


History of the Two-State Solution

PART ONE: up to the 1948 Nakba

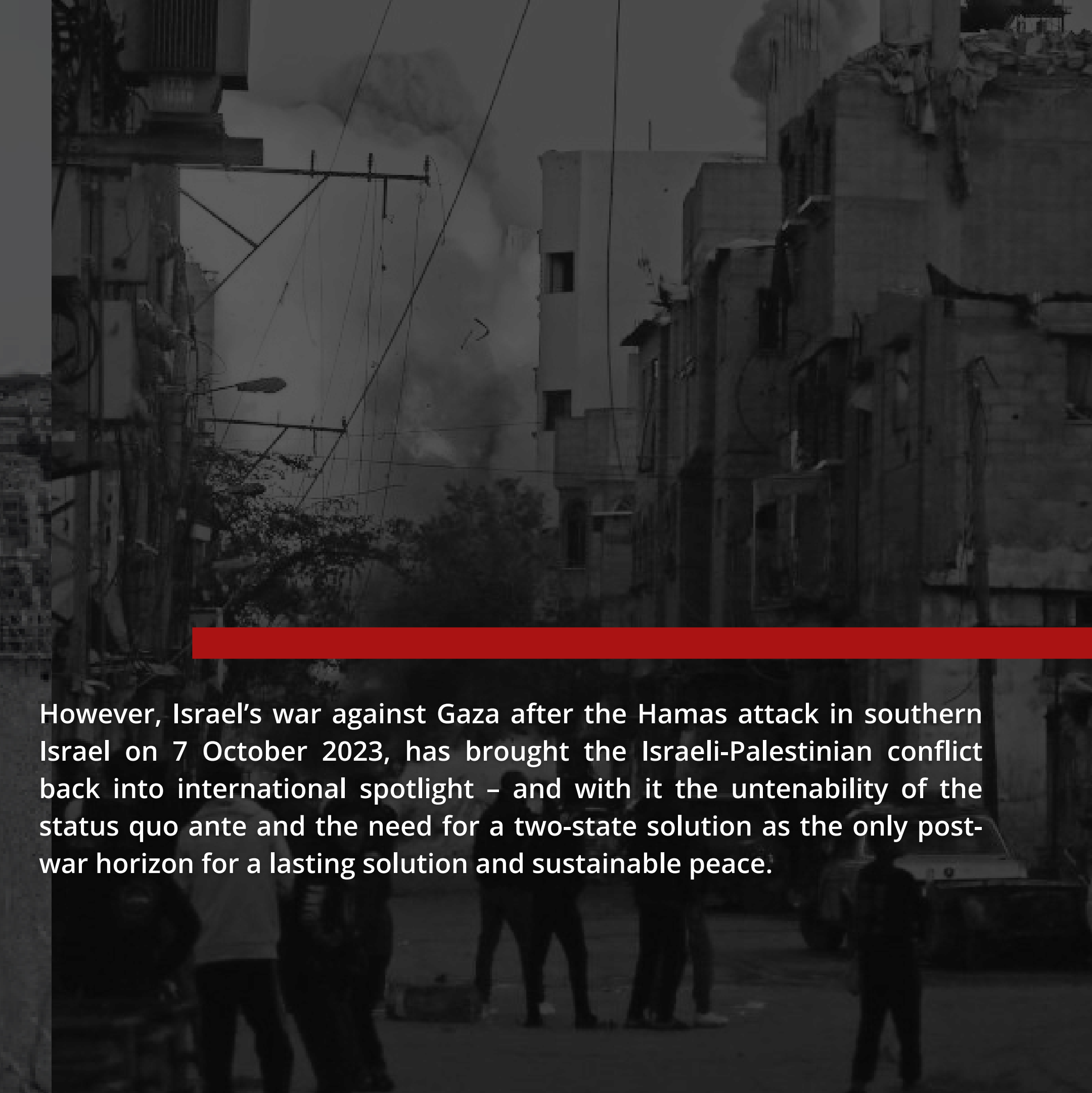




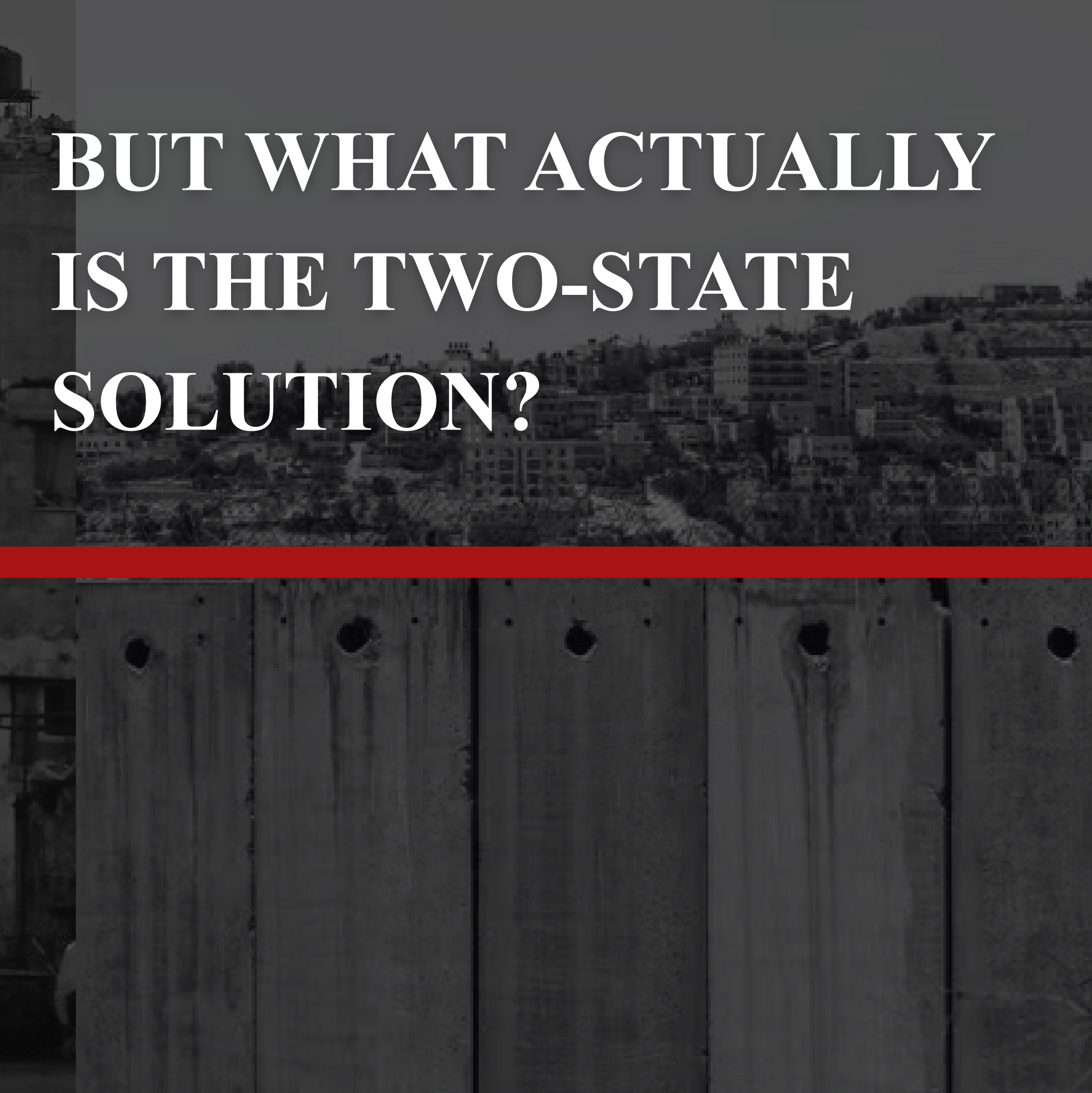
The two-state solution has long been the focus in negotiations to resolving the Palestine-Israel conflict, favored by the US, the EU, the UN, and a significant majority of states and organizations. It advocates “two states for two people”, i.e., a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel with both sides running their countries peacefully and independently.



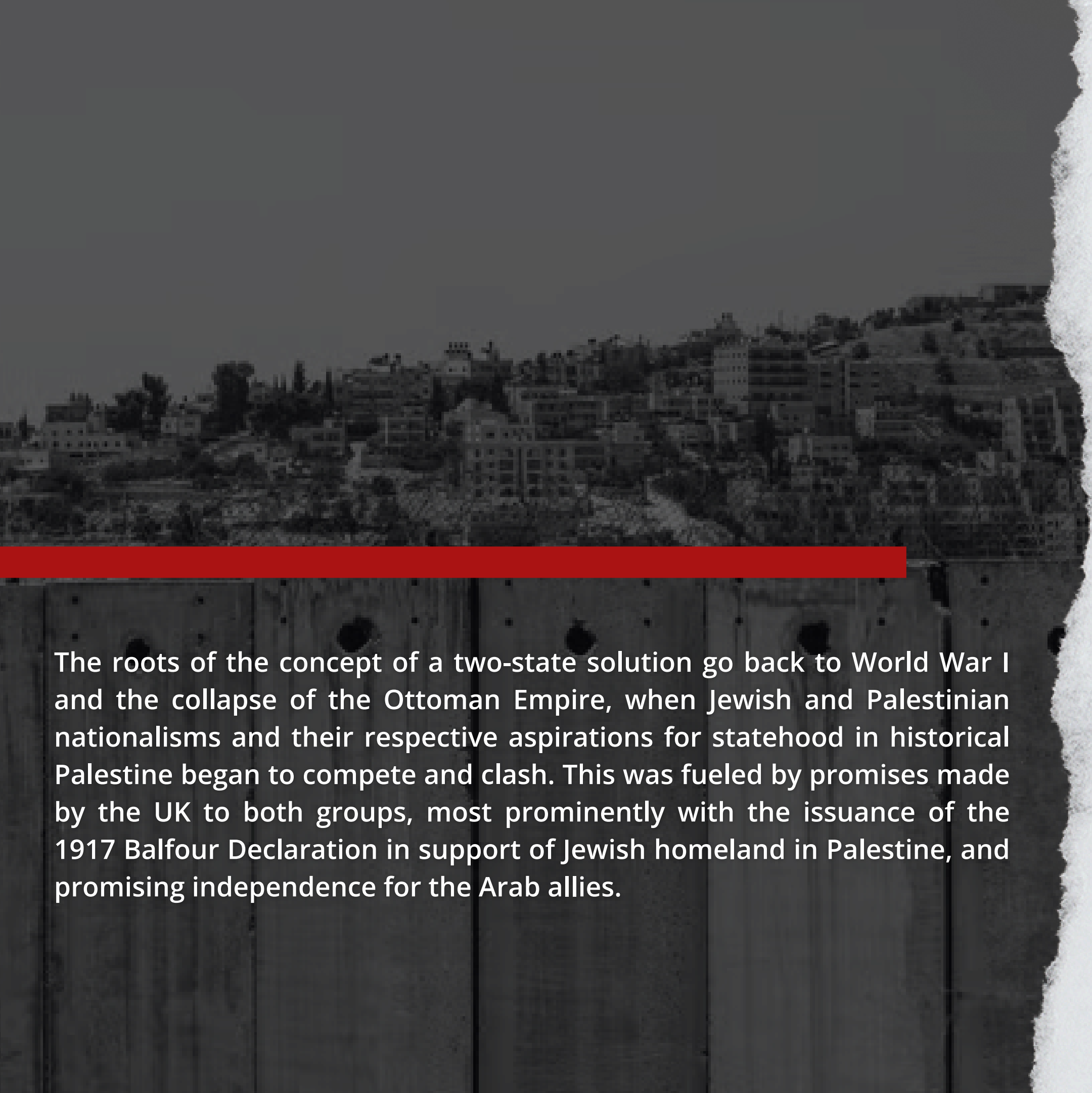
While widely considered the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, there have also been increasing voices that the two-state solution is on the verge of collapse, if not dead altogether. Indeed, it seemed to have become almost absent on the agendas of the international community, which has turned a blind eye to Israel's continuous policies that made a two-state solution increasingly impractical.



However, Israel's war against Gaza after the Hamas attack in southern Israel on 7 October 2023, has brought the Israeli-Palestinian conflict back into international spotlight – and with it the untenability of the status quo ante and the need for a two-state solution as the only post-war horizon for a lasting solution and sustainable peace.



**BUT WHAT ACTUALLY
IS THE TWO-STATE
SOLUTION?**



The roots of the concept of a two-state solution go back to World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, when Jewish and Palestinian nationalisms and their respective aspirations for statehood in historical Palestine began to compete and clash. This was fueled by promises made by the UK to both groups, most prominently with the issuance of the 1917 Balfour Declaration in support of Jewish homeland in Palestine, and promising independence for the Arab allies.

which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

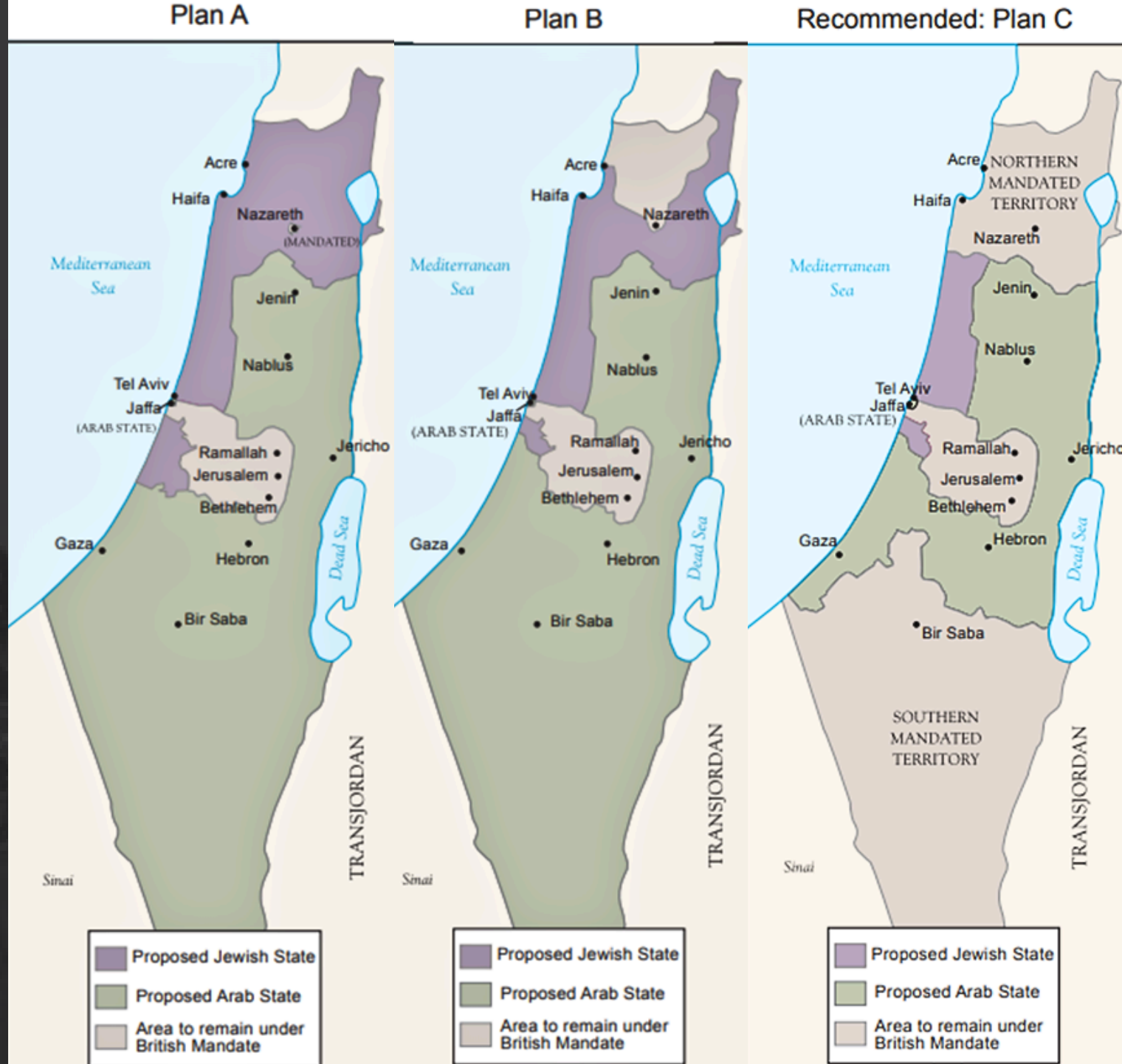
His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

The Balfour Declaration recognized the Jewish people's national right to self-determination, while only stating that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities." It was included in the League of Nations' British Mandate document in 1922.



Increasing Jewish immigration in the 1920s/1930s led to recurrent outbreaks of violence between Palestinians and Jews, and, subsequently, various British commissions of inquiry. All of them recommended limitations on immigration and land purchases as they caused the unrests. The 1937 Peel Commission was the first to propose a two-state solution, concluding that the two sides could not live in peace together in one state, and that Palestine should thus be partitioned into a Jewish and an Arab state.



The British government's 1939 MacDonal White Paper disclaimed any intention to create a Jewish state, placed restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchase, and envisaged an independent state in Palestine. In response, the Zionists launched a bloody anti-British and anti-Palestinian campaign and mobilized American Jewry who formulated the idea of a 'Jewish Commonwealth' in Palestine at the 1942 Biltmore Conference, endorsed by the US Congress and House of Representatives in 1944-1945.

The 1945 joint Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to examine the continued Jewish immigration to Palestine in the wake of the Holocaust proposed a UN trusteeship, which, however, was rejected, as was the subsequent 1946 Morrison-Grady Plan for a federal solution in which the British Mandate would become a trusteeship of a country divided into Jewish and Arab provinces. At the 1946 Palestine Roundtable Conference in London, Arab delegates proposed a unitary state of Palestine in which Jews would have full civil rights, which the Zionists discarded.



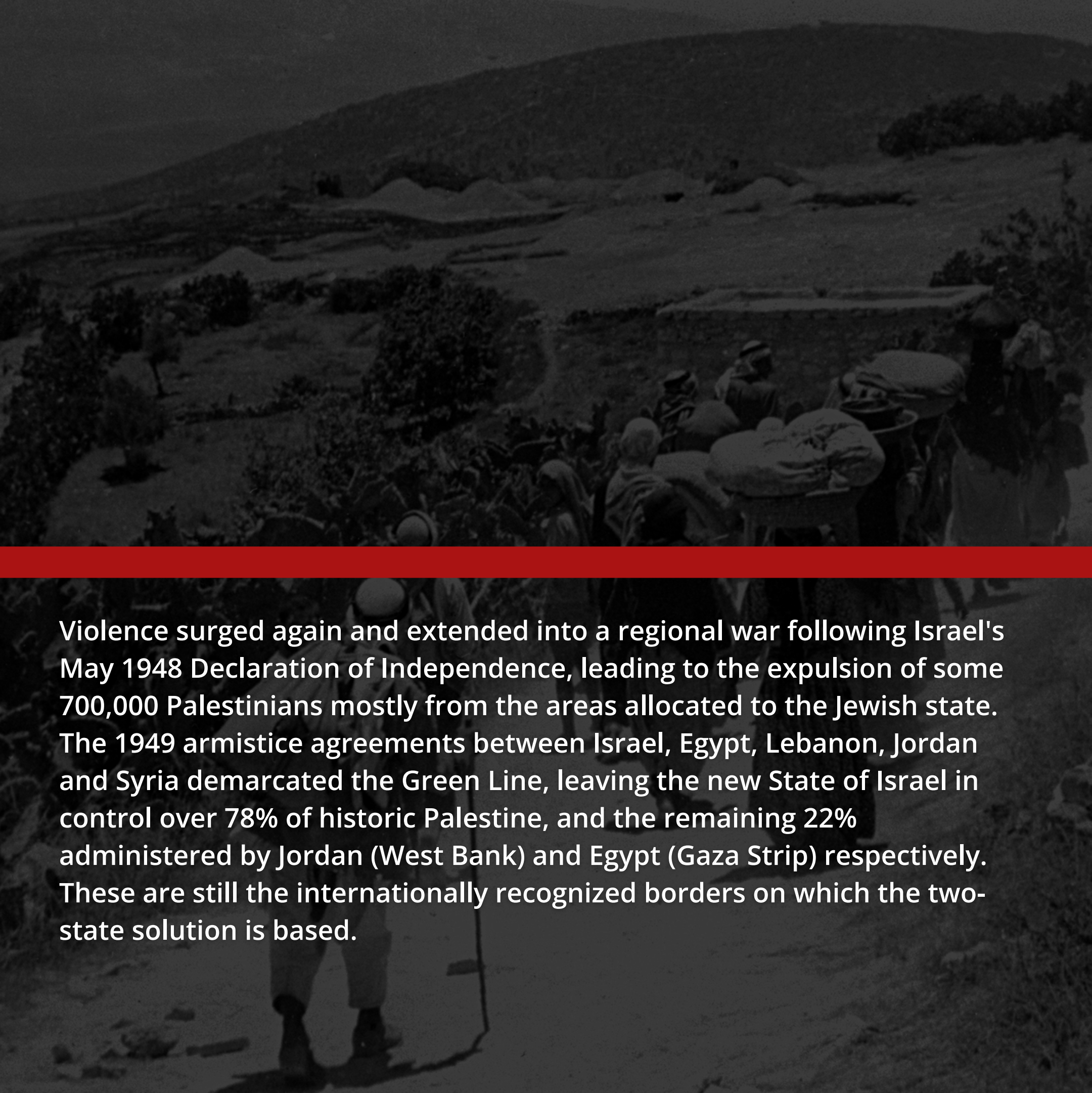
UNSCOP Majority Plan, 1947



In February 1947, Britain announced that it would cease its Mandate, handing the “problem” over to the UN, which then appointed a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to propose solutions. UNSCOP published its report in September, with a minority of the members recommending a federal solution and the majority partition. The UN General Assembly adopted the latter on 29 November 1947 in Resolution 181 (the Partition Plan), which is widely considered the “original” two-state solution. It divided Palestine into Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem and Bethlehem as a corpus separatum under a special international regime.

Most Jews welcomed the plan as an achievement (i.e., international recognition of a Jewish state in Palestine). Palestinians and other Arabs rejected it as fundamentally unjust as the plan granted the Jews 56.47% of the territory at a time when they possessed less than 7% of the privately owned land, with a population of 498,000 Jews and 325,000 Arabs, and the Palestinians only 43.53% of the land with 807,000 Arab inhabitants and 10,000 Jewish inhabitants.





Violence surged again and extended into a regional war following Israel's May 1948 Declaration of Independence, leading to the expulsion of some 700,000 Palestinians mostly from the areas allocated to the Jewish state. The 1949 armistice agreements between Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria demarcated the Green Line, leaving the new State of Israel in control over 78% of historic Palestine, and the remaining 22% administered by Jordan (West Bank) and Egypt (Gaza Strip) respectively. These are still the internationally recognized borders on which the two-state solution is based.