

Episode 11: From the Arab Revolt (1935-1939) to the End of WW II

Guest: Oren Kessler – historian, journalist, and author, fellow of the Royal Historical Society

Hosts: Efe & Yusuf

Bio: Oren Kessler is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and author of *Palestine 1936: The Great Revolt and the Roots of the Middle East Conflict*. He has served as Arab Affairs Correspondent for *The Jerusalem Post*, editor and translator at *Haaretz*, research fellow at the Henry Jackson Society, and Deputy Director for Research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Kessler holds a BA in History from the University of Toronto and an MA in Diplomacy and Conflict Studies from Reichman University, Israel. His work blends scholarly rigor and accessible storytelling, and has appeared in *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New Republic*. *Palestine 1936* has received critical acclaim, including the Wall Street Journal's Ten Best Books of 2023, Booklist's Best Books of the Year, finalist for the National Jewish Book Awards, the Sophie Brody Medal, and the 2024 Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature.

In this episode:

This episode explores the Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936–1939), a pivotal moment in modern Middle Eastern history. Kessler guides listeners through the British Mandate's policies, the emergence of Palestinian national identity, and early Jewish institution-building. He examines the revolt's causes, dynamics, and leadership, with particular attention to Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, highlighting his role during the Revolt and his later collaboration with Nazi Germany during World War II, which has had lasting historical and political significance. Topics also include the Peel Commission, the attitudes the archives of its hearings reveal about Jews and Arabs, the 1939 White Paper, the Evian Conference, and the broader context of the Holocaust. This episode provides insight into how these events shaped Arab-Jewish relations and the trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Links:

Oren Kessler: <https://www.orenkessler.com/> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Kessler, Oren. *Palästina 1936: Der Große Aufstand und die Wurzeln des Nahostkonflikts*. Translated by Norbert Juraschitz, Carl Hanser Verlag, 2025. <https://www.hanser-literaturverlage.de/personen/oren-kessler-p-2826> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

Kessler, Oren. *Palestine 1936: The Great Revolt and the Roots of the Middle East Conflict*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2023.

Further Ressorcen:

Wellesley Peel et al. (1937) *Report of the Palestine Royal Commission* (Cmd. 5479). Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937. United Nations, <https://unispal.un.org/pdfs/Cmd5479.pdf> (Last accessed on October 21, 2025).

Musa Alami: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musa_Alami (Last accessed on October 21, 2025)

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

On the Great Arab Uprisings: Simon Fuchs, Victor Kattan, Gudrun Krämer

On the White Papers, the Holocaust and Jewish Refugees: Michael Brenner, Derek Penslar, Anita Haviv

On the Mufti of Jerusalem: Gudrun Krämer

On the following events of 1948: Derek Penslar, Adel Manna, Muriel Asseburg, 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.