

TIMELINE: Freedom of Action

- 1946** In December, at the Zionist Congress in Basle, David Ben-Gurion is re-elected chairman of the Zionist Executive and given the new defense portfolio.
- 1945** Ben-Gurion launches a campaign of large-scale illegal immigration to draw world attention to Britain's anti-Zionist policy and the plight of Jews seeking to reach Palestine from post-war Europe.
- 1945** In October, the Ben-Gurion-led Haganah aligns with the Irgun and LEHI in the United Hebrew Resistance. The alliance conducts acts of sabotage against the British.
- 1947** The peak of illegal immigration is marked by the British interception of the Exodus, a boat carrying Jewish refugees from Europe. When the British send the refugees back to Germany it arouses world sympathy for the Zionist cause.
- 1947** On September 26th, Britain announces its intention to leave Palestine.
- 1947** On November 29, the UN votes for partition.
- 1948** On May 12, Ben-Gurion rallies the 13-member Provisional Government, which votes by a narrow margin in favor of statehood.
- 1948** On May 14, Ben-Gurion declares the State of Israel. The armies of five Arab states promptly attack and Ben-Gurion, as defense minister, leads the Jews in fighting off the invaders.
- 1949** Against the advice of many experts, Ben-Gurion decides on a massive immigration program. The state doubles its size from 700,000 over a four-year period.
- 1951** Ben-Gurion seeks restitution from the West German government for the Nazi plunder of Jewish property.
- 1953** Ben-Gurion retires to Kibbutz Sde Boker in the Negev.
- 1955** Ben-Gurion returns when he is unhappy with his successor's policies.
- 1956** Under Ben-Gurion's leadership, Israel launches the Sinai Campaign after Egypt nationalizes the Suez Canal. It had earlier closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping.
- 1965** Ben-Gurion splits from Mapai and forms the Rafi Party.
- 1973** Ben-Gurion dies on December 1 at age 86. He is buried at Kibbutz Sde Boker.