

The Jews of Syria - Executive Summary

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.

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.

For over 75 years, the world has ignored the uprooting of Jews from the Arab totalitarian regimes, dictatorships and monarchies. Under Muslim rule, Jews were subjected to a wide-spread pattern of persecution. Official decrees enacted by Arab regimes denied human and civil rights to Jews and other minorities; expropriated their property; stripped them of their citizenship; and means of livelihood. Jews were often victims of murder; arbitrary arrest and detention; torture; and expulsions.

From the 1,000,000 Jews in 1948 based in 10 Arab countries plus Iran, to-day, less than 1% remain. Most fled to Israel, the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people for millennia.

The legitimate call to secure rights and redress for Jewish refugees from Arab countries is not to negate the suffering or the rights of Palestinian refugees. Their claims, however, do not supersede the fact that Palestinians were not the only Middle East refugees.

For peace in the Middle East, truth and justice must prevail.

To that end, eleven Country Reports have been prepared to document the history and heritage, as well as the individual and communal assets lost by Jews displaced from 10 Arab countries and Iran. This first Report is on the Jews of Syria.

In the spirit of the Abraham Accords, at a time of historic breakthroughs in political and economic ties between Muslim countries and Israel/Jews, the time has come for nations to unite in promoting peace and reconciliation among all peoples in the Region.

History of the Jewish Community of Syria

Syria hosted one of the oldest Jewish communities in the Middle East, with roots tracing back over 2,500 years. Archaeological evidence demonstrates a continuous Jewish presence in major cities like Damascus and Aleppo.

The community was renowned for its substantial economic contributions. Jewish merchants played a role in foreign trade, managed significant banking networks, and engaged in international commerce connecting Syria with Baghdad, Persia, and India.

Under Islamic governance, Jews and Christians were classified as *dhimmi*s - a protected but fundamentally subordinate status that systematically marginalized the community. This legal framework imposed numerous restrictions on social and economic life, ensuring that Jews remained second-class citizens, subject to arbitrary treatment and periodic harassment.

The 1930s-1940s marked a particularly dangerous period, characterized by the rise of fascist-inspired nationalist movements, the emergence of Nazi-style youth groups, increasing physical attacks, and growing antisemitic rhetoric.

The post-World War II era saw the most aggressive persecution, including comprehensive property confiscations, severe movement restrictions, systematic economic marginalization, violent incidents, and government-sanctioned harassment.

Driven out by continuous state-sponsored persecution and discriminatory policies, the Jewish population experienced a dramatic decrease: from approximately 50,000 in the early 20th century; dropping to 30,000 by 1948; around 5,000 in 1958, and fewer than 100 by 1991.

By 1991, the Syrian Jewish community was effectively eliminated. Today, it is estimated that four Jews remain in Syria.

Economic Analysis of The Jews of Syria

One purpose of this project is to provide a detailed and comprehensive appraisal and valuation of individual and communal property left behind by Jews displaced from Arab countries.

JJAC compiled the best evidence available on the scope of lost Jewish assets. This process included a thorough and comprehensive review of available documentation, discussions with community leaders and subject-matter experts, the collection of testimonial data, an analysis of each Jewish community’s place within their respective country, and a consideration of previous valuation attempts.

This project’s goal was to consider the totality of Syrian Jews’ financial losses, including their rural assets, urban assets, employment losses, moveable assets and private property, business losses and communal losses. The final result below is an aggregate valuation of Jewish individual and community losses from the Jewish community of Syria:

Total Value per Asset Type According to Valuation Base Year (\$ 1947)

Asset Type	Total Value
Rural Assets	129,407
Urban Assets	109,453,450
Employment Losses	3,062,153
Moveable Assets & Private Property	25,695,950
Business Losses	53,209,388
Communal Losses	8,617,110
Total	200,167,458

Using a detailed, multi-step methodology involving, among other factors, inflation, interest rates, currency exchange, etc the Jewish losses were actualized to show a present day value of all assets under consideration, reflected in 2024 US dollars (USDs).

On the basis of the combined total value of each asset category under consideration and the application of the methodology, the total value for all assets as of December 31, 2024 USD equaled **\$10,692,545,656**.