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## Cotler slams UN and Nuremberg-like Arab laws on Jewish rights

By Beryl Wajzman, Editor, November 15, 2007

Mount subsubRoyal MP Irwin Cotler

**M**ount Royal MP and former federal Justice Minister Irwin Cotler joined Jewish rights scholars in New York last week in unveiling new research that demonstrates Arab inter-state “collusion” to persecute Jews in Arab countries after Israel’s creation.

In a compelling and passionate brief Cotler also pointed the finger at the world community, asking “why is this narrative so distorted, and inverted, such that the original 1947 U.N. Partition Resolution is held out as one where Palestinian-Arab refugees are identified as the victim population, but no reference is made to the fact that Jewish refugees were also a victim population; and that Arab governments, and the League of Arab States, were responsible for both Palestinian and Jewish victim refugee populations.”

The group, calling itself *Justice for Jewish Refugees from Arab Counties*, released a report entitled *The Case for Rights and Redress*.



Cotler and the group unveiled a startling rediscovered Arab League “draft law” that suggests a pan-Arab conspiracy was at work.

While it is known that some 900,000 Jews left Arab countries after the post-war division of Palestine, the pre-meditated and planned state nature of the Jewish exodus has largely gone unstudied. Today comprising 22 countries, the Arab League had seven members in 1947, the year documents say its political committee drafted a law concerning Jews. Those members were Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen.

The draft law calls for registering all Jewish citizens of Arab countries, and freezing their bank accounts to use the money to help fund “resistance to Zionist ambitions in Palestine.”

This would happen even to those Jews prepared to join an Arab army. A Jew considered an “active Zionist” would be interned as a political prisoner.

Such Jews would see their money confiscated.

Brackets written into the draft law suggest it was intended as a template: “Beginning with (date), all Jewish citizens of (name of country) will be considered as members of the Jewish minority State of Palestine,” it begins.

The researchers located the document in UN and World Jewish Congress archives after spotting a May 16, 1948, *New York Times* reference to it. In the Times article, Congress officials cited the document as evidence Jews faced grave danger in Arab lands -- something the researchers say turned out to be prophetic.

The group’s report comes at a critical time just ahead of the Israeli-Palestinian Annapolis conference where the rights of the descendants of up to 600,000 Palestinian refugees of the Arab-Israeli conflict is on the agenda — but not the rights of Jews forced from Arab countries.

Cotler called this “historical revisionism” in his brief, highlighting that without the inter-Arab draft now rediscovered, the measures individual Arab states took against their Jewish citizens may not have been so widespread. Cotler stated that the groups’ report demonstrates “...that the various state sanctions in Arab countries did not occur haphazardly, but were the result of an international collusion organized by the League of Arab States.”

Cotler also pointed a finger at the United Nations, saying that the evidence shows that “... there is an ongoing failure to include the plight of Jewish refugees in any narrative of the Middle East conflict, in any discussion of the Middle East peace process, and in any decision-making at the multilateral level, such as in the United Nations.

Indeed, there is a particularly pernicious and prejudicial role played by the United Nations, which has systemically excluded the narrative of Jewish refugees from Arab countries from any U.N. examination of the Middle East.”

Winnipeg-based human rights advocate David Matas and former Montrealer Stan Urman, executive director of New York-based Justice for Jews from Arab Countries, joined Cotler.

They co-wrote a landmark 2003 study highlighting separate Arab government decrees that sanctioned repression of Jews to varying degrees, resulting in confiscation of more than \$1 billion in property belonging to those who left.

“The existence of the Arab League draft law makes the story of what happened all the more heinous because it represented the acting out of a master plan,” Matas said.

“It enhances the case for redress, which should at least include recognition of the Jewish refugees, given that the peace process speaks of redress for the Palestinian refugees.”

In speaking with *The Suburban*, Cotler pointed out that “...there are important developments in international human rights and humanitarian law, where more has

happened in the last 15 years than in the previous 60, and that there are now a panoply of remedies to implement the right of redress. These are not limited to compensation or indemnification of a victim population, but include such components as the right of memory, the duty of remembrance, the search for truth, access to justice, and state responsibility for wrongs inflicted.”

The group hopes their work will influence U.S. lawmakers currently considering two bills that call for the rights of all refugees — Muslims, Jews, Christians and any others displaced in the region — to be recognized in the peace talks.

The group will also call on the Canadian government, as chair of the Refugee Working Group under a process launched in Madrid in 1991, to include displaced Jews as refugees.

Cotler pulled no punches on the importance of the report’s findings, stating that the report ”exposes not only the massive human rights violations that Jewish refugees from Arab countries have experienced, but documents — for the first time — the state-sanctioned character of these violations, including Nuremberg-like laws that resulted in denationalization, forced expulsions, and illegal sequestration of property...”

Cotler struck a universal theme in concluding his conversation with The Suburban, saying that “...what we are addressing here are foundational principles of memory and remembrance, of truth and justice, of reconciliation and peace, not only on a normative level, but as foundational principles now enshrined in international human rights and humanitarian law. They must be respected and upheld.”