

**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: Expulsion of 3,000 Jews from East Jerusalem in 1948

Precious record of Jerusalem ethnic cleansing resurfaces

22 August 2021

<https://www.jewishrefugees.org.uk/2021/08/precious-record-of-jerusalem-ethnic-cleansing-resurfaces.html>

Had it not been for *Life* photojournalist John Phillips, the destruction of the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem by the Arab Legion in 1948, now ignored by western pundits and politicians, would not have been documented. Phillips evaded the Arab censor to smuggle out poignant pictures. They were later published as the book, *A Will to Survive*. Richard Pollock takes up the story in *JNS News*:

Phillips faced personal danger to do the shoot. He entered the Middle East undercover and wore the uniform of the Arab Legion, a British-created Arab army led by British officers, many of whom stayed on with their units to fight the Jews. “Mistaking me for a British officer, the Arab populace left me alone,” he wrote.

He was appalled about the Arab censorship. “Aware that the sack of the Jewish Quarter would shock the western world, Arab authorities across the Middle East tried to prevent the news from leaking out. Jerusalem could not be mentioned under any circumstances,” he wrote.

“I knew my pictures of the agony of the Jewish Quarter would end up in a censor’s wastepaper basket. I did not want this to happen and decided to smuggle them out of the Middle East.”

Phillips’ first job was to meet the pro-Nazi Arab fanatic, Fawzi al-Qawuqji, the field commander of the so-called Arab Liberation Army—a separate, brutal volunteer force specifically created to battle the Jews.

During the Second World War, Fawzi lived in Nazi Germany alongside Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and held the official rank of colonel in the Wehrmacht, the German army. The Nazis awarded Fawzi a chauffeured car and an apartment, along with other privileges.

Impulsively, Fawzi invited Phillips to lunch. He wrote that he was offended by what he saw. “There was a brutishness about the way they roared with laughter and slapped their thighs in delight at the prospect of wallowing in Jewish blood,” he wrote.

Afterwards, Phillips ran into a Yugoslav mercenary who had witnessed their lunch meeting. “What rabble,” Phillips wrote, quoting the mercenary. “They have no idea what a real fighting outfit is like. I do. I was with the Waffen S.S.”

In fact, that soldier was not alone. The ranks of Arab Liberation Army included demobilized Nazi Wehrmacht Army soldiers, including the brutal SS, along with pro-Nazi mercenary forces from across Europe.

Phillips admired the Jewish defiance. “While the Old Quarter might well be indefensible, they would defend it. This was the Jerusalem that Jewish people around the world asked to return to in their prayers.”

The pre-war atmospherics shocked Phillips, a veteran World War II photographer. “Weapons were peddled on Arab street corners as they were Jaffa oranges. British deserters, German S.S., Polish and Yugoslav mercenaries hired by the Arabs performed acts of sabotage.”

Phillips traveled the city with a British deserter. He was astonished by the destruction of its synagogues. “Whenever we paused to catch our breath, all I seemed to see were damaged synagogues,” he wrote.

He also saw the destruction of the famed Pirate Josef Synagogue. “From a spot near the Wailing Wall I could see Porat Josef synagogue rising in the distance across no-man’s-land. The synagogue, with its adjoining Talmudic schools and academy, was disintegrating behind billows of smoke. The massive walls were coming down in a rising torrent of stone debris. Stunned by this spectacle of wanton destruction, I wondered how many tons of TNT the Arab Liberation Army would squander to reduce this seat of learning to dust.”

For 11 days and nights, the battle raged. On May 28, Jerusalem fell to the Arabs. “By day the Arabs blasted their way into the Jewish Quarter with their artillery,” wrote Phillips. “On May 28 the exhausted Israeli fighters surrendered.”

Eventually, Jerusalem Mayor Mordechai Weingarten walked in to sign the surrender documents.

The surrender of the Jewish Quarter now was official. But the city’s tragedy was only beginning. “Had any Jews decided to remain in the Old City he would have been homeless within hours and probably dead by nightfall. Most of the civilians were Orthodox Jews. The men wore beards and side curls, wide-brimmed black felt hats and long black coats. The women wore babushkas. They were descendants of families that had lived in the Jewish Quarter for centuries. Now they were given just one hour to pack and get ready to leave.”

He describes the stunned civilians. “Dazed by the shelling, the civilians gathered up their belongings and trudged off to Ashkenazi Square.”

After the Jews fled, Phillips walked back to witness wild Arab looting and arson. “Arab civilians ... had come leaping over the rooftops like a swarm of locusts to loot. In their frenzied path fires sprang up. Black smoke billowed out of windows, while bright yellow flames licked wooden balconies. The entire quarter was now afire. The smell of burning mingled with the stench of death.”

Phillips continued to follow the fires. “Outside the Jewish Quarter burned like a pyre. On May 29 the Jewish Quarter was charred and a burned-out shell. Down Beit El a proud Moslem led the way, followed by his barefoot wife carrying three wooden containers of Sephardic scrolls from a nearby synagogue.”

Thirty years later, in 1976, Phillips published *Survive*. Many of his photos were unveiled at Jerusalem's Israel Museum. Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir wrote a short introduction to the book.

With the help of then-Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek, he was able to meet with 51 of the survivors he had photographed.

What Phillips said affected him was the Jews' complete lack of self-pity. "What struck me most while talking to these people, from the Chief Rabbi of Haifa to a Jerusalem housekeeper, was that none indulged in self-pity."

Today's Jews still don't seek pity, but they should demand justice. The sacredness of the Old Jewish Quarter and its brutal destruction by the Arabs need to be widely republicized. There needs to be an international historical reckoning of their 1948 ethnic cleansing. Most importantly, the Jewish community must stand up for historical truths and strongly denounce the Palestinians' baseless claims for the eastern part of the city.