

# Jews from Iraq, Algeria to get Holocaust survivors' benefits

Aside from European Jews, until now only refugees from Libya and Tunisia were eligible; Kahlon says step 'rights a historical wrong'

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Jewish immigrants from Iraq arriving at Atlit transit camp, June 1951 (photo credit: GPO)

Israeli Jews from Iraq, Morocco and Algeria who suffered persecution during the period of the Holocaust will receive an annual monetary grant, a step that Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon said was “righting a historical wrong.”

The benefits are to be given to Jews from Algeria and Morocco who suffered from anti-Semitism between 1940 and 1942, and to Jews from Iraq who were targeted in the “Farhud” pogroms in Baghdad in June 1941. These survivors are entitled to an additional annual payment of NIS 3,600 (approx. \$950) and will be exempt from paying for their medication.

The decision is based on historical evidence presented to the treasury in a series of lawsuits filed by Iraqi Jews, who argued that they deserved recognition and compensation like the Jews who managed to escape Europe.

According to Israeli daily Haaretz, historians see a connection between Nazi Germany and the acts of murder, robbery and persecution suffered by Jews in Arab countries during World War II. Germany encouraged such acts, the historians claim.

Other than European Jews, only Jews from Libya and from Tunisia have to date been eligible for compensation as Holocaust survivors, and only Jews who arrived in Israel from these countries by 1953 are eligible for compensation. Those benefits change according to certain criteria, but the amount begins at NIS 26,400 (\$7,000) per year — far higher than the sums refugees from Iraq and Algeria will receive.

Kahlon’s decision also affects Jews who came to Israel after 1953.

David Yadid, chairman of the Holocaust Survivors' Rights Authority and the lawyer instrumental in filing lawsuits against the Finance Ministry, hailed Kahlon's decision.

The move is a "big step" but mostly for the Jews who came after 1953 and in any case were not eligible for compensation, Yadid told Haaretz. But, he said, for people who came before 1953, Kahlon's decision was a "consolation prize," as they deserved a stipend comparable to that given to refugees from Europe, Libya and Tunisia.



Finance minister and leader of the Kulanu party, Moshe Kahlon, at the opening meeting of the Finance Ministry in Jerusalem, May 18, 2015 (Hadas Parush/Flash90)

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