

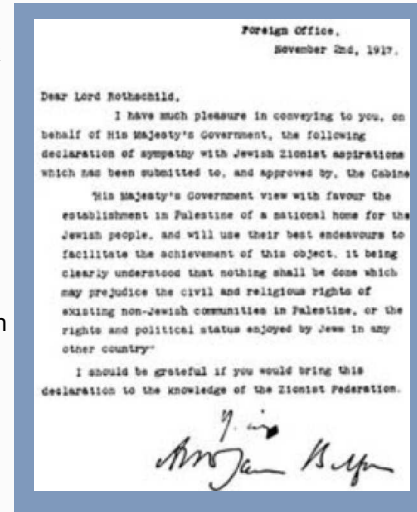


Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how "We the People" interact with the government and each other. Let's help each other expand our civic literacy.

On **October 07, 2023**, the country of Israel suffered one of the worst attacks in its history. The Palestinian terrorist organization **Hamas** launched a large-scale assault across the border of **Gaza** into Israel. The attack resulted in the deaths of more than 1,400 civilians, most of whom were Israeli and some of whom were foreign nationals. Hamas also kidnapped hundreds of Israelis and foreign nationals to be used as hostages. This violence has a long and complicated history, and its origins can be traced back to 1917 when the British became the first nation to formally support a national home for the Jewish people.

This formal support, now known as the **Balfour Declaration**, was issued by the British government during **World War I**. At the time, the Ottoman Empire, an enemy of Great Britain, **controlled** the territory known as Palestine, which had a mixed population of Arab Muslims, Christians, and a small population of Jews. The Jews had been in the area since the days of ancient Israel, and the Arab community had been there for a long time as well. In Europe, as in other areas of the world, the Jewish community had long been dealing with rising **anti-Semitism** (or hatred of Jews). Many Jews, called **Zionists**, sought a Jewish homeland where Jews would be free to live without worry.

During the course of World War I, Great Britain developed a **post-war plan** for the occupation of the lands of the Ottoman Empire, including Palestine. Part of the motivation behind Great Britain's plan was to garner the support of the global Jewish community for the Allied war effort by the establishment of a Jewish homeland.



"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." - The Balfour Declaration



Following the Allied victory, Great Britain was given control of Palestine by the newly formed **League of Nations**. During their three decades of control of the region, the British government unsuccessfully attempted to put the Balfour Declaration into practice. A major component of their failure was not considering the opinions of those residents already living in Palestine and its inability to provide Palestinians and Jews with nations of their own. This led to a great deal of war and violence, as Jewish migration into the area often drove members of the Arab community out. The Balfour Declaration did a poor job of ensuring that the political rights of residents already there were protected, and the rise in violence delayed Britain's ability to make decisions regarding Palestine's future. Ultimately, following the atrocities of the **Holocaust** during World War II, a Jewish homeland was established through the **creation of Israel** in 1948.

Since then, Israel has never known long-lasting peace. In its 75-year history, it has continued **fighting wars** against neighboring countries, who believed they had no right to exist. Victory in these wars has led to the expansion of Israel's control over the **West Bank** and **Gaza**. These areas have ignited extreme conflicts between Israeli settlers and Palestinian residents.

The Israeli government has since **declared war on Hamas**. The conflicts in Israel are ongoing. The terror attack in October 2023 is the latest example of the ramifications of the Balfour Declaration. Its failure to provide evenly divided lands that allow for co-existence continues to fuel violence with no solutions in sight.

The war in Israel highlights the **geopolitical** challenges that continue to exist in the region. Historically, the United States has always been an advocate for Israel. The actions taken by U.S. presidents, from Harry Truman's **recognition of Israel** as a nation, Richard Nixon's **"shuttle diplomacy,"** Jimmy Carter's **Camp David Accords**, Bill Clinton's **Oslo Accords**, Donald Trump's **Abraham Accords**, and now Joe Biden's recent **visit** to the country and his attempted meeting with Arab leaders in Jordan, highlight the United States' continued aims of supporting democratic principles and protecting human rights around the world.

To Think and To Do:
In response to the explosion at the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, President Biden stated, *"The United States stands unequivocally for the protection of civilian life during conflict, and we mourn the patients, medical staff, and other innocents killed or wounded in this tragedy."* Given the president's statement, examine any of the aforementioned events and explain how U.S. foreign policy has contributed to the U.S.' longstanding relationship with Israel and its commitment to peace in the region.

Learn more:

- [Arab- Israel Conflict Timeline](#), from the Institute for Curriculum Services
- [History of Yom Kippur 1973 War](#), from the Institute for Curriculum Services
- [The Question of Palestine](#), from the United Nations



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