1948 Arab–Israeli War

The 1948 Arab–Israeli War, known to Israelis as the War of Independence (Hebrew: מלחמת העצמאות or מלחמת החרות, Milkhemet Ha'atzma'ut or Milkhemet HA'sikhror) or War of Liberation (Hebrew: מלחמת השחרור, Milkhemet Hashikhrur) – was the first in a series of wars fought between the State of Israel and its Arab neighbours in the continuing Arab-Israeli conflict.

The war commenced upon the termination of the British Mandate of Palestine and the Israeli declaration of independence on 15 May 1948, following a period of civil war in 1947–1948. The fighting took place mostly on the former territory of the British Mandate and for a short time also in the Sinai Peninsula and southern Lebanon.\[1\] Much of what Arabs refer to as The Catastrophe (Arabic: الكارثة, al-Nakba) occurred amidst this war.

The war concluded with the 1949 Armistice Agreements.

Background

Following World War II, on May 14, 1948, the British Mandate of Palestine came to an end. The surrounding Arab nations were also emerging from colonial rule. Transjordan, under the Hashemite ruler Abdullah I, gained independence from Britain in 1946 and was called Jordan, but it remained under heavy British influence. Egypt, while nominally independent, signed the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 that included provisions by which Britain would maintain a garrison of troops on the Suez Canal. From 1945 on, Egypt attempted to renegotiate the terms of this treaty, which was viewed as a humiliating vestige of colonialism. Lebanon became an independent state in 1943, but French troops would not withdraw until 1946, the same year that Syria won its independence from France.

In 1945, at British prompting, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan, and Yemen formed the Arab League to coordinate policy between the Arab states. Iraq and Transjordan coordinated policies closely, signing a mutual defence treaty, while Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia feared that Transjordan would annex part or all of Palestine, and use it as a basis to attack or undermine Syria, Lebanon, and the Hijaz.

On 29 November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly approved a plan to resolve the Arab-Jewish conflict by partitioning Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. Each state would comprise three major sections, linked by extraterritorial crossroads; the Arab state would also have an enclave at Jaffa. With about 32% of the population, the Jews would get 56% of the land, though this did not add significantly to the amount of arable land, and was considered insufficient to feed the expected immigrant Jewish population.\[2\] The Jewish area would contain 499,000 Jews and 438,000 Arabs, and most of this territory was in the inhospitable Negev Desert in the south. The Palestinian Arabs would get 42% of the land, which had a population of 818,000 Palestinian Arabs and 10,000 Jews. In consideration of its religious significance, the Jerusalem area, including Bethlehem, with 100,000 Jews and an equal number of Palestinian Arabs, was to become a Corpus separatum, to be administered by the UN.\[3\] The Jewish leadership accepted the partition plan, without reservation, as "the indispensable minimum,"\[4\] glad to gain
international recognition but sorry that they did not receive more[5] and on May 14, 1948 Israel was declared a State, with a provisional government taking charge from the moment of the termination of the Mandate on May 15.[6]

Arguing that the partition plan was unfair to the Arabs with regard to the population balance at that time, the representatives of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab League firmly opposed the UN action and even rejected its authority to involve itself in the entire matter.[7] They upheld "that the rule of Palestine should revert to its inhabitants, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations."[8][9]

1947–1948 Civil War in Mandatory Palestine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1948 Palestinian exodus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Main articles

1948 Palestinian exodus

1947–48 civil war
1948 Arab-Israeli War
Causes of the exodus
  Nakba Day
  Palestine refugee camps
  Palestinian refugee
  Palestinian right of return
  Present absentee
  Transfer Committee
  Resolution 194

Background

British Mandate of Palestine
  Israel's declaration of independence
  Israeli-Palestinian conflict history
    New Historians
  Palestine · Plan Dalet
  1947 partition plan · UNRWA

Key incidents

  Battle of Haifa
  Deir Yassin massacre
  Exodus from Lydda

Notable writers

  Aref al-Aref · Yoav Gelber
  Efraim Karsh · Walid Khalidi
  Nur Masalha · Benny Morris
  Ilan Pappe · Tom Segev
  Avraham Sela · Avi Shlaim

Related categories/lists

  List of depopulated villages

Related templates

  Palestinians
In the immediate aftermath of the United Nations' approval of the Partition plan, the explosions of joy amongst the Jewish community were counterbalanced by the expressions of discontent amongst the Arab community. Soon thereafter, violence broke out and became more prevalent. Murders, reprisals, and counter-reprisals killed dozens on both sides.

The war did not officially begin until the end of the Mandate in May 1948, but following the United Nations vote to partition the Palestine Mandate on November 30, 1947, the Mandate had become engulfed in a civil war between the Arab and Jewish communities. Starting on November 30, 1947 bombings and rioting became daily events. On the night of the partition vote, a Jew was shot down in the Camel market of Jaffa; in the Mandate's main jail at Acre, Arab and Jewish prisoners staged a bloody prison riot; in Haifa, cars in Jewish neighbourhoods were shot at, and all over the Mandate Arab crowds stoned cars driven by Jews. On December 1, the Swedish and Polish consulates were fire-bombed in retaliation for those two nations' votes for partition, while Jewish shops and cafes were bombed all over the Mandate, with one synagogue destroyed by arson. The Arab Higher Committee ordered a general strike and on December 2 a riot in Jerusalem saw Jewish shops looted and the attempted lynchings of several Jews.

In October 1947, Israel Galili, the Chief of Staff of the Hagana wrote:

“As far as we know, it is the Mufti's belief that there is no better way to 'start things off' than by means of terror, isolated bombs thrown into crowds leaving movie theatres on Saturday nights. That will start the ball rolling. For no doubt the Jews will react, and as a reaction to a reaction there will be an outbreak in another place ... until the whole country will be stirred up, trouble will be incited, and the neighbouring Arab countries will be compelled to start a 'holy war' to assist the Palestinian Arabs”.

On December 4, 1947 some 120-150 Palestinians led by Hasan Salama attempted to overrun kibbutz Efal outside of Tel Aviv. This was the first attempt to take a kibbutz, and was beaten off with the loss of about 70 Palestinians killed. In response to the violence, Ben-Gurion ordered the Hagana in December 1947 to begin the transition into a regular army. Initially the Hagana's role was defensive, but starting on December 9, 1947 following attacks on Jewish road traffic, the Hagana was ordered by its operational chief, Yigael Yadin, to call out retaliatory attacks on Arab vehicles and villages that were the homes of Palestinian fighters, and the assassination of the leaders of the Palestinian groups. Typical of such attacks was a Palmach raid on the village of Ramle on December 11, 1947 that saw 15 Arab cars torched. Besides the Hagana retaliatory attacks, which tended to attempt avoiding excessive civilian deaths, the Irgun carried out actions such as an arson attack on a Jerusalem theatre popular with Arabs, on December 2, and a car bomb that killed 20 Palestinians at the Damascus Gate of Jerusalem on December 12, 1947. On December 30, 1947 the Irgun bombed a line-up of Palestinian workers at a oil refinery in Haifa killing six. In revenge for the bombing, the surviving Palestinian workers at the refinery staged a pogrom, killing 39 of their Jewish co-workers. In retaliation for the pogrom at the Haifa refinery, the Hagana raided the village of Balad al-Sheikh, where many of the Palestinian workers lived, and killed 60. During the month of December, 207 Jews and 220 Palestinians were killed in the violence, according to British figures.

In December 1947 and January 1948 an estimated nearly 1,000 people were killed and 2,000 injured. By the end of March, the figure had risen to 2,000 dead and 4,000 wounded. These figures correspond to an average of more than 100 deaths and 200 casualties per week in a population of 2,000,000.
From January onwards, operations became more militaristic, with the intervention in Palestine of a number of Arab Liberation Army regiments that divided up around the different coastal towns and reinforced Galilee and Samaria. Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni came from Egypt with several hundred men of the Army of the Holy War. At the time, military assessments were that the Palestinian Arabs were incapable of beating the Zionists. The main Palestinian strategy by the beginning of 1948 was attacks on kibbutzim and ambushes of Jewish forces. On January 10, 1948, 900 men of the ALA crossed over from Syria to attack kibbutz Kfar-Szold in their first attack. The ALA were defeated by the defenders, and finally driven away by a British tank unit. On January 14, 1,000 Palestinians led by Abd al-Qader al-Husseini attacked kibbutz Kfar-Etzion. The Arab forces were beaten off with the loss of about 200 dead. On January 15, some 35 men from the Etzion bloc led by Danny Mass were ambushed and wiped out. The 35 men killed in the ambush are widely seen in Israel as great heroes.

Having recruited a few thousand volunteers, al-Husayni organized the blockade of the 100,000 Jewish residents of Jerusalem. To counter this, the Yishuv authorities tried to supply the city with convoys of up to 100 armoured vehicles, but the operation became more and more impractical, and more and more died in this process. By March, Al-Hussayni's tactic had paid off. Almost all the Haganah's armoured vehicles had been destroyed, the blockade remained in full operation, and hundreds of Haganah members who tried to bring supplies to the city had been killed. The situation for those in the Jewish settlements in the highly isolated Negev and northern Galilee was even more critical. In Galilee, some 3,000 men of the ALA had entered from Syria. By April, the ALA's strength had risen to 7,000-8,000. Unlike the Palestinian forces, the ALA were armed with mortars and machine guns. The kibbutz of Yechiam was attacked by an ALA force of 400 led by Adib Shishakli on January 20, 1948. During the attack, the kibbutz was surrounded and brought under mortar, machine gun and rifle fire. After contacting Nahariya via heliograph, a Hagana force was sent out, which led to the relief of Yechiam after a two-day siege.

Since the Jewish population was under strict orders to hold their dominions at all costs, the insecurity across the country affected the Arab population more visibly. Up to 100,000 Palestinian Arabs, chiefly those from the upper classes, left the country to seek refuge abroad or in Samaria.

This situation caused the U.S. to retract its support for the partition plan, thus encouraging the Arab League to believe that the Palestinian Arabs, reinforced by the Arab Liberation Army, could put an end to the plan. The British, on the other hand, decided on February 7, 1948 to support the annexation of the Arab part of Palestine by Jordan. By April 1948, the Yishuv had lost 850 men killed and 1,858 wounded, according to British figures. Especially demoralizing was the ambushing of a Jewish convoy travelling from the Etzion bloc to Jerusalem on March 27, 1948. After fighting for almost 24 hours, the Hagana forces were almost out of ammunition. The British agreed to evacuate the Hagana fighters, but left all their vehicles behind, which deprived the Hagana of almost all of its self-manufactured armored cars. The loss of the armored cars severely weakened the Hagana's ability to supply Jerusalem. Although a certain level of doubt took hold amongst Yishuv supporters, their apparent defeats were caused more by their wait-and-see policy than by weakness. Ben-Gurion reorganized the Haganah and made conscription obligatory. Every Jewish man and woman in the country had to receive military training. Funds were gathered by Golda Meir from sympathizers in the United States, and Joseph Stalin supported the Zionist cause at the time, so Jewish representatives of Palestine were able to sign very important armament contracts in the East. Other Haganah agents retrieved stockpiles from World War II, which helped equip the army further. Operation Balak allowed arms and other equipment to be transported for the first time by the end of March.
Ben-Gurion assigned Yigael Yadin the responsibility to come up with a plan in preparation for the announced intervention of the Arab states. The result of his analysis was Plan Dalet, which was put in place from the start of April onwards. The adoption of Plan Dalet marked the second stage of the war, in which Hagana passed from the defensive to the offensive. Plan D called "gaining control over the territory assigned to the Jewish state and defending its borders, as well as the blocs of Jewish settlement and such Jewish populations as were outside those borders, against regular, para-regular and guerrilla forces operating from bases outside or inside the nascent Jewish state." To effect these goals, the plan called for the destruction of Arab bases and supply lines both within Palestine and in other Arab countries, securing control of the main roads inside Palestine to allow for the unhindered movement of Jewish forces from guerrilla ambushes, taking over key Arab towns and villages to end the guerrilla war, taking key bases on the borders to block an Arab invasion in support of the Palestinians and taking over key buildings in the main urban centers.

The first operation, named Operation Nachshon, consisted of lifting the blockade on Jerusalem. Fifteen hundred men from the Haganah's Givati Brigade and the Palmach's Harel brigade went about clearing the route to the city between 5 and 20 April. The breaking of the siege of Jerusalem was the first conventional action fought by the Hagana, as all previous actions had been at most no larger than those at the company level. Before Nachshon, the village of Kastel which dominated the road to Jerusalem was stormed and taken on the night of April 2–3, 1948 while the headquarters of Hasan Salama was destroyed in a raid on April 5.

During Nachshon, Kastel saw much heavy fighting and changed hands several times until April 10, 1948, when the Hagana finally won control of the village. During the fighting for Kastel, Abd al-Qader al-Husseini was killed, which proved to be a major blow to Palestinian morale. The operation was successful, and enough foodstuffs to last two months were shipped to Jerusalem and distributed to the Jewish population. The success of the operation was added to by the death of al-Hussayni in combat. During this time, and beyond the command of Haganah or the framework of Plan Dalet, troops from Irgun and Lehi massacred more than 100 Arabs, mostly civilians, at Deir Yassin, a move that had an important impact on the Palestinian Arab population, and one that was criticised and lamented by all the principal Jewish leaders of the Hagana and the Jewish Agency. The Deir Yassin massacre and widespread fears that the Jewish forces would perpetrate more such massacres played a significant role in sparking the massive flight of Palestinian civilians during the fighting in April–May 1948.

On April 20, the Harel Brigade led by Yitzhak Rabin which had taken control of the roads leading to Jerusalem was ordered into the Holy City to assist with the defence. The ALA took advantage of the Harel Brigade's withdrawal to seize the hills along the main road leading to Jerusalem. On May 8, 1948 the Hagana launched a new offensive, Operation Maccabee, to retake control of the highway. For the next ten days, fierce fighting was to rage along the hills above the highway until the Israelis had taken a number of key hills.

At the same time, the first large-scale operation of the Arab Liberation Army ended in a debacle, with it being roundly defeated at Mishmar Ha'emeq and losing its Druze allies through defection. On April 4, 1948 the ALA led by Fawzi al-Qawuqji attacked the kibbutz at Mishmar-Haemek at dawn using artillery. The ALA then sent in 1,000 fighters to storm the kibbutz, only to be fought off by the defenders. A Jewish counter-attack led by Yitzhak Sadeh saw the fall of several nearby Arab villages. After five days of heavy fighting, the ALA launched another large attack on Mishmar-Haemek, only to be defeated and in serious danger of being encircled, leading to al-Qawuqi to order a general retreat.
Within the framework for the expansion of Jewish territory foreseen by Plan Dalet, prior to declaration, the forces of Haganah, Palmach, and Irgun intended to conquer mixed zones. Tiberias, Haifa, Safed, Beisan, Jaffa, and Acre fell, resulting in the flight of more than 250,000 Palestinian Arabs.

The British had essentially withdrawn their troops by late April. In Haifa, which had been the scene of much Arab-Jewish violence over the winter of 1947-48, the withdrawal of the British troops led to the local Arab leaders requesting that the British negotiate a ceasefire with the Haganah on April 22, 1948. The local British commander, General Hugh Stockwell was successful in arranging a truce. As Stockwell wrote in his report afterwards, the Arab leaders told him "that they were not in a position to sign the truce, as they had no control over the Arab military elements in the town and that, in all sincerity, they could not fulfill the terms of the truce, even if they were to sign". Instead, the Arab leaders offered "as an alternative, that the Arab population wished to evacuate Haifa and that they would be grateful for military assistance. Stockwell told the Arab leaders:

"You have made a foolish decision...Think it over, as you'll regret it afterward. You must accept the conditions of the Jews. They are fair enough. Don't permit life to be destroyed senselessly. After all, it was you who began the fighting and the Jews have won".

Despite Stockwell's advice, the Arab leaders insisted upon evacuation, and Stockwell oversaw the evacuation of nearly all of the 30,000 Palestinians living in Haifa from that city. The evacuation of Haifa, one of Palestine's largest Arab towns, had a huge demoralizing effect on Palestinian morale, and helped to accelerate the flight of the Palestinians that had become general by early May.

The situation provided the final push for the leaders of the neighboring Arab states to intervene with secretary-general Abd al-Rahman Azzam of the Arab League:

"The Zionists are seizing the opportunity to establish a Zionist state against the will of the Arabs. The Arab peoples have accepted the challenge and soon they will close their account with them".

The majority of Palestinian Arab hopes lay with the Arab Legion of Jordan's monarch, Abdullah I, but he had no intention of creating a Palestinian Arab-run state, instead hoping to annex as much of the territory of the British Mandate of Palestine as he could. He was playing a double game, being just as much in contact with the Jewish authorities as with the Arab League.

In preparation for the offensive, Haganah successfully launched Operations Yiftah and Ben Ami to secure the Jewish settlements of Galilee, and Operation Kilshon, which created a united front around Jerusalem.

Golda Meir and King Abdullah I met on 10 May to discuss the situation, but the meeting was inconclusive and their former agreements were not confirmed. On 13 May, the Arab Legion, backed by irregulars, attacked and took Kfar Etzion, killing 127 of the 131 Jewish defenders and massacring the prisoners.

On 14 May 1948, David Ben-Gurion declared the independence of the state of Israel, notifying the International Community and the war entered its second phase, with the intervention of several Arab states' armies the following day.
**Political objectives**

**Yishuv**
Benny Morris points out that the Yishuv's aims evolved during the war.\[51\]
Initially, the aim was "simple and modest": to survive the assaults of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states. "The Zionist leaders deeply, genuinely, feared a Middle Eastern reenactment of the Holocaust, which had just ended; the Arabs' public rhetoric reinforced these fears". As the war progressed, the aim of expanding the Jewish state beyond the UN partition borders appeared: first to incorporate clusters of isolated Jewish settlements and later to add more territories to the state and give it defensible borders. A third and further aim that emerged among the political and military leaders after four or five months was to "reduce the size of Israel's prospective large and hostile Arab minority, seen as a potential powerful fifth column, by belligerency and expulsion."\[51\]

**King Abdullah I of Jordan**
King Abdullah was the commander of the Arab Legion, the strongest Arab army involved in the war. The Arab Legion had about 10,000 soldiers, trained and commanded by British officers.
In 1946–47, Abdullah said that he had no intention to "resist or impede the partition of Palestine and creation of a Jewish state."\[52\] Hostile towards Palestinian nationalism, Abdullah wished to annex as much of Palestine as possible.\[53\] Ideally, Abdullah would have liked to annex all of Palestine, but he was prepared to compromise.\[47\] \[53\] He supported the partition, intending that the West Bank area of the British Mandate allocated for Palestine be annexed to Jordan. Abdullah had secret meetings with the Jewish Agency (at which the future Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir was among the delegates) that reached an agreement of Jewish non-interference with Jordanian annexation of the West Bank (although Abdullah failed in his goal of acquiring an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea through the Negev desert) and of Jordanian agreement not to attack the area of the Jewish state contained in the United Nations partition resolution (in which Jerusalem was given neither to the Arab nor the Jewish state, but was to be an internationally administered area). In one stunning diplomatic coup, the strongest Arab army agreed not to attack the Jewish state.\[54\] However, by 1948, the neighbouring Arab states pressured Abdullah into joining them in an "all-Arab military intervention" against the newly created State of Israel, that he used to restore his prestige in the Arab world, which had grown suspicious of his relatively good relationship with Western and Jewish leaders.\[52\]

Abdullah's role in this war became substantial. He saw himself as the "supreme commander of the Arab forces" and "persuaded the Arab League to appoint him" to this position.\[55\] Through his leadership, the Arabs fought the 1948 war to meet Abdullah's political goals.

**The other Arab states**
King Farouk of Egypt was anxious to prevent Abdullah from being seen as the main champion of the Arab world in Palestine, which he feared might damage his own leadership aspirations of the Arab world.\[53\] In addition, Farouk wished to annex all of southern Palestine to Egypt.\[53\] Nuri as-Said, the strongman of Iraq, had ambitions for bringing the entire Fertile Crescent under Iraqi leadership.\[53\] Both Syria and Lebanon wished to take certain areas of northern Palestine.\[53\] One result of the ambitions of the various Arab leaders was a distrust of all the Palestinian
leaders who wished to set up a Palestinian state, and a mutual distrust of each other.\textsuperscript{53} Co-operation was to be very poor during the war between the various Palestinian factions and the Arab armies.\textsuperscript{53}

**Arab Higher Committee of Amin al-Husayni**

Amin al-Husayni, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Chairman of the Arab Higher Committee, had collaborated with Nazi Germany during World War II.\textsuperscript{56} In 1940, he asked the Axis Powers to acknowledge the Arab right "to settle the question of Jewish elements in Palestine and other Arab countries in accordance with the national and racial interests of the Arabs and along the lines similar to those used to solve the Jewish question in Germany and Italy."\textsuperscript{57}

At the beginning of 1948, al-Husayni was in exile in Egypt. He was involved in some of the high level negotiations between Arab leaders at a meeting held in Damascus in February 1948 to organize Palestinian Field Commands; however, the commanders of his Holy War Army, Hasan Salama and Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni, were allocated only the Lydda district and Jerusalem. This decision paved the way for an undermining of the Mufti's position among the Arab States. On 9 February, only four days after the Damascus meeting, a severe blow was suffered by the Mufti at the Arab League session in Cairo [where his demands for] the appointment of a Palestinian to the General Staff of the League, the formation of a Palestinian Provisional Government, the transfer of authority to local National Committees in areas evacuated by the British, a loan for administration in Palestine and appropriation of large sums to the Arab Higher Executive for Palestinians entitled to war damages [were all rejected].\textsuperscript{58}

The Arab League blocked recruitment to al-Husayni's forces\textsuperscript{59}, which collapsed following the death of his most charismatic commander, his cousin Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni, on 8 April.

Following rumours that King Abdullah was re-opening the bilateral negotiations with Israel that he had previously conducted in secret with the Jewish Agency, the Arab League, led by Egypt, decided to set up the All-Palestine Government in Gaza on 8 September under the nominal leadership of the Mufti. Historian Avi Shlaim wrote:

> The decision to form the Government of All-Palestine in Gaza, and the feeble attempt to create armed forces under its control, furnished the members of the Arab League with the means of divesting themselves of direct responsibility for the prosecution of the war and of withdrawing their armies from Palestine with some protection against popular outcry. Whatever the long-term future of the Arab government of Palestine, its immediate purpose, as conceived by its Egyptian sponsors, was to provide a focal point of opposition to Abdullah and serve as an instrument for frustrating his ambition to federate the Arab regions with Jordan.\textsuperscript{60}

Abdullah regarded the attempt to revive al-Husayni's Holy War Army as a challenge to his authority and on 3 October his Minister of Defence ordered all armed bodies operating in the areas controlled by the Arab Legion to be disbanded. Glubb Pasha carried out the order ruthlessly and efficiently.\textsuperscript{61}
Initial line-up of forces

Military assessments

Benny Morris has argued that although, by the end of 1947, the Palestinians "had a healthy and demoralising respect for the Yishuv's military power", they believed that in decades or centuries "the Jews, like the medieval crusader kingdoms, would ultimately be overcome by the Arab world".[62]

On the eve of the war, the number of Arab troops likely to be committed to the war was about 23,000 (10,000 Egyptians, 4,500 Jordanians, 3,000 Iraqis, 3,000 Syrians, 2,000 ALA volunteers, 1,000 Lebanese and some Saudi Arabians), in addition to the irregular Palestinians already present. The Yishuv had 35,000 troops of the Haganah, 3,000 of Stern and Irgun and a few thousand armed settlers.[63]

On 12 May, David Ben-Gurion was told by his chief military advisers, "who over-estimated the size of the Arab armies and the numbers and efficiency of the troops who would be committed", that Israel's chances of winning a war against the Arab states were only about even.[64]

Yishuv forces

In November 1947, the Haganah was an underground paramilitary force that had existed as a highly organized, national force, since the riots of 1920–21, and throughout the riots of 1929, and Great Uprising of 1936–39[65] It had a mobile force, the HISH, which had 2,000 full time fighters (men and women) and 10,000 reservists (all aged between 18 and 25) and an elite unit, the Palmach composed of 2,100 fighters and 1,000 reservists. The reservists trained 3–4 days a month and went back to civilian life the rest of the time. These mobile forces could rely on a garrison force, the HIM (Heil Mishmar, lit. Guard Corps), composed of people aged over 25. The Yishuv's total strength was around 35,000 with 15,000 to 18,000 fighters and a garrison force of roughly 20,000.[66] The two clandestine groups had 2,000–4,000 and 500–800 members, respectively. Irgun, who had been monitored by the British and whose activities were considered by Mi5 to be terrorism[67] and Lehi. There were also several thousand men and women who had served in the British Army in World War II who did not serve in any of the underground militias but would provide valuable military experience during the war.[68] Walid Khalidi says the Yishuv had the additional forces of the Jewish Settlement Police, numbering some 12,000, the Gadna Youth Battalions, and the armed settlers.[69] Few of the units had been trained by December 1947.[70]

In 1946, Ben-Gurion decided that the Yishuv would probably have to defend itself against both the Palestinian Arabs and neighbouring Arab states and accordingly began a "massive, covert arms acquisition campaign in the West". By September 1947 the Haganah had "10,489 rifles, 702 light machine-guns, 2,666 submachine guns, 186 medium machine-guns, 672 two-inch mortars and 92 three-inch (76 mm) mortars" and acquired many more during the first few months of hostilities. The Yishuv also had "a relatively advanced arms producing capacity", that between October 1947 and July 1948 "produced 3 million 9 mm bullets, 150,000 Mills grenades, 16,000 submachine guns (Sten Guns) and 210 three-inch (76 mm) mortars",[71] along with a few "Davidka" homemade mortars that were highly inaccurate but had a spectacularly loud explosion that demoralized the enemy. Initially, the Haganah had no heavy machine guns, artillery, armored vehicles, anti-tank or anti-aircraft weapons,[68] nor military aircraft or tanks.[72]

On 5 December 1947, obligatory conscription was instituted for all men and women aged between 17 and 25. By end of March, 21,000 had been conscripted.[73] On 30 March, the call-up was extended to men and single women aged between 26 to 35. Five days later, a General Mobilization order was issued for all men under 40.[74]
Sources disagree about the amount of arms at the Yishuv's disposal at the end of the Mandate. According to Karsh before the arrival of arms shipments from Czechoslovakia as part of Operation Balak, there was roughly one weapon for every three fighters, and even the Palmach could arm only two out of every three of its active members. According to Collins and LaPierre, by April 1948, the Haganah had managed to accumulate only about 20,000 rifles and Sten guns for the 35,000 soldiers who existed on paper.\textsuperscript{75} According to Walid Khalidi "the arms at the disposal of these forces were plentiful".\textsuperscript{69} The one weapon of which there was no shortage was locally produced explosives.\textsuperscript{76}

The Yishuv forces were divided into a number of brigades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brigade</th>
<th>Commander</th>
<th>Size\textsuperscript{77}</th>
<th>Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Golani</td>
<td>Moshe Mann</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>Dekel, Hiram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmeli</td>
<td>Moshe Carmel</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Hiram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandroni</td>
<td>Dan Even</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>Latrun, Hametz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiryati</td>
<td>Michael Ben-Gal</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>Dani, Hametz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Givati</td>
<td>Shimon Avidan</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>Hametz, Barak, Pleshet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etzioni</td>
<td>David Shaltiel</td>
<td></td>
<td>Battle of Jerusalem, Shfifon, Yevusi, Battle of Ramat Rachel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Armoured</td>
<td>Shlomo Shamir</td>
<td></td>
<td>Battles of Latrun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Armoured</td>
<td>Yitzhak Sadeh</td>
<td></td>
<td>Danny, Yoav, Horev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oded</td>
<td>Avraham Yoffe</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>Yoav, Hiram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harel</td>
<td>Yitzhak Rabin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nachshon, Danny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yiftach</td>
<td>Yigal Allon</td>
<td>4,500 inc. some Golani</td>
<td>Yiftah, Danny, Yoav, Battles of Latrun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negev</td>
<td>Nahum Sarig</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>Yoav</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Arab forces**

There was no national military organization in the Arab Palestinian community. There were two paramilitary youth organizations, the pro-Husayni Futuwa and the anti-Husayni Najjada ("auxiliary corps").\textsuperscript{53} According to Karsh, these groups had 11,000–12,000 members,\textsuperscript{53} but according to Morris, the Najjada, which was based in Jaffa and had 2,000–3,000 members, was destroyed in the run-up to the 1948 war, during Husayni's attempt to seize control of it, and the Futuwa never numbered more than a few hundred.\textsuperscript{78} At the outbreak of the war, new local militia groups, the National Guard, mushroomed in towns and cities. Each was answerable to its local Arab National Committee.\textsuperscript{79} The tendency of the Palestinians to dissipate their forces along village and clan lines would be a major weakness of the Palestinian side.\textsuperscript{80} In particular there was a split within the Palestinian community between those loyal to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haji Amin Husseini and those opposed to his leadership.\textsuperscript{53} In December, Abd al-Qadir Hussein, who was a protegé of his uncle the Grand Mufti arrived in Jerusalem with one hundred combatants who had trained in Syria and that would form the cadre of the Holy War Army. His forces were joined by a few hundred young villagers and veterans of the British army.\textsuperscript{81} There were 7, 000 Palestinians who served in the British Army during World War II, and 10, 500 Palestinians in the Mandate's para-military police force most of whom deserted during the winter of 1947-48 fight in the war.\textsuperscript{53}

The equipment of the Palestinian forces was very poor. The British confiscated most of their arsenal during the 1936–39 rebellion and World War II.\textsuperscript{82} A report of 1942 by the Haganah intelligence service assessed the number of firearms at the disposal of the Palestinian at 50,000 [but] this was probably an overestimate\textsuperscript{83} or even "highly exaggerated".\textsuperscript{84} In early February 1948 the Arab League's military Committee delivered 1,700 rifles to the Palestinian Arabs; at the same time the Egyptian gave the Mufti 1,200 rifles, Iraq sent 1,000 rifles and Syria gave 645 rifles, 78 machine guns and 8 mortars.\textsuperscript{85} The Arab Liberation Army (Jaysh al-Inqadh al-Arabi) had been set up...
by the Arab League. It was made up of around 6,000 volunteers, mostly from Syria, and was led by Fawzi al-Qawuqji. Its officially allotted area was northern Palestine, including Samaria.\[86\]

Jordan's Arab Legion was considered the most effective Arab force. Armed, trained and commanded by British officers, this 8,000–12,000 strong force was organised in four infantry/mechanised regiments supported by some 40 artillery pieces and 75 armoured cars.\[80\] Until January 1948, it was reinforced by the 3,000-strong Transjordan Frontier Force.\[83\] As many as 48 British officers served in the Arab Legion.\[87\] Glubb Pasha, the commander of the Legion, organized his forces into four brigades as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military Division</th>
<th>Commander[88] [89] [90]</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Military Zone of operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top commander of the Arab Legion</td>
<td>John Bagot Glubb</td>
<td>Major General</td>
<td>Central command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field commander</td>
<td>Norman Lash</td>
<td>Brigadier</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Brigade, includes: 1st and 3rd regiments</td>
<td>Desmond Goldie</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>Nablus Military Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Regiment</td>
<td>H.C. Blackden</td>
<td>Lt. Colonel</td>
<td>Nablus Military Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Regiment</td>
<td>William Newman</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>Nablus Military Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Brigade, includes: Fifth and Sixth Regiments</td>
<td>Sam Sidney Arthur Cooke</td>
<td>Brigadier</td>
<td>Support force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Regiment</td>
<td>James Hawkin</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Regiment</td>
<td>Abdullah el Tell</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Jerusalem Military Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Brigade, includes: Second and Fourth Regiments</td>
<td>Teel Ashton</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>Ramallah Military Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Regiment</td>
<td>R. Slade</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Ramallah Military Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Regiment</td>
<td>Habis Al-Majali</td>
<td>Lt. Colonel</td>
<td>Latrun, Lid, and Ramla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Brigade</td>
<td>Ahmad Sudqi al-Jundi</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>Support: Ramallah, Hebron, and Ramla</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Arab Legion joined the war in May 1948, but fought only in the areas that King Abdullah wanted to secure for Jordan: the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The Jordanian forces were probably the best trained of all combatants. Other combatant forces lacked the ability to make strategic decisions and tactical maneuvers,\[91\] as evidenced by positioning the fourth regiment at Latrun, which was abandoned by other combatants before the arrival of the Jordanian forces. In the later stages of the war, Latrun proved to be of extreme importance, and a decisive factor for Jerusalem's fate.

In 1948, Iraq had an army of 21,000 men in 12 brigades and the Iraqi Air Force had 100 planes, mostly British. Initially the Iraqis committed around 3,000 men\[92\] to the war effort, including four infantry brigades, one armoured battalion and support personnel. These forces were to operate under Jordanian guidance\[93\] During the first truce, the Iraqis increased their force to about 10,000.\[94\] Ultimately, the Iraqi expeditionary force numbered around 15,000 to 18,000 men.\[95\]

In 1948, Egypt was able to put a maximum of around 40,000 men into the field, 80% of its military-age male population being unfit for military service and its embryonic logistics system being limited in its ability to support ground forces deployed beyond its borders. Initially, an expeditionary force of 10,000 men was sent to Palestine under the command of Maj. Gen. Ahmed Ali al-Mwawi. This force consisted of five infantry battalions, one armoured battalion equipped with British Light Tank Mk VI and Matilda tanks, one battalion of sixteen 25-pounder guns, a battalion of eight 6-pounder guns and one medium-machine-gun battalion with supporting troops.
The Egyptian Air Force had over 30 Spitfires, 4 Hawker Hurricanes and 20 C47s modified into crude bombers.

By the time of the second truce, the Egyptians had 20,000 men in the field in thirteen battalions equipped with 135 tanks and 90 artillery pieces.\[97\]

Syria had 12,000 soldiers at the beginning of the 1948 War, grouped into three infantry brigades and an armoured force of approximately battalion size. The Syrian Air Force had fifty planes, the 10 newest of which were World War II–generation models.

On 14 May Syria invaded Palestine with the 1st Infantry Brigade supported by a battalion of armoured cars, a company of French R 35 and R 37 tanks, an artillery battalion and other units. On 15–16 May they attacked the Israeli village Tzemah, which they captured, following a renewed offensive, on 18 May. The village was abandoned following the Syrian forces' defeat at the Degania a few days later. Subsequently, the Syrians scored a victory at Mishmar HaYarden on 10 June, after which they reverted to a defensive posture, conducting only a few minor attacks on small, exposed Israeli settlements.\[98\] The Lebanese army was the smallest of the Arab armies, consisting of only 3,500 soldiers.\[83\] According to Gelber, in June 1947, Ben-Gurion "arrived at an agreement with the Maronite religious leadership in Lebanon that cost a few thousand pounds and kept Lebanon's army out of the War of Independence and the military Arab coalition."\[99\] According to Rogan and Shlaim, a token force of 1,000 was committed to the invasion. It crossed into the northern Galilee and was repulsed by Israeli forces. Israel then invaded and occupied southern Lebanon until the end of the war.\[100\]

Saudi Arabia sent a contingent of 800 men\[101\]–1,200\[102\] to fight with Egyptian and Jordanian forces.\[103\]

Yemen also committed a small expeditionary force to the war effort.

**British forces in Palestine**

There were 100,000 British troops deployed in Palestine "in two ground forces divisions, two independent infantry brigades, two mechanized regiments, some artillery units and a number of RAF squadrons."\[86\] The peak deployment was in July 1947, when 70,200 British troops were stationed in Palestine, supported by 1,277 civilian drivers and 28,155 civilian employees.\[104\] British forces, however, were gradually withdrawn in 1948. British High Commissioner Cunningham left Palestine on May 14, 1948\[105\] yet British forces overseeing the withdrawal remained in Palestine for several weeks thereafter, maintaining an enclave in and around Haifa and its port. Four Royal Air Force airmen were killed on May 22 when the Royal Egyptian Air Force struck RAF Ramat David, mistaking the airfield for one occupied by the Israeli Air Force.\[106\]\[107\] The last British soldiers left Palestine on June 30, 1948.\[108\]

**Intervention by Arab League countries**

Five of the seven countries of the Arab League at that time, namely Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, backed by Saudi Arabian and Yemenite contingents invaded\[109\] territory in the former British Mandate of Palestine on the night of 14–15 May 1948. The forces of Syria and Egypt launched attacks outside of the proposed Arab section of the Partition Plan.\[110\] Jordan invaded the proposed "Corpus Separatum", which had yet to be instituted, including the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. The official motives for their intervention were set out in a statement\[111\] of 15 May 1948:

> the only solution of the Palestine problem is the establishment of a unitary Palestinian State, in accordance with democratic principles, whereby its inhabitants will enjoy complete equality before the law, [and whereby] minorities will be assured of all the guarantees recognised in democratic constitutional countries ....

The main legal objection the Arab League had to the division of Palestine in UN Resolution 181 was that it did not respect the rights of its Arab inhabitants

> in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Charter of the United Nations.
Security and order in Palestine have become disrupted. The Zionist aggression resulted in the exodus of more than a quarter of a million of its Arab inhabitants from their homes and in their taking refuge in the neighbouring Arab countries.

Nevertheless, some un-official speeches were more aggressive. Azzam Pasha, the Arab League Secretary, is said to have declared, "This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades". However, Joffe and Romirowsky report that this 'cannot be confirmed from cited sources'. Six days later, Azzam told reporters "We are fighting for an Arab Palestine. Whatever the outcome the Arabs will stick to their offer of equal citizenship for Jews in Arab Palestine and let them be as Jewish as they like. In areas where they predominate they will have complete autonomy."

According to Yoav Gelber, the Arab countries were "drawn into the war by the collapse of the Palestinian Arabs and the Arab Liberation Army [and] the Arab governments' primary goal was preventing the Palestinian Arabs' total ruin and the flooding of their own countries by more refugees. According to their own perception, had the invasion not taken place, there was no Arab force in Palestine capable of checking the Haganah's offensive".

"[Yishuv] perceived the peril of an Arab invasion as threatening its very existence. Having no real knowledge of the Arabs's true military capabilities, the Jews took Arab propaganda literally, preparing for the worst and reacting accordingly."

The Arab League issued a multiple-point statement as their forces were advancing, describing their reasons for using force to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state.

- England administered Palestine in a manner which enabled the Jews to flood it with immigrants.
- The events which have taken place in Palestine have unmasked the aggressive intentions of...the Zionists.
- The Governments of the Arab states have found themselves compelled to intervene in Palestine.
- The only solution of the Palestine problem is the establishment of a unitary Palestinian state.
- The Governments of Arab states recognize the independence of Palestine, which has so far been suppressed by the British Mandate.
- Security in Palestine is a sacred trust in the hands of Arab states.
1948 Arab–Israeli War

First phase: 15 May–11 June 1948

The British Mandate over Palestine was due to expire on 15 May, but Jewish leadership led by Ben-Gurion declared independence on 14 May (because 15 May was a Shabbat). The State of Israel declared itself as an independent nation, and was quickly recognized by the United States, Iran, the Soviet Union, and many other countries. Within hours, Arab forces invaded Palestine. In an official cablegram from the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to the UN Secretary-General on 15 May 1948, the Arab states publicly proclaimed their aim of creating a "United State of Palestine", in place of the Jewish and Arab, two-state, UN Plan. In the Arab League's official declaration, they announced their intention to fulfill their responsibilities to restore order in Palestine and establish a single democratic state, which they proclaimed as being the only solution to the conflict, proclaimed Palestine to be an Arab country, and subsequently recognized the independence of the State of Palestine. They claimed that partition was illegitimate, as it was opposed by Palestine's Arab majority, and maintained that the absence of legal authority made it necessary to intervene to protect Arab lives and property.\[117\] The Israelis maintain that the plan was not illegitimate, since Jews were a majority in areas assigned to the Jewish state. Israel, the United States and the Soviet Union called the Arab states' entry into Israel illegal aggression. China, meanwhile, broadly backed the Arab claims. The United Nations secretary-general Trygve Lie wrote in his memoirs "The invasion of Palestine by the Arab states was the first armed aggression the world had seen since the end of the [Second World] War. The United Nations could not permit that aggression to succeed and at the same time survive as an influential force for peaceful settlement, collective security and meaningful international law".\[118\]

The Arab plans called for Syrian and Lebanese forces to invade from north while Jordanian and Iraqi forces were to invade from east.\[119\] The Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian and Iraqi forces to link up in Galilee and then turn towards Haifa.\[119\] In the south, the Egyptians were to advance and take Tel Aviv.\[119\] Co-operation between the various Arab armies was extremely poor, so the plan was not entirely carried out in the spirit envisioned.\[119\]

Two Egyptian Air Force Spitfires bombed Tel Aviv. One of them was shot down and its pilot taken prisoner. However, the Egyptian Air Force continued its bombing raids over the city, and efforts were later made to shell the city from the ground. The fledgling Israeli Air Force responded by bombing military installations inside and near Damascus and Amman.\[120\]

Two Egyptian columns with air, armored, and artillery cover entered southern Israel, but were met with fierce resistance from numerous settlements defended by their armed inhabitants of the kibbutzim and Israeli troops.\[121\] Joining the Egyptian Army were a large number of volunteers from the Muslim Brotherhood.\[121\] One Egyptian
column headed towards Tel Aviv to joined by more Egyptian troops who arrived via sea at Majdal and another column advanced towards Beersheba. To secure their flanks, the Egyptians laid siege to a number of kibbutzim in the Negev. The Egyptians were stalled and took heavy casualties, while Israeli losses were comparatively light. At Kfar-Darom, after withstanding an attack by the Muslim Brotherhood was attacked by Egyptian tanks, who retreated after losing one tank to a PIAT. At the kibbutz of Nirm, 40 Israelis fought off repeated Egyptian attacks backed by artillery, armour and air power. These battles were delaying actions, designed to give the Haganah time to prepare for the Egyptian attack. The most notable of these engagements was the Battle of Yad Mordechai, where an inferior force of 100 Israelis armed with nothing more than rifles, a medium machinegun and a PIAT anti-tank weapon, held up a column of 2,500 Egyptians, well-supported by armor, artillery and air units, for five days. The Egyptians suffered some 300-400 dead and wounded while Israeli casualties were 26 killed and 49 wounded. The Haganah stopped the Egyptian offensive at Ad Halom, near Ashdod, on May 29, after Israel's fledgling air force performed its first combat mission, when four Avia S-199s attacked Egyptian armored column of 500 vehicles on its way to Ashdod. The Israeli planes dropped 70 kilogram bombs and strafed the column, although their machine guns jammed quickly. Two of the planes crashed, killing a pilot. The Egyptians scattered, and had lost the initiative by the time they had regrouped. Israeli Givati Brigade troops then counterattacked and halted the Egyptian offensive.

Numerous isolated Israeli settlement outposts in the Galilee were exposed to Arab attack on all sides, and had to rely on their own armories for defense. The hastily mobilized Israeli Army engaged in offensive actions to push Arab forces out of key positions, block the advance of Arab columns, and rush to seal gaps in Israel's defenses.

Over the next few days, approximately 1,000 Lebanese, 5,000 Syrian, 5,000 Iraqi, and 10,000 Egyptian troops (initial numbers) invaded the newly established state. Four thousand Jordanian troops invaded the Corpus separatum region encompassing Jerusalem and its environs, as well as areas designated as part of the Arab state by the UN partition plan. They were aided by corps of volunteers from Saudi Arabia, Libya and Yemen. The Arab nations gradually increased the number of troops by the thousands as the war later progressed (see table of "strength" near top of page). Both sides increased their manpower over the following months, but the Israeli advantage grew steadily as a result of the progressive mobilization of Israeli society and the influx of an average of 10,300 immigrants each month. Syrian forces advanced into Galilee on May 15, only to be bogged down in the sieges of kibbutzim. The Lebanese took the village of Malkiya, which was recaptured by the Israelis three days later. An Iraqi division comprising two infantry and one armoured brigade arrived in an area known as the "triangle" between Jenin, Nablus and Tularm, where on May 25, 1948 it started an offensive with the aim of taking Netanya, which failed. On May 29, an Israeli counter-attack against the Iraqis led to three days of heavy fighting over Jenin, which was finally retained by the Iraqis. After these battles, the Iraqi forces became stationary. On June 6, a Syrian-Lebanese-ALA force retook Malkiya.

### Israeli Forces 1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Initial strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 June</td>
<td>29,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 July</td>
<td>40,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 October</td>
<td>63,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 October</td>
<td>88,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 December</td>
<td>92,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 December</td>
<td>106,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 December</td>
<td>107,652</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On 26 May 1948, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) was officially established, and the Haganah, Palmach and Irgun were incorporated into the army of the new Jewish state.

As the war progressed, the IDF managed to field more troops than the Arab forces. By July 1948, the IDF had 63,000 troops; by early spring 1949, they had 115,000. The Arab armies had an estimated 40,000 troops in July 1948, rising to 55,000 in October 1948, and slightly more by the spring of 1949.

All Jewish aviation assets were placed under the control of the Sherut Avir (Air Service, known as the SA) in November 1947 and flying operations began in the following month from a small civil airport on the outskirts of Tel Aviv called Sde Dov, with the first ground support operation (in an RWD-13[127]) taking place on 17 December. The Galilee Squadron was formed at Yavne’el in March 1948, and the Negev Squadron was formed at Nir-Am in April. By May 10, when the SA suffered its first combat loss, there were three flying units, an air staff, maintenance facilities and logistics support. At the outbreak of the war on 15 May, the SA became the Israeli Air Force. With its fleet[128] of light planes it was no match for Arab forces during the first few weeks of the war with their T-6s, Spitfires, C-47s and Avro Ansons. The main Arab losses were the result of RAF action in response to Egyptian raids on the British air base at Ramat David[129] near Haifa on 22 May during which five Egyptian Spitfires were shot down. It was also during this time that the balance of air power began to swing in favor of the Israeli Air Force following the purchase of 25 Avia S-199s from Czechoslovakia, the first of which arrived in Israel on 20 May. This created the ironic situation of the young Jewish state using derivatives of the Bf-109 designed in Nazi Germany to help counter the British-designed Spitfires flown by Egypt. The first raid on an Arab capital followed on the night of 31 May/June 1 when three Israeli planes bombed Amman.[130] By the fall of 1948, the IDF had achieved air superiority and had superior firepower and more knowledgeable personnel, many of whom had seen action in World War II.[131] Israeli planes also bombed Arish, Gaza, Damascus, and Cairo. Israeli B-17 bombers coming to Israel from Czechoslovakia bombed Egypt on their way to Israel.

The first mission of the Jewish paramilitary organizations and later the IDF was to hold on against the Arab armies and stop them from destroying major Jewish settlements, until reinforcements and weapons arrived.
The heaviest fighting occurred in Jerusalem and on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road, between Jordan's Arab Legion and the Israeli forces. As part of the redeployment to deal with the Egyptian advance, the Israelis abandoned the Latrun fortress overlooking the main highway to Jerusalem, which Glubb Pasha immediately seized. Abdullah ordered Glubb Pasha, the commander of the Jordanian-led Arab Legion, to enter Jerusalem on 17 May, and heavy house-to-house fighting occurred between 19 May and 28 May, with the Arab Legion eventually succeeding in pushing Israeli forces from the Arab quarters of Jerusalem as well as the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. The Israeli forces were seriously short of food, water and ammunition. The Arab Legion fired 10,000 artillery and mortar shells a day. All the Jewish inhabitants of the Old City were expelled by the Jordanians. Israeli attempts to take the Latrun fortress on May 25, May 30 and June 7 were unsuccessful. The Israeli position in Jerusalem was only saved via the opening of the so-called "Burma Road" as the track through the rough countryside was known on June 11. Iraqi troops failed in attacks on Jewish settlements (the most notable battle was at Mishmar HaEmek), and instead took defensive positions around Jenin, Nablus, and Tulkarm. Israeli forces then captured two Arab villages and the city of Acre. Both sides took significant losses, but Iraqi losses were greater than those of the Israelis.

On 21 May, the Syrian army was stopped at Kibbutz Degania Alef in the north, where local militia reinforced by elements of the Carmeli Brigade halted Syrian armored forces with Molotov cocktails and a single PIAT. One tank that was disabled by Molotov cocktails and hand grenades still remains at the kibbutz. The remaining Syrian forces were driven off the next day with four "Napoleonchik" mountain guns—Israel's first use of artillery during the war.

On 22 May, Arab forces attacked kibbutz Ramat Rachel south of Jerusalem. After a fierce battle in which 31 Arabs and 13 Israelis were killed, the defenders of Ramat Rachel withdrew, only to partially retake the kibbutz the following day. Fighting continued until May 26, until the entire kibbutz was recaptured.

On 23 May, Thomas C. Wasson, the Consul General for the US and a member of the UN Truce Commission was assassinated in West Jerusalem.

On 24 May, IDF forces at Latrun, consisting of the newly formed 7th Armoured Brigade (Israel) and a battalion of the Alexandroni Brigade, attacked the Arab Legion forces in Operation "Bin-Nun A", which was repulsed. The Israelis lost 72 dead, 140 wounded, and 6 captured, while the Jordanians lost 5 dead and 6 wounded. On 1 June 1948 the same IDF forces again attacked Arab Legion forces at Latrun in Operation Bin-Nun B. The attack was also repulsed with a loss of 44 men. The Arab Legion forces lost between 12 and 20 dead, including the lieutenant commanding the fort, while the Jordanians claimed to have lost 2 men and killed 161 Israelis. On May 26, the Jordanians retook Radar Hill, with 19 Israelis and 2 Jordanians killed.

On 1 June, the Israeli Carmeli and Golani Brigades captured Jenin from Iraqi forces. They were pushed out by an Iraqi counterattack, and lost 34 dead and 100 wounded. On 2 June 1948, Palestinian Arab commander Hasan Salama...
was killed in a battle at Ras al-Ein, north of Jaffa. The Israeli Air Force won its first aerial victory the day after. Egyptian planes had repeatedly bombed Tel Aviv with almost complete impunity, but Israeli Air Force pilot Modi Alon shot down two Egyptian planes over Tel Aviv on June 3.

Throughout the following days, the Arabs were only able to make limited gains due to fierce Israeli resistance, and were quickly driven off their new holdings by Israeli counterattacks, with both sides suffering heavy casualties. However, Operation Yoram, launched by the Israelis in an attempt to take Latrun, which failed, with the Israeli Harel Battalion losing a handful of dead and the Yiftach Brigade losing 16 dead and 79 wounded, and the Jordanian Arab Legion losing several dozen soldiers. The Jordanians launched two counterattacks, temporarily taking Beit Susin before being forced back, and capturing Gezer after a fierce battle in which 2 Jordanians and 39 Israelis were killed.

**First truce: 11 June–8 July 1948**

The UN declared a truce on 29 May, which came into effect on 11 June and lasted 28 days. The ceasefire was overseen by UN mediator Folke Bernadotte and a team of UN Observers made up of army officers from Belgium, United States, Sweden and France. Bernadotte was voted in by the General Assembly to "assure the safety of the holy places, to safeguard the well being of the population, and to promote 'a peaceful adjustment of the future situation of Palestine'". The truce was designed to last 28 days and an arms embargo was declared with the intention that neither side would make any gains from the truce. Neither side respected the truce; both found ways around the restrictions placed on them. Both the Israelis and the Arabs used this time to improve their positions, a direct violation of the terms of the ceasefire. "The Arabs violated the truce by reinforcing their lines with fresh units and by preventing supplies from reaching isolated Israeli settlements; occasionally, they opened fire along the lines."

At the time of the truce, the British view was that "the Jews are too weak in armament to achieve spectacular success". The Israelis sought to remedy that defect by massive import of arms. The Israeli Defense Forces were able to acquire weapons from communist Czechoslovakia as well as improve training of forces and reorganization of the army during this time. Yitzhak Rabin, an IDF commander at the time of the war and later Israel's fifth Prime Minister, stated "[w]ithout the arms from Czechoslovakia... it is very doubtful whether we would have been able to conduct the war." As well as violating the arms and personnel embargo, they also sent fresh units to the front lines like the Arabs. The Israel army increased its manpower from approximately 30,000 or 35,000 men to almost 65,000 during the truce. They were also able to increase their arms supply to "more than twenty-five thousand rifles, five thousand machine guns, and more than fifty million bullets". As the truce commenced, a British officer stationed in Haifa stated that the four-week-long truce "would certainly be exploited by the Jews to continue military training and reorganization while the Arabs would waste [them] feuding over the future divisions of the spoils". This officer was correct for the Jews were able to reorganize and reequip while the Arabs became unprepared to return to combat.

After the truce was in place, Bernadotte began to address the issue of achieving a political settlement. The main obstacles in his opinion were "the Arab world's continued rejection of the existence of a Jewish state, whatever its borders; Israel's new 'philosophy', based on its increasing military strength, of ignoring the partition boundaries and
conquering what additional territory it could; and the emerging Palestinian Arab refugee problem.\textsuperscript{[140]} Taking all the issues into account, Bernadotte presented a new partition plan. He proposed there be a Palestinian Arab state alongside Israel and that a "Union" "be established between the two sovereign states of Israel and Jordan (which now included the West Bank); that the Negev, or part of it, be included in the Arab state and that Western Galilee, or part of it, be included in Israel; that the whole of Jerusalem be part of the Arab state, with the Jewish areas enjoying municipal autonomy and that Lydda Airport and Haifa be 'free ports'—presumably free of Israeli or Arab sovereignty".\textsuperscript{[140]} Israel rejected the proposal, in particular the aspect of losing control of Jerusalem, but they did agree to extend the truce for another month. The Arabs rejected both the extension of the truce and the proposal.\textsuperscript{[140]}

On 8 July, the day before the expiration of the truce, Egyptian General Naguib renewed the war by attacking the Negba position of Israel.\textsuperscript{[142]} As a result of this attack, Israel responded on 9 July by attacking on all three fronts. The fighting continued for ten days until the UN Security Council issued the Second Truce on 18 July.\textsuperscript{[140]} During the fighting, the Israelis were able to open a lifeline to a number of besieged kibbutzim.\textsuperscript{[139]}

\textbf{Second phase: 8–18 July 1948}

The fighting that followed was dominated by large scale Israeli offensives and a defensive posture from the Arab side. Operation Danny was the most important Israeli offensive, aimed at securing and enlarging the corridor between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv by capturing the roadside cities Lod (Lydda) and Ramle.

In a second planned stage of the operation the fortified positions of Latrun—overlooking the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway—and the city of Ramallah were also to be captured. Hadita, near Latrun, was captured by the Israelis at a cost of 9 dead.

The second plan was Operation Dekel, which was aimed at capturing the lower Galilee including Nazareth. The third plan, to which fewer resources were allocated, Operation Kedem, was to secure the Old City of Jerusalem, but failed.\textsuperscript{[143]} To the north, Operation Brosh was launched in an attempt to dislodge Syrian forces from the Eastern Galilee and the Benot Yaakov Bridge. The operation failed, and 200 Syrians and 100 Israelis were killed. The Israeli Air Force also bombed Damascus for the first time.

In the south, several offensives were launched, including Operation An-Far. On July 12, the Egyptians launched an offensive action, and again attacked Negba, which they had previously failed to capture, using three infantry battalions, an armored battalion, and an artillery regiment. In the battle that followed, the Egyptians were repulsed, suffering 200-300 casualties, while the Israelis lost 5 dead and 16 wounded.\textsuperscript{[144]}

\textbf{Operation Danny}

Further information: Exodus from Lydda and Operation Danny

The objectives of Operation Danny were to capture territory east of Tel Aviv and then to push inland and relieve the Jewish population and forces in Jerusalem. Lydda had become an important military center in the region, lending support to Arab military activities elsewhere, and Ramle was one of the main obstacles blocking Jewish transportation. Lydda was defended by a local militia of around 1,000 residents, with an Arab Legion contingent of 125-300.\textsuperscript{[145]} The IDF forces gathered to attack the city numbered around 8,000. It was the first operation where several brigades were involved. The city was attacked from the north via Majdal al-Sadiq and al-Muzayri'a and from the east via Khulda, al-Qubab, Jimzu and Daniyal. Bombers were also used for the first time in the conflict to bombard the city. The IDF captured the city on
11 July. The next day, Ramle also fell. The civilian populations of Lydda and Ramle fled or were expelled to the Arab front lines, and following resistance in Lydda, the population there was expelled without provision of transport vehicles; some of the evictees died on the long walk under the hot July sun.

On 15–16 July, an attack on Latrun took place but did not manage to occupy the fort. A desperate second attempt occurred on 18 July by units from the Yiftach Brigade equipped with armored vehicles, including two Cromwell tanks, but that attack also failed. Despite the second truce, which began on 18 July, the Israeli efforts to conquer Latrun continued until 20 July.

**Operation Dekel**

While Operation Danny proceeded in the centre, Operation Dekel was carried out in the north. Nazareth was captured on 16 July, and by the time the second truce took effect at 19:00 on 18 July, the whole lower Galilee from Haifa Bay to the Sea of Galilee was captured by Israel.

**Operation Kedem**

Originally Operation Kedem was to begin on 8 July, immediately after the first truce, by Irgun and Lehi forces. However, it was delayed by David Shaltiel, possibly because he did not trust their ability after their failure to capture Deir Yassin without Haganah assistance.

The Irgun forces commanded by Yehuda Lapidot were to break through at the New Gate, Lehi was to break through the wall stretching from the New Gate to the Jaffa Gate, and the Beit Horon Battalion was to strike from Mount Zion.

On July 14, 1948, Irgun occupied the Arab village of Malha after a fierce battle. Several hours later, the Arabs launched a counterattack, but Israeli reinforcements arrived, and the village was retaken at a cost of 17 dead.

The battle was planned to begin on the Sabbath, at 20:00 on 16 July, two days before the second ceasefire of the war. The plan went wrong from the beginning and was postponed first to 23:00 and then to midnight. It was not until 02:30 that the battle actually began. The Irgun managed to break through at the New Gate, but the other forces failed in their missions. At 05:45 on 17 July, Shaltiel ordered a retreat and to cease hostilities.

**Second truce: 18 July–15 October 1948**

At 19:00 on 18 July, the second truce of the conflict went into effect after intense diplomatic efforts by the UN.

On 16 September, Folke Bernadotte proposed a new partition for Palestine in which Jordan would annex Arab areas including the Negev, Lydda and Ramla. There would be a Jewish state in the whole of Galilee, internationalization of Jerusalem and Haifa, and return or compensation for refugees, and the UN should control and regulate Jewish immigration. The plan was once again rejected by both sides. On the next day, 17 September, Bernadotte was assassinated in Jerusalem by the militant Zionist group Lehi because of fears that the Jewish government would accept the plan, but unbeknownst to Lehi, the government had already decided to reject it and resume combat in a month. Bernadotte's deputy, American Ralph Bunche, replaced him.
Operation Shoter

The Arabs had blocked Israeli traffic along the Tel Aviv-Haifa highway. Assaults on 18 June and 8 July failed due to poor planning and stiff resistance by Arab militia in superior positions.

Operation Shoter was launched a week after the truce came into effect in response to the killing of two Israeli civilians. It targeted an area known as the Little Triangle outside Haifa. Israeli assaults on 24 and 25 July were beaten back by stiff resistance. The Israelis launched an infantry and armour assault backed by heavy artillery shelling and aerial bombing. The Arab defenses broke, and the three Arab villages surrendered. Israeli soldiers and aircraft struck at one of the Arab retreat routes, killing 60 Arab soldiers. The Arabs claimed that the Israelis had massacred Arab civilians, but the Israelis rejected the claims. A United Nations investigation found no evidence of a massacre.

Third phase: 15 October 1948–7 January 1949

Israeli operations

Israel launched a series of military operations in order to drive out the Arab armies and secure the borders of Israel.

On 15 October, the IDF launched Operation Yoav in the northern Negev. Its goal was to drive a wedge between the Egyptian forces along the coast and the Beersheba-Hebron-Jerusalem road and ultimately to conquer the whole Negev. This was a special concern on the Israeli part because of a British diplomatic campaign to have the entire Negev handed over to Egypt and Jordan, and which thus made Ben-Gurion anxious to have Israeli forces in control of the Negev as soon as possible. Yoav was headed by the Southern Front commander Yigal Allon. Committed to Yoav were three infantry and one armoured brigades, who were given the task of breaking through the Egyptian lines. The Egyptian positions were badly weakened by the lack of a defense in depth, which meant that once the IDF had broken through the Egyptian lines, there was little to stop them. The operation was a huge success, shattering the Egyptian army ranks and forcing the Egyptian forces to retreat from the northern Negev, Beersheba and Ashdod. Only in the so-called "Faluja Pocket" where an encircled Egyptian force were able to hold out. On October 19, a naval battle took place between three Israeli warships near Majdal, and an Egyptian corvette with air support. An Israeli sailor was killed and four wounded, and two of the ships were damaged. One Egyptian plane was shot down, but the corvette escaped. Israeli naval vessels also shelled Majdal on October 17, and Gaza on October 21, with air support from the Israeli Air Force. On 22 October, Israeli naval commandos using explosive boats sank the Egyptian flagship Emir Farouk, and damaged an Egyptian minesweeper.
On 22 October, the third truce went into effect. That same day, the Arab Liberation Army violated the truce by attacking Manara, capturing the strongpoint of Sheikh Abed, repulsing counterattacks by local Israeli units, and ambushed Israeli forces attempting to relieve Manara. The IDF’s Carmeli Brigade lost 33 dead and 40 wounded. Manara and Misgav Am were totally cut off, and Israel’s protests at the UN failed to change the situation.

On 24 October, the IDF launched Operation Hiram and captured the entire upper Galilee, driving the ALA, and Lebanese army back to Lebanon, and successfully ambushing and destroying an entire Syrian battalion. The Israeli force of four infantry brigades were commanded by Moshe Carmel. The entire operation lasted just 60 hours, during which numerous villages were captured, often after locals or Arab forces put up resistance. Arab losses were estimated at 400 dead and 550 taken prisoner, with low Israeli casualties. Some prisoners were reportedly executed by the Israeli forces. An estimated 50,000 Palestinian refugees fled into Lebanon, some of them fleeing ahead of the advancing forces, and some expelled from villages which had resisted, while the Arab inhabitants of those villages which had remained at peace were allowed to remain and eventually became Israeli citizens. The villagers of Iqrit and Birim were persuaded to leave their homes by Israeli authorities, who promised them that they would be allowed to return. Israel eventually decided not to allow them to return, and offered them financial compensation, which they refused to accept. At the end of the month, Israel had captured the whole Galilee and had advanced 5 miles (8.0 km) into Lebanon to the Litani River. Israeli forces captured the Lebanese village of Hula without resistance. Under the orders of two officers, they executed 35-58 prisoners. Both officers were later arrested and put on trial.

On November 9, 1948, the IDF launched Operation Shmone to capture the Tegart fort in the village of Iraq Suwaydan. The fort’s Egyptian defenders had previously repulsed eight attempts to take it, including two during Operation Yoav. Israeli forces bombarded the fort before an assault. After breaching the outlying fences without resistance, the Israelis blew a hole in the fort’s outer wall, prompting the 180 Egyptian soldiers manning the fort to surrender without a fight. The defeat prompted the Egyptians to evacuate several nearby positions, including hills the IDF had failed to take by force. Meanwhile, IDF forces were met with stiff resistance in Iraq Suwaydan itself, losing 6 dead and 14 wounded.

From December 5 to December 7, the IDF conducted Operation Assaf to take control of the Western Negev. The main assaults were spearheaded by mechanized forces, while Golani Brigade infantry covered the rear. An Egyptian counterattack was repulsed. The Egyptians planned another counterattack, but it failed after Israeli aerial reconnaissance revealed Egyptian preparations, and the Israelis launched a preemptive strike. About 100 Egyptians were killed, and 5 tanks were destroyed, with the Israelis losing 5 killed and 30 wounded.

On 22 December, the IDF drove the remaining Egyptian forces out of Israel with Operation Horev (also called Operation Ayin). The goal of the operation was to secure the entire Negev from Egyptian presence, destroying the Egyptian threat on Israel’s southern communities and forcing the Egyptians into a ceasefire. During five days of fighting, the Israelis expelled the Egyptians from the Negev and entered the Sinai. The operation was a decisive Israeli victory, and Israeli raids into the Nitzana area and the Sinai peninsula forced the Egyptian army, which was encircled in the Gaza Strip, to withdraw and accept a ceasefire. On 7 January 1949, a truce was achieved. Israeli forces withdrew from Sinai and Gaza under international pressure.
On 5 March, Operation Uvda was launched, with the IDF capturing the southern Negev from Arab forces. On 10 March, the Israelis reached Umm Rashrash on the Red Sea (where Eilat was built later) and took it without a battle. The Negev Brigade and Golani Brigade took part in the operation. They raised a hand-made flag ("The Ink Flag") and claimed Umm Rashrash for Israel.

**Anglo-Israeli air clashes**

Israeli raids into Egyptian territory were concerning to the British, who feared that the Israelis might reach the Suez Canal. The Royal Air Force conducted almost daily reconnaissance missions over the Sinai and Israel itself, taking off from Egyptian airbases and sometimes flying alongside Royal Egyptian Air Force planes.

On 20 November 1948, an unarmed RAF photo-reconnaissance De Havilland Mosquito of No. 13 Squadron RAF was attacked by an Israeli Air Force P-51 Mustang flown by American volunteer Wayne Peake as it flew over the Galilee towards Hatzor Airbase. Peake's aircraft scored numerous hits on the aircraft, and caused a fire to break out in the port engine. The aircraft turned to sea and lowered its altitude, before it exploded and crashed off Ashdod, killing both of the crew.\[156\] [157]

Just before noon on 7 January 1949, four Spitfire FR. 18s from No. 208 Squadron RAF on routine reconnaissance in the Deir al-Balah area flew over an Israeli convoy that had been attacked by five Egyptian Spitfires fifteen minutes earlier. The pilots had spotted smoking vehicles, and were drawn to the scene out of curiosity. Two planes dived 500 feet below the convoy to take pictures, while the remaining two covered them from 1,500 feet. Israeli soldiers on the ground, alerted by the sound of the approaching Spitfires and fearing another Egyptian air attack, opened fire with machine guns. One Spitfire was shot down by a tank-mounted machine gun, while the other was lightly damaged and rapidly pulled up. The remaining three Spitfires were then attacked by patrolling IAF Spitfires flown by Slick Goodlin and John McElroy, volunteers from the United States and Canada respectively. All three Spitfires were shot down, and one pilot was killed. Two pilots were captured by Israeli soldiers and taken to Tel Aviv for interrogation, and were later released. Another was rescued by Bedouins, who handed him over to Egyptian forces, who turned him over to the RAF. Later that day, four RAF Spitfires from the same squadron escorted by seven No. 213 Squadron RAF and eight No. 6 Squadron RAF Hawker Tempests went searching for the lost planes, and were attacked by four IAF Spitfires. The Israeli formation was led by Ezer Weizman. The remaining three were manned by Weizman's wingman Alex Jacobs, and American volunteers Bill Schroeder and Caesar Dangott. The Tempests found they could not jettison their external fuel tanks, and some had non-operational guns. Schroeder shot down a British Tempest, killing pilot David Tattersfield. Weizmann severely damaged a British plane flown by Douglas Liquorish, but his own plane was lightly damaged by RAF pilot Brian Spragg. Two other British aircraft were lightly damaged during the engagement. The battle ended after the British wiggled their wings to be more clearly identified, and the Israelis eventually realized the danger of their situation and disengaged, returning to Hatzor Airbase.\[156\] [158]

An RAF salvage team was deployed to recover the wrecks of the aircraft that had been shot down. Two were discovered inside Egypt, and it was later confirmed by local Arabs that Israeli troops had visited the crash sites, removed various parts from the wrecks, and buried the other aircraft. Tattersfield's Tempest was found north of Nirrim, four miles inside Israel. Tattersfield was initially buried near the wreckage, but his body was later removed and reburied at the British War Cemetery in Ramla.\[156\]

In response, the RAF readied all Tempests and Spitfires to attack any IAF aircraft they encountered and bomb IAF airfields, but Air HQ refused to authorize retaliation. However, the Air Ministry announced that RAF aircraft had been instructed to view any IAF planes over Egypt as hostile. At Hatzor Airbase, the general consensus among pilots, most of whom had flown with or alongside the RAF during World War II, was that the RAF would not allow the incidents to go without retaliation, and would probably attack the base at dawn the next day. That night, in anticipation of an impending British attack, some pilots decided not to offer any resistance and left the base. At dawn, a number of pilots were strapped into the cockpits of Spitfires, preparing to repel a retaliatory attack. However, British commanders refused to authorize any retaliation.\[156\]
British diplomacy in support of the Arabs

Britain, which at the time was one of the major powers in the Middle East, supported the Arabs.\[118\] The reasons for this was laid out in a British staff memo which stated "No solution of the Palestine problem should be proposed which would alienate the Arab states. If one of the two communities had to be antagonised, it was preferable, from the purely military angle, that a solution should be found which did not involve the continuing hostility of the Arabs; for in the that event our difficulties would not be confined to Palestine, but would extend throughout the whole of the Middle East".\[159\] The diplomat Sir John Toutbeck wrote:

"We [and the Arabs] are partners in adversity on this question. A Jewish state is no more in our interest than it is in the Arabs.... Our whole strategy in the ME is founded upon holding a secure base in Egypt, but the usefulness of the base must be gravely impaired if we cannot move out of it except through a hostile country".\[160\]

Moreover, it was an article of faith for most British policy-makers that most Jews were Communists, and that Israel would be bound to become a Communist state, thus giving the Soviet Union a toe-hold in the Middle East.\[160\] For these reasons, the British in the months before May 1948 did their best to encumber and block partition.\[160\] Trygve Lie wrote in his memoirs with some anger:

"Great Britain had placed the Palestine matter before the Assembly with the declared conviction that agreement between the Arabs and Jews was unattainable. This did not deter the British representative, [Colonial Secretary] Arthur Creech Jones, from informing the Assembly that Britain would give effect only to a plan accepted by the Arabs and the Jews.... The British approach proved to be not in accord, in my opinion with the either the letter or the spirit of the partition plan. The United Kingdom could not progressively turn over authority to the Palestine Commission as the Assembly resolution provided, but only abruptly and completely on 15 May. Neither did it "regard favourably any proposal by the Commission to proceed to Palestine earlier than two weeks before the date of the termination of the Mandate". London would not permit the formation of the militia which the Assembly's resolution called for, nor would it facilitate frontier delimitation. The Assembly had further recommended that the United Kingdom endeavour to evacuate by February 1 a seaport and hinterland in the area of the Jewish state adequate to provide facilities for immigration".\[160\]

General Sir Alan Cunningham wrote to Creech Jones at this time to complain "It appears to me that H.M.G.'s policy is now simply to get out of Palestine as quickly as possible without regard to the consequences in Palestine".\[160\]

In February 1948, the British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin assured the Jordanian Prime Minister Tawfiz Abu al-Huda of British support for a Jordanian invasion once the British left Palestine.\[161\] British officials regarded the prospect of an Arab invasion favorably as offering an excellent chance to overturn the UN partition resolution and cut Israel "down to size".\[162\] Bernard Burrows of the British Foreign Office's Middle East Department wrote:

"It is tempting to think that Transjordan might transgress the boundaries of the United Nations' Jewish state to the extent of establishing a corridor across the Southern Negev joining the existing Transjordan territory to the Mediterranean and Gaza. This would have immense strategic advantages for us, both in cutting the Jewish State, and therefore Communist influence, off from the Red Sea and by extending up to the Mediterranean the area in which our military and political influence is predominant by providing a means of sending the necessary military equipment etc. into Transjordan other than by the circuitous route through Aqaba".\[147\]

On May 20, Bevin informed Baron Inverchapel, the British Ambassador to the United States:

"I do not (repeat not) intend in the near future to recognise the Jewish State and still less to support any proposal that it should become a member of the United Nations. In this connection I hope that even through the Americans have recognised the Jewish State de facto they will not commit themselves to any precise recognition of boundaries. It might well be that if the two sides ever accept a compromise it
would be on the basis of boundaries differing from those recommended in the Partition Plan of the General Assembly.\[147\]

In this regard, the British launched a sustained diplomatic offensive to have the United Nations recognize all of the areas taken by the Arabs as belonging to those Arab states, especially Jordan and to reduce the borders of Israel to being more or less what the Peel Plan of 1937 had advised.\[147\]

In the early days of the war, the British delegation at the UN blocked all efforts at a ceasefire (which was felt to hurt the Arabs, who winning the war at this point more than the Israelis) and because of fears that Article 39 of the Chapter 7 of the UN Covenant might involve sanctions against the Arab states.\[163\] The British changed position on the ceasefire in the spring of 1948 when the Arab armies were in possession of substantial clunks of Palestine with the Egyptians holding much of the Negev and the Jordanians holding a large section of central Palestine.\[163\] Sir Ronald Ian Campbell, the British Ambassador to Egypt was instructed by Bevin to tell the Egyptian government after the first ceasefire:

"It might be presumed that the period of truce will be utilised by the Jews to establish an effective administration not only in those parts of their November State which are behind the military lines, but also in the Arab areas which they have occupied, such as the Central and Northern Galilee. If the Arabs are to be in a position to bargain on equal terms, it is essential that they should establish some real authority in the areas behind the lines occupied by their forces. This is particularly important in the area to the south of the Egyptian front line. The greater part of this area was awarded to the Jews last November and the Jewish settlements there are still holding out and presumably maintaining contact with Tel Aviv. We shall have great difficulty in supporting the Arab claim to retain this part of Palestine unless it can be shown that it is in fact and not in name only under Arab administration during the truce...."\[164\]

Finally as part of the diplomatic effort to support the Arab war effort, the British supported an arms embargo, which was felt to favour the Arabs more than the Israelis.\[165\] The British reasoning behind the arms embargo was that it was long it was in place, the United States would be prevented from supplying arms to Israel, and if the embargo were lifted the United States could supply vastly greater number of weapons to the Israelis than the British could supply arms to the Arabs.\[165\]

**UN Resolution 194**

In December 1948, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 194 which declared (amongst other things) that in the context of a general peace agreement "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so" and that "compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return." The resolution also mandated the creation of the United Nations Conciliation Commission. However, parts of the resolution were never implemented, resulting in the Palestinian refugee crisis.

**Weapons**

Largely leftover World War II era weapons were used by both sides. Egypt had some British equipment; the Syrian army had some French. German and British equipment was used by Israel.\[166\]
### Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Arab armies</th>
<th>IDF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanks</td>
<td>Matilda tanks, R-39s, FT-17s, R35s, Panzer IVs (dug in and used stationarily by Egypt), Fiat M13/40, Sherman M 4, M-22, Vickers MK-6.</td>
<td>Cromwell tanks, H39s, Sherman M4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>Mortars, 15 cm sIG33 auf Pz IIs, 25 mm anti-tank guns on Bren carriers, improvised self-propelled guns used by Syrians in 1948-49, 65 mm mountain guns on Lorraine 38L chenillettes, 2-pounder anti-tank guns, 6-pounder anti-tank guns.</td>
<td>Mortars, 2-inch (51 mm) British mortars, 65 mm French howitzers (Napoleonchiks), 120 mm French mortars, Davidka mortars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft</td>
<td>Spitfires, T-6 Texans, C-47 Dakotas, Hawker Hurricanes, Avro Ansons.</td>
<td>Spitfires, Avia S-199s, B-17 Flying Fortresses, P-51 Mustangs, C-47 Dakotas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Arms</td>
<td>Lee Enfield rifles, Bren Guns, Sten guns, MAS 36s.</td>
<td>Sten guns, Mills grenades, Karabiner 98k (Czech copies), Bren Guns, MG-34 Machine guns, Thompson submachine guns, Lee Enfield rifles, Molotov cocktails, PIAT anti-tank infantry weapon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Aftermath

#### 1949 Armistice Agreements

In 1949, Israel signed separate armistices with Egypt on 24 February, Lebanon on 23 March, Jordan on 3 April, and Syria on 20 July. The Armistice Demarcation Lines, as set by the agreements, saw the territory under Israeli control encompassing approximately three-quarters of Mandate Palestine. This was about one-third more than was allocated to the Jewish State under the UN partition proposal. The armistice lines were known afterwards as the "Green Line". The Gaza Strip and the West Bank were occupied by Egypt and Jordan respectively. The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization and Mixed Armistice Commissions were set up to monitor ceasefires, supervise the armistice agreements, to prevent isolated incidents from escalating, and assist other UN peacekeeping operations in the region.

#### Casualties

Israel lost 6,373 of its people, about 1% of its population in the war. About 4,000 were soldiers and the rest were civilians. The exact number of Arab losses is unknown but is estimated at between 8,000 and 15,000.

#### Demographic outcome

During the 1947-1948 Civil War in Mandatory Palestine and the 1948 Arab–Israeli War that followed, around 750,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes. In 1951, the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine estimated that the number of Palestinian refugees displaced from Israel was 711,000. This number did not include displaced Palestinians inside Israeli-held territory. More than 400 Arab villages, and about ten Jewish villages and neighbourhoods, were depopulated during the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, the British census in 1946 had listed only 467,000 Muslim Palestinians in the entire British Mandate (although there was some controversy as to how thorough that census was).

The causes of the 1948 Palestinian exodus are a controversial topic among historians. The Palestinian refugee problem and the debate around the right of their return are also major issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Arab Palestinians have staged annual demonstrations and protests on 15 May of each year.
popularity and number of participants in these annual al Nakba demonstrations has varied over time. During the al-Aqsa Intifada after the failure of the Camp David 2000 Summit, the attendance at the demonstrations against Israel increased.

During the 1948 War, around 10,000 Jews were forced to evacuate their homes in Palestine or Israel, but in the three years following the war, 700,000 Jews settled in Israel, mainly along the borders and in former Arab lands. Around 136,000 came from the 250,000 displaced Jews of World War II. About another 270,000 came from Eastern Europe. The bulk of the rest—around 300,000 people—constituted the first wave of a total of 750,000 or more Jews who over the course of the next thirty years would flee from the Arab world.

**Historiography**

After the war, Israeli and Palestinian historiographies differed on the interpretation of the events of 1948. In the West the majority view was of a tiny group of vastly outnumbered and ill-equipped Jews fighting off the massed strength of the invading Arab armies. It was also widely believed that the Palestinian Arabs left their homes on the instruction of their leaders. In 1980, and the opening of the Israeli and British archives, Israeli historians started giving new insights on them. Particularly, the role played by Abdullah I of Jordan, the British government, the Arab aims during the war, the balance of force and the events related to the Palestinian exodus have been nuanced or given new interpretations. Some of them are still hotly debated among historians and commentators of the conflict today.

**Maps**

- Arab invasion 15 May 1948
- Operation AYIN 22 December 1948-7 January 1949

**Notes**

[118] Karsh 2002, p. 72
[121] Karsh 2002, p. 56
[125] Karsh 2002, p. 60
[129] Ramot David - Israel Airfields (http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/israel/ramat_david.htm)
[134] Mordechai Weingarten
[135] *The Palestine Post: State of Israel is Born* (1948)
[139] Karsh 2002, p. 64
[144] Herzog and Gazit, 2005, pg. 86
[147] Karsh 2002, p. 76
[151] Cowell, Alan (November 2, 1991). "THE MIDDLE EAST TALKS: REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK; Syria Offers Old Photo To Fill an Empty Chair" (http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CED5D1638F931A35752C1A967958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all). *The New York Times*. Retrieved 2008-12-28. "In recent years, several members of the group known by the British as the Stern Gang have acknowledged responsibility for the killing. Mr. Shamir, who was a member of the Stern Gang, has declined to discuss the killing, and one of his spokesmen has said he had no role in it."
[152] Karsh 2002, p. 68
References


• Morris, Benny (1994), *1948 and after; Israel and the Palestinians*


• JVL: Casualties in Arab-Israeli Wars (http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/casualties.html)

Further reading


• Flapan, Simha (1987), *'The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities'*, Pantheon Books, New York.


**Fiction**

• *The Hope* by Herman Wouk, a historical novel that includes a fictionalized version of Israel's War of Independence.

**External links**

• Overview of The 1948 Israeli War of Independence (documentary) (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHmBiATUono)


• About the War of Independence (http://www.knesset.gov.il/holidays/eng/independence_day_war.htm)

• United Nations: System on the Question of Palestine (http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/)

• Israel War of Independence (First Arab-Israeli War) (http://www.zionism-israel.com/dic/War_of_Independence.htm)

• Timeline: Israel War of Independence (First Arab-Israeli War) (http://www.zionism-israel.com/his/Israel_war_independence_1948_timeline.htm)

• History of Palestine, Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm)

• Palestinian viewpoint concerning the context of the 1948 war (http://www.zmag.org/shalom-meqa.htm)

• The BBC on the UN Partition Plan (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/middle_east/israel_and_the_palestinians/key_documents/1681322.stm)

• The BBC on the Formation of Israel (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/v3_ip_timeline/html/1948.stm)

• Israeli War of Independence: an autobiographical account by a South African participant (http://israeliwarofindependence.blogspot.com/)

• Israel and the Arab Coalition in 1948 (http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ssfc0005/Israel and the Arab Coalition in 19481.html)

