

Israel-Syria Armistice Agreement

July 20, 1949

Preamble

The Parties to the present Agreement,

Responding to the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948, calling upon them, as a further provisional measure under Article 40 of the Charter of the United Nations and in order to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine, to negotiate an armistice;

Having decided to enter into negotiations under United Nations Chairmanship concerning the implementation of the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948; and having appointed representatives empowered to negotiate and conclude an Armistice Agreement;

The undersigned representatives, having exchanged their full powers found to be in good and proper form, have agreed upon the following provisions:

Article I

With a view to promoting the return of permanent peace in Palestine and in recognition of the importance in this regard of mutual assurances concerning the future military operations of the Parties, the following principles, which shall be fully observed by both Parties during the armistice, are hereby affirmed:

1. The injunction of the Security Council against resort to military force in the settlement of the Palestine question shall henceforth be scrupulously respected by both Parties. The establishment of an armistice between their armed forces is accepted as an indispensable step toward the liquidation of armed conflict and the restoration of peace in Palestine.
2. No aggressive action by the armed forces - land, sea or air - of either Party shall be undertaken, planned or threatened against the people or the armed forces of the other; it being understood that the use of the term "planned" in this context has no bearing on normal staff planning as generally practised in military organisations.
3. The right of each Party to its security and freedom from fear of attack by the armed forces of the other shall be fully respected.

Article II

With a specific view to the implementation of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948, the following principles and purposes are affirmed:

1. The principle that no military or political advantage should be gained under the truce ordered by the Security Council is recognised.
2. It is also recognised that no provision of this Agreement shall in any way prejudice the rights, claims and positions of either Party hereto in the ultimate peaceful settlement of the Palestine question, the provisions of this Agreement being dictated exclusively by military, and not by political, considerations.

Article III

1. In pursuance of the foregoing principles and of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948, a general armistice between the armed forces of the two Parties - land, sea and air - is hereby established.
2. No element of the land, sea or air, military or para-military, forces of either Party, including non-regular forces, shall commit any warlike or hostile act against the military or para-military forces of the other Party, or against civilians in territory under the control of that Party; or shall advance beyond or pass over for any purpose whatsoever the Armistice Demarcation Line set forth in Article V of this Agreement; or enter into or pass through the air space of the other Party or through the waters within three miles of the coastline of the other Party.
3. No warlike act or act of hostility shall be conducted from territory controlled by one of the Parties to this Agreement against the other Party or against civilians in territory under control of that Party.

Article IV

1. The line described in Article V of this Agreement shall be designated as the Armistice Demarcation Line and is delineated in pursuance of the purpose and intent of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948.
2. The basic purpose of the Armistice Demarcation Line is to delineate the line beyond which the armed forces of the respective Parties shall not move.
3. Rules and regulations of the armed forces of the Parties, which prohibit civilians from crossing the fighting lines or entering the area between the lines, shall remain in effect after the signing of this Agreement, with application to the Armistice Demarcation Line defined in Article V, subject to the provisions of paragraph 5 of that Article.

Article V

1. It is emphasised that the following arrangements for the Armistice Demarcation Line between the Israeli and Syrian armed forces and for the Demilitarised Zone are not to be interpreted as having any relation whatsoever to ultimate territorial arrangements affecting the two Parties to this Agreement.

2. In pursuance of the spirit of the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948, the Armistice Demarcation Line and the Demilitarised Zone have been defined with a view toward separating the armed forces of the two Parties in such manner as to minimise the possibility of friction and incident, while providing for the gradual restoration of normal civilian life in the area of the Demilitarised Zone, without prejudice to the ultimate settlement.
3. The Armistice Demarcation Line shall be as delineated on the map attached to this Agreement as Annex I. The Armistice Demarcation Line shall follow a line midway between the existing truce lines, as certified by the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation for the Israeli and Syrian forces. Where the existing truce lines run along the international boundary between Syria and Palestine, the Armistice Demarcation Line shall follow the boundary line.
4. The armed forces of the two Parties shall nowhere advance beyond the Armistice Demarcation Line.
5.
 - a. Where the Armistice Demarcation Line does not correspond to the international boundary between Syria and Palestine, the area between the Armistice Demarcation Line and the boundary, pending final territorial settlement between the Parties, shall be established as a Demilitarised Zone from which the armed forces of both Parties shall be totally excluded, and in which no activities by military or para-military forces shall be permitted. This provision applies to the Ein Gev and Dardara sectors which shall form part of the Demilitarised Zone.
 - b. Any advance by the armed forces, military or para-military, of either Party into any part of the Demilitarised Zone, when confirmed by the United Nations representatives referred to in the following sub-paragraph, shall constitute a flagrant violation of this Agreement.
 - c. The Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission established in Article VII of this Agreement and United Nations Observers attached to the Commission shall be responsible for ensuring the full implementation of this Article.
 - d. The withdrawal of such armed forces as are now found in the Demilitarised Zone shall be in accordance with the schedule of withdrawal annexed to this Agreement (Annex II).
 - e. The Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission shall be empowered to authorise the return of civilians to villages and settlements in the Demilitarised Zone and the employment of limited numbers of locally recruited civilian police in the zone for internal security purposes, and shall be guided in this regard by the schedule of withdrawal referred to in sub-paragraph d. of this Article.

6. On each side of the Demilitarised Zone there shall be areas, as defined in Annex III to this Agreement, in which defensive forces only shall be maintained, in accordance with the definition of defensive forces set forth in Annex IV to this Agreement.

Article VI

All prisoners of war detained by either Party to this Agreement and belonging to the armed forces, regular or irregular, of the other Party, shall be exchanged as follows:

1. The exchange of prisoners of war shall be under United Nations supervision and control throughout. The exchange shall take place at the site of the Armistice Conference within twenty-four hours of the signing of this Agreement.
2. Prisoners of war against whom a penal prosecution may be pending, as well as those sentenced for crime or other offence, shall be included in this exchange of prisoners.
3. All articles of personal use, valuables, letters, documents, identification marks, and other personal effects of whatever nature, belonging to prisoners of war who are being exchanged, shall be returned to them, or, if they have escaped or died, to the Party to whose armed forces they belonged.
4. All matters not specifically regulated in this Agreement shall be decided in accordance with the principles laid down in the International Convention Relating to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, signed at Geneva on 27 July 1929.
5. The Mixed Armistice Commission established in Article VII of this Agreement shall assume responsibility for locating missing persons, whether military or civilian, within the areas controlled by each Party, to facilitate their expeditious exchange. Each Party undertakes to extend to the Commission full co-operation and assistance in the discharge of this function.

Article VII

1. The execution of the provisions of this Agreement shall be supervised by a Mixed Armistice Commission composed of five members, of whom each Party to this Agreement shall designate two, and whose Chairmen shall be the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation or a senior officer from the Observer personnel of that Organisation designated by him following consultation with both Parties to this Agreement.
2. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall maintain its headquarters at the Customs House near Jisr Banat Ya'qub and at Mahanayim, and shall hold its meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary for the effective conduct of its work.

3. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall be convened in its first meeting by the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization not later than one week following the signing of this Agreement.
4. Decisions of the Mixed Armistice Commission, to the extent possible, shall be based on the principle of unanimity. In the absence of unanimity, decisions shall be taken by majority vote of the members of the Commission present and voting.
5. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall formulate its own rules of procedure. Meetings shall be held only after due notice to the members by the Chairman. The quorum for its meetings shall be a majority of its members.
6. The Commission shall be empowered to employ observers, who may be from among the military organisations of the Parties or from the military personnel of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, or from both, in such numbers as may be considered essential to the performance of its functions. In the event United Nations Observers should be so employed, they shall remain under the command of the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization. Assignments of a general or special nature given to United Nations Observers attached to the Mixed Armistice Commission shall be subject to approval by the United Nations Chief of Staff or his designated representative on the Commission, whichever is serving as Chairman.
7. Claims or complaints presented by either Party relating to the application of this Agreement shall be referred immediately to the Mixed Armistice Commission through its Chairman. The Commission shall take such action on all such claims or complaints by means of its observation and investigation machinery as it may deem appropriate, with a view to equitable and mutually satisfactory settlement.
8. Where interpretation of the meaning of a particular provision of this Agreement, other than the Preamble and Articles I and II, is at issue, the Commission's interpretation shall prevail. The Commission, in its discretion and as the need arises, may from time to time recommend to the Parties modifications in the provisions of this Agreement.
9. The Mixed Armistice Commission shall submit to both Parties reports on its activities as frequently as it may consider necessary. A copy of each such report shall be presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for transmission to the appropriate organ or agency of the United Nations.
10. Members of the Commission and its Observers shall be accorded such freedom of movement and access in the area covered by this Agreement as the Commission may determine to be necessary, provided that when such decisions of the Commission are reached by a majority vote United Nations Observers only shall be employed.

11. The expenses of the Commission, other than those relating to United Nations Observers, shall be apportioned in equal shares between the two Parties to this Agreement.

Article VIII

1. The present Agreement is not subject to ratification and shall come into force immediately upon being signed.
2. This Agreement, having been negotiated and concluded in pursuance of the resolution of the Security Council of 16 November 1948 calling for the establishment of an armistice in order to eliminate the threat to the peace in Palestine and to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine, shall remain in force until a peaceful settlement between the Parties is achieved, except as provided in paragraph 3 of this Article.
3. The Parties to this Agreement may, by mutual consent, revise this Agreement or any of its provisions, or may suspend its application, other than Articles I and III, at any time. In the absence of mutual agreement and after this Agreement has been in effect for one year from the date of its signing, either of the Parties may call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convoke a conference of representatives of the two Parties for the purpose of reviewing, revising or suspending any of the provisions of this Agreement other than Articles I and III. Participation in such conference shall be obligatory upon the parties.
4. If the conference provided for in paragraph 3 of this Article does not result in an agreed solution of a point in dispute, either Party may bring the matter before the Security Council of the United Nations for the relief sought, on the grounds that this Agreement has been concluded in pursuance of Security Council action toward the end of achieving peace in Palestine.
5. This Agreement, of which the English and French texts are equally authentic, is signed in quintuplicate. One copy shall be retained by each Party, two copies communicated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for transmission to the Security Council and the United Nations Conciliation Commission on Palestine, and one copy to the Acting Mediator on Palestine.

Done at Hill '132, near Mahanayim, on the twentieth of July nineteen forty-nine, in the presence of the Personal Deputy of the United Nations Acting Mediator on Palestine and the United Nations Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation.

For and on behalf of the Israeli Government

Signed

Lieutenant-Colonel Mordechai Makleff

Yehoshua Pelman

Shabtai Rosenne

For and on behalf of the Syrian Government

Signed

Colonel Fozi Selo

Lieutenant-Colonel Mohamed Nasser

Captain Afif Bizri

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Annex I

Map Delineating Armistice Demarcation Lines *(not reproduced here)*

Syrian Israeli Armistice Demarcation Line

1. From the point where the Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian border meets, MR 208.7-294.2, eastward to MR 212.8-294.7.
2. From MR 212.8-294.7, southward along the Wady Assal to "Marabout" Cheikh el Makhfi.
3. A line from "Marabout" Cheikh el Makhfi to "Marabout" Nabi Huda.
4. A line from Nabi Huda to MR 212.7-290.4.
5. From MR 212.7-290.4 to MR 212.4-290.2, thence southward along the Syrian-Palestinian border to point MR 211.0-276.8.
6. From MR 211.0-276.8 to a point on the Wady es Simadi, MR 210.9-276.7.
7. From MR 210.9-276.7, westward along the Wady es Simadi to intersection of trail MR 210.3-276.5.
8. Southward along trail to MR 209.9-272.6, by-passing Dardara to the east.
9. Westward to MR 209.7-272.6, a point on shoreline of Lake Hula.
10. Southward along shoreline to MR 209.2-271.7, mouth of Jordan River.
11. Northwest along western shoreline of Lake Hula to MR 208.5-272.9.
12. From MR 208.5-272.9, a line to MR 205.2-269.1.
13. From MR 205.2-269.1, a line to MR 208.8-265.0 on Jordan River.
14. Southward along Jordan River to MR 208.7-260.0.
15. From MR 208.7-260.0, a line to MR 208.5-258.2.
16. From MR 208.5-258.2, a line to MR 207.0-257.0.
17. From MR 207.0-257.0, a line to MR 207.4-256.0.
18. From MR 207.4-256.0, southward along the Syrian-Palestinian border to BP 61, MR 210.6-246.3.
19. From BP 61, eastward along the Syrian-Palestinian border to BP 62.

20. From BP 62, southward along the Syria n-Palestinian border to BP 66, MR 211.7-240.1.
21. 21, From BP 66, a line to a point on the eastern shoreline of Lake Tiberias, MR 209.6-239.0.
22. From MR 209.6-239.0, southward along shoreline of Lake Tiberias to MR 206.3-234.8.
23. From MR 206.3-234.8, southward to bend in road at MR 206.3-234.5, then southeast along the west bank of the railroad and the west side of the road to the Block House, MR 207.7-233.4.
24. From Block House, MR 207.7-233.4, a line along the road to the Yarmuk River, on the border, MR 209.5-232.2.

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Annex II

Withdrawal of Military and Para-Military Forces; Removal of Mines and Destruction of Permanent Fortifications

Reference Map Scale 1150, 000

1. The withdrawal of military and para-military forces of both Parties with all of their military impedimenta from the Demilitarised Zone, as defined by Article V of this Agreement (see Map), shall be completed within a period of twelve (12) weeks from the date of the signing of this Agreement.
2. Schedule of withdrawal of forces will be as follows:
 - a. First three (3) weeks, the military force occupying the sector from the Syrian-Palestinian border at the north-south to Ad Darbishiya, MR 211-277.
 - b. Second three (3) weeks, the military forces occupying the sector from El Hammam, MR 208.7-262.3, south to the Trans-Jordan frontier.
 - c. Remaining six (6) weeks, the military forces occupying the sector from Ad Darbishiya, MR 211-277, south to El Hammam, MR 208.7-262.3.
3. Removal of minefields and mines, and the destruction or removal of permanent fortifications in the Demilitarised Zone shall be completed in each sector by the end of the third, sixth and twelfth week respectively from the date of the signing of this Agreement.
4. In this connection, each Party is entitled to remove from the Demilitarised Zone its war material. In case it -does not choose to remove material used in fortifications, the Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission may require either side to destroy such material before leaving the area. The Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission may similarly order the destruction of such permanent fortifications which, in his view, ought not to remain in the Demilitarised Zone.

Annex III

Defensive Area (*See Attached Map*)

No military forces, other than those defined in Annex IV, will be authorised to remain or enter the area defined below:

- a. On the Syrian side: the area from the boundary to the north - south co-ordinate line 216.
- b. On the Israeli side: the area from the Israeli truce line to the north - south co-ordinate line 204, except that where the truce line is established in the Mishmar Hay Yarden salient, the defensive area shall be a distance of six (6) kilometres west from this truce line.
- c. Villages which are crossed by the lines defining the defensive area shall be entirely included in the defensive area.

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Annex IV

Definition of Defensive Forces

I. Land Forces.

1. These forces not to exceed:

a. Three (3) Infantry Battalions, each Battalion to consist of not more than 600 officers and enlisted men, its accompanying weapons not to exceed twelve (12) medium machine guns (M.M.G.'s) of a calibre not to exceed 8 min., six (6) 81 min. mortars, four (4) anti-tank guns not to exceed 75 min.

b. Six (6) Cavalry Squadrons for Syrian forces, each Squadron not to exceed 130 officers and enlisted men; and for Israeli, two (2) Reconnaissance Squadrons, each Squadron composed of nine (9) jeeps, and three (3) half-tracks, not armoured, its personnel not to exceed one hundred and twenty-five (125) officers and enlisted men.

c. Three (3) Field Artillery Batteries, each Battery not to exceed 110 officers and enlisted men. Each Battery to consist of four (4) guns of a calibre not to exceed 75 mm., and four (4) machine guns (M.M.G.'s) not to exceed 8 min.

d. Service units to the above forces not to exceed:

(i) One hundred (100) officers and enlisted men for supply purposes, not armed.

(ii) One (1) engineer company not to exceed two hundred and fifty (250) officers and enlisted men.

2. The following are excluded from the term "Defensive Forces": armour such as tanks, armoured cars, or any other armoured force carriers.

II. Air Forces.

In the areas where defensive forces only shall be allowed, the use of military aircraft shall be prohibited.

III. Naval Forces.

No naval force shall be allowed in the defensive area.

IV.

In the areas in which defensive forces only have to be maintained, the necessary reduction of forces shall be completed within twelve (12) weeks from the date on which this Agreement is signed.

V.

No traffic restriction is imposed on the transport used for the carrying of defensive troops and supplies within the area of defensive forces.

Explanatory Note by Acting Mediator Bunche, 26 June 1949.

"The question of civil administration in villages and settlements in the demilitarised zone is provided for, within the framework of an armistice agreement, in subparagraphs 5(b) and 5(f) of the draft article. Such civil administration, including policing, will be on a local basis, without raising general questions of administration, jurisdiction, citizenship and sovereignty.

"Where Israeli civilians return to or remain in an Israeli village or settlement, the civil administration and policing of that village or settlement will be by Israelis. Similarly, where Arab civilians return to or remain in an Arab village, a local Arab administration and police unit will be authorised.

"As civilian life is gradually restored, administration will take shape on a local basis under the general supervision of the Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission.

"The Chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission, in consultation and co-operation with the local communities, will be in a position to authorise all necessary arrangements for the restoration and protection of civilian life. He will not assume responsibility for direct administration of the zone."

Letter from Dr. Bunche to Foreign Minister Sharett, 26 June 1949.

"Dear Sir,

I have the honour to communicate with you further concerning the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations and especially with regard to my compromise proposal for a demilitarised zone. I consider the meeting of the delegations on 28 June to be a most crucial one. In my view agreement can be readily reached on the basis of the compromise proposal if each delegation will come to this meeting determined to give every reasonable assistance to the United Nations effort to achieve agreement between the two parties. On the other hand, agreement can and will be easily obstructed if either delegation, or both of them, should over-emphasise detail or have a legalistic position. I am confident that neither party will wish to bear responsibility for blocking agreement on any such specious basis.

"The provision for the demilitarised zone in the light of all circumstances is the most that can be reasonably expected in an armistice agreement by either party. Questions of permanent boundaries, territorial sovereignty, customs, trade relations and the like must be dealt with in the ultimate peace settlement and not in the armistice agreement.

"I would point out again that previous arrangements for demilitarised zones involving United Nations responsibility, as at al-'Auja, Government House and Mt. Scopus, have worked satisfactorily and have served to protect fully the interests and claims of rival parties pending final settlement. The proposed demilitarised zone in the agreement now

under negotiation will work equally well. The United Nations will ensure this since its honour and effectiveness will be involved.

"I may also assure both parties that the United Nations, through the Chairman of the proposed Israeli-Syrian Mixed Armistice Commission, will also ensure that the demilitarised zone will not be a vacuum or wasteland, and that normal civilian life under normal local civilian administration and policing will be operative in the zone.

"In this regard, I would point out that in view of the relatively small area involved and the limited number of settlements or villages in it, the administrative and policing problem is not at all a severe or greatly complicated one and can be readily solved. I would also point out that in the projected Mixed Armistice Commission both parties will have a continuing opportunity to discuss and agree upon details affecting this or any other aspect of the armistice agreement, and that the United Nations will find fully satisfactory any subsequent arrangement based on mutual agreement of the two parties. The sole function of the United Nations is to assist the parties in reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement and in giving them such help as they may mutually request in implementing and supervising the terms of the agreement.

"I call attention to the fact that in the Israeli-Transjordan Armistice Agreement, in Article V, paragraph c, and in Article VI, paragraph 2, the armistice demarcation lines agreed upon involved changes in the then existing truce lines, and that this was done in both cases without any question being raised as to the sovereignty over or the final disposition of the territory involved. It was taken for granted by all concerned that this was a matter for final peace settlement. The same applies to the provision for the al-'Auja zone in the Egyptian-Israeli Agreement. From the beginning of these negotiations our greatest difficulty has been to meet Israel's unqualified demand that the Syrian forces be withdrawn from Palestine. We have now, with very great effort, persuaded the Syrians to agree to this. I trust that this will not be undone by legalistic demands about broad principles of sovereignty and administration which in any case would be worked out in the practical operation of the scheme.

"In view of the foregoing, and my own firm conviction that the compromise proposal is reasonable and fair to both parties, may I present a strong appeal that the compromise proposal be accepted in essentials on 28 June without attempts at radical amendment.

"I have the honour etc.

Ralph Bunche Acting Mediator."

Source: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

<http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreign%20relations/israels%20foreign%20relations%20since%201947/1947-1974/israel-syria%20armistice%20agreement>

and The Avalon Project at Yale Law School,

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/arm04.htm>

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