







HISTORY OF ISRAEL


[WAR OF INDEPENDENCE — PART II: ARAB STATES INVADE]


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MAY 15 1948 ... Iraqi Forces Fail To Capture Kibbutz Gesher
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MAY 14 1948 ... Israel Declares Independence; US Recognizes Israel
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MAY 19-24 1948 ... Egyptian Battle to Capture Yad Mordechai
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MAY 20 1948 ... Syrian Army Stopped at Kibbutz Degania
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MAY 22-23 1948 ... Battle over Kibbutz Ramat Rachel
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MAY 28 1948 ... Jewish Quarter of the Old City Surrenders
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MAY 29 1948 ... Egyptians Advance On Tel Aviv; Stopped By Air Attack
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JULY 9-18 1948 ... Lod & Ramla Captured
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OCTOBER 15-22 1948 ... Be'ersheva Captured in Operation Yoav; Opens Negev to IDF
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MARCH 7-10 1949 ... Eilat Conquered in Operation Uvda

On the Jordanian front, the Arab Legion captured the Etzion bloc, the day before Independence. They then went on to Jerusalem, where the Arab Legion captured the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. The biggest threat to Western Jerusalem was the police station at Latrun, which the Arab Legion occupied and cut off Jerusalem. Repeated attempts to capture the station failed. Thankfully, an alternative path that bypassed Latrun was found, called the Burma Road.

After a failed ceasefire, a re-equipped IDF went on the offensive and captured Lod, Ramla, Nazareth, and the rest of the Galilee. After one more ceasefire, the Israelis — now with overwhelming force — overran most of the Egyptian Army, captured Be'er Sheva and opened the road to Eilat.

The human cost of independence was extremely high. Out of a population of 600,000 at the start of the war, 6,000 lost their lives.

EXCERPTS FROM ISRAEL'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

“ **THE STATE OF ISRAEL** will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; **it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or gender;** it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.... **WE EXTEND our hand** to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East. **WE APPEAL to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora** to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream – the redemption of Israel. ”

On May 14th, 1948, Israel declared its independence. A few hours later, the US recognized Israel. The next day, as the last British soldiers departed, bombs fell on Tel Aviv and Arab armies invaded from every border. In the North, the Lebanese Army seized the border crossing of Malkiyah. The Syrians attacked the area around the Sea of Galilee and advanced on Kibbutz Degania, where they were turned back. The Iraqis attacked across the Jordan River near the town of Besian, but were also forced to retreat.

The Egyptians advanced toward both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Their army was delayed five days by the defenders of Kibbutz Yad Mordechai. They eventually reached the area where Ashdod is located today and paused. The force headed for Jerusalem was stopped at Kibbutz Ramat Rachel. On May 29th, Israel launched a counter-offensive against the Egyptians, ending the threat to Tel Aviv.