

the **Arab-Israel**  
**conflict**  
and the  
**peace process**



an overview



Produced by the  
NSW Jewish Board of Deputies  
Editor: Ian Lacey AM

For further information and resources contact the  
NSW Jewish Board of Deputies  
on 9360 1600

Cover photo: Menachem Begin, Jimmy Carter and Anwar Sadat  
signing the Camp David Accords, 1978.  
Photo from the Jimmy Carter Archive

Unless otherwise stated, all maps courtesy of the  
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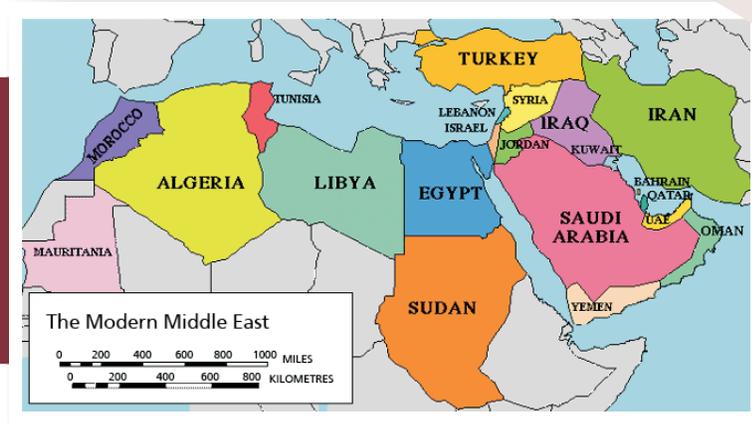
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# Context

## The Middle East



### Israel in 2008

Population in 2008:	7,282,000 comprising
Jews:	5,499,000 (75%)
Arabs:	1,461,000 (20.1%)
Others:	322,000 (4.9%)
GDP per capita	US\$28,800 (2007), an increase of 5.3% in 2007. (Australia \$33,300, Syria \$4100, Lebanon \$5700, Egypt \$4200)
Constitution:	A unicameral parliament (the Knesset) is elected by proportional representation similarly to the Australian Senate. Twelve parties were elected to the 2006 Knesset, including three Arab-based parties.
Major exports:	Communications, medical, avionics and agricultural equipment, software programs, finished diamonds, chemicals, plastics, fruit and vegetables.

## Israel and Palestine historic connections of Arabs and Jews

### The Jews

The Jews are the people who wrote the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament), a library of inspired literature which includes the historical narrative of the Jews in the land of Israel.

The Jewish connection with the land begins in the era of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, generally dated at about 1900BCE. Jacob, for example, is described in Genesis as figuratively wrestling with an angel, and receives the name Israel, meaning “he who struggles with the idea of God”. His descendants, the “children of Israel”, are promised a “land of Israel”. The Bible also includes histories of settlement in the land, the Jewish kingdoms, the Temple and the Prophets.

Some 2000 years after the era of the Patriarchs, in 70 CE, the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, and this is the traditional date for the beginning of the modern Jewish dispersion.

*Detail from the Arch of Titus, showing the Menorah, the golden candlestick described in the book of Exodus, carried in triumphal procession in Rome following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.*



Greater numbers left as captives, slaves and refugees after Emperor Hadrian crushed a massive Jewish revolt in 135CE. Hadrian decreed that the name Judea should be abolished, and that the new name should be Syria Palestina, Syria of the Philistines or Palestine. Nevertheless, many Jews remained, with scholars in Galilee writing some of the central works of Jewish law, and a permanent Jewish presence in Jerusalem.

### The Arabs and Islam

The Islamic calendar begins in 622, the year of the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina. In 638 Mohammed's successor, the Caliph Omar, defeated the Byzantine Roman Emperor Heraclius, and conquered Jerusalem. Palestine was now ruled successively by the Arab Caliphates of Damascus and Baghdad, which became the centres of a flowering Arabian civilisation. Indeed this was a time when the culture and technology of the Arab world were far in advance of the Europe of the Dark Ages.

The mainly Christian inhabitants of Palestine came to adopt the Arabic language and culture, and to identify themselves as Arabs. Most converted to Islam, but many of their descendants still remain Christian today. Jerusalem became the second most holy site in Islam, and the Dome of the Rock and the El Aqsa Mosque were constructed on the Temple Mount.

### Zionism

Meanwhile the dispersed Jews saw themselves as exiles, and prayed every day for the restoration of Zion. In almost every generation as outsiders in Christian Europe, they suffered severe persecution. In 1881, for example, anti-Jewish laws were revived in Tsarist Russia, accompanied by murderous attacks on Jewish areas and villages, known as pogroms. One response was a massive Jewish migration to the US and other countries, including Australia. Twelve year old Jewish boys were conscripted into the army for 25 years, and riots and murderous attacks on Jewish areas and villages took place throughout Russia.

Another Jewish response was the development of modern Zionism, as young Jewish “pioneers” left Russia to restore Turkish Palestine to its ancient fertility, and lead the way for a Jewish return. In 1896, when reporting the wave of antisemitism in France after the fabricated charges of treason in the Dreyfus trial, Theodore Herzl wrote *The Jewish State*. In 1897 the first World Zionist Congress led by Herzl adopted a program of seeking “a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law.” In 1908 the city of Tel Aviv started to rise from the sand dunes.

### The First World War

In 1914 Palestine had been part of the Turkish Empire for some 400 years. In 1915, as it became clear that the British would lose in Gallipoli, the Hashemite ruler Hussein of Mecca offered the military support of the Arabs of the Turkish empire. In exchange he sought a promise of Arab independence under a restored Caliphate. The position of Palestine in the negotiations was left ambiguous.

In 1917, the Australian Light Horse achieved a remarkable victory over a much larger Turkish force in a cavalry charge against the artillery emplacements at Beer Sheba, clearing the way for the British to enter Palestine.

It was at this time that the British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour issued a Declaration: "His Majesty's government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish National Home". After the war, the League of Nations granted Britain a Mandate to administer Palestine on the basis of the Balfour Declaration.

The Emir Feisal, son of Hussein of Mecca and leader of the Arab force during the war, made an agreement with Chaim Weizmann, President of the British Zionist Federation, approving the Balfour Declaration. He also wrote a letter to the US Zionist delegation at the Paris Peace conference, declaring that the Arabs would "welcome the Jews back home". Feisal later became King of Iraq under a British mandate.

*Chaim Weizmann, President of the British Zionist Federation, in Arab dress, with the Emir Feisal, after negotiating an agreement in 1918, in which Feisal approved the Balfour Declaration.*



## The British Mandate

Under the British government the Jewish immigrants built up the major cities, purchased land and established agricultural settlements, built major electricity power stations, drained swamps and brought malaria under control. Arabs also immigrated and the Arab population doubled during the Mandate.

The Jewish immigration was fiercely opposed by the Arabs of Palestine, with widespread riots in 1921, 1930 and 1936-9. The British responded with Royal Commissions, conferences and declarations of policy, progressively limiting, and then, by the 1939 White Paper, effectively preventing Jewish immigration.

This occurred as Hitler assumed power in Germany in 1933, the first concentration camps were opened, and most countries refused to take any substantial number of Jewish refugees.

Eventually, after the Second World War, the UN General Assembly passed the Partition resolution in 1947, and Israel declared its independence in 1948. The Partition resolution was rejected as illegitimate by the Arab world, and on the date of Israel's declaration of independence the forces of the Arab League invaded.

# Chronological Outline

## Historic Connections of Arabs and Jews to 1917

- c.1900 BCE** The era of Abraham and the biblical patriarchs. Canaanite city states under Egyptian protection.
- c.1400 BCE** The Exodus from slavery in Egypt. The Jews return to the land of Israel.
- c.1000 BCE** David and Solomon kings. The Jewish Temple is built in Jerusalem.
- 586 BCE** Babylonians invade and destroy the Temple. Rebuilding commences in 515 BCE.
- 70 CE** Roman destruction of the Second Temple. This is the traditional date for the beginning of the Dispersion, although a substantial Jewish presence remains in the land.
- 70-638** Palestine is ruled by Rome, and later by Constantinople (Byzantium) as part of the Christian Greek-speaking Byzantine Eastern Roman Empire.
- 622** Mohammed's 'migration' from Mecca to Medina (the *Hijra*) marks the foundation of Islam. In 638 his successor Omar defeats the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius and takes Jerusalem.
- 638-1099** Palestine is part of the Arab Caliphate, centred successively in Damascus and Baghdad. The Arabic language and the Islamic religion are introduced. The Dome of the Rock and the El Aqsa Mosque are built on the Temple Mount, and Jerusalem becomes the second most holy site in Islam.
- 1099-1291** Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem.
- 1516-1917** Palestine is part of the Turkish Empire.

## The birth of modern Zionism

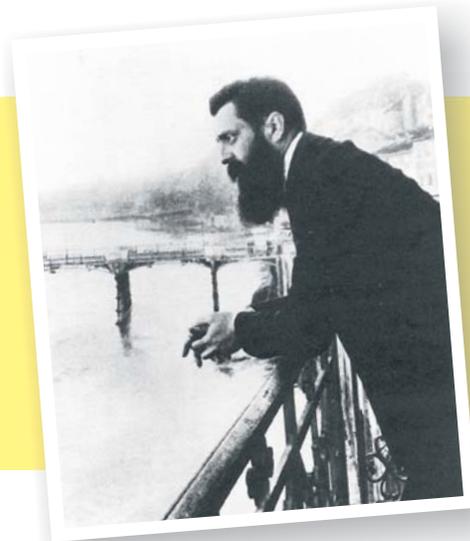
**1881** Tsar Alexander III revives anti-Jewish laws. 12 year old Jewish boys are conscripted into the army for 25 years, and riots and murderous attacks on Jewish neighbourhoods and villages (pogroms) break out in Russia. Over a million Jews emigrate between 1881 and 1914.

An organised Zionist movement, the “Lovers of Zion”, is founded in Russia, and a wave of Jewish migration to Turkish Palestine begins.

**1896** Theodore Herzl publishes *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*).

**1897** The first Zionist Congress establishes the World Zionist Organisation, which adopts a program of seeking “a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law.”

**1908** The city of Tel Aviv is founded. Communal agricultural settlements (kibbutzim) appear.



*Theodore Herzl in Istanbul, before obtaining an audience with the Sultan to seek a Jewish homeland in Palestine.*

## The First World War and the British Mandate

**1915** As British imperial forces face defeat at Gallipoli, Hussein of Mecca proposes an alliance between Britain and the Arabs of the Turkish empire. In return he seeks a promise of Arab independence under a restored Caliphate. The position of Palestine in the negotiation is left ambiguous.

**1917** The charge of the Australian Light Horse at Beer Sheba opens the way for British forces to enter Palestine.  
Britain announces the Balfour Declaration: "His Majesty views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine."

**1922** The League of Nations grants a Mandate to the UK on the basis of the Balfour Declaration. Trans-Jordan is part of Mandatory Palestine, but it is excluded from the provision for a Jewish national home.

During the Mandate agriculture, industry and electricity supply are developed by the Jewish immigrants. Swamps are drained and malaria is controlled. Many Arabs also immigrate. However, Arabs oppose Jewish immigration with violent rioting in 1920, 1933 and 1936-39.

*Nahalal, a co-operative agricultural settlement (kibbutz) founded under the Mandate.*



## The Nazi Holocaust and the Jewish refugees

- 1933** Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany. The first concentration camps are opened at Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück.  
Between 1933 and 1945 six million Jews are murdered by the Nazis.
- 1938** The Evian Conference on Refugees fails to achieve substantial immigration quotas into any country for Jews seeking to flee from Germany. The Australian representative states "As we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one", but agrees to 9000 refugees, one of the larger quotas.
- 1939** In response to Arab riots against Jewish settlement, a British White Paper policy statement effectively prevents further Jewish immigration into Palestine.
- 1939-45** The Second World War.  
Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion declares "We shall fight the Germans as if there was no White Paper, and we shall fight the White Paper as if there was no war".



*Rounded up in the Warsaw Ghetto for extermination.*

## The United Nations and the Creation of Modern Israel

- 1945-47** The White Paper policy is still enforced to prevent the immigration of survivors into Palestine. A Jewish uprising against the British in Palestine begins.
- 1947** Britain refers Palestine to the UN. The UN Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine, chaired by Australian Dr H.V. Evatt, recommends partition and drafts a UN resolution.
- The United Nations, by General Assembly Resolution 181, “recommends to the United Kingdom, as the mandatory Power for Palestine” a Partition Plan which envisages the establishment of an Arab state, a Jewish state and an internationalised Jerusalem.
- Hostilities begin immediately after the resolution is passed, with Arab armed opposition to the Partition Plan. An irregular “Arab Liberation Army” invades from Lebanon and joins in the attacks on the Jewish population.
- 1948** Britain relinquishes its Mandate in Palestine, and British forces are withdrawn.
- Israel declares its independence.
- The Partition Resolution is rejected by the Arabs of Palestine and the Arab states. As a result the proposed Palestinian state and an internationalised Jerusalem are not established.

## The war of 1948-1949

- 1948** Israel is invaded by the armies of Egypt, Trans-Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia and irregular forces from Lebanon and Sudan. The War of Independence (Arabic description Al Naqba - The Catastrophe) begins.

**1949** UN arranges ceasefire. Rhodes Armistice agreements set ceasefire lines.

Some hundreds of thousands of Arabs leave Israel between 1947 and 1949 and become refugees.

Jewish survivors arrive from Europe and the British detention camps in Cyprus, and between 1948 and 1951 about 580,000 Jewish refugees come from Arab countries.

After the armistice agreement Trans-Jordan purports to annex the region east of the demarcation line, names it the "West Bank" of the Jordan River, grants Jordanian citizenship to its inhabitants, and changes its name to The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The annexation is recognised only by Britain and Pakistan, and not by any Arab country. Egypt makes no claim to annex Gaza, and its inhabitants remain stateless.

### The wars of 1956 and 1967

**1956** Egypt nationalises the Suez Canal, owned by France and the UK, and the Canal and the Straits of Tiran are blocked to Israel-bound shipping. Attacks on Israel from Gaza by Egyptian sponsored "Commandos" are intensified. Israel joins France and England in a military campaign against Egypt, and Israeli forces reach the Canal.

**1957** Israel withdraws from Sinai on the basis of international guarantees of freedom of navigation and the presence of a UN peacekeeping force.

**1964** The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is formed by the Arab League "to attain the objective of liquidating Israel." It is a coalition of guerrilla groups, each supported by different Arab states. At this time there are no occupied territories.

**1967** Egypt, Jordan and Syria threaten invasion and mass their armies on Israel's borders.

Egypt orders the UN force out of Sinai and closes the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, in breach of the 1957 guarantees.

Egyptian President Nasser announces to the Egyptian Parliament: "The problem before the Arab countries is not whether the port of Eilat should be blockaded or how to blockade it, but how totally to exterminate the State of Israel for all time".

PLO Chairman Ahmed Shukhairy states: "Those [Israelis] who survive will remain in Palestine. I estimate that none of them will survive."

Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban travels the world seeking international support to lift the blockade, but without success. Israel then makes a pre-emptive attack and destroys the Egyptian air force.

**1967** The Six-Day War ends with Sinai, Gaza, West Bank and Golan in Israel's possession. Israel annexes East Jerusalem, including the Old City. Israel offers "territory for peace".

The Khartoum Conference of the Arab League pronounces the "Three No's": "No peace, no negotiation, no recognition". UN Resolution 242 proposes a framework for peace negotiation.

**1968** Yasser Arafat becomes PLO Chairman, and begins a worldwide terrorism campaign, including bombings and aircraft hijackings. A PLO "state within a state" is established in Jordan.

**1970** After blowing up hijacked airliners in Jordan, the PLO is expelled from Jordan by the Jordanian army. The PLO moves to South Lebanon.

**1973** Egypt and Syria invade in a surprise attack on the Jewish Day of Atonement, a day of fasting and repentance known as Yom Kippur. They are armed with new Soviet anti-tank missiles and Israel is caught unprepared. After two weeks of war, ending after Israeli forces cross into Egypt, ceasefire positions are eventually negotiated, with demilitarised zones, but otherwise without substantial changes.

## The Peace Process

- 1977** Egypt's President Anwar Sadat addresses the Israeli Parliament in Jerusalem and proposes peace and recognition of Israel in exchange for a return of the Sinai.
- 1978** Peace Accords with Egypt are negotiated at the US Presidential retreat at Camp David, between Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, with mediation by US President Jimmy Carter.
- 1981** Sadat is assassinated by the Muslim Brotherhood at a parade celebrating the 1973 war.
- 1982** Peace Treaty with Egypt implemented and Israel withdraws from Sinai.

Israel attacks PLO in South Lebanon, and then bombards PLO positions in Beirut. PLO withdraws from Beirut and establishes headquarters in Tunisia.  
The Hezbollah (Party of God) is formed in South Lebanon as a Shi'ite militia, financed and supplied with arms by Iran and Syria.

- 1987** The Intifada ("throwing-off") uprising begins with stone-throwing in Gaza and the West Bank. Sheikh Yassin founds Hamas as the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.
- 1990** Jews are allowed to leave the Soviet Union. One million arrive in Israel in the next six years.
- 1990** 100,000 Ethiopian Jews flee persecution and are airlifted to Israel.

Iraq invades Kuwait. Iraq is defeated by the US and its allies in the First Gulf War of 1991. Soviet influence in the Middle East is effectively ended.

**1991** Madrid Peace Conference. This is the first direct negotiation between Israel and Arab states other than Egypt. Continues with inconclusive talks in Washington.

**1993** Arafat sends a letter to Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin recognising Israel and renouncing terrorism. The Oslo Accords, negotiated secretly in Norway, are signed in Washington. The Accords establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority to govern the West Bank and Gaza under a power-sharing arrangement pending negotiation of a "final status" peace agreement. Israel retains security powers in the Territories, and the final status negotiations are to deal with borders, settlements, Jerusalem etc.



*Yitzhak Rabin, Bill Clinton and Yasser Arafat after signing the Oslo Accords.*

Bombing attacks escalate dramatically after the Oslo Accords. Rabin declares "we will not let the enemies of peace destroy the peace."

**1995** Rabin is assassinated by a Jewish religious extremist. Shimon Peres becomes caretaker Prime Minister.

**1996** Binyamin Netanyahu of the Likud defeats Shimon Peres at the election for Prime Minister. He introduces a policy of "reciprocity", ie staged withdrawals from the Territories in return for security co-operation by the Palestinian Authority in combating terrorism.

## Negotiation and conflict 2000-2008

**1999** Ehud Barak of the Labour Party defeats Netanyahu in the election for Prime Minister, on a radical peace platform.

**2000** In July 2000 Barak, Arafat and US President Bill Clinton meet at Camp David II to negotiate a “final status agreement”. Arafat rejects a proposal for a Palestinian state in 90% of the area of the Territories plus additional land from within Israel. He demands Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and also Israeli recognition of a right for all Palestinian refugees and their descendants, numbering some 4.5 million, to “return” to Israel itself, rather than to the proposed state of Palestine.

In September 2000 Ariel Sharon, as leader of the Likud opposition, asserts the Jewish right of access to the Temple Mount by making a public visit. This is followed by an outbreak of rioting, which comes to be known as the “Al Aqsa Intifada”, named after the Al Aqsa mosque which stands on the Temple Mount.

**2001** The Al Aqsa Intifada increases in intensity, with almost daily suicide bombings against restaurants, shopping malls, buses and similar targets in Israeli cities. The attacks and bombings are organised by Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, a military wing of Arafat's Fatah, and allegedly controlled by Arafat personally.

Ariel Sharon overwhelmingly defeats Barak in the election for Prime Minister in February 2001.

**2002** Israeli forces attack Hamas and Al Aqsa Brigade centres in Ramallah, Jenin and Bethlehem on the West Bank, and Arafat is confined to the Palestinian Authority government compound in Ramallah. Allegations of a massacre by Israeli forces in Jenin are rejected as false by a UN enquiry.

**2003** In 2003 the “Quartet”, comprising the US, the UN, the EU and Russia, sponsor “A Performance-based Roadmap”, which proposes that the Palestinian Authority would “dismantle” the terrorist organisations, and that this would be followed by an Israeli settlement freeze and by negotiations for the creation of a Palestinian state.

**2004** As the daily bombings resume, the Sharon government builds a security barrier, near to but not on the 1949 armistice lines, with extensions to protect Israeli towns in the West Bank. The barrier consists mainly of fences, with sections of high wall in urban areas and next to major roads.

**2004** The fence causes significant hardship to many Palestinians living in its vicinity, and some bring action in the Israeli Supreme Court, which orders changes in the route to relieve disproportionate hardship. The fence is condemned by the UN General Assembly and in the International Court on the ground that it has the effect of a unilateral acquisition of territory. However, it succeeds in eliminating almost all violent attacks from the West Bank.

On 11 November 2004 Yasser Arafat dies, and Mahmoud Abbas is elected President of the Palestinian Authority.

**2005** The Sharon government unilaterally withdraws all Israelis from Gaza, i.e. without any peace agreement. Some 9,000 Jewish settlers are removed from their homes by Israeli police and soldiers.

Sharon suffers a stroke which leaves him in a coma, and he is succeeded as Prime Minister by Ehud Olmert, deputy leader of Sharon's new Kadima party, with a program of continuing the process of unilateral withdrawal.

**2006** At the elections in February 2006 Hamas wins a clear majority of seats in the Palestinian Authority legislature, and its representatives declare that it would refuse to recognise Israel or negotiate with it and that armed attacks would continue.

The US, the EU and Israel discontinue funding for the Palestinian Authority unless it agrees to honour existing agreements, recognise Israel and renounce violence.

By December 2006 Gaza becomes the centre of a de facto civil war between forces supporting the Hamas government and the forces of Fatah, supporting President Mahmoud Abbas.



*Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO and first President of the Palestinian Authority.*



*Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority since 2004.*

**2006** In July 2006 the Hezbollah cross the border into Israel, and kill and kidnap Israeli soldiers. Israel responds with aerial bombardment, beginning with the bombing of the Hezbollah communications centre at Beirut airport. The Hezbollah fire rockets into Israel, reaching the city of Haifa, and launching rockets from Lebanese population centres. Israeli troops enter south Lebanon. and hostilities end with a UN Security Council resolution requiring the disarming of the Hezbollah and the presence of the Lebanese army and increased UN peacekeeper forces in the border area.

**2007** Hamas decisively defeats the Fatah militias in Gaza. President Abbas declares a state of emergency, and appoints a new non-party Prime Minister, who effectively governs in the West Bank, while Hamas controls Gaza.

Israel destroys a nearly completed nuclear reactor in Syria.

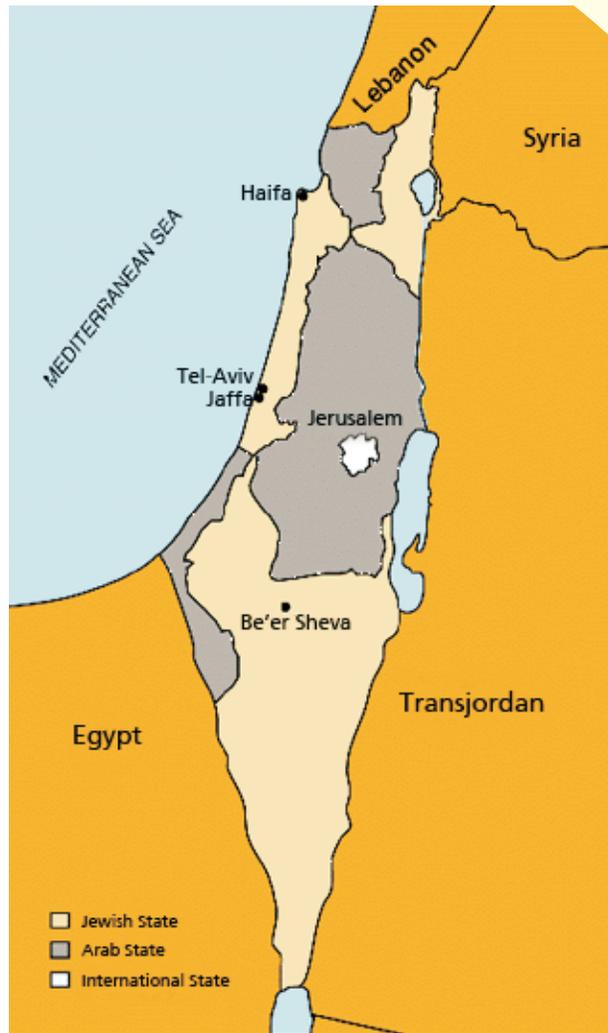
**2008** Under Hamas rule in Gaza, rockets are fired daily on neighbouring Israeli towns. The rockets are fired from Palestinian population centres in Gaza.

Meanwhile confidential negotiations continue with Palestinian Authority representatives from the West Bank for a two-state solution based on the Oslo Accords. Egyptian mediators speak to Hamas and Israel, and arrange a truce. Syrian and Israeli negotiators meet in Turkey.

# Maps

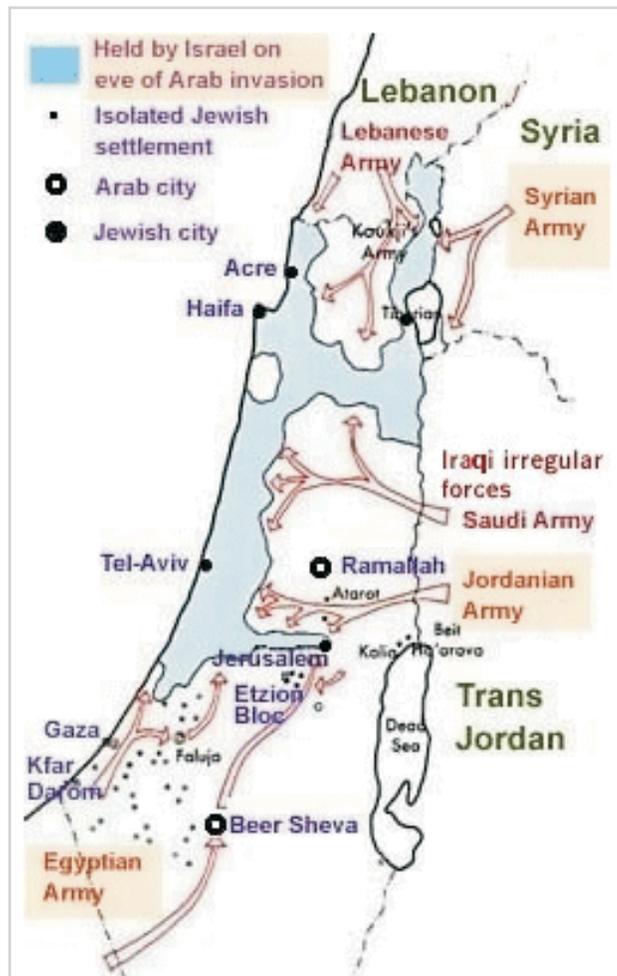
## UN partition plan 1947

*The Partition Resolution was rejected by the Palestinian Arabs, who refused to establish a Palestinian Arab state alongside Israel. Hostilities commenced in 1947, and the neighbouring Arab states invaded in 1948. As a result no Palestinian state was established, and there was no international regime in Jerusalem.*



The Partition Plan, 1947  
U.N General Assembly Resolution 181

## The Arab Invasion 1948



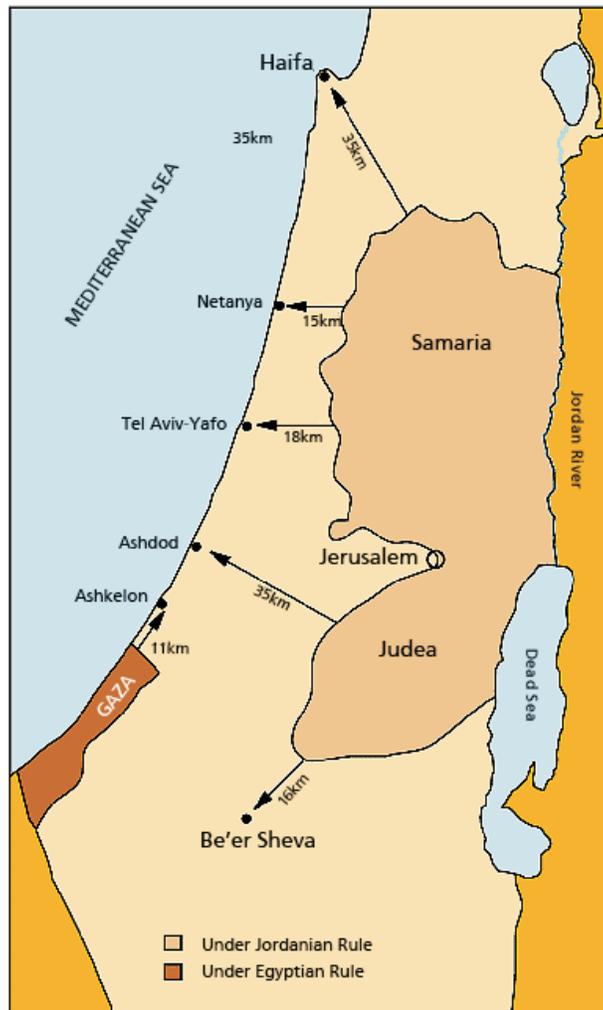
## Armistice boundaries 1949

The 1949 demarcation lines were fixed by the Rhodes Armistice Agreements. Article V.2 of the Agreement with Egypt (in similar terms to the other Agreements), provided:

*“The Armistice Demarcation Line is not to be construed in any sense as a political or territorial boundary, and is delineated without prejudice to rights, claims and positions of either Party to the Armistice as regards ultimate settlement of the Palestine question.”*

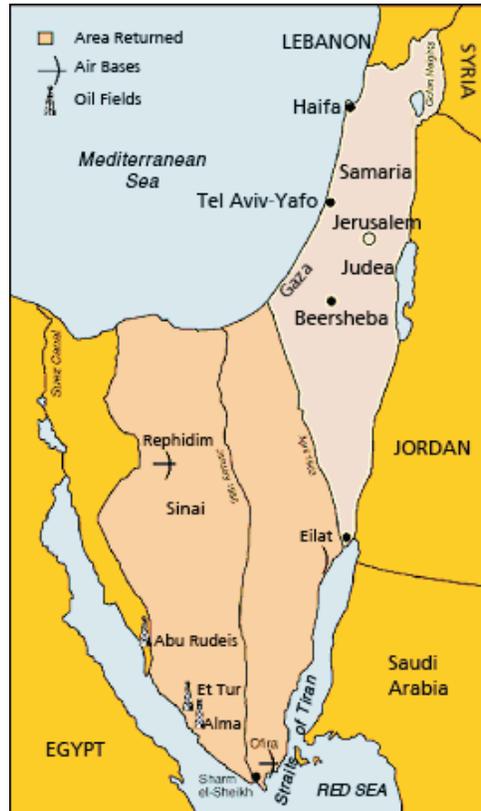


## Distances within 1949 Armistice boundaries



Distances between Israeli Population Centers and the Pre-1967 Lines

## Israel's boundaries after 1982



*This map describes the implementation of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1982. That treaty expressly established "secure and recognized boundaries" under UN Resolution 242 in the context of peaceful relations with Egypt.*

*The demarcation lines of 1949 are not shown, as they were no longer legally applicable after the armistice ended in 1967, although those lines were treated as an informal "green line". See the map of the Armistice Boundaries 1949.*

*The Territories beyond the green line are presently governed by the Palestinian Authority under the 1995 Interim Agreement which provides for a power-sharing arrangement, with Israel retaining responsibility for security. The position of the borders is to be fixed when a final status peace agreement is successfully negotiated.*

*Note the position of the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal in relation to Israel's access to the Red Sea on the route to Asia and Australia.*

# The Refugee issue

There are (as at 2008) some 4.4 million Palestinian refugees and their descendants registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and some of them are still suffering severe hardship. This section looks at the origins of the problem and the present situation.

## The UN Partition Resolution 1947

In November 1947 the UN General Assembly passed a resolution recommending the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. When the resolution was passed, an irregular force known as the Arab Liberation Army entered British Palestine from Lebanon. They joined forces with the local Arab militias who were attacking the Jewish population and who were opposed by the Jewish Defence Force (the *Haganah*) and the *Irgun*, the militia of the Revisionist party. A full scale war erupted, and it was at this time that an emigration of Arabs from the territory that became Israel began.

## Israel's independence

On the first night of Israel's independence, on 14 May 1948, Tel Aviv was bombed by Egyptian aircraft. The next day, the Egyptian Foreign Minister informed the UN Security Council that "Egyptian armed forces have started to enter Palestine to establish law and order".

During that night, the regular armies of Egypt, Syria, Trans-Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq invaded Israel, supported by volunteers from Sudan and Saudi Arabia. During the war which continued until January 1949, the Arab exodus accelerated.

## Numerical estimates

Some hundreds of thousands of Arabs left their homes in the areas which came under Jewish control. Estimates of the number of refugees who left Israel between 1947 and 1949 vary from 419,000, calculated on the basis of numbers before and after the exodus, to 726,000, based on the UNRWA relief figures.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J Schechtman (*The Refugee in the World, Displacement and Integration*, NY 1963). Schechtman estimates a number of 561,000 from the districts which became Israel.

## Destinations

Most of the refugees fled to regions which were within Palestine, but outside the 1949 Armistice lines, and they came under the rule of Jordan and Egypt. Those who arrived in the West Bank were absorbed into Jordan as Jordanian citizens, although many remained in refugee camps receiving UNRWA aid.<sup>2</sup>

Those who arrived in Gaza came under Egyptian rule, but did not receive citizenship. Since Gaza was not annexed by Egypt, the refugees became stateless and were not allowed to enter Egypt without express permission.

The refugees who fled to Lebanon and Syria did not receive citizenship, and their descendants still have limited rights and employment opportunities.

In 1996, the last date of such a classification, the numbers of refugees registered by UNWRA were recorded as follows:

West Bank	1.2 million	Gaza	880,000	Jordan	1.832 million
Lebanon	372,700	Syria	352,100		

## Causes of the exodus

Obviously many, if not most, of the refugees fled with their families simply to avoid the dangers of remaining in a war zone. However, Arab sources accuse the Jewish forces of a concerted terror campaign aimed at removing the Arab population. An Israeli response is to point to documented Arab calls for the inhabitants of the area to leave their homes and make way for an Arab invasion, and to a serious effort by Israel to persuade the Arab population to remain. The issue is still the subject of intense historical controversy, since the events took place in the heat of war, and most of the historical conclusions are politically motivated.

Both of the conflicting descriptions of the events probably have an element of truth, depending on the exigencies of full-scale war. For example, the Jewish leadership in the mixed city of Haifa made a point of attempting to persuade the Arab population to remain in place, a call which was resolutely rejected in order to clear the way for the expected bombardment and invasion of the city.

<sup>2</sup> *In 1995 those who live in Gaza and the West Bank came under the administration of the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords, while those in Jordan are Jordanian citizens.*

On the other hand some of those who occupied strategically critical areas in the centre of the country between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem were displaced, and others fled as a consequence of the highly coloured reports in the Arab media. In particular, lurid tales are still told about the deaths of the inhabitants of the village of Deir Yassin, which the Irgun insisted occurred unintentionally in the course of a battle to secure the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road.<sup>3</sup>

Essentially, however, the Arab exodus was a result of the fact that the war of 1947-1949 took place, in the sense that if there had been no invasion and a peaceful partition had been completed then it is unlikely that any substantial emigration would have occurred.

### After 1967

After the Six-Day War, Gaza and the West Bank came under Israeli rule, as did the refugees who lived in those territories. One consequence was that some fled from the West Bank to Jordan. Another result of Israeli rule was an improvement in living standards, with employment opportunities in Israel and government investment in infrastructure, housing and agriculture.

Moshe Dayan, as Defence Minister, set the tone for the Israeli administration in his instructions to Chaim Herzog, then Military Governor of the West Bank and later President of Israel:

“Don't try to rule the Arabs, let them rule themselves. It's enough that we suffer from Israeli bureaucracy, they don't deserve it. I want a policy whereby an Arab can be born, live and die in the West Bank without ever seeing an Israeli official.”

In 1969 Israel established the Economic Development and Refugee Rehabilitation Trust, which spent some millions of dollars on infrastructure projects in the camps and provided loans and subsidies for agriculture and new housing. Between 1968 and 1972 agricultural production more than doubled. Per capita income in the West Bank increased by 80% and unemployment in Gaza was reduced to 2%. Life expectancy increased from 48 years in 1967 to 72 years in 2007.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See *The Revolt*, by Menachem Begin, leader of the Revisionists and later Israeli PM. See also [www.peacefaq.com/deiryassin.htm](http://www.peacefaq.com/deiryassin.htm) for quotations from Jewish and Arab witnesses.

<sup>4</sup> Data and quotation from Martin Gilbert *Israel - a History* (Doubleday, London 1998)

### After 1993

This period of development came to an end with the uprising of 1988 known as the Intifada. Then, following implementation of the Oslo Accords of 1993 the refugees living in the Palestinian Territories came under the administration of the Palestinian Authority under an interim power-sharing agreement, with Israel retaining security control. Since 2007 the refugees in Gaza are effectively ruled by Hamas, and those on the West Bank by a Fatah-led administration.

### The Israeli Arabs

The Arabs who remained in Israel became Israeli citizens, and at the 2006 census there were 1,387,000 Israeli Arabs, representing about 20% of the population. Eleven Arab members were elected to the Israeli Parliament in 2006, and an Arab Justice serves on the Full Bench of Israel's Supreme Court. The Bedouin and the Druze (an Arab minority religion) volunteer for service in the Israeli army.

### Jewish refugees from Europe

One of the first laws of the State of Israel was the Law of Return, which provided that every Jew was entitled to immigrate to Israel as of right.

Between 15 May 1948 and 31 December 1951 a total of 686,739 Jewish immigrants arrived in Israel. The Jewish population thus grew from about 650,000 in 1948 to about 1.4 million in 1951, causing immense strains on Israel's underdeveloped economy, with severe housing and food shortages.

The first wave of immigration following independence consisted of over 120,000 survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, arriving from the Displaced Persons camps of Europe and the British detention camp in Cyprus. The Romanian government was bribed to permit another 117,950 survivors to leave, and others arrived from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

## Refugees from Arab countries

Most of the Jews in the Arab world fled from persecution following the creation of Israel. In 1950 the Iraqi government agreed to release its Jews provided they left behind their property and valuables, and a total of 123,371 immigrants were immediately airlifted to Israel. Then followed the arrival of more than 250,000 immigrants from Morocco, 56,000 from Tunisia, 35,000 from Libya, nearly 30,000 from Egypt and 46,640 Jews airlifted from Yemen.

In all between 1948 and 1972 about 840,000 Jewish refugees fled from the countries of the Arab world, and about 580,000 found refuge in Israel.<sup>5</sup>

By the mid-1950s the Jewish population of Israel was roughly half of European background and half non-European. The vast tent camps were being replaced by permanent housing, and development towns were being established to absorb many of the new immigrants.

## The claim to a Palestinian "right of return"

One of the central sticking points in the Peace Process is the demand for Israeli recognition that the Arab refugees and their descendants, now numbering some four and a half million, have a right to return into Israel, rather than to the proposed Palestinian state.

According to the 2006 census Israel had a population of some seven million, including about 5.6 million Jews and 1.3 million Arabs. Obviously a serious demand for repatriation into Israel of a hostile population of some 4.5 million would clearly be inconsistent with the idea of a "two-state solution" which envisages two states, one predominately Arab and one predominately Jewish, living side by side in peace. Indeed it would spell the end of Israel as a Jewish state.

The Palestinian demand is therefore usually accompanied by a verbal assurance that all that is required is a formal recognition of the "right" to return, accompanied by a token immigration and compensation for those who do not return. One scenario which has been canvassed is that an international compensation fund might be established in the event of genuine peace.

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<sup>5</sup> *The figures for Jewish refugees are from H.M. Sachar, A History of Israel from the rise of Zionism to our Time Knopf NY 2000.*

## Non-Government Initiatives

Privately funded initiatives are a widespread feature of Israeli-Palestinian relations. These are three recent examples.

### Israeli-Palestinian Business Council

In May 2008, sixty leading businessmen from Israel and the Palestinian Authority announced the establishment of a joint business council headed jointly by the CEO of Israel's telecommunication giant, *Cellcom*, Amos Shapira, and Palestinian businessman Walid Najjab of the *PalTel Communication Company*. "The idea was born due to the difficult political situation but we have no plans or pretensions to deal with diplomatic processes," Shapira said. His co-chairman and Palestinian counterpart added, "but we will do what we know how to do best, and that is to take advantages of possibilities on a business and economic level." (*Ynetnews*)

### The Peres Centre for Peace

Over 1,600 Israeli and Palestinian boys and girls are involved in the Twinned Peace Sports School program, which comprises sport training (football or basketball), peace education instruction, auxiliary educational support and joint Palestinian-Israeli sporting and social activities.

A new project was launched in January 2008 whereby a Palestinian-Israeli Peace Team was created and competed in the AFL (Australian Football League) International Cup in August 2008 in Melbourne and Warnambool, Australia.

### Medical Research

In May 2008 an international conference on Alzheimer's was co-hosted by Rutgers-Newark, the Hebrew University, and Al-Quds University Medical School.

24 Palestinians attended the main scientific sessions in Western Jerusalem, including a dozen medical students and six faculty members from Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem, and five clinical neurologists and psychiatrists and one brain surgeon from Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jenin in the West Bank.

Funds are also being raised to support Middle East collaborative research Consortium on Brain Disorders, which will include training, research, and education on Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

## Documentary extracts

### Psalm 137 (c. 586 BCE)

By the waters of Babylon,  
There we sat, there we wept,  
As we remembered Zion...  
We hung our harps upon the willows;  
How can we sing the Lord's song  
In a strange land?...  
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,  
May my right hand forget its skill."

### Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (1863)

"There was hardly a tree or shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country...Nazareth is forlorn; about that ford of Jordan where the hosts of Israel entered the Promised Land with songs of rejoicing, one finds only a squalid camp... Renowned Jerusalem itself, the stateliest name in history, has lost all its ancient grandeur, and is become a pauper village ... Palestine is desolate and unlovely. It is a hopeless, dreary, heartbroken land."

### A.D. Gordon, *Writings* (1920)

"In Palestine we must do with our own hands all that makes up the sum total of life. We must ourselves do all the work from the least strenuous, cleanest and most sophisticated, to the dirtiest and most difficult. In our way, we must feel what a worker feels, think what a worker thinks - then, and only then, shall we have a culture of our own, for then we shall have a life of our own."

## The Mufti in Berlin, 1941



*Record of the conversation between the Fuehrer and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem on November 28, 1941 in the presence of Reich Foreign Minister and Minister Grobba in Berlin. Füh. 57a. g Rs. BERLIN, November 30, 1941.*

“The Mufti began by thanking the Fuehrer for the great honour he had bestowed by receiving him. He wished to seize the opportunity to convey to the Fuehrer of the Greater German Reich, admired by the entire Arab world, his thanks for the sympathy which he had always shown for the Arab and especially the Palestinian cause...

The Fuehrer then made the following statement to the Mufti, enjoining him to lock it in the uttermost depths of his heart:

1. He (the Fuehrer) would carry on the battle to the total destruction of the Judeo-Communist empire in Europe...

3. Germany's objective would then be solely the destruction of the Jewish element residing in the Arab sphere under the protection of British power. In that hour the Mufti would be the most authoritative spokesman for the Arab world. It would then be his task to set off the Arab operations which he had secretly prepared.”

Extracts from Israel's Declaration  
of Independence  
14 May 1948

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people remained faithful to it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom. The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books...

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people - the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe - was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the comity of nations.

**WE APPEAL** - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions...

**WE EXTEND** our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land.

## Extracts from Statement of the Arab League 15 May 1948

2. The Arabs have always asked for their freedom and independence. On the outbreak of the First World War, and when the Allies declared that they were fighting for the liberation of peoples, the Arabs joined them and fought on their side with a view to realising their national aspirations and obtaining their independence. England pledged herself to recognise the independence of the Arab countries in Asia, including Palestine. The Arabs played a remarkable part in the achievement of final victory and the Allies have admitted this.

4. When the war came to an end England did not keep her promise.

9. When the General Assembly of the United Nations issued, on 29 November 1947, its recommendation concerning the solution of the Palestine problem, on the basis of the establishment of an Arab State and of another Jewish [State] in [Palestine] together with placing the City of Jerusalem under the trusteeship of the United Nations, the Arab States drew attention to the injustice implied in this solution ... and that it would not be possible to carry it out by peaceful means, and that its forcible imposition would constitute a threat to peace and security in this area

Sixth: Therefore, as security in Palestine is a sacred trust in the hands of the Arab States...the Governments of the Arab States have found themselves compelled to intervene in Palestine solely in order to help its inhabitants restore peace and security and the rule of justice and law to their country, and in order to prevent bloodshed.

## British Police Memorandum on 1948 Arab Exodus 26th April, 1948

The situation in Haifa remains unchanged. Every effort is being made by the Jews to persuade the Arab populace to stay and carry on with their normal lives, to get their shops and businesses open and to be assured that their lives and interests will be safe. On the other side the evacuation goes on and a large road convoy escorted by Military and containing a large percentage of Christians left Haifa for Beirut yesterday. An estimated number of 700 has been given for this convoy and evacuation by sea goes on steadily.

### Mahmoud Abbas in Falastin Al Thawra, March 1976

Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) wrote an article in March 1976 in Falastin al-Thawra, the official journal of the PLO in Beirut: 'The Arab armies entered Palestine to protect the Palestinians from the Zionist tyranny, but instead they abandoned them, forced them to emigrate and to leave their homeland, imposed upon them a political and ideological blockade and threw them into prisons similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live in Eastern Europe.'

[Mahmoud Abbas is the current President of the Palestinian Authority]

### Constitution of the Arab Ba'ath Party, Damascus 1951

Many have been the self-appointed counsellors of "realism", urging upon Palestinians acknowledgement of the new status quo in Palestine and acceptance of their exile "in good grace"; and many have been the lucrative offers of economic aid for their "resettlement" and "rehabilitation" outside Palestine. But the people which had remained for thirty years undaunted by the combined power of British Imperialism and Zionist Colonialism, and which subsequently refused to allow the seizure of its land and the dispersal of its body to conquer its soul also, knew very well how to resist those siren calls.

### Letter from Yasser Arafat To Yitzhak Rabin

September 9, 1993

"Mr. Prime Minister,

The signing of the Declaration of Principles marks a new era in the history of the Middle East. In firm conviction thereof, I would like to confirm the following PLO commitments:

The PLO recognizes the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security...

The PLO considers that the signing of the Declaration of Principles constitutes a historic event, inaugurating a new epoch of peaceful coexistence, free from violence and all other acts which endanger peace and stability. Accordingly, the PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and will assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance prevent violations and discipline violators."

## The Hamas Covenant 1988

"In The Name Of The Most Merciful Allah ...

"Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it" (The Martyr, Imam Hassan al-Banna, of blessed memory)...

### Article Seven:

... The Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, has said:

"The Day of Judgement will not come about until Moslems fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Moslems, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him. Only the Gharkad tree would not do that because it is one of the trees of the Jews." (related by al-Bukhari and Muslim)."

### Article Eleven:

The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgement Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up.

This is the law governing the land of Palestine in the Islamic Sharia (law) and the same goes for any land the Moslems have conquered by force, because during the times of (Islamic) conquests, the Moslems consecrated these lands to Moslem generations till the Day of Judgement...

### Article Seventeen:

...That is why you find them [our enemies] giving these attempts constant attention through information campaigns, films, and the school curriculum, using for that purpose their lackeys who are infiltrated through Zionist organizations under various names and shapes, such as Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, espionage groups and others, which are all nothing more than cells of subversion and saboteurs...

The day Islam is in control of guiding the affairs of life, these organizations, hostile to humanity and Islam, will be obliterated.

# Bibliography and web resources

## Recommended for Schools

### **Leanne PIGGOTT**

The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Timeless Struggle, Science Press 2008  
A balanced and accessible textbook specifically designed to cover the NSW Higher School Certificate syllabus, by a lecturer at the University of Sydney .

### **Martin GILBERT**

The Routledge Atlas of the Arab-Israel Conflict, Routledge 2002

## Comprehensive historical texts

### **Howard M. SACHAR**

A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to our Time  
Second edition (Alfred A Knopf, New York 2000.)  
A fully detailed text comprising 1153 pages.

### **Martin GILBERT**

Israel - a History (Doubleday, London 1998)  
750 pages. A very readable text.

### **Walter LAQUEUR**

A History of Zionism (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1972).  
640 pages. The full story of the modern Zionist movement ending with the creation of Israel.

## Documentary Anthologies

### **Walter LAQUEUR and Barry RUBIN**(Editors)

The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict 6th edition (Viking Penguin 2001) 560 pages containing most of the central documentary source material.

### **Michael CURTIS**, Ed.

The Palestinians: People, History, Politics  
(Transaction Books, New Brunswick 1975).  
An anthology of primary materials, selected from a pro-Palestinian viewpoint.

### **Arthur HERTZBERG**

The Zionist Idea (Atheneum, New York 1969)  
638 pages of extracts from early Zionist ideological writing, with full commentary.

## Material for Discussion

### **Alan DERSHOWITZ**

The Case for Peace: How the Arab-Israel Conflict can be resolved  
(John Wiley and Sons 2005)

### **Edward SAID**

The Question of Palestine (Vintage Books 1992)  
The classic exposition of the Arab case against Israel.

### **Joan PETERS**

From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine  
(JKAP Publications USA 1993 - previously Harper & Rowe 1984)  
An analysis of the conflicting claims, based on historical and statistical material.

## Websites

**Israel & Judaism Studies** website of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies  
**www.ijs.org.au** - See sections on "Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1880s-1947" and "The Arab-Israeli Conflict 1948-1996" for articles on the syllabus subjects, including Zionism, the Settlements, the Territories, etc.

### **Official websites**

Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs - **www.mfa.gov.il**  
Palestinian Authority official website - **www.pna.gov.ps**  
Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs - **www.mfa.gov.jo**

### **English language newspapers**

The Jerusalem Post (Newspaper of record) - **www.jpost.com**  
Ha-Aretz ("The Land". Left-wing.) - **www.haaretzdaily.com**  
Arutz Sheva ("Channel Seven". Right-wing Religious) -  
**www.israelnationalnews.com**  
The Cairo Times - **www.cairotimes.com**  
The Daily Star, Lebanon - **www.dailystar.com.lb**

## Videos

Pillar of Fire: The Rebirth of Israel 1986  
The 50 Year War; Israel and the Arabs BBC 1998  
Tkuma: Israel's First 50 years 1999  
("Pillar of Fire" and "Tkuma" are both available to borrow in NSW from Academy BJE, resourcecentre@bje.nsw.edu.au or tel. 9365 7900)



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Editor: Ian Lacey AM

For further information and resources  
contact the  
NSW Jewish Board of Deputies  
on 9360 1600



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