

0290.02.0556

"The Issue of Refugees" a Letter from Elyas Kusa to S.Shereshevsky, 1957

Printed in English, this document features a letter from Elyas Kusa to S. Shereshevsky on 8 June 1957, responding to S. Shereshevsky previously written article and published on 14 May in the NewYork Times Newspaper entitled "Israel and the Arab Refugees" in which he talks about Peace shall remain a document without the value of Israel realizing that the refugees wish to return back to their homeland, and clearly there are feelings of hatred between both sides that cannot be unseen and therefore, sign a peace agreement. In his letter, Kusa rejects all of what is stated above.

ELIAS N. KOUSSA,
ADVOCATE,
P.O.B.14,
HAIFA.

8th June, 1957.

Dr. S. Shereshevsky,
Chancellor Road,
Bikkur Cholim Hospital,
Jerusalem.

Dear Dr. Shereshevsky,

Many thanks for your letter of the 30th ultimo, enclosing a stencilled copy of your article on "Israel and the Arab Refugees", published in the New York Times on the 14th May last, which I have read with much interest.

While the article is a praiseworthy and encouraging contribution toward the settlement of the refugee problem and the establishment of peace, it does not seem to tackle the two questions from their proper perspective. It deals with the problem of the refugees from a humanitarian aspect, and discusses the question of peace from the angle of reciprocity of feelings between the two parties. These considerations are, of course, weighty and should not be brushed away, but it would be futile to proceed, as you appear to do, on the hypothesis that the Arab-Israel dispute would be capable of solution if the question of the refugees were solved, and a feeling of mutual trust and understanding cultivated. The conflict has at present deeper roots and presents intricate issues of wider scope and significance. Its settlement is no longer dependent on a satisfactory solution of the refugee question, nor on the modification of the frontiers, or the internationalization of Jerusalem. Although these matters are still of paramount importance, other knotty problems of larger magnitude and implications have in the meantime arisen.

To dispose first of the question of the Arab refugees. I do not think it is correct to seek the settlement of this problem on purely humanitarian considerations. While the refugees deserve every sympathy and assistance in order to put an end to their misery and pain, their problem should be approached on a legal and political basis rather than on humanitarian grounds. To deal with it simply on compassionate reasons is a flagrant denial of justice which would, in turn, negate the efforts to foster friendly relations, brotherly understanding and good neighbourliness between Arabs and Jews. The refugees do not ask for charity. They demand the satisfaction of their natural right. They were uprooted from their ancestral homes and are fully entitled to return home. The return which has been deliberately prevented by Israel for a decade will naturally raise difficult issues but they are not insurmountable. The responsible leaders of Israel claim that the country can absorb, within its present boundaries, an additional 2m. Jewish immigrants. It can, therefore, and should, a fortiori, absorb all the Arab refugees who prefer to return home than to settle elsewhere and receive fair and reasonable compensation for their properties, movables and immovables. For the early implementation of the return, Israel should complete the reunion of Arab split families, re-settle the 30,000 displaced Arabs scattered in Israel in their villages and restore their properties - lands and buildings, paying adequate compensation for the buildings which were demolished. It should also admit into the country the absentee inhabitants of all existing Arab villages. These acts should be done as a gesture of its good intentions not only to recognize the refugees' right to return home but also to give it effect. Simply to recognize the right in principle would serve no useful purpose. The Arab States do recognize the existence of Israel but this recognition does not make the prospect of peace any brighter. What is required is the immediate gradual

repatriation of the refugees.

Now, to revert to the main cause of Arab unwillingness to negotiate peace. The Arab peoples are profoundly disturbed by the political orientation of Israel which opposes Arab nationalism, runs counter to Arab interests and envisages the impoverishment and expulsion of the Arab minority. Since its birth, Israel has opposed every Arab movement for independence: it opposed the placing of the Moroccan, Tunisian and Algerian questions on the Agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations; it abstained or voted against every resolution favourable to the Arab peoples of these three countries, and whenever it voted in favour of any matter relating to the Arabs it did so only because a negative vote or abstention would have appeared sheer imprudence. Israel has failed to raise a voice of protest against French barbarities and brutalities in Algeria, although it furiously condemned Soviet atrocities in quelling the Hungarian uprising. The cruel murder of innocent Arab children, the rape and mutilation of Arab girls, the mass massacre of Arab men and women - young and old, peaceful and docile -, the razing down of Arab villages, the systematic annihilation of the Arab population - all these cruelties which are not less atrocious and shocking than the extermination of millions of Jews by the Nazis, have not moved the hearts not only of the Israel Government but also of World Jewry to express a protest of revulsion and condemnation.

Again, Israel left no stone unturned to obstruct the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty for the evacuation of the British Forces from the Suez Zone. It has been carrying out a campaign of disparagement and revilement against the Arab peoples and sowing the seeds of discord, dissension and disintegration not only among its Arab citizens, but also among the Arab Governments and their citizens. To these acts of flagrant enmity, Israel has added an unforgettable crime by conspiring with two colonial Powers, the arch enemies of the Arab peoples, to launch the ill-fated Sinai campaign within a very short time of Mr. Ben Gurion's assurance to the world at large that so long as he remained Prime Minister Israel would not commence hostilities against its Arab neighbours. It follows that Israel appears to be animated by aggressive intentions aiming at the fulfilment of the inimical designs of the colonial Powers for the subjugation of the Arab nations to colonial domination, for the obstruction of their cultural, social, economic and political advancement, and for the exploitation of the natural resources of their countries. By espousing the schemes of the West, Israel opposes Arab nationalism which is deeply rooted in the hearts of the Arab peoples. It is this opposition which makes the Arabs unwilling to reconcile themselves to Israel's existence in their midst.

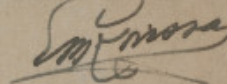
Israel is geographically, economically and politically an integral part of the Arab Middle East. There is a large community of interest, and an appreciable similarity of language and trait between the Arab and Jewish peoples, both being semitic in race and, according to biblical and koranic scriptures, cousins. There is no reason why, with good intentions and clean hearts, an adjustment of its policy and action should not be possible so as to run side by side with Arab nationalism, to allay Arab apprehensions and suspicions. Israel should divorce its militant activism, discard the idea of racial superiority, now vitiating the minds of a large section of the Jewish population, and do away with the exasperating claim of being here to teach the Arabs and lead them into the path of civilization and democracy. It should implant in the hearts of the Jewish youth a feeling of respect and attachment for the Arabs, and should cease to look upon them as the mortal enemies of the State and of the Jews. To demonstrate its genuine wish to identify itself with the welfare of the region and with the well-being of the inhabitants, Israel should, first and foremost, put its own house in order. It should restrict the military

rule to a narrow stretch along the borders, cease to usurp Arab property, restore the agricultural lands taken from the Arab villagers to their lawful owners, treat its Arab citizens on the basis of complete equality of citizenship and participation in the administration of the country, and remove all discriminatory practices and oppressive devices which they now suffer.

When Israel ceases to be a springboard for the colonial Power when it supports Arab nationalism and formulates its policy in a manner consistent with a sincere and honest desire to be integrated in the Middle East as one of its independent states, and when it commences to show this desire by radically changing its oppressive and humiliating policy against the Arab minority and by immediately accepting a part of the refugees as indicated above, then and only then would the Arab world, governments and peoples, be convinced that Israel considers itself part and parcel of the Middle East and that it has at heart the social, economic and political advancement of its inhabitants, and not the service of imperialistic designs and the safeguard of colonial interests.

I am fully convinced that no satisfactory settlement between Israel and the Arab States is feasible so long as Israel identifies itself with the enemies of the Arab peoples, and certainly not as long as Mr. Ben Gurion's hand is on the helm of the State. It is sure that no Arab leader would accept to negotiate peace with him because of the malice which he has consistently shown toward the Arabs, inside and outside Israel, and of the mischief which he has intentionally done to Arab interests.

Yours faithfully,



E. N. KOUSSA.

Copy to:-

1. The Editor of The Pilot, 49 Franklin Street, Boston, Mass. U.S.A.
2. Mr. William Zuckerman, P.O.B. 117, Washington Bridge Station New York 33, N.Y., U.S.A.
3. The National Committee for Security and Justice in the Middle East, Hotel Gorham, 136 West 55th Street, New York 19, N.Y., USA.
4. Mr. M.S. Masoud, 61 Ontario Street, West, Montreal 18, P.Q., Canada.
5. Mr. S. Hadawi, 801 2nd Avenue, Room 801, New York 17, N.Y., U.S.A.
6. Mrs. Helen Klester, 103 Hayden Avenue, Watertown, Mass. U.S.A.

