



In 1948, one Million of
Jews lived in Arab
countries, in some
cases for over 2 500
years.

Today, they are less
than five thousand...

Paulo CASACA, Member of the European Parliament

Cordially invites you to the Conference "Jewish refugees from Arab countries" with Mr Moïse Rahmani, author of the book "Réfugiés juifs des pays arabes", Professor Carole Basri and Edwin Shuker, Co-President of the Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC)

July, 1st, 2008

At the European Parliament

60 rue Wiertz - 1047 Bruxelles

Room ASP3 H1



JEWISH REFUGEES FROM ARAB COUNTRIES

The Case for Rights and Redress

Historically, Jews and Jewish communities have existed in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region, in substantial numbers, for more than 2,500 years – fully one thousand years before the advent of Islam.

Upon the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, the status of Jews in Arab countries changed dramatically as virtually all Arab states in the region declared war or backed the war against Israel. These events triggered a dramatic surge in a longstanding pattern of discrimination and abuse that made the lives of Jews in Arab countries simply untenable. Jews were either uprooted from their countries of birth or became subjugated political hostages in the Arab world's struggle against the state of Israel. In virtually all cases, as Jews fled, individual and communal properties were seized and/or confiscated without any compensation provided by the Arab governments involved.

As victims of the Arab-Israeli conflict, many hundreds of thousands of Jews became refugees, fleeing from their homes and lives in Arab countries. And yet, when the issue of refugees is raised within the context of the Middle East, people invariably refer to Palestinians refugees, not former Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

A refugee is a person who:

“Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...”

The 1951 UNHCR Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

History clearly reveals that there were two major population move-

ments that occurred during years of turmoil in the Middle East. Yet, neither the mass violations of human rights nor the displacement of Jews from Arab countries has ever been adequately addressed by the international community. In fact, there were more former Jewish refugees uprooted from Arab countries (over 850,000) than there were Palestinians who became refugees when six Arab nations attacked the fledgling State of Israel in 1948. (UN estimate: 726,000) The legitimate call to secure rights and redress for former Jews displaced from Arab countries is not a campaign against Palestinian refugees. Moreover, advocating for the rights of former Jewish refugees is not about money, nor about initiating legal proceedings. It is an effort to ensure that the rights of former Jewish refugees from Arab countries be recognized on the international political agenda as a quest for truth and justice.

For it would constitute an injustice to recognize claims by Palestinian refugees without recognizing the rights of former Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

As a matter of law and equity, no just, comprehensive Middle East peace can be reached without recognition of, and redress for, the uprooting, under Islamic regimes, of centuries-old Jewish communities in the Middle East and North Africa.

¹ Estimates based on UN document "Trends and Characteristics of International Migration since 1950 – Refugee Movements and Population Transfers" (UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, Demographic Study No. 64 ST/ESA/Ser. A/64).

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First ~ for the technical things ~ this will be done in English and French. We have a marvellous interpreter who will be able to do the job that is normally done by three, but she is a very competent professional, so I think that she will do it. I would like to tell you that I do not recall to have had the honour of sponsoring an initiative with such a value add ~ it as this one, since it is absolutely incredible how our public opinion ignores the plight of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries. And I often thought that if in Israel, these refugees, instead of being absorbed and fully integrated in the society and making the majority of the society ~ as I understand this is the case now ~, would be kept for sixty years in tense, they would be more or less forbid to integrate wherever and would be more or less pushed to make terrorism all the time. Well, then perhaps a lot of people would know about them. But this way, the plight of the Jewish refugees is really most like the not-ignored by you that are here resent; though I can ensure you that it's ignored by the vast majority of the Europeans. And this is sensing that we have to think and reflect about. The program of the session today is the following: we are starting by 15 minutes of film; I don't know if it's...?.. we are still struggling to put it going. Dmitri D. from the European friends of Israel who is also sponsoring this session is trying to get to terms with it. As you notice, the room was occupied just before, so we didn't had the time to take care of these technical details earlier, as we should have done ideally if this room would have not been occupied exactly to four o'clock... but that's life. As you see, Dmitri is struggling very hard and I think that he will be able to do it. The film is called *The forgotten refugees*. It is produced by The David Project. And now towards we will have Moïse Rahmani, who is actually the person that gave me the idea of making this debate and that actually arranged most of the contacts and is responsible, ultimately, for getting together all these people. And he has a fascinating

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book: those of you who can read French can read it right away, it's published in French: *Réfugiés juifs des pays arabes*. I understand we are trying to see it to be translated in English. I can inform those of you who can be interested that the translation in Portuguese is already underway. I think it should be translated in every language, for we should all know about that, it is absolutely essential. Afterwards I will present the other speakers... I was just trying to optimise time, I know that the film is still not ready, but when it will be ready, Dmitri will just make me a sign and I will just shut up. If you allow me, I don't want to disclose too much of the following speakers; but I just came to realize, four or five minutes ago, that most of them are, well, one almost directly another, Jewish from Iraq and so they will be able to speak to us about a story that, I think, is so important for all of those who really care of this country. We will try to understand the origin of the dramas that we witnessed in the last few years and actually cannot be understood without going back to history, for older dramas are behind the present-day dramas. They are going to speak in different perspectives; we'll see an academic work that is a thesis that was presented by Professor Carole Basri. And that is something different from what Mr. Edwin Shuker will tell us about. He will probably tell us about how life actually was in central Baghdad... The time will come; I think that we have a problem with the film. This happens sometimes; I think it's better to skip the film for later on... Ok, ok, we have to make a quick adaptation to the program. Because we will try to get in, with the film, but in the meantime, if you don't mind, I would pass the floor to our first speaker, Moise Rahmani... it's going? In one minute? Shall we wait one minute? Ok, so we wait one minute. I see my dear colleague Joseph M., you are much welcome here. And I think we have some press among us, which is a good thing, it's very important to have at least one important communication media. And we have some senior civil servants of our European Parliament, which is also a very important thing. You know, members of the Parliament come and go but civil servants stay, they are sometimes more important than anybody else.

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And of course we have old friends, we have also D. from the embassy Israel... and some... okay? Okay? That's it?

[FILM]

In September 1990, he decided to create a newspaper in different languages: French, English and Spanish. He also created the Sefarade European Institute in 1993. He wrote different books; he was awarded the Prize Marcel Marinower in 2003 for his books related to the Sefaradic world. So, the floor is yours, professor.

Moïse Rahmani

Thank you very much Mr. Casaca. Well, first of all I'd like to thank you personally on behalf of the one million people I do believe I do represent here today, on behalf of our parents who were obliged and compelled to leave their land in very difficult circumstances. It is the very first time, I think, that we have the possibility, between the walls of the European Parliament, to talk about the refugees we do represent. And I think people had no opportunity to hear my story, to hear my testimony, for at least the last 60 years. That's why I would like to thank you for this conference in this very distinguished place. So, ladies and gentleman, dear members of the European Parliament, I must say that I am deeply moved to be here today. I have a very heavy heritage with me here today, because I do represent people who are no more here today to hear about this testimony. These people were expelled, had to leave their country to start a new life as well; we had the possibility to see a movie about the unacceptable conditions they had to go through. And I think that more than 30.000\$ were devoted to these refugees. I think that several people had the possibility to settle down off their communities, in the world, in Belgium in particular, the possibility to welcome some refugees, or children, or people coming from these countries. But if you take in consideration the amount of money devoted to these populations, you can see that it was not a considerable amount... And if you read my book, you will see that there is no feeling of hatred, there is no feeling of deep disappointment. I think that we do not want to throw stones at

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people, we don't want to do that, we have not forgotten this history, we have not forgotten where we do come from, and we have to convey the message to our children. You saw the gentleman from Egypt, who was told "oh, I didn't know there were Jews in Egypt!" and it's the same for me, people do not know that we had between 80.000 or 100.000 Jews living in Egypt. And as in centuries it is almost impossible to see that these people lived there, people don't have a clue. They don't even know they were Jews in these countries. One month ago, we had a group of older people who were between 75 and 85 years old, and who wanted to go back home to their motherland for the very last time to see where their family lived. The Egyptian government simply prevented these people from going to Egypt. They were not allowed to go back to their motherland; they were between 75 and 85 years old and had no possibility to go back to their country. So I think that if we want to promote sustainable peace, we need recognition. We need to acknowledge that this happened, and it's probably the only way to finally achieve peace, or a feeling of peace amongst us. Now I'd like to leave the floor to the speaker Professor Basri... but I'm ready, of course, to answer any question you might have immediately after.

Edwin Shuker

My name is Edwin Shuker. I was born at 10 P.M. on July 23rd 1955 in Baghdad. My father, S., was a lawyer; my mother's name was Victoria. They are the descendants of an unbroken chain of Jews who have lived in Mesopotamia, now known as Iraq, for over 2600 years. Their ancestors were forced into exile by the Babylonian king Nabuchodonosor, who destroyed Jerusalem in 586 and brought back his citizens to Babel. There, as we all know, they sat by the rivers of Babylon; there we sat and we also wept. But my ancestors did not weep for too long; soon, they made the best of their situation, and helped build civilization over that period. They saw army after army, empire after empire, but the Jews were there until I was born. I never knew my grandparents, uncles or cousins. They had left Israel in 1951, as you just saw in this film. They left,

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all their assets were frozen or taken away, and they left with the following, the same as 90% of Iraqi Jews: they were allowed three summer outfits, three winter outfits, one pair of shoes, one blanket, six pairs of underwear, socks and heets, one wedding ring, one wrist watch, one thin bracelet, and no more than 50 dinars. They were flown to the newly-born and nearly-equipped state of Israel, where they spent several years in the Mabaroth. Through all my life in Iraq, and until we managed to escape in August 1971, there was no communication between my father and his family, nor between my mother and her siblings. Any such communication - even the mention of the word Israel - would have meant severe repressions. I remember in 1963, when Abdul Karim Qasim was deposed and the Baas party came for the first time... At the age of eight, I was queuing with my family because the new regime decreed that every Jew, wherever he was in the world, has to re-establish that he exists, and if he doesn't come in within three months, his nationality is revoked and his assets would be frozen. And so if you happened to be in England studying, you couldn't go to the embassy; and if you happened to be in business on a long term, you couldn't do it. You had to come back within three months. Those of us who were there had to queue, and what did we get for that? This is what we got: a yellow identity card, especially for the Jew. That, clearly, marked my stay and my life in Iraq until 1971. Restrictions were placed on Jews, attending universities. There were subjects, like medicine, pharmacy, engineering, that you could not study if you were a Jew. And then, with the advent of the 1967 war, life really became close to hell. There were random raids, there were distances limiting the Jew to a certain area. I remember the day we had a knock on our door, and three people from the post office came along. They asked for where the phones are, and I remember how they pulled the sockets out of the wall of every phone in every Jewish home, to close our communication. I remember the incitement pre the war - the 67 war - and after the war. I remember that everyone was encouraged to keep an eye on his Jewish neighbour. And a whole column, every Wednesday, in the local paper, was dedicated to such letters. I remember every

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Tuesday, how we used to not know whose name was going to be in that paper next day, and what would it say about him. I remember the rumours. Without the phone, people would come in and tell us "we think they're going to take us to concentration camps, we think they're going to cut off the water and the electricity". And if you think this was bad... we were not prepared for what came in 1968. In July 1968, the Baas party came for the second time. Ahmad Hasan Al-bakr brought his henchman, Saddam Hussein, to run the operation. I remember January 27 1969: we were kids, and there was an announcement on the radio that today was a national holiday, and that you had to stay tuned to know why, because it was a great day for Iraq. And I remember me and my sisters celebrating all day off, until the news came that the great day was the capture of a circle of spies that were spying for Israel, and that 14 members of that ring were judged, sentenced, hanged and their bodies displayed in Baghdad's main square. I remember the line coverage, and I remember people we used to be with only a few months ago, the parents of our friends, hanging with a huge banner on their bodies that said one word: Jew. These bodies stayed there for whole day, where people dancing and throwing sweets underneath them. I remember Musta Talfah, who was the uncle of Saddam Hussein, coming in and making a famous speech. He said he sometimes asked God why he created three things: the Persian, the Jew and the flies. I remember the incitement pushed into the street; one day at Yom Kippur, I left my synagogue for I was feeling weak and had asked to go early. And I remember being chased by three young people with stones, and I thought this was my end, until I was almost scored and was scooped by a big man. I thought "this is it; he's going to slaughter me." And I say it now because I'm a witness of truth: this Muslim Arab man did this to protect me. He held me and he took his belt and said "by God's name, I will kill whoever touchesthis boy". And he took me home. But every one of us had to live with this, every single day. One day, the son of the chief rabbi of Baghdad was arrested and put into a place called "the Palace of the End", for 365 days. When you went into this place you never got out. But

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he wrote a booklet, because he got out. And the reason he got out was a favour the government has done for his father, the chief rabbi, who had to keep repeating the lie that we lived like normal citizens. And what he wrote will explain I'm sure this question: "why haven't you spoken before? Why are we listening to this now?" And I'll tell you why: because it took him 30 years before he could write this book. And after he wrote that book, people used to turn up to his house, people who were silent for 30 years; they came and sat down and cried with him. In August 1971, a quarter of the young men and adults of Iraqi Jewish community had been either tortured or killed or had disappeared. A quarter of the entire community! What I describe to you was just the beginning. We decided that life and death had become exactly the same. And my father brought his young family together and informed us that within two hours, on this fateful August 15th 1971, we were going to attend to escape with our life. We had to use false papers, we had to keep my young sisters silent, as much as we could, for three days, because of the Judea Arabic accent we have and that would have given us away. The two hours that we spent pre to this escape, we were asked by my father to go and look and say goodbye to our things, but not to anybody else. Not to Youssef my neighbour, my childhood friend; not to Sevan, not to my girlfriend. We did not bring the stamp collection, nor my certificates, not even one single photo. We had to leave every memory of ours back in that house, because the intelligence people were sitting outside every Jewish home. We had to leave that house as if we were going on a normal shopping day. And we did. We left our car locked, and we went on the train... this is not the place to describe a three-day escapade, but we did it and I'm here to tell the tale. And we reached eventually Europe, where we were granted asylum; and in gratitude, my father swore and made us promise never, ever to take any benefit from this gracious and generous country that took us as in asylum. My father, the lawyer, worked six days a week in the east-end of London, packing tee-shirts. But he managed to send me to university. And I in turn managed to send my children to a private school. Did we miss Iraq? Did

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we miss our language, our culture, the Tigris, our Arab neighbours, my childhood friends? Hell, we did. In 2003, I had the opportunity to revisit my birthplace, after the liberation war. And the first thing I visited, and the first thing that every Iraqi Jew asked me about was the cemetery, where laid my grandfather, and I went just to tell him that we had not forgotten him. And I visited that cemetery on behalf of every Jew that left Iraq and who might never go back. Mr Casaca, I carried with me the aspirations and dreams of all my community, which clings ever so precariously to its roots, which tries, ever so hopelessly, to link the children to their grandparents, who lived and were buried in that far and distant homeland. What do we want now? We want to remind the media and the world that the Jews of Arab countries are refugees too. We want to remind you that almost one million Jews lived in the Middle-East for as long as 2600 years and were the indigenous population, a thousand years before the advent of Islam. We also want to remind ourselves that through the dark years of persecution there were shining lights, when we lived side by side with our Arab neighbours, and having a wonderful partnership with them. I believe with all my might that the last chapter of the Jews of Arab countries has not yet been written, and that with the help of the Almighty God, the God of Abraham, we can one day reach out for truth, justice and reconciliation and rebuild a bridge between ourselves and our Arab neighbours for a brighter future, and for the sake of our children and the welfare of all the world. And who knows, maybe I would bump into Youssef and Sevan again, my childhood friends, and apologise for disappearing on them without a goodbye.

MEP Paulo Casaca

Thank you very much, Edwin Shuker, born Baghdad, 55, as he just told you. And spending his first sixteen years of life there, he's now an international business man with a wide-ranged intercultural charity involvement; he is a member of the international division of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, member of the executive of JJAC - Justice for Jews of Arab Countries - and ambassador for peace with MEP. So I think

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that it was the most telling testimony you could have: no comments are necessary. I would pass immediately the floor to Carole Basri: she is a graduate from Banner College, Columbia University, and New York University School of Law. She's a professor in corporate law and grand elector at the University of Pennsylvania Law School; she has a very extensive academic curriculum that, if she would not mind, I would go by. She's also a documentary film producer and her films had been shown at film festivals and PBS, Public Broadcasting Service. Recently, she produced a documentary about haemophiliac's in Iraq and has advised PBS production about Saddam's trial. She has been a commentator on the Iraqi elections, in several newspapers and also TV channels. She is the author of a thesis called *Jewish Refugees from Arab countries*, an examination of legal rights and a case study of the ethnic glinting of Iraqi Jews. Now, she's going to tell us something about all that. Please, thank you.

Carole Basri

Thank you very much. I'm really honoured to be with you today and speak about this. My family is a Baghdadi family going back 2700 years, it means a lot for me to be here and talk to you about I think what really is international. The plight of each refugee is important because any refugee that we ignore means that more human rights violations will occur. And from that perspective of human rights, which is something very important to make clear, I want to speak to you about this because I feel I owe this step to my ancestors. I want to start with the idea that first there is remembrance. What Moise said, and what also was so beautifully said by Edwin, was remembrance. It's very important to remember what happened. That brings us to truth. There were two sets of refugees in the Middle-East; we have to talk about both of those if we have to come to an equitable settlement which brings us to justice. Justice can only come from an understanding of all the facts. And that justice can bring reconciliation. That's my hope. That's why I'm here. And finally, reconciliation can bring a long and lasting peace, and I think

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that's what all of what everyone of us strives for. So let's remember, truth, justice, reconciliation brings peace. And I think the best way to explain that is to look at truth commissions. There have been over 60 truth commissions around the world. They have addressed issues in the most diverse countries. And in each situation where truth is dealt with, you have an opportunity first to expose to the truth; this is according to Richard Goldstone, a noted authority and a jurist. First, exposition of the truth can help to individualize guilt, and thus avoid the imposition of collective guilt on an ethnic, religious or other group. That is very important to me. We must look to the individualization of the guilt, whereas it is collective acknowledge of a government, or collective in any ethnic group, religion or otherwise. Second, justice brings public and official acknowledgment to the victims; this usually is the first step in the healing process. Third, public exposure of the truth is the only way to effectively ensure that history is recorded more accurately and more faithfully. Fourth, the only way to curb international human rights crimes is to police the conduct with justice. I truly firmly believe these words. Now, I would like to talk about the situation, about what happened to the Jews in Arab countries. Initially, there were practically 900.000 Jews in Arab countries in 1948. We now have about 5 to 6000 Jews left in the Arab countries. This is total amounts to ethnic cleansing. What is the definition of ethnic cleansing? Ethnic cleansing is to be defined as the elimination of a dominated ethnic group, of a given territory, by members of another ethnic group. It's that simple. Ethnic cleansing is to be defined as the elimination of a dominated ethnic group in a given territory. Ethnic cleansing involves a variety of methods, with the aim to expel, and it includes harassment, discrimination, beatings, torture, rapes, summary executions relocation of population by force, confiscation of property, destruction of homes, places of worship and cultural institutions. When Moise and Edwin spoke, they spoke about many of those factors. There are different countries and different issues in each country, but these factors were involved. Some of them, all of them, a few of them... The result is, we have gone from 900.000 Jews in Arab countries to

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about 5000. Let's look at the issue of Palestinian refugees. There were, in 1948, about 750.000 of them. So you have 900.000 Jews from Arab countries that were forced to leave. Where did they go? They went to Israel. In fact, a little more than half of Israel is made of Jews of Arab countries. And what is the definition of a refugee? Well, let's look at that. A refugee is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable or owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. Under this definition, the Jews from Arab countries are clearly refugees. This fact has been avoided. And I think it has been lost in the narrative of the history of the Middle-East, though it's been a critical factor to have in that narrative. I think that if we could look at various UN resolutions, but the one I would look to is resolution 242. Yes, 242 is an interesting resolution. It has passed in November 27th 1967. The security council of the UN unanimously adopted the stipulation that a comprehensive peace-settlement should necessarily include a quote-just settlement of the refugee problem. No distinction was made between Arab refugees or Jewish refugees. Now, the soviet ambassador of that time tried to restrict the resolution only to apply to Palestinian refugees. However, this attempt failed because the international community did not want to restrict the just-settlement of the refugees just to Palestinian refugees. Arthur Goldberg, who was the chief US delegate to the UN, was pushing for the settlement to include all refugees now that the resolution addressed the objective of achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem. The language, presumably, referees to both Jews and Arab refugees, for about an equal number abandoned their homes as a result of the war. We just spoke about those numbers. Now another place that the Jewish refugees get mentioned is by the high commissioner in 1957, at the time of the Egyptian departure of the Jews. At that time, he talked about Egyptian Jews that they were refugees. Further, in 1967, one of the members of the high commission, Dr. Jahn, commented that the refugees from Arab countries

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that were Jewish should be considered refugees. However, this acknowledgment of Jews of Arab countries as we heard on the movie that we saw has not been adopted in any of the resolutions. And that really seems to be a lapse. I'd like to go further and talk about Camp David in October 27, 1977, when the US President Jimmy Carter said "Palestinians have rights obviously. There are also Jewish refugees. And they have the same rights as others do". Next is President Clinton, on Camp David 2 in July 27, 2000. He stated: "Israel is full of people, Jewish people, who lived and predominated in Arab countries and who came to Israel because they were refugees in their own land." So why is the Middle-East narrative so distorted? Well, I would say it's because first of all remembrance has fallen out. Why has remembrance fallen out on this subject? I think the reason is probably that on the one hand there was a desire by the Jewish refugees from Arab countries to go on with their lives. They couldn't get the acknowledgment from the UN, except these two small suggestions of it, and therefore, they had to go out and make it on their own. That was the first piece of it. The second piece of it was that nobody wanted to listen. I started doing my documentaries in 1995, because I was trying to find out about my own family. They were trying to shield me from what their history had been. I found out in the course of that that very few people wanted to step forward, out of fear. Out of wanting all that to be the past, out of not wanting to talk about what happened in their families. At first, what I had to do is to get my mother and my uncle out to speak on camera. However, after they did that, I was able to collect the testimonies of over 100 Jews from Arab countries, mostly Iraqi, to talk about what happened to them, and I made a film about the last Jews of Baghdad. And in there, they talk about what happened to them. And I believe that outpouring of ability to speak was similar to what happened during the Holocaust. After the Holocaust, people couldn't bring those memories, they were too painful. In my own family, one of my relatives was hung. In 1948, my grandfather had to escape the country, leaving behind two children because he was going to be hung because in his business affiliations his partner was

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hung. And finally, my uncle, who was the head of Jewish community in 1969, tried to confront Saddam Hussein in the international and local press; because of that, he was tortured. Edwin talked about the torture that went on for three months. As a result of that, I found that I had led a privileged life, unlike other people of my family, who ended up among the road. And they ended up there for sometimes long periods of time. These were the tent camps, similar to what the Palestinians went through, and which Edwin talked about that was opened for about 10 to 12 years. Fortunately, my family only stayed there a brief time, but the fact remains. This was the legacy of my family and I was privileged enough. My mother was able to come to the United States, we were able to have a privileged life and I was able to have this wonderful education in Columbia University, B. College and W.U. Law School. But I felt I had a debt to pay. When I made my documentary I tried to look for pictures of the family; unfortunately, because we had to leave so quickly, we didn't have pictures. As I told you, my grandfather had to escape; he was only able to take four of his children. Two had to remain behind to be smuggled out a year later. These are some of the stories... I talked to other people from the Middle-East to find out about what the history was, to find out what the legacy of Jews from Arab countries was. I learned that in each country, there were different kinds of repression, different kinds of harassment, and some were state-inaugurated. There was a concerted effort however, I learned by the Arab league; and there are documents in the materials that I think will be passed out to you, to show you that there was an effort made, starting in 1947 and 1948, to take away the rights of Jews in Arab countries and to push them to leave the country, either by harassment, or terror, or forcibly, or by taking their properties as it happened in Iraq where first their nationality was given up because for three years before that they couldn't get any licence for business. All the people of the country were prohibited by law from leaving the country. There was one exception made however; one sixth-month old child was allowed to leave the country during that period from 48 to 51. This is said of 160.000 people: it was because he needed medical assistance.

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However, even his mother was not allowed to accompany him out of the country. That's how strictly the Jews were enforced. In some countries, the Jews were not allowed to leave, but in other countries, they were pushed to leave. In Iraq, when they finally had a chance to leave, they signed up, they had to give up their nationality, but they waited to leave. In the next year, legislation was passed in Iraq - which Edwin referred to - where all of the property was confiscated. During that time, there was talk of sending all of the Jews to the border with Jordan, where they could have been killed or put into concentration camps. This was in the newspapers. I think that this is just one story. There are a lot of books, written by people from those countries, of what happened, but unfortunately, nobody wanted to read the books. Nobody wanted to hear their testimony. And I applaud all of you to allow us an opportunity to speak here today, because I feel there is a moral commitment upon all of our parts to talk about this, but from the point of view of success. We've led successful lives; the majority of Jews from Arab countries have been able to create new lives. But what we look for now - and we look for this for everyone -, of the Jews from Arab countries, is the possibility, first for truth, then for justice, then for reconciliation and finally for peace. Because this peace is not only meaningful for the Jews from Arab countries; it's meaningful for everyone in the Middle-East, and I believe looking at the corner situations of the world is relevant for everyone here. We will not be able to break down the barriers of hatred that are going on in the Middle-East right now unless we understand that two sides suffer. And until there is the acknowledgment of what happened to the Jews from Arab countries, how can we find the heart to communicate as human beings and talk about what actually happened? Certainly the UN didn't talk about it, certainly there's only been mild negotiations: right now there's only little negotiation going on about this refugee issue. The negotiation that's going on now has to do with Palestinian refugees, but I ask you: why can't Jews from Arab countries be included in that discussion? Why can't we walk down the road

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to peace? Why can't we talk about our story? Why must we be silent?
Thank you.

Paulo Casaca

Thank you very much, Carol. I think that now, we'll have some time for questions, questions and answers. We will have not much time, but we will have some time. So, if any of you wants to... please, the gentleman over there? You can use either French or English.

Erik M, participant

- It'll be English. I'm Erick M., B'nai Brith in this country, in Brussels, and I would just like to refer to the Durban review conference, and wonder how can we get over the message that you have so clearly brought? It means that the JJAC must be recognized, I presume, as an NJO. I don't know what practical steps one can take in order to make that possible, and if it is not possible in the time - because the time is very short - then it must be other NJO who should take up that story and make sure that it comes into discussion at least.

Paulo Casaca

- That's a very good question. I mean I think that a lot of you would like to comment upon it.

Moïse Rahmani

- I can answer your question or comment in a very gentle way. I believe that we need to try to convince our European authorities, and I'm asking the members of Parliament here to do so. And we need to do what was done with the American congress on the occasion of each international negotiation, when the issue of Palestinian refugees is on the agenda; we need at the same time to talk about the Jews who are also refugees. So we should always talk about the AVA refugees, and Mr. Casaca, as you are a member of the Parliament, I think that you should pass a solution indicating that each time the Palestinian refugees are on the agenda, we

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need, or people need, to also talk about the other refugees. Because it's a way for us to get justice, to get reconciliation, and justice and reconciliation will lead to peace, as you know.

Edwin Shuker

- I'm very grateful for this suggestion. We will try and do our best by coordinating with B'nai Brith as well and with Washington and with other people working on this. I'd like just to bring your attention to the efforts of B'nai Brith and Jay Jack and congress of president and others. Two months ago, a resolution passed through the House of Representatives at the USA, and that was an incredible point in our struggle, that has now invigorated us and energized us. Even 60 years on, justice cannot be buried. I just wanted to read to you the last page of this resolution. This is resolution 185. Those of you, who want the copy, please go on our website which is www.justiceforjews.com and read the entire thing because it sums up the situation beautifully. I'm just going to read the resolution itself, the last page.

"Whereas it would be inappropriate and unjust for the United States to recognize rights for Palestinian refugees without recognizing equal rights for Jewish refugees from Arab countries: Now, let be it resolved, that (1) for any comprehensive Middle East peace agreement to be credible and enduring, the agreement must address and resolve all outstanding issues relating to the legitimate rights of all refugees including Jews, Christians, and other populations displaced from countries in the Middle-East; and (2) the President should instruct the United States Representative to the United Nations and all United States representatives in bilateral and multilateral for a to (A) use the voice, vote, and influence of the United States to ensure that any resolutions relating to the issue of Middle East refugees, and which include a reference to the required resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue, must also include a similarly explicit reference to the resolution of the issue of Jewish refugees from Arab countries; and (B) make clear that the United States Government supports the position that, as an integral part of any comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, the issue of refugees from the Middle

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East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf must be resolved in a matter that includes recognition of the legitimate rights of and losses incurred by all refugees displaced from Arab countries including Jews, Christians, and other groups."

Ladies and Gentleman, this is what we want from you here: a similar resolution, if it's possible, that would make our trip and our testimony here worthwhile.

Carole Basri

- Thank you very much for the suggestion. Just allow me to make a short comment on this Durban 2 question, which is, I think, essential. I already saw that there is a petition for boycott of Durban 2. I think that perhaps it would be wiser to make a counter Durban 2, that would be the real conference against racial and other sorts of discrimination, which obviously has the discrimination against the Jews from Arab countries at the centre. It can't be otherwise, but it will address in a real antiracism, because this is racism, the way that Durban 1 was organized and the way that Durban 2 is being organized. I think that we should have a more proactive position, that's my feeling.

A participant

I would like to speak French. I met Moise a few years ago and we usually work on the issue of minorities in the world. I think that many Jews are not aware of the positive impact their fight could have. I think that people are usually unaware of what might arise from that. I think that the ideology of Islam is based on the fact that we should deny the Jews: the Jewish issue is completely denied that's the first point. That's the first element we need to take on board, and secondly, we also need to take on board that the Jews were the first to suffer these kinds of acts and problems. They were punished you know, because they created their own state. I think that if the Assyrians or other populations had done the same, I think that it would have been different. I don't know how many victims there were in Assyria. But never mind, I think that the Jews were

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the first to be punished because they did not want other populations to do exactly the same. That's why they were punished. And if you could manage to talk about that experience, you would probably do a lot for minorities in the Arab world. I think that when we talk about Arab countries, if we talk about Arab countries, we are probably in favour of these Arab countries. I don't want to be racist but I think we need to talk about the Arab world and not about Arab countries. But it is another point, so I would like to encourage you to share your testimonies. If you manage to do that, you would get rid of one pillar of the Arab world or Islam, because I think that you are the victims in a way... the fact that the Arab world is gaining in importance does create every day anti-Semitism, does create a lot of fundamentalists, etc. And their ideology is based on these different elements, and by voicing your stories, your testimonies, you will probably get rid of this pillar. So I think that you really need to move ahead and destroy these pillars.

Moïse Rahmani

I think, of course, that it is really important. We wrote a book which is called in French "*A l'ombre de l'Islam*" and in this book we really develop this kind of thinking. And I think that maybe intermundialists will behalf no more Christian people if we look at the trances which are emerging in today's society. And I brought with an article published in a paper in Montreal: I was in Montreal for a conference and I read these article. It refers to the Christian minority in Iraq, because it seems said Christian people are obliged to change their religion or opt for another religion and that they are also victims of difficult and terrible sufferings. So, what we want at the end of the day is the Middle-East to become a place of peace, where people can get on together, can share things together. And if I were to dream about the ideal community... I brought an article about that in a newspaper in Belgium, and in that article I explained what was my dream and, Inch' Allah – I don't remember how I'm suppose to say it in a different language ~ and Inch' Allah, one day this will come true: we want peace, we want understanding amongst the

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populations, and the best way to understanding, the best way to peace is justice. We really want justice, we need justice as you want and need justice. We don't want anything more than justice. We owe it to our parents; we also owe it to our Muslim cousins, because when I'm told "what? There are no Jews in Egypt, there are no Jews in Arab countries", I'm really angry when I hear that. Because in a few years time, we will no more have the possibility to talk about these communities, because people will have completely forgot about it. I think it's important for people to know that: for thousand years, for centuries there were Jews in these countries. If I refer to the history, I or someone mentioned that in 586 we had Jew people in these Arab countries. And these people, who are still living there, are the guardians of the cemetery, if I may say so. In each country we have a person who is the guardian of this place, because people don't want to leave them alone. I don't know where the grave of my grandparents is: I would like to do what you did, what my neighbour did; I would like to go to the place where my grandparents are buried. And if I forget about them, they will die forever; I want my children to remember my grandparents. The world didn't want to listen to us for sixty years, but they have to listen to us now. And you probably feel the emotion, you probably feel that I'm passionate, but I owe it to my family, I owe it to my children because we cannot leave it forgotten.

Paulo Casaca

Well, thank you very much; I think that it is unfortunately the end of this meeting. I don't know whether you have a final statement to make to conclude the day, I don't know whether you have further comments, or other questions to ask? Ah, it seems that the lady there has a last question to ask?

A participant

- Well, personally, I would like to congratulate Mr. Casaca. I'm Portuguese, and I'm proud and delighted to see that you decided to organize

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this meeting. I decided to devote a part of my life to what happened to the Jewish people and I really feel it is important to talk about these people who suffered for so long, because most people suffered even for after the war and suffered for a very long time. I'd like to congratulate Mr. Casaca because now, time has come to disclose what we experienced. We are to die, as you know, that's life, and I think that our grandchildren will have no idea at all about the past we had, about their past. That's why it's a critic importance for each and any of us to do what you did today: to talk, to explain, and to tell the truth. And we say it in a very human way. We don't want to wage war, we want to be human in the way we explain what we went through. So, Mr. Casaca, it's even more important to move ahead with that, it's even more important for you to do something for us, toay something on our behalf, and I would like to congratulate all the other distinguished speakers who are part of this group, who are part of this spirit we shed this afternoon.

Paulo Casaca

Thank you.

Moïse Rahmani

Thank you so much, and personally, and on behalf of my colleagues here, and on behalf of the million people who are not here in the room and cannot hear us, I would like to thank you, Mr. Casaca, for the effort you made. And first of all, I would like to thank you for listening to us. It's not easy to find someone who is willing to listen to you. It's not easy at all, and you decided to do this, you listened to us. I know that we have some seeds here, and I hope that the seeds will give birth to something more important in the future. Thank you very much for being, in a way, the spokesman of this experience we went through. There is no feeling of hatred, as I said, we don't have this feeling against anyone, and we simply want justice. That's all.

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Paulo Casaca

Thank you so much.

Edwin Shuker

- Justice for Jews of European countries have produced packs for parliamentarians, for politicians, for media. Please, I would like you to take some of here. But most importantly, Moise will hand his card: anything you want, any backup, any copy of this film, which is 15 minutes - but there is one which is 45 minutes -... whatever you wish for, just take his card, send us an e-mail and you will get it. And please help us on the awareness. When I became the executive of Justice for Jews, I had a registration form, which I gave to my father. My father did not fill that registration form. It was too painful for him. Every week or two, he would take it out, and start filling it, and then tears would come in his eyes, and the form would go back to where it was. We have lost already 70% of those who were born in the Arab countries. We have not got much time. And we need every human being's help that we could get. I want to tell you, under dedicating this to my father, to Carol's father, to Moise's father, and to our children too: the mission of Justice for Jews is simply one line, just one single line to ensure that Justice for Jews displaced from Arab countries assumes its rightful place on the international political agenda and that their rights be secured as a matter of law and equity. With your help, we could do it. Thank you.

Carole Basri

- I just wanted to say that finding the truth will lead us to justice, will lead us to reconciliation, and will lead us to peace. I believe that from the bottom of my heart, which is why I have made these movies, written this law-review article from former international law review, and why I really believe it was worth coming here to talk to you. Because if this past is forgotten, then another human rights violation will go under without being talked about; and each event is important to write in history of the world. If we can do that, we can further humanity. Thank you.

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Paulo Casaca

- Well, Ladies and Gentleman, I think that we reach the end of this event. I'm very, very thankful for the lessons I was able to get from you. For me, humanity has no boundaries and truth has no limits. This particular struggle is very dear to me because I think it is perhaps the most forgotten, the most distorted and I do think that in the human kind, in our days, there is no bigger threat than those who want to make the Holocaust again. The name was already mentioned a while ago, everybody knows what I am referring to. I think that these threats have to be taken very seriously, because we did not do what we should have done, which is to impose the truth, and only on the base of this truth, justice could come. Thank you very much for all, I will certainly do my best. I would, in particular, like to thank Adam M. – sorry for the mispronunciation – who was the first one that really spoke to me about making something like that. I have to tell you that I started thinking about that exactly through Iraq, and through a very good Iraqi friend of mine, who was raised as a normal Arab Iraqi. But she's smart, intelligent and when she first went out of Iraq and came to Brussels, the first thing she told me was she wanted to meet somebody from the Israeli embassy, because she understood exactly contrarily what she had been taught in school, and ingrained... Israel was not the devil; she understood quite the reverse, and was the starting point for me to try to understand these dramas that we are living now in this part of the world.
Thank you to all of you very much.



Paulo Casaca,
Member European Parliament and organiser of the Conference



from left to right :
Moise Rahmani (Belgium), Edwin Shuker (UK) and Carole Basri (USA)



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