

Palestine 1948
Graduate Students
Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Rothberg International School
Spring 2013 – Hillel Cohen
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The war of 1948 has shaped the history of modern Middle East more than any other single event. The establishment (and survival) of the state of Israel despite Arab efforts to avert it, on one hand, and the prevention of establishment an Arab state in Palestine while creating the Palestinian refugee problem, on the other, are the main lasting consequences of this war.

Naturally enough, Zionists and Arabs see the events of 1948 rather differently (leaving alone the internal debates within each camp). Zionists view the result of the war as a fulfillment of a dream to regain Jewish sovereignty in the holy land after 2000 years of Diaspora, and a realization of their natural right to freedom and statehood, acknowledged by the international community after the Holocaust. Arabs, generally speaking, see the war as the culmination of a colonialist endeavor in which the Jews accomplished their idea of transferring the Arabs of Palestine, with the consent of the West who aimed to disunite the Arab nation.

Debates on the real intentions of the Jewish forces during the war, as well as the reasons to the collapse of the Palestinian society, still exists in both scholarly and political writing. These debates touch the very core of Palestinian and Zionist narratives, the self-image of each society and the way they portray themselves to the outer world. Studying the events of 1948 is therefore rather problematic, taking into consideration that (almost) each of us carries with him his beliefs, previous knowledge, views, and to a certain degree his prejudices. Nevertheless, in this course we will try to understand – not necessarily to adopt - both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on the war, including its military, ethical, political and international dimensions.

Background and general readings on 1948

Cohen, Michael Joseph, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982). **E97 C678**

Gelber, Yoav. *Palestine, 1948: War, Escape and the Emergence of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (Brighton: Sussex AP, 2001). **E990.12 G314**

Karsh, Efraim, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: the Palestine war 1948* (Oxford: Osprey 2002). **E327.56 K18**

Khalaf, Issa, *Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration, 1939-1948* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991). **JMS: DS 113.7 K43**

Lorch, Nathanel, *The Edge of the Sword : Israel's War of Independence, 1947-1949* (Jerusalem: Massada Press, 1961). **E990.12 L865**

Masalha, Nur. *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992). **E325.21 M394**

Milstein, Uri. *History of the War of Independence* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996-1998). **E990.12 M637**

Morris, Benny, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987). **E325.21 M875**

----- *1948: The First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2008).

Rogan Eugene and Avi Shlaim (eds.), *Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). **E990.12 R730**

Week 1 Historical Background: Zionists and Arabs under the mandate.

1. Israel Kolatt, "The Zionist Movement and the Arabs", in Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (eds.) *Essential Papers on Zionism* (N.Y.: NYU UPress, 1996), 617-647. **933.608 R371**
2. W. F. Abboushi, [The Road to Rebellion: Arab Palestine in the 1930's](#) *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3. (Spring, 1977), pp. 23-46. **[Access through JSTOR]**

Week 2 The International arena: the way to partition

The British decision to withdraw from Palestine; the international response; the partition plan; the US and USSR support for the plan.

1. Arnold Krammer, "Soviet Motives in the Partition of Palestine, 1947-48", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2. (Winter, 1973), pp. 102-119. **[Access through JSTOR]**

2. Evan M. Wilson, "The [USA] Palestine Papers, 1943-1947", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 4. (Summer, 1973), pp. 33-54.
[Access through JSTOR]
3. Alan Cunningham, "Palestine-The Last Days of the Mandate", *International Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 4. (Oct., 1948), pp. 481-490.
[Access through JSTOR]

Week 3 Jewish and Arab responses to the Partition

1. Jamal al-Husseini, "Palestine Partition Denounced", *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 10/15/47, Vol. 14:1, pp. 2-9.
2. Abba Hillel Silver, "Palestine Partition Acceptable", *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 10/15/47, Vol. 14:1, p10-15. [Both access through EBSCO]

Week 4 The first stage of the war – "the civil war".

Main features and moves; the struggle over the roads; Jewish and Arab terror; the Arab and Jewish forces.

1. David Tal, "The Forgotten War: Jewish-Palestinian Strife in Mandatory Palestine December 1947-May 1948", *Israel Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2000, Vol. 6 Issue 3/4, pp. 3-22. [Access through EBSCO]
2. Fauzi Al-Qawuqji, "Memoirs, 1948 Part I", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4. (Summer, 1972), pp. 27-58.
[Access through JSTOR]

Week 5 Turning points in the "civil War"

Crucial moments December 1947 – May 1948 For Jews, Arabs and British.

1. Motti Golani, "The 'Haifa Turning Point': The British and the Civil War in Palestine", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Apr 2001, Vol. 37 Issue 2, p. 93-130.
[Access through EBSCO]
2. Walid Khalidi (ed.) "The Fall of al-Qastel", in "Selected Documents on the 1948 Palestine War", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3. (Spring, 1998), pp. 60-105 [Access through JSTOR]

Week 6 The birth of the refugee problem

The Causes for the Refuge Problem – first stage of the war

1. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987).
2. Matthew Hogan, “The 1948 Massacre at Deir Yassin Revisited”, *Historian*, Winter 2001, Vol. 63 Issue 2, p. 309-333. [**Access through EBSCO**]

The formal birth of Israel

Israeli Declaration of Independence: decision making and meaning to the future

1. Tuvia Friling and Ilan, Troen, “Proclaiming Independence: Five Days in May from Ben Gurion’s Diary”, *Israel Studies*, Spring 98, Vol. 3:1, pp. 170-195. [**Access through Muse**]
2. Elyakim Rubinstein, “The Declaration of Independence as a Basic Document of the State of Israel”, *Israel Studies*, Spring 98, Vol. 3 Issue 1, p. 195-211.
[**Both access through EBSCO**]

Week 7 The Arab war – May 15 onwards

The Arab invasion to Palestine; the aims of the invaders; the role of the Arab league; inter-Arab relations; the Muslim Brotherhood.

Screening: *The King and the Jews* [Videorecording] / produced by Jeremy Bennett (Great Britain: BBC).

1. Avi Shlaim *The Politics of Partition: King Abdullah, the Zionists, and Palestine, 1921-1951* (New York: Columbia UP, 1990).
2. Gamal Abdul Nasser; Walid Khalidi, “Nasser's Memoirs of the First Palestine War”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2. (Winter, 1973), pp. 3-32

[Access through JSTOR]

Week 8 Facing the Arab armies – Israel: military aspects.

Major operations; The Israeli army.

1. David Tal, “Between Intuition and Professionalism: Israeli Military Leadership During the 1948 Palestine War”, *Journal of Military History*, Jul. 2004, Vol. 68 Issue 3, p. 885-909. [Access through Muse]

Week 9 International intervention

The Truces; Count Bernadotte: his plan, his failure and his assassination; the armistice agreements; the UN resolutions.

Joseph Heller, “Failure of a Mission: Bernadotte and Palestine, 1948”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 14, No. 3. (Jul., 1979), pp. 515-534
[Access through JSTOR]

Week 10 “Ethnic cleansing”: or self Defense: The Debate over the Refugee Problem

The various reasons for flight; blocking the Return, UNRWA and its role; the role of the Arab states,

1. Ilan Pappé, “The 1948 Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 36:1 (2006), 6-20.
2. Shabtai Teveth, “Charging Israel with Original Sin”, *Commentary*, 88 (1989), pp. 24-33.

Week 11 Minorities in the war and the question of collaboration.

The Druze, the Bedouins; the Christians, the Communists

1. Laila Parsons, "The Palestinian Druze in the 1947-1949 Arab-Israeli War", *Israel Studies*, 2:1 (1997), pp. 72-93. [Access through Muse]

2. Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows: Palestinian Collaboration with Zionism 1917-1948* (Berkeley: University of California press, 2007), chap 9 and conclusion.

Week 12 The end of the War

Neil Caplan, “A Tale of Two Cities: The Rhodes and Lausanne Conferences, 1949”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3. (Spring, 1992), pp. 5-34.

Week 13 1948 today – history and memory

1. Ahmad H. Sa'di, “Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakbah as a Component of Palestinian Identity”, *Israel Studies*, 7:2 (Summer 2002), pp. 175-199. **[Access through Muse]**
2. Emmanuel Sivan, “To Remember Is to Forget: Israel's 1948 War”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 28, No. 2. (Apr., 1993), pp. 341-359.
3. Hillel Frisch, “Ethnicity or Nationalism? Comparing the Nakba Narrative amongst Israeli Arabs and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza”, *Israel Affairs*, 9:1, 165 – 184.

Screening: “The Inner Tour” by Ra’anan Alexandrowitch (Israel, 2001).