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## National News

### 'Think of Arab-land refugees'

27/06/2008

By Simon Rocker



A campaign was launched in London this week to publicise the flight of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Arab countries as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

More than 40 delegates from Israel, Europe, North and South America attended the three-day formal founding congress of Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC).

Its goal is to ensure that equal recognition is given internationally to the exodus of Jews from Arab lands as to the plight of the Palestinian refugees resulting from Israel's establishment 60 years ago.

According to JJAC, although 726,000 Palestinians lost their homes, according to official United Nations figures, 856,000 Jews have been displaced from 10 Arab countries since 1948, with barely 5,000 left by 2005.

"For decades this subject never had the prominence it deserved," said Edwin Shuker, an Iraqi-born Londoner who is co-chair of JJAC with Serge Cattan from Brussels.

Based in New York, JJAC has operated for several years as a loose coalition of organisations from 20 countries. This week's conference, which included a briefing at the House of Lords, has established it more formally as a lobby group backed by, among others, the Board of Deputies.

"We want to bring the achievements that have been realised in the US, to Europe and give the campaign equal weight and kudos," said Mr Shuker, who will address a meeting at the

European Parliament on the issue later in the year.

In April, the US Congress passed a resolution declaring that a just Middle East peace could not be achieved "without addressing the uprooting of centuries-old Jewish communities in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf".

It noted that "whereas the Palestinian refugee issue has received considerable attention from countries of the world, the issue of Jewish refugees from the Arab and Muslim worlds has received very little attention".

Stanley Urman, executive director of JJAC, recalled the impact on Arab-Israeli wars on the Jews of Arab lands. They had been victims of discriminatory legislation, losing their citizenship, their jobs and suffering restrictions on religion and freedom of movement.

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Two refugee populations had emerged from the Arab-Israeli conflict, he said. Both suffered, both were victims and justice required "equal consideration and redress".

Among those present were Maurice Maleh of the Association of Jews from Egypt UK. He was seven when his father Jacques, the JC's Cairo correspondent, was expelled from Egypt in May 1953.

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