

**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.)

**Hebron massacre (1929)**

# 90 years later, last-known Jewish survivor recalls Hebron massacre

**Kiryati was then a boy of eight. He and his 18-year-old uncle Moshe Capilouto were in their grandparents' home as Arabs made their way through the Hebron streets calling for Jews to be slaughtered.**

By TOVAH LAZAROFF

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The Jerusalem Post

<https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/90-years-later-last-known-Jewish-survivor-recalls-Hebron-massacre-599438>

Time has not dimmed the powerful memories that 98-year-old Avraham Kiryati has of the moment his grandfather Eliyahu Capilouto was stabbed during the [Hebron massacre of 1929](#).

“My grandfather was dressed just like the Arabs,” said Kiryati.

“He went out to see what was going on. They [the rioters] pushed him inside and stabbed him on the side of his body.”

Kiryati was then a boy of eight.

He and his 18-year-old uncle Moshe Capilouto were in their grandparents' home as Arabs made their way through the Hebron streets calling for Jews to be slaughtered.

The two boys escaped out the back door of their grandparents' home, safely making their way to the family chicken coup where they hid until it was safe.

When they came out of hiding, they found Eliyahu lying on the floor in a pool of blood.

Kiryati recalled how his grandmother Rivka had blocked the wound with coffee grounds.

Sitting in a reclining corner chair in the living room of his Jerusalem home, wearing glasses and black sandals, the white haired nonagenarian explains how his life is one long map of the history of mandate Palestine and the state of Israel. In spite of this, Kiryati said, he often shies away from media interviews.

This week, however, ahead of the 90th anniversary of the August 24 massacre that decimated Hebron's ancient Jewish community, Kiryati opened his door to journalists. He is the last known survivor of the massacre who can still recall the [fatal events of that day](#), in which Arab rioters killed 67 Jews.

He is a descendant of Jews who escaped the Spanish inquisition, settling first in Safed and then in Hebron.

His grandfather Eliyahu was a well-known carpenter and electrician, so well respected that he was even hired to work in the Tomb of the Patriarchs at the time when Jews were not allowed into the building – for 700 years, they could only pray up to the seventh step on the outside of what was then a mosque.

Eliyahu built a home a slight distance away from what Kiryati called the Jewish “ghetto,” on a road that led to Gaza.

Kiryati's parents had moved to Jerusalem, but had sent him to spend some of his summer vacation with his grandparents, a decision that placed him in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In a separate interview, Kiryati's nephew, Yossi Saness, also described how in that moment Eliyahu and his wife, Rivka, a gold dealer, had initially stood outside their house to try and dissuade the rioters from entering. After her husband was stabbed, she was able to bribe the rioters to leave by offering them gold she had stashed in the house, Saness said.

“All the survivors were taken first to the police station and then to Jerusalem,” Kiryati said.

In the following months, his grandfather died of his wounds.

When he thinks about it now, he said, the events of that day “is more or less what happened in the Holocaust.”

In the early 1930s, his grandmother Rivka was among a small number of families who returned to the city and attempted to resurrect the Jewish community in the biblical city. Their efforts came to naught, as the British insisted that they leave in 1936.

Kiryati grew up in Jerusalem and joined the Hagana. He worked with the

British and was also in the British army.

Around 1942 he returned to Hebron with the British and took a photograph of the Jewish cemetery, which was later used to locate the graves of the massacre victims.

In advance of the interview he had placed a copy of the photograph on the coffee table, along with a copy of his Palestinian passport.

Initially he went under his father's last name of Capilouto, but prime minister David Ben-Gurion insisted that he had to change it to a Hebrew one.

When learning of Kiryati's family history, he suggested that he should take a name related to the city, coming up with Kiryati as a derivative from Kiryat Arba.

"He attached Kiryati to my name, and I am happy about that," said Kiryati. Kiryati fought in the War of Independence, during which he met and married his wife, Miriam. He continued to serve in the army, including in the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, attaining the rank of major. During the Six Day War he was part of the unit that liberated Gush Etzion and Hebron from the Jordanians, who ruled the West Bank from 1948 to 1967.

Together with an uncle he went to Hebron to look for the Jewish cemetery, but instead of graves they found a tomato garden.

After Jews returned to live in Hebron in 1979, Kiryati said, he never considered returning to live there. He remained in Jerusalem, where he was also the deputy director-general of the Economy and Industry Ministry, and an attorney with a law practice.

Hebron, however, has always been close to his heart, and he supports the continued Jewish presence in the city. He believes that Hebron, like all of Judea and Samaria, should be under Israeli sovereignty.

"I hope that I will be able to see peace," he said, but not the kind of peace that comes from territorial concessions.

Kiryati knows first-hand the danger of what happens when one "opens the door" to Arabs.

He is a firm believer that today as then, the Palestinians want to drive the Jews into the sea.

"Hebron must be in part of Israel," he said. "I have learned from the past to be prepared.

We do not have any choice but to remain strong."

