

Jewish Brigade Group

A brigade group of the British army that was made up of Jewish volunteers from Palestine. The Jewish Brigade was formed in 1944 and helped liberate Italy in 1945.

Previous attempts had been made to incorporate Jews into the Allied forces. At the beginning of World War II Zionist leaders proposed the creation of an official Jewish unit within the British army. These talks dragged into 1941, and were finally discontinued. Meanwhile, some 30,000 Jews from Palestine volunteered for the British army.

After confirming reports about the extermination of European Jewry in 1942 and 1943, the British decided that it would only be fair to give Jews a chance to take revenge on the Nazis in an official capacity. They accepted the Zionist leadership's proposal to create a Jewish fighting force, and on September 20, 1944 the British War Office announced the creation of the Jewish Brigade Group.

The brigade was composed of 5,000 soldiers. The Zionist flag was chosen as its banner—making it not the first Jewish unit to fight in the war, but the first one to be recognized as representing the Jewish people.

At the war's end, members of the Jewish Brigade helped prepare Displaced Persons for "illegal" immigration to Palestine. The British disbanded the brigade in July 1946.