



## **JUSTICE FOR JEWS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES**

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### **Congressional Human Rights Caucus Hears That Palestinians are not the only Middle East Refugees**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(WASHINGTON) July 19, 2007 - "International apathy must end. The world must take heed of Jewish and Christian refugees. Justice must be done. Let it begin here and now."

So declared Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) at a *Congressional Human Rights Caucus* briefing that took place today on Capitol Hill. The ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen, pointed out that: "Jews who were born in Arab countries have lost their resources, their homes, their heritage and their heritage sites."

In this bi-partisan effort, Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-VA), who co-chairs the Congressional Human Rights Caucus with Rep. Tom Lantos (D-CA), opened the briefing by stating: "The Jewish refugee issue is a serious problem. Cairo and other Arab capitals have little or no remaining Jewish populations."

A primary goal of the briefing was to promote two resolutions on Middle East refugees currently before the U.S. Congress - *H.Res.185* and *S.Res.85*. - that address the mass displacement of Jews, Christians and other minority populations from Arab countries. Far-reaching and comprehensive, these resolutions instruct the President to ensure that in all international forums, when the issue of Middle East refugees is discussed, representatives of the United States must ensure: "That any explicit reference to Palestinian refugees is matched by a similar explicit reference to Jewish, Christian and other refugees, as a matter of law and equity."

An overflow crowd heard testimony underscoring the fact that when the issue of refugees is raised within the context of the Middle East, people invariably refer to Palestinian refugees but virtually never to the plight and flight of Jews, Christians and other minority populations from Arab countries. Testimony alluded to the fact that neither the mass violations of human rights nor the displacement of Jews and others from Arab countries has ever been adequately addressed by the international community.

Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL), a member of the *Congressional Human Rights Caucus*, concurred: "Since 1947, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted 681 resolutions on the Middle East conflict, including 101 resolutions on Palestinian refugees.

During that same period, there were no UN resolutions, nor any recognition or assistance from the international community for Jewish and other refugees from Arab countries.”

Renowned human rights advocate and former Justice Minister and Attorney General of Canada Dr. Irwin Cotler, was unable to attend the briefing but submitted written testimony that focused extensively on the themes of “truth, justice and reconciliation.” Cotler wrote: “We trust that this Congressional briefing will restore the plight and the truth of Jews from Arab countries to the Middle East narrative from which they have been expunged and eclipsed. Any history on the Middle East, that does not include Jewish refugees is a case study in Middle East revisionism and is an assault on truth, and memory and justice.”

Stanley Urman, Executive Director of *Justice for Jews from Arab Countries* asserted that: “The first injustice was the mass violations of the human rights of Jews from Arab countries; today, we cannot allow a second injustice – for the international community to recognize rights for one victim population - Palestinians - without recognizing equal rights for other victims of that very same Middle East conflict - former Jews and Christians - displaced from Arab countries.”

Regina Bublil-Waldman, co-founder of ‘Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa’ (JIMENA) told the story of how her family was nearly murdered while escaping from Libya in 1967. In reinforcing the theme of reconciliation, Bublil-Waldman said: “I have personally forgiven the people who tried to kill my family and me. I do not believe in hating. I truly believe that hate is a weapon of mass destruction.”

In providing a perspective on the long history of Jews in Arab countries, Professor Henry Green, an expert witness on Judaic and Sephardic Studies from the University of Miami revealed that: “Jewish presence in Arab lands has a legacy that is eight times older than American Jewry, which recently celebrated its 350 anniversary (1654-2004).”

*Justice for Jews from Arab Countries* and *B'nai B'rith International*, worked with the *Congressional Human Rights Caucus* to plan the briefing.

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**Photos are located at: <http://www.justiceforjews.com>**

*Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC) is a coalition of Jewish communal organizations operating under the auspices of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the American Sephardi Federation in partnership with the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League, Bnai Brith International, the Jewish Public Council for Public Affairs and the World Sephardic Congress.*