

NAKBA

The Process of Palestinian Dispossession



Palestinians flee Jaffa

Only days after the fall of Haifa, the Jewish forces turned their full attention on Jaffa despite its being an all-Arab city outside the area allocated to the Jews by the UN Partition Plan; a heavy and indiscriminate mortar bombardment of the city and the flight of Jaffa's Arab leadership, combined with the news of the brutality of Zionist forces at Deir Yassin, led the city's population to flee the city. Most left in dangerous and overcrowded boats, many meeting a tragic end by drowning on the way.

Also in the spring of 1948, Jewish forces launched operations to secure the Galilee. Yigal Allon commanded "Operation Yiftach" with the strategy that the simplest and best way of securing the frontier was by clearing the area completely of all Arab forces and civilians. In the case of Safad, Jewish forces attacked the surrounding villages in order to demoralize its population before assaulting the town itself, at which point the residents of the district took flight.



The last British troops leave Palestine, 14 May 1948

All this took place under the indifferent eye of the British authorities who, after tilting the scales firmly in favor of the Zionists during their occupation of Palestine, adopted a policy of non-interference in the conflict despite their supposed responsibility for law and order in their Mandate.

After the ignominious withdrawal of British forces in May 1948 and the first Israeli engagements with the regular Arab armies, the expulsions continued. Lydda and Ramle, two Arab towns strategically placed on the road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, came under attack in July 1948 despite being squarely within the land allocated to Arabs in the UN Partition Plan. King Abdullah's Arab Legion, although

in a position to come to the defense of the towns, chose not to confront the Israeli forces. Over 60,000 Palestinians were expelled from the towns and were forced to walk towards the lines of the Arab Legion.

In the six months before Britain abandoned Palestine, half of the Palestinian population had been forced from their homes.

"Yigal Allon asked Ben-Gurion what was to be done with the civilian population. Ben-Gurion waved his hand in a gesture of 'drive them out.' 'Driving out' is a term with a harsh ring. Psychologically, this was one of the most difficult actions we undertook. The population of Lydda did not leave willingly. There was no way of avoiding the use of force and warning shots in order to make the inhabitants march the ten or fifteen miles to the point where they met up with the Arab Legion."

-Yitzhak Rabin, Service Diary, published in the New York Times, 23 October 1979.

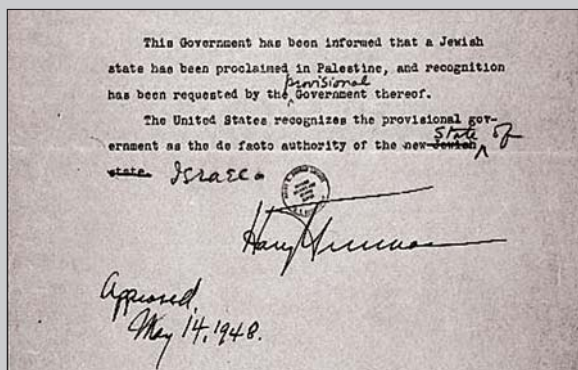
The End of the Mandate

The Zionists, having exploited their alliance with the British to its fullest before turning against them to expel them from Palestine, had made a new and powerful friend to replace them in the form of US President Harry Truman. The US State Department had been working feverishly to negotiate an alternative to war in Palestine through a postponement of an Israeli declaration of statehood. In direct contradiction to the efforts of his own administration, the President secretly informed Chaim Weizmann – the same man who had manipulated the British into support of Zionism – that he would recognize such a declaration if it was made.



President Truman and Weizmann at the White House in 1948

This assurance allowed the Zionists to declare their independence in the full knowledge that the American government would support them; their state was recognized by the United States within hours of its proclamation. The ability to ignore the pressures placed upon them by the international community thanks to unconditional American support has been one of the most important factors in Israeli policy ever since.



The cable from the US recognizing Israel only 11 hours after its declaration