

NAKBA

The Process of Palestinian Dispossession

Palestinian Awareness of the Challenges of Zionism



Yusef al-Khalidi

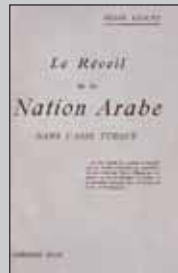
In addition to their desire for independence from the Ottoman Empire, Palestinians were well aware of the Zionist threat to their land from a very early stage. As early as 1899, Mayor of Jerusalem Yusuf al-Khalidi wrote to the Chief Rabbi of France, Zadok Khan, suggesting a different location for Zionists to realize their political ambitions. "In the name of God," he wrote, "let Palestine be left in peace." The response came from Zionist leader Theodor Herzl:

"You say to Mr. Zadok Khan that the Jews would do better to turn elsewhere. That may well happen the day we become aware that Turkey does not wish to partake in the enormous benefits offered by our movement... I have submitted our propositions to His Majesty the Sultan. If he does not accept them, we will seek and, believe me, we will find elsewhere what we need."² Unfolding events soon proved these words to be insincere.

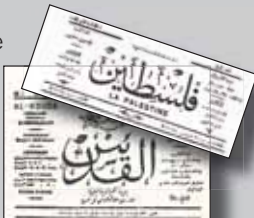


Theodor Herzl

Palestinians were quick to address the threat of Zionism in the public discourse of the region. In 1904, Najib Azouri, a Christian official under the Ottomans in Jerusalem, published *Le Reveil de la Nation Arabe* – "The Awakening of the Arab Nation" – in Paris. The book appealed to all Arab citizens to break away and establish a greater Arab kingdom which would include Syria, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. It also warned of Zionist ambitions in Palestine and forecast the conflict between national movements in the Middle East.



In 1908, three delegates from the Jerusalem district – Ruhi al-Khalidi, Sa'id al-Husseini and Hafez as-Sa'id – were elected to the Ottoman parliament, and Istanbul became a platform for opposition to Zionism. At the same time, three new Palestinian newspapers were founded



Filasteen and Al-Quds

to raise awareness of the dangers of Zionist colonization: *Al-Quds*, *An-Najah* and *Al-Carmel*. The next year, *Al-Mufid* newspaper was founded in Beirut by Abdul Ghani al-Uraysi and in 1911 and the bi-weekly *Filasteen* by Issa Daoud al-Issa in Jaffa, addressing its readership as "Palestinians" and warning them of the consequences of Zionist colonization.



Issa Daoud al-Issa

Al-Uraysi also chaired the first Arab Nationalist Congress, held in France in 1913, which called for increased autonomy for the Arab provinces and laid the foundations for an Arab vision of post-Ottoman Palestine.



Abdul Ghani al-Uraysi

² Walid Khalidi, *Before Their Diaspora*, Beirut, 1991.

British Contradictions and Controversy



Sharif Hussein

During the First World War (WWI), the British government negotiated simultaneous and contradictory agreements in order to further its strategic interests. The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence of 1915-16 pledged support for the formation of an Arab state in the lands then governed by the Ottoman Empire, including Palestine, in exchange for Arab military support for the British campaign against the Ottomans. The map below shows the Arab state in green; the area in orange in the north of the region was to be excluded, as McMahon argued that those portions of land "cannot be said to be purely Arab."



Henry McMahon



At the same time, the British and French were conducting secret talks to divide the same land promised to Sharif Hussein between them. Negotiated by Sir Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot, the agreement carved the region into "spheres of influence" which would come under French or British control after WWI.

