

Palestine, the 1917 'Balfour Declaration' and the Establishment of the State of Israel in 1948

By [Anthony Bellchambers](#)

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The Balfour Declaration was a letter dated 2 November 1917 from the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, to Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community, for transmission to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. It read:

His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours 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.

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, successive British governments have deliberately ignored the very specific safeguards for the protection of the indigenous peoples of Palestine that were explicitly contained within the Foreign Secretary's Declaration of November 1917.

David Lloyd George, who was Prime Minister at the time of the Balfour Declaration, told the Palestine Royal Commission in 1937 that the Declaration was made "*due to propagandist reasons.*"

In his Memoirs, published in 1939, Lloyd George further elucidated his position:

The Balfour Declaration represented the convinced policy of all parties in our country and also in America, but the launching of it in 1917 was due, as I have said, to propagandist reasons.... The Zionist Movement was exceptionally strong in Russia and America.... It was believed, also, that such a declaration would have a potent influence upon world Jewry outside Russia, and secure for the Entente the aid of Jewish financial interests. In America, their aid in this respect would have a special value when the Allies had almost exhausted the gold and marketable securities available for American purchases. Such were the chief considerations which, in 1917, impelled the British Government towards making a contract with Jewry.

Meanwhile the British government continues to ignore the very explicit safeguards that were contained within the said Declaration, which is accepted to be the foundation block that led to the subsequent establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 at the expense of the indigenous population that had been in continuous occupation of the land for over a

thousand years.

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