

June 6, 1919

Letter, Gilbert F. Close to Mr. Saad Zaghloul

Citation:

"Letter, Gilbert F. Close to Mr. Saad Zaghloul", June 6, 1919, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Egyptian Delegation to the Peace Conference. Collection of Official Correspondence FROM NOVEMBER 11, 1918 TO JULY 14, 1919 (Paris: Published by the Delegation, 1919), p. 61. Contributed and annotated by Cyrus Schayegh.
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Summary:

In January 1918, US President Woodrow Wilson in a speech to Congress outlined Fourteen Points to undergird the postwar peace and international politics. Vis-à-vis European empires' interests and against Soviet anti-colonialism, he asserted a panorama of (actually self-interested) US ideals. Thus, point 5 called for "A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable government whose title is to be determined;" and point 14 insisted that "A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small nations alike."

Around the world, many anti-colonialists rejoiced. They insisted these points apply to their case, and hoped Wilson would agree. Neither of these two things came to pass, as Erez Manela has shown in *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (2007). In Paris during the 1919 Peace Conference, Wilson rebuffed the advances of many, including the Egyptian delegation, which wrote and self-published, in Paris in 1919, the booklet containing the two letters below. While conceding British supervision of Egypt's debt and of the Suez Canal, leading Egyptian nationalists had just after the end of World War I demanded independence and the right to address the upcoming Paris Peace conference. Britain rejected these demands and offers. An uprising ensued, which Britain tried to suppress, in March 1919 exiling leading nationalists, including Sa'd Zaghlul (1859-1927), to Malta. As this only worsened the uprising, the Britain's new High Commissioner in Cairo, Edmund Allenby (1861-1936) released the nationalists—who made haste to Paris.

Original Language:

English

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Original Scan

Transcript - English

AMERICAN COMMISSION TO NEGOTIATE PEACE

PARIS, June 9, 1919

My dear Sir:

I am writing you on behalf of the President to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th and to express regret that the President's time has been so completely taken up that he has not had the opportunity to make an appointment to see you.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) GILBERT F. CLOSE

Confidential Secretary to the President.

Mr. Saad Zaghloul,
Chairman of the Egyptian Delegation,
4 Avenue Malakoff, Paris.