

The new level of political activism was conducive to the emergence of students⁷⁶ as a political element, and to the birth of the Palestine Arab Women's Congress which was held on 26 October 1929. The latter was attended by over 200 delegates, both Muslim and Christian from various parts of Palestine. The participants were members of the leading Palestinian families, the most prominent of whom were wives of Palestinian political leaders. The wife of Musa Kazem was elected to the Chair and

many speakers considered the Mandatory Power, as represented by the Palestine Administration, to be solely responsible for all that took place, and a national movement for consolidated action on the part of all women's organizations was earnestly urged.⁷⁷

The resolutions of the Congress rejected the Balfour Declaration and Zionist immigration, called for the establishment of a National Government responsible before a Representative Council, and urged the development of National Industries.

A day later a 'General Assembly of Arab Congress' called by the Arab Executive was held at Jerusalem, Delegates to the Assembly included Beduin Sheikhs from all parts of Palestine and some representatives from Transjordan. According to Police reports,

Great enthusiasm and determination to 'save the country' even at the cost of their lives was manifested. Judging from the attitude of the Assembly it was apparent that the people were in a state of extreme excitement and approximated to a revolutionary disposition. It is said that the Arabs now await the 'decision' of the commission, and if these are unsatisfactory the only course open to them is a general uprising.⁷⁸

A General strike was called and observed on the Balfour anniversary.

The participation of Trans-Jordanians in the Assembly indicated the state of feeling in the adjacent Arab countries. According to a report by the British Resident in 'Amman,

Transjordan was kept out of the riots in August because... a plan of action had not been prepared. Should a further outburst against the Jews be arranged, I fear the country might not behave so well.⁷⁹

An intelligence report dated 13 November stated that a secret

Committee called the Boycott Committee has been formed for terrorist purposes with a view to the assassination of persons considered to be acting against Arab nationalist interests.

These threats were reported to have led to the drying up of the Arab sources of Police Intelligence. The Committee was reported to have been formed 'with knowledge and consent of Supreme Moslem Council and Arab Executive who have subscribed to expense'.⁸⁰ One Arab working for the Zionist Intelligence was assassinated, and a warning was sent to a British Judge. A later report tended to shed some doubt on the links between the Executive Committee and the Boycott Committee as eleven of the twenty-four persons of the latter were reported to be members of the Palestinian Communist Party.⁸¹

The period between 1923 and 1929 which began with a whimper ended with a bang as Arab opposition to the Anglo-Zionist partnership struck deeper popular roots with a disposition towards waging an armed struggle as a means of forcing a change in British pro-Zionist policies in Palestine. From now onwards the Arab struggle against Zionism involved a direct confrontation between the Palestinian Arabs and the Mandatory Government.

Mention should be made of Zionist attitudes towards the prospect of bringing about an Arab-Jewish understanding in 1929. One month after the August outbreak Weizmann told one of the members of the Middle East Department that

The Government should try and get a conference between the Zionists and the Arabs, the latter not necessarily Palestinian Arabs, with the idea of getting both sides to come to a concordat.⁸²

A month later H. St. John Philby, one of the major British officials in the East in the early twenties, paid a visit to Jerusalem and Damascus with the intention of drawing up the 'Basis of an Arab-Jewish understanding in Palestine' and found the Arab leaders moderate and reasonable.⁸³

When Dr Judah Magnes, head of the Hebrew University, said in a speech at the reopening of the University that it was necessary for Jews and Arabs to find ways of living and working together he was heckled by the students, and the Jewish press attacked both him and the Brith Shalom Organisation. The Administrative Committee of the American Jewish Committee expressed its 'feeling of outrage over Dr Magnes's utterances and his irresponsibility in breaking the united Jewish front.'⁸⁴