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SECURITY COUNCIL
1948: ARAB-ISRAELI WAR
TOPIC GUIDE

MID-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SECURITY COUNCILS
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SECURITY COUNCIL

1948: Arab-Israeli War

THE DATE IS 18 May 1948

On 29 November 1947, General Assembly Resolution 181 was passed, setting forth the path for independence of the Palestinian territories from under British mandate. The Palestinian Mandate will be fully terminated, with the removal of all British forces as soon as possible, but no later than 1 August 1948. The resolution called for the partition of the territory into two distinct state governments, on Jewish, and one Arab, and there will be an international regime for the city of Jerusalem.1 Virtually instantaneously after the passage of this resolution, fighting broke out between the Yishuv–the Jewish people–and the Arabs. Between 29 November 1947 and 1 April 1948, the Arab Palestinians, bolstered in number by the armies of Transjordan, Egypt, Syria, and even some British soldiers, were on the offensive, attempting to block the implementation of Resolution 181.2 David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Yishuv and their militaries, declared during this time that the Jews of Palestine must hold their ground. He was also able, with the support of American Jews and Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union, to secure weapons agreements to arm the Yishuv and required military service of all able Jews.

Arabs during this time have also been accusing the Yishuv of beginning a sort of ethnic cleansing of Arab Palestinians. The Baldat al-Sheikh massacre took place on 31 December 1947, killing up to 70 Palestinians; the Sa'sa' massacre on 14 February 1948, when 16 houses were blown up and 60 people lost their lives; and the Deir Yassin massacre on 9 April 1948, when about 110 Palestinian men, women and children were slaughtered.3 Days later, Arab forces attacked a Jewish convoy headed for Hadassah hospital, killing 79.4

International groups are beginning to call the period between 29 November 1947 and 1 April 1948 phase one of this Arab-Yishuv war. Since 1 April, the Haganah, the organized forces under Ben-Gurion, have mounted a counter offensive, turning the tides of the war. During the month of April, the UN Security Council has passed

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[1] General Assembly Resolution 181:
https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/038/88/pdf/nr003888.pdf?token=Fb5KXJiQoyNPmKFFYe&fe=true

[2] Israel's War of Independence
https://embassies.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/history/Pages/Israels%20War%20of%20Independence%20-%201947%20-%201949.aspx

[3] https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/5/23/the-nakba-did-not-start-or-end-in-1948

[4] https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Israeli-wars

Resolutions 42, 43, 44, 46, and 48 concerning the Palestine Question.[5] [6] All of these resolutions focus on calling for a cessation of aggression and a return to negotiations for the partition of the Palestinian Mandate. We appear to be entering into a third stage of the war. Four days ago, on 14 May 1948, the British fully withdrew from Palestine and David Ben-Gurion declared independence for the State of Israel. The Yishuv, now organized as Israel in what we will now call the Arab-Israeli War, have developed a provisional government under Ben-Gurion and the Haganah. The fledgling state of Israel has been invaded by five armies–those from Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, fighting alongside the Arab Legion that the Palestinians have organized under. Egypt initiated on 15 May with a heavy air campaign, and was quickly followed by the other armies. Israel faces potential total annihilation at the hands of vastly superior arms, artillery, and air power. Meanwhile, it is estimated that approximately 400,000 Arabs have been displaced in and from the Palestinian territories, with more expected. The Security Council has been convened for an emergency session today, 18 May 1948, to determine an international course of action for this war.

UNSC Non-permanent Member States: Argentina, Colombia, Canada, Ukrainian SSR, Syria, Belgium, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Israel, Egypt, Transjordan

Permanent members: Republic of China, France, US, UK, USSR

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[5] Resolutions 42, 43, 44:
https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/047/68/pdf/nr004768.pdf?token=zHmN6iNPzM25xQlUfs&fe=true
[6] Resolutions 46, 48
https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/047/71/pdf/nr004771.pdf?token=H927B23115JyTHPF5K&fe=true
Additional Resources for Arab Israeli War:
https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/background-and-overview-israel-war-of-independence
https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Israeli-wars