

The Arab-Israeli Conflict

Vienna: 26 February 1930: Letter to the Keren Hajessod (Dr. Chaim Koffler)

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In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

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Freud would not have been surprised at the continuing conflict in the Middle East. He predicted as much 70 years ago.

We can predict Freud's response because of a letter he wrote to Dr. Chaim Koffler in 1930.

In February 1930 Freud was asked, as a distinguished Jew, to contribute to a petition condemning Arab riots of 1929, in which over a hundred Jewish settlers were killed. This was his reply:

Letter to the Keren Hajessod (Dr. Chaim Koffler)

Vienna: 26 February 1930

Dear Sir,

I cannot do as you wish. I am unable to overcome my aversion to burdening the public with my name, and even the present critical time does not seem to me to warrant it. Whoever wants to influence the masses must give them something rousing and inflammatory and my sober judgement of Zionism does not permit this. I certainly sympathise with its goals, am proud of our University in Jerusalem and am delighted with our settlement's prosperity. But, on the other hand, I do not think that Palestine could ever become a Jewish state, nor that the Christian and Islamic worlds would ever be prepared to have their holy places under Jewish care. It would have seemed more sensible to me to establish a Jewish homeland on a less historically-burdened land. But I know that such a rational viewpoint would never have gained the enthusiasm of the masses and the financial support of the wealthy. I concede with sorrow that the baseless fanaticism of our people is in part to be blamed for the awakening of Arab distrust. I can raise no sympathy at all for the misdirected piety which transforms a piece of a Herodian wall into a national relic, thereby offending the feelings of the natives.

Now judge for yourself whether I, with such a critical point of view, am the right person to come forward as the solace of a people deluded by unjustified hope.

Your obedient servant,

Freud

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