CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND TO THE CREATION OF STATELESS PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN WEST ASIA

The Arabs are pre Islamic people who lived in Palestine and various parts of West Asia before the advent of Islam. In 1517, the Ottoman Turks conquered Palestine and occupied it until 1917. The year 1917 marks a turning point in the history of Palestine not only because of the end of Turkish rule but also because of issuance of Balfour Declaration in November 1917. Under Ottomans, Palestine was an integral part of ‘Ottoman Empire’ and Palestinians were not treated as subject but as citizens of sovereign and independent country. The Palestinians enjoyed full civil and political rights equally with Ottoman citizens. In fact, in the Ottoman Empire these rights were reaffirmed by the Ottoman Constitution of 23 December 1876. Article 48 of the Constitution recognized the right of every Ottoman citizens to elect and to be elected for national representation. The same rights for all citizens were again reaffirmed in the Ottoman constitution of 1908. When the First World War broke out and Turkey joined Germany in the war, the British Government and its allies encouraged the Arabs to revolt against the Turks. As a result, they gave them several assurances to recognize their independence from Turkey at the end of the War. These assurances included an assurance for the independence of Palestine. The Balfour Declaration was the first step in the systematic campaign to usurp Palestine.
from its indigenous inhabitants and reduce them into stateless refugees. The Balfour Declaration was a sequel to the Zionist campaign in Europe to establish a Jewish State in Palestine.

**Zionist Movement:**

Zionism as modern political movement started in the 1890's when the Hungarian Jewish leader Theoder Herzi, convened the first Zionist congress in Basle, Switzerland in 1897 and declared as its objective the establishment of ‘Jewish national home’ in Palestine secured by public law. The Zionist leader realized from the beginning that the biggest obstacle to the objective of transforming Palestine into a “Jewish State” would be the fact that it was already some one’s homeland. It was thus expedient for the Zionists to picture Palestine as neglected Wasteland, as an empty, deserted land. From the start the movement, therefore, used the slogan, “land without people, for a people without land”.

The original concept of “Jewish National Home” was based upon the desires of the Jews to escape from the discrimination and persecution, which they suffered particularly in Europe. But when Palestine was chosen as the future location for as such a home, Zionist Jews invented the concept of a historic right to the country. Zionist claim of historic right did not have a legal, political or even moral basis was the home land of Palestinians, who inhabited the country from the dawn of history until the creation of Israel, when majority of them were forcibly expelled by Jewish terrorist organizations.
Balfour Declaration is now viewed by Arab nationalist and by some historians as the root causes of Palestinian tragedy and Arab-Israel conflict.7

The withdrawal of the Turks from Palestine during the First World War did not lead to Palestine independence, as in the case of other peoples who were liberated from Turkish domination, on the basis of the pledges given. This was because of contradictory pledge given to Zionist Jews by Great Britain. On 2 November, 1917, in a letter addressed by Arthur James Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, to Lord Roths Child.

Balfour Declared:

"His majesty's government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a "National Home" for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the objects, 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 countries".8

In the Balfour Declaration the British Government had expressed its support for the idea of establishing in Palestine a "Jewish National Home" in Pslestine.10 The declaration was issued and approved by Britishers and their allies with the object of winning the support of Zionist Jews during the war11.

At that time of Balfour Declaration, the Jewish population in Palestine numbered some 56,000 against an Arab population of 644,00012. The Jews represented eight percent of the population while the original inhabitants Muslim and Christians represented ninety tow percent of the population13. In
the course of next two decades, the Jews made important strides in organizing themselves for community self-government. Creating a labour movement, pioneering new forms of settlement, establishing a Hebrew education system, and creating a national press and so on. The declaration gained the endorsement of US and European leaders as well as Vatican. When Britain was given the mandate over Palestine the declaration was included in the League of Nations statement regarding the Mandate over Palestine. In the years that followed, Balfour Declaration stood as symbol of British and Great power commitment to Zionism over Arab-nationalism in Palestine. It provided international sanction to the Zionist movement and gave the Zionists the necessary great power backing for increased immigration into Palestine.

The acquisition of land in Palestine had always been a central objective of Zionist movement. As Palestine was subjected to this process of demographic transformation, it suffered under cognate economic mutation. The transfer of land to Zionist settler was always and still is a major objective of the Zionist movement. Zionist policy of land acquisition transformed Palestinian society into a community of landless peasants. During Zionist movement, the land had been acquired wherever possible by purchase mainly from absentee landlords. The area of land involved was a small, but even so the process aroused widespread resentment, especially because the new Jewish owners at once dispossessed the Arab tenant farmers who were actually working on the land and who thereby live their livelihood.
Sir John Hope Simpson, who was sent by the British government to Palestine to study its economic conditions, found that Zionist land policy involved the acquisition of much more land than was needed for the settlement of Jewish immigration. The policy thus led not only to the displacement of the Arab farmers but also to the neglect and deterioration of much of the country’s agricultural land.19

**Jewish immigration to Palestine and Its Consequences:**

Immigration is Israelis lifeblood. For the Zionist, Jewish immigration was a vital and indispensable condition for the growth and strengthening of Palestine Jewish community, for the prosperity of the country and building of “Jewish National Home” in Palestine.

Prior to the first Zionist congress the number of Jews moving to Palestine was not great about 25000 between 1881 and 1900 and their impact was limited. Even after the Basle Conference, the movement remained small for another two decades. The new immigrants, who like those before them came to Palestine to escape discrimination, were frequently socialist, committed to Jewish common living on agricultural settlements. Because of their Zionist philosophy within the community and desire to strengthen the Jewish people through physical activity, they insisted that only Jewish labour could be used on lands owned by Jews. This policy led to tensions with Palestinians peasants who lost their traditional rights to sharecrop the land when it was sold to Zionist immigrants by absentee
owners and were then unable to find work among the new immigrants communities.\(^{20}\)

Between 1923 and 1932, the number of Jews who immigrated to Palestine rose to 844,54. After 1933 as a result of Nazi persecution, the Jews came to Palestine in large numbers within a quarter of century their number increased from 56,000 in 1918 to 608,000 in 1946. In other words, their ratio changed from one twelfth to one third of the total population\(^{21}\). Meanwhile, Palestinians fears and frustration grew in indirect response to Zionist immigration. In the eye of the Palestinian community the European immigrants were exclusivists and arrogant in their political and economic ideas, too western, too modern, too aggressive and in general a corrupting influence. More important, Palestinians quickly recognised that Zionism would be detrimental to nascent Palestinians nationalist aspirations. The Jewish immigration was threatening the numerical superiority of the indigenous Arab community and Zionist colonization was shaking its economic foundation.\(^{22}\) However, it was becoming clear with each wave of immigrants that Jewish immigration into Palestine was inspired, promoted and financed by Zionist organizations with one political objective, the creation of demographic nucleus which would lead to the domination of Palestine and the establishment of Jewish State. The original inhabitants of Palestine Muslim, and Christians, opposed the flow of Jewish immigration into their country. Their opposition took the form of protests, demonstration, riots and civil disturbances against the Mandatory government.\(^{23}\)
After each serious disturbance the British government appointed a Commission of Enquiry to determine its causes. Commissions of Enquiry were appointed in 1920, 1929 and 1936. In all cases the causes for disturbances were found to be same Palestinian opposition to Jewish immigration, their fear of the establishment of "Jewish National Home" and their desire for national independence. Nevertheless, the finding of these commissions failed to arrest the flow of Jewish immigration. The last commission known as the Peel Commission, which investigated the unrest in 1936, recommended the termination of mandate and Partition of country between Arabs and Jews.

UN Partition Plan:

The question of Palestine came up for discussion at UN in 1947 after the end of Palestine Mandate as a result of dissolution of League of Nations. The Mandate requested to the UN Secretary General that the question of political future of Palestine and its inhabitants be placed on the Agenda of Special Session of the General Assembly. The General Assembly Resolution of 15 May 1947 set up the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) and requested it to prepare a report for the General Assembly and to submit such proposals, as it may consider appropriate for the solution of the problem of Palestine. UNSCOP heard the Jewish case, presented mainly by the Jewish Agency and Arab case presented mainly by the Higher Arab Committee. Palestinians however, boycotted UNSCOP and did not participate in its investigations. The UNSCOP submitted two plans known as
the majority. The majority plan proposed the termination of Mandate and Partition of Palestine, the creation of Arab State and Jewish State with Economic Union between them and city of Jerusalem, which would be subjected to a international regime to be administered by the UN. The minority plan also envisaged the termination of mandate but proposed the establishment of a federal state, which would comprise and Arab and Jewish State with Jerusalem as the capital of federation. Both United States and Soviet Union supported the UN Partition Plan. The majority of the Jews were in favour of Partition.

Partition however, was unacceptable to the Arabs. The Palestinians organized strikes and demonstration. The Arab States and Arab League and the Arab Higher Committee rejected the Partition proposal. They argued rightly that the UN can make recommendation and could not pass binding Resolution. In particular, the UN did not and does not have right to determine a country's fate without consulting the people of that country. They raised the issues of the invalidity of the Balfour Declaration and Mandate. In the end, the General Assembly in its Resolution 181(11) dated 29 November 1947 adopted majority view of UNSCOP. It recommended to the mandatory, the Security Council and the members of UN that they adopt and implement with regard to the future government of Palestine, the plan to Partition with Economic Union, contained in the Resolution. The Resolution 181(ii) commended for the Partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish State. The boundaries of the two states were delimited in the Resolution.
Resolution also provided that the independent Arab and Jewish State would have an economic union. The UN decision in 1947 to Partition Palestine into two states was unanimously rejected by the Arab States as immoral and unacceptable. Like Palestine Mandate, the UN Partition Resolution 181(ii) deprived the Palestinian of their sovereign rights on the whole of Palestine by stipulating a provision for the creation of Israel.

The UN Partition Resolution opened the door to chaos in West Asia. It led to an immediate out break of bloodshed, which culminated in, wars between Arab and Jews. The Palestinian exodus began soon after the UN Partition Plan and continued even after the Armistice Agreements were signed between Israel and Arab states in early and mid 1949. The exodus is classified into three phases. The first phase started from November 29, 1947 to mid March 1948, the second phase from late March to May 15, 1948 and third phase started from May 15, 1948 onwards. Here all but most of the biased of Zionist works agree that expulsion became standard policy and was carried out systematically. During the second and third phase was openly practiced and direct expulsion was carried out when Palestinians did not leave willingly.

The first phase of Palestinian exodus started shortly after the UN General Assembly issued a Resolution in 1947 ordering the Partition of Palestinian to two independent state one for Jews and other for Arabs. At first the exodus consisted of mainly of middle class urban Palestinians.
anxious to avoid the sporadic fighting, which broke out between the unit of Haganah, the underground Israeli army and Palestinian irregular.

The 1948 war itself was replete with an abnormal degree of terror to destroy the other. In short, overwhelmingly disastrous and horrifying nature of the war in Palestine breeding numerous atrocities and massacre giving rise to mass fear and panic and added by Zionist efforts to exploit to the fullest this growing fear and panic, created not an orderly exodus but mass flight of civilian throughout the country. The crisis began with the departure of British and proclamation of Jewish State on 14th may 1948. The neighbouring Arab States entered Palestinian to prevent the establishment of Jewish State. At the end of 1948 was the Israeli held a crescent shaped majority of the land running from Sinai Peninsula in the South to Galilee in the north leaving the Arabs only a central area from Jerusalem to Jordan River and tiny Strip of Gaza. The war also involved the major reshuffling of population. Over 750000 Palestinians Arabs who lived in the area that came under Israel control were displaced in the course of fighting both before and after 14th May, 194833 and became refugees in Jordan (45,000) Gaza Strip (10,000) Syria (5,000) and Lebanon (5,000).34 By the end of 1948 war hundreds of thousands of Palestinians refugees were living in orchards, barns and caves convents, army barracks and other places of shelters provided by charitable organizations.35 The 1948 war not only assured the existence of the Jewish State but it also enabled this state to extend its boundaries well beyond those laid down by the UN Partition Resolution in 1947. This increased the size and
created rooms for Jewish immigration and greater physical security. In 1948 Israel signed Armistice Agreement with Arab countries that shared its borders. These agreements, which put end to the war left, many issues unsettled. Israeli territory expanded from 56.4% of Palestine allotted to it under the UN Partition Plan to 77.4% within 14 months of foundation of Jewish State. The Armistice Agreements while acknowledging territorial changes said nothing about the refugees, but a UN Resolution of December 1948 had ruled that those Palestinians wishing to return and live at peace with their neighbours should be allowed to do so. After the creation of Israel, the Israeli army continued to attack Arab villages blew up houses and indiscriminately killed men, women and children. The majority of the original population of the country was forcibly displaced and uprooted by a militant minority of foreign origin. Jewish terrorism and intimidation played a major role in the exodus of Palestinians from their homes in the newly created state of Israel.

The closing months of the Mandate had seen a steady build up of violence. The Zionist terrorist organisations like the Irgun Zvai Leumi and Stern Gang who represented the most extreme settler viewpoint had mounted a campaign against the British Mandate authorities to wrest control of the country from them. In actions against the Arab population, these were joined by the Haganah, which had put on a more respectable front for public relations purposes. According to the British authorities, the Zionist military groups by 1946 had built up organised forces of nearly 70000 armed and
trained men some 62000 in the Haganah between 3000 and 5000 in the Irgun and between 200 and 300 in the Stern Gang.\textsuperscript{39}

The Deir Yassin massacre convinced most Palestinians villages that their wives and children were not safe and that they could only be protected from massacre by evacuation.\textsuperscript{40} The main objective behind the Deir Yassin massacre was terrify the Arabs civilization population. It succeeds with disastrous results.\textsuperscript{41} The Dier Yassin massacre achieved its purpose of terrorizing the Palestinians and they began an exodus, which assumed catastrophic dimensions.\textsuperscript{42}

The terrorist activities by the Zionist forces to force the exodus of the Palestinians that began during the Mandate continued after the creation of State of Israel and was carried out by the organised troops of the new state. Having occupied most of the Arab towns in Palestine, with the exception of the old city of Jerusalem, Nablus and Hebron, Jewish terrorist actions was concentrated on villages. Many villages were destroyed and razed to the ground after being occupied by Israeli forces. According to Yitzhak Rabin former Chief of Staff and later Prime Minister of Israel summed this policy with the brutal clarity. He said: “By the razing villages to the ground and Dividing out the inhabitants, we will ensure that there are no villages left for Arabs to return to”.

Dr. Stephan Penrose while commenting on the Deir Yassin massacres right.
"There is no question but that frightful massacre such as that which took at Deir Yassin in April 1948 were perpetrated for the major purpose of frightening the Arab population and causing them to take flight. It was small wonder that many Arabs families began a history of exodus from the battle area and from a sector, which might soon became battleground. Terror was contagious and it built up the tremendous migration, which has led to the result, which may be witnessed in the refugee camps".43

Although atrocities and massacre were not unusual, the barbarous extermination of the village of Dier Yassin by Irgun and Stern Gang terrorists became symbolic too much of the population of the kind of war it was fighting and the type of enemy it was opposing.44 In most areas, the Palestinians were actively forced to flee or deliberately panic stricken into fleeing with reminders of the, April 1948, Deir Yassin massacre. After the capture of Ladda and Ramalah on 11-12 July, for instance, all men of military age were herded into camps and the remaining resident were ordered to leave within half an hour. Perhaps thirty thousand people or more almost entirely women and children snatched up what they could and fled from their homes across the open field.45

Expulsion was another cause of Palestinians exodus. The expulsion of Palestinians was carried out in Haifa, Lydda and Ramllah, Tiberias, Safad Beersheba and several other towns and villages. On various occasions Israeli forces used loudspeakers to threaten the civilian population and to order it to leave. According to Edgar O. Balance, a military historians "Israeli vans with loudspeakers drove through the streets ordering all the inhabitants to evacuate immediately by and such were reluctant to leave were forcibly
ejected from their homes by the triumphant Israeli whose policy was now openly one of clearing out all the Arabs civil population before them. No longer was there any reasonable persuasion. Bluntly, the Arabs inhabitants ejected to flee into Arab territory. Wherever, the Israeli troops advanced into Arab country, the Arab population was bulldozed out in front of them.\textsuperscript{46} The extent to which the refugees were savagely driven out by Israeli as part of deliberate master plan has been insufficiently recognised. The Zionist concept of Jewish State called for the ousting of the indigenous Arab population from its homeland and emphasized that this objective means ranging from expert psychological warfare to ruthless expulsion by force.

The Israeli later claimed that they urged the Arab inhabitants to stay that they were not driven from their home and they fled of there own freewill. The truth of matter was that it was the concerted policy of the Zionist movement to oust the Palestine Arabs from their homes and country because they needed Palestine to make room for their mass immigration policy. Without Arabs land and property it was not clear how the Zionist could establish a 'Jewish State'.\textsuperscript{47} According to Zionist historians, the Arabs in Palestine were asked to stay and live as citizens in the Jewish State. Instead, they chose to leave, either because they expected an Arab military victory, which would annihilate the Zionists. On the other hands, the Arabs claimed that the Palestinians did not leave their homes voluntarily but were expelled by Zionist aggression. For years, Israeli historians have maintained that the Arabs were made to leave following instruction from their leaders and despite the best efforts of the Zionist to persuade them to stay they choose to
Israeli historians maintained that these alleged evacuation orders were broadcast on Arab radio station. The recently found Israel archival material document that Haganah’s policy of forcing the evacuation of the Arabs population from the coastal plain between Haifa and Tel Aviv, designated as the core of Jewish State. This material provides new evidence about the provocative attack by the Haganah, IZL, and Lehi against the unarmed Arab population. The early December 1947, terrorist attacks of the IZL and Lehi in Jerusalem Haifa and Jaffa, invited Arabs retaliation, which was then eagerly seized and capitalized upon by Haganah to launch offensive strikes against Arabs civilians. In Haifa, initial terrorist attacks against the Arabs were begun by the Irgun and Lehi. The Irgun carried out a bombing attack against Arabs workers waiting at the gates of the Haifa refinery. This resulted in the death and wounding of many Arabs workers and provoked a vengeful, yet spontaneous Arabs attack on Jewish refinery workers. The Haganah strategy in Haifa and other parts of the country was not intended not only punish individual Arabs ‘culprits’ but was rather a psychological blitz of right raids aimed at widening the hostility. The objective was to shock, frighten and throw the communities off balance forcing Arabs neighborhoods and villages to evacuate. Recent Israeli archival material provides cumulative evidence that a large number of Haganah-Palmach IDF commanders at company battalion, brigade and high command level took part indirectly ordering numerous case of expulsion from Arab rural areas. At the same time, and contrary to the official Israeli myth, the Israeli forces
appeared on numerous occasions appeared to be it disciplined and engaged in orgy of looting, rape and acts of brutality which caused panic and led to exodus from various parts of the country.
Notes and References


13. Henry Cattan, *op.cit.*, No. 6, p. 5.


18. Michael Adams, *op.cit.*, No. 9, p. 27.


22. Deborah J. Gerner, *op.cit.*, No. 15, p. 25.


26. Henry Catton, *op.cit.*, No. 8, p. 34.


30. Henry Catton, *op.cit.*, No. 8, p. 36.


43. Henry Catton, op.cit., No. 6, p. 23.


