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Arthur James Balfour

Former British prime minister Arthur James Balfour issued the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which stated that Great Britain would support the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Balfour was the nephew of another prime minister, Lord Salisbury.

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Balfour Declaration

Balfour Declaration, declaration issued on November 2, 1917 by Great Britain in favour of a Jewish national home in Palestine. It was initially in the form of a letter sent in March 1916 by the British statesman Arthur James Balfour, then foreign secretary in the Cabinet of Prime Minister David Lloyd George, to Edmond James Rothschild, a prominent supporter of Zionism. The letter expressed the British government's support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people". It also committed the British government to making the "best endeavours 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".

It has been commonly accepted that the Balfour Declaration was a unilateral undertaking by the British government. The immediate purpose was to win for the Allied cause in World War I the support of Jews and others in the warring nations and in neutral countries such as the United States. In the long term, the motive behind British policy rested on the importance of Palestine as a strategic point on the land and sea routes to India and, above all, as the terminus at the Mediterranean Sea of pipelines from the rich oil-bearing regions of the Middle East. The establishment of a Zionist state under British protection would have given Great Britain possession of that coveted prize, while at the same time apparently implementing the Allied slogan of "self-determination of small nations". On July 24, 1922,

the declaration was embodied in the League of Nations mandate for Palestine, which set forth terms under which Great Britain was entrusted with the temporary administration of the country on behalf of its Jewish and Arab inhabitants. As an indirect result of the Balfour Declaration, Israel was established as an independent state in 1948 in the mandated area.

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