

Salam Hamid - The Arab Countries' Expulsion Of The Jews Was A Disastrous Mistake



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Emirati writer Salam Hamid, founder and head of the Al-Mezmaah Studies and Research Center in Dubai, published an article titled “The Cost of the Expulsion of the Arab Jews” in the UAE daily Al-Ittihad, in which he lamented the expulsion of the Jews from the Arab countries following the establishment of Israel in 1948. This expulsion, he said, was a grave mistake, since the Arab countries thereby “lost an elite population with significant wealth, property, influence, knowledge, and culture,” which could have helped them, including against Israel, and lost the potential contribution of the Jews in many spheres, especially in the financial sphere. The Arabs, he added, should have learned a lesson from the expulsion of the Jews of Spain in 1492, and from Hitler’s expulsion of the Jews of Europe, which eventually harmed the countries that lost their Jews. He stated further that antisemitism, which is deeply entrenched in Arab societies, stems from the books that teach Islamic heritage, studied in schools throughout the Arab world, and therefore called for an overhaul of the curricula in order to strengthen tolerance and banish extremism.

The following are translated excerpts from his article:

“During the years that followed the declaration of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, most Arab countries expelled their Jewish citizens, who

numbered approximately 900,000, to Israel. With this apparently strange behavior, [the Arab countries] gave a gift to the growing Hebrew nation. This makes me wonder: Why were these people deported, and what was their crime?

“Over time, [this expulsion] had disastrous repercussions, when [it turned out that] the Arabs had lost an elite population with significant wealth, property, influence, knowledge, and culture. Soon enough, the Arabs waged pointless wars against Israel, until they were defeated [in June 1967] with heavy losses. Nevertheless, the mentality of the Arab leadership persisted, as they spun conspiracy theories to their defeated peoples and sought scapegoats in order to justify their repeated defeats at the hand of Israel.

“If you ever visit Israel, you will see citizens of diverse colors, just like in the U.S. They arrived as immigrants from across the globe, of various races, and almost half of them are from Arab countries. Any intelligent person is aware that Jews had lived in Arab countries for 2,000 years before being arbitrarily expelled – yet here they are now, making up half of Israel’s citizens.

“Just a look at the number of Jews remaining in their Arab countries elucidates the difference between the past and the present. In the past, there were hundreds of thousands of Jewish citizens in Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and the Maghreb, while today only dozens remain. Meanwhile, the Palestinians make up the largest group of asylum-seekers in the world. Some 700,000 of them left their lands after the 1948 war – not just because of the war, but because of several Arab leaders who asked them to leave the Jewish areas so that they could return after the fledgling Jewish state was destroyed. It is worth noting that in his memoir, Syria’s then-prime minister Khalid Al-‘Azm acknowledged the role played by the Arabs in convincing the Palestinians to leave – a mistake whose severity the Arabs failed to grasp, which created the Palestinian refugee crisis, and which prompted the founding of UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] in 1949.

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