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**"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 26 July 1957 regarding the issue of the Palestinian Refugees.

26th Sept., 1957.

Dr. S. Shereshevsky,  
29 Ben Yehuda Street,  
Jerusalem.

Dear Dr. Shereshevsky,


Many thanks for your letter of the 20th instant as well as for publishing the memorandum of the Arab advocates on the proposed amendment of the period of prescription from 10 to 50 years and my circulated letter regarding the Government's refusal to grant me a passport and an exit visa.

I am happy to note that you consider the problem of the Arab refugees to be one of right and should be settled on this basis. The tone of your article gave me the impression that you look on it as a humanitarian cause; for, apart from calling upon the Government to recognize in principle the right of the refugees to return, there was no mention at all of any measures for the immediate enforcement of the right even where such implementation would not raise any difficulty at all, or would involve surmountable obstacles. This omission together with the reference to "this great humanitarian work" at the end of the article, made me conclude that you were, in fact, treating the question from a humanitarian angle only.

Mere recognition of the right to return is not sufficient to foster confidence in the Government's declared intentions. The recognition should be accompanied by immediate action, especially where no predictable difficulty exists. There is no reason why split families should not be re-united at once irrespective of the age of the male members. The Government categorically refuses to allow the return of any male member who has completed the age of 15. Consequently, this 10 year old split is now one of the causes driving a large number of Israeli Arabs to leave the country for good and all. Similarly, the refugee inhabitants of existing Arab villages should be permitted to return forthwith. Their homes and lands are intact, and, being at present under the control of the Custodian of the Absentee Property, could be released and restored to their lawful owners with ease. Such measures would indicate Israel's real desire to contribute toward the settlement of this sore problem. Simple acknowledgment of the right to return devoid of any earnest effort to give it effect, would lead to no useful purpose.

In this connection, I would ask you to read Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's statement appearing in the second column of The Jerusalem Post of the 23rd inst., regarding the return of the Germans driven from their homes in Silesia. He is reported to have said that "the return of the German refugees to their homes would make the solution of the Oder-Neisse border ease" for the reasons which he explained. Applying the same argument to the dispute regarding the Armistice frontiers, it would not be unreasonable to anticipate a fair solution of this problem when the Arab refugees are permitted to return to their former homes and Israel integrated into the economy of the Arab Middle East by the subsequent lifting of the boycott and blockade. The Arab-Israel dispute can only be solved step by step: the first step being the immediate return of those Arab refugees who can be settled at once as indicated above. Thereafter, the number of returnees would be determined by the commission you suggest, or by any other suitable method.

Yours faithfully,

  
E.N. KOUSSA.

שלך טובה ואחורכך

