

STATEMENT

The modern history of the Arab and Islamic world is inseparable from colonialism.



LEAGUE OF NATIONS MANDATES, 1920

From the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement¹, the 1917 Balfour Declaration², and the 1920's League of Nations Mandates³ to the contemporary occupation of Palestine and calls for "regime change," major features of the region have been imposed by the West with little regard for the rights and hopes of the people living there.

- ¹ In anticipation of the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Sir Mark Sykes of Britain and Francois George-Picot of France negotiated a secret agreement dividing the Arab provinces outside the Arabian peninsula into their respective spheres of influence.
- ² In 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour wrote a letter to Baron Walter Rothschild committing Britain to "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."
- ³ Following World War I, the League of Nations established "mandates," allocating Arab portions of the Ottoman Empire to British and French control.

REFLECTION

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*This land is the skin on my bones,
and my heart flies above its grasses like a bee.*

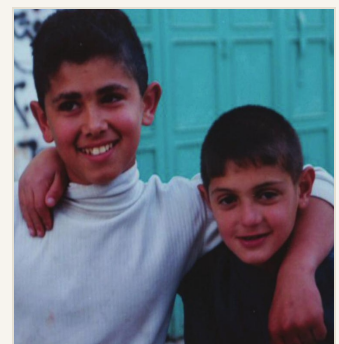
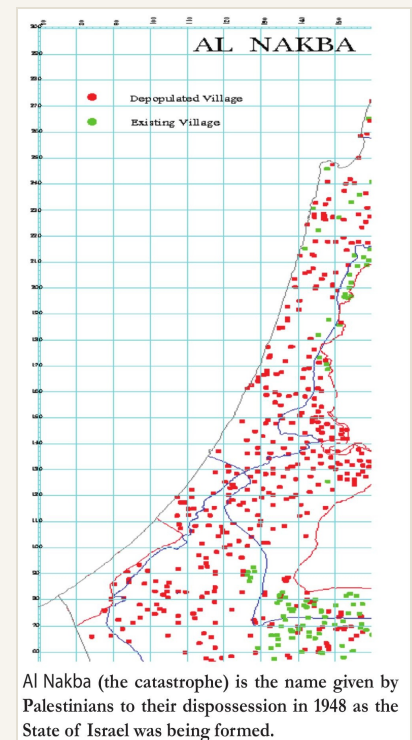
— MAHMOUD DARWISH

From dispossession and war *to a vision of hope and justice*

Like people everywhere who have been colonized, people in the region have sought to defend their land and to retain their identity and culture. In contrast, foreign powers have sought to impose their own geopolitical and economic goals.

This conflict has come to be called a “clash of civilizations.” But this characterization is misleading: this “clash” doesn’t result from some inherent inability to coexist. Rather, it is a natural consequence of the domination by force of one people by another.

The human reality is that people in the Arab and Islamic world have the same hopes and aspirations as people anywhere: they want their children to be healthy and happy, they want to be treated with dignity and respect, and they want the quality of life of future generations to be better than their own.



CONCLUSION

The key to realizing these hopes in the Arab and Islamic world is also the same as for people anywhere: a commitment to simple fairness and to equal respect for the rights, dignity and lives of people regardless of culture.



Justice is the answer.

