

Impact of Balfour Declaration

What was the impact of the Balfour Declaration?

The Balfour Declaration laid the foundation for Jewish-Arab enmity that is now posing a major threat to the world peace. Issued on November 2, 1917 by Great Britain, the Declaration gave international recognition to the Zionist movement and promised them a Jewish state in the land of Palestine. The Jews in Palestine were around ten percent of its entire population before the Balfour Declaration. It allowed massive migration of Jews from all parts of the world and eventually paved way for the formation of the State of Israel.

The Balfour Declaration can be regarded as the biggest diplomatic triumph for Zionist goals in the Middle East. [Lord Rothschild](#) and British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour were the key persons behind this document which was communicated to the leaders of [The Zionist Movement](#) in the form of letters. However, they have always been criticized for interpreting wrong meaning of the Declaration. Balfour wrote:

“His majesty’s Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

Several historians argue that the Balfour Declaration did not have the words “Jewish state” or “Israel” but it rather favored “home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. It was also not clear that if “Jewish people” referred only to the existing Jewish population in Palestine or the Jews living around the world. Another major criticism that Jews faced was that they dishonor the declaration by violating the “civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”

The British cabinet which approved the Balfour Declaration is often criticized for supporting another European settler colonial movement through this document. It was evident from the events afterwards, especially World War II, that Britain and other countries used it as much to their own advantage as did the Zionists. Another criticism for the Declaration is that it overlooked the ground realities of the region and failed to lay out a practical plan for both the Jews and Palestinians. It lent unjust support to the Zionist cause and ruined the future of generations of Palestinians, who will always consider it as the first move that created decades-long conflict in their land. The impact of the Balfour Declaration is further explained here:

- The Balfour Declaration led to mass emigration of Jews during the period between the world wars, thus resulting in the dispossession and exile of the Palestinian people from their own land.
- It gave a legitimate ground to Zionism which did not gained mass acceptance till then, even within the Jews around the world. It resulted in the establishment of a Jewish state of Israel after thirty years, which used force and violence to displace a large proportion of the indigenous Arab population from Palestine.
- It contradicted the Husayn-McMahon correspondence of 1915-16 and thus developed the Arab resentment towards the West which continues even today.
- The reactions of Palestinian Arabs towards the Balfour Declaration were justified because it

Arab Reaction to the State of Israel

How did Arabs within the British Mandate territory react?

After the UN resolution of Nov. 29, 1947, to partition the country into Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem as a corpus separatum, Palestinian Arabs (including veterans of the 1936-9 disturbances, members of Arab youth organizations, and police) initiated hostilities against the Jewish population. They were soon joined by volunteers from neighboring Arab states. Jewish forces were organized mostly in the Haganah (underground militia) with a fulltime component of about 4,000, mostly members of the Palmah.

The early Arab attacks resembled the [Arab Revolt of 1936-9](#), with attacks on villages and terrorism in the cities.

[The Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al Hussein](#), the deeply anti-Semitic Nazi collaborator, stated:

- I declare a holy war, my muslim brothers! Murder the Jews! Murder them all!

Muhamed Nimer Al Hawari described the Arab leaders' ruthless incitement of the Arabs in Jaffa in December 1947:

- ... Jaffa was boiling: every second that passed you heard a new rumour, and after every minute the imaginary tales and lies became bigger, finally, they were accepted as definite truth by the public. When the sun was setting down, many of the Mufti henchmen patrolled the streets in private and lorry cars, calling upon the people: oh! people, oh! men, oh! heros; Help ... Help . . . , stop the Jewish attack! They have attacked your brothers in the Manshiya; they pillaged their properties; burned their holdings and raped their women and girls. They have committed awful acts of horror and brutality against your brothers!! In but a few minutes Jaffa's inhabitants were incited and agitated shouted and fired in the air:—On Them! On Them! On Tel-Aviv, the town of the wicked ... Groups and individuals, they marched on and among them, behind them or in front of them, went the Mufti henchmen belittling the Jewish strength...

One result of the Arab attacks on the State of Israel and its Jewish population was the flight of Arabs from thier homes in Israel. Even though they were encouraged to stayby the new Israeli government, and those who did remain became citizens, many fled at theurging of their Arab leaders who expected a quick victory over the Jews. [The issue ofthe “refugees” is discussedin complete detail on this page of Palestine Facts](#)

Jordan Annexed West Bank after 1948 War

What did the Arabs do about Jordan's annexation of the parts of Palestine they captured?

In April 1950, Jordan annexed eastern Jerusalem (dividing the city for the first time in its history) and the "West Bank" areas in historical [Judea and Samaria](#) that Trans-Jordan had occupied by military force in 1948 (Jordan changed its name to Trans-Jordan in April 1949). On April 24, 1950, the Jordan House of Deputies and House of Notables, in a joint session, adopted a Resolution making the West Bank and Jerusalem part of Jordan. This act had no basis in international law; it was only the de facto act of Trans-Jordan as a conqueror. The other Arab countries denied formal recognition of the Jordanian move and only two governments – Great Britain and Pakistan – formally recognized the Jordanian takeover. The rest of the world, including the United States, never did.

After the 1948 War for Independence and the Jordanian takeover, the Palestinian Arabs never attempted to establish an independent state in the territory allotted to them by the [1947 United Nations Partition Plan](#). They cooperated with its unilateral annexation by Jordan, becoming part of Jordan's political system. Across the barbed wire that marked the dividing line, Jordanian East Jerusalem was not made the capital, even for its Palestinian residents, in 19 years of Jordanian rule. The capital remained in Amman. There was no outcry of claims of "Palestinian" identity being submerged by Jordan.

The reason there was no Arab outrage over the annexation was because Jordan is a state whose ethnic majority is Palestinian Arabs. On the other hand, the Palestinians of Jordan are disenfranchised by the ruling Hashemite minority. Despite this fact, in the years following the annexation the Palestinians displayed no interest in achieving "self-determination" in Hashemite Jordan. It is only the presence of Jews, apparently, that incites this claim.

The Jordanian "occupation" of the West Bank was very abusive of the rights of Jews and Christians, or any resident of Israel. During the 1948-1967 period of its occupation, [Jordan permitted terrorists to launch raids into Israel](#). Jewish and Muslim residents of Israel were not permitted to visit their Holy Places in East Jerusalem. Christians, too, were discriminated against. In 1958, Jordanian legislation required all members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre to adopt Jordanian citizenship. In 1965, Christian institutions were forbidden to acquire any land or rights in or near Jerusalem. In 1966, Christian schools were compelled to close on Fridays instead of Sundays, customs privileges of Christian religious institutions were abolished. Jerusalem was bisected by barbed wire, concrete barriers and walls. On a number of occasions Jordanian soldiers opened fire on Jewish Jerusalem. In May 1967, the Temple Mount became a military base for the Jordanian National Guard.

http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_1948to1967_jordan_annex.php

Captured Jewish Holy Sites Desecrated

What happened to Jewish Holy Sites and places of worship in lands controlled by the Arabs?

On May 28, 1948 the Arab Legion completed the capture of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, the site of numerous ancient synagogues and the Western Wall of the Temple, [destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 AD](#). These were and remain the holiest sites in the Jewish religion.

After the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem was captured, the destruction, desecration and systematic looting of Jewish sites began and continued. 57 ancient synagogues (the oldest dated to the 13th century), libraries and centers of religious study were ransacked and 12 were totally and deliberately destroyed. Those that remained standing were defaced, used for housing of both people and animals. The city's foremost Jewish shrine, the Western Wall, became a slum. Appeals were made to the United Nations and in the international community to declare the Old City to be an 'open city' and stop this destruction, but there was no response. This condition continued until Jordan lost control of Jerusalem in June 1967.

On the Mount of Olives, the Jordanian Arabs removed 38,000 tombstones from the ancient cemetery and used them as paving stones for roads and as construction material in Jordanian Army camps, including use as latrines. When the area was recaptured by Israel in 1967, graves were found open with the bones scattered. Parts of the cemetery were converted into parking lots, a filling station, and an asphalt road was built to cut through it. The Intercontinental Hotel was built at the top of the cemetery. Sadar Khalil, appointed by the Jordanian government as the official caretaker of the cemetery, built his home on the grounds using the stones robbed from graves. In 1967, the press published extensive photos documenting that Jewish gravestones were found in Jordanian Army camps, such as El Azariya, as well as in Palestinian walkways, steps, bathrooms, and pavement.

The Hurva Synagogue, attributed to Rabbi Moses Ben Nahman (Ramban), was the main synagogue in Jerusalem in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (and possibly much earlier), until the Ottomans closed it in 1589 because of Muslim incitement. It was burned by Arabs in 1721 (Hurva = destruction in Hebrew), but again rebuilt by Zionists in the 19th century, becoming the most prominent synagogue on the Jerusalem skyline. For that reason, when it was captured by the Arab Legion during the battle for Old Jerusalem in 1948, they dynamited it to show that they controlled the Jewish Quarter. When the Jews in New Jerusalem saw the Hurva burning, they knew that Jewish life in the Quarter had ended (again).

Access to the Holy Sites

When the 1948 war ended, and negotiations began, the Israeli representatives emphasized regaining access to Jewish Jerusalem. Article VIII of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement, signed on April 3, 1949, called for the establishment of a Special Committee:

- ... composed of two representatives of each Party for the purpose of formulating agreed plans" including "free access to the Holy Places and cultural institutions and use of the cemetery on the Mount of Olives.

Hopes were high that Jews might visit the Western Wall for Passover 1949, but the Jordanians violated the Armistice Agreement. These clauses were never honored. Promises continued to be made, and

Glubb Pasha, the British commander of the Arab Legion, pledged that:

- Jerusalem's Arab and Jewish populations would be two separate cities with free trade and exchange between each other. The Arabs would be perfectly willing to allow the Jews to have access to their shrines, notably the Wailing Wall, now inside the Arab-held Old City.

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During the Jordanian occupation of Hebron from 1948 to 1967, Jews were not permitted to live in the city, nor — despite the term of the 1948 Armistice Agreement — to visit or pray at the Jewish holy sites in the city. Additionally, the Jordanian authorities and local residents undertook a systematic campaign to eliminate any evidence of the Jewish presence in the city. They razed the Jewish Quarter, desecrated the Jewish cemetery and built an animal pen on the ruins of the Avraham Avinu synagogue.

Although there were numerous discussions of this issue, and Israeli complaints, the Jordanians refused to honor the agreement, and the UN did not pass any resolutions against this treatment of Jewish religious institutions.

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