

Fragmentation & Occupation

1948-1967



Palestinian man in Jaramana Refugee Camp, Damascus Syria, 1948

The Partition Plan led to immediate hostilities between Palestinians and Jews. Well-armed Zionist militia forces mobilized, systematically depopulating Palestinian villages so that before the British had even retreated from their role as a Mandate power, 300,000 Palestinians had already been made refugees. As the British Mandate in Palestine came to an end, on May 15, 1948, Zionist leaders proclaimed the State of Israel. This prompted neighbouring Arab states (Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq) to invade Israel, turning the internecine conflict that had been raging from the date of the UN's partition into an intra-state war. The result was an Israeli victory, whereby Israel captured territory beyond that stated in the initial UN partition plan. The 1949 armistice line that ended hostilities came to be known as the Green Line. An additional 400,000 Palestinian refugees fled or were forced to leave their homes during this time, marking the birth of the refugee crisis. In violation of international law, Israel immediately closed its borders and refused to allow the refugees to return to their homes.

1947-1949

With this British reaction, the path had been set for al-Nakba, or the Palestinian catastrophe, of 1948. After the horrors of the Holocaust and against the landscape of a broken Europe, the reality in which Palestinians were fighting for their freedom had irrevocably shifted. Unwilling and unable to hold on to Mandate Palestine, or to sustain their contradictory commitments to both the Zionist forces and the Palestinians, the British government passed the fate of Palestine to the recently formed United Nations. In 1947, the UN General Assembly voted to partition the territory into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. This was the first attempt to formally divide Palestine and sever part of it to the Jewish community. The UN apportioned 56% of Palestine to Jewish settlers, who only formed about one-third of the population and owned less than 6% of the land. Keeping with their opposition to Zionist aspirations in their land, Palestinians and surrounding Arab states rejected the proposed partition, arguing that the UN had no right to carve up their homeland.



Palestinian girl and old man displaced in 1948



Palestinian Prisoners of the Ramla Invasion, July 12-13 1948



Palestinians being Displaced

1964-1967

In the wake of the establishment of the Israeli state, Palestinians began mobilising to liberate Palestine and return to their homeland. In 1964, the Arab League formed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), an umbrella organization that centralized disparate Palestinian factions into a single manageable entity. The PLO's goal was to dismantle the colonial Zionist project through armed struggle and to declare Palestine an independent state. Three years later, in 1967, Israel pre-emptively carried out an attack against Egypt in an escalation that drew the wider region into war. Over the course of six days, Israeli forces seized East Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, and the Golan Heights from Syria.



Teachers Hoisting the Israeli Flag while School Children Sing the Israeli National Anthem

The establishment of the State of Israel on Palestinian land marked the culmination of the Zionist project. At a time when the world was entering a period of decolonization, the European Zionist project had successfully settled Jews from all over the world in Palestine and declared the territory their national home. The effect was the dispossession and transfer of much of the indigenous population, its dispersal throughout the globe, and the denial of its collective right to self-determination. Israel's establishment also meant the geographic division of Palestine and its erasure from the world map. The assumption by the colonial powers that Palestinians were not a people deserving of a state had become a reality. The Gaza Strip fell under Egyptian administration and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, was annexed by Jordan. Palestinians who managed to remain on their land in Israel were placed under military rule for nearly two decades and denied equal citizenship with Israeli Jews. This martial rule over the Palestinians inside Israel formed the foundation of a legal framework that has since ensured the systematic discrimination of Palestinians under Israeli rule in different forms - from curtailed movements, to tiered ID systems and limited civil rights - for the past seven decades.



Members of Arab Delegation at the Arab League Summit in Cairo, 1964

With the occupation of Palestinian territories, Zionism extended beyond state formation within Israel's borders, and instead took a radical step toward the maximalist Zionist goal of creating a Greater Land of Israel. Inherent in this approach is an ideological commitment to controlling maximum land with minimum Palestinians in order to sustain Israel's Jewish majority even within expanded territorial borders. Following the capture of the territories, Israel commenced a process of gradual colonization and settlement of Palestinian lands which continues today. The military regime which oversees these captured territories is one where Palestinians are denied basic human rights, such as freedom of movement, physical safety, access to healthcare, and right to property. The processes of displacement, ethnic cleansing and demographic engineering which we continue to see in Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories today can be traced back to the early days of the Zionist project.



Israeli Tanks Advancing on the Golan Heights, June 1967

Known as *al-Naksa*, or the setback, Israel's expansive land grab was a watershed moment in Middle Eastern history. In less than a week, Israel had expanded its reach into new territories and brought the entire land of Palestine under its direct control, creating in the process another wave of Palestinian refugees. This war marked the beginning of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories beyond the Green Line, one that has lasted half a century.



Israeli Defence Minister and Central Command at the Entrance of Bethlehem, June 1976