

Conference Focuses on Israel's Legal Rights to Land

✖ Participants from three continents gathered in San Remo, Italy, Sunday to mark the 90th anniversary of the signing of a resolution that created a legal foundation for Israel's statehood.

Deputy Speaker of Israel's Knesset Danny Danon and Italian Member of Parliament Fiamma Nirenstein were among those who returned to the site where the Allied powers of World War I signed the San Remo Resolution on April 25, 1920.

The document incorporated into international law the 1917 Balfour Declaration, a formal statement of policy by the British government recognizing "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." The 51-member League of Nations unanimously approved the San Remo Resolution in 1922.

"The Jewish people have international rights from San Remo regarding Israel and Jerusalem," Danon told the Jerusalem Post. "And the time has come that we begin talking about these rights."

Although many in Israel believe the Jewish people have biblical rights to the land, Danon says secular Israelis need to become more familiar with the international rights conferred through San Remo. "Sadly, there are many Israelis who feel that we've conquered or are occupying a place that, in fact, we have full rights to," he said.

The Second San Remo Conference drew participants from the U.S., Canada, Israel and Europe, and was organized by the European Coalition for Israel, a Brussels-based group unites Christians across Europe in support of Israel. The Canadian Supporters of Israel's Legal Rights, the City of San Remo and

the International Institute of Humanitarian Law were partners in hosting the event.

"This [San Remo Resolution] marked the end of the longest colonization in history," said Salomon Benzimra of Canadian Supporters of Israel's Legal Rights. "This early episode of liberation, which preceded the global decolonization process by more than thirty years, should be welcome by all progressive minds."

On Saturday, organizers held a seminar on "the legal significance of the San Remo Resolution as it relates to the status of Israel and Jerusalem under international law." The panelists included Danon, Nirenstein and Jacques Gauthier, a Canadian lawyer who spent 20 years researching the legal status of Jerusalem.

Representatives from the original nations that signed on to the resolution-Britain, France, Italy and Japan, with the U.S. acting as an observer-symbolically re-affirmed the affirmation of Israel's legal status during Sunday's event. The group issued a statement at the close of the conference declaring that "the resolution remains irrevocable, legally binding and valid to this day."

Robert Lloyd George, whose great-grandfather, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, was one of the original signers of the San Remo Resolution, greeted participants during the weekend conference.

In recent years scholars have been raising awareness of the San Remo Resolution and other documents that set the legal stage for the modern Jewish state. But Danon said more education is needed, and he plans to sponsor initiatives to that end in Israel.

"Although we don't always win the struggle opposite Palestinian PR, we will win with the facts," Danon told the Jerusalem Post. "Because when you begin to explore the history

of it all, you begin to understand a reality that is completely different from what is portrayed in the media, and what has been portrayed by the Palestinian side.”