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ISRAEL and the PALESTINIANS: KEY DOCUMENTS

Thursday, 29 November, 2001, 15:19 GMT

The Balfour Declaration

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 was the first significant declaration by a world power in favour of a Jewish "national home" in what was known as Palestine.

Historians disagree as to what the then British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, intended by his declaration. The letter has no mention of the word "state", and insists that nothing should be done "which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine".

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The letter/

Foreign Office - November 2nd, 1917

"Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

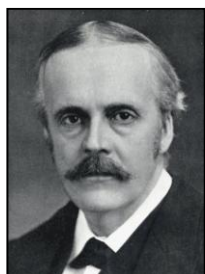
His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and

will use their 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.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation. Yours, Arthur James Balfour »

Questions. 1. **Introduce the source:** author, date, type of document, recipients, context.

1. What does this declaration aim at? Underline the key sentence.
2. What are the different meanings of the phrase "*national home*"?
3. What important safeguard has been added? Why? Was it efficient enough to prevent any conflict in the area?
4. What major changes did this policy bring about in the Near East?



Arthur James Balfour (1848 – 1930) was a British Conservative politician and statesman. He served as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from July 1902 to December 1905, and was later Foreign Secretary in 1916–1919.

Notes. **Walter Rothschild** (1868 – 1937) was a British banker, conservative politician, and zoologist (he used to drive a zebra carriage in London!). His father, Lord Rothschild, was an immensely wealthy financier, of the international Rothschild financial dynasty, and the first Jewish peer in England.

As an active Zionist and close friend of Chaim Weizmann, he worked to formulate the draft declaration for a Jewish homeland in Palestine

Chaim Azriel Weizmann (1874 – 1952) was a famous chemist (who lived in Manchester for 30 years) and Zionist leader, President of the Zionist Organization, who became the first President of the State of Israel. **Zionism** is a form of nationalism of Jews and Jewish culture that supports a Jewish nation state in the territory defined as the Land of Israel. Theodor Herzl is often pictured as the founder of the Zionist movement.