

“The broadcasts”

*A Research Paper by Dave Lane (also known as “microlight” on the Internet!).
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Anyone who has tried to have any meaningful and intelligent discussion with Israelis on the subject of the 1948 Arab expulsions will have heard about “the broadcasts”. You will have been told how there was no Israeli coercion involved in the exodus, but rather it was the Palestinian leadership who encouraged and exhorted their own countrymen to leave, allegedly conveying this information through radio broadcasts. Although always sceptical of this explanation, I nevertheless always assumed that maybe there was an element of truth in this story. Over the past few months I have tried to research the topic and the results follow.

In researching this subject, I was lucky to come across the work of Christopher Hitchens in his article “Broadcasts” (*“Blaming the Victims”* edited by Edward W Said & Christopher Hitchens 1988 & 2001). Although the rest of this section is written in my own words, I freely acknowledge that a great deal of the original research was undertaken by Mr Hitchens and I have quoted extensively from his quotations in order for this information to become available to a wider public.

Searching for concrete information about the “broadcasts” is rather like searching for a needle in a haystack. Everyone is more than willing to come up with the hay, with comments such as “I have heard”, “there is a wealth of evidence”, “we were told” or “it’s common knowledge” but nobody seems to have the needle, the proof! The two major things one hears is that (a) the Greek-Catholic Archbishop of Galilee had “reported exhortations to his flock to leave” and (b) the president of the Arab Higher Executive (the Mufti) gave “express instructions which induced or incited the Palestinians to leave”. Let us look at these two points first, before moving on.

Let’s deal with the Archbishop first.

Erskine B Childers was an Irish diplomat and journalist with an impeccable pedigree. In 1961, he wrote the following in a newspaper article:

“Examining every official Israeli statement about the Arab exodus, I was struck by the fact that no primary evidence of evacuation orders were ever produced. The charge, Israel claimed, was “documented”, but where were the documents? There had allegedly been Arab radio broadcasts ordering the evacuation; but no dates, no names of stations and no texts of messages were ever cited. In Israel in 1958, as a guest of the Foreign Office and therefore doubly hopeful of serious assistance, I asked to be shown the proofs. I was assured they existed, and was promised them. None had been offered when I left, but I was again assured. I asked to have the material sent on to me. I am still waiting” (London Spectator 12th May 1961).

Childers wrote to the Greek-Catholic Archbishop of Galilee asking for clarification of the rumours that his Grace “reported exhortations to his flock to leave”. Childers has signed letters from the Archbishop “*in which he categorically denied ever alleging Arab evacuation orders; he states that no such orders were ever given. He says that his name has been abused for years and that the Arabs fled because of panic and forcible evacuation*”.

With regard to the alleged Mufti’s radio broadcast, I have been unable to find any documentation about this whatsoever – although I have discovered texts which would seem to indicate that no such broadcast was made. The BBC monitored almost all broadcasts from the Middle East throughout 1948 not only from the UK but also via the listening station in Cyprus. These records plus corroborative ones from an American monitoring unit are housed at the British Museum and Erskine Childers who researched them all wrote “*There was not a single order, or appeal, or suggestion about evacuation from Palestine from any Arab radio station, inside or outside Palestine in 1948. There is however repeated monitored record of Arab appeals, even flat orders, to the civilians of Palestine to stay put*”. Not only did Childers **not** find any record of “the broadcasts” but “he did find mention of many Israeli broadcasts in Hebrew, and many Jewish newspapers, reporting those very same Arab appeals to stay put”. Childers also wrote “*There is one recorded instance of such an appeal. It is beyond dispute, even by Arabs, that in Haifa the late gentle Mayor, Shabetai Levy, with tears streaming down his face, implored the cities Arab’s to stay. But elsewhere in Haifa, other Zionists were terrorising Arabs. Arthur Koestler wrote in his book that Haganah loudspeaker vans and the Haganah radio promised that city’s Arabs escort to ‘Arab territory’ and ‘hinted at terrible consequences if their warnings were disregarded*”

Often it is obvious that what superficially may purport to be an accurate description to support the fact that the Mufti made a radio broadcast turns out to be not quite as accurate as it is portrayed. Jon Kimche is often quoted as saying that the Arab Higher Committee was behind the broadcast, yet in an earlier statement by that same person he said it was the Arab League – a totally different and distinct body!

There are no official records whatsoever that I have been able to find – in either officially released Israeli documentation, documentation available in the UK or in a new search of Middle East radio monitoring station records by the writer etc - that contain anyone’s testimony as to ever having “heard” these “broadcasts, and no record of their transmission has ever been found by anyone. Despite this, claims are still heard that “fully documented evidence is available” even though none ever seems to have seen the light of day, and the “broadcast” excuses continue to be heard on the radio, the Internet and in the spoken word of many Israelis.

I tend to treat these claims of “broadcasts” as yet more examples of “bad history” that originate in the Middle East. I also wait in eager anticipation to hear of ONE single concrete piece of “evidence” that these “broadcasts ever took place. How about a little real honesty about what DID happen to cause three quarters of a million Palestinians to leave their lands never to return?

Dave lane

