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**Israel** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en) or [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en); [Template:Lang-he](/wiki/Template:Lang-he) [Template:Transl](/wiki/Template:Transl); [Template:Lang-ar](/wiki/Template:Lang-ar) [Template:Transl](/wiki/Template:Transl)), officially the **State of Israel** ([Template:Lang-he](/wiki/Template:Lang-he) [Template:Transl](/wiki/Template:Transl) [Template:IPA-he](/wiki/Template:IPA-he); [Template:Lang-ar](/wiki/Template:Lang-ar) [Template:Transl](/wiki/Template:Transl) [Template:IPA-ar](/wiki/Template:IPA-ar)), is a country in the [Middle East](/wiki/Middle_East), on the southeastern shore of the [Mediterranean Sea](/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea) and the northern shore of the [Red Sea](/wiki/Red_Sea). It has land borders with [Lebanon](/wiki/Lebanon) to the north, [Syria](/wiki/Syria) to the northeast, [Jordan](/wiki/Jordan) on the east, the [Palestinian territories](/wiki/Palestinian_territories) of the [West Bank](/wiki/West_Bank) and [Gaza Strip](/wiki/Gaza_Strip)[[1]](#cite_note-1) to the east and west, respectively, and [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt) to the southwest. It contains geographically diverse features within its relatively small area.[[2]](#cite_note-2)[[3]](#cite_note-3) Israel's [financial center](/wiki/Financial_centre) and [technology hub](/wiki/List_of_technology_centers) is [Tel Aviv](/wiki/Tel_Aviv)[[4]](#cite_note-4) while [Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem) is the proclaimed capital, although Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem is [internationally unrecognized](/wiki/Positions_on_Jerusalem).<ref group=note>The [Jerusalem Law](/wiki/Jerusalem_Law) states that "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel" and the city serves as the seat of the government, home to the President's residence, government offices, supreme court, and [parliament](/wiki/Knesset). [United Nations Security Council Resolution 478](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_478) (20 August 1980; 14–0, U.S. abstaining) declared the Jerusalem Law "null and void" and called on member states to withdraw their diplomatic missions from Jerusalem. The United Nations and all member nations refuse to accept the Jerusalem Law (see [Template:Harvard citation no brackets](/wiki/Template:Harvard_citation_no_brackets)) and maintain their embassies in other cities such as Tel Aviv, [Ramat Gan](/wiki/Ramat_Gan), and [Herzliya](/wiki/Herzliya) (see the [CIA Factbook](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/is.html) and [Map of Israel](http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/israel.pdf)). The U.S. Congress subsequently adopted the [Jerusalem Embassy Act](/wiki/Jerusalem_Embassy_Act), which said that the U.S. embassy should be relocated to Jerusalem and that it should be recognized as the capital of Israel. However, the US Justice Department Office of Legal Counsel concluded that the provisions of the act "invade exclusive presidential authorities in the field of foreign affairs and are unconstitutional". Since passage of the act, all Presidents serving in office have determined that moving forward with the relocation would be detrimental to U.S. national security concerns and opted to issue waivers suspending any action on this front. The [Palestinian Authority](/wiki/Palestinian_Authority) sees [East Jerusalem](/wiki/East_Jerusalem) as the capital of a [future Palestinian state](/wiki/Proposals_for_a_Palestinian_state). The city's final status awaits future negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (see ["Negotiating Jerusalem," Palestine–Israel Journal](http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=460)). See [Positions on Jerusalem](/wiki/Positions_on_Jerusalem) for more information.</ref>[[5]](#cite_note-5)[[6]](#cite_note-6) On 29 November 1947, the [United Nations General Assembly](/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly) adopted a [Partition Plan](/wiki/United_Nations_Partition_Plan_for_Palestine) for [Mandatory Palestine](/wiki/Mandatory_Palestine). This specified borders for new Arab and Jewish states and an area of [Jerusalem](/wiki/Corpus_separatum_(Jerusalem)) which was to be administered by the UN under an international regime.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[[8]](#cite_note-8) The end of the [British Mandate for Palestine](/wiki/British_Mandate_for_Palestine_(legal_instrument)) was set for midnight on 14 May 1948. That day, [David Ben-Gurion](/wiki/David_Ben-Gurion), the executive head of the [Zionist Organization](/wiki/World_Zionist_Organization) and president of the [Jewish Agency for Palestine](/wiki/Jewish_Agency_for_Israel), [declared](/wiki/Israeli_Declaration_of_Independence) "the establishment of a [Jewish state](/wiki/Jewish_state) in [Eretz Israel](/wiki/Eretz_Israel), to be known as the State of Israel", which would start to function from the termination of the mandate.[[9]](#cite_note-9)[[10]](#cite_note-10)[[11]](#cite_note-11) The borders of the new state were not specified in the declaration.[[8]](#cite_note-8)[[12]](#cite_note-12) Neighboring Arab armies [invaded](/wiki/1948_Arab–Israeli_War) the former British mandate on the next day and fought the Israeli forces.[[13]](#cite_note-13)[[14]](#cite_note-14) Israel has since fought [several wars](/wiki/Arab–Israeli_conflict) with neighboring Arab states,<ref name=RoutledgeAtlas>[Template:Harvnb](/wiki/Template:Harvnb)</ref> in the course of which it has [occupied](/wiki/Israeli-occupied_territories) the West Bank, [Sinai Peninsula](/wiki/Sinai_Peninsula) (1956–57, 1967–82), part of [Southern Lebanon](/wiki/Southern_Lebanon) (1982–2000), Gaza Strip (1967–2005; still considered occupied after [2005 disengagement](/wiki/Israeli_disengagement_from_Gaza)) and the [Golan Heights](/wiki/Golan_Heights). It extended its laws to the Golan Heights and [East Jerusalem](/wiki/East_Jerusalem), but not the West Bank.[[15]](#cite_note-15)[[16]](#cite_note-16)[[17]](#cite_note-17)[[18]](#cite_note-18) [Efforts](/wiki/Israeli–Palestinian_peace_process) to resolve the [Israeli–Palestinian conflict](/wiki/Israeli–Palestinian_conflict) have not resulted in peace. However, peace treaties between Israel and both [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt–Israel_Peace_Treaty) and [Jordan](/wiki/Israel–Jordan_peace_treaty) have successfully been signed. Israel's occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem is the world's [longest military occupation](/wiki/List_of_military_occupations) in modern times.[Template:Refn](/wiki/Template:Refn)[[19]](#cite_note-19) The [population of Israel](/wiki/Demographics_of_Israel), as defined by the [Israel Central Bureau of Statistics](/wiki/Israel_Central_Bureau_of_Statistics), was estimated in 2016 to be 8,502,900 people. It is the world's only [Jewish-majority state](/wiki/Jewish_population_by_country), with 6,363,700 citizens, or 74.9%, being designated as [Jewish](/wiki/Israeli_Jews). The country's second largest group of citizens are denoted as [Arabs](/wiki/Arab_citizens_of_Israel), numbering 1,766,500 people (including the Druze and most East Jerusalem Arabs).[[20]](#cite_note-20)[[21]](#cite_note-21) The great majority of Israeli Arabs are Sunni [Muslims](/wiki/Islam_in_Israel), including significant numbers of [semi-settled](/wiki/Sedentism) [Negev Bedouins](/wiki/Negev_Bedouin); the rest are [Christians](/wiki/Christianity_in_Israel) and [Druze](/wiki/Druze_in_Israel). Other minorities include [Arameans](/wiki/Arameans_in_Israel), [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrians_in_Israel), [Samaritans](/wiki/Samaritans), [Armenians](/wiki/Armenians_in_Israel), [Circassians](/wiki/Circassians_in_Israel), [Dom people](/wiki/Dom_people), [Maronites](/wiki/Maronites_in_Israel) and [Vietnamese](/wiki/Vietnamese_people_in_Israel). Israel also hosts a significant population of non-citizen foreign workers and asylum seekers from Africa and Asia,[[22]](#cite_note-22) including [Black Hebrew Israelites](/wiki/African_Hebrew_Israelites_of_Jerusalem) and [illegal migrants from Sudan, Eritrea](/wiki/Illegal_immigration_from_Africa_to_Israel) and other [Sub-Saharan Africans](/wiki/Sub-Saharan_Africa).[[23]](#cite_note-23) In its [Basic Laws](/wiki/Basic_Laws_of_Israel), Israel defines itself as a [Jewish and democratic state](/wiki/Jewish_and_democratic_state).<ref name=freedomhouse2008>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Israel is a [representative democracy](/wiki/Representative_democracy)[[24]](#cite_note-24) with a parliamentary system, [proportional representation](/wiki/Proportional_representation) and [universal suffrage](/wiki/Universal_suffrage).[[25]](#cite_note-25)[[26]](#cite_note-26) The [prime minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Israel) serves as head of government and the [Knesset](/wiki/Knesset) serves as the [legislature](/wiki/Legislature). Israel is a [developed country](/wiki/Developed_country) and an [OECD](/wiki/Organisation_for_Economic_Co-operation_and_Development) member,[[27]](#cite_note-27) with the [35th-largest](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)) [economy](/wiki/Economy_of_Israel) in the world by nominal gross domestic product [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of). The country benefits from a highly skilled workforce and is among the most educated countries in the world with the one of the highest percentage of its citizens holding a tertiary education degree.[[28]](#cite_note-28)[[29]](#cite_note-29) The country has the [highest standard of living in the Middle East](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index#Middle_East_and_North_Africa) and the [fourth highest in Asia](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index#Asia),[[30]](#cite_note-30)[[31]](#cite_note-31)[[32]](#cite_note-32) and has [one of the highest life expectancies](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_life_expectancy) in the world.[[33]](#cite_note-33)

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[thumb|upright|The](/wiki/File:Merneptah_Israel_Stele_Cairo.JPG) [Merneptah Stele](/wiki/Merneptah_Stele) (13th century BC). The majority of [biblical archeologists](/wiki/Biblical_Archeology) translate a set of hieroglyphs as "Israel," representing the first instance of the name in the record.

Upon independence in 1948, the country formally adopted the name "State of Israel" (*Medinat Yisrael*) after other proposed historical and religious names including *Eretz Israel* ("the [Land of Israel](/wiki/Land_of_Israel)"), [Zion](/wiki/Zion), and [Judea](/wiki/Judea), were considered and rejected.[[34]](#cite_note-34) In the early weeks of independence, the government chose the term "Israeli" to denote a citizen of Israel, with the formal announcement made by [Minister of Foreign Affairs](/wiki/Foreign_Affairs_Minister_of_Israel) [Moshe Sharett](/wiki/Moshe_Sharett).[[35]](#cite_note-35) The names [Land of Israel](/wiki/Land_of_Israel) and [Children of Israel](/wiki/Children_of_Israel) have historically been used to refer to the biblical [Kingdom of Israel](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Israel_(united_monarchy)) and the entire Jewish people respectively.<ref name=levine>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> The [name "Israel"](/wiki/Israel_(name)) ([Standard](/wiki/Modern_Hebrew) *Yisraʾel*, *Isrāʾīl*; [Septuagint](/wiki/Septuagint) [Template:Lang-el](/wiki/Template:Lang-el) *Israēl*; 'El(God) persists/rules' though, after Hosea 12:4 often interpreted as "struggle with God"[[36]](#cite_note-36)[[37]](#cite_note-37)[[38]](#cite_note-38)[[39]](#cite_note-39)) in these phrases refers to the patriarch [Jacob](/wiki/Jacob) who, according to the [Hebrew Bible](/wiki/Hebrew_Bible), was given the name after he successfully wrestled with the angel of the Lord.[[40]](#cite_note-40) Jacob's twelve sons became the ancestors of the [Israelites](/wiki/Israelites), also known as the *Twelve Tribes of Israel* or *Children of Israel*. Jacob and his sons had lived in [Canaan](/wiki/Canaan) but were forced by famine to go into Egypt for four generations, lasting 430 years,[[41]](#cite_note-41) until [Moses](/wiki/Moses), a great-great grandson of Jacob,[[42]](#cite_note-42) led the Israelites back into Canaan during the "[Exodus](/wiki/The_Exodus)". The earliest known archaeological artifact to mention the word "Israel" is the [Merneptah Stele](/wiki/Merneptah_Stele) of [ancient Egypt](/wiki/Ancient_Egypt) (dated to the late 13th century BCE).[[43]](#cite_note-43) The area is also known as the [Holy Land](/wiki/Holy_Land), being holy for all [Abrahamic religions](/wiki/Abrahamic_religions) including Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the [Bahá'í Faith](/wiki/Bahá'í_Faith). From 1920, the whole region was known as [Palestine (under British Mandate)](/wiki/Mandatory_Palestine)[[note 1]](#cite_note-44) until the [Israeli Declaration of Independence](/wiki/Israeli_Declaration_of_Independence) of 1948.[[44]](#cite_note-45) Through the centuries, the territory was known by a variety of other names, including Judea, [Samaria](/wiki/Samaria), [Southern Syria](/wiki/Southern_Syria), [Syria Palaestina](/wiki/Syria_Palaestina), [Kingdom of Jerusalem](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Jerusalem), [Iudaea Province](/wiki/Iudaea_Province), [Coele-Syria](/wiki/Coele-Syria), [Djahy](/wiki/Djahy), and [Canaan](/wiki/Canaan).

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

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### Antiquity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [upright|thumb|left|Map of the Kingdom of Israel, 1020 BCE–930 BCE as imagined from the Bible narrative](/wiki/File:Kingdom_of_Israel_1020_map.svg)[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) The notion of the "[Land of Israel](/wiki/Land_of_Israel)", known in [Hebrew](/wiki/Hebrew) as *Eretz Yisrael*, has been important and sacred to the Jewish people since Biblical times. According to the [Torah](/wiki/Torah), God [promised the land](/wiki/Promised_Land) to the three [Patriarchs](/wiki/Patriarchs_(Bible)) of the Jewish people.[[45]](#cite_note-46)[[46]](#cite_note-47) On the basis of scripture, the period of the three Patriarchs has been placed somewhere in the early 2nd millennium BCE,[[47]](#cite_note-48) and the first [Kingdom of Israel](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Israel_(united_monarchy)) was established around the 11th century BCE. Subsequent [Israelite kingdoms and states](/wiki/History_of_ancient_Israel_and_Judah) ruled intermittently over the next four hundred years, and are known from various extra-biblical sources.[[48]](#cite_note-49)[[49]](#cite_note-50)[[50]](#cite_note-51)[[51]](#cite_note-52) The first record of the name Israel (as [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang)) occurs in the [Merneptah stele](/wiki/Merneptah_stele), erected for Egyptian Pharaoh [Merneptah](/wiki/Merneptah) c. 1209 BCE, "Israel is laid waste and his seed is not."[[52]](#cite_note-53)This "Israel" was a cultural and probably political entity of the central highlands, well enough established to be perceived by the Egyptians as a possible challenge to their [hegemony](/wiki/Hegemony), but an ethnic group rather than an organised state;[[53]](#cite_note-54)Ancestors of the Israelites may have included [Semites](/wiki/Semitic_people) native to [Canaan](/wiki/Canaan) and the [Sea Peoples](/wiki/Sea_Peoples).[[54]](#cite_note-55) McNutt says, "It is probably safe to assume that sometime during [Iron Age](/wiki/Iron_Age) a population began to identify itself as 'Israelite'", differentiating itself from the [Canaanites](/wiki/Canaanites) through such markers as the prohibition of intermarriage, an emphasis on family history and genealogy, and religion.[[55]](#cite_note-56) Villages had populations of up to 300 or 400,<ref name=mcnutt70>McNutt 1999, p. 70.[Template:Title?](/wiki/Template:Title?)</ref>[[56]](#cite_note-57) which lived by farming and herding, and were largely self-sufficient;[[57]](#cite_note-58) economic interchange was prevalent.[[58]](#cite_note-59) Writing was known and available for recording, even in small sites.[[59]](#cite_note-60) The archaeological evidence indicates a society of village-like centres, but with more limited resources and a small population.[[60]](#cite_note-61) Modern scholars see Israel arising peacefully and internally from existing people in the highlands of Canaan.[[61]](#cite_note-62) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:City_of_David_-_King_David's_Palace_IMG_5815.JPG) [Large Stone Structure](/wiki/Large_Stone_Structure), archaeological site of ancient Jerusalem Around 930 BCE, the kingdom split into a southern [Kingdom of Judah](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Judah) and a northern [Kingdom of Israel](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Israel_(Samaria)). From the middle of the 8th century BCE Israel came into increasing conflict with the expanding [neo-Assyrian empire](/wiki/Neo-Assyrian_empire). Under [Tiglath-Pileser III](/wiki/Tiglath-Pileser_III) it first split Israel's territory into several smaller units and then destroyed its capital, Samaria (722 BCE). An Israelite revolt (724–722 BCE) was crushed after the siege and capture of [Samaria](/wiki/Samaria) by the Assyrian king [Sargon II](/wiki/Sargon_II). Sargon's son, [Sennacherib](/wiki/Sennacherib), tried and failed to [conquer](/wiki/Sennacherib's_campaign_in_Judah) Judah. [Assyrian records](/wiki/Taylor_prism) say he leveled 46 walled cities and besieged Jerusalem, leaving after receiving extensive tribute.[[62]](#cite_note-63) In 586 BCE King [Nebuchadnezzar II](/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar_II) of [Babylon](/wiki/Babylon) [conquered](/wiki/Jewish–Babylonian_war) Judah. According to the Hebrew Bible, he destroyed [Solomon's Temple](/wiki/Solomon's_Temple) and [exiled](/wiki/Babylonian_captivity) the Jews to Babylon. The defeat was also recorded by the Babylonians[[63]](#cite_note-64)[[64]](#cite_note-65) (see the [Babylonian Chronicles](/wiki/Babylonian_Chronicles)). In 538 BCE, [Cyrus the Great](/wiki/Cyrus_(Bible)) of [Persia](/wiki/Persia) conquered Babylon and took over its empire. Cyrus issued a proclamation granting subjugated nations (including the people of Judah) religious freedom (for the original text, which corroborates the biblical narrative only in very broad terms, see the [Cyrus Cylinder](/wiki/Cyrus_Cylinder)). According to the Hebrew Bible 50,000 Judeans, led by [Zerubabel](/wiki/Zerubabel), returned to Judah and [rebuilt the temple](/wiki/Second_Temple_of_Jerusalem). A second group of 5,000, led by [Ezra](/wiki/Ezra) and [Nehemiah](/wiki/Nehemiah), returned to Judah in 456 BCE although non-Jews wrote to Cyrus to try to prevent their return.

### Classical period[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|upright=0.75|left|Portion of the](/wiki/File:Temple_Scroll.png) [Temple Scroll](/wiki/Temple_Scroll), one of the [Dead Sea Scrolls](/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls) written during the Second Temple period With successive [Persian rule](/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire), the region, divided between Syria-Coele province and later the autonomous [Yehud Medinata](/wiki/Yehud_Medinata), was gradually developing back into urban society, largely dominated by Judeans. The [Greek](/wiki/Hellenistic_Greece) conquests largely skipped the region without any resistance or interest. Incorporated into Ptolemaic and finally Seleucid Empires, the southern Levant was heavily [hellenized](/wiki/Hellenization), building the tensions between Judeans and Greeks. The conflict erupted in 167 BCE with the [Maccabean Revolt](/wiki/Maccabean_Revolt), which succeeded in establishing an independent [Hasmonean Kingdom](/wiki/Hasmonean_Kingdom) in Judah, which later expanded over much of modern Israel, as the Seleucids gradually lost control in the region.

[thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Israel-2013-Aerial_21-Masada.jpg)[Masada](/wiki/Masada) fortress, location of the [final battle](/wiki/Siege_of_Masada) in the [First Jewish–Roman War](/wiki/First_Jewish–Roman_War) The [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire) invaded the region in 63 BCE, first taking control of [Syria](/wiki/Syria), and then intervening in the Hasmonean civil war. The struggle between pro-Roman and pro-Parthian factions in Judea eventually led to the installation of [Herod the Great](/wiki/Herod_the_Great) and consolidation of the [Herodian Kingdom](/wiki/Herodian_Kingdom) as a vassal Judean state of Rome.

With the decline of Herodians, Judea, transformed into a Roman province, became the site of a violent struggle of [Jews](/wiki/Jews) against Greco-Romans, culminating in the [Jewish-Roman Wars](/wiki/Jewish-Roman_Wars), ending in wide-scale destruction, expulsions, and genocide. Jewish presence in the region significantly dwindled after the failure of the [Bar Kokhba revolt](/wiki/Bar_Kokhba_revolt) against the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire) in 132 CE.[[65]](#cite_note-66) Nevertheless, there was a continuous small Jewish presence and [Galilee](/wiki/Galilee) became its religious center.[[66]](#cite_note-67)[[67]](#cite_note-68) The [Mishnah](/wiki/Mishnah) and part of the [Talmud](/wiki/Jerusalem_Talmud), central Jewish texts, were composed during the 2nd to 4th centuries CE in Tiberias and Jerusalem.[[68]](#cite_note-69) The region came to be populated predominantly by Greco-Romans on the coast and Samaritans in the hill-country. Christianity was gradually evolving over Roman paganism, when the area stood under Byzantine rule. Through the 5th and 6th centuries, the dramatic events of the repeated [Samaritan revolts](/wiki/Samaritan_revolts) reshaped the land, with massive destruction to Byzantine Christian and Samaritan societies and a resulting decrease of the population. After the [Persian conquest](/wiki/Byzantine–Sasanian_War_of_602–628) and the installation of a short-lived [Jewish Commonwealth](/wiki/Jewish_revolt_against_Heraclius) in 614 CE, the [Byzantine Empire](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) reconquered the country in 628.

### Middle Ages and modern history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Ruins_of_the_Ancient_Synagogue_at_Bar'am.jpg)[Kfar Bar'am](/wiki/Kfar_Bar'am), an ancient Jewish village, abandoned some time between the 7th–13th centuries AD.[[69]](#cite_note-70) In 634–641 CE, the region, including Jerusalem, was [conquered](/wiki/Muslim_conquest_of_the_Levant) by the [Arabs](/wiki/Arabs) who had just recently adopted [Islam](/wiki/Islam). It remained under Muslim control for the next 1,300 years under various dynasties.[[70]](#cite_note-71) Control of the region transferred between the [Rashidun](/wiki/Rashidun) [Caliphs](/wiki/Caliph), [Umayyads](/wiki/Umayyad),[[70]](#cite_note-71) [Abbasids](/wiki/Abbasid_Caliphate),[[70]](#cite_note-71) Fatimids, Seljuks, [Crusaders](/wiki/Crusader_states), and Ayyubids throughout the next six centuries,[[70]](#cite_note-71) before the area was conquered in 1260 by the [Mamluk Sultanate](/wiki/Mamluk_Sultanate_(Cairo)).[[71]](#cite_note-72) [thumb|The 15th-century](/wiki/File:RoyLindmanAbuhav1.jpg) [Abuhav synagogue](/wiki/Abuhav_synagogue), established by Sephardic Jews in Safed.<ref name=JVL>[The Abuhav Synagogue](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/AbuhavSyn.html), Jewish Virtual Library.</ref> During the [siege of Jerusalem](/wiki/Siege_of_Jerusalem_(1099)) by the [First Crusade](/wiki/First_Crusade) in 1099, the Jewish inhabitants of the city fought side by side with the Fatimid garrison and the Muslim population who tried in vain to defend the city against the [Crusaders](/wiki/Crusaders). When the city fell, about 60,000 people were massacred, including 6,000 Jews seeking refuge in a synagogue.[[72]](#cite_note-73) At this time, a full thousand years after the fall of the Jewish state, there were Jewish communities all over the country. Fifty of them are known and include Jerusalem, [Tiberias](/wiki/Tiberias), [Ramleh](/wiki/Ramla), [Ashkelon](/wiki/Ashkelon), [Caesarea](/wiki/Caesarea), and [Gaza](/wiki/Gaza_City).[[73]](#cite_note-74) According to [Albert of Aachen](/wiki/Albert_of_Aachen), the Jewish residents of Haifa were the main fighting force of the city, and "mixed with Saracen [Fatimid] troops", they fought bravely for close to a month until forced into retreat by the Crusader fleet and land army.<ref name=634to1099>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref>[[74]](#cite_note-75) However, [Joshua Prawer](/wiki/Joshua_Prawer) expressed doubt over the story, noting that Albert did not attend the Crusades and that such a prominent role for the Jews is not mentioned by any other source.[[75]](#cite_note-76)[Template:Undue weight inline](/wiki/Template:Undue_weight_inline)

In 1165 [Maimonides](/wiki/Maimonides) visited Jerusalem and prayed on the Temple Mount, in the "great, holy house".[[76]](#cite_note-77) In 1141 the Spanish-Jewish poet [Yehuda Halevi](/wiki/Yehuda_Halevi) issued a call for Jews to migrate to the Land of Israel, a journey he undertook himself. In 1187 Sultan [Saladin](/wiki/Saladin), founder of the [Ayyubid dynasty](/wiki/Ayyubid_dynasty), defeated the Crusaders in the [Battle of Hattin](/wiki/Battle_of_Hattin) and subsequently captured Jerusalem and almost all of Palestine. In time, Saladin issued a proclamation inviting Jews to return and settle in Jerusalem,[[77]](#cite_note-78) and according to [Judah al-Harizi](/wiki/Yehuda_Alharizi), they did: "From the day the Arabs took Jerusalem, the Israelites inhabited it."[[78]](#cite_note-79) Al-Harizi compared Saladin's decree allowing Jews to re-establish themselves in Jerusalem to the one issued by the Persian king [Cyrus the Great](/wiki/Cyrus_the_Great) over 1,600 years earlier.[[79]](#cite_note-80) In 1211, the Jewish community in the country was strengthened by the arrival of a group headed by over 300 rabbis from France and England,[[80]](#cite_note-81) among them Rabbi [Samson ben Abraham of Sens](/wiki/Samson_ben_Abraham_of_Sens).[[81]](#cite_note-82) [Nachmanides](/wiki/Nachmanides), the 13th-century Spanish rabbi and recognised leader of Jewry greatly praised the land of Israel and viewed its settlement as a positive commandment incumbent on all Jews. He wrote "If the gentiles wish to make peace, we shall make peace and leave them on clear terms; but as for the land, we shall not leave it in their hands, nor in the hands of any nation, not in any generation."[[82]](#cite_note-83) In 1260, control passed to the [Mamluk sultans of Egypt](/wiki/Mamluk_Sultanate_(Cairo)). The country was located between the two centres of Mamluk power, Cairo and Damascus, and only saw some development along the postal road connecting the two cities. Jerusalem, although left without the protection of any [city walls](/wiki/Walls_of_Jerusalem) since 1219, also saw a flurry of new construction projects centred around the [Al-Aqsa Mosque](/wiki/Al-Aqsa_Mosque) compound (the [Temple Mount](/wiki/Temple_Mount)). In 1266 the Mamluk Sultan [Baybars](/wiki/Baybars) converted the [Cave of the Patriarchs](/wiki/Cave_of_the_Patriarchs) in [Hebron](/wiki/Hebron) into an exclusive Islamic sanctuary and banned Christians and Jews from entering, which previously would be able to enter it for a fee. The ban remained in place until Israel took control of the building in 1967.[[83]](#cite_note-84)[[84]](#cite_note-85) [thumb|Jews at the](/wiki/File:Jews_at_Western_Wall_by_Felix_Bonfils,_1870s.jpg) [Western Wall](/wiki/Western_Wall), 1870s In 1470, Isaac b. Meir Latif arrived from [Ancona](/wiki/Ancona) and counted 150 Jewish families in Jerusalem.[[85]](#cite_note-86)Thanks to [Joseph Saragossi](/wiki/Joseph_Saragossi) who had arrived in the closing years of the 15th century, Safed and its environs had developed into the largest concentration of Jews in Palestine. With the help of the Sephardic [immigration](/wiki/Immigration) from Spain, the Jewish population had increased to 10,000 by the early 16th century.[[86]](#cite_note-87) In 1516, the region was conquered by the [Ottoman Empire](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire); it remained under [Turkish rule](/wiki/Ottoman_Syria) until the end of the [First World War](/wiki/First_World_War), when Britain defeated the Ottoman forces and set up a military administration across the former Ottoman Syria. In 1920 the territory was divided between Britain and [France](/wiki/France) under the [mandate system](/wiki/League_of_Nations_mandate), and the British-administered area which included modern day Israel was named [Mandatory Palestine](/wiki/Mandatory_Palestine).[[71]](#cite_note-72)[[87]](#cite_note-88)[[88]](#cite_note-89)

### Zionism and British mandate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Theodor_Herzl.jpg)[Theodor Herzl](/wiki/Theodor_Herzl), visionary of the Jewish State|alt=Black and white portrait of a long-bearded man. Since the existence of the earliest [Jewish diaspora](/wiki/Jewish_diaspora), many Jews have aspired to return to "Zion" and the "Land of Israel",[[89]](#cite_note-90) though the amount of effort that should be spent towards such an aim was a matter of dispute.[[90]](#cite_note-91)[[91]](#cite_note-92) The hopes and yearnings of Jews living in exile are an important theme of the Jewish belief system.[[90]](#cite_note-91) After the Jews were [expelled from Spain](/wiki/Alhambra_Decree) in 1492, some communities settled in Palestine.[[92]](#cite_note-93) During the 16th century, Jewish communities struck roots in the [Four Holy Cities](/wiki/Four_Holy_Cities)—[Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem), [Tiberias](/wiki/Tiberias), [Hebron](/wiki/Hebron), and [Safed](/wiki/Safed)—and in 1697, Rabbi Yehuda Hachasid led a group of 1,500 Jews to Jerusalem.[[93]](#cite_note-94) In the second half of the 18th century, Eastern European [opponents](/wiki/Misnagdim) of [Hasidism](/wiki/Hasidic_Judaism), known as the [Perushim](/wiki/Perushim), settled in Palestine.[[94]](#cite_note-95)[[95]](#cite_note-96)[[96]](#cite_note-97) [Template:Quote box](/wiki/Template:Quote_box) The first wave of modern Jewish migration to Ottoman-ruled Palestine, known as the [First Aliyah](/wiki/First_Aliyah), began in 1881, as Jews fled [pogroms](/wiki/Pogrom#Pogroms_against_Jews) in Eastern Europe.[[97]](#cite_note-98) Although the Zionist movement already existed in practice, [Austro-Hungarian](/wiki/Austria–Hungary) journalist [Theodor Herzl](/wiki/Theodor_Herzl) is credited with founding political [Zionism](/wiki/Zionism),[[98]](#cite_note-99) a movement which sought to establish a Jewish state in the Land of Israel, thus offering a solution to the so-called [Jewish Question](/wiki/Jewish_Question) of the European states, in conformity with the goals and achievements of other national projects of the time.[[99]](#cite_note-100) In 1896, Herzl published [*Der Judenstaat*](/wiki/Der_Judenstaat) (*The State of the Jews*), offering his vision of a future Jewish state; the following year he presided over the first [Zionist Congress](/wiki/World_Zionist_Congress).[[100]](#cite_note-101) The [Second Aliyah](/wiki/Second_Aliyah) (1904–14), began after the [Kishinev pogrom](/wiki/Kishinev_pogrom); some 40,000 Jews settled in Palestine, although nearly half of them left eventually.[[97]](#cite_note-98) Both the first and second waves of migrants were mainly [Orthodox Jews](/wiki/Orthodox_Judaism),[[101]](#cite_note-102) although the Second Aliyah included [socialist](/wiki/Labor_Zionism) groups who established the [*kibbutz*](/wiki/Kibbutz) movement.[[102]](#cite_note-103) During World War I, [British Foreign Secretary](/wiki/Secretary_of_State_for_Foreign_Affairs) [Arthur Balfour](/wiki/Arthur_Balfour) sent the [Balfour Declaration of 1917](/wiki/Balfour_Declaration_of_1917) to [Baron Rothschild](/wiki/Walter_Rothschild,_2nd_Baron_Rothschild) (Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild), a leader of the British Jewish community, that stated that Britain intended for the creation of a Jewish "national home" within the Palestinian Mandate.<ref name=macintyre>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>[[103]](#cite_note-104) The [Jewish Legion](/wiki/Jewish_Legion), a group primarily of Zionist volunteers, assisted, in 1918, in the British conquest of Palestine.[[104]](#cite_note-105) Arab opposition to British rule and Jewish immigration led to the [1920 Palestine riots](/wiki/1920_Palestine_riots) and the formation of a Jewish militia known as the [Haganah](/wiki/Haganah) (meaning "The Defense" in Hebrew), from which the [Irgun](/wiki/Irgun) and [Lehi](/wiki/Lehi_(group)), or *Stern Gang*, paramilitary groups later split off.[[105]](#cite_note-106) In 1922, the [League of Nations](/wiki/League_of_Nations) granted Britain a [mandate over Palestine](/wiki/British_Mandate_for_Palestine) under terms which included the Balfour Declaration with its promise to the Jews, and with similar provisions regarding the Arab Palestinians.[[106]](#cite_note-107) The population of the area at this time was predominantly Arab and Muslim, with Jews accounting for about 11%,[[107]](#cite_note-108) and Arab Christians at about 9.5% of the population.[[108]](#cite_note-109) The [Third](/wiki/Third_Aliyah) (1919–23) and [Fourth Aliyahs](/wiki/Fourth_Aliyah) (1924–29) brought an additional 100,000 Jews to Palestine.[[97]](#cite_note-98) Finally, the [rise of Nazism](/wiki/Hitler's_rise_to_power) and the increasing persecution of Jews in 1930s Europe led to the [Fifth Aliyah](/wiki/Fifth_Aliyah), with an influx of a quarter of a million Jews. This was a major cause of the [Arab revolt of 1936–39](/wiki/1936–39_Arab_revolt_in_Palestine) during which the British Mandate authorities alongside the Zionist militias of [Haganah](/wiki/Haganah) and [Irgun](/wiki/Irgun) killed 5,032 Arabs and wounded 14,760,[[109]](#cite_note-110)[[110]](#cite_note-111) resulting in over ten percent of the adult male [Palestinian Arab](/wiki/Palestinian_Arab) population killed, wounded, imprisoned or exiled.[[111]](#cite_note-112) The British introduced restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine with the [White Paper of 1939](/wiki/White_Paper_of_1939). With countries around the world turning away Jewish refugees fleeing [the Holocaust](/wiki/The_Holocaust), a clandestine movement known as [Aliyah Bet](/wiki/Aliyah_Bet) was organized to bring Jews to Palestine.[[97]](#cite_note-98) By the end of [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), the Jewish population of Palestine had increased to 33% of the total population.[[112]](#cite_note-113) On July 22, 1946, [Irgun](/wiki/Irgun) [attacked](/wiki/King_David_Hotel_bombing) the British administrative headquarters for Palestine, which was housed in the southern wing[[113]](#cite_note-114) of the [King David Hotel](/wiki/King_David_Hotel) in [Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem).[[114]](#cite_note-115)[[115]](#cite_note-116)[[116]](#cite_note-117) 91 people of various nationalities were killed and 46 were injured.[[117]](#cite_note-118) The hotel was the site of the central offices of the [British Mandatory](/wiki/British_Mandate_of_Palestine) authorities of Palestine, principally the Secretariat of the Government of Palestine and the Headquarters of the British Armed Forces in [Palestine](/wiki/Mandatory_Palestine) and [Transjordan](/wiki/Emirate_of_Transjordan).[[117]](#cite_note-118)[[118]](#cite_note-119) The attack initially had the approval of the [Haganah](/wiki/Haganah) (the principal Jewish paramilitary group in Palestine). It was conceived as a response to [Operation Agatha](/wiki/Operation_Agatha) (a series of widespread raids, including one on the [Jewish Agency](/wiki/Jewish_Agency_for_Israel), conducted by the British authorities) and was the deadliest directed at the British during the Mandate era (1920–1948).[[117]](#cite_note-118)[[118]](#cite_note-119)

### After World War II[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:UN_Palestine_Partition_Versions_1947.jpg)[UN](/wiki/UN) Map, "Palestine plan of partition with economic union" After World War II, Britain found itself in intense [conflict](/wiki/Jewish_insurgency_in_Palestine) with the [Jewish community](/wiki/Yishuv) over Jewish immigration limits, as well as continued conflict with the Arab community over limit levels. The [Haganah](/wiki/Haganah) joined [Irgun](/wiki/Irgun) and [Lehi](/wiki/Lehi_(group)) in an armed struggle against British rule.[[119]](#cite_note-120) At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Jewish Holocaust survivors and refugees sought a new life far from their destroyed communities in Europe. The Yishuv attempted to bring these refugees to Palestine but many were turned away or rounded up and placed in detention camps in [Atlit](/wiki/Atlit_detainee_camp) and [Cyprus](/wiki/Cyprus_internment_camps) by the British. Escalating violence culminated with the 1946 [King David Hotel bombing](/wiki/King_David_Hotel_bombing) which [Bruce Hoffman](/wiki/Bruce_Hoffman) characterized as one of the "most lethal terrorist incidents of the twentieth century".[[120]](#cite_note-121) In 1947, the British government announced it would withdraw from [Mandatory Palestine](/wiki/Mandatory_Palestine), stating it was unable to arrive at a solution acceptable to both Arabs and Jews.

On 15 May 1947, the [General Assembly](/wiki/General_Assembly_of_the_United_Nations) of the newly formed [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations) resolved that a committee, [United Nations Special Committee on Palestine](/wiki/United_Nations_Special_Committee_on_Palestine) (UNSCOP), be created "to prepare for consideration at the next regular session of the Assembly a report on the question of Palestine".[[121]](#cite_note-122) In the Report of the Committee dated 3 September 1947 to the UN General Assembly,[[122]](#cite_note-123) the majority of the Committee in Chapter VI proposed a plan to replace the British Mandate with "an independent Arab State, an independent Jewish State, and the City of Jerusalem ... the last to be under an International Trusteeship System".[[123]](#cite_note-124) On 29 November 1947, the [General Assembly](/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly) adopted a [resolution](/wiki/United_Nations_Partition_Plan_for_Palestine) recommending the adoption and implementation of the *Plan of Partition with Economic Union* as Resolution 181 (II).[[124]](#cite_note-125) The Plan attached to the resolution was essentially that proposed by the majority of the Committee in the Report of 3 September 1947. The [Jewish Agency](/wiki/Jewish_Agency), which was the recognized representative of the Jewish community, accepted the plan. The [Arab League](/wiki/Arab_League) and [Arab Higher Committee](/wiki/Arab_Higher_Committee) of Palestine rejected it, and indicated that they would reject any other plan of partition.[[125]](#cite_note-126)[[126]](#cite_note-127) On the following day, 1 December 1947, the Arab Higher Committee proclaimed a three-day strike, and Arab gangs began attacking Jewish targets.[[127]](#cite_note-128) The Jews were initially on the defensive as [civil war](/wiki/1947–48_Civil_War_in_Mandatory_Palestine) broke out, but in early April 1948 moved onto the offensive.[[128]](#cite_note-129)[[129]](#cite_note-130) The Arab Palestinian economy collapsed and 250,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled.[[130]](#cite_note-131) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Declaration_of_State_of_Israel_1948.jpg)[David Ben-Gurion](/wiki/David_Ben-Gurion) proclaiming the [Israeli Declaration of Independence](/wiki/Israeli_Declaration_of_Independence) on 14 May 1948 On 14 May 1948, the day before the expiration of the British Mandate, [David Ben-Gurion](/wiki/David_Ben-Gurion), the head of the Jewish Agency, [declared](/wiki/Israeli_Declaration_of_Independence) "the establishment of a Jewish state in [Eretz-Israel](/wiki/Eretz-Israel), to be known as the State of Israel".[[131]](#cite_note-132)[[132]](#cite_note-133) The only reference in the text of the Declaration to the borders of the new state is the use of the term *Eretz-Israel* ("[Land of Israel](/wiki/Land_of_Israel)").[[133]](#cite_note-134) The following day, the armies of four Arab countries—Egypt, Syria, Transjordan and Iraq—entered what had been British Mandatory Palestine, launching the [1948 Arab–Israeli War](/wiki/1948_Arab–Israeli_War);[[134]](#cite_note-135)[[135]](#cite_note-136) Contingents from Yemen, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Sudan joined the war.[[136]](#cite_note-137)[[137]](#cite_note-138)The apparent purpose of the invasion was to prevent the establishment of the Jewish state at inception, and some Arab leaders talked about driving the Jews into the sea.[[138]](#cite_note-139)[[139]](#cite_note-140)[[140]](#cite_note-141) According to [Benny Morris](/wiki/Benny_Morris), Jews felt that the invading Arab armies aimed to slaughter the Jews.[[141]](#cite_note-142) The Arab league stated that the invasion was to restore law and order and to prevent further bloodshed.<ref name=cablegram>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

[thumb|upright|Raising of the](/wiki/File:Raising_the_Ink_Flag_at_Umm_Rashrash_(Eilat).jpg) [Ink Flag](/wiki/Ink_Flag), marking the end of the [1948 Arab–Israeli War](/wiki/1948_Arab–Israeli_War) After a year of fighting, a [ceasefire was declared](/wiki/1949_Armistice_Agreements) and temporary borders, known as the [Green Line](/wiki/Green_Line_(Israel)), were established.[[142]](#cite_note-143) [Jordan annexed](/wiki/Jordanian_occupation_of_the_West_Bank) what became known as the [West Bank](/wiki/West_Bank), including [East Jerusalem](/wiki/East_Jerusalem), and [Egypt took control](/wiki/Occupation_of_the_Gaza_Strip_by_Egypt) of the Gaza Strip. The United Nations estimated that more than 700,000 Palestinians were [expelled by or fled from advancing Israeli forces](/wiki/1948_Palestinian_exodus) during the conflict—what would become known in Arabic as the *Nakba* ("catastrophe").[[143]](#cite_note-144)

### First years of the State of Israel[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

Israel was admitted as a [member of the United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly_Resolution_273) by majority vote on 11 May 1949.[[144]](#cite_note-145) On 1949 both Israel and Jordan were genuinely interested in a peace agreement but the British acted as a brake on the Jordanian effort in order to avoid damaging British interests in Egypt.[[145]](#cite_note-146) In the early years of the state, the [Labor Zionist](/wiki/Labor_Zionism) movement led by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion dominated Israeli politics.[[146]](#cite_note-147)[[147]](#cite_note-148) The [Kibbutzim](/wiki/Kibbutzim), or collective farming communities, played a pivotal role in establishing the new state.[[148]](#cite_note-149) Immigration to Israel during the late 1940s and early 1950s was aided by the Israeli Immigration Department and the non-government sponsored [Mossad LeAliyah Bet](/wiki/Mossad_LeAliyah_Bet) ("Institution for Illegal Immigration"[[149]](#cite_note-150)). Both groups facilitated regular immigration logistics like arranging transportation, but the latter also engaged in clandestine operations in countries, particularly in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, where the lives of Jews were believed to be in danger and exit from those places was difficult. [Mossad LeAliyah Bet](/wiki/Mossad_LeAliyah_Bet) continued to take part in immigration efforts until its disbanding in 1953.[[150]](#cite_note-151)[An influx](/wiki/Aliyah#Early_statehood_(1948–1960)) of [Holocaust survivors](/wiki/Aftermath_of_the_Holocaust) and [Jews from Arab and Muslim lands](/wiki/Jewish_exodus_from_Arab_and_Muslim_countries) immigrated to Israel during the first 3 years and the number of Jews increased from 700,000 to 1,400,000,[[151]](#cite_note-152) many of whom faced persecution in their original countries.[[152]](#cite_note-153) The immigration was in accordance with the [One Million Plan](/wiki/One_Million_Plan).

Consequently, the population of Israel rose from 800,000 to two million between 1948 and 1958.[[151]](#cite_note-152) Between 1948 and 1970, approximately 1,150,000 Jewish refugees relocated to Israel.<ref name=bard/> The immigrants came to Israel for differing reasons. Some believed in a Zionist ideology, while others moved to escape persecution. There were others that did it for the promise of a better life in Israel and a small number that were expelled from their homelands, such as British and French Jews in Egypt after the [Suez Crisis](/wiki/Suez_Crisis).[[153]](#cite_note-154) Some new immigrants arrived as refugees with no possessions and were housed in temporary camps known as [*ma'abarot*](/wiki/Ma'abarot); by 1952, over 200,000 immigrants were living in these tent cities.<ref name=immigrants-tents/> During this period, food, clothes and furniture had to be rationed in what became known as the [Austerity Period](/wiki/Austerity_in_Israel). The need to solve the crisis led Ben-Gurion to sign a [reparations agreement with West Germany](/wiki/Reparations_Agreement_between_Israel_and_West_Germany) that triggered mass protests by Jews angered at the idea that Israel could accept monetary compensation for the Holocaust.[[154]](#cite_note-155) In 1950 Egypt closed the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping and tensions mounted as armed clashes took place along Israel's borders. During the 1950s, Israel was frequently [attacked](/wiki/List_of_attacks_against_Israeli_civilians_before_1967) by [Palestinian fedayeen](/wiki/Palestinian_fedayeen), nearly always against civilians,[[155]](#cite_note-156) mainly from the Egyptian-occupied Gaza Strip,[[156]](#cite_note-157) leading to several Israeli [counter-raids](/wiki/Reprisal_operations). In 1956, Great Britain and France aimed at regaining control of the [Suez Canal](/wiki/Suez_Canal), which the Egyptians had nationalized (see the [Suez Crisis](/wiki/Suez_Crisis)). The continued blockade of the Suez Canal and [Straits of Tiran](/wiki/Straits_of_Tiran) to Israeli shipping, together with the growing amount of Fedayeen attacks against Israel's southern population, and recent Arab grave and threatening statements, prompted Israel to attack Egypt.[[157]](#cite_note-158)[[158]](#cite_note-159)[[159]](#cite_note-160)<ref name=jvl-nasser1956/> Israel joined [a secret alliance](/wiki/Protocol_of_Sèvres) with Great Britain and France and overran the [Sinai Peninsula](/wiki/Sinai_Peninsula) but was pressured to withdraw by the United Nations in return for guarantees of Israeli shipping rights in the [Red Sea](/wiki/Red_Sea) via the Straits of Tiran and the Canal[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed).[[160]](#cite_note-161)[[161]](#cite_note-162) The war resulted in significant reduction of Israeli border infiltration.[[162]](#cite_note-163)<ref name=killed-hostile/><ref name=jvl-terror-fatality/><ref name=jvl-eban-killed/>

[thumb|U.S. newsreel on the trial of](/wiki/File:1961-04-13_Tale_Of_Century_-_Eichmann_Tried_For_War_Crimes.ogv) [Adolf Eichmann](/wiki/Adolf_Eichmann) The refugees were often treated differently according to where they had come from. Jews of European background were treated more favorably than Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries—housing units reserved for the latter were often re-designated for the former, with the result that Jews newly arrived from Arab lands generally ended up staying in [transit camps](/wiki/Ma'abarot) for longer.[[163]](#cite_note-164) Tensions that developed between the two groups over such discrimination persist to the present day.[[164]](#cite_note-165) In the early 1960s, Israel captured Nazi war criminal [Adolf Eichmann](/wiki/Adolf_Eichmann) in Argentina and brought him to Israel for trial.[[165]](#cite_note-166) The trial had a major impact on public awareness of the Holocaust.[[166]](#cite_note-167) Eichmann remains the only person executed in Israel by conviction by an [Israeli civilian court](/wiki/Israeli_judicial_system).[[167]](#cite_note-168)

### Six-Day War and Yom Kippur War[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|upright|left|Territory held by Israel:](/wiki/File:Six_Day_War_Territories.svg) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) The [Sinai Peninsula](/wiki/Sinai_Peninsula) was [returned](/wiki/Egypt–Israel_Peace_Treaty) to [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt) in 1982. Since 1964, Arab countries, concerned over Israeli plans to divert waters of the [Jordan River](/wiki/Jordan_River) into the coastal plain,[[168]](#cite_note-169) had been trying to divert the headwaters to deprive Israel of water resources, provoking [tensions](/wiki/War_over_Water_(Jordan_river)) between Israel on the one hand, and Syria and Lebanon on the other.

[Arab nationalists](/wiki/Arab_nationalism) led by Egyptian President [Gamal Abdel Nasser](/wiki/Gamal_Abdel_Nasser) refused to recognize Israel, and called for its destruction.<ref name=RoutledgeAtlas/>[[169]](#cite_note-170)[[170]](#cite_note-171) By 1966, Israeli-Arab relations had deteriorated to the point of actual battles taking place between Israeli and Arab forces.[[171]](#cite_note-172) In May 1967, Egypt massed its army near the border with Israel, expelled [UN peacekeepers](/wiki/United_Nations_Emergency_Force), stationed in the Sinai Peninsula since 1957, and blocked Israel's access to the Red Sea[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed). Other Arab states mobilized their forces.[[172]](#cite_note-173) Israel reiterated that these actions were a [*casus belli*](/wiki/Casus_belli). On 5 June 1967, Israel launched a [pre-emptive strike](/wiki/Preemptive_war) against Egypt. Jordan, Syria and Iraq responded and attacked Israel. In a [Six-Day War](/wiki/Six-Day_War), Israel defeated Jordan and captured the West Bank, defeated Egypt and captured the Gaza Strip and [Sinai Peninsula](/wiki/Sinai_Peninsula), and defeated Syria and captured the [Golan Heights](/wiki/Golan_Heights).[[173]](#cite_note-174) Jerusalem's boundaries were enlarged, incorporating [East Jerusalem](/wiki/East_Jerusalem), and the 1949 [Green Line](/wiki/Green_Line_(Israel)) became the administrative boundary between Israel and the [occupied territories](/wiki/Israeli-occupied_territories).

Following the 1967 war and the ["three nos"](/wiki/Khartoum_Resolution) resolution of the Arab League, during the 1967–1970 [War of Attrition](/wiki/War_of_Attrition) Israel faced attacks from the Egyptians in the Sinai, and from Palestinian groups targeting Israelis in the occupied territories, in Israel proper, and around the world. Most important among the various Palestinian and Arab groups was the [Palestinian Liberation Organization](/wiki/Palestinian_Liberation_Organization) (PLO), established in 1964, which initially committed itself to "armed struggle as the only way to liberate the homeland".[[174]](#cite_note-175)[[175]](#cite_note-176) In the late 1960s and early 1970s, [Palestinian groups](/wiki/Palestinian_fedayeen) launched a [wave of attacks](/wiki/Palestinian_political_violence)[[176]](#cite_note-177)[[177]](#cite_note-178) against Israeli and Jewish targets around the world,[[178]](#cite_note-179) including [a massacre of Israeli athletes](/wiki/Munich_massacre) at the [1972 Summer Olympics](/wiki/1972_Summer_Olympics) in Munich. The Israeli government responded with an [assassination campaign](/wiki/Operation_Wrath_of_God) against the organizers of the massacre, a [bombing](/wiki/1972_Israeli_air_raid_in_Syria_and_Lebanon) and a [raid on the PLO headquarters in Lebanon](/wiki/1973_Israeli_raid_on_Lebanon).

[thumb|300px|*Operation Gazelle*, Israel's ground maneuver, encircles the Egyptian Third Army, October 1973](/wiki/File:1973_sinai_war_maps2.jpg) On 6 October 1973, as Jews were observing [Yom Kippur](/wiki/Yom_Kippur), the Egyptian and Syrian armies launched a surprise attack against Israeli forces in the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights, that opened the [Yom Kippur War](/wiki/Yom_Kippur_War). The war ended on 26 October with Israel successfully repelling Egyptian and Syrian forces but having suffered over 2,500 soldiers killed in a war which collectively took 10–35,000 lives in just 20 days.[[179]](#cite_note-180) An [internal inquiry](/wiki/Agranat_Commission) exonerated the government of responsibility for failures before and during the war, but public anger forced Prime Minister [Golda Meir](/wiki/Golda_Meir) to resign.[[180]](#cite_note-181)

### Further conflict and peace process[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) In July 1976 an airliner was hijacked during its flight to Tel Aviv by Palestinian guerrillas and landed at [Entebbe](/wiki/Entebbe_International_Airport), Uganda. Israeli commandos carried out [an operation](/wiki/Operation_Entebbe) in which 102 out of 106 Israeli hostages were successfully rescued.

The [1977 Knesset elections](/wiki/Israeli_legislative_election,_1977) marked a major turning point in Israeli political history as [Menachem Begin's](/wiki/Menachem_Begin) [Likud](/wiki/Likud) party took control from the [Labor Party](/wiki/Labor_Party_(Israel)).[[181]](#cite_note-182) Later that year, Egyptian President [Anwar El Sadat](/wiki/Anwar_El_Sadat) made a trip to Israel and spoke before the [Knesset](/wiki/Knesset) in what was the first recognition of Israel by an Arab head of state.[[182]](#cite_note-183) In the two years that followed, Sadat and Begin signed the [Camp David Accords](/wiki/Camp_David_Accords) (1978) and the [Israel–Egypt Peace Treaty](/wiki/Israel–Egypt_Peace_Treaty) (1979).[[183]](#cite_note-184) In return, Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula, which Israel had captured during the Six-Day War in 1967, and agreed to enter negotiations over an autonomy for Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.[[184]](#cite_note-185) On 11 March 1978, a PLO guerilla raid from Lebanon led to the [Coastal Road Massacre](/wiki/Coastal_Road_Massacre). Israel responded by launching an [invasion of southern Lebanon](/wiki/1978_South_Lebanon_conflict) to destroy the PLO bases south of the Litani River. Most PLO fighters withdrew, but Israel was able to secure southern Lebanon until a UN force and the Lebanese army could take over. The PLO soon resumed its [policy of attacks](/wiki/Palestinian_insurgency_in_South_Lebanon) against Israel. In the next few years, the PLO infiltrated the south and kept up a sporadic shelling across the border. Israel carried out numerous retaliatory attacks by air and on the ground.

[thumb|Israel's 1980](/wiki/File:Jerusalem_from_mt_olives.jpg) [Jerusalem Law](/wiki/Jerusalem_Law) declared Jerusalem to be Israel's "eternal and indivisible capital". Meanwhile, Begin's government provided incentives for Israelis to [settle](/wiki/Israeli_settlements) in the occupied West Bank, increasing friction with the Palestinians in that area.[[185]](#cite_note-186) The [Basic Law: Jerusalem, the Capital of Israel](/wiki/Jerusalem_Law), passed in 1980, was believed by some to reaffirm Israel's 1967 annexation of Jerusalem by government decree, and [reignited international controversy](/wiki/UN_Security_Council_Resolution_478) over the [status of the city](/wiki/Positions_on_Jerusalem). No Israeli legislation has defined the territory of Israel and no act specifically included East Jerusalem therein.[[186]](#cite_note-187) The position of the majority of UN member states is reflected in numerous resolutions declaring that actions taken by Israel to settle its citizens in the West Bank, and impose its laws and administration on East Jerusalem, are illegal and have no validity.[[187]](#cite_note-188) In 1981 Israel [annexed](/wiki/Golan_Heights_Law) the [Golan Heights](/wiki/Golan_Heights), although annexation was not recognized internationally.[[188]](#cite_note-189) On 7 June 1981, the Israeli air force [destroyed](/wiki/Operation_Opera) Iraq's sole [nuclear reactor](/wiki/Osirak), in order to impede Iraq's nuclear weapons program. The reactor was under construction just outside Baghdad. Following a series of PLO attacks in 1982, Israel [invaded](/wiki/1982_Lebanon_War) Lebanon that year to destroy the bases from which the PLO launched attacks and missiles into northern Israel.[[189]](#cite_note-190) In the first six days of fighting, the Israelis destroyed the military forces of the PLO in Lebanon and decisively defeated the Syrians. An Israeli government inquiry – the [Kahan Commission](/wiki/Kahan_Commission) – would later hold Begin, Sharon and several Israeli generals as indirectly responsible for the [Sabra and Shatila massacre](/wiki/Sabra_and_Shatila_massacre). In 1985, Israel responded to a Palestinian terrorist attack in Cyprus by [bombing](/wiki/Operation_Wooden_Leg) the PLO headquarters in Tunis. Israel withdrew from most of Lebanon in 1986, but maintained a [borderland buffer zone](/wiki/Israeli_occupation_of_southern_Lebanon) in southern Lebanon until 2000, from where Israeli forces [engaged in conflict](/wiki/South_Lebanon_conflict_(1985–2000)) with [Hezbollah](/wiki/Hezbollah).

Israel's ethnic diversity expanded in the 1980s and 1990s due to immigration. Several waves of [Ethiopian Jews](/wiki/Ethiopian_Jews) [immigrated](/wiki/Operation_Solomon) to Israel in the 1980s and 1990s, while between 1990 and 1994, [Russian immigration](/wiki/Aliyah_from_the_Commonwealth_of_Independent_States_in_the_1990s) to Israel increased Israel's population by twelve percent.[[190]](#cite_note-191) The [First Intifada](/wiki/First_Intifada), a Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule,[[191]](#cite_note-192) broke out in 1987, with waves of uncoordinated demonstrations and violence occurring in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Over the following six years, the Intifada became more organised and included economic and cultural measures aimed at disrupting the Israeli occupation. More than a thousand people were killed in the violence.[[192]](#cite_note-193) During the 1991 [Gulf War](/wiki/Gulf_War), the PLO supported [Saddam Hussein](/wiki/Saddam_Hussein) and Iraqi Scud [missile attacks against Israel](/wiki/Gulf_War#Iraqi_missile_strikes_on_Israel_and_Saudi_Arabia). Despite public outrage, Israel heeded US calls to refrain from hitting back and did not participate in that war.[[193]](#cite_note-194)[[194]](#cite_note-195) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Government_Press_Office_(GPO)_-_PM_YITZHAK_RABIN_AND_JORDAN'S_KING_HUSSEIN_SIGN_THE_PEACE_TREATY.jpg)[Bill Clinton](/wiki/Bill_Clinton) watches Jordan's [King Hussein](/wiki/King_Hussein) (left) and Israeli Prime Minister [Yitzhak Rabin](/wiki/Yitzhak_Rabin) (right) sign the [Israel–Jordan peace treaty](/wiki/Israel–Jordan_peace_treaty) In 1992, [Yitzhak Rabin](/wiki/Yitzhak_Rabin) became Prime Minister following [an election](/wiki/Israeli_legislative_election,_1992) in which his party called for compromise with Israel's neighbors.[[195]](#cite_note-196)[[196]](#cite_note-197) The following year, [Shimon Peres](/wiki/Shimon_Peres) on behalf of Israel, and [Mahmoud Abbas](/wiki/Mahmoud_Abbas) for the PLO, signed the [Oslo Accords](/wiki/Oslo_Accords), which gave the [Palestinian National Authority](/wiki/Palestinian_National_Authority) the right to govern parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.[[197]](#cite_note-198) The PLO also [recognized Israel's right to exist](/wiki/Israel –_Palestine_Liberation_Organization_letters_of_recognition) and pledged an end to terrorism.[[198]](#cite_note-199) In 1994, the [Israel–Jordan Treaty of Peace](/wiki/Israel–Jordan_Treaty_of_Peace) was signed, making Jordan the second Arab country to normalize relations with Israel.[[199]](#cite_note-200) Arab public support for the Accords was damaged by the continuation of Israeli [settlements](/wiki/Israeli_settlement)[[200]](#cite_note-201) and [checkpoints](/wiki/Israeli_checkpoint), and the deterioration of economic conditions.[[201]](#cite_note-202) Israeli public support for the Accords waned as Israel was struck by [Palestinian suicide attacks](/wiki/List_of_Hamas_suicide_attacks).[[202]](#cite_note-203) Finally, while leaving a peace rally in November 1995, [Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated](/wiki/Assassination_of_Yitzhak_Rabin) by a far-right-wing Jew who opposed the Accords.[[203]](#cite_note-204) At the end of the 1990s, Israel, under the leadership of [Benjamin Netanyahu](/wiki/Benjamin_Netanyahu), withdrew from [Hebron](/wiki/Hebron),[[204]](#cite_note-205) and signed the [Wye River Memorandum](/wiki/Wye_River_Memorandum), giving greater control to the Palestinian National Authority.[[205]](#cite_note-206) [Ehud Barak](/wiki/Ehud_Barak), [elected Prime Minister in 1999](/wiki/Israeli_prime_ministerial_election,_1999), began the new millennium by [withdrawing forces from Southern Lebanon](/wiki/South_Lebanon_conflict_(1982–2000)#2000:_Israeli_withdrawal) and conducting negotiations with Palestinian Authority Chairman [Yasser Arafat](/wiki/Yasser_Arafat) and U.S. President Bill Clinton at the [2000 Camp David Summit](/wiki/2000_Camp_David_Summit). During the summit, Barak offered a plan for the establishment of a [Palestinian state](/wiki/Palestinian_state). The proposed state included the entirety of the Gaza Strip and over 90% of the West Bank with Jerusalem as a shared capital,[[206]](#cite_note-207) although some argue that the plan was to annex areas which would lead to a cantonization of the West Bank into three blocs, which the Palestinian delegation likened to South African "[bantustans](/wiki/Bantustan)", a loaded word that was disputed by the Israeli and American negotiators.[[207]](#cite_note-208) Each side blamed the other for the [failure of the talks](/wiki/2000_Camp_David_Summit#Responsibility_for_failure). [thumb|left|The Tel Aviv Dolphinarium, the site of the 2001](/wiki/File:PikiWiki_Israel_19099_ruins_of_tel_aviv_dolphinarium.JPG) [Dolphinarium discotheque suicide bombing](/wiki/Dolphinarium_discotheque_suicide_bombing), in which 21 Israelis, mostly teenagers, were killed. After the collapse of the talks and a controversial visit by [Likud](/wiki/Likud) leader [Ariel Sharon](/wiki/Ariel_Sharon) to the [Temple Mount](/wiki/Temple_Mount), the [Second Intifada](/wiki/Second_Intifada) began. Some commentators contend that the uprising was pre-planned by Yasser Arafat due to the collapse of peace talks.[[208]](#cite_note-209)[[209]](#cite_note-210)<ref name=jewishweek>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref><ref name=atlantic>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> Sharon became prime minister in a [2001 special election](/wiki/Israeli_prime_ministerial_election,_2001). During his tenure, Sharon carried out his plan to [unilaterally withdraw](/wiki/Israel's_unilateral_disengagement_plan) from the Gaza Strip and also spearheaded the construction of the [Israeli West Bank barrier](/wiki/Israeli_West_Bank_barrier),[[210]](#cite_note-211) ending the Intifada.<ref name=rage>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>[[211]](#cite_note-212) By this time 1,100 Israelis had been killed, mostly in suicide bombings.[[212]](#cite_note-213) The Palestinian fatalities, by 30 April 2008, reached 4,745 killed by Israeli security forces, 44 killed by Israeli civilians, and 577 killed by Palestinians.[[213]](#cite_note-214) In July 2006, a [Hezbollah](/wiki/Hezbollah) artillery assault on Israel's northern border communities and a cross-border abduction of two Israeli soldiers precipitated the month-long [Second Lebanon War](/wiki/Second_Lebanon_War).[[214]](#cite_note-215)[[215]](#cite_note-216) On 6 September 2007, the Israeli Air Force [destroyed](/wiki/Operation_Orchard) a nuclear reactor in Syria. In May 2008, Israel confirmed it had been discussing a peace treaty with Syria for a year, with Turkey as a go-between.[[216]](#cite_note-217) However, at the end of the year, Israel entered another conflict as a ceasefire between [Hamas](/wiki/Hamas) and Israel collapsed. The [Gaza War](/wiki/Gaza_War_(2008–09)) lasted three weeks and ended after Israel announced a unilateral ceasefire.[[217]](#cite_note-218)<ref name=ravid>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> Hamas announced its own ceasefire, with its own conditions of complete withdrawal and opening of border crossings. Despite neither the [rocket launchings](/wiki/Palestinian_rocket_attacks_on_Israel) nor Israeli retaliatory strikes having completely stopped, the fragile ceasefire remained in order.[[218]](#cite_note-219) In what Israel described as a response to more than a hundred Palestinian rocket attacks on southern Israeli cities,[[219]](#cite_note-220) Israel began an [operation](/wiki/Operation_Pillar_of_Defense) in Gaza on 14 November 2012, lasting eight days.[[220]](#cite_note-221) Israel started another [operation](/wiki/Operation_Protective_Edge) in Gaza following an escalation of rocket attacks by Hamas in July 2014.[[221]](#cite_note-222)

## Geography and environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Multiple image](/wiki/Template:Multiple_image)

Israel is at the eastern end of the [Mediterranean Sea](/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea), bounded by Lebanon to the north, Syria to the northeast, Jordan and the West Bank to the east, and Egypt and the Gaza Strip to the southwest. It lies between latitudes [29°](/wiki/29th_parallel_north) and [34° N](/wiki/34th_parallel_north), and longitudes [34°](/wiki/34th_meridian_east) and [36° E](/wiki/36th_meridian_east).

The sovereign territory of Israel (according to the demarcation lines of the [1949 Armistice Agreements](/wiki/1949_Armistice_Agreements) and excluding all territories captured by Israel during the 1967 [Six-Day War](/wiki/Six-Day_War)) is approximately [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in area, of which two percent is water.[[2]](#cite_note-2) However Israel is so narrow that the [exclusive economic zone](/wiki/Exclusive_economic_zone) in the Mediterranean is double the land area of the country.[[222]](#cite_note-223) The total area under Israeli law, including [East Jerusalem](/wiki/East_Jerusalem) and the [Golan Heights](/wiki/Golan_Heights), is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert),[[223]](#cite_note-224) and the total area under Israeli control, including the military-controlled and partially [Palestinian-governed](/wiki/Palestinian_National_Authority) territory of the [West Bank](/wiki/West_Bank), is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[[224]](#cite_note-225) Despite its small size, Israel is home to a variety of geographic features, from the [Negev](/wiki/Negev) desert in the south to the inland fertile [Jezreel Valley](/wiki/Jezreel_Valley), mountain ranges of the [Galilee](/wiki/Galilee), [Carmel](/wiki/Mount_Carmel) and toward the [Golan](/wiki/Golan_Heights) in the north. The [Israeli Coastal Plain](/wiki/Israeli_Coastal_Plain) on the shores of the Mediterranean is home to 57 percent of the nation's population.[[225]](#cite_note-226)[[226]](#cite_note-227)[[227]](#cite_note-228) East of the central highlands lies the [Jordan Rift Valley](/wiki/Jordan_Rift_Valley), which forms a small part of the [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) [Great Rift Valley](/wiki/Great_Rift_Valley).

The [Jordan River](/wiki/Jordan_River) runs along the Jordan Rift Valley, from [Mount Hermon](/wiki/Mount_Hermon) through the [Hulah Valley](/wiki/Hulah_Valley) and the [Sea of Galilee](/wiki/Sea_of_Galilee) to the [Dead Sea](/wiki/Dead_Sea), the lowest point on the surface of the Earth.[[228]](#cite_note-229) Further south is the [Arabah](/wiki/Arabah), ending with the [Gulf of Eilat](/wiki/Gulf_of_Aqaba), part of the [Red Sea](/wiki/Red_Sea). Unique to Israel and the [Sinai Peninsula](/wiki/Sinai_Peninsula) are [makhteshim](/wiki/Makhtesh), or erosion cirques.[[229]](#cite_note-230) The largest makhtesh in the world is [Ramon Crater](/wiki/Ramon_Crater) in the Negev,[[230]](#cite_note-231) which measures [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[[231]](#cite_note-232) A report on the environmental status of the Mediterranean basin states that Israel has the largest number of plant species per square meter of all the countries in the basin.<ref name=rinat>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

### Tectonics and seismicity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

The [Jordan Rift Valley](/wiki/Jordan_Rift_Valley) is the result of tectonic movements within the [Dead Sea Transform](/wiki/Dead_Sea_Transform) (DSF) fault system. The DSF forms the [transform boundary](/wiki/Transform_fault) between the [African Plate](/wiki/African_Plate) to the west and the [Arabian Plate](/wiki/Arabian_Plate) to the east. The Golan Heights and all of Jordan are part of the Arabian Plate, while the Galilee, West Bank, Coastal Plain, and Negev along with the Sinai Peninsula are on the African Plate. This tectonic disposition leads to a relatively high seismic activity in the region. The entire Jordan Valley segment is thought to have ruptured repeatedly, for instance during the last two major [earthquakes](/wiki/Geography_of_Israel#Seismic_activity) along this structure in [749](/wiki/749_Galilee_earthquake) and 1033. The deficit in [slip](/wiki/Fault_(geology)#Slip,_heave,_throw) that has built up since the 1033 event is sufficient to cause an earthquake of [Mw](/wiki/Moment_magnitude_scale)~7.4.[[232]](#cite_note-233) The most catastrophic earthquakes we know of occurred in 31 BCE, 363, 749, and 1033 CE, that is every ca. 400 years on average.[[233]](#cite_note-234) Destructive earthquakes leading to serious loss of life strike about every 80 years.[[234]](#cite_note-235) While stringent construction regulations are currently in place and recently built structures are earthquake-safe, [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) the majority of the buildings in Israel were older than these regulations and many public buildings as well as 50,000 residential buildings did not meet the new standards and were "expected to collapse" if exposed to a strong quake.[[234]](#cite_note-235) Given the fragile political situation of the Middle East region and the presence there of major holy sites, a quake reaching magnitude 7 on the Richter scale could have dire consequences for world peace.[[233]](#cite_note-234)

### Climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[thumb|Israel map of Köppen climate classification.](/wiki/File:Isreal_map_of_Köppen_climate_classification.svg) Temperatures in Israel vary widely, especially during the winter. Coastal areas, such as those of [Tel Aviv](/wiki/Tel_Aviv) and [Haifa](/wiki/Haifa), have a typical [Mediterranean climate](/wiki/Mediterranean_climate) with cool, rainy winters and long, hot summers. The area of [Beersheba](/wiki/Beersheba) and the Northern Negev has a [semi-arid climate](/wiki/Semi-arid_climate) with hot summers, cool winters and fewer rainy days than the Mediterranean climate. The Southern Negev and the Arava areas have [desert climate](/wiki/Desert_climate) with very hot and dry summers, and mild winters with few days of rain. The highest temperature in the continent of Asia ([Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)) was recorded in 1942 at [Tirat Zvi](/wiki/Tirat_Zvi) kibbutz in the northern Jordan river valley.<ref name=watzman>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>[[235]](#cite_note-236) At the other extreme mountainous regions can be windy, cold, and areas at elevation of 750 meters or more (same elevation as Jerusalem) will usually receive at least one snowfall each year.[[236]](#cite_note-237) From May to September, rain in Israel is rare.[[237]](#cite_note-238)[[238]](#cite_note-239) With scarce water resources, Israel has developed various water-saving technologies, including [drip irrigation](/wiki/Drip_irrigation).[[239]](#cite_note-240) Israelis also take advantage of the considerable sunlight available for [solar energy](/wiki/Solar_energy), making [Israel the leading nation in solar energy](/wiki/Solar_power_in_Israel) use per capita (practically every house uses solar panels for water heating).[[240]](#cite_note-241) Four different [phytogeographic](/wiki/Phytogeographic) regions exist in Israel, due to the country's location between the temperate and the tropical zones, bordering the Mediterranean Sea in the west and the desert in the east. For this reason the flora and fauna of Israel is extremely diverse. There are 2,867 known species of plants found in Israel. Of these, at least 253 species are [introduced](/wiki/List_of_adventive_wild_plants_in_Israel) and non-native.[[241]](#cite_note-242) There are 380 Israeli nature reserves.[[242]](#cite_note-243) <gallery mode="packed"> File:Dover tverya17.jpg|[Tiberias](/wiki/Tiberias) and the [Sea of Galilee](/wiki/Sea_of_Galilee) File:Calaniyot-OrHaner001.jpg|Field of [*Anemone coronaria*](/wiki/Anemone_coronaria), [national flower of Israel](/wiki/National_symbols_of_Israel) File:Israel-2013-Aerial 00-Negev-Makhtesh Ramon.jpg|thumb|[Ramon Crater](/wiki/Ramon_Crater), a unique type of crater that can be found only in Israel and the Sinai peninsula File:Snow 0466.JPG|Snow in [Galilee](/wiki/Galilee) File:Flowers-of-Israel-ver006.jpg|Flowers of Israel </gallery>

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Religion in Israel chart](/wiki/Template:Religion_in_Israel_chart) In 2016, Israel's population was an estimated 8,502,900 million people, of whom 6,363,700 (74.9%) were recorded by the civil government as [Jews](/wiki/Israeli_Jews). 1,766,500 [Arabs](/wiki/Arab_citizens_of_Israel) comprised 20.7% of the population, while non-Arab Christians and people who have no religion listed in the civil registry made up 4.4%.[[20]](#cite_note-20)[[21]](#cite_note-21) Over the last decade, large numbers of migrant workers from Romania, Thailand, China, Africa, and South America have settled in Israel. Exact figures are unknown, as many of them are living in the country illegally,[[243]](#cite_note-244) but estimates run in the region of 203,000.[[22]](#cite_note-22) By June 2012, approximately 60,000 [African migrants](/wiki/Illegal_immigration_from_Africa_to_Israel) had entered Israel.[[244]](#cite_note-245) About 92% of Israelis live in urban areas.[[245]](#cite_note-246) Retention of Israel's population since 1948 is about even or greater, when compared to other countries with mass immigration.[[246]](#cite_note-247) Jewish emigration from Israel (called [*yerida*](/wiki/Yerida) in Hebrew), primarily to the United States and Canada, is described by demographers as modest,[[247]](#cite_note-248) but is often cited by Israeli government ministries as a major threat to Israel's future.[[248]](#cite_note-249)[[249]](#cite_note-250) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), over 300,000 Israeli citizens lived in [West Bank](/wiki/West_Bank) settlements[[250]](#cite_note-251) such as [Ma'ale Adumim](/wiki/Ma'ale_Adumim) and [Ariel](/wiki/Ariel_(city)), including settlements that predated the establishment of the State of Israel and which were re-established after the [Six-Day War](/wiki/Six-Day_War), in cities such as [Hebron](/wiki/Hebron) and [Gush Etzion](/wiki/Gush_Etzion). In 2011, there were 250,000 Jews living in [East Jerusalem](/wiki/East_Jerusalem).[[251]](#cite_note-252) 20,000 Israelis live in [Golan Heights](/wiki/Golan_Heights) settlements.[[188]](#cite_note-189) The total number of [Israeli settlers](/wiki/Israeli_settlers) is over 500,000 (6.5% of the Israeli population). Approximately 7,800 Israelis lived in settlements in the Gaza Strip, until they were evacuated by the government as part of its 2005 [disengagement plan](/wiki/Israel's_unilateral_disengagement_plan).[[252]](#cite_note-253) [300px|thumb|Immigration to Israel in the years 1948–2008. The two peaks, of at least 200,000 each, were in 1949 and 1990.](/wiki/File:Arrivées_en_Israël_entre_1948_et_2008.png) Israel was established as a homeland for the [Jewish people](/wiki/Jews) and is often referred to as a [Jewish state](/wiki/Jewish_state). The country's [Law of Return](/wiki/Law_of_Return) grants all Jews and those of Jewish ancestry the right to [Israeli citizenship](/wiki/Israeli_nationality_law).[[253]](#cite_note-254) Over three quarters, or 75.5%, of the population are Jews from a [diversity of Jewish backgrounds](/wiki/Jewish_ethnic_divisions). Around 4% of Israelis (300,000), ethnically defined as "others", are [Russian descendants](/wiki/Russian_immigration_to_Israel_in_the_1990s) of Jewish origin or family who are not Jewish according to rabbinical law, but were eligible for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return.[[254]](#cite_note-255)[[255]](#cite_note-256)[[256]](#cite_note-257) Approximately 75% of [Israeli Jews](/wiki/Israeli_Jews) are [born in Israel](/wiki/Sabra_(person)), 17% are immigrants from Europe and the Americas, and 8% are immigrants from Asia and Africa (including the [Arab World](/wiki/Arab_World)).[[257]](#cite_note-258)<ref name=Aharoni>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Jews from Europe and the former Soviet Union and their descendants born in Israel, including [Ashkenazi Jews](/wiki/Ashkenazi_Jews), constitute approximately 50% of Jewish Israelis. [Jews who left or fled Arab and Muslim countries](/wiki/Jewish_exodus_from_Arab_and_Muslim_countries) and their descendants, including both [*Mizrahi*](/wiki/Mizrahi) and [*Sephardi*](/wiki/Sephardi) Jews,[[258]](#cite_note-259) form most of the rest of the Jewish population.[[259]](#cite_note-260)[[260]](#cite_note-261)[[261]](#cite_note-262) Jewish intermarriage rates run at over 35% and recent studies suggest that the percentage of Israelis descended from both Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews increases by 0.5 percent every year, with over 25% of school children now originating from both communities.[[262]](#cite_note-263)[Template:Largest cities of Israel](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_Israel)

### Language[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Road sign in](/wiki/File:Rotschild_Boulevards01.JPG) [Hebrew](/wiki/Hebrew_language), [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic_language), and [English](/wiki/English_language) Israel has two official languages, [Hebrew](/wiki/Hebrew_language) and [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic_language).[[2]](#cite_note-2) Hebrew is the primary language of the state and is spoken every day by the majority of the population. Arabic is spoken by the Arab minority, with Hebrew taught in Arab schools. [English](/wiki/English_language) was an official language during the Mandate period; it lost this status after the creation of Israel, but retains a role comparable to that of an official language,[[263]](#cite_note-264)[[264]](#cite_note-265)[[265]](#cite_note-266) as may be seen in road signs and official documents. Many Israelis communicate reasonably well in English, as many television programs are broadcast in English with [subtitles](/wiki/Subtitles) and the language is taught from the early grades in elementary school. In addition, Israeli universities offer courses in the English language on various subjects.[[266]](#cite_note-267) As a country of [immigrants](/wiki/Aliyah), many languages can be heard on the streets. Due to mass immigration from the former Soviet Union and [Ethiopia](/wiki/Aliyah_from_Ethiopia) (some 130,000 [Ethiopian Jews](/wiki/Beta_Israel) live in Israel),[[267]](#cite_note-268)[[268]](#cite_note-269) [Russian](/wiki/Russian_language) and [Amharic](/wiki/Amharic) are widely spoken.[[269]](#cite_note-270) More than one million Russian-speaking immigrants arrived in Israel from the former Soviet Union states between 1990 and 2004.[[270]](#cite_note-271) [French](/wiki/French_language) is spoken by around 700,000 Israelis,[[271]](#cite_note-272) mostly originating from France and North Africa (see [Maghrebi Jews](/wiki/Maghrebi_Jews)).

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|The](/wiki/File:Westernwall2.jpg) [Dome of the Rock](/wiki/Dome_of_the_Rock) and the [Western Wall](/wiki/Western_Wall), Jerusalem.|alt=A large open area with people bounded by old stone walls. To the left is a mosque with large golden dome. Israel comprises a major part of the [Holy Land](/wiki/Holy_Land), a region of significant importance to all [Abrahamic religions](/wiki/Abrahamic_religions) – [Judaism](/wiki/Judaism), [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity_in_Israel), [Islam](/wiki/Islam_in_Israel), [Druze](/wiki/Druze_in_Israel) and [Bahá'í Faith](/wiki/Bahá'í_Faith).

The religious affiliation of [Israeli Jews](/wiki/Israeli_Jews) varies widely: a social survey for those over the age of 20 indicates that 55% say they are "traditional", while 20% consider themselves "secular Jews", 17% define themselves as "[Religious Zionists](/wiki/Religious_Zionism)"; 8% define themselves as "[Haredi](/wiki/Haredi_Judaism) Jews".[[272]](#cite_note-273) Haredi Jews are expected to represent more than 20% of Israel's Jewish population by 2028.[[273]](#cite_note-274) [thumb|upright|9th](/wiki/File:Jerusalem_Holy_Sepulchre_BW_22.JPG) [Station of the Cross](/wiki/Stations_of_the_Cross) on the [*Via Dolorosa*](/wiki/Via_Dolorosa) street in Jerusalem. The [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](/wiki/Church_of_the_Holy_Sepulchre) in the background is venerated by Christians as the site of the [Burial of Jesus](/wiki/Burial_of_Jesus).[[274]](#cite_note-275) Making up 16% of the population, Muslims constitute Israel's largest religious minority. About 2% of the population is [Christian](/wiki/Christianity_in_Israel) and 1.5% is [Druze](/wiki/Druze).[[275]](#cite_note-276) The Christian population primarily comprises [Arab Christians](/wiki/Arab_Christians), but also includes post-Soviet immigrants, the foreign laborers of multinational origins, and followers of [Messianic Judaism](/wiki/Messianic_Judaism), considered by most Christians and Jews to be a form of Christianity.[[276]](#cite_note-277) Members of many other religious groups, including [Buddhists](/wiki/Buddhism) and [Hindus](/wiki/Hindu), maintain a presence in Israel, albeit in small numbers.[[277]](#cite_note-278) Out of more than one million immigrants from the former [Soviet Union](/wiki/Russian_immigration_to_Israel_in_the_1990s) in Israel, about 300,000 are considered not Jewish by the Orthodox rabbinate.[[278]](#cite_note-279) The city of [Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem) is of special importance to Jews, Muslims and Christians as it is the home of sites that are pivotal to their religious beliefs, such as the [Old City](/wiki/Old_City_(Jerusalem)) that incorporates the [Western Wall](/wiki/Western_Wall) and the [Temple Mount](/wiki/Temple_Mount), the [Al-Aqsa Mosque](/wiki/Al-Aqsa_Mosque) and the [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](/wiki/Church_of_the_Holy_Sepulchre).[[279]](#cite_note-280) Other locations of religious importance in Israel are [Nazareth](/wiki/Nazareth) (holy in Christianity as the site of the [Annunciation](/wiki/Annunciation) of [Mary](/wiki/Mary_(mother_of_Jesus))), [Tiberias](/wiki/Tiberias) and [Safed](/wiki/Safed) (two of the [Four Holy Cities](/wiki/Four_Holy_Cities) in Judaism), the [White Mosque](/wiki/White_Mosque,_Ramla) in [Ramla](/wiki/Ramla) (holy in Islam as the shrine of the prophet [Saleh](/wiki/Saleh)), and the [Church of Saint George](/wiki/Church_of_Saint_George,_Lod) in [Lod](/wiki/Lod) (holy in Christianity and Islam as the tomb of [Saint George](/wiki/Saint_George) or [Al Khidr](/wiki/Al_Khidr)). A number of other religious landmarks are located in the [West Bank](/wiki/West_Bank), among them [Joseph's Tomb](/wiki/Joseph's_Tomb) in [Nablus](/wiki/Nablus), the [birthplace of Jesus](/wiki/Church_of_the_Nativity) and [Rachel's Tomb](/wiki/Rachel's_Tomb) in [Bethlehem](/wiki/Bethlehem), and the [Cave of the Patriarchs](/wiki/Cave_of_the_Patriarchs) in [Hebron](/wiki/Hebron). The administrative center of the [Bahá'í Faith](/wiki/Bahá'í_Faith) and the [Shrine of the Báb](/wiki/Shrine_of_the_Báb) are located at the [Bahá'í World Centre](/wiki/Bahá'í_World_Centre) in [Haifa](/wiki/Haifa); the leader of the faith is buried in [Acre](/wiki/Acre,_Israel). Apart from maintenance staff, there is no Bahá'í community in Israel, although it is a destination for [pilgrimages](/wiki/Bahá'í_pilgrimage). Bahá'í staff in Israel do not teach their faith to Israelis following strict policy.[[280]](#cite_note-281)[[281]](#cite_note-282)[[282]](#cite_note-283) A few miles south of the Bahá'í World Centre is the Middle East centre of the reformist [Ahmadiyya](/wiki/Ahmadiyya) movement. Its mixed neighbourhood of Jews and Ahmadi Arabs is the only one of its kind in the country.[[283]](#cite_note-284)[[284]](#cite_note-285)

### Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Education in Israel is highly valued in the national culture with its historical values dating back to Ancient Israel and was viewed as one fundamental blocks of ancient Israelite life.[[285]](#cite_note-286) Israeli culture views higher education as the key to higher mobility and socioeconomic status in Israeli society.[[286]](#cite_note-287) The emphasis of education within Israeli society goes to the gulf within the Jewish diaspora from the [Renaissance](/wiki/Renaissance) and [Enlightenment](/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment) Movement all the way to the roots of Zionism in the 1880s. Jewish communities in the Levant were the first to introduce compulsory education for which the organized community, not less than the parents, was responsible for the education of the next generation of Jews.[[287]](#cite_note-288) With contemporary [Jewish culture's](/wiki/Jewish_culture) strong emphasis, promotion of scholarship and learning and the strong propensity to promote cultivation of intellectual pursuits as well as the nations high university educational attainment rate exemplifies how highly Israeli society values higher education.[[288]](#cite_note-289)[[289]](#cite_note-290)[[290]](#cite_note-291)[[291]](#cite_note-292)[[292]](#cite_note-293)[[293]](#cite_note-294) The Israeli education system has been praised for various reasons, including its high quality and its major role in spurring Israel's economic development and technological boom.[[294]](#cite_note-295) Many international business leaders and organizations such as Microsoft founder [Bill Gates](/wiki/Bill_Gates) have praised Israel for its high quality of education in helping spur Israel's economic development.[[295]](#cite_note-296)[[296]](#cite_note-297) In 2012, the country ranked second among OECD countries (tied with Japan and after Canada) for the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds that have attained tertiary education with 46 percent compared with the OECD average of 32 percent. In addition, nearly twice as many Israelis aged 55–64 held a higher education degree compared to other OECD countries, with 47 percent holding an academic degree compared with the OECD average of 25%.[[28]](#cite_note-28)[[29]](#cite_note-29) In 2012, the country ranked third in the world in the number of academic degrees per capita (20 percent of the population).[[297]](#cite_note-298)[[298]](#cite_note-299) Israel has a school life expectancy of 15.5 years[[299]](#cite_note-300) and a literacy rate of 97.1% according to the United Nations.[[300]](#cite_note-301) The State Education Law, passed in 1953, established five types of schools: state secular, state religious, ultra orthodox, communal settlement schools, and Arab schools. The public secular is the largest school group, and is attended by the majority of Jewish and non-Arab pupils in Israel. Most Arabs send their children to schools where Arabic is the language of instruction.[[301]](#cite_note-302) Education is [compulsory](/wiki/Compulsory_education) in Israel for children between the ages of three and eighteen.[[302]](#cite_note-303)[[303]](#cite_note-304) Schooling is divided into three tiers – primary school (grades 1–6), [middle school](/wiki/Middle_school) (grades 7–9), and high school (grades 10–12) – culminating with [*Bagrut*](/wiki/Bagrut) matriculation exams. Proficiency in core subjects such as mathematics, the [Hebrew language](/wiki/Hebrew_language), Hebrew and general literature, the [English language](/wiki/English_language), history, Biblical scripture and civics is necessary to receive a Bagrut certificate.[[304]](#cite_note-305) In Arab, Christian and [Druze](/wiki/Druze) schools, the exam on Biblical studies is replaced by an exam on Muslim, Christian or Druze heritage.[[305]](#cite_note-306) [Christian Arabs](/wiki/Christian_Arabs) are one of the most educated groups in Israel.[[306]](#cite_note-307) [Maariv](/wiki/Maariv) have describe the [Christian Arabs](/wiki/Christian_Arabs) sectors as "the most successful in education system",[[306]](#cite_note-307) since Christian Arabs fared the best in terms of education in comparison to any other group receiving an education in Israel.[[307]](#cite_note-308) Israeli children from Russian-speaking families have a higher bagrut pass rate at high-school level.[[308]](#cite_note-309) Although amongst immigrant children born in the FSU, the bagrut pass rate is highest amongst those families from Western FSU states of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova (at 62.6%), and lower amongst those from Central Asian and Caucasian FSU states.[[309]](#cite_note-310) In 2003, over half of all Israeli twelfth graders earned a matriculation certificate.[[310]](#cite_note-311) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Hebrew_University_Jerusalem_IL_WV.JPG)[Hebrew University of Jerusalem](/wiki/Hebrew_University_of_Jerusalem) Israel has nine public universities that are subsidized by the state and 49 private colleges.[[304]](#cite_note-305)[[311]](#cite_note-312)[[312]](#cite_note-313) The [Hebrew University of Jerusalem](/wiki/Hebrew_University_of_Jerusalem), Israel's second-oldest university after the [Technion](/wiki/Technion),[[313]](#cite_note-314)[[314]](#cite_note-315) houses the [National Library of Israel](/wiki/National_Library_of_Israel), the world's largest repository of Judaica and Hebraica.[[315]](#cite_note-316) The [Technion](/wiki/Technion_–_Israel_Institute_of_Technology), the Hebrew University, and the [Weizmann Institute](/wiki/Weizmann_Institute_of_Science) consistently ranked among world's 100 top universities by the prestigious [ARWU](/wiki/Academic_Ranking_of_World_Universities) academic ranking.[[316]](#cite_note-317)[[317]](#cite_note-318)[[318]](#cite_note-319) The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University are ranked among the world's top 100 universities by [Times Higher Education](/wiki/Times_Higher_Education) magazine.[[319]](#cite_note-320) Other major universities in the country include [Bar-Ilan University](/wiki/Bar-Ilan_University), the [University of Haifa](/wiki/University_of_Haifa), [The Open University](/wiki/Open_University_of_Israel), and [Ben-Gurion University of the Negev](/wiki/Ben-Gurion_University_of_the_Negev). [Ariel University](/wiki/Ariel_University), in the [West Bank](/wiki/West_Bank), is the newest university institution, upgraded from college status, and the first in over thirty years. Israel's seven research universities (excluding the Open University) are consistently ranked among top 500 in the world.[[320]](#cite_note-321)

## Politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:PikiWiki_Israel_7260_Knesset-Room.jpg) [Knesset](/wiki/Knesset) chamber, home to the Israeli parliament Israel operates under a [parliamentary system](/wiki/Parliamentary_system) as a democratic republic with [universal suffrage](/wiki/Universal_suffrage).[[2]](#cite_note-2) A member of parliament supported by a parliamentary majority becomes the [prime minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Israel)—usually this is the chair of the largest party. The prime minister is the [head of government](/wiki/Head_of_government) and head of the [cabinet](/wiki/Cabinet_of_Israel).[[321]](#cite_note-322)[[322]](#cite_note-323) Israel is governed by a 120-member parliament, known as the [Knesset](/wiki/Knesset). Membership of the Knesset is based on [proportional representation](/wiki/Proportional_representation) of [political parties](/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Israel),[[323]](#cite_note-324) with a [3.25% electoral threshold](/wiki/Elections_in_Israel), which in practice has resulted in coalition governments.

Parliamentary elections are scheduled every four years, but unstable coalitions or a [no-confidence vote](/wiki/Motion_of_no_confidence) by the Knesset can dissolve a government earlier. The [Basic Laws of Israel](/wiki/Basic_Laws_of_Israel) function as an [uncodified constitution](/wiki/Uncodified_constitution). In 2003, the Knesset began to draft an official constitution based on these laws.[[2]](#cite_note-2)[[324]](#cite_note-325) The [president of Israel](/wiki/President_of_Israel) is [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state), with limited and largely ceremonial duties.[[321]](#cite_note-322) Israel has no official religion,[[325]](#cite_note-326)[[326]](#cite_note-327)[[327]](#cite_note-328) but the definition of the state as "[Jewish and democratic](/wiki/Jewish_and_democratic_state)" creates a strong connection with Judaism, as well as a conflict between state law and religious law. [Interaction between the political parties](/wiki/Status_quo_(Israel)) keeps the balance between state and religion largely as it existed during the British Mandate.[[328]](#cite_note-329)

### Legal system[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Israel_Supreme_Court.jpg)[Supreme Court of Israel](/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Israel), Givat Ram, Jerusalem Israel has a [three-tier court system](/wiki/Israeli_judicial_system). At the lowest level are [magistrate](/wiki/Magistrate) courts, situated in most cities across the country. Above them are [district courts](/wiki/District_court), serving as both [appellate](/wiki/Appeal) courts and [courts of first instance](/wiki/Trial_court); they are situated in five of Israel's six [districts](/wiki/Districts_of_Israel). The third and highest tier is the [Supreme Court](/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Israel), located in Jerusalem; it serves a dual role as the highest court of appeals and the [High Court of Justice](/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Israel#High_Court_of_Justice). In the latter role, the Supreme Court rules as a court of first instance, allowing individuals, both citizens and non-citizens, to petition against the decisions of state authorities.[[329]](#cite_note-330)[[330]](#cite_note-331) Although Israel supports the goals of the [International Criminal Court](/wiki/International_Criminal_Court), it has not ratified the [Rome Statute](/wiki/Rome_Statute_of_the_International_Criminal_Court), citing concerns about the ability of the court to remain free from political impartiality.[[331]](#cite_note-332) Israel's legal system combines three legal traditions: [English](/wiki/English_law) [common law](/wiki/Common_law), [civil law](/wiki/Civil_law_(legal_system)), and [Jewish law](/wiki/Halakha).[[2]](#cite_note-2) It is based on the principle of [*stare decisis*](/wiki/Stare_decisis) (precedent) and is an [adversarial system](/wiki/Adversarial_system), where the parties in the suit bring evidence before the court. Court cases are decided by professional judges rather than juries.[[329]](#cite_note-330) Marriage and divorce are under the jurisdiction of the religious courts: [Jewish](/wiki/Beth_din), [Muslim](/wiki/Sharia), Druze, and Christian. A committee of Knesset members, Supreme Court justices, and Israeli Bar members carries out the election of judges.[[332]](#cite_note-333) Administration of Israel's courts (both the "General" courts and the Labor Courts) is carried by the Administration of Courts, situated in Jerusalem. Both General and Labor courts are paperless courts: the storage of court files, as well as court decisions, are conducted electronically. Israel's [Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty](/wiki/Basic_Law:_Human_Dignity_and_Liberty) seeks to defend [human rights and liberties in Israel](/wiki/Human_rights_in_Israel).

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Israel Labelled Map](/wiki/Template:Israel_Labelled_Map) {| class="wikitable sortable" style="text-align:center" |- ! rowspan="2"| District ! rowspan="2"| Capital ! rowspan="2"| Largest city ! colspan="4"| Population[[333]](#cite_note-334)|- ! Jews ! Arabs ! Total ! class="unsortable"| |- ! [Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem_District) | colspan="2"| [Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Sort](/wiki/Template:Sort) | [Template:Ref](/wiki/Template:Ref) |- ! [North](/wiki/Northern_District_(Israel)) | [Nazareth Illit](/wiki/Nazareth_Illit) | [Nazareth](/wiki/Nazareth) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Sort](/wiki/Template:Sort) | |- ! [Haifa](/wiki/Haifa_District) | colspan="2"| [Haifa](/wiki/Haifa) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Sort](/wiki/Template:Sort) | |- ! [Center](/wiki/Central_District_(Israel)) | [Ramla](/wiki/Ramla) | [Rishon LeZion](/wiki/Rishon_LeZion) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Sort](/wiki/Template:Sort) | |- ! [Tel Aviv](/wiki/Tel_Aviv_District) | colspan="2"| [Tel Aviv](/wiki/Tel_Aviv) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Sort](/wiki/Template:Sort) | |- ! [South](/wiki/Southern_District_(Israel)) | [Beersheba](/wiki/Beersheba) | [Ashdod](/wiki/Ashdod) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Sort](/wiki/Template:Sort) | |- ! [Judea and Samaria](/wiki/Judea_and_Samaria_District) | [Ariel](/wiki/Ariel_(city)) | [Modi'in Illit](/wiki/Modi'in_Illit) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Percentage](/wiki/Template:Percentage) | style="text-align:right"| [Template:Sort](/wiki/Template:Sort) | [Template:Ref](/wiki/Template:Ref) |}

[Template:Note](/wiki/Template:Note) Including approximately 200,000 Israeli settlers and 208,000 Palestinians.[[334]](#cite_note-335)[[335]](#cite_note-336)[[336]](#cite_note-337):[Template:Note](/wiki/Template:Note) Israeli citizens only.

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The State of Israel is divided into six main administrative districts, known as *mehozot* (מחוזות; singular: *mahoz*) – [Center](/wiki/Central_District_(Israel)), [Haifa](/wiki/Haifa_District), [Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem_District), [North](/wiki/North_District_(Israel)), [Southern](/wiki/Southern_District_(Israel)), and [Tel Aviv Districts](/wiki/Tel_Aviv_District), as well as the [Judea and Samaria Area](/wiki/Judea_and_Samaria_Area) in the [West Bank](/wiki/West_Bank). All of the Judea and Samaria Area and parts of the Jerusalem and North districts are not recognized internationally as part of Israel. Districts are further divided into fifteen sub-districts known as *nafot* (נפות; singular: *nafa*), which are themselves partitioned into fifty natural regions.[[337]](#cite_note-338) For statistical purposes, the country is divided into three metropolitan areas: [Tel Aviv metropolitan area](/wiki/Tel_Aviv_metropolitan_area) (population 3,206,400), [Haifa metropolitan area](/wiki/Haifa_metropolitan_area) (population 1,021,000), and [Beer Sheva metropolitan area](/wiki/Beersheba_metropolitan_area) (population 559,700).[[338]](#cite_note-339) Israel's largest municipality, in population and area,[[339]](#cite_note-340) is [Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem) with 773,800 residents in an area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) (in 2009). Israeli government statistics on Jerusalem include the population and area of [East Jerusalem](/wiki/East_Jerusalem), which is widely recognized as part of the [Palestinian territories](/wiki/Palestinian_territories) under [Israeli occupation](/wiki/Israeli-occupied_territories).[[340]](#cite_note-341) [Tel Aviv](/wiki/Tel_Aviv), [Haifa](/wiki/Haifa), and [Rishon LeZion](/wiki/Rishon_LeZion) rank as Israel's next most populous cities, with populations of 393,900, 265,600, and 227,600 respectively.[[339]](#cite_note-340)

### Israeli-occupied territories[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|300px|left|Map of Israel showing the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights](/wiki/File:Map_of_Israel,_neighbours_and_occupied_territories.svg) In 1967, as a result of the [Six-Day War](/wiki/Six-Day_War), Israel captured and [occupied](/wiki/Military_occupation) the [West Bank](/wiki/West_Bank), including [East Jerusalem](/wiki/East_Jerusalem), the Gaza Strip and the [Golan Heights](/wiki/Golan_Heights). Israel also captured the [Sinai Peninsula](/wiki/Sinai_Peninsula), but returned it to Egypt as part of the 1979 [Israel–Egypt Peace Treaty](/wiki/Israel–Egypt_Peace_Treaty).[[341]](#cite_note-342) Between 1982 and 2000, Israel occupied part of [southern Lebanon](/wiki/Southern_Lebanon), in what was known as the [Security Zone](/wiki/South_Lebanon_security_belt).

Since Israel's capture of these territories, [Israeli settlements](/wiki/Israeli_settlement) and military installations have been built within each of them. Israel has applied civilian law to the [Golan Heights](/wiki/Golan_Heights_Law) and [East Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem_Law) and granted their inhabitants permanent residency status and the ability to apply for citizenship. The West Bank, outside of the Israeli settlements within the territory, has remained under direct military rule, and Palestinians in this area cannot become Israeli citizens. Israel withdrew its military forces and dismantled the Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip as part of its [disengagement from Gaza](/wiki/Israeli_disengagement_from_Gaza) though it continues to maintain control of its airspace and waters. The UN Security Council has declared the annexation of the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem to be "null and void" and continues to view the territories as occupied.[[342]](#cite_note-343)[[343]](#cite_note-344) The [International Court of Justice](/wiki/International_Court_of_Justice), principal judicial organ of the United Nations, asserted, in its [2004 advisory opinion](/wiki/International_law_and_the_Arab–Israeli_conflict#Ruling_of_the_ICJ) on the legality of the construction of the [Israeli West Bank barrier](/wiki/Israeli_West_Bank_barrier), that the lands captured by Israel in the Six-Day War, including East Jerusalem, are occupied territory.[[344]](#cite_note-345) The status of East Jerusalem in any future peace settlement has at times been a difficult issue in negotiations between Israeli governments and representatives of the Palestinians, as Israel views it as its sovereign territory, as well as part of its capital. Most negotiations relating to the territories have been on the basis of [United Nations Security Council Resolution 242](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_242), which emphasises "the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war", and calls on Israel to withdraw from occupied territories in return for normalization of relations with Arab states, a principle known as "[Land for peace](/wiki/Land_for_peace)".[[345]](#cite_note-346)[[346]](#cite_note-347)[[347]](#cite_note-348) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Raffaespo_-_2938624838.jpg)[Israeli West Bank barrier](/wiki/Israeli_West_Bank_barrier) separating Israel and the West Bank The West Bank was annexed by Jordan in 1950, following the Arab rejection of the UN decision to create two states in Palestine. Only Britain recognized this annexation and Jordan has since [ceded](/wiki/Israel–Jordan_Treaty_of_Peace) its claim to the territory to the [PLO](/wiki/Palestine_Liberation_Organization). The West Bank was occupied by Israel in 1967 during the Six-Day War. The population are mainly [Palestinians](/wiki/Palestinian_people), including [refugees](/wiki/Palestinian_refugee) of the [1948 Arab-Israeli War](/wiki/1948_Arab-Israeli_War).[[348]](#cite_note-349) From their occupation in 1967 until 1993, the Palestinians living in these territories were under [Israeli military administration](/wiki/Coordinator_of_Government_Activities_in_the_Territories). Since the [Israel–PLO letters of recognition](/wiki/Israel –_Palestine_Liberation_Organization_letters_of_recognition), most of the [Palestinian population](/wiki/Demographics_of_the_Palestinian_territories) and [cities](/wiki/List_of_cities_in_Palestinian_Authority_areas) have been under the internal jurisdiction of the [Palestinian Authority](/wiki/Palestinian_National_Authority), and only partial Israeli military control, although Israel has on several occasions redeployed its [troops](/wiki/Israel_Defense_Forces) and reinstated full military administration during periods of unrest. In response to increasing attacks as part of the [Second Intifada](/wiki/Second_Intifada), the Israeli government started to construct the Israeli West Bank barrier.[[349]](#cite_note-350) When completed, approximately 13% of the Barrier will be constructed on the Green Line or in Israel with 87% inside the West Bank.[[350]](#cite_note-351)[[351]](#cite_note-352) The Gaza Strip was [occupied by Egypt from 1948 to 1967](/wiki/Occupation_of_the_Gaza_Strip_by_Egypt) and then by Israel after 1967. In 2005, as part of [Israel's unilateral disengagement plan](/wiki/Israel's_unilateral_disengagement_plan), Israel removed all of its settlers and forces from the territory. Israel does not consider the Gaza Strip to be occupied territory and declared it a "foreign territory". That view has been disputed by numerous international humanitarian organizations and various bodies of the United Nations.[[352]](#cite_note-353)[[353]](#cite_note-354)[[354]](#cite_note-355)[[355]](#cite_note-356)[[356]](#cite_note-357) Following June 2007, when [Hamas assumed power in the Gaza Strip](/wiki/Governance_of_the_Gaza_Strip),<ref name=gaza/> Israel tightened its control of the Gaza crossings along its border, as well as by sea and air, and prevented persons from entering and exiting the area except for isolated cases it deemed humanitarian.<ref name=gaza>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Gaza has a border with Egypt and an agreement between Israel, the European Union and the [PA](/wiki/Palestinian_National_Authority) governed how border crossing would take place (it was monitored by European observers).[[357]](#cite_note-358) Egypt adhered to this agreement under Mubarak and prevented access to Gaza until April 2011 when it announced it was opening its border with Gaza.

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|300px|](/wiki/File:Foreign_relations_of_Israel_Map_July_2011.PNG)[Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) Israel maintains diplomatic relations with 158 countries and has 107 [diplomatic missions](/wiki/Diplomatic_mission) around the world;[[358]](#cite_note-359) countries with whom they have no diplomatic relations include most Muslim countries.[[359]](#cite_note-360) Only three members of the [Arab League](/wiki/Arab_League) have normalized relations with Israel: Egypt and Jordan signed peace treaties in [1979](/wiki/Israel–Egypt_Peace_Treaty) and [1994](/wiki/Israel–Jordan_Treaty_of_Peace), respectively, and Mauritania opted for full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1999. Despite the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, Israel is still widely considered an enemy country among Egyptians.[[360]](#cite_note-361) Under Israeli law, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, and Yemen are enemy countries,[[361]](#cite_note-362) and Israeli citizens may not visit them without permission from the [Ministry of the Interior](/wiki/Ministry_of_Interior_(Israel)).[[362]](#cite_note-363) [Iran](/wiki/Iran–Israel_relations) had diplomatic relations with Israel under the [Pahlavi dynasty](/wiki/Pahlavi_dynasty)[[363]](#cite_note-364) but withdrew its recognition of Israel during the [Islamic Revolution](/wiki/Islamic_Revolution).[[364]](#cite_note-365) As a result of the [2008–09 Gaza War](/wiki/Gaza_War_(2008–09)), Mauritania, Qatar, Bolivia, and Venezuela suspended political and economic ties with Israel.[[365]](#cite_note-366)[[366]](#cite_note-367) The [United States](/wiki/United_States) and the [Soviet Union](/wiki/Soviet_Union) were the first two countries to recognize the State of Israel, having declared recognition roughly simultaneously.[[367]](#cite_note-368) The United States regards Israel as its "most reliable partner in the Middle East,"[[368]](#cite_note-369) based on "common democratic values, religious affinities, and security interests".[[369]](#cite_note-370) Their bilateral relations are multidimensional and the United States is the principal proponent of the [Arab-Israeli peace process](/wiki/Peace_process_in_the_Israeli–Palestinian_conflict). The United States and Israeli views differ on some issues, such as the Golan Heights, Jerusalem, and settlements.[[370]](#cite_note-371) The United States has provided $68 billion in military assistance and $32 billion in grants to Israel since 1967, under the [Foreign Assistance Act](/wiki/Foreign_Assistance_Act) (period beginning 1962),<ref name=PNADR900>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> more than any other country for that period until 2003.<ref name=PNADR900/>[[371]](#cite_note-372)[[372]](#cite_note-373) [Germany's](/wiki/Germany) strong ties with Israel include cooperation on scientific and educational endeavors and the two states remain strong economic and military partners.[[373]](#cite_note-374)[[374]](#cite_note-375) Under the reparations agreement, [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) Germany had paid 25 billion euros in reparations to the Israeli state and individual Israeli Holocaust survivors.[[375]](#cite_note-376) The UK has kept full diplomatic relations with Israel since its formation having had two visits from heads of state in 2007. The UK is seen as having a "natural" relationship with Israel on account of the [British Mandate for Palestine](/wiki/British_Mandate_for_Palestine).[[376]](#cite_note-377) Relations between the two countries were also made stronger by former prime minister [Tony Blair's](/wiki/Tony_Blair) efforts for a two state resolution. Israel is included in the European Union's [European Neighbourhood Policy](/wiki/European_Neighbourhood_Policy) (ENP), which aims at bringing the EU and its neighbours closer.[[377]](#cite_note-378) Although Turkey and Israel did not establish full diplomatic relations until 1991,[[378]](#cite_note-379) Turkey has cooperated with the State since its recognition of Israel in 1949. Turkey's ties to the other Muslim-majority nations in the region have at times resulted in pressure from Arab and Muslim states to temper its relationship with Israel.[[379]](#cite_note-380) Relations between Turkey and Israel took a downturn after the [2008–09 Gaza War](/wiki/Gaza_War_(2008–09)) and Israel's raid of the [Gaza flotilla](/wiki/Gaza_flotilla_raid).[[380]](#cite_note-381) [IHH](/wiki/IHH_(Turkish_NGO)), which organized the flotilla, is a Turkish charity that has been challenged on ties to [Hamas](/wiki/Hamas) and [Al-Qaeda](/wiki/Al-Qaeda).[[365]](#cite_note-366)[[381]](#cite_note-382)[[382]](#cite_note-383)[[383]](#cite_note-384)[[384]](#cite_note-385) Relations between Israel and Greece have improved since 1995 due to the decline of Israeli-Turkish relations.[[385]](#cite_note-386) The two countries have a defense cooperation agreement and in 2010, the [Israeli Air Force](/wiki/Israeli_Air_Force) hosted Greece's [Hellenic Air Force](/wiki/Hellenic_Air_Force) in a joint exercise at the [Uvda base](/wiki/Ovda_Airport). Israel is the second largest importer of Greek products in the Middle East.[[386]](#cite_note-387) The joint Cyprus-Israel oil and gas explorations centered on the [Leviathan gas field](/wiki/Leviathan_gas_field) are an important factor for Greece, given its strong links with [Cyprus](/wiki/Cyprus).[[387]](#cite_note-388) Cooperation in the world's longest sub-sea electric power cable, the [EuroAsia Interconnector](/wiki/EuroAsia_Interconnector), has strengthened relations between Cyprus and Israel.[[388]](#cite_note-389)[[389]](#cite_note-390)[[390]](#cite_note-391) India established full diplomatic ties with Israel in 1992 and has fostered a strong military, technological and cultural partnership with the country since then.[[391]](#cite_note-392) According to an international opinion survey conducted in 2009 on behalf of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, India is the most pro-Israel country in the world.[[392]](#cite_note-393)[[393]](#cite_note-394) India is the largest customer of Israeli military equipment and Israel is the second-largest military partner of India after the Russian Federation.[[394]](#cite_note-395) India is also the third-largest Asian economic partner of Israel[[395]](#cite_note-396) and the two countries have [military](/wiki/India–Israel_relations#Military_and_strategic_ties) as well as extensive [space technology](/wiki/Space_technology) ties.[[396]](#cite_note-397)[[397]](#cite_note-398) India became the top source market for Israel from Asia in 2010 with 41,000 tourist arrivals in that year.[[398]](#cite_note-399) Azerbaijan is one of the few majority Muslim countries to develop bilateral strategic and economic relations with Israel. Azerbaijan supplies Israel with a substantial amount of its oil needs, and Israel has helped modernize the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan. In Africa, Ethiopia is Israel's main and closest ally in the continent due to common political, religious and security interests.[[399]](#cite_note-400) Israel provides expertise to Ethiopia on irrigation projects and thousands of Ethiopian Jews ([Beta Israel](/wiki/Beta_Israel)) live in Israel.

### International humanitarian efforts[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

Israeli foreign aid ranks very low among OECD nations, spending less than 0.1% of its GNI on foreign aid, as opposed to the recommended 0.7%. Individual international charitable donations are also very low, with only 0.1% of charitable donations being sent to foreign causes.[[400]](#cite_note-401) However, Israel has a history of providing emergency aid and humanitarian response teams to disasters across the world.[[401]](#cite_note-402) Israel's humanitarian efforts officially began in 1958, with the establishment of [MASHAV](/wiki/MASHAV), the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs Agency for International Development Cooperation.[[402]](#cite_note-403) Between 1985 and 2015, Israel sent 24 delegations of [IDF search and rescue unit](/wiki/Home_Front_Command) to 22 countries.[[403]](#cite_note-404) In Haiti, immediately following the [2010 earthquake](/wiki/2010_Haiti_Earthquake), Israel was the first country to set up a field hospital capable of performing surgical operations.[[404]](#cite_note-405) Israel sent over 200 medical doctors and personnel to start treating injured Haitians at the scene.[[405]](#cite_note-406) At the conclusion of its humanitarian mission 11 days later,[[406]](#cite_note-407) the Israeli delegation had treated more than 1,110 patients, conducted 319 successful surgeries, delivered 16 births and rescued or assisted in the rescue of four individuals.[[407]](#cite_note-408)[[408]](#cite_note-409) Despite radiation concerns, Israel was one of the first countries to send a medical delegation to Japan following the earthquake and tsunami disaster.[[409]](#cite_note-410) Israel dispatched a medical team to the tsunami-stricken city of [Kurihara](/wiki/Kurihara) in 2011. A medical clinic run by an IDF team of some 50 members featured pediatric, surgical, maternity and gynecological, and otolaryngology wards, together with an optometry department, a laboratory, a pharmacy and an intensive care unit. After treating 200 patients in two weeks, the departing emergency team donated its equipment to the Japanese.[[410]](#cite_note-411) There are additional Israeli humanitarian and emergency response groups that work with the Israel government, including [IsraAid](/wiki/IsraAid), a joint programme run by 14 Israeli organizations and North American Jewish groups,[[411]](#cite_note-412) The Fast Israeli Rescue and Search Team (FIRST),[[412]](#cite_note-413) Israeli Flying Aid (IFA),[[413]](#cite_note-414) Save a Child's Heart (SACH)[[414]](#cite_note-415) and LATET.[[415]](#cite_note-416)

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) The [Israel Defense Forces](/wiki/Israel_Defense_Forces) is the sole military wing of the [Israeli security forces](/wiki/Israeli_security_forces), and is headed by its [Chief of General Staff](/wiki/Chief_of_General_Staff_(Israel)), the *Ramatkal*, subordinate to the [Cabinet](/wiki/Cabinet_of_Israel). The IDF consist of the [army](/wiki/GOC_Army_Headquarters), [air force](/wiki/Israeli_Air_Force) and [navy](/wiki/Israeli_Navy). It was founded during the [1948 Arab–Israeli War](/wiki/1948_Arab–Israeli_War) by consolidating paramilitary organizations—chiefly the [Haganah](/wiki/Haganah)—that preceded the establishment of the state.[[416]](#cite_note-417) The IDF also draws upon the resources of the [Military Intelligence Directorate](/wiki/Military_Intelligence_Directorate_(Israel)) (*Aman*), which works with [Mossad](/wiki/Mossad) and [Shabak](/wiki/Shin_Bet).[[417]](#cite_note-418) The Israel Defense Forces have been involved in several major wars and border conflicts in its short history, making it one of the most battle-trained armed forces in the world.[[418]](#cite_note-419)[[419]](#cite_note-420) Most Israelis are drafted into the military at the age of 18. Men serve two years and eight months and women two years.[[420]](#cite_note-421) Following mandatory service, Israeli men join the [reserve forces](/wiki/Reserve_duty_(Israel)) and usually do up to several weeks of reserve duty every year until their forties. Most women are exempt from reserve duty. [Arab citizens of Israel](/wiki/Arab_citizens_of_Israel) (except the [Druze](/wiki/Druze)) and those engaged in full-time religious studies are exempt from military service, although the [exemption of yeshiva students](/wiki/Tal_committee) has been a source of contention in Israeli society for many years.[[421]](#cite_note-422)[[422]](#cite_note-423) An alternative for those who receive exemptions on various grounds is [*Sherut Leumi*](/wiki/Sherut_Leumi), or national service, which involves a program of service in hospitals, schools and other social welfare frameworks.[[423]](#cite_note-424) As a result of its conscription program, the IDF maintains approximately 176,500 active troops and an additional 445,000 reservists.[[424]](#cite_note-425) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Israel_Defense_Forces_-_Iron_Dome_Intercepts_Rockets_from_the_Gaza_Strip.jpg)[Iron Dome](/wiki/Iron_Dome) is the world's first operational anti-[artillery rocket](/wiki/Rocket_artillery) defense system. The nation's military relies heavily on [high-tech weapons systems](/wiki/Military_equipment_of_Israel) designed and manufactured in Israel as well as some foreign imports. The [Arrow missile](/wiki/Arrow_(Israeli_missile)) is one of the world's few operational [anti-ballistic missile](/wiki/Anti-ballistic_missile) systems.[[425]](#cite_note-426) The [Python air-to-air missile](/wiki/Python_(missile)) series is often considered one of the most crucial weapons in its military history.[[426]](#cite_note-427) Israel's [Spike](/wiki/Spike_(missile)) missile is one of the most widely exported [ATGMs](/wiki/Anti-tank_missile) in the world.[[427]](#cite_note-428) Israel's [Iron Dome](/wiki/Iron_Dome) anti-missile air defense system gained worldwide acclaim after intercepting hundreds of [Qassam](/wiki/Qassam_rocket), [122 mm Grad](/wiki/BM-21_Grad) and [Fajr-5](/wiki/Fajr-5) artillery [rockets](/wiki/Rocket) fire by Palestinian militants from the Gaza Strip.<ref name=Johnson>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref><ref name=Tory>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> Since the [Yom Kippur War](/wiki/Yom_Kippur_War), Israel has developed a network of [reconnaissance satellites](/wiki/Reconnaissance_satellites).[[428]](#cite_note-429) The success of the [*Ofeq*](/wiki/Ofeq) program has made Israel one of seven countries capable of launching such satellites.[[429]](#cite_note-430) Israel is widely believed to [possess nuclear weapons](/wiki/Nuclear_weapons_and_Israel)[[430]](#cite_note-431) as well as [chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction](/wiki/Israel_and_weapons_of_mass_destruction).[[431]](#cite_note-432) Israel has not signed the [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](/wiki/Treaty_on_the_Non-Proliferation_of_Nuclear_Weapons)[[432]](#cite_note-433) and maintains a [policy of deliberate ambiguity](/wiki/Policy_of_deliberate_ambiguity) toward its nuclear capabilities.[[433]](#cite_note-434) The [Israeli Navy's](/wiki/Israeli_Navy) [Dolphin submarines](/wiki/Dolphin-class_submarine) are believed to be armed with [nuclear](/wiki/Nuclear_weapons) [Popeye Turbo missiles](/wiki/Popeye_(missile)#Popeye_Turbo_Submarine_Launched_Cruise_Missile), offering [nuclear second strike](/wiki/Second_strike) capability.[[434]](#cite_note-435) Since the [Gulf War](/wiki/Gulf_War) in 1991, when Israel was attacked by Iraqi [Scud missiles](/wiki/Scud_missile), all homes in Israel are required to have a reinforced security room, [Merkhav Mugan](/wiki/Merkhav_Mugan), impermeable to chemical and biological substances.[[435]](#cite_note-436) Israel has one of the highest ratios of defense spending to GDP of all developed countries, only topped by Oman and Saudi Arabia.[[436]](#cite_note-437) In 1984, for example, the country spent 24%[[437]](#cite_note-438) of its GDP on defense. By 2006, that figure had dropped to 7.3%.[[2]](#cite_note-2) Israel is one of the world's largest arms exporters, and was ranked fourth in the world for weapons exports in 2007.[[438]](#cite_note-439) The majority of Israel's arms exports are unreported for security reasons.[[439]](#cite_note-440) Since 1967, the United States has been a particularly notable foreign contributor of [military aid to Israel](/wiki/Israel–United_States_military_relations#Military_aid): the US is expected to provide the country with $3.15 billion per year from 2013 to 2018.[[440]](#cite_note-441)[[441]](#cite_note-442) Israel is consistently rated low in the [Global Peace Index](/wiki/Global_Peace_Index), ranking 148th out of 162 nations for peacefulness in 2015.[[442]](#cite_note-443)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Money_IL_WV.JPG)[Israeli new shekel](/wiki/Israeli_new_shekel) banknotes and coins (currently being replaced) Israel is considered the most advanced country in [Southwest Asia](/wiki/Southwest_Asia) and the [Middle East](/wiki/Middle_East) in economic and industrial development.[[443]](#cite_note-444) Israel's quality [university education](/wiki/List_of_universities_and_colleges_in_Israel) and the establishment of a highly motivated and educated populace is largely responsible for spurring the country's high technology boom and rapid economic development.[[294]](#cite_note-295) In 2010, it joined the [OECD](/wiki/OECD).[[27]](#cite_note-27)[[444]](#cite_note-445) The country is ranked 3rd in the region and 38th worldwide on the [World Bank's](/wiki/World_Bank) [Ease of Doing Business Index](/wiki/Ease_of_Doing_Business_Index)[[445]](#cite_note-446) as well as in the [World Economic Forum's](/wiki/World_Economic_Forum) [Global Competitiveness Report](/wiki/Global_Competitiveness_Report).[[446]](#cite_note-447) It has the second-largest number of [startup companies](/wiki/Startup_company) in the world (after the United States)[[447]](#cite_note-448) and the largest number of [NASDAQ](/wiki/NASDAQ)-listed companies outside North America.[[448]](#cite_note-449) In 2010, Israel ranked 17th among the world's most economically developed nations, according to [IMD's World Competitiveness Yearbook](/wiki/International_Institute_for_Management_Development). The Israeli economy was ranked as the world's most durable economy in the face of crises, and was also ranked first in the rate of research and development center investments.<ref name=ynet>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The Bank of Israel was ranked first among central banks for its efficient functioning, up from 8th place in 2009. Israel was also ranked as the worldwide leader in its supply of skilled manpower.<ref name=ynet/> The Bank of Israel holds $78 billion of [foreign-exchange reserves](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_foreign-exchange_reserves).[[449]](#cite_note-450) [thumb|350px|Graphical depiction of Israel's product exports in 28 color-coded categories.](/wiki/File:2013_Israeli_Export_Treemap.png) Despite limited natural resources, intensive development of the [agricultural](/wiki/Agriculture_in_Israel) and industrial sectors over the past decades has made Israel largely self-sufficient in food production, apart from grains and beef. Imports to Israel, totaling $77.59 billion in 2012, include raw materials, military equipment, investment goods, rough diamonds, fuels, grain, consumer goods.[[2]](#cite_note-2) Leading exports include electronics, software, computerized systems, communications technology, medical equipment, [pharmaceuticals](/wiki/Pharmaceuticals), fruits, chemicals, military technology, and [cut](/wiki/Diamond_cutting) [diamonds](/wiki/Diamond_industry_in_Israel);[[450]](#cite_note-451) in 2012, Israeli exports reached $64.74 billion.[[2]](#cite_note-2) Israel is a leading country in the [development of solar energy](/wiki/Solar_power_in_Israel).<ref name=CBC>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref><ref name=NPR>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> Israel is a global leader in [water conservation](/wiki/Water_conservation) and [geothermal energy](/wiki/Geothermal_power),[[451]](#cite_note-452) and its development of cutting-edge technologies in software, communications and the life sciences have [evoked comparisons](/wiki/Silicon_Wadi) with [Silicon Valley](/wiki/Silicon_Valley).[[452]](#cite_note-453)[[453]](#cite_note-454) According to the [OECD](/wiki/OECD), Israel is also ranked 1st in the world in expenditure on [Research and Development](/wiki/Research_and_Development) (R&D) as a percentage of GDP.[[454]](#cite_note-455) [Intel](/wiki/Intel)[[455]](#cite_note-456) and [Microsoft](/wiki/Microsoft)[[456]](#cite_note-457) built their first overseas [research and development](/wiki/Research_and_development) centers in Israel, and other high-tech multi-national corporations, such as [IBM](/wiki/IBM), [Google](/wiki/Google), [Apple](/wiki/Apple_Inc), [HP](/wiki/Hewlett-Packard), [Cisco Systems](/wiki/Cisco_Systems), and [Motorola](/wiki/Motorola), have opened R&D facilities in the country.

In July 2007, American business magnate and investor [Warren Buffett's](/wiki/Warren_Buffett) holding company [Berkshire Hathaway](/wiki/Berkshire_Hathaway) bought an Israeli company, [Iscar](/wiki/Iscar), its first non-U.S. acquisition, for $4 billion.[[457]](#cite_note-458) Since the 1970s, Israel has received military aid from the United States, as well as economic assistance in the form of loan guarantees, which now account for roughly half of Israel's [external debt](/wiki/External_debt). Israel has one of the lowest external debts in the developed world, and is a net lender in terms of net external debt (the total value of assets vs. liabilities in debt instruments owed abroad), which [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) stood at a surplus of US$118 billion.[[458]](#cite_note-459) Days of [working time](/wiki/Working_time) in Israel are Sunday through Thursday (for a five-day [workweek](/wiki/Workweek)), or Friday (for a six-day workweek). In observance of [*Shabbat*](/wiki/Shabbat), in places where Friday is a work day and the majority of population is Jewish, Friday is a "short day", usually lasting till 14:00 in the winter, or 16:00 in the summer. Several proposals have been raised to adjust the work week with the majority of the world, and make Sunday a non-working day, while extending working time of other days or replacing Friday with Sunday as a work day.[[459]](#cite_note-460)

### Science and technology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Dan_Shechtman.jpg)[Dan Shechtman](/wiki/Dan_Shechtman), a [materials science](/wiki/Materials_science) professor from the [Technion](/wiki/Technion_–_Israel_Institute_of_Technology), one of six Israelis to win the [Nobel Prize in Chemistry](/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Chemistry) in under a decade.[[460]](#cite_note-461)[[461]](#cite_note-462) Israeli universities are among 100 top world universities in mathematics ([Hebrew University](/wiki/Hebrew_University_of_Jerusalem), [TAU](/wiki/Tel_Aviv_University) and [Technion](/wiki/Technion)), physics (TAU, Hebrew University and [Weizmann Institute of Science](/wiki/Weizmann_Institute_of_Science)), chemistry (Technion and Weizmann Institute of Science), computer science (Weizmann Institute of Science, Technion, Hebrew University, TAU and [BIU](/wiki/Bar-Ilan_University)) and economics (Hebrew University and TAU).[[462]](#cite_note-463) Israel has produced six Nobel Prize-winning scientists since 2002[[460]](#cite_note-461)[[463][463]](#cite_note-464) and has been frequently ranked as one of the countries with the highest ratios of scientific papers per capita in the world.[[464]](#cite_note-465)[[465]](#cite_note-466)[[466]](#cite_note-467) Israel has led the world in stem-cell research papers per capita since 2000.[[467]](#cite_note-468) The [Israeli Space Agency](/wiki/Israel_Space_Agency) coordinates all Israeli space research programs with scientific and commercial goals. In 2012 Israel was ranked ninth in the world by the Futron's [Space Competitiveness Index](/wiki/Space_Competitiveness_Index).[[468]](#cite_note-469) Israel is one of only seven countries that both build their own satellites and launch their own launchers. The [Shavit](/wiki/Shavit) is a [space](/wiki/Outer_space) [launch vehicle](/wiki/Launch_vehicle) produced by Israel to launch small [satellites](/wiki/Satellite) into [low earth orbit](/wiki/Low_earth_orbit).[[469]](#cite_note-470) It was first launched in 1988, making Israel the [eighth nation](/wiki/Timeline_of_first_orbital_launches_by_country) to have a space launch capability. Shavit rockets are launched from the [spaceport](/wiki/Spaceport) at the [Palmachim Airbase](/wiki/Palmachim_Airbase) by the [Israeli Space Agency](/wiki/Israeli_Space_Agency). Since 1988 [Israel Aerospace Industries](/wiki/Israel_Aerospace_Industries) have indigenously designed and built at least 13 commercial, research and spy satellites.[[470]](#cite_note-471) Some of Israel's satellites are ranked among the world's most advanced space systems.[[471]](#cite_note-472) In 2003, [Ilan Ramon](/wiki/Ilan_Ramon) became Israel's first astronaut, serving as payload specialist of [STS-107](/wiki/STS-107), the [fatal mission](/wiki/Space_Shuttle_Columbia_disaster) of the [Space Shuttle *Columbia*](/wiki/Space_Shuttle_Columbia).[[472]](#cite_note-473) Israel is one of the world's technological leaders in water technology. In 2011, its water technology industry was worth around $2 billion a year with annual exports of products and services in the tens of millions of dollars. The ongoing shortage of water in the country has spurred innovation in [water conservation](/wiki/Water_conservation) techniques, and a substantial agricultural modernization, [drip irrigation](/wiki/Drip_irrigation), was invented in Israel. Israel is also at the technological forefront of [desalination](/wiki/Desalination) and water recycling. The Ashkelon seawater reverse osmosis (SWRO) plant, the largest in the world, was voted 'Desalination Plant of the Year' in the Global Water Awards in 2006. Israel hosts an annual Water Technology Exhibition and Conference (WaTec) that attracts thousands of people from across the world.[[473]](#cite_note-474)[[474]](#cite_note-475) By 2014, Israel's desalination programs provided roughly 35% of Israel's drinking water and it is expected to supply 40% by 2015 and 70% by 2050.[[475]](#cite_note-476) As of May 29, 2015 more than 50 percent of the water for Israeli households, agriculture and industry is artificially produced.[[476]](#cite_note-477) As a result of innovations in [reverse osmosis technology](/wiki/Reverse_osmosis), Israel is set to become a net exporter of water in the coming years.[[477]](#cite_note-478) [thumb|alt=A horizontal parabolic dish, with a triangular structure on its top.|The world's largest solar parabolic dish at the](/wiki/File:Solar_dish_at_Ben-Gurion_National_Solar_Energy_Center_in_Israel.jpg) [Ben-Gurion National Solar Energy Center](/wiki/Ben-Gurion_National_Solar_Energy_Center).<ref name=Register>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> Israel has embraced [solar energy](/wiki/Solar_energy); its engineers are on the cutting edge of solar energy technology<ref name=NPR/> and its solar companies work on projects around the world.<ref name=CBC/><ref name=BW>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> Over 90% of [Israeli homes use solar energy](/wiki/Solar_power_in_Israel) for hot water, the highest per capita in the world.[[240]](#cite_note-241)[[478]](#cite_note-479) According to government figures, the country saves 8% of its electricity consumption per year because of its solar energy use in heating.[[479]](#cite_note-480) The high annual incident [solar irradiance](/wiki/Irradiance) at its geographic [latitude](/wiki/Latitude) creates ideal conditions for what is an internationally renowned solar research and development industry in the [Negev Desert](/wiki/Negev_Desert).<ref name=CBC/><ref name=NPR/><ref name=BW/> Israel had a modern electric car infrastructure involving a countrywide network of recharging stations to facilitate the charging and exchange of car batteries. It was thought that this would have lowered Israel's oil dependency and lowered the fuel costs of hundreds of Israel's motorists that use cars powered only by electric batteries.[[480]](#cite_note-481)[[481]](#cite_note-482)[[482]](#cite_note-483) The Israeli model was being studied by several countries and being implemented in Denmark and Australia.[[483]](#cite_note-484) However, Israel's trailblazing electric car company [Better Place](/wiki/Better_Place) shut down in 2013.[[484]](#cite_note-485)

### Transport[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|Reception hall at](/wiki/File:Ben_Gurion_Airport_terminal_3_reception_hall.jpg) [Ben Gurion Airport](/wiki/Ben_Gurion_Airport) Israel has 18,096 kilometers (11,244 mi) of paved roads,[[485]](#cite_note-486) and 2.4 million motor vehicles.[[486]](#cite_note-487) The number of motor vehicles per 1,000 persons was 324, relatively low with respect to developed countries.[[486]](#cite_note-487) Israel has 5,715 buses on scheduled routes,[[487]](#cite_note-488) operated by several carriers, the largest of which is [Egged](/wiki/Egged_(company)), serving most of the country. Railways stretch across 949 kilometers (590 mi) and are operated solely by government-owned [Israel Railways](/wiki/Israel_Railways)[[488]](#cite_note-489) (All figures are for 2008). Following major investments beginning in the early to mid-1990s, the number of train passengers per year has grown from 2.5 million in 1990, to 35 million in 2008; railways are also used to transport 6.8 million tons of cargo, per year.[[488]](#cite_note-489) Israel is served by two international airports, [Ben Gurion International Airport](/wiki/Ben_Gurion_International_Airport), the country's main hub for international air travel near [Tel Aviv-Yafo](/wiki/Tel_Aviv-Yafo), [Ovda Airport](/wiki/Ovda_Airport) in the south, as well as several small domestic airports.[[489]](#cite_note-490) Ben Gurion, Israel's largest airport, handled over 12.1 million passengers in 2010.[[490]](#cite_note-491) On the [Mediterranean](/wiki/Mediterranean) coast, [Haifa Port](/wiki/Port_of_Haifa) is the country's oldest and largest port, while [Ashdod Port](/wiki/Port_of_Ashdod) is one of the few deep water ports in the world built on the open sea.[[489]](#cite_note-490) In addition to these, the smaller [Port of Eilat](/wiki/Port_of_Eilat) is situated on the [Red Sea](/wiki/Red_Sea), and is used mainly for trading with Far East countries.[[489]](#cite_note-490)

### Tourism[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Israel_Aereal_Ropeway_Masada_BW_1.JPG)[Cableway at Masada](/wiki/Masada_cableway), popular tourist attraction Tourism, especially [religious tourism](/wiki/Religious_tourism), is an important industry in Israel, with the country's temperate climate, beaches, [archaeological](/wiki/Archaeology), other historical and [biblical](/wiki/Biblical) sites, and unique geography also drawing tourists. Israel's security problems have taken their toll on the industry, but the number of incoming tourists is on the rebound.[[491]](#cite_note-492) In 2013, a record of 3.54 million tourists visited Israel with the most popular site of attraction being the [Western Wall](/wiki/Western_Wall) with 68% of tourists visiting there.[[492]](#cite_note-493)[[493]](#cite_note-494) Israel has the highest number of museums per capita in the world.[[494]](#cite_note-495)

### Energy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) In 2009, two natural gas reserves, [Tamar](/wiki/Tamar_gas_field) and [Leviathan](/wiki/Leviathan_gas_field), were found near the coast of Israel.[[495]](#cite_note-496) In 2015, Israel located massive oil reserves in the occupied [Golan Heights](/wiki/Golan_Heights), internationally regarded as Syrian territory.[[496]](#cite_note-497)[[497]](#cite_note-498)[[498]](#cite_note-499)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Israel's diverse culture stems from the diversity of its population: Jews from diaspora communities around the world have brought their cultural and religious traditions back with them, creating a melting pot of Jewish customs and beliefs.[[499]](#cite_note-500) Israel is the only country in the world where life revolves around the [Hebrew calendar](/wiki/Hebrew_calendar). [Work and school holidays](/wiki/Public_holidays_in_Israel) are determined by the [Jewish holidays](/wiki/Jewish_holiday), and the official day of rest is Saturday, the [Jewish Sabbath](/wiki/Shabbat).[[500]](#cite_note-501) Israel's substantial Arab minority has also left its imprint on Israeli culture in such spheres as architecture,[[501]](#cite_note-502) music,[[502]](#cite_note-503) and cuisine.[[503]](#cite_note-504)

### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Amos_Oz_by_Kubik.JPG)[Amos Oz's](/wiki/Amos_Oz) works have been translated into 36 languages, more than any other Israeli writer.[[504]](#cite_note-505) [Israeli literature](/wiki/Israeli_literature) is primarily poetry and prose written in Hebrew, as part of the renaissance of [Hebrew](/wiki/Hebrew_language) as a spoken language since the mid-19th century, although a small body of literature is published in other languages, such as English. By law, two copies of all printed matter published in Israel must be deposited in the [National Library of Israel](/wiki/National_Library_of_Israel) at the [Hebrew University of Jerusalem](/wiki/Hebrew_University_of_Jerusalem). In 2001, the law was amended to include audio and video recordings, and other non-print media.[[505]](#cite_note-506) In 2013, 91 percent of the 7,863 books transferred to the library were in Hebrew.[[506]](#cite_note-507) The [Hebrew Book Week](/wiki/Hebrew_Book_Week) is held each June and features book fairs, public readings, and appearances by Israeli authors around the country. During the week, Israel's top literary award, the [Sapir Prize](/wiki/Sapir_Prize), is presented.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

In 1966, [Shmuel Yosef Agnon](/wiki/Shmuel_Yosef_Agnon) shared the [Nobel Prize in Literature](/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature) with German Jewish author [Nelly Sachs](/wiki/Nelly_Sachs).[[507]](#cite_note-508) Leading Israeli poets have been [Yehuda Amichai](/wiki/Yehuda_Amichai), [Nathan Alterman](/wiki/Nathan_Alterman) and [Rachel Bluwstein](/wiki/Rachel_Bluwstein). Internationally famous contemporary Israeli novelists include [Amos Oz](/wiki/Amos_Oz), [Etgar Keret](/wiki/Etgar_Keret) and [David Grossman](/wiki/David_Grossman). The Israeli-Arab satirist [Sayed Kashua](/wiki/Sayed_Kashua) (who writes in Hebrew) is also internationally known.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Israel has also been the home of two leading Palestinian poets and writers: [Emile Habibi](/wiki/Emile_Habibi), whose novel [*The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist*](/wiki/The_Secret_Life_of_Saeed_the_Pessoptimist), and other writings, won him the Israel prize for Arabic literature; and [Mahmoud Darwish](/wiki/Mahmoud_Darwish), considered by many to be "the Palestinian national poet."[[508]](#cite_note-509) Darwish was born and raised in northern Israel, but lived his adult life abroad after joining the [Palestine Liberation Organization](/wiki/Palestine_Liberation_Organization).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Music and dance[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Israel_Philharmonic_Orchestra.jpg)[Israel Philharmonic Orchestra](/wiki/Israel_Philharmonic_Orchestra) conducted by [Zubin Mehta](/wiki/Zubin_Mehta)|alt=Several dozen musicians in formal dress, holding their instruments, behind a conductor [Israeli music](/wiki/Music_of_Israel) contains musical influences from all over the world; [Sephardic music](/wiki/Sephardic_music), [Hasidic](/wiki/Hasidic_Judaism) melodies, [Belly dancing](/wiki/Belly_dance) music, [Greek music](/wiki/Music_of_Greece), [jazz](/wiki/Jazz), and [pop rock](/wiki/Pop_rock) are all part of the music scene.[[509]](#cite_note-510)[[510]](#cite_note-511) Among Israel's world-renowned[[511]](#cite_note-512)[[512]](#cite_note-513) orchestras is the [Israel Philharmonic Orchestra](/wiki/Israel_Philharmonic_Orchestra), which has been in operation for over seventy years and today performs more than two hundred concerts each year.[[513]](#cite_note-514) Israel has also produced many musicians of note, some achieving international stardom. [Itzhak Perlman](/wiki/Itzhak_Perlman), [Pinchas Zukerman](/wiki/Pinchas_Zukerman) and [Ofra Haza](/wiki/Ofra_Haza) are among the internationally acclaimed musicians born in Israel.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) [Israel has participated](/wiki/Israel_in_the_Eurovision_Song_Contest) in the [Eurovision Song Contest](/wiki/Eurovision_Song_Contest) nearly every year since 1973, winning the competition three times and hosting it twice.[[514]](#cite_note-515)[[515]](#cite_note-516) [Eilat](/wiki/Eilat) has hosted its own international music festival, the [Red Sea Jazz Festival](/wiki/Red_Sea_Jazz_Festival), every summer since 1987.[[516]](#cite_note-517) [thumb|upright|Celebrated Israeli ballet dancers,](/wiki/File:Flickr_-_Government_Press_Office_(GPO)_-_Afternoon_of_a_Faun.jpg) [Valery and Galina Panov](/wiki/Valery_Panov), who founded the Ballet Panov, in [Ashdod](/wiki/Ashdod)[[517]](#cite_note-518) The nation's canonical [folk songs](/wiki/Folk_music), known as "Songs of the Land of Israel," deal with the experiences of the pioneers in building the Jewish homeland.[[518]](#cite_note-519) The [Hora](/wiki/Hora_(dance)) circle dance introduced by early Jewish settlers was originally popular in the Kibbutzim and outlying communities. It became a symbol of the Zionist reconstruction and of the ability to experience joy amidst austerity. It now plays a significant role in modern Israeli folk dancing and is regularly performed at weddings and other celebrations, and in group dances throughout Israel.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Modern dance in Israel is a flourishing field, and several Israeli choreographers such as [Ohad Naharin](/wiki/Ohad_Naharin), Rami Beer, [Barak Marshall](/wiki/Barak_Marshall) and many others, are considered [Template:By whom](/wiki/Template:By_whom) to be among the most versatile and original international creators working today. Famous Israeli companies include the [Batsheva Dance Company](/wiki/Batsheva_Dance_Company) and the [Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company](/wiki/Kibbutz_Contemporary_Dance_Company).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Israel is home to many Palestinian musicians, including internationally acclaimed [oud](/wiki/Oud) and violin virtuoso Taiseer Elias, singer [Amal Murkus](/wiki/Amal_Murkus), and brothers Samir and [Wissam Joubran](/wiki/Wissam_Joubran). Israeli Arab musicians have achieved fame beyond Israel's borders: Elias and Murkus frequently play to audiences in Europe and America, and oud player Darwish Darwish (Prof. Elias's student) was awarded first prize in the all-Arab oud contest in Egypt in 2003. The [Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance](/wiki/Jerusalem_Academy_of_Music_and_Dance) has an advanced degree program, headed by Taiseer Elias, in Arabic music.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Cinema and theatre[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|right|](/wiki/File:Habima_Theatre_building-Tel_Aviv-3.jpg)[Habima Theatre](/wiki/Habima_Theatre), in [Tel Aviv](/wiki/Tel_Aviv)

Ten Israeli films have been final nominees for [Best Foreign Language Film](/wiki/Academy_Award_for_Best_Foreign_Language_Film) at the [Academy Awards](/wiki/Academy_Award) since the establishment of Israel. The 2009 movie [*Ajami*](/wiki/Ajami_(film)) was the third consecutive nomination of an Israeli film.[[519]](#cite_note-520) Palestinian Israeli filmmakers have made a number of films dealing with the Arab-Israel conflict and the status of Palestinians within Israel, such as [Mohammed Bakri's](/wiki/Mohammed_Bakri) 2002 film [*Jenin, Jenin*](/wiki/Jenin,_Jenin) and [*The Syrian Bride*](/wiki/The_Syrian_Bride).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Continuing the strong theatrical traditions of the [Yiddish theatre](/wiki/Yiddish_theatre) in Eastern Europe, Israel maintains a vibrant theatre scene. Founded in 1918, [Habima Theatre](/wiki/Habima_Theatre) in Tel Aviv is Israel's oldest [repertory](/wiki/Repertory) theater company and national theater.[[520]](#cite_note-521)

### Media[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) In 2014, Israel proper was ranked 96th of 180 according to [Reporters Without Borders'](/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders) [Press Freedom Index](/wiki/Press_Freedom_Index), 2nd below [Kuwait](/wiki/Kuwait) (at 91) in the Middle East and North Africa region.[[521]](#cite_note-522) The 2013 [Freedom in the World](/wiki/Freedom_in_the_World) annual survey and report by U.S.-based [Freedom House](/wiki/Freedom_House), which attempts to measure the degree of democracy and political freedom in every nation, ranked Israel as the [Middle East](/wiki/Middle_East) and North Africa's only free country.[[522]](#cite_note-523)

### Museums[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Billy_Rose_Art_Garden_(14755133799).jpg)[Shrine of the Book](/wiki/Shrine_of_the_Book), repository of the [Dead Sea Scrolls](/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls) in Jerusalem The [Israel Museum](/wiki/Israel_Museum) in Jerusalem is one of Israel's most important cultural institutions[[523]](#cite_note-524) and houses the [Dead Sea scrolls](/wiki/Dead_Sea_scrolls),[[524]](#cite_note-525) along with an extensive collection of [Judaica](/wiki/Judaica) and [European art](/wiki/Western_art_history).[[523]](#cite_note-524) Israel's national [Holocaust](/wiki/Holocaust) museum, [Yad Vashem](/wiki/Yad_Vashem), is the world central archive of Holocaust-related information.[[525]](#cite_note-526) [Beth Hatefutsoth](/wiki/Beth_Hatefutsoth) (the Diaspora Museum), on the campus of [Tel Aviv University](/wiki/Tel_Aviv_University), is an interactive museum devoted to the history of Jewish communities around the world.[[526]](#cite_note-527) Apart from the major museums in large cities, there are high-quality artspaces in many towns and [*kibbutzim*](/wiki/Kibbutz). *Mishkan Le'Omanut* on Kibbutz [Ein Harod Meuhad](/wiki/Ein_Harod_(Meuhad)) is the largest art museum in the north of the country.[[527]](#cite_note-528) Several Israeli museums are devoted to Islamic culture, including the [Rockefeller Museum](/wiki/Rockefeller_Museum) and the [L. A. Mayer Institute for Islamic Art](/wiki/L._A._Mayer_Institute_for_Islamic_Art), both in Jerusalem. The Rockefeller specializes in archaeological remains from the Ottoman and other periods of Middle East history. It is also the home of the first [hominid](/wiki/Hominid) fossil skull found in [Western Asia](/wiki/Western_Asia) called [Galilee Man](/wiki/Galilee_Man).[[528]](#cite_note-529) A cast of the skull is on display at the Israel Museum.[[529]](#cite_note-530)

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|A meal including](/wiki/File:Food_in_Israel.jpg) [falafel](/wiki/Falafel), [hummus](/wiki/Hummus), [French fries](/wiki/French_fries) and [Israeli salad](/wiki/Israeli_salad) Israeli [cuisine](/wiki/Cuisine) includes local dishes as well as dishes brought to the country by Jewish immigrants from the [diaspora](/wiki/Jewish_diaspora). Since the establishment of the State in 1948, and particularly since the late 1970s, an Israeli [fusion cuisine](/wiki/Fusion_cuisine) has developed.<ref name=raviv/> Roughly half of the Israeli-Jewish population attests to keeping [kosher](/wiki/Kosher) at home.[[530]](#cite_note-531)[[531]](#cite_note-532) [Kosher restaurants](/wiki/Kosher_restaurant), though rare in the 1960s, make up around 25% of the total [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), perhaps reflecting the largely secular values of those who dine out.<ref name=raviv>Yael Raviv, [*Falafel Nation,*](https://books.google.it/books?id=KjuYCgAAQBAJ&pg=PT119) University of Nebraska Press, 2015</ref> Hotel restaurants are much more likely to serve kosher food.<ref name=raviv/> The non-kosher retail market was traditionally sparse, but grew rapidly and considerably following [the influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia](/wiki/1990s_Post-Soviet_aliyah) during the 1990s.<ref name=bernstein/> Together with non-kosher fish, rabbits and ostriches, [pork](/wiki/Pork)—often called "white meat" in Israel<ref name=bernstein>Bernstein, [pp. 231–233](https://books.google.it/books?id=FYXlAgAAQBAJ&pg=PA233).</ref>—is produced and consumed, though it is forbidden by both Judaism and Islam.[[532]](#cite_note-533) Israeli cuisine has adopted, and continues to adapt, elements of various styles of [Jewish cuisine](/wiki/Jewish_cuisine), particularly the [Mizrahi](/wiki/Cuisine_of_the_Mizrahi_Jews), [Sephardic](/wiki/Cuisine_of_the_Sephardic_Jews), and [Ashkenazi](/wiki/Ashkenazi_cuisine) styles of cooking, along with [Moroccan Jewish](/wiki/Moroccan_Jews), [Iraqi Jewish](/wiki/Iraqi_Jews), [Ethiopian Jewish](/wiki/Ethiopian_Jewish), [Indian Jewish](/wiki/Indian_Jewish), [Iranian Jewish](/wiki/Iranian_Jews) and [Yemeni Jewish](/wiki/Yemenite_Jews) influences. It incorporates many foods traditionally eaten in the [Arab](/wiki/Arab_cuisine), [Middle Eastern](/wiki/Middle_Eastern_cuisine) and [Mediterranean cuisines](/wiki/Mediterranean_cuisine), such as [*falafel*](/wiki/Falafel), [*hummus*](/wiki/Hummus), [*shakshouka*](/wiki/Shakshouka), [*couscous*](/wiki/Couscous), and [*za'atar*](/wiki/Za'atar), which have become common ingredients in Israeli cuisine. [Schnitzel](/wiki/Schnitzel), [pizza](/wiki/Pizza), [hamburgers](/wiki/Hamburger), [French fries](/wiki/French_fries), [rice](/wiki/Rice) and [salad](/wiki/Salad) are also very common in Israel.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=37)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Israel has won [seven](/wiki/Israel_at_the_Olympics) Olympic medals since its first win [in 1992](/wiki/1992_Summer_Olympics), including a gold medal in [windsurfing](/wiki/Sailing_at_the_2004_Summer_Olympics –_Men's_sailboard) at the [2004 Summer Olympics](/wiki/2004_Summer_Olympics).[[533]](#cite_note-534) Israel has won [over 100](/wiki/Israel_at_the_Paralympics) gold medals in the [Paralympic Games](/wiki/Paralympic_Games) and is ranked about 15th in the [all-time medal count](/wiki/All-time_Paralympic_Games_medal_table). The [1968 Summer Paralympics](/wiki/1968_Summer_Paralympics) were hosted by Israel.[[534]](#cite_note-535) The [Maccabiah Games](/wiki/Maccabiah_Games), an Olympic-style event for Jewish athletes and Israeli athletes, was inaugurated in the 1930s, and has been held every four years since then.

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Teddy_Stadium,_Jerusalem.jpg)[Teddy Stadium](/wiki/Teddy_Stadium) of Jerusalem The most popular spectator sports in Israel are [association football](/wiki/Association_football) and [basketball](/wiki/Basketball).[[535]](#cite_note-536) The [Israeli Premier League](/wiki/Israeli_Premier_League) is the country's premier football league, and the [Israeli Basketball Super League](/wiki/Israeli_Basketball_Super_League) is the premier basketball league.[[536]](#cite_note-537) [Maccabi Haifa](/wiki/Maccabi_Haifa_F.C.), [Maccabi Tel Aviv](/wiki/Maccabi_Tel_Aviv_F.C.), [Hapoel Tel Aviv](/wiki/Hapoel_Tel_Aviv_F.C.) and [Beitar Jerusalem](/wiki/Beitar_Jerusalem_F.C.) are the largest sports clubs. Maccabi Tel Aviv, Maccabi Haifa and Hapoel Tel Aviv have competed in the [UEFA Champions League](/wiki/UEFA_Champions_League) and Hapoel Tel Aviv reached the [UEFA Cup](/wiki/UEFA_Cup) quarter-finals. [Maccabi Tel Aviv B.C.](/wiki/Maccabi_Tel_Aviv_B.C.) has won the [European championship](/wiki/FIBA_European_Champions_Cup_and_Euroleague_history) in basketball six times.[[537]](#cite_note-538) In 2016, the country was chosen as a host for the official [2017 EuroBasket](/wiki/2017_EuroBasket).

In 1964 [Israel](/wiki/Israel_national_football_team) hosted and won the [Asian Nations Cup](/wiki/AFC_Asian_Cup); in 1970 the [Israel national football team](/wiki/Israel_national_football_team) managed to qualify to the [FIFA World Cup](/wiki/1970_FIFA_World_Cup), which is still considered [Template:By whom](/wiki/Template:By_whom) the biggest achievement of Israeli football.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) The [1974 Asian Games](/wiki/1974_Asian_Games) held in Tehran, were the last Asian Games in which Israel participated, and was plagued by the Arab countries which refused to compete with Israel, and Israel since ceased competing in Asian competitions.[[538]](#cite_note-539) Israel was excluded from the [1978 Asian Games](/wiki/1978_Asian_Games) due to security and expense involved if they were to participate.[[539]](#cite_note-540) In 1994, [UEFA](/wiki/UEFA) agreed to admit Israel and all Israeli sporting organizations now compete in Europe.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[thumb|](/wiki/File:BorisGelfandSicilianDefence.jpg)[Boris Gelfand](/wiki/Boris_Gelfand), chess Grandmaster Chess is a leading sport in Israel and is enjoyed by people of all ages. There are many [Israeli grandmasters](/wiki/List_of_Israeli_chess_players) and Israeli chess players have won a number of youth world championships.[[540]](#cite_note-541) Israel stages an annual international [championship](/wiki/Israeli_Chess_Championship) and hosted the [World Team Chess Championship](/wiki/World_Team_Chess_Championship) in 2005. The Ministry of Education and the [World Chess Federation](/wiki/FIDE) agreed upon a project of teaching chess within Israeli schools, and it has been introduced into the curriculum of some schools.[[541]](#cite_note-542)[[542]](#cite_note-543)[[543]](#cite_note-544) The city of [Beersheba](/wiki/Beersheba) has become a national [chess](/wiki/Chess) center, with the game being taught in the city's kindergartens. Owing partly to Soviet immigration, it is home to the largest number of [chess grandmasters](/wiki/Grandmaster_(chess)) of any city in the world.[[544]](#cite_note-545)[[545]](#cite_note-546)The Israeli chess team won the silver medal at the [2008 Chess Olympiad](/wiki/38th_Chess_Olympiad)[[546]](#cite_note-547) and the bronze, coming in third among 148 teams, at the [2010 Olympiad](/wiki/39th_Chess_Olympiad). Israeli grandmaster [Boris Gelfand](/wiki/Boris_Gelfand) won the [Chess World Cup](/wiki/Chess_World_Cup_2009) in 2009[[547]](#cite_note-548) and the [2011 Candidates Tournament](/wiki/World_Chess_Championship_2012#Candidates_tournament) for the right to challenge the world champion. He only lost the [World Chess Championship 2012](/wiki/World_Chess_Championship_2012) to reigning world champion [Anand](/wiki/Viswanathan_Anand) after a speed-chess tie breaker.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Israeli tennis champion [Shahar Pe'er](/wiki/Shahar_Pe'er) ranked 11th in the world on 31 January 2011.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) [Krav Maga](/wiki/Krav_Maga), a martial art developed by Jewish ghetto defenders during the struggle against fascism in Europe, is used by the Israeli security forces and police. Its effectiveness and practical approach to self-defense, have won it widespread admiration and adherence around the world.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=38)]

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* [Outline of Israel](/wiki/Outline_of_Israel)
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[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links)

Government

* [Government services and information website](https://www.gov.il/he/ExternalAbout)
* [About Israel](http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/Pages/default.aspx) at the [Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs](/wiki/Ministry_of_Foreign_Affairs_(Israel))
* [Official website](http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/Pages/Default.aspx) of the [Israel Prime Minister's Office](/wiki/Prime_Minister's_Office_(Israel))
* [Official website](http://www.goisrael.com/) of the [Israel Ministry of Tourism](/wiki/Ministry_of_Tourism_(Israel))
* [Official website](http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/cw_usr_view_Folder?ID=141) of the [Israel Central Bureau of Statistics](/wiki/Israel_Central_Bureau_of_Statistics)

General information

* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [Israel](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/israel.html) at the [Jewish Virtual Library](/wiki/Jewish_Virtual_Library)
* [Key Development Forecasts for Israel](http://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs/frm_CountryProfile.aspx?Country=IL) from [International Futures](/wiki/International_Futures)
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