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Palestine Liberation Organization institutions

A most remarkable aspect of the PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO) has been its extensive building of institutions—political, cultural, economic, and social. Two of the most important political institutions are the PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL (PNC) and the Executive Committee (EC). Important cultural institutions include the Association for Theater and Palestinian Popular Art, Graphic Arts, the Palestine Cinema Institute, the Folklore Dance Troupe, the PALESTINE RESEARCH CENTER, and the Exhibition Branch. In the economic sphere, the PALESTINIAN NATIONAL FUND (PNF) and the Palestine Martyrs' Works Society (SAMED) are highly significant. Major social institutions include the Palestinian RED CRESCENT society, the Department of Education, the Institute for Social Affairs and Welfare, and the multiple unions in which Palestinians have organized themselves. All these institutions, with the exception of many of the unions, have been initiated by and remain under the jurisdiction of FATAH.

They are highly complex organizations performing a variety of roles that include meeting the functional needs of the Palestinian people, nation building, instilling the value of EDUCATION, enhancing the PLO's international support, and catalyzing the psychological transformation of the Palestinians from having a "refugee" outlook to seeing themselves as self-reliant, productive, independent individuals. Organizations that meet functional needs provide health care, employment, education, and welfare.

The PLO's main political objective—nation building—is a part of all the PLO's institutions. The

PLO sees this task as the solidifying and deepening of the identification of the Palestinian people with the Palestinian nation.

Cheryl Rubenberg

Palestine Mandate

1922-1948

Palestine was ruled by Great Britain from 1917 to 1948, initially as occupied enemy territory and later as a mandate from the League of Nations. The Mandate was assigned to Britain at the SAN REMO CONFERENCE, 1920 after World War I, which ratified the division of the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces between France and Britain. France gained control over SYRIA and LEBANON; Britain acquired Iraq as well as Palestine. Although all these territories were designated Class A mandates, which meant that they would soon gain self-rule, Palestine was placed under unique provisions, because Britain had promised the Zionist movement in the BALFOUR DECLARATION (November 2, 1917) that Jews could establish a national home in the territory.

The Palestine Mandate (approved by the Council of the League of Nations on July 24, 1922, and which came into force officially on September 29, 1923) emphasized the creation of a Jewish national home. It referred to the Palestinians as "non-Jewish communities," although they constituted 90 percent of the population. The preamble emphasized "the historical connection of the Jewish people" with Palestine as "the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country." The Mandate enjoined Britain to place "the country under such political, administrative, and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home . . . and the development of self-governing institutions" (Article 2). Britain was also required to "facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions" and "encourage . . . close settlement by Jews on the land" (Article 6). Article 4 provided for a Jewish agency, as a public body that would cooperate with the Palestine government "in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine." No comparable public body was provided for the Palestinian community.

MANDATE PALESTINE'S SUBDISTRICTS, 1937

- Subdistrict boundaries
- Cities with same name



PALESTINE MANDATE

Although the Mandate stated that Britain must safeguard "the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion," and other articles indicated that the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish communities must not be prejudiced, the Palestinians' political and national rights were ignored in the Mandate provisions. The right to self-determination integral to the Syrian, Lebanese, and Iraqi mandates was absent in the Palestinian case.

Demographic changes over the ensuing thirty years chart the transformation of Palestine under the Mandate: the share of the Palestinian population dropped from 89 percent, according to the British census of 1922, to 72 percent in 1931 and an estimated 69 percent in 1946. The shift in land-holdings was less dramatic, since Jewish-owned LAND was still only 7 percent of the total land surface in 1947. Nevertheless, Zionist policies that banned the resale of land to non-Jews and required owners to hire only Jewish labor multiplied the negative impact of those land purchases on the Palestinians.

British Rule Britain ruled Palestine as a colony, under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Office and headed by the HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR PALESTINE, who had unfettered executive and legislative powers. The first high commissioner was appointed on July 1, 1920, more than three years before the Mandate was ratified by the League of Nations. The advisory Executive Council and district commissioners were exclusively British, although they had Palestinian and Jewish assistants. Palestinians and Jews worked in the administrative departments, under British heads. The only elected bodies were the municipalities and the organs of the Jewish community. Although some prominent Palestinians participated in an ADVISORY COUNCIL established by the high commissioner in the fall of 1920, they did so as individuals, not as representatives of the public. Moreover, they understood that the council was temporary, to be superseded by constitutional representative organs.

Britain controlled communication between the Palestinian residents and the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) of the League of Nations, which oversaw the mandatory system. The memoranda sent by the Palestinians each year to the PMC were first submitted to the Palestine government, which attached its comments before send-

ing the documents to the British Colonial Office and the PMC. Although the Palestinians occasionally sent delegations to the league headquarters in Geneva, they could not address the PMC directly. In any event, the PMC was composed largely of colonial powers who were not inclined to question Britain or to support the political claims of indigenous peoples.

Palestinian Petitions Until the mid-1920s, Palestinian leaders believed they could persuade Britain to relinquish its pro-Zionist policy and grant the Palestinians self-government. Organized through the ARAB EXECUTIVE, they used various methods of persuasion and obstruction to make their position clear. They sent petitions and delegations to London and the League of Nations. They argued on legal grounds that the Mandate violated Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which stated that former Ottoman territories "can be provisionally recognized" as independent nations. They also insisted that British promises of Arab independence in the HUSAYN-McMAHON CORRESPONDENCE, 1915-16, predated and outweighed the Balfour Declaration. These arguments were rejected, however, by the British government.

The CHURCHILL MEMORANDUM, 1922, published after a Palestinian delegation spent nearly a year in London lobbying for independence, did modify British policy slightly. First, the colonial secretary, Winston Churchill, promised that the Jewish community would not dominate or impose Jewish nationality on the indigenous Palestinian population. Second, he introduced regulations to control Jewish immigration, based on "the economic capacity of the country at the time to absorb new arrivals," so that the population as a whole would not be deprived of employment. Nonetheless, those modifications did not satisfy the Palestinian leaders. Prior to the ratification of the Mandate in September 1923, they hoped to overturn rather than merely revise its provisions. Similarly, the Palestinians rejected proposals for a legislative council, an advisory council, and an ARAB AGENCY; since these bodies would be based on the Mandate, their participation would mean that they accepted the Balfour Declaration as the basis of Palestinian political life.

The constitution proposed in the fall of 1922 included the Balfour Declaration. Furthermore,

the Palestinian members of the legislative council would be outnumbered by the combined vote of the Jewish representatives and the British ex officio members. The high commissioner could veto legislation, and the legislative council could not discuss immigration. That sensitive subject would be considered by a special advisory commission composed of the three religious communities, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish, which would propose policies to the high commissioner; he would not be obliged to follow its advice. The structure and powers of the legislative council did not reassure the Palestinian politicians, since they would not gain the means to limit Jewish immigration and the political influence of the Zionists. Therefore, all the political groups except the Zionist-funded National Muslim Societies boycotted the 1923 elections. Rather than form a clearly unrepresentative legislative council, the high commissioner canceled the elections. The Palestinians won a victory in principle.

The Arab Executive also boycotted the new Advisory Council that the high commissioner appointed, since it appeared to replace the Legislative Council. Moreover, Palestinians rejected forming an Arab Agency, which the British claimed would parallel the Jewish Agency established by the Mandate. The Arab Agency, however, unlike the Jewish Agency, would be appointed by the high commissioner and would not be incorporated into the Mandate instrument. Agreeing to the Arab Agency would mean that the Palestinians accepted the Arab and Jewish communities as having equal standing in Palestine, whereas their fundamental premise was that Palestine was and should remain an Arab country. When they rejected these proposals, the Palestinians believed that Britain would recognize that the only just solution was a national representative government that would accord the Arabs self-determination. However, Britain concluded that the Palestinians were stubborn and intractable and decided not to make more political offers, hoping that, in time, the Palestinians would accept the status quo.

Violent Protests Palestinians also protested through demonstrations and violence. The earliest demonstrations were held in February 1920 to protest the first official public reading in Palestine of the Balfour Declaration. Demonstrations were

held in March 1920 to support the proclamation of independence by the second of the ARAB CONGRESSES in Damascus. The religious celebration of al-Nabi Musa (the Prophet Moses) in April 1920 degenerated into violent attacks of the Jewish quarter of the Old City of JERUSALEM. Violence also flared up in Jerusalem on November 2, 1920, the third anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. In May 1921, violent clashes took place in JAFFA and neighboring rural areas. The Palestinian communities also boycotted certain visiting dignitaries and stayed away from the September 1922 ceremony at which the high commissioner took the constitutional oath. A complete boycott was maintained against Lord Balfour when he went to Jerusalem in 1925 to dedicate the Hebrew University.

The Palestinians' attempts to influence British policy through delegations, political strikes, and election boycott appeared to have failed by the mid-1920s. Although British officials in Palestine took seriously this evidence of discontent, the actions had minimal impact in London, where policy was made. Consequently, Palestinians began to disagree over an appropriate political strategy. Some leaders believed they must grasp any available levers of power in order to influence policy; others held that only total opposition would force the British to rethink their policy. In the mid-1920s the former viewpoint prevailed, partly because fears of Jewish immigration had diminished. In 1927, for example, Jewish emigration actually exceeded immigration, and the danger of Jewish statehood appeared to recede.

Given their increased confidence, Palestinian politicians contested elections for the SUPREME MUSLIM COUNCIL in 1926 and for the municipal councils in 1927. The different factions joined together to discuss with a British official in 1926 a new constitutional proposal. The talks foundered because Britain refused to grant the Palestinians the degree of autonomy they sought.

Palestinians' fears revived in 1928 when Jewish immigration and economic life took an upward turn. Moreover, the British confirmed a Zionist concession to extract salts from the Dead Sea and the Jewish National Fund expanded its land purchases. The World Zionist Organization was enlarged to include wealthy non-Zionists in the UNITED STATES in an umbrella organization, the Jewish Agency. Those developments led

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Palestinians to overlook their political differences and convene a congress in July 1928 that elected the forty-eight-member Arab Executive incorporating all the factions. The Palestinians also tried to accelerate constitutional discussions with British officials in Palestine, but the communal violence that erupted in August 1929 caused the British to cancel those discussions.

The Western Wall Discussions The outbreak of violence was rooted in the long-festering difficulties between Muslim and Jewish communities over the Western (Wailing) Wall, which was legally Muslim property and sacred to Muslims as part of al-HARAM AL-SHARIF compound. Jews also venerated it as the site of the Temple destroyed by the Romans. Jews traveled to pray and lament at the Western Wall, as the only remaining part of the Temple. Their customary right of access under the Ottoman regime (1517–1917) had not included the right to bring the full accoutrements for a religious service. As part of their growing political militancy, Jews sought to expand their rights and even to purchase the wall area. An incident at the wall on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, in September 1928 escalated into a political campaign to secure additional rights. Muslims asserted counterrights and the British could not find an acceptable compromise. The final catalyst occurred in August 1929, when Jewish youths staged a political demonstration at the wall, singing the Zionist national anthem and raising the Zionist flag. Muslim counterdemonstrators the next day destroyed Jewish prayer petitions inserted into crevices in the wall, and unrelated violent incidents escalated into rapidly spreading attacks on Jewish communities in HEBRON, Jerusalem, and SAFAD during the next weeks, causing 133 Jewish and over 116 Palestinian deaths.

The bloody outbreak of the WESTERN (WAILING) WALL DISTURBANCES, 1929, demonstrated Muslim anger but hurt Palestinians politically. The British and Zionists cited the violence as proof that the Palestinians were backward and unprepared for independence. Some British officials, however, realized that the Palestinians required a constitutional means to express their grievances if another outbreak were not to occur.

The violence also heightened political mobilization among the Palestinians. A women's congress,

an all-Palestine congress, farmers' congresses, and youth congresses were held in 1929–30. The Arab Executive sent a blue-ribbon delegation to London in the spring of 1930 to demand that Britain stop immigration, make land inalienable, and establish a democratic government in which Palestinians and Jews would have proportionate representation. When Britain rejected these demands, offering only to study the land and immigration issues and to introduce certain constitutional changes, the Palestinian delegation abruptly departed.

The 1929 violence caused the British to reexamine their policy in Palestine. A British commission, the SHAW COMMISSION, 1930, led by Sir Walter Shaw, inquired into the causes of the violence. An international commission on the Wailing Wall, appointed by Britain and the League of Nations, examined systematically the conflicting Muslim and Jewish claims. A British report by Sir Hope-Simpson, who headed the HOPE-SIMPSON COMMISSION, 1930, detailed the shortage of available land for settlement; it endorsed the Passfield White Paper in October 1930, which called for limitations on Jewish immigration and land purchases. Moreover, the Passfield White Paper stated for the first time that Britain's obligation to the Jewish and Arab communities were "of equal weight." For a brief period it appeared that the government would adopt an even-handed approach to Palestine. However, secret negotiations between the Jewish Agency and a special cabinet committee resulted in Britain's repudiating much of the substance of the Passfield White Paper. A letter from Prime Minister J. Ramsay MacDonald to Chaim Weizmann in February 1931 accorded Jewish institutions the right to hire only Jews and to lease land only to Jews; it emphasized that the economic absorptive capacity of only the Jewish sector of the economy was the criterion for immigration quotas. Even though MacDonald's letter maintained the concept of dual obligations, its provisions shocked the Palestinians. It underlined the degree of influence that Weizmann wielded in the British capital.

Rising Militancy The MacDonald letter marked a turning point in Palestinians' attitude toward Britain. The younger generation lost faith in the Arab Executive's moderate tactics. A conference of 300 young politicians in August 1931 pressured the Arab Executive to act more militantly against the

British. Palestinians also resigned in 1932 from Mandate advisory committees that the British had established in Jerusalem.

The Arab Executive convened a Grand National Meeting, which called for the gradual introduction of a policy of noncooperation with all aspects of the Mandatory government, in Jaffa in March 1933. Palestinians boycotted the visiting colonial secretary, although some politicians were eager to discuss Legislative Council proposals with him. Radical groups persuaded the Arab Executive in October 1933 to sponsor demonstrations in Jerusalem and Jaffa, which violated a government ban and led to clashes with the police. When the Histadrut (Jewish Labor Federation) picketed Jewish orange groves, building sites, and businesses that hired Arabs in order to pressure them to hire only Jews, Palestinian politicians organized counterpickets and called for the boycott of Jewish produce.

A few Palestinians formed paramilitary groups to counter the Zionists, distract the British, and call attention to the seriousness of their grievances. An early example was a small band from Safad called the Green Hand Gang, who hid in remote mountains in 1929-30 until they were routed by the British military. More important, Shaykh Izz al-Din al-Qassam formed secret cells in HAIFA. As president of the Haifa Muslim Society and a preacher among dispossessed *fallahin* (peasants) in shantytowns nearby, he attracted dedicated followers when he called them to prepare for a revolt. In November 1935 Shaykh al-Qassam and a few followers took to the hills to launch that revolt. He was killed a week later in a gun battle with British police, but he became a martyr, eulogized throughout Palestine. His call to militant action gained wider currency.

The political and military radicalization of Palestinians increased in direct proportion to the rapidly mounting Jewish immigration that followed Adolf Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933. Nonetheless, the established Palestinian leaders held to a moderate course. They continued to press for a Legislative Council and for legislation to restrict land purchases. However, a temporary leadership vacuum developed when the Arab Executive dissolved after its elderly president, Musa Kazim al-HUSAYNI, died in 1934. Subsequently, several political parties were formed, of which

the most important were the NATIONAL DEFENSE PARTY, sponsored by Raghib al-NASHASHIBI (former mayor of Jerusalem), and the ARAB PARTY, the vehicle of the HUSAYNI family.

Despite their factionalism and personal animosity, the leaders of all the parties except the pan-Arab ISTIQLAL PARTY (Independence Party) joined to present their set of national demands to the high commissioner in November 1935. That meeting took place in the wake of the death of Shaykh al-Qassam. Palestinians discussed with the British a new proposal for a Legislative Council that the high commissioner had outlined. Even though Zionist pressure caused the House of Commons to oppose election of a Legislative Council as "premature," the Palestinian leaders hoped to send a delegation to London to persuade Britain to implement that proposal. Those discussions ended after a general strike engulfed Palestine in April 1936.

The General Strike The general strike was precipitated by a chain of events: an attack on Jewish travelers by followers of Shaykh al-Qassam on April 15, 1936, followed by an inflammatory funeral demonstration by Jews in Tel Aviv and the retaliatory killing of two Arabs near Petah Tikvah. Palestinian groups in Jaffa and NABLUS called for a strike. They demanded that Britain suspend Jewish immigration and begin negotiations to form a national government before they would end the strike. Residents of virtually all towns formed "national committees" to coordinate the strike effort. Responding to this grassroots pressure the senior politicians abandoned their plan to send a delegation to London on April 21 and formed an ARAB HIGHER COMMITTEE on April 25. Al-Itajj Amin al-HUSAYNI, president of the Supreme Muslim Council, became its president. Local national committees, "national guard" units, labor societies, Muslim and Christian sports clubs, boy scouts, the Jaffa boatmen's association, women's committees, and various other local groups directed different aspects of the strike under the loose coordination of the Arab Higher Committee. The national committees held a congress on May 7 that called for civil disobedience, nonpayment of taxes, and stoppage of municipal government. The British authorities responded by banning further congresses.

Virtually all Arab business and transportation ceased operation. Distribution centers for grains,

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fruits, and vegetables were established. Government officials contributed 10 percent of their salaries to the strike fund, rather than join the strike, since they feared their positions would be taken by Jews. Frustration built up among the officials to such an extent that the high commissioner permitted them to sign a petition that endorsed the national demands. Many municipalities closed, and the Supreme Muslim Council continued only its religious functions.

Sporadic violence began in May, after the British announced a new immigration quota instead of responding to the strikers' demand to halt immigration. Violence built up during the summer despite heavy British punitive measures, which included demolishing sections of Jaffa, imposing collective punishment on villages, and detaining suspects without trial. Individual acts of sabotage expanded into engagements by small guerrilla bands with the British military. The Lebanese guerrilla leader Fawzi al-QAWUQI went to Palestine in August 1936, heading a band of Syrians, Iraqis, and Palestinians.

The strike lasted nearly six months, longer than any other general strike in the Middle East or Europe. Because Syrian nationalists had just wrung significant concessions from the French after a fifty-day strike, Palestinians were optimistic about the efficacy of this pressure tactic. British high commissioners had suspended Jewish immigration in the wake of the 1921 and 1929 riots, and, thus, Palestinians viewed as feasible the precondition that immigration be suspended during negotiations to form a national government. However, the British government not only refused to suspend immigration but announced new quotas. The British offer of a royal commission to investigate the political situation once the strike ended seemed an insufficient basis for ending the strike in view of the Palestinians' disappointing experience with the 1930 commission.

The strike persisted until October, punctuated by mediation attempts by the emir of Transjordan and the foreign minister of Iraq. Over time, the Palestinians realized that the Jewish community actually benefited economically from the strike. Moreover, Palestinian citrus growers faced financial losses if they could not export their oranges to Europe in the autumn. Fearing that the strike had become counterproductive, the Arab Higher

Committee suggested to the Arab kings that they appeal for an end to the strike on the grounds that the Palestinians could present their demands to the royal commission. As soon as the kings issued the appeal, it was accepted formally by the Arab Higher Committee. The strike ended without any of the preconditions met but with the hope that the Arab rulers would have the weight to persuade Britain to alter its policies.

The Peel Commission The PEEL COMMISSION, 1937, entered Palestine in November 1936; its final report, issued in July 1937, recommended territorial partition. The Jewish state would comprise a third of Palestine and include all of Galilee, even though the Jewish population of Galilee was negligible. The Arab areas would merge with Transjordan and be ruled by its emir, Abdullah. Palestinians were stunned by the idea of partitioning Palestine and denying them statehood. Both the Arab Higher Committee and NASHASHIBI family party, which had just broken ranks, publicly rejected the Peel Commission Report. However, Raghib al-NASHASHIBI privately hinted that they might accept partition if he could become prime minister under Emir Abdullah.

The Peel Commission Report reignited Palestinian anger. By September 1937, anomic violence and political murders spread throughout Palestine. The British then used the assassination of the Galilee district commissioner, Lewis Anderson, as the pretext for a wholesale roundup of nationalist leaders. The Arab Higher Committee and local committees were proscribed and al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni was removed from the presidency of the Supreme Muslim Council. The members of the Arab Higher Committee were deported or forbidden to return to Palestine; al-Hajj Amin escaped to Lebanon.

Rather than destroying the nationalist movement, the arrests catalyzed the local people. Violence intensified in the towns and countryside. The arrests had eliminated the responsible local leaders on whom the British relied to control mobs, cool passions, and articulate grievances. In their place, local guerrilla bands sprang up and coalesced into regional groups. There were little coordination and considerable rivalry among regional commanders. The commanders also vied for support from Damascus, where the rump Arab

Higher Committee established itself and attempted to supply military equipment and funds for the *mujahidin* (fighters). Although al-Hajj Amin was living in exile, he remained the leader of the national movement.

The rebellion peaked in the summer and early fall of 1938, encompassing most of the countryside. Rebels infiltrated into towns and forced government offices, post offices, banks, and police stations to close. The Old City of Jerusalem was placed under a five-day siege in October 1938 before the rebels were rooted out.

To contain the popular insurrection, the British increased troop numbers and built a wire fence along the border with Syria. They searched villages, demolished houses whose owners were suspected of harboring rebels or weapons, and held hundreds of suspects in detention camps without trial. However, the main reason that the revolt lost momentum was the report of the WOODHEAD COMMISSION, 1938, which found partition unfeasible on technical grounds. Britain then announced that it would reassess the whole political situation at a Round Table Conference in London. Palestinians felt the revolt, which had cost the lives of over 3,000 Palestinians, had achieved a political victory.

The 1939 White Paper The LONDON CONFERENCE was attended by delegates from the Zionist movement, Palestinians, and Arab officials from Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, and Yemen. The Zionist leaders and Arabs met separately with the British negotiators. Both sides rejected the MACDONALD WHITE PAPER, which the British issued in May 1939, after the conference had disbanded. Under its terms, Palestine would become independent in ten years if conditions permitted. Moreover, the Palestinians would have to approve Jewish immigration after a five-year quota was filled, and the British would restrict Jewish land purchases. The Zionist leaders denounced the British for withdrawing the promise of partition and statehood; they refused to let their future depend on the goodwill of the Palestinians. Many Palestinians felt privately they should accept the White Paper, but al-Hajj Amin argued that it did not contain a guaranteed time limit. Moreover, he remained persona non grata to Britain, which had refused to invite him to the conference.

The White Paper proved a pyrrhic victory for the Palestinians. By 1939 the Jewish community in Palestine was too strong and too well mobilized to be contained. Jewish activists responded to the White Paper with strikes, bombs in Palestinian markets, terrorist attacks on some Palestinian villages, increased clandestine military training, and massive propaganda efforts in Europe and the United States. The Palestinian community was weakened, politically and economically, by the two years of the revolt. Exhausted, and lacking effective leadership inside the country, Palestinians could not act to benefit politically from the White Paper. The outbreak of World War II in the fall of 1939 would affect the future of Palestine dramatically.

Disarray During World War II During the war years, serious divisions among the Husaynis, the Nashashibis, and Istiqlal Party members prevented Palestinian leaders from forming a common front. Husayni supporters were in disarray because al-Hajj Amin fled to Germany, where he collaborated with the Axis powers, and the British detained Jamal al-HUSAYNI in southern Rhodesia. Moreover the British banned political activity during most of the war years.

Toward the end of the war, Arab rulers intervened to impose a semblance of unity. In 1944, a Syrian leader induced Istiqlal leaders and Husayni supporters to accept the appointment of Musa al-ALAMI as the Palestinian delegate to the Alexandria conference that established the ARAB LEAGUE. Alami then took charge of league efforts to establish information offices abroad and buy land in Palestine: he earned the enmity of both the Husaynis and the Istiqlal for his refusal to place his activities under their control. Despite Alami's efforts to chart an independent course, his projects came under the supervision of the Arab Higher Committee, which the Arab League reconstituted and funded in 1946. Although the Husaynis soon dominated the revived Arab Higher Committee, the British did not allow al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni to return to Palestine.

The Palestinian politicians did not lay out a systematic plan to counter the recommendations of the ANGLO-AMERICAN COMMISSION, 1945-46, which called for establishing a unitary state, ending restrictions on Jewish land purchase, and admitting

100,000 Jewish REFUGEES from Europe immediately. The Palestinians also did not organize any coherent opposition to the UNITED NATIONS (U.N.) Special Committee's recommendation of partition in September 1947, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in November. That plan called for the Jewish state to cover 55 percent of Palestine, although Jews were only a third of the total population and owned 7 percent of the land. Moreover, the area allotted to the Jewish state included as many Palestinian residents as Jews. The Palestinian state would cover 40 percent of the land, and the final 5 percent would compose a U.N.-administered zone centered on Jerusalem.

The Arab states sketched general plans to support the Palestinians diplomatically but lacked a clear-cut and coordinated strategy. Local committees, which had led the 1936 strike, were not revived until December 1947. Not until April 1948 did the Arab Higher Committee propose that Arab civil servants assume control of their departments once Britain evacuated Palestine in May. Efforts were made to renew guerrilla warfare in the countryside under Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni, son of Musa Kazim, and Fawzi al-Qawuqji, the commander of 1936. Qawuqji headed the Arab League-sponsored ARAB LIBERATION ARMY; however, the major Haganah offensive in April 1948 killed Abd al-Qadir and overran Palestinian urban centers such as ACRE, Haifa, TIBERIAS, Safad, and Jaffa, before the British officially withdrew on May 14 and the State of ISRAEL was proclaimed.

In the ensuing fighting between Israel and the Arab armies, only the seacoast around Gaza and the central hill region were held by the Arabs, effectively reducing the Palestinian areas to 23 percent of the land. In addition, at least 726,000 of the 1.3 million Palestinians were expelled or fled into exile. The British Mandate thus ended with the Palestinians' worst fears realized. The concept of "dual obligation," briefly articulated by the British in 1930, had never been pursued seriously. Moreover, the Zionists' drive for statehood, increasingly urgent after the rise to power of the Nazis and then propelled by the horror of the Holocaust, could not be contained.

Palestinians were caught in an impossible situation throughout the Mandate period. Unable to persuade the British to grant them independence when they tried petitions, reasoned memoranda,

and delegations, they also could not exercise effective pressure through obstructive tactics or violence. The other Arab mandated territories gained independence after World War II, but the aspirations of the Zionist movement blocked self-determination for the Arabs of Palestine. Over time the two communities grew increasingly estranged. By the mid-1930s the British lost control over the situation. When their imperial power waned and Palestine lost its strategic significance, the British turned over the problem to the newly formed United Nations, which deemed partition the only feasible means to apportion the land between the two peoples. The Palestinians lost the most from that PARTITION PLAN. They could not acquiesce to losing more than half of their territory, but they lacked the means to block the partition. In the end, they lost most of the land and their community was torn apart in the ARAB-ISRAELI WAR OF 1948. Decades passed before they could reestablish their political community on part of their homeland.

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Palestine National Charter

The Palestine National Charter, *al-Mithaq al-Qawmi al-Filastini*, is a 1964 PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO) document outlining Palestinian national demands after the 1948 disaster. It was adopted by the PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL in its first meeting, May–June 1964. A special committee (*lajnat al-mithaq*, “charter committee”) drafted the charter, which reflected the Arab political mood of the time as well as ideology of its framers, most of whom were notables serving as public officials, professionals, and business people in various parts of the ARAB WORLD.

The charter outlined five principles. First, it called for the total liberation of Palestine, which in effect meant the dismantling of ISRAEL. Commitment to this goal was expressed sixteen times in the twenty-nine articles of the charter; all other goals were subordinated to this vision of total liberation.

Second, the charter emphasized the principle of self-determination. This principle, however, was not clearly articulated. The charter did not spell out whether the Palestinians would exercise self-determination within the context of an independent Palestinian state, or within the context of a liberated Palestine that would be united with one or more Arab states (Articles 4 and 10). Since the word *state* was totally absent from the charter, one can surmise on the basis of the tone of the articles and the political persuasion of most of the charter committee that preference was given to a liberated Palestine that would be an integral part of one united Arab nation.

Third, the charter offered a definition of who was a Palestinian, and whether or not this definition applied to Israeli Jews. In an attempt to emphasize the indissoluble link between the Palestinians and their homeland, the charter defined the Palestinians as the “Arab nationals” (*al-muwatinun al-Arab*) who “resided normally in Palestine until 1947,” in other words, until the dispossession of the Palestinians after the U.N. PARTITION PLAN and resolution of November 1947. The charter also stipulated that “Jews who are of Palestinian origin will be considered Palestinians if they are willing to live loyally and peacefully in Palestine” (Article 7).

Fourth, the charter endorsed the status quo that had existed in the WEST BANK and the GAZA STRIP by stipulating that the Palestine Liberation Organization would not exercise any sovereignty over those areas (Article 24). The framers of the charter adopted this position because the PLO leadership was too subservient to the Arab governments, whose political prescriptions rested more on perpetuating the status quo than on disrupting it. Moreover, the principle of territorial sovereignty was overshadowed by the dream of Arab unity, which gripped the imagination of the Palestinian and Arab masses. This explains why Article 16 vaguely linked “national sovereignty” (*al-siyada al-wataniyya*) to the abstract idea of “national freedom” (*al-hurriyya al-qawmiyya*).

Fifth, the charter did not specify the means that should be adopted to achieve “total liberation” of Palestine. Armed struggle and revolution, two principles that occupied a central position in the ideologies of most national liberation movements of the time, were not mentioned. Rather, the notion of Arab unity was implicitly viewed as the principal instrument of Palestinian liberation.

The 1964 charter was amended in July 1968 and in April 1996 and December 1998. The amended versions represented a progressive and consistent recognition not merely of the existence but the legitimacy of Israel.

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