

Episode 10: From Sykes-Picot to the Arab Revolt (1936-1938)

Guest: Prof. Victor Kattan, Assistant Professor of Public International Law, University of Nottingham

Hosts: Yusuf & Efe

Bio: Victor Kattan is Assistant Professor of Public International Law at the University of Nottingham and Deputy Director of the Nottingham International Law and Security Centre. He is a leading scholar of the international legal history of the Mandate period, with experience advising the Palestinian Negotiations Affairs Department and providing expert testimony to the UK Parliament and UN bodies. Professor Kattan has taught at Yale-NUS College, NUS Law, and SOAS, and serves on the editorial board of the *Asian Journal of International Law* and as Area Editor for the Middle East and Islam for *Oxford Bibliographies of International Law*. His scholarship, which includes a monograph, four edited books, and over thirty peer-reviewed articles, has been cited by the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, and international organizations worldwide.

In this episode: This episode explores the British Mandate for Palestine (1917–1948) until the Arab Uprisings and its lasting impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Professor Victor Kattan examines the legal and political foundations of the Mandate, from the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration to the structure of the League of Nations Mandate system and the Arab Revolt. The discussion highlights the development of Zionist institutions under Mandate law, the limitations on Palestinian national rights, and the interplay of imperial law and colonial thought. Professor Kattan also analyzes British immigration and land policies, Palestinian political movements, and the long-term implications of Mandate-era legal structures for Palestinian society. This episode provides listeners with a first understanding of how law, empire, and resistance shaped the trajectory of the conflict from a Palestinian perspective.

Links:

Prof. Dr. Victor Kattan

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/law/people/victor.kattan> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Sykes-Picot Agreement:

<https://unispal.un.org/pdfs/232358BACBEB7B55852571100078477C.pdf> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Balfour Declaration:

<https://www1.udel.edu/History-old/figal/Hist104/assets/pdf/readings/14balfour.pdf> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Hussein-McMahon Correspondance:

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-199699/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

The League of Nations' Covenant established the Mandate system, with **Article 22** stating that territories formerly under Ottoman or other colonial rule should be administered in a way that promotes "the well-being and development of such peoples" until they can govern themselves. *League of Nations*. (1919). *Covenant of the League of Nations*, Article 22. Geneva: League of Nations. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

League of Nations. (1922). Mandate for Palestine.

[https://content.ecf.org.il/files/M00301%20-%20Text%20of%20the%20British%20Mandate%20for%20Palestine%20\(1922\).pdf](https://content.ecf.org.il/files/M00301%20-%20Text%20of%20the%20British%20Mandate%20for%20Palestine%20(1922).pdf) (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)).pdf

On the rights of people to self-determination:

Woodrow Wilson (1918). *Fourteen Points*. Speech delivered to the U.S. Congress, January 8, 1918. Full text: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Vladimir I. Lenin (1914). *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. English translation:

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/index.htm> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Note on Cardinal Gasparri:

As Secretary of State under Pope Pius XI, Cardinal Gasparri played a pivotal role in shaping the Church's response to the Nazi regime. Notably, he advocated for appeasement, advising the Vatican to cease criticism of Hitler's government and to comply with demands such as the dissolution of the Catholic Center Party. This approach has been viewed critically by historians, who argue that it facilitated the legitimization of the Nazi regime. It's important to note that Gasparri's successor, Eugenio Pacelli (Pope Pius XII), continued similar policies, leading to further scrutiny of the Vatican's actions during this period. (Cf: Coppa, F. J. (2012). *The Policies and Politics of Pope Pius XII: Between Diplomacy and Morality*. Peter Lang Publishing.)

Please also check out our other episodes to explore multiple perspectives:

On Balfour: Simon Fuchs, Awad Halabi, Michael Brenner, Muriel Asseburg, Gudrun Krämer

On the Settler Colonialism Paradigm: Simon Fuchs, Michael Brenner, Derek Penslar, Omri Boehm, Gudrun Krämer

On the Great Arab Uprisings: Simon Fuchs, Oren Kessler, Gudrun Krämer

Dedication:

We dedicate this Podcast to all victims and survivors of October 7, the hostages and their families, to all innocent civilians killed and injured in Gaza and their grieving families and friends. To our dear guests Udi Goren, Khalil Sayegh, Sima and Mai who shared their losses so powerfully with us. To their families: Tal's wife Ella Haimi, their children Nir, Einav, Udi and Lotan, who never got the chance to meet his father. To Khalil Sayegh's mother and siblings, to Mai's and Sima's family, to her mother Bushra.

To the blessed memory of: Tal Haimi, Lara Sayegh, Jeris Sayegh, Mahmoud, Danny Darlington and Haim Perry.

Disclaimer:

In each episode of this podcast, the invited guests speak on their own behalf. They share their experiences, assessments, and expert perspectives. These contributions are central to the multiperspectivity of the project but do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial team or producers.

Legal & Historical Anchor Episodes:

This podcast may include controversial legal terms of specific technical significance. Their legal applicability requires a thorough expert contextualization; for this, we refer to our legal chapter. All relevant terms of international law, its institutions, current controversies, and the state of jurisprudence are explained in the anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Claus Kreß LL.M. (Cambridge) (Episode 36). He is co-author of the Rome Statute, Special Advisor to the International Criminal Court, and Judge at the International Court of Justice in the parallel Gambia vs. Myanmar genocide case.

Historical matters are discussed from multiple perspectives in this podcast. Please check the cross-references in the shownotes of the respective episodes for details. All historically contested issues are addressed in the history anchor episode with Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Gudrun Krämer (Episode 21), author of the

comprehensive work *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton 2008), a standard reference in the field. For her scholarly achievements as a historian, she was awarded the *Preis des Historischen Kollegs* in 2025, the highest distinction in her discipline in Germany.