

ISRAEL

A Guide for Activists



A publication of the Anti-Defamation League

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KEY FACTS ABOUT ISRAEL

Flag: The colors blue and white were chosen according to the colors of the 'Tallit' – the Jewish prayer shawl. The Star of David appearing in the center of the flag has been a Jewish symbol for hundreds of years.



State Emblem: The official emblem of the State of Israel is the Menorah – a candelabrum, whose shape is derived from the sage plant (Moria). In certain species of the plant, the leaves branch out in a way that resembles the candelabrum that stood in the Holy Temple in ancient Jerusalem. The Menora appearing in the state emblem is similar to the one carved on the Arch of Titus in Rome. It is flanked by two olive branches that symbolize Israel's longing for peace.



Official languages: Hebrew, Arabic, English

Currency: The Israeli currency is the New Israeli **Shekel** (NIS), which is divided into 100 agorot (as of January 1986).
(In December 2014: \$1= approx. 3.9 Shekels)

Capital: Jerusalem. Israel proclaimed Jerusalem as its capital in 1950. The United States, like nearly all other countries, maintains its embassy in Tel Aviv.

Declaration of Independence: May 14, 1948

Governing system: Democratic – unicameral parliamentary.

Constitution: None; however, the Declaration of Establishment (1948), the Basic Laws of the parliament (the Knesset), and the Israeli citizenship law fill many of the functions of a constitution.

Governing Branches: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial.

Executive Branch: includes the President, Prime Minister and government ministries.

President: The first President, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, was sworn into office on 16 February 1949. The President is the titular head of state and is elected by the Knesset every seven years, and the main duties are largely ceremonial. The current president, **President Reuven Rivlin**, was sworn into office on July 24, 2014.

The Prime Minister: The first Prime Minister was David Ben-Gurion. The first government was established on 8 March 1949. Under Israeli law, the Prime Minister serves a term of four years. The current Prime Minister, **Benjamin Netanyahu**, has been in office since March 31, 2009.

Legislative branch: The **Knesset**. The Knesset is the parliament of the State of Israel. It is located in Jerusalem, and has 120 members. Under current law, members of the Knesset are elected for a term of four years. The present Knesset is the 20th, and the elections for this Knesset were held on March 17, 2015. The Knesset has parliamentary sovereignty, and enacts legislation on every issue.

The Judiciary: includes the Supreme Court, the District Court, Magistrates Court, Court for Local Affairs, Religious Court, Traffic Court, Labor Court, Juvenile Court, etc. Judges of the Supreme Court are chosen by an independent non-partisan committee and are formally appointed by the President.

Local authorities: Municipalities, local councils, and regional councils. These authorities have governmental and administrative powers in their areas of jurisdiction, and are responsible for provision of services to their constituencies.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF): The Israeli army is comprised of conscription, reserve and career service. All eligible men and women are drafted at age 18, three years for men and two years for women. Men are liable for reserve duty until age 49 and women until age 24. Individuals accepted at institutions of higher education in disciplines needed by the IDF (medicine, nursing, teaching, engineering, etc.) may defer induction and serve in the IDF in their profession for 3-5 years after graduation. With a small standing army, the IDF is built principally on its reserves, which are regularly called up for training and service.

Geography: The State of Israel is located on the southwest tip of the Asian continent, on the eastern basin of the Mediterranean Sea. The State of Israel lies at a latitude between 29° and the 33° north of the Equator.

Area of the country: 13,714.905 square miles (as of 1967 including East Jerusalem and as of 1982 including the Golan Heights).
Land area: 13,448.3 sq. miles.

Area of lakes: 266.5 sq. miles (Sea of Galilee – 101.9 sq. miles, the Dead Sea-164.6 sq. miles)

Land border: Total length of border: 532.5 miles.

Coastline: Length of Mediterranean Sea Coast 120.5 miles.

Length of Red Sea Coast about 7.456 miles.

Population Figures (2014)

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the population of Israel numbers about 8.2 million inhabitants.

The population of Israel is comprised of:

Over 6.1 million Jews (75 %)

Over 1.7 million Arabs (20.7%)

Over 351,000 are immigrants and their offspring who are not registered as Jews by the Interior Ministry (4.3%).

Annual population growth 2.0%

Urban population 91.8%

Percent of population aged 0-18: 34.9

Percent of population aged 19-64: 55.3

Religious Life

The three most practiced faiths in Israel are Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Israel contains sites holy to practitioners of each of these religions. The City of Jerusalem, houses holy sites for each of these religions: the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque for Muslims, the Western Wall (the remnant of the Second Temple) for Jews and, for Christians ,the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Baha'i World Center, the spiritual and administrative center of the Baha'i faith is located in the city of Haifa.

Other Assorted Facts About Israel

- 43% of the world's Jews live in Israel (2014).
- Over one tenth of the Israeli population is 65 or older.
- There are approximately 193,000 Holocaust survivors living in Israel. (2014)
- The Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth at about 1,300 feet (400 m.) below sea level, lies at the southern end of the Jordan Valley.
- The Mount of Olives in Israel is the oldest, continually used cemetery in the world.
- The cell phone was developed in Israel by Israelis working in the Israeli branch of Motorola. Other major high-tech companies, including Google, Apple, Intel and Microsoft, have significant presences in Israel.
- Relative to its overall population, Israel is the largest immigrant-absorbing nation on earth.
- Israel leads the world in the percentage of plastic bottles it recycles.
- IDF's policies regarding LGBT soldiers are recognized as among the world's most accepting, ensuring that no soldiers are discriminated against based on

their sexual orientation. In 2014, the IDF introduced new guidelines to ensure a supportive environment for transgender soldiers.

- Israel leads the world in the per capita number of scientists and technicians in the workforce, with 145 per 10,000 workers.
- Israel bank notes have braille on them so the blind can identify them.
- Israel has more in-vitro fertilization per capita than anywhere in the world, and it's free.
- Israel has more museums per capita than any other country in the world.
- In recent years, Tel-Aviv has been consistently ranked as a top international tourist destination for its culture, cuisine, nightlife, architecture and large LGBT community.



TOOLS FOR ADVOCACY

ADVOCATING ON CAMPUS

Universities are marketplaces of ideas and change -- many major political and social movements have originated on the college campus. One of the major issues that has become the center of many heated – and intensifying -- discussion on many college campuses across the United States is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Pro-Israel advocacy is a particularly challenging task in today's college and university campus environment. Many high profile academics, charismatic speakers, and influential student leaders present the Israeli-Palestinian situation in a one-sided manner, blaming the conflict on Israel and largely ignoring Palestinian responsibilities.

In addition, the great majority of students (including many Jews) are disinterested, feeling no personal connection to or stake in Israel's future. To many, the Israeli-Palestinian situation is another far-off, seemingly endless conflict.

In sum, those who want to make the case for and defend Israel on campus must contend with an activated hostile minority, and a potentially friendly, but generally unengaged and uninformed majority.

THE ANTI-ISRAEL CAMPAIGN ON CAMPUS

While the majority of U.S. campuses do not experience harsh [anti-Israel activism](#), there has been an increase in anti-Israel activity in the last decade. Self-proclaimed anti-Israel and even anti-Semitic speakers are invited to campus and appear at events, including those related to annual "Israeli Apartheid Week" and "Palestine Awareness Week" events. On some campuses, anti-Israel groups have attempted to intimidate Israeli and pro-Israel speakers through heckling and disruptions. Student governments have considered anti-Israel [divestment](#) initiatives promoted by anti-Israel student groups. In a number of instances, anti-Israel activity has crossed the line into anti-Semitism.

Anti-Israel activity on campus is not a new phenomenon. Such activism was widespread on campuses throughout the 1970s and 1980s, especially during the [First Intifada](#). With the dawn of Arab-Israeli negotiations at the 1991 [Madrid Conference](#), and particularly with the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian [Oslo agreement](#), anti-Israel campaigning on campus receded, although it never entirely ceased. While there were periodic flare-ups of anti-Israel activity, such as those countering the celebration of Israel's 50th anniversary in 1998, themes of peace and reconciliation symbolized by the establishment of Jewish-Arab dialogue groups on some campuses received more

attention. The outbreak of the [Second Intifada](#) in 2000 led to a resurgence of anti-Israel and anti-Zionist campus activity, with some events crossing the line into overt anti-Semitism, a trend continuing until today.

BEING POSITIVE: MAKING THE CASE FOR ISRAEL ON CAMPUS

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a complicated issue that cannot be easily explained through one-line talking points. Making the case for Israel requires a strong background on the conflict, current information, and a nuanced perspective.

The best strategy for students who support Israel is to be proactive rather than merely reactive on campus. Your job is to make a **positive case for Israel, instead of focusing solely on refuting and counteracting anti-Israel agitation**. The latter puts you in the position of always playing catch-up and acting within the parameters of an agenda that is set by others. When you move first, with positive programming, you get to set the tone and the agenda.

The people you most want to educate are not anti-Israel activists, who may never agree with you. Rather, **seek to educate campus opinion leaders, student groups that may be potential allies and the general campus population who are amenable to hearing the case for Israel**. Indeed, a number of your peers may become important public and private sector decision makers in the years to come after they graduate. This outreach is particularly important as anti-Israel student groups are actively seeking to engage other campus organizations.

In making an affirmative case, you will need a long-term, though flexible, plan of action in which you identify your target audiences and come to know them well. You need to educate yourself and know your facts. Most of all, you will need to communicate to others what Israel stands for and what it means to the Jewish people.

Here are some specific actions to consider:

- Bring credible and effective speakers and programs to campus to make a positive case for Israel, at least once each semester. In addition to speakers and programs focusing on current political events, consider bringing in nonpolitical speakers and programs such as artists, musicians, entrepreneurs and environmentalists. Israeli academics on sabbatical in the United States are often available for speaking engagements. When on campus, these academics should not only be used for evening, extracurricular events but also as guest lecturers in appropriate courses. In addition, set up an interview for speakers with a reporter from the campus newspaper and schedule an appearance on campus radio or television. Always reach out to the campus media and invite them to cover your events.
- Provide concise, well-written and researched letters, op-eds and longer articles to the [campus media](#). Submit items on a regular basis, but do not overdo it. These submissions should not always come from the same person or small group.

- Have a supply of literature on Israel on hand and seek to distribute it widely. Download and post such material on your group's Web site.
- Present an image of Israel beyond the conflict. Engage students through music, literature, films, scientific research, business development, high-tech and other elements of Israeli society.
- Take the lead on campus-wide campaigns that connect Israel to the mutual interests of other student groups. For example, Israel has a long history of providing equipment, financial resources and volunteer assistance to countries and people in crisis. By working on a campaign to help victims of natural disasters, environmental initiatives, or promoting awareness about HIV/AIDS, you can find common ground and potential allies.
- Utilize web sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and popular campus blogs to distribute positive messages about Israel to your peers.
- Be in regular contact with local and national Jewish organizations and your local Israeli consulate, which can be a source of timely information, literature, speakers and programs.

RESPONDING TO ANTI-ISRAEL CAMPAIGNS

While positive programming and proactive, long-term goals are preferable, there are situations where it is essential to react directly to anti-Israel incidents and rhetoric. Certainly, when anti-Israel events or speakers cross the line into anti-Semitism, the incident cannot be ignored. When reacting to such situations it is also imperative to think strategically.

It is important to consider the following:

- Jewish groups on campus should maintain routine contact with appropriate personnel in the university administration (i.e., Student Affairs) and campus security. Keep them informed on a regular basis of national trends in anti-Israel activity (e.g., divestment campaigns, interruption of Israeli speakers, harassment, etc.) that should concern them. If an emergency situation arises, an already established relationship will provide you with easier access to the administration. Consider appointing one individual or a small group to serve as designated liaisons.
- While anti-Israel protests may be protected by free speech rights, the protests cannot disrupt normal school functions, obstruct student access to school buildings, create pervasive, severe, or persistent harassment of students, or physically intimidate or threaten individual students. When the protests violate these parameters, alert the university and ask administrators to take action. ADL's publication, [Fighting Back: A Handbook for Responding to Anti-Israel Campaigns on College and University Campuses](#) can provide guidelines to dealing with these scenarios.
- Respond with accurate information in a succinct fashion to specific anti-Israel sentiments in the campus media. It is most effective to do so in the form of op-eds or letters to the editor. Generally submit a response once, as continued back and forth gets tiresome to most readers and can prove to be counterproductive.

- If called upon to present Israel's case publicly on campus during a time of intense anti-Israel activity (an anti-Israel event; divestment initiative etc), always be civil and come prepared. Have a supply of literature that refutes the accusations/arguments you are speaking out against. Be sure to frequently cite unbiased sources in your arguments; using only overtly pro-Israel sources invites criticism and allows readers to easily dismiss your arguments. It is appropriate to speak personally about what Israel means to you, how these accusations make you feel.
- When an on-campus panel discussion features speakers who have a record of hostility towards Israel, make the case to the administration and to the general campus community that this event contravenes accepted standards of fairness and balance. This point is especially vital when such events are sponsored/co-sponsored by academic departments or by the university itself, a growing trend. Urge the administration and academic department to ensure that other voices are heard. Research anti-Israel speakers before they arrive on campus. Come prepared with pointed questions and to challenge inaccuracies. Contact your [local ADL office](#) or [ADL's U.S. Anti-Israel Activity resource site](#) for more information about specific speakers and their arguments.
- When anti-Semitic materials and/or rhetoric appear, you should publicly condemn them and seek to educate the administration and the general campus community to the dangers of hate on campus. Campus administrators and leaders should be urged to strongly denounce such bigotry.
- If you feel intimidated or discriminated against by your professor in your classroom because of your viewpoints or beliefs, you should follow established academic procedures and discuss the matter first with your instructor. Do so in a calm and non-polemical fashion. If this does not lead to a satisfactory solution, you should next bring your concerns to the department chair, dean, or whoever is the appropriate follow-up at your university. If such appeals are mounted, be sure to have documentation of your claims: include statements from other students, detailed class notes, the course syllabus and assigned readings. If you need guidance, approach a sympathetic professor, or contact Hillel or an off-campus Jewish organization, such as ADL.
- Always remember that whatever is happening on your campus, you are not alone. There are numerous on-and-off campus organizations available to advise, assist and support your pro-Israel initiatives on campus.

SOME LONG-TERM CONSIDERATIONS: BUILDING COALITIONS, PARTNERS AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Become a leader on your campus. Get involved in student government elections and represent students on issues that are important to all students.
- Find common ground outside of the Israel and Israeli-Palestinian conflict 'boxes' - - issues like social welfare, environmental sustainability, immigration, domestic concerns - - with other student groups on campus and work to build personal relationships with their membership on issues of mutual concern. These may include College Democrats and Republicans, religious groups, African American, Asian American, LGBT and Latina/o student groups. Often, when pro-Israel groups publicly

support issues of common concern with other groups, those groups will, in turn, be more approachable when building support to counter anti-Israel activity on campus.

- Encourage pro-Israel students to be active in key areas of student life such as student government, public affairs forums, campus newspapers and other media. Get many students involved in your events and campaigns and pay attention to developing leaders who can continue the effort when students graduate and leave the campus.
- Encourage Jewish and non-Jewish students to travel to Israel to gain a firsthand perspective. Once they return, encourage them to share their experiences with their peers. There are numerous opportunities for students to travel to Israel at little to no cost, including [ADL's Campus Leaders Mission](#).

ADVOCATING TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

Establishing relationships with your elected officials is the most effective way to communicate the depth of support for Israel among their constituents. As developments in the region pose new questions and challenges, hearing the views of their own pro-Israel constituents is critical.

Lobby Members at Home. There is no substitute for a Member of Congress hearing from constituents. Regular visits when Members are home in their districts and ongoing contact and engagement make even a small constituency more visible and significant. Prior to a Congressional recess, contact your local ADL office to schedule meetings with your Senators and Representative to discuss current developments.

Town Hall Meetings. Town hall meetings convened by Members across the country provide another vehicle to convey the personal importance of support for Israel to a Member's community. Follow your Members of Congress on Facebook or Twitter, or sign up for alerts on their website to be notified of upcoming events. It might facilitate a more in-depth and productive discussion if you notify a Member's staffer in advance if you plan to raise an Israel-related issue, as well as if you reach out to your local ADL office for talking points and possible questions to raise. Consider connecting with the Member's staff at the meeting so that you can follow up with them after the event.

Communication is key. While a face-to-face meeting is most effective, Congressional staff monitor the number of communications received in support of or in opposition to an issue. Communications on policy matters should be sent to the Member's Washington office.

- **E-mail.** Congressional offices respond to constituent e-mail. Be sure to include your home address, indicating that you live in the Member's district.
- **Phone Calls.** Calls convey a heightened sense of urgency. When legislative action is imminent, many Congressional offices keep a tally of calls to gauge public sentiment in their district. Be prepared to supply your address to verify that you live in the district. Call the Capitol switchboard, (202) 225-3121, to connect to your Member's office.
- If you prefer to write a handwritten note, faxing or emailing a scanned copy of a letter is preferable for contact regarding fast-moving legislation since increased security procedures cause delay in mail delivery to Capitol Hill. Be concise and to the point. State the purpose of the letter up front.

To a Senator:

The Honorable (first and last name)

To a Representative:

The Honorable (first and last name)

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Dear Senator ---:

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Dear Representative ---:

Invite Members to speak. Members of Congress welcome opportunities to speak at community meetings or other events. Work with your local ADL office to organize forums and voter education/registration initiatives with candidates to educate them about your concerns.

Reach out to Congressional staff. Getting to know the Congressional staff in your district and in Washington is vital in facilitating ongoing communication with the Member of Congress and impacting policy. Congressional aides frequently meet with constituents while Members are called to vote or to attend committee hearings and meetings. Not only are they the Member's eyes and ears and help shape how a Member votes, but staffers often move up to leadership positions themselves. Treat these meetings as you would a meeting with the Member and communicate your message clearly.

Get to Know Local Elected Officials and Candidates. The best relationships with officials are those which began in their early careers in state and local offices. Today's candidate for City Council may be tomorrow's U.S. Senator. Although these officials and candidates focus on local issues, they can be important voices in support of Israel in the community and beyond.

LOBBYING TIPS

Advance Preparation

- **Designate who will speak for the delegation.** One person should introduce the group, others may take the lead in discussing the separate issues, or taking notes.
- **Learn about what the Member has done** or said on your issues.
- **Work with your local ADL office to prepare background material.** You may not have time for a full discussion and should be prepared to leave behind additional resources.

At the Meeting

- **Be brief.** Introduce the delegation quickly, underlining the connection with the Member's home district. Keep your presentation of issues to a minute or two.
- **Describe local support** for Israel including from other allies in your community.
- **Get to the point** and request a specific action of support.
- **Leave plenty of time to hear out the Member** about his/her views and reactions.

If the Member Disagrees. . .

Disagree without being disagreeable. While Members may have a different view, focus on the commonality of your commitment to Israel and to finding a just and lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors.

- **Stay focused.** If the Member disagrees, they may try to divert the conversation onto another topic. Be sure to communicate concerns clearly.

If the Member Agrees . . .

- **Thank him/her for support** and reiterate the importance of the issue to you and their constituents. Most letters, calls, and e-mails to Congressional offices are negative – which leaves Members with the impression that their positive actions go unnoticed.
- **Let them know you are available** as a resource and to provide support for the Member's work on the issues.

Keep Lines of Communication Open . . .

- **Send a thank you note** to the Member and staffer with whom you met. Take the opportunity to reconfirm any commitments made. If he/she is undecided, restate your point of view and enclose additional information supporting your point.
- **Continue to correspond with your Member and invite staff to community events.**

Keep Up to Date With Key Issues....

- Stay up to date with ADL Advocacy Alerts on Israel issues by following [@ADL_National](#) on Twitter or [ADL](#) on Facebook, or go straight to the [ADL Action Center](#) for letters you can send to your Members. Sign up for the [ADL Advocacy Matters Newsletter](#) for a monthly update on the most pressing issues in Congress.

ADVOCATING TO THE MEDIA

Most Americans' perceptions of the Middle East conflict come from the mass media. Some media – especially large-circulation daily newspapers, network television and wire services – have correspondents based in Israel and continue to devote considerable attention to the Mideast. This is not surprising considering the intensive U.S. involvement in the peace process, America's substantial interests in the region, and the continuing strong ties between the U.S. and Israel. As the only democracy in the region with a vibrant free press, Israel is open to foreign journalists.

The news media obviously plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of the conflict, and it goes without saying that effective advocacy on behalf of Israel includes an assessment of the daily stream of news coverage from the region. There are some things you can do to become an active participant in this process:

- Read your local newspaper every day
- Know the facts and history
- Pay attention to news coverage of the Middle East, and Israel in particular
- Get involved: Respond to coverage that is unfairly critical of Israel

ASSESSING MEDIA COVERAGE

Newspapers and newsmagazines offer a variety of forums for news and analysis. **Breaking news** (or “straight news”) stories are usually written on the scene and describe events currently taking place in the region. News stories are quite different from **columns, editorials, and op-eds**, which generally express an opinion or offer a certain viewpoint. Understanding this difference is essential.

Generally, **news articles** aim to present the story from a balanced perspective, meaning that more than one point of view is represented. The professional journalists who report news stories strive to uphold their profession's standards of accuracy, fairness and balance. However, there are times when news reports on Israel may contain inaccuracies or overlook a critical piece of information that is necessary to put the story in context. While such oversights are often unintentional, they do merit a response.

Often you will see **op-eds, editorials and columns** that are critical of Israeli policies and/or leadership. The most effective and immediate response is a letter to the editor, and/or a brief comment in the publication's online comment section (often on the same page as the article itself). Tips for submitting an effective letter to the editor are outlined below.

If you suspect a news story misrepresents facts or contains an error, it is important to review the item carefully and **check your facts** before drafting a letter to the editor in response.

National and local Jewish organizations can help you to assess the accuracy of a news story and determine the most appropriate course of action.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR & ONLINE COMMENT SECTIONS

Letters to the editor and online comment sections offer effective vehicles for responding to news articles, op-eds and editorials in newspapers, magazines and news Web sites. A few things to bear in mind:

- **Letters must be timely.** Allowing a week, or even a few days to pass before responding to an article will greatly diminish the likelihood of your letter appearing online or in the print edition.
- **Write in response to a particular news item, editorial or op-ed.** Newspapers and magazines are not interested in letters that do not address a story or issue discussed in their pages. In your letter, make specific reference to the story's headline and the date it appeared. Most newspapers/news sites offer online comment sections where you can allow your voice to immediately be heard.
- **Be brief and address a specific issue.** Newspapers generally will not publish lengthy letters that go into the entire history or background of an issue. Many only accept letters for publication of 250 words or less. Be succinct, brief and as "to the point" as possible. Review the publication's instructions for submitting a letter to the editor.
- **Be civil.** Do not personally attack the writer. If responding to an opinion column or op-ed, you may refer in your letter to the writer by name, indicate that you disagree with his or her point of view, and explain why.
- **Be sure to include your name, address and a daytime telephone number.** With the exception of online comment boards, most newspapers will not accept anonymous letters; most will not publish a letter without first attempting to check the identity of the author.
- **Send your letter by e-mail, or use the online comment form.** When using e-mail, direct the letter to the appropriate address for letters. Do not use multiple addresses, or copy others. This will diminish your chances of being published. In addition to writing a letter for publication, you may submit a comment on the publication's Web site, where it will appear immediately.
- **Do not sign on to mass letters or organized campaigns:** Newspapers do not appreciate mass letter-writing campaigns that flood their in-boxes with nearly identical messages. Make your response unique and your own.
- **Check ADL's [Media Watch](#)** to see ADL's responses to recent issues in the news.

Many newspapers, network news outlets, and some Internet news sites have a designated ombudsman or "reader's advocate" – a staff member whose job is to address specific grievances of readers. If you feel strongly that a certain writer or

columnist continues to unfairly portray the issues or facts with regard to Israel, or see a pattern of unfair anti-Israel bias in the publication's coverage, a letter to the ombudsman may be another effective route.

ISRAEL IN THE BLOGOSPHERE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Another battleground for perceptions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the blogosphere, which in recent years has grown tremendously as bloggers of every political persuasion have taken to commenting on political and news developments in the Middle East.

It is generally counterproductive to respond directly to anti-Israel bloggers or Web sites. And it is simply not possible to respond to every anti-Israel blog. If you read something you disagree with, the best course of action may be to simply ignore it. If the blogger is someone who is well-known or respected, such as a political figure, pundit, celebrity or journalist, you should consider posting your own response on the blog itself. You may want to notify ADL so that we can review the posting and also consider responding in kind.

Social-Networking Sites

Social-networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others offer an unprecedented opportunity for direct engagement with others on the issues of the day. Share articles with your friends, family and acquaintances that reflect positively on Israel. Numerous Israeli government entities along with pro-Israel groups have an effective and timely social media presence.

Keep in mind that social-networking sites also offer fertile ground for abuses and spreading of misinformation, and there are as many anti-Israel pages and profiles in cyberspace as there are pro-Israeli pages. Most, however, present legitimate expressions of opinion about the conflict. Also keep in mind that just as you might not attend an anti-Israel rally in the real world, it may be best not to engage directly with anti-Israel activists in cyberspace.

A note about Internet rumors and e-mail forwards

Every year, ADL receives dozens of e-mail message forwards from supporters of Israel asking "Is this true?" These messages often contain unverified or more often simply false rumors about anti-Israel actions, proposed boycotts, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or other issues pertaining to the Jewish state and people.

Unfortunately, the more these messages are forwarded without verification, the more havoc they can cause. In recent years some unfounded rumors, spread virally, have spiraled out of control, causing damage to the reputations of companies and individuals.

We urge supporters of Israel **to always check the accuracy of any e-mail message before forwarding it on to others.** If you are unable to find accurate information on an issue you receive an e-mail about, send the message to ADL for review. We will try and respond promptly. And always check the League's [Internet Rumors section](#) to see if we have posted information.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS AND EVENTS IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY

FOUNDING OF ISRAEL

Zionism

Zionism is the Jewish national movement of rebirth and renewal in the land of Israel – the historical birthplace and biblical homeland of the Jewish people. While there was a continuous Jewish presence in the land of Israel over the millennia, the yearning to return to Zion, the biblical term for both the Land of Israel and Jerusalem, has been the cornerstone of Jewish religious life since the Jewish exile from the land two thousand years ago, and is embedded in Jewish prayer, ritual, literature and culture.

Modern Zionism emerged in the late 19th century in response to the violent persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe and anti-Semitism in Western Europe. Modern Zionism fused the ancient Jewish biblical and historical ties to the ancestral homeland with the modern concept of nationalism into a vision of establishing a modern Jewish state in the land of Israel.

The “father” of modern Zionism, Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl, consolidated various strands of Zionist thought into an organized political movement, advocating for international recognition of a “Jewish state” and encouraging Jewish immigration to build the land.

Today, decades after the actual founding of a Jewish state, Zionism continues to be the guiding nationalist movement of the majority of Jews around the world who believe in, support and identify with the State of Israel.

The Balfour Declaration

The Balfour Declaration is the letter of November 2, 1917 from British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Zionist leader Baron Rothschild which expressed the British government's support for the establishment of a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration was heartily welcomed by the Zionist leadership. Subsequent British policy and declarations on this issue were less supportive of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

The British Mandate

After World War I, the League of Nations was charged with transferring control of territories previously controlled by the German and Ottoman Empires, giving administrative “mandates” to countries who were part of the victorious allied forces (Britain, France, Belgium and Australia). Under the Treaty of Sevres (1920) which divided the Ottoman Empire, the British were granted control over Transjordan (modern day Jordan) and Palestine (modern-day Israel, with the West Bank and Gaza Strip).

The British Mandate of Palestine lasted from 1923-1948, during which time the authorities were challenged by the demand by Zionists for Jewish self-government, and a growing Arab nationalist movement rejecting this Jewish presence and nationalist aspirations.

Throughout this period the Mandate sought to severely limit Jewish immigration into Palestine, even during the World War II period when Jews were being persecuted and exterminated across Europe.

Growing Jewish-Arab violence and attacks on British personnel by some Jewish extremists led Britain to announce that it sought to end its mandate of the area. In the spring of 1947, the question of sovereignty over Palestine was referred to the United Nations.

United Nations Partition Plan 1947 (UN Resolution 181)

Following the British announcement that it would end its authority over Palestine, the question of sovereignty was considered by a special the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). The UNSCOP report recommended the division of the British Mandate-controlled area of Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish, with Jerusalem to be an “international” city. According to the plan, the two states, roughly equal in size and natural resources, would cooperate on major economic issues, sharing their currency, roads, and government services over the territory.

The Zionist leadership reluctantly accepted the partition plan, as it offered at least two of their requirements – sovereignty and control over immigration. The Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding Arab nations rejected it outright, refusing to accept the establishment of a Jewish state in the region.

In UN Resolution 181, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted to approve the partition plan November 29, 1947 by a vote of 33 to 13, with 10 abstentions.

Founding of the State of Israel 1948

Israel's establishment as an independent, sovereign state was officially declared in Tel-Aviv on Friday May 14, 1948 by Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion, the day the British Mandate over Palestine was officially terminated, in accordance with [UN Resolution 181](#).

Standing at the podium of what is now called Independence Hall, Ben-Gurion proclaimed:

“...the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine, to be called Israel...The State of Israel will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion; will promote development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew Prophets; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its

citizens, without distinction of race, creed, or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations...We offer peace and unity to all the neighboring states and their peoples, and invite them to cooperate with the independent Jewish nation for the common good of all.”

The political, social and economic institutions which governed Jewish life in the pre-state period served as the infrastructure of the new state. Despite the euphoria of the moment, Israel faced imminent disaster with an expected invasion by Arab nations who rejected the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Outnumbered in soldiers and arms, the new Israeli army [was attacked](#) from all directions. In addition, the fledgling state had to deal with the huge challenge of absorbing shiploads of Jewish immigrants who arrived daily – many penniless Holocaust survivors and refugees from Arab states.

Nakba

Palestinians refer to the event surrounding the [establishment](#) of the State of Israel as the Nakba, or catastrophe, and hold Nakba commemorations on May 15, the day of the start of the 1948 War of Independence, to mark the Palestinian displacement and refugee crisis. Some Palestinian politicians, writers and commentators have used the concept of the Nakba to insinuate that the very existence of Israel is a catastrophe and question the legitimacy of Israel as the Jewish national homeland.

ISRAELI-ARAB/ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

War of Independence 1948-1949

On May 15, the day after the [establishment](#) of the State of Israel, the Arab armies of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon invaded the new state (Saudi Arabian forces fought with Egypt). The Arab forces were significantly larger and better equipped than Israel's. Yet coordination and organization within the Arab armies was lacking and political squabbles over conquered territories strained relations among the Arab allies. Despite its small number, the Israeli army was well-organized, well-disciplined and well-trained.

Months of fighting interspersed with temporary cease-fires officially ended in January 1949, followed by a series of armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt (February), Lebanon (March), Jordan (April) and Syria (July). Israel held the 5,600 square miles allotted to it by the UN partition plan plus an additional 2,500 square miles. Jordan held the eastern sector of Jerusalem and the West Bank, and Egypt held the Gaza Strip. Borders were finalized based on the frontlines.

Though Israel hoped the agreements would lead to official peace treaties, the Arab states refused to recognize Israel's existence. A total economic, political and social boycott of Israel was maintained.

The Green Line

The Green Line is a term originally used to define Israel's borders with Jordan from the period following Israel's 1948 [Independence War](#) until the 1967 [Six Day War](#) when Israel captured the [West Bank](#) and East Jerusalem. It was named for the green marker used by Israeli and Jordanian officers negotiating an armistice in 1949 to delineate the borders between the two countries.

Today, the term is used to demarcate the "pre 1967" border (with the West Bank and East Jerusalem outside of Israel), and the "post 1967" borders. During the past two decades of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, the Green Line has become the generally-accepted land marker used in land-for-peace negotiations.

The Palestinians – whose population over the Green Line is estimated at over 2.5 million – believe all areas over the green line should be part of their future state.

While Israel maintains that the old 1949 Green Line borders are indefensible - at its narrowest point from the Mediterranean coast to the demarcation line, Israel is only about nine miles wide – it has also proposed land swaps of small areas of Israeli territory within the Green Line in exchange for incorporating into Israel similar areas over the Green Line with large Israeli populations. Israel has repeatedly offered as much as 95% of the West Bank for a Palestinian state in exchange for peace ([see Camp David 2000](#)). Israel has also reportedly offered Palestinian leadership the option of establishing the capital of a future state in East Jerusalem, a move that is considered controversial by many within Israel.

Arab Economic Boycott

The Arab Economic Boycott was initiated in 1946 by the newly formed League of Arab States. The boycott was aimed at preventing the continued growth of the Jewish community in Mandate-era Palestine by boycotting the goods and services produced by Jews in the region. After Israel's [establishment](#) in 1948, the Arab League used the expanded boycott as another form of warfare against the state, in an effort to undermine Israel's economic viability.

The Arab boycott operated on several levels, targeting not only Israel, but also governments, companies, organizations, and individuals around the world with trade relations to Israel. The boycott weakened through the 1980s due to the decline in Arab economic power. The 1979 [Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty](#) also served to further lessen the effects. The greatest change occurred after the signing of the Israel-Palestinian Declaration of Principles in September 1993, the start of the so-called "[Oslo Process](#)" where there was significantly less adherence to the boycott by Arab countries.

The United States was the only nation in the world to adopt comprehensive anti-boycott legislation. U.S. legislation prohibits American citizens or businesses from refusing to do business with Israel at the request of a foreign government, and prohibits furnishing information about business relations with Israel or blacklisted companies at the request of a foreign government.

From its initiation, the Arab boycott undoubtedly impaired Israel's economic growth, but it has never been able to thwart that growth altogether. While the actual cost is impossible to quantify, the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce estimates that due to the boycott, Israel's annual exports were 10 percent smaller than might otherwise have been expected.

While the scope and power of the official Arab boycott has lessened in recent decades, organized campaigns by pro-Palestinian groups in Europe and the United States calling for "[Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#)" of Israel (BDS) which promote grassroots economic sanctions and cultural and academic boycotts against Israel and Israelis have gained momentum. Among these efforts are calls for the boycotting of Israeli goods, campaigns to prevent the participation of Israeli professionals and academics in international conferences and projects, calls to prevent cultural exchanges with Israelis, and initiatives to "divest" university, church and city investment portfolios of companies that do business with Israel. To date, these campaigns have been largely unsuccessful. However they serve the public relations goals of anti-Israel activists by publicly demonizing and singling out Israel. Such boycott initiatives are not covered by American anti-boycott legislation.

Six Day War

In May 1967, events in the region led Israel to expect that an Arab attack was imminent. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser had ordered a withdrawal of the U.N. forces on the border and announced a blockade of Israeli goods through the Straits of Tiran. At the same time, Syria increased border clashes along the Golan Heights and mobilized its troops. Israel held back on military action due to a request by the United States, but international diplomatic efforts to stop the blockade failed. The Arab states began to mobilize their troops, and Arab leaders called for a war of total destruction against Israel.

Arab mobilization compelled Israel to mobilize its own troops, 80 percent of which were reserve civilians. Israel launched a pre-emptive strike against Egypt on June 5. Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, and when Jordan and Syria entered the conflict, Israel also gained control of the West Bank and the eastern sector of Jerusalem from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria. In a catastrophic military defeat – which shook the Arab world for many years to come – the Arab nations ceased their fight six days after the war began.

This new territory brought great changes to Israeli daily life and created new challenges for policymakers. With the reunification of [Jerusalem](#), Jews, who had been prevented by Jordan from entering the eastern part of the city, flocked to pray at the Western Wall for the first time in 19 years. In the [West Bank and Gaza Strip](#), Israel had to grapple with the implications and challenges of having one million Palestinian Arabs now under its administration.

Soon after the end of the fighting, the United Nations passed [Security Council](#)

[Resolution 242](#), calling for an Israeli withdrawal from territories recently occupied and an acknowledgment by the Arab nations of Israel's right to live in peace within secure borders.

The Yom Kippur War 1973

On October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria attacked Israel in an effort to force Israel to surrender the land gained in [1967](#). The attack was on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur. Caught by surprise, in the war's initial days Israel suffered severe losses of life, military equipment, and territory, abruptly shattering the euphoria the country had experienced since its show of strength in the Six Day War. Following an Egyptian refusal to accept a cease-fire and a Soviet airlift of military equipment to bolster Egyptian forces, the United States sent an airlift to Israel enabling her to recover from the first blow and inflict damage on Egypt and Syria. In response, Saudi Arabia led the Arab world in an oil embargo directed against the United States and other western nations. The war officially ended with a U.N.-declared cease-fire, but fighting continued.

When hostilities stopped later that month, the Israeli army held an additional 165 square miles of territory from Syria and had encircled the Egyptian Third Army by the Suez Canal. Efforts for peace treaties at that point failed, and only a year later following U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" were disengagement treaties signed by the parties. As per these limited agreements, Israel withdrew from all areas it had acquired from Syria during the 1973 war, and some territory from the 1967 war. Israel also withdrew from parts of the Sinai. Prisoners of war were exchanged, and the Arab world ended its oil embargo. Despite the victory, Israel's near-defeat by the Arab nations highlighted her continued vulnerability.

The Lebanon War 1982

The Lebanon War was Israel's longest and most controversial war. In the mid-1970s, the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO) broadened its presence in Lebanon, establishing military training centers and escalating artillery and cross-border attacks on civilians in northern Israel. Following the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador in London, Israel attacked PLO targets in Lebanon on June 4, 1982. The PLO responded with rocket and artillery barrages, and Israel retaliated by sending ground troops into Lebanon, in a mission titled "Operation Peace for the Galilee."

While the original plan called for Israeli troops to undertake a 25-mile incursion to wipe out PLO positions in Southern Lebanon, Israeli troops on the ground quickly overran PLO positions, destroyed Syrian installations in the Bekaa Valley, and reached Beirut by June 9. After battles in West Beirut, the PLO surrendered and agreed to evacuate to Tunisia in September.

On September 16, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan permitted Israel's Lebanese allies, the Christian Phalangist forces, to enter the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla with the purpose of rooting out remaining PLO forces who had evaded evacuation. The Phalangists, however, brutally massacred Palestinian civilians in the camp. Many Israelis were horrified by the

incident, and on September 24, 400,000 gathered in Tel Aviv at the first of many demonstrations to protest the Lebanon War. The Government-appointed Kahane Commission released its report in February 1983 finding Sharon “indirectly responsible” and concluded that given the well-known Phalangist hatred of the Palestinians, he should have anticipated that they “were liable to commit atrocities.” Sharon resigned as defense minister.

In 1983, Israel signed an agreement with Lebanon terminating the state of war between the neighbors. While the PLO state-within-a-state had been dismantled, Syrian troops remained in Lebanon and the Christian-dominated Lebanese Government was too weak to control rival factions from attacking each other and Israel. A year later, under pressure from the Syrian government, Lebanon reneged on its agreement and the country remained volatile. Israeli troops completed a phased withdrawal from Lebanon in June 1985, and created a 9-mile-wide security zone in southern Lebanon along the border. The zone was intended to shield Israeli civilian settlements in the Galilee from cross-border attacks, and facilitated the capture of many terrorists. However, many Israeli soldiers continued to be killed in the security zone by terrorist groups supported by Iran and Syria, particularly Hezbollah.

The high number of casualties incurred in the South Lebanon security zone sparked widespread debate within Israel. In March 2000, the Israeli cabinet voted unanimously for a full troop withdrawal from Lebanon by July. The expectation was that such a withdrawal would be part of an agreement with Syria and Lebanon. However, after Syrian President Hafez al-Assad refused to continue talks with Israel, such coordination was not possible, and Prime Minister Ehud Barak authorized a unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon on May 24, 2000.

Israel remains in the Sheba Farms/Har Dov region, which it has held since the 1967 [Six Day War](#). The area is recognized by the United Nations as Syrian, not Lebanese territory, and thus should be the subject of Syrian-Israeli negotiations. Hezbollah insists that it is Lebanese territory and frequently attacks Israeli troops in the area, as well as along the border, and occasionally launches rocket attacks against northern Israeli cities.

The Intifada 1987-1990

In December 1987, collective Palestinian frustration erupted in the popular uprising against Israeli rule known as the Intifada, or “shaking off.” At first a spontaneous outburst, the Intifada developed into a well-organized rebellion. Masses of civilians attacked Israeli troops with stones, axes, Molotov cocktails, hand grenades, and firearms supplied by Fatah, killing and wounding soldiers and civilians. Israeli troops, trained for combat, were not prepared to fight this kind of war. Amid confusing directives, some abuses occurred.

The Intifada petered out by 1990, with most of its leadership arrested. Nonetheless, it had a tremendous impact on Israeli public opinion and policymaking throughout the ensuing decade. While many Israelis were outraged by the Palestinian violence and

angered by the danger Israeli soldiers encountered in the territories, the Intifada intensified the Israeli longing for normalcy and an end to the conflict, creating consensus for the peace negotiations of the 1990s.

For the Palestinians, the Intifada created a new cadre of leadership based in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These youths were supporters of the [PLO](#) leadership in Tunis, but did not consider themselves accountable to it. Many of the youths most active in the Intifada later became officials in the [Palestinian Authority](#).

The Second Intifada September 2000

Widespread Palestinian violence erupted on Friday, September 29, 2000 in the Old City of Jerusalem and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The grassroots protests and violence soon turned to a campaign of deadly terrorism targeting Israeli civilians on buses, restaurants and on city streets. Over 1,000 Israelis were killed, and thousands severely injured in these attacks.

Palestinians claimed the outbreak of violence was provoked by the visit of then-Likud Party Chairman Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount the previous day. Israeli leaders maintain that the violence was orchestrated by the Palestinian leadership, and point to other incidents of violence against Israeli targets in the Gaza Strip days before the Sharon visit. Well before the Sharon visit there were incendiary calls for action in the Palestinian media and in sermons by religious leaders. Furthermore, on September 29, the PA closed the schools under its jurisdiction and coordinated the busing of demonstrators to the Temple Mount. Palestinian leaders have been quoted boasting that the violence was planned as early as July 2000.

The outbreak of Palestinian violence and terrorism was particularly disheartening for Israelis, especially those who were supportive of negotiations with the Palestinians, because it erupted just as the most serious negotiations for a final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinians were being pursued. At the [Camp David Summit](#) convened by U.S. President Bill Clinton in July 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak had offered the Palestinians far greater concessions on Jerusalem, settlements, and territory than ever anticipated. Yet, the Palestinians refused the Israeli offer and turned to a campaign of violence.

In the initial weeks of the Second Intifada, there was a popular element to the violence, with large demonstrations in some Palestinian cities. Intermingled with the civilians at these demonstrations were armed Palestinian gunmen, who often used the cover of the crowd to shoot at Israeli installations. During this period, a Palestinian mob in Ramallah attacked two off-duty Israeli reservists, lynched them, and celebrated their deaths. Within a short time, grassroots participation in the violence ebbed, and the Palestinians turned to directly attacking Israeli civilian centers, military installations, vehicles, and civilians through suicide bombings, drive-by shootings, and rocket launchings, which killed over 1,000 Israelis, and left thousands severely injured.

The [Palestinian Authority](#) was deeply involved in the violence against Israel through PA-

affiliated militia groups such as Fatah's Tanzim and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. The PA leadership, including Yasir Arafat, were directly linked to numerous arms shipments that were intercepted by Israel en route to the Gaza coast, most notably a large cache found in January 2002 aboard the Karine A ship which was on its way from Iran to the Palestinian Authority.

Israel attempted to counter Palestinian violence in a variety of ways. Most directly, it engaged in military operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to destroy the terrorist infrastructure. A major incursion was launched in March-April 2002, following the March 22 [Hamas](#) suicide bombing of a Passover seder at a Netanya hotel in which 30 were killed and 140 were wounded. As a proactive measure, in 2003, the Government of Israel approved the building of a security fence or barrier, intended to prevent Palestinian terrorists from reaching their civilian targets inside Israel.

Numerous international efforts were undertaken to end the crisis, including plans presented by a commission headed by former Senator George Mitchell (known as the Mitchell Plan, calling for an end to violence, Israeli confidence-building measures, followed by final status negotiations) as well as a timetable set out by CIA chief George Tenet (known as the Tenet Plan, calling for an end to Palestinian violence and terror, Israeli confidence building measures, followed by negotiations for a final status agreement). In September 2002, the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation, and the United Nations (collectively dubbed The Quartet) announced its sponsorship of "A Performance-Based [Roadmap](#) to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict."

The Second Intifada petered out slowly, due in part to Palestinian malaise as well as the effectiveness of Israeli military defense and the protective security fence which served to stymie many terrorist attempts.

The Security Barrier

The security barrier (or fence) is a defensive measure first approved by the Israeli government in 2002 to prevent Palestinian terrorists from reaching their civilian targets inside Israel.

The decision to build the barrier was reached following more than two years of relentless terrorism by Palestinians suicide bombers who targeted Israeli buses, cafes, shopping centers and other civilian gathering points during the [Second Intifada](#) which killed over 1,000 Israelis and left thousands severely injured. Israel felt it had no choice but to take strong action to stop these terrorists from entering Israel from their operation centers in the West Bank.

The approximately 450 -mile security barrier (not yet completed) is comprised 90% of chain-link fence and 10% of a concrete barrier. The entire barrier is a multi-fence system which incorporates ditches, barbed wire, patrol roads and observation systems. Contrary to anti-Israel propaganda, a very small section of the barrier is concrete, or can be described as "a wall." The concrete sections are primarily in the area of the

Palestinian cities of Qualqilya and Tulkarim, the locus of many terrorist operations, areas where there is a history of snipers shooting at Israeli civilians, and along the outskirts of municipal Jerusalem.

The security fence has significantly reduced terrorist attacks in Israel. According to the Israeli government, since it has been operational, there has been a dramatic decrease in Palestinian terrorism – not because there have been no attempted attacks, but because the security barrier has impeded terrorists from reaching Israeli cities, or has forced them to take more circuitous routes, leading to their capture.

The fence has caused hardship for a number of Palestinians located on or near its route; however, Israel has made alterations to the initially planned route to ensure it affects a minimal number of people, given the population density and demographic complications that define the area. The Israeli Supreme Court has issued rulings on the barrier's route, ordering it changed in areas where it would lead to unnecessary hardship for Palestinians.

The Second Lebanon War 2006

The so-called “Second Lebanon War” between Israel and the Lebanon-based [Hezbollah](#) was sparked by Hezbollah's July 12, 2006, cross border raid from Lebanon into Israel. Hezbollah attacked a group of Israeli soldiers patrolling the border, killing eight soldiers and kidnapping two others – Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. Israel responded with precision air strikes specifically aimed at Hezbollah positions and operational assets inside Lebanon; Hezbollah immediately unleashed a barrage of Katyusha rockets targeting civilian population centers in Israel's northern cities including Kiryat Shemona, Haifa and Safed. The Hezbollah rocket fire continued at an unprecedented pace of more than 100 per day, totaling nearly 4,000 rockets over the duration of the conflict which lasted close to five weeks.

Israel's air strikes targeted known Hezbollah positions including the offices of its leadership, weapons storage sites, bunkers and rocket launch sites. Israel sought to disable infrastructure used by Hezbollah including Beirut's airport and certain roads and bridges through which Iran and Syria supplied weaponry to Hezbollah. Air strikes were supported by limited ground incursions to specific villages in southern Lebanon near Israel's border followed by a broader ground offensive with the goal of expelling as many Hezbollah terrorists as possible from southern Lebanon. Hezbollah – a U.S.-designated terrorist organization – had occupied the region south of the Litani River since shortly after Israel's U.N.-certified withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000. Following that withdrawal, Hezbollah moved into the vacated area and established themselves in bunkers throughout civilian areas, despite the presence of UNIFIL observer troops stationed there under the terms of Security Council Resolution 1559, occasionally conducting attack on Israel through cross-border raids and Katyusha rocket fire.

During the conflict, Hezbollah indiscriminately fired Katyusha rockets at Israeli population centers with the intent of harming innocent civilians. At least 157 Israelis were killed during the conflict and countless more injured. The rockets also drove nearly

400,000 Israelis from their homes in the north, while those remaining had to spend long periods in bomb shelters for the duration of the month-long conflict. Damage to northern Israel surpassed \$1.5 billion.

Israel responded with air strikes that were intended to hit only legitimate military targets and took extra steps to ensure minimal civilian casualties. In advance of strikes in civilian areas, Israel gave up a certain degree of surprise by dropping fliers and sending radio messages warning civilians to leave specific areas. Israel also employed precise ordnance rather than larger, more effective ordnance to avoid collateral damage. Despite Israel's best efforts, the situation created on the ground by Hezbollah led to the temporary displacement of 800,000 Lebanese civilians and the death of an estimated 1,000 Lebanese. Hezbollah does not report its casualty figures, and many non-uniformed Hezbollah terrorists are suspected of being among the dead.

The conflict subsided with the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, passed unanimously on August 11, 2006 and adopted by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's Cabinet – also unanimously – on August 13, 2006. The resolution called for an immediate cessation of hostilities to be followed by a withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon during a simultaneous takeover of the territory by a 15,000-troop contingent of the Lebanese army and a 15,000-troop beefed-up UNIFIL force comprised of international troops. The resolution required that Lebanon assert its sovereignty over the entire country and forbade the rearming of terrorist militias in Lebanon. Nearly identical to Resolution 1559, which was passed in 2004 but never fully implemented, these stipulations require that Hezbollah be disarmed and not rearmed by any foreign powers, notably Iran and Syria.

Resolution 1701 mandated the “unconditional release” of the two Israeli soldiers kidnapped by Hezbollah. In July 2008, the bodies of Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev were released to Israel as part of a prisoner exchange. Until that time, Hezbollah refused to provide information as to their fate.

Following the cessation of the war, there was much criticism within Israel that while the country had no choice but to act against Hezbollah following its attack on Israeli soil, the military and country had been ill-prepared for the conflict, its soldiers ill-equipped, and that the conflict should have been ended days earlier. Prime Minister Olmert ordered a government commission of inquiry into the war. The resulting Winograd Commission issued its findings in April 2007 and January 2008 on the decision-making before and during the war by the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, the Chief of Staff and others, concluding “we determine that there are very serious failings in these decisions and the way they were made.”

Gaza Operation/Operation Cast Lead December 2008 – January 2009

On December 27, 2008, in response to eight years of barrages of rockets and missiles launched by [Hamas](#) and other terrorist organizations in Gaza, Israel began a ground military operation. In light of the unceasing attacks, Israel felt it had no choice but to act against Hamas and eliminate its operational capabilities.

As then Presidential candidate Barack Obama said in July 2008 when he visited the beleaguered southern town of Sderot – the target of thousands of rockets - "If somebody was sending rockets into my house, where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that."

During the three-week operation, Israel's military action targeted the Hamas terrorist infrastructure, including Hamas operational centers, storage depots, workshops, production facilities, smuggling tunnels, rocket launching sites and Hamas gunmen.

During the operation, Hamas launched hundreds of rockets on Israel with increasingly further reach. On January 6, 2009, rockets hit the central Israeli city of Gadera, putting over 900,000 Israeli civilians living within range of Hamas rocket attacks.

While every military operation is difficult, the Israel Defense Forces faced particular challenges in Gaza. Hamas deliberately placed its operational centers in densely populated neighborhoods. Hamas leadership headquarters were bunkered beneath a major Gaza hospital. Palestinian rocket launchers were placed amidst apartment houses, schools, mosques and hospitals. Hamas stashed weapons in houses, schoolyards and mosques.

The IDF, following its own internal ethics guidelines and rules of engagement, required its forces to make every effort to limit civilian casualties under these very challenging conditions. The IDF conducted investigations of IDF forces during the operation and concluded that: "...throughout the fighting in Gaza, the IDF operated in accordance with international law. The IDF maintained a high professional and moral level while facing an enemy that aimed to terrorize Israeli civilians whilst taking cover amidst uninvolved civilians in the Gaza Strip and using them as human shields. Notwithstanding, the investigations revealed a very small number of incidents in which intelligence or operational errors took place during the fighting. These unfortunate incidents were unavoidable and occur in all combat situations, in particular of the type which Hamas forced on the IDF, by choosing to fight from within the civilian population."

Throughout the operation, Israel also undertook to ensure the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Israeli government officials met regularly with representatives from the United Nations and humanitarian organizations to ensure that Gazans were provided with the necessary aid, food and medical supplies.

On January 17, Israel announced it was unilaterally ending its operation in Gaza. Israel's decision to undertake this unilateral ceasefire followed the January 16 signing of a "Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Israel Regarding Prevention of the Supply of Arms and Related Materiel to Terrorist Groups". The MOU, signed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israel Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni provided Israel with the assurance that the United States would be a partner in preventing the flow of arms and military equipment to Hamas. Following these guarantees, Israel agreed to a one week ceasefire to enable negotiators to work out firm

guidelines for ending Hamas' smuggling of weaponry into Gaza, and guarantees to stop Hamas rocket fire into Israel. By January 21, all Israeli troops had left Gaza.

On January 9, 2009, the United Nations Human Rights Council voted to send a mission of appointed experts to assess Israel's alleged human rights violations in Gaza. The resulting **Goldstone Report** was released in September 2009, and accused Israel of committing war crimes in the Gaza Operation through a deliberate policy to target civilians. The report further alleged that Israeli government and civil society would be unable or unwilling to properly investigate charges of military abuse. The Goldstone Report became a focal point for critics of Israel, who claimed it documented "proof" of Israel's guilt and immoral policies.

In response to the report, Israel submitted a series of comprehensive papers to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon detailing Israel's intensive process of investigating military-related incidents during the Gaza Operation. While Israel found no proof of wrongdoing in numerous incidents, these investigations led to a number of indictments and criminal charges, and military disciplinary action. Israel also reported that consistent with its process of learning lessons from each military operation, the IDF has implemented procedures to further minimize civilian casualties and damage to civilian property, as well as further limits on the use of munitions that contain white phosphorus.

In April 2011, the lead author of the UN report, South African jurist Richard Goldstone, wrote an op-ed in *The Washington Post*, stating: "If I had known then what I know now, the Goldstone Report would have been a different document." In the op-ed, "*Reconsidering the Goldstone Report on Israel and war crimes*," Justice Goldstone withdrew the report's most serious claim that the Israeli Defense Forces intentionally targeted civilians during their operations in Gaza. The op-ed further commended Israel's investigations into charges of abuse. As Justice Goldstone concluded, "the investigations published by the Israeli military and recognized in the U.N. committee's report...indicate that civilians were not intentionally targeted as a matter of policy."

The Flotilla

On May 31, 2010, after numerous warnings, IDF naval forces intercepted six ships en route to Gaza which intended to break the Israeli blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza. The flotilla was sponsored by the [Free Gaza Movement](#) (FGM), several European Palestinian solidarity organizations and [Insani Yardim Vakfi](#) (IHH), an Istanbul-based Islamic charity with ties to Hamas. During the operation, flotilla members on one ship, the Mavi Mamara, violently attacked the IDF personnel with weapons, including knives, metal rods, clubs, and reportedly with live gunfire. In the resulting confrontation, nine flotilla members were killed and more were wounded. Seven Israeli soldiers were wounded.

The Government of Israel and the IDF made repeated attempts to avoid confrontation with the flotilla. Weeks prior to the launching of the flotilla, Israel repeatedly offered the Government of Turkey the opportunity to send humanitarian aid to Gaza via established overland routes. Turkey refused, and continued to support the flotilla effort. As the

Flotilla neared Israel's maritime border, the IDF repeatedly radioed the ships and appealed to the group's organizers to redirect the flotilla to an Israeli port, where the goods and humanitarian aid onboard would be delivered to Gaza by established routes. The flotilla organizers, intent on sensationalist publicity and confrontation with Israel, refused these entreaties.

People on the other five ships in the flotilla did not react with violence to Israeli naval personnel. Their ships sailed to the Israeli port city of Ashdod and they were all deported to their home countries.

The incident aboard the Mavi Mamara resulted in extremely heightened tensions between Turkey and Israel.

In the aftermath of the incident, Israel established an investigatory commission under the leadership of former Supreme Court Justice Jacob Turkel along with other esteemed Israeli figures from legal and academic circles. The so-called Turkel Commission concluded that Israel's naval blockade of Gaza was legal under international law, and that while "the actions carried out by Israel on May 31, 2010, to enforce the naval blockade had the regrettable consequences of the loss of human life and physical injuries...Nonetheless, and despite the limited number of uses of force for which we could not reach a conclusion, the actions taken were found to be legal pursuant to the rules of international law."

In addition, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon established a four-person panel chaired by former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Geoffrey Palmer to investigate the incident. The resulting "Palmer Report," released in September 2011, found that Israel's naval blockade of Gaza is both legal and appropriate, and that Israeli forces encountered "organized and violent resistance from a group of passengers" aboard the Mavi Mamara, but called Israel's action onboard "excessive and unreasonable." The report recommended the resumption of diplomatic relations between Israel and Turkey. Israel accepted the report, with some "reservations."

In March 2013, in a phone call facilitated by U.S. President Barack Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan that Israel "regrets" the loss of life. The two leaders announced they were beginning a process of reconciliation with the intention of eventually resuming diplomatic relations although tensions remain.

Gaza Operation/Operation Pillar of Defense, November 2012

In response to intensifying rocket attacks from Gaza, on November 14, 2012 Israel launched an aerial military operation in Gaza, code named Operation Pillar of Defense, targeting [Hamas](#) and [Islamic Jihad](#) terrorist leadership and rocket launching and storage sites. A ceasefire, facilitated by Egypt and the United States, was reached on November 21.

On the first day of the operation, an Israeli airstrike killed Hamas military chief Ahmed Jabari, who Israeli security sources say was responsible for “all anti-Israel terror activity emanating from the [Gaza] Strip” over the past decade, including the abduction of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit in 2006.

Over the eight days of conflict, Hamas intensified its rocket attacks aimed at Israeli civilians, lobbing 1,506 rockets. While the brunt of the attacks were in Israel’s south, Iranian-made Fajr-5 rockets reached as far as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, with 3.5 million Israelis – nearly half of Israel’s population – under the threat of attack. Six Israelis were killed by rocket fire, and 240 were injured.

According to the IDF, 800 rockets made impact in Israel, while 421 rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome – a U.S.-funded mobile defense system. 152 rockets fired from Gaza crashed back into Gaza.

Gaza Operation/Operation Protective Edge, July-August 2014

In response to unceasing missile, rocket and mortar fire on civilian centers in Israel, on July 7, 2014, Israel launched a military operation, codenamed “Operation Protective Edge.” Israel Defense Forces (IDF) targeted strategic [Hamas](#) facilities, tunnels, weapons and leadership. The conflict lasted 50 days, with a series of short-lived ceasefires breached by Hamas. Israel initially attacked Hamas targets by air, however, on July 17, Israel sent ground forces into Gaza for a period of just over two weeks in order to destroy Hamas’s infrastructure, including rocket storage sites and infiltration tunnels which Israel was unable to destroy by aerial attacks. An open-ended cease-fire was reached on August 26.

Prior to launching the ground operation, Israel attempted to deescalate the situation with repeated warnings to Hamas and appeals to the international community to facilitate a ceasefire. When these measures failed to end the barrage of rocket attacks on Israel’s population centers, Israel determined it had no choice but to act against Hamas and try to constrain its operational capabilities in order to protect Israeli civilians from further attacks.

During the 50-day conflict, 4,700 missiles, rockets and mortars – some of which were supplied by Iran - were fired by Hamas and other affiliated terrorist organizations from Gaza into Israeli cities and towns. At least six Israeli civilians were killed by Hamas rockets, the youngest a 4 year-old boy who was at play in his family’s living room, and a number were injured, some quite seriously. Sixty-six Israeli soldiers were killed during the ground operation.

The majority of the rocket attacks were on population centers in the south, including Sderot, Ashkelon and Ashdod, but scores of rockets reached significantly further into Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, Be’er Sheva, and even as far north as Haifa, a distance of over 85 miles from Gaza. Two-thirds of Israel’s civilian population (equivalent to over 200 million Americans) – Jews, Muslims, Christians and others – were directly threatened by

missiles from Gaza. Hamas' rockets struck Israeli apartment buildings, schools, houses, cars and power lines, causing approximately \$25 million in damage. For seven weeks, sirens warning of incoming rockets blared across Israel. In some regions of the country, sirens went off dozens of times a day, with people having as little as 15 seconds to find safe shelter. Nearly one million Israelis had less than one minute's notice to reach shelter before a rocket would explode.

Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system intercepted approximately 600 projectiles fired into Israel, including missiles fired toward Ben Gurion International Airport. The primary reason Israel's casualty figures were quite low is due to the Iron Dome's success in intercepting the incoming projectiles. Several rockets were also fired by other terrorist groups from Lebanon, Syria and the Egyptian-controlled Sinai desert into Israel. In addition, Israeli security forces stopped Hamas-affiliated terrorists from infiltrating Israel by sea, overland, and through infiltration tunnels.

Despite Israel's best efforts to avoid harming non-combatants, there were many civilian injuries and deaths were reported in Gaza. As in prior Israel-Hamas conflicts, Hamas had deliberately placed its operational centers, storage facilities and rocket launching sites, infiltration tunnels, in densely populated areas, including private homes, mosques, schools and medical facilities, a violation of the Law of Armed Conflict (which prohibits a party to hostilities from deliberately making civilians the object of attack). Hamas' own military manuals urged their fighters, many of whom posed as civilians and non-combatants, to use populated civilian areas so that it "increases the hatred of the citizens towards the attackers [the IDF] and increases their gathering [support] around the city defender [Hamas]."

Israel enacted procedures to warn civilians through leafleting, phone calls and other methods, that their neighborhoods and buildings were located in the vicinity of military operations and urged them to leave the area. In response to these warnings, Hamas advised Gaza residents to ignore "Israeli propaganda" and stay in their homes.

The exact number of Palestinian casualties in Gaza remains under investigation, but in the weeks after the war ended, Israel estimated the number at 2,127 – 616 were members of Hamas and other terrorists groups, 706 were civilians and 805 were still being investigated. Each Palestinian casualty was regrettable and tragic, and Israel has begun investigations into certain incidents where it is claimed that civilians were killed or injured.

During the conflict, Israel stopped a number of Hamas terrorists attempting to enter Israel through so-called "terror tunnels" built to enable Hamas terrorists to infiltrate into Israel. In one incident, Hamas operatives were caught carrying tranquilizers and handcuffs, with the apparent aim of kidnapping Israeli soldiers. In addition, Hamas operatives used tunnels to attack Israeli soldiers on the ground in Gaza. Over the course of the operation, the IDF uncovered and destroyed 32 tunnels and over 60 tunnel shafts. Exit points in Israel were discovered under kibbutz dining halls, in fields near Israeli towns and on the outskirts of Israeli communities all along the border with

Gaza. It is estimated that the construction of each tunnel required over 4000 tons of concrete each at a cost of over one million dollars.

Throughout the conflict, Israel and Hamas did agree to a number of “humanitarian ceasefires” in order to enable Gazans to shop and resupply. On most occasions, Hamas refused to extend the ceasefire and resumed firing rockets almost immediately upon the ceasefire’s conclusion. Short-lived cease-fires were agreed to on July 15 (Hamas rejected it within hours); August 1 (within 90 minutes Hamas attacked a group of Israeli soldiers); August 8 (Hamas rejected the terms and resumed the firing of rockets); August 19 (Hamas violated an extension agreement and fired rockets).

Finally, on August 26, following nearly two months of conflict, Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian factions in Gaza agreed to an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire for an indefinite period of time. As part of the agreement, Hamas committed to halting rocket fire from Gaza into Israel, and Israel ceased its military actions in Gaza. Israel also agreed to reopen border crossings between Israel and Gaza in order to facilitate the transfer of humanitarian aid and reconstruction supplies, and to restore the six-nautical-mile fishing zone off the Gaza coast.

The terms agreed to were virtually identical to those Hamas had rejected in the early days of the conflict. Referring to Hamas’ prolonging of the crisis, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said in the days after the end of hostilities, “it was possible for us to avoid all of that, 2,000 martyrs, 10,000 injured, 50,000 houses (destroyed).”

In keeping with its commitment to observing international law, Israel created a permanent Fact Finding Assessment Mechanism (FFA Mechanism) to compile alleged violations of international law during Operation Protective Edge, approximately 100 incidents in total. The incidents are being investigated by Israel’s Military Advocate General (MAG) which has launched criminal investigations into a number of the alleged violations.

Efforts to Reach Peace

United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242/338

United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 were passed (respectively) in the aftermaths of the [1967](#) and [1973](#) Arab-Israeli wars. Resolution 242 (reaffirmed in 338) was designed to provide the framework for peace negotiations based on a “land-for-peace” formula and has become the foundation of all subsequent peace treaties in the region. The resolutions called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces “from territories of recent conflict,” an Arab “termination of all claims or states of belligerency,” and a recognition of the State of Israel and its “right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.” The resolution also called for “achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem.”

As 242 and 338 call for Israel’s “withdrawal from territories” and not “*the*” territories as part of a peace agreement, it is understood by the drafters of the resolution and by

Israel and the United States that Israel may withdraw from areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip consistent with its security needs, but not from all the territories.

Camp David Accords/Israel-Egypt Peace Agreement 1978/1979

The Israel-Egypt peace agreement was a watershed event and marked the first such agreement between the Jewish state and an Arab state. The breakthrough came in November 1977 when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made a bold and unprecedented visit to Israel, and in a speech at the Israeli Knesset (parliament) addressed the Israeli people with words of reconciliation and peace.

Formal negotiations ensued the following September when Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin joined U.S. President Jimmy Carter at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland. The so-called “Camp David Accords” of September 17, 1978 were based on U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, and were meant to constitute a basis for peace not only between Egypt and Israel, but also to reach “a just, comprehensive, and durable settlement of the Middle East conflict” for all neighbors willing to negotiate with Israel. Israel agreed to withdraw from all of the Sinai Peninsula (which it had captured in the 1967 Six Day War) within three years, and to dismantle its air bases near the Gulf of Aqaba and the town of Yamit. Egypt promised full diplomatic relations with Israel, and to allow Israel passage through the Suez Canal, the Straits of Tiran, and the Gulf of Aqaba. The accords also established a framework for territorial issues related to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On March 26, 1979, the two countries signed a peace treaty on the White House lawn. Sadat, having gone out on a limb for the peace treaty, was vilified in the Arab world, and was assassinated in 1981.

The groundbreaking Israel-Egypt peace paved the way for subsequent Israeli negotiations and treaties with Jordan and the Palestinians. Relations between Cairo and Jerusalem have not been warm, and the two nations share what is commonly referred to as a “cold peace.” However, in recent years, Egypt has played a key behind-the-scenes role in facilitating Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, including ceasefires between Israel and Hamas.

Madrid Peace Conference 1991

In October/November 1991, just after the Gulf War, the United States and Russia convened an Arab-Israeli peace conference in Madrid. The historic conference marked the first time that Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and a Palestinian delegation (which was officially part of the Jordanian delegation) sat at the same table to negotiate. The participants agreed to establish two tracks for negotiations: a bilateral track for direct negotiations between Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon, and Israel and the Jordanian/Palestinian delegation; and a multilateral track for region-wide negotiations on issues such as water, environment, refugees, arms control and economic development.

A series of bilateral negotiation sessions were held in Washington over the next 18 months. The negotiations were significant on a symbolic level, but yielded very few practical results. A number of multilateral working groups were also convened, laying the groundwork for cooperative regional projects on issues such as the environment, water, arms control, economic development and refugees. The bilateral track was essentially halted by the surprise announcement of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement in August 1993.

The Oslo Accords/Oslo Process

The “Oslo Process” refers to the Israeli-Palestinian negotiating process begun in September 1993 which established a framework for resolving the conflict.

In August 1993, it was revealed that secret negotiations in Oslo, Norway between high-level Israelis and Palestinians had led to the first Israeli-Palestinian agreement. The talks, initiated months earlier under the auspices of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, had begun informally with low level Israeli and Palestinian diplomats and academics. But with growing success in the drafting of an agreement, the talks were upgraded and soon were conducted by high-level Israeli and Palestinian officials. On August 20, a draft of a “Declaration of Principles” (DOP) was initialed.

On September 9, Israel and the [PLO](#) exchanged letters of mutual recognition to precede the official signing of an agreement. In his letter to Israeli Prime Minister Yithak Rabin, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat recognized Israel’s right to exist “in peace and security.” Arafat renounced “the use of terrorism and other acts of violence.” Arafat also pledged to revoke articles in the Palestinian National Covenant which deny Israel's right to exist. In a response to Arafat’s letter, Rabin confirmed that “in light of the PLO commitments included in your letter, the Government of Israel has decided to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and commence negotiations with the PLO within the Middle East peace process.”

On September 13, 1993, the Israel-Palestinian Declaration of Principles (DOP) was signed by Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat in the presence of U.S. President Bill Clinton on the White House lawn amidst tremendous fanfare.

The DOP, the first in a series of what are known as the Oslo Accords, consisted of a carefully constructed two-phased timetable. The first phase, or the “interim period,” was to last five years, during which time Israel would incrementally withdraw from Palestinian population centers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while transferring administrative power to a soon-to-be-elected [Palestinian Authority](#). The Palestinian Authority would be responsible for combating terrorism and coordinating security with Israel. The second phase was the “permanent status” or “final status” negotiations, to resolve “remaining issues, including: [Jerusalem](#), [refugees](#), [settlements](#), security arrangements, borders, relations and cooperation with other neighbors, and other issues of common interest.” A final status agreement would mark the official peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The rationale behind the two-phased plan was to save the most difficult issues for last. While the drafters of the DOP did not believe these issues would be easily resolved, it was hoped that after building confidence and cooperation through the interim period, Israel and the Palestinians would be better able to tackle the most complex and divisive issues in the conflict.

Over the next six years a series of further interim agreements were signed, most significantly the September 1995 Oslo II Agreement and the October 1998 Wye River Accord. Following the implementation of these agreements, by September 2000, over 85 percent of the Gaza Strip and 39.7 percent of the West Bank were under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Ninety-nine percent of the Palestinian population resided under the Palestinian Authority's jurisdiction.

Public opinion polls showed that the negotiations were supported by the majority of Israelis. A very vocal minority, however, stood vehemently opposed to the agreements and the Government's policies. In November 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli anti-Oslo activist.

Throughout the interim period, Palestinian terrorist groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and others, conducted scores of terrorist attacks against Israeli civilian targets. Over the years, Israelis grew increasingly disenchanted with the Palestinian Authority who did little-to-nothing to control terrorist organizations, and continued to spread anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda.

While the Oslo timeline never came to fruition, the lasting legacy of Oslo remains the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and direct negotiations between the State of Israel and the Palestinians.

Camp David Summit 2000

The Camp David Summit was convened by U.S. President Bill Clinton on July 11, 2000, to bring together Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat at Camp David for intensive negotiations for a final status agreement. By July 25, President Clinton announced that the Summit had failed and that no agreement had been reached. President Clinton publicly acknowledged that Prime Minister Barak had shown "particular courage and vision and an understanding of the historical importance of the moment."

Barak entered the summit convinced that a final agreement with the Palestinians was reachable. According to first-hand accounts, he offered Palestinians an ambitious peace package which included far-reaching concessions on [Jerusalem](#), borders, [settlements](#), [refugees](#) and other issues. Barak's offer reportedly included: an Israeli redeployment from as much as 95 percent of the [West Bank](#) and 100 percent of the Gaza Strip and the creation of a Palestinian state in these areas; the uprooting of isolated Jewish settlements in the areas to be transferred to Palestinian control; Palestinian control over parts of Jerusalem; and "religious sovereignty" over the Temple Mount. In return, Barak wanted the final status agreement to include an "end of conflict" clause under which the

parties would pledge that all issues between them were now resolved and further claims would not be made at a future date.

According to the accounts of the participants, Chairman Arafat refused Israel's offer and clung to maximalist positions, particularly on Jerusalem and refugees. The Palestinian delegation did not offer any counter-proposals.

On his return to Israel, Barak said: "Today I return from Camp David, and can look into the millions of eyes and say with regret: We have not yet succeeded. We did not succeed because we did not find a partner prepared to make decisions on all issues. We did not succeed because our Palestinian neighbors have not yet internalized the fact that in order to achieve peace, each side has to give up some of their dreams; to give, not only to demand." Barak later said that at Camp David, Yasir Arafat and his true intentions were "unmasked."

Faced with criticism after abandoning the negotiations at Camp David and the turn to violence barely two months later, Palestinians publicly declared that the failure of Camp David was due to lack of preparation by the Americans, personality differences between Barak and Arafat, and by Barak's "take-it-or-leave-it" negotiating posture. Many Israeli and American high-level officials who were at Camp David dismiss these excuses and say that Camp David demonstrated that Arafat and the Palestinian leadership had unrealistic expectations that they could force Israel to concede to their maximalist demands without making important compromises of their own. While there were additional negotiating sessions in October and December at the Egyptian resort of Taba, they were conducted in the midst of persistent Palestinian violence, and no agreement was reached.

Disengagement

In August 2005, the State of Israel "disengaged" from the [Gaza Strip](#), removing all Israeli military installations, 25 Israeli [settlements](#) (4 in the West Bank) with over 8,000 residents. The Israel disengagement was unilateral, and was not the result of negotiations with the Palestinians.

The disengagement plan was first proposed in December 2003, by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, a long-time advocate for settlements, in a policy address to the annual Herzlyia Conference. Sharon argued that in the absence of a serious Palestinian peace partner and amidst [ongoing Palestinian terrorism](#), Israel needed to take unilateral steps to ensure its own security and improve conditions on the ground. Sharon stated: "...it is a step Israel will take in the absence of any other option, in order to improve its security." "The purpose of the disengagement plan is to reduce terrorism as much as possible, and grant Israeli citizens the maximum level of security. The process of disengagement will lead to an improvement in the quality of life, and will help strengthen the Israeli economy." The plan was approved by Israel's cabinet in June 2004 and by the Israeli Knesset in October 2004. Mechanisms were put in place to implement the pull-out, including the establishment of a "disengagement authority."

The disengagement plan required the uprooting and resettlement of 25 Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank. Many of these settlers had lived in the area for decades and built lives, families and businesses there.

Public opinion polls showed that the majority of Israelis supported the disengagement. Supporters of the plan argued that this painful move was necessary to protect Israel in the long term. They argued that the cost of protecting 8,000-plus Israelis living in the midst of one million-plus Palestinians was hurting Israel's economy and society. The disengagement would also allow Israel's security apparatus to better protect those West Bank settlements which are more heavily populated, of clearer strategic or historical importance to the State, and likely to be annexed to Israel in a final status agreement with the Palestinians. Finally, they argued that an Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip was always intended to be temporary, and that it was tacitly understood that Israel would give up control of Gaza and uproot its settlements as part of any negotiated final agreement with the Palestinians.

Opponents of the plan argued that Israel was retreating from Gaza "under fire" – that the decision to disengage was a capitulation to Palestinian terrorism, and not in the context of mutually agreed concessions. They argued that this move would be perceived as a show of weakness by the Palestinians and the Arab world, and rather than strengthening Israel's security, would lead to increased threats and attacks in the future. Some opponents rejected the plan because it called for the ceding territory historically significant to Jews. Others were opposed in principle to the very idea of uprooting Jews from their homes.

Opponents of the plan organized large demonstrations in the period leading up to and during the disengagement, and groups traveled to the Gaza settlements where they staged (primarily) non-violent protests against the evacuations.

While initial plans called for an evacuation of all settlements by September 15, the army's operation was much quicker. Moreover, despite predictions of widespread "civil war" and amidst protests and acts of civil disobedience by some settlers and other opponents, the evacuations went remarkably smoothly and civilly. The disengagement officially began on August 17 and by August 22, all settlers had been evacuated from the Gaza Strip. The evacuation of residents of the four settlements in the West Bank was completed by August 23. The Israel Defense Forces officially left Gaza on September 12.

It was hoped that the [Palestinian Authority](#) would ensure a smooth transition of this area to full Palestinian control, and that many structures in the former settlements – including the extensive greenhouses – would be used to benefit Palestinian housing and industry. Indeed, James Wolfensohn, the U.S. special envoy to the Middle East and former president of the World Bank, raised \$14 million in private donations to purchase the greenhouses from their Israeli owners so that Palestinians could take over these profitable enterprises. However, in the immediate aftermath of the Israeli withdrawal, Palestinians entered the former Israeli settlements and burned buildings – including

synagogues – and materials from buildings and greenhouses were looted. Some of the greenhouses are operational and there is some building in the settlements for Palestinian industry, educational institutions, and for private housing.

The evacuated settlers were compensated for the loss of their homes and businesses. However, even years later, many have yet to find permanent housing or employment, and among these former Gaza settlers there is much dissatisfaction regarding the Government's assistance and responsiveness to their situation.

While the Israeli military fully withdrew from the Gaza Strip in the disengagement, [Hamas](#)-controlled Gaza (it took over the territory in 2007) represents a serious security challenge to Israel. In response to Hamas terrorist attacks and the launching of thousands of rockets at Israeli population centers, the IDF has conducted military operations (aerially or on the ground) against Hamas in Gaza in 2008/9, 2012 and 2014. Israel and Egypt control the flow of imports into Gaza due to Hamas' misuse and misappropriation of goods for military purposes.

The Roadmap

The Roadmap is a three-phased, performance-based peace plan based on reciprocal steps by both the Israelis and the Palestinians. It was introduced in September 2002, during a period of intense [Palestinian terrorism](#), by the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation, and the United Nations (collectively dubbed The Quartet). On April 30, 2003, the Quartet released the "Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" which outlined the three phases of the plan with the eventual goal of settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by 2005. The plan called upon the Quartet to facilitate and monitor the completion of each phase of the plan.

As initially drafted, the first phase of the plan required that the [Palestinian Authority](#) undertake the necessary measures to ensure an unconditional cessation of violence, terrorism and incitement, restructure the security forces, enact political reforms and engage in democratic institution building. The Israelis were required to facilitate the Palestinian's security measures and to withdraw its military forces from areas it entered in September 2000. Israel was also called on to dismantle settlement outposts and to freeze settlement activity.

In the second phase, the Quartet was to assess whether the new Palestinian government had met the requirements necessary to lead an independent Palestinian state. If the Palestinians were to meet the Quartet's approval, a provisional Palestinian state would be established in the territory that was under P.A. jurisdiction on September 28, 2000.

The third and final phase called for the stabilization of the new Palestinian government and security infrastructures which, if the Quartet found that all the prerequisites had been met, would result in negotiations for a final status peace agreement and the establishment of a permanent Palestinian state by the end of 2005.

The Israeli government, under the leadership of Ariel Sharon, accepted the general framework of the Roadmap, however, they cited 14 “reservations.” These objections included ensuring that the Palestinians make substantial efforts to reform their security forces and to stop terrorism before the second phase would be implemented, and calling for American supervision of the implementation of the Roadmap’s obligations.

However, with the PA’s failure to clamp down on terrorism as required by the first phase of the plan, little practical progress was made in the implementation of the Roadmap. The Quartet remains active in promoting Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and while the Roadmap has not been implemented, it continues to be a working document.

Arab Peace Initiative

The Arab Peace Initiative is a comprehensive peace plan which was proposed in 2002 by then-Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. The Initiative calls for an end to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and the normalization of relations between Israel and the entire Arab world, in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from the areas gained by Israel during the 1967 [Six Day War](#) and a “just settlement” to the issue of [Palestinian refugees](#). The Arab League endorsed the plan in March 2002, and readopted it in March 2007.

While some Israeli politicians welcomed the initiative, many were concerned by what they called “preconditions” in the document, regarding the issues of borders and refugees, which Israel (and the Quartet) says can only be determined as part of a final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Periodically, proposals are floated to reintroduce and update the initiative.

Issues for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiation

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is Judaism’s holiest city, and is also holy to Christianity and Islam.

The Jewish people are inextricably bound to the city of Jerusalem. No other city has played such a dominant role in the history, politics, culture, religion, national life and consciousness of a people as Jerusalem has in the life of Jewry and Judaism. From the time King David established the city as the capital of the Jewish state circa 1000 BCE, and his son Solomon built the Temple on the site where Abraham nearly sacrificed Isaac, it has served as the symbol and most profound expression of the Jewish people’s identity as a nation.

Since the exile, Jerusalem has embodied the Jewish yearning for the return to Zion. In their daily prayers, Jews worship in the direction of Jerusalem, and prayers for Jerusalem are incorporated throughout. Passover Seder tables have resonated with the

refrain “Next Year in Jerusalem.” With the brief exception of the Crusader period, no other people or state has made Jerusalem its capital.

Since King David’s time, Jews have maintained a continuous presence in Jerusalem, except for a few periods when they were forcibly barred from living in the city by foreign rulers. Jews have constituted a majority of the city’s inhabitants since 1880, and today Jews represent just under two-thirds of the city’s population.

Jerusalem is an important spiritual and historic center for Christianity. Jerusalem is central to the events of the New Testament. According to the Gospels, as a child Jesus was brought the Temple by his parents, and, most importantly, it was in Jerusalem that he was tried, crucified and resurrected. Jerusalem was a focus for the apostle Paul, and it continued to be a center for the early church. Jerusalem took on added significance for Christianity when Queen Helena, the mother of Constantine (the Roman emperor who made Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire), designated the holy sites in Jerusalem associated with the last days of Jesus’ life. The great churches built on these spots continue to attract streams of pilgrims, and are surrounded by Christian monasteries, convents, hospices, churches, and chapels.

Jerusalem is also a holy city for Muslims, who refer to it as “al-Quds” (the holy place). According to Islamic tradition, the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven from the rock which the Dome of the Rock currently envelops. The Prophet Muhammad and his followers initially turned to Jerusalem in prayer and although the direction was later changed towards Mecca, the sanctity of Jerusalem continues to be stressed in Islamic tradition. Jerusalem is considered Islam’s third holiest city after Mecca and Medina. The 20th century saw a renewed emphasis on the sanctity of Jerusalem in Islamic religious tradition.

The only time Jerusalem was divided was between [1948](#)-1967 when armistice lines drawn between the army of the newly declared State of Israel and invading Arab armies divided Jerusalem into two sectors, with Jordan occupying and annexing the eastern sector, including the Old City, and Israel retaining the western and southern parts of the city. Barbed wire divided the sides. In violation of the Armistice Agreement, Jordanians denied Jews access to and the right to worship at their holy sites, including the Western Wall. The 58 synagogues in the Jewish Quarter were systematically destroyed and vandalized, and Jewish cemeteries desecrated.

Jerusalem was reunited under Israeli sovereignty as a result of the [1967](#) Arab-Israeli war. Israel immediately passed the “Protection of Holy Places Law,” which guarantees the sanctity of all holy sites and makes it a punishable offense to desecrate or deny freedom of access to them. Under Israeli rule, Christians and Muslims have always administered their own holy places and institutions and have had access to Israel’s democratic court system in order to present any claim of violation of these rights.

Since 1967, Israel has maintained that Jerusalem is the undivided and eternal capital of Israel. Palestinian leaders assert that all of East Jerusalem, including the Temple

Mount, be the capital of an independent Palestinian state, and consider Israeli Jewish neighborhoods in the eastern part of Jerusalem to be “settlements.”

Palestinian Refugees

The Palestinian refugee problem originated as a result of the [1948](#) Arab-Israeli war, when five Arab armies invaded the State of Israel just hours after it was [established](#). During the ensuing war, as many as 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled their homes in the newly created state. Many of the Palestinian Arabs who fled did so voluntarily to avoid the ongoing war or at the urging of Arab leaders who promised that all who left would return after a quick Arab victory over the new Jewish state. Other Palestinians were forced to flee by individuals or groups fighting for Israel.

Of the Palestinians who left, one-third went to the West Bank (which was under Jordan’s control), one-third went to the Gaza Strip (under Egypt’s control), and the remainder to Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The Arab nations refused to absorb these Palestinians into their population and they were instead settled into refugee camps. Only Jordan’s King Abdullah agreed to confer citizenship on the 200,000 Palestinian living in Jordan and the Jordan-controlled West Bank and East Jerusalem. In 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was created to oversee the economic integration of the refugees into these Arab countries. The Arab governments refused to consider integration, insisting that it would undermine the refugees’ “right” to return to their homes in Palestine. UNRWA continues to operate, providing relief, health care, education and vocational training to the refugee populations in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

During the [1967](#) Six Day War, another estimated 250,000 Palestinians fled the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the arrival of Israeli forces. Some of these were people who had left their homes in Israel in 1948. These individuals are considered by the international community to be displaced persons, not refugees.

A Jewish refugee problem was also created with the establishment of the State of Israel. From 1948-1951 as many as 800,000 Jews were expelled from their native Arab nations or forced to flee as a result of state-sponsored anti-Zionist violence. They left behind their property and the lives they had built in these lands over hundreds of years. As many as 500,000 of these refugees fled from Iraq, Tunisia, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Algeria, Libya and Morocco and were absorbed into the new State of Israel. Others fled to Europe and North and South America.

Tallying the number of individuals considered Palestinian refugees today is a complex matter of intense debate. UNRWA, which registers Palestinian refugees, claims that refugees and their descendants number five million, including: those who left Israel in 1948; those who left the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967; those who were abroad but were subsequently not allowed to return to Israel; and all of their descendants. UNRWA’s statistics include those residing in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It should be noted that UNRWA’s policy of including the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who left in 1948 and 1967 into the

refugee population for demographic and aid purposes is not done for any other refugee group. Israel believes the UNRWA statistics are grossly exaggerated. Israel also strictly distinguishes “refugees” from “displaced persons” and from “expired permit Palestinians” who were abroad at the time the conflicts ensued and were not allowed to return.

Palestinian insistence that refugees must have a “right of return” to their former homes inside Israel, and that this “right” is founded in international law, is rejected by Israel. Israel denies that there is any foundation in international law for a Palestinian “right of return,” and that the non-binding international resolutions on the issue call not for a “return” to Israel, but for a just resolution of the refugee problem. Since the start of the [Oslo process](#), refugees is considered one of the “final status” issues, along with borders, security, [settlements](#) and [Jerusalem](#), that are to be negotiated as part of a final Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

Israel also argues that a “return” is not viable for such a small state, given that the influx of millions of Palestinians into Israel would pose a threat to its national security and upset the country’s demographic makeup. In the decades that the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO) did not recognize Israel’s right to exist and actively sought to bring about Israel’s downfall and replace it with a Palestinian state, the “right of return” of Palestinian refugees was a rallying cry. In 1993, the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist and committed to a negotiating process to establish an independent Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel. Given this situation, world leaders, including President Bill Clinton, President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama have publicly stated that Palestinian refugees should rightly be resettled in a future Palestinian state.

Israel maintains that it is not responsible for the Palestinian refugee problem since it is the result of a war forced on Israel by invading Arab armies. However, Israel has stated that on humanitarian grounds it would participate in an international effort to resolve the situation. Such an effort would likely involve Palestinian refugees settling in a newly established state of Palestine, an international compensation fund, and individual cases of family reunification.

Any international effort would also need to consider the situation of the 800,000 Jews who were expelled from their native Arab nations or forced to flee as a result of state-sponsored anti-Jewish violence following the founding of the State of Israel.

Settlements

Settlements are Jewish communities established in the [West Bank and Gaza Strip](#) after these territories came under Israeli military control at the end of the [1967 War](#). In 2005, all Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip were uprooted as part of Israel’s [disengagement](#) from Gaza. As of 2013 statistics, there are 142 settlement and outposts in the West Bank with over 350,000 inhabitants.

Historically, Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) are considered the cradle of Jewish civilization, containing the birthplaces and burial sites of key personalities in the Bible. Jews lived in the area until [1948](#), when the West Bank was occupied by Jordan in the Arab-Israeli war. Indeed, several of the current settlement communities in the West Bank existed prior to 1948 when they were overrun by invading Arab armies. Kfar Etzion and other villages in the Jerusalem-Bethlehem corridor, for example, fell to Arab forces in May 1948 and those captured were massacred. Sons and daughters of those who lived there until 1948 were the first to return after the 1967 war. The Gaza Strip has archeological remains of centuries of Jewish communal life.

In the 1970s, successive Israeli governments believed that settlements in certain sections of the West Bank, particularly in the Jordan Valley and eastern slopes of Samaria, as well as in areas of the Gaza Strip would provide Israel with an important military buffer zone.

While often characterized as “ideological, right-wing, nationalist and religious,” the settler population is actually more diverse and includes secular Israelis, new immigrants, ultra-Orthodox, as well as those who chose their homes in these communities based on affordability and convenience rather than on religion or politics. To be sure, there are many settlers and supporters of the movement who believe there is a religious obligation to settle and hold on to this territory. In addition, the vast majority of settlers and their supporters believe they play an essential role in providing security for the State of Israel, by providing a first line of defense against Palestinian or other Arab attack.

Since 1967, Israeli governments have maintained a willingness to withdraw from areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip as part of a peace agreement with the Arabs. In the event of such an agreement, it has always been expected that at least some of the settlements would have to be uprooted, just as the Israeli town of Yamit in the Sinai was dismantled following Israel’s peace agreement with Egypt.

In the [Oslo Accords](#), settlements were to be negotiated as a final status issue, and were not to be discussed during the interim period. At [Camp David](#), in July 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak reportedly offered to uproot all Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and the isolated settlements in up to 95 percent of the territory of the West Bank. The remaining settlements in five percent of the territory of the West Bank – which contain the vast majority of the settler population – were to be grouped into settlement “blocs” which would be annexed to Israel. Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasir Arafat rejected the plan and offered no alternative.

In 2003, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, a long-time advocate for settlements, announced plans for Israel to unilaterally disengage from the Gaza Strip, uproot its 21 settlements and relocate its 8,000 residents along with four settlements in the northern West Bank. Sharon argued that in the absence of a serious Palestinian peace partner and ongoing Palestinian terrorism, Israel needed to take unilateral steps to ensure its own security and improve conditions on the ground. The dismantlement of the Gaza and four West

Bank settlements was concluded in August 2005, and the Israeli army completed its full disengagement from Gaza in September 2005. Public opinion polls showed that the majority of Israelis supported the disengagement; however, a large and vocal minority of Israelis, particularly the settler community and their supporters, opposed the move and protested and resisted the army's evacuation of the settlements.

Periodically, over the years, Israeli-Palestinian negotiation facilitators have pushed for Israel to "freeze" settlement building as a gesture of good faith. In such an effort, in 2010, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to a 10-month moratorium on settlement construction in the West Bank. However, the Palestinians delayed participating in direct negotiations which only began in the 9th month of the moratorium, and fell apart soon after.

Palestinians and some in the international community consider Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem as settlements. Israel disputes this categorization.

West Bank and Gaza Strip

The territory now known as the West Bank formed the heart of ancient Israel and was the site of many significant events in Jewish history. Since ancient times, the area has been known as Judea and Samaria and was identified as such through the British Mandate period. In the 9th Century BCE, Samaria (in the northern West Bank) was the capital of the Israelite Kingdom. Much of the Old Testament takes place in Judea and Samaria. While Gaza has less of a presence in the Bible, it does appear in the books of Joshua and Judges. From that time until 1948, the West Bank and Gaza Strip were occupied by the Romans, the Ottomans and the British. The Gaza Strip, and particularly the West Bank, are rich in archeological remains of centuries of Jewish communal life.

The 1947 U.N. [Partition Plan](#) proposing an independent Arab state in Palestine alongside a Jewish state was rejected by the Arab states, who then proceeded to invade the State of Israel hours after its establishment. In the [ensuing war](#), Jordan occupied the West Bank (which it annexed in 1950) and Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip. For the next 19 years neither Egypt nor Jordan made any attempt to establish an independent Palestinian state in these territories. Indeed, these areas were relatively neglected in terms of economic and agricultural development.

In 1967 Israel gained control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (and its population of at least one million Arabs) in the [Six Day War](#). Israel immediately made clear that it would be ready to redeploy from territories in return for a peace agreement with its Arab neighbors. Israel's offer was rebuffed.

In 1993, as part of the [Oslo Accords](#), Israel agreed to redeploy from Palestinian population centers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Beginning with the West Bank city of Jericho and a large portion of the Gaza Strip in May 1994, there were a series of Israeli redeployments totaling 40 percent of the West Bank and over 85 percent of the Gaza Strip, leaving 99 percent of the Palestinian population living under the jurisdiction of the [Palestinian Authority](#). At [Camp David](#) in July 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak

reportedly offered an Israeli withdrawal from as much as 95 percent of the West Bank, 100 percent of the Gaza Strip, and parts of Jerusalem. Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat rejected this offer, arguing that only a full withdrawal to the pre-1967 lines would be acceptable, but made no serious counter-offer.

In 2003, then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced a plan for Israel to unilaterally [disengage](#) from the Gaza Strip and some small settlements in the northern West Bank in order to further Israel's political, security and demographic interests. The disengagement was approved by the Cabinet and Knesset and began on August 17, 2005. By mid-September all Israeli civilians and Israeli soldiers had left the Gaza Strip, completing the disengagement.

While there are obvious social, political, religious and family ties between the Palestinian communities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, there have long been differences between the two populations. The Palestinians of the West Bank are considered more cosmopolitan and educated. The Palestinians of Gaza are more economically disadvantaged, tend to be more religious and more supportive of extremist ideology. Since 2007, [Hamas](#) has governed Gaza, and the territory is the center for terrorist and militant activity against Israel – including the launching of rockets at Israeli population centers, raids on Israeli military installations, and the smuggling of weapons from Egypt or by sea. In December [2008](#), November [2012](#) and July [2014](#), Israel launched military operation aimed at ending Hamas rocket attacks on Israeli population centers.

Palestinian/Arab Groups

Hamas

Hamas is a Palestinian Islamic extremist terrorist organization based in the Gaza Strip and West Bank that calls for the eradication of the State of Israel. Both the United States and the European Union have designated Hamas as a terrorist organization. Following internecine fighting between Hamas and Fatah in June 2007, Hamas controls the Gaza Strip.

Hamas (the Arabic acronym for Harakat Al-Muqawama Islamiya fi Filistin, or the Islamic Resistance Movement in Palestine) was established in 1988 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, then a preacher with the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza. Its ultimate goal is the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state ruled by Islamic theocratic law in place of the State of Israel.

The Hamas covenant, issued in 1988, is replete with anti-Semitism, and echoes the notorious [Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#) charging Jews with an international conspiracy to gain control of the world. In Hamas' world-view, Islamic precepts forbid a Jewish state in the area known as Palestine, and they assert the Jewish people have no legitimate connection to the land of Israel. As its covenant proclaims, "The land of Palestine is an Islamic trust... It is forbidden to anyone to yield or concede any part of it... Israel will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it..." To this end, the leaders of Hamas have

denounced compromise with Israel as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause.

Funding and support for the group has traditionally come from Muslim charities around the world, sympathetic sources in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, and most importantly from Syria and Iran, although in recent years, both have stepped back somewhat due to Hamas' support for the rebels in the Syrian civil war.

Hamas is both a terrorist organization and a mass social, political and religious movement. It operates schools, medical clinics and youth groups. The division of Hamas into military and political/social wings has led some observers to erroneously assume that the social wing of Hamas is completely separate from its military wing. To the contrary, funds raised for the social programs of Hamas free up other funds for the military wing. Moreover, Hamas' military wing utilizes the organization's social wing for indoctrination and recruitment. The social, cultural, religious and educational institutions of Hamas, including youth groups and summer camps are well-known venues for anti-Israel and anti-Jewish hatred and have served as recruitment centers for suicide bombers.

Since 1994, Hamas has been the main organization perpetrating terrorist attacks in major Israeli cities with targets including shopping malls, cafes, buses and hotels. Its most deadly attacks include the March 2002 suicide bombing of the Park Hotel in Netanya, killing 30 and injuring 140 during their Passover seder; the August 2001 suicide bombing of the Sbarro pizzeria in Jerusalem killing 15 and injuring 130; and the June 2001 suicide bombing at the Dolphinarium nightclub in Tel Aviv, killing 21 and injuring 120, most of them youths. Following the Israeli [disengagement](#) from the Gaza Strip, Hamas has been behind the thousands of rocket attacks that have targeted Israel's population centers.

Hamas entered the Palestinian political arena and secured nearly half of the municipal seats up for grabs in the January 2005 Palestinian elections. In the January 2006 parliamentary elections, Hamas had tremendous success and won 74 seats in the 132-seat legislature, with Fatah earning a disappointing 45 seats.

Following the 2006 election, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh became Prime Minister of the [Palestinian Authority](#) while Mahmoud Abbas remained President, creating a so-called "unity government." The international community established a policy of isolating Hamas, and suspended financial aid to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority until it met three conditions: recognize Israel's right to exist, renounce the use of violence and terrorism and accept previously negotiated Israeli-Palestinian agreements. Hamas continues to refuse to comply with these conditions.

In June 2007, tensions between Hamas and Fatah reached a boiling point and violence broke out between the two groups in Gaza. Within a few days, Hamas prevailed. Palestinian Authority President Abbas dissolved the Hamas-led government and declared he would govern based on emergency powers. As a result, Gaza is administered by Hamas, and continues to be isolated by the international community.

The West Bank is under the sole administration of the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, which enjoys international support.

Over the years there have been a number of efforts to reconcile Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. In April 2014, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas announced a surprise reconciliation deal which included the formation of a Palestinian unity government. This Palestinian Authority's decision effectively put an end to the nine-months of US-led negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, and soured relations with Israel. To date, however, the reconciliation agreement has not progressed and has had little impact on the ground.

According to the U.S. State Department and human rights NGOs, Hamas has restricted freedom of speech and press in Gaza. The Hamas security apparatus attacks, tortures and detains those who publicly criticize its authority. Hamas affiliates have attacked journalists and other individuals, who publicly criticize their authority. Since 2007, only pro-Hamas broadcast media and PFLP-affiliated radio outlet Voice of the People have operated in Gaza. Hamas television broadcasts children's shows which glorify suicide bombings and defame Jews, spreading anti-Semitism and hatred. Hamas also imposes its religious extremism on its people, with a "morality police force," which monitors women's dress. Gender segregation is also strictly enforced – couples walking together are often stopped and asked to prove that they are married, men are not allowed to work in women's hair salons and women are discouraged from patronizing certain cafes.

Since 2000, Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups, have launched thousands of rocket and mortar attacks. In early years, Hamas rockets reached vulnerable southern Israeli cities such as Sderot, Ashkelon, Netivot and nearby environs, landing in or near private homes, schools and day care and recreation centers. In recent years, Hamas rockets have reached well beyond the south, reaching Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, Be'er Sheva, and even as far north as Haifa, a distance of over 85 miles from Gaza. Two-thirds of Israel's civilian population (equivalent to over 200 million Americans) – Jews, Muslims, Christians and others –have been directly threatened by missiles from Gaza.

Hamas has constructed hundreds of smuggling tunnels underneath the border with Egypt and stockpiled an enormous cache of weapons and associated supplies. In June 2006, Palestinian terrorists, including members of the military wing of Hamas, tunneled under the border fence in the southern Gaza Strip and attacked an Israeli military installation inside Israeli borders, killing 2 Israel soldiers, and kidnapped Cpl. Gilad Shalit, age 19. Shalit was eventually released in October 2011 after over five years of Hamas captivity in exchange for over 1,000 Palestinian prisoners. In addition, in 2014 it was revealed that Hamas has constructed dozens of "terror tunnels" which enabled its operatives to reach inside Israel to carry out terrorist attacks and kidnappings.

On December 27, 2008, following the lapse of an agreed six month Israel-Hamas "period of calm," and in response to renewed rocket attacks, Israel initiated a military operation in Gaza, entitled [Operation Cast Lead](#). The three-week air and ground

operation was intended to stop the rocket attacks on southern Israel and end Hamas smuggling of arms and related supplies.

Four years later, on November 14, 2012, Israel initiated [Operation Pillar of Defense](#) in response to intensifying rocket attacks from Gaza. The aerial military operation targeted Hamas and [Islamic Jihad](#) terrorist leadership and rocket launching and storage sites. During the 8 day operation, Hamas launched 1,506 rockets at Israeli targets. The Iranian-made and supplied Fajr-5 rockets reached as far as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

On July 7, 2014, following weeks of unceasing missile, rocket and mortar fire from Gaza on civilian centers in Israel, the IDF launched [Operation Protective Edge](#) targeting Hamas facilities, tunnels, weapons and leadership. The conflict lasted 50 days, with a series of short-lived cease fires breached by Hamas. Israel initially attacked Hamas targets by air, however, on July 17, Israel sent ground forces into Gaza for a period of just over two weeks in order to destroy Hamas's infrastructure, including rocket storage sites and infiltration tunnels which Israel was unable to destroy by aerial attacks.

During the conflict, 4,700 missiles, rockets and mortars were fired by Hamas into Israeli cities and towns, including Sderot, Ashkelon, Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, and even as far north as Haifa, a distance of over 85 miles from Gaza. The Syrian made M-302 missile, modeled after the Chinese WS-2, which has a range of almost 100 miles, was fired at Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. Two-thirds of Israel's civilian population (equivalent to over 200 million Americans) – Jews, Muslims, Christians and others – were directly threatened by missiles from Gaza. An open-ended cease fire was reached on August 26.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah ("Party of G-d") is a terrorist organization, based in Lebanon, whose goal is the destruction of Israel. In that pursuit it has attacked Israeli and Jewish targets worldwide. It is also responsible for infamous attacks against American military installations in Lebanon in the early 1980s. Hezbollah was declared a terrorist entity by the United States in 2004. Syria and Iran support Hezbollah with money and weapons and have long used Hezbollah as their proxy to directly challenge and battle Israel.

Hezbollah, a Shi'ite Muslim group, is financed and armed by Iran and has enjoyed full backing from Syria. Hezbollah was founded with the help of Iranian Revolutionary Guards who traveled to the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon in 1982 to fight Israel following the [Israeli incursion](#) into south Lebanon. According to its 1985 platform, Hezbollah advocates the establishment of an "Islamic Republic" in Lebanon. It also states: "The conflict with Israel is viewed as a central concern. This is not only limited to the IDF presence in Lebanon. Rather, the complete destruction of the State of Israel and the establishment of Islamic rule over Jerusalem is an expressed goal."

In recent years, Hezbollah has attempted to reinvent itself as a political party. The party enjoys solid support from the country's Shi'ite community (which comprises 40 percent of Lebanon's population).

Hezbollah is also an active combatant in the Syrian conflict, fighting to support Syrian President Bashar Assad against anti-regime Syrian rebels and ISIS and other Islamic extremist forces.

In the early and mid-1980s Hezbollah was responsible for numerous attacks against U.S. installations in Lebanon, most infamously the 1983 attack on the U.S. Marines barracks in Beirut, which killed 241 servicemen. Hezbollah is responsible for scores of attacks against Israeli forces in south Lebanon and civilians in northern Israel.

Since Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, Hezbollah has continued its unprovoked attacks on Israel. On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah terrorists attacked Israel in a cross-border raid, killing eight Israeli soldiers and kidnapping two others – Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. The assault sparked a month-long conflict, known as the Second Lebanon War, with Hezbollah launching thousands of Katyusha rockets at Israel's northern cities and Israel targeting Hezbollah positions throughout Lebanon with air strikes and, eventually, ground forces. A cessation of hostilities was declared after the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1701, which called for a phased withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon and the deployment of an expanded international UNIFIL force working alongside Lebanese troops to re-assert security control of south Lebanon. The resolution required Hezbollah to completely disarm and called for Lebanon to assert its sovereignty over the entire nation. (The bodies of Goldwasser and Regev were returned to Israel by Hezbollah as part of a prisoner exchange in July 2008.) Hezbollah's continuing operations in Lebanese civilian centers violate international humanitarian law and previous U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Hezbollah, with Iranian support, is believed to be responsible for a number of terrorist incidents in the wider Middle East, Western Europe, Latin America and Asia. Hezbollah is responsible for two bombings in Buenos Aires – the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy and the 1994 bombing of the [AMIA-DAIA Jewish community building](#). Most recently, members of Hezbollah were implicated by Bulgaria in the July 2012 bombing of a bus of Israeli tourists in the resort city of Burgas. Hezbollah and its main international sponsor, Iran, have also been linked to a spate of attacks and attempted attacks on Israeli diplomats and other targets abroad in 2012.

Hezbollah also maintains an extensive support operation in Latin America that helps fund its terrorist activities both in Lebanon and abroad through the drug trade and other criminal activity.

Hezbollah runs a satellite television network, Al-Manar (“The Beacon”), which broadcasts Hezbollah’s messages of hate and violence worldwide. Hezbollah owns and operates the station, staffing it with members of Hezbollah and directing its programming and communications. Al-Manar is more than Hezbollah’s mouthpiece – it is its tool for incitement to terror against Americans and Israelis. It broadcasts images of Iraqi devastation attributed to the U.S.-led action with voiceovers calling for “death to America,” glorifies suicide bombings and calls for the recruitment of Palestinian “martyrs” to kill Jews. Al-Manar appears to be the source of the [conspiracy theory](#) that

claimed that 4,000 Israelis (or Jews) were absent from their jobs at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 thereby implying that Israel was in some way behind the attack. The story was posted on its Web site on September 17, 2001 and picked up by extremists around the world. Al-Manar's messages of hate and violence are also often accompanied by anti-Semitic themes, such as the medieval blood libel. Al-Manar is also a conduit to channel money to Hezbollah – openly and actively soliciting funds on the air and on its Web site. Since 2004, the European Union, France and other countries have taken steps to ban Al-Manar from transmitting within their borders.

Palestinian Authority

The Palestinian Authority (PA) is the body which governs and administers Palestinian areas in the West Bank. It was established as a result of the 1993 [Oslo Agreement](#) between Israel and the PLO, and came into being in 1994, overseeing Palestinian population centers in the [West Bank and Gaza Strip](#). However, since the 2007 [Hamas takeover](#), the PA does not govern the Gaza Strip. The PA President effectively serves as the representative of the Palestinian people in the international community, and represents the Palestinians in negotiations with the State of Israel.

Long-time PLO chairman and Fatah leader Yasir Arafat was the first *Rais* or President of the Palestinian Authority until his death in 2004. He was succeeded by Mahmoud Abbas, another long-time PLO and Fatah official who is widely known by his *nom de guerre*, Abu Mazen.

Hamas and the Palestinian Authority are bitter rivals. There have been efforts since 2007 to reconcile the two groups, but aside from dramatic announcements (most recently in April 2014), such reconciliation agreements have had little impact and have been of short duration.

According to the Oslo Accords, the PA was intended to be an interim structure that would be succeeded by an independent, democratically elected Palestinian government following a final peace agreement with Israel.

Over the years, the Israeli government and public have grown increasingly critical of the Palestinian Authority for not preparing the Palestinian public for the concessions that will be required in a peace agreement with Israel, for doing little-to-nothing to control terrorist organizations during the [Second Intifada](#), and for tolerating the spreading of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) is a radical Islamic extremist organization inspired by the Iranian revolution of 1979. It was established by Palestinian students in Egypt who were admirers of the Iranian Revolution and the Muslim Brotherhood. Like [Hamas](#), its expressed goal is the violent destruction of the State of Israel, which Islamic Jihad believes will then bring about the unification of the Arab and Islamic world, “purified of modern Western elements.”

The PIJ carried out its first terror attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers in mid-1986, half a year prior to the outbreak of the first Intifada. It regards itself as part of the larger Islamic Jihad movement, which originated in Lebanon with the backing of Iran.

Unlike the larger and better-funded Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad does not manage social welfare programs; it concentrates instead on spectacular attacks against Israeli civilians and military forces, sometimes using women and children as suicide bombers. Its most deadly attacks include the October 2003 suicide bombing at the Maxim restaurant in Haifa, killing 22 and wounding 60; the June 2002 suicide bombing at Meggido junction, killing 17 and wounding 50; and the March 1996 suicide bombing of the Dizengoff shopping mall in Tel Aviv, killing 13 and injuring 75. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the July 12, 2005 suicide attack on a Netanya shopping mall, killing 5 and wounding 90 and at the Netanya mall on December 5, 2005, killing 5 and wounding 50. The group claimed responsibility (along with the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade) for the April 17, 2006 bombing of the old central bus station in Tel Aviv, killing 11 and wounding 70 and the January 29, 2007 attack on a bakery in Eilat, which killed three.

Since the Israeli [disengagement](#) from Gaza in 2005, PIJ has been one of the perpetrators of rocket attacks against civilian targets in southern Israel.

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

The PLO was founded in 1964 during the first Arab summit in Cairo, where leaders of 13 Arab nations pledged to take a more active role for the “liberation of Palestine.” Since that time it has declared itself the representative of the Palestinian people and their nationalist aspirations. The PLO has operated primarily as an umbrella organization for six Palestinian groups, most prominently, Yasir Arafat’s Fatah group. In 1969, Arafat was elected PLO Chairman, and Fatah became the dominant party in the PLO.

The guiding ideology of the PLO was outlined in the Palestine National Charter or Covenant which was adopted at its founding in 1964 and amended in 1968. The Charter functioned as the PLO’s constitution, and contained 33 articles calling for the destruction of the State of Israel. In June 1974 the PLO adopted its “Phased Program” which declared “Any liberation step that is achieved constitutes a step for continuing to achieve the PLO strategy for the establishment of the Palestinian democratic state...to pave the way for completing the liberation of all Palestinian soil.”

The PLO was responsible for scores of acts of terrorism from its creation, resulting in the deaths of thousands of civilians. Among the infamous attacks conducted by the PLO are: the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games; the killing of 21 schoolchildren at Ma’alot in 1974; the death of 35 people and wounding of 85 in an attack on Israeli tourist buses along the Haifa-Tel Aviv coastal highway in 1978; the hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship in 1985 and the murder of disabled American Jewish passenger [Leon Klinghoffer](#). The PLO also launched terrorist and guerrilla attacks against Israel from Jordan – until they were ousted by King Hussein in September 1972 – and from Lebanon – until they were ousted by Israel in [1982](#).

In 1988 in Geneva, Yasir Arafat announced that he would accept the existence of the State of Israel, renounce terrorism, and accept [U.N. resolutions 242 and 338](#). Despite this declaration, the PLO continued terrorist attacks against Israelis.

Following secret negotiations with Israel in [Oslo](#), on September 9, 1993, Arafat sent a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin recognizing Israel's right to exist, renouncing terrorism, and pledging to remove clauses in the Palestine National Charter calling for the destruction of Israel. In return, Israel recognized the PLO as the "official representative" of the Palestinian people and began formal negotiations with the PLO. The Charter was revised in a vote by the Palestinian Authority Parliament in the presence of U.S. President Bill Clinton in December 1998. However, the original Charter is still featured on some Palestinian Authority web sites.

Today, the PLO continues to exist; however, most of its leaders have now become top Fatah officials in the [Palestinian Authority](#). Fatah-related militia groups, such as the Tanzim, Force 17 and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade played a leading role in Palestinian violence during the [Second Intifada](#), including suicide terrorist attacks, ambushes, and shootings of Israeli vehicles and facilities.

With the death of Arafat in November 2004, Mahmoud Abbas, a long-time secretary general of the PLO, became the new Chairman of the PLO and was subsequently elected President of the Palestinian Authority.

RESPONSES TO COMMON INACCURACIES ABOUT ISRAEL

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS

Inaccuracy: Israel is not interested in or prepared to make meaningful compromises to achieve peace with the Palestinians.

Response: Israel is committed to pursuing a negotiated peace agreement with the Palestinians so that it may finally live in peace and security. Israel was able to reach historic peace agreements with [Egypt](#) (1979) and Jordan (1994) in which both sides made serious compromises for the sake of normalized relations.

While Israel has made great efforts to promote serious negotiations and a final peace agreement with the Palestinians over the past two decades, peace has proved elusive primarily because there has not been a Palestinian peace partner willing to recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and able to uphold peace commitments

From 1993 through 1998, Israel and the Palestinians negotiated a series of agreements as part of the "[Oslo Process](#)," through which Israel withdrew from population centers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At the [Camp David Summit](#) in July 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered the Palestinians a final status agreement which included extensive concessions on sharing Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount, establishing an independent Palestinian state in 100 percent of the Gaza Strip and as much as 95 percent of the West Bank, uprooting isolated [settlements](#). Nonetheless, in response, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasir Arafat refused the Barak proposal, made no counteroffer and failed to demonstrate any flexibility or willingness to compromise on the contentious issues under negotiation, and ultimately walked away from negotiations. After the Summit, President Clinton openly acknowledged Israel's tremendous concessions and stated that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak "showed particular courage and vision and an understanding of the historical importance of the moment." In 2005, in the absence of a serious Palestinian negotiating partner but still interested in taking steps for improving conditions on the ground, the Israeli government unilaterally disengaged from the Gaza Strip, proving its willingness to make painful sacrifices even at a time when mutual cooperation was not an option.

In numerous statements, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has affirmed Israel's commitment to a two state solution as a result of negotiations. In a major address at Bar Ilan University on the peace process in June 2009 he declared: "We do not want to rule over them (the Palestinians), we do not want to govern their lives, we do not want to impose either our flag or our culture on them. In my vision of peace, in this small land of ours, two peoples live freely, side-by-side, in amity and mutual respect. Each will have its own flag, its own national anthem, its own government. Neither will threaten

the security or survival of the other.” In March 2013, the Prime Minister stated: “Israel remains fully committed to peace and to the solution of two states for two peoples. We extend our hands in peace and friendship to the Palestinian people.” In March 2015, following his reelection to a fourth term, he affirmed: “I want a sustainable peaceful two-state solution.” To encourage direct negotiations, in November 2009, Prime Minister Netanyahu ordered a ten-month freeze on settlement construction, an unprecedented move, since Israelis consider settlements to be an issue to be determined in final status negotiations.

Public opinion polls in Israel since the start of the Oslo process in 1993 consistently show that the majority of Israelis are supportive of negotiations with the Palestinians and are willing to make extremely difficult compromises on borders, settlements, Jerusalem and other contentious issues. This support has been relatively constant despite Palestinian terrorism, the rise of [Hamas](#), and widespread skepticism of the Palestinian commitment to negotiations leading to an end of the conflict and a resolution of all claims. Recognizing this great support for peace, every candidate for Prime Minister of Israel since 1993 has pledged to continue the pursuit of peace – albeit with different approaches.

Inaccuracy: Hamas must be part of any Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Israel’s refusal to deal with Hamas doesn’t make sense. After all, Israel eventually negotiated with the Palestinian Liberation Organization after decades of enduring its terrorist attacks against Israelis and Jews.

Response: [Hamas](#) is committed to the elimination of Israel’s existence by whatever means necessary. This commitment is articulated in the Hamas Charter, and is regularly reiterated by its leadership. The Hamas Charter is rife with incendiary anti-Semitism. Israel cannot be expected to negotiate with an entity that espouses hatred of Jews, seeks its destruction and uses terrorism and rocket attacks to further that goal.

Israel and the international community have been clear, Hamas must recognize Israel’s right to exist, renounce the use of violence and terrorism, and accept previously negotiated Israeli-Palestinian agreements. Until it meets these requirements, neither Israel nor the international community will engage with Hamas.

Israel does have relations with the [Palestinian Authority](#) and its leaders who were former [PLO](#) officials. However, this only came about once the PLO met similar requirements by recognizing Israel’s right to exist, renouncing terrorism, and pledging to remove clauses in the Palestine National Charter that called for the destruction of the State of Israel. The PLO/Palestinian Authority and Israel’s other Arab peace partners – including Egypt and Jordan – have done what Hamas adamantly refuses to do: accept the reality of Israel’s existence and reject efforts to eradicate Israel.

Hamas is well aware of the steps it must take if it is interested in negotiating with Israel.

Inaccuracy: Peace process negotiations have not brought Palestinians an

independent state. For Palestinians to get their own state, they must take matters into their own hands and unilaterally seek recognition of its independence and statehood.

Response: Direct, bilateral talks are the only means for the realization of a two-state solution. Unilateral declarations and efforts represent a Palestinian rejection of direct negotiations with the State of Israel, and will not bring about a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict nor satisfy Palestinian nationalist aspirations.

It is only through direct negotiations will a Palestinian state be established that not only will have agreed-to borders and security provisions, but also have mutually agreed to provisions in place for water, electricity, roads and telecommunications which are all currently managed in Israel.

While unilateral declarations and ad-hoc recognition of independence by international bodies may score public relations points for the Palestinians, in the end, such initiatives will bring no constructive benefit to the lives of Palestinians or to their nationalist goals.

Inaccuracy: The concept of a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not feasible and is outdated. Instead, there should be one state, a “bi-national” state that would be comprised of Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip that would protect the respective Jewish/Israeli and Palestinian identities and interests of its citizens.

Response: The proposal of a bi-national state, or a “one-state solution,” is nothing less than an indirect attempt to bring about an end to the State of Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people.

The State of Israel was established out of the [nationalist aspirations](#) of the Jewish people and an international recognition of the rights of Jews to a homeland following millennia of persecution. While a Jewish state, Israel’s founding principles guarantee equal treatment and protection for all its citizens’ – regardless of religion, ethnicity or color.

A bi-national state, in principle and in practice, would mean the ideological end of the Jewish State of Israel and lead to the forsaking of Jewish nationalism and identity, along with its special status as a refuge for Jews fleeing persecution.

Furthermore, bi-nationalism is unworkable given current realities and historic animosities. With historically high birth rates among the Palestinians, and a possible influx of Palestinian refugees and their descendants now living around the world, Jews would quickly be a minority within a bi-national state, thus likely ending any semblance of equal representation and protections. In this situation, the Jewish population would be increasingly politically – and potentially physically – vulnerable.

It is unrealistic and unacceptable to expect the State of Israel to voluntarily subvert its

own sovereign existence and nationalist identity and become a vulnerable minority within what was once its own territory.

Moreover, as Israeli analyst Yossi Klein-Halevi has argued, “the notion that Palestinians and Jews, who can’t even negotiate a two-state solution, could coexist in one happy state is so ludicrous that only the naive or the malicious would fall for it.”

Within certain intellectual circles the call for a bi-national Israeli-Palestinian state has gained traction. While couching their arguments in terms of egalitarianism and justice, proponents of a bi-national state are predominantly harsh critics of Israel, and use this proposal as a vehicle to further their advocacy against an independent Jewish state.

Some nationalist Israelis also call for a “one-state solution” whereby Israel would annex the [West Bank and Gaza Strip](#) and create one state incorporating this entire territory. Such a concept is equally unacceptable as Israel would then have to sacrifice its status as both a Jewish and democratic state. Were Israel to absorb these territories and make the residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip full citizens of Israel, demographic realities would lead to the effective end of a Jewish State of Israel. Should Israel annex these territories yet deny the non-Jewish residents full citizenship, Israel would no longer be a democratic state. Either choice is inimical to Israel’s founding ideology.

Any just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be based on two states, living side by side in peace and security.

PALESTINIAN VIOLENCE AND TERROR/OPPOSITION TO ISRAEL

Inaccuracy: Hamas is just “fighting against the Israeli occupation.”

Response: The [Hamas](#)-controlled Gaza Strip is not under Israeli occupation. Israel fully [disengaged](#) from the Gaza Strip in August 2005, uprooting 8,000 Israeli settlers from their homes and removing all military installations. Israel took this step in order to improve the quality of life for the Palestinian population of Gaza and in the hope that the Palestinians would govern Gaza responsibly and peacefully. Instead, the Hamas leadership has turned Gaza into an armed camp and a launching pad for terrorism and extremism targeting Israeli civilians.

Moreover, Hamas' openly declared mission does not focus on “liberating” the West Bank or Gaza Strip, but calls for the complete eradication of the State of Israel. Its ultimate objective is the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state ruled by Islamic theocratic law in place of the State of Israel. The Hamas covenant, issued in 1988, is replete with anti-Semitism, and echoes the notorious [Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#) which charges Jews with an international conspiracy to gain control of the world. In Hamas' world-view, Islamic precepts forbid a Jewish state in the area known as Palestine, and the Jewish people have no legitimate connection to the land of Israel. As its covenant proclaims, "The land of Palestine is an Islamic trust... It is forbidden to

anyone to yield or concede any part of it... Israel will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it..." To this end, the leaders of Hamas have denounced peace negotiations with Israel as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause.

Israel and Egypt do control Gazan imports and exports for security reasons. Until Egypt clamped down, Hamas openly brought sophisticated weapons and military materiel into Gaza through the Sinai. Similarly, Hamas has used building equipment, computer software and other dual-use items for their own military purposes. Israel takes great efforts to ensure the flow of medical and humanitarian goods into Gaza – and did so even during periods of direct military conflict. Each month on average, over 5,000 trucks carrying approximately 150,000 tons of goods enter Gaza from Israel. These trucks carry food, medicine and medical equipment, building materials and other assorted items. Electricity continues to flow freely from Israel into Gaza. Additionally, each month dozens of truckloads carrying goods produced in Gaza, including flowers and spices, are transferred to international markets via Israel.

Hamas is ultimately responsible for the difficult conditions the people of Gaza endure. Its refusal to comply with international demands to recognize Israel's right to exist and cease terrorist operations has led to the isolation of Gaza by the international community. It deliberately puts ordinary Palestinians in harm's way by misusing domestic items for military purposes, establishing its terrorist infrastructure – manufacturing, storage, training and strategic planning – within densely populated areas, in the midst of homes, schools, mosques and hospitals. It has cynically exploited the harsh conditions in Gaza for public relations purposes, while continuing to expand the hostile activities that created and exacerbated these conditions.

Inaccuracy: The Palestinian use of terrorism is a legitimate tool in the Palestinian national struggle for liberation.

Response: Terrorism - the premeditated use of violence deliberately directed against random civilians, with the aim of killing as many as possible and sowing psychological fear and despair – can never be justified nor legitimized.

As many Palestinian leaders, including [Palestinian Authority](#) President Mahmoud Abbas, have publicly acknowledged, violence and terrorism do nothing to hasten the realization of Palestinian nationalist aspirations.

Terror attacks have brought fear to everyday life for Israelis, who live with the understanding that a suicide terrorist attack can happen anywhere to anybody – to children on the way to school on a city bus, to teens gathering at a nightclub or shopping mall, or to people socializing at a cafe. Following such attacks, grief and fear are often joined by anger towards the terrorists and the Palestinians who condone, celebrate or incite terrorism. Terrorism serves to reinforce the belief among many Israelis that the Palestinian people do not seek peaceful reconciliation.

Direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are the way to properly address the genuine

frustration among Palestinians and offer the only way to achieve a more stable and secure future for all Israelis and Palestinians. However, the willingness of the Israeli public to accept substantial concessions depends on their belief that the Palestinians are truly interested in peace and reconciliation, are capable of carrying out agreements, and have resolutely rejected terrorism and violence.

Inaccuracy: Divestment and other initiatives aimed at sanctioning Israel are appropriate and effective methods by Palestinians and their supporters to protest objectionable Israeli policies.

Response: Divestment and other BDS ([Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#)) initiatives are fundamentally biased in their demonization of Israel and fail to do anything constructive to improve the situation on the ground for Palestinians or promote Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation.

Divestment campaigns ignore the complex nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the competing national and territorial claims, and simplistically and unfairly place the onus of the conflict on Israel alone.

They also disregard the long record of Arab and Palestinian refusal to recognize of Jewish statehood, along with Israel's peace proposals at [Camp David](#), Taba and elsewhere, which were rejected by the Palestinian leadership.

A true solution to the conflict will require the good faith and determination of both parties to work together for a secure, independent and prosperous future for Palestinians and Israelis. Such a solution will only emerge from intense negotiations, with both sides making difficult concessions regarding borders, refugees, settlements and additional contentious matters.

BDS does nothing to promote such a Israeli-Palestinian negotiations or reconciliation, and does not even support this as a goal of the movement. Indeed, leading BDS advocates and organizations do not support a two-state solution or the continued existence of Israel as a Jewish state and deny the Jewish right to self-determination and statehood. The global BDS movement's demand for the return of all Palestinian refugees to their former home in Israel effectively calls for the end of the Jewish State of Israel.

To be sure, criticism of Israel and Israeli policies can be reasonable and legitimate. But divestment, which singles out Israel for pariah status, is biased and disproportionate.

BDS is also not effective. Despite the best efforts of these activists, and some minor gains among church groups and British trade unions, the divestment and boycott campaign has largely failed to have more than a public relations impact, particularly in the U.S. To date, despite some symbolic wins, campaigns have failed to convince targeted institutions to divest from Israel, universities to boycott Israeli scholars and academic institutions, or lobby U.S. companies to stop doing business with Israel.

Inaccuracy: The Palestinian people are waging a war of independence against a colonial, hegemonic power.

Response: In no way can the State of Israel be considered a colonial or hegemonic power. Israel is not a foreign invader. The State of Israel is built on the foundation of thousands of years of Jewish connection to, and presence in, this land.

Moreover, Israel has no desire to empire-build, gain financial benefit, or systematically rule over the lives of millions of Arab Palestinians in the [West Bank or Gaza Strip](#), as is evident from their efforts to seek a negotiated settlement to the conflict with the Palestinians and Israel's unilateral [disengagement](#) from Gaza. Indeed, public opinion polls going back decades show the majority of the Israeli public support a two-state solution, although there is skepticism as to the Palestinian commitment to true reconciliation.

ISRAELI RESPONSES TO PALESTINIAN VIOLENCE

Inaccuracy: Israel's military operations in Gaza in 2008/09, 2012 and 2014 were excessive and they caused deliberate and undue damage and injury to Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

Response: In [2008](#), [2012](#) and [2014](#) Israel launched military operations in Gaza after it determined it had no choice but to respond to intensifying rocket and missiles attacks launched by [Hamas](#) and other terrorist organizations in Gaza. In 2008 and 2012, Israel's main military objective was to end Hamas' ability to launch rockets into Israel, while in 2014 there was an additional objective of destroying Hamas' tunnel network, which was used by Hamas to infiltrate into Israel in order to kidnap and kill Israeli civilians and soldiers. In all three instances, Israel was fulfilling its duty and responsibility to protect its citizens from deadly rocket assaults and terror activities. In the months and years leading up to these military actions, Israel demonstrated the utmost restraint in dealing with Hamas's blatant hostility and tried to stop the attacks through a variety of measures including diplomatic and political, but to no avail.

Most recently, in 2014's [Operation Protective Edge](#), the IDF's military operation aimed to curtail Hamas' ability to attack Israel – through stopping the rocket, missile, mortar attacks, and eradicating an extensive network of underground tunnels leading into Israel designed to enable terror attacks and kidnappings of Israeli civilians and soldiers. Targets in Gaza included Hamas operational centers, storage facilities and rocket launching sites, the labyrinth of tunnels, as well as locations where terrorist leaders were hiding out. Many of the rocket storage sites were deliberately located by Hamas in densely populated areas, including private homes, mosques, schools and medical facilities. Hamas wantonly launched rockets outside apartment buildings, stores, schools and mosques.

The IDF, following its own internal ethics guidelines and rules of engagement, require its

forces to make every effort to limit civilian casualties under these very challenging conditions. In all three operations, Israel enacted procedures to warn civilians through leafleting and phone calls, that their neighborhoods and buildings were located. In the aftermath of the conflicts, Israel has investigated (and in the case of the 2014 operation, continues to investigate) whether errors were made by its soldiers and if legal action is required.

Inaccuracy: The IDF committed war crimes during its actions in Gaza operations in 2008/09 and in 2014. The Israeli army deliberately committed grave violations of international law in Gaza through indiscriminate killing, vandalism and the like.

Response: Israel did not commit war crimes during its operations in Gaza, nor did Israel intentionally harm civilians or Gaza's civilian infrastructure.

IDF guidelines strictly call for the prevention of harm to uninvolved civilians. Allegations that individual Israeli soldiers acted unethically or illegally during Israel's military operations in Gaza were carefully investigated and legal action was taken against soldiers found to have committed violations, including criminal indictments.

In an April 2011 op-ed in the *Washington Post*, Justice Richard Goldstone, the lead author of the infamous 2009 Goldstone Report which charged Israel with war crimes through a deliberate policy to target civilians during the [2008/09 Gaza operation](#), wrote "If I had known then what I know now, the Goldstone Report would have been a different document." Justice Goldstone withdrew the report's most serious claim that the Israeli Defense Forces intentionally targeted civilians during their operations in Gaza. The op-ed, entitled "[Reconsidering the Goldstone Report on Israel and War Crimes](#)," further commended Israel's investigations into charges of abuse. As Justice Goldstone concluded, "the investigations published by the Israeli military and recognized in the U.N. committee's report...indicate that civilians were not intentionally targeted as a matter of policy." He further wrote of Hamas: "rockets were purposefully and indiscriminately aimed at civilian targets... That comparatively few Israelis have been killed by the unlawful rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza in no way minimizes the criminality."

Allegations regarding incidents during the 2014 [Operation Protective Edge](#) are still under investigation. Despite Israel's best efforts to avoid harming non-combatants, there were many civilian injuries and deaths were reported in Gaza. As in prior Israel-Hamas conflicts, Hamas had deliberately placed its operational centers, storage facilities and rocket launching sites, infiltration tunnels, in densely populated areas, including private homes, mosques, schools and medical facilities, a violation of the Law of Armed Conflict (which prohibits a party to hostilities from deliberately making civilians the object of attack). Hamas' own military manuals urged their fighters, many of whom posed as civilians and non-combatants, to use populated civilian areas so that it "increases the hatred of the citizens towards the attackers [the IDF] and increases their gathering [support] around the city defender [Hamas]." Israel enacted procedures to warn civilians through leafleting, phone calls and other methods, that their

neighborhoods and buildings were located in the vicinity of military operations and urged them to leave the area. In response to these warnings, Hamas advised Gaza residents to ignore “Israeli propaganda” and stay in their homes.

In keeping with its commitment to observing international law, Israel created a permanent Fact Finding Assessment Mechanism (FFA Mechanism) to compile alleged violations of international law during Operation Protective Edge, approximately 100 incidents in total. The incidents are being investigated by Israel’s Military Advocate General (MAG) which has launched criminal investigations into a number of the alleged violations.

It should also be noted that many of those who accuse the IDF or individual Israeli soldiers of war crimes believe that military action can never be justified, and do not provide guidelines for what they would consider the justified use of force in the context of a state battling a terrorist organization entrenched in a densely populated area.

Inaccuracy: The Israeli army uses excessive force against unarmed Palestinians.

Response: Israel has shown the greatest possible restraint and makes a determined effort to limit Palestinian casualties during its operations against Palestinian terrorists.

Whenever possible, the Israel Defense Forces respond to Palestinian violence in a directed manner, at carefully chosen specified targets, such as those planning terrorist attacks or launching rockets and mortars at Israel. IDF operations to root out terrorists and their infrastructure are consistent with the Israeli Government’s right and responsibility to defend Israel and its population from attack. The Israeli military seeks to prevent civilian casualties, in stark contrast to the Palestinian terrorist organizations’ goal of killing as many civilians as possible through terrorist and rocket attacks.

Israel has often had no option but to go into Palestinian population centers, since [Hamas](#) and other groups deliberately position themselves in densely populated areas and launched mortar shells and rockets at Israeli targets from residential areas.

Israel targets Palestinians who are directly engaged in anti-Israel violence and terrorism and who aim to kill and maim as many civilians as possible in their attacks. Tragically, innocent Palestinians have been caught in the crossfire. This is in contrast to Palestinian terrorist operations and rocket attacks which deliberately aim to kill as many civilians as possible.

In cases of military operations, the IDF, following its own internal ethics guidelines and rules of engagement, require its forces to make every effort to limit civilian casualties under very challenging conditions. Israel has enacted procedures to warn civilians who might be in neighborhoods and buildings where Israel is targeting terrorists operations.

In cases of Palestinian civilian casualties, Israel has a comprehensive investigative process to determine whether errors were made by its soldiers and if legal action should

be taken.

Inaccuracy: Israel is imposing a humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Response: Israel enables the flow of essential goods into Gaza. Given the ongoing threat from Hamas, Israel does restrict certain dual-use goods which could be used for military purposes (Egypt does as well). Following the Israel-Hamas 2014 [conflict](#) in Gaza, Israel and the Palestinians agreed to allow the import of some previously suspended building materials into Gaza, to be overseen by United Nations monitors. This includes 600 tons of cement, 400 tons of steel and 50 tons of gravel.

Each month on average, over 5,000 trucks carrying approximately 150,000 tons of goods enter Gaza from Israel. These trucks carry food, medicine and medical equipment, building materials and other assorted items. Electricity continues to flow freely from Israel into Gaza.

Additionally, each month dozens of truckloads carrying goods produced in Gaza, including flowers and spices, are transferred to international markets via Israel.

[Hamas](#) is ultimately responsible for the difficult conditions the people of Gaza endure. Its refusal to comply with international demands to recognize Israel's right to exist and cease terrorist operations has led to the isolation of Gaza by the international community. It deliberately puts ordinary Palestinians in harm's way by misusing domestic items for military purposes, establishing its terrorist infrastructure – manufacturing, storage, training and strategic planning – within densely populated areas, in the midst of homes, schools, mosques and hospitals. It has cynically exploited the harsh conditions in Gaza for public relations purposes, while continuing to expand the hostile activities that created and exacerbated these conditions.

Inaccuracy: Israel is building a “wall” on the West Bank in order to encircle the Palestinian population and to seize more land for Israeli control.

Response: Israel's [security barrier](#) is a defensive measure undertaken by Israel to prevent Palestinian terrorists from reaching their civilian targets inside Israel.

The decision to build the barrier was made by the Government of Israel in 2002 following two years of [unabated terrorism](#) by Palestinians suicide bombers, who targeted Israeli buses, cafes, shopping centers and other gathering points for Israeli civilians. Over 1,000 Israelis were killed, and thousands severely injured in these attacks. Throughout this period, the [Palestinian Authority](#) did little-to-nothing to prevent these attacks or to abolish the terrorist infrastructure despite its commitment to do so in agreements with Israel. Israel had no choice but to take strong action to stop these terrorists from entering Israel from their operation centers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Moreover, this barrier is not a “wall.” The approximately 450-mile security barrier, being

constructed in phases, is comprised 90 percent of chain-link fence and 10 percent of a concrete barrier. The entire barrier is a multi-fence system which incorporates ditches, barbed wire, patrol roads and observation systems. Contrary to anti-Israel propaganda, only a very small section of the barrier is concrete, or can be described as “a wall.” As of 2014, only 62% of the barrier’s planned route has been completed.

Most importantly, the security fence is helping to prevent terrorist bombings. Israeli security officials say that scores of attacks have been thwarted since 2003 as terrorists have been unable to reach Israeli cities, or have been forced to take more circuitous routes, leading to their capture.

The fence has caused hardship for some Palestinians who have homes or fields located on or near its route. This is primarily due to the population density and demographic complications that define the area. The Israeli Supreme Court has issued a number of rulings on the barrier’s route, ordering it changed in areas where it would lead to undue hardship for Palestinians. It is anticipated that further modifications to the route will continue to be made.

Inaccuracy: Israel’s policy of “closure” and its system of checkpoints is purposely designed to collectively punish the entire Palestinian population for the acts of certain individuals and to deliberately cause economic hardship to the Palestinians.

Response: Closures and checkpoints are instituted by the Israeli government to protect its citizens. Border closures and checkpoints have been among the only mechanisms at Israel’s disposal to prevent would-be suicide bombers from entering Israeli cities. Indeed, checkpoints have allowed Israel to thwart numerous terrorists attempting to enter Israeli population centers in this manner. Over the past decade, checkpoints have stopped male and female Palestinians who are discovered to be carrying explosives in their cars, under their clothes or in their bags from entering Israel.

Israel understands the economic hardship the closures impose upon Palestinian civilians who cannot go to their jobs in Israel or receive and send shipments. Israel eases the closures and passage through checkpoints when the threat of terrorism is reduced.

ISRAEL/ZIONISM IS RACIST

Inaccuracy: Zionism is a racist ideology.

Response: [Zionism](#) is the Jewish national movement of rebirth and renewal in the land of Israel – the historical birthplace of the Jewish people. Rooted in the liberal principles of freedom, democracy, equality, and social justice, Zionism is fundamentally incompatible with racism.

The yearning to return to Zion, the biblical term for both the Land of Israel and Jerusalem, has been the cornerstone of Jewish religious life since the Jewish exile from the land two thousand years ago, and is embedded in Jewish prayer, ritual, literature and culture. Zionism is an ideology that celebrates the Jewish national connection to Israel. It does not discriminate against or judge other religions or nationalities.

The false and biased charge of racism is a deliberate effort to delegitimize the right of Jews to a national homeland and undermine the Jewish nationalist movement.

Israel's Law of Return, which some critics of Israel accuse of being "racist," is for Jews a potent testimonial to the safe and free haven they will always have in the State of Israel after centuries of persecution and isolation. Israel's uniqueness as a country which grants automatic citizenship to Jews (as well as their non-Jewish immediate family members) who seek to settle there is not racist. Individuals ineligible for automatic citizenship under the Law of Return are eligible for Israeli citizenship under regular procedures equivalent to such requirements in other countries. Indeed, the State of Israel is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, comprised of Jews and non-Jews from at least 100 different countries from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.

The equation of "Zionism equals racism" has its origins in the passage of the Arab and Soviet-sponsored United Nations resolution of November 10, 1975 which declared Zionism a "form of racism and racial discrimination." The highly politicized resolution was aimed at denying Israel its political legitimacy by attacking its moral basis for existence. The resolution, which former-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan described as a "low point" in the history of the UN, was finally repealed on December 16, 1991.

Inaccuracy: Israel is an apartheid state and should be fought in the same manner that apartheid in South Africa was fought – through divestment, boycott and other punitive economic measures.

Response: The treatment of Arabs by the State of Israel cannot be compared in any way to the treatment of the black majority in South Africa under apartheid. There is no Israeli ideology, policy or plan to segregate, persecute or mistreat the Arab population.

Apartheid was a uniquely repressive system, through which South Africa's white minority enforced its domination over the black and other non-white racial groups who made up more than 90 percent of the population. Apartheid – which means "separate development" in the Afrikaans language – was put into effect through a systematic framework of racist legislation imposing strict segregation, including laws which banned blacks from "white areas," prevented blacks and whites from marrying or even having sexual relations with each other, and which regulated the education of black children in accordance with their "subservient" social position. The regime imposed "Bantustans," impoverished autonomous homelands whose borders were designed to exclude economically viable land, upon 12 million black South Africans.

No such laws exist in Israel, which in its Declaration of Independence pledges to safeguard the equal rights of all citizens. Arab citizens of Israel enjoy the full range of civil and political rights, including the right to organize politically, the right to vote and the right to speak and publish freely. Israeli Arabs and other non-Jewish Israelis serve as members of Israel's security forces, are elected to parliament and appointed to the country's highest courts. They are afforded equal educational opportunities, and there are ongoing initiatives to further improve the economic standing of all of Israel's minorities. These facts serve as a counter to the apartheid argument, and demonstrate that Israel is committed to democratic principles and equal rights for all its citizens.

Moreover, Israel's acceptance of a two-state solution as the outcome of bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations belies accusations that Israel's goal is the persecution of Palestinians.

To be sure, Palestinians in the West Bank and in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip do encounter hardships as a result of Israeli policies, including checkpoints, access into Israel, the security barrier and other issues. However, these procedures and structures have been developed to promote security and thwart potential terrorist action, not to persecute or segregate.

Finally, divestment and boycott campaigns singularly demonize Israel and designate Israel for pariah status, while ignoring other states, including many in the Middle East, which systematically abuse human rights. If anti-Israel divestment and boycott activists were truly interested in aiding Palestinians and promoting Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation, they would advocate constructive initiatives between Israelis, Palestinians and others. Unfortunately, most of these activists ignore such initiatives, and focus solely on bashing Israel and promoting punitive actions against the state. Indeed, former South African Constitutional Court Justice Richard Goldstone wrote in a New York Times [op-ed](#) that accusing Israel of apartheid "is an unfair and inaccurate slander against Israel, calculated to retard rather than advance peace negotiations."

Inaccuracy: The fight for freedom for the Palestinians is part of the same struggle as those working for civil rights and equality in the United States. Those challenging racism in the U.S. must also be involved in fighting Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

Response: There is no rational connection between the challenge of racism in America and the situation facing the Palestinians. Conflating these two very different issues is neither helpful in dealing with the racial challenges facing the United States nor in solving the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The civil rights movement in the United States has been instrumental in fighting racism, segregation, discrimination and other manifestations. While the U.S. has come a long way, recent incidents, including the tragic deaths of a number of African-American men at the hands of police officers, highlight that we still have a long way to travel on the road to justice in America.

Israel's relations with the Palestinians are of a completely different character. To be sure, Palestinians encounter restrictions and hardships due to Israeli security policies. However, the fundamental basis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is over territory and competing nationalist narratives. There is no Israeli ideology or policy aimed at discriminating or persecuting the Palestinians.

Comparing America's history of racism and Israel's treatment of the Palestinians seems driven by individuals more invested in undermining the Jewish state than in furthering race relations in America, or working towards a constructive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Inaccuracy: Israel is attempting to “pinkwash” its persecution of the Palestinians by purposefully diverting attention from the conflict to the alleged freedoms enjoyed by the LGBT community in Israel.

Response: Israel is right to be proud of its record of freedoms and protections for LGBTs. Israel is unique in the Middle East for its tolerance, legal protections and equality enjoyed by the LGBT community. This reality does not diminish, ignore or “pinkwash” the Israel-Palestinian conflict, nor does it negate the homophobic attitudes present in some segments of Israeli society, particularly in the ultra-orthodox sector of Israeli society.

Those anti-Israel activists within the LGBT community who accuse Israel of “pinkwashing” willfully ignore the facts of Israel's vibrant democracy in order to justify and promote their attacks against Israel. It is apparent, that many who charge Israel with “pinkwashing” refuse to recognize any positive attributes in the State of Israel, while, at the same time, refuse to condemn negative, violent and homophobic elements in Palestinian society or elsewhere in the region.

Inaccuracy: As a self-described “Jewish State,” Israel is by nature an undemocratic and discriminatory country.

Response: Democracy is the cornerstone of the State of Israel. As stated in its founding declaration, Israel's government will be “for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice, peace as envisaged by the Prophets of Israel, it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.” Hebrew and Arabic (as well as English) are official languages of the state, and all its citizens regardless of religion, ethnicity or color are accorded full civil and political rights, and equal participation in all aspects of Israeli social, political, and civic life.

As in every country, much more needs to be done to promote greater educational and employment opportunities for minorities, particularly Israeli Arabs. Much of this disparity

is due to scarce resources. The Israeli government has been committed to investing in the necessary infrastructure and assistance for these communities and there are numerous non-government organizations in Israel and abroad who monitor government policies and treatment of minorities.

Inaccuracy: Israel treats Arabs as second-class citizens.

Response: Israeli law makes no distinction between its Arab and Jewish citizens. Israeli Arab citizens enjoy the same rights as their Jewish neighbors. They are free to practice their religion without discrimination, in accordance with Israel's commitment to democracy and freedom. Israeli Arabs are well represented in the Israeli Knesset (parliament), and Arab members of Knesset are extremely vocal in promoting their issues and opinions. Israeli Arabs serve in Israel's foreign service, as government ministers and as justices on the Supreme Court.

As in every country, more needs to be done to promote greater educational and employment opportunities for minorities, particularly for Israeli Arabs. The Israeli government has committed to investing in the necessary infrastructure and assistance for these communities. As in the United States, non-governmental organizations publicly advocate for increased investment in Israeli Arab communities.

Palestinian Arabs living in the [West Bank and Gaza Strip](#) are not citizens of Israel. After gaining territory in the [1967 War](#), Israel was faced with a million Palestinian Arabs under its administration. Israel hoped its authority over the Palestinians in these areas would be short-lived and that it would be able to exchange the land for peace with its Arab neighbors. As a result, Israel did not annex or incorporate the West Bank and Gaza Strip into Israel proper, and thus does not apply to Palestinians the same laws that govern Israeli civilian life.

Inaccuracy: Israeli treatment of the Palestinians today is comparable to the Nazis' treatment of the Jews, and policies of "ethnic cleansing" or "genocide."

Response: Absolutely no comparison can be made between the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jews. Nor can Israeli actions or policies be characterized as acts of ethnic cleansing or genocide.

In contrast to the Holocaust and more recent examples of genocide and ethnic cleansing in Darfur, Rwanda and Kosovo, there is no Israeli ideology, policy or plan to persecute, exterminate or expel the Palestinian population – nor has there ever been. Israeli policies toward the Palestinians are a result of a conflict over territory, and are developed based on Israel's need to defend its population and combat threats to Israel's security, while promoting a negotiated resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In direct contrast, the Nazis' "final solution" to the "Jewish problem" was the deliberate, systematic and mechanized extermination of European Jewry. Hitler's final solution led to the calculated, premeditated murder of six million Jews and the destruction of thriving

Jewish communities across Europe.

Those that make the comparison between the Jewish state and the Nazis and Hitler – who perpetrated the greatest and largest act of anti-Semitism in world history – have not chosen this comparison innocently or dispassionately. It is a charge that is purposefully directed at Jews in an effort to associate the victims of Nazi crimes with the Nazi perpetrators, and serves to diminish the significance and uniqueness of the Holocaust. To make such a comparison is anti-Semitic and constitutes blatant hostility toward Jews, Jewish history and the legitimacy of the Jewish State of Israel.

ANTI-SEMITISM AND CRITICISM OF ISRAEL

Inaccuracy: Jews unfairly label anyone who criticizes Israel an anti-Semite.

Response: Certainly the sovereign State of Israel and its government can be legitimately criticized just like any other country or government in the world. Criticism of particular Israeli actions or policies – even harsh and strident criticism and advocacy - in and of itself does not constitute anti-Semitism.

However, it is undeniable that there are those whose criticism of Israel crosses the line into anti-Semitism. It is also undeniable that criticism of Israel is considered socially acceptable, thereby providing a pretext for some whose criticism masks deeper anti-Jewish attitudes.

How can one distinguish between criticism of Israel that is within the bounds of legitimate political discourse, and that which crosses the line into anti-Semitism?

Natan Sharansky, an Israeli leader and former Soviet “refusenik” identifies “3 D’s” to determine when anti-Israel criticism crosses over into anti-Semitism: demonization, delegitimization and when Israel is held to a double standard.

One way is to recognize when those who criticize Israel invoke traditional anti-Jewish references, accusations and conspiracy theories. A clear cut example is when Israelis are depicted using Nazi-era *Der Stürmer*-like stereotypes: i.e., hooked noses; bent over, dark, ugly, demonic figures. Or when Israelis are accused of crimes that are reminiscent of age-old anti-Jewish conspiracy theories – i.e. alleged Israeli/Jewish influence over governments and media and public thought; that a Jewish cabal (elders of Zion) is behind Israel’s strength or behind foreign policy that is favorable to Israel, or allegations of Israeli actions that are eerily similar to medieval blood libel (the deliberate killing of Palestinian babies by IDF soldiers etc).

Another common theme is when Israelis are compared to Nazis and Hitler. This comparison between the Jewish state and those who perpetrated the greatest and largest act of anti-Semitism in world history is not an impartial or dispassionate accusation. It is a charge that is purposefully directed at Jews in an effort to associate

the victims of the Nazi crimes with the Nazi perpetrators, and serves to diminish the significance and uniqueness of the Holocaust. To make such a comparison is an act of blatant hostility toward Jews and Jewish history.

Deeper bias against Israel and Jews may also be evident when Israel is held to a different standard than any other country in the world. Such an example is when critics of Israel question or deny Israel's right to exist. No one questions France or China or Iran's right to exist, simply because there is disagreement with their policies. Why then should it be acceptable for only the Jewish state's legitimacy, or Jewish nationalism to be a subject for discussion? Similarly, questions of motivation arise when Israel is singled out for criticism for actions or policies that nations around the world engage in with impunity.

A more complex manifestation is when critics of Israel advocate policies which would effectively lead to the demise of the Jewish character of the state – such as calls for a “one-state solution” for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or demand the unqualified right of return for all Palestinian refugees. These measures potentially affect all Jews who have a religious, spiritual or nationalist connection to the Jewish homeland and would lead to the end of Israel as a Jewish state. Although some advocates may not appreciate the destructive consequences of these policies, these policies are anti-Jewish in their impact.

Finally, it should be noted that even if strident anti-Israel activism is not motivated by anti-Semitism, at times, these campaigns create an environment which make anti-Semitism more acceptable. As then President of Harvard Lawrence H. Summers said in 2002 in reaction to an anti-Israel divestment campaign on campus, such advocacy is “anti-Semitic in their effect if not in their intent.”

Inaccuracy: Arabs who hate Jews cannot be labeled “anti-Semitic” because they themselves are Semites.

Response: The term anti-Semitism was formulated to refer specifically to the hatred of Jews. The term has never been used to refer to hatred against Arabs. Claims to the contrary are an effort to diminish the term's potency or to seize ownership of it.

The historical roots of the term “anti-Semitism” go back to the 19th century when it was invented and popularized by anti-Jewish German writers and intellectuals in the closing decades of the 19th century. The anthropology of that era gave the name “Semitic” – from the Hebrew “Shem,” one of Noah's sons – to a family of languages that included Hebrew, Arabic, Assyrian and Phoenician; and labeled members of groups that spoke these languages as “Semites.” Through the ministrations of late-century racial “science,” Semitic was increasingly used to designate Jews as a “race” with inborn biological attributes. The use of the term “anti-Semitism” to specifically denote opposition and antagonism to Jews was first suggested by the German journalist Wilhelm Marr in his 1879 work *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism*, a best-seller that helped push “the Jewish question” to the center of German politics.

Quite simply, anti-Semitism refers to the hatred of Jews, whatever the nationality, race, color or creed of the perpetrator. Attempting to dismiss the term anti-Semitism because of semantics does not erase the fact of its existence or its history.

ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

Inaccuracy: Settlements are the main obstacle to achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace. Therefore Israel must agree to a settlement freeze prior before the Palestinians can be expected to engage in any serious negotiations.

Response: [Settlements](#) are an issue among many contentious issues to be negotiated, and surely is not the only issue which has prevented an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

Settlements, along with final borders, security arrangements, [Palestinian refugees](#), [Jerusalem](#), foreign relations “and other issues of common interest” have always been considered “final status” issues – matters to be negotiated as part of a final peace Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. While settlements are an issue of great concern to Palestinians, Israelis are equally concerned about the Palestinian demand for a “right of return” for refugees and border issues.

Serious, bilateral negotiation have been conducted without any “preconditions” regarding settlements. In 2009, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu agreed to a 10-month “settlement freeze” in order to induce the Palestinians to resume negotiations. The Palestinians refused to engage for much of that period, and only agree to a symbolic bilateral meeting at the 10th month.

While the United States government is critical of settlements, on his March 2013 trip to the region, President Obama reiterated that that the issue of settlements can only be resolved in the context of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. As he said in his press conference with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas:

The core issue right now is, how do we get sovereignty for the Palestinian people, and how do we assure security for the Israeli people? And that’s the essence of this negotiation. And that’s not to say settlements are not important. It is to say that if we solve those two problems, the settlement problem will be solved. So I don’t want to put the cart before the horse. I want to make sure that we are getting to the core issues and the substance, understanding that both sides should be doing what they can to build confidence, to rebuild a sense of trust. And that’s where, hopefully, the U.S. government can be helpful.”

Moreover, Israel has demonstrated that it is dismantle and resettle Israeli communities as part of a final peace agreement. The thriving Israeli town of Yamit in the Sinai desert was dismantled in 1982 as part of the Israel-Egypt peace agreement. At the

negotiating table, at Camp David and at Taba, successive Israeli leaders have presented peace proposals which include the dismantlement of numerous settlements, particular those in the outlying areas. Successive Israeli governments have made clear that they would take similar steps regarding settlements in the context of mutually-negotiated agreement with the Palestinians.

Inaccuracy: Settlements are a violation of international law.

Response: [Settlements](#), Jewish communities that were established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the territories were gained in the [1967 War](#), do not violate international law.

Israel's administration of the territories in 1967 replaced Jordan's control of the West Bank and Egypt's of the Gaza Strip. Neither Jordan nor Egypt had legal sovereignty over these areas, but took them over during the 1948 war with the newly established State of Israel. (According to the [U.N. Partition Plan](#), the West Bank and Gaza Strip were to be part of an independent Arab state to be established alongside an independent Jewish state – a plan rejected by Arab nations and Palestinian leadership.)

Israel maintains that these areas can thus not be considered “occupied territories” under international law, since Israel did not “occupy” it from another sovereign nation. Rather, they are “disputed territories” over which there are competing claims requiring that their future must be determined through negotiations.

Since 1967, Israeli governments have maintained a willingness to withdraw from areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip as part of a peace agreement with the Arabs. Israel uprooted all of the settlements in the Gaza Strip in August 2005 as part of its unilateral [disengagement](#) from Gaza.

Critics of Israel frequently cite Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the forcible transfer of segments of a population of a state to the territory of another state which it has occupied through the use of armed force, as proof of the illegality of settlements. However, Israel maintains that the Geneva Convention, drafted after World War II, was intended to protect local populations from displacement, such as the forced population transfers experienced before and during the war in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. The situation in today's West Bank is clearly different. Israel has not forcibly transferred Israelis to these settlements. Rather, Israeli settlers voluntarily moved to the areas where Jews have historically dwelled. Jews have lived in the West Bank throughout recorded history, until 1948, but they were forced to flee the invading Arab armies. Indeed, several of the current settlement communities existed prior to 1948 when they were overrun by invading Arab armies. For example, Kfar Etzion and other villages in the Jerusalem-Bethlehem corridor fell to Arab forces in May 1948 and those captured were massacred. Sons and daughters of those who lived there until 1948 were the first to return after the 1967 war.

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

Inaccuracy: Palestinians were systematically expelled from their land by Israel in 1948.

Response: There was no official, deliberate or systemic Israeli policy of expelling Palestinians from the newly established State of Israel. As many as [700,000 Palestinians](#) abandoned their homes when five Arab armies invaded the newly declared state on May 15, 1948. During the chaotic and volatile war, some of the Palestinians who left did so voluntarily to avoid the war. In certain villages, some left at the urging of Arab leaders who promised a quick return to their homes after an anticipated Arab victory over the new Jewish state. Recent historical studies have revealed that in some towns and villages, Palestinians were forced to flee by individuals or groups fighting for Israel. Palestinians who stayed were made full citizens of the new State of Israel.

Inaccuracy: Palestinian refugees have a “right of return” under international law – the right to reclaim and return to their former homes inside Israel.

Response: International law and international statute do not call for a Palestinian “right of return” to Israel, but rather for a resolution of the long-standing [Palestinian refugee](#) problem which was caused by the Arab attack on Israel in 1948. On humanitarian grounds, Israel has committed to participating in an international effort to resettle and compensate Palestinian refugees.

United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338 refer not to a “right of return,” but of the need to resolve the [Palestinian](#) refugee issue. The international resolutions which Palestinians often base their claim of a “right” on, such as the December 1948 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 and Article 12 of the December 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, are non-binding. Moreover, these non-binding resolutions are inconsistent with current conditions and realities. For example, Resolution 194 calls for a return of refugees to “live at peace with their neighbors,” hardly realistic given the refugees’ long-standing refusal to recognize Israel’s right to exist. Article 12 is similarly inapplicable. It refers to individuals, not a group of people, who left the country as a result of war and infers a relationship, even citizenship, between the individual and the country.

A “right of return” is also not viable on practical grounds. An influx of millions of Palestinians into Israel would pose a threat to its national security and upset the country’s demographic makeup. Moreover, the “right of return” of Palestinian refugees was a rallying cry in the decades that the [PLO](#) and Arab nations did not recognize Israel’s right to exist and actively sought to bring about Israel’s downfall and replace it with a Palestinian state to which Palestinians would return. (Indeed, Arab states with Palestinian refugee populations used this “right” as an excuse not to provide Palestinians with citizenship, or educational and professional opportunities.) In 1993, the PLO officially recognized Israel’s right to exist and engaged in a [negotiating process](#) that was expected to ultimately establish an independent Palestinian state alongside the

State of Israel. Palestinian refugees should rightly be resettled in a mutually negotiated Palestinian state, not in the State of Israel. Indeed, U.S. President George W. Bush declared in April 2004: “It seems clear that an agreed, just, fair and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue, as part of any final status agreement, will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than Israel.”

Israel maintains that it is not responsible for the Palestinian refugee problem since it is the result of a war forced on Israel by invading Arab armies. However, Israel has stated that on humanitarian grounds it would participate in an international effort to resolve the situation. Such an effort would likely involve Palestinian refugees settling in a newly established state of Palestine, an international compensation fund, and individual cases of family reunification. Any international effort would also need to consider the situation of the 800,000 Jews who were either expelled from their native Arab nations or forced to flee as a result of state-sponsored anti-Jewish violence following the founding of the State of Israel.

U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONS

Inaccuracy: The only reason the United States supports Israel is because of the powerful “Jewish lobby.”

Response: U.S. foreign policy on Israel involves many complex issues, actors and considerations and cannot be ascribed to a “powerful Jewish lobby.”

The United States is a longstanding strong ally of Israel based on shared democratic values and strategic interests including the rejection of terrorism and violence. The United States has a great interest in the stability of the Middle East, a region that is afflicted by extremists who violently oppose the U.S., Israel and democracy, by rogue states with large military arsenals which include non-conventional weaponry, and other authoritarian regimes. Bolstering and supporting peace, stability and democracy in the region through relations with Israel is in America’s strategic interest.

Indeed, public opinion polls taken over decades have consistently demonstrated that Americans of all backgrounds support strong U.S.-Israeli relations and view Israel as a key ally of the United States.

As citizens of the United States, American Jewish advocacy is an appropriate exercise of American democracy and reflective of the Jewish community’s commitment to American democratic ideals. The American Jewish community’s active engagement in the political process is mirrored in the activism of other minority constituencies, such as Chinese Americans, Arab Americans, Irish Americans, Indian Americans and others.

Indeed, there is no shortage of voices who are critical of U.S. policy towards Israel. Even within the Jewish community there is a diversity of opinion on U.S. policy towards

Israel. There are strong lobbyists for Arab and Palestinian interests, there is lively debate on U.S. policy daily on op-ed pages, radio and television talk shows, and by speakers on college campuses, where the viewpoint is at times harshly critical of Israel and of U.S. policy.

The exaggeration of the power of the “Jewish lobby,” the disregard for the consistently broad-based American public support for Israel, the omission of the very many interests that the U.S. has in a strong and safe Israel, and the overriding theme that policymakers are controlled by this so-called “lobby,” adds up to an effort to delegitimize pro-Israel activists and has elements of age-old anti-Semitic conspiracy theories alleging insidious Jewish efforts to dominate seats of power.

Inaccuracy: The U.S. relationship with Israel threatens our national interests as it alienates important Arab allies the U.S. needs for access to oil and for support against Middle East-based extremist groups and other strategic goals. .

Response: U.S.-Israel relations do not jeopardize relations with others in the region. The U.S. enjoys a mutually beneficial relationship with its Arab and other Middle Eastern allies, who have overriding national interests in maintaining their close relations with the U.S. They are important strategic partners, and the U.S. provides them with military and political support, which is particularly crucial as many of these regimes confront extremist forces such as ISIS and Shia-supported militants. While some regimes in the Middle East may disapprove of the strong U.S.-Israel relationship, it does not override their own partnership with, and reliance on, the U.S.

Inaccuracy: Islamic terrorists target the United States because of its relationship with Israel and its favoring of Israel in the conflict with the Palestinians. If the U.S. ended its close relations with Israel, these terrorists would no longer have a reason to attack the U.S.

Response: The hatred of the United States and the West by Islamic extremist terrorists has little to do with U.S. policy towards Israel and the Palestinians. Indeed, their key “grievances” against the U.S. and the West, and their goal of establishing a theocratic Muslim state, would remain even were there no Israeli-Palestinian conflict or were the U.S. to sever its ties with Israel.

These extremists are ideologically opposed to everything the U.S. and the West stand for: democracy, modernism, freedom, globalism and diversity. While many of these groups profess allegiance to the Palestinian cause, their main gripes are with the American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. support for “moderate Arab regimes” such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and others that they consider corrupt and anti-Muslim.

These extremist movements recognize that the U.S. and its allies in the region stand in the way of their ultimate goal: the establishment of a theocratic, unified Muslim state spanning the region.

Inaccuracy: The United States gives Israel too much foreign aid making it difficult to meet critical needs at home.

Response: Foreign aid, which represents less than one percent of the federal budget, is a crucial tool in promoting American interests around the world.

Israel no longer receives economic assistance, but does receive significant military assistance to promote its security. In FY2015, Congress appropriated \$3.1 billion in military aid to Israel.

Foreign affairs spending is vital to advance our country's security, economic and humanitarian interests and preserves America's leadership worldwide. American security and prosperity, and its ability to fight global extremism, hinge on having the resources to successfully engage in the world, support key allies like Israel, and to help prevent unstable areas from becoming breeding grounds for terror. That is why such a broad array of faith, business and humanitarian organizations continue to advocate for a strong foreign affairs budget.

Foreign aid creates jobs in the United States and boosts our economy. By law, nearly all U.S. assistance must be spent on American-produced goods. Israel spends nearly 75% of U.S. aid in the U.S. to purchase military equipment.

Aid to Israel promotes stability and democracy in the Middle East. The United States has an ongoing strategic interest in supporting Israel – a stalwart democratic ally, with whom it shares many core values, including a commitment to democracy and a rejection of extremism and terrorism in a strategic and volatile region of the world.

U.S. military aid has proved crucial to Israel to protect itself. For example, in recent years the U.S.-funded Iron Dome has helped protect millions of Israelis from Hamas and Hezbollah terrorist rockets and keep casualty rates low.

Moreover, history has shown that American aid, particularly military assistance, which keeps Israel strong, is the primary ingredient in bringing Israel's neighbors to the peace table.

US aid to Israel is designed to maintain Israel's "qualitative military edge" over neighboring militaries. Security assistance and support for U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation have led to the creation of groundbreaking programs such as the Iron Dome Rocket Defense system and the Arrow Program. This cooperation boosts the efforts of both countries in areas like missile defense, homeland security and counterterrorism and helps both countries to protect their troops and citizens at home and abroad.

ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL

Inaccuracy: Jews are interlopers in the Middle East. The Jews that came to Israel in the late 19th century and later, had no real connection with the land, which was populated solely by indigenous Palestinians.

Response: The Land of Israel – the historical birthplace of the Jewish people, the land promised to Abraham, the site of the holy Temple and David's Kingdom – has been the cornerstone of Jewish religious life since the Jewish exile from the land two thousand years ago, and is embedded in Jewish prayer, ritual, literature and culture.

A small number of Jews lived continuously in the Land of Israel after their exile in the year 70, through Byzantine, Muslim and Crusader rule. At the time of the Ottoman conquest in 1517, Jews lived in Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, Safed and in Galilean villages. Over the centuries, Jews made pilgrimages to the holy land. Hundreds of Hasidic Jews immigrated in 1770 from Eastern Europe. Many pious Jews left Eastern Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in order to pray and die in the four sacred cities of the Holy Land: Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias and Hebron.

There has been a continuous presence of Jewish residents in Jerusalem from King David's time (except for periods when Jews were barred from living in the city), and by 1844, Jews were the largest single religious community in Jerusalem. By 1856, the Jewish population in Palestine was over 17,000. Organized Jewish immigration began in 1880 with the emergence of the modern Zionist movement. The number of Palestinian Arabs living in the area when Jews began arriving en masse in the late 19th century remains the subject of dispute among historians.

The early [Zionist](#) pioneers saw the Arab population as small, apolitical, and without a nationalist element and they therefore believed that there would not be friction between the two communities. They also thought that development of the country would benefit both peoples and they would thus secure Arab support and cooperation. Indeed, many Arabs attracted by new employment opportunities, higher wages and better living conditions migrated to Palestine from other countries in the wake of economic growth stimulated by Jewish immigration.

Inaccuracy: The Palestinians were justified in rejecting the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan.

Response: The rejection of the [Partition Plan in 1947](#) – the United Nations proposal to divide British-Mandate Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State with Jerusalem made an international city – by the Arab nations demonstrated an unwillingness to accept the existence of a Jewish state in the region.

Neither the Jews nor the Arabs were fully satisfied with the plan and there was much internal opposition. Giving the Jews only 12 percent of the land promised to them in the

Balfour Declaration, and drawing borders for the new state which were virtually indefensible, the plan was a difficult compromise for many of the Jews of Palestine. On the other side, the Arab nations desired full control over the land of Palestine and the Arab people in the region.

Yet, the Zionist leaders accepted the partition plan despite its less-than-ideal solution, understanding the need to compromise. It was the Arab nations who refused the plan, refused to accept the establishment of a Jewish state and gathered their armies to wage battle against Israel.

Had the Arabs accepted the plan in 1947 there would today be an Arab state alongside the Jewish State of Israel and the heartache and bloodshed that have characterized the Arab-Israeli conflict would have been avoided.

KEY DATES IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY

February 14, 1896	Publication of Theodor Herzl's treatise "The Jewish State"
August 29, 1897	Opening of the First Zionist Congress at Basel, Switzerland
November 2, 1917	Issuing of Balfour Declaration : British support for a "Jewish Homeland"
April 24, 1920	Britain assigned mandatory power over Palestine at the San Remo Conference
August 23, 1929	Arab attack on Jewish community of Hebron
April 15, 1936	Arab revolt against Jewish community begins
May 17, 1939	British White Paper limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine
December 1945	Initiation of Arab League Boycott (on the Jewish community of Palestine)
July 22, 1946	Irgun bombs King David Hotel
February 14, 1947	Britain gives UN responsibility for Palestine
November 29, 1947	UN Partition Plan approved (Resolution 181)
May 14, 1948	Declaration of the State of Israel
May 15, 1948	Outbreak of War of Independence . Ends January 1949
January 25, 1949	Israel's first national election takes place; David Ben-Gurion elected Prime Minister
May 1950	Operation Ali Baba; brings 113,000 Iraqi Jews to Israel
September 1950	Operation Magic Carpet; 47,000 Yemeni Jews to Israel
Oct. 29-Nov. 6, 1956	Suez Campaign
October 10, 1959	Creation of Fatah

January 1964	Creation of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
January 1, 1965	Fatah first major attack: try to sabotage Israel's water system
May 15-22, 1967	Egyptian Mobilization in the Sinai/Closure of the Tiran Straits
June 5-10, 1967	Six Day War
November 22, 1967	Adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 242
April 4, 1968	Establishment of Jewish settlement in Hebron
July 18, 1968	Hijacking of El Al airliner by PLO
February 1-4, 1969	Arafat becomes PLO Chairman
March 8, 1969	War of Attrition begins, lasts to August 1970
September 5, 1973	Massacre of 11 Israeli athletes at Munich Olympics
October 6-24, 1973	Yom Kippur War
October 17, 1973	Arab Oil Embargo declared
October 22, 1973	Adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 338
May 15, 1974	Terrorist Attack on school in northern Israeli town of Ma'alot
November 10, 1975	" Zionism is Racism " resolution passed by the UN
November 19, 1977	Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visits Jerusalem
September 17, 1978	Camp David accords signed
March 26, 1979	Egypt-Israel peace treaty signed
June 7, 1981	Israel attacks Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor
June 6, 1982	Operation "Peace for the Galilee" launched; start of Lebanon War
November 1984	Operation Moses airlifts 7000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel
October 7, 1986	Hijacking of Achille Lauro cruise ship

December 8, 1987	Start of the First Intifada
January 16	Gulf War; Iraq launches SCUD missiles at Israel
May 24, 1991	Operation Solomon brings 14000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel
October 30, 1991	Madrid Peace Conference
December 16, 1991	UN repeals “Zionism is Racism” resolution
September 13, 1993	Israel-Palestinian Declaration of Principles (Oslo Accord) signed
December 30, 1993	Israel and Vatican sign “Fundamental Agreement”
February 25, 1994	Jewish gunman kills 29 Palestinian worshippers in Hebron
April 6, 1994	Afula suicide bombing, kills 8. In the next years, numerous suicide attacks were perpetrated in Israeli cities, including bus bombings, in restaurants, and malls across the country
May 4, 1994	Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho reached
May 13, 1994	Israel withdraws from Jericho, followed by Gaza on May 18
July 1, 1994	Arafat enters Gaza
October 9, 1994	Hamas kidnaps and kills Israeli soldier, Nachshon Waxman
October 14, 1994	Rabin, Peres, and Arafat awarded Nobel Peace Prize
October 26, 1994	Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty
December 1, 1994	Transfer of West Bank administrative control to Palestinians
September 28, 1995	Signing of Oslo II agreement
November 4, 1995	Assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin
November 13, 1995	Israel redeploys from Palestinian population centers
January 20, 1996	First Palestinian elections
September 24, 1996	Palestinian “Tunnel Riots” erupt
January 17, 1997	Israel withdraws from Hebron

March 13, 1997	Jordanian soldier kills 7 Israeli schoolgirls
October 23, 1998	Israel-Palestinian “Wye Memorandum” signed
December 10, 1998	Palestinians vote to change PLO charter in presence of President Bill Clinton
May 24, 2000	Israel withdraws from southern Lebanon
July 11-25, 2000	Camp David Summit
September 29, 2000	Outbreak of widespread Palestinian violence, “ Second Intifada ” begins. In the next years there were scores of suicide bombings on buses, restaurants, night clubs and city streets
October 12, 2000	Two Israeli soldiers lynched by Palestinian mob in Ramallah
January 4, 2002	Israel intercepts massive Palestinian arms shipment on Karine A ship
March 27, 2002	Suicide bomber kills 30 at Passover seder at Netanya hotel
March 29, 2002	IDF begins Operation Defensive Shield to uproot terrorist infrastructure in West Bank
April 30, 2003	The “ Road Map for Peace ” is presented by the Quartet to the Israelis and Palestinians
January 29, 2004	Israel swaps prisoners with the terrorist group Hezbollah ; releases 435 Arab prisoners in return for the remains of murdered soldiers and a kidnapped Israeli businessman
August 25, 2004	Windsurfer Gal Fridman wins Israel’s first Olympic gold medal at the Athens games
November 11, 2004	Yasir Arafat dies in a Paris hospital
December 23, 2004	The first phase of PA municipal elections are held; Hamah secures nearly half the seats
February 26, 2005	The Knesset gives final approval to the Disengagement Plan , rejects calls for a national referendum
August 17-22, 2005	Evacuation of settlers from the Gaza Strip

August 23, 2005	Evacuation of four settlements in the northern West Bank
September 12, 2005	Israeli military completes withdrawal from the Gaza
January 4, 2006	Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon incapacitated by massive stroke; Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert appointed Acting Prime Minister
January 26, 2006	Palestinian parliamentary elections; Hamas wins 74 seats in the 132-seat legislature
June 25, 2006	IDF Corporal Gilad Shalit is kidnapped by Hamas from IDF army post; Israel responds with military operation
July 12, 2006	 Hezbollah sparks the Second Lebanon War when they cross the border into Israel and attack an Israeli military patrol, killing eight soldiers and kidnapping two others
August 11, 2006	The U.N. Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1701 for ceasefire in the Lebanon War
June 15, 2007	 Hamas takeover of Gaza
July 16, 2008	Hezbollah releases the bodies of captive Israeli soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser, whose kidnapping sparked the Second Lebanon War
December 27, 2008	In response to increasing rocket barrages Israel launches Operation Cast Lead against Hamas in Gaza
January 18, 2009	Israel signs a unilateral ceasefire. Twelve hours later Hamas agrees to a week-long ceasefire.
May 31, 2010	Israel intercepts a flotilla of six ships en route to Gaza.
October 18, 2011	Kidnapped IDF Corporal Gilad Shalit is released in a prisoner exchange deal with Hamas
November 14, 2012	Israel launches Operation Pillar of Defense to end rocket attacks from Gaza. A ceasefire was reached on November 21
April 23, 2014	 Palestinian Authority (Fatah) and Hamas sign reconciliation agreement to create a Palestinian unity government, effectively ending Israeli-Palestinian peace talks
June 12, 2014	Israeli teenagers Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaer and Eyal Yifrah

are abducted and killed by Palestinian terrorists. Their bodies are discovered on June 30th

July 2, 2014

Jewish extremists kidnap and kill 16 year-old Palestinian Mohammed Abu Khdeir

July 7-August 26, 2014

Israel launches [Operation Protective Edge](#) against Hamas to end rocket fire from Gaza and destroy Hamas' terror tunnels. Operation expands to a ground operation on July 17. An open-ended ceasefire between Israel and Hamas is reached.



SELECT ONLINE RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ISRAEL AND THE CONFLICT

ISRAELI GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Israel Defense Forces: www.idf.il/english/

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/

ISRAELI NEWS SOURCES

Ha'aretz: www.haaretz.com

Israel Hayom: www.israelhayom.com/

Jerusalem Post: www.jpost.com

Times of Israel: www.timesofisrael.com/

Yedioth Ahronot: www.ynetnews.com

MIDDLE EASTERN NEWS SOURCES

Al-Ahram (Egypt): weekly.ahram.org.eg/

Arab News (Saudi Arabia): www.arabnews.com

Islamic Republic News Agency (Iran): www.irna.ir/en/

Jordan Times: www.jordantimes.com

Daily Star (Lebanon): www.dailystar.com.lb

Wafa News Agency (Palestinian Authority): <http://english.wafa.ps>

Tehran Times: www.tehrantimes.com

THINK TANKS/ RESEARCH INSTITUTES

BESA Center for Strategic Studies: www.besacenter.org

The Institute for National Security Studies: www.inss.org.il/

Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs: www.jcpa.org

Brookings Institution Center for Middle East Policy

www.brookings.edu/about/centers/middle-east-policy

Washington Institute for Near East Policy: www.washingtoninstitute.org



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