

ARAB-ISRAELI ARMISTICE AGREEMENTS
Signed at Hôtel des Roses
Rhodes, Greece 1949



FOREWORD

Upon the outset of the 1948 Palestine War, the Arab armies of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon had volunteered to “save Palestine and the Palestinians” from the European “Jewish gangs” who were intent on taking over the “Promised Land” from them. They were all defeated by these “gangs” between the summer of 1948 and early spring of 1949.

Before the much ballyhooed intervention of these Arab countries in Palestine, the Palestinians were already conducting a guerilla warfare against the European Jewish armed immigrants brought by Britain into the country. But the Arab governments bolted their borders and would not allow the Palestinian guerillas to continue to arm themselves, then forbade them from carrying weapons in self-defence because “they”, i.e. the Arab armies, were “much better equipped to protect them”. They were actually all defeated ignominiously one after the other by the “Jewish gangs”, who did their homework appropriately despite their small numbers compared to the manpower and military strength of the regular armies of the Arab countries involved. It is still the case today.

Eventually a UN Mediating Mission was formed to call for a truce between the Israelis and the Arab countries under the direction of Dr. Ralph Bunche, a senior UN staff member and formerly with the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) (The precursor organization to the CIA). The term ‘mediating’ was found to be a more acceptable term to use to describe the status of the mission to both Arabs and Israelis. The Agreements were all signed by the Mediator Dr. Ralph Bunche and representatives from each of the warring sides.

For the Israelis the Armistice Agreement meant sanctifying their hold on more Palestinian territories than the 1947 Partition Plan had assigned to them. They won the war and got their state. As far as the Arab governments are concerned, the Armistice Agreement gave them a fig leaf to cover their defeat without calling it what it really was, namely capitulation. This is not strange as Arabs like big talk as long as it covers their shortcomings. They still do the same now. While all this was going on, nobody bothered to talk to the Palestinians whose homeland was to be taken away from them. Actually the Palestinians were prevented from being part of the mediating delegations at Rhodes both by the UN and the countries involved.

The Israeli side designated its delegation to meet with the opposite Arab delegations each separately, and not as one 'Arab' delegation. This was a sure way to break the Arab position, or rather conflicting positions among them, while each was given the formal importance they think they deserve. Divide and conquer. It is still the case since then. The armistice talks were eventually organized through the Mediator Dr. Bunche, and for some reason the Greek island of Rhodes was chosen as the seat for the talks and signing of the Armistice documents.

The Rhodes talks were held under UN Security Council Resolution 62 of November 16, 1948, and were intended to establish an armistice between Israel and its enemies Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria first by fixing cease-fire lines as a first step before enshrining the *status quo*. Talks began on 13 January 1949 and continued until 24 February. Further separate talks took place later with Jordan. Iraq refused to participate in the armistice talks citing the absence of common borders between Iraq and Israel.

King Abdullah I of Jordan wanted to haggle over some Palestinian territory, but also territory now in the hands of the Israelis he could annex to his kingdom. The Syrians wanted to play difficult and appear as if they had won the war, while the Lebanese were more interested in getting back the border town of Malkia, which the Israelis had taken over. The Egyptians wanted to get out of the mess with minimum losses and as little publicity as possible.

ISRAELI ARMISTICE DELEGATION

The Israeli delegation to the talks was under the chairmanship of the head of the General Staff's Operations Division Colonel Yigael Yadin (also known as a professional archaeologist) aided by two experts on Arab affairs, Eliyahu Sasson (A key Syrian/Lebanese Jew knowledgeable in traditional Arab negotiating tactics), Reuven Shiloah (future head of Israeli Intelligence, the Mossad) as well as Foreign Ministry Director General Dr. Walter Eitan. They were also joined by Shabtai Rosenne as legal adviser, and four other officers in advisory and intelligence capacities, Major Yehoshafat Harkabi, Major Arie Simon, Colonel David Shaltiel and Lt. Colonel Yitzhak Rabin (later prime minister of Israel) also participated in some of the talks.



Armistice talks between Israel and Egypt at the Roses Hotel in Rhodes in January 1949.
 Right table from right to left: Dr. Walter Eitan – Colonel Yigael Yadin – Eliyahu Sasson - Centre of rear table UN Mediator Dr. Ralph Bunche (with cigarette dangling between his lips) – The Egyptian delegation is seated at the left table. All the others are undetermined



Seated from left to right: Eliyahu Sasson – Colonel Yigael Yadin – Dr. Walter Eitan – Major Aryeh Simon - Colonel David Shaltiel? - The others undetermined



Seated from left to right: Colonel Yigael Yadin – Dr. Walter Eitan – Major Aryeh Simon



Seated at the table on the right, from right to left: Colonel David Shaltiel? - Major Aryeh Simon – Dr. Walter Eitan - Colonel Yigael Yadin - Eliyahu Sasson
Table in the background, Dr. Ralph Bunche in the middle of the UN delegation



The Israeli military delegation to the 1949 Armistice Agreements talks. Left to right: Major Yehoshafat Harkabi, Major Aryeh Simon, Colonel Yigael Yadin, and Lt. Colonel Yitzhak Rabin

EGYPTIAN ARMISTICE DELEGATION

The Israel-Egypt Armistice Agreement was signed at the Hôtel des Roses on the Greek island of Rhodes on 24 February 1949. The Egyptian delegation was headed by Brigadier Muhammad Ibrahim Seif El-Din, and included Colonel Muhammad Kamel Al-Rahmani. Only these two officers signed on behalf of Egypt as the government abstained from delegating any representative other than the military to remove any political aspect to the Armistice Agreement, and keep it as a technical agreement (Another way of saving face).

The political advisors to the Egyptian delegation included Prince/Colonel Ismail Shirine, member of the Egyptian royal family, Omar Lotfi and Abdel-Monem Mostafa from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mustafa was an old friend of Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Shertok (aka Moshe Sharett), having served as the Egyptian Consul General in Jerusalem during the British Mandate.



Start of negotiations. Sitting from left to right: Omar Lotfi? – Colonel Muhammad Kamel El-Rahmani – Brigadier Muhammad Ibrahim Seif El-Din – Prince/Colonel Ismail Shirine – Colonel Mahmoud Riyad (Future Minister of Foreign Affairs and Secretary General of the Arab League) – Abdel-Monem Mostafa. The others are not members of the Egyptian delegation.



From Left to right: Colonel Mahmoud Riyadh – Undetermined – Lt. Colonel Moshe Dayan. The other two officers are unidentified. (Picture taken during border demarcation between Egypt and Israel in the Sinai in 1949)

JORDANIAN ARMISTICE DELEGATION

The Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement was signed on 24 February 1949 at the Hôtel des Roses on the Greek island of Rhodes, but then re-signed on March 3rd, 1949, and may have been further amended during secret meetings held at Al-Shouna on March 16, 1949 and once again in Jerusalem in October 1950.

The formal Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreements talks started on March 3rd, 1949 on behalf of Jordan by Colonel Ahmed Sedki El-Jundi, Lt. Colonel Muhammad Al-Maayta and Major (First name unknown) Al-Jaraida, Major? Radhi Al-Hindawi, Major Ali Abou-Nawwar, Lieutenant? Fathi Yaseen and on behalf of the Government of Israel by Reuven Shiloah and Lt. Colonel Moshe Dayan. The formal Agreement signed by Colonel Ahmed Sedki El-Jundi was eventually amended on March 30, 1949.

King Abdullah I of Jordan however had always pursued a secret parallel backroom relationship with the Israelis to ensure gaining more for himself. Some would say it was rather “for his kingdom”. In the case of Jordan the talks took place at three different locations: The official and public venue was at the Roses Hotel in Rhodes. The other location was at Al-Shouna along the Jordan River close to the Dead Sea where the king had a personal winter rest-house, the third in Jerusalem. It is reported that the King held these separate meetings against the wishes of his ministers. These parallel Agreements were negotiated and signed by King Abdullah I in person. Some Jordanian historians usually describe the King’s odd behaviour as “far-sightedness”.

Overall, the Israeli delegation to the talks with the Jordanians was represented by practically the same team that met with the Egyptians. The final Agreement between Jordan and Israel was signed in April 1949.

In his memoirs published under the title “Story of my life”, General Moshe Dayan described the Jordanian delegation as follows:

“Colonel Ahmed Sedki El-Jundi was a veteran army officer, correct, smartly turned out – and with an utterly closed mind. He and the other members of his delegation had been sent to fulfill orders they would be receiving from Amman – and not to move a single step outside of those orders...These army officers may well have been experts at maintaining order in Jordan and pursuing robber bands in the southern desert, but it was sheer tragi-comedy to plant them in the Hôtel des Roses to negotiate with the astute and highly sophisticated Dr. Bunche over juridical and political formulas.

They were ready to do anything required of them, but they just did not know what that was. The last thing in the world for which they were suited was conducting armistice negotiations. In fact, they were to prove merely part of the official façade. The hard and basic negotiations were to be conducted unofficially and secretly by their king, Abdullah himself”, as mentioned in previous paragraphs. Dayan added “The first ten days of the negotiations passed without any progress having been made. All the rest was most pleasant – good food, spring weather, enchanting scenery and interesting company”.

What Dayan describes is exactly how rulers in that part of the world have ruled their countries and people until today. They hire ‘yes sir’ type individuals as close to being family or

tribe members as can be, provided they don't make any individual move or decisions without being told to say this or that. Maybe they can change the official dinner menu from chicken shawarma to lamb shawarma or vice versa. This is how they believe democracy should be, no more no less.



Israeli delegation from left to right: First officer undetermined – Lt. Colonel Moshe Dayan – Reuven Shiloah – Legal Adviser Shabtai Rosenne. The last person is unidentified.



From left to right: Major (First name unknown) Al-Jaraida - Lt. Colonel Muhammad Al-Maayta – Lt. Colonel Moshe Dayan



Formal Jordanian armistice delegation – 1949. Sitting from left to right: Lt. Colonel Muhammad Al-Maayta - Colonel Ahmed Sedki El-Jundi – Major Al-Jaraida? – Major Ali Abu-Nawwar.



From left to right: Head of the Jordanian Delegation Colonel Ahmed Sedki El-Jundi, shaking hands with US General William Riley, Chief of Staff, UN Armistice Observation Mission – In the middle Lt. Colonel Muhammad Al-Maayta – Partially visible Major Ali Abu-Nawwar

LEBANESE ARMISTICE DELEGATION

The Lebanon-Israel Armistice Agreement was signed on 23 March 1949. The negotiations took place at Rosh Hanikra (Ras El-Nakoura) in the customs office at the Lebanon-Palestine border. The agreement was signed on behalf of Israel by Lieutenant-Colonel Mordechai Makleff, Yehoshua Pelman and Shabtai Rosenne, Legal Advisor at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On behalf of the Government of Lebanon the Agreement was signed by Lt. Colonel Toufic Salem and Major Joseph Harb.



A Lebanese delegate, probably Major Joseph Harb, bends over the table to sign a document on 23 March 1949

SYRIAN ARMISTICE DELEGATION

In April 1949, talks started between the Syrian and Israeli delegations at Geshar B'not Yaacov (Jeser Banat Yaaqoub), on the River Jordan, and ended on 20 July 1949. The Armistice Agreement was signed on behalf of Israel by Lt. Colonel Mordechai Makleff, Yehoshua Pelman and Shabtai Rosenne, Legal Advisor at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Agreement was signed on behalf of Syria by Colonel Fawzi Selo, Major Muhammad Nasser and Captain Afif El-Bizri. Salah Tarazi acted as Legal Advisor. The Syrians played hard to get and delayed their formal surrender until the end of July 1949 simply to satisfy their ego.



Captain Afif El-Bizri, member of the Syrian delegation to the Syria-Israel Armistice Agreements (He later became Chief of Staff of the Syrian Armed Forces)

UNITED NATIONS DELEGATION TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI ARMISTICE TALKS, RHODES



In the centre is the Mediator Dr. Ralph Bunche, with cigarette dangling (as usual!) – Among those seated but not in any order are members of the UN Mediation delegation which included Colonel Thor Bonde, General Aage Lundstrom, General William E. Riley, Legal Advisor to the Chief of Staff H. Courtney Kingstone, Henry Vigier, Personal Deputy of the Acting Mediator and Principal Secretary, J. J. Cebek-Habersky, Representative of the Mediator in Syria and Lebanon and Pable de Azcarate Representative of the Mediator in Cairo as well as others. (Source: UN Archives)



The Hôtel des Roses, on the island of Rhodes in Greece, where the armistice negotiations took place, as it looks like today (in 2015) after having been converted into both a casino and a hotel