



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **The Umar Declaration v The Balfour Declaration**

Al Quds (Jerusalem) is a city holy to the faiths of Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

When the companion of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and Second Caliph in Islam, Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was handed the keys to Jerusalem circa 637, he was given a tour of the city, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. When the time for prayer came, the Christian patriarch Sophronius invited Umar to pray inside the Church, but Umar refused. He insisted that if he prayed there, later Muslims would use it as an excuse to convert it into a mosque – thereby depriving Christendom of one of its holiest sites. Instead, Umar prayed outside the Church, where a mosque (called Masjid Umar – the Mosque of Umar) was later built and still remains till today.

Umar also issued the Treaty of Jerusalem which guaranteed the rights of all faiths (Umar's Declaration).

Some five hundred years later, and after Jerusalem had been occupied by the Christian crusaders, came Salahaddin. The Crusaders had applied a ban on Jewish settlement in the Holy Land. When Salahaddin liberated Jerusalem, he overturned the ban and allowed Jews to return. Over the course of successive years, the Holy Land shifted between Muslim and Christian control, where a brutal policy of Jewish expulsion was only overturned during periods of Muslim rule. The Jewish historian, Nissim Rejwan states that:

***“It is interesting to note here that, as far as Palestine is concerned, the right of Jews to “return” to live in this small area of land was accepted by all successive Muslim rulers from the Muslim conquest to the end of the nineteenth century, when Zionist settlement there became entangled in European foreign policy.”***

Palestine and its salient city of Jerusalem remained in this state with all three faiths co-existing and thriving in peace for the next 800 years, until the British annexation of Palestine after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and with it came the British foreign policy act of Arthur Balfour known as the Balfour Declaration, which became the foundation stone of the occupying state of Israel. Unlike the declaration of Umar and Salahaddin, the aftermath of the Balfour Declaration has seen millions exiled and made refugees, land confiscated and stolen, homes and families destroyed, and civilians harassed, killed and imprisoned.

However, military force and oppression has not defeated the resistance of the Palestinians in seeking their fundamental human rights of freedom and self-determination as defined in international law, and we are unequivocal that justice and peace for all people will return to the area once again, and that the Umar Declaration, followed by Salahaddin, will outlive the ill-conceived Balfour Declaration.