

On the contrary, as a result of pressure partly from the big landlords (the sellers) but mainly from the Zionist Organization (both, the main head office in London and the local branch in Palestine), the deal was put in effect in 1921. In this year the government amended the 1920 "Land Transfer Ordinance", deleting from it all restrictions on land transfer and recognizing the Zionist land registry books as the authoritative accounts over all land affairs (Stein, 1984: 32).

The legalization of the transfer of land in the Marj in fact meant the expulsion of thousands of families living on and from the land. The most striking feature in the transfer deal refers to the clause on how the land must be transferred. According to this "all property must be transferred free of cultivators...or any claims to settlement, renters or Waqf". (20) This pre-condition, as the following discussion shows, was met by blood and force.

The Marj Cultivators.

Most literature which refers to the case of land transfer in the Marj is often based on two wrong assumptions; the first claims that all the Marj land was privately owned by one big land-lord family and the cultivators were only tenants without property status; and the other says that since the one of the conditions of the sale contracts was the transfer only of unoccupied land, cultivators must have already been expelled by the previous landowners.

Yet, evidence refutes both claims. Firstly, until the late 1880s when the Sursuks were given control over the land as tax collectors, the form of landed property in the Marj was considered as Amiri. The status of the new owners, the Sursuks, under the then prevailing forms