

# Rashida Tlaib and that “safe haven” for Jews created by the Palestinians

by Hugh Fitzgerald



**Appearing as a guest** on the Yahoo News podcast “*Skullduggery*” in early May, Rashida Tlaib offered her own fantastical version of Israeli, and “Palestinian” history:

*“There’s always kind of a calming feeling, I tell folks, when I think of the Holocaust, and the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the fact that it was my ancestors – Palestinians – who lost their land and some lost their lives, their livelihood, their human dignity, their existence in many ways, have been wiped out, and some people’s [sic] passports,” Tlaib said on the podcast’s most recent episode, published Friday [May 11]. “And, just all of it was in the name of trying to create a safe haven for Jews, post-the Holocaust, post-the tragedy and the horrific persecution of Jews across the world at that*

*time. And, I love the fact that it was my ancestors that provided that, right,[sic] in many ways, but they did it in a way that took their human dignity away and it was forced on them."*

What kind of person, what kind of moral idiot, says that when she "thinks of the Holocaust" there "is always kind of a calming feeling"? We could stop right there, for that ought to be enough to permanently earn her universal scorn. But let's continue.

What she claims, in her confused and tortured English, is this:

*Israel came into being to provide a "safe haven for Jews" after the Holocaust; it was the local population, the "Palestinians," who "provided that safe haven" but in so doing, they lost "their land and some lost their lives, their livelihood, their human dignity, their existence in many ways." You see, they were made to suffer for the crimes against the Jews committed by others, while being themselves guiltless.*

Tlaib implies that Israel came into being as a reaction to the Holocaust. It did not. The Jewish state, as an idea and an ideal, long preceded the Holocaust. Eretz Israel was in the minds of exiled Jews for nearly two millennia. Modern Zionism, which called for Jews to rebuild a Jewish state in their ancestral homeland, began not – as Tlaib seems to think – post-World War II, as a belated attempt to create a "safe haven" after the Holocaust, but with Theodor Herzl, who made public at the First Zionist Congress in 1897 the goal of resurrecting a Jewish state.

Even under Ottoman rule, Jews had begun to return to Eretz Israel, buying land from local Arab owners and from absentee landlords in Amman, Beirut, and Istanbul, often at exorbitant

prices. Jews continued to resettle in the Land of Israel during the period of the British mandate. They did not despoil any local Arabs; these Jews paid handsomely for every last dunam they acquired. It was only after the 1948–49 war, in which the armies of five Arab countries attempted to snuff out the young life of the nascent Jewish state, that some land, from which the Arab owners had fled, was expropriated.

Rashida Tlaib appears not to know this history. And she describes the “Palestinians” (who came into existence, as a “people”—invented for propaganda purposes—only after the Six-Day War) as having had to sacrifice so much, in order that the Jews might have a “safe haven.” In fact, the local Arabs (Tlaib’s “Palestinians”) fought the Jews and opposed their return to Zion any way they could. Arabs were attacking Jewish settlers as early as 1920, at Tel Hai, where they killed Jewish farmers and burned their settlement to the ground; the same year, Arabs attacked Jews during the Nebi Musa riots in Jerusalem. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s local Arabs continued to attack Jews in farms, towns and cities.

The “Arab Revolt” in 1936-39 was, however, mainly directed at the British, who were seen as being too favorable toward the Jews (which was definitely not the case). The leader of the Palestinian Muslims, Haj Amin al-Husseini, went into exile during that revolt. Al-Husseini continued to promote violence against the Jews of ‘Palestine’, from his foreign eyries, first in Lebanon, then in Iraq. After a short stay in Fascist Italy, he ended up in Nazi Germany. From there Al-Husseini broadcast pro-Nazi propaganda to Arab and Muslim audiences; he found Bosnian Muslim volunteers for the Waffen-SS; he met with Hitler to express his enthusiasm for how the Fuehrer was dealing with European Jews; he may even have visited Auschwitz. He made propaganda broadcasts for the Nazis. He collaborated with the Germans in sabotage campaigns in Iraq, Transjordan, and ‘Palestine’. Husseini intervened on 13 May 1943, before the meeting with Himmler when he was informed of

the Holocaust, with the German Foreign Office to block possible transfers of Jews from Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania to 'Palestine', after reports reached him that 4,000 Jewish children accompanied by 500 adults had managed to reach 'Palestine'. He asked the Foreign Minister "to do his utmost" to block all such proposals, and this request was complied with. In June 1943 the Mufti recommended to the Hungarian minister that it would be better to send Jews in Hungary to concentration camps in Poland rather than let them find asylum in 'Palestine'.

A year later, on 25 July 1944 he wrote to the Hungarian foreign minister to register his objection to the release of certificates for 900 Jewish children and 100 adults for transfer from Hungary, fearing they might end up in Palestine. He did everything he could to prevent European Jews from reaching Palestine. He knew from Himmler himself what fate awaited them if they remained; that Final Solution was exactly what he wanted. This was the man who, even in exile, remained the undisputed leader of the Palestinian Arabs from the 1920s until after the first Arab-Israeli war.

Rashida Tlaib apparently knows none of this. Her history begins after World War II, with entirely innocent "Palestinians" being made to pay the price for the Holocaust. But those innocent "Palestinians" had been attacking and murdering Jews, whose only crime was to have bought land in 'Palestine', since the 1920s. Their leader Al-Husseini eagerly collaborated with the Nazis and made every effort to persuade governments in Europe to prevent Jews from escaping to 'Palestine'. And it was the desire to placate the "Palestinians," in order to avoid a repeat of the violence of the "Arab Revolt," that caused the British government to severely limit the numbers of Jews who could enter Mandatory Palestine.

By the White Paper of 1939, only 15,000 Jews would be allowed into 'Palestine' each year, for five years; at the end of that

period, any further Jewish immigration would be subject to veto by the Arabs, which meant it would end. The Arab pressure on the British thus led to a policy that prevented hundreds of thousands of desperate Jews from finding refuge just before, and during, World War II, in Mandatory Palestine. Instead, they were forced to remain in Europe, where they were murdered. The "Palestinians" had ensured that the gates to 'Palestine', for Jews, would remain shut.

Rashida Tlaib might want to look into the long history of how the local Arabs – her "Palestinians" – did everything they could to make sure that Jews would not find a "safe haven" in 'Palestine'. They attacked Jews wherever they were – Jewish farmers and Jews living in towns, Jews living in Jerusalem and in the three other "holy cities" of Judaism, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias, and Jews living in the brand-new city of Tel Aviv. These attacks by local Arabs started during World War I, continued during the mandate period, and are still ongoing, as we all know, right up to the present day. That's some "safe haven" the "Palestinians" provided the Jews. Will Rashida Tlaib dare to admit that her potted history is dead wrong? Will she recognize the role of her "ancestors," not in helping Jews to find refuge, but in making sure that they did not?

Tlaib apparently does not know that the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli war began when five Arab armies – those of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq – invaded the newly-declared state of Israel. The Secretary-General of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, promised a "momentous massacre" of a kind that had not been seen since the days of the Mongols. Some "Palestinians" fled in the months prior to the Arab attack, so as to get out of the way of those armies; they had been assured that the Jews would be quickly crushed, and that they could then safely return to their homes. Those who chose to remain were neither dispossessed of their land, nor killed by the Israelis. Contrary to Rashida Tlaib's preposterous assertion, they lost neither their lives, nor their livelihoods, nor their dignity.

Israel did indeed become a “safe haven” for Jews, but that was solely through the efforts of the Jews themselves, and despite the determination of the “Palestinians” to destroy the Jews already in ‘Palestine’, and to ensure that as few as possible would arrive, fleeing the Nazis, from Europe. The fable Rashida Tlaib tells, of “Palestinians:” being made to answer for the crimes of the Nazis, ignores decades of Arab attacks on Jewish settlers, of successful Arab efforts to persuade the British to severely limit Jewish immigration to ‘Palestine’, and to insist that European countries not allow any Jews to escape to the one place where they might have found refuge.

Rashida Tlaib’s string of self-pitying counter-factuals about the supposed role of the “Palestinians” in providing a “safe haven” for Jews, and about how they, so blameless, have been made to suffer for it, both astonishes and disgusts. She should be urged to study, for a start, the life and works of Haj Amin al-Husseini. But I doubt if she would have the decency to do it. One thing about Rashida Tlaib is certain. History is not her strong suit.

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