

**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.)

Egyptian persecution and exodus

‘My family was among the first forced out of
Egypt ‘

20 November 2012

<https://www.jewishrefugees.org.uk/2012/11/my-family-was-among-first-forced-out-of.html>

Jenny Stewart's family was among the first to be expelled from Egypt in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis in 1956. Here is her story, as told to *Point of No Return*:

“My name is Jenny Stewart (nee Setton). I was born in Cairo in 1935. I went to a convent boarding school.

“Our family was amongst the first Jews to be forced out of Egypt in 1956. I was then 21, a primary schoolteacher. The Suez Crisis had just broken out: Britain and France in alliance with Israel were attacking Nasser after he nationalised the Suez Canal. We were among 25,000 Jews expelled from Egypt.

“It was November 1956. There was a knock at our door. It was Mrs Kromovski, an Ashkenazi lady from Poland. She begged us to take her in: she had been turned out of her home in Suez which had become a military zone. Two officers came to our door and gave us three days to leave. We do not know if Mrs Kromovski's arrival and our subsequent expulsion were linked.

“We packed our suitcases with warm clothes. My mother had a UK passport, but I had none. I had to get a travel permit from the Swiss embassy. My stepfather was stateless.

“We were allowed to take out only 20 pounds each. I sewed a £10 note in the hem of my dress. My mother insisted on taking her jewellery with her. It was all confiscated by the immigration officers when we arrived at the airport.

“After a long and complicated journey – we left Cairo on a UN transport plane – I remember arriving at London airport, which consisted then of just a few corrugated shacks. The cold and damp weather made my stepfather very ill. Having previously contracted TB he only had one kidney and asked to be sent to the Jewish hospital in the East End of London. He spent six months there. My mother became so depressed she had spells in a mental hospital under sedation.

“Jews who arrived in England after us were sent to refugee camps in the north of the country.

“My father, an import-export merchant in Egypt, was taken to prison. An Egyptian army officer had designs on the apartment he lived in, and had him arrested on trumped-up charges. My father spent about eight months in jail with robbers and thieves. When he was released he was put on a ship for Italy, and then another to Israel. Life was a struggle: he started working as a postman; as he was well-educated and multilingual, he managed to rebuild his life in Israel.

“Our family business in Egypt involved running two shops selling French designer clothing and children's wear. On our hurried departure we left the shops in the hands of my brother-in-law, but later he too had to flee Egypt, leaving all our property behind. We later found out that we owned a plot of land in Alexandria, the site of an ancient Greek temple. It must have been

purchased before King Faroukh ascended the throne: afterwards, Jews were not allowed to inherit property.

“After 1979, when Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty, we visited Egypt. I remember staying in a palace in Zamalek, converted into a hotel, that I used to walk past as a child. The Egyptians welcomed us very warmly. But I felt Egypt had gone backwards. The shops still had their original names. Their owners of the large department stores, such as Gattegno and Cicurel, had fled Egypt with nothing. The street names, however, had all changed.

“We were recommended an Egyptian lawyer to try and get us compensation for our losses. We paid him his fee, but nothing came of it. ”