

Statement by the Arab League States Following the Establishment of the State of Israel

15 May 1948

Palestine was part of the former Ottoman Empire subject to its law and represented in its parliament. The overwhelming majority of the population of Palestine were Arabs. There was in it a small minority of Jews that enjoyed the same rights and bore the same responsibilities as the (other) inhabitants, and did not suffer any ill-treatment on account of its religious beliefs. The holy places were inviolable and the freedom of access to them was guaranteed.

The Arabs have always asked for their freedom and independence. On the outbreak of the First World War, and when the Allies declared that they were fighting for the liberation of peoples, the Arabs joined them and fought on their side with a view to realizing their national aspirations and obtaining their independence. England pledged herself to recognize the independence of the Arab countries in Asia, including Palestine. The Arabs played a remarkable part in the achievement of final victory and the Allies have admitted this.

In 1917 England issued a declaration in which she expressed her sympathy with the establishment of a National Home for the Jews in Palestine. When the Arabs knew of this they protested against it, but England reassured them by affirming to them that this would not prejudice the right of their countries to freedom and independence or affect the political status of the Arabs in Palestine. Notwithstanding the legally void character of this declaration, it was interpreted by England to aim at no more than the establishment of a spiritual centre for the Jews in Palestine, and to conceal no ulterior political aims, such as the establishment of a Jewish State. The same thing was declared by the Jewish leaders.

When the war came to an end England did not keep her promise. Indeed, the Allies placed Palestine under the Mandate system and entrusted England with (the task of carrying it out), in accordance with a document providing for the administration of the country, in the interests of its inhabitants and its preparation for the independence which the Covenant of the League of Nations recognized that Palestine was qualified to have.

England administered Palestine in a manner which enabled the Jews to flood it with immigrants and helped them to settle in the country. (This was so) notwithstanding the fact that it was proved that the density of the population in Palestine had exceeded the economic capacity of the country to absorb additional immigrants. England did not pay regard to the interests or rights of the Arab inhabitants, the lawful owners of the country. Although they used to express, by various means, their concern and indignation on account of this state of affairs which was harmful to their being and their future, they (invariably) were met by indifference, imprisonment and oppression.

As Palestine is an Arab country, situated in the heart of the Arab countries and attached to the Arab world by various ties - spiritual, historical, and strategic - the Arab countries, and even the Eastern ones, governments as well as peoples, have concerned themselves with the problem of Palestine and have raised it to the international level; (they have also raised the problem) with England, asking for its solution in accordance with the pledges made and with democratic principles. The Round Table Conference was held in London in 1939 in order to discuss the Palestine question and arrive at the just

solution thereof. The Governments of the Arab States participated in (this conference) and asked for the preservation of the Arab character of Palestine and the proclamation of its independence. This conference ended with the issue of a White Paper in which England defined her policy towards Palestine, recognized its independence, and undertook to set up the institutions that would lead to its exercise of the characteristics of (this independence). She (also) declared that her obligations concerning the establishment of a Jewish national home had been fulfilled, since that home had actually been established. But the policy defined in the (White) Paper was not carried out. This, therefore, led to the deterioration of the situation and the aggravation of matters contrary to the interests of the Arabs.

While the Second World War was still in progress, the Governments of the Arab States began to hold consultations regarding the reinforcement of their cooperation and the increasing of the means of their collaboration and their solidarity, with a view to safeguarding their present and their future and to participating in the erection of the edifice of the new world on firm foundations. Palestine had its (worthy) share of consideration and attention in these conversations. These conversations led to the establishment of the League of Arab States as an instrument for the cooperation of the Arab States for their security, peace and well-being. The Pact of the League of Arab States declared that Palestine has been an independent country since its separation from the Ottoman Empire, but the manifestations of this independence have been suppressed due to reasons which were out of the control of its inhabitants. The establishment of the United Nations shortly afterwards was an event about which the Arabs had the greatest hopes. Their belief in the ideals on which that organization was based made them participate in its establishment and membership.

Since then the Arab League and its (member) Governments have not spared any effort to pursue any course, whether with the Mandatory Power or with the United Nations, in order to bring about a just solution of the Palestine problem: (a solution) based upon true democratic principles and compatible with the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the (Charter) of the United Nations, and which would (at the same time) be lasting, guarantee peace and security in the country and prepare it for progress and prosperity. But Zionist claims were always an obstacle to finding such a solution, (as the Zionists), having prepared themselves with armed forces, strongholds and fortifications to face by force anyone standing in their way, publicly declared (their intention) to establish a Jewish State.

When the General Assembly of the United Nations issued, on 29 November 1947, its recommendation concerning the solution of the Palestine problem, on the basis of the establishment of an Arab State and of another Jewish (State) in (Palestine) together with placing the City of Jerusalem under the trusteeship of the United Nations, the Arab States drew attention to the injustice implied in this solution (affecting) the right of the people of Palestine to immediate independence, as well as democratic principles and the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations and (the Charter) of the United Nations. (These States also) declared the Arabs' rejection of (that solution) and that it would not be possible to carry it out by peaceful means, and that its forcible imposition would constitute a threat to peace and security in this area. The warnings and expectations of the Arab States have, indeed, proved to be true, as disturbances were soon widespread throughout Palestine. The Arabs clashed with the Jews, and the two (parties) proceeded to fight each other and shed each other's blood. Whereupon the United Nations began to realize the danger of recommending the partition (of Palestine) and is still looking for a way out of this state of affairs.

Now that the British mandate over Palestine has come to an end, without there being a legitimate constitutional authority in the country, which would safeguard the maintenance of security and respect for law and which would protect the lives and properties of the inhabitants, the Governments of the Arab States declare the following:

- First: That the rule of Palestine should revert to its inhabitants, in accordance with the provisions

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of the Covenant of the League of Nations and (the Charter) of the United Nations and that (the Palestinians) should alone have the right to determine their future.

- Second: Security and order in Palestine have become disrupted. The Zionist aggression resulted in the exodus of more than a quarter of a million of its Arab inhabitants from their homes and in taking refuge in the neighbouring Arab countries. The events which have taken place in Palestine have unmasked the aggressive intentions and the imperialist designs of the Zionists, including the atrocities committed by them against the peace-loving Arab inhabitants, especially in Dayr Yasin, Tiberias and others. Nor have they respected the inviolability of consuls, as they have attacked the consulates of the Arab States in Jerusalem. After the termination of the British mandate over Palestine the British authorities are no longer responsible for security in the country, except to the degree affecting their withdrawing forces, and (only) in the areas in which these forces happen to be at the time of withdrawal as announced by (these authorities). This state of affairs would render Palestine without any governmental machinery capable of restoring order and the rule of law to the country, and of protecting the lives and properties of the inhabitants.
- Third: This state of affairs is threatening to spread to the neighbouring Arab countries, where feeling is running high because of the events in Palestine. The Governments of the Member States of the Arab League and the United Nations are exceedingly worried and deeply concerned about this state of affairs.
- Fourth: These Governments had hoped that the United Nations would have succeeded in finding a peaceful and just solution of the problem of Palestine, in accordance with democratic principles and the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations and (the Charter) of the United Nations, so that peace, security and prosperity would prevail in this part of the world.
- Fifth: The Governments of the Arab States, as members of the Arab League, a regional organization within the meaning of the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, are responsible for maintaining peace and security in their area. These Governments view the events taking place in Palestine as a threat to peace and security in the area as a whole and (also) in each of them taken separately.
- Sixth: Therefore, as security in Palestine is a sacred trust in the hands of the Arab States, and in order to put an end to this state of affairs and to prevent it from becoming aggravated or from turning into (a state of) chaos, the extent of which no one can foretell; in order to stop the spreading of disturbances and disorder in Palestine to the neighbouring Arab countries; in order to fill the gap brought about in the governmental machinery in Palestine as a result of the termination of the mandate and the non-establishment of a lawful successor authority, the Governments of the Arab States have found themselves compelled to intervene in Palestine solely in order to help its inhabitants restore peace and security and the rule of justice and law to their country, and in order to prevent bloodshed.
- Seventh: The Governments of the Arab States recognize that the independence of Palestine, which has so far been suppressed by the British Mandate, has become an accomplished fact for the lawful inhabitants of Palestine. They alone, by virtue of their absolute sovereignty, have the right to provide their country with laws and governmental institutions. They alone should exercise the attributes of their independence, through their own means and without any kind of foreign interference, immediately after peace, security, and the rule of law have been restored to the country. At that time the intervention of the Arab states will cease, and the independent State of Palestine will cooperate with the (other member) States of the Arab League in order to bring peace, security and prosperity to this part of the world. The Governments of the Arab States emphasize, on this occasion, what they have already declared before the London Conference and the United Nations, that the only solution of the Palestine problem is the establishment of a unitary Palestinian State, in accordance with democratic principles, whereby its inhabitants will enjoy complete equality before the law, (and whereby) minorities will be assured of all the guarantees recognized in democratic constitutional countries and (whereby) the holy places will be preserved and the rights of access thereto guaranteed.

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- Eighth: The Arab States most emphatically declare that (their) intervention in Palestine was due only to these considerations and objectives, and that they aim at nothing more than to put an end to the prevailing conditions in (Palestine). For this reason, they have great confidence that their action will have the support of the United Nations; (that it will be) considered as an action aiming at the realization of its aims and at promoting its principles, as provided for in its Charter.

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