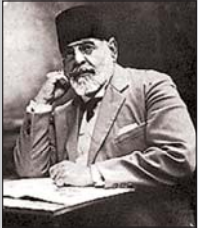


## Palestinians Rise to the Challenge

In response to the sudden need to protect their property and rights in the face of the new threat posed by Zionist funds, institutions and land purchases, Palestinians became active in trying to make up for the Ottoman government's failure to safeguard their interests. They began setting up political and economic bodies to empower and co-ordinate their efforts.



Aref Dajani

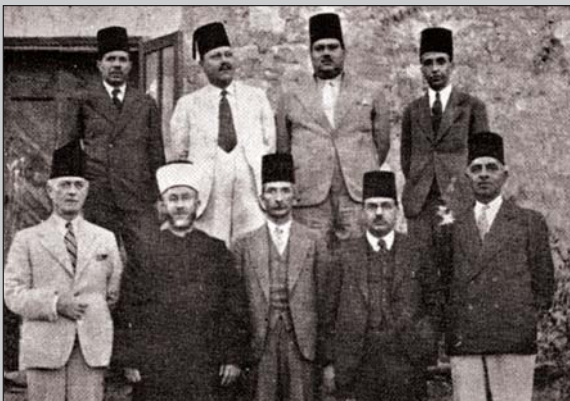
The **Muslim-Christian Association** was formed in 1918 to reflect the deep-rooted Arab identity of the Palestinian people and their opposition to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, to the Balfour Declaration and to Zionism. It soon became a countrywide network of national groups and parties with its headquarters in Jerusalem under the presidency of Aref Dajani. These were amalgamated into the **Arab Executive Committee (AEC)** in 1920 under the leadership of Musa Kazem al-Husseini, who had served in the Ottoman government before returning to become Mayor of Jerusalem during WWI.



Musa Kazem al-Husseini

The British Mandatory authorities tried to contain this Arab political mobilization, attempting first to set up a Legislative Council of Jews and Arabs under High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel, then proposing the formation of an Arab Agency as a counterpart to the Jewish Agency, which was fast becoming the official Jewish governing body. The same Arab consensus which opposed the Balfour Declaration and mass Jewish immigration thwarted this attempt to give the Zionist organizations political legitimacy in Palestine.

After Musa Kazem al-Husseini's death in 1934, the AEC fragmented into various parties. In 1936, when an Arab general strike protesting British rule turned into a revolt, the **Arab Higher Committee (AHC)** was formed under the leadership of Grand Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husseini to assume overall Palestinian leadership of the movement and to coordinate the activities of the various nationalist parties. It was outlawed by the British in 1937, and many of its members were arrested or exiled to the Seychelles – a serious blow to the Palestinian leadership working to confront the increasing power of the Jewish Agency in Palestine.



Members of the Arab Higher Committee in 1936; absent from the group is Secretary-General Awni Abdul Hadi, imprisoned by the British for his role in the 1936 uprising.

## Arab Congresses

In order to formulate Palestinian national aspirations, seven national congresses were held between 1919 and 1928, initially organized by the Muslim-Christian Association. The **First Congress** (Jerusalem, 1919) rejected the Balfour Declaration and presented the Palestinian national position as part of Emir Faisal's demands to the Paris Conference. The **Second Congress** (Jerusalem, May 1920), convened to protest the confirmation of the British Mandate in Palestine, was forbidden by the British authorities. The **Third Congress** (Haifa, December 1920) called for the establishment of a National Government and elected the Arab Executive Committee to direct and oversee the the Palestinian national movement. The **Fourth Congress** (Jerusalem, June 1921) elected the first Palestinian delegation to London, led by Musa Kazem al-Husseini, to present the Palestinian case against Jewish immigration to Palestine to the British government. The **Fifth Congress** (Nablus, 1922) decided to boycott the Legislative Council elections planned by the British and to establish an information office in London. The **Sixth Congress** (Jaffa, 1923) reiterated the boycott of Legislative Council elections and the rejection of the Anglo-Hejaz treaty, which proposed a British-supported Arab confederation of the Hejaz, Iraq and Transjordan. The **Seventh Congress** (Jerusalem, 1928) called for the establishment of a representative government.



7<sup>th</sup> Palestinian National Congress, Jerusalem, 1928

These congresses were of limited benefit to the Palestinian cause, and highlighted the problems of divisions within Palestinian ranks. Most apparent was the rivalry between Mayor of Jerusalem Ragheb Nashashibi and Grand Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husseini. Nashashibi favored fostering good relations with both the British and the Jewish Agency in the hope that a conciliatory approach would yield better results than an uncompromising one. In direct contradiction was the policy adopted by the Grand Mufti, who was a constant voice of resistance and was the main architect of the 1936 general strike which evolved into the three-year Great Revolt.



Hajj Amin al-Husseini



The first official representatives of a Palestinian women's delegation meet with British High Commissioner Lord Chancellor in Jerusalem