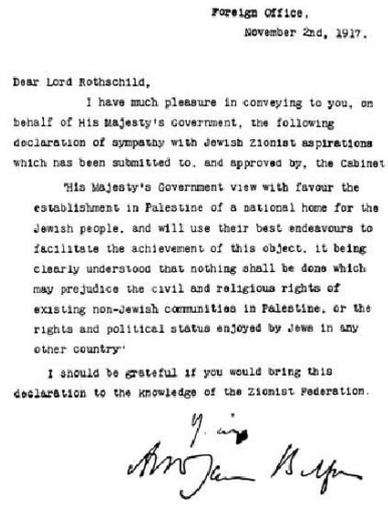
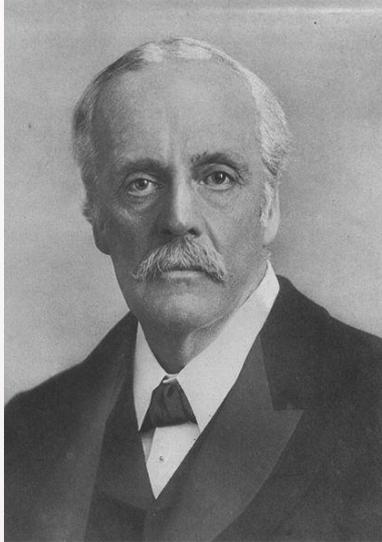




Balfour Declaration Fact Sheet



November 2, 2017 marks 100 years since the British government issued the infamous Balfour Declaration guaranteeing the establishment of a “national home” for the Jewish people in Palestine. Here are some key facts about the declaration and its legacy:

Text of the Declaration

Dear Lord Rothschild,

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 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”

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

Yours, (signed) Arthur James Balfour



Who was Balfour?

Arthur James Balfour was the Conservative Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from July 1902 to December 1905. He then became Foreign Secretary (1916–1919) in David Lloyd George's coalition government. He was a white supremacist. While serving as prime minister from 1902 to 1905, he insisted that Europeans must enjoy greater privileges than Black majority in South Africa. "Men are not born equal," he said in 1904. He later asserted that Black people were "less intellectually and morally capable" than whites.

Who was Lord Rothschild?

Lionel Walter Rothschild, was a British banker, politician, zoologist and leader of the British Jewish community.

Why is the Declaration so controversial?

At the time of the Declaration, Britain was not in control of Palestine. Hence, its pledge was effectively, as Arthur Koestler observed, "one nation solemnly promis[ing] to a second nation the country of a third." In promising to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine, the British failed to consult with the indigenous inhabitants of the land, who constituted the majority of its population and owned the overwhelming share of its land. Balfour later wrote in a memorandum: "In Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country... Zionism be it right or wrong is more important than the wishes of 700,000 Arabs." Furthermore, Britain had made several contradictory promises regarding Palestine to different interest groups in the wake of World War One regarding Palestine. In brief, through the events it was to set into motion, the Balfour Declaration was responsible for the displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian nation and created the long-lasting Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East.

What were Britain's contradictory promises regarding Palestine?

- 1. Hussein McMahon Correspondence:** The Sharif of Mecca is promised an independent Arab state, including Palestine, in exchange for leading a revolt against Ottoman rule.
- 2. The Balfour Declaration:** Assuring the Zionist movement of the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.
- 3. The Sykes Picot Agreement:** A secret pact between Britain and France wherein Palestine is foreseen to be placed under international administration.

Of these three promises, only the Balfour Declaration was adhered to meticulously, barring in one aspect i.e. its stipulations relating to the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine.



Which part of the Balfour Declaration was not adhered to?

Its stipulation that “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”

What was the British Mandate of Palestine?

At the 1920 San Remo conference Britain was given a Mandate to administer and develop Palestine. As per the League of Nations stipulations, ‘advanced’ nations were entrusted with the task of administering certain territories, to be known as Mandates, “until such time as they are able to stand alone.” The British Mandate of Palestine lasted from 1920-1948.

What was the legacy of British rule in Palestine?

Britain was charged with bringing freedom and democratic government to the people of Palestine. Instead its rule was converted into a colonial project as a result of the British betrayal of this principle by ignoring the rights and needs of the indigenous people. Britain imposed military rule on Palestine and violently suppressed its people’s legitimate concerns. When Palestinians protested this policy, British colonial rule responded brutally. In 1936, the British army put down a three-year revolt in which the Palestinian Arabs sought independence from Britain. By 1939, approximately 5000 Palestinians had been killed, 10 000 were wounded and 5670 were detained. This effectively meant that over ten per cent of Palestine’s adult male population had been killed, wounded, imprisoned, or exiled. During the uprising, British security forces used the standard tactics of anti-colonial warfare: torture, murder, collective punishment, detention without trial, military courts, aerial bombardment and 'punitive demolition' of more than two thousand houses. During their administration, the British also effected discriminatory legislation and built up a sophisticated military infrastructure that was effectively handed over to the Zionists when the mandate ended.

What is the Balfour Apology Campaign?

A UK based, international campaign whose mission is to seek an official apology from the British government on the occasion of this centenary for issuing the infamous Balfour Declaration. Its organisers believe that the British government’s recognition of its destructive colonial past is a necessary step towards achieving peace, justice and reconciliation.

Sources: Balfour Apology Campaign, Electronic Intifada, The Guardian



Selected quotations on the Balfour Declaration:

"one nation solemnly promised to a second nation the country of a third" – **Arthur Koestler, Hungarian-British author and journalist**

"the single most destructive political document on the Middle East in the 20th century" – **Walid Khalidi, Palestinian historian**

'By a stroke of the imperial pen, the Promised land [thus] became twice promised. Even by the standards of Perfidious Albion, this was an extraordinary tale of double-dealing and betrayal, a tale that continued to haunt Britain throughout the 30 years of its rule in Palestine.'" – **Professor Avi Schlaim, University of Oxford**

"The Balfour Declaration was equivalent to a decree calling for the annihilation of the Palestinian people. Not one Palestinian, anywhere, remained completely immune from the harm invited by Balfour and his government" – **Dr Ramzy Baroud, Palestinian author and journalist**

"legally void, morally wicked and politically mischievous" – **Henry Cattan, Palestinian jurist**

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