

U.N. Resolution 242 *Answers*

Read the following resolution the United Nations passed after the June 1967 Six-Day War in the Middle East. As you read, think about what the resolution asks Israel to do and what it asks the Arab countries to do. Then answer the questions.

Israel has to:

- Withdraw militarily from territories it acquired in the war.
- Cease aggression against other countries and accept their existence within secure and recognized boundaries.
- Help solve the refugee problem.

Were these obligations met?

Withdraw militarily from territories it acquired in the war. If you understand that clause the way that its framers intended, Israel has clearly left territories it acquired in the 1967 War. Israel gave back 91 percent of the land it acquired when it returned the Sinai to Egypt in 1979 as part of its peace treaty with that country. In addition, under its peace treaty with Jordan of 1994, Israel returned the small piece of Jordanian territory it controlled.

Earlier, in 1988, King Hussein of Jordan announced that he would no longer try to regain control of the West Bank, which had been occupied by Jordan from 1948 to 1967. From now on, he declared, Israel would have to deal with the Palestinian Arabs, so even if it wanted to, Israel could no longer give territory in the West Bank to Jordan.

As a result of the Oslo Accords of 1993-1994, Israel gradually relinquished control of 40 percent of the West Bank (on which more than 90 percent of Arab West Bankers lived) and about 80 percent of the Gaza Strip. In summer 2005, Israel left Gaza entirely, removing all Israeli citizens and military forces from the territory. In terms of population, Israel relinquished control of about 98 percent of the total Palestinian Arab population.

After the onset of the “al-Aqsa intifada,” in September 2000, Israel re-entered areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to eliminate terrorists. Having rooted out terrorist bases in many areas and starting construction of the security barrier, Israel once again withdrew from a number of Palestinian population centers.

Cease aggression against other countries and accept their existence within secure and recognized boundaries. Israel has never denied the right to exist of those established nations surrounding it, although for a long time it would not contemplate a new Palestinian Arab state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On each occasion that Israel went to war with neighboring Arab countries, it either was attacked first or, as in the case of the 1967 Six-Day War, was in imminent danger of being attacked. Israel’s readiness to live in peace with its neighbors can be seen most easily by the peace treaties it has signed with Egypt and Jordan as well as its attempts to reach an agreement with the Palestinian Arabs.

Help solve the refugee problem. This is an issue about which volumes could be written and which serves as the source for much discussion. By agreeing to attempt to negotiate peace with the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Yasir Arafat, was Israel helping to solve the “refugee problem”? In spite of a continuing state of war between Israel and neighboring Arab countries, the facts are these:

In 1949, Israel offered to allow families that had been separated during the war to return, and to repatriate 100,000 refugees. The Arabs rejected these offers. Despite this, Israel has, since the 1950’s, allowed more than 50,000 refugees to return to Israel under a family reunification program, and between 1967 and 1993 allowed a further 75,000 to return to the West Bank or Gaza Strip. Since the beginning of the Oslo process, Israel has allowed another 90,000 Arabs to gain residence in Palestinian Authority-controlled areas of Judea and Samaria (West Bank).

During the years Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, it attempted to move Arab refugees from U.N. Works and Relief Agency camps into permanent housing. However, Arab states, Palestinian leaders and the United Nations opposed the program. Arab states regularly pushed for U.N. resolutions that demanded Israel stop trying to relocate Palestinian Arabs from refugee camps. (Palestinian Arabs and Arab states continue to maintain refugee camps with the intent that Palestinian refugees *and their descendants* would one day move not to a future Palestinian state but to Israel.)

The neighboring Arab countries have to:

- Cease aggression against other countries and accept their existence within secure and recognized boundaries.
- Help solve the refugee problems.
- Allow free navigation through international waters.

Were these obligations met?

Cease aggression against other countries and accept their existence within secure and recognized boundaries. In 1973, Egypt and Syria, launched a surprise attack on Yom Kippur, resulting in still another Arab-Israeli war. They were aided, with troops, arms and money by Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan. In the 1980’s Lebanon became a launching ground first for Palestinian attacks against Israel’s northern border and later attacks by the Iranian- and Syrian-sponsored terrorist group, Hezbollah. More recently, in 2006, Hezbollah, whose members sit in the Lebanese parliament, initiated a war against Israel through its killing and capture of Israeli soldiers and bombardment of the Jewish state.

Additionally, until the 1990’s, most Arab states refused to recognize Israel’s legitimacy. Often, they refuse to even use the name “Israel,” preferring the phrase “Zionist entity.” Beginning in the 90’s, some meetings and talks between a number of Israeli and Arab diplomats began. Despite this, government-controlled communications media, mosques and schools in many Arab countries continue to promote hostility and hatred to Jews and Israel.

Progress did take place. In 1979, Egypt’s president Anwar Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel. Subsequently in 1994, Jordan’s King Hussein also signed a peace treaty. Only these two Arab countries, of those that had participated in either the 1967 Six-Day War, the ‘73 Yom

Kippur War or both, have met the requirements of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 (passed in 1967) or 338 (passed in '73 and calling for implementation of Resolution 242). And while technically "at peace" with Israel, both Egypt and Jordan have been less than forthcoming in establishing normal relations, as are required by their treaties with Israel. Little trade and cultural exchange occurs. Their governments often allow anti-Israel, anti-Jewish incitement in newspapers, on radio and television and in academic and trade union settings. The treaties' terms to promote "people-to-people" in addition to "government-to-government" peace never were fulfilled.

Help solve the refugee problem. (The following is excerpted from *Myths & Facts Online: A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict* by Mitchell G. Bard
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths/mftoc.html>)

After the 1948 war, Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip and its more than 200,000 inhabitants, but refused to allow the Palestinians into Egypt proper or permit them to move elsewhere. In 1952, UNWRA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency) set up a fund of \$200 million to provide homes and jobs for the Arab refugees, but it went untouched.

Jordan was the only Arab country to welcome the Palestinians and grant them citizenship (to this day Jordan is the only Arab country where Palestinians as a group can become citizens). Syria also declined to resettle 85,000 refugees in 1952-54, though it had been offered international funds to pay for the project. Iraq was also expected to accept a large number of refugees, but proved unwilling. Lebanon insisted it had no room for the Palestinians.

Little has changed in succeeding years. Arab governments have frequently offered jobs, housing, land and other benefits to Arabs and non-Arabs, *excluding* Palestinian Arabs. Today, Palestine refugees in Lebanon do not have social and civil rights, and have very limited access to public health or educational facilities. The majority relies entirely on UNRWA as the sole provider of education, health and relief and social services. Considered foreigners, Palestine refugees are prohibited by law from working in more than 70 trades and professions.

Since the refugees "camps" came under the control of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the 1990s little has been done to improve the lot of the Palestinian Arabs living in them. As recently as 1998, a visiting journalist asked a Palestinian official why the camps in Gaza hadn't been dismantled. She was told the Palestinian Authority had made a "political decision" not to do anything for the now nearly 500,000 Palestinian Arabs living in the camps until the final-status talks with Israel took place. To this day, the PA has not used one dime of the billions of dollars in foreign aid it has received to build permanent housing for the refugees.

Allow free navigation through international waters. Israel retained control over the Straits of Tiran from 1967 to 1979 and made no attempt to block international shipping through that area. In 1979, Israel signed a peace treaty with Egypt and withdrew from the Sinai to its pre-1967 Egyptian border, giving up control over the Straits of Tiran. Egypt has maintained its part of the treaty and not tried to stop shipping through that waterway.

The UN has to:

- Assign a representative to work with the Arab countries and Israel on resolving the problems, then report to the United Nations.

Were these obligations met?

Assign a representative to work with the Arab countries and Israel on resolving the problems, then report to the United Nations. The United Nations appointed Dr. Gunnar Jarring, Sweden's ambassador to the Soviet Union, as its special representative. In early 1968, he arrived in the Middle East and met with the leaders of Israel and of the Arab states. Israel saw his mission as that of bringing the parties together for talks. The Arab states refused direct or even indirect contact with Israel though Egypt and Jordan did say they'd consider implementing Resolution 242 according to their interpretation of it, if Israel first agreed to total withdrawal from all territories acquired in the fighting.

In March 1969, Jarring undertook a last attempt to obtain replies to questions that might enable him to continue his mission. The attempt was unsuccessful. Egypt and Jordan continued to insist on prior withdrawal and to speak about "secure and recognized boundaries" as referring to the borders of U.N.'s 1947 partition plan, which the Arab states had rejected at the time and would have left Israel in three barely-contiguous patches and with less territory than it held after its 1948 War of Independence. Upon receipt of the replies, the mission was suspended.