Abandoning Palestine:

the end of the British Mandate and our continuing responsibility

17 & 18 May 2022

Souvenir Booklet

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Abandoning Palestine: the end of the British Mandate and our continuing responsibility

To reserve your free place, visit

www.balfourproject.org/abandoningpalestine

Sir Vincent Fean (Balfour Project Chair) was a member of the British Diplomatic Service (1975-2014). His last post was as Consul-General, Jerusalem (2010-14). He has also been Ambassador to Libya and High Commissioner to Malta.

Vincent advocates equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians, and British Government recognition of the state of Palestine alongside Israel on pre-June 1967 lines.

Day 1—Tuesday 17 May 2022

Welcome by Sir Vincent Fean

Welcome. We will focus on the collapse of the British Mandate, and why it still matters: Britain's responsibility to advance equal rights, and what we – civil society, Parliament and Government - should do now, with our like-minded partners around the world.

The Balfour Project has a clear aim: Peace, Justice and Equal Rights in Israel/Palestine. Our Mission is to acknowledge Britain's historical and continuing responsibilities, and through popular education and advocacy to uphold equal rights for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. We ask the British Government to recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel – a policy decision long overdue, as we shall hear from Hanan Ashrawi.

Let's examine a newsreel report from the last day of the Mandate in May 1948, when the Union Jack was lowered in Haifa for the last time (can be found at www.tinyurl.com/britishpalestinemandate). The newsreel clip is of its time. It was shown to cinema audiences, before the advent of television. It tries to be upbeat, bombastic, even, but you will detect that the tone is forced.

The shocking thing about the clip is that it contains no reference whatever to the Palestinian Arabs. They do not appear. They are entirely absent. There is no reference to their rights, to what was happening to them, or to their likely fate. They were the majority of the population of Palestine in 1948. The clip ends with the appearance on the Haifa quayside of David Ben Gurion, the Prime Minister of the newly proclaimed state of Israel, with his soldiers. British viewers could be deceived into thinking that there had been an orderly transfer of power - just as they could be deceived into thinking there had never been people called Palestinian Arabs. Note the

references to "a job well done" by the soldiers, and “a thankless task”. The reporter is trying to paper over the cracks, but all was not as it should be. Far from it.

It is the ignorance and selective amnesia in this news report – both still all too prevalent - that we are determined to address, with the help of our guest speakers. They will speak their minds, in their own right. Their views do not necessarily all accord with those of the Balfour Project charity, which will set out its own opinion in a statement at the end of the conference – a statement which engages the Balfour Project only.

We begin with the reflections of Hanan Ashrawi about Britain's role. She will be followed by Dr Ghada Karmi - who vividly remembers the day when, as a child, her family left their home in Jerusalem in fear for their lives. This at a time when Britain was responsible for their security. Ghada is both an eye witness and a victim of the Nakba, the catastrophe which continues to this day. Lord Cope, patron of the British Palestine Police Association, will then talk about the experiences of the young British police officers whose impossible, thankless task was to maintain law and order in the dying embers of the Mandate, post-War.

They will be followed by three historians. First Prof. Avi Shlaim, who will talk on Britain's betrayal of Palestine - from Balfour to Bevin. Roger Hardy will show how photos taken by the Haganah and the Israeli army provide documentary evidence of the Nakba. John McHugo will describe the legal chaos and legal vacuum that Britain bequeathed to Palestine at the end of the Mandate, a betrayal of that

Armed British solders aboard a British military vehicle as it passes the Citadel in Jerusalem during the British Mandate, 10 June 1936

Accessing the Recordings

All the recordings of the conference can be found on our website at www.balfourproject.org/abandoningpalestine

What is the Balfour Project for?

What brings us together is a clear aim: Peace, Justice and Equal Rights in Israel/Palestine.

Mission Statement

Acknowledging Britain's historical and continuing responsibilities, through popular education and advocacy to uphold equal rights for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. To persuade the British Government to recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel.

How you can help

The conference is free, but please consider a donation to help us keep going.
www.peoplesfundraising.com/donation/balfour-project
We also seek sponsors for our Peace Advocacy Fellowship Programme. The Balfour Project plans to appoint up to 15 Balfour Project Peace Advocacy Fellowships for the academic year 2022/23. Successful candidates are mostly post-graduates or final year undergraduates with an interest in promoting peaceful solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

legally binding "sacred trust of civilisation" to prepare the people of Palestine for independence that Britain assumed at the start of the Mandate. Britain deliberately withheld from the Palestinian people their right to self-determination – that right which is still withheld today.

Part 2 will be chaired by Dr Phyllis Starkey. We will look at why Britain's failure in Palestine still matters, and ask what Britain – civil society, Parliament and Government - should do now to advance equal rights. Victor Kattan will introduce a presentation by Michael Lynk on the infamous British Emergency Regulations of 1945 - which Israel has used as a legal tool as part of the structure of its occupation. Rory Stewart will speak on Britain's foreign policy. The conference will conclude with two panels. The first is of Palestinians living in this country who will reflect on what happened to their families, what it feels like being Palestinian in Britain today, and will conclude with their reflections on how Palestine is viewed in comparison with Ukraine. The day will conclude with a panel of Members of Parliament: David Jones (Conservative), Julie Elliott (Labour), Layla Moran (Lib Dem) and Tommy Sheppard (SNP). They will address the question: what should our Parliament press the British Government to do today to advance equal rights? What should our Government **not** do, to avoid making matters worse?

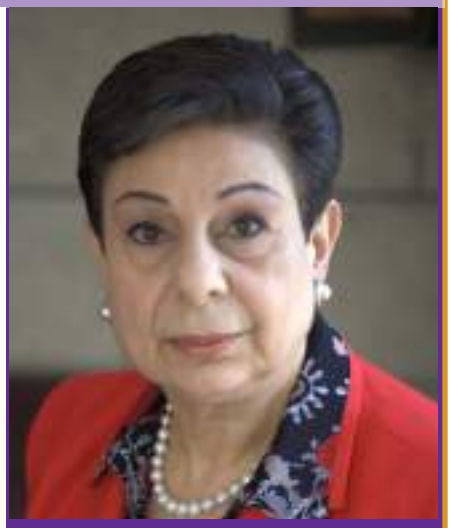
Our first guest is Dr Hanan Ashrawi, former member of the PLO Executive Committee. She recorded this interview before the tragic killing in Jenin of Shireen Abu Aqleh. We must work to ensure that her killing marks a turning-point. Hanan has since written: "Our beloved Shireen, a genuine daughter of Palestine, encapsulates the best we aspire to: a force for unity, humanity, humility, courage, integrity, resistance, empathy, truthfulness, dedication, professionalism and moral power. Her last stand embodies the ultimate sacrifice". May Shireen rest in peace.

I asked Hanan to give her assessment of Britain's role through the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate.

Hanan Ashrawi, in conversation

Sir Vincent Fean
What is your assessment of the period from the Balfour Declaration until the British left Palestine in 1948?

Dr Hanan Ashrawi:
That period to us is absolutely tragic. Probably the worst era in Palestinian history. It launched a whole new process, a whole new reality in Palestine and set the standards for all sorts of painful dealings, of attitudes, mindsets, stereotypes and labels that persist, some of them till today. It also tried to legitimise a very exclusivist ideology - the Zionist ideology. It tried to give it a concrete reality at the expense of the Palestinians. That was one of the foundations of the ongoing Israeli control, expansionism and annexation of Palestine. The grand theft of Palestine...
It set the tone, in the Balfour Declaration, for the dismissal and the negation, and almost the erasure of the Palestinian people, by defining us as by what we are not: we are the non-Jewish communities. We are not a nation or a people that is pluralistic and diverse and at the same time harmonious, with a national identity. No, we are non-Jewish communities, Christian and Muslim. So, it's not a question of the Palestinian people existing as a people with a history, a culture, aspirations and rights, but we are not Jewish. Even though we were the majority and the Jewish population was a very small minority, but at the same time, they were Palestinian. The selection of one religious group for exceptional and special treatment - to legitimise the Zionist ideology and exclusivist sense of entitlement and being special - has laid the foundations for this ongoing narrative.
There was the negation of the Palestinian right to self-determination, our human rights - let alone political, social, etc. Balfour said we only had religious and civil rights, but didn't mention anything about the right to self-determination, human rights, political rights, or any other rights. These communities, somehow existing, had religious and civil rights, but had no national rights, no right to self-determination, to freedom, dignity, justice etc.



Dr Hanan Ashrawi

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi is a distinguished Palestinian leader, legislator, activist and scholar who served as a member of the Leadership Committee and as an official spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation to the Middle East peace process, beginning with the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991. Dr. Ashrawi was appointed as the Palestinian Authority Minister of Higher Education and Research (1996), but she resigned from the post in protest at the non-implementation of reform plans in governance and peace talks (1998). Prior to that, she was Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Bir Zeit University, and head of its Legal Aid Committee since the mid-1970s.

They succeeded in setting the foundation for the ongoing violations. The violence we will talk about in terms of the Mandate and the violence against the Palestinians, the brutality. But let's move on to the issue of imposition of a set of laws that continue to be used until now. This is how Israel is systematically and legally - illegally - oppressing the Palestinians: all the administrative laws, all the so-called emergency laws, whether house demolitions, which are now on the rampage, the issue of expulsion, deportation and extrajudicial executions, even the issue of security.... But along with all these sets of laws that Israel uses there is the colonial mentality. It proved that Israel is really a colonial outpost and is behaving in a colonial way and has inherited the tools and the language, including the language of colonial power, that seems to think it has superior rights, superior powers and can reinvent reality at will. So, all these added patterns in some ways persist now, and have become a way in which Israel is trying totally to erase the Palestinians through ethnic cleansing, house demolitions, expulsions, killing, by land confiscation and annexation.

Sir Vincent Fean:
We will hear from Avi Shlaim about what he calls the betrayal by Britain of Palestine from Balfour through to Bevin, from 1917 to 1948. Professor Michael Lynk will talk about the Emergency Regulations which are still in place, adopted by Israel, and which give cover to administrative detention, house demolitions etc. In that sense, the legacy of the British Mandate is still with us.

Dr Hanan Ashrawi:
Absolutely. It is this legacy that was exploited by Israel, with a whole body of legal instruments that were at its disposal. It is behaving outwardly as a colonial power. But it is more than that. It's a settler colonial power because it is based on the negation of the Palestinians entirely, not just in terms of our rights and so on, but also in terms of our very existence, our very narrative, our history, our culture. What is being confiscated is more than just the land: it is the narrative, the culture, everything else. That has been ongoing and the Mandate provided it with the tools to pursue this. Israeli impunity is very serious. Israel has been emboldened by this patronage of the West. Not just the UK, but many European countries and primarily now the US have practised this patronage of Israel as a favoured ally. It feels protected - exempt from international law and compliance with human rights, international human rights law etc., and continues to feel that it does have and deserves preferential treatment and exceptionalism.

Sir Vincent Fean:
Last year, the Balfour Project held a virtual conference "Israel/Palestine: in search of the rule of law". Speakers included Baroness Hale, the retired President of our Supreme Court, Dominic Grieve QC and others. The rule of law in Israel/Palestine is not the rule of international law, despite the sequence of UN Security Council Resolutions since 242, despite the Geneva Conventions. The rule of law as promoted by the international community is not to be found.

Dr Hanan Ashrawi:
You're right. We call it the global rule of law, because bodies and instruments and whole sets of laws were established to hold the powerful to account and to provide the weak and vulnerable with protection. These things have been absent from our part of the world: the powerful, which is Israel as an occupying power, was rewarded and protected and granted the licence to act with full impunity while the Palestinians are under pressure - constantly threatened without any intervention by the international community.
Even the UN Resolutions including the latest, 2334, were not honoured, not implemented and Israel literally got away with murder. The law doesn't apply when it comes to Israel. And there is no intention or political will to hold Israel to account, or to apply this global rule of law when it comes to Israel. So that has created a greater asymmetry of power, a greater imbalance. It has further victimised the vulnerable, and it has further emboldened and empowered the powerful, and that's why Israel feels that it can replace all of historical Palestine with greater Israel. And that's what it's doing in many ways.

Sir Vincent Fean:
We talk in the Balfour Project about continuing British responsibility. We see a duty on Britain, civil society, parliament, government, all of us to do more, do better, uphold human rights, equal rights. The reality is that the British Government tends to look, partly expediently, to the United States for a lead. Some of our politicians talk about the need for leadership from Israel, leadership from the Palestinians to address the issues. Today's reality is that there is no Middle East Peace Process because the present Prime Minister of Israel and his Deputy both say they don't intend to talk to the Palestinians about final status issues. In that barren terrain, where do you see the role of the international community and indeed the role of the UK today?

Dr Hanan Ashrawi:
The international community bears responsibility for not upholding its own standards and systems and laws. Not honouring them, not holding Israel to account in accordance with them and not acting on the basis of principles and values that they claim they hold dear. This has become apparent when people look at the immediate massive response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as opposed to all this, not just procrastination, but refusal to help the Palestinians in any way or hold Israel to account.
This type of racism and hypocrisy has become evident to everybody, regardless of where you stand on the issues. We as Palestinians support the victims, and we don't like to see people lose their homes and liberties and land. But at the same time, we would like to be given similar, if not the same consideration, as vulnerable people whose land has been usurped and who have been subject to systemic and systematic violence for decades. And we are supposed to sit down and behave like good little boys and girls. And should we in any way react to this massive aggression and violence against us, we are all labelled terrorists.

It was ironic how the US was furious at Russia's use of the veto, but they forgot how many vetoes they used in order to protect Israel when it came to Palestine. At the same time, they were teaching Ukrainians how to use Molotov cocktails while with our children, should they improvise anything to stand up to Israel, they are shot and killed on the spot and they are labelled terrorists. There is this clear disparity, not disproportionality, but collusion with Israel which has become obvious. The racism is obvious, which to me is also part of this continuum of colonial rule and mentality and the colonial sets of instruments that Israel had inherited and used.

This is what we get from the international community - economic assistance here and there, asking us to protect the safety of the settlers and the Israeli army. Do not resort to violence in any way, do not describe reality as it is not really the textbook issue and even the prisoner issue and the martyrs' families and so on. It's as if we are supposed to forget our history and teach the Israeli version, the Israeli narrative of what's happening, which is entirely in contradiction with reality. This is the issue of textbooks that Israel imposed on the West, particularly on Europe and the US. And the same thing with the payment to prisoners as though our prisoners are all terrorists and somehow we are encouraging terrorism. As if it's not a question of freedom fighters and responsibility and a liberation movement. This has become very clear.

Now what do we do? There has to be a rectification of the past; I don't want to use religious terminology, but a confession, a contrition that has to be, in a sense, a recognition of the guilt in itself instead of this constant denial. We are a classic case of the victim being blamed constantly for what happened to us and being forced in many ways to behave like good victims. We cannot expect the Palestinians to lie down and die quietly. It's not going to happen. We are not going to have collective amnesia, and we're not going to go into self-exile. We are here to stay and we're going to stay, we're paying a heavy price, but that's it.

This recognition of the fact that Palestinians deserve equal rights is crucial from the beginning, with the recognition of the legitimacy and the reality of the Palestinian narrative, identity and history. This has to happen because Israel has been either denying or distorting our reality and our history. When people speak out, when you have organisations who are validating this narrative, it begins the process of redemption. Validate the reality, the narrative challenge, the false narrative and the misleading labels that have been used against us. People have been acting for a long time, but not enough in ways to influence Governmental decisions. This is a case where the people are way ahead of the governments. The governments have their own considerations and at the same time, they take decisions that are not consistent with what their constituency wants. This is very strange because when we ask for anything, they say well, our constituency wouldn't accept. But when you look at parliaments, public opinion, polls, there is an increasing recognition of the justice of the Palestinian cause, aspirations and rights. All these are consistent with international humanitarian law, with the values that people say they hold dear. Yet they are not in any way officially recognised or used as a motive for action.

By moving, creating a global conversation, we are becoming - and we see this in the US also - part of a global conversation on peace, justice, freedom, human dignity, rights, as pertaining to our people. The

moment the world recognises Palestinians as having equal rights and that we have the right to live in freedom and dignity on our own land, then you begin the redemptive process. You begin the process of rectification. But so long as governments suffer from this wilful blindness, not to see... You were a Consul-General. You saw everything in Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank. You wrote many reports. You witnessed. Did that change your Government's policy? I don't know. We still meet one CG after the other, one diplomat after the other and we still talk and they still see what's going on on the ground and they still send the reports and governments do not change. And continue to exercise wilful blindness, if not total identification with Israel, the way the American administrations have done. Trump became a partner in crime with Israel, but Biden now is back to the usual pro-Israeli, blind Zionist adherence to what's good for Israel is good for the US and vice versa.

This mentality, this mindset, has to be challenged. The only way to challenge it is with the truth, making reality heard. And with the public acting and with linkages, as you have done with HAFSA (Hanwell Friends of Sabastiya) and others, with Palestinians. So, you know the narrative. You are there, you are working with people and you are helping directly alleviate, not just the suffering, but help people become resilient and even more resilient in facing Israeli aggression and attempts at ethnic cleansing and erasure. That's important.

The moment you give the Palestinians this concrete reality, it becomes more and more difficult for Israel - although it hasn't been so far - to use Palestine as killing fields, those trigger-happy soldiers. Every day we have Palestinian people killed, that's not violence, but should then an Israeli soldier or settler get killed, that's the end of the world. They're innocent victims. Not that they are guilty of war crimes, no, they're innocent victims and the Palestinians are terrorists. So the description is also misleading.

The moment this happens, there's a cumulative, incremental process of unlearning what has been learned which is wrong, and of validating a new discourse that describes things as they are without intimidation and without fear. The greatest threat that is used is the label of antisemitism for anybody who dares to challenge the Israeli narrative, policy, practices or measures and who in any way tries to validate the Palestinian reality.

That now in many ways is being debunked. That's very important. The more people stand up to Israel, the more they defy this type of intimidation, be it the IHRA definition of antisemitism, or the labelling of BDS as being a crime, or criminalising BDS because you cannot in any way use sanctions against Israel or hold it to account. With BDS, with holding Israel to account, with changing policies, with accepting the fact that your people can act in accordance with their conscience, in terms of being ethical and moral consumers and investors by not cooperating with the Israeli occupation... I mean not just labelling, but not importing any settlement products and moving from there to understand that without a price to be paid, without consequences, Israel will persist.

Sir Vincent Fean:

The Balfour Project advocates recognition of the state of Palestine alongside Israel on pre-June 1967

lines. Sweden recognised in 2014. British recognition would have psychological, political and legal impact. This Government is not so minded. The Labour Party, the Scots Nationalists and the Liberal Democrats all say that they would, but they are not in office. The Balfour Project advocates applying international law and a ban on settlement products. We advocate elections to refresh the body politic in Palestine, and to secure unity of purpose. Are we on the right track? What would you prioritise?

Dr Hanan Ashrawi:

Recognition of Palestine, as you rightly said, is important and is long overdue. People have been using this as both a carrot and a stick. We'll do it at the right time, at the end of the Peace Process, at the end of the conflict, we'll do it in coordination with others. There are so many excuses that can be used not to do that. The issue of recognition of Palestine should be a foregone conclusion. Many countries have recognised Palestine. The UN has recognised Palestine as a state, albeit a non-member state, but it doesn't matter, still a state. That prevents Israel and pro-Israeli governments from using this as an excuse to punish Palestine and to avoid any kind of sanctions on Israel or accountability. This has always been used as an excuse. Even when we went to the International Criminal Court, it took us years for the ICC to accept us as a state.

ICC Chief Prosecutor Bensouda tried hard. We got our ducks in a row, we had all the information, all the evidence. We became a state, a non-member state, but a state. That enabled us to start this process, and it took six years for preliminary investigations to begin. It took six days in Ukraine, even though neither Ukraine nor Russia are members. That tells you about the double standards and the racism. Recognition is not just symbolic. It can help the Palestinian cause if you recognise the Palestinian state. Once you do, we will not have these people writing to the ICC on behalf of Israel saying since we are not a state, we do not have the right to access the ICC and international instruments and judicial bodies. It changes the relationships.

But I'm afraid that you are a bit late, because not only has Israel created facts - Israel is busy destroying the possibility of an independent state in Palestine. Israel has reframed the whole issue into a question of Palestinian population centres. And that we may have, maybe civil rights, note Balfour, but not political rights or the right to self-determination, Heaven forbid. They are busy destroying all the requirements of statehood. I don't want a mini-state or whatever. I don't want a state in name. I want a real state that is viable, that is on Palestinian soil that is capable of not just survival, but of development, of bringing together all Palestinians from everywhere.

Unfortunately, with the persistence and the entrenchment and the more extreme racist nature of Zionism, it's going to be very difficult, if not impossible, to say that a sovereign independent Palestinian state can be created on what's left of historical Palestine. It's a painful thing to admit, but that's what's happening.

Now, recognising the Palestinian state helps Palestinian resilience and the ability to check Israeli excesses and violations and violence and aggression. But would it rescue Palestinian statehood, the fact

that Israel has been given a free hand, time and space to do what it wants for so long and to steal the land and the resources and to make life sheer hell for Palestinians?

Look at Gaza. Gaza is not just under siege, but it's a sitting duck for Israeli shelling and killing and bombing and Israel gives itself the right to control long distance airspace, territorial waters, and the state of siege, and they say “We’re not an occupying power”.

This is one of the worst occupations in history where you have all the power, the violence and all the pain that you can inflict without any responsibility and without any accountability. In the West Bank, the land theft is ongoing. Look at the annexation of Jerusalem. The American Embassy is still in Jerusalem. We call it a settlement in Jerusalem.

The systematic transformation of the city, its history, and its culture, its demography, the ethnic cleansing is ongoing. Look at Al-Aqsa. Look at the way they treat, not just the Muslim worshippers, but also the Christian worshippers. This year, last year, for Easter services, people were prevented from going to their own places of worship, be it Christian or Muslim. All Ramadan was just a series of Israeli incursions and attacks. This is the reality. What kind of state do you expect when Israel is swallowing up the land, stealing the resources, making life impossible, fragmenting the Palestinians, not just with the Wall now, but with all the infrastructure? I talked earlier about super-imposing a whole grid on the West Bank. Everything, services and infrastructure, electricity, apartheid roads on the West Bank, so that the settler reality becomes the primary reality, and the ancient but ongoing Palestinian reality becomes the secondary reality surrounded by apartheid roads, totally excluded and divided from each other, without access to their own land or resources.

So, what kind of state? People sat around and waited and watched Israel destroy the so-called two-state solution that the world forced on us. It wasn't our preferred choice. We wanted one secular or non-sectarian democratic state where everybody can live in peace. This came out in the late sixties, and it was totally rejected. People sat around and watched Israel expand and create a forgery in Palestine. To us, Israel is an artificial construct that has been created on Palestine. And it has continued to grow and grow with international support - Western support - at the expense of the indigenous people. And everybody would say, look, we recognise your state, we've done our national duty, or we are for a two-state solution, so that's fine - go back to negotiations. Negotiations have become a tool of power for Israel to buy more time, to create more facts, to destroy the two-state solution. I've seen this personally over the years, and then people say no, the best thing is to resume negotiations. What negotiations? On what basis? With whom? When Israel now clearly says what it has been doing all along, no to the right of self-determination of the Palestinians, no to withdrawal and yes to annexation. There’s nothing left to deal with.

When people ask for creative ideas about the solution, I say, it's not my responsibility. You allowed Israel to destroy the two-state solution. What alternatives do you have? Are you willing to support a one state solution, a democratic, inclusive, non-sectarian state in which everybody can live in peace and dignity and freedom as an equal under the law? What alternatives do you have for allowing Israel to destroy the possibility even of a contiguous Palestinian state that is capable of surviving, let alone

thriving, and developing. That's why people are beginning to talk about the end of the two-state solution and they have been talking about it for a long time.
So long as the Zionist Project is there, frankly speaking, so long as Israel maintains this ideology of racism, exclusivity, and exclusion, and a sense of superiority and entitlement, there can never be either coexistence or neighbouring states.
The de-Zionisation of Israel is very important. That should be looked at: you treat people as equal human beings, not as a group with privilege based on ethnicity or religion that can create exclusive sets and exclusive states. Suppose I said I want a purely Christian or a purely Muslim state, and everybody else may exist, but has no equal rights. Wouldn't the world be in an uproar? Our discourse, our language, our expressions have to change if we are to cope with the reality that is changing, that has been imposed by the impunity of extremely racist, hardline, right-wing successive Israeli governments, motivated by racist ideologies. Not only to cope with that, but to render our values active and applicable.

Sir Vincent Fean:
Where do you see the hope?

Dr Hanan Ashrawi:
I see hope in the younger generation, definitely. Generations of Palestinians have not surrendered and have maintained not just our resilience, but our ability to stay on the land. This is very important. We have more than half of our people in exile or as refugees and expats. But nobody has forgotten Palestine or has acted as though they are outside Palestine, outside the framework and mindset and commitment to Palestine. That is the hope - the old may have died off, but the young have not forgotten. They have inherited an ongoing legacy of struggle and they are using contemporary tools that that can reach others, debunking myths, exposing lies, challenging Israeli versions. And mobilising with like-minded people all over the world. Now there is a language of rights, of values, that is applicable to everybody. We are part of the conversation globally. This is important to us, the younger generation. The older generations, including myself, have not given up. This is very important. We have not surrendered, as Jared Kushner tried to persuade us, that we have to accept our defeat. We didn't fight a war to be defeated. We may be under occupation, but our spirit has not been defeated. We have not surrendered and we will not do so, contrary to Trump and his people.
How do you translate that into active policies with like-minded people to influence decision making, not just to hold Israel in check, but to begin to unravel, to dismantle the reality that was created? This is important. Part of our empowerment is through elections, is through a change of leadership, is through the peaceful transfer of power, to bring the marginalised and the young and the people who have the spirit and the will to bring about change. We have a remarkable younger generation. The only way to get them into power is through elections. Unfortunately, the older generations are staying put, resisting the challenge to have elections and to make room for the young. The worst thing that can happen is if

the young and the women feel excluded or abandoned by the democratic struggle to change Palestine. We need to mobilise everybody to empower the Palestinian people as the whole. This is important for the young. There is also hope in the changing dynamics, awareness in the world that you cannot continue like this. Sooner or later, people will understand what's happening and will try to start dealing with it to end it. There are other situations of injustice, but it's ongoing, it's daily, it's a situation of constant pain and victimisation. People feel that, and will begin to change ultimately, but also a new awareness is coming up and a new sense of solidarity, identification and empathy is emerging. I feel hope with internal empowerment and resilience with external engagement with the world, with challenges, standing up to Israel. The important thing is not to be intimidated and not to surrender. We are capable of change, of standing up to injustice, to racism, to violence, to aggression, we can do that. And we can do that when we act with a collectivity and the main source of our power is the truth. Get it out there and stand up to any kind of aggression and injustice. We will get there. I'm sure we will. It will take time. It's very painful. It's a long process, but we have withstood all the things that were thrown at us in many different expressions of violence and injustice. And I think this is something that we can take in our stride and move ahead. And the more people who stand with us and who speak out the better.

General Sir Edmund Allenby entering Jerusalem, 1917

Dr Ghada Karmi

Ghada Karmi is a Palestinian physician, academic and writer. Her family were forced to leave their home in Jerusalem in April 1948, and took refuge in Syria on their way to England where she grew up and was educated. She is a former research fellow and lecturer at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. Her writings have mostly dealt with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; they include two memoirs, In Search of Fatima, (Verso 2002), and Return (Verso, 2015) which both deal with the Nakba and its effects.

Farewell to Palestine: a personal experience of the Nakba
Dr Ghada Karmi

Sir Vincent Fean:

We now turn to Dr Karmi, who will talk to us about *A Farewell to Palestine*, a personal experience of the Nakba. Dr Ghada Karmi is a distinguished medical doctor, activist and author living in the United Kingdom. She has written several books: *In Search of Fatima*, which deals with the events of 1948 when she was a young child, *Return: A Palestinian Memoir,* and *Married to Another Man: Israel's Dilemma in Palestine*. Thank you, Ghada, for being with us.

Dr Ghada Karmi:

Thank you, Sir Vincent. Really, it's a pleasure to be part of this important conference and it is my task to take you back to the starting-point of the story, the story that Hanan Ashrawi has discussed so eloquently. I want to go back to the Nakba, which I lived through and which was the beginning of a process that has led us here. Now, I was born in Palestine and the Palestine I was born into was an Arab country by any measure. It was an Arab country. I was born in Jerusalem and the area in Jerusalem that we lived in, which was West Jerusalem, was a newish neighbourhood As you know, Jerusalem really means the old city; the rest was added on at various periods.

Now, ours, as I say, was a fairly modern neighbourhood. It was cosmopolitan. It had mainly Christian Palestinian families, but it also had English people living there and also Jews, particularly German Jews. At the time, and this was of course before the establishment of the state of Israel, there was no suggestion of anybody being unfriendly to anybody else. Indeed, we knew the Jewish families and my sister, for example, played with one of the children of a particular family.

Now, quite early on, the Zionists had their eyes on West Jerusalem. In their plan they intended to take over that part, prior to moving on and expanding, obviously. Now you need to follow this story through my eyes as a child at the time. What were my concerns in those years before we were forced out? I was concerned with the house I lived in, with the village woman

who looked after us, and looked after the house, a woman named Fatima, and our dog, our family dog, whom I loved dearly, and with my primary school friends. Those were really my concerns. And that was my world, if you like. Now, things began to change for me at the beginning of 1948. I do not mean, of course, that that's when things really started to change.

No, but I'm inviting you to stay with me. As a child, I had no idea about Balfour or the Biltmore Program in the United States or President Truman. None of these things meant anything of course. Now, at the beginning of 1948 an event took place which really made me aware, as a child, that something was very wrong. That event was the blowing-up of a hotel that was in a road above our road. It was called the Semiramis and it usually had a variety of different nationalities who came to stay, particularly journalists. It was a sort of haunt for journalists. Well, on the night of the 6th of January 1948, the Haganah, the Israeli army, the Jewish army, blew up the hotel which became rubble. This was in the early hours of the morning.

My earliest memory is of fear. I thought it was thunder and lightning and I thought because of the fire that lit up the sky, the night sky, that it was morning. It was the dawn. I remember asking my parents, who were terrified and dragged us all onto the floor with our backs against the bedroom wall. I said 'Is it the dawn? Is that the sun?' Nobody, nobody answered. Anyway, that was the beginning of my consciousness, my awareness that things were not well, were not going well for us. People started to leave our street and we just remained stubbornly because my mother would say, 'No Jew is gonna kick me out of my house'. But, of course, inevitably by April 1948 our street was relatively empty.

There was no more to hang onto and we left in a taxi with shooting around us, with my parents terrified, my brother and my sister, older than me, coping somehow, but I really was very scared. What can I tell you? I didn't understand what was happening. All I knew was that we were told, I was told, we had to leave. And I said, but why? Where are we going to? People were in such a state. I mean, really nobody answered me. I looked at the house which was already shuttered and the dog who was left behind. It was unbearable to me. How could we leave the dog behind? Anyway, we did. And we ended up in the bus station in Jerusalem.

I think people who know Jerusalem will know where I mean. It wasn't like the bus station today, it was absolutely packed out with people fleeing. Cars were in short supply, there were only taxis if you were lucky. There was no pause, no time for me to say bye-bye. Of course, I didn't know that I wouldn't be back. I imagine, it was bye-bye to the dog, to Fatima, to the house – but there was no time for that. We were stuffed into a taxi and we had to go and we went, in our case, to Damascus. We hung around there, stood around. People stood around on street corners with news of Palestine and the way one city after the other was being emptied. It was a time which I don't like to remember, in a way as bad as the time when we left Jerusalem.

And, you know, it's very important for people to understand that the Nakba was not that instant when we left and we lost our homes. It went on for people because it went on in the places of refuge where they went. In our case, as I say, Damascus, crowded out with refugees. Nobody had jobs. My father had no money. Our bank account in the Palestine Bank, the Bank of Palestine, was taken over by the Zionists. We had nothing. And in the end, in our case, as I say, my father found work in Britain, of all places, and in London, because the BBC Arabic Service had started and they wanted bilingual speakers. My father spoke both Arabic and English very well. And so he was offered a job and he didn't feel he

could possibly refuse. So, after the initial trauma of leaving Palestine, there was the second trauma of leaving Damascus and arriving in London.

As I said, this is how the Nakba played out, and it was terrifying for me. I couldn't encompass London after having been a child in Jerusalem. I'd never been very far, anywhere, outside our home and out of our area, and here we were in this foreign country, cold, northern, full of very cold people; that's how it came across to me. However, you know, there it was. When Palestinians were expelled or fled in 1948, between actually 1947 and 1949, you could divide them into two groups: one group that did relatively well and one group that did not do well, who ended up in refugee camps while the others were able to get work or resettle in different countries. You know, when I think about Ukraine – and I have to bring up that parallel – when I think about the reaction to the Ukrainian refugees and the reaction there was to us. We had no Western world backing us.

We had nothing but, admittedly, honestly, the support of Arab countries, for which we were very grateful but we didn't have the West on our side. We had to cope and manage with the help of other Arabs and helping each other, and we had to just get on and survive. So, there we were in England, and of course I've written about all this in my book, *In Search of Fatima*, if people want to read that memoir. So there we were in England. What added to all that misery as I was growing up in England was the erasure of my story. When I went to school people no longer used the word 'Palestine'. We were reading about, or being taught about, the Old Testament, the return of the Jews and how lovely this was.

Nobody was interested in what I had to say, my story. Anyway, you know, it was a really dreadful, dreadful story. Not only did people lose their homes and their property, they lost their lives. In the case of my parents, I can't begin to imagine how hard it was: my father had a promising career with the Mandate authorities, the British Mandate, which ruled Palestine. He was a school teacher. He was in the education department and had been recently given a rise and a new position and he was looking forward to it. All cut off, all ended. My mother, who was a housewife living a nice life with her friends. This was suddenly severed, and there she is in London. She doesn't speak English, she can't understand, she can't absorb the shock of having lost her home and ending up in a hostile society.

What she used to say, and this is for the Balfour Project – now what a good project this is – because remember, my mother would say to my father, 'Look, I can understand we had to find somewhere else to live, but why here for God's sake? They gave our country away. Why are we living with them?' So, there it was. And look at what's happened since then. Today, and I take on board Hannah Ashrawi's optimism, I take on board the promise that we have in the younger generation, the fact that we Palestinians have never given up and we never will. Yet, you know, we have ended up fragmented: our society, our Palestinian society, smashed. We have ended up as communities in different countries in the world. We have separate development; it's unavoidable. You can't help it. You know: American Palestinians, German Palestinians, British Palestinians, each of course has Palestine in common, but they are otherwise quite different. They're used to something else.

So, we've got this situation and, to make it worse, we can't forget because Israel is ongoing. Its assaults on the Palestinians form what we call the ongoing Nakba. I want to leave you with my thoughts in the midst of all this unhappiness and the unhappy memories, and the way that Palestinian society is destroyed. The thought is that it seems to me that we have to talk about solving it all. We have to. Of course, there will be people like me and others who will retain the history, will talk about it. We'll narrate it, we'll write about it, but what we want is an end to this. We really do. I can only echo the

ideas that Hanan Ashrawi spoke of, in that there has to be an end and there is only one way I can see it. And that is the creation of a state in which people have equal rights in which they live in a democracy, and that is the single state in Israel/ Palestine. That seems to me to be the way forward. Please don't forget about the refugees. People tend to, you know. Six million sitting in camps after all this time. What a disgrace. These people need a solution. And the solution, in my estimation, can only be in a single democratic state, which brings back the pluralist society that we used to have in the past in Palestine and I hope it happens.

Sir Vincent Fean:

Thank you, Ghada. That was very moving and I don't mean that lightly. Thank you for your thoughts. Thank you for your wisdom.

A wounded soldier is carried out from the ruins of the King David Hotel, Jerusalem on a stretcher, after being hauled out from under the wreckage

Lord Cope

John Cope is a Conservative politician who was an MP from 1974 to 1997 and appointed to the House of Lords. He held various ministerial offices in the Governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. He was later Conservative Chief Whip in the House of Lords. John Cope was Mrs Thatcher's Security Minister in Northern Ireland during Direct Rule, when he was responsible for Police, Prisons and Troops in support of the civil power. He has a keen interest in Palestine where his wife Djemila was born. He has chaired PalMusic UK. John Cope is Patron of the British Palestine Police Association.

British Police and Security in Palestine

Lord Cope

Lord Cope:

The original plan, implemented immediately in 1920, was for very few British officers, about 17, to be in command of the police force recruited locally and that was 10 times that number. So the best part of 2000 in total. Mainly Arab, of course, both Christian and Muslim, and about 10% Jews, which approximately reflected the population at the time. The whole thing was taken over from the Turks as they withdrew, but also locally recruited, and as I said, British officers to direct the force.

Very rapidly, certainly by 1922, it became apparent that it was very difficult to police public order, by the Arabs policing Arabs or Jews policing Jews. Both communities were involved in starting and continuing the riots that got going. It was very difficult for individual policemen living in close communities actually to act vigorously and impartially in a riot in this situation, when they very likely agreed strongly with the policy advocated by the rioters, whichever side it was.

More and more British policemen were recruited because they were impartial. And there was set up the so-called gendarmerie itself until the police were more than 50% actually British at all ranks. But particularly the senior ranks were British.

By 1948, there were 4,000 British policemen in the Force, of whom quite a lot were young. They were national servicemen doing their National Service in the Palestine police instead of the army or the air force. They came out to Palestine knowing very little about it. At the time of 1948, 2,500 of them had less than two-years' service. They were young: 19-20 or so, and not having any background information about the history. Generally speaking, comparatively few of the junior ranks, at any rate, initially spoke Arabic or Hebrew. The languages were much better in the senior ranks and the ones who served for any length of time got good at it. The patrols were joint, at least most of the time: a British policeman with an Arab or Jewish policeman as well. That helped from the language point of view.

Sir Vincent Fean:

It is worth mentioning the repression of the Arab revolt, 1936 to 1939, which was essentially the work of the British Army. Your

key point is that those who were involved pre-war, between 1920 and 1939, were very different from the police and indeed the soldiers who came after World War II.

Lord Cope:
The picture changed. There were very few British military in Palestine at the beginning. Once the forces of General Allenby had left, there wasn't a battalion in Palestine. By 1922, they had to send for troops from Egypt when rioting occurred. But later on, there were several battalions there backing up the police, and they were less connected with the local society. They did not speak the language; even the officers didn't speak Arabic or Hebrew for the most part. They came out for relatively brief tours of duty, as opposed to being embedded like the police were in the community.

Sir Vincent Fean:
Sir Henry Gurney, the top British civil servant in Palestine as Chief Secretary at the very end of the Mandate between 1946 and 1948, wrote: "In fact, the last 30 years in this country in Palestine have seen nothing but fluctuations of British policy, hesitations, or no policy at all." He wrote that two months before the departure from Haifa of May 1958. Would you say he was right?

Lord Cope:
Yes, I would. I don't think, even at the time, that the Jewish national home was ever properly defined. Nobody quite knew what they meant by it, what the British Government meant by it. Zionists, particularly the strong Zionists, meant exactly what it turned out to mean. That's to say that the land should be taken over by Jews and run by them entirely and the inhabitants at the time could be basically ignored.

I don't think that was Balfour's idea of what it turned out to be. In those days there'd been pogroms in Poland and Russia and Eastern Europe generally, so there were Jews who required a national home, who required somewhere to go, who were refugees from appalling things. It wasn't the Holocaust yet, but as the thirties went on, and particularly when you get into the 1940s, then everybody increasingly realised that the Holocaust existed and was getting worse and worse, and there were more and more refugees with whom people in Britain had a lot of sympathy.

Palestine seemed to be one of the answers or part of the answer, but the trouble was Palestine wasn't big enough. Immigration was increasingly a problem for the police and the military from the late thirties onwards. The fact of immigration and the large amounts of immigration of Jews was the cause of the Arab revolt, because it became obvious that there was a determination to try and take over the place. Then it became much more difficult to police it at all and the military were much more involved.

Sir Vincent Fean:
Britain armed and trained Jewish settlers, particularly during the twenties and thirties, arguing that they needed help to protect their settlements. Is it fair to say that British treatment of the Jewish settlers, incomers and of the indigenous Arab population was anything but even-handed?

Lord Cope:
I think the British intention, and a lot of the execution of it too, was even-handed. But you are right that some of the particularly more isolated Jewish settlements got attacked and said, "Look, we need to defend ourselves". A lot of people had firearms, both legal and illegal, and the Government did allow them to have some firearms and trained them in order that they were able to protect their own settlements, because the British were unable to do it. When they were isolated, it took time to get assistance to them. We did undoubtedly support some settlements in this way.

Sir Vincent Fean:
In your role as patron of the British Palestine Police Association, you've met people who served in the post-war period. The composition of the force changed greatly over the three decades of British rule. What of the 1945 to 1948 contingent?

Lord Cope:
Anyone who was 18 in 1948 is 92 now, and my contacts have been approaching that age in the few years I've been involved with the Association. They were all young men at the time. Nevertheless, I know something of those who were the commanders. John Rymer-Jones was Police Commissioner from 1943-46. He said that by the beginning of 1948, British policing as it was known in Britain had been largely abandoned. This is partly to do with the actual end of the Mandate. One of the problems as far as policing was concerned is that the end of the Mandate was announced in September 1947 to happen in May the next year. That was a very long transitional period. There were all sorts of reasons for this. The United Nations were supposed to move in and organise the partition properly, but of course it was a complete flop. They didn't manage to do that at all. But it was a very long transitional period.

Now, if you are a policeman and you are trying to arrest somebody for stealing or whatever, what's the point of arresting him if you don't know whether you're ever going to be able to to bring him to court and have him sentenced? Dealing with ordinary crime becomes impossible when the whole system of justice is up in the air and patently not going to happen in any recognisable form until things settle down again. So, there was a very long gap, which must have been increasingly difficult to handle and got worse as the months went on, until finally the British were evacuated.
The Jewish and the Arab members of the police force carried on. They were left behind to try and do what they could in the new circumstances, but nobody knew what the new circumstances were going to be. They knew what they were supposed to be, because it was laid down in the United Nations Resolution. But it didn't happen. And it certainly didn't happen in Jerusalem, which was supposed to be a neutral zone under the United Nations partition and turned out to be the centre of the fighting. Or at least a lot of it.

Sir Vincent Fean:
Let's discuss why the British Government post-war decided to pull the plug. One very striking terrorist attack was the King David Hotel bombing by the Irgun in 1946, which killed 91 people - British, Jewish, Arab. Was that a turning point for the British Government? In the period from 1945 to 1948, Britain lost just over 1,000 service personnel killed in Palestine. A very striking number, and largely as a result of Irgun and Haganah attacks. But would you say that the hotel bombing was a turning point, or that it

was an incremental change?

Lord Cope:
It was certainly a very significant event. The King David Hotel was a very important building itself: a prestigious hotel, built not long before to be the Ritz of Jerusalem. One wing of it was requisitioned by the British Government. It was a Government headquarters. But it had both police and a lot of army too there. Bombing that was like bombing Buckingham Palace. It was iconic in that sense as well as for the appalling number killed in a single incident. Although there were very large numbers of British personnel killed in Palestine in the post-war period, the bombing came soon after the Second World War was over. The news had been dominated by the War, as long as that went on, and killings that took place in Palestine were not important by comparison to what was going on in Europe. By 1946 there was no other violence on the same scale - and that certainly drew it to more people's attention in Britain.

A British policeman checking papers of padders by on a street in Jerusalem, during the British Mandate of Palestine, 1947

From Balfour to Bevin - Britain's betrayal of Palestine

Professor Avi Shlaim

Sir Vincent Fean:

May I introduce Professor Avi Shlaim, Emeritus Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford and a fellow of the British Academy, writer of several books. One which struck me forcibly and informed my thinking was *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* from 2014. Currently Avi is working on an autobiographical book. Avi was born in Iraq and the title of the book is *Three Worlds: Memoir of an Arab Jew*, to be published next summer. Avi's talk today is 'From 'Balfour to Bevin', so from 1917 to 1948, 'Britain's Betrayal of Palestine'. Just to repeat, welcome, Avi.

Professor Avi Shlaim

Good afternoon to everybody. And thank you, Sir Vincent. I'm very happy to be taking part in this very important conference of the Balfour Project. It is striking how many British betrayals of Palestine have names which begin with B. First there is the country itself, Britain, and then there is Balfour, Bevin, Blair and Boris. I've given one talk about Britain's 'Betrayal of Palestine from Balfour to Blair' and I've given another talk with the same title but with a subtitle 'From Balfour to Boris'. It's the sad same story. I only have to update it. Today we are talking about the collapse of the British Mandate in Palestine, but I would like to start with the present incumbent in 10 Downing Street. Boris Johnson in his 2014 book on Churchill, *The Churchill Factor,* wrote that the Balfour Declaration was 'bizarre, a tragically incoherent document and an exquisite piece of Foreign Office fudgerama'. I couldn't have put it better myself. This is a rare example of sound judgment and historical perspective coming from our Prime Minister. On the other hand, a year later in 2015, on a trip to Israel as Mayor of London, Boris hailed the Balfour Declaration as a great thing. So, apparently there is no limit to Boris's duplicity. Here he personifies the British position on Palestine all along: an unbroken thread of duplicity and skulduggery connects British foreign policy from Balfour to Boris Johnson. Today's session is

Professor Avi Shlaim

Avi Shlaim is an Emeritus Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of the British Academy. His books include *War and Peace in the Middle East: A Concise History* (1995); *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (2014); *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace* (2007); and *Israel and Palestine: Reappraisals, Revisions, Refutations* (2009). Avi is working on an autobiographical book, *Three Worlds: Memoir of an Arab-Jew,* which will be published in June 2023.

about the British Mandate in Palestine from 1920 to 1948, but the story starts with the original seed, with the Balfour Declaration. Sir John Chancellor, who was a British High Commissioner to Palestine, described the Balfour Declaration as a colossal strategic blunder. I agree. In my view, the Balfour Declaration was one of the worst mistakes in British foreign policy in the first half of the 20th century. To borrow a phrase from Talleyrand it was worse than a crime, it was a mistake. There is an Arabic saying that something that starts crooked remains crooked, and this is a case in point.

The key to understanding British policy during this period is British imperial interest: geopolitical interest and strategic imperative. In World War I Britain was in desperate need of allies. It therefore made three famous promises on the future of Palestine.

In 1915, it promised Hussain the Sharif of Mecca an independent kingdom, an independent Arab kingdom if he for his part would mount an Arab revolt against the Ottomans. The Sharif Hussain kept his side of the bargain, but Britain reneged on its part of the bargain. A debate revolved round whether or not Palestine was included in the promise of an independent Arab kingdom. Britain tried to wriggle out, pretending that Palestine was never promised to the Sharif. This is completely wrong; the Sharif was right. Britain lied to him and betrayed him.

In 1916 Britain signed a secret agreement with France, the Sykes–Picot Agreement. As the two colonial powers could not agree about Palestine they placed it under separate international administration, but this flatly contradicted the promise of an independent kingdom to the Sharif Hussain of Mecca.

Worse was to come. In 1917 Britain issued the Balfour Declaration in support of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine with the well-known caveat about Palestinian rights.

The difference between the Sykes–Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration is that the first was never implemented. Britain reneged on the Sykes–Picot Agreement whereas the Balfour Declaration was fully implemented. The Sykes–Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration constitute the main terms of reference of Arab nationalists ever since. The Sykes–Picot Agreement is a symbol of Western attempts to carve up the Middle East into spheres of influence, of Western intervention in the area to promote their own colonial Imperial interests, whereas the Balfour Declaration is a symbol of the Western attempt to impose a foreign entity, a foreign people in the heartland of the Arab world. It is ever since then that Arab nationalists have regarded Israel, not as a genuine entity, but as an artificial entity, an outpost of Western imperialism in the Middle East. The Balfour Declaration is only 67 words long, but it had far-reaching consequences for Jews, for Arabs and for the entire region.

The literature on the British Mandate in Palestine is vast, but I can summarise my take in one sentence: Britain stole Palestine from the Palestinians and gave it to the Zionists. The Zionist movement was Britain's junior ally in the dispossession of the Palestinians. Zionism is a settler colonial movement and the state of Israel, its principle political progeny, is a colonial settler state. Noam Chomsky once observed that settler colonialism is the most extreme and sadistic form of imperialism. The Palestinians have the misfortune of being at the receiving end of both Zionist settler colonialism and British imperialism. Elizabeth Monroe called her classic book on Britain and the Middle East *Britain's Moment in the Middle East*. In a long historical perspective this was a fleeting moment but its consequences for the Arabs were devastating and enduring. Britain denied the Arabs independence, freedom and democracy. The whole mark of British policy towards Palestine was double standards: one standard for Jews and one standard for Arabs. The French called Britain perfidious Albion, not without reason, but France was no less perfidious. Perfidy and egoism are in the DNA of all colonial powers.

The Jewish writer, Arthur Koestler, famously described the Balfour Declaration as a statement in which one nation promised to a second nation the country of a third. There is no basis in international law for the new-fangled concept of a national home. For the Zionists and for their chief supporters in Britain – Balfour, Lloyd George and Churchill – from the beginning the national home was just a euphemism for a state. In 1917, as is well known, the Arabs constituted 90% of the population of the country, the Jews constituted 10% and the Jews owned only 2% of the land. These are key facts, incontrovertible facts, and these facts make the Balfour Declaration a classic colonial document which completely disregarded the rights and aspirations of the majority of the population of the country. The driving force behind the Balfour Declaration was not Balfour, but the Prime Minister Lloyd George. In domestic politics, Lloyd George was a Welsh radical, but in foreign policy, he was an old-fashioned British imperialist and a land grabber.

Lloyd George wanted Palestine for two reasons: to exclude the French and to secure British control over the access to the Suez Canal. Giving Palestine to the Zionists was an indirect and devious way of reneging on the Sykes–Picot Agreement. Moreover, Lloyd George knew that the majority of British Jews were opposed to Zionism. So why did he privilege the Zionists? Tom Segev in his book *One Palestine Complete* suggests the answer. The answer is that Lloyd George had a highly inflated idea of the international influence of the Jews. His support for Zionism was based on a misperception. In aligning Britain with Zionism he acted in the mistaken, and I may add, the anti-Semitic view that the Jews had covert power. The Jews had subterranean power that made the wheels of history turn.

The reality was that the Jews were helpless with nothing to offer and the Zionists were a minority within an impotent minority. The great majority of influential English Jews were opposed to the nationalist idea inherent in Zionism. Sir Edwin Montague, the Secretary of State for India, was the only Jew in Lloyd George's cabinet. On the 23rd of August 1917 Montague submitted a memorandum to the cabinet under the heading 'The Anti-Semitism of the Present Government'. The memorandum was four pages long but, in a nutshell, it argued that Judaism is a religion, not a nation and to establish a Jewish state in Palestine would undermine the struggle for equal rights for Jews in Britain, in Europe and elsewhere. If there were a Jewish state in Palestine, he argued, and Jews were being difficult, people would say to them, why don't you go to your own country? So this memorandum is very significant and it sums up the Jewish case against Zionism. But the cabinet opted for the Balfour Declaration. Dr Chaim Weizmann was sitting in the antechamber as the cabinet was deliberating. When they had finished deliberating, the Secretary of the Cabinet, Sir Mark Sykes, the same Sykes of the Sykes–Picot Agreement, came out and announced 'Dr Weizmann, it's a boy.' This is an early and a very striking illustration of how close the Zionists were to the centres of power in Britain.

The next important landmark is the League of Nations Mandate to Britain over Palestine. This is highly significant because what had been a merely British promise to a group of people became an international document, an international instrument, an obligation, a formal obligation for the British government to implement the Balfour Declaration, which was incorporated into the mandate. It was a dual mandate with an obligation towards the Jews, but also an obligation towards the Palestinians. The mandate was described as a sacred trust of civilisation. The British mandate was unique. All the other mandates, the mandate to France for Syria and Lebanon and the mandate to Britain over Iraq, all these other mandates called on the mandate power to prepare the country for self-government.

The Palestine mandate was different because it incorporated the Balfour Declaration. So, in effect, the mandatory power was asked to prepare the country, not for self-government by its own people, but to prepare it for independence by bringing to Palestine the Jews from Europe and anywhere else in the world. As the mandatory power, Britain favoured the Zionists from the very beginning. The first High Commissioner for Palestine was Sir Herbert Samuel, who was both a Jew and an ardent Zionist. The Palestinians demanded a democratically elected national assembly and a democratic government. Whitehall refused. Sir Martin Gilbert, who was no friend of the Palestinians and was a passionate Zionist, wrote the following: 'The cornerstone of mandatory policy was to withhold representative institutions so long as there was in Palestine an Arab majority.' In other words, withhold elections until the Jews became the majority. As a result of this one-sided British policy, which encouraged Jewish immigration from Europe to Palestine, an Arab Revolt broke out in 1936. Major General Bernard Montgomery was sent to Palestine to suppress the revolt. When he arrived, his advisors tried to brief him about the background to the conflict. Monty cut them short. He gave them straightforward orders: kill all the troublemakers. And, indeed, the Arab Revolt was suppressed by the British army with the utmost brutality, which included torture, murder, collective punishment, detention without trial, military courts and aerial bombardments.

Rashid Khalidi, the Palestinian historian, has argued that Palestine was not lost in the late 1940s, it was lost in the late 1930s. He advances this argument in his chapter on the Palestinians, in the book that Eugene Rogan and I co-edited called *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*. Khalidi's argument is that it was because of the brutality with which Britain crushed the Palestinian resistance in the late 1930s that by the time the critical phase in the struggle for Palestine began in 1947, the Jews were ready and the Palestinians had very little. This brings me to the 1948 war.

There is a debate between Zionist historians and revisionist Israeli historians, or 'new historians' as we are called, about Britain's role as the Mandate reached its inglorious end. The standard Zionist rendition of events says that as Britain withdrew from Palestine, it did not accept that there would be a Jewish state and it incited, armed and encouraged its Arab allies to invade Palestine upon expiry of the British Mandate and to strangle the infant Jewish state at birth. Ilan Pappé, my fellow new historian, and I contest this version of events. We accept that there is a case to be made against British policy towards the end of the Mandate, but the case is not that it tried to suppress a Jewish state, but that it set out and succeeded in aborting the birth of a Palestinian state. Ilan Pappé does this in his book on Britain and Palestine *Britain and the Arab Israeli Conflict, 1948–1951,* and I argue this in my book *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine*. Hostility towards the Palestinians is a constant factor in British policy in 1948. In British eyes a Palestinian state was synonymous with a Mufti state and therefore Britain did not genuinely accept the UN resolution for the partition of Palestine, but left it for the two sides to fight it out.

The key to Ernest Bevin's policy during this period was Greater Transjordan, to support King Abdullah of Transjordan, to support his bid to grab the West Bank, the heartland of what was to be the Palestinian state. Abdullah was Britain's client. He was also, in the phrase of one British official, a born land grabber. So were the Zionists. 1948 became a general land grab. The winners were Israel, which in the course of the war increased its territory from the 55% of Palestine assigned by the UN cartographers to 78% of the country, and our King Abdullah, who captured and later annexed the West Bank to his kingdom. The losers were the Palestinians, roughly 750,000, roughly three-quarters of a million

Palestinians became refugees and the name Palestine was wiped off the map. This is the Nakba, but the Nakba is not a one-off event. It's an ongoing process. Israeli occupation continues and the Israeli occupation, to judge by the events of the last few days, is getting more and more extreme, vicious and sadistic by the day.

My conclusion is that Britain's record in Palestine in the last 105 years is shameful and indefensible. In Palestine, Britain empowered and enabled a small minority to start the systematic take-over of the country. Britain in fact, over-fulfilled its promise to the Palestinians. It promised to view with favour the establishment of a national hub for the Jews in Palestine, but it ended up helping them to achieve a fully -fledged state. On the other hand, and by the same token, Britain betrayed the sacred trust of civilisation to the Palestinian majority. This is a sad story of double standards, broken promises and betrayals stretching all the way from Arthur Balfour to Boris Johnson, hence the importance of the Balfour Project and the importance of this conference. Thank you.

Sir Vincent Fean:

Thank you very much, Avi. Thank you for being with us. Unsurprisingly, we have many questions and I will transmit to you any that we do not cover in the next 20 minutes. Can I start with one from Sasha Musammi. 'Thank you for the discussion, for the presentation. How is one able to make sense of the horrendous impact of Western imperialism and colonialism? With the far-reaching consequences, particularly in Palestine, similar occurrences have happened in South Africa and, as a nation, it could only go forward once open and honest discussions were had. At the moment, Palestinians are not involved in any political decision-making. When this is aired with reference to Israel, this is viewed as anti-Semitism.' That's his question. Avi, if you can pick the bones out of that, I guess it's a comparison between South Africa under de Klerk and the situation that Israel Palestine faces today.

Professor Avi Shlaim:

It's a very valid comparison between apartheid South Africa and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Israelis don't like this comparison, but in the last year, there have been four major reports by human rights organisations, which reach the same conclusion: B'tselem, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and I think there was one other. They're all based on serious research, in the case of Amnesty International, four years of research, and they all reached the same conclusion. The really significant report was the first one by B'tselem, that highly respected Israeli human rights organisation. In the past B'tselem used to write reports only about the Occupied Territories, but in this report it says it's no longer valid to distinguish between the Occupied Territories and Israel proper as it's one regime. And it's a Jewish supremacist regime that controls the whole area from the river to the sea.

And there is another word for this situation, which is an ethnocracy. Israel prides itself on being a democracy but if you look at the reality from the river to the sea, it's an ethnocracy. It's regime in which one ethnic group dominates and controls the other. It is right to compare present-day Israel with apartheid South Africa. One reason that I'm hopeful that this situation will end is because I do not believe that apartheid in the 21st century is sustainable over the long term. So, like Hanan Ashrawi, I'm pessimistic at the moment, but I am optimistic in the long term.

Sir Vincent Fean:

Can I put two questions together because they are compatible, I think? First from Hanim Abu Salem, 'Professor Shlaim, what solution would you propose to solving the conflict and what is your view on the one-state solution proposed by Dr Karmi and others?' And then Betina Marks 'Can the wrong done by the Balfour Declaration be rectified or repaired? Do you see any chance that Palestinians will gain their rights either in their own state or in one state between the river and the sea?' Those are the two questions.

Professor Avi Shlaim:

I'm a pensioner so I can only cope with one question at a time.

So I'll start with the one-state solution and then I may have to ask you to remind me of the second question. As far as the one-state solution is concerned, I've undergone a change over the years. Throughout most of my political, my academic, career I supported a two-state solution not because it was the perfect solution, not because it would have provided absolute justice for the Palestinians, but in the real world, there is no such a thing as absolute justice, but you are what Edward Said called two communities of suffering. The Palestinians are victims, but they are the victims of victims because the Jews in their time had also been victims. So the most fair, rational solution that one could think of was to partition the land between Palestinians and Israelis, to establish an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel consisting of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and a capital city in East Jerusalem. And, essentially, by signing the Oslo accord, the PLO signed up to the two-state solution and there's been the broadest international consensus behind the two-state solution and there is still today. But Israel has destroyed the possibility of a two-state solution by expanding settlements, constantly expanding settlements and all the settlements are illegal, without exception. The annexation of East Jerusalem is illegal. The annexation of the Golan Heights, although that's not Palestinian, is illegal. The wall, the security wall that Israel has built on the West Bank, is illegal. It is said to be for security, but it also serves the purpose of land grabbing. So, Israel by its actions has made a viable Palestinian state impossible. It has become fashionable to say that the two-state solution is dead.

I will go further and argue that the two-state solution was never on in the sense that no Israeli government, since 1967 has offered a plan for a two-state solution which is acceptable, even to the most moderate Palestinians. Moreover, no American administration since 1967 has really pushed Israel into a two-state solution. So this is mere words, it's *kalam farigh*, it's empty talk, the two states. Therefore, what is the solution? I've come to the conclusion that the only fair solution is one democratic state with equal rights for all its citizens, regardless of ethnicity and religion. So this is where I stand now. I'm not reluctantly driven to the one-state solution. On the contrary, I think it's a noble vision. What could be more noble than Arabs and Jews living together in one state with equal rights for all? So that's my answer to the first question. The second question was? Remind me.

Sir Vincent Fean:

I believe, to be honest, you've answered it, which is why I put them together. You have put your voice to the one-state solution. Can I take you to a question by Gillian Moseley, director of the *Tinderbox* film? She says, 'I have noticed that when talking with enthusiastic Zionists, that history is used randomly to support their claims, thereby delinking those incidents from chronology and context. Other than

repeating chronology and context, are there ways that the weakness in this approach could be exposed, could be demonstrated?

Professor Avi Shlaim:

First of all, I recommend Gillian Moseley's film *Tinderbox* to all the participants. And secondly, I will answer her question, which is that by saying that all national movements rewrite the history, all national movements have a nationalist version of history, and the Zionist movement is no exception. Isaiah Berlin used to say that the Jews are like any other people only more so. By the same token, Zionist historiography is like any other nationalist historiography, only more so. Nationalist versions of history tend to have a number of features in common. They tend to be simplistic, selective, self-serving and self -righteous. So, as Gillian says, Zionists are very selective in their interpretation of history. This is where the new history comes in, the books published by Benny Morris on the *Origins of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, Ilan Pappé on Britain in 1948, my own book *Collusion across the Jordan*. We were collectively called the new historians or revisionist Israeli historians when, between us, we mounted a frontal attack on all the myths that have come to surround the birth of Israel and the first Arab– Israeli war. Edward Said, who was not a historian, said that the new history serves three purposes. First it educates Israelis about the history of the conflict. Secondly, it gives the Palestinians a version of history which is genuine, which is true, which is in line with their own experience, which is in line with the experience of Ghada Karmi in 1948, instead of the usual propaganda of the victors. And thirdly, honest history encourages an honest dialogue and is therefore conducive to producing a climate which is more tolerant, more understanding of the other, and therefore more conducive to a historic reconciliation.

Sir Vincent Fean:

May I ask a question, which comes from Wissam Boustany, world-famous flautist and supporter of Pal Music. 'The conference demonstrates that the Palestinian issue cannot be seen in isolation outside the context of the wider global fragmentation of our humanity as a result of the power structures that have dominated our planet for many decades. I guess we're talking about imperialism being the root of countless wars and suffering, the latest flash-point being Ukraine and Russia. My question is: is there any hope that these power structures can ever be reinvented to rebuild hope for the future of our humanity, including Palestine and many countries and the citizens who have been destroyed in, I guess, imperial wars?'

Professor Avi Shlaim:

It's always good to live in hope but just now we are faced with one of the most egregious examples of double standards by the international community. So Russia invaded Ukraine and, as Hanan Ashrawi pointed out, within six days, the ICC sent an advance party and started an investigation of war crimes. In fact, she was wrong because on the second day of the invasion, the chief prosecutor of the ICC announced that he is going to investigate and he then sent an advance party, whereas it took the ICC five or six years to investigate war crimes in the Occupied Territories. The Palestinian Authority submitted a complaint in 2015 and there was a preliminary probe, but the chief prosecutor sat on the fence for five years before announcing in December 2019 that she would launch a full investigation of war crimes.

This hasn't happened yet. So you couldn't have a more striking example of double standards and no one is more guilty of double standards on this issue than the British government and the Prime Minister, more specifically. Boris Johnson sent a letter to the British Conservative Friends of Israel in which he said, 'We respect the independence of the International Criminal Court, but in this case we think it'd be wrong to have an investigation because Israel is a close friend and ally of the United Kingdom.' So there you have it: because Israel is a friend and ally of the United Kingdom it is above international law, and it's above international scrutiny. This is precisely the problem with the international community and its approach to the Palestinian issue.

Sir Vincent Fean:

Two more questions, and then the break. From Ronald Mendel, 'Can it be argued that the founders of Israel in launching a war against a colonial power, i.e. the terrorism against the UK, the King David Hotel, et cetera, a war against the colonial power for an independent state "disguised" their own secular colonialism?'

Professor Avi Shlaim:

Yes, I think it can be because Zionism was aligned from day one with a colonial power. The Zionist movement could never have made it on its own without the support and backing of the British colonial power. In fact, a cardinal tenet of Zionist foreign policy was always to have on your side the pre-eminent Western power of the day. First it was Britain and after the Second World War it was America. So Israel is a settler colonial state but I wouldn't want to deny that there was also an element of Jewish national self-determination, a genuine element, a genuine Jewish desire for independence and freedom. But the war of independence is what it is called by Israelis. The 1948 war, the war for Palestine, is called the war for independence. So you could say it was independence from the British, but what about the other people? The other community that lived there? Britain was quitting in any case and therefore what happened was the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. In Zionist discourse from the late 1930s, there was always talk about transfer. But in 1948, when war broke out, there was an opportunity to implement the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. I've already described the 48 war as a general land grab, but from the point of view of the Palestinians it was also the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. So, whichever way you look at it, the creation of the state of Israel involved a monumental injustice to the Palestinians.

Sir Vincent Fean:

Thank you, Avi. I repeat, any questions that we have not covered will be transmitted to you for you to see. The last question is from Marcus Holeside. One of the problems he identifies is that Jews living in the diaspora I guess including the UK who are compassionate and sympathetic to most disadvantaged people tend to turn off when asked to show a similar degree of compassion towards Palestinians. Is there a way to address this? I would just add my impression is that the peoples of Palestine and the Jewish people of Israel have grown apart over the decades, partly by governmental design. The knowledge that the other is the same as us is dwindling. But coming back to the question from Marcus, he's talking about the diaspora. Can you see a way to address the graduation of compassion?

Professor Avi Shlaim:

Yes, it is true that in the past, the majority of Jews were Zionists and identified with the state of Israel and this left little space for empathy with the Palestinians, but in the last decade or so, this has been changing and changing very radically and fundamentally. Look at America. Today young liberal Americans have great reservations about Israel. They want an end of the occupation and they want a two-state solution. Maybe 70% of British Jews, of American Jews, are of that opinion and AIPAC, the lobby. represents a shrinking proportion of American Jews. And there is an American organisation, a very powerful organisation, it's called American Jews for Peace, I think. And there is the same trend in this country. The majority of Jews support Israel. Some support it unconditionally, some still operate on the basis of " my country right or wrong", but this is changing.

And I belong to a small group within the Labour Party called Jewish Voice for Labour. We belong to the left wing of the party who are supporters of Jeremy Corbyn. And we are strong supporters of Palestinian rights. The trouble with the debate about anti-Semitism is that anti-Semitism, which is a real problem, a real phenomenon, has been weaponised to silence and discredit and stigmatise critics of Israel. So, I'd like to make a very firm distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. The Jews are a people, Israel is a state and therefore it's perfectly legitimate to criticise Israeli policies and practices, especially in relation to the Palestinians, without being in any way anti-Semitic. So I think that the trend is for more and more Jews to see the light, to recognise the injustice that has been done to the Palestinians and to adopt a more fair-minded position in this conflict.

British soldiers in the Jewish Quarter of the ld City of Jerusalem with the Dome of the Rock in the background during the British Mandate.

Roger Hardy

Roger Hardy was for more than twenty years a Middle East analyst with the BBC World Service. He is the author of *The Muslim Revolt: A Journey through Political Islam, The Poisoned Well: Empire and Its Legacy in the Middle East and, most recently, The Bride: An Illustrated History of Palestine, 1850-1948. He is an Associate Fellow of Green Templeton College, University of Oxford.*

Photographing the Nakba
Roger Hardy

Hello, everybody. Forgive me for beginning with a plug for my book, *The Bride: An Illustrated History of Palestine, 1850-1948* - but, in a sense, the book was the start of a journey into a number of archives, including Israeli archives, some of which were very difficult to get into and very difficult to navigate. As a result, what I am going to say is really very personal. When I got to the *Nakbah*, towards the end of the book, I thought initially of what you might call its stock images. So I approached UNRWA, whose unique collection of photographs is now digitised, and I thought of news agencies which covered the first Arab-Israeli war. They had produced essentially war photographs, often focusing on British soldiers. But I knew in the back of my mind that there were also Israeli photographers who had recorded the *Nakbah*. They, of course, would have said, 'No, we were recording and photographing the Israeli War of Independence' – but in doing the one, they were also doing the other.

Now, friends had told me about the Israeli photographs that appeared in *From Palestine to Israel*, a pioneering book published just over a decade ago by the Israeli researcher Ariella Azoulay. She had taken very remarkable photographs from official Israeli state archives. So, in a sense, I was following in her footsteps. But even she had found some of these archives difficult to access. As a sign of her frustration, she had published a number of empty boxes, indicating pictures that she had not been allowed to publish. If I do not run out of time, I am going to show you some of these today.

Let us go to Picture One. This is Ramleh in July 1948. We know quite a lot about the photographer: he was one of the most distinguished of the Israeli photojournalists, Beno Rothenberg. Rothenberg worked quite closely with the Haganah and had, in some sense, a privileged access to the war, to the *Nakbah*. Here [in Picture One] Ramleh has been conquered. The first thing is always to separate the men from the women. And so this [picture] shows, quite graphically, the surrender of Ramleh.

Picture 1: Ramleh, 1948 / Beno Rothenberg (Meitar Collection/National Library of Israel/The Prizker Family National Photography Collection)

Picture 2: Ramleh, 1948 / David Eldan (Government Press Office)

If we go to Picture Two, we see what happened to some of these men after their surrender. This was taken by a different photographer but, again, an Israeli official photographer, called David Eldan. After the surrender of the town and after the men were separated from the women and children, the men were penned up behind barbed wire prior to their eventual expulsion. You may say, correctly I think, that there is a propagandistic element to the photograph, since it shows the Israeli soldier allowing boys to give water to the men of Ramleh. Incidentally, the men are incorrectly described in the caption to the photo as prisoners of war, POWs; they were not, they were civilians.

Picture 3: Ramleh, 1948 / Boris Carmi (Meitar Collection/National Library of Israel/The Prizker Family National Photography Collection)

If we go to Picture Three, we get a more intimate portrait of a family, clearly in a great hurry, preparing to leave for their enforced departure. This was taken by a third Israeli photographer, Boris Carmi. Look at how the boy in the centre is staring sullenly at the photographer. As many of you know, this family was part of the at least 40,000 Palestinians who were expelled from Ramleh and the neighbouring town of Lydda, in one of the biggest expulsions of its kind.

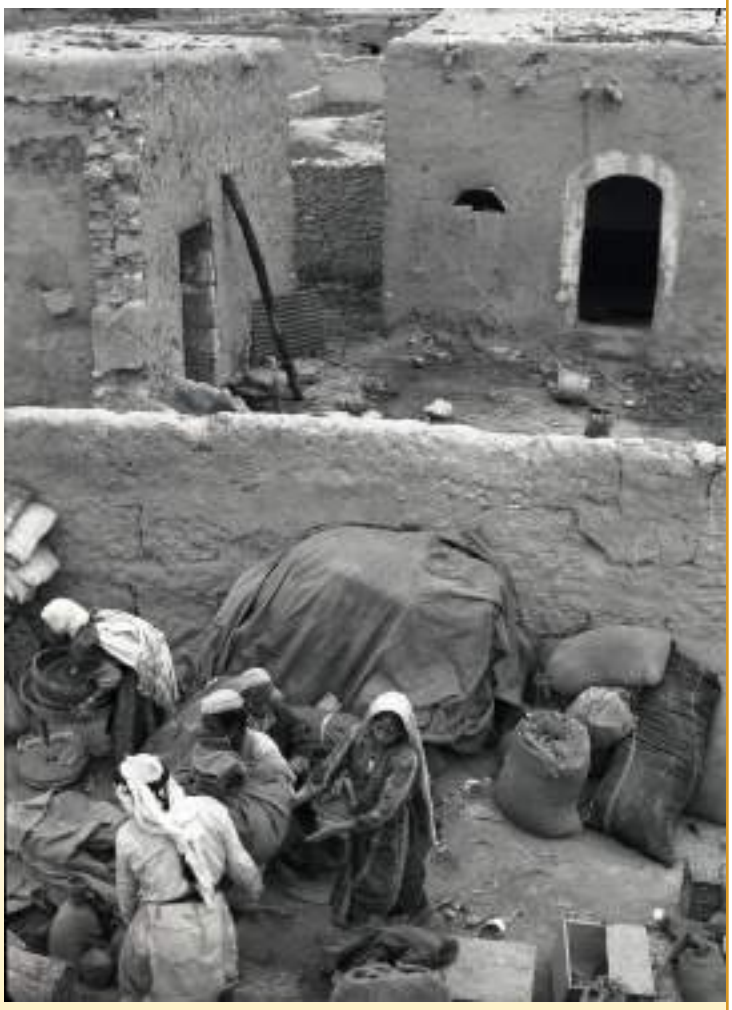
If we go to Picture Four, we move away from Ramleh. Now, you may have seen this picture before, perhaps on the internet, or maybe you have seen it in Ariella Azoulay's book. These people are usually described as the women and children of the coastal village of Tantura - but, in fact, they have already been moved around more than once, from one place to another, by the Israelis. Here they are at the border crossing-point, they are about to go to Tulkarm, which was under Jordanian control.

The first image is what I would call a classic refugee shot. The refugees are in the foreground, a very vivid image of women carrying their bags, carrying their children. The next photo [not published in this booklet] is the same shot but includes anti-tank barriers, sadly rather topical given the war in Ukraine. This is by another official photographer, Paul Goldman, who chose to put the women and children further back into the

Picture 4: Women of Tantura, 1948 / Beno Rothenberg (Meitar Collection/National Library of Israel/The Prizker Family National Photography Collection)

picture. As a result, the brutal lumps of metal are thrust forward, as it were against them. If you look at the background of the picture on the left, you can see the bus that has taken them from their last place of detention to this border crossing called Bir Burin. Goldman's own caption reads 'Expulsion of women and children from Bir Burin, 1948'.

In many cases we do not know what happened to these pictures. And, in many cases, it looks very much as if they were not published, because these were not the images that newspaper editors or government agencies wanted to publish. But in this case, the photograph was published in a rather prominent weekly Davar Hashavua in June 1948. The caption was changed to read: 'Arab women with their children were returned to Arab territory'. The implications is that Arabs were being 'returned' to another Arab territory, Jordan: so that was all right, wasn't it? By the way, this expulsion was viewed not only by photographers – several Israeli photographers – but also by the United Nations and the Red Cross.



Picture 6: Iraq al-Manshiya / Beno Rothenberg (Meitar Collection/ National Library of Israel/The Prizker Family National Photography Collection)

If we go to the next picture, Picture Six, we come to a scene which, to the best of my knowledge, was not witnessed by the United Nations and the Red Cross. It shows the small village of Iraq al-Manshiyya in southern Palestine, where there had been fighting between the Israeli and Egyptian forces. After the Egyptians were defeated and expelled in 1948, a few months later, in early 1949, the inhabitants of Iraq al-Manshiyya were expelled and the village was then razed to the ground. If you have seen this picture, it was almost certainly in Ariella Azoulay's book. The photographer is, again, Beno Rothenberg. He took a whole series of shots of this village.

These images by Rothenberg were not published until some six decades after the event they described. Rothenberg himself was in his nineties when he gave his permission to use them. My strong guess is that he kept them back after he had taken them. He knew what would happen if he submitted them, but he subsequently thought, 'Well, 60 years on, I want to show the pictures that I took.' He could, after all, have suppressed them or even destroyed them, but he didn't. I am glad to say that there has been a change for the better since *From Palestine to Israel* was published. As a result of the efforts of Wikimedia Commons, which is dedicated to putting images into the public domain, this picture, and the other pictures of Iraq al-Manshiyya, are now in the public domain.

If we go to Picture Seven, this, too, raises the issue of making pictures available in the public domain. Researchers like me can then get hold of these pictures, preferably in good resolution and without spending money to do so, and can then reproduce them in a magazine, newspaper or book, whatever it might be. This image is of Majdal in 1950. It is not as well known as it should be, I think, that the expulsions associated with the *Nakbah* continued into 1950. Majdal had been renamed by the Israelis with its ancient name, Ashkelon. Many of the Arab inhabitants had already gone by then but there was quite a degree of contention about what should happen to those who remained. Moshe Dayan was in charge of the final evacuation of the Arabs of Majdal, and insisted that the evacuation was entirely voluntary. But Rothenberg's picture tells a different story.

Picture 7: Majdal/Ashkelon, 1950 / Beno Rothenberg (Meitar Collection/National Library of Israel/The Prizker Family National Photography Collection)

The remaining inhabitants of Majdal were both bribed and coerced into leaving. The Israeli official in the picture – the one with glasses – is handing over money to the Arab who is being told to leave. This is one of the pictures that Ariella Azoulay was not allowed to publish – so I am particularly pleased that it is now in the public domain. However, if you go to Wikimedia Commons, both the caption in English and the caption in Hebrew are less than instructive. They do not tell you what I am telling you now.

The story of Majdal/Ashkelon in 1950 is told in detail by Benny Morris in his book *1948 and After*. Incidentally, some of these [pictures] are in my book. I use two dozen or more pictures from Israeli archives, from the 1930s up to the *Nakbah*, and I've tried to contextualise these pictures.

If we turn to Picture Eight, this is a different photographer, and this is what I call the archaeology of the *Nakbah* - in other words, what happened to the villages from which the inhabitants had either fled or been expelled. Well, the buildings you see in this picture are the houses of the people of Ein Hawd – which the Israelis named Ein Hod. Today it is an artists' colony.

Picture 8: New Moroccan immigrants, Ein Hod (Ein Hawd), 1949 / Zoltan Kluger (Government Press Office)

These women are Jews from Morocco. The photographer is one of the most prolific photographers, and a master of what we can term 'Zionist photography'. Zoltan Kluger was commissioned and paid by official Zionist organisations to take these pictures. They no doubt saw this as a positive picture showing the in-gathering of the Jews into the fledgling state of Israel. I do not think they were much interested in the houses at the top of the photograph which form merely a kind of backdrop to the picture. We, however, who are interested in the *Nakbah* can perhaps view them in a different way. And in particular, we can view in a different way the last picture, which is of the village of Deir al-Qassi near the border with Lebanon. This is again 1949, and again taken by Kluger.

Once again, I think his paymasters would have thought this was good work. Who are these kids? They are newly arrived immigrant children from Kurdistan, and in the background at the top of the hill are the houses of the old village of Deir al-Qassi. Kluger was the master of the staged scene. Immigrants dancing in new Jewish settlements had been a staple of his earlier work in the 1930s and 1940s; before 1948 they had probably been Russians or Poles. Now they were from Kurdistan.

Kluger and his bosses may well have thought that it was an upbeat picture. I think we are free to read it in another way. Kluger was Hungarian-born, but had learned his craft of photography in Berlin before he escaped from Nazi Germany to Palestine [in the 1930s]. So a refugee from Nazi Germany is photographing newly-arrived Kurdish refugees in a village whose original inhabitants are now refugees in United Nations camps.

Picture 9: New Kurdish immigrants. Elkosh (Deir al-Qassi), 1949 / Zoltan Kluger (Government Press Office)

The legal vacuum Britain created: how Britain failed its sacred trust of civilisation towards the Palestinian people

John McHugo, Balfour Project Trustee

I

After the First World War, Britain wanted Palestine for its own imperial purposes: to strengthen its control of the Suez Canal, to provide a land bridge from Egypt to Iraq, and to fulfil its promise in the 1917 Balfour Declaration to facilitate the establishment in Palestine of "a national home for the Jewish people". These purposes complemented each other. As Chaim Weizmann, then the emerging leader of the Zionist movement had put it in 1914, shortly after the war began, a Jewish Palestine would be "a little Asiatic Belgium". This would mean "England would have a very effective and strong barrier [to protect the Suez Canal] and we would have a country."[1]

When the Allied Powers acceded to Britain's wish to possess Palestine, they did not consult its people who wanted independence in a form to be chosen by themselves, and did not want their land to be ruled by Britain. But the Powers extracted a legally binding quid pro quo from Britain. This was that Britain committed itself to "a sacred trust of civilisation" for the "well-being and development" of the people of Palestine. This meant preparing them for independence. The result was the Palestine Mandate.

About three decades later, on 14 May 1948, when the Mandate only had hours left to run, a telegram travelled from the Foreign Office in London along the undersea cable to North America, and then to UKMIS, the British mission to the

John McHugo

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United Nations. It contained legal advice, and was intended to prepare the British delegation to the UN for the moment when the Mandate actually terminated.

Lawyers, as E. M. Forster asserted in *Howard's End*, are a cold breed. Moreover, law and justice do not coincide exactly. Far from it, but in this talk it is law, not justice, that I have to work with.

Among the advice in the telegram was the following statement:

"If the Jews claim to set up a state in the boundaries of the Jewish areas as defined by the United Nations in [the partition resolution] and the Arabs claim to set up a state covering the whole of Palestine, there would be nothing legally to choose between these claims".[2]

I will revert to these words, but I read them now to help you grasp the sheer enormity of what Britain left behind it - a legal vacuum, something that implied that war was inevitable.

So what political rights had Britain been obliged to ensure for the people of Palestine? Let's first consider the Balfour Declaration. When it was issued in 1917, it was just a statement of British Government policy. It promised British "best endeavours" to facilitate the establishment of "a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine". It did not clarify what that meant, but the establishment of a national home was predicated on nothing being done that might prejudice "the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine" - in other words, the Arab Palestinians.

The Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann argued that "civil rights" referred to such matters as existing property and economic rights, and did not include "political rights". This argument still gets aired, and British ministers and diplomats today can even inadvertently give credence to it by sheepishly stating that the declaration "ought" to have included political rights, but didn't. Yet contain political rights it certainly did. Here I respectfully disagree with what Hanan Ashrawi said about this earlier.

First, consider the words "civil rights". Was the civil rights movement in America concerned only with property rights? Was it in Northern Ireland? Was it in South Africa? Of course, not. "Civil rights" include political rights.

Secondly, Palestine had already taken part in elections on the basis of universal but indirect male suffrage for the Ottoman Parliament. The Ottoman Empire was not a democracy, but elections mattered. If you respect somebody's "civil rights", how can you take away their right to vote?

Thirdly, the fact that "civil rights" included "political rights" was effectively what the British Government told its principal Arab ally. In January 1918, only two months after the issue of the declaration, it sent Cdr. David Hogarth, a colleague of T.E. Lawrence, as an emissary to the Sharif Hussein of Mecca to explain the declaration. The message Hogarth carried stated that Britain was determined that no obstacle should be put in the way of the ideal of the return of the Jews to Palestine, "so far as is compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both political and economic".

So there you have it from the horse's mouth. The Balfour declaration had to be compatible with the political and economic freedom of the Palestinians. Afterwards, when Hogarth reported back to his superiors, he used wording that hinted at British double dealing. He said that the Sharif Hussein "would not accept an independent Jewish state in Palestine, nor was I instructed to warn him that such a state was contemplated by Great Britain.[3]

Let's look now at Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations[4] which sets out "the sacred trust of civilisation" that Britain was compelled to undertake. This was a legally binding text. The sacred trust imposed on Great Britain was to ensure "the well-being and development" of the people of the territory covered by the Mandate. Everyone knew this meant preparing them for independence and was eventually confirmed by the International Court of Justice. Britain's obligation to prepare the Palestinian people for independence was clear and unequivocal.

The other key, legally binding text was the document setting out the terms of the Mandate itself. It is a very strange piece of paper. It was largely Britain that drafted it, and it reflected British policy. Dr Weizmann, the leader of the Zionist Organisation, was allowed to have substantial input into the text - although he did not get everything he wanted. Yet no Palestinian - or other Arab - representative was given this opportunity. They were merely informed of its contents after it had been drafted.

Nevertheless, the document was intended to implement Britain's sacred trust of civilisation to the Palestinian people. This is clear from the opening words,

"Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have agreed, for the purposes of giving effect to Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations..."

Preambular paragraphs beginning "whereas", so beloved by lawyers who frequently insert them at the beginning of a document, are called recitals. They set out the intention behind the document and are used to interpret its meaning. They are not merely waffle. They matter.

But the recital referring to Art. 22 was immediately followed by another recital that read:

"Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on 2 November 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, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country..."

This incorporated the Balfour Declaration into the Mandate. Note how the civil rights of the Palestinian Arabs which, as I said, included their political rights, were preserved by this, at least on paper.

There was also another important recital, which immediately followed and should be read with the recital about the Balfour Declaration:

"Whereas recognition has thereby been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country..."

Moving on from the recitals, we should also consider Art. 2 of the Mandate which obliged Britain to place Palestine

"under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home, as laid down in the preamble, *and the development of self-governing institutions*, and also for safe-guarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race or religion." [emphasis added]

Reading all these together, Britain had a sacred trust of civilisation to prepare the Palestinian people for independence, but was simultaneously bound to facilitate the establishment of the Jewish national home in Palestine. In fact most of the rest of the text of the Mandate, which I haven't quoted here, is concerned with facilitating its establishment. Yet what if the Palestinians did not wish their country to become the national home for the Jewish people? Britain knew full well that they did not, if this meant that incomers would take over their country. Britain had also been warned that that could only be accomplished by force of arms.[5]

Nevertheless, under Art. 2 of the Mandate Britain still had to grant the Palestinian people "self-governing institutions" in which they could have expressed their views. Britain never did this. This failure came in for censure from the Mandates Commission at the League of Nations in Geneva in 1924.[6] As Penny Sinanoglou, a scholar who has recently produced an exhaustive study of Britain's various proposals to partition Palestine, has pointed out, "the Mandate was unworkable so long as Jews and Arabs could not be brought together in a joint, representative legislature".[7]

And what if the Jewish community in Palestine, the *Yishuv*, wished to establish an ethnically Jewish state in Palestine? That was the aim of the mainstream Zionist movement. As the historian Martin Gilbert has pointed out, alongside many others, it was a centrepiece of British policy to withhold representative institutions in Palestine until such time as there was a Jewish majority. To paraphrase Sinanoglou, while Britain provided the international scaffolding for Jewish nationalism, it not only failed to do the same for the nationalism of the Arabs of Palestine, but actively suppressed it.[8]

Britain, in pursuit of its imperial interests, had of its own, free, political will put itself in a position where it had given itself a circle to square. Throughout the duration of the Mandate it was unable to establish the representative institutions for Palestine it was bound to establish by Art. 2. The Jewish community in Palestine, the *Yishuv*, fiercely opposed the creation of such institutions unless Jews had first become a majority. In the meantime, it established its own, democratically elected institutions solely for the Jewish community. By contrast, in neighbouring Iraq, Syria and Lebanon to which Art. 22

of the Covenant also applied, self-governing institutions were established. By 1946, these countries had elected parliaments and were fully independent with a constitutional form of government.

II

Let's now look at what happened at the end of the Mandate. Let's return to that legal advice:

"If the Jews claim to set up a state in the boundaries of the Jewish areas as defined by the [partition resolution] and the Arabs claim to set up a state covering the whole of Palestine, there would be nothing legally to choose between these two claims."

It is often wrongly suggested that the UN partition plan passed by UN General Assembly Resolution 181 on 29 November 1947 set out a binding settlement. This was not so. That is why the legal advice stated that there "would be nothing legally to choose between the two claims". The partition plan was always provisional. Up to the last few days of the Mandate, there was always the possibility of a US led U-turn which would have scrapped partition in favour of turning the whole of Palestine into a UN trust territory. This was one of the great fears of Ben Gurion and the other leaders of the *Yishuv*. But Britain's concerns were not for the people of Palestine, but to secure as orderly a withdrawal as possible while leaving Britain's position and prestige in the wider Arab world intact.[9]

As a General Assembly resolution, the partition plan was only a recommendation[10] - a suggestion. It could have been made binding by a Security Council resolution, but there was no majority for this on the Security Council so the issue was never put to a vote.[11] The steps towards implementing it were never taken, and Britain refused to cooperate with the UN Commission that was meant to be in charge of doing so. Britain has been damningly described by the legal scholar John Strawson as "too weak to prevent the civil war that broke out but strong enough to frustrate the UN plan".[12] The Foreign Office legal advice accurately stated on 14 May that: "if a Jewish state is proclaimed it will be setting itself up by its own efforts and not through acts of the UN commission."[13]

Much activity towards setting the Jewish state up had taken place before Israel declared its independence. The *Yishuv*'s own parliament, the *Va'ad Leumi*, had well organised departments dealing with matters such as education, health and labour. These provided the services to the Jewish population that were expected from a government. They had experts such as economists, agronomists, statisticians and surveyors. In reality they had their own armed forces, which had reached the level of sophistication that they had their own military lawyers, while the Jewish Agency acted as ministry of foreign affairs.

The Arab Higher Committee that was treated by Britain and the UN as the representative of the Palestinian people had almost nothing by contrast, including no democratic legitimacy as it had never been elected, and no armed forces. The Palestinian Arab population had had no choice but to rely on

the government provided by the British Mandate for its security and all the services a government was meant to provide. Now that government would cease to exist. The relatively few who had passports issued by the Mandatory government would now find them worthless. Palestinians would now have no army or police to protect them. There would be no budget, no education or health services. No currency. The Palestinians would become a stateless people. Such was Britain's legacy.

According to Menachem Begin's memoirs, Irgun and Haganah commanders had met at the end of January 1948 to plan the conquest of what is today most of Israel and the northern West Bank.[14] By early April, about six weeks before the state of Israel was proclaimed, the armed forces of the *Yishuv* were relatively certain that the British, whose departure was now well under way, would not interfere very much.[15] They went on the offensive. They feared international support for partition might weaken, and they needed to secure the territory of what would become the state of Israel. The Haganah commanders had concluded that, "war is war and there is no possibility of distinguishing between good and bad Arabs".[16] On the eve of the offensive, Ben Gurion said, "we shall enter the empty villages and settle them."[17] Slightly earlier, on 20 March, a representative of the Jewish Agency had told *The Times* that "the Jews of Palestine have already put a sort of partition into force, and we are maintaining it."[18] The historian Benny Morris is of the view that by the first half of April the *Yishuv* was engaged in a war of conquest.[19] Before the proclamation of the State of Israel, thirteen operations to secure strategic Arab areas had already taken place. Not all had been successful, but they were pursuant to the Haganah's Plan Dalet, which envisaged that where necessary in order to secure the State, the inhabitants would be expelled outside its boundaries. The Anglo-Palestinian scholar Victor Kattan, whose researches carried out for his book *From Coexistence to Conquest* has been invaluable for me in writing this paper, has pointed out that eight of these thirteen operations took place outside the areas earmarked by the partition plan for the Jewish state.[20] If the *Yishuv* claimed to accept the partition plan, it did not implement it. It contravened it. In fact, the partition plan had made war inevitable.

Up to half the Palestinians who were made refugees had lost their homes on Britain's watch, before the state of Israel was even proclaimed. This is confirmed by analysis from the IDF, the Israeli Defence Forces.[21] Palestinian society quite simply disintegrated, and Britain let this happen. Britain was still responsible for the security of the people of Palestine, whatever their faith or ethnic group. Rashid Khalidi has observed that, as the Mandate approached its end,

"Arab Palestine was crumbling, and the implications of the absence of a single Palestinian national authority that could have raised and organised forces to defend it were now acutely clear: as individual cities, towns, and villages, most defended by their inhabitants with scant help from outside, fell to the well-organised, centralised forces of a state that had not yet been declared."[22]

When Israel declared its independence at midnight on 14 May, the civil war turned into an international conflict as four Arab states intervened. Governments felt pressurised by public opinion to go to the aid of their Palestinian brothers and sisters, but all these governments followed their own, self-seeking and often incompatible, agendas.

For its part, Israel immediately filed an application to become a member of the UN. This was rejected without even reaching the Security Council floor.

Why was this? As the legal advisers in the British Foreign Office put it four days after the Mandate ended:

"The present juridical situation as regards Palestine is obscure and we cannot be sure whether other governments besides that of the Jewish State will emerge. It would be unfair and legally wrong in the circumstances to admit the Jewish State to the United Nations at this early stage and thus to give it international recognition, while not taking any similar steps for the rest of Palestine."[23]

What an admission by the legal advisers to the outgoing Mandatory Power! Very significantly, the Foreign Office legal advisers also argued against recognition of Israel because, for the time being, it did not in their view fulfil "the basic criteria" of an independent state. Chief among these was the fact that it did not yet exercise effective control over the territories it claimed.[24]

III

So how did Israel come into existence as a state, since this did not happen as a result of the partition plan or a decree of the UN? The answer is: by an act of secession. Secession in international law has been authoritatively defined by James Crawford as "the creation of a State by the use or threat of force without the consent of the previous sovereign".[25] In the case of Israel, that force and the threat of its use had been exercised against the majority of the native people of the land, because there was no way it could come into existence unless it used force to take control of what would become its territory. In other words, it had to conquer that territory. One of the tests for when it became a state was met when it established a stable and effective government there. It had certainly reached that point by 24 February 1949 when it signed an armistice with Egypt.[26] But, although it was immediately recognised after its declaration of independence on a *de facto* basis by the USA, the USA and Britain both opposed Israel's initial application to become a member of the UN. A second application was also rejected on 17 December, although this time the USA voted in favour. Nevertheless, it would only be on 31 January 1949 that the USA accorded Israel *de jure* recognition. And it would seem that this only recognised Israeli sovereignty over the areas earmarked for the Jewish state in the partition plan. Israel would have to wait until 11 May that year to be admitted as a member of the UN.[27] From that date, there has been no doubt about the legitimacy of the existence of the state of Israel in terms of international law. British *de facto* recognition followed two days later on 13 May, and *de jure* recognition on 28 April 1950.

And what of the other areas of Palestine? The West Bank (which includes East Jerusalem) was unilaterally incorporated into its territory by Jordan in late 1948, but this never achieved international recognition.[28] Britain had left chaos here, too. That chaos can be exemplified by the fact that one of the last acts of the Mandatory Government had been to repeal Britain's Palestine Defence (Emergency)

Regulations of 1945, but Jordan was unaware that this had even occurred, and consequently duly enacted its own legislation to repeal the Regulations on the land it purportedly incorporated into Jordan.[29] What is now the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian military occupation, and Gazans would find themselves living under military government until a new military occupier, Israel, took possession in 1967.

To conclude, Britain failed its sacred trust of civilisation towards the Palestinian people. Instead of the well-being, development and independence which it was obligated to ensure for them, it left them with a legal vacuum: chaos, war, and dispossession. It carries direct responsibility for this disaster, but that responsibility is too little remembered in Britain today. To rectify this amnesia is one reason why this conference is taking place. It is Britain's duty to acknowledge its responsibility - our, British, responsibility - and to work now to advance equal rights for all in what was once the British Mandate of Palestine. Those rights include self-determination and mutual security. It is clear, today, who has self-determination and security and who does not.

[1] Rose, Chaim Weizmann: A Biography, 1987, pp. 137-8.
[2] Minute from Sir O. Sargent, 14 May 1948, FO 371/68664 Palestine, Eastern, para 7, quoted in Kattan, From Coexistence to Conquest: International Law and the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1891-1949, p. 189.
[3] The text was published by the British Government on 20 March 1939 in Cmnd. 5964. I am indebted to Dr Peter Shambrook and his work on the Hussein MacMahon correspondence (to be published in his forthcoming book on this topic) for drawing my attention to this.
[4] The text of the Covenant of the League of Nations is widely available, e.g. on the Avalon Project website https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp.
[5] See the warnings in the King-Crane Commission, discussed in Khalidi, The Hundred Years War on Palestine, 2020, p. 51.
[6] Pederson, The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire, 2015, p. 97.
[7] Sinanoglou, Partitioning Palestine: British Policymaking at the End of Empire, 2020, p. 70.
[8] Sinanoglou, p. 11.
[9] Morris, The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited, 2004, p. 13.
[10] Crawford, The Creation of States in International Law, 2007, pp. 431-2.
[11] Kattan, p. 166. Only five of the fifteen members were willing to vote in favour of such a resolution.
[12] Strawson, Partitioning Palestine: Legal Fundamentalism in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, 2010, pp. 122-3.
[13] Minute from Sir O. Sargent, 14 May 1948, quoted in Kattan, p. 293.
[14] Kattan, p. 180.
[15] Morris, p. 190.
[16] Morris, p. 99.
[17] Morris, p. 371.
[18] Quoted in Kattan, p. 168.
[19] Morris, 1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War, pp. 118-9.
[20] Kattan, p. 185.

[21] Morris, The Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited, p. 194.
[22] Rashid Khalidi, The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood, p. 134.
[23] Telegram from Foreign Office to New York, 19 May 1948, FO371/68664, Palestine, Eastern,, 1948 quoted in Kattan, p. 233.
[24] Kattan, pp. 234-5.
[25] Crawford, p. 375.
[26] Crawford, p. 433.
[27] Kattan, p. 233.
[28] Except by Britain and Pakistan.
[29] For this, see the 2011 report by Al Haq, "Perpetual Emergency: A Legal Analysis of Israel's Use of the British Emergency (Defence) Regulations 1945, in the Occupied Territories" available at https://www.alhaq.org/publications/8169.html.

Jewish child refugees at Haifa Docks, 1947

Dr Phyllis Starkey

Welcome - Dr Phyllis Starkey

Dr Phyllis Starkey has held a number of important Parliamentary posts since she was elected as Labour MP for Milton Keynes in 1997.

Before entering Parliament, Dr. Starkey had a double career as a distinguished research scientist and as a politician in both local and national politics. She qualified as a biochemist and followed a career in medical research, leading her own research group in Oxford. She won a seat on Oxford City Council, was Chair of Finance for six years, and Council leader for three years. From 1993-1997, Dr. Starkey was the National Chair of the Local Government Information Unit, which represents over 120 Councils across the country.

Dr. Starkey has held a number of important Parliamentary posts since she was elected in 1997: Between 1999-2001 she was a member of the Modernisation of the House of Commons Select Committee; in 2002 she became PPS to Denis MacShane, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs; in 2005, Dr. Starkey was made Chair of the Select Committee for Communities and Local Government.

She is now working as a Policy Adviser on Middle East issues.

Introducing Prof. Michael Lynk

Victor Kattan

Good afternoon, it is a great pleasure to introduce our next speaker, Professor Michael Lynk, who has just completed a six-year term as United Nations Special Rapporteur for the human rights situation in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. Unfortunately, Professor Lynk cannot join us today, so his paper will be read by John McHugo, who is a trustee of the Balfour Project, and a well-known author of several critically acclaimed books on the history of the Middle East.

Before I hand over to John, I want to say a few words about the paper, regarding the British Defence (Emergency) regulations of 1945 that were promulgated at the height of the Jewish Revolt. What Professor Lynk does particularly well in his paper is to draw parallels between Israel's Counter-Terrorism Law of 2016, and these earlier emergency regulations from the British Mandate period. It also occurred to me while reading his paper that there might be parallels between Israel's Counter-Terrorism Laws and the Internal Security Laws promulgated by the South African parliament during the apartheid era.

Intriguingly back in 1987, Al Haq, which is a leading Palestinian human rights group that was designated a terrorist organization under Israel's Counter-Terrorism Law in October last year, inquired with the British Minister of State for the Middle East about the validity of the British Defence (Emergency) regulations of 1945. The British Government responded by explaining that although Britain considered the regulations repealed as a matter of English law, it could not comment on their status under the laws of any other country.

Of course, Israel is not the only former British ruled territory that has kept controversial colonial laws on its statute books. I recall from my days in Southeast Asia that the Sedition Act was still being used quite liberally in Singapore and Malaysia. But without further ado, I hand the floor to John to read Professor Lynk's paper.

Victor Kattan

Victor Kattan is a senior research fellow at the School of Law at the University of Nottingham, where he is undertaking a study on the prohibition of apartheid in international law in places beyond South Africa.

Prof Michael Lynk

Michael Lynk is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada. He joined the Faculty in 1999, and has taught courses in labour, human rights, disability, constitutional and administrative law. He served as Associate Dean of the Faculty between 2008-11.

In March 2016, the United Nations Human Rights Council appointed him as Special Rapporteur for the human rights situation in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967 for a six-year term, recently completed. In this capacity, he delivered regular reports to the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council on human rights trends in the OPT.

Professor Michael Lynk

Thank you to the Balfour Project for this generous invitation to be a part of this virtual conference. I have long followed the extraordinary work of the Balfour Project as it educates the public in Britain and beyond about how the Balfour Declaration of November 1917 and the 30-year British Mandate over Palestine have rippled through more than a century of history, leaving in its wake a maelstrom of tragedy, sorrow and human suffering on all sides, with by far the greatest cost being borne by the Palestinians.

I have been asked to speak today about one of these fateful ripples of history – the strange afterlife of the *British Defence (Emergency) Regulations 1945,*[1] and particularly the role that its legislative descendants are playing today in Israel's entrenched repression of the Palestinians in the occupied territory.[2]

Many of you who are listening to this presentation will know that the Israeli Minister of Defence, Benny Gantz, designated six Palestinian human rights and humanitarian organizations as terrorist organizations in October 2021.[3] Under Israel's counter-terrorism legislation, this designation – if it becomes permanent – will enable it to ban the Palestinian organizations, seize their assets, charge and even imprison their leadership and staff with terrorist offences, and shutter for good their indispensable advocacy. These organizations have been living under the sword of Damocles ever since.

You may also know that there are many thousands of Palestinians who have been convicted of security and terrorism offences, and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. They were charged and found guilty under an Israeli military court system that denies most of the fundamental features of a fair trial that are embedded in international law and familiar to us in the West, such as the right to an impartial judiciary, the right to know all of the evidence and allegations against you, the right to be able to make full answer to these allegations, and the right to be tried in your own language.[4]

Thousands more Palestinians have been incarcerated throughout the five decades of the occupation through the mechanism of "administrative detention". This permits Israel to arrest and detain a Palestinian as a security suspect for periods of six months at a time, without charges, without evidence,

without a trial and without a conviction. These six month administrative detentions can be continuously renewed by the Israeli authorities through a perfunctory application to the Israeli military courts, with no meaningful judicial oversight or review.[5]

All of these military-legal processes and procedures, and more, are anchored in Israel's *Counter-Terrorism Law of 2016*.[6] This law has been heavily criticised by international human rights organizations and experts for its sweeping definitions, its denial of basic rights for defendants, and its promiscuous use by the Israeli military to shrink the available space for Palestinian civil society organizations to carry on their invaluable work in shining a spotlight on the many abuses of the 55 year old Israeli occupation. I will return to the *Counter-Terrorism Law* shortly.

To understand the scale and sweep of Israel's *Counter-Terrorism Law*, we have to start with its legislative ancestor, the *British Defence (Emergency) Regulations 1945*. These regulations were promulgated by the British Mandate authority in 1945, at the end of the Second War World, as the various underground organizations of the Jewish Yishuv were scaling up their armed resistance to the British Mandate with the aim of creating a Jewish state in Palestine.

The *British Defence (Emergency) Regulations 1945* replaced an earlier body of emergency security orders and laws, enacted in 1936 to counter the Great Arab Revolt against the British Mandate and supplemented by a 1937 Order-in-Council and the Defence Laws of 1939. This 1936-39 revolt was triggered by the growing realization by the Palestinians that their quest for an independent state in Palestine was being thwarted through the collaboration of the Mandate and the Zionist movement to build a Jewish homeland in Palestine in accordance with the Balfour Declaration and its incorporation into the League of Nations mandate granted to Britain. The Palestinian claim to an independent state in Mandate Palestine – consistent with the promise of self-determination contained in Woodrow Wilson's 14 principles of 1919, its Class A mandate designation by the League of Nations and, most of all, by their indigenous status and overwhelming demographic presence in Palestine – was answered by the bayonets of the British military.[7]

These 1936 regulations gave the British High Commissioner in Palestine broad powers to repress the Arab Revolt in the name of public security. In the words of the 1937 British Order-in-Council enacted to support the emergency regulations, the High Commissioner could use "his unfettered discretion…to suppress mutiny, rebellion and riot and for maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community." By the time the British defeated the Revolt in 1939, more than 5,000 Palestinians had been killed, thousands more had been wounded, imprisoned or exiled, and the Palestinian leadership had been politically decimated. The use of the repressive tools in the 1936 emergency regulations and its legal supplements were decisive in quelling the three-year Palestinian uprising.

Eight years later, in 1945, with the well-organised, well-trained and increasingly well-armed Jewish militias initiating their final bid to end the British Mandate, to stifle the Palestinian claim for self-determination and to establish a Jewish state in Palestine through force, the British modernised their 1936 emergency regulations into the *British Defence (Emergency) Regulations 1945*. These Regulations established military courts to charge and convict anyone in Palestine thought to have committed security offences. These courts consisted of three military officers, who could consider secret evidence

that would not be disclosed to the defendant. Their decisions were not open to appeal. British military and police officers had the power to search any place, arrest any person and detain them indefinitely on the basis of mere suspicion. Administrative detention was employed, as was the expulsion of any person from Palestine.[8]

While the violence between the Jewish militias and the British military in Palestine was fierce in the years between 1945 and 1948, most historians of the period agree that the levels of repression meted out by the British military against these militias and the Jewish Yishuv were nowhere close to the scale of brutality employed against the Arab Revolt a decade earlier.[9] Consider this: the British military in Palestine had most of the same repressive legal tools to permit them a relatively free hand in quelling the respective revolts in the 1930s and in the 1940s. The decisive issue was against whom they were employing this repression: on the one hand, a poorly-armed colonialised and subjugated people with little outside help, and on the other, a largely European settler population with important Western sources of support. This is the decisive factor in explaining the differences in the levels of violence utilised by the British.

In May 1948, British gave up its mandate in Palestine, the Jewish Yishuv declared the State of Israel, and the mass expulsion of the Palestinians intensified. The British revoked the *Defence (Emergency) Regulations* several days before the formal end of the Mandate, but the new Israeli government insisted that the Regulations had not been properly abrogated, and the government incorporated much of the Regulations into the new Israeli legal system.

This new life given to the *Defence (Emergency) Regulations* had two significant consequences. First, in the period between 1948 and 1966, they were primarily employed by Israel to establish and maintain a regime of military rule over the Palestinian Arabs who had remained in Israel after the 1948 Nakba. During this period, the roughly 160,000 Palestinians in Israel who had not been expelled in 1948 or who had returned were subject to a pass system that severely restricted their freedom of movement, curtailments on their political and civil rights, and arbitrary arrest and imprisonment for actions that were considered seditious or contrary to public safety and order.[10] While Israel also used the *Defence (Emergency) Regulations* against Israeli Jews – most notably the Lehi underground terrorist organization which had assassinated Court Bernadotte in September 1948 – it was the Palestinian citizens of Israel who bore the disproportionate brunt of this repressive stick through this time period.

And second, after the Israeli government lifted the application of the Regulations against its Palestinian citizens in late 1966, they remained on the law books. Within six months, they were reapplied with full force by the Israeli military commander to the newly-captured Palestinian and Arab territories in the immediate aftermath of the June 1967 war.[11] Their legitimacy and applicability were subsequently reaffirmed by the Israeli Supreme Court.

Most of the justifications for movement restrictions and curfews, censorship, arbitrary arrests and detentions, home demolitions, prohibitions on political activity and civil society advocacy, deportations, area closures and much more during the first five decades of the occupation found its legal rationale under Israeli law in the *Defence (Emergency) Regulations 1945*. These *Regulations,* and their abusive application to buttress an illegal occupation that has become indistinguishable from annexation and

apartheid, has been the source of consistent criticism by both Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations, and by international advocacy organizations disturbed by the enormous daylight between the *Regulations* and the obligatory requirements of international human rights and humanitarian law.[12]

In 2016, the Israeli government overhauled the *Regulations* and recreated them as the *Counter-Terrorism Law*. As a comprehensive letter on the *Counter-Terrorism Law* by 11 UN special rapporteurs and human rights experts issued in May 2022 to the Israeli government noted, there has been, in effect, a permanent and continuous emergency in Israeli law for 74 years, and for 55 years in the occupied Palestinian territory. The focus of this state of permanent emergency has been almost entirely directed at the Palestinians, with all of the attendant enforcement of a profoundly embedded relationship of domination and subjugation which that entails.[13]

Drawing from this remarkable letter from the UN human rights experts to the Israeli government, I would like to focus on four features of the 2016 *Counter-Terrorism Law* which illustrates two fundamental issues for the purposes of today's conference: First, the legal and political continuity between the British emergency suppression laws from 1936 and 1945 to the present; and second, the continuity in the abusive use of so-called public safety laws that have much less to do with public safety and much more with perpetuating unwanted alien rule over a rebellious indigenous population that wants nothing more than independence and an end to their subjugation.

The first feature that I would draw from the May 2022 letter by the human rights experts is their penetrating critique of the *Counter-Terrorism Law* as it is applied to so-called terrorist organizations in the occupied Palestinian territory. The letter forthrightly states that:
"the present legal and regulatory framework for designating terrorist organizations lacks precision in key respects, infringes on critically important rights, and may not meet the required thresholds of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination under international law."

The UN experts go on to say that they are concerned that the *Law* might result in the unlawful infringement of the fundamental rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and freedom of opinion and expression, as well as fair trial rights and core social, economic and cultural rights.

I want to point out that this May 2022 letter is the fifth occasion over the past 8 months that UN human rights experts have issued public statements – to both the Israeli government and to the European Union – protesting against the thin body of publicly-available evidence relied upon by the Israeli government under the *Law* to justify its designation of the six Palestinian organizations as terrorist organizations and to persuade their international funders to starve the organizations of financial support.[14]

The second significant feature of the *Counter-Terrorism Law* commented upon by the UN human rights experts is the legislation's reliance upon 'confidential information" to secure designations and convictions. This is an anathema to modern democratic and human rights standards, and it follows a direct line from the British laws from 1936 and 1945. The definition of "confidential information" in the *Counter-Terrorism Law* is any information where:

"its disclosure is liable to harm State security, foreign relations or public safety or security or to reveal confidential work methods..."
The determination of what constitutes "confidential information" is determined by an Advisory Committee, made up of judges and jurists expert in security law. This is what is known in that wonderful British political phrase – "a pair of safe hands" - who are committed to the worldview of us versus them in the Israeli context.

The third significant feature of the Counter-Terrorism Law which draws a straight line from the past is the utter lack of fair trial and due process rights. The UN experts noted the ubiquitous use of secret and confidential information that is substantially withheld from the defendants and their lawyers. Under international human rights law, the minimum guarantees protected include the presumption of innocence, the right to equality under the law (including the right to be informed promptly and in detail in a language which the defendant understands of the nature and cause of the charge as established by law against him), a speedy progress to trial, the right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal, and the right to judicial review and appeal.

None of this is present in the current *Law*, nor – as we have seen – were any of these rights present in any of the predecessor laws going back 85 years.

The UN experts point out that:
"These provisions come at the high cost of leaving organizations or individuals wholly unaware of the measures taken against them and, in turn, their legal representatives unable to contest the designation."

Equally disturbing, the experts stated, is the fact that "it is the Israeli Minister of Defence – the same person who requests the designation in the first place – that makes the final decision on a permanent designation, albeit with the opportunity for judicial review in the front of the Israeli Supreme Court".

In my view, that should not provide comfort to those deeply worried about the protection of human rights and civil liberties in the OPT. The Israeli Supreme Court has proven itself to be a judicial handmaiden of the occupation, particularly given its most recent ruling earlier this month endorsing the removal of Palestinian villages in the south Hebron hills and its declaration, in this decision, that international law plays no role whatsoever in the administration of Israel's five-decade long occupation.[15]

The fourth and final significant feature of the *Counter-Terrorism Law* that ripples from the past is the severity of the sanctions and penalties imposed upon defendants who have been convicted under the *Law*. It provides for a wide range of criminal sanctions and penalties for designated individuals and organizations convicted under its provisions. Someone who is identified with a designated terrorist organization can be sentenced to a term of 2 to 5 years incarceration. Members or directors of a designated organization can receive 5 to 25 years of imprisonment. And someone who supports or incites in favour of a hostile organization can receive a sentence of 10 years.

Virtually none of the definitions, designations or penalties of the *Counter-Terrorism Law* and its associated orders satisfy the minimum standards of international law. One would wish that such an

argument would catch the attention of Israeli law-makers, Israeli judges and the Israeli military officers who enact, interpret and apply these sweeping provisions. One would hope that the eyes of the international community, particularly European and North American states who proclaim that they are deeply invested in supervising the occupation and realizing their vision of a two state solution, would focus on this deeply illiberal legal regime and call for its abolition on the road to swiftly ending this forever occupation.

In conclusion, may I say that the constant historical thread of these repressive laws – from 1936 and 1945 to this very day – is the perpetuation of an unwanted and deeply resented alien rule over a people and a country that have become, in many ways, the political orphans of the modern system of international relations. The partition of Palestine was the first major decision of the young United Nations in 1947 and, arguably, its first major blunder. After all, the UN of 1947 is not reflective of the UN of today, and it is almost impossible to imagine that it would endorse today the severing of a country against the profound wishes of its indigenous and majority population.

Yet the United Nations of today remains haunted today by that partition decision. As Kofi Annan said in his 2012 memoirs, the unresolved Question of Palestine "…remains for the UN a deep internal wound as old as the organization itself, given that the Arab-Israeli conflict began at the very inception of the UN – a painful and festering sore consequently felt in almost every intergovernmental organ and Secretariat body."[16] There is no conflict in the modern world where the UN and the international community has spoken with such consistency and in such volumes about the rules of international law which apply to the obligations of Israel, the occupying power, and to the rights that are to be claimed by the Palestinian people, yet where the international community has acted with such remarkable political passivity in the face of its duty to enforce its own rules-based legal order.

[1] https://www.imolin.org/doc/amlid/Israel/The_Defence_Emergency_Regulations_1945.pdf
[2] For a critical review of the regulations, see: Al-Haq, "Perpetual Emergency: A legal analysis of Israel's use of the *British Defence (Emergency) Regulations 1945* in the occupied territories" (1989), accessed at: perpetual-emergency-pdf-1616579593.pdf (alhaq.org)
[3] J. Lis & H. Shezaf, "Gantz Declares Six Palestinian NGOs Terrorist Organizations" *Ha'aretz*, 22 October 2021.
[4] H. Shezaf & M. Horodniceanu, "Israel's Other Justice System has rules of its own", *Ha'aretz*, 25 April 2022.
[4] Both the Palestinian prisoners' right organization Addameer (Administrative Detention | Addameer) and the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem (Administrative Detention | B'Tselem (btselem.org) have valuable online webpages explaining Israel's use of administrative detention.
[6] Israel: New Comprehensive Counterterrorism Legislation Adopted | Library of Congress (loc.gov)
[7] M. Hughes, *Britain's Pacification of Palestine: The British Army, the Colonial State and the Arab Revolt, 1936-1939* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[8] Al-Haq, *supra*, note 2.
[9] I. Black, *Enemies and Neighbours: Arabs and Jews in Palestine and Israel, 1917-2017* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2017); A. Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (Norton, 2000).
[10] S. Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel* (Monthly Review Press, 1976).
[11] R. Shehadeh, *Occupier's Law: Israel and the West Bank* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1985).

[12] See generally Amnesty International, *Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians* (2022), pp. 105-108, 121.
[13] United Nations Special Procedures, "Letter to the Permanent Mission of Israel, United Nations, Geneva", 5 May 2022 (OL ISR 6/2022).
[14] United Nations Special Procedures, *Israel/Palestine:UN experts call on governments to resume funding for six Palestinian organisations designated by Israel* (25 April 2022): "The United Nations has been very clear that the drafting and application of anti-terrorism laws have to be rigorously consistent with international law and human rights protections, including the principles of legal certainty, necessity, proportionality, the rule of law and non-discrimination… Applying anti-terrorism laws to well-regarded human rights defenders and civil society organisations – without persuasive evidence to substantiate these claims – seems to indicate a politically-motivated attempt by Israel to silence some of its most effective critics in violation of their rights to freedom of association and of expression,"
[15] H. Shezaf, "Israeli top court approves eviction of eight Palestinian villages after decades-long battles" *Ha'aretz*, 5 May 2022. Also see the *Ha'aretz* editorial on the issue: "Israel's High Court of Justice, the Occupation's Rubber Stamp"", 8 May 2022, where it noted that the court "…rejected the argument that the prohibition in international law against forced population transfer is binding on the court or that it applies to Israel." Also see: D. Kretzmer & Y. Ronen, *The Occupation of Justice: The Supreme Court of Israel and the Occupied Territories* (2nd ed.) (Oxford University Press, 2020).
[16] Kofi Annan, *Interventions* (Penguin, 2012), at p. 254.

The British Mandate in Palestine 1917-1948

Britain in a post-imperial world

Rory Stewart

Sir Vincent Fean:
The rule of law has been looked up to as the referee, as the policeman of international affairs. But it seems that it's mainly dependent on the political will of those who exercise power as to whether the rule of law can apply in a certain case or not. How does that strike you?

Rory Stewart:

I think you're right. It is a very uncomfortable truth which has been revealed again quite dramatically through the Ukraine crisis, because many things come out of the current crisis. I think that you, Sir Vincent, probably will see various elements of hypocrisy and inconsistency in terms of the way in which the West has responded to Ukraine as opposed to the way that it responds to situations in relation to Palestine.

There's another deeper problem going on, which is that the assumption of the early 2000s that really started in the 1990s, was that the world was moving decisively in the direction of democratic government and rule of law as part of that parcel of concepts and ideas along with human rights and other elements of a democratic system. That is now looking very shaky and, in a way, Ukraine exposed that quite brutally. President Biden's assumption was that it would be easy to form a coalition against Vladimir Putin. What he discovered, in fact, is that many of the countries on which he hoped to rely were not willing to work with him. That was true, dramatically, of places like India, South Africa and Pakistan. But it's also been true of his inability to persuade states like Saudi Arabia and UAE to increase oil production. One of the concepts was that you would impose sanctions on Russia on oil and gas and then you would turn to the Gulf as a way of filling that gap.

What was discovered there is that those states feel that they have been insulted and ignored and marginalised, partly because of issues around democracy and the rule of law, and that they've been criticised strongly since the 1990s. Therefore, when they're called on to bail out the US and its allies, they're less willing to do so.

What that reveals is that it feels as though there are not enough liberal democracies in the world for the US and its allies to be able to take the high-minded stance they would've wanted to take in the 1990s and early 2000s. Instead they're entering the world in which they very much feel that they have to form alliances with people, many of whose policies

Rory Stewart

Rory Stewart was Member of Parliament for Penrith and The Border between 2010 and 2019.In May 2019 he was appointed Secretary of State for International Development, having previously been the Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice, Minister of State for Africa in both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID) (June 2017-January 2018), and the Minister of State in DFID (June 2016-June 2017) and, prior to that, Minister for the Environment and Rural Affairs at DEFRA (May 2015-June 2016).

they disapprove of politically and morally. I think Ukraine has just shown that in their inability to form an alliance to really challenge Vladimir Putin.

Sir Vincent Fean:
There is an argument that the leaders in UAE, Saudi etc have a certain view of the world and of the Palestinian question which differs from that of their people. The issue of democratic representation in the Middle East is real and ongoing. Can you take us through the issues that you see since Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq which have impacted, not only on the priority ascribed to the Palestinian question, which remains fundamental for this charity, but the changes that have led to those leaders, at least, treating the issue as if it can be kept on the back burner?

Rory Stewart:
It's extraordinary looking at the change. Not just the change since you joined the Foreign Office in the 1970s, but even the change since I joined in the mid-1990s, how quickly things have changed. When I joined the Foreign Office, it was a very different Middle East and it's extraordinary what's happened. Mid-1990s, Beirut and Cairo were the cultural centres in the Middle East. The Gulf still felt like a cultural backwater and Palestine felt as though it was the single central question of the region. Fast forward: when you now hear people talking about the Middle East, increasingly they will be referring to the invasion of Iraq, the Arab Spring, ISIS, the civil war in Syria, the collapse of Lebanon, the emergence of the Abraham Accords, the new tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia and UAE on the one hand, but also these strange new tensions between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. We're now in a world, for example, in which there's an odd alliance between Turkey, Qatar and one half of Libya, set up against another form of Middle Eastern coalition.
All of this means, in effect, that the Middle East is a quite bewildering place. Part of the story of that, unfortunately - we started with the conversation about rule of law and democracy - is the terrible sense that the promise of the Arab Spring wasn't realised. Even in Tunisia, which was the poster child, and should have been the most successful of all. One of the most educated, homogeneous states in the region, a place which genuinely found itself with a democratic government, has instead faced an incredible contraction in its standard of living. Its GDP per capita is lower today than it was 10 years ago. Lebanon, which is another semi-democratic state in the Middle East, finds itself in one of the worst recessions that any country has experienced in the last 200 years. In both countries, opinion polls suggest that the population are giving up on democracy, that they increasingly feel that they want to live under a rule of technocrats, or an authoritarian government that can guarantee economic growth. And are turning away from the US and the West and increasingly looking to China and Russia.
That's a really important framing to understand how the last 25 years have shifted everything. In that time, Palestine itself has felt as though it's changed less, as though it's been stuck with a single real structure of government, in which Israeli politics has clearly become paralysed and unable to pursue any of the dreams of the 1990s, unable to challenge settlers, unable to really take seriously the idea of a two-state solution. Take the demographic pressures that we've been aware of for decades: the growing Arab population which will eventually force some sort of reckoning within Israel remains unaddressed. But part of the reason for that is that everything else is changing, or in a sense going wrong, in the Middle East.

Sir Vincent Fean:
The British Government says many of the right things about the Middle East Peace Process, but today there is no Middle East Peace Process; the Prime Minister of Israel declines to engage with the PLO leadership on final status issues and does not want two states, which is EU-UK and Biden policy. How do you see Britain's role, post-Brexit, in the absence of a Middle East Peace Process? What do you think Britain can do in the circumstances that you've described?

Rory Stewart:
We talk a lot about America leaving the Middle East, and that's clearly a big phenomenon, and one of the things that will lead to increasing instability and I fear within the next decade, sadly, interstate conflict in the Middle East. The next 10 years are going to make the Middle East look more violent than it did at the end of the 20th century, partly because of America's withdrawal.

Part of the story of American withdrawal is also the story of British withdrawal - indeed, the withdrawal of the West in general. So, it was a very strong American presence, but the UK was part of that, as was indeed France. What's happened is that Britain has given up over the last 30 years on investing in the expertise and deep country knowledge required from our diplomats.

In 2011, the number of British ambassadors in the Middle East who spoke Arabic fluently had declined from 13 to 3, and the size of our representations in many of these places has shrunk and continues to shrink. British participation in the Middle East Peace Process has now been reduced further by the current Foreign Secretary.

This goes along with the diminution in other forms of British presence. Less investment in the BBC World Service, less in the British Council, less visible presence in terms of offering scholarships. There are exceptions: I think Jordan is an interesting example of a place where Britain is still demonstrating quite a wide range of engagements - cultural, military, diplomatic, political - deepening the relationships between the Royal families, thinking about how to do development projects and invest in renewable energy. So, there are exceptions, but it is vital that Britain and the European Union fill in some of the gap left by the United States withdrawal.

This is the other sad thing. Britain has become obsessed in its recent strategic defence review with a tilt towards Asia Pacific, which really in the small print means abandoning Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, to reinforce America's obsessions - largely with the confrontation with China.

Sir Vincent Fean:
You are a former Secretary of State for International Development. Our Government has cut development assistance to the UN Relief Works Agency and across the board by about 40%. I regard that as an element of soft power, along with the British Council and the BBC World Service, but more operational because it's directed by government. In those circumstances, inevitably, our influence declines because we are less attractive to partners or peoples in need. My question is on the soft power mix, which is in part public diplomacy and in part development assistance.

Rory Stewart:
Yes. I think the cuts to British international development have been particularly brutal, partly because they were cut at a time when an enormous amount of money was already pre-committed to different

multilateral institutions. That meant that the cuts, which theoretically were a cut from 0.7% of GDP to 0.5% of GDP, hit bilateral programmes very hard. Some countries suffered almost 70% cuts.

Almost overnight, Britain, which had been steadily increasing its bilateral presence in 30 countries, found itself suddenly unable to continue programmes that everybody had assumed it would expand. The challenge for Britain now is not just to get more money into international development, but also to rebuild our capacity and implementation, not so much what we do, but how we do it. Along with the erosion in Foreign Office language skills and area expertise has been an extraordinary erosion in the amount of time that our development professionals spend in the field. A lot of the changes over the last 20 years have increasingly turned them into project managers, dealing with contracts in capitals or in many cases running big global programmes out of London. The strengths that existed when you joined the Foreign Office, of people who actually were out in rural clinics and really focusing on what was happening in a Jordanian school, who walked into the classroom, checked what the materials were, tried to check what the children were learning - have been replaced by these very abstract ideas that you can somehow just put a large amount of money through some pre-existing system and hope that everything will work. That takes out all the flexibility, the ingenuity, the creativity, the different ways in which a really good British system could use, as you say, soft power, but in particular use developmental systems to reinforce relationships, political projects.

I would like to see Britain investing strongly in cultural heritage in Palestine. I would love to see investments in Bethlehem in traditional crafts, but also in Hebron, in Nablus. Britain has an incredible strength in protection of landscapes. Conveying to people in Palestine that not only do they have a highly educated, energetic, entrepreneurial population with extraordinary skills in architecture and traditional crafts, but that those things are facing a real threat from, I'm afraid, a weak corrupt government and poor planning regulations which are not really protecting these extraordinary sites and which are ruining a great deal of the Palestinian countryside.

Sir Vincent Fean:
We have a group of 12 Balfour Project Peace Advocacy Fellows who receive a stipend from the charity and undertake projects. One of the projects is working on Palestinian cultural heritage: architecture, archaeology and cuisine. They will be doing webinars on those three subjects in the coming weeks. On the issue of the Palestinians and control, the bulk of the archaeology is in Area C in the West Bank - or in Gaza - but in Area C in the West Bank it's under Israeli security control. The Israeli government seeks to plant its flag on the archaeology.

Rory Stewart:
There is an issue around archaeology, but not just archaeology. It's also the modern-built urban environment. Making sure that cities like Ramallah are genuinely attractive, liveable places, well-designed, where people are putting up appropriate buildings at the appropriate height. There's a lot that could be done, not just in Palestine, also in Lebanon and Jordan, to think seriously about preserving what were unique landscapes, broader landscapes.

Sir Vincent Fean:
You mentioned President Biden's switch of focus on to China. Are we going to have some sort of compulsory confrontation with China? And how do we come out of this Ukraine tragedy in any good shape?

Rory Stewart:

The idea of a confrontation with China is very difficult to work through. The economic size of China now, and its extraordinary scale of growth make it difficult for me to see what role Britain plays. What's happened in Ukraine and in relations with China has done something even more fundamental: it's punched a hole in the global trading system. We have benefited for the last few decades from a very open trading system, where we relied on importing an enormous number of our goods from China, and an enormous amount of our food and fertiliser from Russia and the surrounding countries. When I was Environment Minister in the British Government and farmers would talk to me about food security, I and our officials would rather laugh at them and say, no, you don't need to worry about food security. That's a thing of the past. We're not going back to the 1940s where we have to worry about this. We just import it from Russia.

Now we're moving into a world in which there will be much more pressure for us to develop our own independent technology so that we're not dependent on China, to grow more of our own food, to make ourselves energy independent. All of that will come with an immense economic cost. It will increase prices to consumers very dramatically, which will have a deep effect on the cost of living and inflation in the developed world, but will also lead to terrible poverty and suffering in many developing countries. Egypt, for example, is dependent for nearly 60% on wheat imports from Russia.

You ask a good question about where this ends. People are perpetually increasing their rhetoric against Putin. It's extraordinary what was done to defend Ukraine and that Putin was prevented from taking Kiev. But I'm not seeing a very clear story about what the West intends to do in terms of Crimea and Donetsk in the southeast of Ukraine. Russia is a nuclear armed power, so getting the balance right between firmly saying, you overstepped the mark, you are a bully, we're going to stand up to you on the one hand and, on the other, being practical about what the options are over the next 20 years, I'm not seeing.

Sir Vincent Fean:
The occupation and unilateral annexation by Russia of the Crimea in 2014 produced sanctions against Russia from the EU when we were members, and from the US. The Palestinians have been seeking some comparable action on Israel, which is not forthcoming. That is an issue we'll be discussing in this conference.

The Jordanian people, more than half of Palestinian origin, are deeply concerned by what's happening across the Jordan River. Egypt and Jordan are key players in the relationship with Israel, the longstanding peace treaties etc.

In the Foreign Office people used to say: Jordan needs talks, needs a process. Whether the process takes you anywhere is a different question, but Jordan needs activity, to show that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Sadly, at the moment, there is no Israeli willingness to discuss final status issues. For Jordan, it's a constant focus on the *status quo* in Jerusalem and her role as a custodian of the Holy Sites.

What is your view, from Amman? Finally, can you see a way in this total chaos of the Middle East to restore focus on a chronic ongoing problem, which ultimately affects the security of us all: Israel-Palestine?

Rory Stewart:
Firstly, you're right about Jordan. It's very striking talking to any Jordanian how much they think about Palestine, how much they care about Palestine. Just look at the names on the falafel shop around the corner from me or the imagery in people's windows: the issue of Palestine returns again and again. As you say, many people living in Jordan are themselves of Palestinian origin and feel very strong connections back to Palestine. Jordan is suffering many other tensions. It continues to suffer from a very difficult economic performance. It went through this difficult experience of accommodating a million Syrian refugees and it suffers from problems which are now spreading throughout the Middle East, sadly. Serious youth unemployment, real problems of women participating in the labour market, lack of growth and a sense of a government that isn't as effective as it ought to be: problems found in almost every country in the Middle East.

One question at the heart of this problem is to work out what the relationship is between the economics and the politics. Many people are committed to the Palestine project, but are also very worried about their incomes and standard of living and very depressed about the lack of economic growth. In this region in particular, it's cast into particular light because places in the Gulf seem to be growing so rapidly and so dynamically and people feel left behind.

What hope is there for the Peace Process? It is very, very difficult, honestly, as a former British Minister, to see what the answer is to that question. Ultimately, the answer to that question feels as though at some level, Israel has to acknowledge the problem that it finds itself in, and in particular, the demographic issue that it faces. There cannot be - and this is a cliche that we've repeated for 40 or 50 years - a sustainable settlement of this sort. It is inherently fragile and inherently dangerous for everybody concerned.

Also, as a former politician, I'm sadly very aware how the things that drive elections, the things that get people into Parliament, can very much distract them from thinking about those long-term strategic issues and drive them towards short-term considerations. That is what's happening in the Israel debate.

Israel is in a strong position: strong economically, strong militarily. The PLO haven't managed, for many reasons, many of which are not their own fault, but haven't managed to develop the form of dynamic, credible, effective government that people had hoped for 20 years ago.

All of that makes me a bit gloomy. But it is a reason to welcome what you are doing with this conference and to salute your leadership and what, through the Balfour Project, you are trying to do, which is to bring people's attention again to this issue and keep insisting, both morally and practically, on the absolute necessity of its resolution.

Sir Vincent Fean:
We will address the same difficult question to your former Parliamentary colleagues from the four main political parties shortly. What is clear is that this issue is not going away. The Palestinian people are not going away, and neither is the issue.

Dr Imad Karam

Leila Sansour

Victor Kattan

Palestinian Panel, chaired by Dr Imad Karam, Balfour Project Trustee

Dr Imad Karam

Dr Imad Karam is the Executive Director of Initiatives of Change International, a global network of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds, whose mission is to inspire, equip and accompany change makers in the pursuit of a just and peaceful world.

Imad is also an award-winning documentary film-maker. His films focus on forgiveness, peace-building and reconciliation. His films include the award-winning documentary films: 'The Man Who Built Peace' and 'Beyond Forgiving'.

Leila Sansour

Leila Sansour has been a Palestinian/British filmmaker for over 25 years. Leila spent 10 years documenting the wall being built by the Israelis in Bethlehem. She is well-known for her feature documentaries "Jeremy Hardy vs The Israeli Army" 2003 and "Open Bethlehem" 2014.

Victor Kattan

Victor Kattan is a senior research fellow at the School of Law at the University of Nottingham. Victor has published op-eds in newspapers, including Ha'aretz, The South China Morning Post, The Straits Times, and The Guardian. He has appeared on ABC, Al Jazeera English, Al Jazeera Arabic, Al Jazeera Balkans, Bloomberg, the BBC, Channel News Asia, CNBC Asia, and CNN.

Adam Abdalla

Adam Abdalla is a Balfour Project Peace Advocacy Fellow alumnus who studied Arabic and Politics at the University of Leeds. Adam is a Modern Middle Eastern Studies MPhil candidate at the University of Oxford. He was born in Prague but his family origins go back to Palestine from whence they were ethnically cleansed in 1948. He researches language policy and nationalism in Israel.

Adam Abdalla

Dr Atef Alshaer

Atef Alshaer is a lecturer in Arabic Studies at the University of Westminster. He was educated at Bir Zeit University in Palestine and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where he obtained his PhD and taught for a number of years. He is the author of several publications in the fields of language, literature and politics, including Poetry and Politics in the Modern Arab World, The Hizbullah Phenomenon: Politics and Communication (with Dina Matar and Lina Khatib), Love and Poetry in the Middle East (editor) and Language and National Identity in Palestine: Representations of Power and Resistance in Gaza, both forthcoming. Alshaer regularly contributes to academic and media outlets, including the BBC, Independent, I-Newspaper, Electronic Intifada and Radio Monocle.

Dr Atef Alshaer

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
Welcome back everyone, I hope, to the continuation of our session this afternoon. We are moving to an opportunity to hear from Palestinians who live in the UK about their experiences and how it informs their thinking on the way forward for the British government, among other things. The panel is going to be introduced and chaired by Dr Imad Karam, who is the Executive Director of the global network Initiatives of Change, whose mission is to inspire, equip and accompany change-makers in the pursuit of a just and peaceful world. He's also an award-winning documentary filmmaker and a Trustee of the Balfour Project. So, can I hand over to you please, Dr Karam?

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you very much, Phyllis, for the kind introduction. Welcome, everybody to the Palestinian panel. I'm expecting four panellists to join us who will share some of their life journeys and perspectives on the subject.

Let's start with Adam. Adam Abdalla is one of the powerful project alumni of our Peace Advocacy Fellowship Programme. He studied Arabic and Politics at the University of Leeds and now he's doing his postgraduate studies in Modern Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Oxford. Adam, welcome. Would you kindly just start us by telling us a little bit more about who you are and how did you, and maybe your family, ended up living in the UK?

Adam Abdalla:
Well, thank you very much, Imad. And thank you everyone for joining us for this panel. It's a great pleasure to be here with everyone. So, I was born in Prague, Czech Republic in central Europe, and my father is Palestinian, my mother is Czech, and my family originally comes from a city in 48 Palestine called Al-Tira. It's very close to the West Bank city of Tulkarm and it's considered the north of Palestine. My grandfather was born there, and my grandmother was born in Kafr Zibad which is also closer to Tulkarm, but it lies today in the West Bank. My grandfather, during the Nakba in 1948, got separated from his family in Al-Tira, and he had to run away to Kuwait, which is where my father was born. My father studied Petrochemistry in Syria from which he had to also run away because of the political persecution of the Hafez al-Assad regime against the Palestinians. He was lucky to get a scholarship in Czechoslovakia, the socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia at the time, and he met my mother at the Economics University in Prague and that's basically how I was born in Prague. Then I was very lucky to be able to secure a place at the University of Leeds, which is where I studied, as you said, Arabic and Politics. And now I'm doing my MPhil here at Oxford. So, this is, in a nutshell, the journey.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you very much, Adam. I'd like to go next to Dr Atef Alshaer who is a lecturer in Arabic Studies at the University of Westminster. Atef, I'm not mistaken, I think you grew up in Gaza and then went to the West Bank for your studies?

Dr Atef Alshaer:
Yes, absolutely.

Dr Imad Karam:
And you did your doctorate at SOAS?

Dr Atef Alshaer:
Yes.

Dr Imad Karam:
Would you kindly, Atef, also tell us a little bit more about who you are and how did you end up living in the UK?

Dr Atef Alshaer:
I smuggled myself in, you know! As you kindly introduced me, thank you so much for this and for having me on this platform. It's wonderful to get to know you and others as well. I grew up in Gaza. I was born in Gaza and my parents are also refugees. They're from what is now called Beersheba. I grew up in Rafah in the south of Gaza until I finished secondary school, *tawjihi*, and then I went to study at the University of Bir Zeit in 1999. I was one of the last groups to be able to go to the West Bank and study there because after that, in 2000, the Intifada started and Israel effectively shut off Gaza from the rest of the world. So, it's very difficult. It happens, but it's very rare, that students go now from Gaza to the West Bank whereas before, you had 500 students every year at Bir Zeit from Gaza, or more. There was a population that was very interesting. So, I studied at Bir Zeit University, I did my degree in English Language and Literature. Then, I got a scholarship and help assistance from friends here in the UK and got accepted at SOAS where I did my Masters and my PhD. I have lived here in the UK since 2003 and then I had my post doc as well at SOAS where I also taught for some years and then moved on to Westminster where I am now a Senior Lecturer in Arabic Studies.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Atef. Maybe just a quick question, given the fact that I'm also a fellow Gazan. When was the last time you were able to visit?

Dr Atef Alshaer:
The first time I visited Gaza was after 18 years of being away from it, which was 2018.

Dr Imad Karam:
2018. Wow.

Dr Atef Alshaer:
So it's once, since 1999, effectively.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you. Atef, and we all know this is not by personal choice.

Dr Atef Alshaer:
No, no, definitely. I would've loved to go there, but it was very difficult and that journey itself was extremely hard. Once I got on into Gaza, the border was closed. That's another story, but it's not easy. Definitely.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Atef. I would like to move next to Victor. It's my pleasure to introduce Dr Victor Kattan. Some of you may have listened to him earlier when he spoke. Victor is a Senior Research Fellow at the School of Law at the University of Nottingham. Victor, would you tell us a little bit more about your personal journey and your family and how did you end up living in the UK?

Dr Victor Kattan:
Sure. Thank you, Imad. So, I was born in Khartoum in Sudan. My father's Palestinian, originally from Bethlehem and my mother is British, originally from a village in Cheshire. So, like Adam in essence. My father, in many ways, is similar to Adam. He studied in the UK, Manchester University. From being in Manchester, having friends at Manchester University, he met my mother and they got married. His family were merchants from Bethlehem so he actually had an uncle who already lived in Manchester who immigrated to Manchester in the 1920s. So almost a century ago. He already had a community here, when he moved to the UK. I didn't stay long in Sudan and followed my father in various parts of the world. He travelled widely for work but I ended up doing my schooling in the UK and most of my university education also in the UK.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Victor. And welcome, Leila. It is my pleasure to introduce Leila Sansour who is a renowned filmmaker. Leila is mostly known for two of her films, the "Jeremy Hardy vs The Israeli Army" of 2003 and “Open Bethlehem” of 2014, both being featured documentaries. Leila, would you kindly just tell us a little bit more about who you are, and your life journey coming to the UK? Where did you start and how did you end up here, please?

Leila Sansour:
Thank you for having me. I might not be the most usual candidate in terms of how identity labels get distributed. So, I'm half Russian and half Palestinian. It just so happened that I made my journey here from Russia during the collapse of the Soviet Union. I was born in Moscow, brought up in Palestine, then studied in Moscow, did a master’s in philosophy in Moscow and, just as the Soviet Union started going through a very dark time, and I couldn't imagine the future there at all, I also wanted to be part of a larger world. I wanted to be in an English-speaking country, as I saw the English language as the language of the now and of the future. Most recently I realised that there is an answer to why I came to Britain. I wasn't travelling to a country. I think I was travelling into a language that I wanted to travel into. So, I came here, and I settled here and for a long time, because I came from Russia, I was very often perceived as a Russian and I perceived myself slightly more as a Russian. But when the second Intifada broke out, somehow my Palestinian side co-opted me, almost entirely. People say the side that needs you most takes over and, I think, at that point maybe my Palestinian side took over. Although I was living here and I was working here in the media, I started working on many projects to do with

Palestine and made two documentaries and started a campaign against the Wall in Bethlehem. So, my last one documented the building of the Wall and I toured with it, with the idea of trying to use Bethlehem as a doorway into Palestine, to introduce people to the situation in Palestine in general, through the lands of one small, very famous city.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Leila. Your Russian connection will be quite helpful for our conversation later because we'd love to touch base on the situation between Russia and Ukraine, and how we see it from Palestinian eyes. I hope that you can have a conversation amongst yourselves. Maybe this will be after my second question, which is really both a first and second question, just designed to get to know you a little bit more. So, what I'd like to know from each one of you is, if you can share it with us, how did your family experience the end of the British Mandate over Palestine and the beginning of the Palestinian Nakba? I'm going to change the order a little bit so that we're not going over the same order. Victor, would you like to start, please?

Dr Victor Kattan:
Sure. My immediate family, so that's, my grandfather, was not in Palestine at the time, but he was already in Sudan. However, his brothers were in Bethlehem, and they were directly affected. Of course, Bethlehem fell to the Transjordanian Arab Legion in 1948. So, it wasn't occupied by the Israelis until 1967. They weren't affected in that sense, but of course they felt what happened. The family also owned land in Jaffa which is now a suburb of Tel Aviv and West Jerusalem, so this land was confiscated by the Custodian of Absentee Property, which is an agency of the Israeli government. They were still able to travel from Sudan to Bethlehem where my father was born even after 1948, but that was not possible after 1967. So, my grandfather never went back to Bethlehem, but of course, I still have cousins who live in Palestine today, in Bethlehem.

Dr Imad Karam:
And do you frequently visit?

Dr Victor Kattan:
I wouldn't say frequently . Last time I was there it was four years ago. It's easier for me with a British passport. Bethlehem is getting harder to visit, but there are ways and means one can try to get in which I won't discuss, but it's not as hard as the Gaza Strip.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Victor. Atef, could you go next please and share with us your family's experience of the Nakba and the end of the mandate?

Dr Atef Alshaer:

Yes, sure. It's difficult because in a sense, my grandfathers died when I was very young. From both sides, mother and father. My father died not so long after. What I know is that we still have papers proving that we had land there from the British Mandate time. They had been often talking about how can we

reclaim this land or what we had before there. But I heard from my relatives that my grandfather used to trade with people in Haifa, selling sheep and going there, to other parts of the coastal areas of Palestine. And that's how I know about this. I know just little bits and pieces as far as that time goes. They definitely were affected by being dispossessed, effectively to Gaza in 1948, where they took a long time to make their life again and... You know the story.

Dr Imad Karam:
I assume no one was able to go back to Beersheba?

Dr Atef Alshaer:
No, they have land registry copies proving that they have the right to land and so on and that this is their land. They went there as some of my relatives went there, including brothers, actually, as workers in the agricultural sector. They used to work maybe on their own land, but it's taken by somebody else. So that's another, I guess, significant experience for them.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Atef. Leila, would you like to go next, please?

Leila Sansour:
My story on some level, maybe it resembles that of Victor because my family comes from Bethlehem, Beit Jala for those who know the area better. It's part of the wider Bethlehem area. So, 1948 did not affect my family hugely, except that my great grandmother owned a shop in Jerusalem, and she had to abandon that and stop trading. It's the same grandmother who actually had her husband leave the country by ship during the Ottoman time, during the First World War, when a lot of Palestinians had to also flee the Ottoman draft. I think probably my family holds onto that as also a very massive story. The whole tragedy of their lives and their upheavals started then because he had to leave the family and he never made it back until he was very old. So, my great grandmother raised my grandfather on her own. Maybe 1967 affected my family most, because we immediately came under direct military occupation. This is the environment in which I grew up. In fact, it's not only my family's memories, it's my own memory where every single act that we needed to do had to be approved and licensed by the Israeli military. So, opening a street needed a licence, any extra building in your own house, any works needed the licence from the military. There was always upset, there were demonstrations in which we all took part. At that point, most of the protests were pretty peaceful, to be honest. There was this hope that we could maybe use language or law and peace on the ground, at least. I remember my life with the occupation in a very visceral and real sense rather than through family stories because we all lived the post 1967 situation. I remember my mom, who was Russian by the way, hiding Palestinian protestors in our water tanks all the time, almost every other day, during the first Intifada because they would be attacked. If the soldiers got to them, they would sometimes have their arms and legs broken. So, you are always part of this fabric of the life and the direct military occupation. So that's maybe a more precise description of my life.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Leila. It's really an amazing picture being drawn with different backgrounds and different experiences of the same event. Adam, please. Last but not least on this one.

Adam Abdalla:
As I said, my grandfather was from Al-Tira which is inside 48. It's interesting because Al-Tira actually was, I believe, the last city which wasn't conquered by the Zionist militias. At least, this is what I heard from my family. It might not be true, but this is definitely what I heard. So, most of my family stayed in Palestine and today they are citizens of Israel. But my grandfather was working in the West Bank. He was a school inspector. He was separated from his family, and he lived with my grandmother in the Tulkarm area. Basically, he couldn't get back to his family in Al-Tira so he had only one way to go, which was to Kuwait because in Kuwait at the time they needed new teachers because the local population wasn't very well educated, and so they brought educated people from Palestine, from what was becoming Jordan, and from other countries. Obviously, this was the direct way he got affected because he couldn't get together with his family and he had to build a new life in Kuwait. I remember asking my father about what was it like growing up in Kuwait? He said that the life was very difficult for them because my grandfather's dream was to go back to Palestine. So, in the sixties they acquired property in Tulkarm, in the city, and he started building a house. My father told me that they were living in very poor conditions because they were saving money from their life in Kuwait but spending everything back in Palestine and building a house. It was nearly finished in 1967 and in June the Israelis occupied the West Bank and they lost that house, again. It was like a double Nakba in their case. And then, again, my father couldn't go back to Palestine ever, and he went to Syria instead, and then from Syria to Czechoslovakia. I'd say this is the geographical impact, but also it's interesting because my grandfather died before I was born, probably of a heart attack. He was a very heavy smoker, and I asked my father, how come that my grandfather smoked? He told me that he asked him the same question: why did he smoke? He said that when he asked him this question, he replied *lamma saqatatal-bilad*, when Palestine fell. They said to him, "this will help". So, this is also an interesting impact, what it does to people.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Adam. Yes, it's part of our sad story, I guess, but thank you for the anecdote. I'm just wondering, maybe as an open question, if any of you would like to share. How has life been for you living in the UK, with your different identities as it were? What experiences can you share with us of being a Palestinian living in this country, being British-Palestinian, being visiting Palestinian, temporary Palestinian, long-term Palestinian, whatever identity we are. Anyone would like to share some of their experiences living in this country as a Palestinian? At different times?

Dr Atef Alshaer:
I'm happy to talk about that..

Dr Imad Karam:
Please Atef, go ahead.

Dr Atef Alshaer:
Well, I think, Imad, you and I are the only fully-fledged Palestinians. I came from Palestine so obviously, as you perhaps would have experienced, we come to a really different culture. I didn't live in any other country before. There is quite a lot to cope with, like language. I lived with an English family for about 13 years after coming from Rafah to Bir Zeit, to Kensington. You can say it's quite a small difference there. Then studying at SOAS, which was a fascinating experience. For me, the UK has been a place where it's just a different culture, different life and all the rest, but also as far as Palestine is concerned, I thought that when I first came here, being at SOAS I thought that it was possible to speak about Palestine more. It was possible to organise. It was possible to be an activist. I thought this was all innocently done. There's not much to it. We just do it, believing in the cause, believing in the justice of a cause, which I still obviously do. But with time it turns out that there's so much to it, that we live in a country where the environment is not necessarily all welcoming, as I initially assumed. I don't mean the people, but I mean, the organisations, the system, the political system, the media organisations, etcetera. So, I think campaigning and talking about Palestine has become harder and harder, which is unfortunate because actually worldwide, we do see a shift in terms of the way people see Palestine, that the worth of Palestine has risen. There is so much that has been documented in terms of Israeli abuses against Palestinians, against the reality of the occupation which is very oppressive and very destructive. All these aspects, one would expect that they will make a good case for openness in terms of activism, that we can be active, we can organise things at universities, where I work for example, but actually it turns out to be quite hard for various reasons. Another effect on me personally, the fact that I have made the UK, my home, I live here, but it's very hard for me to visit, for example, Gaza. That has been a constant concern, and I keep thinking about it because I'd like my children, for example, or my wife, all of us as a family, to be able to visit and that is also extremely hard. And obviously we negotiate. Negotiate might not be the right word, but it's our identity. I am Arab Palestinian. This is a major and important significant identity for me. I come from there, I live there, et cetera, et cetera. The UK is also an identity that I have acquired because I am part of the system. I live here, the language, the literature, all the things that I have acquired, or I studied at least. So, there's constant negotiation between these two identities. I don't find problems as far as navigating or crossing from one identity to another, or assuming one identity at one point and another at another. That is just part of it. That's expected. But there are difficulties to do with expressing our identity, I don't know how to put it, but suppressing what we feel as Palestinians who are attached to the Palestinian cause, and attached to our homes and our histories and all of these aspects, which are significant to us. This is a difficulty in terms of taking part in activism, being active on it, talking about it. This is how it has become. It's not as easy as it should be really...

Dr Imad Karam:
Indeed. Thank you, Atef.

Leila Sansour:
I don't know personally why I was reluctant to start answering this question because I don't think I experienced any difference in being Russian or being a Palestinian. The British are an island folk and so they are slightly set in their ways and not necessarily open to other cultures , but that's by the by. But I think maybe what is very perceptible to me as a Palestinian is that during my life here, and I've been here for decades now, I think what's shifted, and this is maybe something important for us to

understand, is the attitude of the institutions towards us. So far as people can deal with us, I think there's a lot of goodwill, there's interest. I, for example, work in the media. I'm currently actually doing this interview from ITV News where I often freelance and I don't find that people are even unsympathetic to our cause. A lot of Palestinians may be surprised to understand just how much people sympathise for our cause. But something happened with the way the culture shifted, and we have to remember that. The culture of today is the culture of institutions, it is the institutions that lead us, the institutions that set the tone and the institutions are not for us. In a way I do feel uncomfortable only when I have to face or speak to the institution, not to people. As somebody living with this identity, that's where it becomes problematic. That, I think, also poses big questions about how we, for example, campaign or try and tell our story or achieve change, because we need to remember that it's not necessarily people as much that we need to change, although I'm not disregarding the aspect, but we do really need to think about how is it that we shift institutions to be able to work with us. And I think we don't do that enough.

Dr Imad Karam:
Leila, maybe we can come back to that actually and talk about it later. Is there anyone who would like to compare their own experiences of being Palestinian in the UK?

Victor Kattan:
I'd see myself as British and Palestinian but, I guess, my story is, I wasn't aware of my Palestinian identity until quite late. It wasn't until I was about 16 years old and when my father got a job with the World Health Organization in Gaza that I had the opportunity to visit and meet my family in Palestine, in Bethlehem. I guess that's really from the moment when I suddenly realised where my father was from, and what had happened to his family. I was struck by something Leila Sansour said about the impact of the second Palestine Intifada on you, when you say that the side that needs you takes over. I kind of experienced something similar during the Intifada, especially at university. I studied with Atef at SOAS. There was a feeling you could make change. I guess we were also young, maybe naive students. There was a feeling at that time, there were big issues going on in the world, like 9/11, the global war on terror, the invasion of Iraq. It felt like a different moment. There was a lot of interest and activism and opportunities to speak and engage. I've been living overseas for almost the last 10 years in Southeast Asia, so I've been watching things in the UK from afar, but it seems to me it's become a lot harder to speak. I personally suffer a lot from what I call self-censorship. I often hold back before I say something, especially in institutions, as Leila mentioned. In the universities, especially, I'm very careful about what I say. It took a bit of persuasion to join this panel, to be honest. But I'm happy, I guess that I've done it, but I do feel that for various reasons, which we can discuss if people are interested, the ability to speak honestly and openly about this issue has become much, more difficult.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Victor. I hope we'll have enough time to come back to you, maybe finding one or two areas where we can collectively do better for the cause of Palestine and bringing peace to Palestine and Palestinians, and to the region. Let's move and touch on what's going on in Ukraine, and how do we as Palestinians experience it. What do we experience when we watch the world reaction to what's going on in Ukraine? What does it provoke in us? Anything you would like to say, Leila? Initially, I'd like to see

how we experience Ukraine, or what's going on in Ukraine, as Palestinians Then maybe we could move on to see if there's anything to be learned from what's going on there. The floor is open.

Leila Sansour:

It has been a very real roller coaster for me because I experienced this war both as a Palestinian and as a Russian. As a Russian, I obviously find it very important. It completely captivates my heart. I'm really, really angry with the Russian government to a degree that I cannot describe. And I think Palestinians cannot share this with me because they kind of rotate in a sphere where their main enemy, the power that comes down on them, is the West or the power that conspires to make their plight more difficult aligns itself with the West. But it doesn't mean that Russia doesn't have its own agency, that the whole world doesn't have its bad people. In a way, I'm very angry with Russia to be honest and I'm very supportive of the Ukrainian effort. I wish the Ukrainians the best. I wish them all the support. Of course, it's difficult. And that's another conversation: what to do there, what's the best solution? As a Palestinian, like many Palestinians, of course I experience the frustration of the sense of Ukrainians getting so much support, so much sympathy. Often being, I would say, more gracious than the Ukrainians in terms of how we speak, how respectful we are, how non-aggressive we are. I mean, we've made ourselves so non-aggressive and we're still seen within frameworks of aggression, somehow. At the same time, I also get frustrated with Palestinians when they constantly just go on and on about the idea that how come the West likes the Ukrainians. Are they looking after their own...? Is it because they identify with them because they're white?... I think sometimes yes, okay. Maybe it's frustrating that that's the case, but that's the way of the world. Unfortunately, people do identify with their own people, do have sympathies with people they identify more easily. But what we should be focused on - and I think we've always somehow seemed not to give that aspect enough focus - is that we have international law. So, I'm just saying, rather than love us, at least treat us right under the law.

Dr Imad Karam:

When I sit and watch television and I see how the media is covering Ukraine in this country, how the politicians are talking about it, it does provoke certain feelings, emotions, reactions. So, I just wanted to ask you about this. And then we'll come back to what we can learn, and our conclusions.

Adam Abdalla:

I think it's actually connected to your position as a Palestinian and I would like to clarify what I mean by a Palestinian. In the UK, you're very welcome to be Palestinian, as long as you don't step over certain red lines, which is not to be actively and politically engaged, and act upon this identity that you have. And this is connected to Ukraine. It's connected to Ukraine in a very specific manner, which is that we, as Palestinians here in the UK, live in a very particular condition where we are not even allowed to point out the racism which is being committed against us. No one would in any scenario, doubt that Ukrainians have the absolute right to speak out against the aggression of the Russian state, against their civil rights, against their country, against their sovereignty. At the same time, speaking as a Palestinian, I am not allowed, or I'm not encouraged by the state, to talk about the aggression that the Israeli state commits against my people. This can be within the 1948 borders, this can be against the population of Gaza, this can be in the West Bank, or in the diaspora. It can also be here in the UK by suppressing freedom of speech by constantly putting hindrances in your way, in your career and obviously limiting the platform that you have. So, that is what I think, especially when I see people engaging so

immediately with the Ukrainians, without any sort of knowledge of the subject, acting on strictly sympathetic and emotional grounds. If I juxtapose this to when I speak to people about Palestine, and the level of scepticism that people employ when I try to talk about Israeli human rights violations and Israeli war crimes, and the allegations made against them, the difference is quite stark. So, it's very difficult to be in that position. I think the worst thing about it, and what makes the Palestinians' experience quite unique, is that pointing this out by itself is not allowed in the discourse.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Adam. Atef or Victor, can you explain this?

Victor Kattan:
I can try. I agree with much of what has been said already. I suppose trying to take my Palestinian hat off and wear my British hat, I suppose one big difference, again from a British national security perspective, if you like, would be that Russia is an enemy or was seen as an enemy of this country before the war. Putin had assassinated people in the UK, used biological weapons. Historically there's a lot of enmity going back to the Cold War. There's already that context, whereas the Israelis are perceived to be close allies of the UK. The Israelis haven't been attacking us. Not since the assassination of Lord Moyne in 1944 have there been equivalent actions such as those of the Russians. And then the Palestinians, unfortunately, some groups don't have the best image. Let's just pick one. I know it's a small group, but Islamic Jihad are aligned with Iran, and Iran is an enemy of the UK. So, there's that context that's also taking place, and which may also explain why the government was so fast to react to Russia. There are other reasons. Russia, perhaps, is seen as a greater threat. It's closer. I agree there are other reasons. There are cultural reasons as well, and I do find these also frustrating, as much as Adam and others do as well. But that's the world we live in, as Leila says.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Victor. Atef, anything you would like to add?

Dr Atef Alshaer:
I agree with what other colleagues have said. Basically, I think it was striking, what happened between Russia and Ukraine for us Palestinians in the sense and the way the West treated Ukraine, and the way the West has been treating Palestine. For a very long time, the West could somehow sugar coat its representation of Palestine in a particular way: "this is a complex conflict", "this is two sides", the language that was used. It's language as if they are honest brokers or mediators, when it's actually an asymmetrical conflict. It's a case of occupation, direct colonialism. That is the way journalists and the media use to depict the situation as far as Russia's invasion of Ukraine is concerned. So, I think with this invasion the discourse of double standards has become blatantly clear when it comes to Ukraine and Russia. Russia is only doing what Israel has been doing in Palestine for a very long time. It's recognised in international law as an occupying power, and at the same time, it's supported by the West; it's an occupying power supported by the West - heavily so, particularly by this country, by the United States. Leila has depicted the picture very well when she differentiated between institutions and the people. I think that is a sound. But I think when it comes to that, this war has revealed a case of double standards. It is a case of the fact that Palestinian victims are seen as less significant. It is a case of racism and discrimination, and this is something that has become very clear if we just take the case of Shireen

Abu Akleh the other day: she's been assassinated, effectively, on our screens. We can see that and, at the same time, the language is that "Shireen Abu Akleh died in Jenin". By contrast, if a journalist was killed in Ukraine, a Ukrainian journalist, then obviously it's a crime. I don't say that this is not a crime, but the language will be very emotional and very emotive, and it shows the Palestinian victims as if they are insignificant, immaterial: all the things that Edward Said talked about in Orientalism and all the rest. Mentioning Edward Said, I thought it was interesting that when Edward Said wrote his book, *The Question of Palestine,* in 1979, he said that for us Palestinians, our name now is becoming much more acceptable: you can say 'Palestine', you can be an activist for Palestine. That was 1979 and that was seen as progress. It's unfortunate now we live at a time where anything to do with Palestine is somehow not okay, or any activism on Palestine is suspect. It's put under the radar as it were, and sometimes not allowed. Very good people, very decent people, they have very good views, they understand the issues, they don't have prejudices, and all the rest. I think this war has shown aspects of this.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Atef. So, Leila back to you to kick us off, maybe on the lessons to be learnt, please. I mean, we, as Palestinians have been at it, trying to make the case to the world of the just cause of a people worthy of life, and freedom, and equality. It seems things are going against the tide, or the tide is going against us. Yes, we might be winning over international opinion which, as you pointed out, is less effective than the institutions. But with the Ukraine situation, what do you see? One or two, three lessons to be learnt? Let's just have a reflection on the lessons. What are the takeaways? What do we see as a chance for us here?

Leila Sansour:
I'm going to say something that might sound a bit harsh, although I think the harshness is also meant towards myself. As much as I get frustrated with how the West perceives Palestine's plight and tragedy differently to Ukraine's plight and tragedy, I also get very frustrated with us Palestinians. Sometimes it feels like we should learn the lessons better, and we should stop just talking idly about how we feel. I know people and we all know people who die on the ground, who are in jail on the ground, it's them that should be our priority and it's them that we should think about, not our feelings. We should be very serious and earnest about planning in the right way so that we use whatever tools that are in our hands to create change. I think that means being very serious about where we can push in order to cause change. As I said, we can start campaigning against all forms of racism, but that's the battle that's for the end of time. We have a very clear battle and I think it's a legal battle that we can do better at. We can use it as a focal point if we are serious. By serious, I mean, we need to have our own institutions that are seriously focused on a legal effort towards getting Palestinian rights. All our campaigns, PR campaigns, other campaigns, I think personally all of them should be subservient to that. Because if we can successfully organise such an effort, we will exempt some of the people on the ground from putting their lives all the time on the line, because currently all that is sustaining us is people on the ground who are constantly putting themselves there in harm's way. Ideally I think we should care about people enough to try and make a serious effort to use the tools that are available to us. I think we have not used them enough. Let's name the institutions, or our projects or efforts that are pursuing legal wins. Where are they? We don't have any. Try to raise funds among Palestinians for legal efforts? I don't think you can get that. I've known some people who've tried that, and we don't. So, we should be more serious

about really wanting victory. And I think what the Ukrainians teach me is that they're so serious about victory that they really don't lose sight of any tool available to them. We should do the same.

Dr Imad Karam:
Fascinating. Well, thank you, Leila. That's a good list and a good start. Any comments anyone? Any additions? Any reflections on what we've just heard from Leila?

Adam Abdalla:
I agree to an extent with what Leila said. I think especially her last note was fascinating to me. What I'd like also to bring to people's attention is that the difference isn't only in the reaction to the victims, but also to the resistance, and I think this is important. No one's ashamed of putting tutorials or instructions on how to make a Molotov cocktail on their mainstream news network and then, say 'Oh, this is brilliant. Look how the Ukrainians are making Molotov cocktails'. But when Palestinian children throw rocks this is seen as terrorism. This is, again, the double standard. But I think, we should take advantage of this and if it's endorsed by these news outlets that people make Molotov cocktails and they resist an occupation, then we should take advantage of this and pursue it. It can be legal; it could be the root of advocacy.

If I could speak from the position of a student, make the case to your peers, make the case to your university, make the case to your institution. This is what I've done here in Oxford. In my college, we sent out a letter of support to the Ukrainian students and to the Ukrainian cause. I also invited people to go to a demonstration to commemorate the Nakba. We have the tools in our hands, I think. We should also learn from the lessons of the past, from the sixties and the seventies, when very great leaps were made in the diaspora. They were not made by pandering to or trying to appease the Western audiences, or the Western governments or institutions. It was a very serious effort for the liberation of our homeland. I think there are lessons to be learned from this. Stop being apologetic and trying to always fit the narrative that the Western audiences want us to fit into.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Adam. Your point about the Molotov cocktails and the double standards: I wonder whether it's double standards, as much as other things. One is ignorance. This is our inability, if not failure, to make the case that we are people who are occupied and actually needing resistance, rather than people who are just violent. Because that's the way it comes across, and that's where the media comes in. It doesn't give the full picture. So, what you see is a form of Palestinian violence rather than Palestinian resistance. On the other hand, it links to the institutional aspect that Leila talked about because those institutions have been and are more careful how they will project the Palestine–Israel story. So, that's part of it. I don't think every journalist or media outlet is just completely, intentionally, making those double standards. As Palestinians, we have a lot more to do. I think Leila is right. I mean, how much do we invest personally? There are those who can. By the way, I know many who sacrificially give for the cause as it were. But how coordinated are we? How strategic are we? How integrated are we? Do we have a story of success of being Palestinian-British, for example? And how are we countering this massive Israeli machinery that is presenting it as "disputed territory". That is presenting the Palestinians as violent, not worthy of a state, not worthy of freedom, and our actions don't always help us. So, there's

something there to think about. I'm not blaming the victim here, us, but I do believe that we can do more, also to help those who are helping us. Victor, Atef, just to finish off on this subject of lessons.

Victor Kattan:
Yes. One issue that was raised by Leila and Adam was advocacy and legal efforts. One obvious thing that occurs to me from the Russian invasion of Ukraine is how the West has become suddenly the defender of the international legal order and the UN charter and against a prohibition of the use of force when this government was jettisoning international law during the Brexit talks, or threatening to do so. If it's possible, and I have some concerns whether it is possible, that it might be an idea to point out that there is an occupation, that is what's happening in the West Bank where numerous international rules have been violated. Try to campaign from that angle. The only difficulty, however, is that institutions like the International Criminal Court, as the prosecutor Karim Khan has made it clear, are prioritising the situation in Ukraine over Palestine. I spoke to a senior Palestinian official just a few weeks ago. There were discussions about going to another court and United Nations diplomats from Western countries told the Palestinians not to make a big brouhaha about what's happening in their cause. They don't want the limelight to be taken from Ukraine. So even now, despite all this discussion about justice and international law, there's realpolitik and Palestine unfortunately has always been seen as not a priority for these countries. You always hear that you're not a priority, not important enough, but nonetheless, I think that in terms of advocacy and discourse, this is an obvious angle to focus on: the international law angle that Israelis and Russians are breaching international law in Ukraine and Palestine and that's something that could be focused on.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you, Victor. Well, the issue's not going away. So, Ukraine hopefully will go away soon and the situation there will be resolved. We just need to be ready to bring an end to the Israeli Palestinian thing and not make the world think that they can continue to live with it. Atef, any words to finish off?

Dr Atef Alshaer:
I agree. I do think that our effort should be holistic, as it were, because as Palestinian British here in the UK we are not all very well versed in international law, but we know the justice of the cause. We know what a lot of things could be done for Palestine, so I think our efforts should somehow reflect our fields. We should continue to organise and to integrate, as you said, to come together and to speak to each other and to find ways to somehow find the cracks in authority, as it were, and institutions in this country to make our voice heard. Because, as you said, the people are there, Palestinians are victims, and I don't mean that they are victims, but they also have agency. They can talk and they can speak, and they can resist. And we need to make the demand that it is legitimate to talk about them. It's legitimate to present them and to speak freely about this issue and to take, as just one writer has put it, a moral stance on this issue. It is a moral cause at the end of the day, and this is what we're here to present as much as possible in as many arenas possible.

Dr Imad Karam:
Thank you Atef. The Balfour Project will continue to push for the agenda of international law and equality, and equal rights for all. Speaking as a trustee myself of the Balfour Project, Leila Sansour, Atef Alshaer, Victor Kattan and Adam Abdalla, thank you very much. And I'll hand over back to you, Phyllis.

Layla Moran MP

Layla has been the Member of Parliament for Oxford West and Abingdon since 2017.

She is the Liberal Democrats' Foreign Affairs and International Development Spokesperson, an issue that she is deeply passionate about. She advocates immediate recognition of the state of Palestine alongside Israel. She was previously, as an ex-teacher, the party's education spokesperson.

My family and Jerusalem

Layla Moran MP

Thank you, Phyllis. It's lovely to see you again, virtually this time. I think we first met talking about Palestine issues in and around Oxford. So, it's lovely to see you in this context. And, hello everyone. I'm an enormous fan of the Balfour Project and thank you so much for inviting me to relay some of my own personal experience.

So yes, Phyllis, I know I'm the only Palestinian heritage MP currently. I think I am also the first. I hope not the last, and I hope that there are many others from all political backgrounds who are encouraged to stand for Parliament, to stand as councillors, to get involved in politics in this country, because I think it does bring something of its own richness to have all sorts of different voices in the House.

I speak on foreign affairs now but, as you might imagine, I've always tried whenever there's anything going on in the House about Palestine to go and talk. What I tend to try and do is to bring a voice of personal experience into the chamber, to bring a humanity to the debate, to make people realise, particularly those who frankly will just swallow the briefing from Conservative Friends of Israel or whatever, that there are real families who are affected by the events on the ground, and these are real communities with a long history.

So I'm really proud of my Palestinian history. I'm proud that my first word was Arabic, even though I'm ashamed to say, I don't speak it now, but it was 'daw', which means light. Apparently, there was a pull cord. I was particularly interested in it as a child, and that's what caused that. For the first few years of my life, my mum only spoke to me in Arabic and my Palestinian-ness is expressed mainly in the music we listen to, the food we eat. My mum is coming to London tomorrow and she is bringing me malfouf, because that is my favourite food. Palestinian-ness comes in all sorts of different forms, but the other side of it, and perhaps the less joyous side in a way, is that long history, particularly the part that is so closely linked to the Mandate, which is of course where

Britain comes into this. So, my family, in its past generations, we are Jerusalemites, and I was taught from a very young age that this is a distinction, even among Palestinians. We are proud Jerusalemites. That is very much a part of our identity. We are a Christian family, we are Greek Orthodox and in the later stages of my family's story, which I'll relay, we've ended up recentring the family after the diaspora in Athens, in Greece, because we have links that fed back from Greece over many generations.

My family is probably best known for my great grandfather's diaries. My great-grandfather was a man called Wassif Jawharriyyeh. He wrote prolific diaries that chronicle the period of the Mandate from 1904 to 1948. And we're very proud that he has now become source material for all sorts of different books these days. My mother remembers him. I sadly never got to meet him, but he was an incredible figure. He was a musician. He was a bon viveur, incredibly intelligent. His father was a lawyer and he got involved initially with the Husseini family in Jerusalem during the Ottoman occupation. In his diaries, he chronicles how the liberation of Palestine from the Ottomans was a moment of great renewal. He told horrible stories of how the Ottomans would, for example, drag men through the streets by their scrotum if they didn't pay their taxes. I mean, it sounded horrifically oppressive. So, when the British came in, they were delighted. This was meant to be a time of liberation, and even the Balfour Declaration itself at the time was seen through the eyes of hope.

You fast forward a few years. My grandfather, in fact, worked for the Mandate. He was a clerk in the government and by the time it gets to 1948 and the withdrawal, his view has completely changed. He'd spent much of his adulthood rubbing shoulders with the elites at the time. They'd party together. Then I was reading my grandfather's diaries, who in the tradition of my great-grandfather also wrote down his stories, and I just want to read a little extract from it.

Apparently, they said, when they heard that the UN had voted for the partition of Palestine, he said he blamed the British. He felt this enormous loss. A feeling of great loss sank in as the family had to move and we never returned. So, once the partition happened, it was the terrorism in Jerusalem itself that caused them to move. They first moved to a monastery in Jericho for a short while. And then they left. They went away.

Eventually coming back to Jericho, and I personally find this quite poignant for myself, because there is somewhere also called Jericho in Oxford. So I quite love it that I'm the MP for Jericho, given that that was where my family ended up going.

You fast forward a little bit to my grandfather's time now, and Amman starts to feature. My grandfather grew up with a great sense of loss not being able to go back after ‘48. The house was looted. There was a huge collection of music and trinkets. My great grandfather was a great collector of things, perhaps slightly OCD, but it served as a great record, much of it is gone. My grandfather relays this deep sense of loss, the feeling of never being able to go back.

After studying at AUB he came back to Jericho, seeking to build and till the land, He became a farmer. We had no previous experience of farming. We were very much refugees at this point, having lost everything. He became one of the people who brought mass poultry farming to the Middle East, and built his career that way.

This then took him to Tripoli for a while and he got involved in the Arab Development Society, which was run by Musa Alami, and we are very proud of the work that he did with them, because that was an organisation that sought to take care of refugees, particularly refugee orphans, teaching them a skill, teaching them how to tend the land and rebuilding, so that they didn't leave. I think this was an important thing for many Palestinians at the time. If you left the land, you were never going to come back. So, what could they do to keep people there?

That then took him to Amman. He wasn't making enough money. The family was growing. My mother is one of five children. By that point he couldn't support them on the wage he was being offered there, as amazing as that experience was. So they went to Amman. And so the story of my mother is that's where she finished her secondary school. She went to the University of Jordan and did her masters in the UK, where she met my father.

So that's where I come in, and where the British connection comes in. It's very much a story, and I know it's chronological, but it's a story of increased geographical distance away from Jerusalem. But I would say, and whilst I am half Palestinian, I feel very much a part of the fight for Palestine in my own way, in the same way that many of my cousins do as well. I think whilst our connection with the aftermath of the Mandate and of the struggle is perhaps less present, these are things that happened in our parents' childhoods. It's not things that happened in ours and that we were privy to as first person actors. But the future of Palestine does weigh heavy on my shoulders. I want to be able to one day take my children there. I want to not be the generation that lost Palestine, and to fight for our Homeland. In my grandfather's books, he lays at the end of it a challenge to all of us who are now part of the diaspora, the second generation, the ones who have taken on the passports and the languages, the positions of privilege and power in other countries. He sets us the challenge to make the case why it is so important to keep the hope of Palestine alive. It's for that reason that I'm proud. Every parliamentary session, I introduce another bill for the recognition of Palestine, and I particularly want to impress on this government to not forget their historic obligation to my family, to the people of Palestine in the Balfour Declaration, that said that it was a land that was for two peoples. Unfortunately, I don't think the government currently is holding true to that promise. But by George, as long as I'm here, I'm going to remind them.

Parliamentary Panel — Julie Elliott MP, David Jones MP, Layla Moran MP, Tommy Sheppard MP

Julie Elliott MP

Julie Elliott MP

Julie Elliott is a British Labour Party politician who was first elected MP for Sunderland Central in 2010. Julie served as Shadow Minister for Energy and Climate Change from October 2013 to September 2015, with specific responsibility for renewable energy, the Green Investment Bank and skills and supply chain issues. She chairs the Britain Palestine All-Party Parliamentary Group and Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East.

Rt Hon David Jones MP

Rt Hon David Jones MP

David Jones has been the Conservative Member of Parliament for Clwyd West since 2005. He is a former Secretary of State for Wales and Minister of State at the Department for Exiting the European Union.

David has a long-standing interest in Middle Eastern Affairs. He is chairman of the Council for Arab-British Understanding (CAABU) and also chairs the All-Party Parliamentary Groups for Jordan, Libya and the United Arab Emirates, in which capacities he has made several visits to the region.

Layla Moran MP

Layla Moran MP

See page 76 for full biography.

Tommy Sheppard MP

Tommy Sheppard MP

Tommy Sheppard is the Scottish National Party MP for Edinburgh East, and has been an MP continuously since May 2015. He is currently Shadow SNP Leader of the House of Commons.

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
So, everybody watching this is well aware of who you all are and indeed can read in the programme a much longer bio in any case. So, welcome to all of you and thank you very much for participating in this panel. I wanted to start off by giving you each up to five minutes in the order, David, Julie, Tommy, Layla. But just remind you that what we're trying to concentrate on in this panel is the way forward, and how we can get a real political will in the UK Parliament about getting a movement forward on Palestinian rights. So over to you, David.

Rt Hon David Jones MP:
Thank you very much, Phyllis, and it's very good to be here. I just listened to Layla's presentation which I thought was extremely good, extremely touching and very personal. I haven't got the same personal connection with Palestine, self-evidently. Layla of course is half Palestinian, I'm 100% Welsh. Though I would say that I do have some connection in that my grandfather was a soldier with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and served in Palestine in the First World War. So that goes back a very long way. I've had a long interest in the Middle East - not just Palestine, but also Jordan, the UAE. I chair a number of all party groups. I also chair CAABU, the Council for Arab British Understanding, which has done a lot of very valuable work in this connection, and continues to do so. Layla is right. We in this country do have an obligation to do our very best to resolve the problem of Palestine. I think it's going to be, in all frankness, still a very long haul. The position of governments of all stripes, frankly, for some time has been not to recognise Palestine until, as they put it, “the time is right". I think it's very hard to see on the basis of my experience as a parliamentarian when the time is going to be absolutely right.

We've got a government that, like its predecessors, is committed to what it calls a two-state solution. That means serving the interests of both Israelis and Palestinians equitably. In order to do that, you need fairness and it seems to me quite impossible to see how Palestinians can negotiate successfully against the state of Israel if Palestinians are not themselves recognised as a state. Like several other colleagues I have pressed in parliament and indeed voted in parliament for the recognition of the state of Palestine, which I believe is the first necessary step towards achieving the two-state solution that successive governments say that we should be aiming for. The problem of course we have is that the institutions of statehood in Palestine are still not properly developed. I was very disappointed that the elections that should have taken place about 12 months ago didn't happen. The ostensible reason of course, was because East Jerusalem was not to be included in that process. But I actually believe that there are other issues that precluded the election going ahead, that I believe is important. It's been 15 years now since an election was held for the Palestinian authority and I think by any standards any administration that doesn't have elections for 15 years has got dubious legitimacy. So, I think we do need to press for elections.

The further concern I've got, frankly, is that the issue of Palestine is slipping down the agenda internationally. The Abraham Accords between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain were in some respects welcome. I think that anything that builds more understanding between Middle Eastern states and Israel is commendable. But my concern is that as these Arab states focus upon normalizing relations with Israel, we see the interest of Palestine being side-lined. That again is another great worry. The British government, of course, is keen on pursuing a free trade agreement with Israel. I've a suspicion that that is something that is impelling them chiefly at the moment. I think the consequence of that is

that we are seeing some regrettable things happening. For example, the Jerusalem resolution which is held periodically in the United Nations recently referred to the Temple Mount, which is an expression that has not been used previously. So, I think that those of us who are interested in pursuing equity for the Palestinian people need to be very much aware of the fact that it is slipping down the international agenda. I think the parliamentarians have a responsibility to keep putting it back up the agenda at Westminster. That's something that I and I'm sure my colleagues on this conference call and others are determined to carry on doing.

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
Thank you very much, David, and you've actually answered one of the questions that have been tabled already, which is the one about why we should do recognition. So, we'll see whether you managed to answer any more of the questions without hearing the questions. Thank you.

Julie Elliott MP:
Thank you very much for listening. It's lovely to see everyone, this little group of parliamentarians. We come across each other all the time on this issue. It's lovely to see everyone. It's a real pleasure to be here in this conference organised by the Balfour Project which does so much good work in highlighting the issues and highlighting our historical responsibilities. I think we can't overemphasise how important it is that we remind everyone of that. Although it isn't us as individuals, it's people that were here before us. I think as a country, we do have historic responsibility.

I think to look forward, we have to look at what we can do as parliamentarians. For me, that's about keeping this issue on the agenda as much as possible and looking for opportunities in Parliament to raise the issues and to go through the issues. We recently had the back bench business debate on recognition of Palestine which David took part in. That was a good debate. There was very little dissent to be fair in the speeches that were made but the government was as ever saying, yes, we will recognise the state of Palestine, but at a point that we feel it's best to do. As David said, it's about equalness and fairness. It's not a huge step forward to recognise the stage of Palestine. There shouldn't be any disagreement about it and it should have happened yesterday, not today or tomorrow.

I think as a Labour politician, our position is very clear that we will recognise Palestine. If we form a government, that's a whole other question. It's very important, and the other thing that I think is always important to recognise when we're discussing this issue, is that there is no disagreement between the political parties. Everybody talks about the two state solution, but every day that passes that two-state solution in my view becomes more of a far-off objective because every day the status quo is not really the status quo. Things are getting worse every day with more building of more settlements, more permissions being given, more roads going round and different roads in the occupied territories. All of these things happening on a constant basis make that two-state solution a further off prospect, and where we are at the minute is there is just no peace process going on. So, I think we have to, as I said at the beginning, raise the issue as often and as much and as loudly and as broadly as we possibly can.

The Queen's speech last week raised some alarm bells for those of us who are very interested in the Middle East and peace in the Middle East, with the announcement of a boycott divestment and

sanctions bill, the detail of which at the moment we don't know. But it worries me. I think that's one of the things moving forward that all of us have to keep a very close eye on. We can't let the government blur the lines between Israel and the illegal settlements, because there is a very clear distinction and we can't blur and get rid of that 1967 green line. It is hugely important. My fear is that that bill might try and do that. I think that's something that, as parliamentarians, we have to keep a very close eye on. The other thing that has happened in recent months is the number of reports describing the situation in the occupied territories as a type of apartheid. The rapporteur Michael Lynk, who has spoken to this conference already, brought out a very significant report recently. But that's following a number of others from Amnesty and other very well-respected organizations. I think we need to raise the issues raised in those reports because they're very thorough, significant reports about what's happening on the ground, and what the situation is. It's my personal view that these reports are absolutely correct. I've only visited the area once but when I did visit, there was absolutely no doubt in my mind that people living side by side are not only living under different laws and different conditions, but have different roads, different schools - just completely different ways of life, and living under different rules. As I say, I think for me it's about raising the issue at every opportunity, keeping it on the agenda. Sadly, I agree with David that in recent years I think it has slipped down the agenda, not just in the UK but in the world. We've got to make sure that it goes up the agenda. I also agree with David that elections are absolutely essential amongst the Palestinian community in the occupied territories because elections that took place as long ago as 2006 have very little legitimacy.

Finally, only this week we had the urgent question from our front bench on the appalling killing of Shireen Abu Akleh. That was really putting the spotlight on the government about the importance of that being independently investigated, as well as the brutality of what is going on on a daily basis. Sadly, as we sit here in Westminster, we know that Shireen is not the first journalist to die reporting what is going on. I doubt she will be the last, but what we can do is keep pressure on our government and the international community to make sure that it is investigated properly and that the people who are found responsible are actually held to account for their actions. I think that's where the power of being in Parliament comes in. We do have a platform. We do have a voice in a way that others don't. I think we must use it at every opportunity. I'll leave it there. Thanks very much for this.

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
Thank you very much, Julie. Tommy.

Tommy Sheppard MP:
Thank you Phyllis. Like David and Julie, I have no personal connection to Palestine. I became involved initially in this issue in the late seventies at university because I became friendly with a couple of Palestinian students, and got talking to them. It struck me then and it has struck me for all the decades in between that this is just the most egregious and long running denial of human rights in the world. That is why when I entered parliament in 2015, whilst all of us are concerned about many things particularly in the international sphere, I decided that I would prioritise this particular issue. Better to try and put your effort into one or two things and hopefully achieve something than to support every cause in the world and get nowhere. That's why I am here, and I'm delighted to accept the invitation from the Balfour Project.

I want to start where Julie left off with the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh. It seems to me that not only her murder but the attack by armed police on the funeral procession demonstrates a degree of self-confidence amongst the Israeli authorities and the Israeli political establishment that is new, and is robust, and is quite enduring. I think it has come about through a long process of other countries not standing up and not criticizing where criticism is due, or of making half-hearted platitudinous criticism and not taking any concrete action. The Israeli authorities know that their actions are consequence free, and if they can do what they did to that funeral cortege with the world's media watching,. imagine what they can do behind closed doors, as it were. So I find the situation today extremely worrying. I suppose, like David and others, I like the idea of a two-state solution. It's a nice idea. And by that, two pluralistic democratic states living in harmony with each other with different traditions and focus, perhaps - but each democratic, pluralistic, and respectful of the other. I think you have to ask the question: what happens when it seems to be the policy of one of those states to actively prevent the idea coming to fruition by its policies across every aspect of policy? Every new settlement that is built makes the two state solution harder to achieve. Every new Palestinian dwelling that is demolished, every kid that is arrested, every funeral cortege that is attacked. All of these things just make it harder and harder to achieve. This is not just because the material ground is shifting, but because the confidence of the Palestinians in that process is being eroded.

Perhaps it is time to say the world needs to be looking at other alternatives as well. We need to be focusing much more on Israel's responsibility as a government, not just to its own citizens within Israel proper, but to the people and the civilians that live within the territories which it militarily occupies and militarily administers. That's why I believe that the reports from Bt'selem, Amnesty and others in terms of the apartheid dimension to what's happening are extremely important. This isn't a matter of just using labels and saying "Oh, Israel's an apartheid state." It clearly isn't, but it is a matter of saying that the legal definition of apartheid, when you look at the evidence on the ground, is met in the occupied territories because the manner in which people are dealt with, the justice that they receive, the life chances that they receive, pretty much everything about their life is conditional upon who they are and the community that they come from. There are two administrations at play: one that relates to what happens if you are a citizen of Israel, and another that relates to what happens when you're a Palestinian. That is manifestly wrong and contrary to every human rights paradigm that has been established since the United Nations was founded. It worries me also that Israel is now so confident in having de facto immunity from its actions that it feels able to push further and minimise more space.

Let me just give a couple of examples of this. I mean, the suggestion in the Queen's Speech that there should be a bill to outlaw ethical investment decisions by public bodies. I think it's not something that would've come about a decade ago or 20 years ago. It's coming now because it's being pressed for by supporters of Israel who want to focus on the BDS movement. It seems very important to me that working cross party we need to ensure that the campaign against criminalizing the BDS campaign has a much wider reach than those who just support the BDS campaign itself. Whether or not you support boycott, disinvestment and sanctions, the argument is about whether human beings in a free society have the ability to take non-violent direct actions such as making their own purchase or investment choices. Should public bodies be accountable to their shareholders and their investors? I have pension funds and my brokers are instructed by me to make sure that they only invest in ethical bonds. Are we

moving down a road where I will not be unable to give that instruction to my pension broker in the future? It worries me that the space for debate and discourse even in this country is being minimised as well. And let me just give one other example of that: when we debated at the end of last year the proscription of Hamas. Ministers from the government were keen to say that this is not going to prevent humanitarian work in Gaza, and all of the rest. I had a situation now as a local MP where, just before the recent elections, the administration in Edinburgh city council, which is an SNP and Labour joint administration, wanted to table an item on a council committee to discuss establishing 20 links with civil society in Gaza through academia, the health service, trade unions, cultural things like that. And under pressure from a group called UK lawyers for Israel, the Council's legal officers pulled that report from the agenda and said they were concerned that it should not be discussed because it might fall foul of the proscription of Hamas. So, if we can't even discuss in a local authority the idea of humanitarian links and civic links with a part of the world which surely more than any other needs solidarity, that seems to me to be a very difficult and dire space that we're getting into.

I suppose this is a Chronicle of Depression here. It would be better if we were to try and focus on what we can do about this. I agree with what others have said. We have got to try and find ways to get this moved up the political agenda of all parties. My party does support self-determination for the Palestinian people. It does support an immediate recognition of the state of Palestine. But we are a small player. We're the third party in the Westminster parliament. I think we need to be focusing much more on shoring up support inside the Labour party. Crucially, the most important party in all this is David's, we need to have a dialogue there. There are some excellent Conservatives on the back benches on this issue, but we have lost a few good ones in recent years as well. I think we need to rekindle those relationships. My final point is that in doing this and in pledging solidarity with the people of Palestine, I think we also should be pledging solidarity with the ordinary people of Israel because the space inside Israeli civic society for the state and discourse has never been smaller as well. There are so many good Israelis who are active in the campaign for human rights for Palestinians and for peace in that region whose voices are being silenced. We have a responsibility in this country to make sure that they are heard and to do what we can by providing a platform in this place to make sure that their words are heard and resonate around the world. My final point is this: that we need to do much more to build international governmental pressure on Israel, because at the end of the day, this is going to keep happening and it's going to get worse until the Israeli government feel that there are consequences to it and they have to call a halt.

Layla Moran MP:
Thank you. I've got in a sense the easy job of going last, and I can just agree with everyone before me. But perhaps if I can add a small thought. On the BDS bill it's very clearly trying to rehash old wounds from the last election. I actually think it's going to fail as a bill when people realise that it's also going to stop, for example, the NHS from divesting in Xinjiang when it comes to importing things from cotton mills there, and there is a consensus across the House including many on the backbenches of the Conservative Party who are supporting this BDS bill, who seem not to appreciate that. Unless you are going to quite specifically talk about one country which I'm pretty sure it's not going to do, you are going to have to include other parts of the world where they do have human rights abuses that you may want to catch. I'm hopeful that that will come out in the debate, and it will show it for what it is. I mean in terms of where liberal Democrat policy is on this now, I'm really proud to say that at our last

September conference we passed a motion that called, with the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel who were on board with this, for stopping trade with the illegal settlements. This was quite a big feat - something I helped to negotiate over many months. I think that was a leap forward for them, and it was quite difficult for them to come on board with it. But the point there was to make the distinction between that which is illegal in international law and BDS, which I think is a personal choice. If you elect a Council which has this in their manifesto, and they want to do that, I think it's an affront to local democracy to not allow that Council to do that. But nevertheless, as party policy we think if this government is serious about upholding international law, it does not make sense to allow trade with illegal settlements. The argument is that they don't allow preferential trade. That is an entirely different thing. That trade is illegal in and of itself and shouldn't be happening.

In terms of the arms embargo our party policy, again with Friends of Israel and many of them supporting it, is to apply the same rules to Israel as you would to any other country. The policy is about having a presumption of denial for arms exports to countries listed as human rights priority countries in the FCDO annual human rights report which, incidentally, now does include Israel. So de facto it's a presumption of denial for arms exports which I think is a big step forward in the last year.
Why were these steps forwards possible? Well, it's because the world's media is looking there and there have been these awful scenes from last year, and then more recently with Shireen Abu Akleh. I think people are becoming more attuned to what life is like on the ground in the occupied territories, and also within Israel itself. And they can see with their own eyes now what it looks like in a way that I don't think they had quite engaged with before. That can only be the first step in a good thing. If you talk to most reasonable people out there, they just want international law upheld. When they understand what's actually happening on the ground, they start to see the arguments that are made in all the reports that are calling it apartheid. They understand where those are coming from. The word apartheid itself is being a process that we need to go through. This is something that we as a group need to think about. How do we educate other people that that word is something that is defined in international law which itself is then backed up by evidence that's being given to us by trusted international third-party organizations? I think when people first come across this word, they feel they don't fully understand that at all. In fact, the understanding of this is poor in general among parliamentarians who perhaps see this as something that they don't engage with every day. Their presumption is to give the benefit of the doubt, and they think that this is a political word. It's not a political word, it's a word that's very narrowly defined and I think it's incumbent on us in a group of people like this who are knowledgeable and understand this to make that case to our fellow parliamentarians slowly over time. It's going to be frustrating, I'm sure, for people who are watching and who want it to go faster. I have to say, unless we help to explain it to them and take the heat out of that debate so that they understand it, we're going to get nowhere.

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
Thanks very much Layla. There have been a lot of questions throughout this conference about Ukraine and the double standards. It was particularly marked in the panel of Palestinians just before this panel begun. It runs on from the remark that somebody made here about the way the government is strong on rhetoric but weak on serious action, which I'm afraid was equally true of governments when I was in Parliament as well. The British government, the French government, the EU have all been very strong on words and extremely short on action. So, it's not a new thing. But Ukraine has showed that actually

governments can act very decisively in support of the rules-based system and international law, because they perceive it to be in their own interest to do so. So, what can be done to show that intervention in defending the rights of Palestinians is also protecting the rules-based system and international law, and is therefore in our own interest as well as in the interest of the Palestinians and Israelis?

Layla Moran MP:
Perhaps I could just quickly say that the shift in stance in not supporting the International Criminal Court investigation of war crimes on the ground and also to not vote for the standing amendment as the government normally would, I think is a big mistake because fundamentally that undermines those institutions. That is the argument that I think we need to make. In a sense, yes, they're focusing in on Palestine, and we know they're being leaned on at various points. Thank God Trump's gone, but I think there is a stink of Trump that still pervades American politics that does still influence what the British government does because of the so-called special relationship. We have to acknowledge that is real, and if they step away from what the US is doing, and where American politics is on this, then it is risky for them. That is still there in the background. This is something that we have to bear in mind. I don't agree with it, but perhaps it is one of the things that's feeding in. We should be pressing them to take the stance that they used to take: full support of the ICC, full support of the UN, because if we don't have those international organizations, it's us who loses. It's our own rights that we are eroding by allowing them to be torn apart in that way, and I just don't see how people don't understand that. To attack one is to attack all, in the case of those organizations.

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
David, how would you address that to your other colleagues in the Conservative Party who may not be quite so supportive?

Rt Hon David Jones MP:
Well, if I could first mention Ukraine, I think that Britain's actions in Ukraine have been entirely right and commendable. We've got a case of unjustified aggression by a large military power. I think that we have a duty to step in and assist those who are being persecuted that way. But of course, what that means is that you have to judge persecution in other contexts as well. I'd like to go back to Layla's point about apartheid. I think that the Amnesty report was initially regarded as incendiary. The use of the word 'apartheid' by an organization such as Amnesty was something that I felt a lot of people thought was really quite shocking. But as Layla says, apartheid has a defined legal meaning. It is something that has a meaning in law and of course it was echoed by the special rapporteur. So, we've now got Amnesty International and the United Nations both expressing that concern. I have to say, I'm out of step with my party on this and a few other of my colleagues are out of step as well. I have raised this issue in parliamentary questions with the Foreign Office and they're reluctant to address the issue, even though it's an issue that has been raised by an organization of which the UK has long been a member - in fact, was a founding member - which is, frankly, the ultimate guarantor of security and civilised standards in this world. It doesn't seem to me that an important nation such as the UK, which is a permanent member of the Security Council, can actually not pay attention to the special rapporteur when that is the finding that is delivered.

The conditions that we have in Palestine are deeply worrying. It does seem to me that civil rights and human rights are being routinely violated. The Shireen Abu Akleh killing and the appalling scenes at the funeral simply served to underline that, as indeed was the attack upon the British Al Jazeera journalist in the field who had a tear gas canister thrown at her the other day. These are issues that are happening all the time. Can I be absolutely frank? The big problem that we in the larger parties have got is this: we have a very well-organised pro-Israeli lobby in both our parties. Labour friends of Israel and Conservative Friends of Israel are probably the biggest individual groupings in each party. I've been saying for some considerable time that the interests of the Arab world need to be reflected far more in the major political parties than they are at the moment. We're all aware of that, aren't we? We all know the extent to which the pro-Israel lobby has influence over the major parties. If that's the case, if they can organise themselves all well and good, but we who are concerned about the interest of the Palestinians should be doing something similar. I'm trying to do something in the Conservative Party at the moment which I won't broadcast just now. But I'm hoping that there are going to be steps which will become obvious in the relatively near future. I'm trying to build up a greater recognition of the Arab, including the Palestinian, case but we all have a duty to do this. And I see that Julie's nodding her head there, too. So, there's a recognition that we all have that political problem within our respective parties.

Julie Elliott MP:
Yes, I agree with David entirely. I think in my role as Chair of Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East, it's not for lack of willingness, it's resources. And the Conservative Friends of Israel and the Labour Friends of Israel are incredibly well resourced, with full-time staff and all that. It's an uphill battle. What I would say is we have a large number of Labour MPS who are members of both organizations and I think certainly in the Labour party that most people are broadly in the middle of this debate. They might be slightly to one side or the other, but broadly want the same things. But it's resources - that is the difficulty. It's a very difficult situation. The other thing which I've also said in many meetings via zoom in recent times is that we've lost a lot of good advocates for the cause, particularly on the Conservative side at the last general election. We are still getting to know the newer Members of Parliament because, although they've been in Parliament now two and a half years, we've only been meeting for a few months in what you would call normal ways. We're still getting to know people and how you build alliances on this issue is by personal, face to face conversations, because there is a lot of nervousness among Members of Parliament about speaking out on the issue and saying the wrong thing. Those of us who are more involved in it can play a role by having those one-to-one conversations, and bringing people on board to get more involved in discussing the issues. I think that's how we move things forward in Parliament, but I wouldn't for a second say it's an easy road. I wonder if I can just take this opportunity. I noticed somebody in the chat was asking about the Labour leadership and the differences between the Conservative Party and our party on this. There are differences. Keir Starmer came very recently to a reception of Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East. He came along, he spoke, he went over how we would recognise Palestine immediately. He also said how he supported the International Criminal Court in its investigation into war crimes, which is a clear difference between us and the government. So, there are differences. But rather than highlight the differences, this shouldn't really be a party-political issue. We need to take people with us on this in Parliament, from all sides and that's how we get movement within our Parliament. It's not by highlighting the differences between the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, SNP. That really

doesn't matter. What matters is the issue, and trying to help the Palestinian people get the recognition, the equality of life, and the living conditions that they absolutely deserve and should have.

Rt Hon David Jones MP:
May I come back briefly on that, Phyllis.

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
Okay. Very briefly.

Rt Hon David Jones MP:
I take the point that Julie just made, but I remember being equally frustrated when I was in opposition and Labour were in power, and that is something that's really rather interesting. As soon as politicians become ministers and start engaging with civil servants, their attitudes kind of change. I just make that gentle point.

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
Tommy, perhaps you could touch on the way in which Scottish public opinion seems to be massively more pro-Palestinian than British public opinion as a whole. Although there is very strong support across the whole United Kingdom for Palestine, apart from Northern Ireland. Can you maybe touch on the different climate in Scotland?

Tommy Sheppard MP:
That's true, but I'm not entirely sure why it's true. I think it's in part the absence of any serious pro-Israel campaign or lobby group in Scotland, although just for David's information, the embassy has been doing its best to influence activists inside my own party, even though we are small, so as to make sure that their point of view is put forward. They've spent a fair bit of money at SNP conferences, for example, to try and to make sure their point of view is heard. I wanted just to comment on this dilemma that we have of trying to counteract the limited and pressurised space in which we're operating, and to get people to put their heads above the parapet. I think there are a number of positive ways in which we can do this. The first thing is to make sure that no one defines this as a question of Jewish versus Arab, or Jewish versus Palestinian. I think we should have more effort in reaching out to organizations inside Israel, explicitly Jewish organizations inside Israel, who share the agenda that we do and, in this country, as well. I've had very interesting discussions with people like Yachad and others who have now crossed a barrier. They very much want to be part of the campaign for Palestinian human rights, explicitly. That's an argument that's now going within the Board of Deputies itself and that's a change. So, I think making sure we mobilise and work with Jewish voices on this is very important as well.

I think also framing the debate about equality and human rights is very important. Julie and I are involved in a European initiative of parliamentarians which has the acronym EPIPE, which is European Parliamentarians for Israeli and Palestinian Equality, but it was deliberately framed in that way so that it can't be seen as anti-Israel. It's been a way to engage people who might otherwise have been put off or been scared basically to get involved. The other thing is there is no substitute. One of the problems we've had with the 2019 intake to this Parliament, of course, is that we've not been able to do anything

for two years including in-country visits. I know from having been on a couple I didn't need persuading, but I have seen Members of Parliament go on CAABU sponsored or other sponsored trips to the OPT, and you can see a veil being lifted from their eyes in terms of awareness and understanding. There is no substitute to understanding what the occupation is like than to be standing in the streets of Hebron, looking at people throwing stuff at you through grids. That's now coming to an end, so we can start getting people there. I think in all parties now, and I include my own in this, we should be identifying the people who aren't already on side but who are open to persuasion, who are on the cusp or whatever. They should be the people we send out in these delegations rather than those who are already convinced about the issue, and I think that will help us over the next 12, 24 months bolster our ranks and certainly improve the understanding of the issue inside the UK parliament. And the final point I also want to make is- why are British governments so bad at this? Part of the answer to that is because they slavishly follow American foreign policy as a default, and actually one of the hopeful signs in all of this, is the way in which things are changing in Washington. I mean, we wouldn't want to read too much into it, but a debate that was very much one-sided before but has now definitely got two sides, and the pro-Palestinian voices in the Capitol are gaining in confidence every day and are now influencing American public policy and international policy in a way which would've been unthinkable even 10 years ago. This is in part a reflection of the Palestinian diaspora growing up across the world and moving into positions like Layla has moved into, particularly in America.

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
Thank you very much for this more hopeful and positive point. Can I just raise another issue with you to close on? I was very struck by the discussion in the panel of Palestinians before this that several, in fact all, of the Palestinians who were there - and some of them have been in this country a long time - made the point that in their experience although public opinion was really quite sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, the institutions of this country in their perception were getting more and more opposed to the expression of what Palestinians really feel about the way they are oppressed by the Israelis, and the fact that they are living under what is essentially a racist regime. And the apartheid reports obviously are backing that up in a legalistic sense, but it's perceived by Palestinians on the ground, very obviously as discrimination against them in favour of the Jewish citizens of Israel. I wonder if you could address maybe the issue about why the institutions of this country seem to be actually clamping down on freedom of expression in this country by Palestinians themselves, and also by their supporters. What can be done about that? Julie.

Julie Elliott MP:
I didn't hear what was said before, so I'm just going by what you've said, Phyllis. But I think there is a broad push from the government, and I don't mean David, but from the government to try and clamp down on freedom of speech. If it's not what they want to hear, they are trying to make things difficult for anybody to express things. I think the civil service have a very conservative (with a small c) approach to these things. I think with the views of some of the people in government it's making them bolder to be even more conservative. That's not a very full answer, but I think that's where this comes from. I do think this cautiousness and this clumping down, and this BDS bill is going to be one of those things that just tries to take it a stage further. I think that is where we are as a country. This worries me on a whole range of things because it's not just this issue - it'll affect lots of other issues in our society. It's a

worrying change because it hasn't been like this through successive governments, whether it's been Conservative governments, coalitions, Labour governments. It hasn't been like this historically. There is a move afoot that things are changing. And from my point of view, not changing for the better.

Layla Moran MP:
I think this is such an important point. I regret any kind of stoking of division in our society for the sake of it, particularly for political reasons. I think it's so unhelpful, and the culture war and the accusations - it's not the world I want to live in. I'm in politics and I was a teacher before because I think there's so much more that we've got in common, and if we get it right our institutions can bring out the best in absolutely everyone. It's horrible and I agree with Julie on that. What's happened is Palestine has become part of that. It's become, "if you care about Palestine, then you're on the sort of wokey end of the argument." We need to just absolutely reject that characterization because I prefer to characterise it as I'm on the pro-human rights, pro international law side of the argument, wherever in the world that takes me. And there's a lot of examples of where this is absolutely on the wrong side of international law when it comes to Israel, and we've got to call out human rights abuses and indeed war crimes wherever we see them without fear or favour. We are a country that helped to build these institutions in the first place, and we should be proud about that.

I've been criticised in the past for saying that you can be pro-Palestinian without being antisemitic. I don't really see what there is to criticise in that, but we've just got to be really careful with language. That is where I put that argument. There are for example, two broad definitions of Zionism depending on who you talk to. There's one version where it's the version my family talk, about how the Zionists were the ones who kicked us out of Jerusalem. They were the ones who wanted that land for themselves. So, when we talk about Zionism, some people are referring to that kind of Zionism, but there is another definition of Zionism which is used by the Jewish diaspora in this country which is not actually anti Palestinian. It is pro their ancestors, many of whom were persecuted themselves and who went there for safety. For them, instinctively, it is the support for those families who went there mainly from Eastern Europe and indeed elsewhere, and the two versions clash. So, we've just got to be so careful with our words because when people are talking about the Zionists, you've got to be aware that different communities interpret that in different ways. So, my answer to that is that I just avoid the word completely, unless I'm trying to explain why I tend to not talk about it, and instead I talk about international law, I talk about two states. I talk about the right of Palestinians to exist. I talk about my own identity and how I am Palestinian, and actually all statehood and the recognition would do is recognise what is already there. It's not something to be given. It's not a carrot or a stick. It is a fact, and it just needs to be acknowledged and come out of the fray. That's hopefully where I'd like us to get to together as a country.
Dr Phyllis Starkey:
Thank you so much. David.

Rt Hon David Jones MP:
Thanks, Phyllis. I was smiling slightly when I heard that Julie suggesting that the civil service was right wing because most of my Conservative colleagues would say that they were rabid lefties. I actually know

a lot of civil servants and that they come of all political persuasions. So, I think that the question was about, why.

Julie Elliott MP:
I really didn't mean conservative in terms of politically conservative.

Rt Hon David Jones MP:
Well the point I was going to make Julie, which actually supports what you just said, is that government officials like dealing with other government officials. They like recognizing governments. This brings us really back to the whole thrust of what we're trying to achieve. The best way to get more respect for the Palestinian people is to recognise their statehood. To recognise that they are entitled to a state in the Middle East and that is essentially what the Balfour Declaration was originally supposed to achieve. It was supposed to provide a home for the Jewish people without detriment to the indigenous people of the region. We can't allow Palestinians effectively to continue to be stateless indefinitely. That is quite wrong. I firmly believe that if Palestinian statehood were recognised, then the government institutions of this country would be able to deal with Palestinians or Palestine far more normally, in fact in the way that they deal with Israel at the moment. I think that Israel has an absolute right to exist and it has a right to defend itself, and it has a right to its own institutions, but so does the Palestinian people. I think what we have to achieve is to keep pressing the government to do what it says that it is going to do sooner or later, and make it sooner rather than later: that is to recognise the statehood of Palestine. That's got to be our priority. And I think that the respect that the questioners have raised would soon follow if they actually had a state that was recognised by this country, as it is recognised by so many other countries around the world.

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
Thank you very much, David. Tommy. And you have the last word.

Tommy Sheppard MP:
Well, your question was: why, despite the fact that public opinion appears to be sympathetic to an argument about Palestinian human rights, that the British institutions and the political class appear to be either dumb or going backwards. I think it's not the whole answer but part of the answer to that has been the debate on antisemitism, and how it's been conducted in recent years. I think there's no getting away from that and there is a lot of confused thinking and a lot of people, particularly those who took a position in support of the Israeli government, have deliberately tried to equate criticism of Israel or criticism of Israeli government policy with antisemitism, even though those two things are manifestly not even the IHRA definition, which says that the criticism of Israel is not per se antisemitic. But the fact that it's being talked about, and that narrative is being developed, does make a lot of people think: why do I want to get embroiled in this and be potentially labelled antisemitic? That has led to a lot of people telling me they are keeping their heads down. Therefore, part of the solution has to be clear about the fact that we can be against antisemitism and in favour of Palestinian human rights, and the two things are not mutually exclusive. I think with every breath we need to make that clear. But also I would welcome the Balfour Project and others giving some scrutiny to the Jerusalem Declaration from two years ago, which attempted to define in much broader terms what antisemitism is, and how to

combat it, in order to allow much more space to do solidarity work with Palestine as well. That I think might create a better playing field in which we can engage in the years ahead if we are able to do that.

Dr Phyllis Starkey:
Thank you all very much, indeed. I think that last discussion has been immensely valuable and I hope you've all found it valuable to participate in it. It gives us all a great deal of thought for the way forward, and there are lots of very positive suggestions in there about things that we can all do either inside Parliament or without. So, thank you all very much. Indeed.

VE Day, Jerusalem 1945

Balfour Project conference statement - Dr Phyllis Starkey

I do want to take this opportunity to read out a statement that the Balfour Project is releasing today at the close of this event, and to make it clear that this statement engages the Balfour Project itself but does not commit any of the other participants in this conference to giving it, to signing up to every part of it, because we need to have a diverse debate. This is the statement which the Balfour Project is going to release at the end of this meeting.

Britain's duty to advance equal rights in Palestine Israel.

Whatever our assessment of Britain's past role as an imperial power, since the Second World War, the United Kingdom has played an important role in establishing a new rules-based order in international affairs and contributed to peacekeeping in many parts of the world. In recent months, we have rightly stood with Ukraine in opposing the Russian invasion and occupation of that country and in caring for those who have fled their homes during the conflict. But, as this conference has shown, our record in Israel-Palestine has betrayed these same principles. Even today, we sometimes say the right things, we fail to take action that would turn them into more than words. Britain stayed on in Palestine after the First World War for its own self-interested imperial purposes. In doing so, its watchword was hubris. It frustrated the legitimate aspirations of the people of Palestine who Britain knew full well did not want British rule but wanted to determine their own future. When Britain's Mandate ended, it abandoned them to their fate, despite 'the sacred trust of civilisation', the words of the Mandate, by which Britain was obligated to secure their well-being and development and bring them to independence.

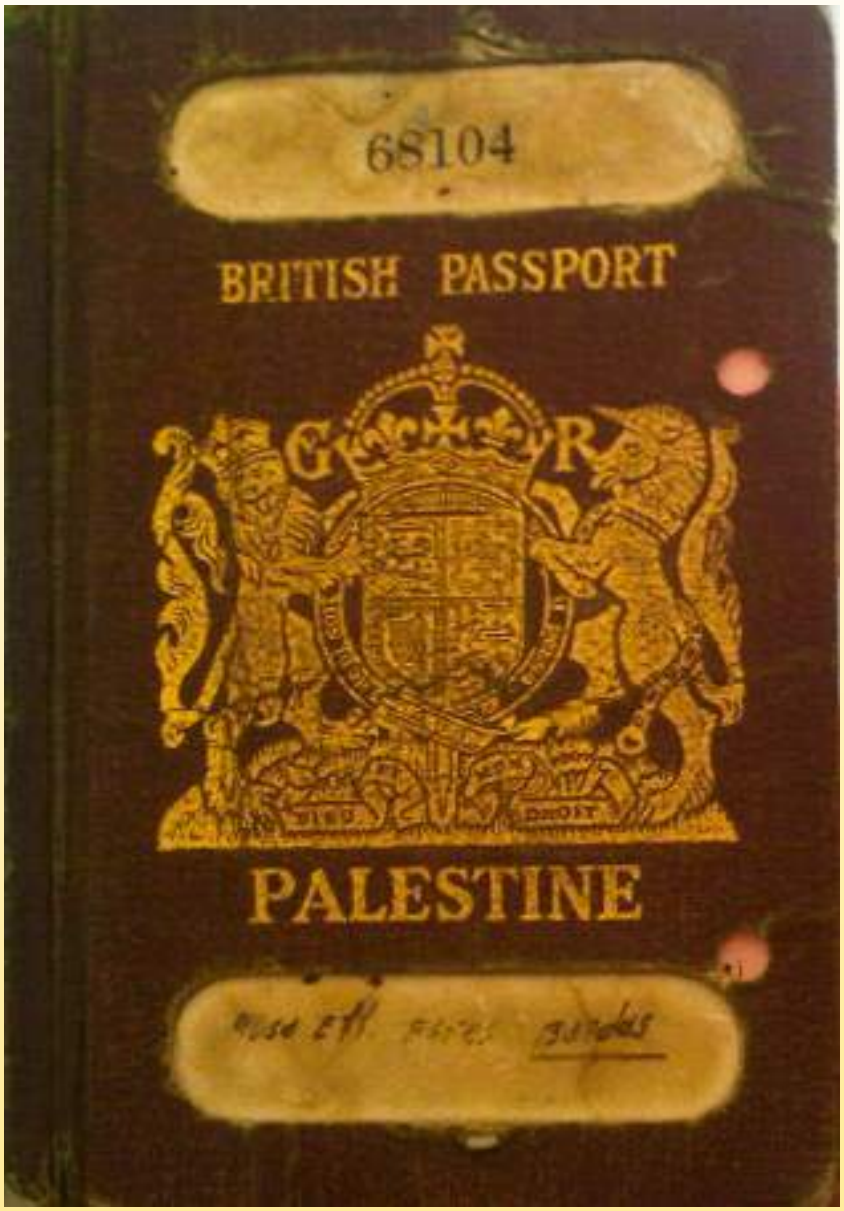
The Nakba began while Britain was still fully responsible for Palestine and continued following Britain's abandonment of Palestine. It continues to this day. The Nakba is a tragedy that's proved to be an unresolved, destabilising factor throughout the decades that have followed. We call on our government to own up to our responsibilities and to act accordingly.

Britain has not joined over 130 member states of the United Nations in recognising Palestine, alongside Israel, as a state covering the Palestinian territory which Israel occupied in 1967. It opposed the investigation at the ICC, as demanded by Israel, by Palestine of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity. It has not spoken out when Israel declared six respected Palestinian human rights NGOs to be terrorist organisations. It won't call things by their name and state publicly that the blockade of Gaza is a collective punishment. It won't demand that Israel end its 55 years of occupation of the OPT forthwith. It won't pass legislation to declare Israeli settlements upon occupied land to be illegal, *de facto* annexation, or to outlaw all dealings with settlements in a manner consistent with our obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 2334. On the contrary, it seeks to outlaw ethical investment policies by local authorities, which might impact on settlements. Why won't it ban from the UK all those who perpetrate or entice violence, including violent settlers, and those who aid and abet them? And why won't it press the Palestinians to hold long-overdue elections, including in East Jerusalem, and to create an independent judiciary?

While we take concrete measures to support Ukraine in its wish to maintain its independence and to secure its territorial integrity we take no such concrete measures with regard to Palestine and the Palestinians. The entrenched injustice and inequality in the Holy Land threaten the security of us all. Long ago we breached our sacred trust of civilisation. Now is the time for us to do what we can to repair

the damage we inflicted through our acts and omissions when we held the Mandate over Palestine. We have a duty to advance equal rights.

So that's the statement that the Balfour Project will be releasing at the end of this conference. And we are also carrying forward a number of other events to take our work forward including, for example, a webinar in early June over the plight of a thousand Palestinians under threatened eviction from the villages of Masafer Yatta and, on the 25th of June, a three-hour workshop entitled 'Israel Palestine in Secondary Schools; Having the Confidence to Teach it' as part of our work to support and encourage the teaching of Israel-Palestine in our secondary schools. Other projects that the Balfour Project is taking forward will be available on our website.



A Palestinian passport from the era of British Mandate for Palestine

Monica Spooner

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, Roger.

'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 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.

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

Patrons

Rt Hon Tom Brake
Rt Revd Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton
Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark
Rt Hon Lord (Peter) Hain of Neath
Very Revd Dr Andrew McLellan CBE, former Moderator of the Church of Scotland and Chief Inspector of Prisons
Baroness Morris of Bolton
Rt Revd John Pritchard, former Bishop of Oxford
Rabbi Danny Rich, Senior Rabbi and CEO of Liberal Judaism in UK 2005-2020
Sir Nicholas Soames
Rt Hon Baroness Sayeeda Warsi
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Balfour Project

For more information and to send us any comments, please email us at info@balfourproject.org or visit www.balfourproject.org

Balfour Project is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). Charity number SC047090

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