

Britain's 1917 Balfour Declaration

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November 2 marks its 100th anniversary, a deplorable action, the beginning of the end of historic Palestine.

UK Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour's declaration came in a 67-word letter to British Zionist Federation's Lord Rothschild.

Accepted by the League of Nations on July 24, 1922, it stemmed from the mandate, giving Britain administrative control of Palestine.

Generations of political, military and cultural repression of its people followed, far worse after Israel's so-called war of independence, stealing 78% of historic Palestine, the rest in June 1967.

Balfour's call for establishing a nation for Jews (on stolen Palestinian land) was a high crime against humanity.

Endless conflict, occupation, dispossession, and repression, along with social and cultural fragmentation define conditions for beleaguered Palestinians – 100 years of suffering, no end of it in sight, the world community dismissive of their rights.

Balfour's letter to Rothschild read as follows:

"I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

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.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.”

Balfour acted without consulting Palestinians, reason enough for them to deplore Britain to this day, beginning the process of stealing their homeland, consigning them to future subjugation.

Former UK prime minister David Cameron urged PM Theresa May to commemorate the anniversary together with the Jewish community “in the most appropriate way,” without further elaboration.

Current UK Foreign Minister Boris Johnson defended his predecessor’s action, saying

“I am proud of Britain’s part in creating Israel.” The declaration was “indispensable to the creation of a great nation.”

It’s been a curse for Palestinians – their land stolen, their rights denied. The myth of “a land without people for a people without land” was predominantly Arab with small numbers of Jews and Christians at the time.

Balfour duplicitously promised Palestinians respect for their rights, saying they’d be protected, free from foreign rule.

Palestinian leaders saw the ruse, wanting no part of it. They opposed further Jewish immigration to no avail, their wishes conflicting with imperial Britain’s plans.

In 1947-48, historian Ilan Pappé explained what he called the “urbicide of Palestine – attacking and ethnic cleansing the country’s major urban centers, slaughtering and displacing Palestinians, making way for Jewish occupation and development.

The Nakba killed or displaced about 800,000 Palestinians. Over 500 historic towns and villages were erased, along with urban neighborhoods in Tel-Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem and other cities, private property destroyed or confiscated, woman raped, other atrocities committed.

David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, said during the Nakba “(e)very attack has to end with occupation, destruction and expulsion” – forcefully eliminating resistance.

Balfour and the British mandate made creating Israel and erasing Palestine possible – his declaration a document to live in infamy forever.

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