

FACTS ABOUT
ISRAEL

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ISRAEL

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THE QUEST
FOR PEACE

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THE QUEST
FOR PEACE

HISTORY



From before Israel's independence and through this day, Israelis have yearned for peace. For decades, much of the Arab world has not reciprocated Israel's desire for peace, and has refused to acknowledge the Jewish people's rights or history in their homeland, the Land of Israel. Yet there is hope; after years of Egyptian and Jordanian hostility toward Israel, peace indeed prevailed between Israel and Egypt in 1979, and Israel and Jordan in 1994. Indeed, these tremendous milestones bring the

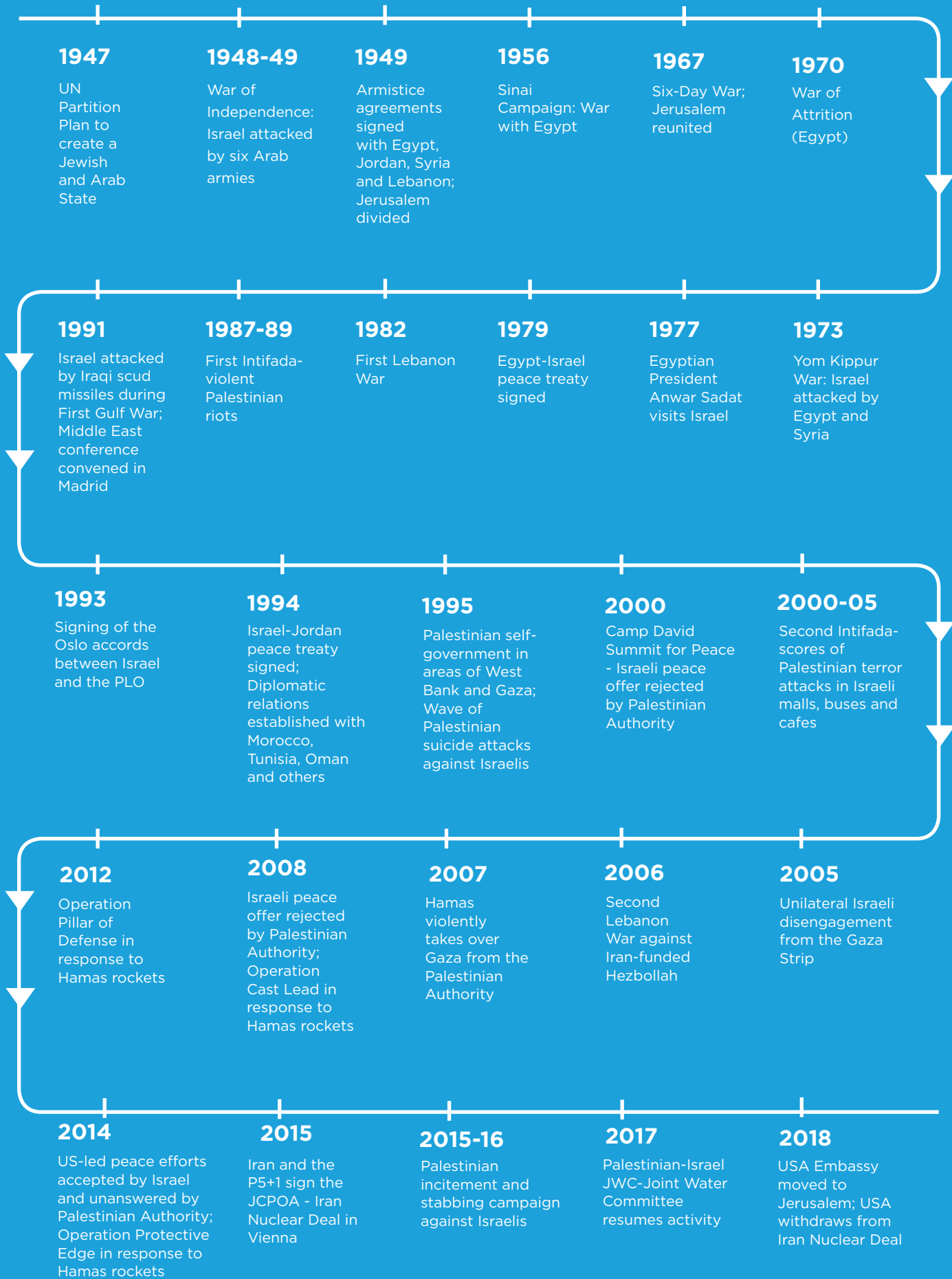
hope for achieving peace between Israelis, Palestinians, and the rest of the Arab and Muslim world.

Overcoming hostilities and achieving peace always requires difficult compromises, mutual recognition of rights, and a genuine desire from all parties to build a better future. From the 1947 UN Partition Plan, to the 2000 Camp David proposal, to the 2008 peace plan and through this day, Israel has again and again extended its hand in peace. The sections that follow offer a brief overview and history of Israel's peacemaking efforts.



Prime Minister Menachem Begin (R) and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat (L)

Key Events in the Conflict and Peace-Building Efforts



EARLY PEACE EFFORTS

On July 24, 1922, the League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations, officially recognized the “historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine,” and agreed to the “establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

The declaration of the League of Nations was preceded by the November 2, 1917 Balfour Declaration, in which, in consort with the international community, the British government expressed support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. The Balfour Declaration recognized the inalienable right of the Jews in their historic homeland, and also stated that, “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”

Respect for the Arabs of Palestine was a fundamental value in Zionism, and it came hand-in-hand with other Zionist ideals including democracy, women’s rights and freedom of expression.

Early attempts to promote peaceful coexistence in the region demonstrate that a different path could have been possible. For example, in 1919, Zionist leader Dr. Chaim Weizmann and Emir Feisal, son of the Sherif of Mecca, reached an agreement on the coexistence of Arabs and Jews in a future national homeland for the Jewish people.



Dr. Chaim Weizmann (L) and Emir Feisal (R)

The Arab Riots

The ancient Jewish community in the city of Hebron had lived in peace with its Arab neighbors for millennia, but in August 1929, following false rumors spread by some Arab leaders, Arab residents of Hebron led a massacre against the Jewish community, leaving 67 Jews dead. The Arab riots of 1929 and later the 1936-1939 upheavals, set a threatening precedence for Arab hostilities against Jews.



The Baltimore News front page headline on the Hebron Massacre of 1929



The Origins of the Name Palestine

Although the definite origins of the term Palestine have been debated, many scholars agree that it is likely to come from the term *Philistines* - the Aegean people that inhabited the land northeast of Egypt in antiquity. A derivative of the term, *Palaistin*, appears in Greek literature, and the Romans, after quelling the Jewish revolt, renamed the area *Palestina*, which was used to describe the geographic region for centuries. Before the establishment of the State of Israel, Jews, like Arabs residing in Palestine, were referred to as Palestinians by the international press.

Excerpts from Israel’s Declaration of Independence:

Yearning for Peace

“We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.”

Equal Citizenship

“We appeal...to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the building of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.”

INDEPENDENCE

On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly voted in favor of partitioning the British Mandate of Palestine into two states, one for Jews of Palestine and one for Arabs of Palestine. Although it meant forgoing the dream of a state on all of the historic Land of Israel, the Jews embraced the partition plan with overwhelming joy and with it, the idea of coexistence.

On the other hand, the Arab leadership, both within Palestine and in the rest of the Arab world, rejected the proposal and intensified attacks against their Jewish neighbors.

On May 14, 1948, hours before the British Mandate in Palestine would expire, Israel declared independence and the modern Jewish state was established. Immediately after,

Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia declared war on Israel, vowing to destroy the Jewish state.

The Arab armies invaded Israel from all sides, and fierce fighting ensued as the poorly-equipped Israel Defense Forces (IDF) struggled to fight back. Against all odds, Israel survived the invasion. The war, which lasted over 15 months and claimed the lives of one percent of the Jewish population, ended with a series of armistices in 1949, signed in Rhodes, Greece, with neighboring countries. After the war, Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip, while Jordan annexed the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Jerusalem became a divided city, with the Israeli and Jordanian sides separated by a wall and fences. Jordanian forces desecrated Jewish holy sites, destroyed synagogues and ancient Jewish cemeteries, and denied Jews access to the Western Wall and to the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Why wasn't a Palestinian state established in 1948?

The Palestinians have had many opportunities for establishing a state. In 1947 the Palestinian leadership and surrounding Arab nations rejected the UN partition plan which would have created a Palestinian Arab state, and instead chose to go to war. Between 1949-1967, Jordan and Egypt controlled the West Bank and Gaza Strip respectively; during that time, Arab leaders could have established a Palestinian state.



Refugees

The 1948 Arab-Israeli War sparked a population exchange of Jews and Arabs, just as many other population exchanges were occurring around the world at the time.

From 1948 onwards, some 800,000 Jews were violently expelled from the Arab lands in which they had lived for centuries – including Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Egypt and across North Africa. Destitute, these Jewish refugees were quickly absorbed as citizens of Israel. Around the same time, some 720,000 Palestinian Arabs were expelled or left – at the urging of the Arab leaders who promised to rapidly destroy Israel. Most relocated to neighbouring Arab countries, expecting to return after the promised Arab victory.

After the war, many of these Palestinian Arabs who left Israel remained refugees; to this day, Palestinians in Syria and Lebanon are denied citizenship and equal rights, and many are confined to camps. On the other hand, the 160,000 Palestinian Arabs that remained in Israel during the war were granted citizenship and equal rights by Israel, and today, Arabs in Israel number some 2 million and fill the highest echelons of society.

UN Partition Plan



The War of Independence (1948)



Armistice Lines (1949-1967)



OVERCOMING EXISTENTIAL THREATS

After Israel won its Independence, the nascent Jewish state faced hostile neighbors and persistent attacks. Throughout the 1950's, 60's and 70's, Arab terrorists known as the Fedayeen from Jordan, Gaza, Syria and Lebanon infiltrated and attacked Israel, killing and wounding 260 Israeli citizens in 1955 alone. In 1956, after nationalizing the Suez Canal, Egypt set up a blockade in the Straits of Tiran in violation of the 1949 armistice agreement, effectively cutting off Israel's only southern trade route to the Indian Ocean and Asia. On October 29, 1956, in coordinations with France and Great Britain, Israel confronted Egypt to end the blockade.

In 1967, Israel's neighbors mobilized for war again, with the clear intent of destroying Israel.

Syrian forces overlooking the Galilee from the Golan Heights shelled Israeli towns and villages with increasing frequency. Egypt expelled the UN Forces in the Sinai, amassed Egyptian battalions, and once again blocked Israel's supply route in the Red Sea - violating international law in what constituted an act of war.

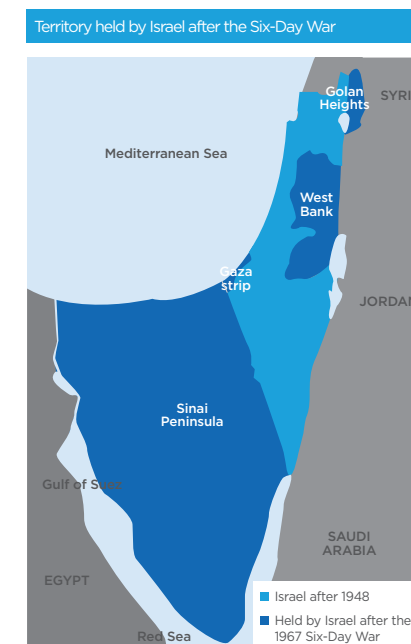
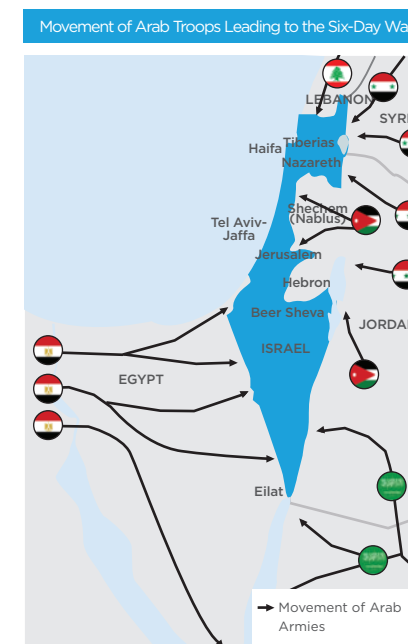
As Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Syria amassed forces on Israel's borders, Israel embarked on a diplomatic campaign to end the Egyptian blockade. When it became evident that diplomacy would not curtail the threats, and fearing for its existence, Israel launched a preemptive strike. The world was stunned when, in just six days, the IDF won an overwhelming victory, gaining control of the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. Most significantly, Israel reunited its capital Jerusalem, which had been divided and partially under Jordanian occupation since 1949; Israel restored free access to all holy sites, guaranteeing freedom of worship to all religions.

Rhetoric and Escalation to War in 1967

Arab leaders leading up to the 1967 War clearly expressed their intentions to destroy Israel: Syrian Defense Minister Hafez Assad stated that Syria's forces were "ready to explode the Zionist presence;" Egypt's President Nasser declared: "Our basic objective will be to destroy Israel." King Hussein of Jordan joined in with "all of the Arab armies now surround Israel" and Iraq's President Abdel Rahman Aref proclaimed: "Our goal is clear - to wipe Israel off the map."



Iconic photo of Israeli paratroopers at the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem after liberating it from Jordanian control in the 1967 Six-Day War, by David Rubinger



The Three Nos

The Khartoum Resolution of 1967, issued by the Arab League, called for continued belligerency against the State of Israel. It was issued following the Six-Day War and in the wake of Israeli calls for a peace agreement. It became infamous for containing a section outlining the "Three No's:" No peace with Israel, No recognition of Israel, No negotiations with Israel. Unfortunately, this intolerant approach by many Arab states continues to obstruct Israeli peace efforts to this day.



Palestinian Terrorism

The PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) was created in 1964, during the Arab League Summit in Cairo prior to any Israeli presence in the West Bank or Gaza Strip. The PLO's stated goal was the destruction of the State of Israel through armed struggle, and its subsequent massive terrorist campaigns and hijackings caused hundreds of Israeli casualties during the 1960s and 1970s. One of the most notorious of these attacks was the brutal murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972. These terrorists set dangerous precedents, as many current global terrorist groups today imitate the methods used by Palestinian terrorists.

FROM WAR TO PEACE

The overwhelming Israeli victory in the 1967 Six-Day War came as a shock to the surrounding Arab states and served as a major turning point in the conflict. Israel was no longer perceived as a weak nation, and its destruction at the hands of Arab states seemed unlikely. But, despite Israel's hopes for peace and calm, Egypt waged a War of Attrition on Israel's southern border from 1969 to 1970. Despite the ceasefire along the Suez Canal reached in 1970, Egyptian hostility towards Israel continued and, in 1973, on *Yom Kippur*, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise military attack against Israel. Although Israel successfully repelled the invading Arab forces, it sustained heavy losses during the Yom Kippur War.

Just four years later, in 1977, in a major, unprecedented turn of events, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat came to Israel and spoke at the Israeli Knesset (Parliament). Israel welcomed him with open arms, and the two nations entered into peace negotiations. In 1979, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and President Sadat signed the Camp David Accords; in accordance with the treaty, Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula, exchanging cease-fire lines for mutually recognized international boundaries. President Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin shared the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize for bringing peace to the two states. Despite some challenges,

Israel and Egypt have come to enjoy a stable, peaceful relationship characterized by economic, agricultural and security cooperation.



Iranian Terror

Following the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979), the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps established a radical Shi'ite army in Lebanon called Hezbollah, whose doctrine centers on the destruction of Israel and the use of terror to achieve its goals. To date, the internationally designated terrorist organization receives extensive training, weapons, financing and guidance from Iran. Iran, which openly declares its intent to destroy Israel, employed Hezbollah as a proxy to attack Israel during the 2006 Second Lebanon War, and continues to threaten Israel to this day.

Relations with Lebanon

During the 1970s, Fatah (PLO) terrorists took over Southern Lebanon and used it as a base from which to attack Israeli towns near the northern border. In June 1982, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched Operation Peace for Galilee, removing much of the PLO's organizational and military infrastructure from the area. For the next 18 years, Israel maintained a security zone along its northern border to safeguard its population against attacks. When Lebanese leader Bachir Gemayel proposed a non-aggression pact, Israel was keen to make the most of the opportunity. Despite Gemayel's assassination in September 1982, an agreement was signed in May 1983, terminating the conflict that had existed between the two countries for 25 years. Unfortunately, the succeeding Lebanese president, Amine Gemayel bowed to Syrian pressure and abrogated the peace treaty in March 1984.



Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir with Defense Minister Moshe Dayan on the Golan Heights during the Yom Kippur War

AN ERA OF HOPE

Despite the obstacles, the success of the Israel-Egypt peace fostered an era of hope and optimism regarding peace between Israel and its other Arab neighbours. Indeed, throughout the 1990's, Israel made diplomatic progress with several Arab states, as well as with the Palestinians.

In December 1988, violent Palestinian riots in the West Bank broke out in what became known as the First Intifada, and in 1991, Israel was bombed by Iraqi scud missiles during the First Gulf War. In the wake of the end of the Cold War, the October 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, held under American and Russian auspices, brought together representatives from Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians for bilateral negotiations and multilateral talks addressing regional concerns.

In September 1993, following months of intensive talks in Oslo, Norway, Israeli and Palestinian leaders agreed on the Declaration of Principles (DOP) which outlined self-government arrangements for the Palestinians in some areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Its signing was preceded by the PLO's official commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, renunciation of terrorism, and pledge to remove articles in its covenant which deny Israel's right to exist. In response, Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and removed its presence from specific areas that then came under the Palestinian Authority's jurisdiction.

The agreements signed by Israel and the Palestinians resulted in about 90% of the Palestinian population in the West Bank coming under a self-governing Palestinian Authority (PA).

In another major breakthrough,

Israel signed a peace treaty with Jordan in 1994, and gradually established diplomatic relations with several Arab states,

including Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Oman and Qatar. Most of these relations however were severed due to Palestinian pressure in October 2000.

On November 4, 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated at a peace rally, shocking the nation.

Water as a Bridge for Peace

As part of the Oslo II Accords signed in 1995, Israel and the Palestinian Authority created the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee (JWC), whose purpose is to manage water issues in the West Bank. From about 2011 - 2016, the Palestinian Authority halted JWC activities for political reasons, much to the detriment of both Palestinians and Israelis. After the long hiatus, in January 2017, Israel and the Palestinian Authority signed an agreement to reconvene the JWC. This agreement shows that it is possible to reach understandings when dealing practically and pragmatically with issues of mutual concern.



Former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (R) and former Foreign Minister Shimon Peres (L) receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, which they received together with former PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat

Peace with Jordan

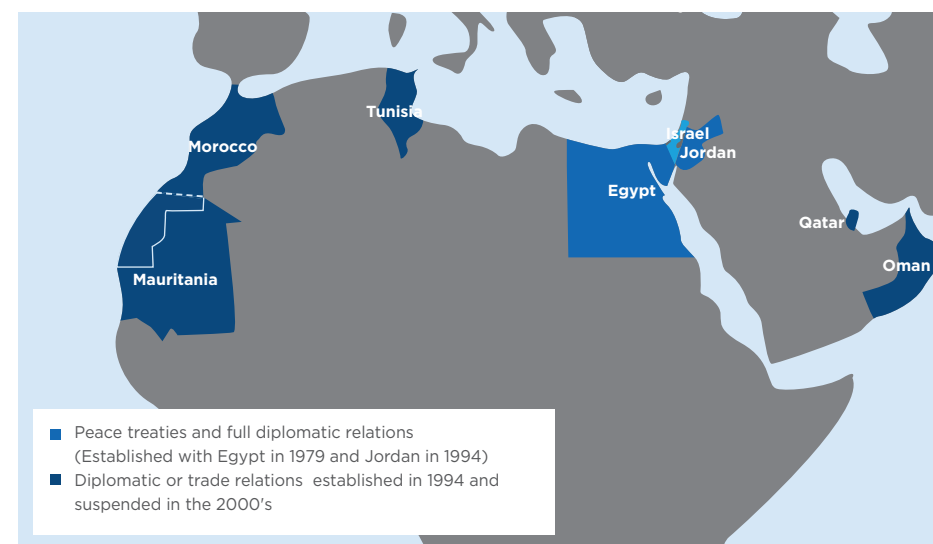
The Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty signed in October 1994 heralded an era of stability, as the two countries developed strong diplomatic relations, characterized by cooperation in security and the economic, agricultural, and tourism sectors. The economic arena in particular has seen success, as Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ) in Jordan enjoy free trade within the trilateral US-Israel-Jordanian trade framework.



Did You Know?

As an integral part of the Madrid Conference in 1991, 36 countries and international organizations held multilateral talks focused on long-term regional development and security in the Middle East and North Africa. Five working groups were established to address different areas of common regional concern: environment; arms control and regional security; refugees; water; and economic development. In recent years, most of the multilateral activities have been frozen by Arab parties. However, several regional projects continue to develop, particularly in the areas of water and environmental protection.

Diplomatic Breakthroughs with the Arab world



OBSTACLES TO PEACE

Following the Oslo Accords, Palestinian terrorism against Israel escalated. Suicide bombing attacks, carried out by the Palestinian terrorist organization Hamas as well as Fatah and other groups at the turn of the millennium, derailed the peace talks.

In July of 2000, in an effort to resolve the conflict, US President Bill Clinton invited Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat to Camp David for intensive negotiations. There, Prime Minister Barak made a far-reaching proposal for a Palestinian state in the hope of reaching a peace agreement.

Arafat flatly refused the proposal, without presenting a single alternative.

He abandoned the talks altogether and launched an unprecedented wave of Palestinian violence against Israel known as the Second Intifada. In the absence of any land barrier, Palestinian terrorists were able to cross easily from the West Bank into Israeli towns, where they carried out murderous suicide bombings against civilians.

Between 2000 and 2005, 1,100 Israelis were murdered, and 8,000 were wounded. Almost every family in Israel knows a relative, friend, co-worker or classmate who was murdered or wounded during the wave of suicide bombings that occurred during this horrific time.

In August 2005 Israel withdrew unilaterally from the Gaza Strip, handing over to the Palestinian Authority valuable infrastructure in the hope that Gaza would become a cornerstone of Palestinian state-building and pave the way to peace. The withdrawal uprooted thousands of Israelis from their homes.

But instead, Israel found itself under a fresh onslaught. After Israel's withdrawal, in June 2007, Hamas, an internationally designated Islamist terror organization, violently took over Gaza from the Palestinian Authority, assassinating rivals and oppressing the local population. Since then, Hamas has launched more than 12,000 rockets into Israel, provoking three military confrontations with Israel in 2008, 2012 and 2014.

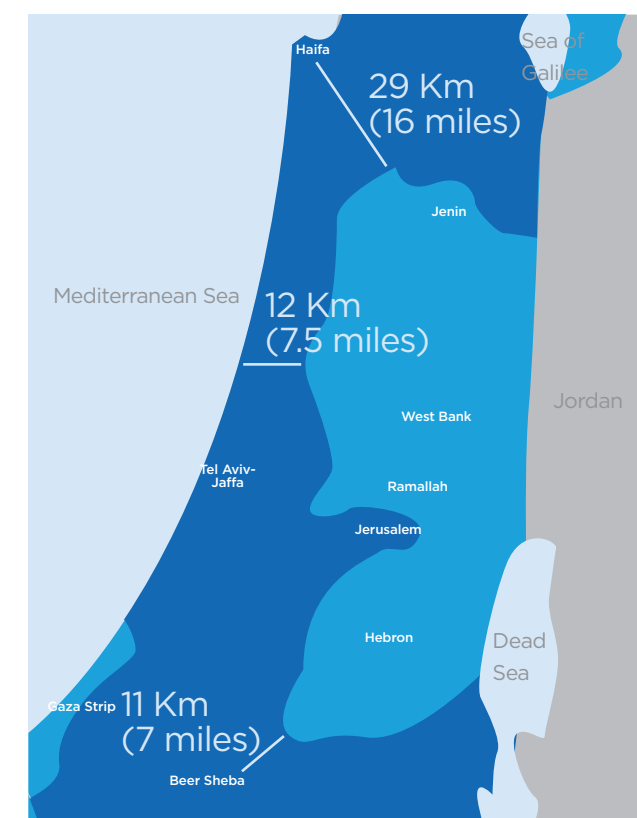
In 2008, Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered the Palestinians yet another far-reaching peace proposal, which was once again refused by Palestinian Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. In 2013-2014, a new series of talks lead by US Secretary of State John Kerry ended when the Palestinians walked out and tried, in vain, to form a unity government with the terrorist group Hamas. In recent years, Palestinian leaders have sought to isolate and pressure Israel through multilateral forums, instead of meeting with Israeli counterparts for direct bilateral negotiations without preconditions. Today, Israel continues to call for peace talks without preconditions.

Security Barrier

From September 2000 to mid-2005, Palestinian terrorists including suicide bombers killed more than 1,100 Israelis and wounded thousands of others in attacks on cafes, restaurants, shopping malls and other public areas. After other options failed to stop this deadly onslaught, Israel was forced to erect a physical barrier. This preventative measure has proved itself in stopping terrorists from entering Israel and has saved countless lives.

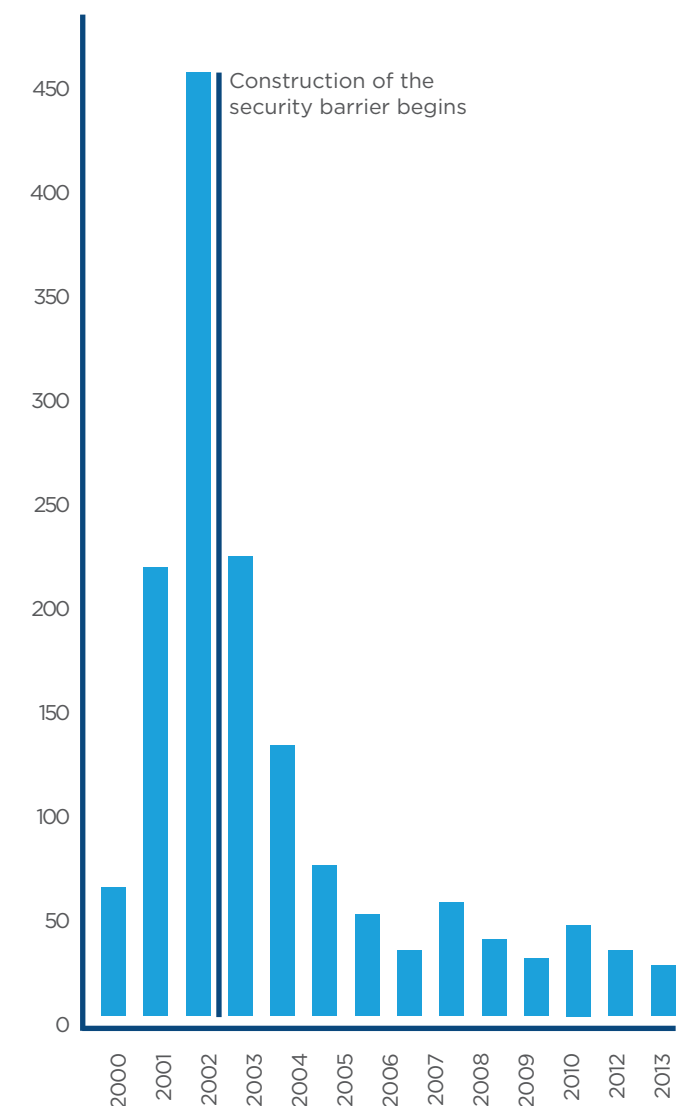


Israel's Vulnerability



Victims of Terror

Victims of Palestinians terror before and after construction of the security barrier in 2002



"The Palestinians had walked away from a chance for a Palestinian state."

- Condoleezza Rice, former US Secretary of State, 2007

TERRORISM

Over the past decades, radical Islamic terrorism has plagued much of the world, from Europe to North America, from Asia to Africa. Israel has also coped with violence and terrorism over the past century.

Today, terrorism is the main expression of Palestinian rejection of Israel, and is the major obstacle to peace.

Unfortunately, Palestinian leaders have steadily rejected win-win compromises. While some Arab voices sought peace, many fanned the flames of hatred and antisemitism, encouraging violence, claiming exclusive rights to the land, and even calling for the ethnic cleansing of Jews from Israel.

Leaders of Hamas, as well as many in the Palestinian Authority (PA), openly declare their will to take over the entirety of Israel to establish a Palestinian State - not next to, but instead of Israel. Today, the PA regularly diverts a significant portion of its budget, funded by international aid, to reward terrorists and their families with hefty payments.

Hamas' Ruthless Regime

At the center of Hamas' charter is the explicit aim to destroy the State of Israel. The organization has launched numerous terror campaigns against Israel, often employing the ruthless Human Shield tactic to cause maximum damage not only to Israelis, but to its own population as well. During the 2014 conflict, Hamas stored its weapons caches under hospitals, homes, mosques and schools in Gaza, and launched rockets in their immediate vicinity. Today, Hamas continues to divert millions of dollars of aid to its terror campaigns, using funds meant for Gazan civilians to build attacks tunnels leading into Israeli towns near the Gaza border.

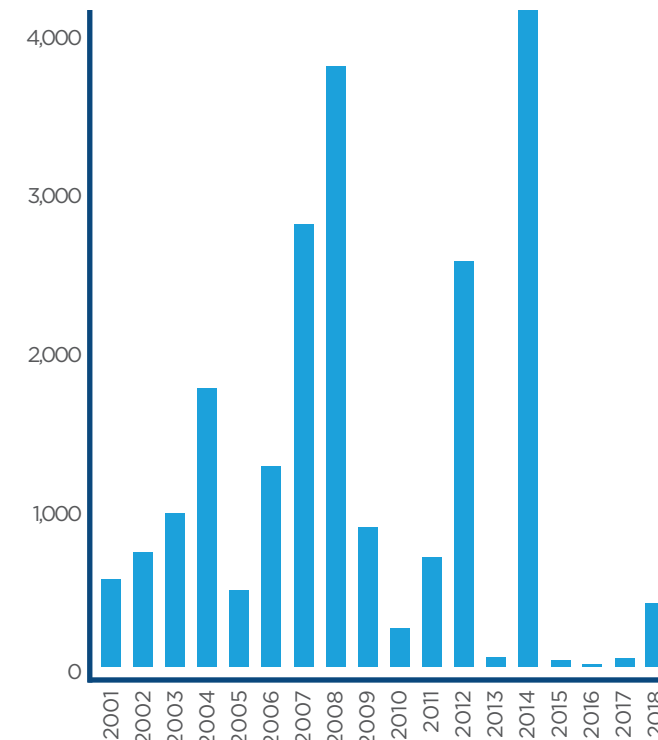
Social Media: Tweeting to Kill

Social media in recent years has emerged as a platform for Palestinian hate speech, incitement and calls for violence against Jews. Violent content has skyrocketed on the Facebook and Twitter accounts of Palestinian organizations and influencers, many of which praise violent attacks and encourage yet more violence. Would-be terrorists are learning through videos and graphics how to stab Jews. Palestinian social media channels have been flooded with hashtags including "Poison the knife before you stab" and "Slaughtering the Jews."



An image circulating Palestinian social media accounts

Rockets Launched at Israel from Gaza



Palestinian Government Calls to Violence

Behind not-so-closed doors, the Palestinian Authority repeatedly promotes messages of hate, although it vehemently denies doing so in international arenas. From official television programs that feature children repeating antisemitic vitriol like "Jews are the most evil of creations, barbaric monkeys," to Facebook posts by members of the PA celebrating terrorist attacks and praising Adolf Hitler, to PA textbooks that erase Israel entirely from the map - the PA has routinely encouraged violence over peace. Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry recognized the hypocrisy of the PA, stating in 2015 on an interview on NPR that PA President Abbas "needs to not engage in some of the incitement that his voice has sometimes been heard to encourage."



Masked gunmen from the Qassam brigade, the military wing of Hamas

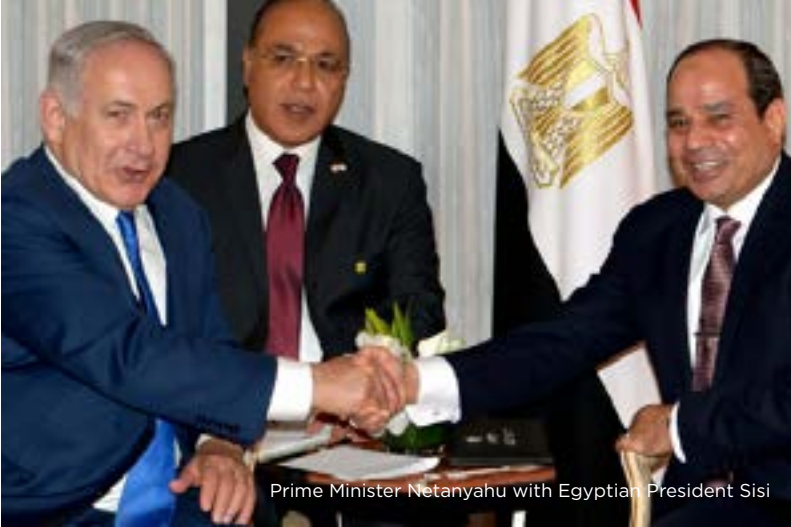
YEARNING FOR PEACE

Israel continues to seek peace with all the Arab and Muslim world and to promote coexistence and fruitful cooperation with all its neighbours. Historic peace was indeed achieved between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Jordan, as well as diplomatic and civil relations with other nations; there is hope that peace too will be achieved between Israelis and Palestinians, and the rest of the Arab and Muslim world.

In the decades since its independence, Israel has extended a hand of peace and offered one far-reaching proposal after another, which, unfortunately, were rejected by Palestinian leaders. Today, Israel hopes to renew direct bilateral negotiations, without preconditions, with its Palestinian neighbors, and to find a mutually agreed-upon and lasting resolution.

The day when the Palestinian leadership chooses peace over rejection will be the day when the two nations begin to enjoy an unprecedented era of stability and prosperity.

Israelis hope that the flames of hate that are still highly prevalent in Palestinian society will be replaced with a yearning for peace. In Israel, the overwhelming majority of the Israeli public shares a desire for peace, expressing this hope through art, music, prayer and in the education system. Indeed, the concept of peace is deeply ingrained in the Jewish tradition. All the daily Jewish prayers include a blessing for peace, and the Jewish sages taught, "Great is peace, for all other blessings are included in it."



Prime Minister Netanyahu with Egyptian President Sisi



Prime Minister Netanyahu with Jordanian King Abdullah



Prime Minister Netanyahu with Palestinian President Abbas



Prime Minister Netanyahu with the Sultan of Oman Qaboos

Arava Institute for Environmental Studies

Bringing together young Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, and other international students, the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies in Israel's southern Negev desert advances cross-border research and cooperation in the fields of water management, sustainable agriculture, ecological research, renewable energy, and sustainable development, while promoting coexistence and peace-building initiatives in the region.



The Peres Center for Peace and Innovation

Working to promote Shimon Peres' vision of a prosperous and peaceful region, the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation develops vibrant programs to unite people from the Middle East - regardless of religion, ethnicity, or background. Programs in sports, business innovation, leadership, entrepreneurship, medicine and healthcare cultivate collaboration between Israel and its neighbors, and among all layers of Israeli society.

Song of Peace

Excerpts from poem by Yaakov Rotbli written in 1969 and sung today at Israeli peace rallies, ceremonies, schools, and other events

Lift your eyes with hope,
Not through the rifle sights.
Sing a song for love,
And not for wars.
Don't say the day will come,
Bring the day because it is not a dream,
And within all the city's squares,
Cheer only peace.