

This Declaration Gave Jews the Right to Their Homeland—70 Years Later, Here's What You Need to Know

Today marks the 70th anniversary of the United Nations' vote to fulfill the 1917 Balfour Declaration and recognize "the Jewish people's right to a national home in their ancient homeland."

On Nov. 29, 1947, the U.N. General Assembly voted to adopt the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine to become effective after the end of the British Mandate in May 1948. This Partition Plan recognized the creation of independent Arab and Jewish states. That 1947 U.N. vote is recorded in U.N. Resolution 181. The Partition Plan was accepted by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, but the Arab leaders and governments rejected the Plan and were unwilling to accept any territorial division.

While several nations such as France, Germany and Japan had considered, or were considering, similar plans, the Balfour Declaration was a public statement issued by the British government 100 years ago in 1917 following Great Britain's defeat of the Ottoman Empire. With there being a strong Jewish presence in the region of Israel for the last 3,000 years, and the cultural and historic value to their community, the letter states:

His Majesty's Government view with favour (British spelling) the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities

in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

The opening words of the declaration represented the first expression of public support for Zionism by a major political power. The term “national home” had no precedent in international law, and was intentionally vague as to whether a Jewish state was contemplated. The declaration also led to the creation of Mandatory Palestine, which later became Israel and the Palestinian territories. As a result, it is considered to have caused the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict, often described as the world’s most intractable conflict.

This year, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution recognizing the importance of the Balfour Declaration and its goal to support the rights of Jewish and non-Jewish communities.

Five years after the 1917 British Mandate, in 1922, or 95 years ago, the League of Nations (which included Great Britain, France, Germany and other nations), the precursor to the United Nations, issued the Mandate for Palestine, recognizing the creation of the Jewish state. And, of course, in 1947, or 70 years ago, the United Nations adopted the Partition Plan.

In May 1948, following the expiration of the British control of Palestine, the Jews in Palestine declared independence and the establishment of Israel in accordance with the plan. But the surrounding Arab nations attacked the Jews living there to destroy them. The modern state of Israel was born.

“The biblical and historical connection of the land of Israel to the Jewish people is undisputed,” said Mat Staver, Founder and Chairman of Liberty Counsel, president of Christians in Defense of Israel, and founder and president of Covenant Journey. “The modern legal right to the land is also clear from the Balfour Declaration, to the League of Nations Mandate, to the United Nations Partition Plan. Israel is not

an occupier of disputed territories but the rightful possessor of the land. This small part of the world is a beacon of hope for democracy and freedom in the Middle East,” said Staver.

Liberty Counsel is an international nonprofit, litigation, education and policy organization dedicated to advancing religious freedom, the sanctity of life and the family since 1989, by providing pro bono assistance and representation on these and related topics.