The 1914 deportation of the Jaffa Jews: ‘a little footnote of war’?

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**ABSTRACT**

Ahmed Djemal Pasha, Military Governor of the Levant during World War I, instigated two major deportations of Jews from Jaffa during the course of the war, and numerous lesser ones. On 17 December 1914, a day that came to be known as ‘Black Thursday’, the Ottoman ruler of Jaffa, under Djemal’s command, ordered the mass deportation of ‘enemy subjects’, including 6,000 Russian-born Jewish residents of Jaffa. Over the course of the next three months, a few thousand more Russian-born Jews were expelled from Palestine or fled just ahead of the deportations. In total 11,277 Jews were exiled, leaving on various ships that took them from Jaffa to Alexandria. This article describes the ‘Black Thursday’ deportation based on testimonies of those who either witnessed it or were its victims, and briefly on the two works of documentary fiction that provide a rounded context for the many accounts.

**KEYWORDS** World War I; Ottoman Empire; Palestine; Djemal Pasha; Jews; deportation; Jaffa; Tel Aviv; Florio

On 26 May 1915, *The New York Sun* published a long dispatch from the foreign ministry in Istanbul to the Ottoman Consul-General in the United States, which denied reports that Jews in Palestine had been treated with cruelty since the beginning of the war. According to the dispatch, immediately after the declaration of war, the Ottoman government ordered all subjects of hostile nations to leave its territory; but in view of the large number of such persons in Palestine who were Hebrews it made special arrangements by which they could become naturalised Ottoman subjects without compulsory military service until after one year. Those who did not avail themselves of this opportunity were ordered to leave the country though they were in no case harshly dealt with.

This presentation of Ottoman policy was broadly accurate, but for the comments about the treatment of the Jews. Numerous documents attest to
the harshness of Ottoman rule in Palestine during the war years. While Jews had previously served in the Ottoman army, with the announcement of jihad upon the Empire’s entry to World War I, the ‘foreign Jews’ in Palestine were caught in a Catch-22 situation: if they refused to become Ottoman subjects they were expelled; if they Ottomanized they were liable for army service within a year. As non-Muslims, they would not be permitted to serve in combat units of the Ottoman army but would rather be sent, with other non-Muslims, to the labour units that, in many cases, meant a death sentence. Those with means could ransom themselves out of the army through a payment of 50–1000 gold francs every year of the war. Many people sold all their possessions in order to pay the ransom. In the last year of the war, the Ottomans cancelled the system of ransom altogether.

This article contextualises the December 2014 ‘Black Thursday’ deportation of the Jaffa Jews to Alexandria by describing the situation in Palestine at the outbreak of the war. It then discusses the deportation itself, referring to the testimonies of those who either witnessed it or were its victims, as well as to the journalism of the time. It also cites the only two works of documentary fiction that provide a rounded context for the many accounts.

While Djemal Pasha’s more extensive and deadly expulsion of 1917 has been widely discussed in Israeli and western historiography, Israeli life-writing and archival material, the less lethal 1914–15 deportations appear to have had a smaller cultural and historical impact. Yet, through examining statements by witnesses to the deportation and the deportees themselves, this article illustrates the severe trauma suffered by over a thousand ordinary people suddenly uprooted from their daily lives and replanted in an alien environment for no reason they could understand. This expulsion, which has been unduly neglected in the literature, has been discussed to some extent in Hebrew-language historiography, but this article hopes to open it up to a wider readership.

As it happens, the exiles were ultimately fortunate to have escaped the depredations of the war that brought large-scale suffering to wartime Palestine, but they could not have been aware of this at the time of their deportation.

**The war in Palestine**

With the outbreak of the war in August 1914 and Istanbul’s disastrous decision to join it in November of that year on the side of the Central Powers, the situation in the Jewish community in Palestine (the yishuv), and in Jerusalem in particular, rapidly and disastrously deteriorated. This was not only due to the threats to individuals’ safety and wellbeing as an expected consequence of the war, but also the hostility of the Ottoman administration to Jewish nationalism (or Zionism). Palestine in 1914 was an Ottoman a military springboard from which Ahmed Djemal Pasha, military governor of the Levant and Commander-in-Chief of the Fourth
Army, intended to launch an attack on the Suez Canal. Urged on by the propaganda of those of his subordinates antagonistic to Jews and Zionists, Djemal decided on more than one occasion to banish those he suspected harboured disloyalty through nationalist aspirations, including the Zionists.  

Twentieth-century European history was marked by changing borders and the dispersal and forced relocation of millions of people in many countries. World War I was the high point of mass deportations, either due to the state turning against its own populations, including the Jews, or to enemy action that caused civilians to flee. For example, approximately half a million Jews fought in the Russian military during the course of the war, many of them as volunteers. Yet the Tsar’s army expelled thousands of Jewish civilians, convinced (without any evidence) that they, together with other minorities, were engaged in espionage.

Djemal Pasha invoked the same false reasoning. Forced evacuations had become a common feature on the Ottoman front as well. As Scott Anderson writes, ‘It was a policy that came quite easily to the Ottomans and for reasons that went beyond simple military expediency. Many times over the centuries the sultans in Constantinople had uprooted entire populations that might simply or overtly collaborate with invaders.’

As one of the three Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) leaders who ruled the Ottoman Empire during the war (alongside Minister of War Enver Pasha and Minister of the Interior Talaat Pasha), Djemal oversaw the deportations in Palestine as part of the subjugation of the yishuv. These were accompanied by detentions, accusations of treason, forced Ottomanisation, unwarranted searches of private property and businesses, and looting. The rationale was appropriate to wartime: the expulsion of aliens who were nationals of enemy states. The persecution and forced deportation of the Greek population of Anatolia in 1914 and the deportation of the Jews from Palestine later the same year enabled the CUP to develop the *modus operandi* for the genocidal activities against the Armenians and the Greeks that resulted in the catastrophes of 1915.

Jaffa was the centre of the so-called ‘New Yishuv’, a city of some 10,000 Jews of a population of about 50,000 people. Tel Aviv in those days was little more than a suburb. During the early years of the war, the crisis in the yishuv grew out of the almost complete loss of contact with Europe and America. ‘It’s sad to see’, writes Mordechai Ben-Hillel Hacohen in his diary of the war years, ‘how slowly the European arteries are being cut off from us: passenger ships have stopped coming, the railway will soon cease and we will not hear the whistle of the locomotive again’. The two main crops of the villages, wine and oranges, were left behind in the ports to rot.

Much of the turmoil in the yishuv resulted from the caprice of Djemal who treated it with methodical ruthlessness, creating an ‘atmosphere of terror and hate’. He was a capricious ruler, acting on the spur of the
moment according to his mood. He saw himself as a warrior for Islam. According to the testimonies of the time, Baha ad-Din, the civilian administrator of Jaffa (the Kaymakam), was the one who planted the hatred of Zionism in Djemal’s heart but Djemal did not need much urging.

Like many Ottoman statesmen, Djemal had witnessed the nationalist movements in the Balkans of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and he was committed to ensure that nothing similar would emerge in the Levant while he was in charge. In Syria they used to say, ‘if Cemal Paşa scratched his nose, he was thinking of sending them to exile; if he stroked his beard, he was thinking of whether or not to forgive them. However, if he twirled his moustache, be afraid for the conversation was on a path that may lead to death.’

Nothing, even the diplomatic entreaties of the German consul, helped to appease him. This is not difficult to understand since his attitude to Zionism – as to all nationalist movements – was complex and often contradictory. His intention was not to exterminate the Jewish community of Palestine but to oppose what he perceived as the Zionist goal to ‘tear away part of the body of the Ottoman Empire and turn it into a Jewish state.’

Like him, the new rulers of Jaffa, Baha and Hassan Bek (or Bey), the military governor, were particularly harsh due to their belief that the Zionist movement contradicted the yishuv’s loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. Baha was widely perceived as a brutal anti-Semite, and this proved true in his handling of events in December 1914. He was a dedicated anti-Zionist, an Ottoman loyalist who detested what he considered to be Jewish separatism. ‘His appearance was that of the secret police trained in an internal environment of espionage in the palaces of the lords and the Pashas. He knew everything about searching and he regarded everyone as a suspect. Antipathy emanated from him.’ Every report echoes this assessment: he was unvaryingly ruthless in his dealings with the Jews and was feared and loathed by the yishuv as a whole. Hassan Bey was not much better: Meir Dizengoff, a prominent Zionist politician and Tel Aviv’s first mayor, writes of him, ‘He was an unlearned barbarian cruel and corrupt’. Hassan told the chief Rabbi of Jaffa, in the presence of other notables, that he was steadfast in his opposition to the Zionists.

Due to the ruthlessness of these men, investment in the yishuv all but ceased, international charitable donations, halukkah, came to an end, charitable institutions were closed, jobs and livelihoods disappeared and the economy was harshly affected. Basic foodstuffs, water and gasoline and other essential materials were commandeered for the war effort. The Ottoman army had taken all the horses and donkeys, carts and camels, creating difficulties of movement. They removed the railways between Jaffa and Jerusalem for their metal, consequently all traffic between the two towns was restricted to the roads, journeys lasting many hours. Barbed-wire fences
were removed for the war effort. Ill equipped and hungry, Ottoman soldiers roamed the countryside stealing the farmers’ livestock. In his memoir, Dizengoff describes them as having been dragged into battle: ‘When we saw the guileless eyes of the Turkish soldier and see him going about without adequate clothing lacking much, tortured by hunger, filthy and disease-ridden, stricken like a dog by cold and heat and all sorts of violence – we would pity him’.

A letter from one of the exiles in Alexandria sets out the yishuv’s experience:

They took products from the shops, flour, sugar, rice and so on. They ordered the bakers to bake bread without payment until there was no bread or flour left in the city. They ordered all kinds of labourers and workers to work without payment and their families went hungry; . . . In addition, they grabbed everyone walking in the street, roped them together and took them to dig pits, once again without payment or food. They confiscated the warehouses of large and small trees to make boxes to carry the stolen oranges to their camps. They took all the leather and skins from the warehouses to make shoes for the army. The robbery was so great that the Kaymakam stole the school piano for his wife to play, and the brutal officer with the crooked legs took a tricycle from a 10-year-old child to ride on (the officer was very short and he had to have a small bicycle).

Djemal ordered house searches for illegal documents and arms, his soldiers brutally arresting anyone considered a suspect. He dissolved the Shomrim, the Jewish guards. Jewish soldiers were relieved of arms and sent to the deadly Ottoman army Labour units. Civilian Jews gave up their arms after being threatened with the kidnapping of Jewish girls for the Turks and the Arabs. Many memoirs and statements record that the Jews’ houses were robbed bare. Germany’s attempts to persuade its Ottoman ally of the importance of the Zionists and the Jews in Palestine, who were a loyal pro-Ottoman force, did not help.

Overall, the population of Palestine declined by over 6% during the war years as a result of emigration, famine, disease, casualties and deportations. Starvation was rife, particularly in Jerusalem. Many petty regulations were announced the flouting of which, according to Dizengoff, was a capital crime. Medical services were disrupted, many doctors having been conscripted. Hospitals closed due to lack of continued funding from abroad. From the end of 1915 epidemics of disease, primarily dysentery and typhoid, broke out throughout the yishuv, brought by soldiers returning from Suez.

The capitulations

One of the most severe of the mounting crises was the revocation of the Capitulations in 1914, the privileges enjoyed by foreign subjects that allowed
them to live and trade in Ottoman lands. In the early 20th century, the capitulations granted Europeans substantial reductions in tax, tariffs and extraterritorial rights. Foreign nationals were placed under the jurisdiction of their consuls with privileges that were constantly being extended. The capitulations implied that most ‘civilized’ nations could not rely on the ‘primitive’ Ottoman institutions, an implication that was not lost on the Ottoman authorities.

By 1914, the Ottomans had come to resent the negative implications of these arrangements. In the late summer of that year, the Ottoman government unilaterally abolished the capitulary system throughout the empire and decreed the closure of the foreign post offices. This draconian step not only alienated the Jews in Palestine but also came as a blow to all foreigners living there, while triggering widespread celebration among the Ottoman Muslim subjects. At the outbreak of the war, Palestine’s non-Ottoman Jews became enemy aliens deprived of any diplomatic protection.

In a well-publicised conversation with the Jerusalem Chief Rabbi after the abrogation of the Capitulations, Baha ad-Din reportedly said: “The honour of the Muslims has been satisfied and they will not allow others [the Jews] to bind their hands in chains and to ride on their backs with the help of their consuls as has been the case until now.”

The expulsion

“For Palestine we used deportation; for Syria, terrorization; for the Hijaz, the army.”

Djemal’s intermittent thaws did not prevent him from instigating two major expulsions from Tel Aviv/Jaffa during the course of the war, and numerous lesser ones. He deported anyone, Arabs and Jews, suspected of nationalist agitation. He excelled at executions on invalid pretexts, hanging those whom he suspected of being spies. To him all Russian citizens, including the many Russian-born Jews living in Palestine, were now enemy nationals. While attending a reception in Jerusalem in 1 January - 1915, organised by the local Jewish community, Djemal interrupted the speech given by Jerusalem’s Chief Rabbi Moses Franco, shouting:

The Russians have always been our enemies. Why didn’t those Jews become Ottoman when we offered them citizenship? They have escaped czarist persecution and they found refuge here. And what did they do? They chose to remain Russian subjects . . . Why do you think I cannot consider them spies?

His lieutenants, including Baha ad-Din and Hassan Bey were equally ruthless and exercised a free hand once the Capitulations were no more.

On 17 December, the day that came to be known as ‘Black Thursday’, Baha ad-Din, ordered the mass expulsion of the 6,000 Russian-Jewish residents of Jaffa, ‘enemy subjects’ and others, on unproven charges of
disloyalty. Over the course of the next three months, a few thousand more Russian-born Jews were expelled from Palestine or fled just ahead of the deportations. Some of them were deported to Damascus and a few to the north of Palestine. The majority was sent to Alexandria in a few waves, the first on 17 December consisting of 698 people, and the last, in November 1915, of 302. In total 11,277 people were exiled, leaving on various ships, the Italian Florio and the American cruisers, the Tennessee, the Des Moines and the Caesar, taking them in 16 clusters from Jaffa to Alexandria. They were a mixture of tradespeople and professionals, businessmen (some of them wealthy), rabbis, teachers and pupils, school-children – being treated equally badly. However, they were not entirely alone: in December 1914 members of the French and Spanish clergy, and other nationals of the ‘belligerent countries’, including American citizens, were also expelled to Damascus or repatriated to their own countries.

Acting on information they claimed to have received, on that Thursday the Ottoman police, soldiers and armed Arabs burst into Jewish homes in Tel Aviv and Jaffa and arrested the predominantly non-Ottomanized Russian Jews. The police surrounded Tel Aviv neighbourhoods and transferred these inhabitants to the Armenian monastery, St Nicholas, and the Customs House near the Jaffa port.

Conde de Ballobar (Antonio de la Cierva y Lewita), the Spanish consul who was an intriguing diarist, did not write much about the 1914 expulsion of the Jews from Jaffa but was concerned about members of the religious orders who had also been given little time to depart:

Having obtained a period of one week for the evacuation of the Jews the latter continue their slow departure which was, in the first days, an avalanche. I don’t remember having seen in my life such queues of people as those formed at customs during the departure of the French clerics, the Russians, etc. and the consulate on the first day of the exodus of the Jews.

He mentions that their departure was delayed more than once because of the rough seas that hindered the ships.

Yaakov Malkov, one of the exiles who wrote a detailed description of his experience, described the scene of which he was part:

On that Thursday, which was also the fifth day of Hanukkah . . . Two Turkish policemen came into my hotel brandishing whips and asking questions about whether we and our guests are Russian and demanded that we follow them. I understood that this was not the time to refuse and ask questions and I told my guests so. Some of them requested at least to gather their belongings but after the yelling of “Get on, get on,” “Get going, there’s no time to fuss with things,” only a few of them managed to grab a few bundles and I and the rest left with nothing but the clothes on our backs.
On the way from Neve Shalom to the port we were joined by men, women and children. Every moment on the way, the crowd grew. They [the police] just grabbed or disciplined anyone who happened to cross their path without any order, children without parents, parents without children, husbands without wives and vice versa. The crowd grew and they led us directly to the seafront where they put us into some Armenian building which was large and wide but because the crowd was growing, for every moment they were bringing in more prisoners, towards evening the building and the rooms were so full that we had to stand upright squashed together.

The scenes of arrest in the middle of the day were very terrible to see. The pleas of those facing expulsion went unheard nor were the pleas to the city leaders. The authorities remained indifferent and police would not stop what they were doing. Masses of terrified and confused men women and children were dragged along like prisoners. Towards the evening these people were thrust into the belly of the Italian ship Florio and they would be joined by Jews who had tried to escape from the country.40

Moshe Smilansky, a prominent Hebrew writer (and a farmer), takes up the story:

The few who remained and demanded justice were injured and dragged along like corpses ... All those who had been arrested were kept in the Armenian monastery beside the Jaffa shore until the ship sailed. Dizengoff, who was then a Russian citizen, rushed to the shore and brought food to the exiles, and also rented a few boats to take them to the ship, and he himself organized the sailing until very late at night. Thanks to his intercession hundreds of the people who were not able to sail after the ship had taken about 700 people, returned to their homes. In the streets of Jaffa, there was a shocking scene: hordes and hordes of people, women and children, confused and terrified were dragged like prisoners to the shore. Everyone had a little bundle on their shoulder, the little that they had managed to grab from the house at the last moment ... The chaos was terrible, the passengers’ possessions were mixed together, families were separated and couldn’t find each other, some parents boarded the ship when the children had had been left behind. After much supplication permission was given to the family members who remained behind to leave the country at the first opportunity.41 On the Italian ship that sailed last Saturday there were about 600 people mainly women and elderly people. Also the American warship came for this purpose to pick up about 500 injured people who were citizens of America and Russia.42

After describing the frenzied crowds Yosef Chelouche reports:

We went to the boat in order to go aboard the ship and saw that on the way boats filled with people, [they] were just standing still in the middle of the sea and the people were screaming. We called to the sailors to carry on, some of them heard us and some didn’t. When we reached the ship we found about 10 boats filled with Jews, all of them crying for help. We asked why they were crying, and they told us that the sailors were strangling them and demanding
the money they had on them. They took the clothes from anyone who didn’t have money.\textsuperscript{43}

Mordecai Ben-Hillel Hacohen writes:

They threw people down to the bottom of the boats like so many parcels, waving, rocking without caring about the sea that is always rough in Jaffa . . . We couldn’t see but we heard the voices of the courageous and of the weak from the boats on the sea\textsuperscript{44} . . . The entire community was confused and panic-stricken. They stood around or ran up and down like madmen, without knowing how to deal with this blow . . . People were weeping, a husband for his wife, a wife for her husband, parents for their children, children for their parents.\textsuperscript{45}

Another exile reported:

When all people had gone to the shore, I was left alone in the monastery. They locked the room and soldiers stood behind the door. I began to cry. The Italian consul arrived and asked them to take pity on me . . . When I said I would throw myself off the roof they hit me in the face.\textsuperscript{46}

Malkov saw Turkish soldiers in European clothing joining the crowd, presumably to escape the country. He also had some scathing words about a Jewish functionary who arrived to offer help but did nothing other than accuse the crowd of failing to Ottomanize in time. From his description this appears to be Dizengoff, but Malkov’s disapproval conflicts with others’ positive reports.\textsuperscript{47} On Malkov’s way to the ship in a boat, ‘Suddenly there was a great cry from the Turkish officials, and the sailors on the ship began to jump into the boats and then they rowed furiously to the shore’.\textsuperscript{48} One likely reason is that they thought they had seen an English warship and fled in fear. Malkov was fortunate. The ship sailed before his boat had reached it and he and the others were taken back to the shore. Having returned to his home and found that everything had been looted, he considered Ottomanizing but decided against it. Of his own accord he sailed to Alexandria on an American ship.

Not only were there numerous documents recording this early phase of the war, but a small amount of documentary fiction as well. Events are consolidated in this fiction through the representation by individual characters of occupational, national and political groups. Clearly, fiction is not a historical source but meta-history has taught us that when it is based on the author’s lived experience and, taken together with statements from victims and witnesses, it can provide a trustworthy version of events. The representation of subjective experience may offer at least a sense of place and atmosphere. Novelists who interpret historical material ‘with imagination’ can provide such a sense.\textsuperscript{49}

Like many other non-Ottoman citizens, the Hebrew author Aharon Reuveni (1886–1971) was conscripted to the Ottoman army but immediately
ransomed himself out of it and became active in the yishuv. His trilogy Ad Yerushalayim (To Jerusalem; 1920), an epic documentary novel of the World War I in Palestine, is derived as much from memory and lived experience on the home front as from contemporary documents, and involves a few historical figures such as Djemal Pasha, who, together with the war, anchor the story in historical reality.

Reuveni fictionalised the events by inserting characters who, by and large, represented either individuals or groups of Jews in Palestine at the time. He recounts in detail the arguments taking place at the very outbreak of the war between the Jewish pioneers in Palestine, predominantly from the Russian empire, who chose to remain there, others who were preparing to leave and those who could not make up their minds. These are very likely to be reproductions of the discussions he heard around him. In his novel he explores the choices faced by the Jewish immigrant – from the discontented Russians, many of whom had arrived not through idealism but to escape anti-Semitism and then to emigrate to the United States, to the highly committed Zionist pioneers and their leaders. These arguments indicate the fluidity of the yishuv, the diversity not only of opinion but of allegiance.

In the first book of the trilogy (Bereshit Hamevokha – When the Confusion Began) Reuveni describes the events that took place on 7 December 1914 in Jaffa and Tel Aviv:

The Kaymakam Baha ad-Din who was known to be very cruel and a Jew-hater suddenly ordered that all Jews who had not become Ottoman citizens be arrested and loaded onto an Italian ship that was anchored by chance in the port of Jaffa. The police spread out across the city and arrested people in the market; they pulled them out of their homes - adults and children. They dragged them, they beat them, they stole their money and their possessions, everything they had on their person at the time of their arrest, telling them that with this money they would pay the sailors on the boats rowing them out to the ship. Once at a distance from the port the sailors again robbed and beat them. There were rumors that some of them had been thrown into the sea. One woman had been raped by a policeman in the Seraya [headquarters].

Reuveni adds a note about one of his disaffected characters, perhaps with a certain hindsight: ‘He envied those who had been expelled from Jaffa – finally they would be free and the beatings and suffering and that whole dreadful path from the port to the ship that, at least, would already be behind them’. Reuveni was an accurate chronicler. In reality, for a variety of reasons some of the Jewish aliens willingly joined the deportees.

Devorah Baron (1887–1956), also a noted Hebrew novelist, was one of the exiles from Jaffa. She turned her experience into a novel, the only one about life after the departure, entitled Hagolim (The Exiles). She tells the story in great detail, more than other witnesses provide:
It happened suddenly at noon when people were getting ready to sit down at the table to eat. Mrs. Rothstein was in the kitchen . . . when her husband came in from outside with the news. Behind him was a Turkish policeman with a whip in his hand. For a moment, she didn’t understand what was happening . . . She went into the room and began to set the lunch table, but when she looked again at the man with the whip and saw her husband opening the drawer of the sideboard where they kept their valuables she suddenly gathered the corners of the tablecloth under her chin and her face assumed the expression that it always had at times of confusion or danger.53

As Baron describes the Rothstein family’s departure, she adds some moving facts, for example that the people Mrs. Rothstein met on the way had dressed in their Sabbath clothes, that a (symbolic) doll lay abandoned, a pet dog had been left behind, and mounted policemen pushed the crowd along ‘like sheep after wolves had fallen upon them’.54 Burdened with their boxes and packets, the expellees were then told of their destination. By giving her characters names and features (old, lame, blind) and specifying their individual experiences Baron intensifies the horror of the event. Only one of Baron’s details contradicts victims’ accounts: that they walked to the shore orderly and disciplined and without a sound.

Eventually, on that same day, the Florio sailed towards Egypt with some 700 people on board, deportees and others who were attempting to leave. The ship was too small to contain the vast number of potential exiles and many were sent back. A telegram gives an idea of the haste in which immigrants were despatched:

A thorough investigation shows that the Turkish authorities in Jaffa gathered about 1,500 Russian Jews in the streets on Thursday last and embarked them on boats for the Italian steamer in port, forbidding them to take any luggage stop. From the shore to the steamer they were robbed by the boatmen if their valuables such as rings, watches, chains, earrings and money.55

Witness and victim statements such as those above gathered shortly after the events reveal not only horror and anxiety but also the bewilderment at having their lives changed unreasonably and irrevocably within a few hours. Despite the emotional individual responses, common themes emerge from the overall experience: the suddenness of the arrests, though a few had heard rumours; the chaotic depositing of everyone in the monastery; the separation of families, the destitution of the refugees. Many of them comment on the presence of Baha himself at the shore. Dizengoff, who was attempting to help the potential refugees with funds and food, stressed the Kaymakam’s obduracy: he would not allow children to remain behind, he insisted on payment from all imprisoned Jews, he would not discipline the guards and police whose brutality was unrestrained. In one instance the guards would not accept a doctor’s note from a woman asking to release her very ill husband because the note had been written by a Russian
physician. To every request, the Kaymakam replied: ‘I’m simply obeying my orders’.

On the boats, each of which held about 80 people, the sailors robbed the passengers of money and jewellery, and often stole the clothes they were wearing. All day they ferried the unfortunate people in fishing boats to the Italian ship, and after a while the oarsmen stopped rowing in the middle of the sea and demanded money and possessions from the prisoners. ‘They did not rush to the ship because they had seen gold rings on the women’s fingers and other jewellery and they tore the earrings out of the women’s earlobes.’ One witness reported that those who could not or would not pay were threatened with stabbing and there are some reports of people being thrown into the sea. When children cried they were beaten. ‘The next morning the news spread and Djemal Pasha pretended that he knew nothing about it. From that moment we knew that we were under the heel of someone who would destroy us and there was no hope for us.’

A transcribed conversation between Chief Rabbi Franco and Baha ad-Din reveals the latter’s intransigence. Baha feigned sympathy to the expelled Jews, but claimed that he was obliged to follow orders from Damascus. He added that if the Chief Rabbi wanted to verify this he could go to Damascus himself but he, Baha, lacked the authority to contact his superiors there with questions. Franco asked, ‘Did they order the expulsion of those who had already applied for Ottoman citizenship?’ Baha replied: ‘I don’t know. Ask Damascus.’ He added, ‘As much as the ship holds, I’ll fill it’. It becomes clear that he had instigated the expulsion without central government authority and at Djemal’s behest.

During the conversation, the Chief Rabbi referred to the crowds of Jews arriving daily to apply for Ottoman citizenship that they had not received due to lack of time or the difficulty of obtaining funds to pay the ‘Ottomanization tax’. He also attempted to draw Baha’s attention to the loyalty of the Jews who had participated in a patriotic procession to the government offices and who expressed their unity with the government. He concludes: ‘Should there therefore be an expulsion?’ To every question the Rabbi asked, the reply was, ‘I don’t know, ask Damascus’.

Despite the many victim statements there is no literature recording whether families were reconciled. One witness reported that four small children between the ages of five and nine arrived in Alexandria without their parents. No records were kept by the authorities, but sporadic passenger lists written in Hebrew commented on whether families remained together or were separated, and also noted the way in which some of those arrested had disposed of their possessions, often leaving them in the care of neighbours. Some had been allowed to go home and pack some belongings, most had not and, according to the victim reports, everything they carried and left behind was stolen anyway.
It was to Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador to Istanbul, and Hans von Wangenheim, his German counterpart, who was a trustworthy ally to the Palestine Jews, that the Tel Aviv leaders turned. After ‘Morgenthalau’s strenuous representation’, the expulsions were stopped. When Talaat Pasha, one of the CUP’s ruling triumvirate, was made aware of these events, fearing adverse reactions abroad, particularly in the US, he immediately cancelled the expulsion order and extended the time both for the process of Ottomanization and for Ottoman citizens to leave the country freely. He requested a report from Palestine and ordered that ‘injustices should be rectified’, telling Morgenthalau that measures implemented without his knowledge would be revoked. A telegram from Talaat complained of ‘reports that the government had not been notified in advance that 500 [sic] Russian Jews living in Jaffa had been expelled’, demanding that no more people be deported without prior permission, the reason being a hostile press in the US. He added firmly, ‘Absolutely no Jews should be deported without first asking [permission from] here’. Djemal was not directly mentioned in Talaat’s telegrams.

Within a day, the deportation order was rescinded and the Kaymakam was relieved of his post, to be appointed adjutant to Djemal Pasha. As Eliezer Hoofien, deputy manager of the Anglo-Palestine bank, observed in his diary, this was a mixed blessing: ‘[The Kamaykam] had previously been able to affect only the inhabitants of Jaffa, now he was in a position to distress the Jews throughout the country’. Talaat also released a statement, which was delivered to Richard Lichtheim, representative of the World Zionist Organization in Istanbul, through von Scharfenberg, the First Secretary of the German Embassy, that ‘the Minister of the Interior [Talaat] “with Djemal Pasha’s concurrence”, had granted Russian Jewish nationals permission to remain in the country’. However, there was a notable gap between the edict to ease the deportation and carrying out the orders, sometimes taking months. The authorities were proficient at delaying the process. For example, a Jewish doctor who handed his Ottoman passport to an official as proof of identity and the passport was ‘lost’ was expelled. Ironically, the situation got worse for those who had remained in Palestine despite the horrors of the exiles’ forced departure. The yishuv experienced starvation, deadly diseases, a locust plague and the iron hand of Djemal Pasha and his lieutenants, while in Alexandria the exiles were well cared for and out of danger.

**Conclusion**

The comparatively small scale of the December 1914 deportation in relation to the Armenian massacres and other tragedies of the war does not make it less traumatic for those who suffered it. Refugee statements attest to the shock of sudden displacement without warning. And while it is easy now to
speak of a ‘soft landing’ in Alexandria.\textsuperscript{70} Baron’s novel, though fiction – but fiction based on her own experience, described the displaced families struggling to find a means of dealing with their changed circumstances as best they could while always longing for the day of homecoming. The various recorded conflicts and even hostile actions among the refugees also show that the ‘landing’ was not without its cruelties and unfairness though it is true that life in Alexandria was far easier than for those who remained in Palestine.

Could the deported Jews have resisted? There are a few archived passenger lists\textsuperscript{71} and stories about deportees thrown into the sea but no details about casualties and deaths during the deportations. I have not been able to find a statement of resistance. There is an air of resignation and helplessness throughout the entire episode, exemplified by Baron’s description of her protagonist, Mrs Rothstein, spreading jam on some cake while she and her husband sit on a Jaffa sidewalk waiting for instructions after being evicted from their home. The journalist Yitzhak Lufban offers an explanation regarding the major expulsion in 1917, which could be applied to 1914–15: the Jews, easy wanderers, quickly become used to new conditions and move on without much ado.\textsuperscript{72} Baron’s Mr Rothstein observes, ‘For what does nationality of enemy countries matter among this gathering of people, an ingathering of the exiles, who had come from Balta and from Kutaisi and from Pesth, who had left no bridges behind them, who had crossed abysses and left abysses behind them’.\textsuperscript{73}

Notes

1. Abramson, \textit{Soldier’s Tales}, 25–31.
2. Markovytzsy, \textit{Conflict of Loyalties}, 56.
3. Rubenstein, \textit{The Complete Collection}, 7.
4. For Djemal Pasha’s attitude to Zionism see Mazza, “We will treat you.”
5. Eigler, \textit{Towards a Transnational Approach}, 51.
6. Koss, \textit{World War I}, 2. See also Budnitskii, \textit{Russian Jews between the Reds and the Whites}, 225–35; and Ansky, \textit{The Enemy at His Pleasure}.
7. Tucker, \textit{The European Powers in the First World War}; and Ulrichsen, \textit{The First World War in the Middle East}.
8. Anderson, \textit{Lawrence in Arabia}, 296.
9. Deinard \textit{The Turkish War}; Hacohen, \textit{The War of the Nations}; and Lüdke, “Loyalty, Indifference, Treason,” 90.
10. Gocsek, \textit{Denial of Violence}, 213; and Clark, \textit{Twice a Stranger}.
11. This term refers to the localities founded by the Zionists who immigrated to Palestine in the hope of establishing a national Jewish homeland. The so-called “Old Yishuv” consisted of the Jewish communities established in Palestine prior to the start of the Zionist movement.
12. Hacohen, \textit{The War of the Nations}, 86.
13. Letter to Djemal Pasha from Zionist notables, CZA L5\textbackslash{}106.
14. Sicker, \textit{Reshaping Palestine}, 117. See also Karsh and Karsh, 166–7.
15. Anderson, \textit{Lawrence in Arabia}, 92.
16. Duru, *Surviving the War*, 164.
17. Porath, “The Awakening,” 379.
18. Dizengoff, *With Tel Aviv*, 18–19.
19. Ibid., 22.
20. Friedman, “German and American Intervention,” 172–3.
21. Hacohen, *The War of the Nations*, 250–2.
22. Dizengoff, *With Tel Aviv*, 15–16. See also Foster, 79.
23. Ram, “In Exile from Palestine”. See also Hacohen, *The War of the Nations*: “They came into the shops and took everything they liked: spectacles, women’s clothing, gloves, stockings, Eau-de-Cologne and so on” (45–46). See also Rogan, *The Fall*, 59.
24. Malkov, *From Egypt*.
25. Friedman, “German and American Intervention”; and Efrati, *From Crisis to Hope*, 159–84.
26. Jacobson. “A City Living Through Crisis,” 78.
27. One of the Hebrew diarists of the war, Haim Nahmias, returned to Jerusalem after his service in a Labour Battalion to find that two of his children had starved to death. Abramson, *Soldiers’ Tales*, 195.
28. Dizengoff, *With Tel Aviv*, 21.
29. Shiloni, “Medical Services,” 67; Dolev, “Medical Assistance,” 52–7; and Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army*, 160.
30. Rogan, *The Fall*, 58.
31. Aaronson, *With the Turks in Palestine*, 14.
32. CZA L2\45.
33. Lewis, “An Ottoman Officer in Palestine,” 405.
34. “Exodus to Egypt.” JNS News Posted on 7 August 2014 by Rafael Medoff/JNS.org http://archive.jns.org/latest-articles/2014/8/7/exodus-to-egypt-100-years-since-the-turkish-expulsion-of-the-jews.
35. Mazza, “We will treat you,” 91.
36. Letter from Morgenthau to Secretary of State. *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1915, Supplement, 956–7.
37. Govrin, “The Encounter,” 82.
38. Conde de Ballobar. *Jerusalem in World War I*, 43.
39. Many witnesses commented on the stormy seas at that time.
40. Malkov, *From Egypt*, 3.
41. Smilansky, “The War”; and Shchori, “100 Years.”
42. Lufban, “The Expulsion from Jaffa.”
43. CZA L2\64\4.
44. Hacohen, *The War of the Nations*, 50.
45. CZA L600.
46. Ibid., L6\255.
47. Dizengoff appears to have been the only leader to have exerted himself to help the deportees. According to one of the exiles, “Dizengoff was the only one who worked hard at the shore to make things easier for us. But not one of the other well-paid functionaries like Messrs [Arthur] Ruppin, [Jacob] Thon and others turned up . . . Shame on them!” (Ram, “In Exile”). In their mitigation, the expulsion was facilitated by the community leaders having been invited to Cairo to celebrate the coronation of Sultan Hussein Kamel of Egypt (Govrin, “The Encounter,” 73–101).
48. Malkov, *From Egypt*, 7.
49. Gierds, *The Relationship between History and Fiction.*
50. Reuveni, *To Jerusalem,* 79.
51. Ibid., 76–7.
52. Ibid., 77.
53. Baron, *The Exiles,* 10.
54. Ibid., 13.
55. A34\112T-A Municipality no. 686.
56. See note 32 above.
57. Deinard, *The Turkish War,* 70.
58. CZA L2\64\2.
59. Ibid.
60. CZA A\20.
61. Ibid.
62. Ram, “In Exile.”
63. www.Zionistarchives.org.il/AttheCZA/AdditionalArticles/Pages/WorldWar1.aspx#prettyPhoto.
64. Moses, *Deportation,* 7. Morgethau does not mention this event in his memoirs.
65. Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism,* 220.
66. Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime,* 60–2; and Moses, *Deportation.*
67. CZA L59\14.
68. Moses, *Deportation,* 33.
69. Anderson refers to the 1917 deportation from Tel Aviv as “one of those little footnotes of war, another point of misery for a civilian population long grown accustomed to it” (*Lawrence in Arabia,* 298). In 1914 they were not yet “accustomed” to it.
70. “The existence of Alexandria, a beautiful port city with a cosmopolitan character in which there was a comparatively large Jewish community contributed to a great extent to a ‘soft landing’ for the exiles.” Lang, “The Connection,” 137.
71. CZA L2\64\1.
72. Lufban, “The Expulsion,” 249–59.
73. Baron, *The Exiles,* 14.

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