Honest Reporting

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

UPDATED EDITION, WITH ALL THE LATEST PEACE DEALS
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The area filled by the modern State of Israel has been known throughout history under a variety of names: Palestine, Judah, Israel, and others. Since its inception, it has been surrounded by enemies and threats from the surrounding Arab states, none of which are democracies.

Israel is governed differently. Its laws are guided by the modern principles of a western liberal democracy. Its laws enshrine freedom of expression, freedom of information, and freedom of religion.

Yet anti-Israel attitudes have become popular in some circles. The reasoning is often related to the false belief that Israel “stole” Palestinian Arab lands and mistreated the Arab refugees. But the lands mandated by the United Nations as the State of Israel had actually been inhabited by Jews for thousands of years. Jerusalem was the site of the original Jewish Temple, built by King Solomon, long before either Christianity or Islam existed.

Israel remains a bastion of democracy and freedom in one of the world’s most oppressive regions. Israel is productive, successful, and an important political and military partner to many nations.

Even after the Arab Spring, Israel is the only true democracy in the Middle East.

Supporting Israel in the face of efforts to delegitimize it is in the national and cultural interests of all who support freedom and democracy.
Key Events in the History of the Holy Land

YEARS 2000 TO 1800 BCE
Ancient Jews establish the first tribal kingdoms in the Land of Israel. This is known as the period of the Biblical Patriarchs. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

950 BCE
King David unites all Jewish tribes and rules over them as a single nation. Jews build the First Holy Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Temple becomes the center of Jewish religious observance. Israel expands and prospers under subsequent Jewish kings, including Solomon.

586 BCE
The Babylonian Empire conquers Israel, destroys the First Jewish Temple and expels most of the Jews to Babylon. Many of them return to Israel 70 years later from the Babylonian exile.

515 BCE
Jews rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem (known as the Second Temple).
Kingdom of Israel in the time of King David and Solomon, 1000 - 925 BCE
**330 BCE**
Alexander the Great conquers the Holy Land. Beginning of the rule of Seleucid kings who introduce Greek culture to the Jewish people.

**161 BCE**
The Jews regain independence. Beginning of rule of Jewish Hasmonean dynasty (Maccabeans).

**63 BCE**
Independent Hasmonean rule comes to an end. Roman leader Pompey gains indirect control over Israel. Twenty years later, the Romans transform the Hasmonean Kingdom into a client kingdom known as the Herodian Kingdom.

**50 BCE**
Beginning of the rule of King Herod the Great who built the famous Masada fortress and renovated the Jewish Second Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

**Year 0**
Jesus is born in Bethlehem. Jesus’ disciples go on to found Christianity. Jesus was condemned to death and crucified by the Romans. In later years antisemites promote the notion that the Jews are responsible for death of Jesus.

**66 to 73 Common Era (CE)**
The Jews rise up against Rome in the first war of independence. In 70 CE the Romans capture and destroy Jerusalem and the Second Temple. After a three-year siege, the Jewish desert fortress Masada is captured by the Romans. Rather than surrender, all 900 Jewish defenders and their families in Masada take their own lives. Masada becomes the symbol of Jewish resistance.

**132-135 CE**
Second Jewish revolt led by great Jewish commander, Simon Bar Kokhba. After initial victories, the Jewish rebels are eventually defeated by crack Roman legions. Many Jews are massacred and others sent into exile. Jews emigrate all over Europe and Africa. This community of expelled Jews is called the Diaspora. The Roman emperor Hadrian applies a new name, “Palestine,” to the land of Israel, which refers to the ancient Biblical enemy of the Jews, the Philistines (tribe of Goliath). The name is deliberately chosen by Hadrian to humiliate the Jews.
311 CE
The Byzantine Christian Empire begins to rule the land. Many people convert to Christianity. The whole area becomes known to the Christians as the Holy Land. Christian churches are built, and Jerusalem flourishes as the center of Christianity.

622-632 CE
An Arab merchant and warrior named Muhammad starts a new religion called Islam. His followers are called Muslims. Muhammad is viewed as the final prophet of God in all the main branches of Islam. His teachings, together with the Koran, form the basis of Islamic religious belief.

625-632 CE
Muhammad’s Muslim army attacks Jews and Christians living in Arab lands (currently Saudi Arabia).

FACT
The Muslims win and expel most Jews including the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir from Medina. The Muslims beheaded all the men of Banu Nadir, taking the surviving women and children as slaves. After Muhammad’s victorious battle of Khaybar (629), Jews are made into second class citizens known as “dhimmis.” In the following years most of the Christians are expelled or murdered by the Muslims.

638 CE
Muslim Arab armies defeat Byzantium and capture the Holy Land, including Jerusalem. For the next 330 years Jewish people in the land are brutally ruled by Arab Caliphs.

7th to 11th century
The population of Palestine gradually becomes a mixture of Jews, Turks, Arabs, Christians, Kurds, Armenians and others.

1071 CE
Turkish Muslim armies win the critical battle of Manzikert, in present day Turkey. Muslim Turks conquer Palestine and massacre Christians. They start preying on the Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, and thus provoke Christian crusades to liberate the area from Muslims.

1097 CE
Beginning of the Christian Crusader rule. Crusaders kill many Jews and Muslims. The kingdom encompassed roughly the territory controlled by modern-day Israel and the southern parts of Lebanon, and lasted for about 200 years.

FROM 1300 CE
The Mamelukes from Egypt defeat the Crusaders and rule the land. Mamelukes prove to be ineffective rulers. Most of the area becomes depopulated and abandoned.
**1514 CE**

The Turkish Empire gains control of the Holy Land and rules for 400 years. The land becomes depopulated further. Small communities of Jews remain and follow their old customs and religion. There are also small communities of Turks, Arabs and Christians.

**19th Century**

Modern Zionism, A new movement to return the European Jews to the Holy Land is started by Theodore Herzl. Thousands of Jews attempt to escape antisemitism in Europe. Poor Arabs from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq also begin to immigrate to Palestine in search of new economic opportunities created by the Jews. Jews build farms and workshops and often employ local and immigrant Arabs.

**1917**

After defeating Turkey in WWI, Great Britain gains control of the land of Palestine. The British half-heartedly try to control hatred and intolerance of Muslim Arabs against non-Muslims, Jews and Christians.

**1921 to 1939**

Repeated massacres of Jewish communities in Palestine by Arabs. The most notorious was the 1929 massacre in Hebron where 67 Jews were slaughtered. In response to Arab aggression, Jews start to organize their own defense force (called the Haganah) to protect Jewish towns and villages.

**1939-45**

WW2. Britain responds to Arab opposition to Jewish immigration by issuing the White Paper, severely limiting Jewish land purchases and immigration. Nevertheless, Muslim Arabs in Palestine side with Nazi Germany, while Jews side with Britain and the United States. Jews form military units in Europe to fight against the Nazis. Muslims form military units to help the Nazis.

**November 1947**

The UN votes to re-establish Israel as the Jewish homeland. Local Arabs, backed up by others from across the Middle East immediately attack Jewish communities, effectively starting what is at this point a civil war between Arabs and Jews.

**1947-48**

Israel's War of Independence. On May 14, 1948, British forces leave the Holy Land and the Jews declare independence, naming their state Israel. The conflict
escalates as the neighboring Arab states attack Israel. Jews lack arms and are few in number; however they are better organized, fight valiantly and successfully defend their homeland.

1964
The Palestinian Liberation Organization is founded with the purpose of the “liberation of Palestine” through armed struggle, with much of its violence aimed at Israeli civilians.

1967
The Six-Day War. After Egypt closes the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, expels international peacekeepers from the Sinai and masses forces there, Israel launches pre-emptive airstrikes on the Egyptian military. Jordan and Syria join the fighting, but are quickly defeated. Following the Six Day War, Israel controls the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula. (The Sinai is returned to Egypt following the 1979 Peace Treaty while Israel unilaterally disengaged from Gaza in 2005.

1973
A humiliated Egypt and Syria join forces to take revenge on Israel in a surprise attack on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. After initially losing great swathes of ground, Israel, with US support, turns it around and ends up on the outskirts of the Syrian capital Damascus.

1979
Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister achieve the seemingly impossible by signing a peace treaty. The agreement makes Egypt the first Arab state to officially recognize Israel. Although generally favorably perceived by his fellow Egyptians, Muslim fundamentalists reject the deal and Sadat is assassinated two years later.

1982
First Lebanon War. Triggered by the shooting of the Israeli ambassador to the UK in London, the war follows years of skirmishes between the Lebanon-based PLO and the IDF. After pushing back the PLO, Israel’s army over-reaches and besieges Beirut, forcing the PLO out of Lebanon. The war is marred by a massacre of Palestinian refugees by a Christian militia allied with Israel. An Israeli investigation subsequently faults Ariel Sharon for failing to prevent the deaths. IDF later withdraws to a southern Lebanon security zone, only fully evacuating Lebanon in 2000.

1987
The First Intifada breaks out. Popular protests devolve into widespread violence including stone throwings, Molotov cocktails and shootings against the IDF and Israeli civilians. Around 200 Israelis are killed, and over 1000 Palestinians are killed as Israel attempts to quell the violence.
**1987**
Hamas, a Palestinian Islamic fundamentalist terror organization, is founded soon after the outbreak of the Intifada. An offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, its charter affirms the aim to establish an Islamic state in place of Israel. The group goes on to commit hundreds of deadly shooting and bombing attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers.

**1993**
Israel and the PLO sign the Oslo Accords, the first of a series of agreements delegating powers to the Palestinians for greater self-governance. The agreements envision eventual statehood. An atmosphere of hope is pervasive despite strong opposition in some quarters.

**1995**
Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated by ultra-nationalist Yigal Amir, following a campaign against Rabin by right-wing politicians and media concerned that the Oslo peace process is a capitulation to Israel's enemies. Rabin’s death exposes Israel’s deep rifts between its religious right-wing and largely secular left-wing groups.

**2000**
Palestinian president Yasser Arafat turns down a generous peace offer from Israel, driving American president Bill Clinton to publicly blame him for the peace talks’ failure. Tensions rise dramatically. Months later the second Intifada commences. Between 2000-2005, over 1,000 Israeli civilians and soldiers are killed, necessitating a strong Israeli response, including setting up a security barrier and hundreds of checkpoints and stage counter-terror operations. At its most intense, bombs, shootings and other attacks occur on a daily basis.

**2005**
The Gaza Disengagement is carried out. Israelis argue bitterly; hundreds of thousands attend protest rallies insisting that the withdrawal constitutes a reward for years of terrorism, while others believe that steps should be taken for peace. Over 8,000 Jewish Israelis are unilaterally evacuated from 22 communities in the Gaza Strip.

**2006**
Hamas mounts a cross-border raid via a tunnel dug into Israeli territory. Two soldiers are killed, and Cpl. Gilad Shalit is captured and held by Hamas in return for security prisoners, many of them convicted terrorists, in contravention of international law. Nevertheless, Israel frees 1,027 prisoners for Shalit in 2011. See The Gaza Wars for more.

**2006**
Two weeks after Shalit’s abduction, Hezbollah stages its own cross-border raid, abducting two Israeli soldiers. Israel refuses Hezbollah demands for a prisoner swap and strikes military
targets in Lebanon. The war ends in a stalemate. In 2008, Israel frees five Lebanese security prisoners for the bodies of the two Israeli soldiers.

2007
One year after making significant gains in Palestinian elections, Hamas seizes permanent control of Gaza in a bloody coup. Over 100 Palestinians are killed, hundreds wounded, and many hundreds of Fatah members flee to the border with Israel seeking refuge in the West Bank. Since 2007, Gaza is ruled by Hamas, which fires thousands of rockets at Israel over the following years.

2008/09
Operation Cast Lead.
*See The Gaza Wars [next page].*

2012
Operation Pillar of Defense.
*See The Gaza Wars [next page].*

2014
Operation Protective Edge.
*See The Gaza Wars [next page].*

2015/16
Clashes erupt after Palestinian thugs gather on the Temple Mount to prevent Jews visiting Judaism’s holiest site. Hundreds of rock throwing attacks ensue, followed by shootings at Israelis, random stabbings and car ramming attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers alike.

2018
A series of protests in Gaza along the Israeli border spiral out of control as *protesters with explosives, knives and guns* attempt to break into Israeli territory, resulting in scores of Palestinians killed. Civilian protesters were bused in en masse by Hamas, and used as cover for terrorists attempting to attack Israeli soldiers. Aware of the upcoming transfer of the American embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, Gazan activists shift one planned protest so that the two coincide, resulting in widespread media coverage.
The Gaza Wars

2006
Sporadic rocket fire on southern Israel and the kidnap of Gilad Shalit provoke Israel to launch an operation to rescue the MIA soldier, which ends in failure and continued rocket fire into the south of Israel.

2008/09
Since Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005, over 4,000 rockets and mortars had been fired into Israeli territory. A ceasefire disintegrates when a Hamas tunnel is discovered being dug along the Israeli border, and Hamas resumes intensive rocket attacks on Israel, leading to an Israeli response, codenamed Operation Cast Lead. Despite extensive measures taken to reduce civilian casualties, widespread use of human shields by Hamas leads to hundreds of civilians being killed in strikes against terrorists and weaponry.

2012
With the informal ceasefire from the end of Operation Cast Lead faltering, rockets on Israel from Gaza steadily increase. Over 1,300 rockets are fired on Israel in the 20 months leading up to the operation, leading Israel to strike the commander of Hamas' Gaza military wing. Over the course of the following week, hundreds of rockets are fired at Israeli population centers, and Israel kills scores of terrorists. Over 100 Gazan civilians, many acting as human shields, are also killed in the violence.

2014
Following the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers by Hamas members, the IDF conducts Operation Brother's Keeper to arrest terrorist leaders and locate the three teens. After Israel learns of Hamas plans involving multiple kidnap and assault tunnels, Hamas launches dozens of rockets at Israel and a seven-week war ensues. The Iron Dome rocket intercept system proves its worth, Israel succeeds in eliminating many tunnels, and the rocket threat is significantly reduced in the years thereafter.
I

When the state of Israel was formally established, the Arab League and Muslims countries opposed any partition of Palestine and the establishment of Israel. Due to Arab reticence to recognize Israel, only two of Israel’s five potential land borders (Egypt and Jordan) are internationally recognized, while the other three (Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Territories) are disputed to this day.

In the aftermath of Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War, the Arab League met in Khartoum. Despite Israel’s stunning success in the war, the Arab states passed a resolution known as “The Three Noes;” No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel. The summit also came to the conclusion that oil rich Arab states financially aid the states who lost the war and help them rebuild their military forces.

A decade later, in 1977, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed a peace treaty which notably made Egypt the first Arab state to officially recognize Israel. The treaty declared mutual recognition, cessation of the state of war that had persisted since 1948, normalizations of relations, and the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the Sinai peninsula which Israel had captured during the Six-Day war in 1967. The treaty also called for an end to Israeli military rule over other territories gained in the war, which would allow full autonomy for the Palestinian inhabitants. These term later became the basis for the Oslo Accords.

After secret negotiations in Oslo, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel sent each letters of recognition, followed by the signing of the Oslo Accords ("Declaration of Principles On Interim Self-Government Arrangements") in September 1993. The Accords created a Palestinian Authority tasked with limited self-governance of parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but deliberately made no mention of a possible Palestinian state.

On October 26th 1994, Jordan became the second Arab country to sign a peace accord with Israel. The agreement ended an open conflict between the two countries, established mutual
diplomatic relations, settled land and water disputes, provided for broad cooperation in tourism and trade, and made it an obligation for both nations to prevent their territory from being used as a staging ground for military strikes by other countries.

In October 1999, Mauritania became the third member of the Arab League to recognize Israel as a sovereign state, establishing full diplomatic relations. However, as a response to the 2008-09 Israel-Gaza War, relations were frozen and diplomatic missions officially ended soon after.

In July 2000, hosted by U.S. President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak met Yasser Arafat at Camp David, Maryland to continue negotiations on the peace process. Barak offered the Palestinians over 90 percent of the disputed territory, an offer unprecedented in its generosity. However, Arafat demanded that Israel agree unconditionally to the right of return of every so-called refugee and rejected any compromise on Jerusalem, leading to the talks' failure. Clinton publicly praised Barak for his flexibility and chided Arafat's bad faith. Months later, the Palestinians launched the bloody Second Intifada, in which over 1,000 Israelis were killed.

Over the years, Israel succeeded in developing covert relations with numerous Gulf states, engaging in extensive unofficial cooperation based on their joint opposition to Iran's nuclear program and regional influence. However, the official position remained that recognition of Israel by Arab states would only materialize when Israel signed a peace treaty with the Palestinians.

That changed dramatically in 2020, as the Trump administration succeeded in coaxing numerous Arab and Muslim states to adopt an historic shift in policy. First the United Arab Emirates declared its intent to normalize relations with Israel. Soon thereafter, Bahrain announced that it too would recognize Israel. Within a month, Israel went from having relations with two Arab states to four.

Then, a month later, the United States announced that it would be removing Sudan from its list of terrorist states, and that Sudan would recognize Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the agreement marked a "new era." The breakthrough was highly symbolic as it was famously the site of a declaration against normalization with Israel in 1967, when the Arab League, meeting in the capital, Khartoum, swore "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it."
It is clear that Jews have a long and eventful history in the land. It is also beyond dispute that Arabs and Muslims have also lived in the same area for centuries. However, Jerusalem was never made a capital of an independent Muslim or Arab political entity. Only for the Jews was Jerusalem ever the capital of a sovereign state. For centuries, various groups of people lived throughout the land, and identified themselves primarily by their religion.

The overwhelming impression of Western visitors in the 19th century was that there were very few people living in Palestine. The British Consul General, James Finn, wrote in 1857 that “the country is in a considerable degree empty of inhabitants.” He added that the land's “greatest need is that of a body of population.”

Mark Twain visited the land in 1867, traveled through the Jezreel Valley, and related, “there is not a solitary village throughout its whole extent... A desolate country... a silent mournful expanse. ...We never saw a human being on the whole route...” Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, the great British cartographer, reached similar conclusions in 1881: “In Judea it is hardly an exaggeration to say that for miles and miles there was no appearance of life or habitation.”

Records show that the local population grew to around 600,000 by the end of the 19th century. Approximately 90% of the inhabitants were Muslims. There were some small Jewish communities in places like Jerusalem, Safed, Jaffa, Akko and Tiberias. All told, Palestine remained an underpopulated backwater province of the Turkish Empire.

By that time, the Zionist movement was a rising force. Jews in Europe and beyond reacted to centuries of discrimination and persecution by seeking to re-establish a Jewish state in their ancient homeland. They arrived in a number of waves, many of them escaping terrible conditions to start a new life in the Holy Land.

Scholar David Meir-Levi on Jewish emigrants from Europe known as Zionists:

Zionist pioneers from the middle of the 19th century onward joined the local Jewish communities in rebuilding a Jewish homeland in what was then the Turkish Empire by purchasing land from the Turkish Crown and from Arab landowners (effendi). There was no invasion, no conquest, and no theft of Arab land. [...] Much of the land that the Zionists purchased was desert and swamp, uninhabited and deemed uninhabitable by the Arabs. Modern agrarian techniques instituted by the Jews and the blood and sweat of thousands of idealistic Zionists reclaimed that land and turned it into prime real estate with flourishing farms and rapidly growing communities sporting modern technology and a healthy market economy.

As a result, Arab migrants poured into the region from surrounding states, with hundreds of thousands seeking a better life and greater economic opportunity.
At the end of World War I, on November 2, 1917, the British promised to establish a Jewish homeland in all of Palestine (the Balfour Declaration). This incensed the Arabs, as it contradicted an earlier promise to recognize Arab independence in the land in return for Arab assistance in WW1. The international San Remo Conference decided that all of British-administered Palestine was to be awarded to the Jewish nation (April 24, 1920; Article 2, 4 and subsequent). The conference’s decisions were confirmed unanimously by all fifty-one member states of the League of Nations on July 24, 1922 and were further endorsed by a joint resolution of the United States Congress in the same year.

However, under Arab pressure, the British split off 77% of the land and gave it to the Arabs. Jews were forcibly expelled from Arab-controlled territory. In 1946, an Arab country called (Trans-) Jordan was formed on this 77% of the Palestinian land.

Israel is the only Jewish country; the rest of the lands in the Middle East are all either Muslim Arab countries or non-Arab Muslim countries such as Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and others.

British Mandate Palestine: The blue area (1917-1922) was to become a Jewish state. Today Arabs demand that the ancient Jewish provinces of Judea and Samaria (also called West Bank – yellow area on the right map) must become a Palestinian Arab state. Another small province called Gaza had been evacuated by Israel in 2005 and is now ruled by the Islamic Hamas.
Collectively, the Arab countries have an area of about 8.2 million square miles. Israel has only 8,000 sq. miles. This means the Arabs have nearly 560 times more land than the Jews. Across the Middle East and North Africa, there are approximately 425,000,000 Arabs. Much of the region is free of Jews, save for one notable exception: Israel, which has a population of close to 7 million Jews. Despite Israel constituting a tiny area in the wider region, many demand that Israel give up more or even all of its land. Jews feel entitled to their small home called Israel.
Arab leaders generally sided with Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany, and assisted him in the war effort and in the Jewish “final solution” (which meant the annihilation of all Jews).

From 1921 on, the ruler of the Palestinian Arabs and their foremost religious leader was Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Amin Al-Husseini. He led and inspired Palestinian Arabs until his death in 1974. Husseini was a close friend of the Nazi leader, SS Chief of Staff Heinrich Himmler, and worked with the Nazis on establishing a death camp in Palestine to exterminate local Jews.

November, 1943. Al-Husseini greeting Bosnian Waffen-SS volunteers with a Nazi salute. The largest division he helped form was the 13th Handschar division.

Amin Al-Husseini confers with Adolf Hitler, Berlin, 1942.
Although much is heard about the plight of the Palestinian Arab refugees, little is said about the Jews who were forced to flee Arab states. Yet, there were more Jewish refugees than all the Arabs who fled Palestine during the 1948 war.

After Israel's War of Independence, more than 800,000 Jews were expelled from Arab lands and resettled in Israel. At the same time 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or voluntarily left Israel because of the war, some with the encouragement of Arab governments and leaders. While Israel integrated Jewish refugees, Arab refugees were kept by Arab governments in refugee camps. They continue to be used as pawns in the political struggle against Israel.

Nearly half of Israel's citizens today were born in Arab countries and descend from Jewish refugees from Arab lands. Their rights have yet to be officially recognized and their lost assets and property returned.

"The Arab states do not want to solve the refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don't give a damn whether the refugees live or die."

- Ralph Galloway, UN Relief and Works Agency official, 1958
Jewish Settlements

Jews have lived in Judea and Samaria (more commonly referred to as the West Bank) for centuries. Some of the most holy Jewish sites are there, including the Cave of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb. In 1948, these territories, together with the Temple Mount in eastern Jerusalem, were lost to the Arab armies. Between 1948 and 1967, the Jordanian army occupied Judea, Samaria, and part of Jerusalem, while Egypt occupied Gaza. The Arabs violently expelled many Judean and Samarian (West Bank) Jews from their homes. Jews were also prohibited from visiting their holy sites.

After Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and eastern Jerusalem in 1967, Jews started to return. Today the Jewish communities in the West Bank are commonly referred to as the “Settlements.” The media consistently refer to the settlements as dangerous and the biggest obstacle to Middle East peace. Built-up areas of Israeli settlements cover less than 1.7 percent of West Bank land, but require significant protective buffer zones as a result of repeated terror attacks.

Settlers frequently face violent hostility from their Arab neighbors, including stabbings, rock throwings and Molotov cocktail attacks.

Neve Dekalim (part of Gush Katif), Gaza Strip, evacuated by Israel in 2005. The settlements are environmentally friendly largely out of necessity. Water conservation and solar electricity production counter the harsh desert conditions.
For over 3,000 years, Jerusalem has been the historical, religious and spiritual capital of the Jewish people with an uninterrupted Jewish presence throughout that time. Though Jerusalem has known many foreign rulers, it has been a capital only for the Jews. It has always been the political, cultural and religious center of the Jewish people around the world. Jerusalem is an integral part of the Jewish religion, and is referred to 669 times in the Jewish Bible.

Over the centuries, many other religions, including different Christian faiths, also established a significant presence in Jerusalem. Under Turkish Muslim rule and then after the 1948 Arab-Jordanian occupation, such faiths were often persecuted. Since 1967, Jerusalem has been fully under Israeli sovereignty. And for the first time in the history of Jerusalem, the different religious communities, including Muslims, now enjoy freedom of worship and the holy sites of all faiths are protected.

**NOTE**

The Islamic Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem was deliberately built on top of the ancient Jewish Holy Temple to erase any traces of that Temple. Muslim Arabs built Al-Aqsa in the 7th century.
The table (right) shows residents of Jerusalem, grouped by religious identification, based on the earliest modern census data. It dispels the myth that Jews have "stolen" the city from Arabs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR OF SURVEY</th>
<th>JEWS</th>
<th>MUSLIMS</th>
<th>CHRISTIANS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>7,120</td>
<td>5,760</td>
<td>3,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>28,112</td>
<td>7,560</td>
<td>5,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>51,222</td>
<td>19,894</td>
<td>19,335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eastern Jerusalem includes the Old City where most of the Jewish and Christian holy sites are located. It also includes the Mount of Olives and the ancient Jewish cemetery.

**How Jerusalem Was Split After the 1948 war**

Today the historic area of eastern Jerusalem is the most contested area between Jews and Arabs. Before 1948, the majority of Jerusalem’s population was Jewish. In May 1948, the Jordanian army captured most of the city and ethnically cleansed it of all the Jews. People were thrown out of their homes and many Jews were murdered.

A total of 58 eastern Jerusalem synagogues were destroyed and the Jewish Quarter was bulldozed. Arabs from Jordan, Syria and other countries settled in the homes of the expelled Jews. Nineteen years later, in the Six-Day War, Israel captured eastern Jerusalem and Jews started to return. The process was very slow because by 1967 all the homes were already occupied by Arabs.
Gaza, with its long Mediterranean shoreline and borders with Egypt and Israel, could have been a prosperous region. But thanks to Hamas, it is a radical Islamic theocracy ripe with violence, oppression and corruption. Jews are not allowed to live in Gaza and Christians are routinely terrorized by Hamas’ henchmen, and it is a place where women face discrimination. For security reasons, Egypt kept its Gaza border closed for the vast majority of the last decade. Israel, however, routinely opens its border with Gaza to deliver humanitarian supplies to Palestinian civilians.

These problems will not be solved by appeasing Islamic terrorists or by blaming Israel for all of the problems in the Middle East.

According to the Arabic-language Asharq al Awsat newspaper, there are 600 millionaires in Gaza. Some estimates put the true figure at closer to double that. Many of the Hamas top brass have made their fortunes from exploiting the conditions to their benefit. Ismael Haniyeh’s wealth, as with others in the Hamas leadership, came largely from the tunnel industry, with all trade conducted via the tunnels subject to a 20 percent taxation fee.

Likewise, IDF soldiers returning from wars in Gaza involved in the taking of Hamas properties have repeatedly reported that large quantities of UN-sponsored aid ended up in the hands of Hamas militants and leaders, rather than dispersed fairly according to need.
Though Iran is not an Arab state, it has greatly influenced the entire Middle East over the last decade:

- It funds and trains Hezbollah, a terror organization that is also a Lebanese political party. With an estimated 150,000 missiles, Hezbollah’s arsenal is larger than the combined arsenals of 27 NATO countries.

- Iranian funding props up the regime of Bashar Assad and keeps it dependent on Tehran. Pro-Iranian militias are trying to gain a foothold in southern Syria near the border with Israel.

- By funding and arming Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Iran has hijacked the Palestinian movement.

- In funding and arming Houthi rebels in Yemen, Iran has a proxy capable of threatening Israeli shipping at the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, a strategic chokepoint at the entrance to the Red Sea.

- Its increasing entrenchment in Iraq allows Iran to develop a land bridge on which it could deliver arms to proxies on the Israel-Syria border or to the Mediterranean ports of Syria and Lebanon.

For Israel, the prospect of a permanent Iranian presence on its doorstep is intolerable. This is a country whose leaders have repeatedly referred to eliminating Israel, or wiping it
from the map, a repressive state in which women are severely restricted, journalists and political opponents made to “disappear,” and in which religious minorities are restricted and persecuted.

**Toward a Nuclear Iran?**

The threat is made all the more tangible by Iran’s insistence on developing its nuclear power capabilities. Although it claims its intentions are entirely peaceful, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors found traces of nuclear activity at undeclared sites in 2019. This confirmed Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu’s announcement a year previously that Iran was hiding nuclear research and design facilities from the world, in spite of an agreement with a number of world powers that it would restrict its nuclear development.

Following Netanyahu’s revelation, the United States pulled out of the agreement with Iran, and in response Iran has taken major steps away from the nuclear deal, exacerbating tensions with the US and Europe. It remains to be seen what, if anything, can be done to rein in Iran’s nuclear ambitions, but one thing is for sure: If Israel can do anything about it, it’s sure to consider all options on the table.

The threat has also spurred Sunni Muslim states into action and triggered a thawing of relations with Israel, breaking the traditional boycott of Israel by Arab states. Concerned by the rise of a powerful and belligerent Iran, Saudi-Israel relations have come out into the open, while Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman have also made moves indicating their willingness to work with Israel.
The Arab-Israeli conflict had pitted hundreds of millions of Arabs and Muslims, in control of two dozen countries [...] not to mention a stranglehold on global oil, against a handful of Jews who then numbered under three-quarters of a million and who lived on a sliver of land so tiny that it could fit into New Jersey. Then came the Six-Day War of 1967. Launched by the then Egyptian President Nasser [...] it ended with Israel in control of the West Bank and Gaza. This humiliating defeat, however, was eventually turned into a great victory by Arab propagandists who redefined the ongoing war of the whole Muslim world against the Jewish state as a struggle merely between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Thus was Israel’s image transformed from a David into a Goliath, a move that succeeded in alienating much of the old sympathy – especially on the Left – that had previously been enjoyed by the outnumbered Jews.

Norman Podhoretz, World War IV, © 2007

FACT

The iconic images of Muhammad al-Dura’s alleged death in Gaza inflamed Palestinian sentiment and provoked terrible bloodshed. Despite evidence that al-Dura was actually killed by a Palestinian gunman, the accusation was widely reported and broadcast.
Are the lies about Israel and the Jews effective? You bet!

"At first the claims of the propaganda were so shameless that people thought it insane; later it got on people’s nerves; and in the end, it was believed."

Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf

The Durban Conference & the New Antisemitism

The current effort to delegitimize Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state began in earnest with the 2001 World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa.

Events at the conference, and especially its NGO Forum, were hijacked by anti-Israel activists to declare Israel an apartheid state that deserved to be isolated and sanctioned just as apartheid South Africa had been a decade earlier.

Statements by the NGO forum included the declaration that it considers “Israel as a racist, apartheid state” and called to “Impose a policy of complete and total isolation of Israel as an apartheid state.” The conference greatly encouraged anti-Israel activists and NGOs, precipitating a rise in the BDS movement around the world.

**ARTICLE 162**
We declare Israel as a racist, apartheid state in which Israel’s brand of apartheid as a crime against humanity has been characterized by separation and segregation, dispossession, restricted land access, denationalization, “bantustanization” and inhumane acts.

**ARTICLE 120**
Impose a policy of complete and total isolation of Israel as an apartheid state... the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid, military cooperation and training) between all states and Israel.
The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement

The effort gained new momentum in 2005 with the launch of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Much of the BDS movement’s efforts consist of pressuring international artists, authors and performers to boycott Israel as a message to their followers that Israel does not belong in the international community. Several prominent artists have canceled appearances in Israel due to BDS pressure.

The BDS movement also tries to organize boycotts against businesses that are active in Israel unless the businesses promise to adhere to the movement’s anti-Israel agenda.

While the BDS movement employs the rhetoric of human rights on behalf of the struggling Palestinian people, the movement’s real aim is to brand Israel a pariah state with no right to exist.

The growing movement to single out Israel as a criminal state has led leaders such as Natan Sharansky to define a “New Antisemitism.” Sharansky explains how it differs from classical antisemitism and how to recognize when it is present:

"Classical anti-Semitism is changing, and it’s been replaced with a new anti-Semitism, which takes its shape in the form of unbridled attacks against the idea of a Jewish state. We’ve identified [the criteria] through a ‘3-D principle - demonization, delegitimization and a double standard. And if you look at anti-Semitism throughout the ages, we see these principles at play as well – the demonization of Jews, the delegitimization of the Jews as a nation, and a double standard towards Jews as a people and a religion.

All three of those criteria, Sharansky added, were alive and well the world over. The goal is to create anger and hatred towards Israel.

Anti-Jewish propaganda can be very sophisticated. To gain credibility, the BDS movement sometimes employs dishonest or misinformed people of Jewish descent to spread propaganda about Israel. The better-known the messenger, the more believable is the falsehood to the uninformed person. If a Jew like Noam Chomsky, a well-known professor, promotes lies and distortions about Israel, then it seems that “Jews are finally admitting their crimes.”

Some Jews have discovered that a quick route to celebrity is by [...] attacking Israel and Zionists. This has always been and remains a tiny minority. [...] Still, anti-Zionists have been a nefarious influence, particularly on college campuses where they are often found teaching courses about Israel and leading anti-Zionist organizations.

Anti-Israel and anti-Jewish propaganda is based on two principal misconceptions. The first misconception is that Jews stole the land of Israel from the Arabs. The second misconception is that Israelis do not want to leave Arabs in peace and brutally attack them for no reason.

Both these misconceptions occasionally appear in the American and European mass media.

The falsity of the first misconception is clear. Jews have lived in the Holy Land for the last four thousand years, and they founded and developed the city of Jerusalem as their capital. It is the Arabs who have migrated into the area. Most of the Arabs came to the land in the last century from Arab Syria, Iraq and Egypt.

The second misconception about Israel killing civilians is even more blatant. Israel does not deliberately target Arab civilians. Regrettably, Israel's enemies regularly employ human shields and hide in urban areas, thus creating the conditions in which innocent bystanders are killed by Israeli strikes. Palestinian Arab terrorists routinely target Israeli civilians, a clear war crime, yet an act many of Israel's detractors claim is warranted and permitted under international law, stating that "all means are justifiable when fighting an occupation." This is false. Deliberately targeting civilians is never acceptable.

To this end, Arabs frequently utilize a policy referred to as “the dead children strategy” in order to damage Israel's image.

One of the strongest visual objects in the media is a mother holding a dead baby in her arms.

A frequent tactic of Arab terrorists is to fire rockets from urban locations where civilians are nearby. Any Israeli response might inadvertently kill these “human shields” and help Arab propagandists to blame Israel. The media, eager for dramatic images and video, are ready and waiting to bring the images to the entire world.

Lies have led to the greatest genocide in history: The Holocaust.

In the 19th century the infamous Czarist forgery, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” was used by right-wing antisemites to demonize Jews. Beginning in 1930, Nazis used this book of lies as an excuse to murder six million innocent Jews. The book included fabricated reports about Jews killing and drinking the blood of children, controlling the world banking system and oppressing and stealing from working class people.
Today, Israel’s enemies use similar lies to defame Jews. They have updated the Protocols to fit the present day. Some examples of these lies are as follows:

“The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) deliberately kills children in Gaza”
“The IDF deliberately targets civilians”
“Jewish settlers murder Arab children”
“Jews poison water wells in Arab villages”
“Jews capture Arab men and kill them to steal and sell their organs”
“The IDF deliberately shot dead unarmed protesters at the Gaza border”

The list of these deliberate and premeditated lies goes on and on. As long as such lies are spread, the hatred will continue.

Israel’s enemies have become very sophisticated at manipulating the media. In the war with Hezbollah, for example, an Arab woman was shown in one picture wailing about the loss of her home to Israeli bombs and then later she was shown in another picture in another place again wailing about the loss of another home. Anderson Cooper (CNN TV) said he was given a tour in which Hezbollah had lined up some ambulances. They were told to turn on their sirens and then the ambulances drove off as if they were picking up wounded civilians when, in fact, they were simply driving back and forth empty. Boston University professor, Richard Landes, has put together a web site with raw video footage he calls “Pallywood,” which documents how the Palestinians fake everything from shoot-outs with Israeli troops to funerals. The classic scene shows a group of mourners carrying a body on a stretcher. Suddenly, the stretcher falls to the ground and the “corpse” gets up and runs away.

While BDS ostensibly attacks Israel, its biggest victims are undoubtedly Jews and Israelis studying on campuses around the world. Jews face intimidation, are smeared as racists and supporters of Apartheid, and often elect to stay silent rather than express their opinions. Such is the extent of the vitriol, many Jews in South African and British campuses now prefer not to openly identify as Jewish.

Campus protests against Israel often include distorted, exaggerated, and context-less claims, such as depicting Israel or the IDF as callous child-killers, stating that Israel is a racist state or acts toward Palestinians like the Nazis did to the Jews - extreme positions which put others on the defensive, leaving them open to accusations of being racists themselves.

Hiding behind the excuse of “academic freedom,” the protests against Israel are often unparalleled in frequency and tone, while totally missing any context. Indeed, any attempt to mention context is rebuffed vehemently, and those attempting to balance the discourse are drowned out, and often physically and verbally intimidated.

For Jews and supporters of Israel in academia, the threats are two-fold: First, anti-Israel academics influence the next generation of leaders and form prevailing opinion, thus fostering a deep animus against Israel. Second, those expressing thoughts considered politically incorrect risk being shunned and judged not on their academic strengths, but on their personal convictions. In that sense, BDS is the polar opposite to the academic spirit: It fosters uniformity and conformity of opinion rather than allowing for the safe and respectful expression of dissenting views.
WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

» BUY ISRAELI PRODUCTS
Support stores that carry Israeli products including Costco, Safeway, Walgreens, and Trader Joe’s.

» SEND LETTERS TO NEWSPAPERS AND WEBSITES
Make your voice heard

» SHARE YOUR VIEWS
Through social media

» VISIT ISRAEL
The country is very safe for tourism despite the way it may appear in the media. You will find that it is a peaceful country where Arabs are treated with respect and have the same rights as the Jews. Explore Israel and form your own opinion.
For further reading on the Israeli-Arab conflict, check out the following resources:

The Truth About the Security Barrier

The Gaza Blockade Explained

Debunking the ‘Disproportionate Force’ Charge

What is Terrorism and Why Does its Definition Matter?

The Jewish Connection to the Land of Israel

Did Arab Violence Really Start With the ‘Occupation’?

The Hebron Massacre of 1929

Israel’s Great Risk for Peace: The 2005 Disengagement

BDS: Myths and Facts

How to Criticize Israel Without Being Antisemitic
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**HAMAS, GAZA, AND THE GAZA WAR**
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Iran
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