

**INFO PACK**

# From Past to Present: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

*Burak Elmali*



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# Contents

06	<b>Introduction</b>
07	<b>Part One: A Timeline</b>
11	<b>Part Two: The Origins of the Conflict</b>
13	<b>Part Three: Israeli Massacres of 1948</b>
15	<b>Part Four: The Battle of Narratives</b>
21	<b>Part Five: Peace Plans and Processes</b>
24	<b>Part Six: Issues</b>
26	<b>Part Seven: Actors</b>
30	<b>Part Eight: What Happened on October 7, 2023</b>
32	<b>Part Nine: The Reaction of the International Community</b>
34	<b>Conclusion</b>



# Introduction

In the morning of October 7, 2023, the al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, initiated 'Operation al-Aqsa Flood' against Israel. This operation began with the launch of 5,000 missiles in its initial phase and involved Hamas members crossing the Israeli border through land, air, and sea routes. They seized control of border crossings such as Kerem Shalom and Erez, taking captives to Gaza, including high-ranking military officials.

Within hours, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the nation, formally declaring that Israel was in a 'state of war' and would respond with an unprecedented measure. In response, Israeli counteroffensives were launched, targeting various locations in Gaza, which unfortunately led to significant civilian casualties, including a considerable number of children. Furthermore, power, water, and internet disruptions left the Gaza Strip under a near-complete blockade.

With Israel's offensive in Gaza showing no signs of abating, this info pack seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of the conflict, spanning from its historical origins to the current crisis. It will focus on the conflict's origins, the differing narratives surrounding it, peace proposals and plans, critical issues at the heart of the conflict, the key actors involved, the Hamas operation, and the international community's responses.

# Part One: A Timeline

In the past century, a multitude of local and international actors have been involved in the shaping of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A comprehensive analysis of contemporary events is difficult without thoroughly examining the historical background. This historical overview encompasses the period of the British Mandate preceding the establishment of Israel, the subsequent escalation of oppression and violence against Palestinians, resistance against settler colonialism, and different actors that played a role over the last century.

The timeline presented below includes critical events spanning approximately a century, providing a panoramic view of this long historical process.

## 1917 | Balfour Declaration

The letter written by British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lionel Walter Rothschild, commonly known as the Balfour Declaration, contained the following statement: "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object."

## 1923-1948 | British Mandate

During its period of control, Britain facilitated a significant Jewish immigration process to Palestine, including those fleeing Nazi Germany, and initiated land confiscation. This period aimed at a substantial demographic transformation and intensified pressure on the Palestinian population.

## 1936-1939 | The Arab Revolt

The newly formed Arab Higher Committee called for a general strike and boycott among the Palestinian population. Despite the resistance from peasants and the general populace, the British Mandate responded with house demolitions, mass arrests, and killings.

## 1939-1948 | Jewish Terror Campaign

During this phase, Zionist militants created several terrorist organisations. One of them went by the name of Irgun. This terrorist organisation proclaimed a revolt, on 1 February 1944, against the British mandatory government. The leader of this terrorist organisation was Menachem Begin, who later became the Prime Minister of Israel. Begin was described by the British government as the "leader of the notorious terrorist organisation". Among the terror actions orchestrated by Irgun, is the bombing of the offices of the British Mandate's Immigration Department and the Income Tax Offices in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa, followed by a series of attacks on police stations in which six policemen were killed. Then, Menachem Begin ordered an attack on the British military and administrative headquarters at the King David Hotel, destroying the building's southern wing, and 91 people, mostly British, were killed.

Another terrorist leader, Yitzhak Shamir, who became the seventh prime minister of Israel, serving two terms, had orchestrated several terror operations through the Stern Gang. Of the key targets was Lord Moyne, the British Resident Minister in the Middle East, who was assassinated. Shamir was also among the plotters behind the assassination of the United Nations representative in the Middle East, Count Folke Bernadotte, who was killed in September 1948.

## 1947 | UN Partition Plan for Palestine

The partition of the land between Palestinians and Jews was proposed through United Nations Resolution 181. The Palestinian people objected to the plan because it allocated approximately 55% of the land to the Jewish state, which included the fertile coastal areas. At that time, the

<sup>1</sup> Oren, Amir (7 July 2011). "British Documents Reveal: Begin Refused Entry to U.K. in 1950s". Haaretz. <https://www.haaretz.com/2011-07-07/ty-article/british-documents-reveal-begin-refused-entry-to-u-k-in-1950s/0000017f-da79-d718-a5ff-fafdf12270000>

Jewish population was roughly equivalent to 33% of the Palestinian population. After the plan, the first Arab-Israeli War broke out.

### **1947-1949 | The Arab-Israeli War and Nakba**

The Nakba, meaning “catastrophe” in Arabic, refers to the forced displacement and dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during and after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. It led to the establishment of the State of Israel and the displacement of an estimated 700,000 to 800,000 Palestinians, creating a large population of Palestinian refugees who lost their homes and property. The total share of Palestinian land was reduced to approximately 22%, which now corresponds to the occupied territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

### **1949-1967 | Egyptian Control of the Gaza Strip**

Between 1949 and 1967, what is now recognised as the Gaza Strip within the contemporary Palestinian territory was under the control of Egyptian forces, initially from the Kingdom of Egypt and subsequently, starting in 1958, from the United Arab Republic.

### **1964 | The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)**

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was founded in 1964 to represent the Palestinian people and advocate for self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state. Over time, the PLO evolved, officially recognising Israel and engaging in peace negotiations, with its main faction, Fatah, which was founded as a political party in 1965.

### **1967 | The Six-Day War or the Third Arab-Israeli War**

The Six-Day War of 1967 was a brief but significant conflict between Israel and a coalition of Arab states, including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. Israel captured territories including the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.

### **1967 | The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine**

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a leftist Palestinian political and militant organisation, was founded in 1967. It is known for its role in armed resistance against Israel and its commitment to a socialist and anti-imperialist ideology.

### **1973 | Yom Kippur War**

It is also known as the October War or the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. The war began on October 6, 1973, when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel on the holiest day in Judaism, Yom Kippur. The war lasted for about three weeks and resulted in a significant loss of life and territory, leading to a ceasefire under the mediation of the United States and the Soviet Union.

### **1978 | Camp David Accords**

The Camp David Accords were signed as a series of negotiations between Israel and Egypt mediated by the United States in 1978. The accords led to a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979, the first between Israel and an Arab state. They also established a framework for autonomy for the Palestinian territories, although the Palestinian issue was not fully resolved at that time.

### **1978 | Israel's Invasion of Lebanon**

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1978, known as "Operation Litani," was prompted by what is known as the Coastal Road massacre in Israel and aimed to push Palestinian resistance groups, particularly the PLO, away from the Israeli border. Israeli forces advanced into southern Lebanon, creating a buffer zone along the Litani River. The operation led to the establishment of UNIFIL and marked the beginning of a series of conflicts in the region.

### **1982-2000 | Second Israeli Invasion of Lebanon**

The Second Israeli Invasion of Lebanon, also known as the 1982 Lebanon War, lasted from June 1982 to May 2000. It began when Israel launched a full-scale military invasion of Lebanon with the primary objective of driving the PLO

out of Lebanon and establishing an occupied zone by Israel in the south. This invasion resulted in the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon. It also led to the emergence of Hezbollah as a resistance group sponsored by Iran. After two decades of guerrilla operations, Israel withdrew from most of Lebanon in 2000, but the conflict continued in the form of sporadic clashes and hostilities until a ceasefire was reached in 2006.

### **1987-1993 | The First Intifada**

The First Intifada, which began in 1987, was a Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule in the occupied territories, primarily the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Widespread civil disobedience, protests, and acts of resistance by Palestinians marked this episode. The First Intifada played a significant role in raising international awareness about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and contributed to subsequent peace negotiations known as the Oslo Accords.

### **1987 | Hamas**

Hamas is a Palestinian political and militant organisation established in 1987 during the First Intifada, with Sheikh Ahmed Yassin among its founders. Known for its Muslim Brotherhood ideology, it has governed the Gaza Strip since 2007, following its electoral victory and subsequent conflict with Fatah. It is recognised as a legitimate political entity by some and designated a terrorist organisation by others. Ismail Haniyeh is the current leader of Hamas. The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades is the military wing of Hamas.

### **1993 | Oslo Accords**

The Oslo Accords were a series of agreements between Israel and the PLO that aimed to establish a framework for Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The accords marked a significant step in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, leading to the creation of the Palestinian Authority and the hope for a future comprehensive peace agreement.

### **1995 | Electronic Fence Built-Up and Division of the West Bank**

Israel built up an electronic fence and wall encircling the Gaza Strip, effectively severing connections between the

separated Palestinian regions. Also, as part of the Oslo Accords, Israel divided the West Bank into three areas (A, B, and C) and increased its control over the occupied territories and key checkpoints.

### **1996 | First General Elections**

It was the first election of the PA and marked an important step in the peace process between Israel and the PLO. Yasser Arafat, the leader of the PLO, was elected as President, and the Fatah party won the majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council.

### **2000-2005 | The Second Intifada**

The Second Intifada commenced in 2000 following Ariel Sharon's contentious visit to the Al Aqsa Mosque, accompanied by a large Israeli security presence in Jerusalem. Israel's forceful response to escalating Palestinian resistance resulted in the reoccupation of previously Palestinian-administered territories. This period witnessed a significant increase in Jewish settlement construction and the displacement of Palestinians.

### **2005 | Presidential Elections**

The second general elections after 1996 were held in Palestine and the PLO leader Mahmud Abbas became the President of the Palestinian National Authority for a four-year term.

### **2006 | Legislative Elections and The Fatah-Hamas Rift**

The Fatah-Hamas civil war in 2006 was primarily rooted in political and ideological differences between the two. The conflict emerged after the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, which Hamas won decisively. Fatah, the rival faction, refused to accept the election results, leading to a power struggle. This struggle escalated into violence, with both sides vying for control of the Palestinian territories, resulting in a brief but intense conflict. The international community made various attempts to mediate the conflict and imposed sanctions.

## 2007 | Gaza Blockade

After the Fatah-Hamas civil war, Hamas seized control over the Gaza Strip and Israel, in collaboration with Egypt, imposed a large-scale blockade on the Gaza Strip by land, air, and sea. The siege has been going on to date.

## 2008-2021 | Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip

Between 2008 and 2021, Israel launched four major offensives in the Gaza Strip in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021, resulting in significant Palestinian casualties, including children, and extensive destruction of homes, schools, and offices. Reconstruction has been hindered by a blockade preventing essential building materials from entering Gaza. The 2008 attack employed banned weapons like phosphorus gas, and in 2014, over 2,100 Palestinians, including 1,462 civilians and nearly 500 children, lost their lives, exacerbating Palestinian displacement and illegal Israeli occupation.

## 2018-2019 | Great March of Return

The Great March of Return is a sequence of weekly demonstrations in the Gaza Strip near the Gaza-Israel border, spanning from March 30, 2018, to December 27, 2019, during which Israeli forces were responsible for the loss of 223 Palestinian lives. The demonstrators passionately advocated for the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the lands from which they had been displaced, now part of Israel and voiced their opposition to Israel's land, air, and sea blockade of the Gaza Strip, as well as the United States' recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. It is important to note that while the majority of these protests were conducted peacefully, Israel's response often involved the disproportionate use of force.

## 2021 | Sheikh Jarrah Evictions

The series of conflicts in 2021 between Israel and Palestine originated when, on May 6, 2021, the Israeli Supreme Court ordered the forced eviction and relocation of certain Palestinian families living in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem. This decision led to protests by Palestinians at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which escalated due to disproportionate responses, eventually turning into reciprocal attacks and an ongoing state of conflict.

## 2023 | Operation Al Aqsa Flood

On the early morning of October 7th, Hamas's Qassam Brigade executed a daring incursion into southern Israel from the besieged Palestinian enclave of Gaza, operating under the banner of the "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation. This involved land, air, and sea infiltrations, accompanied by a barrage of thousands of missiles. This escalation resulted in a tragically high number of casualties on both sides, with Hamas taking Israeli captives, including military personnel, for potential use as bargaining chips in future negotiations. Meanwhile, Israel's actions in Gaza continued to target civilians and facilities, including hospitals, actions that are widely considered to be violations of international law.

The 2008 attack employed banned weapons like phosphorus gas, and in 2014, over **2,100** Palestinians, including **1,462** civilians and nearly **500** children, lost their lives, exacerbating Palestinian displacement and illegal Israeli occupation.

## Part Two:

# The Origins of the Conflict

### 1. Zionism

**Z**ionism, as the nationalist ideology of the State of Israel, is fundamentally dedicated to the creation and strengthening of a Jewish state in what is considered their ancestral homeland, which is situated in the region of Palestine. The term "Zion" has religious roots and historically referred to one of the ancient hills in Jerusalem. The political facet of Zionism began to take shape in the latter part of the 19th century in continental Europe. Austrian activist Theodor Herzl was recognised as the pioneering figure who unified political Zionism into an ideological movement. He convened the inaugural Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. The movement's epicentre was initially in Vienna until his passing in 1904, after which it transitioned to Cologne and later Berlin.

One of the core tenets of Zionism was the necessity to facilitate a significant migration of Jews from Europe and other parts of the world to Palestine to constitute a majority of the population. This strategic shift was motivated by the fact that the Jewish population in Palestine was a minority in comparison to the Muslim population. Critics of Zionism have suggested its systematic violence and oppressiveness to cleanse the territory on which it aims to form a state from the Palestinians. One valid aspect of the criticism against the Zionist ideology, which aims to displace the native population from their lands, is exemplified by Herzl's diary entry dated June 12, 1895:

"When we occupy the land, we shall bring immediate benefits to the state that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries while denying it any employment in our own country. The property owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly. Let the owners of immovable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us things for more than they are worth. But we are not going to sell them anything back."

\*The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl I-V

The establishment of the state that Zionism aimed for became a reality on May 14, 1948, when the leader of the World Zionist Organisation (WZO), David Ben-Gurion, who would later become Israel's first Prime Minister,

declared Israel's independence. After delving into this fundamental ideology, let's also discuss the concept of settler colonialism, which was planned to materialise this ideological foundation in the Palestinian territories and constituted the key origin of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

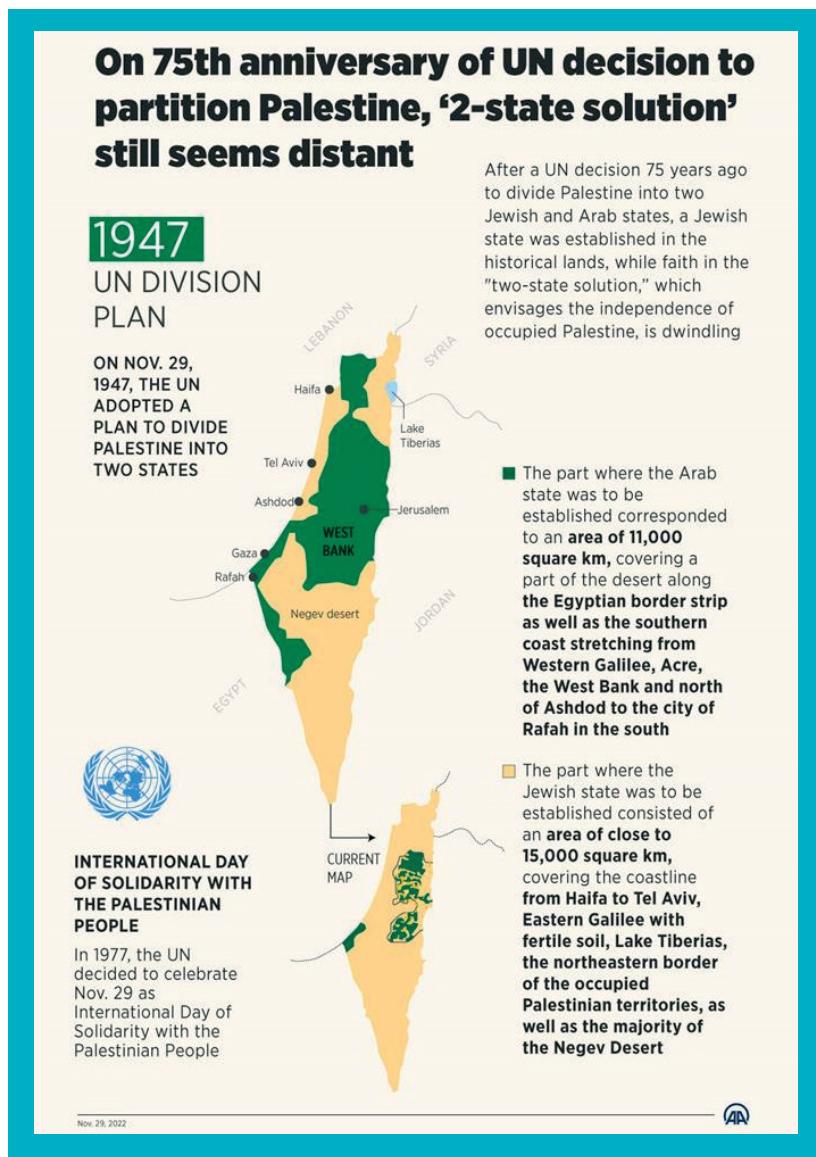
### 2. Establishing a Settler Colonial State

The goal of state-building envisaged by Zionism transitioned to consolidating the newly established state of Israel following its formation. The most significant obstacle to this endeavour was the relatively small Jewish population compared to the Palestinian population and the limited amount of land, which corresponded to this demographic composition.

In 1947, one year before the establishment of the State of Israel and the mass expulsion of the Palestinian population from Palestinian territories, the total population of approximately 1.9 million was composed of roughly 1.1 million Palestinians and approximately 590,000 Jews<sup>2</sup>. This demographic composition persisted despite incentives for migration and the extreme violence of the Special Night Squads, a paramilitary organisation formed by Captain Orde Wingate through British-Jewish collaboration during the era of the British Mandate. Even during the period of the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt, when this paramilitary structure was responsible for the deaths of more than 5,000 Palestinians, the injuring of tens of thousands, and the destruction of more than 2,000 homes, the demographic balance remained in favour of local Palestinians.

Jewish mass migration was encouraged to address the issue of population imbalance between the Palestinians and Jews, especially starting from the era of Nazi Germany. Over the years, Jewish migration became a form of demographic re-engineering. Achieving this objective necessitated the forced displacement of Palestinians and the resettlement of the Jewish population in their place. This process fits the definition of settler colonialism.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the demographic composition of the Mandatory Palestine, refer to Hagopian, E. & Zahlan, A. B. (1974). Palestine's Arab Population: The Demography of the Palestinians. Journal of Palestine Studies, 3(4), 32–73. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2535449>



Since the 1947 UN Partition Plan, Israel's policy of colonial settlement has continued to escalate. While the Jewish population accounted for 33% of the total plan, they only owned 6% of the land before the plan's implementation. However, they were allocated 56%, and following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Israel increased this share to 78%, dividing the remaining 22% into the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Despite this, the colonial settlement policy persisted, and Israeli court decisions have been used to justify systematic dispossession and displacement in the neighbourhoods where Palestinians reside.

One of the most recent and glaring examples is the forced eviction orders in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. This issue, essentially a microcosm of

the broader Palestinian conflict, continues systematically, despite Israel's application of its legal framework in occupied East Jerusalem -which is against international law, discrimination against Palestinians in property laws, and other forms of institutionalised inequality. Therefore, settler colonialism constitutes an embedded legal and institutional character through which Israel perpetuates its resettlement policies by shrinking the public and private sphere of the Palestinian people.

## Part Three:

# Israeli Massacres of 1948

This info-pack delves into these massacres committed by Israel in 1948 as a microcosm of a much more systemic behaviour. It will take volumes to document all massacres committed by Israeli forces in the past seven decades. As a colonial state, Israel adopted the massacre of civilians as a state policy countless times since 1948.

However, delving into the historical backdrop and the genesis of the conflict, the atrocities committed against the Palestinians in 1948 reveal this state policy in action, leading to the establishment of the State of Israel.

These acts of brutality transcend the mere intent of inducing fear and issuing warnings to the Palestinian inhabitants; they manifest as unequivocal acts of ethnic cleansing of a population from their lands.

The primary objective in hundreds of these mass killings was evidently to create an atmosphere of existential insecurity, prompting the indigenous Palestinian population to abandon the region. This deliberate and systematic policy fundamentally served as a crucial means to fulfil the goals formulated by the Zionist narrative for this area, and it was advocated by many Israeli actors deeply committed to this ideology.

Palestinian-American scholar Naseer Aruri explains this intertwined dynamic that is responsible for the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people as the following:

The overwhelming facts show conclusively the primary responsibility of the Zionists for the displacement and dispossession of the Palestinians in 1948. In particular, Ben-Gurion emerges as both an 'obsessive' advocate of 'compulsory transfer' in the late 1930s and the great expeller of the Palestinians in 1948. Israel was primarily responsible for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem; the exodus was largely the deliberate creation of Jewish leaders (principally Ben-Gurion) and military commanders; it was an outcome of Zionist 'transfer thinking', transfer mentality, transfer predisposition and premeditation. The 1948 war simply provided an opportunity and the necessary background for the creation of a Jewish state largely devoid of Arabs; it

concentrated Zionist-Jewish minds, and provided the security, military and strategic explanations and justifications for purging the Jewish state and dispossessing the Palestinians.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the Israeli massacres committed against the Palestinian population in 1948 are briefly examined below.

### The Deir Yassin Massacre

The Deir Yassin Massacre, which took place on April 9, 1948, was a significant event during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the lead-up to the establishment of the State of Israel. It involved an attack on the Palestinian Arab village of Deir Yassin, located near Jerusalem. Jewish terror groups, including the Irgun and Lehi, launched the assault on the village.

During the operation, a significant number of Palestinian villagers were killed, including women, children, and the elderly. The exact number of casualties remains a subject of historical debate, with estimates ranging from around 100 to several hundred. Many reports indicated that the massacre included acts of brutality, such as rape and mutilation.

The Deir Yassin Massacre had a profound impact on the Palestinian population, leading to widespread fear and panic among Palestinians in other villages. It also played a role in fuelling the Palestinian Arab exodus, known as the Nakba, as many Palestinians fled their homes due to the violence and the fear of further attacks. This event is often cited as an example of the violence and brutality that occurred during the war and its consequences for the Palestinian people.

### The Al-Dawayima Massacre

The Al-Dawayima massacre was also a significant event during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the broader conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. It occurred in the village of Al-Dawayima in October 1948, a few months after the Deir Yassin massacre.

<sup>3</sup> Aruri, N. (Ed.). (2001). Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return. Pluto Press.

The Al-Dawayima massacre took place when Israeli forces, specifically units of the 89th Commando Battalion, occupied the village during the war. This group consisted of the members of the former Irgun and Lehi terror groups. Reports and accounts describe widespread violence and killings, including the deaths of many Palestinian civilians, women, children, and the elderly. The exact death toll from the massacre is uncertain, ranging from 200 to 1,000 victims, depending on various sources like the Egyptian garrison and the American consul in Jerusalem. The village's mukhtar (local leader) reported 455 victims and mentioned other casualties, but their exact number is unknown.

The Al-Dawayima massacre, like the Deir Yassin massacre, had a significant impact on the Palestinian population and contributed to the atmosphere of fear and displacement during the 1948 war. It is often cited as an example of the systematic Israeli violence in the early stages of the state formation.

### **The Tantura Massacre**

The Tantura massacre is another painful episode in the history of the Palestinian people during the early stages of Israel's formation. In 1948, the Palestinian coastal village of Tantura witnessed a horrifying event that forever scarred the collective memory of the Palestinian people. Israeli forces captured Tantura in May 1948, and what followed was a tragedy of immense proportions. Numerous Palestinian villagers, including innocent civilians, women, and children, were caught up in the violence. Reports suggest that many lost their lives during or after the battle, and there are allegations of heinous crimes committed against the people, such as rape and other brutalities.

For Palestinians, the Tantura massacre represents not just a historical event but a haunting memory that underscores the suffering and loss endured. It is a reminder of the forced displacement and dispossession of the Palestinian people.

While Israeli authorities have disputed the claims and portrayed the events as a military engagement, for Palestinians, the memory of Tantura stands as a stark example of the broader injustices and hardships experienced by our people during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **The Balad al-Shaykh Massacre**

The Balad al-Shaykh massacre is just another brutal Israeli massacre that unfolded during the initial phases of the 1947–1948 civil war in Mandatory Palestine. It transpired shortly after the Haifa Oil Refinery massacre, distinguishing itself as one of the earliest and most extensive massacres in the context of the 1948 Palestine war. The massacre was intended as a response to the murder of Jewish oil refinery employees on the preceding day, allegedly carried out by Palestinian colleagues. The Haganah, a terrorist organisation, was responsible for the tragic loss of life in the Palestinian Arab village of Balad al-Shaykh.

This tragic incident occurred in the early hours, resulting in the killing of 21 to 70 adult Arab men, in addition to at least two women and five children. The psychological impact of these distressing events on the Palestinian civilian population in the Haifa region was significant. Notably, two Haganah terrorists were killed, and two others were injured.

### **The Ein al-Zeitun Massacre**

The Ein al-Zeitun massacre transpired on May 1, 1948, within the Palestinian Arab village of Ein al-Zeitun, situated to the north of Safed, which was then under the jurisdiction of the British Mandate for Palestine. Various historical accounts suggest that a group of Arab prisoners, numbering between 23 and 70 individuals, lost their lives during the incident at the hands of the Palmach, considered an elite faction associated with the Haganah terrorist organisation.

While these massacres were taking place, the British Mandate administration in the region, in its final days, adhered to its conventional stance and maintained a pro-Jewish posture. For instance, when Adib Shishaqlı, the commander of the Arab Liberation Army's northern region at the time, requested permission from the Mandate administration to launch attacks against Jewish garrisons identified near villages close to Ein al-Zeitun, his request was met with rejection<sup>4</sup>. This shows how the British-Zionist cooperation was intended to make the Palestinian resistance unable to resist the growing Zionist footprint in the region.

<sup>4</sup> Abbasi, M. (2004). The Battle for Safad in the War of 1948: A Revised Study. International Journal of Middle East Studies, 36(1), 21–47.

## Part Four:

# The Battle of Narratives

**T**he first part of the historical panorama outlined key events from the past century. Throughout this course, both the narratives of the Palestinians and the Zionist movement have played a significant role in shaping how these events are interpreted on the world stage through media, academics, and political debates. This part explores what these narratives are basically about and how their differences impact the key events that happened over the last century.

### 1. The Zionist Narrative

According to the Zionist narrative, the existence of the state of Israel was a necessity, primarily aimed at preventing the assimilation of the Jewish people who were scattered throughout various parts of the world, particularly in Europe. The establishment of an Israeli state would provide a living space for all Jewish people worldwide, thus ending their dispersion. This objective originated from various religious, historical, and legal references and justifications.

The religious aspect of the Zionist narrative draws on the deep historical and spiritual connection of Jews to Eretz Israel (the land of Israel). It is based on the biblical and historical ties of the Jewish people to the region, with Jerusalem as the central religious and historical focal point. Prominent in this narrative is the belief in the biblical promise of the land of Israel to the Jewish people, as articulated in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh). The idea of a "Promised Land" was used to support Jewish return and sovereignty in their ancestral homeland. The Western Wall in Jerusalem and the historical Jewish presence in the city have profound religious significance for Jews, contributing to the desire for a Jewish state with Jerusalem as its capital.

The legal aspect of the Zionist narrative emphasises the international legal framework, including the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the League of Nations mandate for Palestine in 1922. The Balfour Declaration expressed British support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people. The League of Nations mandate recognised the historical connection of Jews to Palestine and entrusted Britain with the administration of Palestine to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish national home. The UN Partition Plan in 1947 further provided a legal basis for the establishment of Israel by recommending the

division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states.

The historical aspect of the Zionist narrative points to the long and ancient history of Jewish presence in the region. It refers to the time of the biblical Israelites, who are seen as having established a kingdom in the area, including the historical city of Jerusalem. The connection to historical figures and events in the Hebrew Bible is often cited to substantiate these claims. The historical narrative also takes into account the Jewish diaspora, where Jewish communities spread across the world following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and subsequent dispersal. During the diaspora, Jews faced persecution, discrimination, and expulsion from various countries, which is often used to emphasise the need for a homeland where Jews can find refuge and self-determination.

The confluence of these religious, legal, and historical aspects in the Zionist narrative provided the ideological foundation for the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Delving into the nature of the Zionist narrative from a critical perspective, we can discern its significant impact on political discourse. During the prolonged period of attacks on Gaza, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu frequently used biblical references in various public statements, crafting a narrative rooted in this context. "The Bible says that 'there is a time for peace and a time for war.' This is a time for war," Netanyahu told a press conference, quoting Ecclesiastes, a book in both the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) and the Old Testament of the Christian Bible.

This situation underscores a fundamental paradox within the Zionist narrative. On the one hand, the narrative aspires to act and seeks legitimacy within the contours of an international system whose principal actors, nation-states, are supposed to be rational actors. The system's whole political and legal structure takes this "rationality" paradigm at the very centre of its foundation. On the other hand, there exists a faction that selectively approaches historical decisions within this system and, when it aligns with their interests, endeavours to construct a legitimacy framework by invoking biblical references in their discourse. This incongruity, wherein we witness a divergence between rational actors and seemingly irrational rhetoric, represents one of the narrative's perplexing dimensions.

## 2. The Palestinian Traditional Narrative

The Palestinian Traditional Narrative counters the Zionist narrative by emphasising the historical and cultural ties of Palestinians to the land of Palestine. It provides a different perspective on the history of the region and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. First and foremost, the Palestinian narrative centres that Judaism is a religion of revelation, like Christianity, and has no inherent tie to a particular land. Jews are not a nation but rather a community of believers.

The traditional Palestinian narrative asserts that Palestinian people have a deep and ancient connection to the land of Palestine, dating back centuries. It points to the continuity of Arab and Palestinian communities in the region, even during periods of foreign rule, and argues that this presence predates the Zionist immigration. Accordingly, this narrative considers the waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which were driven by the Zionist movement, as disruptive and threatening to their existing communities and way of life because it relies on systemic dispossession, confiscation, and displacement of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian narrative also emphasises the Ottoman and Arab rule of Palestine for many centuries before the establishment of Israel. Palestinians argue that they had a coherent and functioning society with their own culture, language, and traditions.

The Palestinian narrative highlights the resistance of the local Arab population to the Zionist movement, as they saw it as a threat to their land and rights. This resistance included protests, strikes, and later armed confrontations with Zionist militias and Israeli forces. Additionally, this narrative opposes the systematic displacement policies that have continued from the establishment of the State of Israel to the present day. It advocates for the right to self-determination and statehood on international platforms.

The way the Palestinian narrative stands in opposition to the Zionist narrative underscores the profound influence of European colonialism in the making of the Zionist narrative. This influence has led to a critical examination of the ideological foundations underpinning both the Balfour Declaration and the UN Partition Plan. In essence, the colonial approach championed by the United Kingdom during that era effectively turned a blind eye to the presence of Palestine for various reasons and claimed a right that had no basis here—granting a homeland to the Jewish people. From the vantage point of the Palestinian narrative, the League of Nations' pro-Jewish stance is viewed as lacking historical context, running afoul

of international legal principles, and devoid of a solid foundation of legitimacy.

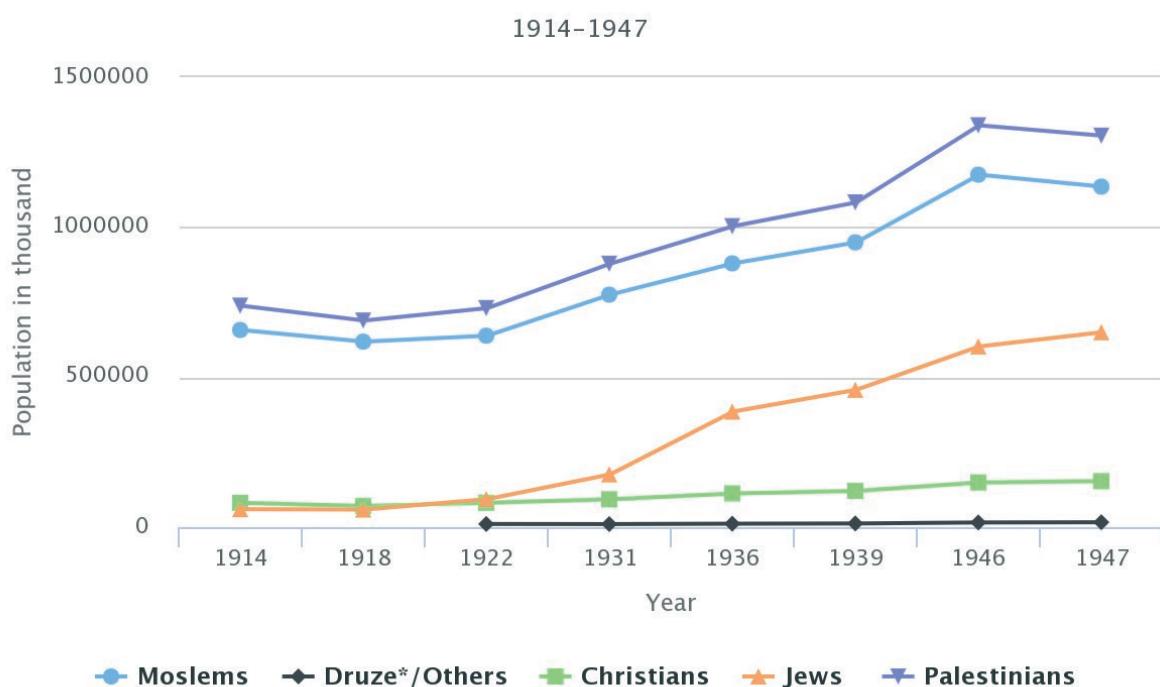
Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the traditional Palestinian narrative, from a cultural, historical, and ideological perspective, has played a defining role in the official position of Palestine on various peace plans and processes that have emerged over time<sup>5</sup>. For instance, this narrative emphasises the deep-rooted connection of the Palestinian people to their homeland, highlighting an ancestral bond, which, in diplomatic terms, has been vocalised as the right of return for more than six million Palestinian diaspora. Consequently, the focal points of this narrative have exerted a significant influence on subsequent developments and peace initiatives.

## 3. “A Land without a People for a People without a Land”

The phrase ‘a land without a people for a people without a land’ holds significant relevance in the Zionist narrative concerning the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This narrative incorporates a colonial theme that is underpinned by two invalid claims about Palestinian territories. The first claim asserts that they established their aspirations on unpopulated land due to the absence of an independent Jewish state. However, both Ottoman-era population records and British records during the Mandatory Palestine period indicate that these lands hosted well-established Arab populations. Throughout the Mandatory Palestine administration, the Muslim population consistently outnumbered Jews. The Interactive Encyclopaedia of the Palestine Question’s population chart, based on historian Justin McCarthy’s work, *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate*, illustrates the following graph. This figure shows the population records during the British rule between 1917-1947:

<sup>5</sup> Scham, P., Pogrund, B., & Ghanem, A. (2013). Introduction to Shared Narratives—A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue. *Israel Studies*, 18(2), 1–10.

## Population in Palestine by Religious Community



Source: McCarthy, Justin. *The Population of Palestine: Population Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate (1990)*

**Graph 1:** Population in Palestine by Religious Community

Certainly, this phrase addresses not only the aspect that can be easily refuted with statistical data but also the core of the colonial narrative, which contains a second claim. According to this claim, despite the obvious Arab population, Palestine is considered terra nullius, meaning "land belonging to no one," due to being perceived as backward, primitive, and lacking signs of civilisation. This narrative directly resonated with the initial motivations behind the colonisation movements in 15th-century Europe and was frequently used as a legitimising ground by the British Empire. When Chaim Weizmann, who later became Israel's first president, was asked about the Balfour Declaration process and his thoughts on the presence of the Palestinian population in the region, he provided the following response to Arthur Ruppин, the head of the colonisation department of the Jewish Agency:

"The British told us that there are some hundred thousand negroes ['kushim'] and for those, there is no value."<sup>6</sup>

By centring on this European-originated colonial narrative, the Zionist narrative initiates a process of statehood in Palestine as the Jewish population increases, asserting that civilisation has arrived and, therefore, they have the greatest claim to these lands. They even present statements like Mark Twain's in his 1869 travelogue, *The Innocents Abroad*, where he described Palestine as "a hopeless, dreary, heart-broken land" and "desolate and unlovely" as a form of evidence. However, when one examines the writings of others who have travelled to the region, such as the Scottish artist David Roberts, it becomes apparent that the region was also described differently. For instance, in Roberts' notes, he expressed the region as "across the plain of Sharon, through a richly-cultivated country. The ground is carpeted with flowers—the plain is studded with small villages and groups of palm trees, and, independent of its interesting associations, the country is the loveliest I ever beheld." This colonial narrative, which essentially carries a colonial character, sought validation by drawing from various expressions. However, as past travel notes reveal, facts on the ground continue to rebuff those unsubstantiated claims.

<sup>6</sup> See Masalha, N. (2001). *The Historical Roots of The Palestinian Refugee Question*. In N. Aruri (Ed.), *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return* (pp. 36–68). Pluto Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18fs9x9.7>

## 4. The Nakba

This profound divergence in narratives has naturally resulted in differences in understanding and interpretation of key events in the historical process. For instance, while May 14, 1948, marks the establishment of the State of Israel, for Palestinians, it signifies the Nakba. Nakba, an Arabic word meaning "catastrophe," represents the day when approximately 700,000 Palestinians were mass expelled from their homeland. The official Israeli government perspective does not use the term "Nakba" and instead emphasises the establishment of the State of Israel as a momentous and just event. According to this view, the Palestinian exodus was largely a result of the war and not a deliberate policy of expulsion. Israel often highlights its willingness to accept the UN Partition Plan, which was rejected by Arab states, as evidence of its desire for peace. Within Israeli society, there is a wide range of perspectives. Some Israelis view the Nakba as a tragic but necessary outcome of the conflict and Israel's struggle for survival. Others are more critical of Israel's actions during the 1948 war and its treatment of Palestinian Arabs. In addition to the official ideology of Israel embodied in the Zionist narrative, the Nakba, viewed through historical references, is often likened to one of many conflicts, wars, and resulting migration movements in history. In this manner, Nakba is somewhat normalised in a way that it is one of the events in the course of history, among numerous other events.

Within the Israeli narrative, Nakba is not merely refuted as an "Arab fabrication" or a means to "justify terrorism." This denial transcends mere rhetoric, finding reinforcement in institutional, legal, and diplomatic aspects. For instance, in 2009, the Israeli Ministry of Education proscribed the use of the term "Nakba" in textbooks prepared for Palestinian students. In 2011, the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, passed legislation forbidding the commemoration of Nakba Day within any institution, contending that marking this day constituted an affront to Israel's identity as a "democratic Jewish state." Furthermore, in 2023, when the United Nations declared its intention to commemorate Nakba Day on May 15, Israel responded vehemently, and 30 countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, voted against it.

These instances underscore the implausibility of Nakba's acceptance within the purview of the conventional Zionist narrative. From this standpoint, this tragic event serves as a symbol of Israel's establishment based on a systematic catastrophe of the Palestinian people.

## 5. The Battle over History

The historical claim of Jews to the land that is now Israel and parts of the Palestinian territories is deeply rooted in religious and historical narratives. This claim is primarily based on the Hebrew Bible, which describes the land of Canaan as a divine promise to Abraham and his descendants. The biblical account narrates the Exodus from Egypt, the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, and the establishment of the Hebrew Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital, including the construction of the First Temple by King Solomon. The First Temple in Jerusalem, also known as Solomon's Temple, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II led the invasion and destruction of the First Temple. The Second Temple, also known as Herod's Temple, was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. The Roman general Titus led the siege and destruction of the Second Temple during the First Jewish-Roman War. This event marked the end of the Jewish presence in the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Throughout history, Jews maintained their connection to the land through religious rituals and traditions, fostering a deep sense of longing for their historical homeland. This biblical and cultural narrative forms the foundation of the Jewish historical claim to the Palestinian lands.

The Palestinian counterargument to the Jewish historical claim over the land of Israel rests on a narrative that underscores their alleged deep-rooted ties to the region. Palestinians assert their status as the indigenous people of historic Palestine, emphasising their uninterrupted presence over thousands of years and their vibrant, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious history in cities like Jerusalem, Hebron, and Bethlehem. They recognise the Arab influence through the 7th-century Arab conquest and emphasise that the arrival of Jewish immigrants and the establishment of Israel in 1948 were influenced by European colonialism. The Nakba, symbolising the displacement and suffering of Palestinian Arabs, is regarded as a historical injustice. Palestinians also highlight the shared religious and cultural heritage in the region, especially within Christianity and Islam, and assert their rights to self-determination, statehood, and international recognition. This narrative serves to challenge the Jewish historical claim by emphasising the importance of acknowledging the Palestinian people's historical presence, cultural richness, and the injustices they have faced throughout the conflict's history.

In historical accounts, the first inhabitants of the region, known as Canaan, were not Jewish, and there was a vast Arab settlement long before they came to settle the region<sup>7</sup>. The Zionist narrative officially adopted by Israel attempts to propagate the idea that they were the original settlers

<sup>7</sup> Hitti, P.K. (1946). Zionist Claims and Arab Rights. *World Affairs*, 109(1),

7–9. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20664248>

in the region, even going so far as to instrumentalise archaeological findings to strengthen and legitimise their historical claims. To this end, particular emphasis is placed on Judeo-Christian relics, and the names of cities in the regions of Palestine, Negev, and Arabah are changed to Hebrew names, thus attempting to substantiate the claim that the Jewish population was the first to inhabit this region in the past.

## 6. The First and the Second Palestinian Intifadas

The First Intifada (1987-1993) and the Second Intifada (2000-2005) represent two significant phases of social resistance by the Palestinian people, mostly young, against systematic Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. As mentioned earlier, including in the timeline, these events played a crucial role in increasing international awareness of the Palestinian issue and spreading the traditional Palestinian narrative to a wider audience. When viewed through the lens of the Palestinian narrative, therefore, the First Intifada can be associated with the following three points:

- Social unrest out of the ongoing Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank
- The collective desire for self-determination in these areas
- Aim to garner international attention and awareness for the Palestinian cause

These objectives were similarly embraced by Palestinians during the Second Intifada as well. Nevertheless, the persistent impasse can also be ascribed to the inability of the 1993 Oslo Accords to realise the envisaged peace and a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders. Although the Oslo process initially engendered optimism by culminating in the establishment and acknowledgement of the Palestinian National Authority, the formal recognition of Israel's existence, and the initiation of mutual collaboration in realms like water, electricity, energy, trade, and transportation, it faltered in concluding core issues, such as the delineation of the Palestinian state's borders and the division of Jerusalem. Contrary to expectations, there was an observed surge in Israeli settlements following this agreement, accompanied by criticisms regarding corruption and deteriorating standards within the Palestinian Authority (PA).

When interpreting the Intifadas through the lens of the aforementioned narratives, it is noteworthy that both collective resistance movements were perceived in the Zionist narrative as acts of insurrection and security threats. The Israeli Military's markedly disproportionate interventions in both episodes were met with the

sentiment that the Palestinian population's resolve was progressively assuming a marginalised guise, with the Israel-Palestine conflict increasingly framed within the context of securitisation. The following table pertains to the casualties recorded during the First and Second Intifadas:

	Palestinian Death Toll	Israeli Death Toll
<b>First Intifada</b> (1987-1993)	1376	94
<b>Second Intifada</b> (2000-2005)	3256	958

<sup>1</sup> Israeli death toll during the Intifadas

Palestinian Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

Just before the onset of the Second Intifada, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak engaged in a two-week-long negotiation session at Camp David under the mediation of then-American President Bill Clinton. These talks, which revolved around critical issues such as East Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees, failed to yield a conclusive agreement.

The catalyst for the Second Intifada can be traced to the visit of then-Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, accompanied by hundreds of security staff. After this visit, demonstrations erupted, during which, despite Palestinian non-violent demonstrations at the initial stages, Israeli forces responded violently. Over approximately five years, the Zionist Israeli narrative framed its actions as "self-defence" against escalating security threats. It held that the opposing side was responsible for disrupting the peaceful climate fostered by the Oslo and Camp David processes. Conversely, the Palestinian narrative, although diplomatic processes claimed to have generated such an atmosphere, instead emphasised Israel's ongoing settlement plans and escalating violence during this period.

## 7. The Two-State Solution

The Two-State Solution refers to a proposed resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that envisions the creation of two separate and independent states: one for the Jewish people (Israel) and one for the Palestinian people. Under this framework, Israel would exist alongside a sovereign and viable Palestinian state.

When viewed from a Zionist and Palestinian narrative perspective, thoughts on the two-state solution differ both between the narratives and within each narrative. Some Zionists emphasise the importance of recognising Israel's right to exist as a sovereign Jewish state. They view

the Two-State Solution as a means to secure Israel's long-term existence and protect its Jewish character, as well as establish the grounds for peaceful coexistence. On the other hand, hard-liner Zionist perspectives interpret the two-state solution as a concession that would contradict Israel's national interests. Their focus is generally placed on the idea of a Greater Israel, indicating an expansionist agenda, not a compromising one. This notion of Greater Israel contends that the establishment of a Palestinian state near Israel would pose a security threat. They argue that a Palestinian state could potentially become a base for terrorism and hostile actions against Israel. Also, they express concerns about demographic shifts and the possibility of Jews becoming a minority within a single bi-national state. This demographic argument underscores the importance of maintaining a Jewish majority in the entire territory.

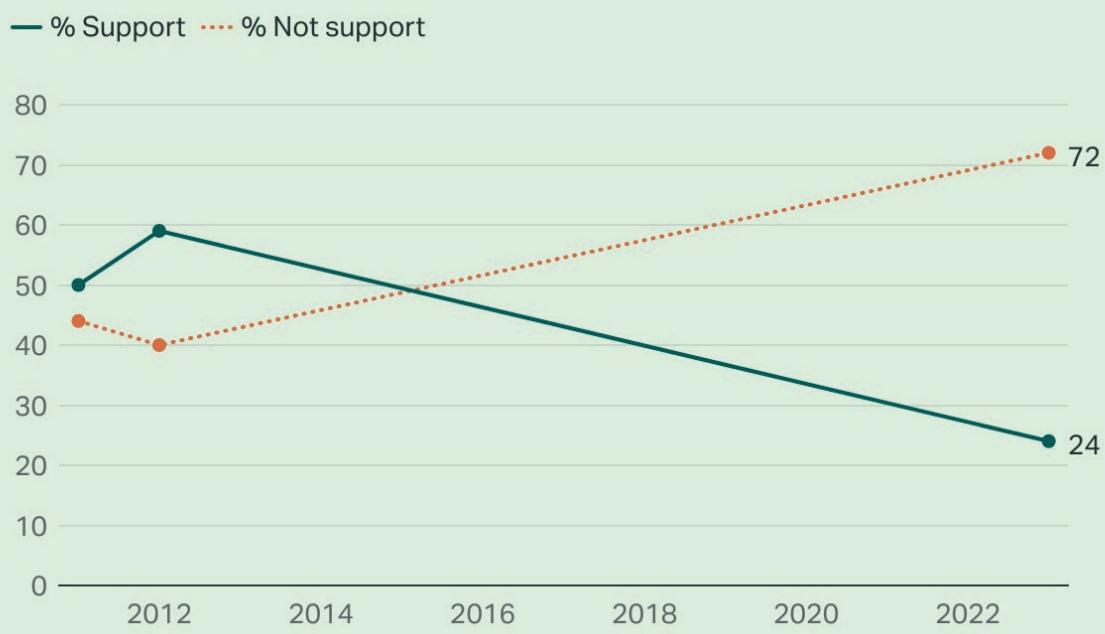
The Palestinian narrative of the two-state is about the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This narrative is rooted in the historical and political context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and reflects the aspirations and demands of the Palestinian people, including borders, the right to return, and the status of Jerusalem.

This narrative points out the establishment of an autonomous Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem, based on the pre-1967 borders, including both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Furthermore, it brings into focus the contentious issue of the return of Palestinians who, as a consequence of the 1948 Nakba, found themselves displaced from their ancestral homeland. This event holds a paramount position within the annals of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, constituting a narrative that remains unacknowledged and even reversed within the Zionist discourse. The issue of return is an integral facet of the ongoing deliberations regarding a two-state solution.

From the Palestinian standpoint, the initial stride toward engaging in discussions about a two-state solution hinges upon the cessation of the current occupation and the systematic withdrawal of Israeli security forces from territories under their control, including neighbourhoods where Jewish settlements continue to proliferate. Consequently, the notion of a two-state solution, as elucidated in this narrative, signifies a political framework that can only be forged after the recognition and rectification of certain imperfections by the opposing party, which is Israel.

## Decline in Palestinian Support for a Two-State Solution

Would you support or not support a situation in which an independent Palestinian state existed alongside an independent state of Israel?



**Graph 2:** Decline in Palestinian Support for a Two-State Solution (Source: GALLUP)

## Part Five: Peace Plans and Processes

The peace processes initiated and conducted to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although nearly as old as the conflict itself - dating back to the 1947 UN Partition Plan - have seen their most significant developments following the post-First Intifada period in the early 1990s. In these peace processes, mediators have generally included multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the Arab League, and the Quartet, as well as special initiatives launched by some US presidents under their initiative. Here is the list of some of the key peace plans and processes:

### Oslo Accords (1993-1995)

The Oslo I Accords, also known as the "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements," marked a historic moment in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Signed in Washington on September 13, 1993, the accords emerged from secret negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian representatives. The Oslo I agreement outlined a transitional period during which the Palestinian Authority (PA) would be established to govern portions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a maximum of five years while both sides negotiated a final peace settlement. The agreement included provisions for Israel's gradual military withdrawal from these areas, democratic elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council and President (electing Yasser Arafat), security cooperation, and an understanding that critical issues like the status of Jerusalem, refugees, and borders would be addressed in future negotiations. Despite its optimistic nature, the Oslo I Accords encountered challenges, including violence, disputes over the ongoing Israeli settlements, and difficulties in implementation, ultimately failing to culminate in a final peace agreement.

Building on the progress of Oslo I, the Oslo II Accords, formally titled the "Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip," were signed in Taba, Egypt, on September 28, 1995. These accords further developed the peace process, dividing the West Bank into three areas with varying degrees of Palestinian control. Area A was granted full Palestinian control, Area B was placed under joint Israeli-Palestinian control, and Area C remained under Israeli control. Gaza was also placed under Palestinian control. The agreement elaborated on Israeli

withdrawals from West Bank cities and towns, security cooperation mechanisms, economic collaboration, and Palestinian self-rule.

Nevertheless, like its predecessor, Oslo II faced its challenges, including outbreaks of violence and disputes regarding the execution of its terms. It was designed as an interim step toward a final peace settlement, but final status negotiations, encompassing critical issues, such as Jerusalem, refugees, borders, and settlements, were deferred for future discussions. Despite their limitations, the Oslo Accords established the framework for subsequent peace efforts in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even as the ultimate goal of a comprehensive peace agreement remained elusive.

### Camp David Summit (2000)

Facilitated by then-US President Bill Clinton, the 2000 Camp David Summit represented a crucial juncture in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, with direct negotiations between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat. These negotiations sought to address the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including borders, the status of Jerusalem, the return of Palestinian refugees, and the establishment of a Palestinian state. Discussions encompassed sensitive matters such as the city of Jerusalem and territorial compromises while also tackling security arrangements and the contentious issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Despite intensive efforts, the Camp David Summit did not yield a final peace agreement. The subsequent of the accords is the eruption of the Second Intifada as a result of the ongoing Israeli oppression and settlement.

### Arab Peace Initiative (2002)

The Arab Peace Initiative, first presented by the Arab League during the 2002 Arab League Summit in Beirut and re-endorsed in 2007, is a comprehensive peace plan designed to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and foster normalised relations between Israel and the Arab states. This initiative offers the prospect of a comprehensive peace agreement, with Arab states committing to recognise Israel and establishing diplomatic relations in exchange

for a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. It calls for a complete Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 Six-Day War, encompassing the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem. The plan also emphasises a "just solution" to the Palestinian refugee issue in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 194, which addresses their right to return or compensation. While Israel did not accept the initiative in its entirety, it has served as a reference point in subsequent negotiations, underlining the commitment of Arab states to a two-state solution and a comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Palestinian Authority swiftly embraced the initiative under the leadership of Yasser Arafat. Subsequently, his successor, Mahmoud Abbas, also threw his support behind the plan and officially requested US President Barack Obama to incorporate it into his Middle East policy. However, Hamas, which governed the Gaza Strip, was deeply divided, with the majority of its factions rejecting the plan. On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon dismissed the initiative primarily due to its requirement for Israel to withdraw from the pre-June 1967 borders. In 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tentatively expressed support for the initiative. However, by 2018, he had rejected it as a basis for future negotiations with the Palestinians.

### **The Road Map for Peace (2003)**

The Road Map for Peace, presented by the Quartet on the Middle East (comprising the United States, European Union, United Nations, and Russia) in 2003, offers a comprehensive framework to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Central to the plan is the commitment to a two-state solution, aiming to establish an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state. It adopts a phased approach, encompassing three main stages: the cessation of violence, the resumption of Palestinian security cooperation, the creation of a Palestinian state with provisional borders, and negotiations on final status issues, including borders, refugees, the status of Jerusalem, and settlements, culminating in a comprehensive peace agreement.

The Road Map for Peace, while accepted by the Palestinian Authority under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas, faced reservations from the right-wing Likud Party government led by Ariel Sharon at the time. The Israeli government stated that it accepted the roadmap's phased approach rather than the entire plan and introduced various conditions. Notable among these conditions was the

demand for the disarming and dismantling of Palestinian security forces and Hamas. It is worth noting that there were no specific provisions related to curbing Israeli violence in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Additionally, Israel saw its conditional position as a prerequisite for advancing to the second phase and then the third phase. Subsequent conditions included the waiver of the right of return, monitoring of the process by the United States rather than the Quartet, and the design of a demilitarised provisional Palestinian state. In summary, Israel's stance on this roadmap reflected a highly asymmetric position in the peace process, ultimately hindering its ability to bring a solution to the conflict.

### **The Annapolis Conference (2007)**

The Annapolis Conference, convened in November 2007 by the United States, marked another diplomatic effort to revive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to achieve a comprehensive resolution to the enduring Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The central objective of the conference was to re-establish direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority that started in 2003 with the Road Map for Peace, addressing core final status issues, including borders, security, the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, and settlements. Underlying the discussions was a steadfast commitment to a two-state solution, envisioning an independent and viable Palestinian state alongside Israel. The parties agreed to a timeline that aspired to reach a final peace agreement by the end of 2008, with international leaders and organisations providing their support and participation, underscoring the global interest in finding a resolution.

Hamas and Iran boycotted the Annapolis Conference because it was designed to serve the interests of Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert faced pressures, especially from right-wing parties and actors in domestic politics, over the debates on potential concessions on East Jerusalem. The ultra-Zionist Shas Party, which was part of Olmert's coalition at the time, stated that it would withdraw from the coalition if concessions regarding Jerusalem were made. The United Nations withdrew a draft resolution that aimed to support the peace process targeted by the conference due to objections from Israel and the United States.

### **United Nations Resolutions**

The first UN resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although it did not include any peace plans or proposals,

is Resolution 181, widely known as the UN Partition Plan. It proposed a plan to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with international administration of Jerusalem. The plan was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by Arab leaders, leading to the 1947-1949 Arab-Israeli War.

United Nations resolutions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have, over the years, shaped the diplomatic landscape of peace processes by providing a coherent framework for both parties. Starting with UN Resolution 242 in 1967, these resolutions have consistently emphasised the impermissibility of territorial acquisition through war, urging Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the Six-Day War and advocating for secure borders and a just refugee settlement. Building on this, UN Resolution 338 in 1973 called for an immediate ceasefire, reinforcing the principles of Resolution 242 and the necessity of negotiations for a just and enduring peace. In 2002, UN Resolution 1397 marked a crucial milestone by endorsing the vision of a two-state solution for the first time, coexisting within secure and recognised boundaries. Subsequently, Resolution 1515 in 2003 reiterated the commitment to a two-state solution, urging an end to violence and a return to negotiations while also endorsing the Quartet's roadmap for peace. Resolution 1850 in 2008 further underscored the importance of international and regional efforts to support a two-state solution and bring an end to the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, UN Resolution 2334 in 2016 reiterated the international community's condemnation of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as a breach of international law, called for an immediate halt to settlement construction, and reaffirmed the unwavering commitment to a two-state solution. Even if they are not comprehensive peace plans, these resolutions represent critical principles and guidelines that have underpinned peace negotiations and have underscored the international community's stance on the imperative of a two-state solution and the need to address critical issues through negotiations.

Since 1945, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has witnessed the exercise of veto power in the United Nations Security Council on 36 occasions. These occurrences have involved one of the five permanent UNSC members: The United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France. The majority of these vetoes, specifically 34 of them, were employed by the United States, with Russia and China each exercising this power on two separate occasions.

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## Part Six: Issues

**W**ithin the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, a plethora of pivotal issues have surfaced, serving as both catalysts for the conflict and consequential developments over time. These issues have held a significant position in shaping the trajectory of the conflict and peace initiatives, bearing great significance in terms of the consensus they demand.

### Palestinian Refugees

The issue of Palestinian refugees is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Dating back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the Nakba, and the subsequent Arab-Israeli conflicts, approximately 700,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes. Now, the estimated number of the Palestinian diaspora is about 6 million, registered as refugees in different countries. The debate centres on their right to return to their ancestral lands, with Palestinians advocating for their return and Israelis concerned about the demographic and security implications of such a move. The refugee issue is central to any comprehensive peace resolution, with various proposals and international initiatives aimed at addressing the needs and rights of Palestinian refugees and addressing Israeli objections to the subject, mainly about security and demographics.

### Jerusalem

Jerusalem is a city of immense religious and historical significance to both Palestinians and Israelis. It is claimed as a capital by both parties, and the status of Jerusalem has been a central point of contention in the conflict. The city's historical and religious importance, including the Western Wall and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, makes it a focal point for negotiations and disputes. Resolving the Jerusalem issue involves finding a way for both Palestinians and Israelis to share the city, a challenge that has proven to be one of the most difficult in the peace process.

### Territory and Borders

The issue of territory and borders is a fundamental aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It revolves around the

West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. Pre-1967 borders, commonly referred to as the Green Line, have been a point of reference in negotiations. Yet, disputes persist regarding the establishment of a Palestinian state, the borders of that state, and the sovereignty of the land. Despite numerous peace talks and United Nations resolutions pointing towards a solution, the operation of Israeli courts in a manner that facilitates the expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, contrary to international law, has contributed to the departure of this issue from the path of reconciliation.

### Water

The issue of water in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a multifaceted challenge deeply rooted in the region's geography, politics, and history. The scarcity of water resources is exacerbated by the arid climate, making access to water a critical concern. A core aspect of this problem lies in the unequal distribution of water, as Israel has developed advanced water infrastructure and technology that enables effective management of its water supply. In contrast, Palestinians often grapple with water scarcity due to insufficient infrastructure, restrictions on drilling wells, and other limitations, resulting in disparities in access to clean water. The situation is further complicated by the shared nature of critical groundwater sources, like the Mountain Aquifer in the West Bank. The control and management of water resources carry significant political implications, as Israel, as the occupier in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, plays a central role in regulating access to water sources in these territories. This has given rise to allegations of discriminatory water allocation where Israel systematically weaponises the water sources. Water scarcity also extends to its economic and social ramifications, affecting agriculture, development, and economic growth, as individuals and businesses rely on water for basic needs and activities. Efforts have been made to address the water issue through cooperation on water projects, desalination initiatives, and international mediation.

### The Economy

The economic dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is marked by profound and long-lasting consequences



that have affected every facet of life in the region. This multifaceted issue encompasses trade and economic relations that have been severely disrupted due to restrictions on movement, goods, and people, making it challenging for Palestinians to engage in normal economic activities with the rest of the world. According to the World Bank, the annual GDP remains only 19.11 billion dollars as of 2022. Infrastructure development has been hampered, with ongoing military conflicts and insecurity impeding the construction of critical infrastructure like roads, energy networks, and water facilities. High unemployment rates, particularly among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, have persisted as economic instability and restrictions on labour movement limit job opportunities. The economic repercussions of the conflict have touched the daily lives of the population by compromising access to basic services, including healthcare and education. In the context of a potential two-state solution, addressing the economic challenges becomes essential, not only for achieving peace but also for fostering economic stability, sustainable development, and improving the overall quality of life for people in the region.

### The Blockade of Gaza

The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, in place since 2007, has had a severe impact on the people living in the area. The blockade restricts the movement of goods and people, contributing to an economic and humanitarian crisis. It has resulted in significant hardships for Gazans, including limited access to essential services, high unemployment rates, and food and energy shortages. The blockade remains a contentious issue, with Israel citing security concerns, while critics argue that it has resulted in collective punishment and human rights violations. Addressing the blockade is a vital element in the pursuit of a comprehensive peace agreement and improved living conditions for Gazans.

# Part Seven:

## Actors

**S**ince the outbreak of the conflict, multiple actors have been involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this part, the focus will be on three key actors of the conflict: The Israeli settler movement, The Palestinian Authority (PA), and Hamas.

### 1. The Israeli Settler Movement

The Israeli Settler Movement comprises Israeli Jews who have established communities, commonly known as settlements, primarily in the West Bank and, to a lesser extent, in East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. These settlements have grown in number since the aftermath of the 1967 Six-Day War, with motivations among settlers varying widely. Many settlers are motivated by religious and ideological beliefs, drawing upon historical and biblical connections to the land. In contrast, others are attracted by economic incentives such as government subsidies and affordable housing provided by the Israeli government to attract more settlers to these lands. The settler movement remains a deeply contentious issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinians and the international community often view the settlements as illegal under international law and a significant obstacle to a potential two-state solution, given their expansion and impact on the geographic contiguity of a future Palestinian state.

In this context, the Israeli government has provided:

- Financial incentives,
- Infrastructure development that is double that of the people living in East Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, and
- Security to promote settlement growth.

This policy has been a major source of controversy, as it is often viewed as an obstacle to peace, undermining the viability of a potential Palestinian state and leading to international criticism, as many consider these settlements illegal under international law. The policy has varied across different Israeli governments, with some administrations promoting settlement expansion more vigorously than others.

In this year's report presented by the UN High

Commissioner for Human Rights to the Human Rights Council, some current information about the expansionist acts of the Israeli settler movement is noteworthy:

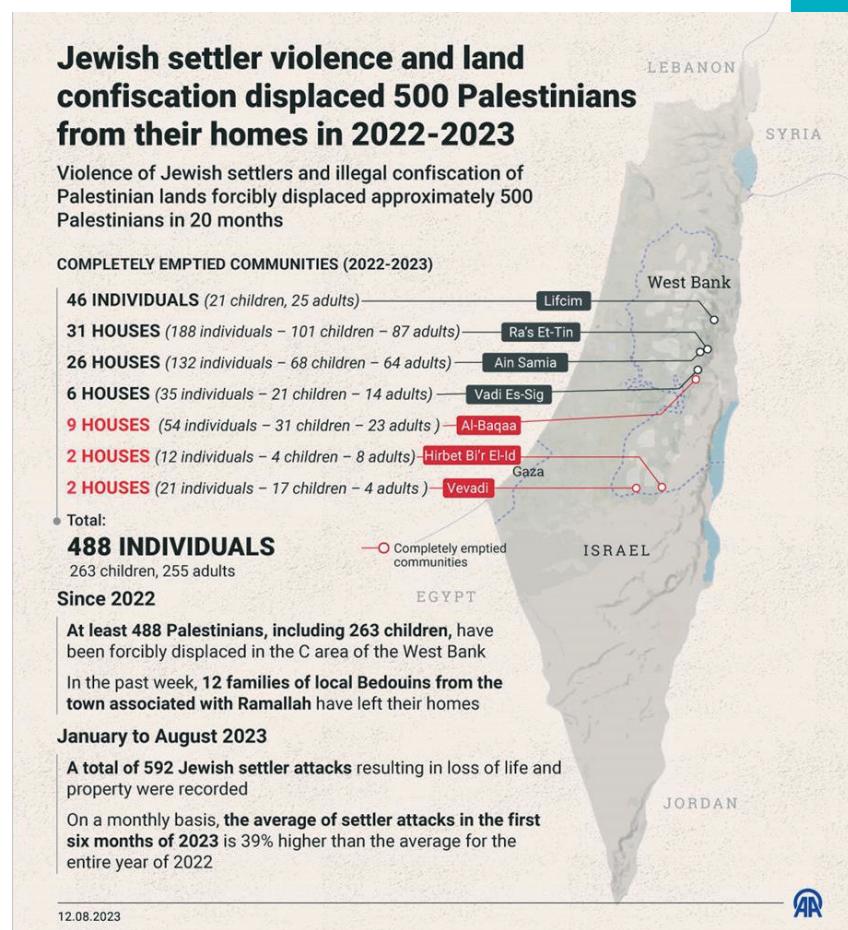
- "Through the manipulative use of land laws applicable in the West Bank, Israel has declared more than 750,000 dunams of land in the West Bank as "State land", including lands that would have been classified as private property. Under local laws, land registered as "State land" is intended for public use. Nevertheless, according to Yesh Din, an Israeli human rights organisation, 99.76 per cent of the State land allocated for use has been allocated for the benefit of Israeli settlements."
- "Israel has spent billions of dollars on consolidating settlement blocs with networks of so-called bypass roads, which are designed to circumvent the Palestinian presence in the West Bank. A 1997 Israeli planning document explained that separate roads were a preferred planning model because they "provide a better solution for the issue of segregation". Indeed, some roads are only for Israeli use, segregating Jewish and Palestinian travellers. Even when Palestinians are allowed to travel on some roads, they are primarily designed to connect settlements and outposts, to Israel and Jerusalem. In addition, an extensive system of checkpoints and roadblocks allows Israel to control access to the bypass roads and the main highways in the West Bank. Furthermore, some roads segment Palestinian governorates into isolated enclaves of village clusters, hindering connectivity and restricting Palestinians' movement in the West Bank in a manner that severely infringes upon their freedom of movement and access to livelihoods and services, with negative results. For example, people who experience gender-based violence are not able to access life-saving services and quality care."
- "Over the past ten years, Israel has failed in its obligation to promptly, effectively and independently investigate and prosecute crimes against Palestinians committed by settlers and related violations by the Israeli security forces and to provide justice to the victims...Failure to protect Palestinians and deficiencies in the justice system to hold settlers accountable for violence against Palestinians, with

particular obstacles to access to justice for women and girls, have been reported previously. Palestinians submit few complaints as they distrust the Israeli legal system and because of fear of reprisals. Overall, these deficiencies sustain and exacerbate a climate of impunity for settler violence, encouraging the continuation of attacks. Additionally, the above-mentioned attacks against Palestinians by settlers shooting side by side with the Israeli security forces, add to such a climate. Settler violence against Palestinians serves as a method to take over land in the West Bank."

The settler movement against the Palestinian population is empowered by the Israeli legal system and bureaucracy, making the trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

much more asymmetric in favour of settler colonialism at the expense of Palestinian residents.

As of the recent data on the Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank, the number is 700,000, and it is reported that the Israeli government intends to double this by 2027. In the Zionist framework of Israeli policymaking, the general attitude towards the consecutive UN resolutions describing the settler movement as illegal under international law is the complete rejection and arrangement of the domestic legal framework in a way that allows the settler expansion in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.



Many  
settlers are  
motivated by  
**religious** and  
**ideological**  
**beliefs**,  
drawing upon  
**historical**  
and **biblical**  
**connections**  
to the land.

## 2. The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Following the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established in 1994 to serve as the governing body for certain areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, known as Areas A and B. Its primary purpose is to administer civil order, essential services, and local institutions, functioning as a limited self-governing body with varying degrees of autonomy. Under its jurisdiction, it manages daily life in these areas, overseeing aspects such as law and order, education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Originally intended to govern the entire Palestinian territories, it lost control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 to Hamas, which remains the de facto authority there. Led by President Mahmoud Abbas, the PA has played a central role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, seeking a two-state solution and international recognition as the State of Palestine. However, it faces significant challenges, including political divisions with Hamas, economic difficulties, and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## 3. Hamas

Hamas, originally the Islamic Resistance Movement, was founded in 1987 during the early days of the First Intifada by Sheikh Ahmed Yasin and Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, among others, including Mahmoud Zahar and Mohammad Taha. Its roots can be traced to The Mujama al-Islamiya, a social charity organisation established as a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1973. The incident in which an Israeli military truck struck and killed four Palestinians in 1987 was one of the tragic events that influenced the formation of Hamas.

Initially, Hamas focused on non-violent solutions and even proposed truce and peace proposals, including discussions with Israeli leaders. They emphasised the need for an independent Palestinian state on the basis of equal rights and the principle of sovereignty. However, the tragic losses of Palestinian lives during the First Intifada, coupled with Israel's disproportionate use of force, pushed Hamas towards armed resistance. Hamas viewed the 1993 Oslo Accords as a departure from its core principles and as a concession that did not adequately address what it saw as the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. As a result, it opposed the Accords and continued to pursue its agenda, including armed resistance against Israeli occupation.

The Second Intifada saw Hamas maintain its commitment to armed struggle against Israel, resulting in a significant disparity in casualties, with Palestinian losses far outnumbering Israeli casualties.

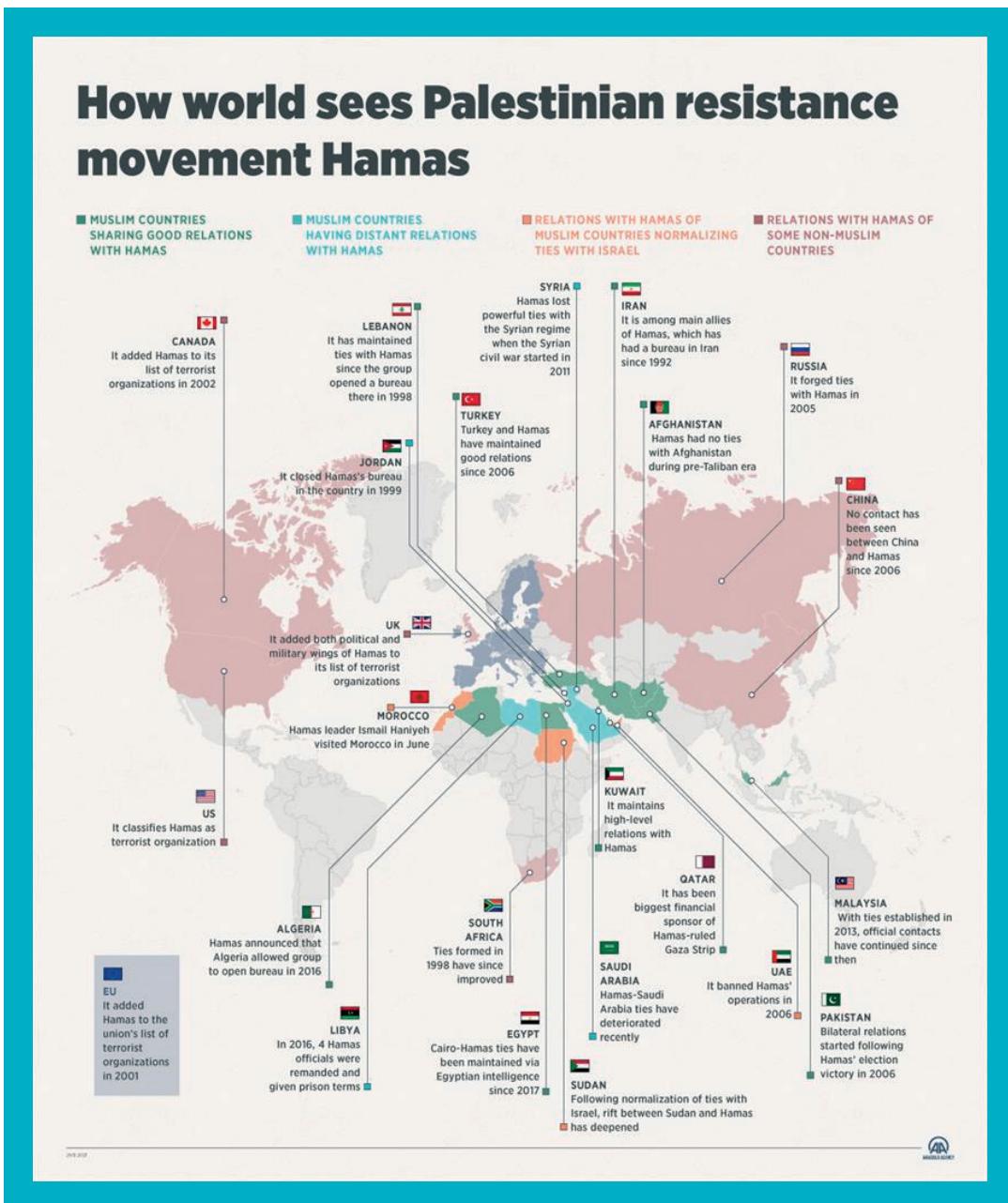
In 2006, Hamas achieved a significant political milestone by winning parliamentary elections. This electoral victory signalled a potential shift towards more comprehensive political engagement. Notably, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, in a 2006 article in The Guardian, expressed a belief in the possibility of a peace process rooted in the principles of equal rights.

The electoral victory in 2006 was a significant factor in their rise to power in Gaza. The international community, including Israel and the United States, largely opposed Hamas's participation in the elections due to its classification as a terrorist organisation. In June 2007, after a series of clashes, Hamas seized control of Gaza from Fatah, solidifying its grip on the territory. This event marked a turning point in Palestinian politics and left Hamas in control of the Gaza Strip while Fatah retained power in the West Bank. Hamas has also gained support in Gaza through its provision of social services and welfare programs, which helped it build a base of popular support among some Palestinians. This included things like education, healthcare, and food distribution.

The conflicts between Israel and Hamas remained volatile, with sporadic ceasefire talks initiated through the efforts of mediators like Israeli peace activist Gershon Baskin. However, the assassination of Hamas leader Ahmed Jabari during Israel's Operation Pillar of Defence in 2012 disrupted these diplomatic efforts and led to a resumption of armed struggle.

The 2006 elections exacerbated the ideological and methodological differences between Hamas and Fatah. The conflict between the two sides erupted into a civil conflict. Despite multiple reconciliation efforts in various locations like Mecca, Sana'a, Doha, and Cairo since 2007, full unity has remained elusive. One of the foundational elements shaping Hamas's method and approach, as enshrined in its charter, was its staunch opposition to Israel's right to exist. Fatah's approach during the Oslo Accords process, viewed by Hamas, essentially amounted to making concessions to attain statehood, a right it believed Palestinians already deserved, with little faith in the process of bringing about a resolution.

Throughout this period, Hamas continued its use of suicide bombings and attacks, leading to constant pressure on Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat to impel Israel and the US to halt Hamas's actions. Even before the Second Intifada, Hamas faced substantial pressure, including from Jordan, resulting in the arrest of its leaders, Khaled Mashal and Ibrahim Ghosheh, upon their return from an Iran visit. Ghosheh was deported to Qatar in 1999, while Mashal resided in Damascus until the outbreak of the Syrian Civil



War, then he moved to Qatar. These anecdotes illustrate that the Hamas-Fatah ideological and methodological divide took shape as Hamas gradually became marginalised and faced increasing regional and international pressure.

In light of this background, it is observed that Hamas did not resort to violence in the early stages of its formation. However, especially with the First Intifada, it underwent a shift in its stance and methods in response to the increasing Israeli violence. Additionally, Hamas has faced

a challenging political landscape in Palestine and, upon gaining control in Gaza, became the dominant authority here, facing various regional and international reactions that culminated in a land, sea, and air blockade on the movement of goods and people in and out of the Gaza Strip by Egypt and Israel for nearly two decades.

## Part Eight: What Happened on October 7, 2023?

The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades of Hamas initiated the 'Operation Al-Aqsa Flood' in the early hours of October 7th, targeting the southern regions of Israel and penetrating the border from air, land, and sea. Commencing with approximately 5,000 missiles in the initial hours of the operation, which coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, Hamas subsequently took 240 Israelis, including soldiers, as captives upon entering southern Israeli territories. Despite the prominent positions of the Israeli domestic intelligence agency, Shin Bet, and the foreign intelligence network, Mossad, in the region, criticism arose, suggesting that these attacks were a result of a serious security vulnerability. Hours later, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that a state of war had been declared, marking the first such declaration since the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The conflict began on that day.

Since the first day, the Israeli military (IDF) has conducted intense aerial attacks in the Gaza Strip, operating within the framework of a principle of disproportionality. This has resulted in serious humanitarian consequences, such as a high number of civilian casualties and targeting of hospitals, places of worship, and civilian residential areas. Notably, the attack on Al Ahli Baptist Hospital on the night of October 15th resulted in the loss of 300 to 500 lives, and the strikes on the Jabalia refugee camp on October 31st claimed the lives of over fifty civilians.

Among the narratives most frequently used by Israel in these attacks are counterterrorism and self-defence. The IDF's attacks, targeting civilian settlements indiscriminately, have turned out to be collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Additionally, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch assessments have established the repeated use of white phosphorus bombs near civilian settlements, which constitutes a war crime. Instead of conducting a large-scale ground operation, the Israeli army has opted for a partial ground operation, yet it still encounters significant resistance, and the continuation of the war in the foreseeable future is highly anticipated.

Despite calls for a ceasefire from the United Nations and its affiliated bodies, numerous leaders, and various independent organisations, Israel continues its disproportionate and non-discriminatory warfare. A leaked

document from the Israeli Ministry of Intelligence indicates that the forced migration of 2.2 million Palestinians in Gaza to northern Sinai in Egypt is the ultimate target of Israel through the continuation of its large-scale attacks on the Gaza Strip. This leaked plan resembles a modern-day Nakba, constituting the strategies of ethnic cleansing and forced displacement, both of which are considered crimes under all aspects of international humanitarian law.

Notably, the attack on **Al Ahli Baptist Hospital** on the night of October 15th resulted in **the loss of 300 to 500 lives**, and **the strikes** on the Jabalia refugee camp on **October 31st** claimed the lives of over fifty civilians.

# While world focuses on humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Western powers oppose cease-fire

Countries calling for cease-fire



Countries opposing cease-fire / or not calling for cease-fire



While **US** and **UK** have blocked cease-fire efforts in **Israel-Palestine** conflict at UN Security Council, European countries, except for some, have **not voiced support** for cease-fire

# Part Nine: The Reaction of the International Community

**I**nternational responses to Hamas' attacks and Israel's conflict in Gaza have exhibited considerable diversity. When examining the stance of Western nations, it becomes evident that state leaders, diplomatic channels, and international organisations have extended their support to Israel, primarily invoking grounds of "counterterrorism" and "self-defence," all the while disregarding the historical backdrop of pressure and violence. It should be noted that this support, albeit merely rhetorical in some cases, has also manifested in practical terms, particularly in the actions of states like the United States and the United Kingdom, who have actively supplied military aid. Below is a snapshot of various reactions from the international community:

## United States of America

"This morning, I spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu about the horrific and ongoing attacks in Israel. The United States unequivocally condemns this appalling assault against Israel by Hamas terrorists from Gaza, and I made clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu that we stand ready to offer all appropriate means of support to the government and people of Israel. Terrorism is never justified. Israel has a right to defend itself and its people. The United States warns against any other party hostile to Israel seeking advantage in this situation. My Administration's support for Israel's security is rock solid and unwavering. Jill and I are keeping in our prayers all of the families who have been hurt by this violence. We are heartbroken by the lives that have been tragically cut short and hope for a swift recovery for all those who have been wounded. My team and I are tracking this situation closely, and I will remain in close touch with Prime Minister Netanyahu."

**US President Joe Biden**

## United Kingdom

I am shocked by this morning's attacks by Hamas terrorists against Israeli citizens. Israel has an absolute right to defend itself. We're in contact with Israeli authorities, and

British nationals in Israel should follow travel advice. (1)

As the barbarity of today's atrocities becomes clearer, we stand unequivocally with Israel. This attack by Hamas is cowardly and depraved. We have expressed our full solidarity to @Netanyahu and will work with international partners in the next 24 hours to coordinate support. (2)

The scenes we have seen in Israel over the last 36 hours are truly horrifying. I spoke to Prime Minister @Netanyahu earlier today to assure him of the UK's steadfast support as Israel defends itself against these attacks. Terrorism will not prevail. (with a video statement) (3)

**UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak**

## Joint Statement by the leaders of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America

Today, we — President Macron of France, Chancellor Scholz of Germany, Prime Minister Meloni of Italy, Prime Minister Sunak of the United Kingdom, and President Biden of the United States — express our steadfast and united support to the State of Israel, and our unequivocal condemnation of Hamas and its appalling acts of terrorism. We make clear that the terrorist actions of Hamas have no justification, no legitimacy, and must be universally condemned. There is never any justification for terrorism. In recent days, the world has watched in horror as Hamas terrorists massacred families in their homes, slaughtered over 200 young people enjoying a music festival, and kidnapped elderly women, children, and entire families, who are now being held as hostages. Our countries will support Israel in its efforts to defend itself and its people against such atrocities. We further emphasise that this is not a moment for any party hostile to Israel to exploit these attacks to seek advantage. All of us recognise the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and support equal measures of justice and freedom for Israelis and Palestinians alike. But make no mistake: Hamas does not represent those aspirations, and it offers nothing for the Palestinian people

other than more terror and bloodshed. Over the coming days, we will remain united and coordinated, together as allies, and as common friends of Israel, to ensure Israel is able to defend itself, and to ultimately set the conditions for a peaceful and integrated Middle East region.

## United Nations

It is time to end the vicious circle of bloodshed, hatred, and polarisation in the Middle East. Israel must see its legitimate needs for security materialized, and Palestinians must see a clear perspective for the establishment of their own state realized. I recognise the legitimate grievances of the Palestinian people. But nothing can justify acts of terror and the killing, maiming, and abduction of civilians. I reiterate my call to immediately cease these attacks & release all hostages. While I recognise Israel's legitimate security concerns, I also remind Israel that military operations must be conducted in strict accordance with international humanitarian law. Civilians must be respected and protected at all times. Civilian infrastructure must never be a target.

**UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres**

## Türkiye

We are deeply concerned about the violence and tension that occurred in Israel and Palestine today (October 7). We attach high importance to the restoration of calm in the region as soon as possible and strongly condemn the loss of civilian lives. We underline that acts of violence and associated escalations will not benefit anyone, and call on the parties to act with restraint and avoid impulsive steps. As Türkiye, we are always ready to contribute to the best of our ability to ensure that these developments can be taken under control before they escalate further and spread to a wider area. In this regard, we continue our intensive contact with the relevant parties. These sad developments once again show the importance of the two-state solution vision. We call on the parties to renounce the use of force and work for a lasting solution in line with this vision without further delay.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

The problem in the region cannot be solved by constantly harassing the Palestinian people, disregarding the safety of life and property, seizing their homes and lands, destroying their infrastructure, and preventing their development. Such an approach will only lead to increased conflicts caused by deepening unrest, and constant bloodshed

on both sides, and ultimately the search for peace will always end in disappointment. Israel's approach, which disregards the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, also threatens the security of its own people, as seen in the latest incident. Just as we are against the oppression, cruelty, extrajudicial killings, and threats to life and property imposed on Palestinians by Israeli security forces and illegal settlers, we are also against random actions against Israeli civilians. The destruction of Gaza by disproportionate air and ground attacks, the bombing of mosques, and the deaths of innocent children, women, elderly, and civilians are completely unacceptable. If similar scenes have occurred in the actions against Israeli cities, we definitely do not approve of them. We ask the Israeli administration to stop its bombardments against Palestinian lands, especially Gaza, and the Palestinians to stop their harassment of civilian settlements in Israel. This moderate step will also open the door to peace. This is the day to act not impulsively, but with state reason, coolness, and human conscience. I would like to state that, as Türkiye, we are ready for all kinds of mediation, including prisoner exchange, if the parties request it. We are also making the necessary preparations for the supply of humanitarian aid materials that the people of Gaza will need. Today, I had very productive telephone conversations with the President of Palestine, Mr Abbas, and the President of Israel, Mr Herzog. Again today, we met with the Emir of Qatar, Mr Sheikh Tamim, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Mr Mikati, and the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mr Anwar Ibrahim, and discussed how we can stop the bloodshed. We will hopefully continue to increase our diplomatic contacts and will make every effort to end the conflicts and restore calm as soon as possible.

**President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**

## Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is closely following the developments of the unprecedented situation between a number of Palestinian factions and the Israeli occupation forces, which has resulted in a high level of violence on several fronts there. The Kingdom calls for an immediate halt to the escalation between the two sides, the protection of civilians, and restraint. The Kingdom recalls its repeated warnings of the dangers of the explosion of the situation as a result of the continuation of the occupation, the deprivation of the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights, and the repetition of systematic provocations against its sanctities. The Kingdom renews the call of the international community to assume its responsibilities and activate a credible peace process that leads to the two-

state solution to achieve security and peace in the region and protect civilians.

### **Qatar**

The State of Qatar expresses its deep concern over the developments in [the] Gaza Strip and calls on all parties to de-escalate and exercise maximum restraint. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs holds Israel solely responsible for the ongoing escalation due to its ongoing violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, the latest of which was the repeated incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of the Israeli police. The Ministry stresses the need for the international community to act [urgently] to compel Israel to stop its flagrant violations of international law, respect the resolutions of international legitimacy and the historical rights of the Palestinian people, and to prevent these events from being used as a pretext to ignite a new asymmetric war against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterates the firm position of the State of Qatar regarding the justice of the Palestinian cause, and the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, and to establish their independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

## **Conclusion**

The Israel-Palestine conflict, a protracted and multifaceted struggle, has witnessed the involvement of various stakeholders across different epochs. At its core, it is characterized by systematic colonial practices of Israel seeking to displace the indigenous Palestinian population, which has given rise to a resilient spirit of resistance. In essence, the recent events, commencing with the Hamas attacks on October 7th and Israel's onslaught on Gaza, notable for its disproportionate use of force against civilians and deliberate targeting of hospitals, public buildings, and civil residential areas, are events that find their roots in the extensive historical backdrop of the conflict. This info pack delved into the conflict's historical trajectory and its contemporary status, offering a multidimensional panorama that encompasses the Zionist narrative and the traditional Palestinian narrative, thereby underscoring the profound and enduring nature of this issue.





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