

**From:** سعيدة ملاخي

**Sent:** Monday, August 10, 2020 1:31 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies; [emails redacted]

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Include Antisemitism and the Middle Eastern-American Experience

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm Sayeeda, the descendant of Yemenite Jews of Banu al Harith tribe who are indigenous to Najran, which used to be part of north Yemen. My ancestors faced severe persecution for their faith, and were treated as lesser human beings in daily life. When the Italians colonized the area, they had the opportunity to leave, and they did. However, our relatives who did in fact stay remained in Najran until it was taken by the new country of Saudi Arabia. When Najran was taken, the Saudis gave all Jews 3 days to decide if they were going to convert to Islam, leave their precious homeland forever, or be killed. Thankfully our relatives who remained in Najran decided to also flee, however attacks against them for being Jewish in other regions left them no choice but to be brought to the new country of Israel in an emergency via airplane. Our family has since slowly been reuniting over the years. You can't imagine how painful this was for our ancestors, and how painful this is for us today to have had to live in diaspora this way because of senseless hatred toward our family for practicing Judaism which stuck us with the label of "kafir."

On the other side of my family, I'm descended from Jews from Tabriz, Iran and Hamburg, Germany. My relatives from Tabriz actually left Iran early on and worked for the Ottoman Empire, where they ended up meeting with the Sephardic life that once flourished in Ottoman Palestine. On this side of my family, my relatives are Azeri Jews, Algerian Jews, and Sephardic German Jews of Hamburg. They came together as a melting pot under Ottoman rule. They fled persecution as hostility toward Jews increased across the Mediterranean.

Please understand that it's up to you to not cover up the Middle Eastern and North African side of the Holocaust. A hatred was brewing against Ashkenazi Jews for centuries in Europe. The world needs to be educated on the fact that this hatred was also alive and well against the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East. It should be explained that this was due to the fact that interpretations of Islam were in fact created in order to justify this hatred. It's a solid fact. Muftis at that time were preaching about the reward for the killing of Jews. Not "some bad Jews" who Allah will punish (e.g. murderers, rapists, thieves, etc), but rather "all Jews." And not all Muslims believed this doctrine, nor do all Muslims believe this today. But young people are definitely being fooled into believing this if you just scroll through TikTok and Instagram to see people under 30 years old who are using this same hateful ideology to justify the idea that the state of Israel doesn't have a right to exist. The reality is that none of these countries in the Middle East would then have a right to exist. Everyone was displaced, and everyone "stole land" for decades while conforming to European standards for what a country's borders should look like. Look at how Saudi Arabia took Najran. And I don't hold any hatred in my heart. To be honest, I really love Saudi Arabia and the surrounding countries of the Arabian Peninsula. They and their citizens are a part of me. My relatives who remained there and are Muslims today are

a part of me like my arms and legs, and I would die for them. For years I've had to explain to people that "Arab" is something like a blanket category for people who have indigenous ancestry in the Arabian Peninsula, but that there is such a thing as a "Jewish Arab."

It's important the world knows, via the future generations who are taught the truth, that Jewish Arabs do exist and have always existed. Our families were/are Jewish, but very much Arab. These identities are harmonious, not exclusive. I can't wait for the day when people talk about Jewish Arabs like it's a normal thing. It's crucial the world knows about our families' suffering. This can also help spread awareness of other minority groups from the Middle East, and create more compassion for what they've continued to go through, such as the Yazidis who were tortured and murdered at the hands of daesh.

For people to understand what's happening today, they need to understand what happened before. They need to learn the history, the full inclusive history of North Africa and the Middle East. Our families experience terrible discrimination in the form of anti-Semitism/Jew-hatred as well as hatred toward North African and Middle Eastern people. Please help educate the young generation so they can educate the world.

Thank you so much for listening to this painful story. I'm literally in tears right now.

Sincerely,  
Sayeeda Malachi