

Historic evidence shows that Jews asked Arabs to stay in Israel

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IT SEEMS as if it is Dr Paul Hendler ("Please get facts right about Israel, the Arabs and the contested land," Cape Times Letters, January 9) who needs to get his facts right.

Let me assist. Dr Hendler states "that there is no evidence of widespread calls from neighbouring Arab states for the people to flee – if anything, there were calls to stay".

I will provide Dr Hendler with the evidence he so sadly lacks by quoting directly from Arab and objective sources at the time before revisionists such as Dr Hendler attempted to change history. The calls to stay were – by the Jews!

"Of the 62 000 Arabs who formerly lived in Haifa not more than 5 000 or 6 000 remained. The most potent of the factors were the announcements made over the air by the Higher Arab Executive, urging the Arabs to quit. It was clearly

intimated that those Arabs who remained in Haifa and accepted Jewish protection would be regarded as renegades." – The London weekly Economist, October 2, 1948

"It must not be forgotten that the Arab Higher Committee encouraged the refugees' flight from their homes in Jaffa, Haifa, and Jerusalem." – Near East Arabic Broadcasting Station, Cyprus, April 3, 1949

"The mass evacuation, prompted partly by fear, partly by order of Arab leaders, left the Arab quarter of Haifa a ghost city.. By withdrawing Arab workers, their leaders hoped to paralyse Haifa." – Time, May 3, 1948.

"The Arab States encouraged the Palestine Arabs to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies". – Falastin (Jordanian newspaper), February 19, 1949.

"We will smash the country with

our guns and obliterate every place the Jews seek shelter in. The Arabs should conduct their wives and children to safe areas until the fighting has died down." – Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Said, quoted in *Sir Am Nakbah* ("The Secret Behind the Disaster") by Nimr el Hawari, Nazareth, 1952.

"The Arab governments told us: Get out so that we can get in. So we got out, but they did not get in." – from the Jordan daily Ad Difaa, September 6, 1954.

"The Arab civilians panicked and fled ignominiously. Villages were frequently abandoned before they were threatened by the progress of war." – General Glubb Pasha, in the London Daily Mail on August 12, 1948.

"The Arabs of Haifa fled in spite of the fact that the Jewish authorities guaranteed their safety and rights as citizens of Israel." – Monsignor George Hakim, Greek

Catholic Bishop of Galilee, according to Rev. Karl Baehr, executive secretary of the American Christian Palestine Committee, New York Herald Tribune, June 30, 1949; and, yes no less than the Times of London reporting events of 22.4.1948 "...the Jewish hagana asked (using loud speakers) Arabs to remain at their homes but most of the Arab population followed their leaders who asked them to leave the country".

So the evidence is, Dr Hendler that the Jews asked the Arabs to stay and the Arabs forced other Arabs to leave. I am sorry to disappoint you, but the evidence not of historians but of Arabs themselves and journalists on the spot is that there was no ethnic cleansing and no wanton destruction but simply abandonment of property, no different from any other war.

Actually, I admit that there was some wanton destruction of property and some ethnic cleansing. The

illegal Jordanian occupiers of Jerusalem destroyed 57 of the 58 synagogues in Jerusalem's Old City and expelled its 20 000 plus Jewish inhabitants.

There is a bona fide dispute about the number of Arabs who left Israel in 1948. Walter Pinner in his "How many Arab Refugees?" arrives at 430 000 and the UN figure based on Arab census figures is about 539 000.

Many who left were part of the huge illegal immigrants doing as immigrants do today: leaving poverty-struck Arab countries and following the prosperity.

It seems that by the 1930s the standard of living of Palestinian Arabs was approximately twice that of Arabs in surrounding countries, whereas in Ottoman Turkish times it was lower than in surrounding countries.

Dr Hendler's number of 750 000 refugees (more than the then total

Arab population! The Statistical Abstract of Palestine in 1944-45 set the figure for the total Arab population living in the Jewish-settled territories of Palestine at 570 800; there were only about 696 000 Arabs within the Armistice lines prior to the commencement of fighting!) is clearly an exaggeration, but is still substantially less than the 850 000 Jews expelled by Arab countries whose confiscated properties in today's currency would amount to about \$100 billion.

There was a population exchange similar to the 1948 Indian/Pakistan population exchange or the 13 to 15 million German refugees expelled from Eastern Europe in 1945 following World War II. What is not subject to dispute is that those Arabs who remained became full and equal citizens of Israel in the Middle East's only functioning democracy.

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