

November 30 – Day to Mark the Departure and Expulsion of Jews from the Arab Countries and Iran

The State of Israel has decided, in legislation, to mark November 30 as the day marking the departure and expulsion of the Jews from Moslem countries. This date is symbolic, coming as it does immediately after the 29th of November, the date on which the United Nations General Assembly voted in favor of the Partition Plan. As a result of this decision, waves of opposition and persecution of Jews arose in those countries, and many Jewish communities in Moslem countries were forced to leave. It is important to note that the vast majority of the Jews left as refugees, who had to abandon their homes and possessions in their countries of origin, and leave, some with only a handful of possessions. Some left openly. Others fled with the assistance of Jewish underground organizations that were set up (for example, in Iraq), in some cases with the cooperation of agents from Israel who came to those countries. There were instances in which some family members immigrated to Israel, while others (particularly the elderly and sick) remained in their countries of origin. The majority of these Jews came to Israel in the early years of its independence, while others migrated to other countries.

Since 2003, the Government of Israel and the United States Congress have recognized the Jews who were uprooted from the Arab countries as refugees, and in recent years the Government of Israel has taken steps to assess the value of the property left behind and nationalized by the Arab countries, estimated in the billions of dollars.

This date offers an opportunity to discuss these communities, to understand – at least a little – their atmosphere, and to grasp the fact that these communities, some of them thousands of years old, for the most part no longer exist.