

**The 1949 Armistices Agreements at 70
Rhodes International Conference on History, Law and Politics**

to be held on

31 October - 1st November 2019

in

Rodos, Greece

**CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT
AND CALL FOR PAPERS**

The Conference is organized under the auspices of the Department of Mediterranean Studies of the University of the Aegean in collaboration of the Faculty of Law of the University of Cyprus and the Jean Monnet European Centre of Excellence of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

Concept of the Conference

2019 marks the 70th anniversary of the General Armistice Agreements between Israel and its four neighboring Arab States that took part in the first Arab-Israeli war. Two of these Agreements were concluded on the Greek island of Rhodes (Rodos).

On this occasion, we are organizing an international conference bringing together lawyers, historians, political scientists, international relations scholars and statesmen in order to study:

- the historical context of the GAAs, the legal/political environment in which they were concluded, and the negotiations that led to them;
- the history and politics of their implementation and eventual termination;
- legal issues arising from the GAAs, both as to matters covered in them and as to the gaps they contained;
- lessons learned for international mediation and for ongoing efforts in order to establish a permanent peace in the Middle East.

The road to Rhodes

In 1949, between February and July, after tortuous and difficult negotiations, General Armistice Agreements (GAAs) were signed between Israel and four Arab states: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, which took part in the first Arab-Israeli war (1948-1949). The UN (through its Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche) facilitated the negotiations for a general armistice between the warring

parties, called for by the Security Council resolution of 16 November 1948 (S/1080). The GAAs followed the re-ignition of the armed clashes in October 1948, after the periods of truce in the summer 1948 (four weeks' truce (9 July-11 June 1948) agreed by the parties in conflict, following the call by the Security Council resolution of 29 May 1948 (S/801) and the mediation by the UN Mediator on Palestine, Count Folke Bernadotte; and the truce imposed by the Security Council (mid-July – mid-October 1948, resolution of 15 July 1948 (S/902)).

The negotiations and the signature of the GAAs with Egypt and Jordan took place in Rodos on 24 February and 3 April 1949 respectively. Since early January 1949 the Egyptian and Israeli delegations along with the team of the UN Acting Mediator arrived in Rodos and started negotiations. The GAA with Lebanon was signed in Ras el Nakoura, on the Israeli-Lebanese border, on 23 March 1949 and the GAA with Syria in Hill 132, near Mahanayim near the Jordan River, on 20 July 1949. The agreement between Israel and Transjordan also covered the front held by Iraqi forces, and therefore made unnecessary any separate negotiations between Iraq and Israel.

The United Nations established supervising and reporting agencies to monitor the lines agreed in the GAAs. In addition, in 1950, the United States, Britain, and France in a separate Tripartite Declaration pledged their support to the effective implementation of the GAAs.

The GAAs were envisaged as temporary/interim arrangements to remain in force until a peaceful settlement were achieved between their parties. The failure however of the Lausanne Conference (April - September 1949) and the subsequent incapacity of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) to achieve comprehensive peace treaties made the four GAAs into quasi-permanent arrangements that regulated the relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors until the 1967 war. With many ups and downs, the four GAAs remained for almost twenty years as a more or less effective framework regulating relations between Israel and the four Arab signatories.

Currently only the Israeli-Lebanese GAA remains a legal instrument potentially regulating the relations between the two countries, despite their uneasy relationship after the 1967 war, the transfer of Palestinian armed guerrilla groups to Lebanon in the early 1970's and the frequent military operations and incidents along the demarcation line, including invasions of Lebanese territory by Israeli armed forces. However, due to this bilateral environment this GAA is deemed ineffective.

Content of the GAAs

The GAAs are rather short documents. The first signed, between Egypt and Israel served as a pattern for the three subsequent ones, in terms of substantive principles and procedural rules of the armistices. The fundamental objective of the negotiations that lead to the GAAs was the elimination of the risk of an imminent return to hostilities and the facilitation of a process to achieving permanent peace between Israel and the Arab countries. Consequently, the GAAs set demarcation lines, specifying that these line were not to be construed in any sense as a political or territorial boundary, and were delineated without prejudice to rights, claims and positions of the parties regarding the definitive solution of the "Palestine question"; emphasised that no aggressive acts shall

be undertaken, planned or threatened by one party against the other provided for no-man's zones and for the demilitarisation of territories; and organised the contacts between the signatories (bilateral Mixed Armistice Commissions, MAC). The latter, composed of an equal number of representatives of the parties to each GAA and of the Chief of Staff of the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), as Chairman, were entrusted with supervising the application execution of each GAA.

The GAAs did leave considerable gaps, including: Question of Israeli shipping through Suez canal and the Straits of Tiran; Use of the waters of river Jordan and its tributaries; Access of Jews to the Jewish Sacred Places in Jerusalem's Old City; Access of Jordanians to the south through the Bethlehem road

End of the GAAs

In the aftermath of the 1956 Suez–Sinai War, Israel declared the GAA with Egypt null and void, but this claim did not receive international recognition. The positioning of the UN Emergency Force along the demarcation lines after 1957 introduced a new factor into Egypt–Israel relations, in effect superseding the application of the Egypt–Israel GAA. Israel's conquest of the Sinai Peninsula in June 1967 rendered the GAA inoperative, while the 1979 Egypt–Israel peace treaty (Camp David, 17 September 1978) resulted in the final, legal termination of the GAA.

The conquest of Jerusalem and the West Bank of Jordan in June 1967 by Israeli forces brought an end to the applicability of the Jordan–Israel GAA, since neither Jordanian civil government nor the Jordanian army ever returned to these areas. The peace treaty concluded between Jordan and Israel in 1994 (Washington, 25 July 1994) brought about the termination of the Jordan–Israel GAA.

The take-over of the West Bank of Jordan and the Golan Heights rendered the 1949 Israel–Syria GAA irrelevant. The legal vacuum was eventually filled following the October 1973 war. The May 1974 "Separation of Forces" agreement resulted in a new demarcation line and has since then been supervised by the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

Topics of the Conference

The themes of the Conference shall include the following main axes and the indicative list of topics below; proposal of related topics are welcomed.

Diplomatic and Political History - International Politics and Relations

- Antecedents and History of Middle East conflicts;
- Why Rodos?;
- History of the Armistice Conference;
- Personalities and positions of the principal actors;
- The work (and personality) of Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche;
- The aftermath of Rhodes Armistices;

- Middle East Peace Conferences (Lausanne, Camp David, Oslo, etc);
- The Rodos Armistices' impact on UN mediating role;
- The Rodos Armistices' impact on UN peacekeeping;
- Middle East conflicts: present and future;
- Role of regional and international actors (UNSC Permanent 5, EU, etc.);
- The elusive comprehensive peace.

International Law

- Diplomatic means of peaceful settlement of international disputes;
- Peace negotiations (interstate conflicts and intra-State conflicts);
- Hosting of peace conferences;
- End of hostilities/ end of war;
- Cease-fire, truce, armistice;
- Withdrawal and reduction of forces agreements;
- Pacta bellica;
- Non-aggression pacts;
- Interim/temporary agreements, their application and duration;
- Demilitarised zones;
- End of international agreements;
- Effects of war on international agreements;
- Non-hostile relations between belligerents;
- Effects on belligerents and private actors (compensation, trade relations, interpersonal relations);
- Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran, navigational rights;
- Issues of humanitarian law.

Please submit your paper abstract **(200-300 words)** by **31 July 2019** at stribis@aegean.gr. The abstract should include the following information: names, title, status, corresponding address, telephone and fax numbers and email.

Notification of acceptance will be sent by 31 August 2019.

The conference is expected to culminate in a collection of essays selected from the presentations.