**[Villain of the piece](https://www.dawn.com/news/1793195/villain-of-the-piece)**

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A [news item](https://www.dawn.com/news/1780806/uk-sends-ships-spy-planes-to-help-israel) in *Dawn’s* issue of Oct 13 wasn’t really needed. It informed the readers that Britain had [decided](https://www.dawn.com/news/1780806/uk-sends-ships-spy-planes-to-help-israel) to send two naval ships and surveillance aircraft to the eastern Mediterranean to “support Israel and regional stability”.

As history tells us, if there is any country that is solely and unequivocally responsible for the slaughter that is going on in Gaza, it is Britain. By issuing the Balfour Declaration and handing over Palestine to the Jewish minority, Britain paved the way for the massacre happening now and has been ongoing since 1917, not just in the “Eastern Mediterranean” but also between the “river and the sea”, for that is how the Palestinians identify their country — from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean.

In elaborating the Balfour criminality, and dwelling on the crafty language, where every clause was duplicitous, I will be taking readers along the beaten track which scholars have traversed for more than a century.

There will be nothing new in what follows but it deserves to be repeated as long as Palestine remains in bondage. The most farcical part of the declaration is an ‘appeal’ 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”.

Normally, it is a majority to which pleas are made for safeguarding the interest of a minority, but here a minority — the Jewish minority — is being requested to safeguard the interests of the non-Jewish majority.

Over a century ago, Britain paved the way for the Gaza killings.

In 1917, the Jews formed six per cent of the Palestinian population. However, if you include foreign settlers, especially German who had settled in Palestine because of the friendly relations between the Ottoman and Germanmpires, the Jewish population comprised 13pc.

This means it had already been decided that Palestine would be turned into a Jewish majority territory under the British Mandate. (‘Mandate’ needs a separate discussion). In this appeal to a minority, concern is being expressed for the “civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities [read: Arabs] in Palestine”.

Here the words “political rights” have been avoided, but when it comes to the followers of the Judaic faith, the declaration makes clear that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the “rights and political status [emphasis added] enjoyed by Jews in any other country”.

The declaration was made in the form of a letter by British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild, who was requested by Balfour to “bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation”. (Incidentally, it was also a Rothschild who in the 19th century had given money to British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli to purchase shares of the Suez Canal).

Having secured Palestine by defeating the Turks militarily, Britain’s task was how to handle(read: dispose of) Hussain bin Ali, the Sharif (governor) of Makkah, who had revolted against Turks under the leadership of T.E. Lawrence and was now waiting for Britain to fulfil its promise and make him the king of the Ottoman Empire’s Arab territories. That he expected Palestine to be part of his kingdom was never accepted by Britain, because the British government insisted that they never promised Palestine to Hussain.

Getting rid of the former governor of Makkah was less problematic, because Abdul Aziz bin Saud knew well the British wanted Hussain out of the picture. The Saudis obliged, captured the Hejaz and made Hussain run. As a sop, however, Britain made one of his sons, Faisal, king of Iraq and Abdullah the king of a newly created country called Jordan.

Even though they installed two of Hussain’s sons as kings, Britain said they would stay on in Iraq because they had been given a mandate by the League of Nations to do so in order to prepare the natives for governance. Sidekick France applied the same principle with some variation and gobbled up Syria after taking Lebanon away from Syria and creating a country.

This was all part of the infamous Sykes-Picot treaty which Britain and France had kept secret to cheat their Arab allies.

That the spirit of the Balfour Declaration is alive was to be seen on London streets 106 years later when police warned pro-Palestinian demonstrators that anyone “showing support” for Hamas could be arrested.

The naval ships which Britain sent to the Eastern Mediterranean were of no military value; they were meant to remove any misgivings Israel and the powerful Zionist lobby back home might have with regard to Britain’s continued loyalty to Israel

It is America which is now Israel’s guardian angel; in reality though America has to obey what the powerful Zionist lobby in the US — nay in the West — orders.

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