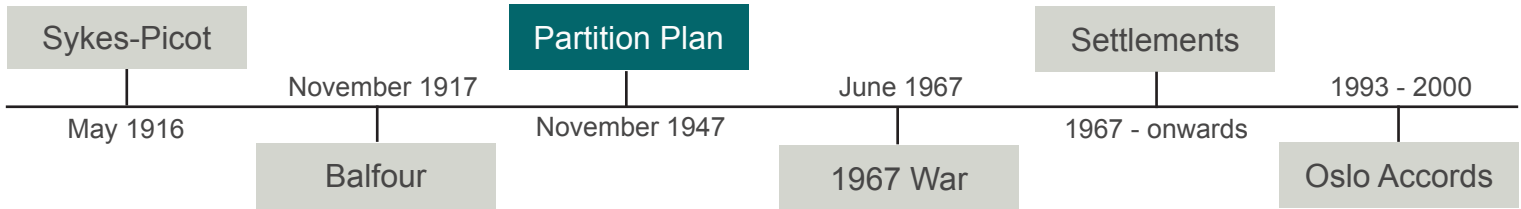


Arab-Israeli Relations



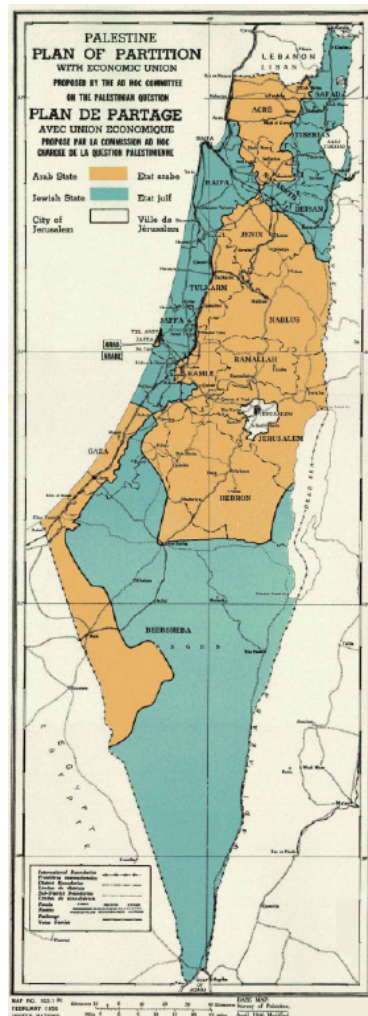
1947 Partition Plan and 1948 War of Independence

Prepared by Anna Siodlak, Research Associate

Following Britain’s announcement that it intended to terminate its mandate over Palestine in 1947, a plan to partition Palestine into two states joined by an economic union was devised and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 181, November 1947).¹ The plan proposed:

- a Jewish State covering 56.47% of Mandatory Palestine (excluding Jerusalem) with a population of 498,000 Jews and 325,000 Arabs;
- an Arab State covering 43.53% of Palestine, with 807,000 Arab inhabitants and 10,000 Jewish inhabitants;
- an international trusteeship regime in Jerusalem, where the population was 100,000 Jews and 105,000 Arabs; and
- religious and minority rights protection, including free access to and the preservation of Holy Places;
- an Economic Union between the two states including a free trade area, joint monetary system, the joint administration of main services, and equal access to water and energy resources.

Neither the Arab delegation nor the Jewish Agency was satisfied with the plan. The former contested the validity of the resolution and called for the is-



The 1947 United Nations Partition Plan sought to extricate Britain from Palestine. Map courtesy of Stephen Sizer.

sue to be raised by the International Court of Justice, while the latter complained about the territorial and immigration restrictions attached to the plan. Protests and violence ensued, preventing the formal implementation of the plan.

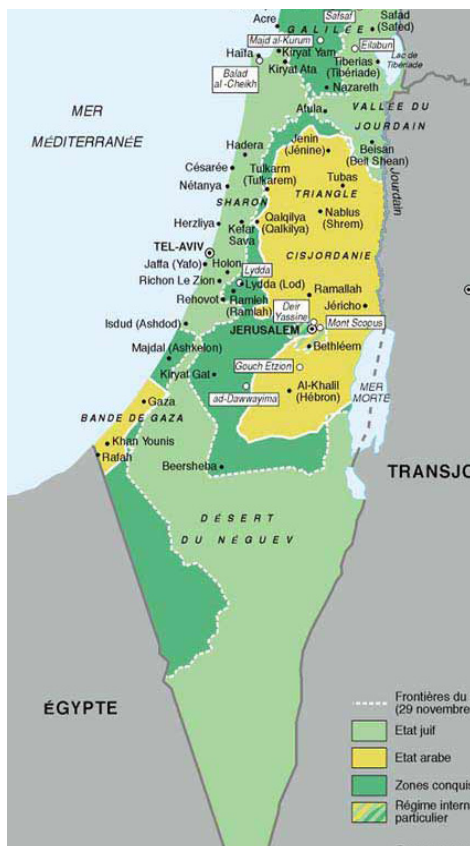
The Nakba/War of Independence

On 14 May 1948, the day of the termination of the Britain’s mandate in Palestine, the Jewish Agency declared the establishment of the State of Israel as per the UN Partition Plan.

On 15 May 1948, a coalition of Arab forces from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan invaded Israel. Although the Arab coalition initially made strong advancements, Israel soon fought back. Between May 1948 and January

1949, Israeli forces destroyed 370 Palestinian villages. 750,000 Palestinians living in Israel and parts of the territory UN designated as an Arab State became refugees who retreated further into the West Bank and Gaza Strip or fled abroad to Leba-

¹ After a period of intense lobbying at the White House and suspected side deals to accept the plan, 33 states voted in favour of the plan with 13 against and 10 abstentions.



The solid white lines outline the 1949 armistice lines. Map courtesy of Le Monde Diplomatique (2004).

non, Jordan, Syria and further afield.² This period became known by the Arab world as the ‘Nakba’, or catastrophe.

The 1949 Armistice Agreements

On 16 November 1948, UN Resolution 62 called for an armistice to “eliminate the threat to the peace in Palestine” and to “facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace”.³

Each Arab state entered a bilateral General Armistice Agreement with Israel, marking the end of the first Arab-Israeli war.

The two key agreements (Egypt, 24 February 1948 and Jordan, 3 April 1948) mapped out temporary demarcation lines defining Israel and Palestine. The agreements stipulated that such lines should “not be construed in any sense as a political or territorial boundary” and “no military or political advantage

should be gained”.⁴ However, the original partition lines stipulated in the UN plan were recreated to reflect territory gained by Israel during the war. As a result of the agreements, Egypt and Jordan took control of the Gaza Strip and West Bank respectively. This arrangement continued until 1967 when Arab forces attempted to regain the territory lost to the Armistice lines.



Refugees fleeing the 1947 War in Palestine. Photo courtesy of UN-RWA.

² I. Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*. (Cambridge University Press, 2006). pp. 135-138.

³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 62. (16 November 1948). Available: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/scres062.htm>. 02.09.14.

⁴ Egyptian-Israeli General Armistice Agreement. Article IV & V. (24 February 1949). Available: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/arm01.asp. 02.09.14. Jordanian-Israeli General Armistice Agreement. Article II (3 April 1949). Available: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/arm03.asp. 02.09.14.



Anna Siodlak

Anna is a Research Associate with the West Asia – North Africa Institute, where she focuses on mechanisms for achieving Arab integration and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Before joining the WANA Institute, Anna was based at a development organisation in the region where she launched a number of initiatives including discussion groups on current affairs and career mentoring sessions for students. She holds a Bachelor of International Relations and is completing a Master’s degree in Global Politics at the London School of Economics, specialising in international relations of the Middle East and human security.