

## ABOUT PALESTINIAN RABBI HAIM SOFER

Haim Sofer was born in Jerusalem in 1976 to Iraqi parents. He now lives in London after fleeing Israel.

### HAIM'S History

At Israel's inception in 1948, there were more than 1 million Jews in Arab countries. Israel wanted to bring them to populate the land from which they had driven the Palestinians. But these diaspora Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews were generally well-off and comfortable – accepted by the Arab neighbours- why would they want to come to Palestine? Right up to 1950 most Iraqi Jews rejected Zionism. Young Mizrahi Jews didn't want to be soldiers in the Hagganah or the Israeli Army.

They also did not like colonial Britain. During WW2, many Iraqis sided with Germany. Haim's father was in the Iraqi army. When Iraq's support for Germany in WW2 became clear, the British Army took Baghdad in 1941 (The Anglo-Iraqi War was a British-led Allied military campaign during the Second World War against the Kingdom of Iraq under Rashid Gaylani, who had seized power in the 1941 Iraqi coup d'état with assistance from Germany and Italy).

Following this, Haim's father was sent to fight the Kurds, but Haim's father refused. He went into hiding but was captured by the military, beaten, taken to hospital. But there was, because of the rise of Zionists in Palestine, growing antisemitism. The hospital doctors declared that if they had known he was Jewish, they would not have treated him! At this point the Iraqi Army were beginning to think all Jews were Zionists.

In 1950 the Israelis, secretly, undertook the "Baghdad Bombings"- they went and planted bombs in synagogues. They were used to say Arabs were trying to kill Jews. See [1950–1951 Baghdad bombings - Wikipedia](#) and read [Avi Shlaim's](#) book "Three Worlds: Memoirs of an Arab-Jew".

It worked- Thousands requested to leave Iraq. Haim declares that the Zionists made a deal with the Iraqi Government- they said- give us the Jews- you can keep their money. And so the Jews were pushed to Palestine, but they hated it- they were treated as second-class citizens by the Ashkenazi Jews.

According to Haim, babies were taken from Sephardic Jews and sold to the US or given to Kibbutzim, so they could adopt them and rear them as Zionists.

Haim's parents moved to Israel in 1951 and Haim was born 25 years later. He was reared hearing a lot of anti-Zionist news channels from Lebanon. He grew up alongside Arabs and spoke Arabic and sang Arabic songs. His father worked in construction.

From the age of 15, Haim grew interested in the Neturei Karta and slowly got more active. He spoke Arabic at home in Al Quds (Jerusalem). He visited Palestinians in Ramallah and took part in anti-Zionist protests in Al Quds. From his early 20s he was being arrested and jailed by the Israeli police. He learned that some protestors were being injected with compounds that made them weak.

He was incarcerated by the Israeli police over six times, a few days each time. He was terrified they would inject him with the drugs. The police went to his apartment to search for evidence against him.

He reports there are many anti-Zionist Jews- maybe 10,000. But far fewer are activists- maybe just a few hundred. But many protest when Israelis take boys into the army. Recently 3,000 blocked the entrances into Jerusalem.

Haim was particularly persecuted because of the interviews he gave to Al-Jazeera. He learnt that religious Zionists wanted to beat him up. He went to Ramallah to visit Yasser Arafat's grave. When he came back, there were flowers at his door- which he took as a sign that they were going to kill him (flowers on his grave). He fled to London- but even there he was not safe. He was attacked by religious Zionists with bottles. He says these Zionists are assisted by the British police- for Neturei Karta are harassed for burning the Israeli flag.

Haim sees it as his mission to get to Jews and tell them they are creating a small-scale Holocaust on the Palestinians. He describes it as a "small genocide". He believes the Zionists are committing an enormous sin and we must help them.

On the Muslim & Jew Tour, he will talk about:

How wonderful the relationship between Muslims and Jews always was, especially in Palestine. How it was under the Turkish empire- Palestinians have always been kind to the Jews – which only changed with the coming of Zionism. He will talk of the suffering of the Palestinian people and the importance that Jews should have warmth and sympathy for Palestinian people- and recognise the land belongs to them.