



## ON: The Partition and The War of Independence

### The Partition Plan

On November 29, 1947, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 called for the partition of the British-ruled Palestine Mandate into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Jewish state was to have three segments; Jerusalem was to be an international zone.



After the UN announced the plan on November 29, 1947, violence broke out almost immediately. The first large-scale assaults began on January 9, 1948, when approximately 1,000 Arabs attacked Jewish communities in northern Palestine. By February of that year, the British said so many armed Arabs from neighboring countries had infiltrated they lacked the forces to turn them back.

In the first phase of the war, lasting from November 29, 1947 until April 1, 1948, Palestinian fighters, with help from volunteers from neighboring countries, took the offensive. The Jews suffered severe casualties while passage along most of their major roadways was disrupted.

The UN blamed the Arab side for the violence. The UN Palestine Commission was never permitted by the Arabs or British to go to Palestine to implement the partition resolution.

Arab leaders were blunt in taking responsibility for starting the war. Jamal Husseini, the Arab Higher Committee's spokesman, told the Security Council on April 16, 1948:

*The representative of the Jewish Agency told us yesterday that they were not the attackers, that the Arabs had begun the fighting. We did not deny this. We told the whole world that we were going to fight.*

### The War of Independence

The UN never suspended or rescinded Resolution 181, and on May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was established. Less than 24 hours after the declaration was made, five Arab armies (Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon and Iraq) invaded the new Jewish state. In what became known as Israel's War of Independence, the poorly equipped Israel Defense Forces (IDF) repelled the invaders in fierce fighting, which lasted some 15 months and claimed over 6,000 Jewish lives — nearly one percent of the country's Jewish population at the time.

During the first few months of 1949, with the war coming to a close, the UN oversaw direct negotiations between Israel and each of the invading countries (except Iraq, which has refused to negotiate with Israel to date). These negotiations resulted in armistice agreements that reflected the war's outcome. Accordingly, Israel controlled the coastal plain, the Galilee, and the Negev; Jordan controlled Judea and Samaria (the "west bank" of the Jordan River); Egypt controlled Gaza; and the city of Jerusalem was divided, with Jordan controlling the eastern part (including the Old City) and Israel controlling the western half.