



The foreign secretary David Milliband speaking at the launch of the British Arabs Association.



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"We are lagging behind other communities. We hope to see the first Arab Baroness or Lord with the help of the government, because we think it is time the British Arabs are represented in the House of Lords", Said said. He is very much involved in the Labour Party and the association's vice-chairman is active in the Conservative Party. "Although there has never been a census to measure the true size of the Arab community in the UK, some estimate it is upwards of 700,000. British Arabs have come to recognise the UK as a home for them and their families. That is why they believe in integration in the communities in which they live. British Arabs are lecturers, surgeons, writers, bankers, judges, accountants and teachers. Yet they lack an organised voice with which to articulate their concerns and interests. We think the time has come for the British Arab community to create a forum to unite all the efforts of the community and agree on its broader aims".

Said attributed the lack of success, despite several attempts, to set up a British Arabs Association due to lack of funds. He hopes that when people start to understand the need for such an association they will put some money into it. His project is financed by the members and some donors.

London has attracted the majority of Arabs who have settled in the UK mainly from Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon, the Gulf States and Iraq.

Trade between the UK and the Arab world began in medieval times. Yemeni seamen started living in port towns in the 19th century and the first Iraqi settlers arrived in 1930.

The Egyptians started arriving in large numbers in the 1940's. They were followed by the Moroccans, professional and unskilled, who came in search of work.

The number of Arab immigrants increased in the next two decades as their citizens sought greener pastures in the post

colonial era. The hotel and catering industry attracted skilled and unskilled Moroccans and Palestinians.

The next wave of immigrants were businessmen who arrived from the Gulf during the oil-boom of the 70s and refugees from the Lebanese civil war. Iraqi Kurds and Arabs make up one of the largest refugee communities.

A cafe society has been created with many coffee shops and patisseries both in London and



Atallah Sai Promoting Arab participation in British politics.



Edgware road station

the suburbs, especially Richmond and Harrow.

The Arab community is concentrated in central London: SW1, NW London, W2 and W1.

Edgware Road is a major Arab street with numerous restaurants, coffee shops, travel agents and exchange bureaux. Richer Arabs congregate in Knightsbridge and the Egyptian Al Fayed brothers own Harrods, an exclusive department store.

The most recent development has been the growth of London as a center of communications with the Arab world. The

controversial Qatar-based news channel Al Jazeera broadcasts in English from London and the BBC has launched an Arabic news channel.

London is also a base for dissidents from throughout the Arab world who publish a variety of opposition newspapers. Among the most active is the Bahrain Freedom Movement. Associations such as the Abrar Islamic Foundation promote dialogue with the host society and arrange discussion meetings on a variety of political and religious topics.