

# U.S. SENATOR BEN CARDIN



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Dear Friends:

It is my privilege to welcome everyone attending today's dedication ceremony of the historic memorial for the *Exodus 1947*, on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Exodus 1947*'s arrival in Haifa.

Along with a series of associated commemorative projects, the *Exodus 1947* memorial is the culmination of decades of tireless effort by the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation (JASHP) to recognize the historic events that led to the formation of Israel. In particular, I applaud the work of Dr. Barry S. Lever, Chairman of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the Final Voyage of the *SS President Warfield – Exodus 1947*, the Jewish Museum of Maryland, the Chesapeake Bay Museum and the individuals and organizations here and abroad who have aided in the efforts to honor the *Exodus 1947* and its passengers.

The story of *Exodus 1947* is as important today as it was 70 years ago. In 1947 the world was horrified and outraged by the British policy of violently preventing Holocaust survivors from reaching Palestine and forcing their return to Europe and refugee camps in Germany. Watching the British Navy ram the *Exodus 1947* - which had 4,515 Holocaust survivors on board - inflamed world opinion and prompted the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to scrutinize the actions of the British. Eventually the British were forced to end their policy of preventing Jewish immigration to Israel and the State of Israel was born.

But why is the story of the *Exodus 1947* so important that we are still talking about it 70 years later? After all, geopolitical transitions have launched multiple large-scale refugee migrations around the world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century including Armenians in 1915, Russians in 1917, Chinese in 1949, Hindus from Pakistan and Muslims from India in 1947, East Germans between 1945 and 1961, Bosnians in the 1990s, Rwandans in 1994, Syrians in 2016 – and many more.

The story of the *Exodus 1947* is important to remember and consider today because it reminds us of our responsibility to protect human rights, help people outside of our own borders, stand up for Americans values and work with our allies and international organizations to advance our goals. It reminds us that our work is not finished. It reminds us that while it was the Jews on the *Exodus 1947* 70 years ago, political outrages around the world continue to require our leadership and our action.


And as a U.S. Senator from Maryland and vigilant friend of the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland's maritime history, I would like to highlight the fact that prior to its service in support of Jewish refugees from the Holocaust, the *Exodus 1947* was called the *President Warfield* and it sailed the Chesapeake Bay for the Baltimore Steam Packet Company. The *President Warfield* changed hands many times, from the Baltimore Steam Packet Company to the British Navy to the U.S. Navy to the Potomac Shipwrecking Company, which was actually acting as clandestine purchasing agents of the Haganah who wanted the ship because the conditions that made it ideal for navigating the Chesapeake Bay - shifting sand of three feet or less in depth – made it ideal for getting immigrants quickly and closely up to the coastal areas of Palestine.

After the Haganah secured the ship she was retrofitted in Baltimore from where she sailed towards France to pick up 4515 Holocaust the refugees and deposit them in Palestine – a plan which was destroyed after the British rammed the ship, prevented the refugees from disembarking in Palestine, detained them in inhumane conditions and eventually returned them to Germany.

The world witnessed the inhumane treatment of the *Exodus*'s passengers and some righteous people cried out. And we continue to talk about the *Exodus 47* to remind ourselves never to forget both our suffering and our empowerment.

I would like to thank all who have made the creation of this memorial possible. I am proud to join you in honoring the legacy of the *Exodus 1947*.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senate