



BALFOUR CENTENARY

BRITAIN'S BROKEN PROMISE TIME FOR A NEW APPROACH

**CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER
TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2017**

Dr Monica Spooner

Chair of Trustees,
Balfour Project

Rt Hon Emily Thornberry MP

Shadow Foreign Secretary

Rt Hon Lord Owen

Foreign Secretary 1977-9

Crispin Blunt MP

Baroness Helena Kennedy QC

Principal,

Mansfield College, Oxford University

Rt Hon Tom Brake MP

Dr Philippa Whitford MP

Richard Burden MP

Layla Moran MP

Sir Vincent Fean

former UK Consul-General, Jerusalem

Rt Revd Declan Lang

Roman Catholic Bishop of Clifton

Rabbi Danny Rich

Senior Rabbi, Liberal Judaism

Rt Revd Christopher Chessun

Anglican Bishop of Southwark

Dr Imad Karam

Executive Director

Initiatives of Change International

Imam Ajmal Masroor, broadcaster

Dr Peter Shambrook, historian

John Bond

Moderator: **Very Revd Nicholas Frayling**,

Dean Emeritus of Chichester

Music by

Chai for All seven-piece band

EXTRACTS OF SPEECHES

ACT OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND COMMITMENT

BALFOUR CENTENARY DECLARATION

ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAST, COMMITTING TO THE FUTURE

Twelve hundred people filled Central Hall Westminster on 31 October 2017 to hear British leaders mark the Centenary of the Balfour Declaration.

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 event focused on Britain's failure to uphold this second clause. It called on the British Government and civil society to acknowledge this failure, and to take action in response.

It was moderated by the Very Revd Nicholas Frayling, Dean Emeritus of Chichester.



IF BRITAIN GIVES A LEAD....

Dr Monica Spooner, Chair of Trustees, Balfour Project

I rejoice to believe in three impossible things!

I dare to believe that Britain will acknowledge her failure to protect and bring to independence all the people in Mandate Palestine, and that we will now recognise equal rights for all the present inhabitants.

I dare to believe that the Palestinian people will unite in vision for their future role in the world.

I dare to believe that the people of Israel will convince their neighbours that trust and transparency are more powerful peace-making tools than military might.

Queen in Ireland

I have come to believe the impossible by watching myself change from being disabled by shyness and quite ignorant of British history, to a passion to see Britain use her moral responsibility to fulfil her 'sacred trust' to bring both peoples of Mandate Palestine to self determination.

I hold fast to the words of Her Majesty the Queen in Ireland in 2011, when she acknowledged that things had been done there 'which we wish had been done differently or not at all.'

Let us use this centenary to learn what was done in our name in Palestine after the first world war, acknowledge the massive suffering that followed, and start a new chapter – that of serving others rather than seeking our own interests.

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.



WE HAVE TO RECOGNISE PALESTINE

Rt Hon Emily Thornberry MP (Labour),
Shadow Foreign Secretary

Since becoming a Member of Parliament I have become a member of Labour Friends of Israel and Labour Friends of Palestine. To be a true friend to either side you need to recognise the legitimate concerns of both parties.

America is retreating from its global leadership role on this issue. Therefore it is time for Britain to accept our responsibility to be a force for good in the world.

The only way forward, it seems to me, is a viable and secure state of Israel alongside a viable and secure state of Palestine. Extremists on both sides of the debate who favour a one-state solution are blocking progress. If the Israeli Government continues to approve construction of settlements on the scale we are now seeing, the physical barriers to a two-state solution will be even more of a barrier to peace.

The humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, especially in Gaza, is making it even more important to make steps forward. The UN has said that Gaza will be uninhabitable by 2020.

Ever-expanding settlements

Are we really looking at a generation of young people in Israel and Palestine today that will know nothing but division and violence and hatred? Will young Israelis grow up into a world where air raids, car rammings and random stabbings are a fact of life? Or where military service is a necessity because they live in a country that is surrounded by hostile neighbours who deny their right to exist?

Will we see a generation of young Palestinians growing up into a world where youth unemployment remains at 58%, where they are reliant on humanitarian aid, where they have no hope? Will they inherit a map where the ever expanding settlements and the destruction of their own homes make it harder to envisage what a viable independent Palestine could even look like?

We have to recognise Palestine. In November 2011 another former Foreign Secretary, William Hague, said: 'We reserve the right to recognise a Palestinian state at a moment of our choosing and when it can best help bring about peace.' Well, how about now, on the hundredth anniversary of Balfour? If this Government is not ready to recognise Palestine, the next Labour Government will.



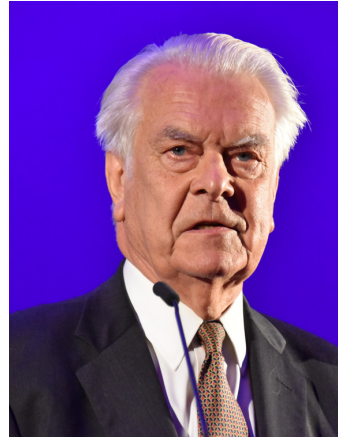
WE MUST ALLOW GAZA TO BREATHE

Rt Hon Lord Owen, Foreign Secretary 1977-9

I have no doubt that we did break our promise to the Palestinians in the Balfour Declaration. We can recover from that broken promise, but only if there is a fresh approach.

We have had three US presidents, whose pressure could be expected to have some effect, all pursuing a line on a map. That approach will not be sufficient. There has to be changes in attitudes.

In 1977 I was the first Foreign Secretary to visit Syria and after it we recognised the PLO. In '78 I was the first Foreign Secretary to visit Israel. Between those two events Sadat flew into Tel Aviv, Begin came to London and we had Camp David – three men of different religions who seemed for a moment might be able to bring peace.



Now in my view we need three steps:

We must allow Gaza to breathe. I was once chairman of a company trying to grow strawberries for export from Gaza and the constant interruption of flights from Ben Gurion Airport made that venture impossible. The situation has deteriorated dramatically since then.

Not right and wrong, right and right

But there is a hope. The uncrowned prince of Saudi Arabia has announced that an 'I-city', Neom, will be built by 2030, in close cooperation with Jordan and Egypt. Hamas and Gaza should be part of that opportunity. It could transform Gaza's economy.

Secondly, something has to be done about Golan. We cannot ignore what has been happening in Syria and Iraq and the involvement of Iran down towards Lebanon. There will have to be some built-in strategic insurance as this affects Golan.

The third element is recognition (of Palestine).

There is a very real risk of another war breaking out in southern Lebanon. And then it will set back the whole peace process.

Amos Oz, a founder of Peace Now said, 'It is not a matter of right or wrong so much as a matter of right and right.'

Broadly speaking the rights of the Jewish people have been accommodated. By no stretch of the imagination have the rights of the Palestinians been accommodated and certainly not fulfilled. We have a big, big task ahead of us. And there is a British role. But time is not on our side.

THE BEST ISRAELI COMMEMORATION



Crispin Blunt MP (Conservative), former Chair,
House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs

The world has changed dramatically since the Balfour Declaration. Britain is no longer the world's leading maritime and global power. Israel is recognised by 161 of the 192 UN member states. Nevertheless the Balfour Declaration is a part of British history; and for all its success in providing a national home and a sense of security for the global Jewish community, this came at a truly catastrophic cost to the Palestinians.

After the horrors of the Holocaust, the case for a Jewish homeland became morally unanswerable in the West. The fledgling state of Israel had huge moral authority through its saving of a people persecuted down the centuries. Israel's moral and legal authority came under challenge after the war of 1967; it turned Israel from a country fearful for its survival into an occupying power, administering millions of people who did not want to be governed by a country that had not expected to rule them.

It is now a modern and developed country, but its claim to democracy must be qualified by its record on the rule of international law, civil liberties and the other wretched consequences of the continuing occupation and the rise of the settler interest. The rise of the settler interest is as straightforward a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention as its drafters could have imagined.

Reinvigorate the Israel project

The central issue is that the Declaration has yet to be more than half implemented. Citizenship should not be divided into classes, and the second part of the Declaration has equal importance with the establishment of a Jewish national home. Palestinians have enjoyed neither full civil and political rights inside Israel, nor a sovereign state of their own.

It should, and indeed can only, be on Israel's shoulders to ensure the full delivery of the Balfour Declaration. The best way for Israelis to commemorate it would be to ensure that, one hundred years after it was announced, the full measure of the text starts to be realised. And whilst this would not undo the suffering of the last century of conflict, it would prevent more in the future; and it would reinvigorate the Israel project with the high moral purpose associated with its beginning.

INEQUALITY DOES NOT BRING SECURITY

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

The Balfour Declaration promised that there would be a Jewish homeland, and there would also be the protection of the rights of the Palestinian people. We have failed in that latter promise.

On 31st October 1917 discussions were taking place in the Cabinet Room. Mark Sykes emerged from the room joyful, and went to Chaim Weizmann, who had been lobbying for a homeland for Jewish people. Sykes announced, 'It's a boy'. He was signifying the delivery of Mr Weizmann's hopes.



Voice of the unheard

In that Cabinet there was one Jewish man, Edwin Montagu, later Lord Montagu. He argued strongly that there had to be protection of the religious and civil rights of the people who lived there, the vast majority of whom were of Arab background.

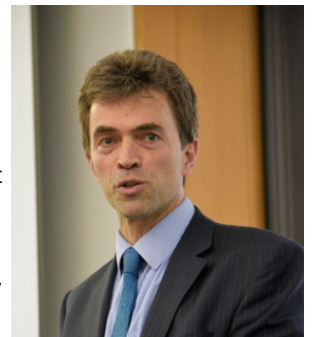
The great growth of the Jewish population began after 1948. In that same period, after the Holocaust, we decided there had to be a template of rights which would ensure that no-one would be treated without the dignity they deserved as human beings.

Inequality does not bring security. Violence is the voice of the unheard. In recent years we have seen breach after breach of international law on the rights of the Palestinian people. We have a sacred duty to speak up for those who are being dealt an injustice. I call upon all of us to remind our government of what that duty means.

I HAVE SEEN THE POTENTIAL

Rt Hon Tom Brake MP (Lib Dem)

The Balfour Project remembers our role in the Balfour Declaration. We need to make sure that the UK Government acknowledges that we have a particular role. This was brought to my attention some years ago by a group of young Palestinians who came to Westminster, and made very clear that I, as a Member of Parliament, needed to try and sort out the difficulties they are now facing as regards the second half of the Balfour Declaration.



I know Israel and have visited the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I have seen the differences between those two areas, and also the potential. There is a will for the potential to be developed, but perhaps the first step in achieving this is that the UK recognises Palestine. There is now a very strong cross-party consensus on that, although it is not total. We have to organise and activate to make sure the UK Government accepts that we should recognise Palestine, and do so without preconditions.

CONQUEST BY CONCRETE



Dr Philippa Whitford MP (SNP)

Before I was elected, I was a surgeon, and spent 16 months as a volunteer with Medical Aid for Palestinians in Gaza city. I was there in 1991 when the Madrid Peace Conference ended. After much violence in the morning, in the afternoon I saw young Palestinians giving olive branches to Israeli soldiers. They were full of hope.

A quarter of a century on we are further from peace. Gaza has been under blockade for ten years. Every few years they have been attacked. The last incursion killed 2,000 people. 100,000 people were made homeless, and 30,000 people are still homeless three years on. Al-Wafa hospital was totally destroyed. Gaza's power plant was damaged in 2014, so electricity is imported from Israel and the Gazans receive four hours of electricity a day on a rota. The hospitals receive four hours a day. For several years the water has not been drinkable. Due to the doubling of the population and the refusal to allow expansion of the sewage works, sewage pours out across the beaches and into the sea. The stench is appalling.

The separation wall

When I was there last Spring I met women in Bureij refugee camp. I was shocked to find that, regardless of the stage of their cancer, they had all had a mastectomy. The reason is there is no radiotherapy in Gaza. They could get radiotherapy in East Jerusalem, but almost half of them are refused permission to go there. This doesn't just affect them; it has created a nihilism among the surgeons, so they don't try. They remove a woman's breast without any attempt to preserve it.

We must also think about the West Bank. The wall is separating houses from gardens, villages from their water well or their olive grove, and the possibility of a two-state solution is being undermined. We see relentless building of settlements. I call it conquest by concrete. These settlements are illegal. So the UK government must recognise its responsibility. The comments made yesterday in Parliament, about this being something for Israel and Palestine to sort out, are not acceptable. This is not an equal partnership. Both communities would gain from peace, but this will only work if they come to the table as equals. You can't have a two-state solution if you don't recognise two states.

STOP COMMERCE WITH ILLEGAL SETTLEMENTS



Richard Burden MP (Labour),
Chair, Palestine All-Party Parliamentary Group

The Balfour Centenary is a reminder of promises unfulfilled. Having been to Israel and Palestine many times, I have seen the outcome of those unfulfilled promises. It is time to resolve to put them right. The cornerstone of that resolve must be an unflinching commitment to equal rights for all. That means upholding international law.

Like in the village of Khan al Ahmar in the West Bank, whose primary school serves around 150 children of the Bedouin Jahalin tribe. Khan al Ahmar is just one of the Palestinian communities in the West Bank that live under the threat of demolition. Why? Because they stand in the way of Israeli settlements expanding still further.

Britain disapproves of this expansion. In response to a letter from me and 15 other Parliamentarians last week the Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt, confirmed that what is happening violates international humanitarian law and calls into question Israel's commitment to the two state solution.

But international law must mean more than words. It means an obligation to hold to account those who flout the law. That is why it is time to put a stop to commercial involvement with illegal settlements by UK and associated companies.

Unfit for human habitation

And when the people of Gaza face a humanitarian crisis that leaves the strip on the edge of being unfit for human habitation, the time has come to say that the collective punishment of nearly two million people there has to stop.

Balfour set in train a sequence of events which led to the creation of the state of Israel, an act of self-determination that has for decades been recognised as a matter of right by our country and by the international community. But Palestinians have no fewer rights.

On 13th October 2014, the House of Commons called on the UK Government to recognise the State of Palestine alongside the internationally recognised borders of the State of Israel.

On this, the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, it is time for the UK Government to show that it stands by the second commitment of the Declaration in equal measure to the first. It can start by recognising the State of Palestine.



PROUDLY THE FIRST BRITISH PALESTINIAN MP

Layla Moran MP (Lib Dem)

I stand here proudly as the first ever British Palestinian Member of Parliament. The Balfour Declaration, or more aptly its interpretation by those in power, has deeply affected many millions of people, including my own family. I think of my great grandfather Wasif Jawhariyyeh, whose diaries of life as a Christian during the late Ottoman and British Mandate years were published recently under the title 'The Storyteller of Jerusalem'.

He wrote that the advent of British rule in Palestine had at first been welcomed as an alternative to Ottoman oppression, and Jews and Arabs alike had high hopes. But, as the diaries progress, he developed profound doubts about the British, who he felt had lied to them. His concerns were founded in the failure of the Declaration to mention Palestinian political rights – a lack which has been accepted by various British governments. Through this omission, the Balfour Declaration has often provided sustenance to those who ignore the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.



Not a card to be played

I fully accept and recognise Israel's right to exist within the borders as defined in UN Resolution 242. But given the situation of Palestinians today, I am bound to question the value of Balfour. In terms of contributing to peace and stability, it has probably produced exactly the opposite.

Rather than sift through the ashes of the past, I prefer to look to the future. Even after years of hearing my mother cry at news reports, I choose to hold on to hope. We can find ways to encourage the parties to get back round the negotiating table. Britain should act on the House of Commons motion of October 2014, and recognise the State of Palestine. Adding the UK's voice to the over 70% of UN members who have already done this would help to keep the two-state solution – the only viable way forward – off life support.

Recognition should not be seen as a card to be played as the Foreign Secretary said yesterday. This is not a game. It is time for Britain to recognise the part it has played in the past, and lead from the front. Recognition is the least Britain should do.



WE CANNOT WAIT FOR PRESIDENT TRUMP



Sir Vincent Fean,
former UK Consul-General, Jerusalem

I lived in Jerusalem for three years. What I saw and heard from Palestinians and Israelis of good will brings me here tonight.

May I share one experience. I went to the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh to express condolences at the death of a young man from the village, shot dead by a sniper from the Israeli Defence Force during a demonstration at which some Palestinians threw stones. The dead man's sister asked what recourse the family had. I had nothing to say. We both knew that there was no recourse to justice. There are procedures, yes, but no recourse.

The Occupation is terrible for Palestinians. It is demeaning, dehumanising for those ordered to impose it. That's why Israeli heads of security – Shin Bet and Mossad – the gatekeepers who keep Israel safe – argue for a peace agreement with the Palestinians, based on security for both peoples. Like the gatekeepers, I support the wellbeing of Israel, whose reputation is gravely harmed by policies of separation and inequality towards the Palestinians – apartheid. Israel's Government is going ever faster down the wrong path. The only equitable, achievable solution of two states living at peace is being destroyed. I argue for Palestinian sovereignty over the lands occupied in 1967. Genuine sovereignty, not sovereignty minus.

Change cost/benefit analysis

Sometimes we British are better at words than deeds. We should uphold the law without fear or favour. Israel's friends need to speak the truth to power, and act where persuasion has failed. We need a twin-track approach – British recognition now of the State of Palestine and British-led action to change the cost/benefit analysis of those who seek to prevent the solution of two sovereign states. This is at the heart of the new Balfour Centenary Declaration: Israel/Palestine Equal Rights, signed by over 80 people of standing in our society.

These days, on Israel/Palestine, our Government is waiting for President Trump. A policy of wait and see. With respect, that's not a policy. To say the right things, but choose to do nothing effective to make those right things happen, is worse than useless. It is prevarication – and wrong. We have waited for too long. We have seen, and what we have seen is morally abhorrent. There is urgent need to change course.

AWARENESS MUST TRANSLATE INTO ACTION

Rt Revd Declan Lang,

Roman Catholic Bishop of Clifton

Standing on a hillside in East Jerusalem looking out over Palestinian villages and Israeli settlements, what struck me was how two communities divided by fear, distrust and misunderstanding, are so physically close to one another. People living just a few miles apart are seen as strangers, foreigners or even enemies - separated by barbed wire and concrete walls.



A Palestinian psychology student at Bethlehem University described how she misses classes when she is held up at military checkpoints and struggles to study against the sound of gunfire. She told me *'No matter how many times I get caught up in clashes, no matter how many times I see the wall, this is not OK, this is not how we are supposed to live.'*

Her words echoed what I saw a few years earlier in the Israeli town of Sderot, on the border with Gaza. It has been targeted by thousands of rocket attacks, which have killed or injured dozens of civilians. Schools in Sderot are equipped with sirens in the classrooms and concrete shelters in the playgrounds – it is not how any child is supposed to live.

On this anniversary, we should look forward to how, in light of Britain's responsibility, we may help to ensure that the next generation of Israelis and Palestinians grow up in peace and dignity.

Refuse to be enemies

I hope that here in the UK, faith communities will mark this historic moment by praying for everyone who calls Israel or Palestine their home.

We all have a responsibility for raising awareness. To become agents of change it is imperative that we inform others, while continually deepening our own knowledge.

Our awareness must translate into action. Since our Bishops visited the Holy Land in January, over one hundred MPs have received correspondence from Catholics in their constituencies.

Our decisions as consumers and travellers can have a real impact – using ethical tour operators, buying products that support local families and making informed choices about where goods come from.

We also need to get behind projects that are building bridges. Earlier this year I visited the Tent of Nations, a farm not far from Bethlehem, which hosts camps and volunteering opportunities for people of different backgrounds to better understand one another. Their motto is simple: *we refuse to be enemies*.

On this anniversary we are called to share in that rejection of division, conflict and hate.

NO PEOPLE SHOULD LIVE UNDER DOMINATION



Rabbi Danny Rich,
Senior Rabbi, Liberal Judaism

In common with much of world Jewry, I will mark the centenary of the Balfour letter with some thanks, some pride, much reflection and some hope.

Conscious of the 3000 year old historic link of the Jewish people with the ancient Biblical land and aware that the Balfour letter was the first external recognition of the rights of Jews to a national revival in the land of the Hebrew Bible, I recall with appreciation those early pioneers who, as exemplars, drained swamps, built kibbutzim and revived the Hebrew language.

The ramifications of the Balfour letter included the establishment of the State of Israel which was to serve as a refuge for the broken souls, hearts and bodies of the victims of the Shoah, the Holocaust, the attempt to destroy European Jewry in the middle of the 20th century. I cherish with pride many aspects of modern Israel including, for example, its impressive Supreme Court, its robust free press, and its life-giving development work on the African continent.

Viable Palestinian state

At the same time, as I commemorate the achievements of a Jewish homeland and the State of Israel, I am conscious that this is not paralleled in the realities of the Palestinians and other peoples in the region whose 'civil and religious rights' were not to be prejudiced, according to the Balfour letter. No people should live under the day-to-day domination of another people. But the very existence of a UN member should not be constantly questioned.

Therefore, I call upon Israelis and Palestinians, Britain and the United States and the whole international community to work for a just and lasting resolution in which the State of Israel and its viable Palestinian neighbouring State will dwell together in mutual respect and security.

The 8th century BCE Hebrew Biblical prophet Isaiah foresaw: 'On that day let there be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria; and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians' (19:23).

If in the 8th century Isaiah could predict that, what hope and vision will we work for?



RENEW BELIEF IN NON-VIOLENCE

Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Anglican Bishop of Southwark

At a time when the Israel-Palestine situation is at an impasse it is incumbent on all political leaders to explore new ways to move forward.

Both Israelis and Palestinians deserve security. Both deserve statehood. A one-state outcome risks cementing permanent discrimination. This would be neither a just nor a peaceful solution and the security it offers Israel is illusory.

For ourselves, we should not try and see Palestine and Palestinians as anything less than in their full dignity. To do otherwise is to look away. Faults there will be, as we have faults, but we should treat a people as they deserve and expect the same graciousness from them.



Bilateral recognition of Palestine is in the UK's gift. To do so would recognise, as the Government noted at the UN in 2011 that 'the Palestinian Authority has developed successfully the capacity to run a democratic and peaceful state.' It is a step that 134 UN member states have taken. It is supported by the Holy See and responsible lead bishops on international affairs for both the Church of England and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Shameful neglect

The Government has evaded this issue by stating that Britain waits for a 'moment of our choosing and when it can best bring about peace.'

The Occupation will end only when we have negotiations based on equity and justice for all. But recognition has the potential to renew Palestinian belief that the path of non-violence, not the Hamas path, leads somewhere: to a state coming into being through diplomacy and democratic expression, not through violence and aggression. Peace negotiations will be on a more equitable basis.

In doing so we must not heed the excesses of Christian Zionism. I am conscious of the European heritage – the Christian legacy – of the persecution and segregation of Jewry. We must resist contemporary secular and religious versions of anti-Semitism that are abroad and feed into unregulated media. Some are shocking in their virulence as they are persistent in their idolatry of hate.

For those who think we should delay until a more favourable time, let me say that if we stand idly by, the equitable outcome that we all pray for will disappear. That would amount to shameful neglect, for which our children and grandchildren should rightly hold us accountable.

THE ONUS IS ON ISRAEL



Dr Imad Karam, Britain and Palestine
Executive Director, Initiatives of Change International

In 1917 Arab people made up 90% of the inhabitants of Palestine. Today, one people with one religion dominate another people of other religions. It is time to end this situation.

I am touched tonight to feel that the moral conscience of Britain is alive. I long to see, in this country and beyond, a value-driven principled political leadership. The current situation in Palestine is morally indefensible, and what is morally wrong cannot be politically right.

May I say to my Palestinian people that we don't need tunnels or rockets to fight. We have the right to fight for our land; but we also have the right to choose how we secure our rights.

A people's movement

You can hear the desperation of the Palestinian leaders, speaking at the UN last month. The onus is not on my people any more. It is on the Jewish and Israeli people. Do they want to live in peace within the 1967 border, giving back the rest of the land to the Palestinians for their state? Or do they want us all in one state?

The onus is also on the international community. The occupation will not end as long as both sides are left to battle it out. The British Government should lead an international effort to give teeth to international law and the UN resolutions.

Only courageous political action will bring about the change we all want. Tonight is a stepping stone to a people's movement that will see Britain recognise the rights of the people of Palestine and help bring peace.

A PROSPEROUS, PEACEFUL LAND FOR ALL



Imam Ajmal Masroor, Imam and broadcaster, London

Each time I visit the Holy Land I spend many hours at the airport for no reason except, 'Are you an Arab?' 'No.' 'But you have an Arabic name. Why are you here?'

My origin is Bangladeshi. But I feel the injustice. And the Holy Land is breathtaking. Every cobble stone, every turn and twist a reservoir of history. Prophets, great people, great culture.

I look forward to a day when all who live in that land – Jewish, Christian, Muslim, people of faith and no faith – can live together. I look to the day when we can have one state for all people regardless of their background, their religion, their status. We have to come together and organise. Together we can create a prosperous, secure, peaceful land for all.

DECLARATION CONCEALED BALFOUR'S PURPOSE

Dr Peter Shambrook,
historical consultant, The Balfour Project

The League of Nations Mandate for Palestine required Britain to implement the Balfour Declaration by supporting the creation of a Jewish national home and preparing the people of Palestine for self-government.

However, the ambiguity of the Declaration's wording deliberately concealed the purpose of those who wrote it – the creation of a Jewish state in which Palestinian Arabs would have no national rights.

In 1919 Balfour said: 'Palestine presents a unique situation, which inevitably excludes numerical self-determination. We are definitely building for a Jewish numerical majority in the future.'

Betrayal of both peoples

Yet successive British governments told the Palestinian Arabs and the League of Nations that they were indeed preparing Palestine for democratic self-government. The official records reveal this decades-long British 'double speak'. Palestine was the only former Ottoman mandated territory in which representative institutions were not established.

We like to think that we treat others fairly and responsibly. In Palestine we did not do so.

Acknowledgement of our lack of honesty during our occupation of Palestine, and our betrayal of both peoples, would be evidence of moral strength and a sign of our civilisation.



WILL PALESTINIANS FORGIVE BRITAIN?

John Bond, Initiatives of Change, Oxford

Solutions cannot be imposed from outside. But I don't believe Israelis and Palestinians will find a resolution without outside help. Can we find the attitudes that will mean that both sides will trust us?

It may depend on people like us. I am both British and Australian. Twenty years ago an inquiry revealed the tragic impact on Aboriginal Australia of cruel and misguided policies. Some of us felt this called for a national apology. The Government was not interested. So we invited the people of Australia to apologise, and nearly a million people did so. Through the following years thousands of these people worked at healing the harm done, and gradually we saw political attitudes change. So when a new Prime Minister was elected 10 years ago, who announced that he would make this apology, the whole Parliament joined him, and it was a historic day for Australia.

That was the outcome of citizens who saw an injustice, and worked to answer it. This is where we can make a difference in the Middle East. Our forebears acted in a way that shames our nation, and many Palestinians hate us. Will we work in a way that they forgive us?



ACT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND COMMITMENT

Baroness Kennedy read out this Act at the meeting on behalf of the Balfour Project and all who wish to associate themselves with it.

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.

*Balfour
Project*

BALFOUR CENTENARY DECLARATION

ISRAEL/PALESTINE EQUAL RIGHTS

On the same day as the Central Hall meeting, this Declaration was launched by Members of Parliament from the Conservative, Labour, Lib Dem and SNP parties:

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.

Continued overleaf

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.

SIGNATORIES OF THE BALFOUR CENTENARY DECLARATION

Rt Hon Jack Straw – Crispin Blunt MP – Tracy Brabin MP – Rt Hon Ben Bradshaw MP – Rt Hon Tom Brake MP
Alan Brown MP – Richard Burden MP – Ruth Cadbury MP – Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP – Sarah Champion MP
– Joanna Cherry QC, MP – Julie Elliott MP – Ruth George MP – Rt Hon Dominic Grieve MP
Wera Hobhouse MP – Rt Hon David Jones MP – Graham Jones MP – Pauline Latham MP – Chris Law MP
Sir Edward Leigh MP – Seema Malhotra MP – Layla Moran MP – Lisa Nandy MP – Chi Onwurah MP
Tommy Sheppard MP – Paula Sherriff MP – Andy Slaughter MP – Rt Hon Sir Nicholas Soames MP
Bob Stewart MP – Rt Hon Sir Hugo Swire MP – David Warburton MP – Dr Philippa Whitford MP

Rt Rev Christopher Chessun – Bishop of Southwark – Rt Rev Declan Lang – Bishop of Clifton
Lord Alderdice – Baroness Blackstone – Rt Hon Lord Bruce of Bennachie – Rt Hon Lord Cope of Berkeley
Lord Green of Deddington – Lord Griffiths of Burry Port – Rt Hon Lord Grocott of Telford – Rt Hon Lord Hain
Lord Hollick – Baroness Hollins – Rt Hon Baroness Hussein-Ece – Lord Hylton – Baroness Jay of Paddington
Lord Judd – Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws – Rt Hon Marquess of Lothian – Baroness Meacher
Duke of Montrose – Baroness Morris of Bolton – Rt Hon Baroness Northover – Lord Ouseley of Peckham Rye
Lord Purvis of Tweed – General Lord Richards of Herstmonceux, former Chief of Defence Staff
Baroness Sheehan – Rt Hon Lord Steel of Aikwood – Rt Hon Lord Warner – Rt Hon Baroness Warsi
Lord Wood of Anfield – Lord Wright of Richmond

Prof. James Allan – Emeritus Professor of Eastern Art, University of Oxford
Merrick Baker-Bates – Consul-General, Los Angeles (ret'd)
Sir Tony Brenton – Ambassador to Russia (ret'd)
Sir Iain Chalmers M.D. DSc – Coordinator James Lind Foundation
Alan Charlton – Ambassador to Brazil (ret'd)
Rev. Iain Cunningham – Convenor, World Mission Council, Church of Scotland
Lady Ellen Dahrendorf
Sir Richard Dalton – Ambassador to Iran and Consul-General, Jerusalem (ret'd)
Rt Rev Michael Doe, Assistant Bishop of Southwark
Sir Terence English – Surgeon and former Master, St Catherine's College, Cambridge
Sir Vincent Fean – Consul-General, Jerusalem and Ambassador to Libya (ret'd)
Rev. Richard Frazer – Convenor, Church and Society Council, Church of Scotland
Pat Gaffney – General Secretary, Pax Christi
Prof. Fawaz A Gerges – International Relations, LSE
Henry Hogger – Ambassador to Syria (ret'd)
Michael Hone – Ambassador to Iceland (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
Rt Hon Sir David Latham, former Lord Justice of Appeal
Anthony Layden – Ambassador to Morocco, Mauritania and Libya (ret'd)
Richard Makepeace – Consul-General, Jerusalem and Ambassador to UAE and to Sudan (ret'd)
Sir Christopher Mallaby – Ambassador to France and Germany (ret'd)
Ivan McKee – Member of the Scottish Parliament
Sir Alan Munro – former Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Middle East, FCO
Patrick Nixon – Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates and HC to Zambia (ret'd)
Peter Osborne – author and journalist
Sir William Patey – Ambassador to Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia (ret'd)
Rt Revd Dr Stephen Platten – Chaplain to St Martin – within - Ludgate
Sir Stephen Sedley – Faculty of Law, University of Oxford
Prof. Avi Shlaim – Emeritus Professor of International Relations, University of Oxford
Sir Roger Tomkys – High Commissioner, Nairobi and Ambassador to Syria and Bahrain (ret'd)
Sir Harold Walker – Ambassador to Iraq (ret'd)
Sir Peter Westmacott – Ambassador to the United States (ret'd)
Sandra White – Member of the Scottish Parliament

We welcome further public figures who wish to add their signatures. Please contact us at declaration@balfourproject.org



Chai for All performed Jewish and Arabic songs



ISRAELI CALL TO RECOGNISE PALESTINE

Prominent Israelis sent the meeting a message calling for the British Government to recognise the State of Palestine. The 23 signatories from the Policy Working Group, led by their Chair, Ambassador (retired) Ilan Baruch, state that the Balfour Project's meeting at Central Hall Westminster 'is the appropriate occasion to correct this historical wrong and complement the original Declaration by stating that both the Israeli and the Palestinian people have equal rights to self-determination in two states – Israel and Palestine – living side by side along the 1967 borders in peace, security, and prosperity.' The full message and list of signatories can be found on the Balfour Project website.

WORK WITH THE BALFOUR PROJECT

The Balfour Project is working for justice, peace and reconciliation in the Middle East. If you would like to help, do contact us. Many British people and organisations are taking creative action. If enough of us get involved, our Government will respond with new policies.

www.balfourproject.org

Many articles in the British press reflected the need for a new approach:

Britain must pursue a two-state solution

Anniversary of Balfour reminds Britain the job is unfinished
Britain's calamitous promise

JUSTIN WELBY
A chance to make good on Britain's broken promise

Israel and Palestine
A century after Balfour, two peoples still search for peace

There was also wide media coverage across the Middle East.

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