

# Arabs Urged to Flee from Palestine in 1948: Arab and Independent Sources Document That Arab Leaders Urged Palestinians to Leave

- "The fact that there are these refugees is the direct consequence of the act of the Arab states in opposing partition and the Jewish state. The Arab states agreed upon this policy unanimously and they must share in the solution of the problem."
  - Emile Ghoury, secretary of the Palestinian Arab Higher Committee, in an interview with the Beirut Telegraph September 6, 1948. (same appeared in The London Telegraph, August 1948)
- "The most potent factor [in the flight of Palestinians] was the announcements made over the air by the Arab-Palestinian Higher Executive, urging all Haifa Arabs to quit... It was clearly intimated that Arabs who remained in Haifa and accepted Jewish protection would be regarded as renegades."
  - London Economist October 2, 1948
- "It must not be forgotten that the Arab Higher Committee encouraged the refugees' flight from their homes in Jaffa, Haifa, and Jerusalem."
  - Near East Arabic Broadcasting Station, Cyprus, April 3, 1949
- "Every effort is being made by the Jews to persuade the Arab populace to stay and carry on with their normal lives, to get their shops and businesses open and to be assured that their lives and interests will be safe."
  - Haifa District HQ of the British Police, April 26, 1948, (quoted in Battleground by Samuel Katz).
- "The mass evacuation, prompted partly by fear, partly by order of Arab leaders, left the Arab quarter of Haifa a ghost city.... By withdrawing Arab workers their leaders hoped to paralyze Haifa."
  - Time Magazine, May 3, 1948, page 25
- "The Arab civilians panicked and fled ignominiously. Villages were frequently abandoned before they were threatened by the progress of war."
  - General John Glubb "Pasha," The London Daily Mail, August 12, 1948
- "The Arabs of Haifa fled in spite of the fact that the Jewish authorities guaranteed their safety and rights as citizens of Israel."
  - Monsignor George Hakim, Greek Catholic Bishop of Galilee, New York Herald Tribune, June 30, 1949
- Sir John Troutbeck, British Middle East Office in Cairo, noted in cables to superiors (1948-49) that the refugees (in Gaza) have no bitterness against Jews, but harbor intense hatred toward Egyptians: "They say 'we know who our enemies are (referring to the Egyptians)', declaring that their Arab brethren persuaded them unnecessarily to leave their homes...I even heard it said that many of the refugees would give a welcome to the Israelis if they were to come in and take the district over."
- "The Arab states which had encouraged the Palestine Arabs to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies, have failed to keep their promise to help these refugees."
  - The Jordanian daily newspaper Falastin, February 19, 1949.

- "The 15th May, 1948, arrived ... On that day the mufti of Jerusalem appealed to the Arabs of Palestine to leave the country, because the Arab armies were about to enter and fight in their stead."  
-- The Cairo daily Akhbar el Yom, October 12, 1963
- "Arabs still living in Israel recall being urged to evacuate Haifa by Arab military commanders who wanted to bomb the city."  
-- Newsweek, January 20, 1963
- "Who brought the Palestinians to Lebanon as refugees, suffering now from the malign attitude of newspapers and communal leaders, who have neither honor nor conscience? Who brought them over in dire straits and penniless, after they lost their honor? The Arab states, and Lebanon amongst them, did it."  
-- The Beirut Muslim weekly Kul-Shay, August 19, 1951
- "The Arab Exodus ...was not caused by the actual battle, but by the exaggerated description spread by the Arab leaders to incite them to fight the Jews. ...For the flight and fall of the other villages it is our leaders who are responsible because of their dissemination of rumors exaggerating Jewish crimes and describing them as atrocities in order to inflame the Arabs ... By spreading rumors of Jewish atrocities, killings of women and children etc., they instilled fear and terror in the hearts of the Arabs in Palestine, until they fled leaving their homes and properties to the enemy."  
-- The Jordanian daily newspaper Al Urdun, April 9, 1953.
- "The Arab governments told us: Get out so that we can get in. So we got out, but they did not get in."  
-- A refugee quoted in Al Difaa (Jordan) September 6, 1954
- In listing the reasons for the Arab failure in 1948, Khaled al-Azm (Syrian Prime Minister) notes that "Since 1948, it is we who have demanded the return of the refugees, while it is we who made them leave. We brought disaster upon a million Arab refugees by inviting them and bringing pressure on them to leave. We have accustomed them to begging...we have participated in lowering their morale and social level...Then we exploited them in executing crimes of murder, arson and throwing stones upon men, women and children...all this in the service of political purposes..."  
-- Khaled el-Azm, Syrian prime minister after the 1948 War, in his 1972 memoirs, published in 1973.
- "The Arab states succeeded in scattering the Palestinian people and in destroying their unity. They did not recognize them as a unified people until the states of the world did so, and this is regrettable."  
-- Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas), from the official journal of the PLO, Falastin el-Thawra ("What We Have Learned and What We Should Do"), Beirut, March 1976.
- "Abu Mazen Charges that the Arab States Are the Cause of the Palestinian Refugee Problem" (Wall Street Journal; June 5, 2003):  
Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) wrote an article in March 1976 in Falastin al-Thawra, the official journal of the PLO in Beirut: "The Arab armies entered Palestine to protect the Palestinians from the Zionist tyranny, but instead they abandoned them, forced them to emigrate and to leave their homeland, imposed upon them a political and ideological blockade and threw them into prisons similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live in Eastern Europe."

- Mahmud Al-Habbash, a regular writer in the official Palestinian Authority paper, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, indicates in his column "The Pulse of Life" (Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, December 13, 2006) that the Arabs left Israel in 1948 only after political Arab leaders persuaded them to do so by promising the Arabs a speedy return to their homes in Palestine:

"...The leaders and the elites promised us at the beginning of the "Catastrophe" [[the establishment of Israel and the creation of refugee problem] in 1948, that the duration of the exile will not be long, and that it will not last more than a few days or months, and afterwards the refugees will return to their homes, which most of them did not leave only until they put their trust in those "Arkuvian" promises made by the leaders and the political elites. Afterwards, days passed, months, years and decades, and the promises were lost with the strain of the succession of events..." [Term "Arkuvian," is after Arkuv – a figure from Arab tradition - who was known for breaking his promises and for his lies.]" "

- "We heard sounds of explosions and of gunfire at the beginning of the summer in the year of the "Catastrophe" [The establishment of Israel and the expulsion from the land in 1948]. They told us: The Jews attacked our region and it is better to evacuate the village and return, after the battle is over. And indeed there were among us [who fled Israel] those who left a fire burning under the pot, those who left their flock [of sheep] and those who left their money and gold behind, based on the assumption that we would return after a few hours."

-- Asmaa Jabir Balasimah Um Hasan, Woman who fled Israel, Al-Ayyam, May 16, 2006

- An Arab viewer called Palestinian Authority TV (PA TV April 30, 1999) and quoted his father and grandfather, complaining that in 1948 the Arab District Officer ordered all Arabs to leave Palestine or be labeled traitors. In response, Arab MK Ibrahim Sarsur, then Head of the Islamic Movement in Israel, cursed the leaders who ordered Arabs to leave, thus, acknowledging Israel's assertion.

*Statement of son and grandson of man who fled:*

"Mr. Ibrahim [Sarsur]. I address you as a Muslim. My father and grandfather told me that during the "Catastrophe" [establishment of Israel in 1948 and the expulsion from the land], our district officer issued an order that whoever stays in Palestine and in Majdel [near Ashkelon – Southern Israel] is a traitor, he is a traitor."

*Response from Ibrahim Sarsur, Head of the Islamic Movement in Israel:*

"The one who gave the order forbidding them to stay there bears guilt for this, in this life and the Afterlife throughout history until Resurrection Day."

- Fuad Abu Higla, then a regular columnist in the official PA daily Al Hayat Al Jadida, wrote an article before an Arab Summit (Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, March 19, 2001), which criticized the Arab leaders for a series of failures. One of the failures he cited, in the name of a prisoner, was that an earlier generation of Arab leaders "forced" them to leave Israel in 1948, again placing the blame for the flight on the Arab leaders.

"I have received a letter from a prisoner in Acre prison, to the Arab summit:

To the [Arab and Muslim] Kings and Presidents, Poverty is killing us, the symptoms are exhausting us and the souls are leaving our body, yet you are still searching for the way to provide aid, like one who is looking for a needle in a haystack or like the armies of your predecessors in the year of 1948, who forced us to leave [Israel], on the pretext of clearing the battlefields of civilians... So what will your summit do now?"

SOURCE: PA daily: Arab leaders caused the refugee problem, by Itamar Marcus and Barbara Crook- Dec. 17, 2006 (pmw.org.il)

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