**The Secret Ethnic Cleansing of Palestinians**

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By Khaled Abu Toameh

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http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/6314/ethnic-cleansing-palestinians

It is no secret that most of the Arab countries have long been mistreating their Palestinian brethren by subjecting them to a series of  [Apartheid](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3770/lebanon-apartheid-laws)-like discriminatory laws and regulations that often deny them basic rights.

In countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Syria, Palestinians are treated as second and third class citizens, a fact that has forced many of them to seek better lives in the U.S., Canada, Australia and various European countries. As a result, many Palestinians today feel unwelcome in their countries of origin and other Arab countries.

The condition of Palestinians in Arab countries began to deteriorate after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The Palestinians were the first to "congratulate" Saddam Hussein on his invasion of Kuwait, a country that used to provide the PLO with tens of millions of dollars in financial aid every year. But many fled Kuwait to be away from the anarchy and lawlessness that prevailed after the Iraqi invasion.

When Kuwait was liberated the following year by a U.S.-led coalition, some 200,000 Palestinians were expelled from the oil-rich emirate in retaliation for having supported Saddam Hussein's invasion of it. An additional 150,000 Palestinians had fled Kuwait before the U.S.-led coalition war. They had suspected a new incursion might be in the offing, and were worried about what would be awaiting them once Kuwait was liberated.

Most of the Palestinians who left Kuwait voluntarily, or who were expelled,  [settled](http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/plohistoryofrevolution/2009/2009/08/200981294137853350.html) in Jordan.

The Palestinians in Iraq are now also paying a heavy price. Since 2003, the number of Palestinians there has dropped from 25,000 to 6,000. Palestinian activists say the Iraqis are waging a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the country's Palestinian population.

The activists say that since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime, Shiite militias in Iraq have been systematically attacking and intimidating the Palestinian population over the past decade, prompting many to flee.

The Shiites, they say, are opposed to the presence of non-Iraqi Sunnis, including the Palestinians, in their country -- especially in the capital, Baghdad.

In addition, they say, many Sunnis in Iraq who had opposed Saddam Hussein have also been waging war on the Palestinians, in retaliation for their support for him.

Thamer Meshainesh, head of the League for Palestinians in Iraq, was [quoted](http://www.islamtoday.net/albasheer/artshow-14-212163.htm) a few days ago as saying that Palestinians were facing "unprecedented violations" and "increasing assaults." He warned that Palestinians in Iraq were being targeted by various militias as part of a systematic policy to expel them from the country.

Abu al-Walid, a Palestinian researcher who has been following the plight of the Palestinians in Iraq for several years, [pointed out](http://www.islamtoday.net/albasheer/artshow-14-212163.htm) that 19,000 out of the 25,000 Palestinians in Iraq have already fled the country. He also noted that Palestinians were being targeted on a daily basis on the pretext of involvement in terrorism.

But UN only cares about Palestinians when it comes to Israel.

According to the researcher, many Palestinians captured by Shiite militias in Iraq have been brutally tortured and forced to "confess" to their alleged involvement in terrorism.

Meshainesh and Abu al-Walid accused the Palestinian Authority (PA) of failing to help the Palestinian in Iraq. They said that the only effort made by the PA in this regard has been limited to "empty rhetoric."

The Palestinians in Iraq are paying the price for meddling in the internal affairs of the country. This is what also happened to Palestinians in Syria, Lebanon and Libya. Palestinians often find themselves involved, both directly and indirectly, in the rivalries that take place inside Arab countries. And when the fire reaches them, they start screaming for help, as is the case today in Iraq.

But what is most interesting is the complete indifference displayed by international human rights organizations, the media and the Palestinian Authority toward the mistreatment of Palestinians in Arab countries.

The PA, whose leaders are busy inciting against Israel on a daily basis, does not have time to care about its people in the Arab world. PA leaders say they want to press "war crimes" charges against Israel with the International Criminal Court because of last year's war with Hamas and continued construction in West Bank settlements.

However, when it comes to ethnic cleansing and torture of Palestinians in Arab countries such as Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority leadership chooses to look the other way.

Similarly, the international media seems to have forgotten that there are tens of thousands of Palestinians living in various Arab countries. The only Palestinians that Western journalists know and care about are those living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

International journalists do not care about the Palestinians in the Arab world because this is not a story that can be blamed on Israel. An Arab killing or torturing an Arab is not an item worth publishing in a major newspaper in the U.S., Canada or Britain. But when a Palestinian in the West Bank complains against the Israeli authorities or Jewish settlers, many Western journalists waste no time rushing to the scene to cover this "major" development.

The ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Iraq is not a strange phenomenon in the Arab world. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have also fled Syria during the past few years. Most have gone to Lebanon and Jordan, where authorities are doing their utmost to ensure that the Palestinian refugees know that they are [unwelcome](http://ecre.org/component/content/article/70-weekly-bulletin-articles/773-palestinians-fleeing-syrian-conflict-denied-safety-in-lebanon-amnesty-international-reports.html). Palestinian activists estimate that in a few years from now, there will be no Palestinians in Iraq or Syria.

The UN and other international bodies have obviously not heard of the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in the Arab world. They too are so obsessed with Israel that they prefer not to hear about the suffering of Palestinians under Arab regimes.

Not only do the Arab countries despise the Palestinians, they also want them to be the problem of Israel alone. That is why, since 1948, Arab governments have refused to allow Palestinians permanently to settle in their countries and become equal citizens. Now these Arab countries are not only denying Palestinians their basic rights, they are also killing and torturing them, and subjecting them to ethnic cleansing. And this is all happening while world leaders and governments continue to bury their heads in the sand and point an accusing finger at Israel.