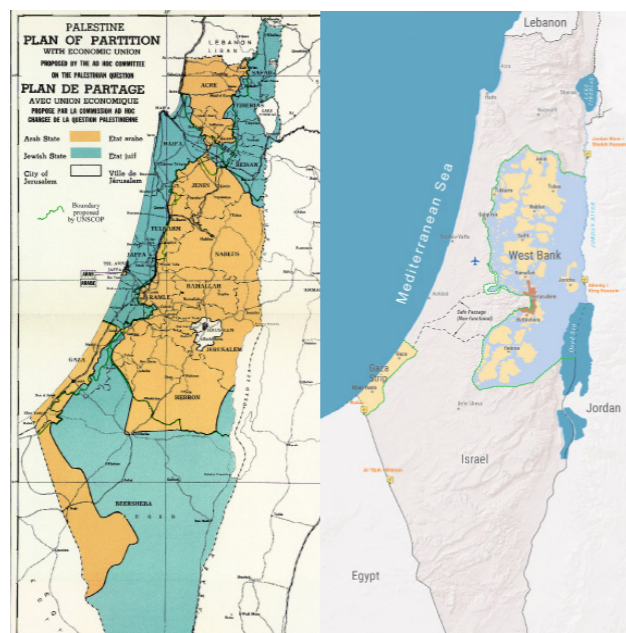


HISTORY OF THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

How it began, and why it's still going on



Left: a 1947 UN map showing the proposed split of Palestine. Right: the situation now. The orange/yellow areas are Palestinian

THE conflict between Israel and Palestine has been going on for a long time, with regular outbreaks of violence affecting civilians on both sides. Since June 1967, Israel has been occupying Palestinian territory and has a huge amount of control over the daily lives of everyone there, but Israel says this is necessary to protect itself.

● **Why are the two sides fighting?**

The areas belonging to Israelis and Palestinians contain many holy sites, such as Jerusalem, that are sacred to Muslims, Jews and Christians, which is one of the reasons why people feel so strongly about events there. The country of Israel now takes up most of the territory that

once belonged to Palestine, which has led to millions of Palestinians losing their homes and land. However, the conflict isn't new, and has been going on for 100 years, with both sides claiming the land as their own.

● **When did the fighting begin?**

After World War One, Palestine was run by the UK. Between 1922-1947, Britain supported efforts to make a home in Palestine for Jewish people, who were escaping cruel treatment in Germany and other parts of Europe. Many Jewish people said that the area was their ancient homeland and that they had a right to be there.

But Palestinians wanted to be independent and didn't want to lose part of their country, so a rebellion led to fighting on both sides. In 1947, the UK passed the problem over to the United Nations (UN), which proposed splitting Palestine into two countries – one for Arabs and one for Jews. However, after Israel declared independence in 1948, a war began between both sides and neighbouring Arab countries including Jordan, Egypt and Syria. In the end, the war saw the new Jewish state of Israel increase its territory to include more than three-quarters of Palestine. Around half of the Palestinian population were forced from their



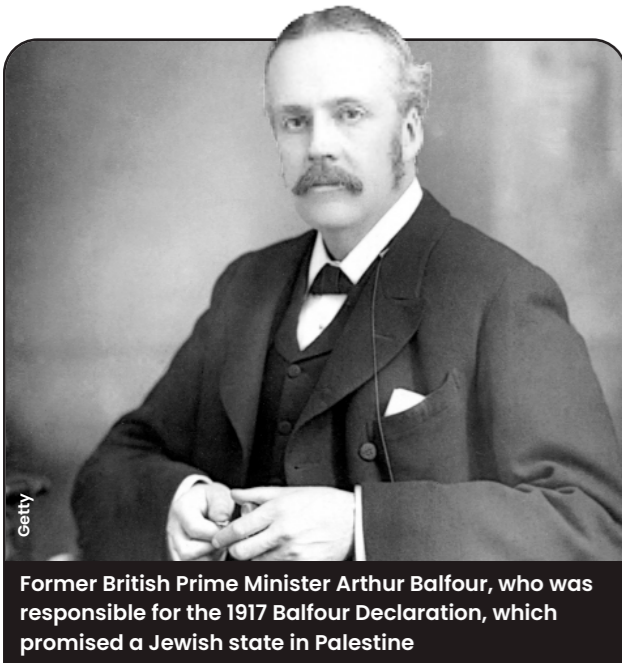
Members of the Israeli Navy celebrate the departure of the last British troops in 1948

homes, and this time is known by Palestinians as the Nakba, which is Arabic for 'Catastrophe'. A further war in 1967 saw Israel take over the other two areas of Palestine, known as the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, as well as the Palestinian part of the city of Jerusalem. These areas together are known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Israel's control of these regions is still ongoing and is the world's longest-running military occupation. Although Israel pulled out of Gaza in 2005, Israel's security wall surrounds most of it, while Egypt controls the western border. People can't leave Gaza unless they get a permit from Israel or Egypt.

● **What's the situation like now?**

To protect itself from regular violent attacks, Israel built a huge wall around Palestinian areas, and controls what goods and people can go in and out. The International Court of Justice said in 2004 that the wall was illegal under international law, but it's still standing. Although Israel says the wall has mostly stopped Palestinian attacks, Palestinians say that the wall puts too many restrictions on their lives. Some have compared it to being in "the world's biggest open prison".

Israel also builds settlements on land that it claims as its own, but which international law says belongs to Palestine. Even Israel's biggest supporters, including the US, say that this settlement activity should stop, and only leads to more conflict. The UN says Israel is breaking international law by building these settlements, which take homes and land away from Palestinians.



Former British Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, who was responsible for the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which promised a Jewish state in Palestine

1916

European countries secretly divide up the part of the Middle East that used to belong to the Ottoman Empire.

1917

The UK Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour signs a document known as the Balfour Declaration, promising a "home for the Jewish people in Palestine".

1922

The League of Nations (an earlier version of the United Nations) hands Palestine to the UK and agrees to the terms of the Balfour Declaration.

1933

As Jews move to Palestine to escape the Nazis, Palestinian protests turn into riots. Over the coming years, the protests turn into a full rebellion against Palestine's British rulers.

1947

The UK decides that it doesn't want to deal with the 'question of Palestine' and hands it over to the UN. The UN proposes splitting Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state.

1948

Israel declares independence. Soon after, a war begins and Israel seizes Palestinian land. The UN says that Palestinians forced from their land should be allowed to return.



Burnt-out cars at the festival in Israel where Hamas gunmen killed more than 250 civilians last week



The aftermath of one of many airstrikes carried out by Israel on Gaza in response

The West Bank is run partly by the Palestinian Authority and partly by Israel now. A Palestinian group called Hamas runs Gaza, but it has been declared a terrorist organisation by many countries, including the UK, US and the EU. Hamas is supported by Israel's rival Iran, which supplies it with money, weapons and military training.

● **Crimes on both sides**

Palestinian fighters have carried out bomb attacks, stabbings and shootings in Israel, and rockets are regularly fired over the border into Israel. However, Israel's military is vastly superior to anything on the Palestinian side, and Israel's attacks on Palestinian territory are generally much more destructive.

Even in Israel, not everyone agrees with how the country treats Palestinians. The Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem says that Israel controls the region with "one



An Israeli soldier watches over Palestinians as they head towards a checkpoint in the wall that separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem

organising principle: establishing and perpetuating [continuing] the control of one group of people – Jews – over another – Palestinians – through laws, practices and state violence." Although B'Tselem regularly reports on illegal acts carried out by Israeli forces, it also condemns Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians as war crimes.

Israeli forces have regularly cut off supplies of power, food and water to Palestinian areas, and have also knocked down the homes of those it has accused of crimes. Legal experts and human rights organisations say these actions are what's known as collective punishment, which is classed as a war crime in international law.

Deliberately harming civilians is also a war crime, and both Israel and Palestine have been accused of this. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says that since 2008, 6,407 Palestinians have been killed in the conflict, with 308 Israelis killed, although

those figures don't include the hundreds of deaths on both sides from the deadly attacks this month.

● **Are there any solutions?**

The UN and many countries think that the only way forward is for a 'two-state solution', which means having two completely separate countries. However, Hamas doesn't recognise Israel's right to exist and has declared that it wants to see the destruction of Israel. This is one reason why there's been no peace agreement.

Other issues that the two sides don't agree on are the right of around five million Palestinian refugees in other Arab countries to return to Palestine, and whether a Palestinian state should be allowed to have an army.



US President Bill Clinton (centre) holding peace talks at Camp David with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak (left) and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in 2000. They were the biggest peace talks to date, but were widely seen as being unsuccessful

1949

Israel is accepted as a member of the UN.

1967

The Six-Day War sees Israel occupy the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, along with territory belonging to Egypt and Syria.

1987

The first Intifada ('Uprising') against Israel begins in Gaza. Hundreds are killed on both sides until it ends in 1993.

1988

Palestine declares independence. It still hasn't been granted full member status of the UN.

2000

The second Intifada begins, with hundreds more killed over the next five years.

2002

Israel begins building a wall around Palestinian areas. The country says it protects against attacks, but Palestinians say it splits their communities and helps Israel to seize more land.

2005

Israel pulls its troops out of Gaza. Hamas eventually wins control of the area in 2007.

2023

Hamas' invasion of Israel is the most deadly attack in Israel's history.