

July 1922, the League of Nations provided Britain with a mandate over Palestine, while Syria and Lebanon were placed under France's mandate. However, since Britain's military forces had already been in Palestine since 1918, the League of Nations ruling was, as one author put it, "a formality which gave Britain an international legality over its occupation of Palestine" (Gozansky, 1986:97).

From the outset, Britain created the office of High Commissioner and empowered it with full legislative and administrative powers. The High Commissioner, in turn appointed other British officials as Commissioners of each district. The indigenous population, on the other hand, were totally excluded from forming any part of the administration.

Despite its status as mandated territories, Palestine had many important features in common with ordinary British colonies. Referring to this point, Owen says: "Although nominally only a 'mandated' territory and subject to certain international restrictions preventing the mandator power from establishing any special privileges for itself (for example with regard to trade) it would seem that these were largely disregarded in practice". The British government, Owen continued, "had a typical system of colonial finance with revenues drawn largely from indirect taxes, notably the external tariff, and a very high proportion of government expenditure on security and defence" (Owen, 1982:4).

By assuming exclusive rule over Palestine, the British government had in fact breached the agreement signed with France in 1918. The British mandate over Palestine became sharply different from France's mandate over Syria and Lebanon, where indigenous Syrians