

Palestine under the British Occupation

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This period of time is considered the most dangerous across the history of Palestine as it paved the path for seizing the country and handing it to the Zionist movement. The policies and measures taken at the time reflected the Christian-Zionist close relationship that sprung from a shared ideology in which religion, politics and economy intersected. The result was seizing an Islamic country, stealing its riches and displacing its people.

Topic One: Occupation of Palestine and Administration of Its Institutions

Britain managed to occupy Palestine; place it under military rule, which enforces martial laws; and facilitate Jewish control over the Palestinian institutions as part of its grand scheme to control the world trade pathways.

The British Occupation

The European ambitions in Palestine date back to the mid seventeenth century in modern times. The European countries were suffering from serious conflicts over the control of world trade and pathways. Britain was on top of these countries. It perceived the Jews as effective partners who could help it achieve its political and economic ambitions. It took the Jews into care, offered them the required trade facilitations in Britain and encouraged them to immigrate to Palestine⁽¹⁾.

At the time, the Ottoman Empire was weak and the western countries were racing to seize shares of its lands. These factors contributed to the implementation of the Zionist project. At the Campbell-Bannerman conference, which was held in London from 1905-1907, the idea of establishing a 'buffer state' in Palestine appeared. The participants in the conference submitted this recommendation to the British Minister

⁽¹⁾ Mahmoud, Amin, *Jewish Settlement Projects Since French Revolution until End of WWI*, (Kuwait, World of Knowledge, 1984), pp. 11-12.

Campbell Bannerman with the aim to prevent the achievement of Islamic unity between the Asian and African parts of the world⁽¹⁾.

During the WWI, Al-Quds was no longer under the Ottoman rule. Turkey's participation in the war by Germany's side in 1914 led to the Allies' control over Palestine, after the British had promised the Arabs to recognize their countries' independence (including Palestine). In conjunction with making these promises, Britain and France concluded a secret agreement that was later known as 'Sykes-Picot Agreement' on May 16, 1916⁽²⁾.

In the late 1917, the British occupation occupied the south of Palestine⁽³⁾, so the Turks realized that the occupation of Al-Quds was a matter of time. Poverty rates rose and the prices were high, so they started retreating from the city on December 8, 1918 and until the following day. General Allenby entered the city on December 11 after which the Turks tried to retrieve the city but failed⁽⁴⁾.

The economic conditions were severe at the time. The north and south of Palestine were busy surviving grave battles in 1918. The Turks had burned the olive and orange trees to use as fuel and for other military reasons. This, in return, led to an economic crisis accompanied by the prevention of imports and exports. A British report stated this issue and pointed to the rise in prices and importance of reconstructing what the war had destroyed⁽⁵⁾.

Back then, the lands' ownership was distributed as 50.59% owned by Arabs, 44.4% owned by the state and 2.41% owned by the Jews⁽⁶⁾.

Military and Civil Administration

(1) Saleh, Mohsen, **Methodological Studies on the Palestinian Cause**, (Amman, Dar Al-Furqan for Publishing and Distribution, 2004), pp. 27-28.

(2) Cattan Henry, **Jerusalem**, translated by Ibrahim Al-Rahem, (Damascus, Dar Kanaan for Studies and Publishing, ed. 1, 1997), p. 27.

(3) Al-Barghouti and Totah, Omar and Khalil, **History of Palestine**, (El-Thaqafya El-Dinia, 2001), p. 261.

(4) Al-Aref, Aref, **Detailed History of Jerusalem**, (Al-Quds, Al-Maarif Printing Home, 5th ed., 1999), pp. 383-384.

(5) Khila, Kamel, **Palestine and the British Mandate 1922-1939**, (Tripoli, Libya, Al-Manshaa Al-Aama for Publishing, Distribution and Advertising, 2nd ed., 1982), pp. 73-75.

(6) Hijazi, Akram, **the Social Roots of the Palestinian Nakba 1858-1948**, (Cairo, Madarat for Research and Publishing, 1st ed., 2015), p. 82.

Allenby announced Palestine to be under the military administration in the name of administrating the enemy's occupied southern part of the country from 9/12/1917 until 1/7/1920. This military administration was following General Allenby, leader of the British Empire's Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Cairo, orders⁽¹⁾.

The military administration did not adhere to the international laws of managing and administrating occupied countries. Instead, it submitted to the directions of the Zionist envoy that had visited Palestine under Chaim Weizmann leadership on 1/7/1920⁽²⁾.

The military rule period of Palestine had three main characteristics:

- 1- Absolute rule: The country adhered to the martial law for over 33 months.
- 2- Jews' rule over the military administration: Hebrew became the official language.
- 3- Ottoman laws stayed in effect: The ones which had served the ambitions and objectives of the British occupation⁽³⁾.

The cornerstones of the British policy in Palestine were Balfour Declaration, and the Mandate. The British departments had started implementing its constituents before receiving the approval of the League of Nations on 24/7/1922⁽⁴⁾.

The leadership of Zionism in fact helped formulate these two documents. Balfour Declaration, the use of 'National Home' in particular, can almost be alluded from the decisions of the First Zionist Congress which was held in Basel in Switzerland in August 1897. The Congress identified the main objective of Zionism: Establishing a national home for Jews in Palestine. To the Jews, it meant establishing a Jewish state as declared by Max Nordau, Vice President of the Zionist Congress, at the time⁽⁵⁾.

London Conference (from 12-21/2/1920) gave the first international approval to grant Britain the Mandate of Palestine. On 18/2/1920, General Pulls announced

⁽¹⁾ Kafafi, Zeidan, et al., **Al-Quds across History**, (2008), p. 294.

⁽²⁾ Al-Sheikh, Raafat, **Early Modern and Modern History of Arabs**, (Cairo, Ein for Human and Social Studies, 1st ed., 2005), p. 342.

⁽³⁾ Ibid: Khila, **Palestine and the British Mandate 1922-1939**, pp. 83-85.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid: Kafafi, **Al-Quds across History**, p. 295.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid: Kafafi, p. 295.

receiving approval from the allies, mainly France and America, on granting the Jews some rights in Palestine. They also agreed on Balfour Declaration to make Palestine a national home of the Jews as long as the religious, civil and political interests of the natives remain unaffected⁽¹⁾.

The reality was completely different from the written Mandate. Britain occupied Palestine in 1918 and was given the right to impose its mandate in 1920. It was not fair nor did it prepare the Palestinian people for independence as it had claimed since it was an actual occupation.

On 20/2/1920, the country's chiefs and prominent figures called for a meeting in Al-Quds where the Allies' decision on granting Britain the mandate of Palestine and including the Balfour Declaration in it were recited. A week later, a huge demonstration led by Musa Kazim Al-Husayni was launched in Al-Quds and headed to all foreign consulates. The demonstrators delivered statements rejecting granting Palestine to the Jews, marking the first grand political demonstration in Palestine after the British occupation⁽²⁾.

On July 1st, 1920, the military administration of Palestine was turned into a civil one, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became its observer until the Secretary of State for the Colonies became so⁽³⁾.

Based on the Mandate decision issued on April 20, 1920 at San Remo Conference, the British Government assigned Herbert Samuel the High Commissioner of Palestine⁽⁴⁾, and assigned him the implementation of Balfour Declaration to turn Palestine into the national home of Jews⁽⁵⁾.

The ruling method was not different from Britain's method in controlling occupied countries, yet the key difference was that Palestine's occupation was more

⁽¹⁾ Ibid: Khila, **Palestine and the British Mandate 1922-1939**, pp. 119-120.

⁽²⁾ Shurrab, Mohammed, **Al-Quds Founded by Arabs and Developed by Muslims**, (Amman, Al-Ahlia for Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2006), p. 249.

⁽³⁾ Ibid: Al-Aref, **Detailed History of Jerusalem**, p. 390.

⁽⁴⁾ Palestine Papers: 1917-1922, comp. and Annotated by Doreen Ingrams (London: John Murray, 1972), pp. 187-188.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibid: Al-Barghouti and Totah, **History of Palestine**, p. 261.

severe as it was intended to guarantee and pave the path for the establishment of a 'national home' for the Jews⁽¹⁾.

On July 24, 1922, the UN approved the Mandate which stipulated the importance of exerting all efforts to realize Balfour Declaration and facilitate the Jews' immigration to Palestine. The Mandate also approved the involvement of Zionist organizations in finding suitable solutions for the occupation of Palestine⁽²⁾.

It is clear, then, that the UN is more biased to the Zionist movement as this was not the crime of Britain alone. Other big countries and international commissions, that should take the side of right and spread world security and peace, also played a part in the occupation.

On the same year, Britain issued the constitution of Palestine in which it identified the tasks and duties of the High Commissioner which included supervising the public lands, assigning employees, releasing employees and declaring general amnesty⁽³⁾.

Topic Two: British Policy on Palestine

Britain played a serious role in enabling the Jews to occupy Palestine. It developed policies to ensure the Jews' demographic superiority; it facilitated Zionist immigration and Judaization of institutions through changing their systems and replacing Arab employees with Jews.

Judaization of Institutions

The British rule in Palestine was more of a colonial one. The High Commissioner was the legislator and at the top of the British employment hierarchy. He had direct communications with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who is

⁽¹⁾ Jarrar, Husni, **Palestinian People Before British Conspiracy and Zionist Wickedness (1920 – 1939)**, (Amman, Dar Al-Furqan, n.d.), p.20.

⁽²⁾ Eid, Atef, **Story and History of Arab Civilizations – Palestine**, (Beirut, 1999), p.145.

⁽³⁾ Ibid: Khila, **Palestine and the British Mandate 1922-1939**, pp. 285-286.

responsible for the colonies' policy before the British Parliament, the British government and the Queen; and has the authority to enforce laws in Palestine⁽¹⁾.

Britain formed an executive council to help the High Commissioner run the country affairs. The council consisted of the Secretary General, Wyndham Deedes at the time, a financial and economic secretary and a secretary of justice and law, who assumed the position of the prosecutor enabling him to draft laws and enact legislations. This position is considered one of the most important positions in the British Civil Administration of Palestine. It was assumed by Norman Bentwich from 1920-1930.⁽²⁾

An Advisory Board was also formed encompassing several high-profile figures and a minority of Arabs, who had 7 seats out of 21. Samuel hired dozens of prominent Jews and Zionists in the British Administration and assigned them key positions: Secretary General, Directors of Immigration and Travel, Trade, Prosecution, Deputy of Al-Quds Governor, and Deputy of the High Commissioner⁽³⁾.

As a result, several Zionists were in control in the Central Administration in Al-Quds. These were Samuel, Wyndham Deedes, Norman Bentwich and *Richard Meinertzhagen*; some of them worked as Zionists serving the best interest of Zionism.

Article 4 of the Mandate stipulated the establishment of a Jewish agency that functions as an advisory board that cooperates with it in the addressing of economic and social issues relevant to the establishment of a 'national home for the Jews' and that serve the best interests of the Jews in Palestine⁽⁴⁾.

Hebrew, along with English and Arabic, became the official language. The Jews became more independent as they had their own administration and schools which were

⁽¹⁾ Ibid: Kafafi, **Al-Quds across History**, p. 297.

⁽²⁾ Natshah, Rafiq, **Early Modern and Modern History of Palestine**, (Beirut, Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1st ed., 1999), p. 27.

⁽³⁾ Ibid: Kafafi, et al., **Al-Quds across History**, p. 297.

⁽⁴⁾ El-Messiri, Abdel Wahab, **Encyclopedia of Jews, Judaism and Zionism**, (Cairo, Dar Al-Shorok, 1st ed., 1999), vol. 6, pp. 332-333.

supervised by the Executive Committee of the Zionist organization. As for the Arab schools, they were under the supervision and administration of the English⁽¹⁾.

Several Jewish and Zionist institutes were established in Al-Quds. The headquarters of the Executive Committee of Zionism, the Executive Committee of the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund, the Chief Rabbinate of the eastern and western Jews and Hebrew University. The Russian Compound in the city center was transformed into a police station, central prison, public hospital and courts⁽²⁾.

Britain assigned the country's key institutions to Zionism, and paved the path, after the establishment of the Jewish Agency and other Zionist institutions, for the establishment of the Israeli occupation.

Zionist Immigration

In 1908, Zionism opened Palestine office to supervise the agricultural settlements and offer services to the settlers and new comers, and help in purchasing lands. In 1914, there were 59 settlements with a population of 12,000 settlers while 70,000 others were living in the cities, mainly Al-Quds⁽³⁾.

After the Nazis' rule in Germany, the number of Jewish immigrants who headed to Palestine increased 37 times (i.e. from 1806 immigrants in 1919 to 66,422 immigrants in 1935). The population of Palestine in 1947 reached 1,548,255 (1,076,783 Arab Muslims, 145,63 Christians, 68,481 Jews and 15,481 others. The number of Jews increased from 55,000,000 in 1918 to 68,481 in 1947⁽⁴⁾.

The Palestinian Al-Haya newspaper cited Herbert Samuel's words on the number of Jews who came to Palestine in its issue on 9/3/1931. It reported that in ten years from 1921-1931, 100,000 Jews came to Palestine and settled there⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Ibid: Kafafi, **Al-Quds across History**, p. 299.

⁽²⁾ Ibid: pp. 299-300.

⁽³⁾ Ibid, Mahmoud, **Jewish Settlement Projects**, p. 187.

⁽⁴⁾ Ibid: Kafafi, **Al-Quds across History**, p. 302.

⁽⁵⁾ Newspapers website, **Archive of Arab Newspapers from Ottoman and Mandate Palestine**, the National Library of Israel.

The policy of opening doors to the Jewish immigrants increased the number of Jews after having been a minority in Palestine. They were given lands and employed while the Arabs were deprived from their rights in their land.

Zionist Gangs

One of Britain's dangerous policies in the establishment of a 'national home' was approving the formation of Zionist military organizations in Palestine. These included the Haganah, which was the military wing of the Jewish Agency and was founded in 1920; Palmach, which was led by Ben Gurion and carried out terrorist acts against the Arabs who opposed the settlement project; Irgun, which split from the Haganah, was founded in 1936 and was headed by Menachem Begin; and Lehi, which was founded in 1933 and led by Yitzhak Shamir⁽¹⁾.

The Jews were armed and trained while the Arabs were banned from doing so⁽²⁾. The Jews used to buy bullets from British soldiers. A Jewish gang bought 3,000 bullets from the soldiers of the British air forces in Ramla⁽³⁾. They used to smuggle weapons too. In Haifa and Yafa customs, big boxes of rifles were smuggled by a huge Jewish gang that is based in England with branches in Europe⁽⁴⁾. They used to carry out the smuggling in barrels of cement, beehive boxes and oil boxes⁽⁵⁾. As for the Arabs, those who were caught with weapons or bullets were either arrested or fined⁽⁶⁾.

Although the Arabs wanted to resist, the confiscation of their weapons and arrest of their fighters led to the predominance of the Zionist gangs.

Settlement Expansion

The British occupation government and the Jewish Agency were collaborating on the Zionist settlement project in Palestine⁽⁷⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Al-Fernanwi, Taha, **Secrets of Extreme Zionism**, (Cairo, General Egyptian Book Organization, 2008), p. 27.

⁽²⁾ Al-Aref, Aref, **History of Jerusalem**, (Cairo, Dar Al-Maarif, 2nd ed., n.d.) pp. 143-144.

⁽³⁾ Al-Fath, vol. 16 (381), (1933), p. 19.

⁽⁴⁾ Al-Fath, vol. 19 (420), (1934), p. 19.

⁽⁵⁾ Al-Khaldi, Waleed et al., **the Palestinian Cause and the Arab-Zionist Conflict**, p. 457.

⁽⁶⁾ Al-Fath, vol. 7 (167), (1929), p.3.

⁽⁷⁾ Taim, Saeed, **the Israeli Political System**, (Beirut, Dar Al-Jil, 1989), p. 31.

General Allenby took the initiative and helped the Jews take control over Palestine, especially Al-Quds. Before withdrawing the Turkish-German forces, he called on the engineers and asked them to design the initial map of the city, the measurements and restrictions on its construction and development. The initial map was designed in 1918 and became the base for the following maps. According to this design, Al-Quds was divided into four areas: the Old Town and its wall, the areas surrounding the Old Town, the eastern part of Al-Quds (for Arabs), and the western side of Al-Quds (for the Jews). The design prohibited the conduct of construction works in the surrounding areas of the Old Town and imposed restrictions on construction works in the eastern side of Al-Quds⁽¹⁾.

The design considered the western side of Al-Quds as a developmental area where construction is unlimited. As a result, the Jews expanded and surrounding Al-Quds preventing any possible Arab expansion there. They tried to take control over the municipality as a bigger step to seize the entire city and turn it into the capital of the Jewish state⁽²⁾.

Such policy is still being executed by the occupation forces in Al-Quds. The Arab neighborhoods are prevented from constructing anything but the Jewish ones are allowed to; all to change the demography of the city.

Britain cancelled all the laws and regulations enforced by the Ottomans on lands ownership. These laws prevented the Jews from owning any lands in Palestine. Britain amended these laws to enable the Zionist Jews to seize most of the Palestinian lands. In 1920, the British occupation's government enacted multiple laws that enabled the Jews to own assets, and opened deeds registry offices in Palestine. In 1921, Hebert Samuel and Norman Bentwich amended the laws of 1920 to offer the Jews bigger chances in owning lands in Palestine⁽³⁾.

The greatest settlement expansion took place in 1920 when Britain helped the Zionist settlement institutions to expand and confiscated Palestinian lands. It allowed

⁽¹⁾ Ibid: Kafafi, **Al-Quds across History**, pp. 301-302.

⁽²⁾ Ibid: p.302.

⁽³⁾ Hussein, Mohammed, **Arabs and Jews: in the Past, Present and Future**, p.169.

the Jews to seize one million and a half donums of the best and most agricultural lands. The Jews' ownership of lands rose to 5.6% until the end of the British occupation in 1948⁽¹⁾.

In 1945, Al-Quds had an area of 4,333,534 donums, from which the Zionists owned 39,679 donums (i.e. about 0.9%). 348,880 people lived there; 284,600 of them were Arabs (73.9%) and 100,280 were Zionists (26.1%)⁽²⁾.

The English government forced the Arab farmer in Palestine to pay high taxes to push them into abandoning their lands. Its plan worked as the farmers could no longer pay back the debts. The government also closed the Ottoman bank and established other banks that dealt with interests. This worsened the situation because the farmers sold their lands, and the Jews bought them at very low prices⁽³⁾.

These policies confirm that the Palestinian people did not sell their lands willingly. They were forced to as a result of debts, high taxes, confiscation of lands, land renting and others.

The British government sent John Hope Simpson to Palestine. Simpson wrote a report revealing facts about the situation in Palestine and the threats the Arabs were facing. While the Arabs were pleased with the report, the Jews were quite the opposite. One of the truths the reported cited was the fact that one third of the Arab farmers no longer owned any lands at all⁽⁴⁾.

The British authorities in Palestine made sure to pass lands to the Jews by all means available, renting lands was one of these methods. The total donums the government rented to the Jews until 1937 reached 175,545 donums, along with 29,290

⁽¹⁾ Hussein, Adnan, **Expansion as Part of Israeli Strategy**, (Beirut, Nafaes Publishing and Distribution, 1989), pp. 31-32.

⁽²⁾ Ibid: Kafafi, **Al-Quds across History**, p.299.

⁽³⁾ Ibid: Hussein, **Arabs and Jews: in the Past, Present and Future**, p. 171.

⁽⁴⁾ Al-Rimawi, Ahmed, **the Historical Journey of Palestinian National Struggle in the 20th Century**, (Mecca, General Union of Palestinian Writers, 2005), p. 147.

donums the Jews had seized. Until 1937, then, the total area of lands the Jews had seized reached 204,835; and until 1939 it reached 467,017 donums⁽¹⁾.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study reached the following conclusions:

- Britain perceived the Jews as a good partner which would serve its own political and economic interests. It offered them the necessary trade facilitations in Britain and encouraged them to immigrate to Palestine.
- It enacted the military rule over Palestine since its occupation in 1917 until 1920, when it enacted the civil rule.
- Britain's policy was based on establishing a 'national home' for the Jews. It assigned several Zionist-British figures to assume important positions (such as the position of the High Commissioner), and excluded the Arab employees.
- Britain followed Judaizational policies such as making Hebrew the official language, allowed the Jews to immigrate, helped the Zionist gangs and facilitated the Jews' seizure of lands.

Recommendations

It is important to:

- Understand the policies of the occupation; whether it is Britain that helped in the establishment of the Israeli occupation, or American that continues to support it militarily and politically.
- Expose Britain's lies about helping developing countries and its policies on Palestine.
- Although Britain received a UN resolution to impose its mandate on Palestine, it had occupied Palestine long before the resolution was out. Therefore, this period of time must not be placed under the same category.

⁽¹⁾ Al-Yadiri, Hind, **the Lands of Palestine: between Zionist Allegations and Historical Facts**, (the Arab League, 2002), p. 195.

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