

## THE PARTITION PLAN

### **Aftermath of the Holocaust**

Prior to 1948, and even as Jews fled the horrors of Europe, the British Mandate placed tight restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine while allowing Arabs to enter the country freely. After the Holocaust, many survivors were left without a place to go and the need for a Jewish homeland intensified.

The British concluded that the only solution to resolving the contradictory aspirations of the Jews and Arabs was partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, but the Arabs continually refused to make any concessions. The issue was turned over to the United Nations in February 1947.

### **UN Response**

The UN established a Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) to devise a solution. UNSCOP's delegates recommended the establishment of two separate states, Jewish and Arab, to be joined by economic union, with Jerusalem an internationalized enclave. The UN General Assembly later voted on this recommendation. Resolution 181, the call for the partition of Palestine, was approved on November 29, 1947, with 33 votes in favor, 13 against, and 10 abstentions.

The boundaries of the partitioned state were based solely on demographics. Its borders took on a checkerboard appearance because Jewish towns and villages were spread throughout Palestine. Overall, the Jewish State was to be comprised of roughly 5,500 square miles and the population was to be 538,000 Jews and 397,000 Arabs. The Arab State was to be 4,500 square miles with a population of 804,000 Arabs and 10,000 Jews. Though the Jews were allotted more total land, the majority of that land was in the desert (in addition to land in the northern part of the country). The remainder was to form the Arab state.

### **Jewish and Arab Reaction**

Although the territory allotted to the Jews was small and lacked control of Jerusalem, the Jews accepted the plan. The Arabs rejected it, refusing to accept the concept of a Jewish State in Palestine. Following the UN announcement, the Arabs declared a protest strike and instigated riots that claimed the lives of 62 Jews and 32 Arabs. The Arabs proclaimed *jihad* (holy war) and the violence against the Jews escalated. From November 30- February 1, 427 Arabs, 381 Jews and 46 Britons were killed and 1,035 Arabs, 725 Jews and 135 Britons were wounded. The UN placed blame for the violence on the Arabs, who openly accepted responsibility for starting the war. Arab Higher Committee spokesman Jamal Husseini told the UN that the Arabs would drench "the soil of our beloved country with the last drop of our blood."

### **Israeli Declaration of Independence**

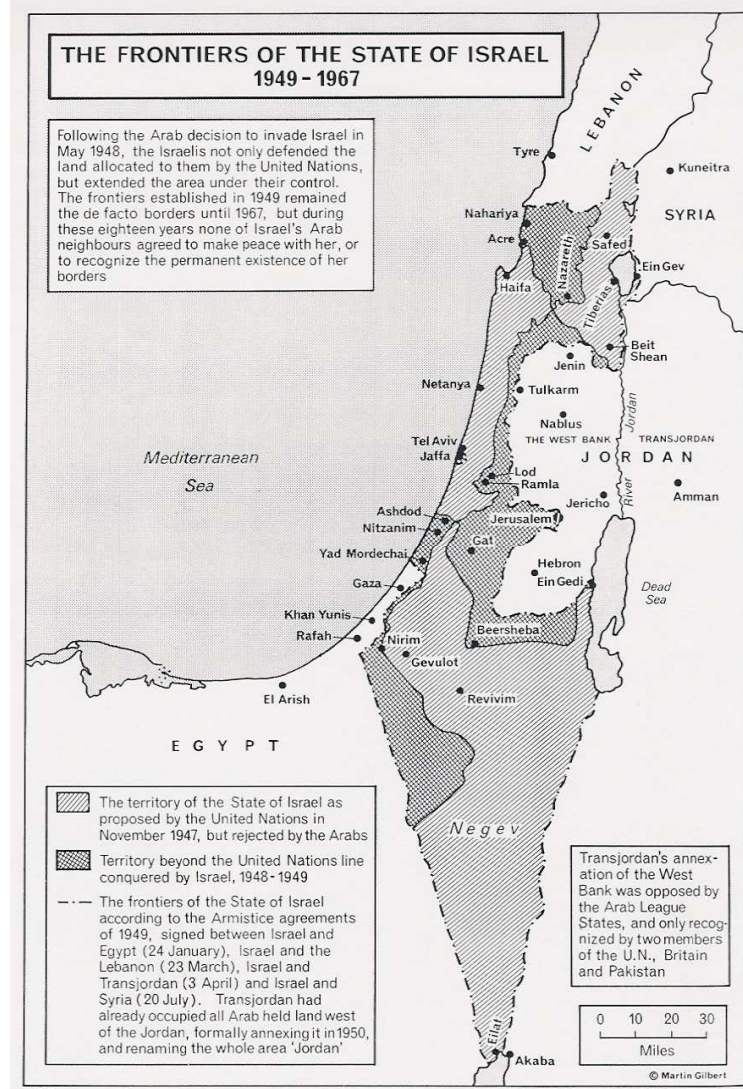
Despite their disadvantages in numbers, organization, and weapons, in April 1948 the Jews began to take initiative. The Haganah (the predecessor of the Israeli army) captured several major towns and temporarily opened the road to Jerusalem. The partition resolution was never suspended or rescinded.

Israel, the Jewish State, was declared on May 14, 1948, as the British finally left the country. The United States issued recognition of Israel just eleven minutes after its declaration. The Soviet Union, Guatemala, and most other states also recognized the State of Israel. On the day Israel was declared independent, Egyptian aircraft bombed Tel Aviv.

### **Arab Response to the Jewish State**

Six Arab armies (Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Iraq) immediately invaded Israel. The cost of the war to Israel was enormous; fields and citrus groves, Israel's main source of income, were largely destroyed, military expenditures totaled approximately \$500 million, and 6,373 Israelis were killed,

nearly one percent of the Jewish population of 650,000. But the Arab campaign to destroy Israel failed. Although the Arab countries bordering Israel signed armistice agreements in 1949, they did not accept the Jewish State of Israel. After 1949, the Arabs insisted that Israel accept the borders in the 1947 partition resolution and repatriate the Palestinian refugees before they would negotiate a true end to war. In 1954 Egyptian Foreign Minister Muhammad Salah al-Din proclaimed the Arabs' intention: "The Arab people will not be embarrassed to declare: We shall not be satisfied except by the final obliteration of Israel from the map of the Middle East."



Guided by Jewish values, the JCRC informs, collaborates, advocates and takes action on issues in the public arena that are of central concern to the Jewish community.

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