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Jewish Immigration To Palestine  
And Its Devastating Effects  
On The Peace Process

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## JEWISH IMMIGRATION TO PALESTINE AND ITS DEVASTATING EFFECTS ON THE PEACE PROCESS

### Introduction

Previous Israeli governments, and the present one set up of a coalition from the Labor and Meretz parties, have given special attention towards the question of Jewish immigration to Palestine. A huge portion of its budget and resources have been earmarked to absorb the alarming increase of Jewish immigrants from all over the world. They have worked relentlessly to procure all the anticipated requirements of absorption including raising funds from Europe and easy term credit from the US Administration, estimated at 10 billion US dollars. Moreover, the various Jewish immigration agencies are active in raising funds from Jewish communities abroad to cover the increasing expenses. This task can not be accomplished without the confiscation of more Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza. The expropriation activities accompanied by repressive practices exercised by Israel against Palestinian individuals have accelerated recently. The main objective of such actions was to evict the real owners from their land in order to accommodate scores of Jewish immigrants.

Despite a 1992 pledge to freeze construction of settlements, the signing of the Declaration of Principles in Madrid on Oct. 1991, and the conclusion of the Cairo Agreement in May 1994, the ruling coalition government is still adopting its old expansionist policy, thus obstructing the smooth progress of negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli track. Israel has unilaterally evaded all its responsibilities and commitments, particularly those related to the settlement issue, which is closely connected with the Jewish immigration question. Israel pledged under the Oslo Accords and the Madrid Declaration of Principles to refrain from constructing new settlements or expropriating new land for expansion of existing ones. Notwithstanding, the postponement of the settlement issue to the final stage of negotiations, Israel has deliberately intensified its settlement campaign in order to increase the number of settlements, particularly over land expropriated from East Jerusalem and along the green line separating the 1967 border from land occupied in 1948.

A thorough investigation of Israeli practices demonstrates that Israel is still reluctant to abide by its commitments with the PLO and the Arab world at large towards the peace process. Instead, Israel is dedicated in view of its immense potential, to reshape the demographic infrastructure of the Palestinian land during the interim period. This tactic will enable Israel to score new gains during the final stages of negotiations, thus violating Palestinian human rights and UN security council resolutions 242 and 338.

**First: Jewish Immigration - Facts and Figures.**

The latest census estimates for Jews all over the world climaxed to approximately 16 million distributed according to the following countries:

North America	7.3 million
Russia	0.55 million
Ukraine	0.50 million
Other former USSR Republics	0.45 million
Britain	0.40 million
France	0.60 million
Latin America	0.70 million
Israel	4.30 million
Asian Countries	0.25 million
Africa	0.15 million
Other European Countries (including Australia and New Zealand)	0.45 million
Total	15.65 million

According to Israeli statistics, the 1994 population census approached 4.3 million. Most Jews immigrated to the holy land via successive exodus campaigns starting in 1882. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the

percentage of Jews in Palestine did not exceed 6 percent of the total population of Palestinians.

Jewish population estimates for 1988 in Palestine, distributed according to their place of birth runs as follows:

Place of Origin	Born Abroad	Born in Israel	Total
Asia	278,800	468,700	747,500
Africa	322,500	471,500	794,000
Europe and America	741,800	589,400	1,331,200
Palestine	-----	786,300	786,300
Total	1,343,100	2,315,900	3,659,000

The total number of immigrants, who arrived in Israel since its establishment in 1948 and up to 1989, is estimated at 2.4 million. However those arriving in Israel through the last immigration influx, i.e., from 1989 up to the end of 1994 reached approximately 570,000 persons including 490,000 from the Soviet Union and approximately 48,000 Jews from Ethiopia during the regime of Sudan's President, Ja'afar Nemeiry. The Jews descending from Arab origin who lived in Palestine prior to 1948, represent only 18.25 percent or 786,300 from the total population of Israel. This means, the percentage of Jews who arrived in Palestine through successive mass exodus campaigns after 1948, represent 69 percent of the present Israeli population. The percentage of oriental Jews did not reach 13.1 percent of the original population.

However, Palestinian emigration caused by the 1948 and 1967 wars and the Israeli atrocities committed against Palestinians, helped to a large extent to the increase of the above figures. The Palestinian exodus encouraged Jews to settle in Palestine and consequently turn the demographic picture in Palestine upside down. Nevertheless, the Palestinians remaining in Palestine have deepened their roots over Palestinian soil and have registered high birth rates exceeding the Israeli population growth and

immigration rates combined. Consequently, the percentage of Palestinians living in Israel recorded 26.7 percent of the Israeli population in 1983.

The 1994 estimates published by Israel showed the distribution of Palestinians and Jews in Israel as follows:

Location	Palestinian Population	Jewish Population	Total
Within Green Line	1,017,000	4,110,500	5,127,500
East Jerusalem	160,000	155,000	315,000
West Bank	1,200,000	130,000	1,330,000
Gaza Strip	850,000	4,500	853,500
Total	3,227,000	4,399,000	7,629,500

American and West European Jews were not attracted by large scale propaganda campaigns organized by the Zionist movement to immigrate to Palestine. The standard of living conditions in Western Europe and the United States is preferred over the false promises of a better life in Israel. Now, Israel is trying to take advantage of the peace process in the Middle East to lure large numbers of new immigrants. To realize this objective, Israel has recently intensified the confiscation of Palestinian land, with the aim of encouraging Jewish immigration to settle these lands. The Zionist mentality is keeping the door open before a new mass exodus concentrating also on countries suffering from political and economic instabilities, a case in point is the Muslim Republic of Chechnya. The US government supported the Israeli policy and agreed to provide Israel with a 10 billion dollars easy term credit to help her absorb the new wave of immigrants. However, the United States stipulated at that time that Israel should refrain from using this credit on the construction of new Israeli settlements over Arab and Palestinian land occupied in 1967.

The former Soviet government had imposed a partial closure before Jewish immigration to Palestine since 1950. The permitted annual average was limited to 4000 persons per annum until the year 1980. They were given special passes for immigration to transit points in countries like Austria,

Czechoslovakia and Romania. From there the Soviet Jews were to decide for themselves their final destination. However, only 18% of this figure chose Israel as its final destination. The Zionist movement had second thoughts about the Soviet Jews and mobilized all its efforts in organizing direct mass exodus to Israel. This policy extended to other East European countries who began to lift all restrictions imposed on the immigration of Jews after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This swift swerve in policy has prompted Paul Nakshman, Mayor of "Ariel" settlement near Nablus, to nominate this immigration policy as the second Russian revolution considering it a "new miracle" for the sake of Israel. As a result, the number of Jews leaving the Soviet Union after 1987 increased rapidly according to the following schedule:

Year	No. Of Jewish Immigrants From The Former USSR
1986	914
1987	8,011
1988	18,000
1989	70,000

It is evident that the number of Soviet Jews departing the Soviet Union has increased alarmingly during the past few years. The final figures in 1989 have outnumbered the record figure estimated at 51,000 persons in 1979. Despite this increase, those who arrived in Israel during 1989 didn't exceed 12.9 percent or 9,000 immigrants. Overwhelmed by this fact, the Zionist movement began to consider a new plan that can lure more immigrants. Consequently, it began closing all open accesses before the Jews and keeping one route open leading only to Israel. The Zionist movement resorted to exercise pressure and compulsory procedures to forbid the immigrants from flying to other countries. For its part, the US government advocated this new policy by issuing new legislation closing doors before Jewish immigration to USA, except for purely humanitarian reasons. Ora Namir stated in 1994, that those who were permitted to immigrate to the United States were only elderly people whom Israel did not need. Israel's keen interest to operate regular flights to transport Soviet Jews, stems from its conviction to divert the destination of immigrants from other parts of the globe to Israel. The real target of most Jews was to travel to the United States and West Europe.

These facts reflect the extent of Israeli anxiety to attract large numbers of immigrants during a relatively short period of time. Israel has banned the

publication of any figures regarding Soviet Jews except through the military censorship authority. It considers this issue as closely connected with national security matters. The non-disclosure of these figures was aimed at alleviating the magnitude of international protests against this illegal exodus. Any politician may ask, "Why is Israel working fervently to bring these massive numbers of immigrants at a time of intensified contacts with Palestinians and other Arab governments for a comprehensive peace settlement in the region"? The answer to this question comes from Israel itself and was disclosed by Paul Nakshman, the Mayor of "Ariel" settlement. Mr. Nakshman was quoted as saying, "If Israel succeeded to bring half a million Jews from the Soviet Union, then all the reasons of settlement and the exchange of land for peace will automatically disappear". The most daring reply to all these questions was divulged by Israeli Prime Minister, Yitshak Rabin. In this regard, the Israeli Prime Minister said, "An immigration with this volume necessitates a bigger Israeli state". This description applies to all the different political views in Israel, including the religious parties, who consider immigration as a sacred duty. Even the ruling labor party government led by Mr. Rabin, envisaged immigration as not negotiable. The Israeli Environment Minister, Yossi Sarid, believes that any possible interference by PNA President Yasser Arafat, on the question of Jewish immigration as "nonsense". According to Sarid, such immigration will contribute in realizing peace since it will raise the morals of the Israeli citizens.

#### Second: Expropriation of Land

The Israeli policy continues to apply the Zionist expansionist goals via the confiscation of a massive number of Arab land in a move to evict Palestinian land owners from the territories in preparation for the absorption of more immigrants. Only 18 days after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in June 1967, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and extended the boundaries of the municipality from 48,200 dunums to 108,000 dunums. Israel began to accommodate Jews in East Jerusalem and its suburbs. It established new housing quarters such as, "Ramat Ashkol", the French Hill, "Ramot", "Gillo", "Ne've Yacob", "Giva't Ze'ev", and the old city. Israel also embarked on annexing "Ma'aleh Adumim" at the eastern part of Jerusalem, now accommodating over 20,000 inhabitants to the Jerusalem municipality. This move was orchestrated to ensure a Jewish majority in East Jerusalem.

Settling activities are underway throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, within the framework of an Israeli plan to effect geographic and demographic changes in the area. According to this plan, the original inhabitants will be uprooted from their land and replaced by new

immigrants. Faced by this fait-accomplis policy, the PNA will encounter difficulties in stretching its sovereignty over the West Bank during the final stage of a political settlement.

Immediately after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, the successive Israeli governments have invented numerous methods to confiscate Arab land. Israel claimed that certain areas are closed government territory, pastures or natural protectorates. This would enable the Israeli government to confiscate this land at a later stage. Israel has expropriated more land for the construction of roads and the establishment of stone quarries. These acts of thievery were not restricted to Palestinian land but extended to cover natural resources despite their rarity in the occupied territories. Israeli quarry(stone) plants were constructed throughout the West Bank starting from Tulkarem up to Hebron, passing through the Middle area to Rantis and Shokba. Stone material is considered an essential source of the Palestinian national economy. The seizure of this vital resource by Israel deprive the Palestinians of one of its important natural resources. It has been noted that all the quarries fall within the Western area of the West Bank not far away from the green line. This implies the existence of undisclosed plans to relocate the green line area to the east under the pretext of establishing quarries. The establishment of stone quarries over territories previously allocated for settlements was a maneuver in violation of the Madrid Conference, which prohibits building new settlements in the occupied territories. The regional planning of roads in the West Bank was designed to link all the Israeli settlements with each other and with Jerusalem.

By taking into account the restrictions imposed on Palestinians by Israel regarding building activities, the frequent demolition of houses, the internal immigration from villages to cities and towns, Palestinian emigration, and the codified plans for these villages, the Israeli policy should have achieved its cherished goals by transferring these settlements from a temporary to a permanent status, in addition to destroying the environment and the infrastructure of the Palestinian economy. The continued confiscation of Palestinian land and the establishment of Jewish settlements undoubtedly confirm that Israel is still resorting to argument and procrastination in dealing with the implementation of the second stage of the Oslo Accords. This policy will expose the whole peace process to real danger and constitute a flagrant violation of all agreements concluded with the PLO. Moreover, Israel is violating UN resolutions and human rights principles.