

Aug. 2, 2012.

The Editor,

The Chronicle Herald.

Dear Editor,

Larry Riteman, in his letter Aug.2 "Land ownership legal", makes incredible statements claiming, on the basis of the Balfour Declaration, that all Palestinian territory is for Jewish residency, including Jordan, and a bit of southern Lebanon and Syria.

It was the 2nd of November 1917, when Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, issued his infamous declaration in the form of a letter written to a British Jew, Lord Rothschild, it read:

"His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people... it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine".

It is interesting to note that the four-letter word "Arab" occurs not once in this document. To refer to the Arabs who constituted, at the time, 92% of the population of Palestine and owned 98% of its land, as the non-Jewish communities is not merely preposterous but deliberately fraudulent. I do not need to tell you that this letter has no shred of legality, as Palestine did not belong to Balfour to assume such acts of generosity. The words of the distinguished British historian, Professor Arnold Toynbee, describe the British role, in issuing this document accurately:

"We were taking it upon ourselves to give away something that was not ours to give. We were promising rights of some kind in the Palestinian Arabs' country to a third party".

Similarly, the well-known Jewish writer, Arthur Koestler, summed it up aptly when he described the Balfour Declaration as a document in which "one nation promised a second the country of a third".

The Balfour Declaration, in essence, has no shred of legality to give the land of the Palestinians, who lived in this land since history began, to a third party. Adding to that, Jordan and bits of Lebanon and Syria, as claimed by Mr. Riteman, were not part of Palestine or the British Mandate.

On the 29th of November 1947, the U.N. General Assembly passed its Resolution #181, recommending the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state, in 56% of the land; and an Arab state in 42% of the land; and an International Zone in Jerusalem. At the time, the Jews, a large proportion of them were recent or illegal immigrants, constituted 31% of the population of Palestine and owned 5.6% of its land.

Is it surprising that the Arabs rejected this unjust resolution. As to the war waged in 1948, it was a direct result of the massive ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, from their land, brought about by the Zionist groups, the Haganah, Stern and Irgun, before the creation of the state of Israel, and the occupation of major areas, including the cities of Jaffa and Acre, that were allotted to the Arab state by the UN Resolution # 181. Furthermore, the UNGA Resolution # 194 of Dec. 1948 resolved that the Palestinian refugees must be allowed to return to their homes at the earliest practicable date. Israel continues, to this day, 64 years later, to defy this resolution, together with scores of other UN and Security Council resolutions.

To sum up, our call is that international law and UN resolutions must be complied with so that a modicum of justice is obtained, so that Arabs and Jews can live in peace and security in this tortured land.

Yours sincerely,

Ismail Zayid, MD.