



## ANJOMAN-E KALĪMĪĀN

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**ANJOMAN-E KALĪMĪĀN** (JEWISH ASSOCIATION), name given to the Jewish Association of Tehran in the 1930s, and to the Jewish Association of Iran since 1974.

By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, new developments on the communal, state, and international levels brought about changes in the traditional structure and function of Jewish community organizations, especially in Tehran. The [Alliance Israélite Universelle](#), which began its educational activities in Iran in 1898, played an important role in the social awakening of Iranian Jewry. The 1324/1906 constitution recognized the Jewish community as a religious minority with the right to be represented in the Majlis by one of its elected members. This representation required institutionalization of general elections among all eligible and qualified members of the Jewish communities throughout the country. The legal process of nominating and electing candidates in turn meant more centralization and cooperation among the communities.

A turning point in the restructuring and transforming of the social and communal activities of Iranian Jewry came with the Balfour Declaration, issued by British Foreign Secretary A. J. Balfour in November, 1917, to indicate support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” At the beginning of 1918, in preparation for the “day of redemption,” the Jewish community of Tehran established the Iranian Jewish Cultural Society (Anjoman-e Farhangī) whose activities included the study of Hebrew, a subject neglected in Alliance program. A community of twelve then set up a



society for the promotion of the Hebrew language, which published several books, among them *Tārīkča-ye nahzat-e šionist* (Tehran, 1920), a short history of the Zionist movement written in Judeo-Persian. In order to gain the recognition and support of the Zionist organizations in Europe, community leaders decided early in 1919 to change the name of the group to Taškīlāt-e Šionist-e Īrān (Zionist Organization of Iran), which established branches in eighteen cities in Iran and became involved in the activities of the local Jewish organizations, called Wa'ad ha-Qehilā (Hebrew: the committee of the community) or Ḥebrāh (Hebrew: association).

The most important results of these developments were the foundation of local newspapers; the foundation of community schools parallel to those of Alliance; cultural activities including sports, stage performances, and public lectures; closer ties among the scattered Jewish communities throughout the country; close interaction with the central and local authorities in the country; connections with world Jewry through international Jewish organizations; fund-raising throughout the Jewish communities in Iran for the Zionist movement, which sought to establish a Jewish state in Palestine; the establishment of new committees to deal with immigration to Palestine.

These activities were stopped, or at least restricted, during the reign of Reżā Shah (1304-20 Š./1925-1941), who, for strong nationalistic reasons, prohibited all organized political or party activities connected with organizations or groups outside the country. After Reżā Shah's forced abdication (Šahrivar, 1320 Š./September, 1941), the Jews of Iran resumed their communal and Zionist activities. Between 1948 and 1953, 30,769 Jews, more than one-third of the Jewish population of Iran, emigrated to Israel.

In autumn 1353 Š./1974, the Association changed its name to Anjoman-e Kalīmīān-e Īrān and amended article 23 of its regulations to call for general elections every four years. In March, 1975, twelve members, most of them wealthy merchants, together with their representative in the Majlis, Yūsof Kohan (d. 1981), were elected. Ḥabīb Elqānīān (executed 1979) became the chairman of the Anjoman. In the revolutionary atmosphere of 1357 Š./1978, the radical intellectual Jews of Tehran demanded that the Anjoman be dissolved and new elections held. In the elections of March, 1978 the old Jewish oligarchy, including Elqānīān, was ousted from the Anjoman and replaced by the radical and moderate young intellectuals. The Anjoman has continued functioning under the revolutionary regime, but its activities have been limited mostly to religious matters.



In 1978, leftist and non-Zionist Jews of Iran founded the Organization of the Jewish Intellectual Youth of Iran, which later cooperated with the Islamic regime. Despite the small number of its followers, this organization publishes a monthly paper, *Tamūz*, and is influential in electing its candidate to represent Iranian Jewry in the Majlis; it also tries to confine the activities of the Anjoman to religious and philanthropic matters.

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