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May 20, 2021

**Alone with the burden of history**

The story of Palestine is like the story of no other country. It is spread over millennia and at any time in history, it has always attracted the attention, love and affection of the followers of three major religions and over half of the population of the globe at any time.

It has been a venue of history-shaping events and also the battleground where hordes from the far corners of earth have come to fight for the supremacy of their worldviews rather than in search for wealth and bounty. Often in history, as now, it has been left to carry the burden of centuries all alone.

In the waning years of the 19th century, Palestine came into the eye of a new storm brewed by Zionists with support and assistance by the British colonial power. In pursuit of this strategy to wean Palestine away, a series of agreements were entered into with various Arab Emirs during WW1 by representatives of the British colonial power.

To set the record straight, let us first note the four major agreements made to pave the ground for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

First, an agreement was signed between Percy Cox, chief political officer of Great Britain in the Gulf, and Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, Emir of Nejd in 1915.

Second, between Mac Mahon, the British governor of Egypt and Hussein ibn Ali, Sharif / Emir of Mecca, through exchange of letters in 1915.

Both agreements were signed under a false pretext of British promises for the United Arab Land to emerge as one sovereign, independent state after WW1 in exchange for support against Ottoman Empire.

The deceit and duplicity of these promises was exposed when it was disclosed that, while these negotiations with Arab leaders were going on, Britain and France had reached a secret agreement – the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 – to divide the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire among themselves after the war. The promise of a united Arab sovereign independent state in the Gulf had already gone with the wind.

Two other agreements followed (apart from the Sykes-Picot Agreement) which had a bearing upon the fate of Palestine.

One was the Balfour declaration of 1917 in which the UK government formally confirmed – what Cox and Mac Mahon had been working for – that the British government had all along been preparing ground to hand over Palestine to the Zionists for establishment of a ‘national home for the Jewish people’, while dividing the rest of Arab lands among themselves to expand the British and French empires.

This was the most decisive moment in the history of Palestine when a foreign imperial power had surprisingly lent official support to help achieve the objectives of a private political group from another foreign country – Austria! All at the cost of the third party, the people of Palestine whom nobody consulted and who had committed no aggression against either one or against anyone else.

From this blind, unwarranted and uncalled for aggressive pact between two foreign entities was born the aggressive strategy of racism, ethnic cleansing and settlement colonialism practiced in Palestine. This was captured by the Zionist slogan of “land without people, for people without land” aiming to eject by force the indigenous people of Palestine, occupy their lands, import additional Jewish population from around the world and settle them to change the demographic composition of Palestine and prepare ground for the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel.

Then there was also the agreement between Faisal son of Hussein, Sharif of Mecca and the Zionist Chase Weizmann which was also joined by Lawrence (of the Lawrence of Arabia fame) from the British foreign office in January 1919, a fortnight before the start of Peace Conference at Versailles.

However, none of these pieces of paper with signatures secured from Arab Emirs by British and Zionist entities carried any legal validity and provided no legal or moral ground for annexation of Palestine.

These Arab Emirs were not rulers of any state recognized by international law or by any other country or a state. Palestine did not belong to them nor was under their control. They were themselves under sovereign authority of the Ottoman Empire just as Palestine was. By what law could they ‘give away’ a territory which did not belong to them nor did they exercise sovereignty over it?

These agreements were largely for psychological purposes for Arab leaders and to prepare ground for separate treatment of Palestine when the time came. Which arrived with the Treaty of Versailles (1919) when Palestine was handed over along with other spoils of war of the Ottoman Empire to the UK and formalized through the League of Nations mandate in 1922.

And this is where the cat comes out of the bag.

When the UK relinquished its mandate over Palestine in 1947, it did not return the land to the original Arab inhabitants to whom it belonged – like it was the usual practice in other parts of Asia and Africa when colonialism was wound up there – but to new Jewish settlers who had been brought there from all around, as part of original strategy.

As British colonialism ended, it did not bring independence to Palestine. But one foreign colonial power handed over Palestine to another foreign colonial power – and the state of Israel came into being.

Thus, the colonial enterprise which had no legal or moral basis and was imposed and sustained by force has continued in Palestine in the 21st century. It has been violating international law and the UN Charter with measures such as ejecting people from their homes, refusing right of return to refugees, importing immigrants to change demographic composition, annexing territories and expanding its area of control etc – none of which have legal validity and all are outlawed.

Lassa Oppenheim, a great authority on international law, had clearly said: “there is not an atom of sovereignty in the authority of the occupying power.” And that sums up the state of Israel.

For those who may have read about the vicious brutalities of colonialism in Asia and Africa in previous centuries, they are now seeing with their own eyes its ugly reality on display through images and stories of atrocities coming out of Occupied Palestine.

To find a way forward and to bring peace and stability to the area, the UN passed resolution 181 in 1947 for the creation of two sovereign independent states of Palestine and Israel; while UN resolution 242 in 1967 disallowed any territorial annexation by force. However, neither has been allowed to be implemented by Israel.

Protracted negotiations were used to gain time while continuing to change demography and geography by settlements all over Arab areas to make it impossible to implement UN resolutions.

So, where do we go from here?

Is the colonial enterprise imposed upon the land of Palestine by the imperial force of one superpower and sustained by a blank cheque from another superpower likely to be influenced by public pressure from inside Israel and outside to want to implement UN resolutions, undo settlement colonialism and live side by side in peace as two independent states of Palestine and Israel?

Or will the world be waiting for another change in power equations for a future superpower in order for Palestine to receive justice and find peace?

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