

1947-49



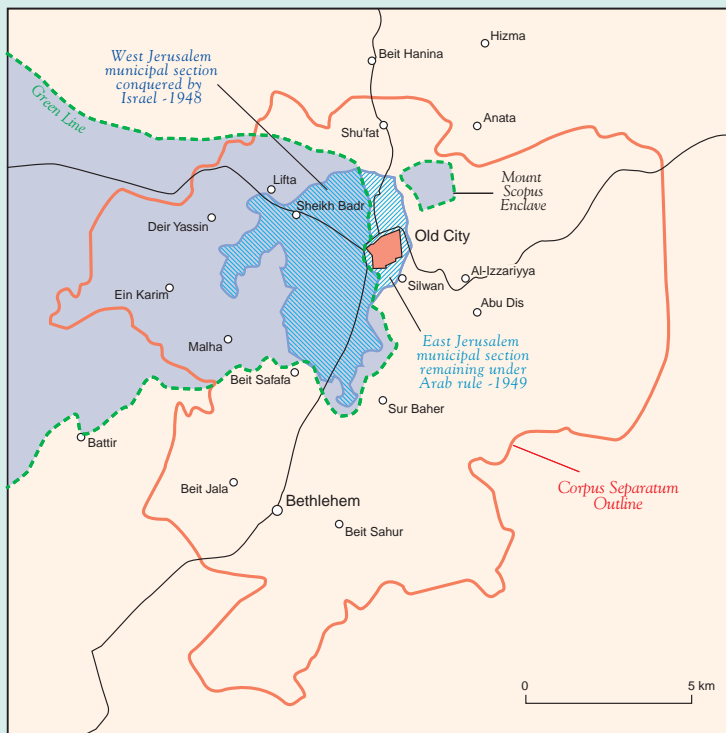
Selim Effendi Al-Husseini

Mayor of Jerusalem at the end of the Ottoman rule up to his death in 1917

Sultan Abdel Aziz Bin Mahmud II issued an Ottoman decree establishing the first Jerusalem municipality in 1863.

In April 1947, the UN established a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to investigate the situation in Palestine and propose a solution. The committee published a majority and a minority report containing different proposals. In Nov. 1947, the UNGA voted by 33-13 with 10 abstentions for the majority scheme (UN Res. 181), recommending the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state with an international enclave comprising Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The Palestinians (two-thirds of the population and owning most of the land) rejected the resolution. The ensuing disturbances culminated in the first Arab-Israeli war, after the Jewish Agency declared the establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948 in the part of Palestine allocated to the Jews in UN Res. 181.

UN Partition Plan, 29 Nov. 1947



The balance of power was very unequal with a well-equipped and trained Zionist army fighting against poorly armed Palestinian resistance groups, and many Palestinian civilians fled in panic after Jewish forces committed a series of massacres in their villages.

Before the entry of the Arab armies, the Zionist forces launched two offensives - one from Tel Aviv and one from Jerusalem itself (Dec. 1947-May 1948) - which resulted in the conquest of West Jerusalem and the corridor leading to the coast - in violation of the UN Partition Resolution. Until today the international community, incl. the US, has never explicitly recognized Israeli sovereignty over even West Jerusalem.

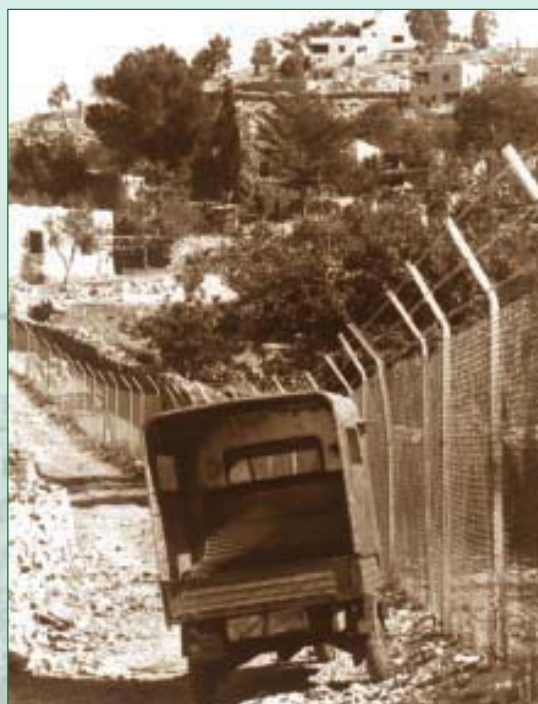
The War of 1948 and After

During the course of the War of 1948, Jewish forces captured much of the territory assigned to the proposed Arab state, incl. 85% of Jerusalem (mainly in the city's western part and surrounding neighborhoods). The Jordanian Arab Legion took control of the West Bank, incl. 11% of the eastern part of Jerusalem (incl. the Old City and adjacent villages). The remaining 4% of the Jerusalem area was considered no-man's land in which the UN headquarters were established.

Some 64,000-80,000 Palestinians were forcibly driven out of West Jerusalem and the villages in the immediate vicinity. In June 1948, their property (incl. 10,000 homes, furniture, and businesses) came under the control of the Israeli 'Custodian of Absentee Property'. Some 40 Palestinian villages in and around Jerusalem were depopulated and many of them destroyed.

The 1949 cease-fire agreement between Jordan and Israel formally divided the city into Jordanian-controlled East and Israeli-controlled West Jerusalem. In 1950, the Israeli government passed the 'Absentee Property Law', which transferred the ownership of 'left' property to the Jewish state.

On 2 Feb. 1949, Israeli PM David Ben-Gurion unilaterally declared that Israeli-held (West) Jerusalem was no longer occupied territory but an integral part of the Israeli state, and on 13 Dec. 1949, West Jerusalem was illegally declared the capital of Israel.



Israeli-Jordanian border at Beit Safafa



New Gate