



Written by on July 17, 2009

U.S. Will Resettle Palestinian Refugees from Iraq

Others left Kuwait during the 1991 Gulf War. The Palestinian community within Iraq would eventually number around 34,000 people. Paralleling the post-Hussein plight of Iraqi Christians, that number has since fallen to about 15,000.



Former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, who ruled Iraq from 1979-2003, welcomed the Palestinians, with whom he shared a Sunni Muslim heritage. With the removal of Hussein and the rise of a militant Shiite influence in Iraq, the Palestinians, along with other non-Shiite minorities, have suffered. Many were evicted from Shiite-owned housing, where, under Saddam, they had received subsidized rents — a policy that created resentment. With the ouster of their protector, most Palestinians were literally put out into the streets. Some fled to neighboring Jordan and Syria; thousands of others languished in refugee camps in no-man's-land areas along Iraq's borders with those countries.

The *Christian Science Monitor* noted that while the United States generally doesn't accept Palestinians, Todd Pierce, a spokesman for the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, said that Iraqi Palestinians fall under a different category from those in Gaza and the West Bank. Pierce told the *Monitor* that each applicant will be carefully scrutinized for terrorist ties.

Reaction to the decision to accept these refugees into the United States has been mixed. George Bisharat, a professor at the University of California Hastings College of Law, who specializes in Middle Eastern law, was quoted by the *Wall Street Journal* of July 17: "These particular Palestinians are a fallout from the Iraq War. The Obama administration had to take some responsibility for the consequences of the invasion."

Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, took an opposing view: "We don't think that Washington should be bringing in a group of people who we know were publicly and consistently hostile to the United States and its closest ally, Israel."

However, an Israeli government spokesman stated that "Israel has no official position on this internal American issue."

And Bill Frelick, refugee policy director at Human Rights Watch (HRW) in Washington, told the *Christian Science Monitor* last week: "Really for the first time, the United States is recognizing a Palestinian refugee population that could be admitted to the U.S. as part of a resettlement program."



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In searching for some precedent as to how the United States has traditionally handled the plight of political refugees, it is obvious that we have given shelter over the years to many people who have fled from oppressive governments. Even today, we continue to allow Cubans who set foot on our soil to remain here. (The "wet-foot, dry-foot" policy.) Indeed, a case can be made that we had a responsibility to provide sanctuary to those fleeing the Castro's island prison. Although the United States did not effect "regime change" in Cuba in 1958-59 through overt military invasion, as it did in Iraq, the behind-the-scenes role of the U.S. State Department to undermine Fulgencio Batista and replace him with the "agrarian reformer" Fidel Castro was just as decisive. And our State Department's setup and abandonment of the Bay of Pigs invaders was another betrayal of patriotic Cubans to their communist slavemasters (for more information, [click here](#)).

However, the help we provide to those harmed by our government's disastrous interventionist policies should not be unlimited, nor should it damage our national security. The 1980 Mariel oatlift from Cuba is a case in point. The 125,000 Mariel "boat people" were not just a collection of innocent fleeing refugees. Many of them were career criminals so incorrigible that Castro did not even want them in his prisons. Hidden among them were Cuban intelligence operatives who came to the United States to set up a drug trafficking network. Their presence in the Miami area undoubtedly still impacts the high crime rate in that area.

Will the settlement of 1,350 Palestinian refugees be relatively benign, like Cold War-era Polish refugees fleeing communism to establish a new life in Chicago, or more like the Mariel boatlift — heavily seeded with al Qaeda agents harmful to America?

That can only be determined by extremely diligent screening of these refugees by competent and trustworthy U.S. intelligence personnel. Whether or not such screening will take place is certainly questionable. But one thing can be said with absolute certainty: if the United States did not intervene in Iraq, there would be no rationale for resettling Palestinian refugees in the United States and therefore no concern about how many may be hostile to America.

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