العدالة لليهود من الدول العربية Justice Pour Les Juifs Des Pays Arabes צדק ליהודים יוצאי מדינות ערב

Report on the Jews of Tunisia

Historical and Economic Analysis

Cover Photo: A Jewish family in Tunisia, 1950. Source: JDC Archives

Disclaimer

This Executive Summary provides data on the history and economic losses when Jews were displaced from Aden. Although every attempt was made to collect testimonies and locate all relevant statistical data, this Report should not be considered as definitive. Research was adversely affected by the fact that this mass displacement of Jews from Aden occurred decades ago and there is no central repository where records of losses were maintained. It is hoped that additional research will be conducted in the future which would expand upon and refine the financial projections contained in this Report.

This Report was produced by Justice for Jews from Arab Countries, LLC

PREFACE

Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC) has completed a multi-year project to document the historical ethnic cleansing of Jews from Aden, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, .Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen

The eleven Country Reports portray the narrative of ancient Jewish communities indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa for thousands of years; from their plight under the Muslim conquest, to Ottoman rule; then colonial occupation; their persecution under Arab nationalism and Islamism, then their flight from the region. Their story is one of an oppressed minority that was uprooted from their countries of birth and who suffered extensive losses of both personal (homes, businesses, property, etc.) and Jewish communal assets (Synagogues, schools, cemeteries, etc.)

This report is based on extensive personal testimonies and exhaustive statistical data. 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.

Extensive archival research was conducted in the following 22 archives in six countries:

Israel: Israel State Archives (ISA), Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Israeli Ministry of Justice archives, Israeli Ministry of Social Equality archives, Yad Ben Zvi Institute, Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot,World Jewish Congress, Israel Archives
Canada: Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa
France: Alliance Israelite Universelle, Paris, Archives Nationale – France, Paris Branch, Pierrefitte Branch, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de la Courneuve
Switzerland: National Archives, Bern, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva
UK: London Metropolitan Archives, National Archives of the U.K.
USA: American Jewish Committee, New York, Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) – New York, National Archives & Records, College Park, Maryland, World Jewish Archives, New York

Research was adversely affected by the fact that records in Arab countries were inaccessible. Moreover, this mass displacement of Jews occurred, in some cases, more than 75 years ago and there is no central repository where records of these losses were maintained. Consequently, this Report should not be considered as definitive.

It is hoped that additional research will be conducted in the future which will expand upon and refine the projections contained in these Reports.

Tunisia Executive Summary

Context

The Jews of Algeria stand as another illustration of a broader historic pattern that unfolded across the Middle East and North Africa,

Jews are indigenous to the region, having lived there for thousands of years - roughly one thousand years before the birth of Islam in the seventh century C.E. For the next thousand years, Jews lived under Islamic rule as 'dhimmis', a subordinate class, marked by legal inferiority and social humiliation.

Under Ottoman rule, Jews faced fluctuating conditions, from oppression to limited

reforms. The arrival of colonial powers to the Middle East and North Africa marked a dramatic turning point for indigenous Jewish communities. Many Jews gained access to education and the ability to contribute meaningfully to the cultural, economic, and professional life of their countries. But this chapter was short-lived.

The rise of Arab nationalism, at times fueled by fascist ideologies, and growing opposition to Zionism unleashed a wave of discriminatory laws, violence, and state-backed repression. While Jews were often victims of violence and pogroms throughout their time in Muslim countries, the situation worsened immediately before and after the founding of the State of Israel in 1948.

What followed was not a mere exodus, but the erasure of ancient Jewish communities, through forced expulsion, flight under duress, or systemic marginalization. With respect to Algeria:

Displacement of Jews from Tunisia: 1948-2025

	1948	1958	1968	1976	2001	2025
Tunisia	**105,000**	80,000	10,000	7,000	1,500	**1,500**

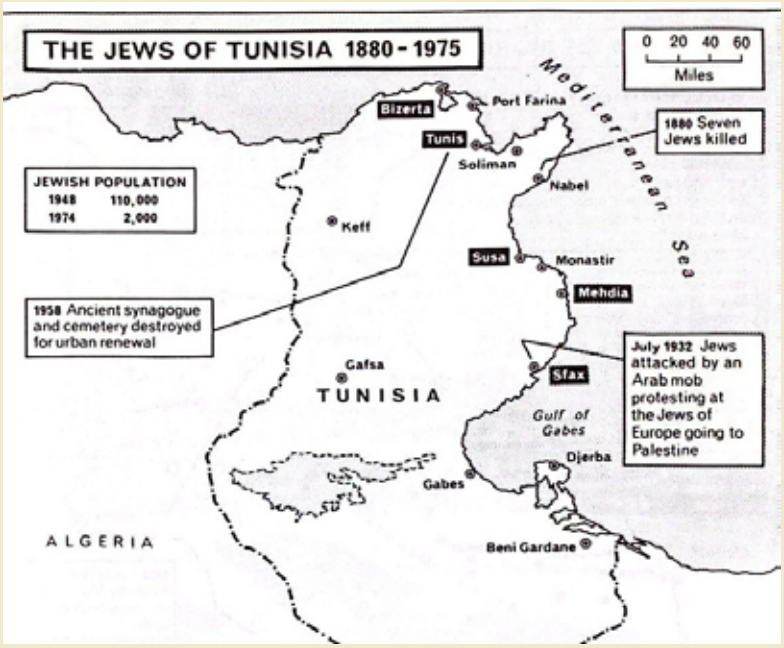
Today, over 99% of the descendants of the historic Jewish communities in 10 Arab countries plus Iran no longer reside in these vast regions.

Neither the mass violations of the human rights of Jews in Arab countries, nor their uprooting from their countries of birth, has ever been addressed by the international community.

This publication is a sincere call to recognize the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab countries on both moral and legal grounds and to ensure their story is no longer forgotten.

In an era of historic reconciliation, inspired by the spirit of the Abraham Accords, the time has come to face history with honesty and courage. Only through truth and justice, for all can the peoples of the region move toward a future of dignity, healing, and lasting peace.

History of the Jewish Community of Tunisia



The Jewish presence in Tunisia spans about two millennia.

Following the Muslim conquest of Tunisia in the 7th century, Jews were classified as dhimmis under Islamic rule. As dhimmis, Jews were granted protection but were subjected to a subordinate and humiliating social status. They were required to pay the jizya (a tax), which symbolized their inferior position in society, and faced various legal and social restrictions. Jews were prohibited from holding public office and were limited in their professions. They were also often required to wear distinctive clothing to mark their status as non-Muslims.

In Tunisia, Jews maintained a significant role in commerce, especially in the urban centers along the coast. While living under the dhimmi system, the community managed to preserve its traditions, maintain strong religious institutions, and even contribute to the broader society in areas like trade, craftsmanship, and medicine. An influx of Sephardi Jews, notably from Livorno, soon played a dominant role in the economy.

Despite long periods of discrimination and hardship, including during the Almohad and Ottoman periods, Jewish communities existed in urban centers like Tunis, Sousse, and Kairouan.

Under Ottoman rule, Jews played key roles in Tunisia's economy and bureaucracy but remained *dhimmis*, subject to legal and social restrictions. The 1857 execution of Batto Sfez, a Jew accused of blasphemy, triggered foreign pressure and liberal reforms granting Jews equal rights, though these reforms were externally imposed rather than internally motivated.

During the French protectorate (1881-1956), Jews welcomed colonial rule as a protector of civil rights. Many adopted French language and culture, gained citizenship, and advanced in professional fields. However, their alignment with France provoked resentment among Muslims, and antisemitic incidents persisted.

Jews contributed significantly to the country's modernization, excelling in law, medicine, the arts, commerce, and even in nationalist politics. Prominent figures include Albert Memmi, Albert Bessis, Habiba Messika, and Albert Samama Chikly. Their story is one of resilience, achievement, and eventual uprooting under the pressures of decolonization and Arab nationalism.

World War II intensified tensions. Tunisia came under pro-Nazi Vichy rule after 1940 and was briefly occupied by Nazi forces. Anti-Jewish riots followed Israel's establishment in 1948. Jews were increasingly seen as foreign and disloyal.

In the 1950s the main Jewish cemetery in Tunis was expropriated and turned into a park. Violence erupted in January 1952 with riots in the Hara of Tunis that killed one Jew. Independence in 1956 led to attacks targeting Jews, followed by the expropriation of the old cemetery in 1957. Despite early reassurances from nationalist leaders like Habib Bourguiba, official Arabization policies, antisemitic press, and violent incidents led to mass emigration.

In July 1958 Jewish community institutions were dissolved. By 1961–62 Jews were permitted to take out only one dinar on leaving the country. On July 6, 1967, rioters looted the Jewish quarter, and the Great Synagogue was set on fire. Jews were murdered in Djerba in 1982, and on April 11, 2002, the Djerba synagogue was attacked again.

From a peak population of 105,000 in 1948, the Jewish community rapidly declined. Two major waves of emigration occurred: the first (1948-1956) motivated by Zionist aspirations and fear of marginalization; and the second (1956-1967) driven by political hostility, state pressure, and violent outbursts. By 1968, fewer than 10,000 Jews remained. Today, Tunisia's Jewish population is estimated at around 1,500, primarily in Djerba.

Economic Analysis of The Jews of Tunisia

Methodological Benchmarks & Economic Indicators

For the purposes of this report, a total Jewish Tunisian population of 105,000 Jews was estimated. The Tunisian Jewish population was determined to be 10% rural and 90% urban, with urban areas widely recognized as larger metropolitan centers and their immediate environs/hinterlands, while rural communities are characterized by their distance from urban centers, their relatively smaller numbers, and an agriculture-centric way of life. It was further determined that the average size of a Jewish family in Tunisia in and around the 1948 period was 7 people. Therefore, based on a population of 105,000 a total of 15,000 Jewish households was calculated.

Approximately 61% of all Jews in Tunisia lived in Tunis and its surroundings, while the more rural, less developed communities were scattered in the interior and the south. Tunisia's location on the Mediterranean coast, as well as the Jewish community's proclivity to living in coastal settings, contributed to a pattern of Jewish economic participation concentrated in transnational commercial activity. The community gradually moved into other areas of economic activity such as industry, banking and other professions.

A specific breakdown of the socioeconomic structure and economic experience of Jews in Tunisia is not available, however based on the employment distribution of urban Jews in Tunisia an estimated socioeconomic distribution can be assumed:

Socioeconomic Class	Percentage of Jewish Households
Wealthy/Upper-Middle	19%
Middle	20%
Lower-Middle	20%
Poor	41%
Total	**100%**

Asset categories and types

This project considers losses suffered by Jews as individual members, as well as assets that belonged to each Jewish community, respectively. These losses include urban and rural land, urban and rural immoveable property, personal property and moveable assets, financial assets, employment losses, business losses, and communal losses. This report does not attempt to account for non-pecuniary damages, such as pain and suffering, nor personal injury or death.

There is evidence of Jewish landownership of a sizeable parcel of land in Tunisia as early as 1880. However, there is little supporting primary evidence based on official registrations to draw conclusions on Jewish landownership in Tunisia from. Reliable testimonial and historical data was not available for Tunisia to make any conclusions as to the value of losses across the different asset categories. Instead, discussions and summaries were carried out for each asset category to provide historical and illustrative content and context.

Summary of Findings

Due to the lack of reliable testimonial and historical data for Tunisia, it was determined that the analysis for Egypt, Syria, and Iraq would be used for illustrative purposes. Lost assets found in the first three countries at 1948 values were used to determine the value of lost property per person. This yielded a range, with Iraq providing the lowest value of lost property per person among the three countries, and Egypt being the highest. The low and high values were then multiplied with the population of each remaining country, and a mid-point was calculated from this range. In the absence of "best evidence" to reach accurate and verifiable country-specific values a discount factor of 50% was determined based on precedent discounts and applied across the mid-point value for Tunisia. Finally, a compound interest formula which makes use of the principal amount and an average yearly rate based on the ten-year yields on US treasury bonds over a total compound period from January 1, 1949, through December 31, 2024, was applied to the mid-point value for each of the countries on a yearly compounding basis. As there is no internationally recognized, risk free rate, the 10-year US Treasury Yield rate was chosen, as it is an accepted benchmark for the time

value of money over long horizons and aligns with established practices in historical asset valuation. The table below illustrates the calculated mid-point of lost assets for Tunisia:

($) Range of Lost Assets		
Tunisia	**1948**	**Estimated Present (Value ($, 2024**
Population	105,000	
Estimated – Low Range	510,697,485	
Estimated – High Range	1,605,941,135	
Estimated – Mid-Point	**1,058,319,310**	
Discount	50%	
Estimated – Mid-Point (with Discount)	**529,159,655**	**27,599,994,516**

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries Legal and Political Context

When the term 'refugees' is mentioned in the context of the Middle East, the international community's singular focus has been on Palestinian refugees.

Yet, within the last 75 years, the world has ignored the mass displacement of some 1,000,000 Jews from the totalitarian regimes, dictatorships and monarchies of Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco Yemen and Aden, as well as Iran.

Neither the mass violations of the human rights of Jews in Arab countries, nor their uprooting from their ancestral countries of birth, has ever been appropriately addressed by the international community.

In reality, as a result of the longstanding conflict in the Middle East, two populations of refugees emerged – Arabs as well as Jews from Arab countries. In fact, there were more Jews displaced from Arab countries (856,000 plus Iran))[1] than there were Palestinians who became refugees as a result of the 1948 Arab Israeli war (726,000)[2]

Asserting rights and redress for Jewish refugees is not intended negate any suffering of Palestinian refugees. It is a legitimate call to recognize that Jews from Arab countries also became refugees as a result of that same Middle East conflict and still possess rights even today.

Jews as an Indigenous People of the Middle East

Jews are an indigenous people of the Middle East having lived in the region continuously from pre-historic times to the present. Jews and Jewish communities proliferated throughout parts of the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf region for thousands of years, fully one thousand years before the advent of Islam in the seventh century C.E. . For the next thousand years, Jews lived under Islamic rule as 'dhimmis', a subordinate class, marked by legal inferiority and social humiliation.

Longstanding Jewish Presence in the Region

Throughout the millennia, the Jewish presence endured despite various empires ruling the region, including the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans, and British. Notwithstanding some periods of exile, descendants of the Jewish people, maintained their unbroken lineage in the Middle East, stretching across millennia.

1 Roumani, *The Case 2; WOJAC'S Voice Vol.*1, No.1

2 United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine p. 18; United Nations, Annual *Report of the Director General of UNRWA*, Doc 5224/5223, 25 Nov. 1952 First estimate as September 1949

Table 1 - Early Jewish Presence in the Middle East and North Africa

Country/Region	Date of Jewish Community	Sources*
Iraq	6th century BCE	Meir, Esther. Iraq and the Jews of Iraq – a General Survey. In Haim Saadoun (Ed.), *Iraq* (Ben-Zvi Institute, 2002), pp. 11-12. [Hebrew]
Egypt	6th century BCE	Ehrlich, Haggai. Egypt and its Jews. In Nahem Ilan (ed.), *Egypt* (Ben Zvi Institute, 2008), pp. 9, 12-14. [Hebrew]
Iran	6th century BCE	Sahim, Haideh. Iran and Afghanistan. In Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer (eds.), *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in modern times* (Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 368.
Libya	4th century BCE	Goldberg, Harvey. Libya and the Jews of Libya. In Haim Saadoun (Ed.), *Libya*. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2007, p. 11 [Hebrew]
Lebanon	2nd century BCE	Schulze, Kirsten E. *The Jews of Lebanon: Between coexistence and conflict* (Sussex Academic Press, 2001), pp. 12-13.
Yemen	1st century CE	Araqi Klorman, Bat-Zion. Introduction. In Haim Saadoun (ed.), *Yemen* (Ben-Zvi Institute, 2002), p. 17. [Hebrew]
Morocco	1st century CE	Bashan, Eliezer. *The Jews of Morocco, their past and culture* (Hakibutz Hameuchad, 2000), pp. 15-16. [Hebrew]
Algeria	1st century CE	Cohen, David. Algeria. In Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier & Sara Reguer (Eds.), *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in modern times* (pp. 458-470). Columbia University Press, 2002.
Syria	1st century CE	Harel, Yaron. *Syria* (Jerusalem, Ben-Zvi Institute, 2009), p. 11 [Hebrew]
Tunisia	2nd century CE	Les Juifs de Tunisie: Quelques repères historiques. *Confluences Méditerranée* 10 (1994), pp. 149-154.

*These time periods are conservative projections, based on archeological and academic sources. Biblical and traditional sources claim earlier presence of Jews in these countries.

The ancient Israelites were among the first inhabitants of the region. Their illustrious history is detailed in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The uninterrupted historical presence of Jews in the Middle East can then be characterized into six periods:

Period One: Ancient Israelite History (See Appendix A)

Period Two: Destruction of the First Temple to The Rise of Islam (See Appendix B)

Period Three: Prophet Muhammed To Colonialism

Period Four: Colonial Period

Period Five: The Rise of Jewish and Arab Nationalism

Period Six: The Founding of The State of Israel

Period Three: Prophet Muhammed To Colonialism.

With the birth of Mohammed in 570, and the advent of Islam, the region was transformed.

Starting in the seventh century, pan-Arab imperialism foisted the Arabic language and culture on indigenous peoples like Assyrians, Berbers, Kurds, Zoroastrians, Maronites, Egyptian Copts and Jews.

Following the Muslim conquest of the region, from the 7th century onward, Jews were ruled by Muslims for years under the Pact of Umar, attributed to the Second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-644 CE). Enacted in 637 CE, the Pact of Umar was a bilateral agreement of limitations and privileges between conquering Muslims and conquered non-Muslims who were declared "dhimmi'. The term *dhimmi*, 'protected,' was a diminished status assigned to Christians and Jews, among others, who were considered a 'People of the Book' (as opposed to atheists or polytheists) and therefore

extended some degree of legal protection, while relegated to second-class status[3]

The most concrete law to which *dhimmis* were subjected was the need to pay a special tax known as '*jizya.'* The origin of this tax is contained in the Qur'an which states: *"Fight against those who have been given the scripture until they pay the due tax [jizya], willingly or unwillingly."*[4]

By paying the *jizya,* Jews and Christians were allowed to practice their faith, maintain personal security and were permitted limited religious, educational, professional and business opportunities. They were also subject to discriminatory restraints.

Restrictions for the *dhimmi* under the Pact of Umar prohibited Jews and other religious minorities from holding public religious ceremonies; and the legal exclusion of Jews from holding public office. The dhimmi could not raise himself above the Muslim nor could his synagogue be higher than the mosques. Non-Muslims could not ride horses, only donkeys and were required to dismount if he passed a Muslim. The Jew was tolerated but barely so [5]

These practices were not uniform within the Arab world and there were even differences in individual countries. [6]

Throughout the countries colonialized by the Muslim conquest, non-Arab and non-Muslim minorities, among the indigenous inhabitants in those regions, remained as minorities in their ancestral places of birth.

Period Four: Colonial Period

European colonialism in the Arab world was partially spurred by the British conquest of India, which led Napoleon to invade Egypt in 1798, in part to disrupt British trade routes. Although the French occupation of Egypt was short-lived, it was not long before the European presence in the Arab world grew. France's colonization of Algeria began in 1830, of Tunisia in 1881, and of Morocco in 1912. Meanwhile, Britain colonized Egypt in 1882 and also took control of Sudan in 1899. And in 1911, Italy colonized Libya.[7]

After World War I and with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, control over the Middle East fell into the hands of France and Great Britain.

Jews fared well under secular, colonial 'European' rule. This period witnessed a gradual erosion of the dhimmi system and a growing integration of Jewish and other communities into the broader societies in which they lived.

Many Jews experienced increased prosperity and opportunities during this era, contributing significantly to many fields such as education, finance, culture, politics, and administration.

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3 Cohen,, *Cresent* p. 52-53

4 Quaran, *Sura* 9:

5 Cohen, *Cresent* 65

6 Yeor, *Islam and Dhimmitude*; Yeor, *The Dhimmi*; Deshem and Zenner; Stillman, *Jews of Arab Land*

7 Arab Center, "The Colonial Legacy in the Arab World: Health, Education, and Politics", Washington DC., Accessed Nov. 10, 2024. https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-colonial-legacy-in-the-arab-world-health-education-and-politics/

Period Five: The Rise of Jewish and Arab Nationalism

Arab nationalism emerged in the early 20th century as an opposition movement in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, and European imperialism, later evolving into the overwhelmingly dominant ideological force in the Arab world.

It started out as a political ideology asserting that Arabs constitute a single nation. As a traditional nationalist ideology, it promotes Arab culture and civilization, celebrates Arab history, the Arabic language and Arabic literature. It often also calls for unification of Arab society.[8]

Zionism, or Jewish nationalism, is a modern political movement. Its core beliefs are that all Jews constitute one nation (not simply a religious or ethnic community) and that the only solution to anti-Semitism is the concentration of as many Jews as possible in the biblical land of Israel, and the establishment of a Jewish state in their ancestral homeland.

Most associate Theodor Herzl with the founding of the Zionist movement in 1897. While Herzl succeeded in bringing together virtually all Zionist groups under one organizational roof, there was significant Zionist activity even before Herzl came onto the scene.

The history of Zionism began earlier and is intertwined with Jewish history and Judaism.[9] More than 20 new Jewish settlements were established in Palestine between 1870 and 1897 (the year of the first Zionist Congress).[10]

Arab nationalists predominantly perceived Zionism as a threat to their own aspirations.

Beginning with the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and intensifying in the 1930s during the Arab Revolt, tensions between Arab nationalism and Jewish nationalism escalated. From as early as 1922 and into the 1960s, all the North African states gained independence from their colonial European rulers.

In the aftermath of World War II, many regions transitioned from imperial rule to nation-states. Countries like Jordan and Iraq emerged in the wake of colonialism's decline. The Middle East became a focal point for political realignment, with borders redrawn and new Arab governments established. The evolution of Arab, Muslim states did not bode well for its Jewish inhabitants.

The Arab League and Jewish Refugees

To promote Arab unity, the Arab League was established by Pact on March 22, 1945, initially composed of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Transjordan, Saudi-Arabia, and Yemen, according to the Pact, the League has as its purpose to strengthen relations between the member-states, to coordinate their policies in order to achieve cooperation between them, and to safeguard their independence and sovereignty.[11]

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8 Dawisha, Adeed, "Requiem for Arab Nationalism", *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2003. Accessed Nov. 10, 2024 https://www.meforum.org/middle-east-quarterly/requiem-for-arab-nationalism

9 University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, accessed Nov. 10, 2024 https://lsa.umich.edu/content/dam/cmenas-assets/cmenas-documents/unit-of-israel- Palestine/Section1_Zionism.pdf

10 *Snitkoff, Rabbi Ed "Secular Zionism". My Jewish Learning. Accessed on Nov. 11, 2024* http://www.myjewishlearning.com/israel/Jewish_Thought/Modern/Secular_Zionism.shtml

11 The Avalon Project "Pact of the League of Arab States, 22 March 1945". Yale Law School. 1998.Acessed on Nov. 10, 2024, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/arableag.asp

Over time, these Arab League member states colluded in, and coordinated, a shared pattern of conduct that appeared intended to coerce Jews to leave, or to use them as weapons in their struggle against first Zionism and then the State of Israel. This is evidenced even before 1948 from: (a) reports on multilateral meetings of the the Arab League; (b) statements and threats made by delegates of Arab countries at the U.N.; and c) and strikingly similar legislation and discriminatory decrees, enacted by numerous Arab governments, that violated the fundamental rights and freedoms of Jews resident in Arab countries.[12]

The danger to Jews was well known and even declared publicly in threats made against their Jewish populations by Arab regime officials at the United Nations.

- In a key address to the Political Committee of the U.N. General Assembly on the morning of November 24, 1947, just five days before that body voted on the partition plan for Palestine, Heykal Pasha, an Egyptian delegate, made the following statement:

> "*The United Nations ... should not lose sight of the fact that the proposed solution might endanger a million Jews living in the Moslem countries. ... If the United Nations decided to partition Palestine, they might be responsible for very grave disorders and for the massacre of a large number of Jews."*[13]

- In an afternoon session of the Political Committee of the U.N. General Assembly on November 24, 1947, the Palestinian delegate to the UN, Jamal Husseini, representing the *Arab Higher Committee of Palestine* to the UN General Assembly, made the following threat:

> *"It should be remembered that there were as many Jews in the Arab world as there are in Palestine whose positions might become very precarious."*[14]

- On November 28, 1947 Iraq's Foreign Minister Fadil Jamali, at the 126th Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly stated:

> *"Not only the uprising of the Arabs in Palestine is to be expected but the masses in the Arab world cannot be restrained. The Arab-Jewish relationship in the Arab world will greatly deteriorate."*[15]

Words were followed by actions

In 1947, the Political Committee of the Arab League (League of Arab States) drafted a law that was to govern the legal status of Jewish residents in all Arab League countries. Entitled: Text of Law Drafted by the Political Committee of the Arab League, it provided that "...all Jews – with the exception of citizens of non-Arab countries – were to be considered members of the Jewish 'minority state of Palestine,'; that their bank accounts would be frozen and used to finance resistance to 'Zionist ambitions in

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12 The Text of Law Drafted by the Political Committee of the Arab League was reported on in a front page, May 16, 1948 New York Times article headlined: "Jews in Grave Danger in All Moslem Lands"

13 U.N. General Assembly, Second Session, Official Records, Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, Summary Record of the Thirteenth Meeting, Lake Success, N.Y., November 24, 1947 (A/AC.14/SR.30). This comment was made at 10:30am.

14 U.N. General Assembly, Second Session, Official Records, Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, Summary Record of the Thirty-First Meeting, Lake Success, N.Y., November 24, 2947 (A/AC.14/SR.31) This comment was made at 2:30pm.

15 U.N. General Assembly, Second Session, Official Records, Verbatim Record of the 126th Plenary Meeting, November 28, 1947, p. 1391.

Palestine'; Jews believed to be active Zionists would be interned as political prisoners and their assets confiscated; only Jews who accept active service in Arab armies or place themselves at the disposal of these armies would be considered 'Arabs.'[16]

The draft law was a prediction of what was to happen to Jews in the region. It became a blueprint, in country after country, for the laws which were eventually enacted against Jews - denationalizations; freezing of Jewish bank accounts; diverting funds of frozen Jewish bank accounts to pay for the Arab wars against Israel; confiscation of property of "active Zionists"; and Zionism became a criminal offence throughout the region, in some cases punishable by death. Property confiscation of Jews was widespread[17]. The Arab League had accomplished its goal.

Period Six: Jewish refugees and the founding of the State of Israel

There were many factors that finally influenced virtually all Jews resident in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf Region to leave: the rise of Arab nationalism; after the European colonialists left, the establishment of sovereign Arab, Islamic states; discriminatory decrees adopted by Arab regimes; the UN moving towards partition; the outbreak of war in 1948; etc. These factors convinced Jews resident in Arab countries that their situation had become dangerously untenable and that it was time to leave.

Following the UN vote on the partition plan in November 1947, and the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, the status of Jews in Arab countries changed dramatically as six Arab countries – Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia – as well as the Palestinians, declared war, or backed the war against Israel. This rejection by the Arab world of a Jewish state in the Middle East triggered hostile reactions to Jews by Arab regimes and most of their peoples. Jewish populations in Muslim countries were suspected of dual loyalties and were under assault. For example: After the 1947 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 (Partition Plan), rioters, joined by the local police force, engaged in a bloody pogrom in Aden that killed 82 Jews and destroyed hundreds of Jewish homes.[18]

- In Syria, during November 1947 there were pogroms in several cities; synagogues were burned and of Jews were arrested.[19]

- Between June and November 1948, bombs set off in the Jewish Quarter of Cairo killed more than 70 Jews and wounded nearly 200. [20]

In the immediate aftermath of the 1948 War of Independence, hundreds of thousands of Jews were either uprooted from their countries of residence or became subjugated, political hostages of the Arab Israeli conflict.

16 The Text of Law Drafted by the Political Committee of the Arab League was reported on in a front page, May 16, 1948 New York Times article headlined: "Jews in Grave Danger in All Moslem Lands"

17 Ibid

18 Sachar, *A History of Israel*, p. 397-398.

19 Trigano, Samuel, *"Elimination of Israelite Communities in Arab and Islamic Countries*", Outline Presentation, p. 9

20 Sachar, p. 401

Displacement of Jews from Arab Countries

In reality. the displacement of Jews began even before the founding of the State of Israel. It accelerated in the twentieth century when, under Muslim rule, Jews were subjected to a wide-spread pattern of persecution. Official decrees and legislation enacted by Arab regimes denied human and civil rights to Jews and other minorities; expropriated their property; stripped them of their citizenship; and other means of livelihood. Jews were often victims of murder; arbitrary arrest and detention; torture; and expulsions.

As a result of these twentieth century developments, post-World War II life for Jews in Arab countries became dangerous and untenable. Leaving was not always easy – the difficulty varied from country to country. In some countries, Jews were forbidden to leave (e.g., Syria); in others, Jews were displaced *en masse* (e.g., Iraq); in some places, Jews lived in relative peace under the protection of Muslim rulers (e.g., Tunisia, Morocco); while in other states, they were expelled (e.g., Egypt) or had their citizenship revoked (e.g. Libya).

However, the final result was the same - the mass displacement -. the ethnic cleansing - of some 856,000 Jews from some ten Arab countries – in a region overwhelmingly hostile to Jews.

As noted in the Table below, the mass displacement of Jews from Arab countries coincided with major conflicts in the Middle East (e.g. 1948 War; 1956 War; 1967 War; etc.) Each conflict led to major displacements of Jews from Arab countries. The cumulative result was that, over a seventy-five-year period from 1948- until today approximately 99% of all Jews resident in Arab countries and Iran have been displaced.

Table 2 - Country of Origin and Jewish Population Compiled by Justice for Jews from Arab Countries

Displacement of Jews from Arab Countries and Iran:1948-2025

	1948	1958[i]	1968[ii]	1976[iii]	2001[iv]	2024 (est.)
Aden	**8,000**	800	0	0	0	**0**
Algeria	**140,000**	130,000	3,000	1,000	0	**0**
Egypt	**75,000**	40,000	2,500	400	100	**8**
Iran	**100,000 +**					**8,756[v]**
Iraq	**135,000**	6,000	2,500	350	100	**5**
Lebanon	**5,000**	6,000	3,000	400	100	**50**
Libya	**38,000**	3,750	500	40	0	**0**
Morocco	**265,000**	200,000	50,000	18,000	5,700	**2,500**
Syria	**30,000**	5,000	4,000	4,500	100	**3**
Tunisia	**105,000**	80,000	10,000	7,000	1,500	**1,500**
Yemen	**55,000**	3,500	500	500	200[vi]	**1**
TOTAL	**856,000[vii]**	**475,050**	**76,000**	**32,190**	**7,800**	**4,067[viii]**

i American Jewish Yearbook (AJY) v.58 American Jewish Committee
ii AJY v.68; AJY v.71
iii AJY v.78
iv AJY v.101
v Official Census in Iran; As of 2012
vi AJY v.102
vii Roumani, The Case 2; WOJAC'S Voice Vol.1, No.1
viii Estimates derived in discussions with the recognized leadership of the World Organizations representing Sephardi/ Mizrahi communities from these respective countries

What led to this mass exit and displacement of was a wide-spread pattern Arab regimes instituted legal, economic, political and behavioral processes aimed at isolating and persecuting Jews in their countries. These measures can be categorized as follows:[21]

A) Denial of Citizenship

B) Quarantine and Detention of People

C) Legal Restrictions

D) Economic Decrees/Sanctions

E) Socioeconomic Discrimination

F) Pogroms

21 Trigano, p. 2

The examples listed below are a mere sampling of the actual and extensive discriminatory measures and decrees enacted by Arab regimes against their Jewish populations.

A) Denial of Citizenship

Egypt:

- According to the first Nationality Code promulgated by Egypt on May 26, 1926, a person born in Egypt of a 'foreign' father, (who himself was also born in Egypt), was entitled to Egyptian nationality only if the foreign father *"belonged racially to the majority of the population of a country whose language is Arabic or whose religion is Islam."* [22]

- A mass departure of Jews was sparked in 1956 when Egypt amended the original Egyptian Nationality Law of 1926. Article 1 of the Law of November 22, 1956, stipulated that "Zionists" were barred from being Egyptian nationals. Article 18 of the 1956 law asserted that "Egyptian nationality may be declared forfeited by order of the Ministry of Interior in the case of persons classified as Zionists." Moreover, the term "Zionist" was never defined, leaving Egyptian authorities free to interpret the law as broadly as they wished. [23]

Iraq:

- Law No. 1 of 1950, entitled "Supplement to Ordinance Canceling Iraqi Nationality," in fact deprived Jews of their Iraqi nationality. Section 1 stipulated that *"the Council of Ministers may cancel the Iraqi nationality of the Iraqi Jew who willingly desires to leave Iraq for good"* (official Iraqi English translation).[24]

Libya:

- The Citizenship Act of June 12, 1951, (Section 11/27) places restrictions on the status of non-Muslims (e.g. Jews were not allowed to vote or play any political role).[25]

- On August 8, 1962, the Council of Ministers announced a Royal Decree amending Article 10 of the Citizenship Act, which provided, *inter alia*, that a Libyan national forfeited his nationality if he had had any contact with Zionism. The retroactive effect of this provision, commencing with Libyan independence on December 24, 1951, enabled the authorities to deprive Jews of Libyan nationality at will.[26]

B) Quarantine and Detention of People

Yemen:

- In 1949, Jews were officially banned from leaving the country, an injunction which still exists today. [27]

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22 Article 10(4) of the Code. See : Maurice de Wee, La Nationalite Egptienne, Commentairo de la loi du mai 1926, p. 35.

23 Law No. 391 of 1956, Section 1(a), *Revue Egyptienne de Droit International*, vol. 12, 1956, p. 80.

24 Law No. 1 of 1950, entitled "Supplement to Ordinance Canceling Iraqi Nationality," *Official Iraqi Gazette*, March 9, 1950.

25 Trigano, p.3

26 UNHCR Archives, Confidential memorandum to Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, dated May 8, 1970.

27 Trigano, p. 3

Libya:

- Law No.62 of March 1957, Article 1 of which provided, inter alia, that physical persons or corporations were prohibited from entering directly or indirectly into contracts of any nature whatsoever with organizations or persons domiciled in Israel, with Israel citizens or with persons acting on behalf of Israel, or with their representatives. [28]

Syria:

- In 1973, communication with the outside world was banned.[29]

Many other measures were imposed in Iraq; Tunisia; Morocco; Iran and Egypt [30]

C) Legal Restrictions

Egypt:

- Promulgation in 1957 of Army Order No. 4 relating to those who administer the property of the so-called people and associations ("Zionist" i.e. Jewish) are subject to imprisonment or supervision.[31]

Libya:

- Law of Dec 31,1958, a decree issued by the President of the Executive Council of Tripolitania, ordered the dissolution of the Jewish Community Council and the appointment of a Moslem commissioner nominated by the Government.[32]

Many other legal restrictions against Jews were imposed in Iraq, Lebanon, Iran, Yemen; Syria; Morocco; and Tunisia;[33]

D) Economic Sanctions

Syria:

- In April of 1950, a 'Jewish property foreclosure Law" allowed authorities to seize Jewish houses, land, and shops in the cities of Aleppo and Qamishli. Palestinian refugees were then allowed to settle in these formerly Jewish neighborhoods. A ransom had to be paid for every Jew leaving the country. [34]

Egypt:

- Law No. 26 of 1952 obligated all corporations to employ certain prescribed percentages of "Egyptians." A great number of Jewish salaried employees lost their jobs, and could not obtain similar ones, because they did not belong to the category of Jews with Egyptian nationality.[35]

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28 Gruen, "*Libya and the Arab League*", p. 11

29 Trigano, p.3

30 Trigano, p. 3-4

31 *Egyptian Official Gazette, No. 88, November 1, 1957*

32 UNHCR Archives, Confidential memorandum to Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, dated May 8, 1970.

33 Trigano, p. 4

34 Ibid, p. 6

35 Laskier, "Egyptian Jewry"

Iraq:

- Law No. 5 of 1951, entitled "A law for the Supervision and Administration of the Property of Jews who have Forfeited Iraqi Nationality," also deprived them of their property. Section 2(a) "freezes" Jewish property.[36]

- There were a series of laws that subsequently expanded on the confiscation of assets and property of Jews who "forfeited Iraqi nationality". These included Law No. 12 of 1951[37] as well as Law No. 64 of 1967 (relating to ownership of shares in commercial companies) and Law No. 10 of 1968 (relating to banking restrictions).

Other economic sanctions were imposed in Iran, Yemen; Libya; Morocco and Tunisia.[38]

E) Socioeconomic Discrimination

Egypt:

- On July 29, 1947, an amendment was introduced to the Egyptian Companies Law which required at least 75% of the administrative employees of a company to be Egyptian nationals and 90% of employees in general. This resulted in the dismissal and loss of livelihood for many Jews since only 15% had been granted Egyptian citizenship.[39]

Iraq:

- In Iraq, no Jew is permitted to leave the country unless he deposits £5,000 ($20,000) with the Government to guarantee his return. No foreign Jew is allowed to enter Iraq, even in transit. [40]

Libya:

- On May 24, 1961, a law was promulgated which provided that only Libyan citizens could own and transfer property. Conclusive proof of the possession of Libyan citizenship was required to be evidenced by a special permit that was reported to have been issued to only six Jews in all. [41]

Other such socioeconomic discriminatory measures were imposed on the Jews in Yemen; Syria; Libya; Morocco; Egypt and, Tunisia[42];

F) Pogroms

Morocco:

- In Morocco, On June 7 and 8, 1948, there were riots against Jews in Ojeda and Jareda.[43]

Egypt:

- In 1954, upon the Proclamation of a State of Siege in Egypt, the Military Governor

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36 Law No. 5 of 1951, entitled "A Law for the Supervision and Administration of the Property of Jews who have Forfeited Iraqi Nationality," *Official Iraqi Gazette*, March 10, 1951 (English version), p. 17.

37 Law No. 12 of 1951, supplementary to Law No. 5 (*Official Gazette,* English version, 27 January 1952, p.32)

38 Trigano, p. 5

39 Cohen, H.J., p. 88

40 *New York Times*, May 16, 1948, front page

41 UNHCR Archives, Confidential memorandum.to to Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, May 8, 1970.

42 Trigano, p. 6-7

43 Trigano, p. 9

of Egypt was authorized "to order the arrest and apprehension of suspects and those who prejudice public order and security." At least 900 Jews, without charges being laid against them, were detained, imprisoned or otherwise deprived of their liberty.[44]

Iraq:

- At the end of 1968, scores were jailed upon the discovery of a local "spy ring" composed of Jewish businessmen. Fourteen men, eleven of them Jews, were sentenced to death in staged trials and hanged in the public squares of Baghdad; others died of torture. [45]

Other pogroms and violence against Jews occurred in, Libya; Lebanon, Iran, Yemen; Syria; Tunisia; and Algeria; [46]

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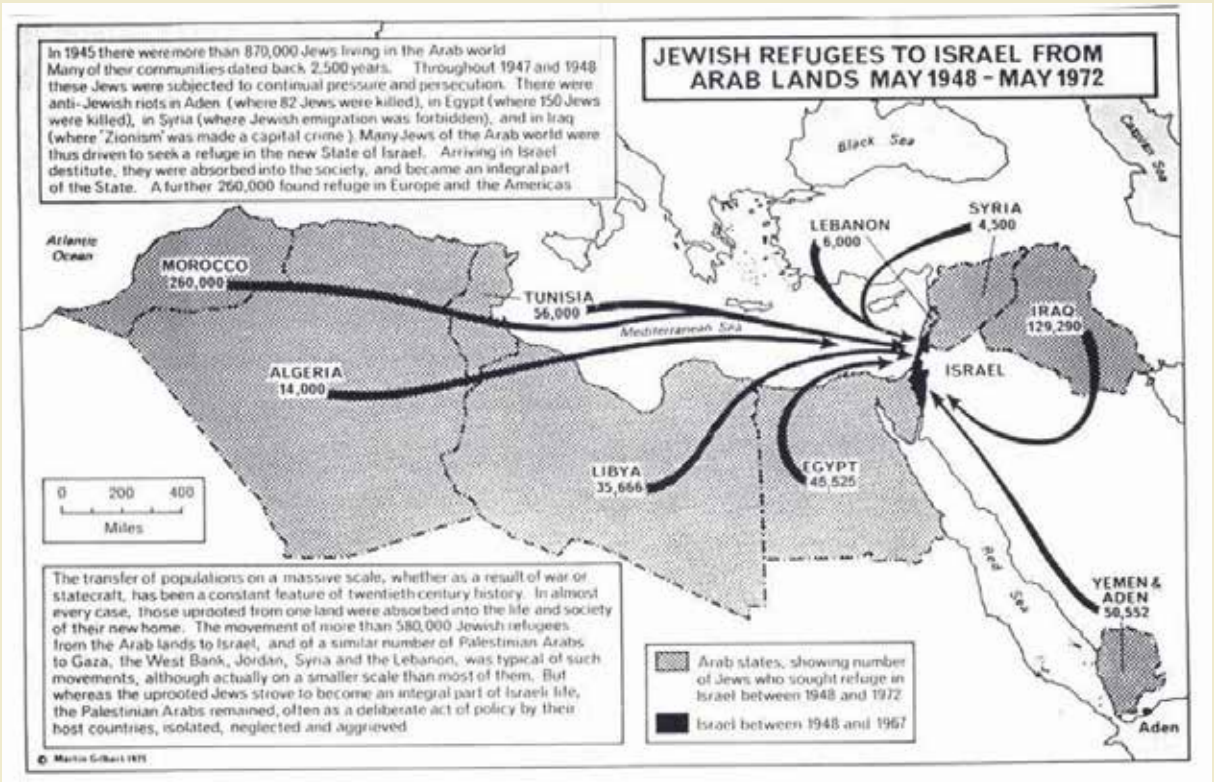
Jews who left Arab countries were not voluntary migrants. They left their home countries neither for economic reasons nor solely for religious freedom. They suffered from harassment and discrimination. They were driven from their homes as a result of the persecution they suffered.

Over 2/3 of all Jews displaced from Arab countries – roughly 650,000 - emigrated to Israel:

Map 1 – Jewish Refugees to Israel from Arab lands May 1948 – May 1972



Source: Martin Gilbert, Jews *of Arab Lands*, p.16 (Egyptian Jewish community leaders claim the number fleeing from Egypt to Israel was significantly higher).

44 Article 3, Paragraph 7 of Emergency Law No. 5333 of 1954.

45 Judith Miller and Laurie Mylroie, *Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Gulf*, p. 34.

46 Trigano, p. 7-10

While Zionism motivated most to settle in Israel, an estimated 260,000 people [47] – or about one third - of all Jewish refugees immigrated to other countries (e.g. Britain, France, USA, Canada, etc.). In virtually all cases, as Jews left their homes and their countries of birth, individual and communal properties were confiscated without compensation.

Were Jews Displaced from Arab Countries Legally Refugees

The internationally accepted definition for the term "refugee" derives from the Statute of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that was established by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 319 (IV) on December 3, 1949. The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted on July 28, 1951, by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, which was convened under General Assembly Resolution 429 (V) of December 14, 1950, and entered into force on April 22, 1954. Article 1 of *the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* states the following:

> *For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "refugee" shall apply to any person who: … (2) As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it.…*

This internationally accepted definition of "refugees" applied to many Jews who fled Arab countries who clearly had, a "*well-founded fear of being persecuted*."

The plight of Jewish refugees displaced from Jews in Arab countries was finally and formally recognized when, on two separate occasions, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) specifically declared that Jews fleeing from Arab countries were indeed refugees "who fall under the mandate" of the UNHCR. The first recognition pertained to Jews fleeing Egypt. In a 1957 statement to the UNREF Executive Committee, Mr. Auguste Lindt, UN High Commissioner for Refugees stated:

> *"Another emergency problem is now arising - that of refugees from Egypt. There is no doubt in my mind that those refugees from Egypt who are not able, or not willing to avail themselves of the protection of the Government of their nationality fall under the mandate of my office."* [48]

The second recognition by the UNHCR that Jews fleeing Arab countries were indeed refugees came in 11 years later in a letter released by the Office of the UN High Commissioner:

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47 Gilbert, *Atlas of the Arab-Israeli conflict.* p. 48

48 Mr. Auguste Lindt, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Report of the UNREF Executive Committee, Fourth Session – Geneva 29 January to 4 February 1957.

> *"I refer to our recent discussion concerning Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries in consequence of recent events. I am now able to inform you that such persons may be considered prima facie within the mandate of this Office."*[49]

The significance of this second ruling was twofold:

1) Unlike the first statement by the High Commissioner that merely referred to "*refugees from Egypt*" - the vast majority of whom were Jews - this letter referred specifically to "Jews"; and

2) Unlike the first determination that limited UNHCR involvement to "refugees from Egypt", this statement constituted a ruling that Jews who had left *any* of the "*Middle Eastern and North African countries*" - namely: Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia – all fell within the mandate of the Office of the UNHCR.

Do These Former Jewish Refugees Still Possess Rights Today?

The statute of limitations does not apply to the right of refugees to petition for rights and redress. This principle is enshrined in the "*Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law",* adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly on December 16, 2005. It states, in part:

> *6)… statutes of limitations shall not apply to gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law which constitute crimes under international law.*

The passage of time does not negate the right of refugees to petition for redress for the mass violations of their human rights as well as for the personal losses. If a refugee left behind assets, including bank accounts and pension plans, they do not lose their rights to these assets, notwithstanding how many years have passed. Therefore, former Jewish refugees have the legal right, under international law – even today - to petition for rights and redress.

United Nation and Middle East Refugees

So, in fact, both Palestinians and Jews from Arab countries were recognized as *bona fide* refugees by the relevant UN Agencies.

The declaration that Palestinians were refugees was made by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and accepted by the international community. The designation by the UNHCR that Jews fleeing Arab countries were indeed refugees was less known and not publicized.

From the mid 1940's onward, the United Nations was faced with two refugee populations; both emerging from the same conflict; in comparable numbers, both recognized by the UN as *bone fide* refugees; with both still possessing rights today. Nonetheless, there are startling differences in the treatment, by the United Nations, of Arab refugees compared to Jewish refugees. For example:

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49 Dr. E. Jahn, Office of the UN High Commissioner, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Document No. 7/2/3/Libya, July 6, 1967.

With respect to Security Council resolutions, from 1946 – 2024 inclusive, there were a total of 338 Security Council resolutions on the Middle East in general, and 9 resolutions on Palestinian refugees in particular. During that same time period, there was not one Resolution dealing with Jewish refugees.[50]

UN Security Council Resolutions on Middle East Refugees			
	Resolutions on the Middle East	**Resolutions on Palestinian Refugees**	**Resolutions on Jewish Refugees**
SECURITY COUNCIL	338	9	0

With respect to Resolutions of the UN General Assembly,[51] from 1949 to 2024 inclusive, the General Assembly focused much greater attention on the issue of Palestinian refugees – over 21 % of its resolutions – more than on any other Middle East issue.

UN General Assembly Resolutions on Middle East Refugees			
	Resolutions on Middle East	**Resolutions on Palestinian Refugees**	**Resolutions on Jewish Refugees**
GENERAL ASSEMBLY	976	208	0

In contrast to Palestinian refugees, General Assembly resolutions never specifically addressed the issue of Jewish refugees, nor were there any resolutions on other topics that mentioned Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

However, there is one UN Resolution that does refer to Jewish refugees from Arab countries obliquely, while still not mentioning their plight directly.

UN Security Council Resolution 242

On November 22nd, 1967, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 242, which laid down the principles for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

Still considered the primary vehicle for resolving the Arab-Israel conflict, Resolution 242, stipulates that a comprehensive peace settlement should necessarily include "*a just settlement of the refugee problem*". No distinction is made between Arab refugees and Jewish refugees. This was the intent of the Resolution's drafters and sponsors.

On Thursday, November 16, 1967, the United Kingdom submitted their draft of Resolution 242 [S/8247] to the UN Security Council. The UK version of 242 was not exclusive and called for a just settlement of "the refugee problem." Just four days after the United Kingdom submission, the Soviet Union's U.N. delegation submitted their own draft Resolution 242 to the Security Council [S/8253] restricting the just settlement only to "Palestinian refugees" [Para. 3 (c)].

50 Urman, Dr. Stanley A., *The United Nations and Middle East Refugees: The Differing Treatment of Palestinians and Jews; Rutgers University, 2010.* Page 134. Analysis derived from United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), Statistics updated to 20.24 from UNISPAL on Nov. 2. 2024. https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/

51 Ibid, Page 137. Statistics updated to 20.24 from UNISPAL on Nov. 2. 2024. https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/

On Wednesday, November 22, 1967, the Security Council gathered for its 1382nd meeting in New York at which time, the United Kingdom's draft of Resolution 242 was voted on and unanimously approved.[52] Immediately after the UK's version of 242 was adopted, the Soviet delegation advised the Security Council, that "*it will not insist, at the present stage of our consideration of the situation in the Near East, on a vote on the draft Resolution submitted by the Soviet Union*" which would have limited 242 to

Palestinian refugees only.[53] Even so, Ambassador Kuznetsov of the Soviet Union later stated: "The Soviet Government would have preferred the Security Council to adopt the Soviet draft Resolution…" [54]

Thus, the attempt by the Soviets to restrict the "just settlement of the refugee problem" merely to "Palestinian refugees" was not successful. The international community adoption of the UK's inclusive version signaled a desire for 242 to seek a just solution for all – including Jewish refugees.

Moreover, Justice Arthur J. Goldberg, the US Ambassador to the United Nations who was seminally involved in drafting[55] the unanimously adopted Resolution, told The Chicago Tribune that the Soviet version of Resolution 242 was "not even-handed."[56]

He went further - pointing out that:

> *"A notable omission in 242 is any reference to Palestinians, a Palestinian state on the West Bank or the PLO. The resolution addresses the objective of 'achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem.' This language presumably refers both to Arab and Jewish refugees, for about an equal number of each abandoned their homes as a result of the several wars…."*[57]

So, it is clear that the intent of UN Resolution 242 requires a "just settlement of the refugee problem" that includes Jewish refugees, as equally as Palestinian refugees.

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Other international Agreements and entities have recognized the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

Multilateral Initiatives

- The Madrid Conference, which was first convened in October 1991, launched historic, direct negotiations between Israel and many of her Arab neighbors. In his opening remarks at a conference convened to launch the multilateral process held in Moscow in January 1992, then-U.S. Secretary of State James Baker made no distinction between Palestinian refugees and Jewish refugees in articulating the mandate of the Refugee Working Group as follows: *"The refugee group will consider practical ways of improving the lot of people throughout the region who have been displaced from their homes."*[58]

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52 Security Council Official Records - November 22, 1967 - S/PV.1382 - Paragraph 67..

53 Security Council Official Records - November 22, 1967 - S/PV.1382 - Paragraph 117

54 Security Council Official Records - November 22, 1967 - S/PV.1382 - Paragraph 117

55 Transcript, Arthur J. Goldberg Oral History Interview I, 3/23/83, by Ted Gittinger; Lyndon B. Johnson Library. March 23, 1983; Pg I-10

56 "Russia stalls UN Action on Middle East." The Chicago Tribune. November 21, 1967 pg. B9

57 Goldberg, Arthur J., "Resolution 242: After 20 Years." The Middle East: Islamic Law and Peace (U.S. Resolution 242: Origin, Meaning and Significance.) National Committee on American Foreign Policy; April 2002. (Originally written by Arthur J. Goldberg for the American Foreign Policy Interests on the occasion of its twentieth anniversary in 1988.)

58 Remarks by Secretary of State James A. Baker, III before the Organizational Meeting for Multilateral Negotiations on the Middle East, House of Unions, Moscow, January 28, 1992.

No distinction is made between Arab and Jewish refugees.

- The Road Map to Middle East Peace, advanced in 2002 by the Quartet (the U.N., EU, U.S., and Russia) also refers in Phase III to an "*agreed, just, fair and realistic solution to the refugee issue*", language applicable both to Palestinian and Jewish refugees.

Bilateral Arab - Israeli Agreements

Israeli agreements with her Arab neighbors allow for a case to be made that Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians have affirmed that a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict will require a "*just settlement*" of the "*refugee problem*" that will include recognition of the rights and claims of all Middle East refugees:

Israel – Egypt Agreements 1978 and 1979

The *Camp David Framework for Peace in the Middle East* of 1978 (the "Camp David Accords") includes, in paragraph A(1)(f), a commitment by Egypt and Israel to *"work with each other and with other interested parties to establish agreed procedures for a prompt, just and permanent resolution of the implementation of the refugee problem."*

Article 8 of the *Israel – Egypt Peace Treaty* of 1979 provides that the "*Parties agree to establish a claims commission for the mutual settlement of all financial claims."* Those claims were to include those of former Jewish refugees displaced from Egypt.

Israel – Jordan Peace Treaty, 1994

Article 8 of the *Israel – Jordan Peace Treaty*, entitled "Refugees and Displaced Persons" recognizes, in paragraph 1, "*the massive human problems caused to both Parties by the conflict in the Middle East".* Reference to massive human problems in a broad manner suggests that the plight of all refugees of "*the conflict in the Middle East"* includes Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

Israeli Palestinian Agreements, 1993

Almost every reference to the refugee issue in Israeli-Palestinian agreements, talks about "refugees", without qualifying which refugee community is at issue, including the *Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993* {Article V (3)}, and the *Interim Agreement of September 1995* {Articles XXXI (5)}, both of which refer to "refugees" as a subject for permanent status negotiations, without qualifications.

Recognition by Political Leaders of Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries

Recognition by political leaders has enhanced the credibility of Jewish refugees from Arab countries and strengthened the legitimacy of their claims for rights and redress.

- U.S. President Jimmy Carter, after successfully brokering the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian - Israeli Peace Treaty, stated in a press conference on Oct. 27, 1977:

"Palestinians have rights… obviously there are Jewish refugees…they have the same rights as others do."

- Former U.S. President Bill Clinton made the following assertion after the rights of Jews displaced from Arab countries were discussed at 'Camp David II' in July, 2000.

- *There will have to be some sort of international fund set up for the refugees. There is, I think, some interest, interestingly enough, on both sides, in also having a fund which compensates the Israelis who were made refugees by the war, which occurred after the birth of the State of Israel. Israel is full of people, Jewish people, who lived in predominantly Arab countries who came to Israel because they were made refugees in their own land.*

- Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin recognized Jewish refugees in a June 3rd, 2005, interview with the Canadian Jewish News which he later reaffirmed in a July 14, 2005, letter:

A refugee is a refugee and that the situation of Jewish refugees from Arab lands must be recognized. All refugees deserve our consideration as they have lost both physical property and historical connections. I did not imply that the claims of Jewish refugees are less legitimate or merit less attention than those of Palestinian refugees.

- British Prime Minister Theresa May spoke at a dinner in London marking the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, on November 2nd, 2017:

We must recognize how difficult at times this journey has been – from the Jews forced out of their homes in Arab countries in 1948 to the suffering of Palestinians affected and dislodged by Israel's birth – both completely contrary to the intention of Balfour to safeguard all of these communities.

Legislation Recognizing Rights for Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries

Unanimously adopted by the **United States** Congress on April 1, 2008, House Resolution 185 affirms that all victims of the Arab - Israeli conflict must be recognized and urges the President and US officials participating in any Middle East negotiations to ensure: "*…. that any explicit reference to Palestinian refugees is matched by a similar explicit reference to Jewish and other refugees, as a matter of law and equity.*"

On March 5, 2014, **Canada** formally recognized the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab lands. The Canadian Cabinet and Parliament accepted a committee recommendation that the federal government *officially recognize the experience of Jewish refugees who were displaced from states in the Middle East and North Africa after 1948."*

The Knesset of **Israel** adopted two Bills, in 2008 and again in 2010, confirming rights - including compensation - for Jews displaced from Arab countries and that their rights must be addressed in any Middle East peace negotiations.

Jewish Refugees and Palestinian Refugees

Emanating as a result of the 1948 conflict in the Middle East, Palestinians are considered as the world's longest-standing refugee population who continue to require significant international protection as well as material and financial assistance.

Their continuing needs, however, do not supersede the fact that, Palestinians were not the only Middle East refugees. During the twentieth century, two refugee populations emerged as a result of the conflict in the Middle East – Arabs as well as Jews.

There is no parallel history, geography, nor demography that could allow for any just

comparison between the fate of Palestinian refugees and the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Moreover, there is a fundamental distinction in the way the two crises were dealt with:

The newly established state of Israel, under attack from six Arab armies, with scant and scarce resources, opened its doors to hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees displaced from Arab countries, granted them citizenship, and tried, under very difficult circumstances, to absorb them into Israeli society.

- By contrast, the Arab world, with the sole exception of Jordan, turned their backs on displaced Palestinian Arabs, sequestering them in refugee camps to be used as a political weapon against the state of Israel for the last seventy-five plus years.

So, while there is no symmetry between these two narratives, there is one important factor that applies to both: namely, the moral imperative to ensure that all *bona fide* refugees receive equal treatment under international law.

It would constitute an injustice, were the international community to recognize rights for one victim population – Arab Palestinians - without recognizing equal rights for other victims of the same Middle East conflict – Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

The legitimate call to secure rights and redress for Jewish refugees from Arab countries is just as in any Middle East peace proposals, the rights and claims of Palestinian refugees will certainly be addressed. What is important is to ensure that the rights and claims of hundreds of thousands of Jews displaced from Arab countries are similarly recognized and addressed.

As Jews were forced to leave their homes, communities and countries of birth, they left behind assets now estimated at over $263 billion. But the true loss goes far beyond wealth. It was the erasure of a civilization, a rich tapestry of language, faith and identity that helped shape the very fabric of the region.

This publication is a sincere call to recognize the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab lands—on both moral and legal grounds—and to ensure their story is no longer forgotten. The Middle East conflict created two refugee populations —one Palestinian, one Jewish—and both deserve acknowledgment.

In an era of historic reconciliation, inspired by the spirit of the Abraham Accords, the time has come to face history with honesty and courage. Only through truth, justice, and mutual recognition can the peoples of the region move toward a future of dignity, healing, and lasting peace.

In the spirit of the Abraham Accords, at a time of historic breakthroughs in political and financial 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.

Chapter 2

Scope and Methodology

The purpose of this project is to provide a detailed and comprehensive appraisal and valuation of property left behind by Jews displaced from Arab countries in the years following the founding of the State of Israel as well as post-Revolution Iran. 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. Moreover, this massive civilizational presence was uprooted over only the course of just more than half a century and transformed into an enormous flow of refugees headed to Israel, Europe, North and South America, Australia and other locations. This report seeks to document this historical injustice to produce a valuation of assets left behind by Jewish refugees in Arab countries and Iran.

2.1. Project Scope

The scope of this project encompasses the Jewish communities of the following ten Arab countries.

- Aden
- Algeria
- Egypt
- Iraq
- Lebanon
- Libya
- Morocco
- Syria
- Tunisia
- Yemen

Also included is Iran.

“This project will bring to light the best evidence available on the scope of lost Jewish individual and communal assets, apply an orderly methodology on the data collected, and arrive at an aggregate valuation of the assets that belonged to Jewish refugees and their communities.

The research, which was conducted over a period of over five years, was orchestrated by Sylvain Abitbol, Co-President of Justice for Jews from Arab Countries, working with economists. accountants, historians. academicians, Jewish community organizations and Mizrahi Jewish community leaders, utilizing testimonies submitted by Jews displaced from Arab countries.

This process included a thorough, comprehensive review of available documentation, the collection of testimonial data, an analysis of each Jewish community’s place within their respective country, and a consideration of previous valuation attempts where such attempts have been made. The final result will be an aggregate valuation of Jewish individual and community assets from Arab countries and Iran.

2.2. Technical Premises

For the purposes of this report's valuation exercise, the assumption was that all Jewish assets that belonged to Jews in most of the countries under consideration were lost over the course of each Jewish community's displacement, unless otherwise noted.

As this valuation report represents a comprehensive effort to collect information on all types of assets that belonged to Jews and Jewish communities in countries whose subsequent governments can be said to be generally hostile to this particular demographic group and the State of Israel, the amount and quality of information available for such an effort was limited.

2.3. Loss Types Under Review

This project considers losses suffered by Jews as individual members of Jewish households, as well as assets that belonged to each Jewish community, respectively. These losses include urban and rural land, urban and rural immoveable property, personal property and moveable assets, financial assets, employment losses, business losses, and communal losses.

Table 3 - Loss Categories and Types - Valuation Methodology

Loss Category	Loss Type
Individual	**Urban and Rural Land**
	Property – Immoveable assets: Urban and rural buildings, houses
	Property – moveable assets: Household and personal items, furniture etc.
	Financial assets: Bank accounts and other securities
Business	**Total assets:** Overall business value, including real estate, inventory, and commercial holdings
Communal	**Communally-owned assets:** All land and property communally owned by the Jewish community, including synagogues, cemeteries, mikvahs etc.

The report does not attempt to account for non-pecuniary damages, such a pain and suffering, nor personal injury or death. However, in rare cases some of the claim forms filed by displaced Jews and analyzed for the report did include monetary valuations for time spent incarcerated and other such losses associated with mistreatment and expulsion. In these instances, the valuations were included as part of individual losses calculated in the movable assets category.

2.4. Methodology: Principles and Rationale

The methodology implemented in this report consists of both preliminary research and a subsequent valuation. The research phase relies on general research and analysis approaches which have been further adjusted to fit the circumstances of each country under consideration, as well as the amount and quality of information available.

Furthermore, a significant aspect of the research and valuation methodology consists of information collected and analyzed from first-hand testimonials given by Jews displaced from all countries under consideration throughout the relevant time period. This aspect of the research and valuation methodology will also be described in greater detail below.

Research Methodology

The scope of this project requires an assessment of the present value of all individual and communal assets left behind by Jewish refugees from Arab countries and Iran. This task requires a particular methodology both for compiling all the relevant research materials available and for converting those materials into a professional, present-day valuation. Therefore, a research methodology was devised to collect all primary materials that are relevant and available to assessing the particular assets that belonged to Jews and their respective communities in the countries under consideration, as well as supplementary overarching country research, meant to fill the missing pieces in each country.

Considering that no full material accounting of all Jewish property was kept on record, a research methodology based solely on either one of the aforementioned approaches would be incomplete. There is neither a comprehensive, primary accounting of all Jewish property left behind by Jewish refugees from Arab countries and Iran, nor a reliable approach that is able to reflect the particular nuances of Jewish property-ownership in every country under consideration. In light of this complex scenario, it was decided the optimal research methodology would be to combine a number of approaches in order to paint the fullest picture of Jewish property left behind in each country.

Primary research included a preliminary audit of relevant archives and visits to those archives that were likely to contain relevant information. This research phase also included meetings with community leaders from all the relevant countries and

subject-matter experts in order to clarify any questions, to pursue further detail in regard to other primary documents uncovered, to ask for any primary materials these community leaders or experts might possess, and to ask for further guidance where necessary. Finally, use was made of a wide selection of secondary sources, including books, journal articles, reports, websites, heritage/cultural centers, etc. for any other relevant materials that helped produce as comprehensive and detailed an evidence-based assessment of Jewish property that belonged to Jews from the countries under consideration.

The next step of the research methodology seeks to supplement the assessment of Jewish property ownership, to the extent necessary, with a series of calculations any

other taking into consideration the size and relative position of the Jewish community in each country, as well as other factors as the situation demands. There are a number of reasons why the evidence-based picture emerging out of any country will be less than complete, including the fact that these events took place over 75 years ago, some of them in places where government administration was in flux and in places that are inaccessible today. Other rationales include differing colonial administrative practices, as explained below. From this research, reasonable conclusions are drawn from the available information.

Historical Note on Mandatory/Colonial Administrative Practices

This valuation report ultimately rests on the best information and evidence currently available based on multiple sources, including the primary administrative materials collected by the colonial/mandatory powers that directly or indirectly ruled many of the countries under consideration. As such, the administrative habits practiced by these powers (i.e. Great Britain, France, and Italy) ought to be considered for the purpose of illuminating any differences in administrative methods that may have had consequences for the amount and type of information and data available.

As far as the research phase of this project is concerned, the administrative habits exercised by Great Britain during its Mandate over Palestine from 1920 through 1948 ought to be juxtaposed with the administrative habits exercised by French authorities in its role as colonial/mandatory/protectorate authority in several of the countries under consideration (Italy ruled as a colonial administrator in Libya for a shorter amount of time that is relevant to this project). The British administrative record in Mandatory Palestine is interesting in particular, as these administrative habits produced the type of detailed information against which this valuation report must contend as an historical comparison. The historical record on this matter shows a starkly different approach to gathering and recording materials amongst the British and the French that are of major significance to this project.

The historical motives and interests that characterized the British presence in Palestine at the time were such that British authorities had reason to keep meticulous records of developments in Palestine. British authorities were well aware of their commitments to both Jewish and Arab nationalist aspirations in Mandatory Palestine and were sensitive to a future contest for land between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. This reality coincided with Britain's larger geo-political interests in maintaining a stable, long-term presence in part of Mandatory Palestine. The situation required a well-run administration capable of producing and maintaining detailed administrative records for the sake of controlling the eventual clash between Jewish and Arab communities, and for securing the long-term British presence in Palestine. This attitude was reflected in various British policies, including attempts at land reform, tax reform, registration of private and state land, aerial documentation of land throughout the territory etc. All of these efforts combined produced a detailed accounting of the kind of material that can serve as primary evidence for this sort of valuation project. And indeed, British land records, such as the '1945 Village Statistics' document, served as the basis for various Palestinian valuation reports.

From further research, it is apparent that French administrative habits were different to those of the British, for various reasons. To begin with, French authorities had a different 'ideological' outlook to the British, and this difference animated their administrative habits. French authorities were more determined to disregard the sociological divisions present in the populations they ruled, in an attempt to have their vision of an egalitarian society benevolently ruled by Frenchmen reflected in their administrative records. To this end, French administrative records show less distinctions among the populations over which they ruled, a practice which, for example, makes distinguishing Jewish and Muslim land records, much more difficult.

More importantly, however, is the fact that the French had no overriding interest in maintaining detailed records of the Jewish communities that were part of the territories they controlled. Unlike the British, who were in part dedicated to promoting the collective interest of the Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine and of safeguarding the rights of Mandatory Palestine's Arab residents as well, a situation which forced British authorities to act as a neutral referee of sorts, French records were mainly concerned with recording narrower French interests, to cement their control of lands and economic interests in the territories they ruled. These differences between British and French interests and mindsets were reflected in their different administrative practices. These, in turn, produced different levels of detail and scope regarding the type of documentation necessary for a valuation project of this sort.

Testimonials by Jews Displaced from Arab Countries and Iran

In addition to research materials collected and reasonable assessments deduced, per the research methodology described above, information collected from first-hand

testimonials by Jews displaced from Arab countries and Iran was utilized and analyzed. Details of the testimonial collection campaign and analysis can be found in Section 2.6.

The Israeli Government, under the auspices of the registrar of foreign claims department in the Ministry of Finance, began collecting claims of property losses by Jews from Arab countries as early as 1949. By 1950, the registrar had collected claims totaling $54,032,576, as detailed below:

Table 4 - Value of Jewish Property Losses in Arab Countries (including debts owed by Palestinian refugees), Recorded by Israel Registrar of Foreign Claims, 1949-1950

Country	No. of Claimants	No. of Claims	Amount (currency)	Total Amount ($ -1950)
Libya	203	203	£Lib. 629,636,340 £Egypt 19,135 FF 1,248,620	1,065,927
Egypt	153	153	£Egypt 619,473 £Pal. 17,901 £UK 45,287 Rupees 74,357 $US 3,025 FF 107,500	1,977,856
Iraq	1,619	50	Iraqi dinars 709,955 £UK 3,525	1,997,184
Yemen	15	15	£Pal. 15,000 Riyals 167,024 Rupees 116,217	85,512
Syria	121	121	£Syr. 2,453,090 £Pal. 100,902 Gold pounds 4,608 Ottoman pounds 34	1,410,467
Lebanon	74	74	£Leb. 289,946 £Pal. 90,417 £Syr. 2,459 £UK 1,667 $US 253	390,981
Jordan	38	38	£Pal. 3,509,180 £Syr. 1,950	9,826,590
West Bank	1,414	1,284	£Pal. 3,094,294	36,664,023
Palestinian refugees*	111	111	£Pal. 219,015 £UK 998	616,036
Total	**3,748**	**2,049**	**-**	**54,032,576**

* Debts owed to Jews by Palestinian refugees

Source: ISA (130) 1848/hts/9, "Overall Summary of the Work of the Foreign Claims Registration Office as of December 31, 1950."

Subsequently, efforts to document property losses suffered by Jews displaced from Arab countries resumed in the aftermath of new waves of mass displacement. Notably, an effort to document property losses suffered by Egyptian Jews was initiated by the Organization of Victims of anti-Jewish Persecution in Egypt (Association des ex-Victimes des Persécutions Anti-Juives en Egypte) in the wake of the expulsion of Egyptian Jews after the Suez Crisis in 1956. Similarly, following a renewed wave of mass displacement of Jews from Arab countries after the 1967 war, the Israeli Government signed Government Decision number 34 on September 28, 1969, directing the renewed efforts by the Department for the Rights of Jews from Arab Countries, under the auspices of the Head of Legal Assistance at the Ministry of Justice, to register the claims of lost property by Jews displaced from Arab countries (this particular effort concentrated on Jewish property losses in four Arab countries: Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Yemen).

This responsibility was renewed and expanded both in March 2002, in Government Decision number 1544 relating to the "Registration of claims of Jews from Arab Countries" (expanding the registration efforts to include all Jews displaced from all relevant Arab countries and Iran), as well as on December 28, 2003 in Government Decision 1250 pertaining to the "Rights of Jews from Arab Lands". Following this renewed emphasis on the matter, testimonial forms were made available for Jews displaced from Arab countries and Iran to document their stories and register any lost property. Later on, in 2009, the responsibility for these efforts was transferred from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Senior Citizens, which was subsequently renamed the Ministry for Social Equality.[59]

Methodological Principles Guiding the Report Preparation

As mentioned above, this valuation report is based on information that is decades old. In addition, the historical circumstances are such that the existing evidence often provides only an incomplete assessment of the property that used to belong to Jews and the Jewish communities in the countries under consideration. That said, the methodological principles that guide the analysis are as follows:

1. **Transparency**: The facts, that the events in question took place so long ago, the difficulty with accessing potentially-useful sources of information, the lack of data and/or the existence of contradictory information in some cases – tend to lend themselves to the necessity to delineate what is known and what cannot be known; what sources were available and which were not, and for the report to be transparent in all of its limitations, assumptions and consequent calculations.
2. **Professionalism and practicality**: In undertaking the project, we were guided by high professional standards at every step, including the research and valuation efforts.
3. **Simplicity and consistency**: This project comprises eleven separate country reports. The sources of information, the cooperation of community leaders, the administrative legacies in each country – all of these presented a complex informational web that had to be standardized for the purposes of this project.
4. Throughout, we strove for consistency in style, structure, scope, and methodology.

59 Israeli Ministry of Justice website

5. **Multidisciplinary:** The particular circumstances of this project demand a multidisciplinary approach that combines historical research, knowledge of the Jewish community in several countries over a lengthy timespan, familiarity with political, social, and economic trends at the time, as well as professional financial valuation expertise and strategic consulting insights that contributed to the problem-solving and analysis aspects of this project. We were guided by the need to fuse these disciplines in a coherent and direct manner.
6. **Trustworthiness:** We have referenced and documented all relevant sources of information and can fully stand behind the assumptions, methodological judgments, and final products in this project.

2.5. Level of Evidence

As mentioned above, this project entails an inquiry into the value of assets owned by Jews and the Jewish communities in eleven different countries, over half a century ago. As such, a comprehensive and detailed accounting of all manner of assets is virtually impossible. The testimonials cannot purport to serve as a representative sample of Jews leaving all Arab countries; they do, nonetheless, provide informative and useful data in portraying an uprooted Jewish community and its lost wealth.

In addition to the testimonials, data was derived from a variety of sources including archives, books and interviews. Research was based on the best documentation available, and this evidence was supplemented with the most appropriate and reasonable analysis that could be made on the basis of the available evidence.

Archives in numerous countries were visited and research was conducted seeking relevant files and data:

Israel: Israel State Archives (ISA), Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Israeli Ministry of Justice archives, Israeli Ministry of Social Equality archives, Yad Ben Zvi Institute, Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot,World Jewish Congress, Israel Archives
Canada: Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa
France: Alliance Israelite Universelle, Paris, Archives Nationale – France, Paris Branch, Pierrefitte Branch, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de la Courneuve
Switzerland: National Archives, Bern, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva
UK: London Metropolitan Archives, National Archives of the U.K.
USA: American Jewish Committee, New York, Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) – New York, National Archives & Records, College Park, Maryland, World Jewish Archives, New York

In addition, Jewish community leaders and academic experts from numerous countries were consulted.

2.6. Methodology for the gathering, processing, and analysis of testimonials

In order to organize and standardize the information derived from over 12,000 testimonials processed, a number of procedures were followed.

The testimonial methodology entailed filling out the following information: relevant country, year of displacement, family size, city of origin, year in which the testimonial was given, information relating to lost assets and their value (organized according to asset category: real estate, land, moveable assets, and business losses) and any other relevant information gleaned from narrative accounts written in individual testimonials.

An array of factors influenced the precision of these types of testimonials, and a measure of bias is usually an inseparable aspect of such methodologies. These factors include the following:

1. In many cases, 50 years or more had passed between the events and sums in questions and the recording of testimony/lost property.
2. A lack of representation of the impact of inflationary effects and other macro - economic conditions that might have influenced the real value of property under consideration
3. The age of respondents at the time the testimony was collected (many were children at the time of displacement and only documented their testimony at a much older age).
4. A lack of proper supervision during the documentation of testimony – in some cases, dependents filled out the forms for the relevant respondents.

The following details the testimonial methodology for use in the project, starting with the gathering of testimonials through to their analysis and the adjusted calculation of their values by class group.

The testimonial claims forms for this project were received from three sources:

- Scanned copies of testimonials collected by the Israeli government and various NGOs.
- Handwritten testimonials from the Israeli Ministry of Social Equality's "*And you said to your son*" project.
- Handwritten testimonials from the Israeli Ministry of Justice and Israel State Archives.

The process of analyzing the testimonials comprised three stages:

- Reception and cataloguing of testimonials.
- Manual entry of all testimonials deemed relevant, i.e. containing financial information, into a country-specific Excel spreadsheet for the purpose of data calculation.
- Testimonials underwent full processing, from reception to final analysis as laid out below.

Standard Testimonial Methodology

1. The testimonial documents came in different versions and included close to 10 different form types.
2. All versions of the testimonials were useful for the purposes of this project, with two exceptions:
    a. Some claimants were not instructed to detail their assets in a number of the categories crucial to this project, resulting in a failure to report full holdings.
    b. Some claimants were asked to report the value of their assets in a convoluted manner, which made it impossible to extract reliable data.
3. The following chart indicates the testimonials processed and entered:

Country	Testimonials Processed from All Sources	Testimonials Entered for Calculation
Aden	2	0
Algeria	57	22
Egypt	5,563	676
Iran	223	92
Iraq	5,503	1903
Lebanon	96	0
Libya	233	129
Morocco	328	112
Syria	229	102
Yemen	85	20
Tunisia	175	76
TOTALS	12,494	3,132

Stage 1 - Reception and Cataloguing of Testimonials

All testimonials were classified as “Processed” or “Unprocessed” and catalogued into the categories detailed below.

Processed

All processed testimonials were classified and filed as follows:

Entered: Testimonials which were entered into the spreadsheet for the relevant country. These testimonials were analyzed in order to calculate the average holdings of each class group.

Not Entered: Testimonials which were not entered into the spreadsheet for the relevant country for the following reasons:

a. Testimonials included information on movable assets alone
b. Duplicate versions of testimonial forms already processed
c. Testimonials included communal property alone and as a result, were irrelevant to the calculation of individual holdings but were used elsewhere to calculate communal losses
d. Testimonials that were not relevant to this project were categorized as “NR”. Testimonials were entered into this category if they met one or more of the following criteria:
    - The form was empty or illegible
    - The form did not include information regarding assets in the Movables, Business or Real Estate categories
    - There was no currency type was listed (for example: “Home worth 1,500”)
    - The information contained in the form did not include monetary values (e.g., “We were quite wealthy”)
    - The phrasing of the form itself did not allow for the extraction of reliable data (e.g., “Were it in Israel today, what would be the value in shekels of the property left behind?”

Stage 2 – Entering Testimonial Data

Testimonials were entered into a country-specific Excel spreadsheet created in tandem with the structure of the testimonial forms and the needs of the project, according to the following parameters:

a. Personal Information
a. Real Estate
b. Business
c. Movables
d. Rural Lan

Claimants were instructed to list the value of their assets in the year in which the assets were abandoned. Therefore, as a rule, values were entered into the spreadsheet according to the currency used in the testimonial and the value of that currency in the year in which the claimant left their country of origin.

Exceptional to this are any testimonials for which the analyst was able to conclude that the values were not listed in regard to the year in which the claimant left their country of origin. This was the case in the following circumstances:

a. The form itself instructed claimants to report values for a particular year, regardless of when they left their country of origin (for example: one version of the forms instructed all claimants to list the value of their assets as of 1949).

b. The claimant listed values in a currency which was not in circulation at the time in which they left their country of origin (for example: a testimonial which reports values in NIS or EUR, despite the fact that the claimant left their country of origin in 1952).

c. The claimant explicitly wrote that the values were reported in regard to a different year.

d. In the analyst's judgement, it is not reasonable for the values listed to reflect the year in which the claimant was displaced.

e. Any other circumstance in which the analyst concluded that a year other than the year of displacement should be used.

Stage 3 – Analysis of Testimonial Data

To effectively and efficiently analyze the testimonial data, the following procedures were followed:

Historical exchange rates for the testimonial currencies were identified in the following sources:

a. IMF Tables: "Exchange Rates Selected Indicators." IMF data. Accessed August 28, 2024. https://data.imf.org/regular.aspx?key=61545850

b. IFS – IMF 1950: International Financial Statistics: International Financial Statistics, December 1950. Washington, D.C: International Monetary Fund, 1950, p. 34 & 54

c. Pacific Exchange Rates: Antweiler, Werner. "Foreign Currency Units per 1 U.S Dollar, 1948-2015." PACIFIC Exchange Rate Service, 2016. https://web.archive.org/web/20150512095429/http:/fx.sauder.ubc.ca/etc/USDpages.pdf.

It should be noted that the world exchange rate mechanism from 1944 until 1973 was operated under the auspices of the Bretton Wood agreement. Under this agreement, exchange rates were determined by pegging the countries rates to the gold standard and movements between major currencies were comparatively rare. Changes had to be formally implemented only after an application to the IMF/World bank. There were no constant hourly or daily changes as there are today – indeed rates could remain unchanged for years on end.

Because different testimonials were submitted at different times, individuals left their country of origin at different times, and values were listed using different currencies, a "base year" was identified and defined as the year in which the testimonial loss values are stated. A "valuation start year" was also identified, based on the circumstances governing each country. In each asset category, the relevant valuation start year is used as a benchmark. Testimonial data for each country was then converted to the valuation start year in two steps.

a. Base year values for each loss category in the testimonial files were converted from the testimonial currency to USD in the base year using the exchange rate data (for example, real estate in Syria with a base year value of 20,000 SL in 1953 was converted to a value of 9,132 USD in 1953).

b. The base year value in USD was then converted to the country's "valuation start year" in USD using the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Inflation Calculator (Inflation Calculator | Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis (minneapolisfed.org)) (for example, real estate in Syria with a converted value of 9,132 USD in 1953 was converted to a value of 7,617 USD in 1947, as this was the base year for valuation for Syria).

It should be noted that testimonials given in NIS were not used due to the assumed difficulty in recalling and converting values in these cases which would call into question their reliability.

Relevant population data and socioeconomic breakdowns of classes for each country were determined through primary and secondary research materials. Testimonial data was then divided into social classes based on the percent of population per socioeconomic breakdown, using the available data from relevant research materials. Social classes were consolidated into three groups:

d. Wealthy and Upper Middle
e. Middle
f. Lower Middle and Poor

The summary of each country-specific testimonial data yielded a series of values per socioeconomic class. The median of the data in each social class was then calculated and multiplied by the number of households per class to determine the total asset value per class.

Due to the small number of testimonials in several of the categories, the following adjustments were made:

a. The median calculation for each group includes the highest value of the class immediately below. For example: the range for the wealthy and upper middle class begins at the highest value of the middle class and extends to the highest value in the wealthy and upper-middle class group, thus creating a continuous range for calculations

b. In cases where there were less than 10 testimonials in total in a given loss category, the median of all of the data in the category was used rather than dividing the data into the three classes above. The median was multiplied by the total number of households to arrive at a total loss value for the category.

2.7. Methodology for present day valuation

The above steps are meant to document Jewish refugees' losses, which include the assets' market value at the relevant benchmark year (or a substitute value based on the best evidence available), plus interest. The final figures should reflect the actualized, present-day valuation of all assets under consideration, reflected in 2024 US dollars (USDs).

Due to the high number of countries under consideration, a preference emerged for a single standard with which to measure all principal amounts. In addition, the fact that the testimonial data had been converted into USDs for base year values and valuation start year values supports the decision to rely on a rate of interest measured in USDs. The choices available are therefore between relying on either nominal or real inflation rates, the US consumer price index inflation rate, or some other relatively risk-free rate, in order to actualize the valuation principles in the most substantive and appropriate manner possible. Judgement was that the latter inflation rates are too reliant on particular economic trends in the United States and are not the best determinants of an interest rate that fully actualizes the value of the assets under consideration. And while there is no internationally recognized, absolutely risk- free rate, it was decided to use the 10-year US Treasury Yield Rate.

Furthermore, it was resolved that a compound interest formula is the most appropriate formula for calculating actualized value plus interest, instead of simple interest, in order to show the present market value of the assets under consideration in addition to compounded interest rates on those assets. $FV = PV\ (1+i/n)^{nt}$. This formula takes into account both inflationary and interest on value effects and thus reflects the most substantial actualized value of the original assets. The compound interest formula was applied on a yearly compounding basis, ending on December 31, 2024.

2.8. Methodology for the remaining 7 country reports

Four reports have been published under this project scope, finding $**166,239,520,930** of lost assets across Egypt, Syria, Iran and Iraq. This project also encompasses seven additional countries:

- Aden
- Algeria
- Lebanon
- Libya
- Morocco
- Tunisia
- Yemen

However, the documentation available for review of these seven countries was not on par with the data collected for the first four. Despite a thorough review of historical sources, discussions with subject-matter experts, and community leaders, as described above, the collection of available testimonial data was insufficient to be relied upon to conclude on the financial value of the Jews' lost assets. Therefore, to estimate financial losses, an updated valuation methodology was used. We note that the resulting conclusions are provided for illustrative purposes only and should not be considered as exact figures.

Due to the lack of reliable testimonial and historical data for the seven remaining reports, it was determined that the analysis for Egypt, Syria, and Iraq would be used for illustrative purposes. Iran was left out of this analysis due to its valuation start year being significantly different than the other three countries (1979). Iran also had very different circumstances in comparison to the other countries reviewed at the time. It was reasoned that the Jewish population's circumstances across the ten countries were similar in many ways, and therefore the lost assets found, at 1948 values, in the first three countries was used to determine the value of lost property per person, as shown in the table below.

Table 5 - Range of Lost Assets for Egypt, Iraq, & Syria ($, 1948)

Range of Lost Assets for Egypt, Iraq, & Syria ($, 1948)			
	Egypt	**Iraq**	**Syria**[60]
Total Value ($, 1948)	1,147,100,811	656,611,052	215,562,196
Population[61]	75,000	135,000	30,000
($) Value per person	15,295	4,864	7,185

This determined the range of lost assets across Arab countries: Jews lost an estimated **$4,864** to **$15,295** per person. This range was then applied to the population of each remaining country and a mid-point was calculated, per the table below.

60 Syria's valuation start year is 1947, therefore it was decided to convert Syria's total assets as of 1947 to 1948 values to properly calculate a range across the three countries (Egypt, Iraq, and Syria). The reported total assets for Syria as of 1947 ($ 200,167,458) were converted to the 1948 USD value ($ 215,562,196) using the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis' Inflation Calculator (https://www.minneapolisfed.org/about-us/monetary-policy/inflation-calculator).

61 All population figures are based on Roumani population chart, for the year 1948.

Table 6 - Range of Lost Assets for Remaining Seven Countries ($, 1948)

Range of Lost Assets for Seven Countries ($, 1948)							
	Aden	Algeria	Lebanon[62]	Libya	Tunisia	Yemen	Morocco[63]
Jewish Population	8,000	140,000	6,000	38,000	105,000	55,000	265,000
Estimated - Low Range	38,910,285	680,929,980	29,182,713	184,823,852	510,697,485	267,508,206	30,467,470
Estimated - High Range	122,357,420	2,141,254,847	91,768,065	581,197,744	1,605,941,135	841,207,261	336,863,513
Estimated - Mid Point	**80,633,852**	**1,411,092,414**	**60,475,389**	**383,010,798**	**1,058,319,310**	**554,357,734**	**183,665,491**

We note that though this methodology is intended for informative and illustrative purposes only, it is still lacking in that it is based on values found in other countries and is not adjusted to reflect the exact situation of each jurisdiction. Similar to other attempts to value lost assets following wars and other tragedies,[64] this project was predicated on the availability of contemporaneous evidence, historical sources, and testimonial data. The inability to rely on the latter opens the door for inaccuracy, overstatement, and falls below the standard set for this project. Additionally, this method does not consider country-specific considerations such as GDP, the Jews' socio-economic status and their relative wealth as compared to non-Jews, and their ability to take their assets with them when leaving the countries. It also does not reflect macro-economic conditions that might have impacted the value of the property in question.

In the absence of the "best evidence" to reach accurate and verifiable country-specific values, other valuation exercises have applied various levels of discount factors to manage the risk of overstatement created by the methodologies' shortcomings. For example, the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC) notes:

> *"For instance, in the case of estimated cost of repair work not yet completed, in the absence of documents such as a quotation or description of damage, a 50 per cent discount factor was applied to the amount claimed. On the other hand, when claimants filed optional documents that had not been required upfront but which could serve to substantiate the claim, this would result in an add back to the adjusted value. The total of all deductions and add backs would result in an assessment score expressed as a percentage and applied to the adjusted value. The assessment score could not be higher than 100 per cent or lower than 0 per cent."*[65]

62 All population figures are based on Roumani population chart, for the year 1948. However, we note Lebanon's population is based on estimates for 1958, as the base year valuation date for the country is 1967, and 1958 is the last population estimate available through Roumani that predates 1967.

63 As Morocco had no state-directed confiscation of Jewish-owned assets, and many Jews were able to divest themselves of their assets and/or bring them out of the country, it was deemed inappropriate to try and project wholesale losses of assets. Therefore, a range based on communal assets of the first three reports was used for Morocco instead.

64 As outlined in IOM's "Property Restitution and Compensation: Practices and Experiences of Claims Programmes" (2008) publication.

65 2008. "Property Restitution and Compensation: Practices and Experiences of Claims Programmes." International Organization for Migration.

To accommodate the issues listed above, it was determined that a discount factor should be applied to the range of values for each of the seven countries. A discount factor of 50% was determined based on precedent discounts and the following:

- To migrate for the risk of overstatement if any evidence fell sort of standards
- To migrate risks due to limited testimonial data
- To account for some countries, such as Morocco, where the Jewish population was able to divest their assets and/or bring them out of the country, limiting total property losses
- To account for other countries, such as Yemen, where the population was mostly rural and poor, and there was a lack of public synagogues
- To account for other countries, such as Lebanon, where some of the Jewish population was able to leave and liquidate their assets in a relatively orderly fashion prior to the outbreak of the civil war in 1975
- To account for other countries, such as Algeria, where some of the Jewish population received compensation from the French government

The discount factor of 50% was applied across the range of values for each of the seven countries, as shown in the table below. This led to a mid-point of **$1,865,777,494** across all seven countries.

Table 7 - Range of Lost Assets for Remaining Seven Countries after discount ($, 1948)

	Aden	Algeria	Lebanon	Libya	Tunisia	Yemen	Morocco[66]
Discount	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Estimated – Mid-Point (with Discount)	40,316,926	705,546,207	30,237,695	191,505,399	529,159,655	277,178,867	91,832,746

Finally, using the previously discussed present valuation methodology, each of the seven countries estimated mid-point with discount were brought forward to a present-day value as of December 31, 2024. This led to a total present value of **$96,556,730,734** across all seven countries. See the tables below:

66 It is noted that Morocco's range is based on communal assets only, as many Moroccan Jews were able to divest themselves of their assets and/or bring them out of the country, therefore communal assets were most likely the largest loss category.

Table 8 – Range of lost assets & estimated present values for remaining Seven Countries ($, 1948)

	Estimated Mid-Point with 50% Discount ($, 1948)	Estimated Present Value ($, 2024)[67]
Aden	40,316,926	2,102,856,725
Algeria	705,546,207	36,799,992,688
Lebanon[68]	30,237,695	818,350,236
Libya	191,505,399	9,988,569,444
Morocco[69]	91,832,746	4,789,827,140
Tunisia	529,159,655	27,599,994,516
Yemen	277,178,867	14,457,139,985
Total of Remaining Country Reports	**1,865,777,495**	**96,556,730,734**

Range of Lost Assets for Seven Countries ($, 1948)							
	Aden	Algeria	Lebanon[70]	Libya	Tunisia	Yemen	Morocco[71]
Population	8,000	140,000	6,000	38,000	105,000	55,000	265,000
Estimated – Low Range	38,910,285	680,929,980	29,182,713	184,823,852	510,697,485	267,508,206	30,467,470
Estimated – High Range	122,357,420	2,141,254,847	91,768,065	581,197,744	1,605,941,135	841,207,261	336,863,513
Estimated - Mid-Point	**80,633,852**	**1,411,092,414**	**60,475,389**	**383,010,798**	**1,058,319,310**	**554,357,734**	**183,665,491**
Discount	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Estimated – Mid-Point (with Discount)	**40,316,926**	**705,546,207**	**30,237,695**	**191,505,399**	**529,159,655**	**277,178,867**	**91,832,746**
Estimated Present Value ($, 2024)[72]	**2,102,856,725**	**36,799,992,688**	**818,350,236**	**9,988,569,444**	**27,599,994,516**	**14,457,139,985**	**4,789,827,140**

67 Rates from 2024 to 1954 are from "Interest Rates: Long-Term Government Bond Yields: 10-Year." Federal Reserve Economic Data. 2024 rate represents average interest rate through December 31, 2024 based on available data. Retrieved from https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?id=IRLTLT01USQ156N ; Rates from 1954 to 1948 are from "An Update of Data shown in Chapter 26 of Market Volatility." R. Shiller, Princeton 2015. Retrieved from http://www.econ.yale.edu/~shiller/data.htm. R. Shiller notes that pre-1953 rates are government bond yields from Sidney Homer A History of Interest Rates

68 All population figures are based on Roumani population chart, for the year 1948. However, we note Lebanon's population is based on estimates for 1958, as the base year valuation date for the country is 1967, and 1958 is the last population estimate available through Roumani that predates 1967. We also note that the estimated present value is based on the start year of 1967 for Lebanon, while all other countries are based on 1948

69 It is noted that Morocco's range is based on communal assets only, as many Moroccan Jews were able to divest themselves of their assets and/or bring them out of the country, therefore communal assets were most likely the largest loss category.

70 We note Lebanon's population is based on estimates for 1958, as the base year valuation date for the country is 1967, and 1958 is the last population estimate available through Roumani that predates 1967. We also note that the estimated present value is based on the start year of 1967 for Lebanon, while all other countries are based on 1948.

71 As Morocco had no state-directed confiscation of Jewish-owned assets, and many Jews were able to divest themselves of their assets and/or bring them out of the country, it was deemed inappropriate to try and project wholesale losses of assets. Therefore, a range based on communal assets of the first four reports was used for Morocco instead.

72 Rates from 2024 to 1954 are from "Interest Rates: Long-Term Government Bond Yields: 10-Year." Federal Reserve Economic Data. 2024 rate represents average interest rate through December 31, 2024 based on available data. Retrieved from https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?id=IRLTLT01USQ156N ; Rates from 1954 to 1948 are from "An Update of Data shown in Chapter 26 of Market Volatility." R. Shiller, Princeton 2015. Retrieved from http://www.econ.yale.edu/~shiller/data.htm. R. Shiller notes that pre-1953 rates are government bond yields from Sidney Homer A History of Interest Rates.

Additional historical context was provided across all loss types under review for each of the seven countries, however additional valuation details were not provided in these sections.

Grand Summary Chart

Lost Assets Across All Countries ($)		
Country	**Base Year Value ($, 1948)[1]**	**Estimated Present Value ($, 2024)**
Egypt	1,147,100,811	59,816,315,234
Iran[2]	5,879,126,747	61,491,251,179
Iraq	656,611,052	34,239,408,861
Syria[3]	200,167,458	10,692,545,656
Subtotal of Comprehensive Reports	**7,883,006,068**	**166,239,520,930**
Aden	40,316,926	2,102,856,725
Algeria	705,546,207	36,799,992,688
Lebanon[4]	30,237,695	818,350,236
Libya	191,505,399	9,988,569,444
Morocco	91,832,746	4,789,827,140
Tunisia	529,159,655	27,599,994,516
Yemen	277,178,867	14,457,139,985
Subtotal of Remaining Country Reports	**1,865,777,495**	**96,556,730,734**
GRAND TOTAL	**9,748,783,563**	**262,796,251,664**

[1] All country base years are for 1948, except for Iran (1979), Syria (1947), and Lebanon (1967). Note for the remaining seven countries (Aden Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen) the value is based on an estimated mid-point with discount, based on updated methodology discussed in detail within chapter 2.
[2] Note Iran's Base Year is 1979.
[3] Note Syria's Base Year is 1947.
[4] Note Lebanon's Base Year is 1967.

Chapter 3

Tunisia Historical Section

Section 1 – Historical Background

Origins of the community

According to Tunisian Jewish tradition, Jews first arrived in Tunisia after the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem in 586 BC[73]. However, concrete historical evidence indicates that their presence in Tunisia dates back to at least the 2nd century AD. They were present in Carthage, the capital of Roman Africa, as evidenced by a large necropolis discovered there. Jewish communities also existed in other parts of the country, such as Naro[74] and Hadrumète (today Sousse). Byzantine conquest in 535 led many Jews to flee to mountainous regions and the desert, where they may have converted Berber tribes to Judaism[75].

Following the Arab conquest in the 7th century, Jews and Christians were given the choice of converting to Islam or paying a tribute to the conquerors. Most chose to pay tribute and remain faithful to their beliefs. They were then classified as "People of the Book" (those who believe in the Holy Scriptures) and were both protected and discriminated against – under the status of dhimmi. They had to pay a poll tax (jizya) to the Muslim state, which was supposed to ensure their safety and protection. They were also subject to certain restrictions, such as a dress code and a ban on marrying Muslim women. They lived in separate quarters in every major town, especially in Tunis, and were not allowed to acquire properties in towns and villages[76]. Jewish communities enjoyed religious and internal autonomy[77].

In the late 10th and early 11th centuries, Kairouan, the first capital of Arab Tunisia, had a large Jewish population. This period marked a golden age for the community, characterized by notable figures such as Isaac Israeli (Yitzhak Ben Shlomo)[78], the governor's physician; Dunash Ben Tamim[79], a doctor, linguist, astronomer, and mathematician; and Rabenu Hananel[80], whose Talmudic interpretations are well-known. Jews were also present in other cities like Mahdiya and Sousse, engaging in trade and crafts. In rural areas, they practiced agriculture and animal husbandry. Some were even nomadic, a vestige of the Judaized Berber tribes [81].

The Jewish community in Tunisia was gravely affected by the 12th century Almohad

73 Saadoun, Haim. Tunisia. In Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer (eds.), *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in modern times* (Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 445.

74 Biebel, Franklin M. The Mosaics of Hammam Lif. *The Art Bulletin* (1936) 18(4), pp. 541-551.

75 Les Juifs de Tunisie: Quelques repères historiques. *Confluences Méditerranée* 10 (1994), pp. 149-154.

76 Saadoun, 2002, p. 445.

77 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

78 Lasker, Daniel J. Israeli, Isaac ben Solomon. In *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, Executive Editor Norman A. Stillman. Consulted online on 20 July 2024 http://dx.doi.org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_COM_0011770

79 Wechsler, Michael G. Dunash (Abū Sahl) ben Tamīm. In *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, Executive Editor Norman A. Stillman. Consulted online on 20 July 2024 http://dx.doi.org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_0006780

80 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

81 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

conquest. The Almohad rulers, who were intolerant of religious minorities, forced Jews and Christians to convert to Islam or face death [82]. This period, which lasted nearly a century, was the darkest in the history of Jewish communities in the Maghreb. Judaism was practiced in secret, and many Jews were forced to convert. Some Jews managed to maintain their faith, thanks in part to the teachings of Maimonides, who advised them to bend but not break under pressure[83].

In the 13th century, under the *Hafsid* dynasty, Jewish communities re-emerged in Tunisia. They returned to cities like Tunis and engaged in various professions, including crafts, trade, and finance. Some even served in the Muslim state administration, working as mint masters, customs officials, interpreters, and translators. The late 15th century saw the expulsion of Jews from Spain and Portugal, leading many to seek refuge in Muslim states, including those in North Africa [84]. While the number of Jewish immigrants to Tunisia was not as large as in Morocco and Algeria, some families of Iberian origin did settle there [85].

Ottoman period (1574-1881)

In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire conquered Tunisia, establishing it as a regency under the control of provincial governors (*bey*, in Turkish). These governors were initially subordinate to the Ottomans, but later, under the *Husainid* dynasty, which ruled Tunisia from 1705 onwards, became more and more autonomous [86].

By the 18th century, the Jewish community in Tunis was estimated to be around 15,000 people, out of a total Jewish population of 30,000 in the entire country. Jews played a significant role in Tunisia's economic life, working as merchants, bankers, artisans, and in various other professions. They also served the Muslim state in various capacities, such as minting coins, managing finances, and even serving as diplomats [87].

The reasons for the Jews' prominent role in the Muslim state were manifold. Their expertise in precious metals, knowledge of currencies, and accounting skills were valuable assets. Additionally, their minority status made them dependent on the protection of the ruler, which in turn fostered loyalty and diligence. However, despite their contributions, Jews remained subject to discriminatory laws and practices under their designation as *dhimmi* [88].

By the mid-19th century, Tunisia had a Jewish population of 25,000-30,000, primarily residing in the capital, Tunis. This population was divided into two main groups: the *Twansa*, Arabic-speaking Jews with deep roots in Tunisia, and the *Grana*, descendants of Jews from Livorno and other Italian cities who had settled in Tunis in the 17th and 18th centuries [89]. The *Twansa* constituted the majority of the Jewish population and held the position of *qa'id*, the communal leader. There were also some nomadic Jewish groups living in rural areas, indistinguishable from their Arab neighbors in terms of

82 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
83 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
84 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
85 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
86 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
87 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
88 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
89 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

dress and lifestyle[90].

Despite their place in Tunisian society in this period, Jews were still subject to discrimination and persecution. Louis Frank, a physician of Belgian origin and the personal physician of the ruler of Tunisia, Hamouda Bey (ruled 1782-1814), described the situation of the Jews in his memoirs:

> *"The Jews are the only subjects of the Regency who pay a personal tax to the bey. However, although this payment is claimed for their protection, nothing is more common than to see them being molested and even struck by the Moors. Moreover, they accept these mistreatments and blows with astonishing resignation. However, should one of them dare to reply to his aggressors, he would most certainly run the risk of becoming involved in serious proceedings from which he could extricate himself only at the cost of a large sum of money. Often these insults have no other aim but this abusive and tyrannical extortion…*
>
> *"It is remarkable that the Moorish women do not feel obliged to veil themselves before a jew, whom they consider to be no more than a vile animal and who they are far from believing belongs to the human race"* [91]

The efforts of some Jews to escape their status as *dhimmi* by seeking the patronage of European powers, which had already begun to exert their influence in the region, repeatedly caused tensions with the Muslim community[92]. In 1823, for example, the Bey prohibited all Jews, including those under foreign protection, from wearing modern hats, which symbolized their liberation from *dhimmi* status. This decision caused a crisis with England, after an English subject, a Jew from Gibraltar, refused to wear the traditional hat and was imprisoned. Only after the English fleet approached Tunisia did the Bey exempt foreign subjects from this rule [93].

Another issue was the persistent accusation that Jews cursed Muhammad or Islam. A famous case occurred when a Jewish wagoner named Batto Sfez got into a skirmish with a Muslim in 1856. Their exchange grew increasingly heated until the Muslim suddenly accused Batto of cursing the religion of the Prophet. The police intervened, arresting Batto Sfez and throwing him in jail. Several witnesses described the act of blasphemy that the Jewish coachman was accused of [94].

The matter was brought before the Bey, who could have punished Batto with torture, but preferred to transfer the case to the Sharia Court. Despite Batto Sfez's vigorous protests and claims of innocence, the court found him guilty. News of the sentence spread throughout the city, causing a great uproar. Representatives of foreign powers, called upon by the Jewish community, tried to persuade the Bey to soften the sentence or at least postpone the execution, but to no avail. The sentence was upheld, and on June 24, 1857, the unfortunate Jewish coachman was executed: the executioner cut off his head with a single swing of the sword [95].

The execution of Batto Sfez remains a tragic event in the collective memory of Tunisian

90 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
91 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
92 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
93 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
94 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
95 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

Jews. It inspired a *kina*, a folk mourning poem in Jewish-Arabic, which was printed in no less than three versions in the late 19th century [96]. But it also had a far-reaching impact on the general history of Tunisia. Using this case as a pretext to further their interests in Tunisia, France and Britain urged the Bey to implement reforms similar to those carried out by the Ottoman Empire during the Tanzimat period. The arrival of a French squadron of ships into the port of Tunis convinced the Bey to no longer oppose these liberal reforms. On September 10, 1857, Muhammad Bey published the "Basic Charter," a statement on human rights that provided considerable security to all residents of Tunisia [97].

This statement was followed in the following years by a series of laws, which transformed the regency of Tunisia into a parliamentary monarchy, where all residents, regardless of origin or religion, could enjoy the same rights [98]. Of particular note was the equality established between Jews and Muslims. The reforms granted Jews and Muslims the same rights and imposed the same duties on them, effectively eliminating all forms of discrimination against Jews and ending their centuries-long status as *dhimmi* [99]. What is most important to note here is that these reforms and the equality of Jews before the law was achieved due to foreign interference and not due to internal changes in Tunisian Muslim society.

The liberal reforms had significant impact on the living conditions of Jews in Tunisia. Jews were granted the right to wear red clothing like Muslims, allowing them to abandon the black caps that had been imposed on them. Jews were also granted the right to purchase immovable property, both within and outside the city. Additionally, due to overcrowding in the Jewish neighborhood (*hara*) of Tunis, Jews were allowed to live in neighboring streets, where they renovated dilapidated houses and built new ones. The requirement for Jews to pay the special tax, the Jizya, was also abolished [100].

Jews enthusiastically welcomed the liberal reforms, while Muslims had reservations as it abolished their preferential status. These deepening tensions were evident in an uprising in 1864, which was caused among other things by the economic hardships of the population, and which targeted Jews, especially in Sfax and Djerba [101].

French colonial period

The 1881 Treaty of Bardo established a French protectorate in Tunisia. Although the *beys* retained their rule, it was now under French control. While the establishment of the protectorate did not provoke significant opposition among the Muslim population, it was welcomed with clear satisfaction by the Jewish population. The Jews believed they would benefit from the changes France would introduce. They anticipated that their situation would improve under the protection of a nation that championed human rights and citizens' rights and was the first to extend these rights to Jews. The increasing closeness between the Jewish community and France provoked the anger of the Muslim population, who struggled to accept the changing social status of the

96 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
97 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
98 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
99 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
100 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.
101 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

Jews. They began to perceive the Jews as collaborators with the French occupiers [102].

Indeed, French colonization soon brought about a series of changes that profoundly affected the life of the Jewish minority [103]. Although Jews remained subjects of the Tunisian Bey, their personal security was enhanced, and discriminatory practices in various areas of life were abolished. The relationship between their representatives and government authorities also changed, and certain individuals were granted the right to receive French citizenship. Some Jews entered professions such as medicine, law, and paramedical services, contributing significantly to the country's development [104].

The Jewish population in this period consisted of three groups with distinct legal statuses. The first group comprised Tunisian Jews who were French subjects, but under the authority of the Bey. It is estimated that they accounted for at least 80% of the Jewish population. The second group consisted of Jews with Italian citizenship, estimated to represent about 5% of the Jewish population. The third group included Tunisian Jews who had received French citizenship. Although the exact number of this group is unknown, it is estimated that they made up about 10% to 15% of all Jews in the country. Tunisia was unique in the Maghreb for having a Jewish population with three different legal identities [105].

102 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

103 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

104 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

105 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

Figure 1 – A Jewish family in Tunisia, 1950

Source: JDC Archives

Despite the relative improvement in the lives of Jews, anti-Jewish incidents continued to occur. During the summer of 1917, anti-Jewish riots broke out in the main cities of Tunisia. One of them occurred on the night of August 19, when three Muslim soldiers were injured in Tunis during a fight with some Jews. The following day, Muslim soldiers on leave in the Kasbah looted the Jewish quarter. The riots lasted for three days and spread to other cities across Tunisia, including Bizerte, Sousse, Gabès, Sfax, and Kairouan. These events primarily involved looting and damage to Jewish property [106].

Other anti-Jewish incidents occurred in 1918 in Tunis and in 1924 in Ariana, a prestigious suburb of Tunis with many Jewish residents. The violence in Ariana involved attacks on Jews not only by Muslims but also by French settlers [107].

106 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

107 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

Impact of the Arab Israeli conflict and World War II

The rising Tunisian nationalism had a strong affinity with the Arab and the Islamic world. As the Arab-Jewish conflict over the British Mandate of Palestine intensified, especially after the 1929 Arab riots, Tunisian nationalists became increasingly committed to the Arab Palestinian cause, reflecting their pan-Arab stance. Local activists conducted extensive propaganda campaigns throughout Tunisia, and anti-Zionist and antisemitic pamphlets were widely published. Muslims were periodically called to participate in mass prayers and special fasting days for their "oppressed brothers" in Palestine, and decisions were made to boycott Jewish trade, products, and services. These developments exacerbated the strained relations between Jews and Muslims [108].

During World War II, Tunisia was the only French North African territory to have had direct contact with the German army, as it was occupied for about six months. Despite the presence of SS units prepared to implement the Final Solution, the Jews of Tunisia were spared due to the brief Axis occupation [109].

During the German occupation, the *Bey* of Tunisia warned the Germans that the Jews must not be tortured because they were his subjects. He also worked to prevent the enforcement of the yellow star. However, evidence regarding Tunisian society's attitude towards the Jews is mixed. During this period, violent anti-Jewish incidents occurred in several cities, including in Gabès, where seven Jews were killed and 18 were injured by Muslims. German and Italian soldiers entered at least twice into the Hara, led by Muslims. They entered Jewish houses, raped women and caused great damage in body and property. On the other hand, there are testimonies referring to Muslims who sheltered Jews whose houses were destroyed by shelling or who feared conscription. Sometimes, Jews paid significant amounts for this shelter [110].

Tensions in Tunisia and anti-Jewish sentiments rose following the UN resolution in favor of the partition of Palestine on November 29, 1947. On December 5, 1947, thousands of demonstrators in Tunis heard the leaders of the main nationalist party, *Destour*, speaking harshly about "the betrayal by the Jews of Tunisia" and warning that "the time to respond will come." The Tunisian Committee for the Defense of Palestine collected over 100,000 francs. The French increased security in the Jewish quarter, and tension was palpable in the Jewish community [111].

The most significant reaction of the Tunisians was to volunteer for the war against Israel. About 2,500 volunteers, mostly from central and southern Tunisia, left for Libya on their way to Israel to join the fighting Arab forces. This effort, organized by the *Destour* movement mainly through preaching in mosques, ended in failure. The volunteers did not reach Israel and remained in Libya [112].

108 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

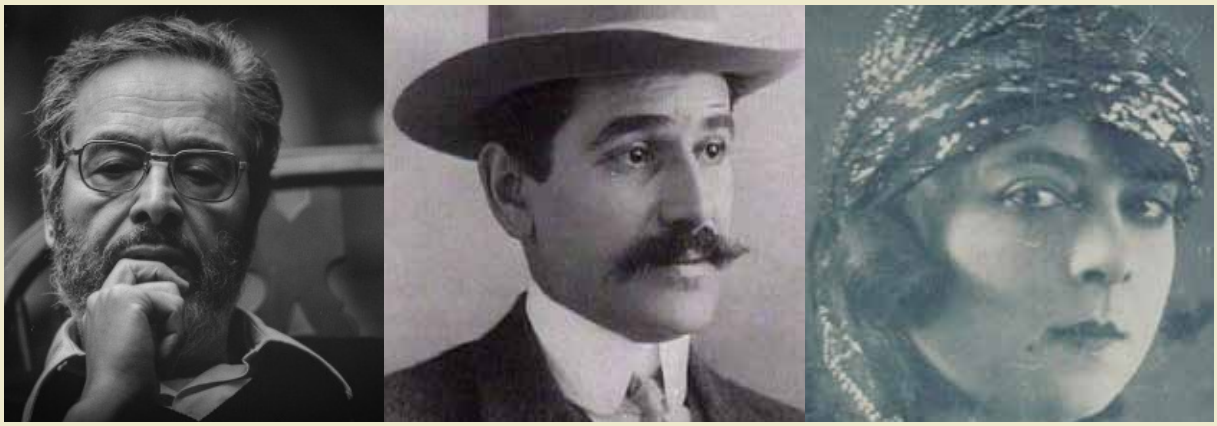
109 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

110 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

111 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

112 Les Juifs de Tunisie, 1994, pp. 149-154.

Jewish contribution to Tunisia



Habiba Messika, Albert Samama Chikly and Albert Memmi

Developments in Tunisia in the 20th century spurred rapid economic growth in various sectors. This transformation of Tunisian society was evident in the growth of international trade, industry, agriculture, small businesses, and the rise of freelancers in numerous fields, including medicine, pharmacy, banking, journalism, colonial administration, education, and research. This period created a demand for skilled professionals with relevant education and knowledge of French, providing a favorable environment for the integration of Jews[113].

Approximately ten percent of the Jewish workforce was engaged in liberal professions. This percentage was likely higher among Jews with French and Italian citizenship. As education expanded and French universities became accessible, Jews increasingly pursued careers in medicine, law, pharmacy, and architecture. Consequently, their representation among lawyers and doctors exceeded their proportion in the general population. For instance, between the two world wars, three Jews served as heads of the bar association, and eight Jewish doctors were among the twenty candidates for chairman of the Association for Medical Sciences. From 1936 to 1939, about 40 percent of the 200 lawyers in the country were Jews. In Tunis alone, 244 doctors practiced, of whom 111 were Jews. The cinema industry was also predominantly Jewish-owned[114].

A few Jewish figures are worthy of special note. Among the Jewish activists who contributed to the Tunisian national struggle, lawyer **Élie Zérah** was particularly prominent at the beginning of the 20th century. He formulated the claims of the *Destour* (the Tunisian Constitutional Movement) at the Paris Peace Conference in 1920. **Albert Bessis** (1885-1972) wad member of the Tunis city council (1938-1943 and 1943-1945) and an expert member of the Tunisian delegation in the negotiations with France in 1954-1955 towards independence. He served as minister of urbanism in 1955-1956 and was elected to the Tunisian National Assembly from 1956 to 1969[115]. **Albert Cattan**

113 Saadoun, Haim. The Jews in the local economy. In Haim Saadoun (ed.), *Tunisia* (Ben-Zvi Institute, 2005), pp. 62, 67.

114 Saadoun, economy, pp. 62, 67.

115 Saadoun and Sebag, 2021, pp. 199-200; Kazdaghli, Habib. Bessis, Albert. In *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, Executive Editor Norman A. Stillman. Consulted online on 27 July 2024 http://dx.doi.org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_0004240

(1875-1932) was one of the founding members of the Tunisian socialist party[116].

Jews were also prominent in the performing arts. **Raoul Journo** (1911-2001) was one of the most popular Arab singers of the 20th century in Tunisia[117]. **Albert Samama Chikly** (1872-1934) was a filmmaker and photographer, considered one of the earliest pillars in world cinema. He was the first feature film maker in Tunisia and one of the pioneers of cinema in the Arab world and Africa. He also introduced the bicycle, the wireless telegraph and the first X-ray machine to be installed in a Tunisian hospital[118]. **Habiba Messika** (1895-1930) was one of Tunisia's best-known singers and actresses during the musical revival in the early 20th century. Her career came to end in 1930, when her jealous wealthy lover doused her in petrol while she slept, burning her alive[119].

Perhaps the best-known and most influential Jewish figure born in Tunisia was **Albert Memmi** (1920-2020). Born on the edge of Tunis's Jewish quarter, Memmi has been a central figure in colonial and postcolonial studies all around the world. Sociologist, philosopher, and novelist, Memmi was associated with the anticolonial struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, most notably in Tunisia itself. His career has spanned fifty years, more than twenty book-length publications, and hundreds of articles[120].

The Jewish exodus: The first wave (1948-1956)

In 1948, Tunisia had a Jewish population of approximately 105,000. About three-quarters were Tunisian citizens, less than a quarter held French citizenship, and a few thousand were Italian or British citizens. This period likely marked the peak of the Jewish population in the country. Jews were actively involved in sports, cultural activities, and vibrant social life. However, significant changes were on the horizon[121].

116 Kazdaghli, Habib. Cattan, Albert. In *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, Executive Editor Norman A. Stillman. Consulted online on 27 July 2024 http://dx.doi.org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_000175

117 Taïeb, Jacques. Journo, Raoul. In *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, Executive Editor Norman A. Stillman. Consulted online on 27 July 2024 http://dx.doi.org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_0012220

118 Corriou, Morgan. Albert Samama, a Tunisian filmmaker in the Ottoman Empire at war (1911-1913). In Samuel Sami Everett and Rebekah Vince (eds.), *Jewish-Muslim interactions: Performing cultures between North Africa and France* (Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 23-41; Julius, Lyn. *Uprooted* (Vallentine Mitchell, 2018), p. 65.

119 Tobi, Yosef. Messika, Ḥabiba. In *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, Executive Editor Norman A. Stillman. Consulted online on 27 July 2024 http://dx.doi.org.bengurionu.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1878-9781_ejiw_SIM_0015200

120 Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. Albert Memmi. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 18 May. 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Albert-Memmi. Accessed 4 August 2024.

121 Taïeb, Jacques. The unsuccessful integration of Tunisian Jews. In Shmuel Trigano (ed.), *The end of Judaism in Muslim lands* (Carmel, 2009), pp. 206-208. [Hebrew]

Table 9 - Demographic Breakdown of Ethnic Groups in Tunisia, 1946 Census

Group	Population
Tunisian Muslims	2,833,000
Tunisian Jews	*70,900
Other Muslims	87,500
French	144,000
Italians	84,900
Other Europeans	6,700
Total	**3,227,000**

*This figure does not take into account the approximately 30,000 Jews with European citizenship in Tunisia

With the establishment of the State of Israel, particularly from the spring of 1949, a few thousand Tunisian Jews began leaving to the new Jewish state. This first wave included Zionist activists, devout religious individuals, and the economically disadvantaged, mainly from Southern Tunisia, who were seeking better opportunities. By the early 1950s, nearly 100,000 Jews still remained in Tunisia, maintaining their visibility in public life and their economic influence, as many professionals, merchants, and industrialists did not leave[122].

The remaining Jewish community in Tunisia faced a challenging new reality. As demands for independence among Tunisian Muslims grew, many Jews hesitated to fully join the struggle because they wanted the French to remain for their protection. This led to increased perceptions among Muslims of Jews as traitors and collaborators with the French occupiers. The Jewish community found itself in an impossible situation, caught between the conflicting demands of the Muslim population and the French, both of whom demanded their allegiance. The Jews in Tunisia sought to maintain neutrality to avoid future harm[123].

Increasing political violence in the years preceding Tunisia's independence in 1956 raised significant concerns within the Jewish community. There was a fear of returning to a subordinate status in a Muslim-majority country—once Tunisia gained its independence—and anxiety influenced by the plight of Jewish communities in other Arab countries. These concerns were particularly acute in southern Tunisia, where Jews faced harassment from the Muslim majority. Israeli emissaries in Tunisia reported that Jewish women were being raped and Jewish girls kidnapped by their Muslim neighbors[124].

These events prompted more Jews to leave Tunisia, and by 1956, about a third of the Jewish community had left the country. While Jews left Tunisia primarily due to their attraction to the Holy Land between 1948 and 1951, later departures were driven

122 Taïeb, 2009, pp. 206-208.

123 Laskier, Michael M. *North African Jewry in the twentieth century: The Jews of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria* (New York University Press, 1994), pp. 254-286.

124 Laskier, 1994, pp. 254-286.

by escalating tensions and fears for their future in the country. By the end of 1957, between 65,000 and 70,000 Jews remained in Tunisia[125].

During this period, Tunisian nationalist forces, including Destour Party leader Habib Bourguiba, sought to reassure the Jewish community and convey that integration into the newly independent state would indeed be possible. In August 1952, the Bey of Tunisia invited 42 Tunisian leaders, including two Jews, to discuss political reforms proposed by the French authorities. In 1954, the Tunisian government declared the Jewish Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, as a legal holiday. A Jewish minister was appointed to the government in 1957, and the new president, Habib Bourguiba, visited the Jewish quarter in Tunis[126].

However, despite these efforts, violence against Jews and attempts to push them out persisted. In January 1952, an attempted pogrom in the Jewish quarter of Tunis was thwarted by self-defense groups, though a young Jewish man was killed by a Muslim policeman. A bomb was planted in a Jewish gathering place in Tunis, and armed individuals (known as the "corridor men") attacked Europeans and Jews at night[127].

The second wave (1956-1967)

The remaining Jews in Tunisia hoped that Bourguiba's stance would prevail over the anti-Jewish sentiments in the country. However, his initial goodwill gestures ultimately proved unsuccessful. The Jewish government minister André Barouch did not survive the first cabinet reshuffle, and no Jew was appointed to a ministerial post again. The goodwill extended to Jews in the higher echelons of government did not permeate the lower ranks, where attitudes ranged from traditional contempt to outright hostility. As Tunisia naturally gravitated towards increased identification with the Arab world, the divide between Muslims and Jews widened[128].

Moreover, government actions, such as the decision in July 1958 to replace the Jewish Communal Council of Tunis and reduce its authority, had a detrimental psychological impact on Jews. They perceived their traditional communal structures as being under siege. The official push for Arabization and cultural conformity in Jewish educational institutions only exacerbated their fears instead of fostering integration[129].

Many Jews throughout Tunisia believed that their communal life had come to an end by 1961, and several political developments prompted them to leave in increasing numbers. Firstly, dramatic military clashes between the Tunisian and French armies in the port city of Bizerte not only signified the final blow to French colonialism in Tunisia but also intensified accusations against Tunisian Jews for aligning with the French from the beginning. During the crisis, Jews were accused in the nationalist press of sympathizing with France and being a potentially disloyal element. These accusations shook the faith of many Tunisian Jews in the attitudes of their Muslim compatriots[130].

Secondly, negative coverage of the Jewish community in neighboring Algeria in the Tunisian press portrayed North African Jewry in a highly unfavorable light. Consequently,

125 Taïeb, 2009, pp. 206-208.

126 Taïeb, 2009, pp. 206-208.

127 Taïeb, 2009, pp. 206-208.

128 Stillman, Norman A. *The Jews of Arab lands in modern times* (The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), pp. 172-174.

129 Stillman, 1991, pp. 172-174.

130 Laskier, 1994, p. 301.

many Jews concluded that, since the press was partially government-controlled, these articles reflected a negative regional stance vis-à-vis the Jews. Lastly, following the events in Bizerte, there were indications that Bourguiba, who had previously kept his distance from the Arab League and the Egyptian leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, adopted a closer approach to them in the early autumn of 1961[131].

The outcome of these developments led to the Jews of Tunisia being perceived by the Muslim majority as outsiders to the Tunisian nation. They were required to prove their loyalty and were viewed as a potential fifth column[132]. In this impossible and menacing atmosphere, over 70 per cent of the Jewish population left the country in the decade following Tunisian independence, and before the outbreak of the Six-Day War[133].

The final blow to the Jewish community in Tunisia came in June 1967, when around 23,000 Jews still lived in the country. On June 5, 1967, a crowd of Tunisian Muslims, shouting slogans such as 'Down with the Jews,' 'Into the Sea with the Jews,' and 'Let's Burn the Jews,' set fire to the monumental Star of David adorning the front of the Great Synagogue of Tunis. Widespread anti-Jewish riots erupted in Tunis that day, resulting in the looting of most Jewish shops and businesses. Dozens of vehicles were damaged, and demonstrators even attempted to set fire to buildings where the frantic Jewish population had sought refuge. Many young Jews were attacked and beaten[134].

Despite President Bourguiba's strong condemnation of the riots and government promises to punish the perpetrators and provide restitution, a sense of despair took hold of the Jewish community. Eyewitnesses noted that Jews concluded there was no future for them in Tunisia. Most remaining Jews fled to France, and by 1968, only about 7,000 to 8,000 remained in the country[135]. The community continued to dwindle, and current estimates suggest that there are approximately 1,500 Jews in Tunisia, with about 1,000 residing in Djerba[136].

131 Laskier, 1994, p. 301.

132 Haley, Sean. *Seeking a place in a nation: The exodus of the Tunisian Jewish population 1954-1967*. 2012. American University in Cairo, Master's Thesis. https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/1018, pp. 83-84.

133 Chouraqui, André N. *Between east and west: A history of the Jews of North Africa* (Varda Books, 2001), p. 268.

134 Laskier, 1994, p. 306.

135 Stillman, 1991, pp. 172-174.

136 U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report: Tunisia.* 2022. https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/tunisia

Table 10 - Departure of Tunisian Jewish community to Israel and Other Countries, 1948-71

Year	No. of Emigrants to Israel	No. of Emigrants to Other Countries*
1948	6,200	
1949		
1950	3,725	
1951	3,414	
1952	2,548	
1953	606	
1954	2,651	
1955	6,104	
1956	6,545	
1957	2,667	
1958	1,326	
1959	425	
1960	509	
1961	N/A	
1962	2,093	
1963	904	
1964	816	
1965	7,753	
1966		
1967		
1968		
1969		
1970		
1971		
Total	**48,286**	***60,000~**

*Best estimates indicate that approximately 60,000 Jews from Tunisia left predominantly for France and other Western countries over this period

Source: JDC Archives

Chapter 4

Tunisia Economic Section

Section 1 – Methodological Benchmarks

Based on the information presented above regarding the makeup of the Jewish community in Tunisia in 1948, the following dates and figures will serve as a methodological benchmark for different points of analysis regarding the analysis of different categories of Jewish assets:

Valuation Start Year:

The year 1948 represents a reasonable benchmark regarding the beginning of the Jewish community's gradual departure from Tunisia, as well as a reasonable date from which to assess property values, as it predates the downward price-spiral associated with larger waves of Jewish departure in the years following.

Size of the Jewish community:

For the purposes of this report, a total Jewish Tunisian population of 105,000[137] Jews, as supported by Roumani, will be used to value Jewish property.

Distribution of Jewish population:

Based on the information presented below in detail, the Tunisian Jewish population was calculated to be 10% rural and a 90% urban.

The distinction between rural and urban communities allows one to draw a simple distinction between vastly different types of communities (in terms of geography, literacy rates and type of education and employment, average size and value of land and property etc.).

Urban areas are widely recognized as larger metropolitan centers and their immediate environs/hinterlands, while rural communities are characterized by their distance from urban centers, their relatively smaller numbers, and an agriculture-centric way of life

Jewish demographics:

As mentioned in detail below, the average size of a Jewish family being utilized for the relevant period covered, is 7.

137 Roumani, Maurice. *The Case 2; WOJAC's Voice* Vol.1, No.1. 1978.

Section 2 – Economic Indicators

The following section is meant to describe the types of activities and occupations that characterized Jewish economic life in Morocco in the time-period under consideration. The data and conclusions from this section will serve as a point of departure for further analyses regarding the Jewish community's economic strength in Tunisia.

Jewish Demographics in Tunisia

The roughly 105,000 Jews living in Tunisia in 1948 constituted 3.25% of the total Tunisian population.[138] Around 70,000 of them were Tunisian nationals ("native" Tunisian Jews without European citizenship) while the rest possessed European citizenship.[139]

Map 2 - Jewish Communities in Tunisia Before 1948

Source: Gilbert, Maps

The Jewish population was concentrated along the Mediterranean coast, with major population centers in Tunis (65,000), Sfax (4,500), and Sousse (4,000). Other significant Jewish population centers included Gabès, Nabeul, Medenine, and Djerba, while the

138 Laskier (1997), pg. 257

139 Most Jews holding European citizenships held French citizenships, while some held Italian citizenships and a smattering of other European nationalities

rest of the Jewish population was spread out in smaller towns and villages.[140] Most Jews lived in urban population centers[141] and their environs in the north of the country (approximately 61 percent of all Jews in Tunisia lived in Tunis and its surroundings) in close proximity to a high percentage of European residents as well.[142] More rural, less developed communities were scattered in the interior and the south, in towns and villages of a more traditional orientation. Altogether, there were twenty-six major Jewish communities in Tunisia, along with smaller groupings of Jews in more isolated locales.[143]

Table 11 - Demographic Breakdown of Ethnic Groups in Tunisia, 1946 Census

Group	Population
Tunisian Muslims	2,833,000
Tunisian Jews	70,900[144]
Other Muslims	87,500
French	144,000
Italians	84,900
Other Europeans	6,700
Total	**3,227,000**

Table 12 - Demographic Breakdown of Ethnic Groups in Tunisia, 1956 Census

Group	Population
Tunisian Muslims	3,383,904
Tunisian Jews	57,792[8]
Algerian Muslims	66,885
Other Muslims	19,304
French	180,440
Italians	66,910
Other Europeans	7,974
Total	**3,783,209**

140 Laskier (1997), pgs. 257-258

141 Nelson and Reese, pg. 68 - "Urban residents made up 47.5 percent of the national population in 1975 as compared with 40 percent in 1966 and 30 percent in 1956." - It should be noted, however, that the Jewish population was much more urban than the rest of the population. The more rural Jewish population of southern Tunisia represented approximately 10% of the total Jewish population.

142 Gilbert, pg. 194

143 Laskier (1997), pgs. 194-195

144 These figures do not take into account the approximately 30,000 Jews with European citizenship in Tunisia

Table 13 - Jewish-Tunisian Population per Year and Locality[145]

	1909(a)	1921	1926	1931	1936	1946	1956	1976
Ariana	153	1,373	1,169	2,637	2,619	3,128	2,678	-
Béjà	540	1,14	1,035	986	998	1,011	620	20
Ben Gardane	234	314	313	458	489	675	365	85
Bizerte	1,125	1,522	1,39	1,25	1,342	1,037	958	15
Djerba	3	3,779	3,828	4,098	4,109	4,294	2,684	1,1
Gabès	1,271	2,523	2,495	2,459	2,552	3,21	2,252	70
Gafsa	250	636	695	663	577	639	320	-
Hammam-Lif	57	345	394	283	543	674	489	-
Kairouan	483	294	270	236	226	168	82	-
La Goulette et Carthage	825	1,54	2,057	843	1,668	3,641	3,327	-
La Marsa	324	360	334	285	131	405	290	-
Le Kef	750	784	812	891	807	357	313	-
Moknine	699	595	616	635	651	612	125	-
Monastir	405	195	168	166	142	124	33	-
Nabeul	1,56	1,545	1,737	1,795	1,912	2,058	1,161	115
Sfax	2,722	33,331	3,265	3,058	3,466	4,223	3,168	205
Sousse	2,681	3,531	3,728	3,672	3,741	3,574	3,282	320
Tunis	24	19,02	24,131	25,399	27,345	34,194	32,000	4,6
(a): Diapers E. Vassel, le Juif à l'intérieur de la Tunisie								

Demographically, the Jewish community was statistically in between the European and Muslim communities. In the mid-1950s, the average number of children per Jewish family was about 5 children.[146] The Jewish population was also relatively young: infants and young people made up 44 percent of the Jewish population (Muslims – 50 percent; Europeans – 30 percent); the 21 – 49 age group constituted nearly 41 percent of the total population; Jews 50 and over represented nearly 15% of the total population.[147]

145 Figures collected from different sources: "Regards sur les Juifs de Tunisie" par Robert Attal et Claude Sitbon; Gilbert; Laskier (1997)

146 Laskier (1997), pg. 271 – we will use this figure for the Tunisian Jewish community in 1948 as well, for lack of more precise information for this year

147 Ibid.

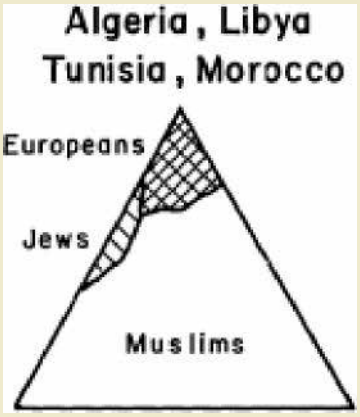
Table 14 - Distribution of Tunisian Jews by Age Group, 1953-54[148]

Age	Percentage of Population
0-19	44
20-49	41
50+	15

Jewish Participation in Tunisia's Economy

Tunisia's location on the Mediterranean coast, as well as the Jewish community's proclivity to living in coastal settings, contributed to a pattern of Jewish economic participation concentrated in transnational commercial activity. As the French entrenched themselves in the Tunisian economy, Jews gradually moved into other areas of economic activity such as industry, banking, and other free professions such as medicine, legal services, public administration, and public education. And while Tunisia's main occupation entailed farming and other rural pursuits, Jews comprised a comparatively small part of the agricultural rural economy, moving into more modern industrial, commercial, and white-collar professions as these opportunities arose.[149]

Figure 2 - Depiction of Jewish economic placement relative to Europeans and Muslims in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco



Source: Issawi, pg. 9

Jewish Tunisian Employment

Different sources describe the spectrum of Jewish employment in Tunisia in the early 1950s. According to a report by Naphtali Ben-Giora, a representative of the Jewish Agency who conducted an in-depth report on the urban Jewry in Tunisia in 1950, found that approximately 10-15% of urban Jews were described as affluent property owners and businessmen who invested their surplus capital in immoveable assets. Another 20% of urban Jews were described as store owners and small businessmen, and trade intermediaries who mainly invested their surplus money in savings. Lastly, 20% of urban Jews were described as artisans: shoemakers, tinsmiths, tailors and the

148 Laskier (1997), pg. 254

149 Saadon, pg .63 – The percentage of Jews engaged in agricultural work did not pass the 1% threshold

like, most of whom were unable to invest in immoveable assets, whose income was mostly derived from selling their product, and who most likely owned their workshops.[150] Bar-Giora provides less information on the class of French-educated professionals who represented a growing, urban middle class among the Jewish population. Other sources claim this class, consisting of lawyers, doctors, teachers and administrators, represented about 9% of the total Jewish population in the 1946 Census.[151] These reports suggest that roughly 36%-41% of the Jewish working community could be classified as menial workers, with little steady work and little assets to their name.

Research on neighboring Jewish community's socioeconomic distribution for the entire French controlled area of North Africa suggests, however, that the size of the 'Wealthy' class was much more exclusive. Indeed, the approach attaches a 0.1% categorization to this class and proceeds accordingly in this report as well. The size of the next socioeconomic class is adjusted accordingly, expanding the size of the 'Upper-Middle' class to 18.9% as a further breakdown of Laskier's analysis.

Table 15 – Employment Distribution of Urban Jews in Tunisia, 1950[152]

Socioeconomic Class	Employment Type	Percentage of Urban-Jewish Labor Force	Assets
Wealthy	Affluent property owners and businessmen	0.1%	Invested capital in immoveable assets
Upper-Middle	French-educated professionals and intellectuals (lawyers, doctors, rabbis, administrators etc.)	18.9%	N/A
Middle	Store owners, small businessmen, and trade intermediaries	20%	Invested money in savings
Lower-Middle	Artisans (shoemakers, tinsmiths, tailors etc.)	20%	Mostly possessed assets that were easy-to-liquidate and moveable assets
Poor	Menial Work	41%	Basic moveable goods

Furthermore, figures collected by Paul Sebag - author of the book "Histoire des Juifs de Tunisie" (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1991) - reflect the distribution of Jewish employment according to employment sector at the time of the 1946 and 1956 census:

150 Laskier (1997), pg. 258
151 Ibid., pgs. 221-22
152 Laskier (1997), pg. 258

Table 16 - Employment of Jews in all of Tunisia, 1946 Census[153]

Employment Type	No. of Jews	Percentage of all Jews Employed in Tunisia
Industry	9,265	46.5%
Commerce & Banking	6,594	33.1%
Intellectual and Liberal Professionals	1,781	8.9%
Storage and Transport	1,166	5.9%
Independent	687	3.4%
French-Jewish Administrators	320	1.6%
Agriculture	115	0.6%
Total	19,928	100.0%

Table 17 - Employment of Jews in the Capital city of Tunis, 1956 Census[154]

Employment Type	No. of Jews	Percentage of all Jews Employed in Tunisia
Industry & Merchants	2,580	32.6%
Salaried Employees	1,800	22.8%
Laborers	1,370	17.3%
Unemployed	1,120	14.2%
Middle Class	600	7.6%
Liberal Professions	260	3.3%
Other	70	0.9%
Agriculture	60	0.7%
Services	50	0.6%
Total	7,910	100.0%

For the purposes of this report, these distributions of Jewish employment categories and percentages were representative of the working Jewish population in Tunisia in 1948.

153 Laskier (1997), pg. 258

154 Saadon, pg. 68. Based on Paul Sebag's figures

Figure 3 - Jewish artisan working in new quarters funded through a JDC loan. Tunis, circa 1954

Source: JDC Archives

Figure 4 - ORT school for boys. Two students in woodworking class. Tunis, 1954

Source: JDC Archives

Tunisian Jewish Community Dissolution

The dissolution of the Tunisian Jewish community took place over a comparatively long period of time. While some Jewish communities in the Arab world were almost entirely displaced in the immediate years following the founding of the State of Israel, Tunisian Jews began leaving in the late 1940s and early 1950s and then started leaving in more significant numbers after Tunisian independence in 1956 and after new rounds of violence between Israel and her Arab neighbors.

Beginning in 1948, the founding of the State of Israel, combined with a heightened sense of turmoil and uncertainty about the future of Tunisia, prompted Tunisian Jews to start leaving for Israel. This movement resulted in a 15% decrease in the Jewish

population in Tunisia over the course of four years.[155] In the early 1950s, news of the hardships facing new immigrants trickled back to Tunisia. This reality, compounded by an economic downturn in Israel, caused a slowdown in Tunisian Jews leaving for Israel. Altogether, the departure rate during these years, combined with the natural growth rate of the Jewish community, amounted to a small dent in the size and vitality of the Jewish community.[156] But by 1954, the French had given Tunisia political autonomy, and the Jewish community, fearing the departure of the French and an independent Tunisia, began to leave in droves, with 30,000 leaving for Israel and France between 1954 and 1957.[157]

The newly independent government of Tunisia, headed by President Habib Bourguiba, sought to create a religiously tolerant atmosphere that was accepting of the native Jewish community. No laws were passed to discriminate against Jews in particular, and Jews were extended the same political rights as all Tunisians.[158] The desire of the Jewish community to feel at ease in the newly independent Tunisia was challenged at times, as was the case during the Tunisian government's transfer of the old Jewish cemetery and the razing of the Jewish quarter of Tunis in preparation for an urban renewal project.[159] In general though, the Jews who stayed in Tunisia hoped to integrate and remain in the country, as was reflected by a significant decrease in the number of Jewish departures after the anxiety accompanying independence passed. Low emigration numbers would last until 1961.[160]

Later that year, however, President Bourguiba ordered the evacuation of the last French forces from naval bases in the northern port city of Bizerte. This confrontation escalated into violence, with the Jewish community in Bizerte caught in the crossfire. This event was followed by stricter regulations on communications between Tunisian Jews and Israel, setting off Jewish fears anew. Soon after, only Jews with French citizenship were allowed to depart Tunisia with their belongings, on the condition that they could prove that their final destination was France and not Israel. Some were able to register their properties with the French consul and at least maintain a record of their possessions. Some opened bank accounts abroad and coordinated with families in France to avoid as much economic loss as possible.[161] Jews bearing Tunisian citizenship did not have a consul to turn to for help, could not make arrangements for safekeeping their property, were allowed to leave the country with only 30 Dinars, and were forbidden from taking their property with them to their destination.[162] Within weeks of the Bizerte crisis, about 2,500 Jews left Tunisia, mostly for France.[163]

By 1962, only 30,000 Jews remained in Tunisia. Later on, during and after the 1967 war, Jewish businesses suffered heavy damages, further encouraging the departure

155 Perkins, pg. 148

156 Saadon, pg. 24

157 Simon, pg. 455; Saadon, pg. 24; Meeting of the Administration Committee of the Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC), NY55-64- CR_006_0529: "In addition to the 6,000-7,000 who leave for Israel yearly, about 150 leave for France monthly."

158 Simon, pg. 456

159 Simon, pg. 46

160 Ibid.

161 Laskier (1997), pg. 302

162 Ibid., pgs. 456-57; 95 Franco-Tunisian Negotiations, AJDC File NY55-64_CR_006_0537: "Frenchmen in Tunisia may not be dispossessed of their property except through expropriation for public purposes."

163 Saadon, pg. 24

of the Jewish community.[164] Within six months of the war, 10,000 Jews left Tunisia, mostly for France.[165] Ten years later, the size of the Jewish community would number under 10,000.[166] Over the next two decades, until 1984, nearly the entirety of the remaining Jewish community, numbering just over 11,000 over this time period, left for Israel and France.[167] The war between Israel and Lebanon in 1982, the subsequent transfer from Beirut to Tunis of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and the rise of fundamentalist Islamist political sentiments, gradually pushed what remained of Tunisia's Jewish population to leave. Today, around 1,500 Jews remain in Tunisia.[168]

Figure 5 - Classroom in JDC-sponsored school for Jewish children. Tunis, 1958

Source: JDC Archives

Figure 6 - 12-year-old Denise Sitruc during mealtime at the JDC maintained orphanage. Hammam- Lif, 1951

Source: JDC Archives

164 Laskier (1997), pg. 457

165 Saadon, pg. 24e

166 Laskier (1997), pg. 278; AJDC Files NY_74_CR_0380 and NY_74_CR_0365 - It was also reported that in the months following the 1967 war, approximately 11,000-14,000 Moroccan and Tunisian Jews made their way to France (of whom, approximately 30% were Tunisian Jews), where French authorities acknowledged that most could not release their assets before leaving and arrived with only $100 on their person.

167 Rahmani – The exact number of Jews from Tunisia who left for France is unknown. Rahmani estimates that around 60,000 Jews from Tunisia (including those with and without French citizenship) left for France, while Saadon estimates that 35-40 percent of Jews from Tunisia left for France.

168 Laskier (1997), pg. 457

Figure 7 - Three young Jewish girls. Djerba, 1950s

Source: JDC Archives

Figure 8 - Children after their meal in the JDC-supported canteen. Tunis, 1951

Section 3 – Land Distribution

This section will discuss the legacy of the Ottoman land tenure system on the distribution of public and private lands in Tunisia as well as subsequent changes to land registration practices instituted by French authorities in the time of the French Protectorate.

Tunisian Land Tenure System

Before the arrival of the French in Tunisia, the Tunisian land tenure system operated according to Ottoman land tenure laws. Under this land tenure system, five categories of land registration were common in rural areas:[169]

- **Mulk,** or private (freehold) property, was land to which an individual held full rights of ownership and usufruct[170] as a result of succession, sale, donation, or development.
- **Waaf** was generally constituted from mulk as a permanent endowment to an Islamic religious foundation such as a mosque, a shrine, or one of the Holdy Cities of Islam.
- **Miri** was land to which the state held domanial rights and also direct control of usufruct.
- **Matruka** was state land to which a village, tribe, or other unit claimed inalienable usufruct in collectivity.
- **Mawt** or "dead" land, was either uncultivated or uncultivable and free of individual appropriation.

During the majority of Ottoman rule, under this land categorization, only Muslims could acquire title to real estate. This rule was changed in 1857 under pressure from French and English consuls to allow the right to acquire private property to all inhabitants of Tunisia, regardless of nationality or religion.[171] As it pertains to Jews, anecdotes show that nationalized Jews were able to own property as early as 1880.[172]

French Registration Practices

French authorities instituted a modern code of land registration in 1885 that laid the groundwork for the registration of land titles to European settlers who would acquire a majority of Tunisia's fertile land over the upcoming decades. The French, eager to capitalize on the opportunity to register the most productive lands to their own citizens, proceeded to do so quickly and comprehensively.[173] Considering the entirety of Tunisia's unregistered land, however, the French were slower and less meticulous in registering lands that did not pertain to their immediate interests. "Up to the end of 1957 registration of land and surveying had been completed only for one-quarter of the cultivable area of the Republic."[174]

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169 Balgley, pgs. 4, 5

170 Usufruct refers to an arrangement whereby the owner of a piece of land leases the use of the land (while enjoying a portion of the profits resulting from the use of the land) to a second party who enjoys an agreed-upon portion of profits and/or usage rights

171 Crist, pg. 404

172 Ibid., pg. 403

173 Duwaji, pg. 130 - "By 1937 about 1,720,000 acres were in the hands of French settlers. This formed about 95.0 percent of the lands owned by the Europeans. Four companies owned about one-fourth of the French total. These were "the Societe Marsellaise de Credit, 100,000 acres; Compagine des Phosphates et de Chemin de Fer Gafsa, 75,000 acres, Societ6 de Fermes Fransiise, 68,000 acres; Omnium Immobiles Tunisen, 71,000 acres.""

174 Barbour, pg. 327

Table 18 - Land Use in Tunisia ('000s acres/dunams), 1957[175]

Use Type	Total No. of Acres	Conversion to Total No. of Dunams
Total area	31,250	126,464
Productive area	18,250	73,855
Forests	2,250	9,105
Esparto grass	1,500	6,070
Pasture	7,500	30,351
Cereals	4,250	17,199
Fruit & olive trees	2,250	9,105
Various	500	2,023

To sum up, the key takeaways from the data available on land distribution in Tunisia in 1956 are as follows:[176]

- Total land in Tunisia: 31,250,000 acres
  - Tribal (common) lands: 7,410,000 acres (1/10 officially registered, the rest unofficially distributed amongst different tribes)
  - Melk (freehold, private property): 5,434,000 acres
    - 1,050,000 acres assigned to colonists
  - Miri (State land): 1,976,000 acres
    - 803,000 acres registered to colonists
    - 1,173,000 acres registered to Tunisians
  - Habous (religious endowments): 3,211,000 acres
    - 1/6 (~535,000) acres assigned to private occupants

- Total productive/arable land in Tunisia: 18,250,000 acres

- Total registered land in Tunisia: 4,693,000 acres (1/4 of arable land)

  - Total European owned land: 1,853,000 acres (~1/10 of all productive land in Tunisia)
    - Divided amongst ~4,000 Europeans (mostly French)
    - Average landholding size: 750 acres
  - Total land allotted to native Tunisians: 3,347,000
    - Divided amongst ~5,000 Tunisian landowners with large landholdings and ~450,000 Tunisians who own/lease small properties and depend on subsistence farming

- European population in Tunisia in 1956 – 180,000 French, 60,000 Italians
  - Jewish population with French nationality in 1956: ~30,000 (16.6% of French population in Tunisia)

175 Barbour, pg. 330

176 Barbour, pgs. 327-330; Duwaji, pgs. 139-140

Jews and Land Distribution

As mentioned above, there is evidence of Jewish landownership of a sizeable parcel of land in Tunisia as early as 1880. European influence on Tunisian land codes allowed Jewish nationals to purchase and hold private property in Tunisia. Based on available information, aside from the restriction on non-Muslims from laying claim to habous (religious) lands, Jews were able to purchase rights to miri (state) lands and melk (freehold, private) lands. And while there is no supporting evidence to suggest that Jews were the beneficiaries of specific tribal, common lands (lands attributed to groups who were known to have settled a specific piece of land from "time immemorial"), there is also no evidence to counter the suggestion that lands of permanent Jewish inhabitance were registered to the Jewish communities, or at least recognized as 'de facto Jewish' by the sheer presence of an ancient Jewish community on the same pieces of land.

As mentioned above, there is little supporting primary evidence based on official registrations from which conclusions can be drawn of Jewish landownership in Tunisia. This lack of land registration records may very well be derived from the aforementioned differences between British and French Mandatory administrative practices. There is also the consideration that affluent Jews with the capacity and spare income to afford landownership were likely to also be Jews bearing French citizenship (the evidence available does not differentiate French landownership according to religion).

Thus, in order to draw the best conclusions regarding Jewish landownership in Tunisia, in both rural and urban locales, use of the land distribution statistics described above (as the 1957 figures represent the comprehensive and relevant landownership information currently available, these figures will be used as estimates to describe the distribution of land ownership in 1948) along with the most relevant assessment of Jewish economic indicators will be made. These will be combined to suggest an estimation of Jewish landownership that will serve as the basis for a valuation of Jewish landownership in Tunisia.

Section 4 – Rural Assets

4.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

This section discusses the condition of rural land and property ownership by Jews in Tunisia.

A concentrated registrar listing Jewish rural landownership in Tunisia was not available. French administrative records show few distinctions among their ruled populations, a practice which made distinguishing between Jewish and Muslim land records very difficult. Land records that were maintained were likely in place only to serve the interests of the French colonists.

Nevertheless, other statistical indicators can be relied on to narrow down a reasonable assessment of Jewish landownership based on the French presence in Tunisia and the characteristics of Jewish employment at the same time.

As mentioned above, the Jewish community in Tunisia was primarily urban (90% urban

vs. 10% rural). In addition, based on the employment figures presented above, a very small number of Jews were employed in the agricultural sector (no more than 1% of gainfully employed Jews - approximately 100). These figures, however, tell little about actual Jewish land ownership. For purposes of this report, we relied on assessments of French rural landownership in Tunisia.

While there is not an exact distribution of landholding according to nationality, it is known that the two primary European settler groups in Tunisia were the French and the Italians, where the Italians were mostly working-class farmers who worked on French and Tunisian owned farms. Due to the method by which unregistered lands were sold off (mainly to French-connected settlers), it is reasonable to assume that approximately 95% of the total European landownership was French (3,800 individuals or entities). Moreover, out of a total French population of approximately 150,000 French nationals in Tunisia in 1948, it is known that approximately 30,000 of them were Jewish, comprising 20% of the total French population in Tunisia at the time. As the percentage of French landowners who were Jewish is unverified, it was decided to superimpose the percentage of French-Jews out of the total French population in Tunisia on the number of French landowners in Tunisia in order to come to a reasonable assessment of Jewish rural landownership in Tunisia in 1948.

To do so, the 30,000 French-Jewish population should be broken down to households based on the aforementioned demographic of the Jewish family size being 7, generating a total of 4,285 households. This figure represents the maximum number of likely Jewish candidates who would be capable of owning land in Tunisia. This number ought to be tested against the number of potential Jewish landowners gleaned from a statistical analysis of the socioeconomic distribution of all Jews. Assuming that only Jewish households represented by the top two socioeconomic classes could have afforded to own rural land on the scale of estates owned by other Europeans, it was calculated that the number of potential Jewish households that owned rural land on was on the basis of these two classes. It is recognized that Jews belonging to the 'Poor' and 'Lower-Middle' classes may have owned smaller plots of rural land, but there is a dearth of information to verify this possibility. It was thus resolved to concentrate on the former classes for the purposes of this section.

Moreover, as mentioned above, the average size of French land holdings were about 750 acres.[177] This number, however, is heavily skewed due to the ownership by French companies of massive agricultural estates that proved far larger than an individual possession of land, or even of a medium-sized enterprise for the production of wheat or wine. In contrast, it is known that the average size of the more modest Italian landownership was 75 acres.[178] Thus, considering that most Jewish landowners were likely French and that at least a few of them were invested in company-sized enterprises the report assumes an average size of Jewish land ownership of 100 acres, or 404.686 dunams.

There is one primary source of evidence to suggest vast Jewish landholdings of a particular sort that can be relied on to further the valuation of Jewish rural land ownership. A 1948 Histadrut report on Jews in North Africa described the economic

177 Barbour, pgs. 327-328

178 Ibid.

conditions of Jews in Tunisia.[179] The report mentions that the olive oil industry in Tunisia is one of the most profitable industries in Tunisia and relays that according to the Tunisian Agricultural Offices' statistics, there were 50 million olive trees in Tunisia. The author of the report also states that many millions of these trees are held by Jews. The author does not provide a specific number, but given that French settlers owned the vast majority of such lands in Tunisia, and given that Jews comprised 20% of the French population in Tunisia at the time, the maximum number of olive trees that may have been owned by Jews was likely at most 20% of the 50 million olive trees mentioned, or 10 million olive trees. To this extent, several testimonials of Jewish refugees from Tunisia who filled out lost property reports corroborate this possibility. One testimony describes a family owning "thousands of dunams worth of olive groves"[180] while another describes owning 400 olive trees.[181]

By way of further analysis, the report produces a valuation of rural property owned by Jews in Tunisia. Rural property entails the extent of immoveable property in rural areas. This category would normally include all types of property including buildings and infrastructural investments. The limited information available on this topic, however, has led to a concentration on calculating the extent and value of residential buildings in rural Jewish communities. This exercise does not aim to calculate the value of any property that was part of the larger, rural landholdings described above (mostly owned by wealthy, urban Jews) and considers their value to be reflected in the value of rural land calculated above.

As such, the following includes information describing Jewish property ownership in the poorer Jewish communities in the interior and south of the country. A series of correspondence between Gerhart Reigner, Director of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) Geneva office, and Jacques Lazarus, a French military officer who had been active in the Jewish resistance in France during WWII, contained descriptions of Jewish life in Morocco and Tunisia between 1947 and 1952. With regard to more rural communities in southern Tunisia and the country's interior,

"Jewish property was characterized by ownerships of small houses and stores… In Jerba and southern Tunisia, Jewish property is characterized by a small house of 4-5 rooms (there are also houses with two stories). Every house is worth approximately 600,000 Francs (before the beginning of Aliyah) …In addition real estate the Jews have many stores…making up approximately 80% of all shops there."[182]

Based on population charts from this era, 10% of the Jewish population in Tunisia, or 1,500 households.

179 HC 163/14 - "Establishment of a banking institution for the liquidation of Jewish property in Tunisia," 14/11/1954. Report from M. Marcus, the Jewish Agency, to L. Grossman, head of the economic department

180 Testimonials from the Ministry of Citizen Equality

181 Ibid.

182 WJC Archives: correspondence from Gerhart Reigner, Director of the World Jewish Congress Geneva office,

Section 5 – Urban Assets

5.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

This section will carry out a summary of urban land and urban property owned by Jews in Tunisia.

5.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

The main source of primary supporting evidence of the extent and value urban property owned by Jews in Tunisia comes from first-hand testimonials by Jewish refugees from Tunisia stored in Israeli archives at the Ministry for Social Equality. Jews from Tunisia filled out a total of 113 testimonials, most of which contain information relevant to the purposes of this project. However, not enough data was available to calculate the scope and value of urban assets owned by Jews in Tunisia in 1948.

Section 6 – Loss of Employment

6.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

This section will carry out a summary of employment and labor for Jews in Tunisia.

6.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

Economic data from the World Bank and further analysis by Deininger, Squire, and Simmons show the relative distribution of income in Tunisia in 1970-1975 across the five quintiles that make up the Tunisian class structure.[183] These quintile distributions can be assumed to correlate to the five socioeconomic classes described in the employment report, describing the distribution of Jewish employment in Tunisia. This provided a broad sense of the relative size of income distribution that characterized these classes.

Additionally, data on income distribution in 1961 showed the distribution of annual income based on different income levels corresponding to the aforementioned five socioeconomic classes. This provided a sense of the average annual income relating to the different classes.[184] However, there was not sufficient information to draw conclusions with respect to the value employment losses as of 1948.

183 King, pg. 39 – This distribution represents the most comprehensive and relevant distribution of its kind that the research has currently come across and shall be used for the purposes of this report for our analysis on figures in 1948.

184 Ibid., pg. 70

Section 7 – Personal Property & Moveable Assets

7.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

This section will carry out a summary of personal property and moveable assets owned by Jews in Tunisia. For the purposes of this report, personal property and moveable assets include cash, gold and silver, jewelry, private vehicles, commodity stocks, clothing, household goods and furniture.

7.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

For the purposes of this report, data collected from firsthand testimonials currently stored in Israeli archives was considered. In the case of Tunisia, such testimonials did not provide a complete indication of the private property and moveable assets lost by the Jewish community of Tunisia.

Section 8 – Business Losses

8.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

This section will carry out a summary of businesses owned by Jews in Tunisia and business losses.

8.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

For the purposes of this report, data collected from firsthand testimonials currently stored in Israeli archives was considered. In the case of Tunisia, such testimonials did not provide a complete indication of the businesses lost by the Jewish community of Tunisia.

Section 9 – Communal Losses

9.1 Objectives and Scope of Work

In addition to private ownership by Jewish individuals throughout Tunisia, the Jewish community owned communal assets that belonged to the Tunisian Jews as a whole. This section will carry out a summary of communal assets owned by the Jewish communities in Tunisia. Such assets include synagogues, cemetery land, other communal assets such as mikvahs, and schools, as well as holy books and other moveable assets.

9.2 Research Analytical Conclusions

The most comprehensive accounting of Jewish communal property in Tunisia is a list of all synagogues in Tunis and its surroundings in 1956.[185] The list shows that there were 82 synagogues in Tunis and its environs. At the time, approximately 70% of all Jews in Tunisia lived in Tunis and the surrounding areas, yielding a citywide Jewish population of approximately 65,000[186] Jews. Using these figures, we reach an approximation of 790 Jews per synagogue. Considering that Jews had begun to leave Tunisia throughout the 1950s and given the lower population density of Jews throughout Tunisia when other Jewish communities outside of Tunis are considered, a ratio of 1,000 Jews per synagogue was assumed for the whole of Tunisia. Relying on such a ratio for the Jewish population of Tunisia in 1948, it was assessed that there were 100 synagogues in Tunisia in 1948 that were owned by the Jewish community.

There are no comprehensive records listing the number of cemeteries and mikvahs that served the Jewish community in 1948, although evidence was found of at least 7 Jewish burial sites in Tunisia.[187] However, assuming each of the 26 Jewish communities in Tunisia had their own cemetery, it was concluded that there were at least 26 Jewish cemeteries in Tunisia. Partial records listing other communal properties such as schools, hospitals, community centers, rabbinic courts, sports organizations, and Zionist offices were also found.[188] Altogether, these buildings amount to another 40 buildings counted towards Jewish communal property.

While there is no primary evidence of the number of mikvahs (ritual baths) that belonged to the Jewish communities of Tunisia, an assumption was made that there was probably 1 mikvah available for every 3 synagogues. This means that it was likely that there were 33 mikvahs throughout the country.

Most of the synagogues and other communal properties were found in urban areas but they were also likely to be modest properties, purchased by the Jewish community earlier in the 20th century, and thus more likely to be in the hara and other poorer sections as opposed to the more modern parts of the city.

The data available was insufficient to conclude as to the exact value of the communal property lost by the Jews of Tunisia.

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185 Hazan and Saadon, pg. 47

186 Figures collected from different sources: "Regards sur les Juifs de Tunisie" par Robert Attal et Claude Sitbon; Gilbert; Laskier (1997) – see also page 42

187 See the International Jewish Cemetery Project – Tunisia: https://www.iajgsjewishcemeteryproject.org/africa/index.html

188 Sociales, 1953, pg. 45

Section 10 – Calculating Present Day Valuation

Over 75 years have passed since the baseline date for evaluating the property left behind by Jews in Tunisia. As mentioned in our methodology in Chapter 2 of this report, we argue that a truly compensatory approach to valuating the aggregate assets left behind by Jews demands that this value be actualized to reflect present-day value. Thus, we rely on a compound interest formula which makes use of the principal amount, an interest rate based on ten-year averages of the ten-year yields on US treasury bonds, over a total compound period of 76 years, from January 1st, 1949, through December 31st, 2024:

$$FV = PV\ (1+i/n)nt$$

10.1 Benchmark Values

As mentioned above, 1948 represents a reasonable benchmark regarding the beginning of the Jewish community's gradual departure from Tunisia. The present-day valuation will assume a valuation start year of 1948.

10.2 Application of Compound Interest Formula

The compound interest formula, FV = PV (1+i/n)nt was applied on the basis of a combined set of total values per asset category, all valued in 1948 USD, for a period of 76 years.

The formula is analyzed as follows:

FV = Future Value

PV = Present Value

i = Interest rate

n = Number of periods

t = Number of years in the period

The formula was applied using ten-year units with corresponding ten-year US treasury bond average yields. This methodology yielded the results as outlined in Section 12 below.

Section 11 – Summary of Findings

A thorough review of historical sources, discussions with subject-matter experts, community leaders, and available testimonial data was conducted. However, due to the lack of reliable testimonial and historical data for Tunisia, it was determined that the analysis for Egypt, Syria, and Iraq would be used for illustrative purposes. Lost assets found in the first three countries at 1948 values were used to determine the value of lost property per person. This yielded a range, with Iraq providing the lowest value of lost property per person among the three countries, and Egypt being the highest. The low and high values were then multiplied with the population of each remaining country, and a midpoint was calculated from this range. In the absence of "best evidence" to reach accurate and verifiable country-specific values a discount factor of 50% was determined based on precedent discounts and applied across the mid-point value for Tunisia.

Table 19 – Range of Lost Assets for Tunisia, ($)

($) Range of Lost Assets	
Tunisia	**1948**
Population	105,000
Estimated – Low Range	510,697,485
Estimated – High Range	1,605,941,135
Estimated - Mid Point	**1,058,319,310**
Discount	50%
Estimated – Mid Point (with Discount)	**529,159,655**

A compound interest formula which makes use of the principal amount and an average yearly rate based on the ten-year yields on US treasury bonds over a total compound period from January 1, 1949, through December 31, 2024, was applied to the mid-point value for each of the countries on a yearly compounding basis. As there is no internationally recognized, risk free rate, the 10-year US Treasury Yield rate was chosen, as it is an accepted benchmark for the time value of money over long horizons and aligns with established practices in historical asset valuation.

Table 20 – Periodic Compounding Table for Tunisia, ($)[189]

Year	LT Govt Bond Yields: 10-Year for US (FRED) + 10-Year [Treasury [RLONG (Robert Shiller)	($) Balance	Year	LT Govt Bond Yields: 10-Year for US (FRED) + 10-Year [Treasury [RLONG (Robert Shiller)	($) Balance
1947			1986	7.68%	5,054,733,236
1948		**529,159,655**	1987	8.38%	5,478,530,496
1949	2.31%	541,383,243	1988	8.85%	5,963,152,172
1950	2.32%	553,943,334	1989	8.50%	6,469,920,721
1951	2.57%	568,179,678	1990	8.55%	7,023,098,943
1952	2.68%	583,406,893	1991	7.86%	7,574,997,468
1953	2.83%	599,917,308	1992	7.01%	8,106,004,791
1954	2.40%	614,325,323	1993	5.87%	8,582,097,472
1955	2.82%	631,628,819	1994	7.08%	9,189,709,973
1956	3.18%	651,730,406	1995	6.58%	9,794,392,889
1957	3.65%	675,502,273	1996	6.44%	10,424,988,551
1958	3.32%	697,900,802	1997	6.35%	11,087,235,949
1959	4.33%	728,143,170	1998	5.26%	11,670,886,528
1960	4.12%	758,118,398	1999	5.64%	12,328,735,499
1961	3.88%	787,552,344	2000	6.03%	13,072,055,510
1962	3.95%	818,627,847	2001	5.02%	13,727,945,895
1963	4.00%	851,393,427	2002	4.61%	14,360,918,600
1964	4.19%	887,038,432	2003	4.02%	14,937,509,482
1965	4.28%	925,025,853	2004	4.27%	15,575,963,533
1966	4.92%	970,567,959	2005	4.29%	16,244,172,369
1967	5.07%	1,019,808,107	2006	4.79%	17,022,538,962
1968	5.65%	1,077,384,773	2007	4.63%	17,810,540,661
1969	6.67%	1,149,255,315	2008	3.67%	18,463,593,819
1970	7.35%	1,233,706,426	2009	3.26%	19,064,891,524
1971	6.16%	1,309,692,461	2010	3.21%	19,677,668,912
1972	6.21%	1,391,024,363	2011	2.79%	20,225,855,972
1973	6.84%	1,486,205,205	2012	1.80%	20,590,427,026
1974	7.56%	1,598,525,164	2013	2.35%	21,074,473,648
1975	7.99%	1,726,207,361	2014	2.54%	21,609,940,899
1976	7.61%	1,857,600,512	2015	2.14%	22,071,493,220
1977	7.42%	1,995,418,989	2016	1.84%	22,477,976,554
1978	8.41%	2,163,233,727	2017	2.33%	23,001,713,407
1979	9.44%	2,367,497,071	2018	2.91%	23,671,063,268
1980	11.46%	2,638,812,235	2019	2.14%	24,178,610,316
1981	13.91%	3,005,893,008	2020	0.89%	24,394,807,390
1982	13.00%	3,396,709,197	2021	1.44%	24,746,702,486
1983	11.11%	3,773,913,753	2022	2.95%	25,477,142,655
1984	12.44%	4,243,325,725	2023	3.96%	26,485,400,575
1985	10.62%	4,694,108,362	2024	4.21%	**27,599,994,516**

189 Rates from 2024 to 1954 are from "Interest Rates: Long-Term Government Bond Yields: 10-Year." Federal Reserve Economic Data. 2024 rate represents average interest rate through September 30, 2024 based on available data. Retrieved from https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?id=IRLTLT01USQ156N ; Rates from 1954 to 1948 are from "An Update of Data shown in Chapter 26 of Market Volatility." R. Shiller, Princeton 2015. Retrieved from http://www.econ.yale.edu/~shiller/data.htm. R. Shiller notes that pre-1953 rates are government bond yields from Sidney Homer A History of Interest Rates.

On the basis of the illustrated mid-point of lost assets for Tunisia and the application of the aforementioned periodic compounding formula, the estimated value for all assets on December 31, 2024 USD equals **$27,599,994,516.**

Table 21 – Range of Lost Assets for Tunisia with Present Value, ($)

($) Range of Lost Assets		
Tunisia	**1948**	**Estimated Present Value ($, 2024)**
Population	105,000	
Estimated – Low Range	510,697,485	
Estimated – High Range	1,605,941,135	
Estimated – Mid-Point	**1,058,319,310**	
Discount	50%	
Estimated –Mid-Point (with Discount)	**529,159,655**	**27,599,994,516**

Appendix A: Period One: Ancient Israelite History[190]

The illustrious history of the Jewish people in the region is detailed in the Bible and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. These dates are derived from Biblical references.

YEARS – BCE	NOTES
2000-1750	Old Babylonian period
1813-1452	The life of Abraham; begins period of Jewish forefathers
1240 1280-	Exodus from Egypt, Entry into the Land of Israel
1200-1050/1000	Period of the Judges in Israel
1000-587	Monarchical period in Israel
900-612	Neo-Assyrian period
722/721	Northern Kingdom (Israel) destroyed by Assyrians; 10 tribes exiled
587/586	Southern Kingdom (Judah) and First Temple destroyed

190 Jewish Virtual Library, "Timeline for the History of Judaism: Ancient Israelites" accessed on Nov. 6, 2024 https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/timeline-for-the-history-of-judaism

Appendix B: Period Two: From the destruction of the first Jewish temple to the rise of Islam 587 – BCE – 683 CE

In the years after the destruction of the Jewish Temple, the "Babylonian Exile" dispersed the Jews throughout the region. During this period, Mesopotamia became the preeminent center of Jewish life between the third and sixth centuries C.E. the Jewish communities in exile played a pivotal role in the development of Judaism. A prime example is the Babylonian Talmud, a foundational text of Rabbinic Judaism, composed between the 3rd and 5th centuries in present-day Iraq. This work, second only to the Hebrew Bible, serves as the primary source of Jewish law (halakha) and theology.

The Sages of Babylon also established the tradition of reading the Torah in an annual cycle, a departure from the triennial cycle practiced in ancient Israel.

Throughout the period of exile, there always remained a presence of Jews in the land of Israel.

PERIOD TWO: FIRST TEMPLE TO THE RISE OF ISLAM[191]	
YEARS – BCE	**NOTES**
541	First Jews return from Babylon to rebuild the city
538-333	.Persian Period
520-515	.Jerusalem ("Second") Temple rebuilt
333-63	.Hellenistic (Greek) period
63	.Rome (Pompey) annexes the land of Israel
.YEARS – C.E	**COMMON ERA**
70	.Destruction of Jerusalem and the second Temple
132-135	Bar Kokhba rebellion (Second Jewish Revolt
368/426	.Jerusalem Talmud compiled. Babylonian Talmud compiled
570	Birth of Prophet Muhammad

191 Jewish Virtual Library, "Timeline for the History of Judaism: Ancient Israelites" accessed on Nov. 6, 2024 https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/timeline-for-the-history-of-judaism

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Archives and Institutions

AJCA	American Jewish Committee Archives
CZA	Central Zionist Archives
DIARNA	The Geo-Museum of North African and Middle Eastern Jewish Life
ISA	Israel State Archives
JJAC	Justice for Jews from Arab Countries

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