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**MEDIA CONTACT:** Shira Dicker

[shira.dicker@sd-media.com](mailto:shira.dicker@sd-media.com) 917.403.3989

### **Important New Report Details Vibrant 2,500 Year-Old Iraqi Jewish Community Catalogs Seizure of Assets, Institutions and Property Exceeding \$34 Billion**

#### **Episode constitutes the little-known population transfer of over 135,000 Jews**

February 18, 2025 (New York) — The prospect of a population transfer in the Middle East has dominated headlines and ignited fierce debate over the past two weeks. While unpopular in some quarters, population transfers have occurred many times over the past century with mostly enduring results.

[A new report](#) released by Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC) details the largely-unknown population transfer of over 135,000 Jews from Iraq to Israel and other countries, which began in 1951.

To provide historical context, in the 1920s, Greek Orthodox Christians in Turkey moved to Greece, while Muslims in Greece moved to Turkey. After World War II, millions of Indians and Pakistanis were geographically relocated and forced to find new homes, as were ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.

Little known, and less reported is the negotiations among the British, American and Iraqi authorities, in the late 1940s, to transfer 135,000 Jews from Iraq and a significant number of Palestinians to be resettled in Iraq. Although the agreement was never formalized, most of the Jewish community left the country but only some 5,000 Palestinians came to Iraq. (Wikipedia, Operation Ezra & Nechemia, accessed on February 17, 2025).

Thus ended the illustrious 2,500 year history of the Jewish community of Iraq.

This stunning historical event is documented in the much-anticipated report on the Jews of Iraq released today by JJAC, an advocacy and historical preservation group. The far-ranging report — the product of six years of intricate research, and the second in a series of eleven — details the rich life and culture that flourished in Iraq for two and a half millennia, beginning in the year 586 BCE. Tragically, this important historic community, which numbered over 135,000, was forced to leave Iraq beginning in 1941, owing to violence and persecution.

In addition to the loss of its Jewish citizens, forensic accounting work reveals that assets, institutions and property seized from Jews in Iraq total over \$34 billion by today's valuation.

The mission of JJAC is to preserve this history in the name of truth and justice, explained Sylvain Abitbol, co-president of JJAC. “To ignore the fact that the grand and impressive Jewish community in Iraq was persecuted, imprisoned, expelled and destroyed is not just to erase 2500 years of Jewish life and culture; it is to deny reality. We compiled this Iraqi Jewish Community Report so that the Jews of Iraq will not be forgotten and their contributions to Iraq to that region are duly recorded.”

JJAC’s eleven country reports were commissioned to document the history and heritage of Jews from Arab countries, as well as the individual and communal assets that were lost. The [first report](#), on Syria, was released two months ago. The remaining reports will be released in the coming months.

Jews are an indigenous people of the Middle East, having lived in the region continuously for millennia, fully one thousand five hundred years before the advent of Islam. The truth about the uprooting of Jews from the Arab totalitarian regimes, dictatorships and monarchies has been denied for over 75 years. “In the 20th century, the breadth and scale of the near-total displacement of Jews from eleven Muslim countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf region ranks among the more significant cases of mass displacement in modern history,” stated Rabbi Dr. Elie Abadie, who is co-president of JJAC.

From the 1,000,000 Jews in 1948 based in 10 Arab countries plus Iran, to-day, less than 1% remain.

“The historic significance of the Iraqi Jewish community cannot be overstated,” said Dr. Stanley Urman, executive director of JJAC. “Over centuries, Babylonian Jews played a central role in Judaism, producing the Babylonian Talmud and influencing Jewish communities worldwide. The abrupt cancellation of this culture constitutes a tremendous loss to civilization,” he said.

The turning point in the history of Iraqi Jewry came in 1950–1951 when between 120,000 to 130,000 Jews emigrated in Operation Ezra and Nehemiah after the Iraqi government allowed them to leave under the condition of renouncing citizenship. The remaining Jews faced increasing oppression under the Baath regime, culminating in public executions in 1969. By the early 1970s, nearly all Iraqi Jews had fled.

“The Jews felt themselves to be an integral part of Iraq during the first four decades of the 20th century,” said Maurice Shohet, president of the World Organization of Jews from Iraq. Shohet fled the country with his family in 1970 at the age of 21. “We need to preserve the unique aspects of the Iraqi Jewish story. It is the burial place of the prophets Ezekiel and Nahum, the oldest Jewish community in the world. This story must be preserved and told.”

For further information on JJAC's report on the Jews of Iraq, or to request an interview with JJAC leadership, please contact Shira Dicker at [shira.dicker@sd-media.com](mailto:shira.dicker@sd-media.com) or 917.403.3989.

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