

Palestinians Sue Britain for 1917 Balfour Declaration

By [The New Arab](#)

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Palestinian lawyers on Thursday filed a complaint to sue the British government for the 1917 declaration setting out [London's support for a "national home" for the Jewish people in Palestine](#).

The lawyers filed a complaint in the occupied West Bank town of Nablus that claimed “the suffering of the Palestinians” stemmed from this document.

The Balfour Declaration, signed by the [then British foreign secretary Arthur James Balfour](#), is seen as a precursor to Israel’s creation and the [Palestinians’ ethnic cleansing from their homeland in 1948](#).

“The British mandate is at the root of the suffering of the Palestinian people and has paved the way for the violation of their rights and the plunder of their land,” Munib al-Masri, head of the Federation of Independent and Democratic Trade Unions, told a news conference in Ramallah.

As well as the trade unions group, the complaint was filed on behalf of the International Commission to Support Palestinian People’s Rights and the Palestinian Journalists’ Syndicate.

The Balfour Declaration was published on November 2, 1917, a year before the end of World War I.

In one sentence it announced the British government’s backing for the establishment within Palestine, then a region of the [Ottoman Empire](#), of “a national home for the Jewish people”.

It was a shock to the Arab world, which had not been consulted and [had received promises of independence of its own](#) in the post-war break up of the defeated Ottoman Empire.

The Palestinians have always condemned the declaration, which they refer to as the “Balfour promise”, saying Britain was giving away land it did not own.

With the Balfour Declaration, London was seeking Jewish support for its war efforts, and the Zionist movement, which pushed for a homeland for Jews in Palestine, was an emerging political force.

The British Mandate for Palestine was later set up in the wake of World War I, and ran until Israel’s declaration of statehood in 1948.



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