



## Cotler: Recognize Jewish refugees from Arab lands

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ROME (JTA) -- There can be no lasting peace in the Middle East unless the claims of Jews displaced from Arab countries are redressed, Canada's former Justice Minister said.

The "exclusion and denial of rights and redress to Jewish refugees" from Arab and Muslim countries, Irwin Cotler told Italian lawmakers, "will prejudice authentic negotiations between the parties and undermine the justice and legitimacy of any agreement."

Cotler spoke Tuesday as part of a delegation of the Justice for Jews from Arab Countries organization, which presented its case to the Foreign Affairs Commission of Italy's Chamber of Deputies.

Some 850,000 Jews were driven out of Arab countries after the birth of Israel.

Cotler said a "revisionist Mideast narrative" continues to hold "that there was only one victim population, Palestinian refugees, and that Israel was responsible for the Palestinian Nakba [catastrophe] of 1948." This, he said, is "prejudicial to authentic reconciliation and peace between peoples as well as between states."

Cotler described "a double Nakba -- not only of Palestinian-Arab suffering and the creation of a Palestinian refugee problem, but also with the assault on Israel and on Jews in Arab countries, the creation thereby of a second, almost unknown, group of refugees, namely, Jewish refugees from Arab countries."

He urged Italy to "use its voice, vote and participation in matters relating to issues of Mideast refugees to ensure that any reference to Palestinian refugees will include a similarly explicit reference to Jewish refugees from Arab countries."