

Florence Model United Nations

Research Guide

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Committee: Historical Security Council

Topic: Exploring ceasefire options between Israel and its neighboring states (Six day war June 5, 1967)

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I. Introduction

The 6 day war of 1967, an Arab-Israeli conflict that, combined with the establishment of the State of Israel, transformed the political landscape of the Middle East. Israel's new territory included the concession of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, Old City of Jerusalem, and Golan Heights; the status of these territories and the boundaries that surround them subsequently became a major point of contention in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Prior to this conflict these territories were owned and populated by a majority of Palestinian citizens. The tensions that lead to this conflict began before the first world war, when Jewish immigrants began settling in Palestine with the intent of creating a homeland for themselves. Further escalation was seen in the following years, with the British mandate in Palestine during the interwar period, and then the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. During the period from 1948 to the time we will be discussing, June of 1967 there were a series of crises and disputes that fuelled further stress on the relationship between Israel and its neighbouring states, leading to the outbreak of conflict.

Definition of Key Terms

- **“The Nakba” (from Arabic al-nakbah, “the catastrophe”):** The name given to the 1948 war of independence by the Palestinians because of the mass displacement of up to 750,000 Palestinians that resulted from the war, who were then banned from entering the new state of Israel again.
- **United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF):** The UN peacekeeping which had been deployed in the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip since the 1956 Suez Crisis

II. General Overview

Early Tensions (1940s)

- 1947: The United Nations proposes the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states on November 29. This leads to immediate clashes between Jews and Arabs in Palestine.
- November 30, 1947: Palestinian Arabs ambush a bus carrying Jewish passengers near Lod, marking one of the first violent incidents following the UN partition plan.
- December 2, 1947: The Arab Higher Committee announces a three-day strike against the partition plan, leading to riots in Jerusalem.

War of Independence (1948) or the Nakba

- April 9, 1948: Jewish paramilitaries destroy Deir Yassin village, killing about 100 people and sparking widespread panic among Palestinians.
- May 14, 1948: Israel declares independence as British forces withdraw from Palestine. Egypt launches an aerial assault on Tel Aviv; other Arab states join the conflict shortly after.
- February-July 1949: Armistice agreements are signed between Israel and each Arab state involved in the war. These agreements establish temporary borders but do not lead to formal peace treaties.

1956: Suez Crisis (Sinai War)

- October 29: Israel, along with Britain and France, invaded Egypt in response to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. International pressure, including from the United States and the Soviet Union, forced the withdrawal of the invading forces.

Escalation leading up to June 5th:

- November 1966: an Israeli strike on the village of Al-Samū' in the Jordanian West Bank left 18 dead and 54 wounded
- April 1967: During an air battle with Syria, the Israeli Air Force shot down six Syrian MiG fighter jets.
- May: Soviet intelligence reports indicated that Israel was planning a campaign against Syria, and, although inaccurate, the information further heightened tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbors.
- May 14, 1967: Nasser mobilized Egyptian forces in the Sinai;
- May 22: Nasser closed the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, thus instituting an effective blockade of the port city of Elat in southern Israel.
- May 30: King Hussein of Jordan arrived in Cairo to sign a mutual defense pact with Egypt, placing Jordanian forces under Egyptian command; shortly thereafter, Iraq too joined the alliance.

III. Major Parties Involved and their Views

Israel: As a new nation surrounded by hostile states, Israel sought to secure its borders and ensure its continued survival. Because of existential threats posed by its Arab neighbours, like

the blockade of the Straits of Tiran which threatened its economic lifeline, Israel was focused on striking first to maintain military superiority

Syria: Due to both ideological clashes and territorial disputes, Syria had a large stake in a war with Israel and due to this border clashes between the two nations were frequent. Syria acted as a key instigator of regional tensions due to the alliances it made with neighbouring Arab nations.

Jordan: Fearing being drawn into a conflict that could potentially destabilize it, Jordan maintained tentative bilateral relations with both Israel and other Arab nations despite immense pressure that it faced from Palestinian refugees that resided within its borders.

France: Historically, France had supported Jewish establishment of a homeland in Palestine, especially before 1948. However, due to colonial interests in North Africa, they eventually shifted to a more neutral or pro-Arab stance. They supplied weapons to both sides of the conflict.

England (United Kingdom): Through the Palestinian mandate and the Balfour declaration, Britain was a major supporter to the establishment of Israel. However, they faced pressure from the Arab nations with which they still maintained diplomatic relations, due to the colonial legacy interests in oil supplies. This was especially important in Egypt with the strategically important Suez Canal.

United States: Despite initially maintaining neutrality, the US became gradually more involved in the conflict as an ally to Israel, seeing it as a way to control the spread of Soviet influence in the Middle East.

Soviet Union: Supported various Arab nations through economic and military means as a way to counter Western influence. The USSR was also responsible for the transfer of false information regarding alleged concentrations of Israeli soldiers on the Syrian border in May of 1967.

IV. Relevant Documents and Articles

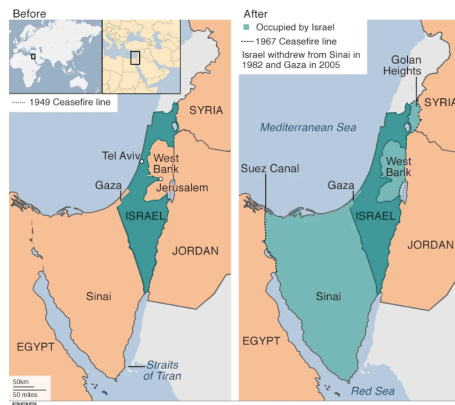
1. UN Resolutions:

- Resolution 181 (II): In 1947, the UN proposed a partition plan for Palestine, dividing the territory into Arab and Jewish states
<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-185393/>
- Resolution 194 Adopted in December 1948, this resolution addressed the status of Jerusalem and the issue of Palestinian refugees, stating that refugees who wish to return to their homes and live peacefully with their neighbors should be allowed to do so
<https://www.unrwa.org/content/resolution-194#>

2. Tripartite Declaration of 1950: Joint declaration from the United Kingdom, France and the United States of America that outlined a path towards peace in the middle east which was seen as acceptable to these countries
<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-209951/>
3. Balfour Declaration of 1917: An official statement made by the British government announcing their commitment to a Jewish national homeland in Palestine
https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125415/8008_Balfour_Declaration.pdf

V. Questions to Consider

- What role did the United Nations and other international bodies play in seeking a ceasefire during or after the conflict?
- How will potential solutions affect your state's regional and international standing
- How will potential solutions alter whatever stake and role your nation will have in the future
- Does your nation recognize the state of Israel
- How did Cold War tensions between the US and the Soviet Union influence the negotiation of a ceasefire?



VI. Conclusion

As delegates prepare to attempt finding a path towards lasting peace and security through an end to this conflict, you must consider the complex background that leads to this conflict. Furthermore, it is important that all information that is used is found from before June 1st, 1967, and that hindsight is used as minimally as possible to preserve the integrity of this committee's debate. While researching solutions to this conflict, consider the regional and global effects they will have and how they will affect your nation in the future as well as now.

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