

**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.)

Exodus and dispossession of Jews from Palestine: Jewish exodus and loss of property in Gaza

Whatever happened to Gaza’s Jewish quarter?

11 January 2022

<https://www.jewishrefugees.org.uk/2022/01/whatever-happened-to-gazas-jewish-quarter.html>

There was once a Jewish quarter in Gaza. This might not be news to Jews, but it is to *Al-Monitor*, which is published by Arab American Jamal Daniel. What is even more interesting is that Jewish families sought to recover their properties when Israel

conquered Gaza in 1967. But the Israeli courts ruled in favour of the Palestinian residents. This is in contrast to the situation in Sheikh Jarrah, where the Jordanian authorities did not properly transfer deeds of ownership.

Based on information obtained during his studies at Birzeit University from history professor [Roger Heacock](#), Yafawi said that after the 1967 war and Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip, Israel removed the remains of about 12 Jews buried in Gaza and took them to Israel at the order of then-Defense Minister Moshe Dayan. "This is for two reasons. The first is that Gaza was seen as a cursed land in the Jewish religion, and the second is the political and field circumstances in Gaza," he explained.

He noted, "In the early 1950s, the Egyptian administration expropriated lands in the area to expand the main Salah El-Din Street. It compensated those affected with other land plots within what is known as the Jewish Quarter. The Jewish cemeteries, however, were preserved and Jews continued to visit their loved ones even under Egypt's rule."

When Israel took over the Gaza Strip, Israeli institutions such as the [Jewish National Fund](#) and the [Custodian of Absentee Properties Department](#) sought to recover the quarter from the Palestinians by submitting title deeds proving the ownership of the lands by Jewish families before 1948. Their first success was the transfer of the remains of the Jews' bodies under the supervision of the representative of the Mizrahi Jews' rabbis.

In turn, the Palestinians who resided in the quarter presented ownership documents obtained from the Egyptian land and real estate properties department. Yafawi explained, "After lengthy legal procedures, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Palestinians and obligated the Jews to assign the lands. The court was persuaded by the fact that Gaza was seen as a cursed land and the main battleground of a constant conflict. The Supreme Court rejected the claims filed by Jews in this case."

He concluded, "The only book that addresses the Jewish Quarter in Gaza, briefly, is 'Gaza Through History,' by [Ibrahim Khalil Skaik](#). Not many people in Gaza know that the Jews had a neighborhood in Gaza. The issue remains taboo and highly frowned upon in a society that sees Israel only as an enemy amid the repeated attacks over the years of occupation."

Abdel Raouf Shniora, a 60-year-old Palestinian from Gaza, who lives in the Jewish Quarter, told Al-Monitor, "In the early 1960s the quarter was part of our groves. There were very few graves for Jews. It was a land planted with wheat and barley, surrounded by lemon trees."

His octogenarian neighbor, Mohammed Juha, who was sitting in front of his house, told Al-Monitor, "I have lived here since I was young. My grandfather bought this house. I remember that Jews would come to this neighborhood to visit the graves of their loved ones. All we know is that this neighborhood is called the Jewish Quarter because there are graves for Jews in it. When we moved here in the 1960s there were no Jews, only Jewish graves."

