

0290.02.0632

## **A Letter from Samy Haddawy to the Editor of the New York Times, September 1958**

Dated September 29, 1958, this printed letter in English was sent from Samy Haddawy on behalf of the Palestine Arab Refugee Officer to the Editor of the New York Times regarding the "Arab Refugees Plan," which was published by the Institute for Mediterranean Affairs during the same year, where Haddawy corrects the number of refugees included in this plan and divides them into three distinct categories.

*"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"*

## THE PALESTINE ARAB REFUGEE OFFICE

801 2nd Avenue, Room 801

New York 17, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: LEXINGTON 2-2272

CABLE: PALOFFICE, NEW YORK

September 29, 1958.

To the Editor  
The New York Times  
Times Square  
New York 36, N.Y.

*with emphasis.  
will with soon.  
Sami*

The item of news emanating from the Israeli Sector of Jerusalem (N.Y. Times of 28 Sept. 1958) gives the erroneous impression that Israel had in fact "repatriated about 20,000 refugees". The returnees are said to be "repatriates under the family reunion plan dating back to 1948".

To set the record straight, the figures published by the International Red Cross which conducted the exchange at the time, placed the number of persons affected by the reunion of split families plan at 4,500 entering Israeli-occupied territory and about 1,500 persons who left. These consisted specifically of wives, daughters and sons below fifteen years of age, and were supposed to have returned to their own homes at the time, so that the question of rehabilitation could not have arisen at this late period.

Whatever their number, these "repatriate refugees" are, however, in no way connected with the Arabs within the Israeli-occupied territory who were forcibly removed from their homes under one pretext or another and their lands confiscated and allotted to new Jewish settlers. These displaced Israeli Arabs are made up of three distinct categories:-

- 1) those who have been removed in 1948 from villages such as Ikret, Kfar Bir'im, Sha'b, Birwa, Umm El-Paraj, and Majdal, with promises of early return but later their homes, churches and mosques were demolished despite court rulings that the inhabitants were to be allowed to return to their villages and homes;
- 2) inhabitants of villages within "demilitarized zones" who have been removed into the interior contrary to the express provisions of the Armistice Agreements for "the return of civilians to villages and settlements in the demilitarized zone." Jews were permitted to return but not the Arabs and those who remained were either expelled or removed;
- 3) persons who - according to Don Peretz in his book "Israel and the Palestine Arabs" - had "fled from one place to another within Israel but who never left the country". Don Peretz placed the figure of such persons at 30,000.

The irony of the whole project is that after stripping the Arab citizens of their homes and lands and allowing them to suffer impoverishment and humiliation for ten years, the Israelis have the audacity to pose as merciful benefactors and to expect their proposed plan - to put it in the words of the Israeli official - to "serve as an example of what can be done to alleviate the lot of the other refugees". Since it was Israel and none other that uprooted and dispossessed the "other refugees", it stands to reason that Israel and Israel alone must learn from her own example.

*Sami Hadawi*  
SAMI HADAWI