

implications in terms of providing Jewish settlers with priority over land settlement and development, forced the Sursuks to think seriously about their property in Palestine. The Sursuks were doubtful whether under British rule over Palestine they would be able to keep their property. Their fears were in fact realized in 1920 when France and Britain separated Lebanon from Palestine. The 1920 "Land Transfer Ordinance" prohibited land transfer by and to non-Palestinian nationals. (18)

Finally, for the Sursuks, who in 1918 were informed by the military Government that their claims for property in the Huleh were cancelled and that the British would not recognize the contract they signed with the Ottomans (the concession comprised of about 191,000d.), found themselves basically facing two alternatives. They either had to sell their remaining property, that is the land in the Marj, and make some money, or simply forget about their property in Palestine altogether. (19)

The state's involvement in the Marj case was also evident by the following facts. The sale contract was written and concluded between 1918-1920. During that period, British military rule prohibited all forms of land transactions, since they were in a chaotic situation in terms of land registration books, most of which, according to them, were lost during the war (Stein, 1984:23).

Consequently, and from a strictly legal point of view, one would have expected that the civil administration in 1920 would have cancelled the deal. Moreover, the 1920 "Land Transfer Ordinance" which prohibited non-Palestinian nationals from transferring land would have been again from a legal point of view, another obstacle. But the deal was not cancelled.