

In a chapter of his new book Jared Kushner claims that separating the Territorial dispute from the Jerusalem issue was a key element leading to the Abraham Accords. Too bad he didn't take his thinking one step further and also break the refugee issue away from the territorial dispute. The whole world (including the Arabs) knows that the Palestinian refugees have been kept as a political pawn to further a Palestinian agenda. The people who suffer from this status are the refugees, themselves. It isn't surprising that people fleeing from the Syrian civil war claimed they were Syrians, even when they came from UNRWA camps for "Palestinian" refugees. They had no desire to return to their former residences and be trapped by the UNRWA definition that claims the ONLY solution is repatriation to homes in Palestine where neither most refugees, nor their ancestors, were actually born.

The next step needed is to separate the refugee question from the definition of borders for a possible future Palestinian state. It can be started by disestablishing UNRWA and transferring responsibility for the camp residents to the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. His office, unlike UNRWA, is tasked with solving the plight of refugees by EITHER repatriation OR resettlement elsewhere. Allowing the refugees to choose what they want could remove another issue that keeps Israel and the Palestinians apart. There are also alternative ways to solve corollary issues in host countries, like the Lebanese concern for their theoretical Muslim-Christian balance, which already doesn't exist, even without including so-called Palestinian refugees. Jordan already granted citizenships to those refugees living within its' borders.

When examining this problem it is important to remember that about 70% of the original 1949 refugees were not born in Palestine. They, or their parents, came from Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. They were attracted by the higher wages available in the British mandate in the 1930's and 1940s. This is thoroughly documented in Roberta Peters' book "From Time Immemorial".

Another side benefit from closing down UNRWA is shifting the burden of financial responsibility away from US and European nations that currently foot most of the

bill. UNRWA funding, sadly, is far too often syphoned off to the coffers of the rulers of the countries where it operates. This often happens indirectly., but it does form part of what is used to build fortunes by many corrupt officials.

Israel closed down UNRWA refugee camps within her borders prior to 1967. Now is the time to do this everywhere else.

This was originally prepared as a letter to a news magazine, but they did not publish it.