

Rehabilitation of the Palestinian Refugees

A New Israeli Approach



The Israeli Initiative

The Right Road to Peace

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The Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza are not their homes, but rather temporary stations.

The question that remains open is not whether they will return to their homes. They will not return to their homes, just as Jews will not return to Poland, Iraq or Morocco. The question is how to rehabilitate and resettle them in spite of the fact that they have been uprooted from their homes.

When it becomes clear that this is indeed the question, the answers become quite apparent.

Amazingly, this question has hardly been asked.

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OVERVIEW

The Palestinian refugee problem was born sixty years ago during the War of Independence. As opposed to the other refugee problems created at that time, this one remains unresolved to this day. In fact, it has taken on gigantic dimensions as Arab countries have perpetuated the refugee situation as a tool to de-legitimize the State of Israel.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, hundreds of thousands of Arabs were displaced and since then have remained homeless. The Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza are not their homes, but rather temporary stations.

The question that remains open is not whether they will return to their homes. They will not return to their homes, just as Jews will not return to Poland, Iraq or Morocco. The question is how to rehabilitate and resettle them in spite of the fact that they have been uprooted from their homes.

Amazingly, this question has hardly been asked. For many years, Israel preferred to ignore the refugee problem in the hope that in time, it would resolve itself. Successive governments have chosen to stick their heads in the sand when faced with the looming fear of the refugee issue.

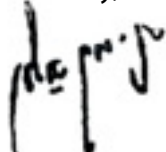
Needless to say, this policy has been ineffective. The refugee problem has grown in size and in effect, it has given birth to terror and Palestinian nationalism. Despite everything, Israel decided to legitimize Palestinian nationalism as part of the "two states" solution. Israel's choice to recognize Palestinian nationalism has brought her to endure countless terrorist attacks and a diplomatic process where Israel is constantly pushed to capitulate on issues that cost lives. This will to capitulate has led to tragedies that continually repeat themselves.

Israel must disentangle itself from this trap and examine new avenues that deal with the root of the problem. If Israel can succeed in overcoming its fear of directly dealing with the refugee problem and assertively adopt a clear initiative that deals head on with this issue, then Israel will be able to neutralize a very substantive part of the explosive material in its conflict with the Palestinians. We must radically change our way of thinking about the matter and boldly deal with the issue of the refugees from a long-term perspective.

This initiative is the first step.

Thanks for your attention and interest,

Sincerely,



Benny Elon, MK

Chapter One: The Problem

REFUGEES FROM THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Leading up to the War of Independence, the British left the area under their mandate, and the State of Israel was born. A war erupted between the country's Jewish and Arab population. The Arab population was joined by armies from surrounding Arab countries and a full-scale war erupted.

Despite the fact that the country was formally designated by the Mandate to be a "national home for the Jewish People", the Jews in the Yishuv accepted the Partition Plan. This plan detailed that the land would be divided into a Jewish State and an Arab State. The Arabs rejected the division and attacked the young State. During the fighting, a large number of the indigenous Arab population left their homes voluntarily with the expectation of returning later accompanied by the victorious Arab armies. Israel succeeded in forming a sovereign country and the Arabs that fled became refugees.

POPULATION EXCHANGES

This was how the "Palestinian Refugee Problem" was born. Some 600,000 people who fled in the throes of war were unable to return to their homes. They were without citizenship, without shelter, and without defense. These new refugees were housed in temporary camps in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, in Egypt, Syria and in Lebanon waiting for "the next round" where the Arab countries would humiliate the 'Zionist entity'. They retained their identity based on the village or city from which they came.



In actuality, the refugee problem was a result of a broader process known as a population exchange. The State of Israel became a sanctuary for hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees. In addition to the remnant of European Jewry who survived the Holocaust and came to Israel, the young State also absorbed some 600,000 Jews who were expelled from Arab lands. Most of these Jews owned substantial assets and property in the Arab lands where they resided. Many escaped with only the clothes on their backs and came to Israel as poor refugees.

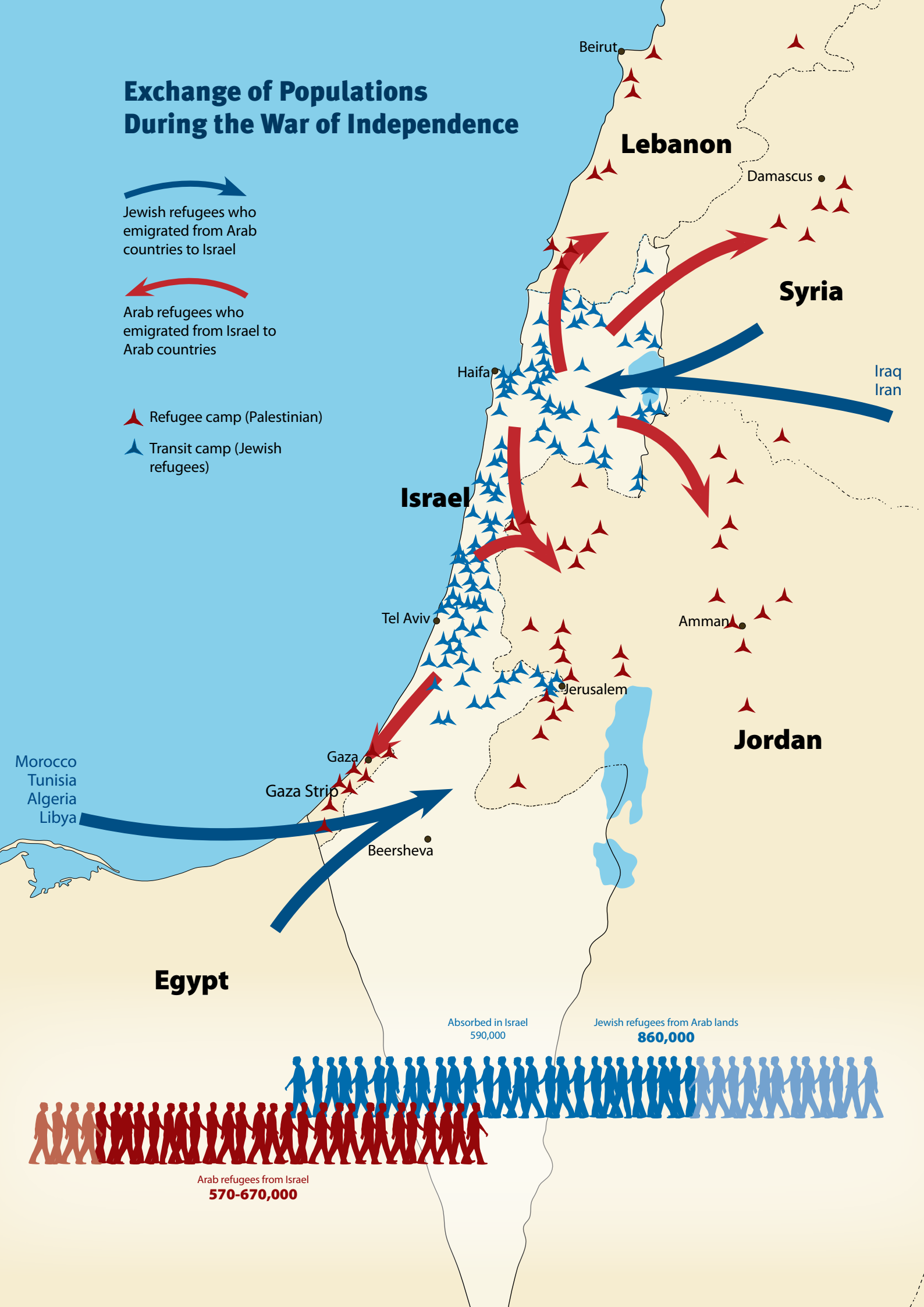
A major population exchange took place at this time in the Middle East. Jewish refugees from Arab lands found refuge in Israel, while Arab refugees from the land of Israel fled to Arab lands.

Exchange of Populations During the War of Independence


Jewish refugees who emigrated from Arab countries to Israel


Arab refugees who emigrated from Israel to Arab countries

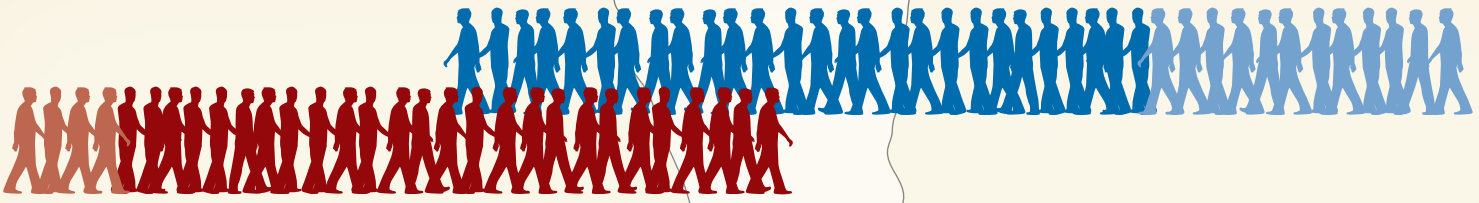
-  Refugee camp (Palestinian)
-  Transit camp (Jewish refugees)

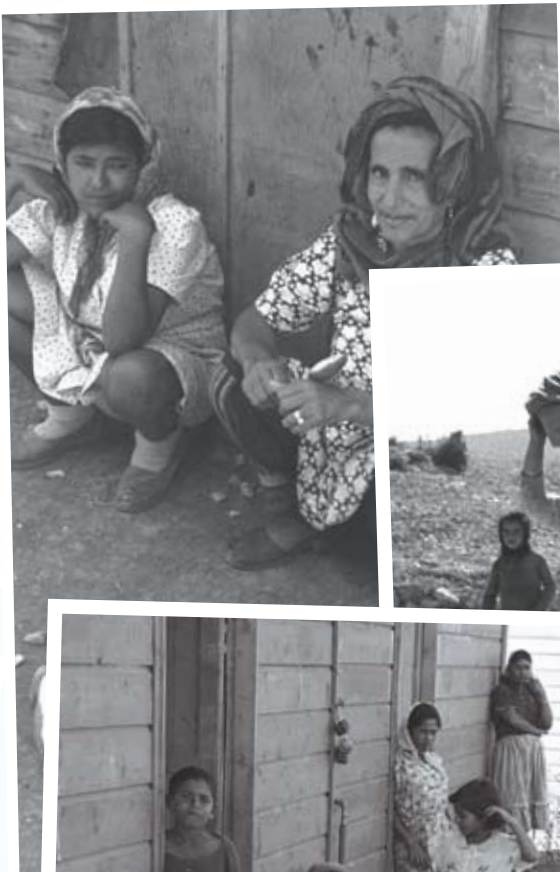


Absorbed in Israel
590,000

Jewish refugees from Arab lands
860,000

Arab refugees from Israel
570-670,000





Jewish refugees from Yemen
in transit camp in Atlit

Arabs flee their homes in the
Galilee, 1948



Jewish refugees in transit camp
in Ra'anana, 1949

THE LEGACY OF THE REFUGEES

The State of Israel transformed the Jewish refugees into citizens and integrated them into every aspect of life. Great sums of money from Jews around the world were invested in the absorption and rehabilitation of new immigrants who came streaming to the little country.

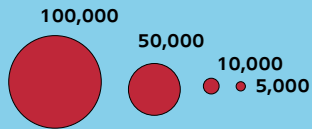
The Arab countries choose not to make their refugees into citizens or try to rehabilitate them in any way. These countries could not be reconciled with the establishment of the State of Israel and with the consequences of the War of Independence. Rather, they chose to conduct themselves as if Israel were just a temporary inconvenience. They told themselves that Israel would be destroyed one day soon and that the refugees would not be their responsibility. The distressful situation of these refugees never touched their hearts. In fact, the Arab countries used the suffering of the refugees as a political weapon and continue to do so after many decades.

The refugees - 60 years later

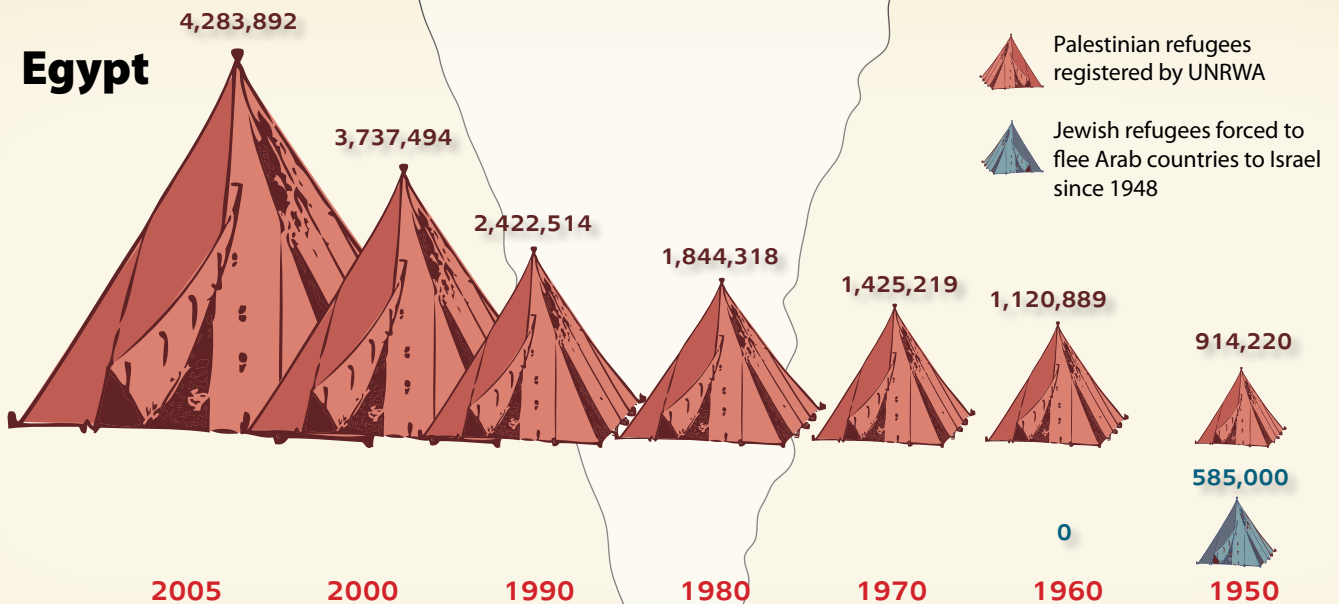
according to UNRWA website

● refugee camp

numbers of refugees registered in camps



Egypt



Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA

Jewish refugees forced to flee Arab countries to Israel since 1948

0

585,000

Palestinian terrorist organizations followed in the paths of the Arab countries. They exploited the refugee situation for personal gain, preferring the political struggle over the welfare of their brethren.

Many years have passed since the refugee situation was created. The number of refugees has not dwindled, nor has their status as refugees been changed. Rather, their numbers have grown to include successive generations.

A refugee is defined as someone who has been forced to flee from his home. Children of refugees hold no special status. Refugee populations are supposed to shrink in size as the international community works to integrate them into new countries. This is true everywhere except in Israel.

It is important to note that since the War of Independence, tens if not hundreds of refugee situations have been created throughout the world. Each of these circumstances has been settled within a short period of time. Many refugees have returned to their homes, thanks to UNHCR and a number of UN refugee aid organizations. Others became citizens in the countries where they found temporary refuge and others began new lives in third countries that were willing to absorb them. By this process, the number of refugees around the world has steadily declined over the years, depending on the level of success of the international aid organizations.

This is how the international community has handled millions of refugees from wars in Africa, Yugoslavia and Southeast Asia. In recent years millions of refugees from Iraq who were absorbed by other Middle Eastern countries, Europe and the Americas.

Unfortunately, the Palestinian refugees from the War of Independence have not been provided with equal treatment from UN relief organizations. They have not been rehabilitated, educated or assisted. Rather, UNRWA has facilitated the perpetuation of their suffering.



The UN also knows how to resolve refugee problems. A publicity poster from the UN agency for refugees, designed to encourage a pleasant integration in welfare countries, 1997

UNRWA: THE CENTRAL OBSTACLE

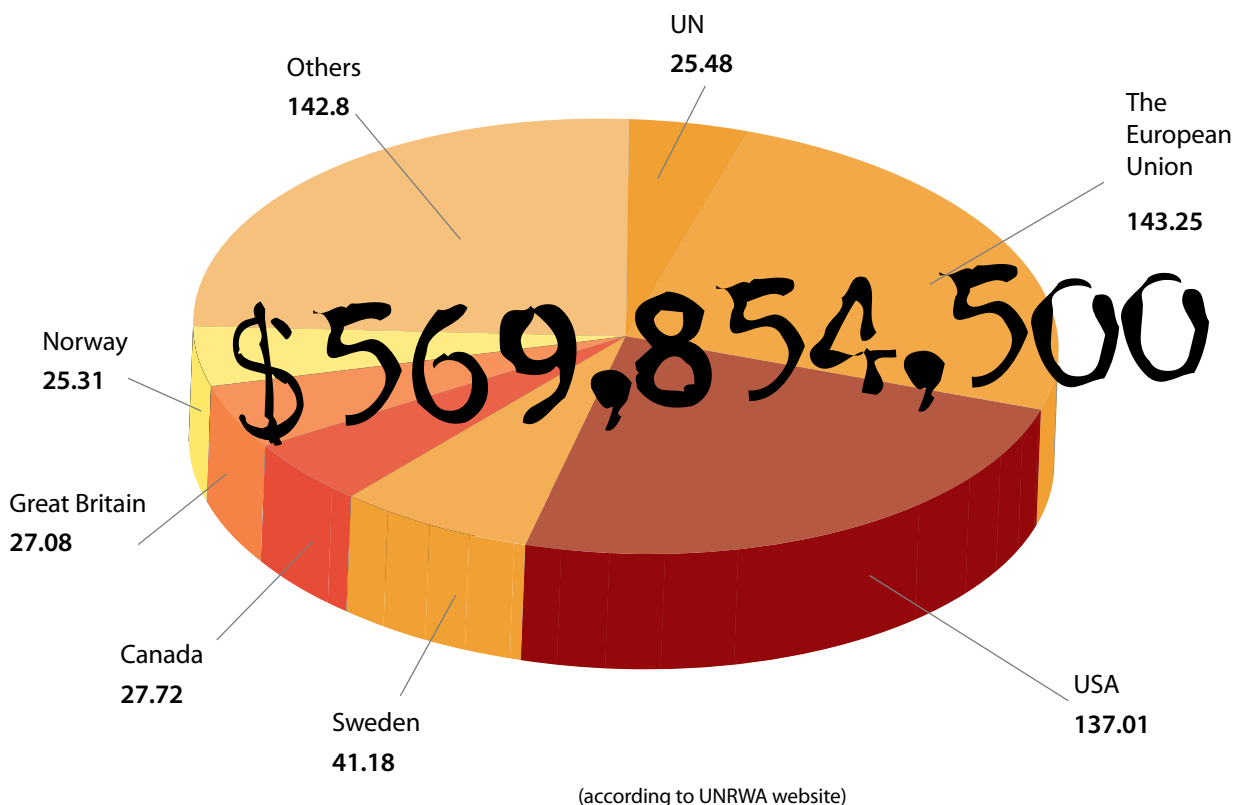
Once the battles died out and the UN's temporary aid agencies completed their work, the UN established an aid and employment agency known as UNRWA. Unlike any other UN body designated to handle refugees, UNRWA was created especially for the Palestinians.

The Arab countries did not want to solve the refugee problem. Therefore, they pressured for the establishment of a temporary agency that would grant humanitarian and economic aid without making efforts to rehabilitate the refugees in any way whatsoever. Time after time, the agency's standing has been extended. UNRWA's current mandate is scheduled to end on June 30, 2008.

UNRWA has no mandate to reduce the number of refugees, help them gain citizenship in the countries and areas where they are currently residing, or to recommend that they become citizens in other countries. As opposed to other UN agencies, UNRWA employs masses of refugees in their extensive bureaucratic framework, which serves one objective: to maintain the refugee camps and ensure that the Palestinian problem remains intact.



Sources of UNRWA's funding
Annual budget, 2006
in millions of dollars



It is important to note that UNRWA is an enormous organization that affects millions of lives. It operates within the sovereignty of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and the Palestinian Authority (in Judea, Samaria and Gaza Strip). It is reasonable to say that UNRWA has become a seminal factor within the Palestinian population, strengthening the deep sense of Palestinian identity and their status as refugees. This contributes to the transformation of the refugee problem into a crisis that is insoluble and will remain so as long as Israel exists.

As long as UNRWA remains in existence the refugee camps will continue to be the "national home" for the Palestinian people. They will continue to serve as hothouses for anti Israel and anti Western terror. The number of refugees will continue to increase and the desire to engage Israel in a direct conflict will continue to strengthen. The Gaza Strip, which is largely comprised of refugees and their offspring, will remain a nightmare for Israel and the world. It will be a haven for Muslim extremists and a factory for suicide bombers.



“THE ARAB SUPPORT OF A NON-SOLUTION FOR THE REFUGEE PROBLEM”



Mordechai Ben Porat, who in 1983 served as Chairman of the Israeli Ministers Committee for the Rehabilitation of the Palestinian Refugees, said in 2007:

“The Arab countries made no effort on behalf of the refugees. They did everything possible to keep them in camps. When rehabilitation programs were suggested, they objected to them. They preferred to leave the refugee camps as is and the refugees as is, in order to present their suffering before the entire world.”

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.”



Ralph Garroway, former director of UNRWA, said in 1958:

“The Arab States do not want to solve the refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don’t give a damn whether the refugees live or die.”

Chapter Two:

Rehabilitation of the Refugees

There is another way. This problem can and must be solved. All peace processes in the Middle East have included elaborate declarations for rehabilitation programs for the refugees but all have delayed the development and implementation of such programs until the end of the process. This process remains stuck today and the Palestinian refugees, Israel, the Arab countries and the Western world remain unresolved.

FROM A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO A HUMANITARIAN SOLUTION

The ongoing suffering of the refugees nurtured the birth of Palestinian nationalism. Generations in refugee camps have galvanized the national consciousness and the desire to destroy Israel. Instead of resolving their suffering and dealing with the root of the problem, Israel and the international community chose to cultivate the Palestinian national consciousness and to advance the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Everyone believes that the refugee problem will be resolved when this state is created.

This policy is a profound failure. It has not resulted in peace, but rather in war. There has been no improvement in the status of the Palestinian refugees whatsoever. UNRWA continues to act under the Palestinian Authority, the refugees continue to live in camps, and Palestinian citizenship carries no value whatsoever.

Once again the refugees are being abandoned. Great sums of money have been invested not in their rehabilitation, but rather in the building up of the Palestinian Authority. The PA is a pro-terrorist, corrupt authority that has not brought any benefit to the Palestinians themselves, and has transformed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into an endless cycle of bloodshed.

To eliminate despair, we must change course before it is too late. We must begin now by solving the refugee problem.

HOW DO WE SOLVE THE REFUGEE PROBLEM?

Refugee problems are solvable. The international community has amassed broad and diverse experience in doing so. In recent decades, millions of people from Asia, Africa and Europe have exited their refugee status and undergone rehabilitation. The Palestinian refugee problem is no different than any of these other refugee issues.

In order to rehabilitate refugees, there are three principle avenues upon which we can operate:

- (a) rehabilitation in a temporary country of refuge;
- (b) rehabilitation within a third country
- (c) return to the homeland.

The State of Israel, as a Jewish State cannot allow itself to absorb these refugees. The Palestinian refugees are large in number at this point and they carry a deep hostility towards Zionism and the State of Israel. This makes the third avenue unviable, which leaves us with the first two avenues to choose from.

Welcome the most vulnerable

RESETTLEMENT =
 improved public understanding of refugees
 high-quality reception & integration
 protection of most vulnerable
 show of solidarity
 access to Europe

Offer a future to refugees

Many refugees are in countries where they have no access to proper protection or a durable solution to their plight. Resettlement is one of the ways to offer protection and a secure future to refugees. It allows refugees to be transferred to a country, normally with permanent residence, where they have a chance to settle in safety.

All European countries should have a resettlement programme

Europe can and should resettle more refugees. All European countries should contribute to this and those that already have resettlement programmes should aim to fill their annual quotas and where possible expand them.

Establish a Europe-wide resettlement programme led by the EU

A European resettlement programme would increase the EU's strategic impact on global refugee protection. A collective programme would help more refugees, add value to national programmes and encourage governments in regions of origin to improve their asylum systems.

Develop resettlement as a complement not a substitute to existing asylum systems

The right to apply for asylum is guaranteed under international law. EU countries must ensure that the right to apply for asylum within their territories is upheld even where other opportunities for protection are offered through resettlement.



10 000 000

2004: nearly 10 million refugees in the world

5000

fewer than 5000 resettled in Europe

The accepted manner to rehabilitate refugees. A page taken from the ECRE booklet, the European Union's Committee on Refugees, calls for improving integration of refugees in Europe, 2006

REHABILITATION IN A TEMPORARY COUNTRY OF REFUGE

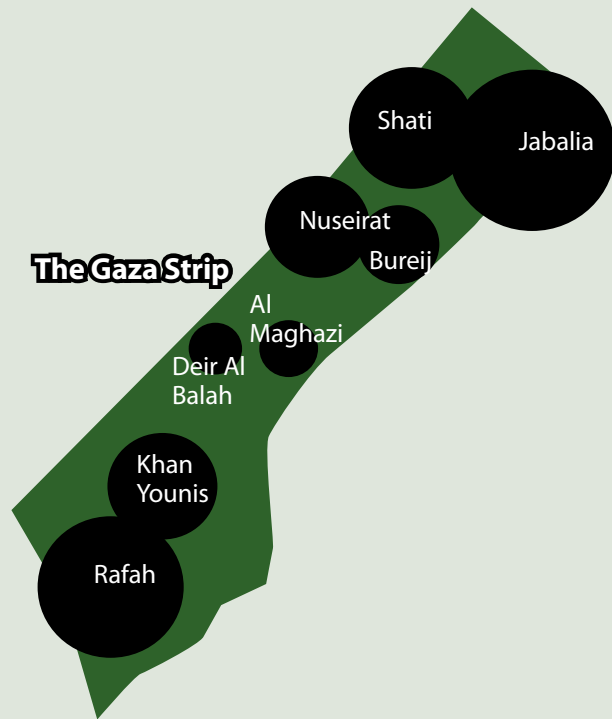
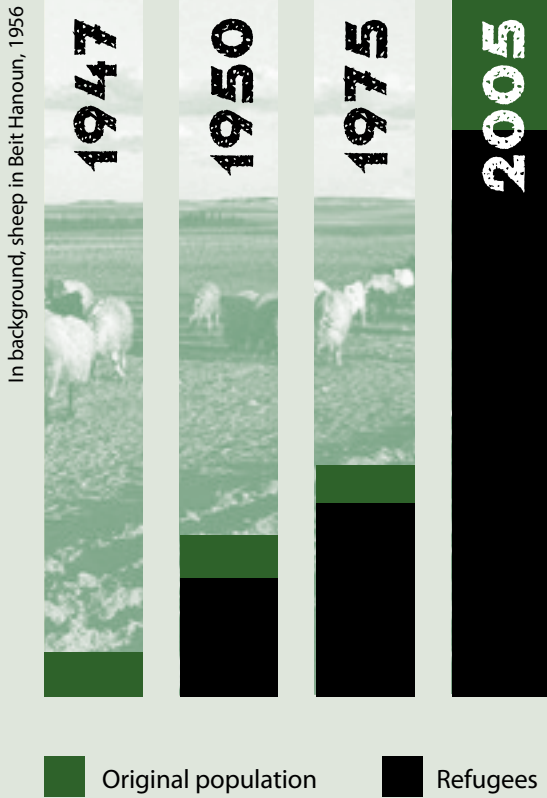
The refugees from 1948 found shelter in four major destinations: Jordan, Lebanon, Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. The best absorption took place in Jordan. As opposed to the other Arab countries, the Jordanian monarchy received some of the refugees as citizens. These former refugees integrated into society, the economy and even the Jordanian government. Within the framework of a comprehensive rehabilitation program and appropriate economic incentives for the refugees and the monarchy, we can reasonably assume that most of the refugees living within Jordan will choose to remain there as citizens and continue to rehabilitate their lives. The rehabilitation process will energize the economy in the monarchy and will strengthen regional economic initiatives such as the "Valley of Peace" (Emek Hashalom).

In Lebanon, we are witnesses to the painful, ongoing process of the refugee problem, for those who have not become Lebanese citizens. Sixty years after arriving in this country, the time has come for the international community and the Arab world to demand that Lebanon take part in finding a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and cease discrimination against its Palestinian brethren. Here too, the rehabilitative process and its accompanying compensation will help in the rehabilitation of Lebanon and act as a stabilizing force for the country. It is possible that due to the many different sects and power struggles in Lebanon, that not all of the refugees currently living in Lebanon will be able to enjoy full rehabilitation. In such a scenario, the refugees will have to seek viable alternatives for settling outside of Lebanon. Very few Palestinian refugees fled to Syria. They now comprise less than 3% of the population. There is no reason that the Syrian government should prevent full rehabilitation and absorb them as citizens into the country.

The rehabilitation of the refugees in Judea and Samaria (The West Bank) presents a much more complex problem. The refugee camps in Judea and Samaria have been transformed over the years into terrorist nests and this population has become the most hostile to Israel. Were it not for the presence of the Israel Defense Forces, Hamas militias would be ruling Judea and Samaria today leaving Israel's population centers particularly vulnerable. It is in Israel's

The Gaza Pressure Cooker

An impossible refugee population



Year	Number of refugees registered by UNRWA	Cumulative population
1947	0	80,000
1950	198,227	280,000
1975	333,031	398,500 (according to Bureau of Statistics)
2005	969,588	1,200,000 (approximate)

Note: Statistics of Gaza population after 1997 are not reliable, due to the fact that no census has been conducted, and the tendency of the Palestinian Authority to cite unofficial statistical work. Also, the number of Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA, in spite of their precise listing, has never been confirmed by an independent source. Many suspect that part of those registered as refugees by UNRWA are not in fact refugees Palestinians. These inaccurate figures are used to bolster the numbers.

interest to reduce the number of Palestinian refugees that will be rehabilitated in this region. It is also in the interest of the moderate Arab states and the Western world to weaken the Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas axis and to strengthen the moderate regimes of Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon. The majority of the Palestinian refugees living in Judea and Samaria, and particularly those residing in the refugee camps (about 1/3 of the refugees in Judea and Samaria), cannot be rehabilitated here. We must find another solution for them.

The possibility of rehabilitation in the Gaza Strip is dependent on removing most of the refugees from the strip. The area has become very dangerous due to the concentration of refugees who carry the deciding weight of the population. There is no viable future for the Gaza Strip without dramatically reducing the population there. Extremist elements there are causing the Gaza Strip to become a magnet for every possible disaster scenario that can take place in the Middle East.



Balata refugee camp near Shechem (Nablus)

REHABILITATION COSTS OF THE REFUGEES

The rehabilitation of refugees in host countries demands many resources. The creation of the rehabilitation process in host countries must include large scale, costly infrastructure projects in order to dramatically improve the refugees' lives, provide employment, education, and free hundreds of thousands from their dependence on UNRWA (this primarily relates to life in refugee camps).

In the case of emigration to other lands, there is no need for major infrastructure projects but there is a need to grant each family a substantial amount of money. This will enable them to make the transformation from refugees to immigrants and will help them to successfully integrate into society and contribute to that society.

It is complicated to determine the cost of rehabilitation. It is a process that demands careful and weighty analysis of many factors. A group of professionals must be specifically designated to carry out this task. Roughly speaking, we may be talking about \$12 billion to rehabilitate all the refugees currently residing in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Jordan, Judea, Samaria and Syria. A similar amount might be needed for the other refugees, who do not reside in refugee camps. In total, \$25 billion would have to be put aside on a one-time basis for this purpose.

This arrangement would encompass the monies granted to UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority. UNRWA's annual budget from contributing countries currently stands at \$5 billion. The international community's assistance granted to the Palestinian Authority is currently estimated at \$6 billion. Add to this the supplemental monies that were recently promised by the donor countries (December 2007) and the total amount comes to more than \$7 billion spent on the Palestinian refugees per year.

REHABILITATION IN A THIRD COUNTRY

Another form of rehabilitation is the absorption of refugees in another country (not one from which they fled and not one where they found temporary refuge) where they can become citizens. The success of this process is dependent on the willingness of the designated country, on the economic possibilities that exist for refugees in that country and on the country's cultural compatibility with the refugees.

Most refugees who are absorbed into new countries are lacking in everything and therefore become a strain on their host country. The few countries willing to absorb refugees are among the richer ones and have established an ethic to absorb a limited number of refugees each year. Naturally, those countries (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Ireland, Denmark, Holland and Switzerland) are willing to participate in the absorption of Palestinian refugees. Similarly, we should include other countries that have exhibited a willingness to absorb refugees in specific circumstances (e.g. Germany, Greece, Slovakia and France have already absorbed the bulk of the Iraqi refugees who arrived in Europe during recent years.)

Since rehabilitation in a third country involves compensation for the refugees, every Palestinian refugee family that requests to be absorbed by a third country will do so, if there is an economic base that will enable them to begin a new life. As such, even developed countries that are not necessarily 'rich' can be involved in the absorption of refugees and serve as a viable option for their emigration and rehabilitation.

Palestinians are among the most educated and talented members of Arab society and Arab countries beyond Israel's borders could very well be encouraged to absorb these educated and talented refugees who could contribute economically and enjoy a reasonably facile integration into their Muslim-Arab societies.

THE REHABILITATION AUTHORITY

The rehabilitation process will not take place on its own. Solving the Palestinian refugee problem demands an integrated and concentrated effort on the part of the international community. The resolution of this problem deserves a concerted effort considering its influence on the stability of the Middle East and the peace of the entire world.

An international body comprising Israel, Jordan, the United States of America and other countries should be created to serve alongside representatives of the refugees. This will provide a way to resolve the cycle of refugee status, complete the rehabilitation process of all the refugees and find appropriate arrangements for the refugees over a period of ten years. This body cannot be established until UNRWA is dismantled and the issue of the refugees is properly lifted in importance before the international community. To ensure that such a body will not work against Israel's interests, it is imperative that Israel be the primary force behind its establishment. This initiative is not a lost cause or a last chance, but rather a historical mission.

It is possible to choose: There is life beyond Gaza

Latin America

Successful immigrant communities of Palestinian refugees and Arab immigrants exist in Brazil, Chile and Bolivia



Iraqi refugees, for example

No less than 2.2 million refugees from Iraq were absorbed by other countries in the past 2 years. In Europe refugees were largely absorbed by Germany, Greece, France and Slovenia



Absorption in Arab Countries

The rehabilitated refugees - a highly educated population, possessing means will integrate well in Arab countries and in other developed states



Western Countries do their part

In Scandinavia, Holland and the British Isles, a government system is in place to absorb refugees, as is in Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand



Photos: James Dale, Sergio Savarez, Gareth Harper, Luis

"Resettlement also serves as a tangible demonstration of international solidarity and burden sharing with countries of first asylum. This is extremely important given that the overwhelming majority of the world's refugees are hosted in regions of refugee origin, mainly in countries that are among the world's poorest and least stable, and at a time when many of these countries see Europe shirking its protection responsibilities."

Leena-Kaisa Aberg, Finnish Red Cross and representative of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS

For many years, the resolution of the refugee problem has been delayed simply for the sake of convenience. The Arab countries and the terrorist organizations have wanted to keep the refugee situation alive in order to undermine Israel. Successive Israeli governments have feared raising the issue and therefore have not questioned UNRWA's status.

Today, there is a window of opportunity to stop this devastating cycle of refugees and terror. Arab countries are fearful of the Iranian-Hamas axis and prefer compromise with Israel over strengthening radical Muslims. Palestinians, Israelis and the world understand that a "Palestinian State" will not bring either peace or prosperity and it will most certainly not provide a solution to the refugee problem. Israel is strong enough to deal with the refugee question and to bear some of the cost.

Surveys conducted over the years indicate the willingness and desire of refugees to rehabilitate themselves, even if this means emigration. Many economic and political obstacles obstruct this path for the refugees. These barriers must be broken down within the framework of a rehabilitation process.

Independent polls indicate that half of all Palestinians are considering moving to a different country

Independent polls, commissioned over the years by both Palestinian and Israeli polling agencies, clearly indicate that Palestinians are becoming increasingly convinced that living under Palestinian Authority control will not solve their problems. There are growing signs that the Palestinian population would be open to a true humanitarian solution that would enable them to rebuild their lives in other countries. A survey that was conducted in 2004 showed that half (50%) of Palestinian society does not rule out the option of permanently moving to another country if they had the ability and means to relocate. In this survey, 71% of those polled named the major factors that would lead them to make a permanent move to another country: Assurance of a job abroad (16%), a substantial financial incentive (19%), promise of a place to live and a high level of education (14%). Only 15% replied that nothing would convince them to relocate. This poll was conducted by Ma'agar Mochot - a leading Israeli polling agency - in cooperation with The Palestinian Center for Public Opinion under the management of Dr. Nabil Kokli. A survey that was conducted in 2006 by the Palestinian An-Najah University in Nablus showed that 31.4% of Palestinians are considering rebuilding their lives in another country, assuming they could achieve a good standard of living in that country. A survey conducted in September 2007 by the Center for Palestinian Policy and Research headed by Dr. Khalil Shkaki, showed that 32% of Palestinians want to emigrate to another country.

فئة فرد	النسبة المئوية	العدد	النسبة المئوية
الذكور	41.0	23.8	31.4
الإناث	37.8	73.3	67.8
لا يدرى	1.8	0.7	1.0
المجموع	180.0	890.0	100.0

Survey from An NaJah National University, November 2006

Chapter Three:

It is possible to begin

One characteristic that appears in all the proposed programs and peace processes is the issue of refugees. Each plan postpones the issue to be solved sometime in the future, at the end of the process. There is no reason to continue this way. It is possible to start the rehabilitation of Palestinian refugees independent of any political process.

THE KEY: DISMANTLE UNRWA



The key to advancing this new approach to the resolution of the refugee problem is to end the historic role of UNRWA. Palestinian refugees who meet international criteria (those who left their homes in 1948) would subsequently join the UN commission for refugees, UNHCR. An international authority will be established to administer the rehabilitation of the refugees for a period of ten years. The primary role of this body will be to rehabilitate the second and third generations of refugees either in their current locations or in host countries and eliminate all of the temporary refugee camps. They will draw upon resources from Israel, USA, the Arab world and the international community.

In actuality, the refugee camps exist because of UNRWA. The moment their mandate is negated and their resources dry up, those countries currently hosting refugees will have to contend with the new reality and take part in the rehabilitation program. The refugees themselves will have been freed from their dependence on UNRWA and they will be able to break the refugee cycle. This will allow them to seek a better, more permanent existence either independently or through a rehabilitation agency.

Dr. Daniel Pipes, a senior American analyst who specializes in the Middle East, published the following on the connection between the USA and UNRWA a month prior to UNRWA's mandate being renewed in 2003:

"The time has come to help those generations of non-refugees (that is to say the offspring of Palestinian refugees), to save them from refugee status and to make them citizens, to help them gain the skills to build a better future. The best possible thing for them is to close UNRWA and transfer the responsibility to UNHCR so that they can handle the real refugees that are left.

This can only happen if the United States recognizes the responsibility that UNRWA must bear for augmenting the desperate situation of the Palestinian refugees. A result of the United States' mistaken spirit of 'a deep obligation towards the welfare of the Palestinian refugees', is Washington's support to the tune of 40% of UNRWA's annual \$300 million budget. Washington should not give this organization another dollar."

Pipes called for canceling the renewal of UNRWA's mandate in 2005. The mandate was renewed and will be reviewed again this year in July 2008.



Dr. Daniel Pipes

THE DISMANTLING HAS ALREADY STARTED

Bringing about a cessation of UNRWA's activities is not an impossible feat. One possible course is to conduct public relation campaigns in various countries whose annual donations keep the organization afloat. Another possibility is to pursue diplomatic channels by preventing the renewal of UNRWA's mandate or to agree upon a final date for its cessation.

Last year, a group of Senators and Congressmen began working towards the halting of American funding of UNRWA. This particular agenda is being coordinated by the Israeli Initiative through its representatives in the U.S., whose expertise is working with the Congress. This is not the first program of this sort. The House of Representatives raised a proposal to limit America's funding of UNRWA and stipulated that progress be made towards finding a permanent solution for the refugees by providing more stringent supervision of the funds that are transferred to UNRWA.

The recommendation for a law as stipulated in the 109th Congress and in the House (HR 5278 IH):

"UNRWA was established in 1949 as a temporary agency to provide welfare services to Palestinian refugees: this is the only UN agency that is devoted to only one specific group of refugees.

Unlike other UN refugee agencies, that seek to find solutions for the suffering of refugees, UNRWA makes no effort to resettle the refugees.

Since 1950, the United States has contributed more than \$2 billion to UNRWA.

In 2005, the United States contributed \$108 million dollars to UNRWA, one fourth of the agency's annual budget.

UNRWA has never permitted an independent audit.

The last report of the internal auditor of UNRWA provided only general, vague numbers, and even within this framework, at least \$48 million of expenses have no explanation."

It is imperative to note that one of the reasons this initiative has failed in the past was due to Israel's official objection. Successive Israeli governments have feared the dismantling of UNRWA as part of their continual avoidance of correctly dealing with the refugee problem.

If we are successful in changing this policy, UNRWA will have to deal with the absence of American funding, the primary motor for the agency. This situation would once again open the discussion on UNRWA's mandate and as such would then lead to exploring new ways of dealing with the refugee problem.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Israel has the power to change the refugee problem. The Ministers Committee for the Rehabilitation of the Palestinian Refugees operated in 1983 until changes in the government coalition resulted in the cessation of its activities. Since then, no other government has developed any other program with a vision of refugee rehabilitation.

Unfortunately, the finest Israeli minds have been occupied with developing different versions of a Palestinian National Authority, in effect cultivating a bitter enemy. The resolution of the refugee problem has always been postponed until the end of the process.

Israel must establish a committee to clearly define the refugee issue and to seek ways to rehabilitate the refugees. At the same time, the UNRWA mandate and its problematic involvement in the Middle East refugee issue should be stopped. This will pave the way for a new situation in the Middle East. Sixty years after the establishment of the State of Israel, peace in our region is possible.



Successful Rehabilitation

The many refugees from World War II led to the establishment of the UN Agency for Refugees - since its establishment the agency has helped resettle or repatriate more than 50 million people. In the photo is a brochure marking 50 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Principles of the Israeli Initiative

1. REHABILITATION OF THE REFUGEES AND DISMANTLING OF THE CAMPS

Israel, the US, and the international community will formulate a multi-year program for full and rapid rehabilitation of the Palestinian refugees, while absorbing them as citizens in various countries.

During the rehabilitation process, UNRWA, an organization that perpetuates the status of the refugees, will be dismantled, and all residents of refugee camps will be offered permanent places of residence, citizenship, and a generous rehabilitation grant. The refugee camps will also be dismantled following this process.

2. STRATEGIC COOPERATION WITH THE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

Israel, the US, and the international community will recognize the Kingdom of Jordan as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, and Jordan will again grant citizenship status to the residents of Judea and Samaria. The Palestinian Authority in Judea, Samaria and Gaza will no longer be recognized as a representative body, and all weapons will be collected from armed organizations. Israel, the US, and the international community will invest in the long-term development of the Kingdom of Jordan to restore and strengthen its economy.

Israel and Jordan, together with Egypt, Turkey, and the US, will create a strategic organization to halt the Islamic axis based in Teheran, and to promote overall peace between Israel and the Arab countries.

3. ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA

In coordination with Jordan, Israel will extend its sovereignty over Judea and Samaria. Arab residents of these areas will become citizens of Jordan (Palestine). Their status, their relationship to the two countries, and the nature of the administration in the populated areas will be formulated and set forth in an agreement between the governments of Israel and Jordan.