

Ugandan Asians and Idi-Amin Factsheet

What happened?

On August 4, 1972, almost 50 years ago, then president Idi Amin ordered all members of the Asian community to leave Uganda within three months, accusing them of economic sabotage, including acts such as tax evasion, corruption, and illegal dealings. Amin exploited resentment towards Asians in Uganda at the time, which persisted partly as a result of their success in the business and civil service sectors.



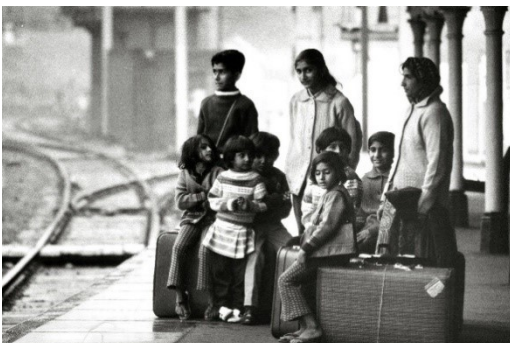
Why did it happen?

Amin gave an incoherent speech to his troops, saying he had a dream in which God had told him to expel the Asians, saying Uganda had no place "for the over 80,000 Asians holding British passports who are sabotaging Uganda's economy and encouraging corruption".

What was the impact?

At the time of the expulsion, there were about 50,000 individuals of Indian descent living in Uganda. The government froze their bank accounts and assets. The luggage allowance on planes for those having to flee was 20kg and they could only take £50 in cash.

Gold jewellery was one way to take money out of the country. However, this became a liability as women were strip-searched, beaten, and raped by soldiers at roadblocks and at the airport. Discipline and the rule of law were replaced by chaos and anarchy.



The majority of those who were expelled emigrated to the UK, while others went to Canada, India, Kenya, or Pakistan. Meanwhile, over 5,000 of their businesses, farms and estates were reallocated, along with their homes, cars and most of their household goods.

According to the Uganda Resettlement Board over 28,000 Ugandan Asians came to Britain after being expelled by Idi Amin.

What's the situation now?

Fifty years on, we celebrate the resilience and resourcefulness of those who were displaced and forced to start all over again, far away from home. Despite daily challenges of racism and bullying and the struggle to find suitable employment, Ugandan Asians persevered and family members pooled resources and bought businesses, found jobs, educated their children and survived.

“Perhaps it was our self-reliance, tenacity and entrepreneurship that pulled us through...50 years on, we must tell these stories while the survivors are still alive. If we don’t tell them ourselves, someone else will, according to their own interpretation. The anniversary is a wonderful opportunity for educating the younger generation to know their history and heritage.” Dolar Vasani, International Development Consultant based in Johannesburg whose family were expelled from Uganda and came to the UK as refugees.

More info...

We recommend watching [this video](#) of Jonathan Dimbleby interviewing Ugandan Asians fleeing the country at the time of their forced expulsion in 1972.

