

## Mandatory Palestine

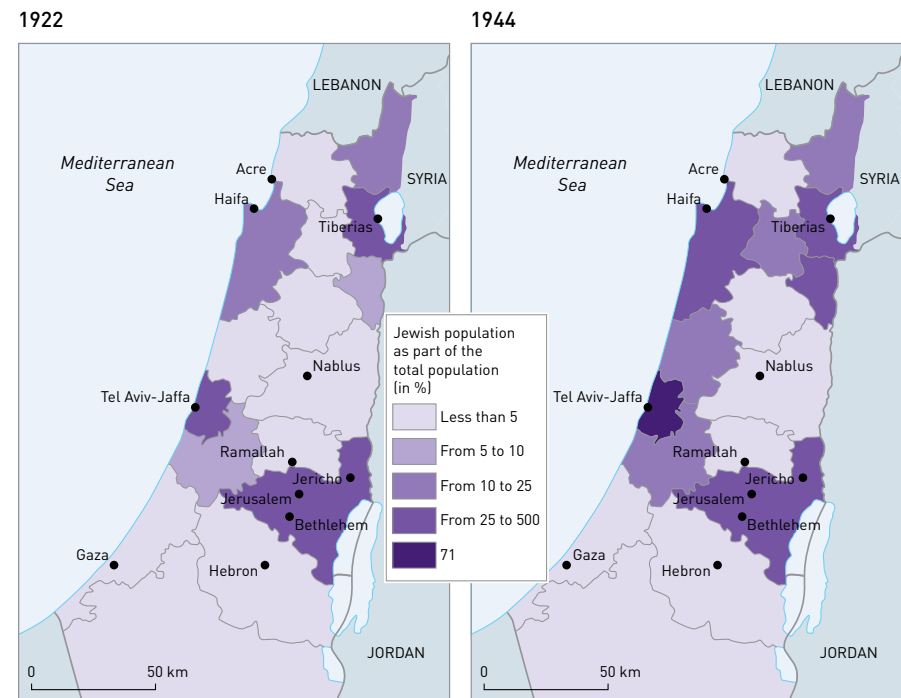
In 1920 the League of Nations entrusted Great Britain with the mandate over Palestine. The text of the mandate echoed the Balfour Declaration, promising the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Herbert Samuel, the first British High Commissioner in Jerusalem (1920–25), was himself an influential Jewish politician and pro-Zionist. He focused on safeguarding British domination while allowing the Zionist movement to create a springboard to enable it to take over the entire country. Unlike the divided and isolated Palestinian Arab population, the Zionist movement mobilised its worldwide network of institutions, which provided considerable financial, propagandist, and diplomatic means. The Jews comprised only 17 per cent of the Palestinian population in 1922 but, due to the reinforcement of emigration, by 1945 they had become a third of the population, in spite of the Palestinians' high birth rate. Moreover, half of the Arab population was under 20 years of age, versus a quarter of the Jewish population, which was essentially composed of young educated adults brought up and nurtured with a nationalist ideal which the Palestinians lacked. The latter did not understand that the Zionist project was not a simple colonialist undertaking but a national construct that aimed to exclude them. The massive purchase of farms from prominent Arabs allowed the Jews to take over the farmlands, even though their community was primarily made up of city dwellers. According to the 1931 census, 78 per cent of the Jews lived in cities, mostly in Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem, compared to a mere 30 per cent of the Arab population. The income of the Jews was 2.6 times higher than that of the Arabs and their economy grew at a rate of 13 per cent yearly, thanks to investments from abroad; and this was in spite of the great depression of the 1930s. The rate of school enrolment for Jewish children was 77 per cent against 44.5 per cent for Arab children (even though the latter was quite high compared to other Arab countries in the region). The socio-economic gap between the two communities grew during the British mandate, in spite of the general progress of the whole population.

Politically, the British mandate locked the Palestinians in an iron cage. The high commissioner held all the power, there were no parliament or other nationally elected representative institutions, unlike in the states under French mandate. In contrast, the Jewish Agency was guaranteed by the mandate, and

while some Jews had access to high positions in the public administration, this was not the case for Arabs. Certain prominent Palestinians obtained some prestigious posts but not leadership positions because the objective of the high commissioner was to accentuate the divisions within the Palestinian elite in order to control the emergence of the Arab nationalist movement.

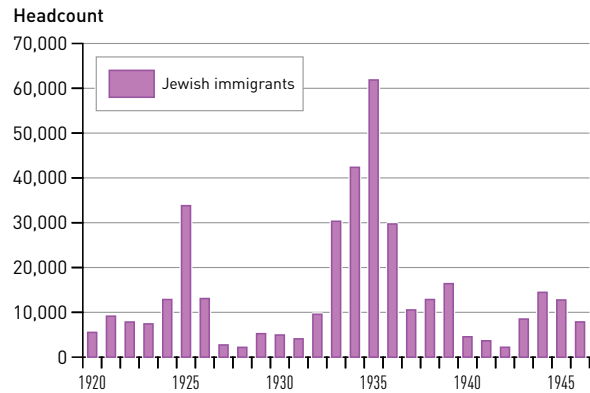
The great Arab revolt of 1936 coincided with a resurgence of Jewish immigration to Palestine, following three years of extensive land purchases by Jewish organisations. The repression caused 5,000 deaths, injured 10,000, while close to 6,000 were arrested, or 10 per cent of the adult male Arab population. The budding Palestinian national movement was broken. In 1948 the Yishuv

### JEWISH POPULATION IN PALESTINE



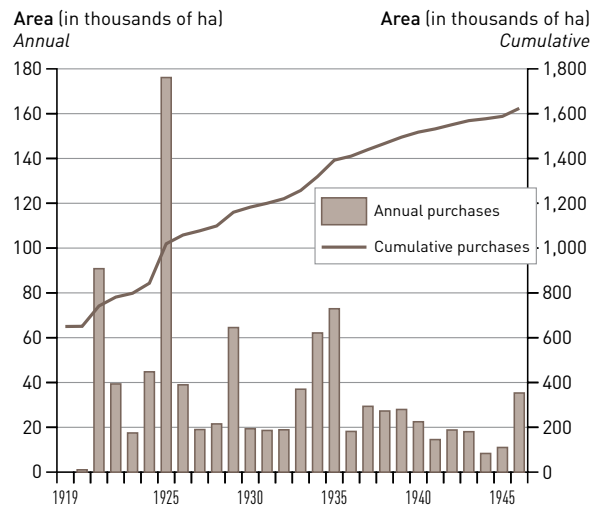
Source: ARIJ Resource Center.

### LEGAL JEWISH EMIGRATION TO PALESTINE (1920-1946)



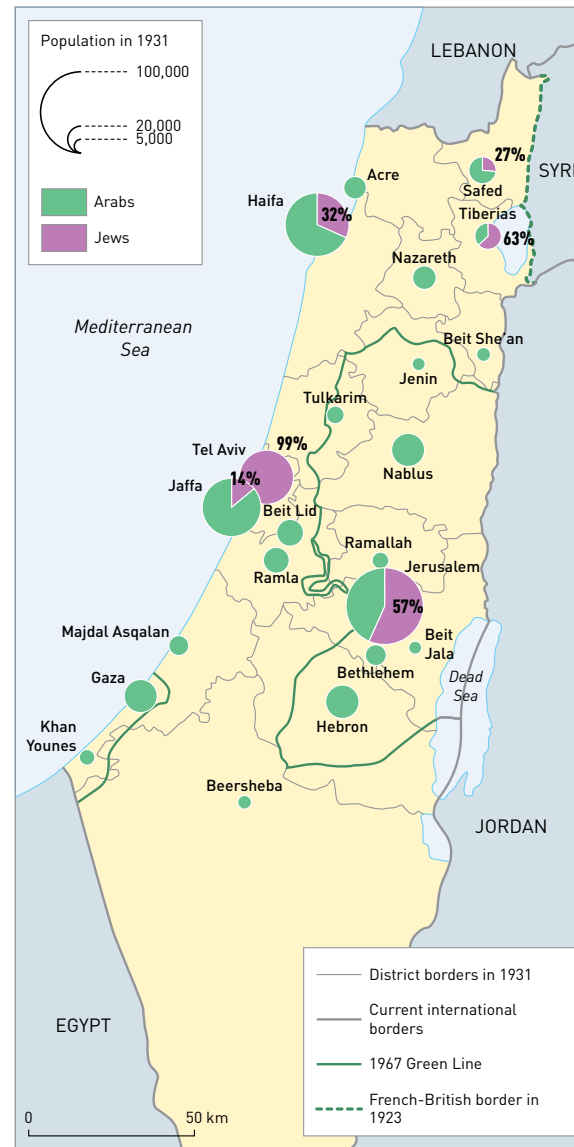
Source: Survey of Palestine.

### PURCHASE OF LAND BY JEWS IN PALESTINE



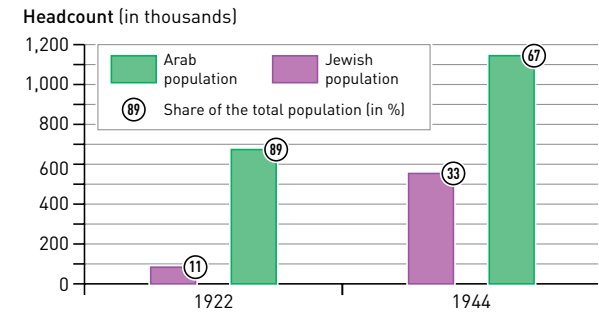
Source: Survey of Palestine.

### THE URBAN NETWORK IN PALESTINE UNDER THE BRITISH MANDATE



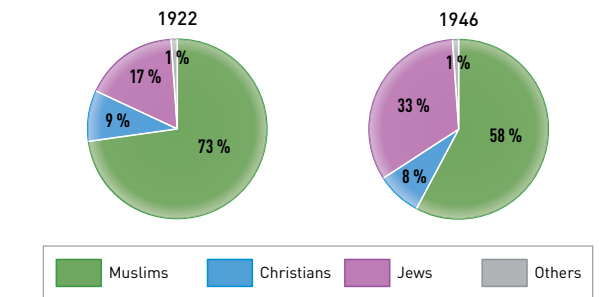
Source: 1931 Census, Survey of Palestine.

### ARABS AND JEWS IN PALESTINE (1922-1944)



Source: ARIJ Resource Center.

### THE EVOLUTION OF FAITHS UNDER THE BRITISH MANDATE



Source: Survey of Palestine.

(Jewish population in Palestine), who joined in the British repression, successfully took advantage of the weakened Palestinian resistance to take over the country. The British about-face in 1939, in which they decided to cease Jewish immigration to Palestine in order to accommodate the Arabs, came too late to halt the impetus of the Zionist project.