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A Letter from Elyas Kusa to Matilda Kazda, January 1958

Printed in English, this document features a letter from Elyas Kusa to Matilda Kazda, serving as the editor of the Time-Incorporated Newspaper, sent on 4 January 1958 regarding an article by Israel Embassy Officer in Washington 1954-1960 Hugh Orgel where he encloses that Israel allowed 35, 000 Palestinian refugee to return back to their homeland, and the Jews were forced to leave the Arab states, as Kusa, in his letter denies such allegations.

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

4th January, 1958.

The Editor of Time,
Time and Life Building,
Rockefeller Center,
New York 20, N.Y.
U. S. A.

Dear Sir,

Mr. Hugh Y. Orgel, presumably a responsible officer of the Israel Embassy at Washington, has contained his letter (Time Dec., 23) many misleading and erroneous statements of fact.

It is untrue that "Israel has already repatriated 33,000 Arabs from the surrounding countries" either under the plan to reunite split families, or on any other ground. The total number of Arab and non-Arab refugees admitted to Israel from the adjacent Arab countries is about 4500 persons, mostly wives, daughters and sons who had not completed 15 years of age of Arab and non-Arab residents. As against this, some 1000 Arabs have already left Israel for good and all. Many more would gladly depart if they were helped to liquidate their properties and leave with the proceeds to settle elsewhere.

The statement that "Israel has relieved the UNRWA of responsibility for nearly 50,000 refugees", is misleading. In point of fact these persons were not refugees. 35,000 were Palestinian Arabs expelled from their homes and lands by the Military Authorities. They did not leave the country, and are at present living in Arab villages and towns in Israel. The remaining 15,000 were displaced Jews, now fully settled. The majority of the Arab displaced persons have not been resettled, and it is sheer fancy to claim that they have been "integrated in the economic and political life" of the State. They were farmers who lived on the produce of their lands. They have been stripped of their homes and lands, and are now landless casual labourers dependent for their livelihood on the availability of work, on the grace of the Military Governor and his subordinates and on the pleasure of the Histadrut. Their conditions are, generally, hard and pathetic.

It is also untrue that the Arab refugees fled at the behest of their leaders. This malicious propaganda is purposely disseminated to conceal the truth that the Arab exodus was the direct consequence of the savage butchery at Deir Yassin and the result of the Jewish policy to drive out as many Arabs as possible from the Jewish State with a view to reducing the large Arab minority which was likely to become the majority in the course of time. *under the*

It is likewise untrue that the 400,000 Jewish refugees quoted by Mr. Orgel, were forced to flee from Arab States. Apart from the non-Egyptian Jews who were expelled from Egypt in the wake of the triple conspiratorial Sinai campaign, the Yemenite, Iraqi, Libyan, Tunisian and Moroccan Jews were not refugees. They were induced to come to Israel by Zionist propaganda, and were, in fact, brought at the expense of the Jewish Agency. There are still many Jews in some of these countries who were not taken by this propaganda and continue to live in peace, prosperity and happiness among their Arab compatriots. It stands to the credit of these countries, allegedly backward and undemocratic, that in spite of the aggressive Sinai campaign no massacre of Jews was perpetrated as the savage carnage in the allegedly civilized and democratic State of Israel.

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U.N. Position Repudiated

The payment of compensation for the properties of the Palestinian refugees appears to be now of secondary importance. The Palestine problem has been so complicated by subsequent developments that no solution seems feasible in the foreseeable future. The longer it remains without settlement the more insoluble it becomes. And the more democratic and civilized the Arab peoples are, the more intransigent the Arab States would be against peace with Israel. In the contemplation of the Arab peoples the problem transcends, at present, the four main issues of the conflict, namely, the territorial boundaries, the return of the refugees, the payment of compensation for their properties, and the internationalization of Jerusalem. It involves the very existence of Israel in an Arab region among Afro-Asian peoples struggling for their complete independence and full sovereignty against colonialism and imperialism, and for the elimination from their midst of colonial bases and imperial centers. Hence, Israel is in dire need for more sagacious and imaginative leaders having a sense of realism to achieve peace with the Arab States, to become integrated in the Afro-Asian world, and to live in understanding, cooperation and friendship with the peoples of the region of which its territory is geographically, economically, politically and strategically an integral part.

Surely, Prime Minister Ben Gurion and his clique will never be able to achieve these desirable goals.

Yours faithfully,


E. N. KOUSSA.

Sir:

Israel has already repatriated 33,000 Arab refugees from the surrounding countries, many of them under a plan to reunite split families. During the past nine years Israel has, furthermore, relieved the UNRWA of responsibility for nearly 50,000 refugees within the borders of Israel, taking them off the U.N. relief rolls by fully integrating them into Israel's economic and political life. During those nine years, Israel has also accepted and fully integrated over 400,000 Jewish refugees forced to flee from Arab states. Israel still stands by its offer to pay compensation to the Arab refugees for the property they left behind when they fled at the behest of their leaders.

HUGH Y. ORGEL

Embassy of Israel
Washington, D.C.

TIME, DECEMBER 23, 1957

