

**League of Arab States. Arab League Declaration of War. Damascus, 15 May 1948. Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*.**<sup>1</sup>

*The Arab League Declares War*

(1) Palestine was part of the former Ottoman Empire, subject to its rule and is represented in its parliament. The overwhelming majority of the population of Palestine were Arabs, and it had a tiny Jewish minority, enjoying similar rights, duties and standard of live as the rest of the population, and did not face any unfair treatment because of their faith. The Holy Places were protected and free access to them was secured.

(2) The Arabs have always been demanding their freedom and independence, so when the World War I broke out and the Allies announced that they are fighting for the liberation of the nations, the Arabs joined them and fought by their side to achieve their own nationalist aspirations and get independent. Britain has then pledged to recognise the independence of the Arab countries in Asia, including Palestine. The Arabs had a significant impact on the final victory in World War II and this was recognized by the Allies themselves.

(3) In 1917 Britain issued a statement in which it expressed sympathy towards the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. When the Arabs learnt about the statement they objected. To which Britain reassured them that the statement will not affect their right in freedom and independence, and neither it will affect the political situation in Palestine.

In spite of the invalidity of the statement legally, it was explained by Britain as intention to establish no more than a spiritual centre for the Jews in Palestine, and they had no political agenda for the establishment of a Jewish state. This was also stated by the Jewish leaders.

(4) When the war ended, Britain did not fulfil the promise, rather the Allies put Palestine under the British Mandate, under agreement document provided for the running of the state and preparing it for independence in which the Charter of the League of Nations recognised Palestine qualifying for.

(5) Britain went on to make it possible for Palestine to be inundated with Jewish immigrants and helped them settle in the country, although it was

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evident that the population density in Palestine exceeded the state's economic ability to absorb more immigrants. Britain did not consider the interests and rights of the Arabs in spite of them being the rightful owners of the land. The Arabs were seeking various means to express their concern and anger over the situation, which was harming their own existence and destiny, but they were faced with reluctance and were subjected to prison and displacement.

(6) Since Palestine was an Arab state located at the heart of the Arab world, and has spiritual, historical and strategic ties with the Arab world, both the governments and the nations of the Arab and Eastern countries went in for the Palestinian issue, and raised its cause at International forums demanding a solution in accordance with the pledges, promises and democratic principles.

A round table conference was held in London in early 1939 to discuss the Palestinian issue and the development of a just solution. The government of the Arab countries participated in the conference and demanded preserving the Arab identity of Palestine and declaring its independence. The conference ended with issuing a white paper setting out Britain's policy towards Palestine, and recognised its independence. Britain also pledged to put in place regulations to ensure the smooth running of the policy, and announced that its commitment for the establishment of a Jewish homeland have exhausted as this homeland has already been established. However, The policy developed in that paper was never implemented leading to the situation to get worse, exacerbating things further against the interests of the Arabs.

(7) At the time when World War 2 was in full swing, the governments of the Arab states began talking for closer cooperation and increased solidarity, in order to warrant their present and future existence, and to contribute to the establishment of the new world on firm ground. Palestine got its share of interest in these talks.

These talks have resulted in establishing the Arab League of States as a conduit for cooperation between Arab states towards security and peace.

The Arab League Charter declared that Palestine is an independent country since its separation from the Ottoman Empire; however, the manifestation of independence remained unseen for reasons beyond the control of its people. It was a coincidence that the United Nations was established shortly thereafter, and the Arab countries contributed to the inception of the United Nations and participated in it, believing in the ideals of this organisation.

(8) And since then, the Arab league and its governments has spared no effort to seek every way possible, whether with the mandate countries or the United Nations, in order to reach a just solution for the Palestinian issue, based on the right democratic foundation, and agreeing with the provisions of the charter of the United Nations to ensure security and peace in the country, and opens the way for progress and prosperity. However, reaching such a solution has always clashed with the demands of the Zionists who voiced their intention of establishing an independent Jewish state after having prepared themselves with armed forces, forts and fortifications to face by force anyone who stand in their way.

(9) And when the United Nations general assembly issued on the 29 November 1948 recommendation for resolving the Palestinian issue on the basis of two states, putting Jerusalem under the mandate of the UN, the Arab states warned that this solution does not consider the Palestinians' right in independence, it ignores the democratic principles, and the provisions of the charter of the United Nations. The Arabs declared their opposition to the recommendation, and expressed that they expect forcing such recommendation would jeopardise peace and security in the region. The expectation of the Arabs came true as soon strikes spread across Palestine, and the Arabs and Jews began clashing and fighting. The UN then realised that the recommendation would be impossible to implement and is still looking for a solution to the situation.

(10) And now that the British mandate over Palestine has ended without establishing any legitimate constitutional authority to ensure the continuity of security, the rule of the law, and protects the lives and property of the people. Thereby the governments of the Arab states declare the following:

First: The people of Palestine have the right to self-rule according to the provisions of the United Nations, and only they have the right to self-determination.

Second: Order and security have been disturbed in Palestine, and the Zionist aggression has lead to the displacement of more than a quarter of a million of the Arabs, making them refugees in the neighbouring Arab states. The recent events in Palestine have revealed the aggression and hostile intentions of the Zionists, and their colonial goals. That is evident in the atrocities they have committed against the peaceful Arabs especially in the village of Deir Yasin, Tiberias and others. Also, they attacked the Arabic consulates in Jerusalem and did not observe their sanctity.

After the end of the British mandate, the British authorities are no longer in charge of the security except that which affects their withdrawing troops, and in the areas where these troops are located at the time of withdrawal, as they have declared, and this situation makes Palestine free from any government agency able to restore order and the rule of the law to the country, and able to save people's lives and property.

Third: There is concern that the situation would spread over to the neighbouring Arab states, as the current sentiment is erupting in the neighbouring Arab states, due to the events taking place in Palestine. Governments of member states of the Arab league as well as the United Nations are deeply concerned and paying great attention to the situation.

Fourth: It was hoped by these governments that the United Nations could devise a just and peaceful solution to the Palestinian issue, in accordance with the democratic principles and the provisions of the United Nations, so that peace, order and prosperity predominate in this part of the world.

Fifth: The governments of the Arab states are responsible for the upkeep of peace and security in the region as members of the Arab league, which is a regional organisation as defined in the provisions of the 8th chapter of the charter of the United Nations, and these governments view the current events in Palestine as a real and direct threat to the peace and security of the region in general and to each of the individual member states.

Sixth: Therefore, and because to the Arab states the security of Palestine is sacred, and as a wish to put an end to the situation and to prevent it from worsening and turning into anarchy the extent of which would be unknown, and as a wish to prevent the spread of the unrest and anarchy from Palestine into the neighbouring Arab states, and in order to fill the vacuum taking place in the governmental system in Palestine, as a result of the end of the mandate, and the unavailability of a legitimate authority, the Arab governments have felt compelled to intervene in Palestine for the sole purpose of helping the people to restore order, peace and the rule of the law to their land and to prevent further bloodshed.

Seventh: The governments of the Arab states recognise the independence of Palestine - which has been so far blocked by the British mandate - has become a reality for the legitimate people of Palestine, and they only have the right to provide their country with the systems and governmental institutions with absolute sovereignty, and to exercise independence in their own way with no

outside intervention of any kind once peace, security and the rule of the law returns to the land.

Then, the intervention of the Arab states will stop, and the independent state of Palestine will cooperate with the other members of the Arab league on the upkeep of security, peace and prosperity of this part of the world.

The governments of the Arab states emphasise on this occasion what has already been declared the London Conference and the United Nations that the only just solution to the Palestinian issue is the establishment of a unified Palestinian state in accordance with the democratic principles, where all the people enjoy full equality before the law, all the guarantees for the minorities are secured as established in constitutional democratic countries, the holy places are safeguarded and free access to them are ensured.

Eighth: The Arab states strongly declare that these considerations and objectives solely necessitated the intervention in Palestine, and is prompted merely to put an end to the current conditions in there, and therefore, they express strong confidence in the support of the United Nations since this work is aiming to achieve the goals and ideals of the United Nations as stipulated by its charter.

*Damascus, 15 May 1948*