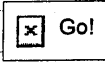




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**Answers to Frequently Asked Questions:**  
• **Palestinian Violence and Terrorism**  
• **The International War against Terrorism**  
(August 2002)

*Note: Although a new version of the Frequently Asked Questions has been published (November 2003), this text is being maintained on-line because it contains certain issues relevant to the time that are not dealt with in the updated text.*

**◆ What is Israel's position on the Palestinian claim to a "right of return"?**

**The Palestinian demand to unconditionally exercise a self-declared "right of return" is nothing less than a demand to eliminate the State of Israel. The arrival of millions of Palestinians in Israel (whose present Jewish and Arab population is just over 6 million) would in effect end Israel's existence as the modern political embodiment of the ancient Jewish nation.**

The Palestinian refugee problem did not spring from a vacuum. Its immediate cause was the refusal of the Arab world to accept UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (the Partition Plan) in 1947, and the subsequent Arab invasion of the

new State of Israel. During that war, many Arabs living in battle zones abandoned their homes, whether following calls from the Arab leadership, out of fear of the fighting or in apprehension over their future in a Jewish state. The refugee problem would not exist at all had the war not been forced upon Israel by the various Arab countries and the local Arab population.

The Arab states (with the notable exception of Jordan) have remained determined to perpetuate the refugee problem and to exploit it in their struggle to destroy Israel. From 1948 to the present day, the refugees have been confined to crowded camps, where they have lived in poverty and despair, and as a deliberate policy, no attempt has been made to absorb them into society or to provide for their welfare. This policy was pursued in order to engender international sympathy for the Palestinian cause, at the expense of the Palestinians themselves. As a first step to the realization of the Palestinian claim to a so-called "right of return" for all descendants of the Arab refugees, it has been demanded that Israel admit its responsibility for the refugee problem. Since Israel is neither at fault for the creation of the refugee problem nor for its perpetuation, it cannot take upon itself, even as a gesture, responsibility for this problem. Such a declaration of responsibility would have far-reaching implications. Primarily, it would lend an air of false legitimacy to the historically unprecedented Palestinian demand for an unconditional right to "return" to areas that are part of the State of Israel.

It should be noted that hundreds of thousands of Jews were forced out of Arab countries, leaving behind vast property and wealth for which they were never compensated. The number of Jews displaced as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict is roughly equal to the number of Arabs, and in effect, this parallel displacement constitutes an exchange of population similar to those which have taken place in many other instances of regional conflict in the 20th century (India-Pakistan, Greece-Turkey, etc.). In sharp contrast to the Arab states' treatment of their Palestinian brethren, Israel took these Jews in and integrated them into Israeli society, despite the heavy burden this placed on its developing economy.