

al majdal

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al majdal aims to raise public awareness and support for a just solution to Palestinian residency and refugee issues

● Call for the Establishment of a Palestinian Land Commission

● New Palestinian & International Initiative for Palestinian Refugee Rights

● Empowering Palestinian Refugee Initiatives and NGOs

● Palestinian Refugees and UNRWA

● Advocate for the Palestinian Right to Restitution

● Update: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

● Our Visitors - Poem from Refugee Children in Lebanon

● Call for Mobilization! Israeli High Court Decision on ID Card Confiscation on 22 April 1999

● Jerusalem ID Card Confiscation: Date for 1996-1998

● Update: Residency Rights Under the PA

● Editorial: Why *al majdal* ?

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palestinian refugees: RECLAIMING the RIGHT OF RETURN

In the course of the last 50 years, the collusion of Zionist interests and regional interests of powerful western states led by the United States, has brought about the establishment of a consensus which holds that the right of return - the international standard for the solution of refugee problems in general, and the Palestinian case in particular - is not binding when the Palestinian refugee question is tackled in so-called practical terms. The establishment and maintenance of a pure Jewish state through the eviction of most of the country's indigenous Arab population has remained widely unchallenged. The success of this policy is proof of both superb Israeli diplomacy and the moral and political bias of the west.

Between 1989 and 1997, Israel absorbed some 800,000 Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, while claiming - at the same time - that Palestinian refugee repatriation was impossible due to the lack of available space in the country. Those who refuse to consider repatriation as a solution should take note that, unlimited Jewish immigration according to the Israeli "Law of Return" and the denial of the Palestinians' right of return is a sure recipe for continued conflict, instability and war in the Middle East. The fact that, according to Israeli press reports, over 27 percent of Russian immigrants to Israel are not Jewish, makes the continued exclusion of Palestinians even more indefensible.

Israel's absolute refusal to repatriate the Palestinian refugees now taken as the starting point for all so-called realistic discussion, needs to be questioned and challenged. Israel has justified this refusal by means of the following arguments: i) the historic persecution of the Jewish people and their need for a refuge; ii) Palestinian and Arab responsibility for the flight of Palestinians in 1948; iii) unfeasibility and lack of living space in the territory of the Israeli state; and, iv) Israel's security. These arguments are either demonstrably false (ii, iii), or they are cases of special pleading that need to be weighed in the balance against the possibility of real peace in the Middle East.

Many people concede the justice of the Palestinian refugee claims, but describe them as "unrealistic". It is time to challenge the notion that what is rejected by Israel is "not practical". It is time to raise the fact that politics aimed at the maintenance of an ethnically pure Jewish state does not override international law nor the aims of social and political justice and peace. International support is vital in order to add weight, in all interna-

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