

The Palestine Issue

Historical Background & Contemporary Developments



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Chapter Two

*Palestine Under British Occupation
1918–1948*

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Palestine Under British Occupation 1918–1948

Introduction

The British completely occupied the southern and central parts of Palestine in December 1917, and occupied Jerusalem on 9/12/1917. According to Arab references, General Allenby, who led the British army, remarked while celebrating his victory in Jerusalem, “Today, the crusades have ended,”¹ as if their campaign in Palestine was the last crusade, and as if the Crusades hadn’t ended more than 800 years earlier. However, this is not strange as the King of the British Empire George V was giving remarks



• Edmund Allenby

on the “Final Crusade.”² Besides the British Prime Minister Lloyd George was describing the British occupation of Palestine in a clear crusade spirit.³ In September 1918, the British occupied the northern part of Palestine, and then in September–October 1918, east of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. After that, Britain forcefully launched the organized Judaization of Palestine, and was able to convince France to abandon the proposed internationalization of Palestine of the Sykes-Picot documents. In exchange, Britain would end its support for the Arab government that emerged in Damascus, led by Faisal bin al-Sharif Hussein bin Ali, allowing France to occupy Syria in the process.

Britain gave itself an international cover with a League of Nations Resolution (dated 24/7/1922), which granted it a Mandate over Palestine. The Balfour Declaration was included in the Mandate documents, and thus became an internationally-recognized official commitment. However, the notion of the Mandate, according to the League of Nations, was based on supporting the people who were under such a Mandate regime, and preparing them to obtain their independence. The documents pertaining to the Mandate of Palestine included Britain’s responsibility in advancing institutions for

local governance and fostering the civil and religious rights of all Palestinians. This would have meant that the Balfour Declaration should not ultimately stand in their way for establishing their institutions and their state. Indeed, the Declaration's implementation practically meant harming the interests and rights of Palestinians and hindering the formation of their constitutional institutions with the aim of establishing their state. Britain chose to comply with the part related to Balfour's pledge and completely disregarded the part related to the rights of Arab Palestinians, who represented around 92%⁴ of the inhabitants at the beginning of the occupation. So perhaps its aim behind drafting texts related to the rights of Palestinians was to offer the guise of being a fair and impartial referee between the Arabs and the Jews; to encourage the Palestinians to claim their rights according to "constitutional" civil means; and to refrain from shutting all doors before them, so that they do not rapidly have to deal with unrest and revolt. In the meantime, Britain would stall and drag its feet, until the nationalist Jewish state is established in Palestine.



• Arthur Wauchope

Britain put Palestine under direct military rule until the end of June 1920, when it began ruling Palestine under a civil administration. It appointed the Jewish Zionist Herbert Samuel as its first "high commissioner" in Palestine (1920–1925), where he implemented the Zionist project, as did the high commissioners who succeeded him. However, the worst of them was Arthur Wauchope (1931–1938), who advanced the Zionist project to its most dangerous levels.

First: Development of the Zionist Project

Palestine was, under the British occupation, the target of a heinous conspiracy, as the Palestinians were prevented from establishing their constitutional institutions and obtaining self-rule. They were put under direct British rule, and high commissioners were given absolute powers. Britain made it difficult for the Palestinians to earn a living, encouraged corruption,

and sought to deepen tribal and sectarian divisions, creating strife among the Palestinians. On the other hand, Britain encouraged Jewish immigration to the country. 483 thousand Jews immigrated from all over the world to Palestine, without having any legal proof of belonging to it except their claimed Jewish religious belief. It is noteworthy that the Zionist movement signed the *Ha'avara* (transfer) Agreement with the Nazi authorities in Germany on 25/8/1933, to facilitate the Jewish immigration from Germany to Palestine. This official Zionist cooperation with the Nazis resulted in the influx of tens of thousands of German Jews to Palestine. Many of them were highly educated, experts, wealthy tradesmen, managers... who contributed significantly to the establishment of the Zionist state. The process of immigration led to an increase in the number of Jews in Palestine from 55 thousand (8% of inhabitants) in 1918 to 646 thousand (31.7% of inhabitants) in 1948. But despite the concerted efforts of the Jews and the British to acquire land, the Jews were only able to take control of around 6% of Palestine by 1948—most of which being either government-owned or land that was sold by non-Palestinian feudal landowners who lived in Lebanon, Syria, or elsewhere. There, the Jewish settlers went on to build 291 settlements.

The British authorities sought to disarm the Palestinians, even killing those who carried firearms and imprisoning for years anyone who owned ammunition, daggers, or knives. However, it turned a blind eye to, and even secretly encouraged, the armament of the Jews and their formation and training of armed militias: For instance, there were more than 70 thousand fighters when the 1948 war started (64 thousand from the Haganah, five thousand from Irgun, two thousand from Stern, etc.); more than three times the number of the Arab armies that took part in the War of 1948. In 1929, the Jews established the Jewish Agency, which was in charge of Jewish affairs in Palestine, and became the equivalent of a state within a state due to the broad powers it enjoyed. The Jews established huge economic, social, and educational institutions that constituted a strong infrastructure for the future Jewish state. The Histadrut (general federation of labor) was established, and the Hebrew University was inaugurated in Jerusalem in 1925.⁵ The British mandate of Palestine can be viewed as characterized by much injustice, oppression, and favoritism.



• Haganah Soldiers 1948

Second: The Emergence of the Palestinian National Movement

The Palestinians were drained after WWI, and the Arab countries around them, and the Islamic world in general, fell under the control of colonial powers. The Islamic world lacked the material resources and the ability to exert political pressure and influence, in stark contrast to the support the Zionist project received from the major powers and World Jewry. Despite this disparity, the Palestinians clung on to their full rights in Palestine, and insisted on their independence at any cost; this stance characterized their political struggle throughout the British occupation, focusing on the following specific demands:

- To annul the Balfour Declaration and the injustice it engendered towards the rights of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of Palestine.
- To put an end to Jewish immigration.
- To stop the sale of land to Jews.
- To establish a national Palestinian government, to be elected through a parliament (Legislative Council), representing the true will of the Palestinians.
- To enter into negotiations with the British to sign a treaty that would ultimately lead to the independence of Palestine.

Thus, the Palestinian national movement was born, and the Palestinians held their first Palestine Arab Congress in Jerusalem from 27/1–10/2/1919. They rejected the partitioning of *Bilad al-Sham* as a matter that suited colonialist interests alone, considered Palestine to be part of Greater Syria (*Bilad al-Sham*), and demanded the independence of Syria within Arab unity and the establishment of a national government that would rule in Palestine. Seven congresses were held, up until 1928. The national movement was led by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Congress Musa Kazim al-Hussaini, who remained officially in this post until his death in March 1934.



• **Musa Kazim al-Hussaini**

Under the British mandate, Haj Amin al-Hussaini became most prominent in the Palestinian national movement. He became the *mufti* of Jerusalem in 1921 and was the Chairman of the Supreme Muslim Council from its foundation in 1922, which became the most important fortress of the national movement and one of its driving forces. After the death of Musa Kazim al-Hussaini, Haj Amin became the undisputed leader of Palestine until the end of British colonialism in 1948.



• **Haj Amin al-Hussaini**

The Palestinian National Movement 1918–1929

The Palestinian national movement focused, particularly during 1918–1929, on peaceful resistance against the Zionist project and on the attempt to convince Britain to renounce the Balfour Declaration. It was still hopeful that this could happen, especially as the British were the allies of Sharif Hussein during WWI. The Zionist project had not yet achieved any practical results that had irreversible repercussions on the situation in Palestine. Moreover, the Palestinian leadership did not consider that the Palestinians had sufficient means to enable them to impose their will on the British. Besides these factors, the leadership itself lacked

the determination, will, and internal cohesion to challenge the British occupation. The lack of political experience and the struggle over leadership (between the families of al-Hussaini and al-Nashashibi), which the British fueled, also played a role in weakening the Palestinian national movement. However, such division generally did not affect the Palestinian stance on the Zionist project and British colonialism, or the overall political demands of the national movement.

On the political level, the Palestinian leadership sent its first delegation to London in July 1921, to meet with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, and a number of officials. However, their appeal fell on deaf ears, although they succeeded in pushing the House of Lords to issue a decision rejecting the Balfour Declaration. On the other hand, the Palestinians thwarted a British attempt in 1923 to form a legislative council in Palestine without effective powers or actual representation of the Palestinians. Balfour's visit to Palestine in 1925 was met with protests and boycotts, with a general strike in all of Palestine. In the fifth Palestinian Congress that was held on 22–25/8/1922 in Nablus, a Palestine Covenant was adopted and the attendees committed to an oath that stipulated that they, the representatives of the Palestinian Arab people, pledge themselves to *Allah*, History and the People that they shall continue their endeavors for the independence of their country, and to achieving Arab unity by all legitimate methods, and that they shall not accept the establishment of a Jewish National Home or Jewish immigration.⁶



• Winston Churchill

During the same period (1918–1929), three uprisings expressed popular wrath towards the Zionist project and were directed against the Jews. They attempted to spare the British (for the aforementioned reasons), but the latter were the ones that played the main role in suppressing these riots. The uprising of al-Quds or *Mawsim al-Nabi Musa* (Prophet Moses Season) took place on 4–10/4/1920 in Jerusalem (five Jews were killed and 211 were injured, compared to four Arabs were killed and 24 injured); the Jaffa Uprising erupted between 1–15/5/1921 and included parts of northern Palestine (47 Jews were killed and 146 were injured, while 48 Arabs were killed and 73 injured); and al-Buraq Uprising lasted from 15 August until 2/9/1929 and erupted due to the

dispute over al-Buraq Wall (The Western Wall of the *al-Aqsa* Mosque) which the Muslims were defending against Jewish Zionist claims and aggressive attitude. The uprising spread all over Palestine, where 133 Jews were killed and 339 were injured, and 116 Arabs were killed and 232 were injured. Most of the Jewish deaths and injuries in these three uprisings were caused by the Arabs, while most of the Arab deaths and injuries were inflicted by the British troops and the British police. Haj Amin al-Hussaini, the *mufti* of Jerusalem, secretly played a prominent role in both al-Quds and al-Buraq Uprisings. As for the official political Palestinian leadership, it continued to adhere to peaceful methods and even strove to contain the sentiments of rage. It is noteworthy that the three revolts took on a combined Islamic and national character, which contributed to further fueling activities against the Zionist project.⁷

The Palestinian National Movement 1929–1939

Al-Buraq Uprising in 1929 ushered in a decade of growing armed resistance against the Zionist project and British colonialism, which reached its peak with the Arab revolution in Palestine (1936–1939). Indeed, the gravity of the Jewish-Zionist project had then begun to become more tangible, particularly following the immigration of more than 152 thousand Jews during 1930–1935, which doubled the number of Jews in Palestine (around 156 thousand Jews in 1929). During the same period (1930–1935), the Jews were able to take over approximately 229 thousand donum of Palestinian land. They also smuggled huge quantities of weapons, which were uncovered on two occasions, on 15/3/1930 and 16/10/1935.⁸

The first half of the 1930s was characterized by an increase in political activity and national interaction with events, as well as direct and widespread hostility towards the British authorities, widely considered to be “the root of all evil.” Palestinian parties were formed during this period, with the Independence Party seeing the light in August 1932 and greatly contributing to the hostilities against the British before withering by mid-1933. In March 1935, the Palestine Arab Party was founded. It became the top popular party and was supported by both the *mufti* (Haj Amin) and large segments of the public.⁹ During the same period, Muslim Youth Associations and Scout movements became active. This was in addition to secret military resistance movements such as the al-Jihadiyyah Movement led by Ezzedeen Al-Qassam, and the al-Jihad al-Muqaddas organization led by

‘Abdul Qadir al-Hussaini (and secretly supervised by Haj Amin). Smaller rebel groups, such as The Green Palm also emerged and entered in early clashes with the colonial authorities.

The Palestinians had lost any hope in obtaining their rights through peaceful and legal means, and Haj Amin al-Hussaini commented on that period by saying that they still had some hope until 1932, but it faded with time. “All their suffering... all their pain was carefully prepared.”¹⁰ A memorandum written by the British director of intelligence of the police force records:

The increase of feeling of disaffection of the Arabs towards the British Mandate and the administration of the country. This feeling is prevalent amongst all classes and discontent and bitterness are general and has been increasing yearly. The Arabs who have all this time hoped that the British would realise the justness of their cause, have become despondent.¹¹

The failure of the mission of the Arab Palestinian delegation to London headed by Musa Kazim al-Hussaini in 1930 contributed in perpetuating and spreading hostile feelings against the British. This was in addition to the non-compliance with the recommendations of Sir John Hope Simpson, the housing and land expert who was entrusted by the British government to examine the situation in Palestine and who concluded after a thorough study that there was “no margin of land available for agricultural settlement by new immigrants, with the exception of such undeveloped land as the various Jewish Agencies hold in reserve.” He described Arab unemployment as “serious and general.” Thus he recommended limiting or stopping Jewish immigration if it led to depriving the Arabs from employment.¹² The situation also worsened when the British government refrained from implementing what it had announced in the White Paper in October 1930 (which pledged to limit Jewish immigration), and issued the Black Paper in February 1931, which affirmed Britain’s commitment to the Zionist project and practically reversed the White Paper.¹³



• John Hope Simpson

The Palestinians were able to revive and mobilize the Arab and Islamic dimensions of the Palestine issue. Reports in May 1931 mentioned a revolutionist plan for armed resistance to save Arab countries, especially Palestine and Syria, headed by Prince Shakib Arslan (Lebanese Muslim), with the participation of Haj Amin al-Hussaini and Shaukat ‘Ali, the renowned Indian leader. They were in contact with the leaders of Arab movements in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Damascus, and Egypt. However, the plan failed.¹⁴ On 7–17/12/1931, the General Islamic Conference was held in Jerusalem under the chairmanship of Haj Amin al-Hussaini, and was attended by delegates from 22 countries. This firmly established the Islamic dimension of the Palestine issue, which became a main concern for the whole Islamic world, and was attended by renowned scholars and Muslim figures such as Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Rida, Indian poet and thinker Muhammad Iqbal, Indian leader Shaukat ‘Ali, Tunisian leader ‘Abdul Aziz al-Tha‘alibi, former Iranian Prime Minister Ziya al-Din Tabataba’i, Syrian leader Shukri al-Quwatli, and others. Many practical decisions were issued, such as the establishment of an Islamic university, the foundation of a company to retain land, and the formation of commissions for Palestine in several countries.¹⁵



• Shaukat ‘Ali



• Muhammad Iqbal



• Muhammad
Rashid Rida



• Shukri al-Quwatli



• Ziya al-Din
Tabataba’i



• ‘Abdul Aziz
al-Tha‘alibi



Delegates attending the General Islamic Conference: 1. Haj Amin al-Hussaini (Palestine) 2. Musa Kazim al-Hussaini (Palestine) 3. Muhammad 'Ali 'Allubah Pasha (Egypt) & behind him Shaukat 'Ali (India) 4. Muhammad Zibara (Yemen) 5. Bashir al-Sa'dawi 6. Hamad Pasha bin Jazi (Jordan) 7. Nu'man al-A'thami (Iraq) 8. Muhammad 'Abdul Latif Darraz (Egypt) 9. Ra'uf Pasha 10. Mustafa al-Ghalayini (Beirut) 11. 'Abdul Wahab al-Najjar & behind him Is'af al-Nashashibi (Palestine) 12. Ibrahim Ifteish (Algeria) 13. Muhammad Tariq 14. Muhammad Rashid Rida (Tripoli-Lebanon) 15. Abu al-Hassan 16. 'Abdul Qahhar Muthakkar (Indonesia) 17. Muhammad Tuffaha 18. Sa'id al-Khatib 19. Mustafa Rajab (Egypt) 20. Hamid al-Miligi (*al-Balagh* newspaper-Cairo)

However, most countries of the Muslim world became colonized and the British persisted in thwarting any practical resolutions, and thus most of these decisions were left unimplemented. Palestinian Muslim scholars saw their role becoming ever more crucial after they held their first conference on 25/1/1935, where they issued fatwas prohibiting the sale of land to Jews, declaring those who do so as apostates, and launched a large awareness campaign for Palestine.¹⁶

On the other hand, the armed resistance was first represented by the al-Kaff al-Akhdar [lit. the Green Palm] Movement, which emerged following al-Buraq Uprising in the north of Palestine, under the leadership of Ahmad Tafish. The movement conducted operations against the Jews and the British, but the intense British campaign against it led to its end in February 1930, and to the capture of its leader.¹⁷

In October 1933, the Palestinian political leadership escalated its opposition and organized two mass protests in Jerusalem (13/10) and Jaffa (27/10), which saw the participation of the leaders themselves. The first protest began at *al-Aqsa* Mosque,

while the second began after the Friday prayers in Jaffa. There was a general strike in Palestine during these two days, and the authorities tried to prevent the demonstrations by force, with 35 Arabs killed and 255 injured. The scope of the protests widened, and they became more violent in Haifa, Jerusalem, Nablus, Beersheba, Lod (Lydda), and other cities, causing more victims in the process. A seven-day strike was subsequently held in Palestine and the British authorities arrested 12 Palestinian leaders, three of whom were members of the Executive Committee. Musa Kazim al-Hussaini lost conscience during the Jaffa demonstration after being physically assaulted, and ultimately passed away in March 1934 at the age of 81.¹⁸



• Occupation suppressing demonstrations in October 1933



• Sheikh Ezzedeen Al-Qassam

The Jihadist movement, meanwhile, was founded by Sheikh Ezzedeen Al-Qassam, with its roots going as far back as 1925. A secret struggle movement that follows the principles of Islam, its motto was “This is jihad-victory, or martyrdom,” and it spread in northern Palestine, particularly among laborers and peasants. It was able to organize 200 men, in addition to 800 supporters. It took part covertly in al-Buraq Uprising, and carried out some operations in the first half of the 1930s, before

going public in November 1935. Sheikh Al-Qassam and two of his companions were killed in their first confrontation with the police in the battle of Ya'bad on 20/11/1935. However, this did not mean the end of the movement, as it was then led by Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di, who played a major role in the Palestinian Revolt (1936–1939).¹⁹

A national-Islamist character marked al-Jihad al-Muqaddas Organization, which was secretly sponsored by Haj Amin. It was mostly located in Jerusalem, and was led by 'Abdul Qadir al-Hussaini, with 400 members in 1935.²⁰ In the Palestinian Revolt, it led the resistance efforts in Jerusalem and Hebron.



• 'Abdul Qadir al-Hussaini

Third: The Palestinian Revolt 1936–1939

The Palestinian Revolt was one of the greatest revolts in Palestine's modern history. It erupted on 15/4/1936 at the hands of Sheikh Al-Qassam's movement, now led by Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di, killing two Jewish settlers. A succession of events followed, and mutual acts of retaliation took place between Arabs and Jews. On April 20, the Palestinians declared they were going on a general strike. Arab parties united together, and the Arab Higher Committee was formed (chaired by Haj Amin al-Hussaini himself) on April 25. It announced its insistence to continue the strike until the fulfillment of the Palestinian demands of establishing a responsible Palestinian government before an elected parliament,



• The Palestinian Revolt 1936–1939

stopping Jewish immigration, and preventing the sale of land to the Jews. The strike lasted 178 days (around six months), rendering it **the longest strike in history conducted by the entire Palestinian people**. Meanwhile, revolt prevailed throughout Palestine. Its first phase ended on 12/10/1936,

upon the calls of Arab monarchs and heads of state, and in preparation for the visit of the Palestine Royal Commission (Peel Commission) to examine the situation and submit its recommendations. The Commission issued its recommendations in early July 1937, and proposed the partitioning of Palestine between the Arabs and the Jews. This reignited the feelings of the revolt, which was started again with the assassination of the British District Commissioner for the Galilee (North Palestine) Lewis Andrews on 26/9/1937.

The British authorities took drastic measures, dissolving the Supreme Muslim Council, the Arab Higher Committee, and the national committees, and attempted to arrest Haj Amin, who was able to flee to Lebanon in mid-October 1937 and continued to lead the revolt from there. However, they managed to arrest four members of the Arab Higher Committee and banished them to the Seychelles islands.

• Peel Commission Partition Plan 1937



Source: Peel Commission Report, July 1937, London: HMSO



• The Arab Higher Committee

The revolt reached its peak during the summer of 1938, and the rebels were able to control the Palestinian countryside and villages, and to occupy some

towns, albeit for limited periods of time. British civil authority collapsed. Had the matter been restricted to a confrontation between an occupied people and a colonialist authority, perhaps the latter would have withdrawn and the people would have been given their rights. However, the presence and influence of the Jewish-Zionist side, and the nature of its project, exerted a constant pressure on the British to show more obstinacy and belligerency.

The British authorities had to send military reinforcements, led by the best military leaders such as Dill, Wavell, Haining, and Montgomery, which reoccupied Palestine village by village, using the most destructive and modern military capabilities of the time. Many of the revolt’s leaders lost their lives, such as Farhan al-Sa’di, Muhammad al-Saleh al-Hamad, ‘Abdulrahim al-Haj Muhammad, and Yusuf Abu Durrah.²¹



• Yusuf Abu Durrah



• Muhammad al-Saleh al-Hamad



• Farhan al-Sa’di

Hence, the revolt was significantly weakened, especially after April 1939, and it continued to decline gradually until the end of that year. According to British statistics, the total operations conducted by the revolt’s activists during 1936–1939 were as follows:²²

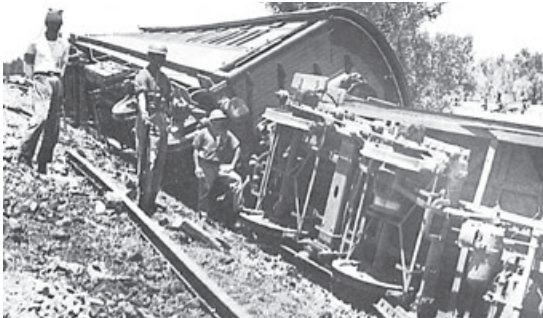
Year	1936	1937	1938	1939
Total operations	4,076	598	4,969	952

British sources state that during the first part of the revolt there were: 80 Jews killed with 288 injured, 35 killed and 164 injured from the British army and police, and 193 Arabs killed with 803 injured. However, Muhammad ‘Izzat Darwazah,

the renowned historian, states that there were more than 750 Arabs killed and more than 1,500 injured. As for the second part of the revolt, and according to Darwazah, the Jewish casualties reached around 1,500, of which a quarter, if not a third, were killed—which is close to official Jewish statistics. Darwazah also estimated that around 1,800 British were killed or injured, and three thousand Arabs were killed with seven thousand injured.²³



• ‘Abdulrahim al-Haj Muhammad leading a resistance group, and a personal photograph (corner)



• A train derailed by an explosion set off by resistance forces in the 1936–1939 Palestinian Revolt

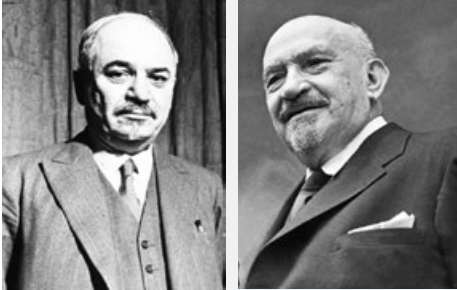
Meanwhile, Britain attempted to find a political solution while crushing the revolt. It annulled the project of partitioning Palestine, freed the prisoners in the Seychelles islands, and called for a round table conference in London to be attended by delegations representing Palestinians, Jews, and a number of Arab countries. But the conference, held in February 1939, failed to deliver a decisive result. This paved the way for the British to announce a unilateral solution, which they said they would implement regardless of the two parties’ approval.

The British government thus issued the White Paper in May 1939, which represented a limited political victory for Palestinians, as Britain categorically determined that it is not its policy that Palestine should become a Jewish state, and that it wished to see “established ultimately an independent Palestine State. It should be a State in which the two peoples in Palestine, Arabs and Jews, share authority in government in such a way that the essential interests of each are shared.” Britain announced that it seeks to establish a Palestinian state within 10 years, the immigration of the Jews in the following five years would not exceed 75 thousand Jews and “no further Jewish immigration will be permitted unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it.” It also stated that there is “in certain areas no room for further transfers of Arab land, whilst in some other areas such transfers of land must be restricted.” Most of the Palestinian leaders did not agree with the British project, since they doubted British sincerity and intentions, and since the project linked the independence of Palestine with the cooperation and approval of the Jews. It also did not offer a general amnesty to the rebels or reconciliation with Palestine’s leader, Haj Amin. Moreover, the Palestinians considered it unwise to give their premature approval to the project, which entailed some concessions. Since Britain insisted on implementing it in any case, time would demonstrate its seriousness in the matter. The Jews also strongly objected to the British project.²⁴

Fourth: Political Developments 1939–1947

The World War II (WWII) took place between 1939 and 1945, and the Palestinians entered this period with depleted capabilities, and with a political leadership that was dispersed after the revolt. Haj Amin had to flee to Iraq in October 1939, then to Iran, Turkey, and Germany, where he arrived in November 1941. This followed the fall of the anti-British regime in Iraq, which he had a major contribution in establishing. In Germany, he found himself obliged to make use of his stay to cooperate with the Germans, the enemies of the British, in order to help the Arabs obtain their rights. A draft declaration was prepared, guaranteeing that the two Axis countries, Germany and Italy, would offer help and support to the Arab countries occupied and controlled by Britain, and would

recognize their independence and help them in overcoming the idea of a Jewish homeland. However, the Germans insisted on issuing the declaration only after the German forces reach Caucasia.



• Ivan Maisky • Chaim Weizmann

In February 1941, in a secret meeting with Ivan Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London, Chaim Weizmann (the leader of the Zionist movement) offered the expulsion of one million Palestinians from their land to allow for the immigration of four-five million Jews from Eastern Europe.

The ambassador sent a report on the matter, which was archived by the Russian foreign ministry, until it was uncovered by Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* in May 1993 and published by *al-Quds* newspaper and the Jordanian newspaper *Alrai* on 29/5/1993.

In any case, Haj Amin used his presence in Germany to seek the creation of an Arab army trained by the Germans. Hundreds of young Arabs were thus trained in this army that was officially formed on 2/11/1943, and was equipped by the Germans with light weapons and ammunition. They also hid around 30 thousand small arms and light weapons in Libya for future use.²⁵ However, the victory of the British and their allies in the war put the Palestinians and their leadership in an even tougher position. The French arrested Haj Amin, but he was able to escape in June 1946, and arrived suddenly in Egypt. Joy and happiness prevailed in Palestine, where decorations were hung everywhere, convoys lined up, and people were extremely relieved,²⁶ thus showing how popular the *mufti* still was.

The Arab Higher Committee for Palestine was formed on 12/6/1946 by a decision of the Arab League and was chaired by Haj Amin after his return. It thus became the body that represents Palestinians. However, the problems faced by Haj Amin with the Jordanian and Iraqi governments weakened his ability to work and maneuver, not to mention that he was in Egypt, which was still under some form of British influence.

Meanwhile, the Zionists exploited the sufferance and massacres inflicted by Nazi Germany on the Jews in Europe during WWII, in order to attract sympathy and support. They claimed that there was no secure place for them, and that the only way to be saved was to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine.



• **Harry Truman**



• **Clement Attlee**

The Zionists focused on the rising major power, namely the US, particularly after the Biltmore conference in 1942, and obtained the support of both the Democrats and the Republicans to reverse the British White Paper in May 1939. When Harry Truman became president, he exhibited great sympathy to Zionism and asked the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee on 31/8/1945 to allow 100 thousand Jews into Palestine.

The Jews strove to equip themselves militarily, and 26 thousand Jews in Palestine took part in the Jewish units of the British army during the WWII, most of who were members of the Haganah organization, where they gained military experience that turned them into the nucleus of the anticipated Jewish state. Around 92 thousand Jews immigrated to Palestine during 1939–1945, and 61 thousand during 1946–1948. They obtained, in the period 1939–1947, around 270 thousand donoms of land, and established 73 new settlements during 1940–1948. On 13/11/1945, amidst Jewish-American pressure and Arab weakness, the British officially abandoned the White Paper in a statement issued by Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, which also called for the formation of an Anglo-American commission to investigate the Palestine issue and submit its recommendations, thus directly involving the Americans in the issue. The commission recommended in 1946 the immigration of 100 thousand Jews and the freedom of transferring lands and selling them to the Jews.²⁷



• **Ernest Bevin**

Zionist groups in Palestine rejected the British White Paper and began a campaign of attacks on British mandate and Arab civilians. However, the Zionist movement had no choice but to stand with the British against Nazi Germany in the WWII which erupted in September 1939. The Head of the Jewish Agency

David Ben-Gurion declared that “We will fight the White Paper as if there is no war, and fight the war as if there is no White Paper.”

The militant Zionist underground organization the Irgun declared a revolt on 1/2/1944 against the British mandate. Zionist terrorism reached the climax when the Irgun carried out an attack on 22/7/1946, on the British administrative headquarters for Palestine, which was housed in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. 91 people were killed and 46 were injured. Among those killed 21 were first-rank government officials; 49 were second-rank clerks, typists and messengers...; 13 were soldiers; three were policemen; and five were from the public. Also, among those killed, there were 41 Arabs, 28 British citizens and 17 Jews. The leader of Irgun was Menachem Begin, who later became the Prime Minister of Israel, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

In general, the British did not take real strict measures to confront the Zionist terrorist organizations, compared to the harsh campaigns they took against the Palestinian revolutions.

The Palestine issue took an international dimension when Britain asked the United Nations (UN) on 2/4/1947 to add it to its agenda. Then the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was created to examine the situation and submit its report, which it did on 31/8/1947, with the following recommendations:

- “The Mandate for Palestine shall be terminated at the earliest practicable date.”
- “Palestine... shall be constituted into an independent Arab State, an independent Jewish state, and the City of Jerusalem,” where Jerusalem would be placed under international trusteeship.²⁸

In the Sofar (6/9/1947) and Aley (7–15/10/1947) conferences in Lebanon, the Arab states decided to reject the UNSCOP recommendations and offer support to Palestine in terms of both men and weapons, and take “military measures” and organize military work.

The Zionist demand for a Jewish state was in full contradiction with all principles of modern history and international law.

- > Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) 1956–1968, “The Psychology of Middle East Peace,” *Foreign Affairs* magazine, vol. 54, no. I, October 1975, pp. 113–114.





On 29/11/1947, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) issued its Resolution 181 for partitioning Palestine into two, Arab and Jewish, states, which was ratified by a majority of two-thirds of the member states, with American lobbying and strong Russian support. The resolution gave 54.7% of Palestine to the Jewish state (14,400 km²), and 44.8% to the Arab state (11,780 km²), and around 0.5% to the Jerusalem area.

The major powers were not having the two-thirds majority, and a vote almost took place on November 26, which would have thwarted the partitioning project, but the UNGA president (the Brazilian delegate), postponed the session. The Jewish Zionist lobbies and Americans launched a strong campaign that

succeeded by using all means at their disposal to gain more votes. Indeed, the wives of the Latin American delegates received precious gifts of diamonds and expensive fur coats. The Haiti government, which had voted against the partitioning, ordered its delegate to vote in support of the resolution, after the US promised to offer economic aid. American businessman Robert Nathan used his financial influence to buy the vote of Guatemala, the Firestone company made economic threats to Liberia if it did not offer its support, and the Philippines was strongly pressured, leading to the interference of its president, who ordered his delegate to vote in support of the resolution. It is thus through these “dirty” tricks that the fate of one of the holiest places on earth was sealed. What is the logic behind deciding the fate of a Muslim people and a Holy Land based on Latin American wives receiving diamonds, jewelry or fur coats? Or Liberia being intimidated by an American company? On 29/11/1947, the resolution in question obtained a majority of 33 votes against 13, with 10 abstentions.

It is worth noting that UNGA resolutions are not binding, even within the UN charters themselves. The resolution itself is in contradiction with the basis upon which the UN was founded, namely the right of peoples to freedom and self-determination. Moreover, the Palestinian people, the ones who are concerned by the issue first and foremost, were not consulted. This is in addition to the blatant injustice imposed by the resolution in giving around 55% of Palestine’s land to an immigrant Jewish minority representing 31.7% of the population and possessing no more than 6% of the land.

Population Dynamics in Palestine Under British Occupation

Year	Arabs		Jews	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
1918	600,000	91.6	55,000	8.4
1948	1,390,000	68.3	646,000	31.7

Land Ownership in Palestine Under British Occupation

Year	Arabs (%)	Jews (%)
1918	98	2
1948	94	6

“It is high time for a few prominent and respectable American Jews, particularly those from whom I learned a lot, to courageously and publicly say Let’s quit lying to the world and to ourselves. We stole Palestine. We stole it. Even if we give the Palestinians autonomy or self-determination, or the West Bank or a Palestinian State, We will still have stolen most of their country. Let’s at least start by telling the truth.”

> Ron David, *Arabs and Israel for Beginners* (New York: 1993), p. 210.



Fifth: The 1948 War and Its Repercussions

The war erupted upon the issuance of resolution on the partitioning of Palestine. The Palestinians bore this war's burdens alone during the first six months, with the help of a limited number of volunteers, as the Arab states refused to send their armies until Britain left on 15/5/1948. The Palestinians formed the Army of al-Jihad al-Muqaddas led by 'Abdul Qadir al-Hussaini, and the Arab League formed the Arab Liberation Army (ALA), which consisted of volunteers from Arab and Muslim countries. Although they suffered tragically as a result of weak Arab support in terms of weapons and supplies, the Palestinians were able to show strong performance against the Zionist gangs for a long time. This led the US to seriously consider abandoning the partitioning project in March 1948. Until the entrance of the Arab armies, the Palestinians were able to maintain around 80% of the land of Palestine, despite their terrible shortcomings in everything compared to the Jews, and despite the cooperation of the British with the Jews during the British withdrawal.



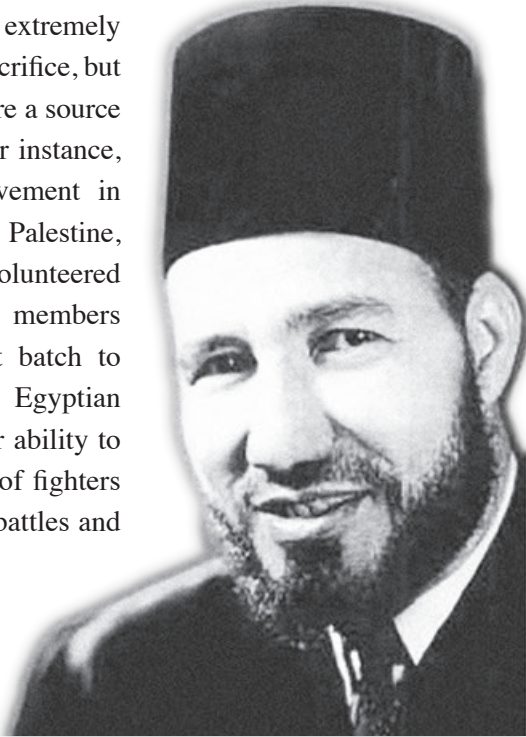
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The involvement of the seven Arab armies represented another tragedy, as they included a total of 24 thousand fighters up against more than 70 thousand Zionist Jewish fighters, and they suffered from a lack of coordination, were ignorant of the land, and lacked modern efficient weapons. Some of these armies occupied themselves with removing the weapons of Palestinians instead

of arming them. In other cases, weapons given to Palestinians were faulty and dangerous to use. Other armies lacked good leadership, not to mention that one of these armies had 45 British nationals among its 50 high ranking officials. This was in addition to the newly-acquired independence of some Arab states and the lack of experience of their armies. Indeed, some of these states were still practically under the influence of British colonialism.²⁹ The following table demonstrates the military balance of forces in terms of numbers between the Arab and Zionist sides:

	Arab forces (thousands)	Jewish forces (thousands)
Before the Arab forces entered the war (December 1947–May 1948)	12	60
First phase of fighting (when the Arab armies entered)	21	67
Second phase of fighting (when the war ended)	40	106

The Palestinians and Arabs were extremely enthusiastic about resistance and sacrifice, but the political leaders and armies were a source of great frustration and failure. For instance, the Muslim Brothers (MB) Movement in Egypt made great efforts to save Palestine, and MB leader Hassan al-Banna volunteered in October 1947 ten thousand members of the MB Movement as a first batch to participate in the battle. But the Egyptian government greatly restricted their ability to travel. Nonetheless, the hundreds of fighters who were able to take part in the battles and fight heroically were arrested and imprisoned before they returned to Egypt. The MB Movement was dissolved before the battles ended in December 1948, and the



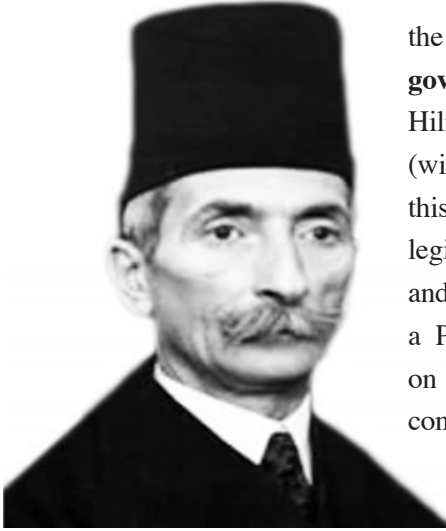
• Sheikh Hassan al-Banna

Egyptian intelligence services assassinated Hassan al-Banna on 11/2/1949, prior to signing the armistice with the new Zionist state. Moreover, MB members from Jordan, Syria, and Iraq also participated in the resistance, revealing a commitment to sacrifice for the Palestine issue. Besides, there was heroic participation of others, such as the fighters of Army of al-Jihad al-Muqaddas in addition to the participation of many Arabs in the liberation army, and around 250 Bosnians in this war to defend Palestine.

The Zionists declared the State of Israel on the evening of 14/5/1948, and were able by the end of the war to defeat the Arab armies and seize around 77% of the Palestinian land. Meanwhile, the Arab Higher Committee decided to establish a Palestinian government to fill the vacuum left by the British withdrawal, and strove in vain to persuade the Arab governments of this in March, April, and the first half of May 1948.



• David Ben-Gurion reading out the proclamation of establishing the state of Israel



• Ahmad Hilmi 'Abdulbaqi, the head of All-Palestine government

On 23/9/1948, the Committee declared the establishment of the **All-Palestine government** in Gaza, headed by Ahmad Hilmi 'Abdulbaqi. The Arab governments (with the exception of Jordan) recognized this government. In affirmation of its legitimacy, the All-Palestine government and the Arab Higher Committee convened a Palestinian National Conference in Gaza on 1/10/1948, headed by Haj Amin. The conference declared the independence of

Palestine and the establishment of a free sovereign and democratic state based on the internationally-recognized borders established during the British

occupation. The conference gave a vote of confidence to the All-Palestine government, which was composed of 10 ministers and led by Ahmad Hilmi 'Abdulbaqi.³⁰

When the All-Palestine government attempted to exercise its powers in the Gaza Strip (GS), the Egyptian authorities interfered and forcefully transported Haj Amin al-Hussaini to Cairo, and forced a number of members of the national council to leave Gaza for Cairo. It then also forced the head and members of the All-Palestine government to move to Egypt. Arab governments refused to recognize the passports issued by the All-Palestine government, and the forces of al-Jihad al-Muqaddas affiliated with the Arab Higher Committee were disbanded. The Egyptian authorities appointed an administrative governor to rule over the “regions under the control of Egyptian forces,” i.e., the GS.³¹

One of the direct consequences of the 1948 war was that the Palestinians were stripped of around 77% of their land by Jewish-Zionist gangs. Around 800 thousand out of one million and 390 thousand Palestinians (about 58%) were forcefully displaced, driven out of the land on which the Jews went on to establish their state. They also displaced 30 thousand other Palestinians to other areas within the occupied territory itself. The Zionists destroyed about

400 villages that existed prior to the war, in addition to staging 34 massacres during the 1948 war against Palestinian civilians in their bid to drive out the Palestinian population. The most infamous massacre of these was that of Deir Yasin, which took place on 9/4/1948, in which the Zionists admitted to slaughtering 254 men, women, and children.³²



• The Deir Yasin Massacre

The Zionist terrorism was not confined to Palestinians. For instance, the militant Zionist gang Lehi (Stern) assassinated the Swedish diplomat Folke Bernadotte, the UN mediator in the 1948 war. He was assassinated on 17/9/1948 in Jerusalem, while pursuing his official duties. Yitzhak Shamir, a Lehi leader, who became later the Prime Minister of Israel, was responsible for the decision of Bernadotte's assassination. The Israeli authorities arrested the accused. However, they were accused of membership of a terrorist group (not the assassination), and they were released two weeks later!³³

The 1948 war tore apart the social and economic fabric of the Palestinian people, who found themselves completely exposed, after having inhabited this land for the past 4,500 years. Sadly, this people had to be destroyed in order to pay



• The forced displacement of the Palestinians 1948

for the crimes of the Europeans against the Jews. They had to be expelled in order to realize the wishes of the major international powers that sympathized with the Zionist movement. The Zionists who built their entity on a sea of Palestinian blood, pain, and suffering showed no remorse whatsoever, despite the injustice that they claim had befallen the Jews, and for which they rallied the whole world. Surely, injustice inflicted on Jews by Europeans, doesn't give the Zionists the right to inflict injustice and oppression on Palestinians.

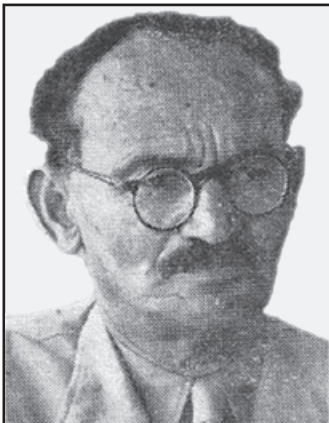


• **The forced displacement of the Palestinians 1948**

Moshe Dayan, who occupied the posts of the chief of staff of the Israeli army, defense minister, and foreign minister, said, “Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages, and you do not know even the names of these Arab villages, they are not there anymore.”³⁴

It was a premeditated organized crime, and the fact that the UN

has issued more than 120 resolutions to this day calling for the return of the refugees to their land did not change anything. The number of Palestinian refugees from the Palestinian land occupied in 1948 reached more than six million and 250 thousands in 2011, in addition to more than one million refugees from GS and the West Bank (WB) who are living outside historic Palestine, and not allowed to return there.



• **Yosef Weitz**

“... it must be clear that there is no room in the country for both [Arab and Jewish] peoples ... If the [Palestinian] Arabs leave it, the country will become wide and spacious for us... The only solution [after the end of WWII] is a Land of Israel, at least a western land of Israel [i.e., Palestine since Transjordan is the eastern portion], without [Palestinian] Arabs. There is no room here for compromises.

The Zionist idea is the answer to the Jewish question in the Land of Israel... The complete evacuation of the country from its other inhabitants and handing it over to the Jewish people is the answer.”

> Yosef Weitz, director of the Jewish National Fund’s Land Settlement Department, The Weitz Diary, A246/7, entries dated 20/12/1940 and 20/3/1941, The Central Zionist Archives (CZA), cited in Nur Masalha, *The Expulsion of the Palestinians* (USA: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993), pp. 131–132.

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- ¹ Emile Gory, *Filastin 'Abr Sittin 'Aman* (Palestine Throughout Sixty Years) (Beirut: Dar An-Nahar, 1972), pp. 28–30.
- ² R. Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary 1917–1956* (London: The Cresset Press, 1959), p. 11.
- ³ Barbara Haddad, *al-Mawaqif al-Baritaniyyah fi Filastin Bayna 'Amay 1918 wa 1920* (The British Stances in Palestine Between 1918 and 1920), *Shu'un Filastiniyyah* magazine, no. 17, January 1973, p. 118.
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- ⁶ On this matter, see 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Kayyali, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–105 and 134–198.
- ⁷ On the three revolts, see Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *al-Tayyar al-Islami fi Filastin wa Atharuhu fi Harakat al-Jihad 1917–1948* (The Islamic Movement in Palestine and Its Effect on the Movement for Jihad 1917–1948) (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Falah, 1988), pp. 165–191.
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- ¹⁰ Zuhair al-Mardini, *Alf Yawm ma' al-Haj Amin al-Hussaini* (One Thousand Days with Amin al-Hussaini) (Beirut: n.p., 1980), p. 77.
- ¹¹ Appreciation of Arab Feeling as Affecting Palestine, Memorandum by H.R. Rice Submitted to the Chief Secretary, Government of Palestine, 8/9/1933, Secret, Colonial Office (CO) 733/257/11.
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- ¹³ The paper was known as the *Passfield White Paper*. As for the *Black Paper*, it was a letter addressed from British Prime Minister R. MacDonald to Chaim Weizmann, the president of WZO, and read before the British House of Commons on 13/2/1931.
- ¹⁴ 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Kayyali, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
- ¹⁵ See Bayan al-Hout, *op. cit.*, pp. 216, 246–247 and 872–873.

- ¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 294–295; *Watha'iq al-Harakah al-Wataniyyah al-Filastiniyyah 1918–1939: Min Awraq Akram Zu'aytir* (Documents of the National Palestinian Movement 1918–1939: From the Papers of Akram Zu'aytir), prepared for publication by Bayan al-Hout, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1984), pp. 381–391.
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- ¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 408–418.
- ¹⁹ For details about this movement see Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *al-Tayyar al-Islami fi Filastin*, pp. 229–327.
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- ²¹ On the Great Revolt, see 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Kayyali, *op. cit.*, pp. 260–300; and Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *al-Quwwat al-'Askariyyah wa al-Shurtah fi Filastin*, pp. 437–618.
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- ²³ Muhammad 'Izzat Darwazah, *Filastin wa Jihad al-Filastiniyyin* (Palestine and the Struggle of Palestinians) (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1959), pp. 43 and 220.
- ²⁴ See British White Paper of 1939, the Avalon Project, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/brwh1939.asp; 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Kayyali, *op. cit.*, pp. 300–302; and Kamil Khullah, *op. cit.*, pp. 733–743.
- ²⁵ See Falah Khalid 'Ali, *Filastin wa al-Intidab al-Baritani 1939–1948* (Palestine and the British Mandate 1939–1948) (Beirut: Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1980), pp. 107–111; and Zuhair al-Mardini, *op. cit.*, pp. 157–162, 171, 200–202, 241 and 243.
- ²⁶ Khalil al-Sakakini, *Kadha Ana Ya Dunya* (Such Am I, Oh World), vol. 2, ([Damascus]: al-Ittihad al-'Am li al-Kuttab wa al-Sahafiyyin al-Filastiniyyin, 1982), p. 367.
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