

Exodus 1947

An "illegal" immigration ship that attempted to bring Jewish survivors to Palestine in 1947, only to be turned back to Europe by the British Mandatory authorities. The *Exodus 1947* became an international symbol of the need for free Jewish immigration to Palestine.

In July 1947 the *Mosad le-Aliya Bet*, the main illegal immigration agency, loaded 4,500 Jewish refugees onto a re-outfitted American ship, which sailed from Marseilles, France. When it reached the open sea, the ship renamed itself *Exodus 1947*. British warships picked up on the ship before it even reached Palestine's waters and forced it to advance into Haifa. As soon as the boat reached the port, British soldiers forcibly removed the refugees, killing three and wounding many others. On July 20 the refugees were dragged onto three British ships and sailed back to France. The ships sat off the coast of France for a month, while the French authorities refused to remove the Jews, but also refused them refuge. The Jews organized a hunger strike that attracted world attention to their terrible situation. Nonetheless, to the world's astonishment, the British decided to send the Jews back to displaced persons camps in Germany. The refugees remained in the camps until 1948, when the State of Israel was established.