

THE EPHRON PROJECT

Proposal for the Recognition and Repatriation of Gazans as Ottoman Citizens Under a Second Treaty of Lausanne

This proposal advocates for the recognition of Gazans as former Ottoman citizens, granting them citizenship rights in Turkey and Ottoman Syria (a potential Turkish-administered region in a federalized Syria). The plan builds upon historical records indicating that many Palestinians, especially in Gaza, were Ottoman subjects before 1917 and seeks to establish a legal framework for their repatriation and integration under a Second Treaty of Lausanne.

Key Components of the Proposal

Legal Recognition of Ottoman Citizenship: Turkey acknowledges Gazans of Ottoman descent as eligible for citizenship or special residency status. Similar to Israel's Law of Return, Gazans would be entitled to relocate to Turkey or Turkish-administered areas in Syria.

Repatriation Support & Resettlement Assistance: Economic incentives, infrastructure projects, and financial aid would facilitate the voluntary relocation of Gazans. Resettlement zones could be established in Southeastern Turkey (Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa) and Turkish-influenced parts of Syria (Afrin, Idlib, Raqqqa).

A Second Treaty of Lausanne to Redefine Regional Borders & Citizenship Rights: Modeled after the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which settled Ottoman territorial transitions, this new treaty would: Redefine Palestinian national status, granting an alternative citizenship option in Turkey or Ottoman Syria; Formalize a Turkish-led governance structure in northern Syria, integrating Syrian Arab and Turkmen populations under a Turkish protectorate.

Geopolitical & Strategic Implications: Reduces demographic pressure on Gaza and provides an alternative to the Israel-Palestine conflict; Strengthens Turkey's regional influence while ensuring the stability of a federalized Syrian state; Aligns with U.S. and European interests by reducing refugee migration to the West and stabilizing the Eastern Mediterranean.

Conclusion:

This framework offers a historical, legal, and geopolitical solution to the Palestinian refugee crisis while reinforcing Turkey's role as a regional power. A Second Treaty of Lausanne could reshape borders and citizenship rights to accommodate both Gazans, registered refugee Palestinians and Syrian communities under Turkish leadership, creating a new, stable geopolitical order in the Middle East.

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THE EPHRON PROJECT - RESTORING A LASTING PEACE

Proposal for the Recognition, Repatriation, and Reintegration of Ottoman Descendants of Gaza, Samaria and Judea Under a 2nd Treaty of Lausanne

1. Executive Summary

This proposal seeks to establish a legal and diplomatic framework for the recognition, repatriation, and reintegration of Gazans and other descendants of Ottoman citizens or subjects into Turkey and a potential Turkish-administered region in a federalized Syria (Ottoman Syria). This policy is rooted in historical Ottoman citizenship rights and would offer displaced populations—especially Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere—the opportunity for legal repatriation and economic integration. The plan aligns with Turkey’s historical role in integrating former Ottoman subjects, addresses demographic and geopolitical challenges in the Middle East, and could form the basis of a Second Treaty of Lausanne, updating the terms of the 1923 agreement to accommodate new regional realities. This initiative offers a sustainable alternative to the Israel-Palestine conflict by providing voluntary resettlement and citizenship pathways, thus easing demographic pressures while simultaneously strengthening Turkey’s regional influence and economic potential.

2. Historical and Legal Foundations

A. Ottoman Citizenship and Its Relevance Today

Prior to 1918, the territories of modern Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine were under Ottoman rule, and residents were considered Ottoman subjects. With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the imposition of Western mandates, millions of former Ottoman citizens lost their nationality and were stateless or absorbed into new nation-states. This proposal aims to restore Ottoman-descended individuals’ legal status within modern Turkish or Turkish-administered territories through a structured repatriation program.

B. The Need for a Second Treaty of Lausanne

The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne defined the modern borders of Turkey and settled post-Ottoman citizenship issues, but it did not anticipate: (1) The mass displacement of Palestinians (Nakba, 1948). (2) The current fragmentation of Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. (3) The possibility of Turkey reasserting its influence over former Ottoman lands in a post-war Middle East. A Second Treaty of Lausanne would redefine territorial, citizenship, and governance rights, allowing Turkey and a future federalized Syria to legally absorb and integrate Ottoman-descended populations, including Palestinians and other displaced groups.

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3. Turkey's History of Repatriation Efforts

Turkey has a history of granting citizenship, repatriation rights, or special residency to displaced Ottoman-descended populations, including:

- a. **The 1923 Population Exchange with Greece** – Following the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey and Greece exchanged nearly 2 million people, repatriating Muslim Turks from Greece to Turkey. A similar diplomatic approach could facilitate the voluntary resettlement of Ottoman-descended Gazans and other displaced groups into Turkish-controlled areas.
- b. **Repatriation of Crimean Tatars (1944-Present)** – After Stalin's deportation of Crimean Tatars, Turkey accepted thousands of returnees, recognizing them as Ottoman descendants with historical ties to Anatolia. A similar model could be used for Palestinians and other Ottoman-descended populations.
- c. **The Resettlement of Bosniaks, Albanians, and Circassians (19th-20th Century)** – Throughout the late Ottoman period and early Republic of Turkey, displaced Bosniaks, Albanians, and Circassians were granted Turkish citizenship and land. Turkey has historically absorbed displaced Ottoman subjects, setting a legal and diplomatic precedent for a Palestinian resettlement program.
- d. **Ahıska Turks (Meskhetian Turks) Repatriation (1990s-Present)** – After being deported by Stalin in 1944, Ahıska Turks were granted legal repatriation rights in Turkey under a special government program. This approach demonstrates Turkey's willingness to restore citizenship to displaced Ottoman populations, making a similar policy viable for Palestinian and Syrian refugees.

4. Policy Objectives and Key Provisions

Turkey and a restructured federal Syria would grant citizenship or special residency status to the descendants of Ottoman citizens and subjects from 1918. This policy would provide a legal pathway for voluntary repatriation of: Palestinians in Gaza and the diaspora. Displaced Syrians, Turkmens, and Arabs with Ottoman ancestry. Other Ottoman-descended communities seeking reintegration.

5. Implementation Timeline

- a. **Phase 1: Diplomatic Framework and Legal Recognition** – Negotiations with Turkey, Syria, and international stakeholders. Establish legal mechanisms for citizenship pathways and residency rights. Secure international funding for repatriation programs.
- b. **Phase 2: Infrastructure Development and Repatriation** – Develop settlement zones in Turkey and northern Syria. Implement economic and housing support for incoming repatriates. Establish security and governance structures for new communities.
- c. **Phase 3: Economic and Political Consolidation** – Full integration of Ottoman-descended populations into Turkey and Syria. Expansion of Turkish influence and

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stabilization of Syria's federal structure. International diplomatic recognition of the new regional order.

6. Conclusion

A Second Treaty of Lausanne would offer a historical, legal, and geopolitical solution to the Palestinian refugee crisis and broader regional instability. By granting Ottoman-descended populations legal status, expanding Turkish influence in Syria, and securing international backing, this proposal presents a realistic, structured pathway for repatriation and reintegration.

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