

No, James: The Law That Would Save You Isn't Racist

THE LIE

On October 12, 2026, British activist James Schneider claimed that Israel's Law of Return is racist. He wrote that a Palestinian "violently expelled" during the "Nakba" cannot return, while he, "as a British Jew," can move to Israel and become a citizen. [X](#)

THE TRUTH

Every sovereign state decides who becomes its citizen, and international law protects that right. Israel was founded as the refuge of the Jewish people, and the Law of Return is how it keeps that promise.

BACKGROUND

→ The Law of Return is Israel's immigration law for Jews. The Knesset passed it on July 5, 1950, and it allows all Jews to immigrate to Israel and become citizens. [My Jewish Learning](#)

→ Israel accepted the 1947 UN partition plan. Arab states rejected it and went to war to destroy the new state, and Arabs fled or were displaced during that war. The term "Nakba" first described the Arab armies' defeat in that war. [Jewish Insider](#)

→ Schneider is a British left-wing activist and former communications adviser to Jeremy Corbyn.

TRUTH EXPLAINED

→ **International law recognizes every country's right to decide who qualifies for citizenship.** The UN Convention Against Racial Discrimination protects this right, provided a country's citizenship laws do not discriminate against people from a particular nationality. Israel's Law of Return gives Jews the right to immigrate and obtain citizenship, regardless of which country they come from. A Jew from America, Ethiopia, France, or Iran can qualify under the same law. [Harvard International Law Journal](#)

→ **International support for Jewish immigration began long before Israel became a state.** In 1922, the League of Nations gave Britain responsibility for governing Palestine. It specifically instructed Britain to encourage Jewish immigration and make it easier for Jews who settled there to become citizens. Israel's Law of Return, passed in 1950, builds on this earlier international recognition of the Jewish people's right to return to their ancestral homeland. [United Nations](#)

→ **The Law of Return provides a safe haven for Jews in times of crisis.** When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, thousands of Jews and their families faced an uncertain future. Israel offered them a place to rebuild their lives. Within three months of the invasion, more than 21,000 people eligible under the Law of Return had arrived in Israel from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, including over 10,000 from Ukraine alone. Most had already become Israeli citizens. The Law of Return meant they did not have to remain refugees. They could become citizens of a country ready to welcome them home. [Jerusalem Post](#)

→ **Israel is not the exception.** Many democracies keep a door open for their people abroad. Ireland, Finland, Germany, Greece, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and others give their ethnic kin abroad privileged access to immigration and citizenship. No one calls those countries racist. Schneider makes that charge only when the country is Israel. [JNS](#)

→ **Israel's citizens are equal, whatever their origin.** The Law of Return decides who may immigrate. It does not decide who counts as a full citizen. Arab Israelis vote and hold office with the same rights as Jewish Israelis. Arabs have been elected to every Knesset since the 1960s, and in 2004 Salim Joubran became the first Arab citizen appointed permanently to Israel's Supreme Court. The only legal difference is a duty, not a right: Arab citizens are exempt from compulsory military service. [Jewish Virtual Library](#)

→ **Jews were refugees too.** In 1948, immediately after Israel declared independence, five Arab armies invaded the newly established Jewish state. In the years that followed, Jewish communities that had lived in Arab countries for centuries, and in some cases thousands of years, faced persecution, violence, confiscation of property, and expulsion. Approximately 850,000 Jews fled or were forced to leave Arab countries and Iran, including 259,000 from Morocco and 135,000 from Iraq. Many found refuge in Israel, where they received citizenship and rebuilt their lives. Yet while the Palestinian refugee issue remains central to international debate, the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Arab and Muslim countries is rarely mentioned. [Honest Reporting](#)

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→ **International law does not establish an automatic Palestinian right of return to Israel.** Schneider says Palestinians “cannot return,” implying that Israel is denying them a guaranteed legal right. But the legal question is more complicated. In 1948, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 194, recommending that refugees who wished to return to their homes and live peacefully with their neighbors should be allowed to do so. **The resolution was a recommendation, not a binding law requiring Israel to admit them.** Arab states initially voted against it, although Palestinian advocates later made it a central basis for their demand for return. Whether other international human rights laws establish such a right remains disputed. None of this means Israel is legally required by Resolution 194 itself to admit every Palestinian refugee and their descendants. [Jerusalem Center](#)

QUOTES

“Israel was created so that the survival of Jews in danger would never again depend entirely on the goodwill of others.” - Alex Gandler, on [X](#)

TAKEAWAY

Schneider calls the Law of Return discriminatory because it gives Jews a right to immigrate to Israel that others do not have. But that is precisely why the law exists. For centuries, Jews faced persecution and expulsion, often with nowhere to go. Even as Jews were being murdered in the Holocaust, countries around the world closed their doors to Jewish refugees.

The establishment of Israel changed that. For the first time in nearly 2,000 years, Jews had a country where they could seek refuge without asking another nation's permission. The Law of Return guarantees that right. Schneider may never need that protection. But if he does, Israel will welcome him too. That is the purpose of the law he condemns.