

**Submission to the UN Human Rights Council “Commission of Inquiry” on Israel
created May 27, 2021 by resolution A/HRC/RES/S-30/1**

Organization: HARIF on behalf of the descendants of Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa – victims of Arab and Iranian discrimination and repression on the basis of Jewish identity.

Biography: HARIF is a UK charity representing Jews from North Africa and the Middle East (UK no.1186454), and dedicated to promoting their history, culture and heritage. Over 2,000 years of history in the Middle East and North Africa came to an abrupt and tragic end just 50 years ago. Jews departed for Israel and the West, leaving an enormous cultural and economic void behind. In another 20 years, few Jews who were born in these countries will still be alive. A vital chapter of Jewish identity, history and culture – an entire civilisation – will be lost. HARIF is here to make sure it is not forgotten.

Issues to which our submission applies:

- (1) “Underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict in and between the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem [*sic*], and Israel; as well as systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity;”
- (2) “Facts and circumstances regarding alleged violations of international humanitarian law and alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law leading up to and since 13 April 2021;”
- (3) “Identification of those responsible;”

Submission: (This submission itself does not constitute an endorsement of the “Commission of Inquiry” or its mandate.)

Escape from Baghdad

Escapee from Iraq: ‘I owe my life to Israel’

23 April 2015

<https://www.jewishrefugees.org.uk/2015/04/escapee-from-iraq-i-owe-my-life-to.html>

To mark Israel’s 67th Birthday, I am reposting the [moving story of Moshe Kahtan](#), one of the last Jews to be smuggled out of Iraq before the outbreak of the Six-Day War. Israel has always dedicated itself to rescuing Jews in distress, wherever they might be.

The post is dedicated to the unsung Israeli heroes who secretly helped engineer Moshe's escape, and the escape of thousands of other Jews in the 1970s through Kurdistan.

Moshe tells the dramatic story of his escape from Baghdad [in this film](#) by his son David.

Moshe feels he owes his life to Israel. A man called Yossi, disguised as a Bedouin, helped organise Moshe's escape by boat to the Iranian coast and paid bribes to all the key officials on the Iranian side of the border.

Moshe and his wife Dominique now live in Israel.

Here is Moshe's story, as summarised in the synagogue newsletter by Barbara Saunders of Sutton Synagogue. The film was shown there on 29 April 2012.

“Moshe was educated in England, but by returning to Iraq in 1965 to be with his sick father, he fully understood that he would not be able to leave. His passport was confiscated on arrival.

“Although his English degree entitled him to become an officer, his Jewish status meant that his degree would not be recognised. Compulsory conscription was accompanied by sweeps of those without service papers, who could simply disappear in prison. One day an army truck crashed into the back of his car and though the colonel admitted fault, on discovering Moshe's name, he blackmailed him. Eventually Moshe had to make the hard decision to go.

“Moshe calculated that each time he tried to prepare the way to put his affairs in order, such as selling his home, he had to deal with thirty different officials, each expecting a bribe or *bakshish*. However, as the paperwork was only valid for a month, he repeated the whole procedure about three times. Eventually, he managed to arrange a necessary cholera injection, without the necessary travel documents, and flew to Basra on the border with Iran. The plan was to hire a boat as though he were taking a small trip on the lake, then meet a boat that would smuggle him over to Iran. However, the smuggler did not show up until very late.

“Although Moshe was eventually picked up, the authorities were alerted, gave chase and opened fire on the launch, which fortunately was faster than the police boat. He was smuggled across the water after an ordeal which lasted five and a half hours instead of ten minutes. “We were just part of the commodities.”

“Sadly, the smuggler was identified by his boat and he was arrested, tortured and hanged.

“On arrival in Iran, Moshe was interviewed by a colonel who acted courteously, just demanding that he sign a statement explaining why he had to leave Iraq. On the first day of the Six Day War, the Iraqi secret service came looking for him at his home in Baghdad, as they did to many other Jews who were imprisoned and tortured. Nine Jews accused of spying for Israel were given a show trial and publicly hanged. The film is dedicated to the memory of

these nine men, aged between 20 and 60 years old, who were murdered in Baghdad on 27th January 1969.

“Moshe reflects on the behaviour of the Iranians then and now and the malleability of the human mind, that is so easily brainwashed, just as the German population were by Hitler, including the cream of the intelligentsia, many of whom were in the SS: philosophers, poets and doctors. Moshe concludes that he owes his life to the State of Israel, which is where he feels he belongs and where he and his wife Dominique now live.”