

Letter from Emir Feisal (later King of Iraq) to an American Zionist

Letter from Emir Feisal (later King of Iraq) to Felix Frankfurter (member of the American Zionist delegation to the Peace Conference and legal advisor to Chaim Weizmann) expressing sympathy with the Zionist movement and support for its proposals at the Peace Conference, March 1, 1919.

Arab response to the Balfour Declaration was not unanimous. Feisal, son of the Sherif of Mecca welcomed the Jews as returning exiles and signed a letter of mutual friendship with Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader, in Aqaba in May 1918. Feisal went on to conclude an agreement with Weizmann in January 1919 in which he renounced any claim to Eretz-Israel although on condition that the British establish an independent Arab State.

The above letter was written in response to a request by Felix Frankfurter for a clarification on Feisal's position after contradictory statements on Zionism had been made by the Arab leader. A central section of the letter reads: "We are working together for a reformed and revived Near East, and our two movements complement one another. The Jewish movement is national and not imperialist ... and there is room in Syria for us both."

24/20001

DÉLÉGATION MEDJAZIENNE
PARIS

1. 3. 19.

Dear Mr. Frankfurter

I want to take this opportunity of my first contact with American Zionists to tell you what I have often been able to say to Dr. Weizmann in Arabia and Europe.

We feel that the Arabs and Jews are cousins in race, have suffered similar oppressions at the hands of powers stronger than themselves, and by a happy coincidence have been able to take the first step towards the attainment of their national ideals ~~at the same time~~ together.

We Arabs, especially the educated among us, look with the deepest sympathy on the Zionist movement. Our delegation here in Paris is fully acquainted with the proposals submitted yesterday by the Zionist Organization to the Peace Conference, and we regard them as moderate and proper. We will do our best, in so far as we are concerned, to help them through: we will wish the Jews a most hearty welcome home.

With the chiefs of your movement, especially with Dr. Weizmann we have had, and continue to have the closest relations. He has been a great helper of our cause, and I hope the Arabs may soon be in a position to make the Jews come return for their kindness.

We are working together for a reformed and revived Near East, and our two movements complement one another. The Jewish movement is national, and not imperialist, our movement is national and not imperialist, and there is room in Syria for us both. Indeed I think that neither can be a real success without the other. ^{ignoring} People less in form and less responsible than our leaders and yours, of the need for co-operation of the Arabs and Zionists have been trying to exploit the local difficulties that must necessarily arise in Palestine in the early stages of our movements. Some of them here, I am afraid, misrepresents your aim to the Arab peasantry, and our aim to the Jewish peasantry, with the result that interests parties have been able to make capital out of what they call our differences.

I wish to give you my firm conviction that these differences are not on questions of principle, but on matters of detail such as must inevitably occur on every contact of neighboring peoples, and as are easily adjusted by mutual goodwill. Indeed nearly all of them will disappear with fuller knowledge.

I look forward, and my people with me look forward to a future in which we will help you and you will help us, so that the countries in which we are mutually interested may once again take their place in the comity of the united peoples of the world.

Believe me,
yours very sincerely
Feisal