**5c. Unrest in 1920s and 1930s Mandate Palestine**

On 25th April 1920, the Mandate for Palestine was provisionally granted to Britain at the San Remo conference in Italy. Earlier in the month, the Nebi Musa Riots had taken place in Jerusalem. Between the 4th and 7th April, large crowds of Palestinian Muslims gathered at the religious festival of Nebi Musa, and some of the speeches mentioned Zionist ambitions in Palestine-Israel. This escalated into violence against Jews, with 5 Jews and 4 Palestinians killed, and hundreds more injured. The Nebi Musa Riots significantly worsened the relationship between Palestinians and Jews at the very start of the Mandate period.

Just one year later in 1921, the Jaffa Riots took place. In the first week of May, rioting started in Jaffa and spread to Abu Kabir and other parts of Mandate Palestine. The violence began as a fight between two Jewish groups (the Jewish Communist Party and a rival Jewish socialist group) but it was misreported as attacks by Jews on Palestinians. This led to attacks by Palestinians on Jews and attacks by Jews on Palestinians. 47 Jews and 48 Palestinians were killed, with another 146 Jews and 73 Palestinians wounded. High Commissioner Herbert Samuel had to call in reinforcements from Egypt to restore peace.

In late August 1929, in the context of rising tensions over Jewish immigration to Mandate Palestine, demonstrations and riots occurred regarding access to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. The Western Wall is an important site for Jews because it is the holiest place where Jews can pray. It is a similarly important site for Muslims because it is part of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam. The violence spread to Hebron, Jaffa and Safed, with 166 Palestinians and 133 Jews killed. 232 Palestinians and 339 Jews were injured. Some say that the events of 1929 destroyed any chance of peace between Palestinians and Jews.

The Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 was a nationalist uprising of Palestinian Arabs against the British administration of the Palestine Mandate. It started with a general strike and nationwide demonstrations against British rule and British support for Jewish immigration to Mandate Palestine. It turned into three years of instability across the country, during which, for long stretches of the rebellion, the British lost control of Palestine. Historian Elizabeth Brownson has described this as “the most disruptive Palestinian uprising during the British Mandate”. By the end of the revolt, 10% of Palestinian men had been killed, wounded or exiled. An investigation at the start of the uprising concluded that Mandate Palestine must be partitioned. We’ll return to this idea of partition in a future lesson.

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