



**BALFOUR CENTENARY**

# **BRITAIN'S BROKEN PROMISE TIME FOR A NEW APPROACH**

**CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER  
TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2017  
6.30-8.30PM**

**SOUVENIR PROGRAMME**





Vincent Fean



Tom Brake



Nicholas Frayling



Philippa Whitford



Chai for All



Martyn Atkins



Danny Rich



Layla Moran



Helena Kennedy



Richard Burden



Declan Lang



Christopher Chessun

# PROGRAMME

Moderator: Very Revd Nicholas Frayling, Dean Emeritus of Chichester

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## Welcome

Rev Dr Martyn Atkins, Team Leader and Superintendent, Methodist Central Hall

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## Why the Balfour Project?

Dr Monica Spooner, Chair of Trustees, Balfour Project

Documentary: 'Britain in Palestine 1917-1948'

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## Britain's responsibility

Dr Peter Shambrook, historian specialising in the Middle East

Rt Hon Tom Brake, MP for Carshalton and Wallington

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## The current situation

Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Principal, Mansfield College, Oxford University

Layla Moran, MP for West Oxford

Dr Philippa Whitford, MP for Central Ayrshire

Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Anglican Bishop of Southwark

Rt Revd Declan Lang, Roman Catholic Bishop of Clifton

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## The future

Richard Burden, MP for Birmingham Northfield, Chair of the Palestine All-Party Parliamentary Group

Rabbi Danny Rich, Senior Rabbi, Liberal Judaism

Dr Imad Karam, award-winning film-maker, Britain and Palestine

Sir Vincent Fean, former UK Consul-General, Jerusalem

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## Act of Acknowledgement and Commitment

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## Music by Chai for All, and Tibah Saad accompanied by Basel Saleh

Chai For All will play items from their show 'Longing Belonging and Balfour' – a musical re-telling of the Balfour Declaration story, which melds klezmer, Arabic and other idioms. Tibah Saad is Palestinian and the cellist of the Galilee Quartet. She will be accompanied on the oud by Prof Basel Saleh from Syria.



# WHAT IS THE BALFOUR PROJECT?

The Balfour Project was born when Monica Spooner, a retired doctor in Edinburgh, visited Israel and Palestine in 2008 with her husband.



MONICA SPOONER

'I saw the achievement of a Jewish homeland, but discerned great anxiety and fear,' she recalls. 'I saw the pain of the Palestinians, and discovered their anger towards Britain. They felt betrayed by the 1917 Balfour Declaration, in which the British Government promised support for a homeland for Jews in Palestine so long as this did not prejudice the rights of the existing inhabitants, 90% of whom were Arab at that time. Now that homeland is a reality. But the Palestinians have no freedom.

'Studying this history, I realised that we British acted with duplicity, making several contradictory promises, and finally washed our hands of Palestine, leaving the Jews and the Palestinians to an undeclared war for domination. We in Britain are not taught these shameful episodes.

'I concluded that the Centenary of the Balfour Declaration needed to shine a light on our responsibility for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Honest acknowledgement is a moral obligation without which Britain can never be trusted in the region.

'I met others who felt similarly, and together we launched the Balfour Project. We have been joined by academics, politicians, clergy and citizens from all parts of the UK. Our first aim is to inform the British about this history, and we have held seven conferences in British cities and universities. Our website carries a wealth of information and is accessed from all over the world. We made a documentary, 'Britain in Palestine 1917 – 1948', and screened it in Parliament.

'Our second aim is to acknowledge this history – and that we do today.

'We are discovering a vast network of people throughout the country who are equally committed to peace and justice for both Palestine and Israel.'

## SOME BALFOUR PROJECT EVENTS



EXTRACT FROM AMY HAILWOOD'S  
PLAY 'FARAWAY, SO CLOSE'



'BRITAIN IN PALESTINE 1917-1948'  
IN PARLIAMENT, LONDON



## ACT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND COMMITMENT

One hundred years ago the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, promised British Government support for the 'establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people'.

The declaration contained a significant caveat: '...it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities...'

Soon after, Britain secured the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, thereby accepting a 'sacred trust' to bring its peoples to independence.

Under British rule, successive governments largely honoured the promise to the Jewish people, but reneged on the promise to the Arab majority.

This and other broken promises exacerbated division and sparked recurrent conflict.

In 1948 Britain gave up the struggle to contain the conflict, and walked away.

Today the Jews, who have been persecuted grievously in Europe over the centuries, have a sanctuary and an internationally-recognised state.

But the Palestinians are dispossessed, oppressed in their own land, refugees in neighbouring countries or scattered throughout the world.

We, as British citizens, acknowledge that Britain bears much responsibility. We failed to treat all sides fairly.

We profoundly regret the immense suffering this has caused across the Middle East.

We humbly commit ourselves to

- continue informing the people of Britain about our historical responsibilities in the Middle East
- support Palestinians and Israelis in building a peaceful future based on equal rights, justice and security for all
- work for the recognition by the British Government of Palestine as a state.

We welcome everyone who will join us in this mission.

The Balfour Project



# BALFOUR CENTENARY DECLARATION

## ISRAEL/PALESTINE EQUAL RIGHTS

### **Calling for action by the British Government and by civil society**

The centenary of the Balfour Declaration is the time to reconcile peace with justice for both Israelis and Palestinians, consistent with the principle Britain claims as her own: equal rights for all under the law.

Through the Declaration of 2 November 1917 the British Government decided to facilitate 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people', on the explicit understanding that 'nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine'.

In 1917, and until Britain gave up her Mandate for Palestine in 1948, the Palestinian people were in the majority, as they had been for centuries. The Mandate conferred on Britain a 'sacred trust of civilisation' to help the people of Palestine towards self-determination and nationhood. In 1948 the Government handed the problem to the United Nations, and withdrew – but the legacy of that period is still with us. There was joy and sanctuary in Israel for the Jewish people surviving the horrific Holocaust – but pain and despair for the Palestinians: many expelled in 1948, and more occupied in 1967.

### **Inequality does not bring security; equal rights for both peoples**

Israel, created in 1948 as the permanent national home of the Jewish people, is recognised as a state by Britain, the EU, the US and – crucially – the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Israel's prosperity and military strength have grown. But Israel's 50-year military occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem prevents the Palestinian people from exercising their own equal and inalienable right to self-determination, a right endorsed by the UN, the EU and our Government.

This occupation dehumanises both the occupier and the occupied. One people is repressing their neighbouring people, by closing Gaza militarily and transferring 600,000 Israeli settlers illegally into occupied Palestinian territory. Change is urgently needed, delivering equal rights for both peoples.

We condemn violence from any quarter. But conducting and resisting occupation inevitably mean chronic and sustained violence, stemming from the repression of a people. Inequality does not bring lasting security and prosperity.

### **Recognise the State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel**

In the best interests of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, and in our own national interest, we urge our Government to

- recognise immediately the State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel on the basis of the pre-June 1967 borders, as two thirds of UN members have done;
- uphold rigorously the Geneva Conventions which Britain co-wrote and ratified after World War II;
- give practical effect to the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Roadmap which Britain has endorsed;
- require genuine freedom of worship without hindrance for all believers – Jewish, Muslim and Christian – at their holy sites in Jerusalem;



- encourage West Bank/Gaza reunification on the basis of PLO agreements;
- work with like-minded partners, including France, Germany, Sweden, Belgium and Ireland, to respect and safeguard the rights of both Palestinians and Israelis, with due and proportionate consequences for breaches of those rights, alongside incentives for those seeking to uphold them.

### **End the occupation; peace with justice for the good of all**

Ending the 1967 occupation through negotiation will realise the acknowledged right of the Palestinian people to self-determination; a right gained by Israel 70 years ago. The political and economic cost/benefit calculations of those who oppose this outcome must be challenged. Establishing the Palestinian state, with sustainable international security guarantees both for it and for Israel, will help to stabilise the Middle East region and enhance our own security. The opposite is also true. This inequality supplies oxygen to the propagandists of Islamic State, and contributes to radicalisation both abroad and at home.

We commit ourselves to work for a secure future of equal rights and peaceful coexistence between the citizens of Israel and Palestine in two states along pre-June 1967 lines. We support the majorities on both sides of that border who see this outcome as just.

Britain should uphold her core values by taking the lead to address this bitter, harmful conflict. The Government of the day took a decision in 1917. We now need to acknowledge what is right, and exert political influence to achieve it – for our own good, and the good of the two peoples who will share the Holy Land forever.

*Rt Hon Jack Straw*  
*Rt Hon Tom Brake MP*  
*Richard Burden MP*  
*Ruth Cadbury MP*  
*Rt Hon Dominic Grieve MP*  
*Rt Hon Sir Nicholas Soames MP*  
*Rt Hon Sir Hugo Swire MP*  
*Dr Philippa Whitford MP*

*Lord Alderdice*  
*Baroness Blackstone*  
*Rt Hon Lord Cope of Berkeley*  
*Rt Revd Christopher Chessun*  
*Lord Green of Deddington*  
*Lord Griffiths of Burry Port*  
*Lord Hollick*  
*Lord Hylton*  
*Rt Hon Marquess of Lothian*  
*Baroness Morris of Bolton*  
*Rt Hon Lord Steel of Aikwood*  
*Rt Hon Lord Warner*  
*Lord Wright of Richmond*

*Lady Ellen Dahrendorf*  
*Sir Richard Dalton – Ambassador to Iran and Consul-General, Jerusalem (ret'd)*  
*Sir Terence English – Surgeon and former Master, St Catherine's College, Cambridge*  
*Sir Vincent Fean – Consul-General, Jerusalem and Ambassador to Libya (ret'd)*  
*Dr Imad Karam – Executive Director, Initiatives of Change International*  
*Robin Kealy – Ambassador to Tunisia and Consul-General, Jerusalem (ret'd)*  
*Stuart Laing – Master, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*  
*Peter Osborne – author and journalist*  
*Sir William Patey – Ambassador to Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia (ret'd)*  
*Prof Avi Shlaim – Emeritus Professor of International Relations, University of Oxford*

# BUILDING MOMENTUM TOWARDS A JUST PEACE

The Centenary is being marked widely across Britain. Take a look at the many talks and events listed on the Balfour Project website, [www.balfourproject.org/forthcoming talks/](http://www.balfourproject.org/forthcoming%20talks/)

## BOOKS AND MEDIA

A range of books have been published to commemorate the centenary. The Balfour Project's bibliography features many new books, and old ones such as the re-publication of JMN Jeffries' *Palestine: The Reality*. See [www.balfourproject.org/bibliography](http://www.balfourproject.org/bibliography).

Many newspaper articles can be found at [www.balfourproject.org/marking-the-centenary/](http://www.balfourproject.org/marking-the-centenary/) *The Guardian* newspaper has carried significant articles, particularly the Long Read of 17 October by Ian Black, headed 'A calamitous promise', which describes the impact of the Balfour Declaration through the past century.

## NEW DOCUMENTARIES

'100 Years After Balfour', made by Independent Jewish Voices, offers a range of Jewish perspectives on the Balfour legacy. 'It is available on YouTube.

The Amos Trust ([www.amostrust.org](http://www.amostrust.org)) has a 3-minute video, 'Changing the record', calling for full equal rights for everyone who calls the Holy Land home.



'From Balfour to Banksy: divisions and visions in Palestine' is produced by Miranda Pinch. 'Israel is a young nation with many years ahead of it,' she writes. 'But we cannot ignore the continuing dispossession, the deaths, the lack of opportunity for the Arab young. Change comes through being able to see other viewpoints.' [www.balfourtobanksy.co.uk](http://www.balfourtobanksy.co.uk).

## A JUDICIAL CHALLENGE

Earlier this month 700 judges and senior judicial figures attended the Judges' Service at Westminster Abbey. In his sermon Bishop Michael Doe drew attention to the Balfour Declaration. 'We British, who made the Declaration, have an unfinished responsibility to ensure its implementation,' he said. 'We rightly defend the sovereignty and security of Israel. But we reneged on that promise to the Palestinians. So today, the administration of the law in the military occupied territories is selective and discriminatory, and the growth of illegal settlements continues without challenge. There are moral and legal obligations which we should not shun.'





# CITIZEN PEACEMAKING

Can this Centenary inspire fresh approaches, which help justice and peace to grow in Israel and Palestine?

Other seemingly intractable conflicts have been resolved. Northern Ireland has found peace after decades of war. Can that happen in the Middle East?

Political leaders must play the central role. Peace in Northern Ireland resulted from a greater readiness among British leaders to listen to their enemies. But it was ordinary citizens who brought both sides together. Creative citizen action is vital to peace.

## Groundswell of concern

The Balfour Project aims to inform British people about our responsibility for conflict in the Middle East. We welcome help in taking this information to schools, universities, and communities of every kind. The documentary 'Britain in Palestine 1917-1948' is available, as is a vast amount of information on the Balfour Project website. We believe a groundswell of concern can grow across Britain out of which new initiatives will emerge.

Already British people are working to ameliorate the tragic conditions in which many Palestinians live. They are standing alongside Palestinians in difficult situations, and helping increase the capacity of commerce, education, medical services, both in Palestine and in the refugee camps. More can join them and become directly involved.

And even if we can't join them, we can support the organisations with which they work. We can write to the newspapers, talk with our politicians. And above all, work to resolve the conflicts in our own situations. Israelis and Palestinians are no different to us. We all need to learn how to get on with our neighbours, and the more we discover, the better equipped we are to be peacemakers.



British volunteers work with human rights organisations meeting and supporting Palestinian and Israeli peace activists. Here a volunteer visits a Palestinian community in the northern West Bank who are struggling to regain access to their farmland.

(Photo: EAPPI/Paal.A.Berg)



**Philippa Whitford**, a British Member of Parliament and a cancer specialist, helps train doctors in Palestine during Parliamentary recess. Here she is carrying out an operation in Gaza.

(Photo: The Guardian)

## MESSAGES TO THE BALFOUR CENTENARY COMMEMORATION, CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER

**Revd Loraine Mellor**  
President of the  
Methodist  
Conference

**Mrs E Jill Baker**  
Vice-President of  
the Methodist  
Conference

The Methodist Conference, meeting in June 2017, acknowledged both the long association of the Jewish people with the region of the Holy Land and the desire of Palestinian people for self-determination. Drawing the attention of Methodists to the online resources provided by the Balfour Project, the Conference also supported a reassessment of the values that guided our foreign policy in the past and called for the Centenary of the Balfour Declaration to be marked as a significant historical event but not as a time of celebration. In this context, we welcome this event, as a serious and reflective attempt to appraise the outcome of political decisions taken a century ago. We hope that all those attending the event will reflect sincerely on the past, present and future of Israel-Palestine and we invite you to join us in praying for a lasting peace based on trust, security and freedom from fear for all people in the area.

**Very Rev Andrew R C McLellan CBE**  
former Moderator  
of the General  
Assembly of the  
Church of  
Scotland

We cannot make realistic judgments about the wisdom or morality of a Cabinet Minister a century ago. But we certainly can make judgments about the consequences today of the Balfour Declaration. We must not ignore the cost of the Balfour Declaration to the Palestinian people. Millions have been consigned to lives of misery as a consequence of the promises contained in the Declaration: promises which no one attempted to fulfil and which could not be fulfilled. Any commemoration of the Declaration which does not recognise the cost to the Palestinian people is a hollow commemoration.

**Professor Avi Shlaim**  
Emeritus  
Professor of  
International  
Relations, Oxford  
University

The Balfour Declaration was only 67 words yet it had the most far-reaching consequences for Jews, Arabs and the entire Middle East. By supporting a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine when they constituted barely 10% of the population, the British government paved the way to the gradual Zionist takeover of the country. This document and Britain's policy during the Palestine Mandate made conflict between the Arab population and the Zionists inevitable. Today, 100 years on, we are still grappling with the consequences of the Balfour Declaration. The Balfour Project is an admirable attempt to educate the British public about Britain's historic responsibility for the ongoing conflict in Israel-Palestine and the conference held on 31 October is an important contribution by a group of leading experts to raise awareness of this critical issue.

**Dr Hanan Ashrawi**  
Palestine  
National Council

A century on, it is time to end the colonial legacy in Palestine unleashed by the Balfour Declaration. The UK must recognise its culpability, apologise for this historic injustice and make it right to every Palestinian generation that has suffered from that calamitous decision.



## MESSAGES TO THE BALFOUR CENTENARY COMMEMORATION, CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER

**Lord David Owen**  
former British  
Foreign Secretary

Successive British governments have helped to fulfil part, but not by any measure all, that Britain pledged in that Declaration.

I was the first Foreign Secretary to visit Israel in 1978. It was in the wake of Sadat's visit to Israel and Begin's visit to the UK. Both in their ways acts of deep reconciliation. Camp David with Carter, Sadat and Begin was a moment of hope. Now after three two-term US Presidents - Clinton, Bush and Obama - covering 24 years and following only one negotiating agenda, we are left with a worsening situation.

It behoves us all to think afresh. To challenge previous prejudices and to be cautious about assuming there are no alternatives.

**Duke of Montrose**

speaking at a  
Balfour Project  
event in the UK  
Parliament, April  
2017

This event has opened a window onto the way our history has affected the world and the attitudes that have characterised it. The incredible pride and imperial self-confidence which allowed us to bring certain events in history to reality. We hear a lot about the high-handed way we dealt with Africa, but I have never heard as much about where we ran roughshod over those with local authority in India. This emphasises our need for new perspective on what we created in the Middle East where, at that time, our own self-interest was a major driving force. Is there any forum in the UK where these matters are being discussed as we have discussed here this evening?

**Dr Usameh Jamali**  
Economist dealing  
with energy  
resources

By espousing a political agenda based on an exclusionist religious myth, the Balfour Declaration ensured the fragmentation of the Middle East. The radicalisation it engendered stymied the development of democratic political institutions. This ensured that no countervailing power would hinder the domination by colonial powers of the bridge connecting Europe to Asia and the 70% plus of the world's proven oil reserves.

It was of no consequence that this caused the uprooting of indigenous populations – the Palestinians and the Arab Jewish communities – nor that it came at the expense of the integrity of international law and institutions such as the United Nations.

The Declaration was a geopolitical success for the colonial powers. But the world will continue to suffer as long as its results are not recognised and atoned for. In bringing to light the Declaration's impact, the Balfour Project is a step in the right direction. Dare one hope for an apology?

## MESSAGES TO THE BALFOUR CENTENARY COMMEMORATION, CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER

**Dr Alon Liel**  
former Director of  
Israel's Ministry for  
Foreign Affairs

The Balfour Declaration was announced before my parents were born. It probably had a lot to do with their escaping to Palestine (from Germany) 30-40 years later. They built their home in Israel, a country that for decades fought for its survival. When I grew up in Israel, nothing was guaranteed.

Today, 100 years after the Balfour declaration and 70 years after Israel's creation, nothing on the ground looks similar. Israel's existence is guaranteed; it is strong militarily and has a vibrant and sophisticated economy. During the last decade, Israel has positioned itself as a regional power while some of its neighbours downgraded and almost destroyed themselves.

Instead of using its accumulated power to become more generous, Israel is still obsessed with fears. Israel has become a cruel occupier, running the lives of over 4 million Palestinians, while ignoring their rights for territory and freedom.

This has to change. The Balfour idea was to share and not to control. If Israel will not share the territory, it will have to withdraw from the democratic family of nations, which would have Balfour turning in his grave.

You British friends, who see the danger ahead, can help us convince the Israeli government to adopt a new approach: honest, just and long-sighted. We need more international support for the creation of a viable Palestinian State living peacefully alongside the State of Israel.

**Raja Shehadeh**  
Palestinian writer,  
lawyer and a  
founder of Al-Haq  
human rights  
organisation

The Balfour Project has made a major contribution to bringing to the attention of the British people a past whose tragic consequences have yet to be fully acknowledged. Britain's promise of Palestine to one people at the expense of another brings with it a British responsibility to seek to address the injustice and suffering caused to the Palestinian people over the last century and to support their long denied right to self-determination.

**Dr Naim Ateek,**  
founder Sabeel  
Ecumenical  
Liberation  
Theology Centre,  
Jerusalem

I hope and pray that the British Government will have the courage and moral integrity to take a stand and to right the wrong that happened a hundred years ago when it denied the indigenous people of Palestine their right to self-determination. It is important now for the British Government to offer an apology to the Palestinian people, to recognise Palestine as a sovereign state, to pressure Israel to accept the international right of statehood for the Palestinians, and to do everything in its power to champion the cause of justice, peace, and liberation for the Palestinian people. IT IS TIME FOR PALESTINE.



## MESSAGES TO THE BALFOUR CENTENARY COMMEMORATION, CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER

**Revd Sam Wells**  
Vicar, St Martin in  
the Fields, London

Israelis and Palestinians are two peoples profoundly more sinned against than sinning. This event promises to be one of lament and grief but also of possibility and hope, as those of different perspectives make strides together to forge a future bigger than the past.

**Cedar Duaybis**  
Founding member,  
Sabeel Ecumenical  
Liberation  
Theology Centre,  
Jerusalem

The British Mandate over Palestine, a sacred trust granted by the League of Nations, incorporated the Balfour Declaration, thereby ensuring a breach of trust from the outset. The UK could start righting the wrong by acknowledging the injustice done to the Palestinian people; by recognising Palestine's right to self-determination; and by accepting the vote of the House of Commons 'to recognise the State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel'. The call of the Central Hall event will be beneficial for the UK, the Palestinians, the Israelis and the whole Middle East.

**Professor  
Rajmohan Gandhi**  
Biographer of his  
grandfather,  
Mahatma Gandhi

The Balfour Project is an inspiring, inclusive and courageous exercise to stir a nation's thinking. Citizens in other lands will draw confidence from it to confront their own history and help shape their future.

**Samia Khoury**  
Board of Trustees,  
Birzeit University,  
Palestine

I appreciate the effort of the Balfour Project to bring about awareness of the grave injustice that has befallen the Palestinian people as a result of the Balfour Declaration. I hope this event will initiate a moral apology by the United Kingdom, and the recognition of the right of return of the Palestinian refugees who were driven out of Palestine or had to flee out of fear as a result of the establishment of the State of Israel. This moral stand must be followed by the recognition of the State of Palestine and an end to Israeli military occupation. We hope that such a historic atonement will usher an era of peace in our region with a Palestinian State alongside the State of Israel.

**The Rt Revd  
Graham James**  
Bishop of Norwich

The Balfour Declaration remains unfinished business a century on, especially for the people of Great Britain. We can rejoice that 'a national home for the Jewish people' has been secured while regretting that the promise of the Declaration to 'the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine' rings rather hollow. Observing the Centenary of the Balfour Declaration should kindle fresh determination to honour its ambitions more comprehensively, bringing hope where there's been despair and imagining a better future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

## WHAT CONTRADICTIONARY PROMISES DID THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT MAKE?

### 1915 MCMAHON-HUSSEIN CORRESPONDENCE

In 1915 Britain promised the Arabs that, if they would join a wartime alliance against the Turks, the Arab lands would be granted independence. This offer was made in letters from Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt, to Sherif Hussein of Mecca. McMahon promised all the Arab lands except 'portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo [which] cannot be said to be purely Arab'. Today this excluded region is largely Lebanon. A British political intelligence report in 1919 stated, ***'With regard to Palestine, His Majesty's Government are committed by Sir H McMahon's letter to the Sherif on the 24th October, 1915, to its inclusion in the boundaries of Arab independence.'***

Since 1922, British governments have maintained that Palestine was excluded from the area promised to Sherif Hussein.

### 1916 SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT

The French, British and Russian Governments authorised François Georges-Picot, Mark Sykes and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov to draw up a secret agreement which divided between them the region which is now largely Syria and Iraq, and proposed that Palestine be controlled by an 'international administration'. This was a large section of the land which, in Sir Henry McMahon's letters to Sherif Hussein, had already been promised as independent Arab lands.

### 1917 BALFOUR DECLARATION

On 2 November the British Cabinet approved this statement: ***'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.'***

### 1918 ANGLO-FRENCH DECLARATION

Britain and France promised independence to the former subjects of the Ottoman Turks in Syria, Palestine and Iraq. The Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918 stated:

***'The goal envisaged by France and Great Britain .....[is] the setting up of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the free exercise of the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations.... Far from wishing to impose any particular institutions on the populations of those regions, their [ie France and Great Britain's] only concern is to offer such support and efficacious help as will ensure the smooth working of the governments and administrations which those populations will have elected of their own free will.'***

Copies were posted on the public notice boards in all towns and villages in the Arab territories then occupied by the Allied forces.

## 1922 BRITISH MANDATE

In July 1922 the British obtained the League of Nations' Mandate to govern Palestine. The Preamble to the Mandate stated:

***'The Principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.'***

However, the Mandate also operated under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations which defined the 'Sacred Trust of Civilisation' – the requirement to prepare the countries for independence. It stated:

***'Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone.'***

## 1939 WHITE PAPER

Palestinian Arab anger turned into armed conflict in 1936. This was put down by British military action during the next three years, leaving the Palestinians militarily defenceless. In 1939, with war clouds gathering, and the need to keep the Arab and Muslim world onside, the British Government issued a White Paper retreating from the Balfour Declaration. It called for the establishment of a Jewish national home in an independent Palestinian state within 10 years and limited Jewish immigration. Restrictions were put on the rights of Jews to buy land from Arabs. This was approved by the British Parliament.

It was rejected by Zionist groups in Palestine and by the representatives of Palestine Arab parties acting under the influence of Haj Amin al-Husseini. More moderate Arab opinion represented in the National Defence Party was prepared to accept it. But its main proposals were never implemented because of Churchill's opposition when he became Prime Minister.

## 1948 CIVIL WAR AND PROCLAMATION OF STATE OF ISRAEL

In February 1947 Britain, exhausted militarily and economically by World War II, feeling incapable of fulfilling its pledge to bring both peoples to independence, announced that it would end its Mandate and refer the Palestinian question to the United Nations. In November the UN approved a resolution for the partition of Palestine. In March 1948 civil war broke out. In May the British Mandate ended, the State of Israel was proclaimed, and British troops withdrew. There was thus no means of enforcing the partition. Israel gained military ascendancy, and 700,000 Arab Palestinians were forced to flee their country.







## BRITAIN'S BROKEN PROMISE

The 1917 Balfour Declaration was a first step towards the creation of a sanctuary for a persecuted people, the Jews.

It was also the start of a process which has rendered Palestinians stateless, living under occupation in their own land, in refugee camps, or scattered throughout the world.

### CONTRADICTIONARY PROMISES

The Declaration pledged Britain's support for a 'national home' in Palestine for the Jewish people on the understanding that the rights of 'existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine' would not be prejudiced. The failure to uphold this second clause, for which Britain bears much responsibility, has caused conflict between Palestinians and Israelis ever since.

This was just one of Britain's contradictory promises during the First World War. After the War we secured a mandate from the League of Nations which included a 'sacred trust' to prepare the people of Palestine for independence. But in the end Britain walked away.

## TIME FOR A NEW APPROACH

The ensuing suffering and destruction in Israel, Palestine and neighbouring countries have been allowed to continue far too long.

The British Government recognises the right of both Israelis and Palestinians to self-determination. Israelis have achieved this. Now is the time to help Palestinians achieve this, in cooperation with both peoples and the rest of the international community.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND COMMITMENT

It will mean committing ourselves to work for peace with justice on the basis of equal rights for both Israelis and Palestinians. It entails upholding international law, including the Geneva Conventions, without fear or favour. This is a huge, long-term challenge. Governments will only take it on if their citizens do so first. If Britain gives a lead, others will follow.

This Centenary event is an opportunity to acknowledge Britain's legacy, consider our individual and collective responses, and make ourselves heard.

**Balfour  
Project**

Contributing to justice,  
peace and reconciliation  
in the Middle East

**Patrons:** Rt Hon Tom Brake MP, Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Baroness Morris of Bolton, Dr Philippa Whitford MP, Rt Revd Graham James, Rt Revd Declan Lang  
Scottish Charitable, Organisation no. SC047090

