APL MUN'25

UNGA - DISEC

Agenda: Deliberation upon Statehood with special emphasis on Middle East

Meeting Date: November 29, 1947

Greetings, Delegates

It is with great enthusiasm that we welcome you to the simulation of the United Nations General Assembly set during a pivotal moment in modern international diplomacy: November 29, 1947 — the day the UNGA voted on Resolution 181 (II), recommending the partition of Mandatory Palestine into independent Arab and Jewish states, with Jerusalem under international administration.

Our simulation will place you, the delegates, directly in the heart of the international debate that shaped the Arab-Israeli conflict. The British Mandate over Palestine is nearing its end. Tensions between Jewish and Arab communities have escalated sharply following years of migration, violence, and diplomatic stalemates. The world is watching as the UNGA attempts to forge a path toward peace — or at least, a division of responsibility.

You are tasked with thinking diplomatically but critically — balancing morality, strategy, and the interests of your assigned country. As the situation develops in the room, historical constraints may give way to alternate outcomes. Your negotiation, policy proposals, and alliances will shape not only the vote itself but potentially the future of the Middle East.

Also, this Guide is a starting point but in no way is it the only source of research you must do to win.

See you at the Conference :D

Idhant Singh Chauhan
Vijayasriram
Shruthika Balaji

About the Committee:

UNGA – United Nations General Assembly

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is the principal deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the United Nations, encompassing all 193 Member States, each with an equal vote. It is the central forum for multilateral discussion of international issues covered by the UN Charter, and it plays a foundational role in shaping global norms, fostering international cooperation, and addressing pressing challenges to peace, security, and development.

The General Assembly operates under formal Rules of Procedure and functions through its six main committees, plenary meetings, and special sessions. Though it does not hold binding power like the Security Council, its resolutions carry substantial moral and political weight and often set the stage for further international action and norm-building.

At its core, the UNGA embodies the principles of sovereign equality, collective responsibility, and inclusive dialogue. The committee serves not only as a platform for state actors but also as a voice for the global population, advocating for a shared vision of peace, dignity, and prosperity.

History of the Conflict

The Mandatary System of the League of Nations

After World War I, the victorious Allied Powers were left with the question of how to manage the colonies and territories previously controlled by the defeated Central Powers, especially Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Rather than annex these areas outright, the League of Nations established the Mandate System under Article 22 of its Covenant. The system was intended to administer these territories until they could govern themselves independently, based on the idea that some populations were not yet ready for self-rule and needed guidance.

The Mandate System divided territories into three classes — A, B, and C mandates — depending on their stage of development and their ability to eventually become independent.

Class A Mandates: These were former Ottoman territories in the Middle East (such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine). They were considered "advanced" enough that independence was a near goal, though still requiring administration and advice from a mandatory power (like Britain or France).

Class B Mandates: These were mainly African territories, such as Tanganyika (modern-day Tanzania) and parts of Cameroon and Togo. The inhabitants were deemed less advanced, requiring more control, but under conditions ensuring no exploitation or militarisation.

Class C Mandates: These were territories with small populations or harsh environments (such as South West Africa—modern Namibia —and Pacific Islands like Nauru). They were considered best administered under the laws of the mandatory country as integral parts of its territory, though still subject to League oversight.

The main idea behind the Mandate System was that the mandatory powers were not to act for their own benefit, but as "trustees" for the well-being and development of the native people. However, in practice, many mandatory powers often treated these territories like colonies, leading to criticism that the Mandate System simply continued imperialism under a dierent name.

Overall, while the Mandate System introduced the idea that colonial powers had responsibilities toward the people they governed, it ultimately did little to accelerate the true independence of many mandated territories. Nevertheless, it laid some of the groundwork for later international principles of trusteeship and decolonization after World War II.

Post WW-II Changes

In 1947, the Middle Eastern political environment was shaped to a great extent by the long-term consequences of colonial occupation, particularly through British and French mandates, as well as Arab nationalism. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I left a power vacuum in the region, and it was simple for the creation of Western mandates in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine. Though some Arab nations, such as Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon, enjoyed a nominal independence in the 1930s and early 1940s, much of the region was still politically volatile and susceptible to outside interference.

Palestine has been under British rule since 1920, with tensions mounting for decades between Jewish and Arab communities. While Britain initially sought to bring the two communities into contact with one another, its policies increasingly tended to change in reaction to pressures at home, driven by colonial interests and European events. Recurring bursts of violence — such as the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939 and the following Jewish paramilitary action — highlighted the mounting crisis over the future of the land.

The end of World War II sharply increased tensions. With the trauma of the Holocaust recent, with huge numbers of Jewish displaced persons in Europe, and with the news of the devastation of the European Jewish community still circulating, Zionist leaders pressed harder for an immediate state in Palestine. Arab leaders meanwhile opposed any partition, considering Palestine to be Arab territory and Western backing for Zionism as imperialist meddling. By 1947, Britain had lost political will and ability to continue to govern Palestine. The British government therefore transferred the issue to the newly established United Nations in the hope of discovering an international solution. The United Nations' consideration of the "Question of Palestine" would then be one of its earliest major challenges in coping with postwar decolonization and promoting international peace.

Jewish Calls for Statehood

The modern Jewish nationalist movement, or Zionism, emerged in the late 19th century in response to rising European antisemitism and the broader rise of ethnic nationalism. Zionist thinkers, particularly Theodor Herzl, argued that Jews constituted a nation entitled to self-determination in their ancestral homeland — Palestine. Early waves of Jewish immigration began in the 1880s, and by the time of the British Mandate, the Jewish population in Palestine had grown significantly.

The 1917 Balfour Declaration issued by the British government pledged support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. Zionist organizations took this as international recognition of their right to statehood, though Britain also promised to protect the rights of Arab inhabitants — leading to conflicting obligations. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Zionist institutions such as the Jewish Agency, the Histadrut (labor union), and the Haganah (militia) laid the foundation for a future Jewish state.

During and after World War II, the Jewish demand for statehood intensified. Six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, and over 250,000 displaced survivors languished

in camps across Europe. Zionists argued that only a sovereign Jewish state could guarantee safety and dignity for the Jewish people. Violent resistance to British immigration limits (e.g., through Irgun and Lehi attacks) further escalated pressure on the Mandate authorities.

By 1947, Zionist leaders, especially David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizmann, pushed for immediate recognition of a Jewish state in part of Palestine. They accepted the UN's partition plan as a political compromise, even though it involved painful territorial concessions. The proposed state would include areas with strong Jewish presence and economic infrastructure, while Jerusalem was to be placed under international administration.

Arab and Palestinian Calls for Statehood

In contrast, the Arab population of Palestine — roughly two-thirds of the total inhabitants in 1947 — rejected the Zionist project as a colonial imposition. Palestinian Arabs had long seen themselves as an indigenous people whose political aspirations were denied under British rule and endangered by Jewish immigration and land purchases. Arab resistance to both British policy and Zionist expansion culminated in the violent 1936–1939 Arab Revolt, which was brutally suppressed.

Palestinian leaders, such as Hajj Amin al-Husseini, and broader Arab League members consistently opposed the partition of Palestine. They argued that the majority Arab population should be granted independence under a unified Arab state, where Jews could live as a minority with civil rights. They viewed partition as both unjust and a violation of the principle of self-determination for the local majority.

The Arab states, having recently emerged from colonial mandates themselves, saw the Palestinian cause as a symbol of broader anti-imperialist struggle. Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia all warned that any attempt to forcibly impose partition would lead to war. Arab delegates at the UN lobbied forcefully against the partition plan, calling it a Western betrayal of indigenous rights in favor of European settlers.

By November 1947, Palestinian Arabs had no recognized state institutions akin to the Jewish Agency. The political fragmentation among Arab Palestinian leadership, and lack of a unified military force, limited their ability to negotiate effectively. However,

they made it clear through protests, diplomatic pressure, and regional coordination that any Jewish state established by external mandate would be violently resisted.

IV. The United Nations' Role and the Path to Partition

Faced with the failure of the British Mandate and rising violence in Palestine, the United Nations established the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in May 1947. The committee toured the region and interviewed both sides. Notably, Arab groups largely boycotted the proceedings, believing the UN had no legitimacy to decide the fate of Palestine without Arab consent.

In its final report, UNSCOP recommended partitioning Palestine into two independent states — one Arab and one Jewish — with economic union and special international status for Jerusalem. The plan proposed by UNGA Resolution 181 (II) allocated approximately 56% of the territory to the Jewish state, though Jews made up about one-third of the population and owned less than 10% of the land at the time.

The partition plan was fiercely debated in the UNGA throughout November 1947. The United States and the Soviet Union — rarely aligned during the early Cold War — both supported the plan, while Britain abstained. Arab and Muslim-majority states rejected the proposal entirely, warning it would spark a broader conflict in the region. Extensive lobbying, particularly by Zionist representatives and sympathetic delegations, was critical in securing the necessary two-thirds majority.

Impending Violence and the Sense of Urgency

Framework, or risk watching Palestine descend into chaos. By mid to late 1947, the situation in Palestine had reached a boiling point. Clashes between Jewish and Arab communities were growing in frequency and intensity, and both sides had armed militias preparing for open conflict. The British, fatigued by two decades of unrest and deeply preoccupied with postwar recovery, had announced their intention to withdraw from Palestine by May 1948 — without offering any successor government. Intelligence reports and diplomatic correspondence made it clear: if no political solution — such as partition — was agreed upon, the vacuum left by British withdrawal would likely trigger full-scale civil war. Arab leaders warned they would mobilize militarily to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state, while Zionist forces were already preparing to defend

Jewish communities and assert sovereignty. The United Nations thus faced an urgent dilemma: act quickly to implement a diplomatic solution.