

The “Right of Return”

Is it a valid demand, and how would it affect Middle-East peace?

Three years ago, President Clinton and Ehud Barak, then Prime Minister of Israel, made every effort to achieve final peace between Jews and Arabs. They offered the “Palestinians” 97 per cent of the “West Bank” and Gaza, the eastern part of Jerusalem as their capital, and \$30 billion in refugee compensation. But Yasser Arafat did not accept this overly generous offer. He insisted on the “right of return,” flooding Israel with as many as five million so-called “refugees.” When this outrageous demand was not granted, he broke off negotiations and started his bloody intifada, the war against Israel, which by now has killed about 2,000 people on both sides and has left many thousands more wounded, many of them crippled for life.

What are the facts?

Who are the so-called “refugees?” On the very day that Israel declared its independence, five Arab states invaded the nascent Jewish state. In fiery broadcasts and confident of victory, their leaders urged the Arabs to flee the war zone, so as not to impede the invading armies. Once victory was achieved and after all the Jews had been killed or had fled, the Arabs could return, reclaim their property and loot that of the Jews.

Things didn’t turn out that way. About 600,000 Arabs followed the call of their leaders and became refugees. About 200,000 accepted the promises of the Israeli authorities that they would not be harmed and that they would become citizens of the new state, with the same rights as the Jews. Hardly any of the original refugees are still alive. But those who claim to be their descendants (who astonishingly number as many as five million), clamor to “return” to Israel. With the single exception of Jordan, none of their Arab brethren have allowed them to settle in their countries and to become citizens. They have confined them to squalid refugee camps, supported by UNWRA (a dependency of the U.N. and financed mostly by the USA). Those refugee camps are seething hotbeds of hatred against Israel and are the sources for terrorists and suicide bombers.

Is the Palestinian “refugee” problem unique? Migrations of populations are nothing new in world history, especially after major wars. About 15 million Germans were (often brutally) expelled from what became western Poland, from

what used to be East Prussia and from the Sudetenland. Millions of Muslims and Hindus, following bloody battles, migrated to India and to what became Pakistan. Other major migrations following the World Wars were those of the French from Algeria, Armenians, Turks, Greeks, Cypriots, Kurds and others. It is only the “Palestinians” who insist on being “repatriated.”

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But more to the point, Israel has absorbed over 600,000 Jews who were expelled from Arab countries and millions of others from all over the world. All of them are productive citizens of their new country.

Since the founding of Israel in 1948, the Arabs have waged unrelenting wars to defeat the Jewish state, but they have been unable to do so by military means. The destruction of Israel, however, remains a cornerstone of the PLO charter, which has never been rescinded. What the Arabs have failed to achieve by force of arms they are now determined to accomplish demographically, by flooding Israel with millions of “Palestinians.”

The “right of return” is the one concession that Israel can never grant and can never accept. The world must not forget that Israel was founded for one purpose only, namely to be the home of the Jewish people. Even today, more than twenty per cent of the population of Israel are Arabs, almost all of them hostile and a potential fifth column. Even if only a fraction of those who claim the “right of return” were indeed to come to Israel, the country would be swamped by Arabs, and Israel would cease to exist as a Jewish state.

According to the U.N., only those who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted in their home countries...” are considered “refugees.” For instance, the Cubans who fled Castro are considered refugees, but their children and grandchildren living in Miami are not. Only the “Palestinians” have been granted special status by the U.N., by which all of their descendants, for generations to come, are considered “refugees.” The purpose of this special status is to assist in the destruction of Israel. Israel is prepared to pay huge amounts in (unwarranted) compensation to those “refugees.” But under no circumstances will it ever or should it ever accept the “right of return.” What that would accomplish in one stroke would be the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state. Israel will never allow that to happen and the world should not request it either. The problem has to be solved by settling the “refugees” in any or all of the 22 Arab countries. Peace will never come about as long as the Arabs insist on the “right of return”—a “right” that can never and will never be granted.

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P.O. Box 590359 ■ San Francisco, CA 94159
Gerardo Joffe, President

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