

**ISRAEL - PALESTINIANS - TOGETHER  
THE PAST AND THE FUTURE**

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**KING OF THE NORTH**  
Assyria and Remnant Kingdoms

**KING OF THE SOUTH**  
Egypt and Allies

**Israel in a crossfire**

ARABIA

*When, finally, in the twelfth century BCE the Jews settled in a country they could call their own, they used the worst possible judgment. They selected a strip of land that was a corridor for the armies of warring empires. Over and over again the Jews were to pay for this error of judgment by being decimated in battle, sold into slavery, or deported to alien lands. Yet they showed up persistently at the same old place, building anew their little strip of real estate which has been alternately called Canaan, Palestine, Israel, Judah, Judea, and now again, Israel.*

*(Max Dimont, 'Jews, God and History' p48)*

*Founded in 1948, Israel is the world's only Jewish State and is the Middle East's only liberal democracy. Today more than eight million citizens - Jews, Muslims and Christians - call Israel home.*

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**PART 0-1 SEARCHING FOR TEXT,**

**HISTORY AND HOPE**

## SEARCHING FOR TEXT

### 1. Access the Search Function:

- **Keyboard Shortcut:**

Press **Ctrl + F** on Windows or **Command + F** on Mac. This opens the search bar.

- **Menu Option:**

In some PDF readers, you can also find the search option in the menu. Look for 'Edit' > 'Find'.

**2. Enter the Search Term:** Type the word or phrase you want to find in the search bar.

**3. Use 'Next' or 'Previous' buttons** to navigate through occurrences of the term in the document.

### 4. You will see three headings

**Headings   Pages   Results**

Click all three headings individually and you will see what each heading has found.

### 5. Click on what you require

You will see what has been found in yellow

Click on what you want. The computer will take you to it.

## **THE STORY OF JEWISH HISTORY IS TOLD IN OUR TWO WEBSITES**

*The first, [jewishwikipedia.info](http://jewishwikipedia.info) covers 4000 years*

*The second [jewishwikipedia.info/ottoman-palestine-israel.pdf](http://jewishwikipedia.info/ottoman-palestine-israel.pdf)  
covers the past 100+ years.*

*World War One saw the end of the Ottoman Empire.*

*Britain accepted the League of Nations Mandate coastal area  
to the south of Syria to be known as Palestine*

*Britain gave 80% of their territory to a new country  
that became known as Transjordan (later called Jordan).*

*The British Mandate came to an end shortly after World War 2  
and the new state of Israel was created in 1948*

*The two biggest groups in Palestine were the Arabs and the Jews.*

**TO UNDERSTAND THE BELIEFS  
OF PALESTINIAN CHILDREN AS THEY GREW OLDER  
Go to  
[VIDEOS – TEACHING PALESTINIAN CHILDREN](#)**

# OUR FUTURE HOPE FOR ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

**ChatGPT (AI) (Jan 2024)**

**The future hope for Israel and Palestine lies in fostering a vision where peace, coexistence, and mutual respect transcend historical grievances and political divides.**

**Achieving this hope requires a combination of education, dialogue, and practical steps toward reconciliation.**

**Here's a framework for envisioning a better future:**

---

## **1. A Shared Vision for Peace**

- **Two States or Shared Sovereignty:**
    - A viable solution may lie in the establishment of two states living side by side in peace, with clearly defined borders and mutual recognition. Alternatively, some advocate for a single, democratic state that guarantees equal rights for all citizens.
  - **Commitment to Coexistence:**
    - Both Israelis and Palestinians must cultivate a shared commitment to coexist as neighbors, partners, or members of the same political entity, respecting each other's rights and aspirations.
- 

## **2. Building Trust Through Dialogue**

- **Grassroots Efforts:**
    - Civil society organizations, schools, and community leaders can promote dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians to break down stereotypes and build trust.
  - **Cross-Border Initiatives:**
    - Programs that bring together youth, academics, and professionals from both sides can foster collaboration and shared understanding.
- 

## **3. Prioritizing Education for Peace**

- **Peace-Oriented Curricula:**
    - Revamping educational systems to teach mutual respect, shared history, and conflict resolution is critical.
  - **Language and Culture:**
    - Learning each other's languages and celebrating cultural contributions can bridge divides and foster empathy.
- 

## **4. Addressing Economic Disparities**

- **Economic Cooperation:**

- Joint economic projects, such as industrial parks or trade partnerships, can create shared prosperity and interdependence.
  - Humanitarian Focus:
    - Addressing poverty and providing access to healthcare, education, and basic services can reduce tensions and improve quality of life.
- 

## **5. Strengthening Political Leadership**

- Bold and Visionary Leaders:
    - Both sides need leaders willing to take risks for peace, prioritize dialogue, and reject extremism.
  - International Mediation:
    - The international community, including the United Nations, the United States, and regional partners, can play a critical role in mediating and supporting negotiations.
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## **6. Ensuring Human Rights and Justice**

- Equal Rights:
    - Guaranteeing rights and protections for all individuals, regardless of nationality or religion, is essential for long-term peace.
  - Transitional Justice:
    - Mechanisms to address past grievances, such as truth commissions or compensation for displaced families, can help heal historical wounds.
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## **7. Environmental and Resource Cooperation**

- Shared Resource Management:
    - Joint management of shared resources like water, energy, and arable land can build interdependence and reduce conflicts.
  - Sustainability Projects:
    - Collaborative efforts to combat climate change and protect the environment can unite both sides around a common goal.
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## **8. Empowering the Next Generation**

- Youth Leadership:
    - Investing in young leaders who believe in peace and coexistence can create a new generation unburdened by the weight of past conflicts.
  - Digital Platforms for Collaboration:
    - Technology can connect young people from both sides, fostering shared projects and breaking down barriers.
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## 9. Emphasizing Shared Humanity

- Cultural Exchange:
    - Art, music, literature, and sports can serve as powerful tools for highlighting shared humanity and building relationships.
  - Shared Mourning and Healing:
    - Acknowledging the pain and losses of both sides can foster compassion and empathy.
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## 10. Long-Term Security and Stability

- Demilitarization and Cooperation:
    - Agreements that focus on security cooperation and demilitarization can build trust and reduce violence.
  - Peacekeeping Support:
    - International peacekeepers may help maintain stability during transitional periods.
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### **Conclusion: A Hopeful Future**

The hope for Israel and Palestine lies in their ability to see each other not as perpetual adversaries, but as partners in building a peaceful, prosperous region. This requires courage, empathy, and unwavering commitment to a shared future where both peoples can thrive. By addressing the root causes of conflict, fostering trust, and investing in the next generation, Israel and Palestine can move toward a reality where peace is not just a dream, but a lived experience.

**PART A TIMELINE 1897- 2022**

## TIMELINE (1881-1948) OF INTERCOMMUNAL CONFLICT IN MANDATORY PALESTINE

[WIKIPEDIA](#)

[AJC1897-1947](#) | [1947-1979](#) | [1982-Present](#)

[AJC](#)

**1897-  
1947:  
Pre-State  
Israel**

**1897: First  
Zionist  
Congress**

The Zionist movement, founded by Theodor Herzl and other leaders, advocated for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Widespread antisemitism and persecution of Jewish communities in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries served as a major catalyst for the Zionist movement. Jews faced discrimination, violence, and pogroms, a violent organized riot or attack directed at Jews, in many parts of Europe, which fueled the desire for a safe and secure homeland. The First Zionist Congress was held in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland, where Herzl and other prominent figures in the Zionist movement discussed and debated their vision for the establishment of a Jewish state.

### **Why It Matters:**

The Zionist movement under Theodor Herzl was historically significant because it marked the birth of modern political Zionism. Herzl advocated for a Jewish homeland, organized the First Zionist Congress, and played a central role in shaping the intellectual and political foundations of the movement. His vision influenced Jewish identity and led to diplomatic efforts that eventually contributed to the establishment of the State of Israel. Herzl's legacy as a visionary and advocate for Jewish self-determination remains a fundamental part of Israel's history and ideology.

**1917: The  
Balfour  
Declaration**

The Balfour Declaration was a letter from British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Walter Rothschild, expressing British support for the establishment of a

### **Why It Matters:**

It was the first recognition by a major international power of Jewish national aspirations, which had a profound impact on international diplomacy, contributed to

	<p>"national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.</p>	<p>the end of Ottoman rule in the region, and shaped the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by laying the groundwork for competing national claims in Palestine. It remains a pivotal historical document in the context of the region's complex history and ongoing discussions about its future.</p>
<p><b>1920: The League of Nations Mandate</b></p>	<p>The League of Nations granted Britain the mandate to administer Palestine following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The mandate includes a commitment to implementing the Balfour Declaration and facilitating Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine. The mandate led to nearly 30 years of British control over the region, ending in 1948.</p>

<p><b>1920: Creation of the Haganah</b></p>	<p>The Haganah was a Jewish paramilitary organization that played a significant role in the defense of Jewish communities in British Mandate Palestine.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>Initially formed to protect Jewish communities from local Arab attacks, the Haganah later evolved into one of the main military organizations in the Jewish community in the lead-up to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. After the establishment of the state, the Haganah became the foundation for the Israel Defense Forces.</p>
<p><b>1929: Hebron Massacre</b></p>	<p>The 1929 Hebron massacre was a violent event in the city of Hebron in British Mandate Palestine, occurring in August 1929. Arab residents attacked the Jewish community, resulting in the deaths of approximately 67 Jewish residents, including women and children, and injuries to many others.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The violence had its roots in long-standing tensions between Jewish and Arab communities and had a profound impact on the relations between the two communities in Palestine. The massacre led to the end of Jewish presence in Hebron, one of the holiest cities in Judaism that dated back thousands of years. The Jewish community did not return till after the 1967 Six-Day War.</p>
<p><b>1930s: The Arab Revolt</b></p>	<p>The 1930s Arab revolt was a period of intense Arab resistance and rebellion against British colonial rule and Jewish immigration in the Mandate of Palestine. It occurred from 1936 to 1939 and was triggered by several factors, including Arab frustrations over land dispossession, Jewish immigration and economic disparities.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The 1930s Arab revolt was a period of intense Arab resistance and rebellion against British colonial rule and Jewish immigration in the Mandate of Palestine. It occurred from 1936 to 1939 and was triggered by several factors, including Arab frustrations over land dispossession, Jewish immigration, and economic disparities.</p>

<p><b>1936: Peel Commission</b></p>	<p>This was a British investigative commission formed to examine the causes of the 1936-1939 Arab revolt in Palestine</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>It resulted in the first recommendation to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, offering one of the first official proposals for a two-state solution.</p>
<p><b>1939: White Paper</b></p>	<p>A British policy statement that limited Jewish immigration and land acquisition in Palestine.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>This had a significant impact by restricting the ability of Jews to escape the Holocaust and return to their ancestral homeland to establish a Jewish state. It also contributed to tensions between Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine, furthering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.</p>
<p><b>1947-1979: Arab-Israeli Wars and Peace Attempts</b></p> <p><b>1947: UN Resolution 181</b></p>	<p>This resolution recommended the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international administration. Jewish leaders accept the plan, while Arab states and Palestinians reject it.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>This resolution led to the establishment of Israel but was met with rejection by Arab states, sparking the Arab-Israeli War of 1948-1949.</p>

<p><b>1948: Israel's War of Independence</b></p>	<p>Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948. The declaration was followed by an invasion by neighboring Arab states, including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. The war resulted in Israel's survival and expansion of territory.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The war led to the establishment of the State of Israel as it successfully defended itself from the invasion of the surrounding Arab countries. Upon its declaration, Israel gained international recognition from various countries, including the United States and the Soviet Union - the world's two major superpowers at the time. This lent it international support and legitimacy. It also marked the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict and resulted in the displacement of an estimated 700,000-800,000 Palestinian Arabs to many surrounding Arab countries. Many Palestinian Arabs also remained within Israel's newly formed borders, comprising over 20 percent of Israel's population today. The war defined the borders of Israel and had far-reaching consequences for regional politics, diplomacy, and future conflicts in the Middle East. It remains a pivotal event in the history of the region.</p>
<p><b>1956: Suez Crisis (Sinai War)</b></p>	<p>Israel, along with Britain and France, invaded Egypt in response to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. International pressure, including from the United States and the Soviet Union, forced the withdrawal of the invading forces</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The war had far-reaching implications for global diplomacy, including the decline of traditional colonial powers - the UK and France. For the Middle East, it boosted Egyptian nationalism under President Gamal Nasser, who increased tensions with Israel, event leading to the 1967 Six-Day War.</p>

<p><b>1964: Creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization</b></p>	<p>The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964 during an Arab League Summit in Cairo, Egypt, to represent Palestinian aspirations for the destruction of Israel, self-determination, and a state. Initially led by Ahmed Shukeiri, the PLO later embraced armed struggle, terrorism, and later diplomacy as a means to achieve its goals. Yasser Arafat became a prominent leader and became the face of the PLO and the Palestinian movement until his death in 2004. Mahmoud Abbas succeeded him.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The beginning of the PLO signaled the creation and formalization of the Palestinian national movement. For decades, the PLO was dedicated to terrorism against Israelis. In a historic move, in 1988 the PLO accepted the notion of two states for two peoples which eventually helped pave the way for the 1993 Oslo peace process.</p>
<p><b>1967: Six-Day War</b></p>	<p>The Six-Day War, which lasted from June 5 to June 10, 1967, was a brief but intense conflict in the Middle East. It was primarily between Israel and a coalition of Arab states, including Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. It resulted in an overwhelming victory for Israel, the capture of large swathes of territory from the surrounding Arab states creating an important defensive buffer for Israel, and the reunification of Jerusalem, which came under Jewish sovereignty for the first time in nearly 2,000 years.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The war was a watershed moment for the region. Israel's overwhelming victory vaulted it from a scrappy nation focused on its survival, to a major regional power. It also led to a significant deepening of relations with the United States. Additionally, it resulted in Israel's capture of key territories, including East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula. This had profound implications, including the establishment of Israeli settlements, the rise of Palestinian nationalism, heightened Arab rejection of Israel, and complex geopolitical dynamics in the region.</p>



<p><b>1972: Munich Olympics Massacre</b></p>	<p>The first major Palestinian terrorist attack on Israel was carried out by the Palestinian terrorist group Black September, a faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). During this attack, 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team competing in the 1972 Munich Olympics in Germany were taken hostage and eventually killed by the terrorists.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>While there were earlier instances of Palestinian terrorism and attacks against Israel, the Munich Olympics attack gained significant international attention and was a turning point in the history of terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It demonstrated the ability of Palestinian terrorist groups to carry out large-scale, high-profile attacks on Israeli targets outside of the Middle East. Additional major attacks throughout the 1970s and 80s included the 1974 Ma'alot school attack, the 1978 Coastal Road massacre, and the 1985 Achille Lauro hijacking, among others.</p>
<p><b>1973: Yom Kippur War (October War)</b></p>	<p>Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel during Yom Kippur, the holiest day in Judaism. The conflict resulted in a ceasefire, and Israel eventually withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula as part of the 1979 Camp David Accords.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The 1973 Yom Kippur War was significant because it began with a surprise attack by Egypt and Syria on Israel, challenging Israeli military dominance and reasserting Arab pride. The conflict led to superpower involvement, with the U.S. supporting Israel and the Soviet Union supporting Arab states. It ended in a ceasefire, triggering diplomatic efforts, oil embargoes, and changes in Israeli strategy and leadership. The war had a long-term impact on regional security and contributed to the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict and peace negotiations, such as the 1979 Camp David Accords.</p>

<p>1979: Camp David Accords - Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel</p>	<p>Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty, leading to Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>Egypt became the first Arab country to recognize Israel formally. The peace realigned Egypt's position in the Middle East and established it as an important U.S. ally in the region - significantly undercutting Soviet influence in the region. The Accords also marked the end of a series of major Arab-Israeli Wars, which began in 1948.</p>
<p>1982- Present: Peace Process and Terrorism</p> <p>1982: First Lebanon War</p>	<p>The First Lebanon War, also known as the 1982 Lebanon War, was a military conflict in 1982 between Israel and various Lebanese factions, mainly the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Israel's main objective was to remove PLO forces from southern Lebanon, which had been launching attacks against Israel.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The conflict evolved into a protracted and controversial involvement in Lebanon by Israel and the rise of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah terrorist group. Israel eventually withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000.</p>
<p>1987: First Intifada</p>	<p>The First Intifada was a period of widespread Palestinian protests, civil disobedience, and acts of violence and terrorism against Israelis that began in December 1987 and continued into the early 1990s. The intifada was sparked by a combination of factors, including frustrations with the Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, economic</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The First Intifada had a significant impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, leading to international attention, changes in the political landscape, and the eventual start of peace negotiations, notably the Madrid Peace Process and the Oslo Accords in the early 1990s. The First Intifada also led to the creation of Hamas</p>

	<p>hardships, and a lack of political progress toward a Palestinian state.</p>	
<p><b>1991: Madrid Peace Conference</b></p>	<p>The conference was a pivotal diplomatic effort co-sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union to address the Arab-Israeli conflict. It brought together representatives from Israel, Arab states, and the Palestinians to engage in both bilateral negotiations and multilateral discussions on regional issues.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The Madrid conference marked the first time they participated in peace talks with Israel, and it set the stage for subsequent peace efforts, including the Oslo Accords and the 1994 peace treaty between Israel and Jordan.</p>
<p><b>1993: Oslo Accords</b></p>	<p>The Oslo Accords were a pair of transitional agreements signed by Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) that were designed to establish a partnership for negotiating border disputes, creating Palestinian self-governance through the creation of the Palestinian Authority, and over time, the hope was this would lead to a peaceful solution to the conflict and a two-state solution.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>While the talks resulted in two agreements (Oslo I in 1993, and Oslo II in 1995) the accords began to unravel amid increasing terror attacks and the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist. This left the region in a continued state of hostility and distrust. After the breakdown in talks between Israelis and the PLO at Camp David in 2000, the Palestinians launched the Second Intifada.</p>

<p><b>1994: Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty</b></p>	<p>1994, is an agreement between Jordan and Israel that recognizes each other's sovereignty, establishes their international boundary, and promotes security and economic cooperation.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The agreement saw Jordan become the second Arab country after Egypt to normalize relations with Israel. While there remains limited engagement between the peoples of both countries, the agreement has led to significant regional ties between Israel and Jordan, especially in economic, resource, and security cooperation.</p>
<p><b>1995: Assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin</b></p>	<p>On November 4, 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a longtime major political figure in Israeli politics and head of the left-wing Labor Party, was assassinated by an Israeli extremist, Yigal Amir, at a peace rally in Tel Aviv.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>Rabin's death was a significant loss to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and it cast a long shadow over the process, raising questions about security and extremism within Israeli society. The assassination had lasting impacts on Israeli politics and society and remains a significant chapter in Israeli history, symbolizing the challenges of pursuing peace in the Middle East.</p>
<p><b>2000-2005: Second Intifada (Al-Aqsa Intifada)</b></p>	<p>The Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, was a period of intense conflict and Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule that began in late September 2000 and continued for several years. The intifada was characterized by widespread protests, demonstrations, suicide bombings, and armed confrontations between</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The Second Intifada resulted in a high number of casualties on both sides, with close to 1,000 Israelis killed or injured by Palestinian terror attacks, including suicide bombings and bus bombings. It had a significant impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, leading to the construction of the West Bank barrier by Israel and influencing subsequent peace negotiations. It</p>

	Israeli security forces and Palestinian terrorists.	officially ended around 2005, but its consequences continue to shape the region's political landscape.
<b>2005: Israel Withdraws from the Gaza Strip</b>	<p>In 2005, Israel, overcoming huge political pushback domestically and the terror onslaught during the Second Intifada, withdrew from the Gaza Strip, dismantling its settlements and military installations in the name of <b>peace</b>.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>After Israeli withdrawal in 2005, <b>the coastal territory has been under the control of the Iran-backed Hamas terrorist group</b>, which violently ousted the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority in 2007</p>
<b>2006: Second Lebanon War</b>	<p>Conflict erupts between Israel and the <b>Iranian-backed terrorist group Hezbollah in Lebanon</b> following an ambush on Israeli soldiers along the border that killed three soldiers as well as led to two being taken hostage. The 50-day war ended with a ceasefire and a UN peacekeeping force deployed in southern Lebanon.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The conflict had several significant impacts, including revealing <b>Hezbollah's potent military capabilities</b>, questions over Israel's military planning and leadership, and significant humanitarian impacts on Lebanon. It also had wide regional impacts, particularly with Iranian and Syrian support for Hezbollah. It resulted in the adoption of UN Resolution 1701, which called for a ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces, and the deployment of UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon. It also called for the disarming of Hezbollah, which has failed to happen. While no major conflicts between Israel and Hezbollah have occurred since tensions along the border are very high following the October 7 Hamas terror attack on Israel.</p>

<p><b>2007: Hamas Takes Control of Gaza</b></p>	<p>In June, <b>Hamas, considered a terrorist organization by Israel, the U.S., U.K., EU, and others</b>, took control of the Gaza Strip following violent clashes with its rival Palestinian faction, Fatah.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>This led to the division of the Palestinian territories, with Fatah controlling the West Bank and Hamas becoming the defacto ruler in Gaza. Hamas has used Iranian support to launch several significant attacks against Israel from its base in Gaza, including in 2008, 2009, 2014, 2021, and most recently on October 7, 2023, when Hamas terrorists murdered over 1,400 Israelis, wounded over 3,200, taken over 200 hostages, and launched thousands of rockets.</p>
<p><b>2007: Annapolis Conference</b></p>	<p>In 2007, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, with the support of the U.S., launched the Annapolis Conference. The goal was to reach a peace agreement that would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Hamas called for all parties to boycott the conference.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>Olmert said that he gave Abbas an “unprecedented offer” based on a return to the pre-1967 borders, including land swaps and a division of Jerusalem. But Olmert <b>never received a final response from the Palestinians on the offer</b>. A Palestinian negotiator subsequently acknowledged in the media that the Israeli plan would have given his side the equivalent of 100 percent of the disputed lands under discussion.</p>

<p><b>2008-2009: Operation Cast Lead (Gaza War)</b></p>	<p>From December 27, 2008 to January 18, 2009, Israel launched a military operation in response to rocket attacks from Gaza. Israeli forces conducted airstrikes, artillery shelling, and a ground invasion in response to the rocket attacks.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>This was the first major conflict between Israelis and Palestinians since the end of the Second Intifada in 2005. This also saw Israeli forces re-enter the Gaza Strip for the first time since its withdrawal in 2005 due to the terror threat posed by Hamas. The conflict resulted in significant casualties and destruction in Gaza, as well as international condemnation.</p>
<p><b>2009-2010: Settlement Freeze</b></p>	<p>U.S. President Barack Obama attempted to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks shortly after taking office in 2009. At a speech at Cairo University that year, Obama reiterated his support for a two-state solution</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>As part of a good faith gesture, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu implemented a settlement freeze, a key Palestinian demand, that lasted 10 months. While talks briefly restarted, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas aborted the talks.</p>
<p><b>2012: Operation Pillar of Defense</b></p>	<p>From November 14 to November 21, 2012, Israel launched an operation to target terrorists and rocket launchers in Gaza, in response to increased rocket attacks from Gaza into nearby Israeli communities.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The operation resulted in a ceasefire agreement brokered by Egypt and other international mediators, which ended the hostilities. While a ceasefire was brokered, this conflict reaffirmed the threat that Hamas posed to Israel, especially after the much larger 2009 conflict. In particular, Hamas' firing of rockets into Israeli civilian areas led to more investment in <b>Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system</b> as well as</p>

		bomb shelters and a civilian alert system in Israel. It also renewed international criticism of Israeli policies, including questions over disproportionate force by human rights groups.
<p><b>2014: Operation Protective Edge</b></p>	<p>In June 2014, three Israeli teenagers - Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaer, and Eyal Yifrah - were abducted and killed by Hamas terrorists while hitchhiking in the West Bank. Their murder by Hamas led to a widespread Israeli crackdown on Hamas terrorists in the West Bank as well as increasing tensions and rocket fire on Israel. This eventually escalated into Operation Protective Edge, which lasted from July 8 to August 26, 2014.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The operation aimed to uncover and neutralize a network of tunnels that extended from Gaza into Israeli territory as well as end Hamas rocket fire. These tunnels were viewed as a significant security risk, potentially allowing terrorists to infiltrate and carry out attacks in Israel. Hamas also has held the bodies of two Israeli soldiers - Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul - leading to significant tension between Israel and Hamas. It was also the last time Israeli ground forces entered the Gaza Strip until the October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attack.</p>
<p><b>2020: Peace to Prosperity Plan</b></p>	<p>U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled the "Peace to Prosperity" plan in January 2020. The plan presented a vision for a two-state solution but with certain parameters, including Israeli sovereignty over some settlements in the West Bank and land swaps. The plan also included an economic component, which was unveiled in June 2019 at a conference in Bahrain, that promised \$50 billion in new investment for Palestinians.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The plan was largely rejected by the international community, although serious attention was given to the new opportunities for <b>regional cooperation and investment</b> built into the proposal. The Palestinians did not participate in the drafting of the plan and outright rejected it when it was released. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had boycotted the Trump administration following its decision</p>



		to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017.
2020: Abraham Accords	<p><b>The Abraham Accords, signed in 2020</b>, are a series of historic agreements that led to the normalization of diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations between Israel and Arab countries, including the UAE and Bahrain, and later the Joint Declaration with Morocco. <b>Take our Abraham Accords quiz.</b></p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The Accords marked a departure from decades of Arab-Israeli conflict, opened up economic opportunities, fostered regional stability, and represented a symbol of changing dynamics in the Middle East. They also served as a model for potential future agreements between Israel and other Arab and Muslim-majority countries.</p>
2021: May Conflict in Gaza	<p><b>An 11-day war erupted between Israel and Hamas.</b> Hamas terrorists used tensions in Jerusalem, specifically over the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the eviction dispute in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, as a pretext to launch rockets at Israeli civilian areas and ignite hostilities. It resulted in intense rocket fire from Gaza and Israeli airstrikes. A ceasefire was brokered by Egypt and other mediators on May 21, 2021, ending the hostilities.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p><b>Why It Matters:</b> Prior to October 7, 2023, this was the most recent direct conflict between Israel and Hamas until October 2023. The conflict also led to a major spike in antisemitism globally <b>targeting Jewish communities in the United States</b> and Europe.</p>
2022: August Operation in Gaza	<p>This three-day conflict resulted in over 1,000 rockets being fired at Israel by the <b>Iranian-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group and the targeted killing of PIJ commander Tayseer al-Jabari.</b></p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>While the operation quickly ended in a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, it was significant in that Hamas, the de facto ruler of Gaza, did not take part in the hostilities. The conflict was a setback for the Iranian-backed terror group, but tensions between Israel</p>

		and Palestinian Islamic Jihad continued into 2023 in both Gaza and the West Bank
2023: Operation Shield and Arrow	<p><a href="#"><u>Israel launched Operation Shield and Arrow</u></a> to end the threat against Israel posed by Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists after they fired over 100 rockets into Israel.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>The violence stemming from Gaza was also linked to increasing terrorism in the West Bank, <a href="#"><u>specifically from Hamas</u></a> and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Backed by Iran, these Palestinian terror groups have sought to export their operations to the West Bank, specifically in Jenin, in order to carry out additional terror attacks against Israel. As such, Israeli security forces had been conducting near-daily counterterrorism operations in the West Bank to quell the violence.</p>

<p>2023: October 7          Hamas Massacre</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Hamas, the Iran-backed terror group controlling Gaza, launched an unprovoked and vicious surprise attack on over 20 Israeli communities.</u></a> Using rockets, paragliders, boats, motorcycles, and other vehicles, and whatever other means they could, terrorists infiltrated Israel with one goal—to murder and kidnap Israelis. Over 1,200 Israelis have been killed, thousands of rockets have been fired on Israel, and over 134 hostages are being held by Hamas.</p>	<p><b>Why It Matters:</b></p> <p>This was the largest terrorist attack in Israeli history and the worst attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust. In order to protect itself, Israel is working to eliminate the threat that Hamas poses through an air, sea, and ground campaign against the terror group’s operations.</p>
<p><b>Update Everything You Need to Know About Rafah, Its Importance to Hamas, and Protecting Its Civilian Population</b></p>	<p><b>October 29, 2024</b></p> <p>The southern Gaza city of Rafah sits strategically along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. In May, after months of deliberations and international concerns about the humanitarian impact, Israel launched a limited and phased operation to dismantle the remaining Hamas terror battalions in the city. At the time, some 1.4 million Palestinians resided in the city, with over a million Palestinians evacuating there since Israel launched its war to defend itself following the Hamas massacre on October 7, 2023. Here is what to know about the strategic importance of Rafah, Israel’s operation, and the future of the Israel-Hamas war.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Latest Updates:</b></p> <p><b>Sinwar Killed:</b> On October 17, 2024, Israeli officials announced <a href="#"><u>the IDF killed Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar in Rafah.</u></a> Read <a href="#"><u>AJC's statement.</u></a></p> <p><b>Where it stands:</b> In late June, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that Israel’s operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah is nearing its conclusion, with the remaining four Hamas battalions there having been dismantled.</p>	

"The intense phase of the fighting against Hamas is about to end," he said. "It doesn't mean that the war is about to end, but the war in its intense phase is about to end in Rafah."

**What Israel exposed:** Dozens of Hamas tunnels have been found in Rafah and on the border between Gaza and Egypt, known as the Philadelphi Corridor. Israeli forces uncovered two types of tunnels in the city. The first type was a smuggling tunnel from Gaza to Egypt and vice versa. These tunnels were used to smuggle arms, parts for arms factories, other terror means, and also civilian items. The second type of tunnel that was uncovered was the kind that connects to other tunnels in various areas in Gaza, used for storing weapons, command centers for Hamas, and the movement of terrorists from one area to another.

The IDF announced it recovered the bodies of six hostages executed by Hamas from a tunnel beneath Rafah on Sunday, September 1. The hostages—[Israeli-American Hersh Goldberg-Polin](#), 23; Eden Yerushalmi, 24; Ori Danino, 25; Alex Lubanov, 32; Carmel Gat, 40; and Almog Sarusi, 27—were murdered only days before the IDF closed in on their location.

**What's next:** Currently, key issues remain unresolved about the reopening of the Rafah crossing on the Egypt-Gaza border and securing the Philadelphi Corridor to prevent Hamas from using smuggling to rearm itself with rockets and weapons to attack and murder Israelis. Netanyahu has made the security of the border region a core issue in ceasefire talks. Senior Israeli and U.S. officials have been in negotiations with their counterparts in Egypt over border security arrangements.

**What is the U.S. saying:** Amid the Rafah operation, U.S. officials said that Israel had addressed many of the concerns the Biden administration has expressed.

On July 8, U.S. State Department Spokesman Matthew Miller said that based on U.S. assessments, the Rafah operation saw a decrease in destruction and civilian casualties.

"The casualty number has come down dramatically over the past few months," Miller said, adding that no level of civilian casualties is acceptable.

"But the operation has just, in terms of the results, looked different than the operations in Gaza City and Khan Younis," he said.

## Why did Israel launch its operation in Rafah?

To return the hostages kidnapped on 10/7, prevent Hamas from carrying out another 10/7-style massacre of Israelis, shut down the illegal weapons and people smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt, end the Iran-backed terror group's influence over Gaza, and put pressure on Hamas to agree to a deal that will release Israeli hostages.

Every country has a moral obligation to not only protect the safety and security of its citizens but to rescue those taken hostage. Many Israeli analysts believe that pressuring Hamas in Rafah could force the terror organization to get serious about negotiating with Israel and releasing its prisoners. In February, Israel carried out a successful and dramatic rescue operation in Rafah that freed two hostages, Fernando Simon Marman, 60, and Luis Har, 70, who were abducted from Kibbutz Nir Yitzhak on October 7.

In addition, Rafah was the last remaining stronghold for Hamas' military battalions and its leadership. Defeating Hamas' remaining battalions in Gaza is needed to ensure that the Iran-backed terror group no longer has the ability to murder Israelis. Hamas, which calls for Israel's destruction in its charter, has [repeatedly promised to carry out more 10/7-style massacres against Israel](#). Hamas could easily use Rafah as a base to reassert control over the entire Gaza Strip if the war were to end prematurely.

A campaign in Rafah is also essential to eliminate Hamas' and other terrorist groups' underground network of smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza. Shortly after [Hamas gained control of the Gaza Strip](#), throwing out the Palestinian Authority in a bloody coup in 2007, a "tunnel industry" began to thrive under the border between Gaza and Egypt. Hamas has operated most of these tunnels, collecting tolls and trafficking explosives, guns, rockets, and drones. Terrorists also have used the tunnels to go to and from Gaza in order to train in Iran and other countries.

Egypt has previously worked to destroy the tunnels, but smuggling remains a concern. Ridding the area of Hamas and destroying the tunnels once and for all is an Israeli security priority.

## **What steps did Israel take to protect civilians in Rafah?**

While Israel goes to extraordinary lengths to keep Palestinian civilians out of harm's way (more on that below), Hamas specifically puts Palestinian civilians in danger. For example, in Rafah, IDF spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said that "Hamas built everything in a civilian neighborhood — among houses, among mosques, among the population — in order to create its terror ecosystem." Time and again, Hamas uses Palestinians as human shields, purposely driving up the number of innocent Palestinians killed in the war while preserving the lives of the terrorist fighters.

"Israel has implemented more measures to prevent civilian casualties in urban warfare than any other military in the history of war. This includes many measures the U.S. has (or has not) taken in wars and battles but also many measures no military in the world has ever taken," asserts John Spencer, Chair of Urban Warfare Studies at the Modern War Institute at West Point, a research center dedicated to the study of war and warfare. [Read more of Spencer's expert analysis.](#)

In Rafah, Israel again deployed extraordinary steps to ensure Gazans were not in harm's way in Rafah. For instance, before Israel's targeted operation in eastern Rafah neighborhoods, hundreds of thousands of leaflets, phone calls, text messages, and social media posts in Arabic were disseminated to ensure the approximately 100,000 Palestinian civilians in these areas were evacuated out of harm's way to an expanded humanitarian zone in the al-Mawasi and Khan Younis areas of southern Gaza.

The IDF said that the expanded humanitarian zone includes field hospitals and tent camps for displaced Palestinians, while the IDF noted that "there has been a surge of humanitarian aid going into Gaza."

### **[What You Need to Know About Israel's Humanitarian Aid To Gaza](#)**

Previously, IDF spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said that moving the Palestinian civilians to designated areas, which would be done in coordination with international actors, was a key part of the IDF's preparations for any Rafah operation.

## **What have U.S. leaders said about Israel's efforts in Rafah?**

In the months leading up to the Rafah operation, U.S. government officials expressed concern about a full-scale ground operation in Rafah, reiterating that there needs to be a credible plan to safeguard Palestinian civilians.

	<p>In a CNN interview on May 8, President Biden delineated his “red line” when it comes to Israel and Rafah, saying “I made it clear that if they [the IDF] go into Rafah—they haven’t gone in Rafah yet—if they go into Rafah, I’m not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah, to deal with the cities, that deal with that problem,” referring to his decision last week to pause the delivery of a shipment of a specific type of munition to Israel. In the interview, President Biden clearly said that Israel’s limited and targeted operations in Rafah to date have not crossed his red line. President Biden also added, “We’re going to continue to make sure Israel is secure in terms of Iron Dome and their ability to respond to attacks that came out of the Middle East recently.”</p> <p>Biden’s comments on possibly not supplying weapons set off a flurry of concern and criticism from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle and from AJC:</p> <p>AJC CEO Ted Deutch said that Israel’s ability to defeat Hamas - which has long called for Israel’s destruction, <a href="#">which is enshrined in its charter</a> and <a href="#">vowed to carry out additional October 7-like massacres</a> - should not be impaired.</p> <p>“President Biden should not take steps that could impair Israel’s ability to prevent Hamas from attacking it again and again — as its leaders have promised,” he said. “The U.S. knows that defeating Hamas is critical to Israel’s long-term security and to defeating the global threat posed by the Iranian regime and its proxies.”</p>
<p><b>American Jewish Committee Appalled by ICC’s Issuance of Arrest Warrants Against Israelis</b></p>	<p><a href="#">November 21, 2024 — New York, NY</a></p> <p>American Jewish Committee (AJC), the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, is appalled by the decision of the <a href="#">International Criminal Court (ICC)</a> Pre-Trial Chamber to issue arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. This reckless, irresponsible decision is a gross distortion of international law that harms the Court’s credibility, completely undermines its core mandate, and emboldens enemies of democracy around the world.</p> <p>Rather than acknowledging the reality that Israel’s military actions in Gaza are solely focused on defeating the internationally recognized terror organization Hamas, securing the safe return of the 101 hostages still held by the terror group, and protecting Israelis from further attack, the Court embraced the false claims that Israel is acting with malicious intent toward Palestinians, restricting humanitarian aid as a tool of punishment, and</p>

deliberately attacking and harming civilians. Perversely, the Court even cited Israel's efforts to increase humanitarian aid entering Gaza in the spring of 2024 as evidence of ill intent, suggesting that prior restrictions had not been dictated by military necessity but intended to cause Palestinian civilians harm.

In an outrageous failure to exercise power responsibly, the Court also refused to address serious challenges to its authority to even consider this case.

The ICC's foundational purpose is to act only when the states with the primary responsibility to do so are unable or unwilling to exercise it. Yet Israel is a democracy with a robust and independent judiciary capable of actively considering the allegations. The State of Israel has repeatedly expressed its full commitment to investigate and address any alleged illegal acts committed by members of its military force. AJC has full confidence in Israel's independent judiciary.

Further, for years, numerous governments have consistently rejected the Court's claim of jurisdiction over Israelis and the Court has never conclusively ruled on this question. Countries including the United States, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Hungary raised objections to the Court's jurisdiction and on the principle of complementarity – that international justice mechanisms should defer to national justice systems whenever appropriate – in filings made as recently as this summer. For the Court to decline to conclusively answer these serious questions and refuse to act on reasoned arguments and instead issue these warrants, including against a sitting Prime Minister, is an outrageous overreach.

This decision is a boon to Israel's enemies and the enemies of international law and justice. It castigates democratic Israel – which has consistently affirmed its commitment to abide by its international obligations while fighting terrorists – while rewarding regimes like Iran that fuel terrorism around the world and distort the law for their malign ends. We call on all governments to immediately reject this erroneous decision and affirm that they will not enforce the warrants issued by the ICC in this case.

**AJC**  
**Statement**

[November 26, 2024 — New York, NY](#)

American Jewish Committee (AJC), the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, welcomes today's announcement of a ceasefire



## **on Israel- Hezbollah Ceasefire Agreement**

agreement between Israel and Hezbollah, and hopes its enforcement can lead to enduring security for both the Israeli and Lebanese people. As Israel has done time and time again, it has chosen to agree to a ceasefire at the risk of huge potential costs. To protect this peace, enforcement from the Lebanese army, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and U.S. Central Command will be paramount. As long as Hezbollah, funded by the Iranian regime to eradicate Israel, remains on its border, Israel and her people are under threat.

Much of this deal is based on the original tenets of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which has failed to be enforced since its adoption in 2006. While AJC welcomes the new enforcement mechanisms in this agreement, we will continue to advocate for a reassessment of UNIFIL's mandate and operations.

As recently as last August, UNIFIL's mandate was simply renewed without the necessary adjustments to address the threat posed by Hezbollah. Without meaningful reforms, UNIFIL will continue to fall short of its mandate. UNIFIL's mandate must be changed from "observe and report" to "security enforcement" – adapting to the current reality and threat Hezbollah poses to Israelis and the Lebanese people.

In a country that is languishing and facing economic collapse, Hezbollah has spent the last 40 years creating a state within a state and an army more powerful – thanks to Iranian arms and funding, as well as income from criminal enterprises around the world – than the legitimate Lebanese Armed Forces. While the durability of the ceasefire agreement remains to be seen, AJC is hopeful that it will create an opportunity for the Lebanese people to build a more stable, unified, and sovereign state—free from the Iranian regime's agenda to destroy Lebanon's southern neighbor.

Our hearts are with the Israeli people who have been forced to flee from their homes in the north of the country and who will disproportionately face the risk of this agreement.

AJC is grateful for United States leadership in securing this agreement and welcomes American and French involvement in the inspection committee to ensure its success.

**PART B**

**TIMELINE 1947 -**

## **TIMELINE EXPLORES THE HISTORY AND IMPORTANT EVENTS BEHIND THE LONG-STANDING MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ISRAELIS AND THE PALESTINIANS FROM 1947 TO TODAY.**

**Explore the history and important events behind the long-standing Middle East conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians from 1947 to today.**

*LAST UPDATED October 3, 2024*

[COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS](#)



***Smoke rises in Gaza following Israeli strikes on October 9, 2023.***

***Source: Mohammed Salem / Reuters***

The conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians reflects a long-standing struggle in the region encompassing the land between the Jordan River to the east and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. That conflict has deep historical roots, shaped by statehood claims from the Israelis and the Palestinians that have been supported by various international agendas and activities over time.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict dates back more than a century, with flashpoints building from the United Nations' 1947 initial UN Partition Plan to the 1973 Yom Kippur War, to the recent Israel-Hamas war sparked in October 2023.

Despite continued efforts at brokering peace—including the 1979 Camp David Accords, the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, and the 2020 Abraham Accords—conflict has persisted.

This timeline explores some of the pivotal moments in the conflict from 1947 to today.

## **November 29 1947**

### **UN Partition Plan**

The UN General Assembly passes Resolution 181 calling for the partition of the Palestinian territories into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The resolution also envisions an international, UN-run body to administer Jerusalem. The Palestinian territories had been under the military and administrative control of the United Kingdom (known as a mandate) since the 1917 defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. Civil strife and violence between the Jewish and Arab communities of the Palestinian territories intensifies.

## **May 14 1948**

### **Israel Declares Independence**

Israel declares its independence as the British rule ends. Sparked by Israel's declaration of independence, the first Arab-Israeli War begins. Egypt (supported by Saudi Arabian, Sudanese, and Yemeni troops), Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria invade Israel. The fighting continues until 1949, when Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria sign [armistice](#) agreements.

## **Dec 11, 1948**

### **UN Addresses Palestinian Displacement**

Over the course of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, at least seven hundred thousand Palestinian [refugees](#) flee their homes in an exodus known to Palestinians as the *nakba* (Arabic for "catastrophe"). Israel wins the war, retaining the territory provided to it by the United Nations and capturing some of the areas designated for the imagined future Palestinian state. Israel gains control of West Jerusalem, Egypt gains the Gaza Strip, and Jordan gains the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including the Old City and its historic Jewish quarter. In 1948, the UN General Assembly passes Resolution 194, which calls for the [repatriation](#) of Palestinian [refugees](#). The Palestinians will later point to Resolution 194 as having established a "right of return" for Palestinian refugees and their descendants. The specific parameters of that return are debated in the decades that follow, including among many descendants from the 1948 refugees and the three hundred thousand Palestinians who will flee their homes during the June 1967 war.

**Jun 5, 1967 - Jun 10, 1967**

### **The Six-Day War**

Israel and several of its Arab neighbors fight the Six-Day War. Israel wins a decisive victory: it suffers seven hundred casualties; its adversaries suffer nearly twenty thousand. Israel emerges with control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—areas inhabited primarily by Palestinians—as well as all of East Jerusalem.

Israel also takes control of Syria’s Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula, which is part of Egypt. Israel will stay in the Sinai Peninsula until April 1982.

**Nov 22, 1967**

### **The UN Security Council Resolution for Israeli Withdrawal**

The UN Security Council passes Resolution 242 calling for Israeli “withdrawal ... from territories occupied in the recent conflict” and for the termination of “states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the [sovereignty](#), territorial integrity, and political independence of every state in the area and the right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.” The resolution establishes the concept of *land for peace*.

**Oct 3, 1973**

### **The Yom Kippur War**

Another Arab-Israeli war, known variously as the Yom Kippur War, the Ramadan War, and the October War, is fought when Egypt and Syria attempt to retake the Israeli-occupied Sinai Peninsula and Golan

Heights. [Cold War](#) tensions spike as the [Soviet Union](#) aids Egypt and Syria and the United States aids Israel. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries begins an oil [embargo](#) on countries that support Israel, and the price of oil skyrockets. The fighting ends after a UN-sponsored [cease-](#)

[fire](#) (negotiated by the United States and the Soviet Union) takes hold. The UN Security Council passes Resolution 338, which calls for implementing UN Security Council Resolution 242.

**Sep 1, 1978**

### **The Camp David Accords**

Israel and Egypt sign the Camp David Accords, which establish a basis for a peace treaty between the two countries. The accords also commit the Israeli and Egyptian governments, along with other parties, to negotiate the disposition of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

**Mar 26, 1979**

### **Israel Withdraws From the Sinai Peninsula**

Egypt and Israel sign a peace treaty, the first between Israel and one of its Arab neighbors. The treaty commits Israel to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula and evacuate its settlements there. The termination of the state of war between Egypt and Israel leads to the normalization of diplomatic and commercial relations between the two countries. Israel’s prime minister and Egypt’s president exchange letters reaffirming their

commitment—outlined in the Camp David Accords—to negotiate the disposition of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

**Dec 1, 1987**

### **First Intifada**

An Israeli driver kills four Palestinians in a car accident that sparks the first intifada, or uprising, against Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. The image of Palestinians throwing rocks at Israeli tanks becomes the enduring image of the intifada. Over the next six years, roughly 200 Israelis and 1,300 Palestinians are killed.

A Palestinian cleric named Sheikh Ahmed Yassin establishes the militant group Hamas as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas endorses [jihad](#) as a way to regain territory for Muslims; the United States designates Hamas a foreign [terrorist](#) organization in 1997.

**Jul 31, 1988**

### **Jordan Surrenders Claims on the West Bank and East Jerusalem**

King Hussein of Jordan relinquishes his country's claims to the West Bank and East Jerusalem in favor of the claims of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). In December of the same year, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat denounces violence, recognizes Israel's right to exist, and acknowledges UN Security Council Resolution 242 and the concept of land for peace. The United States responds to Arafat's announcement by beginning direct talks with him, though it suspends the talks following a Palestinian [terrorist](#) attack against Israel.

**Oct 30, 1991**

### **The Madrid Peace Conference**

The Madrid Peace Conference begins, sponsored jointly by the United States and the [Soviet Union](#). Israeli, Jordanian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian delegates attend the first negotiations among those parties. The talks proceed along [bilateral](#) tracks between Israel and its neighbors, though the Lebanese join the Syrian delegation and the Jordanian team includes Palestinian representatives. A [multilateral](#) track includes the wider Arab world and addresses regional issues. The talks last for two years without any breakthroughs.

**Sep 13, 1993**

### **The Oslo Accords**

Secret negotiations in Norway result in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, also known as the Oslo Accords. Before the accords are signed, Israel and the PLO recognize each other in an exchange of letters. Israel and the PLO agree to the creation of the Palestinian Authority to temporarily administer the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Israel also agrees to begin withdrawing from parts of the West Bank, though large swaths of land and Israeli settlements remain under the Israeli

military's exclusive control. The Oslo Accords envision a peace agreement by 1999. Palestinian leader Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994 for their efforts on the Oslo Accords.

**May 4, 1994**

### **The Gaza-Jericho Agreement**

The Israelis and the Palestinians sign the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, which begins implementation of the Oslo Accords. The agreement provides for an Israeli military withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, a town in the West Bank, and for a transfer of authority from Israeli administration to the newly formed Palestinian Authority. The agreement also establishes the structure and composition of the Palestinian Authority, its jurisdiction and legislative powers, a Palestinian police force, and relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Arafat returns to the Gaza Strip after a long absence.

**Oct 26, 1994**

### **Israel and Jordan Sign a Peace Treaty**

Israel and Jordan sign a peace treaty, settling their territorial dispute and agreeing to future cooperation in sectors such as trade and tourism. This is Israel's second peace treaty with an Arab state. It accords special administrative responsibilities for Jerusalem's Muslim holy places to Jordan.

**Sep 28, 1995**

### **Oslo II Accord**

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators sign the Interim Agreement, sometimes called Oslo II. It gives the Palestinians control over additional areas of the West Bank and defines the security, electoral, public administration, and economic arrangements that will govern those areas until a final peace agreement is reached in 1999.

**Jul 11, 2000 - Jul 25, 2000**

### **Camp David Summit**

President Bill Clinton hosts Israeli and Palestinian leaders for talks at Camp David. Reports indicate that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is prepared to accept, among other things, Palestinian [sovereignty](#) over some 91 percent of the West Bank and certain parts of Jerusalem. The deal would include a land swap in which some Israeli land would go to the Palestinians in compensation for the remaining 9 percent of the West Bank, which would go to Israel. Two weeks of intensive discussion, however, fails to produce an agreement. President Clinton blames Arafat for the failure. Before leaving office several months later, Clinton lays out proposals for both sides. Talks between them continue, but without success.

**Sep 28, 2000**

### **The Second Intifada**

Israeli politicians, including Ariel Sharon, a controversial retired Israeli general, visit the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. The Palestinians view the visit as an effort to change the status quo at the holy site. The ensuing demonstrations turn violent, marking the beginning of a second intifada. It will last until 2005 and be markedly more violent than the first intifada. Four thousand Palestinians and one thousand Israelis die.

**Mar 27, 2002**

### **The Passover Massacre**

A [terrorist](#) attack kills thirty people at a Passover celebration at a hotel in the Israeli city of Netanya. As a result, the Israeli military reoccupies portions of the West Bank, including the city of Ramallah, where the Palestinian Authority is located and where Arafat has his West Bank headquarters.

**Jun 23, 2002**

### **Israeli West Bank Barrier-Building Begins**

Israel begins building a security barrier in the West Bank to protect Israeli cities and towns from [terrorist](#) attacks. The barrier, which is a wall in some stretches and a fence in others, is controversial because in places it cuts deep into West Bank territory to protect settlements. The Palestinians are cut off from Jerusalem, some Palestinian villages are sliced in half, and some Palestinians are unable to get to work or school as a result of the security barrier's path. Israel's Supreme Court forces changes in the barrier's route, but the barrier continues to impede Palestinian movement and commerce in certain areas.

**Apr 30, 2003**

### **Road Map for Peace**

The Quartet, an informal group created to pursue Middle East peace comprising the United States, Russia, the United Nations, and the [European Union](#), puts forth a Road Map for Peace based on the outline President George W. Bush offered in his 2002 speech. The road map lays out a plan for peace based on Palestinian reforms and a cessation of terrorism in return for an end to Israeli settlements and a new Palestinian state.

**Aug 15, 2005**

### **Israeli Disengagement With Gaza**

Israel begins a [unilateral](#) withdrawal of settlers and military forces from the Gaza Strip. The Israeli military remains in control of Gaza's borders (except the Gaza-Egypt border, which is controlled by Egypt), airspace, and coastline. After Israel's withdrawal, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic [Jihad](#), and other smaller militant groups fire rockets from Gaza into southern Israel.



**Jan 29, 2006**

**Hamas Expands Power in Gaza**

Hamas defeats Fatah, a Palestinian political faction founded in 1950s which was a long-dominant faction within the PLO, in Palestinian elections. The United States and other countries suspend their aid to the Palestinian Authority because they consider Hamas to be a [terrorist](#) organization. Fatah and Hamas make a deal to govern the West Bank and Gaza Strip together. The deal quickly fails, and Hamas takes over the Gaza Strip in 2007.

**Jun 25, 2006**

**Gilad Shalit Taken Hostage**

Hamas operatives kidnap an Israeli soldier named Gilad Shalit on Israeli soil near the Gaza Strip. The Israeli military tries and fails to free him. He is held captive in Gaza until Israel—with the help of Egypt and the United States—negotiates his release in 2012.

**Dec 27, 2008**

**Israel Attacks the Gaza Strip**

Israel attacks the Gaza Strip following nearly eight hundred rocket attacks from Gaza on Israeli towns in the months of November and December. The war lasts less than a month but kills hundreds of civilians, in addition to hundreds of combatants, and sparks international criticism.

**Jul 28, 2013**

**Negotiations Face Continued Hurdles**

Secretary of State John Kerry seeks to restart final status negotiations. The process begins with the Israeli's agreement to release 104 Palestinian prisoners and the Palestinians' agreement not to use their new observer state status at the United Nations to advance the cause of statehood. Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority collapsed in April 2014 over such issues as Israeli settlement growth, the status of a final round of prisoners, and Palestinian attempts to join several international organizations.

**Apr 23, 2014**

**Tensions Between the PLO and Hamas**

The PLO and Hamas sign an agreement to form a unity government. Tensions between the factions remain, however, and no unity government is formed. Gaza and the West Bank remain disconnected and under the control of rival Palestinian leaderships.

**Jul 8, 2014 - Aug 26, 2014**

**Operation Protective Edge**

After tit-for-tat attacks on Israeli and Palestinian civilians by extremists on both sides, Israel invades the Gaza Strip. The operation, code-named Protective Edge, lasts for fifty days, killing about two thousand Gazans, sixty-six Israeli soldiers, and five Israeli civilians. Unlike the conflicts from 2008 to 2009 and in

2012, Palestinian rocket fire targets major Israeli cities. The war ends after the United States, in consultation with Egypt, Israel, and other regional powers, brokers a [cease-fire](#).

**Dec 6, 2017**

### **The U.S. Formally Recognizes Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel**

Changing long-standing U.S. policy, U.S. President Donald Trump formally recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. He also pledges to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to that city, though the move is not set to occur immediately. Numerous foreign leaders, including those of Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, along with UN Secretary-General António Guterres, criticize the policy change. It also sparks protests and violence throughout East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank, as well as in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Jordan. In January 2018, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declines to meet with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence during Pence's trip to the region.

**Mar 25, 2019**

### **The U.S. Recognizes Israeli Sovereignty Over the Golan Heights**

The Trump administration recognizes Israeli [sovereignty](#) over the Golan Heights, which Israel had formally annexed from Syria in 1981. The United States is the first country other than Israel to recognize Israel's [sovereignty](#) over the territory.

**Jan 28, 2020**

### **Trump Administration Launches Proposed Peace Plan**

Trump unveils his administration's proposed Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, crafted by U.S. and Israeli diplomats without Palestinian input. The plan calls for a two-state solution with significant economic aid to the Palestinians. Many analysts criticize the plan as being one sided, stipulating impossible requirements for Palestinian statehood and paving the way for Israeli [annexation](#) of the West Bank. Palestinian authorities reject the plan immediately. Following the plan's announcement, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announces Israel's plan to annex portions of the West Bank as outlined in Trump's proposal.

**Sep 15, 2020**

### **Relations between Some Arab Countries and Israel Normalize**

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates agree to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel, becoming the first Arab countries to do so in over twenty-five years. In return, Israel announces the suspension of its plans to annex territory in the West Bank. Morocco and Sudan subsequently also sign on to the agreement and normalize relations with Israel.

**2021****2021 Israel-Hamas Crisis**

Evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and clashes at al-Aqsa Mosque spark conflict between Israel and Hamas. Over two hundred people in Gaza and at least ten in Israel die. The Joe Biden administration helps mediate a truce and restores some U.S. aid and diplomatic contact with the Palestinians.

**2022****Deadly Year in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Israel launches a [counterterrorism](#) operation in the West Bank in response to attacks by Palestinians against Jewish Israelis. The operation and resulting resurgence contribute to the deadliest year for both sides since 2005, an uptick in violence that only turned out to rise in 2023.

**Oct 7, 2023****Hamas Launches Surprise Attack on Israel**

Hamas launches an unprecedented surprise attack on Israel, leading to an explosion of violence. According to the Israeli government, the attack kills approximately 1,200 people, many of them civilians. Over 200 people are also taken hostage. The attack is the deadliest in Israel's history. Hamas military leaders justify the attack by citing Israel's long-running [blockade](#) on Gaza and its occupation of Palestinian lands. Following the attack, Israel launches a deadly counter offensive aiming to eradicate Hamas in Gaza. International bodies, including the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice, have since issued investigations into Israeli and Hamas officials for violating [international law](#). Both parties reject these claims.

**Oct 1, 2024****Israel Expands Operations Into Lebanon, Iran Retaliates**

Nearly a year on, peace between the parties remains elusive and the conflict continues to escalate. On October 1, Israeli military forces begin ground operations in Lebanon against the militant group and political party Hezbollah, a group that has expressed support for Hamas in Gaza and enjoys support from Iran. Hezbollah has been exchanging aerial attacks with Israel since October 7. The group says it will continue to attack Israel until there is a ceasefire in Gaza. That ceasefire remains unreachable. After almost a year of fighting, Israel and Hamas are still in conflict. Over 40,000 Palestinians have been killed, many of them civilians. Over 100 Israeli hostages are still held by Hamas. Meanwhile, in support of Hezbollah, Iran launches over 150 ballistic missiles into Israel. Experts increasingly fear these events could lead to an even larger regional war.

[More on this topic. Explore the latest analysis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from CFR.](#)

## HAMAS-ISRAEL WAR 2023-

<a href="#"><u>What Biden's Wartime Visit to Israel Signals to Hamas, Iran, Hezbollah</u></a>	October 19 2023	Jason Isaacson, AJC's Chief Policy and Political Affairs Officer, joins us to break down U.S. President Joe Biden's historic wartime visit to Israel and his message to Iran and its terror proxies Hamas and Hezbollah.
<a href="#"><u>Attack on Israel: Video Updates from AJC's Jerusalem Director</u></a>	October 19 2023	Videos from Lt. Col. (Res.) Avital Lebovich regarding the October 7th Hamas attack on Israel
<a href="#"><u>7 Ways Some Anti-Israel Protests Have Spread Antisemitism</u></a>	October 21 2023	Here are eight antisemitic terms, tropes, and themes that pervaded anti-Israel protests in May 2021 and again in the Israel-Hamas War in October 2023 that have made life more dangerous for Jews in America
<a href="#"><u>Renana Gomeh's Sons Were Taken Hostage by Hamas: What She Needs You to Do to Bring Them Home Now</u></a>	October 20 2023	At 6:30 a.m on October 7, 2023, Renana Gomeh's life changed forever when Iran-backed Hamas terrorists stormed her home in Kibbutz Nir Oz and took her two sons, ages 12 and 16, hostage. Listen to Renana's painful account of what happened two weeks ago, how she is coping, and her mission to bring them home.
<a href="#"><u>Did Israel Bomb a Hospital? No. What to Know About Hamas' Lie About a Rocket Strike on a Gaza Hospital</u></a>	October 23 2023	Did Israel really bomb a hospital? No. An explosion occurred at the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital, also referred to as the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital, in Gaza City, where apparently many Palestinians had taken refuge amid the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel. Here is what we know about the situation, how the media is reporting on it, and past incidents of rocket misfires by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.
<a href="#"><u>7 Ways Hamas Exploits Palestinian Civilians in Gaza</u></a>	November 2 2023	From diverting economic resources to the endangerment of human lives, these activities not only perpetuate the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza - representing a crime against humanity - but also give Hamas operational advantages in its war against Israel where they win not only when they kill Israeli soldiers, but also when Israel inadvertently harms Palestinian civilians. Here are seven ways Hamas exploits Gaza's Palestinian civilians to further its genocidal aim to destroy Israel
<a href="#"><u>7 Ways Hamas Has Conned Americans and Spread Hatred of Jews</u></a>	November 9 2023	Major influencers on social media, as well as elected officials and mainstream media news and pundits, have amplified Hamas' messages and presented those messages "pro-Palestinian." From the "River to the Sea" to claims that Israel is carrying out the "Genocide of the Palestinians" here are seven hateful and harmful slogans that Hamas and its supporters have unleashed, and many of those supporting Palestinians in America have spread
<a href="#"><u>AJC CEO Ted Deutch's Full Address to Park Avenue Synagogue on Standing with Israel Post-October 7</u></a>	November 13 2023	In a speech at the Park Avenue Synagogue, AJC CEO Ted Deutch reflects on the reality of the new world following the Hamas massacre on Israel on October 7. Ted details the work American Jewish Committee has been doing since the attack. He also spoke about what it was like to, earlier in the week in Israel, visit the sites of Hamas' atrocities and meet with survivors, family members of hostages, and Israeli President Herzog.

<a href="#"><u>What Can't Be Unseen: The Pain of Rescue and Recovery During the War Against Hamas</u></a>	November 14 2023	Saving lives is a core mission of ZAKA—95% of whose volunteers are EMTs—and they are used to doing that under the most difficult of circumstances.
<a href="#"><u>6 Reasons Why an Unconditional Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Is Not the Right Path Forward</u></a>	November 14 2023	On October 7th, Hamas killed, raped, tortured, and kidnapped Israeli civilians, including women and children. They take innocent Palestinians as human shields and prevent them from fleeing the combat zone. Hamas indiscriminately shoots rockets at Israeli civilian centers. All of these are clear war crimes and morally abhorrent acts and call into question how the international community could expect Hamas to adhere to a ceasefire.
<a href="#"><u>AJC CEO Ted Deutch Live from D.C.: "Am Yisrael Chai"</u></a>	November 14 2023	AJC CEO Ted Deutch is immensely proud to be in our Nation's Capital at the March For Israel, where he – alongside hundreds of thousands of advocates and allies – are standing in solidarity with the Jewish state, condemning rising antisemitism, and demanding the immediate release of all hostages.
<a href="#"><u>5 of Some of the Most Powerful Moments from the March for Israel Rally</u></a>	November 15 2023	In the largest pro-Israel gathering in American history, an astounding 290,000-plus people descended upon the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to show their solidarity with Israel, demand the release of hostages held by the Iran-backed terror group Hamas, and call out surging antisemitism.
<a href="#"><u>The Good, the Bad, and the Death Threats: What It's Like to Be a Jewish College Student Right Now</u></a>	November 16 2023	Delve into the unsettling rise of antisemitism on American college campuses, focusing on alarming incidents at Cornell University and Columbia University. Our guests, Molly Goldstein and Elliot Sadoff, share their experiences of Jewish students being targeted in the classroom and facing death threats for merely speaking Hebrew.
<a href="#"><u>Setting the Record Straight About Hamas' Use of Gaza's Hospitals and Israel's Efforts to Help Patients</u></a>	November 20 2023	The IDF entered Al-Shifa Hospital and found weapons and uniforms that unequivocally confirmed Hamas is using the hospital for terror, violating the laws of war. Here is what you need to know about Gaza's hospitals, Israel's operation, and how Hamas uses hospitals as a base for its terrorism.
<a href="#"><u>'Never Again' Will Never Have an Expiration Date</u></a>	November 20 2023	I have not been immune to doom scrolling Facebook, to post and repost in support of Israel. Much of what I read — the obituaries, the stories of those held hostage, the pain of parents and children — is deeply affecting, but one post stopped me in my tracks. A young woman whose bat mitzvah I had officiated at many years ago simply posted, "'Never Again' Doesn't Have an Expiration Date." In seven words she said it all.
<a href="#"><u>AJC Statement on Agreement to Secure Release of 50 Hostages Held by Hamas</u></a>	November 21 2023	American Jewish Committee (AJC) welcomes today's announcement of an agreement brokered by the United States, with assistance from Qatar, for the release of 50 of the hostages abducted by Hamas and other terrorists from southern Israel on October 7.
<a href="#"><u>Debunking the False Equivalency Between Israeli Hostages and Palestinian Prisoners</u></a>	November 28 2023	An agreement between Israel and the Palestinian terror group Hamas was reached on November 21 for the release of 50 Israeli hostages, who are among the over 200 taken by the terror group during the October 7 attack on Israel. While many have welcomed the deal, including AJC, it is important to make a clear distinction between the groups of people being exchanged.

<a href="#"><u>American Jewish Committee Applauds Unanimous House Passage of Resolution Calling for Release of Hamas Hostages</u></a>	November 28 2023	American Jewish Committee today welcomed the U.S. House of Representatives' unanimous passage of a bipartisan resolution condemning the Hamas terror attack on Oct. 7 and demanding that Hamas immediately release all hostages and allow for their safe return home.
<a href="#"><u>What Happens Next: AJC's Avital Leibovich on the Hostage Deal and Challenges Ahead</u></a>	November 29 2023	From the frontlines of the Israel-Hamas War, Lt. Col. (res.) Avital Leibovich, director of AJC Jerusalem, joins us to discuss the current pause in fighting between Israel and the terror group Hamas, the release of hostages, and more.
<a href="#"><u>Actress Ginnifer Goodwin explains how "Globalize the Intifada" is a Call for Violence</u></a>	November 30 2023	Learn about the violent history behind the phrase "Globalize the Intifada," and how it is being used today by people rallying in support of Palestinians for widespread violence against Jews in Israel and across the globe
<a href="#"><u>K-12 Schools Must be Equipped to Fight Antisemitism</u></a>	November 30 2023	Since the Hamas attack on Israel, we have seen disturbing headlines, videos, and even arrests made on college campuses across the country due to an alarming surge in antisemitism. As we justifiably focus on how to ensure the safety of Jewish university students, we cannot forget the need to combat antisemitism in K-12 schools as well.
<a href="#"><u>AJC CEO Ted Deutch at The Second Front Conference on Antisemitism</u></a>	December 4 2023	Watch AJC CEO Ted Deutch address the increase in antisemitism since October 7 at The Second Front conference hosted by The Jerusalem Post
<a href="#"><u>A Tour of the Nova Festival Commemoration Site</u></a>	December 7 2023	To commemorate two months since Hamas' massacre, AJC Jerusalem Director Lt. Col. (res.) tours the Nova Festival Commemoration memorial in Tel Aviv. On October 7, 2023, terrorists murdered more than 360 innocent civilians at the festival near Kibbutz Re'im.
<a href="#"><u>110+ Ibero-American and U.S. Jewish Leaders Reaffirm Commitment to Fight Antisemitism, Support Israel in War Against Hamas</u></a>	December 8 2023	This week, more than 110 Ibero-American and U.S. Jewish leaders unanimously endorsed American Jewish Committee's (AJC) Santiago Declaration, reaffirming their regional commitment to fight antisemitism, stand by Israel in its war against Hamas, support democratic values and human rights worldwide, and promote continued collaboration. The Strategic Forum for Leaders of Ibero-American Jewish Communities, convened December 3-5 by AJC's Arthur and Rochelle Belfer Institute for Latino and Latin American Affairs (BILLA) and hosted by the Jewish Community of Chile, brought together diplomats, political leaders, and representatives from civil society from 13 countries for discussions on current relations with Israel and rising global antisemitism, among other topics.
<a href="#"><u>Hanukkah Heroes: Eight Modern-Day Hanukkah Heroes in the Wake of October 7</u></a>	December 14 2023	Although the October 7 Hamas massacre produced unprecedented devastation in Israel, it also gave rise to modern-day Maccabees. As we usher in Hanukkah at the darkest hour in recent memory for all of world Jewry, we recognize the courage of the following eight individuals — one for each night of Hanukkah. Some of them made the ultimate sacrifice. Others have survived against the greatest of odds. All of them are showing us the light.
<a href="#"><u>Top 5 Popularized Antisemitic Terms Since the Start of the Israel-Hamas War</u></a>	December 19 2023	Amid the terrifying increase of antisemitic harassment, intimidation, and violence around the world in the wake of the October 7 Hamas terror attack against Israelis, many antisemitic phrases and terminology have been used at protests, on social media accounts, by celebrities, and even government officials, when criticizing Israel.

<a href="#"><u>4-Year-Old Hostage Abigail Idan is Free—Her Family is On a Mission to #BringThemAllHome</u></a>	December 21 2023	Four-year-old Abigail Mor Idan, the youngest U.S. citizen who was kidnapped and held by Hamas, returned home during a pause in fighting in November. Abigail's great-aunt joins us to recount her family's harrowing story and her relentless effort to bring the remaining captives home to their loved ones.
<a href="#"><u>AJC Social Media Influencer Fact-Finding Mission to Israel</u></a>	December 21 2023	Amid horrifying levels of denial about the Hamas massacre of Israelis on October 7, AJC Project Interchange led a delegation of social media influencers to see firsthand the atrocities of Hamas' attack.
<a href="#"><u>Honoring the Heroic Civilian Guards of Kfar Aza</u></a>	December 26 2023	Watch AJC Jerusalem Director Lt. Col. (Res.) Avital Leibovich explain the critical role of civilian guards who protect communities in and around Israel's borders. Leibovich honors the memory of seven civilian guards of Kfar Aza who died defending their beloved kibbutz from Hamas terrorists on October 7, 2023.
<a href="#"><u>The Jewish Community's First Line of Defense</u></a>	December 30 2023	US Law enforcement must rebuild trust by facing the menace of antisemitism and cultivating relationships with Jewish communities
<a href="#"><u>Majority of American Jews Feel Less Safe After October 7 Hamas Terror Attack</u></a>	January 11 2024	American Jewish Committee (AJC) released new data showing how Hamas' October 7 terror attack on Israel is affecting American Jews – they are feeling less safe.
<a href="#"><u>AJC Statement on the Provisional Measures Order by the International Court of Justice</u></a>	January 26 2024	South Africa's outrageous case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was dealt a major blow today, as the Court plainly rejected South Africa's request for Israel to be ordered to cease its defensive military operation against Hamas in Gaza.
<a href="#"><u>Silence of the Musicians</u></a>	January 31 2024	On October 7, 2023, the music industry suffered the deadliest event in its history when more than 400 people were brutally murdered and kidnapped at the Nova Music Festival in Israel. The event was billed as a celebration of "unity and love." We should honor that spirit this weekend at The Grammys.
<a href="#"><u>What to Know about UNRWA and Its Controversial Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict</u></a>	February 12 2024	Amid the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, questions have been raised about UNRWA's ties with Hamas, and what function, if any, it would fulfill in a post-war Gaza. On January 26, the U.S. announced it would temporarily pause funding to UNRWA after Israel revealed that at least a dozen employees were allegedly involved in the October 7 Hamas terror attack on Israel.
<a href="#"><u>AJC Policy on UNRWA</u></a>		American Jewish Committee (AJC) is outraged by the revelations that twelve employees of UNRWA – the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East – were involved in the horrific October 7 terror attacks perpetrated by Hamas against Israel.
<a href="#"><u>It Must be Restated: Israel is Central to Judaism and Jewish Identity</u></a>	February 9 2024	Given the prevalence of misinformation on social media and the one-sided reports in news outlets, it's not unreasonable for some people to think that Zionism—the belief that Jews have a right to self-determination in our ancestral homeland—is controversial among Jews and that anti-Israel attitudes are mainstream in the American Jewish community. Yet these Jews do not represent the vast majority of the Jewish community and they reside in small but loud echo chambers.

<a href="#"><u><i>The State of Antisemitism in America 2023: Insights and Analysis</i></u></a>		American Jewish Committee's State of Antisemitism in America 2023 Report is unique. Not only is it the lone resource to analyze five years of consecutive data on the impact of antisemitism on American Jews, it was also in the field during a critical moment: October and November 2023
<a href="#"><u><i>AJC CEO Ted Deutch Op-ed   The Numbers Are Scary But There's an Opportunity to Fight Antisemitism</i></u></a>	February 16 2024	We have a national antisemitism crisis, and it affects Jews every day — on the streets, at school, at work, online and everywhere in between.
<a href="#"><u><i>Antisemitism Cannot Be Business As Usual for Jews</i></u></a>	February 21 2024	In Philadelphia, we are all too aware of how antisemitism has affected Jews, especially since Oct. 7, when Hamas terrorists attacked Israel and slaughtered more than 1,200 innocent civilians and kidnapped 240 men, women, children and babies.
<a href="#"><u><i>Israel is Far From Being Isolated</i></u></a>	February 22 2024	Ominous headlines about the Israel-Hamas war, antisemitic condemnations from world leaders and South Africa's outrageous genocide allegations before the International Court of Justice could easily lead one to believe that Israel is isolated on the world stage.
<a href="#"><u><i>Rise in Antisemitism is Alarming, But There Is Hope In How to Fight It</i></u></a>	February 22 2024	For many Jews, our world was already an unsettling place rife with Jew-hatred prior to the October 7 Hamas-led massacre in Israel. As we've seen time and time again, when tensions spike in the Middle East, a spike in antisemitism accompanies it in the U.S. and around the world.
<a href="#"><u><i>What is Students for Justice in Palestine, the Hamas-supporting Anti-Israel Group Being Banned on College Campuses?</i></u></a>	February 23 2024	Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) is an anti-Zionist student organization in America that has been responsible for numerous recent anti-Israel protests on college campuses across the country.
<a href="#"><u><i>Tough Questions About Gaza Answered</i></u></a>	February 26 2024	The Gaza Strip is a 141-square-mile Palestinian enclave located near Israel's southwestern tip. After the Israeli withdrawal in 2005, the coastal territory has been under the control of the Iran-backed Hamas terrorist group. Hamas has launched several significant attacks against Israel from its base in Gaza, including in 2008, 2009, 2014, 2021, and most recently the Israel-Hamas War on October 7, 2023, when Hamas terrorists murdered over 1,200 Israelis, wounded over 12,000, took 134 hostages, and thousands of rockets.
<a href="#"><u><i>Confronting the Scourge of Antisemitism</i></u></a>	February 28 2024	In recent years, the U.S. has witnessed a troubling resurgence of antisemitism, echoing a dark chapter in history the world vowed never to repeat. The State of Antisemitism in America 2023 Report released by the American Jewish Committee, provides a sobering assessment of the challenges facing Jewish communities in Indiana and around the country.
<a href="#"><u><i>Antisemitism is Happening in San Diego. You Can Help Stop It.</i></u></a>	March 7 2024	Sometimes the rest of the world feels far away here in San Diego. We watch the crises across the globe and would like to think "no, not here, we're not affected." If only that was the case with antisemitism, which knows no boundaries. And in communities where antisemitism has been left to rage unchecked, all of society suffers.



<a href="#"><u> Hamas' Most Horrific Weapon of War: 5 Takeaways from UN Report on Sexual Violence Against Israelis </u></a>	March 12 2024	The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict has issued a report validating the heinous and sadistic crimes committed against women during the October 7 terror attacks and against hostages held by Hamas since that day.
<a href="#"><u> What You Need to Know About Israel's Humanitarian Aid To Gaza </u></a>	March 27 2024	By air, land, and sea. That's how Israel and its allies have tried to sidestep Hamas terrorists in Gaza "to flood the area with supplies" for Palestinian civilians. Here's everything you need to know about Israel's humanitarian aid to Gaza.
<a href="#"><u> On MSNBC, AJC CEO Ted Deutch Discusses Recent Israel Trip, Iran Threat, U.S.-Israel Ties, and More </u></a>	April 3 2024	In an interview this morning on MSNBC, AJC CEO Ted Deutch addressed several critical issues about Israel's mission to rescue the hostages and ensure that Hamas cannot carry out another 10/7 attack.
<a href="#"><u> Unilaterally Declaring Palestine a State will Torpedo Peace Prospects </u></a>	April 15 2024	Two initiatives that claim to help the Palestinian people are currently making waves at the UN. Both support the unilateral and unconditional advancement of Palestinian statehood. Sadly, if successful, these resolutions would have the opposite effect, setting back the fulfillment of Palestinian national aspirations.
<a href="#"><u> Seven Months In: What Israelis Think About the War Against Hamas, Campus Antisemitism in America, and More </u></a>	May 16 2024	Jacob Magid, U.S. Bureau Chief for the Times of Israel, provides his take on Israel's efforts to destroy Hamas in Gaza, the U.S-Israel relations, the anti-Israel campus protests, the Israeli public's reaction to rising antisemitism abroad, and the challenges he has faced as a journalist since October 7.
<a href="#"><u> What You Need to Know About the ICC and the Israel-Hamas War </u></a>		Adding another dangerous twist to the Israel-Hamas War and its impact, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has announced he is simultaneously seeking arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, along with three leaders of the genocidal terror group Hamas.
<a href="#"><u> What the State Department's National Security Memorandum Said, and Didn't Say, About Israel's Defensive War Against Hamas </u></a>	May 23 2024	On May 10, the Biden administration released a report assessing Israel's conduct amid the ongoing war Israel-Hamas war. The 46-page State Department report, formally known as the National Security Memorandum 20, was ordered by President Biden earlier this year to verify whether seven different countries - including Israel – adhere to international law in their use of U.S.-made weapons.
<a href="#"><u> Key Takeaways from Prime Minister Netanyahu's Address to Congress </u></a>	July 25 2024	At the invitation of Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-LA), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed a joint session of Congress on Wednesday, emphasizing the strong U.S.-Israel relationship, the shared interests of the two countries in battling Hamas, and the need to counter the Iranian regime's threats throughout the Middle East. Netanyahu was joined at the Capitol by several freed hostages, hostage families, and heroic IDF soldiers.
<a href="#"><u> 4 Ways Bella Hadid Has Spread Hateful Anti-Israel Lies and Antisemitic Conspiracy Theories Online </u></a>	August 5 2024	For years, Palestinian-American supermodel Bella Hadid has been vocal about her anti-Israel views. While criticism of Israel is perfectly legitimate in public discourse, Hadid's comments have often crossed the line, as she posts content that demonizes Israel and is antisemitic on her social media channels with millions of followers.

<a href="#"><u>What Would You Do If Your Son Was Kidnapped by Hamas?</u></a>	September 1 2024	This heartfelt conversation with Jon Polin and Rachel Goldberg, the parents of 23-year-old Hersh, was recorded before the 23-year-old, Israeli-American was murdered by Hamas terrorists in captivity in late August 2024. In this episode, Polin and Goldberg detail what they knew about their son's abduction from the Supernova music festival on October 7 and the challenges they faced in trying to secure his rescue.
<a href="#"><u>AJC CEO Ted Deutch to CNN: Global Action Needed After Six Israeli Hostages Murdered by Hamas</u></a>	September 1 2024	CEO Ted Deutch reacts to the heartbreaking news of six Israeli hostages found dead in Gaza, including one Israeli American. Ted emphasizes the ongoing threat posed by Hamas, a terrorist organization responsible for the deaths of over 35 Americans since October 7.
<a href="#"><u>How Many Americans Have Been Killed by Hamas, Before, and After October 7?</u></a>	September 5 2024	The brutal execution of six hostages by Hamas in late August has heightened the urgency to free the 100+ hostages still held by the terror group nearly a year after the October 7. Hamas has a long history of murdering U.S. nationals dating back to its founding in the late 1980s. Here's what to know about the Americans killed by Hamas on and before October 7.
<a href="#"><u>Tracking Which Nations Have Condemned the Iranian Regime's Ballistic Missile Attack on Israel</u></a>	October 1 2024	On October 1, 2024 millions of Israelis rushed to bomb shelters as the Iranian regime launched the largest ballistic missiles ever at Israel. Here are the countries that have condemned the Iranian regime's ballistic missile attack on Israel.
<a href="#"><u>11 Essential Resources on the One-Year Anniversary of October 7</u></a>	October 7 2024	Here is a collection of 11 resources that all advocates for Israel and the Jewish people need to know as we mark the anniversary of October 7.
<a href="#"><u>Meet Kfir and Ariel Bibas: The Youngest Hostages Still Held By Hamas in Gaza Since October 7, 2023</u></a>	October 8 2024	Viciously ripped from their Kibbutz Nir Oz home on October 7 by Hamas terrorists, Kfir and Ariel Bibas—along with their parents Yarden and Shiri—remain captive in the terror group's dungeons in Gaza. Kfir and Ariel should be celebrating birthdays with their family and playing with their friends, not enduring physical and psychological trauma for more than 365 days.
<a href="#"><u>AJC Statement on the Death of Hamas Head Yahya Sinwar</u></a> the Death of Hamas Head Yahya Sinwar	October 17 2024	AJC Statement on the Death of Hamas Head Yahya Sinwar
<a href="#"><u>"Within Our Lifetime": What You Need to Know About the Pro-Hamas and Antisemitic Group</u></a>	October 22 2024	Meet Within Our Lifetime - United for Palestine (WOL), the anti-Israel group that hasn't been afraid to call for the death of Jews
<a href="#"><u>Who Is Ta-Nehisi Coates? 5 Things to Know About His Controversial New Book on Israel</u></a>	October 23 2024	Who is Ta-Nehisi Coates? And what is Ta-Nehisi Coates famous for? A celebrated writer and public intellectual known for his works on race in America, he has recently stirred controversy with his new book, The Message.
<a href="#"><u>Bring Naama Levy Home</u></a>	October 23 2024	Naama Levy, just 20 years old, has been held hostage by Hamas terrorists for more than a year

<a href="#"><u>What to Know About Iran's Ballistic Missile Attacks and Israel's Efforts to Defend Itself</u></a>	October 26 2024	<p>On October 1, Iran launched over 180 ballistic missiles at Israel, marking the largest-ever single ballistic missile attack. Israel, with the help of the U.S. and its allies, intercepted most of the missiles using its multi-layered air defense system, but some hit central Israel, resulting in casualties. The attack, which Iran claims was in retaliation for Israel's assassination of key Hezbollah and Hamas leaders, is part of Iran's long-standing campaign against Israel, which it seeks to eliminate. In response, Israel is preparing for further action, with global allies condemning the attack and offering support.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Update: Everything You Need to Know About Rafah, Its Importance to Hamas, and Protecting Its Civilian Population</u></a>	October 29 2024	<p>Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has declared that Hamas terrorists remaining in the southern Gaza city of Rafah will be the next objective of the war. As long as Hamas operates from Rafah, Israelis are in danger of rocket fire and a reoccurrence of October 7.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Who is Shlomo Mantzur, the Oldest Hostage Held by Hamas?</u></a>	October 30 2024	<p>Shlomo Mantzur, 86—the oldest hostage held by Hamas terrorists—is a loving husband and grandfather who escaped the antisemitic, 1941 Iraqi Farhud massacre and emigrated to Israel, only to face another pogrom 82 years later in the Jewish state.</p>
<a href="#"><u>What Is Samidoun, the 'Charity' That Supports Anti-Israel Campus Protests and Fundraises for a Terror Group</u></a>	November 5 2024	<p>The U.S. Treasury Department and Canadian government sanctioned Samidoun, a nonprofit posing as a Palestinian rights charity, for financially supporting the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a designated terrorist group involved in Hamas' October 7 attacks. Cofounded in 2011 by American Charlotte Kates and her husband, PFLP member Khaled Barakat, Samidoun has also backed pro-Hamas protests on college campuses including at Columbia University; Kates was recently arrested in Canada for praising the October 7 massacre and traveled to Iran to accept a "human rights award" from the Iranian regime.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Antisemitism in Amsterdam: What to Know About the Violent Attacks on Jewish, Israeli Soccer Fans</u></a>		<p>The violent attacks on Israeli and Jewish fans of the Maccabi Tel Aviv soccer team in Amsterdam marks the latest chapter of how "Globalize the Intifada" is a dangerous call for violence against the Jewish people and what happens when antisemitism goes unchecked. This modern-day pogrom—rooted in anti-Jewish and anti-Israel vitriol—is why American Jewish Committee (AJC), the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, will continue to stand up for Jews everywhere and demand that European leaders protect its Jewish communities.</p>
<a href="#"><u>American Jewish Committee Appalled by ICC's Issuance of Arrest Warrants Against Israelis</u></a>	November 21 2024	<p>American Jewish Committee (AJC), the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, is appalled by the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) Pre-Trial Chamber to issue arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant. This reckless, irresponsible decision is a gross distortion of international law that harms the Court's credibility, completely undermines its core mandate, and emboldens enemies of democracy around the world.</p>
<a href="#"><u>What to Know About the Israel-Hezbollah Ceasefire, and What's Next</u></a>	November 26 2024	<p>On November 26, Israel's security cabinet approved a U.S.-brokered 60-day ceasefire agreement that involves the Iranian-backed terror proxy Hezbollah that will go into effect on November 27 at 10 a.m. local time, marking a temporary halt to over a year of violent conflict. Here is what you need to know.</p>

<a href="#"><u>What the Mother of Hostage Edan Alexander Wants the World to Know</u></a>	December 1 2024	<p>“Listen to me, Edan. I'm here. I'm with you. I love you. Just protect yourself. Just be safe.” These were the last words Yael Alexander spoke to her then-19 year old son, Edan, on the morning of October 7, 2023. Edan was later taken hostage by Hamas terrorists. Yael joins us from her New Jersey home to tell her story.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Meet the Seven American Hostages Still Held By Hamas</u></a>	December 2 2024	<p>Meet the seven Americans still held hostage after thousands of Hamas terrorists breached the border between Israel and Gaza intent on terrifying and destroying the Jewish state.</p>

## LEARNING

### ABOUT THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

<p><b>PART 1</b></p> <p>There is a lot to learn about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and that's why we have DOZENS of 5-Minute Videos devoted to the topic. We've split this playlist into two parts, and here is the first.</p> <p><a href="#"><u>PRAGER U</u></a></p> <p>10 Oct 2023 58min 58sec</p>	<p><b>PART 2</b></p> <p>There is a lot to learn about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and that's why we have DOZENS of 5-Minute Videos devoted to the topic. We've split this playlist into two parts, and here is the second.</p> <p><a href="#"><u>PRAGER U</u></a></p> <p>10 Oct 2023 1hour 5min 3sec</p>
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ORIGINS OF THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT		
<p><b>PART I: TO 1949</b></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Henry Abramson</u></a></p> <p>19 Nov 2023 29min 10sec</p>	<p><b>PART II: 1949 – 1993</b></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Henry Abramson</u></a></p> <p>26 Nov 2023 31min 29sec</p>	<p><b>PART III: FROM OSLO TO OCTOBER 7 2023</b></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Henry Abramson</u></a></p> <p>3 Dec 2023 30min 59sec</p>

RESULT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR	
<p><b>HOW THE FIRST WORLD WAR CREATED THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICTS</b></p> <p><a href="#"><u>THE GREAT WAR</u></a></p> <p>8 December 2023 23min 26sec</p> <p>The modern Middle East is a region troubled by war, terrorism, weak and failed states, and civil unrest. But how did it get this way? The map of today's Middle East was mostly drawn after the First World War, and the war that planted many of the seeds of conflict that still plague Israel, Palestine, Iraq, Syria and even Iran today.</p>	<p><b>HOW BRITAIN STARTED THE ARAB ISRAELI CONFLICT</b></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Free Documentary - History</u></a></p> <p>3 March 2021 52min 35sec</p> <p>The bitter struggle between Arab and Jew for control of the Holy Land has caused untold suffering in the Middle East for generations. It is often claimed that the crisis originated with Jewish emigration to Palestine and the foundation of the state of Israel. Yet the roots of the conflict are to be found much earlier – in British double-dealing during the First World War. This is a story of intrigue among rival empires; of misguided strategies; and of how conflicting promises to Arab and Jew created a legacy of bloodshed which determined the fate of the Middle East</p>

## TRANSLATE HATE ('ANTISEMITISM') GLOSSARY

[AJC](#)

American Jewish Committee's [TRANSLATE HATE](#) glossary empowers you to identify, expose, and report antisemitism.

Click on the terms below to learn more about how antisemitic tropes, words, and symbols hide in plain sight  
- from the internet to pop culture.

[DOWNLOAD THE GLOSSARY HERE](#)

**PART C**

**GENERAL**

## **COUNTRIES WITH MORE WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT ARE MORE PROSPEROUS**

**WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM** Nov 15, 2023

*Our governments lack female representation. We need to stop accepting the problem and focus on solving it. At the current rate of progress, full parity will not be reached for another 130 years, according to the World Economic Forum's latest [Global Gender Gap Report](#).*

*It turns out that societies gain advantages when their political leadership includes more women. Countries with greater female representation at the highest levels remove legal inequality between men and women, according to [a new report by Women Political Leaders and the Oliver Wyman Forum](#).*

### **Have you read?**

- [Women in the workforce: How closing gender gaps can accelerate economic growth](#)

Eliminating legal discrimination removes barriers for women. This leads to a boost in female workforce participation as opportunities are equalized, which positively impacts not only the women themselves but also their countries' GDPs, the research shows.

All nations are different, and there is no single path for increasing the number of women in government leadership roles. What works for some might not work for others. But countries that are under-represented

### **INDEX OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

A growing body of evidence demonstrates the impact women have on legislation and when in office.

Countries with higher numbers of female political leaders typically pass more laws that remove inequality and score higher on the World Bank's Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) Index, which measures legal equality of economic opportunity.

A perfect score of 100 means a nation has laws that protect the legal rights of all citizens. Only 14 countries – Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden – have perfect scores, according to the index. This means 2.4 billion women around the globe are left without these legal protections and opportunities.

The WBL score increases as more women are elected to office. The average score for nations that have 50% or more women in parliament is 10 percentage points higher than countries that haven't yet reached parity (88 vs. 78). Similarly, governments in which women occupy at least half of the minister positions have WBL scores 17 percentage points higher on average than those that don't (95 vs. 78). And those headed by female leaders are 10 percentage points higher than those led by men (86 vs. 76).

This confirms earlier research that found a strong positive correlation between political representation by women and legal equality of economic opportunity. These laws are important because they ensure women and men are treated equally (including protection against discrimination) and typically result in greater



female labour force participation, which is currently 30% lower than male participation globally. Full female participation would increase global GDP by an estimated 20%.

### **PAINFULLY SLOW PROGRESS**

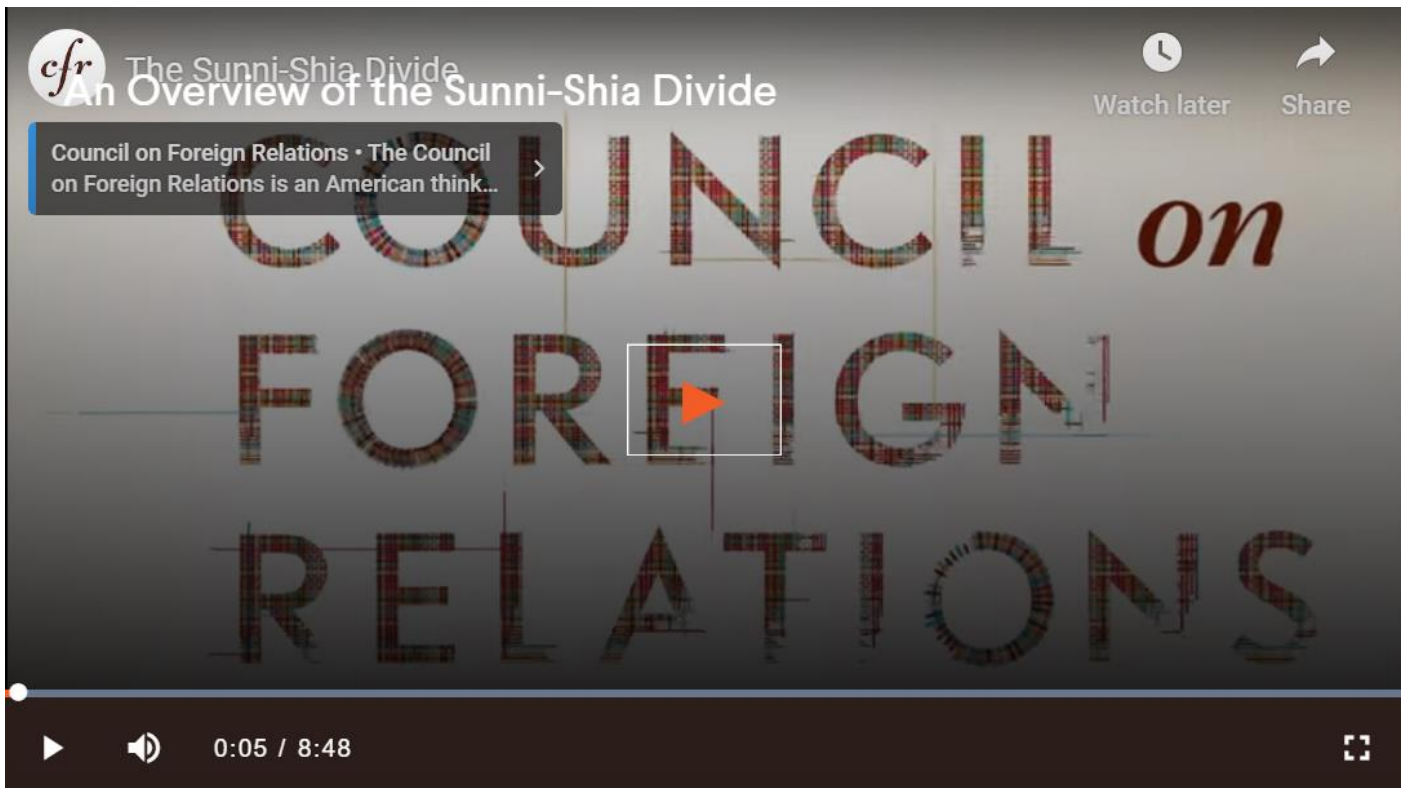
At the beginning of 2023, women held about 27% of parliamentary seats and 23% of ministerial positions, and represented fewer than 10% of the world's heads of state. Only six of the 193 United Nations member nations – Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Rwanda, UAE and Cuba – have achieved gender equality in parliament, and women hold half or more of the ministerial positions in just 11 nations (Albania, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Finland, Germany, Mozambique, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway and Spain).

Discover

will continue to miss out on the benefits, and the gaps in their growth trajectories will only widen.

## OVERVIEW OF THE SUNNI-SHIA DIVIDE

[CFR](#)



[LINK](#)

#An ancient religious divide is helping fuel a resurgence of conflicts in the Middle East and Muslim countries. Struggles between Sunni and Shia forces have fed a Syrian civil war that threatens to transform the map of the Middle East, spurred violence that is fracturing Iraq, and widened fissures in a number of tense Gulf countries. Growing sectarian clashes have also sparked a revival of transnational jihadi networks that poses a threat beyond the region.

Islam's schism, simmering for fourteen centuries, doesn't explain all the political, economic, and geostrategic factors involved in these conflicts, but it has become one prism through which to understand the underlying tensions. Two countries that compete for the leadership of Islam, Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran, have used the sectarian divide to further their ambitions. How their rivalry is settled will likely shape the political balance between Sunnis and Shias and the future of the region, especially in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Yemen.

Alongside the proxy battle is the renewed fervor of armed militants, motivated by the goals of cleansing the faith or preparing the way for the return of the messiah. Today there are tens of thousands of organized sectarian militants throughout the region capable of triggering a broader conflict. And despite the efforts of many Sunni and Shia clerics to reduce tensions through dialogue and counterviolence measures, many

experts express concern that Islam's divide will lead to escalating violence and a growing threat to international peace and security.

Sunni and Shia Muslims have lived peacefully together for centuries. In many countries it has become common for members of the two sects to intermarry and pray at the same mosques. They share faith in the Quran and the Prophet Mohammed's sayings and perform similar prayers, although they differ in rituals and interpretation of Islamic law.

Shia identity is rooted in victimhood over the killing of Husayn, the Prophet Mohammed's grandson, in the seventh century, and a long history of marginalization by the Sunni majority. Islam's dominant sect, which roughly 85 percent of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims follow, viewed Shia Islam with suspicion, and extremist Sunnis have portrayed Shias as heretics and apostates.

A regional war in the Middle East draws ever closer.

UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

### **ORIGINS OF THE SCHISM**

Mohammed unveiled a new faith to the people of Mecca in 610. Known as Islam, or submission to God, the monotheistic religion incorporated some Jewish and Christian traditions and expanded with a set of laws that governed most aspects of life, including political authority. By the time of his death in 632, Mohammed had consolidated power in Arabia. His followers subsequently built an empire that would stretch from Central Asia to Spain less than a century after his death. But a debate over succession split the community, with some arguing that leadership should be awarded to qualified individuals and others insisting that the only legitimate ruler must come through Mohammed's bloodline.

A group of prominent early followers of Islam elected Abu Bakr, a companion of Mohammed, to be the first caliph, or leader of the Islamic community, over the objections of those who favored Ali ibn Abi Talib, Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law. The opposing camps in the succession debate eventually evolved into Islam's two main sects. Shias, a term that stems from *shi'atu Ali*, Arabic for "partisans of Ali," believe that Ali and his descendants are part of a divine order. Sunnis, meaning followers of the *sunna*, or "way" in Arabic, of Mohammed, are opposed to political succession based on Mohammed's bloodline.

Ali became caliph in 656 and ruled only five years before he was assassinated. The caliphate, which was based in the Arabian Peninsula, passed to the Umayyad dynasty in Damascus and later the Abbasids in Baghdad. Shias rejected the authority of these rulers. In 680, soldiers of the second Umayyad caliph killed Ali's son, Husayn, and many of his companions in Karbala, located in modern-day Iraq. Karbala became a defining moral story for Shias, and Sunni caliphs worried that the Shia Imams—the descendants of Husayn who were seen as the legitimate leaders of Muslims (Sunnis use the term "imam" for the men who lead prayers in mosques)—would use this massacre to capture public imagination and topple monarchs. This fear resulted in the further persecution and marginalization of Shias.

Even as Sunnis triumphed politically in the Muslim world, Shias continued to look to the Imams—the blood descendants of Ali and Husayn—as their legitimate political and religious leaders. Even within the Shia community, however, there arose differences over the proper line of succession. Mainstream Shias believe there were twelve Imams. Zaydi Shias, found mostly in Yemen, broke off from the majority Shia community at the fifth Imam, and sustained imamate rule in parts of Yemen up to the 1960s. Ismaili Shias, centered in

South Asia but with important diaspora communities throughout the world, broke off at the seventh Imam. Most Ismailis revere the Aga Khan as the living representative of their Imam. The majority of Shias, particularly those in Iran and the eastern Arab world, believe that the twelfth Imam entered a state of occultation, or hiddenness, in 939 and that he will return at the end of time. Since then, “Twelvers,” or *Ithna Ashari* Shias, have vested religious authority in their senior clerical leaders, called ayatollahs (Arabic for “sign of God”).

Many Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian converts to Islam chose to become Shia rather than Sunni in the early centuries of the religion as a protest against the ethnic Arab empires that treated non-Arabs as second-class citizens. Their religions influenced the evolution of Shia Islam as distinct from Sunni Islam in rituals and beliefs.

Sunnis dominated the first nine centuries of Islamic rule (excluding the Shia Fatimid dynasty) until the Safavid dynasty was established in Persia in 1501. The Safavids made Shia Islam the state religion, and over the following two centuries they fought with the Ottomans, the seat of the Sunni caliphate. As these empires faded, their battles roughly settled the political borders of modern Iran and Turkey by the seventeenth century, and their legacies resulted in the current demographic distribution of Islam’s sects. Shias comprise a majority in Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Bahrain, and a plurality in Lebanon, while Sunnis make up the majority of more than forty countries from Morocco to Indonesia.

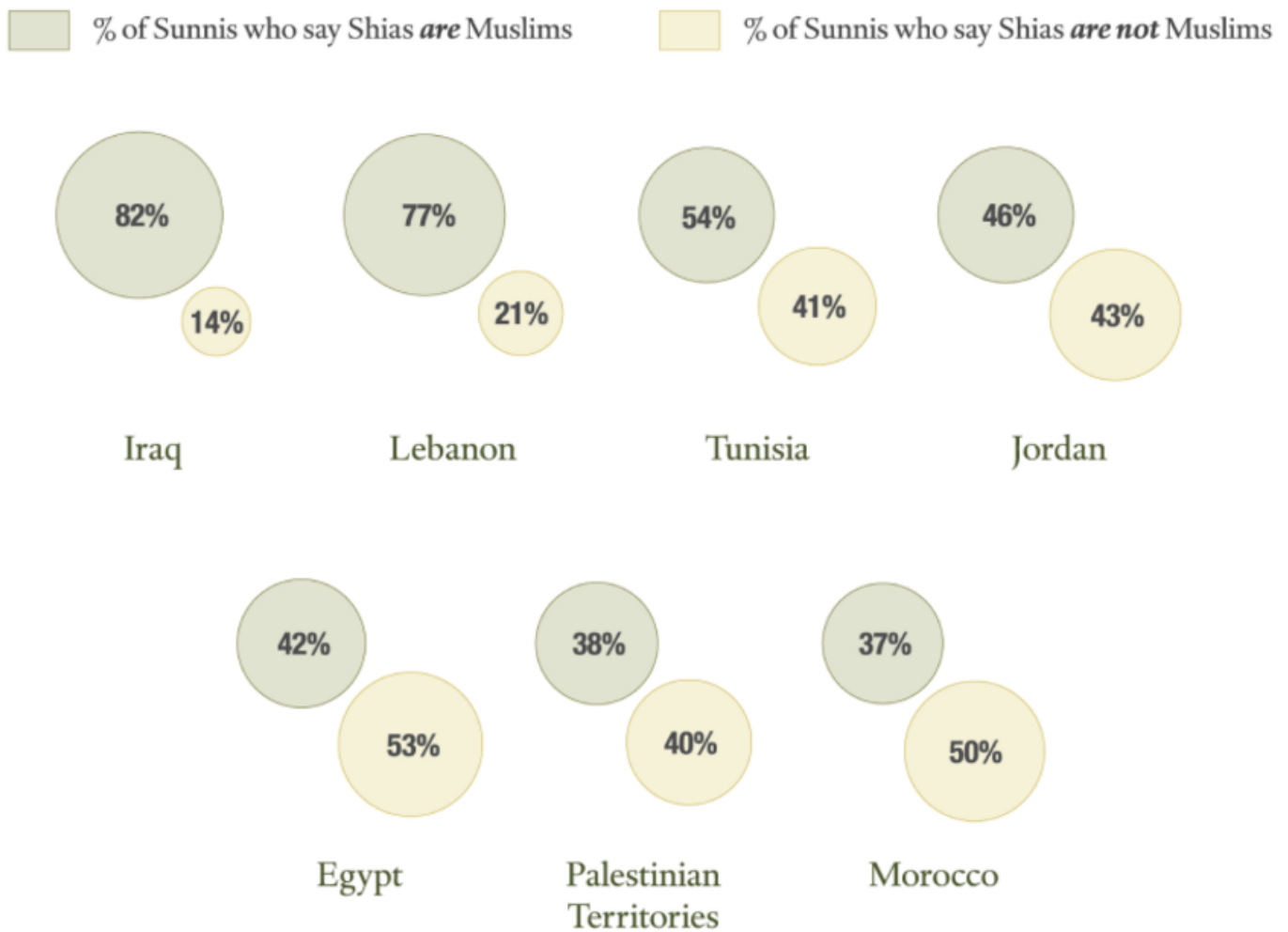
### **MODERN TENSIONS**

Iran’s Islamic Revolution in 1979 gave Shia cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini the opportunity to implement his vision for an Islamic government ruled by the “guardianship of the jurist” (*velayat-e faqih*), a controversial concept among Shia scholars that is opposed by Sunnis, who have historically differentiated between political leadership and religious scholarship. Shia ayatollahs have always been the guardians of the faith. Khomeini argued that clerics had to rule to properly perform their function: implementing Islam as God intended, through the mandate of the Shia Imams.

Under Khomeini, Iran began an experiment in Islamic rule. Khomeini tried to inspire further Islamic revival, preaching Muslim unity, but supported groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bahrain, and Pakistan that had specific Shia agendas. Sunni Islamists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, admired Khomeini’s success, but did not accept his leadership, underscoring the depth of sectarian suspicions. Saudi Arabia has a sizable Shia minority of roughly 10 percent, and millions of adherents of a puritanical brand of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism (an offshoot of the Sunni Hanbali school) that is antagonistic to Shia Islam. The transformation of Iran into an overtly Shia power after the Islamic revolution induced Saudi Arabia to accelerate the propagation of Wahhabism, as both countries revived a centuries-old sectarian rivalry over the true interpretation of Islam. Many of the groups responsible for sectarian violence that has occurred in the region and across the Muslim world since 1979 can be traced to Saudi and Iranian sources. Saudi Arabia backed Iraq in the 1980–1988 war with Iran and sponsored militants in Pakistan and Afghanistan who were primarily fighting against the Soviet Union, which had invaded Afghanistan in 1979, but were also suppressing Shia movements inspired or backed by Iran.

The transformation of Iran into an agitator for Shia movements in Muslim countries seemed to confirm centuries of Sunni suspicions that Shia Arabs answer to Persia. Many experts, however, point out that

Shias aren't monolithic—for many of them, identities and interests are based on more than their confession. Iraqi Shias, for example, made up the bulk of the Iraqi army that fought Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, and Shia militant groups Amal and Hezbollah clashed at times during the Lebanese civil war. The Houthis, a Zaydi Shia militant group in Yemen, battled the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh, a Zaydi, several times between 2004 and 2010. Then, in 2014, the Houthis captured the capital Sana'a with ousted president Saleh's support.



Source: Pew Research, *The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity*, 2012

For their part, both mainstream and hard-line Sunnis aren't singularly focused on oppressing Shias. They have fought against coreligionists throughout history, most recently in the successive crackdowns on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia's battles against al-Qaeda and related Sunni militant groups. Sharing a common Sunni identity didn't eliminate power struggles among Sunni Muslims under secular or religious governments.

But confessional identity has resurfaced wherever sectarian violence has taken root, as in Iraq after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion removed Saddam Hussein, a dictator from the Sunni minority who ruled over a

Shia-majority country. The bombing of a Shia shrine in Samara in 2006 kicked off a cycle of sectarian violence that forced Iraqis to pick sides, stirring tensions that continue today.

In the Arab world, Shia groups supported by Iran have recently won important political victories. The regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which has ruled since 1970, relies on Alawis, a heterodox Shia sect that makes up about 13 percent of Syria's population, as a pillar of its power. Alawis dominate the upper reaches of the country's military and security services and are the backbone of the forces fighting to support the Assad regime in Syria's civil war. Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq unseated Saddam Hussein and instituted competitive elections, the Shia majority has dominated the parliament and produced its prime ministers. Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shia militia and political movement, is the strongest party in Lebanon. The Houthis, Shia militants in Yemen tenuously linked to Iran, have toppled the country's internationally recognized government. Iran, a majority Shia country, has seen its regional influence swell as its allies in these countries have accumulated power.

Sunni governments, especially Saudi Arabia, have increasingly worried about their own grips on power, a concern that was exacerbated during the protest movement that began in Tunisia in late 2010. The Arab Awakening, as the uprisings are known, spread to Bahrain and Syria, countries at the fault lines of Islam's sectarian divide. In each, political power is held by a sectarian minority—Alawis in Syria and a Sunni ruling family in Bahrain—where Shias are the majority. In Yemen, Houthi rebels have expanded their territorial control, which Saudi Arabia perceives as a potential beachhead for Iran on the Arabian peninsula, along vital shipping routes in the Red Sea and in territory abutting Saudi Arabia's own marginalized Shia minority.

### **PRACTICING THE FAITH**

Sunnis and Shias agree on the basic tenets of Islam: declaring faith in a monotheistic God and Mohammed as his messenger, conducting daily prayers, giving money to the poor, fasting during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and performing the pilgrimage to Mecca.

There are divisions even over the precepts of Islam, but the main difference relates to authority, which sparked the political split in the seventh century and evolved into divergent interpretations of sharia, or Islamic law, and distinct sectarian identities.

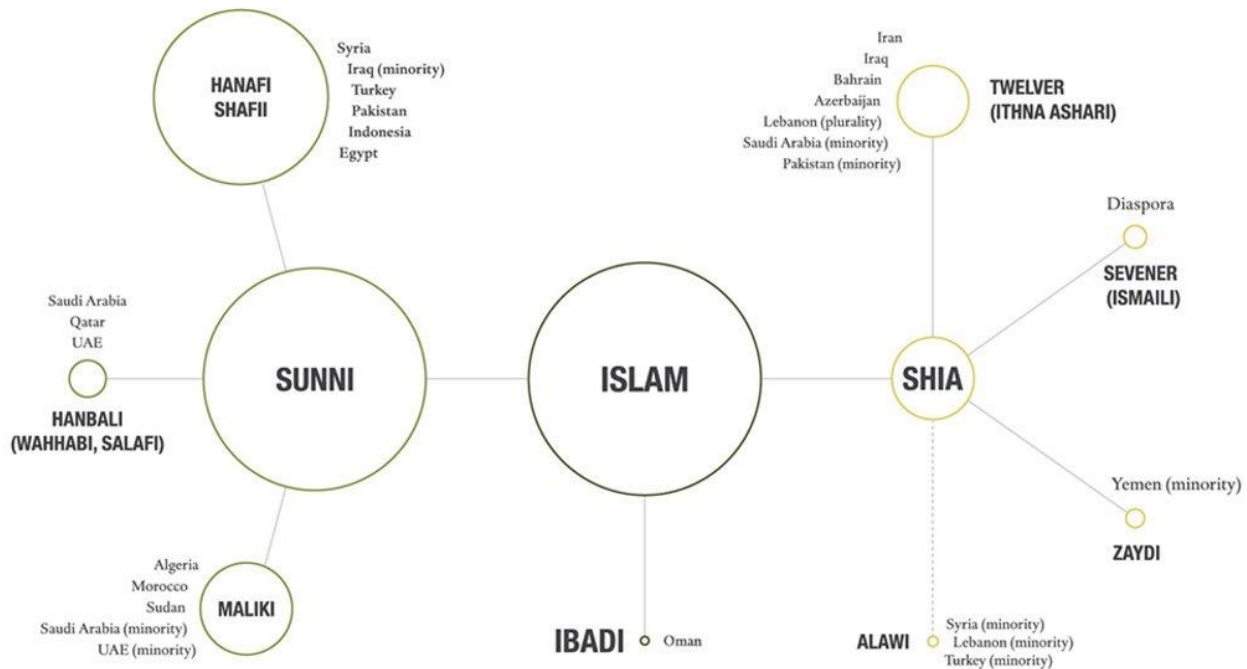
Shias believe that God always provides a guide, first the Imams and then ayatollahs, or experienced Shia scholars who have wide interpretative authority and are sought as a source of emulation. The term "ayatollah" is associated with the clerical rulers in Tehran, but it's primarily a title for a distinguished religious leader known as a *marja*, or source of emulation. Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, was appointed by an elected body of Iranian clerics, while *maraji* (plural of *marja*) are elevated through the religious schools in Qom, Najaf, and Karbala. Shias can choose from dozens of *maraji*, most of whom are based in holy cities in Iraq and Iran. Many Shias emulate a *marja* for religious affairs and defer to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in Iran for political guidance. For Sunnis, authority is based on the Quran and the traditions of Mohammed. Sunni religious scholars, who are constrained by legal precedents, exert far less authority over their followers than their Shia counterparts.

Both sects have subdivisions. The divisions among Shias were discussed above. Four schools comprise Sunni jurisprudence: Hanafi, Shafii, Maliki, and Hanbali, the latter spawning the Wahhabi and Salafi

movements in Saudi Arabia. Sunnism, a broad umbrella term for non-Shia Islam, is united on the importance of the Quran and practice of Mohammed but allows for differences in legal opinion.

### The Branches of Islam—Relative Size

CLICK ON THE BRANCHES FOR MORE INFORMATION



Julia RojCFR *cfr*

Dear Karbala, dear Najaf, dear Kadhimiyyah, and dear Samarra, we warn the great powers and their lackeys and the terrorists, the great Iranian people will do everything to protect them.

Hassan Rouhani, *Iranian President*

### SECTARIAN MILITANTS

Violence between Islam's sects has been rare historically, with most of the deadly sectarian attacks directed by clerics or political leaders rather than erupting spontaneously. Extremist groups, many of which are fostered by states, are the chief actors in sectarian killings today.

Two of the most prominent terrorist groups, Sunni al-Qaeda and Shia Hezbollah, have not defined their movements in sectarian terms, and have favored using anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, and anti-American frameworks to define their jihad, or struggle. They share few similarities beyond the use of violence. Hezbollah has developed a political wing that competes in elections and is part of the Lebanese government, a path not chosen by al-Qaeda, which operates a diffuse network largely in the shadows. Both groups have deployed suicide bombers, and their attacks shifted from a focus on the West and Israel to other Muslims, such as al-Qaeda's killing of Shia civilians in Iraq and Hezbollah's participation in the Syrian civil war.

Conflict and chaos have played a role in the reversion to basic sectarian identity. In Iraq, for instance, remnants of Hussein's Ba'athist regime, as well as militants whose organization would eventually become the self-proclaimed Islamic State, employed Sunni rhetoric to mount a resistance to the rise of Shia power.

Sunni fundamentalists, many inspired by al-Qaeda's call to fight Americans, flocked to Iraq from Muslim-majority countries, attacking coalition forces and many Shia civilians. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who founded al-Qaeda's franchise in Iraq, evoked ancient anti-Shia fatwas, or religious rulings, to spark a civil war in hopes that the Shia majority would eventually capitulate in the face of Sunni extremist violence. Iraq's foremost Shia religious authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has been a voice for sectarian restraint in Iraq, and the country's Shia community absorbed thousands of deaths before fighting back with their own militias. But, during the U.S. occupation of Iraq and, more recently, offensives against the Islamic State, Shia paramilitaries have been accused of possible war crimes.

Syria's civil war, in which a quarter million people have been killed and eleven million—more than half the country's prewar population—displaced, has amplified sectarian tensions to unprecedented levels. The war began with peaceful protests in 2011 calling for an end to the Assad regime. Decades of the Assad family's repression of Syria's majority Sunni population and elevation of minority Alawis in government and the private sector has sown sectarian strife. The 2011 protests and brutal government crackdown uncovered sectarian tensions, which have rippled across the region.

Tens of thousands of Syrian Sunnis joined rebel groups such as Ahrar al-Sham, the Islamic Front, and al-Qaeda's Nusra Front, which all employ anti-Shia rhetoric; similar numbers of Syrian Shias and Alawis enlisted with an Iran-backed militia known as the National Defense Force to fight for the Assad regime. Sunni fighters from Arab and Western countries initially joined the Syrian rebels before turning their guns on them in an effort to establish their envisaged caliphate. Meanwhile Hezbollah and some Shia militias from Iraq, such as Asaib Ahl al-Haq and Kata'ib Hezbollah, backed the Syrian government. Syria's civil war has attracted more militants from more countries than were involved in the conflicts in Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Bosnia combined.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq had been decimated by Sunni Iraqis who joined the fight against extremists, the U.S.-led military surge, and the death of Zarqawi, its leader, in a 2006 U.S. airstrike, but found new purpose exploiting the vacuum left by the receding Syrian state. It established its own transnational movement known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The group expanded its grip on Sunni provinces in Iraq and eastern regions in Syria, seizing Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, in June 2014. It defied orders from al-Qaeda's top commanders to curtail its transnational ambitions and wanton violence against civilians, which led to the militant group's expulsion from al-Qaeda in February 2014. ISIS rebranded as the Islamic State in July 2014 and declared its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as caliph. The group's highly publicized killing of Western hostages triggered a campaign of air strikes by the United States and its regional allies Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Extremist groups have come to rely on satellite television and high-speed Internet over the past two decades to spread propaganda and attract recruits. Fundamentalist Sunni clerics, many sponsored by wealthy Sunnis from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, have popularized anti-Shia slurs. Shia religious scholars have also taken to the airwaves, mocking and cursing the first three caliphs and Aisha, one of Mohammed's wives.

Sectarian rhetoric dehumanizing the "other" is centuries old. But the volume is increasing. Dismissing Arab Shias as Safawis, a term that paints them as Iranian agents (from the Safavid empire) and hence traitors to



the Arab cause, is increasingly common in Sunni rhetoric. Hard-line Sunni Islamists have used harsher historic terms, such as rafidha, rejecters of the faith, and majus, Zoroastrian or crypto Persian, to describe Shias as heretical. Iranian officials, Iraqi politicians, and Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, routinely describe their Sunni opponents as takfiris (referring to the doctrine embraced by al-Qaeda of declaring fellow Muslims apostate) and Wahhabis (referring to the puritanical Saudi sect). This cycle of demonization has been amplified throughout the Muslim world.

For Sunni extremists, social media has revolutionized recruitment opportunities. Fundamentalists no longer have to infiltrate mainstream mosques to attract recruits surreptitiously, but can now disseminate their call to jihad and wait for potential recruits to contact them. Shia groups can count on state support from the Iranian, Iraqi, and Syrian governments to recruit militants for sectarian jihad.

Terrorist violence in 2013 was fueled by sectarian motivations, marking a worrisome trend, in particular in Syria, Lebanon, and Pakistan.

U.S. Department of State

### **FLASH POINTS**

Sunni-Shia tensions contribute to multiple flash points in Muslim countries that are viewed as growing threats to international peace and security. The following arouse the most concern among regional specialists:

#### **RISING MILITANCY**

Sectarian violence intensified in 2013 and has grown since. Extremists were [“fueled by sectarian motivations”](#) in Syria, Lebanon, and Pakistan, according to the U.S. State Department. After years of steady losses for al-Qaeda–linked groups, Sunni extremist recruitment is rising, aided by private funding networks in the Gulf, [particularly in Kuwait](#), with much of the violence directed at other Muslims rather than Western targets. Shia militant groups are also gaining strength, in part to confront the threat of Sunni extremism. In 2015, the Islamic State claimed responsibility for, among other attacks, bombing Shia worshippers in Kuwait; attacking Sunni and Shia mosques in Saudi Arabia; downing a Russian passenger plane in Egypt, killing over two hundred people; and a pair of suicide bombings in a Shia-majority district of south Beirut that killed more than forty people.

U.S. authorities have warned that the war in Syria, which has attracted thousands of fighters from Europe and the United States, poses a long-term threat to Western security. Islamic State attacks and foiled plots in Europe have put the continent on edge, and the backlash against Muslims and immigrants threatens to end the EU’s open-border policy.

#### **SAUDI-IRANIAN RIVALRY**

Saudi Arabia and Iran have deployed considerable resources to proxy battles, especially in Syria, where the stakes are highest. Riyadh closely monitors potential restlessness in its oil-rich eastern provinces, home to its Shia minority, and deployed its forces, along with other Gulf countries, to suppress a largely Shia uprising in Bahrain. It also assembled a coalition of ten Sunni-majority countries, backed by the United States, to fight Houthi rebels in Yemen. The war, fought mostly from the air, has exacted a high civilian toll. Saudi Arabia provides hundreds of millions of dollars in financial support to the predominantly Sunni rebels

in Syria, while simultaneously banning cash flows to al-Qaeda and extremist jihadi groups fighting the Assad regime.

Iran has allocated billions of dollars in aid and loans to prop up Syria's Alawi-led government and has trained and equipped Shia militants from Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Iraq to fight in Syria. Iran and Saudi Arabia, which have repeatedly postponed efforts to establish a dialogue for settling disputes diplomatically, discussed the conflict in Syria in October 2015 at U.S. urging. This was a notable development though cast into doubt by a rupture in diplomatic relations in early 2016. Both countries have confronted the Islamic State, with Iran fighting it in parts of Iraq, while Saudi Arabia and other Sunni-majority countries back a U.S.-led air campaign against the extremist group in Syria and Iraq.

### **HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**

The ongoing civil war in Syria has displaced millions internally, and more than four million civilians, mostly Sunni, are now refugees in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The influx of more than one million mostly Sunni Syrians into Lebanon, a state that experienced its own fifteen-year civil war (1975–90), has burdened its cash-strapped government and put pressure on communities hosting refugees. Jordan and Iraq are struggling to provide housing and services to an impoverished and traumatized population. Turkey has provided considerable humanitarian aid, yet Ankara must increasingly balance [“the public’s sympathy for and unease toward refugees,”](#) the International Crisis Group reports. The spillover of migrants and refugees into Europe spiked in 2015, and countries with generous resettlement policies are bracing for a larger influx as the wars in the Middle East continue.

### **FRACTURED STATES**

Syria threaten to redraw the map of the Middle East. The Assad regime has consolidated control over Syria's Mediterranean coast, the capital of Damascus, and the central city of Homs, which together comprise a rump state contiguous with Hezbollah's strongholds in Lebanon, threatening the territorial integrity of Lebanon. Other parts of the country are contested or controlled by various rebel and Islamist groups, including the Islamic State, which seeks to dominate the eastern regions of Syria that link to its territory in Iraq. And Kurdish groups in northern Syria, which, like their Iraqi cousins, have long campaigned for basic rights denied under the Ba'athist government, are on the [verge of gaining de facto independence](#). The United States spent more than \$1 trillion in Iraq, but the country remains in a precarious state. Sectarian tensions are mounting in Iraq as the newly ascendant Shia majority struggles to accommodate the Sunni and Kurdish minorities while confronting extremist Sunni groups. Yemen, too, which was unified in 1990, is at risk of splintering again. Most politicians and activists in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen reject calls to redraw the map of the region, but the shifting borders and emergence of new areas of influence based on sectarian and ethnic identities are a growing challenge. Sunnis had no other option but to defend themselves and use arms. We reached a point of to be or not to be.

Tariq Al-Hashimi, *Former Vice President of Iraq*

### **CREDITS**

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**WHETHER A COUNTRY HAS A HAPPY OR A SAD FUTURE DEPENDS  
ON THEIR DECISIONS.  
THESE 'YOU TUBE' VIDEOS ILLUSTRATE  
WHAT HAS AND WHAT CAN HAPPEN.**

**HAMAS: THE TERROR GROUP BENT ON DESTROYING ISRAEL  
- AND THEMSELVES**

[Daily Mail](#) 12 October 2023 13min 2sec

They were one of the pioneers of the suicide bomb and have waged a decades-long campaign of terror against Israel. Hamas, founded as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, took control of Gaza after winning a shock election there in 2006 and now rules with an iron fist. On Saturday, they led an attack into Israel which killed at least 1,200 people - most of them civilians - with such brutality that the terror group is now being compared to ISIS. Their goal seems to have been to provoke Israel into a devastating ground war in Gaza in order to derail a new peace effort and send the Middle East spiralling back into conflict.

These are the deep contradictions at the heart of Sunni Hamas, their perhaps unlikely allies in Shia Iran, and how - together - they threaten to destabilise the world.

**WHO IS FUNDING HAMAS? | DW BUSINESS SPECIAL**

[DW News](#) 14 October 2023 14min 58sec

The terror attacks against Israel have drawn new attention to the Hamas movement in the Gaza Strip – and its backers. Host Marie Sina is joined by Matthew Levitt, director of the Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. They discuss Hamas' main sources of funding, its ties to Iran and Russia, and the humanitarian situation for Palestinian civilians.

**WHY DOES IRAN HATE ISRAEL? | EXPLAINED**

[Today Unpacked](#) 21 April 2024 11min 29sec

Historically, Israel's wars were fought against its direct neighbors, and Iran is on the other side of the Arabian peninsula. And Palestinians are Arabs, so the Arab world has historically showed solidarity with them by opposing Israel. But Iranians are Persian, not Arab. Additionally, most of Israel's enemies are Sunni. But Iran is a Shi'a country and the Sunni and Shi'a have been at war for centuries. And lastly, Iran and Israel used to be close allies. So all this begs the question - why does Iran hate Israel so much?

## WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR PALESTINIANS IN GAZA?

[Unpacked](#) 17 July 2024 26min 40sec

Life for Palestinians in Gaza under Hamas has been extremely difficult. Palestinian civilians lack basic water, sanitation, and electricity infrastructures, as well as access to upward economic mobility and the rights to freedom of speech and self-expression. The

constant suffering from rampant political and economic corruption has left civilians in Gaza with a sense of despair and a longing for a change in leadership.

Chapters: [00:00](#) Intro [00:37](#) Brief history of the Gaza Strip [01:52](#) The First Intifada and economics [03:54](#) The Oslo Accords and the Second Intifada [05:03](#) The Disengagement and Palestinian elections in Gaza [06:18](#) The Hamas Charter and Hamas rule in Gaza [07:46](#) Egyptian and Israeli blockade [09:05](#) Hamas tunnels in Gaza [10:32](#) Water infrastructure in Gaza [12:30](#) Debt and economic corruption [13:58](#) Hamas leadership's extravagant lifestyle [14:55](#) Hamas executions of Palestinians [16:17](#) March, 2019 Gazan protests against Hamas, [#WeWantToLive](#) [17:58](#) Lack of basic human rights in Gaza [20:25](#) Palestinian perspectives of the 2023 Israel-Hamas War [21:47](#) The Christian minority in Gaza [22:43](#) Hamas prevents Gazans from fleeing [23:46](#) What do Palestinians want when the war ends?

## WILL ISRAEL ATTACK IRAN?

### GENERAL AMIR AVIVI'S VISION FOR ISRAEL'S FUTURE

[IDSF Daily War Briefing](#) 22 Oct 2024 54min 18sec

Brigadier General Res. Amir Avivi discusses the impending war with Iran, the developments on the Northern Front of Israel with Hezbollah, and the destruction of Hamas in Gaza. IDF Sergeant Ari Kalker conducts the interview. The General also talks about a vision for Israel and the Golden Age that will occur once Israel claims its victory.

## WHY SOME ARAB STATES SIDE WITH ISRAEL | MAPPED OUT

[DW News](#) 22 Jun 2024 13min 50sec

Leaders of most Arab countries condemn Israel and the war in Gaza. Yet, some Arab governments maintain close ties with the state of Israel. They have a common enemy – and face an uneasy balancing act.

Chapters: [00:00](#) Intro [0:57](#) Shattered from the start: The Israel-Arab relationship [4:48](#) First rapprochements [7:30](#) The Abraham Accords [8:31](#) Saudi Arabia and the Palestinians' future [10:22](#) Iran and the 'Axis of Resistance' [12:31](#) The test: The Israel-Hamas war

## **HOW TO RESPOND TO COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ATTACK ON ISRAEL**

### AJC

#### **Claim: *Gaza is an open air prison***

#### **Response:**

- Israel has a security fence/blockade on its border to prevent terrorists from entering from Gaza - not to keep Palestinian civilians locked in. Egypt has the same type of closed border with Gaza for the same reason.
- In 2005, Israel disengaged and withdrew from Gaza, dismantling all Jewish settlements and withdrawing all military forces. Since 2007, Gaza has been controlled by Hamas, an Iran-backed terror group, which came to power through elections.
- Since 2007, Hamas has posed a true security threat to Israel. It has launched thousands upon thousands of rockets into Israel, targeting civilian neighborhoods. There have been wars between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, including in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. Hamas has built underground tunnels from Gaza into Israel through which they smuggle weapons and engage in terrorist incursions into Israeli territory.
- Hamas, with the funding it receives from international aid, could have built infrastructure, health care, and education systems for its population. Instead, it has created rockets and tunnels to attack Israel, turning Gaza into a wasteland and keeping the Palestinian population in poverty.
- Israel has issued over 15,000 work visas for civilians in Gaza to work in Israel, which provides an economic lifeline for tens of thousands of Gazans, and provides free electricity and consistent humanitarian aid to Gazans.
- It is important to also keep in mind that, as noted above, Gaza has a border with Egypt. Egypt and other Arab nations could take in Palestinian refugees who don't support Hamas and are essentially being held prisoners by a terrorist group. It has thus far refused to do so.

#### **Claim: *Israel is equally at fault for killing as many or more Palestinian civilians***

#### **Response:**

- The Gazan people are tragic pawns of Hamas, which has prioritized terror against Israel over the wellbeing of its own people. Using civilians as human shields, Hamas stores missiles and military equipment in schools and hospitals, putting the lives of Palestinian civilians in danger when Israel must bomb military installations. Israel has a policy of warning civilians before attacking, making phone calls to residents and dropping lead on buildings to warn of impending missile strikes. In this conflict, Israel has warned Gazans to evacuate ahead of air strikes. The Israeli army has shared footage of Hamas
- Israel was attacked by Hamas, and 1,300 Israeli citizens were murdered. Israel has a moral obligation to protect its citizens and to recover the approximately 150 Israelis, among them babies,

children, women, and the elderly (some of whom are American citizens), who are being held hostage by Hamas terrorists in Gaza.

- While Israel does its best to avoid civilian casualties through warnings before bombing military installations, Hamas uses its own citizens as human shields, which increases the death toll in Gaza exponentially. Unfortunately, Hamas' lack of humanity results in the tragic death of innocent civilians.

**Claim: *Israelis are colonizers***

**Response:**

- There is no justification for terrorism. Period.
- The accusation that Israel is a colonial state is an attempt to delegitimize the existence of the State of Israel and deny its right to exist.
- As is documented through historical sources and archeological finds, Israel has been the homeland of the Jewish people for more than 3,000 years. The Roman Empire destroyed the Jewish state of Judea in 70 CE and expelled the Jews living there, but even in exile, the Jewish people always longed to return to their homeland. The Zionist movement of the late 19th century gave Jews the hope and ability to begin to return to live there.
- The term "colonizers" suggests a colonial empire which benefits from colonization. Far from colonizers, Jews who returned to Israel were fleeing persecution in their nations of previous residence to return to their ancestral homeland.
- Lastly, and importantly, Israel does not occupy the Gaza Strip and has had no presence in the coastal enclave for nearly two decades.

**Claim: *Antizionism is not Antisemitism***

**Response:**

- Zionism is the movement for self-determination for Jews in the land of modern-day Israel. Antizionism is the opposition to Jews having a Jewish state in their ancestral homeland and the denying of the Jewish people's right to self-determination, calling for Israel's dissolution.
- While criticism of Israeli policies, like critiquing any other country, is valid and not antisemitic, the particular belief that Jews do not have the right to self-determination is discrimination against Jews and is antisemitism. [Natan Sharansky's 3D test and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism \(IHRA\)](#) are helpful frameworks to determine when criticism of Israel veers into antisemitism.
- While criticism of Israeli policy is valid and not antisemitic, attacks on "Zionists" are often thinly veiled attacks against Jews, especially since most Jews support Zionism and have a connection to Israel.

**Claim: *Israel is an apartheid state***

**Response:**

- This is one of the most commonly used canards against Israel, which seeks to cast Israel as uniquely evil and worthy of being dismantled. Apartheid is defined as "the implementation and maintenance of a system of legalized racial segregation in which one racial group is deprived of

political and civil rights.” 21% of the Israeli population are Muslim Israeli Arabs who enjoy the same rights as all other citizens of Israel. There are two Arab parties in the Israeli Knesset, the legislature of Israel. There are also two Arab Supreme Court judges.

- People who claim Israel is an apartheid state point to the barrier wall between the West Bank and Israel proper as evidence for their claim, but the wall is a critical security measure put into place as a result of the Second Intifada during which terrorists crossing into Israel from the West Bank killed approximately 1000 Israelis. The wall has saved countless Israeli lives, including Arab Israeli lives. It is important to note that terrorists do not only harm Jews. Arabs are also protected from terrorist attacks by Israeli security measures.

**Claim: *Gaza lives in abject poverty because of Israeli oppression***

**Response:**

- Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. Hamas gained control of the territory in 2007. Instead of investing in schools, civil infrastructure, and hospitals, Hamas invested in rockets to target Israeli civilians and they consistently place Palestinians who live in Gaza as human shields, hiding their terrorist cells in heavily populated neighborhoods where it becomes challenging to dislodge them without harming innocent civilians.
- Israel provides electricity, fuel, and humanitarian aid to Gaza. International organizations also provide millions of dollars in aid to Gaza. Hamas takes this aid and weaponizes it to build terror tunnels, fund missiles and weaponry, and pay off the families of suicide attackers instead of providing for the Palestinian people.

**Claim: *Israel has created the context and circumstances that led to this recent conflict.***

**Response:**

- Let's be very clear here: Nothing justifies the unprovoked murder and kidnapping of innocent civilians. Babies, children, young people, elderly, disabled individuals have been killed, injured, or kidnapped by brutal terrorists. What happened in Israel was a pogrom. The slaughter of innocent Israelis and the documentation by Hamas of these crimes against humanity must be denounced unequivocally.
- Any attempt to rationalize or justify Hamas' terrorist actions is utterly abhorrent. There can be no moral equivalency drawn between the horror of Hamas' attack on Israel beginning October 7th, 2023 and Israel's legitimate defense of its citizens from Hamas aggression.
- For decades, Israel has endorsed a two-state solution that would lead to a Palestinian state. The Palestinian leadership has repeatedly rejected proposals for two-state solutions. Since 2005, Israel has had no military or civilian presence in Gaza.

**Claim: *Rallies and organizations celebrating the “successes” of Hamas have a right to organize and express themselves.***

**Response:**

- When freedom of speech turns into hate speech, it is our collective responsibility as a society to condemn it and denounce it unequivocally.

- The horrors that we see perpetrated by Hamas are acts of terrorism, and supporting Hamas' actions in any kind of way equals defending terrorists.
- Organizations like Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), and other pro-Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement groups who back Hamas and their terrorist acts are supporting and praising the killing of Jews. They foment hatred against Jews and create an unsafe environment for Jewish students on campus.



## **THERE ARE NO CIVILIANS IN GAZA**

**In a culture where terrorists in the field don't wear uniforms,  
where large families have sizable stocks of weapons,  
and where children are taught to kill and die,  
the externals don't matter.**

**JNS** Daniel Greenfield June 13 2024

Americans expected Osama bin Laden to be found in a cave in Afghanistan. In reality, he was living comfortably in a military town in Pakistan under the protection of local authorities. Similarly, Israeli hostages, including the four who were rescued last Saturday, have come home telling stories of being kept captive in "civilian" households.

Many in the West fundamentally misunderstand what Islamic terrorism is. It's not a "fringe group of extremists," as politicians and the media describe it, but an ethnic and religious movement. The religious values of Islamic terrorists are universally shared by the vast majority of Muslims, while the ethnic ones ground Islamic warfare in the interests of specific clans and families.

Hamas is an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood and has a widespread base of support across the Muslim world, which is dotted with branches of the Brotherhood. But its ethnic power base is also grounded in the key clans and families that control Gaza. That is why Hamas still retains the support of the majority of the Muslim colonists currently occupying Gaza. It's also why those same "civilians" held Israeli hostages prisoner and could be trusted not to inform on them.

The latest Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research poll shows that 71% of Gazans support the Hamas atrocities of Oct. 7, and 56% expect Hamas to win the war. Some 62% in Gaza are happy Hamas's performance during the war, and 59% want Hamas to stay in power.

That's because they are Hamas and the terror group is also them.

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The "Palestinian" myth is that the Muslim colonists occupying parts of Israel are the "indigenous" people. The reality is that they were Arab settlers who arrived with and after the Islamic conquest of Israel. Some, like the notorious Hussein clan, which produced Hitler's mufti, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, were relatively recent arrivals. The most powerful and wealthiest of these large families took control of urban areas, as the Husseinis tried to do in Jerusalem, and became a vital part of the Ottoman feudal order, serving as mayors and muftis. When the Ottomans were defeated, the clans fought to reclaim their power with movements like the [Muslim Brotherhood](#), also known as Hamas.

Hamas is an ideological Islamist movement, but its control over Gaza depends on these large families. That's why the idea that most people have that Hamas is a fanatical movement that exists apart from ordinary people and can be fought and defeated apart from them is wrong.

That's also why so few of the hostages have been rescued. Like the recently rescued four, the hostages are largely dispersed among "civilian" clan families across neighborhoods controlled by them. These families are formally civilian households, but many of their members are affiliated with Hamas. Rather than being an army whose members belong foremost to Hamas, they are more like the mafia and belong foremost to their extended clan, and choose to lend their support to Hamas.

It's not just that Hamas uses human shields, which it certainly does, it's that its infrastructure depends on clans whose adults provide fighters, and whose women and children act as human shields for the greater glory of the clan and Islam. The same clans that will kill teenage girls for violating family honor will also serve up even younger children as human shields for honor.

**There is no way for Israel to rescue its hostages without going into dense neighborhoods under the control of the clans to get them out.** And that will lead to firefights and "Black Hawk Down" moments. Clan members, who never identify themselves as such, will cry that they were massacred. And foreign leaders and the media will condemn the deaths of "civilians."

Defeating Hamas without civilian casualties is impossible because the Islamic terrorist group not only operates among civilians but is rooted in the society of Gaza. The clans that run Gaza, that provide the manpower that controls UNRWA institutions, and that are the mainstays of Hamas are also the large families that dominate the businesses, cultural and religious life in Gaza.

There's no meaningful distinction between civilians and Hamas. Some clans reject Hamas authority and Israel has tried to solicit some of them to run Gaza. For now, with few results. The U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq had similarly depended on swaying certain clans, elders and warlords into abandoning Al-Qaeda or the Taliban, with very temporary success.

Eventually the Taliban or Al-Qaeda, rebranded as the Islamic State, returned. And some of the same men we had armed and trained turned their guns on us. It is an almost inevitable outcome of counterinsurgency (COIN). When bringing democracy to the Muslim world fails, Westerners begin competing with jihadists for the support of the clans, only to be stabbed in the back.

The jihadists have the Quran on their side. To Muslims, their terrorism will always be more righteous than our fumbling efforts to avoid civilian casualties and collateral damage. Appealing to moderates or promising a better life will not win their support. On the contrary, it only infuriates the imams in their mosques and the influential clan leaders into opposing us.

Instead, we must reckon with the reality that there are few civilians in Gaza or the Muslim world generally. And those who legitimately are civilians should be measured by their deeds, not their clothing. In a culture where terrorists in the field don't wear uniforms, where large families have sizable stocks of weapons, and where children are taught to kill and die, the externals don't matter.

There are no civilians in Gaza. The vast majority of the population supports Hamas or some Islamic terrorist movement. Only a tiny minority opposes Islamic terrorism and wants peace.

The distinction is not between soldiers, terrorists and civilians, but enemies and non-combatants. Israel and Western nations should stop thinking about civilians, a concept that does not apply in a battlespace where terrorists wear street clothes and entire neighborhoods are controlled by clans that hide hostages in plain sight and think about enemies and neutrals.

An enemy is anyone, regardless of clothing or sex, who is aligned with Islamic terrorists.

Every poll continues to show that the vast majority of those in Gaza are aligned with the enemy. And if that were not the case, the war would have long since ended once locals informed the authorities of where the hostages are and where the remaining Hamas terrorists are set up.

Israel is not just at war with an organization, but with an enemy culture. As is most of the world, whether it chooses to admit it or not. The war is not defined by what they wear, but by what they think. As long as human shields, female suicide bombers and child soldiers abound, the war cannot be fought by treating civilians as noncombatants while hunting elusive terrorists.

The only way to defeat an enemy is to fight him as he is, not as we would like him to be.

It would be a far cleaner and neater war if Islamic terrorists fought like conventional armies. They do not. And it is time to fight them on their own terms instead.

Hamas can't be defeated by waiting until its terrorists take off their civilian clothes and put on uniforms.

Hamas are the civilians. They are the ones holding the hostages. The only way to free the hostages and defeat the terrorists is to destroy the terror culture in whatever form it takes.

The opinions and facts presented in this article are those of the author,  
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## ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

[GLOBAL CONFLICT TRACKER Center for Preventive Action](#) October 6 2024



Hamas launched its deadly attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, prompting the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to engage in aerial campaigns and ground operations within the Gaza Strip. Efforts to free the more than one hundred remaining Israeli and foreign [hostages](#) taken by Hamas have been largely unsuccessful, and their location and health status are unknown. Almost two million Gazans—more than 85 percent of the population—have [fled](#) their homes since October 2023. Recent casualty estimates from the Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry place the [death toll](#) in Gaza at around 42,000, though such numbers are challenging to verify due to limited international access to the strip. Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is attempting to facilitate a [ceasefire and hostage release deal](#) between the two parties.

The conflict has sparked increased regional tensions across the Middle East. Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon have engaged in cross-border skirmishes with the IDF, Yemen's Houthi rebels have [shot](#) missiles at Israel and commercial ships in the Red Sea, and other Iran-backed groups have [launched](#) dozens of attacks on U.S. military positions in Iraq and Syria. (For more on the direct confrontation between Iran and Israel and the role of the United States, visit the "[Confrontation with Iran](#)" page. For more on the direct confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel, visit the "[Instability in Lebanon](#)" page.)

### Background

The [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#) dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. In 1947, the United Nations adopted [Resolution 181](#), known as the Partition Plan, which sought to divide the British Mandate of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was created, sparking the first Arab-Israeli War. The war ended in 1949 with Israel's victory, but 750,000 Palestinians were displaced, and

the territory was divided into 3 parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (of the Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip.

Over the following years, tensions rose in the region, particularly between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Following the [1956 Suez Crisis](#) and Israel's invasion of the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria signed mutual defense pacts in anticipation of a possible mobilization of Israeli troops. In June 1967, following [a series of maneuvers](#) by Egyptian President Abdel Gamal Nasser, Israel preemptively attacked Egyptian and Syrian air forces, starting the Six-Day War. After the war, Israel gained territorial control over the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt; the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan; and the Golan Heights from Syria.

Six years later, in what is referred to as the Yom Kippur War or the October War, Egypt and Syria launched [a surprise two-front attack](#) on Israel to regain their lost territory; the conflict did not result in significant gains for Egypt, Israel, or Syria, but Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat declared the war a victory for Egypt as it allowed Egypt and Syria to [negotiate over previously ceded territory](#). Finally, in 1979, following a series of cease-fires and peace negotiations, representatives from Egypt and Israel signed the [Camp David Accords](#), a peace treaty that ended the thirty-year conflict between Egypt and Israel. Even though the Camp David Accords improved relations between Israel and its neighbors, the question of Palestinian self-determination and self-governance remained unresolved. In 1987, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rose up against the Israeli government in what is known as the first intifada. The 1993 [Oslo I Accords](#) mediated the conflict, setting up a framework for the Palestinians to govern themselves in the West Bank and Gaza, and enabled mutual recognition between the newly established Palestinian Authority and Israel's government. In 1995, the [Oslo II Accords](#) expanded on the first agreement, adding provisions that mandated the complete withdrawal of Israel from 6 cities and 450 towns in the West Bank.

In 2000, sparked in part by Palestinian grievances over Israel's control over the West Bank, a stagnating peace process, and former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's [visit](#) to the al-Aqsa mosque—the third holiest site in Islam—in September 2000, Palestinians [launched](#) the second intifada, which would last until 2005. In response, the Israeli government approved the [construction of a barrier wall](#) around the West Bank in 2002, despite [opposition](#) from the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Factionalism among the Palestinians flared up when  [Hamas](#) won the Palestinian Authority's parliamentary elections in 2006, deposing longtime majority party Fatah. This gave Hamas, a political and militant movement inspired by the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, control of the Gaza Strip. Gaza is a small piece of land on the Mediterranean Sea that borders Egypt to the south and has been under the rule of the semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority since 1993. The United States and European Union, among others, did not acknowledge Hamas' electoral victory, as the group has been considered a terrorist organization by western governments since the late 1990s. Following Hamas' seizure of control, [violence broke out](#) between Hamas and Fatah. Between 2006 and 2011, a series of failed peace talks and deadly confrontations culminated in an agreement to reconcile. [Fatah entered into a unity government](#) with Hamas in 2014.

In the summer of 2014, [clashes](#) in the Palestinian territories precipitated a [military confrontation](#) between the Israeli military and Hamas in which Hamas fired nearly three thousand rockets at Israel, and Israel retaliated with a major offensive in Gaza. The skirmish ended in late August 2014 with a [cease-fire](#) deal brokered by Egypt, but only after 73 Israelis and 2,251 Palestinians were [killed](#). After a wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 2015, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah [announced](#) that Palestinians would no longer be bound by the territorial divisions created by the [Oslo Accords](#).

In March of 2018, Israeli troops [killed](#) 183 Palestinians and wounded 6,000 others after some Palestinians stormed the perimeter fence between the Gaza Strip and Israel and threw rocks during an otherwise peaceful demonstration. Just months later, Hamas militants fired over one hundred rockets into Israel, and Israel [responded](#) with strikes on more than fifty targets in Gaza during a twenty-four-hour flare-up. The tense political atmosphere resulted in [a return to disunity](#) between Fatah and Hamas, with Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party controlling the Palestinian Authority from the West Bank and Hamas *de facto* ruling the Gaza Strip.

The Donald J. Trump administration reversed longstanding U.S. policy by [canceling](#) funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency, which provides aid to Palestinian refugees, and [relocating the U.S. embassy](#) from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The Trump administration also helped broker the [Abraham Accords](#), under which Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates normalized relations with Israel, becoming only the third and fourth countries in the region—following Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994—to do so. Similar deals followed with [Morocco](#) [PDF] and [Sudan](#). Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah [rejected](#) the accords, [as did Hamas](#).

In early May 2021, after a court [ruled](#) in favor of the eviction of several Palestinian families from East Jerusalem properties, protests erupted, with Israeli police [employing](#) force against demonstrators. After several consecutive days of violence, Hamas, the militant group that governs Gaza, and other Palestinian [militant groups](#) launched hundreds of [rockets](#) into Israeli territory. Israel responded with artillery bombardments and airstrikes, [killing](#) more than twenty Palestinians and hitting both [military](#) and non-military infrastructure, including residential buildings, [media headquarters](#), and [refugee](#) and [healthcare facilities](#). After eleven days, Israel and Hamas agreed to a [cease-fire](#), with both sides claiming victory. The fighting [killed](#) more than 250 Palestinians and at least 13 Israelis, wounded nearly 2,000 others, and [displaced](#) 72,000 Palestinians.

The [most far-right and religious government](#) in Israel's history, led by Benjamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu and his Likud party and comprising two ultra-Orthodox parties and three far-right parties, was inaugurated in late December 2022. The coalition government [prioritized](#) the expansion and development of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, [endorsed discrimination](#) against LGBTQ+ people on religious grounds, and voted to [limit](#) judicial oversight of the government in May 2023 after a [delay](#) due to nationwide protests in March.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In early October 2023, Hamas fighters [fired](#) rockets into Israel and stormed southern Israeli cities and towns across the border of the Gaza Strip in a surprise attack, [killing](#) more than 1,300 Israelis, injuring 3,300, and [taking](#) hundreds of hostages. One day after the October 7 attack, the Israeli cabinet

formally [declared war](#) against Hamas, followed by a [directive](#) from the defense minister to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to carry out a “complete siege” of Gaza. It is the most significant escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in several decades.

Israel [ordered](#) more than one million Palestinian civilians in northern Gaza to evacuate ahead of a ground invasion that began on October 27th. The ground invasion began in the north in conjunction with Israel’s continued aerial assault. The first stage of the ground invasion [ended](#) on November 24 with the hostage-for-prisoner swap that also allowed more aid into Gaza. After seven days, the war resumed—particularly in [Khan Younis](#), the largest city in southern Gaza that Israel claims is a Hamas stronghold.

Under pressure from its principal ally, the United States, Israel announced it would begin to withdraw soldiers from the Gaza Strip in January 2024. Since then, military analysts speculate that the IDF has [pulled out](#) at least 90 percent of the troops that were in the territory a few months ago, leaving one remaining brigade. Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, is unwavering in his [position](#) that an Israeli offensive in Rafah, the southernmost city in the Gaza Strip where over one million Palestinians have taken refuge, is essential to eradicating Hamas.

In mid-March, Israel conducted a two-week raid on al-Shifa Hospital, the largest medical center in Gaza. Israel claimed Hamas was operating out of al-Shifa, and it reportedly killed 200 fighters and captured an additional 500. The U.S. intelligence community later [determined](#) that Hamas had used al-Shifa as a command center and held some hostages there, but the Islamist group evacuated the complex days prior to the Israeli operation. In late April, two mass graves were [discovered](#) at al-Shifa and Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, another target of an Israeli operation. More than 300 bodies were found among the two sites; the United Nations has called for an independent investigation.

On April 1, Israel launched an airstrike on an Iranian consular building in Damascus, Syria, killing multiple senior Iranian military officers. In response, Iran engaged directly in the war by [launching](#) over 300 drones and missiles at Israel on April 13. Though Israel was able to ward off the attack and only sustained minor damage to an air base, the escalation marked Iran’s first-ever direct attack on Israel. As Israel weighed an extensive counterstrike on multiple military targets in Iran, the United States and other allies [advised](#) against actions that they feared would further widen the war. Israel ultimately launched a more limited [aerial strike](#) on military bases in Isfahan and Tabriz on April 19. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi later [downplayed](#) the response, suggesting Iran aimed to avoid further escalation.

In late July, tensions rose between Israel and Iran-backed proxy groups when a Hezbollah airstrike killed eleven people in a Druze village in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. Israel retaliated by assassinating a top Hezbollah leader in Beirut, Lebanon, for which it claimed responsibility. Hours later, Hamas’ top political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, was killed in Tehran while attending the Iranian presidential inauguration. Israel [did not claim responsibility](#) for Haniyeh’s death; however, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated Israel would “exact a very heavy price from any aggression.” As Hamas’ leader in the negotiations over a ceasefire in Gaza, Haniyeh’s killing further dampened prospects for regional de-escalation. Iran vowed to retaliate but has delayed its response. A month later, Israel launched a wave of pre-emptive strikes against a significant rocket and drone attack by Hezbollah. After [exchanging heavy fire](#), both parties signaled they sought to reduce tensions.

Gaza is desperately low on water, fuel, and supplies as Hamas has rejected the most recent cease-fire proposals mediated by the United States and Egypt, while Israel has [limited](#) the amount of aid that can enter. Many humanitarian agencies [suspended](#) their operations after Israel killed seven World Center Kitchen employees in an airstrike. The World Food Programme warns famine is now [imminent](#) in Gaza. Only eleven out of thirty-five hospitals in the strip [remain](#) partially functional due to attacks on medical infrastructure and a lack of basic supplies. The World Health Organization has [warned](#) of disease spread in addition to mounting civilian casualties.

The displacement of millions more Palestinians presents a [challenge](#) for Egypt and Jordan, which have absorbed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the past but have resisted accepting anyone during the current war. They fear that Gazans, many of whom were already displaced from elsewhere in Israel, will not be allowed to [return](#) once they leave. Egypt also [fears](#) that Hamas fighters could enter Egypt and trigger a new war in the Sinai by launching attacks on Israel or destabilizing the authoritarian regime of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi by supporting the Muslim Brotherhood. So far, negotiations have resulted in only 1,100 people [exiting](#) Gaza through the Rafah border crossing to Egypt. The other 1.5 million displaced Gazans—70 percent of the territory's population—remained [confined](#) to southern Gaza and face increasingly dire living conditions and security risks.

While the United States [said](#) there was “no direct evidence” that Iranian intelligence and security forces directly helped Hamas plan its October 7 attack, Iran has a [well-established patronage relationship](#) with Hamas and other extremist groups across the Middle East. Israel has exchanged artillery fire with Iran-backed [Hezbollah](#) almost daily and [struck](#) Syrian military targets and airports, prompting concern that the war could expand north. To the south, [Yemen's Houthi rebels](#) have launched multiple rounds of missiles at Israel as well. Meanwhile, the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, a coalition of Iranian-backed militias, has [claimed responsibility](#) for dozens of attacks on U.S. military targets in Iraq and Syria since the war began.



## HAMAS BUILT AN UNDERGROUND WAR MACHINE TO ENSURE ITS OWN SURVIVAL

**Vowing self-sufficiency, Hamas turned a maze of tunnels in Gaza into weapons factories and well-stocked fortifications.**

**A year after the war began, parts of the group remain deeply entrenched.**

[THE WASHINGTON POST](#) [Joby Warrick](#), [Loveday Morris](#) October 5, 2024

AMMAN, Jordan — Six months before the Oct. 7 attack, [Hamas](#)'s top leader in the [Gaza Strip](#) was meeting with visiting Palestinian businessmen in the enclave when he made a shocking disclosure. Hamas was planning something big, Yahya Sinwar told his guests.

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"There's going to be a surprise," he said, according to one of the participants in the meeting, which has not been previously reported. While offering no details, he intimated that preparations had long been underway in Gaza itself, within Hamas's network of underground fortresses. Of the allies and partners assisting the effort, he mentioned only one.

"God will help us," he said.

Sinwar's secret plan would reveal itself on a Jewish Sabbath morning one year ago as waves of attackers [swarmed Israeli villages](#) and military bases, killing about 1,200 people and taking some 250 hostages. But the nature of Sinwar's preparations — how, exactly, the group armed itself for the assault while simultaneously engineering a sophisticated, multilayered defense against the inevitable Israeli military response — would become clear only gradually, in the weeks and months of heavy fighting that followed. Evidence accumulated over the past year has brought new clarity to Hamas's operational planning before Oct. 7, revealing how and from where it obtained the means for both the attack itself and a carefully considered resistance phase that was designed to last up to 12 months. It shows how, despite years of isolation within a densely populated strip of land the size of Philadelphia, Hamas acquired an astonishing arsenal of rockets, explosives and small arms, while constructing the financial and defensive networks that enabled Sinwar and his followers to hold out for months under a determined assault by one of the world's most capable militaries.

Across Israel's northern border, the Lebanese militia [Hezbollah is in disarray](#) after Israeli forces killed the group's leader and decimated its command structure in a series of recent operations that revealed a deep penetration of the group by Israeli intelligence.

But a year after the Oct. 7 attacks, Sinwar, who studied Israeli tactics during years in prison and later became notorious for brutally rooting out suspected Israeli collaborators, has not only survived but is already laying the groundwork for the group's reemergence, according to Hamas officials interviewed by The Washington Post.

This article is based on interviews with more than two-dozen Israeli, U.S. and Arab military and intelligence analysts, many of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence assessments. The Post also interviewed current and former Hamas and Palestinian Authority officials, some of whom, like the businessman who met with Sinwar in the spring of 2023, spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

The accounts describe how Hamas, under Sinwar's leadership, became relentlessly focused on achieving self-sufficiency, including a capacity to produce its own weapons and explosives, and carry out elaborate operations involving thousands of participants, while maintaining complete secrecy.

[Skip to end of carousel](#)

### **Unchecked War**

A year that began with Hamas' devastating attack in Israel has spiraled into catastrophe for Gazans and triggered a wave of violence in Lebanon, with tens of thousands of people killed — and no end in sight.

The group relied on outsiders for money and advice. It raised tens of millions of dollars, some of it from Iran, but much of it siphoned from aid money, [charitable contributions](#), tax revenue and — after Oct. 7 — shareholder deposits stolen from Gazan banks. Hamas commanders traveled to Tehran for training, Israel Defense Forces officials say, and made multiple trips to Lebanon, where Iran had established an operations room to coordinate military planning and share technical know-how.

But the Hamas that Sinwar built was no mere proxy group, officials and experts said. Mindful of Israel's ability to cut off Gaza from the world, Hamas spent years perfecting a war machine that could make its own munitions, carry out operations without outside approval or even knowledge, and then allow its fighters to disappear inside an elaborate underground maze — a warren beneath the streets of the seaside enclave estimated to consist of hundreds of miles of interlinked, reinforced passages, rooms and bunkers.

Hamas's tunnels are its greatest engineering feat and, to Sinwar, the key to its survival.

"We succeeded in making manufacturing factories underground," Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas's political bureau from Gaza, said in an interview with The Post, "because we knew that one day all the channels would be closed."

Hamas today is, without question, a badly diminished force. The group has lost its top civilian leader along with dozens of military commanders and an estimated 15,000 fighters, according to regional intelligence officials. Cash and weapons stockpiles are dwindling; swaths of the Strip lie in ruins; and [at least 40,000 Palestinians](#) have been killed, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants but says the majority of the dead are women and children. Many of the group's estimated 5,700 tunnel shafts have been destroyed by Israeli bombs.

Yet Hamas fights on. The group's capabilities and tactics, revealed over the past year, have repeatedly challenged the conventional thinking about Hamas that existed before Oct. 7, 2023. They also raise new concerns about the organization's ability to reconstitute itself in Gaza or elsewhere.

[How Joe Biden lost his grip on Israel's war for 'total victory' in Gaza](#)



[Hamas built an underground war machine to ensure its own survival](#)

['The land is full of blood': An Israeli kibbutz where Oct. 7 never ends](#)

[Gaza's uncounted dead](#)

[Israel has bombed much of Gaza to rubble. What will it take to rebuild?](#)

[American Jews cope with the fallout a year after the Oct. 7 attacks](#)

Many analysts had believed that Hamas was heavily dependent on Iran and had smuggled in large shipments of Iranian-made rockets and missiles while making new ones in large underground factories. Yet a year later, IDF investigators in Gaza have turned up surprisingly few Iranian-made weapons, and no large-scale factories for mass assembly of rockets and missiles. Instead, they mostly found small workshops where metalworkers with simple lathes turned scavenged pipes and agricultural chemicals into components for explosive projectiles to be lobbed into Israeli villages.

After the IDF's May invasion of Gaza's southernmost city, Rafah, an Israeli commander reported finding [no new active smuggling tunnels](#) leading into Egypt, as many experts had believed existed. In the previous decade, when Gazans ran contraband through hundreds of tunnels along the border, Israeli forces would sometimes seal off the shafts with concrete, only to later discover that Hamas had drilled new passageways through the barriers. The group even tweaked rocket designs so that the components were small enough to fit through twists and turns in the reconfigured passageways.

Yet after the Rafah invasion, intelligence analysts concluded that most of Hamas's supply of imported weapons and components had entered overland, in trucks and cars passing through border crossings controlled by Egypt and Israel. The rest arrived years ago, before [Egypt destroyed](#) thousands of underground passageways and created a mile-wide system of barriers along its border with Gaza.

But the biggest surprise, U.S. and Israeli officials say, was the tunnels within Gaza. Israeli war planners well understood the challenge IDF soldiers faced in trying to defeat a foe that could move fighters and supplies freely through underground passages. But the size, scale and complexity of the Gaza "metro," as it came to be dubbed, far exceeded Israeli estimations. IDF officials in interviews described their dismay after picking their way through bunkers 30 feet beneath Gaza's streets, only to find shafts leading to deeper tunnels buried 120 feet underground.

"Their eyes were bulging," said a former U.S. counterterrorism official who visited Hamas-built tunnels as a guest of the IDF. "They had no idea of the labyrinth. Can you image 150 kilometers of tunnels? The reality was several times bigger."

### **'WE WILL COME TO YOU WITH ENDLESS ROCKETS'**

In private conversations and in public speeches before Oct. 7, Sinwar could not restrain himself from bragging about what his group had achieved. Outside Gaza, his words were mostly dismissed as empty boasts.

*"We will come to you, God willing, in a roaring flood," [Sinwar warned Israelis](#) at a rally for his supporters in Gaza on Dec. 14, 2022. "We will come to you with endless rockets, we will come to you in a limitless flood of soldiers, we will come to you with millions of our people, like the repeating tides."*

Sinwar, who had long dreamed of inflicting a savage blow that could disrupt the status quo with Israel, "made sure the money and material was there for many years," said Abu Hamza, 33, a Hamas commander in the West Bank town of Jenin. Abu Hamza spoke on the condition that he be identified by his nom de guerre for security reasons.

"Hamas built really well for this thing," Abu Hamza said. Inside the tunnels, Hamas was "hiding weapons and making their own," while laboring to ensure that Hamas could withstand any Israeli counterstrike.

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"In Gaza we were working day and night, day and night, 24 hours," said Hamad, the member of the group's political bureau. "We prepared a lot, not for one year or two years."

But even homemade weapons require parts that must be brought in from the outside. Hamad said getting components past the Israeli blockade was a constant challenge. Almost every facet of weapons production, from machine tools to agricultural chemicals for explosives, was either labeled for civilian use or hidden inside shipments of food or other everyday wares.

"We are in the situation that pressures us to do everything, and collect everything," he said. "We face a very dangerous country, with a lot of technology and weapons. It's not easy to fight Israel. We knew this equation very well."

## HOMEMADE ARSENAL

The Israeli response to Oct. 7 began in earnest with a ground invasion three weeks later by an IDF force that eventually grew to 100,000 fighters. Within days, Israeli soldiers were venturing into Hamas's tunnels, often with underground surveillance drones or bomb-sniffing dogs in the lead.

The images posted by the IDF in the weeks that followed offered the first glimpse into what Hamas had wrought underground. Among the initial findings were armories filled with weapons — thousands of them, of every make and description: North Korean-made F-7 rocket-propelled grenades, Bulgarian rifles, Iranian 60mm mortars and Italian-designed TC/6 mines, a copy of which is produced in Egypt.

But IDF officials eventually concluded that up to 80 percent of Hamas's weapons were manufactured in Gaza, by the group itself. Among the homemade arms: antitank IEDs (improvised explosive devices), Claymore-type antipersonnel mines and thermobaric rocket-propelled grenades. Hamas — perhaps [drawing inspiration from Islamic State fighters](#) who used similar tactics in the 2017 battle for Mosul, Iraq — learned to modify small commercial drones to drop explosives, IDF officials said.

A cache of Hamas weapons is displayed at a military base in southern Israel on Oct. 20, 2023. (Heidi Levine for The Washington Post)

Hamas's specialty is short- and medium-range rockets, such as the M-75, a copy of the Iranian-made Fajr-5, capable of striking targets as far away as Tel Aviv. More common is the Qassam, named after a legendary Syrian Arab nationalist from the 1920s and featuring a design developed by Hamas more than 20 years ago. Hamas weaponeers have assembled [thousands of Qassams](#) from steel water pipes, shaping the metal into rocket bodies using metal presses and lathes, and packing the warheads with hundreds of pounds of explosives made from sugar and potassium nitrate fertilizer.

While limited in range, a single Qassam costs only a few hundred dollars to make. The Israeli military's Iron Dome antimissile system shot down thousands of such rockets in the days after Oct. 7, but at a cost of roughly \$50,000 per launch.

By January, the IDF had stumbled upon Hamas's manufacturing hubs. Israeli soldiers found dedicated fabrication centers for producing small arms, ammunition and explosives, and other workshops for crafting the cylindrical frames for rockets. Some of the production facilities consisted of interconnected underground chambers that formed crude assembly lines. These were not factories, in the traditional sense. But they served the purpose.

"They are essentially labs with lathes," said Matthew Levitt, a former Treasury Department counterterrorism official who has studied Hamas and its tunnels for more than a decade.

The largest of the manufacturing hubs discovered up to now consisted of a complex of underground workshops and street-level warehouses, raided by IDF forces in January beneath a crowded district in Khan Younis, a city in central Gaza. Connected by tunnels, it amounted to a weapons assembly line that extended nearly half a mile, according to an IDF weapons expert who analyzed the site.

"There were many different capabilities within the same location," the IDF official said. "It was such a large operation, it took us about a week to process it."

Secretly, and out of the view of satellite surveillance cameras, the group had created a "Hamas military industrial complex" that could produce a variety of cheap weapons in vast quantities, said Levitt, who now

serves as the director of the Reinhard counterterrorism program for the Washington Institute of Near East Policy. “Some of the weapons even had Hamas branding on them,” he said.

### **CITIES BENEATH CITIES**

The IDF had long known about the threat posed by tunnels. After Hamas used cross-border tunnels to [abduct Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit](#) in 2006, Israeli forces deployed special sensors along the border that allowed them to hear, see and map efforts to dig new passages into Israeli territory. Yet the size and complexity of the group’s tunnels within Gaza itself surprised everyone, including Israel’s vaunted intelligence services and their U.S. counterparts.

“Nobody understood how extensive the tunnels were, or that there were so many different types of tunnels,” said [Dana Stroul](#), the deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Middle East during the first three years of the Biden administration.

Echoing a common assessment among U.S. and Israeli military officials, Stroul said the failure to grasp the many dimensions of Hamas’s most important strategic asset was “part of the intelligence failure” of Oct. 7, and one that has not yet been fully reckoned with. Fighting an enemy that can move horizontally and vertically, through a battlefield situated in heavily populated urban terrain, posed a formidable military challenge, she said.

“I don’t know that any modern military has faced the complexity of the battlefield that the IDF faced in Gaza,” she said.

The tunnels served to hide weapons production, according to Israeli, U.S. and Arab analysts, but they also served as a communications network, supply depot, highway system, logistics pipeline, bomb shelter and field hospital, officials said. Hidden tunnel shafts were used as staging grounds for ambushes. Underground living quarters became command centers and detention facilities for Israeli hostages.

Costing, at minimum, hundreds of millions of dollars — money that Hamas diverted from humanitarian and economic development projects intended to improve the lives of ordinary Gazans — the tunnel system by Oct. 7 extended more than 300 miles, longer than the New York City subway, or about the distance from Tel Aviv to southern Turkey. The IDF acknowledges there is no practical way to destroy the entire system.

The IDF eventually became adept at fighting underground. But Maj. Gen. Dan Goldfus, an Israeli commander dubbed by local media as the IDF’s “tunnel destroyer,” said his forces initially faced a steep learning curve.

“All our definitions of tunnel shafts, tactical tunnels, strategic tunnels — none of that applies there,” Goldfus told the Hebrew-language newspaper Israel Hayom in August. “It’s all one large network; you can enter it at the [northern] Erez Crossing and emerge in Rafah [on the Egyptian border]. Everything there is connected to everything.”

Goldfus described a moment of wonder in February when the IDF arrived at Sinwar’s hastily vacated underground command center, a suite of well-appointed bunkers buried deep beneath the streets of Khan Younis.

“We reached senior officials’ compounds and we studied this infrastructure ... this center of strength, its importance,” Goldfus told the newspaper. “It slowly became revealed to us before our eyes. And when I understood it — what can I say, hats off.”

## **SURVIVING THE SIEGE, EYEING A COMEBACK**

By the day of the Oct. 7 assault, Hamas's well-trained military wing numbered about 35,000, including a vanguard of 6,000 shock troops who burst into Israel early that morning for the attack the group dubbed "Operation al-Aqsa Flood." Hamad, the political bureau member, said the idea was to shake Israel to its core and force its leaders to end the siege on Gaza, halt settler expansion in the West Bank and curtail raids on the al-Aqsa Mosque, which sits atop Jerusalem's Temple Mount, known in Islam as the Noble Sanctuary and revered by both Muslims and Jews. He said he was not aware of Oct. 7 planning in advance.

But Sinwar, Hamad said, also understood that Israel would respond with devastating force. Much of the planning and preparation in the years preceding the attack was devoted to ensuring that Hamas would not only survive the blow but also quickly recover so it could strike again.

The tunnels, amply stocked with provisions and weapons to last many months, would play a key role. But so would Hamas's reserves of cash.

Hamas is believed to have socked away hundreds of millions of dollars in cash and cryptocurrencies before Oct. 7, much of it from tax revenue collected from Gazans as well as [financial aid given by Qatar](#) — with the tacit approval of Israeli leaders — in recent years to keep the enclave's economy from collapsing.

Hamas has used the cash over the past year to pay fighters in the group's military wing, who Hamad said are still being "looked after," even as the roughly 2 million civilians in Gaza have been forced into destitution.

The money has also enabled Hamas to retain a functioning public sector to meet the basic needs of Gazans, the officials said. The group's payroll includes 50,000 workers, including teachers, doctors, sanitation crews and more. Whatever money is left serves as a vital lifeline for Gazans struggling to feed their families at a time when many businesses and shops have been shuttered or destroyed. Hamas regularly announces collection points and times for aid recipients, with new locations posted every month.

*"I don't know where the money comes from," said an employee of the Gaza Justice Ministry. "What I care about now is finding something to satisfy my two children's hunger."*

Yet a year into the conflict, the tap appears to be finally running dry. Beginning in the spring, many Gazan workers began drawing only half their normal salaries, when they were paid at all.

With Israel's unrelenting assault and a dearth of humanitarian trucks bearing food and other necessities reaching Gaza, Hamas may be reaching a tipping point, at least with regard to its supply of money and other vital resources, say analysts. While Hamas was prepared for an extended siege, a year of IDF operations in Gaza — combined with stricter controls by Israelis at border crossings — have nearly drained Hamas's coffers, officials said. Hamad maintains that Hamas still has "channels" to ensure cash flow into Gaza, but he declined to elaborate.

Still, one of Hamas's key assets remains available to the group with a nearly inexhaustible supply. Analysts say Gaza's devastation is spurring recruitment, driving legions of embittered or desperate youths into the arms of Hamas.

“There is no shortage of young volunteers,” a senior Arab intelligence official said. “Perhaps they are not as well trained, but they will help Hamas make up for its losses. These are the people who have lost families, and they have one motive: revenge.”

Hamas, still in survival mode, appears already to be shifting to a new phase of conflict that could more easily harness the energy of its newest members. Social media postings by Hamas’s military wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, have begun to promote the tactics of an insurgency, such as bombings using IEDs. One illustration, titled “The Hunting,” depicts three Israeli soldiers approaching a pair of mines. A Hamas operative in the foreground extends his hand to touch the remote-control trigger.

“What is hidden,” it warns, “is immense.”



## HEZBOLLAH VS. HAMAS: KEY DIFFERENCES IN MILITARY POWER

[NEWSWEEK](#) [Jesus Mesa](#) Politics Reporter Jun 24, 2024

More than eight months after [Hamis](#) launched its surprise attack on Israel, triggering a brutal war in Gaza that shows no immediate signs of abating, a different Iran-backed militant group is threatening to draw Israel into a new front on its northern border.

Increasing clashes between [Hezbollah](#) and the [Israel Defense Forces \(IDF\)](#) along the Israel-Lebanon border are raising fears that the conflict in Gaza could spread into an all-out regional conflagration. Hamas and Hezbollah, both labeled as terrorist organizations by the U.S., [EU](#) and several other governments, are skilled in asymmetrical warfare. Both groups are supported by [Iran](#) and consider Israel to be their arch enemy. But while Hamas is more or less contained to Gaza — with its brutal Oct. 7 assault on southern Israel a notable exception — Hezbollah has transformed itself over the years, under the leadership of Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, into an influential political party and regional powerbroker.

"Hamas has increasingly received funding, weapons, and training from Iran, but it is not as controlled by Iran as Hezbollah, which is almost entirely backed by Iran and follows its directives," Julie M. Norman, associate professor in politics and international relations at UCL, recently wrote for *The Conversation*. Here is an overview of the military capabilities of both militant groups.

### HAMAS: GUERRILLA TACTICS

Hamas, established in 1987 as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, operates primarily in the Gaza Strip. Its military wing, known as the al-Qassam Brigades, has developed a network of tunnels underneath Gaza that it uses for guerrilla warfare, making detection difficult for Israeli forces.

#### Read more [Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)

[Israel Launches Fresh Strikes on Beirut on Eve of October 7 Anniversary](#)

- [Israel Kills Hamas Commander in Strike on Lebanon Refugee Camp](#)
- [U.S. Rescues 250 Americans From Lebanon Amid Fighting](#)
- [China Reacts to Widening Iran-Israel 'Turmoil'](#)

Hamas is well-known for producing and acquiring improvised rockets, mortars, explosives, anti-tank guided missiles, and shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles (MANPADS). The group tends to focus on quantity over quality, moving its weaponry through its extensive tunnel network to evade detection.

Hamas has a range of rockets, including the M-75, R-160, and J-80, capable of reaching up to 50 miles. These rockets, along with Iranian and Syrian-sourced long-range rockets, are crucial to their offensive capabilities. Estimates of their rocket stockpile vary widely, with numbers ranging from 5,000 to 20,000, according to Israeli officials.

Some reports suggest Hamas also has a significant supply of anti-tank guided missiles, including the Russian-made Kornet and North Korean Bolsai missiles, which pose a threat to Israeli ground forces. Hamas has recently introduced suicide drones modeled after the Iranian Ababil-2 for targeting and kamikaze missions. When it comes to small arms, Hamas fighters primarily use older Chinese and Russian-made assault rifles, machine guns and grenades. Their arsenal includes AK-47 variants, sniper rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns.

After months of grinding war, Hamas has lost a significant chunk of its fighting force, though those estimates vary widely. Reports indicate that Hamas originally had around 30,000 fighters before Oct. 7. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) claim to have killed approximately 12,000 Hamas operatives since then.

### **HEZBOLLAH: ADVANCED MILITARY CAPABILITIES**

Hezbollah, founded in 1982 and primarily based in Lebanon, has far more advanced military capabilities compared to Hamas. With substantial funding and supplies from its patrons in Tehran, Hezbollah's arsenal includes sophisticated rockets, missiles, drones and anti-ship weapons.

Israel believes Hezbollah possesses around 150,000 rockets and missiles, including the Iranian Fateh-110 and Zelzal-2, capable of striking deep into Israeli territory with high precision. This large and sophisticated arsenal has the potential to overwhelm Israel's Iron Dome air-defense system in the event of an all-out war.

The group also extensively employs drones, such as the Shahed 136, for reconnaissance and offensive operations, enhancing Hezbollah's ability to gather intelligence and carry out targeted attacks.

Hezbollah's arsenal includes advanced Russian-made Yakhont and Chinese Silkworm anti-ship missiles, each with a range of about 186 miles. Although Israeli air superiority largely remains unchallenged, Hezbollah's anti-aircraft defenses have seen marked improvements.

With over 100,000 fighters as claimed by Nasrallah, its long-serving leader, Hezbollah boasts a fighting force considerably larger than that of Hamas. And like Hamas, the group has developed an extensive network of tunnels in southern Lebanon, providing strategic advantages and protection against Israeli airstrikes.

Hezbollah's military strategy involves the use of precision-guided munitions and high-yield missiles that represent a significant threat to specific targets that eclipses the less-sophisticated rockets and mortars lobbed into Israel by Hamas.

The Lebanese group's readiness for large-scale conflict, combined with its advanced arsenal, presents a formidable challenge to Israeli defense systems — which partially explains why the U.S. and Israel's other allies have been urging calm.

## **SOME PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE OF GAZA AFTER HAMAS HAS BEEN REPLACED**

### **PROPOSAL 1 The Future of Gaza (COUNCIL OF FOREIGN RELATIONS)**

**A new proposal for the future of Gaza urges formation of an International Trust for Gaza Reconstruction.** *Blog Post by [Elliott Abrams](#) March 8, 2024*

The Gaza situation got a lot of attention in the State of the Union speech. I was part of a group that spent several months—with two visits to Israel and one to Saudi Arabia, many meetings in both places, and about one hundred zoom meetings with U.S., Israeli, Palestinian, Saudi, Emirati, civilian, military, and security officials—devising a Gaza plan.

Called the *Gaza Futures Task Force* and formed by JINSA and the Vandenberg Coalition, we have published *The Day After: A Plan for Gaza* and it can be found

here: <https://vanderbergcoalition.org/the-day-after-a-plan-for-gaza/>.

Our five-page action plan can be found here: <https://vanderbergcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/The-Day-After-A-Plan-for-Gaza-Action-Plan.pdf>.

Very briefly, the plan calls for establishment of an *International Trust for Gaza* that would funnel funding for humanitarian relief and reconstruction, oversee deradicalization in Gaza, and undertake most governmental functions including provision of security. How will it do that? I urge you to look at the Plan and then the full report.

A brief comment on the President's proposal that the United States assist with a maritime aid plan with a route from Cyprus to Gaza: it's a good idea, and has been discussed for months. It will help increase the amount of aid arriving, and usefully take pressure off both Egyptian and Israeli supply routes.

But there is a huge problem, one that the President did not even address: what happens when the aid arrives in that new port? Who receives it? Who distributes it? The President suggested no plan, nor even ideas, for establishing security in Gaza. Unless he does, the kind of anarchy we see now in Gaza, including attacks on aid convoys, will only grow. He should read the Gaza Futures Task Force Report and Plan.

### **PROPOSAL 2. Five Alternatives for the Future of Gaza**

Col. (res.), Shay Shabtai June 24, 2024

ESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 2,287, June 24, 2024

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** In this article I will present five alternatives for the future of Gaza. Israel's long-term strategy to ensure its continued existence entails the accomplishment of these goals: destruction of Hamas's military capabilities, abolition of Hamas control in Gaza, and the preservation of good relations

with the United States. Less core strategic considerations are the return of the abductees, the crisis on the northern front, relations within the region, and Israel's legitimacy. The alternatives for Gaza's future are: the Hamas option, which is the most problematic; the revitalized Palestinian Authority option; the military-civilian option, which seems the most balanced; the chaos option; and the sovereignty option, which is also very problematic. It is essential to conduct a far-reaching discussion on all these alternatives and to avoid attachment to any one of them.

Discussions about the future of Gaza are being conducted in isolation, without comparative discourse, and the political dimension is causing opinions to harden rather than remain open and flexible. Thus, for example, the head of the INSS Institute wrote on May 29 that "An alternative civil address in Gaza [is] the need of the hour" and opened with the words "There is no time," while Gabi Siboni from the Mishgav Institute said on May 24 that "We need to enter the Strip and take control of all humanitarian aid in Gaza." And so on.

There are several alternatives for the future of Gaza, and in this article I will present five of them. A choice will be made through a comparative discussion of their costs and benefits. Constructive strategic planning creates maximum flexibility for decision makers, and optimal conduct would be to implement close alternatives that all serve Israel's strategic goals.

**Before presenting the options, we must define the Israeli goals and interests according to which they will be examined. I propose that Israel's goals and interests should be prioritized thus:**

**Destroying Hamas's military capability:** This is the key strategic need. Israel's long-term position in the region depends on its delivering the clear message that anyone who carries out a criminal attack like that of October 7 will, at the very least, lose their military capabilities and their ability to harm Israel for a very long time.

**Abolition of Hamas control in Gaza:** Following on from the first consideration, Israel must strive to ensure that any party – especially a terrorist organization – that carries out murderous attacks against Israel will lose its rule and its leaders their lives. Between the statement that it is impossible to eliminate an idea, especially a radical one, and the statement that the existence of Hamas in any form, including a civilian one, should be protested, there are many shades of possibility, a significant one of which should be the abolition of Hamas control.

**Relations with the United States:** Every alternative should take into account the strategic need to maintain good relations with the United States over time. This is a complex consideration against the background of American domestic politics. There can be disagreements, even difficult ones, with the American administration, but Israeli insistence on its positions should be part of a healthy relationship between the countries despite occasional extreme asymmetry. An Israel that pleases the Americans time and time again will lose its position in the United States. With that said, however, it is important to respect American global interests and help to promote them.

**The return of the abductees:** This is an important issue, but as it is not an existential necessity, it does not meet the same level of importance as the previous considerations. The return of the abductees is a matter of moral and value considerations but not strategic ones. The reality is that there is no scope for a comprehensive deal with Hamas because Sinwar's personal fate depends on his holding the hostages. He will continue to hold them as long as possible until he has another survival option. Efforts to return the abductees through operational means or through local deals should be continued in every way.

**The issue of the northern front and dealings with Iran:** This consideration is also complex. Hezbollah has said it will not stop firing on the north and will not allow the return of the displaced residents without the cessation of fighting in Gaza. But for Israel, the cessation of fighting in Gaza without the achievement of its objectives against Hamas would represent serious damage to its deterrence against it and against Iran. This is an impasse that can be resolved with either a wider-scale war, which would severely damage Hezbollah's capabilities; or an informal arrangement that Nasrallah can present as an achievement or as a "non-cessation" of the fighting while the war in Gaza continues. Because of this impasse, this consideration has been relegated to a relatively low place, though in principle it is more fundamental.

**Approaching the moderate regional countries, with an emphasis on Saudi Arabia:** The war in Gaza, the escalation with Iran, and the incessant Houthi attacks only strengthen the region's understanding of the need to join forces with Israel. While the delay in implementation stems from public opinion and American interests, it seems that it will eventually continue, and Israel's continued military achievements against Hamas strengthen the likelihood that it will come to fruition. This consideration, therefore, has less influence on the choice between the alternatives.

**The issue of Israel's legitimacy:** In this area there is a gap. While in the short and medium term Israel's legitimacy is under pressure from international institutions, in the long term, the gap – if not the abyss – between the false and politicized accusations against Israel and the actual situation on the ground will be revealed. Although the war is creating negative images, it is one of the "cleanest" wars in history in terms of the proportion of combatants to civilians killed and the amount of humanitarian aid entering Gaza. Therefore, despite the need to continue to fight resolutely and place the blame for the consequences on Hamas, in choosing alternatives, this is a less influential concern.

**There are second-order considerations.** These include resources (the economic cost of each option); legal (Israel's obligations towards Gaza within the framework of international law and how they are realized); and social (the impact on each option on national resilience, though in my view this is included in each consideration). It would be better for these considerations to affect the means of carrying out the preferred option and less the actual choice.

**Now that the seven main considerations have been defined, the five alternatives can be defined and examined:**

**The Hamas alternative:** In this option, the fighting in Gaza stops and the IDF withdraws from it in exchange for the release of the abductees and the cessation of fighting in the north. A militarily weakened

Hamas returns to control the Strip. This option is being promoted by some of the families of abductees and several opposition elements to the government, and the American administration may also support it for internal political reasons. In examining this choice against the balance of considerations, it is clear that while it might achieve the release of the abductees and the cessation of fighting in the north and might be perceived as a good move in terms of relations with the United States, it would substantially harm Israel's core strategic need to destroy Hamas's military capacity and abolish its control in Gaza. The notion that this option would lead to a comprehensive solution to the issue of the abductees and the Hezbollah challenge is questionable. It is more likely that the fighting would resume under less favorable conditions for Israel.

**The revitalized Palestinian Authority alternative:** In parallel with continued military damage to the military capabilities of Hamas and its government, a governmental and security alternative would be built that would include a revitalized Palestinian Authority with the integration of local elements and the backing and involvement of a coalition of Arab and Western countries. This "nation-building" alternative is being promoted by the United States and European countries in apparent collaboration with Arab countries, as well as by elements in Israel who give too much weight to the official American position. This option promotes American and possibly regional considerations (it is too early to say whether the Arab position is real or the artificial product of American pressure), but there is a big question mark over how much it would be able to provide a real answer to the core considerations of harming Hamas and preventing its re-establishment. It also provides no broad response to the issues of the abductees and the challenge in the north.

**The military-civilian alternative:** In this option, Israel continues to hit the Hamas organization, both in its military capabilities and in its governance, until it is sufficiently weakened to allow local Palestinian elements to replace it on the ground, with considerable regional and international backing. This alternative is being promoted by Prime Minister Netanyahu and is reflected in key components of the cabinet's decisions. This option provides a good answer to the core considerations of harming Hamas, and might even be tacitly accepted by the Americans and Arab and international actors. It does not, however, provide a solution to the problems of freeing the abductees and the fighting in the north.

**The "chaos" alternative:** Here, Israel continues to strike at the Hamas organization, both in its military capabilities and in its governance, and at the same time allows local, regional and international parties to create governmental alternatives on the ground that may mature into a comprehensive governmental alternative. This option was given expression in the opinion that called (at least at the beginning of the war) for the "Somalization" of Gaza, meaning a kind of supervised, partially independent nation-building. This alternative would allow Israel to define what would not happen and others to decide what is possible. It provides a good answer to Israel's core considerations in terms of Hamas, but would be difficult for the Americans and the regional and international actors to digest. It also does not solve the problems of the abductees and the north.

**The sovereignty alternative:** Israel imposes a total military government on Gaza, applies its full military and security control over the Strip, and perhaps occupies and even annexes parts of it. This option is being

promoted by the right wing of the government. While it provides a good answer to the core considerations in terms of Hamas and might even bring gains on the issue of the abductees, it would make relations with the United States as well as other considerations very difficult.

**The alternatives for the future of Gaza clearly entail a complex discussion.** It is likely possible to move between alternatives and merge them according to developments. As of today, the option that best balances Israel's considerations is the military-civilian one. The most problematic are the Hamas option and the sovereignty option. It is appropriate and correct to continue a complex comparative discussion on Israel's considerations and the alternatives to achieve them and to avoid perceptual and political attachment to any one of them.

### **PROPOSAL 3 GAZA FUTURES TASK FORCE (The Vandenberg Coalition, JINSA)**

*Observations and Action Proposal: The International Trust for Gaza Reconstruction*

**On October 7, Hamas, as the de facto government of Gaza, launched a war against Israel; but this war also arises from a broader program of Iranian regional aggression.** With great determination, the Iranian regime disrupts peace in pursuit of its goals of driving the United States from the Middle East, destroying Israel, and asserting Iranian hegemony. **To this end, the Iranian regime provides** arms, training, funding, and direction to terrorist armies across the region, intimidates or seeks to overthrow legitimate regional leaders and governments, and actively seeks the extinction of the UN-recognized state of Israel. **Any “day after” or post-war scenario must consider:**

- 1) restoring the deterrence and security needs of Israel,** both for its own people and its standing as a powerful regional ally and essential component of resisting Iran's ambitions;
- 2) dismantling Hamas as a military and governing force** and protecting against its reconstitution through Israel's continued freedom of action against it and against Palestinian Islamic Jihad; and by demilitarizing, de-radicalizing, and improving conditions in Gaza such that major terrorist attacks like October 7 can't and won't happen again;
- 3) drawing upon and empowering Gazans** dedicated to a peaceful future;
- 4) recognizing a political horizon** and thus securing essential participation and support from the United States and its most powerful and influential Arab partners; and
- 5) countering more generally Iran's aggressive campaign** to derail regional peace efforts, including by constraining the threat posed by Hezbollah and resuming progress toward normalizing Israel and Saudi Arabia.

**The Israeli and Palestinian people deserve a better life than what Hamas – aided by outside forces – forced upon Gaza: serving as human shields protecting Iranian-backed aggression.** The region deserves a better future than Iran strives to impose on others. Restoring a realistic path to a two-state solution can be a part of that better Gazan and regional future and a longterm political horizon for two

states should be recognized. In order to move to such a political horizon, the first steps must be reconstruction of Gaza and revamping of the Palestinian Authority (the "PA").



## **“ISRAEL” AND “PALESTINE”: WHERE SHOULD HISTORY BEGIN, AND SHOULD IT MATTER?**

[Australian Institute of International Affairs](#) Dr Daniel Miller 6 Jan 2022

The geographic terms “Israel” and “Palestine” have a long history and specific connotations for Jews and Arabs with respect to their competing claims to the same land. The only way forward for Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Arabs is to cease looking backwards.

In her 14 May [“Looking Forward” newsletter](#), Jodi Rudoren, *New York Times* Jerusalem bureau chief during the last two Israel-Hamas wars in 2012 and 2014 (there have been four since 2008), wrote: “It does not, actually, help to examine what specifically started this conflagration, or the one before or the one before that, because it does, in so many ways, end up at ‘Abraham had two sons: there was Isaac, and there was Ishmael’”—a reference to the Genesis account that the Patriarch Abraham engendered one son said to be the ancestor of Arabs ([Ishmael](#)) and another considered to be the ancestor of Jews ([Isaac](#)).

Sadly, Rudoren is correct: investigating [the particular events](#) that culminated in the latest Israel-Hamas war can provide only an imperfect, fragmentary understanding of a conflict that began well over a century ago and is rooted in issues of territory that predate the Common Era. Still, given that one side claims fervently that the land is “Israel” and the other equally passionately that it’s “Palestine,” a potentially worthwhile avenue of enquiry for understanding the conflict, at least to some degree, is to look at what each of those terms has historically denoted with respect to geography.

### **“ISRAEL”**

In the last decade of the 13th century BCE, Pharaoh Merneptah recorded that his military forces had decisively defeated [an entity called “Israel”](#) in the central highlands of what was then known as “Canaan.” A few centuries later, that region would be the location for two kingdoms: “Israel” and a weaker sister kingdom called “Judah,” the ultimate origin of the term [“Jew,”](#) to its south. The biblical tradition holds that there had previously been a united monarchy, apparently under the name “Israel.” The kingdom of [Israel was overthrown](#) in ca. 722 BCE by the Neo-Assyrian empire, centred in what is now Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia), and “Israel” ceased to be a geographic entity of the ancient Middle East.

### **“PALESTINA”**

In the sixth century BCE, Judah and its capital Jerusalem were [conquered by the Neo-Babylonians](#), another Mesopotamian empire. Following [the Babylonian Exile](#), the territory of the former kingdom would serve as the geographic centre of Jewish existence until 135 CE when, following a [disastrous Jewish uprising](#), Roman emperor Hadrian expelled the Jews from Jerusalem and decreed that the territory

surrounding the city be part of a larger entity called “Syria-Palestina.” Thenceforth, it would be primarily Jews in the [Diaspora](#) who would carry the traditions of Judaism forward. “[Palestina](#)” had as its ultimate referent the name and traditional territory of the Philistines, [mortal enemies of the Israelites](#) (forerunners of the Jews).

As part of the Islamic conquest of the Middle East in the seventh century, Arab peoples began to settle in significant numbers in the land. Apart from a relatively brief period of [Crusader](#) control, [Palestine](#) remained under Muslim control for just under 12 centuries, its population overwhelmingly Arab.

## ZIONISM AND JEWISH RETURN

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews’ yearning to return to their ancestral land was given concrete expression in the form of the Jewish nationalistic movement [Zionism](#). Zionism arose in response to mounting virulent Jew hatred in Europe and czarist Russia. As Jews began to trickle back into the land, they encountered a sizeable Arab population that had been there for centuries.

Under the [Turkish Ottoman empire](#), the land comprised three administrative regions, none of which bore the name “Palestine”. World War I saw the collapse of the Ottomans, and in 1917 the land fell under British rule. “[Mandatory Palestine](#)”—comprising also the current state of Jordan—came into existence in 1923. Until that time, the Arabs living there saw themselves primarily not as “Palestinians” in the sense of a nationhood but as Arabs living in Palestine (or to be precise, “[Greater Syria](#)”).

## THE FOUNDING OF THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL

During the era of Mandatory Palestine, the Zionist leadership in Palestine (the *Yishuv*) strove to increase Jewish numbers in the land to solidify Jewish claims to statehood, an initiative that was ultimately blocked by [British limits](#) placed upon Jewish immigration. It would be horrified world reaction to the [Holocaust](#) that would push the Zionist project over the finish line. In November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed [Resolution 181](#), partitioning the territory into “Independent Arab and Jewish States.” The Resolution received immediate Arab rejection, and Palestinian militias attacked Jewish settlements. On 14 May, 1948, the *Yishuv* declared the founding of the state of Israel, immediately recognised by the United States.

On the morrow of Israel’s founding, the new Jewish state was invaded by a military force comprising multiple Arab armies plus Palestinian militia forces. By the time the fighting ended in 1949, the Palestinians had lost 78 percent of what the UN had allotted to them, and 700,000 Palestinians had been uprooted from their homes with no right of return to the present day. For Israelis, it was the “[War of Independence](#).” For Palestinians, it’s [al-Nakba](#) — “the Catastrophe.”

Following decades of military and diplomatic setbacks, the Palestinian National Council issued a declaration of independence on 15 November, 1988, which was recognised a month later by the General Assembly as [Resolution 43/177](#). Currently, about three quarters of the UN’s membership [recognises](#) the statehood of Palestine, which has “[non-member observer status](#)” in the UN.

Since its founding and despite multiple wars with Arab states and non-state actors, Israel has flourished as a formidable Middle Eastern power. By contrast, the Palestinians have striven fruitlessly to establish a viable state and any real, sustained economic success.

The seizure by Israel of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza during its overwhelming victory in the [Six-Day War](#) of 1967—in which Israel faced a true existential threat to its existence from a combined Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian military force—has left the majority of Palestinians under various forms of Israeli occupation or control. Since the 1990s, there have been several unsuccessful attempts to achieve a [two-state solution](#). Under former prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, Jewish settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, considered illegal by much of the world, increased dramatically. Those Arabs who do have Israeli citizenship, about a fifth of Israel's population, are far too often treated as [second-class citizens within Israel](#). The 13 June ouster of Netanyahu from power could alleviate this somewhat—for the first time, an [Arab Israeli party is part of a government coalition](#).

Jewish Israelis, meanwhile, have experienced the violent fury of [two Palestinian Intifadas](#) (1987–1993; 2001–2005), the second of which featured a wave of Palestinian suicide bombings and ambushes that [killed over 1,000 Israelis and wounded about 3,000](#). This was the catalyst for [Israel's Security Barrier](#), which has further exacerbated Palestinian distress.

### WHERE SHOULD HISTORY BEGIN, AND SHOULD IT MATTER?

“Israel” and “Palestine.” One land, two names. Both Jews and Arabs have claimed it as theirs alone. From a purely historical perspective, “Israel” predates “Palestine” by more than a millennium. But, with the Jewish people then dispersed from their homeland, “Palestine” became home to a substantial Arab population, again for more than a millennium. From a perspective of justice and equity, both peoples have a legitimate claim to the land.

The wrongs and brutalities done by each side to the other have become too numerous to count. It does no good to try to assign blame for the latest war between Israel and Hamas. The war and the specific events that led up to it are just more entries in a ledger written in blood and tears. The stark fact is that there is now no act of vengeance or retribution that Jews and Arabs could do to the other party in the conflict that would allow them to say that accounts had been settled on their side.

The ledger must, therefore, be discarded. As [Jodi Rudoren](#) has written: “[A]ny hope of ending the conflict...requires Palestinians and Israeli Jews to either acknowledge each other's versions of history without trying to determine which is more legitimate, or to just ignore them. The only possible peace agreement is one that looks forward.” In a reversal of the transformation of the Nile in [Exodus 7](#), the rivers of blood spilled must, somehow, become water under the bridge.

*This article originally published on 19 June 2021. It is one of the top ten most read articles published in Australian Outlook in 2021.*

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## **ANALYSIS: HAMAS AND HEZBOLLAH: HOW THEY ARE DIFFERENT AND WHY THEY MIGHT COOPERATE AGAINST ISRAEL**

**The current conflict between Israel and Hamas would rapidly change course and possibly open up a regional war if Iran decides to activate Hezbollah, writes Dr Julie Norman (UCL Political Science) in The Conversation.**

[UCL](#) 18 October 2023 Dr Julie Norman (UCL Political Science)

As Israel prepares for a massive military operation against Hamas in Gaza, risks of an escalating regional conflict loom large. The most critical additional threat to Israel is from Hezbollah, the militant group and political party based across Israel's northern border in Lebanon.

Hamas and Hezbollah are both backed by Iran and see weakening Israel as their primary *raison d'être*. However, the two groups are not the same. Their differences will likely influence their actions – and Israel's – in the days and weeks to come.

Unlike Hamas, Hezbollah has, to date, not gone to war purely for the Palestinian cause. That could change. Hezbollah has not yet fully entered the current conflict, but the group has exchanged fire with Israel, across the northern border with Lebanon. Meanwhile, Iran has said that an expansion of the war may be "inevitable".

Named the "party of God", Hezbollah bills itself as a Shia resistance movement. Its ideology is focused on expelling western powers from the Middle East and on rejecting Israel's right to exist.

The group was founded in 1982 – in the middle of the 15-year Lebanese civil war – after Israel invaded Lebanon in retaliation for attacks perpetrated by Lebanon-based Palestinian factions. It was quickly backed by Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which supplied funding, weapons and training in an effort to expand Iranian influence in Arab states.

Hezbollah's military force continued to develop after the Lebanese civil war came to an end in 1990, despite most other factions disarming. The group continued to focus on "liberating" Lebanon from Israel, and it engaged in years of guerrilla warfare against Israeli forces occupying southern Lebanon until Israel's withdrawal in 2000. Hezbollah then largely focused its operations on retaking the disputed border area of Shebaa Farms for Lebanon.

In 2006, Hezbollah engaged in a five-week war with Israel in an attempt to settle scores rather than with an aim to liberate Palestine. That conflict killed over 158 Israelis and over 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilians. From 2011, during the Syrian civil war, Hezbollah's power grew further as its forces assisted Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, an ally of Iran, against mostly Sunni rebels. In 2021, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said the group had 100,000 fighters (though other estimates range between 25,000 and 50,000). It boasts a sophisticated military arsenal equipped with precision rockets and drones.

The group has also functioned as a political party in Lebanon and holds significant influence, often described as a “state within a state.” Eight members were first elected to the Lebanese parliament in 1992, and in 2018, a Hezbollah-led coalition formed a government.

Hezbollah retained its 13 seats at the 2022 election but the coalition lost its majority and the country currently has no fully functioning government. Other Lebanese parties accuse Hezbollah of paralysing and undermining the state and of contributing to Lebanon’s persistent instability.

“ Hamas”, which translates literally as “zeal,” is an Arabic acronym for the “Islamic resistance movement”. The group was founded in 1987, in Gaza, as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, a prominent Sunni group based in Egypt.

Emerging during what’s known as the first intifada or uprising of Palestinians against Israeli occupation, Hamas quickly adopted the principle of armed resistance and called for the annihilation of Israel.

Palestinian politics shifted significantly after 1993’s Oslo accords, a series of agreements negotiated between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) with the aim of establishing a comprehensive peace agreement.

Opposed to the peace process, Hamas’s armed wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, established itself as the primary force of armed resistance against Israel. It launched a series of suicide bomb attacks that continued through the early years of the second intifada (2000-2005), before shifting to rockets as a primary tactic.

Like Hezbollah, Hamas operates as a political party. It won parliamentary elections in 2006, and in 2007, it gained control of the Gaza Strip in a bloody battle with rival party Fatah that left over 100 dead. Hamas has controlled Gaza ever since, showing little tolerance for political opposition. They have never held elections, and political opponents and critics are frequently arrested with reports of torture.

Over this time, Hamas’s armed wing has become increasingly sophisticated. Its arsenal now comprises thousands of rockets, including long-range missiles and drones.

Hamas has increasingly received funding, weapons and training from Iran, but it is not in Iran’s pocket to the same degree as Hezbollah, which is backed almost exclusively by Iran and takes its directives from the Islamic Republic.

What’s more, as a Sunni organisation, Hamas does not share the Shia religious link to Iran that characterises Hezbollah and most of Iran’s proxies. As a result, while Hamas no doubt benefits from Iran’s patronage, it tends to operate more independently than Hezbollah.

In contrast, Hamas has received support in the past from Turkey and Qatar, among others, and operates with relative autonomy. The group was also long at odds with Iran over their opposing stances in Syria. Right now, this is very much a war between Israel and Hamas. Hezbollah remains, however, a threat to Israel. If activated by Iran, its full involvement would rapidly change the course of the conflict and likely open up a regional war.

This article was first published in [The Conversation](#) on 17 October.

Links

## **PAST PRECEDENTS FOR MUSLIM AND JEWISH PEACE**

**A solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine seems as far away as ever.**

**But, says Martin Gilbert, past relations between Muslims and Jews**

**have often been harmonious and can be so again.**

**[HISTORY TODAY](#) Vol 60 Issue 8 Martin Gilbert, August 2010**

**Past Precedents for Muslim and Jewish Peace**

**A solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine seems as far away as ever. But, says Martin Gilbert, past relations between Muslims and Jews have often been harmonious and can be so again.**

**[Martin Gilbert](#) | Published in [History Today Volume 60 Issue 8 August 2010](#)**

Enmity between Jews and Muslims seems to be a fact of life in the 21st century: a hostility that impinges on Jewish and Muslim life worldwide and, in particular, on the Arab-Israeli conflict, now in its sixth decade.

When did this enmity begin? How was it sustained? Why did it survive? In order to answer these questions we must look to the other side of the coin, to a story that might serve both sides today as a positive reminder of what could lie ahead.

Hostility has unquestionably been a part of the long historical narrative of Arab-Jewish relations. Among the chants and placards that accompanied and followed the Turkish ships carrying aid to the Gaza Strip, and which were intercepted by Israeli forces, was the Muslim rallying cry: 'Jews: remember Khaibar. The army of Muhammad is coming back to defeat you.'

This cry has echoed in each decade of modern times. On August 7th, 2003, when Amrozi bin Nurhasin, one of the 'Bali bombers', entered an Indonesian courtroom for sentencing, having been found guilty of blowing up more than 200 people – none of them Jews – he shouted out the same rallying cry in the presence of the world's media.

The cry refers to an event that took place in the year 628, when, as leader of the new faith of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad achieved one of his first military victories, against a Jewish tribe living in the oasis of Khaibar on the Arabian peninsula. Contemporary Arab sources report that between 600 and 900 Jews were killed in the battle. This Muslim victory was followed by the spread of segregation and taxation for non-Muslims, as well as forcible conversion to Islam.

Two months after Amrozi bin Nurhasin received his sentence of death, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad – who in 1986 had inaugurated an 'Anti-Jews Day' – told the Tenth Islamic Summit Conference held in the Malaysian city of Putrajaya, that: '1.3 billion Muslims cannot be defeated by a few million Jews. There must be a way ... Surely the 23 years' struggle of the Prophet can provide us with some guidance as to what we can and should do.'

Within three years of this appeal, Palestinian Arab voters cast a majority of their votes for Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement (44 per cent as against the 41 per cent who voted for Hamas's nearest rival,

Fatah). The Hamas Charter, promulgated in 1988, looks forward to the implementation of 'Allah's promise', however long it might take:

The Prophet, prayer and peace be upon him, said:

*'The Day of Judgement will not come about until Muslims fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Muslims, O Abdullah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.'*

From the time of the Babylonian conquest of Judaea 2,500 years ago Jews have been dispersed, first in Mesopotamia and Persia (now, respectively, Iraq and Iran), then, following the Roman conquest of Judaea, throughout Arabia and North Africa from Egypt to Morocco: all lands that came under Muslim rule with the conquests of Muhammad. In the 12th century, 600 years after the death of Muhammad, the Jewish sage Maimonides (1135-1204) described the situation of the Jews after five centuries of Muslim rule: 'No nation has ever done more harm to Israel.' He went on to elaborate: 'None has matched it in debasing and humiliating us. None has been able to reduce us as they have.'

### REFLECTIONS ON THE PAST

Yet there is another side to this tale of debasement and humiliation. By the end of the 20th century Bernard Lewis, among the most eminent historians of the Middle East, a lifelong student of Jews and Islam and himself a Jew, reflected on the 14 centuries of Jewish life under Islamic rule since Muhammad. He concluded that the situation of Jews living under Islamic rulers 'was never as bad as in Christendom at its worst', even if it was never 'as good as in Christendom at its best'. Lewis continued: 'There is nothing in Islamic history to parallel the Spanish expulsion and Inquisition, the Russian pogroms, or the Nazi Holocaust.'

From the time of Muhammad in the seventh century and the rapid military conquests of Islam that followed the Jews were subjects of their Muslim rulers throughout a great swathe of land, stretching from the Atlantic coast of Morocco to the mountains of Afghanistan. Being non-Muslims, the Jews held, along with all Christians and other religious minorities under Muslim rule, the status of dhimmi, literally the 'people of the contract' or 'people of the book', referring to the common roots of the Abrahamic religions. Dhimmi were of an inferior status which, while giving them protection as a minority to worship in their own faiths, subjected them to many vexatious and humiliating restrictions in their daily lives, including a sometimes punitive *jizya*, or head tax.

History shows, however, that in every century and in every land under Muslim rule, despite moments of persecution, dhimmi regulations could be relaxed, the *jizya* reduced to a nominal amount with the Jews thus becoming an integral and respected part of Muslim society. This accommodation has a long history. In 638, under the second Caliph, Muhammad's companion and second father-in-law Omar ibn al-Khattab (r. 634-44), the army of Islam conquered several cities formerly under Christian rule in which the Jews openly aided the Muslim conquerors, hoping to be free of Christian persecution. Jewish soldiers fought in the Muslim ranks as volunteers, Jews acted as guides and provided food and provisions for the Muslim armies.

A new Jerusalem

When Omar made his way to Jerusalem in 638 the Jews asked him for permission for 200 Jewish families to live in the city. Because the Christian patriarch vehemently opposed this suggestion, Omar fixed their



number at 70. Omar gave these Jewish families their own area in Jerusalem, located in what is now the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. There they were allowed to build a religious college and a synagogue and to pray in the neighbourhood of the Temple Mount, once the site of Solomon's Temple.

Contemporary Jewish sources emanating from Baghdad relate that when Omar conquered Babylonia he confirmed that the leader of the Jewish community there – who was known as the Exilarch and was at that time Bustanai ben Haninai – would remain as Exilarch under Muslim rule, with authority over the Jews of the province (modern-day Iraq).

Sixty years later, another Caliph, Abd al-Malik, appointed Jewish families to be guardians of the Temple Mount – known to Muslims as Haram ash-Sharif ('The Noble Sanctuary') – and charged them with maintaining the cleanliness of the Mount and with making glass vessels for its lights and kindling them. He also decreed that these particular Jews should be exempt from payment of the *jizya*. Other Jews obtained positions of authority in al-Malik's administration.

Jewish doctors, merchants and artisans lived prosperously and worked productively under Muslim rule. In Afghanistan, in the 11th and 12th centuries, Jewish communities likewise flourished; Sultan Mahmud (998-1030) assigned a Jew named Isaac to administer his lead mines and melt ore for him. One of the most successful Jews in a Muslim land in the 12th century was Abu al-Munajja Solomon ben Shaya, a government official in Egypt. As the administrator of several districts, his fame rested on the irrigation canal that he constructed over six years, bringing water to a parched agricultural landscape. So successful was he that he was given the Arabic title Sani al-Dawla ('The Noble of the State').

Many great Jewish thinkers, scholars and poets lived in Muslim lands. Maimonides – Musa ibn Maymun in Arabic, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon in Hebrew and known by his Hebrew acronym as the Rambam – was the greatest Jewish scholar of the Middle Ages. In 1164, having fled Muslim persecution in Fez, he settled in Egypt under the tolerant Shi'ite Fatimids, where he became a court physician. In his writings on food and diet he advocated a 'shared convivial meal' as a way to conquer anxiety and tension 'and also suspicion between ethnic groups'.

Close to power in Islamic society, Maimonides spoke and wrote in Arabic and was conversant with Arab thought and culture. In Cairo, one of the great intellectual centres of the Arab world, he entered an environment that encouraged his learning and his creativity. He also served as Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community there. His fame as a physician was such that Saladin, when Sultan of Egypt, appointed him court physician.

Among Maimonides' medical writings was *Fi 'l-Jima'a* ('*On Sexual Intercourse*'), a treatise on sex and aphrodisiacs concentrating heavily on dietetics, a branch of medicine in which he was a pioneer. The treatise was commissioned by Sultan Omar, the nephew of Saladin. Intended for a non-Jewish reader, it was distributed in Arabic.

A draft proclamation survives declaring Maimonides Ra'is al-Yahud, 'Head of the Jews', recognised by the Muslim authorities as the official representative of the Jewish community in Cairo.

The great Muslim warrior, Saladin, a Kurd and scourge of the Christian Crusaders, conquered Jerusalem in 1187 after a five-month siege. Saladin encouraged the Jews to return to the city. Some came from as far south as Yemen, others from North Africa. Between 1209 and 1211, Jews also reached Jerusalem from

England, northern France and Provence. Some 300 rabbis in all were welcomed to the city by its Muslim rulers.

There are many other examples of constructive cross-cultural engagement. Accounts survive of the revenue and expenditure of a large house in Cairo lived in by Jews and Muslims in 1234 and owned jointly by them. There were no doubt other such arrangements. Like Maimonides, many Jews attained well-remunerated positions as doctors at Muslim courts, under almost all but the most fanatical caliphates, often holding considerable influence. Jewish doctors for whom medicine had long been a traditional speciality were highly prized in Muslim societies. So too were Jewish linguists, writers and poets.

In the city of Basra, wrote an Italian Jewish traveller, Jacob d'Ancona in 1270,

*'there are not only traders among the Jews, but also tailors, workers in wood, leather and iron, makers of shoes and saddles as well as many apothecaries and physicians, from the great skill and knowledge of the Jews in the healing of men and from the understanding of their nature'.*

Starting in the 14th century, the Ottoman Turks created a vast Muslim empire, in which Jews were an accepted and integral part of the fabric of society. Jewish merchants were the principal tradesmen in Baghdad. In Tunis and Algiers, Jews served as the conduit for Ottoman trade with Christian countries across the Mediterranean.

Among the Jews who came to the Ottoman city of Edirne (in western Turkey) from Christian Europe was Rabbi Isaac Tzarfati, who was made Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman dominions in the 14th century. In a letter to the Jews of Germany, France and Hungary, he wrote to the Jews of Europe [about Ottoman Turkey] to 'inform you about how agreeable is this country'.

*Here I found rest and happiness; Turkey can also become for you the land of peace ... Here the Jew is not compelled to wear a yellow hat as a badge of shame, as is the case in Germany, where even great wealth and fortune are a curse for a Jew because he therewith arouses jealousy among Christians ... Arise my brethren, gird up your loins, collect your forces, and come to us. Here you will be free of your enemies, here you will find rest ...*

### **Self-government**

From the first days of his conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II encouraged Jews to settle in the city and to govern themselves in their own religious-based community. Property was offered free to Jewish newcomers, with a substantial exemption in their taxes for an extended period and with permission to build synagogues – thus ignoring an age-old Muslim prohibition for dhimmis to build any new places of worship. By 1478 there were 1,647 Jewish households in Constantinople – 10,000 people – constituting 10 per cent of the total population.

Jews continued to fight as companions-in-arms with Muslim soldiers against the Christians. In 1431 they were an integral part of the army of Sultan Muhammad IX of Granada at the Battle of Higuera, where, unfortunately for both Jews and Muslims, Muhammad IX's forces were defeated by the army of King John II of Castile.

The expulsion of the Jews from Christian Spain in 1492 saw at least 130,000 move to Muslim lands.

Joseph Hamon, who had fled from Spain, became court physician to two Ottoman sultans, Bayazid II and Selim I. His son Moses succeeded him as court physician and looked after the health of Suleiman the

Magnificent (r. 1520-66), whom he accompanied on his military expedition against Persia. Moses Hamon wrote several books on medicine, including an important one on dentistry, which is today in the Istanbul University Library.

Under the rule of Suleiman the Magnificent, Jews gained important positions in court. A document in the Topkapi Palace archive, dated 1527, mentions among the silversmiths in his service, 'Abraham the Jew', who specialised in laying gold and silver leaves under the sultan's precious stones in order to accentuate their brilliance.

When Abbas I became Shah of Persia in 1588 Jews were at first much favoured. During his military campaign against the Georgians in the Caucasus, Jewish soldiers fought in Abbas's army. In appreciation of their help, he allowed them to establish a new Jewish community, Farahabad – 'City of Joy' – on the shore of the Caspian Sea. When Abbas moved his capital from Kazvan to Isfahan many Jews went to live there.

Each succeeding century saw Jews living in Muslim lands discover opportunity and contentment, while at the same time being subjected to outbursts of fanaticism, attack and even massacre. No Muslim country was free from periods of anti-Jewish sentiment, or devoid of times of conciliation and peaceful coexistence.

Jews flourished in Egypt and Iraq, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. But with the advent of Zionism and Britain's promise of a Jewish national home in Palestine, growing Arab nationalism – which Britain had also encouraged – began to champion the Palestinian cause and to demand an end to Jewish immigration into Palestine. At the same time, Islamic fundamentalism, inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, denounced all Jewish immigration to Palestine, even to those areas where Jews had been farming for many decades. They began to portray Jews in Muslim lands – few of whom were Zionists – as disloyal and alien.

### **ISRAEL AND PALESTINE**

As anti-Zionist feeling intensified in the 1930s, inflamed by Nazi and Fascist radio propaganda and German emissaries, so the Jews living in Arab lands, their home throughout 1,400 years of Muslim rule, felt increasingly insecure.

Starting with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, more than half a million Jews fled or were driven out of the lands in which they had lived for so long with their Muslim neighbours. Their plight mirrored that of the more than half a million Palestinian Arab refugees fleeing or driven out of Israel.

Today, the large Jewish communities that existed a century ago in more than 15 Muslim nations are no more. When British troops entered the Iraqi port of Basra in 2003, at the beginning of the Second Gulf War, a single Jew lived there, 80-year-old Selima Nissin. She was found by a Scottish lieutenant. Fewer than a dozen Jews were living elsewhere in Iraq in 2003; in 1948 there had been more than 150,000. In 2005 the BBC reported that only one Jew remained in Afghanistan. His name was Zebulon Simantov, the last of an ancient Jewish community of many thousands. Only in Morocco has the monarch, King Muhammad VI, acted like the Ottoman sultans in earlier centuries, encouraging his country's 2,000 Jews; 80 years ago there had been more than a quarter of a million.

Will the 50,000 Jews who still live in Muslim lands, including the 25,000 in Iran, be able to achieve a security and a secure Jewish life that in so many ways was denied them in the past? There are good and bad precedents.

The history of the Jews living in Arab and Muslim lands has been a varied and remarkable one. Times of suffering and danger have alternated with times of achievement and fulfilment. Jews have been respected, admired and emulated; they have also been persecuted, robbed and killed. But they stayed and welcomed the times of good relations with their Muslim neighbours.

For 1,400 years Jews, in their different ways, made enormous contributions to the wellbeing and continuity of the umma – the worldwide community of Muslims. They had no subversive intentions and no desire to convert Muslims to Judaism, or in any way to subvert the Muslim religion.

### **A FUTURE FROM THE PAST**

The exodus and dispersal of the Jews in Arab and Muslim lands after 1948 was an irreversible interruption to a 1,400-year story of remarkable perseverance, considerable achievements and justifiable pride. For that reason, I dedicated my most recent study of Jewish populations in Muslim lands ‘to the 14 million Jews and the 1,400 million Muslims in the world in the hope that they may renew in the 21st century the mutual tolerance, respect and partnership that marked many periods in their history’. This could be the aim of all Jews and Muslims and their friends on both sides of the existing divide, who want a peaceful, productive, fulfilling relationship in the remaining nine decades of the 21st century. It is my hope that, in some way, my work will encourage a better understanding of history and with it a future that emulates only the best of the past; and there is much of that.

Each month, despite the ongoing strife, sees new signs of hope. In June 2010, for example, the Premier of the Canadian province of Ontario, Dalton McGinty, was among the visitors to the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, located in Israel’s Arava Valley, a place where Muslim and Jewish students – from Israel, the Palestinian West Bank and Jordan – work together on complex environmental issues, the solutions to which are crucial to the region’s future prosperity and stability. Similar joint projects abound, in education, science, medicine and the arts. Each one is a beacon of light and a potential harbinger of harmony.

**Sir Martin Gilbert** (1936-2015) was a historian of Winston Churchill, the 20th Century, and Jewish history. He was a member of the Chilcot Inquiry into Britain's role in the Iraq War. His last book was *In Ishmael's House: A History of the Jews in Muslim Lands* (2010).

## EARLY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE ARABS AND JEWS

### WIKIPEDIA

#### Demographics in Palestine<sup>[12]</sup>

year	Jews	Arabs
1800	6,700	268,000
1880	24,000	525,000
1915	87,500	590,000
1931	174,000	837,000
1947	630,000	1,310,000

Gorny also distinguishes several important developments that had their bearing on the confrontation and the Zionists' attitude. Up to 1917, Zionism was tolerated as a national movement in the Ottoman Empire. After 1917, Palestine became a Mandate administrated by the British, and the right of the Jewish people to a national homeland in Palestine was recognised by the British and the League of Nations. In 1948, the state of Israel was established. Simultaneously, the Palestine problem became an ever more important subject for Jews, Arabs and the international

community. During this period the demographic balance changed from one Jew in every 23 inhabitants in 1880 to one Jew in every three inhabitants in 1947 (see table). Finally, Gorny says the uneven pace of Westernization gave the Jewish society a technological and organizational advantage. Jewish society was mainly urban, Arab society mainly rural.<sup>[13]</sup>

In his book *Zionism and the Palestinians*, Flapan distinguishes six basic concepts of Zionism's policy toward the Arabs:

- (1) gradual build-up of an economic and military potential as the basis for achievement of political aims,
- (2) alliance with a great power external to the Middle East;
- (3) non-recognition of the existence of a Palestine national entity;
- (4) Zionism's civilising mission in an undeveloped area;
- (5) economic, social and cultural segregation as prerequisites for the renaissance of Jewish national life;
- (6) the concept of 'peace from strength'.<sup>[14]</sup>

The [Franco-Syrian War](#) erupted in March 1920, as an attempt to establish an Arab Hashemite Kingdom in all of the Levant. In a number of notable incidents the war spilled into neighbouring [Mandatory Palestine](#), including the [Battle of Tel Hai](#) in March 1920. Further, in April 1920, Amin al-Husseini and other Arab leaders initiated the [1920 Jerusalem riots](#) where 10 people were killed and 250 others wounded. Several women were raped and two synagogues burned. Jews were particularly shocked by these events and viewed the events as a pogrom.<sup>[18]</sup>

After the British had left Syria for the French, in July 1920, Faisal's [rule in Syria collapsed](#) and pan-Arab hopes in Palestine were dashed.[\[19\]](#)

To review what happened go to

[\*Timeline of intercommunal conflict in Mandatory Palestine\*](#)

[\*Intercommunal conflict in Mandatory Palestine\*](#)

During the British rule in Mandatory Palestine, there was civil, political and armed struggle between [Palestinian Arabs](#) and the Jewish [Yishuv](#), beginning from the violent spillover of the [Franco-Syrian War](#) in 1920 and until the onset of the [1948 Arab–Israeli War](#). The conflict shifted from sectarian clashes in the 1920s and early 1930s to an armed [Arab Rebellion](#) against British rule in 1936, armed [Jewish Revolt](#) primarily against the British in mid-1940s and finally open [war](#) in November 1947 between Arabs and Jews.

## THE MANY, MANY TIMES ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS TRIED TO MAKE PEACE — AND FAILED

**The many, many times Israelis and Palestinians tried to make peace — and failed**  
**A timeline of the decades-long peace negotiations that came before the Israel-Hamas war.**

[VOX](#) [Nicole Narea](#) Nov 22 2023

Even though [Israel](#) has approved a temporary ceasefire in its unprecedented assault on [Gaza](#) following [Hamas's October 7 attack](#), Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) has made clear that he still believes it is a "[time for war](#)," not for peace.

On Tuesday, he [vowed](#) that the war will continue "until Hamas is destroyed, all the hostages are released and there is nobody in Gaza who can threaten Israel."

But while US leaders have supported the Israeli war effort, they have also held out hope for an eventual [two-state solution](#) in which Israel and a sovereign [Palestine](#) exist side by side: "The only ultimate answer here is a two-state solution that's real," US President [Joe Biden said recently](#).

The two-state solution isn't the only approach to solving the [Israel-Palestine conflict](#). But it is the mainstream one; it's been the international community's approach for the last several decades. The idea is that US-brokered negotiations can lead to a peace treaty, or a "final status agreement," which would establish a Palestinian state in Gaza and the [West Bank](#) in exchange for a permanent end to hostilities.

But in the three decades since this peace process really began — with the historic Oslo Accords in 1993 — the two-state solution has slipped further away. A lack of political will in Israel, Palestine, and the US, as well as disagreement over the precise contours of the deal, have rendered negotiations unsuccessful.

Major sticking points include:

- what the borders of the two states should be (and where Jerusalem falls in that),
- whether Palestinian refugees who were forced out of what is now Israel will be able to once again live there (also known as the "right of return"),
- and how to establish security guarantees for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Today, all of these issues remain major impediments to peace.

*[Related: [Everything you need to know about Israel-Palestine](#)]*

Violence perpetrated by Palestinian militants such as Hamas — an organization many countries designate as a terrorist group — as well as by Israeli security forces, has eroded trust on both sides. So, too, has Israel's expansion of illegal settlements in West Bank territory that the international community sought to set aside for Palestine. The more extreme elements of Israeli and Palestinian society, and their political leaders, have forestalled negotiations at critical moments.

Israel and its allies have often laid the blame at the feet of Palestinians for rejecting what they saw as generous offers. “You are leading your people and the region to a catastrophe,” former US President Bill Clinton [famously told](#) the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat when he refused a peace deal proposed at Camp David in 2000.

But Palestinians contend that those offers, no matter how generous by Israeli standards, never went far enough. Israel has always had the military and diplomatic edge in the conflict, with a powerful ally in the US. And Palestinians have been forced to progressively narrow their conception of acceptable peace, let alone a fair peace, especially as Israel treats its territorial expansion as a fait accompli and normalizes relations with Arab countries that had previously fought for the Palestinian cause.

“Palestinians wonder whether they are always doomed to accept what they have previously refused just to find that it is no more an offer — if it ever was an offer — again to be faced with new attempts to extort new concessions from them for an undefined future,” writes Palestinian diplomat Afif Safieh in his 2011 book, *The Peace Process: From Breakthrough to Breakdown*.

Here is what you need to know about the history of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and why they have repeatedly failed.

### **1967: UN RESOLUTION 242**

In 1967, Israel fought Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the [Six-Day War](#), a brief but intense conflict over water, land, and Palestine. Israel defeated the three Arab states, capturing Gaza, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula, parts of East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.

Israeli military leaders confer during the Six Day War. On the left is then-Army Chief of Staff and future Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin; on the right is General Yeshayahu Gavish. Universal Images Group/Getty Images

Following the conflict, the UN adopted [Resolution 242](#), which calls on Arab countries to recognize Israel’s right to “live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force,” as well as for Israel to withdraw from “territories occupied” in the conflict — essentially, to revert to its pre-1967 borders, a provision that Israel has [since resisted](#).

Israel, Egypt, and Jordan all came to accept the resolution, ushering in temporary peace between them. Egypt and Jordan recognized Israel’s existence and ceased direct hostilities with the country, though Israel didn’t uphold its part of the deal, never fully reverting to its pre-1967 borders — a choice that led to the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Still, achieving buy-in from Arab nations that were once hostile to Israel was a significant step toward opening formal Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. The resolution was later affirmed in 1973 in UN Resolution 338, which, along with resolution 242, served as the foundation of peace talks in the region for decades to come.



## 1978: CAMP DAVID ACCORDS

The [Camp David Accords](#) established long-lasting (but cold) peace between Egypt and Israel, and also had a significant impact on the trajectory of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

The Accords, brokered by then-US President Jimmy Carter, came after a ceasefire in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, in which Egypt and Syria fought Israel, hoping to regain territory lost in previous conflicts. As part of the deal, Egypt and Israel agreed to refrain from use of force to resolve their disputes, and Israel agreed to a path toward returning the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. (Syria signed a separate disengagement agreement with Israel.)

Israel and Egypt also addressed the fate of Palestinians: They reiterated their commitment to UN Resolutions 242 and 338. Both countries called for Palestinians to participate in future negotiations, “full autonomy” for people in the West Bank and Gaza, a provisional government in those territories supported by Israeli security forces, and negotiations to determine Palestinians’ final status within five years. Palestinians were not formally invited to participate in the talks because the US refused to deal with the Palestine Liberation Organization, an umbrella group for Palestinian nationalists, so long as they refused to acknowledge Israel’s right to exist and to [renounce terrorism](#).

The Accords are considered a major watershed moment in Middle East peacemaking — earning then-Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat Nobel Peace Prizes — and provided a blueprint for subsequent negotiations.

However, while Israel successfully kept the peace with Egypt, it did not abide by its commitments to Palestinians in the Accords. The five-year deadline for beginning to grant Palestinian people autonomy within the West Bank and Gaza came and went, and [Israeli settlements in the occupied territories ballooned](#).

Carter writes in his 2006 book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* that by “remov[ing] Egypt’s considerable strength from the military equation of the Middle East,” Israel “permitted itself renewed freedom to pursue the goals of a fervent and dedicated minority of its citizens to confiscate, settle, and fortify the occupied territories.”

Historians — including Seth Anziska, author of the 2018 book [Preventing Palestine](#) — have also argued that the Accords had the effect of limiting remedies available to the Palestinians by focusing on establishing an ill-defined goal of “full autonomy” rather than sovereignty.

Essentially, the Accords successfully kept war from breaking out between Israel and Egypt. But in the view of Carter and others critical of the deal’s limitations, the agreement also removed incentives Israel may have had to pursue peace with the Palestinians, setting the stage for the next few decades of difficulties.

## **1988: AMID THE FIRST INTIFADA, ARAFAT ACKNOWLEDGES ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST**

In 1987, Palestinian frustrations had reached a boiling point following Israel's invasion of Lebanon to root out the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) presence there, the construction of new Israeli settlements, and increased repression by Israeli security forces in the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians staged their [First Intifada](#), Arabic for "shaking off," engaging in nonviolent mass protests that often turned into violent clashes with Israeli security forces. It was amid this fighting that Hamas rose in prominence, initially committing to a nonviolent strategy alongside the PLO to facilitate peace talks.

With the intifada unfolding, PLO leader Yasser Arafat, known as the father of Palestinian nationalism, made an announcement that paved the way for direct negotiations with the Israelis.

Arafat [said](#) that the PLO, which had previously sought to defeat and replace the state of Israel — often via violent means, like [airplane hijackings](#) and bombings of Jewish civilians across the globe — had "accepted the existence of Israel as a state in the region" and "declared its rejection and condemnation of terrorism in all its forms."

*"We accept two states, the Palestine state and the Jewish state of Israel," he said.*

Though the initial reception from the US and Israel was icy, it was a significant capitulation. The PLO was still widely regarded as a terrorist group, [including by the US](#), following the announcement. But it would begin to take a more active role in determining the future of the Palestinians.

## **1991: MADRID CONFERENCE**

In 1991, representatives from the US, Soviet Union, Israel, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, as well as non-PLO Palestinian delegates, convened for the first time in Madrid to hold negotiations to create a new framework for the peace process. The conference was conceived by then-US Secretary of State James Baker to change course from a continued pattern of conflict during the final years of the First Intifada.

There were still significant disagreements between the US and Israel around what peace should look like, particularly on settlement expansion, and no formal agreements came of the conference.

But "what Madrid did achieve was significant," write George Mitchell, former US President Barack Obama's special envoy for Middle East peace, and Alon Sachar, a Middle East expert and former adviser to the US Ambassador to Israel, in the 2016 book [A Path to Peace](#). That included bolstering public support for negotiations in Israel, which elected Yitzhak Rabin as prime minister in 1992 on a platform that focused on Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. Together, Rabin's election and the hope generated in Madrid laid the groundwork for the first major breakthrough in decades.

## 1993: OSLO

The year 1993 marked a breakthrough that established the modern peace process as we know it.

The PLO and Israel entered secret negotiations — facilitated by Norwegian politicians through a think tank in Oslo — at a moment when both felt backed into a corner. Israel was facing [increasing international pressure](#) to engage in peace talks following its violent clampdowns on Palestinian protesters in the intifada. And the PLO was [weakened](#) after supporting Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein before his defeat by US and international forces in the First Gulf War. The fall of the Soviet Union had also reduced Cold War tensions in the Middle East that had previously [made peacemaking difficult](#).

The secret talks allowed the negotiators to discuss difficult issues without fear of political blowback. After some progress had been made, the Israelis elevated them to official, public negotiations in Oslo. Then-US President Bill Clinton had a limited role in the negotiations, but held a formal signing ceremony for the so-called [Oslo Accords](#) on the White House lawn in Washington, DC, in 1993, in which Rabin and Arafat famously shook hands. In the West Bank and Gaza and established the Palestinian Authority as the government of those areas. It to withdraw its security forces from Gaza and “redeploy” those located in the West Bank in phases. In exchange, the PLO formally recognized the state of Israel and the right of its citizens to live in peace, accepting the language of UN Resolution 242. “To this day Palestinians refer to their acquiescence to 242 as their historic compromise, the moment they accepted partition,” Mitchell and Sachar write.

Critically, the PLO failed to limit Israel’s continued military presence in Gaza and the West Bank in key ways. The agreement provided no timeline for Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza and gave Israelis exclusive jurisdiction over their settlements in the occupied territories. At this time, the settler population there [exceeded 280,000](#) and would increase by almost 70,000 in the following five years.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians were left to manage their own affairs, including administering security and public services, relieving Israel of “formal responsibility for the living conditions and welfare of the territories’ rapidly increasing population, still completely dominated by Israeli forces,” Carter writes.

The Accords also established a five-year interim period in which the [thornier issues](#) of the conflict were meant to be resolved once and for all: the fate of a Palestinian state and its borders, whether Palestinian refugees would be able to return to Israel or the Palestinian territories or be compensated, what would happen to Israeli settlers and Jerusalem, and water usage. But that would never come to be.

## 1995: OSLO II

Oslo II built on the momentum of the first Oslo agreement, which was received positively by both Palestinians and Israelis. In September 1995, Rabin and Arafat [convened](#) to sign a second agreement in DC that divided the West Bank into three zones, labeled Areas A, B, and C, keeping Gaza continuous. The hope was that, eventually, the Palestinian state would be formed in these areas.

The newly created Palestinian Authority (PA) was given full control over Area A, which encompassed the Palestinian cities of Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus, and Bethlehem. In Area B, which spans a dense zone around those Area A cities, the Palestinian Authority was to have civil jurisdiction in partnership with Israel, which would administer security. Area C, which represented most of the West Bank (and encompassed all of the settlements that Israel had built since it captured the territory in 1967) was to be administered entirely by Israel. Israel was still permitted to [collect taxes](#) from the many Palestinians living anywhere in the West Bank and Gaza if they worked in Israel, which it would then distribute to the PA. The Israelis had agreed to [withdraw from most of Gaza](#) ahead of Oslo II.

Rabin also agreed that Israel would withdraw from Areas A and B within three months of the signing of the agreement, and would negotiate further withdrawals in the five-year interim period established in the first Oslo agreement.

Both sides sought to prevent both Oslo I and II's implementation. Rabin, who had become the face of the peace movement in Israel, was assassinated by a Jewish extremist who opposed the Accords just months later. A period of heightened attacks by Hamas followed. Public support for the peace process eroded, leading to Netanyahu's election as prime minister in 1996. He opposed the Oslo Accords, arguing they only encouraged attacks like those Hamas was launching at the time, and that Israel needed to take a hard line against the Palestinians. He also distrusted the PLO's Arafat, a feeling that was mutual.

Netanyahu's first government wasn't as far right as his latest one, but decisions he made in the years to come would make negotiations increasingly difficult.

## **2000: CAMP DAVID AND THE CLINTON PARAMETERS**

Following Rabin's assassination and Netanyahu's election, the Accords were threatened, and Clinton tried to salvage the negotiations by inviting Arafat and Netanyahu to Maryland's Wye River plantation in 1998. There, the leaders agreed to additional Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank as well as Palestinians taking measures to prevent violence against Israel — but both sides accused each other of failing to properly implement the agreement.

That contributed to a [deteriorating political situation](#) in Israel, where Netanyahu was facing criticism from the left for failing to make enough progress on negotiations and from the right for making what they saw as unreasonable territorial concessions. Netanyahu was subsequently voted out in 1999, with Ehud Barak taking his place as prime minister and promising an agreement with the Palestinians within 15 months.

At Barak's urging, Clinton held another summit at Camp David in July 2000, where the leaders failed to come to an agreement on borders, Jerusalem, and Palestinian refugees' "[right of return](#)." Why they failed is a subject of disagreement: Clinton and other pro-Israel voices have blamed Arafat, arguing that he was unwilling to make peace, while others say the negotiations were [designed to fail](#) because they didn't meet the "minimum requirements of any Palestinian leader," as Robert Malley, one of the US negotiators, argued several years later. It was nevertheless a blow to Barak, who would not survive long as prime minister.

Clinton to undertake a last ditch effort to salvage negotiations before he left office. At the outset of a Second Intifada, which would prove more bloody than the last, Clinton proposed his own [parameters for peace](#).

In Clinton's plan, 80 percent of Israeli settlers would remain in the West Bank, covering about 10 percent of the occupied land. Israel would have exclusive access to the utilities and certain roads that serviced them and would be allowed to create a security perimeter around the settlements. Palestinians would get some land adjacent to Gaza in exchange.

The rest of the West Bank would go to the new state of Palestine, which would also encompass all of Gaza. The new country would be demilitarized and supported by an international force. Palestinians would control the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem, including what is known to Muslims as the al-Aqsa Mosque, and Israelis would control the Western Wall.

Displaced Palestinians from around the world would have the right to return to the West Bank and Gaza, but not to their former homes in any land owned by Israel. Israel has generally opposed a right of return for Palestinians, which it "views as a tactic to undermine Jewish self-determination," Mitchell and Sachar write. The return of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced in 1948 would erode Israel's Jewish demographic majority.

Israel accepted the framework with reservations that Clinton said were "[within \[his\] parameters](#)." Arafat also accepted the parameters but with reservations that Clinton deemed incongruous with an agreement. Part of the problem for Arafat was that the parameters required too many Palestinian concessions on land for settlers and on right of return, [some foreign affairs experts have argued](#).

Clinton later wrote in his memoir that Arafat had made an "[error of historic proportions](#)."

Carter saw Arafat's decision differently, writing that "there was no possibility that any Palestinian leader could accept such terms and survive, but official statements from Washington and Jerusalem were successful in placing the entire onus for the failure on Yasser Arafat."

This was the closest that the Israelis and Palestinians have come in recent years to achieving a peace agreement.

### **2002-2003: VARIOUS FRAMEWORKS FOR PEACE ARE DEVELOPED**

The Second Intifada, which ended with a ceasefire in 2003 following significant loss of life, made official peace overtures difficult. But several initiatives that were not orchestrated by Israeli or Palestinian government representatives were nevertheless pursued during this period.

That included the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative proposed by the Saudi Crown Prince, which proposed Arab nations' recognition of Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from the occupied territories, among other elements of a peace plan. It was embraced by many Arab countries and Palestinian leaders, but dismissed by the new Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government as a "[nonstarter](#)" just as it was launching a major invasion of the West Bank in response to the Second Intifada. There was also the 2003 Geneva

Initiative, spearheaded by former Israeli and Palestinian officials, which aimed to provide a comprehensive plan for implementation of a two-state solution based on the framework discussed in the Clinton Parameters and the Arab Peace Initiative. It was also rejected by Sharonest Bank city of Nablus, a Palestinian woman points a rifle at an effigy of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon amid celebrations marking the first anniversary of the start of the Second Intifada. Odd Andersen/AFP/Getty Images

The US, [Russia](#), the [European Union](#), and the United Nations — together, the Quartet — also announced a roadmap for peace in 2003 that described progressive steps toward a two-state solution over the course of three years, with political, security, economic, humanitarian, and institution-building benchmarks.

The roadmap was grounded in then-US President George W. Bush's belief that Palestinian militant violence was a primary obstacle to peace. He and the international community therefore demanded that Arafat step aside in favor of new Palestinian leadership to continue negotiations. At the time, there were still [significant numbers of suicide bombings](#) on Israeli and Jewish targets committed by Palestinian militants. Arafat agreed to step aside; the more moderate Mahmoud Abbas replaced him.

The Palestinians accepted the roadmap — despite the fact that Bush had [made assurances](#) to the Israelis that they would not be expected to totally withdraw from the occupied territories and that Palestinians would not have right of return to Israel. But the Israeli government, led by Sharon, demanded prerequisites that ultimately doomed the deal. Those included dismantling all Palestinian militant groups, precluding any reference to UN Resolution 242, and barring discussion of Israeli settlements.

“The practical result of all this is that the Roadmap for Peace had become moot,” Carter writes.

### **2005: ISRAEL'S UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL FROM GAZA AND SOME SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK**

Despite previously advocating for expansionist policies in the occupied territories, Sharon announced [an Israeli “disengagement plan” for Gaza](#) in 2005 that involved the unilateral withdrawal of Israeli settlements and military forces. However, Israel maintained control of the Gazan airspace and cooperated with Egypt in administering its border with Gaza.

Approximately 8,500 Israeli settlers — some of whom had lived there for decades and resisted the plan — were removed from their homes, and some were compensated. Israel ceded control of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority, led by Abbas, who was elected its president that year. Israel also vacated four Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

The move was surprising from Sharon, who had for years pursued a dream of a [“Greater Israel,”](#) understood by many Israelis as their biblical lands that encompass the Palestinian territories. It earned him a reputation as a peacemaker who was seeking to deescalate the situation. But as Dartmouth professor Bernard Avishai [later argued in the](#)



[New Yorker](#), the decision was “not meant to precede a negotiated settlement and but to obviate the need for one.”

Sharon wanted to “cut Israel’s losses” in Gaza, Avishai argues, while pursuing his long-term goals of annexing Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley, and all major Israeli settlements in the West Bank, pushing the Palestinians well beyond Israel’s 1967 borders and behind the illegal “[separation barrier](#)” he had built. Sharon, however, suffered from a stroke soon after that would leave him incapable of fully carrying out that vision.

[Hamas](#) won a majority in the PA in the 2006 elections following the withdrawal. The US refused to recognize their new government and pressured Abbas’s government to overturn the results, [helping spark a brief civil war](#) that culminated in the group taking control of Gaza while the PA, led by politicians aligned with Abbas, continued to govern in the West Bank.

### **2008: OLMERT’S PEACE OFFER**

After the schism in the Palestinian government, Ehud Olmert, who became Israel’s prime minister after Sharon suffered from a stroke, decided to reopen peace talks with the PA in Annapolis, Maryland, for the first time since 2000.

Hamas supported the talks and was prepared to reverse its policy of rejecting Israel if an agreement that the Palestinian people would approve of could be finalized.

Olmert presented a proposal to Abbas that included [significant territorial concessions](#), though the exact contours of the proposal are vague and were never fully disclosed. Reportedly, Olmert [offered](#) Palestinians 5.8 percent of Israeli land, consisting of lightly populated farmland, in exchange for 6.3 percent of the West Bank, encompassing major Israeli settlements. On other issues, however, there appeared to still be significant gaps between the Israeli and Palestinian positions on refugees, Jerusalem, and an Israeli withdrawal.

Abbas [did not accept the proposal](#), later saying he wasn’t provided enough detail, though Olmert speculates that Abbas was “[entirely for it](#)” and believes Abbas likely regrets that he did not sign the deal. In that respect, Abbas’s rejection of the offer is sometimes compared to Arafat’s reaction to the Clinton Parameters: It was “the best an Israeli prime minister had ever offered to a Palestinian leader” in terms of territory, Mitchell and Sachar write. But Abbas later stated that he believed the offer did not meet Palestinian aspirations for an independent and viable state.

Some reports suggest that Abbas was also [concerned](#) about the political situation in Israel at the time, as Olmert had announced his intention to resign over corruption allegations. Olmert later served a prison sentence for accepting bribes and committing obstruction of justice. Netanyahu succeeded him and rejected the talks as dangerous for Israel, raising questions as to whether he would have honored any agreement signed.

## 2014: NEGOTIATIONS LED BY JOHN KERRY COLLAPSE

Obama's presidency began in 2009 with the ending of a Gaza war, known as Israel's Operation Cast Lead, and he appointed George Mitchell, co-author of the 2016 book *A Path to Peace*, to shepherd peace talks. But the [Israeli government was skeptical of Obama](#), and the heft Mitchell brought as a former negotiator with Northern Ireland did not directly translate to Israel and Palestine.

It quickly became clear Obama's peace overtures weren't working. Senior US officials had begun warning that because of the pace of Israel's settlement expansion, the [horizon of the two-state outcome was approaching](#), and human rights organizations were increasingly calling the [situation in the West Bank apartheid](#). US Secretary of State John Kerry put his hat in the ring, setting a deadline of mid-2014 to reach a comprehensive agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Kerry started with a series of confidence-building measures: Israel agreed to progressively release Palestinian prisoners in four parts while Palestinians agreed to halt the process of applying for membership as a country in international bodies. However, when Israel refused to release the fourth group of prisoners and continued to expand its settlements, Abbas reacted by applying for Palestine to be recognized by 15 UN and other international bodies.

Both sides also faced opposition within their own camps. Hamas rejected the talks, saying that Abbas had no authority to negotiate on behalf of Palestinians since no formal elections had been held in the Palestinian territories since 2005. The group [called for a third intifada](#), though it never materialized.

Netanyahu's Likud party [proposed legislation](#) to annex the Jordan Valley in direct contradiction of the US's proposal during the talks that the area go to Palestinians. Hardliners also [threatened to resign](#) from Netanyahu's government if he agreed to Israel's 1967 borders as a starting point for negotiations.

These challenges led to a breakdown in the talks in April 2014.

## 2020: TRUMP'S "DEAL OF THE CENTURY"

Former [President Donald Trump](#) severely undermined the prospect of Palestinian autonomy, delivering several major wins for Israel that poisoned dialogue with the Palestinians.

He [recognized](#) the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights, which Syria says should rightfully be its property — a decision later reaffirmed under Biden. He reversed decades of US policy and moved the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2018 — a decision made in recognition of the fact that Israel had made unified Jerusalem its capital, but that ignores Palestinian claims on East Jerusalem that are recognized by the UN. It's now incredibly politically difficult for any American president to move the embassy back to Tel Aviv.



The [Trump administration](#) also argued in 2019 that Israeli settlements in the West Bank [are not necessarily illegal](#), lending legitimacy to Israel's claims on the territories. Israel's annexations and settlements are widely regarded as illegal under international law, and no other country has recognized them.

Though Trump unveiled a plan in 2020 that he hailed as the peace “deal of the century,” Palestinians vehemently rejected it. The [proposal](#) would have allowed Israel to absorb the vast majority of settlements in the occupied West Bank, home to [more than half a million Israelis](#), required that Palestine be fully demilitarized, and rejected Palestinian refugees’ right of return outright. It would have also recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, while also impossibly recognizing Jerusalem as the “undivided capital” of Israel.

“We say a thousand nos to the Deal of The Century,” Abbas [said](#) at the time.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks at a ground-breaking ceremony for the new settlement Trump Heights, named in honor of Donald Trump. Jalaa Marey/AFP/Getty Images

Trump's barefaced pro-Israel policies undermined the US's ability to credibly moderate peace talks going forward. There's also no one credible representative for Palestinians across the occupied territories with which to negotiate. Polling in recent years but before Hamas's October 7 attack has shown that the PA, under Abbas's leadership, is [broadly unpopular when compared with Hamas](#), and as Mitchell and Sachar note, has become seen as “behaving like a security subcontractor easing the burden for Israel of the occupation.” That's partially by the design of Netanyahu, who has [propped up Hamas](#) at the expense of a unified Palestinian voice in peace talks.

Even if there were strong representatives, Trump wasn't interested in pursuing a peace plan. His administration created the Abraham Accords, which were normalization deals between Israel and Arab states like the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco (Arab states that had previously not recognized Israel); such deals did not include any progress on the Palestinian issue. Biden took up this policy, and his team put a major emphasis on bringing Saudi Arabia into the normalization fold during his first two and a half years in office. This Trump-Biden approach went against the Arab Peace Initiative and cut Palestinians out of the conversation.

### **2023: THE US RENEWS CALLS FOR A TWO-STATE SOLUTION**

For years after Trump announced his framework, no meaningful attempts were made to reopen peace negotiations, with US [President Joe Biden looking to turn his attention](#) to other parts of the world, including [China](#) and Russia, and Israel signing normalization agreements with some of its Arab neighbors.

But that calculus changed with the onset of the war in Gaza. The Biden administration has offered its nearly unconditional support to Israel, but has raised concerns about Israel's ability to achieve its stated goal of eliminating Hamas and its methods as civilian casualties skyrocket. It has also called for a renewed commitment to a two-state solution.

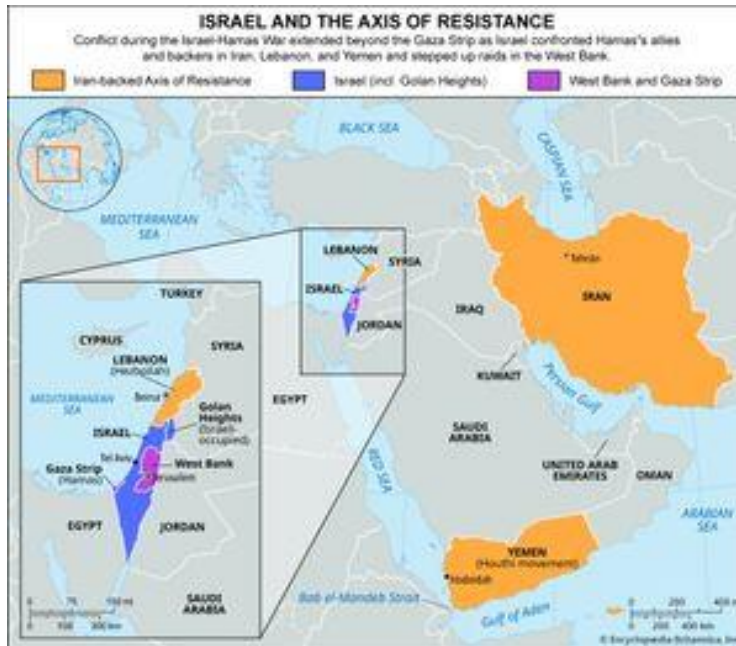
The Biden administration's focus on a two-state solution raises the question as to whether the window for that path to peace has passed. Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories has become entrenched, and its settler population in the West Bank has grown to [at least 700,000](#), leading some observers — including Carter — to argue that the reality is that [Israel and Palestine are a de facto one state](#).

“A system of apartheid, with two peoples occupying the same land but completely separated from each other, with Israelis totally dominant and suppressing violence by depriving Palestinians of their basic human rights. This is the policy now being followed,” Carter wrote in his 2006 book.

As the war continues, Biden has called on Israel to [disentangle itself from Palestine](#), and has warned the country [against trying to occupy Gaza](#) once it concludes its offensive. But Following Hamas's October 7 attack and the destruction Israel has wreaked in Gaza, reversing the status quo now seems more difficult than ever.

## ISRAEL AND THE AXIS OF RESISTANCE WEST BANK, HEZBOLLAH, HOUTHIS FORCES AND IRAN

[BRITANNICA](#)



### [Israel and the Axis of Resistance](#)

Although the fighting was by and large centered on the Gaza Strip, it was not confined to that territory. The IDF also intensified its raids in the [West Bank](#), blockading several urban areas, and in October it conducted a strike by warplane in the territory for the first time since the second [intifada](#) (2000–05). Raids were carried out nearly daily and concentrated primarily around refugee camps in the northern West Bank. Attacks on Palestinians by vigilante [Israeli settlers](#) increased as the number of gun permits

and weaponry in the settlements proliferated, especially at the [initiative](#) of Israel's far-right national security minister [Itamar Ben-Gvir](#). Skirmishes with [Hezbollah](#) near the Lebanese border threatened to open a second major front, although both the IDF and Hezbollah appeared hesitant to escalate the fighting. Attempts by [Houthi](#) forces to strike southern Israel—an unusual target for the [Yemen](#)-based movement—using both missiles and drones also gave early indication that there was some level of coordination among the [Iran](#)-led axis of resistance during the war.

### ISRAEL AND IRAN EXCHANGE DIRECT STRIKES IN APRIL 2024

Israel and Iran entered into direct confrontation in April 2024. Israeli warplanes struck Iran's embassy complex in [Damascus](#), killing, among others, senior officers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' [Quds Force](#), which provides aid, support, and training for the Iran-led [axis](#). Two weeks later, in a retaliation that *Politico Magazine* and other observers considered to be "[designed to fail](#)" in order to avoid escalation, Iran fired into Israel hundreds of [drones](#) and missiles, most of which were intercepted by Israel's [Iron Dome](#) and Arrow 3 antimissile systems (along with help from American, British, and Jordanian forces). Israel retaliated days later with an attack near a military complex in the Iranian city of Isfahan ([Esfahān](#)), which includes facilities involved in its nuclear program; Iran downplayed the incident and claimed it had intercepted the strikes. See the section below for the [confrontations](#) between Israel and Iran that took place in July and September.

## ESCALATION WITH IRAN'S AXIS OF RESISTANCE IN JULY 2024 AND AFTERWARD

Regionwide tensions escalated again in July, despite reports that Israel and Hamas had been close to a ceasefire:

### ISRAEL AND THE [HOUSHI MOVEMENT](#) IN YEMEN

On July 19 a Houthi drone struck [Tel Aviv](#), killing one person and wounding several others after it traveled undetected for 16 hours from Yemen. The following day the IDF retaliated with an air strike on [Hodeidah](#), a Houthi-controlled port that is critical to the import of both weaponry and humanitarian aid to the [war-torn country](#). In September Houthi forces fired a number of missiles toward Israel in separate instances. They were intercepted, and on September 29 the IDF again retaliated, with air strikes on Hodeidah and Ras Issa, a Houthi-controlled port north of Hodeidah.

### ISRAEL AND [HEZBOLLAH](#) IN LEBANON

On July 27 a rocket that was launched from Lebanon killed 12 children of the [Druze community](#) in the northern [Golan Heights](#) region, where much of the tension between Israel and Hezbollah had been centered since 2022. Hezbollah denied responsibility, but on July 30 the IDF responded with an air strike in Beirut that killed Fuad Shukr, a top Hezbollah commander who had been involved in the [1983 Beirut barracks bombings](#). As Israel caught wind in late August of a missile buildup in preparation for a retaliatory salvo, the IDF preemptively struck dozens of sites in Lebanon on August 25. Hezbollah then sent hundreds of rockets and drones into Israel. Despite the major escalation, fighting between Israel and Hezbollah returned to more regular levels the next day.

In September Israel began placing greater focus on the conflict with Hezbollah. Late that month thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies, many belonging to members of Hezbollah, exploded, dealing a significant blow to its communications network. The attacks were followed days later by a campaign of intense air strikes throughout Beirut and southern Lebanon, killing hundreds of people, including civilians. On September 25 Hezbollah fired a missile toward central Israel for the first time, aiming for Tel Aviv, although it was intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome system. On September 27 the Israeli [air force](#) dropped more than 80 bombs on a neighborhood just south of Beirut in a strike targeting and killing Hezbollah's leader, [Hassan Nasrallah](#).

### ISRAEL AND [IRAN](#)

On July 31 [Ismail Haniyeh](#), Hamas's political chief abroad who was leading Hamas's [delegation](#) in the ceasefire negotiations, was killed by a covert Israeli operation. The assassination took place in Iran's capital, [Tehrān](#), where Haniyeh had attended the inauguration of Iranian Pres. [Masoud Pezeshkian](#) the day before. [According to \*The New York Times\*](#), [Ali Khamenei](#), Iran's supreme leader, ordered a direct attack on Israel in retaliation. Iranian officials initially indicated a delay to avoid disrupting a potential breakthrough in ceasefire talks, but, after the shock of Haniyeh's assassination had worn off, the risk of regional escalation appeared to deter Iran from responding within a timely manner.

After the September 27 assassination of [Hassan Nasrallah](#), the Hezbollah leader who played a vital role in coordinating activity within Iran's axis of resistance, Iran launched about 180 [ballistic](#) missiles toward central and southern Israel that it said targeted air bases and intelligence headquarters. With assistance

from U.S. forces, Israel and its Arrow 3 antimissile system prevented casualties within Israel proper, although a shooting spree in [Tel Aviv](#)'s Jaffa district by Palestinian militants just before the missile barrage killed 8 people.

### **ISRAEL'S LARGE-SCALE OFFENSIVE IN THE WEST BANK IN AUGUST 2024**

On August 28, 2024, days after Hamas and the PIJ claimed responsibility for an attempted [suicide bombing](#) in [Tel Aviv](#), Israel launched a large-scale offensive in the [West Bank](#) that it said would prevent further terrorist attacks that might originate from the territory. The IDF blockaded roads around [Jenin](#), [Tulkarm](#), and Al-Faraa refugee camp as ground forces and aerial vehicles entered them, destroying roads that Israeli forces suspected of containing explosive devices and controlling access to hospitals where they said militants might hide.

## HOW THE AXIS OF RESISTANCE IS SHAPING THE MIDDLE EAST

[MIDDLE EAST EYE](#) By [Mohammad Ataie](#) 14 October 2024

This unprecedented mobilisation of multiple fronts - a network of allied states and movements - in support of the Palestinian resistance has been a long time coming

With [Israel](#) still in full assault on [Gaza](#) and [Lebanon](#), the year-long multi-front war escalated sharply on 1 October 2024, when [Iran](#) launched a massive [missile strike](#) on military installations across Israel.

According to Tehran, this attack was a response to the Israeli assassinations of Iranian, Lebanese, and Palestinian figures, notably Hamas's political leader, [Ismail Haniyeh](#), and Hezbollah's leader, [Hassan Nasrallah](#).

This marked Iran's second [direct strike](#) on Israel in a conflict that pro-Israel pundits describe as a "[six-front war](#)", and the convergence of Middle Eastern conflicts into "[one big war](#)".

Since 7 October 2023, Israel has waged a war from Gaza and the West Bank to Lebanon, [Syria](#), [Yemen](#), [Iraq](#), and Iran.

As early as 8 October, Hezbollah started a calculated military escalation against Israel, which was followed by attacks from Yemen, Iran, and Iraq under the banner of "unity of fields".

This month, Iran's major missile attack on Israel marked the height of coordinated operations. Abu Obaida, spokesperson for Hamas's military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, [described](#) the moment as the convergence of the ummah's flames of resistance in the skies of Palestine.

### **THE AXIS OF RESISTANCE, WHICH CENTRED PALESTINE AS ITS IDEOLOGICAL UNIFIER, BECAME AN INFLUENTIAL FORCE IN THE REGION**

This unprecedented mobilisation of multiple fronts in support of the Palestinian resistance has been a long time coming. It marked a culmination in the decades-long convergence of actors who together comprise the Axis of Resistance - a network of allied states and movements, including Iran, Syria, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Ansar Allah (also known as the Houthi movement) in Yemen, and various Iraqi forces.

Western policymakers and media dismiss the Axis of Resistance as a "[terror network](#)" with no history or context and [frame](#) it as an expansionist threat to stability in the Middle East.

Following the assassination of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah on 28 September, US President Joe Biden praised Israel's air strike in Beirut's southern suburb, describing it as a strike against "the Iranian-supported terrorist groups" and their "[reign of terror](#)".

Israeli officials have called the axis an [octopus](#): "Iran is the head of the octopus, and you see its tentacles all around from the Houthis to Hezbollah to Hamas."

After the Israeli defence minister called Palestinians [human animals](#), New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman described the axis as an "[invasive parasite](#)". Taking the task of justifying the Israeli genocide to a new low, he wrote that Iran is a parasitoid wasp and the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas and Kataib Hezbollah

are its eggs, concluding: "We have no counter-strategy that safely and efficiently kills the wasp without setting fire to the whole jungle."

Denying the humanity and the agency of these actors in the region (they are typically called proxies or tentacles) goes hand in hand with denying their resistance.

While the mainstream media frequently de-historicises and dehumanises the Axis of Resistance, its ideological roots emerged before the Iranian revolution in 1979. It has centred Palestine as its ideological unifier and evolved through a transnational circulation of people, ideas, and expertise, making the axis an [influential force](#) in the region.

## IRANIAN REVOLUTION

Palestine had an indelible imprint on the 1978-79 revolution in Iran and its global vision. From the outset, when Ayatollah Khomeini staged a revolt from within the religious establishment, the Zionist colonisation of Palestine and Israel's ties with the shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, were central to his revolutionary struggle.

In 1968, Khomeini issued a religious [decree](#) in support of the Palestinian fedayeen guerrilla forces, allowing his Shia Muslim followers to donate alms (zakat) to them. During the 1970s, Fatah, which was the dominant faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), emerged as a [crucial node](#) in the transnational anti-Shah movement.

It embraced the Iranian leftist and clerical revolutionaries and provided expertise, training, and connections with liberation fighters from around the globe.

Under the leadership of experienced commanders such as Yasser Arafat and Khalil al-Wazir, Fatah stood at the apex of the PLO for its strong leadership, resources, skilled cadres, and its all-encompassing ideology. PLO leaders and roving Iranian revolutionaries were brothers in arms in the 1970s. Following the 1979 revolution, the PLO played an essential role in the establishment of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and the liberation of Palestine inspired its global vision.

Many co-founders of the IRGC - among them Mohammad Montazeri and Abbas Aqa-Zamani - received training in the Palestinian refugee camps in the 1970s.

They drew on the military training, expertise, and global ties they inherited from Fatah to build up the military arm of the revolution. Palestine was also central to the revolution's global vision, which was influenced by anti-colonial pan-Islamism and Third Worldist solidarity.

Religious revolutionaries in Iran were influenced by pan-Islamists, like Sayyid Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Hasan al-Banna, and advocated the unification of Muslims against imperialism.

Palestine, as an Islamic ecumenical cause, was at the heart of the unification to which revolutionary clerics aspired.

The 1978-79 revolution was also imbued with Third World solidarity. The Iranian revolutionaries found lessons and rejoiced in the struggles of Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt against colonialism and neocolonialism.

Palestine was at the intersection of these liberation struggles and the ecumenical vision of clerical revolutionaries. To them, it was a [struggle](#) at the core of the conflict between Islam and global arrogance (Istikbar-i Jahani/al-sticker al-'alami, or imperialism).

## CREATION OF THE AXIS

The Axis of Resistance emerged after 1979 during several crucial events, chief among them the 1978-79 revolution in Iran, the 1980 invasion of Iran by Iraq, and the 1982 invasion of Lebanon by Israel.

Iraq, under President Saddam Hussein, was fearful of the spread of the Iranian revolution, and Israel was concerned with an emerging PLO-Iran axis in Lebanon.

These invasions, which sought to contain the revolution within Iran's borders, instead drew Iran to Syria, seeding the Axis of Resistance. Thus, unlike the prevailing narratives in western media that describe the axis as expansionist, it originated as a defensive partnership between Iran and Syria.

At the time, Iran and Syria shared geopolitical concerns regarding Saddam's ambitions in the region. They feared the fall of Lebanon to the camp of Arab regimes like Jordan and Egypt, which had recognised Israel. Between these two factors, Israel emerged as the enduring influence in consolidating the Iranian-Syrian alliance.

In June 1982, Israel launched an invasion of Lebanon, resulting in massive destruction and massacres, during which close to 50,000 Lebanese and Palestinians were killed.

The invasion managed to push the PLO from Lebanon, only to have it replaced with a mightier armed resistance. This marked the rise of the Islamic resistance in both the Lebanese and Palestinian spheres. Hezbollah emerged from the Lebanese and Palestinian resistance to the Israeli invasion and managed to push out the Israeli army from Beirut and most of Lebanon's territory to southern Lebanon by 1985.

The cooperation between Iran and Syria, by providing bases, military training and arms, was crucial in Hezbollah's success against the Israeli army, which led to the withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon in 2000, excluding Shebaa Farms.

These achievements climaxed in July 2006, when Israel launched an all-out attack on Lebanon after Hezbollah's fighters captured Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid, in order to exchange them for Lebanese prisoners in Israel.

Israel unleashed its military on Lebanon, [declaring](#) that the war would not stop until it crushed Hezbollah.

Thirty-three days later, Israel agreed to a ceasefire without achieving any of its goals: no soldiers were returned, and Hezbollah emerged from the war both militarily and politically stronger.

These achievements solidified Hezbollah's image as the only armed resistance organisation to have forced Israel to surrender occupied territories. Indeed, Hezbollah obliterated Israel's long-standing red line: no compromise in the face of the armed resistance.

The PLO was influential in Hezbollah's formation. Besides the galvanising impact of the Palestinian struggle on the founders of Hezbollah, some of its key leaders, like Imad Mughniyeh or Abu Hassan Salameh, were originally members of Fatah.

Salameh, a native of Jabal Amil in southern Lebanon, [exemplified](#) Fatah's initial influence on Hezbollah, including the party's steadfast commitment to Palestinian armed resistance. He was so popular among Palestinians that Arafat gave him the nickname of the fallen Palestinian commander, Ali Hassan Salameh, who was assassinated by Mossad in 1979.

As a commander of Hezbollah from 1982 until his assassination by Israel in 1999, Abu Hassan Salameh orchestrated resistance in the south and provided extensive support to the PLO, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad.



## PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE

The transformation of the Palestinian resistance, led by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, has been notably shaped by the Islamic resistance in Lebanon.

The historic humiliation of Israel in 2000 was a [galvanising](#) moment for Palestinians, who had long been disillusioned with the Oslo Accords. The Second Intifada (2000-2005) flared up against this backdrop, with a resurgence of armed resistance against the Zionists. Hamas and Islamic Jihad persisted in building up their military capabilities, especially in the liberated Gaza.

Israel's 2005 disengagement from Gaza was a [pivotal](#) moment in the trajectory of the Palestinian resistance, not only for Gaza but also for advancing the broader goal of Palestinian liberation from the river to the sea.

Through collaboration with the Axis, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas and al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Islamic Jihad, have steadily developed their military capabilities and expertise, posing a substantial challenge to the Israeli army.

From a reliance on machine guns at the time of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, their arsenal has evolved to include missile technology capable of striking Tel Aviv and beyond with significant destructive force.

Upgrading such military capabilities stemmed from long [cooperation](#) with Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah, which shared expertise in the development of missiles and drones with Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

This capability was demonstrated in different battles, notably during the 11-day Sword of Jerusalem battle of 2021, revealing the resistance's capacity to confront and disrupt Israel across its territory effectively.

Since 2000, the Axis of Resistance has unfurled in the crucible of wars and conflicts across the region. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Islamic State invasion in 2014 have brought several Iraqi militant groups into the Axis.

In the aftermath of the 2011-2012 Yemen Revolution, Ansar Allah has firmly sided with the Axis, developing bonds with Hezbollah, Hamas, and the IRGC.

Yet, Palestine, in the intersection of Islamic ecumenicalism and the Third Worldist liberation, has remained a unifying factor among the Axis's diverse actors who pursue their ideological and political agenda in various national contexts, sometimes in conflicting ways.

## TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS

Far from being celebratory, the Axis's history has been marked by many tensions and conflicts over inter-Arab politics and the diverging pan-Arab, leftist, and Islamist leanings of its partners.

At fraught junctures, Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas diverged and even collided, sparking rumours and speculations about the imminent demise of their partnerships.

During the formative years of Syrian-Iranian relations in the 1980s, disagreements surfaced between Syrian President Hafez al-Assad and Khomeini over a range of issues, including the Iranian link with Arafat and the Islamic opposition in Syria, over Hezbollah and Amal in Lebanon, and the Iran-Iraq war.

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[Follow Middle East Eye's live coverage of the Israel-Palestine war](#)

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The revolutionary clerics in Iran sympathised with the Muslim Brotherhood and maintained ties with a faction of the Syrian Brotherhood, which worried Assad. While Iran's relationship with the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood remained limited, the clergy's support for Lebanese Sunni movements and Hezbollah led to major tensions between Damascus and Tehran in Lebanon.

Assad was initially distrustful of Hezbollah and feared it would strengthen the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and back his archfoe, Arafat. Assad was also wary of an Iranian influence in Lebanon, which he saw as Syria's backyard.

Throughout the 1980s, differences and disagreements between Damascus and Tehran put Hezbollah on a collision course with Syria and led to a massacre of 28 Hezbollah members by the Syrian army in 1987. At the same time, there was also a rivalry and conflict between Hezbollah and the pro-Syrian Amal, as the latter feared losing ground within the Shia community to the former. The Hezbollah-Amal conflict, which became known as the War of Brothers, lasted throughout the late 1980s until Syria and Iran sponsored an agreement between the two Lebanese groups in 1990.

Hezbollah recognised Syria's paramount role in Lebanon, which allowed it to protect its arms and ties to Iran.

As Tehran and Damascus consolidated their partnership in the 1990s, Iran's support for Palestinian and Lebanese resistance forces became increasingly linked to its alliance with Syria. Thus, it took a decade before Tehran and Damascus reached a modus vivendi, defying many expectations about the collapse of the partnership.

However, in the wake of the 2003 US invasion and overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, tensions began to surface between Tehran and Damascus over their differing visions for a post-Saddam political order. Syrians wanted a role for the former ruling Baath Party, while Iran actively undermined it. A common enemy was gone, giving rise to speculations about the possible demise of this partnership. Still, the partnership endured, managing to exceed expectations.

### **CRISIS AND UPRISINGS**

With the post-2010 Arab uprisings, the Axis of Resistance faced one of its most challenging crises when anti-regime protests swept Syria, and the country took a dark turn into civil war.

The crackdown against protesters and political dissidents in Syria and the subsequent role of Iran undermined the legitimacy of both regimes. Iran has also suppressed numerous activists and protesters in recent years.

#### **In early 2012, Hamas quietly abandoned its base in Syria, revealing fault lines within the Axis over Syria**

As the protests in Syria militarised and developed into a war with an array of regional and international players, Hezbollah, in early 2013, began deepening its involvement in the war.

Hezbollah faced a mounting backlash both inside Lebanon and across the region for neglecting its resistance role against Israel and entering the civil war in Syria.

In early 2012, Hamas quietly abandoned its base in Syria, revealing fault lines within the Axis over Syria.

In the eyes of Assad, Hamas betrayed him and sided with his archenemy, the Muslim Brotherhood. In a moment of divide across the region, which appeared to be sectarian, losing Hamas posed a significant setback for the Axis. Yet Hamas's relationship with Iran and Hezbollah did not break.

Even the military wing of the movement, the Qassam Brigades, continued to build up its capabilities through working with the IRGC's Quds Force and Hezbollah.

In a few years, the mediation role of the former IRGC's Quds Force leader Qasem Soleimani and Hezbollah's Nasrallah revived the relationship between Syria and Hamas, culminating in a Hamas leadership visit to Damascus in 2022.

These efforts unfolded as the US, under both Trump and Biden, vigorously pursued the Abraham Accords to create a [new Middle East](#) centred on normalisation with Israel. It replaced the so-called Israeli peace with Palestinians with an Israeli normalisation with the autocrats in the region, chief among them the ruling families in [Saudi Arabia](#), [Bahrain](#), and [UAE](#).

However, Hamas's actions on 7 October not only derailed the Abraham Accords but also [revived](#) the Axis of Resistance.

Even with the assassination of Hezbollah's leader in September 2024, unravelling the Axis remains a remote possibility.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's wish for a new Middle East and the revival of the Abraham Accords will need much more than air strikes, intelligence sabotage, and assassinations of resistance leaders.

### 'GLOBAL PALESTINE'

For four decades, the Axis has evolved into a significant force shaping the political landscape of the Middle East. How has the Axis survived its many contradictions and paradoxes in a volatile region which has historically seen many short-lived alliances?

**Israel's swift wars, fought with minimal losses on the lands of others and resulting in decisive victories, are a vestige of a bygone era.**

What can explain the realignment of Hamas within the Axis, which, to the surprise of many observers, has derailed yet another US grand vision for the Middle East?

After all, to Zionists, the alliance between Arabs, Iranians, Sunnis, and the Shia is "[unnatural](#)", and according to their sectarian views of Middle Eastern societies and politics, it should have crumbled long ago.

It would have been difficult to imagine this longevity without the global pro-Palestine movement and the cause of liberating al-Quds, a rallying point for the ummah (the Muslim community).

In the [words](#) of the Islamic Jihad founder Fathi al-Shiqaqi: "Palestine and the unification...constitute the two sides of the Islamic agenda" in the face of "fragmentation [al-tajz'ia] and the Zionist entity; the two sides of the colonial scheme."

Beyond being a cause for Muslims, Palestine remains a quintessential Third World issue. Its connection with broader struggles for social, economic, and environmental justice continues to be one of the most [unifying issues](#) within the diverse global justice movement.

Radiating both Third Worldist solidarity and Islamic ecumenicalism, the heroes and martyrs of Palestine have unified the elements of the Axis beyond sectarian identities and political disagreements.

Since the early 1980s, the Axis's growth has notably changed the power dynamics between it and Israel. There was a time when Israel [deemed](#) going to war a "luxury with minimal losses".

In the days leading up to the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, then chief of staff of the Israeli forces, Raphael Eitan, [bragged](#) that Israel has "got a well-oiled, well-prepared military machine. Why not use it then?"

As the Israeli army advanced into Beirut, some Lebanese and Palestinian fighters buried their arms and fled.

After the 2000 liberation of Lebanon, Nasrallah recalled the story of those fighters, proclaiming that "some buried their weapons in the dirt in 1982 when the Zionist army entered Lebanon. We will bury the Israelis should they return to our land again'.

Israel's [swift wars](#), fought with minimal losses on the lands of others and resulting in decisive victories, are a vestige of a bygone era. This change owes much to the four decades of transsectarian and transnational solidarity and cooperation between the partners of the Axis of Resistance.

*The views expressed in this article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Middle East Eye.*

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**PART D**

**EDUCATION and BIOGRAPHY**

## PALESTINIAN EDUCATION

### [ISRAEL GOVERNMENT](#) 2024

#### **No child is born a terrorist: How the Palestinian Authority's Education System is Grooming the Next Generation of Extremists**

What if your child's textbooks glorified violence and martyrdom? What if school activities prepared them for conflict, instead of building a future of peace?

Our report reveals the alarming reality within the Palestinian Authority's education system, where children are taught that Israel has no right to exist. Schools and streets are named after terrorists, and incitement is embedded in the curriculum.

**Shaping young minds is critical for the future of any society.** When children are taught to hate, to glorify violence, and to revere martyrdom, their potential is replaced by a dangerous narrative of extremism. The harsh truth is that millions of dollars in international aid are funding this indoctrination.

In 2023, European countries via UNWRA gave approximately 450 million to the Palestinian educational system. A system that is poisoned with incitement and promotes violence instead of peace. The report uncovers:

- **Examples from textbooks** that glorify violent jihad and portray Israel and Jews in a demonizing light.
- **Schools and streets named after terrorists**, such as "Amin al-Husseini" – a Nazi collaborator, and "Dalal al-Mughrabi" – the leader of a terror attack that killed dozens of Israelis.
- **Extracurricular activities** that train children for armed conflict, rather than nurturing peace and coexistence.

**This is what your money is funding. It's time to act.**

**Explore the full report to understand how this education system shapes a future of conflict.**

[\*\*LINK – Go to Methodology and Key Findings\*\*](#)

# THE URGENT NEED FOR CURRICULUM REFORM IN PALESTINIAN SCHOOLS

[WE BELIEVE IN ISRAEL](#) CATHERINE PEREZ-SHAKDAM 11 NOV 2024

The events of October 7 served as a tragic reminder of a long-standing issue that has been ignored for far too long: the radicalisation of Palestinian youth, which begins, all too often, in the classroom. For years, the Palestinian Authority's education system has faced accusations of inciting hatred and glorifying violence. These concerns are not new. However, as the international community now confronts the horrifying implications of a generation raised on anti-Israel indoctrination, it has become painfully clear that the issue of Palestinian textbooks can no longer be dismissed as a minor detail.

Recently, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, Xavier Bettel, took a rare stand, confronting officials from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) over the presence of incitement and glorification of terrorism in Palestinian schoolbooks. In a moment of frustration, Bettel held up a textbook and challenged the official: "UNRWA is not neutral on education if they teach this. It's in the book... If I want to defend you, help me to defend you." His remarks encapsulate a problem that has been festering within Palestinian society for years. As long as the education system promotes a culture of hate, any claims of neutrality or innocence by UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority are nothing more than a façade.

IMPACT-se, an organisation that monitors educational content worldwide, has documented anti-Israel indoctrination in Palestinian textbooks for years. The problem isn't subtle; it is blatant. These books erase Israel from maps, deny any Jewish connection to the land, and glorify "martyrdom" as a noble pursuit. According to IMPACT-se's CEO, Marcus Sheff, what happened on October 7 is the direct result of an education system that instils hatred and celebrates violence. In his view, tackling the problem at its root requires a complete overhaul of the curriculum—anything less would be a band-aid on a deeply embedded wound.

## BEYOND THE CLASSROOM WALLS: A NEED FOR SOCIETAL CHANGE

It is, of course, tempting to believe that revising a few textbooks will fix the problem. But as Dr. Michael Milshtein of the Moshe Dayan Center has pointed out, real change will demand more than just altering language on a page. According to Milshtein, Palestinian society needs to engage in the kind of national introspection that Germany undertook after 1945—a genuine reckoning with past actions, ideologies, and goals. The desire to reform, he argues, must come from within Palestinian society, and there is, at present, little evidence of this. Simply removing offensive phrases or violent imagery from textbooks does nothing if the society that reads them remains rooted in enmity and resentment.

In Gaza, where Hamas controls much of the informal education, this challenge is compounded. With over 80% of Gaza's schools destroyed or turned into makeshift shelters, teaching often takes place in tents under the authority of teachers loyal to Hamas or UNRWA. These teachers remain largely unregulated and free to instil in their students the same glorification of "martyrdom" and jihad. Without a fundamental change

in Palestinian society—a willingness to reject the ideology that valorises violence—there is little hope that revised textbooks will make any real difference.

### **THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE AND THE PATH FORWARD**

For years, the European Parliament and other international bodies have called for reform in Palestinian education, with some conditioning aid on the removal of antisemitic and violent content. But the Palestinian Authority has made only token adjustments, while the essential content of incitement remains intact. This problem has existed for so long that some leaders in East Jerusalem have resorted to placing blank stickers over inflammatory sections of textbooks. The absurdity of this “solution” is evident: Palestinian students reportedly keep two sets of books—one “censored” version for show, and another, unaltered, for the classroom. Such efforts fall laughably short of addressing the real problem.

There are, however, some examples in the region that provide a glimmer of hope. The United Arab Emirates, for example, has introduced Holocaust education into its curriculum, and Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Egypt have removed antisemitic passages from school materials. These changes demonstrate that where there is political will, reform is possible. But will there be any such will within Palestinian leadership? According to Sheff, “Countries change their curricula because they understand it’s for the good of their society.” Yet the Palestinian Authority has shown little interest in reforming a curriculum that serves its political agenda.

If the international community truly seeks peace, it must recognise the critical role that education plays in shaping future generations. The textbooks Palestinian children read today are the prism through which they view their neighbours tomorrow. A society cannot claim to seek peace while its youngest minds are raised on a steady diet of hate and martyrdom.

The time has come for the world to demand more than hollow promises and superficial changes.

Palestinian leaders must be held accountable for an education system that incites hatred rather than hope, violence rather than coexistence. At We Believe in Israel, we believe that the first step towards genuine peace is an education system grounded in truth, tolerance, and respect for all. Anything less is a betrayal of those children and a disservice to the prospects of a future without bloodshed.

Reforming Palestinian education is no longer an option—it is a necessity. Until Palestinian textbooks reflect a commitment to peace, the prospect of peace itself will remain tragically out of reach.



## **THE URGENT NEED FOR CURRICULUM REFORM IN PALESTINIAN SCHOOLS**

[WE BELIEVE IN ISRAEL](#) Catherine Perez-Shakdam 11 Nov 2024

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### **THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE AND THE PATH FORWARD**

For years, the European Parliament and other international bodies have called for reform in Palestinian education, with some conditioning aid on the removal of antisemitic and violent content. But the Palestinian Authority has made only token adjustments, while the essential content of incitement remains intact. This problem has existed for so long that some leaders in East Jerusalem have resorted to placing blank stickers over inflammatory sections of textbooks. The absurdity of this “solution” is evident: Palestinian students reportedly keep two sets of books—one “censored” version for show, and another, unaltered, for the classroom. Such efforts fall laughably short of addressing the real problem.

There are, however, some examples in the region that provide a glimmer of hope. The United Arab Emirates, for example, has introduced Holocaust education into its curriculum, and Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Egypt have removed antisemitic passages from school materials. These changes demonstrate that where there is political will, reform is possible. But will there be any such will within Palestinian leadership? According to Sheff, “Countries change their curricula because they understand it’s for the good of their society.” Yet the Palestinian Authority has shown little interest in reforming a curriculum that serves its political agenda.

If the international community truly seeks peace, it must recognise the critical role that education plays in shaping future generations. The textbooks Palestinian children read today are the prism through which they view their neighbours tomorrow. A society cannot claim to seek peace while its youngest minds are raised on a steady diet of hate and martyrdom.

The time has come for the world to demand more than hollow promises and superficial changes.

Palestinian leaders must be held accountable for an education system that incites hatred rather than hope, violence rather than coexistence. At We Believe in Israel, we believe that the first step towards genuine peace is an education system grounded in truth, tolerance, and respect for all. Anything less is a betrayal of those children and a disservice to the prospects of a future without bloodshed.

Reforming Palestinian education is no longer an option—it is a necessity. Until Palestinian textbooks reflect a commitment to peace, the prospect of peace itself will remain tragically out of reach.

## TEACHING PALESTINIAN CHILDREN TO VALUE TERRORISM

[COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS](#) [Elliott Abrams](#) *May 1, 2017*

Peace between Israel and the Palestinians does not, fundamentally, depend on who is doing the negotiating, how skilled they are, and other such diplomatic matters. Fundamentally it depends on the desire for peace.

A new study of Palestinian textbooks finds that Palestinian children are being taught to glorify and value terrorism and violence. The study, called "Palestinian Elementary School Curriculum 2016–17: Radicalization and Revival of the PLO Program," was conducted by the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (in Jerusalem) and can be found [here](#).

The study's summary begins with this:

The new Palestinian curriculum, which includes new textbooks for grades 1–4, is significantly more radical than previous curricula. To an even greater extent than the 2014–15 textbooks, the curriculum teaches students to be martyrs, demonizes and denies the existence of Israel and focuses on a “return” to an exclusively Palestinian homeland.

### **Pressure Points**

Abrams gives his take on U.S. foreign policy, with special focus on the Middle East and democracy and human rights issues.

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Within the pages of the textbooks children are taught to be expendable. Messages such as: “the volcano of my revenge”; “the longing of my blood for my land”; and “I shall sacrifice my blood to saturate the land” suffuse the curriculum. Math books use numbers of dead martyrs to teach arithmetic. The vision of an Arab Palestine includes the entirety of what is now Israel, defined as the “1948 Occupied Territories.”

That is not the way to prepare children for peace.

Here is how the grade 4 math textbook teaches math:

The number of martyrs of the First Intifada during 1987–93 totaled 2026 martyrs, and the number of martyrs of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Intifada in the year 2000 totaled 5,050 martyrs while the number of the wounde

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will be in Washington this week. The teaching and glorification of terrorism and violence should be at the top of the agenda with him. For decades, such matters were considered peripheral to the serious business of diplomatic negotiations. But the negotiations start, stop, and go nowhere. Meanwhile another generation of Palestinian children learn in schools and play in parks named after murderers. That's what is really serious, and that's what Mr. Abbas should be confronted with this week.

## **UNRWA TEXTBOOKS WERE PIVOTAL IN RADICALIZING GENERATIONS OF GAZANS — WATCHDOG**

**Education-monitoring group says UN agency allowed incitement  
to be taught in its schools,**

**and argues that staff who took part in October 7 attack were not isolated ‘bad apples’**

**[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#)** [Gianluca Pacchiani](#) 26 March 2024

A map of the Middle East in a geography book makes no mention of the State of Israel, showing “Palestine” in its place; a history book narrates a 1968 battle between the Israeli army, the Jordanians and Palestinian fedayeen, extolling the latter’s courage in wearing explosive belts, and praising the “image of a burnt Zionist soldier”; a chemistry book asks students to analyze the type of chemicals contained in phosphorous bombs allegedly dropped by Israel; an Islamic studies book describes the goals of jihad as “terrorizing the enemy” and “achieving martyrdom.”

These are examples from textbooks used in schools in Gaza run by the UN Palestinian refugee agency, UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency UNRWA), as highlighted in a recent [report](#) compiled by the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-se). The organization, based in the UK and Israel, has since the late 1990s monitored school curricula around the world, with a particular focus on the Middle East.

For years, IMPACT-se has been sounding the alarm over what it says is anti-Israel incitement contained in Palestinian textbooks, including the systematic erasure of Israel’s existence and the glorification of violent jihad and martyrdom.

“The cooperation between UNRWA and Hamas is absolutely undeniable,” said Marcus Sheff, CEO of IMPACT-se, “both in educating the terrorists that perpetrated the October 7 atrocities, and in being part, as we discovered afterwards, of the terror infrastructure in its schools and in its hospitals.”

Israel has said it has evidence that at least 12 UNRWA employees [took “active part” in the October 7 massacres](#), that at least 30 more “assisted,” and that around 1,500 of the agency’s employees in Gaza (some 10 percent) have active ties to terror groups.

“The end result of that radicalization is that among the thousands who went over the border on October 7 and committed acts of murder, rape and abduction, it is statistically probable that the majority went to UNRWA’s schools,” Sheff said. “The UNRWA curriculum is what they were brought up on, and it teaches about jihad and martyrdom being the most important meanings of life, and that Jews are liars and frauds.”

### THREE DISTINCT SCHOOL SYSTEMS — ONE MESSAGE

In Gaza, around 70% of the population are considered refugees. Palestinians are unique in that, unlike any other group of refugees around the world, their refugee status is hereditary and is transferred by the UN automatically through the generations. All descendants of Palestinians who fled or were expelled from Israel during Israel's 1948 War of Independence are eligible for UNRWA services, including health and education.

The remaining 30% of the population of the Strip, native Gazans who are not descendants of refugees, attend government schools run by Hamas.

Advertisement

Per UNRWA's policy, the organization's schools teach the curriculum of the "host country" in the various Middle East nations and regions in which it operates. Since Gaza was under the administration of the Palestinian Authority until 2007 — until the PA was ousted by Hamas — the relief agency has historically used PA textbooks in both the West Bank and Gaza.

For years, IMPACT-se has issued [reports](#) scrutinizing those textbooks, in a bid to draw attention to anti-Israel incitement they contain.

[The watchdog uncovered](#) that PA teaching materials not only did not promote education toward a peaceful solution to the conflict, but denied the existence of the Jewish state. Israel was routinely left off maps, and Israeli cities were said to be in Palestine.

In addition, there was no mention of the Holocaust in history chapters on World War II, and Palestinian terrorists who massacred Israeli civilians were glorified.

The curriculum produced by the PA has been adopted without compunction by UNRWA in Gaza and the West Bank for its schools.

"UNRWA, a UN agency, does not change any of the teaching material issued by the Palestinian Authority, despite the fact that it doesn't meet the standards of the United Nations on neutrality," Sheff noted, "and has resisted calls to draw up a parallel curriculum for refugees in line with international educational standards." In certain cases, individual UNRWA schools in Gaza have produced supplementary materials that are "just as bad as the Palestinian Authority's material," Sheff said.

A recent [report](#) by his organization revealed that a school in Beit Hanoun, in northeastern Gaza, uploaded online self-evaluation exercises for ninth graders in which the correct answers to the question "What are the requirements for protecting society's unity?" were "knowledge" and "weapons."

The school also published a competition to research the "Nakba," the Arabic term for the displacement of Palestinians during Israel's establishment (literally "catastrophe"), with a goal to "envision the future of Palestine after return and liberation."

Another online self-evaluation exercise for sixth graders on Islamic education violated UNRWA's principle of religious neutrality in education, presenting the following statement as false: "A person's belief is true even if he does not believe in the Prophet Muhammad."

Students from UNRWA's Boys Preparatory School in Bet Hanoun, Gaza Strip, April 2, 2023 (from the school's Facebook page)

## ‘NOT JUST BAD APPLES’

Yusef Al-Hawajara was among the 3,000 terrorists that stormed across the border from Gaza into Israel on October 7. In a [phone call](#) he made that day, Al-Hawajara bragged to a friend: “We have female hostages, I captured one!” The Arabic term he used for the female hostages, *sabaya*, is often used by jihadis to mean sex slaves. “Everything’s fine, I hope,” he later said in the recording. “We will enter Al-Aqsa Mosque.” Al-Hawajara was a member of Hamas’s Central Camps Brigade. He was also a teacher at UNRWA’s Deir al-Balah Boys’ Elementary School in the central Gaza Strip. His double allegiance was not an isolated case.

“The UNRWA employees who took part in the massacre were not just bad apples. It was not a bug. It is a feature of the institution,” argued Sheff.

“UNRWA in Gaza is institutionally an organization that was riddled with Hamas ideas, with Hamas members, and by educating the majority of schoolchildren in Gaza, they have been at the very center of that radicalization process,” Sheff said.

IMPACT-se released a [report](#) in November revealing that at least 100 Hamas members who have carried out terror attacks against Israelis in recent years are graduates of the UNRWA education system.

“We see how much [support for Hamas](#) was expressed in [social media of UNRWA employees](#). UNRWA is a UN organization; there is absolutely no excuse for the fact that this went on day after day, year after year, under everybody’s noses,” Sheff said.

“For us, the impact of this has been quite terrible, because [we warned for years](#) governments and parliaments that if UNRWA continued to teach this material in schools, about jihad and martyrdom, and the dehumanization of Jews and Israelis, something terrible is going to happen,” he added.

## CHANGE STARTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Multiple examples around the Middle East have shown that radical changes in the school curriculum are a viable solution to curtail extremism, Sheff said.

Textbooks in the United Arab Emirates, a country that signed a peace agreement with Israel in 2020, today promote [peace and religious tolerance toward Jews](#), based on sources from the Quran and other religious texts. The curriculum also [includes Holocaust education](#), as the Gulf country has moved to position itself as a regional peacemaker.

Even in [Saudi Arabia](#), a large conservative Muslim country that does not yet have diplomatic ties with Israel, the portrayal of the Jewish state in textbooks has notably improved, and educational materials have become increasingly critical of radical and jihadi movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah and ISIS.

Positive changes with regards to Israel and Jews have also been implemented in the curricula taught in Morocco and Egypt, Sheff noted.

The same deradicalizing approach could be easily applied to the Palestinian education system, he said.

“We are in touch with [many] policymakers in the US, in Europe, and in the Arab world. There’s a great deal of interest because it is absolutely understood that this is essential for [Palestinian] society moving forward. And unquestionably, that needs to be put into place as soon as possible.

## **TEACHING TERROR: HOW HAMAS RADICALIZES PALESTINIAN SOCIETY**

[THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY](#) Matthew Levitt February 12 2007

*On February 12, 2007, Matthew Levitt participated in a panel discussion on the topic of environments that enable terrorism at a conference titled, "The Roots of Terror: Understanding the Evolving Threat of Global Terrorism," sponsored by Women in International Security and the U.S. Army War College. This is the prepared text of his remarks.*

If Hamas has one supreme objective, it is to mutate the essentially ethno-political Palestinian national struggle into a fundamentally religious conflict. Accomplishing this goal entails transforming Palestinian society -- a relatively secular culture, compared to other Muslim societies in the Arab world -- into one that is religiously zealous and politically extreme. Such a project of radicalization is the goal of all violent Islamist groups, from al-Qaeda to Egyptian Islamic Jihad. But Hamas, operating a grassroots campaign in a limited geographical area, is able to execute a strategically planned radicalization campaign that translates existing social preconditions - Israeli occupation, military checkpoints, lack of Palestinian leadership, lawlessness - into an active, violent, and radical response.

One study of Palestinian suicide bombers reveals the critical role played by the Hamas dawa - Hamas's social-welfare infrastructure of clinics, schools, mosques and charities - in pushing angry and frustrated Palestinians to the point of committing acts of terrorism. While they acknowledge that no single psychological profile describes the wide variety of Palestinian suicide bombers, the researchers developed a series of prototypical categories that combine both clinical and social psychological causes. A telling corollary to their primary findings, however, is that whatever the typology of the potential terrorist, each requires "a social environment that is supportive of such an attack; media that disseminates the information among the supportive population; spiritual leadership that encourages such attacks; and financial and social assistance for families of suicide terrorists after their death." Together, these conditions create a comprehensive social environment - a culture of radicalization - within Palestinian society."

Social preconditions by themselves do not make a suicide bomber. While poverty, humiliation, personal suffering, shame, or loss of a loved one can all be powerful radicalizing factors, they traditionally require an established terrorist organization to channel that anger and frustration into a desire to kill and maim random civilians (as opposed, for example, to a desire simply to kill oneself). Increasingly, the internet now fulfills some of these functions, but Hamas's grassroots radicalization campaign on-the-ground is personal, eye-to-eye, and second to none.

What are the goals of Hamas's radicalization campaign, and what are the methods by which this radicalization is achieved?

The goals of Hamas's radicalization efforts include building grassroots support for the Islamist agenda; affecting hard-to-reach populations; undermining moderate Palestinian leaders; and purchasing goodwill toward Hamas - and logistical support for its operatives - by promoting financial dependency.

Hamas charitable and humanitarian organizations not only fund the families of Hamas suicide bombers, they finance important health, education, and welfare projects that are badly needed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Projects like these play a critical role in building sympathy and support for the group among the local population. Hamas humanitarian projects are usually couched in Islamist terms and are designed to build grassroots support for its religious agenda.

For example, the Treasury Department revealed that Sanabil, a since-defunct Hamas front organization in Lebanon, increased its influence in Palestinian refugee camps there by first providing basic necessities to needy families and only later requiring these families to fill out application forms noting whether they had ever worked with Hamas.

For a terrorist organization to have Hamas's spectacular success and influence, it needs to convert to its cause not only disaffected young men, but also children, women, and entire families. These groups are less likely to be attracted by the charms of a street militia, but they are easily reached -- and radicalized -- by the social services network.

In the Islamist society idealized by Hamas, the martyr is the most revered citizen; Palestinian children who are caught up in the Hamas dawa are taught to recognize the virtue of death-for-Allah. Once indoctrinated into this belief system, they are more easily exploited as grade-school terrorists. A 2004 Israel Security Agency (ISA) report identified a 64 percent increase in the number of minors involved in terrorism compared to 2003. Gaza psychologist Fadi Abu Hein has lamented, "Martyrdom has become an ambition for our children. If they had a proper education in a normal environment, they won't have looked for a value in death."

Hamas also seeks to equate in the minds of Palestinian parents familial "nurturing" with nursing hatred. In an interview with National Geographic, a suicide bomber's mother admitted that it was she who instilled in her son the desire for martyrdom and "brought them [her sons] up to become martyrs, to be martyrs for the name of Allah." Her "martyred" son Muhammad's old bedroom was adorned with posters of martyred Palestinians and featured a photo of Muhammad on the computer screensaver. The mother, Miriam Farhat, was elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council on the Hamas ticket in January 2006.

The vast majority of moderate Palestinian leaders does not share Hamas's Islamist orientation -- and therefore must be supplanted in order for Hamas's vision of Palestinian society to be realized. The dawa is the most successful tool at Hamas's disposal to undermine moderate Palestinian leaders. A Palestinian report submitted to PA chairman Yasser Arafat in June 2000 described a meeting in Damascus at which Iranian officials and Hamas leaders agreed "to use the dawa in the battle for public opinion." But it was much earlier, during a 1993 Hamas meeting in Philadelphia, where Hamas fundraisers decided that "most or almost all" funds collected from that point on "should be directed to enhance the Islamic Resistance Movement [Hamas] and to weaken the self-rule government [Palestinian Authority]."

Those who benefit from Hamas largesse support the organization and, frequently, actively facilitate the group's attacks. In the words of an Israeli defense official, "In the territories, there are no free lunches: those who receive help from the Islamic associations pay with support for Hamas." Indeed, Mohammad Anati, the head of the Holy Land Foundation office near Jerusalem, acknowledged to criminal investigators that providing services promotes Hamas interests and earns the support of those who benefit from Hamas



aid. To be sure, Hamas social welfare support is largely determined by a cold cost-benefit analysis that links the amount of aid awarded to the support it will buy.

What are the methods by which Hamas radicalizes Palestinian society?

The process of becoming an adherent of radical Islam is fundamentally a didactic process, as is the indoctrination to any ideology -- whether political, philosophical, or religious. From a very young age, Palestinians who participate in the Hamas dawa, both as agents and subjects, are instructed in the language of radical Islam, schooled in its rationalizations and apologies, and taught its supreme virtue and boundless promise. Such an education program requires the student to be constantly supervised, mentored, cajoled, threatened, and praised. No wonder, then, that Hamas invests so heavily in schools, campuses and mosques - controlled environments where impressionable minds are formed and where people go for answers and hope.

In 2001, the Islamic Society in Gaza held a graduation ceremony for the 1,650 children who attend its forty-one kindergartens. Photographs of the graduation ceremony show preschool age children wearing military uniforms and carrying mock rifles; a five-year-old girl dips her hands in red paint to mimic the bloodied hands Palestinians proudly displayed after the lynching of two Israelis in Ramallah; another child is dressed as Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yasin and surrounded by other children costumed as suicide bombers. The radicalization campaign continues through the course of a Palestinian student's academic career, employing materials produced and distributed by the dawa. The Hamas Islamic Student Movement in the Bethlehem area distributed to young students so-called "Instruction Cards," bearing the pictures of Hamas suicide bombers and others killed carrying out terrorist attacks, and encouraging Palestinian youth to follow in their footsteps.

In addition to schools, Hamas dawa organizations run summer camps at which Palestinian children are saturated with the group's propaganda and even given semi-military training. Combining childhood recreation with radical indoctrination, the camp environment exposes children to both active programming in the form of classes on radical Islam and passive indoctrination through the pervasive images of suicide bombers plastered on walls throughout the camp. According to Hamas's Sheikh Bahar, summer camps are especially successful for indoctrinating religious and secular youth alike. Bahar explained that teaching children the history of Islam while they are surrounded by pictures of martyrs instills "seeds of hate against Israel."

Radicalization of Palestinian youth is no less prominent at Palestinian institutions of higher learning. Hamas propaganda -- pamphlets, posters and myriad other printed collateral -- literally litter Palestinian university campuses. For example, a timetable for university lectures at one campus featured pictures of Hamas suicide bombers. During student elections at Bir Zeit University in 2003, Hamas candidates reenacted suicide bombings by blowing up models of Israeli buses. In one Bir Zeit campus debate, a Hamas candidate taunted his Fatah challenger by boasting, "Hamas activists in this University killed 135 Zionists. How many did Fatah activists from Bir Zeit kill?"

With an estimated 11,000 students enrolled during the 2004-2005 school year, al-Najah University in the West Bank city of Nablus is the largest university in the Palestinian territories. The terrorist recruitment, indoctrination and radicalization of students for which al-Najah is known typically take place via various

student groups. By far the most prominent of these student associations is the Hamas-affiliated Kutla Islamiya, or Islamic Bloc. Of the thirteen members of al-Najah's 2004 student council, eight -- including the chairperson -- belong to Hamas's Islamic Bloc. Some of the most notorious Hamas terrorists have held senior positions in the al-Najah faction, including Qais Adwan, a former Islamic Bloc leader and head of the al-Najah student council, who was also the head of the Qassam Brigades in the northern West Bank. Mosques controlled by Hamas members and supporters serve as the nerve center for the group's activities - political, charitable and military all.

Examples of mosques that function as radical soapboxes are commonplace. But in addition to the radical rhetoric issuing from the pulpits, mosques run by Hamas members and sympathizers are often a bulletin board of propaganda, their walls plastered with posters and pamphlets glorifying suicide bombers and jailed Hamas militants. For example, Israeli forces raiding the al-Ein mosque in al-Bireh in September 2003 found posters of suicide bombers on the mosque's front door as well as on walls and notice boards throughout the mosque. More surprising, soldiers also seized leaflets and other Hamas propaganda calling for "many spectacular suicide bombing attacks" against U.S. forces in Iraq.

Religious study groups held at Hamas-affiliated mosques -- including Jerusalem's al Aqsa mosque -- have also been identified as sources of recruitment and radicalization. Known as an usra (literally, "family"), such a group is typically led by a teacher (emir) who is a Hamas member or sympathizer, and therefore in a unique position to identify members responsive to radical and Islamist messages.

Increasingly, compliments its on-the-ground radicalization efforts with a parallel campaign on the internet. Hamas publishes a weekly online children's magazine -- just one of approximately 20 Internet sites the group produces -- called al-Fateh (The Conqueror). Launched in September 2002, the site links to other Hamas websites and runs benign children's stories alongside articles preaching the value of carrying out acts of terror -- casting suicide bombers as ideal role models for young children, and encouraging hatred of Israel and Jews. Issue 38, for example, featured a photograph of the decapitated head of Zaynab Abu Salem, a female suicide bomber from the al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (not Hamas) who detonated her suicide bomb belt on September 22, 2004, at the French Hill intersection in Jerusalem, killing two and wounding seventeen. Interestingly, the fact that Salem was not a Hamas member did not preclude members of the media committee from using her severed head to desensitize Palestinian youth to acts of violence.

Al-Fateh is only one of many Hamas websites, which typically feature statements and interviews with the group's leaders, martyr photo galleries, video clips of soon-to-be martyrs giving their "living wills," as well as articles, posters and photographs demonizing Israel and glorifying suicide bombers.

Hamas also uses the Internet to recruit new supporters and members. While some Hamas recruitment efforts are active and tangible, such as spotting potential recruits at mosques and religious classes, the Internet enables terrorist groups to conduct a virtual recruitment drive that, while passive and intangible, has the capacity to reach out to a far larger audience -- one that can be reached at any time of day, in any weather, under any conditions (i.e., even when neighborhoods are under curfew or closure), and anywhere -- not just the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but the world entire. To this end, Hamas operates websites in Arabic, English, Russian, French, Farsi (Persian), Urdu, and Malay, which are run off servers in the United States, Russia, Ukraine, and Indonesia.

Through an impressive combination of all these means -- including secular and religious institutions, grassroots activism and globalized media -- Hamas successfully radicalizes Palestinians not only to support and fund but to facilitate and participate in the group's terrorist attacks. And the fact that Hamas, an organization that prides itself on being a local "resistance" organization, targets foreign audiences from America to Malaysia with its web-based messages should not surprise: the vast majority of Hamas's operating budget is raised abroad.

[Matthew Levitt](#) is a senior fellow and Director of the Stein program on terrorism, intelligence and policy at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. From 2005 to early 2007 he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis at the U.S. Treasury Department. He is the author of [Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad](#) (Yale University Press, 2006), from which this talk is drawn.

## PALESTINIAN BIOGRAPHIES

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### AMIN AL-HUSSEINI

,Amin al-Husseini the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem from the 1920s to the 1940s, played a significant role in amplifying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through his militantly anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist stances.

Some of the key effects of al-Husseini's actions and influence include:

1. **Inciting anti-Jewish violence:** Al-Husseini actively incited violence against the Jewish population in Mandate Palestine, such as the 1920 Nebi Musa riots and the 1929 Hebron massacre of Jews. This established a pattern of violence.
2. **Rejecting Jewish immigration:** He vehemently opposed Jewish immigration and purchase of land, seeing it as an existential threat to the Arab population. This hardened attitudes against compromise.
3. **Allying with the Nazis:** During WWII, al-Husseini met with Hitler, actively supported Nazi policies, and assisted in the formation of Muslim SS divisions. This linked Palestinian nationalism with anti-Semitism.
4. **Opposing the partition plan:** His outright rejection of the 1947 UN Partition Plan and demands for a unitary Arab Palestinian state set the stage for the 1948 Arab-Israeli war after Israel declared independence.
5. **Fleeing and radicalizing refugees:** When he fled Palestine in 1937, his pro-Nazi and anti-Jewish messaging further radicalized Palestinian refugees in the diaspora against any negotiated settlement.
6. **Legitimizing rejectionism:** Al-Husseini provided religious/nationalist legitimacy to an uncompromising attitude that rejected any Jewish sovereign entity between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea.

*While not the sole instigator, al-Husseini's inflammatory rhetoric, violence incitement, and ideological anti-Semitism helped transform the conflict into a zero-sum struggle over all of Mandate Palestine rather than a basis for compromise and peaceful resolution between Arabs and Jews. His legacy deeply impacted ~*



**Haj Amin al-Husseini**

**Meets With Adolf Hitler `1941**

**Photo**

**Bundesrchiv/Wikimedia**

*Palestinian rejectionism.*

**See [Holocaust Encyclopedia](#)**

## **YASSER ARAFAT**

**Yasser Arafat was chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization from 1969 until his death in 2004, a tumultuous period when clashes with neighboring Israel were prevalent.**

**BIOGRAPHY** Oct 11, 2023



**YASSER ARAFAT**

**1929-2004**

### **SYNOPSIS**

Born in Cairo in 1929, Yasser Arafat was named chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization 40 years later. From this post, he was at the forefront of years of violence, border disputes and the Palestinian liberation movement, all centering on neighboring Israel. Arafat signed a self-governing pact with Israel in 1991, at the Madrid Conference, and together with Israeli leaders made several attempts at lasting peace soon after, notably through the Oslo Accords (1993) and the Camp David Summit of 2000. Stemming from the Oslo Accords, Arafat and Israel's Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres shared the Nobel Peace Prize, but the terms were never implemented. Arafat ceded his PLO chairman post in 2003, and died in Paris in 2004. In November 2013, Swiss researchers released a report containing evidence suggesting that his death was the result of poisoning.

### **EARLY YEARS**

Born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1929, Yasser Arafat was sent to live with his mother's brother in Jerusalem when his mother died in 1933. After spending four years in Jerusalem, Arafat returned to Cairo to be with his father, with whom Arafat never had close ties. (Arafat did not attend his father's 1952 funeral.)

In Cairo, while still a teenager, Arafat began smuggling weapons to Palestine to be used against the Jews and British, the latter of which had an administrative role in the Palestinian lands. Playing a part that he would inhabit his entire life, Arafat left the University of Faud I (later Cairo University) to fight against the

Jews during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which resulted in the establishment of the state of Israel when the Jews prevailed.

### **FATAH**

In 1958, Arafat and some associates founded Al-Fatah, an underground network that advocated armed resistance against Israel. By the mid-1960s, the group had congealed enough that Arafat left Kuwait, becoming a full-time revolutionary and staging raids into Israel.

The year 1964 was seminal for Arafat, marking the founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which brought together a number of groups working toward a free Palestinian state. Three years later, the Six-Day War erupted, with Israel once again pitted against the Arab states. Once again, Israel prevailed, and in the aftermath Arafat's Fatah gained control of the PLO when he became the chairman of the PLO executive committee in 1969.

### **THE PLO**

Moving operations to Jordan, Arafat continued to develop the PLO. Eventually expelled by King Hussein, however, Arafat moved the PLO to Lebanon, and PLO-driven bombings, shootings and assassinations against Israel and its concerns were commonplace events, both locally and regionally, notably with the 1972 murder of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games. The PLO was driven out of Lebanon in the early 1980s, and Arafat soon after launched the *intifada* ("tremor") protest movement against Israel occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The intifada was marked by continual violence in the streets with Israeli retaliation.

### **PEACE ON THE HORIZON?**

The year 1988 marked a change for Arafat and the PLO, when Arafat gave a speech at the United Nations declaring that all involved parties could live together in peace. The resulting peace process led to the Oslo Accords of 1993, which allowed for Palestinian self-rule and elections in the Palestinian territory (in which Arafat was elected president). (Around this time, in 1990, Arafat, at 61 years of age, married a 27-year-old Palestinian Christian, remaining married until his dying day.)

In 1994, Arafat and Israel's Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin all received the Nobel Prize for Peace, and the following year they signed a new agreement, Oslo II, which laid the foundation for a string of peace treaties between the PLO and Israeli, including the Hebron Protocol (1997), the Wye River Memorandum (1998), the Camp David Accords (2000) and the "roadmap for peace" (2002).

### **LATER YEARS**

Regardless of treaties and the best-laid plans between the two parties, peace was always elusive, and, after issuing a second intifada in 2000 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Arafat was confined by Israel to his headquarters in Ramallah.

In October 2004, Arafat fell ill with flulike symptoms and, his situation worsening, was transported to Paris, France, for medical treatment. He died there the following month, on November 11.

In the years since his death, conspiracy theories regarding the true cause of Arafat's demise have abounded, many holding Israel responsible. In November 2013, researchers in Switzerland released a report revealing that tests conducted on Arafat's remains and some of his belongings support the theory that the late Egyptian leader was poisoned. Evidence from the report suggests that radioactive polonium—a highly toxic substance—had been used. Suha Arafat, Yasser Arafat's widow, supported the findings in media interviews as proof of Arafat's murder. Other authorities, including a Russian medical investigation team called to the case, have maintained that they believe Arafat died of natural causes.

## **ISMAIL HANIYEH**

**ISMAIL HANIYEH'S POLITICAL JOURNEY IS A TESTAMENT TO THE ENDURANCE OF THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE. BORN IN A REFUGEE CAMP. HE ROSE TO BECOME A PROMINENT LEADER WITHIN HAMAS AND ASSUMED THE ROLE OF PRIME MINISTER DURING A TUMULTUOUS PERIOD IN PALESTINIAN POLITICS. RECENTLY HE LED A LAVISH LIFESTYLE WITH OTHER LEADERS IN QATAR WHERE HE WAS ASSASSINATED BY ISRAEL IN 2024 (SEE BELOW)**

### **THE ECONOMIC TIMES OCT 12 2023**

Ismail Haniyeh was prominent Palestinian political figure who has played a pivotal role in the complex and tumultuous landscape of Middle East politics. With a career marked by highs and lows, Haniyeh's journey reflects the enduring struggle for Palestinian self-determination and statehood. He is a millionaire, stemming from the 20% tax charged on all items entering through tunnels from Egypt to the Gaza Strip. He ordered the recent attack on Israel over the weekend, which resulted in over 1,500 deaths on both sides. Haniyeh is currently leading a lavish lifestyle in Qatar and reportedly watched the attacks from the comfort of his office.

### **EARLY LIFE AND BACKGROUND**

Ismail Haniyeh was born on January 29, 1962, in Shati refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip, a densely populated coastal enclave, has been a focal point of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades. Growing up in a refugee camp, Haniyeh experienced firsthand the hardships and challenges faced by Palestinians in their quest for statehood. He is married with 13 children.

### **EDUCATION**

He received his primary education in institutions managed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). He studied Arabic literature at the Islamic University of Gaza and became involved with Hamas while at university. He has also been involved with the Muslim Brotherhood and was head of the students' council representing the Muslim Brotherhood while at university.

### **HAMAS AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM**

Haniyeh's political journey is closely tied to the rise of Hamas, a Palestinian political and militant organization. Founded in the late 1980s, Hamas aimed to resist Israeli occupation and provide social services to Palestinians in need. Haniyeh's involvement with Hamas began in the early 1990s when he became associated with its charitable activities and later its political wing.

He rose through the ranks of Hamas, and his commitment to the Palestinian cause and his leadership skills quickly became evident. Haniyeh's leadership during the Second Intifada, a period of intensified conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, catapulted him to the forefront of Palestinian politics.



## **PRIME MINISTER OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY**

In 2006, following democratic elections in the Palestinian territories, Ismail Haniyeh assumed the role of Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority. However, this period was marked by internal conflict between Hamas and its rival, Fatah, which controlled the West Bank. This internal strife escalated into a violent confrontation in 2007, leading to the expulsion of Fatah forces from Gaza.

The split between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority retaining control of the former and Hamas governing the latter, has endured for over a decade. Haniyeh's tenure as Prime Minister was marred by political and economic challenges, as well as international isolation of the Hamas government.

### **CHALLENGES AND CONTROVERSIES**

Ismail Haniyeh's leadership has faced considerable scrutiny and controversy. Hamas's classification as a terrorist organization by some Western nations, including the United States and the European Union, has led to significant challenges for Haniyeh and the Gaza Strip. The region has grappled with a blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt, leading to economic hardships, humanitarian crises, and limited access to basic necessities.

Furthermore, Haniyeh and Hamas have been involved in conflicts with Israel, including multiple military confrontations that have resulted in loss of life and extensive destruction in the Gaza Strip. These conflicts have drawn both international condemnation and regional support. Haniyeh has been arrested by Israeli authorities multiple times for his involvement in the Palestinian uprising against Israel.

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### **MEDIATION EFFORTS AND RECONCILIATION**

In recent years, Haniyeh has been involved in mediation efforts and reconciliation attempts between Hamas and Fatah, as well as between Palestinian factions in general. These efforts have aimed to address the political division that has hindered Palestinian aspirations for statehood.

One of the significant developments was the signing of a reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah in 2021. This agreement opened up possibilities for new Palestinian elections, which are seen as essential for reestablishing unified governance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ISMAIL HANIYEH**

Ismail Haniyeh's political journey reflects the enduring complexities of Palestinian politics. He remains a symbol of resistance and determination in the face of adversity. Haniyeh's leadership within Hamas has both shaped and been shaped by the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, internal divisions, and international dynamics.

As the political landscape continues to evolve, Ismail Haniyeh's role in mediating reconciliation and pursuing the Palestinian cause will be closely watched. While his journey has been marked by challenges and controversies, he remains a significant figure in the quest for Palestinian self-determination and

statehood.

Despite the challenges and controversies he has faced, Haniyeh's commitment to the Palestinian cause remains unwavering.

## **HAMAS POLITICAL LEADER HANIYEH ASSASSINATED IN IRAN, PLUNGING MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT INTO DANGEROUS NEW PHASE**

**(July 31 2024 by [Rob Picheta](#), Helen Regan, Kareem El Damanhoury, Abeer Salman and Paul Murphy, [CNN](#))**

Hamas said its political leader Ismail Haniyeh [has been killed](#) in an overnight strike in the Iranian capital Tehran, a major development that throws the war between Israel and the militant group into an unpredictable and dangerous new phase.

Haniyeh's death is, both strategically and symbolically, a dramatic blow to Hamas, eliminating its most public figure who headed up the group's political operations while living overseas.

He is the second leader of an Iran-backed group reported to have been assassinated in the last day, following the [killing of Hezbollah's most senior military commander](#) in Lebanon.

In a statement, Hamas accused Israel of targeting Haniyeh and his bodyguard in a "strike" on the building in which he was staying in Tehran, where he had participated in Tuesday's inauguration of the new Iranian president. Hamas officials said Haniyeh's death would "not pass in vain" and described the killing as a "grave escalation," while Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said it was Iran's "duty" to avenge Haniyeh's death since he was killed inside Iran. According to the New York Times, which cited information provided by three Iranian officials, Khamenei issued an order for Iran to "strike Israel directly" following the killing.

At a news conference in Tehran later Wednesday, Hamas spokesperson and deputy head Khalil Al-Hayya said Haniyeh was hit directly by a rocket in the room where he was staying, and said Israel would "pay the price" for the "heinous crime."

Iranian state run media IRNA said the strike happened at around 2 a.m. local time (6:30 p.m. ET on Tuesday), involving an "airborne guided projectile." Iran's new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, was sworn in on Tuesday and Hamas released pictures the same day of Haniyeh meeting Iranian officials in Tehran.

State-affiliated Fars said Haniyeh was staying in a residence in north Tehran.

Israel's military said it does not respond to reports in foreign media, though senior officials have previously vowed to eliminate Hamas and its leadership in response to the group's October 7 attack on Israel. It later said it was "conducting a situational assessment."

In contrast, Israel did confirm it [carried out a strike](#) in Beirut, Lebanon, on Tuesday that killed Hezbollah commander Fu'ad Shukr, whom it blamed for a deadly attack in the Israeli-occupied [Golan Heights](#) over the weekend. Hezbollah later confirmed Shukr's death. His assassination was the [most serious Israeli escalation](#) in its confrontation with the powerful Lebanese militant group since it restarted in earnest last October.

Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza, launched following the attacks led by the militant group on October 7, has sparked increasingly intense, near-daily ripples of conflict throughout the region. This week's dual strikes, which came within several hours of each other, seemingly escalate that discord on multiple fronts, and will prompt renewed fears of an [all-out war breaking out](#) in the Middle East.

In a televised address Wednesday evening, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel had delivered "crushing blows" to its enemies in the last few days, but did not mention the death of Haniyeh.

"We'll settle the score with anyone who harms us, anyone who massacres our children, anyone who murders our citizens," Netanyahu said.

In a bellicose speech, he said he did not "give in" to earlier calls to end the war in Gaza "and I am not giving in today." He conceded "these are challenging days," but stressed Israel is "ready for any scenario."

This week's strikes may also dash any remaining hopes of a ceasefire and hostage deal in Gaza being reached in the near future, amid a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in the enclave. Haniyeh had played a leading role representing Hamas in months-long truce negotiations, which have repeatedly appeared to reach the cusp of a breakthrough, only to collapse at the last moment.

In a statement after the strike, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum – which is campaigning to free the hostages still held in Gaza – said that "while (Israel's) military operations over the past 10 months have achieved significant security gains, true achievement can only be realized with the release of all 115 hostages still in captivity." It urged the Israeli government "to decisively advance negotiations."

Haniyeh photographed at the inauguration ceremony for the new Iranian President, Masoud Pezeshkian, on Tuesday, hours before his death.

### **KILLING WILL 'COMPLICATE' CEASEFIRE TALKS**

Haniyeh is the second Hamas senior leader to be killed since the war in Gaza began. In January, the group said the deputy head of its political bureau, Saleh Al Arouri, was [killed in an Israeli airstrike](#) in Beirut. Arouri was considered one of the founding members of Hamas's military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades.

The impact of any single death in Hamas' leadership structure is difficult to predict given the group's vast and opaque network, and it has been able to weather the death of other key leaders before – including the slaying of its co-founders Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Abdel Aziz Rantisi, killed weeks apart in 2004.

But Haniyeh's death leaves Hamas without its public political figurehead, and likely represents a major setback to its international operations. It would not be expected to dramatically impact its military effort, but his demise may carry symbolic weight throughout the organization.

He had taken a central role in hostage and ceasefire talks between Israel and Hamas, and earlier this spring said Hamas was willing to strike a deal – but added it would require Israel withdrawing from Gaza and a guarantee to cease fighting in the enclave permanently, demands that Israel has called "unacceptable."

A source with knowledge of the negotiations told CNN on Wednesday that Haniyeh's death could "complicate mediation talks."

The source said Haniyeh – along with Hamas' military leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar – was a "key decision maker."

“He was someone who saw the value of a deal and was instrumental to getting certain breakthroughs in the talks,” the source added.

Haniyeh was in touch with mediators in Qatar and Egypt as recently [as early July](#). Those talks now hang in the balance, despite some hope earlier this month that they were nearing a framework agreement.

“How can mediation succeed when one party assassinates the negotiator on other side?” Qatar’s Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, a mediator in the talks, posted on X on Wednesday. Qatar’s capital, Doha, also hosts the main Hamas political bureau. “Peace needs serious partners & a global stance against the disregard for human life,” Al-Thani wrote.

Dual deaths raise fears of all-out war

The killings of Haniyeh in Tehran and Hezbollah’s Shukur in Beirut are significant in both their timing and location.

Brigadier General (Res.) Assaf Orion, senior researcher at Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies think tank, said the two deaths “increase the likelihood of an axis response, adding Iran and other proxy attacks to the menu.”

Iran has spent years investing in regional proxy groups, informally known as the “Axis of Resistance” – an anti-Israel and anti-Western alliance – supplying them with money, weapons, and training as Tehran has sought to broaden its influence across the Middle East.

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that Iran sees it as its duty to avenge the killing of Haniyeh because he was assassinated on Iranian soil. The aftermath of an Israeli military strike on a building in Beirut on Wednesday. Israel said it targeted a Hezbollah commander responsible for the attack that killed several children in the Golan Heights.

Anwar Amro/AFP/Getty Images

“You killed our dear guest in our house and now have paved the way for your harsh punishment,” Khamenei said in a statement referring to Israel. “We consider it our duty to ask for the blood of our dear guest.”

Israel’s war against Hamas in Gaza has brought that longstanding shadow war with Iran out into the open – and inflamed opinion globally.

In a speech at the United Nations Security Council on Wednesday, Iran’s ambassador to the UN blamed the United States for the death of Haniyeh, saying it could not have happened without US authorization and intelligence support.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said the US was “not aware of or involved in” the killing. In calls with both the Jordanian and Qatari foreign ministers, Blinken said it was important to continue the ceasefire talks and to prevent “further escalation of the conflict,” according to State Department readouts.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, while traveling in the Philippines, said he does not think war in the Middle East is inevitable, but if Israel were to be attacked the United States would help defend it. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, an elite wing of the Iranian military, said Haniyeh’s death was under investigation and results will be announced later Wednesday, according to Iranian state media.

And Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas condemned Haniyeh’s killing calling it “a cowardly act and a dangerous development,” according to the Wafa news agency on Wednesday. “His Excellency

called on the masses and forces of our people to unite, be patient and steadfast in the face of the Israeli occupation,” Wafa reported.

### **A HAMAS MEMBER FOR DECADES**

Haniyeh, 62, was born in a refugee camp near Gaza City, and joined Hamas in the late 1980s during the First Intifada, or uprising.

As Hamas grew in power, Haniyeh rose through the ranks – being appointed part of a secret “collective leadership” in 2004. By 2017 he had become chief of the group – and was named a “specially designated global terrorist” by the US soon after.

Some Palestinians expressed shock and sadness at his death on Wednesday. “Ismail Haniyeh is the son of Gaza. He represents my entire people,” Ahmad Al Nims told a journalist working with CNN in Deir el-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip.

[Related article Who was Ismail Haniyeh, the Hamas political leader killed in Tehran?](#)

Another Gazan, Abu Yasser Hassoun, said the assassination had “struck” Palestinians “like a thunderbolt.” Palestinian analyst Mustafa Ibrahim told CNN that despite some disagreements, Haniyeh held a “special place among the Palestinians.”

Over the years, Haniyeh has participated in peace talks with former [US President Jimmy Carter](#), and met with other world leaders including the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, and Chinese diplomat Wang Kejian earlier this year.

In April, Israeli air strikes killed [three of Haniyeh’s sons](#) and four of his grandchildren, according to Hamas. At the time, Haniyeh insisted their deaths would not affect ongoing ceasefire and hostage talks. “Whoever thinks that by targeting my kids during the negotiation talks and before a deal is agreed upon that it will force Hamas to back down on its demands, is delusional,” he said.

### **HOW HANIYEH SPENT THE MONTHS AFTER OCT. 7**

After he celebrated seeing his fighters return to the Gaza Strip with Israeli equipment in Hamas’ office in Istanbul, Turkey on October 7, Ismail Haniyeh spent the majority of his time in Doha as head of Hamas’ Political Bureau but took a number of trips to Tehran, Istanbul and Cairo, according to a CNN analysis. CNN reviewed statements by Hamas and others, in addition to state media outlets and other social media posts, to analyze and track Haniyeh’s movements since October 7.

Haniyeh took at least four trips to Tehran – in November, March, May and July. During all four visits, he met with Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

In May, he attended the funerals of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who were killed in a helicopter crash.

On his final trip to Tehran, which ended with his assassination, he was attending the inauguration of the new Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

He also took three known trips to Cairo in November, December and February, to lead Hamas’ ceasefire negotiating delegation. That negotiation process, which is still ongoing, has been shepherded by Qatar and Egypt.

The Hamas leader also spent two periods of time in Istanbul. He watched the October 7 attacks unfold in Hamas' Istanbul offices. Video that circulated social media following the attacks show him celebrating after watching news reports of Hamas fighters returning to the Gaza Strip with Israeli equipment.

He returned home to Doha in October after the attacks, and took another 14 day-trips there in April.

While there in April, Haniyeh met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in addition to a number of Turkish politicians.

Haniyeh's body will be buried in Doha on Friday, after funerals are held for him in Tehran on Thursday.

CNN's Mostafa Salem, Kareem Khadder, Sahar Akbarzai, Jessie Yeung, Mostafa Salem, Negar Mahmoodi and Niamh Kennedy contributed reporting.

## MAHMOUD ABBAS

[JEWISH STRATEGIC TRIBUNE](#) Ksenia Svetlova, August 2022



**Mahmoud Abbas**  
**President**  
**of the Palestinian Authority**

On July 15, 2022, Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, was standing shoulder to shoulder with US President Joe Biden in Bethlehem. It was hard to hide the disappointment on Abbas's face. Since the Oslo Peace Accords of 1993 he has met five US presidents. The first two—Bill Clinton and George W. Bush—were eager to engage in Palestinian–Israeli negotiations, but the last three presidents—Obama, Trump and now Biden—showed moderate to low interest in the Palestinian plight, as other critical matters drew away their attention.

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If there were any high hopes back in early 2021 when Biden became the US president, not many are left now. Biden brought with him some funding for Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem and some practical steps important for the daily life of Palestinians, such as the upgrading of the cellular networks, longer working hours of the border crossing at Allenby Bridge, and Palestinian family unification in the West Bank. Biden's political statements on Palestinian statehood, however, have been rather limited in scope, although they have repeated the trope of “two states based on the 1967 lines.” The US Consulate General in East Jerusalem remains closed as does the PLO office in Washington. After more than six decades of fighting and negotiating with Israel, this was a disappointment.

U.S. President Biden meets Abbas in the West Bank, July 2022. Photo credit: REUTERS

Throughout a lengthy political career that started with co-founding Fatah (the Palestinian National Liberation Movement) in 1959, Mahmoud Abbas experienced endless ups and downs. Together with Arafat, he switched from armed struggle to negotiations and coexistence. Unlike Arafat, he more wholeheartedly chose the latter, and back in 2002, he offered the sad insight that the Palestinians have defeated themselves through “militarization of the uprising” (*askarat al-intifada*). He was praised by the international community and by Israeli leaders as being “moderate and pragmatic,” invited to lead the

Palestinian side in rounds of talks in 2007, 2010, and 2013–2014 but then was slammed as a “terrorist supporter” by the Netanyahu-led government in 2015. He was finally castigated by many Palestinians as a corrupt and incompetent leader who serves the occupation by providing for security cooperation with Israeli authorities. Did Palestinians and Israelis ever have a real chance with Abbas, one of the “founding fathers” of the Oslo Accords, at the helm? And if so, why was this chance lost? How will Abbas (also known as Abu Mazen or father of Mazen, after the name of his eldest son) be remembered, and who might succeed him as the head (or heads) of the Palestinian Authority?

### **A PALESTINIAN REFUGEE, A QATARI STUDENT, A SOVIET PHD**

Mahmoud Abbas was born in 1935 in the city of Safed in the Galilee. In 1948 his family joined hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who became refugees due to the war in Palestine. The family settled in Damascus, where he was admitted to university and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in law. In the late fifties he left for Qatar, where he became an official in the Ministry of Education and recruited teachers in the West Bank and Gaza to work in the Qatari education system. Had he not met a young civil engineer whose name was Mohammed Abdel Rahman Abdel Raouf al-Qudwa al-Husseini—i.e., Yasser Arafat—who at the time was living and working in Kuwait, Abbas might have continued his educational work in Qatar instead of becoming a senior Palestinian politician. The two men grew close, and soon Abbas became Arafat’s right hand man.

In the 1970s, Mahmoud Abbas became responsible for the financial affairs of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. In Israel there is a dispute as to whether he was a secret partner in the actions of the Black September group, which, among other atrocities, carried out the massacre of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972. This is what Abu Daoud (Mohammed Daoud Odeh), one of the heads of Black September, claimed in his autobiography. Abbas has always denied his involvement.

In the late 1970s, Abbas was appointed PLO representative in Moscow, where he completed a doctorate at the Institute of Oriental Studies under the guidance of the head of the institute, Yevgeny Primakov, a close associate of the Communist Party Secretary General Leonid Brezhnev. The title of his doctoral thesis was “The connections between Zionism and Nazism between the years 1933–1945.” It stated that the two movements not only cooperated with each other during World War II but also had some common elements.



**Abbas in 1993 with  
Yasser Arafat,  
N Secretary General  
Boutros Boutros Ghali  
and PLO spokeswoman  
Hanan Ashrawi.  
Photo credit: Reuters**



In 2001, when I was working at MEMRI (Middle East Media Research Institute), I went to Moscow to locate this work. After a quick search I found it in the archive of the Institute of Oriental Studies. The thesis was written in Russian, and every second sentence in it was some quote of Lenin. It was very much in line with the then official Soviet antisemitic claim that castigated Zionism as a “colonial vestige,” rather than as a genuine movement, and described it as a menace to the “indigenous Palestinian nation.” In 1984, Abbas’s book, based on his PhD, was published in Arabic in Syria, but it was very different in content and included denying the Holocaust. However, in his many TV appearances and interviews, including with me, he said that he never denied the Holocaust and believed that it was a heinous crime.

Indeed, what else did Abbas do while he was in Moscow? According to documents revealed by Vasili Mitrokhin, a former KGB man who defected to the West, Abbas’s name appeared on the list of KGB agents in Syria under the nickname “Krotov” (meaning “the mole”). The Palestinian Authority rejected this report in every way. Muhammed al-Madani, who is responsible for the Committee for Interaction with the Israeli Public, claimed that the ties between the Palestinians and the Soviet Union had always been close, and that there was no logic in this claim because Abbas was openly the head of Palestinian–Russian Friendship Association and never tried to hide this fact.

### **GREAT EXPECTATIONS**

Mahmoud Abbas was always considered to be a moderate among senior PLO officials, in regard to the use of violence and the prospect of negotiations with Israel. Already in 1977, he declared that he was not opposed to contacts with Israel and to peaceful resolution of the conflict, breaking away from the official PLO line that insisted on Israel’s annihilation.

Fifteen years later, Abbas became a top negotiator in the later stages of the Oslo Accords (initially led by his perennial rival in the leadership ranks, Ahmed Qurei, known as Abu Alaa) and co-authored with Yossi Beilin the secretive “Beilin–Abu Mazen” document. During all this time, Abbas consistently rejected the use of violence as part of the struggle against Israel. He believed that by resorting to violence Palestinians were only harming their own chances, and that violence would not lead to a breakthrough. Later, he even hinted, during a televised interview on Israel’s Channel 12, that he would not demand his right to his parents’ house in Safed. His words were interpreted by his many critics in the Palestinian leadership and in refugee camps across the Middle East as a readiness to give up the “right of return”—one of the Palestinians’ most hallowed slogans.



**Abbas  
with U.S. President  
George W. Bush.  
Photo credit: REUTERS**

On February 11, 2005, I stood in the pouring rain in the Muqata'a—a government compound—in Ramallah, covering, as a journalist, the inauguration ceremony of a new Palestinian president. An eternal number two, he suddenly became number one. The world, especially the Israelis, and the Palestinians, expected a miracle; after the hellish years of the Second Intifada, Abbas was supposed to stop the violence and dismantle Palestinian armed groups. He was expected to revive what was left of the Palestinian economy, promote peace agreements with Israel, and protect Palestinian interests at the same time. In 2002, President George W. Bush had called for a “new and different” Palestinian leadership; Abbas was expected to fulfill this vision. Palestinians, meanwhile, wanted him to express a willingness to make major concessions for the sake of peace but to not give up on the fundamental issues, such as the right of return. In just a few months after Abbas's inauguration as president, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon accomplished the unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip. It was a necessary, yet extremely controversial move that almost tore Israeli society apart and was presented by Hamas leaders in Gaza as a victory. Hamas's military parades and flags that colored Gaza in green that summer were a prelude to their landslide victory during the parliamentary elections in January 2006. Abbas, a pragmatic leader who wanted to avert violence, focus on reviving the Palestinian economy and on resuming negotiations, now had to rule over the Palestinian Authority with a Palestinian parliament dominated by a party that demanded Israel's destruction.

The parliamentary elections in 2006 were observed by international monitors and described as “clean and transparent” but had brought about an unexpected and grim result. Fifteen months later, after an unsuccessful attempt to handle a unity government, Abbas decided to fire his prime minister, Hamas leader Ismael Haniya. Soon Hamas fighters were busy shooting Fatah activists in their kneecaps and taking over government buildings and crossings in Gaza. Since 2006, Abbas has not set foot in Gaza. From that very moment, his authority was undermined and compromised in the eyes of both Israelis and Palestinians. The loss of Gaza in 2006 also provided the Israeli political establishment with a question still posed to its voters: Why should Israel negotiate with a leader who is unable to exercise authority over his own people?

## BETWEEN CHRONIC WEAKNESS AND ABSOLUTE POWER

Despite the loss of Gaza, Abbas had successfully fulfilled the delicate and tricky task of dismantling the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade—the military wing of Fatah—and by 2007 his team was back at the negotiation table. At the other side of the table was ex-Likud and then Kadima Party leader, Ehud Olmert. Some dramatic progress was made in narrowing the gaps; however, there was ultimately no breakthrough to boast about, and each side was wary of making significant decisions at a time of political uncertainty. It is widely believed that Abbas had disappointed Olmert by his constant refusals and denials. No one knows, however, what the outcome of these negotiations would have been had Olmert not been under a legal cloud (he soon resigned and was tried and found guilty on counts of graft). Could Abbas have accepted and signed—on behalf of all Palestinians in the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian diaspora—an agreement that would terminate the conflict and establish a Palestinian state, giving up the right of return and claims of sovereignty over the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, if he knew that Olmert would still be prime minister? Was Olmert's offer, described by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as “amazing” really appealing to the Palestinians? Rice mentioned at the time that “Rabin had been killed for offering far less,” but perhaps it was Abbas who was worried that he would be killed for accepting an offer that in the eyes of many Palestinians was still far from sufficient.



**Abbas and Ehud Olmert  
in Jerusalem, 2008.  
Photo credit: REUTERS**

After Olmert left office, the negotiations stalled. Abbas tried fighting Israel in the UN and other international institutions—unsuccessfully. The lack of progress on the negotiations track, the divide between Gaza and West Bank, the Arab Spring, and the tremendous changes in intraregional relations, as well as growing authoritarianism in the Palestinian Authority, turned Abbas into an isolated, helpless leader, who exercises what is left of his power to prevent any reform and change in the West Bank. He had been weakened by 12 years of Netanyahu's rule, when even the simplest steps, such as enlarging a certain residential quarter in Qalqilya or extending the working hours of some border crossing were impossible. And yet nothing can justify the vast corruption and nepotism that became a distinctive feature of the Palestinian Authority. The bid to have elections by May 2021, the first in 15 years, was followed by the decision to postpone them indefinitely and resort to political repression. It was the last straw. The Palestinian street wants elections, political unity, and a firm position vis-à-vis Israel. In Abbas, who is keen to stick to the status quo, they see nothing other than weakness.

## THE DAY AFTER ABBAS

For the last 17 years the Palestinian Authority, a ruling body that was meant to exist only for a few years and to serve as a bridge to Palestinian statehood, has been led by Abbas. His own people currently see him as an ailing autocratic leader who did not promote their dream of independence, did not curb Israeli settlement activity, and did not succeed in economic development; in practice, he became “an official who serves Israel.” In contrast, the Israelis blame him for not being bold and daring enough to stop the incitement and payments for terrorists and for not offering enough of a compromise. Many have forgotten that he dismantled the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade and essentially stopped the violent Second Intifada, that he always advocated for nonviolence, and that during the 17 years of his rule, the West Bank did not pose a military threat to Israel.

Although no peace was achieved, no war or intifada erupted either. Is it enough of an achievement for a leader of a political entity that was never free to make his own choices? Time will tell. Just like former president Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Mahmoud Abbas has tried not to rock the boat too much. Just like Mubarak, he and his immediate environment are steeped in corruption and have become oblivious to the plight of the Palestinian people. After Abbas, some kind of a violent shake-up in the West Bank is seemingly inevitable. Just like other Arab leaders of his age, Abbas has not prepared an heir. He has meticulously destroyed and banned any cadre around him that seemed intelligent and ambitious. The battle for legacy and spheres of influence might be brutal and dangerous. Palestinian society will have to make some painful choices, and the Israelis will be faced with a new, post-Abbas reality.

When a brutal war is raging in Ukraine and the danger of famine is hanging over dozens of countries in Africa and the Middle East, it’s natural that the world is not focused on Israeli–Palestinian affairs. The only two parties that have to make sure that the nonviolent legacy of Abbas is not lost are the Palestinians and Israelis. They will have to work hard to prevent a violent outburst, to maintain the conditions that will still allow for a two-state reality, and to try to work out a solution. The last was, unfortunately, not accomplished during Abbas’s era.

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**The Holocaust is the most infamous genocide in history.**

**It came close to wiping out the entire Jewish population of Europe**

**But questions remain over who has a share in the responsibility for it.**

### STUDENTS' TOUGHEST QUESTIONS

1	Why did Hitler choose the swastika to be the symbol of the Nazi Party?
2	Why didn't Germans speak out against laws that stripped Jews of their rights after the Nazis came to power?
3	Why didn't Jews leave Germany when they saw what was happening in the 1930s?
4	Why were so many countries, including the United States, unwilling to accept Jews who wanted to leave Germany?
5	Did people who lived near ghettos and camps know what was going on? Why didn't they do anything to stop what was happening, were they afraid?

Yes, many people knew what was happening, often in quite a bit of detail. Even after the Nazis and their collaborators implemented the “Final Solution” and tried to obscure their brutal activities, many people even far from the scene of murder still had access to quite a bit of information—through letters, soldiers home on leave, business people and others who had been to the areas where murder was happening, etc. It is true that some people made an effort not to understand and willingly chose to ignore what was happening. The frequently uttered mantra “we didn't know” by Germans and others after the war was more of an attempt to avoid responsibility than it was a statement of fact. The totalitarian nature of the Nazi regime meant that fear of punishment may have been a factor. However, it is important to remember that even in the most oppressive regimes, individuals retain the ability to make decisions about how they will behave.

There may not have been much that could have been done to stop the “Final Solution” as a phenomenon; however, it was still possible to help on an individual basis in certain situations. Nothing is a more striking example of this than those people across Europe who, at great peril, chose to risk their lives to aid Jews. To date, 27,921 of these individuals and groups have been recognized as “Righteous Among the Nations” for their efforts. Since each ghetto was different, the possibilities of giving help also varied. Help was much less possible for Jews already interned in labor or concentration camps, except by camp personnel.

6	When did the United States realize what was happening to Jews in Europe and what was the response?
7	What was the role of the Catholic Church during the Holocaust?
8	Why didn't the Jews fight back?
9	Why were Jews singled out for mass murder; why did people hate them so much?
10	How were the Nazis able to identify who was Jewish, especially in places where they were assimilated?
11	Did some Jews collaborate with the Nazis?

### **[36 Questions and Answers About the Holocaust/ Victims of the Nazi Holocaust and Nazi Persecution](#)**

The Museum of Tolerance is located at 9786 West Pico Blvd,  
Los Angeles, CA 90035.

you can call 310-772-2505 to reserve your tickets.

#### **YAD VASHEM IN [ECHOES AND REFLECTIONS](#)**

As students study the Holocaust, they will — and should — have lots of questions. Answering and engaging in discussion about these and other questions that arise in the classroom is a valuable opportunity to refute incorrect information, add additional content and context, and deepen learning.

Go to

**[Students' Questions related to the Israel/Hamas War: Guidance for Holocaust Educators](#)**

## INTRODUCTION:

Echoes & Reflections is dedicated in purpose and program to ensuring that students learn about the Holocaust and its lessons for the world today. The brutal attacks in Israel on October 7th and the subsequent dramatic rise in antisemitism are profoundly unsettling, and reinforce the need for all people to understand, identify, and challenge antisemitism in our society and world.

Our pedagogy supports student learning to critically examine and make connections from history to today in appropriate, thoughtful, and accurate ways. The following information is intended to provide guidance and resources to help Holocaust educators address these current events with students specifically as they relate to identifying and understanding antisemitism and the use/abuse of Holocaust history in this moment.

Given the sensitivity and emotional toll of the current conflict on so many, the safety and well-being of students must remain at the forefront of teaching and classroom discussions. As such, we recommend that educators take the time to prepare themselves emotionally for discussing sensitive topics, fostering a trusting and calm environment, and responding respectfully to all questions.

Emphasize and acknowledge the complexity of incidents, avoid simplistic explanations, and exercise caution around unintentionally reinforcing stereotypes, bias, and antisemitism/anti-Muslim bigotry.

Consider these additional resources to help in classroom framing and productive dialogue:

- 10 Ways to Have Conscientious Conversations on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict - ADL •
- Helping Children Cope with Terrorism - National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) • -
- How to Talk to Kids About Violence, Crime, and War (Common Sense Media)

When working with students on topics such as these, it is imperative to use precise language when discussing current events that are difficult and often contentious. While the below provides guidance and suggested responses to specific queries related to antisemitism and the Holocaust, we encourage teachers to support students' critical thinking, encouraging them to research the history of the region and how that affects the current conflict, and to continue to learn more about what is happening in Israel and Gaza using reliable and trusted sources.

**[Go to 36 Questions and Answers About the Holocaust/ Victims of the Nazi Holocaust and Nazi Persecution](#)**



**PART E**

**JEWS AND ARABS**

**'THE HAJ' BY LEON URIS  
HELPS TO UNDERSTAND  
ARAB CONFLICT. LAND, LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT**

**IN PALESTINE BETWEEN THE JEWS, ARABS AND THE BRITISH  
IN PALESTINE AFTER WORLD WAR 1.**

**'Prelude'  
Tells of the Appointment of a New 'Muktar' in 1922.**

Young Ibrahim quietly took his place at his father's bedside, watching the old man wheeze out his final scene.

The glazed eyes of the sheik gave his son an inkling of recognition and he rallied his remaining strength. Reaching beneath the pillow, he withdrew the jeweled dagger and, trembling, handed it to Ibrahim, enacting the ancient rite of the passage of power.

"This belongs to Farouk," Ibrahim said. "He is my elder."

"Your brother is a dog with no teeth," the father rasped. "Already the others are conspiring to select a new muktar. The power must remain with us, the Soukoris," he said and thrust the dagger into his son's hand. "It is small, as weapons go," the sheik said, "but it is the weapon by which we rule our people. They know the meaning of the dagger and the courage of the man who can drive it in to the hilt."

The old sheik died and the village wailed, and true to his dying thoughts, the four other clans had selected a new muktar for Tabah, breaking the Soukori hold of a century. An hour after his father was buried, Ibrahim invited eight of the leading members of the other clans to his home. In the center of the room stood a crude wooden table. Ibrahim suddenly produced eight knives and stabbed them in a line into the planking, then pulled back his robes, revealing the jeweled dagger.

"I believe," he said, "it is time that we hold an election for the new muktar. If anyone disagrees with the continuity of the Soukori rule ..." He left the sentence unfinished and waved an open hand at the array of knives. Ordinarily the election of a new muktar would take a thousand hours of haggling before coming to the conclusion that Ibrahim had now presented to them. This election was over within a minute, with each of the eight adversaries stopping before him one at a time, bowing, kissing his hand, and declaring his loyalty.

Ibrahim al Soukori was in his midtwenties and Muktar of Tabah, and he knew the power of the dagger in Arab life.

# GAZA WAR - FRIENDLY AND OPPOSITE COUNTRIES TO ISRAEL

ChatGPT AI 21 July 2024

attitudes of Arab countries toward Israel, including both friendly countries and those maintaining opposition, with detailed context on historical, political, economic, and public sentiment factors.

## FRIENDLY ARAB COUNTRIES

### *Egypt*

- **Historical Context:** Egypt was the first Arab country to recognize Israel officially, signing the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979, following the Camp David Accords mediated by US President Jimmy Carter. This landmark agreement ended the state of war that had existed since Israel's creation in 1948 and returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, which Israel had captured during the Six-Day War in 1967.
- **Diplomatic Relations:** Egypt and Israel maintain embassies in each other's capitals, and diplomatic relations are stable. Security cooperation is a key aspect of their relationship, especially in combating terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula and maintaining the peace treaty's provisions.
- **Economic Ties:** Trade between the two countries includes natural gas, agricultural products, and textiles. The Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) allow Egyptian companies to export products to the US duty-free if they contain a certain percentage of Israeli content. These economic ties are significant, though not as extensive as those with Western countries.
- **Public Sentiment:** Public opinion in Egypt remains largely negative toward Israel, influenced by historical conflicts and solidarity with Palestinians. Egyptian media and political discourse often reflect this sentiment. Nonetheless, the Egyptian government's pragmatic approach ensures the peace treaty and cooperation continue.

### *Jordan*

- **Historical Context:** Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, making it the second Arab country to officially recognize Israel. This followed the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO, which paved the way for Jordan to negotiate its peace terms.
- **Diplomatic Relations:** The countries have embassies and cooperate closely on security matters, particularly in the Jordan Valley and along their shared border. The treaty includes provisions for economic cooperation and resource sharing, especially concerning water.

- **Economic Ties:** Economic cooperation includes joint tourism initiatives, energy agreements, and infrastructure projects. The Jordan Gateway industrial park is an example of joint economic ventures, promoting cross-border trade and investment.
- **Public Sentiment:** Despite official ties, many Jordanians oppose normalization due to the large Palestinian population in Jordan and ongoing tensions over Jerusalem and Palestinian rights. Public protests and political opposition highlight the underlying discontent.

### ***United Arab Emirates (UAE)***

- **Historical Context:** The UAE normalized relations with Israel in 2020 as part of the Abraham Accords, brokered by the US. This marked a significant geopolitical shift, driven by mutual concerns over Iran's influence and the potential for economic cooperation.
- **Diplomatic Relations:** The UAE and Israel quickly established embassies and consulates, with high-level diplomatic visits becoming routine. This normalization has been one of the most visible in terms of public diplomacy.
- **Economic Ties:** The countries have signed numerous agreements covering sectors like technology, healthcare, agriculture, and tourism. Trade between the UAE and Israel has surged, with joint ventures in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and renewable energy.
- **Public Sentiment:** While there is some opposition among the UAE's population, the government focuses on the economic and technological benefits of the relationship. The public sentiment is generally more accepting compared to other Arab countries.

### ***Bahrain***

- **Historical Context:** Bahrain normalized relations with Israel in 2020 under the Abraham Accords, driven by strategic interests, including security concerns about Iran.
- **Diplomatic Relations:** Diplomatic ties were quickly established, with embassies and regular high-level visits.
- **Economic Ties:** Cooperation includes financial services, technology, healthcare, and cybersecurity. Bahraini companies are increasingly exploring opportunities in Israel, and vice versa.
- **Public Sentiment:** Public opinion in Bahrain is mixed, with some segments of society opposing normalization due to solidarity with the Palestinians. The government, however, emphasizes the benefits of peace and cooperation.

## ***Morocco***

- **Historical Context:** Morocco established diplomatic relations with Israel in 2020. This move was partly incentivized by US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.
- **Diplomatic Relations:** Diplomatic missions were opened, and high-level visits have facilitated bilateral cooperation.
- **Economic Ties:** Areas of cooperation include tourism, agriculture, water management, and renewable energy. There is significant interest in Israeli technology and innovation.
- **Public Sentiment:** The Moroccan public has mixed feelings about normalization. Historical ties due to the Moroccan Jewish community in Israel play a role, but there is also strong support for Palestinian rights.

## ***Sudan***

- **Historical Context:** Sudan agreed to normalize relations with Israel in 2020, part of a broader effort to reintegrate into the international community and secure economic aid, including removal from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism.
- **Diplomatic Relations:** The process of establishing full diplomatic ties is ongoing, influenced by Sudan's complex political transition.
- **Economic Ties:** Potential areas of cooperation include agriculture, technology, and economic development. Sudan hopes to benefit from Israeli expertise and investment.
- **Public Sentiment:** There is significant opposition within Sudan to normalization, driven by support for the Palestinian cause and political factions resistant to change.

## **COUNTRIES SUPPORT TO HAMAS**

### **IRAN**

- **Historical Context:** Iran's support for Hamas dates back to the early 1990s, following Hamas' establishment in 1987 during the First Intifada. Iran views Hamas as a critical ally in its resistance axis against Israel and the United States.
- **Financial Support:** Iran provides substantial financial assistance to Hamas, which is crucial for its military operations and governance in Gaza. This funding helps Hamas pay salaries, procure weapons, and maintain its social services network.
- **Military Training and Weapons:** Iran supplies Hamas with advanced weaponry, including rockets, drones, and other military equipment. Iranian military advisors and members of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) provide training to Hamas fighters, helping them enhance their combat capabilities.

- **Political Support:** Iran supports Hamas politically by recognizing it as a legitimate resistance movement against Israeli occupation. This support includes diplomatic backing in international forums and media campaigns to bolster Hamas' image.
- **Strategic Implications:** Iran's support for Hamas is part of its broader strategy to extend its influence in the region and counter Israeli and US policies. By supporting Hamas, Iran also gains a foothold in the Palestinian territories, challenging rivals such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

## **COUNTRIES AGAINST NORMALIZATION WITH ISRAEL**

- **Historical Context:** Algeria has a long history of opposition to Israel, rooted in its anti-colonial stance and strong support for Palestinian self-determination. Algeria has consistently supported Palestinian militant groups and opposed any form of normalization.
  - **Diplomatic Relations:** No formal diplomatic relations exist between Algeria and Israel. Algeria strongly opposes normalization and supports Palestinian rights.
  - **Public Sentiment:** There is widespread support for the Palestinian cause and strong opposition to any form of normalization with Israel, influenced by historical anti-colonial sentiment.
- 
- **Historical Context:** Lebanon and Israel have been technically at war since 1948, with no formal diplomatic relations. The presence and influence of Hezbollah, a powerful political and militant group in Lebanon, which opposes Israel, perpetuates hostilities.
  - **Diplomatic Relations:** Non-existent. Border tensions and periodic conflicts, especially in southern Lebanon, perpetuate hostilities.
  - **Public Sentiment:** Highly negative toward Israel, influenced by the presence of Palestinian refugees, historical conflicts, and the influence of Hezbollah.
- 
- **Historical Context:** Syria and Israel have been in a state of conflict since Israel's establishment, primarily over territorial disputes including the Golan Heights, which Israel captured in 1967 and annexed in 1981.
  - **Diplomatic Relations:** No formal diplomatic relations. The Golan Heights remains a contentious issue, and Syria remains hostile toward Israel.
  - **Public Sentiment:** Public sentiment is largely hostile due to territorial disputes, historical enmity, and the ongoing civil war.
- 
- **Historical Context:** Iraq has a history of hostility towards Israel, including participation in wars against Israel and support for Palestinian militant groups. The government maintains a policy of non-recognition.
  - **Diplomatic Relations:** No formal diplomatic relations and strong opposition to normalization.
  - **Public Sentiment:** Largely hostile, driven by historical conflicts, solidarity with the Palestinians, and regional political dynamics.

- **Historical Context:** Libya under Muammar Gaddafi was staunchly anti-Israel. Since Gaddafi's fall, the country's political fragmentation precludes any coherent foreign policy regarding Israel.
  - **Diplomatic Relations:** No formal relations. Different factions hold varying views, but overall, Libya remains opposed to normalization.
  - **Public Sentiment:** Varies among factions, but generally negative toward Israel, influenced by the country's political instability and historical positions.
- 
- **Historical Context:** Tunisia has maintained a position of support for Palestinian rights and has not pursued normalization with Israel. Tunisia occasionally hosts multilateral meetings involving Israel but remains officially opposed to normalization.
  - **Diplomatic Relations:** No formal diplomatic relations. Tunisia has participated in international forums where Israel is present but remains opposed to formal normalization.
  - **Public Sentiment:** Strong opposition to normalization, influenced by historical and cultural solidarity with the Palestinian cause.
- 
- **Historical Context:** While Qatar does not have formal diplomatic relations with Israel, it has maintained unofficial ties and pragmatic engagements, particularly involving humanitarian efforts in Gaza and indirect negotiations with Hamas.
  - **Diplomatic Relations:** Unofficial ties, primarily involving humanitarian aid and indirect negotiations.
  - **Public Sentiment:** Generally supportive of Palestinian rights, with opposition to formal normalization. Qatar balances its pragmatic engagements with strong public support for the Palestinian cause.
- 
- **Historical Context:** Qatar's support for Hamas intensified in the mid-2000s after Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006 and took control of Gaza in 2007. Qatar's approach aligns with its broader foreign policy of supporting Islamist movements and expanding its regional influence.
  - **Financial Support:** Qatar provides significant financial aid to Gaza, including hundreds of millions of dollars for infrastructure projects, humanitarian aid, and direct cash assistance to families. This financial support is vital for maintaining basic services and rebuilding efforts in Gaza.
  - **Diplomatic and Political Support:** Qatar hosts several senior Hamas leaders, including political bureau members. The Qatari government facilitates international diplomacy on behalf of Hamas, including mediating ceasefire agreements with Israel.
  - **Humanitarian Assistance:** Qatar funds numerous humanitarian projects in Gaza, such as hospitals, schools, and housing. This aid improves living conditions in Gaza and indirectly strengthens Hamas' governance.
  - **Strategic Implications:** By supporting Hamas, Qatar aims to bolster its regional standing and counterbalance the influence of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This support aligns with Qatar's broader strategy of backing various Islamist movements across the region.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Syria was a strong supporter of Hamas for many years, offering a haven for its leadership and logistical support.

The relationship soured during the Syrian civil war, as Hamas opposed the Assad regime's brutal crackdown on opposition forces, leading to a temporary rupture.

- **Breakdown and Reconciliation:** Hamas' decision to support the Sunni opposition in Syria strained relations with the Assad regime. Recently, there have been reconciliation efforts, with Hamas leaders expressing a desire to restore ties with Syria, facilitated by Iran and Hezbollah.
- **Potential Future Support:** If fully reconciled, Syria could again provide a strategic base for Hamas operations and facilitate military and logistical support through its alliance with Iran and Hezbollah.
- **Strategic Implications:** Restoring relations with Hamas would strengthen the "axis of resistance" comprising Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria, enhancing their collective influence against Israel and US interests in the region.

### LEBANON (HEZBOLLAH)

- **Historical Context:** Hezbollah, a Shia militant group and political party in Lebanon backed by Iran, has supported Hamas for decades. The relationship is based on mutual opposition to Israel and shared strategic goals.
- **Military Training and Weapons:** Hezbollah provides military training to Hamas fighters, leveraging its extensive experience in guerrilla warfare and asymmetric tactics. Hezbollah also facilitates the transfer of Iranian weapons to Hamas.
- **Political Alliance:** Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, frequently expresses solidarity with Hamas, highlighting their common struggle against Israel. This alliance is part of the broader Iran-led "axis of resistance."
- **Strategic Implications:** Hezbollah's support for Hamas strengthens the operational capabilities of both groups against Israel. This alliance also amplifies Iran's influence in the region, posing a strategic challenge to Israel and its allies.

### TURKEY

- **Historical Context:** Turkey's support for Hamas has grown under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, particularly after the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations following the 2010 Gaza flotilla raid. Erdoğan's government views Hamas as a legitimate political actor and a key player in Palestinian politics.
- **Political Support:** Turkey provides political backing to Hamas, recognizing it as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Turkish leaders often criticize Israeli policies in Gaza and advocate for Hamas' inclusion in peace negotiations.



- **Diplomatic Haven:** Turkey hosts several Hamas leaders, providing them with a platform to conduct political and diplomatic activities. This support includes facilitating international travel and meetings with foreign diplomats.
- **Humanitarian Aid:** Turkey channels significant humanitarian aid to Gaza, supporting various projects in health, education, and infrastructure. This aid helps alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and indirectly supports Hamas' governance.
- **Strategic Implications:** Turkey's support for Hamas enhances its influence in Palestinian affairs and aligns with its broader regional ambitions. By backing Hamas, Turkey positions itself as a key player in the Middle East and strengthens its ties with other Islamist movements.

## YEMEN, IRAQ, AND ISRAEL WITH FOCUS ON THE RED SEA

### YEMEN

- **Historical Context:** Yemen has historically taken a strong stance against Israel, supporting the Palestinian cause and aligning with broader Arab nationalist movements. This hostility stems from Yemen's involvement in the broader Arab-Israeli conflict and its solidarity with Palestinian aspirations.
- **Houthis' Stance:** The Houthi movement (Ansar Allah), which controls significant portions of Yemen, including the capital Sanaa, maintains a vehemently anti-Israel stance. They regularly issue statements condemning Israel and express strong solidarity with the Palestinian cause. The Houthis' slogan, "Death to Israel," highlights their extreme opposition.
- **Iranian Influence:** Iran's backing of the Houthis has intensified Yemen's anti-Israel stance. Iran provides the Houthis with military training, weapons, and financial assistance, aligning their interests with Iran's broader regional strategy, which includes opposition to Israel.
- **Public Sentiment:** Public opinion in Yemen is overwhelmingly hostile to Israel, driven by a combination of historical conflicts, solidarity with the Palestinians, and pervasive anti-Israel propaganda in media and education.
- **Strategic Importance of the Red Sea:** The Red Sea is a critical strategic waterway for global maritime trade and regional security. Yemen's location along the Red Sea, particularly its control over parts of the Bab al-Mandab Strait, gives it significant strategic importance. The Houthis have used their position to threaten shipping routes, including through the use of missiles and maritime mines, which could affect Israeli interests and global trade routes. The Bab al-Mandab Strait is a key chokepoint between the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa, making it crucial for energy shipments and military logistics.
- **Red Sea Security:** The instability in Yemen poses a significant threat to the security of the Red Sea. The Houthis' control over parts of Yemen's coast and their ability to disrupt shipping routes impacts regional security dynamics. The Red Sea's strategic importance to Israel, particularly in

terms of maritime security and trade routes, means that any instability in Yemen could have direct implications for Israeli security and economic interests.

- **Strategic Implications:** Yemen's opposition to Israel and its strategic location along the Red Sea align it with other anti-Israel actors, such as Iran and Hezbollah. This alignment enhances the Houthis' ability to project power in the region and disrupt Israeli and Western interests in the Red Sea.

## IRAQ

- **Historical Context:** Iraq has maintained a hostile stance toward Israel since the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948. Iraq participated in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, reflecting its long-standing opposition to Israel.
- **Government and Militia Stance:** The Iraqi government does not recognize Israel and maintains a policy of non-engagement. Various Shia militia groups in Iraq, backed by Iran, are staunchly opposed to Israel and support Palestinian militant groups. These militias, such as Kata'ib Hezbollah and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, have expressed willingness to confront Israel militarily. In 2022, the Iraqi parliament passed a law criminalizing normalization with Israel, reflecting strong legislative opposition to any form of engagement.
- **Public Sentiment:** Iraqi public opinion is predominantly hostile toward Israel, driven by historical conflicts, solidarity with Palestinians, and the influence of political and religious leaders who propagate anti-Israel rhetoric.
- **Strategic Importance of the Red Sea:** While Iraq does not have a direct coastline on the Red Sea, its regional alliances and geopolitical influence extend to the area. The stability and security of the Red Sea are of strategic importance to Iraq, particularly through its alliances with Iran and other regional actors who have interests in the Red Sea.
- **Regional Influence and Alliances:** Iraq's opposition to Israel aligns it with Iran and other anti-Israel factions in the region. This alliance strengthens the geopolitical axis against Israel and the United States, with implications for regional security and trade routes in the Red Sea.
- **Strategic Implications:** Iraq's anti-Israel stance, combined with its strategic alliances, impacts the broader Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape. The support of Iranian-backed militias in Iraq for Palestinian causes and opposition to Israel aligns with broader efforts to challenge Israeli and Western influence in the region.

## YEMEN'S OPPOSITION TO ISRAEL AND RED SEA SECURITY:

- **Houthis' Control:** The Houthis' control over parts of Yemen, including strategic coastal areas along the Red Sea, poses significant threats to maritime security and global trade routes.
- **Iranian Influence:** Iran's support for the Houthis enhances their military capabilities and their ability to disrupt shipping routes in the Red Sea, impacting Israeli interests.
- **Strategic Location:** Yemen's location along the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandab Strait gives it critical strategic importance, influencing regional security dynamics and international maritime trade.

## IRAQ'S OPPOSITION TO ISRAEL AND REGIONAL ALLIANCES:

- **Government and Militia Stance:** Iraq's government and Iranian-backed militias maintain strong opposition to Israel, supported by legislative actions criminalizing normalization.
- **Public Sentiment:** Iraqi public opinion is overwhelmingly hostile toward Israel, influenced by historical conflicts and anti-Israel rhetoric.
- **Regional Influence:** Iraq's alliances with Iran and other anti-Israel actors extend its influence to the Red Sea region, impacting regional security and geopolitical dynamics.

The opposition of Yemen and Iraq to Israel is deeply rooted in historical, political, and ideological factors. Their strategic locations and regional alliances significantly influence the broader Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape, particularly in the context of the Red Sea's security and the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict.

## OVERLAND TRANSPORT TO ISRAEL AVOIDING THE RED SEA

Transporting goods to Israel while avoiding the Red Sea involves navigating through several countries in the Middle East. This route needs to take into account the political and security landscape of the region. Here's a detailed look at potential overland routes to Israel:

### 1. Via Jordan

- **Route:** Goods can be transported through various routes in the region, but one primary overland route to Israel involves moving goods through Jordan.
- **Steps:**
  1. **From the Gulf States (e.g., UAE, Saudi Arabia):** Goods can be transported by road from the Gulf States through Saudi Arabia to Jordan.
  2. **Saudi Arabia to Jordan:** The goods would travel northward through Saudi Arabia, entering Jordan.
  3. **Jordan to Israel:** The final leg involves crossing from Jordan into Israel. The most common entry point is the Allenby Bridge (King Hussein Bridge) which connects Jordan to the West Bank, and from there into Israel.

### 2. Via Lebanon

- **Route:** Given the current political and security situation, this route is less feasible, but theoretically, goods could pass through Syria into Lebanon, and then into Israel.
- **Steps:**
  1. **From Turkey:** Goods can be transported south through Turkey.
  2. **Turkey to Syria:** The goods would enter Syria.
  3. **Syria to Lebanon:** From Syria, goods would move west into Lebanon.

4. **Lebanon to Israel:** Finally, goods would cross from Lebanon into northern Israel. This route, however, is highly unlikely due to the lack of diplomatic relations and ongoing hostilities between Israel and Lebanon.

### 3. **Via Egypt (Avoiding Red Sea Ports)**

- **Route:** Goods can be transported overland through Egypt to reach Israel.
- **Steps:**
  1. **From Sudan:** Goods can be transported northward from Sudan into Egypt.
  2. **Egypt to Israel:** The goods would then travel through Egypt's road networks to the Sinai Peninsula and cross into Israel at the Taba border crossing near Eilat.

## **FEASIBILITY AND CONSIDERATIONS**

### • **Security and Political Climate:**

- The primary and most feasible route is through Jordan, given the established peace treaty and trade agreements between Jordan and Israel.
- The routes involving Syria and Lebanon are currently impractical due to the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Lebanon's hostile stance towards Israel.
- The route through Egypt is possible but involves a long overland journey and requires navigating the Sinai Peninsula, which has had security concerns due to militant activity.

### • **Logistical Challenges:**

- **Customs and Border Controls:** Cross-border trade involves navigating complex customs regulations and potential delays at border crossings.
- **Road Conditions:** The quality of roads and infrastructure can vary significantly, affecting transit times and the safety of goods.
- **Transport Costs:** Overland transport may be more expensive and time-consuming compared to maritime routes, particularly when traversing multiple countries.

## **DETAILED ROUTE EXAMPLE: GULF STATES TO ISRAEL VIA JORDAN**

### 1. **From the UAE or Saudi Arabia:**

- Goods are loaded onto trucks and transported northwest towards Saudi Arabia's border with Jordan.

### 2. **Saudi Arabia to Jordan:**

- The trucks travel through major highways in Saudi Arabia, such as the route passing through Riyadh towards the Jordanian border.
- Cross into Jordan at border points such as the Al-Haditha border crossing.

### 3. **Jordan to Israel:**

- In Jordan, goods travel via the desert highway towards Amman.
- From Amman, goods are transported west to the Allenby Bridge (King Hussein Bridge) border crossing.

- Cross into the West Bank and from there into Israel.

## **CONCLUSION**

Transporting goods to Israel while avoiding the Red Sea primarily involves overland routes through Jordan, given the geopolitical realities and existing infrastructure. Routes through Lebanon and Syria are currently unfeasible due to security and political reasons. The Egyptian route is an alternative but involves navigating through regions with security concerns. The route via Jordan remains the most viable option, balancing political feasibility, security, and logistical considerations.

**WHY DID BRITISH DOUBLE DEALING  
CREATE DOUBLE DEALING  
BETWEEN THE ARABS AND JEWS  
IN PALESTINE?**

Go to [Palestine vs Israel: What Ignited The Ongoing Conflict | Promises & Betrayals](#)

How British double-dealing during WW1 ignited the conflict between Arabs and Jews in the new British mandate of Palestine in the Middle East is told in the story of intrigue among rival empires; of misguided strategies; and of how conflicting promises to Palestine and Israel created a legacy of bloodshed which determined the fate of the Middle East. Avi Shlaim, Professor of International Relations at Oxford University, calls it 'one of the best historical documentaries on the Middle East I have ever seen'.

## **YEMINI: JEWISH 'NAKBA' WAS WORSE THAN THE ARAB**

**POINT OF NO RETURN** *between on 1 August 2024*

**Jews lost property valued at \$9 billion, has declared Ben-Dror Yemini, who coined the expression 'Jewish *nakba*'. Speaking in May 2024 at Touro university during an international conference on Jews from Arab countries, the journalist, researcher and author of 'The Industry of Lies' said that he doubted if Jewish refugees would get compensation under international human rights law. His presentation begins at 1:32 minutes into the recording:**

"People who talk about the Palestinian *nakba* have no idea about the Jewish *nakba*", Ben Dror Yemini said. "It was worse in many respects."

Ben-Dror Yemini coined the expression 'Jewish *nakba*' about five years ago to refer to the persecution and pogroms which caused 850,000 Jews to flee Arab countries.

His Yemenite grandparents came to Israel not as 'colonists' but fleeing the Orphan's Decree after WWI. This decreed that a child which lost its Jewish parents had to be brought up as a Muslim.

Some 70 million refugees worldwide were created as a result of nationalist wars in the 20th century, Yemini claimed. All refugee crisis were settled by an exchange of populations, except for one – the Palestinian.

Yemini gave several examples of Arab leaders declaring their intention to destroy Jews not just in Palestine, but across the Arab world. The lost Jewish property and assets were worth \$9 billion, as against \$6 billion in Palestinian losses.

There was a beginning of recognition for the rights of the Jewish refugees by President Jimmy Carter\*, an unlikely Zionist.

Yemini said that Palestinian refugees did not deserve compensation because they had started a war of extermination. "People who attack do not have a right of compensation. Don't ask us to apologise," he said. Jews did not declare war – they did deserve compensation. "However, let's not delude ourselves", he said. The Jews would not get compensation because they had spent so many years outside their countries. He claimed that Turkish refugee from Cyprus had been deemed not entitled to compensation under international law.

Other speakers at the conference included Prof Michael Lasker, Haim Saadon, Sarina Roffe, Dr Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah, Dr Stanley Urman and Dr Henry Abramson.

## **ARAB STATES ARE GIVING PALESTINIANS THE COLD SHOULDER – HERE’S WHY**

**Former U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker on why  
Arab states won’t accept Palestinians fleeing war.**

**Ryan Crocker warns that the current conflict between Israel and Hamas — and its potential resolution — depend on understanding the history from the Arab side, and the reluctance of other Arabs to come to the Palestinians’ aid. | Ali Haider/AFP via Getty Images**

[POLITICO](#), MICHAEL HIRSH 02/21/2024 05:00 AM EST

*Michael Hirsh is the former foreign editor and chief diplomatic correspondent for Newsweek, and the former national editor for POLITICO Magazine.*

Israel is poised to launch a ground operation in the city of Rafah on Gaza’s border with Egypt, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees have fled in the four months since Israel began retaliating for the Hamas attack on Oct. 7, 2023. Some members of Israel’s conservative government are now openly advancing the idea of expelling the Palestinian population from Gaza altogether.

If that were to happen, they would have nowhere in the Arab world to go, says former U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker. Despite public support for Palestinian rights, in truth nearly every Arab state has long viewed the Palestinians with “fear and loathing,” Crocker says. This is especially true of Egypt, which will continue to refuse to admit Palestinians from across the border, he says.

Perhaps no American diplomat has seen more history unfold in the Middle East than Crocker. Dubbed “America’s Lawrence of Arabia” by President George W. Bush, who awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Crocker spent nearly four decades representing America’s interests in the Arab world, serving as U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Kuwait, as well as to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Now 74 and retired, Crocker was a survivor of the 1983 terrorist bombing of the U.S. embassy in Lebanon, which killed 64 people. He has watched up close as the Palestinian cause evolved from a guerrilla movement into a failed diplomatic bid for statehood in the 1990s and early 2000s, and finally into what has become a desperate struggle for survival under the Israeli onslaught today. And he warns that the current conflict between Israel and Hamas — and its potential resolution — depend on understanding the history from the Arab side, and the reluctance of other Arabs to come to the Palestinians’ aid.

*The following has been edited for length and clarity.*

**So far, Arab states have not permitted the resettlement of Palestinians in their territory. What’s struck you most about their response to Israel’s war in Gaza?**

What’s noteworthy in this entire conflict since Oct. 7 has been the lack of reaction or response from the Arab world. Saudi Arabia continues to hold the door open for a peace agreement with Israel. The UAE, Morocco and Bahrain didn’t even withdraw ambassadors. Jordan did, but of course with about half of its population being Palestinian, Jordan has a particular problem. That lack of reaction I think is very telling. If



you needed another example that Arab states are not viscerally concerned about the Palestinians and their fate, this would be it.

**The Biden administration is pushing hard to end the conflict by demanding that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu begin discussing a postwar settlement for the Palestinians, including a future state. In return, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states would help rebuild and continue normalizing relations with Israel. But if the Arab states are merely giving lip service to the Palestinian cause without caring much about it, that suggests that all Netanyahu would have to do is make the right noises about giving the Palestinians some autonomy, but not much more.**

**Correct?**

I think you've got it exactly right. Netanyahu wouldn't have to do very much to put this back on track again, but I think it's unlikely he will do even that. [Netanyahu has refused to consider any negotiations over a Palestinian state.]

**How far back does this history of Arab antipathy to the Palestinians go? If the Palestinians were forced out of Gaza, would anyone accept them?**

They are truly a people without a land or a refuge anywhere. We've all seen the horror of Gaza, and that's overshadowed the nightmare of the West Bank, which is appalling in its own right. Then you look at the Palestinian diaspora, where they have had an existence of pure hell by and large. I was in Beirut at the time of the Israeli invasion [of Lebanon in 1982] and the [massacre at the Shatila Palestinian refugee camp](#) carried out by Lebanese forces. But it was just one of many massacres.

"The last thing the Arab states, particularly those around Palestine and Israel, wanted to see was an independent Palestinian movement, let alone a state," Ryan Crocker said.

[Tall al-Za'tar](#), the big Palestinian refugee camp in East Beirut, was besieged by Lebanese forces and reduced to rubble in the early days of the Lebanese civil war in 1975. And just three years after the Shatila massacre, in 1985, something started called the "War of the Camps." That was Lebanese Shia, backed by Syria and Iran, laying siege to the Shatila and Bourj el-Barajneh camps for almost three years with untold numbers of dead and wounded among the Palestinians. And the irony there of course is when you fast forward to today and the supposed Iranian support for Hamas and the Palestinian cause generally — well, not so much. It is a marriage of convenience. All part of Iran's larger strategy of exporting force beyond its borders with allies and proxies. We in the West do not remember the War of the Camps, but I assure you that the Iranians and Palestinians do. They understand there is no love in Tehran on the part of Ayatollahs for the Palestinians or their cause.

**That's somewhat ironic considering that many American politicians and Israelis blame Iran for the Hamas attack.**

I don't think the Iranians planned the Oct. 7 attack. In fact, I'd be confident that they didn't. But neither were they appalled or outraged. The fact that there is no ideological affinity in Iran for the Palestinian cause doesn't mean they don't use the Palestinians for horrific ends of their own.

**Doesn't it all start after the Six Day War in 1967, when Arab leaders first recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization [the original group founded in 1964 to re-establish control over the land**

**that became Israel], following the defeat by Israel and the fleeing of Palestinians from the West Bank?**

The 1967 war and emergence of the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” was a watershed moment. Prior to that, the Palestinians in political terms were effectively a function of other Arab states and Arab militaries. You had the PLA, the Palestine Liberation Army, that was under command of other Arab states — Jordan and Syria in particular. So in a sense, you went from, say, 1947 and 1948 to 1967 without an independent Palestinian voice.

The trauma of '67 changed that, where the PLO did emerge as the voice of the Palestinians. And what reaction did you get from the other Arabs? Fear and loathing. The 1967 war forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into exile following their brethren from the '48 war [over the founding of Israel]. Many of them wound up in Lebanon and Jordan. And in Lebanon they emerged as an entity that was increasingly independent of any Lebanese government control. ... In 1969, the Cairo accords effectively gave the Palestinians under the PLO virtual autonomy in areas where they were settled. They ran the camps and increasingly ran south Lebanon, and that of course was a precipitating factor for the 1982 Israeli invasion. But getting back to the main point: The last thing the Arab states, particularly those around Palestine and Israel, wanted to see was an independent Palestinian movement, let alone a state.

**Was this because the Arab regimes feared that the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs displaced by the creation of Israel in 1948 — known as the *Nakba* (Arabic for “catastrophe”) — and then displaced again in 1967 would want to assume control of the territory of other Arab states?**

Yes, in part. The *Nakba* of 1948 shook the legitimacy of Arab regimes. Seven Arab states declared war on the Zionists — and were decisively routed. Arab leaders feared the consequences of their failure in Palestine, both from elements within their own societies and from Palestinians themselves. ... But the fact that [Palestine Liberation Army] units were [under the command of the Arab armies] allowed them to keep control of Palestinian arms until the Six Day War. The 1967 war brought two dramatic changes: It ended dreams of the conquest of Israel by force of arms, and it gave rise to the PLO as a somewhat independent force. These combined to shift the fight for Palestinian control of territory to the Arab lands themselves — Lebanon in 1969 and Jordan in 1970.

That is what led to Black September, the 1970 PLO effort to overthrow the Jordanian monarchy. That failed not just because of the prowess of the Jordanian military but also because the Syrians withheld the air support for the Palestinians they had promised, and that allowed the Jordanians to win the day. That Syrian air force was under command of a general named Hafez al-Assad [later ruler of Syria], whose hatred and fear of all things Palestinian was intense.

That was one of the many ironies of the Israeli invasion in 1982, in that Israel did serious work for Syria in dismantling the PLO structures in Lebanon and forcing the PLO to evacuate from Beirut.

**Wasn't there once some actual support in parts of the Arab world for the Palestinian cause, which back then was still mostly secular, under the PLO? That's in contrast to the dominance today of Hamas, which is anathema to Egypt and the other Arab regimes because of its Muslim Brotherhood-inspired ideology.**

It's a great point. One does tend to look back at the good old days with rose-colored glasses: Gee, if only we could resurrect secular Palestinian nationalism. But even that was seen as an existential threat to both Jordan and Syria. For both countries, the PLO was a threat that they dealt with in different ways, but for both it was their top national security concern. Everything else was secondary. I don't think we grasped that in the case of Syria.

The so-called Arab street [a term for public opinion in the Arab world] was behind the Palestinian cause, but it never really affected policy on part of any of the Arab governments. As you go around the region almost all [the Arab governments] were united on one point, which was that the Palestinians were a threat, a foreign population that should be weakened if not exterminated.

In Syria, you had the orchestration of a [campaign against the PLO](#), and in Jordan, and the same in Egypt. It is noteworthy there is no Palestinian population in Egypt. Going back to the days of [former Egyptian leader] Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptians saw the threat. Again, the Palestinians contributed to their isolation through some spectacular acts like the [assassination of a Jordanian prime minister](#) in front of the Sheraton hotel in broad daylight in Cairo by two Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [PLPF] gunmen, one of whom stooped down to drink the assassinated prime minister's blood.

Yasser Arafat was President of the Palestinian Authority from 1996 until his death in 2004. "Fatah [the largest faction of the PLO] and Arafat presented the greatest threat to Syria — their secular, nationalist ideology had broad appeal among Palestinians," Crocker said.

That is why Egypt just exploded when [U.S. Secretary of State] Tony Blinken proposed they give temporary sanctuary to Gazans. Again, there is an ideological overlay of enmity because of Hamas' Muslim Brotherhood affiliation, but the deep antipathy and fear on the part of the Egyptian government toward the Palestinians predates that by decades.

All in all, the Palestinians have been hamstrung by their so-called Arab brothers. That was a line I picked up in Lebanon — when someone calls you "brother," you know you've got to watch your back.

**So you think there has been a fairly consistent policy by the Arab states all along — one of rhetorically supporting the "Palestinian cause" but rejecting, in practice, any prospect of Palestinian independence?**

After the Khartoum summit [of Arab leaders following the Six Day War], rhetorical support for the PLO was the staple of Arab politics. Yet the actual practice of Arab governments vis-a-vis the Palestinians was exactly the opposite. Now in fairness, the fight then was about Palestinian control of other Arab lands, be it in Lebanon or Jordan, not about the Palestinians engaged in an existential struggle to establish their own state in the West Bank or Gaza. The Israelis were too formidable a power to make that even a possibility, so the fight took place outside of Israel and the Palestinian territories.

**The Palestinians did get some refuge at various points, in places like Libya and Sudan, correct?**

Well, in terms of Libya and Sudan, and the Palestinians, those two countries became destinations for PLO fighters who were evacuated from Beirut as part of the [Habib \[cease-fire\] agreement](#) [negotiated by U.S. envoy Philip Habib in 1981]. I was involved in that. The negotiations to find locations that would accept these Palestinian fighters — I don't know how we ever talked the Tunisians into accepting the PLO leadership. Some of the hardest parts of the entire diplomatic effort to end the fighting [in 1981] involved

trying to find locations for the PLO leadership and its rank and file, because nobody wanted them. Those were extraordinarily tough talks. And again, it is noteworthy that the Syrians accepted none of them. We didn't even ask Jordan. So it was those countries farther afield, not directly involved in the conflict and without substantial Palestinian populations. Tunisia ended up with the headquarters. ... I think the Tunisians eventually accepted because they felt not having a Palestinian population meant they were not likely to be internally destabilized by it.

**Given all your experience as ambassador in the region since you were first posted as political officer in Lebanon in 1982, reflect on your discussions with Washington about these issues. Did the American administrations get it?**

I think we've missed the complexity of it, and the intensity. ... I don't think we understood in depth just how deeply rooted Syrian fear and antipathy toward the PLO and Palestinians really was. I don't think we really understood how deep the chasm was between Arab rhetoric supporting the PLO and the fear and loathing behind the mask. In the case of Syria, how Assad could manage an extreme anti-Israel, pro-Palestinian position ... with action on the ground that was decidedly anti-Palestinian. The Israelis certainly missed it as well.

**Did that mean there were opportunities missed to get things right for the Palestinians? For example, the Camp David summit in 2000, when then Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat declined to make a deal for statehood?**

There certainly were. I think a huge missed moment took place in 2000, but it wasn't with Arafat. It was the talks in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, between Ehud Barak and Farouk al-Sharaa, the Syrian foreign minister. I was ambassador to Syria at the time. ... I noticed a sea change in the Syrian government's attitude toward Israel. They were fascinated by the Israeli election campaign. I was called in to see Sharaa several times. He wanted to know my assessment: Could Barak pull this off? And then he was almost ecstatic with the results [of the Israeli election] when Barak won and signalled he would open peace talks with Syria. Albright put that idea to Assad and he accepted.

Those talks in January 2000 made amazing progress. We produced a draft peace agreement that Sharaa said he could work with. Barak said he needed a pause, so much was happening so fast, he needed to talk with the political class in Israel and [President Bill] Clinton let him go. Those talks never resumed because the draft peace agreement was leaked by the Israelis, to the embarrassment of the Syrians. And [Syrian leader Hafez] al-Assad was ill. He was motivated by the desire to hand his son a stable future in Syria, and he thought there was an opportunity. But with the clock running out on his own life — he was dead by early June — he shifted his thinking to abandoning the peace process and consolidating authority for Bashar [his son, current Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad] domestically.

That would have transformed the Middle East, because Iran stayed completely silent. The Iranians were determined not to destroy the relationship with Syria, which was strategically important to them. So Tehran would have tacitly accepted a peace agreement. It would have allowed Lebanon to step forward. And it would have finally given the Palestinians the freedom at the time, when the Oslo process was active, to make their own settlement with Israel.

**How would an agreement with Syria have changed things for the Palestinians?**

Fatah [the largest faction of the PLO] and Arafat presented the greatest threat to Syria — their secular, nationalist ideology had broad appeal among Palestinians. Assad used the PFLP and other [radical Palestinian] rejectionists to limit Arafat's freedom of maneuver. A Syrian-Israeli agreement would have removed this constraint, allowing Fatah greater freedom to pursue Palestinian-Israeli peace.

## EXPLAINER: WHAT IS BEHIND THE PRO-PALESTINIAN PROTESTS AT US UNIVERSITIES?

### Editors Note

**These protests have appeared earlier, for example**

**Terrorist Hunter (2003)** Anonymous Author. The extraordinary story of an Iraqi Jewess who escaped from Iraq and later infiltrated US groups financed by Saudi Arabia to infiltrate radical Islamic Groups operating in America.

### WIKIPEDIA

**Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP;** طلاب من أجل العدالة في فلسطين) is a pro-Palestinian college [student activism](#) organization in the United States, Canada and New Zealand. It has campaigned for [boycott and divestment against corporations that deal with Israel](#) and organized events about Israel's human rights violations. In 2011, *The New York Times* reported that "S.J.P., founded in 2001 at the University of California, Berkeley, has become the leading pro-Palestinian voice on campus."<sup>[1]</sup> As of 2019, SJP had over 200 chapters at American and Canadian universities.<sup>[2]</sup> Some SJP chapters in the U.S. have adopted the name **Palestine Solidarity Committee** or **Students for Palestinian Equal Rights**. In Canada, some SJP chapters have adopted the name **Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA)**, or **Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR)**.

### REUTERS May 3 2024



**A drone view shows demonstrators at a protest encampment in support of Palestinians, during the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington, U.S., May 2, 2024.**

[Student protests](#) over the [war in Gaza](#) have swept the U.S. in [past weeks](#), with police clearing a number of encampments, at times after confrontations between protesters and counter-protesters; other tent protests dismantled after universities agreed to protesters' demands; and some demonstrations continuing.

### **WHAT DO THE PRO-PALESTINIAN PROTESTERS WANT?**

Across campuses where protests have broken out, students have called for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, an end to [U.S. military assistance](#) for Israel, university divestment from arms suppliers and other companies profiting from the war, and amnesty for students and faculty members who have been disciplined or fired for protesting.

The students are protesting Israel's offensive in Gaza, which it launched after a Hamas attack on Oct. 7 that Israel says killed 1,200 people. Israel has killed over 34,000 people in retaliation, according to Gaza health authorities.

### **WHO ARE THE PROTESTERS SUPPORTING PALESTINIANS?**

Pro-Palestinian protests have drawn students, faculty and outside activists, including of Jewish and Muslim faiths. The groups organizing the protests include Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace.

The encampments have hosted a diverse array of teach-ins, interfaith prayers and musical performances.

Organizers have disavowed violence against pro-Israel counter-protesters, although some Jewish students have said they feel unsafe on campus and unnerved by chants they call antisemitic.

Some city leaders and university administrators have said activists from outside campus have co-opted or orchestrated protests. The University of Texas, Austin, for instance, said of the 79 people arrested on its campus on April 29, 45 had no affiliation with the university.

### **WHO ARE THE COUNTER PROTESTERS?**

Campus counter protests have been led by Israeli American and Zionist groups as well as fellow students and Jewish-American community members.

Hundreds of people attended a counter rally at UCLA in Los Angeles organized by the Israel advocacy group the Israeli American Council. A Jewish student activist at UCLA posted video of himself being barred from an area of campus by pro-Palestinian protesters.

A scuffle broke out at the University of California, Berkeley on May 1 between the co-founder of Zionist group Students Supporting Israel and a pro-Palestinian protester.

At Arizona State University student counter protesters helped police dismantle a protest encampment on April 27. Hundreds of students at the University of Mississippi, some waving U.S. flags and banners supporting former President Donald Trump, chanted against pro-Palestinian protesters on May 2.

### WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESPONSE FROM AUTHORITIES?

Some school administrators have called in local law enforcement to arrest protesters and clear camps and sit ins. Others have let camps operate or reached deals to end protests.

[Columbia sent in police](#) on April 18, a day after students set up a camp on the Manhattan campus. On April 30 police again raided the camp and a building occupied by students, making hundreds of arrests. President Minouche Shafik said the camp was an unauthorized protests that had made the campus "intolerable" for many Jewish students.

The University of California, Berkeley has allowed a pro-Palestinian camp so long as it does not disrupt campus operations and there is no threat of violence.

Northwestern University, Brown University and Rutgers University are among colleges that have reached deals to disband camps. Brown will hold a vote on possible divestment from firms connected with Israel. Rutgers agreed to set up an Arab cultural center and look into creation of a Middle East studies department.

### WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT ON REGULAR CAMPUS LIFE?

Columbia has at times had to switch to all-virtual classes.

The University of Southern California [called off](#) its main-stage graduation ceremony after canceling the valedictorian speech by a Muslim student and dozens of arrests after police cleared a pro-Palestinian encampment.

California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, canceled in-person classes after students barricaded themselves in an administrative building.

The University of Michigan said it would allow free expression and peaceful protest at its early May [graduation ceremonies](#) but would stop "substantial disruption."

### HOW ARE POLITICAL LEADERS RESPONDING?

Democratic President Joe Biden, who has been criticized by the protesters for [supplying funding](#) and weapons to Israel, told reporters on Thursday that Americans had the [right to demonstrate](#) but not to unleash violence.

Trump, the Republican candidate for the 2024 election, called the campus protests "[tremendous hate](#)" and said the April 30 [police raid on Columbia](#) "was a beautiful thing to watch."



## **IDF TAKES OVER THE RAFAH CROSSING**

### **MAY 7, 2024**

#### **ISRAELAM**

**IDF has taken over the Rafah crossing** on the Gaza side on May 7 2024 and is mounting targeted operations against terrorists in eastern Rafah.

The international media reported that Hamas accepted a ceasefire proposal and that Israel subsequently rejected it. In truth, Hamas accepted their own version of a proposal that was totally unacceptable to Israel and the U.S. They did not accept the deal proposed by Israel and supported by the U.S., that would release 33 Israeli hostages in exchange for a 6 week ceasefire and the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. The result of the Hamas "acceptance" and the media coverage was that Israel comes out looking like the bad guy -- just like Hamas planned.

[Hamas clearly fired those rockets at the Kerem Shalom crossing on Sunday to draw Israel into mounting a full scale invasion of Rafah. By doing so they made it clear that they are not interested in a ceasefire or in releasing hostages. All they are interested in is to harm Israel by isolating it in the international community and making it into a pariah state -- and the easiest and quickest way for them to accomplish that is through an Israeli invasion of Rafah that leads to the deaths of thousands of civilians.

Israel has not launched a full scale invasion of Rafah. The IDF is currently just operating in a very limited and targeted manner, in order to be able to stop in the event that Hamas accepts a reasonable ceasefire proposal. Israel also wants to respect the demands of the Biden administration not to invade Rafah. But if Hamas continues to reject proposals and attack Israeli forces, Israel might have to move forward with a full push into Rafah to finish the job it started on October 8 -- the destruction of Hamas as a viable fighting force.]

The Biden administration is reportedly delaying a shipment of thousands of weapons to Israel. For more, [click here](#).

**Drone attacks and rocket barrages against Israel** continue in the north. The air force is responding.

The IDF announced the names of 2 soldiers killed in a drone attack on Metula on Sunday:

- Major (res.) Dan Kamkagi, 31 years old, from Kfar Oranim, a fighter in patrol battalion 6551, half-fire formation (551).

- Major (res.) Nahman Natan Hertz, 31 years old, from Elazar, a fighter in patrol battalion 6551, half-fire formation (551).

## JEWS, MUSLIMS, AND AN “ORIGIN STORY” OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians, and the worldwide moral outrage that day’s savagery generated were only paralleled by a gleeful *schadenfreude* that overtook many European capitals and other places around the globe, from the Arab world to the United States to American university campuses outright celebrating the greatest loss in Jewish life since the Holocaust.

HOOVER INSTITUTION November 16, 2023 Franck Salameh  
Research Team: Middle East and the Islamic World Working Group

(Editors Note

**Noun** **demonym** (*plural* demonyms) [Wiktionary](#)

A name for an [inhabitant](#) or [native](#) of a [specific place](#), usually derived from the [name](#) of the place.

1. *Why is it that people from the United States use American as their **demonym**?)*

**Adjective** [Wiktionary](#)

**onomastic** (*not* [comparable](#))

1. Of or relating to a [personal](#) or [place name](#).
2. Of or relating to [onomastics](#).

**Derived terms**

- [onomastics](#)

**Related terms**

- [onomastician](#))

The October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians, and the worldwide moral outrage that that day’s savagery generated were only paralleled by a gleeful *schadenfreude* that overtook many European capitals and other places around the globe, from the Arab world to the United States to American university campuses outright celebrating the greatest loss in Jewish life since the Holocaust. What is the root cause of such stark, vile dichotomies when it comes to Israel, pitting on the one hand a camp of empathy and on the other one of resentment? How is it that alongside Western sympathizers there are always those depicting Israel as the eternal offender, forbidden from defending itself, even at the risk of being depicted in the most hideous of antisemitic tropes? Conversely, why is it that among Arabs and Muslims, Palestinians are consistently, uncritically, portrayed as eternal victims, beatific casualties of Israeli Apartheid who can do no wrong, and whose own brutality is the justifiable result of grievances long unheeded and a righteous legitimate expression of self-defense?

What follows is an attempt to understand the intractable nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the divisiveness that it generates around the world. I will try to explain *not* by taking sides, not by passing a

sentence on who is right and who is wrong, not by drawing Manichaean fault lines between Good and Evil, and not by proceeding from the premise of the militant Zionist or the Arabist activist. In this, I shall assume the role of a historian recounting a complex story, probing its details, interrogating its players, exploring their languages and their languages' connotations, and interpreting the whole in an intelligible voice devoid of the prevailing Wokeist frills of our times. I shall do that while remaining mindful of this story's challenges, avoiding its ideological *partis pris*, and steering clear of the tendency to discard nuances and realities for the sake of soothing emotions and mythologies. In the end, there *are* "origin stories" to this conflict that ought to come to the fore, ones that are often scorned in favor of resentments, platitudes, political correctness, and the human condition's natural urge for settling scores.

### ONE ORIGIN STORY

Let us begin with the lay of the land of today's theater of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, a quick, oversimplified lesson, as it were, in the history, geography, and toponymy of what is commonly referred to as the Arab-Israeli conflict.

On the eve of the Great War, the Levantine political entities known today as Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine did not exist as distinct geographic, national, or administrative units. All were territories of the Ottoman Empire (1516-1918); all had inhabitants who were subjects of that empire; all flaunted no distinct identities of their own besides being on the one hand privileged Muslim members of the *Umma* (the "nation of Islam") and on the other hand underprivileged *Millets*, which is to say non-Muslim *Dhimmi* peoples or "lesser nations," living on sufferance in the "the abode of Islam." Those *Millets*, in the main Christians and Jews, were subject to the *Dhimma* system: an institutionalized complex of legal, social, political, and cultural handicaps—"institutional racism" in the language of today's virtuous *bien-pensance*, a form of "legal discrimination"—that guaranteed the *Millets'* physical safety and ability to keep pre-Muslim traditions in return for fealty and submission to an otherwise hostile, predominantly Muslim, universe. Under this *Dhimma* arrangement, a "system of protection" as it is often described in tidy academic terminologies, Christians and Jews in the world of Islam were "tolerated" peoples denied political and cultural rights, disenfranchised in their own homelands, lands from which they'd been dispossessed by seventh-century Muslim conquerors—"colonial settlers" in the normative language of our times. Describing this system in the late Ottoman period, Lebanese historian Zeine Zeine noted that Christians and Jews were "tributary people whose life and property were safe only by the good pleasure of the Turkish authorities"; that they lived in "an inferior and humiliating position compared with the Muslims"; that they were forbidden from bearing arms or entering civil service; and that they had to be "outwardly distinguished by the colors of [their] dress, [their] headwear and [their] shoes."<sup>[1]</sup> Zeine noted further that national identities as we understand them in the West did not exist in the Ottoman world:

All the ties, relationships, and loyalties were denominational and religious, primarily Muslim [Jewish] or Christian ... National unity was impossible under the circumstances ... The Arab Muslim, speaking of the Ottoman Empire, could say "it is also my Empire," for it was a Muslim Empire and the Muslim felt at home in it. But the Christian [and the Jew] was conscious most of the time that he was only one of the *ra'yyah*.<sup>[2]</sup>

But this system of unequal relationships between Ottoman Muslims and non-Muslims would come to an end in the Great War's aftermath. Alongside its tragedies and losses, the War's conclusion would also conduce to the "emancipation" of non-Muslims in Muslim lands. Having chosen wartime's "losing team," the Ottoman Empire was dissolved in October 1918, leading to the abrogation of the *Millet* system and the redesigning of the eastern provinces of the former Empire by Britain and France, the war's "winning team." This task was guaranteed by a regime known as the League of Nations Mandate system, the purpose of which had been to shepherd the former Ottoman subjects into modern "citizenship" and shape their newly redesigned territories into modern states. Thus, based on this arrangement, and under the auspices of the League of Nations (predecessor of today's United Nations), France was given "Mandate" over the former Ottoman Provinces (Vilayets) of Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo, and the *Sanjak* of Mount-Lebanon, creating out of them what became known as Syria and Greater Lebanon (later *tout court* Lebanon). Concomitantly, Britain was assigned the former Ottoman Vilayets of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul, stitching them together into today's Iraq. Britain was likewise assigned the former Ottoman Sanjak of Jerusalem and the southern parts of the Vilayets of Beirut and Damascus, creating out of them what became known as Mandatory Palestine. Mandatory Palestine would undergo an additional makeover in 1921, creating from its eastern flank the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan, today's Jordan.

Therefore, prior to this arrangement, none of the states mentioned above existed. There was no Syria nor a distinct Syrian national identity to speak of, no Palestine nor a Palestinian national consciousness among Arabs, and, as modern Iraq's travails keep reminding us, no distinct, unified Iraqi history, memory, or *esprit de corps*. What is more, most of these newly Mandated entities were assigned "national names" owed *not* to their own histories or languages, but to European (Anglo-French) toponymic and geographic habits, Western traditions not only reflecting a tenuous local authenticity but also affirming the origins of modern Middle Eastern states as Western spawns adhering to Western political models and national assumptions. There were of course notable exceptions. Egypt had always been Egypt. In Lebanon, or to be exact in Mount-Lebanon, there were Maronite Christians who had long viewed themselves as Lebanese with a separate non-Arab identity, members of a "Lebanese nation, distinguished by a ... culture dating back to the Phoenicians."<sup>[3]</sup> Finally, in the Holy Land, there were also local Levantine Jews who dreamt of the redemption of the Jewish people and their restitution to their ancestral homeland in the former Ottoman Sanjak of Jerusalem and the southern Vilayets of Beirut and Damascus.<sup>[4]</sup> But those were exceptions that confirmed the rule, the rule being that Palestine, among others, was a Western concept, a Western toponym, yielding a Western demonym that Europeans used in pre-modern times to mean "Jews," not Arabs, and to which Arabs themselves would remain indifferent until 1948 at the very earliest.

### ONOMASTICS OF THE STORY

To the points above, Bernard Lewis reiterates that modern Near Eastern political entities like Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and the rest *all* owe their names (and often their "national histories") to Classical Antiquity or Biblical tradition, *not* to Arab or Muslim tradition. In this sense, Jordan, Israel, and Lebanon are names issuing from the Bible; Syria is of classical Greek provenance; Palestine is a Roman term assigned

to Roman Judea after the AD 70 destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. All five place names are spawns of Judeo-Christian historical memory and modern European political language; in their modern senses they would have been unknown, imperceptible, unintelligible to their Muslim inhabitants a hundred years ago.<sup>[6]</sup>

Thus, the demonym “Palestinian,” for instance, before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, would have meant something quite distinct and different from the term “Palestinian” post-1948 and certainly today. Indeed, after the Ottoman Empire’s dismantlement and throughout the Mandate period, save among some Arabic-speaking Christians already imbued in the traditions, languages, and ideas of Europe who might have willingly adopted “Palestinian” as a demonym, the term referred almost exclusively to Jews and was accepted and widely used strictly speaking by Jews. The term was conversely rejected, or at best ignored, by Arabs—which is to say by Muslims—primarily because to them it was synonymous with “Jewish.” But as mentioned earlier, “Palestinian” was also rejected because Muslims, members of an established *Umma*, already had time-honored identifiers of their own that did not need augmenting. Thus, identity markers among Mandatory Palestine’s Muslims were primarily familial. They were Husseinis, Nusseibehs, Khalidis, Sakakinis, Nashashibis, or some other variants of lesser branches of these larger notable families. Kinship was also tribal (*Hamula*). Mandatory Palestine’s Arabs were thus Alamis, Dughmush, Adwan, Abu-Ghawsh, etc. Their attachments were also linked to distinct localities, villages, towns, yielding family names and lineages relating to place names such as Yafi (from Jaffa), Akkawi (from Akko), Khalili (from Hebron), Nabulsi (from Nablus), Masri (from Egypt), Makdisi (from Jerusalem), Shami (from Damascus), Beiruti (from Beirut), etc.<sup>[6]</sup>

But most importantly, before the establishment of the state of Israel, the Palestinians of today viewed themselves first and foremost as Muslims, as members of the *Umma*, and indeed they fought the Zionist national project *not* as Palestinians fighting Jews but as Muslims fighting Palestinians whom they viewed as Jewish intruders into the world of Islam. “There is no such thing as Palestine in [Arab] history,” famously noted Lebanese-American historian Philip Hitti in 1946.<sup>[7]</sup> The term was Arabized and came to refer to Arabs *only* when Jews relinquished it in the text of their 1948 declaration of independence, opting instead for Israel. It is not a trivial matter that the Arabs of British Mandate Palestine fought the Zionist project throughout the early half of the twentieth century under bona fide Muslim, *not* national—and certainly not “Palestinian”—banners. Their revolt against the British Mandate between 1936 and 1939 was termed “The Arab Revolt,” *not* “The Palestinian Revolt.” Their main representative body in British Mandate Palestine was “The Higher Arab Committee,” *not* “The Higher Palestinian Committee.” And finally, their two most vocal “national” leaders were Muslim religious figures: Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husseini of Jerusalem, a Nazi sympathizer and propagandist who was all too happy entertaining with Hitler himself the prospects of a “Final Solution” for Palestinian and Arab Jewry; and the Damascene petty cleric Izzeddin al-Qassam, a fiery Islamist preacher who would come to bequeath his name onto two of this conflict’s most recognizable actors, Hamas’ military wing, the Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades, and that organization’s infamous “Qassam Rocket” artillery type.

## THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT IN FIVE MINUTES

In a nutshell, and as alluded to earlier, the Arab-Israeli conflict, contrary to its normative nomenclatures in “consensus scholarship,” is not (or not simply) a struggle between two national ideas, one Israeli and one Palestinian, both disputing the same piece of real estate. Instead, the Arab-Israeli conflict is, in origin, a battle pitting a coherent national idea represented by political Zionism against an ethno-religious ideology (Arab and Islamic), formed in reaction to Zionist encroachments on what were deemed Arab and Islamic lands, an ideology that has since been “nationalized” as “Palestinian.” The Islamic component of Arab Palestinian national consciousness is not to be underrated; Arabism and Palestinianism are far more religious than they are made out to be (“the Prophet Muhammad was *ipso facto* the Prophet of Arabism,” famously noted Arab nationalist ideologue Michel Aflaq). Likewise, Zionism is far more complex an historical phenomenon than to be dismissed as an alien body.

Modern political Zionism as the “national liberation movement of the Jewish people” is often attributed to Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl (1860-1904). That is of course not untrue. But it is also *only* partly true. Indeed, Zionism—as an emotive if not a political impulse for a “return” to Israel—is part and parcel of Jewish national history and memory, and in that sense is a millennial and *not* a modern phenomenon, and certainly not an exclusively Herzlian one. Zionism is in fact an ancient Jewish concept, dating back to the 587 BC Babylonian Exile. The Lamentations of Jeremiah and Psalm 137 speak of the exiled Jews longing for Zion (one of the Biblical “nicknames” of Jerusalem). “By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion,” begins [Psalm 137](#), admonishing the Jewish exiles that “if I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill; may my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth ...” Likewise in their Passover traditions for almost 3000 years, Jews throughout the *Galut* (or Diaspora), have remembered and longed for Zion, concluding their Passover seder with the traditional toast, “here’s to next year in Jerusalem.” Jewish history is also replete with waves of *Aliyot* (Rising Up movements of return) to the Biblical Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel). And although Jewish political sovereignty over “Israel” had ended with the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70, Jewish presence never ceased in what the Romans had renamed “Palæstina” in circa AD 100. Indeed, subsequent to that trauma, native Jewish communities would remain on “the land,” getting augmented periodically by recurring waves of *Aliya* “returns.”<sup>[8]</sup> But for all intents and purposes, and spanning two millennia of Roman, Byzantine, Arab, and Ottoman rule, what was left of local Jewish life would be reduced to sufferance, living at the pleasure of the hegemon of the day, and any hope for restored political sovereignty would not materialize before the end of the Great War.

And so, it was during the Mandate period that the Zionist movement, in its modern, organized, “Herzlian” secular iteration, would gain momentum, soliciting “guarantees” from the Mandatory power in support of the creation of a Jewish state in British Mandate Palestine. In reality, the much-maligned [Balfour Declaration](#), which Arabs held responsible for suppressing the creation of an Arab state and yielding the state of Israel, did nothing of the sort. Indeed, Balfour’s, like other “pledges” Britain had made to Arabs in its Mandated territories, was at best a diplomatic platitude, *not* a promise: It “viewed with favor” (it did not *commit* to) the “establishment of a Jewish home” (*not* a Jewish state nor even a homeland) “in Palestine” (*not* on the whole of it or instead of an Arab Palestine).<sup>[9]</sup>

And so, Zionism's pitfall appears to have been its keen understanding of the modern world, its ideas, its tools, while Arabism's (or Islam's) main failing was and remains its insistence on facing a new world with assumptions, belief systems, and notions of chivalry, manhood, and honor that no longer exist.<sup>[10]</sup> Thus, Zionism during the Mandate period was socially, politically, organizationally, and intellectually sophisticated, building elaborate structures that would culminate in the attainment of Jewish statehood in 1948. By contrast, the Arabs' response remained stalled in the emotive and religious realm. In other words, instead of responding to the Zionist national challenge with nation-building of their own, the Arabs of British Mandate Palestine countered with religious (Islamist) zeal, lashing out *not* at Zionist (secular) structures but at Jewish communities, meting out Pogroms reminiscent of Hamas's on October 7, 2023.<sup>[11]</sup>

By the summer of 1947, with growing Jewish-Muslim animosities and irruptions of violence in British Mandate Palestine becoming increasingly intractable, Britain resolved to disengage from its Mandate, transferring responsibility to the United Nations. In late November 1947, the UN General Assembly voted for the partition of the Mandated territory into an Arab state and a Jewish state with Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* condominium under international protection.

Following the resolution, the Jews accepted the partition plan and announced the "rebirth" of Israel in the territories originally allotted by the UN. Conversely, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon (friends of "Arab Palestine") rejected the UN resolution and proceeded to attack the newly established Jewish state in an attempt to stunt its emergence. It was an unequal struggle from a Jewish perspective—a David vs. Goliath battle as described in Israel's national mythology—but a struggle in which Israel managed to prevail. And so, not only did it emerge triumphant, but Israel also acquired more territories, conquering some of what had initially been reserved for the (stillborn) Arab state projected by the UN Resolution. Israel also proceeded to expel Arab populations from newly added areas in accounts ranging from claims of "ethnic cleansing" to stories of villagers "leaving of their own volition," who heeded calls by Arab leaders promising a "triumphal return" once the Jews are "thrown into the sea."<sup>[12]</sup> Needless to say, Israel was not thrown into the sea (although that remains an abiding goal of Hamas and fellow travelers), there have been no triumphal returns (not for lack of trying), and hundreds of thousands of Mizrahi Jewish refugees, banished from Arab lands in the aftermath of Israel's rebirth, would come to cement the Jewish state as a regional fixture and indeed to define the "face" of modern Israel *not* as an Ashkenazi (European) Zionist interloper, but as a surviving local Mizrahi (Eastern) legacy.<sup>[13]</sup>

And so, against great odds, Israel was reborn in its (expanded) 1948 borders; the birth of an Arab state alongside it was aborted; the West Bank and Gaza fell respectively under Jordanian and Egyptian rule (1948-1967), preventing an Arab state from taking shape on those territories; and the "Arab refugee problem" ensued. What is more, Israel sued for peace with the Arabs repeatedly since 1948, pursuing a "land for peace" approach that the Arabs refused at every turn,<sup>[14]</sup> opting instead for more war (1967, 1973), more rejectionism (the three noes of Khartoum), more refugees, and more disorientation and loss of territory. Arabs viewed 1948 as the epitome of injustice: the dispossession of the Arabs and their exile, a *Nakba* ("catastrophe") as the events are described in Arabic. Conversely, Israel viewed 1948 as the

apotheosis of justice: the *summum bonum* of redemption, the answer to 2000 years of dispossession, exile, prayers, yearnings, and dreams of restitution to the Jews' ancestral homeland.

This is, in a nutshell, an "origin story" of the Hamas-Israel predicament today. There may be others, but the one recounted here is one seldom pondered thoughtfully. It is the story of a *Dhimmi* people, a subject people who ought to have stayed within their bounds but who shook off the yoke of servitude, emerging triumphant as master of a sovereign non-Muslim state in the "Abode of Islam."

Beyond the prevalent depictions of this conflict as a struggle between two nationalist ideas, one Jewish and one Arab, disputing the same territory, there lies an ignored, perhaps a more important, triumphalist eschatological dimension. Put in simple terms, traditional Islam divides the world between *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*, literally the "Abode of Islam" and the "Abode of war," which is to say on the one hand territories where Islam reigns supreme and where Muslims rule, and on the other hand lands of disbelief where infidels still rule and where Islam is destined to conquer and dominate.<sup>[15]</sup> In this traditional conception of the world (which "is not irenic," writes P.J. Vatikiotis),<sup>[16]</sup> the struggle between those two abodes is continuous until one, presumably Islam, prevails over the other.<sup>[17]</sup> What is more, territories that Islam has already conquered and claimed for Muslims should be clung to by any means, and should never be ceded back to the world of disbelief.<sup>[18]</sup> Israel, and for that matter a Lebanon of earlier times where Christians had sovereign prerogatives, both fall within that category: lands that have been conquered and Islamized beginning in the seventh century, that should never have been allowed to lapse into Jewish or Christian hands, and whose *Dhimmi* peoples should be prevented from exercising political or military authority over Muslims. Jews (and for that matter Lebanon's Christians) have committed a mortal sin on that account and deserve to be chastised for their temerity, the lands they have contaminated to be "cleansed of their sins and impurities."<sup>[19]</sup> Indeed, Israel is part and parcel of that triumphalist schema, argues Franco-Algerian author Boualem Sansal: "it must once more be brought back within the confines of *Dar al-Islam*, and it must remain so forevermore."<sup>[20]</sup>

That is the Hamas premise, clear, pellucid, honest. It is not the "liberation of Palestine" for the sake of a Palestinian cause or the Palestinian people. It is an apocalyptic struggle for the redemption of Muslim land (*Dar al-Islam*) fallen to the hands of disbelief. Article 8 of the [Hamas Charter](#) reveals that much: "Allah is our goal; the Prophet is our model; the Koran is our constitution; Jihad is our path; and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of our wishes." Those are not idle words or symbolic notions; they are foundational convictions that structure the life of a righteous Muslim.<sup>[21]</sup> And lest the preceding be interpreted as the extreme view of religious zealots like Hamas, Mahmoud Abbas, the President of the Palestinian Authority, begs to differ. He affirmed in 2009 that the Palestinians' armed struggle was "a strategy, not [a] tactic ... in the battle for liberation and for the elimination of the Zionist presence; [a struggle that] will not stop until the Zionist entity is eliminated and Palestine is liberated."<sup>[22]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In sum, the story of Israel as recounted here is the tale of a Jewish state that views its rebirth as restitution and justice. It is also the tale of an Arab (Muslim) state that never was, that ought to have been and still



deserves to be, but that chose to self-immolate on the altar of preventing Israel's emergence and that views the Jewish state in its midst as an aberration and disruption of God's justice, the personification of injustice. Thus, justice from a Jewish perspective is "Israel reborn," while injustice in Arab (Muslim) eyes is *this* same "Israel reborn." How does one resolve such a dilemma when Israel having achieved "justice" seeks "recognition," when Arabs having been dealt an "injustice" seek its correction, and when "justice" for one means the "dissolution" of the other? For fans of "context"—from Hamas apologists, to honest human rights activists genuinely concerned for civilian lives, to infantilized pedestrians gorged on social media fallacies devoid of reflection, discernment, or critical analysis, to outright antisemites to whom Israel can't seem to do anything right *and* has no right to self-defense—*that* is the context of October 7, 2023.

Arabs won't "recognize," and Israel won't oblige by offering its "demise."

## **ARABS DON'T ALL STAND WITH HAMAS**

### **Muslim nations in the Middle East don't agree on what should come after a cease-fire in Gaza if it happened**

**WORLD** [Nick Eicher](#), [Mary Reichard](#) 21 Nov 2023

*MARY REICHARD, HOST: Coming up next on The World and Everything in It: Arab views on the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.*

*Earlier this month, the New York Times ran an article citing a Hamas media advisor who said the following: "I hope that the state of war with Israel will become permanent on all the borders, and that the Arab world will stand with us."*

*NICK EICHER, HOST: While Arab nations like Saudi-Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt have called on the United States to pressure Israel for a cease-fire in Gaza, they have largely stayed out of the conflict, apart from supplying humanitarian aid.*

*But so far, much of the Arab world is not standing with Hamas's mission to create permanent war for Gaza.*

*REICHARD: On Saturday, the Crown Prince of Bahrain stepped out as the first Arab leader to take Hamas to task for its brutal attack.*

*CROWN PRINCE OF BAHRAIN: I condemn Hamas unequivocally. This is so everybody in the room can understand that I stand on the side of civilians and innocents and not on the side of political posturing.*

Is the Crown Prince alone in the Arab world, or the tip of an iceberg?

EICHER: Joining us now is Hussain Abdul-Hussain. He's an Arab journalist and a research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Hussain, good morning.

HUSSAIN ABDUL-HUSSAIN: Morning.

EICHER: Well let's start with the basics. Last Monday you published [an article in Newsweek](#) in which you say you can't understand why the world can't feel Israeli pain following Hamas's attacks, only Palestinian pain. Why is that the case, do you think? And maybe that plays into the larger issue of why the Palestinian cause is so important in the Arab world.

HUSSAIN: Well, the main reason is that we have at least 1 billion Muslims, and at most we have 20 million Jews. And no matter who's right and who's wrong, the voice of 1 billion is always much louder than the voice of 20 million, even if the other side is right, and even if the other side is still hurting from the massacre that Hamas committed against 1200 Israelis. So this is a case where the Israelis were clearly on the defensive. They were clearly the victims, and yet you have the majority of the Arabs still blaming Israel for whatever we see unfolding today.

REICHARD: What are Arab nations in the Middle East saying about the conflict? Are they all on one page, or are there differences you've noticed, country to country?

HUSSAIN: On the surface it may seem that they are on the same page asking for a ceasefire, but if you look deeper you will see great differences. You have the bloc that includes Qatar, Turkey, to an extent Iran, and these guys when they call for a ceasefire, they want a ceasefire because they want to spare Hamas the bitter fate that Israel is going after this terrorist organization.

On the other hand, if you look at the moderate Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Jordan, these guys want a ceasefire because they believe that peace talks are the only alternative here, the only option and the only choice. So while both might be calling for a ceasefire, each one of them imagines what happens next differently. One wants it as a pitstop to more fighting, the other wants it as a full stop to have peace talks.

EICHER: Let's talk a little more about Qatar, you brought that up. The [New York Post](#) recently ran a story about top Hamas leaders living in luxury in Qatar while the Palestinian people of Gaza suffer as the result of Hamas's attacks on Israel. What do we know about the extent of Qatar's support for Hamas...and what can Israel and its allies do to persuade Qatar to end that support?

HUSSAIN: Well, we know for a fact that the Hamas leadership is corrupt and is wealthy compared to the rest of Gazans, and the two main leaders of Hamas, Khaled Mashal and Ismail Haniyeh, they do live in Qatar, enjoying a lot of luxury. There was a leak showing that Ismail Haniyeh spent over \$5,000 only going to spas and getting massages. So this is known even inside of the Gaza Strip itself. Gazans have often put out footage showing that the Hamas leadership inside the Strip lives in luxury, they drive luxury cars. In August there were protests, the Gazans took out to the streets to protest Hamas's corruption. They were saying, "We're hungry, we're impoverished, and you're just driving your luxury cars." Now the point here is that Qatar has two faces. On one side, they are an ally of the United States. They host our air base in Al Udeid. On the other hand, they're funding Hamas, they're funding Al-Jazeera, which to me now sounds like a mouthpiece of Hamas that instigates violence not only against Israelis but against everything that's Western at this point. What we can do is that we have a lot of leverage here in the United States. We can ask the Qataris to cut it out. We can just say, If you don't stop funding, your people will face sanctions, or your banking system will face sanctions. And I'm sure at this point the Qataris will not be willing to sacrifice their own wealth and banking system and their own connection to the global financial system only to support a bunch of terrorists that are called Hamas.

REICHARD: A part of the current conflict comes down to whether Hamas really has a system of tunnels and command centers underground in Gaza. Since Israeli forces took control of the Al-Shifa hospital last week, the IDF has been releasing footage of what it found inside the hospital complex. Some mainstream media aren't taking the Israelis' word for it and are demanding more concrete evidence.

Are the Israelis providing enough evidence and the mainstream just doesn't want to accept it, or is there more to the story?

HUSSAIN: Well, I think the Israelis have provided a lot of evidence that offers a strong case, and I think in this case, most of the Arab media just refuse to believe. Now, if we take the statements of Hamas officials themselves, they have talked about the tunnels that they are managing. Sometimes they use them to threaten Israel, to say that, "If you come into the Strip, you will not be able to beat us because we have the tunnels." So this is not a secret. Everyone knows that the Hamas fighters are hiding in these tunnels. Now

the point is that no matter what amount of evidence Israel offers, even footage of brutal acts of violence that Hamas committed against Israeli citizens, even this footage is sometimes not being taken as solid evidence. So I see bias in most of this. And I think if you get a neutral observer, they'll absolutely believe the evidence that Israel is putting out. And thankfully, Washington at this point and this administration, they believe what Israel is putting out.

EICHER: Hussain Abdul-Hussain is an Arab journalist and research fellow for the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. Thank you for your time.

HUSSAIN: Thank you.

## WHY ARAB STATES HAVEN'T BROKEN WITH ISRAEL

**Arabs across the region are angry, but regimes can't afford to sever ties.**

[FP David E. Rosenberg](#), April 19 2024

For many, the news that Jordanian fighter pilots [came to the defense](#) of Israel during Iran's missile and drone attack last weekend must have come as a surprise. While Israel and Jordan have had diplomatic relations for 30 years, the peace between them has been cold even in the best of times and since the outbreak of the war in Gaza has gone into a deep freeze.

Yet Jordan was not the only Arab country contributing to Israel's defense that night. The Royal Saudi Air Force also shot down Iranian projectiles flying in its airspace and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates reportedly [provided](#) critical intelligence before the attack.

There are any number of reasons why moderate Arab powers chose to play a role that night. One is that had the Iranian operation ended with significant loss of life or destruction, Israel would have struck back hard, raising the risk of a regional war. Indeed, an apparent Israeli retaliation early Friday against Iran appears to have been limited.

Another is that many Arab countries are no less anxious than Israel about Iran's meddling—in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen and the instability it has created.

But no less important is that, for moderate Arab powers, Israel has become a key economic partner—indeed, for Jordan and Egypt, Israel is an economic lifeline. That goes a long way toward explaining why six months into the war in Gaza, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have taken almost no concrete steps against Israel. When Turkey finally did something, [announcing](#) on April 9 that it was banning a wide range of exports to Israel, no Arab country followed suit.

Of these countries, Jordan is the most reliant on Israel—not for the ordinary stuff of cross-border trade or for investment (both of which are negligible) but for essential water and energy.

Jordan is one of the world's most water-scarce countries, with just 950 million cubic meters [available](#) annually to meet demand of about 1.4 billion cubic meters. Under the 1994 peace agreement, Jordan was [entitled](#) to buy 50 million cubic meters of water a year from Israel. That number has since [doubled](#) as Jordan's population has grown, and Israel has developed so much desalination capacity that it has fresh water to spare. And the dependence is likely to grow: If a deal to swap more Israeli water for solar energy from Jordan goes through, Amman will [begin importing](#) an additional 200 million cubic meters.

The kingdom also lacks domestic energy resources and relies on imports of Israeli natural gas for electric power and its chemical industry. Gas accounts for more than [70 percent](#) of electricity production in Jordan, and nearly all that comes from Israel's Leviathan field. Egypt also [needs](#) Israeli gas because domestic reserves are [depleting](#) faster than new sources are being found, and its giant Zohr field is [plagued](#) by technical problems. When Israel briefly slashed exports after the outbreak of the war in Gaza, Egypt had to [double](#) rolling blackouts to two hours a day and [import](#) liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Egypt's demand for Israeli gas goes beyond domestic needs. With its own supplies so tight, it can no longer export its own gas as LNG to Europe and instead [re-exports](#) Israeli gas. That has not only earned Egypt badly needed hard currency but ensures its role as the center of an emerging east Mediterranean gas hub that includes Israel and will likely include Cyprus one day.

The UAE's economic interests in maintaining ties with Israel are about something entirely different: trade and investment, enhancing the Emirates' role as a global logistics hub, leveraging Israel's high-tech prowess to build its own tech industry, and partnering to solve the threat of climate change to the region. Since the 2020 Abraham Accords, the UAE has also emerged as a major buyer of Israeli arms.

The [export](#) of Israeli weapons to countries that signed the Abraham Accords grew from nil that year to [\\$2.9 billion](#) in 2022.

In dollar terms, the Israel-UAE economic relationship remains comparatively small for both countries. But it represents something larger and more aspirational, namely part of an effort to reshape the Middle East—or at least as much of the Middle East as is possible—from a place chronically in the grip of war and extremist politics to one focused on economic development. The UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain have taken the route of prioritizing economics over all else, and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is following their lead with his Vision 2030 plan to turn his kingdom from an oil economy into a center of technology, finance, tourism, and entertainment.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Jordan's King Abdullah II, and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi talk to delegates during the Arab League's Summit for Jerusalem in Cairo, on Feb. 12, 2023.

### [Arab Countries Have Israel's Back—for Their Own Sake](#)

Last weekend's security cooperation in the Middle East doesn't indicate a new future for the region.

Gilad Erdan, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, shows a video of Iranian missiles being intercepted over Al-Aqsa Mosque during an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

### [Can Israel Harness Its Rare Moment of Regional Support?](#)

Israel has launched a diplomatic offensive to further isolate Iran after its attack.

Israel's Iron Dome air defense system launches to intercept missiles fired from Iran.

### [3 Ways Israel Could Respond to Iran](#)

Israeli leaders have vowed to counterattack, but how they do so could jeopardize international support.

That said, the Saudis appear less convinced than the Emiratis that Israel has an important role to play in the new Middle East. But as the normalization talks that got underway last year [demonstrated](#), Riyadh is willing to recognize Israel as part of a wider deal with the United States, something that would have been unimaginable a decade ago. While the war in Gaza has disrupted the talks and raised the price the Saudis are demanding from Israel on the Palestinian issue, Riyadh has signaled it is still willing to move forward. The economic imperatives that have driven these relations face powerful headwinds. Even before the war in Gaza, public opinion even among Israel's peace partners was overwhelmingly hostile to Israel. A year ago, just [15 percent](#) of Jordanians said they would support business deals with Israel if they would help

their country's economy, according to a poll conducted by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Even though their country would struggle without Israeli gas and water, ordinary Jordanians frequently call to sever ties with Israel and rescind the import agreements. Under immense public pressure after the war in Gaza erupted, Jordan last November [canceled](#) a water-for-energy deal with Israel (although it has since [sought](#) quietly to resurrect it).

In Egypt and Saudi Arabia, about 38 percent of respondents in the poll a year ago accepted the idea of doing business with Israel. When the Washington Institute [asked Saudis](#) more recently whether they should be allowed to "have business or sports contacts with Israelis," just 17 percent said yes, down from 42 percent in the summer of 2022.

Under the circumstances, it should be no surprise that the business Arab countries do with Israel is an elite affair confined to government-to-government deals and big state-affiliated enterprises. The ordinary ways of doing business, with executives attending industry conferences and exhibits or making sales calls, don't exist. Tourism is a one-way affair—with Israelis visiting Arab countries but little reciprocation.

The UAE has been somewhat of an exception to this rule, certainly in the honeymoon period after the Abraham Accords were signed in 2020. Israeli executives and tourists [flocked](#) to the Gulf, and companies were signing investment and partnership deals. Abu Dhabi's Mubadala Petroleum took a [22 percent](#) stake in Israel's Tamar gas field, and many other investment deals were under discussion. A Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement [went into effect](#) a year ago and in 2023, two-way trade [reached](#) \$3 billion, up from [\\$190 million](#) in 2020. Even then, however, the people-to-people warmth exhibited on the Emirati side was tepid: The Washington Institute poll found only a 45 percent minority of Emiratis thought doing business with Israel was "acceptable." Emiratis didn't visit Israel, except for business.

Even though Emirati leaders say they remain committed to the economic and political partnership with Israel, there has been a perceptible chill since the onset of the war in Gaza. Last month, Abu Dhabi's national oil company, ADNOC, [put on hold](#) a deal to buy, together with BP, a 50 percent stake in Israeli energy company NewMed. They cited the "external environment," presumably the war, for the decision. Fortunately for the future of these relationships, it appears that the war in Gaza is winding down. It is by no means certain that it won't re-ignite with an assault on Rafah, as Israel has threatened, or that the low-intensity conflict between Israel and Hezbollah won't spiral into a full-fledged war. But for now, as a testament to the prioritizing of realpolitik and economic interest by Arab leaders, these ties have stood the test.

[David E. Rosenberg](#), the economics editor and a columnist for the English edition of *Haaretz* and the author of *Israel's Technology Economy*.

# GENERATIONS OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES FACE PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT AND DISPOSSESSION

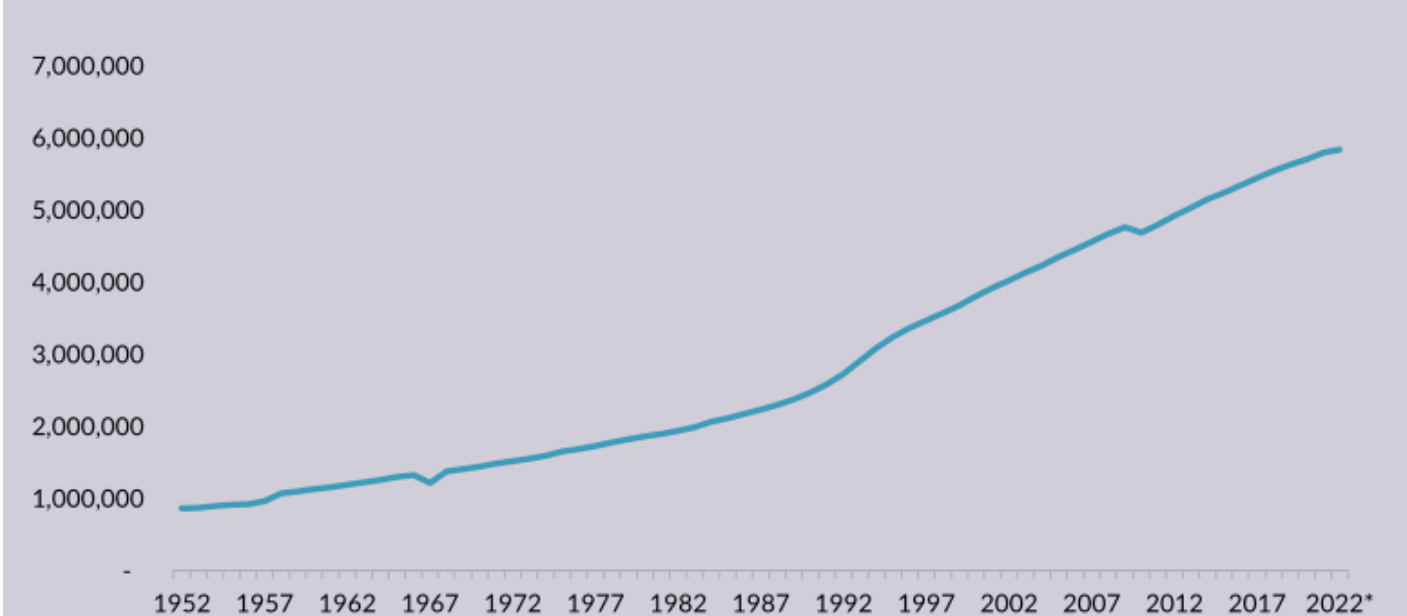
[MPI \(MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE\)](#) **MAY 3, 2023** By Nathan Citino, Ana Martín Gil, and Kelsey P. Norman

Seventy-five years after the mass displacement of Palestinians began, approximately 5.9 million registered Palestinian refugees live across the Middle East. Palestinians comprise the largest stateless community worldwide. While they constitute the world's longest protracted refugee situation, their plight has been eclipsed by more recent displacement crises and dismissed as unsolvable.

Among refugees, this population is unique in several ways. For one, it includes people originally displaced from Palestine between 1946 and 1948, amid the creation of the state of Israel, as well as their children and other descendants; while these younger generations would not typically be considered refugees in other displacement situations, they are counted as such by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). So while the Palestinian refugee population has grown significantly over time, it has done so because of the descendants of people displaced decades ago, rather than new displacement. And unlike other refugees, Palestinians do not fall under the mandate of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but instead are protected by UNRWA, which was established in December 1949 to provide them direct relief and other services. Unlike UNHCR, UNRWA cannot resettle refugees; it describes its mandate as to assist and protect Palestinians "pending a just and lasting solution to their plight." UNRWA acts solely as a service provider, primarily for education, health (including mental health), social services, emergency assistance, and microfinance. It does not administer the refugee camps where approximately one-third of all Palestinian refugees live, which are the responsibility of the host country or governing authority.

This article provides an overview of the historical circumstances that gave birth to the displacement and dispossession of Palestinian refugees and takes stock of their current situation in countries across the Middle East, especially in light of worsening regional economies. While many long-term challenges are rooted in ongoing conflict involving Israel, other factors have contributed to Palestinian refugees' situation, including the near impossibility of obtaining citizenship in many host countries and UNRWA's precarious funding.



**Figure 1. Number of Palestinian Refugees, 1952-2022\***

\* Data for 2022 are as of the middle of the year.

*Note:* Figure refers to Palestinians under the mandate of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

*Source:* UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Refugee Data Finder," accessed April 27, 2023, [available online](#).

## THE CREATION OF A REFUGEE POPULATION

Colonialism set the stage for Palestinians' dispossession. Following World War I, the League of Nations authorized the partition of the Ottoman Empire's Middle Eastern territories by the United Kingdom and France. In the Palestine mandate, the United Kingdom was to foster a national home for Jewish people consistent with its 1917 Balfour Declaration, a goal aligned with those of the broader settler-colonial project of Zionism and opposed by Palestinian Arabs. Jews remained a minority in mandate Palestine, but their numbers increased during the 1930s as many fled Nazi persecution. Palestinian Arabs, who lacked institutional power, revolted from 1936 until 1939, leading British authorities to kill, wound, jail, or exile around one-tenth of all adult men. Following the revolt, the British government also set a limit on Jewish migration to the territory.

World War II brought cataclysmic changes. The horrors committed by Nazis and their collaborators in the Holocaust created a large displaced population, increasing pressure on British leaders to lift restrictions on Jewish migration to Palestine. Meanwhile, Zionist leaders shifted the focus of their diplomacy to the United States, where they enjoyed political and organizational support. President Harry Truman prevailed on Britain to resettle 100,000 Jewish refugees in Palestine, a proposal adopted by an Anglo-American Commission. The United Kingdom subsequently turned the question of Palestine over to the United Nations, whose Special Committee on Palestine proposed partitioning the mandate into Jewish and Arab states, with the city of Jerusalem as a separate entity. Despite their minority status, Jews were granted 55

percent of the mandate's territory, including much of the productive agricultural land. With strong U.S. backing, the UN General Assembly adopted the partition measure on November 29, 1947.

In the civil war that erupted following the partition vote, Arab and Jewish forces clashed in anticipation of British withdrawal. Palestinian Arabs lacked the Zionists' unity and resources and were reliant on an undersupplied Arab Liberation Army backed by regional states. In anticipation of an invasion, Jewish leaders instructed brigade commanders to empty cities and towns of presumably hostile Arab residents. Historians differ over the degree to which Zionist forces pursued ethnic cleansing as official policy, but the result was hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs were expelled from their homes or fled. By the time David Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency Executive, proclaimed the establishment of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948, more than 300,000 Palestinian Arabs had been turned into refugees (although this predates the 1951 Refugee Convention, historical literature considers Palestinians who fled to have been refugees).

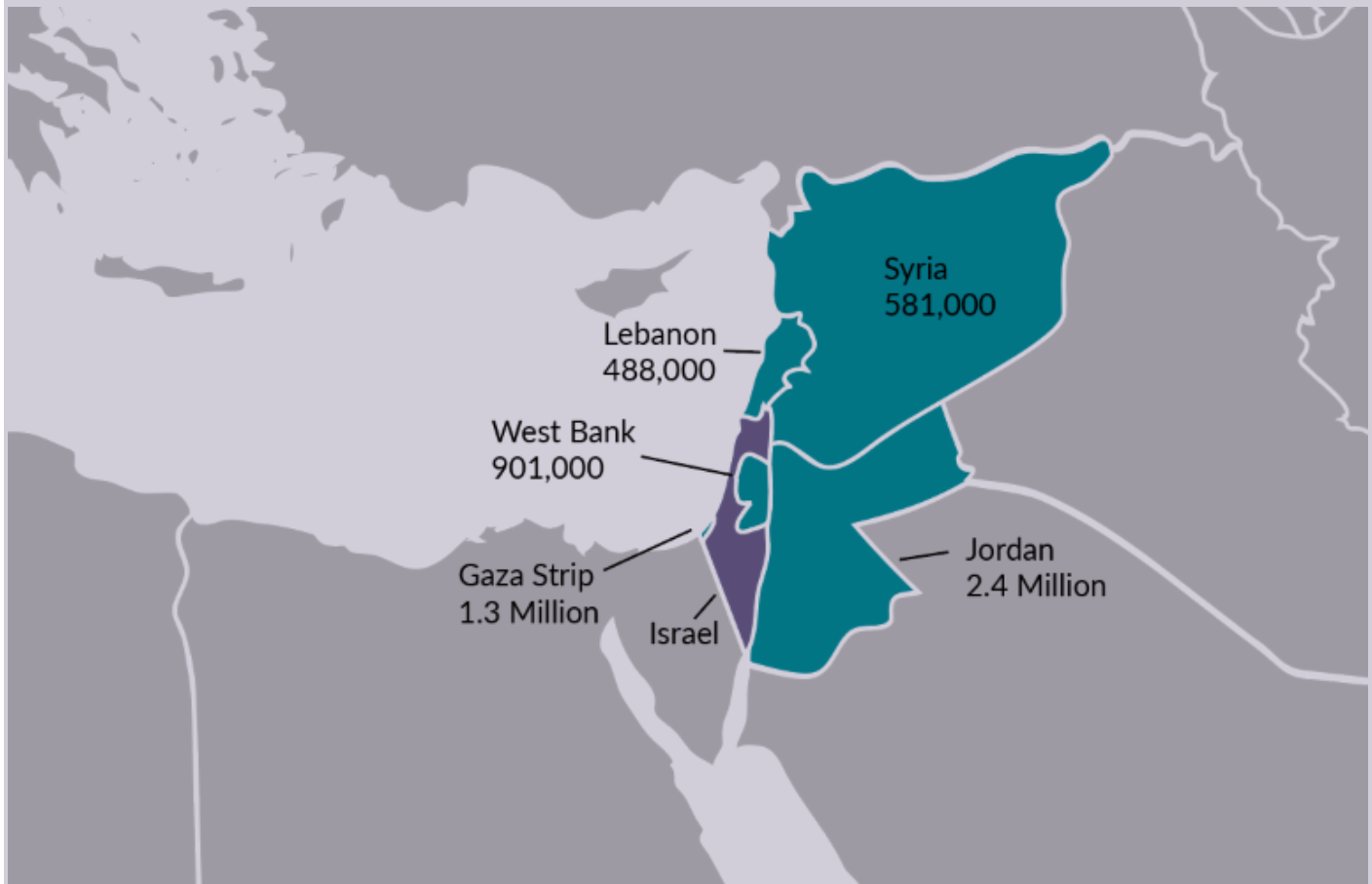
Israel's establishment led to a new phase of fighting and an invasion of Palestinian territory by Arab states. Israel benefited from lack of unity among Arab countries. For instance, Zionists had previously held secret talks with King Abdullah of Transjordan envisioning his kingdom's occupation of the geographically Arab portion of Palestine, a plan bitterly opposed by Abdullah's rivals in the Palestinian leadership and other Arab states such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Despite UN mediation efforts, Israeli forces secured not only the area designated for the Jewish state under the partition plan but also territories such as the western Galilee and west Jerusalem. Israeli forces depopulated multiple Arab towns and villages. In all, more than 400,000 additional Palestinian Arabs fled or were driven from their homes during the war that followed Israel's establishment.

Palestinians and other Arabs describe this dispossession as *al-Nakba* ("the disaster"). The term has come to refer not only to a discrete event, which is commemorated every year on May 15, but also to an ongoing process of dispossession. Despite UN General Assembly Resolution 194 calling for the right of refugees to return or be compensated for lost property, Israel prevented Palestinian refugees from returning and passed laws granting a state custodian authority over Palestinian lands. Hundreds of Palestinian villages were destroyed to prevent the return of their inhabitants and to facilitate Jewish immigration and settlement. The roughly 160,000 Arabs who remained in the territory that became Israel were citizens of the new country but nonetheless lived under a state of emergency and martial law until 1966.

### **PALESTINIAN DISPLACEMENT ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST**

Palestinian refugees scattered across the region, and their population has grown several times over. As of 2022, 40 percent of the nearly 5.9 million registered Palestinian refugees lived in Jordan; 10 percent in Syria, although approximately one-fifth of these are believed to have fled to other countries since the start of the Syrian civil war; and 8 percent in Lebanon, according to UNRWA (see Figure 2). The remainder were in the Israeli-occupied territories of Gaza (26 percent) and the West Bank (15 percent).

**Figure 2. Map of Palestinian Refugees, by Country of Residence, 2022**



*Note:* Figure refers to Palestinians under the mandate of UNRWA.

*Source:* UNRWA, “UNRWA Registered Population Dashboard,” accessed April 14, 2023, [available online](#).

### **JORDAN: HOST TO THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES**

In 1949, Jordan welcomed approximately 900,000 refugees by amending the country’s 1928 Law of Nationality to grant equal citizenship to Palestinians; the 1954 Law of Jordanian Nationality later extended citizenship to Palestinians who arrived in Jordan after the 1949 addendum. Jordan annexed the West Bank in 1950, but the war in 1967 led to its loss of this territory and displaced between 250,000 and 300,000 Palestinians to the East Bank. Like those who had fled in 1948, Palestinians from the West Bank retained their Jordanian citizenship. However, Palestinians from Gaza displaced to Jordan after 1967 were not able to become Jordanian citizens. After 1988, when Jordan relinquished claims to the West Bank, the government also took steps to distinguish between so-called Palestinian-Jordanians and Transjordanians (or non-Palestinian Jordanians), and to push back against the Israeli narrative that Jordan could serve as an alternative homeland for Palestinians.

Because about three-quarters of Palestinians in Jordan are Jordanian citizens, they are fairly integrated into its society and economy, though Palestinians from Gaza remain barred from citizenship and are excluded from most rights and services, forced to turn to UNRWA for education and health care. Gazans

also must renew their travel documents every two years, obtain special permits to work in the private sector, and pay double the tuition fees to access public schools and universities.

Palestinian refugees who had been living in Syria but later fled to Jordan after the Syrian civil war started in 2011—of whom there were more than 19,000 as of June 2022—also face challenges. Lacking Jordanian citizenship, they cannot work and access government services. And unlike other refugees from Syria, they are excluded from UNHCR assistance—which is more robust in acute displacement situations—and forced to instead turn to UNRWA. According to UNRWA, a trifecta of factors—the COVID-19 pandemic, increases in commodity prices, and the economic fallout of the Russia-Ukraine war—have recently exacerbated the impoverishment of Palestinian refugees from Syria, 80 percent of whom depended on UNRWA assistance as their main source of income as of 2022.

### **LEBANON: LIFE IN CAMPS AND LIMITED RIGHTS**

Unlike many of those in Jordan, the nearly 488,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon cannot become citizens and have very limited access to public health care, education, or the formal economy. While refugees' presence can be politically contentious everywhere, the permanent settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon (known as *tawteen*) evokes fears about upending the delicate balance of Lebanon's confessional political system, which institutionalizes the division of power among religious communities. Historically, Lebanese politicians and many Palestinians have objected to anything thought to encourage *tawteen*. Until 2005, the Lebanese government prohibited Palestinian refugees from accessing the formal labor market, forcing them to work in the informal economy, where they received lower wages. Now, Palestinians born in Lebanon who have registered with UNRWA and the Ministry of Interior can obtain work permits and access 70 occupations.

Still, many challenges remain. Palestinians cannot access public health insurance and remain barred from numerous professions in the fields of law, engineering, and public health care. More alarmingly, approximately 210,000 Palestinians—close to 45 percent of the total Palestinian refugee population in the country—live in outdated camps where conditions tend to be poor.

In 1968, Palestinians obtained autonomous governance within camps in Lebanon under the Cairo Agreement. These camps had played a vital role as locations for political and military mobilization during Israel's invasion of Lebanon and throughout the Lebanese civil war, and so their independence was reined in with the 1991 Taif agreement. Simultaneously, new laws prohibited Palestinians from residing outside camps or owning land or housing. Since then, the population in Lebanon's Palestinian camps has grown, but the land allocated to them has remained practically the same, leading to overcrowding and unsafe construction. Recent economic and financial crises, impacts of the pandemic, and the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020 have fallen particularly hard on refugees in Lebanon; 93 percent of Palestinian refugees in the country lived in poverty as of 2022, according to UNRWA. The price of a food basket in refugee camps increased more than fivefold between October 2019 and July 2022, leaving many families unable to afford basic items.

## **SYRIA: NEW DISPLACEMENT FOR MANY AMID CIVIL WAR AND NATURAL DISASTER**

Syria meanwhile received a large number of Palestinian refugees in both the 1940s and the 1960s. Palestinians in Syria could not gain citizenship but otherwise could access employment, education, and health care on par with Syrian nationals. However, the civil war beginning in 2011 had a severe impact on Palestinian refugees. The camps of Dera'a, Yarmouk, and Ein el Tal—which combined hosted more than 30 percent of Palestinian refugees in the country—were nearly destroyed. About 120,000 Palestinians fled to other countries, meaning that about 438,000 of the 575,000 refugees who were registered with UNRWA remained in Syria as of 2022; of these, 40 percent were internally displaced.

Syria's civil war has become localized over time, but the humanitarian situation remains dire and has been exacerbated by the economic downturn, declining agricultural production due to climate change, and health issues. Two earthquakes also hit Turkey and northwest Syria in February 2023, leaving tens of thousands dead and affecting Palestinian refugees in Aleppo, Latakia, and Hama in northern Syria. Close to 47,000 Palestinian refugees were affected and thousands were again displaced.

## **REFUGEES IN GAZA AND THE WEST BANK**

In addition to the 3.4 million registered Palestinian refugees living in host countries, nearly 2.5 million Palestinians live in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank. Refugees comprise about 67 percent of Gaza's population. They live in difficult socioeconomic conditions stemming from the land, air, and sea blockade imposed by Israel since 2007, when Hamas took political control of Gaza, as well as violence and political instability. As a result, 80 percent of the population depended on humanitarian assistance as of 2021. Poverty rates are extremely high (nearly 82 percent) and the unemployment rate is among the highest in the world, at nearly 47 percent as of August 2022.

The humanitarian situation in the West Bank is less severe, but Palestinian refugees nonetheless face numerous challenges such as Israeli-imposed closures and movement restrictions as well as conflict-related violence. Checkpoints and the unreliability of access to permits to enter and to work in Israel prevent many from accessing jobs, education, and health care, and can seriously impact their mental health. Israeli security forces frequently raid refugee camps in the West Bank—an average of 14 times per week as of October 2022, according to UNRWA—during which they have used tear gas, destroyed property, and harassed residents. Palestinians continue to be expelled from their homes in the West Bank, leading to further displacement. In 2022, 953 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished or seized across the West Bank, the most since 2016, and 1,031 individuals were displaced as a result.

## **CHALLENGES FOR UNRWA**

The UN General Assembly's Resolution 194 (III) from 1948 set forth that Palestinians "wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their [neighbors] should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date," which has been interpreted in international law as the right of return. This principle has had profound implications for the operations of UNRWA, which is seen as a temporary custodian of Palestinians in exile, as well as possible solutions to Palestinians' 75-year plight.

UNRWA is often thought of as a quasi-state, since it provides state-like services to Palestinians such as education, health care, and other assistance. Yet unlike a state that can collect taxes, UNRWA is almost entirely dependent on donor funding (which accounts for 93 percent of its budget), leading to chronic budget shortfalls and leaving it subject to political headwinds. Some argue that UNRWA's mandate has grown too significant over time, making the organization financially unsustainable. Yet the number of Palestinians has grown significantly as additional generations have been born into statelessness. The United States has historically been UNRWA's top donor, contributing between U.S. \$300-350 million per year, but under the Trump administration aid fell to U.S. \$60 million in 2018 and was eliminated in 2019, before a restoration to U.S. \$338 million in 2020. With the election of a Republican-controlled House of Representatives in 2022, UNRWA once again faces an uphill battle for funding, and agency staff fear that U.S. financial support could stop altogether if a Republican retakes the presidency in 2024.

The services and assistance UNRWA provides Palestinians are inextricably linked to the question of their return. Those arguing for defunding or dismantling the organization also often advocate for Palestinians to be absorbed into host societies. Yet most Palestinians lack full economic and social rights in these countries, and there is little appetite from either host-country politicians or Palestinians themselves to fully integrate, for fear that doing so means abandoning hope of return to their ancestral land. In addition to the repercussions for individual Palestinians, such a move would also be a profound shock to much of the Arab world, which has rallied around their cause for decades, despite a thaw in relations between some Arab governments and Israel via normalization agreements.

### **75 YEARS GONE, AND WHAT NEXT?**

A resolution for Palestinian refugees would require a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and refugees' return to their ancestral lands or restitution for lost property. Such a solution has been debated for decades but seems dimmer than ever after the election of Israel's far-right government in December 2022. Benjamin Netanyahu returned as prime minister after his party formed a coalition with parties regarded as extremist, generating the most right-wing government in the country's history. Several members of the cabinet committed to strengthening the Israeli settler movement across the West Bank, despite findings that these settlements are illegal under international law, violate Palestinians' human rights, and will lead to further Palestinian displacement. Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir was previously convicted for inciting racism against Palestinians, and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has consistently called for expanding Israel's territory and further expulsions of Palestinians. Violence rapidly escalated between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank in 2023, including at the Jenin refugee camp, which Israeli forces raided in January, killing 10 Palestinians and wounding 20 more, including both militants and civilians.

Still, other reforms might be more attainable and could improve Palestinians' access to services and increase opportunities for mobility. For one, although UNRWA does not have a mandate to resettle Palestinian refugees, the international community and receiving states could increase their use of complementary pathways such as existing work and study visa channels, in line with the 2018 Global

Compact on Refugees. While historically many Palestinians—including political leaders—have feared resettlement would fragment and dilute their cause, Palestinians abroad can still retain their identity and need not concede the right to return. Increased opportunities for mobility are especially important for refugees in Gaza and the West Bank who have faced stringent barriers to exit from Israeli authorities.

For host societies, the lack of citizenship for many Palestinian refugees and other integration challenges are continual obstacles. Even without citizenship, legal changes allowing Palestinians to own land or seek employment in certain professions in Lebanon, for instance, could ultimately benefit both Palestinians and host-state societies and economies.

Finally, UNRWA's dependence on individual donor countries is a major challenge. Some experts have suggested a shift to multiyear allocations rather than annual funding, which would allow UNRWA to better plan operations and reduce time spent on fundraising.

Seventy-five years into multigenerational and multicountry Palestinian displacement, soon no refugees will themselves have fled directly from their ancestral land before 1948. Instead, the international community has allowed generations of Palestinians to be born into refugee status, a fate shared by no other refugee group. This extraordinary position has transformed Palestinians into an emblem of wider geopolitical tensions but has failed to yield a meaningful resolution to their plight.

## **CREATION OF ZIONISM AND EARLY TENSIONS**

**Zionism** emerged in the late 19th century as a nationalist movement advocating the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It was spread by the first Zionist Congress in 1897 which mobilized Jewish support and spread by Theodor Herzl's publication of "Der Judenstaat"

The conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine and Israel is driven by deep-rooted historical, religious, and political factors. Despite numerous efforts, including peace treaties and accords, a lasting resolution remains elusive, influenced by ongoing violence, territorial disputes, and shifting regional dynamics.

Add Difference between revised UNWRA definition of refugee and UNHCR who are responsible for rest of world and use UN refugee definition Result number of UNWRA Palestinians expands due to heredity irrespective of obtaining alternative citizenship. while each UNHCR group shrinks due to mortality and obtaining citizenship. UNWRA education biased from an early age against Israel and Jews. .In Palestine Jews purchased land from Arab landowners usually based in Damascus thought by them to be non agricultural land and so not being farmed by Arabs

## **FIRST ARAB RIOT AGAINST JEWS (1920)**

In April 1920, the **Nebi Musa riots** marked the first significant outbreak of Arab-Jewish violence in Palestine. Arab crowds attacked Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem, resulting in several deaths and injuries. The violence was fueled by Arab opposition to increasing Jewish immigration and land purchases, as well as dissatisfaction with British rule.

## Palestine demographics, 1st century through the Mandate.

Figures in thousands.

See also the [detailed timeline](#)

Year	Jews	Christians	Muslims	Total
1st c.	Majority	–	–	~1,250
4th c.	Majority	Minority	–	>1st c. <sup>[1][2]</sup>
5th c.	Minority	Majority	–	>1st c.
End 12th c.	Minority	Minority	Majority	>225
14th c.	Minority	Minority	Majority	150
1533–1539	5	6	145	156
1553–1554	7	9	188	205
1690–1691	2	11	219	232
1800	7	22	246	275
1890	43	57	432	532
1914	94	70	525	689
1922	84	71	589	752
1931	175	89	760	1,033
1947	630	143	1,181	1,970

Estimates by [Sergio DellaPergola](#) (2001), drawing on the work of [Bachi](#) (1975).  
 Figures in thousands <sup>[3]</sup>

## EARLY OTTOMAN PERIOD

The population of the [region of Palestine](#), which approximately corresponds to modern [Israel](#) and the [Palestinian territories](#), has varied in both size and ethnic composition throughout the [history of Palestine](#).

Studies of Palestine's demographic changes over the millennia have shown that a Jewish majority in the first century CE had changed to a Christian majority by the 3rd century CE,<sup>[4]</sup> and later to a Muslim majority, which is thought to have existed in [Mandatory Palestine](#) (1920–1948) since at least the 12th century CE, during which the total shift to Arabic language was completed.<sup>[5]</sup>

During the first century of the Ottoman rule, i.e., 1550, [Bernard Lewis](#) in a study of Ottoman registers of the early Ottoman Rule of Palestine reports a population of around 300,000:<sup>[63][64]</sup>

From the mass of detail in the registers, it is possible to extract something like a general picture of the economic life of the country in that period. Out of a total population of about 300,000 souls, between a fifth and a quarter lived in the six towns

of [Jerusalem](#), [Gaza](#), [Safed](#), [Nablus](#), [Ramle](#), and [Hebron](#). The remainder consisted mainly of peasants ([fellahin](#)), living in villages of varying size, and engaged in agriculture. Their main food-crops were wheat and barley in that order, supplemented by leguminous pulses, olives, fruit, and vegetables. In and around most of the towns there was a considerable number of vineyards, orchards, and vegetable gardens.

According to [Justin McCarthy](#), the population of Palestine throughout the 17th and 18th centuries (1601–1801) was likely not much smaller than when it in 1850 (~340,000), after which it started to increase.<sup>[85][page needed]</sup>



## LATE OTTOMAN PERIOD

Group	Population	Percentage
Muslim citizens	403,795	86–87%
Christian citizens	43,659	9%
Jewish citizens	15,011	3%
Jewish (foreign-born)	Est. 5–10,000	1–2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>Up to 472,465</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

In the late nineteenth century, prior to the rise of Zionism, Jews are thought to have comprised between 2% and 5% of the population of Palestine, although the precise population is not known.<sup>[86]</sup>

Jewish immigration had begun following the 1839 [Tanzimat](#) reforms; between 1840 and 1880,

the Jewish population of Palestine rose from 9,000 to 23,000.<sup>[87]</sup>

According to [Alexander Scholch](#), Palestine in 1850 had about 350,000 inhabitants, 30% of whom lived in 13 towns; roughly 85% were Muslims, 11% were Christians and 4% Jews.<sup>[88]</sup>

The Ottoman census of 1878 indicated the following demographics for the three districts that best approximated what later became [Mandatory Palestine](#); that is, the [Mutasarrifate of Jerusalem](#), the [Nablus Sanjak](#), and the [Acre Sanjak](#).<sup>[89]</sup> In addition, some scholars estimate approximately 5,000-10,000 additional foreign-born Jews at this time:<sup>[89]</sup>

According to [Ottoman](#) statistics studied by [Justin McCarthy](#),<sup>[90]</sup> the population of Palestine in the early 19th century was 350,000, in 1860 it was 411,000 and in 1900 about 600,000 of which 94% were [Arabs](#).

The estimated 24,000 Jews in Palestine in 1882 represented just 0.3% of the world's Jewish population.<sup>[91]</sup>

## BRITISH MANDATE PERIOD, 1919–1948

### Population of Palestine, 1922–1945

Year	Muslims	Christians	Jews	Total
1922	589,177	73,024	83,790	757,182
1931	759,717	174,610	91,398	1,035,821
1945	1,061,270	135,550	553,600	1,764,520

According to [Roberto Bachi](#), head of the Israeli Institute of Statistics from 1949 onwards, between 1922 and 1945 there was a net Arab migration into Palestine of between 40,000 and 42,000, excluding 9,700 people who were incorporated after territorial

adjustments were made to the borders in the 1920s. Based on these figures, and including those netted by the border alterations, Joseph Melzer calculates an upper boundary of 8.5% for Arab growth in the two decades, and interprets it to mean the local Palestinian community's growth was generated primarily by natural increase in [birth rates](#), for both Muslims and Christians.<sup>[108]</sup> According to [Roberto Bachi](#), head of the Israeli Institute of Statistics from 1949 onwards, between 1922 and 1945 there was a net Arab migration into Palestine of between 40,000 and 42,000, excluding 9,700 people who were incorporated after territorial adjustments were made to the borders in the 1920s. Based on these figures, and including those netted by the border alterations, Joseph Melzer calculates an upper boundary of 8.5% for Arab growth in the two decades, and interprets it to mean the local Palestinian community's growth was generated primarily by natural increase in [birth rates](#), for both Muslims and Christians.<sup>[108]</sup>

According to a [Jewish Agency](#) survey, 77% of Palestinian population growth in Palestine between 1914 and 1938, during which the Palestinian population doubled, was due to natural increase, while 23% was due to immigration. Arab immigration was primarily from [Lebanon](#), [Syria](#), Transjordan, and Egypt (all countries that bordered Palestine).<sup>[109]</sup>

The overall assessment of several British reports was that the increase in the Arab population was primarily due to natural increase.<sup>[110][111]</sup> These included the [Hope Simpson Enquiry](#) (1930),<sup>[112]</sup> the [Passfield White Paper](#) (1930),<sup>[113]</sup> the [Peel Commission](#) report (1937),<sup>[114]</sup> and the Survey of Palestine (1945).<sup>[115]</sup> However, the Hope Simpson Enquiry did note that there was significant illegal immigration from the surrounding Arab territories,<sup>[112]</sup> while the Peel Commission and Survey of Palestine claimed that immigration played only a minor role in the growth of the Arab population. The [1931 census of Palestine](#) considered the question of illegal immigration since the previous census in 1922.<sup>[116]</sup> It estimated that unrecorded immigration during that period may have amounted to 9,000 Jews and 4,000 Arabs.<sup>[116]</sup> It also gave the proportion of persons living in Palestine in 1931 who were born outside Palestine: Muslims, 2%; Christians, 20%; Jews, 58%.<sup>[116]</sup> The statistical information for Arab immigration (and expulsions when the clandestine migrants were caught), with a contrast to the figures for Jewish immigration over the same period of 1936–1939, is given by [Henry Laurens](#) in the following terms<sup>[117]</sup>

**PART F**

**BEFORE AND DURING**

**THE BRITISH MANDATE**

# HOW JEWISH AND ARAB OPINION WAS CHANGED BEFORE THE BRITISH MANDATE

ChatGPT

## IMMIGRATION OF JEWS AND ARABS TO WHAT WAS TO BECOME PALESTINE (TO 1920)

### Jewish Immigration (Aliyahs)

Jewish immigration into Palestine began to transform the region's demographic and economic dynamics significantly by 1920.

#### 1. First Aliyah (1882–1903):

- Around 25,000 Jews, mainly from Eastern Europe and Yemen, migrated to Palestine.
- Driven by pogroms in Russia and Zionist aspirations, the settlers established agricultural colonies such as Rishon LeZion, Zikhron Ya'akov, and Petah Tikva.
- Financial support from philanthropists like Baron Edmond de Rothschild allowed the fledgling settlements to survive despite hardships, including diseases and a lack of agricultural experience.

#### 2. Second Aliyah (1904–1914):

- Roughly 35,000 Jews, predominantly from Russia, arrived in Palestine. This wave included many socialist Zionists who prioritized creating a self-sustaining Jewish agricultural presence.
- These settlers founded the first kibbutzim (collective farms), such as Degania (1909), and emphasized the "conquest of labor" by employing Jewish-only workers, a policy that excluded Arabs.
- Cities like Tel Aviv (founded in 1909) symbolized the urban side of Jewish settlement efforts.

#### 3. World War I and British Mandate Era:

- Jewish immigration slowed during World War I due to military disruptions and Ottoman restrictions.
- Following the Balfour Declaration in 1917, Jewish migration resumed, buoyed by the British government's support for a Jewish "national home."

## ARAB MIGRATION AND GROWTH

**Arab migration and population growth during this period also shaped the region:**

- Natural population growth was supplemented by migration from surrounding areas, as the economic opportunities created by Jewish settlement and British infrastructure projects attracted laborers.
- Urban centers like Jaffa and Jerusalem saw substantial Arab population increases, contributing to the growth of a politically conscious and organized Arab community.

## WORLD WAR I COMPETITION BETWEEN ARABS AND JEWS

### Arab Aspirations

#### 1. Promises of Independence:

- The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence (1915–1916) saw Britain imply support for an independent Arab state in exchange for Arab assistance in overthrowing Ottoman rule. However, the exact boundaries of the proposed state were vague, and Palestine was left out of the promise, unbeknownst to many Arabs at the time.

#### 2. The Arab Revolt:

- Led by Sharif Hussein of Mecca and his sons, the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans was a significant contribution to the Allied war effort.
- Arab leaders expected to gain sovereignty over Palestine as part of their envisioned state.

### Jewish Aspirations

#### 1. Zionist Diplomacy:

- Zionist leaders, such as Chaim Weizmann, lobbied Britain for support during the war, presenting the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine as aligned with British imperial interests.
- This effort culminated in the Balfour Declaration (1917).

#### 2. Strategic Alignment:

- The Zionist movement saw British control of Palestine as an opportunity to advance its goals, leading to support for Britain during the war.

### The Balfour Declaration:

- A pivotal document in the conflict, the declaration stated British support for the establishment of a Jewish "national home" in Palestine, while also promising to protect the "civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities."
- For Jews, this represented a significant diplomatic victory.

- For Arabs, the declaration was perceived as a betrayal of British wartime promises, fueling resentment and opposition.

### **The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916):**

- A secret treaty between Britain and France divided the Ottoman Empire's territories into zones of control, with Palestine placed under international administration.
- This agreement further inflamed Arab distrust, as it contradicted promises made to both Arabs and Zionists.

## **GROWTH OF KIBBUTZIM, MOSHAVIM, AND OTHER JEWISH SETTLEMENTS**

### **Kibbutzim:**

- The kibbutz movement became central to Zionist settlement strategies:
  - Emphasized collective ownership, communal living, and the "pioneering spirit."
  - Kibbutzim aimed to reclaim and cultivate neglected lands, often considered unsuitable for farming.
  - They symbolized the ideological and practical commitment of Zionist settlers to rebuilding a Jewish presence in the land.

### **Moshavim:**

- Moshavim offered a less rigid alternative to kibbutzim:
  - Families owned individual plots of land but shared resources and cooperatives.
  - The first moshav, Nahalal, was established in 1921.

### **Urban Settlements:**

- Tel Aviv, founded in 1909, became a modern urban center representing Jewish cultural and economic aspirations.
- Urban settlements also served as hubs for trade and migration.

### **Economic Impact on Arabs:**

- Land purchases by Jewish settlers often involved absentee landlords selling large tracts of land, leading to the displacement of Arab tenant farmers.
- Jewish policies of "Hebrew Labor" (prioritizing Jewish workers) deepened economic divides between the two communities.

## REASONS FOR RIOTS (END OF 19TH CENTURY TO JAFFA RIOTS)

### Underlying Causes

#### 1. Demographic Shifts:

- By 1920, Jewish immigration was altering the demographic balance, raising fears among Arabs of being outnumbered or marginalized.

#### 2. Land Disputes:

- Jewish land purchases and settlement expansion led to the eviction of Arab tenants, creating economic insecurity.
- The establishment of kibbutzim and other settlements on land previously used by Arabs heightened tensions.

#### 3. Cultural and Religious Tensions:

- Zionist aspirations for a Jewish state conflicted with Arab perceptions of Palestine as part of the broader Arab homeland.
- Control of religious sites in Jerusalem and other areas became a flashpoint.

#### 4. Political and Economic Rivalries:

- Zionist political organizations like the Jewish Agency worked to establish Jewish self-governance, creating anxiety among Arabs about losing sovereignty.
- Arab workers were increasingly excluded from employment in Jewish settlements.

#### 5. British Policies:

- Britain's contradictory promises to Jews and Arabs during and after WWI inflamed tensions.
- The Balfour Declaration was particularly polarizing, as Arabs viewed it as a threat to their national aspirations.

## MAJOR RIOTS

#### 1. Nebi Musa Riots (1920):

- Occurred during an Arab religious festival in Jerusalem.
- Rumors of Jewish threats to Islamic holy sites triggered widespread violence, with Arab mobs attacking Jewish communities.
- Casualties: 5 Jews killed, hundreds injured, and property destroyed.
- Outcome: The riots underscored the growing divide between Jews and Arabs and the inadequacy of British governance.

## 2. Jaffa Riots (1921):

- Initially sparked by tensions between socialist Zionist factions, the riots escalated into widespread violence as Arab mobs attacked Jewish neighbourhoods.
- Casualties: Over 95 killed (Jews and Arabs) and hundreds injured.
- British Response: Imposed immigration restrictions (White Paper of 1922) to placate Arab concerns.

## CONCLUSION

By 1920, Palestine was a region marked by significant demographic, economic, and political changes driven by Jewish immigration, settlement expansion, and British wartime promises. The Zionist movement's focus on establishing a Jewish homeland clashed with Arab nationalist ambitions, creating a volatile environment. Land disputes, economic rivalries, and cultural tensions culminated in violent confrontations such as the Nebi Musa and Jaffa riots, signaling the deepening of the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine.

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## THE EFFECT OF NEWSPAPERS AND PUBLICITY ON THE ARAB-JEWISH CONFLICT IN PALESTINE (TO 1920)

**The emerging mass media in Palestine, the Middle East, and the broader Jewish and Arab diasporas played a significant role in shaping public opinion, mobilizing political movements, and escalating tensions between Arabs and Jews.**

### JEWISH MEDIA AND PUBLICITY

#### 1. Zionist Publications:

- **Purpose:** Zionist leaders used newspapers, journals, and pamphlets to promote their vision of a Jewish homeland and garner international support.
- **Key Outlets:**
  - Hebrew and Yiddish-language newspapers such as *Ha-Tzvi* and *Haaretz* were prominent in Palestine.
  - International Jewish newspapers spread Zionist ideas to Jewish communities in Europe and America, emphasizing the spiritual and national revival in Palestine.
- **Impact:**
  - Zionist media framed Jewish immigration and settlement as a historic return to their ancestral homeland.



- Publicized the progress of kibbutzim, moshavim, and urban centers like Tel Aviv to demonstrate the success of the Zionist project.

## 2. Countering Opposition:

- Jewish publications addressed criticisms from Arabs and non-Zionist Jews, portraying opposition as misunderstandings or hostility toward Jewish self-determination.
- They highlighted instances of anti-Jewish violence, such as pogroms in Europe and riots in Palestine, to justify the necessity of a Jewish homeland.

## 3. Diaspora Engagement:

- Jewish media helped raise funds and political support by sharing stories of progress and hardships in Palestine.
- Reports of violence, like the Nebi Musa riots, rallied global Jewish communities to the Zionist cause, pressuring Britain to honor the Balfour Declaration.

## ARAB MEDIA AND PUBLICITY

### 1. Emergence of Arab Press:

- The Arab press in Palestine and neighboring regions grew rapidly during the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods.
- Arabic newspapers like *Filastin* (founded in 1911 in Jaffa) and *Al-Karmil* (established in 1908 in Haifa) became leading voices for Arab nationalism.
- These papers were critical of Zionist immigration and settlement and opposed British policies perceived as favoring Jews.

### 2. Themes in Arab Media:

- **Land and Sovereignty:**
  - Articles warned of the dispossession of Arab farmers due to Jewish land purchases and British support for Zionism.
  - Publicized instances of Arab tenants being evicted by Jewish organizations, stoking fears of economic and social marginalization.
- **Religious Concerns:**
  - The press amplified fears that Jewish immigration would threaten Islamic holy sites, particularly in Jerusalem.

- **Nationalism:**
  - Promoted the idea of Palestine as an integral part of the Arab world, opposing any division or foreign domination.

### 3. **Mobilization of Arab Opinion:**

- Newspapers played a critical role in organizing protests and rallies against British policies and Jewish immigration.
- For example, the Nebi Musa riots (1920) were fueled by inflammatory rhetoric in the Arab press, which spread rumors of Jewish intentions to seize Muslim holy sites.

## **INTERNATIONAL MEDIA AND PERCEPTION**

### 1. **British Publicity and Propaganda:**

- During World War I, Britain sought to manage public opinion through controlled messaging.
- The **Balfour Declaration** was strategically publicized to win Jewish support for the Allied cause, particularly in the United States and Russia, where Jewish communities wielded significant influence.

### 2. **Global Jewish Media:**

- International Jewish newspapers and organizations, such as the World Zionist Organization, leveraged the declaration to rally Jewish communities.
- Reports of Arab opposition and riots were used to depict Jewish settlers as victims of aggression, garnering sympathy from Western audiences.

### 3. **Arab Diaspora Response:**

- Arab intellectuals and journalists in Cairo, Damascus, and Beirut responded by publishing articles denouncing Zionism and British imperialism.
- The Arab media argued that British policies betrayed Arab sacrifices during WWI and undermined promises of independence.

## **THE ROLE OF PUBLICITY IN ESCALATING RIOTS**

### **Nebi Musa Riots (1920):**

#### • **Arab Media's Role:**

- Newspapers and political leaders spread rumors that Zionists planned to seize Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem.

- Reports of British favoritism toward Jews and increasing immigration inflamed tensions during the Nebi Musa festival, a traditional occasion for public gatherings and nationalist rhetoric.
- Inflammatory articles and speeches led to mass mobilization, resulting in widespread violence against Jewish communities in Jerusalem.
- **Zionist Response:**
  - Jewish newspapers reported the violence in graphic detail, emphasizing Jewish vulnerability and the need for self-defense.
  - These accounts strengthened international support for Zionism and led to the establishment of the **Haganah** (a Jewish paramilitary organization).

#### **Jaffa Riots (1921):**

- **Media Amplification:**
  - Both Arab and Jewish media blamed each other for the outbreak of violence, escalating mutual hostility.
  - Arab papers condemned Jewish immigration and British policies, framing the riots as a defense of Arab rights.
  - Jewish publications highlighted the destruction and loss of life to galvanize international support for increased immigration and settlement.

### **CONCLUSION**

Newspapers and publicity were critical in shaping the dynamics of the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine by 1920. The press on both sides amplified fears, mobilized communities, and solidified identities. For Zionists, media coverage helped portray Jewish immigration as a historic and just cause, while Arab publications emphasized resistance to dispossession and the protection of national and religious rights. The spread of inflammatory rhetoric and politicized reporting contributed directly to outbreaks of violence, such as the Nebi Musa and Jaffa riots, making media a powerful driver of both conflict and mobilization.

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### **THE ROLE OF NEWSPAPERS IN THE ARAB-JEWISH CONFLICT IN PALESTINE (TO 1920)**

The period leading up to 1920 saw newspapers emerge as a powerful force in shaping public opinion, mobilizing political movements, and escalating tensions between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. Both communities leveraged the press to advocate for their causes, respond to perceived threats, and rally support locally and internationally.

## JEWISH NEWSPAPERS AND PUBLICITY

### Zionist Press in Palestine

Jewish newspapers in Palestine became central to the Zionist movement's efforts to inform, mobilize, and unify Jewish communities:

#### 1. Key Publications:

- *Ha-Tzvi* (established in 1884 by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda): A Hebrew-language newspaper promoting Zionism, Jewish self-determination, and cultural revival.
- *Haaretz* (established in 1919): Became a major platform for Zionist ideals and discussion of political issues.
- *Do'ar HaYom*: Advocated for Hebrew culture and nationalism, fostering a sense of unity among Jewish settlers.

#### 2. Themes:

- Highlighted the success of Jewish immigration, agricultural settlements (kibbutzim and moshavim), and urban centers like Tel Aviv.
- Promoted the idea of Jewish self-reliance, often through stories of land reclamation and "making the desert bloom."
- Publicized the threat of antisemitism in Europe and the Middle East, portraying Zionism as a solution to Jewish persecution.

#### 3. Publicizing Zionist Achievements:

- Newspapers celebrated milestones in Jewish settlement, such as the establishment of Degania (the first kibbutz) and Tel Aviv.
- Coverage of cultural events and infrastructure projects reinforced the narrative of a thriving Jewish national revival.

#### 4. Diaspora Support:

- Zionist newspapers communicated with Jewish communities worldwide, rallying financial, political, and moral support.
- Coverage of the Balfour Declaration (1917) and the Nebi Musa riots (1920) emphasized the challenges and progress of Zionist efforts.

### International Zionist Media

Jewish newspapers outside Palestine played a critical role in influencing global opinion and Jewish diaspora support:

- **The Jewish Chronicle** (based in London) and other publications in Europe and the United States disseminated reports on Jewish settlement and Arab resistance.
- Stories of Arab violence against Jews, such as during the Nebi Musa riots, were used to galvanize international sympathy and donations.

## ARAB NEWSPAPERS AND PUBLICITY

### Emergence of Arab Press

Arab newspapers in Palestine and the broader Arab world became an essential platform for nationalist movements and opposition to Zionism:

#### 1. Key Publications:

- *Filastin* (founded in Jaffa in 1911 by Issa and Yusef El-Issa): One of the most influential Arab newspapers in Palestine, dedicated to opposing Zionist immigration and land purchases.
- *Al-Karmil* (established in Haifa in 1908 by Najib Nassar): Focused on defending Arab rights and land, warning against Zionist expansion.

#### 2. Themes:

- **Land and Labor:** Highlighted the displacement of Arab tenant farmers due to land sales to Jewish organizations, stoking fears of economic marginalization.
- **Nationalism:** Framed the Zionist movement as a colonial project, incompatible with Arab sovereignty and culture.
- **Religious Concerns:** Amplified fears of Jewish plans to seize Islamic holy sites, particularly in Jerusalem.

#### 3. Mobilization:

- Arab newspapers frequently called for protests, boycotts, and political action against Zionist activities and British policies.
- During events like the Nebi Musa festival (1920), inflammatory articles fueled public anger and contributed to riots.

#### 4. Countering Zionism:

- Articles exposed Zionist land purchases and policies like "Hebrew Labor" (which excluded Arab workers), presenting them as existential threats to Arab livelihoods and sovereignty.
- Criticism of the Balfour Declaration framed it as a betrayal of Arab wartime contributions to the Allied victory in WWI.

## Pan-Arab Influence

Arab newspapers outside Palestine, particularly in Cairo, Damascus, and Beirut, supported Palestinian Arab opposition to Zionism:

- Publications like *Al-Muqattam* and *Al-Ahram* in Egypt raised awareness of the Arab struggle in Palestine.
- The Arab press networked with Palestinian journalists, amplifying calls for pan-Arab solidarity.

## Impact of Newspapers on the Arab-Jewish Conflict

### Spreading Awareness and Mobilizing Communities

#### 1. For Jews:

- Newspapers helped unify Jewish settlers around the Zionist vision of a national homeland.
- Reports of Arab violence and British indifference heightened the sense of urgency for Jewish self-defense and political advocacy.
- Publicity strengthened ties between Jews in Palestine and the diaspora, ensuring a steady flow of financial and political support.

#### 2. For Arabs:

- Newspapers served as a tool to organize resistance against Zionism and British policies.
- Coverage of land sales and immigration stoked fears among rural and urban Arab communities, creating widespread opposition.
- Mobilized political activism, including petitions, protests, and boycotts.

### Escalation of Tensions

#### • Misinformation and Inflammatory Rhetoric:

- Both Arab and Jewish newspapers often used sensationalism to rally support, which sometimes escalated fears and violence.
- For example, Arab newspapers' claims that Jews planned to seize Islamic holy sites contributed to the Nebi Musa riots in 1920.
- Zionist publications highlighted Arab attacks on Jewish settlements, portraying them as unprovoked aggression and justifying the need for self-defense organizations like the **Haganah**.

- **International Scrutiny:**

- Media coverage of the conflict attracted the attention of European and American audiences.
- Reports on riots and unrest often reflected the biases of the respective outlets, with Western publications generally more sympathetic to Zionist aspirations.

### **EXAMPLES OF MEDIA INFLUENCE IN KEY EVENTS**

#### **Nebi Musa Riots (1920):**

- Arab newspapers, including *Filastin*, published inflammatory articles warning of Jewish threats to the Al-Aqsa Mosque.
- These reports amplified nationalist rhetoric during the Nebi Musa festival, contributing to the violence that followed.
- Zionist newspapers responded by documenting the destruction and casualties, using the riots to highlight the vulnerability of Jewish settlers.

#### **Jaffa Riots (1921):**

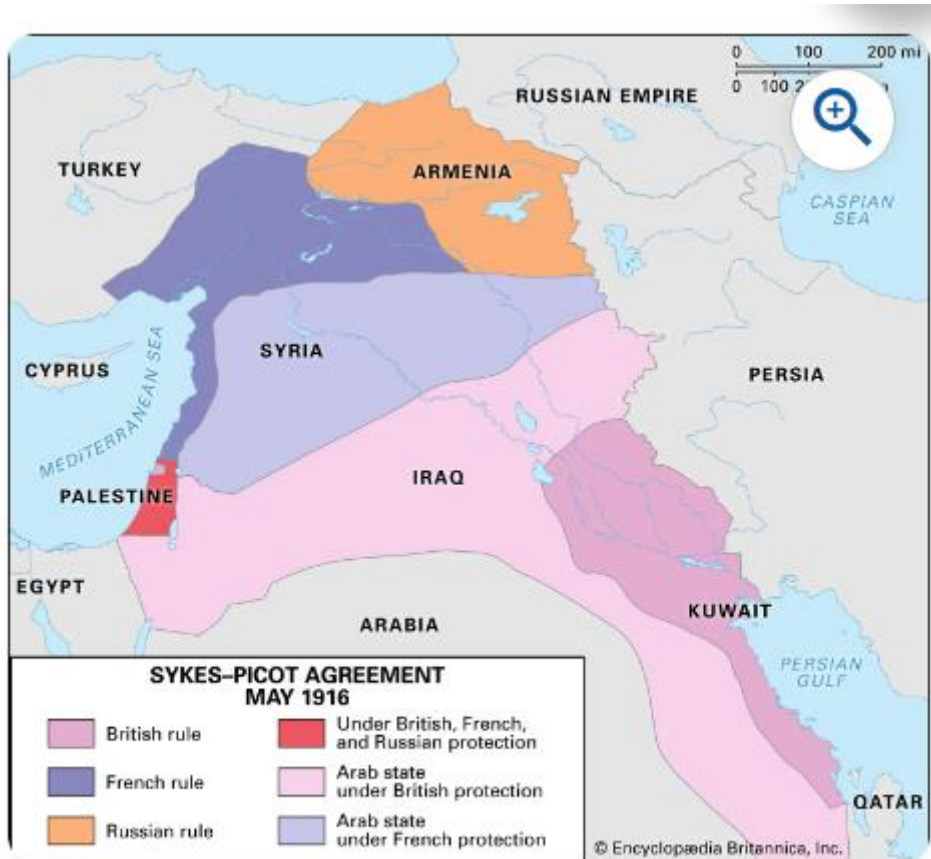
- Both Arab and Jewish newspapers covered the riots extensively, blaming each other for the violence.
- Arab publications criticized Zionist immigration as the root cause of the unrest, while Jewish outlets emphasized Arab hostility and British failures to protect Jewish communities.

### **CONCLUSION**

Newspapers played a critical role in shaping the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine by 1920. They were not only tools for information dissemination but also active participants in the conflict, amplifying nationalist aspirations and fears on both sides. Arab newspapers mobilized resistance to Zionist immigration and British policies, while Jewish publications rallied international support for the Zionist cause. This media-fueled polarization contributed to the outbreaks of violence, such as the Nebi Musa and Jaffa riots, solidifying the deep divisions between the two communities.

## WORLD WAR 1 AND AFTER

[BRITANNICA](#) [Glenn Richard Bugh](#), [Walid Ahmed Khalidi](#)



During World War I the [great powers](#) made a number of decisions concerning the future of Palestine without much regard to the wishes of the [indigenous](#) inhabitants. Palestinian Arabs, however, believed that [Great Britain](#) had promised them independence in the [Hussein-McMahon correspondence](#), an exchange of letters from July 1915 to March 1916 between Sir [Henry McMahon](#), British high commissioner in Egypt, and [Hussein ibn Ali](#), then emir of Mecca, in which the British made certain commitments to

### Sykes-Picot Agreement

the Arabs in return for their support against the Ottomans during the war. Yet by May 1916 Great Britain, [France](#), and [Russia](#) had reached an agreement (the [Sykes-Picot Agreement](#)) according to which, inter alia, the bulk of Palestine was to be internationalized. Further complicating the situation, in November 1917 [Arthur Balfour](#), the British secretary of state for foreign affairs, addressed a letter to [Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild](#) (the [Balfour Declaration](#)) expressing sympathy for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people on the understanding that “nothing shall be done which may [prejudice](#) the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish [communities](#) in Palestine.” This declaration did not come about through an act of generosity or stirrings of [conscience](#) over the bitter fate of the Jewish people. It was meant, in part, to prompt American Jews to exercise their influence in moving the [United States](#) to support British postwar policies as well as to encourage Russian Jews to keep their nation fighting. Palestine was hard-hit by the war. In addition to the destruction caused by the fighting, the population was devastated by famine, [epidemics](#), and Ottoman punitive measures against Arab nationalists. Major battles took place at Gaza before Jerusalem was captured by British and Allied forces under the command of [General Sir Edmund \(later 1st Viscount\) Allenby](#) in December 1917. The remaining area was occupied by the British by October 1918.



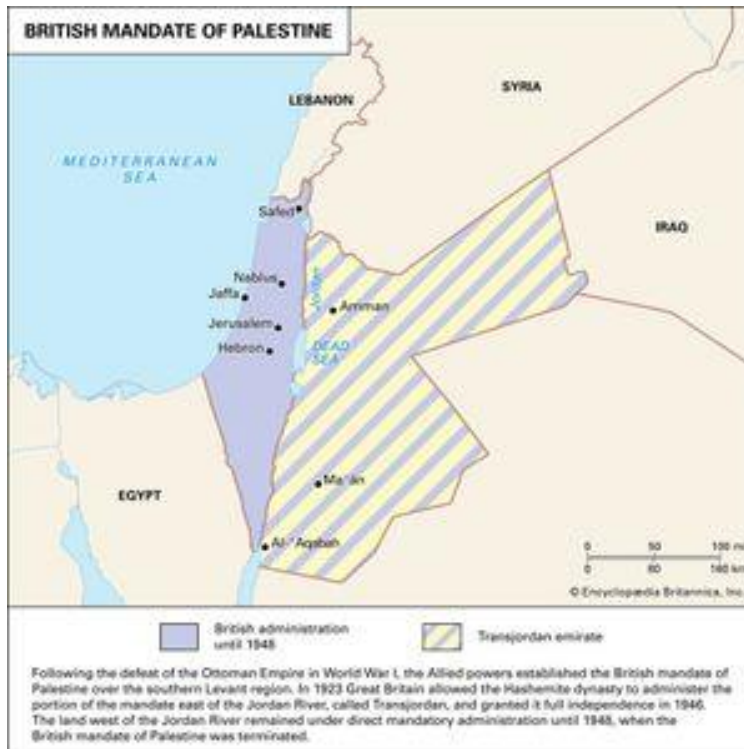
At the war's end, the future of Palestine was problematic. Great Britain, which had set up a military administration in Palestine after capturing Jerusalem, was faced with the problem of having to secure international sanction for the continued occupation of the country in a manner consistent with its [ambiguous](#), seemingly conflicting wartime commitments. On March 20, 1920, delegates from Palestine attended a general Syrian congress at Damascus, which passed a resolution rejecting the Balfour Declaration and elected [Faisal I](#)—son of Hussein ibn Ali, who ruled the [Hejaz](#)—king of a united Syria (including Palestine). This resolution echoed one passed earlier in Jerusalem, in February 1919, by the first Palestinian Arab conference of Muslim-Christian associations, which had been founded by leading Palestinian Arab notables to oppose Zionist activities. In April 1920, however, at a [peace conference](#) held in [San Remo](#), Italy, the Allies divided the former territories of the defeated [Ottoman Empire](#). Of the Ottoman provinces in the Syrian [region](#), the northern portion (Syria and [Lebanon](#)) was [mandated](#) to France, and the southern portion (Palestine) was [mandated](#) to Great Britain. By July 1920 the French had forced Faisal to give up his newly founded kingdom of Syria. The hope of founding an Arab Palestine within a federated Syrian state collapsed and with it any prospect of independence. Palestinian Arabs spoke of 1920 as *'ām al-nakbah*, the “year of the catastrophe.”

Uncertainty over the [disposition](#) of Palestine affected all its inhabitants and increased political tensions. In April 1920 anti-Zionist [riots](#) broke out in the Jewish quarter of [Old Jerusalem](#), killing several and injuring scores. British authorities attributed the riots to Arab disappointment at not having the promises of independence fulfilled and to fears, played on by some Muslim and Christian leaders, of a massive influx of Jews. Following the confirmation of the [mandate](#) at San Remo, the British replaced the military administration with a civilian administration in July 1920, and [Sir Herbert \(later Viscount\) Samuel](#), a Zionist, was appointed the first high commissioner. The new administration proceeded to [implement](#) the Balfour Declaration, announcing in August a quota of 16,500 Jewish [immigrants](#) for the first year.

In December 1920, Palestinian Arabs at a congress in [Haifa](#) established an executive committee (known as the Arab Executive) to act as the representative of the Arabs. It was never formally recognized by the British and was dissolved in 1934. However, the platform of the Haifa congress, which set out the position that Palestine was an [autonomous](#) Arab entity and totally rejected any rights of the Jews to Palestine, remained the basic policy of the Palestinian Arabs until 1948. The arrival of more than 18,000 Jewish immigrants between 1919 and 1921 and land purchases in 1921 by the Jewish National Fund (established in 1901), which led to the eviction of Arab peasants (fellahin), further aroused Arab opposition that was expressed throughout the region through the Christian-Muslim associations. On May 1, 1921, more serious anti-Zionist riots broke out in Jaffa and spread to [Petah Tikva](#) and other Jewish communities, in which nearly 100 were killed. An Arab delegation of notables visited London in August–November 1921, demanding that the Balfour Declaration be [repudiated](#) and proposing the creation of a national government with a parliament democratically elected by the country's Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Alarmed by the extent of Arab opposition, the British government issued a [white paper](#) in June 1922 declaring that Great Britain did “not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded in Palestine.” Immigration would not exceed the economic absorptive capacity of the country, and steps would be taken to set up a legislative council. These

proposals were rejected by the Arabs, both because they [constituted](#) a large majority of the total mandate population and therefore wished to dominate the instruments of government and rapidly gain independence and because, they argued, the proposals allowed Jewish immigration, which had a political objective, to be regulated by an economic [criterion](#).

## THE BRITISH MANDATE OF PALESTINE



### [British mandate of Palestine](#)

In July 1922 the Council of the [League of Nations](#) approved the mandate instrument for Palestine, including its preamble incorporating the [Balfour Declaration](#) and stressing the Jewish historical connection with Palestine. Article 2 made the mandatory power responsible for placing the country under such “political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home...and the development of self-governing institutions.” Article 4 allowed for the establishment of a [Jewish Agency](#) to advise and cooperate with

the Palestine administration in matters affecting the Jewish national home. Article 6 required that the Palestine administration, “while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced,” under suitable conditions should [facilitate](#) Jewish immigration and close settlement of Jews on the land. Although Transjordan—i.e., the lands east of the [Jordan](#) River—constituted three-fourths of the British mandate of Palestine, it was, despite protests from the Zionists, excluded from the clauses covering the establishment of a Jewish national home. On September 29, 1923, the mandate officially came into force.

## THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT AND MAKING OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

To mark the 100th anniversary of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, we've got a package with an explanatory article about the secret accord, an argument the accord still underlies the discontent in the Middle East (below) and the counter-view that its influence is overstated.

[THE CONVERSATION](#) May 12 2016



### SYKES-PICOT MAP

The [Sykes-Picot Agreement](#) created the modern Middle East. It represents one of the first instalments in a long line of modern European – and subsequent American – meddling in the region. And, in providing a set of unrealistic and impossible promises to the Arabs, it led directly to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Asia Minor Agreement, the official name of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, dates to 1916. It was the result of secret deliberations between the British civil servant [Mark Sykes](#) and French diplomat [François Georges-Picot](#).

It was made official by the Allied Powers of the first world war with the [San Remo Conference](#) in 1920.

The agreement provided a general

understanding of British and French spheres of influence in the Middle East. The goal was to divide between them the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces (not including the Arabian Peninsula).

The [line across a map of the Middle East](#) it drew created colonial spheres of influence that cut directly and artificially across a region that had previously been divided along ethnic, linguistic and religious lines.

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Area "A" was to be under French influence and control, while "B" was to be under British influence and control. The Sykes-Picot Agreement also proposed an "international administration" for Palestine.

In 1920, the latter region was transferred to British control as “Mandatory Palestine”. It was governed under British civil administration until 1948, during which the competing Arab and Zionist nationalist movements clashed with one another.

The cause of many of these clashes were unrealistic promises made to each side by the British; promises directly related to the artificial arrangement of the modern Middle East initiated by the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

The agreement, then, helped frame the contours of modern nation states in a region where before there had been none. Since it’s essentially an accord between two colonialist powers external to the region, it would have devastating effects.

The mainstay of the plan was that France and Great Britain were prepared to recognise and protect an independent Arab state, or confederation of Arab states – in exchange for Arab help in overthrowing the Ottoman Empire.

### CONFLICTING PROMISES

To get a sense of the broken promises, it’s worthwhile comparing the Sykes-Picot Agreement to two other contemporary documents. These are the [McMahon-Hussein letters](#) and the [1917 Balfour Declaration](#).

[Sir Henry McMahon](#) was the British high commissioner in Egypt and [Hussein bin Ali](#) was the Sharif of Mecca. In letters they exchanged between 1915 to 1916, Britain clearly agreed to recognise Arab independence after the first world war, in exchange for Arab help in fighting the Ottomans.

The Arabs regarded McMahon’s promises as a formal agreement, which it may very well have been. The boundaries proposed by Hussein included Palestine. But this area was not explicitly mentioned in the McMahon–Hussein correspondence.



Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has called for the replacing of the Middle East’s crumbling nations with a transnational regional power. Reuters

Confusing the issue was the [1917 Balfour Declaration](#), which promised British support for a Jewish “national home” in Palestine. [Part of this very short text](#) reads as follows:

*His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object...*

These conflicting promises remained at the heart of the impasse between two distinct nationalist groups in Mandate Palestine: the Zionists and the Arabs, later to be renamed Israelis and Palestinians.

Repeated and conflicting promises to both sides during the Mandate period further stoked nationalist resentment. Each expected the land to remain in their hands, which seems to have been what the British promised them. And repeated attempts at dividing or partitioning the land suited neither.

### INTRACTABLE PROBLEMS

If the Sykes-Picot Agreement created the modern Middle East, it is also at the heart of many of the region's intractable problems.

The most significant, at least historically, has been the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More recently, it's the breakdown of Arab nation states in the area and the rise of Islamic State (IS).

[\*Read about how Islamic State uses Sykes-Picot in its propaganda\*](#)

One of IS's stated goals is [to dismantle the agreement](#). The outfit's leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, has called for replacing the crumbling nations of the area into a transnational regional power, the so-called "caliphate".

In a 2002 interview, then British foreign secretary Jack Straw [quipped](#):

*A lot of the problems we are having to deal with now, I have to deal with now, are a consequence of our colonial past ... The Balfour Declaration and the contradictory assurances which were being given to Palestinians in private at the same time as they were being given to the Israelis — again, an interesting history for us but not an entirely honourable one.*

The Sykes-Picot Agreement is instrumental to understanding the modern Middle East. It represents the framework of its colonial past and shows the potential for national fractures inherent to the region's present and future.

When taken in the larger context of other agreements, declarations and promises to the players in the region over the years, we see how the agreement is at the root of so many contemporary problems.

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*This article is part of a package marking the 100th anniversary of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Read [the counter-argument about the legacy of the document](#) or the [introductory article about the accord](#).*

## THE CREATION OF PALESTINE

An area of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century was to become Palestine in the twentieth century. It was largely Arabic where usable land was used for basic methods of agriculture with wealthy owners in areas such as Damascus in Syria. They saw other land as having little scope for development. The few Jews there lived in towns such as Safed and Tiberias. (see '*Famous Travellers to the Holy Land*')

The Russian Jews who were concentrated in the Russian Pale were they were inflicted with **Pogroms** (a violent **riot** incited with the aim of **massacring** or expelling an ethnic or religious group, particularly **Jews**<sup>[1]</sup>). They gave rise to a group called **Zionists** and led to '**Aliyah**' (Jewish emigration) (see '*Herzl's Troubled Dream: The Origins of Zionism*', History Today)

A homeland for the Jewish people is an idea rooted in Jewish history, religion, and culture. Most had been expelled by the Romans in 70CE. Since then, Jews had told each other '*next year in Jerusalem*' but few went. Those who did could largely be found in Safed, Tiberias, Hebron and Jerusalem.

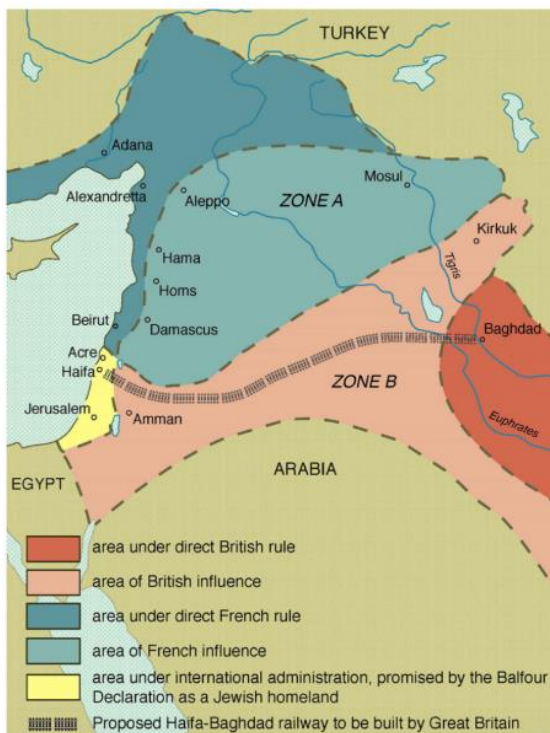
Modern legal attempts to establish a national homeland for the Jewish people began in 1839 with a petition by Moses Montefiore to Sa'id of Egypt for a Jewish homeland in the region of what is now Palestine.

During WW1 the **Sykes–Picot Agreement** was a 1916 secret treaty between the United Kingdom and France,

with assent from the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy, to define their mutually agreed spheres of influence and control in an eventual partition of the Ottoman Empire. England and France on how to share land the Ottomans would lose. This appeared as the Sykes-Picot Agreement for approval by the League of Nations.

The Arab hierarchy decided to join the Allies.

The map shows that the north was to become a French mandate and the south a British mandate to be called 'Palestine'



## Balfour Declaration

Foreign Office,  
November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.




The original letter from Balfour to Rothschild; the declaration reads:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

**Created** 2 November 1917  
**Location** [British Library](#)  
**Author(s)** [Walter Rothschild](#), [Arthur Balfour](#), [Leo Amery](#), [Lord Milner](#)  
**Signatories** [Arthur James Balfour](#)  
**Purpose** Confirming support from [the British government](#) for the establishment in Palestine of a "national home" for Jewish people, with two [conditi](#)



**Full Text**

 [Balfour Declaration at Wikisource](#)

The **Balfour Declaration** was a public statement issued by the [British Government](#) in 1917 during the [First World War](#) announcing its support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in [Palestine](#), then an [Ottoman](#) region with a small minority [Jewish](#) population. The declaration was contained in a letter dated 2 November 1917 from the United Kingdom's [Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour](#) to [Lord Rothschild](#), a leader of the [British Jewish community](#), for transmission to the [Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland](#). The text of the declaration was published in the press on 9 November 1917.

"This is a very carefully worded document and but for the somewhat vague phrase 'A National Home for the Jewish People' might be considered sufficiently unalarming ... But the vagueness of the phrase cited has been a cause of trouble from the commencement. Various persons in high positions have used language of the loosest kind calculated to convey a very different impression to the more moderate interpretation which can be put upon the words. President Wilson brushed away all doubts as to what was intended from his point of view when, in March 1919, he said to the Jewish leaders in America, 'I am moreover persuaded that the allied nations, with the fullest concurrence of our own Government and people are agreed that in Palestine shall be laid the foundations of a Jewish Commonwealth.'<sup>[w]</sup> The late President Roosevelt declared that one of the Allies peace conditions should be that 'Palestine must be made a Jewish State.' Mr. Winston Churchill has spoken of a 'Jewish State' and Mr. Bonar Law has talked in Parliament of 'restoring Palestine to the Jew'."

*Report of the Palin Commission, August 1920*

The **Balfour Declaration** was a public statement issued by the British Government in 1917 during the First World War announcing its support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, then an Ottoman region with a small minority Jewish population. The declaration was contained in a letter dated 2 November 1917 from the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community, for transmission to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. The text of the declaration was published in the press on 9 November 1917.



In 1922 the British gave 80% of their territory to the Arabs to a new country to be known as Transjordan (this was later changed to Jordan).

After World War I, religion played an important role for Arab and Jewish groups.

For Palestinian Arabs: Islam was central to Arab nationalist identity in opposing Zionism. Arabs felt the influx of European Jews infringed on the traditional status of Arab Muslims who had largely controlled the region for centuries, known as "Dar al-Islam" (house of Islam). They aimed to defend Islamic sacred sites and cultural legacy.

Under traditional Islamic law and practices, discriminatory status was accorded to "dhimmis" - non-Muslims such as Christians and Jews living under Islamic rule. They faced restrictions and extra taxation. After World War I, Zionist rhetoric of Jews as equals threatened the privileged position Arabs expected, creating tensions. Many local Arabs were incensed over Zionist Jews who refused second-class "dhimmi" treatment.

Key Arab figures like the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Husseini framed the growing conflict as Muslims protecting their religious rights and way of life from encroaching Zionist Jews. He incited religious fervor during the 1920's and then around the 1929 riots by claiming the al-Aqsa mosque was threatened. Arab religious leaders issued fatwas against selling land to Zionists as they thought losing control over the land resonated as undermining Arab cultural identity and power.



# JEWISH AND ARAB SETTLEMENTS IN PALESTINE

## ChatGPT

The period from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century witnessed growing tensions and conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

These conflicts were shaped by competing nationalisms, land disputes, demographic changes, and external interventions.

Below is a detailed account of the escalating conflict during this period.

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## ROOTS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN JEWS AND ARABS

### Pre-WWI Period

#### 1. Early Tensions Over Land:

- Jewish land purchases often displaced Arab tenant farmers, leading to localized disputes.
- While some Arab landlords (often absentee) profited from selling land, displaced Arab peasants (fellahin) frequently became embittered, fueling resentment toward Jewish settlers.
- Early Jewish settlements, such as Petah Tikva and Rishon LeZion, began to disrupt traditional patterns of land ownership and use, though the scale of conflict remained limited.

#### 2. Cultural and Economic Differences:

- Jewish settlers, inspired by Zionist ideals, introduced modern agricultural methods and often employed only Jewish labor, seeking economic self-sufficiency. This created a divide with local Arab farmers and laborers who were excluded from these jobs.
- Arabs viewed these changes as an encroachment on their traditional way of life, even as some benefited economically from selling goods and services to Jewish communities.

#### 3. Arab Nationalist Awakening:

- Arab intellectuals and elites became increasingly aware of the Zionist movement's long-term goals, as articulated in Theodor Herzl's writings and the proceedings of Zionist Congresses.
  - Arab newspapers and public figures began to warn of the potential displacement of Arabs and the transformation of Palestine into a Jewish homeland.
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## WWI AND ITS AFTERMATH (1914–1920's)

### Balfour Declaration (1917):

- The British promise of support for a Jewish national home in Palestine alarmed the Arab population, who feared it signaled British favoritism toward Zionist aspirations.
- Arabs believed the declaration contradicted earlier promises made to them in the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence, fueling feelings of betrayal.

**Emerging Arab-Jewish Divisions:****1. Postwar British Mandate:**

- The League of Nations Mandate for Palestine (1922) incorporated the Balfour Declaration, further cementing tensions.
- Both Jews and Arabs viewed British rule with suspicion: Jews were frustrated by perceived limitations on immigration, while Arabs opposed British facilitation of Zionist goals.

**2. Riots and Violence:**

- **Jaffa Riots (1921):** The first major outbreak of violence between Jews and Arabs occurred in Jaffa, sparked by tensions over Jewish immigration. Over 100 people were killed, including Jews and Arabs.
- The riots marked the beginning of organized Arab opposition to Jewish settlement.

**3. Arab Nationalism Strengthens:**

- Arab leaders formed organizations like the Arab Executive to oppose British policies and Jewish immigration.
- Calls for an independent Arab state in Palestine began to grow louder, with Palestinian Arabs rejecting both British rule and Zionist settlement.

# THE BRITISH MANDATE OF PALESTINE

## (1) ORGANISATION

### ChatGPT

**The British Mandate for Palestine (1920–1948) is not only a story of imperial rule and geopolitical tension but also a story shaped by key personalities, organizations, and pivotal moments that have left an enduring impact on the region.**

**This expanded analysis delves into the individuals, political movements, and significant events such as the**

**Arab Higher Committee and Arab Revolt**

**the Peel Commission and its proposed Arab/Jewish partition plan of 1937,**

**which served as one of the earliest formal attempts**

**to address the burgeoning conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine.**

### INITIAL BRITISH RULE

The British mandate officially began in 1920, but from the outset, Britain faced challenges in managing the contradictory promises it had made to both Jews and Arabs. The region was home to a predominantly Arab population, but Zionist immigration, spurred by Jewish persecution in Europe and the Balfour Declaration, was beginning to rise.

- **Jewish Immigration:** The Zionist movement, which began in the late 19th century, aimed to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- With British control and the Balfour Declaration, Jewish immigration intensified, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, as European Jews sought refuge from rising anti-Semitism.
- **Arab Nationalism:** Meanwhile, Arab nationalism was growing across the region, and many Palestinian Arabs resented British rule and Jewish immigration. They feared the creation of a Jewish state would disenfranchise them, as the Jewish population was growing through land purchases and settlements.

### Tensions and Uprisings

Tensions between Arabs and Jews grew as both communities vied for political control, land, and resources.

Several violent outbreaks marked the mandate period:

1. **1920 and 1921 Arab Riots:** The first major clashes between Arabs and Jews occurred in Jerusalem in 1920 and in Jaffa in 1921. These riots were fueled by Arab fears of Jewish immigration and anger over British policies.
2. **1929 Hebron Massacre:** Another major outbreak of violence occurred in 1929, when rumors of Jewish attempts to take control of holy sites in Jerusalem sparked widespread riots. In Hebron, 67 Jews were killed, and the violence spread to other parts of Palestine.

3. **Arab Revolt (1936–1939)**: The most significant uprising during the mandate was the Arab Revolt, which lasted from 1936 to 1939. Palestinian Arabs launched a general strike and armed rebellion against both British rule and Jewish immigration. Britain responded with military force, suppressing the revolt with brutal measures and killing thousands of Arabs. This revolt deepened the rift between Jews and Arabs and led to a major shift in British policy.

### KEY PERSONALITIES OF THE MANDATE ERA

- **David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973)**

David Ben-Gurion was one of the most influential figures in the Zionist movement during the British Mandate. As the head of the **Jewish Agency**, the quasi-governmental organization that represented the Jewish community in Palestine, Ben-Gurion played a central role in navigating the delicate and often hostile relationship between the British authorities, the Arab population, and the Jewish immigrants.

Ben-Gurion was a pragmatic leader who believed in both diplomacy and, when necessary, force to achieve Zionist goals. Under his leadership, the Jewish Agency organized mass immigration to Palestine and established the framework for what would become the **Haganah**, a Jewish defense force that would later evolve into the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Although Ben-Gurion initially cooperated with the British in the early years of the mandate, he later grew increasingly disillusioned with British policies, particularly the restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchases after the **1939 White Paper**.

His political foresight, combined with his determination to secure a Jewish state, made him a dominant figure during the mandate and ultimately the first Prime Minister of Israel when the state was declared in 1948.

- **Haj Amin al-Husseini (1897–1974)**

Haj Amin al-Husseini, the **Grand Mufti of Jerusalem**, was the most prominent Palestinian Arab leader during the British Mandate. Appointed to his position by the British in 1921, Husseini became the foremost advocate for Palestinian Arab nationalism, vehemently opposing Jewish immigration and land acquisition in Palestine.

As the head of the **Supreme Muslim Council**, Husseini had significant religious and political authority, and he used his position to rally the Arab community against both British rule and the Zionist project. His leadership during the **1929 Western Wall Riots** and the **1936–1939 Arab Revolt** against British policies made him a symbol of Arab resistance, though his leadership was also divisive. His controversial decisions, such as aligning with Nazi Germany during World War II in hopes of thwarting British and Zionist ambitions, tarnished his legacy and limited his influence post-war.

Husseini's uncompromising stance on the question of Jewish immigration and his rejection of compromise or partition plans, such as the Peel Commission's proposal, reflected the broader Arab opposition to any solution that would entail the creation of a Jewish state.

- **Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952)**

Chaim Weizmann was another central figure in the Zionist movement and a key architect of the political strategy that helped secure the **Balfour Declaration** in 1917. Weizmann, a brilliant scientist and diplomat, used his influence in British political circles to advocate for Jewish immigration to Palestine and to support the establishment of a Jewish national home.

As the first president of the **World Zionist Organization** and later the first President of Israel, Weizmann's moderate approach to diplomacy often contrasted with more militant Zionist factions like the **Irgun** or **Lehi**. He worked closely with British authorities during the early years of the mandate, though like Ben-Gurion, he became increasingly frustrated with British policies in the 1930s and 1940s, especially after the issuance of the 1939 White Paper. Weizmann was a key figure in Jewish negotiations with the British and international powers and played a pivotal role in securing international support for the establishment of Israel

### **BRITISH POLICY SHIFTS**

Throughout the mandate period, British policies fluctuated as they tried to balance their obligations to both Jews and Arabs, while maintaining control over a strategic region. Several important policy documents were issued:

- **White Paper of 1930 (Passfield White Paper):** After the violence of the 1929 riots, Britain issued this white paper, which aimed to limit Jewish immigration and land purchases. However, under pressure from Zionist leaders, Britain backed down, allowing immigration to continue.
- **White Paper of 1939:** In response to the Arab Revolt and the looming threat of World War II, Britain issued this policy statement, which severely restricted Jewish immigration and land purchases, essentially abandoning the idea of creating a Jewish state. The goal was to maintain stability in the Arab world, especially since Britain needed Arab support in the upcoming war. This white paper infuriated Zionist leaders, who saw it as a betrayal.

An expanded analysis of the British Mandate for Palestine highlights the complexity of British colonial governance, the socio-political transformations within the Arab and Jewish communities, and the long-term consequences of this period for both local and international politics.

#### **1. Colonialism and Strategic Ambitions**

At its core, the British Mandate for Palestine was part of the broader framework of European colonialism. Following World War I, Britain, in partnership with France, sought to reshape the post-Ottoman Middle East in a way that maximized their strategic and economic interests. Palestine was of particular significance due to its location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and its proximity to the Suez Canal, a vital lifeline for the British Empire, especially for maintaining control over India.

While the mandate was framed by the League of Nations as a civilizing mission, meant to guide the region toward self-governance, it was in many ways a direct extension of Britain's imperial interests. The strategic importance of Palestine lay not just in its geographic location, but also in Britain's desire to maintain influence in the Middle East, particularly in the face of rising nationalist movements and European rivalries, particularly with France, which controlled neighboring Syria and Lebanon.

The contradictory nature of British policy—supporting both Jewish and Arab aspirations to varying degrees—can be seen as a direct consequence of Britain's desire to maintain control over a volatile region without alienating either community too severely. British officials frequently found themselves in a delicate balancing act, often pursuing policies that satisfied neither the Zionists nor the Arabs, while their primary goal remained stability and imperial control.

## 2. Contradictory Promises and Their Fallout

One of the most defining aspects of the British Mandate was the conflicting promises Britain made during and after World War I, particularly in the **Balfour Declaration (1917)** and the **Hussein-McMahon Correspondence (1915–1916)**. These contradictory commitments laid the groundwork for deep mistrust between Arabs, Jews, and the British government.

- **The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence (1915-16)**: Britain's earlier communication with Arab leaders during World War I, promising support for Arab independence, created expectations among the Arabs that were later dashed. While Britain insisted that Palestine had been excluded from the areas promised to the Arabs, many Arab leaders and communities believed that Palestine had been included in the broader Arab sphere of independence.
- **The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916)**: This secret agreement between Britain and France planned the division of Ottoman territories in the Middle East after the war, placing Palestine under international administration, with neither side getting full control. This contradicted promises made to both Jews and Arabs.
- **The Balfour Declaration (1917)**: In promising support for a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, the British government was responding to Zionist lobbying, particularly from figures such as Chaim Weizmann, who had gained influence within the British political establishment. However, the Declaration's ambiguous wording—particularly the phrase "without prejudicing the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities"—allowed for differing interpretations. Zionists viewed it as a green light for Jewish immigration and state-building, while Arabs saw it as a threat to their majority status and rights.

This "double-dealing" by the British fueled Arab resentment, leading to riots, protests, and eventually the Arab Revolt (1936–1939). Meanwhile, Zionists, though initially supportive of British control because of the Balfour Declaration, became increasingly frustrated by British limitations on Jewish immigration and land purchases, particularly in the late 1930s with the **1939 White Paper**, which aimed to cap immigration.

## 3. Jewish Immigration and Land Purchase: A Central Source of Conflict

A key driver of conflict during the mandate period was Jewish immigration, particularly as waves of Jewish settlers arrived in Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s, fleeing anti-Semitism and persecution in Europe. Immigration figures swelled, particularly after the rise of fascism and Nazism, which culminated in the Holocaust. Jewish immigration was organized through Zionist organizations like the **Jewish Agency** and funded by international Jewish networks. This influx, accompanied by the purchase of Arab land by Jewish organizations, transformed the demographic landscape of Palestine.

From the perspective of the Arab population, Jewish immigration represented both a demographic and political threat. Palestinian Arabs, the majority population at the time, feared displacement as Zionist land purchases often led to the eviction of Arab tenant farmers. The increase in Jewish land ownership and the creation of Jewish-only settlements fueled Arab anxieties about becoming a minority in their own homeland. Zionist leaders, on the other hand, saw immigration and land acquisition as essential to the establishment of a future Jewish state. Leaders like **David Ben-Gurion** and the Jewish Agency argued that the Jewish people had a historic and moral right to return to Palestine, which they considered their ancestral

homeland. For them, British restrictions on immigration were seen as a betrayal, especially in the face of the increasing persecution of Jews in Europe.

#### **4. Arab Nationalism and the Response to Zionism**

While Zionism had deepened its organizational capacities through the establishment of institutions like the Jewish Agency and the Haganah (a Jewish defense organization), Arab political organization during the mandate period was less cohesive. Palestinian Arabs, although united in their opposition to Zionism, were politically fragmented, divided along clan lines and between urban and rural populations. Leaders such as **Haj Amin al-Husseini**, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, emerged as significant political figures, but their ability to unite the Arab community was often hampered by internal rivalries.

Moreover, Arab nationalism was not confined to Palestine. It was part of a broader pan-Arab movement that sought independence from colonial powers throughout the Arab world. However, the Palestinian issue became a rallying point for Arab nationalist movements, not only in Palestine but across the region. The Arab Revolt of 1936–1939 was the most significant manifestation of this growing nationalism, combining a general strike with guerrilla warfare against both British forces and Jewish settlers.

The Arab Revolt, though ultimately crushed by the British, had profound consequences. It demonstrated the depth of Arab opposition to Zionism and British rule, and it pushed the British to re-evaluate their policies. The repression of the revolt, which included mass arrests, executions, and the destruction of Arab villages, further embittered the Palestinian population.

#### **5. The Role of the British Military and Administration**

The British administration in Palestine was caught in an increasingly impossible situation. British officials on the ground were often tasked with enforcing policies that were unpopular with both Arabs and Jews. They faced frequent violence, with attacks on British personnel coming from both sides, particularly from Jewish militias like the **Irgun** and the **Lehi** (Stern Gang) later in the mandate period.

The most notorious attack was the bombing of the **King David Hotel** in 1946 by the Irgun, which killed 91 people. The attack, aimed at the British administrative headquarters, was emblematic of the growing Jewish insurgency against British rule. At the same time, Britain had to deal with Arab protests, riots, and guerrilla warfare, particularly during the Arab Revolt.

As Britain's global power waned after World War II, it became increasingly clear that managing Palestine was unsustainable. Britain was dealing with post-war reconstruction, economic challenges, and rising anti-colonial movements across its empire, including in India. The rising cost of maintaining order in Palestine, combined with the increasing intractability of the conflict, led Britain to refer the issue to the **United Nations** in 1947.

#### **6. Internationalization of the Conflict**

The post-World War II context dramatically shifted international opinion on the question of Palestine. The horrors of the Holocaust galvanized international sympathy for Jewish survivors, many of whom were languishing in displaced persons camps in Europe. There was growing pressure, particularly from the United States, to find a solution that would allow Jewish refugees to resettle in Palestine. At the same time, the Arab states, which had gained formal independence from European colonial powers, were increasingly vocal in their opposition to Zionism.

The **United Nations Partition Plan** of 1947 was an attempt to resolve the conflict by dividing Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem placed under international administration. The plan was accepted by Jewish leaders, who saw it as a step toward establishing a Jewish state, albeit one that fell short of their territorial ambitions. The Arab leadership, both in Palestine and across the Arab world, rejected the plan, viewing it as an unjust division that favored the Jews, despite their minority status at the time.

## 7. Legacy of the British Mandate

The British Mandate for Palestine officially ended on May 14, 1948, with the declaration of the State of Israel and the subsequent **1948 Arab-Israeli War**. The war led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs, an event known as the **Nakba** or catastrophe, which has become a central grievance in the Palestinian national narrative.

The legacy of the British Mandate is still deeply felt today. The borders, political institutions, and unresolved tensions of the mandate period have had a lasting impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. British policies, particularly their failure to reconcile Jewish and Arab aspirations, set the stage for decades of conflict. The mandate period also saw the solidification of two competing national movements, both of which claimed the same territory as their homeland, a dynamic that continues to define the conflict.

The partition of Palestine and the establishment of Israel, alongside the displacement of Palestinian Arabs, has had profound geopolitical consequences, shaping regional alliances, conflicts, and diplomatic efforts ever since. The unresolved status of Palestinian refugees, the question of statehood, and control over Jerusalem remain central issues in Middle Eastern politics today, with roots firmly planted in the British Mandate era.

## JEWISH AND ARAB ORGANIZATIONS DURING THE MANDATE

### 1. The Jewish Agency and the Haganah

The **Jewish Agency** was the principal body representing the Jewish community in Palestine and was recognized by the British as the official interlocutor for Zionist interests. Under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion, the Jewish Agency was responsible for organizing Jewish immigration, land purchases, economic development, and the establishment of Jewish settlements. It also laid the groundwork for Jewish self-defense by helping to establish the **Haganah**, a paramilitary organization that would later form the core of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

The **Haganah** was initially organized to protect Jewish settlements from Arab attacks, particularly in response to incidents like the **1920 Nebi Musa riots** and the **1929 Hebron Massacre**, in which many Jews were killed or displaced. As tensions escalated during the Arab Revolt (1936–1939), the Haganah grew in strength, becoming more organized and militarized. Although it initially worked with the British to suppress the Arab Revolt, the Haganah would later turn against British rule during the final years of the mandate, particularly as Jewish insurgents sought to end British restrictions on immigration and pave the way for statehood.

### 2. Irgun (Etzel) and Lehi (Stern Gang)

The **Irgun**, also known as **Etzel**, was a more militant Zionist paramilitary organization that split from the Haganah in 1931. Under the leadership of figures like **Menachem Begin**, the Irgun advocated a more



aggressive approach to both the Arab population and British authorities. The group believed that the establishment of a Jewish state required not only self-defense but also offensive action to secure Jewish control over all of Palestine.

The **Lehi**, also known as the **Stern Gang**, was an even more extreme group that broke off from the Irgun during World War II. Led by **Avraham Stern**, Lehi viewed British rule as the primary obstacle to the establishment of a Jewish state and conducted numerous attacks against British personnel and infrastructure. Both Irgun and Lehi played significant roles in the escalating violence during the late 1940s, including the bombing of the **King David Hotel** in 1946, a British administrative headquarters.

### 3. Arab Higher Committee and Arab Revolt

The **Arab Higher Committee**, formed in 1936 and led by Haj Amin al-Husseini, became the main political body representing Palestinian Arabs during the British Mandate. It coordinated political opposition to Zionism and British rule and played a crucial role in organizing the **1936–1939 Arab Revolt**, a watershed moment in Palestinian history. The revolt began as a general strike and escalated into a full-scale insurgency against British forces and Jewish settlers, marking a shift toward armed resistance in the face of British policies that seemed to favor Jewish immigration.

The Arab Revolt was brutally suppressed by the British, with thousands of Arabs killed, arrested, or exiled, including members of the Arab Higher Committee. Although the revolt failed to achieve its objectives, it forced Britain to reconsider its policies and led to the issuance of the **1939 White Paper**, which significantly restricted Jewish immigration and land purchases. However, this move came too late to reconcile Palestinian Arabs with British rule or prevent further violence.

### THE PEEL COMMISSION AND THE PROPOSED PARTITION (1937)

The **Peel Commission**, officially known as the **Palestine Royal Commission**, was established by the British government in 1936 to investigate the causes of unrest in Palestine following the outbreak of the Arab Revolt. Chaired by **Lord William Peel**, the commission sought to understand the underlying grievances of both the Jewish and Arab communities and to propose a solution to the ongoing conflict. In its 1937 report, the Peel Commission concluded that the British Mandate was unworkable due to the irreconcilable national aspirations of Jews and Arabs. The commission recommended, for the first time, the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with a small, internationally administered zone around Jerusalem. According to the plan:

- The **Jewish state** would be established in the northern and coastal regions, where the Jewish population was concentrated.
- The **Arab state** would encompass the remaining territory, including most of the central and southern regions of Palestine.
- **Jerusalem** and its surrounding areas would remain under British control due to their religious significance to Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

### Reactions to the Peel Partition Plan

- **Jewish Reaction:** The Zionist leadership, including David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizmann, accepted the Peel Commission's recommendation for partition in principle, albeit reluctantly. For the Zionists, partition was seen as a step toward the eventual realization of a larger Jewish state, even

if the proposed borders were unsatisfactory. Ben-Gurion, in particular, viewed the acceptance of the plan as a strategic move, believing that the Jewish state could later expand through immigration and settlement.

- **Arab Reaction:** The Arab leadership, led by Haj Amin al-Husseini and the Arab Higher Committee, unequivocally rejected the Peel Commission's proposal. For the Palestinians, the idea of partition was an unacceptable concession that violated their right to self-determination in a land where they formed the majority. They argued that partition would legitimize Jewish land acquisition and establish a Jewish state at the expense of Arab sovereignty.

The Peel Commission's proposal marked the first time that partition was formally suggested as a solution to the conflict, and its rejection by the Arabs set a precedent for future failures of partition plans. The commission's recommendations were never implemented, largely due to Arab opposition, but the idea of partition would re-emerge a decade later with the **United Nations Partition Plan of 1947**, which led directly to the creation of Israel and the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

### **THE LEGACY OF THE BRITISH MANDATE AND THE PARTITION PROPOSAL**

The British Mandate for Palestine was a period of profound transformation and conflict, shaped by key personalities, organizations, and moments of crisis. Figures like David Ben-Gurion, Haj Amin al-Husseini, and Chaim Weizmann played decisive roles in advancing their respective national causes, while organizations like the Jewish Agency, Haganah, and Arab Higher Committee mobilized their communities for the political and military struggles ahead.

The **Peel Commission** and its proposed partition of Palestine represented an early acknowledgment by the British that their mandate had failed to reconcile Jewish and Arab aspirations. While the plan was ultimately rejected, it set the stage for the eventual partition of Palestine in 1947 and the subsequent decades of conflict that have shaped the modern Middle East. Today, the legacies of these events are still felt, with the unresolved questions of statehood, territory, and refugee rights continuing to drive the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **WORLD WAR II AND ITS AFTERMATH**

During World War II, Palestine became a crucial strategic base for the British. Jewish and Arab leaders both participated in the war effort to varying degrees, although Jewish militias like the **Haganah** also began to prepare for a potential future conflict with both the British and the Arabs.

After the war, the Holocaust had a profound impact on global attitudes toward the Jewish cause. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees, survivors of Nazi atrocities, sought to emigrate to Palestine, leading to increased pressure on Britain to allow more Jewish immigration. However, Britain, facing Arab opposition and internal exhaustion after the war, tried to maintain its restrictive policies.

#### **The End of the Mandate**

By the mid-1940s, Britain found itself unable to manage the growing conflict between Jews and Arabs, as well as increasing Jewish insurgency against British rule. Jewish underground organizations like the **Irgun** and **Lehi** (the Stern Gang) launched attacks on British targets, most notably the bombing of the **King David Hotel** in 1946, which killed 91 people.

Faced with rising violence, international pressure, and the inability to find a political solution, Britain decided to end its mandate. In 1947, it referred the issue to the newly formed United Nations.

### **United Nations Partition Plan (1947)**

The United Nations proposed a partition plan to divide Palestine into two states: one Jewish and one Arab, with Jerusalem under international control. The Jewish leadership, led by **David Ben-Gurion**, accepted the plan, though with some reservations. The Arab leadership, both in Palestine and across the Arab world, rejected the plan, seeing it as unjust and a violation of the rights of the Arab majority in Palestine.

### **1948: The Creation of Israel and the Nakba**

On May 14, 1948, as the British mandate officially ended, the Jewish leadership declared the establishment of the state of Israel. The next day, neighboring Arab states invaded, sparking the **1948 Arab-Israeli War**. During this war, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs were displaced or fled, an event known in Arabic as the **Nakba** (Catastrophe).

By the end of the war, Israel had expanded its territory beyond the boundaries of the UN partition plan, while the West Bank came under Jordanian control and Gaza under Egyptian administration. The Arab-Israeli conflict had begun in earnest.

## **OVERVIEW**

The British Mandate for Palestine was a period of competing nationalisms, clashing promises, and violent conflict. Britain's inability to reconcile its commitments to both Jews and Arabs, combined with the broader geopolitical dynamics of the 20th century, led to a situation that remains unresolved today. The legacy of the mandate period is still deeply felt in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

At the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire, which had controlled much of the Arab world for centuries, collapsed. The League of Nations granted Britain and France mandates over different parts of the former Ottoman territories in the Middle East. These mandates were meant to help guide these regions toward self-governance, although in practice they served the strategic and colonial interests of the European powers.

# THE BRITISH MANDATE OF PALESTINE

## (2) LAND PURCHASE

The analysis of Jewish land purchases in the British Mandate for Palestine (1920–1948) reveals their profound implications on economic, social, and political dynamics, and provides crucial context for understanding the intensification of Jewish-Arab conflict.

### ChatGPT

#### Extent of Jewish Land Purchases

##### Late Ottoman Period (Before 1917):

- During the Ottoman era, laws such as the **1858 Land Code** encouraged land registration but often resulted in absentee landlords registering large tracts of land. These absentee landlords later became a significant source of land sales to Jewish buyers.
- By 1918, Jews owned about **2–3% of the total land area of Palestine**, amounting to roughly 100,000 dunams (25,000 acres). Much of this land was purchased through foreign Zionist funds, such as the **Jewish National Fund (JNF)** and the **Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PJCA)**.

##### British Mandate Period (1917–1948):

- Jewish land ownership increased significantly during the British Mandate, facilitated by Zionist organizations and legal frameworks established under British rule.
- By 1947, Jews owned about **1.5 million dunams (370,000 acres)**, or approximately **6–7% of the total land area**. While small in percentage terms, the land was strategically located and highly productive.
  - **Agricultural Land:** About half of the Jewish-owned land was used for agriculture, including citrus groves, which became a key export.
  - **Urban Land:** Jewish communities acquired land in growing urban areas such as Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem, which facilitated urbanization and economic growth.

#### Methods and Patterns of Land Acquisition

##### Land Sources:

##### 1. Absentee Landlords:

- Many purchases were made from Arab absentee landlords, often residing in cities like Beirut, Damascus, and Cairo. These individuals sold land primarily for financial gain and were less concerned with the political implications of the sales.

##### 2. Local Landowners:

- Smaller transactions also occurred with local Arab landowners. These sales were sometimes driven by economic distress or rising land values due to demand from Jewish buyers.

### 3. Government Land:

- Some land was acquired directly from the British authorities, though this was relatively limited compared to private purchases.

### Key Organizations Involved:

- **Jewish National Fund (JNF):**
  - Established in 1901, the JNF was the primary vehicle for purchasing land in Palestine. It aimed to secure land for Jewish settlement and ensured that the land would remain in Jewish hands in perpetuity.
- **Palestine Land Development Company:**
  - This organization specialized in acquiring and developing land for agricultural settlements.
- **Private Purchases:**
  - Wealthy Jewish individuals also invested in land, often contributing to urban expansion.

### Geographic Patterns:

- Land purchases were concentrated in areas suitable for agriculture or urban development:
  - **Coastal Plain:** Fertile lands for citrus cultivation.
  - **Jezreel Valley:** Reclaimed swampy areas for farming.
  - **Galilee:** Hilly regions for settlement and agriculture.
  - Urban areas like Tel Aviv and Haifa for commercial and residential development.

### Economic and Social Implications

#### Impact on Jewish Society:

1. **Economic Growth:**
  - Jewish agricultural settlements became centers of productivity, employing modern farming techniques and fostering economic self-sufficiency.
  - Land purchases facilitated the creation of a distinct Jewish economy, separate from the Arab economy, with its own labor force and trade networks.
2. **Employment:**
  - The "**Hebrew labor**" policy prioritized Jewish workers in land development, which reinforced economic independence but limited employment opportunities for Arabs on Jewish-owned land.
3. **Settlement Expansion:**
  - Jewish settlements (kibbutzim and moshavim) grew, creating a solid territorial and demographic foundation for future statehood.

#### Impact on Arab Society:

1. **Displacement:**
  - The sale of land, particularly by absentee landlords, often led to the displacement of Arab tenant farmers who had worked the land for generations.
  - Displaced farmers faced economic hardship and were often forced to migrate to urban areas or join a growing class of landless rural laborers.

## 2. **Social Stratification:**

- Land sales deepened social divisions within Arab society, as wealthier landowners profited while poorer tenants suffered.
- The perception of betrayal by Arab landowners fueled resentment within the Arab community.

## 3. **Economic Opportunities:**

- Despite tensions, some Arabs benefitted indirectly from Jewish agricultural and urban development, finding employment in construction, infrastructure projects, and Jewish-owned businesses.

## **Political Implications**

### **For the Zionist Movement:**

#### 1. **Strategic Acquisitions:**

- Land purchases were often made with an eye toward future statehood, focusing on contiguous areas that could serve as a geographic basis for a Jewish state.
- Zionist leaders emphasized the importance of controlling land as a foundation for national sovereignty.

#### 2. **Strengthening the Case for Partition:**

- By 1947, Jewish land ownership and settlement patterns were used to support Zionist claims in negotiations over the partition of Palestine.

### **For Arab Nationalism:**

#### 1. **Growing Resistance:**

- The sale of land to Jews became a rallying point for Arab nationalists, who viewed it as part of a broader effort to dispossess Arabs and establish a Jewish state.
- Arab leaders attempted to limit land sales through boycotts, legal challenges, and political pressure, but these measures had limited success.

#### 2. **Arab Revolt (1936–1939):**

- Opposition to land sales and Jewish immigration contributed to the outbreak of the Arab Revolt, which included violent attacks on Jewish settlements and infrastructure.

## **British Role and Policies**

### 1. **Support and Restrictions:**

- Initially, British policies under the **Balfour Declaration (1917)** facilitated Jewish immigration and land purchases.
- As Arab resistance grew, the British attempted to limit Jewish land acquisitions through measures such as the **1939 White Paper**, which restricted sales in certain areas. However, enforcement was inconsistent, and Jewish organizations often circumvented these restrictions.

### 2. **Colonial Dynamics:**

- The British administration's attempts to mediate between Jewish and Arab interests often backfired, fueling tensions on both sides and undermining trust in British governance.

## **Legacy and Broader Conflict**

The patterns of Jewish land purchases during the British Mandate had lasting effects on the region's social and political landscape:

### **1. Territorial Claims:**

- The areas acquired and developed by Jews became critical to the borders proposed in the **1947 UN Partition Plan**, solidifying Zionist territorial claims.

### **2. Arab Grievances:**

- The displacement of Arab farmers and the perceived collaboration of absentee landlords with Jewish buyers became enduring symbols of Arab resistance to Zionism.

### **3. Conflict Foundation:**

- Jewish land purchases, though limited in scale, were seen by Arabs as a precursor to broader territorial ambitions, intensifying fears of displacement and fueling the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In summary, Jewish land purchases during the British Mandate were a cornerstone of Zionist strategy, facilitating demographic and territorial consolidation. However, they also exacerbated Arab fears of dispossession and catalyzed the conflict over the land, identity, and future of Palestine.

# THE BRITISH MANDATE OF PALESTINE

## (3) HAGANAH

The Haganah's growth and evolution were marked by a series of significant actions that demonstrated its changing capabilities, strategies, and role in the Jewish community.

Below is a detailed examination of its phases of development, each illustrated with key operational examples.

### ChatGPT

#### 1920s: Early Formation and Local Defense

##### 1. Defensive Focus:

- The Haganah initially operated as a decentralized network of local defense units, often with little coordination or formal structure.
- It focused on defending agricultural settlements vulnerable to sporadic Arab attacks.

##### 2. Example: Tel Hai Defense (1920):

- Although predating the formal establishment of the Haganah, the defense of Tel Hai, a small agricultural settlement in the Galilee, was emblematic of the need for organized self-defense.
- The clash resulted in the death of Zionist leader Joseph Trumpeldor and underscored the vulnerability of isolated Jewish communities.

##### 3. Growth after the Jaffa Riots (1921):

- Following the violence in Jaffa, the Haganah expanded to urban centers, including Jerusalem and Haifa, to provide protection to Jewish neighborhoods.

#### 1930s: Consolidation and Professionalization

##### 1. Response to Arab Revolt (1936–1939):

- During the Arab Revolt, the Haganah transformed from a loosely organized militia into a more centralized force. It began training its fighters in modern tactics and established command hierarchies.

##### 2. Example: Special Night Squads (1938–1939):

- Formed in collaboration with British officer Orde Wingate, these units conducted offensive operations against Arab insurgents, such as ambushing groups attacking British infrastructure or Jewish settlements.
- A notable operation involved pre-emptive raids on villages suspected of harboring militants, showcasing the shift toward proactive defense.



### 3. Fortified Settlements ("Stockade and Tower"):

- In response to Arab attacks and British restrictions on settlement expansion, the Haganah supported the construction of "stockade and tower" settlements.
- Example: The establishment of Hanita (1938) in the Galilee was conducted under cover of night and completed in a single day to circumvent British land regulations and deter attacks.

## 1940s: Expansion and Clandestine Activities

### World War II Period

#### 1. Illegal Immigration (Aliyah Bet):

- With the British imposing strict immigration quotas under the 1939 White Paper, the Haganah organized clandestine efforts to bring Jewish refugees into Palestine.

#### 2. Example: SS Patria Incident (1940):

- The Haganah attempted to sabotage the British ship Patria to prevent it from deporting Jewish refugees to Mauritius. The operation backfired, sinking the ship and causing the deaths of over 200 passengers, highlighting the risks of clandestine activities.

#### 3. Creation of the Palmach (1941):

- The elite strike force of the Haganah, the Palmach, was established to conduct sabotage operations and train fighters in guerrilla warfare.
- Example: Palmach units destroyed oil pipelines and trains used by Axis-aligned forces in Syria and Lebanon during World War II, supporting Allied efforts.

### Post-War Period

#### 1. Jewish Resistance Movement (1945–1946):

- The Haganah joined the Jewish Resistance Movement alongside the Irgun and Lehi to intensify efforts against British rule.

#### 2. Example: Night of the Bridges (1946):

- In one of the most coordinated operations, the Haganah attacked 11 bridges connecting Palestine to neighboring countries. This was intended to disrupt British military movements and demonstrate Jewish resistance capabilities.
- The operation caused significant logistical challenges for the British, highlighting the Haganah's growing effectiveness in large-scale actions.

### 3. Operation Agatha (1946):

- In response to escalating resistance, the British launched Operation Agatha, raiding Jewish Agency offices and Haganah facilities.
- Many Haganah members were arrested, but the raids exposed the extent of the Haganah's organization and its involvement in resistance efforts.

## 1947–1948: Civil War and Preparation for Statehood

### 1. Transition to Offensive Operations:

- After the UN Partition Plan (1947), the Haganah shifted from defensive to offensive operations, aiming to secure areas allocated to the Jewish state and ensure the survival of Jewish enclaves.

### 2. Example: Operation Nachshon (April 1948):

- This was the first large-scale offensive operation of the Haganah, aimed at breaking the siege of Jerusalem by Arab forces.
- Haganah units secured the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road, allowing convoys to deliver supplies to the besieged Jewish population in Jerusalem.

### 3. Plan Dalet (1948):

- The Haganah implemented Plan Dalet, a strategy to establish territorial continuity for the Jewish state. It involved taking control of villages, cities, and key infrastructure, often leading to the displacement of Arab residents.
- Example: Capture of Haifa (April 1948):
  - Haganah forces captured the Arab-majority city of Haifa, using urban warfare tactics and psychological operations to encourage the exodus of the Arab population.

## Conclusion

Throughout its development, the Haganah adapted to the evolving challenges in Palestine, transitioning from a defensive militia to a sophisticated paramilitary organization. Its actions—whether defending settlements, organizing illegal immigration, or conducting military offensives—played a pivotal role in the establishment of Israel. However, these actions also contributed to deepening tensions with the Arab population, shaping the contours of the enduring Arab-Israeli conflict.

## LAND OWNERSHIP IN PALESTINE, 1880–1948

THE ROHR JEWISH LEARNING INSTITUTE Moshe Aumann

A great deal has been spoken and written over the years on the subject of land ownership in Israel—or, before 1948, Palestine. Arab propaganda, in particular, has been at pains to convince the world, with the aid of copious statistics, that the Arabs “own” Palestine, morally and legally, and that whatever Jewish land ownership there may be is negligible. From this conclusions have been drawn (or implied) with regard to the sovereign rights of the State of Israel and the problem of the Arab refugees.

The Arab case against Israel, in the matter of Jewish land purchases, rests mainly on two claims: (1) that the Palestinian Arab farmer was peacefully and contentedly working his land in the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th when along came the European Jewish immigrant, drove him off his land, disrupted the normal development of the country and created a vast class of landless, dispossessed Arabs; (2) that a small Jewish minority, owning an even smaller proportion of Palestinian lands (5 per cent as against the Arabs' 95 per cent ), illegally made itself master of Palestine in 1948.

Our purpose in this pamphlet is to set the record straight by marshalling the facts and figures pertaining to this very complex subject, on the basis of the most reliable and authoritative information available, and to trace the history of modern Jewish resettlement purely from the point of view of the sale and purchase of land.

### PRE-1948 CONDITIONS IN PALESTINE

A study of Palestine under Turkish rule reveals that already at the beginning of the 18th century, long before Jewish land purchases and large-scale Jewish immigration started, the position of the Palestinian fellah (peasant) had begun to deteriorate. The heavy burden of taxation, coming on top of chronic indebtedness to money-lenders, drove a growing number of farmers to place themselves under the protection of men of wealth or of the Moslem religious endowment fund (*Waqf*), with the result that they were eventually compelled to give up their title to the land, if not their actual residence upon and cultivation of it.

Until the passage of the Turkish Land Registry Law in 1858, there were no official deeds to attest to a man's legal title to a parcel of land; tradition alone had to suffice to establish such title—and usually it did. And yet, the position of Palestine's farmers was a precarious one, for there were constant blood-feuds between families, clans and entire villages, as well as periodic incursions by rapacious Bedouin tribes, such as the notorious Ben Sakk'r, of whom H. B. Tristram (*The Land of Israel: A Journal of Travels in Palestine*, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1865) wrote that they “can muster 1,000 cavalry and always join their brethren when a raid or war is on the move. They have obtained their present possessions gradually and, in great measure, by driving out the fellahin (peasants), destroying their villages and reducing their rich corn-fields to pasturage.” (p. 488.)

Tristram goes on to present a remarkable and highly revealing description of conditions in Palestine on both sides of the Jordan River in the middle of the 19th century—a description that belies the Arab claim of a tranquil, normally developing Palestinian rural economy allegedly disrupted by Jewish immigration and settlement.

*A few years ago, the whole Ghor was in the hands of the fellahin, and much of it cultivated for corn. Now the whole of it is in the hands of the Bedouin, who eschew all agriculture, except in a few spots cultivated here and there by their slaves; and with the Bedouin come lawlessness and the uprooting of all Turkish authority. No government is now acknowledged on the east side; and unless the Porte acts with greater firmness and caution than is his wont . . . Palestine will be desolated and given up to the nomads.*

*The same thing is now going on over the plain of Sharon, where, both in the north and south, land is going out of cultivation, and whole villages [are] rapidly disappearing from the face of the earth. Since the year 1838, no [fewer] than 20 villages have been thus erased from the map and the stationary population extirpated. Very rapidly the Bedouin are encroaching wherever horse can be ridden; and the Government is utterly powerless to resist them or to defend its subjects. (p. 490)*

For descriptions of other parts of the country, we are indebted to the 1937 Report of the Palestine Royal Commission—though, for lack of space, we can quote but the briefest passages. In Chapter 9, para. 43 the Report quotes an eye-witness account of the condition of the Maritime Plain in 1913:

*The road leading from Gaza to the north was only a summer track suitable for transport by camels and carts . . . no orange groves, orchards or vineyards were to be seen until one reached Yabna village. . . . Not in a single village in all this area was water used for irrigation. . . . Houses were all of mud. No windows were anywhere to be seen. . . . The ploughs used were of wood. . . . The yields were very poor. . . . The sanitary conditions in the village were horrible. Schools did not exist. . . . The rate of infant mortality was very high. . . .*

*The area north of Jaffa . . . consisted of two distinctive parts. . . . The eastern part, in the direction of the hills, resembled in culture that of the Gaza-Jaffa area. . . . The western part, towards the sea, was almost a desert. . . . The villages in this area were few and thinly populated. Many ruins of villages were scattered over the area, as owing to the prevalence of malaria, many villages were deserted by their inhabitants.*

The Huleh basin, below the Syrian border, is described as “including a number of Arab villages and a large papyrus swamp draining south into Lake Huleh . . . a triangular strip of land some 44 sq. miles in area. . . . This tract is irrigated in a very haphazard manner by a network of small, primitive canals. It is, owing to over-irrigation, now the most malarious tract in all Palestine. It might become one of the most fertile.”

With regard to yet another region in Palestine—the Beisan (Beit Shean) area—we quote from the report of Mr. Lewis French, Director of Development appointed by the British Government in 1931:

*We found it inhabited by fellahin who lived in mud hovels and suffered severely from the prevalent malaria. . . . Large areas of their lands were uncultivated and covered with weeds. There were no trees, no*

*vegetables. The fellahin, if not themselves cattle thieves, were always ready to harbor these and other criminals. The individual plots of cultivation changed hands annually. There was little public security, and the fellahin's lot was an alternation of pillage and blackmail by their neighbours, the Bedouin.*

This, then, was the picture of Palestine in the closing decades of the 19th century and up to the First World War: a land that was overwhelmingly desert, with nomads continually encroaching on the settled areas and its farmers; a lack of elementary facilities and equipment; peasants wallowing in poverty, ignorance and disease, saddled with debts (interest rates at times were as high as 60 per cent) and threatened by warlike nomads or neighbouring clans. The result was a growing neglect of the soil and a flight from the villages, with a mounting concentration of lands in the hands of a small number of large landowners, frequently residing in such distant Arab capitals as Beirut and Damascus, Cairo and Kuwait. Here, in other words, was a social and economic order that had all the earmarks of a medieval feudal society.

### **WHO DISPOSSESSED THE PALESTINIAN PEASANT?**

The Palestinian peasant was indeed being dispossessed, but by his fellow-Arabs: the local sheikh and village elders, the Government tax-collector, the merchants and money-lenders; and, when he was a tenant-farmer (as was usually the case), by the absentee-owner. By the time the season's crop had been distributed among all these, little if anything remained for him and his family, and new debts generally had to be incurred to pay off the old. Then the Bedouin came along and took their "cut", or drove the hapless fellah off the land altogether.

This was the "normal" course of events in 19th-century Palestine. It was disrupted by the advent of the Jewish pioneering enterprise, which sounded the death-knell of this medieval feudal system. In this way the Jews played an objective revolutionary role. Small wonder that it aroused the ire and active opposition of the Arab sheikhs, absentee landowners, money-lenders and Bedouin bandits.

### **JEWISH LAND PURCHASES**

It is important to note that the first enduring Jewish agricultural settlement in modern Palestine was founded not by European refugees, but by a group of old-time families, leaving the overcrowded Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. (According to the Turkish census of 1875, by that time Jews already constituted a majority of the population of Jerusalem and by 1905 comprised two-thirds of its citizens.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1910 gives the population figure as 60,000, of whom 40,000 were Jews.)

In 1878 they founded the village of Petah Tikva in the Sharon Plain—a village that was to become known as the "Mother of Jewish Settlements" in Palestine. Four years later a group of pioneering immigrants from Russia settled in Rishon le-Zion. Other farming villages followed in rapid succession.

When considering Jewish land purchases and settlements, four factors should be borne in mind:

1. *Most of the land purchases involved large tracts belonging to absentee owners. (Virtually all of the Jezreel Valley, for example, belonged in 1897 to only two persons: the eastern portion to the Turkish Sultan, and the western part to the richest banker in Syria, Sursuk "the Greek.")*

2. *Most of the land purchased had not been cultivated previously because it was swampy, rocky, sandy or, for some other reason, regarded as uncultivable. This is supported by the findings of the Peel Commission Report (p. 242): "The Arab charge that the Jews have obtained too large a proportion of good land cannot be maintained. Much of the land now carrying orange groves was sand dunes or swamp and uncultivated when it was purchased . . . there was at the time at least of the earlier sales little evidence that the owners possessed either the resources or training needed to develop the land." (1937)*
3. *While, for this reason, the early transactions did not involve unduly large sums of money, the price of land began to rise as Arab landowners took advantage of the growing demand for rural tracts. The resulting infusion of capital into the Palestinian economy had noticeable beneficial effects on the standard of living of all the inhabitants.*
4. *The Jewish pioneers introduced new farming methods which improved the soil and crop cultivation and were soon emulated by Arab farmers.*

The following figures show land purchases by the three leading Jewish land-buying organizations and by individual Jews between 1880 and 1935.

#### **JEWISH LAND PURCHASES, 1880–1935 (IN DUNAMS<sup>1</sup>)**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Total Land Acquired</b>	<b>Government Concessions</b>	<b>From Private Owners</b>	<b>Large Tracts<sup>2</sup> Dunams</b>	<b>Large Tract Percent (approx.)</b>
PICA (Palestine Jewish Colonization Association)	469,407	39,520	429,887	293,545	70
Palestine Land Development Co.	579,492	66,513 <sup>3</sup>	512,979	455,169	90
Jewish National Fund <sup>4</sup>	836,396				
Until 1930			270,084	239,170	90
1931–1947			566,312		50
Individual Jews	432,100		432,100		50

From the above table it will be seen that the proportion of the land purchased from large (usually absentee) owners ranged from about 50 to 90 per cent.

“The total area of land in Jewish possession at the end of June 1947,” writes A. Granott in *The Land System in Palestine* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1952, p. 278), “amounted to 1,850,000 dunams, of this 181,100 dunams had been obtained through concessions from the Palestinian Government, and about 120,000 dunams had been acquired from Churches, from foreign companies, from the Government otherwise than by concessions, and so forth. It was estimated that 1,000,000 dunams and more, or 57 per cent, had been acquired from large Arab landowners, and if to this we add the lands acquired from the Government, Churches, and foreign companies, the percentage will amount to seventy-three. From the fellaheen there had been purchased about 500,000 dunams, or 27 per cent, of the total acquired. The result of Jewish land acquisitions, at least to a considerable part, was that properties which had been in the hands of large and medium owners were converted into holding of small peasants.”

When the League of Nations conferred the Mandate for Palestine upon Great Britain in 1922, it expressly stipulated that “The Administration of Palestine . . . shall encourage, in cooperation with the Jewish Agency . . . close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not acquired for public purposes” (Article 6), and that it “shall introduce a land system appropriate to the needs of the country, having regard, among other things, to the desirability of promoting the close settlement and intensive cultivation of the land.” (Article 11)

British policy, however, followed a different course, deferring to the extremist Arab opposition to the above-mentioned provision of the Mandate. Of some 750,000 dunams of cultivable State lands, 350,000, or nearly half, had been allotted by 1949 to Arabs and only 17,000 dunams to Jews. This was in clear violation of the terms of the Mandate. Nor, ironically enough, did it help the Arab peasants for whose benefit these transactions were ostensibly carried out. The glaring examples of this policy are the case of the Besian lands and that of the Huleh Concession.

Under the Ghor-Mudawwarra Agreement of 1921, some 225,000 dunams of potentially fertile wasteland in the Besian (Beit Shean) area were handed over to Arab farmers on terms severely condemned not only by Jews but also by such British experts as Lewis French and Sir John Hope-Simpson. More than half of the land was irrigable, and, according to the British experts, eight dunams of irrigated land per capita (or 50–60 dunams per family) were sufficient to enable a family to maintain itself on the land. Yet many farmers received far more than that: six families, of whom two lived in Syria, received a combined area of about 7,000 dunams; four families (some living in Egypt) received a combined area of 3,496 dunams ; another received 3,450 and yet another, 1,350.

Thus the Ghor-Mudawwarra Agreement was instrumental in creating a new group of large landowners. Possessing huge tracts, most of which they were unable to till, these owners began to sell the surplus lands at speculative prices. In his 1930 Report, Sir Hope-Simpson wrote of the Agreement that it had deprived the Government of “the control of a large area of fertile land eminently suited for development and for which there is ample water for irrigation,” and that “the grant of the land has led to speculation on a considerable scale.”

For twenty years (from 1914 to 1934) the Huleh Concession—some 57,000 dunams of partly swamp-infested but potentially highly fertile land in north-eastern Palestine—was in Arab hands. The Arab concessionaires were to drain and develop the land so as to make additional tracts available for cultivation, under very attractive terms offered by the Government (first Turkish, then British). However, this was never done, and in 1934 the concession was sold to a Jewish concern, the Palestine Land Development Company, at a huge profit. The Government added several onerous conditions concerning the amount of land (from the drained and newly developed tracts) that had to be handed over—without reimbursement for drainage and irrigation costs—to Arab tenant-farmers in the area.

All told, hundreds of millions of dollars were paid by Jewish buyers to Arab landowners. Official records show that in 1933 £854,796 was paid by Jewish individuals and organizations for Arab land, mostly large estates; in 1934 the figure was £1,647,836 and in 1935, £1,699,488. Thus, in the course of only three years £4,202,180 (more than 20 million dollars at the prevailing rate of exchange) was paid out to Arab landowners (Palestine Royal Commission Report, 1937).

To understand the magnitude of the prices paid for these lands, we need only look at some comparative figures. In 1944, Jews paid between \$1,000 and \$1,100 per acre in Palestine, mostly for arid or semi-arid land; in the same year rich black soil in the state of Iowa was selling for about \$110 per acre (U.S. Department of Agriculture).

In those instances where as a result of such transactions Arab tenant-farmers were displaced (on one year's notice), compensation in cash or other land was paid, as required by the 1922 Protection of Cultivators Ordinance; the Jewish land-buying associations often paid more than the law required (Pollack and Boehm, *The Keren Kayemeth Le-Israel*). Of 688 such tenants between 1920 and 1930, 526 remained in agricultural occupations, some 400 of them finding other land (Palestine Royal Commission Report, 1937, Chapter 9, para. 61).

Investigations initiated in 1931 by Mr. Lewis French disposed of the charge that a large class of landless or dispossessed Arab farmers was created as a result of Jewish land purchases. According to the British Government report (Memoranda prepared by the Government of Palestine, London 1937, Colonia No. 133, p. 37), the total number of applications for registration as landless Arabs was 3,271. Of these, 2,607 were rejected on the ground that they did not come within the category of landless Arabs. Valid claims were recognized in the case of 664 heads of families, of whom 347 accepted the offer of resettlement by the Government. The remainder refused either because they had found satisfactory employment elsewhere or because they were not accustomed to irrigated cultivation or the climate of the new areas (*Peel Report*, Chapter 9, para. 60).

Purchases of land by Jews in the hill country had always been very small and, according to the investigations by

Mr. French, of 71 applications by Arabs claiming to be landless, 68 were turned down.



## ARAB POPULATION CHANGES DUE TO JEWISH SETTLEMENT

Another Arab claim disproved by the facts is that Zionist “colonialism” led to the disruption and ruin of the Arab Palestinian society and economy.

Statistics published in the Palestine Royal Commission Report (p. 279) indicate a remarkable phenomenon: Palestine, traditionally a country of Arab emigration, became after World War I a country of Arab immigration. In addition to recorded figures for 1920-36, the Report devotes a special section to illegal Arab immigration. While there are no precise totals on the extent of Arab immigration between the two World Wars, estimates vary between 60,000 and 100,000. The principal cause of the change of direction was Jewish development, which created new and attractive work opportunities and, in general, a standard of living previously unknown in the Middle East.

Another major factor in the rapid growth of the Arab population was, of course, the rate of natural increase, among the highest in the world. This was accentuated by the steady reduction of the previously high infant mortality rate as a result of the improved health and sanitary conditions introduced by the Jews.

Altogether, the non-Jewish element in Palestine’s population (not including Bedouin) expanded between 1922 and 1929 alone by more than 75 per cent. The *Royal Commission Report* makes these interesting observations:

*The shortage of land is, we consider, due less to the amount of land acquired by Jews than to the increase in the Arab population, (p. 242) We are also of the opinion that up till now the Arab cultivator has benefited, on the whole, both from the work of the British administration and from the presence of Jews in the country. Wages have gone up; the standard of living has improved; work on roads and buildings has been plentiful. In the Maritime Plains some Arabs have adopted improved methods of cultivation. (p. 241)*

Jewish development served as an incentive not only to Arab entry into Palestine from Lebanon, Egypt, Syria and other neighbouring countries, but also to Arab population movements within the country—to cities and areas where there was a large Jewish concentration. Some idea of this phenomenon may be gained from the following official figures:

*Changes in towns:* The Arab population in predominantly Arab towns rose only slightly (if at all) between the two World Wars: in Hebron—from 16,650 in 1922 to 22,800 in 1943; Nablus—from 15,931 to 23,300; Jenin—from 2,737 to 3,900; Bethlehem—from 6,658 to 8,800. Gaza’s population actually decreased from 17,426 in 1922 to 17,045 in 1931.

On the other hand, in the three major Jewish cities the Arab population shot up during this period, far beyond the rate of natural increase: Jerusalem—from 28,571 in 1922 to 56,400 (97 percent); Jaffa—from 27,437 to 62,600 (134 per cent); Haifa—from 18,404 to 58,200 (216 per cent).

*Changes in rural areas:* The population of the predominantly Arab Beersheba district dropped between 1922 and 1939 from 71,000 to 49,000 (the rate of natural increase should have resulted in a rise to 89,000). In the Bethlehem district the figure increased from 24,613 to about 26,000 (after falling to 23,725

in 1929). In the Hebron area it went up from 51,345 to 59,000 (the natural increase rate dictated a rise to 72,000).

In contrast to these declines or comparatively slight increases in exclusively Arab-inhabited areas, in the Nazareth, Beit Shean, Tiberias and Acre districts—where large-scale Jewish settlement and rural development was underway—the figure rose from 89,600 in 1922 to some 151,000 in 1938 (by about 4.5 per cent per annum, compared with a natural increase rate of 2.5–3 per cent).

In the largely Jewish Haifa area the number of Arab peasants increased by 8 per cent a year during the same period. In the Jaffa and Ramla districts (heavily Jewish populated), the Arab rural population grew from 42,300 to some 126,000—an annual increase of 12 per cent, or more than four times as much as can be attributed to natural increase (L. Shimony, *The Arabs of Palestine*, Tel-Aviv, 1947, pp. 422–23).

One reason for the Arab gravitation toward Jewish-inhabited areas, and from neighbouring countries to Palestine, was the incomparably higher wage scales paid there, as may be seen from the following table.

**DAILY WAGE SCALES, 1943 (IN MILS)<sup>5</sup>**

	<b>Unskilled Labour</b>	<b>Skilled Labour</b>
Palestine	220–250	350–600
Egypt	30–50	70–200
Syria	80–100	150–200
Iraq	50	70–200

The capital received by Arab landowners for their surplus holdings was used for improved and intensive cultivation or invested in other enterprises. Turning again to the Report of the Palestine Royal Commission (p. 93), we find the following conclusions: “The large import of Jewish capital into Palestine has had a general fructifying effect on the economic life of the whole country. . . . The expansion of Arab industry and citriculture has been largely financed by the capital thus obtained. . . . Jewish example has done much to improve Arab cultivation. . . . The increase in Arab population is most marked in areas affected by Jewish development.”

During World War II, the Arab population influx mounted apace, as is attested by the *UNRWA Review*, Information Paper No. 6 (September 1962):

A considerable movement of people is known to have occurred, particularly during the Second World War, years when new opportunities of employment opened up in the towns and on military works in Palestine. These wartime prospects and, generally, the higher rate of industrialization in Palestine attracted many new immigrants from the neighbouring countries, and many of them entered Palestine without their presence being officially recorded.

## LAND OWNERSHIP IN 1948

The claim is often made that in 1948 a Jewish minority owning only 5 per cent of the land of Palestine made itself master of the Arab majority, which owned 95 per cent of the land.

In May 1948 the State of Israel was established in only part of the area allotted by the original League of Nations Mandate. 8.6 percent of the land was owned by Jews and 3.3 per cent by Israeli Arabs, while 16.9 per cent had been abandoned by Arab owners who imprudently heeded the call from neighbouring countries to “get out of the way” while the invading Arab armies made short shrift of Israel. The rest of the land—over 70 per cent—had been vested in the Mandatory Power, and accordingly reverted to the State of Israel as its legal heir. (Government of Palestine, *Survey of Palestine, 1946*, British Government Printer, p. 257.)

The greater part of this 70 per cent consisted of the Negev, some 3,144,250 acres all told, or close to 50 per cent of the 6,580,000 acres in all of Mandatory Palestine. Known as Crown or State Lands, this was mostly uninhabited arid or semi-arid territory, inherited originally by the Mandatory Government from Turkey. In 1948 it passed to the Government of Israel.

These lands had not been owned by Arab farmers—neither under the British Mandate nor under the preceding regime. Thus it is obvious that the contention that 95 per cent of the land—whether of Mandatory Palestine or of the State of Israel—had belonged to Arabs has absolutely no foundation in fact.

There is perhaps no better way of concluding and summing up this study than to quote from an article entitled *Is Israel a Thorn or a Flower in the Near East?* by Abdul Razak Kader, the Algerian political writer, now living in exile in Paris (*Jerusalem Post*, Aug. 1, 1969):

“The Nationalists of the states neighbouring on Israel, whether they are in the government or in business, whether Palestinian, Syrian or Lebanese, or town dwellers of tribal origin, all know that at the beginning of the century and during the British Mandate the marshy plains and stone hills were sold to the Zionists by their fathers or uncles for gold, the very gold which is often the origin of their own political or commercial careers. The nomadic or seminomadic peasants who inhabited the frontier regions know full well what the green plains, the afforested hills and the flowering fields of today’s Israel were like before.

“The Palestinians who are today refugees in the neighbouring countries and who were adults at the time of their flight know all this, and no anti-Zionist propaganda—pan-Arab or pan-Moslem—can make them forget that their present nationalist exploiters are the worthy sons of their feudal exploiters of yesterday and that the thorns of their life are of Arab, not Jewish, origin.”

Aumann, Moshe. “Appendix 2: Land Ownership in Palestine, 1880–1948”, from Leibler, Isi. *The Case for Israel*. Melbourne, Victoria: Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 1972.

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## ENDNOTES

1. dunams = 1 acre.
2. The large tracts often belonged to absentee landlords.
3. Land situated in the sandy Beersheba and marshy Huleh districts.
4. “. . . created on December 25, 1901, to ensure that land would be purchased for the Jewish workers who were to be personally responsible for its cultivation.

“Since the J.N.F. was as concerned with conforming to socialist ideals as with intensive economic exploitation of land, its Charter was opposed to the use of lands purchased by it as private property. The J.N.F. retained the freehold of the lands, while the people working it are only life tenants. . . .

“The capital of the Jewish National Fund was essentially raised from small regular donations from millions of Jewish craftsmen, labourers, shop-owners and intellectuals in Central and Eastern Europe where the shadow of genocide was already apparent, who felt concerned about the return of Jews to Zion. . . .

“Contrary to colonialist enterprises, which were seeking an exorbitant profit from land extorted from the colonized peoples, Zionist settlement discouraged private capital as its enterprise was of a socialist nature based on the refusal to exploit the worker.” (Kurt Niedermaler, *Colonisation without Colonialism*, Youth and Hechalutz Dept., Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, 1969).

5. Source: A. Khoushy, *Brit Poali Eretz-Israel*, 1943, p. 25.

## ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR: WHAT IS ZIONISM? A HISTORY OF THE POLITICAL MOVEMENT THAT CREATED ISRAEL AS WE KNOW IT

[THE CONVERSATION](#) [Andrew Thomas](#) December 13, 2023

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As the Israel-Hamas war continues, there's been a lot of discussion around Zionism.

Put simply, Zionism is a nationalist movement that advocates for a homeland for the Jewish people in the [Biblical Land of Israel](#). It is the organisation of ideas that actively sought and achieved the existence of the Israeli state in 1948.

Basically, political Zionism underpins the country we today call Israel.

It's a movement that encompasses a broad spectrum of political beliefs with common objectives at its centre. But perhaps more than other political movements, Zionism has evolved over time.

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*Read more: [On its 75th birthday, Israel still can't agree on what it means to be a Jewish state and a democracy](#)*

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So what is the history of Zionism, and what has that evolution looked like?

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*Read more: [On its 75th birthday, Israel still can't agree on what it means to be a Jewish state and a democracy](#)*

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### WHERE DID ZIONISM COME FROM?

There are biblical underpinnings to Zionism, as religious Zionists often reference God promising the [Land of Canaan to Abraham](#) and his descendants – the Israelites – and renaming it the Land of Israel.

For various reasons, Jews decided to relocate to Ottoman Palestine towards the end of the 19th century.

The first mass migration (known as the *First Aliyah*) occurred between 1882 and 1903. Between 15,000 and 25,000 Jews migrated, essentially doubling the region's Jewish population at the time.

However, the beginnings of modern Zionism are secular and constructed through political philosophy.

Although many Zionist ideas predate his works, Theodore Herzl is considered the father of modern Zionism as he was the first to set out its political aims clearly.

Herzl was raised in a secular Jewish household in Hungary. In Vienna, he had a brief career as a lawyer before becoming a journalist and writer of plays and literature. Initially, he firmly believed European Jews should assimilate into European culture, and he held this view for much of his early life.

But his views changed after witnessing [antisemitic riots in Paris](#) in 1895. He decided antisemitism was not something that could ever be defeated. Instead, he encouraged European Jews to abandon the continent and create their own national home.

In his 1896 work [Der Judenstaat: Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage](#) (The Jewish State: Proposal of a modern solution for the Jewish question), he argues Jews possess a national identity that should be embraced.

However, he said, they would never be safe from antisemitism unless they lived in a community in which they were the majority.

### A JEWISH STATE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In his diaries, Herzl mused about many places a Jewish state could take shape. This homeland would be outside Europe, potentially in Latin America. But by 1904, Herzl began to focus on the Promised Land (*Eretz Yisrael*) in the Middle East "[from the brook of Egypt to the Euphrates \(in Iraq\)](#)".

In the early 1900s, this area was controlled by the Ottoman Empire, and Herzl met with Ottoman dignitaries multiple times to lobby the Zionist cause.

Herzl's vision is considered by many as [eurocentric and colonial](#) with regard to the to the native Palestinian population.

But given that Jews are also originally native to this land, [the Anti Defamation League \(ADL\)](#) argues that the establishment of a Jewish state in Israel is not a form of settler colonialism.

It can be argued that political Zionism exhibits [both anticolonial and colonial aspirations](#).

On one hand, it seeks to give self-determination to the Jewish people in a land to which they were once native. On the other, given early Zionists were trying to convince European colonial powers to create the Jewish national home, it adopted some colonial rationalisations and often saw the existing population, [both Arabs and native Jews](#), as inferior.

Herzl rarely wrote about Arabs or other native populations, and when he did, he mused about how much their [lives would be improved](#) by the best of European and Jewish culture.

A growing political force

As Jewish migration began to gather steam, Zionism became more politically influential internationally.

But as the first world war drew to a close, there were large geopolitical shifts in the region. The Ottoman Empire's power was waning, and the British would eventually end up in control of Jordan and Palestine in 1919.

In 1917, in an effort to undermine Ottoman control, the British implicitly supported the existence of a Jewish homeland in the [Balfour Declaration](#):

***His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.***

The British would later renege on the declaration in 1939, saying it was no longer British government policy to support a Jewish homeland.

As British colonial rule continued, not all Zionist action was peaceful. Paramilitary organisations such as Ze'ev Jabotinsky's *Irgun* and the *Lehi* (also known as the "Stern Gang") conducted bombings and attacks against the [colonial British](#).

These groups would perpetrate the [Deir Yassin massacre](#) in 1948, killing more than 100 Palestinians near Jerusalem.



The state of Israel was founded on 14th May, 1948 by its first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. Kluger Zoltan-Israeli Government Press Office/EPA

But it was the rise of Nazism in Europe and the Holocaust that solidified Zionism as a movement globally. Jews fleeing Europe to settlements in Palestine (then under British rule) led to the Jewish population rising from 50,000 in the early 1900s to an estimated [650,000 by 1948](#).

Jewish calls for a "national home" turned into [calls for a Jewish Commonwealth](#) with full sovereign authority over its lands.

The central goal of Zionism was achieved on May 14 1948, with new Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion declaring the establishment of the state of Israel.

The war of independence followed within hours. Some 700,000 Palestinians fled to the West Bank (then belonging to Jordan), Gaza (a part of Egypt) and the neighbouring Arab states. This is known among Palestinians as the *Nakba*; the Arabic word for "catastrophe", and the point at which Palestinians lost the potential for self-determination.

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Read more: [A brief history of the US-Israel 'special relationship' shows how connections have shifted since long before the 1948 founding of the Jewish state](#)

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## ZIONISM IN THE CURRENT WORLD

Over the decades, Zionism has changed considerably as new political questions raised themselves. With the state of Israel established, what should the state look like and how should it protect itself from its foreign adversaries?

One of these questions is: how should Zionism respond to Palestinian self-determination?

The annexation of the West Bank by Jordan and Gaza by Egypt after the war of independence seemed to answer this question in the short term. Israel offered citizenship to some Palestinians, who make up just under 20% of Israel's population today. They are Israel's largest minority and have often struggled with [political representation and socio-economic outcomes](#).

But Israel's swift defeat of Jordan, Syria and Egypt in the 1967 [Six Day War](#) changed political realities again. Israel took control of the West Bank and Gaza, along with the millions of Palestinians living there - but they were not offered citizenship. This has left the Palestinians stateless.

This raised a question that has still not been adequately answered today: does an effective application of Zionism mean statelessness for Palestinians?

There are different schools of thought on this.

For liberal and modern Labor Zionists, factions that include members of the Yesh Atid party and the late former Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, the answer is no. They implicitly reject the idea that Palestinian and Jewish self-determination are at odds with one another.

For them, a political solution to the conflict is essential. For a long time they advocated for a two-state solution - the creation of a state of Palestine completely independent from Israel. The Palestinian Authority would transition into a state government with sovereignty over its land.

But some liberal Zionists have abandoned this idea, stating the only sustainable option is to offer [Palestinians equal rights and citizenship in Israel](#), challenging the idea that the home of the Jewish people must be a Jewish state.

This is because of a combination of the failure to transition the West Bank and Gaza into a Palestinian state, and the contradiction of freedom for Israelis and statelessness for Palestinians.

Although the political power of liberal and Labor Zionism in the Knesset (Israel's Parliament) has waned, it is certainly alive and well in Israeli civil society. For example, [B'Tselem](#), the legacy of left wing Zionist Yossi Sarid, has been very active in documenting instances of apartheid and settler violence in the West Bank. In short, Zionism does not preclude someone from being critical of the policies of the Israeli government. However, for many nationalist, conservative religious and revisionist Zionists, Palestinian self-determination anywhere west of the River Jordan is a direct threat to the Jewish state. They, therefore, [do not support Palestinian independence](#).

This form of Zionism has become the dominant form in Israeli politics today.

Under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, this approach has transcended rhetoric and become legislation in [Israel's Nation State Law](#) of 2018, which legally enshrines unique Jewish sovereignty in the state of Israel and settlement as a "national value".

It is this kind of Zionism that has informed Israel's response to Palestinian action - both political and violent - for decades.



It has attempted to justify the blockade of Gaza, the forcible transfer of Palestinians in the West Bank, bans on political speech, mandatory detention without trial, and disproportionate violence as policy solutions to Israeli-Palestinian tensions.

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Read more: [10 books to help you understand Israel and Palestine, recommended by experts](#)

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After the Hamas attacks on October 7, ultra-nationalist ministers have become loud and influential voices. With the help of the prime minister, their brand of Zionism has ensured that a political solution with the Palestinians is out of reach.

Notwithstanding his colonial aspirations and attitudes toward Palestinian natives, Herzl made at least some attempts to reconcile his views with liberal values and democracy. In his novel [Altneuland](#) (The Old New Land) he envisaged that non-Jews would have the same rights as Jews in a democracy.

Contrast that with today, where the most powerful Zionist voices see liberal democracy – and the Palestinians – as an obstacle to security of the Israeli state.

*Correction: this article has been amended to say the First Aliyah ended in 1903. It previously said the First Aliyah ended in 1901. The article has also been amended to reflect that Palestinians have never historically had self-determination.*

## ZIONISM AND JUDAISM: ARE THEY INDEPENDENT?

**JUDAISM NEEDS ZIONISM BECAUSE IT ENABLED JEWS TO RETURN  
AND TO ESTABLISH A STATE;  
THIS ALLOWS JEWS TO HAVE A NATIONAL IDENTITY  
AND ENGAGE IN FULFILLING COMMANDMENTS THAT CAN ONLY BE DONE IN**

[THE JERUSALEM POST](#) Moshe Dann June 5 2021

Although some people – such as those in the Reform and Reconstruction movements, “Progressives,” and some left-wing Israelis – claim to support Judaism and Zionism, in fact, they do not. For example, on May 15, 2021, a large group of students, mostly from Reform and Reconstructionist colleges, published a letter condemning Israel for “apartheid” and for “violating human rights” in its war against Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip. This explains why some [Jews in America have turned their backs on Zionism](#), Israel and Judaism.

Zionism is connected to Judaism because it provides a text, the Jewish Bible, or *Tanach* (The Five Books of Moses, Prophets, and other writings), as well as libraries of theological and philosophical writing that define and mandate the Land of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people.

Judaism needs Zionism because it enabled Jews to return and to establish a state; this allows Jews to have a national identity and engage in fulfilling *mitzvot* (commandments) that can only be done in Eretz Yisrael. This is the basis for creating the Third Jewish Commonwealth/Civilization.

Although they need each other to become fulfilled, Zionism and Judaism can and do exist separately and independently in the Diaspora. One can practice Judaism without being a Zionist, just as one can be secular or a non-Jewish Zionist.

Without Judaism, however, Zionism is limited to its existence as a state; without Zionism, Judaism is a religion like many others in nation-states throughout the world. Although valid and important identity markers, they miss two essential ingredients: revelation and redemption. This is what defines the difference between *galut* (exile) and *geulah* (salvation) – the parameters of Jewish historical consciousness.

Although the concept of God is central to Judaism, the interaction with human input is essential. This dynamic is in the everyday life of a Jew: prayer, Shabbat, celebrating the New Moon and holidays, especially Shavuot, which has no specific date and is totally dependent on human calculation.

Judaism and Zionism are not only rooted in commitment and continuity, they are also expressions of human creativity.

Among [Jews who reject authentic Judaism](#) and Zionism (as the legal and historic right of the Jewish people to their homeland in Eretz Yisrael), many are opposed to the right of Jews to live in Judea and Samaria and eastern Jerusalem. Some support a terrorist-led Palestinian state in the name of “social justice,” “ending the occupation” or “battling colonialism and apartheid.”

Concerned with “human rights” and “injustices to Palestinians,” they support anti-Israeli and antisemitic organizations such as the Jewish Voice for Peace, J Street, Human Rights Watch, and B’Tselem, oblivious to the dangers of a Palestinian state and Palestinianism that call for Israel’s destruction.

The vital link between Judaism and Zionism, therefore, represents the essence of the Jewish people. That is what is at stake.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANTI-SEMITISM AND ANTI-ZIONISM?

[BBC NEWS](#) 29 April 2016

**The UK Labour Party has been at the centre of a row over anti-Semitism, including its relationship to anti-Zionism. What do these terms actually mean?**

- Anti-Semitism is "hostility and prejudice directed against Jewish people" (OED).
- Zionism refers to the movement to create a Jewish state in the Middle East, roughly corresponding to the historical land of Israel, and thus support for the modern state of Israel. Anti-Zionism opposes that.
- But some say "Zionist" can be used as a coded attack on Jews, while others say the Israeli government and its supporters are deliberately confusing anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism to avoid criticism.

Former London Mayor Ken Livingstone was suspended from Labour following a series of remarks about Israel, including the suggestion that Hitler supported Zionism before the Holocaust.

It follows the suspension of Bradford West MP Naz Shah after it emerged she had once suggested, among other things, that Israel should be moved to the United States. The new president of the National Union of Students, Malia Bouattia, has also been heavily criticised for remarks she made about Zionists.

Many in the Jewish community say the use of "Zionist" as a term of abuse reflects a rising tide of bigotry and racism directed at Jews. Image caption,

The Labour peer Lord Levy **told** the BBC's Newsnight: "There can be criticism of the state of Israel, but anti-Semitism - using the word 'Zionist' as another form of anti-Semitism - frankly can no longer be tolerated."

Others - including Livingstone - argue anti-Zionism is not the same as anti-Semitism, and that it's wrong to mix up anti-Jewish prejudice with legitimate disagreement with the actions of the Israeli state.

However, critics of anti-Zionists point out that sometimes particularly harsh criticism of Israel goes further than disagreement with policies, but rather denies the right of the Jewish state to exist.

Speaking on The Daily Politics, the former London Mayor said: "Don't confuse anti-Semitism with criticism of the Israeli government policy and treatment of the Palestinians."

It's a debate around which emotions run high. It's also obviously true that being a Zionist and being Jewish are not the same thing.

There are Zionist critics of Israeli government policies, such as the occupation of the West Bank, the route of the separation barrier (which Israel is building in and around the West Bank and which it says is for security against Palestinian attackers, though Palestinian supporters see it as a device to grab land) and the building of settlements.

Equally, there was Jewish opposition to the Zionist movement, which sought to establish a Jewish homeland, long before the state of Israel was declared in 1948. Today fringe ultra-Orthodox groups such as Neturei Karta oppose the state of Israel because they believe the true Jewish state will only be established with the coming of the Messiah.

Likewise, some **make the point** that Zionism is a political project supported by plenty of non-Jews, including Western governments and many US evangelical Christians.

But it's been widely argued that the term "Zionist" has, in some circles, become a code word for "Jew" and that bigotry against Jewish people has been expressed using the language of anti-Zionism.

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### WHAT IS ZIONISM?

- Political movement which emerged in 19th Century Europe aimed at countering anti-Semitism, and establishing a Jewish homeland
- In the Hebrew Bible the word "Zion" refers to Jerusalem, hence the movement's identification with the city and the land that surrounds it
- Balfour Declaration of 1917 gave British support to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine
- Chaim Weizmann, the president of the Zionist Organisation, was elected the first president of Israel in 1949

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Khadim Hussain, a former Lord Mayor of Bradford, was suspended from Labour after he shared a Facebook post that **referred to** "the six million Zionists that were killed by Hitler". Alex Chalmers, a former co-chair of Oxford University Labour Club, **said** some members regularly used the word "zio" - despite it being regarded as an ethnic slur.

Bouattia was attacked after it emerged that in 2011, she **co-wrote a blog** for a Friends of Palestine campaign group saying that "the University of Birmingham is something of a Zionist outpost in British Higher Education". She has also attacked "Zionist-led media outlets" - which critics said reflects anti-Semitic myths about Jewish conspiracies to control the media.

On the other hand, it's regularly claimed that accusations of anti-Semitism are deployed to silence criticism of the Israeli government or to further other political ends.

Pia Feig, of Manchester Jews for Justice for Palestinians, told BBC Radio 2's Jeremy Vine programme that "anti-Semitism has been used to quieten down and suppress my concern and the concern of other people for Palestinians".

In a statement after Livingstone's suspension, the Jewish Socialists' Group **said** accusations of anti-Semitism were being "weaponised" to attack the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn.

On the other hand, supporters of Israel ask why it's the Jewish state that is so widely singled out for criticism and not Iran, Russia, China or any other state attacked for their human rights record.

Baroness Julia Neuberger told the BBC's Jeremy Vine show that anti-Zionism implies "Jews have no right to self-determination, unlike other people". Mark Wallace, **writing for Conservative Home**, said in practice

it would mean either allowing Israel to be wiped out by its enemies or "denying millions of Israeli Jews their home and deporting them".

Some anti-Zionists say Zionism itself is a racist ideology, because of how, in their view, the Palestinian people have been treated by the Israeli state. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign **says** it opposes all racism, including anti-Jewish prejudice and the "the apartheid and Zionist nature of the Israeli state" - although the PSC has itself been accused of racism for its anti-Zionist stance.

Bouattia said she rejected claims of prejudice, adding that "for me to take issue with Zionist politics is not me taking issue with being Jewish" and that "Zionist politics are held by people from a variety of different faiths, as are anti-Zionist politics".

Media caption,

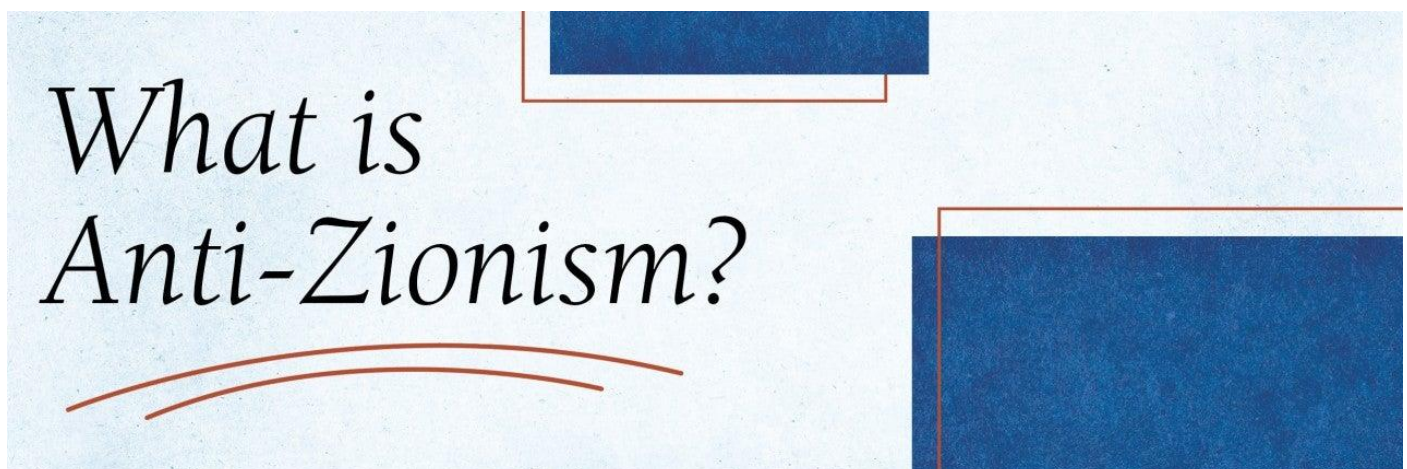
Labour MP John Mann confronts Ken Livingstone as tensions rise over anti-Semitic claims.

Accusations of anti-Semitism continue to dog Labour. Vicki Kirby was forced to stand down as a parliamentary candidate after tweeting that Hitler was a "Zionist God". She was re-instated and then suspended again. Gerry Downing, who was expelled from the party, **described** "Zionist politicians within the ruling classes of America and Europe".

Livingstone was accused of "rewriting history" over his remarks about Hitler supporting Zionism by Labour MP John Mann, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group against Anti-Semitism.

Few would deny there are anti-Semites who call themselves anti-Zionists, or that it's possible to criticise Israel without being a racist or a bigot. But agreement on how exactly the two relate appears elusive.

## Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism



**Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism**

## ANTI-ZIONISM AND ANTISEMITISM

### AJC AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

#### WHAT IS ANTI-ZIONISM?

**Zionism** is derived from the word Zion, referring to the Biblical Land of Israel. In the late 19th century, Zionism emerged as a political movement to reestablish a Jewish state in Israel, the ancestral homeland of the Jewish People. Today, Zionism refers to support for the continued existence of Israel, in the face of regular calls for its destruction or dissolution. Anti-Zionism is opposition to Jews having a Jewish state in their ancestral homeland, and denies the Jewish people's right to self-determination.

#### HOW IS ANTI-ZIONISM ANTISEMITIC?

The belief that the Jews, alone among the people of the world, do not have a right to self-determination — or that the Jewish people's religious and historical connection to Israel is invalid — is inherently bigoted. **When Jews are verbally or physically harassed or Jewish institutions and houses of worship are vandalized in response to actions of the State of Israel, it is antisemitism.** When criticisms of Israel use antisemitic ideas about Jewish power or greed, utilize Holocaust denial or inversion (i.e. claims that Israelis are the “new Nazis”), or dabble in age-old xenophobic suspicion of the Jewish religion, otherwise legitimate critiques cross the line into antisemitism. Calling for a Palestinian nation-state, while simultaneously advocating for an end to the Jewish nation-state is hypocritical at best, and potentially antisemitic.

#### IS ALL CRITICISM OF ISRAEL ANTISEMITIC?

No. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism (“the IHRA Definition”) — employed by governments around the world — explicitly notes that legitimate criticism of Israel is not antisemitism: “Criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.” [1] *When anti-Zionists call for the end of the Jewish state, however, that is no longer criticism of policy, but rather antisemitism.*

#### WHAT ABOUT BDS?

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and leadership, including founder Omar Barghouti, call for the elimination of Israel as a Jewish state. [2] The BDS Movement operates under the guise of social justice and Palestinian rights, but **the end goal of the movement is to undermine and eliminate Jewish rights.** In addition, BDS supports “anti-normalization” — which seeks to make taboo any cooperation between Israelis and Arabs. On college campuses, this extends to urging people who see themselves as allies of the Palestinian cause to marginalize Jewish students (unless those students preemptively disavow

Zionism). This can also be a form of antisemitism because it renders collaboration impossible except on Palestinian terms, removing agency from individual Jews. It is important to note, however, that while the BDS movement has antisemitic motivations, supporters of the movement are not ipso facto antisemitic; many supporters are unaware of the movement's antisemitic foundation and mistakenly believe that BDS is a way to express their sympathy for Palestinians.

1. <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>
2. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/bds-in-their-own-words>



## WHAT IS ALIYAH?

### INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

#### THE MEANING OF ALIYAH

*Aliyah* is the Hebrew word used to describe immigration to Israel—bringing Jews from the “four corners of the earth” to their biblical homeland is the very backbone of the Jewish state. It’s the return of Jews to the land of Israel from the diaspora (Jewish communities outside of Israel). In Hebrew, aliyah means “to ascend” or “to go up.” This word was originally used to describe the pilgrimage that Jews made three times a year to the city of Jerusalem for the biblically mandated [holy days](#) of Passover, Shavuot (Pentecost), and Sukkot (Feast of the Tabernacles). Since Jerusalem is located on top of Mount Zion, the pilgrims literally ascended to the Holy Temple.

#### THE ORIGINS OF ALIYAH

The origins of aliyah can be traced back to ancient times, with a deep historical and religious significance for the Jewish people.

The concept of aliyah originates from the biblical narrative and the promise of the land of Israel to the Jewish people. In the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Genesis recounts the story of Abraham, who was commanded by God to leave his homeland and go to the land of Canaan, which is now modern-day Israel. This is considered an early form of aliyah, as Abraham’s journey represented the first step toward the establishment of a Jewish presence in the land.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF ALIYAH

Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, [founder of The Fellowship](#), used to tell a story about the late Ariel Sharon, his friend and Israel’s 11th Prime Minister. When the Rabbi asked Sharon, “What are the three most important things we at The Fellowship can do for Israel?” the Prime Minister’s response was simple and succinct: “Aliyah, aliyah, aliyah.”

As PM Sharon said, helping bring Jews from around the world to Israel is the most important task we can take on—not just in saving the lives of individuals living in poverty and oppression, but in strengthening the Jewish state as a whole. Many Israeli leaders have recognized this fact. In 2016, during a ceremony commemorating Israel’s first Aliyah Day holiday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remarked, “The democratic values of the Jewish state, our military might, our economic strength, our adherence to progress, our scientific and technological innovations, draw hundreds of new immigrants, each one of whom contributes to the bolstering of those values and strengths.”

Each Jewish person who makes the monumental decision to come to Israel brings their talents and professional skills to work for the betterment of the Jewish state. At The Fellowship, this is something we have heard repeatedly: when immigrants come home to Israel, they are put in an environment where they are able to develop their unique talents and practice them in service of their new country, and the entire Jewish state is better—and stronger—because of it.

## HOW MANY PEOPLE MAKE ALIYAH?

Thousands of Jewish people move to Israel every year. Turns out, these numbers have been increasing year over year due to the rising anti-Semitism and religious persecution sweeping the world. According to [Jewish News Syndicate](#), approximately 70,000 people from 95 countries made aliyah in 2022. This was the largest wave of new olim in 23 years and a major jump compared to the 28,000 immigrants in 2021. Some of the countries Jews are moving from include Ukraine, Russia, France, Ethiopia, and South Africa. The spike in 2022 could have been the result of the devastating war in Ukraine that started on February 24, 2022. In response to this crisis, The Fellowship has been on the ground working to support the Jewish communities in Ukraine and have helped many children, families, and elderly Jewish people—many of them Holocaust survivors—make their return to the Holy Land.

## Yael TELLS HER ALIYAH STORY

Fellowship President and CEO Yael Eckstein tells her story of making aliyah (immigrating to Israel) with her husband. At first, though, she was opposed to leaving everything that was familiar, all that she had known growing up in America. But when God changed her mind, there was no going back. Since then, Yael and her husband have made their home in the Holy Land, where they have raised their four children, all of whom were born in Israel.

## WHY JEWS MAKE ALIYAH

These olim are also given the chance—many for the first time in their lives—to live freely as Jews. For Jews who have had to keep their Jewish identity secret for their entire lives—or who have lost touch with their Jewish identity through generations of anti-Semitic oppression and violence—the ability to reclaim that identity, and live and worship openly in a free and democratic Jewish state, is truly a dream come true. Aliyah also sends a powerful message to Israel's enemies, many of whom still do not accept the reality of a Jewish state in their midst. It is a message that, sadly, is still necessary to restate: Israel isn't going anywhere. Jews recognize the founding of the Jewish state for the miracle that it is and, having been denied their own sovereign country for so long, they are committed to keeping and protecting this one.

## HISTORY OF ALIYAH: A PROPHETIC RETURN

When [the state of Israel was formed in 1948](#), Jews from all over the world—Holocaust survivors in Europe, refugees expelled from Arab lands where they had been living for generations, poor Jews from Africa and South America—eagerly took the opportunity to return to their biblical homeland. By 1955, the Jewish population of the Holy Land had more than doubled, to over 1.5 million.

Following the call of David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, to “make the desert bloom,” the Jews made something of their land. Israeli farmers turned barren desert into fertile land for crops. Industry boomed, and the new nation was greatly productive.

But aliyah did not stop with this first wave of settlers. Over the years, Jewish people returned to the land of Israel to escape poverty, to flee anti-Semitism... and simply to fulfill this dream of returning to the Holy Land that had so long been denied to them.

## MAJOR WAVES OF ALIYAH

Throughout history, Jews have faced various periods of dispersion, persecution, and even genocide, leading to multiple waves of aliyah. Large waves of immigration to Israel started around the 1880s, almost 70 years prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948. Each wave brought thousands of Jews home to the Promised Land and radically changed the population and modernization of Israel. There have been [five major waves of aliyah](#) since the 1880s.

### THE FIRST ALIYAH

In 1881, Russian Czar Alexander II was assassinated, which led to a rise in anti-Semitism and pogroms across Russia. Russian Jews were desperate to escape the violent attacks and began immigrating to Israel. Approximately 35,000 Russian Jews made aliyah between the years of 1882 and 1903. This wave was motivated by Zionist ideals, seeking to re-establish a Jewish homeland. Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia settled in rural agricultural communities, known as “Moshavot” and “Kibbutzim,” and played a significant role in the early stages of building the infrastructure of what would become the State of Israel. These farming settlements eventually transformed into the existing towns of Zichron Yaakov, Rosh Pina, and Rishon Letzion.

### THE SECOND ALIYAH

The Second Aliyah brought approximately 40,000 olim from Russia and Poland to the Holy Land. This wave began due to continued violence against Jewish people and the rise of socialist and labor movements. This major influx of immigrants took place from 1904 to 1914 and were mostly single young people seeking the national redemption of the Jewish people in Israel. Many of these Jewish immigrants settled in urban areas and contributed to the development of Tel Aviv.

### THE THIRD ALIYAH

The [Third Aliyah](#) was a continuation of the Second Aliyah and occurred during the 1920s, following the end of World War I and the beginning of the British Mandate over Palestine. This wave of aliyah consisted of Jews fleeing persecution and economic difficulties in Eastern Europe. About 35,000 Jews arrived, most of them from Russia and Poland, with a small number also coming from Lithuania and Romania. They made significant contributions to various sectors, including education, healthcare, and industry, further shaping the emerging Jewish society.

### THE FOURTH ALIYAH

The fourth major wave of aliyah brought more than 67,000 immigrants from Poland, Russia, Romania, and Lithuania, as well as a few other groups from Yemen and Iraq. Most of them consisted of middle-class families escaping anti-Semitism. The Fourth Aliyah took place between the years of 1924 to 1928 and led to rapid development in the major cities in Israel.

### THE FIFTH ALIYAH

In 1929, an economic revival was on the rise which led to the beginning of the Fifth Aliyah. This wave of immigration continued with World War II and brought thousands of Jewish people from all parts of Europe. Hitler’s rise to power was the major driver for many immigrants, leading to approximately 250,000 olim arriving in Israel by 1939.

Aliyah continued after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, with subsequent waves of immigrants coming from different parts of the world. Notable examples include the mass immigration of Jews from North African and Middle Eastern countries in the 1950s and 1960s, known as the Mizrahi Aliyah, as well as the immigration of Ethiopian Jews in the 1980s and 1990s.

### **ON WINGS OF EAGLES**

Family of Ethiopian immigrants arrive in Israel in 2020 after flying on a Fellowship Freedom flight.

Photo credit: IFCJ 2020

It was the plight of one of those groups of Jewish people that led to the formation of The Fellowship's flagship [On Wings of Eagles program](#). When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990, the door to freedom opened for Soviet Jews, who under Communist rule had been greatly oppressed and denied the right to come to their biblical homeland. On Wings of Eagles provided aliyah Flights to these people who had suffered so greatly and for so long. Christians eagerly took part in this initiative, knowing that they were being used by God to fulfill the biblical prophecy: "See, I will beckon to the nations, I will lift up my banner to the peoples; they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their hips" (Isaiah 49:22). Over the years, The Fellowship's aliyah efforts have grown and expanded to help suffering Jews come to Israel from Ethiopia, Arab lands, Europe, South America, and elsewhere. And when these Jews arrive in the Holy Land, they are also provided with klitah (resettlement) assistance, which helps them become full, productive citizens in their new home.

The formation of the modern state of Israel and the Jews' return to the Holy Land has truly been the fulfillment of God's promise to "gather the exiles of Israel... from the four quarters of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12). It has been our blessing and our privilege to be God's instrument in this work—to be part of helping His people return home.

### **ALIYAH IN THE BIBLE: A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY**

The word aliyah was initially used to describe the pilgrimage all Jews made three times a year in biblical times to Jerusalem for the festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Sukkot.

In fact, Psalms 120—134 are often called "pilgrim psalms" or "songs of ascent." These psalms were typically sung by those who journeyed to the Temple in Jerusalem for the annual festivals. Each psalm is considered a step along the journey. It begins with Psalm 120 as the pilgrim sets out from a distant land, surrounded by enemies: "Woe to me that I dwell in Meshek, that I live among the tents of Kedar! Too long have I lived among those who hate peace" (vv.5–6).

The journey continues in Psalm 121 as the psalmist expresses the hope and trust he has in God's protection day and night. Read aloud these beautiful words of God's ever-present watchfulness: "indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (v.4). And in Psalm 122, the pilgrim acknowledges his entrance into Jerusalem itself, "Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem" (v. 2). In the remaining psalms, the psalmist moves toward the Temple itself—the very spiritual center of Israel.

Biblical pilgrims on the Southern steps of the Temple Mount reading Psalms of Ascent.

When Jews return to Israel, they are returning to their spiritual center, to a land promised to them since the time of Abraham. They are returning home. God has been faithful to His promises to His people throughout

time and throughout history. And He remains faithful today as Jews continue to make aliyah and return home.

**[FIND OUT HOW MUCH YOU KNOW ABOUT ALIYAH.](#)**

**[SEE HOW MANY WORDS YOU CAN FIND IN OUR FELLOWSHIP WORD SEARCH.](#)**

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## **THE ARAB WORLD HAS FORSAKEN THE PALESTINE CAUSE**

**The Palestinians have lost their Arab allies  
amid Arab regimes' increasing authoritarianism and dependence on the US.**

[ALJAZEERA](#) Imad K Harb is Director of Research and Analysis at Arab Center Washington DC.

When Zionist forces embarked on the ethnic cleansing of Palestine to establish the state of Israel in 1948, the plight of the Palestinian people shocked the Arab world. It angered Arab nations who were amid their own anti-colonial struggles and elevated the liberation of Palestine to the status of a pan-Arab cause.

The abandonment of the Palestinians is directly related to the undemocratic nature of Arab regimes and their continuing political dependence on the United States, the main supporter of Israel and its settler-colonial project.

Indeed, Palestine today appears like an afterthought in the Arab political order, with many states making peace and normalising relations with Israel, the only colonial state left in the Arab world, while blaming Palestinian political disunity for this sad state of affairs.

### **THE AUTOCRATIC CENSORSHIP OF PALESTINE**

The Palestinian cause has always been, and indeed remains, a central issue in the Arab public's imagination and a symbol of the exercise of free expression. Regimes used to find it difficult to limit their people's desire to voice their solidarity with Palestinians living as second-class citizens inside Israel, under occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and in squalid conditions in refugee camps across the region.

But with Arab governments becoming more authoritarian and entrenched, the space for advocacy for the Palestinian cause has shrunk. Increasing control over public discourse, growing censorship and escalating political violence have silenced dissent across the Arab world.

Not only are calls for democratic change stymied in Arab countries, but expressions of solidarity with Palestinians are also being met with vicious repression, as regimes seek to control the narrative of the Palestinian cause.

The aim of this monopolisation of how the Palestinian struggle is addressed in public is to cover up the fact that Arab regimes have increasingly abandoned making any significant political effort to help the Palestinians. Instead, official support has been limited to deceptive rhetoric and symbolic gestures so as to avoid confrontation with Israel and its backer, the United States.

While this has been detrimental to the Palestinian struggle and popular Arab solidarity with it, it has enabled Arab governments to devote their energies to their own survival amid the myriad of political, economic, and social ailments they face.

## **SURRENDERING PALESTINE TO THE US**

In 1977, a few months before his fateful trip to Israel, which paved the way for a US-brokered peace deal between Egypt and Israel, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat quipped that Washington held “99 percent of the cards” in the Middle East. The collapse of the Soviet Union 14 years later solidified that reality and Arab dependence on the US has only grown since then.

Seeking to maintain good relations with the superpower, Arab regimes allowed Washington – Israel’s main supplier of weapons and military support – to take control of peace efforts in the region. This left no space for Arab leaders to positively impact decision-making regarding the Palestinians.

Slowly but surely, the rights of the Palestinian people dropped down the priority list of Arab governments which saw the US as the main guarantor of their political survival and narrow economic interests.

The normalisation process between some Arab states and Israel that was shepherded by the Trump administration is just another iteration of the gradual Arab abandonment of the Palestine cause. It culminated in the so-called Abraham Accords, which despite all the promises of “benefits” for the Palestinians, held nothing of value for them or their national aspirations.

In fact, the Arab normalisation with Israel has only emboldened the Zionist state in its oppression of the Palestinians and paved the way for the de facto annexation of the occupied West Bank.

The escalating settler violence against the Palestinian people, including the recent [pogrom against the Palestinian village of Huwara](#), and the open calls by Israeli officials for ethnic cleansing are a reflection of how empowered and confident Israel feels that it can commit war crimes and crimes against humanity with complete impunity.

The most that Arab governments have done in response to Israeli aggression is issue futile condemnations and protests.

## **THE EXCUSE OF PALESTINIAN DISUNITY**

Since 2007, when Hamas took over the government in the Gaza Strip from the Palestinian Authority (PA) controlled by Fatah, Palestine has not had a unified political leadership. Worse still, the PA, which is the internationally recognised body governing the occupied Palestinian territories, has lost almost all of its legitimacy in the eyes of the Palestinian population.

Palestinian political disunity has not only worked in Israel’s favour but has also become a convenient excuse for Arab regimes not to advance the Palestinian cause. They cynically reason that if Palestinians – who have over the years demanded to be independent in deciding their own affairs – do not have a unified stance, why and how could the Arab world work on their behalf?

At the same time, most Arab regimes have thrown their weight behind the PA, which has become an extension of the authoritarian Arab political order. It refuses to make itself accountable to the Palestinian people and at the same time does almost nothing to advocate for the Palestinians’ national and human rights.

By blaming Palestinian disunity and pretending to support Palestinians through the PA, Arab regimes have essentially abdicated their responsibility towards them.

Abandoned by Arab leaders, the Palestinians find themselves with no apparent allies in their struggle against an increasingly brutal occupation and apartheid. The US-brokered “peace process” is clearly a farce and international institutions, such as the United Nations, remain too weak – or rather intentionally weakened by the US – to take any meaningful action on their behalf.

And yet, the status quo of Palestinian dispossession, life under a brutal occupation, and Israeli apartheid is not sustainable. The Palestinian question continues to be the open wound of the Arab world.

Today, it appears that only the Palestinians can lead their own struggle for liberation – one that is based on a national project that includes all sectors of Palestinian society inside Palestine and in the diaspora and that is based on the ideas of inclusion, pluralism, and democracy.

The ossified Palestinian national institutions must be renewed through open democratic processes, including the election of new leadership that could take over from old and failed elites. The Palestinian civil society, educational and social institutions, the youth movement, and other organisations must also be involved in developing this national project.

As for the Arab political order, it has shown that it is unreliable, so long as it is authoritarian and dependent on the very power that sustains Israel and supports its policies. Indeed, the Arab world may one day be capable of playing a positive role in helping Palestinians; but that will only be possible after it undergoes its own process of democratisation and renewal.

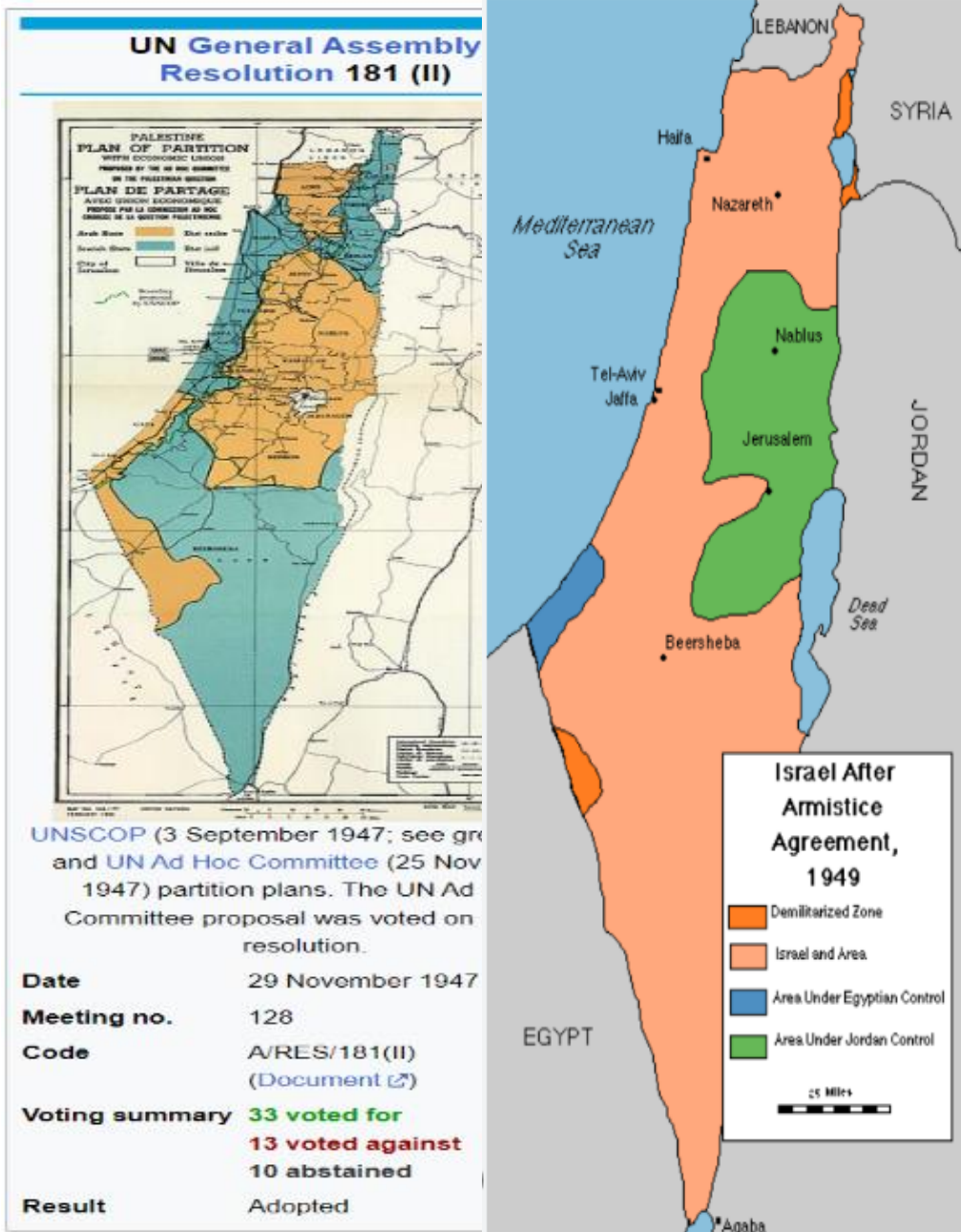
***The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera’s editorial stance.***



**PART G**

**THE CREATION OF ISRAEL**

## UN PARTITION OF PALESTINE, 1947



A United Nations investigative committee in Palestine proposed that a UN Partition Vote should be held. After the UN Partition Plan resolution was passed on 29 November 1947, the civil war between Palestinian Jews and Arabs eclipsed the previous tensions of both with the British. However, British and Zionist forces continued to clash throughout the period of the civil war up to the termination of the British Mandate for Palestine and the Israeli Declaration of Independence on 14 May 1948.

*On 3 September 1947 the United Nations Partition Plan was accepted with 33 votes For, 13 Against and 10 Abstained. This was accepted by the Jews who created their portion as*

*Israel and was rejected by the Arabs who invaded Israel the following day.*

The final stage of the 1948 Palestine war formally began following the end of the British Mandate for Palestine at midnight on 14 May 1948; the Israeli Declaration of Independence had been issued earlier that day, and a military coalition of Arab states entered the territory of British Palestine in the morning of 15 May.

After the war the country fought over was split into Israel, Gaza under the Egyptians (this is where the Egyptian army was based at the end of the war) and Jordan who had occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

## THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF ISRAEL

### [WIKIPEDIA](#)

Monitored by the [Israel Central Bureau of Statistics](#), encompass various attributes that define the nation's



populace. Since [its establishment in 1948](#), Israel has witnessed significant changes in its demographics. Formed as a [homeland for the Jewish people](#), Israel has attracted [Jewish immigrants](#) from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

The [Israel Central Bureau of Statistics](#) defines the population of Israel as including Jews living in all of the [West Bank](#) and Palestinians in [East Jerusalem](#) but excluding Palestinians anywhere in the rest of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and foreign workers anywhere in Israel. As of December 2023, this calculation stands at approximately 9,842,000 of whom:

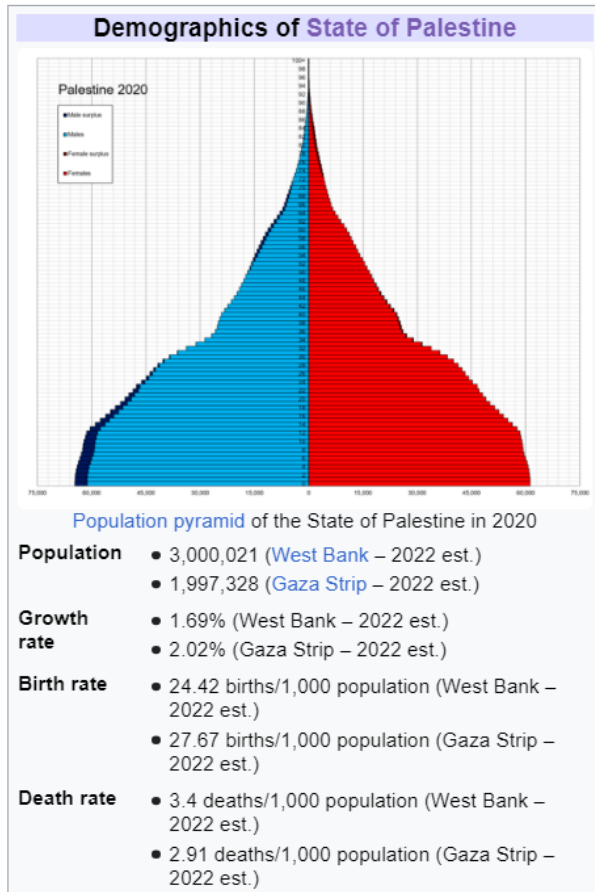
- 73.2% (about 7,208,000 people) are [Jews](#), including about 503,000 living outside the self-defined borders of the State of Israel in the [West Bank](#)
- 21.1% (around 2,080,000 people) are Israeli citizens classified as [Arab](#), some identifying as [Palestinian](#), and including [Druze](#), [Circassians](#), all other Muslims, [Christian Arabs](#), [Armenians](#) (which Israel considers "Arab")<sup>[2]</sup>
- An additional 5.7% (roughly 554,000 people) are classified as "others". This diverse group comprises those

with Jewish ancestry but not recognized as Jewish by religious law, non-Jewish family members of Jewish immigrants, Christians other than Arabs and Armenians, and residents without a distinct ethnic or religious categorization.<sup>[2][1]</sup>

Israel's annual population growth rate stood at 2.0% in 2015, more than three times faster than the [OECD](#) average of around 0.6%.<sup>[3]</sup> With an average of three children per woman, Israel also has the highest [fertility rate](#) in the OECD by a considerable margin and much higher than the OECD average of 1.7.<sup>[4]</sup>

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE STATE OF PALESTINE

Go to [WIKIPEDIA](#) for more detail



[Demographic](#) features of the [population](#) of the area commonly described as [Palestinian territories](#) includes information on [ethnicity](#), education level, health of the populace, economic status, religious affiliations and other aspects of that population.

According to a commonly used definition as relating to an application of the [1949 Armistice Agreement green line](#), the [Palestinian territories](#) have contributory parts of the [West Bank](#) (including [East Jerusalem](#)) and the [Gaza Strip](#).

The [Palestinian National Authority](#), the [United Nations Security Council](#),<sup>[1]</sup> the [United Nations General Assembly](#),<sup>[2]</sup> the [European Union](#),<sup>[3]</sup> the [International Court of Justice](#),<sup>[4]</sup> and the [International Committee of the Red Cross](#)<sup>[5]</sup> use the terminology "Palestinian territories" or "occupied Palestinian territories". [Israel](#) refers to the administrative division encompassing Israeli-controlled Jewish-majority civilian areas of [Area C](#) of the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, as [Judea and Samaria](#)

[Area](#) ([Hebrew](#): אזור יהודה ושומרון, *Ezor Yehuda VeShomron*).<sup>[6]</sup>

### Overview PALESTINE (REGION)

The demographic statistics of [The World Factbook](#) and the [Israel Central Bureau of Statistics](#) estimated that the collective Palestinian (including [Israeli Arabs](#)) population in the region of [Palestine](#), including Israel, the Golan Heights, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, amounted to 5.79 million people in 2017.<sup>[7][8]</sup> Of these, 2.16 million Palestinians lived in the West Bank, 1.84 million lived in Israel, and 1.79 million lived in the Gaza Strip.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

## JEWISH REFUGEES FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

[UK PARLIAMENT](#) 19 June 2019

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con) [Share this specific contribution](#)

I beg to move,

**That this House has considered Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa.**

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone, as we consider this important matter. In 1945, 856,000 Jewish people lived in the middle east, north Africa and the Gulf region. Only about 4,500 remain, almost all of them in Morocco and Tunisia. Jewish people have lived continuously in the middle east and north Africa for over 2,600 years, yet in just a few decades they almost totally disappeared. Thousands were expelled or fled their home countries in fear. Around 850,000 were forced out or felt they had to leave following the United Nations decision to partition Palestine in 1947. Age-old communities, with roots dating back millennia, were gone. It was the largest exodus of non-Muslims from the middle east until the movement of Christians from Iraq after 2003.

Between 1948 and 1972, pogroms and violent attacks were perpetrated in every Arab country against its Jewish residents. The ethnic cleansing of thousands of Jewish people from the Arab world in the mid-20th century was described by journalist Tom Gross as “systematic, absolute and unprovoked.” For example, there were 38,000 Jews living in western Libya before 1945. Now there are none. Few of the 74 synagogues in Libya are recognisable, and a highway runs through Tripoli’s Jewish cemetery. In Algeria, 50 years ago, there were 140,000 Jewish people. Now there are none. In Iraq, there were 135,000, and in Egypt, 75,000. Almost all are gone from those countries too. Some 259,000 left Morocco, 55,000 left Yemen, 20,000 left Lebanon, 180,000 left Syria and 25,000 left Iran. What happened amounted to the near total extinction of an ancient civilisation.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con) [Share this specific contribution](#)

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing this important debate. Is she concerned by the assumption that the near total absence of Jews from so many countries across north Africa and the middle east is because there were never Jewish communities in those countries? Helping to break that misperception and spreading the stories of the great histories of those Jewish communities, which go back thousands of years, as she says, is key to helping us to understand and find solutions for some of the problems of today in the region.

Theresa Villiers [Share this specific contribution](#)

My right hon. Friend makes a good point. That is one reason why this debate is so important. It is shocking that, so far as I am aware, there has never been a debate specifically on this subject in the House.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con) [Share this specific contribution](#)

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing the debate. Somebody who asked a question in last night's Tory leadership debate—Abdullah from Bristol—had retweeted a tweet suggesting that Israel should be relocated to the United States. This debate demonstrates why that is so offensive. It feeds into a false narrative that Israel is a creation of Europe or America, and totally whitewashes the history of the Jews in the middle east and the recent living history of Jews in Arab states in the middle east. That is why it is so offensive and so disgusting.

Theresa Villiers [Share this specific contribution](#)

I agree. Both those points reinforce the importance of raising awareness of this issue, because if our colleagues in the House or the general public do not understand what happened to the Jewish communities of the middle east, they do not understand the middle east conflict. Understanding what we are discussing is crucial if one is to have a fair and balanced outlook on that long-standing dispute.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con) [Share this specific contribution](#)

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing this historic debate. She will know that my family, on my father's side, comes from Libya but had to leave because their home and business were appropriated by Gaddafi, and there were pogroms before that. Why does she think the United Nations has passed 172 resolutions specifically on Palestinian refugees over the past 60 years yet not one on Jewish refugees?

Theresa Villiers [Share this specific contribution](#)

That United Nations record is a matter of grave concern. As I will go on to acknowledge, it is of course important to recognise the suffering experienced by the Palestinians displaced by the 1948 war, but that should not blind us to the suffering experienced by the Jewish communities about whom we are reflecting today.

Jewish people lived in what is now the Arab world for a millennium before Islam was founded, and centuries before the Arab conquest of many of those territories. Until the 17th century, there were more Jewish people in the Arab and wider Muslim world than in Europe. In 1939, 33% of the population of Baghdad was Jewish, making it proportionately more Jewish than Warsaw. Until their 20th-century expulsion, Jewish people had lived in the area covered by present-day Iraq since the Babylonians exiled them from Judea to Mesopotamia in 586BC. The Bible tells us that, taken into captivity in Babylon, they wept on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates. A sizeable minority chose to stay after the Persian king Cyrus defeated the Babylonians and declared that the Jews were free to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. Jewish people living under Muslim rule shaped Judaism as we know it today. The Talmud—or the Babylonian Talmud, as it is often called—was written in the pre-Islamic academies of present-day Iraq. For centuries, Babylon was the spiritual and religious hub of Judaism.

According to the powerful book "Uprooted" by Lyn Julius—I warmly recommend it to everyone here and welcome that Lyn is with us in the Gallery—Jewish people in the Arab world faced two types of oppression. Countries such as Yemen, Syria and post-Suez Egypt drove out their Jewish populations mainly in a single

mass expulsion. In other places, such as Lebanon and Morocco, Jews were pushed out gradually over a more protracted period, steadily being made to feel less and less welcome in their home countries. Several countries criminalised Zionism, exposing their Jewish minorities to the allegation that they were somehow enemies of the state.

In Iraq, the situation deteriorated over time. Having served their country proudly over centuries, the vast majority of the Jewish community in Iraq had their nationality taken from them in 1951. A crisis point was reached in 1969 with the execution of nine Jewish Iraqis on trumped-up charges of spying. Their bodies were left hanging for days on public display. Following that brutal episode, many of Iraq's remaining Jewish population escaped through Kurdish areas, including the vice-president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, my constituent Edwin Shuker.

Last year, Edwin visited Parliament to talk to MPs about the injustice we are reflecting on today and to share with us the story of his escape from Baghdad over the Kurdistan mountains. He told me:

“For years, we were pleading to be allowed to leave...We were happy to leave behind everything, but were denied this request. Instead, we were practically kept as hostages from 1963 until we finally managed to escape with our lives in 1971...and were mercifully granted asylum upon arrival to the UK.”

I pay tribute to the tireless work Edwin and others have done on this issue, and I am pleased he is here with us today. I welcome all those here today who have been personally affected by the events that we are considering or whose families were driven out of those ancient communities in the middle east.

Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con) [Share this specific contribution](#)

Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Theresa Villiers [Share this specific contribution](#)

In a moment. I thank those people for their courage in speaking out on this important issue. We owe them all a great debt of gratitude.

Zac Goldsmith [Share this specific contribution](#)

I apologise for intervening on my right hon. Friend while she was mid flow. I congratulate her on securing this historic and hugely important debate. The US and Canadian Governments have both passed resolutions formally recognising the plight of Jewish refugees. Would she support a similar measure here in the UK, so that the British Government, the British people and Britain as a whole finally recognise, officially and formally, the plight of those Jewish refugees, which she is describing?

Theresa Villiers [Share this specific contribution](#)

I agree that we need much clearer recognition. One good way to do that would be a resolution in Parliament. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will consider that as a next step from this debate.

I pay tribute to Harif, which provides a powerful voice for Jewish people originally from the middle east and north Africa, ventilating many of the concerns about which we will no doubt hear in this debate. I also thank

the Board of Deputies, Conservative Friends of Israel and Dr Stan Urman for the information they provided me with in advance of the debate.

Many people were given just days to leave, and most lost everything they owned. A Jewish Egyptian refugee, Joseph Abdul Wahed, wrote:

“We left. And we lost everything. We lost the business, the manufacturing shop, a very beautiful villa with a garden full of orange blossoms and lemon blossoms that I can still remember. But I did take with me a Star of David. It was made by my grandfather. Luckily I was able to get it out.”

The ethnic cleansing of Jewish people from the Arab world has far too often been overlooked, as we have already heard in interventions. This is largely an untold story, and it is an unresolved injustice.

Huge amounts of airtime, debate and resources are focused on the Palestinians who were displaced by the 1948 conflict, and it is right to acknowledge their suffering and the importance of safeguarding their interests in a future peace settlement. But the plight of the 850,000 Jewish refugees and the scale of their suffering have never had the recognition they deserve. Indeed, I was shocked to learn that some countries' embassies in Cairo are apparently located in homes stolen from Jewish Egyptian refugees. Concentrating only on the Palestinian refugees gives the international community a distorted view of the middle east dispute. A fair settlement needs to take into account the injustice suffered by Jewish refugees as well as the plight of displaced Palestinians.

The historic UN resolution 242 states that a comprehensive peace agreement should include

“a just settlement of the refugee problem”—

language that is inclusive of both Palestinian and Jewish refugees. The status of Jewish refugees has been recognised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and by world leaders such as President Bill Clinton.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (LabCo-op) [Share this specific contribution](#)

I thank the right hon. Lady for raising this issue. Although I am a European Jew—my family are European Jews—my mother's best friend at school was an Egyptian Jew who had to flee Egypt in the 1950s to move to Israel. I grew up with stories of Egyptian Jews, Iranian Jews and Iraqi Jews who had to flee and who lost many things when they were fleeing, so I am really grateful for the right hon. Lady's intervention, and I call for reparations for Jewish refugees from those countries as well as for Palestinian refugees.

Theresa Villiers [Share this specific contribution](#)

I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. It is so important for us to be able to tell some of these stories. It is astonishing that they are so little known. I therefore welcome his intervention.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised this matter in her speech to mark the 100th anniversary of the Balfour declaration; she referred to the suffering of both Jewish and Palestinian refugees. I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Government's help on some key questions. I appeal to them to back the efforts by UNESCO and other bodies that are pressing for the conservation of historic sites in the middle east that have cultural significance for the Jewish community and, indeed, other minorities. I also appeal for Ministers, when they discuss middle east matters, explicitly to acknowledge that two refugee populations,



Palestinians and Jews, emerged from the same conflict, during the same period, and that the rights of both need to be addressed in a fair settlement. I also ask right hon. and hon. Members to acknowledge that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith) did, and as has been the case in resolutions passed in the US Congress and the Canadian Parliament.

After fleeing their home countries, a number of the 850,000 displaced Jewish people went to the UK and Europe or to Australia, the USA and Canada. About 650,000 found refuge in Israel. Many faced hardship and adversity, but I want to highlight the optimism, because theirs is a huge success story, as they have become a much-valued part of the social fabric of the countries that welcomed them and took them in. In their former homelands in the middle east and north Africa, Jewish people over centuries had attained leading roles in many walks of life, and that success has been replicated in their new home countries, including here in the United Kingdom and in my own constituency. I count it a great honour that those I represent in the House include people whose courage and determination got them through a traumatic expulsion from their former homes in the middle east and north Africa.

I want to close on a cautionary note. I am deeply worried that history is repeating itself in the middle east. Just as the indigenous Jewish population was forced out 70 years ago, so the Christians are now under ever-increasing pressure. A grave injustice was perpetrated on the Jewish communities in the middle east and north Africa. Let us hope that that is not repeated in relation to the Christians in the region, whose roots also go back many centuries and whose position now also looks increasingly precarious.

I am afraid that this is an occasion to recall the solemn statement by the former Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks:

“The hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews.”

That is a danger that none of us should ever forget.

Several hon. Members rose [Share this specific contribution](#)

Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair) [Share this specific contribution](#)

Order. This hour-long debate will finish at 5.58 pm. Seven Members are seeking to contribute. I am obliged to start calling the Front Benchers no later than 5.36 pm, and the guideline time limits are five minutes for the SNP and for Her Majesty's Opposition and 10 minutes for the Minister, with Theresa Villiers having two or three minutes at the end to sum up the debate. That means we have 21 minutes of Back-Bench time, which means that there will have to be a three-minute limit to ensure that everyone can contribute.

5.14pm

Dame Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op) [Share this specific contribution](#)

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) on securing this important debate. The 850,000 Jewish people displaced from Arab countries from 1948 are the forgotten refugees. They rarely feature as part of the discourse about the plight of middle eastern refugees associated with the establishment of the state of Israel, yet they are an integral part of the history of that region.

It is truly shocking that since 1947, antisemitism—hostility towards Jewish people—has virtually extinguished Jewish life in the middle east. Jewish people have lived in the middle east and north Africa since antiquity. Cities such as Baghdad in Iraq and Aleppo in Syria were renowned hubs of Jewish life. In 1947, one quarter of the population of Baghdad was Jewish, putting Baghdad on a par, in terms of the Jewish population, with pre-war Warsaw and New York. In 1947, there were 90,000 Egyptian Jews, living mainly in Cairo and Alexandria. The fate of the Jews of that region was persecution and expulsion, and their assets were confiscated. There is no right of return. The persecution and expulsion continued into the 1950s and beyond. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Dame Margaret Hodge) is one of the Jewish Egyptian refugees.

The Jewish refugees were forced to make new lives elsewhere. Many found refuge in the state of Israel. Today, half of Israel's population traces its origins to other middle eastern or north African countries. It is time that the story of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries was told as a fundamental part of the history of that important region. The Jewish people have always been part of the middle east. It is a sad reflection on the history of the region that there are now virtually no Jews in the middle east outside of Israel, the world's only Jewish state. I hope that a peaceful solution to current conflicts in the region will once again welcome Jewish people right across the region to the place of their origins.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con) [Share this specific contribution](#)

It is an honour to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. Many in the House will know that I have a deep personal connection to this issue. I very much wish that my grandfather, Renato Halfon, had been alive now to see the demise of Muammar Gaddafi. In 1968, my grandfather was forced to leave Libya because of pogroms targeting Jews and, as an Italian Jew, he fled to Rome. He had owned a clothing business, and planned to return to Tripoli once the pogroms had subsided, but when Colonel Gaddafi took power in 1969, all Jewish businesses were seized under the new regime. In the beginning, Gaddafi was seen as a saviour, yet, as we know, he became a murderous dictator.

My grandfather, like thousands of other Jews from Libya, had nothing to return to—no home or business. On top of oil money, Gaddafi had bought the loyalty of his supporters by giving them all the property seized from the Jews and Italians. Gaddafi's rule was driven by the conviction that foreigners were still exploiting Libya, and the eviction of Jews and Italians was made a hallmark of his regime.

Fortunately, my grandfather had seen Gaddafi coming. He sent my father, aged 15, to England in the late 1950s. After a short stint in Rome, my grandfather joined him in north London, where he spent the rest of his life. It is a great sadness that, by the end of 1970, nearly all Jews and Italians had left Libya. Jews had lived in Libya for more than 2,300 years and had a thriving culture. The population numbered more than 38,000 by 1948.

Today, Jewish communities all over the middle east and north Africa have been almost entirely erased. The flight of historic Jewish communities has altered the shape and face of the region forever, but that is rarely recognised or spoken about on the international stage. As I mentioned to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers), the UN has passed 172 resolutions specifically on Palestinian refugees, but nothing on Jewish refugees. It must be noted that Israel, despite being in its infancy as a

country and under attack from six Arab states in 1948, did its best to integrate Jewish refugees. In comparison, many Arab countries, with the exception of Jordan and a few others, turned their backs on the displaced Palestinians.

I am proudly British. I feel a deep attachment to my heritage. I do not want a right of return. I only wish to go to Tripoli to retrace my dear grandfather's footsteps. I urge the Minister to give the immense suffering of Jewish refugees international recognition and equal prominence to the plight of the Palestinian refugees. All their stories deserve to be told.

Mr Ivan Lewis (Bury South) (Ind) [Share this specific contribution](#)

It is always a pleasure to participate in debates under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) on securing this important debate.

As the right hon. Lady has made clear, it is important to acknowledge the historical facts relating to Jews forced to flee their homes in the middle east and north Africa. Too often, the debate about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is dominated by a narrative that demonises Israel and delegitimises the rights of Jews to self-determination in their own state.

In the aftermath of the creation of the state of Israel, as the right hon. Lady said, a minimum of 850,000 Jews were forced from their homes. From Iraq to Egypt, Syria, Libya and Yemen, state-sanctioned pogroms descended on Jewish neighbourhoods, killing innocents and destroying ancient synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. New draconian laws prevented Jews from public worship, forced them to carry Jewish identity cards, and seized billions of dollars of their property and assets. Any future peace plan must tackle that issue. It should be part of any full and final settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. Naturally, there must also be justice for Palestinian refugees, based on credible proposals. As Palestinian leaders have privately accepted for decades, it is not feasible to demand both a Palestinian state and the right of return to Israel for Palestinian refugees. Other solutions have to be found, which are just and recognise the losses that refugees have suffered.

It is also time to question the need for Palestinians to live in United Nations-run refugee camps. Surely, they should be encouraged and supported to live in better conditions in Arab countries in the region. That need not in any way compromise or prejudice their rights in any future peace agreement. Refugees, especially children, should not be used as political pawns in the frontline of a public relations campaign.

Regarding these issues, in the past I have accused the Leader of the Opposition of supporting a one-state solution. Today, I reiterate that charge. It is the logical conclusion of the positions he has adopted for decades and his support for the view that the creation of the state of Israel was a catastrophe. His personal attempt to persuade the Labour national executive committee to amend the definition of antisemitism, to allow people to say that the creation and existence of Israel is a racist endeavour, tells us all we need to know about his view of Jewish people's right to self-determination.

The Leader of the Opposition and many of his supporters support the campaigns of every minority around the world who demand the right to self-determination. Why are Jews the only exception? It is to be hoped that the Equality and Human Rights Commission inquiry will shine a light on the Leader of the

Opposition's and his inner circle's failure to act against their allies who are found to promote antisemitic rhetoric and imagery.

In conclusion, it is a source of regret that there is no meaningful political dialogue taking place at the present time between Israelis and Palestinians. Let us hope that this changes, in the interests of peace and stability for both peoples.

Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con) [Share this specific contribution](#)

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) on securing this important debate. It is an opportunity to give this issue the prominence that it deserves. As the hon. Member for Bury South (Mr Lewis) said, it is remarkable that this issue is rarely remarked upon. Some 850,000 people were forced from their homes, yet no pressure group or organisation ever talks about it. However, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) said, the UN has passed 172 resolutions on Palestinian refugees and not a single one on Jewish refugees. I ask the Minister to advise us on what can be done to correct that imbalance, and what the Government can do with regard to the United Nations.

The right hon. Lady said that Jewish roots in north Africa go back 3,000 years. Indeed, many Jewish people travelled with the Phoenicians, who were wonderful traders and seaman, capable of navigating the oceans. Today there is not a single Jewish person left in Algeria; previously there were 140,000. The same is true in Libya. There are said to be just 20 Jewish people living in Egypt, despite there once being a thriving community of 75,000.

The Jews of Yemen, a community going back 2,000 years, also faced some of the worst persecution, with protests against the UN partition plan resulting in the murders of over 80 innocent Jewish people, and the burning of their homes, school and synagogue. However, Israel managed to save 47,000 of the Yemeni Jews in the extraordinary Operation Magic Carpet, from 1949 to 1950, with help, I must say, from the United Kingdom, so that they could start their new lives in the nascent Jewish state.

Some 60,000 square miles of land was taken from Jewish refugees, which would be four times the size of Israel. These people are not seeking any kind of restitution; they are seeking recognition of their plight. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith) also suggested that the Government should follow the lead of the Canadian, American and Israeli Governments, and officially recognise the experience of so many Jewish refugees after the second world war. I hope that the Government take that opportunity. Many of those Jewish exiles have gone on to make a huge advance in their personal lives, as well as contributing to the community of Israel itself. They have reached important positions in national Government, and thrived in the public and private sectors. They have made an invaluable contribution to the state of Israel. When we hear about Palestinian refugees, we must all bear in mind the fact that this was a tragedy for not just one group of people, but two groups.

5.26pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP) [Share this specific contribution](#)

It is a pleasure to speak in this debate. I thank the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) for bringing this debate here and setting the scene so well, and giving us all a chance to participate. I add my voice to her call for the Minister for the Middle East to make representations to his US counterparts, ensuring that the long-awaited middle east peace process includes reference to the Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

I am pleased to see the Minister in his place. I believe this is his first debate in Westminster Hall.

The Minister for the Middle East (Dr Andrew Murrison) [Share this specific contribution](#)

indicated assent.

Jim Shannon [Share this specific contribution](#)

Well, he is very welcome. I am sure it will not be his last. It probably will not be my last either, but that is by the way.

Since the partition of Ireland and the creation of Northern Ireland, the Protestants in the border regions that made up the new Northern Ireland have faced attempts on their lives, to ethnically cleanse them out of the regions. The United Nations has defined ethnic cleansing as

“a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic, or religious, group from certain geographic areas.”

That is what has happened along the border of Northern Ireland, and that is what has happened to the Jews. We know that only 4,000 Jews remain in the Arab world, while some 200,000 Arabs were absorbed into Israeli society, making up the Arab minority of 1.7 million people, which forms 21% of Israel's population.

What can we do? First, the media bias against Israel and her people is exactly that: bias. For example, when the BBC attempts to set a narrative that does not equate to what is actually taking place on the ground—such as reporting retaliatory missiles launched by Israel in such a way that it seems like an offensive attack—we must investigate and seek the truth, but not from those who seek to write the narrative that suits them.

Secondly, we must fulfil our obligations to do what the Balfour declaration began—allowing Israel back to her home and having equality and safety for all in the middle east. Thirdly, there is significant linkage between those two refugee populations, which underscores the need to deal with both simultaneously. We must impress upon the American Administration the importance of not negating any refugee's rights to justice, nor the responsibility of Arab states to provide a humanitarian solution to their plight. Ensuring rights for both Arab and Jewish refugees is an essential key, on a very practical level, to resolving the issue of the refugees.

If Israelis—over 50% of whom are descendants of Jews displaced from Arab countries—are asked to approve a peace plan that provides rights and redress for Palestinian refugees only, it will be less likely to be adopted than an agreement that would provide rights and redress to Jewish refugees as well. That makes sense to me, and I believe it makes sense to everyone taking part in this debate.

A question was put to me over the weekend, and I shall ask the Minister the same question. What steps will the British Government take to recognise the injustice that was suffered by some 800,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries and to ensure that, in the Government's stance on the middle east peace process, they recognise their tragedy alongside that of the Palestinian refugees? Both sets of lives matter and both narratives matter. We must strongly advocate for those whose plight often goes unnoticed—in this case, the plight of Jewish refugees from the middle east and north Africa.

5.29pm

John Howell (Henley) (Con) [Share this specific contribution](#)

I wish to dedicate much of what I am going to say to the Jewish refugees of Iraq. I have taken a personal interest in them over the past year, having become friends with several Jews of Iraqi heritage who fled to the UK from Iraq.

A few months ago, I had the pleasure of watching a powerful documentary entitled "Remember Baghdad", which tells the story of Edwin Shuker and others, and of a once prosperous Jewish community in the Iraqi capital. Their stories are similar to those of so many other Iraqi Jews—135,000, to be precise.

Baghdad was seen as one of the centres of the Jewish world, with an abundance of synagogues, Jewish schools and kosher butchers. At one point, the Jewish community constituted as much as a third of the total population of Baghdad. It was a Jewish community much like those in many other parts of the world.

The situation began to change in the 1940s, with violent riots. Then, upon Israel's foundation in 1948, the situation for Iraq's Jews became absolutely untenable. Laws were passed making Zionism a criminal offence and allowing the police to raid and search thousands of Jewish homes for any evidence of Zionism. Jews were also prevented from going to schools, hospitals and other public places and organisations. Also, Jews were removed from thousands of Government positions and their homes were valued at 80% less than those of their Arab neighbours. Faced with such heartbreaking persecution, over 120,000 Iraqi Jews fled the country between 1948 and 1951; sadly, today the Jewish population of Iraq numbers no more than five. Many refugees went to Israel to forge a new life, but hundreds came to the UK, and in doing so they forfeited their Iraqi citizenship and their property.

The powerful documentary that I have mentioned tells a story of great loss, but I was also struck by the enormous optimism that it showed about re-establishing a Jewish presence in Iraq. In closing, I encourage the Minister to take the time to watch this short film; I ask him to recognise the injustice that was suffered by more than 850,000 Jewish refugees from across the middle east and north Africa; and I also ask him to ensure that the Government recognise this tragedy alongside that of the Palestinian refugees in their stance on the middle east peace process.

5.32pm

[Andrew Percy \(Brigg and Goole\) \(Con\) Share this specific contribution](#)

Thank you, Mr Hollobone, for calling me to speak; I nearly said, "Sir Philip", as I am sure it is just a matter of time before you are called that. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship.

I of course congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) on securing this debate and on everything she said. I associate myself entirely with her comments and with other comments, particularly those by the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) about the declaration that we would like to see this Government make, which would bring us into line—as I believe a number of speakers have said—with both the United States and Canada.

I was not planning to speak in this debate, as the time for it is short, but now I have been given the opportunity I will, of course, take it. I will say something about the importance of education regarding this particular issue. That is because, as I said in my intervention earlier and as we saw in the awful tweet from Abdullah in Bristol last night—speaking as I am now, he will probably think, as he also tweeted, that I too am a political figure on the “Zionist payroll”—there is a false narrative that has been created that Israel is a European and western creation, and that it is anathema in the middle east. However, we absolutely know—not only because of the thousands of years of history and heritage of the Jewish people in the middle east and north Africa, but because of recent history, as has been outlined during this debate—that the Jewish presence in the middle east is a living history that goes back to before the creation of the state of Israel, and there are many in the Jewish community who doubtless would have liked to continue to live their lives in north Africa and other parts of the middle east but are prevented from doing so today.

The lack of understanding of the history of Jewish refugees from elsewhere in the middle east and north Africa is perhaps part of the reason why so many people who pronounce on the issue of Israel are so ignorant in making the offensive comments and statements they make, and it is also why this debate is so important.

Of course, Yemen has been referred to; I will just make a very brief comment on it for the Minister to respond to when he speaks. There is a very small Yemeni Jewish community left, of—possibly—only about 70 people. Previously I have written and said on the Floor of the House of Commons that those Jews who are left in Yemen have been subjected to the most awful abuses and threats. One family in particular, whose representatives came to see me, live in fear. Only the father goes out to shop; his daughters have been threatened with rape by their Arab neighbours. This is a really dire situation; as I say, there are fewer than 100 Jews left in Yemen.

A former immigration Minister—the Minister without Portfolio, my right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis)—tried to be as helpful as possible on this issue, but I hope that the Minister who is here today, the Minister for the Middle East, will also look at it.

Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair) [Share this specific contribution](#)

We now come to the speeches from the Front Benches.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP) [Share this specific contribution](#)

I am pleased to be able to contribute to this debate. I commend the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) for securing it. I also commend her not only for the content of her speech, but for the tone in which she delivered it.

In 2010, I had the great privilege of being present when Kate Adie was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of St Andrews. In her doctoral address, she surprised a lot of the media studies students in the hall by telling them that if they wanted to follow her career path—possibly with fewer attempts on their life than she had experienced—they should not do a degree in media studies but a degree in history. Her logic was very simple. She said, “How can you possibly hope to explain to people back home what is happening in a faraway country today if you don’t understand what happened in that country, and to it, in the past?” This debate, and particularly the opening speech by the right hon. Lady, has brought that comment home again, because it seems to me that too many people who speak very forcefully about what should happen to solve the problems in the middle east are either unaware of its history or—perhaps even worse—only aware of part of that history.

When we look at the recent history of Israel and of the Jewish people, it is very easy to be overwhelmed by the scale and the horror of what happened in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, and to lose sight of the fact that at any other time what was happening to Jews in other parts of the world would have been seen as a catastrophe on a global scale. That is because 850,000 people were forced out of the only homes they had ever known—homes that they could demonstrate their families had lived in for hundreds, and possibly even thousands, of years. An unknown number of people were killed—certainly hundreds, but probably thousands. By today’s standards, that was ethnic cleansing. Indeed, I would argue that by today’s standards that was a genocide and it deserves to be recognised as such. And those people who fled for their lives to try to escape from that genocide should be recognised as refugees, just as those people who are currently fleeing from Yemen, Syria and other conflict areas should be recognised, and looked after, as refugees.

One of the sad things in any conflict is that civilians always lose; they are always the ones who become refugees. And it is unusual for there to be an armed conflict where there is only one group of refugees; we almost always find that there are refugees from both sides. As the right hon. Lady forcefully reminded us, and as others have commented on, two entire populations of refugees were created as a result of the conflict in the middle east in the 1940s and 1950s. Both those populations deserve equal recognition; the members of those populations all had equal rights and they all suffered appalling losses and appalling treatment. All of their stories deserve to be heard and remembered.

As well as looking at what we need to do now to try, as far as possible, to restore the rights of all those who were persecuted in the past, we also need to look at what we should be doing differently now to stop such persecution from happening again. I liked the comment earlier that hatred against the Jews does not stop with the Jews, and eventually becomes hatred of somebody else. I think that is a lesson that we take too long to learn. When we allow hatred and persecution of any minority in a society to become normalised, that hatred and persecution very quickly spreads to a different minority, whether that minority is based on religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or any other characteristic.

If we tolerate and allow people to demean, dehumanise and vilify anyone else because of their religion, colour or nationality, we are allowing the start of another process of persecution against a minority at some point. In welcoming today’s debate, and associating myself with a huge amount of what the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet said in her opening comments, I desperately hope that in 50 years’ time, there



will not be some Parliament somewhere talking about a massive persecution against a population of refugees that happened because we did not do enough to stop it from happening in our world today.  
5.39pm

Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East) (Lab) [Share this specific contribution](#)

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this afternoon, Mr Hollobone, and I congratulate the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) on having secured a very timely debate. It is extremely important, at this stage of all stages, to be reminded of the true history of the middle east and the part that the Jewish community played in it. I will say a little bit more about that in a minute.

I thank the right hon. Lady for her tour d’horizon of the middle east and north Africa, as well as her remarks about the near-total extinction of an ancient civilisation and the fact that this is the first debate we have had in this House on this subject. She also pointed out that Jews lived in that region for more than 1,000 years before the religion of Islam was founded. It was a thoughtful, well-researched opening speech, and I am grateful to her for it. The right hon. Lady also quoted the former Chief Rabbi and my relative through marriage, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks—a wise and incredible man, who did such a lot to represent the Jewish community of this country.

We then heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Dame Louise Ellman), who always makes an excellent contribution in every debate that I hear her speak in. She mentioned that Jewish people have always been a part of the middle east, which is absolutely right. We heard from the right hon. Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon); we then heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Bury South (Mr Lewis), who made the point that any future peace plans must include the history of Jewish refugees and the loss faced by those refugees. We also heard contributions from the hon. Members for Hendon (Dr Offord), for Strangford (Jim Shannon), for Henley (John Howell), and for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy). I am very grateful for the points that they made.

I have a personal interest in this topic. My earliest memories of my own family’s history centre on photographs of my late father, taken outside a mosque in Tangier. When my grandfather was a refugee from the Nazis during the occupation of Paris in 1940, my grandmother remained in Paris; he was in Spain. He crossed the water to Morocco, where he found refuge in Tangier. His own brother was the mayor of that city at the time, which shows the part that Jews played in north Africa and, indeed, the middle east. My father’s origins were Ottoman, from Salonica and Istanbul, so the cuisine that we enjoyed as children was always middle eastern and Turkish cooking—something that I found strange when I went to the homes of my English friends at school. Having mentioned my great-uncle, I will add that on the street where I lived in north-west London, my best friend’s family had fled from Cairo. The Sharma family had found refuge in London, and the parents and grandparents still spoke very good Arabic; their main language was French, which meant my family could communicate with them. Their stories about having to flee from Nasser’s Egypt always remained in my mind.

A few years ago, I went to Kurdistan in northern Iraq; I went to Erbil. The right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet mentioned the part that the Kurdish people have played in helping Jews escape from the hostile environments they found themselves in after 1947. It was a pleasure to hear from so many Kurdish

contacts and interlocutors about their respect for the Jewish people, and the fact that if Israel were able to establish an embassy in Baghdad today, there would be one in Erbil tomorrow. They are great supporters of the Jewish people, and they feel a great sympathy because of the plight and persecution that they have unfortunately had to experience.

Over successive waves of persecution in the 20th century since 1948, up to 850,000 Jews—some estimates are close to 1 million—were expelled from mainly Arab countries. Most of those Mizrahi, as they are called in Israel, took their refuge in that country; their descendants comprise approximately half of all Israeli Jews. To many Israelis, the issue of refugees remains one of the outstanding obstacles to peace that must be resolved in any final status negotiations. The plight of Palestinian refugees, as we have heard, is well known, but Israelis rightly believe that less attention is given to former Jewish refugees.

As it happens, just before I came to this debate, I had a meeting with Dr Saeb Erekat from the Palestine Liberation Organisation. I told him about this debate and that we would be discussing Jewish refugees in the middle east, and asked him what he would do about that. He asked me to say quite openly that the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian Authority believe that just as Palestinians should have their rights to return with full compensation, so should all Jewish refugees. I thought that was very interesting.

The Minister for the Middle East (Dr Andrew Murrison) [Share this specific contribution](#)

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone, for my first time in this capacity. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) on having convened this debate; it is indeed a timely debate to be having, and she has laid out the case extremely well.

In the very short period of time we have had to debate this matter this afternoon—I hope this will be the first of several such debates, as one hour is insufficient to give this issue the coverage that it so richly demands—we have had a tour de force of the historical background to the conundrum currently faced by Jewish refugees. I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Leeds North East (Fabian Hamilton), the Opposition spokesman on these matters. He has referred to a meeting with Dr Saeb Erekat; I also met with Dr Erekat today, and we shared a number of reflections on the current situation. He is a very wise man with a great deal of experience in these matters, and the remarks that he made to the hon. Gentleman do not surprise me in the least.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet mentioned Jewish refugees in the round, and spoke about the historical background to this issue. She mentioned Morocco and Tunisia; I am pleased she did so, because although the general history in respect of the Jewish people across north Africa and the middle east has been appalling, there are examples of countries that have done relatively well in a dismal scene. I cite Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan, which I think has also been mentioned, as countries where there has been a more benign attitude towards Jewish refugees. My right hon. Friend knows that I have an interest in Morocco; I was told anecdotally that Jewish residents in Israel who are from Morocco—the Opposition spokesman is nodding; I think he knows what I am going to say—often have a picture of the King of Morocco on their wall, because Morocco has done good things in the past in respect of its Jewish population.

However, that does not obscure the general awfulness of the way these things have been. We have heard from a lot of right hon. and hon. Members about the failure of the international community to properly understand the extent of Jewish refugee status. We talk a great deal about Palestinians—they are always in the news, and they are extremely important—but we also need to consider refugees in the round. Of course, UN Security Council resolution 242 mentions “refugees”; it does not disaggregate refugees. There is a reason for that, which we are exploring today.

It is particularly timely for me to be talking about this today, because three weeks ago I paid my first visit to the middle east in my new capacity, and I visited Yad Vashem. My belief is that a person will not fully understand the state of Israel unless they visit Yad Vashem. It had a profound impact on me. Yad Vashem gives us the story; it tells us why it is that a people who have been bashed, bullied and messed around over generations and centuries have said, “Enough! This is our home. This is ours, and we are going to defend it.” I am very pleased that the Government are four-square behind their right to self-determination and safety in the state of Israel.

The hon. Member for Bury South (Mr Lewis) spoke about the two-state solution. As we approach the Manama conference next week, I make it clear that we have to have a two-state solution based on the '67 borders, with agreed land swaps and Jerusalem as a shared capital. There has been lots of talk in recent times about that being finessed, and he referred to the Leader of the Opposition. We are clear that we will not have peace in the middle east unless we have a shared future between the Jewish and Palestinian people, and that means a two-state solution. At this time, we just need to make that abundantly clear. I spent a lot of time in the west bank, Gaza and Israel. I saw the desperate conditions in which the people of Gaza are living, and I visited Khan al-Ahmar, whose inhabitants are apparently safe for now, but who still expect to be made homeless by Israeli demolitions. The UN has said that could constitute a forcible transfer. The experience of all these people—the victims and survivors of the holocaust, the Israelis who live in fear of Palestinian rockets, and the Palestinians who live a precarious existence in Gaza or the west bank—illustrates the complexity of the issues still to be resolved by the middle east peace process. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet is absolutely right to cite UN Security Council resolution 242. It speaks of refugees; it does not break them down. The Scottish National party spokesman, the hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant), touched on similar ground in his remarks.

The history of Jewish migration and displacement in the region is highly complex. We have touched on a great deal of that today. Some have estimated that the figures could be as high as 1 million displaced people over that period. For those whose homes and property were seized or who were forcibly expelled, the experience was hugely traumatic and hugely distressing. Some continue to live with all that distress today and rightly seek some sort of recognition of the trauma they have suffered. We deeply sympathise with that suffering, just as we sympathise with the many Palestinians who have been forced from their homes over the same period and, indeed, the more than 15 million people of many faiths and nationalities who are currently displaced in the region.

We understand that there were a range of motivations for Jews who decided to leave Arab countries. Many of them were certainly forced out, one way or another—either directly or by the general bullying behaviour that they experienced over years. Many left because they were driven by the desire to forge a new

homeland for the Jewish people in the new state of Israel. We continue to support that legitimate aspiration for a secure and safe homeland in the form of the modern state of Israel, just as we support the objectives of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. The hon. Member for Bury South was absolutely right to underscore the importance of that. It is with those two states very much in mind that we approach the Manama conference next week, at which this country will of course be represented.

The Government continue to believe that the way forward is through substantive peace talks between the parties leading to a two-state solution with Jerusalem as the shared capital. We would also like to use every opportunity to call out any instances of antisemitism, wherever it occurs. Scapegoating and demonising minorities fuels division, hatred and violence, and it cannot go unchallenged, wherever we find it. Freedom of religion or belief is a universal human right that dovetails with many other human rights. Where religious freedoms are under attack, other basic rights are also under threat.

In the time available to me, I will run briefly through the contributions that have been made this afternoon. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet mentioned UNESCO world heritage sites. We work, as she will probably know, with regional Governments and UN agencies so that cultural sites, religious and secular, are protected in a troubled region. She is right to raise that.

I commend the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Dame Louise Ellman) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) on their contributions, particularly in relation to the history of this piece. They have a deep and long-standing interest in the matter.

My good friend the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) pointed out that peace in the middle east needs consideration of Palestinian and Jewish refugees. I hope in my remarks and my emphasis on UN Security Council resolution 242 that I have made clear that the Government very much see it in that light, too.

My hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) talked about the injustice perpetrated on Jewish refugees and hoped that they, as well as Palestinian refugees, would feature in the middle east peace process. The fact we are having this debate in this place should reinforce the message that there can be no lasting peace without consideration of both of the peoples principally in the frame in this matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) quoted a very insensitive remark by Abdullah from Bristol. I am grateful to Abdullah from Bristol for making his crass remark, because it gave us an opportunity to explode it today in the House of Commons. My hon. Friend also mentioned Yemen. Between 1948 and 1949, 50,000 Jews were airlifted from Yemen, and he is right to point out that there are probably only around 100 left.

I once again congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet on rightly raising this important matter. It is timely that she has done so, since next week in Manama these grave matters concerning the middle east peace process and the way forward will be considered. I very much hope that someone involved with those talks has been listening today.

Theresa Villiers [Share this specific contribution](#)

I thank the Minister and everyone who has taken part in the debate. The main point I take away from it is that one hour is just not long enough. This story has stayed untold for far too long. We need this debate to be the start of a process by which we ensure that more people know about this unresolved injustice.

I echo the request from all parts of the House that the Government explicitly refer to the matter of Jewish refugees in statements, discussions and debates about the middle east because, as we have heard, it is not possible properly to understand the middle east conflict or to formulate a fair solution without an understanding of the issue with which we have been grappling this afternoon.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) made a powerful point when he said that ignorance about the long history of the Jewish communities across the Arab world and the middle east is used as an excuse to fuel the entirely false narrative that Israel is somehow an artificial European construct and a colonial outpost. That is a false narrative, and I hope that the Minister and all right hon. and hon.

Members present today will help me in taking forward the process and in ensuring that more people know what really happened 70 years ago, so that we can see some genuine justice in the middle east for the dispossessed Jewish communities of the Arab world.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa.

5.58pm

Sitting adjourned.

## THE ORIGINS OF THE 'EXCHANGE OF POPULATIONS'

[bataween](#) | Posted on 23 May 2005

It was in 1949, when Nuri al-Said took office as Iraqi Prime Minister, that the idea of exchanging the 160,000 Jews of Iraq for the Arab refugees created by the war in Palestine was first floated. In an essay entitled '[The break between Muslims and Jews in Iraq](#)', in *Jews among Arabs* (Ed Cohen and Udovitch) the late, lamented Iraqi-Jewish historian Professor Elie Kedourie shows how the idea started as a threat, then took on a life of its own.

The Jews of Iraq – settled in the country since Biblical times but increasingly being driven from their jobs and treated as if they had no right to be there – were now seen as 'pawns and hostages to...allow Nuri to appear as champion of the Palestinian Arabs'. The outside powers too, cynically viewed the Iraqi Jews as useful pawns for resolving the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The Israeli foreign minister, Moshe Sharrett, initially refused any possible linkage between the two sets of refugees. As the Jewish exodus got underway, Levi Eshkol, treasurer of the Jewish Agency, told the Zionist Underground in Baghdad that they must not rush: Israel did not have enough tents. "If they come, they'd have to live on the street," he said.

Even before the passing of a law allowing Jews to renounce their Iraqi citizenship and leave for Israel, some 30 or 40 a day were fleeing Iraq illegally through Iran. When the law was passed it was thought that not more than 10,000 Jews would leave Iraq. By the time the law expired at the end of March 1951, some 120,000 had chosen to leave. A thirst for vengeance seemed to be driving Nuri al-Said, who tried unsuccessfully to get the Jordanians to agree to truckloads of Jews, whom he branded exploitative, seditious and worthy of punishment, being dumped on the border with Israel.

Now came Nuri's masterstroke. A law passed in secret froze the property of the Iraqi Jews, in contravention of all undertakings Iraq had made to safeguard minority rights. The property of those who were abroad and failed to return within two months would also be confiscated, even if the Jews had not given up their Iraqi citizenship. There were 25 such cases in Britain.

By then Sharrett had accepted the linkage of the two sets of refugees. A Foreign Office memo approvingly spoke of the two accounts, of the Iraqi Jews and the Arab refugees, standing in perfect symmetry and precise balance. And all this before the expulsion of Egyptian, Syrian and North African Jewry, with all *their* lost assets, were added to the equation.

## ABOUT THE JEWISH BLOG

### POINT OF NO RETURN

In just 50 years, almost a million Jews, whose communities stretch back up to 3,000 years, have been 'ethnically cleansed' from 10 Arab countries. These refugees outnumber the Palestinian refugees two to one, but their narrative has all but been ignored. Unlike Palestinian refugees, they fled not war, but systematic persecution. Seen in this light, Israel, where some 50 percent of the Jewish population descend from these refugees and are now full citizens, is the legitimate expression of the self-determination of an oppressed indigenous, Middle Eastern people.

This website is dedicated to preserving the memory of the near-extinct Jewish communities, which can never return to what and where they once were - even if they wanted to. It will attempt to pass on the stories of the Jewish refugees and their current struggle for recognition and restitution. Awareness of the injustice done to these Jews can only advance the cause of peace and reconciliation.

*(Iran: once an ally of Israel, the Islamic Republic of Iran is now an implacable enemy and numbers of Iranian Jews have fallen drastically from 80,000 to less than 10,000 since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Their*

<b>Displacement of Jews from Arab Countries 1948-2012</b>							
	<b>1948</b>	<b>1958<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1968<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>1976<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>2001<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>2005<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>2012 (est.)</b>
<b>Aden</b>	8,000	800	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Algeria</b>	140,000	130,000	3,000	1,000	0	0	0
<b>Egypt</b>	75,000	40,000	2,500	400	100	100	75
<b>Iraq</b>	135,000	6,000	2,500	350	100	50 <sup>6</sup>	50
<b>Lebanon</b>	5,000	6,000	3,000	400	100	~50 <sup>7</sup>	40
<b>Libya</b>	38,000	3,750	500	40	0	0	0
<b>Morocco</b>	265,000	200,000	50,000	18,000	5,700	3,500	3,000
<b>Syria</b>	30,000	5,000	4,000	4,500	100	100	50
<b>Tunisia</b>	105,000	80,000	10,000	7,000	1,500	1,100	1,000
<b>Yemen</b>	55,000	3,500	500	500	200 <sup>8</sup>	200	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>856,000<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>475,050</b>	<b>76,000</b>	<b>32,190</b>	<b>7,800</b>	<b>5,110</b>	<b>4,315</b>

+ Iran from 150,000 to 10,000 (Progressive Voice) **TOTAL (app) 1,600,000**

Prepared for Use by the



September 10, 2012

<sup>1</sup> American Jewish Yearbook (AJY) v.58 American Jewish Committee.

<sup>2</sup> AJY v.63; AJY v.71

<sup>3</sup> AJY v.78

<sup>4</sup> AJY v.101

<sup>5</sup> AJY v.105

<sup>6</sup> Saad Jawad Qindisi, head of the political bureau of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, as reported in *The Jerusalem Post*: July 13, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> *Time Magazine*: February 27, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> AJY v.102

<sup>9</sup> Roumani, *The Case 2: BGCAC'S Voice* Vol.1, No.1

plight - and that of all other communities threatened by Islamism - does therefore fall within the scope of this blog.)

Live chat replay has been turned off for this video. See also 54:16 / 1:48:45

**Monajat/The Nightingale of Iran: A Persian Selihot Concert – go to 44min**

<b>Best of Point of No Return</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Imperialism, colonialism and oppression in the Middle East (Hen Mazzig)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">What were Arab-Jewish relations really like?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Let's reframe the Israel debate (Lyn Julius)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The myth of Jewish colonialism</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">How coexistence projects can hinder peace</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Why leftists and Arabs ignore Mizrahi rights (Loolwa Khazoom)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rachel Shabi's Mizrahi Post-Zionism: a Critique (Lyn Julius)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Has Hitch heard of Jews from Arab lands?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Publicising Jews 'nakba' can lead to 'sulha'</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Exodus of refugees: an overview</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Anti-Jewish laws and practices</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">That's my house in Egypt you're living in</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Dhimmi denial</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Arab states' original sin</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">How complicit were Arabs with Nazism?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Israel's secret Kabyl allies</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">In search of righteous Arabs</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Post-Zionism and the Sephardi question</a></li> <li>• </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Giving the lie to the big lie</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Arabs without Jews: roots of a tragedy</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Oriental Zionism of Arab-born Jews</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Who is an Arab Jew? By Albert Memmi</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The illusion of Palestinian return</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Discriminatory laws against Iraqi Jews</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Babylon...and on</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Fallacies about Mizrahi Jews and Israeli politics</a></li> </ul>
<b>MUST READ ON NEXT PAGE</b>		



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Guide to the Peace Process: Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries (Israel MFA)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Jewish refugees from Arab Countries: the Case for Rights and Redress (JJAC)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Jewish and Arab refugees:rhetoric and reality by Sidney Zabudoff</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">And the world is lying - the plight of refugees by Ben Dror Yemini</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Why Jews fled Arab Countries by Yaakov Meron</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">A tragedy shrouded in silence: the destruction of the Arab World's Jewry by Adi Schwartz</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Arab and Jewish Refugees: the Contrast (Myths and Facts) by Eli Hertz</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">A different story of displacement and loss by Matti Friedman</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Mizrahi Nation by Matti Friedman</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Why Jews from Arab Countries are central to combating anti-Zionism by David Matas</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Arabism not Zionism caused the Jewish exodus by S. Trigano</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">How Arabs stole Jewish property (By Tani Goldstein)</a></li> <li>• </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Expelled Jews hold deeds for five times Israel's size</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Were Jews from Arab countries all refugees?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Frequently Asked Questions</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Jewish Virtual Library Fact Sheet</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">How much did the Jews lose?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Who are the Mizrahi Jews?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Seven myths about Jews from Arab lands</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Arab League Draft Law regarding Jews</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Congress adopts first ever Jewish refugees bill</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Jewish refugee bill introduced in Knesset</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Knesset to confirm 30 November as Jewish Refugees Memorial Day</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Massacres of Jews by Muslims before 1948</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Who is an Arab Jew? By Albert Memmi</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Exodus of refugees: an overview</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Dhimmi denial</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">All you wanted to know about Muslim antisemitism</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Anti-Jewish laws and practices</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">An Egyptian Jew's story</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Denationalisation of Jews in Egypt</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">My house is your house: Egyptian Jews'rights denied</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Jews of Yemen: countdown to extinction</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">How Syria and Lebanon became emptied of Jews</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The saviour of Syrian Jewry</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">How Morocco's Jews became shadows</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Baghdad once as Jewish as NY</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Timeline to disaster for Jews of Iraq</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Non-Jews threw 1951 Baghdad bomb</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The exchange of populations</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Paradise lost: Iraqi family's story</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Jews are also an Arab question</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">My return to Morocco</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">My right of return - by a Tunisian Jew</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The truth about the Jews of Iran</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">JIMENA Bibliography</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Is it all over for the Jews of Turkey?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Will there be Jews in Palestine?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Jewish ownership in 'Arab' areas</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Sociologist: Mizrahim are not victims, they are dominant</a></li> </ul>
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## DISPLACEMENT OF JEWS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES 1948-2012

For Detail go to

[OVERVIEW – JEWISH EXILES FROM ARAB COUNTRIES](#)

<b>Displacement of Jews from Arab Countries 1948 - today</b>			
	<b>1948</b>	<b>Today</b>	<b>Date Established*</b>
<b>Algeria</b>	<b>140,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1st - 2nd Century CE</b>
<b>Egypt</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2nd Century BCE</b>
<b>Iran</b>	<b>100,000</b>	<b>8,000</b>	<b>6th Century BCE</b>
<b>Iraq</b>	<b>150,000</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6th Century BCE</b>
<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1st Century BCE</b>
<b>Libya</b>	<b>38,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3rd Century BCE</b>
<b>Morocco</b>	<b>265,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1st Century BCE</b>
<b>Syria</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1st Century BCE</b>
<b>Tunisia</b>	<b>105,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1st Century BCE</b>
<b>Yemen</b>	<b>55,000</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3rd Century BCE</b>

\* Justice for Jews from Arab Countries

## THE EXPULSION OF JEWS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES AND IRAN – AN UNTOLD HISTORY

[WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS](#) 2 Feb 2021 *This op-ed was written by WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps member Andrea Mifano, was originally published on the Brazilian Jewish news website [Kadima](#) in Portuguese on 31 December 2020*

Until the 1960s, approximately one million Jews lived in Iran and other Arab countries having arrived in the region more than 2,000 years before. Nowadays, it is estimated that only around 15,000 remain, as the majority of the Jewish population in Muslim lands were forced to flee their homes in the years following the establishment of the State of Israel. This mass expulsion and exodus is part of modern history, but inexplicably, it's neither taught at schools nor remembered within the context of the conflicts in the Middle East.

For over 2,500 years, Jews lived continuously in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region the first Jewish population had already settled there at least 1,000 years before the advent of Islam. Throughout the generations, Jews in the region were often subjected to various forms of discrimination - and in many cases, ranked lower on the status of society than their Muslim compatriots -- but they were nevertheless loyal citizens who contributed significantly to the culture and development of their respective countries.

Despite the positive influence that Jews brought to the places where they lived, more than 850,000 Jews were forced to leave their homes in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Morocco, and several other Arab countries in the 20 years that followed the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. Another major forced migration took place from Iran in 1979–80, following the Iranian Revolution and the collapse of the shah's regime, adding 70,000 more Jewish refugees to this number.

There is ample evidence that this conduct against Jews was orchestrated in tandem as a joint effort of all the involved Arab countries. Among the events preceding the expulsion were: (a) The drafting of a Law by the Political Committee of the Arab League that recommended a coordinated strategy of repressive measures against Jews; (b) strikingly similar legislation and discriminatory decrees, enacted by numerous Arab governments, that violated the fundamental rights and freedoms of Jews resident in Arab countries; (c) statements made by delegates of Arab countries at the U.N. during the debate on the 'Partition Resolution', representing a pattern of ominous threats made against Jews in Arab countries; and (d) newspaper reports from that period.

In 1947, the Political Committee of the Arab League (League of Arab States) drafted a law that was to govern the legal status of Jewish residents in all of its member states. This Draft Law of the Arab League provided that "...all Jews – with the exception of citizens of non-Arab countries – were to be considered members of the Jewish 'minority state of Palestine'; that their bank accounts would be frozen and used to finance resistance to 'Zionist ambitions in Palestine; Jews believed to be active Zionists would be interned as political prisoners and their assets confiscated; only Jews who accept active service in Arab armies or place themselves at the disposal of these armies would be considered 'Arabs.'"

In the international arena, Arab diplomats pretended to ignore the Arab League's collusion in encouraging state-sanctioned discrimination against Jews in all its member states, seeking publicly to attribute blame the Arab "masses" - and even the United Nations itself - for any danger facing the Jews across the region. This covert move was part of the Arab states' attempt to divert attention from the official discriminatory practices of their governments against the Jewish citizens.

In a key address to the Political Committee of the U.N. General Assembly on the morning of November 24, 1947, just five days before that body voted on the partition plan for Palestine, Egyptian delegate Heykal Pasha declared: "The United Nations ... should not lose sight of the fact that the proposed solution might endanger a million Jews living in the Moslem countries. ... If the United Nations decided to partition Palestine they might be responsible for very grave disorders and for the massacre of a large number of Jews.

On 28 November 1947, at the 126th Plenary Meeting of the UN General Assembly, Iraq's Foreign Minister Fadil Jamali warned further: "Not only the uprising of the Arabs in Palestine is to be expected but the masses in the Arab world cannot be restrained. The Arab-Jewish relationship in the Arab world will greatly deteriorate."

On 16 May 1948, the New York Times ran an article headlined, "Jews in Grave Danger in all Muslim Lands: Nine Hundred Thousand in Africa and Asia face wrath of their foes."

As a Jew of Egyptian descent, this was the story of my family. My parents and grandparents were forced to flee Egypt in 1957, leaving everything they possessed behind, to start a new life in a country they didn't know – Brazil – with a language they didn't speak - Portuguese. All of their assets were plundered and as of today, nothing that remained of their lives in Cairo has ever been recovered. Still, from this expulsion emerged a new generation of Brazilian Jewish families that were raised in São Paulo and are very grateful to have been adopted by this diverse and welcoming country.

In spite of this history, the events of the past few months have brought about a new horizon of hope regarding this complicated relationship between Jews and Arab countries. With the recent news regarding the peace agreements between the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan\* with the State of Israel, - known as the Abraham Accords - a new era of reconciliation appears to be rising for Muslims and Jews. May this new era herald real peace between Arab countries and Israel. But at the same time, it is imperative that the preservation of the story of the Jews from Arab lands not be forgotten, and that the citizens of those countries learn what happened in the lands where they live. In order to avoid history repeating itself, it is of utmost importance that we strive to learn and understand the past.

\*Since this article was originally published the Kingdom of Morocco also joined the Abraham Accords.

*The WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps is the flagship program of the World Jewish Congress, under the vision and leadership of WJC President Ronald S. Lauder. This program empowers the new generations of outstanding Jewish leaders. A selective worldwide network of over 300 Jewish young professionals from 50 countries receiving opportunities, experience, and skills to impact Jewish interests through diplomacy and public policy.*

## TV SERIES ON JEWS OF IRAQ SPOTLIGHTS CAUSES OF EXODUS

Israel has tended to portray the immigration of Jews from Arab Countries  
as an ‘ascent’ to the Promised Land.

It has not emphasised the push factors which caused the Jews to leave – until recently.

A new four-part documentary series by David Kahtan was aired

called ‘*The long journey home*’ ([catch-up link here](#))

which explained the life Jews fled in Iraq. *Ruvik* publishes a glossary of terms:

[bataween](#) 16 January 2025



*Souk Daniel in Baghdad: the market was partly owned by a Jewish family*

In recent weeks, the Israeli TV channel Kan presented a masterly four-part documentary series about the history of this immigration, with an emphasis on what happened in Iraq and caused the Jews to leave, most of them with only the clothes on their backs. The series is called: “The Long Journey Home” and can be viewed on ‘Kan Box’. The creator of the series is David Kahtan, a member of a family that emigrated from Iraq to England and was born there, and immigrated to Israel eight years ago. Ron Goldman, one of the creators of “Children of the Sun,” co-wrote and edited the series.

From “The Long Journey Home,” you can also learn about the life of Iraqi Jewry, and about key terms that accompanied the community, which is the oldest in the Jewish community, and its traces lead to the sixth century BC in Babylon. Below is a brief historical dictionary, a culinary dictionary, and the full and accurate story about the birth of the popular dish *sabih*.

**A-Taskit.** The law established by the Iraqi government in 1950 that allowed Jews to leave Iraq on the condition that they renounce their citizenship without the possibility of returning to it. A year was allocated for this.

**The Near East Airlines.** A company established specifically for the purpose of bringing Jews to Israel.

**The Property Confiscation Law.** After the enactment of A-Tashit, another law was enacted that confiscated in the dead of night all the assets and funds of Jews who announced their intention to leave.

**Lajeon.** Palestinian refugees who arrived in Iraq, following the population exchange plan devised by Nuri Said between Jews who would immigrate to Israel and refugees who would arrive in Iraq. A few thousand arrived.

**Operation Michelberg.** An airlift operation at the beginning of the waves of immigration, in the summer of 1947. The operation took place in coordination with Zionist organizations in Iraq, and two sorties were carried out in which about a hundred immigrants were brought from Iraq.

**The Office of Frozen Jewish Assets.** An office established following the Confiscation Law.

**Farhud.** Two days of riots in June 1941, in which murders, rapes, and looting of Jews occurred in the style of Kristallnacht.

The series returns to places and sites in Iraq, the object of longing, nostalgia, and difficult memories of the interviewees.

**El Kifel.** The tomb of the prophet Ezekiel. Also Al-Uzair, the tomb of Ezra the scribe, the tomb of Daniel in Kirkuk and of the High Priest Joshua in Baghdad.

**Bab a Sheikh.** A nationalist Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad, where the Farhud began.

**Meir Tweg Synagogue.** The main synagogue that continued to exist even after most of the Jews left.

**Beit Zalka Yeshiva.** The main yeshiva of the Jews of Baghdad, which existed since the 19th century.

**Nadi.** A club. The Jews spent a lot of time in clubs, the most popular of which was Nadi Laura Kadoorie.

**Souk Daniel.** A central market in Baghdad, in which Jews had a significant partial ownership.

[Read article in full \(Hebrew\)](#)

## JEWISH REFUGEES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

### [STANDWITH US TV](#)

Click on the link above to view each of the links below.



## **ISRAEL SAID SET TO SEEK \$250B COMPENSATION FOR JEWS FORCED OUT OF ARAB COUNTRIES**

**After 18 months of research, first claims being finalized for reported \$35b from Tunisia, \$15b from Libya, for assets Jews left behind when kicked out after establishment of Israel**

[Tol Staff](#) 5 January 2019

Israel is preparing to demand compensation totaling a reported \$250 billion from seven Arab countries and Iran for property and assets left behind by Jews who were forced to flee those countries following the establishment of the State of Israel.

“The time has come to correct the historic injustice of the pogroms (against Jews) in seven Arab countries and Iran, and to restore, to hundreds of thousands of Jews who lost their property, what is rightfully theirs,” Israel’s Minister for Social Equality, Gila Gamliel, who is coordinating the Israeli government’s handling of the issue, said Saturday.

According to figures cited Saturday night by Israel’s Hadashot TV news, compensation demands are now being finalized with regards to the first two of the eight countries involved, with Israel set to seek \$35 billion dollars in compensation for lost Jewish assets from Tunisia, and \$15 billion dollars from Libya.

In total, the TV report said Israel will seek over \$250 billion from those two countries plus Morocco, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen and Iran.



Yemenite Jews walking to Aden,  
the site of a reception camp,  
ahead of their emigration to Israel,  
1949.

(Kluger Zoltan/  
Israeli National Photo Archive/public  
domain)

Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC), an international umbrella group of Jewish community organizations, has estimated that some 856,000 Jews from 10 Arab countries — the other two were Algeria and Lebanon — fled or were expelled in 1948 and after, while violent Arab riots left many Jews dead or injured.



For the past 18 months, utilizing the services of an international accountancy firm, the Israeli government has quietly been researching the value of property and assets that these Jews were forced to leave behind, the TV report said.

It is now moving toward finalizing claims as the Trump Administration prepares for the possible unveiling of its much-anticipated Israeli-Palestinian peace proposal. A 2010 Israeli law provides that any peace deal must provide for compensation for assets of Jewish communities and individual Jews forced out of Arab countries and Iran.



Yemeni Jews aboard a plane  
to Israel  
in operation Magic Carpet, 1949  
(photo credit:  
Wikimedia Commons)

“One cannot talk about the Middle East without taking into consideration the rights of the Jews who were forced to leave their thriving communities amid violence,” said Gamliel, a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party.

The Palestinian Authority has sought over \$100 billion in compensation from Israel for assets left behind by Arab residents of what is today Israel who fled or were forced to leave at the time of the establishment of the Jewish state, and presented documentation to that effect to the United States a decade ago, the TV report said.

The Palestinians have also always demanded a “right of return” to what is today’s Israel for the few tens of thousands of surviving refugees and for their millions of descendants. This demand would spell the end of Israel as a Jewish state and has been dismissed by successive Israeli governments. Israel argues that Palestinian refugees would become citizens of a Palestinian state under a permanent peace accord, just as Jewish refugees from Arab lands became citizens of Israel. It also argues that by extending refugee status to Palestinian descendants, the relevant UN agencies artificially inflate the issue, complicating peace efforts. The latter view is shared by the Trump administration, which last year announced it was halting funding for the UN’s Palestinian refugee agency, UNRWA.

Israel has never formally demanded compensation for Jews forced out of Arab lands and Iran, and although many of those Jews arrived in Israel with next to nothing, they did not seek formal refugee status from the international community.

At the time, the newly established Jewish state was struggling to attract migration from the world's Jews and to project its legitimacy as a sovereign state, able to care for its own people. Its first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, would not have wanted Jews returning to their "historic homeland" classed as refugees, according to Meir Kahlon, chairman of the Central Organization for Jews from Arab Countries and Iran.

Monies obtained from the eight countries would not be allocated to individual families, the TV report said, but would rather be distributed by the state via a special fund. Gamliel is coordinating the process, together with Israel's National Security Council, which works out of the Prime Minister's Office.

In 2014, Israel passed a law making each November 30 a day commemorating the exit and deportation of Jews from Arab and Iranian lands, which involves educational programming and diplomatic events aimed to increase international awareness of the issue of Jewish refugees from Arab lands and Iran, and of their right to compensation.

That year, at the first such events, [Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin issued calls for financial reparations](#).

"It is not for nothing that this day is marked on the day after the 29th of November," Netanyahu said on November 30, 2014, in reference to the anniversary of the UN adoption of the Palestine partition plan in 1947. "The Arab countries, which never accepted the UN declaration on the establishment of a Jewish state, compelled the Jews living in their territories to leave their homes while leaving their assets behind... We have acted – and will continue to act – so that they and their claims are not forgotten."

**Read: [The expulsion that backfired: When Iraq kicked out its Jews](#)**

In his address at that first ceremony, Rivlin appealed for greater Sephardic representation in Israeli society, as well as for compensation for their suffering. He acknowledged that the troubles of Middle Eastern Jews were not mitigated upon their arrival in Israel, where European Jews were firmly entrenched in power.

"Their voices were muted, but the words were in their mouths all along, even if they were said in Hebrew with a Persian or Arabic accent, which in Israel were thought of as enemy languages and viewed as a source of shame," he said.

"The voice of Jews from Arab countries and Iran must be heard within the education system, in the media, in the arts, and in the country's official institutions, as it needs to be heard in the international arena as well, in order to mend the historical injustice, and to ensure financial reparations," Rivlin said.

Kahlon said that "nearly 800,000 came here (in the years after the establishment of the state) and the rest (around 56,000) went to the United States, France, Italy and elsewhere."

Kahlon himself came to Israel as a child from Libya and spent his first years in the Jewish state in one of the tent camps set up to shelter the flood of newcomers.

In March 2014, Canada formally recognized the refugee status of the Jewish emigres who fled or were expelled from Arab countries after Israel's founding.

Some of the migrants to Israel say privately that the issue is being promoted to give Israel a bargaining card in negotiations with the Palestinians, to set against Palestinian compensation claims for property and assets left behind in what is now Israel.

## HOW ARABS STOLE JEWISH PROPERTY

[POINT OF NO RETURN](#) [bataween](#) 16 May 2011 5 Comments

### *Transit camp in Israel for Jewish refugees (Photo GPO)*

**Against the backdrop of Palestinian ‘Nakba Day’, Tani Goldstein, writing in *Ynet News* takes an unusually detailed look at the wholesale robbery suffered by Jews from Arab countries:**

The Jews’ situation began deteriorating with the Arab national awakening, before the State of Israel’s establishment. “From a British mandate, Iraq turned into an autonomic state in 1932 and immediately began disinheriting the Jews,” says (Zvi) Yehuda (of the Babylonian Heritage Centre).

“They weren’t accepted to schools and universities and were dismissed from jobs with all sorts of claims.”

“The Arab nationalists and the militant Muslims. The establishment was not happy with the situation but was dragged into it, and most of the population was ambivalent: In day-to-day life they had friendly relations with the Jews, but when a Jew was appointed as a judge or government worker it bothered them, because according to their perception, a Jew is not supposed to control Muslims.”

Upon the establishment of the State of Israel, the Arab world was flooded with violent riots, massacres and plunder against the Jews. Some of the Arab governments defended the Jews, while others – mainly in Iraq and Yemen – inflamed the riots and looting.”The Iraqi government confiscated property, as if to compensate the Palestinian refugees,” says Yehuda. “Government workers would arrive at a business and ask the Jewish owner how much he would like to ‘donate’ to the refugees. If he wouldn’t – that was the end of the business. Most of the property reached people with ties to the government. In 1951, the Iraqi government quietly agreed to let Jews immigrate to Israel, and almost all of them did. At the same time, it enacted a law stating that the entire Jewish property – houses, factories, goods, jewelry and bank accounts – would be nationalized.

Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser enacted similar laws after the Lavon Affair and the Sinai war. Libya’s Jews were expelled and their property was nationalized in the 1960s. “(Libya leader Muammar) Gaddafi promised to return everything within 30 years,” notes Hajaj, “but at the moment he’s busy with other stuff.” Syria, Tunisia and Algeria did not nationalize property, but the Jews fled those countries when they gained independence (1946, 1959 and 1962, respectively), and the Muslims looted the remaining property. That is what happened to the property of Yemeni Jews who made aliyah in Operation Magic Carpet as well.

“Some of Morocco’s Jews ‘got off easy’: They immigrated with the money and property and ‘only’ left the homes,” says Hajaj. “Jews from other countries immigrated with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. My father was one of Libya’s biggest billionaires and immigrated with a suitcase weighing 20 kilos.”

Researchers and organizations are at odds over the scope of the lost property.

Economist Sidney Zabudoff, a former American government worker, estimated that the property totalled some \$700 million in the 1950s and reached some \$6 billion in 2007. The Pensioner Affairs Ministry puts the sum at about 2 billion pounds. One organization says \$30 billion and another says \$100 billion in Iraq alone.

Will the Jews be compensated for the looted property? And can it, and should it, be deducted from the property Israel took from the Palestinians?

The scope of the Palestinian property is also a matter of controversy. Economist John Barncastle evaluated the Palestinian property the 1950s at some \$450 million. Zabludoff said it stood at some \$4 billion today. The Camp David peace talks discussed \$20 billion, while Arab organizations spoke of some \$200 billion. The disagreement stems from the re-evaluation method.

The number of people who escaped on both sides was similar: About 730,000 Palestinians and about 700,000 Jews (excluding those who immigrated to France). Most of them lived in their own homes. The Jews, in general, were much richer and possessed many assets in addition to the houses. But real estate is the main thing, and it is customary to add to the original value the rising prices in the places the refugees lived in. Israeli housing prices, as we all know, have gone up much more.

Israel earned a lot from the Jewish property looted in Europe and used the funds to help Holocaust survivors, although insufficiently. But until recently, the State ignored the Jewish property in Arab countries. "Until recently, there was a lot of fear," says Yehuda. "During the peace talks, Egypt's Jews demanded that (then-Israeli Prime Minister) Menachem Begin include a clause requiring compensation, but he wouldn't listen. I think the government was afraid that it would have to pay the Palestinians more.

"They changed their mind when (former US President) Bill Clinton stated that an international fund would be established to compensate both sides. Since then, they are hoping that the arrangement won't be at their expense."

The property in Israel is worth more thanks to the Jews' knowledge and capital. Why should it increase the compensation to the Palestinians?

"These things are not determined according to logic. Here's something even more absurd: Rich Jews from Iraq bought lands in Israel in the 1930s and 1940s before immigrating. Whoever bought lands within the Green Line received them. But some bought lands in Judea and Samaria, and the Jordanians nationalized them.

After the Six-Day War, the Jews demanded their lands back and the military government said, 'We are acting in accordance to Jordanian law, and therefore they aren't yours.' But settlements of other Jews were established on those same lands." Americans demanded compensation first: The United States recognized Jews' right for compensation from Arab countries in the 1990s. Former Justice Minister Meir Sheerit stated in 2006 that Israel would demand compensation. In 2010, the Knesset enacted the "law for compensating Jewish refugees from Arab countries," which obligates the government to demand compensation as part of any future peace negotiations.

How will Arab countries respond to the Israeli demand? In the past, London-based Arabic-language newspaper *al-Sharq al-Awsat* quoted an Iraqi lawyer named Hasem Muhammad Ali as saying he supports compensation.

But the Iraqi government, according to the newspaper, is against it, claiming that the Jews left out of their own free will and could get their property back if they returned.

The public discourse in Israel focuses on the distress of Oriental Jews. Most books and articles, speeches and protests dealt with the discrimination and injustice they suffered in Israel by the Ashkenazi establishment, and only few dealt with the robbery they suffered in their homelands.

“I think our situation would have been better had we remained in Libya,” says Hajaj. “But I don’t know if the only one to blame is Israel, which took care of our livelihood and provided education, or the countries which robbed us and sent us away stark naked.”

[Read article in full](#)

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE ARAB CITIZENS OF ISRAEL

**Arabs represent one-fifth of Israel’s population. Systemic discrimination, outbreaks of communal violence and the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict continue to strain their ties with Israel’s Jewish majority.**

**COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS** Kali Robinson Oct 26 2023

### Summary

- Arabs comprise just over 20 percent of Israel’s population. The vast majority are citizens, while those in Jerusalem, which Israel claims as its capital, are considered “permanent residents.”
- Arab citizens have the same legal rights as Jewish Israelis, but they tend to live in poorer cities, have less formal education, and face other challenges that some experts attribute to structural discrimination.
- Arab political parties have long struggled to gain representation in Israel’s government, and many Arabs have expressed alarm at the leadership of right-wing Jewish politicians, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

### INTRODUCTION

Israel was founded as a homeland for the Jewish people seventy-five years ago, but a significant portion of its population has always been Arab. Today, Arab citizens of Israel—distinct from Arabs living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip—remain the country’s largest minority group.

They have the same legal rights as Jewish citizens, but many continue to face discrimination and socioeconomic disadvantages. Meanwhile, the two communities are divided by the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as religious and cultural differences. A flare-up of intercommunal violence in 2021 highlighted that the simmering tensions can sometimes boil over.

#### WHO ARE THE ARAB CITIZENS OF ISRAEL?

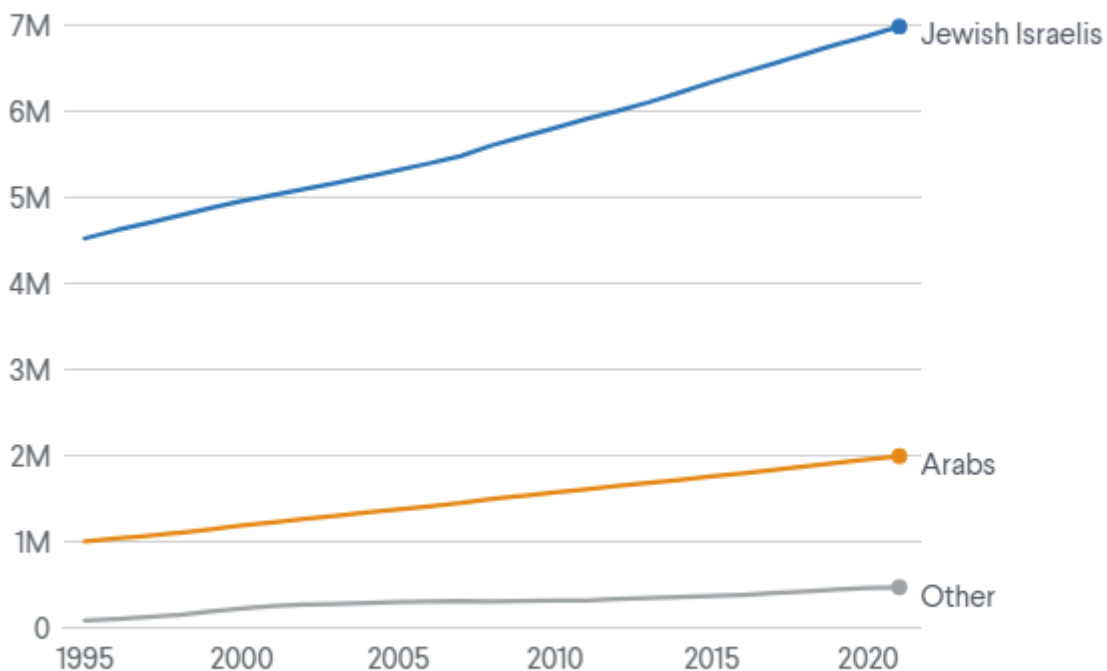
The overwhelming majority are the remnants and descendants of the Arabs who stayed within the borders Israel declared after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The state of Israel was created out of the British Mandate of Palestine, then home to about [1.2 million Arabs](#). After more than 700,000 of them were expelled or departed in what Arabs call the *nakba*, or catastrophe, about [150,000 remained](#) [PDF] within the portion of mandatory Palestine that would become the state of Israel, and they automatically became citizens,

forming about half of Israel's population.\* Unlike Jewish citizens, Arab citizens of Israel were subjected to [military rule](#) until 1966.

A year later, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and offered the hundreds of thousands of Arabs living there Israeli citizenship, but most of them declined. The [United Nations considers](#) [PDF] the land occupied Palestinian territory. Arabs who live there today are counted in both Israeli and Palestinian censuses, and few are Israeli citizens.

Today, about 21 percent of Israel's population is Arab, totaling some two million people. All are citizens of Israel except the few hundred thousand in East Jerusalem, who are permanent residents, a designation that affords them fewer rights. The majority of Arab citizens are Sunni Muslims, though there are many Christians and [also Druze](#), who more often embrace Israeli identity. They share history, culture, and family ties with Palestinian Arabs living in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, as well as Palestinian diaspora populations in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and other countries.

### Jewish Israelis Make Up Larger Portion of Israel's Population



Source: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics.

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Israeli government documents and media refer to Arab citizens as “Arabs” or “Israeli Arabs,” and some Arabs use those terms themselves. Global news media usually use similar phrasing to distinguish these residents from Arabs who live in the Palestinian territories. Most members of this community self-identify as [“Palestinian citizens of Israel,”](#) and some identify just as “Palestinian” to indicate their rejection of Israeli identity. Others prefer to be referred to as Arab citizens of Israel for various reasons. The phrase is used in this Backgrounder, as it represents the current political and legal reality.



## WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

Most Israeli cities have either majority Jewish or Arab populations. Towns in the Galilee, in the north; in the so-called Little Triangle, along the 1949 Armistice Line that delineated Israel's border with the West Bank; and in the southern Negev region have mostly Arab populations. About one-tenth of Arabs live in the seven "mixed" cities where populations are more intermingled, such as Haifa and Lod (the Hebrew name for the city Arabs call al-Lyd). Still, even these areas often have mostly Jewish or Arab neighborhoods. This geographic separation persists for multiple reasons, including the legacy of restrictions imposed at the time of Israel's founding, which outlined where non-Jewish Israelis could live and work; a split education system in which most schools teach according to either Arab or Jewish language and cultural norms; and prevailing prejudices against integrating neighborhoods.

Today, nearly all Arab towns and cities have lower standards of living than those that are predominantly Jewish. This separation and socioeconomic disparity fuel intense debate. Some analysts argue that Israel has effectively established an unjust, segregated society. "Technically you don't have redlining, technically you don't have formal, Jim Crow-type segregation. In practice you do," says Palestinian American historian Rashid Khalidi. Conversely, Arik Rudnitzky of the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) tells CFR that terms such as "segregation," "de facto separation," or the more conservative "voluntary separation" reflect individual worldviews, but that there is no expert consensus on how to characterize this separation. Experts such as Nachum Blass of the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel say many in both communities prefer separation, though Arabs are increasingly [moving to Jewish areas](#) to improve their standards of living, as well as to work and attend school.

Where Jewish and Arab Citizens of Israel Live

Populations of census regions as defined by the Israeli government, 2020

### Where Jewish and Arab Citizens of Israel Live

Populations of census regions as defined by the Israeli government, 2020

(Editors Note go to [Council on Foreign Relations](#) for a map)

## DO THEY HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES AS OTHER ISRAELIS?

Israel's declaration of independence recognizes the equality of all the country's residents, Arabs included, but equality is not explicitly enshrined in [Israel's Basic Laws](#), the closest thing it has to a constitution. Some rights groups argue that dozens of laws [indirectly or directly discriminate](#) against Arabs.

Israel's establishment as an explicitly Jewish state is a primary point of contention, with many of the state's critics arguing that this by nature casts non-Jews as second-class citizens with fewer rights. The 1950 [Law of Return](#), for example, grants all Jews, as well as their children, grandchildren, and spouses, the right to move to Israel and automatically gain citizenship. Non-Jews do not have these rights. Palestinians and their descendants have no legal right to return to the lands their families held before being displaced in 1948 or 1967.

Another major difference is that, unlike the vast majority of Jewish Israelis, Arab citizens do not have to serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the country's military. They can still enlist, and some do,

especially Druze and Circassians, but some are stigmatized in their communities as a result. Yet, not enlisting can significantly disadvantage them both socially and economically. For instance, many Israelis make important and lasting personal connections with their fellow citizens through the IDF, and they also receive many financial benefits, such as education assistance and discounted permits for building homes and owning land.

Statistics [from IDI show](#) that Arab citizens of Israel continue to face structural disadvantages. For example, poorly funded schools in their localities contribute to their attaining lower levels of education and their reduced employment prospects and earning power compared to Israeli Jews. [More than half](#) of the country's Arab families were considered poor in 2020, compared to 40 percent of Jewish families.

Socioeconomic disparities between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens are [less pronounced](#) in mixed cities, though a government audit in July 2022 [found Arabs had less access](#) to municipal services in those cities.

### Disparities Between Israel's Jewish and Arab Households in 2019

	Jewish Israelis	Arab citizens of Israel
Median monthly income (U.S. dollars)	\$4,652	\$3,048
Average years of schooling of economic head of household (years)	14.4	11.7
Average age of economic head of household	50	42
Average number of people per household	3.1	4.4

Source: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics.

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Arab citizens' concerns about inequality mounted after Israel passed its [nation-state law](#) in 2018. Among other provisions, the law removed Arabic as an official language but gave it a "special status," declared Israel the nation-state of the Jewish people, and said the Jewish people have a unique "right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel." The language left many Arabs feeling that their rights as citizens were being undermined.

To address disparities in the so-called Arab sector, in 2021, the government approved a \$9 billion, five-year plan to boost employment, improve health-care services and housing, and develop infrastructure, among other goals. It followed a similar initiative by the previous prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who [designated more funding](#) for the sector than any of his predecessors, even as he frequently incited anger toward the Arab community.

### WHAT ABOUT PALESTINIANS IN EAST JERUSALEM?

Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its capital and includes all of the city's residents in its censuses, though this territorial claim is not recognized by the United Nations and is disputed by Palestinians, who view East Jerusalem as the future capital of their independent state.

A preponderance of the Arabs living in East Jerusalem identify as Palestinian and [are not citizens](#) of any country. Most Arabs there declined Israel's offer of citizenship after the 1967 Six Day War and were instead given permanent resident status. Today, about [362,000 Palestinians](#) in East Jerusalem hold this status. Permanent residency grants them many of the same rights as Israeli citizenship, including the ability to live, work, and travel freely within Israel, as well as access to health insurance and social services. However, they do not get Israeli passports (many have Jordanian ones) and cannot vote in national elections. They can lose their residency status and be deported if the Israeli government determines that East Jerusalem is no longer their primary residence or that they or a family member engage in anti-Israel or terrorist activities. Likewise, as of February 2023, Israel can [deport and revoke the citizenship](#) of Arabs who are convicted of terrorism and receive financial aid from the Palestinian Authority. Since 1967, more than [fourteen thousand East Jerusalem Palestinians](#) have had their residency revoked, according to a compilation of data from several government agencies by Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem. Some international and Palestinian rights groups argue that the revocations count as forcible transfers, which are illegal under international law.

### **HOW ARE ISRAEL'S ARABS REPRESENTED IN POLITICS?**

Arab citizens of Israel have historically [distrusted Israeli elections](#), a sentiment that has limited their voter turnout and resulted in their never having held more than fifteen seats in the 120-seat Knesset, Israel's parliament. At first, their main representation in the Knesset came from the Arab-Jewish Communist Party. Independent Arab parties failed to gain traction for decades and were often banned or shut down for refusing to recognize the state of Israel. Although there are still efforts to [limit their political power](#), such as right-wing lawmakers' attempts to ban Arab parties from elections, Arab parties currently hold ten seats in the Knesset.

Arabs have sat on the Supreme Court and worked in the [foreign service](#), with a handful serving as ambassadors since 1995. Many have served as mayors, judges in lower courts, and in civil service positions.

Historically, Arab citizens have had little influence on Israeli policy. Their grievances about problems in their municipalities, such as rampant crime and a lack of building permits, have often been ignored, and until mid-2021, their independent parties were never welcomed into a governing coalition. This changed when the United Arab List (UAL), also known as Ra'am, joined an ideologically diverse mix of parties that unseated Prime Minister Netanyahu in a narrow vote. Its inclusion highlighted the growing power of the Arab vote, as both Netanyahu and his opponents had courted the UAL and its supporters despite its Islamist ideology. However, no ministers in the new government were from the UAL, a concession the party reportedly made in exchange for [several reforms](#) benefiting Arab communities.

For several years, the main Arab parties—Balad, Hadash, Ta'al, and the UAL—united to form a coalition called the Joint List. But the UAL split off in 2021 and Balad the following year, just before the general elections.

In late 2022, Netanyahu returned to power and formed what many observers characterized as the most right-wing government in Israel's history, to the alarm of many of the country's Arabs. Only Hadash-Ta'al and the UAL won enough votes in that year's election to enter the Knesset, with five seats each. Netanyahu

brought several ultraconservative, formerly fringe politicians into his cabinet, including new National Security Minister [Itamar Ben Gvir](#), who was previously convicted of inciting racism against Arabs and supporting a terrorist organization. However, Netanyahu has sought to downplay concerns that his government will infringe on minorities' rights.

### WHAT IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH JEWISH ISRAELIS?

Despite a long history of mistrust rooted in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israel's Arab and Jewish citizens work and live together peaceably in many areas. For example, Israel's health-care system has [long employed](#) Arab and Jewish medical professionals side by side. Their cooperation was especially visible when the country confronted the COVID-19 pandemic, as health workers treated patients from each other's communities.

Some far-right Jewish leaders have gained influence in recent years and tried to portray Arab citizens of Israel as [a security threat](#), linking them to extremist groups, such as [Hamas](#), that reject Israel's legitimacy. Tensions boiled over into a surge of sectarian violence in 2021 that included [efforts to evict](#) Palestinians in East Jerusalem, police raids at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the outbreak of a days-long war between Hamas and Israel, and violent mob attacks against both communities. The discord quickly reverberated across Israel, particularly [in Lod](#) and other mixed cities.

Three months later, an [IDI survey](#) [PDF] of Arab and Jewish citizens found that the damage to intercommunal relations was "less significant than might be expected." Still, only about half of Jewish Israelis thought it was better for the two communities to live together, compared to around 80 percent of Arab citizens, and the underlying tensions that sparked the 2021 conflict remain unresolved.

"Clearly the combination of [events in Jerusalem](#) stirred [Arab citizens of Israel] to reassert who they are against the power of a state and society whose very existence denies them their reality," [CFR Middle East expert Steven A. Cook wrote](#) amid the upheaval. "On the other side, of course, are Israelis who are deeply committed to the historical connection between Jews and the land...[Jewish] Israelis will neither give up nor apologize for who they are, which is how [surges in Arab-Jewish violence] become possible."

### Recommended Resources

The Israel Democracy Institute [assesses the damage](#) [PDF] from the 2021 outbreak in violence between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens.

On *The President's Inbox* podcast, CFR's Steven A. Cook and James M. Lindsay discuss the causes of the 2021 [turmoil in Jerusalem](#).

This Backgrounder explains [U.S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#).

The Jewish Telegraph Agency's Ben Sales looks at the de facto [segregation of Jews and Arabs](#) in Israel. In this article for Bloomberg, the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington's Hussein Ibish argues that [marginalizing Arab citizens of Israel](#) will push them toward the Palestinian national movement.

## ARAB LEAGUE BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL

### EDITOR'S NOTE

*Jews living in Palestine have faced boycotts since 1922. This was led by the antisemitic [Grand Mufti of Jerusalem](#) who was expelled by the British in 1937 and spent much of WW2 in Germany where he made an anti-Jewish pact with Hitler. One of the Great 'ifs' of history is if the Arabs and Jews had cooperated. His opposition was formalised by the Arab League in 1945. Its effectiveness has varied over time. The Boycott, Diversion and Sanctions [BDS](#) is the boycott organisation today.)*

Go to [BOYCOTTING ISRAEL](#) for full article

<a href="#">Boycotts of Jewish-owned businesses in Mandatory Palestine</a>	<a href="#">Arab League Boycott of Israel (1)</a>	<a href="#">Arab League Boycott of Israel (2)</a>	<a href="#">How Much Does BDS Threaten Israel's Economy?</a>	<a href="#">Israel Okays \$72 Million anti-BDS Project</a>
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## EAST JERUSALEM

[WIKIPEDIA](#)



East Jerusalem ([Arabic](#): القدس الشرقية, *al-Quds ash-Sharqiya*; [Hebrew](#): מזרח ירושלים, *Mizrah Yerushalayim*) is the portion of [Jerusalem](#) that was [held by Jordan](#) after the [1948 Arab–Israeli War](#), as opposed to [West Jerusalem](#), which was held by [Israel](#).<sup>[a]</sup> Under [international law](#), East Jerusalem is considered part of the [West Bank](#), and [Palestinian territories](#), and under illegal occupation by Israel.<sup>[2][3][4]</sup> Many states recognize East Jerusalem as the capital of the [State of Palestine](#) (such as Brazil,<sup>[5]</sup> China,<sup>[6]</sup> Russia,<sup>[7]</sup> and all 57 members of the [Organisation of Islamic Cooperation](#)),<sup>[8]</sup> whereas other states (such as Australia, France and others) assert that East Jerusalem "will be the capital of Palestine",<sup>[9][10]</sup> while referring to it as "an [occupied territory](#)".<sup>[11]</sup> In 2020, East Jerusalem had a population of 595,000 inhabitants, of which 361,700 (61%) were [Palestinian Arabs](#) and 234,000 (39%) Jewish [settlers](#).<sup>[12][13]</sup> [Israeli settlements](#) in East Jerusalem are illegal under [international law](#) and in the eyes of the [international community](#).<sup>[14][15]</sup>

Jerusalem was envisaged as a [separate, international city](#) under the 1947 [UN partition plan](#). It was, however, divided by the 1948 war that followed [Israel's declaration of independence](#). As a result of the [1949 Armistice Agreements](#), the city's western half came under Israeli control, while its eastern half, containing the famed [Old City](#), fell under Jordanian control.<sup>[16][b]</sup> Israel occupied East Jerusalem during the 1967 [Six-Day War](#); since then, the entire city has been under Israeli control. The 1980 [Jerusalem Law](#) declared unified Jerusalem the capital of Israel,<sup>[18]</sup> formalizing the [effective annexation of East Jerusalem](#). [Palestinians](#) and many in the international community consider East Jerusalem to be the future capital of the [State of Palestine](#). The [status of Jerusalem](#) has been described as "one of the most intractable issues in the [Israeli–Palestinian conflict](#)", with conflicting claims to [sovereignty](#) over the city or parts of it, and access to its holy sites.<sup>[19]</sup>

Israeli and Palestinian definitions of East Jerusalem differ.<sup>[6]</sup> Following the 1967 Six-Day War, Jerusalem's municipal boundaries were extended totaling an area three times the size of pre-war West Jerusalem. This includes several West Bank villages to the north, east and south of the Old City that are now considered neighborhoods of the city, as well as [eight suburban neighborhoods](#) that were built since then. The international community considers these neighborhoods [illegal settlements](#), but the Israeli government disputes this. The Israeli position is based on the extended municipal boundaries, while the Palestinian position is based on the 1949 Agreements.

East Jerusalem includes the Old City, which is home to many sites of seminal [religious importance](#) for the three major [Abrahamic religions](#)—[Judaism](#), [Christianity](#), and [Islam](#), including the [Temple Mount](#) / [Al-Aqsa](#), the [Western Wall](#), the [Dome of the Rock](#) and the [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#). Arab residents of East Jerusalem are increasingly becoming integrated into Israeli society, in terms of education, citizenship, national service and other aspects.<sup>[21][needs update][22][better source needed]</sup>

## ETYMOLOGY

On 27 June 1967, Israel expanded the municipal boundaries of [West Jerusalem](#) so as to include approximately 70 km<sup>2</sup> (27.0 sq mi) of West Bank territory today referred to as *East Jerusalem*, which included *Jordanian East Jerusalem* ( 6 km<sup>2</sup> (2.3 sq mi) ) and 28 villages and areas of the [Bethlehem](#) and [Beit Jala](#) municipalities 64 km<sup>2</sup> (25 sq mi).<sup>[23][24][25]</sup>

*East Jerusalem* is the familiar term in English. Arabs largely use the term *Arab Jerusalem* for this area in official English-language documents, emphasizing the predominance of the Arabic-speaking Palestinian population while Israelis call the area *East Jerusalem* because of its geographic location in the east of the expanded Jerusalem.<sup>[26]</sup>

## FTER 1948

### PARTITION INTO WEST (ISRAEL) AND EAST (JORDAN)

- 1947–1948: [1947–1948 civil war in Mandatory Palestine](#).
- 1948: [1948 Arab–Israeli War](#).
- 6 January: [Semiramis Hotel bombing](#).
- 9 April: [Deir Yassin massacre](#).
- 13 May: [Hadassah medical convoy massacre](#).
- 14 May: The term of the British Mandate ends and the British forces leave the city.<sup>[88]</sup>

- 14 May: [The State of Israel is established at 4 pm.](#)
- 22 May: American Consul General [Thomas C. Wasson](#) is killed on Wauchope Street by an unknown assassin.
- 27 May: The [Arab Legion](#) destroys the [Hurva Synagogue](#).
- 28 May: The Jewish Quarter of the Old City falls to Arab Legion under British officer [Glubb Pasha](#); synagogues are destroyed and Jews evacuated. [Mordechai Weingarten](#) discusses surrender terms with [Abdullah el Tell](#).
- 26 July: [West Jerusalem](#) is proclaimed territory of Israel.
- 17 September: [Folke Bernadotte](#), the United Nations' mediator in Palestine and the first official mediator in the UN's history, is killed by [Lehi](#) assassins.
- 1949: Jerusalem is proclaimed the capital of Israel. The [Knesset](#) moves to Jerusalem from [Tel Aviv](#). [Jordan](#) prevents access to the [Western Wall](#) and [Mount Scopus](#), in violation of the [1949 Armistice Agreements](#).
- 1950: [East Jerusalem](#) is [annexed by Jordan](#) along with the [West Bank](#).
- 1951: King [Abdullah I of Jordan](#) is assassinated by Palestinian extremists on the [Temple Mount](#).
- 1953: Establishment of [Yad Vashem](#).
- 1955-1965: the Dome of the Rock undergoes restoration, going from blackened lead to [gold-plated](#)
- 1964: [Pope Paul VI](#) visits [Israel](#), becoming the first pope in one thousand years to visit the [Holy Land](#), but performs a ceremony at [Mount Zion](#) without visiting the [Old City of Jerusalem](#). His meeting with [Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople](#) led to the rescinding of the [excommunications](#) of the 1054 [Great Schism](#).
- 1966: Inauguration of new Knesset Building. [Israel Museum](#) and [Shrine of the Book](#) are established.

### REUNIFICATION AFTER 1967



The [Temple Mount](#) as it appears today. The [Western Wall](#) is in the foreground with the [Dome of the Rock](#) in the background

- 1967 5–11 June: The [Six-Day War](#). Israel captures the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights.
- 6 June: The [Battle of Ammunition Hill](#) takes place in the northern part of Jordanian-controlled East Jerusalem.
- 7 June: The Old City is captured by the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF).
- 10 June: The [Moroccan Quarter](#) including 135 houses is razed, creating the [Western Wall Plaza](#).
- 28 June: Israel declares Jerusalem unified and announces free access to holy sites of all religions.
- 1968: Israel starts rebuilding the [Jewish Quarter](#), confiscating 129 dunams (0.129 km<sup>2</sup>) of land which had made up the Jewish Quarter before 1948.<sup>[89]</sup> 6000 residents and 437 shops are evicted.<sup>[90]</sup>
- 1969: [Denis Michael Rohan](#), an Australian [Protestant](#) extremist, [burns a part of](#) the [Jami Al-Aqsa](#).
- 1977: [Anwar Sadat](#), President of Egypt, visits Jerusalem and addresses the Knesset during negotiations over the [Camp David Accords](#).



- 1978: [World Union of Jewish Students](#) (WUJS) headquarters moves from London to Jerusalem.
- 1980: Israel enacts the [Jerusalem Law](#) officially annexing Jerusalem. The [U.N. Security Council](#) ratifies [Resolution 478](#) stating that it does not recognize the change in status.
- 1993: In Oslo Accords, Jerusalem was not included, except parts of few neighborhoods were transferred to the newly formed [Palestinian Authority](#)
- 2000: [Pope John Paul II](#) becomes the first Latin Pope to visit Jerusalem, and prays at the Western Wall.
- 2000: Final Agreement between [Israel](#) and [Palestinian Authority](#) is not achieved at the [2000 Camp David Summit](#), with the status of Jerusalem playing a central role in the breakdown of talks.
- 2000: The [Second Intifada](#) (also known as [Al-Aqsa Intifada](#)) begins two months after the end of the Camp David Summit—[Ariel Sharon](#)'s visit to the [Temple Mount](#) is reported to have been a relevant factor in the uprising.
- 2008: Israeli Sephardic Religious Party, [Shas](#), refuses to form part of the government without a guarantee that there will be no negotiations that will lead to a partition of Jerusalem.
- 2017: December: [US](#) president, [Donald Trump](#), recognizes Jerusalem as the [capital of Israel](#); this sparks protest by many Palestinians and other Muslims in the region.<sup>[91]</sup>
- 2018: The United States, followed by [Guatemala](#) and [Paraguay](#) become the first three countries to open embassies to Israel in Jerusalem.<sup>[92]</sup>

# THE MANY, MANY TIMES ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS TRIED TO MAKE PEACE — AND FAILED

## A TIMELINE OF THE DECADES-LONG PEACE NEGOTIATIONS THAT CAME BEFORE THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR.

[VOX](#) by [Nicole Narea](#) Nov 22, 2023,

[Nicole Narea](#) covers politics and society for Vox. She first joined Vox in 2019, and her work has also appeared in Politico, Washington Monthly, and the New Republic.

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[Everything you need to know about Israel-Palestine](#)

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Even though [Israel](#) has approved a temporary ceasefire in its unprecedented assault on [Gaza](#) following [Hamas's October 7 attack](#), Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) has made clear that he still believes it is a "[time for war](#)," not for peace.

On Tuesday, he [vowed](#) that the war will continue "until Hamas is destroyed, all the hostages are released and there is nobody in Gaza who can threaten Israel."

But while US leaders have supported the Israeli war effort, they have also held out hope for an eventual [two-state solution](#) in which Israel and a sovereign [Palestine](#) exist side by side: "The only ultimate answer here is a two-state solution that's real," US President [Joe Biden said recently](#).

The two-state solution isn't the only approach to solving the [Israel-Palestine conflict](#). But it is the mainstream one; it's been the international community's approach for the last several decades. The idea is that US-brokered negotiations can lead to a peace treaty, or a "final status agreement," which would establish a Palestinian state in Gaza and the [West Bank](#) in exchange for a permanent end to hostilities. But in the three decades since this peace process really began — with the historic Oslo Accords in 1993 — the two-state solution has slipped further away. A lack of political will in Israel, Palestine, and the US, as well as disagreement over the precise contours of the deal, have rendered negotiations unsuccessful. Major sticking points include: what the borders of the two states should be (and where Jerusalem falls in that), whether Palestinian refugees who were forced out of what is now Israel will be able to once again live there (also known as the "right of return"), and how to establish security guarantees for both Israelis and Palestinians. Today, all of these issues remain major impediments to peace.

*[Related: [Everything you need to know about Israel-Palestine](#)]*

Violence perpetrated by Palestinian militants such as Hamas — an organization many countries designate as a terrorist group — as well as by Israeli security forces, has eroded trust on both sides. So, too, has Israel's expansion of illegal settlements in West Bank territory that the international community sought to set aside for Palestine. The more extreme elements of Israeli and Palestinian society, and their political leaders, have forestalled negotiations at critical moments.

Israel and its allies have often laid the blame at the feet of Palestinians for rejecting what they saw as generous offers. "You are leading your people and the region to a catastrophe," former US President Bill

Clinton [famously told](#) the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat when he refused a peace deal proposed at Camp David in 2000.

But Palestinians contend that those offers, no matter how generous by Israeli standards, never went far enough. Israel has always had the military and diplomatic edge in the conflict, with a powerful ally in the US. And Palestinians have been forced to progressively narrow their conception of acceptable peace, let alone a fair peace, especially as Israel treats its territorial expansion as a *fait accompli* and normalizes relations with Arab countries that had previously fought for the Palestinian cause.

“Palestinians wonder whether they are always doomed to accept what they have previously refused just to find that it is no more an offer — if it ever was an offer — again to be faced with new attempts to extort new concessions from them for an undefined future,” writes Palestinian diplomat Afif Safieh in his 2011 book, *The Peace Process: From Breakthrough to Breakdown*.

Here is what you need to know about the history of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and why they have repeatedly failed.

### **1967: UN RESOLUTION 242**

In 1967, Israel fought Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the [Six-Day War](#), a brief but intense conflict over water, land, and Palestine. Israel defeated the three Arab states, capturing Gaza, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula, parts of East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.

Following the conflict, the UN adopted [Resolution 242](#), which calls on Arab countries to recognize Israel’s right to “live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force,” as well as for Israel to withdraw from “territories occupied” in the conflict — essentially, to revert to its pre-1967 borders, a provision that Israel has [since resisted](#).

Israel, Egypt, and Jordan all came to accept the resolution, ushering in temporary peace between them. Egypt and Jordan recognized Israel’s existence and ceased direct hostilities with the country, though Israel didn’t uphold its part of the deal, never fully reverting to its pre-1967 borders — a choice that led to the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Still, achieving buy-in from Arab nations that were once hostile to Israel was a significant step toward opening formal Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. The resolution was later affirmed in 1973 in UN Resolution 338, which, along with resolution 242, served as the foundation of peace talks in the region for decades to come.

### **1978: CAMP DAVID ACCORDS**

The [Camp David Accords](#) established long-lasting (but cold) peace between Egypt and Israel, and also had a significant impact on the trajectory of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

The Accords, brokered by then-US President Jimmy Carter, came after a ceasefire in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, in which Egypt and Syria fought Israel, hoping to regain territory lost in previous conflicts. As part of the deal, Egypt and Israel agreed to refrain from use of force to resolve their disputes, and Israel agreed to a path toward returning the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. (Syria signed a separate disengagement agreement with Israel.)

Israel and Egypt also addressed the fate of Palestinians: They reiterated their commitment to UN Resolutions 242 and 338. Both countries called for Palestinians to participate in future negotiations, “full autonomy” for people in the West Bank and Gaza, a provisional government in those territories supported by Israeli security forces, and negotiations to determine Palestinians’ final status within five years. Palestinians were not formally invited to participate in the talks because the US refused to deal with the Palestine Liberation Organization, an umbrella group for Palestinian nationalists, so long as they refused to acknowledge Israel’s right to exist and to [renounce terrorism](#).

The Accords are considered a major watershed moment in Middle East peacemaking — earning then-Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat Nobel Peace Prizes — and provided a blueprint for subsequent negotiations.

However, while Israel successfully kept the peace with Egypt, it did not abide by its commitments to Palestinians in the Accords. The five-year deadline for beginning to grant Palestinian people autonomy within the West Bank and Gaza came and went, and [Israeli settlements in the occupied territories ballooned](#).

Carter writes in his 2006 book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* that by “remov[ing] Egypt’s considerable strength from the military equation of the Middle East,” Israel “permitted itself renewed freedom to pursue the goals of a fervent and dedicated minority of its citizens to confiscate, settle, and fortify the occupied territories.”

Historians — including Seth Anziska, author of the 2018 book [Preventing Palestine](#) — have also argued that the Accords had the effect of limiting remedies available to the Palestinians by focusing on establishing an ill-defined goal of “full autonomy” rather than sovereignty.

Essentially, the Accords successfully kept war from breaking out between Israel and Egypt. But in the view of Carter and others critical of the deal’s limitations, the agreement also removed incentives Israel may have had to pursue peace with the Palestinians, setting the stage for the next few decades of difficulties.

### **1988: AMID THE FIRST INTIFADA, ARAFAT ACKNOWLEDGES ISRAEL’S RIGHT TO EXIST**

In 1987, Palestinian frustrations had reached a boiling point following Israel’s invasion of Lebanon to root out the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) presence there, the construction of new Israeli settlements, and increased repression by Israeli security forces in the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians staged their [First Intifada](#), Arabic for “shaking off,” engaging in nonviolent mass protests that often turned into violent clashes with Israeli security forces. It was amid this fighting that Hamas rose in prominence, initially committing to a nonviolent strategy alongside the PLO to facilitate peace talks.

Intifada as foam dropped by Israeli troops rains down on them. Sven Nackstrand/AFP/Getty Images  
With the intifada unfolding, PLO leader Yasser Arafat, known as the father of Palestinian nationalism, made an announcement that paved the way for direct negotiations with the Israelis.

Arafat [said](#) that the PLO, which had previously sought to defeat and replace the state of Israel — often via violent means, like [airplane hijackings](#) and bombings of Jewish civilians across the globe — had “accepted the existence of Israel as a state in the region” and “declared its rejection and condemnation of terrorism in all its forms.”

“We accept two states, the Palestine state and the Jewish state of Israel,” he said.

Though the initial reception from the US and Israel was icy, it was a significant capitulation. The PLO was still widely regarded as a terrorist group, [including by the US](#), following the announcement. But it would begin to take a more active role in determining the future of the Palestinians.

### **1991: MADRID CONFERENCE**

In 1991, representatives from the US, Soviet Union, Israel, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, as well as non-PLO Palestinian delegates, convened for the first time in Madrid to hold negotiations to create a new framework for the peace process. The conference was conceived by then-US Secretary of State James Baker to change course from a continued pattern of conflict during the final years of the First Intifada.

There were still significant disagreements between the US and Israel around what peace should look like, particularly on settlement expansion, and no formal agreements came of the conference.

But “what Madrid did achieve was significant,” write George Mitchell, former US President Barack Obama’s special envoy for Middle East peace, and Alon Sachar, a Middle East expert and former adviser to the US Ambassador to Israel, in the 2016 book [A Path to Peace](#). That included bolstering public support for negotiations in Israel, which elected Yitzhak Rabin as prime minister in 1992 on a platform that focused on Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. Together, Rabin’s election and the hope generated in Madrid laid the groundwork for the first major breakthrough in decades.

### **1993: OSLO**

The year 1993 marked a breakthrough that established the modern peace process as we know it.

The PLO and Israel entered secret negotiations — facilitated by Norwegian politicians through a think tank in Oslo — at a moment when both felt backed into a corner. Israel was facing [increasing international pressure](#) to engage in peace talks following its violent clampdowns on Palestinian protesters in the intifada.

And the PLO was [weakened](#) after supporting Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein before his defeat by US and international forces in the First Gulf War. The fall of the Soviet Union had also reduced Cold War tensions in the Middle East that had previously [made peacemaking difficult](#).

The secret talks allowed the negotiators to discuss difficult issues without fear of political blowback. After some progress had been made, the Israelis elevated them to official, public negotiations in Oslo. Then-US President Bill Clinton had a limited role in the negotiations, but held a formal signing ceremony for the so-called [Oslo Accords](#) on the White House lawn in Washington, DC, in 1993, in which Rabin and Arafat famously shook hands.

The Accords [allowed Palestinians to self-govern](#) in the West Bank and Gaza and established the Palestinian Authority as the government of those areas. Israel agreed to withdraw its security forces from Gaza and “redeploy” those located in the West Bank in phases. In exchange, the PLO formally recognized the state of Israel and the right of its citizens to live in peace, accepting the language of UN Resolution 242. “To this day Palestinians refer to their acquiescence to 242 as their historic compromise, the moment they accepted partition,” Mitchell and Sachar write.

Critically, the PLO failed to limit Israel's continued military presence in Gaza and the West Bank in key ways. The agreement provided no timeline for Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and gave Israelis exclusive jurisdiction over their settlements in the occupied territories. At this time, the settler population there [exceeded 280,000](#) and would increase by almost 70,000 in the following five years.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians were left to manage their own affairs, including administering security and public services, relieving Israel of "formal responsibility for the living conditions and welfare of the territories' rapidly increasing population, still completely dominated by Israeli forces," Carter writes.

The Accords also established a five-year interim period in which the [thornier issues](#) of the conflict were meant to be resolved once and for all: the fate of a Palestinian state and its borders, whether Palestinian refugees would be able to return to Israel or the Palestinian territories or be compensated, what would happen to Israeli settlers and Jerusalem, and water usage. But that would never come to be.

### **1995: OSLO II**

Oslo II built on the momentum of the first Oslo agreement, which was received positively by both Palestinians and Israelis. In September 1995, Rabin and Arafat [convened](#) to sign a second agreement in DC that divided the West Bank into three zones, labeled Areas A, B, and C, keeping Gaza continuous. The hope was that, eventually, the Palestinian state would be formed in these areas.

The newly created Palestinian Authority (PA) was given full control over Area A, which encompassed the Palestinian cities of Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus, and Bethlehem. In Area B, which spans a dense zone around those Area A cities, the Palestinian Authority was to have civil jurisdiction in partnership with Israel, which would administer security. Area C, which represented most of the West Bank (and encompassed all of the settlements that Israel had built since it captured the territory in 1967) was to be administered entirely by Israel. Israel was still permitted to [collect taxes](#) from the many Palestinians living anywhere in the West Bank and Gaza if they worked in Israel, which it would then distribute to the PA. The Israelis had agreed to [withdraw from most of Gaza](#) ahead of Oslo II.

Rabin also agreed that Israel would withdraw from Areas A and B within three months of the signing of the agreement, and would negotiate further withdrawals in the five-year interim period established in the first Oslo agreement.

Radicals on both sides sought to prevent both Oslo I and II's implementation. Rabin, who had become the face of the peace movement in Israel, was assassinated by a Jewish extremist who opposed the Accords just months later. A period of heightened attacks by Hamas followed. Public support for the peace process eroded, leading to Netanyahu's election as prime minister in 1996. He opposed the Oslo Accords, arguing they only encouraged attacks like those Hamas was launching at the time, and that Israel needed to take a hard line against the Palestinians. He also distrusted the PLO's Arafat, a feeling that was mutual.

Netanyahu's first government wasn't as far right as his latest one, but decisions he made in the years to come would make negotiations increasingly difficult.

## 2000: CAMP DAVID AND THE CLINTON PARAMETERS

Following Rabin's assassination and Netanyahu's election, the Accords were threatened, and Clinton tried to salvage the negotiations by inviting Arafat and Netanyahu to Maryland's Wye River plantation in 1998. There, the leaders agreed to additional Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank as well as Palestinians taking measures to prevent violence against Israel — but both sides accused each other of failing to properly implement the agreement.

That contributed to a [deteriorating political situation](#) in Israel, where Netanyahu was facing criticism from the left for failing to make enough progress on negotiations and from the right for making what they saw as unreasonable territorial concessions. Netanyahu was subsequently voted out in 1999, with Ehud Barak taking his place as prime minister and promising an agreement with the Palestinians within 15 months. At Barak's urging, Clinton held another summit at Camp David in July 2000, where the leaders failed to come to an agreement on borders, Jerusalem, and Palestinian refugees' "[right of return](#)." Why they failed is a subject of disagreement: Clinton and other pro-Israel voices have blamed Arafat, arguing that he was unwilling to make peace, while others say the negotiations were [designed to fail](#) because they didn't meet the "minimum requirements of any Palestinian leader," as Robert Malley, one of the US negotiators, argued several years later. It was nevertheless a blow to Barak, who would not survive long as prime minister. The failures of Camp David led Clinton to undertake a last ditch effort to salvage negotiations before he left office. At the outset of a Second Intifada, which would prove more bloody than the last, Clinton proposed his own [parameters for peace](#).

In Clinton's plan, 80 percent of Israeli settlers would remain in the West Bank, covering about 10 percent of the occupied land. Israel would have exclusive access to the utilities and certain roads that serviced them and would be allowed to create a security perimeter around the settlements. Palestinians would get some land adjacent to Gaza in exchange.

The rest of the West Bank would go to the new state of Palestine, which would also encompass all of Gaza. The new country would be demilitarized and supported by an international force. Palestinians would control the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem, including what is known to Muslims as the al-Aqsa Mosque, and Israelis would control the Western Wall.

Displaced Palestinians from around the world would have the right to return to the West Bank and Gaza, but not to their former homes in any land owned by Israel. Israel has generally opposed a right of return for Palestinians, which it "views as a tactic to undermine Jewish self-determination," Mitchell and Sachar write. The return of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced in 1948 would erode Israel's Jewish demographic majority.

Israel accepted the framework with reservations that Clinton said were "[within \[his\] parameters](#)." Arafat also accepted the parameters but with reservations that Clinton deemed incongruous with an agreement. Part of the problem for Arafat was that the parameters required too many Palestinian concessions on land for settlers and on right of return, [some foreign affairs experts have argued](#).

Clinton later wrote in his memoir that Arafat had made an "[error of historic proportions](#)."

Carter saw Arafat's decision differently, writing that "there was no possibility that any Palestinian leader could accept such terms and survive, but official statements from Washington and Jerusalem were successful in placing the entire onus for the failure on Yasser Arafat."

This was the closest that the Israelis and Palestinians have come in recent years to achieving a peace agreement.

### **2002-2003: VARIOUS FRAMEWORKS FOR PEACE ARE DEVELOPED**

The Second Intifada, which ended with a ceasefire in 2003 following significant loss of life, made official peace overtures difficult. But several initiatives that were not orchestrated by Israeli or Palestinian government representatives were nevertheless pursued during this period.

That included the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative proposed by the Saudi Crown Prince, which proposed Arab nations' recognition of Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from the occupied territories, among other elements of a peace plan. It was embraced by many Arab countries and Palestinian leaders, but dismissed by the new Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government as a "[nonstarter](#)" just as it was launching a major invasion of the West Bank in response to the Second Intifada. There was also the 2003 Geneva Initiative, spearheaded by former Israeli and Palestinian officials, which aimed to provide a comprehensive plan for implementation of a two-state solution based on the framework discussed in the Clinton Parameters and the Arab Peace Initiative. It was also rejected by Sharon.

The US, [Russia](#), the [European Union](#), and the United Nations — together, the Quartet — also announced a roadmap for peace in 2003 that described progressive steps toward a two-state solution over the course of three years, with political, security, economic, humanitarian, and institution-building benchmarks.

The roadmap was grounded in then-US President George W. Bush's belief that Palestinian militant violence was a primary obstacle to peace. He and the international community therefore demanded that Arafat step aside in favor of new Palestinian leadership to continue negotiations. At the time, there were still [significant numbers of suicide bombings](#) on Israeli and Jewish targets committed by Palestinian militants. Arafat agreed to step aside; the more moderate Mahmoud Abbas replaced him.

The Palestinians accepted the roadmap — despite the fact that Bush had [made assurances](#) to the Israelis that they would not be expected to totally withdraw from the occupied territories and that Palestinians would not have right of return to Israel. But the Israeli government, led by Sharon, demanded prerequisites that ultimately doomed the deal. Those included dismantling all Palestinian militant groups, precluding any reference to UN Resolution 242, and barring discussion of Israeli settlements.

"The practical result of all this is that the Roadmap for Peace had become moot," Carter writes.

### **2005: ISRAEL'S UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL FROM GAZA AND SOME SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK**

Despite previously advocating for expansionist policies in the occupied territories, Sharon announced [an Israeli "disengagement plan" for Gaza](#) in 2005 that involved the unilateral withdrawal of Israeli settlements and military forces. However, Israel maintained control of the Gazan airspace and cooperated with Egypt in administering its border with Gaza.

Approximately 8,500 Israeli settlers — some of whom had lived there for decades and resisted the plan — were removed from their homes, and some were compensated. Israel ceded control of Gaza to the



Palestinian Authority, led by Abbas, who was elected its president that year. Israel also vacated four Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

The move was surprising from Sharon, who had for years pursued a dream of a “[Greater Israel](#),” understood by many Israelis as their biblical lands that encompass the Palestinian territories. It earned him a reputation as a peacemaker who was seeking to deescalate the situation. But as Dartmouth professor Bernard Avishai [later argued in the New Yorker](#), the decision was “not meant to precede a negotiated settlement of any kind but to obviate the need for one.”

Sharon wanted to “cut Israel’s losses” in Gaza, Avishai argues, while pursuing his long-term goals of annexing Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley, and all major Israeli settlements in the West Bank, pushing the Palestinians well beyond Israel’s 1967 borders and behind the illegal “[separation barrier](#)” he had built. Sharon, however, suffered from a stroke soon after that would leave him incapable of fully carrying out that vision.

[Hamas](#) won a majority in the PA in the 2006 elections following the withdrawal. The US refused to recognize their new government and pressured Abbas’s government to overturn the results, [helping spark a brief civil war](#) that culminated in the group taking control of Gaza while the PA, led by politicians aligned with Abbas, continued to govern in the West Bank.

### **2008: OLMERT’S PEACE OFFER**

After the schism in the Palestinian government, Ehud Olmert, who became Israel’s prime minister after Sharon suffered from a stroke, decided to reopen peace talks with the PA in Annapolis, Maryland, for the first time since 2000.

Hamas supported the talks and was prepared to reverse its policy of rejecting Israel if an agreement that the Palestinian people would approve of could be finalized.

Olmert presented a proposal to Abbas that included [significant territorial concessions](#), though the exact contours of the proposal are vague and were never fully disclosed. Reportedly, Olmert [offered](#) Palestinians 5.8 percent of Israeli land, consisting of lightly populated farmland, in exchange for 6.3 percent of the West Bank, encompassing major Israeli settlements. On other issues, however, there appeared to still be significant gaps between the Israeli and Palestinian positions on refugees, Jerusalem, and an Israeli withdrawal.

Abbas [did not accept the proposal](#), later saying he wasn’t provided enough detail, though Olmert speculates that Abbas was “[entirely for it](#)” and believes Abbas likely regrets that he did not sign the deal. In that respect, Abbas’s rejection of the offer is sometimes compared to Arafat’s reaction to the Clinton Parameters: It was “the best an Israeli prime minister had ever offered to a Palestinian leader” in terms of territory, Mitchell and Sachar write. But Abbas later stated that he believed the offer did not meet Palestinian aspirations for an independent and viable state.

Some reports suggest that Abbas was also [concerned](#) about the political situation in Israel at the time, as Olmert had announced his intention to resign over corruption allegations. Olmert later served a prison sentence for accepting bribes and committing obstruction of justice. Netanyahu succeeded him and rejected the talks as dangerous for Israel, raising questions as to whether he would have honored any agreement signed.

## 2014: NEGOTIATIONS LED BY JOHN KERRY COLLAPSE

Obama's presidency began in 2009 with the ending of a Gaza war, known as Israel's Operation Cast Lead, and he appointed George Mitchell, co-author of the 2016 book *A Path to Peace*, to shepherd peace talks. But the [Israeli government was skeptical of Obama](#), and the heft Mitchell brought as a former negotiator with Northern Ireland did not directly translate to Israel and Palestine.

It quickly became clear Obama's peace overtures weren't working. Senior US officials had begun warning that because of the pace of Israel's settlement expansion, the [horizon of the two-state outcome was approaching](#), and human rights organizations were increasingly calling the [situation in the West Bank apartheid](#). US Secretary of State John Kerry put his hat in the ring, setting a deadline of mid-2014 to reach a comprehensive agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Kerry started with a series of confidence-building measures: Israel agreed to progressively release Palestinian prisoners in four parts while Palestinians agreed to halt the process of applying for membership as a country in international bodies. However, when Israel refused to release the fourth group of prisoners and continued to expand its settlements, Abbas reacted by applying for Palestine to be recognized by 15 UN and other international bodies.

Both sides also faced opposition within their own camps. Hamas rejected the talks, saying that Abbas had no authority to negotiate on behalf of Palestinians since no formal elections had been held in the Palestinian territories since 2005. The group [called for a third intifada](#), though it never materialized. Netanyahu's Likud party [proposed legislation](#) to annex the Jordan Valley in direct contradiction of the US's proposal during the talks that the area go to Palestinians. Hardliners also [threatened to resign](#) from Netanyahu's government if he agreed to Israel's 1967 borders as a starting point for negotiations. These challenges led to a breakdown in the talks in April 2014.

## 2020: TRUMP'S "DEAL OF THE CENTURY"

Former [President Donald Trump](#) severely undermined the prospect of Palestinian autonomy, delivering several major wins for Israel that poisoned dialogue with the Palestinians.

He [recognized](#) the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights, which Syria says should rightfully be its property — a decision later reaffirmed under Biden. He reversed decades of US policy and moved the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2018 — a decision made in recognition of the fact that Israel had made unified Jerusalem its capital, but that ignores Palestinian claims on East Jerusalem that are recognized by the UN. It's now incredibly politically difficult for any American president to move the embassy back to Tel Aviv.

The [Trump administration](#) also argued in 2019 that Israeli settlements in the West Bank [are not necessarily illegal](#), lending legitimacy to Israel's claims on the territories. Israel's annexations and settlements are widely regarded as illegal under international law, and no other country has recognized them.

Though Trump unveiled a plan in 2020 that he hailed as the peace "deal of the century," Palestinians vehemently rejected it. The [proposal](#) would have allowed Israel to absorb the vast majority of settlements in the occupied West Bank, home to [more than half a million Israelis](#), required that Palestine be fully demilitarized, and rejected Palestinian refugees' right of return outright. It would have also recognized

Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, while also impossibly recognizing Jerusalem as the “undivided capital” of Israel.

“We say a thousand nos to the Deal of The Century,” Abbas [said](#) at the time.

Trump’s barefaced pro-Israel policies undermined the US’s ability to credibly moderate peace talks going forward. There’s also no one credible representative for Palestinians across the occupied territories with which to negotiate. Polling in recent years but before Hamas’s October 7 attack has shown that the PA, under Abbas’s leadership, is [broadly unpopular when compared with Hamas](#), and as Mitchell and Sachar note, has become seen as “behaving like a security subcontractor easing the burden for Israel of the occupation.” That’s partially by the design of Netanyahu, who has [propped up Hamas](#) at the expense of a unified Palestinian voice in peace talks.

Even if there were strong representatives, Trump wasn’t interested in pursuing a peace plan. His administration created the Abraham Accords, which were normalization deals between Israel and Arab states like the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco (Arab states that had previously not recognized Israel); such deals did not include any progress on the Palestinian issue. Biden took up this policy, and his team put a major emphasis on bringing Saudi Arabia into the normalization fold during his first two and a half years in office. This Trump-Biden approach went against the Arab Peace Initiative and cut Palestinians out of the conversation.

### **2023: THE US RENEWS CALLS FOR A TWO-STATE SOLUTION**

For years after Trump announced his framework, no meaningful attempts were made to reopen peace negotiations, with US [President Joe Biden looking to turn his attention](#) to other parts of the world, including [China](#) and Russia, and Israel signing normalization agreements with some of its Arab neighbors. But that calculus changed with the onset of the war in Gaza. The Biden administration has offered its nearly unconditional support to Israel, but has raised concerns about Israel’s ability to achieve its stated goal of eliminating Hamas and its methods as civilian casualties skyrocket. It has also called for a renewed commitment to a two-state solution.

The Biden administration’s focus on a two-state solution raises the question as to whether the window for that path to peace has passed. Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories has become entrenched, and its settler population in the West Bank has grown to [at least 700,000](#), leading some observers — including Carter — to argue that the reality is that [Israel and Palestine are a de facto one state](#).

“A system of apartheid, with two peoples occupying the same land but completely separated from each other, with Israelis totally dominant and suppressing violence by depriving Palestinians of their basic human rights. This is the policy now being followed,” Carter wrote in his 2006 book.

As the war continues, Biden has called on Israel to [disentangle itself from Palestine](#), and has warned the country [against trying to occupy Gaza](#) once it concludes its offensive. But Following Hamas’s October 7 attack and the destruction Israel has wreaked in Gaza, reversing the status quo now seems more difficult than ever.

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Swati Sharma

Vox Editor-in-Chief

## **CAMPUS BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTION (BDS)**

### AJC

#### ○ **WHAT IS BDS?**

- The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement is focused on encouraging governments, companies, universities, and individuals to dissociate from Israel and Israeli institutions (corporations, universities, etc.). The BDS movement advocates for the cessation of foreign and military aid, the dissolution of free trade agreements, the suspension of Israel's membership in international fora, and the boycotts of Israeli academics and Israeli institutions of higher education.
- The BDS movement also rejects efforts for Israelis and Palestinians to build bridges and reduce tensions through people-to-people interactions and joint economic development, claiming that such actions would “normalize” Israel. BDS is counterproductive for those who want peace and the creation of a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel.
- Student governments at numerous universities across the country and around the world have launched BDS initiatives to pressure universities to divest from companies that do business with Israel and/or to cancel academic programs and travel opportunities connected to Israel.

#### **MESSAGING ABOUT BDS**

- University leadership should issue strong and unequivocal statements against BDS to set an example on their college campus. They should emphasize that academic boycotts are at odds with the principles of academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas and that ending all academic exchange programs and other initiatives with Israel is contrary to a university's core mission to teach students how to build bridges between people of different backgrounds. University leaders must make clear that universities will not divest from Israel or cut ties with academic programs in Israel.
- While no university has divested from Israel or enacted a boycott based on a student government resolution, BDS has a corrosive impact on college campuses.
  - BDS campaigns often spread misinformation about Israel, reduce a complicated conflict to a flattened binary, silence and marginalize Jewish students, and undermine campus values of academic freedom and diversity of ideas.
  - BDS campaigns often incorporate anti-Zionist and antisemitic language, demonizing the vast majority of the Jewish community who support and have connections to Israel.
  - BDS campaigns often target and isolate Jewish students on campus for their perceived or actual support or connection to Israel and make them feel unwelcome on campus. In some cases, pro-BDS organizations can also lead to exclusion of Jewish students from progressive student groups

because they are Zionists.

- The targeting of individual faculty members or speakers because of their Israeli heritage or support for Israel is particularly dangerous because it furthers the antisemitic trope of [dual loyalty](#) and demonizes all Jews and Israelis for the actions of the Israeli government. It also inhibits the academic freedom of targeted faculty members.
- While BDS proponents often speak of their support for “academic freedom,” acts limiting students or faculty’s ability to study what and where they choose is a violation of the principle of academic freedom and is antithetical to academic values.
- BDS campaigns are antisemitic as they demonize the world’s only Jewish state and hold Israel to a double standard by singling it out for censure while holding no other nation to the same standard.
- While criticism of Israel is certainly acceptable, as it would be for any other country, discussions should operate on the premise that Israel’s right to exist is not up for debate. When a movement seeks to delegitimize Israel’s right to exist, singles Israel out for censure while holding no other nation to the same standard, or demonizes the world’s only Jewish state, criticism of Israel ceases to be legitimate.

### **BACKGROUND ON BDS**

- Boycotts of Israel are not a new phenomenon. The Arab League imposed a boycott of Jews in Mandatory Palestine, beginning in 1945, three years before the establishment of the State of Israel.[1](#)
- The modern BDS movement was founded in 2001 during the United Nations’ World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, which was overtaken by anti-Israel organizations who equated Zionism with racism and initiated the strategy to boycott Israel. By 2005, a coalition of 171 Palestinian organizations had taken on the BDS agenda.[2](#)
- While BDS supporters suggest their movement is non-violent and focused on the rights of the Palestinian people, their true intention is the elimination of Israel as the only Jewish state.
  - Omar Barghouti, the founder of the BDS movement, made that perspective clear: *“Good riddance! The two-state solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is finally dead. But someone has to issue an official death certificate before the rotting corpse is given a proper burial and we can all move on and explore the more just, moral and therefore enduring alternative for peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs in Mandate Palestine: the one-state solution.”*[3](#)
  - Barghouti also opposed a bi-national Arab and Jewish state:
 

“I am completely and categorically against binationalism ... because it assumes that there are two nations with equal moral claims to the land and, therefore, we have to accommodate both national rights. I am completely opposed to that.”[4](#)

- There are four main categories of BDS activities:
  - Academic Boycott - the refusal to work with Israeli universities and professors
  - Cultural Boycott - cancellation of shows featuring Israeli artists or those who support Israel or perform in Israel
  - Economic Boycott and Divestment - Refusing and encouraging others not to buy Israeli products, products produced in Israeli settlements on the West Bank, or divesting from companies that do business with or in Israel.
  - Christian Boycott - Church groups who have endorsed BDS policies and refuse to engage with Jewish organizations and communities that support Israel.

### More information about BDS

- [AJC's BDS homepage](#)
- [Behind the Boycott: The History of the Hateful Campaign Against Israel](#)
- [Tough Questions on the Anti-Israel BDS Movement Answered](#)
- [BDS on Campus: What Should Jewish Students Expect?](#)
- [Governors United Against BDS](#)
- [AJC Project Interchange](#)

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1 <https://ajc.org/behindtheboycott>

2 <https://www.israelactionnetwork.org/bds-101>

3 Omar Barghouti, "Relative Humanity: The Essential Obstacle to a One-State Solution" in *The Plight of the Palestinians*, ed. William A. Cook, 2010: 233-254.

4 Ibid.

## ARAB-ISRAELI WARS OR ISRAELI-ARAB WARS

**BRITANNICA** [The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica](#) Oct 24, 2024

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- How did the Six-Day War impact the region's geography?
- What were the outcomes of the Yom Kippur War?
- How have peace efforts, like the Camp David Accords, influenced the Arab-Israeli conflict?
- What are some lasting effects of the Arab-Israeli wars on the Middle East?
- How do current events relate to the historical Arab-Israeli wars?

After decades of confrontations between Arabs and Jews under the British [mandate](#) of [Palestine](#), where both [communities](#) sought self-determination after the fall of the [Ottoman Empire](#) in 1922, the [United Kingdom](#) announced its intention in 1947 to withdraw its forces from Palestine and [endorsed United Nations Resolution 181](#), which partitioned the British [mandate](#) into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The plan, although accepted by the international [community](#), was rejected by the Arabs, and in May 1948, as British forces withdrew, Israel was born in a region with unresolved disputes over borders, security, land ownership, and other matters. Since that time, Israel has fought a number of conflicts with various Arab forces, most notably in 1948–49, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982, 2006, and 2023–present. This article focuses on those conflicts with significant consequences for the broader [Middle East](#) region. For coverage of clashes specific to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, see [Israel](#), [Palestine](#), [intifada](#), and [Gaza Strip](#).





## 1948–49: ISRAEL'S [WAR OF INDEPENDENCE](#) AND THE [PALESTINIAN NAKBA](#)

[See all videos for this article](#)

On November 29, 1947, the [United Nations](#) (UN) voted to [partition](#) the British mandate of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state (see [United Nations Resolution 181](#)). Clashes broke out almost immediately between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, beginning with the Arab ambush of a bus carrying Jewish passengers from [Netanya](#) to [Jerusalem](#) on November 30. As British troops prepared to withdraw from Palestine, conflict continued to escalate, with both Jewish and Arab forces committing hostile acts. Among the most infamous events was the attack on the Arab village of [Deir Yassin](#) on April 9, 1948. The news of a massacre there by [Irgun Zvai Leumi](#) and the [Stern Gang](#) forces spread widely and inspired both panic and retaliation. Days later, Arab forces attacked a Jewish convoy headed for Hadassah Hospital, killing 78.

### [UN partition plan for Israel and Palestine in 1947](#)

On the eve of the British forces' May 15, 1948, [withdrawal](#), Israel declared independence. The fighting intensified immediately: [Egypt](#) launched an aerial assault on [Tel Aviv](#), and, the next day, Arab forces from Egypt, Transjordan ([Jordan](#)), [Iraq](#), [Syria](#), and [Lebanon](#) occupied the areas in southern and eastern Palestine not apportioned to the Jews by the UN partition of Palestine and then captured [East Jerusalem](#), including the small Jewish quarter of the Old City. The Israelis, meanwhile, won control of the main road to Jerusalem through the Yehuda Mountains ("Hills of Judaea") and successfully repulsed repeated Arab attacks. By early 1949 the Israelis had managed to occupy all of the [Negev](#) up to the former Egypt-

Palestine frontier, except for the [Gaza Strip](#).

## ARAB-ISRAELI WARS EVENTS

Between February and July 1949, as a result of separate armistice agreements between Israel and each of the Arab states, a temporary frontier was fixed between Israel and its neighbors. In Israel, the war is remembered as its War of Independence. In the Arab world, it came to be known as the Nakba (“Catastrophe”) because of the large number of refugees and displaced persons resulting from the war.

### 1956: [SUEZ CRISIS](#)

[Tensions](#) mounted again with the rise to power of [Egyptian](#) Pres. [Gamal Abdel Nasser](#), a staunch [Pan-Arab nationalist](#). Nasser took a hostile stance toward Israel. In 1956 Nasser nationalized the [Suez Canal](#), a vital waterway connecting Europe and Asia that was largely owned by French and British concerns. France and Britain responded by striking a deal with Israel—whose ships were barred from using the canal and whose southern port of [Eilat](#) had been blockaded by Egypt—wherein Israel would invade Egypt; France and Britain would then intervene, ostensibly as peacemakers, and take control of the canal.

In October 1956 Israel invaded Egypt’s [Sinai Peninsula](#). In five days the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) captured [Gaza](#), [Rafah](#), and [Al-‘Arīsh](#)—taking thousands of prisoners—and occupied most of the peninsula east of the Suez Canal. The Israelis were then in a position to open sea communications through the [Gulf of Aqaba](#). In December, after the joint Anglo-French intervention, a UN Emergency Force was stationed in the area, and Israeli forces [withdrew](#) in March 1957. Though Egyptian forces had been defeated on all fronts, the [Suez Crisis](#), as it is sometimes known, was seen by Arabs as an Egyptian victory. Egypt dropped the blockade of Eilat. A UN buffer force was placed in the Sinai Peninsula.

### 1967: [SIX-DAY WAR](#)

Arab and Israeli forces clashed for the third time June 5–10, 1967, in what came to be called the [Six-Day War](#) (or June War). In early 1967 [Syria](#) intensified its bombardment of Israeli villages from positions in the [Golan Heights](#). When the Israeli Air Force shot down six Syrian [MiG](#) fighter jets in reprisal, Nasser mobilized his forces near the Sinai border, dismissing the UN force there, and he again sought to blockade Eilat. In May 1967 Egypt signed a mutual defense pact with Jordan.

Israel answered this apparent Arab rush to war by staging a sudden air assault, destroying Egypt’s [air force](#) on the ground. The Israeli victory on the ground was also [overwhelming](#). Israeli units drove back Syrian forces from the [Golan Heights](#), took control of the [Gaza Strip](#) and the [Sinai Peninsula](#) from Egypt, and drove Jordanian forces from the [West Bank](#). Importantly, the Israelis were left in sole control of Jerusalem.

### 1973: [YOM KIPPUR WAR](#)

The sporadic fighting that followed the Six-Day War again developed into full-scale war in 1973. On October 6, the Jewish holy day of [Yom Kippur](#) (thus, “Yom Kippur War”), Israel was caught off guard by Egyptian forces crossing the [Suez Canal](#) and by Syrian forces crossing into the Golan Heights. The Arab armies showed greater aggressiveness and fighting ability than in the previous wars, and the Israeli forces suffered heavy [casualties](#). The Israeli army, however, reversed many of its early losses and pushed its way into Syrian territory and encircled the Egyptian Third Army by crossing the Suez Canal and establishing forces on its west bank. Still, it never regained the seemingly impenetrable fortifications along the Suez Canal that Egypt had destroyed in its initial successes.

The fighting, which lasted through the Islamic holy month of [Ramadan](#), came to an end on October 26. Israel signed a formal cease-fire agreement with Egypt on November 11 and with Syria on May 31, 1974. A disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt, signed on January 18, 1974, provided for Israeli withdrawal into the Sinai west of the Mitla and Gidi passes, while Egypt was to reduce the size of its forces on the east bank of the canal. A UN peacekeeping force was established between the two armies. This agreement was supplemented by another, signed on September 4, 1975.

On March 26, 1979, Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty formally ending the state of war that had existed between the two countries for 30 years. Under the terms of the treaty, which had resulted from the [Camp David Accords](#) signed in 1978, Israel returned the entire Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, and, in return, Egypt recognized Israel’s right to exist. The two countries subsequently established normal [diplomatic](#) relations.

### 1982: [LEBANON WAR](#)

On June 5, 1982, less than six weeks after Israel’s complete withdrawal from the Sinai, increased tensions between Israelis and [Palestinians](#) resulted in the Israeli bombing of [Beirut](#) and southern [Lebanon](#), where the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO) had a number of strongholds. The following day Israel invaded Lebanon, and by June 14 its land forces reached as far as the outskirts of Beirut, which was encircled, but the Israeli government agreed to halt its advance and begin negotiations with the PLO. After much delay and massive Israeli shelling of west Beirut, the PLO evacuated the city under the supervision of a multinational force. Eventually, Israeli troops withdrew from west Beirut, and the Israeli army had withdrawn from areas north of the [Lītāni River](#) by June 1985. [Hezbollah](#), a militant group that formed as a militia to resist the Israeli invasion in 1982, continued to engage in a guerrilla campaign against Israeli forces until they withdrew fully in May 2000.

### 2006: [SECOND LEBANON WAR](#)

After Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah continued to press Israel over border disputes and Israel’s detention of Lebanese prisoners. On July 12, 2006, [Hezbollah](#) launched a [barrage](#) of rockets into northern Israel, diverting the IDF’s attention as Hezbollah fighters infiltrated the border, killing several Israeli soldiers and capturing two others in an attempt to pressure Israel into releasing Lebanese prisoners. Israel

launched an offensive into southern Lebanon to recover the captured soldiers, beginning with an extensive air campaign that targeted [infrastructure](#) as far north as [Beirut](#) and later a ground offensive that aimed to push Hezbollah away from the Israeli-Lebanese border. Several Arab leaders criticized Hezbollah for inciting the conflict, which left more than one thousand Lebanese dead and about one million others displaced. Nevertheless, Hezbollah's ability to fight the IDF to a standstill won it praise throughout much of the Arab world. When hostilities came to an end on August 14, Israeli leaders claimed that they had met most of the war's objectives, but the abducted soldiers remained in Hezbollah's custody (their remains were later exchanged through UN-brokered negotiations in 2008) and the handling of the war was heavily [scrutinized](#) by the Israeli public.

### **2023–PRESENT: ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR**

Throughout the 20th century and the first years of the 21st century the major conflicts between Israeli forces and Arab forces were either driven by non-Palestinian actors or took place on foreign soil. After  [Hamas](#), a militant Palestinian movement, took control of the [Gaza Strip](#) in 2007, the enclave came under blockade by [Israel](#) and [Egypt](#) and a number of armed conflicts between Israel and Hamas took place in the territory, most notably in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. The consequences of those conflicts largely remained contained within the enclave.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas led the most brutal assault against Israel since its independence, killing some 1,200 people and taking more than 240 others hostage. The attack, which caught Israeli forces off guard on the [solemn Jewish holiday](#) of [Shemini Atzeret](#), occurred under the shadow of the 50th anniversary of the [Yom Kippur War](#). With thousands of rockets launched into Israel in the span of 20 minutes, thus distracting the IDF while Hamas militants infiltrated the border and captured both civilians and soldiers, the assault echoed—and amplified—that of Hezbollah in the [Lebanon War](#) in 2006. Netanyahu vowed to dismantle and destroy Hamas using “all the power” of the IDF, and the next day Israel declared a state of war.

In the weeks that followed, the IDF's air strikes in the crowded enclave were devastating. By the end of October, when Israel launched its ground invasion, more than half of the Gaza Strip's population had been displaced, and the war had become the deadliest for Palestinians since the war of 1948. Despite efforts by [Qatar](#) and [Egypt](#) to mediate the return of the hostages and the [cessation](#) of violence—with short-lived success in late November—the war leveled much of the Gaza Strip and led to a calamitous humanitarian crisis. Moreover, the conflict inspired an escalation in conflict with allies of Hamas, including [Hezbollah](#), which stepped up a series of confrontations with Israel that had begun before October 7, and the [Houthi movement](#), which disrupted global shipping by attacking ships in the [Red Sea](#). At the end of the year Israel faced tremendous international pressure to ease its offensive, and in February a rift emerged between Israel and the [United States](#), Israel's most important source of international support. Meanwhile, efforts to reach a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas continued, although Hamas refused to accept any proposal that did not guarantee a permanent end to hostilities and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces.

## FULL REPORT: IN 2024, THERE WERE 18,000 TERRORIST ATTACKS IN ISRAEL

[THE JEWISH PRESS](#) [Hana Levi Julian](#) January 9, 2025

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Photo Credit: National Public Diplomacy Directorate of Israel



There were more than 18,000 attempts by Arab terrorists to murder Israelis last year in the Jewish State, according to the annual [Summary Report of Terrorism Against Israel for 2024](#).

The report, released Thursday by Israel's National Public Diplomacy Directorate in the Prime Minister's Office, gathers all the information and data from the Israel Defense Forces, Israel Police, Shin Bet and emergency and rescue authorities.

Advertisement

The report is sent to all the official Israeli authorities that do public diplomacy and is used as the official source of data in the "hasbara" arena.

Last year, Israel was attacked from seven fronts: Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, Iraq, Yemen and from within Israel.

The number of terrorist attacks in 2024 was 18,365, in which 134 people were murdered and 1,277 people were injured.

According to the report, approximately 16,400 rockets were fired and crossed into Israeli territory.

Of those, some 15,400 rockets were launched from Lebanon, and some 700 rockets were fired from Gaza. The greatest number of rockets fired at Israel — 6,900 launches — came during October 2024.



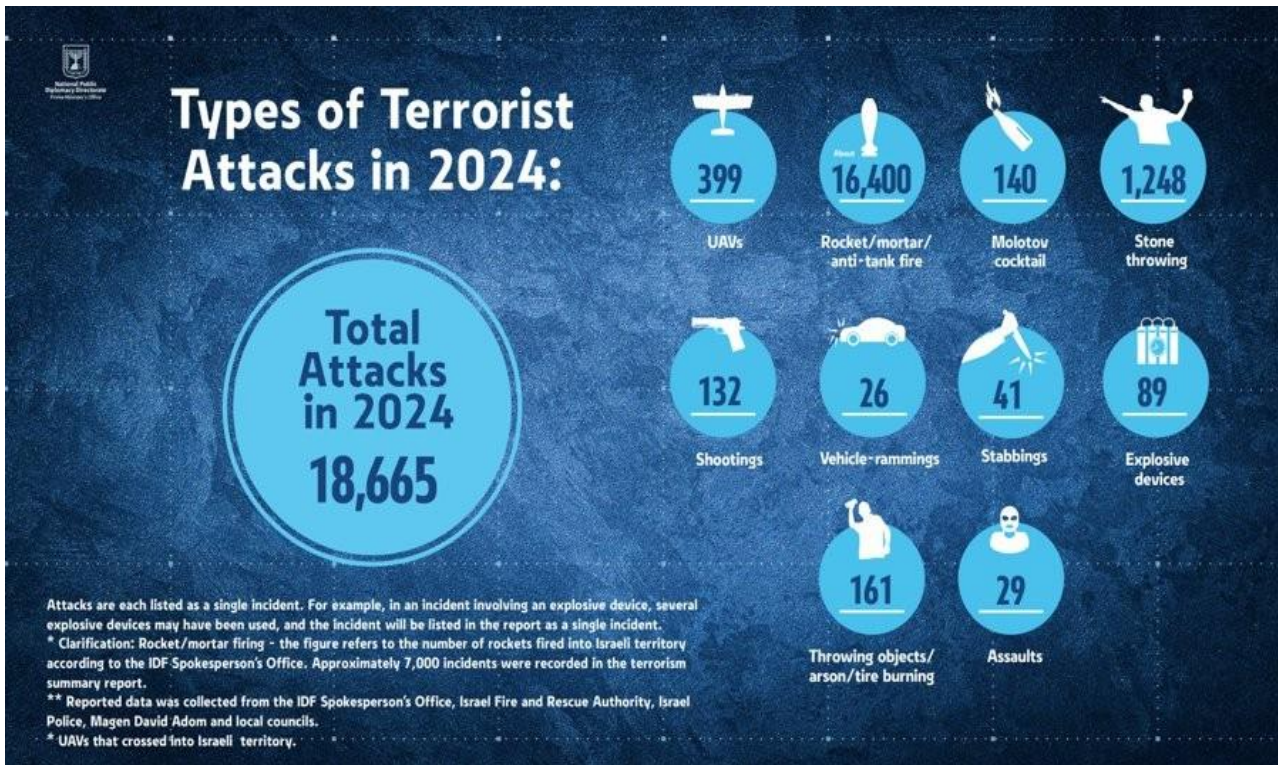
Attacks were also carried out by 399 hostile UAVs (explosive drones) last year.

The damage from rocket fire and combat drones was terrible:

- 71 people were killed, including 14 minors;
- 892 people were injured;
- 610 fires were started;
- Fires burned 92,417 acres of Nature & Parks Authority land;
- More than 42,749 acres of grazing land were burnt.
- More than 370 acres of crops were burned throughout northern Israel

In addition, there were 1,900 terrorist attacks carried out last year, including stone-throwing, firebombing (Molotov cocktails), vehicle rammings, shootings, stabbings, assaults, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and throwing other objects.

The highest number of attacks took place in July (191). November was the quietest month with 109 attacks. October was the most violent month: 37 people murdered and 394 others wounded.



The most common type of terrorist attack was stone throwing, with 1,248 incidents. April had the most stone throwing attacks, with 130 incidents. November was the quietest month, with 76 incidents. The next most common attacks included throwing objects, arson and tire burning (162), hurling Molotov cocktails (140), shootings (132) and explosive devices (89).

[To download the complete report, click here.](#)

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**PART H1**

**WEST BANK – PALESTINIANS AND JEWS**



## WEST BANK

[Britannica](#) Nov 26 2024

**West Bank**, area of the former British-mandated (1920–47) territory of [Palestine](#) west of the [Jordan River](#), claimed from 1949 to 1988 as part of the Hashemite Kingdom of [Jordan](#) but occupied from 1967 by [Israel](#). The territory, [excluding](#) East Jerusalem, is also known within Israel by its biblical names, [Judaea](#) and [Samaria](#).

Within its present boundaries, the West Bank represents the portion of the former [mandate](#) retained in 1948 by the Arab forces that entered Palestine after the departure of the British. The borders and status of the area were established by the Jordanian-Israeli armistice of April 3, 1949. In the decades that followed the armistice, Jordan, Israel, and the [Palestinian Liberation Organization](#) (PLO) each laid claim to the approximately 2,185-square-mile (5,660-square-km) area. Population (2024 est.) 4,026,000; population excluding [Israeli settlements](#), 3,325,905. Population [density](#) (2024) 1,842.6 people per square mile; (2024) 711.3 people per square km.

### GEOGRAPHY

Geographically, the West Bank is mostly composed of north-south-oriented limestone hills (conventionally called the Samaritan Hills north of Jerusalem and the [Judaeen Hills](#) south of Jerusalem) having an average height of 2,300 to 3,000 feet (700 to 900 meters). The hills descend eastwardly to the low-lying [Great Rift Valley](#) of the Jordan River and the [Dead Sea](#). The West Bank does not lie entirely within the drainage system of the Jordan River, as elevated areas in the west give rise to the headwaters of streams flowing westward to the [Mediterranean Sea](#).

Annual rainfall of more than 27 inches (685 mm) occurs in the most highly elevated areas in the northwest and declines in the southwest and southeast, along the Dead Sea, to less than 4 inches (100 mm). Widely variable land-use patterns are dictated by the availability of water. Relatively well-watered nonirrigated terrain in the hills (especially those of Samaria) is used for the grazing of sheep and the cultivation of cereals, olives, and fruits such as melons. Irrigated land in the hills and the [Jordan River valley](#) is intensively [cultivated](#) for assorted fruits and vegetables.

#### Quick Facts

**Also Known As:** Al-Ḍaffah al-Gharbiyah • ha-Gadah ha-Ma'aravit • Judaea and Samaria

**Population:** (2024 est.) 4,026,000<sup>1</sup>

**Official Name(S):** West Bank; Al-Ḍaffah al-Gharbiyyah (Arabic); Ha-gadah Ha-ma'aravit (Hebrew)

**Total Area (Sq Km):** 5,660

**Total Area (Sq Mi):** 2,185

**Arabic:** Al-Ḍaffah al-Gharbiyyah

**Hebrew:** Ha-Gadah Ha-Ma'aravit

1. Includes 700,000 Israeli Jews in the West Bank.

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The industrial development of the West Bank was never strong during the Jordanian period, and by the mid-1960s there were less than a dozen industrial establishments with more than 30 employees in the area. Israeli occupation resulted in constraints on West Bank industrial development; investment capital remained scarce both in the West Bank and the [Gaza Strip](#), and only the transportation [infrastructure](#) saw

much improvement after 1967. This improvement occurred mostly for military reasons, although it also benefited agriculture by [facilitating](#) the supply and servicing of markets. Although [human capital](#) is abundant among the highly educated population, [foreign direct investment](#) remains scarce because of the economic uncertainty related to the occupation as well as Israeli restrictions on access between the West Bank and external markets.

The principal Palestinian municipalities of the West Bank are [Jenin](#), [Nablus](#), and [Ramallah](#) north of Jerusalem and [Bethlehem](#) and [Hebron](#) (Al-Khalīl) south of Jerusalem. [Jericho](#) (Arīḥā) is the chief municipality of the Jordan River valley. [Tulkarm](#), which straddles the armistice border, serves as a hub—albeit a restricted one—between the northern municipalities of the West Bank and the [Tel Aviv metropolitan area](#) in Israel. Several small universities in the West Bank (founded or [attaining](#) university status in the 1970s) enroll mostly Palestinian students.

Many Palestinians were displaced after the [1948](#) and [1967](#) wars. About 300,000 Palestinians (most of whom were originally from territory captured by Israel in 1948) left the impoverished West Bank for Transjordan (later Jordan) during the year after the 1948 war; and about 380,000 Palestinians fled the West Bank after it was captured by the Israelis in 1967. Between 1967 and 1977 an estimated 6,300 Palestinians were evicted from [East Jerusalem](#) and replaced by Jewish immigrants, and more than 10,000 others lost their residency rights between 1995 and 2010.

## HISTORY

### Jordanian Annexation

Upon the departure of the British occupying forces in May 1948 and the proclamation of the State of Israel, the armies of five Arab countries entered Palestine. In the [ensuing conflict](#)—the first of the [Arab-Israeli wars](#)—Israel expanded beyond the territory contemplated by the partition plan. The West Bank, as demarcated by the Jordanian-Israeli armistice of 1949, was broadly similar to (but smaller than) one of the zones designated as an Arab state by the [United Nations](#) (UN) partition plan for Palestine in 1947 (see [United Nations Resolution 181](#)). According to that plan, [Jerusalem](#) was to have been an international zone. However, the city was instead divided into Israeli (west) and Jordanian (east) sectors. The Arab state whose creation was [envisioned](#) by the 1947 UN partition plan never came into being, and the West Bank was formally annexed by Jordan on April 24, 1950, although this [annexation](#) was recognized only by Great Britain and Pakistan.

From 1950 until it was occupied by Israel in the [Six-Day War](#) of 1967, the West Bank was governed as part of Jordan, though it was divided from the Jordanian population of the East Bank by the [Jordan River](#). The relationship between the East and West banks was uneasy, both because of Palestinian suspicions of the [Hashemite dynasty](#) and because of the [aspirations](#) of Palestinians in the West Bank for a separate state. The web of relationships connecting the two halves of Jordan grew during this period, however, and by 1967 the West Bank represented about 47 percent of Jordan's population and about 30 percent of its [gross domestic product](#).

## ISRAELI OCCUPATION

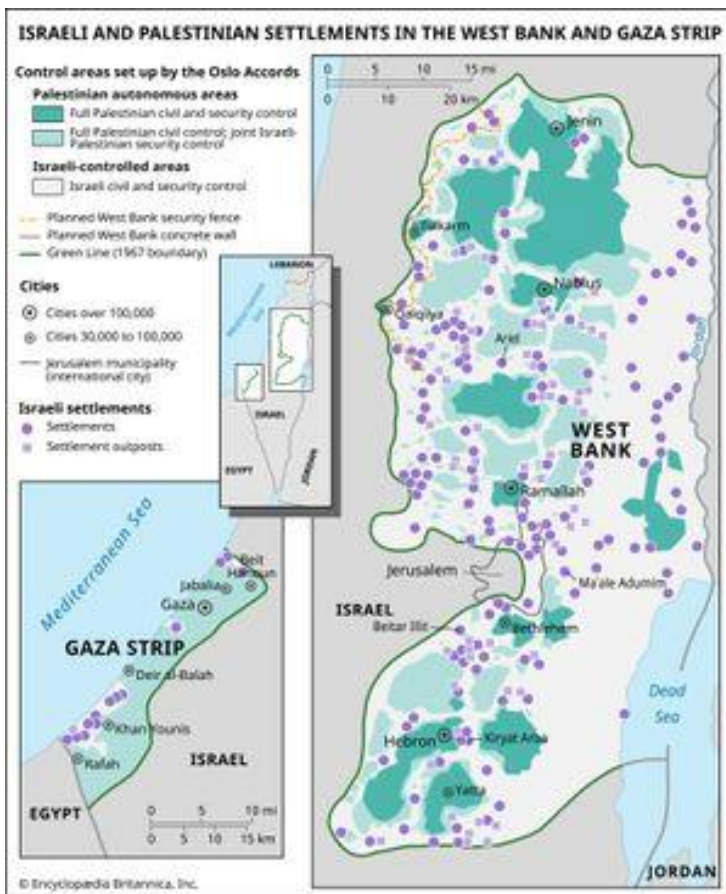
During the 1967 war [Israel](#) occupied the West Bank and established a military administration throughout the area, except in East Jerusalem, which Israel incorporated into itself, extending Israeli citizenship, law, and civil administration to the area. In the remaining areas of the West Bank, the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) issued a military order that prohibited the display of political symbols and the distribution of political publications and restricted public gatherings, preventing civil resistance to Israeli authorities for much of the first decade of Israeli occupation.

This period of relative calm began to [wane](#) during the late 1970s and early '80s as Israel began a more aggressive course of establishing [settlements](#). By the early '80s the settlements numbered in the scores. Land, businesses, and buildings were expropriated from the Palestinian inhabitants, many of whom were long displaced, having fled the wars of 1948 and 1967. During the administration of Prime Minister [Menachem Begin](#) (1977–83), the number of Israeli settlements more than tripled, and the number of Israeli settlers increased more than fivefold. Israeli claims of a right to administer land in the West Bank not cultivated or privately owned (a category that might amount to between 30 and 70 percent of the West Bank, depending on the definitions adopted) gave rise to [suspicions](#) that Israel intended ultimately to annex the area piecemeal.

Throughout the 1970s and '80s the issue of Israeli rule over the West Bank Palestinians remained unresolved. Israel regarded possession of the West Bank as vital to its security, and the growing number of Israeli settlements further stiffened Israeli unwillingness to relinquish control of the area. At the same time, the chief political representative of the West Bank Palestinians, the [PLO](#), refused to negotiate with Israel and, until 1988, was unwilling to recognize Israel's right to exist; Israel refused to negotiate with or recognize the PLO for years after that date.

## CREATION OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

In 1988 Jordan's [King Hussein renounced](#) all administrative responsibility for the West Bank, thereby severing his country's remaining connections with the area. Meanwhile, a popular uprising broke out among the Palestinians of the West Bank in December 1987, and the first [intifada](#) became virtually a permanent feature of West Bank life for the next few years, despite the Israeli army's continued attempts to suppress the disorders.



[Israeli and Palestinian settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip \(1995\)](#) The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (1995), building off the 1993 Oslo Accords, divided the West Bank and the Gaza Strip into areas A (Palestinian civil and security control), B (Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control), and C (Israeli civil and security control). (more)

As a result of secret negotiations begun in January 1993, Israel and the PLO in September reached agreement on a plan to gradually extend self-government to the Palestinians of the West Bank (and [Gaza Strip](#)) over a five-year period prior to a final settlement of the issue of Palestinian statehood (see [Oslo Accords](#)). Under the plan, Israel's civilian and military

administration would be dissolved and the Israeli army withdrawn from populous Palestinian areas. In the West Bank the plan's actual implementation began in May 1994 with the Israelis' withdrawal from the town of [Jericho](#) and its environs and the creation of the [Palestinian Authority](#) (PA) led by PLO chair [Yasser Arafat](#). The following year the West Bank was divided into three zones of administration and security during the [interim](#) period:

- Area A: areas under Palestinian administration and security
- Area B: areas under Palestinian administration but joint Israeli-Palestinian security
- Area C: areas under Israeli administration and security

But the peace process began to fall apart after the [assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin](#) in 1995 and the subsequent election of [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), an outspoken critic of the Oslo Accords. In 2000, despite expectations of [autonomy](#) by the end of the previous decade, the PA controlled less than one-fifth of the West Bank, while Israeli occupation (in some areas, combined with PA local administration) continued in the remainder. With Jerusalem's status proving to be the most [contentious](#) of the outstanding matters, Israeli opposition leader [Ariel Sharon](#) made a provocative visit to the [Temple Mount](#) (where [Al-Aqsa Mosque](#), one of Islam's holiest sites, stands). Frustration boiled over, and a new uprising (often dubbed the "Al-Aqsa intifada") began, lasting nearly half a decade.

### **RULE OF MAHMOUD ABBAS UNDER CONTINUED OCCUPATION**

In 2006 parliamentary elections [Fatah](#)—the leading [constituent](#) faction within the PLO—suffered a decisive loss to [Hamis](#), reflecting years of dissatisfaction with Fatah's governance, which was criticized as corrupt and inefficient. The victory of Hamas, a group that was regarded by many as a terrorist organization, resulted in sanctions and [boycotts](#) from Israel, the [United States](#), and the [European Union](#). In 2007, with

violence escalating in the [Gaza Strip](#) and the failure of a [coalition government](#), PA president [Mahmoud Abbas](#) dissolved the Hamas-led government and established in its place an emergency cabinet favoring Fatah. The increasingly violent power struggle between Hamas and Fatah resulted in a split between the West Bank, run by Fatah through the emergency PA government, and the Gaza Strip, controlled by Hamas. Israel and other members of the international [community](#) moved to aid the West Bank, offering shows of economic and diplomatic support for Abbas and Fatah while blockading the Gaza Strip.

Abbas appointed [Salam Fayyad prime minister](#) of the emergency cabinet. During his [tenure](#) the PA pursued a [neoliberal](#) state-building agenda in the West Bank to prepare it for eventual statehood. In 2011, after years of stalled peace talks, the PA began lobbying for international recognition of statehood and started gaining partial recognition in 2012. Fayyad, however, failed to garner a wide base of support among Palestinians and resigned in 2013 as the PA was facing a financial crisis.

The 2010s were marked by continued unilateralism in the West Bank. The Fatah-dominated PA continued to work toward establishing itself as an independent government in the urban Palestinian areas of the West Bank while Israel expanded its settlement activity in the territory. By the close of the decade, many in Israel were calling for the annexation of parts of the West Bank.

### **ISRAELI RAIDS AND THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR**

A wave of attacks on Israelis in early 2022 led the IDF to conduct frequent raids in the West Bank, especially in the northern West Bank cities of [Jenin](#), [Nablus](#), and [Tulkarm](#), in an effort to root out militants. The confrontations between Palestinians and the IDF led to the deadliest year in the territory in nearly two decades.

On October 7, 2023, [Hamas](#) conducted a surprise land, sea, and air assault on Israel from the [Gaza Strip](#), leading to the deadliest day in Israel since its independence in 1948. The following day the IDF began restricting movement in the West Bank, blocking the entrance to many cities and villages altogether as it stepped up raids, which took place almost daily around refugee camps in the northern part of the territory during the [Israel-Hamas War](#). Attacks on West Bank Palestinians by vigilante Israeli settlers increased as the number of gun permits and weaponry in the settlements proliferated, especially at the [initiative](#) of Israel's far-right national security minister [Itamar Ben-Gvir](#). In some cases settlers violently seized land and created new outposts, prompting U.S. sanctions against a small number of individuals and organizations related to the settlement movement.

In August 2024, days after militant groups claimed responsibility for an attempted [suicide bombing](#) in [Tel Aviv](#), Israel announced a large-scale offensive in the West Bank that it said would prevent further terrorist attacks that might originate from the territory. The IDF blockaded roads around [Jenin](#), [Tulkarm](#), and Al-Faraa refugee camp as ground forces and aerial vehicles entered them, destroying roads that Israeli forces said they suspected might contain explosive devices and controlling access to hospitals where they said militants might hide.

*[The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica](#) This article was most recently revised and updated by [Adam Zeidan](#).*

[World HistoryWars, Battles & Armed Conflicts](#)

# THE JEWS, THE PALESTINIANS, THE WEST BANK

## ChatGPT (AI)

*THE WEST BANK, IS A FOCAL POINT OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT THAT HAS UNDERGONE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND DEMOGRAPHIC TERMS FROM THE OSLO ACCORDS (1993-1995) TO TODAY.*

*IT HAS SEEN THE EVOLUTION OF JEWISH SETTLEMENTS, PALESTINIAN GOVERNANCE AND KEY ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO), FATAH AND HAMAS.*

*BELOW IS AN ANALYSIS OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS.*

### 1. The Oslo Accords and the Initial Framework

The Oslo Accords established the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a self-governing body for parts of the West Bank and Gaza, **dividing the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C:**

- Area A: Full Palestinian control (mainly urban centers, ~18% of the West Bank).
- Area B: Palestinian civil control, shared security with Israel (~22%).
- Area C: Full Israeli control (~60%), including most settlements.

The Accords were intended to pave the way for a two-state solution, but political disagreements, mistrust, and violence have impeded progress.

### 2. Development of Israeli Settlements

- **Expansion:** Jewish settlements in the West Bank have grown steadily, with the settler population increasing from approximately 120,000 in 1993 to over 500,000 by 2024. This growth has been fueled by state-backed infrastructure projects, security guarantees, and ideological movements emphasizing the religious and historical connection to the land.
- **Economic Integration:** Settlements have created a mixed economy where many Palestinians work in Israeli industrial zones or agriculture, but this has also deepened dependency and economic asymmetry.
- **Legal and Political Impact:** Internationally, settlements are considered illegal under international law (Fourth Geneva Convention), but Israel disputes this interpretation. Domestically, settlements have significant political clout, influencing Israeli policy and elections.

### 3. Palestinian Political Landscape

#### PLO and Fatah

- **The PLO** dominated by Fatah, initially drove the peace process but has faced diminishing credibility due to its inability to achieve statehood.
- **Fatah** governs the PA in the West Bank but faces criticism for corruption, inefficiency, and collaboration with Israel (e.g., security coordination agreements).

#### Hamas

- **The rift between Fatah and Hamas** deepened after Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007. Despite occasional attempts at reconciliation, the factions remain divided, with contrasting ideologies and strategies toward Israel.
- **Hamas has gained support in the West Bank**, particularly among those disillusioned with Fatah and the PA.

### 4. Demographic Shifts

- **Population Growth:** The Palestinian population in the West Bank has grown from roughly 1.8 million in 1993 to over 3 million in 2024, with a high fertility rate compared to Jewish settlers.
- **Israeli Settlers:** Settler growth has also been rapid, altering the demographic and geographic landscape, particularly in Area C and East Jerusalem.

### 5. Economic Trends

- **Palestinian Economy:** Heavily reliant on international aid, the Palestinian economy in the West Bank has been constrained by:
  - Restrictions on movement and trade due to Israeli checkpoints and barriers.
  - Dependence on the Israeli labor market and tax transfers.
- **Israeli Economy in the West Bank:** Settlements have thrived economically, benefiting from state subsidies, modern infrastructure, and integration with Israel's advanced economy.

### 6. Israeli-Palestinian Relations and Conflict

- **Second Intifada (2000-2005):** Marked a turning point with widespread violence, leading to harsher Israeli security measures, including the construction of the West Bank Barrier.
- **Settlement Regularization and Annexation:** Moves toward de facto annexation, especially under right-wing Israeli governments, have escalated tensions.
- **U.S.-led efforts, including the 2020 Abraham Accords,** shifted focus away from **Peace Initiatives:** Israeli-Palestinian negotiations toward broader regional normalization with Arab states.

### 7. International and Regional Dynamics

- **Arab States:** Decreasing prioritization of the Palestinian cause in favor of normalization with Israel (e.g., UAE, Bahrain).
- **Global Actors:** European nations and the UN have continued to push for a two-state solution, but U.S. policy has fluctuated, particularly during the Trump administration (2017-2021), which recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and proposed controversial peace plans.

## 8. Humanitarian and Social Impact

- **Displacement:** Demolitions of Palestinian homes, especially in Area C, have led to ongoing displacement and humanitarian crises.
- **Education and Civil Society:** Despite challenges, Palestinian educational and cultural institutions have grown, although they often face restrictions.

## CONCLUSION

From the Oslo Accords to 2024, the West Bank remains a contested space marked by deep divisions. The growth of Israeli settlements and political fragmentation among Palestinians have complicated the prospects for peace. With regional and global dynamics shifting, the focus on achieving a two-state solution has waned, leaving the future of the region uncertain.

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***THIS SECTION DELVES DEEPER INTO THE CONFRONTATION  
BETWEEN ISRAELIS (PRIMARILY SETTLERS) AND PALESTINIANS,  
THE ROLE OF HAMAS, AND ECONOMIC FACTORS  
WITH SUPPORTING STATISTICS.***

### 1. Confrontations Between Jews and Palestinians

Confrontations in the West Bank have intensified due to settlement expansion, land disputes, and periodic escalations in violence.

#### Clashes Over Land and Resources

- **Settler-Palestinian Violence:** The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported a sharp increase in settler attacks on Palestinians, with 590 attacks in 2022 compared to around 260 in 2017.
- **Military Raids:** Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) frequently conduct operations in Area A and B, citing security concerns. These raids often lead to fatalities and arrests, with over 250 Palestinians killed in 2023, one of the highest tolls in decades.
- **Land Seizures:** Palestinians accuse Israel of appropriating land for settlement expansion. By 2024, approximately 12% of the West Bank's land has been allocated to settlements.

### 2. Role of Hamas

**Hamas**, though primarily based in Gaza, exerts influence in the West Bank and plays a key role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

#### Rise of Hamas Influence in the West Bank

- **Popular support for Hamas surged following perceived corruption and inefficiency within Fatah.** In a 2023 poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 33% of Palestinians in the West Bank preferred Hamas leadership over the PA.
- **Hamas cells in the West Bank** have carried out periodic attacks, including shootings targeting settlers or soldiers. In 2022, Hamas claimed responsibility for over 20 incidents in the West Bank.



## Hamas-Israel Confrontations

- **While most Hamas-Israel conflicts occur in Gaza, ripple effects often extend to the West Bank.** For example, during the 2021 Gaza-Israel conflict, protests and clashes erupted in the West Bank, leading to over 30 deaths in just a week.

## 3. Economic Dynamics

**The economic landscape in the West Bank** is marked by stark inequalities between Jewish settlers and Palestinians, with ongoing dependency and restrictions exacerbating Palestinian economic struggles.

### Palestinian Economy

- **GDP and Unemployment:** The West Bank's GDP was approximately \$15 billion in 2023, with an unemployment rate of 16.9%. This contrasts with Gaza's 45% unemployment, but the numbers reflect significant underdevelopment.
- **Aid Dependency:** The Palestinian Authority heavily relies on international aid, receiving around \$500 million annually from donors like the EU and the U.S. in 2022. However, aid has declined due to donor fatigue and political disputes.
- **Restrictions on Trade:** Palestinian businesses face heavy restrictions due to Israeli control over borders and checkpoints. A 2020 World Bank report estimated that such constraints cost the Palestinian economy \$3.4 billion annually.

### Israeli Settlements' Economy

- **Economic Growth:** Settlements have experienced robust economic growth, supported by Israeli subsidies. The average annual income of settlers is 40% higher than that of Palestinians in the West Bank.
- **Labor Dynamics:** Approximately 135,000 Palestinians work in Israel or settlements, earning higher wages than in Palestinian territories but under stringent conditions.

## 4. Demographic Shifts and Impacts

**The interplay of demographic changes** has deepened the socio-political tensions.

### Population Growth

- **Palestinian Population:** The population grew from 1.8 million in 1993 to over 3 million by 2024, with a fertility rate of 4.4 children per woman in 2022.
- **Settler Population:** The number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank increased from 120,000 in 1993 to over 500,000 by 2024, growing at approximately 4% annually, far outpacing natural growth rates in Israel.

## 5. Politics and Governance

**The political impasse within Palestinian leadership and between Israel and Palestinians remains unresolved.**

### Palestinian Authority (PA)

- **The PA's governance is undermined** by its lack of control over most of the West Bank (Area C). In a 2023 survey, 72% of Palestinians believed the PA was corrupt, contributing to its waning legitimacy.

## Israeli Policy

- **Israel's right-wing governments**, particularly under Benjamin Netanyahu, have accelerated settlement expansion. The 2020 Nation-State Law further solidified Jewish identity as central to the state, alienating Palestinians.
- **In 2023**, the Israeli government allocated \$200 million to settlement security and infrastructure, fueling further tensions.

## 6. International and Regional Dynamics

- **Abraham Accords:** These normalization agreements between Israel and Arab states have marginalized the Palestinian issue. In 2024, no major breakthroughs were made toward a two-state solution despite ongoing EU and UN efforts.
- **U.S. and Global Shifts:** The Trump administration's 2020 "Peace to Prosperity" plan allowed for potential annexation of West Bank areas by Israel, though it was never fully implemented. U.S. policy under Biden has emphasized a two-state solution, but with limited actionable steps.

## CONCLUSION

**From the Oslo Accords to 2024, the West Bank has seen persistent conflict, political fragmentation, and economic stagnation.** Confrontations between settlers and Palestinians have escalated, driven by demographic pressures, settlement expansion, and political stalemates. The role of Hamas has complicated Fatah's governance, while international dynamics have shifted focus away from resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite international aid and efforts, prospects for peace and economic parity remain distant.

## **THE OSLO ACCORDS AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE PROCESS**

### Office of the (US) Historian

On September 13, 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas signed a Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, commonly referred to as the “Oslo Accord,” at the White House. Israel accepted the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians, and the PLO renounced terrorism and recognized Israel’s right to exist in peace. Both sides agreed that a Palestinian Authority (PA) would be established and assume governing responsibilities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over a five-year period. Then, permanent status talks on the issues of borders, refugees, and Jerusalem would be held. While President Bill Clinton’s administration played a limited role in bringing the Oslo Accord into being, it would invest vast amounts of time and resources in order to help Israel and the Palestinians implement the agreement. By the time Clinton left office, however, the peace process had run aground, and a new round of Israeli-Palestinian violence had begun.

### **THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE PROCESS, 1993–1996**

The Clinton administration did not initially make Israeli-Palestinian peace a priority. Clinton and his advisors believed that a diplomatic breakthrough on the Israeli-Syrian track would be more likely, and that Israel’s leaders would find it politically easier to pull back from the Golan Heights than to withdraw from the West Bank. An Israeli-Syrian agreement, they reasoned, would also lead to an Israeli-Lebanese agreement, and help isolate Iraq and Iran, the principal regional opponents of the peace process. U.S. officials were briefed on secret negotiations that the Israelis and Palestinians had begun in Oslo in December 1992, but made little effort to get involved in them.

The United States did not play a major role in the negotiations that led to the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty of October 1994, though Clinton lent his support by hosting King Hussein and Rabin in Washington and urging Congress to forgive Jordan’s debts. Nor did the United States play a critical part in the negotiations leading up to the May 1994 Cairo Agreement, which finalized Israel’s withdrawal from most of Gaza and Jericho, or the Taba (or “Oslo II”) Agreement of September 1995. The latter agreement divided the West Bank into separate areas under Israeli control, Palestinian control, and Israeli military responsibility with Palestinian civil administration, respectively. Oslo II also spelled out provisions for elections, civil/legal affairs, and other bilateral Israeli-Palestinian cooperation on various issues. Since the Oslo Accord did not give the United States monitoring responsibilities, the Clinton administration found itself largely confined to defusing crises and building up the Palestinian Authority with economic aid and security assistance.

On the Israeli-Syrian track, the administration exerted itself more forcefully, but with few results. Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross tried to build on Rabin’s August 1993 promise to withdraw fully from the Golan if Syria agreed to full peace and necessary security arrangements. By 1994, these talks stalled over Israel and Syria’s different definitions of “full

withdrawal.” The Syrians insisted that the Israelis should withdraw to the line of “June 4, 1967,” when they had controlled a pocket of land on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Israel’s principal source of water. The Israelis wanted to pull back to the 1923 international border, which would have left the Sea of Galilee under their sovereignty. That July, Rabin indicated to Christopher that Israel would withdraw to the June 4 line if Syria met its other needs, paving the way for talks between Israeli and Syrian military officers. However, these negotiations eventually bogged down over whether Israel could retain early warning stations on the Golan, and also became politically controversial in Israel. Rabin thus chose to suspend them until after Israel’s elections in 1996.

### **OSLO’S COLLAPSE, 1996–2000**

In November 1995, Rabin was assassinated by Yigal Amir, an Israeli who opposed the Oslo Accords on religious grounds. Rabin’s murder was followed by a string of terrorist attacks by Hamas, which undermined support for the Labor Party in Israel’s May 1996 elections. New Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu hailed from the Likud Party, which had historically opposed Palestinian statehood and withdrawal from the occupied territories.

Worried that the peace process might collapse, the Clinton administration involved itself more actively in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. In January 1997, following intensive U.S. mediation, Israel and the PA signed the Hebron Protocol, which provided for the transfer of most of Hebron to Palestinian control. In October 1998, Clinton hosted Netanyahu and Arafat at the Wye River Plantation, where they negotiated an agreement calling for further Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank. Infighting over the implementation of the Wye Memorandum, however, brought down Netanyahu’s government in January 1999.

In Israel’s May 1999 elections, the Labor Party’s Ehud Barak decisively defeated Netanyahu. Barak predicted that he could reach agreements with both Syria and the Palestinians in 12 to 15 months, and pledged to withdraw Israeli troops from southern Lebanon. In September, Barak signed the Sharm al-Shaykh Memorandum with Arafat, which committed both sides to begin permanent status negotiations. An initial round of meetings, however, achieved nothing, and by December the Palestinians suspended talks over settlement-building in the occupied territories.

Barak then focused on Syria. In January 2000, Israeli, Syrian, and U.S. delegations convened in West Virginia for peace talks. These negotiations foundered when Barak refused to reaffirm Rabin’s pledge to withdraw to the June 4, 1967 line, arguing that none of the concessions offered by the Syrian delegation in return could be considered final, since Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad was not present. A subsequent meeting between Clinton and Asad in Geneva failed to produce an Israeli-Syrian accord.

Barak then withdrew Israeli forces unilaterally from Lebanon and returned to the Palestinian track. At the prime minister’s insistence, Clinton convened a summit at Camp David in July 2000, where he, Barak, and Arafat attempted to reach a final agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Accounts differ as to why Camp David failed, but it is clear that despite additional concessions by Barak, the Israelis and Palestinians remained strongly at odds over borders, Jerusalem, and whether Israel would recognize Palestinian refugees’ “right of return.” The summit ended without a settlement; Clinton would blame Arafat for its failure.

On September 28, riots erupted following a visit of Likud Party leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount, and soon escalated into a wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence that became known as the al-Aqsa Intifada. In December 2000, Clinton put forward his own proposals for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. By this point, however, the president was leaving office, Barak faced electoral defeat, and Israeli-Palestinian violence continued unabated.

Thus, by the end of 2000, the prospect of ending the Arab-Israeli conflict looked more distant than it had eight years earlier. The Clinton administration had helped facilitate Israeli-Jordanian peace and lay the foundations for Palestinian self-rule. More broadly, the negotiations of the 1990s helped Israel, the Palestinians, and Syria break with numerous diplomatic taboos and establish a basis for what a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace might look like. But a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict remained elusive.

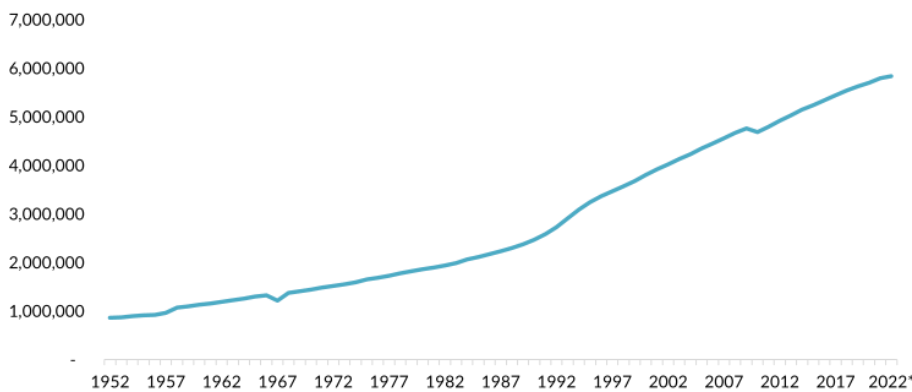
## **GENERATIONS OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES FACE PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT AND DISPOSSESSION**

[MPI](#) (Migration Policy Institute) May 3, 2023 Nathan Citino, Ana Martín Gil, and Kelsey P. Norman

Seventy-five years after the mass displacement of Palestinians began, approximately 5.9 million registered Palestinian refugees live across the Middle East. Palestinians comprise the largest stateless community worldwide. While they constitute the world's longest protracted refugee situation, their plight has been eclipsed by more recent displacement crises and dismissed as unsolvable.

Among refugees, this population is unique in several ways. For one, it includes people originally displaced from Palestine between 1946 and 1948, amid the creation of the state of Israel, as well as their children and other descendants; while these younger generations would not typically be considered refugees in other displacement situations, they are counted as such by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). So while the Palestinian refugee population has grown significantly over time, it has done so because of the descendants of people displaced decades ago, rather than new displacement. And unlike other refugees, Palestinians do not fall under the mandate of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but instead are protected by UNRWA, which was established in December 1949 to provide them direct relief and other services. Unlike UNHCR, UNRWA cannot resettle refugees; it describes its mandate as to assist and protect Palestinians "pending a just and lasting solution to their plight." UNRWA acts solely as a service provider, primarily for education, health (including mental health), social services, emergency assistance, and microfinance. It does not administer the refugee camps where approximately one-third of all Palestinian refugees live, which are the responsibility of the host country or governing authority.

This article provides an overview of the historical circumstances that gave birth to the displacement and dispossession of Palestinian refugees and takes stock of their current situation in countries across the Middle East, especially in light of worsening regional economies. While many long-term challenges are rooted in ongoing conflict involving Israel, other factors have contributed to Palestinian refugees' situation, including the near impossibility of obtaining citizenship in many host countries and UNRWA's precarious funding.

**Figure 1. Number of Palestinian Refugees, 1952-2022\***

\* Data for 2022 are as of the middle of the year.  
 Note: Figure refers to Palestinians under the mandate of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).  
 Source: UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Refugee Data Finder," accessed April 27, 2023, [available online](#).

### THE CREATION OF A REFUGEE POPULATION

Colonialism set the stage for Palestinians' dispossession. Following World War I, the League of Nations authorized the partition of the Ottoman Empire's Middle Eastern territories by the United Kingdom and France. In the Palestine mandate, the United Kingdom was to foster a national home for Jewish people consistent with its 1917 Balfour Declaration, a goal aligned with those of the broader settler-colonial project of Zionism and opposed by Palestinian Arabs. Jews remained a minority in mandate Palestine, but their numbers increased during the 1930s as many fled Nazi persecution. Palestinian Arabs, who lacked institutional power, revolted from 1936 until 1939, leading British authorities to kill, wound, jail, or exile around one-tenth of all adult men. Following the revolt, the British government also set a limit on Jewish migration to the territory.

World War II brought cataclysmic changes. The horrors committed by Nazis and their collaborators in the Holocaust created a large displaced population, increasing pressure on British leaders to lift restrictions on Jewish migration to Palestine. Meanwhile, Zionist leaders shifted the focus of their diplomacy to the United States, where they enjoyed political and organizational support. President Harry Truman prevailed on Britain to resettle 100,000 Jewish refugees in Palestine, a proposal adopted by an Anglo-American Commission. The United Kingdom subsequently turned the question of Palestine over to the United Nations, whose Special Committee on Palestine proposed partitioning the mandate into Jewish and Arab states, with the city of Jerusalem as a separate entity. Despite their minority status, Jews were granted 55 percent of the mandate's territory, including much of the productive agricultural land. With strong U.S. backing, the UN General Assembly adopted the partition measure on November 29, 1947.

In the civil war that erupted following the partition vote, Arab and Jewish forces clashed in anticipation of British withdrawal. Palestinian Arabs lacked the Zionists' unity and resources and were reliant on an undersupplied Arab Liberation Army backed by regional states. In anticipation of an invasion, Jewish leaders instructed brigade commanders to empty cities and towns of presumably hostile Arab residents. Historians differ over the degree to which Zionist forces pursued ethnic cleansing as official policy, but the result was hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs were expelled from their homes or fled. By the time David Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency Executive, proclaimed the establishment of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948, more than 300,000 Palestinian Arabs had been turned into refugees (although this

predates the 1951 Refugee Convention, historical literature considers Palestinians who fled to have been refugees).

Israel's establishment led to a new phase of fighting and an invasion of Palestinian territory by Arab states. Israel benefited from lack of unity among Arab countries. For instance, Zionists had previously held secret talks with King Abdullah of Transjordan envisioning his kingdom's occupation of the geographically Arab portion of Palestine, a plan bitterly opposed by Abdullah's rivals in the Palestinian leadership and other Arab states such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Despite UN mediation efforts, Israeli forces secured not only the area designated for the Jewish state under the partition plan but also territories such as the western Galilee and west Jerusalem. Israeli forces depopulated multiple Arab towns and villages. In all, more than 400,000 additional Palestinian Arabs fled or were driven from their homes during the war that followed Israel's establishment.

Palestinians and other Arabs describe this dispossession as al-Nakba ("the disaster"). The term has come to refer not only to a discrete event, which is commemorated every year on May 15, but also to an ongoing process of dispossession. Despite UN General Assembly Resolution 194 calling for the right of refugees to return or be compensated for lost property, Israel prevented Palestinian refugees from returning and passed laws granting a state custodian authority over Palestinian lands. Hundreds of Palestinian villages were destroyed to prevent the return of their inhabitants and to facilitate Jewish immigration and settlement. The roughly 160,000 Arabs who remained in the territory that became Israel were citizens of the new country but nonetheless lived under a state of emergency and martial law until 1966.

### PALESTINIAN DISPLACEMENT ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST

Palestinian refugees scattered across the region, and their population has grown several times over. As of 2022, 40 percent of the nearly 5.9 million registered Palestinian refugees lived in Jordan; 10 percent in Syria, although approximately one-fifth of these are believed to have fled to other countries since the start of the Syrian civil war; and 8 percent in Lebanon, according to UNRWA (see Figure 2). The remainder were in the Israeli-occupied territories of Gaza (26 percent) and the West Bank (15 percent).

Figure 2. Map of Palestinian Refugees, by Country of Residence, 2022



Note: Figure refers to Palestinians under the mandate of UNRWA.  
 Source: UNRWA, "UNRWA Registered Population Dashboard," accessed April 14, 2023, [available online](#).



## **JORDAN: HOST TO THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES**

In 1949, Jordan welcomed approximately 900,000 refugees by amending the country's 1928 Law of Nationality to grant equal citizenship to Palestinians; the 1954 Law of Jordanian Nationality later extended citizenship to Palestinians who arrived in Jordan after the 1949 addendum. Jordan annexed the West Bank in 1950, but the war in 1967 led to its loss of this territory and displaced between 250,000 and 300,000 Palestinians to the East Bank. Like those who had fled in 1948, Palestinians from the West Bank retained their Jordanian citizenship. However, Palestinians from Gaza displaced to Jordan after 1967 were not able to become Jordanian citizens. After 1988, when Jordan relinquished claims to the West Bank, the government also took steps to distinguish between so-called Palestinian-Jordanians and Transjordanians (or non-Palestinian Jordanians), and to push back against the Israeli narrative that Jordan could serve as an alternative homeland for Palestinians.

Because about three-quarters of Palestinians in Jordan are Jordanian citizens, they are fairly integrated into its society and economy, though Palestinians from Gaza remain barred from citizenship and are excluded from most rights and services, forced to turn to UNRWA for education and health care. Gazans also must renew their travel documents every two years, obtain special permits to work in the private sector, and pay double the tuition fees to access public schools and universities.

Palestinian refugees who had been living in Syria but later fled to Jordan after the Syrian civil war started in 2011—of whom there were more than 19,000 as of June 2022—also face challenges. Lacking Jordanian citizenship, they cannot work and access government services. And unlike other refugees from Syria, they are excluded from UNHCR assistance—which is more robust in acute displacement situations—and forced to instead turn to UNRWA. According to UNRWA, a trifecta of factors—the COVID-19 pandemic, increases in commodity prices, and the economic fallout of the Russia-Ukraine war—have recently exacerbated the impoverishment of Palestinian refugees from Syria, 80 percent of whom depended on UNRWA assistance as their main source of income as of 2022.

## **LEBANON: LIFE IN CAMPS AND LIMITED RIGHTS**

Unlike many of those in Jordan, the nearly 488,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon cannot become citizens and have very limited access to public health care, education, or the formal economy. While refugees' presence can be politically contentious everywhere, the permanent settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon (known as *tawteen*) evokes fears about upending the delicate balance of Lebanon's confessional political system, which institutionalizes the division of power among religious communities. Historically, Lebanese politicians and many Palestinians have objected to anything thought to encourage *tawteen*. Until 2005, the Lebanese government prohibited Palestinian refugees from accessing the formal labor market, forcing them to work in the informal economy, where they received lower wages. Now, Palestinians born in Lebanon who have registered with UNRWA and the Ministry of Interior can obtain work permits and access 70 occupations.

Still, many challenges remain. Palestinians cannot access public health insurance and remain barred from numerous professions in the fields of law, engineering, and public health care. More alarmingly,

approximately 210,000 Palestinians—close to 45 percent of the total Palestinian refugee population in the country—live in outdated camps where conditions tend to be poor.

In 1968, Palestinians obtained autonomous governance within camps in Lebanon under the Cairo Agreement. These camps had played a vital role as locations for political and military mobilization during Israel's invasion of Lebanon and throughout the Lebanese civil war, and so their independence was reined in with the 1991 Taif agreement. Simultaneously, new laws prohibited Palestinians from residing outside camps or owning land or housing. Since then, the population in Lebanon's Palestinian camps has grown, but the land allocated to them has remained practically the same, leading to overcrowding and unsafe construction. Recent economic and financial crises, impacts of the pandemic, and the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020 have fallen particularly hard on refugees in Lebanon; 93 percent of Palestinian refugees in the country lived in poverty as of 2022, according to UNRWA. The price of a food basket in refugee camps increased more than fivefold between October 2019 and July 2022, leaving many families unable to afford basic items.

### **SYRIA: NEW DISPLACEMENT FOR MANY AMID CIVIL WAR AND NATURAL DISASTER**

Syria meanwhile received a large number of Palestinian refugees in both the 1940s and the 1960s. Palestinians in Syria could not gain citizenship but otherwise could access employment, education, and health care on par with Syrian nationals. However, the civil war beginning in 2011 had a severe impact on Palestinian refugees. The camps of Dera'a, Yarmouk, and Ein el Tal—which combined hosted more than 30 percent of Palestinian refugees in the country—were nearly destroyed. About 120,000 Palestinians fled to other countries, meaning that about 438,000 of the 575,000 refugees who were registered with UNRWA remained in Syria as of 2022; of these, 40 percent were internally displaced.

Syria's civil war has become localized over time, but the humanitarian situation remains dire and has been exacerbated by the economic downturn, declining agricultural production due to climate change, and health issues. Two earthquakes also hit Turkey and northwest Syria in February 2023, leaving tens of thousands dead and affecting Palestinian refugees in Aleppo, Latakia, and Hama in northern Syria. Close to 47,000 Palestinian refugees were affected and thousands were again displaced.

### **REFUGEES IN GAZA AND THE WEST BANK**

In addition to the 3.4 million registered Palestinian refugees living in host countries, nearly 2.5 million Palestinians live in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank. Refugees comprise about 67 percent of Gaza's population. They live in difficult socioeconomic conditions stemming from the land, air, and sea blockade imposed by Israel since 2007, when Hamas took political control of Gaza, as well as violence and political instability. As a result, 80 percent of the population depended on humanitarian assistance as of 2021. Poverty rates are extremely high (nearly 82 percent) and the unemployment rate is among the highest in the world, at nearly 47 percent as of August 2022.

The humanitarian situation in the West Bank is less severe, but Palestinian refugees nonetheless face numerous challenges such as Israeli-imposed closures and movement restrictions as well as conflict-related violence. Checkpoints and the unreliability of access to permits to enter and to work in Israel prevent many from accessing jobs, education, and health care, and can seriously impact their mental health. Israeli security forces frequently raid refugee camps in the West Bank—an average of 14 times per

week as of October 2022, according to UNRWA—during which they have used tear gas, destroyed property, and harassed residents. Palestinians continue to be expelled from their homes in the West Bank, leading to further displacement. In 2022, 953 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished or seized across the West Bank, the most since 2016, and 1,031 individuals were displaced as a result.

### **CHALLENGES FOR UNRWA**

The UN General Assembly's Resolution 194 (III) from 1948 set forth that Palestinians "wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their [neighbors] should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date," which has been interpreted in international law as the right of return. This principle has had profound implications for the operations of UNRWA, which is seen as a temporary custodian of Palestinians in exile, as well as possible solutions to Palestinians' 75-year plight.

UNRWA is often thought of as a quasi-state, since it provides state-like services to Palestinians such as education, health care, and other assistance. Yet unlike a state that can collect taxes, UNRWA is almost entirely dependent on donor funding (which accounts for 93 percent of its budget), leading to chronic budget shortfalls and leaving it subject to political headwinds. Some argue that UNRWA's mandate has grown too significant over time, making the organization financially unsustainable. Yet the number of Palestinians has grown significantly as additional generations have been born into statelessness. The United States has historically been UNRWA's top donor, contributing between U.S. \$300-350 million per year, but under the Trump administration aid fell to U.S. \$60 million in 2018 and was eliminated in 2019, before a restoration to U.S. \$338 million in 2020. With the election of a Republican-controlled House of Representatives in 2022, UNRWA once again faces an uphill battle for funding, and agency staff fear that U.S. financial support could stop altogether if a Republican retakes the presidency in 2024.

The services and assistance UNRWA provides Palestinians are inextricably linked to the question of their return. Those arguing for defunding or dismantling the organization also often advocate for Palestinians to be absorbed into host societies. Yet most Palestinians lack full economic and social rights in these countries, and there is little appetite from either host-country politicians or Palestinians themselves to fully integrate, for fear that doing so means abandoning hope of return to their ancestral land. In addition to the repercussions for individual Palestinians, such a move would also be a profound shock to much of the Arab world, which has rallied around their cause for decades, despite a thaw in relations between some Arab governments and Israel via normalization agreements.

### **75 YEARS GONE, AND WHAT NEXT?**

A resolution for Palestinian refugees would require a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and refugees' return to their ancestral lands or restitution for lost property. Such a solution has been debated for decades but seems dimmer than ever after the election of Israel's far-right government in December 2022. Benjamin Netanyahu returned as prime minister after his party formed a coalition with parties regarded as extremist, generating the most right-wing government in the country's history. Several members of the cabinet committed to strengthening the Israeli settler movement across the West Bank, despite findings that these settlements are illegal under international law, violate Palestinians' human rights, and will lead to further Palestinian displacement. Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir was previously convicted for inciting racism against Palestinians, and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has consistently called for

expanding Israel's territory and further expulsions of Palestinians. Violence rapidly escalated between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank in 2023, including at the Jenin refugee camp, which Israeli forces raided in January, killing 10 Palestinians and wounding 20 more, including both militants and civilians. Still, other reforms might be more attainable and could improve Palestinians' access to services and increase opportunities for mobility. For one, although UNRWA does not have a mandate to resettle Palestinian refugees, the international community and receiving states could increase their use of complementary pathways such as existing work and study visa channels, in line with the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees. While historically many Palestinians—including political leaders—have feared resettlement would fragment and dilute their cause, Palestinians abroad can still retain their identity and need not concede the right to return. Increased opportunities for mobility are especially important for refugees in Gaza and the West Bank who have faced stringent barriers to exit from Israeli authorities. For host societies, the lack of citizenship for many Palestinian refugees and other integration challenges are continual obstacles. Even without citizenship, legal changes allowing Palestinians to own land or seek employment in certain professions in Lebanon, for instance, could ultimately benefit both Palestinians and host-state societies and economies.

Finally, UNRWA's dependence on individual donor countries is a major challenge. Some experts have suggested a shift to multiyear allocations rather than annual funding, which would allow UNRWA to better plan operations and reduce time spent on fundraising.

Seventy-five years into multigenerational and multicountry Palestinian displacement, soon no refugees will themselves have fled directly from their ancestral land before 1948. Instead, the international community has allowed generations of Palestinians to be born into refugee status, a fate shared by no other refugee group. This extraordinary position has transformed Palestinians into an emblem of wider geopolitical tensions but has failed to yield a meaningful resolution to their plight.

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## ARAB-ISRAELI WARS

### BRITANNICA



After decades of confrontations between Arabs and Jews under the British [mandate](#) of [Palestine](#), where both [communities](#) sought self-determination after the fall of the [Ottoman Empire](#) in 1922, the [United Kingdom](#) announced its intention in 1947 to withdraw its forces from Palestine and [endorsed United Nations Resolution 181](#), which partitioned the British [mandate](#) into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The plan, although accepted by the international [community](#), was rejected by the Arabs, and in May 1948, as British forces withdrew, Israel was born in a region with unresolved disputes over borders, security, land ownership, and other matters. Since that time, Israel has fought a number of conflicts with various Arab forces, most notably in 1948–49, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982, 2006, and 2023–present. This article focuses on those conflicts with significant consequences for the broader [Middle East](#) region. For coverage of clashes specific to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, see [Israel](#), [Palestine](#), [intifada](#), and [Gaza Strip](#).

### 1948–49: ISRAEL'S [WAR OF INDEPENDENCE](#) AND THE PALESTINIAN [NAKBA](#)

On November 29, 1947, the [United Nations](#) (UN) voted to [partition](#) the British mandate of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state (see [United Nations Resolution 181](#)). Clashes broke out almost immediately between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, beginning with the Arab ambush of a bus carrying Jewish passengers from [Netanya](#) to [Jerusalem](#) on November 30. As British troops prepared to withdraw from Palestine, conflict continued to escalate, with both Jewish and Arab forces committing hostile acts. Among the most infamous events was the attack on the Arab village of [Deir Yassin](#) on April 9, 1948. The

news of a massacre there by [Irgun Zvai Leumi](#) and the [Stern Gang](#) forces spread widely and inspired both panic and retaliation. Days later, Arab forces attacked a Jewish convoy headed for Hadassah Hospital, killing 78.

On the eve of the British forces' May 15, 1948, [withdrawal](#), Israel declared independence. The fighting intensified immediately: [Egypt](#) launched an aerial assault on [Tel Aviv](#), and, the next day, Arab forces from

Egypt, Transjordan ([Jordan](#)), [Iraq](#), [Syria](#), and [Lebanon](#) occupied the areas in southern and eastern Palestine not apportioned to the Jews by the UN partition of Palestine and then captured [East Jerusalem](#), including the small Jewish quarter of the Old City. The Israelis, meanwhile, won control of the main road to Jerusalem through the Yehuda Mountains (“Hills of Judaea”) and successfully repulsed repeated Arab attacks. By early 1949 the Israelis had managed to occupy all of the [Negev](#) up to the former Egypt-Palestine frontier, except for the [Gaza Strip](#).

## ARAB-ISRAELI WARS EVENTS

### [Six-Day War](#)

[June 5, 1967 - June 10, 1967](#)

[October 6, 1973 - c. November 1973](#)

Between February and July 1949, as a result of separate armistice agreements between Israel and each of the Arab states, a temporary frontier was fixed between Israel and its neighbors. In Israel, the war is remembered as its War of Independence. In the Arab world, it came to be known as the Nakba (“Catastrophe”) because of the large number of refugees and displaced persons resulting from the war.

### 1956: [Suez Crisis](#)

[Tensions](#) mounted again with the rise to power of [Egyptian](#) Pres. [Gamal Abdel Nasser](#), a staunch [Pan-Arab nationalist](#). Nasser took a hostile stance toward Israel. In 1956 Nasser nationalized the [Suez Canal](#), a vital waterway connecting Europe and Asia that was largely owned by French and British concerns. France and Britain responded by striking a deal with Israel—whose ships were barred from using the canal and whose southern port of [Eilat](#) had been blockaded by Egypt—wherein Israel would invade Egypt; France and Britain would then intervene, ostensibly as peacemakers, and take control of the canal.

In October 1956 Israel invaded Egypt’s [Sinai Peninsula](#). In five days the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) captured [Gaza](#), [Rafah](#), and [Al-‘Arīsh](#)—taking thousands of prisoners—and occupied most of the peninsula east of the Suez Canal. The Israelis were then in a position to open sea communications through the [Gulf of Aqaba](#). In December, after the joint Anglo-French intervention, a UN Emergency Force was stationed in the area, and Israeli forces [withdrew](#) in March 1957. Though Egyptian forces had been defeated on all fronts, the [Suez Crisis](#), as it is sometimes known, was seen by Arabs as an Egyptian victory. Egypt dropped the blockade of Eilat. A UN buffer force was placed in the Sinai Peninsula.

### 1967: [Six-Day War](#)

Arab and Israeli forces clashed for the third time June 5–10, 1967, in what came to be called the [Six-Day War](#) (or June War). In early 1967 [Syria](#) intensified its bombardment of Israeli villages from positions in the [Golan Heights](#). When the Israeli Air Force shot down six Syrian [MiG](#) fighter jets in reprisal, Nasser mobilized his forces near the Sinai border, dismissing the UN force there, and he again sought to blockade Eilat. In May 1967 Egypt signed a mutual defense pact with Jordan.

Israel answered this apparent Arab rush to war by staging a sudden air assault, destroying Egypt’s [air force](#) on the ground. The Israeli victory on the ground was also [overwhelming](#). Israeli units drove back Syrian forces from the [Golan Heights](#), took control of the [Gaza Strip](#) and the [Sinai Peninsula](#) from Egypt,

and drove Jordanian forces from the [West Bank](#). Importantly, the Israelis were left in sole control of Jerusalem.

### **1973: [Yom Kippur War](#)**

The sporadic fighting that followed the Six-Day War again developed into full-scale war in 1973. On October 6, the Jewish holy day of [Yom Kippur](#) (thus, “Yom Kippur War”), Israel was caught off guard by Egyptian forces crossing the [Suez Canal](#) and by Syrian forces crossing into the Golan Heights. The Arab armies showed greater aggressiveness and fighting ability than in the previous wars, and the Israeli forces suffered heavy [casualties](#). The Israeli army, however, reversed many of its early losses and pushed its way into Syrian territory and encircled the Egyptian Third Army by crossing the Suez Canal and establishing forces on its west bank. Still, it never regained the seemingly impenetrable fortifications along the Suez Canal that Egypt had destroyed in its initial successes.

The fighting, which lasted through the Islamic holy month of [Ramadan](#), came to an end on October 26. Israel signed a formal cease-fire agreement with Egypt on November 11 and with Syria on May 31, 1974. A disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt, signed on January 18, 1974, provided for Israeli withdrawal into the Sinai west of the Mitla and Gidi passes, while Egypt was to reduce the size of its forces on the east bank of the canal. A UN peacekeeping force was established between the two armies. This agreement was supplemented by another, signed on September 4, 1975.

On March 26, 1979, Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty formally ending the state of war that had existed between the two countries for 30 years. Under the terms of the treaty, which had resulted from the [Camp David Accords](#) signed in 1978, Israel returned the entire Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, and, in return, Egypt recognized Israel’s right to exist. The two countries subsequently established normal [diplomatic](#) relations.

### **1982: [Lebanon War](#)**

On June 5, 1982, less than six weeks after Israel’s complete withdrawal from the Sinai, increased tensions between Israelis and [Palestinians](#) resulted in the Israeli bombing of [Beirut](#) and southern [Lebanon](#), where the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO) had a number of strongholds. The following day Israel invaded Lebanon, and by June 14 its land forces reached as far as the outskirts of Beirut, which was encircled, but the Israeli government agreed to halt its advance and begin negotiations with the PLO. After much delay and massive Israeli shelling of west Beirut, the PLO evacuated the city under the supervision of a multinational force. Eventually, Israeli troops withdrew from west Beirut, and the Israeli army had withdrawn from areas north of the [Litāni River](#) by June 1985. [Hezbollah](#), a militant group that formed as a militia to resist the Israeli invasion in 1982, continued to engage in a guerrilla campaign against Israeli forces until they withdrew fully in May 2000.

### **2006: [Second Lebanon War](#)**

[Beirut: rescue workers search rubble of bombed building](#) Rescue workers searching for survivors under the rubble of a building bombed by the Israeli Defense Forces in Beirut, Lebanon, August 13, 2006.(more)  
After Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah continued to press Israel over border disputes and Israel’s detention of Lebanese prisoners. On July 12, 2006, [Hezbollah](#) launched a [barrage](#) of rockets into



northern Israel, diverting the IDF's attention as Hezbollah fighters infiltrated the border, killing several Israeli soldiers and capturing two others in an attempt to pressure Israel into releasing Lebanese prisoners. Israel launched an offensive into southern Lebanon to recover the captured soldiers, beginning with an extensive air campaign that targeted [infrastructure](#) as far north as [Beirut](#) and later a ground offensive that aimed to push Hezbollah away from the Israeli-Lebanese border. Several Arab leaders criticized Hezbollah for inciting the conflict, which left more than one thousand Lebanese dead and about one million others displaced. Nevertheless, Hezbollah's ability to fight the IDF to a standstill won it praise throughout much of the Arab world. When hostilities came to an end on August 14, Israeli leaders claimed that they had met most of the war's objectives, but the abducted soldiers remained in Hezbollah's custody (their remains were later exchanged through UN-brokered negotiations in 2008) and the handling of the war was heavily [scrutinized](#) by the Israeli public.

### **2023–present: Israel-Hamas War**

Throughout the 20th century and the first years of the 21st century the major conflicts between Israeli forces and Arab forces were either driven by non-Palestinian actors or took place on foreign soil.

After [Hamas](#), a militant Palestinian movement, took control of the [Gaza Strip](#) in 2007, the enclave came under blockade by [Israel](#) and [Egypt](#) and a number of armed conflicts between Israel and Hamas took place in the territory, most notably in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. The consequences of those conflicts largely remained contained within the enclave.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas led the most brutal assault against Israel since its independence, killing some 1,200 people and taking more than 240 others hostage. The attack, which caught Israeli forces off guard on the [solemn Jewish holiday](#) of [Shemini Atzeret](#), occurred under the shadow of the 50th anniversary of the [Yom Kippur War](#). With thousands of rockets launched into Israel in the span of 20 minutes, thus distracting the IDF while Hamas militants infiltrated the border and captured both civilians and soldiers, the assault echoed—and amplified—that of Hezbollah in the [Lebanon War](#) in 2006. Netanyahu vowed to dismantle and destroy Hamas using “all the power” of the IDF, and the next day Israel declared a state of war.

In the weeks that followed, the IDF's air strikes in the crowded enclave were devastating. By the end of October, when Israel launched its ground invasion, more than half of the Gaza Strip's population had been displaced, and the war had become the deadliest for Palestinians since the war of 1948. Despite efforts by [Qatar](#) and [Egypt](#) to mediate the return of the hostages and the [cessation](#) of violence—with short-lived success in late November—the war leveled much of the Gaza Strip and led to a calamitous humanitarian crisis. Moreover, the conflict inspired an escalation in conflict with allies of Hamas, including [Hezbollah](#), which stepped up a series of confrontations with Israel that had begun before October 7, and the [Houthi movement](#), which disrupted global shipping by attacking ships in the [Red Sea](#). At the end of the year Israel faced tremendous international pressure to ease its offensive, and in February a rift emerged between Israel and the [United States](#), Israel's most important source of international support. Meanwhile, efforts to reach a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas continued, although Hamas refused to accept any proposal that did not guarantee a permanent end to hostilities and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces.

## THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANISATION (PLO)

### HISTORY

The Palestine Liberation Organization, or PLO, was first founded in 1964 during a summit in Cairo, Egypt. The organization's initial goals were to unite various Arab groups and create a liberated Palestine in Israel. Over time, the PLO has embraced a broader role, claiming to represent all Palestinians while running the Palestinian National Authority (PA). Although the PLO wasn't known to be violent during its early years, the organization became associated with controversial tactics, terrorism and extremism.

### ORIGINS OF THE PLO

The PLO emerged in response to various compounding events that took place in the Middle East.

In 1948, [Israel](#) became an independent state, which resulted in more than 750,000 Palestinians fleeing their homeland. The subsequent 1948 war set the stage for years of tension and violence between Arabs and Israelis.

Around this time, Palestinians were spread out among several countries, lacked formal leadership and weren't well organized. This limited their political influence and presence.

During the Arab League Summit in 1964, Palestinians came together to create one central organization – the PLO. The PLO's [Palestine](#) National Council (PNC) was first comprised of Palestinian civilians and helped define the group's goals, which included the destruction of Israel. The organization's first chairman was Ahmad Shuqayrī.

### YASSER ARAFAT STEPS IN

After the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War of 1967, in which Israel emerged victorious, the PLO began to ramp up their presence.

A group known as Fatah, led by military leader [Yasser Arafat](#), started to infiltrate and dominate the organization. In 1969, Arafat became Chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee, holding the title until his death in 2004.

Starting in the late 1960s, the PLO launched attacks on Israel from its bases in Jordan. In 1971, the PLO was forced to relocate from Jordan, shifting its headquarters to Lebanon.

While in Lebanon, factions within the PLO began to neglect Israeli military target attacks and instead carried out terrorism plots, including high-profile bombings and aircraft hijackings. In 1974, Arafat called for the PLO's attacks on targets outside of Israel to stop, as part of a plan to gain global acceptance and legitimacy.

In October 1974, the Arab League recognized the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," and granted it full membership. A month later, Arafat became the first non-state leader to address the [United Nations](#) General Assembly.

In 1982, the PLO leadership moved its bases to Tunisia, where it remained until it relocated to Gaza in 1994.

## OSLO ACCORDS

The First Intifada, a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, started in 1987 and ended around 1991.

This period of bloody conflict triggered a peace process, known as the [Oslo Accords](#). Arafat signed a series of treaties with Israeli Prime Minister [Yitzhak Rabin](#). The two leaders were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994.

The first Oslo Accord agreement was signed in 1993, and the second in 1995.

The Oslo Accords established the Palestinian National Authority (PA), which functions as an agency of the PLO, to govern parts of Gaza and the West Bank. They also created a timetable for Israel to gradually withdraw from key territories.

In 1994, Arafat returned to Gaza to head up the PA, after being exiled for 27 years.

However, peace between the Israelis and Palestinians was short-lived. The Second Intifada, another period of bloody conflict, took place from 2000 to 2005.

## HAMAS TAKES OVER

In 2006, a Sunni Islamist militant group called Hamas won the majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections.

Conflict between the ruling Fatah and Hamas led to violence in 2007, when Hamas defeated Fatah in a battle for Gaza. The two PA areas were run by separate factions, with Fatah ruling the West Bank and Hamas ruling Gaza.

In 2014, Hamas and Fatah agreed to a deal that would form a unified national Palestinian government. Hamas has a reputation of carrying out terrorist acts. In fact, many countries consider the group to be a terrorist organization, while others regard them as a political party.

Hamas has been on the U.S. State Department's list of terrorist organizations since 1997.

## STRUCTURE OF PLO

The PLO consists of the following main bodies:

**The Palestine National Council (PNC):** This branch of the PLO is considered the highest authority. Among its many responsibilities, the PNC sets policies, elects the Executive Committee and Board of Council and makes membership decisions.

**The Executive Committee:** This committee oversees daily affairs, maintains a budget and represents the PLO internationally. Members carry out policies set forth by the PNC and Central Council.

**Central Council:** The Central Council has 124 members that serve as an intermediary between the PNC and the Executive Committee.

**Palestine Liberation Army (PLA):** This official military branch of the PLO was first created in 1964.

## PLO TODAY

In 2011, the PA made a bid for full member-state status in the UN. Although this attempt failed, the UN General Assembly voted to make Palestine a "non-member observer state" in 2012.

This distinction allows Palestinians to participate in General Assembly debates and improves their odds of eventually joining UN agencies.

In another step forward, the PLO became a member of the International Criminal Court in 2015. Currently, Mahmoud Abbas serves as the PLO's chairman and president of the PA. Abbas is considered relatively moderate and has voiced opposition to violence in past conflicts. The PLO's present efforts have focused on achieving international recognition of Palestinian statehood. However, a two-state solution is a controversial plan that Israel's Prime Minister and the United States both oppose. In fact, in 2017, U.S. President [Donald Trump](#) recognized [Jerusalem](#) as the capital of Israel, generating disapproval among Arabs and other allies.

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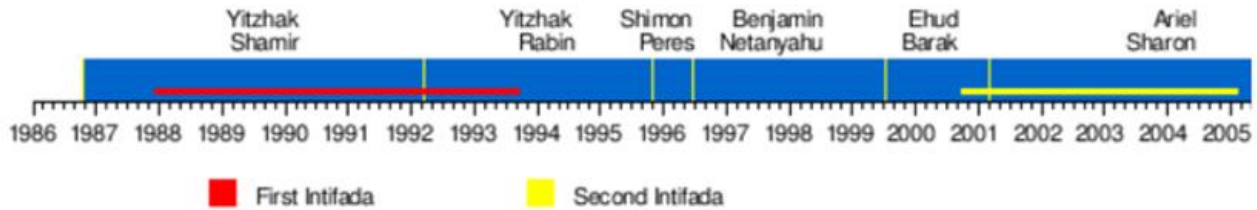
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## THE INTIFADA 1987-1993

Britannica Robert J. Brym, Bader Araj The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica



### THE INTIFADA,

Either of two popular uprisings of Palestinians in the **West Bank** and **Gaza Strip** aimed at ending **Israel's** occupation of those territories and creating an independent Palestinian state. The first intifada began in December 1987 and ended in September 1993 with the signing of the first **Oslo Accords**, which provided a framework for peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The second intifada, sometimes called the Al-Aqsa intifada, began in September 2000. Although no single event signaled its end, most analysts agree that it had run its course by late 2005. The two uprisings resulted in the death of more than 5,000 Palestinians and some 1,400 Israelis.

### THE FIRST INTIFADA

The proximate causes of the first intifada were intensified Israeli land expropriation and settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the electoral victory of the right-wing **Likud** party in 1977; increasing Israeli repression in response to heightened Palestinian protests following the Israeli invasion of **Lebanon** in 1982; the emergence of a new cadre of local Palestinian activists who challenged the leadership of the **Palestine Liberation Organization** (PLO), a process aided by Israel's stepped-up attempts to **curb** political activism and break the PLO's ties to the occupied territories in the early 1980s; and, in reaction to the invasion of Lebanon, the emergence of a strong peace camp on the Israeli side, which many Palestinians thought provided a basis for change in Israeli policy. With motivation, means, and perceived opportunity in place, only a precipitant was required to start an uprising. This occurred in December 1987 when an Israeli vehicle struck two vans carrying Palestinian workers, killing four of them, an event that was perceived by Palestinians as an act of revenge for the death by stabbing of an Israeli in Gaza a few days earlier.

Most of the Palestinian rioting took place during the intifada's first year, after which the Palestinians shifted from throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at Israeli targets to attacking them with rifles, hand grenades, and explosives. The shift occurred mainly because of the severity of Israeli military and police reprisals, which intensified after Palestinian attacks became more violent. According to the Israeli **human rights** group B'Tselem, nearly 2,000 deaths due to violence occurred during the first intifada; the ratio of Palestinian to Israeli deaths was slightly more than 3 to 1.

**Pragmatism** crystallized alongside the violence, however. In 1988 the PLO accepted American conditions for opening a U.S.-Palestinian dialogue: rejection of **terrorism**, recognition of Israel's right to exist, and acceptance of **United Nations Security Council** Resolutions **242** (which called upon Arab states to accept Israel's right "to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries") and **338** (which called for the implementation of **Resolution 242** "in all its parts"). With the intifada proving to be politically and economically damaging to Israel, a new Israeli government was elected in 1992 with a **mandate** to negotiate for peace. In the following year secret talks between Israel and the PLO under the **auspices** of the Norwegian government resulted in the Oslo Accords, a series of agreements signed in 1993–95. The accords **reiterated** the PLO's 1988 commitments, and Israel recognized the PLO as the Palestinian people's **legitimate** representative, agreed to withdraw in stages from areas of the West Bank and Gaza, and allowed the creation of a **Palestinian Authority** to govern those areas. Outstanding matters in achieving a **two-state solution** were to be settled over the next five years.

Negotiations and continued violence

Just as the PLO turned to pragmatism, however, a new organization, **Hamas**, headed in the opposite direction, **articulating** a vision of an Islamic state in all of historical **Palestine**. Hamas rejected the Oslo Accords and, in a move to scuttle peace talks, initiated a series of suicide attacks against Israeli targets. Meanwhile, Israel continued to build settlements in the occupied territories, and the Palestinians imported arms and built up their security forces, in violation of the terms of the Oslo Accords. As a result, talks broke down in 2000 in a wave of frustration and mutual recrimination. Shortly afterward, Likud's prime ministerial candidate, **Ariel Sharon**, visited the **Temple Mount** in **Jerusalem** as an assertion of Israel's **sovereignty** over **Al-Aqsa Mosque**, **Islam**'s third holiest site. Rioting broke out, Israeli police responded with lethal force, and unrest quickly spread throughout the occupied territories. The second intifada had begun.

### **THE SECOND INTIFADA**

The second intifada was much more violent than the first. During the approximately five-year uprising, more than 4,300 fatalities were registered, and again the ratio of Palestinian to Israeli deaths was slightly more than 3 to 1.

In March 2002, following an especially horrific **suicide bombing** that killed 30 people, the Israeli army launched Operation Defensive Shield to reoccupy the West Bank and parts of Gaza. One year later Israel started building a separation barrier in the West Bank to match a similar barrier erected in Gaza in 1996. Also helping to **suppress** the uprising were more than 200 state-directed assassinations of Palestinian military operatives and political leaders.

Although the violence had nearly subsided by the end of 2005, the conditions causing it had in some respects worsened. **Israeli settlement** activity in the West Bank continued, and tight controls were placed on the movement of Palestinian goods and people, stifling **economic growth**. Negotiations were at a standstill. In addition, the Palestinian Authority lost support amid charges of widespread corruption. Many Palestinians now turned to Hamas, which won the 2006 legislative elections and took power by force in Gaza in 2007.

## THE SIX DAY WAR

### SCHOOL HISTORY

#### Key Facts & Summary

The Six Days War, also known as the June War or Arab-Israeli War, happened between June 5-10, 1967. The conflict involved Israel and the Arab countries – Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq, supported by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Sudan.

Although the Zionist state was the winner of the war, it was the most consistent Arab response to the founding of the State of Israel.

On the evening of the first day of war half of the Arab aviation was destroyed. On the evening of the sixth day, the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armies were defeated.

Even more symbolic than the Arab defeat was the capture of the old city of Jerusalem. Israel considered this city as its capital without the recognition of most of the international community.

The results of the Six Days War still influences the current geopolitics of the region.

#### Overview

The growing tensions between the Arab countries and Israel in the mid-1967 led both sides to mobilise their troops. The conflict did, in fact, begin when the Israeli air force launched a pre-emptive strike against the Egyptian Air Force bases in Sinai (Operation Focus). Israel claimed that Egypt was preparing to wage war against its nation. Whether the Arab countries were actually mobilising their troops in order to advance against the Israelis, or whether their preparations were merely defensive measures, it is still to this day a matter of debate and controversy.

On June 4, 1967, Israel was surrounded by Arab forces that were far more numerous than their own and their plan of invasion seemed doomed to fail, until the Mossad thought of a solution. War was imminent. In the face of imminent Arab action, before the invasion began, Israel's government and military leaders had implemented a strategy to break the military blockade imposed by the Arabs. Shortly after, on June 5, at 8:45 they launched an air strike against the Arab forces.

This air raid, codenamed 'Moked', was designed to destroy the Egyptian Air Force while it was on the ground. In three hours most of the planes and bases were destroyed. Israeli fighters operated continuously: they returned to refuel and armour in just seven minutes. On this first day, the Arabs lost more than 400 airplanes; whereas Israel lost 20. These air strikes gave Israel the chance to destroy the Arab defence forces. The initial idea was only that of rendering the Egyptian air base inoperative, making it impossible for any military aircraft to take off.

Subsequently, Israel's ground forces moved to the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza Strip where they surrounded the Egyptian units.

The war was not far from the eastern front of Israel. Israel's Prime Minister Levi Eshkol sent a message to King Hussein of Jordan, claiming that the Israelis would not take any action against Jordan unless his country attacked them first. But on the morning of the second day, Nasser phoned Hussein, encouraging him to fight. He told Hussein that Egypt had been victorious in the morning fight – although such claim

made by Nasser caused an overwhelming defeat for Jordan, it succeeded in preventing Israel from taking Amman.

On the same day, at 11:00 am, Jordanian troops attacked Israel from Jerusalem with mortars and artillery. With full control of the skies, Israeli ground forces were free to invade Egypt and Jordan. Because of this, the reinforcements that were sent in had serious setbacks, which allowed the Israelis to take much of the Jordanians' city in just 24 hours.

On the third day of the war, June 7, Jordanian forces were driven into the Transjordan, on the other side of the Jordan River. Israel had annexed the whole of Transjordan and Jerusalem, entering and reunifying the city.

The United Nations, under American pressure, initiated calls and negotiations with the Arab countries involved. Fortunately, a cease-fire agreement was reached between Israel and Jordan, and it came into effect that same afternoon. After the ceasefire, Israel's large contingent of troops and tanks was directed against the forces of Egypt in the Sinai desert and the Gaza Strip. The Israel Defence Forces attacked with three divisions of tanks, parachutists and infantry.

Being aware of the fact that the war could only last a few days due to the UN's appeals, the belligerent parties understood that a rapid victory and domination of the neighbouring territories was essential.

Although they were aware of possible reactions, the Israelis concentrated all their power across the Egyptian lines in the Sinai desert.

On June 8, the Israelis began their attack on the Sinai desert and, under the leadership of General Ariel Sharon, they drove the Egyptians to the Suez Canal. At the end of the day, the Tzahal reached the channel and their artillery continued the battle along the front line while their air force attacked the retreating Egyptian forces (which were attempting to retreat using the few uncontrolled roads). At the end of the day, the Israelis controlled the entire Sinai Peninsula, and then Egypt. Thanks to the intervention of the United Nations, Egypt accepted a ceasefire with Israel.

In the early hours of June 8, Israel accidentally bombarded the American warship USS Liberty, off the coast of Israel, which had been mistaken for a ship of Arab troops. Thirty-four Americans died. This forced Israel to accept the ceasefire agreements proposed by the United Nations.

With Sinai under control, Israel began their assault on the Syrians in the Golan Heights on June 9. It was a difficult offensive since the Syrian forces were well entrenched. Israel sent an armoured brigade to the front lines while the infantry attacked the Syrian positions, and gained control of the hills.

At 18:30 on June 10, Syria withdrew from the offensive, accepted the UN's appeal and signed the armistice.

It was the end of the war on the battlefields and the beginning of the bureaucratic war on the UN premises.

#### The End of the Six Days War

The Six Day War was a defeat for the Arab States, which lost more than half of their military equipment. The Jordanian Air Force was completely destroyed. The Arabs suffered 18,000 casualties, while on the Israeli side there were 766 casualties.

On the day after the conquest of the Sinai peninsula, President Nasser of Egypt resigned because of his country's defeat (although he later reconsidered his decision). However, this defeat did not change the



attitude of the Arab States towards Israel. In August 1967, Arab leaders met in Khartoum and announced a message of commitment to the world: they were not inclined towards diplomatic negotiations and the recognition of the State of Israel since it had caused their country great harm. Such war greatly amplified the aversion of the Islamic world towards the state of Israel. Even countries that had never had friction with it ended up severing relations with Israel (as did all the other Arab countries).

As for Israel, it had achieved considerable results as a consequence of the war. The frontiers over which they had control were now larger and included the Golan Heights (whose control was shared with the Syrians), Transjordan, and the Sinai peninsula (whose control was shared with the Egyptians). The control of Jerusalem was of considerable importance to the Jewish people because of the historical and religious value, since the city was Jewish about 2000 years ago when the Romans expelled the Jews. Since then, over the centuries, Jerusalem had almost always been under the control of great empires such as the Byzantine, the Ottoman, and the British empires, and it was only after the war that it returned to be fully controlled by the Jewish state.

Because of the war, the Palestinians fled their homes. As a result, the number of refugees in Jordan, and other neighbouring countries (especially Lebanon) increased. The conflict created 350,000 refugees, who were rejected by some neighbouring Arab states. Such refugees have constantly attacked the Israeli state in isolation from Transjordan, the Gaza Strip and even south Lebanon.

With the Israelis controlling the eastern shore of the Suez Canal, the naval route remained closed from 1967 until 1975. The fifteen ships that crossed the channel when the war broke out were stranded on the Great Bitter Lake and the Lake Timsah.

#### Consequences

Syria lost the Golan Heights; Egypt lost the Gaza strip that it had occupied since 1948 and the area between the Sinai Peninsula and the Suez Canal. Although Israel hoped to negotiate a peace treaty, the Arab countries that gathered at the Khartoum conference, vehemently opposed any peace offerings. However, the great powers and the UN proposed a compromise, Resolution 242: it established Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories and the cessation of terrorist activities by the Palestinians. Israel adhered to it reluctantly, followed by Nasser and King Husayn of Jordan, while the Palestinians who had the support of Syria refused it, continuing their terrorist aggression towards Israel, which continues to this day.

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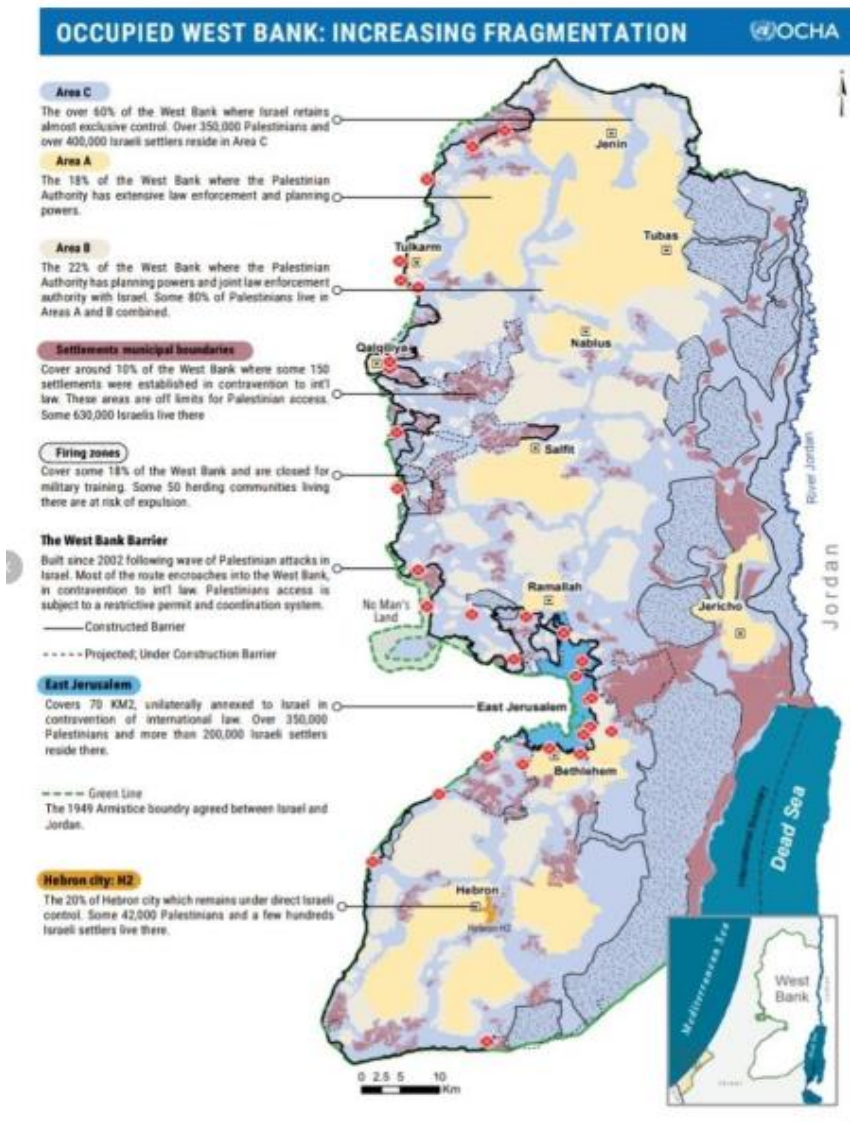
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## THE OSLO ACCORDS

**HISTORY** History.com Editors Aug 21 2018



It clarifies the divisions of the West Bank according to the Oslo Accords, as well as the route of the separation barrier, and other things (Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)).

The Oslo Accords were a landmark moment in the pursuit of peace in the Middle East. Actually a set of two separate agreements signed by the government of Israel and the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—the militant organization established in 1964 to create a Palestinian state in the region—the Oslo Accords were ratified in Washington, D.C., in 1993 (Oslo I) and in Taba, Egypt, in 1995 (Oslo II). While provisions drafted during the talks remain in effect today, the relationship between the two sides continues to be marred by conflict. Although the Oslo Accords were noteworthy in that the [PLO](#) agreed to formally recognize the state of [Israel](#) and that Israel, in turn, allowed the Palestinians some form of limited self-governance in Gaza and the West Bank (the so-called Occupied Territories), they were originally seen

only as a stepping-stone toward the ratification of a formal peace treaty between the two sides that would end decades of conflict.

However, the Oslo Accords have yet to result in any lasting peace—and their overall impact remains up for debate.

### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE OSLO ACCORDS

The negotiations between Israel and the PLO that ultimately led to the Oslo Accords began, in secret, in Oslo, Norway, in 1993.

Neither side wanted to publicly acknowledge their presence at the talks for fear of generating controversy. Many Israelis considered the PLO a terrorist organization, and thus would have seen the talks as violating the country's prohibition on negotiating with terrorists.

The PLO, meanwhile, from its inception had not formally recognized the legitimacy of Israel, and its supporters would have considered a formal acknowledgement of the Jewish state's right to exist a non-starter.

### **CAMP DAVID ACCORDS**

Leaders from both sides sought to make inroads toward lasting peace, at the behest of the United States and other world powers, and they came to Norway hoping to build upon the [Camp David Accords](#), which were signed by Egyptian President [Anwar Sadat](#) and Israeli Prime Minister [Menachem Begin](#) in September, 1978.

The Camp David Accords established the so-called "Framework for Peace in the Middle East" and brought about the end of simmering conflict between Egypt and Israel.

They also called for the creation of a Palestinian State in the area known as Gaza and on the West Bank of the River Jordan. However, because the Palestinians were not represented at the talks, which were held at the country retreat of U.S. President [Jimmy Carter](#), the resulting agreement was not formally recognized by the [United Nations](#).

### **OSLO I NEGOTIATIONS**

As the PLO and representatives of the Israeli government arrived in Norway some 15 years later, the Camp David Accords served as both a model and starting point for the latest negotiations, in that the ultimate goal was to build a framework for the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Seated at the table for these important talks were noteworthy leaders, including PLO head Yassir Arafat, former Israeli prime minister [Shimon Peres](#), Israeli prime minister [Yitzhak Rabin](#) and Norwegian deputy foreign minister Jan Egeland. The Norwegians effectively served as mediators between the two sides.

### **ISRAEL AND THE PLO**

However, before both sides could begin talks, there was the not-so-small matter of each recognizing the legitimacy of the other.

Indeed, just days prior to the formal signing of Oslo I, both sides signed a "Letter of Mutual Recognition" in which the PLO agreed to recognize the state of Israel (prior to this agreement, they had viewed the country as existing in violation of international law since its formation in 1948) and the Israelis acknowledged the PLO's role as a "representative of the Palestinian people."

In addition to the "Letter of Mutual Recognition," Oslo I established the "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements," which established the Palestinian Legislative Council (essentially, a freely elected parliament) and set the parameters for the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza over a five-year period.

### **OSLO II**

Oslo I also set the agenda for the follow-up agreement that became known as Oslo II, which would include discussion of the future governance of the city of [Jerusalem](#) (both sides claim it as their respective capital) as well as issues concerning borders, security and the rights, if any, of Israeli settlers in the West Bank. A protocol for free elections for Palestinian Authority leadership was also established.

Oslo II, which was signed two years later, gave the Palestinian Authority, which oversees Gaza and the West Bank, limited control over part of the region, while allowing Israel to annex much of the West Bank, and established parameters for economic and political cooperation between the two sides. As part of the treaty, for example, both sides were prohibited from inciting violence or conflict against the other. Israel also collects taxes from Palestinians who work in Israel but live in the Occupied Territories, distributing the revenue to the Palestinian Authority. Israel also oversees the trade of goods and services into and out of Gaza and the West Bank.

### **AFTERMATH OF THE OSLO ACCORDS**

Unfortunately, any momentum gained from the ratification of the Oslo Accords was short-lived.

In 1998, Palestinian officials accused Israel of not following through on the troop withdrawals from Gaza and Hebron called for in the Oslo Accords. And, after initially slowing down settlement construction in the West Bank, at the request of the United States, the building of new Israeli housing in the region began in earnest again in the early 2000s.

Conversely, critics of the Accords said that Palestinian violence against Israeli citizens increased in their aftermath, coinciding with the increasing power of the Palestinian Authority. These critics felt that the Palestinian Authority was failing to adequately police Gaza and the West Bank, and identify and prosecute suspected terrorists.

With these disagreements providing the backdrop, negotiators from both sides reconvened, once again at Camp David, with the hope of following up on the Oslo Accords with a comprehensive peace treaty. However, with the United States playing a key role in the negotiations, the talks soon collapsed, complicated further by the impending changes in American leadership (the second term of President [Bill Clinton](#) would end, and he would be replaced by [George W. Bush](#) in January 2001).

In September 2000, Palestinian militants declared a “Second Intifada,” calling for increased violence against Israelis after Sharon, who as prime minister visited the Temple Mount—a site sacred to both Jews and Muslims.

The period of violence on both sides that ensued dashed any hopes of lasting peace, and the Israelis and Palestinians have not held substantive negotiations since.

Although some provisions of the Oslo Accords remain in effect—namely, the role of the Palestinian Authority in governance in Gaza and the West Bank—many of the provisions have long been abandoned.

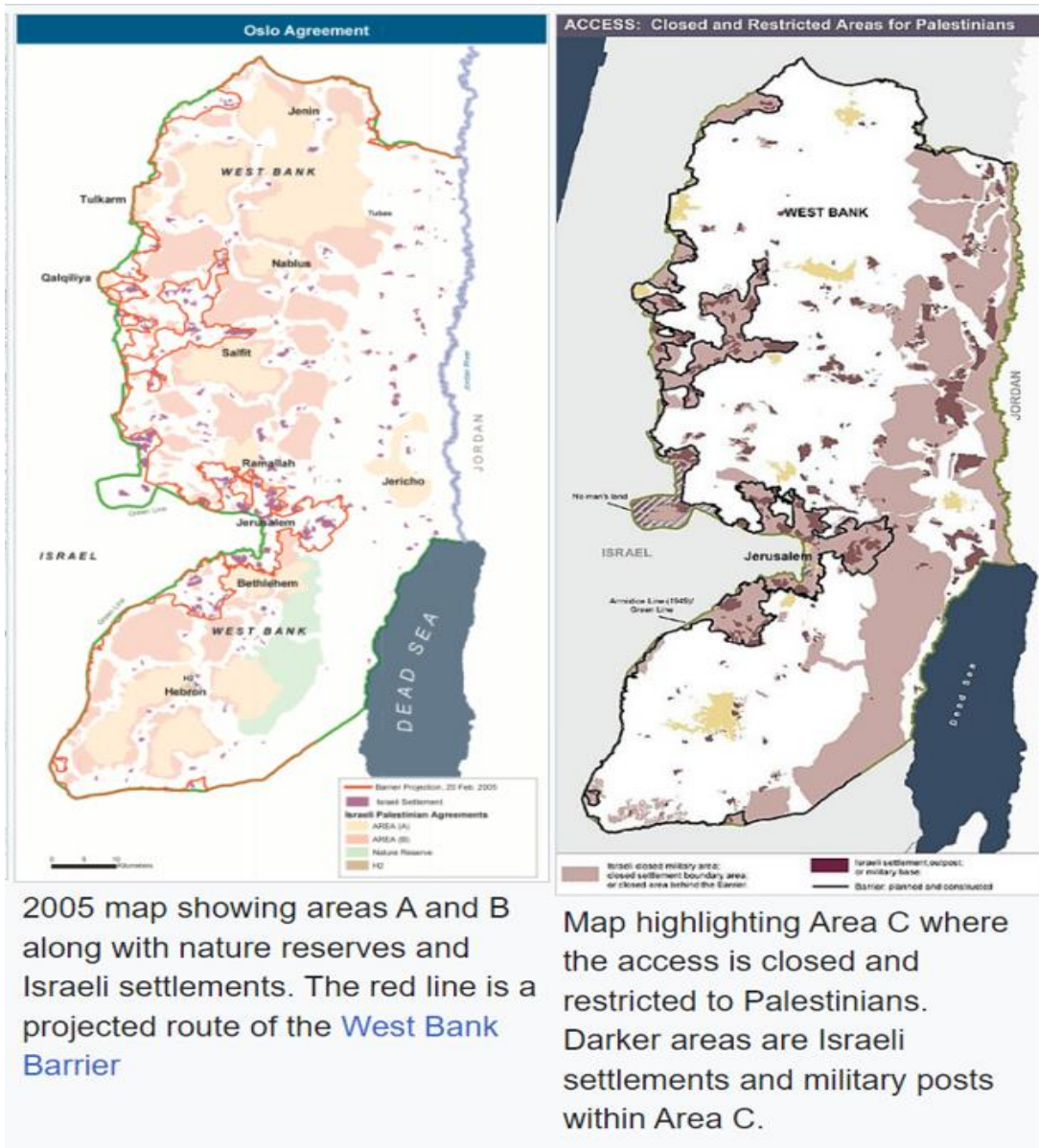
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## **THE OSLO ACCORDS AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE PROCESS**

### Office of the (US) Historian

On September 13, 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas signed a Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, commonly referred to as the “Oslo Accord,” at the White House. Israel accepted the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians, and the PLO renounced terrorism and recognized Israel’s right to exist in peace. Both sides agreed that a Palestinian Authority (PA) would be established and assume governing responsibilities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over a five-year period. Then, permanent status talks on the issues of borders, refugees, and Jerusalem would be held. While President Bill Clinton’s administration played a limited role in bringing the Oslo Accord into being, it would invest vast amounts of time and resources in order to help Israel and the Palestinians implement the agreement. By the time Clinton left office, however, the peace process had run aground, and a new round of Israeli-Palestinian violence had begun.

### **THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE PROCESS, 1993–1996**

The Clinton administration did not initially make Israeli-Palestinian peace a priority. Clinton and his advisors believed that a diplomatic breakthrough on the Israeli-Syrian track would be more likely, and that Israel’s leaders would find it politically easier to pull back from the Golan Heights than to withdraw from the West Bank. An Israeli-Syrian agreement, they reasoned, would also lead to an Israeli-Lebanese agreement, and help isolate Iraq and Iran, the principal regional opponents of the peace process. U.S. officials were briefed on secret negotiations that the Israelis and Palestinians had begun in Oslo in December 1992, but made little effort to get involved in them.

The United States did not play a major role in the negotiations that led to the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty of October 1994, though Clinton lent his support by hosting King Hussein and Rabin in Washington and urging Congress to forgive Jordan’s debts. Nor did the United States play a critical part in the negotiations leading up to the May 1994 Cairo Agreement, which finalized Israel’s withdrawal from most of Gaza and Jericho, or the Taba (or “Oslo II”) Agreement of September 1995. The latter agreement divided the West Bank into separate areas under Israeli control, Palestinian control, and Israeli military responsibility with Palestinian civil administration, respectively. Oslo II also spelled out provisions for elections, civil/legal affairs, and other bilateral Israeli-Palestinian cooperation on various issues. Since the Oslo Accord did not give the United States monitoring responsibilities, the Clinton administration found itself largely confined to defusing crises and building up the Palestinian Authority with economic aid and security assistance.

On the Israeli-Syrian track, the administration exerted itself more forcefully, but with few results. Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, and Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross tried to build on Rabin’s August 1993 promise to withdraw fully from the Golan if Syria agreed to full peace and necessary security arrangements. By 1994, these talks stalled over Israel and Syria’s different definitions of “full

withdrawal.” The Syrians insisted that the Israelis should withdraw to the line of “June 4, 1967,” when they had controlled a pocket of land on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Israel’s principal source of water. The Israelis wanted to pull back to the 1923 international border, which would have left the Sea of Galilee under their sovereignty. That July, Rabin indicated to Christopher that Israel would withdraw to the June 4 line if Syria met its other needs, paving the way for talks between Israeli and Syrian military officers. However, these negotiations eventually bogged down over whether Israel could retain early warning stations on the Golan, and also became politically controversial in Israel. Rabin thus chose to suspend them until after Israel’s elections in 1996.

### **OSLO’S COLLAPSE, 1996–2000**

In November 1995, Rabin was assassinated by Yigal Amir, an Israeli who opposed the Oslo Accords on religious grounds. Rabin’s murder was followed by a string of terrorist attacks by Hamas, which undermined support for the Labor Party in Israel’s May 1996 elections. New Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu hailed from the Likud Party, which had historically opposed Palestinian statehood and withdrawal from the occupied territories.

Worried that the peace process might collapse, the Clinton administration involved itself more actively in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. In January 1997, following intensive U.S. mediation, Israel and the PA signed the Hebron Protocol, which provided for the transfer of most of Hebron to Palestinian control. In October 1998, Clinton hosted Netanyahu and Arafat at the Wye River Plantation, where they negotiated an agreement calling for further Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank. Infighting over the implementation of the Wye Memorandum, however, brought down Netanyahu’s government in January 1999.

In Israel’s May 1999 elections, the Labor Party’s Ehud Barak decisively defeated Netanyahu. Barak predicted that he could reach agreements with both Syria and the Palestinians in 12 to 15 months, and pledged to withdraw Israeli troops from southern Lebanon. In September, Barak signed the Sharm al-Shaykh Memorandum with Arafat, which committed both sides to begin permanent status negotiations. An initial round of meetings, however, achieved nothing, and by December the Palestinians suspended talks over settlement-building in the occupied territories.

Barak then focused on Syria. In January 2000, Israeli, Syrian, and U.S. delegations convened in West Virginia for peace talks. These negotiations foundered when Barak refused to reaffirm Rabin’s pledge to withdraw to the June 4, 1967 line, arguing that none of the concessions offered by the Syrian delegation in return could be considered final, since Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad was not present. A subsequent meeting between Clinton and Asad in Geneva failed to produce an Israeli-Syrian accord.

Barak then withdrew Israeli forces unilaterally from Lebanon and returned to the Palestinian track. At the prime minister’s insistence, Clinton convened a summit at Camp David in July 2000, where he, Barak, and Arafat attempted to reach a final agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Accounts differ as to why Camp David failed, but it is clear that despite additional concessions by Barak, the Israelis and Palestinians remained strongly at odds over borders, Jerusalem, and whether Israel would recognize Palestinian refugees’ “right of return.” The summit ended without a settlement; Clinton would blame Arafat for its failure.



On September 28, riots erupted following a visit of Likud Party leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount, and soon escalated into a wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence that became known as the al-Aqsa Intifada. In December 2000, Clinton put forward his own proposals for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. By this point, however, the president was leaving office, Barak faced electoral defeat, and Israeli-Palestinian violence continued unabated.

Thus, by the end of 2000, the prospect of ending the Arab-Israeli conflict looked more distant than it had eight years earlier. The Clinton administration had helped facilitate Israeli-Jordanian peace and lay the foundations for Palestinian self-rule. More broadly, the negotiations of the 1990s helped Israel, the Palestinians, and Syria break with numerous diplomatic taboos and establish a basis for what a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace might look like. But a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict remained elusive.

# THE JEWS, THE PALESTINIANS, THE WEST BANK

## ChatGPT (AI)

*THE WEST BANK, IS A FOCAL POINT OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT THAT HAS UNDERGONE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND DEMOGRAPHIC TERMS FROM THE OSLO ACCORDS (1993-1995) TO TODAY.*

*IT HAS SEEN THE EVOLUTION OF JEWISH SETTLEMENTS, PALESTINIAN GOVERNANCE AND KEY ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO), FATAH AND HAMAS.*

*BELOW IS AN ANALYSIS OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS.*

### 1. The Oslo Accords and the Initial Framework

The Oslo Accords established the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a self-governing body for parts of the West Bank and Gaza, **dividing the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C:**

- Area A: Full Palestinian control (mainly urban centers, ~18% of the West Bank).
- Area B: Palestinian civil control, shared security with Israel (~22%).
- Area C: Full Israeli control (~60%), including most settlements.

The Accords were intended to pave the way for a two-state solution, but political disagreements, mistrust, and violence have impeded progress.

### 2. Development of Israeli Settlements

- **Expansion:** Jewish settlements in the West Bank have grown steadily, with the settler population increasing from approximately 120,000 in 1993 to over 500,000 by 2024. This growth has been fueled by state-backed infrastructure projects, security guarantees, and ideological movements emphasizing the religious and historical connection to the land.
- **Economic Integration:** Settlements have created a mixed economy where many Palestinians work in Israeli industrial zones or agriculture, but this has also deepened dependency and economic asymmetry.
- **Legal and Political Impact:** Internationally, settlements are considered illegal under international law (Fourth Geneva Convention), but Israel disputes this interpretation. Domestically, settlements have significant political clout, influencing Israeli policy and elections.

### 3. Palestinian Political Landscape

#### PLO and Fatah

- **The PLO** dominated by Fatah, initially drove the peace process but has faced diminishing credibility due to its inability to achieve statehood.
- **Fatah** governs the PA in the West Bank but faces criticism for corruption, inefficiency, and collaboration with Israel (e.g., security coordination agreements).

#### Hamas

- **The rift between Fatah and Hamas** deepened after Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007. Despite occasional attempts at reconciliation, the factions remain divided, with contrasting ideologies and strategies toward Israel.
- **Hamas has gained support in the West Bank**, particularly among those disillusioned with Fatah and the PA.

### 4. Demographic Shifts

- **Population Growth:** The Palestinian population in the West Bank has grown from roughly 1.8 million in 1993 to over 3 million in 2024, with a high fertility rate compared to Jewish settlers.
- **Israeli Settlers:** Settler growth has also been rapid, altering the demographic and geographic landscape, particularly in Area C and East Jerusalem.

### 5. Economic Trends

- **Palestinian Economy:** Heavily reliant on international aid, the Palestinian economy in the West Bank has been constrained by:
  - Restrictions on movement and trade due to Israeli checkpoints and barriers.
  - Dependence on the Israeli labor market and tax transfers.
- **Israeli Economy in the West Bank:** Settlements have thrived economically, benefiting from state subsidies, modern infrastructure, and integration with Israel's advanced economy.

### 6. Israeli-Palestinian Relations and Conflict

- **Second Intifada (2000-2005):** Marked a turning point with widespread violence, leading to harsher Israeli security measures, including the construction of the West Bank Barrier.
- **Settlement Regularization and Annexation:** Moves toward de facto annexation, especially under right-wing Israeli governments, have escalated tensions.
- **U.S.-led efforts, including the 2020 Abraham Accords,** shifted focus away from **Peace Initiatives:** Israeli-Palestinian negotiations toward broader regional normalization with Arab states.

### 7. International and Regional Dynamics

- **Arab States:** Decreasing prioritization of the Palestinian cause in favor of normalization with Israel (e.g., UAE, Bahrain).
- **Global Actors:** European nations and the UN have continued to push for a two-state solution, but U.S. policy has fluctuated, particularly during the Trump administration (2017-2021), which recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and proposed controversial peace plans.

## 8. Humanitarian and Social Impact

- **Displacement:** Demolitions of Palestinian homes, especially in Area C, have led to ongoing displacement and humanitarian crises.
- **Education and Civil Society:** Despite challenges, Palestinian educational and cultural institutions have grown, although they often face restrictions.

## CONCLUSION

From the Oslo Accords to 2024, the West Bank remains a contested space marked by deep divisions. The growth of Israeli settlements and political fragmentation among Palestinians have complicated the prospects for peace. With regional and global dynamics shifting, the focus on achieving a two-state solution has waned, leaving the future of the region uncertain.

***THIS SECTION DELVES DEEPER INTO THE CONFRONTATION  
BETWEEN ISRAELIS (PRIMARILY SETTLERS) AND PALESTINIANS,  
THE ROLE OF HAMAS, AND ECONOMIC FACTORS  
WITH SUPPORTING STATISTICS.***

### 1. Confrontations Between Jews and Palestinians

Confrontations in the West Bank have intensified due to settlement expansion, land disputes, and periodic escalations in violence.

#### Clashes Over Land and Resources

- **Settler-Palestinian Violence:** The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported a sharp increase in settler attacks on Palestinians, with 590 attacks in 2022 compared to around 260 in 2017.
- **Military Raids:** Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) frequently conduct operations in Area A and B, citing security concerns. These raids often lead to fatalities and arrests, with over 250 Palestinians killed in 2023, one of the highest tolls in decades.
- **Land Seizures:** Palestinians accuse Israel of appropriating land for settlement expansion. By 2024, approximately 12% of the West Bank's land has been allocated to settlements.

### 2. Role of Hamas

**Hamas**, though primarily based in Gaza, exerts influence in the West Bank and plays a key role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

#### Rise of Hamas Influence in the West Bank

- **Popular support for Hamas surged following perceived corruption and inefficiency within Fatah.** In a 2023 poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 33% of Palestinians in the West Bank preferred Hamas leadership over the PA.
- **Hamas cells in the West Bank** have carried out periodic attacks, including shootings targeting settlers or soldiers. In 2022, Hamas claimed responsibility for over 20 incidents in the West Bank.

## Hamas-Israel Confrontations

- **While most Hamas-Israel conflicts occur in Gaza, ripple effects often extend to the West Bank.** For example, during the 2021 Gaza-Israel conflict, protests and clashes erupted in the West Bank, leading to over 30 deaths in just a week.

## 3. Economic Dynamics

**The economic landscape in the West Bank** is marked by stark inequalities between Jewish settlers and Palestinians, with ongoing dependency and restrictions exacerbating Palestinian economic struggles.

### Palestinian Economy

- **GDP and Unemployment:** The West Bank's GDP was approximately \$15 billion in 2023, with an unemployment rate of 16.9%. This contrasts with Gaza's 45% unemployment, but the numbers reflect significant underdevelopment.
- **Aid Dependency:** The Palestinian Authority heavily relies on international aid, receiving around \$500 million annually from donors like the EU and the U.S. in 2022. However, aid has declined due to donor fatigue and political disputes.
- **Restrictions on Trade:** Palestinian businesses face heavy restrictions due to Israeli control over borders and checkpoints. A 2020 World Bank report estimated that such constraints cost the Palestinian economy \$3.4 billion annually.

### Israeli Settlements' Economy

- **Economic Growth:** Settlements have experienced robust economic growth, supported by Israeli subsidies. The average annual income of settlers is 40% higher than that of Palestinians in the West Bank.
- **Labor Dynamics:** Approximately 135,000 Palestinians work in Israel or settlements, earning higher wages than in Palestinian territories but under stringent conditions.

## 4. Demographic Shifts and Impacts

**The interplay of demographic** changes has deepened the socio-political tensions.

### Population Growth

- **Palestinian Population:** The population grew from 1.8 million in 1993 to over 3 million by 2024, with a fertility rate of 4.4 children per woman in 2022.
- **Settler Population:** The number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank increased from 120,000 in 1993 to over 500,000 by 2024, growing at approximately 4% annually, far outpacing natural growth rates in Israel.

## 5. Politics and Governance

**The political impasse within Palestinian leadership and between Israel and Palestinians remains unresolved.**

### Palestinian Authority (PA)

- **The PA's governance is undermined** by its lack of control over most of the West Bank (Area C). In a 2023 survey, 72% of Palestinians believed the PA was corrupt, contributing to its waning legitimacy.

## Israeli Policy

- **Israel's right-wing governments**, particularly under Benjamin Netanyahu, have accelerated settlement expansion. The 2020 Nation-State Law further solidified Jewish identity as central to the state, alienating Palestinians.
- **In 2023**, the Israeli government allocated \$200 million to settlement security and infrastructure, fueling further tensions.

## 6. International and Regional Dynamics

- **Abraham Accords:** These normalization agreements between Israel and Arab states have marginalized the Palestinian issue. In 2024, no major breakthroughs were made toward a two-state solution despite ongoing EU and UN efforts.
- **U.S. and Global Shifts:** The Trump administration's 2020 "Peace to Prosperity" plan allowed for potential annexation of West Bank areas by Israel, though it was never fully implemented. U.S. policy under Biden has emphasized a two-state solution, but with limited actionable steps.

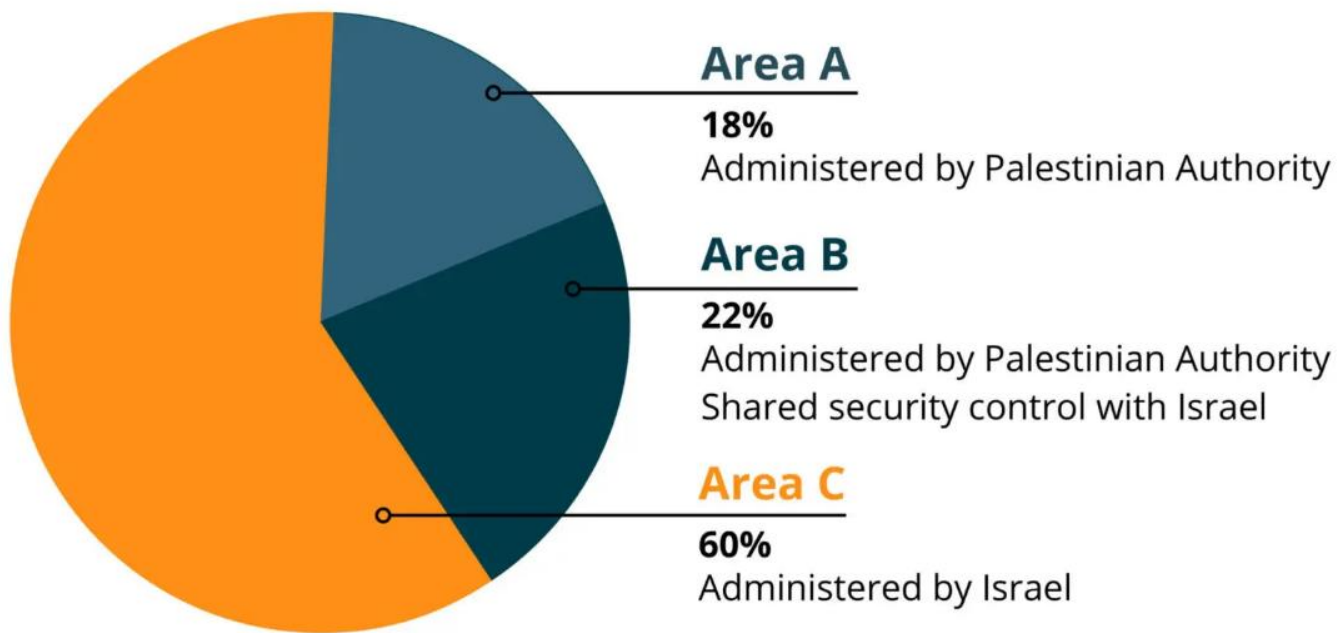
## CONCLUSION

**From the Oslo Accords to 2024, the West Bank has seen persistent conflict, political fragmentation, and economic stagnation.** Confrontations between settlers and Palestinians have escalated, driven by demographic pressures, settlement expansion, and political stalemates. The role of Hamas has complicated Fatah's governance, while international dynamics have shifted focus away from resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite international aid and efforts, prospects for peace and economic parity remain distant.

## WHAT ARE AREA A, AREA B, AND AREA C IN THE WEST BANK?

### anera

The 1995 Oslo II Accord established the administrative division of the Palestinian [West Bank](#) into areas A, B, and C as a transitional arrangement, pending a final status agreement. Oslo II intended for the divisions to be temporary, with full jurisdiction of all three areas gradually transferred to the Palestinian Authority over time. Instead, the divisions persist, with Area A administered by the Palestinian Authority, Area C by Israel, and Area B under joint control.



### **Area A**

Under the terms of the Oslo agreement, Area A is under Palestinian administrative and police control. It constitutes 18% of the West Bank. Of the 3 areas, **Area A is the most densely populated**. Although under Palestinian control, much of the available land for building lies on borders with Area C.

### **Area B**

The Palestinian Authority exercises administrative control over Area B but shares security control with Israeli authorities. This area makes up about 22% of the West Bank. Palestinian administrative or civil control of the area includes education, economic, and health sectors.

The majority of Palestinians in the West Bank live in areas A or B. These areas are not contiguous: Area C divides **Areas A and B into hundreds of separate segments**.

## Area C

Area C, which Israel administers, covers over 60 percent of the West Bank. An estimated 300,000 Palestinians live in 532 residential areas located partially or fully in Area C, along with some 400,000 Israeli settlers residing in approximately 230 settlements. In addition, around 30% of Area C is a designated “firing zone” for military training – [38 Palestinian communities](#) are located within these training areas. Altogether, 60% of Area C is made up of these firing zones, other military land, or state land and nature reserves. Palestinian residents struggle to obtain land permits for housing and farming in the remaining 40%.

A [third of Palestinian communities in Area C](#) lack a primary school, forcing children to travel or walk long distances to reach the nearest school. [More than 70% of communities in Area C](#) are not connected to a water network and rely on tankered water at vastly increased cost. 95,000 people receive fewer than 50 liters of water per capita per day – half of the minimum amount recommended by the World Health Organization. [Nearly half of Area C Palestinian communities](#) report that their access to emergency and basic healthcare is hampered by the long distances to the nearest clinic or the need to pass through checkpoints.



Map courtesy SoWhAt249 [CC BY-SA 4.0], via Wikimedia Commons



Apart from the administrative divisions established by the Oslo Accords, the West Bank is apportioned into 11 governorates. **Learn about Anera's long history of work across Palestine's West Bank.**

[Bethlehem](#)

[Hebron](#)

[Jericho](#)

[Jenin](#)

[Jerusalem](#)

[Nablus](#)

[Qalqiliya](#)

[Ramallah](#)

[Salfit](#)

[Tubas](#)

[Tulkarem](#)

## WHO GOVERNS THE PALESTINIANS

**Power in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the so-called Palestinian territories, has been divided among three entities: a governing body called the Palestinian Authority, the militant group Hamas, and the state of Israel. But as Israel now seeks to destroy Hamas, it is unclear who would administer Gaza instead.**

[COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS](#) Kali Robinson May 28 2024

### SUMMARY

- **Millions of Palestinians live under the control of a mix of authorities in the Palestinian territories and in refugee camps across the Middle East.**
- **In recent decades, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has controlled parts of the West Bank, and the militant group Hamas has run the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, Israel has exercised power over both areas in different ways.**
- **Amid the latest Israel-Hamas war, the PA is facing heightened scrutiny about its ability to run Gaza if Israel destroys Hamas.**

### INTRODUCTION

A complex mix of authorities governs the 5.5 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip and West Bank territories. Palestinians, like Jews, trace their ancestry to the geographic area that now forms the state of Israel and the two Palestinian territories. Yet, the Palestinians do not have a universally recognized state, with their aspirations to create one depending not just on Palestinian leadership, but also on Israel and recognition by foreign powers.

Officially, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) represents Palestinians worldwide at international fora, while the Palestinian Authority (PA), a newer institution led by a PLO faction known as Fatah, is supposed to govern most of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In reality, the PA has overshadowed the PLO, and both are deeply troubled; Israel has exercised significant control over the Palestinian territories, de facto and official; and Gaza has been ruled by the militant Palestinian group Hamas, which Israel and multiple other countries have designated as a terrorist organization. Palestinian leaders will have to grapple with these and other challenges—including succession concerns and yet another war between Israel and Hamas—to deliver their peoples' dream of an independent Palestinian state.

[Timeline of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict via CFR Education](#)

[What Is U.S. Policy on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict? by Kali Robinson](#)

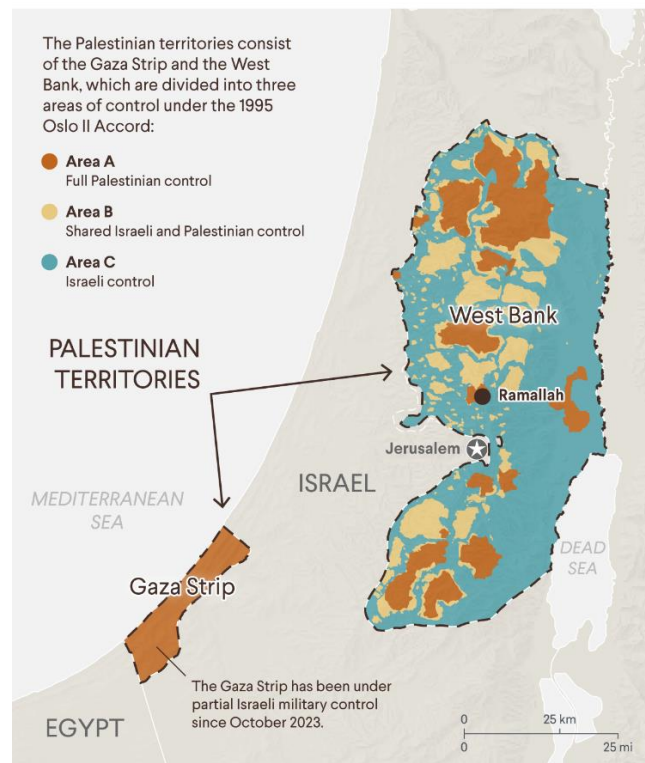
[What to Know About the Arab Citizens of Israel by Kali Robinson](#)

## WHO'S IN CHARGE IN THE GAZA STRIP AND THE WEST BANK?

It depends on the location. In the 1990s, the PLO and Israel signed the Oslo Accords and the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, deals that divided areas of control in Gaza and the West Bank (East Jerusalem excluded) between Israel and the newly created Palestinian Authority, with the expectation that the two territories would eventually constitute a Palestinian state. But with the decades-old [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#) still unresolved, the territories remain formally divided into three areas of control:

- **Area A**, which consists of most of Gaza and [about 17 percent](#) of the West Bank, is the most densely populated and urbanized. It is designated as fully Palestinian controlled under Oslo, including for civil affairs and internal security issues. However, Israel has waged an extensive military campaign in Gaza since October 2023 with the goal of eliminating Hamas, and it has therefore imposed more-stringent movement controls in the territory.
- **Area B** covers nearly a quarter of the West Bank and mostly comprises villages and rural areas. Israelis and Palestinians cooperate on security here, but the PA manages all civil affairs. Israel also controls the movement of goods and people. Areas A and B have a combined Palestinian population of about 2.8 million.
- **Area C** makes up the remaining land and mostly consists of pastoral areas. It contains most of the West Bank's natural resources and is under full Israeli control, though the PA provides education and medical services to the area's 150,000 Palestinians. The area is home to most of Israel's settlers, who total some 700,000 people spread across the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Most live near the border with Israel, though international law dubs their settlements illegal.

How the Palestinian Territories Are Divided



Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

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Since 2006, the Gaza Strip has been controlled by Hamas, an armed group and political party that was founded during the first Palestinian “intifada,” or uprising, against Israeli rule in 1987–93. (The name Hamas is an acronym for “The Islamic Resistance Movement” in Arabic.) The organization was created out of the Palestinian branch of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) to compete with Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), a militant faction that simultaneously aims to destroy the state of Israel and create a Palestinian state governed by [Islamic law](#). Hamas explicitly opposes Israel’s existence and has perpetrated grievous acts of violence against Israelis. Its October 7, 2023, rampage through southern Israel killed more than 1,200 people and spurred the massive Israeli military response aimed at eradicating Hamas. Governments including the United States, Israel, Japan, and the European Union (EU) have designated Hamas a terrorist organization.

Hamas briefly joined the PA, rising to the head of the authority in 2006 after winning general elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But it split from the authority months later, when the rival faction Fatah, which has long dominated the PA, refused to recognize Hamas’s election victory. The two went to war, and though Fatah was able to oust Hamas from the West Bank and maintain its sway over Palestinian affairs there, Hamas’s forces prevailed in the Gaza Strip, securing the group’s control over the territory. The Gaza-West Bank schism is severe enough that some experts considered Gaza to be “[practically a separate state](#)” before the most recent war with Israel [devastated the territory](#).

Who governs Palestinians in Jerusalem?

Straddling the border of Israel and the West Bank, the city of Jerusalem has been populated by both Arabs and Jews for centuries. It holds some of the most sacred sites in Christianity and Islam, as well as the holiest sites in Judaism. Today, it is home to many Palestinians and Israelis, though Israel has political control. The peace deal that ended the first Arab-Israeli War in 1949, which was triggered by Israel’s founding the previous year, divided the city between Israeli rule in the west and Jordanian rule in the east. Israel captured East Jerusalem in the [1967 Arab-Israeli War](#), and it considers the “complete and undivided” city of Jerusalem as its capital due to the Jewish people’s [deep historical and religious ties](#) to the city. The United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Kosovo, and Papua New Guinea have constructed embassies to Israel in the western part of Jerusalem. Other countries keep their missions in Tel Aviv because of Jerusalem’s disputed status.

Meanwhile, Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of their state, given its centrality to the Palestinian economy, its significance to Muslims in particular, and its Palestinian population of [more than 360,000](#). Nonetheless, Israel’s de facto annexation of East Jerusalem makes it subject to Israeli law. Most Palestinians there are designated as permanent residents of Israel—a status that can be [revoked punitively](#). Most are not citizens of any country; having largely refused Israeli citizenship offered in 1967 or [lost Jordanian citizenship](#) after Amman renounced its claim to the West Bank in 1988.

Who oversees Palestinian refugee populations?

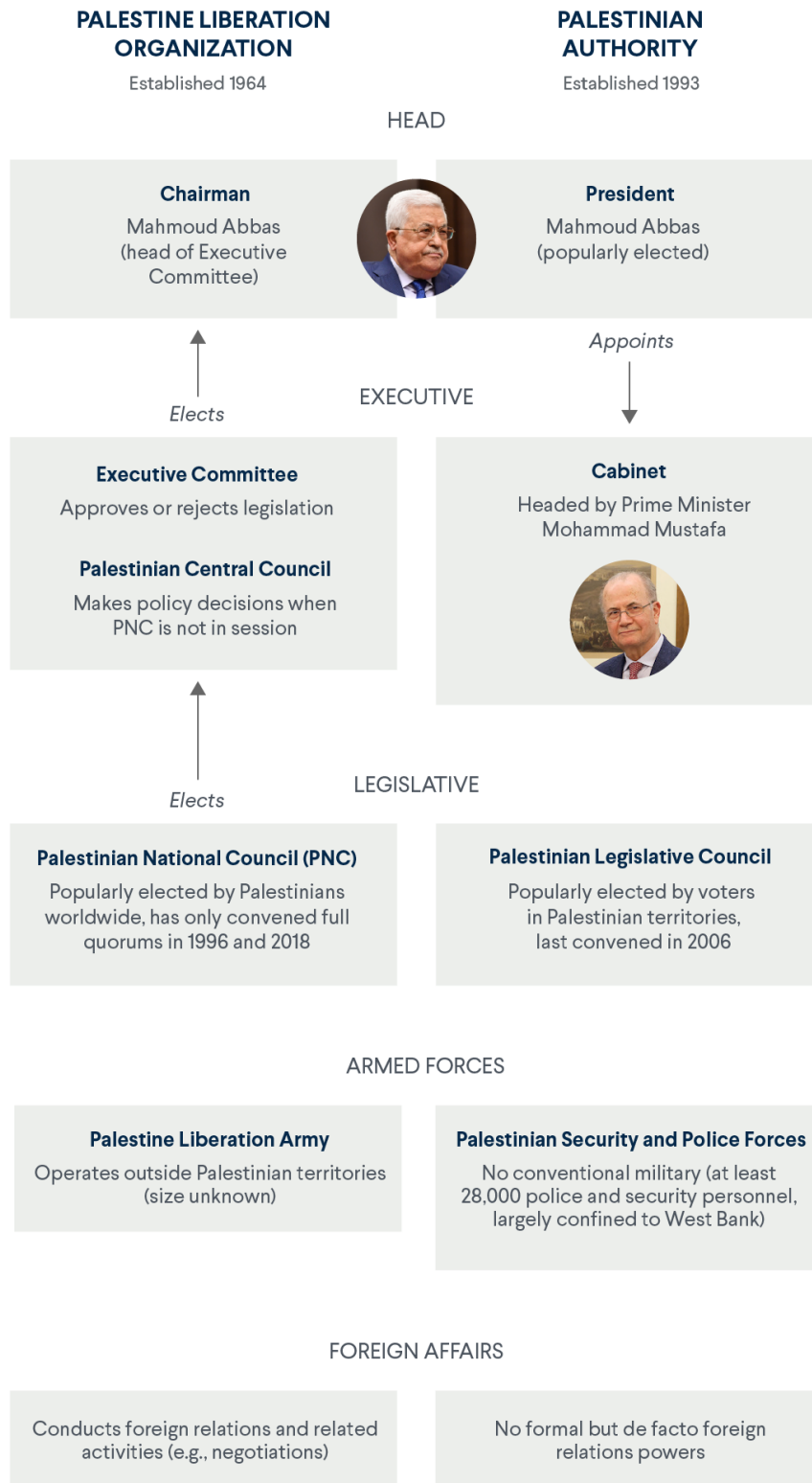
The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) established in 1949, manages Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and Syria in connection with local authorities. These camps house Palestinians displaced by the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli Wars, as well as their descendants. Some camps, such as the Rafah and Jabalia camps in Gaza, have evolved

into built-up cities. Yet, they remain dependent on UN aid, even though some have populations that [exceed one hundred thousand](#). Close to [six million registered refugees](#) are under UNRWA's remit, though not all reside in camps.

Host governments handle security in the camps, while UNRWA provides health care, housing, and education. UNRWA itself is officially nonpolitical, but [experts say](#) [PDF] Fatah wields significant influence over residents in some West Bank refugee camps, as Hamas has done in certain Gaza camps. Additionally, UNRWA has for years [faced accusations](#) [PDF] that Hamas has co-opted some of its employees and facilities. In 2024, the agency suffered [deep funding cuts](#) when the United States pulled its support due to Israeli allegations that UNRWA employees participated in Hamas's October 7 attack. Around a dozen other countries initially followed the United States' example, but most soon resumed funding after separate reviews by the agency and independent experts said that Israel did not provide evidence for the allegations. How does the Palestinian Authority govern?

The PA is headquartered in the West Bank, where it operates from the city of Ramallah. Officially named the Palestinian National Authority, it comprises most major Palestinian factions, such as Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), but excludes militant groups such as Hamas and PIJ. The authority's responsibilities are spelled out in the 2002 [Basic Law](#) [PDF] that serves as an interim Palestinian constitution. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas simultaneously serves as leader of the PA, the PLO, and his party, Fatah, which has the greatest representation in the PA of any faction. In March 2024, Abbas's longtime economic advisor Mohammad Mustafa replaced Mohammad Shtayyeh as PA prime minister, a position that gives him little power compared to Abbas. His appointment comes as Washington and other governments push for PA reforms that would improve living conditions in the West Bank and show that the authority could responsibly govern Gaza after the Israel-Hamas war.

## The Institutions of the Palestinian Territories



Sources: CIA World Factbook; European Council on Foreign Relations; International Institute for Strategic Studies.

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The PA has become synonymous with “corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency,” [writes Ghaith al-Omari](#), a former PA official and current senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Many experts say governance began to seriously erode after Abbas became PLO chairman in 2004. Now nineteen years into what should have been a four-year presidential term, Abbas has concentrated power by dissolving

parliament, entrenching his [control over the judiciary](#), introducing laws only by decree, and purging political rivals. In 2021, he blocked presidential and legislative elections that would have been Palestinians' first since 2006. Abbas blamed the move on Israeli restrictions on voting in East Jerusalem, though experts say he likely feared he and his party would lose to Hamas. International rights watchdog Freedom House classifies the PA as "authoritarian" and the West Bank as "not free" due to poor Palestinian governance and Israel's occupation.

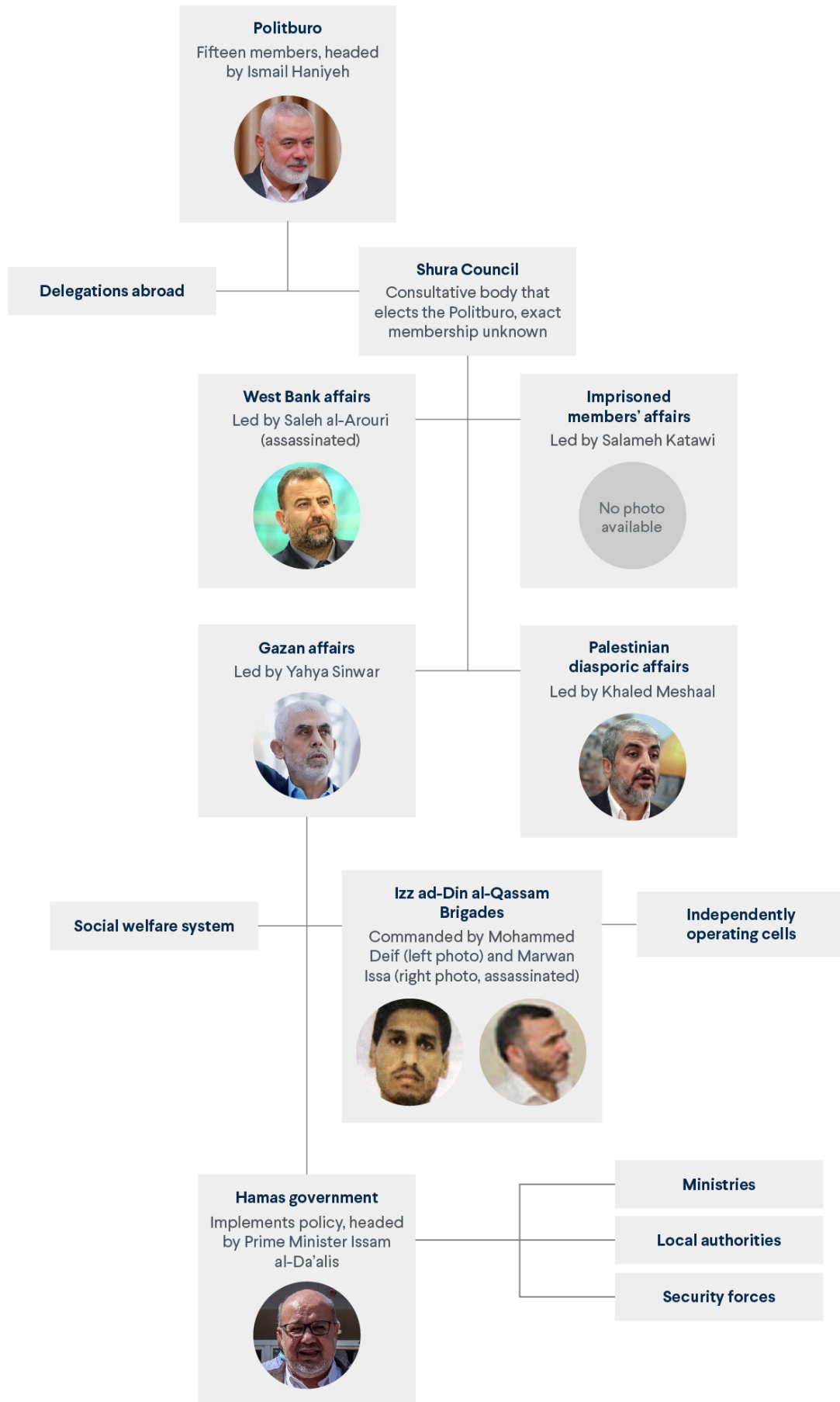
Abbas also oversees the West Bank's [security forces](#), which consist of police and other security officers but cannot constitute a conventional military, per the Oslo Accords. They work in coordination with the Israeli military, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), to stamp out Hamas and other armed groups and have also faced accusations of brutality against Palestinian civilians. As a result, many Palestinians view the security forces as instruments of Israel's occupation, rather than as protectors of the rule of law. In addition, Israeli and Palestinian observers alike [blame the weakness of the PA](#) and its security forces for the proliferation of new armed groups that increasingly targeted Israel starting in 2022.

Without full autonomy over Gaza and the West Bank, the PA's powers of economic policy are limited. The authority relies on international aid, which is [generally conditioned](#) on the PA's recognition of Israel and commitment to nonviolence. However, some donor countries have [cut aid](#) in recent years, citing mismanagement by the PA. Meanwhile, Hamas has been blocked from U.S. and EU aid given its status as a terrorist entity, though it has various other [funding sources](#), both legal and illicit.

How has Hamas governed the Gaza Strip?

After taking control of Gaza, Hamas established political, military, and legal institutions entirely separate from those in the West Bank. Though Hamas set up its seat of government in Gaza City, many top officials have chosen to live abroad full time, including political chief Ismail Haniyeh and diaspora affairs leader Khaled Meshaal, who both live in Qatar. As with the PA and West Bank, Freedom House has also labeled Hamas's government as "authoritarian" and Gaza as "not free." Before the current war shattered all semblance of day-to-day life in Gaza, Hamas had nominally followed the PA's Basic Law, but also implemented a restrictive interpretation of Islamic law that it used to repress the [rights of women](#), the LGBTQ+ community, and other marginalized groups. In addition, the Hamas government had removed most checks on its power, having suppressed opposition from Gazan media outlets, politicians, civilian activists, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), often through [violence and arbitrary arrest](#).

## Hamas’s Governing Structure





## [What Is Hamas?](#)

### HOW MUCH CONTROL DOES ISRAEL HAVE OVER PALESTINIANS?

*West Bank.* Israel officially controls only Area C of the West Bank in full, implementing policy through its Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), which also liaises with the PA. However, Israeli [legal and military powers](#) extend to all three areas. Israel also has full legal jurisdiction over all Jewish settlers, who total about [five hundred thousand](#) people in the West Bank and two hundred thousand in East Jerusalem. (A 2016 UN Security Council resolution reaffirmed that Israel's settlements [are illegal](#) under international law. The United States, which frequently uses its veto power on the council to block resolutions censuring Israel, abstained from the vote, helping it to pass.) Israeli civil law covers settlers, while Palestinians, even where subject to PA laws, are tried in the IDF's military courts. Additionally, the Oslo Accords authorized Israel to collect Palestinian taxes for the PA in the areas that Israel controls. However, Israel deducts money from the payments based on a sum that Israeli government experts calculate that the PA spends funding terrorism. This amount [usually refers](#) to PA payments to families of "martyrs," meaning [civilians and combatants](#) killed in violence related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and payments to the families of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. Israel says the payments incentivize terrorism and therefore [withholds](#) [PDF] approximately \$100–\$185 million in Palestinian taxes annually, an amount equal to around 2–4 percent of the PA's budget.

To protect its own national security, Israel has imposed stringent movement restrictions in both territories. These include numerous military checkpoints in the West Bank, as well as a barrier wall that spans hundreds of miles across that territory. An onerous part of daily life for many Palestinians, Israel's security measures "limit Palestinian development in the West Bank while creating conditions akin to a nearly closed economy on Gaza," [according to the World Bank](#).

*Gaza Strip.* Israel [captured Gaza](#) during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and militarily occupied the territory until 2005, when it pulled out its troops and settlers. In the years before its 2023 invasion, Israel implemented various controls over Gaza that it said were needed to prevent terrorism against Israelis. It restricted Gaza's airspace, borders, cellular frequencies, coastal waters, and electricity supply, among other areas. It had also barred locals from entering buffer zones on the border with Israel, which cover around 20 percent of Gaza. Wary that Hamas had been found to [divert imported goods and foreign aid](#) to bolster its military capabilities, Israel also prevented Gaza from importing "dual-use" items, meaning items with potential military as well as civilian purposes. The [import blacklist](#) had at times included certain foods, medical equipment, and construction materials. Similar but less stringent restrictions still apply to the West Bank. It is unclear what restrictions Israel would maintain on Gaza if it succeeds in dismantling Hamas.

Israel's controls in the Palestinian territories are highly controversial. Proponents of the extensive security apparatus say it has [fortified Israeli national security](#), while critics say the policies [violate Palestinian rights](#) and disrupt essential services. In a [2022 report](#), the UN-appointed special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories went so far as to argue that Israel's two-tiered legal system in the West Bank qualifies as apartheid, a position that has spurred intense debate. Some observers, including U.S. and Israeli officials, have said the report reflects a history of [anti-Israel bias](#) by the United Nations. Since

the UN document's release, independent human rights organizations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Israel's B'Tselem, have also published reports accusing Israel of apartheid. How do Palestinian leaders approach foreign policy?

The [Arab League](#) established the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinian people, and it is this body that represents them at many international fora. At the United Nations, the PLO received "observer" status in 1974 and "non-member observer state" status, under the name "State of Palestine," in 2012. It still holds this status but received [additional, limited rights and privileges](#) amid a renewed push for full membership in 2024. The United States and Israel both oppose PLO aspirations for full member status. Additionally, 146 of 193 UN member countries have independently recognized Palestinian statehood, with seven doing so in the first half of 2024: the Bahamas, Barbados, Ireland, Jamaica, Norway, Spain, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Meanwhile, 165 UN members recognize Israel, which has been a UN member state since 1949. Most of the countries that deny Israel's sovereignty are predominantly Arab or Muslim. In recent years, Palestinian leaders have urged Arab countries not to normalize relations with Israel under the 2020 Abraham Accords, as Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates have done. Egypt and Jordan established relations with Israel in 1979 and 1984, respectively.

While the Fatah-dominated PLO was the main organ for Palestinian diplomacy until the Oslo Accords, the PA has since [overshadowed it](#) to become the de facto representative of Palestinians. Foreign governments largely interact with the PA and shun Hamas, providing aid to Gaza through other channels, such as UN agencies. However, a handful of countries, namely Iran, Qatar, Russia, and Turkey, have open relations with Hamas.

Seeking support for the Palestinian national movement, the PLO has pushed for full UN membership and joined multiple international organizations, including the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Most notably, it acceded to the Rome Statute in 2015, making it a party to the [International Criminal Court](#) (ICC). At the PA's behest, the ICC has [opened a probe](#) into possible war crimes committed by Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

*How is the PA involved in the Israel-Hamas war?*

The aftermath of Hamas's October 7 assault on Israel has reinforced the widely held belief that the PA in its current form has become "[basically irrelevant](#)," in the words of CFR Middle East expert Steven A. Cook. The authority [sat on the sidelines](#) during the conflict's first few months, underscoring its lack of power over violent factions such as Hamas and its inability to stem the [Palestinian suffering](#) caused by Israel's retaliation.

The PA's perceived ineffectiveness, plus Israel's pledge to wipe out Hamas over the October 7 attack, has raised the question of who would run Gaza instead. "Trying to establish a Palestinian Authority government in Gaza, with help from Arab states, is probably the least-bad option," [writes CFR national security expert Max Boot](#). Experts have viewed the Shtayyeh government's February 2024 resignation as [the first step](#) in a U.S.-backed plan for a reinvigorated PA to administer Gaza. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has so far rejected the idea, proposing instead that Israel maintain indefinite control over the West Bank and Gaza after the war.

## WHAT CHALLENGES DO PALESTINIAN LEADERS FACE?

**Disunity.** Political infighting [has fractured](#) what was once a fairly unified national movement, precluding Palestinian leaders from negotiating with Israel, organizing elections, and articulating a coherent vision to their supporters. Furthermore, a [plurality of Palestinians](#) [PDF] call the Gaza-West Bank split the most damaging development for their people since Israel's founding, but past reconciliation attempts by Hamas and the PA all failed, and Israel's new vow to eliminate Hamas has further complicated the issue.

**Eroding legitimacy.** President Abbas and the multiple bodies he oversees are widely unpopular, as [polling](#) by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) has shown. More than half the Palestinians whom PCPSR surveyed in June 2023 supported dissolving the PA, which many deride as beholden to Israel. Experts at the International Crisis Group, an independent nongovernmental organization, echoed that sentiment [in a February 2023 report](#): "The [PA] has never lived up to expectations that it would become the foundation of an independent Palestinian state; instead, it has become, as its harshest critics contend, a mere subcontractor to Israel in maintaining the military occupation."

**Financial matters.** As the top employer in the West Bank, the PA directly funds the livelihoods of around 130,000 public-sector workers. Yet, the deeply indebted authority [faces bankruptcy](#) and is unable to pay full salaries. The [World Bank reports](#) that the PA needs various reforms to right itself financially, along with additional donor assistance and reduced economic restrictions from Israel.

**Succession.** Abbas's advanced age and history of health issues have raised concerns about the lack of clear plans for leadership change. Various [succession procedures](#) for the PA and PLO exist, but Abbas has disabled the institutions that would uphold them. While he has no clear successor, experts say candidates could include Abbas's aide Hussein al-Sheikh and popular Fatah member Marwan Barghouti. In a hypothetical election, more voters would prefer Barghouti, [write Arab Barometer pollsters](#) Amaney A. Jamal and Michael Robbins, despite Barghouti's current imprisonment for orchestrating attacks on Israelis. A failed leadership transition could trigger clashes for power or even the PA's collapse, which experts say could spell disaster despite the authority's flaws. "Whatever else one may say about the PA and its complicity in Israel's colonisation, dispossession and annexation, it provides vital support in the form of jobs and essential services to millions of Palestinians," the International Crisis Group writes. "A botched succession would thus be harmful for all main players in this conflict, but most of all for Palestinians in the occupied territories themselves."

### Recommended Resources

This UN timeline traces [pivotal political developments](#) in Palestinian history.

The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) offers a more in-depth look at [Palestinian governance](#) [PDF].

The European Council on Foreign Relations maps the [most prominent individuals and institutions](#) in Palestinian politics.

In a two-part series, *Haaretz's* David B. Green breaks down [Israeli](#) and [Palestinian](#) perspectives on Jerusalem's status.

Palestinian economist Raja Khalidi [makes a case](#) for establishing Palestinian state amid the war in Gaza in this *Foreign Affairs* article.

For *Foreign Affairs*, former PA official Ghaith al-Omari [previews the succession crisis](#) that could unfold once Mahmoud Abbas leaves power.

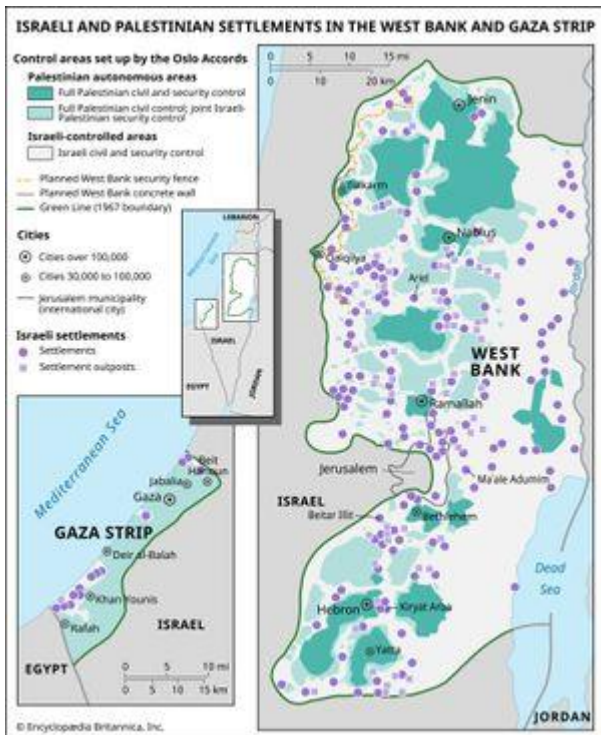
### **PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY (PA),**

The Governing body of the Palestinian [autonomous](#) regions in the [West Bank](#). Established in 1994 as part of the [Oslo Accords](#) peace agreement between [Israel](#) and the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO), the PA also has [de jure](#) governing authority over the entirety of the [Gaza Strip](#), but it has not exercised [de facto](#) control there since 2007, when  [Hamas](#) took control of the region by force. Although the PA was, until then, democratic, Pres. [Mahmoud Abbas](#) has since ruled by decree and indefinitely delayed elections. By 2011 the PA had built up institutions for a functioning state, but it later suffered repeated financial crises under pressure from Israel and others.

The PA was founded following years of hostility. Secret meetings held in [Norway](#) in 1993 between the PLO and Israel led to the signing of the historic Declaration of Principles (the Oslo Accords), in which the two sides agreed to mutual recognition and terms whereby governing functions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—occupied by Israel since the [Six-Day War](#) of 1967—would be progressively handed over to a Palestinian council. During that time—in what generally came to be known as the Oslo process—Israel and the Palestinians were to negotiate a permanent peace treaty to settle on the final status of these territories. The agreements between the sides called for the Palestinian Authority (PA) to take control over most populated areas in the occupied territories. Security for those areas would rest with the Palestinian police, although Israelis would be guaranteed freedom of movement. Several militant Islamic groups, particularly  [Hamas](#), denounced the peace agreement.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

The PA is governed by an [interim](#) constitution known as the Basic Law, which may be [amended](#) by the legislature by a two-thirds majority. The president is elected directly to a four-year term, with a limit of two terms. The president is the commander in chief of the security forces, manages [foreign relations](#), has the power to veto legislation, and may issue decrees when the legislature is not in session. The [prime minister](#), appointed by the president, and the council of ministers hold primary executive authority, subject to the confidence of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The PLC consists of 132 members elected to four-year terms. According to the 2005 [amendment](#) to the Basic Law, the 2006 election was a mixed majority and [proportional representation](#) system. This resulted in the controversial outcome of Hamas winning 74 seats although it received 44 percent of the vote (against [Fatah](#)'s 41 percent). In 2007 the Basic Law was amended to make the system fully proportional. A number of seats, defined by presidential decree, are [allocated](#) to Christians, and political parties must include a certain number of women on their lists, including one in the top three slots. Amid Fatah-Hamas factional violence in 2007, Pres. [Mahmoud Abbas](#) dismissed the government and declared a state of emergency, and thereafter he ruled by decree.



[Israeli and Palestinian settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip \(1995\)](#) The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (1995), building off the 1993 Oslo Accords, divided the West Bank and the Gaza Strip into areas A (Palestinian civil and security control), B (Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control), and C (Israeli civil and security control). (more)

Regional governance is divided into 16 governorates—11 in the West Bank and 5 in the Gaza Strip. Per the 1995 Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with Israel (also known as Oslo II), these territories are divided into three types of administration: areas under PA administration and security (Area A), areas under PA

administration but joint Israeli-Palestinian security (Area B), and areas under Israeli administration and security (Area C). As a key proviso of the Oslo Accords, PA security forces operate in partnership with the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF), which has included training, cooperation, joint patrols, and intelligence sharing; security makes up one-third of the [expenditure](#) of the PA.

## HISTORY

### PRESIDENCY OF [YASSER ARAFAT](#)

The PA first assumed some civil functions in 1994, when the Israeli military withdrew from the cities of Gaza and Jericho. Six other cities followed in 1995, and elections were held in 1996.

The first Israeli withdrawals took place in 1994, from the cities of Gaza and [Jericho](#). That same year the PA assumed control of many civil functions, and its autonomous authority was extended to six other cities in 1995. On January 20, 1996, elections were held in PA-administered areas for the presidency and the PLC. PLO chairman Yasser Arafat was easily elected president, and his Fatah party gained a majority of seats within the PLC.

Arafat's presidency was tasked with building the institutions and [rapport](#) of the fledgling PA while, per the terms of the Oslo Accords, stemming violence against Israel carried out by Palestinians. Because some Palestinians, especially Fatah's rival organization Hamas, were unhappy with [concessions](#) Arafat had made to Israel in the Oslo Accords, violence increased in 1996. The continued violence convinced many that Arafat was either unable or unwilling to curb violence, and it contributed to doubts among many that the [two-state solution](#) could actually bring about peace. [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), who campaigned on the slogan "Peace with security," was granted a surprise victory in Israel's 1996 parliamentary elections. Aspects of Israel's implementation of the Oslo Accords were delayed or halted under Prime Minister Netanyahu, resulting in the negotiation in 1998 of the [Wye River Memorandum](#), which made Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip [contingent](#) on the PA's actions to crack down on violence. Domestic politics in Israel caused the memorandum to be suspended in 1999.

Ongoing violence in the 1990s raised doubts in Israel that the Oslo process would bring peace. The process began to stall, intifada broke out, and the international [community](#) began to push for new leadership in the PA.

Amid a growing sense of distrust and pessimism between Israelis and Palestinians, U.S. Pres. [Bill Clinton](#) [convened](#) a two-week summit at [Camp David](#) in July 2000 to hash out final status issues, including the division of [Jerusalem](#). No agreement was reached. Attempting to capitalize on many Israelis' dissatisfaction with Prime Minister [Ehud Barak](#)'s willingness to divide Jerusalem, [Ariel Sharon](#)—the leader of the opposition in the [Knesset](#) and a former defense minister infamous for his role in the 1982 massacre at a Palestinian refugee camp—made a provocative visit to the [Temple Mount](#), where Islam's third holiest site sits (see [Dome of the Rock](#)). Palestinians were outraged, resulting in angry demonstrations and the beginning of the second [intifada](#). By the end of 2001, as the intifada and Israel's response to it had escalated, the IDF had confined Arafat to his [Ramallah compound](#). He remained there until the final days of his life in 2004.

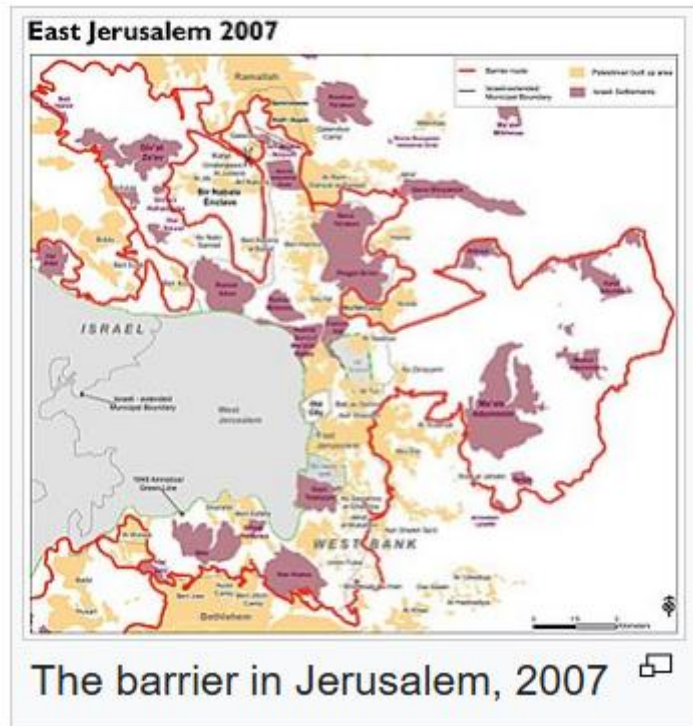
In 2003, amid intense international pressure for new Palestinian leadership, the post of prime minister was established, and Abbas became the first person to occupy the office. However, he resigned only months later, claiming that his role in the post had been undermined by Israel, the [United States](#), and Arafat. Ahmed Qurei, another chief Oslo negotiator, was named prime minister in his place.

## WEST BANK BARRIER, WEST BANK WALL OR THE WEST BANK SEPARATION BARRIER

[WIKIPEDIA](#)



The barrier route as of July 2011: 438 km (272 mi) finished, 58 km (36 mi) under construction, 212 km (132 mi) planned



The **West Bank barrier**, **West Bank wall** or the **West Bank separation barrier**,<sup>[1][2]</sup> is a [separation barrier](#) built by [Israel](#) along the [Green Line](#) and inside parts of the [West Bank](#). Israel describes the wall as a necessary security barrier against [Palestinian political violence](#); whereas [Palestinians](#) describe it as an element of [racial segregation](#) and a representation of [Israeli apartheid](#),<sup>[3]</sup> who often call it "**Wall of Apartheid**".<sup>[4]</sup> At a total length of 708 kilometres (440 mi) upon completion, the route traced by the barrier is more than double the length of the Green Line, with 15% of its length running along the Green Line or inside Israel, and the remaining 85% running as much as 18 kilometres (11 mi) inside the West Bank, effectively isolating about 9% of the land and approximately 25,000 Palestinians from the rest of the [Palestinian territory](#).<sup>[5]</sup>

The barrier was built by Israel following a wave of Palestinian political violence and incidents of terrorism inside Israel during the [Second Intifada](#), which began in September 2000 and ended in February 2005.<sup>[6]</sup> The [Israeli government](#) cites a decreased number of [suicide bombings carried out from the West Bank](#) as evidence of its efficacy, after such attacks fell from 73 between 2000 and July 2003 (the completion of the first continuous segment) to 12 between August 2003 and the end of 2006.<sup>[7][8]</sup> While the barrier was initially presented as a temporary security measure at a time of heightened tensions, it has since been associated with a future political border between Israel and the [State of Palestine](#).<sup>[9]</sup> The barrier has drawn criticism from Palestinians, human rights groups, and members of the international community, who have all argued that it serves as evidence of [Israel's intent to annex Palestinian land](#) under the guise of security.<sup>[10]</sup> It has also been alleged that the construction of the wall aims to undermine the [Israeli–Palestinian peace process](#) by unilaterally establishing new *de facto* borders.<sup>[11]</sup> Key points of dispute are that it substantially deviates eastward from the Green Line, severely restricts the travel of many Palestinians, and impairs their ability to commute to work within the West Bank<sup>[12]</sup> or to Israel.<sup>[13]</sup> The [International Court of Justice](#) issued [an advisory opinion](#) finding that the barrier qualifies as a [violation of international law](#).<sup>[14][15]</sup> In 2003, the [United Nations General Assembly](#) adopted a resolution that charged Israel's building of the barrier to be a violation of international law and demanded its removal by a vote of 144–4 with 12 abstentions.<sup>[16]</sup>

The walled sections of the barrier have become a [canvas for graffiti art](#), with its Palestinian side illustrating opposition to the barrier, Palestinian resistance, their right to return, as well as [human rights](#) in general.<sup>[1]</sup>

## NAMES



Grffiti on the road to [Bethlehem](#) in the West Bank stating "[Ich bin ein Berliner](#)"

In [Hebrew](#), descriptions include: "separation fence" ([גדר ההפרדה](#)<sup>ⓘ</sup>, *Geder HaHafrada*); "separation wall" (Hebrew: חומת ההפרדה, *Homat HaHafrada*) and "security fence" (גדר הביטחון, *Geder HaBitahon*).<sup>[17][18]</sup>

In [Arabic](#), it is called "wall of apartheid"/"racial segregation wall"<sup>[4]</sup> [جدار الفصل العنصري](#)<sup>ⓘ</sup>, *jidār al-faṣl al-‘unṣuriyy*, indicating an allegation of [Israeli apartheid](#).

In English, the [BBC](#)'s style guide uses the terms "barrier" (sometimes "separation barrier" or "**West Bank barrier**")<sup>[19]</sup> as do [The Economist](#),<sup>[20]</sup> [PBS](#)<sup>[21]</sup> and [The New York Times](#).<sup>[22]</sup> The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses the phrase "security fence" in English.<sup>[23]</sup> The [International Court of Justice](#) has used the term "wall", explaining that "the other expressions sometimes employed are no more accurate if understood in the physical sense."<sup>[24]</sup> It is also referred to as the "Apartheid Wall" or "Apartheid Fence" in a derogatory manner.<sup>[25][26][27]</sup> "[Seam zone](#)" (Hebrew: מרחב התפר) refers to the land between the [1949 Armistice Agreement Line](#) and the fence.



## STRUCTURE



Route 443 near [Giv'at Ze'ev](#) Junction, with pyramid-shaped stacks of barbed wire forming a section of the Israeli West Bank barrier

The barrier is described by the [Israeli Defense Forces](#) as a "multi-layered composite obstacle", parts of it consisting of a 9 metres (30 ft) high concrete wall,<sup>[28]</sup> while other stretches consist of a multi-layered fence system, with three fences with pyramid-shaped stacks of barbed wire on the two outer fences and a lighter-weight fence with intrusion detection equipment in the middle; an anti-vehicle ditch; patrol roads on

both sides; and a smooth strip of sand for "intrusion tracking".<sup>[29][30]</sup>

Where the multi-layered fence system is employed, it contains an exclusion area of 60-metre (200 ft) in width on average,<sup>[31]</sup> with some sections having an exclusion area that reaches up to 100 metres

(330 ft).<sup>[32]</sup> The concrete wall has a width of 3 metres (9.8 ft),<sup>[failed verification]</sup> and the wall is 9 metres (30 ft) high.<sup>[28]</sup>

## ROUTE



Israeli West Bank barrier – North of [Meitar](#), near the southwest corner of the West Bank, in 2006

See also: [1949 Armistice Agreements § Cease-fire line vs. permanent border](#)



The barrier between northern [West Bank](#) and the [Gilboa](#)



[Highway 1](#) – [Route 4370](#) Junction ([Al-Issawiya](#) Junction) – one can see the barrier between the Israeli and the Palestinian lanes.

The barrier runs partly along or near the [1949 Jordanian–Israeli armistice line](#) ("[Green Line](#)") and partly through the [Israeli-occupied West Bank](#) diverging eastward from the [armistice line](#) by up to 20 km (12 mi) to

include on the western side several of the areas with concentrations of highly populated [Israeli settlements](#), such as [East Jerusalem](#), the Ariel Bloc ([Ariel](#), [Karnei Shomron](#), [Kedumim](#), [Immanuel](#) etc.),<sup>[33]</sup><sup>[better source needed]</sup> [Gush Etzion](#), [Givat Ze'ev](#), [Oranit](#), and [Maale Adumim](#).<sup>[34]</sup><sup>[35]</sup>

The barrier nearly encircles some Palestinian towns, about 20% follows the [armistice line](#),<sup>[36]</sup> and a projected 77,000 ha (191,000 acres) or about 13.5% of the West Bank area is on the west side of the wall.<sup>[37]</sup> According to a study of the April 2006 route by the Israeli [human rights organization B'Tselem](#), 8.5% of the West Bank area will be on the Israeli side of the barrier after completion, and 3.4% partly or completely surrounded on the eastern side.<sup>[38]</sup> Some 27,520 to 31,000 Palestinians will be captured on the Israeli side.<sup>[38]</sup><sup>[39]</sup> Another 124,000, on the other hand, will effectively be controlled and isolated. Some 230,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem will be placed on the West Bank side.<sup>[39]</sup> Most of the barrier<sup>[vague]</sup> was built at the northern and western edges of the West Bank, mostly beyond the Green Line and created 9 [enclaves](#), which enclosed 15,783 ha (39,000 acres). An additional barrier, circa 10 km long, run south of Ramallah.<sup>[40]</sup>

Israel states that the [topography](#) does not permit putting the barrier along the Green Line in some places because hills or tall buildings on the Palestinian side would make the barrier ineffective against terrorism.<sup>[41]</sup> The International Court of Justice states that in such cases it is only legal to build the barrier inside Israel.

The barrier route has been challenged in court and changed several times. Argument presented to the court has reiterated that the [cease-fire](#) line of 1949 was negotiated "without prejudice to future territorial settlements or boundary lines" (Art. VI.9).<sup>[42]</sup>

**[GO TO SITE FOR FULL ARTICLE](#)**

## THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY: CREATING THE FIRST PALESTINIAN CHIP IN THE MIDDLE OF AN UNPRECEDENTED CONFLICT

[WORLD BANK BLOGS](#) [Andreja Marusic](#) [Gianluca Mele](#) [Johan Bjurman Bergman](#) [Zackaria Sabella](#) December 16, 2024

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has had an unprecedented impact on the economy and private sector activities of both Gaza and the West Bank. Business activity in Gaza has been crippled, with a significant portion of establishments damaged or destroyed, and many business owners and employees displaced. The remaining economic activity is largely informal, focusing on essential goods often sold on the black market at inflated, unregulated prices. In the West Bank, nearly every business reports also being affected by the conflict. Despite efforts to avoid layoffs, roughly two thirds of firms in the West Bank reported some form of reduction in their workforce and 87.2 percent of workers saw their household incomes shrink since the conflict's onset. The West Bank economy alone contracted by 23 percent in Q2 2024, while that in Gaza shrank by an astounding 86 percent, in the same period.<sup>1</sup> Unemployment has reached record highs, exceeding 50 percent on average. In a context of high Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV) exposure, already before the current crisis, recent developments have further destabilized an already tense situation.

**Amid these challenges, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector emerges as a beacon of hope.** The borderless nature of ICT services, such as software development, back-office support, and research and development (R&D), has been enabling Palestinian businesses to overcome restrictions on movement and access and continue to operate in the regional and global markets. In fact, Gaza was known in the region as a hub for high quality programmers skilled in AI technologies before the conflict. Despite recurring bouts of violence and the external constraints on the economy, Palestinian IT firms have succeeded in tapping into the global growth of IT services exports. The ICT sector, including telecom firms and internet service providers, employs almost 15,000 people and contributes about 3.3 percent of GDP<sup>2</sup>.

Members of the Orion team, representatives from the Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunications and Digital Technologies (the implementing unit), and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (key project donor).

**The recent launch of the Palestinian semiconductor design firm Orion offers a bright example of the power of the ICT industry to create high-tech jobs in some of the most challenging circumstances.** Orion, which is based in Rawabi in the West Bank and was launched in 2022, is the first Palestinian firm specializing in very-large scale integration (VLSI), the process by which millions or billions

of transistors are combined onto a single chip. The company was founded with the vision to create a VLSI design industry in the Middle East to enable the training and employment of world class VLSI engineers. Its goal is to create the first-ever semi-conductor chip developed in the Palestinian territories. The chip will be designed to be integrated into a range of systems, including home appliances and automotive applications, with a strong focus on data security.

**The launch of Orion was supported by the Technology for Youth and Jobs (TechStart), a project of the Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunications and Digital Economy and supported by World Bank financial and technical assistance.** The project – benefitting also from co-financing from the European Union, Switzerland, and the Netherlands – focuses on developing both the supply and demand sides of the ICT industry to increase economic resilience and generate jobs for youth. Launched at the peak of COVID-19 and running until 2028, the project has to date mobilized over US\$5 million in private investment into Palestinian IT services firms and created 800 IT sector jobs. These results are especially impressive given the unique challenges of the Palestinian context.

While an exhaustive reflection on the lessons learned so far would require much more than a blog, highlighting the mechanisms used by the TechStart project to facilitate Orion's development can be helpful for designing interventions in other contexts. These were primarily:

1. **Access to Global Expertise:** TechStart's [UpSkill program](#) helped bring a senior VLSI expert from the Palestinian diaspora in the USA to ASAL, a local IT services company. This expert assembled a team, developed a business plan, and laid the groundwork for Orion.
2. **De-Risking Firm Establishment:** [TechStart's PIONEER](#) program provided a matching grant to help establish Orion as a separate entity, mitigating the risks associated with launching a new venture by extending the runway to get to profitability.
3. **Developing Local Talent:** The UpSkill program supported the hiring and training of Palestinian youth as VLSI engineers. This effort expanded Orion's team from 6 engineers in 2023 to an expected 42 by mid-2024, significantly enhancing local capacity.

**Orion's success story underscores the vital role that technology and links to the international market can play in building economic resilience in contexts affected by FCV.** Orion leverages high-value services outsourcing projects from international clients to equip Palestinian youth with internationally market aligned technology skills and create good jobs, mitigating brain drain and building the reputation of the West Bank as a high-skilled outsourcing destination. With the support of projects like TechStart, such models can be scaled even in the most challenging of contexts. As technological developments, including AI, pose new challenges that may exacerbate the digital divide, this is a critical time for international organizations and governments to step up support to develop domestic ICT industries and high quality, digital jobs.

## Related

- [The World Bank in the West Bank & Gaza](#)
- [The World Bank in MENA](#)

## THE WORLD BANK IN WEST BANK AND GAZA

### WORLDBANKGROUP

Against the backdrop of the humanitarian emergency in Gaza and in line with our mission, the World Bank is working in close collaboration with development partners to support urgent relief efforts for the affected people of Gaza. In the immediate term, we are mobilizing resources through project restructurings and World Bank managed trust funds that deliver help to the poorest and most vulnerable people. The funds mobilized are being used to provide lifesaving interventions, including emergency medical supplies, food and water. These activities are being implemented through UN Agencies, including UNICEF, WHO and WFP, based upon their ability to operate on the ground during an active conflict. The World Bank grieves the tragic loss of life and devastating impact on all civilians from this conflict.

### OVERVIEW – CONTEXT

**LAST UPDATED: MAY 11, 2023**

The World Bank began its program of assistance in the Palestinian territories in November 1992. Grants, financed from the World Bank's own resources and supplemented by co-financing from development partners, fund the Palestinian Authority's (PA) projects in water, energy, urban and local development, public financial management, social protection, education, health, solid waste management, digital development, the financial sector, and private sector development.

The peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis remain stalled, and the political context deteriorated further at the start of 2023. Despite continued efforts at reconciliation between the polities of Gaza and the West Bank, progress remains elusive. Movement and access restrictions imposed by Israel<sup>[1]</sup> continue to limit Palestinian development in the West Bank while creating conditions akin to a nearly closed economy on Gaza.

At the end of 2022, unemployment in the territories was 24.4 percent, two percentage points lower than the previous year. However, the divergence in joblessness between the West Bank and Gaza continued to mirror the differing severity of the restrictions to access and movement imposed on them, with the former registering 13.1 percent unemployment and the latter a striking 45.3 percent.

The Palestinian economy continued its post-pandemic rebound in 2022, registering full year Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 3.9 percent, following the post-COVID rebound spurt of 7 percent in 2021. The continued growth was driven by consumption, which in turn was boosted by an increase in the number of Palestinians working in Israel, where workers earn more than twice the daily average wage in the West Bank. The PA's revenues grew significantly, driven by increased economic activity and successful efforts to expand the tax base. As spending remained stable, the deficit decreased by about 60 percent in 2022 compared to the year before, albeit at a high social cost with fewer payments made to poor households. Despite these positive fiscal developments, conditions are expected to remain tight in 2023 as donor aid is expected to remain at historically low levels, below 2 percent of GDP of the Palestinian territories.

Regarding the economic outlook, downside risks remain elevated. Growth is projected to soften during 2023 and beyond with nominal GDP growth expected at around 3 percent and real GDP growth stagnant due to population growth trends. This modest expansion will be driven by a continued recovery in consumption and increase in the number of Palestinians working in Israel. However, the interconnectedness of the two economies also exposes the Palestinian side to additional downside risks, which may be further exacerbated if the recent escalation of clashes between Palestinian and Israeli forces extends over several months and results in a tightening of restrictions, including on the cross-border movement of workers.

<sup>[1]</sup>According to the Government of Israel, these restrictions are for the purpose of enhancing the security of Israel and Israeli citizens

**PART H2**

**WEST BANK - STATE OF PALESTINE**

## STATE OF PALESTINE

### WIKIPEDIA

	green).
<b>Status</b>	UN observer state under Israeli occupation Recognized by 143 UN member states
<b>Proclaimed capital</b>	Jerusalem (limited recognition) <sup>[a]</sup>
<b>Administrative center</b>	Ramallah
<b>Largest city</b>	Rafah <sup>[b][3]</sup>
<b>Official languages</b>	Arabic
<b>Demonym(s)</b>	Palestinian
<b>Government</b>	Unitary semi-presidential republic <sup>[4]</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>President</b></li> <li>• <b>Prime Minister</b></li> <li>• <b>Speaker of the Parliament</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mahmoud Abbas<sup>[c]</sup></li> <li>Mohammad Mustafa</li> <li>Aziz Dweik</li> </ul>
<b>Legislature</b>	National Council
<b>Formation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Declaration of Independence</b></li> <li>• <b>UNGA observer state resolution</b></li> <li>• <b>Sovereignty dispute with Israel</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15 November 1988</li> <li>29 November 2012</li> <li>Ongoing<sup>[d][5][6]</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Area</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Total</b></li> <li>• <b>Water (%)</b></li> <li>• <b>West Bank</b></li> <li>• <b>Gaza Strip</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6,020<sup>[7]</sup> km<sup>2</sup> (2,320 sq mi) (163rd)</li> <li>3.5<sup>[8]</sup></li> <li>5,655 km<sup>2</sup></li> <li>365 km<sup>2[9]</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Population</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2023 estimate</b></li> <li>• <b>Density</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5,483,450<sup>[10]</sup> (121st)</li> <li>731/km<sup>2</sup> (1,893.3/sq mi)</li> </ul>

**Palestine** (Arabic: فلسطين, romanized: *Filasṭīn*<sup>[e]</sup>), officially the **State of Palestine** (دولة فلسطين, *Dawlat Filasṭīn*),<sup>[f]</sup> is a country in the [southern Levant](#) region of West Asia. It encompasses two disconnected territories — the [West Bank](#) and the [Gaza Strip](#), collectively known as the [Palestinian territories](#) — within the larger [region of Palestine](#). The country shares its borders with Israel to north, west and south, Jordan to the east and Egypt to the southwest. It has a combined land area of 6,020 square kilometres (2,320 sq mi) while [its population](#) exceeds five million people. Its [proclaimed capital](#) is [Jerusalem](#) while [Ramallah](#) serves as its administrative center and [Rafah](#) is currently its largest city. [Arabic](#) is the official language. The majority of Palestinians [practice Islam](#) while Christianity also has a [significant presence](#).

The [region of Palestine](#) has played an important part in world history.

[Canaanites](#), [Israelites](#), [Assyrians](#), [Babylonians](#), [Persians](#), [Greeks](#), [Romans](#) and [Byzantines](#) all left their mark on the land. In addition to its historical significance, Palestine holds profound religious importance for [Judaism](#), [Christianity](#) and [Islam](#). Throughout history the region has experienced periods of coexistence and conflict between different religious and ethnic groups. Notably, during the Middle Ages, when Jewish communities faced [persecution](#), they found refuge and protection under [Muslim rule](#) and the wider [Islamic world](#). The [Ottoman Empire](#), which [controlled Palestine](#) from the 16th century until its [collapse](#) at the end of [World War I](#), provided a sanctuary for Jews fleeing persecution in Europe. The end of the Ottoman rule



marked a new chapter in Palestine's history. Following World War I, the British Empire assumed control of the region under the [League of Nations](#) mandate. The [British Mandate for Palestine](#), established in 1920, brought significant changes to the political and social landscape of the area, setting the stage for [the conflicts and struggles that would follow](#).

The establishment of the [State of Israel](#) in 1948 was accompanied by a [war](#) which led to the [forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians](#) and created a large [refugee population](#).<sup>[18]</sup> Subsequent [Arab–Israeli wars](#), including the [Six-Day War](#) in 1967, resulted in the Israeli [occupation of the West Bank](#) and the [Gaza Strip](#). On 15th November 1988, [Palestinian National Council](#), the legislative body of the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO) led by [Yasser Arafat](#), declared the establishment of Palestine. Signing of the [Oslo Accords](#) in the 1990s, negotiated between Israel and the PLO, created the [Palestinian Authority](#) (PA) to exercise partial control over parts of Palestine. In 2007, [internal divisions](#) between Palestinian political factions led to a [takeover of the Gaza Strip](#) by [Hamas](#). Since then, the West Bank has been governed in part by the Palestinian Authority, led by [Fatah](#), while the Gaza Strip has remained under the [control of Hamas](#). Israel has built [settlements](#) in both of the Palestinian territories since the start of the occupation. The settlements in the Gaza Strip were dismantled in Israel's [unilateral disengagement](#) in 2005, and approximately 670,000 [Israeli settlers](#) live in settlements in the West Bank. The international community considers Israeli settlements in Palestine [illegal under international law](#), but the Israeli government disputes this.

Currently, the biggest challenges to the country include the Israeli occupation, partial [blockade](#), [restrictions on movement](#), [expansion of Israeli settlements](#) and [settler violence](#), as well as an overall poor security situation. Unsolved remain the question of [Palestine's borders](#), the [legal and diplomatic status of Jerusalem](#), and the [return of Palestinian refugees](#). Despite these challenges, the country remains one of the most highly-educated countries in the [Arab world](#), maintains an emerging [economy](#), and sees frequent [tourism](#). As of May 2024, Palestine is [recognized as a sovereign state](#) by 143 out of 193 [member states of the United Nations](#). It is also a member of several [international organizations](#), including the [Arab League](#) and the [Organization of Islamic Cooperation](#). It has been a [non-member observer state of the United Nations](#) since 2012.<sup>[19]</sup>

## WHO IS A PALESTINIAN REFUGEE

### POINT OF NO RETURN

Jewish refugees arriving in Israel were sent to ma'abarot, or transit camps.

According to [Don Peretz \(Who is a Refugee?\)](#) initially UNRWA defined a refugee

*“as a needy person who, as a result of the war in Palestine, has lost his home and his means of livelihood”.*

This definition included some 17,000 Jews who had lived in areas of Palestine taken over by Arab forces during the 1948 war and about 50,000 Arabs living within Israel's armistice frontiers. Israel took responsibility for these individuals, and by 1950 they were removed from the UNRWA rolls leaving only Palestine Arabs and a few hundred non-Arab Christian Palestinians outside Israel in UNRWA's refugee category.

At the time there was no internationally recognised definition of what constituted a refugee. In 1951, the UN Refugee Convention agreed the following definition:

*“A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”*

This definition certainly applies to the 850,000 Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Arab countries, synagogue burnings, arrests and riots. Returning to these countries would have put – and still does -their lives at risk.

The burden of rehabilitating and resettling the 650,000 Jewish refugees who arrived in Israel from Arab countries was shouldered by the Jewish Agency and US Jewish relief organisations, such as the Joint Distribution Committee. They were shunted into transit camps or *ma'abarot*. The conditions were appalling.

The American aid earmarked to solve the issue of Middle East refugees was supposed to have been split evenly between Israel and the Arab states, with each side receiving \$50 million to build infrastructure to absorb refugees. The money to take in the Arab refugees was handed over to the U.N. agency founded to address the issue of Palestinian refugees, and the Americans gave Arab countries another \$53 million for “technical cooperation.” In effect, the Arab side received double the money given to Israel, even though Israel took in more refugees, including ones from Arab nations – Jews who had been displaced by the regional upheavals. The bills presented to Congress in 1951 included a bill to send Israel aid to take in refugees. It was the first and last time that any mechanism was established for the Jewish refugees. The

amount Congress allocated to provide for Middle East refugees – Jewish and Arab – at the request of then-President Harry Truman was equal to \$1.5 billion today.

From an early stage in the conflict, the UN was co-opted by the powerful Arab-Muslim voting bloc to skew its mandate and defend the rights of only one refugee population – the Palestinians. UNRWA is dedicated to the exclusive care of Palestinian refugees. There are ten UN agencies solely concerned with Palestinian refugees. These even define refugee status for the Palestinians explicitly: one that stipulates that status depends on ‘two years’ residence’ in Palestine. The definition makes no mention of ‘fear of persecution’ nor of resettlement. Palestinian refugees are the only refugee population in the world, out of 65 million recognised refugees, permitted to pass on their refugee status to succeeding generations, even if they enjoy citizenship in their adoptive countries. It is estimated that the current population of Palestinian ‘refugees’ is 5,493, million. Instead of resettlement, they demand ‘repatriation’, an Israeli red line.

In contrast to the \$17.7 billion allocated to the Palestinian refugees, no international aid was earmarked for Jewish refugees. The exception was a \$30,000 grant in 1957 which the UN, fearing protests from its Muslim members, did not want publicised. The grant was eventually converted into a loan and paid back by the American Joint Distribution Committee, the main agency caring for Jews in distress.

Yet on two occasions the UN did determine that Jews fleeing Egypt and North Africa were *bona fide* refugees. In 1957, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, August Lindt, /> declared that the Jews of Egypt who were ‘unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of the government of their nationality’ fell within his remit. In July 1967, the UNHCR recognised Jews fleeing Libya as refugees under the UNHCR mandate.

Needless to say, no Jew still defines himself as a refugee. Despite the initial hardships, they are now all full citizens of Israel and the West.

The post [UNRWA was set up as a temporary measure](#) first appeared on [Point of No Return](#).

## WHO ARE THE PALESTINIANS?

[BRITANNICA](#)

### WORLD WAR I AND AFTER



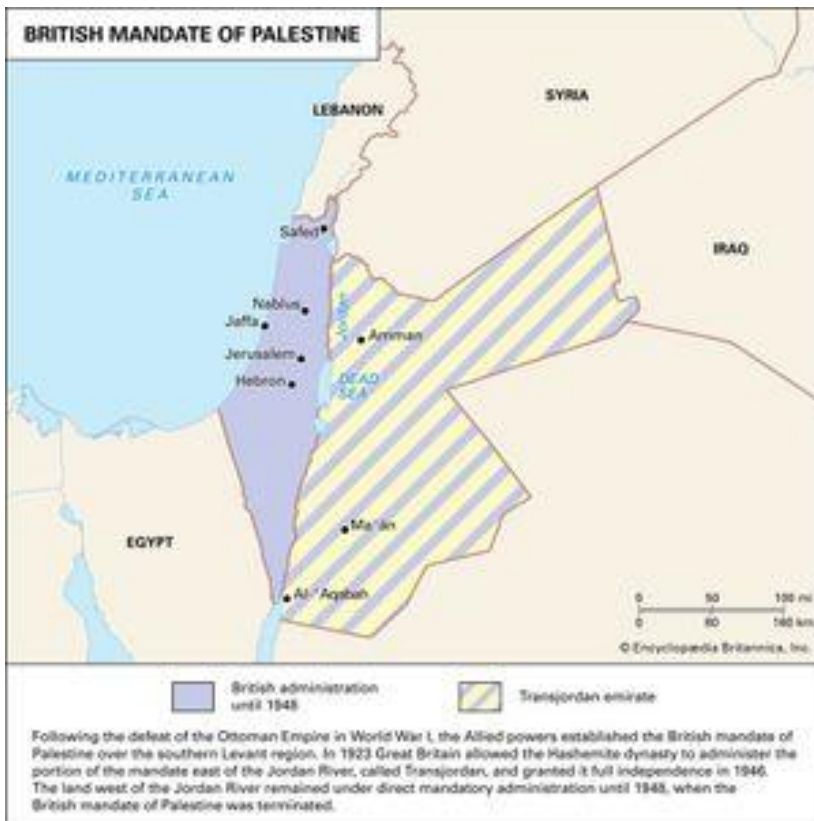
#### [Sykes-Picot Agreement](#)

During World War I the [great powers](#) made a number of decisions concerning the future of Palestine without much regard to the wishes of the [indigenous](#) inhabitants. Palestinian Arabs, however, believed that [Great Britain](#) had promised them independence in the [Hussein-McMahon correspondence](#), an exchange of letters from July 1915 to March 1916 between Sir [Henry McMahon](#), British high commissioner in Egypt, and [Hussein ibn Ali](#), then emir of

Mecca, in which the British made certain commitments to the Arabs in return for their support against the Ottomans during the war. Yet by May 1916 Great Britain, [France](#), and [Russia](#) had reached an agreement (the [Sykes-Picot Agreement](#)) according to which, inter alia, the bulk of Palestine was to be internationalized. Further complicating the situation, in November 1917 [Arthur Balfour](#), the British secretary of state for foreign affairs, addressed a letter to [Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild](#) (the [Balfour Declaration](#)) expressing sympathy for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people on the understanding that “nothing shall be done which may [prejudice](#) the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish [communities](#) in Palestine.” This declaration did not come about through an act of generosity or stirrings of [conscience](#) over the bitter fate of the Jewish people. It was meant, in part, to prompt American Jews to exercise their influence in moving the [United States](#) to support British postwar policies as well as to encourage Russian Jews to keep their nation fighting.

Palestine was hard-hit by the war. In addition to the destruction caused by the fighting, the population was devastated by famine, [epidemics](#), and Ottoman punitive measures against Arab nationalists. Major battles took place at Gaza before Jerusalem was captured by British and Allied forces under the command of [General Sir Edmund \(later 1st Viscount\) Allenby](#) in December 1917. The remaining area was occupied by the British by October 1918.

At the war’s end, the future of Palestine was problematic. Great Britain, which had set up a military administration in Palestine after capturing Jerusalem, was faced with the problem of having to secure



international sanction for the continued occupation of the country in a manner consistent with its [ambiguous](#), seemingly conflicting wartime commitments. On March 20, 1920, delegates from Palestine attended a general Syrian congress at Damascus, which passed a resolution rejecting the Balfour Declaration and elected [Faisal I](#)—son of Hussein ibn Ali, who ruled the [Hejaz](#)—king of a united Syria (including Palestine). This resolution echoed one passed earlier in Jerusalem, in February 1919, by the first Palestinian Arab conference of Muslim-Christian associations, which had been founded by leading Palestinian Arab notables to oppose Zionist activities. In April 1920,

however, at a [peace conference](#) held in [San Remo](#), Italy, the Allies divided the former territories of the defeated [Ottoman Empire](#). Of the Ottoman provinces in the Syrian [region](#), the northern portion (Syria and [Lebanon](#)) was [mandated](#) to France, and the southern portion (Palestine) was [mandated](#) to Great Britain. By July 1920 the French had forced Faisal to give up his newly founded kingdom of Syria. The hope of founding an Arab Palestine within a federated Syrian state collapsed and with it any prospect of independence. Palestinian Arabs spoke of 1920 as *'ām al-nakbah*, the “year of the catastrophe.” Uncertainty over the [disposition](#) of Palestine affected all its inhabitants and increased political tensions. In April 1920 anti-Zionist [riots](#) broke out in the Jewish quarter of [Old Jerusalem](#), killing several and injuring scores. British authorities attributed the riots to Arab disappointment at not having the promises of independence fulfilled and to fears, played on by some Muslim and Christian leaders, of a massive influx of Jews. Following the confirmation of the [mandate](#) at San Remo, the British replaced the military administration with a civilian administration in July 1920, and [Sir Herbert \(later Viscount\) Samuel](#), a Zionist, was appointed the first high commissioner. The new administration proceeded to [implement](#) the Balfour Declaration, announcing in August a quota of 16,500 Jewish [immigrants](#) for the first year. In December 1920, Palestinian Arabs at a congress in [Haifa](#) established an executive committee (known as the Arab Executive) to act as the representative of the Arabs. It was never formally recognized by the British and was dissolved in 1934. However, the platform of the Haifa congress, which set out the position that Palestine was an [autonomous](#) Arab entity and totally rejected any rights of the Jews to Palestine, remained the basic policy of the Palestinian Arabs until 1948. The arrival of more than 18,000 Jewish immigrants between 1919 and 1921 and land purchases in 1921 by the Jewish National Fund (established in 1901), which led to the eviction of Arab peasants (fellahin), further aroused Arab opposition that was expressed throughout the region through the Christian-Muslim associations. On May 1, 1921, more serious

anti-Zionist riots broke out in Jaffa and spread to [Petah Tikva](#) and other Jewish communities, in which nearly 100 were killed. An Arab delegation of notables visited London in August–November 1921, demanding that the Balfour Declaration be [repudiated](#) and proposing the creation of a national government with a parliament democratically elected by the country’s Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Alarmed by the extent of Arab opposition, the British government issued a [white paper](#) in June 1922 declaring that Great Britain did “not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded in Palestine.” Immigration would not exceed the economic absorptive capacity of the country, and steps would be taken to set up a legislative council. These proposals were rejected by the Arabs, both because they [constituted](#) a large majority of the total mandate population and therefore wished to dominate the instruments of government and rapidly gain independence and because, they argued, the proposals allowed Jewish immigration, which had a political objective, to be regulated by an economic [criterion](#).

## THE BRITISH MANDATE

### [British mandate of Palestine](#)

In July 1922 the Council of the [League of Nations](#) approved the mandate instrument for Palestine, including its preamble incorporating the [Balfour Declaration](#) and stressing the Jewish historical connection with Palestine. Article 2 made the mandatory power responsible for placing the country under such “political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home...and the development of self-governing institutions.” Article 4 allowed for the establishment of a [Jewish Agency](#) to advise and cooperate with the Palestine administration in matters affecting the Jewish national home. Article 6 required that the Palestine administration, “while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced,” under suitable conditions should [facilitate](#) Jewish immigration and close settlement of Jews on the land. Although Transjordan—i.e., the lands east of the [Jordan](#) River—constituted three-fourths of the British mandate of Palestine, it was, despite protests from the Zionists, excluded from the clauses covering the establishment of a Jewish national home. On September 29, 1923, the mandate officially came into force.

Palestine was a distinct political entity for the first time in centuries. This created problems and challenges for Palestinian Arabs and Zionists alike. Both communities realized that by the end of the mandate period the region’s future would be determined by size of population and ownership of land. Thus, the central issues throughout the mandate period were Jewish immigration and land purchases, with the Jews attempting to increase both and the Arabs seeking to slow down or halt both. Conflict over these issues often [escalated](#) into violence, and the British were forced to take action—a lesson not lost on either side.



[Amin al-Husseini](#) Arab nationalist and grand mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husseini, c. 1937.

Arab nationalist activities became fragmented as tensions arose between clans, religious groups, and city dwellers and fellahin over the issue of how to respond to British rule and the increasing number of Zionists. Moreover, traditional rivalry between the two old preeminent and ambitious Jerusalem families, the Husseinis and the Nashashibis, whose members had held numerous government posts in the late Ottoman period, [inhibited](#) the development of effective Arab leadership. Several Arab organizations in the 1920s opposed Jewish immigration, including the Palestine Arab Congress, Muslim-Christian associations, and the Arab Executive. Most Arab groups were led by the strongly

anti-British Husseini family, while the National Defense Party (founded 1934) was under the control of the more accommodating Nashashibi family. In 1921 the British high commissioner appointed [Amin al-Husseini](#) to be the (grand) [mufti](#) of Jerusalem and made him president of the newly formed Supreme Muslim Council, which controlled the Muslim courts and schools and a considerable portion of the funds raised by religious charitable endowments (*awqāf*; singular [waqf](#)). Amin al-Husseini used this religious position to transform himself into the most powerful political figure among the Arabs.

Initially, the Jews of Palestine thought it best served their interests to cooperate with the British administration. The [World Zionist Organization](#) (founded 1897) was regarded as the [de facto Jewish Agency stipulated](#) in the mandate, although its president, [Chaim Weizmann](#), remained in London, close to the British government; the Polish-born emigré [David Ben-Gurion](#) became the leader of a standing executive in Palestine. Throughout the 1920s most British local authorities in Palestine, especially the military, sympathized with the Palestinian Arabs, whereas the British government in London tended to side with the Zionists. The Jewish [community](#) in Palestine, the Yishuv, established its own assembly (Va'ad Leumi), [trade union](#) and labor movement ([Histadrut](#)), schools, courts, taxation system, medical services, and a number of industrial enterprises. It also formed a military organization called the [Haganah](#). The Jewish Agency came to be controlled by a group called the Labor Zionists, who, for the most part, believed in cooperation with the British and Arabs, but another group, the Revisionist Zionists, founded in 1925 and led by [Vladimir Jabotinsky](#), fully realized that their goal of a Jewish state in all of Palestine (i.e., both sides of the Jordan River) was inconsistent with that of Palestinian Arabs. The Revisionists formed their own military arm, [Irgun Zvai Leumi](#), which did not hesitate to use force against the Arabs.

British rule in Palestine during the mandate was, in general, [conscientious](#), efficient, and responsible. The mandate government developed administrative institutions, municipal services, [public works](#), and transport. It laid water pipelines, expanded ports, extended railway lines, and supplied electricity. It was less [assiduous](#) in promoting education, however, particularly in the Arab sector, and it was hampered

because it had to respond to outbreaks of violence both between the Arab and Jewish communities and against itself. The aims and [aspirations](#) of the three parties in Palestine appeared incompatible, which, as events proved, was indeed the case.

There was little political cooperation between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. In 1923 the British high commissioner tried to win Arab cooperation by offers first of a legislative council that would reflect the Arab majority and then of an Arab agency. Both offers were rejected by the Arabs as falling far short of their national demands. Nor did the Arabs wish to legitimize a situation they rejected in principle. The years 1923–29 were relatively quiet; Arab passivity was partly due to the drop in Jewish immigration in 1926–28. In 1927 the number of Jewish emigrants [exceeded](#) that of immigrants, and in 1928 there was a net Jewish immigration of only 10 persons.

Nevertheless, the Jewish national home continued to consolidate itself in terms of urban, agricultural, social, cultural, and industrial development. Large amounts of land were purchased from Arab owners, who often were absentee landlords. In August 1929 negotiations were concluded for the formation of an enlarged Jewish Agency to include non-Zionist Jewish sympathizers throughout the world.



[Western Wall](#) The Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem.

This last development, while accentuating Arab fears, gave the Zionists a new sense of confidence. In the same month, a dispute in Jerusalem concerning religious practices at the [Western Wall](#)—sacred to Jews as the only remnant of the Second [Temple of Jerusalem](#) and to Muslims as the site of the [Dome of the Rock](#)—

flared up into serious communal clashes in Jerusalem, [Safed](#), and [Hebron](#). Some 250 were killed and 570 [wounded](#), the Arab casualties being mostly at the hands of British security forces. A royal commission of inquiry under the aegis of Sir Walter Shaw attributed the clashes to the fact that “the Arabs have come to see in Jewish immigration not only a menace to their livelihood but a possible overlord of the future.” A second royal commission, headed by [Sir John Hope Simpson](#), issued a report stating that there was at that time no margin of land available for agricultural settlement by new immigrants. These two reports raised in an [acute](#) form the question of where Britain’s duty lay if its specific obligations to the Zionists under the Balfour Declaration clashed with its general obligations to the Arabs under Article 22 of the [Covenant of the League of Nations](#). They also formed the basis of the Passfield White Paper, issued in October 1930, which accorded some priority to Britain’s obligations to the Arabs. Not only did it call for a halt to Jewish immigration, but it also recommended that land be sold only to landless Arabs and that the determination of “economic absorptive capacity” be based on levels of Arab as well as Jewish unemployment. This was seen by the Zionists as cutting at the root of their program, for, if the right of the Arab resident were to gain priority over that of the Jewish immigrant, whether actual or potential, development of the Jewish national home would come to a



standstill. In response to protests from Palestinian Jews and London Zionists, the British [prime minister](#), [Ramsay MacDonald](#), in February 1931 addressed an explanatory letter to Chaim Weizmann nullifying the Passfield White Paper, which virtually meant a return to the policy of the 1922 white paper. This letter convinced the Arabs that recommendations in their favor made in Palestine could be annulled by Zionist influence at the center of power in London. In December 1931 a Muslim congress at Jerusalem was attended by delegates from 22 countries to warn against the danger of Zionism.

From the early 1930s onward, developments in Europe once again began to impose themselves more forcefully on Palestine. The [Nazi](#) accession to power in Germany in 1933 and the widespread persecution of Jews throughout central and eastern Europe gave a great [impetus](#) to Jewish immigration, which jumped to 30,000 in 1933, 42,000 in 1934, and 61,000 in 1935. By 1936 the Jewish population of Palestine had reached almost 400,000, or one-third of the total. This new wave of immigration provoked major acts of violence against Jews and the British in 1933 and 1935. The Arab population of Palestine also grew rapidly, largely by natural increase, although some Arabs were attracted from outside the region by the capital infusion brought by middle-class Jewish immigrants and British public works. Most of the Arabs (nearly nine-tenths) continued to be employed in agriculture despite deteriorating economic conditions. By the mid-1930s, however, many landless Arabs had joined the expanding Arab proletariat working in the construction trades on the edge of rapidly growing urban centers. This was the beginning of a shift in the foundations of Palestinian economic and social life that was to have profound immediate and long-term effects. In November 1935 the Arab political parties collectively demanded that Jewish immigration cease, land transfer be prohibited, and democratic institutions be established. A [boycott](#) of Zionist and British goods was proclaimed. In December the British administration offered to set up a legislative council of 28 members, in which the Arabs (both Muslim and Christian) would have a majority. The British would retain control through their selection of nonelected members. Although Arabs would not be represented in the council in proportion to their numbers, Arab leaders favored the proposal, but the Zionists criticized it bitterly as an attempt to freeze the national home through a [constitutional](#) Arab stranglehold. In any event, [London](#) rejected the proposal. This, together with the example of rising [nationalism](#) in neighboring Egypt and Syria, increasing unemployment in Palestine, and a poor citrus harvest, touched off a long-smoldering [Arab rebellion](#).

### THE ARAB REVOLT

The Arab Revolt of 1936–39 was the first sustained violent uprising of Palestinian Arabs in more than a century. Thousands of Arabs from all classes were mobilized, and nationalistic [sentiment](#) was fanned in the Arabic press, schools, and literary circles. The British, taken aback by the extent and intensity of the revolt, shipped more than 20,000 troops into Palestine, and by 1939 the Zionists had armed more than 15,000 Jews in their own nationalist movement.

The revolt began with spontaneous acts of violence committed by the religiously and nationalistically motivated followers of Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, who had been killed by the British in 1935. In April 1936 the murder of two Jews led to [escalating](#) violence, and Qassamite groups initiated a [general strike](#) in Jaffa and Nablus. At that point the Arab political parties formed an [Arab Higher Committee](#) presided over by the mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini. It called for a general strike, nonpayment of taxes, and the closing

of municipal governments (although government employees were allowed to stay at work) and demanded an end to Jewish immigration, a ban on land sales to Jews, and national independence. Simultaneously with the strike, Arab rebels, joined by volunteers from neighboring Arab countries, took to the hills, attacking Jewish settlements and British installations in the northern part of the country. By the end of the year, the movement had assumed the dimensions of a national revolt, the mainstay of which was the Arab peasantry. Even though the arrival of British troops restored some semblance of order, the armed rebellion, arson, bombings, and assassinations continued.

[Lord Robert Peel and Horace Rumbold](#) Peel Commission members Lord Robert Peel (second from left) and diplomat Horace Rumbold (far left) leaving the Office of the Palestine Royal Commission, Palestine, 1937.(more)

A royal commission of inquiry presided over by Lord Robert Peel, which was sent to investigate the volatile situation, reported in July 1937 that the revolt was caused by Arab desire for independence and fear of the Jewish national home. The [Peel Commission](#) declared the [mandate](#) unworkable and Britain's obligations to Arabs and Jews mutually irreconcilable. In the face of what it described as "right against right," the commission recommended that the [region](#) be partitioned. The Zionist attitude toward partition, though ambivalent, was overall one of cautious acceptance. For the first time a British official body explicitly spoke of a Jewish state. The [commission](#) not only allotted to this state an area that was immensely larger than the existing Jewish landholdings but recommended the forcible transfer of the Arab population from the proposed Jewish state. The Zionists, however, still needed mandatory protection for their further development and left the door open for an undivided Palestine. The Arabs were horrified by the idea of dismembering the region and particularly by the suggestion that they be forcibly transferred (to Transjordan). As a result, the momentum of the revolt increased during 1937 and 1938.



[Peel Commission](#) Partition plan proposed by the Peel Commission report, 1937.

In September 1937 the British were forced to declare [martial law](#). The Arab Higher Committee was dissolved, and many officials of the Supreme Muslim Council and other organizations were arrested. The mufti fled to Lebanon and then Iraq, never to return to an undivided Palestine. Although the Arab Revolt continued well into 1939, high [casualty](#) rates and firm British measures gradually eroded its strength. According to some estimates, more than 5,000 Arabs were killed, 15,000 wounded, and 5,600 imprisoned during the revolt. Although it signified the birth of a national identity, the revolt was unsuccessful in many ways. The general strike, which was called off in October 1939, had encouraged Zionist self-reliance, and the Arabs of Palestine were unable to recover from their sustained effort of defying the British administration. Their traditional leaders were either killed, arrested, or deported, leaving the dispirited and disarmed population divided along urban-rural, class, clan, and religious lines. The Zionists, on the other hand, were united behind Ben-Gurion, and the [Haganah](#) had been given permission to arm itself. It cooperated with British forces and the [Irgun Zvai Leumi](#) in attacks against Arabs. However, the prospect of war in Europe alarmed the British government and caused it to reassess its policy in Palestine. If Britain went to war, it could not afford to face Arab hostility in Palestine and in neighboring countries.

The Woodhead Commission, under Sir John Woodhead, was set up to examine the practicality of partition. In November 1938 it recommended against the Peel Commission's plan—largely on the ground that the number of Arabs in the proposed Jewish state would be almost equal to the number of Jews—and put forward [alternative](#) proposals drastically reducing the area of the Jewish state and limiting the [sovereignty](#) of the proposed states. This was unacceptable to both Arabs and Jews. Seeking to find a solution acceptable to both parties, the British announced the impracticability of partition and called for a roundtable conference in London.

No agreement was reached at the London conference held during February and March 1939. In May 1939, however, the British government issued a [white paper](#), which essentially yielded to Arab demands. It stated that the Jewish national home should be established within an independent Palestinian state. During the

next five years 75,000 Jews would be allowed into the country; thereafter Jewish immigration would be subject to Arab “acquiescence.” Land transfer to Jews would be allowed only in certain areas in Palestine, and an independent Palestinian state would be considered within 10 years. The Arabs, although in favor of the new policy, rejected the white paper, largely because they mistrusted the British government and opposed a [provision](#) contained in the paper for extending the mandate beyond the 10-year period. The Zionists were shocked and enraged by the paper, which they considered a death blow to their program and to Jews who desperately sought refuge in Palestine from the growing persecution they were enduring in Europe. The 1939 white paper marked the end of the Anglo-Zionist entente.

Progress toward a Jewish national home had, however, been remarkable since 1918. Although the majority of the Jewish population was urban, the number of rural Zionist colonies had increased from 47 to about 200. Between 1922 and 1940 Jewish landholdings had risen from about 148,500 to 383,500 acres (about 60,100 to 155,200 hectares) and now [constituted](#) roughly one-seventh of the cultivatable land, and the Jewish population had grown from 83,790 to some 467,000, or nearly one-third of a total population of about 1,528,000. [Tel Aviv](#) had developed into an all-Jewish city of 150,000 inhabitants, and hundreds of millions of dollars of Jewish capital had been introduced into the region. The Jewish literacy rate was high, schools were expanding, and the [Hebrew language](#) had become widespread. Despite a split in 1935 between the mainline Zionists and the radical Revisionists, who advocated the use of force to establish the Zionist state, Zionist institutions in Palestine became stronger in the 1930s and helped create the preconditions for the establishment of a Jewish state.

## [WORLD WAR II](#)

With the outbreak of [World War II](#) in September 1939, Zionist and British policies came into direct conflict. Throughout the war Zionists sought with growing urgency to increase Jewish immigration to Palestine, while the British sought to prevent such immigration, regarding it as illegal and a threat to the [stability](#) of a region essential to the war effort. Ben-Gurion declared on behalf of the Jewish Agency: “We shall fight [beside Great Britain in] this war as if there was no White Paper and we shall fight the White Paper as if there was no war.” British attempts to prevent Jewish immigration to Palestine in the face of the [Holocaust](#)—the terrible tragedy befalling European Jews and others deemed undesirable by the Nazis—led to the disastrous sinking of two ships carrying Jewish [refugees](#), the *Patria* (November 1940) and the *Struma* (February 1942). In response, the Irgun, under the leadership of [Menachem Begin](#), and a small [terrorist](#) splinter group, LEHI (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel), known for its founder as the [Stern Gang](#), embarked on widespread attacks on the British, culminating in the murder of [Lord Moyne](#), British minister of state, by two LEHI members in Cairo in November 1944.

During the war years the Jewish [community](#) in Palestine was vastly strengthened. Its moderate wing supported the British; in September 1944 a Jewish brigade was formed—a total of 27,000 Jews having enlisted in the British forces—and attached to the British 8th Army. Jewish industry in general was given immense [impetus](#) by the war, and a Jewish munitions industry developed to manufacture antitank mines for the British forces. For the Yishuv the war and the Holocaust confirmed that a Jewish state must be established in Palestine. Important also was the support of American Zionists. In May 1942, at a Zionist conference held at the Biltmore Hotel in [New York City](#), Ben-Gurion gained support for a program

demanding unrestricted immigration, a Jewish army, and the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish commonwealth.

The Arabs of Palestine remained largely [quiescent](#) throughout the war. [Amin al-Husseini](#) had fled—by way of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Italy—to Germany, whence he broadcast appeals to his fellow Arabs to ally with the [Axis powers](#) against Britain and Zionism. Yet the mufti failed to rally Palestinian Arabs to the Axis cause. Although some supported Germany, the majority supported the [Allies](#), and approximately 23,000 Arabs enlisted in the British forces (especially in the [Arab Legion](#)). Increases in agricultural prices benefited the Arab peasants, who began to pay accumulated debts. However, the Arab Revolt had ruined many Arab merchants and importers, and British war activities, although bringing new levels of prosperity, further weakened the traditional social institutions—the family and village—by fostering a large urban Arab working class.

The Allied discovery of the Nazi [extermination camps](#) at the end of [World War II](#) and the undecided future of [Holocaust](#) survivors led to an increasing number of pro-Zionist statements from [U.S.](#) politicians. In August 1945 U.S. Pres. [Harry S. Truman](#) requested that British Prime Minister [Clement Attlee](#) [facilitate](#) the immediate admission of 100,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors into Palestine, and in December the [U.S. Senate](#) and [House of Representatives](#) asked for unrestricted Jewish immigration to the limit of the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine. Truman's request signaled the U.S. entry into the arena of powers determining the future of Palestine. The question of Palestine, now linked with the fate of Holocaust survivors, became once again the focus of international attention.

As the war came to an end, the neighboring Arab countries began to take a more direct interest in Palestine. In October 1944 Arab heads of state met in Alexandria, Egypt, and issued a statement, the Alexandria Protocol, setting out the Arab position. They made clear that, although they regretted the bitter fate inflicted upon European Jews by European dictatorships, the issue of European Jewish survivors ought not to be confused with [Zionism](#). Solving the problem of European Jews, they asserted, should not be achieved by inflicting injustice on Palestinian Arabs. The [covenant](#) of the League of Arab States, or [Arab League](#), formed in March 1945, contained an annex emphasizing the Arab character of Palestine. The Arab League appointed an Arab Higher Executive for Palestine (the Arab Higher Committee), which included a broad spectrum of Palestinian leaders, to speak for the Palestinian Arabs. In December 1945 the league declared a [boycott](#) of Zionist goods. The pattern of the postwar struggle for Palestine was unmistakably emerging.

### THE EARLY POSTWAR PERIOD

The major issue between 1945 and 1948 was, as it had been throughout the mandate, Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Yishuv was determined to remove all restrictions to Jewish immigration and to establish a Jewish state. The Arabs were determined that no more Jews should arrive and that Palestine should achieve independence as an Arab state. The primary goal of British policy following [World War II](#) was to secure British strategic interests in the [Middle East](#) and [Asia](#). Because the cooperation of the Arab states was considered essential to this goal, British Foreign Secretary [Ernest Bevin](#) opposed Jewish immigration and the foundation of an independent Jewish state in Palestine. The U.S. State Department basically supported the British position, but Truman was determined to ensure that Jews displaced by the war were

permitted to enter Palestine. The issue was resolved in 1948 when the British mandate collapsed under the pressure of force and diplomacy.

In November 1945, in an effort to secure American coresponsibility for a Palestinian policy, Bevin announced the formation of an [Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry](#). Pending the report of the committee, Jewish immigration would continue at the rate of 1,500 persons per month above the 75,000 limit set by the 1939 white paper. A plan of provincial [autonomy](#) for Arabs and Jews was worked out in an Anglo-American conference in 1946 and became the basis for discussions in London between Great Britain and the representatives of Arabs and Zionists.

In the meantime, Zionist pressure in Palestine was intensified by the unauthorized immigration of refugees on a hitherto unprecedented scale and by closely coordinated attacks by Zionist underground forces. Jewish immigration was impelled by the burning memories of the Holocaust, the chaotic postwar conditions in Europe, and the growing possibility of attaining a Jewish state where the victims of persecution could guarantee their own safety. The underground's attacks [culminated](#) in Jerusalem on July 22, 1946, when the Irgun blew up a part of the [King David Hotel](#) containing British government and military offices, with the loss of 91 lives.

On the Arab side, a meeting of the Arab states took place in June 1946 at Blūdān, Syria, at which secret resolutions were adopted threatening British and American interests in the Middle East if Arab rights were disregarded. In Palestine the Husseinis consolidated their power, despite widespread mistrust of the mufti, who now resided in Egypt.

While Zionists pressed ahead with immigration and attacks on the government, and Arab states mobilized in response, British resolve to remain in the Middle East was collapsing. World War II had left Britain victorious but exhausted. After the war it lacked the funds and political will to maintain control of colonial possessions that were agitating, with increasing violence, for independence. When a [conference](#) called in London in February 1947 failed to resolve the impasse, Great Britain, already negotiating its withdrawal from [India](#) and eager to decrease its costly military presence in Palestine (of the more than 280,000 troops stationed there during the war, more than 80,000 still remained), referred the Palestine question to the [United Nations](#) (UN).



### [UN partition plan for Israel and Palestine in 1947](#)

On August 31, 1947, a majority report of the UN Special Committee on [Palestine](#) (UNSCOP) recommended that the region be partitioned into an Arab and a Jewish state, which, however, should retain an economic union. Jerusalem and its environs were to be international. These recommendations were substantially adopted by a two-thirds majority of the [UN General Assembly](#) in [Resolution 181](#), dated November 29, 1947, a decision made possible partly because of an agreement between the United States and the [Soviet Union](#) on [partition](#) and partly because pressure was exerted on some small countries by Zionist sympathizers in the United States. All the Islamic Asian countries voted against partition, and an Arab proposal to query the [International Court of Justice](#) on the competence of the General Assembly to partition a country against the wishes of the majority of its inhabitants (in 1946 there were 1,269,000 Arabs and 678,000 Jews in Palestine) was narrowly defeated.

The Zionists welcomed the partition proposal both because it recognized a Jewish state and because it allotted slightly more than half of (west-of-Jordan) Palestine to it. As in 1937, the Arabs fiercely opposed partition both in principle and because nearly half of the population of the Jewish state would be Arab. [Resolution 181](#) called for the formation of the UN Palestine Commission—which it tasked with selecting and overseeing provisional councils of government for the Jewish and Arab states by April 1, 1948—and set the date for the termination of the mandate no later than August 1, 1948. (The British later announced that the mandate would be terminated on May 15, 1948.)

### **CIVIL WAR IN PALESTINE**

Soon after the UN resolution, fighting broke out in Palestine. The Zionists mobilized their forces and

redoubled their efforts to bring in immigrants. In December 1947 the Arab League pledged its support to the Palestinian Arabs and organized a force of 3,000 volunteers. Civil war spread, and external intervention increased as the disintegration of the British administration progressed.

Alarmed by the continued fighting, the United States in early March 1948 expressed its opposition to forcibly [implementing](#) a partition. A March 12 report by the UN Palestine Commission stated that the establishment of provisional councils of government able to fulfill their functions would be impossible by April 1. Arab resistance to the partition in principle precluded the establishment of an Arab council, and, although steps had been taken toward the selection of the Jewish council, the commission reported that the latter council would be unable to carry out its functions as intended by the resolution. [Hampering](#) efforts altogether was Great Britain's refusal in any case to share with the commission the administration of Palestine during the transitional period. On March 19 the United States called for the UN Palestine Commission to suspend its efforts. On March 30 the United States proposed that a truce be declared and that the problem be further considered by the General Assembly.

The Zionists, insisting that partition was binding and anxious about the change in U.S. policy, made a major effort to establish their state. They launched two offensives during April. The success of these operations coincided roughly with the failure of an Arab attack on the Zionist settlement of Mishmar Ha 'Emeq; the death in battle of an Arab national hero, Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, in command of the Jerusalem front; and the [massacre](#), by [Irgunists](#) and members of the [Stern Gang](#), of civilian inhabitants of the Arab village of [Deir Yassin](#). On April 22 Haifa fell to the Zionists, and Jaffa, after severe mortar shelling, surrendered to them on May 13. Simultaneously with their military offensives, the Zionists launched a campaign of [psychological warfare](#). The Arabs of Palestine, divided, badly led, and reliant on the regular armies of the Arab states, became demoralized, and their efforts to prevent partition collapsed.

On May 14 the last [British](#) high commissioner, General Sir [Alan Cunningham](#), left Palestine. On the same day the State of [Israel](#) was declared and within a few hours won [de facto](#) recognition from the [United States](#) and [de jure](#) recognition from the [Soviet Union](#). Early on May 15 units of the regular armies of [Syria](#), Transjordan, Iraq, and Egypt crossed the frontiers of Palestine.

In a series of [campaigns](#) alternating with truces between May and December 1948, the Arab units were routed, and by the summer of 1949 Israel had concluded armistices with its neighbors. It had also been recognized by more than 50 governments throughout the world, joined the [United Nations](#), and established its sovereignty over about 8,000 square miles (21,000 square km) of formerly [mandated](#) Palestine west of the [Jordan River](#). The remaining 2,000 square miles (5,200 square km) were divided between Transjordan and Egypt. Transjordan retained the lands on the west bank of the Jordan River, including the eastern portion of Jerusalem (East Jerusalem), although its annexation of those lands in 1950 was not generally recognized as [legitimate](#). In 1949 the name of the expanded country was changed to the [Hashemite](#) Kingdom of [Jordan](#). [Egypt](#) retained control of, but did not annex, a small area on the Mediterranean coast that became known as the [Gaza Strip](#). The Palestinian Arab community ceased to exist as a [cohesive](#) social and political entity. **The [partition of Palestine and its aftermath](#)**

If one chief theme in the post-1948 pattern was embattled [Israel](#) and a second the hostility of its Arab neighbors, a third was the plight of the huge number of Arab [refugees](#). The violent birth of Israel led to a major displacement of the Arab population, who either were driven out by Zionist military forces before May 15, 1948, or by the Israeli army after that date or fled for fear of violence by these forces (see [1948 Arab-Israeli War](#)). Many wealthy [merchants](#) and leading urban notables from Jaffa, [Tel Aviv](#), [Haifa](#),



and [Jerusalem](#) fled to Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan, while the middle class tended to move to all-Arab towns such as [Nablus](#) and [Nazareth](#). The majority of fellahin ended up in refugee camps. More than 400 Arab villages disappeared, and Arab life in the coastal cities (especially Jaffa and Haifa) virtually disintegrated. The center of Palestinian life shifted to the Arab towns of the hilly eastern portion of the region—which was immediately west of the [Jordan River](#) and came to be called the [West Bank](#). Like everything else in the Arab-Israeli conflict, population figures are hotly disputed. Nearly 1,400,000 Arabs lived in Palestine when the war broke out. Estimates of the number of Arabs displaced from their original homes, villages, and neighborhoods during the period from December 1947 to January 1949 range from about 520,000 to about 1,000,000; there is general [consensus](#), however, that the actual number was more than 600,000 and likely exceeded 700,000. Some 276,000 moved to the West Bank; by 1949 more than half the prewar Arab population of Palestine lived in the West Bank (from 400,000 in 1947 to more than 700,000). Between 160,000 and 190,000 fled to the Gaza Strip. More than one-fifth of Palestinian Arabs left Palestine altogether. About 100,000 of these went to Lebanon, 100,000 to Jordan, between 75,000 and 90,000 to Syria, 7,000 to 10,000 to Egypt, and 4,000 to Iraq.

### **THE TERM [PALESTINIAN](#)**

Henceforth the term Palestinian will be used when referring to the Arabs of the former [mandated](#) Palestine, excluding Israel. Although the Arabs of Palestine had been creating and developing a Palestinian identity for about 200 years, the idea that Palestinians form a distinct people is relatively recent. The Arabs living in Palestine had never had a separate state. Until the establishment of Israel, the term Palestinian was used by Jews and foreigners to describe the inhabitants of Palestine and had only begun to be used by the Arabs themselves at the turn of the 20th century. With the Arab world in a period of renaissance popularizing notions of [Arab unity](#) and [nationalism](#) amid the [decline of the Ottoman Empire](#), most saw themselves as part of the larger Arab or Muslim [community](#). The Arabs of Palestine began widely using the term Palestinian starting in the pre-World War I period to indicate the nationalist concept of a Palestinian people. But after 1948—and even more so after 1967—for Palestinians themselves the term came to signify not only a place of origin but, more importantly, a sense of a shared past and future in the form of a Palestinian state.

## WHO GOVERNS THE PALESTINIANS

**Power in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the so-called Palestinian territories, has been divided among three entities: a governing body called the Palestinian Authority, the militant group Hamas, and the state of Israel. But as Israel now seeks to destroy Hamas, it is unclear who would administer Gaza instead.**

[COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS](#) Kali Robinson May 28 2024

### SUMMARY

- **Millions of Palestinians live under the control of a mix of authorities in the Palestinian territories and in refugee camps across the Middle East.**
- **In recent decades, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has controlled parts of the West Bank, and the militant group Hamas has run the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, Israel has exercised power over both areas in different ways.**
- **Amid the latest Israel-Hamas war, the PA is facing heightened scrutiny about its ability to run Gaza if Israel destroys Hamas.**

### INTRODUCTION

A complex mix of authorities governs the 5.5 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip and West Bank territories. Palestinians, like Jews, trace their ancestry to the geographic area that now forms the state of Israel and the two Palestinian territories. Yet, the Palestinians do not have a universally recognized state, with their aspirations to create one depending not just on Palestinian leadership, but also on Israel and recognition by foreign powers.

Officially, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) represents Palestinians worldwide at international fora, while the Palestinian Authority (PA), a newer institution led by a PLO faction known as Fatah, is supposed to govern most of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In reality, the PA has overshadowed the PLO, and both are deeply troubled; Israel has exercised significant control over the Palestinian territories, de facto and official; and Gaza has been ruled by the militant Palestinian group Hamas, which Israel and multiple other countries have designated as a terrorist organization. Palestinian leaders will have to grapple with these and other challenges—including succession concerns and yet another war between Israel and Hamas—to deliver their peoples' dream of an independent Palestinian state.

[Timeline of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict via CFR Education](#)

[What Is U.S. Policy on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict? by Kali Robinson](#)

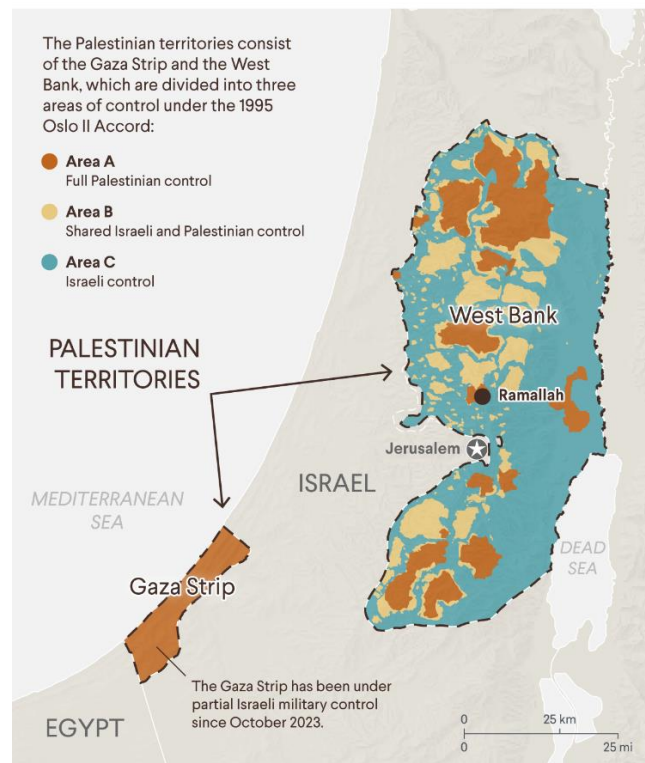
[What to Know About the Arab Citizens of Israel by Kali Robinson](#)

## WHO'S IN CHARGE IN THE GAZA STRIP AND THE WEST BANK?

It depends on the location. In the 1990s, the PLO and Israel signed the Oslo Accords and the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, deals that divided areas of control in Gaza and the West Bank (East Jerusalem excluded) between Israel and the newly created Palestinian Authority, with the expectation that the two territories would eventually constitute a Palestinian state. But with the decades-old [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#) still unresolved, the territories remain formally divided into three areas of control:

- **Area A**, which consists of most of Gaza and [about 17 percent](#) of the West Bank, is the most densely populated and urbanized. It is designated as fully Palestinian controlled under Oslo, including for civil affairs and internal security issues. However, Israel has waged an extensive military campaign in Gaza since October 2023 with the goal of eliminating Hamas, and it has therefore imposed more-stringent movement controls in the territory.
- **Area B** covers nearly a quarter of the West Bank and mostly comprises villages and rural areas. Israelis and Palestinians cooperate on security here, but the PA manages all civil affairs. Israel also controls the movement of goods and people. Areas A and B have a combined Palestinian population of about 2.8 million.
- **Area C** makes up the remaining land and mostly consists of pastoral areas. It contains most of the West Bank's natural resources and is under full Israeli control, though the PA provides education and medical services to the area's 150,000 Palestinians. The area is home to most of Israel's settlers, who total some 700,000 people spread across the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Most live near the border with Israel, though international law dubs their settlements illegal.

How the Palestinian Territories Are Divided



Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

COUNCIL ON  
FOREIGN  
RELATIONS

Since 2006, the Gaza Strip has been controlled by Hamas, an armed group and political party that was founded during the first Palestinian “intifada,” or uprising, against Israeli rule in 1987–93. (The name Hamas is an acronym for “The Islamic Resistance Movement” in Arabic.) The organization was created out of the Palestinian branch of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) to compete with Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), a militant faction that simultaneously aims to destroy the state of Israel and create a Palestinian state governed by [Islamic law](#). Hamas explicitly opposes Israel’s existence and has perpetrated grievous acts of violence against Israelis. Its October 7, 2023, rampage through southern Israel killed more than 1,200 people and spurred the massive Israeli military response aimed at eradicating Hamas. Governments including the United States, Israel, Japan, and the European Union (EU) have designated Hamas a terrorist organization.

Hamas briefly joined the PA, rising to the head of the authority in 2006 after winning general elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But it split from the authority months later, when the rival faction Fatah, which has long dominated the PA, refused to recognize Hamas’s election victory. The two went to war, and though Fatah was able to oust Hamas from the West Bank and maintain its sway over Palestinian affairs there, Hamas’s forces prevailed in the Gaza Strip, securing the group’s control over the territory. The Gaza-West Bank schism is severe enough that some experts considered Gaza to be “[practically a separate state](#)” before the most recent war with Israel [devastated the territory](#).

Who governs Palestinians in Jerusalem?

Straddling the border of Israel and the West Bank, the city of Jerusalem has been populated by both Arabs and Jews for centuries. It holds some of the most sacred sites in Christianity and Islam, as well as the holiest sites in Judaism. Today, it is home to many Palestinians and Israelis, though Israel has political control. The peace deal that ended the first Arab-Israeli War in 1949, which was triggered by Israel’s founding the previous year, divided the city between Israeli rule in the west and Jordanian rule in the east. Israel captured East Jerusalem in the [1967 Arab-Israeli War](#), and it considers the “complete and undivided” city of Jerusalem as its capital due to the Jewish people’s [deep historical and religious ties](#) to the city. The United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Kosovo, and Papua New Guinea have constructed embassies to Israel in the western part of Jerusalem. Other countries keep their missions in Tel Aviv because of Jerusalem’s disputed status.

Meanwhile, Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of their state, given its centrality to the Palestinian economy, its significance to Muslims in particular, and its Palestinian population of [more than 360,000](#). Nonetheless, Israel’s de facto annexation of East Jerusalem makes it subject to Israeli law. Most Palestinians there are designated as permanent residents of Israel—a status that can be [revoked punitively](#). Most are not citizens of any country; having largely refused Israeli citizenship offered in 1967 or [lost Jordanian citizenship](#) after Amman renounced its claim to the West Bank in 1988.

Who oversees Palestinian refugee populations?

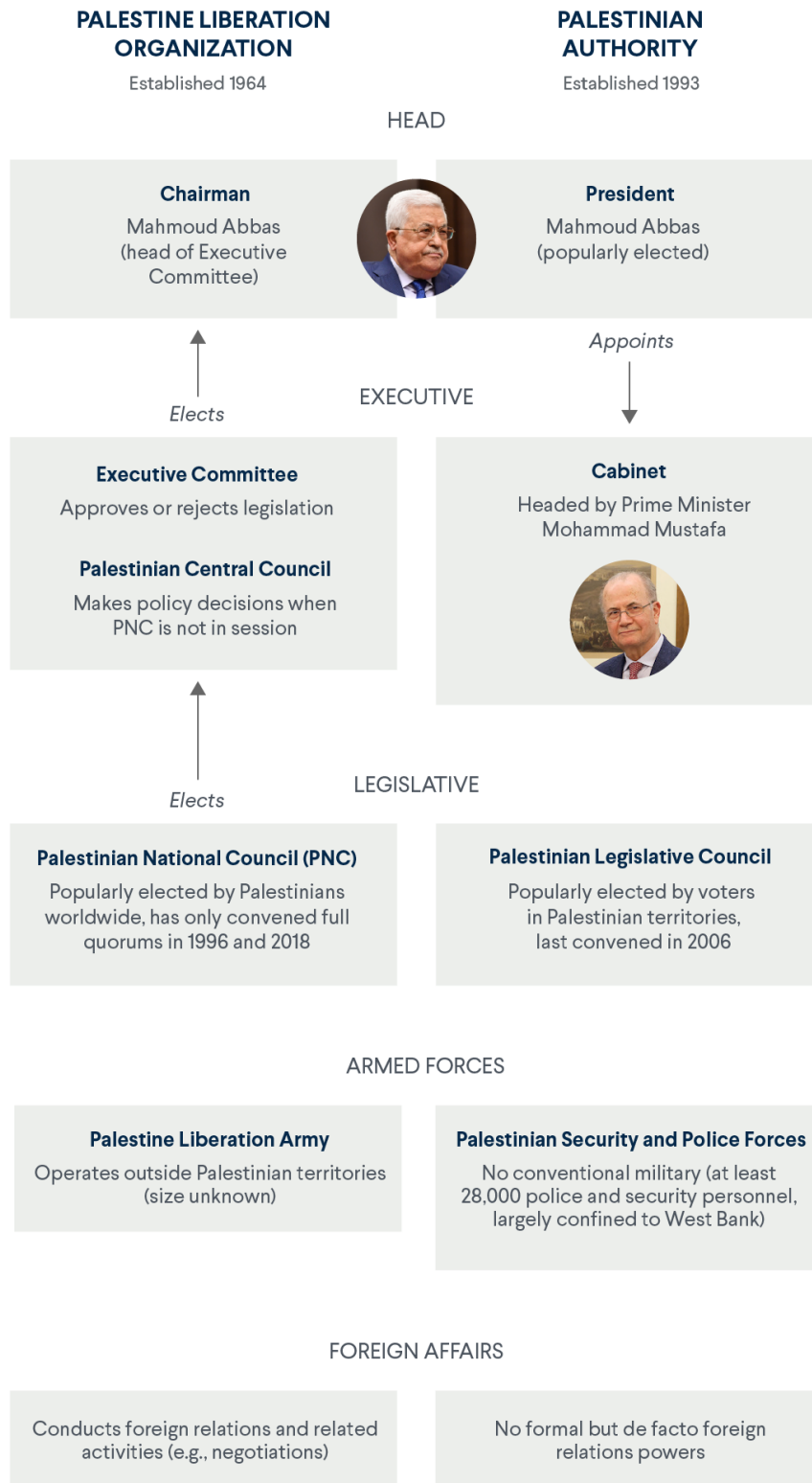
The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) established in 1949, manages Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and Syria in connection with local authorities. These camps house Palestinians displaced by the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli Wars, as well as their descendants. Some camps, such as the Rafah and Jabalia camps in Gaza, have evolved

into built-up cities. Yet, they remain dependent on UN aid, even though some have populations that [exceed one hundred thousand](#). Close to [six million registered refugees](#) are under UNRWA's remit, though not all reside in camps.

Host governments handle security in the camps, while UNRWA provides health care, housing, and education. UNRWA itself is officially nonpolitical, but [experts say](#) [PDF] Fatah wields significant influence over residents in some West Bank refugee camps, as Hamas has done in certain Gaza camps. Additionally, UNRWA has for years [faced accusations](#) [PDF] that Hamas has co-opted some of its employees and facilities. In 2024, the agency suffered [deep funding cuts](#) when the United States pulled its support due to Israeli allegations that UNRWA employees participated in Hamas's October 7 attack. Around a dozen other countries initially followed the United States' example, but most soon resumed funding after separate reviews by the agency and independent experts said that Israel did not provide evidence for the allegations. How does the Palestinian Authority govern?

The PA is headquartered in the West Bank, where it operates from the city of Ramallah. Officially named the Palestinian National Authority, it comprises most major Palestinian factions, such as Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), but excludes militant groups such as Hamas and PIJ. The authority's responsibilities are spelled out in the 2002 [Basic Law](#) [PDF] that serves as an interim Palestinian constitution. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas simultaneously serves as leader of the PA, the PLO, and his party, Fatah, which has the greatest representation in the PA of any faction. In March 2024, Abbas's longtime economic advisor Mohammad Mustafa replaced Mohammad Shtayyeh as PA prime minister, a position that gives him little power compared to Abbas. His appointment comes as Washington and other governments push for PA reforms that would improve living conditions in the West Bank and show that the authority could responsibly govern Gaza after the Israel-Hamas war.

## The Institutions of the Palestinian Territories



Sources: CIA World Factbook; European Council on Foreign Relations; International Institute for Strategic Studies.

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RELATIONS

The PA has become synonymous with “corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency,” [writes Ghaith al-Omari](#), a former PA official and current senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Many experts say governance began to seriously erode after Abbas became PLO chairman in 2004. Now nineteen years into what should have been a four-year presidential term, Abbas has concentrated power by dissolving

parliament, entrenching his [control over the judiciary](#), introducing laws only by decree, and purging political rivals. In 2021, he blocked presidential and legislative elections that would have been Palestinians' first since 2006. Abbas blamed the move on Israeli restrictions on voting in East Jerusalem, though experts say he likely feared he and his party would lose to Hamas. International rights watchdog Freedom House classifies the PA as "authoritarian" and the West Bank as "not free" due to poor Palestinian governance and Israel's occupation.

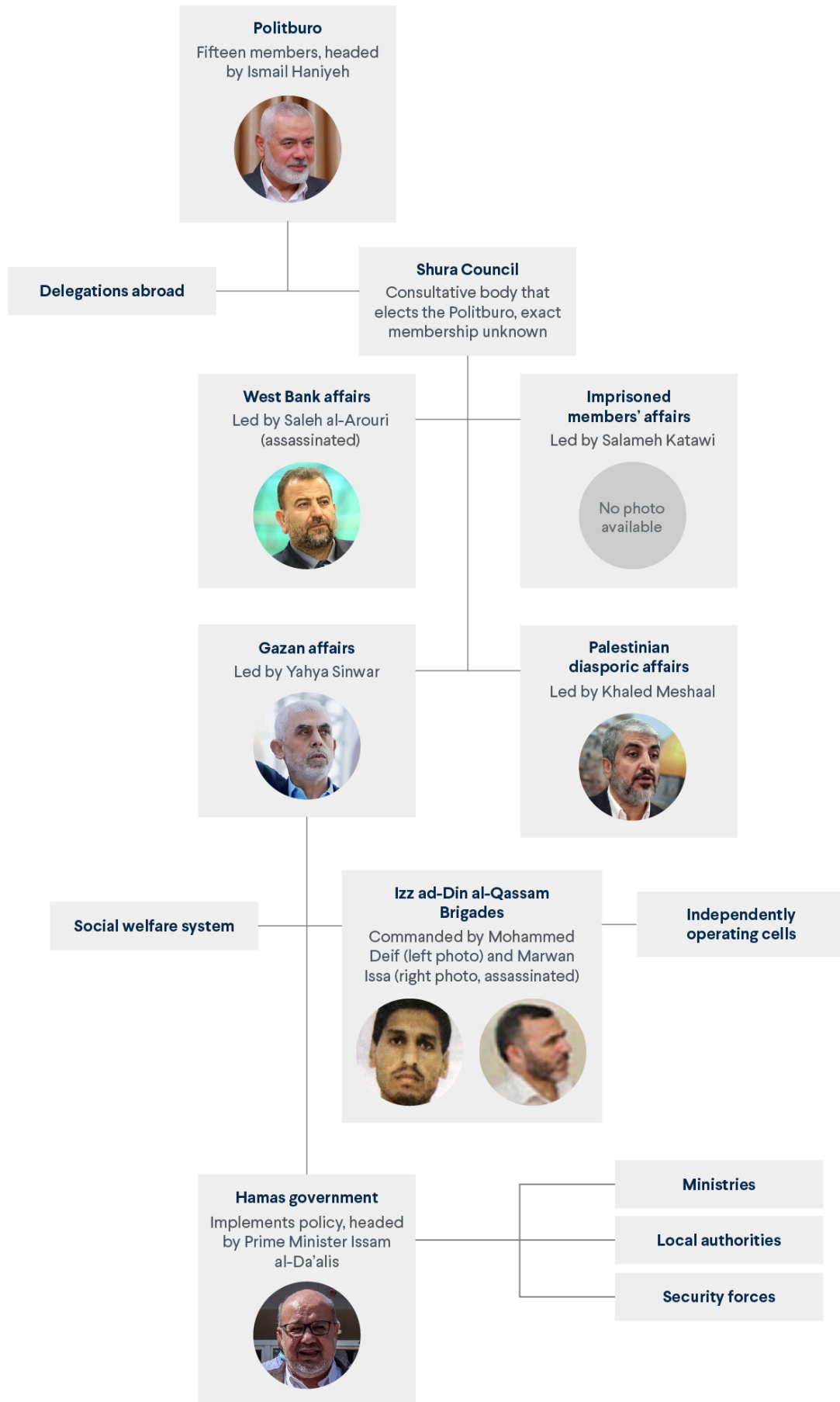
Abbas also oversees the West Bank's [security forces](#), which consist of police and other security officers but cannot constitute a conventional military, per the Oslo Accords. They work in coordination with the Israeli military, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), to stamp out Hamas and other armed groups and have also faced accusations of brutality against Palestinian civilians. As a result, many Palestinians view the security forces as instruments of Israel's occupation, rather than as protectors of the rule of law. In addition, Israeli and Palestinian observers alike [blame the weakness of the PA](#) and its security forces for the proliferation of new armed groups that increasingly targeted Israel starting in 2022.

Without full autonomy over Gaza and the West Bank, the PA's powers of economic policy are limited. The authority relies on international aid, which is [generally conditioned](#) on the PA's recognition of Israel and commitment to nonviolence. However, some donor countries have [cut aid](#) in recent years, citing mismanagement by the PA. Meanwhile, Hamas has been blocked from U.S. and EU aid given its status as a terrorist entity, though it has various other [funding sources](#), both legal and illicit.

How has Hamas governed the Gaza Strip?

After taking control of Gaza, Hamas established political, military, and legal institutions entirely separate from those in the West Bank. Though Hamas set up its seat of government in Gaza City, many top officials have chosen to live abroad full time, including political chief Ismail Haniyeh and diaspora affairs leader Khaled Meshaal, who both live in Qatar. As with the PA and West Bank, Freedom House has also labeled Hamas's government as "authoritarian" and Gaza as "not free." Before the current war shattered all semblance of day-to-day life in Gaza, Hamas had nominally followed the PA's Basic Law, but also implemented a restrictive interpretation of Islamic law that it used to repress the [rights of women](#), the LGBTQ+ community, and other marginalized groups. In addition, the Hamas government had removed most checks on its power, having suppressed opposition from Gazan media outlets, politicians, civilian activists, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), often through [violence and arbitrary arrest](#).

## Hamas’s Governing Structure





## [What Is Hamas?](#)

### **HOW MUCH CONTROL DOES ISRAEL HAVE OVER PALESTINIANS?**

*West Bank.* Israel officially controls only Area C of the West Bank in full, implementing policy through its Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), which also liaises with the PA. However, Israeli [legal and military powers](#) extend to all three areas. Israel also has full legal jurisdiction over all Jewish settlers, who total about [five hundred thousand](#) people in the West Bank and two hundred thousand in East Jerusalem. (A 2016 UN Security Council resolution reaffirmed that Israel’s settlements [are illegal](#) under international law. The United States, which frequently uses its veto power on the council to block resolutions censuring Israel, abstained from the vote, helping it to pass.) Israeli civil law covers settlers, while Palestinians, even where subject to PA laws, are tried in the IDF’s military courts. Additionally, the Oslo Accords authorized Israel to collect Palestinian taxes for the PA in the areas that Israel controls. However, Israel deducts money from the payments based on a sum that Israeli government experts calculate that the PA spends funding terrorism. This amount [usually refers](#) to PA payments to families of “martyrs,” meaning [civilians and combatants](#) killed in violence related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and payments to the families of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. Israel says the payments incentivize terrorism and therefore [withholds](#) [PDF] approximately \$100–\$185 million in Palestinian taxes annually, an amount equal to around 2–4 percent of the PA’s budget.

To protect its own national security, Israel has imposed stringent movement restrictions in both territories. These include numerous military checkpoints in the West Bank, as well as a barrier wall that spans hundreds of miles across that territory. An onerous part of daily life for many Palestinians, Israel’s security measures “limit Palestinian development in the West Bank while creating conditions akin to a nearly closed economy on Gaza,” [according to the World Bank](#).

*Gaza Strip.* Israel [captured Gaza](#) during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and militarily occupied the territory until 2005, when it pulled out its troops and settlers. In the years before its 2023 invasion, Israel implemented various controls over Gaza that it said were needed to prevent terrorism against Israelis. It restricted Gaza’s airspace, borders, cellular frequencies, coastal waters, and electricity supply, among other areas. It had also barred locals from entering buffer zones on the border with Israel, which cover around 20 percent of Gaza. Wary that Hamas had been found to [divert imported goods and foreign aid](#) to bolster its military capabilities, Israel also prevented Gaza from importing “dual-use” items, meaning items with potential military as well as civilian purposes. The [import blacklist](#) had at times included certain foods, medical equipment, and construction materials. Similar but less stringent restrictions still apply to the West Bank. It is unclear what restrictions Israel would maintain on Gaza if it succeeds in dismantling Hamas.

Israel’s controls in the Palestinian territories are highly controversial. Proponents of the extensive security apparatus say it has [fortified Israeli national security](#), while critics say the policies [violate Palestinian rights](#) and disrupt essential services. In a [2022 report](#), the UN-appointed special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories went so far as to argue that Israel’s two-tiered legal system in the West Bank qualifies as apartheid, a position that has spurred intense debate. Some observers, including U.S. and Israeli officials, have said the report reflects a history of [anti-Israel bias](#) by the United Nations. Since

the UN document's release, independent human rights organizations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Israel's B'Tselem, have also published reports accusing Israel of apartheid. How do Palestinian leaders approach foreign policy?

The [Arab League](#) established the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinian people, and it is this body that represents them at many international fora. At the United Nations, the PLO received "observer" status in 1974 and "non-member observer state" status, under the name "State of Palestine," in 2012. It still holds this status but received [additional, limited rights and privileges](#) amid a renewed push for full membership in 2024. The United States and Israel both oppose PLO aspirations for full member status. Additionally, 146 of 193 UN member countries have independently recognized Palestinian statehood, with seven doing so in the first half of 2024: the Bahamas, Barbados, Ireland, Jamaica, Norway, Spain, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Meanwhile, 165 UN members recognize Israel, which has been a UN member state since 1949. Most of the countries that deny Israel's sovereignty are predominantly Arab or Muslim. In recent years, Palestinian leaders have urged Arab countries not to normalize relations with Israel under the 2020 Abraham Accords, as Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates have done. Egypt and Jordan established relations with Israel in 1979 and 1984, respectively.

While the Fatah-dominated PLO was the main organ for Palestinian diplomacy until the Oslo Accords, the PA has since [overshadowed it](#) to become the de facto representative of Palestinians. Foreign governments largely interact with the PA and shun Hamas, providing aid to Gaza through other channels, such as UN agencies. However, a handful of countries, namely Iran, Qatar, Russia, and Turkey, have open relations with Hamas.

Seeking support for the Palestinian national movement, the PLO has pushed for full UN membership and joined multiple international organizations, including the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Most notably, it acceded to the Rome Statute in 2015, making it a party to the [International Criminal Court](#) (ICC). At the PA's behest, the ICC has [opened a probe](#) into possible war crimes committed by Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

*How is the PA involved in the Israel-Hamas war?*

The aftermath of Hamas's October 7 assault on Israel has reinforced the widely held belief that the PA in its current form has become "[basically irrelevant](#)," in the words of CFR Middle East expert Steven A. Cook. The authority [sat on the sidelines](#) during the conflict's first few months, underscoring its lack of power over violent factions such as Hamas and its inability to stem the [Palestinian suffering](#) caused by Israel's retaliation.

The PA's perceived ineffectiveness, plus Israel's pledge to wipe out Hamas over the October 7 attack, has raised the question of who would run Gaza instead. "Trying to establish a Palestinian Authority government in Gaza, with help from Arab states, is probably the least-bad option," [writes CFR national security expert Max Boot](#). Experts have viewed the Shtayyeh government's February 2024 resignation as [the first step](#) in a U.S.-backed plan for a reinvigorated PA to administer Gaza. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has so far rejected the idea, proposing instead that Israel maintain indefinite control over the West Bank and Gaza after the war.

## WHAT CHALLENGES DO PALESTINIAN LEADERS FACE?

**Disunity.** Political infighting [has fractured](#) what was once a fairly unified national movement, precluding Palestinian leaders from negotiating with Israel, organizing elections, and articulating a coherent vision to their supporters. Furthermore, a [plurality of Palestinians](#) [PDF] call the Gaza-West Bank split the most damaging development for their people since Israel's founding, but past reconciliation attempts by Hamas and the PA all failed, and Israel's new vow to eliminate Hamas has further complicated the issue.

**Eroding legitimacy.** President Abbas and the multiple bodies he oversees are widely unpopular, as [polling](#) by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) has shown. More than half the Palestinians whom PCPSR surveyed in June 2023 supported dissolving the PA, which many deride as beholden to Israel. Experts at the International Crisis Group, an independent nongovernmental organization, echoed that sentiment [in a February 2023 report](#): "The [PA] has never lived up to expectations that it would become the foundation of an independent Palestinian state; instead, it has become, as its harshest critics contend, a mere subcontractor to Israel in maintaining the military occupation."

**Financial matters.** As the top employer in the West Bank, the PA directly funds the livelihoods of around 130,000 public-sector workers. Yet, the deeply indebted authority [faces bankruptcy](#) and is unable to pay full salaries. The [World Bank reports](#) that the PA needs various reforms to right itself financially, along with additional donor assistance and reduced economic restrictions from Israel.

**Succession.** Abbas's advanced age and history of health issues have raised concerns about the lack of clear plans for leadership change. Various [succession procedures](#) for the PA and PLO exist, but Abbas has disabled the institutions that would uphold them. While he has no clear successor, experts say candidates could include Abbas's aide Hussein al-Sheikh and popular Fatah member Marwan Barghouti. In a hypothetical election, more voters would prefer Barghouti, [write Arab Barometer pollsters](#) Amaney A. Jamal and Michael Robbins, despite Barghouti's current imprisonment for orchestrating attacks on Israelis. A failed leadership transition could trigger clashes for power or even the PA's collapse, which experts say could spell disaster despite the authority's flaws. "Whatever else one may say about the PA and its complicity in Israel's colonisation, dispossession and annexation, it provides vital support in the form of jobs and essential services to millions of Palestinians," the International Crisis Group writes. "A botched succession would thus be harmful for all main players in this conflict, but most of all for Palestinians in the occupied territories themselves."

### Recommended Resources

This UN timeline traces [pivotal political developments](#) in Palestinian history.

The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) offers a more in-depth look at [Palestinian governance](#) [PDF].

The European Council on Foreign Relations maps the [most prominent individuals and institutions](#) in Palestinian politics.

In a two-part series, *Haaretz's* David B. Green breaks down [Israeli](#) and [Palestinian](#) perspectives on Jerusalem's status.

Palestinian economist Raja Khalidi [makes a case](#) for establishing Palestinian state amid the war in Gaza in this *Foreign Affairs* article.

For *Foreign Affairs*, former PA official Ghaith al-Omari [previews the succession crisis](#) that could unfold once Mahmoud Abbas leaves power.

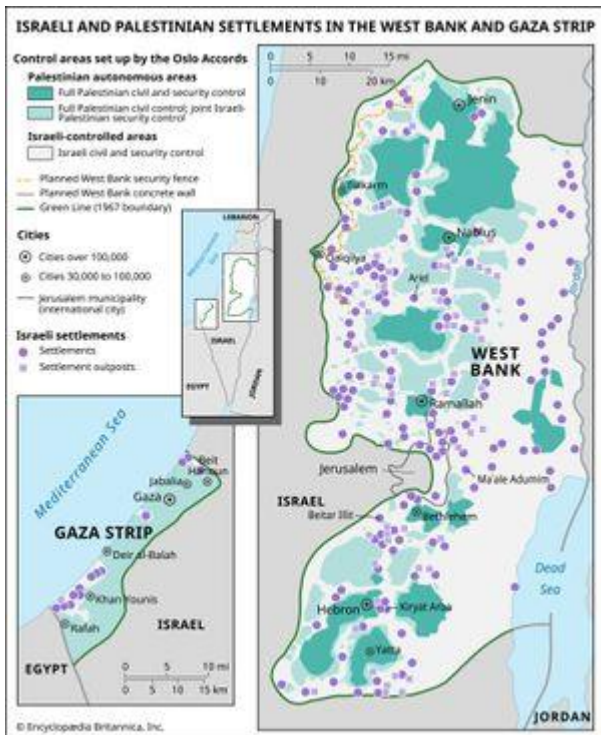
### PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY (PA),

The Governing body of the Palestinian [autonomous](#) regions in the [West Bank](#). Established in 1994 as part of the [Oslo Accords](#) peace agreement between [Israel](#) and the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO), the PA also has [de jure](#) governing authority over the entirety of the [Gaza Strip](#), but it has not exercised [de facto](#) control there since 2007, when  [Hamas](#) took control of the region by force. Although the PA was, until then, democratic, Pres. [Mahmoud Abbas](#) has since ruled by decree and indefinitely delayed elections. By 2011 the PA had built up institutions for a functioning state, but it later suffered repeated financial crises under pressure from Israel and others.

The PA was founded following years of hostility. Secret meetings held in [Norway](#) in 1993 between the PLO and Israel led to the signing of the historic Declaration of Principles (the Oslo Accords), in which the two sides agreed to mutual recognition and terms whereby governing functions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—occupied by Israel since the [Six-Day War](#) of 1967—would be progressively handed over to a Palestinian council. During that time—in what generally came to be known as the Oslo process—Israel and the Palestinians were to negotiate a permanent peace treaty to settle on the final status of these territories. The agreements between the sides called for the Palestinian Authority (PA) to take control over most populated areas in the occupied territories. Security for those areas would rest with the Palestinian police, although Israelis would be guaranteed freedom of movement. Several militant Islamic groups, particularly  [Hamas](#), denounced the peace agreement.

### ADMINISTRATION

The PA is governed by an [interim](#) constitution known as the Basic Law, which may be [amended](#) by the legislature by a two-thirds majority. The president is elected directly to a four-year term, with a limit of two terms. The president is the commander in chief of the security forces, manages [foreign relations](#), has the power to veto legislation, and may issue decrees when the legislature is not in session. The [prime minister](#), appointed by the president, and the council of ministers hold primary executive authority, subject to the confidence of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The PLC consists of 132 members elected to four-year terms. According to the 2005 [amendment](#) to the Basic Law, the 2006 election was a mixed majority and [proportional representation](#) system. This resulted in the controversial outcome of Hamas winning 74 seats although it received 44 percent of the vote (against [Fatah](#)'s 41 percent). In 2007 the Basic Law was amended to make the system fully proportional. A number of seats, defined by presidential decree, are [allocated](#) to Christians, and political parties must include a certain number of women on their lists, including one in the top three slots. Amid Fatah-Hamas factional violence in 2007, Pres. [Mahmoud Abbas](#) dismissed the government and declared a state of emergency, and thereafter he ruled by decree.



[Israeli and Palestinian settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip \(1995\)](#) The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (1995), building off the 1993 Oslo Accords, divided the West Bank and the Gaza Strip into areas A (Palestinian civil and security control), B (Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control), and C (Israeli civil and security control). (more)

Regional governance is divided into 16 governorates—11 in the West Bank and 5 in the Gaza Strip. Per the 1995 Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with Israel (also known as Oslo II), these territories are divided into three types of administration: areas under PA administration and security (Area A), areas under PA

administration but joint Israeli-Palestinian security (Area B), and areas under Israeli administration and security (Area C). As a key proviso of the Oslo Accords, PA security forces operate in partnership with the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF), which has included training, cooperation, joint patrols, and intelligence sharing; security makes up one-third of the [expenditure](#) of the PA.

## HISTORY

### PRESIDENCY OF [YASSER ARAFAT](#)

The PA first assumed some civil functions in 1994, when the Israeli military withdrew from the cities of Gaza and Jericho. Six other cities followed in 1995, and elections were held in 1996.

The first Israeli withdrawals took place in 1994, from the cities of Gaza and [Jericho](#). That same year the PA assumed control of many civil functions, and its autonomous authority was extended to six other cities in 1995. On January 20, 1996, elections were held in PA-administered areas for the presidency and the PLC. PLO chairman Yasser Arafat was easily elected president, and his Fatah party gained a majority of seats within the PLC.

Arafat's presidency was tasked with building the institutions and [rapport](#) of the fledgling PA while, per the terms of the Oslo Accords, stemming violence against Israel carried out by Palestinians. Because some Palestinians, especially Fatah's rival organization Hamas, were unhappy with [concessions](#) Arafat had made to Israel in the Oslo Accords, violence increased in 1996. The continued violence convinced many that Arafat was either unable or unwilling to curb violence, and it contributed to doubts among many that the [two-state solution](#) could actually bring about peace. [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), who campaigned on the slogan "Peace with security," was granted a surprise victory in Israel's 1996 parliamentary elections. Aspects of Israel's implementation of the Oslo Accords were delayed or halted under Prime Minister Netanyahu, resulting in the negotiation in 1998 of the [Wye River Memorandum](#), which made Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip [contingent](#) on the PA's actions to crack down on violence. Domestic politics in Israel caused the memorandum to be suspended in 1999.

Ongoing violence in the 1990s raised doubts in Israel that the Oslo process would bring peace. The process began to stall, intifada broke out, and the international [community](#) began to push for new leadership in the PA.

Amid a growing sense of distrust and pessimism between Israelis and Palestinians, U.S. Pres. [Bill Clinton](#) [convened](#) a two-week summit at [Camp David](#) in July 2000 to hash out final status issues, including the division of [Jerusalem](#). No agreement was reached. Attempting to capitalize on many Israelis' dissatisfaction with Prime Minister [Ehud Barak](#)'s willingness to divide Jerusalem, [Ariel Sharon](#)—the leader of the opposition in the [Knesset](#) and a former defense minister infamous for his role in the 1982 massacre at a Palestinian refugee camp—made a provocative visit to the [Temple Mount](#), where Islam's third holiest site sits (see [Dome of the Rock](#)). Palestinians were outraged, resulting in angry demonstrations and the beginning of the second [intifada](#). By the end of 2001, as the intifada and Israel's response to it had escalated, the IDF had confined Arafat to his [Ramallah compound](#). He remained there until the final days of his life in 2004.

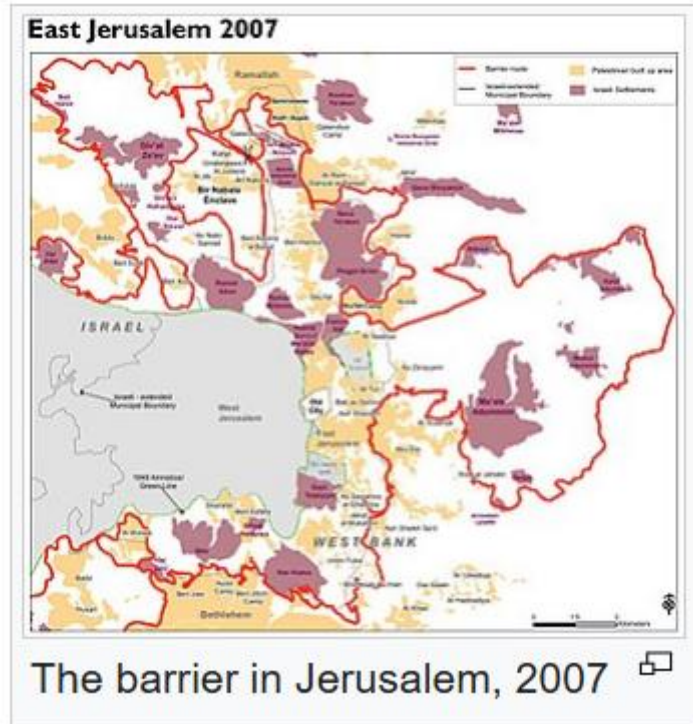
In 2003, amid intense international pressure for new Palestinian leadership, the post of prime minister was established, and Abbas became the first person to occupy the office. However, he resigned only months later, claiming that his role in the post had been undermined by Israel, the [United States](#), and Arafat. Ahmed Qurei, another chief Oslo negotiator, was named prime minister in his place.

## WEST BANK BARRIER, WEST BANK WALL OR THE WEST BANK SEPARATION BARRIER

[WIKIPEDIA](#)



The barrier route as of July 2011: 438 km (272 mi) finished, 58 km (36 mi) under construction, 212 km (132 mi) planned



The **West Bank barrier**, **West Bank wall** or the **West Bank separation barrier**,<sup>[1][2]</sup> is a [separation barrier](#) built by [Israel](#) along the [Green Line](#) and inside parts of the [West Bank](#). Israel describes the wall as a necessary security barrier against [Palestinian political violence](#); whereas [Palestinians](#) describe it as an element of [racial segregation](#) and a representation of [Israeli apartheid](#),<sup>[3]</sup> who often call it "**Wall of Apartheid**".<sup>[4]</sup> At a total length of 708 kilometres (440 mi) upon completion, the route traced by the barrier is more than double the length of the Green Line, with 15% of its length running along the Green Line or inside Israel, and the remaining 85% running as much as 18 kilometres (11 mi) inside the West Bank, effectively isolating about 9% of the land and approximately 25,000 Palestinians from the rest of the [Palestinian territory](#).<sup>[5]</sup>

The barrier was built by Israel following a wave of Palestinian political violence and incidents of terrorism inside Israel during the [Second Intifada](#), which began in September 2000 and ended in February 2005.<sup>[6]</sup> The [Israeli government](#) cites a decreased number of [suicide bombings carried out from the West Bank](#) as evidence of its efficacy, after such attacks fell from 73 between 2000 and July 2003 (the completion of the first continuous segment) to 12 between August 2003 and the end of 2006.<sup>[7][8]</sup> While the barrier was initially presented as a temporary security measure at a time of heightened tensions, it has since been associated with a future political border between Israel and the [State of Palestine](#).<sup>[9]</sup> The barrier has drawn criticism from Palestinians, human rights groups, and members of the international community, who have all argued that it serves as evidence of [Israel's intent to annex Palestinian land](#) under the guise of security.<sup>[10]</sup> It has also been alleged that the construction of the wall aims to undermine the [Israeli–Palestinian peace process](#) by unilaterally establishing new *de facto* borders.<sup>[11]</sup> Key points of dispute are that it substantially deviates eastward from the Green Line, severely restricts the travel of many Palestinians, and impairs their ability to commute to work within the West Bank<sup>[12]</sup> or to Israel.<sup>[13]</sup> The [International Court of Justice](#) issued [an advisory opinion](#) finding that the barrier qualifies as a [violation of international law](#).<sup>[14][15]</sup> In 2003, the [United Nations General Assembly](#) adopted a resolution that charged Israel's building of the barrier to be a violation of international law and demanded its removal by a vote of 144–4 with 12 abstentions.<sup>[16]</sup>

The walled sections of the barrier have become a [canvas for graffiti art](#), with its Palestinian side illustrating opposition to the barrier, Palestinian resistance, their right to return, as well as [human rights](#) in general.<sup>[1]</sup>

## NAMES



Grffiti on the road to [Bethlehem](#) in the West Bank stating "[Ich bin ein Berliner](#)"

In [Hebrew](#), descriptions include: "separation fence" ([גדר ההפרדה](#)<sup>ⓘ</sup>, *Geder HaHafrada*); "separation wall" (Hebrew: חומת ההפרדה, *Homat HaHafrada*) and "security fence" (גדר הביטחון, *Geder HaBitahon*).<sup>[17][18]</sup>

In [Arabic](#), it is called "wall of apartheid"/"racial segregation wall"<sup>[4]</sup> [جدار الفصل العنصري](#)<sup>ⓘ</sup>, *jidār al-faṣl al-‘unṣuriyy*, indicating an allegation of [Israeli apartheid](#).

In English, the [BBC's](#) style guide uses the terms "barrier" (sometimes "separation barrier" or "**West Bank barrier**")<sup>[19]</sup> as do [The Economist](#),<sup>[20]</sup> [PBS](#)<sup>[21]</sup> and [The New York Times](#).<sup>[22]</sup> The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses the phrase "security fence" in English.<sup>[23]</sup> The [International Court of Justice](#) has used the term "wall", explaining that "the other expressions sometimes employed are no more accurate if understood in the physical sense."<sup>[24]</sup> It is also referred to as the "Apartheid Wall" or "Apartheid Fence" in a derogatory manner.<sup>[25][26][27]</sup> "[Seam zone](#)" (Hebrew: מרחב התפר) refers to the land between the [1949 Armistice Agreement Line](#) and the fence.



## STRUCTURE



Route 443 near [Giv'at Ze'ev](#) Junction, with pyramid-shaped stacks of barbed wire forming a section of the Israeli West Bank barrier

The barrier is described by the [Israeli Defense Forces](#) as a "multi-layered composite obstacle", parts of it consisting of a 9 metres (30 ft) high concrete wall,<sup>[28]</sup> while other stretches consist of a multi-layered fence system, with three fences with pyramid-shaped stacks of barbed wire on the two outer fences and a lighter-weight fence with intrusion detection equipment in the middle; an anti-vehicle ditch; patrol roads on

both sides; and a smooth strip of sand for "intrusion tracking".<sup>[29][30]</sup>

Where the multi-layered fence system is employed, it contains an exclusion area of 60-metre (200 ft) in width on average,<sup>[31]</sup> with some sections having an exclusion area that reaches up to 100 metres

(330 ft).<sup>[32]</sup> The concrete wall has a width of 3 metres (9.8 ft),<sup>[failed verification]</sup> and the wall is 9 metres (30 ft) high.<sup>[28]</sup>

## ROUTE



Israeli West Bank barrier – North of [Meitar](#), near the southwest corner of the West Bank, in 2006

See also: [1949 Armistice Agreements § Cease-fire line vs. permanent border](#)



The barrier between northern [West Bank](#) and the [Gilboa](#)



[Highway 1](#) – [Route 4370](#) Junction ([Al-Issawiya](#) Junction) – one can see the barrier between the Israeli and the Palestinian lanes.

The barrier runs partly along or near the [1949 Jordanian–Israeli armistice line](#) ("[Green Line](#)") and partly through the [Israeli-occupied West Bank](#) diverging eastward from the [armistice line](#) by up to 20 km (12 mi) to

include on the western side several of the areas with concentrations of highly populated [Israeli settlements](#), such as [East Jerusalem](#), the Ariel Bloc ([Ariel](#), [Karnei Shomron](#), [Kedumim](#), [Immanuel](#) etc.),<sup>[33]</sup><sup>[better source needed]</sup> [Gush Etzion](#), [Givat Ze'ev](#), [Oranit](#), and [Maale Adumim](#).<sup>[34]</sup><sup>[35]</sup>

The barrier nearly encircles some Palestinian towns, about 20% follows the [armistice line](#),<sup>[36]</sup> and a projected 77,000 ha (191,000 acres) or about 13.5% of the West Bank area is on the west side of the wall.<sup>[37]</sup> According to a study of the April 2006 route by the Israeli [human rights organization B'Tselem](#), 8.5% of the West Bank area will be on the Israeli side of the barrier after completion, and 3.4% partly or completely surrounded on the eastern side.<sup>[38]</sup> Some 27,520 to 31,000 Palestinians will be captured on the Israeli side.<sup>[38]</sup><sup>[39]</sup> Another 124,000, on the other hand, will effectively be controlled and isolated. Some 230,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem will be placed on the West Bank side.<sup>[39]</sup> Most of the barrier<sup>[vague]</sup> was built at the northern and western edges of the West Bank, mostly beyond the Green Line and created 9 [enclaves](#), which enclosed 15,783 ha (39,000 acres). An additional barrier, circa 10 km long, run south of Ramallah.<sup>[40]</sup>

Israel states that the [topography](#) does not permit putting the barrier along the Green Line in some places because hills or tall buildings on the Palestinian side would make the barrier ineffective against terrorism.<sup>[41]</sup> The International Court of Justice states that in such cases it is only legal to build the barrier inside Israel.

The barrier route has been challenged in court and changed several times. Argument presented to the court has reiterated that the [cease-fire](#) line of 1949 was negotiated "without prejudice to future territorial settlements or boundary lines" (Art. VI.9).<sup>[42]</sup>

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## THE SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT AND THE MAKING OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST



During World War I the [great powers](#) made a number of decisions concerning the future of Palestine without much regard to the wishes of the [indigenous](#) inhabitants. Palestinian Arabs, however, believed that [Great Britain](#) had promised them independence in the [Hussein-McMahon correspondence](#), an exchange of letters from July 1915 to March 1916 between Sir [Henry McMahon](#), British high commissioner in Egypt, and [Hussein ibn Ali](#), then emir of Mecca, in which the British made certain commitments to the Arabs in return for their support against the Ottomans during the war. Yet by May 1916 Great Britain, [France](#), and [Russia](#) had reached an agreement (the [Sykes-Picot Agreement](#)) according to which, inter alia, the bulk of Palestine was to be internationalized. Further complicating the situation, in November 1917 [Arthur Balfour](#), the British secretary of state for foreign affairs, addressed a letter to [Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild](#) (the [Balfour Declaration](#)) expressing sympathy for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people on the understanding that “nothing shall be done which may [prejudice](#) the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish [communities](#) in Palestine.” This declaration did not come about through an act of generosity or stirrings of [conscience](#) over the bitter fate of the Jewish people. It was meant, in part, to prompt American Jews to exercise their influence in moving the [United States](#) to support British postwar policies as well as to encourage Russian Jews to keep their nation fighting. Palestine was hard-hit by the war. In addition to the destruction caused by the fighting, the population was devastated by famine, [epidemics](#), and Ottoman punitive measures against Arab nationalists. Major battles took place at Gaza before Jerusalem was captured by British and Allied forces under the command of [General Sir Edmund \(later 1st Viscount\) Allenby](#) in December 1917. The remaining area was occupied by the British by October 1918.

At the war's end, the future of Palestine was problematic. Great Britain, which had set up a military administration in Palestine after capturing Jerusalem, was faced with the problem of having to secure international sanction for the continued occupation of the country in a manner consistent with its [ambiguous](#), seemingly conflicting wartime commitments. On March 20, 1920, delegates from Palestine attended a general Syrian congress at Damascus, which passed a resolution rejecting the Balfour Declaration and elected [Faisal I](#)—son of Hussein ibn Ali, who ruled the [Hejaz](#)—king of a united Syria (including Palestine). This resolution echoed one passed earlier in Jerusalem, in February 1919, by the first Palestinian Arab conference of Muslim-Christian associations, which had been founded by leading Palestinian Arab notables to oppose Zionist activities. In April 1920, however, at a [peace conference](#) held in [San Remo](#), Italy, the Allies divided the former territories of the defeated [Ottoman Empire](#). Of the Ottoman provinces in the Syrian [region](#), the northern portion (Syria and [Lebanon](#)) was [mandated](#) to France, and the southern portion (Palestine) was [mandated](#) to Great Britain. By July 1920 the French had forced Faisal to give up his newly founded kingdom of Syria. The hope of founding an Arab Palestine within a federated Syrian state collapsed and with it any prospect of independence. Palestinian Arabs spoke of 1920 as *'ām al-nakbah*, the “year of the catastrophe.”

Uncertainty over the [disposition](#) of Palestine affected all its inhabitants and increased political tensions. In April 1920 anti-Zionist [riots](#) broke out in the Jewish quarter of [Old Jerusalem](#), killing several and injuring scores. British authorities attributed the riots to Arab disappointment at not having the promises of independence fulfilled and to fears, played on by some Muslim and Christian leaders, of a massive influx of Jews. Following the confirmation of the [mandate](#) at San Remo, the British replaced the military administration with a civilian administration in July 1920, and [Sir Herbert \(later Viscount\) Samuel](#), a Zionist, was appointed the first high commissioner. The new administration proceeded to [implement](#) the Balfour Declaration, announcing in August a quota of 16,500 Jewish [immigrants](#) for the first year.

In December 1920, Palestinian Arabs at a congress in [Haifa](#) established an executive committee (known as the Arab Executive) to act as the representative of the Arabs. It was never formally recognized by the British and was dissolved in 1934. However, the platform of the Haifa congress, which set out the position that Palestine was an [autonomous](#) Arab entity and totally rejected any rights of the Jews to Palestine, remained the basic policy of the Palestinian Arabs until 1948. The arrival of more than 18,000 Jewish immigrants between 1919 and 1921 and land purchases in 1921 by the Jewish National Fund (established in 1901), which led to the eviction of Arab peasants (fellahin), further aroused Arab opposition that was expressed throughout the region through the Christian-Muslim associations. On May 1, 1921, more serious anti-Zionist riots broke out in Jaffa and spread to [Petah Tikva](#) and other Jewish communities, in which nearly 100 were killed. An Arab delegation of notables visited London in August–November 1921, demanding that the Balfour Declaration be [repudiated](#) and proposing the creation of a national government with a parliament democratically elected by the country's Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Alarmed by the extent of Arab opposition, the British government issued a [white paper](#) in June 1922 declaring that Great Britain did “not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded in Palestine.” Immigration would not exceed the economic absorptive capacity of the country, and steps would be taken to set up a legislative council. These

proposals were rejected by the Arabs, both because they [constituted](#) a large majority of the total mandate population and therefore wished to dominate the instruments of government and rapidly gain independence and because, they argued, the proposals allowed Jewish immigration, which had a political objective, to be regulated by an economic [criterion](#).

The British mandate



### [British mandate of Palestine](#)

In July 1922 the Council of the [League of Nations](#) approved the mandate instrument for Palestine, including its preamble incorporating the [Balfour Declaration](#) and stressing the Jewish historical connection with Palestine. Article 2 made the mandatory power responsible for placing the country under such “political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home...and the development of self-governing institutions.” Article 4 allowed for the establishment of a [Jewish Agency](#) to advise and cooperate with the Palestine administration in matters affecting the Jewish national home. Article 6 required that the Palestine administration, “while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced,” under suitable conditions should [facilitate](#) Jewish immigration and close settlement of Jews on the land. Although Transjordan—i.e., the lands east of the [Jordan](#) River—constituted three-fourths of the British mandate of Palestine, it was, despite protests from the Zionists, excluded from the clauses covering the establishment of a Jewish national home. On September 29, 1923, the mandate officially came into force.

Palestine was a distinct political entity for the first time in centuries. This created problems and challenges for Palestinian Arabs and Zionists alike. Both communities realized that by the end of the mandate period the region’s future would be determined by size of population and ownership of land. Thus, the central issues throughout the mandate period were Jewish immigration and land purchases, with the Jews attempting to increase both and the Arabs seeking to slow down or halt both. Conflict over these issues often [escalated](#) into violence, and the British were forced to take action—a lesson not lost on either side.



[Amin al-Husseini](#) Arab nationalist and grand mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husseini, c. 1937.

Arab nationalist activities became fragmented as tensions arose between clans, religious groups, and city dwellers and fellahin over the issue of how to respond to British rule and the increasing number of Zionists. Moreover, traditional rivalry between the two old preeminent and ambitious Jerusalem families, the Husseinis and the Nashashibis, whose members had held numerous government posts in the late Ottoman period, [inhibited](#) the development of effective Arab leadership. Several Arab organizations in the 1920s opposed Jewish immigration, including the Palestine Arab Congress, Muslim-Christian associations, and the Arab Executive. Most Arab groups were led by the strongly anti-British Hussein family, while the National Defense Party (founded 1934) was under the control of the more accommodating Nashashibi family. In 1921 the British high commissioner appointed [Amin al-Husseini](#) to be the (grand) [mufti](#) of Jerusalem and made him president of the newly formed Supreme Muslim Council, which controlled the Muslim courts and schools and a considerable portion of the funds raised by religious charitable endowments (*awqāf*; singular [waqf](#)). Amin al-Husseini used this religious position to transform himself into the most powerful political figure among the Arabs.

Initially, the Jews of Palestine thought it best served their interests to cooperate with the British administration. The [World Zionist Organization](#) (founded 1897) was regarded as the [de facto Jewish Agency stipulated](#) in the mandate, although its president, [Chaim Weizmann](#), remained in London, close to the British government; the Polish-born emigré [David Ben-Gurion](#) became the leader of a standing executive in Palestine. Throughout the 1920s most British local authorities in Palestine, especially the military, sympathized with the Palestinian Arabs, whereas the British government in London tended to side with the Zionists. The Jewish [community](#) in Palestine, the Yishuv, established its own assembly (Va'ad Leumi), [trade union](#) and labor movement ([Histadrut](#)), schools, courts, taxation system, medical services, and a number of industrial enterprises. It also formed a military organization called the [Haganah](#). The

Jewish Agency came to be controlled by a group called the Labor Zionists, who, for the most part, believed in cooperation with the British and Arabs, but another group, the Revisionist Zionists, founded in 1925 and led by [Vladimir Jabotinsky](#), fully realized that their goal of a Jewish state in all of Palestine (i.e., both sides of the Jordan River) was inconsistent with that of Palestinian Arabs. The Revisionists formed their own military arm, [Irgun Zvai Leumi](#), which did not hesitate to use force against the Arabs.

British rule in Palestine during the mandate was, in general, [conscientious](#), efficient, and responsible. The mandate government developed administrative institutions, municipal services, [public works](#), and transport. It laid water pipelines, expanded ports, extended railway lines, and supplied electricity. It was less [assiduous](#) in promoting education, however, particularly in the Arab sector, and it was hampered because it had to respond to outbreaks of violence both between the Arab and Jewish communities and against itself. The aims and [aspirations](#) of the three parties in Palestine appeared incompatible, which, as events proved, was indeed the case.

There was little political cooperation between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. In 1923 the British high commissioner tried to win Arab cooperation by offers first of a legislative council that would reflect the Arab majority and then of an Arab agency. Both offers were rejected by the Arabs as falling far short of their national demands. Nor did the Arabs wish to legitimize a situation they rejected in principle. The years 1923–29 were relatively quiet; Arab passivity was partly due to the drop in Jewish immigration in 1926–28. In 1927 the number of Jewish emigrants [exceeded](#) that of immigrants, and in 1928 there was a net Jewish immigration of only 10 persons.

Nevertheless, the Jewish national home continued to consolidate itself in terms of urban, agricultural, social, cultural, and industrial development. Large amounts of land were purchased from Arab owners, who often were absentee landlords. In August 1929 negotiations were concluded for the formation of an enlarged Jewish Agency to include non-Zionist Jewish sympathizers throughout the world.



[Western Wall](#) The Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem.

This last development, while accentuating Arab fears, gave the Zionists a new sense of confidence. In the same month, a dispute in Jerusalem concerning religious practices at the [Western Wall](#)—sacred to Jews as the only remnant of the Second [Temple of Jerusalem](#) and to Muslims as the site of the [Dome of the Rock](#)—flared up into serious communal clashes in Jerusalem, [Safed](#), and [Hebron](#). Some 250 were killed and 570 [wounded](#), the Arab casualties being mostly at the hands of British security forces. A royal commission of inquiry under the aegis of Sir Walter Shaw attributed the clashes to the fact that “the Arabs have come to

see in Jewish immigration not only a menace to their livelihood but a possible overlord of the future.” A second royal commission, headed by [Sir John Hope Simpson](#), issued a report stating that there was at that time no margin of land available for agricultural settlement by new immigrants. These two reports raised in an [acute](#) form the question of where Britain’s duty lay if its specific obligations to the Zionists under the Balfour Declaration clashed with its general obligations to the Arabs under Article 22 of the [Covenant of the League of Nations](#). They also formed the basis of the Passfield White Paper, issued in October 1930, which accorded some priority to Britain’s obligations to the Arabs. Not only did it call for a halt to Jewish immigration, but it also recommended that land be sold only to landless Arabs and that the determination of “economic absorptive capacity” be based on levels of Arab as well as Jewish unemployment. This was seen by the Zionists as cutting at the root of their program, for, if the right of the Arab resident were to gain priority over that of the Jewish immigrant, whether actual or potential, development of the Jewish national home would come to a standstill. In response to protests from Palestinian Jews and London Zionists, the British [prime minister](#), [Ramsay MacDonald](#), in February 1931 addressed an explanatory letter to Chaim Weizmann nullifying the Passfield White Paper, which virtually meant a return to the policy of the 1922 white paper. This letter convinced the Arabs that recommendations in their favor made in Palestine could be annulled by Zionist influence at the center of power in London. In December 1931 a Muslim congress at Jerusalem was attended by delegates from 22 countries to warn against the danger of Zionism.

From the early 1930s onward, developments in Europe once again began to impose themselves more forcefully on Palestine. The [Nazi](#) accession to power in Germany in 1933 and the widespread persecution of Jews throughout central and eastern Europe gave a great [impetus](#) to Jewish immigration, which jumped to 30,000 in 1933, 42,000 in 1934, and 61,000 in 1935. By 1936 the Jewish population of Palestine had reached almost 400,000, or one-third of the total. This new wave of immigration provoked major acts of violence against Jews and the British in 1933 and 1935. The Arab population of Palestine also grew rapidly, largely by natural increase, although some Arabs were attracted from outside the region by the capital infusion brought by middle-class Jewish immigrants and British public works. Most of the Arabs (nearly nine-tenths) continued to be employed in agriculture despite deteriorating economic conditions. By the mid-1930s, however, many landless Arabs had joined the expanding Arab proletariat working in the construction trades on the edge of rapidly growing urban centers. This was the beginning of a shift in the foundations of Palestinian economic and social life that was to have profound immediate and long-term effects. In November 1935 the Arab political parties collectively demanded that Jewish immigration cease, land transfer be prohibited, and democratic institutions be established. A [boycott](#) of Zionist and British goods was proclaimed. In December the British administration offered to set up a legislative council of 28 members, in which the Arabs (both Muslim and Christian) would have a majority. The British would retain control through their selection of nonelected members. Although Arabs would not be represented in the council in proportion to their numbers, Arab leaders favored the proposal, but the Zionists criticized it bitterly as an attempt to freeze the national home through a [constitutional](#) Arab stranglehold. In any event, [London](#) rejected the proposal. This, together with the example of rising [nationalism](#) in neighboring Egypt and Syria, increasing unemployment in Palestine, and a poor citrus harvest, touched off a long-smoldering [Arab rebellion](#).



## THE ARAB REVOLT

The Arab Revolt of 1936–39 was the first sustained violent uprising of Palestinian Arabs in more than a century. Thousands of Arabs from all classes were mobilized, and nationalistic [sentiment](#) was fanned in the Arabic press, schools, and literary circles. The British, taken aback by the extent and intensity of the revolt, shipped more than 20,000 troops into Palestine, and by 1939 the Zionists had armed more than 15,000 Jews in their own nationalist movement.

The revolt began with spontaneous acts of violence committed by the religiously and nationalistically motivated followers of Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, who had been killed by the British in 1935. In April 1936 the murder of two Jews led to [escalating](#) violence, and Qassamite groups initiated a [general strike](#) in Jaffa and Nablus. At that point the Arab political parties formed an [Arab Higher Committee](#) presided over by the mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini. It called for a general strike, nonpayment of taxes, and the closing of municipal governments (although government employees were allowed to stay at work) and demanded an end to Jewish immigration, a ban on land sales to Jews, and national independence. Simultaneously with the strike, Arab rebels, joined by volunteers from neighboring Arab countries, took to the hills, attacking Jewish settlements and British installations in the northern part of the country. By the end of the year, the movement had assumed the dimensions of a national revolt, the mainstay of which was the Arab peasantry. Even though the arrival of British troops restored some semblance of order, the armed rebellion, arson, bombings, and assassinations continued.

A royal commission of inquiry presided over by Lord Robert Peel, which was sent to investigate the volatile situation, reported in July 1937 that the revolt was caused by Arab desire for independence and fear of the Jewish national home. The [Peel Commission](#) declared the [mandate](#) unworkable and Britain's obligations to Arabs and Jews mutually irreconcilable. In the face of what it described as "right against right," the commission recommended that the [region](#) be partitioned. The Zionist attitude toward partition, though ambivalent, was overall one of cautious acceptance. For the first time a British official body explicitly spoke of a Jewish state. The [commission](#) not only allotted to this state an area that was immensely larger than the existing Jewish landholdings but recommended the forcible transfer of the Arab population from the proposed Jewish state. The Zionists, however, still needed mandatory protection for their further development and left the door open for an undivided Palestine. The Arabs were horrified by the idea of dismembering the region and particularly by the suggestion that they be forcibly transferred (to Transjordan). As a result, the momentum of the revolt increased during 1937 and 1938.



[Peel Commission](#) Partition plan proposed by the Peel Commission report, 1937.

In September 1937 the British were forced to declare [martial law](#). The Arab Higher Committee was dissolved, and many officials of the Supreme Muslim Council and other organizations were arrested. The mufti fled to Lebanon and then Iraq, never to return to an undivided Palestine. Although the Arab Revolt continued well into 1939, high [casualty](#) rates and firm British measures gradually eroded its strength. According to some estimates, more than 5,000 Arabs were killed, 15,000 wounded, and 5,600 imprisoned during the revolt. Although it signified the birth of a national identity, the revolt was unsuccessful in many ways. The general strike, which was called off in October 1939, had encouraged Zionist self-reliance, and the Arabs of Palestine were unable to recover from their sustained effort of defying the British

administration. Their traditional leaders were either killed, arrested, or deported, leaving the dispirited and disarmed population divided along urban-rural, class, clan, and religious lines. The Zionists, on the other hand, were united behind Ben-Gurion, and the [Haganah](#) had been given permission to arm itself. It cooperated with British forces and the [Irgun Zvai Leumi](#) in attacks against Arabs.

However, the prospect of war in Europe alarmed the British government and caused it to reassess its policy in Palestine. If Britain went to war, it could not afford to face Arab hostility in Palestine and in neighboring countries. The Woodhead Commission, under Sir John Woodhead, was set up to examine the practicality of partition. In November 1938 it recommended against the Peel Commission's plan—largely on the ground that the number of Arabs in the proposed Jewish state would be almost equal to the number of Jews—and put forward [alternative](#) proposals drastically reducing the area of the Jewish state and limiting the [sovereignty](#) of the proposed states. This was unacceptable to both Arabs and Jews. Seeking to find a solution acceptable to both parties, the British announced the impracticability of partition and called for a roundtable conference in London.

No agreement was reached at the London conference held during February and March 1939. In May 1939, however, the British government issued a [white paper](#), which essentially yielded to Arab demands. It stated that the Jewish national home should be established within an independent Palestinian state. During the next five years 75,000 Jews would be allowed into the country; thereafter Jewish immigration would be subject to Arab "acquiescence." Land transfer to Jews would be allowed only in certain areas in Palestine, and an independent Palestinian state would be considered within 10 years. The Arabs, although in favor of the new policy, rejected the white paper, largely because they mistrusted the British government and opposed a [provision](#) contained in the paper for extending the mandate beyond the 10-year period. The Zionists were shocked and enraged by the paper, which they considered a death blow to their program and to Jews who desperately sought refuge in Palestine from the growing persecution they were enduring in Europe. The 1939 white paper marked the end of the Anglo-Zionist entente.

Progress toward a Jewish national home had, however, been remarkable since 1918. Although the majority of the Jewish population was urban, the number of rural Zionist colonies had increased from 47 to about 200. Between 1922 and 1940 Jewish landholdings had risen from about 148,500 to 383,500 acres (about 60,100 to 155,200 hectares) and now [constituted](#) roughly one-seventh of the cultivatable land, and the Jewish population had grown from 83,790 to some 467,000, or nearly one-third of a total population of about 1,528,000. [Tel Aviv](#) had developed into an all-Jewish city of 150,000 inhabitants, and hundreds of millions of dollars of Jewish capital had been introduced into the region. The Jewish literacy rate was high, schools were expanding, and the [Hebrew language](#) had become widespread. Despite a split in 1935 between the mainline Zionists and the radical Revisionists, who advocated the use of force to establish the Zionist state, Zionist institutions in Palestine became stronger in the 1930s and helped create the preconditions for the establishment of a Jewish state.

### [World War II](#)

With the outbreak of [World War II](#) in September 1939, Zionist and British policies came into direct conflict. Throughout the war Zionists sought with growing urgency to increase Jewish immigration to Palestine, while the British sought to prevent such immigration, regarding it as illegal and a threat to the [stability](#) of a

region essential to the war effort. Ben-Gurion declared on behalf of the Jewish Agency: “We shall fight [beside Great Britain in] this war as if there was no White Paper and we shall fight the White Paper as if there was no war.” British attempts to prevent Jewish immigration to Palestine in the face of the [Holocaust](#)—the terrible tragedy befalling European Jews and others deemed undesirable by the Nazis—led to the disastrous sinking of two ships carrying Jewish [refugees](#), the *Patria* (November 1940) and the *Struma* (February 1942). In response, the Irgun, under the leadership of [Menachem Begin](#), and a small [terrorist](#) splinter group, LEHI (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel), known for its founder as the [Stern Gang](#), embarked on widespread attacks on the British, culminating in the murder of [Lord Moyne](#), British minister of state, by two LEHI members in Cairo in November 1944.

During the war years the Jewish [community](#) in Palestine was vastly strengthened. Its moderate wing supported the British; in September 1944 a Jewish brigade was formed—a total of 27,000 Jews having enlisted in the British forces—and attached to the British 8th Army. Jewish industry in general was given immense [impetus](#) by the war, and a Jewish munitions industry developed to manufacture antitank mines for the British forces. For the Yishuv the war and the Holocaust confirmed that a Jewish state must be established in Palestine. Important also was the support of American Zionists. In May 1942, at a Zionist conference held at the Biltmore Hotel in [New York City](#), Ben-Gurion gained support for a program demanding unrestricted immigration, a Jewish army, and the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish commonwealth.

The Arabs of Palestine remained largely [quiescent](#) throughout the war. [Amin al-Husseini](#) had fled—by way of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Italy—to Germany, whence he broadcast appeals to his fellow Arabs to ally with the [Axis powers](#) against Britain and Zionism. Yet the mufti failed to rally Palestinian Arabs to the Axis cause. Although some supported Germany, the majority supported the [Allies](#), and approximately 23,000 Arabs enlisted in the British forces (especially in the [Arab Legion](#)). Increases in agricultural prices benefited the Arab peasants, who began to pay accumulated debts. However, the Arab Revolt had ruined many Arab merchants and importers, and British war activities, although bringing new levels of prosperity, further weakened the traditional social institutions—the family and village—by fostering a large urban Arab working class.

The Allied discovery of the Nazi [extermination camps](#) at the end of [World War II](#) and the undecided future of [Holocaust](#) survivors led to an increasing number of pro-Zionist statements from [U.S.](#) politicians. In August 1945 U.S. Pres. [Harry S. Truman](#) requested that British Prime Minister [Clement Attlee](#) [facilitate](#) the immediate admission of 100,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors into Palestine, and in December the [U.S. Senate](#) and [House of Representatives](#) asked for unrestricted Jewish immigration to the limit of the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine. Truman’s request signaled the U.S. entry into the arena of powers determining the future of Palestine. The question of Palestine, now linked with the fate of Holocaust survivors, became once again the focus of international attention.

As the war came to an end, the neighboring Arab countries began to take a more direct interest in Palestine. In October 1944 Arab heads of state met in Alexandria, Egypt, and issued a statement, the Alexandria Protocol, setting out the Arab position. They made clear that, although they regretted the bitter fate inflicted upon European Jews by European dictatorships, the issue of European Jewish survivors

ought not to be confused with [Zionism](#). Solving the problem of European Jews, they asserted, should not be achieved by inflicting injustice on Palestinian Arabs. The [covenant](#) of the League of Arab States, or [Arab League](#), formed in March 1945, contained an annex emphasizing the Arab character of Palestine. The Arab League appointed an Arab Higher Executive for Palestine (the Arab Higher Committee), which included a broad spectrum of Palestinian leaders, to speak for the Palestinian Arabs. In December 1945 the league declared a [boycott](#) of Zionist goods. The pattern of the postwar struggle for Palestine was unmistakably emerging.

The early postwar period

The major issue between 1945 and 1948 was, as it had been throughout the mandate, Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Yishuv was determined to remove all restrictions to Jewish immigration and to establish a Jewish state. The Arabs were determined that no more Jews should arrive and that Palestine should achieve independence as an Arab state. The primary goal of British policy following [World War II](#) was to secure British strategic interests in the [Middle East](#) and [Asia](#). Because the cooperation of the Arab states was considered essential to this goal, British Foreign Secretary [Ernest Bevin](#) opposed Jewish immigration and the foundation of an independent Jewish state in Palestine. The U.S. State Department basically supported the British position, but Truman was determined to ensure that Jews displaced by the war were permitted to enter Palestine. The issue was resolved in 1948 when the British mandate collapsed under the pressure of force and diplomacy.

In November 1945, in an effort to secure American coresponsibility for a Palestinian policy, Bevin announced the formation of an [Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry](#). Pending the report of the committee, Jewish immigration would continue at the rate of 1,500 persons per month above the 75,000 limit set by the 1939 white paper. A plan of provincial [autonomy](#) for Arabs and Jews was worked out in an Anglo-American conference in 1946 and became the basis for discussions in London between Great Britain and the representatives of Arabs and Zionists.

In the meantime, Zionist pressure in Palestine was intensified by the unauthorized immigration of refugees on a hitherto unprecedented scale and by closely coordinated attacks by Zionist underground forces. Jewish immigration was impelled by the burning memories of the Holocaust, the chaotic postwar conditions in Europe, and the growing possibility of attaining a Jewish state where the victims of persecution could guarantee their own safety. The underground's attacks [culminated](#) in Jerusalem on July 22, 1946, when the Irgun blew up a part of the [King David Hotel](#) containing British government and military offices, with the loss of 91 lives.

On the Arab side, a meeting of the Arab states took place in June 1946 at Blūdān, Syria, at which secret resolutions were adopted threatening British and American interests in the Middle East if Arab rights were disregarded. In Palestine the Husseinis consolidated their power, despite widespread mistrust of the mufti, who now resided in Egypt.

While Zionists pressed ahead with immigration and attacks on the government, and Arab states mobilized in response, British resolve to remain in the Middle East was collapsing. World War II had left Britain victorious but exhausted. After the war it lacked the funds and political will to maintain control of colonial possessions that were agitating, with increasing violence, for independence. When a [conference](#) called in

London in February 1947 failed to resolve the impasse, Great Britain, already negotiating its withdrawal from [India](#) and eager to decrease its costly military presence in Palestine (of the more than 280,000 troops stationed there during the war, more than 80,000 still remained), referred the Palestine question to the [United Nations](#) (UN).



### [UN partition plan for Israel and Palestine in 1947](#)

On August 31, 1947, a majority report of the UN Special Committee on [Palestine](#) (UNSCOP) recommended that the region be partitioned into an Arab and a Jewish state, which, however, should retain an economic union. Jerusalem and its environs were to be international. These recommendations were substantially adopted by a two-thirds majority of the [UN General Assembly](#) in [Resolution 181](#), dated November 29, 1947, a decision made possible partly because of an agreement between the United States and the [Soviet Union](#) on [partition](#) and partly because pressure was exerted on some small countries by Zionist sympathizers in the United States. All the Islamic Asian countries voted against partition, and an Arab proposal to query the [International Court of Justice](#) on the competence of the General Assembly to partition a country against the wishes of the majority of its inhabitants (in 1946 there were 1,269,000 Arabs and 678,000 Jews in Palestine) was narrowly defeated.

The Zionists welcomed the partition proposal both because it recognized a Jewish state and because it allotted slightly more than half of (west-of-Jordan) Palestine to it. As in 1937, the Arabs fiercely opposed partition both in principle and because nearly half of the population of the Jewish state would be Arab. [Resolution 181](#) called for the formation of the UN Palestine Commission—which it tasked with selecting and overseeing provisional councils of government for the Jewish and Arab states by April 1, 1948—and set the date for the termination of the mandate no later than August 1, 1948. (The British later announced that the mandate would be terminated on May 15, 1948.)

#### Civil war in Palestine

Soon after the UN resolution, fighting broke out in Palestine. The Zionists mobilized their forces and redoubled their efforts to bring in immigrants. In December 1947 the Arab League pledged its support to the Palestinian Arabs and organized a force of 3,000 volunteers. Civil war spread, and external intervention increased as the disintegration of the British administration progressed.

Alarmed by the continued fighting, the United States in early March 1948 expressed its opposition to forcibly [implementing](#) a partition. A March 12 report by the UN Palestine Commission stated that the establishment of provisional councils of government able to fulfill their functions would be impossible by April 1. Arab resistance to the partition in principle precluded the establishment of an Arab council, and, although steps had been taken toward the selection of the Jewish council, the commission reported that the latter council would be unable to carry out its functions as intended by the resolution. [Hampering](#) efforts altogether was Great Britain's refusal in any case to share with the commission the administration of Palestine during the transitional period. On March 19 the United States called for the UN Palestine Commission to suspend its efforts. On March 30 the United States proposed that a truce be declared and that the problem be further considered by the General Assembly.

The Zionists, insisting that partition was binding and anxious about the change in U.S. policy, made a major effort to establish their state. They launched two offensives during April. The success of these operations coincided roughly with the failure of an Arab attack on the Zionist settlement of Mishmar Ha 'Emeq; the death in battle of an Arab national hero, Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, in command of the Jerusalem front; and the [massacre](#), by [Irgunists](#) and members of the [Stern Gang](#), of civilian inhabitants of the Arab village of [Deir Yassin](#). On April 22 Haifa fell to the Zionists, and Jaffa, after severe mortar shelling, surrendered to them on

May 13. Simultaneously with their military offensives, the Zionists launched a campaign of [psychological warfare](#). The Arabs of Palestine, divided, badly led, and reliant on the regular armies of the Arab states, became demoralized, and their efforts to prevent partition collapsed.

On May 14 the last [British](#) high commissioner, General Sir [Alan Cunningham](#), left Palestine. On the same day the State of [Israel](#) was declared and within a few hours won [de facto](#) recognition from the [United States](#) and [de jure](#) recognition from the [Soviet Union](#). Early on May 15 units of the regular armies of [Syria](#), Transjordan, Iraq, and Egypt crossed the frontiers of Palestine.

In a series of [campaigns](#) alternating with truces between May and December 1948, the Arab units were routed, and by the summer of 1949 Israel had concluded armistices with its neighbors. It had also been recognized by more than 50 governments throughout the world, joined the [United Nations](#), and established its sovereignty over about 8,000 square miles (21,000 square km) of formerly [mandated](#) Palestine west of the [Jordan River](#). The remaining 2,000 square miles (5,200 square km) were divided between Transjordan and Egypt. Transjordan retained the lands on the west bank of the Jordan River, including the eastern portion of **Jerusalem** (East Jerusalem), although its annexation of those lands in 1950 was not generally recognized as [legitimate](#). In 1949 the name of the expanded country was changed to the [Hashemite](#) Kingdom of [Jordan](#). [Egypt](#) retained control of, but did not annex, a small area on the Mediterranean coast that became known as the [Gaza Strip](#). The Palestinian Arab community ceased to exist as a [cohesive](#) social and political entity.



## UNRWA

### Has Changed the Definition of Refugee

[FP](#) [Jay Sekulow](#) August 17 2018

**Jay Sekulow** is chief counsel of the American Center for Law & Justice and serves as counsel to U.S. President Donald Trump.

Last week, Foreign Policy [published a story](#) about Palestinian refugees that claimed I am among the “activists trying to strip Palestinians of their status.” The article obscured basic facts about the matters at hand—both my own role as a policy advocate and the questions that lawmakers in Congress are presently considering that pertain to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). I feel compelled to correct the record on both points.

This requires first understanding the legal facts. UNRWA was founded in 1949 through U.N. General Assembly Resolution 302 at the conclusion of the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948, aiming for “the alleviation of the conditions of starvation and distress among the Palestine refugees” from that conflict. The agency [defines](#) Palestinian refugees as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.”

In 1965, UNRWA changed the eligibility requirements to be a Palestinian refugee to include third-generation descendants, and in 1982, it extended it again, to include all descendants of Palestine refugee males, including legally adopted children, regardless of whether they had been granted citizenship elsewhere. This classification process is inconsistent with how all other refugees in the world are classified, including the definition used by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the laws concerning refugees in the United States.

Under Article I(c)(3) of the 1951 U.N. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, a person is no longer a refugee if, for example, he or she has “acquired a new nationality, and enjoys the protection of the country of his new nationality.” UNRWA’s definition of a Palestinian refugee, which is not anchored in treaty, includes no such provision.

Last month, members of Congress introduced a [bill](#) asking that with respect to refugees under UNRWA the policy of the United States should be consistent with the definition of a refugee in the Immigration and Nationality Act, such that “derivative refugee status may only be extended to the spouse or minor child of such a refugee” and “an alien who was firmly resettled in any country is not eligible to retain refugee status.”

Foreign Policy’s article includes a claim that deserves closer scrutiny and reflects the sleight of hand often performed by [UNRWA](#). The author writes:

“Palestinians, [Sekulow and his organization] claim, are the only refugees in the world who pass on their refugee status through the generations. The view is not shared by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the State Department, which maintain that multiple generations of Afghan, Bhutanese, Burmese, Nepalese, Thai, Tibetan, and Somali people have been recognized as refugees.”

The clear implication of that paragraph, and the similar claims made by UNRWA, is that the laws I have cited above are wrong, that UNRWA's definition of a refugee is consistent with the standard definition, and that in all of these cases the descendants of refugees are considered to be refugees as well. In actuality, what the article has done is to conflate two different issues.

The 1951 refugee convention has a lengthy definition of refugee that is personal: A refugee is a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." In registering refugees on this basis, the UNHCR interprets the convention as requiring "family unity," and it implements the principle by extending benefits to a refugee's accompanying family, calling such people "derivative refugees." Derivative refugees do not have refugee status on their own; it depends on the principal refugee. UNRWA's definition is also personal: Palestinian refugees are "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict," but it also registers "descendants of Palestine refugee males, including adopted children." The status for descendants is *not* dependent upon accompanying the principal refugee.

Here is where the sleight of hand comes in: Of course it is possible for there to be multiple generations of refugees, *if* the multiple generations all fit the primary 1951 definition of a refugee. For example, if the granddaughter of a refugee is also outside the country of her nationality due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted, she too is a primary refugee. But she is not a refugee due to descent, because there is no provision for refugee status based on descent in the 1951 refugee convention or in internationally accepted practices for refugees who are not Palestinian refugees.

Those are the laws. Now, consider the broader political facts. Since the end of World War II, millions of refugees have left refugee camps and have been resettled elsewhere, including hundreds of thousands of Jewish people who were forced out of Arab countries. Many hardworking agencies have played a role in making sure that the descendants of these refugees were never refugees themselves. These agencies include the UNHCR, whose mandate is to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people, and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement to a third country.

The only refugees who do not fall under the UNHCR and instead have their own agency are the Palestinians. While the UNHCR has resettled millions of refugees, since the time it was created, UNRWA has not managed to solve or even diminish the problem at all. Instead, using its own metrics, the number of refugees has grown exponentially, while UNRWA has become one of the larger U.N. agencies, with 30,000 personnel and a \$1.2 billion budget. This is despite the fact that many of the UNRWA "refugees" are not actually refugees at all under the standard international definition of that term. For example, of the 2 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan, most have been granted Jordanian citizenship.

UNRWA, moreover, is the *only* refugee agency in the world whose purpose is not to resettle refugees and help them go on with their lives. UNRWA spends more to do less, while perpetuating a problem it was created to help solve. This situation, which does little to advance the interests of actual refugees and much to expand a bloated UNRWA bureaucracy, needs to be addressed.

The United States has been UNRWA's biggest donor since its inception and contributes a disproportionate amount toward Palestinian refugees in comparison to other refugees around the world. What I, and concerned citizens including members of Congress and members of the American Center for Law & Justice (ACLJ), are asking is that the United States support UNRWA solely to the extent necessary to accomplish its original and intended purpose to resettle refugees from the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948 under the internationally recognized definition of refugees that applies in every other instance.

In the words of Lt. Gen. Alexander Galloway, then the director of UNRWA in Jordan, in 1952:

It is perfectly clear that Arab nations do not want to solve the Arab refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront against the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don't give a damn whether the refugees live or die.

We at the ACLJ, on the other hand, do believe that U.N. agencies should exist to solve problems and help people. We are calling on the United States to do this for the sake of everyone involved, including the legitimate refugees who deserve better treatment than a failed agency like UNRWA can apparently provide.

**Jay Sekulow** is chief counsel of the American Center for Law & Justice and serves as counsel to U.S. President Donald Trump.

## **WORLD BANK ISSUES NEW UPDATE ON THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY**

The World Bank has issued its latest update on [\*The Impact of the Conflict in the Middle East on the Palestinian Economy\*](#).

The report draws on the latest available data and analysis to assess the ongoing impact of the conflict to the Palestinian economy.

[WORLD BANK GROUP](#) WASHINGTON, May 23, 2024

WASHINGTON, May 23, 2024 – The World Bank has issued its latest update on [\*The Impact of the Conflict in the Middle East on the Palestinian Economy\*](#). The report draws on the latest available data and analysis to assess the ongoing impact of the conflict to the Palestinian economy.

It finds that the fiscal situation of the Palestinian Authority has dramatically worsened in the last three months, significantly raising the risk of a fiscal collapse. Revenue streams have largely dried up due to the drastic reduction in clearance revenue transfers payable to the Palestinian Authority and a massive drop in economic activity. The rapidly widening gap between the amount of revenues coming in, and the amount needed to finance essential public expenditure, is driving a fiscal crisis.

As of the end of 2023, this financing gap reached US\$682 million. This gap is projected to double within the coming months, reaching up to US\$1.2 billion. Increased foreign assistance and the accumulation of further arrears to public employees and suppliers are the only available financing options for the Palestinian Authority.

**Close to half a million jobs have been lost in the Palestinian economy since October 2023. This includes an estimated loss of 200,000 jobs in the Gaza Strip, 144,000 jobs in the West Bank, and that of 148,000 cross-border commuters from the West Bank to the Israeli labor market.**

The report takes a close look at different dimensions of poverty of the Palestinian people. Drawing on new official 2023 data, the World Bank was able to assess poverty rates across all Palestinian households, broken down by geographic location. The findings focus on data available at the mid-point of 2023 and show that poverty was significantly increasing prior to October 2023.

The overall poverty rate of Palestinians stood at 32.8% in mid-2023. Wide differences are found between the West Bank and Gaza. In Gaza, the poverty rate stood at close to 64%. In the West Bank, it was around 12%. Compared to the last poverty analysis conducted in 2017, poverty in the Palestinian territories had increased by 3.7 percentage points. At present, nearly every Gazan lives in poverty.

The research also looked at GDP per capita. In 2023 it stood at \$3,360, a 12% drop from 2022. For Gaza alone, there was a 28% drop. The per capita income in Gaza was about a fifth of that in the West Bank. In 2023 Gaza's per capita real income was the lowest ever recorded.

The Palestinian economy continues to be under a massive shock in the first months of 2024. While the outlook for 2024 remains highly uncertain, a further economic contraction of anywhere between 6.5 and 9.6% is projected.

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## RELATED

- [Report: The Impact of the Conflict in the Middle East on the Palestinian Economy](#)
- [The World Bank in the West Bank & Gaza](#)
- [The World Bank in MENA](#)

## UNDERSTANDING THE PALESTINIAN PHRASE "FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA "

[AJC](#) American Jewish Committee

**"From the River to the Sea"**

*noun* \ 'fruhm 'thə 'RIVər 'too 'thə 'si \

: a phrase that can be used to call for the elimination of the State of Israel and/or ethnic cleansing of Jews living there, to be replaced with Palestinian control over the entire territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea

### WHEN IT'S ANTISEMITIC:



A poster from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine terrorist group.

A poster from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine terrorist group.

The phrase "From the River to the Sea," refers to the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. It includes the entirety of the territory of the State of Israel (in addition to the West Bank and Gaza, which are not a part of the State of Israel).

While its origins are unknown, in the 1960s and 70s it became the signature phrase of the Palestine Liberation Organization to indicate the replacement of the State of Israel with a State of Palestine extending "from the river to the sea," including the expulsion of Jews who entered the land after 1947. The phrase soon after became a rallying cry for terrorist groups including Hamas, the group responsible for the October 7, 2023 terror attack on Israeli civilians, murdering over 1,200 people and taking over 250 people hostage.



Go to YouTube and search for  
**'From the River to the Sea'**

The phrase "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free," has become prevalent in public discourse, including online and on social media, particularly since the Hamas-led attacks against Israel on October 7, 2023, and in the context of protests opposing Israel's responding military operation in Gaza.

When the phrase is used with the harmful intent of implying the erasure of the State of Israel, ethnic cleansing of Jews from the

land, or simply as harassment of Jews in any other part of the world, it is antisemitic. Indicators of antisemitic usage include when the phrase appears alongside (a) text, images, or symbols signaling violence, including references to organizations that advocate for Israel's violent destruction like Hamas and their leaders or other symbols associated with them, or (b) text, images, or symbols signaling a call for discrimination against Jews, including the exclusion of Jews (or "Zionists," as a proxy for Jews or Israelis), from social groups, political institutions, professional settings or the territory of the State of Israel itself. Another phrase – "Globalize the Intifada," which uses the Arabic word for "uprising" or "shaking off," feeds a discourse promoting widespread violence against both Israelis and Jews across the globe (see ["Globalize the Intifada"](#)).

The call for the establishment of a Palestinian State in addition to the State of Israel or advocacy for Palestinian rights is not antisemitic, and not all who use the phrase "From the River to the Sea" use it with harmful intent. Some assert that their call for Palestine to be free "from the river to the sea" does not require the eradication of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, but simply that all people of Palestinian heritage, wherever they reside, have their rights, culture and freedoms honored.



**Episode #7**  
**From the**  
**[River to the Sea](#)**  
**Deep Dive with Dr. Einat Wilf**  
**Israeli Citizen Spokespersons**  
**10 July 2024**

## **WHO GOVERNS THE PALESTINIANS?**

Power in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the so-called Palestinian territories, has been divided among three entities: a governing body called the Palestinian Authority, the militant group Hamas, and the state of Israel.

But as Israel now seeks to destroy Hamas, it is unclear who would administer Gaza instead.

[COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS](#)

**GO TO PART K West Bank (Part K)**



## **DO PALESTINIANS HAVE THE LOWEST STANDARD OF LIVING IN THE WORLD?**

**It is not fair that you enjoy a good life while our brothers in Gaza endure the worst standard of living. Therefore, God willing, our attacks against you will continue as long as you maintain your support to Israel.**

– Osama Bin Laden <sup>1</sup>

### [ISRAEL ADVOCACY \(NO DATE SHOWN\)](#)

#### **OVERVIEW OF THE TRUTH**

One of the most frequently heard claims about Palestine is that they suffer from a standard of living comparable to the poorest of African states. To validate whether this is true we will explore four key areas:

- Health of the Palestinians
- Quality of life
- Average income
- Aid to Palestine

#### **HEALTH OF THE PALESTINIANS**

One way to measure the standard of living is by seeing how long people live on average – healthy people tend to live longer. When we explore life expectancy it would seem that Palestinians live to a ripe old age – Palestinian born today are expected reach 75 years of age. In terms of life expectancy Palestine ranks tenth out of twenty two Arab states. In contrast the average Somali Arab is unlikely to see their 52<sup>nd</sup> birthday. There are 132 countries in the world with lower life expectancies – so life expectancy is not a problem for the Palestinians.

Another indicator of standard of living is infant mortality rates (IMR) as this is a strong measure of the healthcare provided. Thankfully the overwhelming majority of Palestinian babies live beyond the age of one, as only 15 out of 1,000 die before the age of one. This gives Palestine the ninth lowest infant mortality rate in the Arab world. Tragically 100 out of 1,000 Somali babies are lost in their first year of life.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Life expectancy</b>	<b>Infant mortality rate</b>
Bahrain	78.6	9.7
Qatar	78.4	6.4
Kuwait	77.6	7.5

Lebanon	77.2	8
UAE	77.1	10.9
Morocco	76.5	24.5
Algeria	76.4	21.8
Libya	76	11.9
Tunisia	75.7	23.2
Palestine	75	15
Oman	75	14
Saudi Arabia	74.8	14.6
Jordan	74.1	15.7
Egypt	73.4	22.4
Iraq	71.4	37.5
Syria	68.4	15.8
Yemen	64.8	50.4
Comoros	63.6	65.3
Sudan	63.3	52.9
Djibouti	62.4	50.2
Mauritania	62.3	50.1
Somalia	51.6	100.1

Now it is no secret that there are some incredibly wealthy Arab states, so we'd expect long lives and low infant mortality rates. But what happens when we compare Palestine to some of the world's most impoverished states?

Country	Life expectancy	Infant mortality rate
Palestine	75	14.9
Yemen	64.8	50.4
Comoros	63.6	65.3
Eritrea	63.5	38.4
Mauritania	62.3	56.1
Guinea	59.6	55.2
Burundi	59.5	63.4
Liberia	58.2	69.2
Sierra Leone	57.4	73.3
Somalia	51.6	100.1
Chad	49.4	90.3

There are 116 out of 224 countries in the world with a worse IMR, so it seems pretty conclusive that in terms of health the Palestinians are not even close to having lowest living standards.<sup>2, 3</sup>

### QUALITY OF LIFE

Perhaps you might argue that they may have their health, but the Palestinians live a miserable existence. Again the facts don't agree, according to the 2012 Happy Planet Index, which is a survey conducted by the New Economics Forum to measure happiness around the world – Palestine was the third happiest Arab country and the 30<sup>th</sup> happiest in the world. Making Palestine happier than many developed countries like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia and Canada.<sup>4</sup>

1. Algeria – 52.2
2. Jordan – 51.7
3. **Palestine – 51.2**
4. Iraq – 49.2
5. Tunisia – 48.3
6. Morocco – 47.9
7. Syria – 47.1

8. Saudi Arabia – 46.0
9. Yemen – 43.0
10. Lebanon – 42.9
11. Libya – 40.8
12. Egypt – 39.6
13. Sudan – 37.6
14. Djibouti – 37.2
15. Comoros – 36.5
16. Mauritania – 32.3
17. UAE – 31.8
18. Kuwait – 27.1
19. Qatar – 25.2
20. Bahrain – 26.6

Another measure could be the Human Development Index (HDI), which is the United Nations comparative measure of life expectancy, literacy, education, standards of living, and quality of its member states. In this study 36% of the states perform worse than Palestine – including Egypt, South Africa, Indonesia and Pakistan.<sup>5</sup>

### **AVERAGE INCOME**

An obvious measure of the standard of living is the economy (GDP) of a country, particularly when divided by how many people live in that country. If two people generate £100, they are richer than 10 people people that generate £100. In economics this calculation at a national level is called the GDP per-capita. When we compare the GDP per-capita of impoverished nations with Palestine, it is clear that at an individual level Palestine is far more affluent than many states.<sup>6</sup>

1. Palestine – \$4,422
2. Yemen – \$2,518
3. Mauritania – \$2,061
4. Chad – \$1,687
5. Sierra Leone – \$1,407
6. Comoros – \$1,237
7. Guinea – \$1,080
8. Eritrea – \$729
9. Liberia – \$649
10. Somalia – \$578
11. Burundi – \$566

In fact when we look at the Palestinian economy it dwarves many nations. 40% of countries around the world have a lower GDP than Palestine (such as Kosovo, Iceland, Haiti, Moldova, Monaco, etc.). Some people mistakenly have a mental image of Palestine as an impoverished nation, which simply isn't true. It is

not rich, but it is disingenuous to compare it to the poverty of nations like Ethiopia and Eritrea – as the images below demonstrate. (No dates given)



Al-Mashtal Luxury Hotel in Gaza



Bank of Palestine in Ramallah



Intercontinental Hotel in Bethlehem



Grand Palace Hotel in Gaza



A Palestinian village in the West Bank



Movenpick Luxury Hotel in Ramallah



Former Headquarters of the PLO in East Jerusalem



Construction of the billion dollar Palestinian city of Rawabi

### **AID TO THE PALESTINIANS**

Incredibly despite the relatively high Palestinian living standards, they are one of the largest recipients of international aid. Each year over a billion dollars flows across its borders, while nations living in abject poverty are all but ignored by the international community. Tragically nations like Eritrea which has a GDP PPP Per-Capita of a meager \$729 receives a measly \$134 million in aid – despite suffering from decades of war, mass poverty and a dictatorship accused of extrajudicial executions, torture, forced labour, rape and sexual servitude.<sup>7</sup>



Country	Aid	Aid per person
Palestine	\$1.8 billion	\$396
Liberia	\$571 million	\$136
Mauritania	\$408 million	\$107
Comoros	\$69 million	\$96
Somalia	\$905 million	\$89
Sierra Leone	\$440 million	\$74
Burundi	\$522 million	\$53
Chad	\$477 million	\$38
Yemen	\$660 million	\$28
Guinea	\$296 million	\$26
Eritrea	\$134 million	\$22

### SUMMARY

The purpose of this article is not to suggest the Palestinians have the highest standard of living in the world, such a claim would be a absurd. However, it is important to note that relative to the rest of the world the Palestinians benefit from a good standard of living. Unfortunately a disproportionate amount of international aid flows into Palestine, taking it away from far needier countries that are largely ignored by the international community.

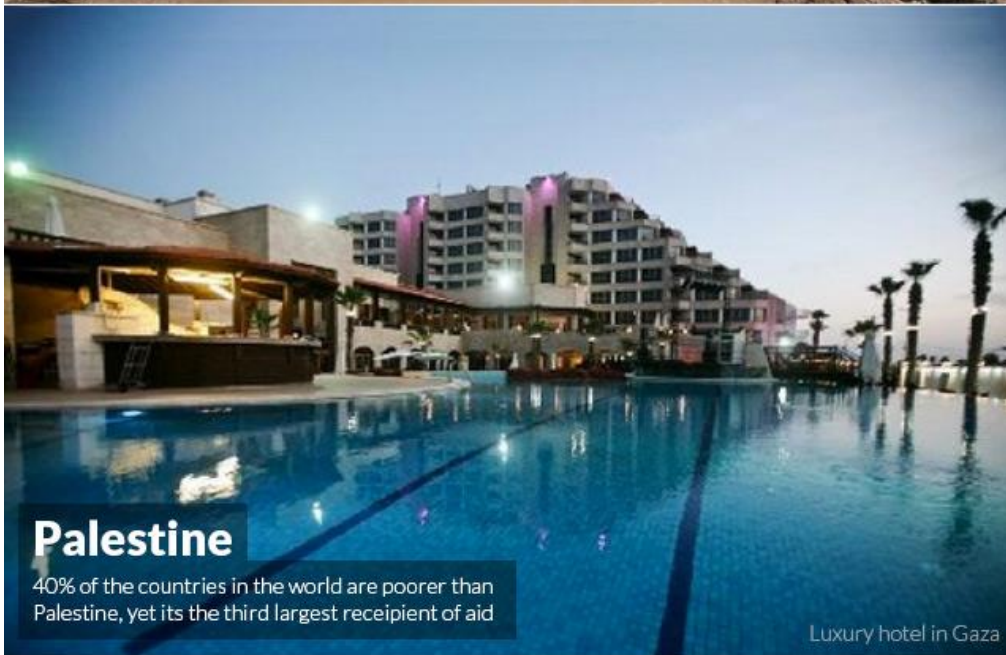
- Palestinians live very long lives and have access to great healthcare
- Palestinians are happier than citizens of superpowers like the UK and USA
- Palestine is one of the world's largest recipients of aid – receiving approximately \$2 billion each year
- 40% of the world's countries are poorer than Palestine
- According the UN 36% of their member states have a worse development index



## Eritrea

Palestine is 4 times richer than Eritrea, yet Eritrea receives 13 times less aid than Palestine

Water hole in Eritrea

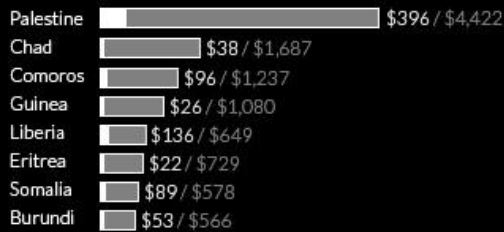


## Palestine

40% of the countries in the world are poorer than Palestine, yet it's the third largest recipient of aid

Luxury hotel in Gaza

### Aid and GDP per person



■ Aid per person    ■ GDP per person

### Aid and GDP per country



■ Aid    ■ GDP

The economy of Comoros is 23 times poorer than Palestine, yet Palestine receives 26 times more aid.

The average income in Liberia is 7 times smaller than in Palestine, yet Palestine receives 15 times as much aid per person.



**EXPOSE MORE LIES OF ISRAELI DISCRIMINATION:**

- [Do Palestinians have the lowest standard of living in the world?](#)
- [Is Israel a racist or apartheid state?](#)
- [Is the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions movement just?](#)

## Sources

1. Osama Bin Lade, Reported in the Al Arabiya News, 24/1/10
2. [CIA World Factbook, 2014, Life expectancy at birth](#)
3. [CIA World Factbook, 2014, Infant mortality rate](#)
4. [2012 Happy Planet Index, New Economics Forum](#)
5. [UN 2014 development report](#)
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7. [Global Humanitarian Assistance 2012](#)

## PALESTINE REFUGEE CAMPS

### WIKIPEDIA



Clickable map of the Palestinian refugee camps

Camps were set up by the [United Nations Relief and Works Agency](#) (UNRWA) in [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#), [Syria](#), the [West Bank](#) and the [Gaza Strip](#) to accommodate [Palestinian refugees](#) registered with UNRWA, who fled or were expelled during the [1948 Palestinian expulsion and flight](#) after the [1948 Arab–Israeli War](#) or in the aftermath of the [Six-Day War](#) in 1967, and their patrilineal descendants.<sup>[1]</sup> There are 68 Palestinian refugee camps, 58 official and 10 unofficial,<sup>[2]</sup> ten of which were established after the Six-Day War while the others were established in 1948 to 1950s.

Only a third of registered Palestinian refugees live within the boundaries of the refugee camps.<sup>[3]</sup> Most have integrated socially and economically outside the camps.<sup>[4]</sup> Many live in adjacent geographic areas. <sup>[5]</sup>

The number of registered Palestine refugees grew from 750,000 in 1950 to around 5 million in 2013.<sup>[6]</sup>

UNRWA's mandate is to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees, including access to its refugee camps. For this purpose, it defines Palestinian refugees as "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict."<sup>[6]</sup>

UNRWA also extends assistance to the patrilineal descendants of such refugees, as well as their legally adopted children.<sup>[6]</sup>

For a camp to be recognized by UNRWA, there must be an agreement between the host government and UNRWA governing use of the camp. UNRWA does not itself run any camps, has no police powers or administrative role, but simply provides services to the camp. UNRWA recognizes facilities in 58 designated [refugee camps](#) in [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#), [Syria](#), the [West Bank](#) and the [Gaza Strip](#), and it also provides facilities in other areas where large numbers of registered Palestine refugees live outside of recognized camps. UNRWA also provided relief to Jewish [displaced persons](#) inside [Israel](#) following the 1948 conflict until the Israeli government took over responsibility for them in 1952. Refugee camps developed from tented cities to rows of concrete blockhouses to urban ghettos indistinguishable from their

surroundings (effectively becoming urban developments within existing cities or by themselves), that house around one third of all registered Palestine refugees.



**Shu'fat Camp** in the city of **Jerusalem**. The official area of the camp is in the center of the image and is characterized by low-rise buildings; on either side of the camp are additional Palestinian neighborhoods located beyond the **Israeli West Bank barrier** (visible at the bottom of the image), where the buildings are taller.

The [Funding for UNRWA](#) activities comes almost entirely from voluntary contributions from UN member states. UNRWA also receives some funding from the Regular Budget of the United Nations, which is used mostly for international staffing costs.<sup>[6]</sup>

List of camps

The camps are divided between five regions:

- **Gaza Strip:** The [Gaza Strip](#) has eight official and no unofficial refugee camps,<sup>[2]</sup> and 1,221,110 registered refugees.
- **West Bank:** The [West Bank](#) has 19 official and four unofficial refugee camps,<sup>[2]</sup> and 741,409 registered refugees.
- **Syria:** [Syria](#) has nine official refugee camps and three unofficial refugee camps,<sup>[2]</sup> and 499,189 registered refugees.
- **Lebanon:** There are 12 official refugee and no unofficial camps in [Lebanon](#),<sup>[2]</sup> and 448,599 registered refugees.
- **Jordan:** There are 10 official and three unofficial refugee camps in [Jordan](#),<sup>[2]</sup> and 2,034,641 registered refugees.

## POPULATION STATISTICS

	1950	2018
<b>Jordan</b>	506,200	2,242,579
<b>Lebanon</b>	127,600	475,075
<b>Syria</b>	82,194	560,139
<b>West Bank</b>	–	846,465
<b>Gaza Strip</b>	198,227	1,421,282
<b>Total registered refugees</b>	914,221	5,545,540

**The evolution of Palestinian  
refugee population**

	Registered persons (refugees and other)	Registered refugees in camps	% registered refugees in camps
2018	6,171,793	1,728,409	28.0

The table below shows the population of registered refugees, other registered people, and refugees residing in camps, in 2018.<sup>[79]</sup> UNRWA's definition of Other Registered Persons refer to "those who, at the time of original registration did not satisfy all of UNRWA's Palestine refugee criteria, but who were determined to have suffered significant loss and/or hardship for reasons related to the 1948 conflict in Palestine; they also include persons who belong to the families of other registered persons."<sup>[80]</sup>

	Jordan	Lebanon	Syria	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Total
Registered refugees	2,242,579	475,075	560,139	846,465	1,421,282	5,545,540
Other registered people	133,902	58,810	83,003	201,525	149,013	626,253
Total registered people	2,376,481	533,885	643,142	1,047,990	1,570,295	6,171,793
Refugees living within official camp borders	412,054	270,614	194,993	256,758	593,990	1,728,409
% living within camp borders	18.4%	57.0%	34.8%	30.3%	41.8%	31.2%

**PART H3**

**WEST BANK – JEWISH SETTLEMENTS**

## WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS

Settlements are Israeli civilian communities, overwhelmingly inhabited by Jews, in territories acquired by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War that are not under Israeli sovereignty.

### ISRAEL POLICY FORUM

#### WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS

Settlements are Israeli civilian communities, overwhelmingly inhabited by Jews<sup>1</sup>, in territories acquired by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War that are not under Israeli sovereignty.

While Israeli settlements previously existed in Sinai and the Gaza Strip prior to Israel's withdrawal from those territories (in 1982 and 2005, respectively), today the term is largely used to refer to Israeli communities in the West Bank (also known as Judea and Samaria).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There are 33 settlements with registered Arab residents. Ariel has the largest Arab population out of the settlements, with 573 Arab residents (mostly Ariel University students.) Several others, including Maale Adumim, Kfar Etzion, and Giv'at Ze'ev, have a few dozen ([Shaul Arieli, Deceptive Appearances, 99](#)).

<sup>2</sup> Some also refer to Israeli communities in the Golan and neighborhoods in East Jerusalem as settlements, but given that Israel has annexed these areas, such communities do not function as settlements under Israeli law.

**132**

West Bank Settlements (Legal Under Israeli Law)

**465,400**

Jews Living in West Bank Settlements

**20,000+**

Jews Living in Illegal West Bank Outposts

Source: Peace Now

#### THERE ARE 127 SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK THAT HAVE LEGAL STATUS UNDER ISRAELI LAW.

Legal settlements must be built on state land, have building permits from the government, and be established by a government resolution. Settlements that do not meet those criteria are [West Bank outposts](#), which are illegal under Israeli law. Most of the world also considers settlements to be illegal under international law.

According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, there are 451,700 Jews living in West Bank settlements as of the year 2020. Between 20,000 and 30,000 more live in illegal West Bank outposts. All settlements



are located in Area C, the 60% of the West Bank controlled by Israel. Given that Israel has not annexed the West Bank, Jewish settlements in the territory are not considered by Israel to be under its sovereignty. Emergency regulations renewed every five years extend Israeli criminal and some civil law to Israeli citizens in the West Bank.

Today, one-third of settlers are Haredim, one-third are secular, and the remaining third are religious Zionists.

### **GOALS OF THE SETTLEMENT ENTERPRISE**

In allowing and encouraging the establishment of Jewish communities in the West Bank, a disputed territory over which Israel does not exercise sovereignty, the Israeli government's initial priority was security. By placing Israeli civilians in certain areas to solidify Israel's control, Israel sought to ensure that the territory's political future would be consistent with the country's perceived security needs. A civilian settler population could also act as the first line of defense against an invasion. Under this approach, Israel designated certain strategic regions of the West Bank for Jewish settlement while initially forbidding the establishment of civilian communities in more heavily populated areas.

Over time, messianic Religious Zionist ideology developed as a significant driver of the settlement movement, based on the notion of a religious imperative for Jews to settle the entire Land of Israel. Settlements established as part of this religious movement were often placed in regions with a large Palestinian population in order to secure Jewish dominance over the territory, prevent a Palestinian state, and secure the entire West Bank for Israel.

**Driven by these two distinct rationales, the settlement movement and the Israeli government sought to achieve the following political goals since post-1967 Jewish settlement in the West Bank began:**

To delineate a future border between Israel and a Palestinian entity that reflects Israel's priorities

To disrupt the contiguity of Palestinian communities in the West Bank, especially along the central mountain range running north-south

To establish a significant Jewish population in parts of the West Bank so that if annexed, it would not impact the demographic character of the State of Israel

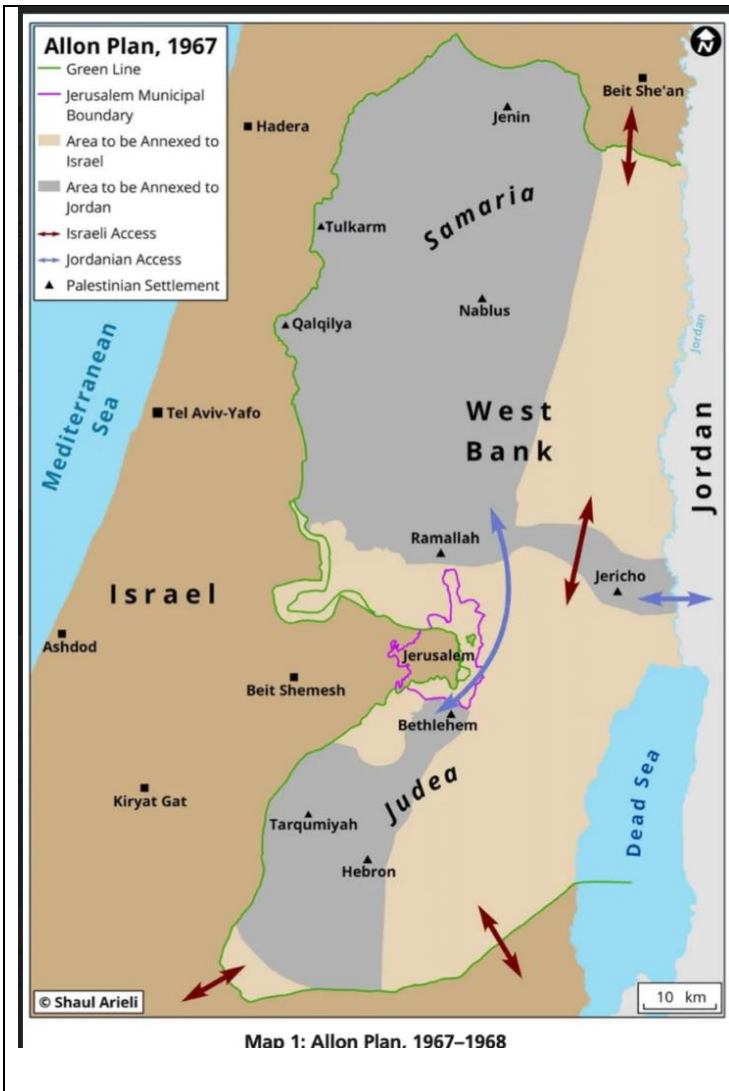
**1/3 of Jews in the West Bank are motivated by religious ideology.**

In terms of settlers' personal reasons for living in the West Bank, one-third of Jews in the West Bank are motivated by religious ideology, while the rest were drawn to the region by the potential to improve their quality of life. Of the 127 recognized settlements, 64 were established for religious reasons, while 63 (home to 67% of Jews in the West Bank) were built with the motivation to provide a high quality of life.

## HISTORY OF WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS

Prior to Israel's founding and the Jordanian occupation of the West Bank, the territory contained several Jewish communities, as well as millennia of Jewish history and many of Judaism's holiest sites, such as the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. Jordan expelled 17,000 Jews from the West Bank during the 1948 war, and when Israel conquered the territory in 1967, it had no Jewish population. The first West Bank settlement was Kfar Etzion, a Jewish community that existed prior to 1948 that Israel reestablished in 1967.

The first decade of Israel's occupation of the West Bank saw the establishment of 32 settlements, primarily in the Jordan Valley and around Jerusalem. Under this era's Labor-led governments, security was the primary rationale for encouraging the establishment of civilian Jewish communities in these areas. The aim was to establish the Jordan River as Israel's eastern security border, encircle the large Palestinian population in the mountain range running north-south through the West Bank's center, and widen the narrow approach to Jerusalem. This strategy was in line with the Allon Plan, a proposal developed in the wake of the Six-Day War by then-Labor Minister Yigal Allon to divide the West Bank. The Allon plan imagined Israeli annexation of the eastern flank of the territory and the area surrounding Jerusalem, while the rest of the West Bank, which contained most of the Palestinian population, would be returned to Jordan. Although the Israeli government never formally adopted the plan, it served as an influential vision while Labor was in power, with most settlements during this period established in areas designated for Israeli annexation by the plan.





During the Likud governments of 1977-1984, Israel charted a different course regarding West Bank settlement. Under the Sharon plan, imagined by influential Likud minister Ariel Sharon and adopted by the government in 1977, Israel expanded the areas open for Jewish settlement to include a strip adjacent to the Green Line (western Samaria and Judea) in order to encircle the West Bank's Palestinian population, separate it from Israeli Arab communities in the Triangle region, and secure the mountain range overlooking Israel's populous coastal plane. Building on the Allon Plan, the Sharon Plan continued to emphasize a security rationale for West Bank settlement and called for avoiding settling Jews in the more densely populated mountain ridge in the West Bank's center (labeled "Eastern Judea and Samaria" on Map 2).

Shortly after, Matityahu Drobles, the World Zionist Organization's Settlement Division head, presented the government with an initiative known as the Drobles Plan. This plan took West Bank settlement a step further by imagining blocs of settlements throughout the West Bank, with the explicit goal of disrupting the Palestinians' demographic contiguity and entrenching Israel's presence throughout the territory. The WZO's Settlement Division was one of the leading drivers of settlement construction during this era.

To that end, this period under the Likud governments of 1977-1984 saw a significant increase in West Bank settlement, the largest share of which were built along the West Bank's central ridge and its slopes, rather than the Jordan Valley. The goal of creating these Jewish communities in heavily populated Palestinian areas was to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. Whereas the Labor-era Jordan Valley settlements were largely agricultural communities inhabited by secular Labor Zionists, most residents of settlements built in the late '70s and early '80s were adherents of Religious Zionism, driven by a messianic ideology to settle the Land of Israel. Representing this ideological movement, Gush Emunim ("the bloc of the faithful") rose to prominence as the umbrella organization for West Bank settlers.

Israel's Labor-Likud national unity governments from 1984 to 1990 struck a balance between the two sides with regard to West Bank settlement. While the pace of establishing new settlements slowed, new settlements appeared in all four of the Sharon plan's zones. Following the Likud government of 1990-1992, which oversaw the creation of just two settlements (both in Samaria), Labor Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government issued a decision to halt the establishment of new settlements. Soon after, Israel entered into the Oslo peace process with the Palestinians, which created the Palestinian Authority as an autonomous governing body in the West Bank and Gaza and divided the territories into Areas A (full Palestinian control), B (Palestinian administration with Israeli responsible for security), and C (full Israeli control). From 1992 through 2020, Israel established a mere seven settlements. However, this period also saw the emergence of over 100 illegal West Bank outposts, constructed without the approval of the Israeli government and illegal under Israeli law. Several have undergone retroactive legalization by the government, often by being recognized as a neighborhood of an existing settlement.

## WHY ARE WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS A PROBLEM?

### Settlements negatively impact prospects for securing a two-state outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

**Broadening Israel's footprint.** Settlements seek to secure Israel's control over the West Bank by establishing spatial dominance over the territory.

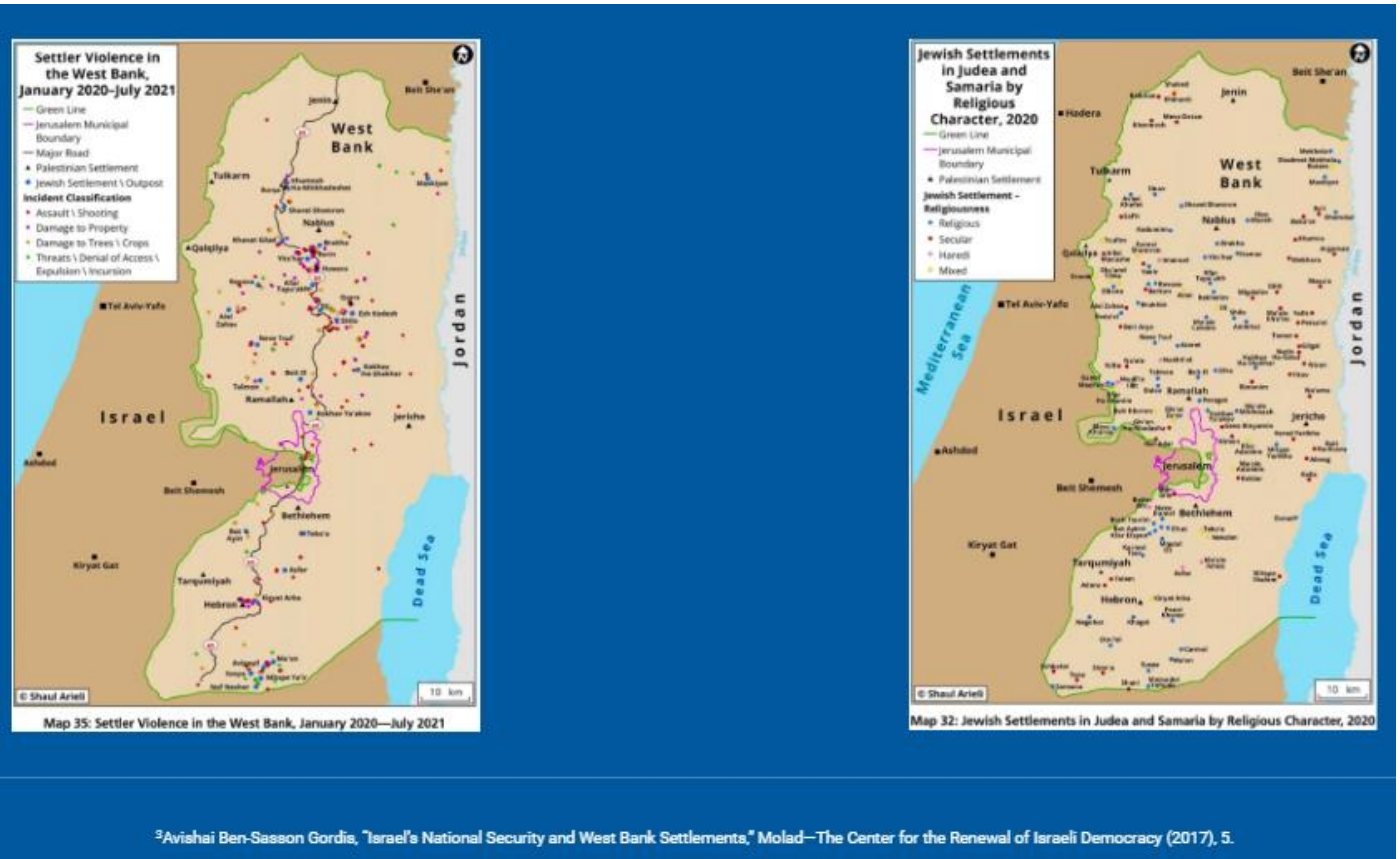
**Disrupting Palestinian contiguity.** The settlement enterprise aims to break the contiguity of Palestinian population centers in the West Bank, making it harder to create a viable Palestinian state.

**Undermining Palestinian trust.** When the peace process was active, Israeli government approval of settlement construction (as well as the establishment of illegal outposts in violation of Israeli law) in disputed territories whose status was set to be determined through negotiations eroded Palestinians' trust in Israel as an honest negotiating partner and cast doubt on Israel's willingness to withdraw.

**Shaping public perception.** Signifying an entrenchment of Israel's presence in the West Bank, the continued growth of West Bank settlements and their normalization in Israeli society stoke doubt among Israelis and Palestinians that a two-state outcome is possible.

**Burdening Israel's security.** Settlements in the West Bank require protection from the IDF, as do the roads connecting them and linking them to Israel. This requires a massive deployment of troops to protect civilians in a territory whose majority population is hostile to them. Over one-half of active IDF troops are stationed in the West Bank, 80% of whom are defending settlements and ensuring their security—not fighting terrorism and helping to keep Israel itself secure.<sup>3</sup>

**Exacerbating violence.** Settlers are too often the targets of and perpetrators of violence against Palestinians, particularly those living in ideological settlements deep in the West Bank.



However, the existence of settlements does not negate the possibility of two states.

**WE HAVEN'T YET PASSED THE POINT OF NO RETURN.**

The size of the settler population does not come close to threatening the West Bank's solid Palestinian majority.

- **85.2%** of West Bank residents are Palestinians.
- Jews are the majority population (51.9%) within the environs of Jerusalem. In all other parts of the West Bank, Palestinians are the overwhelming majority. **96.7% of the population along the West Bank's central mountain range that connects the major Palestinian cities is Palestinian.**
- The growth rate of the settler population has fallen to **2.24%** from a high of 16% in 1991. Most of this growth is the result of natural growth, rather than migration, and almost half of it is from the Haredi cities of Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit—both of which are consensus settlements that would be annexed to Israel under any two-state formulation. **Settlements deep in the West Bank in areas slated for evacuation do not pose a demographic threat.** Moreover, the West Bank Jewish population's growth is expected to fall given current trends.

**THE SETTLER POPULATION IS NOT DISTRIBUTED EFFECTIVELY  
TO SECURE ISRAELI DOMINANCE OVER THE TERRITORY,  
ESPECIALLY COMPARED TO THE PALESTINIAN POPULATION.**

- The Palestinian population density in the West Bank is six times higher than that of the Jewish population—472 people per square kilometer, compared to 78. The Jewish population density in the West Bank is lower than the overall population density of the Negev Desert.
- The layout of the West Bank’s Jewish population is also ineffective for the purposes of controlling the territory. Settlements are largely concentrated linearly, such as along the Green Line, along Route 60 through the central mountain ridge, and along Route 90 in the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea region.
- The Palestinian population, by contrast, is more evenly distributed throughout the entire territory, with the exception of the sparsely populated Jordan Valley (where Palestinians, nevertheless, still outnumber Jews).

**Contrary to the widespread perception that the settlement movement succeeded in establishing facts on the ground that ensure Israel’s dominance over the territory, in fact, the opposite is true.**



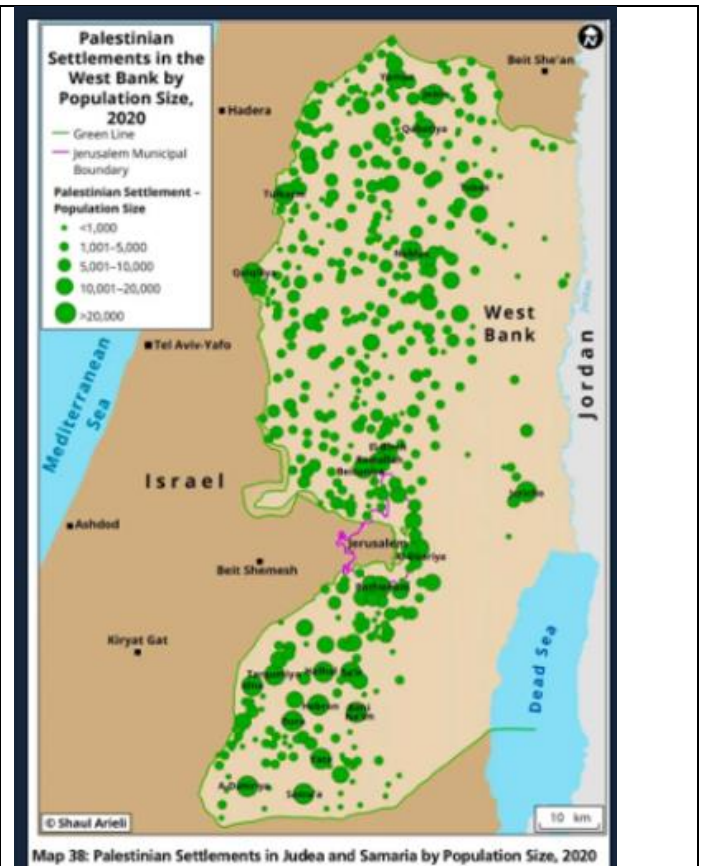
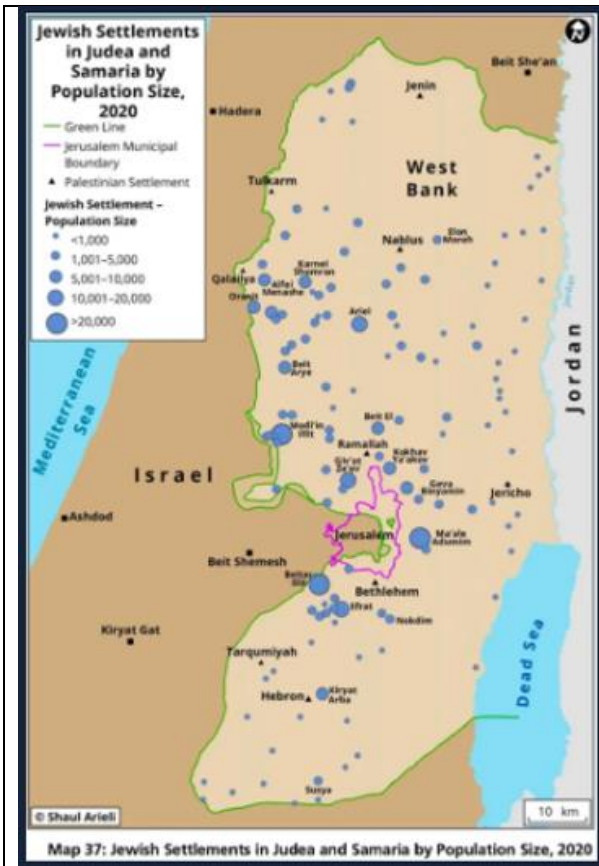
**Settlements are incredibly dependent on Israel-proper. They are not self-sufficient and their residents are reliant on aid and services from within the Green Line.**

- Settlements are not a cohesive community, even within each of the six regional councils in the West Bank.
- ▶ Long distances between settlements and their respective regional council

administrative centers, as well as between the settlements themselves, limit interaction and hinder the establishment of Jewish cultural and economic centers within the West Bank.

- The need to circumvent Palestinian areas when traveling exacerbates this challenge.
- The West Bank settlement system lacks a normal urban hierarchy, i.e. large urban centers surrounded by medium-sized and small communities.
- ▶ The two largest settlements, Beitar Illit and Modi'in Illit, are Haredi communities that are largely irrelevant to the lives of non-Haredi settlers.
- ▶ The settlement system largely consists of small settlements that function as disconnected islands reliant on cities in Israel.





- Israeli West Bank residents frequently need to travel to major cities within Israel for services that aren't available in the settlements.
  - Employment opportunities within the settlements are incredibly limited. On average, 60% of the employed population in a settlement is employed in Israel.<sup>4</sup>
  - The Israeli government provides significant financial aid to the local authorities and residents of the settlements.
- In 2014, the average per capita aid from the Israeli government to local authorities in the Judea and Samaria region was NIS 3,762, compared to NIS 2,282 within Israel. Local authorities east of the security barrier received NIS 5,950 per capita on average.
- In 2017, settlers received on average NIS 1,922 in grants and tax benefits, NIS 1,416 more than the national average.<sup>5</sup>
- The number of settlers employed in local agriculture and industry in the West Bank is very low.
  - **The precarity of the settlement enterprise is obscured by the government largesse that keeps it afloat. Should Jerusalem choose to end this support, local governments and residents would find themselves in a dire financial position.**

Over 500,000 Israelis living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem can expect to remain in their homes, which will be within Israeli's de jure borders, under a two-state outcome.

- 77% of settlers reside west of the security barrier, as opposed to deep in the West Bank.
- Various two-state proposals include land swaps that would result in the majority of settlers being annexed to Israel without impeding Palestinian contiguity. Dr. Shaul Arieli's proposal for a stable border is based on a **3.9% land swap that would leave 77.7% of Israelis east of the Green Line (including in East Jerusalem)—521,000 people—under Israeli sovereignty.**



- This leaves approximately 150,000 settlers who live outside of the zone of probable agreement and therefore would need to be evacuated and resettled within Israel's borders.
  - Opinion surveys focused on this group (which, far from being monolithic, includes settlers motivated by ideology as well as those focused on quality-of-life concerns) show that a large majority would respect a government decision resulting in their evacuation, even if it is not their preferred outcome.
  - A majority of those who would work to thwart such an evacuation would do so non-violently and legally.
- While absorbing this population within Israel's sovereign borders would not come without challenges, it does not come close to posing an insurmountable barrier to a two-state outcome.** As a point of comparison, Israel absorbed nearly one million immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s.

<sup>6</sup> Shaul Arieli, *Deceptive Appearances: Do the Jewish Settlements in the West Bank Negate the Feasibility of the Two-State Solution?*, Dfus SefiDagan Ltd. (2020), 203.

<sup>7</sup> Gilad Hirschberger and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, "Profile of the Needs and Desires of Settlers in Judea and Samaria" in *Deceptive Appearances: Do the Jewish Settlements in the West Bank Negate the Feasibility of the Two-State Solution?*, Shaul Arieli (Dfus SefiDagan Ltd., 2020), 244.

## **WEST BANK SETTLER POPULATION GREW BY NEARLY 3% IN 2023 — REPORT**

**Citing government numbers, pro-settler group says population has passed 517,000,  
not including East Jerusalem; predicts ‘accelerated growth’**

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) AP 12 February 2024

This year’s report predicted “accelerated growth” in the coming years, claiming the October 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel, which triggered the current war in Gaza, persuaded many Israelis who were formerly opposed to settlement-building to change positions.

“Serious cracks have indeed developed in the wall of opposition to Jewish settlement of the West Bank,” it said.

Israel captured the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip in the 1967 Six Day War. The Palestinians seek all three areas for an independent state.

The international community largely considers Israel’s settlements to be illegal and an obstacle to peace by occupying land the Palestinians seek for their state. Israel considers the West Bank to be disputed and says the territory’s fate should be decided in negotiations. The Biden administration recently sanctioned four settlers for violence against Palestinians and activists in the West Bank.

The report projected that if the growth rate over the past five years continues, the settler population in the West Bank will exceed 600,000 before 2030.

The report did not include population figures for East Jerusalem, where more than 200,000 Israelis live in neighborhoods that Israel considers to be part of its capital, but which the international community views as settlements.

The Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

Israel’s government is dominated by settler leaders and supporters. The Israeli watchdog group Terrestrial Jerusalem says that since the start of the Israel-Gaza war on October 7, three plans were either approved or are about to be approved for Jewish housing in East Jerusalem.

Terrestrial Jerusalem called the speed of approval processes over the last few months “frenetic.”

The report came as a spasm of violence grips the West Bank.

Since the Hamas attack on October 7, Israel has held the West Bank under a tight grip — limiting movement and conducting frequent raids to arrest terror suspects.

Palestinian health officials say 391 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank during that period. Most have been killed in clashes with Israeli forces. But the Israeli rights group Yesh Din says settlers shot and killed nine Palestinians in the first month and a half of the war, among 225 incidents of Israeli civilian violence the group documented during that time.

## EYEING TRUMP SUPPORT, ISRAELI MINISTER PUSHES FOR WEST BANK SETTLEMENT ANNEXATION

**CNN** By Dana Karni, [Mick Krever](#), Abeer Salman and Kareem Khadder Nov 12 2024

### Who controls the West Bank

- **Area A**  
 Fully controlled by the Palestinian Authority, makes up approximately 18% of the land area of the West Bank.

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- **Area B**  
 Under joint control between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, makes up approximately 22% of the West Bank.

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- **Area C**  
 Entirely under Israeli control, most settlements are located here. Area C makes up approximately 60% of the West Bank.

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- **East Jerusalem**  
 Annexed by Israel in 1980, most of the world considers it occupied territory. Palestinians claim it for a future state.

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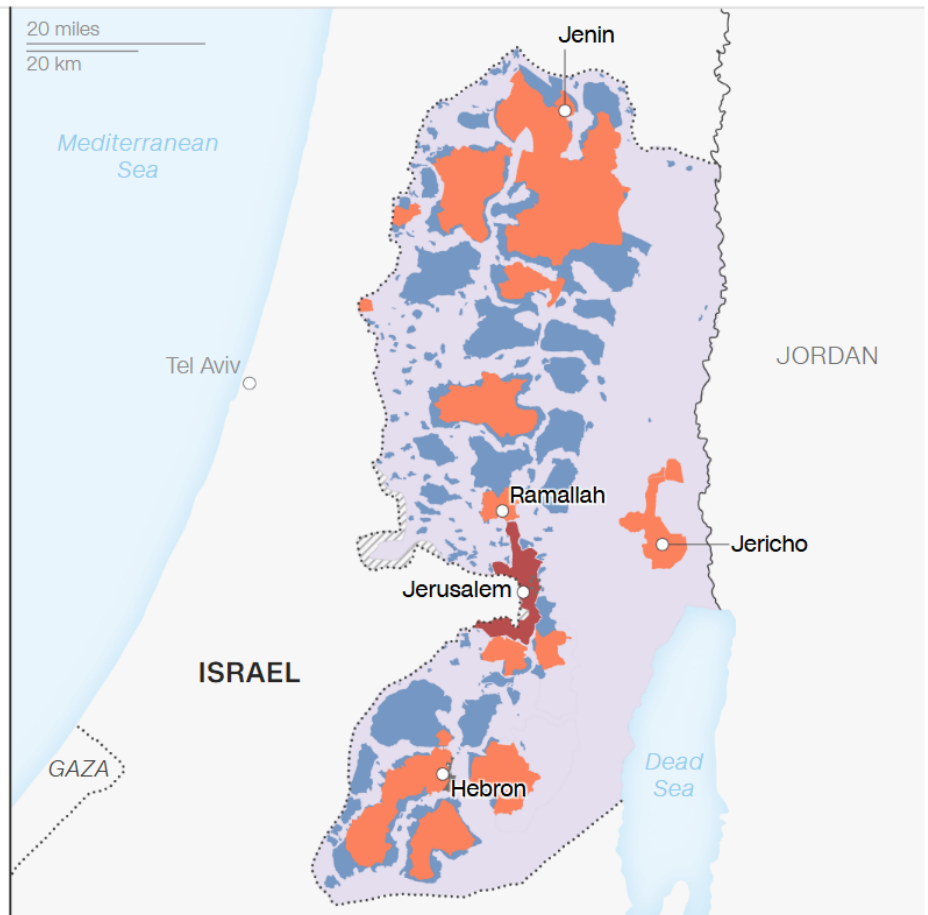
- Special case

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- ▨ No Man's Land

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- ⋯ The 1949 Armistice Line



Israeli forces raid El Far'a camp, for Palestinian refugees, in the occupied West Bank, in April. The Israeli military has intensified incursions in the West Bank, following the Hamas-led October 7 attacks.

Israel's far-right finance minister, [Bezalel Smotrich](#), has ordered preparations for the annexation of settlements in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Smotrich, who is in charge of the settlements, said on Monday that he had instructed his department to "prepare the necessary infrastructure for applying sovereignty."

It is unclear whether his long-standing desire to apply full Israeli law in West Bank settlements has any chance of being implemented soon.

The Prime Minister's Office is yet to comment on Smotrich's order. However, earlier Monday, Gideon Sa'ar, Israel's new foreign minister, told a press briefing that the government had made no decision on the issue

of annexation as yet, but noted it had been discussed during Donald Trump's first term as US president and added that "if it will be relevant it will be discussed again with our friends in Washington."

Observers said Smotrich's announcement was likely motivated in large part by staking out political ground in Israel's fractious domestic politics.

Still, it drew swift condemnation from the Palestinian Authority, whose foreign affairs ministry characterized such comments as "a blatantly colonial and racist extension of the ongoing campaign of extermination and forced displacement against the Palestinian people."

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, the spokesperson for the Palestinian Authority's presidency, said Smotrich's comments confirmed "the Israeli government's intention to finalize its plans for taking control of the West Bank by 2025" and said he held both the "Israeli occupation authorities" and the US administration responsible for allowing Israel to "persist in its crimes, aggression and defiance of international legitimacy and international law."

### **TRUMP VICTORY BRINGS 'OPPORTUNITY'**

Smotrich told the Knesset, or Israeli parliament, that US President-elect Donald Trump's victory in the US election "brings an important opportunity for the state of Israel."

The "only way to remove" the "threat" of a Palestinian state, Smotrich added, "is to apply Israeli sovereignty over the entire settlements in Judea and Samaria," the biblical term by which Israelis refer to the West Bank.

Israel has occupied [the West Bank](#) since seizing the territory from Jordan in 1967. In the decades since, it has expanded Jewish settlements in the area, which are considered illegal under international law, despite signing a series of peace agreements with the Palestinians in the 1990s.

Around half a million Israelis live in West Bank settlements. Smotrich, himself a settler, has long called for Israeli law to apply in the settlements, and previously opposed [the creation](#) of an independent Palestinian state.

The minister said he intends to "lead a government decision" that will allow Israel to "*work with the new administration of President Trump and the international community to apply sovereignty and achieve American and international recognition.*"

During his first term, Trump took [several steps](#) in Israel's favor. [In 2017, he recognized](#) Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, upending decades of US policy and international consensus. He also recognized [Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights](#), which it captured from Syria during the 1967 war and is also considered occupied under international law.

"I have instructed the Settlement Division in the Ministry of Defense and the Civil Administration to begin professional and comprehensive work to prepare the necessary infrastructure for applying sovereignty," Smotrich said on Monday.

"In his first term, President Trump led dramatic steps, including... affirming the legality and legitimacy of settlements in Judea and Samaria," Smotrich added. "Alongside this, there were the Abraham Accords – peace for peace." Those accords, a set of agreements facilitated by Trump's first administration, saw Israel normalize relations with four Arab nations.

“We were on the verge of applying sovereignty over the settlements in Judea and Samaria, and now the time has come to do so,” Smotrich said.

### **IDEAS OF PEACE ‘DELUSIONAL’: HAMAS**

Hamas, the Palestinian militant group Israel is fighting in the Gaza Strip some 60 miles from the West Bank, seized on Smotrich’s comments, saying they confirmed “the colonial intentions of the occupation” and refuted “the claims of those who are delusional about achieving peace and coexistence” with Israel. Another militant group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, said it was “tantamount to an admission of the open war waged by the criminal entity against the Palestinian people.”

Israel has been waging its war in Gaza since the Hamas-led terror attack on October 7 that killed 1,200 people and saw 250 taken hostage. Since then, more than 43,500 people have been killed in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the strip, with the United Nations reporting that most of the dead are women and children.

At the same time, another major escalation of violence has been playing out in the West Bank, where more than 700 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli troops since the war began, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. The attacks are occurring amid a surge in Israeli [settler violence](#) across the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem, where some settlers continue a campaign targeting Palestinian civilians and infrastructure.

In both places, the violence shows little sign of abating, with Gaza hospital authorities on Monday reporting dozens of deaths from new strikes across the enclave.

At least 10 people were killed in an Israeli strike on Al Mawasi, west of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, according to Nasser hospital officials and the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS). The aid group said the strike hit a cafe housing displaced people.

Multiple strikes in Nuseirat in central Gaza killed at least 20, according to Al Awda hospital, while in Gaza City, an airstrike killed at least two people, according to Al Ahli Baptist hospital officials.

CNN has reached out to the IDF for comment on the strikes.

The latest violence comes even as Israeli Foreign Minister Sa’ar suggested at his press briefing Monday that Israel was open to ending its military operations in Gaza. The foreign minister told the briefing that Palestinians would be able to return to their homes in the north when the war ends – though he cautioned this would not happen before Israel’s objectives were achieved.

He also appeared to rule out the possibility of creating a separate Palestinian state, saying this would pose a security threat to Israel. Asked about the possibility, he responded, “in a word: no.”

Meanwhile, Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) leaders meeting in Riyadh for the Arab-Islamic summit condemned Israel’s measures in the occupied West Bank.

In its closing statement, the summit called on the UN Security Council and international community to take action to “stop the escalating illegal Israeli measures in the occupied West Bank that undermine the two-state solution” and to “condemn colonial policies pursued by the occupying power to annex any part of the occupied Palestinian territory by force with the aim of expanding illegal settler colonialism.”

**PART J1-1**

**VIDEOS - GAZA-HAMAS**

## **WHY DID ISRAEL BUILD A WALL AROUND THE WEST BANK?**

**UNPACKED** 11 Oct 2023 14min 21sec

[Note: This video was created before the horrific attack by Hamas on the people of southern Israel and the outbreak of the October 2023 war.] The separation barrier that divides the West Bank from western Israel, often referred to as the Apartheid Wall, is the source of much debate in both Israeli and Palestinian societies. For some, it serves to protect Israeli citizens. For others, it enforces an unequal system of oppression of Palestinians. And while for many it is simply a visual reminder of the continued failure of the peace process, Israel remains a land of hope.

Chapters: [00:00](#) Intro [00:38](#) Description of separation barrier [01:06](#) Palestinian's personal testimony [01:30](#) The peace process [02:21](#) Opposition to the Oslo Accords [04:12](#) Rabin assassination [04:31](#) The Second Intifada [05:59](#) Operation Defensive Shield [06:17](#) Plans for a barrier wall [07:08](#) Did the wall make Israelis safer? [07:32](#) Differing viewpoints of the effectiveness of the security barrier [08:27](#) Is the separation barrier really a land grab? [09:08](#) Land gained from the 1967 War [10:23](#) Jewish return to Judea and Samaria [10:35](#) Palestinian links to the West Bank [11:41](#) The separation wall limits Palestinian freedom of movement [12:54](#) The separation wall does not prevent all terrorist attacks [13:11](#) Rabbi Yehuda HaKohen offers a vision of hope

## **EGYPT IS SILENTLY BUILDING A MASSIVE WALL ON ITS GAZA BORDER |**

**INSIDER News** 26 Feb 2024 1min 8sec

New satellite images show Egypt is building a 16-foot wall around a 8-square mile buffer zone but has offered no explanation.

## **HAMAS: THE TERROR GROUP BENT ON DESTROYING ISRAEL - AND THEMSELVES**

[Daily Mail](#) 12 October 2023 13min 2sec

They were one of the pioneers of the suicide bomb and have waged a decades-long campaign of terror against Israel. Hamas, founded as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, took control of Gaza after winning a shock election there in 2006 and now rules with an iron fist. On Saturday, they led an attack into Israel which killed at least 1,200 people - most of them civilians - with such brutality that the terror group is now being compared to ISIS. Their goal seems to have been to provoke Israel into a devastating ground war in Gaza in order to derail a new peace effort and send the Middle East spiralling back into conflict.

These are the deep contradictions at the heart of Sunni Hamas, their perhaps unlikely allies in Shia Iran, and how - together - they threaten to destabilise the world.

## **WHO IS FUNDING HAMAS? | DW BUSINESS SPECIAL**

[DW News](#) 14 October 2023 14min 58sec

The terror attacks against Israel have drawn new attention to the Hamas movement in the Gaza Strip – and its backers. Host Marie Sina is joined by Matthew Levitt, director of the Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. They discuss Hamas' main sources of funding, its ties to Iran and Russia, and the humanitarian situation for Palestinian civilians.



## **EVACUATED RESIDENTS OF NORTHERN ISRAEL REMAIN IN LIMBO 6 MONTHS INTO WAR**

[I24 NEWS ENGLISH](#) 4 Apr 2024 2min 11 sec

Sixty thousand residents have been evacuated from their homes in northern Israel. With anxiety at an all time high over the potential outbreak of direct conflict with Hezbollah, i24NEWS reports on the tense situation they are living in as they wait to go home.

## **WHY DOES IRAN HATE ISRAEL? | EXPLAINED**

[Today Unpacked](#) 21 April 2024 11min 29sec

Historically, Israel's wars were fought against its direct neighbors, and Iran is on the other side of the Arabian peninsula. And Palestinians are Arabs, so the Arab world has historically showed solidarity with them by opposing Israel. But Iranians are Persian, not Arab. Additionally, most of Israel's enemies are Sunni. But Iran is a Shi'a country and the Sunni and Shi'a have been at war for centuries. And lastly, Iran and Israel used to be close allies. So all this begs the question - why does Iran hate Israel so much?

## **WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR PALESTINIANS IN GAZA?**

[Unpacked](#) 17 July 2024 26min 40sec

Life for Palestinians in Gaza under Hamas has been extremely difficult. Palestinian civilians lack basic water, sanitation, and electricity infrastructures, as well as access to upward economic mobility and the rights to freedom of speech and self-expression. The constant suffering from rampant political and economic corruption has left civilians in Gaza with a sense of despair and a longing for a change in leadership.

Chapters: [00:00](#) Intro [00:37](#) Brief history of the Gaza Strip [01:52](#) The First Intifada and economics [03:54](#) The Oslo Accords and the Second Intifada [05:03](#) The Disengagement and Palestinian elections in Gaza [06:18](#) The Hamas Charter and Hamas rule in Gaza [07:46](#) Egyptian and Israeli blockade [09:05](#) Hamas tunnels in Gaza [10:32](#) Water infrastructure in Gaza [12:30](#) Debt and economic corruption [13:58](#) Hamas leadership's extravagant lifestyle [14:55](#) Hamas executions of Palestinians [16:17](#) March, 2019 Gazan protests against Hamas, [#WeWantToLive](#) [17:58](#) Lack of basic human rights in Gaza [20:25](#) Palestinian perspectives of the 2023 Israel-Hamas War [21:47](#) The Christian minority in Gaza [22:43](#) Hamas prevents Gazans from fleeing [23:46](#) What do Palestinians want when the war ends?

## **WILL ISRAEL ATTACK IRAN?**

### **GENERAL AMIR AVIVI'S VISION FOR ISRAEL'S FUTURE**

[IDSF DAILY WAR BRIEFING](#) 22 Oct 2024 54min 18sec

Brigadier General Res. Amir Avivi discusses the impending war with Iran, the developments on the Northern Front of Israel with Hezbollah, and the destruction of Hamas in Gaza. IDF Sergeant Ari Kalker conducts the interview. The General also talks about a vision for Israel and the Golden Age that will occur once Israel claims its victory.

## **WHY THE MAZE OF TUNNELS UNDER GAZA IS KEY TO THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR**

[The Wall Street Journal](#) | 26 October 2023 5min

Israel is gearing up for a possible ground offensive of Gaza. Underneath the Palestinian enclave sits a labyrinth of tunnels used by Hamas as a key military asset. These tunnels were used by Hamas militants in Israel's seven-week war on Gaza in 2014 allowing for Hamas to hide weapons, equipment and troops. WSJ's Rory Jones – who visited them in 2014 – explains how they pose a unique challenge to Israel and could make urban combat costly for both Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians.

### **INSIDE THE GAZA TERROR TUNNEL WHERE HOSTAGES WERE HELD**

[DW News](#) | 1 Sept 2024 4min 20sec

Israel says that its forces have recovered the remains of six Israeli hostages during operations in Gaza. Israeli-American Hersh Goldberg-Polin is among those confirmed dead. Hamas captured him and four others at a music festival during the October 7 terror attacks. Hours before their deaths were announced, thousands protested in Tel Aviv to demand a deal to free the remaining hostages in Gaza. Around a hundred people still remain captive in Gaza, including 33 that the Israeli army says are dead.

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**PART J1-2**

**GAZA OVERVIEW**

## BRITISH CONTROL OF GAZA

Palestine	
1920–1948	
	
Flag	Public Seal
	
Mandatory Palestine in 1946	

Go to the source document which is

[Mandatory Palestine](#)

to use the links in the frames below.

Mandatory Palestine in 1946	
<b>Status</b>	Mandate of the United Kingdom
<b>Capital</b>	Jerusalem
<b>Common languages</b>	English, Arabic, Hebrew
<b>Religion</b>	Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Bahá'í Faith, Druze faith
<b>Demonym(s)</b>	Palestinian
<b>High Commissioner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1920–1925 (first) Sir Herbert L. Samuel</li> <li>• 1945–1948 (last) Sir Alan Cunningham</li> </ul>
<b>Legislature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliamentary body of the Muslim community Supreme Muslim Council</li> <li>• Parliamentary body of the Jewish community Assembly of Representatives</li> </ul>
<b>Historical era</b>	Interwar period Second World War Cold War
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandate assigned 25 April 1920</li> <li>• Britain officially assumes control 29 September 1923</li> <li>• Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel 14 May 1948</li> </ul>	
<b>Area</b>	
• Total	25,585.3 km <sup>2</sup> (9,878.5 sq mi) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Currency</b>	Egyptian pound (until 1927) Palestine pound (from 1927)
<b>ISO 3166 code</b>	PS
<b>Preceded by</b>	<b>Succeeded by</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occupied Enemy Territory Administration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Israel </li> <li>Jordanian annexation of the West Bank </li> <li>All-Palestine Protectorate </li> </ul>
<b>Today part of</b>	Israel Palestine 

<b>Gaza Strip</b> قطاع غزة <i>Qīṭā' Ghazza</i>	
1959–1967	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
 <p style="text-align: center;">Gaza Strip after the 1949 Armistice.</p>	
<b>Status</b>	Area occupied by the <a href="#">United Arab Republic (UAR)</a> / <a href="#">Arab Republic of Egypt</a>
<b>Capital</b>	<a href="#">Gaza</a>
<b>Common languages</b>	<a href="#">Arabic</a>
<b>Religion</b>	<a href="#">Sunni Islam</a>
<b>Government</b>	<a href="#">Military occupation</a>
<b>Historical era</b>	<a href="#">Cold War</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Established</b> <a href="#">1959</a></li> <li>• <b>Disestablished</b> <a href="#">1967</a></li> <li>• <b><a href="#">Egyptian claim relinquished</a></b> <a href="#">17 September 1978</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Currency</b>	<a href="#">Egyptian pound</a>

## Egypt, Israel. And Gaza

## GAZA STRIP

BRITANNICA



**Gaza Strip**, territory occupying 140 square miles (363 square km) along the [Mediterranean Sea](#) just northeast of the [Sinai Peninsula](#). The Gaza Strip is unusual in being a densely settled area not recognized as a [de jure](#) part of any [extant](#) country. The first accurate census, conducted in September 1967, showed a population smaller than had previously been estimated by the [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East](#) (UNRWA) or by [Egypt](#), with nearly half of the people living in refugee camps. Pop. (2017) 1,899,291; (2023 est.) 2,226,544.

## GEOGRAPHY

Arabic: Qiṭāʿ Ghazzah Hebrew: Rezuʿat ʿAzza Population: (2024 est.) 2,229,0

Official Name(S): Gaza Strip; Qiṭāʿ Ghazzah (Arabic); Rezuʿat ʿAzza (Hebrew)

Total Area (Sq Km): 365 Total Area (Sq Mi): 141

[See all facts & stats →](#)

The Gaza Strip is situated on a relatively flat coastal plain. Temperatures average in the mid-50s F (about 13 °C) in the winter and in the upper 70s to low 80s F (mid- to upper 20s C) in summer. The area receives an average of about 12 inches (300 mm) of precipitation annually.

Living conditions in the Gaza Strip are typically poor for a number of reasons: the region's [dense](#) and rapidly increasing population (the area's growth rate is one of the highest in the world); inadequate water, sewage, and electrical services; high rates of unemployment; and, from September 2007, sanctions imposed by [Israel](#) on the region.

Agriculture is the economic mainstay of the employed population, and nearly three-fourths of the land area is under cultivation. The chief crop, citrus fruit, is raised on irrigated lands and is exported to Europe and other markets under arrangement with Israel. Truck crops, wheat, and olives also are produced. Light industry and handicrafts are centred in [Gaza](#), the chief city of the area.

In politically stable times, as much as one-tenth of the Palestinian population travels daily to Israel (where they are not allowed to stay overnight) to work in menial jobs. Political tension and outbreaks of violence often led Israeli authorities to close the border for extended periods, putting many Palestinians out of work. As a result, a thriving smuggling industry emerged, based on a network of subterranean tunnels linking parts of the Gaza Strip with neighbouring Egypt. The tunnels provided Palestinians with access to goods such as food, fuel, medicine, electronics, and weapons.

## HISTORY

### Occupation

After rule by the [Ottoman Empire](#) ended there in [World War I](#) (1914–18), the Gaza area became part of the [League of Nations mandate](#) of [Palestine](#) under British rule. Before this mandate ended, the General Assembly of the [United Nations](#) (UN) in November 1947 accepted a plan for the Arab-Jewish partition of Palestine under which the town of [Gaza](#) and an area of surrounding territory were to be allotted to the Arabs. The British mandate ended on May 15, 1948, and on that same day the first [Arab-Israeli war](#) began. [Egyptian](#) forces soon entered the town of Gaza, which became the headquarters of the Egyptian expeditionary force in Palestine. As a result of heavy fighting in autumn 1948, the area around the town under [Arab](#) occupation was reduced to a strip of territory 25 miles (40 km) long and 4–5 miles (6–8 km) wide. This area became known as the Gaza Strip. Its boundaries were demarcated in the Egyptian-Israeli armistice agreement of February 24, 1949.



**The Gaza Strip was under Egyptian [military rule](#) from 1949 to 1956 and again from 1957 to 1967.**

From the beginning, the area's chief economic and [social problem](#) was the presence of large numbers of Palestinian Arab [refugees](#) living in extreme poverty in squalid camps. The Egyptian government did not consider the area part of Egypt and did not allow the refugees to become Egyptian citizens or to migrate to Egypt or to other Arab countries where they might be [integrated](#) into the population. Israel did not allow them to return to their former homes or to receive compensation for their loss of property. The refugees were maintained largely through the aid of the [UNRWA](#). Many of the younger refugees became fedayeen (Arab guerrillas operating against Israel); their attacks on Israel were one of the causes precipitating the Sinai campaign during the [Suez Crisis](#) of 1956, when the strip was taken by [Israel](#). The strip reverted to Egyptian control in 1957 following strong international pressures on Israel.

In the [Six-Day War](#) of June 1967, the Gaza Strip was again taken by Israel, which occupied the region for the next quarter century. In December 1987 rioting and violent street clashes between Gaza's Palestinians and occupying Israeli troops marked the birth of an uprising that came to be known as the [intifada](#) (Arabic *intifāḍah*, "shaking off"). In 1994 Israel began a phased transfer of governmental authority in the Gaza Strip to the [Palestinian Authority](#) (PA) under the terms of the [Oslo Accords](#) that were signed by Israel and the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO). The [fledgling](#) Palestinian government, led by [Yasser Arafat](#), struggled with such problems as a stagnant economy, divided popular support, stalled negotiations with Israel over further troop withdrawals and territoriality, and the threat of terrorism from militant Muslim groups such as [Islamic Jihad](#) and [Hamas](#), which refused to compromise with Israel and were intent on derailing the peace process. Beginning in late 2000, a breakdown in negotiations between the PA and Israel was followed by a further, more extreme outbreak of violence, termed the [second, or Aqṣā, intifada](#). In an effort to end the fighting, Israeli Prime Minister [Ariel Sharon](#) announced in late 2003 a plan that centred on [withdrawing](#) Israeli soldiers and settlers from the Gaza Strip (see [Israel's disengagement from Gaza](#)). In September 2005 Israel completed the pullout from the territory, and control of the Gaza Strip was transferred to the PA, although Israel continued to patrol its borders and airspace.

### **UNDER HAMAS'S GOVERNANCE**

In the 2006 PA parliamentary elections, [Fatah](#)—which had dominated Palestinian politics since its founding in the 1950s—suffered a decisive loss to [Hamas](#), reflecting years of dissatisfaction with Fatah's governance, which was criticized as corrupt and inefficient. Hamas's victory prompted sanctions by Israel, the [United States](#), and the [European Union](#), each of which had placed the organization on its official list of terrorist groups. The Gaza Strip was the site of escalating violence between the competing groups, and a short-lived [coalition government](#) was ended in June 2007 after Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip and a Fatah-led emergency cabinet took control of the [West Bank](#). Despite calls by PA Pres. [Mahmoud Abbas](#) for Hamas to relinquish its position in the Gaza Strip, the territory remained under Hamas's control.

### **ATTEMPTS AT RECONCILIATION WITH FATAH**

A number of attempts were made to [reconcile](#) with the Fatah-led PA. An initial deal was reached in 2011 but did not bring about much change. A new deal was achieved in 2014, in which Hamas agreed to hand over administration of the Gaza Strip to the PA and recognize the prime ministership of [Rami Hamdallah](#).

As such, the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip resigned, including the [prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh](#). The PA was not allowed to resume control of public institutions in the Gaza Strip until late 2017, however, after implementation of a new agreement. The PA failed to gain full governance in the area, though, and decided to cut funding to the Gaza Strip in 2018. As disagreements continued to [escalate](#), the PA ceased operating the [Rafah](#) border crossing with Egypt in January 2019. Later that month Hamdallah resigned, ending the unity government.

### **BLOCKADE OF GAZA STRIP**

In autumn 2007 [Israel](#) declared the [Gaza](#) Strip under [Hamas](#) a hostile entity and approved a series of sanctions that included power cuts, heavily restricted imports, and border closures. In January 2008, facing sustained rocket assaults into its southern settlements, Israel broadened its sanctions, completely sealing its border with the Gaza Strip and temporarily preventing fuel imports. Later that month, after nearly a week of the intensified Israeli blockade, Hamas's forces demolished portions of the barrier along the Gaza Strip–Egypt border (closed from Hamas's mid-2007 takeover until 2011), opening gaps through which, according to some estimates, hundreds of thousands of Gazans passed into Egypt to purchase food, fuel, and goods unavailable under the blockade. Egyptian Pres. [Hosni Mubarak](#) temporarily permitted the [breach](#) to [alleviate](#) civilian hardship in Gaza before efforts could begin to restore the border.

In the years after the Israeli blockade on Gaza was instated, an organization known as the Free Gaza Movement made a number of maritime efforts to breach it. The first such mission—which consisted of a pair of vessels bearing medical supplies and some 45 activists—was permitted to reach Gaza in August 2008, and four missions in subsequent months were also successful. In May 2010 a flotilla bound for Gaza was the scene of a clash between activists and Israeli commandos in which 9 of the more than 600 activists involved were killed.

Under Mubarak, Egypt's cooperation in enforcing the blockade was deeply unpopular with the Egyptian public. In May 2011, four months after a [popular uprising in Egypt](#) forced Mubarak to step down as president, Egypt's [interim](#) government announced that it would permanently reopen the [Rafah](#) border crossing, allowing Palestinians to pass between Egypt and Gaza. About 1,200 people were allowed to cross the border daily, though it remained closed for trade. However, in the turmoil following the ouster of Egyptian Pres. [Mohamed Morsi](#) in the summer of 2013, traffic through the border crossing was reduced to 50 people per day because of security concerns and was later closed altogether.

After the [PA](#) took control of the Rafah border crossing in late 2017, Egypt began allowing 200 people per day to cross the border in May 2018. The border was closed briefly after the PA quit the Gaza Strip in January 2019, but it was reopened weeks later by Hamas. During this rare and prolonged easing of the border, tens of thousands of Gazans were reported to have permanently emigrated from the Gaza Strip. After months of violence between Israel and Hamas in mid-2018, Israel began to ease restrictions on its blockade as a part of an effort to incentivize a more long-term cease-fire agreement between the two. In 2019 Israel allowed the flow of additional goods into and out of the territory, expanded the permitted fishing zone for Gazans to its largest extent in more than a decade, and began allowing thousands of Gazans to cross the border to work in Israel.

[Qatar](#), meanwhile, began offering tens of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip at the end of 2018, after both Israel and Egypt agreed to allow the aid. By 2021 it had disbursed nearly \$400 million to the territory.

## CONFLICT WITH ISRAEL

In June 2008, after months of back-and-forth strikes and incursions, Israel and Hamas agreed to [implement](#) a truce scheduled to last six months. However, this was threatened shortly thereafter as each accused the other of violations, which escalated in the last months of the agreement. When the truce officially expired on December 19, Hamas announced that it did not intend to extend it. Broader hostilities erupted shortly thereafter as Israel, responding to sustained rocket fire, mounted a series of air strikes across the region—among the strongest in years—meant to target Hamas. After a week of air strikes, Israeli forces [initiated a ground campaign](#) into the Gaza Strip amid calls from the international [community](#) for a cease-fire. Following more than three weeks of hostilities—in which perhaps more than 1,000 were killed and tens of thousands were left homeless—Israel and Hamas each declared a unilateral cease-fire.

Beginning on November 14, 2012, Israel launched a series of air strikes in Gaza, in response to an increase in the number of rockets fired from Gaza into Israeli territory over the previous nine months. The head of the military wing of Hamas, Ahmed Said Khalil al-Jabari, was killed in the initial strike. Hamas retaliated with increasing rocket attacks on Israel, and fighting continued until the two sides reached a cease-fire agreement on November 21.

In June 2014 three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped; Israel conducted a massive crackdown in the [West Bank](#) and increased air strikes in the Gaza Strip, prompting retaliatory rocket fire from Hamas. As fighting continued to [escalate](#), Israel launched a 50-day offensive into the Gaza Strip on July 8. Some 2,100 Palestinians and more than 70 Israelis were killed in the ensuing conflict, with about 5,000 targets hit in the Gaza Strip. Despite the devastation, Hamas's handling of the conflict was viewed positively by Palestinians and boosted the group's popularity.

In the spring of 2018 a series of protests along the border with Israel, which included attempts to cross the border and flying flaming kites, was met with a violent response from Israel. Both the protests and the violence reached a peak on May 14 when about 40,000 Gazans [attended](#) the protests. When many of them tried to cross the border at once, Israeli troops opened fire, killing about 60 people and wounding 2,700 others. The violence escalated into military strikes from Israel and rocket fire from Hamas and continued for several months.

Amid the occasional skirmishes, and as Egypt tried to mediate a long-term truce between them, Israel and Hamas appeared to make some effort to de-escalate tense situations. In October, when rocket fire from the Gaza Strip hit Israel, Israel concluded that the rockets had been set off by a lightning strike. In November a [covert](#) Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip was exposed, and Hamas responded by firing hundreds of rockets into Israel. Israel retaliated with more than 100 air strikes. The two sides quickly agreed to a truce, however, and, throughout 2019 and into 2020, they continued to negotiate a long-term “understanding” for the maintenance of peace and easing of the blockade. The discussions, though occasionally interrupted by

brief outbreaks of tit-for-tat violence, were reinforced by halted border protests and a loosening of the restrictions on trade and travel through the Gaza border.

A major escalation took place in May 2021. Weeks of simmering [tensions](#) in Jerusalem boiled over when Israel's Supreme Court was set to rule on the eviction of dozens of Palestinian residents in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of [Sheikh Jarrah](#). Confrontations between Israeli police and Palestinian demonstrators prompted Hamas to launch rockets into Jerusalem and parts of southern Israel; Israel responded with air strikes in the Gaza Strip.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a coordinated land, sea, and air assault that took Israel by surprise. At least 1,200 Israelis were killed in the attacks—the deadliest day for Israel since its independence—and about 240 were taken hostage. Israel's response led to hundreds of deaths in the Gaza Strip on that same day. On the following day, Israel declared war for the first time since the [Yom Kippur War](#) in 1973.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF GAZA'S 75 YEARS OF WOE

**REUTERS** Writing by Stephen Farrell, Nidal al-Mughrabi and Rosalba O'Brien; Editing by Chris Reese  
October 11 2023



Gaza is a coastal strip of land that lay on ancient trading and maritime routes along the Mediterranean shore. Held by the Ottoman Empire until 1917, it passed from British to Egyptian to Israeli military rule over the last century and is now a [fenced-in enclave, opens new tab](#) inhabited by over 2 million Palestinians. Here are some of the major milestones in its recent history.

### **1948 - END OF BRITISH RULE**

As British colonial rule came to an end in Palestine in the late 1940s, violence intensified between Jews and Arabs, culminating in war between the newly created State of Israel and its Arab neighbors in May **1948**.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians took refuge in Gaza after fleeing or being driven from their homes. The invading Egyptian army had seized a narrow coastal strip 25 miles (40 km) long, which ran from the Sinai to just south of Ashkelon. The influx of refugees saw Gaza's population triple to around 200,000.

### **1950S & 1960S - EGYPTIAN MILITARY RULE**

Egypt held the Gaza Strip for two decades under a military governor, allowing Palestinians to work and study in Egypt. Armed Palestinian "fedayeen," many of them refugees, mounted attacks into Israel, drawing reprisals.

The United Nations set up a refugee agency, UNRWA, which today provides services for 1.6 million registered Palestine refugees in Gaza, as well as for Palestinians in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank.

### **1967 - WAR AND ISRAELI MILITARY OCCUPATION**

Israel captured the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Middle East war. An Israeli census that year put Gaza's population at 394,000, at least 60% of them refugees.

Destroyed Egyptian armour lines the sides of a Sinai road after it was hit by Israeli jet fighters

With the Egyptians gone, many Gazan workers took jobs in the agriculture, construction and services industries inside Israel, to which they could gain easy access at that time. Israeli troops remained to administer the territory and to guard the settlements that Israel built in the following decades. These became a source of growing Palestinian resentment.

### **1987 - FIRST PALESTINIAN UPRISING. HAMAS FORMED**

Twenty years after the 1967 war, Palestinians launched their first intifada, or uprising. It began in December 1987 after a traffic accident in which an Israeli truck crashed into a vehicle carrying Palestinian workers in Gaza's Jabalya refugee camp, killing four. Stone-throwing protests, strikes and shutdowns followed.

**Seizing the angry mood, the Egypt-based Muslim Brotherhood created an armed Palestinian branch, Hamas, with its power base in Gaza. Hamas, dedicated to Israel's destruction and restoration of Islamic rule in what it saw as occupied Palestine, became a rival to Yasser Arafat's secular Fatah party that led the Palestine Liberation Organization.**

### **1993 - The Oslo Accords, and Palestinian semi-autonomy**

Israel and the Palestinians signed an historic peace accord in 1993 that led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority. Under the interim deal, Palestinians were first given limited control in Gaza, and Jericho in the West Bank. Arafat returned to Gaza after decades in exile.

The Oslo process gave the newly created Palestinian Authority some autonomy, and envisaged statehood after five years. But that never happened. Israel accused the Palestinians of reneging on security agreements, and Palestinians were angered by continued Israeli settlement building.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad carried out bombings to try to derail the peace process, leading Israel to impose more restrictions on movement of Palestinians out of Gaza. Hamas also picked up on growing Palestinian criticisms of corruption, nepotism and economic mismanagement by Arafat's inner circle.

### **2000 - SECOND PALESTINIAN INTIFADA**

In 2000, Israeli-Palestinian relations sank to a new low with the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada. It ushered in a period of suicide bombings and shooting attacks by Palestinians, and Israeli air strikes, demolitions, no-go zones and curfews.

Palestinian police exchange fire with Israeli soldiers during clashes near Netzreem Jewish settlement in Gaza Strip,

One casualty was Gaza International Airport, a symbol of thwarted Palestinian hopes for economic independence and the Palestinians' only direct link to the outside world that was not controlled by Israel or Egypt. Opened in 1998, Israel deemed it a security threat and destroyed its radar antenna and runway a few months after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.

Another casualty was Gaza's fishing industry, a source of income for tens of thousands. Gaza's fishing zone was reduced by Israel, a restriction it said was necessary to stop boats smuggling weapons.

### **2005 - ISRAEL EVACUATES ITS GAZA SETTLEMENTS**

In August 2005 Israel evacuated all its troops and settlers from Gaza, which was by then completely fenced off from the outside world by Israel.

Palestinians tore down the abandoned buildings and infrastructure for scrap. The settlements' removal led to greater freedom of movement within Gaza, and a "tunnel economy" boomed as armed groups, smugglers and entrepreneurs quickly dug scores of tunnels into Egypt.

But the pullout also removed settlement factories, greenhouses and workshops that had employed some Gazans.

### **2006 - ISOLATION UNDER HAMAS**

In 2006, Hamas scored a surprise victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections and then seized full control of Gaza, overthrowing forces loyal to Arafat's successor, President Mahmoud Abbas.

Much of the international community cut aid to the Palestinians in Hamas-controlled areas because they regarded Hamas as a terrorist organization.

Israel stopped tens of thousands of Palestinian workers from entering the country, cutting off an important source of income. Israeli air strikes crippled Gaza's only electrical power plant, causing widespread blackouts. Citing security concerns, Israel and Egypt also imposed tighter restrictions on the movement of people and goods through the Gaza crossings.

Ambitious Hamas plans to refocus Gaza's economy east, away from Israel, founded before they even started.

Viewing Hamas as a threat, Egypt's military-backed leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who took power in 2014, closed the border with Gaza and blew up most of the tunnels. Once again isolated, Gaza's economy went into reverse.

## CONFLICT CYCLE

Gaza's economy has suffered repeatedly in the cycle of conflict, attack and retaliation between Israel and Palestinian militant groups.

Before 2023, some of the worst fighting was in 2014, when Hamas and other groups launched rockets at heartland cities in Israel. Israel carried out air strikes and artillery bombardment that devastated neighbourhoods in Gaza. More than 2,100 Palestinians were killed, mostly civilians. Israel put the number of its dead at 67 soldiers and six civilians.

### 2023 - SURPRISE ATTACK

While Israel was led to believe it was containing a war-weary Hamas by providing economic incentives to Gazan workers, the group's [fighters were being trained](#) and drilled in secret.

On Oct.7, Hamas gunmen launched a surprise attack on Israel, rampaging through towns, killing hundreds, and taking dozens of hostages back to Gaza. [Israel took revenge](#), hammering Gaza with air strikes and razing entire districts in some of the worst blood-letting in the 75 years of conflict.

Get the latest news and expert analysis about the state of the global economy with Reuters Econ World. Sign up [here](#).



## WHY DID ISRAEL NEED SO MANY AIR ATTACKS ON GAZA?

The conflict between Israel and Hamas in 2023 was marked by complex military operations, unprecedented tunnel warfare, and significant humanitarian consequences.

The following sections provide a detailed examination of the operational strategies, types of weaponry employed, and the impact on both Hamas and Gaza's civilian population, supported by numerical and structural details.

### ChatGPT AI

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#### 1. HAMAS' TUNNEL NETWORK: STRATEGIC ROLE AND DESIGN

##### Size and Structure:

- The network of tunnels spanned **hundreds of kilometers** beneath Gaza.
- Tunnel depths varied from **10 to 30 meters (33 to 98 feet)** below the surface.
- Many tunnels were reinforced with concrete and fitted with ventilation systems to sustain prolonged use.

##### Operational Uses:

- **Weapon Transport:** Allowed covert movement of rockets, explosives, and other munitions.
- **Command and Control:** Facilitated secure communication and command operations even during heavy bombardments.
- **Cross-Border Infiltration:** Some tunnels extended into Israeli territory for launching raids, smuggling, and kidnappings.
- **Storage Facilities:** Housed weapons and logistical supplies.

##### Tunnel Entry and Exit Points:

- Embedded beneath civilian structures such as residential homes, schools, and mosques to prevent detection.
  - Disguised entry points complicated Israeli targeting efforts, contributing to collateral damage during attacks.
-

## 2. ISRAELI AIR AND GROUND OPERATIONS

### a) Tunnel Destruction Strategy:

- **Airstrikes:** Israel deployed **bunker-busting bombs** designed to penetrate deep underground before detonation to collapse tunnels.
- **Precision Targeting:** Guided munitions were employed to strike identified tunnel access points.
- **Ground Penetration Bombs:** These included **GBU-28s and GBU-72s**, capable of reaching depths of up to **30 meters (98 feet)**.

### b) Types of Bombs Used:

- **Bunker-Busting Bombs:** Targeted underground fortifications.
- **Fragmentation Bombs:** Designed to neutralize personnel near surface-level tunnel entry points.
- **High-Explosive Munitions:** Used for demolishing reinforced structures and command centers.

### c) Entry and Exit Tunnel Targeting:

- Efforts included strikes on known exit points to prevent Hamas fighters from escaping into Israeli territory.
- Ongoing surveillance identified additional tunnel locations, with **over 100 access points reportedly neutralized**.

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## 3. EFFECTIVENESS OF ISRAELI CAMPAIGN AGAINST HAMAS

### a) Military Impact on Hamas:

- **Leaders Eliminated:** Several high-ranking Hamas commanders were reported killed.
- **Weapons Cache Losses:** Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) claimed destruction of **dozens of weapons depots**.
- **Tunnel Network Collapse:** A significant portion of Hamas' underground infrastructure was reportedly rendered inoperable.

### b) Hamas' Rocket Launch Capacity:

- Despite the strikes, Hamas managed to fire **over 5,000 rockets** during the conflict, indicating the partial resilience of its infrastructure.
- Reports suggested that the air campaign disrupted rocket production but did not fully eliminate Hamas' ability to launch attacks.

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## 4. CIVILIAN AND HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

### a) Civilian Casualties:

- **Gaza:** The conflict resulted in **thousands of civilian deaths**, including women and children.
  - Civilian casualties were exacerbated by the proximity of military targets to non-combatant areas.
- **Israel:** Over **1,400 civilians and soldiers** were killed in initial and subsequent attacks, with many more injured.

### b) Displacement:

- An estimated **500,000 Gaza residents** were displaced due to airstrikes and infrastructural collapse.

**c) Infrastructure Damage:**

- **Housing:** Approximately **30,000 residential units** were destroyed or severely damaged.
  - **Healthcare:** **Numerous hospitals and clinics** sustained damage, worsening the health crisis.
  - **Utilities:** Destruction of power and water facilities left much of Gaza without essential services.
- 

**5. GEOPOLITICAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS****a) Civilian Shielding by Hamas:**

- The use of civilian infrastructure to hide tunnel entry points and command centers complicated Israeli operations and raised international concerns over proportionality and civilian harm.

**b) International Reactions:**

- Global calls for ceasefires and humanitarian access intensified as civilian casualties mounted.
- Diplomatic efforts by Egypt, Qatar, and other nations sought to mediate temporary truces.

**c) Ethical and Legal Debates:**

- The conflict reignited debates over the ethical implications of urban warfare and the legal considerations under international humanitarian law.
- 

**6. MORTALITY AND LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES****a) Death Toll Estimates:**

- Gaza: Reported fatalities ranged between **10,000 and 15,000**, including significant civilian casualties.
- Israel: Casualties included **over 1,400 killed** and numerous others injured.

**b) Psychological and Social Impact:**

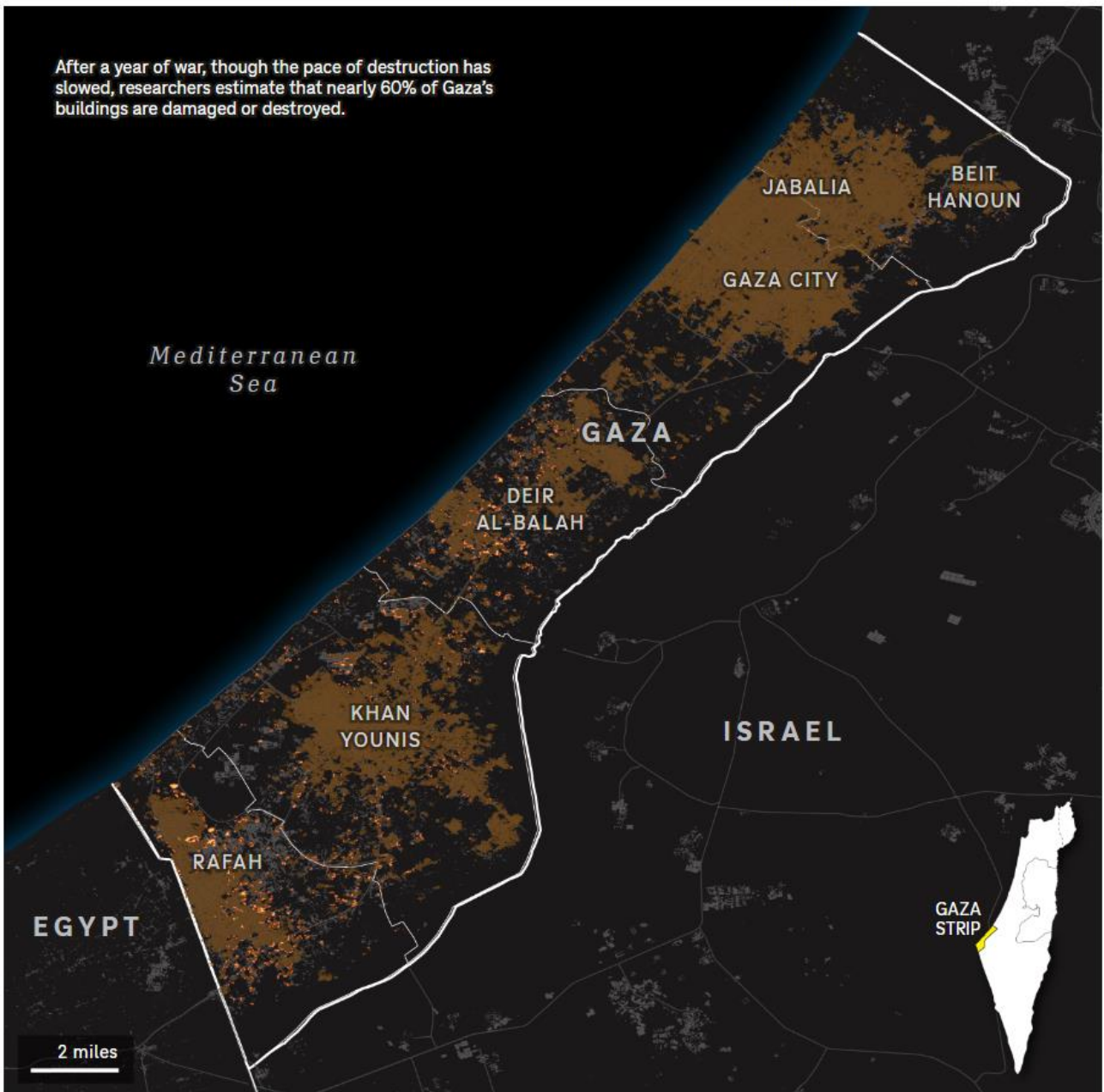
- **Trauma and Psychological Effects:** The population of Gaza, including children, faced increased mental health crises due to bombardments and loss of life.
  - **Radicalization Risks:** The destruction and loss of civilian life risk fueling long-term cycles of violence and resentment.
- 

**CONCLUSION**

The 2023 Gaza-Israel war demonstrated the complex interplay between military strategy, urban warfare, and humanitarian consequences. While Israel's efforts focused on neutralizing immediate threats from Hamas, the human cost and infrastructure damage underscored the urgent need for a diplomatic resolution to prevent future escalations. Balancing security concerns with humanitarian principles remains a critical challenge for the region's stability.

# THESE MAPS AND IMAGES SHOW WHAT'S LEFT OF GAZA, ONE YEAR INTO THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

[npr](#) Daniel Wood **October 10 2024**



Source: Damage analysis of Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite data by Corey Scher of CUNY Graduate Center and Jamon Van Den Hoek of Oregon State University. Building footprints from the World Settlement Footprint, 2019. Credit: Daniel Wood/NPR

Within hours of Hamas' attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, Israel began airstrikes across the Gaza Strip. Last Oct. 27, Israel's ground invasion of Gaza began, and within a few days the Israeli military had encircled Gaza City. In the months since then, the war in Gaza has continued unabated and has yielded one of the most devastating humanitarian crises in recent decades, as almost 2 million residents have fled the onslaught of bombardment, demolition and warfare.

Last year's Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack killed around 1,200 people and about 250 individuals were taken hostage, according to Israeli authorities. Israel's military response since then in Gaza has killed more than 42,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Risk of famine in Gaza is widespread.

Buildings destroyed by Israeli airstrikes in Gaza's Jabalia camp for Palestinian refugees on Oct. 11, 2023. The conflict has expanded: The Iran-backed Lebanese militia Hezbollah began firing rockets at Israel on Oct. 8, 2023, setting off Israeli-Hezbollah fighting that has intensified and led to an [Israeli air and ground offensive](#) in Lebanon, and hostilities have drawn in Iran and militias in Yemen and Iraq. No cease-fire has been reached.

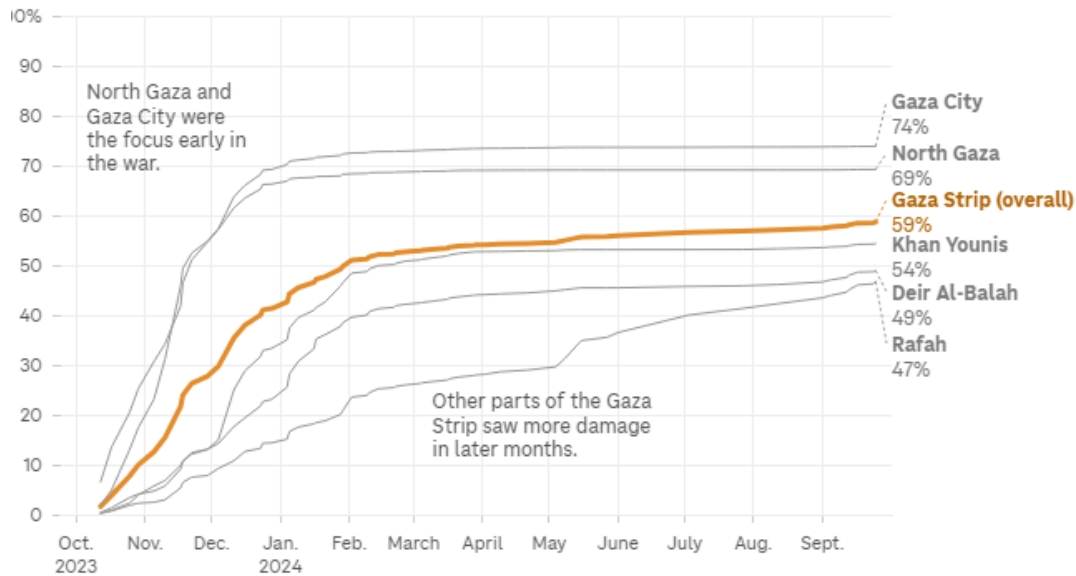
After a year of war, here is what's left of the Gaza Strip.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE DAMAGE**

A year of Israeli airstrikes and demolitions has left Gaza in ruins. It's estimated that nearly 60% of buildings in the enclave have been damaged or destroyed, according to satellite data analysis by Corey Scher of the City University of New York's Graduate Center and Jamon Van Den Hoek of Oregon State University. By the beginning of 2024, 71% of buildings in Gaza City and 67% of buildings in northern Gaza were already damaged or destroyed. This destruction then followed Israel's campaign against Hamas as troops moved farther south, with Deir al-Balah, Khan Younis and finally Rafah seeing a steady increase in bombardments and Israeli clearing operations.

## Analysis: 59% of buildings in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed

Estimated damage across the Gaza Strip, by region and date



Source: Damage analysis of Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite data by [Corey Scher](#) of CUNY Graduate Center and [Simon Van Den Hoek](#) of Oregon State University

credit: Alyson Hurt/NPR

The Israeli military says that it has struck more than 40,000 targets from the air, dismantling more than 1,000 rocket launchers and locating about 4,700 Hamas tunnel shafts as of Sept. 25.

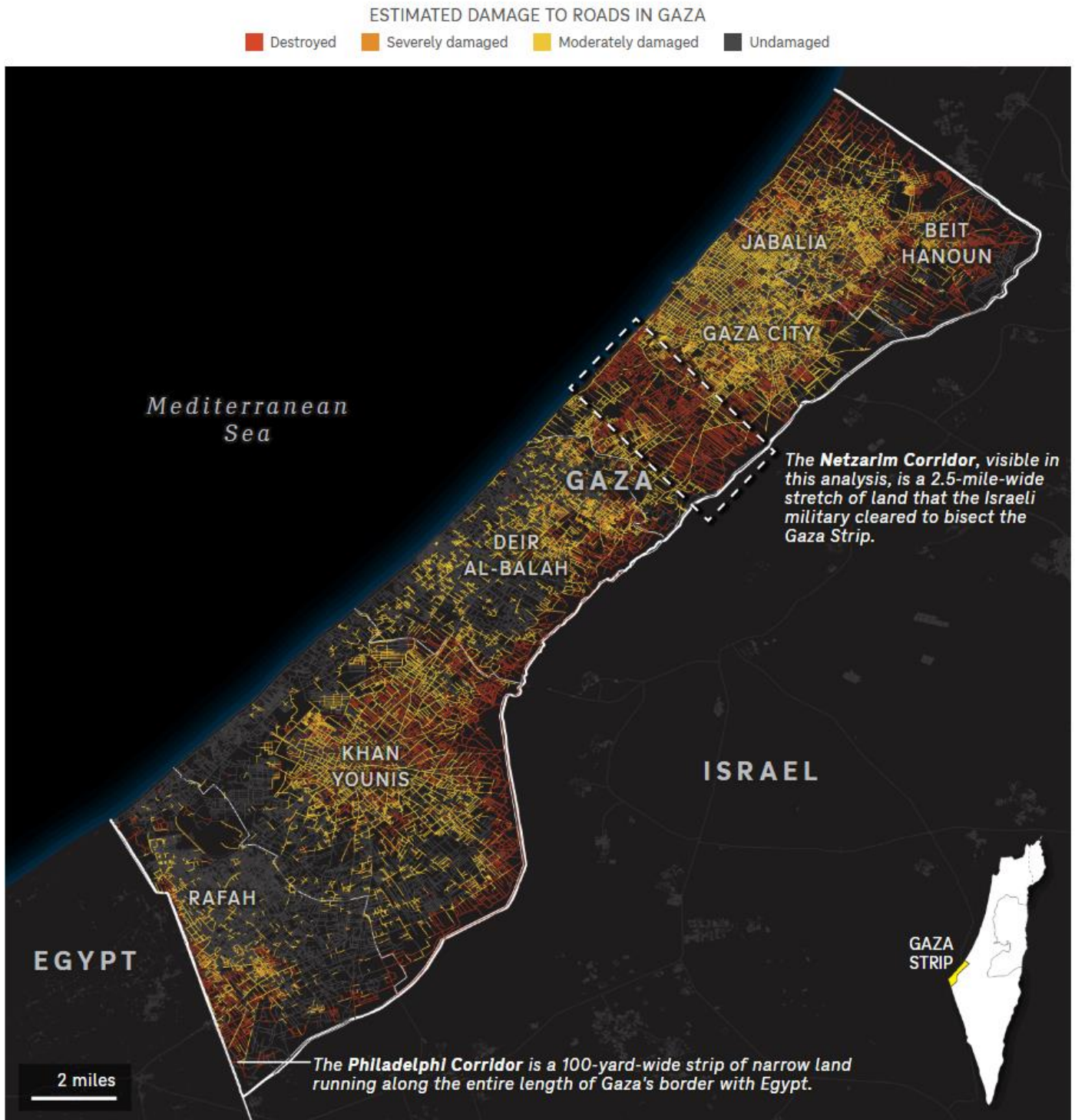
The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [reports](#) that 87% of schools in Gaza have been hit by munitions or been damaged since the beginning of the conflict.

In May, Palestinian civil defense authorities estimated that as many as [10,000 people](#) may be buried under rubble throughout the enclave. These people, presumed dead, are not included in the casualty numbers that Gaza's Health Ministry publishes.

The more than 37 million metric tons of debris include over 800,000 metric tons of asbestos and [7,500 metric tons of unexploded ordnance](#), according to U.N. estimates.

Adding to the chaos, roads in Gaza are increasingly impassable. An [analysis](#) released by the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) on Sept. 4 estimates that 68% of roads in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed, hampering the movement of millions of repeatedly [displaced people](#), as well as ambulances and aid groups operating in the enclave.

The U.N. estimates that nearly 70% of roads in the Gaza Strip are damaged or destroyed



Source: UNOSAT comprehensive road damage assessment, published Sept. 4, 2024

Credit: Daniel Wood/NPR

This damage includes demolition by the Israeli military along two strategic corridors, the Philadelphi Corridor adjacent to Egypt and the Netzarim Corridor bisecting the territory south of Gaza City.

### AGRICULTURAL DAMAGE

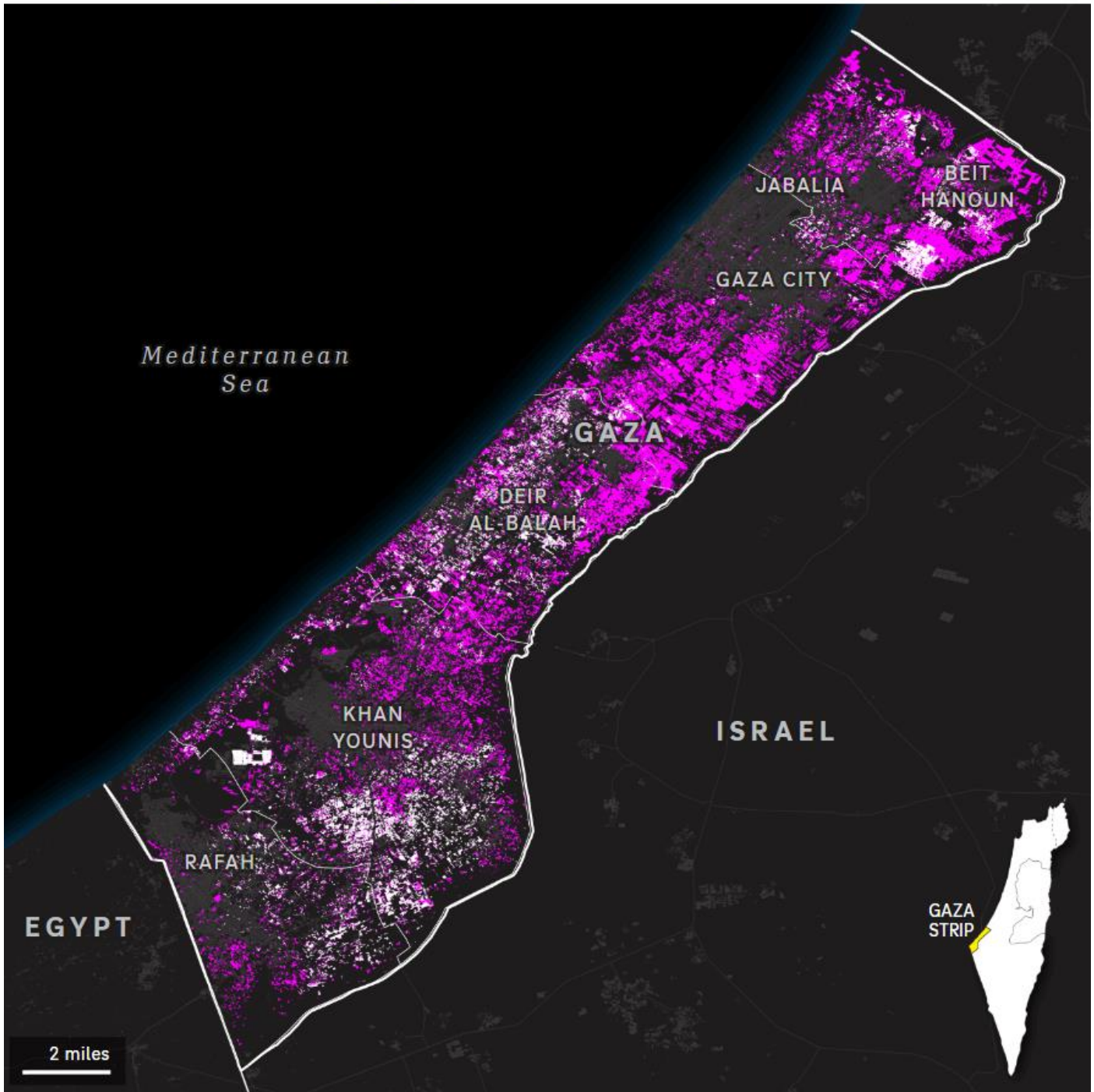
Prior to the war, nearly a quarter of the land in Gaza was covered with orchards, crops or greenhouses, according to He Yin, head of the Remote Sensing and Land Science Lab at Kent State University.

Yin has been closely studying agriculture in the Gaza Strip over the past year. Olives, citrus fruits, flowers and vegetables once grew abundantly there. After a year of war, 70% of greenhouses and nearly 70% of tree crops have been damaged or destroyed, according to Yin's analysis of high-resolution satellite imagery of the region. Tree crops include citrus fruits, olives and other orchard trees. They don't include natural trees or shrubs.

After a year of war, 70% of tree crops have been damaged or destroyed

ESTIMATED DAMAGE TO TREE CROPS IN GAZA

■ Damaged or destroyed □ Undamaged



Source: Damage analysis by He Yin, Kent State University. Tree crops include citrus fruits, olives and crops from other orchard trees.



"Agriculture [in Gaza] is economically valuable, but it's also a cultural symbol," Yin says. Many Gaza residents have been forced to cut down their own olive and citrus trees to create firewood to bake bread and boil water.

Before this war, about 90% of farmers in Gaza worked less than a half acre of land, according to a [2017 report](#) from the nonprofit American Near East Refugee Aid. Others had small home garden plots next to their homes. The loss of a single tree can be devastating.

Widespread destruction of orchards and greenhouses is visible across Gaza



Source: Satellite images ©2023, 2024 Planet Labs PBC  
Credit: Daniel Wood/NPR

"No matter what kind of tree crop, it takes years before you have a harvest," Yin says. "So even if the war stops tomorrow, there's no way to recover these [trees]."

Likewise, the loss of greenhouses will be felt for years to come. Greenhouses typically produce higher-value crops, like seasonal market vegetables.

## HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The widespread destruction of buildings, roads and agriculture exacerbates the desperate situation faced by people throughout Gaza.

The U.N. reports that 17 out of 36 hospitals in Gaza are partially functioning, while the remaining 19 are out of service, as of Oct. 2. Many local medical personnel have been killed, wounded or repeatedly displaced, making hospital operations increasingly difficult. In August, [NPR reported](#) that hundreds of children in need of medical treatment were not being allowed to evacuate the territory, recently leading to the deaths of at least nine children awaiting care.

With the war stretching south over the past year, very few places in Gaza designated by Israel as safe zones for Palestinian civilians remain, as Israel's military puts more and more of the territory under evacuation orders and carries out attacks there.

This has forced many residents to flee to the narrow strip of coast in al-Mawasi, designated as a humanitarian zone by the Israeli military. Conditions in this area are [increasingly overcrowded](#) and unsanitary, as family after family aims to find a safe place to shelter from the Israeli invasion. But this area is not free from Israeli bombardments either. In September, an [Israeli airstrike](#) hit the humanitarian zone, killing at least 19 people. In [July](#), 90 Palestinians were killed in al-Mawasi by an Israeli airstrike. In both cases, Israel's military said it was targeting Hamas commanders. Using just satellite imagery, Yin can sense the growing desperation in Gaza. "First they settled areas that [were] pretty empty — no one's managing that land," Yin observed. "Just barren land and natural fields with shrubs." But as safety in Gaza became increasingly elusive, he noticed displaced people finally entering agricultural land. "They have to, because there's not enough space."

### METHODOLOGY

*Damage analysis of the European Space Agency's Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite data by [Corey Scher](#) of CUNY Graduate Center and [Jamon Van Den Hoek](#) of Oregon State University. The road analysis is from UNOSAT's [comprehensive road damage assessment](#), published Sept. 4, 2024, using imagery collected on Aug. 18, 2024. Tree crop damage analysis by He Yin, Kent State University. The analysis uses 3-meter PlanetScope imagery, courtesy of Planet Labs PBC.*

*Before and after satellite imagery courtesy of Planet Labs PBC. The borders of the humanitarian zone in Gaza are from the [Institute for the Study of War](#) and the [American Enterprise Institute's Critical Threats Project](#). Building footprints from the World Settlement Footprint, 2019.*

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*Aya Batrawy and Daniel Estrin contributed to this report. Preeti Aroon copy edited the story.*

## **WHAT IS HAPPENING IN GAZA? HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS FACING WINTER WITHOUT SHELTER**

**Find out the latest on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza,  
how you can help, and how the Red Cross and Red Crescent is responding**

**[BRITISH RED CROSS](#)** 19 December 2024

It has been more than a year since the attacks in Israel and the escalation of the conflict which has led to relentless and intolerable suffering in Gaza and the wider region. Here you can find out what's been happening, how we've responded and what you can do to support people affected by the crisis.

The latest news update on the Gaza humanitarian crisis

- Conflict shows no signs of slowing and the humanitarian situation in Gaza deteriorates by the day
- More than 43,000 people have died in Gaza, and a further 732 in the West Bank
- At least 101,000 people have been injured in Gaza and a further 5,500 in the West Bank
- The [healthcare system is on the edge of collapse](#), entire neighbourhoods have been destroyed, and families have been torn apart
- In Israel, 1,195 died following the attacks on 7 October 2023. A further 5,432 have been injured
- Families of those held hostage in Gaza remain caught between hope and despair as they desperately await news of their loved one
- Fighting has [intensified in the wider region, particularly on the Israel-Lebanon border](#), where tens of thousands of people have been displaced.

### **A YEAR OF CONFLICT IN ISRAEL AND GAZA**

On 7 October 2023, 1,195 people were killed in Israel and 251 taken hostage.

Since then, more than 43,000 people have been killed in Gaza and many more injured. Hostages are still being held, and innumerable survivors are traumatised. The picture today is catastrophic.

### **PALESTINE RED CRESCENT SOCIETY RESPONSE OVER THE PAST YEAR**

For the past year, nearly 1,600 staff and volunteers from the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) have been working tirelessly to provide life-saving support in Gaza. In the face of immense challenges, losses and risks to their own lives, PRCS has distributed 1.6 million emergency relief items, and provided emergency medical support to over 100,000 people. Tragically, 21 PRCS colleagues have been killed in Gaza and the West Bank in the last year.

Gaza is unrecognisable, with homes, schools, and hospitals having been reduced to rubble. There is not enough food or clean water, and the healthcare system has all but collapsed.

Almost every single person in Gaza, including our own staff and volunteers, has fled their homes. But there is nowhere safe left to go.

## MAGEN DAVID ADOM RESPONSE SINCE 7 OCTOBER 2023

In the first moments after the attacks on 7 October, Magen David Adom mobilised 1,500 ambulances and over 10,000 first responders. Tragically, six Magen David Adom colleagues were killed while responding. Since then, Magen David Adom has responded to over one million emergency calls and collected more than 300,000 units of blood. Magen David Adom continues to support communities, particularly those living near the borders with Gaza and Lebanon, by answering emergency calls and dispatching ambulances and paramedics.

## THE PLIGHT OF HOSTAGES REMAINS A PRIORITY

The families of over 200 hostages endured months of terrible suffering, and for more than 100 hostages and their families, the ordeal continues. More than a year on, the plight of the hostages taken from Israel remains a priority and we call for their immediate and unconditional release.

The British Red Cross reiterates what the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has said from the outset of the crisis: that those taken hostage must be released immediately, and the ICRC must have access to check on their health, the conditions they are being detained in, and their treatment.

The lack of access being granted to the ICRC is causing extreme distress and concern, particularly for families in Israel and beyond who have been desperately waiting for news.

[How your donations are helping](#)

## "WE'VE WORKED TIRELESSLY, DAY AND NIGHT"

Palestine Red Crescent Society workers risk their lives every day to deliver vital aid and providing emergency care to their community.



Palestine Red Crescent Society workers risk their lives every day to deliver vital aid and providing emergency care to their community.

Duration of video: 02:07

Please donate now

## IS AID GETTING INTO GAZA?

The Rafah border, a critical lifeline for humanitarian aid into Gaza, has been closed since May 2024.

The Rafah border crossing was one of the largest and most important aid crossings and though some aid has continued to enter Gaza, the closure exacerbated an already dire situation. Only a trickle of aid is able to reach the area, leaving the PRCS teams in Gaza delivering lifesaving aid with much reduced resources.

We need safe, unimpeded, and sustained humanitarian access into and throughout Gaza. Land-based delivery through the south of Gaza remains the most effective way to deliver aid. These roads are the main arteries for aid delivery and so have the greatest capacity.

- Take a more in-depth look with our explainer: [how is aid getting into Gaza?](#)

### **IS THERE A FAMINE IN GAZA?**

The lack of aid access has had devastating effects for the people of Gaza, who have endured critical food insecurity and face the prospect of famine.

The independent and internationally recognised [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification](#) warned in March 2024 that famine was imminent in the north of Gaza, and also possible later in the south in the worst-case scenario.

- [Explainer: what is food insecurity and why it is a threat?](#)

### **IS THERE ANY CLEAN WATER IN GAZA?**

There are acute shortages of water as 67 per cent of critical water infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed by the ongoing hostilities. Dehydration is making people extremely ill, with children the most vulnerable.

With no means of removing waste water, the overpowering stench of sewage, rubbish and mould is another reality of conflict in Gaza, along with hunger and dehydration.

Infectious diseases, such as vomiting, diarrhoea and hepatitis are spreading rapidly in Gaza, especially in the overcrowded areas where people shelter. Many of the elderly and sick are at greater risk of dying from these diseases.

### **WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE WEST BANK?**

The security situation and rising violence in the West Bank is deeply concerning - 2023 was the deadliest year in the West Bank in over a decade.

According to UNOCHA, since the conflict escalated in October 2023, it has so far led to:

- 732 deaths
- More than 5,500 injuries
- The displacement of over 3,000 people due to the demolition or confiscation of homes and structures
- The loss of people's lands and livelihoods
- The displacement of entire communities.

### **ARE ANY HOSPITALS OPEN IN GAZA?**

The healthcare system in Gaza has all but collapsed. As of November 2024:

- Only 17 of Gaza's 36 hospitals remain even partly functional
- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) continue to provide health services despite immense challenges
- In Rafah, the ICRC has set up a 60-bed field hospital supported by 12 National Societies including the British Red Cross
- Medical teams have performed over 14,500 consultations and 600 surgical procedures
- Teams have performed 3,500 surgical procedures at the European Gaza Hospital
- Health workers have faced unimaginable challenges over the last year

- Since hostilities escalated, hundreds of medical and humanitarian workers have lost their lives while trying to deliver essential medical care and aid. This is unacceptable – medical facilities, health workers and patients, must be protected.

[More about the Red Cross field hospital in Rafah](#)



**"We experienced first hand, the horror of this conflict"**

Dr Sandy Inglis, ICRC's chief medical officer, treated people involved in a mass casualty event in May. He describes what he saw.

Duration of Video 00.52

[More on the Red Cross field hospital in Rafah](#)

### **ARE PEOPLE HOMELESS IN GAZA?**

A million people have been forced to evacuate Rafah since the start of May 2024, and people have been displaced up to six times. There is nowhere safe in Gaza for people to go, and nowhere that can adequately meet people's basic needs.

Many have sought shelter in Rafah, having already been displaced multiple times along the way. Men, women and children have walked for days past horrific scenes of death and destruction, sometimes losing family members throughout the journey.

People are struggling to live with dignity in makeshift tents next to waste or sewerage areas; many are sleeping in the open, or trying to cover themselves with cardboard and scraps of wood.

Those able to find a space in a displacement camp have just one square metre per person. Many shelters lack sufficient ventilation and over half are soaked by water and rain - infectious diseases are spreading rapidly, and vulnerable people are dying.

## HOW IS THE PALESTINE RED CRESCENT SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN GAZA?

The Palestine Red Crescent Society is working day and night, risking, and losing, their lives to deliver assistance. They are mandated to receive and distribute this aid to where it is needed most in Gaza.

In Gaza PRCS teams have:

- received over 22,000 trucks of humanitarian aid for distribution in Gaza
- distributed 1.6 million emergency aid items
- supported over 345,000 people with health services.

### IN THE WEST BANK PRCS TEAMS HAVE:

- responded to 4,052 injuries
- delivered food parcels to 42,840 people

["We must always have hope": what it's like for Red Cross Red Crescent colleagues responding to the crisis in Gaza](#)

## HOW TO HELP PEOPLE IN GAZA

The best way to help people in Gaza today is by donating to the Gaza Crisis Appeal.

Throughout this crisis, Red Cross and Red Crescent teams have been working day and night in Gaza, the West Bank, Israel, Lebanon, and neighbouring countries. Their dedication and the funds raised so far have helped provide lifesaving support, including food, shelter and medical aid.

Aid alone cannot solve this crisis and it is not a substitute for political and other long-term solutions – but it will save lives. Together, with your support, we will continue to be there for people wherever they are for as long as we are needed, in the coming weeks, months and years ahead.

You can help us continue our work in Gaza and affected areas in the wider region, including Lebanon, by donating to our Gaza Crisis Appeal.

[Donate to the Gaza Crisis Appeal](#)



**MAP OF ISRAEL AND THE GAZA STRIP**

## **WHAT IS THE BRITISH RED CROSS DOING FOR GAZA?**

The British Red Cross is directly supporting our partners in the Movement – including the Palestine Red Crescent Society – to respond to these urgent needs, providing funding as well as expert staff.

We have also deployed logistics and managerial staff to the region to support with the delivery and distribution of aid and humanitarian assistance.

We will do all we can to support people on both sides of the conflict for as long as we're needed.

What is the Occupied Palestinian Territory?

The Occupied Palestinian Territory or OPT is an internationally accepted description, used by the United Nations. It refers to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem).

## **WHAT IS THE GAZA STRIP?**

The Gaza Strip is part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It is an enclave 25 miles long and six miles wide, bounded by the Mediterranean Sea, Israel, and Egypt.

### **Gaza Crisis Appeal**

Millions of people across Gaza, Lebanon and the wider region are in urgent need of food, shelter and medical care. Please help now.

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## **WHY DID ISRAEL THINK A BORDER FENCE WOULD PROTECT IT FROM AN ARMY OF TERRORISTS?**

**Once an offensive-minded force, the IDF thought it could hunker down behind walls and the Iron Dome, while the threat grew on the other side**

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Lazar Berman](#) 10 October 2023

On the morning of October 7 — a date that will long be marked as one of the Jewish people’s darkest days — Israel’s security concept crumbled as Hamas terrorists streamed through, over, and around its Gaza border fence.

Israeli leaders believed that the fortification, an NIS 3.5 billion (\$1.1 billion) project that took over three years to complete, would provide a defensive shield around its citizens on the border.

“This barrier, a creative, technological project of the first order, denies Hamas one of the capabilities that it tried to develop and puts a wall of iron, sensors and concrete between it and the residents of the south,” [said](#) then-defense minister Benny Gantz at a ceremony marking its completion in 2019.

As videos of the calamity on Saturday made painfully clear, the fence did next to nothing to stop the invasion.

Hamas fighters knocked it aside with bulldozers, then drove right through the gaping holes in jeeps and on motorcycles. Others sailed right over in gliders, while members of Hamas’s navy hopped on boats to try to reach Israel by sea.

The results are known to everyone by this point. Nearly a thousand Israelis dead, the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. More than a hundred hostages, including elderly women and infants, in Hamas captivity.

How did the mighty IDF, which once knocked massive Arab armies out of action with bold ground maneuvers, find itself relying on a fence to protect the lives of its citizens living nearby?

### **TAKING OFFENSE**

Throughout most of its history, the IDF did not want much to do with defensive measures. Its traditional security concept rested on three complementary pillars — deterrence, early warning, and decisive battlefield victory (*hachra’a* in Hebrew).

Guided by this concept in the era of its famous victories over conventional Arab armies, the IDF built offensive power designed to deter its enemies from attacking, and intelligence arrays to detect when that deterrence had eroded. If it was unable to convince the other side that it was better off avoiding conflict, the IDF would bring the full might of its offensive capabilities to bear in search of a rapid and decisive victory in enemy territory.

This would, according to the concept, strengthen deterrence.

Defense began sneaking into the conversation in the 1960s, as Israel considered purchasing the Hawk surface-to-air missile system from the US. The possibility of spending scarce resources on defense roused stiff opposition at the highest level of the IDF.

Air Force commander Ezer Weizman opposed the idea on the grounds that it would give Israel's political chiefs an excuse to avoid the bold offensive operations — in this case surprise airstrikes — necessary to win a war. “I feared that when the senior leadership would need to approve an air offensive,” Weizman revealed in his memoir, “the presence in Israel of Hawk missiles would actually block a fast-affirmative decision [to strike first].”

Other senior IAF officers took issue with the Hawk missiles over the fact that they were purely defensive. They argued the money would be better spent on flexible platforms like aircraft that could serve in both defensive and offensive roles.

In the end, five Hawk missile batteries were purchased just before the 1967 Six Day War for \$30 million. Notably, they were integrated into the existing offensive concept, by protecting Israel's air force installations (in addition to the Dimona nuclear reactor) to maintain the IAF's deterrence and first-strike capabilities.

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The subsequent defensive project the IDF embarked upon was a debacle — and one that presaged the disaster three days ago.

The infamous Bar-Lev Line, the string of fortifications built on the banks of the Suez Canal after the Six Day War, was easily overrun by Egyptian forces at the start of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Instead of holding off the enemy advance to give IDF reserves the time to reach the front and go on the offensive, attempts to rescue the besieged troops in the outposts — rather than gathering enough force to cross the Suez and take the fight to the enemy — sucked up much of the Southern Command's attention and resources in the difficult early days of the war.

### IRON WALLS

“In the end, in the State of Israel, as I see it, there will be a fence surrounding it,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared, during a February 2016 tour of the Israel-Jordan border. “They'll say to me, ‘That's what you want to do, to defend the villa?’ The answer is yes. ‘Will we surround all of Israel with fences and obstacles?’ The answer is yes.”

The reliance on a defensive barrier didn't begin with Netanyahu. Israel embarked on its current reliance on border barriers during

After the March 2002 Park Hotel Seder night suicide bombing and the ensuing Operation Defensive Shield, Israel began building the controversial security barrier to separate West Bank Palestinians from Israelis. It built a new and improved fence on the Israel-Gaza border. It spent more than NIS 1.6 billion on a 245-mile

fence on its border with Egypt, initially to keep African migrants out and then as a bulwark against Sinai-based terrorist groups. After deadly protests by Palestinians in Syria in May and June 2011, during which dozen of protesters breached the existing fence, Israel built an eight-meter-high barrier running south from Majd al-Shams.

In 2016, Israel began building the fence from Eilat to Timna, on the border with Jordan.

If it was building walls, Israel also had to get its citizens behind them. In 2005, Ariel Sharon pushed through the Disengagement from Gaza and the northern West Bank, evacuating thousands of Israeli civilians, some

The walls began affecting the mindset of the soldiers and leaders bunkered down behind them. The state had built up mental barriers in the minds of its defenders no less formidable than those on its borders.

The Gilad Shalit kidnapping in 2006 — after the Gaza disengagement — remains a stunning illustration of the adverse psychological affects of being walled in. Hamas terrorists tunneled under the border fence, and attacked outposts and a tank where soldiers failed to react effectively. They were either entirely unfocused on a potential threat, or were simply asleep, assuming that the mere presence of the barrier would keep them safe.

According to a report by Gen. (res.) Giora Eiland, who investigated the incident, Israeli forces were slow to cross the fence into Gaza in pursuit of the kidnappers, thinking they needed special permissions and preparations to enter the Strip.

## **WALLS IN THE SKY**

As Israel threw up walls and fences, its enemies pursued a logical response — they intensified the development of their rocket and missile arsenals to fly over the barriers. This threat truly opened the way for defense to take its place among the three traditional elements of the Israeli security concept.

After Hezbollah succeeded in maintaining sustained Katyusha rocket fire throughout the 2006 Second Lebanon War, the 2007 Meridor Committee on Israel's National Security Doctrine presented defense as the fourth pillar in the national security concept. The same year, then-prime minister Ehud Olmert accepted the recommendation of defense minister Amir Peretz and [approved](#) Iron Dome as Israel's solution against short-range rockets.

Iron Dome was envisioned as the short-range component in Israel's emerging missile defense system. David's Sling would protect against medium-range rockets, while the Arrow 2 and Arrow 3 systems were intended to engage long-range ballistic missiles.

It didn't take long for the Iron Dome to affect how Israel fought. The Gaza operation that took place before Iron Dome's operational deployment, the 2008-9 Operation Cast Lead, saw a significant ground maneuver by IDF infantry and armored forces.

After the Iron Dome was deployed in 2011, Israel fought two more major conflicts against Hamas. In the 2012 Operation Pillar of Defense, the IDF relied entirely on stand-off firepower and did not maneuver at all,

while the limited ground advance in the 2014 Operation Protective Edge was part of a defensive effort against tunnels, and was not meant to defeat Hamas in the field.

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The recent rounds against Hamas also did not feature any ground maneuver.

It should be noted that the IDF had been moving away from ground maneuver since the 1990s, relying on precision strikes that would not put IDF soldiers directly in harm's way. But there was a recognition that the IDF needed to urgently fix its ground maneuver capabilities after the 2006 debacle, and the success of the Iron Dome robbed maneuver advocates of much of their momentum.

Investment in defense aroused opposition this time around as well. Many IDF officers saw the system as a threat to the IDF offensive war-fighting concept. What's worse, they argued, missile defense could even damage Israel's deterrence, as it would take money from the offensive capabilities on which that deterrence rests.

Students of military history will make the association with other failed massive defensive systems, ones that had the very effect of which Weizman was afraid. In a 2015 Ma'arachot article, IDF Brigadier General (res.) Dr. Meir Finkel details the effect of the defensive fortification line France built in the 1930s to hold off a German offensive. The state-of-the-art Maginot Line consumed 6 percent of France's defense budget from 1930 to 1937, taking desperately needed funds from offensive capabilities like tanks and planes.

The impact of the Maginot Line was felt beyond budgets. In his work on the fall of France in World War II, British historian Alistair Horne describes how the line became not only a core component of French strategy, but also created an illusory atmosphere of safety and security.

It provided neither, and when the German armor finally came in 1940, it simply attacked through the Ardennes Forest where the fortifications were sparse. France surrendered within 46 days.

### **A THREAT ALLOWED TO GROW**

With the illusion that the technological wizardry of the Iron Dome and the high-tech fence grants it a hermetically sealed bunker to shelter in for as long as it needs to, Israel chose to let the Gaza problem fester.

The range and precision of the Gaza terror groups' rockets steadily expanded. In 2012, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv came under fire, and in 2014, it was Haifa's turn. In the same conflict, Hamas even succeeded in temporarily shutting down Israel's Ben Gurion Airport, for several hours cutting off from the world the country with the mightiest military in the Middle East. This had been unthinkable only a few years before.

"What was once a tactical defense mechanism to temporarily protect the civilian population has become a strategy unto itself," [wrote](#) Tel Aviv University political theorist Yoav Fromer.

Senior IDF officers warned that the enemy would aim to carry out the type of attacks it did on October 7, and that the area just beyond the fence had become the target of enemy plans.

Col. Yehuda Vach, commander of the Officer Training School, [spoke](#) to battalion and brigade commanders operating along Israel's border fences, and published his insights in a 2019 article in the IDF's Dado Center Journal.

The officers told him that "Hezbollah and Hamas are 'knocking on the fence,' and understand that they don't need to penetrate deep into Israeli territory to make strategic gains, but simply need to cross the fence and carry out attacks and kidnapping near the border. The commanders were well aware of the threat of kidnapping attacks, but were not confident they could stop all attempts.

"Because we don't cross the fence, the other side has become strategically stronger," wrote Vach. "The enemy conducts a strategy around the fence, while we guard the fence with small and weak forces."

"The enemy will seek in the next campaign to carry out an operation to kidnap soldiers and harm civilians in the towns near the fence, thus enjoying the first achievement of the campaign," he predicted. "The fence creates an illusion and gives a false sense of security to both the soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces and the residents near the fence."

The illusion has now dissipated, the false sense of security shattered. The question now is what it will be replaced with.

Will Israel return to its offensive mindset, and maneuver deep into Gaza to achieve a decisive victory over the organization that snatched its children and shot its senior citizens in the head? Or will it look for other ways to tell its citizens it has given them security, while dangerous enemies continue to plot just over its borders?

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF ISRAEL'S GAZA BARRIER

**By completing a barrier around Gaza, Israel aims to remove any security-based pressure to reach a two-state solution.**

[CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT SADA](#) Basem Aly March 27, 2019

On February 3, Israel began construction on the third and last phase of a large barrier along its land and sea borders with Gaza. As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [tweeted](#), Israel aims to “prevent terrorists from Gaza from penetrating into our territory on the ground,” adding, “If the quiet is not maintained in Gaza, we will not hesitate to act.” Aside from Netanyahu’s plan to surround Israel with a fence to “[protect ourselves from wild beasts](#)”—referring to the Palestinian factions—this move is part of a larger strategy to remove any security-based pressure on Israel to reach a two-state solution.

Once completed, the aboveground barrier, constructed of [galvanized steel](#), will be 65 kilometers (40 miles) long, covering the area from Zikim on Gaza’s northern border—where a new three layer, 200-meter (656 foot) sea barrier extends off the coast—to the Kerem Shalom crossing in the south. The entire aboveground length has a corresponding [underground section](#) with advanced sensors and monitoring devices. The sea barrier is not only made of heavy concrete slabs and metal rods, it also [includes](#) a “smart fence” with sensors and an alarm system. It surrounds the breakwater as a “final security measure,” in response to a Hamas operation in the 2014 war in which a team of militants entered Israel through the sea.

The new barrier has significant implications not just for Israeli security but the future of the peace process. Historically, armed struggle has served as a key tool for the Palestinians to force Israel to make concessions concerning negotiations. The 1993 [Oslo Accords](#), for instance, agreed “to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority” in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in return for ending “decades of confrontation and conflict.” Certainly, Palestinians had combined the paramilitary operations with political and diplomatic steps such as calling on Arab and international states to collectively adopt anti-Israeli positions or arranging large-scale protests, widely known as the Intifada. However, their gains in the peace process gradually started to diminish as—following the death of Yasser Arafat in 2005—Fatah party leader Mahmoud Abbas called for an end to the Palestinian Intifada and denounced paramilitary operations. He even later encouraged the rival Islamist group Hamas to follow the same path.

As armed struggle reached its lowest levels in years—due to both intra-Palestinian divisions and the Israeli siege of Gaza—Palestinians still made some progress in terms of gaining international recognition to their statehood rights. For example, in 2012 the UN General Assembly voted to upgrade the Palestinian Authority’s (PA) observer status from “entity” to “non-member status,” following UNESCO’s decision to grant it full membership in 2011. However, even though months-long Palestinian protests and clashes with Israeli forces along the Gaza-Israel border would suggest the reemergence of some of the conditions that led to Oslo, measures such as the wall have lessened the pressure these protests put on Israel to make concessions. This suggests that Palestinian diplomacy cannot make further gains in negotiations unless it is backed by active, armed resistance.

During the past decade, Netanyahu’s successive coalitions have expanded settlement building and the extent of control over Palestinian territories to an unprecedented degree, also showing no interest in

addressing the issue of the return of Palestinian refugees. These developments coincided with a decline in the number of terrorist attacks, mainly due to the presence of the West Bank barrier that former prime minister Ariel Sharon built in 2002 in response to Israeli public pressure. Since then, [according to Israeli official figures](#), the West Bank saw 87 “terror events” in 2018 as opposed to 97 in 2017, 169 in 2016, and 219 in 2015. In Gaza, Israel wants a similar outcome. Hamas is the only major Palestinian faction that continues to use a confrontational strategy against Israel, regularly launching rockets toward Israel and digging tunnels to smuggle military equipment into Gaza from Israel and target Israeli security personnel in cross-border raids.

The completion of the barrier leaves Hamas with few options. One is to escalate its paramilitary activities, potentially leading to the outbreak of a new war. Although Hamas has emphasized that it will still be able to pose a threat to Israel after the barrier is completed, it is unclear how it can do so, especially if the barrier cuts off the smuggling routes it relies on for access to military equipment. Based on the example of the West Bank barrier, Israel will likely succeed in making it harder for groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad to attack its territories while maintaining the ability to launch an offensive against Hamas whenever it deems it necessary. If the barrier proves effective, there will be no security-based motive for Netanyahu's cabinet to worry about Palestinian calls for negotiations. Hamas might instead consider new asymmetrical tactics, such as the car-ramming attacks used in the West Bank or hijacking the large-scale protests along the Gaza–Israel border.

Alternatively, Hamas could acknowledge that its militants are no longer capable of fighting Israel, potentially leading to a dramatic shift in its political and ideological beliefs. Based on this logic, it will aim to avoid incurring new Israeli offensives that it will find difficult to counter, especially if asymmetrical tactics appear to have no effect. Halting violent operations could make it possible for Hamas to negotiate a long-lasting ceasefire with Israel that could ease restrictions on the entrance of food, reconstruction materials, and medical supplies. So long as these demands do not include Palestinian calls for territorial concessions, Israel may be inclined to accept them, especially if Hamas agrees to end its paramilitary activities. Yet not only would this cause significant divisions within Hamas's ranks, especially between its military wing and political bureau, it is no guarantee of further concessions from Israel, which continuously insists on excluding Hamas from any rounds of peace talks. Hamas has [indirectly indicated](#) in the past that it could accept a two-state solution if the majority of Palestinians approved a deal. However, with a secure border, Israel has little reason to give Hamas anything else.

**PART J1-3**

**GAZA - FOOD**



## **FOOD INSECURITY IN THE OPT: 1.3 MILLION PALESTINIANS IN THE GAZA STRIP ARE FOOD INSECURE**

**OCHA** United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 14 December 2018

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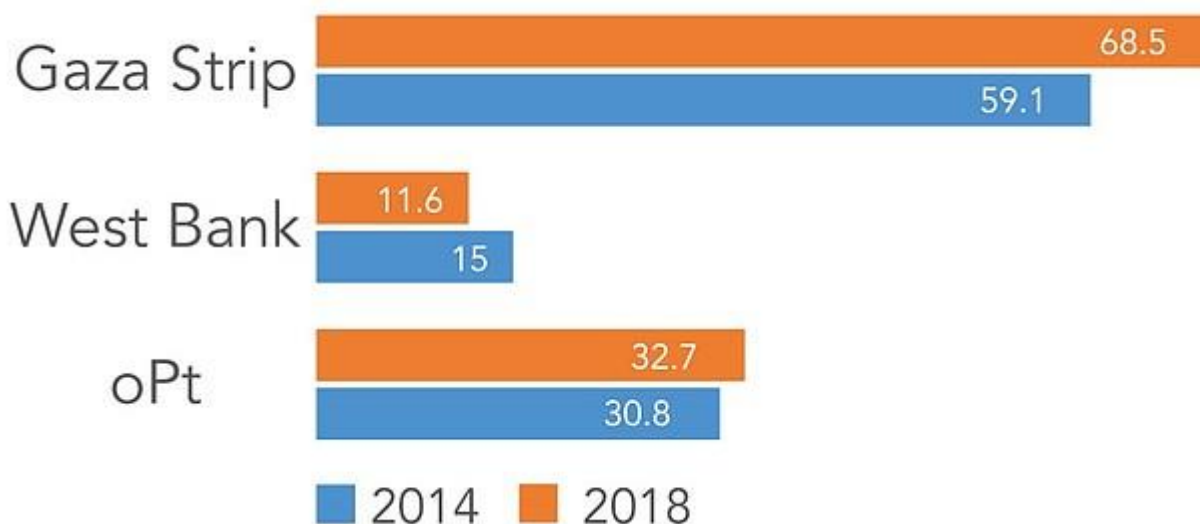
Over 68 per cent of households in the Gaza Strip, or about 1.3 million people, are severely or moderately food insecure, according to the preliminary findings of the latest Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey (SefSec) carried out in 2018. [1] This is despite the fact that 69 per cent of households in Gaza reported in the survey that they receive some form of food assistance or other forms of social transfers from Palestinian governmental bodies or international organizations. The current food insecurity rate in Gaza constitutes a rise of 9 percentage points from the equivalent figure for 2014 (59 per cent), the last time the SefSec was conducted. By contrast, food insecurity in the West Bank stands at nearly 12 per cent of households according to the same survey, down from 15 per cent in 2014.

Food insecurity in the oPt is primarily caused by limited economic access to food. The World Bank forecast economic growth of 1.7 per cent for the oPt in 2018, “declining significantly in per capita terms”. [2] In Gaza the economy is “in free fall, registering minus 6 per cent growth in the first quarter of 2018 ... (while) initial indications are that Gaza has further deteriorated in the second quarter.” While the situation in the West Bank is not as dire, “the economy is expected to slow considerably in the coming period”. [3]

The unemployment rate in the oPt has also increased in recent years and reached nearly 32 per cent in the third quarter of 2018; in Gaza the rate was almost 55 per cent, the highest ever recorded. Of the approximately 244,000 people recorded as “employed” in Gaza, about 62,000 are public employees on the PA’s payroll whose salaries have been cut since March 2017. Another 22,000 are employees recruited by the Hamas authorities who have only received part of their salaries on an irregular basis since 2014: in November some of these employees were paid their August salaries from the Qatari funding.

Unemployment among youth in Gaza exceeded 70 per cent, and was even higher for females at 78 per cent in the second quarter of 2018. [4]

Food insecurity by area, in percentages of households



Poverty is one of the main determinants of food insecurity. The 2017 Household Expenditure and Consumption Survey found that the poverty rate in Gaza had increased from 38.8 to 53 per cent since the previous survey in 2011. Nearly two-thirds of the poor, or about 656,000 people, are considered to be living in “deep poverty”.<sup>[5]</sup>

The chronic energy deficit has placed additional pressure on farmers, herders and fishermen who are already experiencing an increase in agricultural input costs despite falling vegetable and poultry market prices, putting profitability and sustainability at risk. The electricity crisis made it difficult for households to refrigerate food items and caused increased expenditure and work for women as daily cooking or use of canned food is required.<sup>[6]</sup> The situation has improved with the recent boost to the electricity supply. Food insecurity has been further jeopardized by the shortfall in funding to UNRWA and decreased support from the Palestinian Ministry of Social Development to the most vulnerable, leading to higher levels of household debt. Due to the timing of data collection, the full impact of these challenges might not be fully reflected in the 2018 SefSec findings, which indicated that the prevalence of food insecurity among refugees in the Gaza Strip is slightly lower (67.3 per cent) than among non-refugees (70.3 per cent). Cash Transfer Programming (CTP) is increasingly recognised as a major modality of humanitarian assistance. This is particularly true in the Gaza Strip where years of blockade and conflict have decimated exports and private sector investments, making aid and remittances the almost exclusive source of foreign exchange inflow.

In the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for the oPt, the humanitarian community appealed for \$130 million for various cash assistance interventions in the Gaza Strip, including \$95 million for food security and \$34 million for temporary shelter cash assistance (TSCA) for those still displaced since the 2014 hostilities. By the end of November 2018, humanitarian organizations had received only \$23 million, or 18 per cent of the requirements. This has prevented the delivery of the majority of the planned interventions. UNRWA was forced to halt the distribution of TSCA entirely during the second half of 2018. The two main modalities of cash assistance in the food security sector have been Cash for Work and Cash for Livelihood interventions. In 2018, UNRWA appealed for \$63.6 million to offer short-term employment opportunities for more than 54,000 people, or the equivalent to over 5.5 million workdays. Such opportunities could have injected millions into the local economy, however, due to underfunding, less than

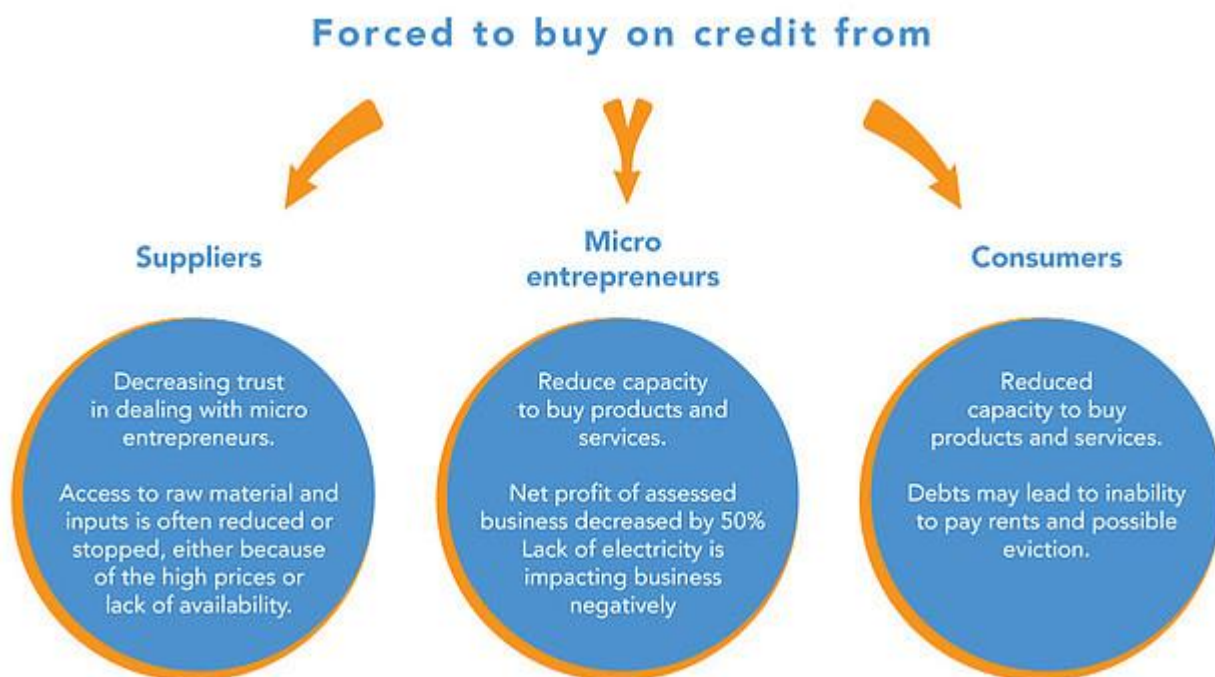
10 per cent of the appeal target was reached. Another 12 humanitarian partners requested \$5.7 million for Cash for Livelihood, with only \$1.1 million received by the end of November 2018.

Constraints on micro businesses indicative of broader livelihood crisis

Businesses in the Gaza Strip are mostly small, both in terms of the number of employees and the value of their assets. According to a 2017 survey by UNDP, the majority (88.8%) employ one to four workers. This small-scale private sector continues to operate under increasing internal and external stress resulting from the Israeli-imposed blockade and intra-Palestinian political divisions.

In September 2018 Action Against Hunger's Food Security and Livelihoods team surveyed several beneficiaries of its Income Generating Activities to assess the impact of 2018 developments on the performance of the micro businesses. All the interviewees stated that lack of cash in the communities where the businesses are located forces their consumers and themselves to buy on credit.

The survey was conducted on behalf of the Cash Programming Working Group, which operates under the Food Security Sector, to coordinate, promote and facilitate sustainable activities related to Cash Programming in Palestine. The main mandate of the working group is to address all methodologies and standards of Cash Programming related to emergency interventions, medium and long-term food security related programs.



Cash assistance beneficiary progresses from struggling to feed her children to giving business tips

Asbita Ali El Masri lives with her son and his wife Wedad and their four children in Gaza city. The family was a selected beneficiary of Action Against Hunger's cash assistance program. The program targets women and aims at supporting small income generating activities (IGA) along with managerial and business plan training in order to increase disposable income for high vulnerable families.

The hostilities had a destructive impact on this family. In 2014, an Israeli "warning" [\[7\]](#) missile hit the house, killing Wedad's 13-year-old son, and destroying the house except for two rooms. The family was displaced twice in the past, as a result of the 2009 and 2012 hostilities.

'We also lost our sheep, chickens and rabbits', Asbita explains. 'It was the business I took over after my husband's death.'

Since 2014, Asbita and her son's family of four children continue to live in the only two rooms that were not destroyed. Given their poor economic status, Wedad had moved back with her parents for a period of time as it is custom in Gaza, a woman is expected to go back to her own parents' house if her husband is no longer able to cover the family expenses. In such cases, the children would then stay with the father, at his parents' house. However, unlike many couples, Wedad returned to live with her family at her mother-in-law's house.

'It was too hard to be separated from my husband, he is my rock', said Wedad. 'We struggled to keep the children well fed and we reduced our own meals. We did not care about the quality of the food. We just did not want them to go hungry.' She explained.

Even before the last war in 2014, as Wedad gradually took over responsibilities from Asbita who became ill, she went through many rough days to support the family. 'I had to save up to buy milk for my children. Food in general had become more expensive and therefore scarcer since the beginning of the blockade.'

Despite the heavy losses during the last hostilities, the family resumed the sheep rearing business after the war with Action Against Hunger's cash assistance and training. Asbita now takes care of the financial side of things, while the animals are Wedad's responsibility.

'We were taught to make sound business decisions like buying fodder in bulk to ensure availability and avoid sudden price increases. With the first payment, we prepared the barn, and with the second one we bought the sheep.' Said Asbita.

Wedad describes with pride how they are now able to provide their children with vegetables, fruits and even meat up to twice a week. The family has future plans for the business. They want to expand into poultry and rabbits again. 'A friend recently asked me for tips on how to create her own business', Wedad smiles. 'I offered her my business plan!'

## GAZA'S FOOD CRISIS BEGAN LONG BEFORE THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

**The threat of famine has deepened with war  
and will continue after the conflict ends**

**THINK GLOBAL HEALTH** by [Simone Lipkind](#) April 18, 2024



A Palestinian woman waits to receive  
food supplies  
at an aid distribution center  
run by  
United Nations Relief and Works  
Agency (UNRWA),  
at Beach refugee camp,  
in Gaza City, on March 10 2022.  
REUTERS/Mohammed Salem

Ten days after an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) drone strike killed seven aid workers distributing food with the World Central Kitchen, USAID Director Samantha Power confirmed on April 11 what many humanitarian experts had claimed long prior: Famine is under way in the northern Gaza Strip.

Yet the seeds of Gaza's famine were sown long before these aid workers' deaths and even before the devastating October 7 attack by Hamas. In 2022, [64.3% of Gaza's population](#) was already classified as being moderately or severely food insecure, and [77% of residents](#) reported that all of their family members had reduced the number of meals they consume per day.

Even though Israel's war with Hamas has brought Gaza's population to the brink of famine, Israeli policies that predate October 7 created a food insecure environment that was uniquely vulnerable to this threat. Israeli government officials [have emphasized](#) Hamas's role in precipitating [the hunger crisis](#), specifically, its history of [diverting aid and stockpiling resources to benefit a select few](#), but a wide variety of aid groups insist that [the biggest challenge](#) to their famine prevention efforts is Israel's military campaign, not Hamas's hoarding of humanitarian assistance.

### FARMS AND FISH

Starting in 2007, after Hamas took control of Gaza, Israel instituted new security regulations that hampered the territory's infrastructure and limited access to food throughout the strip. To protect its civilian population in southern Israel, the IDF carved a thousand-kilometer buffer zone out of Gaza's territory, taking [29% of its farmland](#) out of its normal circulation in one of the world's most densely populated territories. Both Israel

and Egypt also enforced a blockade of the strip, and Israel strictly regulated whether items it considered dual use, anything that could have both a civilian and military purpose, could enter the territory.



A Palestinian farmer works inside farmland after an Israeli ban on Gaza's exports, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, on September 5, 2023. REUTERS/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa

Those [import restrictions](#) kept food items including dates, certain agricultural fertilizers, and materials critical to developing and maintaining infrastructure, such as concrete, out of Gaza. Controls on dual-use items have [devastated electricity infrastructure](#) and contributed to [chronic energy deficits](#) throughout Gaza, exacerbating food insecurity by making refrigeration unreliable.

Some [70%](#) of water-, sanitation-, and hygiene-related materials also appear on Israel's dual-use list, and, before October 7, less than [16% of the materials](#) critical to water infrastructure were reaching Gaza. [Almost one-third](#) of Gazan households were not connected to sanitation systems, and Gaza's sole freshwater aquifer had been [overdrawn](#), the void filled by seawater and untreated sewage. As a result, 97% of Gaza's freshwater supply was unsuitable for human consumption by 2019.

This water contamination, in addition to being [the leading cause of infant mortality](#) in the strip, had also driven food insecurity given Israeli restrictions on fishing off Gaza's coast. Israel maintains full control of the waters off of Gaza, and although the exact perimeter has fluctuated depending on negotiations, the Israeli military has set firm limits on fishing areas for Gazans, ranging from [3](#) to [15](#) nautical miles. Those restrictions [compelled Gazans](#) to fish mostly in shallow, sewage-filled waters and contributed to the persistent overfishing of polluted fish. Even when restrictions were looser, many fishermen did not have boats capable of traversing deeper waters because more powerful engines are also [considered dual-use materials](#).

Hamas made matters worse by continuously prioritizing regime survival over the needs of Gazan civilians. Hamas imposed steep tax hikes on many food items in [2015](#), [2019](#), [2022](#), and [2023](#) even though its leadership often [claimed](#) that these revenues were meant to benefit its civil servants. The group also [reportedly stockpiled](#) months of food for its fighters leading up to October 7 but not for unaffiliated Gazan civilians.

**TWO-THIRDS**  
**Given the plethora of**  
**obstacles, two-thirds of**  
**Gaza's population**  
**depended on food**  
**assistance before the war**

Given the plethora of obstacles, [two-thirds of Gaza's population](#) depended on food assistance before the war.

These challenges existed before Israel's current offensive in Gaza, but conflict has long and consistently intensified Gaza's food shortages. After [Operation Cast Lead](#) in 2009, Israel limited fishing grounds to three nautical miles from Gaza's shore, leading to a [47% decrease](#) in total catch. That same war also damaged [17%](#) of Gaza's cultivated land by both bulldozing and

chemical contamination in agricultural areas. In 2014, during another outbreak of violence between Israel and Hamas, the Israeli military [killed](#) almost 2,000 cattle and destroyed or partially destroyed 10 dairy processors. The total loss just to the dairy sector exceeded \$43 million.

### **FOOD INSECURITY SINCE OCTOBER 7**

The current war is no exception to this phenomenon but its effects on Gaza's food supply are unprecedented. On October 9, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [announced](#) that "there will be no electricity, no food, no fuel—everything is being blocked off. We are fighting human animals, and we will act accordingly." During the war's first month alone, 30 food warehouses [were struck](#), along with hundreds of grocery stores. By November 10, water consumption had shrunk by [92% on average](#) across Gaza's population. In December, widespread reports emerged in Israeli newspapers that Gazans were eating [shrubs and expired food](#).

That same month, UNICEF estimated that children in southern Gaza had access to only [1.5 to 2 liters of drinking water per day](#). The World Health Organization recommends 50 liters per day for basic consumption and hygiene needs, and 3 liters for simple survival.



Palestinian children wait to collect drinking water amid shortages, at a tent camp sheltering people, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on January 28, 2024.  
 REUTERS/Saleh Salem

Even though this crisis was well documented, the Israeli government continued to undermine humanitarian efforts by hindering attempts both to move vital supplies into Gaza and to distribute them. A dual-use list still dictates what materials can enter Gaza. [Israeli officials claim](#) that they are not rejecting "anything that is

underneath four headlines . . . Food, water, medical supplies and shelters," but aid groups report that Israeli inspectors have [refused goods such as tinned foods](#).

If a single item in a truck is rejected, the entire truck is often forced to queue again with an average wait time of [20 days](#). Once food items are across the border, distribution problems emerge. [Fifty-one percent](#) of planned food missions to high-risk areas have been denied or impeded by the Israeli military. Meanwhile, humanitarian workers such as those from the World Central Kitchen, who attempt to deconflict their efforts from the IDF's by following protocol and informing Israel's Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) of their plans to distribute aid often simply receive [a confirmation of receipt, not a guarantee of safety](#).

This war has been one of the deadliest for humanitarian workers, killing [more than 200](#) thus far. In its efforts to root out Hamas, Israel's military has targeted both Hamas combatants and Gaza's civil authorities, who would normally escort aid workers' distribution efforts. Even though the [United States has pressed the Israeli government](#) to cease its attacks on members of Gaza's police force, Israel has largely persisted. In response, Gazan police have stopped escorting these food aid missions, creating a breakdown in civil order that has led to tragedies that include the death of [more than 100](#) Palestinians who swarmed an aid convoy for flour.

In the aftermath of the World Central Kitchen convoy strike, Israel has taken steps to improve Gazan civilians' access to humanitarian aid but, given the scale of the crisis and its deeply entrenched causes, these attempts may not be sufficient. [Most famine victims](#) succumb not to starvation but to opportunistic infections that prey on compromised immune systems, which means that Gaza's health system, gutted by Israel's military campaign, is compounding its hunger crisis.

### **GAZA'S HEALTH SYSTEM,**

#### **GUTTED BY ISRAEL'S MILITARY CAMPAIGN, IS COMPOUNDING ITS HUNGER CRISIS**

Of Gaza's 36 hospitals, only 10 [were still functioning](#) as of early April, and they were operating at 359% of their intended capacity. Clean water is essential to staving off infections such as diarrhea and cholera that can be deadly to those suffering from hunger, and clean water was exceedingly rare in pre-war Gaza.

Chlorine tabs, often used by aid workers to purify water, remain banned as part of [Israel's dual-use list](#).

The Israeli government has touted the increased number of trucks passing through Israeli inspections as evidence that the humanitarian crisis is easing, but experts have pointed out that these numbers can be misleading. For instance, COGAT [has counted](#) many half-filled trucks as full, artificially inflating the amount of aid entering the Gaza Strip.

With 1.1 million Gazans [facing imminent famine](#), dire food shortages, a dilapidated health system, and ongoing military hostilities, dramatic changes are necessary to prevent thousands of deaths. Even if a peace were reached tomorrow, deaths would continue as those suffering from hunger would remain vulnerable.

Yet just as famines do not resolve overnight, they do not appear overnight either, and this war may have laid the groundwork for future food insecurity in Gaza. More than 20% of Gaza's greenhouses [have been destroyed](#), along with 30% of irrigation infrastructure. Israeli naval forces have also destroyed or



damaged [70% of Gaza's boats](#). Many Gazans who once relied on chickens for eggs and cows for milk have [slaughtered them](#) to meet their immediate needs, sacrificing a future reliable source of food. An estimated [70% of all livestock](#) and other animals in Gaza have died since October 7. More than [40% of all croplands](#) have been damaged; in some areas the damage is permanent and the result of Israel's [attempts to flood](#) Hamas's tunnels with seawater, further contaminating Gaza's groundwaters. Even once the war ends and the tons of rubble are cleared, the underlying soil will wear the scars of this conflict.



Palestinians wait to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen amid shortages of food supplies, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on February 13, 2024.  
REUTERS/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa

Simone Lipkind is a research associate for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

## **HAMAS STEALS FOOD FROM ITS CITIZENS, YET ISRAEL GETS BLAMED**

**Hamas alone is employing starvation as a weapon of war.**

**It knows enemies of Israel will blame the Jewish state,  
helping push Israel to end the war.**

[ins](#) Jason Shvili Mar 19 2024/FLAME

Jason Shvili is a contributing editor at Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME), which publishes educational messages to correct lies and misperceptions about Israel and its relationship to the United States.

*“Israel has been intentionally starving the Palestinian people in Gaza since 8 October,”* say United Nations “experts.”

This accusation is blatantly false: Israel is neither responsible for nor complicit in Gazans going hungry. First, Israel facilitates unprecedented deliveries of food to Gaza, despite enormous obstacles. Second, there is no food shortage in Gaza. Third, it is Hamas who is starving Gaza’s civilians, using their suffering to bring international pressure on Israel to cease its campaign to destroy the terrorist group.

Given these realities, why do the media and leftist politicians so willingly swallow and perpetuate the lie that Israel is starving Gazans?

All evidence shows that while there is food in Gaza, most Gazans cannot afford it. The reason: Hamas prevents needy Gazans from accessing donated food by stealing and reselling it on the black market—forcing Gazans to pay exorbitant prices for what should be free.

Related Articles

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Hamas is also working to prevent Israel’s efforts to facilitate aid delivery to ordinary Gazans through local clans and business people, threatening reprisals against Palestinians who cooperate with Israel as it attempts to prevent theft by the terrorists.

For the media, politicians, the United Nations and NGOs to blame Israel for the suffering of Gazan civilians is not only inaccurate and unfair, it distracts world attention from the real reasons for Gaza’s hunger crisis. Where are the stories exposing Hamas’s profiteering in food it steals from the mouths of starving children and families? Where are the cries to stop the plunder and safely deliver donated food directly to ordinary Gazans?

The accusation that Israel is “starving Gazans” is a blood libel—malicious and unproven. There is no proof that Israel intentionally limits food supplies to Gaza. To the contrary, Israel makes herculean efforts to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza. Over the last five months, Israel has allowed nearly 14,000 aid trucks into Gaza—an average of about 2,800 a month, 665 a week. Some 126 food trucks per day enter Gaza

currently. COGAT, the body responsible for implementing the Israeli government's civilian policy in the Gaza Strip, has stated, "There is no limit to the amount of aid that can enter Gaza."

Remember, Israel itself facilitated the aid convoy that last month gave rise to another blood libel—the lie that the Israel Defense Forces murdered over 100 civilians seeking aid on Feb. 29. Israel organized this convoy in partnership with local Palestinian businessmen. Contrary to media reports, nearly all the civilians killed trying to access the aid died in a stampede that ensued when they swarmed the convoy.

Israel welcomes every effort to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including its suggestion of aid delivery by sea, which the United States is currently implementing.

Food in Gaza is available—for a price. While the media and many NGOs portray the humanitarian situation in Gaza as apocalyptic, this seems a gross exaggeration, especially when comparing Gaza now to, say, Somalia in 2011, where a famine was only declared once 100,000 people had died. The Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry claims 21 people have died of malnutrition and dehydration—tragic, but hardly a humanitarian disaster.

Still, media run such headlines as, "Gaza residents surviving off animal feed and rice as food dwindles." In contrast, evidence indicates sufficient food is available in Gaza markets—for those who can afford it.

In an interview with *The New Arab*, Gaza resident Mohammed al-Ashram said, "Because of the unreasonable prices, I can barely buy a few vegetables and some meat for my children...and we do not get enough food or even water. In return, we are forced to buy it from the black market." It is because of Hamas that Gazans like al-Ashram do not receive the aid they should be getting.

Hamas deliberately prevents needy Gazans from accessing humanitarian aid. They distribute to themselves, then sell the rest on the black market. One Gaza resident told *The Media Line*, "[The aid] goes to the gangs. Hamas controls 70% of it, and the rest goes to merchants who sell it in the market. We do not receive aid except for a few things on rare occasions. The rest is for Hamas, and the merchants belong to Hamas. The prices are very high, and we cannot buy it."

Israeli intelligence estimates Hamas steals as much as 66% of the aid meant for Gazan civilians. *The Media Line* reporter also witnessed armed men, who locals identified as Hamas operatives, surrounding the aid trucks and firing into the air to keep Gazan civilians away.

Hamas also prevents Gazan civilians from ensuring safe delivery of humanitarian aid. In an effort to prevent Hamas from pirating aid, Israel is working to enlist influential, often well-armed, large families or clans in Gaza. However, many clans refuse to work with Israel, fearing reprisals from Hamas.

Last week, Hamas executed the leader of the Doghmush clan in northern Gaza because Israel allegedly contacted him about supervising aid distribution. Hamas's *Al-Majd* website issued a warning to any Palestinians against helping Israel secure aid convoys. Until Hamas's vise-like control over Gaza is broken, it's hard to imagine stopping them from routinely stealing humanitarian aid.

Hamas alone is employing starvation as a weapon of war. Hamas knows enemies of Israel will blame the Jewish state for hungry Gazans, helping push Israel to end the war, thus allowing Hamas to survive.

Hamas's strategy seems to be working, as Biden and other Western leaders use all manner of excuses—first fake death statistics, now "starvation"—to increase pressure on Israel to discontinue destroying the barbaric terrorist group.

Yet it is in Hamas's power to end the suffering of Gazan Palestinians. First they can stop stealing food aid meant for their citizens. Second, they can lay down their arms, surrender and release the hostages, in which case hunger in Gaza—and deaths on both sides—will end. In the long term, the people of Gaza will become free of Hamas's brutal repression and gain a chance to live in peace with their neighbor, Israel.

*Originally published by Facts and Logic About the Middle East.*

## TRADE IN SMUGGLED CIGARETTES SAID TO HAMPER AID DELIVERIES IN GAZA

**With a single cigarette selling for up to \$25, aid trucks reportedly targeted by smugglers seeking to pick up their secreted goods, and by other criminals trying to get to them first**

[Tol Staff](#) 19 June 2024,

Amid a breakdown of order in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian smugglers have turned their attention to contraband cigarettes due to the sky-high tobacco prices in the enclave, resulting in thousands of aid trucks being unable to deliver essential humanitarian supplies for fear of being attacked, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.

According to [the report](#), cigarettes are regularly smuggled into war-torn Gaza via humanitarian aid trucks, having been placed there by UN and Israeli accomplices. Once past inspection and inside Gaza, the aid trucks are targeted both by smugglers retrieving their goods and other criminals hoping to get to them first. Following the outbreak of the war with Hamas's October 7 attack— when some 3,000 terrorists invaded southern Israel, killing about 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages— Israel limited imports into Gaza to essential goods, a category that does not include cigarettes.

A single cigarette can now sell for as much as \$25 in Gaza, the report said, making the smuggling trade hugely profitable. "Cigarettes have become like the new gold in Gaza," one UN official told the newspaper. Prior to the start of Israel's offensive in Rafah in early May, cigarettes were largely smuggled in via the Rafah Crossing on Gaza's border with Egypt, but after the crossing was [closed indefinitely](#), criminals turned to the Kerem Shalom Crossing, on the border with Israel, the report said.

A Palestinian familiar with the smuggling operations told the Journal that smugglers hide packs of cigarettes in hollowed-out watermelons or bury them inside packages of legitimate goods. "The Israelis conduct thorough checks on a few selected boxes [within each aid shipment] but cannot possibly inspect every single pack, box or carton," he said.

As a result of criminal attacks on aid convoys, more than 1,000 truckloads of aid have reportedly remained stuck on the Gazan side of the crossing, and even the goods that reach their destination risk being looted by criminals attacking warehouses.

"This is threatening to undermine everything we're trying to do," a UN official was quoted as saying.

Advertisement

The Israeli military announced Sunday it had begun to implement a daily "tactical pause of military activity" along a key road in southern Gaza to enable the flow of aid. The announcement drew criticism from Prime Minister Netanyahu as well as from far-right members of the government, but it has been implemented each day since.

The daily pause is intended to ease the danger posed to workers by active fighting in the Strip. In April, an IDF strike killed seven aid workers from the World Central Kitchen organization in what Israel acknowledged as a "tragic" and "unintentional" incident. The organization withdrew its workers from Gaza for several weeks, but they [returned](#) later that month.

A pier built by the US military to facilitate the flow of aid by sea is likely to be dismantled in July, according to a Tuesday [report](#) in the New York Times. Usage of the pier, which cost some \$200 million to build, has been hampered by rough weather as well as security concerns.

Western governments and international aid organizations have widely assessed that the quantity of aid reaching civilians in Gaza is insufficient, but Israel contends that this is a distribution problem rather than a supply problem, and that the UN and other organizations tasked with delivering the aid have failed to keep up with the supply entering from Israel.

On Tuesday, a senior US State Department official, testifying before a Senate subcommittee, [cited the withdrawal](#) of IDF troops from parts of Gaza as a contributing factor, saying, "As the IDF has stepped back, various violent actors have stepped in, to the point where the much-diminished Hamas enforcers cannot get control of independent families and gangs."

## HUNGER EXPERTS SAY THE RISK OF FAMINE IN GAZA REMAINS HIGH

**AP** SAMY MAGDY and JOSEPH KRAUSS October 17, 2024



The Gaza Strip is still at risk of famine more than a year into [the Israel-Hamas war](#), even as the number of people facing the most extreme level of hunger has declined in recent months, the international authority on hunger crises said Thursday.

The findings come after the United States warned Israel that it [might cut off military aid](#) if its ally does not do more to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Hundreds of thousands of people there are [displaced from their homes](#) and packed into squalid tent camps and schools-turned-shelters.

In recent weeks Israel has once again ordered the evacuation of the northern third of Gaza, and it launched another major military operation there. It allowed no food to enter the north for roughly the first two weeks of October before resuming shipments Monday.

According to the military's own figures, a little over 5,800 tons of food have entered all of Gaza so far this month, compared with nearly 76,000 in September, and not all of those shipments have reached people inside. More than 500 trucks remain trapped on the Gaza side of the border, where the U.N. says it has In a statement announcing a second shipment on Wednesday, the military said it will continue to act in accordance with international law "to facilitate and ease the entry of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip."

**86% of Gaza's population faces crisis-level hunger or worse**

## [Israel passes legislation to restrict UN agency providing aid to Gaza](#)

### [US gives Israel a 'fail' grade on improving aid to Gaza so far](#)

The latest findings on hunger in Gaza were released by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC, an initiative set up in 2004 during the famine in Somalia that involves more than a dozen U.N. agencies, aid organizations, governments and other groups. It has repeatedly warned of famine over the course of the yearlong war, which was triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack into southern Israel. Over 1.8 million people, or around 86% of Gaza's population, are experiencing crisis levels of hunger, defined as Phase 3 or higher on the IPC's five-point scale. Some 133,000 people, or around 6%, are at Phase 5, the highest level, known as catastrophic hunger. That is down from earlier periods of the war, when [nearly a third of the population](#) was at Phase 5.

The IPC warned the situation could rapidly deteriorate, and that it expects catastrophic hunger levels to double in the coming months. It cited a slowdown in aid in recent weeks, the onset of what is typically a cold and rainy winter, and the harsh conditions people face in crowded tent camps with little in the way of food, clean water or toilets.

*"One year into the conflict, the risk of famine persists throughout the whole Gaza Strip as conflict intensifies and winter approaches,"* it said in the report.

Israel has controlled Gaza's entire land border since May. The Israeli military body in charge of civilian affairs, known as COGAT, says it places no limits on humanitarian aid entering the territory and accuses U.N. agencies and aid groups of failing to promptly deliver it.

Those groups say their efforts are severely hampered by Israeli restrictions, ongoing fighting and displacement, and the breakdown of law and order in many areas.

At a public kitchen in central Gaza on Thursday, crowds of women and children lined up with empty pots to receive a thin tomato soup with peas and noodles.

"It's been two weeks since we had enough food for ourselves and our children. A lot of food items disappeared from the markets because the crossings are closed," said Mohammed Abed, who was displaced from Gaza City, in the northern part of the territory.

"We used to live a decent life, but now as you can see, we stand at kitchens to get a plate of food and bread," said Aisha Saliby, who was also displaced from Gaza City. "End the war and let us go back home safely."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Thursday that he's alarmed by the latest report, calling it "intolerable," according to his spokesman.

Guterres demanded the immediate opening of crossing points and the removal of obstacles so U.N. agencies can deliver aid, said Farhan Haq, the spokesman.

### **Israel cut aid to the north for 2 weeks as it launched another offensive**

Israel allowed no food to enter northern Gaza for the first two weeks of October, according to the U.N.'s World Food Program, as it waged a major military operation there that is still ongoing. U.N. humanitarian officials said last week that aid entering Gaza is [at its lowest level in months](#).



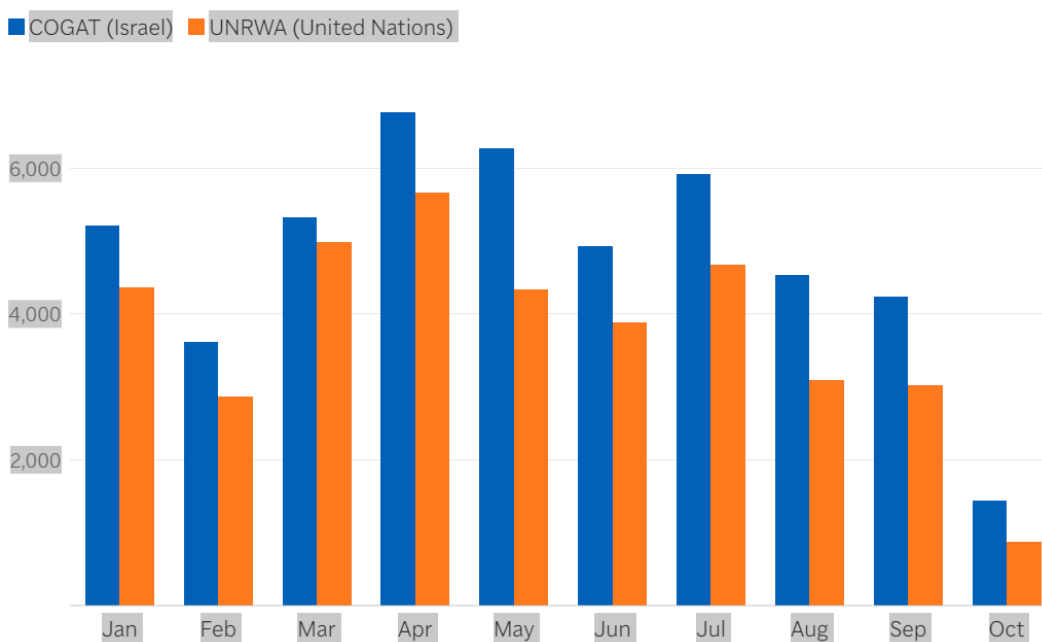
Most residents of northern Gaza fled after evacuation warnings at the start of the war, and Israel has not allowed them to return. An estimated 400,000 people have remained there despite the harsh conditions. Palestinians say nowhere in the besieged territory feels safe.

Many fear Israel will implement [a surrender-or-starve plan](#) proposed by former generals calling for a cutoff in aid, and for anyone who ignores evacuation orders to be classified as a militant. The Israeli government has not said whether it has adopted the plan, which rights groups say would violate international law.

### Sharp drop in Gaza humanitarian aid

Humanitarian groups say aid entering Gaza is at its lowest level in months as Israel has renewed its military offensive in the territory's northern region and closed crossings there.

Aid trucks entering Gaza in October 2024



Tallies differ due to different methodologies used by agencies to count and track cargo shipments. October data is as of Oct. 28. COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of civilian affairs in Gaza, says it

counts each truck that it allows to enter. U.N. agencies, which provide a lower count, say they cannot always access aid at the border because of Israeli restrictions, security concerns and shortages of trucks and staff.

Source: COGAT; UNRWA

The IPC report said the latest evacuation orders “have significantly disrupted humanitarian operations, and repeated displacements have steadily worn down people’s ability to cope and access food, water and medicine, deepening the vulnerability of entire communities.”

In a letter over the weekend, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin [warned Israel](#) that if it did not increase the amount of humanitarian aid allowed into Gaza within the next 30 days it could risk losing U.S. weapons supplies for the ongoing wars against Hamas in Gaza and A similar letter sent in April — [after an Israeli strike killed seven aid workers](#) — led to an increase in humanitarian aid to the territory. But State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said this week that the supply dwindled again, falling by over 50% from its peak earlier this year.

Israel has so far allowed two shipments into northern Gaza this week — a total of 80 trucks — and it says around 430 trucks have entered through the southern Kerem Shalom Crossing since the start of the month. That is far below the 350 trucks a day that the U.S. said were needed.

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The IPC warned the situation could rapidly deteriorate, and that it expects catastrophic hunger levels to double in the coming months. It cited a slowdown in aid in recent weeks, the onset of what is typically a cold and rainy winter, and the harsh conditions people face in crowded tent camps with little in the way of food, clean water or toilets.

FILE - Abdulrahman Al-Rai holds his daughter Hana Al-Rai, 3, who suffers from diabetes, a weakened immune system and malnutrition at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, where she is receiving treatment, on June 1, 2024. (AP Photo/Jehad Alshrafi)

"One year into the conflict, the risk of famine persists throughout the whole Gaza Strip as conflict intensifies and winter approaches," it said in the report.

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The United States has spent nearly \$18 billion on military aid to Israel since the war in Gaza began, [according to a report for Brown University’s Costs of War project](#).

## CHILDREN MAKE UP NEARLY HALF OF GAZA'S POPULATION. HERE'S WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE WAR

[NPR](#) [Linah Mohammad](#) October 19 2023

When Fidaa Al-Araj received the pre-recorded message last week telling her to evacuate her home because the area was about to be bombed, she first thought of her children.

To her surprise, they had actually beaten her to the street.

The day before, an Israeli airstrike had hit her cousin's house, killing his wife, mother and children. Those kids were close to Al-Araj's children in age. They were friends.

"My daughter said to me, 'What are you waiting for?'" Al-Araj recalled. "'Yesterday, we were crying for our cousins. Do you want people to cry over our dead bodies today?' So I had to leave."

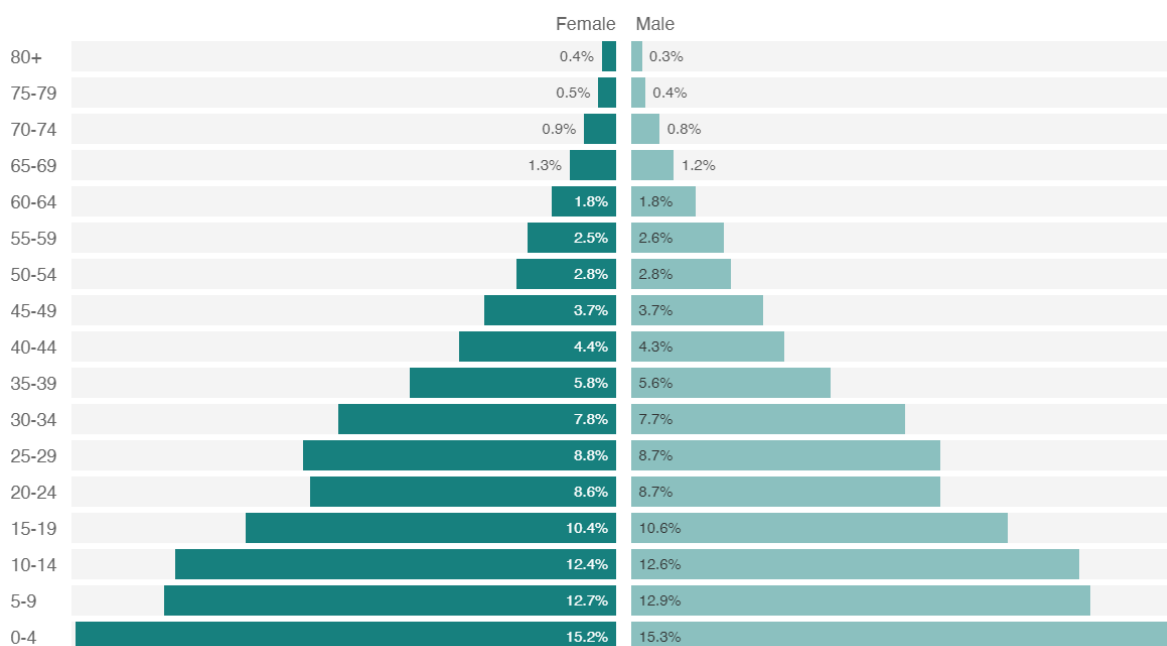
The family left their home in Gaza City and started a days-long journey to Rafah, in southern Gaza, where NPR reached her by phone this week. Al-Araj, 39, is a mother of five, aged 13, 12, 10, 8 and 2.

The current war in Gaza isn't their first, and the family is part of a striking trend: the population is one of the youngest in the world.

Nearly half (47.3%) are under 18.

### Gaza's population skews younger

Share of female and male populations by age group



Source: [Palestinian Ministry of Health](#). Data as of 2022. Credit: Connie Hanzhang Jin/NPR

According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza on Wednesday, more than 3,470 people have been killed in Gaza since Israel began its bombardment in response to the attack by the militant group Hamas on October 7. Of those, about 1,200 have been children, according to the [Defense for Children International — Palestine](#) on Wednesday.

Here's why the population skews so young, what it means for this war, and what it means for the future.

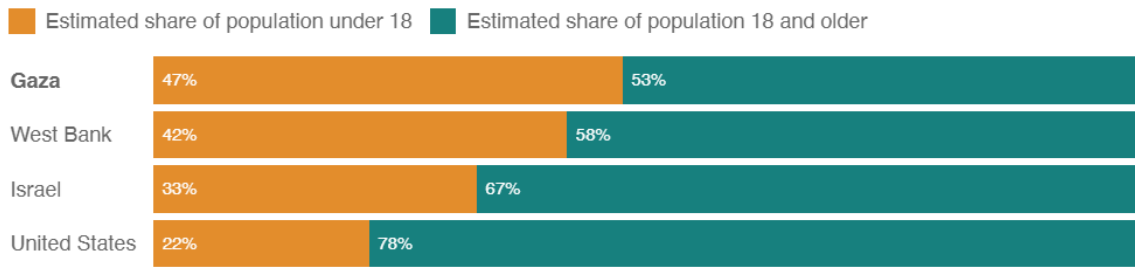
## WHO LIVES IN GAZA?

The population of the Gaza Strip is 2.2 million.

The narrow slice of land covering 140 square miles — roughly the size of Las Vegas — is one of the most densely populated places on earth.

### Compared with other areas, Gaza has a younger population

Almost half of Gaza's population is under age 18 — a higher share of younger people compared with nearby Israel and the West Bank. In contrast, only 22% of the U.S. population is under 18.



Source: [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](#), [Israel Central Bureau of Statistics](#), [U.S. Census Bureau](#).

Data as of 2022. Credit: Connie Hanzhang Jin/NPR

Two-thirds of the Palestinians living in Gaza are refugees or their descendants from the 1948 war, and most of the population is Muslim. There is also a small native Palestinian Christian population.

Since 2007, Gaza has been under a strict land and sea blockade by Israel that prevents civilians, along with goods like food and medicine, from easily moving across the border, contributing to harsh economic conditions and [high poverty levels](#).

Culturally, education has remained a top priority. More than [95% of children aged 6-12 in Gaza attend school](#), and most graduate from high school. Additionally, [57% of students](#) at the Islamic University of Gaza are female.

The drive for attaining education is part cultural, part pride, and it all goes back to the 1948 displacement, says Maha Nassar, an associate professor in the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies at the University of Arizona.

"So many Palestinians lost their lives and their livelihood," she told NPR. "And so they wanted their children, and then later their grandchildren, to be able to do something that they could take with them even if they were displaced again. And so education came to be seen as the mechanism to do that."

## WHY DO CHILDREN MAKE UP SUCH A LARGE PORTION OF THE POPULATION?

The reasons are varied.

Many Palestinians simply don't get the chance to grow old — dying in their early adulthood either in conflicts or due to a struggling healthcare system — which drags the averages down.

The 16-year blockade has hampered fast access to medical care and caused shortages of essential supplies like gauze and I.V. bags, says Yara Asi — an assistant professor of global health management and informatics at the University of Central Florida, and the author of the upcoming book, [How War Kills](#).

"Preventive care is basically nonexistent," she said. "They're constantly dealing with short-term health issues, and those that need chronic care either don't get it or have to leave."

And to be able to leave for medical treatment, residents have to [apply for a permit that's notoriously difficult to obtain](#).

Another factor for the young population in Gaza is that people tend to marry in their early twenties, according to 2021 data by the [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](#). And the fertility rate (births per woman) is 3.38, [according to a U.S. Census Bureau estimate](#). This is compared to 1.84 in the U.S.

"Some research has shown in Palestinian populations, and others under threat, that they see having children as a way of resistance, in a way," Asi said. "That's kind of seen as a continuation of a bloodline that's been under threat in various ways for 100 years."

## WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR THIS CONFLICT?

For Al-Araj and her five children, it means constant vigilance.

Even before this conflict began, Al-Araj had a rule: her kids must always stay within her eyesight. Still, this moment feels different, she says.

She knows of families where both parents were killed in Israeli airstrikes, and only the children survived. Or, in some cases, only one child survived.

She said she talked with her two oldest daughters, Rita and Ilham, aged 13 and 12, about what they should do if their parents are killed. She told them where they keep the money and the essential documents, and who they should contact.

"They were shocked like, 'What are you saying?' And I was like, '*Khalas*, maybe I'm next. I hope I'm next if we are next, not you,'" she said. "I know this is a huge burden to dump on my kids, but this is the reality of life because, I mean, what are they going to do?"

The number of children also has a practical effect, with some families reporting they simply don't have the means to travel with kids and also have nowhere to go.

"Where can we go as a family of five or six people?" one man [told the BBC](#).

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE FUTURE?

*Multiple conflicts, the blockade, and harsh living conditions have had a compounding effect.*

*A 2021 report by the [Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor](#) found 91% of Gazan children suffered from conflict-related trauma. A 2022 report by [Save The Children](#) found 80% of children reported emotional distress — up from 55% in 2018.*

Asi said there are still many unknowns, but the outlook is bleak.

"These children are out of school. These children are completely traumatized," she said. "There's no good news here. It's bad outcomes all around, not just today, but for future generations who, for those who survive, grow up with this history and this trauma."

Still, Nassar, from the University of Arizona, says something can be done. Some of her cousins are in Gaza and have already lived through several wars.

"They know how to laugh. They know how to make jokes. They know how to enjoy life," she said. "We cannot fail them by telling them, 'OK, we're going to go put things back to the status quo until the next war.' That's not an option."

And she believes the children of Gaza deserve the chance to heal.

"They still have dreams, they still have hopes, they still have aspirations," she said. "And I think that with the right support mechanisms in place, we can help them deal and sort through this trauma and help them."

## In Gaza Organized Gangs Make a Bad Situation Even Worse

[NPR](#) [Aya Batrawy](#) [Anas Baba](#) [Greg Dixon](#) Nov 21 2024



6-Minute Listen

+ PLAYLIST



Israel has been accused of using starvation in Gaza as a weapon of war.

It's a charge the government denies, however aid groups say too little food is being allowed into Gaza.

And making the problem even worse, armed gangs are looting much of the aid that is coming in.

We hear more about the issue and what Israel is doing about it.

For more coverage of all sides of this conflict, go to [npr.org/mideastupdates](https://www.npr.org/mideastupdates)

## THE DILEMMA OF REBUILDING GAZA WITHOUT REARMING HAMAS

[BBC News](#) Yolande Knell 10 June 2021



Thousands of Palestinians saw their homes destroyed or damaged

**With long-range rockets, missile launchers and drones, Hamas fighters in camouflage gear have held parades across the Gaza Strip since the recent deadly fighting with Israel.**

They underscore the challenge for international donors wanting to help rebuild Gaza without rearming what is seen by the US, EU, Israel and others as a terrorist group.

On his recent visit to Jerusalem and the West Bank, the UK's Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, told me it was "crucially important" to ensure funds went to "the Palestinian people, to alleviate their plight, and do not drift into the pockets of Hamas".

The Islamist organisation, which governs Gaza, does not recognise Israel's right to exist.



*Hamas's military wing held parades in Gaza following the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire*

**Image source, Reuters**



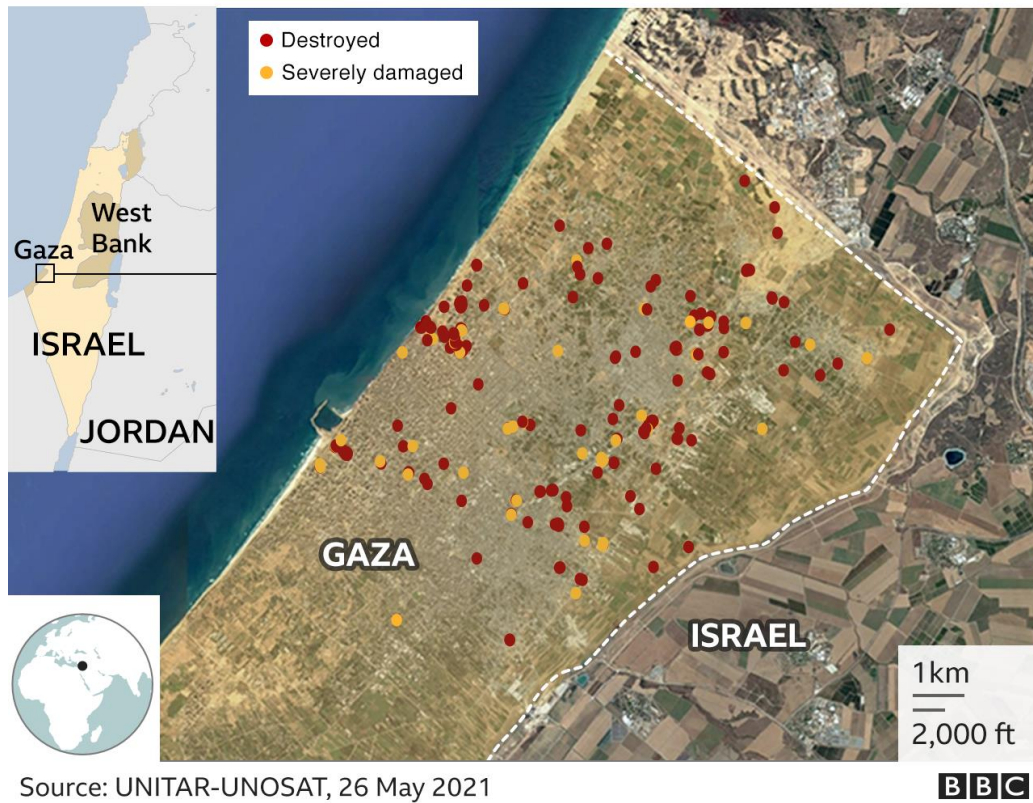
According to the UN, in Gaza this conflict destroyed or damaged more than 16,000 homes, along with 58 schools and training centres, nine hospitals, 19 clinics and vital infrastructure.

The Israeli military says it attacked more than 1,000 militant targets.

The Khalidi family in Gaza City are among the thousands left homeless. When Israeli war planes targeted their neighbours' building, their apartment was caught in the blast.

## UN damage assessment of northern Gaza

Buildings destroyed or severely damaged in May 2021 conflict



"I found glass all over my son's toys. I cried a lot when I saw the damage," says Waad al-Khalidi, who is now staying at a relative's house with her husband and baby.

"The war ended but we don't have money for repairs. I just want our beautiful home back."

At least 256 people were killed in Gaza, according to the UN, and 13 people were killed in Israel during the hostilities.

The UN said at least 128 of those killed in Gaza were civilians. Israel's military said 200 were militants; Hamas's leader there, Yahya Sinwar, put the number of fighters killed at 80.



Two children from Gaza City and Israel describe their experience of the Israel-Gaza conflict

A land and sea blockade of Gaza, which is imposed by Israel and Egypt, looks set to make reconstruction slow and complicated.

This was introduced after Hamas seized full control of the tiny territory from the Palestinian Authority (PA) in a bloody internal battle in 2007, a year after it won the last general election.

It has crippled the economy but has only partly succeeded in its stated security aim: to stop weapons and other supplies from reaching militants.

- [A conflict on pause as both sides claim victory](#)
- [The children who have died in the conflict](#)
- [Life in the Gaza Strip](#)

During the 11 days of violence in May, the Israeli military says that more than 4,300 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israeli towns and cities, damaging or destroying homes and other infrastructure.

The intensity with which they were fired and their range were greater than in the last serious outbreak of hostilities in 2014.

"They've replenished themselves and added a few longer-range rockets to their arsenal with a heavier payload so obviously they've advanced their capabilities," says Michael Herzog, a retired Israeli brigadier-general at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.



Homes in southern and central Israel were struck by rockets fired from Gaza  
Image source, Reuters

Back in 2014, Egypt completed the destruction of smuggling tunnels under its border with Gaza, stopping missiles being brought in from Iran.

However, militants from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, a smaller group, increasingly use Iranian expertise to manufacture their own rockets in secret workshops.

Last year, an Al Jazeera documentary showed Hamas commanders claiming they had made missiles from water pipes for abandoned Israeli settlements in Gaza and unexploded munitions from Israeli air strikes and a sunken British WW1 warship off the coast.



### Damage to housing and services in Gaza

- **16,250** housing units sustained some degree of damage
- **1,165** destroyed housing and commercial units in 331 buildings
- **58** education facilities damaged
- **9** hospitals partially damaged
- **19** clinics damaged
- **400,000** people with no regular access to safe piped water

Source: UN OCHA

**REUTERS**

"As they say, necessity is the mother of all invention," comments Michael Herzog who saw the report, "but on top of that, I think what was not disclosed, was that Hamas put its hands on a lot of 'dual-use' materials and used them for its own military purposes."

Israel heavily restricts imports of "dual-use" goods - including pipes, cement and iron - that can have military or civilian purposes. Egypt has allowed a limited supply of building materials to enter.

Yet, the Israeli military says that in its recent bombardment of Gaza, it destroyed more than 100km (62 miles) of a vast underground militant tunnel network that it called "the Metro", which Hamas had built at a cost of millions of dollars.



The use of all building supplies entering Gaza is supposed to be checked by the UN

Image source, Reuters

The UN is under pressure to reform an elaborate mechanism that it set up to supervise the entry of building materials to Gaza after the 2014 conflict.

"We're working on that right now with the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli side to determine how we can make it faster," says Lynne Hastings, the UN Resident Co-ordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. She told journalists checks were also being carried out "to see whether or not any mistakes by any of the parties involved may have been made over the past several years, to ensure that the aid is not diverted". All supplies entering Gaza are supposed to be carefully stored by approved importers and monitored with cameras while UN inspectors check they are only used for legitimate repairs. Their data is shared with Israeli intelligence.

Palestinian officials estimates that up to 270,000 tonnes of rubble need to be cleared in Gaza. The US and other foreign donors insist that the internationally accepted PA must continue to be their partner in rebuilding Gaza.

There are also demands for Qatari funds - which have previously gone directly to the Palestinian territory - to be channelled through it - something Hamas vehemently opposes.

The US wants to work with the PA to ensure Hamas will not benefit from any reconstruction assistance. Some commentators express concern at the way aid is being used as a diplomatic tool to boost and legitimise the PA leadership.

Just prior to the Gaza fighting, the PA President Mahmoud Abbas had postponed the first parliamentary election in 15 years. He said this was because Israel was blocking voting in Jerusalem, but many believe it was because his Fatah faction looked set to lose to Hamas.

"It's hugely problematic," says prominent Palestinian lawyer, Diana Butto.

"It's effectively trying to impose the results of an election without having elections. They're saying to the people of Gaza: if you want things to be rebuilt, we're not going to push for elections, but we're going to push for these people who we like to be in charge."

Cairo is continuing to mediate talks on aid between the Palestinian factions and with Israel, in an effort to bolster the fragile ceasefire in Gaza.

Egypt has sent engineering crews to Gaza to help clear the rubble of destroyed buildings.

Adding to the complex picture, there are Israeli demands for two missing Israeli civilians and the bodies of two Israeli soldiers held by Hamas to be returned.

Amid the devastation, Hamas leaders have sought to reassure ordinary Palestinians that all homes that need repairs will be fixed.

But in Gaza City, Ms Khalidi knows she is in for a long wait.

"I don't care much about politics and I don't care who pays," she says, "but I want Hamas to abide by its pledge."

**PART J1-4**

**GAZA - FINANCE**

# GAZA IS PLAGUED BY POVERTY, BUT HAMAS HAS NO SHORTAGE OF CASH. WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

**Hamis has an investment portfolio of real estate and other assets worth \$500 million, say experts, and an annual military budget of as much as \$350 million.**

**NBC NEWS** [Dan De Luce](#) and [Lisa Cavazuti](#) October 25 2023

The unemployment rate in [Gaza](#) is 47% and more than 80% of its population lives in poverty, according to the United Nations. [Hamis](#), however, has funded an armed force of thousands equipped with rockets and drones and built [a vast web of tunnels](#) under Gaza. Estimates of its annual military budget range from \$100 million to \$350 million, according to [Israeli and Palestinian sources](#).

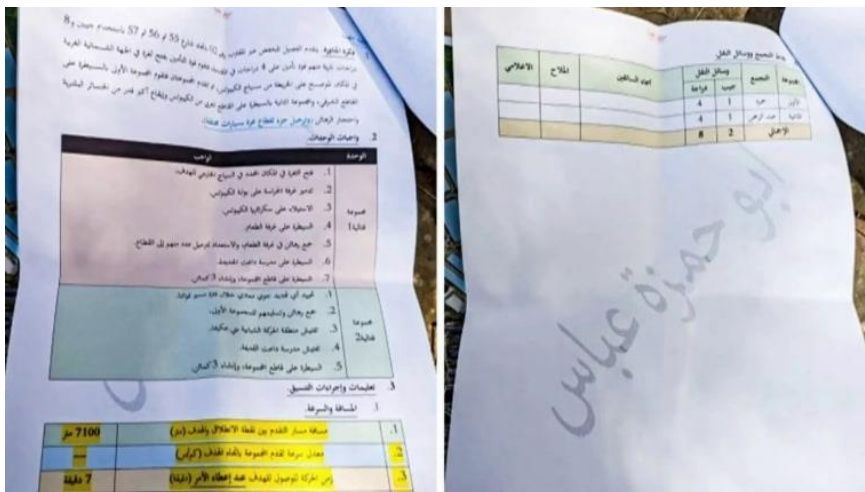
As the U.S. House and Senate will be asking in separate hearings Wednesday and Thursday, where does all that cash come from?

### ADVERTISING

Since coming to power in the Gaza Strip 17 years ago, Hamis has filled its coffers with hundreds of millions in international aid, overt and covert injections of cash from Iran and other ideological partners, as well as cryptocurrency, taxes, extortion and smuggling, according to current and former U.S. officials and regional experts.

Much of the money is public and legal, including large sums of financial aid from Qatar via the United Nations, an arrangement encouraged and approved by Israel. The Qatari aid covers the salaries of civil servants, [buys fuel for the power grid](#) and provides cash to needy families.

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[IDF releases Hamas documents](#)  
[directing how](#)  
[to carry out civilian abductions](#)

Some of it is less than legal, according to experts. In addition to levying taxes on Gaza's businesses and residents, Hamis imposes unofficial fees on smuggled goods and other activity, for a combined income of

up to \$450 million per year. Hamas also has real estate and other investments around the globe, despite international restrictions, and uses cryptocurrency to mask some of its transactions.

Some of it may be fully illegal. A small portion of its budget seems to come from smuggling in South America, including drug smuggling.

Experts, enemies and Western governments have questioned whether Hamas mingles the money for its military operations with money meant for civilian use. Hamas could not be reached for comment. But Hamas representatives have said previously that the group strictly separates funding for the administration of Gaza from funding for its military wing, also known as the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades.

In the wake of the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel that killed 1,400 people, some former Treasury Department officials and experts argue that the United States and its European allies need to crack down on the group's global financial network.

"There will need to be a policy review," said Jonathan Schanzer, a former Treasury official now with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies think tank.

### THE IRANIAN CONNECTION

The size of the Hamas budget and its sources have both morphed over time.

[Iran](#) has been a consistent financial and military patron of Hamas since the 1990s, long before the group achieved control of Gaza. The funding has gradually increased, and is now at about \$100 million annually, according to the State Department.

Hamas leaders have publicly acknowledged Iran's ongoing financial and military support.

In an interview this month that appeared on Russia Today TV, senior Hamas official Ali Baraka said that "First and foremost, it is Iran that is giving us money and weapons." Last year, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh told Al Jazeera that Iran paid \$70 million to the group to support its defense plan.

In addition to Iran's support, Hamas has long relied on funds from other ideological allies, including private donations and groups in Turkey, Kuwait and Malaysia, former U.S. counterterrorism officials said.

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[U.S. weighs tactical pauses  
of Israeli airstrikes  
for civilian protections](#)

Hamas also has donors in other parts of the world, including the U.S., according to Treasury reports. From 1995 until 2001, the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development operated as the chief U.S.

fundraising arm of Hamas, sending more than \$12 million “with the intent to willfully contribute funds, goods, and services to Hamas,” according to [federal court documents](#) and government [assessments](#).

### CASH IN SUITCASES

After Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, Hamas gained another major benefactor, the Qatari government. Hamas won an election over Fatah, the Palestinian ruling party, in early 2006, in part because residents believed the existing authorities could not be trusted to administer funds properly. Hamas ultimately seized complete control of Gaza and has ruled without an election since 2007.

As conditions continued to deteriorate for residents of the enclave, Israel, the U.S. and the international community turned to gas-rich Qatar to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe.

Qatari officials began carrying millions of dollars in cash in suitcases through Israel’s Erez border crossing into Gaza, with the permission of the Israeli government.

For Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been in power for much of the time after Hamas began ruling Gaza, the policy was meant to bring some degree of stability to Gaza and bolster Israel’s security. It also, however, helped fuel the bitter rivalry between Hamas and Fatah, which continued to govern the occupied West Bank.



['Please let us get our food in':  
World Food Program  
warns of crisis inside Gaza](#)

Under the arrangement, between 2012 and 2021, Qatar provided \$1.49 billion in financial aid to support projects for Palestinian civilians in Gaza, a Qatari official told NBC News.

The deal also triggered criticism in Israel and discomfort in Washington. But former U.S. officials, who were in government at the time, said there were no easy options given that Hamas, which had crushed its political rivals, was firmly in charge.

“I think there was broad recognition that the situation in Gaza was pretty awful,” former CIA Director John Brennan said. “There needed to be some flow of funds from somewhere [and] Qatar had the financial wherewithal to do that.”

Neomi Neumann, former head of research for Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security service, said that “we didn’t find any other way to finance this and we didn’t want a humanitarian crisis.”

But from the start, she said, “We knew that it was so problematic.”



In 2021, Israel and Qatar agreed to a new arrangement that ended the use of cash hand-delivered in suitcases. Instead, the Qatari money was distributed through the U.N. at supermarkets, money exchange shops, post offices and other locations.

The Qatari official told NBC News that Qatar does not provide financial aid to Hamas. “We provide aid to Palestinian civilians in Gaza,” the official said. “Qatari aid is fully coordinated with the Israeli authorities, the U.S. government and the United Nations. All goods such as food, medicine and fuel pass directly through Israel before entering Gaza.”

Qatar says the money has been used for its intended purposes. The Israeli government has “complete oversight over the funds, and would have canceled the agreements if aid was not reaching its intended recipients,” the Qatari official said.

Muhammad Shehada, a Gaza-born Palestinian analyst and writer, rejects claims that aid has been diverted by Hamas. He points to a 2017 Australian government [probe](#) that found no evidence that taxpayer money was misused by the nongovernmental organization World Vision in the Gaza Strip, following allegations by Israel that Hamas had siphoned off millions of dollars a year from the charity to the Islamist group.

“Given the tough circumstances in Gaza, the group would have faced a rebellion from their civil servants and the population had there been any evidence of them using government revenue to fund their militant wing,” Shehada said.

But skeptics say the U.N. was unable to exercise strict control over how the money was allocated, and that it enabled Hamas to use tax revenue and other funds to build up its military arm.

“All the funds that were supposed to go to the public, most of it went to their military capability,” Neumann said.

After its takeover of Gaza, Hamas also “developed the capability to tax and extort,” said Matthew Levitt, who worked as a senior Treasury official focusing on countering terrorist financial networks. Hamas began to rake in taxes and kickbacks from salaries, sale of goods and smuggling, a sum that now reaches up to [\\$300 million to \\$450 million](#) a year, said Levitt, now at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy think tank.

Although the U.S. and the European Union have designated Hamas as a terrorist organization, “they’re not effectively cut off from the international financial system,” said Hans-Jakob Schindler, senior director of the Counter Extremism Project. “They actually are able to invest funds in companies and in real estate.”

Hamas’ leadership has invested its income in an international investment portfolio worth \$500 million in real estate and other assets from companies in Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, which it uses to conceal and launder its money, according to a Treasury [announcement](#).

Cryptocurrencies have helped the group invest its money while bypassing international financial sanctions according to a [report](#) by the Counter Extremism Project. To combat those efforts. “Hamas was an early adopter of fundraising in crypto starting in 2019,” said Ari Redbord, a former federal prosecutor and global head of policy and government affairs at TRM Labs, which is working to track Hamas funding. “They were using Telegram channels to solicit donations. They then stood up website infrastructure to solicit donations.”

Yet, experts, including Rebord, emphasize that cryptocurrency remains a small piece of the group's financial strategy.

To some extent, Hamas also supplements its income with various criminal enterprises, experts said. "All large-scale terror groups, such as Hamas, have to ensure that they have multiple, overlapping financing streams, because there is international pressure on its finances," Schindler said.

For example, Hamas has a presence in the tri-border area of South America, a region along Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina known as a haven for terrorists and transnational criminal organizations. While experts say the activity there likely makes up a small portion of Hamas' broader financial apparatus, it participates in drug, arms and people trafficking, smuggling and money laundering operations based there in connection with Hezbollah's efforts.

### CRACKING DOWN

During the past two decades, Western governments tended to focus more on cutting off the finances of other Islamist organizations while Hamas received a lower priority, former U.S. officials said. Gerald Feierstein, who worked in the State Department's counterterrorism bureau from 2006 to 2008, said Hamas was not perceived as a direct threat to the U.S.



[How hostage releases could be part of Hamas strategy to stave off Israeli ground invasion](#)

"From a counterterrorism perspective, people weren't really focused on Hamas," said Feierstein, now at the Middle East Institute think tank in Washington. "At that point, the focus was really AQ," he said, referring to al Qaeda.

In the past few years, however, Western governments have disrupted some sources of Hamas financing. In August 2020, U.S. authorities [seized](#) millions of dollars and more than 300 cryptocurrency assets linked to groups, including Hamas, as part of a series of terrorism-related actions. The Treasury Department's [latest](#) sanctions targeting Hamas operatives include a Gaza-based virtual currency exchange, Buy Cash Money and Money Transfer Company, and its operator used to collect small-dollar donations. In 2021, Israel seized several cryptocurrency wallets, including Buy Cash, believed to be controlled by Hamas. At the time, Elliptic, a research analytics firm [estimated](#) those wallets had received more than \$7.7 million in crypto. The same year, the German government [banned](#) a network of ostensibly charitable

organizations of the Ansaar International e.V. network, which had collected donations for terror organizations, including Hamas, and included real estate assets.

Then came the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel.

European countries, some of which make a distinction between Hamas' political and armed wings, say they are working to close existing loopholes involving purported charitable organizations that collect money for Palestinian causes but have been proven to be fronts to funnel money to Hamas militants.

Switzerland had been among a group of countries that have not yet formally banned Hamas. The Swiss Foreign Ministry has [indicated](#) it is reviewing the issue.

Last week, the U.S. [sanctioned](#) a network of 10 Hamas members and financial facilitators based across Gaza, Sudan, Turkey, Algeria and Qatar. Among those targeted were a Qatar-based operative and a Hamas military relations commander, who was allegedly killed in a recent airstrike, for having acted on behalf of Hamas, in addition to a Gaza-based company that provides money transfer and virtual currency exchange services.

"I do think this has been a wake-up call for the U.S. to start to get serious about these jurisdictions that have been treated as allies, and even as assets," Schanzer said, referring to governments that he says have failed to act against Hamas financiers operating within their borders.

An Israeli official said that Hamas failed to use the opportunity offered by international aid and other financial assistance to improve the lives of Palestinians in Gaza.

"If only Hamas would have prioritized the Gazan population over its military and extremist ideology, Gaza would have been able to benefit from economic growth and prosperity," the official said.

"In retrospect, it was a mistake to allow a terrorist organization to control the Gaza Strip. We intend to rectify that mistake now."

## POOR GAZA, RICH HAMAS

**GLOBES** Adi Tenenbaum 29 Oct 2023



photos: AP, Martin Meissner, Adel Hana, reuters, Mahmoud Hefnawy, wikipedia

The Gaza Strip is one of the poorest places on earth, but its leaders bask in huge wealth.

Much like its underground tunnel network, it can't be seen from the surface but the underside of Gaza City is lined with cash. While Gaza is considered one of the poorest regions in the world, its leaders enjoy lives of luxury, many with fortunes of millions or billions of dollars.

Gaza suffers from an unemployment rate of over 60%. In a 2022 World Bank report, GDP per capita in Gaza was estimated at \$1,257, approximately one-fourth the estimated \$4,458 GDP per capita in the West Bank. These figures make it one of the world's most impoverished places. Many attribute its limited economic growth to the Israeli-Egyptian blockade that, since 2007, has imposed restrictions on goods entering or exiting the Gaza Strip. This argument, however, ignores a fundamental issue in Gaza, which is the wealth of the Palestinian leadership.

The Hamas leadership built its wealth mainly through the booming tunnel industry, with Hamas officials imposing taxes, generally 20%, on all goods smuggled through the tunnels. Unlike the secrecy surrounding the tunnels themselves, their role in enriching Hamas and its supporters has long been out in the open.

Today, more than half of the residents of Gaza live in severe poverty, but already in 2012, there were reports of some 600 millionaires living in Gaza, who made their fortunes thanks to the hundreds of underground tunnels along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. At that time, newspaper *Al Monitor*, as cited by *The Tower*, described the trade through the tunnels as the factor that "gave birth to a new class of rich people who managed to accumulate a huge fortune in a short period of time".

Many of the senior members of the terrorist organization that controls Gaza keep a low public profile, and some have spent a considerable proportion of their lives evading assassination attempts by Israel. For

years, their wealth was also considered a mystery. Today, much is already known about the way in which these individuals, born and raised in refugee camps, were transformed into reclusive tycoons. But since the day Hamas shocked Israel with the deadliest attack ever launched from Gaza, questions have surfaced anew.

### **PRIVILEGES AND PERKS FOR HANIYEH'S OFFSPRING**

A few hours after the outbreak of the Hamas attack on Israel, according to *The Times of Israel*, Hamas leader and puppet-master Ismail Haniyeh (61) was seen on video celebrating the invasion from his luxurious office in Doha, the capital of Qatar, while he and other senior Hamas officials cheered happily before prostrating themselves on the floor, in praise of Allah.

During his long years as a senior Hamas official, Haniyeh, who was elected head of the organization's political bureau in 2017, has accumulated an impressive fortune. He has lived in Qatar since 2019. His exact net worth is unknown, but today is estimated to be at least \$5 million.

Haniyeh, who in 2018 was designated as a terrorist by the US State Department, has acquired impressive assets over the years. In 2010, Haniyeh paid \$4 million for a 2,500 square meter plot of land in Rimal, Gaza's posh beachfront neighborhood, near the Shati refugee camp where he grew up. He registered the land in his son-in-law's name, according to Egyptian weekly *Rose al-Y?suf*.

Since then, Haniyeh has reportedly purchased additional houses and registered them too in the names of some of his 13 children. One of his sons is even known in Gaza as Abu al-Akerat, or "father of real estate". Haniyeh's children exploit their privileged status both inside and outside Gaza. Having obtained a Turkish passport, according to reports, Haniyeh's son travels to and from Gaza, investing in properties in Turkey, joining the family's international enterprises. Meanwhile, according to reports, Haniyeh's children own generators, and sell electricity inside Gaza, a rare commodity that they themselves get for free.

Already in 2021, *The Jerusalem Post* reported on intelligence information indicating that, from the early 2000s and up until 2018, Hamas controlled some 40 commercial companies in Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Algeria and Sudan. Citing business intelligence website Double Cheque, it was reported that most of the companies were in the real estate and infrastructure sectors. "Hamas has chosen to manage its secret investment portfolio in Turkey because of the weak financial system in Turkey, which enables Hamas to hide its money-laundering activity and tax violations from the regulatory bodies". According to Double Cheque, these were assets worth about \$500 million.

### **PERSIAN GULF REAL ESTATE AND FINANCIAL CONGLOMERATES**

Haniyeh isn't the only one. Towards the end of last year, according to *The Times of Israel*, more and more high-profile Hamas officials moved from Gaza to luxury hotels in Beirut, Doha, and Istanbul, where they maintain a life of opulence and extravagance that the residents of Gaza - whom they claim to represent - would not dare dream of in their wildest imagination.

The person leading Hamas inside the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar (60), has also amassed a considerable fortune, estimated at \$1-3 million, according to the BBC. Sinwar, who was born in the Khan Yunis refugee camp during Egypt's rule of the Gaza Strip, is the founder of the Hamas security service. Although he was sentenced to four life sentences in Israel in 1988, he was released in deal to bring back captured Israeli

soldier Gilad Shalit, and was reinstated as a senior Hamas leader. In 2017, he was appointed chief of Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

In addition, there is the person known to the Palestinians as "The Brain", to the Israelis as "The Cat with Nine Lives", and now also as the planner (together with Haniyeh), of the most recent terrorist attack. For years, Israel has considered Mohammed Deif among the most wanted Hamas leaders, as well as among the most elusive. To date, a total of three photos of Deif have been issued: one of Deif in his twenties, another in which he wears a mask, and a the third where only his shadow is visible.

Deif (58, born Mohammed Masri), who leads the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of the Hamas movement, was nicknamed thanks to having evaded seven Israeli assassination attempts, the last one in 2021. According to media sources, at June 1, 2023, Deif's estimated net worth was approximately \$5 million.

Khaled Mashal (67), who was born in Silwad in the West Bank, then under Jordanian control, was also central to the terrorist organization. In 1992, Mashal played a key role in establishing the core Hamas leadership, and eventually rose to the top. Like Haniyeh and others, he also lives in Qatar today, and is known for having invested in Egyptian banks, and real estate projects in the Persian Gulf countries, amassing considerable wealth. He is considered one of the leadership's richest people. His personal wealth was estimated to be in the billions of dollars a decade ago by publications in the Arab world. It is currently estimated at about \$5 billion.

Mashal's deputy, Dr. Musa Abu Marzouk, previously considered number two in the Hamas hierarchy, has also long since established his position on the Hamas list of tycoons. According to Dr. Col. (res.) Moshe Elad, lecturer in Political Sciences and History of the Middle East at the Western Galilee College, back in the early 1990s, Marzouk launched a fundraising campaign in the US among wealthy Muslims, and at the same time founded several banking operations. Elad told *Globes* that Marzouk had turned himself into a conglomerate of 10 financial enterprises, giving loans and making investments.

### **CRYPTO - THE INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS WORKAROUND**

In addition to the tunnels tax industry, global financing networks, and international businesses, *Reuters* recently reported that senior Hamas officials had found a way to circumvent international sanctions: cryptocurrency.

American counter-terrorism expert Matthew Levitt told *Reuters* that the bulk of Hamas's budget, more than \$300 million, came from taxes on businesses, as well as from countries such as Iran and Qatar, or charities. Hamas, which has been sanctioned as a terrorist organization by the US and Britain, for example, has increasingly used cryptocurrencies to avoid international restrictions, Levitt said.

Tom Robinson, co-founder of blockchain research firm Elliptic, told *Reuters* that "Hamas has been one of the more successful users of crypto for the financing of terrorism". After the outbreak of violence of May 2021, Hamas-controlled crypto addresses received more than \$400,000, according to blockchain researchers TRM Labs.

However, reports *Reuters*, after large losses this year, and because of the ability to track transactions in the cryptocurrency accounting system, senior Hamas officials said they would stay away from these currencies.

It is likely that these crypto losses will be easily recouped, thanks to support from Iran, which last year significantly increased annual funding for Hamas's military wing from \$100 million to about \$350 million.

## **A PHOENIX' AND A 'MAGICAL CITY': HOW RESIDENTS REMEMBER GAZA BEFORE THE WAR**

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**Residents of the Gaza Strip have long endured hardship, but amid their struggle, many enjoyed aspects of a 'normal' life. As Israel's war against Hamas continues, much of Gaza has now been reduced to rubble. Dateline spoke to three current and former residents about what life used to be like in the tiny enclave.**

[SBSNews](#) Gavin Butler 21 December 2023

It's been more than two months since Israel declared war on the Palestinian militant group Hamas in retaliation [for its shock 7 October attack](#) and invaded the Gaza Strip.

Destruction is enveloping Gaza as the latest escalation in a decades-old conflict reaches unprecedented extremes.

Even before the current conflict, Gaza has long rested in the shadow of violence and hardship.

Some 2.2 million people called the tiny enclave – just 365 square kilometres or

[less than half the size of Canberra](#) – home, making it one of the most densely populated places in the world.

Blockaded by Israel and Egypt since 2007 after Hamas seized control of the territory, two-thirds of its inhabitants were living in poverty and 80 per cent relied on international aid. Its unemployment rate was one of the highest in the world.

And yet, despite seemingly insurmountable odds, glimmers of hope and normality have persisted within this conflict-riven area.

Dateline spoke to three current and former residents about what life was like inside the Gaza Strip.

Their accounts tell of a place defined by paradox: a territory flanked by the glittering Mediterranean Sea on one side and barbed wire on the other; a culture of hospitality, warmth, and benevolence that is regularly fractured by the sound of gunshots, fighter planes, and bombs; a people who are desperate for peace, and yet improbably accustomed to war.

### **'GAZA IS LIKE A MAGICAL CITY'**

Amal Zaqout was born in Gaza, but it was in 2007 that it became her long-term home.

Having left the territory at the age of two, first for Egypt and then Yemen, the 51-year-old mother of two returned to her birthplace following the death of her husband. She had travelled extensively and had the opportunity to emigrate elsewhere, but something about Gaza beckoned.

"Gaza is like a magical city," Zaqout told SBS Dateline. "After I went back in 2007, I made my memories, I made my friends. I made a life here. Sixteen years. I brought up my boys here in Gaza."

Zaqout is now in Rafah, a city at the southern end of Gaza near the Egyptian border, where she fled in October after being evacuated from her home in the north. Even here she says she is not safe, with bombardments battering the area each night and telecommunications being almost completely cut off.



But amid the mayhem, she speaks warmly of her memories of life in Gaza before the siege: memories of the sea, where she would go with friends every weekend; of eating barbecued lamb and chicken under the fruit trees at her brother's house; of playing cards and, at least once a week, visiting the animal shelter near the beach where she could spend time with the resident cats and dogs.

"We had funny days and a peaceful life," she said. "It was difficult to live due to the blockade, but you find good people. You can adapt. I believe you can create your happiness."

The resources for happiness, however, were not always at hand. Zaqout lived in Gaza at a time when Israel restricted the importation of food, fuel, building materials, and batteries for medical devices, claiming that "dual-use goods" could be exploited or weaponised by militant groups inside the territory.

After the blockade began, groups such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provided basic supplies to over a million refugees.

"We managed to live with what's available in Gaza," Zaqout said.

Such resilience was pushed to breaking point in late October when bombs started falling over the Gaza Strip - not on empty plots or fields, as would sometimes happen before the latest conflict, but on hospitals, schools, and densely-populated neighbourhoods.

We just want to build our life, to raise our kids in a proper way, to give them a happy and peaceful life. But at the end of the day, [it's] out of our control, what happened.

Now every time she opens Facebook Zaqout discovers someone else who has died, whose house was destroyed, or who lost a member of their family. She cries for them every night.

Zaqout also cried when she learned her home had been destroyed. The apartment, which had saddled her with a debt that took nine years to pay off, was where she had lived with her two sons, now 22 and 24 years old, while they studied science and business at the university in Gaza. Israeli forces reduced the entire building to rubble.

"Every single angle in my home has a memory, and it's destroyed," she says. "A lot of people like me, we have memories everywhere. It's unfair to spend years building your life and someone comes in minutes and destroys it."

"It's like hell when you see it after and before."

The UN estimates 1.9 million Gazans have been displaced and 20,000 killed since Israel started its intense bombing of the enclave, shortly after Hamas' attack on 7 October.

About 1,200 people were killed and 240 hostages taken, according to the Israeli government, in that attack, in what was a significant escalation of a long-running conflict between Hamas and Israel. Israel has vowed to continue military action until all hostages are released.

Hamas is a Palestinian political and military group, with a stated aim to establish a Palestinian state and stop Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, illegal under international law.

The group has governed the Gaza Strip since the most recent elections in 2006, and in its entirety, is listed as a terrorist organisation by the European Union and seven other countries, including Australia. But the UN Assembly rejected classifying Hamas as a terrorist group in 2018.

In 2021 the International Criminal Court opened an investigation into alleged Israeli war crimes in the Palestinian territories dating back to 2014, including the recent attacks of both Israel and Hamas.

Zaqout says there is no word in English for what Gazans are currently going through, but one that she keeps coming back to is 'unthinkable.' The scale and brutality of the siege are more than she can comprehend. Yet she refuses to be overcome by it.

"I insist to start again," she says. "I will not leave Gaza. Even [if I am] one hundred [years old] and they destroyed it, I will rebuild it again, because this is my homeland."

### **'WE ARE EXPERTS IN WAR NOW'**

Before she left Gaza for the first time at 17, Asil Ziara didn't think the outside world, past the border fence and across the sea, was much different to the one she'd spent her whole life learning to tolerate.

She'd seen photographs and movies of places other than the Gaza Strip but had always assumed that these were not quite accurate representations of how people lived their lives.

Asil Ziara grew up in Gaza and remains hopeful her homeland will endure. Source: Supplied

"When I got out of Gaza, I discovered there is another world," Ziara said. "There are actually people who are living and everything is fine with them."

She also discovered she was traumatised. After moving to Cyprus to attend university, Ziara spent more than a year seeing a therapist. Now 21, she travelled to Egypt at the end of September to meet her mother and brother and prepare for her return to Gaza. As she puts it, "There was a war telling me 'welcome back.'"

There is a sea, a big beautiful sea, but at the same time you can't breathe. You feel you're living in a prison. In Gaza, Ziara explains, the consistency of war has come to signify a perverse kind of normality—as unstoppable as the tides or the phases of the moon.

"People in Gaza believe they have to have a war every two or three years," she explained. "We got used to it. And before October 7th, we were expecting there was a war coming."

"We feel it. We are experts in war now. We are experts in things we don't actually want to know."

Ziara's father, a journalist with American media outlet ABC News, along with seven of her eight siblings, remain trapped in Gaza. He has relocated about 16 times, she said, to avoid Israeli attacks.

As a child, she remembers him teaching her to swim and ride horses; taking her to karate lessons; or letting her sit up until midnight with him and his friends, talking.

He remembers these people but doesn't know whether any of them are alive. She does know that two of her uncles, one of her aunties, and a cousin have all been killed by Israeli forces.

"I'm not going to lie," she says. "I'm not fine at all."

Even as people who have become conditioned to the inevitability of war, Gazans have never experienced anything as bad as this, Ziara says. Yet she remains hopeful her homeland will endure.

Despite centuries of wars, conflict, and oppression, the Gaza Strip has demonstrated a tendency towards survival that Ziara describes as being "something like a miracle."

"Gaza is a phoenix," she says. "[But] us in Gaza, we are not sure of anything. There is always hope that it's going to be fine one day. But we don't know if we will stay in it, or if we will be alive."

A very warm and strange place to live'

## NICOLE JOHNSTON

She remembers Rafah as the place to go for seafood in Gaza. Living and working in the enclave as a foreign correspondent for 12 months in 2011, the Australian-born journalist would spend her downtime there, with her Palestinian friends, at one of the cafes or fish restaurants by the sea.

“Gaza’s got beautiful beaches, really rich culture, great seafood, and just very hospitable people who are desperate to have connection with foreigners,” Johnston told SBS Dateline.

“They invite you into their homes and share their food, and they want you to know their families and their children. It’s a very warm place to live.”

Having said that,” she added, “there’s always this sort of strange tension.”

Johnston has several anecdotes to illustrate this tension, and the surreal, everyday contradictions that simmer just below the surface of Gazan life.

At one point she remembers doing yoga on a friend’s rooftop when she heard Israeli air force jets swooping overhead. In another memory, she recalls driving along a road that skirted the Mediterranean Sea, looking one way to see the surf-combed beach and the other to see a Hamas training ground.

“It’s a very strange place to live, calm and welcoming on one hand and on the other, this incredibly unique situation where practically no one inside Gaza can leave,” she said.

“That’s why the people there and human rights groups call it an open-air prison: because that’s what it feels like inside.”

In more peaceful times, however, she also remembers Gaza as a vibrant, densely-packed community with markets, mosques, schools, and an abundance of children - unsurprising, for an area whose population is one of the youngest globally, with an average age of 18.

“Palestinian people are like people anywhere else in the world: they just want to be able to go to work, educate their children, spend time with their families on the weekend and go to the beach,” Johnston said.

“They’re no different to people in Australia, but they’re stuck with this situation of living under a blockade for over 16 years.”

Do you want to learn more about the life of ordinary Palestinians in the Gaza Strip? Watch this Dateline documentary from 2016.

**PART J1-5**

**GAZA -**

**PARLIAMENT ELECTION**

# IMPLEMENTING A NEW ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN GAZA, EXCLUDING HAMAS

## ChatGPT (AI)

Designing and implementing a new electoral system in Gaza that excludes Hamas is an ambitious and complex challenge, given Hamas's entrenched role in both the political and military aspects of Gaza's governance. However, if the goal is to establish a democratic, inclusive political system without Hamas's participation or influence, the process must involve multiple elements, including legal, political, and security reforms.

### 1. CREATING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR EXCLUDING HAMAS

#### 1.1 Legal Restrictions

- **Banning Hamas as a Political Party:** Legally banning Hamas from participating in elections would be the first step. This can be achieved by:
  - Declaring Hamas a **non-legitimate political actor** due to its militant activities and non-recognition of Israel, aligning with international designations of Hamas as a terrorist organization (by the U.S., EU, and others).
  - Passing **electoral laws** that exclude political parties with armed wings or those that engage in violent activities, ensuring that only non-violent, democratic entities can contest elections.
  - The **Palestinian Authority (PA)**, with international support, could enact these legal changes, framing them as necessary for Gaza's democratization and alignment with global standards of governance.

#### 1.2 Constitutional and Electoral Reform

- **New Constitution:** A new constitutional framework would be required to clearly outline the criteria for political participation, emphasizing peaceful democratic engagement. This could include:
  - The **disarmament of all militias** and the prohibition of any political party that refuses to renounce violence.
  - The establishment of **clear, transparent rules** for elections, with independent bodies overseeing the process.
- **Proportional Representation:** Implementing a **proportional representation system** would allow for smaller political factions and independent candidates to participate in the political process, ensuring no single group can dominate the system.

## 2. SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE REFORMS

### 2.1 Disarmament and Demilitarization

- **Disarmament of Hamas's Military Wing:** Ensuring that Hamas cannot continue to wield power militarily is essential. This would require:
  - **International involvement**, such as peacekeepers or security forces, to oversee the demilitarization process in Gaza, ensuring that Hamas cannot operate militarily or intimidate political opponents.
  - A **disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR)** program for Hamas fighters, potentially offering economic incentives, job training, and rehabilitation to those willing to abandon militant activities.
- **Neutralizing Armed Groups:** Beyond Hamas, other armed factions in Gaza must also be brought under control. A unified **national security force**, overseen by the PA and supported by international partners, would need to be established to maintain law and order without political bias.

### 2.2 Strengthening the Role of the Palestinian Authority (PA)

- The PA would need to regain control of Gaza from Hamas. This would require significant political and military support from regional and international actors.
  - **PA governance structures:** PA officials would need to rebuild administrative control over Gaza, ensuring that all public institutions, including police, courts, and public services, operate under their authority.
  - **Re-establishing civil services:** The PA would need to ensure that public institutions are rebuilt to offer basic services, like healthcare, education, and welfare, to Gazans, strengthening its legitimacy.

## 3. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL SUPPORT

### 3.1 Arab and International Mediation

- **Arab League and Egypt:** Egypt and other Arab countries (e.g., Jordan and Saudi Arabia) could play a key role in mediating the political process, pushing for democratic elections that exclude Hamas, while ensuring regional stability.
- **The Role of Israel:** While Israel's security concerns are central to any discussion about Gaza, the broader international community, particularly through **UN** and **U.S.-led efforts**, could negotiate security guarantees for Israel in exchange for allowing humanitarian and political efforts in Gaza.
- **International Funding:** The PA and other potential political actors in Gaza would require international financial support, particularly from the **European Union**, the **U.S.**, and **Gulf states**. This would help rebuild infrastructure, create jobs, and fund electoral reforms.

### 3.2 International Oversight of Elections

- A new electoral system would require **heavy international oversight** to ensure fairness and security. International observers from the **UN**, **European Union**, and **Carter Center** would need to oversee the entire electoral process to prevent manipulation or voter intimidation by Hamas.
- **Sanctions and incentives**: International actors could use a combination of sanctions against Hamas leaders and economic incentives for the PA and other democratic actors to encourage peaceful participation in the electoral process.

## 4. POLITICAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 Fostering New Political Parties

- A concerted effort would be needed to support the creation and development of **new political parties** in Gaza that can provide alternatives to Hamas. These parties could focus on:
  - Economic development, job creation, and improving social services.
  - Engagement with the international community, including promoting peace with Israel.
  - Representing diverse groups within Gaza, including women, youth, and professionals, to appeal to a broad base of voters.

### 4.2 Engaging Civil Society

- **Civil society organizations (CSOs)** would play a crucial role in this transformation by:
  - Educating the public about the electoral process and the benefits of peaceful political participation.
  - Advocating for human rights, including freedom of speech, press, and assembly.
  - Holding political actors accountable, ensuring that new leaders focus on governance rather than corruption or violence.

## 5. POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

### 5.1 Hamas's Resistance

- Hamas is unlikely to relinquish power without resistance. Even if legally excluded from elections, Hamas might continue its activities covertly or through intimidation tactics.
- To counter this, robust **security measures**, including the presence of international peacekeepers and a well-trained, neutral police force, would be needed to prevent violence and ensure a peaceful transition.

### 5.2 Internal Palestinian Divisions

- The **Fatah-Hamas rivalry** remains a significant obstacle to political unity. Any electoral system excluding Hamas would need to address these internal divisions, potentially through a **national dialogue** or reconciliation process that unifies Palestinians under one legitimate government.

### 5.3 Israel's Role

- Israel would need to cooperate by allowing greater freedom of movement for Gazans and facilitating humanitarian aid. However, Israel's primary concern would remain security, especially ensuring that Gaza does not become a base for attacks against its citizens. Any new electoral system and government in Gaza must include **security guarantees** for Israel.

## 6. BUILDING TOWARD STABILITY AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

### 6.1 Normalization with Israel and Joining the Abraham Accords

- A newly governed Gaza could potentially open the door to normalization with Israel, similar to the broader regional peace framework established by the **Abraham Accords**. This would depend on the new government's willingness to:
  - Commit to non-violence and peaceful coexistence with Israel.
  - Work towards a sustainable **two-state solution**, engaging in diplomacy rather than armed conflict.

### 6.2 Economic Development

- Once a stable political system is in place, Gaza could begin to rebuild its economy through:
  - **Regional investments:** Gulf countries involved in the **Abraham Accords** could invest in infrastructure, energy, and trade in Gaza, spurring job creation and reducing dependency on foreign aid.
  - **Trade with Israel:** A stable, peaceful Gaza could reopen trade routes with Israel and the West Bank, allowing the local economy to grow.

### **CONCLUSION: TRANSFORMING GAZA'S ELECTORAL SYSTEM**

Building a new electoral system in Gaza that excludes Hamas would require significant international engagement, legal reforms, and security measures. The **Palestinian Authority**, with international backing, would need to lead the process of governance and demilitarization, while civil society plays a critical role in fostering a culture of democracy and peaceful political engagement. Regional cooperation, especially through the Abraham Accords, could offer Gaza both economic opportunities and political stability in the long term. However, the success of such a system would ultimately depend on overcoming internal resistance and building trust between the population, the PA, and the international community.



# ENCOURAGEMENT OF FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN ORGANIZING, IMPLEMENTING, AND RUNNING A NEW ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN GAZA

ChatGPT (AI)

AI Overview

[Learn more](#)

According to the ILO, women's employment in Gaza has decreased by 12.8% since the beginning of the war, while unemployment has increased by 18.6%. The effects of the war on women have been less severe than on men, who have left the workforce in greater numbers as many women were already in more stable positions in the public sector or other industries before the war. The unemployment rate in Gaza averaged 79.7% between early October 2023 and the end of September 2024. The entire population of Gaza is experiencing acute food insecurity or worse. The Labor Law of 2000 created a more equal work environment in Gaza by reforming the previous labor regulations.

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Once there is peace Gaza will be rebuilding the country. This means a major staff demand. Go to [‘A Year of War in Gaza: Impacts on Employment and Livelihoods in the West Bank and Gaza Strip’](#).

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In the 1930's there was a rumour that Gaza could become a tourist resort in competition with the south of France. This came to nothing. As much will have been destroyed it could now be implemented.

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Ensuring the active participation of women in the creation and operation of a new electoral system in Gaza is crucial for promoting gender equality,  
strengthening democratic governance,  
and creating a more inclusive political environment.

Women in Gaza face significant challenges, including social, cultural, and political barriers, yet their involvement in political processes is essential for addressing the diverse needs of society and fostering long-term peace and development.

Here is a comprehensive approach to encourage and support female participation in organizing, implementing, and running a new electoral system in Gaza.

## 1. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR FEMALE INCLUSION

### 1.1 Legal Quotas for Female Representation

- **Electoral Laws with Gender Quotas:** One of the most effective ways to ensure women's representation in the political system is to establish **gender quotas** in the electoral laws. This could be done by:
  - Mandating that **at least 30% to 40% of parliamentary seats** be reserved for women, ensuring that female voices are adequately represented in legislative processes.
  - Requiring political parties to include a certain percentage of female candidates on their electoral lists, as part of the proportional representation system.
- **Constitutional Guarantees for Gender Equality:** Embedding **gender equality** in the new constitution or legal framework would provide women with legal protection for their political participation and rights. This would include provisions ensuring:
  - Equal rights in political, economic, and social spheres.
  - Legal frameworks protecting women from discrimination and harassment in politics.

### 1.2 Independent Women's Electoral Commission

- **Creation of a Women's Electoral Commission:** Establishing an independent **Women's Electoral Commission** could ensure that gender-specific concerns are addressed during the electoral process. This body would:
  - Oversee the implementation of gender quotas.
  - Ensure women's safety and security while participating in elections, as candidates, voters, or organizers.
  - Provide **gender-sensitive training** to election officials, ensuring they are equipped to handle the unique challenges women may face during the process.

## 2. BUILDING CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP AMONG WOMEN

### 2.1 Training and Capacity Building

- **Leadership Training for Women:** Providing targeted training programs for women to develop the skills needed for **political leadership, campaign management, and governance** is essential. This training could focus on:
  - **Public speaking, negotiation, and leadership skills** to help women become effective political candidates and organizers.
  - **Electoral laws and political processes**, ensuring women understand the legal and procedural aspects of running in elections or organizing political campaigns.
  - **Campaign management** techniques, helping women to effectively strategize and mobilize voters.
- **Capacity Building for Women in Civil Society:** Supporting women's organizations and **female-led civil society groups** can empower them to play a larger role in political discourse. These groups could provide grassroots support for female candidates, run public awareness campaigns, and advocate for gender-sensitive policies.

## 2.2 Mentorship and Networking Programs

- **Female Mentorship Programs:** Establishing **mentorship programs** that connect experienced female leaders with emerging women leaders can foster peer support and guidance. Women with political or leadership experience, both locally and internationally, can offer mentorship to potential female candidates and organizers in Gaza.
- **Regional and International Networking:** Facilitating connections between women in Gaza and those in **other Arab countries** or **international women's networks** (such as the **Arab Women Organization** or the **International Women's Democratic Union**) can provide access to resources, knowledge, and solidarity in pursuing gender equality in politics.

## 3. PROMOTING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

### 3.1 Involvement in Electoral Management

- **Recruitment of Women in Electoral Bodies:** Women should be actively recruited and placed in key roles within the **Electoral Management Body (EMB)** that organizes and runs elections. These roles could include:
  - **Election administrators**, tasked with overseeing voter registration, polling station management, and vote counting.
  - **Senior decision-making positions**, such as commissioners or directors within the electoral body, ensuring women have a say in high-level electoral decisions.
- **Gender Balance in Polling Station Staff:** Ensuring gender balance at **polling stations** by employing both male and female staff can make voting more accessible for women, especially in conservative communities where women might feel uncomfortable interacting with male officials.

### 3.2 Security for Female Candidates and Voters

- **Ensuring Women's Safety:** Female candidates often face **intimidation, harassment, and violence** in male-dominated political spaces. Special security measures must be implemented to protect female candidates, voters, and electoral workers:
  - **Gender-sensitive security protocols:** Law enforcement and electoral security forces should receive training to address and prevent gender-based violence during the electoral process.
  - Establishing **safe spaces** or designated areas for women at polling stations to ensure their comfort and security while voting.

## 4. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND CHANGING CULTURAL ATTITUDES

### 4.1 Awareness Campaigns

- **National Campaigns to Promote Women in Politics:** Public campaigns can challenge existing stereotypes and highlight the importance of women's participation in politics. These campaigns could include:
  - **Media campaigns** featuring female leaders, role models, and candidates, promoting the idea that women are equally capable of holding political office.
  - **Community-based awareness** programs, especially in more conservative areas, that emphasize the benefits of female participation in governance and decision-making.

- **Education and Civic Engagement:** Schools, universities, and community groups should be encouraged to teach **civic education** with a focus on gender equality, ensuring that future generations understand the importance of equal political participation.

#### 4.2 Engaging Religious and Cultural Leaders

- **Collaborating with Religious Leaders:** In Gaza, as in many other regions, religious and cultural leaders hold significant influence. Engaging these leaders in **promoting women's participation** in politics could help change public perceptions and reduce resistance to female candidates. Religious leaders can be invited to:
  - Advocate for women's rights and political engagement during sermons or community gatherings.
  - Issue public statements supporting the role of women in political and public life, framed within culturally and religiously acceptable contexts.

### 5. ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS AND DONORS

#### 5.1 International Support for Gender Equality Initiatives

- **International Aid for Women's Political Empowerment:** International donors, such as the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, the **European Union**, and **NGOs focused on women's empowerment**, should provide targeted funding for programs that promote gender equality in Gaza's political processes. These programs could include:
  - Funding for **female candidates' campaigns**.
  - **Capacity-building initiatives** for women's organizations and civil society groups that advocate for women's rights and participation.
- **International Electoral Monitoring:** Including **gender-focused electoral monitors** from international bodies during elections can help ensure that women are able to participate freely and without discrimination. These monitors can also document any gender-based challenges or threats to women's participation.

### 6. FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN PEACEBUILDING AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

#### 6.1 Engagement in Peacebuilding Efforts

- **Women's Role in Negotiations and Peacebuilding:** Women must be involved in any **peace negotiations** or dialogues related to Gaza's political future, especially when it comes to reconciliation between Palestinian factions or talks with Israel. Research shows that women's participation in peace processes tends to lead to more lasting peace agreements. Their involvement could focus on:
  - Advocating for **inclusive governance**, human rights, and gender-sensitive policies.
  - Building trust and reducing tensions by emphasizing **non-violent conflict resolution**.

#### 6.2 Regional and International Alliances

- **Involvement in Regional Initiatives:** Gaza could benefit from involving women in **regional peacebuilding efforts**, such as those linked to the **Abraham Accords**. Women can play an instrumental role in fostering regional cooperation by:

- Participating in **diplomatic and economic dialogues** with other Arab states, Israel, and the broader international community.
- Promoting **cross-border initiatives** that focus on education, health, and women's rights, thereby reinforcing Gaza's integration into regional frameworks.

### **CONCLUSION: PATHWAY TO INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY**

Promoting female participation in the organization, implementation, and running of a new electoral system in Gaza is vital for building a **more inclusive, democratic society**. By embedding legal protections, creating capacity-building programs, engaging civil society, and providing security for female candidates and voters, women can be empowered to play a key role in shaping Gaza's political future.

Moreover, involving women in the electoral process can help shift cultural attitudes toward gender equality, creating a more balanced and fair governance system. With sustained international support and collaboration, women's participation in politics can help pave the way for a **peaceful, stable, and prosperous Gaza**, where all citizens, regardless of gender, can contribute to the region's future.

# GAZA, INDUSTRIAL, RETAIL, CONSTRUCTION AND CONSUMER UTILITIES

## ChatGPT (AI)

**Incorporating industrial, retail, and consumer utility sectors into Gaza's reconstruction plan is essential for creating a robust economy, job opportunities, and a sustainable urban ecosystem.**

**Efficiently developing these sectors will foster local entrepreneurship, reduce dependence on imports, and enhance residents' quality of life.**

**Here's a detailed approach to incorporating these components into Gaza's reconstruction while prioritizing quality and cost-effectiveness.**

**Analysis of Key Sectors in Gaza: Industrial, Retail, Construction, and Consumer Utilities**

**Detailed Analysis of Gaza's Sectors: Industrial, Retail, Construction, and Consumer Utilities**

**Comprehensive Analysis of Gaza's Sectors: Industrial, Retail, Construction, and Consumer Utilities**

## COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF GAZA'S SECTORS: INDUSTRIAL, RETAIL, CONSTRUCTION, AND CONSUMER UTILITIES

### 1. Industrial Sector

#### Key Industries and Outputs:

- **Textile Manufacturing:**
  - Gaza historically had a thriving textile industry, supplying garments to local markets and beyond. This sector has dwindled due to export barriers but retains potential for revival through investments in small-scale garment production.
- **Food Processing:**
  - Small factories process olives, sesame (for tahini production), and fruits for jams and preserves.
  - Fisheries, a significant part of Gaza's economy, contribute to seafood processing, but restrictions on fishing zones hamper output.
- **Construction Materials:**
  - Small-scale production of cement blocks and recycled construction materials attempts to meet local demand.
- **Handicrafts:**
  - Traditional handicrafts, such as embroidery and pottery, cater to both local markets and export opportunities via international aid agencies.

**Systemic Challenges:****1. Energy Dependence:**

- Factory downtime caused by electricity shortages often exceeds 50%.
- Backup diesel generators increase operating costs, making local products less competitive.

**2. Import and Export Barriers:**

- Dual-use restrictions on chemicals, machinery, and electronics curb the sector's potential.
- Exports are limited to select Israeli or international markets, often through stringent oversight.

**3. Infrastructure Deficiencies:**

- Industrial zones in Gaza lack consistent water, power, and sewage systems.
- Damage from repeated conflicts remains unrepaired due to material restrictions.

**Opportunities for Growth:****1. Renewable Energy Solutions:**

- Solar energy for industrial zones could stabilize operations.
- Partnerships with NGOs to subsidize renewable energy could offset startup costs.

**2. Value-Added Products:**

- Processing agricultural produce for export (e.g., organic olive oil, pickled vegetables) can create niche markets.

**3. Strategic Investments:**

- Establishing small, specialized industrial hubs with donor-backed infrastructure.

**2. Retail Sector****Characteristics:****• Composition:**

- Approximately 80% of retail outlets are micro or small enterprises run by families or individuals.
- Larger wholesale outlets operate primarily in urban centers like Gaza City.

**• Products:**

- Primarily imported goods such as clothing, food, and household items dominate the market.
- A growing demand for second-hand goods reflects economic hardships.

**Market Dynamics:****• High Reliance on Aid:**

- Humanitarian organizations often serve as intermediaries, providing food vouchers redeemable at local retailers.

**• Consumer Priorities:**

- Spending focuses on food and basic necessities, with minimal allocation for luxury items or non-essentials.

**1. Cash Flow Issues:**

- Retailers often face delayed payments due to informal credit systems.

**2. Supply Chain Disruptions:**

- Dependence on Israeli and Egyptian borders for imported goods creates delays and price inflation.

**3. Weak Consumer Spending:**

- Per capita income in Gaza is one of the lowest globally, limiting demand for diverse products.

**Opportunities for Development:****1. Digital Retail Transformation:**

- Creation of local e-commerce platforms to allow small vendors to reach broader markets.
- Introduction of mobile payment systems to bypass cash flow issues.

**2. Inclusive Retail Strategies:**

- Programs targeting women and youth in retail entrepreneurship.

**3. Local Branding:**

- Promoting local artisanal products (e.g., embroidery, handmade crafts) through retail channels.

**3. Construction Sector****Sector Importance:**

- Construction is essential for rebuilding homes, hospitals, schools, and public infrastructure damaged during conflicts. It also has the potential to address Gaza's chronic housing shortages.

**Sector Challenges:****1. Material Availability:**

- Basic construction materials like cement, rebar, and steel are limited by import restrictions.
- Costs for materials smuggled through tunnels or sourced via intermediaries are prohibitively high.

**2. Funding Reliance:**

- Reconstruction projects depend almost entirely on foreign aid, often delayed or cut due to political factors.

**3. Labor Market Stagnation:**

- The sector, which could employ thousands, remains underutilized due to lack of materials and funding.

**Environmental Concerns:**

- Overextraction of local resources like sand and gravel leads to environmental degradation.
- Waste from destroyed buildings is often left untreated, creating health hazards.



**Growth Opportunities:****1. Innovative Construction Techniques:**

- Prefabricated housing units to expedite rebuilding projects.
- Use of recycled building materials to reduce dependence on imports.

**2. Public Infrastructure Projects:**

- Donor-backed projects for roads, sewage systems, and water supply can simultaneously boost employment.

**3. Energy-Efficient Construction:**

- Promoting green buildings with solar installations to address long-term utility needs.

**4. Consumer Utilities Sector****Water Access and Management:**

- **State of Water Supply:**

- 97% of Gaza's groundwater is unsafe for drinking, leaving over 2 million residents reliant on desalination or bottled water.
- Coastal aquifer overuse has led to saltwater intrusion, worsening water quality.

- **Infrastructure:**

- Gaza's aging water distribution network loses ~30% of water through leaks and inefficiencies.
- Wastewater treatment plants operate below capacity, polluting the environment.

**Electricity and Energy:**

- **Supply Deficit:**

- Gaza requires ~500 MW of power daily, but only ~150 MW is supplied through imports and local production.

- **Renewable Energy Potential:**

- Solar energy adoption is growing but remains unaffordable for many households and businesses.

**Telecommunications:**

- **Infrastructure Gaps:**

- Limited investment in broadband and mobile networks leaves residents with slower internet speeds and less reliable connectivity.
- Current services are dependent on Israeli providers, limiting local control.

**Sector Opportunities:****1. Water Desalination:**

- Expansion of donor-funded desalination plants could provide a reliable water source for residents.

**2. Renewable Energy Scaling:**

- Development of solar farms and microgrids can stabilize energy access and reduce dependence on diesel generators.

**3. Telecommunications Upgrades:**

- Investment in fiber-optic networks and 4G/5G mobile technologies could integrate Gaza into the digital economy.

**BROADER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTORAL DEVELOPMENT****1. Encourage Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):**

- Collaborations between local businesses, NGOs, and international donors can address infrastructure needs, particularly in utilities and construction.

**2. Advocate for Policy Changes:**

- Efforts to lift or ease restrictions on dual-use materials are critical for unlocking industrial and construction potential.

**3. Focus on Vocational Training:**

- Training programs in trades such as carpentry, welding, and plumbing can support the construction sector while creating employment.

**4. Boost Renewable Energy Adoption:**

- Provide subsidies or grants for households and businesses to install solar panels and energy storage systems.

**5. Leverage International Funding:**

- Develop accountability mechanisms to ensure that donor aid reaches projects with maximum community impact.

**6. Strengthen Local Entrepreneurship:**

- Microfinance and training programs targeted at women and youth could foster resilience in the retail and industrial sectors.

By addressing systemic constraints and leveraging opportunities, these sectors can drive Gaza's economic recovery and create pathways for sustainable development. If you'd like, I can further explore implementation strategies or provide case studies to illustrate successful interventions in similar contexts.

# GAZA REORGANISATION TO ACHIEVE ABOVE OBJECTIVES

## ChatGPT

By adopting this structured approach, the organization can efficiently mobilize resources, build consensus among stakeholders, and drive transformative change in Gaza's industrial, retail, construction, and utilities sectors. Let me know if you'd like to dive deeper into specific components!

### COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF GAZA'S SECTORS: INDUSTRIAL, RETAIL, CONSTRUCTION AND CONSUMER UTILITIES

#### 1. Industrial Sector

##### Key Industries and Outputs:

- **Textile Manufacturing:**
  - Gaza historically had a thriving textile industry, supplying garments to local markets and beyond. This sector has dwindled due to export barriers but retains potential for revival through investments in small-scale garment production.
- **Food Processing:**
  - Small factories process olives, sesame (for tahini production), and fruits for jams and preserves.
  - Fisheries, a significant part of Gaza's economy, contribute to seafood processing, but restrictions on fishing zones hamper output.
- **Construction Materials:**
  - Small-scale production of cement blocks and recycled construction materials attempts to meet local demand.
- **Handicrafts:**
  - Traditional handicrafts, such as embroidery and pottery, cater to both local markets and export opportunities via international aid agencies.

##### Systemic Challenges:

1. **Energy Dependence:**
  - Factory downtime caused by electricity shortages often exceeds 50%.
  - Backup diesel generators increase operating costs, making local products less competitive.
2. **Import and Export Barriers:**
  - Dual-use restrictions on chemicals, machinery, and electronics curb the sector's potential.

- Exports are limited to select Israeli or international markets, often through stringent oversight.

### 3. Infrastructure Deficiencies:

- Industrial zones in Gaza lack consistent water, power, and sewage systems.
- Damage from repeated conflicts remains unrepaired due to material restrictions.

### Opportunities for Growth:

#### 1. Renewable Energy Solutions:

- Solar energy for industrial zones could stabilize operations.
- Partnerships with NGOs to subsidize renewable energy could offset startup costs.

#### 2. Value-Added Products:

- Processing agricultural produce for export (e.g., organic olive oil, pickled vegetables) can create niche markets.

#### 3. Strategic Investments:

- Establishing small, specialized industrial hubs with donor-backed infrastructure.

## 2. Retail Sector

### Characteristics:

#### • Composition:

- Approximately 80% of retail outlets are micro or small enterprises run by families or individuals.
- Larger wholesale outlets operate primarily in urban centers like Gaza City.

#### • Products:

- Primarily imported goods such as clothing, food, and household items dominate the market.
- A growing demand for second-hand goods reflects economic hardships.

### Market Dynamics:

#### • High Reliance on Aid:

- Humanitarian organizations often serve as intermediaries, providing food vouchers redeemable at local retailers.

#### • Consumer Priorities:

- Spending focuses on food and basic necessities, with minimal allocation for luxury items or non-essentials.

**Barriers to Growth:**

1. **Cash Flow Issues:**
  - Retailers often face delayed payments due to informal credit systems.
2. **Supply Chain Disruptions:**
  - Dependence on Israeli and Egyptian borders for imported goods creates delays and price inflation.
3. **Weak Consumer Spending:**
  - Per capita income in Gaza is one of the lowest globally, limiting demand for diverse products.

**Opportunities for Development:**

1. **Digital Retail Transformation:**
  - Creation of local e-commerce platforms to allow small vendors to reach broader markets.
  - Introduction of mobile payment systems to bypass cash flow issues.
2. **Inclusive Retail Strategies:**
  - Programs targeting women and youth in retail entrepreneurship.
3. **Local Branding:**
  - Promoting local artisanal products (e.g., embroidery, handmade crafts) through retail channels.

**3. Construction Sector****Sector Importance:**

- Construction is essential for rebuilding homes, hospitals, schools, and public infrastructure damaged during conflicts. It also has the potential to address Gaza's chronic housing shortages.

**Sector Challenges:**

1. **Material Availability:**
  - Basic construction materials like cement, rebar, and steel are limited by import restrictions.
  - Costs for materials smuggled through tunnels or sourced via intermediaries are prohibitively high.
2. **Funding Reliance:**
  - Reconstruction projects depend almost entirely on foreign aid, often delayed or cut due to political factors.
3. **Labor Market Stagnation:**
  - The sector, which could employ thousands, remains underutilized due to lack of materials and funding.

**Environmental Concerns:**

- Overextraction of local resources like sand and gravel leads to environmental degradation.
- Waste from destroyed buildings is often left untreated, creating health hazards.

**Growth Opportunities:****1. Innovative Construction Techniques:**

- Prefabricated housing units to expedite rebuilding projects.
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**• Renewable Energy Potential:**

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## **Sector Opportunities:**

### **1. Water Desalination:**

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- Development of solar farms and microgrids can stabilize energy access and reduce dependence on diesel generators.

### **3. Telecommunications Upgrades:**

- Investment in fiber-optic networks and 4G/5G mobile technologies could integrate Gaza into the digital economy.

## **5. Broader Recommendations for Sectoral Development**

### **1. Encourage Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):**

- Collaborations between local businesses, NGOs, and international donors can address infrastructure needs, particularly in utilities and construction.

### **2. Advocate for Policy Changes:**

- Efforts to lift or ease restrictions on dual-use materials are critical for unlocking industrial and construction potential.

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- Training programs in trades such as carpentry, welding, and plumbing can support the construction sector while creating employment.

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By addressing systemic constraints and leveraging opportunities, these sectors can drive Gaza's economic recovery and create pathways for sustainable development. If you'd like, I can further explore implementation strategies or provide case studies to illustrate successful interventions in similar contexts.

**To achieve the objectives outlined above, a multi-stakeholder approach is essential, involving local authorities, international organizations, NGOs, private sector entities, and community groups.**

**Below is a structured plan for organizing efforts across the sector**

## **EXPANDED ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES**

This expanded organizational framework details the structure, roles, responsibilities, and processes for managing the development and revitalization of Gaza's industrial, retail, construction, and consumer utilities sectors. It incorporates multi-stakeholder collaboration, advanced resource management, and robust oversight mechanisms to ensure success.

### **1. Central Coordinating Authority (CCA)**

The CCA acts as the apex body overseeing and harmonizing efforts across sectors, ensuring resources are effectively allocated and progress is aligned with overarching development goals.

#### **Key Components:**

- **Leadership:**
  - A Chairperson (appointed from local authorities or an international body like the UN).
  - Vice-Chairpersons from prominent international organizations (e.g., UNDP, World Bank) and local government representatives.
- **Core Functions:**
  - Develop a unified development roadmap for Gaza.
  - Approve budgets, allocate resources, and manage donor funding.
  - Coordinate with international agencies, private investors, and local stakeholders.
  - Enforce transparency through regular progress reports and public disclosures.

#### **Key Departments within the CCA:**

1. **Strategic Planning and Policy Unit (SPPU):**
  - Develops policies and strategies for sectoral growth.
  - Ensures alignment with international development goals (e.g., UN Sustainable Development Goals).
2. **Operations and Implementation Unit (OIU):**
  - Monitors daily operations across all task forces.
  - Facilitates cross-sectoral coordination.
3. **Legal and Compliance Unit (LCU):**
  - Ensures compliance with international and local laws.
  - Resolves disputes between stakeholders.



## 2. Sectoral Task Forces (STFs)

Each sector has a specialized task force to manage targeted initiatives and implement sector-specific strategies.

### 2.1 Industrial Task Force (ITF)

#### Key Responsibilities:

- Identify industries with the potential for growth (e.g., food processing, textiles).
- Develop renewable energy solutions for industrial zones.
- Facilitate the procurement of raw materials and equipment despite import restrictions.

#### Structure:

- **Chair:** Representative from the local Chamber of Commerce.
- **Core Members:**
  - Local industrialists and factory owners.
  - Renewable energy experts and technical advisors.
  - Representatives from NGOs and international trade organizations.

### 2.2 Retail Task Force (RTF)

#### Key Responsibilities:

- Strengthen the retail sector by improving supply chains and supporting local entrepreneurs.
- Promote e-commerce and digital retail platforms.
- Provide microfinancing and capacity-building programs for small retailers.

#### Structure:

- **Chair:** Representative from a local entrepreneur network.
- **Core Members:**
  - Retail associations and market leaders.
  - Technology providers for e-commerce.
  - NGO representatives specializing in small business development.

### 2.3 Construction Task Force (CTF)

#### Key Responsibilities:

- Manage large-scale reconstruction projects, including housing and public infrastructure.
- Promote green and sustainable construction techniques.
- Ensure equitable distribution of resources for rebuilding efforts.

#### Structure:

- **Chair:** Representative from the local public works department.
- **Core Members:**
  - Construction firms and architects.
  - Environmental and sustainability experts.
  - Representatives from international donors.

## 2.4 Utilities Task Force (UTF)

### Key Responsibilities:

- Enhance water, electricity, and telecommunications infrastructure.
- Scale up renewable energy installations.
- Develop long-term maintenance and operation plans for utility services.

### Structure:

- **Chair:** Senior engineer from the local utilities authority.
- **Core Members:**
  - Experts in energy, water, and telecommunications systems.
  - Representatives from donor organizations like the World Bank.
  - Environmental NGOs to advise on sustainable practices.

## 3. Cross-Cutting Support Units (CSUs)

These units provide specialized support to all STFs, ensuring consistency, innovation and inclusivity across projects.

### 3.1 Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (MEU)

- Tracks progress and evaluates the impact of all projects.
- Reports directly to the CCA with actionable recommendations for course corrections.

### 3.2 Resource Mobilization Unit (RMU)

- Identifies funding opportunities from international donors, private investors, and NGOs.
- Manages grant applications and funding proposals.
- Coordinates fundraising campaigns and public awareness efforts.

### 3.3 Community Engagement Unit (CEU)

- Ensures community participation and feedback throughout project lifecycles.
- Organizes public forums, surveys, and workshops to gather input.
- Disseminates information on project outcomes to foster trust and transparency.

### 3.4 Innovation and Research Unit (IRU)

- Conducts feasibility studies and pilots innovative solutions.
- Collaborates with universities and think tanks to drive sector-specific innovations.

## 4. Implementation Framework

### 4.1 Timeline and Phases

1. **Phase 1: Stabilization (0–2 Years):**
  - Emergency interventions in water, electricity, and housing.
  - Immediate support for small retailers and factories.
2. **Phase 2: Capacity Building (3–5 Years):**
  - Training programs for trades and small business management.
  - Upgrading core infrastructure.

### 3. Phase 3: Sustainable Growth (5+ Years):

- Achieving economic independence through industrial parks, renewable energy systems, and robust local markets.

## 4.2 Decision-Making Process

- **Consensus-Based:**
  - Decisions made collaboratively within task forces.
- **CCA Oversight:**
  - Final approval for high-impact initiatives.

## 5. Reporting and Transparency

- **Public Quarterly Reports:**
  - Detailed progress updates on each sector.
  - Financial disclosures to maintain accountability.
- **Annual Stakeholder Summits:**
  - Gather all stakeholders to review achievements, address challenges, and set goals.

## 6. Tools and Technologies

1. **Integrated Project Management Platform:**
  - Real-time collaboration among task forces and support units.
  - Centralized dashboard for tracking progress and milestones.
2. **Digital Communication Channels:**
  - Mobile apps and web portals for community engagement and feedback.
3. **Advanced Data Analytics:**
  - Use AI and big data to identify trends, predict challenges, and optimize resource allocation.

## 7. Partnerships

1. **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):**
  - Collaborative projects with private companies to fund and implement renewable energy, telecommunications, and industrial park initiatives.
2. **International Alliances:**
  - Work with organizations like UNDP, USAID, and the World Bank for financial and technical support.
3. **Grassroots Collaboration:**
  - Empower local communities through cooperative projects and participatory governance.

By structuring the effort through this detailed organizational framework, stakeholders can systematically address Gaza's challenges, unlock growth potential, and create a path toward sustainable economic and social development. Let me know if you need additional specifics on operational workflows or resource allocations.

## **UN SAYS GAZA RECONSTRUCTION TO COST \$30-40 BILLION, DAMAGE ON A SCALE UNSEEN SINCE WWII**

**United Nations Development Programme report estimates  
Palestinian economy has shrunk by 26.9% since Hamas's October 7 massacre**

[AFP](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 2 May 2024

A United Nations agency said Thursday that rebuilding the Gaza Strip, following the destruction in the enclave resulting from the war between Israel and Hamas, will cost an estimated \$30-40 billion and require an effort on a scale unseen since World War II.

“The United Nations Development Programme’s initial estimates for the reconstruction of... the Gaza Strip surpass \$30 billion and could reach up to \$40 billion,” UN assistant secretary-general Abdullah Al Dardari said.

“The scale of the destruction is huge and unprecedented... This is a mission that the global community has not dealt with since World War II,” Dardari, who previously served as deputy prime minister under Syrian President Bashar Assad, told a press conference in the Jordanian capital Amman.

He added that if Gaza’s reconstruction were to be carried out through the normal process, “it could take decades, and the Palestinian people do not have the luxury of waiting for decades.”

“It is therefore important that we act quickly to re-house people in decent housing and restore their lives to normal – economically, socially, in terms of health and education,” Dardari said. “This is our top priority, and it must be achieved within the first three years following the cessation of hostilities.”

He estimated the total rubble from bombardment and explosions at 37 million tons.

Abdullah Al Dardari gestures as he speaks during a conference, in Beirut, Lebanon, January 19, 2017. (AP Photo/Bilal Hussein)

“We are talking about a colossal figure, and this figure is increasing every day,” he said. “The latest data indicates that it is already approaching 40 million tons.”

The UN official also said “72 percent of all residential buildings have been completely or partially destroyed.”

“Reconstruction must be planned carefully, efficiently and with extreme flexibility because we do not know how the war will end” and what type of post-war governance will be established in the Gaza Strip.

### **GAZA ECONOMY SHRINKING**

The war between Israel and the terrorist group Hamas has also severely impacted the Palestinian economy. According to an assessment released on Thursday by the UNDP, it is estimated the Palestinian economy, encompassing both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, has shrunk by 26.9% since the war broke out on October 7.

The estimates, released with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, also found that the Gaza poverty rate is expected to continue climbing to 58.4%.

The war erupted with Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel in which 3,000 terrorists killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapped 253 to Gaza.

Israel's subsequent offensive, vowing to destroy Hamas, has killed over 34,000 people in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run Gaza health ministry. This figure cannot be independently verified and does not differentiate between civilians and Palestinian belligerents. Israel says it has killed over 13,000 terrorists since the war began and around 1,000 inside Israeli territory on October 7.

"Every additional day that this war continues is exacting huge and compounding costs to Gazans and all Palestinians," said UNDP administrator Achim Steiner in a statement.

[Grab your reader's attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.]

"These new figures warn that the suffering in Gaza will not end when the war does," he added.

He warned of a "serious development crisis" stemming from the massive losses over a short span of time. Should the war continue for nine months, poverty is expected to more than double from pre-war levels, while the drop in gross domestic product would reach 29 percent, the UNDP said.

A World Bank report published early April said the Israel-Hamas war has caused damage of around \$18.5 billion to Gaza's critical infrastructure.

This was equivalent to 97% of the combined economic output of the West Bank and Gaza in 2022.

**PART K-1**

**HAMAS -**

**MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD**

## **HASSAN AL-BANNA, FOUNDER OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD**

### **WIKIPEDIA**

Hassan Ahmed Abd al-Rahman Muhammed al-Banna ([Arabic](#): حسن أحمد عبد الرحمن محمد البنا; 14 October 1906 – 12 February 1949), known as Hassan al-Banna ([Arabic](#): حسن البنا), was an Egyptian schoolteacher and [Imam](#), best known for founding the [Muslim Brotherhood](#).<sup>[8]</sup> His Ikhwani movement is one of the largest and most influential of the global [Islamic fundamentalist](#) movements.<sup>[8][3]</sup>

Al-Banna's writings marked a turning-point in Islamic intellectual history by presenting a modern ideology based on [Islam](#).<sup>[9]</sup> Al-Banna considered Islam to be a comprehensive system of life, with the [Quran](#) and [Sunnah](#) as the only acceptable constitution.<sup>[10]</sup> He called for [Islamization](#) of the state, the economy, and society.<sup>[9]</sup> He declared that establishing a just society required development of institutions and progressive taxation, and elaborated an [Islamic fiscal theory](#) where [zakat](#) would be reserved for social expenditure in order to reduce inequality.<sup>[10][9]</sup> Al-Banna's ideology involved criticism of Western [materialism](#), [British imperialism](#), and the traditionalism of the Egyptian [ulema](#).<sup>[11]</sup> He appealed to Egyptian and [pan-Arab](#) patriotism but rejected [Arab nationalism](#) and regarded all [Muslims](#) as members of a single [nation-community](#).<sup>[10][9][11]</sup>

Following the [abolition of the Caliphate](#) in 1924, al-Banna called on Muslims to prepare for armed struggle against [colonial rule](#); he warned Muslims against the "widespread belief" that "jihad of the heart" was more important than "jihad of the sword".<sup>[12]</sup> He allowed the formation of a secret military wing within the Muslim Brotherhood, which took part in the [Arab-Israeli conflict](#).<sup>[11]</sup> Al-Banna generally encouraged Egyptians to abandon [Western customs](#); and argued that the state should enforce Islamic public morality through censorship and application of [hudud](#) corporal punishment.<sup>[9]</sup> Nonetheless, his thought was open to Western ideas and some of his writings quote European authors instead of Islamic sources.<sup>[9]</sup>

Al-Banna was assassinated by the [Egyptian secret police](#) in 1949.<sup>[10]</sup> His son-in-law [Saïd Ramadan](#) emerged as a major leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s.

### **MUSLIM BROTHERS AND THE PALESTINE CONFLICT**

Among the Muslim Brothers' most notable accomplishments during these early years was its involvement in the [1936–1939 Arab revolt in Palestine](#). The Muslim Brothers launched a pro-Palestine campaign which contributed to making the Palestine issue a widespread Muslim concern. The Muslim Brothers carried out a fundraising campaign said to have relied upon donations from the rural and urban working classes, rather than wealthy Egyptians. In addition to their fundraising efforts, the Muslim Brothers also organized special prayers for Palestinian Arab nationalists, held political rallies, and distributed propaganda. Although the Arab revolt in Palestine was ultimately suppressed through repression and military action, the Muslim Brothers' impressive mobilization efforts helped make the Palestinian question a pan-Arab concern in the Middle East.

When Rashid Rida died in August 1935, his *Al-Manar* magazine also perished with him. Sometime in 1939, Hassan al-Banna resurrected *Al-Manar* to further promote the revolutionary ideology pioneered by the Muslim Brotherhood and claim Rashid Rida's legacy.<sup>[15]</sup>

Hassan al-Banna in two of his writings, *Peace In Islam* and *Our Message*, criticises the ultra-nationalism of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as being a "reprehensible idea" within which was "not the slightest good"<sup>[27]</sup> and which gave power to "chosen tyrants".<sup>[28]</sup>



## THE ENDURING LEGACY OF ISLAMIC IMPERIALISM

Progressive western historians have a marked tendency to ignore the millennium and a half-long history of [Islamic and Arab imperialism](#).

This spread through the imposition of the Arabic language.

The core of the Arab-Muslim irredentist demand that Israel be destroyed is a direct expression of this imperialist Islam from its first century, argues Richard Landes in [Fathom](#):

[POINT OF NO RETURN](#) [bataween](#) 28 July 2024



*Hassan al-Banna,  
founder of the Muslim Brotherhood.  
He planned to revive true Islam*

“The reason why the Arab world, and the Muslim-Arab world in particular, find Israel categorically unacceptable goes back to the doctrine of *Dar al-Harb*, *Dar al-Islam*. *The land between the river and sea became a key part of the exploding Arab-Muslim empire – Dar al-Islam – in the 7<sup>th</sup> century*. Fast forward some 14 centuries, and the dissolution of the Caliphate in 1924 (the first ‘*Nakba*’) put an end to *Dar al-Islam* formally. In the eyes of the West, Islam, the millennia-long foe, had been put in its place.

But this triumphalist vision of a world ultimately entirely submitted to Allah (through Islam) lived on, taking on a more modern form, more powerful and effective than the Ottoman basket case. Hassan al-Banna formed the Muslim Brotherhood (1927), a multi-generational plan to revive true Islam, fight the forces of secular modernity making inroads in the Arab world whose progress al-Banna saw as a regression to the ‘*Jahaliyya*,’ i.e. the ‘Ignorance’ of the pre-Islamic Arab world. He sought a long-term, multi-generational goal of a new salvific and eventually global Caliphate in which Muslims ruled according to Sharia: Where there was *Dar al-Harb*, there shall be *Dar al-Islam*.

For al-Banna, his triumphalist followers and sympathisers, the demotion of Islam in the eyes of the nations that had occurred through the military and cultural success of Western imperial-colonialists, threatened the very religion itself: [‘a declaration of war on all shapes of Islam.’](#) For them, Islam must dominate. Few forces today that seek global hegemony are so open about their imperial ambitions.

In the minds of supremacists like al-Banna, therefore, the creation of Israel was a further catastrophe in this long war on Islam, the loss of territory in the heart of what was *and should be* dar al-Islam, and a denial of Muslim imperial claims. The core of the Arab-Muslim irredentist demand that Israel be destroyed, is a direct expression of this imperialist Islam from its first century. Free infidels are anathema to Islam's triumphalist sovereignty. 'We cannot concede a grain of sand to Jews.' For Abul A'la al-Maududi, the most systematic thinker of modern Islam explained, Jews must exist in the state of submission. 'The purpose for which the Muslims are required to fight is ... to put an end to their sovereignty and supremacy.'<sup>[1]</sup> To have the dissolution of the Caliphate followed two decades later by a *Jewish* state in the heart of what should be Dar al-Islam was a continuation of the same war 'against all shapes of Islam.' For triumphalist Muslims like al-Banna, Islam *necessitated* dominion. Its demotion on the world stage was an existential threat. Hence, losing the battle with the Jews threatened to be an unmitigated disaster, utter humiliation on a global scale in response to which, in complete confidence in their impending victory, the Arab League [promised historic massacres](#). To lose would fatally wound triumphalist Islam's need for visible dominion. To Muslims such as these, Israel was a blasphemy against the Prophet (PBUH). An intolerable degradation. Another *nakba*. Indeed, The Muslim Brotherhood, initially a weak movement, only came into its own in the fight against Zionism.<sup>[2]</sup>

This hard zero-sum mentality – if you win (anything) I lose; in order for me to win you must lose (everything) – has characterised one of the dominant currents in Arab attitudes towards Jews in the modern period.”

### WHAT IS DAR AL-ISLAM (FROM CHATGPT - AI)

**Dar al-Islam** (Arabic: دار الإسلام) is a classical Islamic legal and theological concept that refers to territories where Islam is the dominant religion and where Islamic law, or **Sharia**, prevails. It has played a crucial role in the development of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), as well as in political and social theory within the Islamic world.

The term "Dar al-Islam" can be understood by breaking down its two key components:

1. **Dar**: This means "house" or "abode" in Arabic.
2. **Islam**: Refers to the religion of Islam, encompassing both the faith and its legal and social system, particularly Sharia law.

### HISTORICAL AND CLASSICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In Islamic jurisprudence, particularly during the **classical period** (7th to 15th centuries), Muslim scholars used Dar al-Islam to distinguish areas that were governed by Islamic law from those that were not. Its counterpart is **Dar al-Harb** (the Abode of War), which describes territories not ruled by Muslims and where Islamic law does not apply.

Islamic scholars from different schools of thought generally agreed on the following characteristics of Dar al-Islam:

1. **Governance by Sharia**: A territory is considered Dar al-Islam if it is governed by a Muslim ruler or government that applies Sharia law as the foundation of governance.

2. **Religious Freedom for Muslims:** In Dar al-Islam, Muslims are free to practice their religion openly and are guaranteed protection under Islamic governance. This includes public worship, religious education, and the observance of Islamic practices.
3. **Protection of Non-Muslims (Dhimmi):** Non-Muslim residents, especially Christians and Jews (referred to as **dhimmis**), are granted protection under the governance of Dar al-Islam as long as they agree to certain conditions, such as paying the **jizya** (a tax for non-Muslims). They are free to practice their own religions under these terms.
4. **Security and Military Defense:** Historically, Dar al-Islam was seen as a place that offered security and protection for Muslims against external threats. Islamic governments were responsible for defending their lands from non-Muslim forces, whether they were local threats or foreign invaders.
5. **Territorial Expansion:** During the early centuries of Islamic expansion (7th–9th centuries), the concept of Dar al-Islam motivated the spread of Islam into new territories. As Muslim empires grew, particularly under the Rashidun, Umayyad, and Abbasid Caliphates, newly conquered lands were considered part of Dar al-Islam once Islamic law was established.

### **MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF DAR AL-ISLAM**

In modern times, the concept of Dar al-Islam has evolved. Today, Islamic scholars and political thinkers are divided over how relevant or applicable the distinction between Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb is in contemporary geopolitics. Modern nation-states, international law, and the concept of sovereignty have complicated traditional classifications. However, in certain religious, academic, and political contexts, Dar al-Islam retains significance.

#### **Key Views in Modern Contexts:**

1. **Traditionalist View:** Some scholars continue to uphold the classical distinction between Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb. In this view, territories that apply Islamic law or are governed by Muslims are still considered part of Dar al-Islam. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and historically the Ottoman Empire were often regarded as part of Dar al-Islam because they applied Islamic law at various levels of governance.
2. **Reformist View:** Others argue that the traditional concept is outdated in a world of nation-states, international law, and globalization. They claim that Muslims can live and practice Islam in non-Muslim-majority countries without conflict. In this sense, the boundaries between Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb are blurred or irrelevant. Some reformers assert that peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims in pluralistic societies should be a priority.
3. **Islamist Movements:** For some Islamist movements, like **Hamas** or the **Taliban**, Dar al-Islam remains a critical ideological concept. They seek to establish Islamic states in specific territories by applying Sharia law, often through political struggle or armed resistance. For these groups, reclaiming or establishing Dar al-Islam means liberating lands that they view as rightfully belonging to the Muslim community from non-Muslim rule or secular governance. This is a motivating factor for resistance against Israel (in the case of Hamas) or against foreign influence (in the case of the Taliban).

4. **Non-Territorial Dar al-Islam:** In some contemporary theological interpretations, the notion of Dar al-Islam is no longer tied to geography but is seen more as a spiritual or legal state of affairs. Some scholars suggest that Dar al-Islam can exist wherever Muslims can freely practice their religion, even in secular or non-Muslim countries. This approach aligns with more pluralistic and globalized understandings of Islam.

### **DAR AL-ISLAM IN PRACTICE**

Historically, the **Islamic Caliphate** represented the largest and most prominent manifestation of Dar al-Islam. Under the Abbasid Caliphate, for example, territories spanning from Spain to India were part of Dar al-Islam. These regions were united under Islamic law, and Muslims could travel, trade, and practice their religion freely across these lands.

However, over time, as Muslim empires fragmented and colonialism divided the Islamic world, the political and territorial unity of Dar al-Islam weakened. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century, which had been the last major caliphate, marked a significant end to the historical concept of Dar al-Islam as a political entity.

#### **Contrasting Terms**

To fully understand Dar al-Islam, it is important to know the contrasting terms:

1. **Dar al-Harb** (The Abode of War): Refers to territories not governed by Muslims, where Islamic law is not in force, and where Muslims might face hostility or persecution.
2. **Dar al-Sulh** or **Dar al-Ahd** (The Abode of Treaty): This term refers to non-Muslim lands with which Muslim territories have a peace treaty. These areas are neither Dar al-Islam nor Dar al-Harb but are in a state of peaceful coexistence.
3. **Dar al-Kufr** (The Abode of Disbelief): Sometimes used to describe non-Muslim lands that are not necessarily hostile but where Islamic law does not govern.

### **CONCLUSION**

The concept of Dar al-Islam has been central to Islamic thought, defining the relationship between Islamic governance, law, and society. While its application and relevance have evolved over time, it remains a key framework in understanding historical Islamic civilization and certain modern political ideologies. Its interpretation varies, from a geographical reality to a more abstract or spiritual idea, reflecting the diversity of perspectives within the Muslim world.

## EGYPT'S MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

[cfr](#) Zachary Laub August 15 2019

The Muslim Brotherhood, once Egypt's largest opposition movement and a standard-bearer for Islamist groups around the world, has been once again driven underground as Abdel Fatah al-Sisi has consolidated power.



*Supporters of ousted President Mohammed Morsi protest in Cairo.*

*Amr Abdallah Dalsh/Reuters*

### Summary

- Founded in Egypt in the 1920s, the Brotherhood is one of the most influential Islamist organizations in the world, mixing religious teaching with political activism and social welfare programs.
- The group came to national power—winning the presidency in Egypt—amid the Arab Spring in the early 2010s. But a military junta ended its rule in 2013 and has since imprisoned thousands of its members.
- The Brotherhood's influence over its Islamist offshoots in the region has diminished, and its ability to participate civically and politically remains stifled.

### INTRODUCTION

The Muslim Brotherhood is Egypt's oldest and largest Islamist organization, with offshoots throughout the Arab world. The Brotherhood renounced violence in the 1970s and earned popular support by providing social services such as pharmacies, hospitals, and schools.

After the ouster of former president Hosni Mubarak in the Arab Spring protests of 2011, the group's political arm won a plurality of seats in Egypt's lower house of parliament and its candidate, Mohammed Morsi, was elected president. But Morsi was ousted by the military in July 2013, and the Brotherhood's members were imprisoned, went into exile, or were forced underground. As part of a wide-ranging crackdown on political opposition, the Egyptian government has labeled the group a terrorist organization, as have Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). U.S. President Donald J. Trump has expressed interest in [following suit](#), but many experts say a designation—whether of the original Egyptian group or of kindred groups throughout the region—would [stretch the bounds of the law](#) and also [complicate U.S. diplomacy](#) across much of the Middle East and North Africa.

[Blacklisting the Muslim Brotherhood: What to Know](#) by [Zachary Laub](#)

[Egypt Doesn't Matter Anymore](#) by [Steven A. Cook](#)

## A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood is the world's most influential Islamist organization. The Brotherhood's mission is to Islamize society through the promotion of [religious law](#), values, and morals. It has long combined preaching and political activism with social welfare to advance this objective.

The group earned legitimacy among its core constituency, the lower-middle class, as the most effective organized resistance against the British occupation of Egypt (1882–1952). The Muslim Brotherhood joined with the Free Officers, nationalist military leaders who sought to wrest Egypt from a British-backed monarchy. After a coup d'état that forced King Farouk out of power in July 1952, the military junta that took charge and the Brotherhood became rivals. This conflict was over power and ideology; the Brotherhood rejected the military's vision of Egypt as the leader of a socialist, secular, [pan-Arab movement](#).

In 1954, a suspected member of the Brotherhood attempted to assassinate the leader of the Free Officers, Gamal Abdel Nasser. In response, thousands of suspected Brothers were imprisoned. Though Nasser barred the group from government, the Brotherhood nevertheless became ubiquitous in society, building allegiance as a populist alternative to the Egyptian state, which provided neither prosperity nor welfare and suffered repeated military defeats by Israel.

Among those arrested was a member of the Brotherhood named Sayyid Qutb, who developed a doctrine of armed struggle against the regime in Egypt and beyond while writing from prison. His work has provided the underpinnings for many militant Sunni Islamist groups, including [al-Qaeda](#) and [Hamas](#). Extremist leaders often cite Qutb, who was hanged in 1966, to argue that governments not based on sharia are apostate and therefore legitimate targets of jihad.

## TOWARD PRAGMATIC POLITICS

Though establishing a state based on Islamic principles was at the core of the Brotherhood's agenda, the group gained prominence by effectively providing social services where the state failed.

The Brotherhood renounced violence at the insistence of Nasser's successor, Anwar al-Sadat, who allowed the group to preach and advocate in exchange for its support against his political rivals, Nasser loyalists and leftists. Sadat paid lip service to sharia and freed imprisoned Islamists. He was assassinated in 1981 by members of al-Jihad, an extremist group whose leaders opposed Sadat's 1979 peace treaty with Israel—though they were not the only ones—and sought the violent overthrow of the Egyptian political system because it was not based on religious law.

Although Egypt was not a democracy, it did hold parliamentary elections. Brotherhood-affiliated candidates first participated in [parliamentary elections](#) in 1984, even as the party officially remained banned. An alliance with the officially recognized Wafd Party, which stood for nationalism and economic liberalism, won 65 of the parliament's 450 seats. Running as independents in the early 2000s, Brotherhood candidates won still more seats, forming the largest opposition bloc.

## GRAPPLING WITH POWER

The Brotherhood emerged as a dominant political force in Egypt following Mubarak's removal from office amid mass protests in February 2011. The Brotherhood's organizational capacity was unmatched, but the group's electoral victories were tarnished by power struggles with the judiciary and the military. Battles over the drafting of a new constitution were a particular flash point.

In the 2012 parliamentary elections, the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) won nearly half the seats in the lower house (People's Assembly) and Islamists took 84 percent of the seats in the [upper house](#) (Shura Council). Pushing back against the Brotherhood's increasing power, the Mubarak-appointed Supreme Constitutional Court issued a decision in June 2012 that led to the [dissolution of the People's Assembly](#). At the same time, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which had been in control of Egypt since Mubarak's fall, gave the military exclusive control over defense and national security policy, diminishing the power of the president.

Just before Mubarak had stepped aside, the Brotherhood said that it would not seek the presidency, but it nevertheless put forward Khairat el-Shater, its deputy spiritual head, as a candidate. After Shater was disqualified, Morsi took his place. In a contest that posed a choice between Ahmad Shafiq—who had been a government minister during the Mubarak years and briefly prime minister after the January 2011 uprising—and the Brotherhood's candidate, Morsi was announced the winner in June 2012.

With the lower house of parliament dissolved, Morsi had both executive and legislative control of the government. In late November 2012, Morsi declared himself, the Shura Council (previously a consultative body without legislative authority), and the constituent assembly (which was charged with writing a new constitution) immune from judicial review. Morsi had justified the move by arguing that the judiciary and much of the bureaucracy was dominated by remnants of the Mubarak regime intent on impeding the revolution's goals. But after an immediate backlash, including public demonstrations, he annulled the decree.

The new constitution, which enshrined Islamic law as the basis for legislation, also stirred controversy. Though a similar principle existed in Egypt's prior constitution, the new draft raised concern with Egyptian liberals suspicious that the Brotherhood would take it as license to codify its worldview in the law. Many Egyptians also feared insufficient protections for women's rights and freedoms of speech and worship and distrusted the broad power accorded to the presidency. The constitution was approved with a 64 percent majority in a nationwide referendum, but only a third of the electorate voted.

The conflict between Morsi and the judiciary continued in March 2013, when the Supreme Administrative Court overturned a presidential decree calling for April parliamentary elections, questioning the constitutionality of election-law provisions. The secular opposition had previously called for a boycott of the vote.

Many analysts criticized Morsi's tactics as majoritarian, and Egyptians critical of the Brotherhood [coalesced around the group Tamarrod \(Rebellion\)](#), which claimed to gather twenty-two million signatories to a petition calling for Morsi to step down. As the Tamarrod movement gained steam, Egyptians complained of a breakdown in security and about Brotherhood vigilantism. Bringing things to a head, Morsi appointed a member of the former militant group [Jamaat al-Islamiyya](#) as governor of Luxor, where the group had massacred dozens of tourists in 1997.

As millions of protesters massed in the streets, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces—the same body that had forced Mubarak aside—issued an ultimatum to Morsi, giving him forty-eight hours to meet their demands. On July 3, 2013, SCAF, led by Defense Minister Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, ousted Morsi and suspended the new constitution.

The following month, security forces responded harshly to sit-ins protesting the coup, [killing more than 1,150 demonstrators](#), Human Rights Watch found. The main encampment, Rabaa al-Adawiya Square, became a rallying cry for opposition to the new regime.

#### The Brotherhood After the Coup

The government outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood, forcing it underground once again. Under Sisi, who became president in May 2014, the regime has taken strong steps to repress the opposition, using [accusations of membership](#) in the Brotherhood to repress dissent of all stripes.

Thousands of the group's leaders and members have been imprisoned, and others went into exile. The group's charities have been shuttered and their assets confiscated. Morsi, who had been on trial ever since his ouster, died in June 2019 after being [denied medical care](#) while held in solitary confinement, according to Human Rights Watch. It was the [seventh anniversary](#) of his election.

Unable to seek a voice through political or civic participation, some members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood could [split off into radical factions](#) and resort to violence, analysts say. In this way, the group could be forced in a direction far different than that of its offshoots, many of which have [taken part in parliamentary politics](#) as socially conservative parties.

Qatar and Turkey have cultivated ties with the Brotherhood and [its offshoots](#), and many exiled members of the Egyptian group have settled in those countries. In contrast, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have worked to suppress Brotherhood-affiliated movements, seeing their populist appeal as an ideological rival to their absolute monarchies. They have advocated a broad-brush U.S. terrorist designation. That would treat



disparate movements and parties around the region as if they were all part of a monolithic organization, when in reality the original Egyptian organization's influence over the diffuse network has been diminished, officials and experts say.

After Sisi's April 2019 visit, the White House directed national security officials to pursue a terrorist designation for the Muslim Brotherhood. Even the narrower approach of designating just the Egyptian branch could have far-reaching consequences and [invite legal challenge](#). The move, [former U.S. officials Daniel Benjamin and Jason Blazakis write](#), would expose hundreds of thousands of the movement's followers to potential U.S. sanctions while alienating the United Nations and European Union—which have long followed U.S. designations—and “providing cover for Sisi's government to expand an already brutal crackdown.”

### **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

The group's future trajectory will depend as much on its self-evaluation as it will on whether the Egyptian state pursues a strategy of containment or eradication, [writes](#) the Middle East Institute's Khalil al-Enani. Scholars debate political Islam after Morsi's ouster in forums convened by [Jadaliyya](#) and the [Project on Middle East Political Science](#).

## WHAT IS THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

### STANDWITHUS

- The Muslim Brotherhood's goal is to turn the world into a theocratic empire.  
The Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928, is a revolutionary fundamentalist movement to restore the caliphate and strict shariah (Islamist) law in Muslim lands and, ultimately, the world. Today, it has chapters in 80 countries. "It is in the nature of Islam to dominate, not to be dominated, to impose its law on all nations and to extend its power to the entire planet." —Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna
- The Brotherhood wants America to fall. In 2010 their Supreme Guide told their followers to be "patient" because America "is heading towards its demise."
- Western democracy is "corrupt," "unrealistic," and "false," according to former Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Muhammed Mahdi Akef
- "[Jihad must be waged against] the Muslim's real enemies, not only Israel but also the United States. Waging jihad against both of these infidels is a commandment of Allah that cannot be disregarded."
- —*Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Mohammed Badie, Sept. 2010*
  - The Brotherhood assassinated Anwar Sadat in 1981 for making peace with Israel. It also assassinated Egypt's prime minister in 1948 and attempted to assassinate President Nasser in 1954
  - The Brotherhood supports Sudan's genocidal dictator Omar al-Bashir and has worked against international efforts to bring him to justice. The Brotherhood condemned and called on the world to boycott the International Criminal Court when it accused al-Bashir of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes in 2009 The Brotherhood's chapter in Sudan backed al-Bashir as well.
  - The terrorist organization Hamas is a "wing of the Muslim Brotherhood," according to the Hamas Charter. The Charter calls for the murder of Jews, the "obliteration" of Israel and its replacement with an Islamist theocracy.
  - The Brotherhood supports Hezbollah's war against the Jews. Brotherhood leader Mahdi Akef declared he was "prepared to send 10,000 jihad fighters immediately to fight at the side of Hezbollah" during Hezbollah's war against Israel in 2006.
  - The Brotherhood glorified Osama bin Laden. Osama is "in all certainty, a mujahid (heroic fighter), and I have no doubt in his sincerity in resisting the occupation, close to Allah on high."
- —*Former Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Muhammed Mahdi Akef, Nov. 2007*
  - The Brotherhood sanctioned suicide bombings against Israeli civilians. "They do not have bombs, so they turn themselves into bombs. This is a necessity."
- —*Muslim Brotherhood Spiritual leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Dec. 17, 2011*

- The Brotherhood supports indiscriminate rocket fire at Israeli civilians.
- The Brotherhood advocates violence and terrorism: The “change that the [Muslim] nation seeks can only be attained through jihad and sacrifice and by raising a jihadi generation that pursues death just as the enemies pursue life,” said Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Mohammed Badie in a September 2010 sermon. Major terrorists came out of the Muslim Brotherhood, including bin Laden’s deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (mastermind of the 9/11 attacks).
- The Brotherhood believes it must acquire weapons of mass destruction. “We must possess... [nuclear, chemical, and biological] weapons in order to strike terror in our enemies... If we had nuclear weapons, they would be afraid to attack us... This is armed peace.”
  - *Muslim Brotherhood Spiritual leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi, 2009*
- The Brotherhood advocates a deceptive strategy in democracies: appear moderate and use existing institutions to gain power. “The civilizational-jihadist process...is a kind of grand jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and ‘sabotaging’ its miserable house...so that it is eliminated and God’s religion is made victorious over all other religions,” reads a US Muslim Brotherhood 1991 document. It believes it can conquer Europe peacefully: “After having been expelled twice, Islam will be victorious and reconquer Europe....I am certain that this time, victory will be won not by the sword but by preaching and [Islamic] ideology.” — Muslim Brotherhood Spiritual leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi, “Fatwa,” 2003
- The Brotherhood believes in subjugating and segregating women. Their ideal society would include “a campaign against ostentation in dress and loose behavior...segregation of male and female students; private meetings between men and women, unless within the permitted degrees of relationship, to be counted as a crime for which both will be censured...prohibition of dancing and other such pastimes.”
- —*Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna, “Five Tracts”*
  - The Brotherhood supports female genital mutilation: “[the Americans] wage war on Muslim leaders, the traditions of its faith and its ideas. They even wage war against female circumcision, a practice current in 36 countries, which has been prevalent since the time of the Pharaohs.”
- —*Former Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Muhammed Mahdi Akef, 2007*
  - The Brotherhood will not treat non-Muslim minorities, such as Coptic Christians, as equals. “Allah’s word will reign supreme and the infidels’ word will be inferior.” —Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Muhammed Badi, Sept. 2010 • “[As] far as the movement is concerned, Israel is a Zionist entity occupying holy Arab and Islamic lands...and we will get rid of it no matter how long it takes.”

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- —*Former Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Muhammed Mahdi Akef, 2005 and 2007*
  - The Brotherhood has anti-Semitic roots. It supported the Nazis, organized mass demonstrations against the Jews with slogans promoting ethnic cleansing like “Down with the Jews!” and “Jews get out of Egypt and Palestine!” in 1936; carried out a violent pogrom against Egypt’s Jews in November 1945; and made sure that Nazi collaborator and Palestinian Mufti al Husseini was granted asylum in Egypt in 1946.
  - The Brotherhood remains virulently anti-Semitic. “Today the Jews are not the Israelites praised by Allah, but the descendants of the Israelites who defied His word. Allah was angry with them and turned them into monkeys and pigs....There is no doubt that the battle in which the Muslims overcome the Jews [will come]....In that battle the Muslims will fight the Jews and kill them.”
- —*Muslim Brotherhood Spiritual leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi*<sup>23</sup>
  - The Brotherhood’s Arabic language website contains blatantly anti-Semitic articles.<sup>24</sup>  
**The Brotherhood attempted to exploit the Arab Spring to dramatically increase its political power in the Middle East. The Brotherhood became a leading political force in Egypt, before being overthrown.**
  - When the Egyptian Revolution first broke out in January, 2011 the Brotherhood kept a relatively low profile. In June, 2011 the Brotherhood founded the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) to run in parliamentary elections, but promised not to field a presidential candidate. The FJP surprised many by winning 38% of the seats, making it the largest party in the government.
  - In 2012 the Brotherhood broke its promise and nominated Mohamed Morsi to run for president. Morsi won the presidential election in June, 2012.
  - The Brotherhood quickly expanded its power at the expense of the military, which dominated Egyptian politics for 60 years. In August, 2012 Morsi ordered the defense minister and chief of staff to retire and changed the constitution to give himself many new presidential powers
  - President Morsi and the current leader of the Brotherhood are anti-Semites. During a 2010 speech Morsi said, “we must... nurse our children and grandchildren on hatred [of]... Zionists and Jews,” and Brotherhood chief Mohammed Badie was quoted in Al-Ahram saying, “the Jews have... spread corruption on earth, spilled the blood of believers, and... profaned the holy places...”
  - The Brotherhood discriminated against Egypt’s women and Coptic Christians. The Brotherhood’s stated position is that Copts and women are “unsuitable” to be nominated for president in Egypt. President Morsi has suggested that people who publicly convert from Islam to another religion and attempt to convert others should be executed. According to some reports he also stated that he will make Christians, “convert to Islam, pay [tribute],...or emigrate.” Morsi also broke his promise to appoint a woman and a Christian as vice

presidents, choosing Islamist Mahmoud Mekki instead. Sectarian clashes between Muslims and Christians grew more violent after the Brotherhood's rise to power.

- President Morsi's government was overthrown by the Egyptian military in 2013, after millions of Egyptians took to the streets to demand his resignation.

**PART K-2**

**WHAT IS HAMAS**

## **HAMAS:**

### **THE PALESTINIAN MILITANT GROUP THAT RULES GAZA**

[BBC 1 July 2021](#)

#### **HAMAS IS THE LARGEST OF SEVERAL PALESTINIAN MILITANT ISLAMIST GROUPS.**

Its name is an Arabic acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement, originating as it did in 1988 after the beginning of the first Palestinian intifada, or uprising, against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Under its charter, it is committed to the destruction of Israel.

Hamas originally had a dual purpose of carrying out an armed struggle against Israel - led by its military wing, the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades - and delivering social welfare programmes.

But since 2005, when Israel withdrew its troops and settlers from Gaza, Hamas has also engaged in the Palestinian political process. It won the legislative elections in 2006, before reinforcing its power in Gaza the following year by ousting the rival Fatah movement of President Mahmoud Abbas.

Since then, militants in Gaza have fought four major conflicts with Israel, which along with Egypt has maintained a blockade on the strip to isolate Hamas and to pressure it to stop attacks.

Hamas as a whole, or in some cases its military wing, is designated a terrorist group by Israel, the United States, European Union and United Kingdom, as well as other powers.

#### **SUICIDE BOMBINGS**

Hamas came to prominence after the first intifada as the main Palestinian group opposed to the Oslo peace accords signed in the early 1990s between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the body representing most Palestinians.

Despite numerous Israeli operations against it and clampdowns by the Palestinian Authority (the main governing body of the Palestinians) Hamas found it had an effective power of veto over the process by launching suicide attacks. It carried out multiple bus bombings, killing scores of Israelis, and stepped up its attacks after Israel assassinated its chief bomb maker Yahya Ayyash in December 1995.

The bombings were widely blamed for turning Israelis off the peace process and bringing Benjamin Netanyahu - a staunch opponent of the Oslo accords - to power in 1996.

In the post-Oslo world, most particularly following the failure of US President Bill Clinton's Camp David summit in 2000 and the second intifada which followed shortly thereafter, Hamas gained power and influence as Israel clamped down on the Palestinian Authority, which it accused of sponsoring deadly attacks.

Hamas organised clinics and schools, which served Palestinians who felt let down by the corrupt and inefficient Palestinian Authority, dominated by the Fatah faction.

Many Palestinians cheered the wave of Hamas suicide attacks in the first years of the second intifada. They saw "martyrdom" operations as avenging their own losses and Israel's settlement-building in the West Bank, territory wanted by Palestinians for a future state of their own.

In March and April 2004, Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and his successor Abdul Aziz al-Rantissi were assassinated in Israeli missile strikes in Gaza.

The death of Fatah leader Yasser Arafat that November saw the Palestinian Authority newly led by Mahmoud Abbas, who viewed Hamas rocket-fire as counter-productive. When Hamas scored a landslide victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006, the stage was set for a bitter power-struggle with Fatah.

Hamas resisted all efforts to get it to sign up to previous Palestinian agreements with Israel, as well as to recognise Israel's legitimacy and to renounce violence.

### **THE 1988 CHARTER**

*Hamas's charter defines historic Palestine - including present-day Israel - as Islamic land and it rules out any permanent peace with the Jewish state.*

[The document, external](#) also repeatedly makes attacks on Jews as a people, drawing charges that the movement is anti-Semitic.

In 2017, Hamas produced a [new policy document, external](#) that softened some of its stated positions and used more measured language.

There was no recognition of Israel, but it did formally accept the creation of an interim Palestinian state in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem - what are known as pre-1967 lines.

The document also stresses that Hamas's struggle is not with Jews but with "occupying Zionist aggressors". Israel said the group was "attempting to fool the world".

### **SANCTIONS**

As a result, the new Hamas-led government was subjected to tough economic and diplomatic sanctions by Israel and its allies in the West.

After Hamas ousted forces loyal to Fatah from Gaza in 2007, Israel tightened its blockade on the territory, and Palestinian rocket-fire and Israeli air strikes continued. Egypt also closed its border crossing with Gaza and has only opened it intermittently since.

Israel holds Hamas responsible for all attacks emanating from the strip, and the two sides have been in a constant state of conflict ranging from deadly incidents around the border to full-scale hostilities.



## DOCTRINE OF HAMAS

[WILSON CENTER](#) October 20, 2023

**GO TO THIS LINK FOR CHARTER LIST**



*Hamas leader  
Ismail Haniyeh*

IMAGE CREDIT

Since its creation in December 1987, Hamas has invoked militant interpretations of Islam to spearhead a Sunni extremist movement committed to destroying Israel. Hamas distanced itself from the longstanding Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—an umbrella organization for disparate Palestinian factions that ranged from Marxist to secular nationalists—by propagating resistance in the religious context of jihad, or a holy struggle and martyrdom. “Jihad is its path and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its wishes,” Hamas said in its first [statement](#) in the late 1980s. Predominantly Shiite Iran has armed, trained and funded Hamas since the late 1980s largely due to its opposition to Israel and Islamic ideology.

Hamas is an Arabic acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement. It has called on members of the other two Abrahamic faiths—Judaism and Christianity—to accept Islamic rule in the Middle East. “It is the duty of the followers of other religions to stop disputing the sovereignty of Islam in this region, because the day these followers should take over there will be nothing but carnage, displacement and terror,” it decreed. Hamas also rejected any prospect of peace or coexistence with the state of Israel. “Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors. The Palestinian people know better than to consent to having their future, rights and fate toyed with.”

Hamas was founded—in the early days of the first Intifada uprising—amid growing Palestinian fury over the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The Hamas Covenant was largely crafted by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, a quadriplegic and partially blind cleric who was the founder and spiritual leader of the militant militia in Gaza. The first Intifada [raged](#) sporadically until 1993, when Yasser Arafat of the PLO signed a partial peace agreement with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at the White House. Hamas

rejected the so-called Oslo Accords. As the peace process deadlocked, Hamas deployed suicide bombers against Israeli civilian and military targets. A second Intifada erupted in 2000 after Ariel Sharon, the right-wing opposition leader and former general, made a trip to the Temple Mount to declare Israel's [sovereignty](#) over the third holiest site in Islam. In 2004, Israel assassinated Yassin in a [missile strike](#). The second Intifada [ended](#) in 2005, and Israel opted to unilaterally end its military occupation of Gaza, which it had captured during the 1967 war.

In 2006, Hamas ran openly for the first time in legislative [elections](#) and won the largest number of seats—over Arafat's Fatah and other secular parties—in the Palestinian Authority's legislature. It [wrested](#) physical control of Gaza away from the PA a year later, thereby cementing its political and military control of an area that is about the size of Philadelphia. Its statements since then have often sounded contradictory—in one moment calling for liberation of all the lands that were part of historic Palestine and in another moment claiming Hamas could live alongside another state based on the 1967 borders, when Israel seized Gaza from Egypt. In December 2012, Khaled Mashaal, a leader in exile, reflected the traditional Hamas hardline, "The state will come from resistance, not negotiation. Liberation first, then statehood. Palestine is ours from the river to the sea and from the south to the north," he said in a [speech](#). "There will be no concession on any inch of the land. We will never recognize the legitimacy of the Israeli occupation, and therefore there is no legitimacy for Israel... We will free Jerusalem inch by inch, stone by stone. Israel has no right to be in Jerusalem."

In 2017, a revised Hamas manifesto included three departures from the 1988 charter, former U.S. diplomat Aaron David Miller told [The Islamists](#). First, Hamas accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state separate from Israel —although only provisionally. Its statement on principles and policies said, "Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea. However, without compromising its rejection of the Zionist entity and without relinquishing any Palestinian rights, Hamas considers the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of the 4th of June 1967, with the return of the refugees and the displaced to their homes from which they were expelled, to be a formula of national consensus." Second, it attempted to distinguish between Jews or Judaism and modern Zionism. Hamas said that its fight was against the "racist, aggressive, colonial and expansionist" Zionist project, Israel, but not against Judaism or Jews. The updated platform also lacked some of the anti-Semitic language of the 1988 charter. Third, the document did not reference the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, from which Hamas was originally an offshoot.

After the deadly offensive by Hamas against Israel in October 2023, Ismail Haniyeh, who replaced Mashaal as head of the Hamas political bureau in exile, again invoked religious rhetoric. "Today, the enemy has had a political, military, intelligence, security and moral defeat inflicted upon it, and we shall crown it, with the grace of God, with a crushing defeat that will expel it from our lands, our holy city of al Quds, our al Aqsa mosque, and the release of our prisoners from the jails of the Zionist occupation," he [said](#). The following are excerpts from the manifestos and statements by Hamas leaders.

### **HAMAS COVENANT IN AUGUST 1988**

Out of the midst of troubles and the sea of suffering, out of the palpitations of faithful hearts and cleansed arms; out of the sense of duty, and in response to Allah's command, the call has gone out rallying people together and making them follow the ways of Allah, leading them to have determined will in order to fulfill their role in life, to overcome all obstacles, and surmount the difficulties on the way. Constant preparation has continued and so has the readiness to sacrifice life and all that is precious for the sake of Allah. Thus it was that the nucleus (of the movement) was formed and started to pave its way through the tempestuous sea of hopes and expectations, of wishes and yearnings, of troubles and obstacles, of pain and challenges, both inside and outside

## **THE 1988 COVENANT OF THE HAMAS**

### **– MAIN POINTS**

**FAS Note: This is a translation of excerpts of the original 1988 charter of Hamas. A translation of the full document is [here](#).**

**A [revised](#) Hamas Document of General Principles and Policies was issued in 2017.**

#### **INFORMATION DIVISION, ISRAEL FOREIGN MINISTRY - JERUSALEM**

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The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement was issued on August 18, 1988. The Islamic Resistance Movement, also known as the HAMAS, is an extremist fundamentalist Islamic organization operating in the territories under Israeli control. Its Covenant is a comprehensive manifesto comprised of 36 separate articles, all of which promote the basic HAMAS goal of destroying the State of Israel through Jihad (Islamic Holy War). The following are excerpts of the HAMAS Covenant:

#### **GOALS OF THE HAMAS:**

'The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinguished Palestinian movement, whose allegiance is to Allah, and whose way of life is Islam. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch Palestine.' (Article 6)

#### **ON THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL:**

'Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.' (Preamble)

#### **THE EXCLUSIVE MOSLEM NATURE OF THE AREA:**

'The land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf [Holy Possession] consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgment Day. No one can renounce it or any part, or abandon it or any part of it.' (Article 11)

'Palestine is an Islamic land... Since this is the case, the Liberation of Palestine is an individual duty for every Moslem wherever he may be.' (Article 13)

#### **THE CALL TO JIHAD:**

'The day the enemies usurp part of Mosle land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Moslem. In the face of the Jews' usurpation, it is compulsory that the banner of Jihad be raised.' (Article 15)

'Ranks will close, fighters joining other fighters, and masses everywhere in the Islamic world will come forward in response to the call of duty, loudly proclaiming: 'Hail to Jihad!'. This cry will reach the heavens

and will go on being resounded until liberation is achieved, the invaders vanquished and Allah's victory comes about.' (Article 33)

### **REJECTION OF A NEGOTIATED PEACE SETTLEMENT:**

'[Peace] initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement... Those conferences are no more than means to appoint the infidels as arbitrators in the lands of Islam... There is no solution for the Palestinian problem except by Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are but a waste of time, an exercise in futility.' (Article 13)

### **CONDEMNATION OF THE ISRAEL-EGYPT PEACE TREATY:**

'Egypt was, to a great extent, removed from the circle of struggle [against Zionism] through the treacherous Camp David Agreement. The Zionists are trying to draw other Arab countries into similar agreements in order to bring them outside the circle of struggle....Leaving the circle of struggle against Zionism is high treason, and cursed be he who perpetrates such an act.' (Article 3)

### **ANTI-SEMITIC INCITEMENT:**

'The Day of Judgment will not come about until Moslems fight Jews and kill them. Then, the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rocks and trees will cry out: 'O Moslem, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him.' (Article 7)

'The enemies have been scheming for a long time ... and have accumulated huge and influential material wealth. With their money, they took control of the world media... With their money they stirred revolutions in various parts of the globe... They stood behind the French Revolution, the Communist Revolution and most of the revolutions we hear about... With their money they formed secret organizations - such as the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs and the Lions - which are spreading around the world, in order to destroy societies and carry out Zionist interests... They stood behind World War I ... and formed the League of Nations through which they could rule the world. They were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains... There is no war going on anywhere without them having their finger in it.' (Article 22)

'Zionism scheming has no end, and after Palestine, they will covet expansion from the Nile to the Euphrates River. When they have finished digesting the area on which they have laid their hand, they will look forward to more expansion. Their scheme has been laid out in the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'.' (Article 32)

'The HAMAS regards itself the spearhead and the vanguard of the circle of struggle against World Zionism... Islamic groups all over the Arab world should also do the same, since they are best equipped for their future role in the fight against the warmongering Jews.' (Article 32)

## **. THE REVISED 2017 COVENANT OF THE HAMAS – MAIN POINTS**

**FAS NOTE: THIS IS A TRANSLATION OF EXCERPTS OF THE ORIGINAL 1988 CHARTER OF HAMAS.**

**A TRANSLATION OF THE FULL DOCUMENT IS [HERE](#).**

**A [REVISED](#) HAMAS DOCUMENT OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES WAS ISSUED IN 2017.**

### **INFORMATION DIVISION, ISRAEL FOREIGN MINISTRY - JERUSALEM**

The Islamic Resistance Movement “Hamas” A Document of General Principles and Policies

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all worlds. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad, the Master of Messengers and the Leader of the mujahidin, and upon his household and all his companions.

Preamble:

Palestine is the land of the Arab Palestinian people, from it they originate, to it they adhere and belong, and about it they reach out and communicate.

Palestine is a land whose status has been elevated by Islam, a faith that holds it in high esteem, that breathes through it its spirit and just values and that lays the foundation for the doctrine of defending and protecting it.

Palestine is the cause of a people who have been let down by a world that fails to secure their rights and restore to them what has been usurped from them, a people whose land continues to suffer one of the worst types of occupation in this world.

Palestine is a land that was seized by a racist, anti-human and colonial Zionist project that was founded on a false promise (the Balfour Declaration), on recognition of a usurping entity and on imposing a fait accompli by force.

Palestine symbolizes the resistance that shall continue until liberation is accomplished, until the return is fulfilled and until a fully sovereign state is established with Jerusalem as its capital.

Palestine is the true partnership among Palestinians of all affiliations for the sublime objective of liberation.

Palestine is the spirit of the Ummah and its central cause; it is the soul of humanity and its living conscience.

This document is the product of deep deliberations that led us to a strong consensus. As a movement, we agree about both the theory and the practice of the vision that is outlined in the pages that follow. It is a vision that stands on solid grounds and on well-established principles. This document unveils the goals, the milestones and the way in which national unity can be enforced. It also establishes our common understanding of the Palestinian cause, the working principles which we use to further it, and the limits of flexibility used to interpret it.

### **THE MOVEMENT:**

**1. The Islamic Resistance Movement “ Hamas ” is a Palestinian Islamic national liberation and resistance movement. Its goal is to liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project. Its frame of reference is Islam, which determines its principles, objectives and means.**

### **THE LAND OF PALESTINE:**

**2. Palestine, which extends from the River Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean in the west and from Ras Al-Naqurah in the north to Umm Al-Rashrash in the south, is an integral territorial unit.** It is the land and the home of the Palestinian people. The expulsion and banishment of the Palestinian people from their land and the establishment of the Zionist entity therein do not annul the right of the Palestinian people to their entire land and do not entrench any rights therein for the usurping Zionist entity.

3. Palestine is an Arab Islamic land. It is a blessed sacred land that has a special place in the heart of every Arab and every Muslim.

### **THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE:**

4. The Palestinians are the Arabs who lived in Palestine until 1947, irrespective of whether they were expelled from it, or stayed in it; and every person that was born to an Arab Palestinian father after that date, whether inside or outside Palestine, is a Palestinian.

5. The Palestinian identity is authentic and timeless; it is passed from generation to generation. The catastrophes that have befallen the Palestinian people, as a consequence of the Zionist occupation and its policy of displacement, cannot erase the identity of the Palestinian people nor can they negate it. A Palestinian shall not lose his or her national identity or rights by acquiring a second nationality.

6. The Palestinian people are one people, made up of all Palestinians, inside and outside of Palestine, irrespective of their religion, culture or political affiliation.

### **ISLAM AND PALESTINE:**

7. Palestine is at the heart of the Arab and Islamic Ummah and enjoys a special status. Within Palestine there exists Jerusalem, whose precincts are blessed by Allah. Palestine is the Holy Land, which Allah has blessed for humanity. It is the Muslims’ first Qiblah and the destination of the journey performed at night by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. It is the location from where he ascended to the upper heavens. It is the birthplace of Jesus Christ, peace be upon him. Its soil contains the remains of thousands of Prophets, Companions and Mujahidin. It is the land of people who are determined to defend the truth – within Jerusalem and its surroundings – who are not deterred or intimidated by those who oppose them and by those who betray them, and they will continue their mission until the Promise of Allah is fulfilled.

8. By virtue of its justly balanced middle way and moderate spirit, Islam – for Hamas - provides a comprehensive way of life and an order that is fit for purpose at all times and in all places. Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance. It provides an umbrella for the followers of other creeds and 4 religions who can practice their beliefs in security and safety. Hamas also believes that Palestine has always been and will always be a model of coexistence, tolerance and civilizational innovation.

9. Hamas believes that the message of Islam upholds the values of truth, justice, freedom and dignity and prohibits all forms of injustice and incriminates oppressors irrespective of their religion, race, gender or nationality. Islam is against all forms of religious, ethnic or sectarian extremism and bigotry. It is the religion that inculcates in its followers the value of standing up to aggression and of supporting the oppressed; it motivates them to give generously and make sacrifices in defence of their dignity, their land, their peoples and their holy places.

### **JERUSALEM:**

**10. Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine. Its religious, historic and civilizational status is fundamental to the Arabs, Muslims and the world at large. Its Islamic and Christian holy places belong exclusively to the Palestinian people and to the Arab and Islamic Ummah.** Not one stone of Jerusalem can be surrendered or relinquished. The measures undertaken by the occupiers in Jerusalem, such as Judaization, settlement building, and establishing facts on the ground are fundamentally null and void.

11. The blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque belongs exclusively to our people and our Ummah, and the occupation has no right to it whatsoever. The occupation's plots, measures and attempts to judaize Al-Aqsa and divide it are null, void and illegitimate. The Refugees and the Right of Return:

12. The Palestinian cause in its essence is a cause of an occupied land and a displaced people. The right of the Palestinian refugees and the displaced to return to their homes from which they were banished or were banned from returning to – whether in the lands occupied in 1948 or in 1967 (that is the whole of Palestine), is a natural right, both individual and collective. This right is confirmed by all divine laws as well as by the basic principles of human rights and international law. It is an inalienable right and cannot be dispensed with by any party, whether Palestinian, Arab or international.

13. Hamas rejects all attempts to erase the rights of the refugees, including the attempts to settle them outside Palestine and through the projects of the alternative homeland. Compensation to the Palestinian refugees for the harm they have suffered as a consequence of banishing them and occupying their land is an absolute right that goes hand in hand with their right to return. They are to receive compensation upon their return and this does not negate or diminish their right to return.

### **THE ZIONIST PROJECT:**

**14. The Zionist project is a racist, aggressive, colonial and expansionist project based on seizing the properties of others; it is hostile to the Palestinian people and to their aspiration for freedom, liberation, return and self-determination. The Israeli entity is the plaything of the Zionist project and its base of aggression.**

15. The Zionist project does not target the Palestinian people alone; it is the enemy of the Arab and Islamic Ummah posing a grave threat to its security and interests. It is also hostile to the Ummah's aspirations for unity, renaissance and liberation and has been the major source of its troubles. The Zionist project also poses a danger to international security and peace and to mankind and its interests and stability.

16. Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against



the Zionists who occupy Palestine. Yet, it is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity.

17. Hamas rejects the persecution of any human being or the undermining of his or her rights on nationalist, religious or sectarian grounds. Hamas is of the view that the Jewish problem, anti-Semitism and the persecution of the Jews are phenomena fundamentally linked to European history and not to the history of the Arabs and the Muslims or to their heritage. The Zionist movement, which was able with the help of Western powers to occupy Palestine, is the most dangerous form of settlement occupation which has already disappeared from much of the world and must disappear from Palestine. The position toward Occupation and Political Solutions:

18. The following are considered null and void: the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate Document, the UN Palestine Partition Resolution, and whatever resolutions and measures that derive from them or are similar to them. The establishment of "Israel" is entirely illegal and contravenes the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and goes against their will and the will of the Ummah; it is also in violation of human rights that are guaranteed by international conventions, foremost among them is the right to self-determination.

19. There shall be no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity. Whatever has befallen the land of Palestine in terms of occupation, settlement building, Judaization or changes to its features or falsification of facts is illegitimate. Rights never lapse.

20. Hamas believes that no part of the land of Palestine shall be compromised or conceded, irrespective of the causes, the circumstances and the pressures and no matter how long the occupation lasts. Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea. However, without compromising its rejection of the Zionist entity and without relinquishing any Palestinian rights, Hamas considers the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of the 4th of June 1967, with the return of the refugees and the displaced to their homes from which they were expelled, to be a formula of national consensus.

21. Hamas affirms that the Oslo Accords and their addenda contravene the governing rules of international law in that they generate commitments that violate the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Therefore, the Movement rejects these agreements and all that flows from them, such as the obligations that are detrimental to the interests of our people, especially security coordination (collaboration).

22. Hamas rejects all the agreements, initiatives and settlement projects that are aimed at undermining the Palestinian cause and the rights of our Palestinian people. In this regard, any stance, initiative or political programme must not in any way violate these rights and should not contravene them or contradict them.

23. Hamas stresses that transgression against the Palestinian people, usurping their land and banishing them from their homeland cannot be called peace. Any settlements reached on this basis will not lead to peace. Resistance and jihad for the liberation of Palestine will remain a legitimate right, a duty and an honour for all the sons and daughters of our people and our Ummah. Resistance and Liberation:

24. The liberation of Palestine is the duty of the Palestinian people in particular and the duty of the Arab and Islamic Ummah in general. It is also a humanitarian obligation as necessitated by the dictates of truth and

justice. The agencies working for Palestine, whether national, Arab, Islamic or humanitarian, complement each other and are harmonious and not in conflict with each other.

25. Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws. At the heart of these lies armed resistance, which is regarded as the strategic choice for protecting the principles and the rights of the Palestinian people.

26. Hamas rejects any attempt to undermine the resistance and its arms. It also affirms the right of our people to develop the means and mechanisms of resistance. Managing resistance, in terms of escalation or de-escalation, or in terms of diversifying the means and methods, is an integral part of the process of managing the conflict and should not be at the expense of the principle of resistance.

### **THE PALESTINIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM:**

**27. A real state of Palestine is a state that has been liberated. There is no alternative to a fully sovereign Palestinian State on the entire national Palestinian soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.**

28. Hamas believes in, and adheres to, managing its Palestinian relations on the basis of pluralism, democracy, national partnership, acceptance of the other and the adoption of dialogue. The aim is to bolster the unity of ranks and joint action for the purpose of accomplishing national goals and fulfilling the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

29. The PLO is a national framework for the Palestinian people inside and outside of Palestine. It should therefore be preserved, developed and rebuilt on democratic foundations so as to secure the participation of all the constituents and forces of the Palestinian people, in a manner that safeguards Palestinian rights.

30. Hamas stresses the necessity of building Palestinian national institutions on sound democratic principles, foremost among them are free and fair elections. Such process should be on the basis of national partnership and in accordance with a clear programme and a clear strategy that adhere to the rights, including the right of resistance, and which fulfil the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

31. Hamas affirms that the role of the Palestinian Authority should be to serve the Palestinian people and safeguard their security, their rights and their national project.

32. Hamas stresses the necessity of maintaining the independence of Palestinian national decision-making. Outside forces should not be allowed to intervene. At the same time, Hamas affirms the responsibility of the Arabs and the Muslims and their duty and role in the liberation of Palestine from Zionist occupation.

33. Palestinian society is enriched by its prominent personalities, figures, dignitaries, civil society institutions, and youth, students, trade unionist and women's groups who together work for the achievement of national goals and societal building, pursue resistance, and achieve liberation.

34. The role of Palestinian women is fundamental in the process of building the present and the future, just as it has always been in the process of making Palestinian history. It is a pivotal role in the project of resistance, liberation and building the political system. The Arab and Islamic Ummah:

35. Hamas believes that the Palestinian issue is the central cause for the Arab and Islamic Ummah.

36. Hamas believes in the unity of the Ummah with all its diverse constituents and is aware of the need to avoid anything that could fragment the Ummah and undermine its unity.

37. Hamas believes in cooperating with all states that support the rights of the Palestinian people. It opposes intervention in the internal affairs of any country. It also refuses to be drawn into disputes and

conflicts that take place among different countries. Hamas adopts the policy of opening up to different states in the world, especially the Arab and Islamic states. It endeavours to establish balanced relations on the basis of combining the requirements of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people's interests on the one hand with the interests of the Ummah, its renaissance and its security on the other.

#### **THE HUMANITARIAN AND INTERNATIONAL ASPECT:**

38. The Palestinian issue is one that has major humanitarian and international dimensions. Supporting and backing this cause is a humanitarian and civilizational task that is required by the prerequisites of truth, justice and common humanitarian values.

39. From a legal and humanitarian perspective, the liberation of Palestine is a legitimate activity, it is an act of self-defence, and it is the expression of the natural right of all peoples to self-determination.

40. In its relations with world nations and peoples, Hamas believes in the values of cooperation, justice, freedom and respect of the will of the people.

41. Hamas welcomes the stances of states, organisations and institutions that support the rights of the Palestinian people. It salutes the free peoples of the world who support the Palestinian cause. At the same time, it denounces the support granted by any party to the Zionist entity or the attempts to cover up its crimes and aggression against the Palestinians and calls for the prosecution of Zionist war criminals.

42. Hamas rejects the attempts to impose hegemony on the Arab and Islamic Ummah just as it rejects the attempts to impose hegemony on the rest of the world's nations and peoples. Hamas also condemns all forms of colonialism, occupation, discrimination, oppression and aggression in the world.

**May 2017**

## **THE ROAD TO OCTOBER 7: HAMAS' LONG GAME, CLARIFIED**

**Abstract:** When Hamas took over the Gaza Strip by force of arms in 2007, it faced an ideological crisis. It could focus on governing Gaza and addressing the needs of the Palestinian people, or it could use the Gaza Strip as a springboard from which to attack Israel. Even then, Hamas understood these two goals were mutually exclusive. And while some anticipated Hamas would moderate, or at least be co-opted by the demands of governing, it did not. Instead, Hamas invested in efforts to radicalize society and build the militant infrastructure necessary to someday launch the kind of attack that in its view could contribute to the destruction of Israel. This article explores the road from Hamas' 2007 takeover of Gaza to the October 2023 massacre.

[COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT](#) [Devorah Margolin](#), [Matthew Levitt](#)

October/November 2023 Volume 16, Issue 10

Go to

[The Road to October 7: Hamas' Long Game, Clarified](#)

## WHAT IS HAMAS

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS Kali Robinson, April 18 2024

### Summary

- Hamas is an Islamist militant group that spun off from the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1980s. It took over the Gaza Strip after defeating its rival political party, Fatah, in elections in 2006.
- Governments including the United States and European Union have designated Hamas a terrorist organization over its attacks against Israel, which have included suicide bombings and rocket attacks.
- Israel has declared war on Hamas following its surprise assault on the country's south in October 2023, the deadliest attack in Israeli history.

### INTRODUCTION

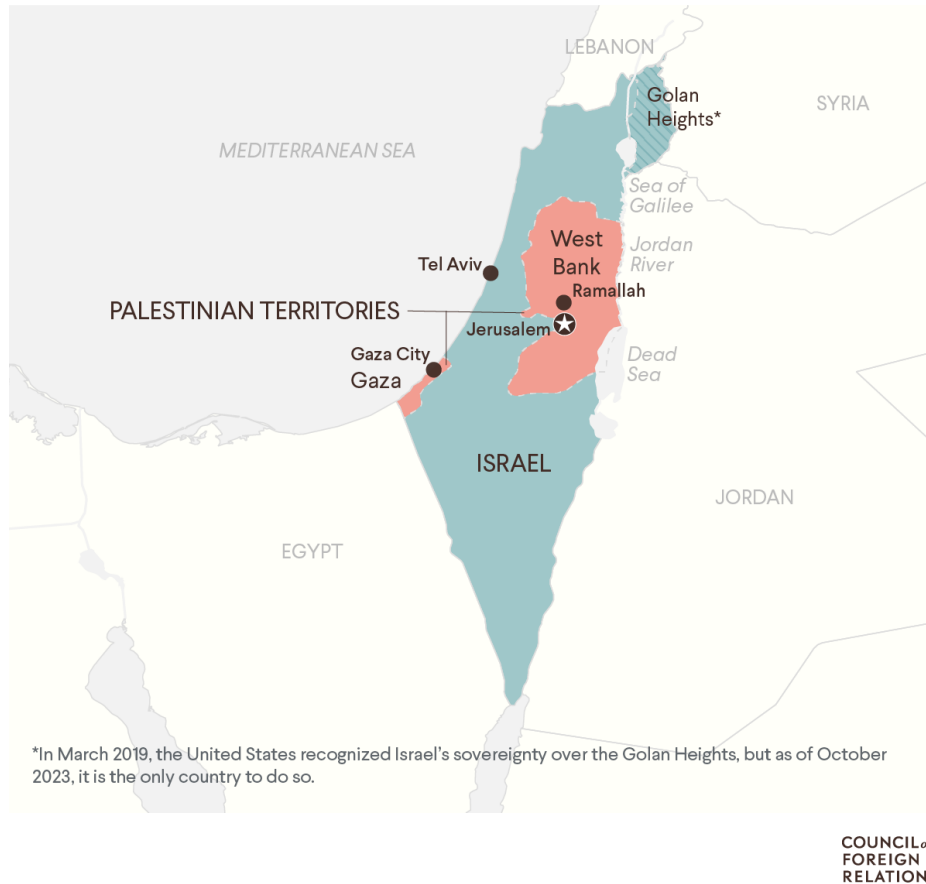
Hamas is an Islamist militant movement that has controlled the Gaza Strip for nearly two decades. It also violently rejects Israel's existence. In October 2023, Hamas infiltrated southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people and taking dozens more hostage. In response, the Israeli military has attempted to eradicate the group, an effort that had reportedly killed more than thirty-three thousand Palestinians as of mid-April 2024. With Hamas's regional partners—known as the “axis of resistance”—now targeting Israel, the war threatens to embroil much of the Middle East.

Dozens of countries have designated Hamas a terrorist organization, though some apply this label only to its military wing. Iran provides it with materiel and financial support, counting it [among a coalition](#) of regional allies that includes Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthis, and various pro-Tehran militias in Iraq and Syria, among other groups. Along with Qatar, Turkey harbors some of Hamas's top leaders, who have used the Turkish financial system to help fund the organization's activities. Hamas's rival party, Fatah, which dominates the Palestinian Authority and rules in the West Bank, has formally renounced violence, though it has not always upheld that vow in times of high Israeli-Palestinian tensions. The split in Palestinian leadership and Hamas's unwavering hostility toward Israel diminished prospects for stability in Gaza ahead of the ongoing war, which has only cast the territory into further despair.

### WHAT ARE THE GROUP'S ORIGINS?

Hamas, an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (“Islamic Resistance Movement”), was founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, a Palestinian cleric who became an activist in local branches of the Muslim Brotherhood after dedicating his early life to Islamic scholarship in Cairo. Beginning in the late

1960s, Yassin preached and performed charitable work in the West Bank and Gaza, both of which Israel occupied following the 1967 Six-Day War.



Yassin established Hamas as the Brotherhood's political arm in Gaza in December 1987, following the outbreak of the first intifada, a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. At the time, Hamas's purpose was to engage in violence against Israelis as a means of restoring Palestinian backing for the Brotherhood, which was losing political support to Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), a Gaza-based, Iran-sponsored organization that had begun pursuing terrorist operations against Israel.

Hamas [published its charter](#) in 1988, calling for the murder of Jews, the destruction of Israel, and in Israel's place, the establishment of an Islamic society in historic Palestine. In what observers called an attempt to moderate its image, Hamas [presented a new document](#) [PDF] in 2017 that removed explicit references to killing Jews but still refused to recognize Israel. The revised charter also hinted that Hamas could accept a future Palestinian state along the borders established before the Six-Day War, which are generally recognized internationally as the borders of the West Bank and Gaza. The new document says only that the matter should depend on "national consensus."

Hamas first employed suicide bombing in April 1993, five months before Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Accords. The historic pact established limited self-government for parts of the West Bank and Gaza under a newly created entity called the Palestinian Authority (PA). Hamas condemned the accords, as

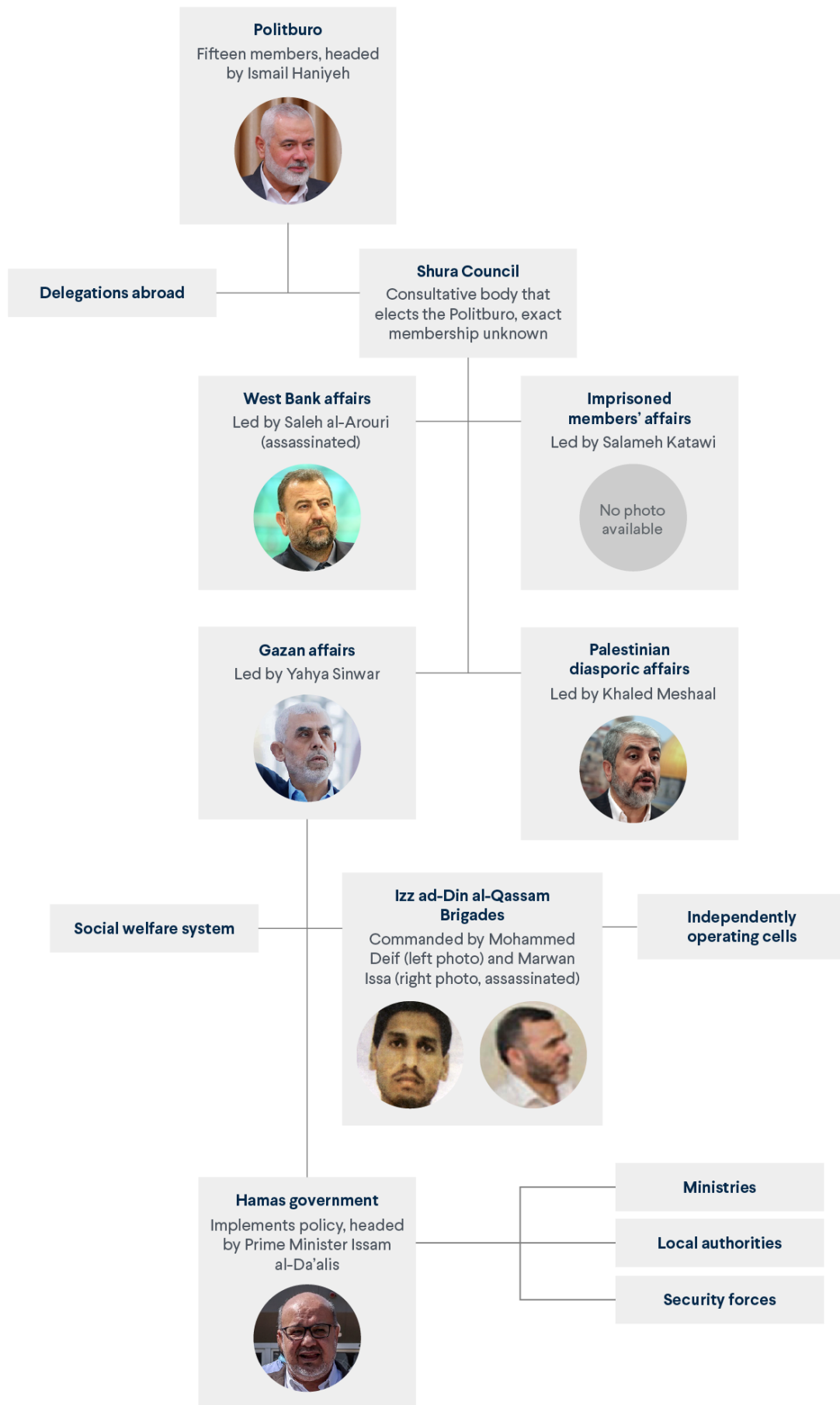
well as the PLO's and Israel's recognition of each other, which Arafat and Rabin officially agreed to in letters sent days before Oslo.

In 1997, the United States designated Hamas a foreign terrorist organization. The movement went on to spearhead violent resistance during the second intifada, in the early 2000s, though PIJ and Fatah's Tanzim militia were also responsible for violence against Israelis.

### **WHO ARE ITS LEADERS?**

Hamas has a host of leadership bodies that perform various political, military, and social functions. General policy is set by an overarching consultative body, often called the politburo, which operates in exile. Local committees manage grassroots issues in Gaza and the West Bank.

## Hamas's Governing Structure





Ismail Haniyeh currently serves as political chief, having replaced longtime leader Khaled Meshaal in 2017. Haniyeh has operated from Doha, Qatar, since 2020, reportedly because Egypt [restricts his movement](#) into and out of Gaza. Hamas leaders established a presence in Qatar after falling out with their previous host, Syria, when Palestinian refugees participated in the 2011 uprising that preceded the [Syrian Civil War](#). Some senior Hamas figures [reportedly operate](#) out of the group's offices in Turkey.

Day-to-day affairs in Gaza are overseen by Yahya Sinwar, who previously headed Hamas's military wing and served twenty-two years in an Israeli prison for masterminding the abduction and killing of two Israeli soldiers in 1988. He was among the more than one thousand Palestinian prisoners freed in 2011 in exchange for an Israeli soldier held by Hamas. As of June 2021, Gaza's de facto prime minister is Issam al-Da'alis.

Internal elections that [concluded in 2021](#) gave Meshaal leadership of Hamas's diaspora office, while Salameh Katawi was elected to manage the affairs of imprisoned members. Deputy politburo chairman and Lebanon affairs director Saleh al-Arouri was voted leader of the group's West Bank branch, a post he held until his January 2024 death by a suspected Israeli drone strike.

Marwan Issa and Mohammed Deif jointly commanded Hamas's military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, until Issa was reportedly killed by an Israeli air strike in March 2024, though his death is not yet confirmed. Israeli forces killed Yassin, Hamas's founder, in 2004.

## HOW IS HAMAS FUNDED?

Historically, Palestinian expatriates and private donors in the Persian Gulf provided much of the movement's funding. Today, Iran is one of Hamas's biggest benefactors, contributing funds, weapons, and training. Though Iran and Hamas briefly fell out after backing opposing sides in Syria's civil war, Iran [provides some \\$100 million annually](#) [PDF] to Hamas, PIJ, and other Palestinian groups designated as terrorist organizations by the United States, according to 2021 U.S. State Department estimates. Iran was quick to [praise Hamas's assault](#) on Israel in late 2023 and pledge its continuing support for the Palestinian group.

Turkey has been another stalwart backer of Hamas—and a critic of Israel—following President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's [rise to power](#) in 2002. Though Ankara insists it only supports Hamas politically, it has been accused of [funding Hamas's terrorism](#), including through aid diverted from the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency.

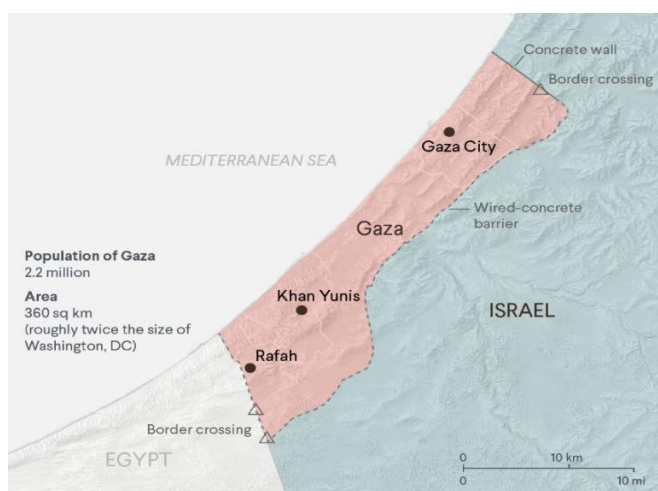
Egypt and Israel [closed their borders](#) with Gaza in 2006–07, restricting the movement of goods and people into and out of the territory. For years after the blockade began, Hamas collected revenue by taxing goods moving through a sophisticated network of tunnels that circumvented the Egyptian crossing into Gaza; this brought staples such as food, medicine, and cheap gas for electricity production into the territory, as well as construction materials, cash, and arms. Egypt shut down most of the tunnels breaching its territory but began to allow some commercial goods to enter Gaza through its Salah al-Din border crossing in 2018. As of 2021, Hamas reportedly [collected upward of \\$12 million per month](#) from taxes on Egyptian goods imported into Gaza.

## DOES FOREIGN AID FOR GAZA GO THROUGH HAMAS?

Before the current war, Israel allowed Qatar to provide Gaza with hundreds of millions of dollars in annual assistance through Hamas. But foreign aid generally reaches Gaza via the PA and UN agencies, namely the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), though Hamas has reportedly [diverted some of this aid](#). As a designated terrorist entity, Hamas and its government are cut off from official assistance that the United States and European Union (EU) provide to the West Bank. Some Islamic charities in Western countries have channeled money to Hamas-backed social service groups, prompting the U.S. Treasury to freeze their assets. The latest Israel-Hamas war has exacerbated the [already extreme poverty](#) in Gaza, where more than one million people needed aid before the fighting broke out. The Egyptian-Israeli blockade keeps Gaza mostly cut off from the world, reliant on the little international assistance allowed past Israeli inspectors. UNRWA remains the primary aid distributor, but it suffered a [massive funding cut](#) following accusations that it employed Hamas members involved in the October 7 massacre. Its top donor, the United States, paused funding for a year in March 2024, while around a dozen other countries issued their own, open-ended pauses or announced that future UNRWA funding would depend on the results of investigations into the allegations.

## HOW HAS HAMAS GOVERNED GAZA?

Hamas became the de facto authority in Gaza shortly after Israel withdrew from the territory in 2005. The following year, Hamas won a majority of seats in the PA's legislature and formed a government. It earned votes for the social services it provided and as a rejection of the incumbent Fatah, which many voters perceived as having grown corrupt at the helm of the PLO and delivering little to Palestinians through its negotiations with Israel. The outcome was unacceptable to Fatah and its Western backers, and the party ousted Hamas from power in the West Bank. In Gaza, Hamas routed Fatah's militias in a week of fighting, resulting in a political schism between the two Palestinian territories. Palestinians have not voted for a legislature since 2006, nor a president since 2008.



Sources: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

COUNCIL ON  
FOREIGN  
RELATIONS

“The Hamas-controlled government has no effective or independent mechanisms for ensuring transparency in its funding, procurements, or operations.”

Freedom House

As Hamas took over the remnants of PA institutions in the strip, it established a judiciary and put in place authoritarian institutions. In theory, Hamas has governed in accordance with the PA's [sharia-based](#) Palestinian Basic Law; but it has generally been [more restrictive](#) than the law requires, including by controlling how women dress and enforcing gender segregation in public. The watchdog group Freedom House [found in 2020](#) that the "Hamas-controlled government has no effective or independent mechanisms for ensuring transparency in its funding, procurements, or operations." Hamas also represses the Gazan media, civilian activism on social media, the political opposition, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), leaving it without mechanisms for accountability.

### **HOW HAS HAMAS CHALLENGED ISRAEL?**

For decades, Hamas's attacks on Israel mostly involved rocket and mortar strikes, mass shootings, and suicide bombings. Iranian security officials say that Tehran has provided Hamas with some weapons, but that Hamas gained the ability to build its own missiles after training with Iran's [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC) and proxies. Israeli security officials [estimate](#) that Hamas had about twenty thousand rockets and mortars in its arsenal at the start of its current war with Israel. The group has also carried out incursions into Israeli territory, killing and kidnapping soldiers and civilians.

Prior to the 2023 conflict, Hamas and Israel had their deadliest fighting in years in 2021, when Hamas fired rockets into Israel following [weeks of tensions](#) between Palestinians and Israelis in Jerusalem. Some analysts say that Hamas wanted to bolster its reputation as the [defender of the Palestinian cause](#) after the PA postponed the 2021 elections. During the eleven-day conflict, Hamas and PIJ fired more than four thousand rockets from Gaza, killing ten Israeli civilians and injuring more than three hundred others. The United States and Egypt brokered a cease-fire to the conflict.

### **HOW WAS HAMAS'S ATTACK ON ISRAEL IN 2023 DIFFERENT?**

Hamas's 2023 assault on southern Israel, "Operation al-Aqsa Storm," was extraordinary in its strategy, scale, and secrecy, analysts say. It began early on October 7, the Jewish Sabbath and an important Jewish holiday, with Hamas launching several thousand rockets into southern and central Israel, hitting cities as far north as Tel Aviv. Hamas militants also breached the heavily fortified Gaza border and infiltrated many southern Israeli towns and villages, killing nearly 1,200 people and wounding and kidnapping scores more. Fighters livestreamed videos of their actions, showing that the attack was especially brutal, with some militants appearing to perpetrate what experts say could be [ruled war crimes](#); in March 2024, [UN investigators said](#) there were "reasonable grounds to believe" some Hamas members committed sexual violence against hostages and those killed on October 7. Military leader Mohammed Deif said Hamas [undertook its assault](#) in response to Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands and its various "crimes" against the Palestinian people.

The October 7 attack is the deadliest in Israel's seventy-five-year history and has inflicted a deep psychological trauma on its people, with some analysts drawing comparisons to the surprise Pearl Harbor and September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. "It is completely unprecedented that a

terrorist organization would have the capacity or the wherewithal to mount coordinated, simultaneous assaults from the air, sea, and land,” [writes CFR Senior Fellow Bruce Hoffman](#).

The operation also showcased an unprecedented level of support for coordination with Hamas by Iran and its network of regional allies, an anti-West, anti-Israel coalition known as the axis of resistance.

The [Wall Street Journal reports](#) that Hamas likely planned the October 7 attack with Iran’s knowledge, if not its direct authorization, though U.S. and Israeli officials have said they have no evidence of this.

The axis’s subsequent attacks on Israel-linked targets, particularly by

Lebanon’s [Hezbollah](#) and [Yemen’s Houthis](#), have raised fears that the war in Gaza will balloon into a regional conflagration.

### HOW DO PALESTINIANS VIEW HAMAS?

Palestinian opinions of Hamas are mixed. Before October 7, the group [had been unpopular](#) [PDF] in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, though Palestinians in both territories preferred Hamas to other political factions. Many experts say that PA President Mahmoud Abbas canceled the 2021 Palestinian national elections to [prevent a likely Hamas victory](#).

After October 7, support for Hamas in Gaza rose four percentage points and nearly quadrupled in the West Bank, according to a [December 2023](#) survey, though this was not enough for it to gain majority support in either territory. “Palestinians believe that diplomacy and negotiations are not an option available to them, that only violence and armed struggle is the means to end the siege and blockade over Gaza, and in general to end the Israeli occupation,” West Bank–based pollster [Khalil Shikaki told CNN](#). However, he added that “no one should see this as support for any atrocities that might have been committed by Hamas on that day.”

### WHAT’S NEXT FOR HAMAS?

Israel is seeking to eradicate the group and free around 130 hostages still held in Gaza, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warning of a “long and difficult war.” After the first [five months of fighting](#), the Israeli military had “certainly done considerable damage to Hamas, which is no longer capable of firing rockets into Israel and has seen thousands of its fighters either killed, wounded, or captured,” writes CFR Senior Fellow Steven A. Cook. Israeli officials say Hamas [no longer constitutes](#) an organized fighting force in northern Gaza, while its Gaza-based leaders, such as Sinwar, are thought to be hiding below ground in the south.

Despite these setbacks, Hamas leaders have [yet to concede](#) to Israeli demands to cease fighting and free the remaining hostages, and they reportedly envision a role for themselves in Gaza’s postwar leadership. Hamas and Palestinian Authority negotiators have held talks on cooperating in a technocratic government that administers Gaza once the fighting ends. But some experts say that the Israeli government is unlikely to accept such an outcome, having so far rejected temporary cease-fires that could have given Hamas time to regroup. “The Israelis are clearly willing to countenance international opprobrium for rejecting what they regard as a bad cease-fire deal that will allow Hamas to survive and fight another day,” [Cook writes](#).

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

For *Foreign Affairs*, CFR Distinguished Fellow Martin Indyk discusses [why Hamas attacked Israel](#) in 2023 and why Israel was taken by surprise.

These Backgrounders by CFR's Kali Robinson explain what to know about [Palestinian governance](#) beyond Gaza and about U.S. policy on the [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#).

Palestinian economist Raja Khalidi [makes a case](#) for establishing a Palestinian state amid the war in Gaza in this *Foreign Affairs* article.

The Israeli NGO Gisha [maps access to the Gaza Strip](#) [PDF] and documents restrictions on the movement of people and goods enforced by Israel and Egypt.

The European Council on Foreign Relations [maps Palestinian politics](#).

## HAMAS: WORDS AND DEEDS...

[WILSON CENTER](#) By Ambassador [Mark A. Green](#) on *October 24, 2023*

In its original 1988 charter, Hamas states that “There is no solution for the Palestinian problem except by Jihad.” In a 2017 version of its charter, Hamas claimed to reject the “persecution of any human being or the undermining of his or her rights on nationalist, religious or sectarian grounds.” On October 7, 2023, it launched a terrorist attack that killed more than 1,300 people in Israel.

Hamas was established in Gaza at the end of 1987 as both an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood and a rival to another designated terrorist group: the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In line with its belief that "[The day that enemies usurp part of Muslim land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Muslim](#)," Hamas not only [condemned the historic Oslo Accords](#) but declares that international peace proposals and conferences are "[but a waste of time, and vain endeavors](#)."

Such pronouncements and a string of violent acts made it easy for the US State Department to [designate](#) Hamas a “foreign terrorist organization.” Others like the European Union, Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom have taken similar steps.

By 2017, it appeared that Hamas wanted to reshape, or at least clarify, its public image in some quarters. It took steps to soften some of the most extreme language of its [1988 charter](#) by issuing new statements and declarations that, while not repealing or superseding the original document, supplemented it with more ambiguous terms and rhetoric. For example, the original charter called it "[compulsory that the banner of Jihad be raised](#)." In 2017, Hamas portrayed itself as a resistance movement aiming to "[liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project](#)." In 1988, Hamas explicitly acknowledged its links to the Muslim Brotherhood, but the [2017 Hamas Charter](#) is devoid of references to the Brotherhood. In 1988, Hamas declared that the “Day of Judgment will not come about until Muslims fight Jews and kill them.” By 2017, Hamas claimed its mission wasn’t “a struggle against Jews or Judaism,” but a “struggle...against the Zionist occupation....”

While the tone and terms of the 2017 charter may be different from the extremist provisions of its 1988 predecessor, the newer document still hints at the violence and hatred at the organization’s core. Article 25 provides that “Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws. At the heart of these lies armed resistance...”

On October 7, Hamas terrorist forces attacked Israel by land, sea, and air, killing at least 1,300 people—including at least 31 Americans, most of whom were unarmed civilians—injuring thousands more, and taking over 150 civilians and soldiers hostage.

In 2017, Hamas dressed up their terrorist objectives in more ambiguous, less violent terms. But in 2023, they made clear what they really stood for—in President Biden’s words, “the destruction of the State of Israel and the murder of Jewish people.”

Little has changed since their anti-Semitic, anti-human, jihadist beginnings.

*This blog was researched with the assistance of Caroline Moody.*

## **THERE ARE NO CIVILIANS IN GAZA**

**In a culture where terrorists in the field don't wear uniforms,  
where large families have sizable stocks of weapons,  
and where children are taught to kill and die,  
the externals don't matter.**

**JNS** Daniel Greenfield June 13 2024

Americans expected Osama bin Laden to be found in a cave in Afghanistan. In reality, he was living comfortably in a military town in Pakistan under the protection of local authorities. Similarly, Israeli hostages, including the four who were rescued last Saturday, have come home telling stories of being kept captive in "civilian" households.

Many in the West fundamentally misunderstand what Islamic terrorism is. It's not a "fringe group of extremists," as politicians and the media describe it, but an ethnic and religious movement. The religious values of Islamic terrorists are universally shared by the vast majority of Muslims, while the ethnic ones ground Islamic warfare in the interests of specific clans and families.

Hamas is an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood and has a widespread base of support across the Muslim world, which is dotted with branches of the Brotherhood. But its ethnic power base is also grounded in the key clans and families that control Gaza. That is why Hamas still retains the support of the majority of the Muslim colonists currently occupying Gaza. It's also why those same "civilians" held Israeli hostages prisoner and could be trusted not to inform on them.

The latest Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research poll shows that 71% of Gazans support the Hamas atrocities of Oct. 7, and 56% expect Hamas to win the war. Some 62% in Gaza are happy Hamas's performance during the war, and 59% want Hamas to stay in power.

That's because they are Hamas and the terror group is also them.

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The "Palestinian" myth is that the Muslim colonists occupying parts of Israel are the "indigenous" people. The reality is that they were Arab settlers who arrived with and after the Islamic conquest of Israel. Some, like the notorious Hussein clan, which produced Hitler's mufti, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, were relatively recent arrivals. The most powerful and wealthiest of these large families took control of urban areas, as the Husseinis tried to do in Jerusalem, and became a vital part of the Ottoman feudal order, serving as mayors and muftis. When the Ottomans were defeated, the clans fought to reclaim their power with movements like the [Muslim Brotherhood](#), also known as Hamas.

Hamas is an ideological Islamist movement, but its control over Gaza depends on these large families. That's why the idea that most people have that Hamas is a fanatical movement that exists apart from ordinary people and can be fought and defeated apart from them is wrong.

That's also why so few of the hostages have been rescued. Like the recently rescued four, the hostages are largely dispersed among "civilian" clan families across neighborhoods controlled by them. These families are formally civilian households, but many of their members are affiliated with Hamas. Rather than being an army whose members belong foremost to Hamas, they are more like the mafia and belong foremost to their extended clan, and choose to lend their support to Hamas.

It's not just that Hamas uses human shields, which it certainly does, it's that its infrastructure depends on clans whose adults provide fighters, and whose women and children act as human shields for the greater glory of the clan and Islam. The same clans that will kill teenage girls for violating family honor will also serve up even younger children as human shields for honor.

**There is no way for Israel to rescue its hostages without going into dense neighborhoods under the control of the clans to get them out.** And that will lead to firefights and "Black Hawk Down" moments. Clan members, who never identify themselves as such, will cry that they were massacred. And foreign leaders and the media will condemn the deaths of "civilians."

Defeating Hamas without civilian casualties is impossible because the Islamic terrorist group not only operates among civilians but is rooted in the society of Gaza. The clans that run Gaza, that provide the manpower that controls UNRWA institutions, and that are the mainstays of Hamas are also the large families that dominate the businesses, cultural and religious life in Gaza.

There's no meaningful distinction between civilians and Hamas. Some clans reject Hamas authority and Israel has tried to solicit some of them to run Gaza. For now, with few results. The U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq had similarly depended on swaying certain clans, elders and warlords into abandoning Al-Qaeda or the Taliban, with very temporary success.

Eventually the Taliban or Al-Qaeda, rebranded as the Islamic State, returned. And some of the same men we had armed and trained turned their guns on us. It is an almost inevitable outcome of counterinsurgency (COIN). When bringing democracy to the Muslim world fails, Westerners begin competing with jihadists for the support of the clans, only to be stabbed in the back.

The jihadists have the Quran on their side. To Muslims, their terrorism will always be more righteous than our fumbling efforts to avoid civilian casualties and collateral damage. Appealing to moderates or promising a better life will not win their support. On the contrary, it only infuriates the imams in their mosques and the influential clan leaders into opposing us.

Instead, we must reckon with the reality that there are few civilians in Gaza or the Muslim world generally. And those who legitimately are civilians should be measured by their deeds, not their clothing. In a culture where terrorists in the field don't wear uniforms, where large families have sizable stocks of weapons, and where children are taught to kill and die, the externals don't matter.

There are no civilians in Gaza. The vast majority of the population supports Hamas or some Islamic terrorist movement. Only a tiny minority opposes Islamic terrorism and wants peace.

The distinction is not between soldiers, terrorists and civilians, but enemies and non-combatants. Israel and Western nations should stop thinking about civilians, a concept that does not apply in a battlespace where terrorists wear street clothes and entire neighborhoods are controlled by clans that hide hostages in plain sight and think about enemies and neutrals.



An enemy is anyone, regardless of clothing or sex, who is aligned with Islamic terrorists.

Every poll continues to show that the vast majority of those in Gaza are aligned with the enemy. And if that were not the case, the war would have long since ended once locals informed the authorities of where the hostages are and where the remaining Hamas terrorists are set up.

Israel is not just at war with an organization, but with an enemy culture. As is most of the world, whether it chooses to admit it or not. The war is not defined by what they wear, but by what they think. As long as human shields, female suicide bombers and child soldiers abound, the war cannot be fought by treating civilians as noncombatants while hunting elusive terrorists.

The only way to defeat an enemy is to fight him as he is, not as we would like him to be.

It would be a far cleaner and neater war if Islamic terrorists fought like conventional armies. They do not. And it is time to fight them on their own terms instead.

Hamas can't be defeated by waiting until its terrorists take off their civilian clothes and put on uniforms.

Hamas are the civilians. They are the ones holding the hostages. The only way to free the hostages and defeat the terrorists is to destroy the terror culture in whatever form it takes.

The opinions and facts presented in this article are those of the author,  
and neither JNS nor its partners assume any responsibility for them.

# WHY IS HAMAS CLASSIFIED AS A TERRORIST GROUP?

(THIS IS THE AI RESPONSE FROM CHATGPT)

Hamas is classified as a terrorist group by several countries and organizations due to its use of violence and tactics targeting civilians, as well as its broader political and ideological objectives. Here is a detailed explanation of the reasons behind this designation:

## 1. VIOLENT ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS

One of the primary reasons Hamas is designated as a terrorist organization is its long history of attacks targeting civilians, both Israeli and foreign. These attacks include:

- Suicide Bombings:** During the Second Intifada (2000–2005), Hamas carried out numerous suicide bombings in buses, restaurants, and public spaces within Israel, killing and injuring hundreds of civilians.
- Rocket Attacks:** Hamas regularly launches indiscriminate rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israeli cities and towns. These rockets often target civilian areas without differentiation between combatants and non-combatants, a violation of international humanitarian law.
- Kidnappings:** Hamas has been involved in high-profile kidnappings, including the 2006 capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, which they used as leverage for a prisoner exchange.

## 2. INDISCRIMINATE AND ASYMMETRIC WARFARE

Hamas is frequently criticized for using tactics that violate international laws of war, particularly the principles of distinction and proportionality, which require combatants to distinguish between military and civilian targets and to avoid excessive force. Hamas:

- Fires rockets indiscriminately from civilian areas in Gaza into Israel, often targeting civilian populations.
- Uses tunnels for cross-border attacks, often to launch surprise raids on civilian or military targets.
- Carries out urban warfare in heavily populated areas, sometimes escalating violence during periods of conflict, leading to civilian casualties.

## 3. HUMAN SHIELDS AND CIVILIAN USE IN CONFLICT

Hamas has been accused of using civilians as human shields, positioning military infrastructure such as rocket launchers and weapons caches in schools, hospitals, and residential buildings. This strategy increases the risk of civilian casualties and has drawn widespread condemnation from international human rights organizations. It complicates Israel's military response, as any retaliation risks civilian harm.

## 4. Refusal to Recognize Israel and Calls for Its Destruction

Hamas has consistently refused to recognize the state of Israel and has called for its destruction. The Hamas Charter (1988) explicitly rejects Israel's right to exist and advocates for the establishment of an Islamic state in all of historic Palestine, including Israel. This ideological position fuels Hamas' violent resistance against Israel, rather than participating in peace negotiations or recognizing international agreements like the Oslo Accords.

## **5. CONNECTIONS TO OTHER TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS**

Hamas has historical ties to other groups labeled as terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). These connections are viewed as part of a broader network of militant Islamist groups that engage in asymmetric warfare and terrorism. Hamas has received financial, military, and logistical support from Iran, enabling it to develop a more sophisticated arsenal of weapons.

## **6. POLITICAL CONTROL AND ARMED WING**

Hamas is unique among many terrorist organizations in that it also functions as a political party, governing the Gaza Strip since 2007 after a violent conflict with the Palestinian Authority's Fatah faction. Despite its political role, Hamas maintains an armed wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, which is responsible for carrying out many of the attacks and military operations against Israel. This dual nature—political and military—complicates the group's classification, but its armed actions remain the focus of its terrorist designation.

## **7. INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST DESIGNATIONS**

The following countries and organizations officially classify Hamas as a terrorist group:

United States: Designated Hamas as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in 1997 due to its attacks on civilians and its opposition to peace efforts.

European Union (EU): Hamas has been on the EU's terrorist list since 2003, following a wave of suicide bombings and attacks during the Second Intifada.

Canada, Australia, and Japan have similarly designated Hamas as a terrorist entity.

Israel: As the primary target of Hamas' attacks, Israel considers the group a direct threat to its existence and has consistently labeled it as a terrorist organization.

## **8. HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS**

Hamas has been accused of committing serious human rights violations, not only in its attacks on Israel but also in its governance of Gaza. This includes suppressing dissent, executing alleged collaborators, and violating the rights of political opponents within the Gaza Strip. Such practices contribute to Hamas' negative international image.

## **CONCLUSION**

Hamas is classified as a terrorist group primarily due to its targeting of civilians, its use of violence and asymmetric warfare, and its rejection of Israel's right to exist. The group's tactics—including suicide bombings, rocket attacks, kidnappings, and the use of civilians as human shields—are widely seen as violations of international law, leading to its designation as a terrorist organization by many governments and international bodies. Despite its political role in Gaza, Hamas' violent activities and ideological stance continue to drive its classification as a terrorist entity.

## GAZA, DISPUTE FOR CONTROL BETWEEN FATAH AND HAMAS

V · T · E	Gaza–Israel conflict	[hide]
Timeline · Palestinian rocket attacks (Lists)		
<p>Gaza cross-border raid · Summer Rains · Autumn Clouds · Gaza–Egypt border breach · Hot Winter · 2008–2009 Gaza War · March 2010 clashes · Southern Israel cross-border attacks · March 2012 clashes · Pillar of Defense · 2014 war (Shuja'iyya · Beach bombing incidents) · 2018 border protests · November 2018 clashes · May 2019 clashes · November 2019 clashes · 2021 Israel–Palestine crisis · 2022 clashes · 2023 clashes</p>		

Politics of the Gaza Strip	
	
<b>Covenant</b>	[show]
<b>Government</b>	[show]
<b>National symbols</b>	[show]
<b>Legislative Council</b>	[show]
<b>Elections</b>	[show]
<b>Administrative divisions</b>	[show]
<b>Foreign relations</b>	[show]
V · T · E	

Go to the source document which is [Mandatory Palestine](#) to use the links in these frames



The **Gaza Strip**, or simply **Gaza**, is a political entity and the smaller of the two [Palestinian territories](#) (the other being the West Bank). On the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Gaza is bordered by Egypt on the southwest and Israel on the east and north.

The British Empire relinquished its control of Palestine during the 1948 Palestine war (the first of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict) and was captured by Egypt during the war. when Gaza became a refuge for many Arabs. During the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel occupied the Gaza strip and the Sinai from Egypt imitating a decades-long military occupation of the Palestinian territories. The mid-1990s Oslo Accords established the Palestinian Authority to govern both territories, which it did under Palestinian nationalist party Fatah until that party's electoral defeat in 2006 to militant [Sunni Islamic](#) organization [Hamas](#). That group took over the [governance of Gaza](#) in [a battle the next year](#), subsequently warring with Israel.

Israel [unilaterally withdrew its military forces](#) from Gaza and dismantled [its settlements](#) in 2005 and implemented a temporary [blockade of Gaza](#) that same year; the blockade, supported by Egypt through restrictions on its land border with Gaza, became indefinite after the 2007

**Hamas takeover of the governance of Gaza.** Despite the Israeli disengagement, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and many human-rights organizations continue to consider Gaza to be held under Israeli military occupation, due to what they consider Israel's effective military control over the territory; Israel disputes that it occupies the territory and the [Israeli Supreme Court](#) has found that since the disengagement Israel no longer occupies Gaza.<sup>[13][14][15]</sup> The land, sea, and air blockade prevents people and goods from freely entering or leaving the territory, resulting in a \$17 million loss in exports and leading to Gaza often being called an "open-air prison".<sup>[16][17]</sup> The UN, as well as at least 19 human-rights organizations, have urged Israel to lift the blockade.<sup>[18]</sup>

The Gaza Strip is 41 kilometres (25 miles) long, from 6 to 12 km (3.7 to 7.5 mi) wide, and has a total area of 365 km<sup>2</sup> (141 sq mi).<sup>[19][20]</sup> With around 2 million [Palestinians](#)<sup>[21]</sup> on approximately 365 km<sup>2</sup> (141 sq mi) of land, Gaza has a high [population density](#) ([comparable](#) to that of [Hong Kong](#)).<sup>[22][23]</sup> The majority of Palestinians in Gaza, which contains eight refugee camps, are descendants of refugees who [fled or were expelled](#) from the area that became Israel after the [1948 Arab–Israeli War](#).<sup>[24]</sup> Sunni Muslims make up most of Gaza's population, with a [Palestinian Christian](#) minority. Gaza has an annual population growth rate of 1.99% (2023 est.), the [39th-highest](#) in the world.<sup>[25]</sup> Gaza's unemployment rate is among the highest in the world, with an overall unemployment rate of 46% and a youth unemployment rate of ~70%, according to the [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](#), while the population has one of the highest literacy rates in the world.<sup>[26][27][28]</sup>

## FATAH-HAMAS CONFLICT

The **Fatah– Hamas conflict** ([Arabic](#): النزاع بين فتح وحماس *an-Nizā‘ bayna Fataḥ wa-Ḥamās*) is an ongoing political and strategic conflict between [Fatah](#) and [Hamās](#), the two main Palestinian political parties in the Palestinian territories, leading to the [Hamās takeover of the Gaza Strip](#) in June 2007. The [reconciliation process](#) and unification of Hamas and Fatah administrations remains unfinalized and the situation is deemed a [frozen conflict](#).

The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights has found that over 600 Palestinians were killed in the fighting from January 2006 to May 2007.<sup>[14]</sup> Dozens more were killed or executed in the following years as part of the conflict.

Hamas was founded in 1987,<sup>[15][16]</sup> soon after the [First Intifada](#) broke out, as an offshoot of the Egyptian [Muslim Brotherhood](#).<sup>[17]</sup> It is a [Palestinian Sunni-Islamist](#) fundamentalist organization,<sup>[18][19]</sup> which is regarded, either in whole or in part, as a [terrorist organization](#) by [several countries and international organizations](#), most notably by [Israel](#), the [United States](#) and the [European Union](#).<sup>[20][21][22]</sup>

Tensions between Fatah and Hamas began to rise in 2005 after the death of [Yasser Arafat](#) in November 2004. After the [legislative election on 25 January 2006](#), which resulted in a Hamas victory, relations were marked by sporadic factional fighting. This became more intense after the two parties repeatedly failed to reach a deal to share government power, escalating in June 2007 and resulting in [Hamās' takeover of Gaza](#).<sup>[23]</sup> A major issue was control over the border crossings, especially the [Rafah Border Crossing](#).

Hamas leader [Ismail Haniya](#) formed a [new PA government](#) on 29 March 2006 comprising mostly Hamas members. Fatah and other factions had refused to join, especially as Hamas refused to accept the Quartet's conditions, such as recognition of Israel and earlier agreements. As a result, a substantial part of the international community, especially Israel, the United States and European Union countries, refused to deal with the Hamas government and imposed sanctions. Following the abduction by Hamas militants of [Gilad Shalit](#) on 25 June 2006 in a cross-border raid via a tunnel out of Gaza, Israel detained nearly a quarter of PLC members and ministers on the West Bank during **August 2006**, intensified the boycott of Gaza and took other punitive measures.<sup>[24][25][26]</sup>

**PART K-3**


**HAMAS - DIPLOMACY AND HOSTAGES**

# HAMAS DIPLOMACY: FROM HANIYEH TO SINWAR

[THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY](#) Aaron Y Zelin Aug 28 2024

The group has sought to build legitimacy and prepare for a postwar role in Gaza by engaging with various countries since October, but the death of Ismail Haniyeh will complicate those efforts.

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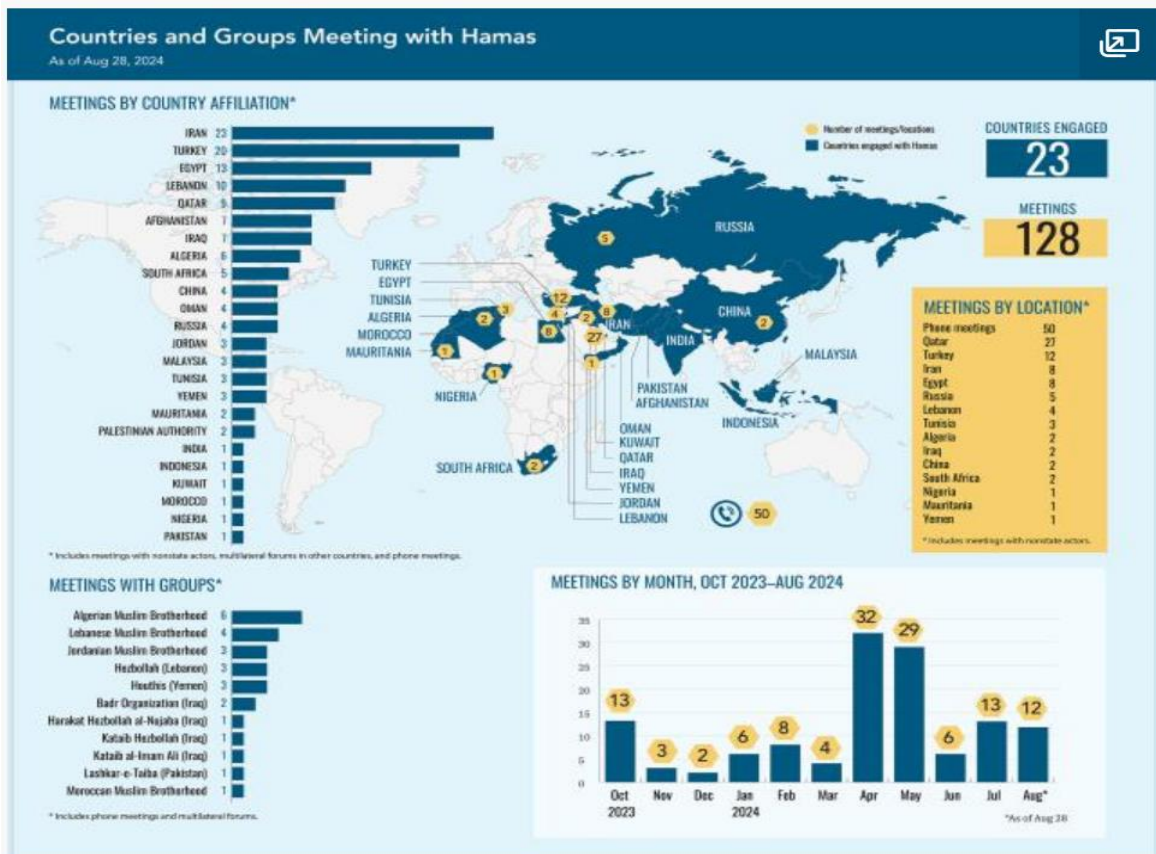


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After conducting the world’s largest terrorist attack since 9/11 and sparking a tragically destructive war in Gaza, Hamas has spent months conducting a diplomatic campaign to garner support and gain political cover on the world stage. These efforts increase the chances that the group will remain a key actor in the Palestinian arena after the war, potentially undermining Israel’s pledge to eradicate or at least defang it. Yet the recent assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh—who took part in nearly three-fourths of its diplomatic engagements during the war—will likely complicate its future charm offensives.



## WHO IS MEETING WITH HAMAS?



Since the October 7 attack, Hamas has regularly promoted its diplomatic meetings with foreign officials, political parties, local NGOs, and other groups via its official Telegram channels and website. As of August 28, it had engaged in 128 such meetings either in person or via phone (or 134 if one includes each country's presence at a multilateral engagement). Twenty-three countries were involved in these meetings, whether in the form of government officials, political parties, or nonstate actors that operate within their borders. In contrast, Hamas had only 37 diplomatic engagements in the year prior to the October 7 attacks, meaning it is on pace for a fivefold annual increase.

All of Hamas' encounters served various purposes: congratulating Hamas for the October 7 attack, publicly supporting its claims, as well as calling for an end to Israel's military campaign, greater humanitarian access to Gaza, and a ceasefire agreement. In other cases, Hamas appeared to avoid heavily publicizing certain engagements due to apparent political sensitivities—for example, when it [opened](#) a political office in Iraq in June or [met with](#) the Pakistani terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba in August.

Unsurprisingly, the meetings also show that Iran is the group's biggest diplomatic backer, not just its main military patron. The Islamic Republic was the first country to congratulate Hamas on the October 7 attack and has steadfastly supported it via numerous phone conversations and in-person meetings in Tehran and Qatar. Among other issues, the two allies have discussed broad strategic matters and specific responses to Israel's actions in Gaza and regionally.

Elsewhere, Qatar and Turkey have served as key venues for supporting Hamas diplomacy. Doha also provides a safe space for the group to meet with other Palestinian militants fighting Israel, most recently hosting talks between members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad on August 22. Egypt has played an important role in Hamas diplomacy as well—but as an intermediary in negotiations with Israel, not as an ally of the group.

In other countries, Hamas has often met with a range of actors, from elected officials and groups that have representation in the government to designated terrorist groups (in some cases, all of these labels apply). For example, meetings in Iraq and Lebanon have included the Badr Organization, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Kataib Hezbollah, Kataib al-Imam Ali, Lebanese Hezbollah, and the [Lebanese Muslim Brotherhood](#) (notably, most of these groups are backed by Iran). In Jordan and Morocco, Hamas did not meet with royal officials, just members of local Muslim Brotherhood branches (which hold parliamentary seats). In Pakistan and Yemen, it only engaged with Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Houthis, respectively. Beyond its traditional allies, Hamas has also engaged politicians and civil society actors in various parts of Africa to garner greater international support:

- During a week-long diplomatic marathon in Algiers this February, Hamas described meeting with “thirty political parties and ten associations, and holding meetings with media outlets and Algerian notables.”
- In Tunisia, Hamas participated in group forums in January and May while meeting with political actors and unions across the spectrum, from leftists to Islamist factions like Ennahda.
- In Mauritania, Hamas leader Khaled Mashal gave a speech at a November festival in support of the Palestinian cause.

- In Nigeria, Hamas conducted a four-day visit in February that included meeting with political officials and religious actors to explain the situation in Gaza.
- In South Africa, Hamas officials conducted multiple trips to Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, and Johannesburg, meeting with various political actors (e.g., the African National Congress), local NGOs, and religious figures. The aim of these visits was twofold: to share details on the Gaza war, and to link the group's cause to South Africa's experience under apartheid. In April, Haniyeh met with Nelson Mandela's grandson—Zwelivelile “Mandla” Mandela, a convert to Islam—in Istanbul to further link their causes.

Notably, a large proportion of the group's diplomatic meetings in recent years have been conducted by phone rather than in person (e.g., 40 percent during the war, 33 percent the previous year). Although the restrictions on travel to or from Gaza may partially explain this trend (especially during wartime), it also suggests that questions persist about the group's legitimacy. Despite its claims to the contrary, Hamas is not the officially recognized leader of the Palestinian national movement; that role still belongs to Fatah via the Palestinian Authority. In contrast, another nationally focused jihadist actor—the Taliban's Islamic Emirate—[conducts](#) most of its diplomacy in person and inside its territory, despite lacking formal UN recognition as the government of Afghanistan. The differences are clear: the Taliban controls all of Afghanistan, has a monopoly over national politics, and is not restricted by a de facto blockade on its territory.

Thus, even as Hamas measurably expands its diplomatic activity during the war, there remains a ceiling on how far this engagement can potentially go for now. Haniyeh's death will likely lower this ceiling, and quite literally—his role as head of the Hamas Political Bureau has been taken over by military commander Yahya al-Sinwar, who continues to prosecute the war from bunkers and tunnels beneath Gaza.

### **PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

In addition to meetings abroad, Hamas has sought to sway public opinion about the October 7 attack in writing, most prominently with a January publication it titled “This Is Our Narrative: Why al-Aqsa Flood?” This document attempts to justify the group's mass murder of civilians and underplay its involvement in rape and other war crimes. To make sure the message reached as large an audience as possible, Hamas promptly translated the document from Arabic to English, French, Farsi, Russian, Malay, Urdu, Chinese, Turkish, and Spanish.

The group has also attempted to situate itself as the sole voice on Palestine, in part by praising countries for taking actions it perceives as beneficial to the Palestinian cause. For example, Hamas has:

- Thanked the [African Union](#) and [Arab League](#) for backing its struggle;
- Thanked [Armenia](#), [the Bahamas](#), [Ireland](#), [Norway](#), [Slovenia](#), [Spain](#), and [Trinidad and Tobago](#) for recognizing a Palestinian state post-October 7;
- Praised [Bolivia](#), [Brazil](#), [Chad](#), [Chile](#), [Colombia](#), [Honduras](#), [South Africa](#), and [Turkey](#) for breaking ties with Israel post-October 7;
- Congratulated [South Africa](#) for opening a “genocide” case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, and praised [Egypt](#), [Libya](#), [Spain](#), and [Turkey](#) for subsequently joining the case.

### **After Haniyeh**

In the months after the October 7 attack, Haniyeh took part in 73 percent of Hamas's publicly announced diplomatic engagements. How will the group fill this gap now that he is gone?

Of course, at least some Hamas engagements are likely conducted out of the public view, so Haniyeh's outside role may not represent the full picture. As noted above, however, naming Sinwar as his successor will necessarily complicate the group's diplomatic activities—meeting with the commander in person will likely be impossible even if officials wanted to take that risk, and speaking with him by phone is likely difficult as well because it could reveal where he is hiding. Some diplomacy could plausibly be done via couriers, but that is no substitute for the in-person legitimacy that Haniyeh was seemingly helping Hamas rebuild with certain constituencies.

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Biden administration can and should continue pushing for a Gaza ceasefire regardless of who is representing Hamas. Yet the group's decision to situate its political and military power in one person could impede such efforts, making the war more likely to drag on.

Washington should also do more to curb the major increase in Hamas diplomatic engagement on the world stage—otherwise, the group could wind up being legitimized as the sole voice of Palestine despite starting a destructive war and losing much of its infrastructure in Gaza. For example, the State Department could exert far more pressure on U.S. allies and partners that host or meet with Hamas. If private conversations or official demarches do not have the desired effect, the administration may need to call these countries out publicly.

#### **[Aaron Y. Zelin](#)**

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## ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

[cfr GLOBAL CONFLICT TRACKER](#) October 6 2024

Hamas launched its deadly attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, prompting the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to engage in aerial campaigns and ground operations within the Gaza Strip. Efforts to free the more than one hundred remaining Israeli and foreign [hostages](#) taken by Hamas have been largely unsuccessful, and their location and health status are unknown. Almost two million Gazans—more than 85 percent of the population—have [fled](#) their homes since October 2023. Recent casualty estimates from the Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry place the [death toll](#) in Gaza at around 42,000, though such numbers are challenging to verify due to limited international access to the strip. Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is attempting to facilitate a [ceasefire and hostage release deal](#) between the two parties.

The conflict has sparked increased regional tensions across the Middle East. Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon have engaged in cross-border skirmishes with the IDF, Yemen's Houthi rebels have [shot](#) missiles at Israel and commercial ships in the Red Sea, and other Iran-backed groups have [launched](#) dozens of attacks on U.S. military positions in Iraq and Syria. (For more on the direct confrontation between Iran and Israel and the role of the United States, visit the "[Confrontation with Iran](#)" page. For more on the direct confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel, visit the "[Instability in Lebanon](#)" page.)

### BACKGROUND

The [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#) dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. In 1947, the United Nations adopted [Resolution 181](#), known as the Partition Plan, which sought to divide the British Mandate of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was created, sparking the first Arab-Israeli War. The war ended in 1949 with Israel's victory, but 750,000 Palestinians were displaced, and the territory was divided into 3 parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (of the Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip.

Over the following years, tensions rose in the region, particularly between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Following the [1956 Suez Crisis](#) and Israel's invasion of the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria signed mutual defense pacts in anticipation of a possible mobilization of Israeli troops. In June 1967, following [a series of maneuvers](#) by Egyptian President Abdel Gamal Nasser, Israel preemptively attacked Egyptian and Syrian air forces, starting the Six-Day War. After the war, Israel gained territorial control over the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt; the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan; and the Golan Heights from Syria.

Six years later, in what is referred to as the Yom Kippur War or the October War, Egypt and Syria launched [a surprise two-front attack](#) on Israel to regain their lost territory; the conflict did not result in significant gains for Egypt, Israel, or Syria, but Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat declared the war a victory for Egypt as it allowed Egypt and Syria to [negotiate over previously ceded territory](#). Finally, in 1979, following a series of cease-fires and peace negotiations, representatives from Egypt and Israel signed the [Camp David Accords](#), a peace treaty that ended the thirty-year conflict between Egypt and Israel.

Even though the Camp David Accords improved relations between Israel and its neighbors, the question of Palestinian self-determination and self-governance remained unresolved. In 1987, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rose up against the Israeli government in what is known as the first intifada. The 1993 [Oslo I Accords](#) mediated the conflict, setting up a framework for the Palestinians to govern themselves in the West Bank and Gaza, and enabled mutual recognition between the newly established Palestinian Authority and Israel's government. In 1995, the [Oslo II Accords](#) expanded on the first agreement, adding provisions that mandated the complete withdrawal of Israel from 6 cities and 450 towns in the West Bank.

In 2000, sparked in part by Palestinian grievances over Israel's control over the West Bank, a stagnating peace process, and former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's [visit](#) to the al-Aqsa mosque—the third holiest site in Islam—in September 2000, Palestinians [launched](#) the second intifada, which would last until 2005. In response, the Israeli government approved the [construction of a barrier wall](#) around the West Bank in 2002, despite [opposition](#) from the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Factionalism among the Palestinians flared up when [Hamas](#) won the Palestinian Authority's parliamentary elections in 2006, deposing longtime majority party Fatah. This gave Hamas, a political and militant movement inspired by the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, control of the Gaza Strip. Gaza is a small piece of land on the Mediterranean Sea that borders Egypt to the south and has been under the rule of the semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority since 1993. The United States and European Union, among others, did not acknowledge Hamas' electoral victory, as the group has been considered a terrorist organization by western governments since the late 1990s. Following Hamas' seizure of control, [violence broke out](#) between Hamas and Fatah. Between 2006 and 2011, a series of failed peace talks and deadly confrontations culminated in an agreement to reconcile. [Fatah entered into a unity government](#) with Hamas in 2014.

In the summer of 2014, [clashes](#) in the Palestinian territories precipitated a [military confrontation](#) between the Israeli military and Hamas in which Hamas fired nearly three thousand rockets at Israel, and Israel retaliated with a major offensive in Gaza. The skirmish ended in late August 2014 with a [cease-fire](#) deal brokered by Egypt, but only after 73 Israelis and 2,251 Palestinians were [killed](#). After a wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 2015, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah [announced](#) that Palestinians would no longer be bound by the territorial divisions created by the [Oslo Accords](#). In March of 2018, Israeli troops [killed](#) 183 Palestinians and wounded 6,000 others after some Palestinians stormed the perimeter fence between the Gaza Strip and Israel and threw rocks during an otherwise peaceful demonstration. Just months later, Hamas militants fired over one hundred rockets into Israel, and Israel [responded](#) with strikes on more than fifty targets in Gaza during a twenty-four-hour flare-up. The tense political atmosphere resulted in [a return to disunity](#) between Fatah and Hamas, with Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party controlling the Palestinian Authority from the West Bank and Hamas *de facto* ruling the Gaza Strip.

The Donald J. Trump administration reversed longstanding U.S. policy by [canceling](#) funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency, which provides aid to Palestinian refugees, and [relocating the U.S. embassy](#) from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The Trump administration also helped broker the [Abraham Accords](#), under which

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates normalized relations with Israel, becoming only the third and fourth countries in the region—following Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994—to do so. Similar deals followed with [Morocco](#) [PDF] and [Sudan](#). Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah [rejected](#) the accords, [as did Hamas](#).

In early May 2021, after a court [ruled](#) in favor of the eviction of several Palestinian families from East Jerusalem properties, protests erupted, with Israeli police [employing](#) force against demonstrators. After several consecutive days of violence, Hamas, the militant group that governs Gaza, and other Palestinian [militant groups](#) launched hundreds of [rockets](#) into Israeli territory. Israel responded with artillery bombardments and airstrikes, [killing](#) more than twenty Palestinians and hitting both [military](#) and non-military infrastructure, including residential buildings, [media headquarters](#), and [refugee](#) and [healthcare facilities](#). After eleven days, Israel and Hamas agreed to a [cease-fire](#), with both sides claiming victory. The fighting [killed](#) more than 250 Palestinians and at least 13 Israelis, wounded nearly 2,000 others, and [displaced](#) 72,000 Palestinians.

The [most far-right and religious government](#) in Israel's history, led by Benjamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu and his Likud party and comprising two ultra-Orthodox parties and three far-right parties, was inaugurated in late December 2022. The coalition government [prioritized](#) the expansion and development of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, [endorsed discrimination](#) against LGBTQ+ people on religious grounds, and voted to [limit](#) judicial oversight of the government in May 2023 after a [delay](#) due to nationwide protests in March.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In early October 2023, Hamas fighters [fired](#) rockets into Israel and stormed southern Israeli cities and towns across the border of the Gaza Strip in a surprise attack, [killing](#) more than 1,300 Israelis, injuring 3,300, and [taking](#) hundreds of hostages. One day after the October 7 attack, the Israeli cabinet formally [declared war](#) against Hamas, followed by a [directive](#) from the defense minister to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to carry out a “complete siege” of Gaza. It is the most significant escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in several decades.

Israel [ordered](#) more than one million Palestinian civilians in northern Gaza to evacuate ahead of a ground invasion that began on October 27th. The ground invasion began in the north in conjunction with Israel's continued aerial assault. The first stage of the ground invasion [ended](#) on November 24 with the hostage-for-prisoner swap that also allowed more aid into Gaza. After seven days, the war resumed—particularly in [Khan Younis](#), the largest city in southern Gaza that Israel claims is a Hamas stronghold.

Under pressure from its principal ally, the United States, Israel announced it would begin to withdraw soldiers from the Gaza Strip in January 2024. Since then, military analysts speculate that the IDF has [pulled out](#) at least 90 percent of the troops that were in the territory a few months ago, leaving one remaining brigade. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, is unwavering in his [position](#) that an Israeli offensive in Rafah, the southernmost city in the Gaza Strip where over one million Palestinians have taken refuge, is essential to eradicating Hamas.

In mid-March, Israel conducted a two-week raid on al-Shifa Hospital, the largest medical center in Gaza. Israel claimed Hamas was operating out of al-Shifa, and it reportedly killed 200 fighters and captured an

additional 500. The U.S. intelligence community later [determined](#) that Hamas had used al-Shifa as a command center and held some hostages there, but the Islamist group evacuated the complex days prior to the Israeli operation. In late April, two mass graves were [discovered](#) at al-Shifa and Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, another target of an Israeli operation. More than 300 bodies were found among the two sites; the United Nations has called for an independent investigation.

On April 1, Israel launched an airstrike on an Iranian consular building in Damascus, Syria, killing multiple senior Iranian military officers. In response, Iran engaged directly in the war by [launching](#) over 300 drones and missiles at Israel on April 13. Though Israel was able to ward off the attack and only sustained minor damage to an air base, the escalation marked Iran's first-ever direct attack on Israel. As Israel weighed an extensive counterstrike on multiple military targets in Iran, the United States and other allies [advised](#) against actions that they feared would further widen the war. Israel ultimately launched a more limited [aerial strike](#) on military bases in Isfahan and Tabriz on April 19. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi later [downplayed](#) the response, suggesting Iran aimed to avoid further escalation.

In late July, tensions rose between Israel and Iran-backed proxy groups when a Hezbollah airstrike killed eleven people in a Druze village in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. Israel retaliated by assassinating a top Hezbollah leader in Beirut, Lebanon, for which it claimed responsibility. Hours later, Hamas' top political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, was killed in Tehran while attending the Iranian presidential inauguration. Israel [did not claim responsibility](#) for Haniyeh's death; however, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated Israel would "exact a very heavy price from any aggression." As Hamas' leader in the negotiations over a ceasefire in Gaza, Haniyeh's killing further dampened prospects for regional de-escalation. Iran vowed to retaliate but has delayed its response. A month later, Israel launched a wave of pre-emptive strikes against a significant rocket and drone attack by Hezbollah. After [exchanging heavy fire](#), both parties signaled they sought to reduce tensions.

Gaza is desperately low on water, fuel, and supplies as Hamas has rejected the most recent cease-fire proposals mediated by the United States and Egypt, while Israel has [limited](#) the amount of aid that can enter. Many humanitarian agencies [suspended](#) their operations after Israel killed seven World Center Kitchen employees in an airstrike. The World Food Programme warns famine is now [imminent](#) in Gaza. Only eleven out of thirty-five hospitals in the strip [remain](#) partially functional due to attacks on medical infrastructure and a lack of basic supplies. The World Health Organization has [warned](#) of disease spread in addition to mounting civilian casualties.

The displacement of millions more Palestinians presents a [challenge](#) for Egypt and Jordan, which have absorbed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the past but have resisted accepting anyone during the current war. They fear that Gazans, many of whom were already displaced from elsewhere in Israel, will not be allowed to [return](#) once they leave. Egypt also [fears](#) that Hamas fighters could enter Egypt and trigger a new war in the Sinai by launching attacks on Israel or destabilizing the authoritarian regime of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi by supporting the Muslim Brotherhood. So far, negotiations have resulted in only 1,100 people [exiting](#) Gaza through the Rafah border crossing to Egypt. The other 1.5 million displaced Gazans—70 percent of the territory's population—remained [confined](#) to southern Gaza and face increasingly dire living conditions and security risks.

While the United States [said](#) there was “no direct evidence” that Iranian intelligence and security forces directly helped Hamas plan its October 7 attack, Iran has a [well-established patronage relationship](#) with Hamas and other extremist groups across the Middle East. Israel has exchanged artillery fire with Iran-backed [Hezbollah](#) almost daily and [struck](#) Syrian military targets and airports, prompting concern that the war could expand north. To the south, [Yemen’s Houthi rebels](#) have launched multiple rounds of missiles at Israel as well. Meanwhile, the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, a coalition of Iranian-backed militias, has [claimed responsibility](#) for dozens of attacks on U.S. military targets in Iraq and Syria since the war began.

### **More on The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

[What Is Hamas? CFR Backgrounder August 19, 2024](#)

[Who Governs the Palestinians? CFR Background May 28, 2024](#)

[One Year After the October 7 Attacks CFR.org October 2, 2024](#)

[U.S. Aid to Israel in Four Charts CFR.org May 31, 2024](#)

[Where Will Israel's Multifront War End? Foreign Affairs October 2, 2024](#)

[The Israel-Palestine Crisis: Causes, Consequences, Portents International Crisis Group May 14, 2021](#)

[Israel-Hamas Conflict: U.S. Policy and Options for Congress Congressional Research Service April 16, 2024](#)

[The Israel-Hamas War: The Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza CFR In Brief February 8, 2024](#)

[Washington’s New Mideast Balancing Act CFR In Brief April 14, 2024](#)

[Five Months of War: Where Israel, Hamas, and the U.S. Stand CFR Expert Brief March 8, 2024](#)



## PALESTINIAN ROCKET ATTACKS ON ISRAEL FROM 2000

[WIKIPEDIA](#)

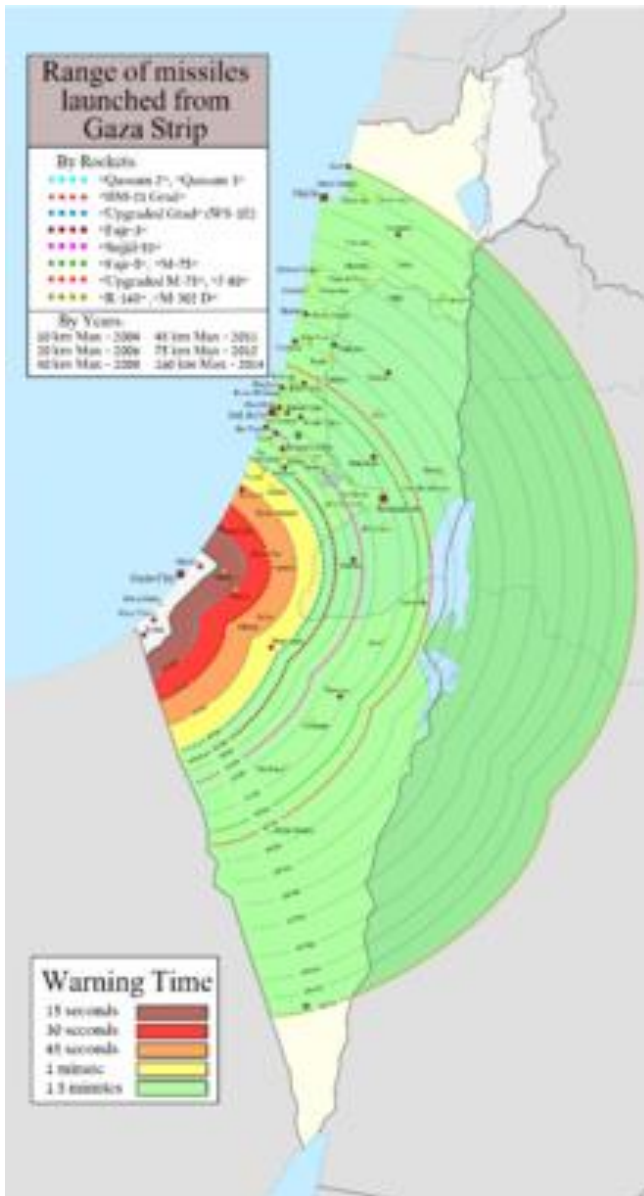
### OVERVIEW

#### RANGE OF MISSILES LAUNCHED FROM GAZA STRIP (10-160 KM).

In the cycle of violence, rocket attacks alternate with Israeli military actions. From the outbreak of the [Al Aqsa Intifada](#) (30 September 2000) through March 2013, 8,749 rockets and 5,047 mortar shells were fired on Israel,<sup>[34]</sup> while Israel has conducted several military operations in the Gaza Strip, among them [Operation Rainbow](#) (2004), [Operation Days of Penitence](#) (2004), [Operation Summer Rains](#) (2006), [Operation Autumn Clouds](#) (2006), [Operation Hot Winter](#) (2008), [Operation Cast Lead](#) (2009), [Operation Pillar of Defense](#) (2012), [Operation Protective Edge](#) (2014), [Operation Guardian of the Walls](#) (2021) and [Operation Swords of Iron](#) (2023).

#### OVERVIEW

Attacks began in 2001. Since then (August 2014 data), almost 20,000 rockets have hit southern Israel,<sup>[35][36]</sup> all but a few thousand of them since [Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip](#) in August 2005. Hamas justified these as



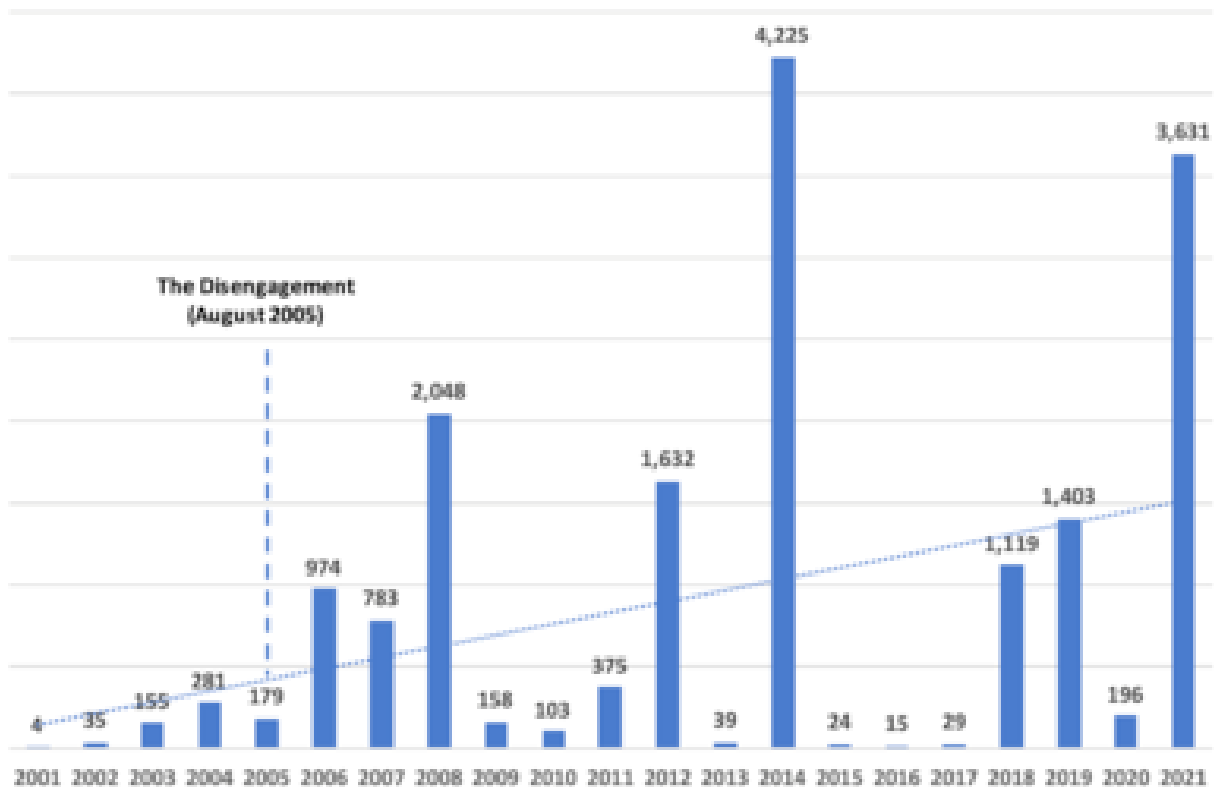


Figure 2. Number of rockets fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip by year.

Sources: Ben Sasson-Gordis (2016) and Meir Amit Terrorism and Information Center (2017–2022).

### Rocket attacks fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip, 2001-2021<sup>[48]</sup>

counter-attacks to the [Israeli blockade of Gaza](#). The rockets have killed 28 people and injured hundreds more. The range of the rockets has increased over time. The original Qassam rocket has a range of about 10 km (6.2 mi) but more advanced rockets, including versions of the old Soviet Grad or Katyusha have hit Israeli targets 40 km (25 mi) from Gaza.<sup>[37]</sup>

Some analysts see the attacks as a shift away from reliance on [suicide bombing](#), which was previously Hamas's main method of attacking Israel, as an adoption of the rocket tactics used by the Lebanese group [Hezbollah](#).<sup>[38]</sup>

### Participating Groups

All the Palestinian armed groups carry out rocket and mortar attacks, with varying frequency.<sup>[28]</sup> The main groups are [Hamas](#), [Islamic Jihad](#),<sup>[39]</sup> the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine](#),<sup>[40]</sup> the [Popular Resistance Committees](#),<sup>[41]</sup> [Fatah](#),<sup>[42]</sup> and the [Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine](#).<sup>[28]</sup> In June 2007, Hamas took over from Fatah as the de facto governing authority in the Gaza Strip,<sup>[43]</sup> while Fatah holds the presidency of the [Palestinian National Authority](#).

Islamic Jihad has involved other Palestinians in the activities, running summer camps where children were taught how to hold a Qassam rocket launcher.<sup>[44]</sup> One Islamic Jihad rocket maker, [Awad al-Qiq](#), was a science teacher and headmaster at a United Nations school. Christopher Gunness, a UNRWA spokesman,

said the UN had "zero-tolerance policy towards politics and militant activities in our schools", but that they "cannot police people's minds."<sup>[45]</sup>

A 2007 report by [Human Rights Watch](#) found "little evidence that Palestinian security forces were making efforts to prevent rocket attacks or to hold responsible the militants who launch them." In some cases, "Palestinian security officials themselves acknowledged they were not acting to stop the attacks."<sup>[46]</sup>

The Israeli [Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center](#) estimated that in 2007<sup>[47]</sup> the proportions of rockets fired from the Gaza Strip were:

- 34% – [Palestinian Islamic Jihad \(Al Quds\)](#)
- 22% –  [Hamas \(Qassam\)](#)
- 8% – [Fatah \(Kafah\)](#)
- 6% – [Popular Resistance Committees \(al Nasser\)](#)
- 30% – unknown

## Statistics

Precisely counting the number of rockets fired is impossible, and differing estimates have been given. The injury figures and attack counts below are attributed to the [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#).<sup>[192]</sup> Prior to 4 September 2005, the majority of attacks were against Israeli targets within the Gaza Strip.<sup>[192]</sup>

**Annual number of attacks and casualties**<sup>[182][193][194][195][196]</sup>

Year	Dead	Injured	Rocket attacks	Mortar attacks	Total attacks	Total attacks % change
2001	0		4		4+	
2002	0		35		35+	▲ 775%
2003	0		155		155+	▲ 343%
2004	4		281		281+	▲ 81%
2005	2		401	854	1,255	▲ 346%
2006	2	371	1,722	55	1,777	▲ 42%
2007	2	578	1,276	1,531	2,807	▲ 58%

**Annual number of attacks and casualties**<sup>[182][193][194][195][196]</sup>

Year	Dead	Injured	Rocket attacks	Mortar attacks	Total attacks	Total attacks % change
<b>2008</b>	8	611	2,048	1,668	3,716	▲ 32%
Israeli and Egyptian <a href="#">blockade of Gaza</a> after <a href="#">Operation Cast Lead</a> to stop missile fire into Israel <sup>[197]</sup> and arms import into Gaza. <sup>[198][199]</sup>						
<b>2009</b>	0	11	569	289	858	▼ 77%
<b>2010</b>	1	35	150	215	365	▼ 57%
<b>2011</b>	2	81	419	261	680 <sup>[200]</sup>	▲ 86%
<b>2012</b>	6 <sup>[180][201]</sup>	284+	2,256 <sup>[202]</sup>	17	2,273+ <sup>[203][204]</sup>	▲ 234%
<b>2013</b>	0		32	12	44	▼ 98%
<b>2014</b>	6	80	2,800	1,700	4,500 <sup>[205]</sup>	▲ 9000%
<b>2015*</b>	0	0	3 <sup>[206]</sup>	0	0	▼ 9000%
<b>Total*</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1971+</b>	<b>12,338</b>	<b>6,500</b>	<b>18,928</b>	

## 19,000 ROCKETS LAUNCHED AT ISRAEL SINCE HAMAS'S OCTOBER 7 ATROCITIES

[FDD](#) June 11, 2024 | Flash Brief

Listen to analysis 3 min

### LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Hamas and other terrorist groups have launched more than 19,000 unguided rockets at Israel since the October 7 massacre in southern Israel, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) [said](#) on June 10. “The projectiles were mostly fired from the Gaza Strip, although the portion of rocket attacks from Lebanon has been steadily growing in recent months. Thousands of those rockets have been intercepted by air defense,” *The Times of Israel* [reported](#). The IDF data includes only projectiles that crossed into Israeli territory. On October 21, two weeks after Hamas launched its attack, the IDF [noted](#) that one in five Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad rockets are misfired, landing within Gaza. Hamas has also [admitted](#) that some of its rockets misfire.

The new data illustrates that rocket fire continues to terrorize Israel. In April, the IDF [said](#) that approximately 9,100 rockets crossed into Israel from Gaza and that approximately 3,100 rockets had crossed into Israel from Lebanon.

### EXPERT ANALYSIS

“Hamas began its war on Israel with an unprecedented barrage of thousands of rockets. Israel has been able to successfully intercept rockets and reduce the Hamas threat over eight months of war. However, the threat has now shifted, as Hezbollah is increasing its attacks using drones. This illustrates how Israel is forced to contend with a rapidly changing battlefield as it counters Iranian-backed terrorist threats.” — [Seth J. Frantzman](#), *FDD Adjunct Fellow*

“With the guidance of Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah have been able to develop significant arms manufacturing capabilities over the years. This effort has culminated in the current conflict, where their ability to produce and deploy weapons has made a tangible impact. The most striking example of this is the array of rockets and drones deployed by Hezbollah and Hamas against Israel.” — [Joe Truzman](#), *Senior Research Analyst at FDD's Long War Journal*

### IDF PREPARES TO DEFEND AGAINST 'SWARMS' OF HEZBOLLAH DRONES

The IDF is preparing to defend against “swarms” of Hezbollah drones, according to a new [report](#) from Israel's *Ynet News*. “The recent demonstration of Hezbollah's capabilities, which have intensified in recent weeks, still represents only a small fraction of the Iran-backed terror group's aerial arsenal which the IDF believes to include an array of precision munitions supplied mainly by Iran over the past decade, or weapons that have undergone upgrade and modifications based on lessons learned in the conflict,” *Ynet* noted. The IDF also [said](#) on June 10 that Israeli air defenses have intercepted more than 150 drones throughout the Gaza war and corresponding fighting along the Israel-Lebanon border. Hezbollah has been intensifying its drone attacks on Israel.

## ISRAEL STRIKES ROCKET LAUNCHING POST IN GAZA USED BY HAMAS TO ATTACK TEL AVIV

[FDD](#) August 14 2024

**Listen to analysis 3min**

### LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Israeli Air Force jets struck more than 40 targets in Gaza on August 14, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said. Among the sites hit was a rocket-launching position located in a humanitarian [corridor](#) that was used by Hamas terrorists to [fire](#) two rockets at Tel Aviv on August 13, one of which landed in the Mediterranean Sea, with the second failing to even leave Gaza. A Hamas statement on its Telegram channel attributed to its spokesman Abu Obeidah claimed that the terrorist group had attempted to “bombard Tel Aviv and its suburbs with two M90 missiles [long-range rockets with a 90-km range] in response to the Zionist massacres against civilians and the deliberate displacement of our people.”

IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said in a [post](#) on social media that “Hamas terrorists continue to terrorize Israelis and endanger the Gazans around them.” A separate IDF statement [noted](#) that the “Hamas terrorist organization continues to deliberately embed its military assets used to carry out attacks against Israel next to humanitarian infrastructure and the civilian population inside the Gaza Strip.”

Hamas [launched](#) rockets from a humanitarian [corridor](#) toward central Israel, the IDF [said](#) on August 14. “Hamas terrorists continue to terrorize Israelis and endanger the Gazans around them,” IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said in a [post](#) on social media. He also posted footage of Hamas launching the two rockets aimed at Tel Aviv. “The Hamas terrorist organization continues to deliberately embed its military assets used to carry out attacks against Israel next to humanitarian infrastructure and the civilian population inside the Gaza Strip,” the IDF [added](#).

### EXPERT ANALYSIS

“The brazen attempt to target Tel Aviv with rockets by firing them from a humanitarian route in Gaza illustrates how Hamas continues to use every civilian area in Gaza for terrorist purposes. Hamas knows that the humanitarian routes and areas in Gaza are key areas for providing support to civilians, and it is now trying to hide in these areas to use them for protection.” — [Seth J. Frantzman](#), *FDD Adjunct Fellow*

“Hamas and other terrorist groups feel compelled to demonstrate they are actively fighting Israel despite intense IDF pressure. One of the most visible ways to convey this is by launching rockets at communities and cities in Israel. If Hamas and its allies are unable to carry out such attacks, it would serve as a significant indication that Israel has severely compromised their capacity for warfare.” — [Joe Truzman](#), *Senior*

*Research Analyst at FDD's Long War Journal*

## **ISRAEL ENCOURAGES CIVILIANS TO EVACUATE AREAS NEAR KHAN YOUNIS**

In the wake of continued terrorist threats from areas near Khan Younis, the IDF [encouraged](#) civilians to evacuate several areas near the southern Gazan city. IDF Arabic Spokesperson Lt. Col. Avichay Adraee posted a [map](#) of an area in the Bani Suheila neighborhood that has been used by terrorists as he called on civilians to move west toward a humanitarian zone. In addition, the IDF continued to carry out precision strikes against terrorists in Gaza, which came as Hamas [told](#) pro-Iranian media outlets in the Arab world that it would not [participate](#) in ceasefire talks with Israel scheduled for August 15.

### **RELATED ANALYSIS**

["Israel Issues Warning Over Iran, Hamas Destabilization of Jordan and West Bank,"](#) FDD Flash Brief

[" Hamas Terrorist Released Through Ceasefire Deal Strikes Again in West Bank,"](#) FDD Flash Brief

[" Hamas Shuns New Talks on Gaza Ceasefire,"](#) FDD Flash Brief

## HAMAS' USE OF HUMAN SHIELDS IN GAZA

ISRAEL:PALESTINE PP148-169 2008-2014 THEMATIC AREA: LAWFARE

[hamas human shields.pdf](#)

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hamas, an Islamist militant group and the de facto governing authority of the Gaza Strip, has been using human shields in conflicts with Israel since 2007. According to the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the war crime of using human shields encompasses “utilizing the presence of a civilian or other protected person to render certain points, areas, or military forces immune from military operations.” Hamas has launched rockets, positioned military-related infrastructure-hubs and routes, and engaged the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) from, or in proximity to, residential and commercial areas.

The strategic logic of human shields has two components. It is based on an awareness of Israel’s desire to minimise collateral damage, and of Western public opinion’s sensitivity towards civilian casualties. If the IDF uses lethal force and causes an increase in civilian casualties, Hamas can utilise that as a lawfare tool: it can accuse Israel of committing war crimes, which could result in the imposition of a wide array of sanctions. Alternatively, if the IDF limits its use of military force in Gaza to avoid collateral damage, Hamas will be less susceptible to Israeli attacks, and thereby able to protect its assets while continuing to fight. Moreover, despite the Israeli public’s high level of support for the Israeli political and military leadership during operations, civilian casualties are one of the friction points between Israeli left-wing and right-wing supporters, with the former questioning the outcomes of the operation.

### KEY POINTS

- v The use of **human shields** can be considered an **example of ‘lawfare’** – i.e. the use of the legal system against an enemy by damaging or delegitimising them, tying up their time or winning a public relations victory.
- v Even if a targeted strike may be justifiable from a legal perspective, **first impressions frame the narrative**. Public opinion tends to be influenced more by images depicting the suffering of innocent civilians than by well-thought-out legal arguments.
- v National governments should be able to publicly justify their position, and reveal their adversary’s use of civilians in combat. This can only be accomplished by thoroughly documenting incidents, preparing supportive messages, and working across multiple channels to convey those narratives.



v Priority should be given to information activities **aimed at the very civilians who are used as human shields**, in order to undermine the adversary and convince civilians to actively or passively refuse to serve as human shields. Such activities need to be coherent, consistent and coordinated.

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43 For example: In December 2009, an arrest warrant was issued for the then leader of the opposition Tzipi Livni under charges of war crimes allegedly committed during the 2008-09 Gaza War, when Livni was Foreign Minister. These incidents strained relations between Israel and the United Kingdom, and Israel urged the UK to rethink its policies to prevent a further breakdown. Roni Sofer, "Israel: If UK Doesn't Act, Relations Will Suffer," Ynet, 15 December 2009

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### SUMMARY

Hamas is an Islamist militant group based in the Gaza Strip, which has been designated by the US, the EU and other countries as a terrorist group. Hamas has been using human shields in conflicts with Israel since 2007. Although the definition of human shields is not consistent among states and inter-governmental organisations, the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) states the war crime of using human shields encompasses "utilizing the presence of a civilian or other protected person to render certain points, areas, or military forces immune from military operations.

"1 Hamas relies on the Israeli government's aim to minimise collateral damage, and is also aware of the West's sensitivity towards civilian casualties. Hamas' use of human shields is therefore likely aimed at minimising their own vulnerabilities by limiting the Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) freedom of action. It is also aimed at gaining diplomatic and public opinion-related leverage, by presenting Israel and the IDF as an aggressor that indiscriminately strikes civilians.

Hamas' most common uses of human shields include:

- Firing rockets, artillery, and mortars from or in proximity to heavily populated civilian areas, often from or near facilities which should be protected according to the Geneva Convention (e.g. schools, hospitals, or mosques).
- Locating military or security-related infrastructures such as HQs, bases, armouries, access routes, lathes,<sup>3</sup> or defensive positions within or in proximity to civilian areas.
- Protecting terrorists' houses and military facilities, or rescuing terrorists who were besieged or warned by the IDF.
- Combating the IDF from or in proximity to residential and commercial areas, including using civilians for intelligence gathering missions.

By engaging in these acts, Hamas employs a win-win scenario: if indeed the IDF uses kinetic power, and the number of civilian casualties surges, Hamas can use that as a weapon in the lawfare<sup>5</sup> it conducts. It would be able to accuse the IDF (and Israel) of committing war crimes, which in turn could result in the imposition of a wide

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1 Douglas Fischer, "Human Shields, Homicides, and House Fires: How a Domestic Law Analogy Can Guide International Law Regarding Human Shield Tactics in Armed Conflict," *American University Law Review* 57, no. 2 (December 2007): 488. <http://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1029&context=aulr>

2 This modus operandi is inspired by Hezbollah's use of human shields in Lebanon. See: No

Author, "Deadly Hezbollah Chess Match," *The Washington Times*, 26 October 2006.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2006/oct/25/20061025-092622-2090r/>

3 Lathes are used to produce weapons and ammunition, especially rockets and mortar shells.

4 The IDF often uses telephone calls and leaflets to tell occupants to leave before striking. In some cases, the Israelis fire missiles without explosive warheads onto the roof to get Palestinians who had gathered there to leave. The Israelis call it "the knock on the roof." Steven Erlanger and Fares Akram, "Israel Warns Gaza Targets by Phone and Leaflet," *The New York Times*, 8 July 2014. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/09/world/middleeast/by-phone-and-leaflet-israeli-attackers-warn-gazans.html?mcubz=1>

5 Lawfare refers to the use of the legal system against an enemy, such as by damaging or delegitimising them, tying up their time or winning a public relations victory (From: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/jil/vol43/iss1/>). Originally defined by Dunlap as 'a method of warfare where [international] law is used as a means of realizing a military objective', or 'as a weapon of war' (From: <http://people.duke.edu/~pfeaver.dunlap.pdf>). The term is more broadly understood as the exploitation of real, perceived or even manipulated instances of international law violations in order to undermine the target nation and their values.

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array of sanctions. On the other hand, if the IDF limits its use of military power in Gaza to avoid collateral damage, Hamas will be less vulnerable to Israeli attacks, and thereby able to protect its assets while continuing to fight. Hamas' growing strategic distress in the face of recent geopolitical developments will probably push the organisation towards a more pragmatic strategy in the near future. However, the movement is simultaneously preparing itself for yet another round of armed conflict with Israel. If this indeed happens, and in light of the success of the human shield practice,

there is every reason to believe Hamas will continue resorting to the use of civilians as human shields.

**[GO TO LINK FOR REMAINDER OF ARTICLE](#)**

Hamas' use of human shields in Gaza

## USE OF HUMAN SHIELDS BY HAMAS

### 2023 Israel - Hamas War Israeli Accusations

#### WIKIPEDIA

During the [2023 Israel–Hamas war](#), Israel stated that Hamas has strategically placed portions of its military tunnel system and command network [beneath civilian infrastructure](#), including Gaza's [al-Shifa Hospital](#). Israel released what it said were [videos of interrogations of two alleged members of Hamas' armed wing](#) in which the people on camera supported the assertion that Hamas militants are using hospitals as a means of protection from IDF strikes.<sup>[31]</sup> [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#) and [Physicians for Human Rights Israel](#) have denounced such taped alleged confessions, stating that they were likely extracted under torture, violate international law and basic human rights, and should be considered inadmissible as credible evidence.<sup>[54][55]</sup> They also called on the Israeli government to cease publishing taped "confessions".<sup>[54]</sup> The Israeli army accused Hamas of sending over one hundred women and children to a compound it was targeting to act as human shields. It said two of its soldiers were killed while withdrawing from the compound.<sup>[56]</sup>

On 8 November, the IDF and Shin Bet footage from what it said was an intercepted phone call and the interrogations of terrorists who participated in the October 7 massacre. The *Times of Israel* reported that "an apparent Hamas operative" said to another man in Gaza that he "can leave with any ambulance" he wants.<sup>[57]</sup>

Israel accused Hamas of "double war crimes" in using civilian locations to launch attacks. An IDF spokesman told CBS News that "a systemic abuse by Hamas of sites and locations that are supposed to enjoy special protection under the Geneva Convention and humanitarian law". The IDF shared with CBS photos it said showed Hamas members launching rockets from near UN facilities.<sup>[58][59]</sup>

On 18 November CNN aired footage taken by the IDF showing what appears to be a person armed with an [RPG](#) launcher entering the premises of [Al-Quds Hospital](#).<sup>[60]</sup>

On 19 November the IDF released footage of an underground tunnel under al-Shifa.<sup>[61]</sup> The tunnel, which is 160 meter long and 10 meter deep, passes directly under the Qatari building of the hospital; it has air-conditioned rooms, bathrooms, a kitchenette, electricity connections and communication infrastructure, and is protected by a [blast door](#).<sup>[62]</sup> The IDF also released [CCTV](#) footage that appears to show two of the hostages being led in the hospital's corridors, as well as Hamas and stolen IDF vehicles in its courtyard.<sup>[63][64]</sup>

According to Israel, Ahmad Kahlot, who they reported to be the director of [Kamal Adwan Hospital](#) in northern Gaza, while being interrogated by the [Shin Bet](#) said that Hamas had taken control of the hospital as a military operations center and that he himself was Hamas member. Israel said that during the interrogation he said that many hospital staff members served in the [al-Qassam brigades](#).<sup>[65][66]</sup> According to the Israeli military, he said that Hamas used the hospital for holding an IDF soldier hostage and employed ambulances to transport the bodies of Israeli hostage and that Hamas had separate offices, ambulances, and equipment with distinct colors and signs.<sup>[65][66]</sup>

On 1 January 2024, the Jerusalem Post released selected footage of the IDF's Unit 504 interrogations of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants. The investigation alleged various tactics Hamas employed to exploit Gazan civilians.<sup>[67]</sup> Zohadi Ali Zahadi Shahin, an alleged Hamas member, said Hamas prevented civilians from fleeing towards Rafah crossing and instead relocated them to Al-Shifa Hospital where they were kept while Hamas terrorists hid in tunnels underneath. Shahin also said Hamas terrorists would forcibly take over civilian homes, plant explosives, and intimidate residents, with one militant threatening Shahin directly. Another alleged operative, Muhammad Darwish Amara from Palestinian Islamic Jihad, said Hamas planted a bomb in his home where his children were staying to coerce him into participating in terrorist activities.<sup>[67]</sup>

These interrogations and use of selected video footage of alleged confessions by alleged Hamas militants have been widely criticized by human rights organizations as they likely involve the use of torture, do not give due process to detainees, and are selectively edited for release.<sup>[54][55][68]</sup>

Input from other parties

[White House National Security Council](#) spokesperson [John Kirby](#) said that the United States has intelligence indicating that Hamas is using the Shifa Hospital in Gaza City for military purposes, possibly for weapon storage and also for holding captives.<sup>[69][70]</sup> [National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan](#) stated that "you can see even from [open-source reporting](#) that Hamas does use hospitals, along with a lot of other civilian facilities, for command-and-control, for storing weapons, for housing its fighters... this is Hamas' track record, both historically and in this conflict". According to another US official, "Hamas has a command node under the Al-Shifa hospital, uses fuel intended for it and its fighters regularly cluster in and around [it]."<sup>[71]</sup> The US assessment that Hamas and other Palestinian militants were operating within the Al-Shifa hospital included communication intercepts of fighters inside the complex.<sup>[72]</sup>

A top Hamas official stated in October 2023 that they are not responsible for the protection of civilians in Gaza, and that instead the UN and in particular Israel are responsible for this under international law given that it is the occupying power over the [Occupied Palestinian Territories](#), which includes Gaza.<sup>[73]</sup>

The October 2023 report by the UN Human Rights Council's [Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese](#), said that Israel, "despite its obligations as an Occupying Power, deprives Palestinians and their children of their basic human rights as part of its efforts to impede the development of Palestinian society and to permanently frustrate the Palestinians' right to self-determination".<sup>[74]</sup> A July 2024 landmark opinion by the UN's top court, the [International Court of Justice](#), also reaffirmed this, stating that Israel should dismantle settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, and end its "illegal" occupation of those areas and the Gaza Strip as soon as possible.<sup>[75]</sup> [Human Rights Watch](#) called on both Israel and Hamas to protect civilians under their control and not use them as "human shields."<sup>[14]</sup>

Human rights organizations demanded the release of hostages held by Hamas and cautioned that using them to shield military assets is prohibited under international law.<sup>[76][77]</sup>

## HAMAS OFFICIALS ADMIT ITS STRATEGY IS TO USE PALESTINIAN CIVILIANS AS HUMAN SHIELDS

[FDD](#) Natalie Ecanow Nov 1 2023

An interviewer recently posed a logical question to Mousa Abu Marzouk, a senior member of the Hamas politburo: “Since you have built 500 kilometers of tunnels, why haven’t you built bomb shelters where civilians can hide during bombardments?”

Abu Marzouk said the tunnels are “meant to protect us” from Israeli aircraft and facilitate attacks on Israeli targets.

“Us” meaning Hamas. Not civilians.

Hamas chooses not to build bomb shelters in Gaza because that would undercut its ability to [use the population as human shields](#).

By putting civilians in or above its military positions, Hamas knows it cannot lose.

Either it will prevent Israel from attacking, since the Israeli military tries to minimize harm to civilians, or if Israel does attack, the use of human shields will ensure high civilian casualties.

Hamas can then hold the death toll against Israel while generating sympathy for itself.

[Hamis uses its hundreds of miles of tunnels](#) for military purposes: to transport weapons and ammunition, store supplies and train its members without exposing them to enemy surveillance and fire.

Equally important, the tunnels are a convenient way for Hamas to hide its military assets underneath civilian infrastructure. That is a textbook use of human shields, which international law prohibits.

Reliant on civilians to protect it from Israeli counterattacks, Hamas cannot afford to let Gaza’s civilian population seek refuge from clashes with the Israel Defense Forces.

Accordingly, Hamas leadership ordered civilians in northern Gaza to defy the IDF’s advice to “evacuate south for your own safety” in advance of Israel’s ground invasion.

Eyad al-Bozom, a spokesman for Hamas’ interior ministry, encouraged Gaza’s residents to “stay put in your homes and your places.”

To its credit, the Biden administration has called out Hamas for employing a strategy whose essence is the commission of war crimes against the same people Hamas supposedly represents.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby explained on CNN, “Hamas actually gave a counterorder telling Palestinians in Gaza to stay at home. Why? Because having human shields, they think, protects them.”

Hamas’ use of human shields is not new. Hamas has come close to confessing its exploitation of civilians before.

During an organized 2016 uprising at the Gaza border, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar admitted the group “decided to turn that which is most dear to us — the bodies of our women and children — into a dam blocking the collapse in Arab reality.”

After acknowledging Hamas builds tunnels to protect fighters but not civilians, Abu Marzouk ventured that it is the job of the United Nations, not Hamas, to protect civilians.

It might have been hard to say that with a straight face, since Hamas also has a long record of turning UN facilities into part of its wall of human shields.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), whose mission is to provide relief for Palestinians, has repeatedly found stores of Hamas rockets hidden in tunnels beneath its schools.

In 2018, Congress passed the Sanctioning the Use of Civilians as Defenseless Shields Act, which has lain dormant since becoming law.

The Shields Act, which specifically calls out Hamas, requires the president to impose sanctions on individuals determined to be using human shields, but neither Biden nor his predecessor designated any Hamas leaders. Now would be a good time to start.

Doing so is unlikely to change Hamas' behavior, but it would send an important message both to Americans and leaders in other democratic nations.

**It is not Israel but Hamas that bears moral responsibility for the [death of civilians in this war](#).**

**Hamas seeks to win by generating enough pressure on Israel from its allies to [force an end to Israel's military operations](#).** Washington should make clear it will never fall for this ruse; nor should anyone else.

*Natalie Ecanow is a research analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.*

**PART K-4**

**HAMAS - ISRAEL WARFARE**



# GAZA WAR

## 2008-9 Gaza War,

### [WIKIPEDIA](#)

The **Gaza War**, also known as **Operation Cast Lead** (Hebrew: מבצע עופרת יצוקה),<sup>[39]</sup> also known as the **Gaza Massacre** (Arabic: مجزرة غزة),<sup>[40][41][42]</sup> and referred to as the **Battle of al-Furqan** (معركة الفرقان) by Hamas,<sup>[43][44]</sup> was a three-week armed conflict between [Gaza Strip](#) Palestinian paramilitary groups and the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) that [began](#) on 27 December 2008 and ended on 18 January 2009 with a unilateral ceasefire. The conflict resulted in 1,166–1,417 Palestinian and 13 Israeli deaths (including 4 from [friendly fire](#)).<sup>[45]</sup>

## 2012 Israeli Operation in the Gaza Strip

### [WIKIPEDIA](#)

In November 2012, the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) launched **Operation Pillar of Defense** (Hebrew: עמוד הן, *Amúd 'Anán*, literally: "[Pillar of Cloud](#)")<sup>[23]</sup> which was an eight-day campaign in the [Hamas-governed Gaza Strip](#), which began on 14 November 2012 with the killing of [Ahmed Jabari](#), chief of the Gaza military wing of [Hamas](#) by an Israeli airstrike.<sup>[24][25][26][27]</sup>

## 2014 Gaza War

### [WIKIPEDIA](#)

The **2014 Gaza War**, also known as **Operation Protective Edge** (Hebrew: מבצע צוק איתן, *romanized*: *Miv'tza Tzuk Eitan*, lit. 'Operation Strong Cliff'),<sup>[note 3][26][27][28]</sup> and **Battle of the Withered Grain** (Arabic: معركة العصف المانكول, *romanized*: *M'a-rakkat Al-'asf Al-Ma'kool*)<sup>[29] [30]</sup> was a military operation launched by [Israel](#) on 8 July 2014 in the [Gaza Strip](#), a [Palestinian territory](#) that has been [governed by Hamas since 2007](#).<sup>[note 4]</sup> Following the [kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers](#) in the [West Bank](#) by [Hamas-affiliated Palestinian](#) militants, the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) initiated *Operation Brother's Keeper*, in which some 350 Palestinians, including nearly all of the active Hamas militants in the West Bank, were arrested.<sup>[31][32][33]</sup> Hamas [subsequently fired a greater number of rockets into Israel](#) from the Gaza Strip, triggering a seven-week-long conflict between the two sides. It was one of the deadliest outbreaks of [open conflict between Israel and the Palestinians](#) in decades. The combination of [Palestinian rocket attacks](#) and [Israeli airstrikes](#) resulted in over two thousand deaths, the vast majority of which were Gazan Palestinians.<sup>[34]</sup>

## 2021 Israel–Palestine Crisis

### [WIKIPEDIA](#)

A major outbreak of violence in the ongoing [Israeli–Palestinian conflict](#) commenced on 10 May 2021, though disturbances took place earlier, and continued until a ceasefire came into effect on 21 May. It was marked by protests and police riot control, [rocket attacks on Israel](#) by [Hamas](#) and [Palestinian Islamic Jihad](#) (PIJ), and Israeli airstrikes in the [Gaza Strip](#). The crisis was triggered<sup>[34]</sup> on 6 May, when [Palestinians](#) in [East Jerusalem](#) began protesting over an anticipated decision of the [Supreme Court of Israel](#) on the [eviction of six Palestinian](#)

[families](#) in the [East Jerusalem](#) neighborhood of [Sheikh Jarrah](#).<sup>[35]</sup> Under international law, the area, [effectively annexed by Israel in 1980](#), is a part of the [Israeli-occupied West Bank](#);<sup>[36][37]</sup> On 7 May, according to Israel's [Channel 12](#), [Palestinians threw stones](#) at [Israeli police forces](#),<sup>[38]</sup> who then stormed the [Al-Aqsa Mosque compound](#)<sup>[39]</sup> using tear gas, rubber bullets, and stun grenades.<sup>[40][39][41]</sup> The crisis prompted [protests around](#)<sup>[35]</sup> Under international law, the area, [effectively annexed by Israel in 1980](#), is a part of the [Israeli-occupied West Bank](#);<sup>[36][37]</sup> On 7 May, according to Israel's [Channel 12](#), [Palestinians threw stones](#) at [Israeli police forces](#),<sup>[38]</sup> who then stormed the [Al-Aqsa Mosque compound](#)<sup>[39]</sup> using tear gas, rubber bullets, and stun grenades.<sup>[40]</sup> [d the world](#) as well as [official reactions from world leaders](#).

## THE ASSERSON REPORT

### THE LAWYER SUING THE BBC FOR ANTI-ISRAEL BIAS (AND IT'S DAMNING)

[J-TV: Jewish Ideas](#). 5 November 2024 41Min 36Sec

Ollie talks to lawyer Trevor Asserson.

Executive Summary of Report - <https://asserson.co.uk/wp-content/upl...>

Full Report - <https://asserson.co.uk/wp-content/upl...>

[Show transcript](#)

#### [JA HOSTS CRUCIAL EVENT ON BBC'S COVERAGE OF ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR](#)

- [September 19, 2024](#)

The National Jewish Assembly (NJA) is pleased to announce the success of its Zoom event “Spotlight on the BBC”, held on Tuesday, 17th September 2024. The event featured prominent litigation solicitor Trevor Asserson in conversation with solicitor and activist Robert Festenstein. The discussion centred on Asserson’s recent report which revealed that the BBC breached its guidelines 1,500 times in its coverage of the Israel-Hamas war.

Asserson, recognised as one of the UK’s leading litigation solicitors and head of the largest international law firm in Israel, highlighted the systematic failings of the BBC’s complaint system and its entrenched institutional bias. He stated, “The complaints system simply doesn’t work... so many people have given up.”

The report, which exposed 1,500 instances of bias, is described by Asserson as a “very significant underestimate,” demonstrating not just individual journalistic errors but an institutional lack of accountability. “The worst problem of all is the combination of institutional bias and lack of management control,” Asserson emphasised during the event. He further detailed how BBC journalists, such as Jeremy Bowen, believe that impartiality means “giving the truth,” as they see it, rather than offering balanced coverage.

The conversation also touched on the broader implications of the BBC’s failings, with Festenstein asking, “What do we do now?” Asserson responded that while the complaints system is frustrating, he encouraged continued efforts, urging attendees to support the possibility of bringing a judicial review.

The NJA thanks all those who participated in this critical event. As misinformation continues to shape public opinion, particularly in the context of Israel, the NJA remains committed to holding media outlets to account for balanced and fair reporting.

To watch the recording of our event, please click here: <https://youtu.be/ZE47wHaCkeQ>

## **THE ASSERSON REPORT: BROKEN GUIDELINES AND HOW TO FIX THEM**

**Trevor Asserson: *an Interview with Dr Haran Shani-Narkiss and Carly Maisel***

Read the report here: [www.asserson.co.uk/assersonreport](http://www.asserson.co.uk/assersonreport)

[LOCKDOWN UNIVERSITY 6 November 2024](#)

Trevor Asserson



Trevor Asserson has for more than 30 years been recognised by directories as one of the UK's leading litigation solicitors. He is the founding partner of Asserson, a pioneering firm that brings British legal excellence to the heart of Tel Aviv. Before launching Asserson, Trevor worked at Herbert Smith Freehills, Europe's premier litigation firm, and later was Global Head of International Litigation at Bird & Bird, one of Europe's largest law firms.

Trevor's career is marked by numerous high-profile successes, acting for and against sovereign states – including the UK Government – multi-national corporations and High Net Worth individuals. Trevor's cases have been widely covered in broadcast and print journalism, on TV, Radio, and national papers including in the UK, Israel, the US and beyond.

### **TREVOR ASSERSON AND THE BBC**

Early in his career Trevor acted for two UK political parties in a claim of bias against the BBC. In 2002 he founded BBCwatch, a platform scrutinising BBC's Middle East coverage, and published a number of independent reports exposing BBC bias in the Middle East. Trevor was selected by the Thomas Committee, a BBC appointed independent panel, as one of two leading UK experts on BBC Middle East reporting. His article, "What Went Wrong at the BBC: A Public Monopoly Abusing Its Charter Through Bias Against Israel," published by JCPA, remains a critical analysis of media accountability.

On 9 September 2024 Trevor launched his c200 Page Report titled 'The Israel-Hamas War and the BBC' which includes an in-depth analysis of some 9 million words of BBC output in both English and Arabic. The Report combined traditional forensic analysis with analysis by a team of

data scientists. This innovative combination of skills has enabled the Report to analyse BBC output in novel and revealing ways.

The Asserson Report constituted an in-depth analysis and revealed institutionalised bias in BBC news reporting. The Report was widely reported and was the basis of a petition in the House of Lords for an inquiry into BBC reporting.

### **TREVOR AS THOUGHT LEADER**

Trevor is a thought leader whose articles on judicial reasonableness, the role of unelected judges, and Judicial Independence – all relevant to the recent contentious judicial reforms in Israel - have been featured in various publications including Globes, The Jerusalem Post, and The Jewish Telegraph.

### **Dr Haran Shani-Narkiss**



Dr. Haran Shani-Narkiss is an interdisciplinary researcher with expertise in the fields of Computational Neuroscience, Human Behaviour and AI Models. Haran founded and led RIMe (Research for Impartial Media), where he has brought together a team of data scientists, analysts and experts of the Arabic language/culture who have contributed extensively to the Report.

## **BBC RESPONSE TO ASSERSON REPORT**

**BBC** 28 October 2024

Summary of complaint

**The Asserson report complained that the BBC had “materially breached its obligations for due impartiality and accuracy under the BBC Editorial Guidelines 2019 in its coverage of the Israel-Hamas war.”**

### **OUR RESPONSE**

We have read the Asserson report in its entirety and have responded to its authors in detail. Having carefully examined the report, we do not think that its methodology leads to reliable conclusions. We do not accept that impartiality can be assessed using ‘sympathy’; nor by quantifying daily coverage of events or counting words. We believe the use of AI to measure impartiality in this way is unreliable and unproven. The methods used in the report fail to take account of basic journalistic principles and practice, and often rely on selective interpretations and incomplete evidence.

In conclusion, we do not see any new evidence to suggest we have breached our obligations for due impartiality and accuracy during our coverage of this highly complex, challenging and polarising conflict.

## **BBC BREACHES ITS OWN EDITORIAL GUIDELINES 1,500 TIMES OVER THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR**

**EUROPEAN JEWISH CONGRESS** September 9 2024

The BBC has breached its editorial guidelines for news coverage more than 1,500 times since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war, according to The Telegraph's Saturday report based on research led by British lawyer Trevor Asserson.

The research analyzed four months of the BBC's output across television, radio, online news, podcasts, and social media. Additionally, a team of around 20 lawyers and 20 data scientists contributed to the research and analyzed nine million words of BBC output using artificial intelligence (AI), The Telegraph added.

The research found that there was a "deeply worrying pattern of bias against Israel" and that Israel was associated with genocide 14 times more than the Hamas terror group was throughout the analyzed BBC coverage.

The total number of BBC editorial breaches, including impartiality, accuracy, editorial values, and public interest, was 1,553.

Further findings from the research included the BBC's repeated downplaying of Hamas terrorism.

Conversely, Israel was presented as a "militaristic and aggressive nation" by the BBC, the report said.

The report also added that there were BBC journalists who have shown sympathy for Hamas, with some celebrating its acts of terror in the past.

## **THE ASSERSON REPORT ON THE BBC - DISCUSSION ON REVELATION TV'S "BEHIND THE HEADLINES" (YOUTUBE)**

[UKLFI Charitable Trust](#) 14 Sept 2024

Revelation TV discusses the Asserson Report on the BBC, including interview of Jonathan Turner, UKLFI Chief Executive,



## ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR 2023-

[Brittanica](#)



**Israel-Hamas War**, war between [Israel](#) and Palestinian militants, especially [Hamas](#) and the [Palestinian Islamic Jihad](#) (PIJ), that began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a land, sea, and air assault on Israel from the [Gaza Strip](#). The October 7 attack resulted in more than 1,200 deaths, primarily Israeli citizens, making it the deadliest day for Israel since its independence.

More than 240 people were taken [hostage](#) during the attack. The next day, Israel declared itself in a state of war for the first time since the [Yom Kippur War](#) in 1973. The war began with the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) conducting air strikes on the Gaza Strip, followed weeks later by the incursion of ground troops and armored vehicles. By early 2024 tens of thousands of Gazans had been killed and over half of the buildings in the Gaza Strip had been destroyed or damaged.

# Oct. 7 2023 HAMAS MASSACRE:

Documentation of Crimes Against Humanity

On the morning of October 7, 2023, Hamas invaded Israel from Gaza in a massive surprise terrorist attack against civilians by air, land and sea.

 Gallery



More than 1000 innocent civilians massacred



Raped and slaughtered in their own homes



Over 200 people kidnapped into Gaza

Hamas' terrorists recorded their barbaric atrocities on body cameras and cell phones to proudly display their crimes and gloat about them. Many of these cameras were recovered from neutralized terrorists. Now the whole world can see Hamas' unfathomable savagery.

[saturday-october-seven.com](http://saturday-october-seven.com)



Fact Check: AI Fakes in Israel's War Against Hamas  
[DW News](#)

DW is a German Public Service



Israel-Gaza War: Fake News, Misinformation, Disinformation & How to Spot It | Explained  
[ABC News in Depth](#)

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## OCTOBER 7 2013 VIDEOS

### **IDO AHARONI & DAN SHUEFTAN: THE REAL STORY OF OCTOBER 7TH**

[TAUVOD](#) Jun 2024 40min 55sec

Dr. Dan Schueftan is an Israeli academic and chairman of the National Security Studies Center at the University of Haifa. He also serves as a senior lecturer at Haifa University's School of Political Sciences. He was a visiting Professor (2012-2014) at the Department of Government at Georgetown University in Washington DC and a lecturer at the Israel Defense Forces National Defense College. For the last four decades he has been a consultant to Israeli decision makers and to the top echelon of Israel's Prime Minister's Office, Foreign Ministry, Defense Ministry, the IDF and The National Security Council.

[01:09](#) - What is the meaning of 7.10.23? [02:55](#) - Attacks from the public and the media [05:00](#) - Nationalism [06:17](#) - Progressiveness [08:30](#) - Pluralism [11:20](#) - Hamas VS extreme Islam [13:43](#) - Human rights [15:00](#) - United Nations Organization [18:00](#) - Demographics of the State of Israel [24:00](#) - Common threat - Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood [29:00](#) - US policy in the Middle East

### **HAMAS'S OCTOBER 7 ATTACK: A MINUTE-BY-MINUTE BREAKDOWN**

[The Military Show](#) 7 Oct 2024 22min 5sec

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a highly coordinated and devastating attack on Israel, leading to the deaths of over 1,200 people, making it one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in history. In this video, we provide a minute-by-minute breakdown of the events leading up to and during the attack, revealing how it was carefully planned for nearly three years. From rocket barrages to ground infiltrations, discover how this catastrophic day unfolded in Israel.

### **TEL AVIV AND OCTOBER 7**

[DW Documentary](#) 7 Oct 2024 42min 34sec

The Hamas terror attack of 7 October 2023 has had profound consequences in Israel, Gaza and beyond. This film asks how those in Tel Aviv have reacted to the subsequent war, and what they expect the future will bring.

In the summer of 2023, DW's Kai Steinecke was in Tel Aviv filming a lifestyle series. He met nightclub owners, creatives, restaurateurs, LGBTQ activists and architects, all working in what was a lively, liberal metropolis. Then came October 7th, and everything changed.

In May of 2024, the same people return to speak about their experiences in the wake of the attack, how daily life has changed for them, and what the future may hold for their country.

The result is a moving personal documentary and a portrait of a very different city to the one that was recorded a year ago. The square in front of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art has been renamed "Hostages Square", with empty chairs commemorating the kidnapped. At the once-bustling Carmel Market, many

stalls are now deserted. And cultural center Habima Square, famous for its theatre and orchestra, now has a large illuminated sign stating: "Bring them home".

We accompany several people into their personal spaces as they show us how their individual, day-to-day lives have changed. The documentary lays these contrasts bare by juxtaposing present-day scenes with those filmed before October 7th, back when Tel Aviv was the "capital of cool" — a world-famous party city with the Middle East's largest spaces devoted to queer life and culture. Now, the city and the country are in shock.

One example is fun-loving bureka vendor Kobi Shmuel, who was drafted into the army and had to close his stall at Carmel Market. He was initially deployed in the Gaza Strip, where one of his comrades was killed. Or architect Shiraz Solomon, who showed us last year how she turned an old Templar building into luxury housing. Now the architect is helping others build bunkers for Israelis and accessible apartments for those injured in the war. The Palestinian workers that used to work on her construction sites are no longer allowed to enter the country.

Muhammad Zoabi, a university student and LGBTQ activist from an Arab-Muslim family, is dealing with the fact that a friend and fellow student was kidnapped at the Nova Festival on October 7th and has not been heard from since.

Shani Goldstein had led DW host Kai Steinecke through Tel Aviv in the original 2023 production. But now, because of the October 7th attack, the co-presenter has lost her jobs as a model and radio host. She doesn't understand why Israel is becoming increasingly internationally isolated as an aggressor.

These stories and others provide personal insights into a traumatized society. The film is a contemporary document that, despite deep sadness, also offers hope for a time after the war.

### **OCTOBER 7TH SURVIVOR RECOUNTS HORRORS WITNESSED AT NOVA FESTIVAL BY HAMAS | YAIR PINTO**

[TBN Israel](#) 8 Jun 2024 11min 39sec

Join Yair Pinto as he travels to Re'im forest, the site of the Nova Music Festival where Hamas killed hundreds of festival-goers and took at least forty hostages. Hear from terrorist attack survivor Rafaela Treistman as she recounts witnessing the savage attack and losing her boyfriend, Ranani Nidejelski Glazer. Please join us in praying for the release of the hostages, the truth about the war against Hamas to be told, and for the peace of Jerusalem.

### **LIVE: October 7<sup>th</sup>: One Year Later**

[ABC News](#) 7 Oct 2024 59min 6sec

Monday marks one year since the Israel-Hamas war began, the deadliest war in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. ABC News' Matt Gutman anchors from Tel Aviv. Martha Raddatz, Ian Pannell and Josh Einiger join to discuss the rising tensions in the Middle East.

**DAY 450 - TOI REPORTS FROM SEMI-PERMANENT IDF BASES INSIDE GAZA**

[The Times of Israel](https://www.timesofisrael.com/) 26min 8 sec 29 Dec 2024

Military reporter Emanuel Fabian (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/writers...>) joins host Amanda Borschel-Dan (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/writers...>) on today's show.

Some 240 suspected terror operatives were detained during the operation against Hamas at northern Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital, including the medical center's director and 15 terrorists who participated in the October 7, 2023, onslaught on southern Israel. Fabian sheds light on the operation, which involved the Navy's Shayetet 13 commando unit.

Israeli air defenses on Saturday intercepted two rockets fired from Gaza's Beit Hanoun toward the Jerusalem area, an increasingly rare occurrence after nearly 15 months of war. The IDF said both rockets were successfully intercepted, with no injuries or damage reported. Overnight, Israeli fighter jets struck the launchers used by the Palestinian terrorists. We hear what surprised Fabian about this rocket attack.

Air defenses intercepted a missile fired from Yemen that triggered sirens in the Jerusalem, southern West Bank and Dead Sea areas early Saturday morning, the military said, in the sixth such overnight attack on the center of the country in less than two weeks. Along with Israel's defense array, the Thaad system was used for the second time, after its use early Friday morning. Fabian explains how it complements Israel's air defense systems.

Fabian was deep in the Gaza Strip last week and writes that everything the Israel Defense Forces has established in the Netzarim Corridor is reportedly temporary, "But the reality on the ground in this zone bisecting the Gaza Strip indicates that the IDF will remain here for the foreseeable future." In the second half of the program, we discuss the massive zone and the more than a dozen small military outposts stationed there.

## HAMAS' VIEW OF THE OCTOBER 7 WAR

[SW Institute for the Study of War](#) Brian Carter

[Click here to read the full report.](#)

### Executive Summary

**Military conditions are being set in the Gaza Strip that could lead to the defeat of Hamas, but these conditions will fail to achieve an enduring end to the war without a political solution. The military defeat of Hamas is an essential precondition for the establishment of a new government in Gaza that will be willing and able to make and keep an enduring peace.** Defeat is a temporary military effect, however. Israel must cement Hamas' defeat by setting a clear and obtainable political endstate for this war, and the US and its regional partners must also recognize that a ceasefire in the current conditions will virtually ensure the renewal of Hamas attacks on Israel and future major war in the Gaza Strip.

**Hamas initiated a war on October 7, 2023, that it believes is one step towards destroying the Israeli state.** Hamas does not seek to create an independent Gazan state or an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Hamas sees its political control of the Gaza Strip as one step towards its ultimate goal of controlling all of Israeli territory. Hamas, if it survives this war, will prepare to initiate the next war against the Israeli state. Hamas and its allies in Iran's Axis of Resistance (AoR) are learning new lessons that they will likely incorporate into their operations in future wars aimed at Israel's destruction.

**Hamas' long-term effort to embed itself in Palestinian society and politics makes defeating and replacing it very difficult, but not impossible.** Hamas' combination of social services and outreach with coercive measures have ensured that Hamas retains significant support in Gaza relative to the very limited number of other entities that could replace it, despite the extremely destructive war that Hamas initiated. Hamas' coercive apparatus makes it extremely difficult for possible Hamas alternatives in the Gaza Strip to begin to build their own governance system because to do so while Hamas remains militarily active risks near-certain death. It is not impossible to destroy Hamas' political and military system, but doing so will require Hamas' military defeat and a long transition to a new Palestinian-led government in the Gaza Strip.

**Support from Iran and its regional allies and proxies combined with Hamas' internal development enabled the October 7 attacks.** This combination will likely drive future Hamas attacks on Israel. Several key Hamas leaders, notably Hamas leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar and Hamas Gaza military commander Mohammad Deif, helped the group develop its offensive doctrine and key military infrastructure—including tunnels—that enabled both the October 7 attacks and the subsequent defensive campaign against the Israeli ground operation. Iran and its regional allies and proxies provided more advanced weapons and probably helped Hamas develop the plans that would form the basis for the October 7 attacks.

**Hamas will likely survive this war in an extremely weak position, but it could acquire the requisite resources to rebuild itself unless Israel sets both military and political conditions to prevent Hamas' reconstitution.** Israel and its partners should exploit Hamas' current weakness by building a new political authority in the Gaza Strip that can replace Hamas. Militarily defeating Hamas is a requirement for

replacing the group's political control in the Gaza Strip. Hamas has attempted to reconstitute itself during the war both by reorganizing its forces and recruiting new fighters and by building new but rudimentary weapons. This reconstitution effort will accelerate as the war ends and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) leaves the Strip, unless Israel or another capable entity can interdict Hamas resupply from abroad. The IDF has severely degraded Hamas, but Hamas' remnants can still kill and threaten any alternative political authority that seeks to replace Hamas' control.

**Israel and its international partners, including the United States, should maintain the current course in order to defeat Hamas militarily while simultaneously preparing to create an external security force to protect a new Palestinian-led authority and to prevent Hamas from reconstituting.** Israel and its partners cannot introduce a new government without protecting it or defeating Hamas, and the establishment and consolidation of a new government will take considerable time. An external security force will probably not agree to conduct major operations on Israel's behalf, but the external force will be needed to continue to suppress Hamas remnants as Israel and its partners transition control to the new governing authority. Israel may need to retain the freedom to conduct operations to continue targeting Hamas, depending on whether Israel can generate support for an external security force. the quality of such external forces, and their rules of engagement. Finally, Israel and its partners will need to install an inspections regime along the Rafah border to ensure that Hamas cannot be resupplied either through a border crossing or by smugglers.

**There will be no permanent peace while Hamas remains a surviving political and military entity.** No ceasefire that ends this war without setting conditions to prevent Hamas' reconstitution will preclude Hamas from launching a new war in the future. Hamas sees any ceasefire as an interim truce that the group can use to prepare for the next round of fighting that its leaders will initiate for reasons and at a time of their choosing. Hamas will not end its multigenerational war to destroy the Israeli state until it is compelled to do so. Failure to defeat Hamas in this war condemns Israel and its partners—including the United States—to planning to fight a future war against Hamas, which will again be backed by Iran. Iran and its allies and proxies may support Hamas more aggressively in a future war, including by launching ground attacks from Lebanon, the West Bank, or the Golan Heights. Defeating Hamas in this war means that Israel will have removed one pressure point from which Iran and its partners can threaten Israel's existence.

**This paper describes Hamas' aims on October 7 and the reality that a failure to destroy Hamas militarily will prevent a sustainable peace.** The paper does not attempt to evaluate the legality of the behavior of either side in this war. It also is not attempting to ascribe blame to any particular actor for the activities of either side. It specifically does not seek to assign praise or blame for the success or failure of IDF activities. Multiple domestic Israeli and international factors have informed Israeli decisionmaking at every level of war, and this paper does not attempt to disentangle them. The purpose of this paper is rather to understand Hamas' decisionmaking throughout the war and how it seeks to shape the postwar environment to its benefit.

[Click here to read the full report.](#)

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ICC AND THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR**

**UPDATE: Adding another dangerous twist to the Israel-Hamas War and its impact, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has announced that it has issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as Mohammed Deif, a commander from the genocidal terror group Hamas.**

**Read AJC's Statement**

### [AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE](#)

#### [American Jewish Committee Appalled by ICC's Issuance of Arrest Warrants Against Israelis](#)

The Court's Pre-Trial Chamber I [said that it had issued the warrants](#) for Netanyahu and Gallant for "crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from at least 8 October 2023 until at least 20 May 2024," which is the date that ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan announced he would be seeking the arrest warrants.

The court said it had found reasonable grounds to believe that Netanyahu and Gallant "each bear criminal responsibility for the following crimes as co-perpetrators for committing the acts jointly with others: the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts."

In a separate statement, the ICC also issued an arrest warrant for Deif, who Israel says was killed in an airstrike on July 13. ICC Chief Prosecutor Khan had previously sought warrants for Hamas terror leaders [Yahya Sinwar](#), the mastermind of the October 7 massacre, and [Ismail Haniyeh](#) for the war crimes and crimes against humanity of extermination, murder, taking of hostages, rape and sexual violence, torture, and other inhumane acts following the October 7 terror attack on Israel. However, Khan dropped the legal proceedings against them after their deaths on July 21 and Oct. 16.

AJC CEO Ted Deutch [slammed](#) the ICC's decision to issue warrants from Netanyahu and Gallant.

"Equating the leaders of a democratic state exercising its right to self-defense with a terrorist organization responsible for the rape, murder and mutilation of over 1,200 innocent people, the kidnapping of 251, and the continued captivity of 101, is an intentional distortion of justice, morality, and international law founded on virulent anti-Israel animus."

Here's what you need to know about the ICC, its history and powers, and how this will affect the Israel-Hamas war.

### **WHY IS THIS A DANGEROUS DEVELOPMENT IN THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR?**

The ICC's decision to issue arrest warrants for Israeli leaders is a distortion of international law that harms the Court's credibility, completely undermines its core mandate, and emboldens enemies of democracy around the world.

Rather than acknowledging the reality that Israel's military actions in Gaza are solely focused on defeating the internationally recognized terror organization Hamas, securing the safe return of the 101 hostages still held by the terror group, and protecting Israelis from further attack, the Court embraced the false claims



that Israel is acting with malicious intent toward Palestinians, restricting humanitarian aid as a tool of punishment, and deliberately attacking and harming civilians. Perversely, the Court even cited Israel's efforts to increase humanitarian aid entering Gaza in the spring of 2024 as evidence of ill intent, suggesting that prior restrictions had not been dictated by military necessity but intended to cause Palestinian civilians harm.

[Click here to read AJC's full statement on the ICC's decision and why it is dangerous.](#)

### **WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT?**

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an independent international judicial tribunal based in The Hague. It was established in 2002 by the Rome Statute, a treaty that spells out what crimes the ICC should investigate and adjudicate and when it can do so. The ICC can prosecute individuals for four main categories of crimes: war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and aggression. Importantly, the ICC can investigate and prosecute not only State actors but also non-state actors like the leaders of Hamas. Considered a court of last resort, the ICC adjudicates when national legal systems fail to prosecute such crimes—a principle of complementarity that respects the role of independent judiciaries in sovereign states.

Belle Yoeli, AJC's Chief Advocacy Officer, explains why the ICC's charges are not only baseless but also undermine justice.

[\*The ICC Issues Arrest Warrants: What You Need to Know\*](#)

### **IS THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT PART OF THE UNITED NATIONS?**

The ICC should not be confused with the International Criminal Court of Justice (ICJ), the judicial arm of the United Nations. The ICJ settles legal disputes between states and issues advisory opinions upon request by UN entities.

Like the ICC, the ICJ only has limited jurisdiction over certain situations. Israel has been compelled to participate in ICJ proceedings concerning a complaint against it brought by South Africa because both States are parties to the Genocide Convention, a treaty that gives the ICJ jurisdiction to settle disputes about its enforcement. "Palestine" has not signed the Genocide Convention, and Hamas cannot do so as a non-State actor, so neither can be a party to that ICJ case.

[\*What You Need to Know About the Latest International Court of Justice Action in the Case Against Israel\*](#)

### **IS ISRAEL A MEMBER OF THE ICC?**

Israel is not a member, or what's called a "State party," of the ICC, though it did play an important role in negotiations during the drafting of the Rome Statute. But at the end of the day, Israel did not sign the Rome Statute and join the ICC. Why? The ICC was intended to focus on the most heinous crimes, including genocide and crimes against humanity. But, urged by a number of Arab countries, a majority of countries agreed to add the transfer of civilians *into* an occupied territory to the list of crimes the Court would have jurisdiction to prosecute. Israel's diplomats objected that States were distorting international law and not mirroring the language of the Geneva Convention in order to specifically prosecute Israelis for actions in the West Bank.

The U.S. also played a significant role in the Rome Statute negotiations but ultimately did not join the ICC, citing concerns that it would be politicized and used to target American officials for U.S. actions overseas, undermining U.S. national sovereignty.

### **CAN THE ICC PROSECUTE THE STATE OF ISRAEL?**

No, the ICC only prosecutes individuals, not states.

### **CAN THE ICC PROSECUTE ISRAELIS?**

In short, it is a question of jurisdiction.

Israeli officials have vigorously rejected the ICC's authority to investigate or try Israelis for actions in Gaza or the West Bank. Israel is not alone: countries, including the U.S. and the United Kingdom, have also insisted that the ICC does not have jurisdiction over Israelis in this case. AJC agrees with this position. However, the Palestinians and the ICC see it differently.

One way the ICC can gain jurisdiction is if a State asks the ICC Prosecutor to investigate a situation *on its own territory*, thereby delegating to international authorities its own sovereign power to investigate.

Since 2009, Palestinians have been pursuing this route and asking the ICC to investigate the situation in the territory of "the State of Palestine." But at no point has the [UN Security Council accepted Palestine's requests for UN Member State status \(in fact, it has twice declined it\)](#), with States like the [U.S.](#) stressing the lack of essential State attributes like an effective government, given that Hamas controls Gaza. Nor has the UN Secretariat ever actually determined that "Palestine" has the legal capacity of a State.

Instead, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in 2012 making the "State of Palestine" a "non-member observer State." This status upgrade enabled the Palestinian Authority (PA) to begin signing international treaties over which the United Nations is the custodian, including the Rome Statute.

#### **[5 Key Takeaways from AJC's Advocacy During the United Nations General Assembly](#)**

In February 2021, the pre-trial chamber of the Court determined that the ICC did have jurisdiction over Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank, based on the 2012 UNGA resolution and the UN's acceptance of Palestine's treaty signatures.

Meanwhile, it said it had no authority to assess whether Palestine was, in fact, a State that could turn to the ICC for adjudication, but allowed a full investigation to open anyway. It also suggested that the issue of jurisdiction could be revisited should the Prosecutor seek arrest warrants, laying the groundwork for the controversy that has erupted now.

In addition, there is no question that Hamas celebrates its leaders' international crimes against Israelis and has no intention of holding them accountable. But unlike the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, Israel has an independent judiciary capable of addressing any alleged illegal acts committed by members of its military force.

In fact, since the beginning of the conflict, Israel's Military Advocate General has opened 55 criminal investigations; its Fact Finding and Assessment Mechanism is simultaneously addressing hundreds of incidents; and Israel's law enforcement agencies are examining dozens of statements made and recently decided that some cases justify the promotion of criminal proceedings.

That factor alone should have led the Prosecutor to decline to seek warrants against Israelis.

## **CAN THE ICC PROSECUTE THE TERROR GROUP HAMAS?**

Hamas is an internationally recognized terror group backed by Iran. The savage attack on Israeli civilians by Hamas terrorists on October 7 was an egregious violation of International Humanitarian Law that amounts to war crimes.

### **[A Spider Web of Terror: How Iran's Axis of Houthis, Hezbollah, and Hamas Threaten Israel and America](#)**

However, the ICC does not have jurisdiction over the situation because Palestine is not a state, and no international body with the authority to do so has determined that it is one. Nor has any other mechanism in the Rome Statute been triggered that would allow the Court to consider this case. The consequences of the ICC's 2021 decision to defer conclusively answering this foundational question are now evident.

## **CAN THE ICC ARREST NETANYAHU AND GALLANT?**

No. The warrant has no enforcement mechanism. Instead, the ICC relies on the cooperation of its more than 120 member states to enforce its decisions. While ICC member countries are required to act on the court's arrest warrants, political, diplomatic, and legal considerations can also play a factor in their respective decisions to arrest individuals.

Israel and the United States are not signatories to the Rome Statute.

## **WHAT IS ISRAEL'S RESPONSE TO THE ICC'S DECISION?**

The Prime Minister's Office declared in a statement on Thursday that the ICC's "antisemitic decision" to issue arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant "is equivalent to a modern Dreyfus trial."

Meanwhile, Israeli leaders from across the political spectrum condemned the ICC's decision.

Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar called the move "a loss of the ICC's legitimacy," accusing it of serving "radical forces" undermining Middle East stability. Opposition Leader Yair Lapid said that Israel is "defending its existence from terrorist groups that attacked, murdered and raped out citizens. These arrest warrants are a prize for terrorism."

Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana called the decision an assault on justice and democracy, while Education Minister Yoav Kisch vowed Israel would continue defending itself.

Benny Gantz, a former minister in Israel's war cabinet and current opposition figure, called the ICC's decision "moral blindness and a shameful stain of historic proportions that will never be forgotten."

Israel's defensive war, launched after [Hamas' brutal October 7 attack](#), during which more than 1,200 people were murdered, thousands injured, and more than 250 kidnapped, has been carried out utilizing a military code of conduct that strives to protect civilian life. That civilians have been harmed anyway is a deeply regrettable consequence of Hamas' lawless tactics, not evidence of Israel's criminal intent.

### **[7 Ways Hamas Exploits Palestinian Civilians in Gaza](#)**

## **WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE?**

There has been bipartisan outrage in the United States. The Biden Administration condemned the ICC's decision to issue arrest warrants for senior Israeli officials, with a White House spokesperson stating, "The United States fundamentally rejects the Court's decision to issue arrest warrants for senior Israeli officials. We remain deeply concerned by the Prosecutor's rush to seek arrest warrants and the troubling process

errors that led to this decision. The United States has been clear that the ICC does not have jurisdiction over this matter. In coordination with partners, including Israel, we are discussing next steps.”

U.S. Representative Mike Waltz, who is set to become National Security Advisor for President-elect Trump, posted on X, “The ICC has no credibility and these allegations have been refuted by the U.S. government. Israel has lawfully defended its people & borders from genocidal terrorists. You can expect a strong response to the antisemitic bias of the ICC & UN come January.” Senator John Thune, the incoming Senate Majority Leader, called the ICC decision “outrageous and unlawful,” adding, “The Senate should pass sanctions legislation targeting the ICC over its decision.” Earlier this year, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bipartisan bill calling for sanctions on ICC officials for requesting arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant.

Globally, the reactions have been mixed. Argentina’s President Javier Milei [expressed](#) his country’s “profound disagreement” with the ICC’s decision, stating, “It ignores Israel’s legitimate right to defend itself against constant attacks by terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah.” Similarly, Paraguay [strongly rejected the decision](#), saying that it compromises the legitimacy of the court, while weakening efforts for peace, security, and stability in the Middle East.

In Europe, several European Union countries, including [Austria](#), [Estonia](#), [Hungary](#), and the [Czech Republic](#), have expressed skepticism and condemnation for the ICC’s decision. However, the EU’s High Representative, Josep Borrell, [embraced the decision](#), underscoring the importance of accountability for alleged war crimes.

The United Kingdom offered a [mixed response](#), with a spokesperson saying, “While we respect the ICC’s independence, we also support Israel’s right to self-defense,” adding, “There is no moral equivalence between Israel, a democracy, and Hamas and Lebanese Hizbullah, which are terrorist organizations.”

## ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR, OCTOBER 7 2023-

[BRITANNICA](#)



### GAZA STRIP

**I**srail-Hamas War, war between [Israel](#) and Palestinian militants, especially [Hamas](#) and the [Palestinian Islamic Jihad](#) (PIJ), that began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a land, sea, and air assault on Israel from the [Gaza Strip](#). The October 7 attack resulted in more than 1,200 deaths, primarily Israeli citizens, making it the deadliest day for Israel since its independence. More than 240 people were taken [hostage](#) during the attack. The next day, Israel declared itself in a state of war for the first time since the [Yom Kippur War](#) in 1973. The war began with the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) conducting air strikes on the Gaza Strip, followed weeks later

by the incursion of ground troops and armored vehicles. By October 2024 more than 41,000 Gazans had been killed and two-thirds of the buildings in the Gaza Strip had been damaged or destroyed.

### WHAT LED UP TO OCTOBER 7

In 1948 the State of Israel was created on land inhabited by both Jews and Arab Palestinians. Hostilities between the two [communities](#) that year led to a mass displacement of Palestinians. Many of them became

refugees in the [Gaza Strip](#), a narrow swath of land roughly the size of [Philadelphia](#) that had come under the control of Egyptian forces in the [1948–49 Arab-Israeli war](#). The status of the Palestinians remained unresolved as the protracted Arab-Israeli conflict brought recurrent violence to the region, and the fate of the Gaza Strip fell into the hands of Israel when it occupied the territory in the [Six-Day War](#) of 1967. In 1993 there was a glimmer of hope for a peaceful resolution when the Israeli government and the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO) reached an agreement on the creation of a Palestinian state alongside an Israeli state (see [two-state solution](#); [Oslo Accords](#)). Hamas, a militant Palestinian group founded in 1987 and opposed to the more [conciliatory](#) stance taken by the PLO, rejected the plan, which included Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel, and carried out a terror campaign in an attempt to disrupt it. The plan was ultimately derailed amid [suicide bombings](#) by Hamas and the 1995 [assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin](#) by a Jewish extremist. In 2005, in the wake of the collapse of the peace process, Israel unilaterally [withdrew](#) from the [settlements](#) it had constructed in the Gaza Strip after 1967, and in 2007, after factional conflict within the [Palestinian Authority](#) (PA), Hamas emerged as the [de facto](#) ruler in the Gaza Strip. The takeover by Hamas prompted a blockade of the Gaza Strip by Israel and [Egypt](#) and set the stage for the next decade and a half of continued unrest.



[Gaza's underground tunnels](#) Members of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) keeping guard inside an underground tunnel in the Gaza Strip, on March 30, 2023.(more)

The first major conflict between Israel and Hamas, which included Israeli air strikes and a ground invasion, took place at the end of 2008. Hostilities continued to break out, most notably in 2012, 2014, and 2021.

Among the factors complicating those hostilities were the high [population density](#) of the Gaza Strip and the proliferation of subterranean tunnels there. Those tunnels were used by Hamas and other Gazans to sidestep the blockade, to conduct operations, and to hide from Israeli forces, and they were difficult to detect or destroy, especially when constructed under urban dwellings.

These conflicts were devastating for the Gaza Strip and came at a high human cost for Gaza's civilians. But they usually lasted only weeks, resulted in few Israeli civilian casualties, and weakened Hamas's military capacity. Hostilities often resulted in ceasefire agreements that temporarily eased Israel's blockade and [facilitated](#) the transfer of [foreign aid](#) into the Gaza Strip. Many officials in Israel's defense establishment maintained that Hamas had been effectively deterred by years of conflict and that an occasional flare-up of violence would be manageable. On October 7 the error of that assumption became

tragically clear. Ongoing violence in the West Bank, political turmoil at home, and simmering tensions with [Hezbollah](#) in Lebanon were among the distractions that left Israel unprepared for the onslaught from the Gaza Strip.

In early 2022 militants from the PIJ and new, localized groups in the [West Bank](#), a territory northeast of the Gaza Strip that is also predominantly inhabited by Palestinians, conducted a string of attacks in Israel. The IDF responded with a series of raids in the West Bank, resulting in the deadliest year for the West Bank since the end of the second Palestinian [intifada](#) (uprising; 2000–05). The IDF targeted PIJ militants in the Gaza Strip—but left Hamas alone. In turn, Hamas refrained from escalating the conflict, [bolstering](#) the assumption by Israeli officials that they could prioritize other threats over Hamas.

At the close of 2022, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) returned to office as Israel's [prime minister](#) after cobbling together the most far-right cabinet since Israel's independence, which proved to be domestically destabilizing. The cabinet pushed for reforms to Israel's [basic laws](#) that would bring the judiciary under legislative oversight; the polarizing move led to unprecedented strikes and protests by many Israelis, including thousands of army reservists, concerned over the [separation of powers](#). In August 2023 senior military officials warned lawmakers that the readiness of the IDF for war had begun to weaken. All the while, provocations by [Hezbollah](#) were raising the risk of conflict along Israel's northern border.

But while tensions were brewing at home, [Saudi Arabia](#)—which had long conditioned diplomatic relations with Israel on the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process—had begun negotiating with Israel and the [United States](#) on an [Israeli-Saudi peace deal](#). Although Saudi Arabia sought [concessions](#) on issues related to the Palestinians, the Palestinians were not directly involved in the discussions and the deal was not expected to satisfy the grievances of the Palestinians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Many observers believed that disrupting those negotiations was one of the goals of Hamas's October 7 attack. That deal was part of a broader regional transformation. The United States, which had long been the driving force behind the peace process, sought a “pivot to Asia” in its [foreign policy](#) and hoped an Israeli-Saudi deal would reduce the resources it needed to devote to the [Middle East](#). [Iran](#), meanwhile, was consolidating an “axis of resistance” in the region that included [Hezbollah](#) in [Lebanon](#), Pres. [Bashar al-Assad](#) in [Syria](#), and [Houthi](#) rebels in [Yemen](#). Hamas, whose relationship with Iran had been [tumultuous](#) in the 2010s, had grown closer to Iran after 2017 and received significant Iranian support to build up its military capacity and capability.

## THE OCTOBER 7, 2023, ATTACK



[Aftermath of the October 7, 2023,  
attack  
Britannica](#)

### [Britannica](#)

On October 7, 2023,  [Hamas](#) led a stunning coordinated [attack](#), which took place on [Shemini Atzeret](#), a [Jewish holiday](#) that closes the autumn thanksgiving festival of [Sukkot](#). Many IDF soldiers were on leave, and the IDF's attention had been focused on Israel's northern border rather than on the [Gaza Strip](#) in the south.

The assault began about 6:30 AM with a [barrage](#) of at least 2,200 rockets launched into Israel in just 20 minutes. During that opening salvo, Hamas used more than half the total number of rockets launched from Gaza during all of 2021's 11-day conflict. The barrage reportedly overwhelmed the [Iron Dome](#) system, the highly successful antimissile defense system [deployed](#) throughout Israel, although the IDF did not specify how many missiles penetrated the system. As the rockets rained down on Israel, at least 1,500 militants from Hamas and the PIJ infiltrated Israel at dozens of points by using explosives and bulldozers to [breach](#) the border, which was heavily fortified with smart technology, fencing, and concrete. They disabled communication networks for several of the Israeli military posts nearby, allowing them to attack those installations and enter civilian neighborhoods undetected. Militants simultaneously [breached](#) the maritime border by [motorboat](#) near the coastal town of Zikim. Others crossed into Israel on motorized [paragliders](#).

About 1,200 people were killed in the assault, which included families attacked in their homes in [kibbutzim](#) and attendees of an outdoor [music festival](#). That number largely [comprised](#) Israeli civilians but also included foreign nationals. A [March 2024 United Nations report](#) found evidence that some were victims of sexual violence before they were killed. Adding to the trauma was the fact that it was the deadliest day for Jews since the [Holocaust](#).



### [Hostages taken on October 7, 2023](#)

Portraits of some of the hostages taken during the October 7, 2023, attacks, displayed on a wall during a rally in Tel Aviv calling for their release.



More than 240 others were taken into the Gaza Strip as hostages. Many of them were taken from their homes and some from the music festival. Including Israelis with dual citizenship, more than half of those taken hostage collectively held passports from about two dozen countries, effectively pulling several countries into the efforts to release their citizens.

### **AT WAR OCTOBER 2023: AIR CAMPAIGN**

At 8:23 AM on October 7 the [IDF](#) announced a state of alert for war and began mobilizing its army reserves (eventually calling up more than 350,000 reservists over the next several days). Two hours later, IDF fighter jets began conducting air strikes in the [Gaza Strip](#). On October 8 [Israel](#) declared itself in a state of war, and [Netanyahu](#) told residents of the blockaded [enclave](#) to “get out now. We will be everywhere and with all our might.” On October 9 Israel ordered a “complete siege” of the Gaza Strip, cutting off water, electricity, food, and fuel from entering the territory.



#### [Israel's Iron Dome Defense System](#)

The Iron Dome antimissile defense system intercepting rockets launched from the Gaza Strip

As Israel conducted air strikes, international efforts were made to secure the release of the hostages. [Qatar](#), which in years past had coordinated with Israel on the delivery of international aid packages to the Gaza Strip, became the key mediator, but in the first weeks of the war it managed to negotiate the release of only four of the people held by Hamas. Gaza’s subterranean tunnels—forming an [intricate](#) web of passageways extending hundreds of miles—added to the difficulty of locating the hostages as well as targeting militants and their weapons caches: destroying the tunnels without high civilian cost proved difficult, and conducting military activity inside the tunnels presented a high risk for all those inside, especially for the IDF troops and the hostages who might be held there. Just three weeks after Hamas’s assault on October 7, more than 1.4 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip had become internally displaced, and, with numbers of Palestinians killed still climbing by the thousands, it had already become the deadliest conflict for the Palestinians since the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

## WHY THE MAZE OF TUNNELS UNDER GAZA IS KEY TO THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

[The Wall Street Journal](#) | 26 October 2023 5min

Israel is gearing up for a possible ground offensive of Gaza. Underneath the Palestinian enclave sits a labyrinth of tunnels used by Hamas as a key military asset.

These tunnels were used by Hamas militants in Israel's seven-week war on Gaza in 2014 allowing for Hamas to hide weapons, equipment and troops.

WSJ's Rory Jones – who visited them in 2014 – explains how they pose a unique challenge to Israel and could make urban combat costly for both Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians.

## OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2023: GROUND INVASION AND BEGINNING OF THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS



### [Israel-Hamas War](#)

Destruction in the Jabalia refugee camp from an Israeli air strike in the Gaza Strip on November 1, 2023

At the end of October Israeli ground forces advanced into the Gaza Strip. Communications in the territory were initially cut, restricting the ability of militants to coordinate but also limiting the ability of paramedics and humanitarian organizations to [attend](#) to emergencies. Unlike in previous conflicts, the ground invasion was slow and the number of [armored vehicles](#) and personnel was increased gradually. On November 1 the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt was opened, under conditions agreed to by Egypt, Hamas, and Israel, to allow a limited number of foreign nationals to evacuate the territory for the first time since October 7.

On November 22 Israel's war cabinet agreed to a prisoner exchange with Hamas, which was mediated by Qatar and Egypt, that would coincide with a temporary pause in fighting. During the pause, which lasted seven days, 110 of the hostages were freed in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners. In the days after fighting resumed, Israeli forces moved into Khan Younis, the largest urban center in the south of the Gaza Strip and the location of the homes of senior Hamas leaders, including [Yahya Sinwar](#) and Mohammed Deif. A large number of civilians fled to [Rafah](#), one of the last areas in the enclave for civilians to shelter from the

ground invasion, and within weeks more than half of the Gaza Strip's total population had crammed into the city along Egypt's border.

### **DECEMBER 2023–JANUARY 2024: PRESSURE MOUNTS FOR A CEASE-FIRE**

By year's end international pressure weighed heavily on Israel amid the high number of civilian casualties and wide destruction in the Gaza Strip. In mid-December U.S. Pres. [Joe Biden](#), during a fundraising event for his reelection campaign, said that Israel was beginning to lose international support. In early January 2024, after nearly 23,000 Palestinians had been reported dead (a number that included mostly civilians but also Hamas fighters), Israel announced a change in strategy that would result in a more targeted approach. By the end of January the average number of daily deaths was one-third of what it had been in October but was still more than three times that of the 2014 conflict, the deadliest in the Gaza Strip until 2023. (By early May, the number of Palestinians reported dead exceeded 34,000.)

In late January a framework emerged through the mediation of Qatar, Egypt, and the United States for a potential three-phase pause in fighting during which a [comprehensive](#) agreement to end the war would be negotiated. The pause would include the release, in stages, of hostages held in the Gaza Strip and Palestinian prisoners taken by Israel since the start of the conflict. But the framework remained [elusive](#) as Hamas insisted on guarantees that the hostage exchange would lead to a permanent cease-fire.

### **FEBRUARY–APRIL 2024: INVASION OF RAFAH LOOMS**

Israeli officials in February announced their intent to extend the war into [Rafah](#), leading to concerns internationally over the high humanitarian cost of such an operation. Netanyahu [insisted](#), however, that an invasion of Rafah would proceed to root out "the last bastion" of Hamas battalions. A rift between Netanyahu and Biden came out into the open as Biden mulled withholding military support if an invasion of Rafah were to go forward without a comprehensive plan in place to protect civilians. In mid-March the IDF said that it would evacuate a portion of the civilians in Rafah to "humanitarian islands" that it would set up in the center of the Gaza Strip. On March 25, for the first time since the outbreak of the war, the United States [refrained](#) from vetoing a resolution by the [United Nations \(UN\) Security Council](#) that called for an immediate cease-fire.

On April 1 several vehicles carrying aide workers for chef [José Andrés](#)'s World Central Kitchen were hit in an Israeli air strike. The seven workers were killed, and the deaths brought increasing scrutiny on the actions of the IDF in the wake of the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The IDF took responsibility for the deaths with a government spokesman describing the incident as "a terrible chain of errors."

Early that same month, Hamas rejected a cease-fire proposal that would require it to release 40 living hostages who were female, children, older people, or sick in the initial stages, saying it did not have 40 such hostages. At the end of April, as the IDF readied the Gaza Strip for an evacuation of Rafah, Hamas released videos showing proof of life of three hostages.

## **MAY–JUNE 2024: RAFAH INVASION, OPERATION ARNON, AND PRESSURE FOR A CEASE-FIRE**

Although negotiations seemed to be progressing at the beginning of May, talks broke down on May 5. Hours later, Hamas fired rockets at Israeli soldiers who were stationed near the Kerem Shalom border crossing, the main avenue for humanitarian aid. The attack killed four soldiers and prompted Israel to close the crossing to aid convoys. The next day, Israel ordered the evacuation of 100,000 Palestinians from Rafah. That evening, Hamas accepted a cease-fire proposal tendered by mediators that included efforts toward a “permanent cessation” of hostilities, but Israel [reiterated](#) its stance that it would reject any proposal that insists on an end to the war.

Meanwhile, Israel’s war cabinet unanimously authorized the military to proceed with its plans for Rafah. Israeli forces began moving to take control of the Rafah border crossing and on May 14 they entered the city. Within days the number of people who had fled Rafah since May 6 exceeded 800,000, and the areas they escaped to were deemed inadequate by international observers. On May 17 a floating pier constructed by the United States for international humanitarian aid received its first shipment, but in its early weeks of operation the distribution of aid was repeatedly disrupted by safety concerns and weather damage.

On June 8 Israeli special forces rescued four of the hostages who had been kidnapped at the music festival in an operation that was conducted in central Gaza. The raid took place in two buildings in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the middle of the day. When the four Israelis were recovered alive and unharmed, the Israeli officers gave word to their commanders by radio: “Ha-yahalomim be-yedeinu” (“The diamonds are on hand”). Heavy fighting took place as the special forces escaped with the rescued hostages, and more than 270 Palestinians in the [vicinity](#) were killed as air strikes aimed to shield the Israelis. The officer who led the mission, Arnon Zamora, was critically wounded and died shortly afterward; the operation was renamed Operation Arnon in his honor ex post facto.

When the rescued hostages revealed that they knew in captivity that protesters were fighting for their release, demonstrators took to the streets in major cities across Israel that night to celebrate the rescue, call on the government to do more to bring the remaining 120 hostages home, and call for Netanyahu to be replaced as prime minister. The following day [Benny Gantz](#), an opponent of Netanyahu who was also a key figure in his war cabinet, carried out a threat made weeks earlier to resign if Netanyahu had still not [articulated](#) a plan for the hostages to be released and end the war.

On June 10 the [UN Security Council](#) adopted Resolution 2735. It called for an immediate cease-fire, a release of hostages, and the safe distribution of humanitarian aid, followed by a permanent end to hostilities in exchange for the release of remaining hostages and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. The resolution, which was drafted by the United States and followed a cease-fire plan outlined by Biden weeks earlier, was passed with 14 votes in favor; Russia abstained, saying it had questions about the details of the U.S.-drafted resolution.

## JULY–SEPTEMBER 2024:

### HAMAS DROPS KEY DEMAND, ISRAEL DEMANDS PHILADELPHI CORRIDOR, POLIOVIRUS DETECTED IN THE GAZA STRIP, AND HAMAS EXECUTES SIX HOSTAGES

In early July Hamas and Egyptian officials who were involved in the ceasefire negotiations reported that Hamas had dropped its demand for Israel to commit to a permanent end to hostilities. Meanwhile, Netanyahu began insisting that Israel retain control of the Gaza Strip's [Philadelphi Corridor](#), a demand that Israel had not previously raised in its [May 27 proposal](#). As talks continued, Israel intensified its operations in Gaza. On July 13 an Israeli strike in Khan Younis targeted Mohammed Deif, Hamas's top military commander. The strike killed Deif, according to an intelligence [assessment](#) by the IDF, and about 90 other Palestinians. [Ismail Haniyeh](#), Hamas's political chief abroad who was leading Hamas's delegation in ceasefire negotiations, was killed in [Tehrān](#) on July 31, leaving the negotiations in the hands of the more hard-line and inaccessible [Sinwar](#).

On July 23, as Netanyahu arrived in the [United States](#) to address the [U.S. Congress](#), Hamas, [Fatah](#) (the Palestinian faction that leads the Palestinian Authority), and 12 other Palestinian factions agreed to a reconciliation deal, which was brokered by the [Chinese](#) foreign ministry. The agreement would attempt to bring unified governance to the [West Bank](#) and the [Gaza Strip](#), which have been split between Fatah and Hamas rule, respectively, since 2007. It was not immediately clear, however, how the "Beijing Declaration" would differ from [past failed attempts at reconciliation](#), such as those in 2011, 2014, and 2017.

Meanwhile, the war's toll on [public health](#) was highlighted in July, after [The Lancet](#) published [a study](#) that indicated a [conservative](#) estimate of about four indirect deaths per one direct death during the war due to destroyed health care [infrastructure](#) and shortages of food, water, and safe shelter, bringing the total of direct and indirect deaths due to the war to 186,000. Later that month the IDF announced that it had found [poliovirus](#) in sewage and would offer vaccines to its soldiers. It also coordinated with international groups to assess the risk of polio among Gazans and administer vaccines. When the first confirmed case of polio was identified in a 10-month-old infant in mid-August, UN agencies requested a pause in fighting to allow health workers to [vaccinate](#) children in the Gaza Strip. On August 28 Netanyahu agreed under U.S. pressure to allow a vaccination campaign to take place in select areas.

On August 27 Israeli forces rescued Farhan al-Qadi, a [Bedouin](#) Arab from Israel who was working as a security guard when he was taken hostage on October 7. He was the first hostage to be rescued from inside a subterranean tunnel and was alone when he was found. Qadi reported that his captors had fled when they learned the IDF was close by.

On August 31 Israeli forces found the bodies of six hostages. Autopsies indicated that they were executed 1–2 days before they were found and nearly two months after Hamas had agreed to release three of them in a July ceasefire proposal. Protests erupted in fury across Israel as hundreds of thousands of Israelis took to the streets to demand Netanyahu reach a deal for the hostages to be released. [Histadrut](#), Israel's largest [trade union](#), joined the protests on September 2 with a [general strike](#) (although a court found the strike illegal and ordered it to end that same afternoon). At a press [conference](#) that same day, Netanyahu doubled down on his demand to control the Philadelphi Corridor, which he characterized as "the oxygen of Hamas." In mid-September Israeli forces focused on weakening [Hezbollah](#) in Lebanon—including killing its

longtime leader, [Hassan Nasrallah](#)—while the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip continued to deteriorate from the unbroken bombardment of the territory and from restrictions on the entrance of humanitarian aid.

**OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2024:  
YAHYA SINWAR IS KILLED, UNRWA IS BANNED IN ISRAEL,  
AND ICC ISSUES ARREST WARRANTS**

The killing of Nasrallah induced [Iran](#) to send a barrage of missiles into Israel on October 1, an attack that nonetheless caused minimal damage and one casualty. The anniversary of the October 7 attack passed with bombardment from Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthi forces, which likewise rendered little damage. On October 17 Israel announced that the IDF had killed [Sinwar](#) in an operation it had conducted the previous day in the Rafah area. The international [community](#) seized the chance to reopen ceasefire discussions about a week later, and Egyptian Pres. [Abdel Fattah al-Sisi](#) proposed a short pause in fighting followed by the release of a small number of Israeli hostages who also hold citizenship in the United States or Russia. Egyptian mediators also proposed subsequent phases that would build toward a more lasting end to the fighting. Despite the reluctance of Hamas to engage after previous ceasefire negotiations fell apart in July, the group indicated an openness to the proposal while insisting on guarantees that a short pause would lead eventually to a long-term ceasefire. The Israeli [delegation](#), which had flown to Qatar to take part in the discussion in person, awaited the results of the [U.S. election](#) on November 5 to determine how to proceed. [Donald Trump](#) won the election, and members of Israel’s right-wing government believed that his administration would align even more sympathetically with their cause than the Biden administration had. On October 28 the Israeli [Knesset](#) overwhelmingly voted to ban and designate as a terrorist organization [UNRWA](#), the [United Nations](#) agency that distributes the largest amount of international aid to the Gaza Strip. The [designation](#) came months after Israel [alleged](#) that some employees of UNRWA were members of Hamas and that about a dozen had taken part in the October 7, 2023, attack; an [independent review](#) in April 2024 indicated that the agency could do more to “assume more accountability for staff neutrality” but also concluded that it already had a “more developed approach than other similar UN or [NGO](#) entities” and that Israel had not expressed specific concerns about staff prior to the Israel-Hamas War.

On November 9 Qatar announced a pause in its efforts to mediate until “the parties show their willingness and seriousness to end the brutal war.” Later that month, on November 21, the [International Criminal Court](#) (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and [Yoav Gallant](#), who until November 5 had served as Israel’s defense minister. In a [press release](#), the court noted reasonable grounds that Netanyahu and [Gallant](#) “intentionally and knowingly deprived the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival” and that “no clear military need or other justification under international humanitarian law could be identified” for those restrictions. The ICC also issued an arrest warrant that same day for Deif, whose reported death in July the court could not verify, for his role in commanding the October 7 attacks against civilian targets and his responsibility for his subordinates’ cruel treatment of and sexual violence against hostages. The court also intended to issue arrest warrants for Haniyeh and Sinwar before their deaths.

## WHO OWNS THE GAZA STRIP?

[Unpacked](#) 7 Aug 2024 21min 15sec

Since October 7, 2023, Gaza has been at the heart of a brutal war between Israel and Hamas. But this tiny 25-mile strip's troubled history started long before the current hostilities. After Israel captured Gaza during the 1967 Six-Day War, its fate took a turbulent turn, eventually falling under Hamas' control. Now governed by Hamas, Gaza has witnessed immense suffering and resilience in the face of decades of conflict. Who will control Gaza next? It's uncertain. But understanding the deep, historical roots of this conflict is crucial to solving it.

## **ONE YEAR AFTER HAMAS'S OCTOBER 7 TERRORIST ATTACKS, HERE'S HOW THE REGION HAS CHANGED**

[ATLANTIC COUNCIL](#) by Atlantic Council experts October 4 2024

A year into the Gaza war, the conflict has left deep political, security, and societal scars across the Middle East and North Africa. The war was ignited by an unprecedented terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7, 2023 in which militants killed some 1,200 people and took 251 hostages—97 of whom are still being held hostage one year later, with approximately one-third of that group already believed to be dead. The attack prompted Israel's strongest response in decades, with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launching airstrikes and a ground invasion aimed at dismantling Hamas and its capabilities that continue to this day.

The Gaza Strip, which has been ruled by Hamas since 2007 and under an Israeli blockade for nearly two decades, has suffered widespread destruction and heavy damage to its infrastructure. Since the war began, some 41,000 people have been killed, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. The humanitarian situation in Gaza has reached catastrophic levels, with Gazans facing massive food shortages, the spread of disease, and the displacement of 1.9 million people from their homes.

International efforts at the United Nations to calm tensions have been ineffectual, and the decision by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to seek arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar has been met with fury in Israel and derision by Hamas. The United States, Qatar, and Egypt had early success in November 2023 in securing a ceasefire and freeing some hostages, but since then the conflict has continued unabated, leaving the region in a fragile state and possibly veering toward wider regional conflict.

The potential for a direct conflict between Israel and Iran has never been higher following Iran's firing of almost two hundred ballistic missiles at the beginning of October, an event preceded by the Islamic Republic's April barrage of over three hundred missiles and drones. Houthi rebels in Yemen have spent months intermittently launching missiles into Israel while consistently attacking Western shipping lines in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait. And daily skirmishes along the Israel-Lebanon border have led to dozens of deaths in both countries over the last year. It may be a prelude to a broader war—the likelihood of which greatly increased following Israel's September killing of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah and its ground invasion of southern Lebanon.



One year on, the Gaza War remains unresolved and the potential for war across the region is becoming more likely. So what is the humanitarian situation on the ground? Will Saudi-Israeli diplomatic normalization materialize? What does the future of the Abraham Accords look like? Is there a regional war around the corner? Fourteen experts from across the Atlantic Council take on these questions in a series of short essays below.

## **NAVIGATE OUR COVERAGE**

### **ISRAEL'S RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES**

Israel has settled into a routine known colloquially as the “new normal,” where the fabric of daily life is interwoven with threads of ever-present crisis. One year since the brutal October 7, 2023, massacre wrought by Hamas, and amid the repercussions of that day’s devastating aftermath—including multiple “hot” battlefronts, constant dread over the fate of the captives in Gaza, and extended tours of reserve duty—Israelis are abiding a split-screen existence. They go about their regular business while simultaneously perceiving that the nation’s calendar will be stuck hopelessly on October 8, 2023.

A similar, schizophrenic rhythm pervades Israel’s relationship with its main benefactor, the United States, as matters of critical substance are intermingled tightly with considerations of domestic politics. On the one hand, the two countries remain aligned closely in their commitment to ensuring Israel’s security: The Joe Biden administration has come singularly to Israel’s aid with invaluable military, intelligence, and diplomatic assistance, thereby enabling the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to persist in the effort to dismantle Hamas’s infrastructure and to defend against other threats, from Lebanon and Syria to Yemen and Iran. On the other hand, and at the same time, that cooperation has come under heavy assault from various constituencies in the United States and Israel, who charge that Washington has been either excessively or insufficiently supportive of its embattled ally.

These conflicting realities complicate an already problematic environment where tensions have surfaced regularly over the precise manner in which the Benjamin Netanyahu government has pursued its objectives. US initiatives to promote a hostage release and ceasefire deal in Gaza, bring a halt to fighting across the Israel-Lebanon border, institutionalize an emerging US Central Command-led regional defense architecture, and possibly deepen Israel’s integration into the wider region have stalled as Israel gives precedence to continuing IDF manoeuvre in neighboring theaters of operation and resists attempts to cede control to other foreign auspices. The volatility of the current political moment—with impending elections in the US and coalition instability in Israel—amplifies these fraught dynamics.

The predicament facing Israel is almost certain to grow more acute when the next US administration assumes power in January 2025. With more questions than answers about the path

forward, both presidential candidates have resorted to issuing impatient calls for Israel to draw its Gaza campaign to a close. Under these circumstances, the prime minister would be wise to hasten and proceed toward an endgame that allows Israel to ground its relations with the United States' next president—a vital component in Israel's national security—on a more positive footing.

—[Shalom Lipner](#) is a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative who previously worked in foreign policy and public diplomacy during his time at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem, where he served in the administration of seven consecutive Israeli premiers.

## ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR MISCONCEPTIONS

[JEWISH PRESS](#) Yoram Ettinger September 1 2024



*Anti-Israel demonstration immediately following the Hamas October 7 massacre, November 4, 2023.*

Western conventional wisdom is systematically baffled by the volcanic, violent, intolerant, unpredictable, despotic and frustrating Middle East reality, as evidenced by Western misperceptions of the Israel-Hamas war, which undermines the national and homeland security of the US.

For example:

\*The State Department's pressure on Israel to switch from the military option toward Hamas to the **diplomatic/negotiation option**, ignores the failure of the US diplomatic option toward Iran's Ayatollahs, and the on-again, off-again Israeli diplomatic option toward Hamas since 2007 (the latest was in May 2023), which dramatically upgraded Hamas' terror capabilities, paving the road to the horrific October 7, 2023 Hamas terrorism. Moreover, Hamas is a branch of the Moslem Brotherhood and a proxy of Iran's Ayatollahs, which are dedicated to the toppling of the regimes of all pro-US Arab countries and bring the Western "infidel," and particularly "The Great American Satan" to submission.

\*Thus, snatching Hamas from the jaws of obliteration would reflect a State Department and Israeli determination to repeat – rather than avoid – past critical mistakes. In the Middle East, it would be perceived as a major Islamic terrorism victory, undermining the US' and Israel's **posture of deterrence**, promoting more anti-US terrorism in the Middle East and on US soil. This would intensify terrorism against the pro-US Arab regimes (which feel the Moslem Brotherhood machete at their throats) and against Israel,

and cause a major setback to the Arab-Israeli peace process (which has been induced, mostly, by Israeli's posture of deterrence, which was devastated on October 7).

\*Israel is not fighting a Hamas **terror organization**, but the most fortified aboveground and underground Hamas **terrorist state** with an elaborate network of 60-80-foot-deep tunnels, equipped with the most advanced electronics, accommodating heavy vehicles and is longer than the NYC Subway system!

\*The toll of Hamas atrocities on October 7, 2023 – 1,200 mutilated Israelis – does not fully convey the magnitude of Hamas terrorism. In proportion to the size of the US population (340 million), it was identical to 41,000 American fatalities, or **13 “nine-elevens”** committed by terrorists, dispatched by a neighboring country. How would the US react to such a neighbor?!

\*The **number of Arab casualties** in Gaza are issued by Hamas and Gaza-based branches of international organizations, who are controlled by Hamas, which is known for its horrific violation of human rights, hate education, despotism, ruthlessness and corruption. However, in the pursuit of the immoral “moral equivalence,” Western policy makers and public opinion molders reverberate Hamas' numbers....

\*Are most Gazans **innocent civilians**? Hitler's [Mein Kampf has been a best seller](#) in the Palestinian Authority since its establishment in 1993, including in Gaza. The Gaza population has considered “September 11” as a role model of Islamic heroism. Since 1994, Gaza parents have sent their children to hate-education-school – which have been the most effective production line of terrorists – while worshipping in hate-sermon-mosques, cheering and heralding daily acts of terrorism, and enticing their children to join the ranks of Hamas and other Palestinian terror organizations.

\*As expected, Western and Israeli **humanitarian aid** to Gaza is controlled by Hamas terrorists, bolstering their terror capabilities; thus, **dehumanizing the aid**. Genuine humanitarian aid would be extended by the obliteration of Hamas' terror capabilities, which could set Gaza on a humanitarian path.

\*While Hamas considers its October 7 terror offensive as a divine mission to annihilate the “infidel” Jewish State, the State Department takes lightly the **centrality of fanatic Islamic visions** in the conduct of Middle East rogue entities. Foggy Bottom believes that terrorism is despair-driven and assumes that financial (“money talks”) and diplomatic bonanzas could induce moderation. However, Iran's Ayatollahs, Hezbollah and Hamas interpret Western and Israeli gestures as weakness, which whets their terroristic appetite. They have demonstrated that fanatic Islamic ideology transcends financial considerations, and eclipses accords concluded with the “infidel.” They have diverted mega billions of dollars in Western gestures toward anti-Western terrorism, not moderated policy.

\*Western policy makers have showered rogue Middle East entities with diplomatic and financial gestures, ignoring the precedents, which demonstrate that terrorists bite the hand that feeds them, as experienced by the US, which facilitated the rise to power of the Ayatollahs in Iran 1978/79 and the Mujahideen in Afghanistan (1980s). These terror entities emerged as chief anti-US terrorists, partaking in “September 11” and the bombings of the US Embassies in Lebanon (1983), Kenya and Tanzania (1998), as well as the Marines barracks in Lebanon (1983). Similarly, in 1993 and 2005, Israel overwhelmed the Middle East with dramatic gestures (never contemplated by Arabs) extended to the PLO, which yielded unprecedented waves of terrorism, as was demonstrated by the 2007-2023 series of Israeli financial and humanitarian

gestures to Hamas, which resulted in thousands of missiles hitting Israeli civilian targets, and leading to the October 7, 2023 massacre.

\*Israel's wars on Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists are not only Israel's wars. These wars are largely designed, directed, supervised and financed by Iran's Ayatollahs. The [Ayatollahs' strategic footprint](#) stretches from the Persian Gulf through the Middle East at-large and Africa to Latin America – viewed as the US' soft underbelly – and on **US soil**, as [recently testified](#) by FBI Director, Chris Wray. The Ayatollahs view Israel as the most effective US outpost/beachhead in the Middle East, and the first line of defense of the Western democracies against Shiite (Iran's Ayatollahs) and Sunni (the Moslem Brotherhood and ISIS) Islamic terrorism.

\*A **nuclear Iran** is not the only real and clear threat to global stability. In fact, the most pressing threat to global stability and vital US interests is **Iran's conventional military potency**, which has its machete at the throats of every pro-US Arab regime, while constituting the global epicenter of anti-US terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering and proliferation of weapon systems, They are training terrorists in the tri-border areas of Argentina-Paraguay-Brazil and Chile-Bolivia-Peru, and supplying underground tunnel construction equipment and predator unmanned aerial vehicles to Venezuela and to Mexican drug cartels.

\*The 45-year-old US diplomatic option – and its bonus of hundreds of billions of dollars – failed to entice the Ayatollahs toward peaceful co-existence, good faith negotiation and abandoning a fanatical ideology. In fact, the diplomatic option transformed the Ayatollahs from a secondary power in 1979 to a leading regional and global power in 2024, and to extend a most critical support to Hezbollah, Houthi, Hamas, and Latin American terrorists – a chief threat to global sanity and US national and homeland security. Contrary to the prevailing misperception, for the sake of global sanity, Iran's Ayatollahs are not a partner for negotiations, but a target for regime change.

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## THE IDF HAS TAKEN OVER THE RAFAH CROSSING ON THE GAZA SIDE

ISRAEL AM May 7 2024

**The IDF has taken over the Rafah crossing** on the Gaza side and is mounting targeted operations against terrorists in eastern Rafah.

The international media reported that Hamas accepted a ceasefire proposal and that Israel subsequently rejected it. In truth, Hamas accepted their own version of a proposal that was totally unacceptable to Israel and the U.S. They did not accept the deal proposed by Israel and supported by the U.S., that would release 33 Israeli hostages in exchange for a 6 week ceasefire and the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. The result of the Hamas "acceptance" and the media coverage was that Israel comes out looking like the bad guy -- just like Hamas planned.

[Hamas clearly fired those rockets at the Kerem Shalom crossing on Sunday to draw Israel into mounting a full scale invasion of Rafah. By doing so they made it clear that they are not interested in a ceasefire or in releasing hostages. All they are interested in is to harm Israel by isolating it in the international community and making it into a pariah state -- and the easiest and quickest way for them to accomplish that is through an Israeli invasion of Rafah that leads to the deaths of thousands of civilians.

Israel has not launched a full scale invasion of Rafah. The IDF is currently just operating in a very limited and targeted manner, in order to be able to stop in the event that Hamas accepts a reasonable ceasefire proposal. Israel also wants to respect the demands of the Biden administration not to invade Rafah. But if Hamas continues to reject proposals and attack Israeli forces, Israel might have to move forward with a full push into Rafah to finish the job it started on October 8 -- the destruction of Hamas as a viable fighting force.]

**The Biden administration is reportedly delaying a shipment** of thousands of weapons to Israel. For more, [click here](#).

**Drone attacks and racket barrages against Israel** continue in the north. The air force is responding.

The IDF announced the names of 2 soldiers killed in a drone attack on Metula on Sunday:

- Major (res.) Dan Kamkagi, 31 years old, from Kfar Oranim, a fighter in patrol battalion 6551, half-fire formation (551).

- Major (res.) Nahman Natan Hertz, 31 years old, from Elazar, a fighter in patrol battalion 6551, half-fire formation (551).

## ON THE GROUND IN GAZA: WHAT I SAW OF ISRAEL'S MILITARY OPERATIONS

[Forbes](#) [David A. Deptula](#) (general, US army), Updated Aug 5, 2024,

Dave Deptula is a retired Air Force 3-star general. He is Dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies and a Senior Scholar at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The smell of dust clung to the air when I departed from the border crossing at Kerem Shalom, at the intersection of Israel, Egypt, and Gaza, this past week on July 25, 2024. I traveled through an ancient city's suburbs to the shores of the Mediterranean, and back again, becoming the first U.S. general officer (active or retired) to travel across Gaza during this war.

Gaza presents an extraordinarily difficult adversary environment. Yet the Israel Defense Forces face the acute challenge of defending their nation while striving to protect Palestinian civilians. Unfortunately, negative perceptions on social media and elsewhere, based on a combination of [disinformation](#), [ignorance](#), and [anti-Semitism](#), indicates there is a wide gap between the reality I witnessed and the perceptions abroad. Sadly, war always involves civilian casualties. But there are many complex factors unfolding on the ground in this war between Israel and Hamas.

Entering Gaza, just past the Kerem Shalom crossing, there was a new road lined on both sides with dozens of trucks, most of them carrying food. The road was constructed by the IDF to make it easier to get food, water, fuel, and other essential supplies to the civilian population. An Israeli Druze colonel in the IDF, responsible for coordinating humanitarian access, explained to me that the numbers vary on average between 200 to 240 trucks entering Gaza every day to deliver food and other [humanitarian aid](#). Some days that number goes even higher.

While there is certainly a difficult situation in Gaza for civilians, [assertions](#) by the International Criminal Court that Israel is intentionally starving Gazan civilians did not match what I witnessed on both sides of the crossing. The average man needs 2500 [calories a day](#) to maintain a stable diet; the average woman needs 2000. At current levels, there is enough aid entering Gaza daily to support over a 3,000 calorie a day diet. But food insecurity remains a challenge in Gaza, IDF officials say, because of Hamas fighters inside Gaza who steal and hoard relief supplies.

Driving into the city of Rafah, I witnessed a substantial level of destruction. IDF officials say that Hamas fighters deliberately mingle with civilians in order to use noncombatants as human shields. The fact is the [killing of Palestinian civilians](#) is a cruel and [illegal](#) element of Hamas' strategy. While there is no denying that civilians are dying because of the IDF's actions, the routine Hamas tactic of walking the streets in civilian clothes with no weapons, then duck into a building knowing where weapons are stored for use against the IDF, makes urban structures legitimate military targets according to the [laws of armed conflict](#). In targeting these, the [principles](#) of distinction and proportionality still apply. The military activities I saw, as well as the processes and procedures followed by the Israeli military, are indicative of the IDF complying with the laws of armed conflict.

In those cases where there are questions of misconduct or errors in the application of military force, these issues are investigated by a judicial arm of the IDF. In fact, such [investigations are currently underway](#) in Israel by a judicial arm that is separate from the military chain of command, causing widespread debates across the Jewish nation. Legal action is imminent. IDF personnel are [legally held accountable](#) for their actions. Israel employs measures not just to comply with international law, but because, whenever hostilities end, Israelis will still be living with the Palestinians as neighbors.

According to the Chair of Urban Warfare Studies at West Point's Modern War Institute, John Spencer, "Israel has done [more to prevent civilian casualties](#) in war than any military in history," he posted on LinkedIn. His studies reveal that the [ratio of enemy belligerent deaths to civilian deaths](#) in Gaza is on the order of 1 to 1.0-1.5. Others estimate that ratio to be on the order of [1 to 2](#). World famous historian Lord Andrew Roberts gave a [compelling expose](#) in the House of Lords to the same effect. In similar urban terrain in Mosul, Iraq, from 2016 to 2017, the ratio was [1 to 2.5](#). The United Nations estimates that the nominal ratio of belligerent casualties to civilian casualties in wars of all types is on the order of [1 to 9](#). While the effects of combat are not conclusive, regarding the implementation of law of armed conflict obligations, they are certainly relevant. It is hard to square the accusations of indifference to Palestinian civilians and indiscriminate warfare with these statistics.

The current war also complicates Israel's obvious interest in avoiding confrontation with Egypt. I drove past Hamas rocket launch positions that were located feet from Gaza's border with Egypt. Hamas operatives know the Israeli Air Force would not strike positions so close to Egypt. This is the same logic Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad use for occupying hospitals, mosques, schools, United Nations facilities, etc. It is important to realize that the law of armed conflict does not categorically prohibit attack on such locations, and that when an enemy transforms such locales into military objectives, [such strikes are legally defensible](#).

In our move to the coast, we also drove over an underground [city of tunnels](#), not unlike those used by subways and trains in New York City. For years, [Hamas has diverted resources](#) intended for the betterment of the Palestinian civilian society to instead build this underground city for wartime purposes. There are underground bunkers full of rockets and booby traps, and command centers for the Hamas military leadership. These are the same tunnels Hamas uses to imprison hostages, smuggle aid, and store ammunition. While much of that has now been emptied, there are even server farms still housed in the Hamas tunnel system. And where does all the electric power needed to keep this underground city operating come from? It is diverted from civilian hospitals, apartments, offices, and often from UN facilities. That is why a critical IDF operational objective is to locate, destroy, or otherwise seal off these tunnels. Hamas' use of their tunnel city enabled them to set the conditions for the October 7th attack in a concealed fashion. By sealing off the terrorist tunnels, the IDF can force Hamas to move to the surface where they can more easily be corralled. It is slow and difficult work, as this is where Hamas is holding many of the remaining hostages. But the IDF is making progress. During my trip into Gaza, I visited an engineering unit tasked with finding and then physically confirming the exact location of the tunnels. Since going into Rafah, this unit locates, on average, two tunnels a day. Once located, they turn over the mission of destroying the tunnels to another unit with experts equipped to accomplish that task.



Once we arrived at the shore of the Mediterranean, next to a suburb of Rafah known as the Swedish village, due to the source of its aid funding, I had the opportunity to discuss IDF operations with a commander in the area. He has been fighting since ground operations began in late October 2023 in northern Gaza. He described the difficulty of the operational environment.

The commander was confident when asked about how long it would take to break Hamas, answering that, “it will take time, but it can be done.” He emphasized that this was a war—not a counterinsurgency operation. There is a lot to unpack in that statement. It became very evident during my visit that the IDF is competently integrating all available means to accomplish their objectives from all domains—air, sea, ground, space, and the electromagnetic spectrum.

As we talked, the commander pointed out an Israeli Navy ship about a mile and a half off the coast, mentioning how it was providing valuable support in the immediate fight. With machine gun fire echoing to the northeast of our position, we could still hear Israeli Air Force drones flying overhead, and occasionally fighter jets tied closely to the actions of the Israeli Army on the ground.

There are both lethal and non-lethal operations integrated across the traditional armed services. How IDF actions are conducted are informed by an assessment that involves complex telecommunication operations, including the integration and distribution of the various means of data collected by intelligence organizations. The data is then translated into situational awareness, actualized by means across the electromagnetic spectrum. From my experience, it was evident that the IDF has achieved a level of integration and an authentic understanding of how to genuinely apply jointness—using the right force, at the right place, at the right time—regardless of the service components sourcing those forces.

While there are multiple alternatives proposals for how to end this war, one thing is certain: the IDF takes many precautions in an effort to reduce civilian casualties. Thousands of phone calls, texts, leaflets, as well as roof-knocking (dropping small munitions on top of buildings) are some of the warnings the IDF uses to notify civilians to evacuate Hamas-occupied structures. I visited an IDF [control center](#), used to integrate information from a variety of sources, that closely monitors civilian locations and movements throughout Gaza. The data is continually updated to inform IDF operations to minimize unintended collateral damage, as well as to evacuate and separate the civilian population from combat operations to the greatest degree possible.

There is no “moral equivalency” [as implied by the White House’s public statements](#), when comparing Israel’s “right to defend itself” with ending the war in Gaza to stop “the death of far too many innocent civilians,” at least, not before the IDF reduces Hamas’ military capabilities so they can never repeat the atrocities of 7 Oct. There is no such thing as “immaculate war” where there are no civilian casualties. Unfortunately, Hamas is only one element of an alliance of terrorist activities—Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthi’s, radical Islamic militias—all under the influence of Iran. Collectively these organizations and the current Iranian government are a threat to both liberal democracy and free trade. What I witnessed in Gaza impressed upon me that the sooner the people subjugated by these militant forces—including Palestinians in Gaza—can be free of extremism, the sooner the world can become a better place.

**Disclosure:** *Travel for my trip was supported by the Friends of Israel Initiative, a U.S.-based non-profit 501c3.*

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[David A. Deptula](#)

Follow

Dave Deptula is a retired Air Force 3-star general. He is Dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace

## **HAMAS, FATAH SIGN DECLARATION ON PLANS TO SEEK JOINT GOVERNMENT; ISRAEL SLAMS FATAH**

**China upbeat on agreement made in Beijing, though previous efforts to end rift have failed;  
Israel's Katz: 'Instead of rejecting terrorism, Abbas embraces the murderers and rapists'**

[TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) Agencies and TOI Staff 23 July 2024

The Hamas terror group and the Palestinian Authority's Fatah movement signed a declaration in Beijing on ending a years-long rift, Chinese state media said Tuesday, as the war in Gaza rages on.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who hosted senior Hamas official Moussa Abu Marzouk, Fatah envoy Mahmud al-Aloul and emissaries from 12 other Palestinian groups, said they had agreed to set up an "interim national reconciliation government" to govern postwar Gaza.

The declaration is the result of the latest in a series of talks meant to unite the sides. But previous declarations have failed, including a similar deal in 2011, casting doubt over whether the China-sponsored negotiations will actually lead to a resolution. It also comes as Israel and Hamas are weighing an internationally backed ceasefire proposal that would wind down the nine-month war and potentially free 120 Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

*"Today we sign an agreement for national unity and we say that the path to completing this journey is national unity. We are committed to national unity and we call for it," Abu Marzouk said after meeting Wang and the other envoys.*

Israel lambasted Fatah for agreeing to reconciliation with the terror group.

"Instead of rejecting terrorism, Mahmoud Abbas embraces the murderers and rapists of Hamas, revealing his true face," Foreign Minister Israel Katz wrote on X, referring to the PA president.

"In reality, this won't happen because Hamas's rule will be crushed, and Abbas will be watching Gaza from afar," he wrote in English. "Israel's security will remain solely in Israel's hands."

The declaration comes as negotiations continue between Israel and Hamas for a hostage-ceasefire deal to end the war in Gaza, which began on October 7 when thousands of Hamas-led terrorists invaded southern Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages.

It is believed that 120 hostages are currently held in Gaza, including the bodies of over 40 confirmed dead by the IDF. A framework endorsed by both sides would see Hamas release the remaining hostages in stages, in exchange for a permanent ceasefire and the release of hundreds of Palestinian security prisoners.

A previous Israel-Hamas deal in November saw 105 civilian hostages released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian security prisoners, during a weeklong truce.

**Since October 7, Hamas officials have said that the group does not want to return to ruling Gaza as it did before the conflict, and have called for the formation of a government of technocrats to be agreed upon by the various Palestinian factions, which would prepare the way for elections in both Gaza and the West Bank with the intention of forming a unified government.**

The agreement underscored China's growing role in Middle East diplomacy, after success in the restoration of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Also present at Tuesday's meeting were envoys from Egypt, Algeria and Russia, according to Wang. A joint statement issued after the most recent talks in Beijing gave no details on how or when a new Palestinian government might be formed, saying only that it would be done "by agreement among the factions."

According to the joint statement, the two groups are committed to the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, which Israel captured from Jordan and Egypt, respectively, in 1967, during the Six Day War.

Fatah and Hamas have been rivals since Hamas violently routed forces loyal to Abbas's Fatah in Gaza in 2007, taking over the coastal enclave.

The deadly internal fighting happened after Hamas won a Palestinian legislative election in 2006, following Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza the previous year.

The Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority, headed by Abbas, administers parts of the West Bank. It is widely viewed by the Palestinian public as corrupt and out of touch, and many resent its security coordination with Israel.

Repeated attempts at mending the rift between Fatah and Hamas have failed, wrecked by the factions' bitter rivalry over power.

US President Joe Biden's administration envisions a revamped Palestinian Authority to rule postwar Gaza and has sought a series of reforms that might make it a viable presence in the war-ravaged territory. Israel has rejected that idea, but has not put forward a credible alternative for who will govern Gaza.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a smaller terror group allied with Hamas, issued a statement Tuesday after the talks saying that it still "rejects any formula that includes recognition of Israel explicitly or implicitly" and that it had "demanded the withdrawal of the Palestine Liberation Organization's recognition of Israel."

## **IDF COMPLETE RAID ON NORTH GAZA HOSPITAL, SAYS SOME 240 TERROR SUSPECTS ARRESTED**

**Military says facility was a 'key stronghold' for Hamas,  
detains hospital's director, Oct. 7 terrorists;  
also says it evacuated hundreds of patients to other hospitals**

[Times of Israel](#) [Emanuel Fabian](#) 28 December 2024

The Israeli military said on Saturday that it had completed an operation against Hamas at northern Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital and the surrounding area.

Some 240 suspected terror operatives were detained, including the medical center's director and 15 terrorists who participated in the October 7, 2023, onslaught on southern Israel.

The Israel Defense Forces, which last operated against Hamas at Kamal Adwan in October, said the operation was launched because the hospital had "once again become a key stronghold for terrorist organizations and continues to be used as a hideout for terrorist operatives."

The army said the hospital was still used by Hamas "despite repeated calls to refrain from allowing [terror operatives] to exploit hospitals for military activities."

The operation was led by the IDF's 162nd Division. At the start of the raid, the IDF said troops of the 401st Armored Brigade surrounded the hospital, detained several terror operatives, and killed additional gunmen. Members of the Navy's Shayetet 13 commando unit then carried out "precise activities" inside the hospital, during which they located and captured weapons, including grenades, handguns, ammunition, and other military equipment, according to the IDF.

The Navy's Shayetet 13 commando unit operates at northern Gaza's Kamal Adwan hospital, in a video released by the IDF on December 28, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

Over 240 members of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and others suspected of being members of terror groups were detained amid the operation, the military said.

The IDF said some of the terror operatives "tried to impersonate patients and medical staff, and some tried to escape in ambulances."

Among those detained was the director of Kamal Adwan, Hussam Abu Safiya, who the IDF said is suspected of being a Hamas operative.

The Hamas-run health ministry also said Abu Safiya was detained, but a statement posted to his Instagram account said, "All that is being circulated about Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya being arrested is false news," adding, "thank God he is fine, but the communications and network are very bad."

At least 15 of those arrested at the hospital and the surrounding area participated in the October 7 onslaught, according to the military. Several members of Hamas's engineering and anti-tank forces were also arrested in the operation.

The suspects were questioned by field interrogators from the Military Intelligence Directorate's Unit 504 and the Shin Bet security agency. The IDF said many admitted to interrogators that they had participated in "terror activity" in the hospital area.

During the operation, the military said operatives launched RPGs and anti-tank projectiles at troops from an area near the hospital, and attempted other attacks.

There were no injuries among the Israeli forces, and the operatives behind the attacks were killed, the IDF said. It added that a drone strike eliminated a cell of gunmen whose members tried to flee the area.

Before launching the operation, the IDF said it enabled the evacuation of 350 patients, caregivers, and medical personnel to other hospitals, in an effort coordinated by the Defense Ministry's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT).

In the weeks prior to the operation, "tens of thousands of liters of fuel, food, and medical supplies for the essential functioning of the hospital" were delivered to Kamal Adwan.

During the raid itself, the IDF said another 95 patients, caregivers, and medical personnel were evacuated from Kamal Adwan to the nearby Indonesian Hospital, where 5,000 liters of fuel, two generators, and medical equipment were delivered "to maintain and operate essential systems in the hospital."

Hundreds of Palestinian civilians also left the hospital area "via defined evacuation routes," the military added.

The IDF [denied that Israeli troops had set fire](#) to the hospital as claimed by Hamas.

IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani pushed back on Hamas's account. "While IDF troops were not in the hospital, a small fire broke out in an empty building inside the hospital that is under control," he said, adding that a preliminary investigation had found "no connection" between military activity and the fire.

"Running with unsubstantiated reports on the cause of this fire shows nothing but questionable journalistic integrity," said Shoshani.

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry had accused Israeli troops of setting fires in several parts of Kamal Adwan, including the lab and surgery department, and said that 25 patients and 60 health workers remained in the hospital.

The ministry also said Israeli troops had entered the hospital, taken staff and patients outside and forced them to strip in winter weather.

Unverified video circulating on social media purported to show patients and staff being marched outside in front of IDF tanks.

The IDF [last operated at the Kamal Adwan facility in late October](#), detaining dozens of terror operatives and locating and destroying weapons and terror infrastructure.

At the time, the military released footage from the interrogation of a detained individual, who identified himself as a driver and paramedic for Kamal Adwan Hospital and Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City.

He alleged in the footage that Hamas was using ambulances at the hospital to move operatives around.

"Hamas military operatives are present. They are in the courtyards, at the gates of the buildings, in the offices," he said when asked about the terror group's operations around Kamal Adwan.

"They operate ambulances to transport their wounded military operatives and to transport them for their missions," he went on. "This is instead of using the ambulances for the benefit of civilians."

“We, the public in the northern Gaza Strip, are sick of this situation,” he said when asked if he had anything more to add. “We have had enough; they [ Hamas ] are stationed in the hospitals, stationed in the schools.” Hamas has fought from within hospitals throughout the war and even periodically hid some of the Israeli hostages kidnapped on October 7 inside them. International law generally prohibits targeting hospitals during wartime, but hospitals can lose this protection if used for military purposes.

Since October, Israel has intensified its land and air offensive in northern Gaza, stating its goal is to prevent Hamas from regrouping in the area.

Israel had ordered civilians to evacuate the area amid preparations to invade Gaza in October 2023 in response to the Hamas onslaught, which saw thousands of terrorists storm southern Israel to kill some 1,200 people and take 251 hostages.

**PART K-5**

**HAMAS - FINANCE**



## **HAMAS LEADERS WORTH STAGGERING \$11BILLION REVEL IN LUXURY – WHILE GAZA’S PEOPLE SUFFER**

[NEW YORK POST](#) Nov7 2023 [Isabel Vincent](#) and Benjamin Weinthal

While their people languish in poverty and are treated as human shields, the leaders of Hamas live billionaire lifestyles.

The terror group’s three top leaders alone are worth a staggering total of \$11 billion and enjoy a life of luxury in the sanctuary of the emirate of Qatar.

The emirate has long welcomed the leaders of the terror group and installed them in its luxury hotels and villas at the same time as it hosts a vast American military presence.

Now US Rep. Andy Ogles (R-Tenn.) is sponsoring a bill that would strip Qatar of its status as a key US ally, The Post has learned, unless it kicks out the Hamas leadership.

The terrorist group, which is responsible for the antisemitic [Oct. 7 massacre](#) of more than 1,400 innocent civilians and soldiers in southern Israel, continues to hold over 200 hostages in Gaza.

Hamas runs an office in Qatar’s capital, Doha, and leaders Ismail Haniyeh, Moussa Abu Marzuk and Khaled Mashal maintain a luxurious lifestyle.



**One of the sons of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh lounges in a luxury hotel suite in Qatar.**

**Haniyeh is worth more than \$4 billion.**

**Ofir Gendelman/ Twitter**



**Hamas leaders live the high life while many of the more than 2 million residents of Gaza City live in abject poverty.**

**EPA**



Three of the terror group's top leaders  
enjoy a life of luxury  
in the sanctuary of the emirate of  
Qatar.

Mapcreator.io/OSM.org; AW3D30

They have been seen at its diplomatic club, photographed on private jets, and traveled widely.

The leadership would have been there for the 2022 soccer World Cup.

In contrast, most of the population of more than 2 million in the Gaza Strip, which Hamas has ruled since 2007, live in abject poverty.

Haniyeh, 61, the head of Hamas' politburo, was prime minister of all Palestinian territory following elections in 2006, although he was booted from office a year later.

He continued to rule the Gaza Strip until 2017 before ending up in Qatar.

Haniyeh, a father of 13 who presides over one of the world's wealthiest terrorist groups, is worth more than \$4 billion.

#### SEE ALSO



[Hamas official vows to repeat Israel attacks 'again and again' until it's destroyed](#)

He has been photographed with his two adult sons, Maaz and Abdel Salam, living the high life in luxury hotels in Qatar and Turkey, according to a recent social media post from the [Embassy of Israel in the US](#).

Last week, Haniyeh travelled to Iran to meet with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran is a longtime sponsor of Hamas.

Last month, the Four Seasons hotel in Doha said he was not one of its guests after calls for Bill Gates, who owns a controlling stake in the chain, to kick him out.

It did not address whether he had previously stayed there.

Among its high-end offerings are suites with sea views starting at \$900 a night.

The Hamas leader's son Maaz Haniyeh is known as "the father of real estate" in Gaza for his collection of villas and buildings.

He lives a playboy lifestyle in Turkey, and this year obtained a Turkish passport, according to [Israel Today](#). Haniyeh Sr. also has Turkish citizenship, according to reports.

Abu Marzuk, 72, a senior Hamas political leader who heads its "international relations office," is estimated by the Israeli government to be worth \$3 billion.

He has a master's degree in construction management from Colorado State University and was detained in New York when US immigration authorities found his name on a terrorist watch list in 1995.

And Mashal, 67, who issued a global threat against Jews after the Oct. 7 atrocities, is worth more than \$4 billion, according to the Israeli government.

Abu Marzuk, who is widely considered the second in command of Hamas, was arrested by US immigration authorities in 1995 and held at the Manhattan Correctional Center. REUTERS

Khaled Mashal, one of the leaders of Hamas, is worth more than \$4 billion, according to reports. AP

The presence of the Hamas leaders in Qatar has long been justified by the emirate as part of its support for turning the terror group into "a responsible governing power," according to a report from the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.

The country provides Hamas with between \$120 million and \$480 million per year, according to the October report by the Washington, DC-based nonprofit that studies foreign policy.

"These funds benefit Hamas leaders directly through payroll and kickback schemes and indirectly through social services and government operations that help Hamas maintain political control over Gaza," the report said.

Billionaire Hamas leaders travel by private jet and enjoy five-star hotels and mansions in Qatar.

Qatar is also home to the Al Jazeera news channel, which the report alleges "spreads antisemitism, anti-Americanism and incitement to violence throughout the Arab world."

"Qatar is Hamas and Hamas is Qatar," Yigal Carmon, president of the Washington, DC-based Middle East Media Research Institute, said in an interview with The Post in Israel.

But moves to force action on Hamas are ramping up in DC.

Hamas leader Khaled Mashal enjoys a luxury lifestyle, dining at some of the Middle East's best restaurants while in Qatar.

Ogles' bill would strip Qatar of its special status in the top tier of America's non-NATO allies alongside Israel, Taiwan, South Korea, Australia and Japan.

Ogles told The Post Tuesday, "As Hamas terrorists continue to wreak havoc on the lives of innocent Israeli civilians, the United States must ensure there is no ally supporting them. Sadly, the State of Qatar is still funding and supporting Hamas as its leadership enjoys political refuge in Doha."

The country has had the special status since last year, but Ogles' move would make it conditional on removing Hamas.

The importance of Qatar is regularly underlined, such as this visit by US Central Command commander

Gen. Erik Kurilla to the Qatari armed forces chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Salem Bin Hamad Al-Nabit, last year.  
U.S. Central Command

Along with hosting Hamas, Qatar is also one of the most important military bases for the US in the Middle East.

It is home to US Central Command's forward base in the Middle East at the giant Al Udeid air base, which itself is vital to Air Force operations in the Gulf.

Qatar is not the only source of Hamas' cash. The group also took in nearly \$400 million in the last two years from the UN, which does not recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization.

At Al Udeid air base, the US has one of its most important presences in the Middle East. Visitors have included Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in 2021.<sup>AP</sup>

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency provided Hamas with \$380 million since 2021, according to the FDD.

Much of that cash came from the Biden administration, which has provided \$1 billion to the UNRWA since 2021.

## ISRAEL FACES 'LONG, DIFFICULT WAR' AFTER HAMAS ATTACK FROM GAZA

[BBC NEWS](#) Paul Kirby 8 October 2023



Watch:  
A day of violence and fear  
BBC News

**Israel's military has warned that Hamas militants from Gaza are still fighting inside Israel after they infiltrated southern communities and left a reported 300 people dead.**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has told Israelis they are going into a "long and difficult war".

Hundreds of gunmen burst into southern Israel, killing soldiers and civilians, and taking into Gaza what the army said was a "significant number" of hostages.

Israel has responded with air strikes.

These have continued on Sunday morning, with the Israeli Air Force saying it was targeting "operational infrastructure" in Gaza.

The Israeli military also carried out artillery strikes in southern Lebanon after mortars were fired from there towards Israeli positions in the disputed Mount Dov/Shebaa Farms area.

Lebanon's militant Hezbollah movement claimed it had carried out the attack "in solidarity with the Palestinian resistance".

More than 300 people have been killed by Israeli strikes in Gaza since Palestinian militants infiltrated Israel from Gaza on Saturday morning, according to Palestinian health officials.

Gazans received Israeli text messages overnight telling them to leave their homes and move to city centres or take refuge in shelters.

The Israeli prime minister said in an overnight message that the war had been "forced on us by a murderous attack by Hamas", and the first stage would end in the coming hours when most of the militants on Israeli territory had been wiped out. Israel would restore security to its citizens and win, he added.

The Israeli government also said it would cut off electricity, fuel and goods supplies to Gaza.

Israel's nightmare scenario - armed Palestinian militants at large in the south of the country - began early on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath and festival of Simchat Torah.

Gunmen cut through the Gaza perimeter fence, storming into Israel on motorbikes, paragliders and by sea. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) spokesman said they numbered in the high hundreds, while more than 3,000 rockets were fired across Israel across the day.

"They attacked dozens of Israeli communities and IDF bases and went door to door, house to house," said Lt Col Jonathan Conricus.

"They executed Israeli civilians in cold blood in their homes and then continued to drag into Gaza Israeli civilians and military personnel. I'm talking women, children, elderly, disabled."

Distressing videos emerged of Israeli civilians running for their lives from a festival in the desert, and of women being bundled into vehicles and kidnapped.

Media caption,

Watch: Party-goers recall militant attack

Israelis rang into news channels saying they were hiding in their homes and scared for their lives. The town of Netiv HaAsara said 15 of its residents were shot dead by Hamas militants.

In the town of Sderot, a resident called Shlomi described seeing a "sea of bodies, inside Sderot along the road".

### **MORE ON ISRAEL-GAZA ATTACKS**

- Follow LIVE: [Latest updates](#)
- Hostages: [What we know about Israelis taken by Hamas](#)
- Analysis: [Israel blindsided, says Jeremy Bowen](#)
- Explained: [What's going on in Gaza and Israel, and why now?](#)

Gradually the Israeli military began to reassert control over most of the southern communities. Hostages held in a dining room in Kibbutz Be'eri were eventually freed after 18 hours, Israeli media reported. Shortly afterwards further reports said troops had freed hostages in the town of Ofakim and the attackers holding them had been killed.

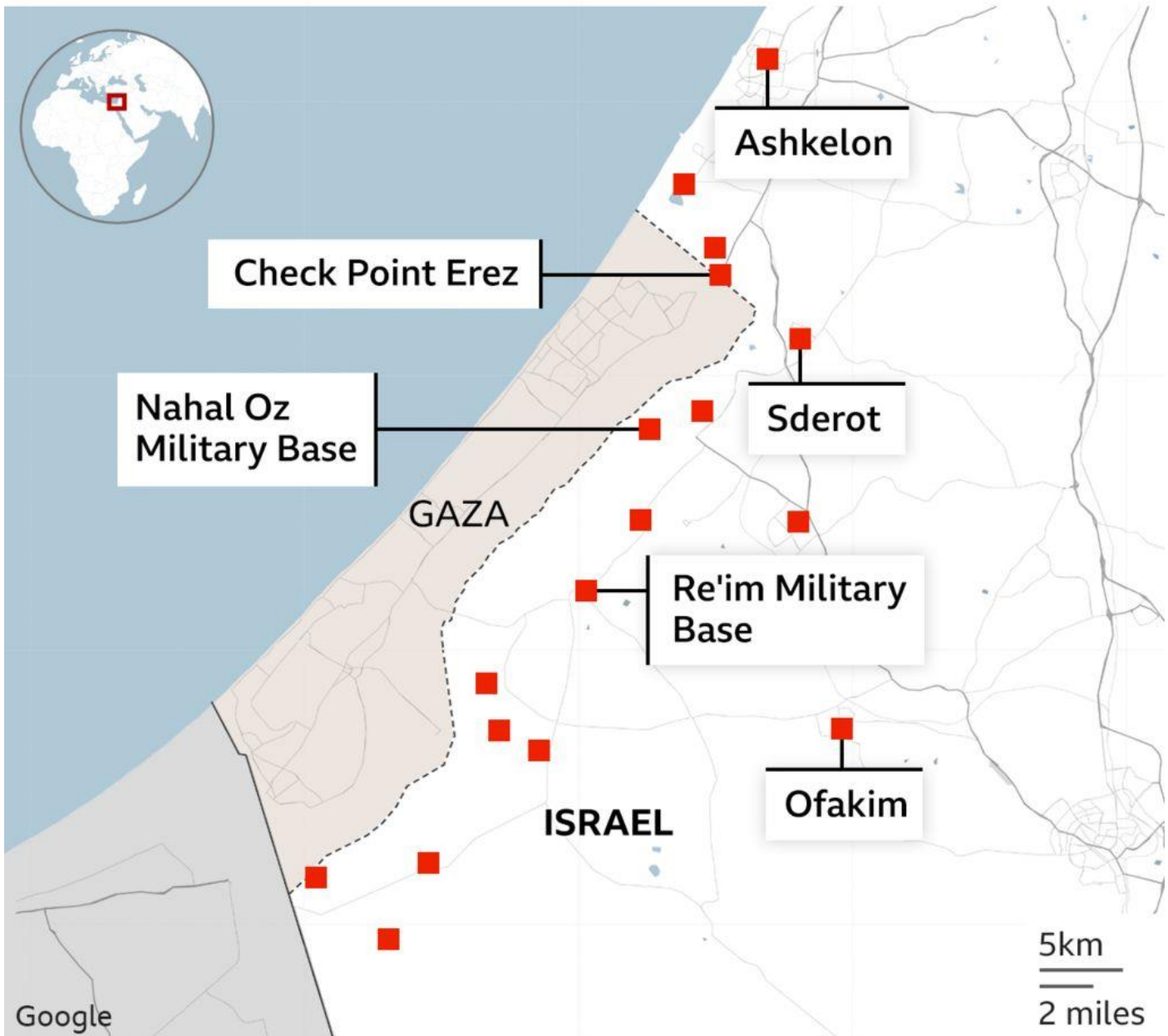
US President Joe Biden spoke of America's "rock-solid and unwavering" support for Israel which was "under attack orchestrated by a terrorist organisation".

Hamas's military wing said the number of Israelis captured was several times greater than dozens and they included senior military officers.

By the end of Saturday, more than 1,500 people had been wounded in Gaza and 1,500 more in Israel, officials said.

The army said Hamas's unprecedented level of violence would be met with an unprecedented response. Tens of thousands of reservists have been mobilised and are now expected to launch a ground operation in Gaza.

# Palestinian infiltrations near the Gaza strip



**BBC**

On Saturday Israeli strikes destroyed the 11-storey Palestine Tower in downtown Gaza City, which houses Hamas radio stations in the rooftop.

The Israeli air force said it struck "military infrastructure in two multi-storey buildings used by senior Hamas terrorist operatives for carrying out terrorist activity", and that it had warned occupants to evacuate before the attack.

- **Bowen: Israel blindsided by most serious attack in a generation**
- **How did Israeli intelligence fail to stop major attack?**

There was also violence in several locations in the West Bank on Saturday. Palestinian medics reported that six Palestinians were shot dead during confrontations with Israeli forces.

Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif called on Palestinians everywhere to join the group's operation.

"We have decided to put an end to these Israeli offences with God's help, so the enemy understands that the time of wreaking havoc without being held accountable is over," he said.

Ismail Haniyeh, the leader-in-exile of Hamas, claimed that Palestinian factions intended to expand the violence to the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem.

Ghazi Hamad, a Hamas spokesman, meanwhile told the BBC that the group had direct backing for the attack from Iran.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas - a political rival of Hamas - said the Palestinian people had the right to defend themselves against the "terror of settlers and occupation troops".

There has been strong international condemnation of the Hamas attacks.

UN Secretary General António Guterres said he was "appalled by reports that civilians have been attacked and abducted from their own homes", while the UK's Foreign Secretary, James Cleverly, said it "unequivocally condemns the horrific attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians".

However Saudi Arabia called for an immediate halt to the escalation, saying it had warned repeatedly about the dangers stemming from "continued occupation" and "the deprivation of the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights".



## THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT HAS ISSUED ARREST WARRANTS FOR NETANYAHU AND GALLANT

[NPR Willem Marx](#) [Nick Spicer](#) November 21, 2024

LONDON — The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants on Thursday for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip.

[The court's decision](#) followed allegations leveled in May by the ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan.

Those allegations, which underpinned the warrants, focused on the period between Oct. 8, 2023 and May 20, 2024, and encompassed the alleged use of "starvation as a method of warfare" and "intentionally directing an attack against the civilian population," as well as what the prosecutor's team said was the deliberate targeting of medical facilities and restrictions on medical and humanitarian supplies.



[Middle East crisis — explained](#)

[The International Criminal Court is seeking warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders](#)

Israel, whose earlier attempts to challenge the ICC's jurisdiction were denied by the court, rejects the charges against Netanyahu and Gallant. The country's President Isaac Herzog called the decision to issue arrest warrants "outrageous" and said the court had turned the concept of universal justice into a "universal laughing stock." Netanyahu's office said it "utterly rejects the false and absurd charges" and called the decision "antisemitic."

The ICC also issued a warrant Thursday [for the arrest of Muhammad Deif](#), Hamas' military chief, for crimes against humanity and war crimes. Israel said in August that it had killed Deif but Hamas has not confirmed Deif's death and the ICC said the prosecution was not yet in a position to determine his status. Khan, the chief prosecutor, had previously sought arrest warrants for two other Hamas leaders, Yahya Sinwar and Ismail Haniyeh, but withdrew these requests as both men have since been confirmed dead.

The warrant issued Thursday for Deif is tied to the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, assault on Israel, which sparked the current war. Authorities in Israel say more than 1,200 people were killed in the Oct. 7 attack, and some 250 were taken hostage in Gaza.

In issuing the warrant, the court's pretrial chamber determined there were reasonable grounds to believe that Deif, also known as Mohammed Diab Ibrahim al-Masri, was responsible for crimes against humanity including "murder; extermination; torture; and rape," as well as war crimes that included "murder, cruel treatment, torture, taking hostages, outrages upon personal dignity and rape."

While Israel and Hamas have repeatedly denied the prosecutor's allegations against their respective leaders, Hamas hailed the warrants against the two Israelis in a statement as an "important historical precedent, and a correction to a long path of historical injustice against our people."

Israel's military action in Gaza has so far killed nearly 44,000 people, according to the territory's health ministry that Hamas oversees. The ICC said there were reasonable grounds to believe that Netanyahu and Gallant bore "criminal responsibility as civilian superiors for the war crime of intentionally directing an attack against the civilian population."

"The ICC's judges stood up for victims and survivors in Palestine and Israel," said Mark Kersten, a senior consultant for the Wayamo Foundation, a Berlin-based nonprofit focused on strengthening the rule of international law. "It may not be that we see trials in the near future, but this is a powerful signal that the only permanent international criminal court in the world believes them — and not their perpetrators."

For Netanyahu and Gallant, the issuance of arrest warrants means the 124 member countries of the International Criminal Court are now under a legal obligation to arrest them on their territory.

Netanyahu visited the United States recently, but the U.S. is not a signatory to the treaty that established the court, so is not under this obligation. (Others include Russia, China and India).

A U.S. National Security Council spokesperson [told journalists](#) on Thursday the United States was "deeply concerned by the prosecutor's rush to seek arrest warrants and the troubling process errors that led to this decision."

But some officials in Europe, the Middle East and Africa welcomed the news. Caspar Veldkamp, the foreign minister of the Netherlands, where the ICC is headquartered, [told the Dutch parliament](#) his government would no longer engage in any "non-essential" contacts with Netanyahu and Gallant, and would arrest the Israeli premier if he set foot in Dutch territory.

And in France, a spokesperson for the foreign ministry said the country would act "in line with the ICC's statutes," but as to whether it would arrest Netanyahu if he entered France, the question was "legally complex."

**PART K-6**

**HAMAS TUNNELS**

## **WHY THE MAZE OF TUNNELS UNDER GAZA IS KEY TO THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR**

### **VIDEO**

[The Wall Street Journal](#) 25 October 2023 5min

Israel is gearing up for a possible ground offensive of Gaza.

Underneath the Palestinian enclave

sits a labyrinth of tunnels used by Hamas as a key military asset.

These tunnels were used by Hamas militants in Israel's seven-week war on Gaza in 2014 allowing for Hamas to hide weapons, equipment and troops.

WSJ's Rory Jones – who visited them in 2014 -

explains how they pose a unique challenge to Israel and could make urban combat costly for both Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians.

Chapters: [0:00](#) Hamas's underground tunnels

[0:47](#) The tunnels' design and function

[2:45](#) Challenges in combating the tunnels

[4:25](#) Israeli hostages in tunnels

## INSIDE THE TUNNELS OF GAZA

IMPORTANT – GO TO [REUTERS](#) TO SEE FULL GRAPHICS

[REUTERS](#) [Adolfo Arranz](#), [Jonathan Saul](#), [Stephen Farrell](#), [Simon Scarr](#) and [Clare Trainor](#)

Dec 31 2023





Beneath the warscape of Gaza City lies a vast network of tunnels built by the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Some entrance shafts are hidden among what remains of the city's multi-storey buildings, ravaged by Israeli air strikes. Others are concealed in sandy dunes outside the city. Or tucked away in private homes. They lead to a warren of interconnecting passages that stretches below Gaza's streets, extending for hundreds of miles into almost every area of the enclave.

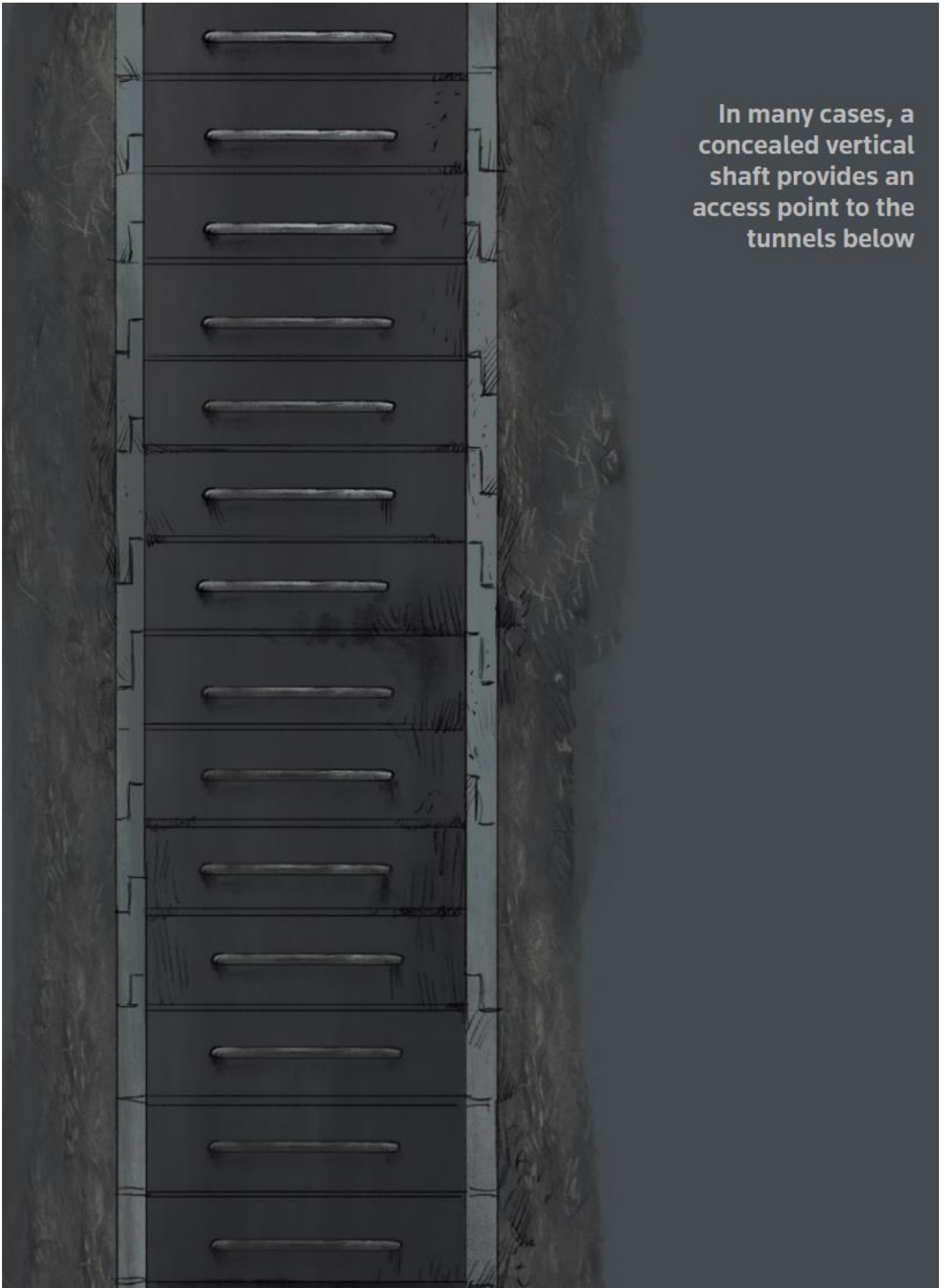
Reuters spoke to seven military experts and officials, and drew on its own reporting on the ground in Gaza, as well as descriptions and images from Hamas and the Israeli military, to piece together a picture of the scale and sophistication of the tunnel network



Climbing bars

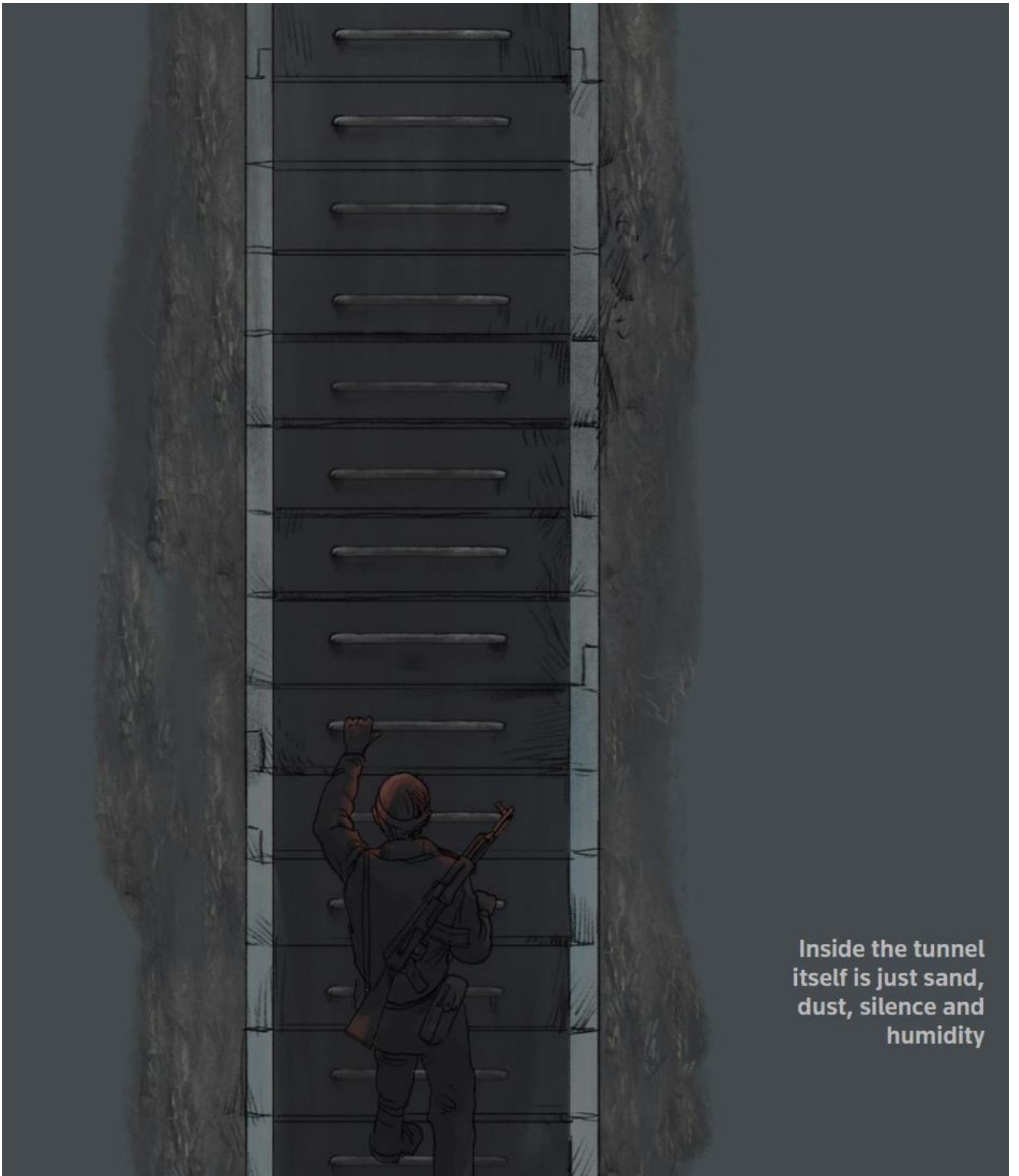
1m

Supporting wall can be  
made from concrete  
panels or bricks

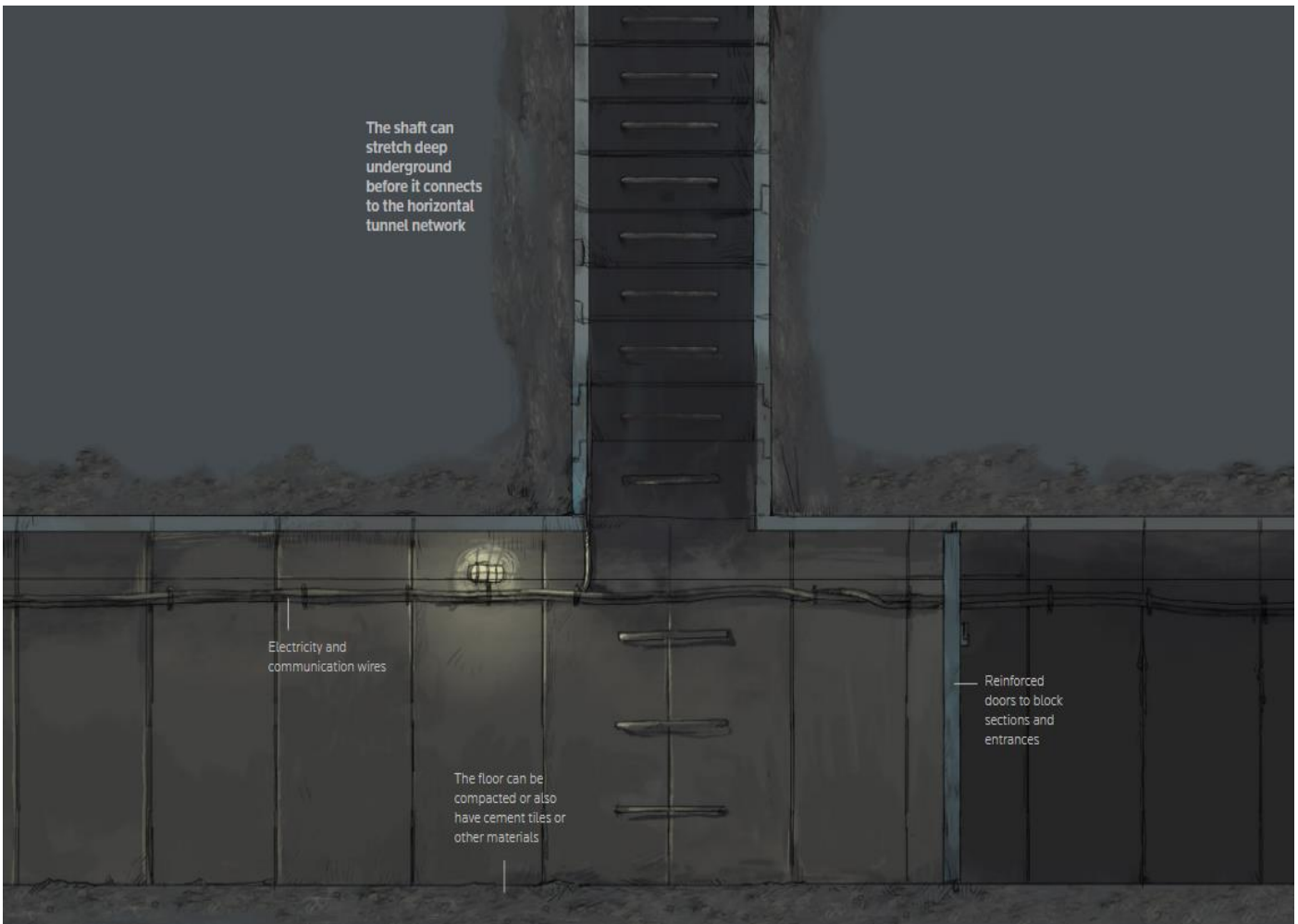


**In many cases, a concealed vertical shaft provides an access point to the tunnels below**





Inside the tunnel  
itself is just sand,  
dust, silence and  
humidity



## THE GAZA METRO

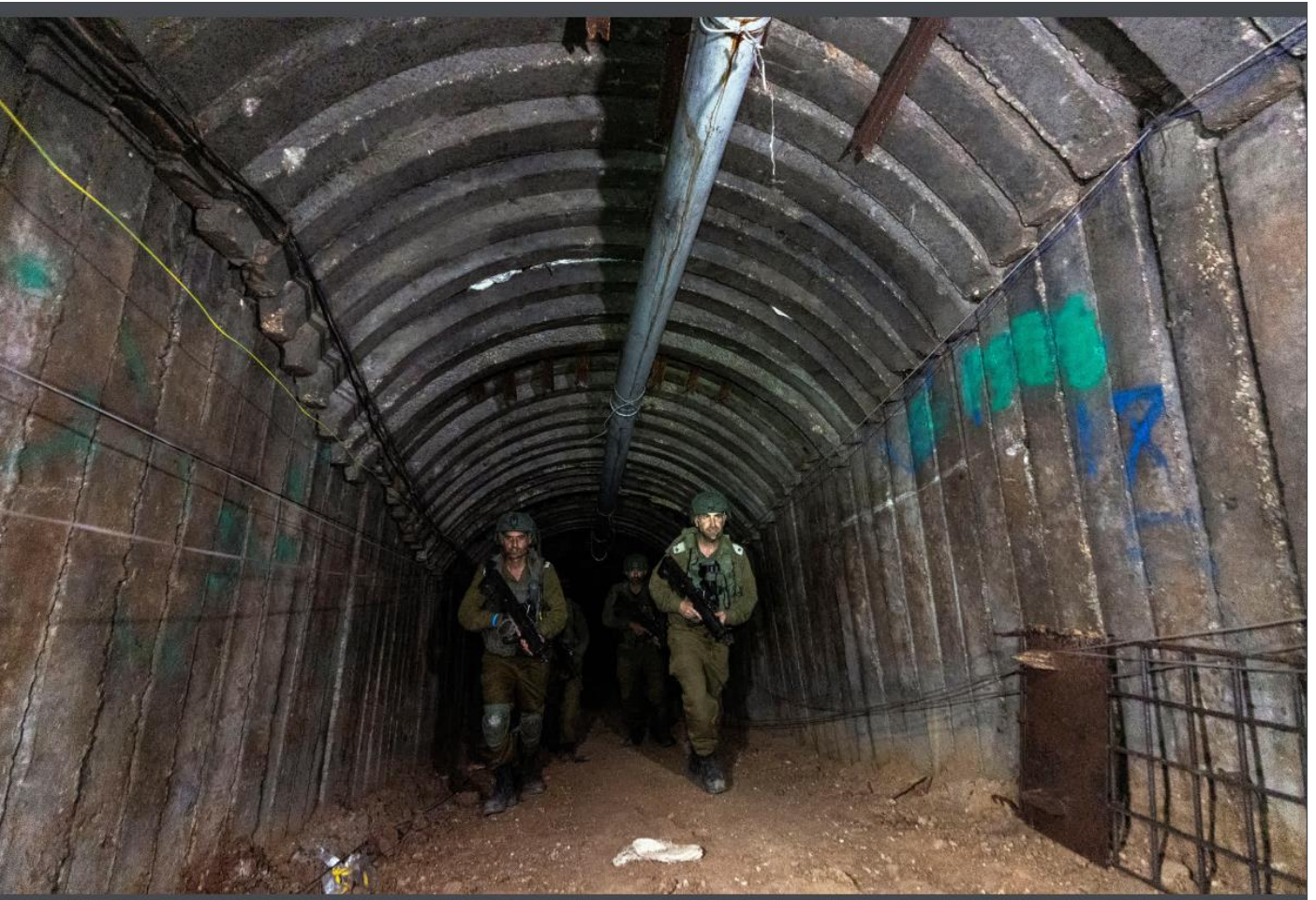
Hamas, which has controlled the Gaza Strip since 2007, said two years before the current conflict erupted that it had installed a network of more than 500 kilometers (310 miles) of tunnels - roughly equivalent to half the length of the New York subway system.

The Israeli military has nicknamed it the Gaza metro.

Israel says the tunnels have been a primary target of its air strikes, artillery bombardment and ground forces since the war began. Images shared by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), as well as Reuters reporting on the ground, show the tunnels have specialized sections for launching military attacks, as well as logistics areas, storage facilities and transportation routes.

Hamas has said it is using the tunnels, and other safe places, to hide hostages seized in its Oct. 7 attack on Israel. Hamas gunmen killed some 1,200 people and took 240 captives in the raid, which sparked the war. Around 110 of those hostages have been released, most of them during a week-long ceasefire that ended in late November, while Israel says 129 remain in Gaza, though it says 22 of those are believed to be dead.

Israel's air and artillery bombardment has killed more than 21,800 people, according to health authorities in Hamas-run Gaza.



*Israeli soldiers walk through what Israel's military says is an iron-girded tunnel designed by Hamas to disgorge carloads of Palestinian fighters for a surprise storming of the border, amid the Israeli army's ongoing ground operation against Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, close to Erez crossing in the northern Gaza Strip, December 15, 2023. REUTERS/Amir Cohen*

The scale of some of the tunnels demonstrate significant planning and resources. In mid-December, the Israeli military uncovered what it called the biggest tunnel to date. The passageway, wide enough to drive a car through, emerged in a sand dune at the northern edge of the Gaza Strip, just 100 meters south of Israel's Erez military checkpoint, which controls all pedestrian access from Israel into Gaza.

Reinforced with concrete and iron, the tunnel was 3 meters (10 feet) in diameter, and 4 km (2.5 miles) long - enough to reach into northern Gaza City. With cables and piping to provide power and ventilation, the tunnel descended down a ramp to a depth of 50 meters below ground, the Israeli military said.

Erez was one of the places attacked by Hamas gunmen on Oct. 7. The Israeli military said the tunnel was designed to transport Hamas fighters to the border area, but didn't confirm it was used in the attack.

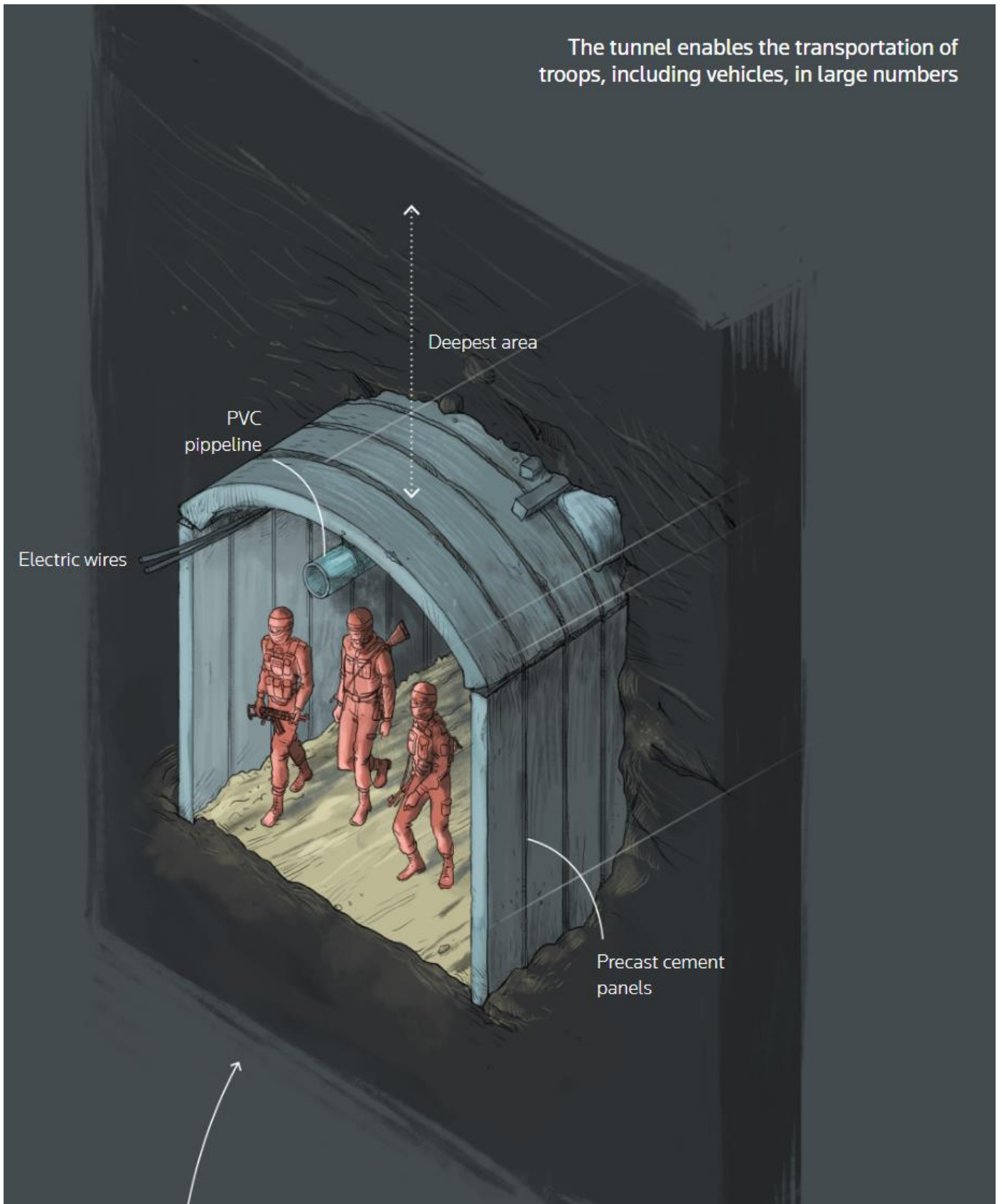
Hamas responded to Israel's discovery by releasing a video of what appeared to be bodycam footage of Oct. 7, showing fighters emerging from a tunnel in the dunes and attacking an Israeli military position.

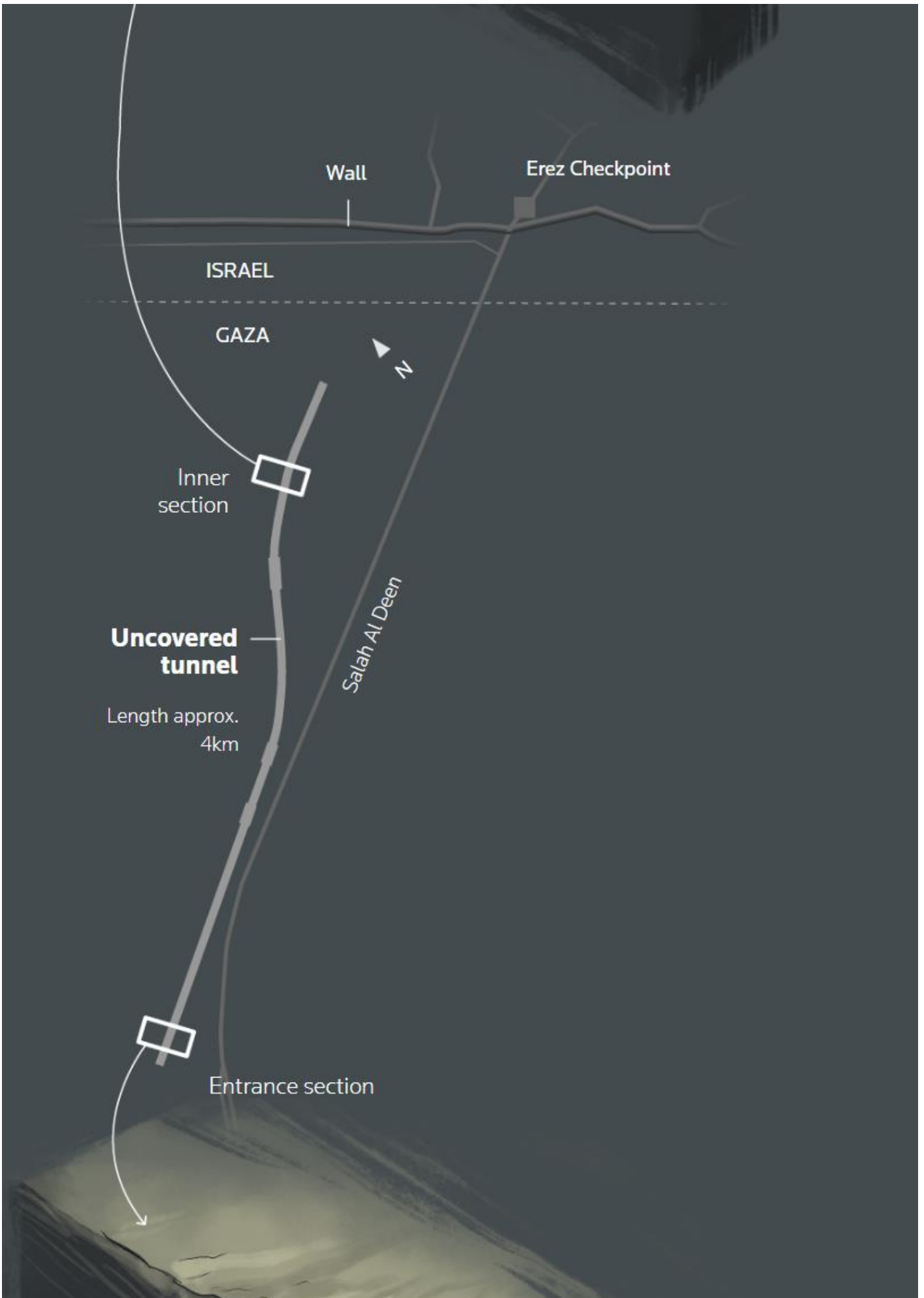
Reuters was able to confirm the location as the Erez crossing, using visible landmarks. "You arrived too late ... Mission had already been completed," read an on-screen message at the end of the video.

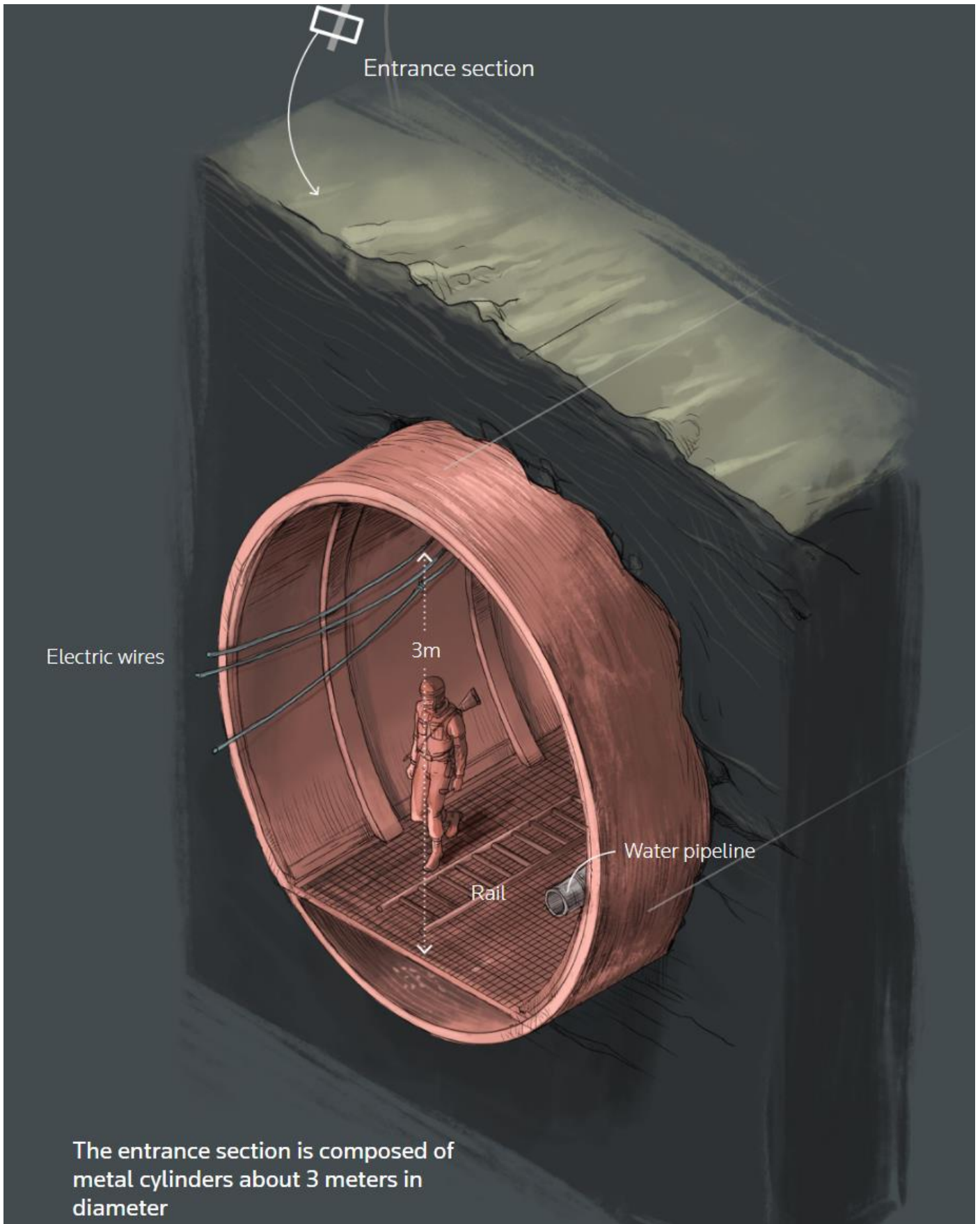
Hamas didn't immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment on its tunnel building activities.

The IDF said in a statement it has a variety of methods and successful experience in dealing with tunnels of all types. It did not provide further details.

The tunnel enables the transportation of troops, including vehicles, in large numbers



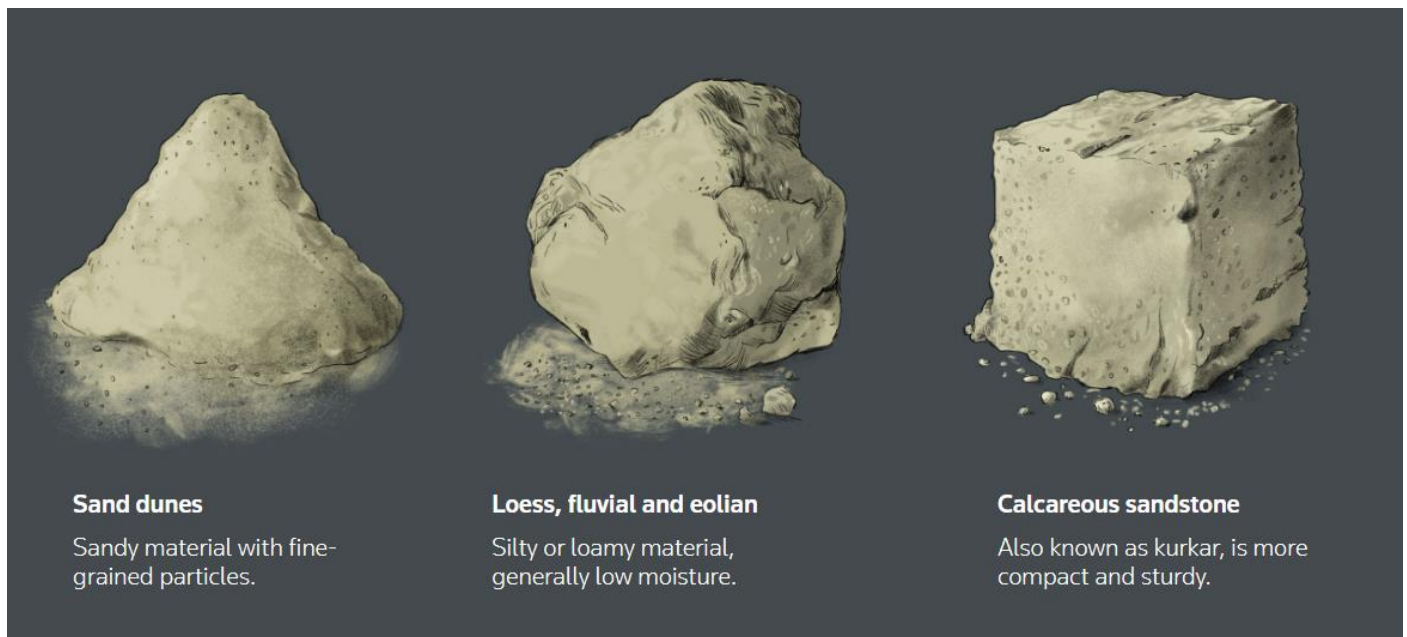




## ON SOFTER GROUND

The types of sandy or loamy soils common in Gaza made it both easier for Hamas to excavate the tunnels and harder for Israel to destroy them, two experts said.

The three main types of soil in the 365 sq. km. enclave are:



### **Sand dunes**

Sandy material with fine-grained particles.

### **Loess, fluvial and eolian**

Silty or loamy material, generally low moisture.

### **Calcareous sandstone**

Also known as kurkar, is more compact and sturdy.

Even in the trickier areas - such as the dunes near the Mediterranean coast that are prone to water infiltration - Hamas had enough building materials and resources to adjust to the type of soil they were dealing with, said Professor Joel Roskin, a geomorphologist and geologist with Israel's Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv, who has studied the tunnel network.

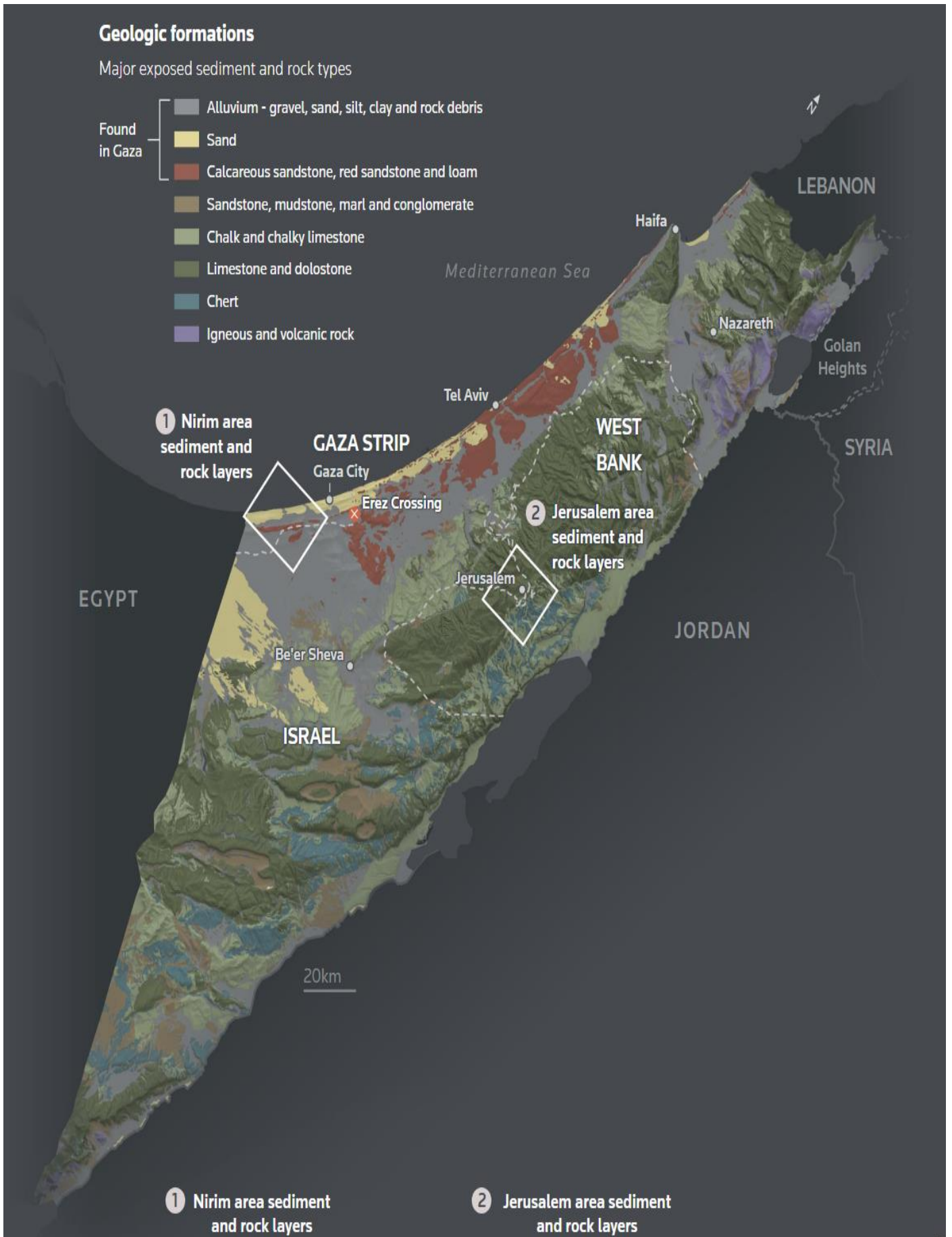
“What we’ve seen is that there are so many tunnels that have been reinforced with concrete,” Roskin said, adding that Hamas had invested considerable money and manpower in construction.

“To dig deeper demands more resources, more energy. The deeper tunnels are of course more difficult to detect.”

### Geologic formations

Major exposed sediment and rock types

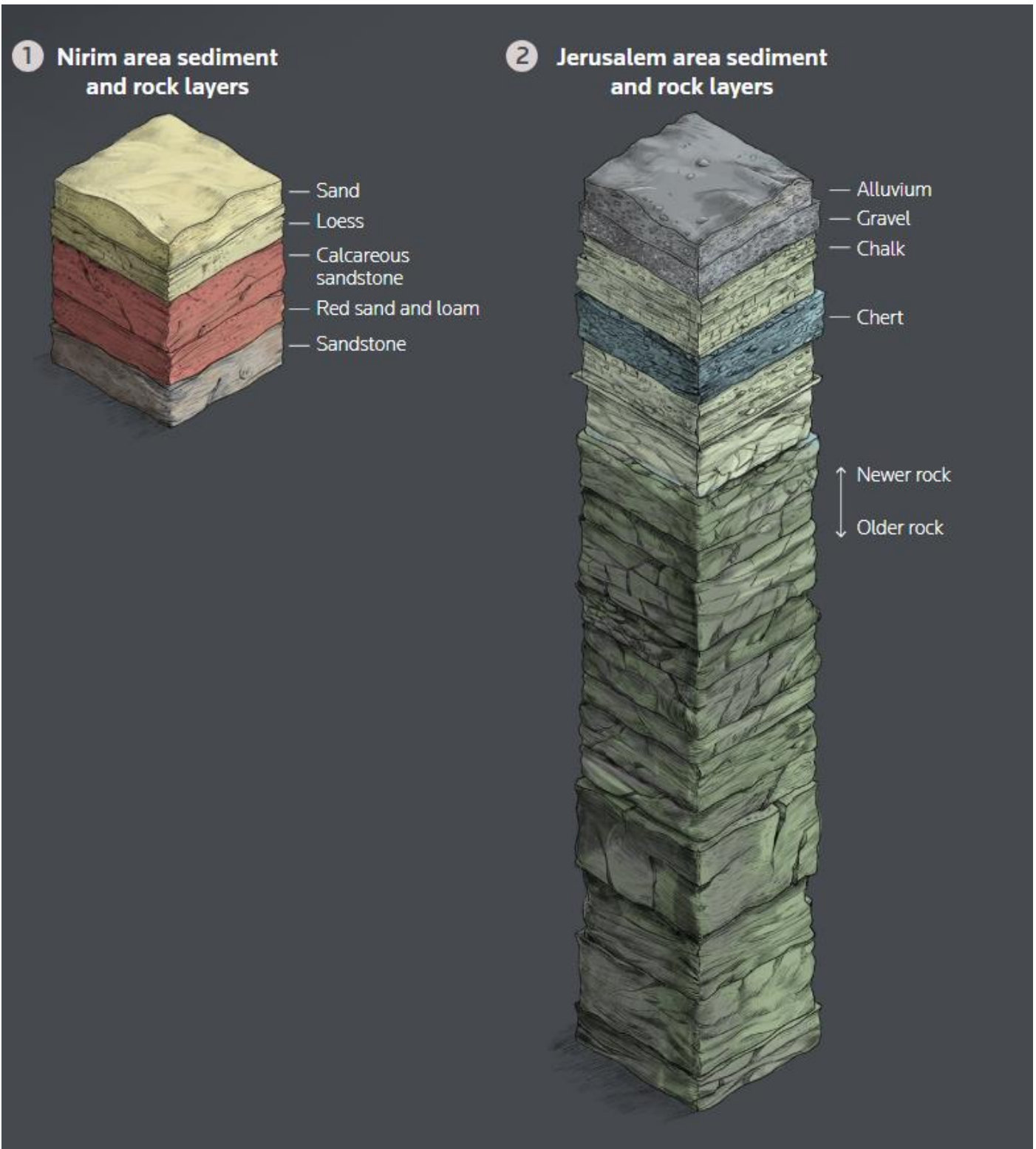
- Found in Gaza
- Alluvium - gravel, sand, silt, clay and rock debris
  - Sand
  - Calcareous sandstone, red sandstone and loam
  - Sandstone, mudstone, marl and conglomerate
  - Chalk and chalky limestone
  - Limestone and dolostone
  - Chert
  - Igneous and volcanic rock



1 Nirim area sediment and rock layers

2 Jerusalem area sediment and rock layers





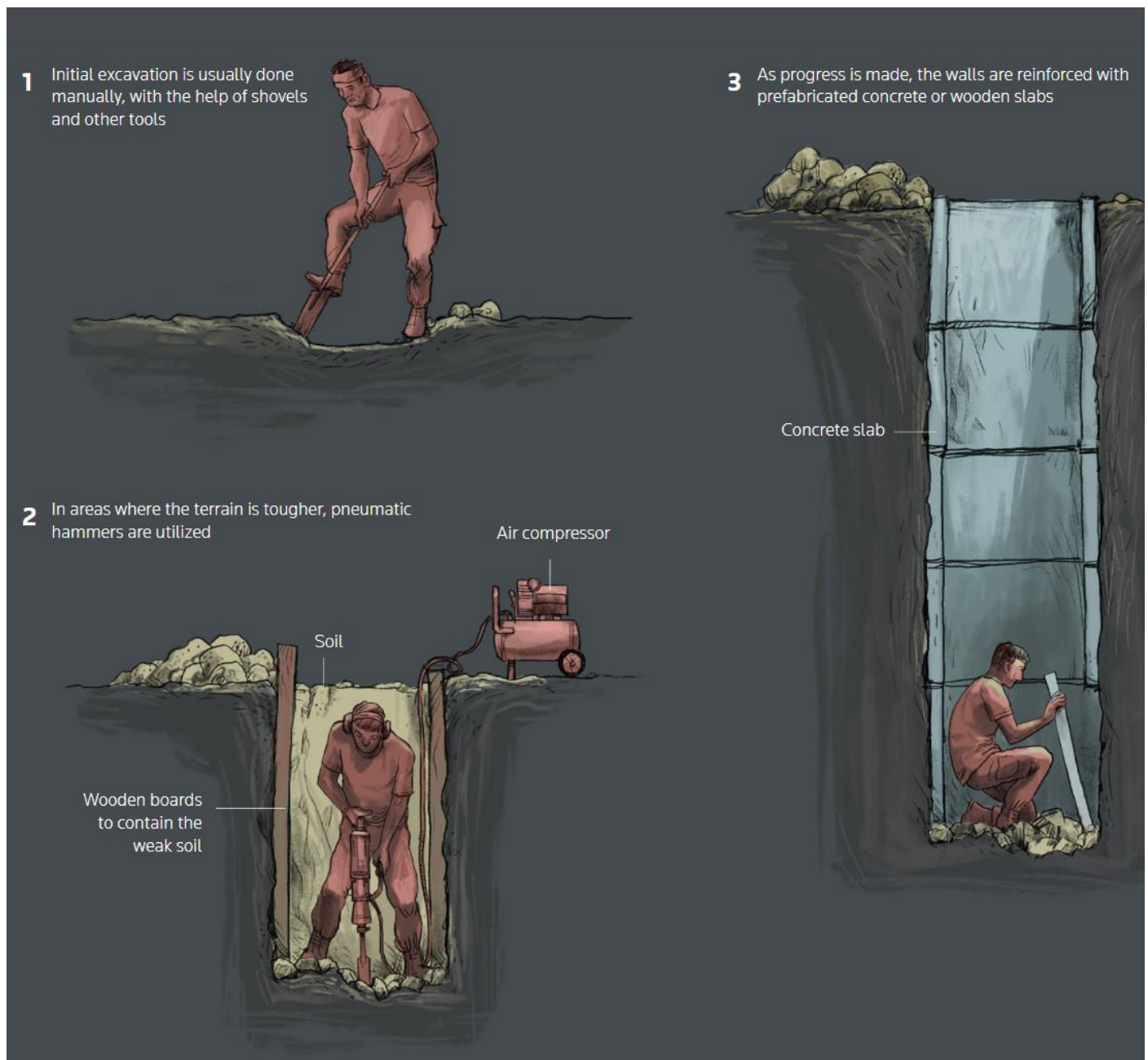
John Spencer, chair of urban warfare studies at the Modern War Institute and a founding member of the International Working Group on Subterranean Warfare, said the sandy nature of the soil had certainly made it easier for Hamas.

“I have seen many videos of them digging by hand or using simple power tools,” he told Reuters. “The soil is conducive to rapid and unskilled digging.” By contrast, he said, the Lebanese Shi’ite group Hezbollah had to dig through solid rock in south Lebanon to build cross border tunnels into northern Israel.

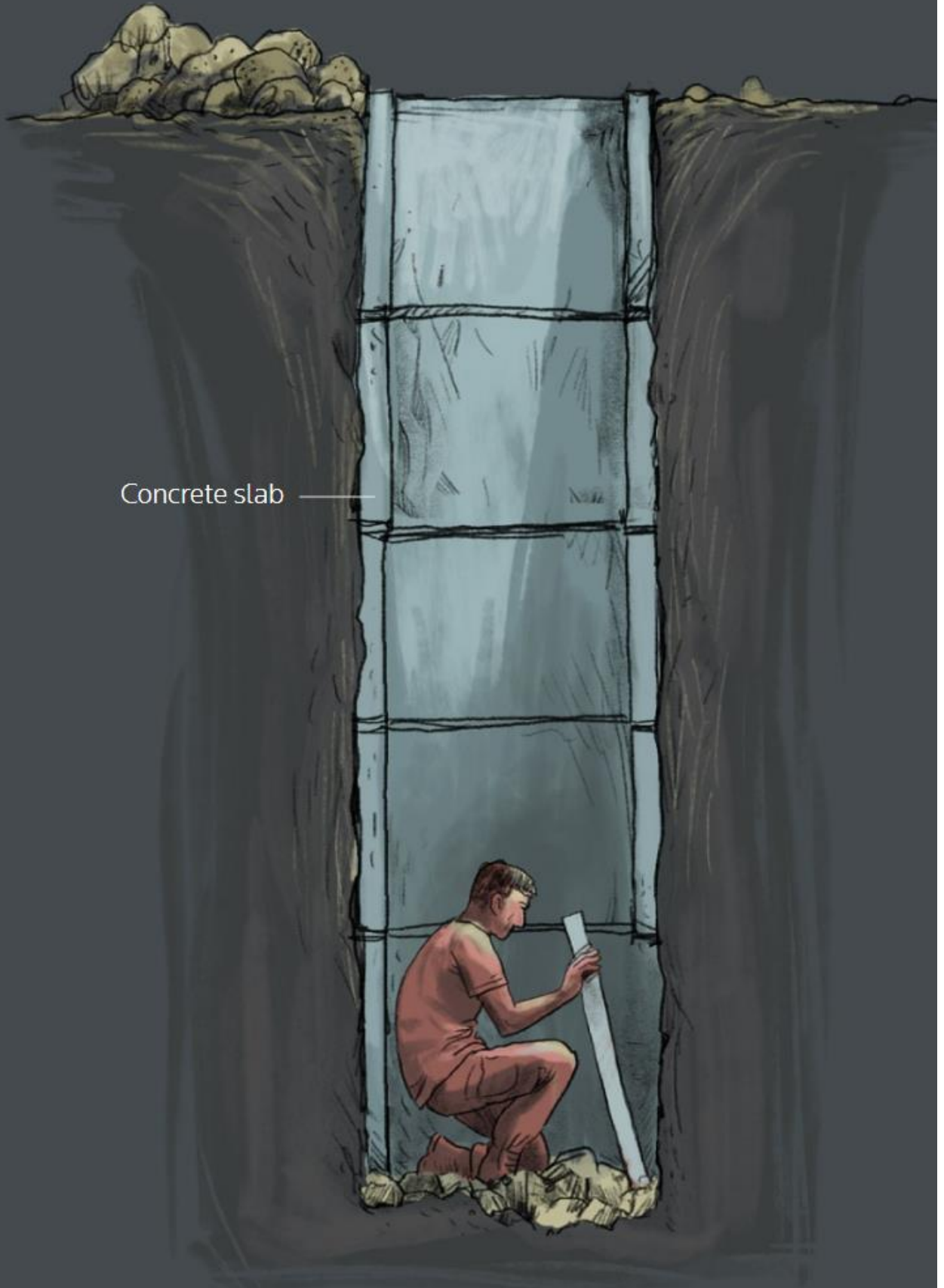
Hezbollah has not confirmed the existence of the tunnel network but, in 2019, the Israeli military put on display one tunnel that, it said, reached depths of 80 meters (265 feet) as it ran from a kilometer inside Lebanon into Israel near Zar'it in the Upper Galilee.

The relative softness of the soil in Gaza is also a disadvantage to the IDF teams seeking to clear and destroy the network, Spencer said.

“The loose soil actually reduces the IDF use of explosives to destroy tunnels as the soft soil absorbs explosive force. Add the blast doors in the tunnels we’ve seen, and that further reduces the effects of explosive force traveling through the tunnel.”

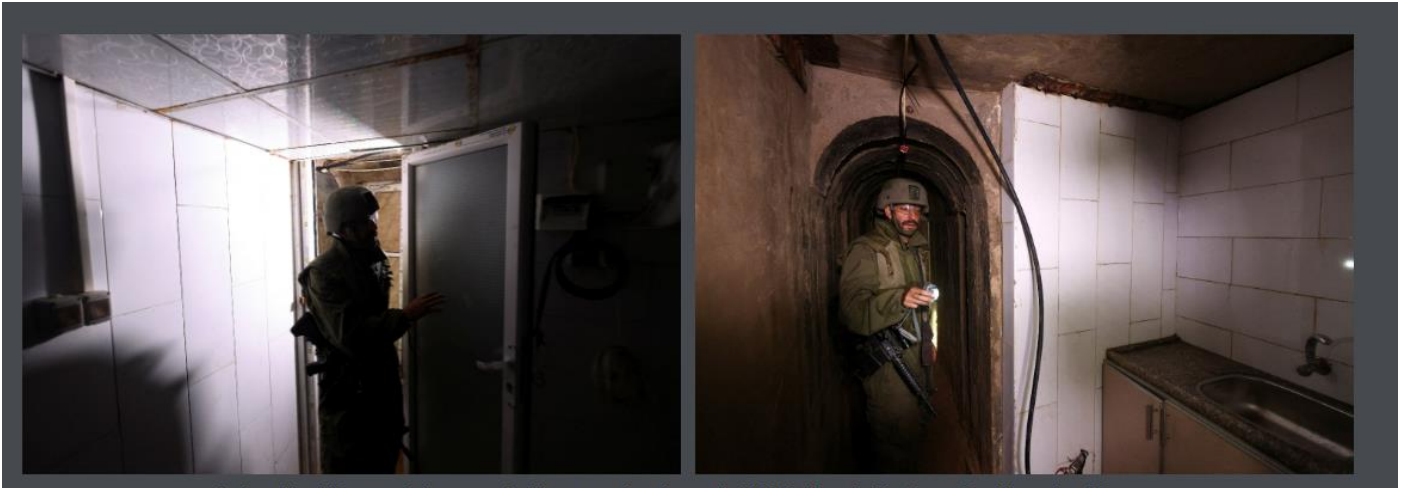


- 3** As progress is made, the walls are reinforced with prefabricated concrete or wooden slabs



On Nov. 22, the Israeli army showed some news organizations a concrete-lined tunnel near Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City that, it said, was a command post for Hamas fighters. The tunnel complex, which the IDF said was at a depth of around 10 meters below ground, featured a bedroom, a tiled bathroom, kitchen and meeting room.

Reuters photographer Ronen Zvulun went inside the tunnels. “The tunnel floor is sand but the walls and roof are lined with concrete, like a tiny road or train tunnel. And just about high enough for someone to stand upright.”



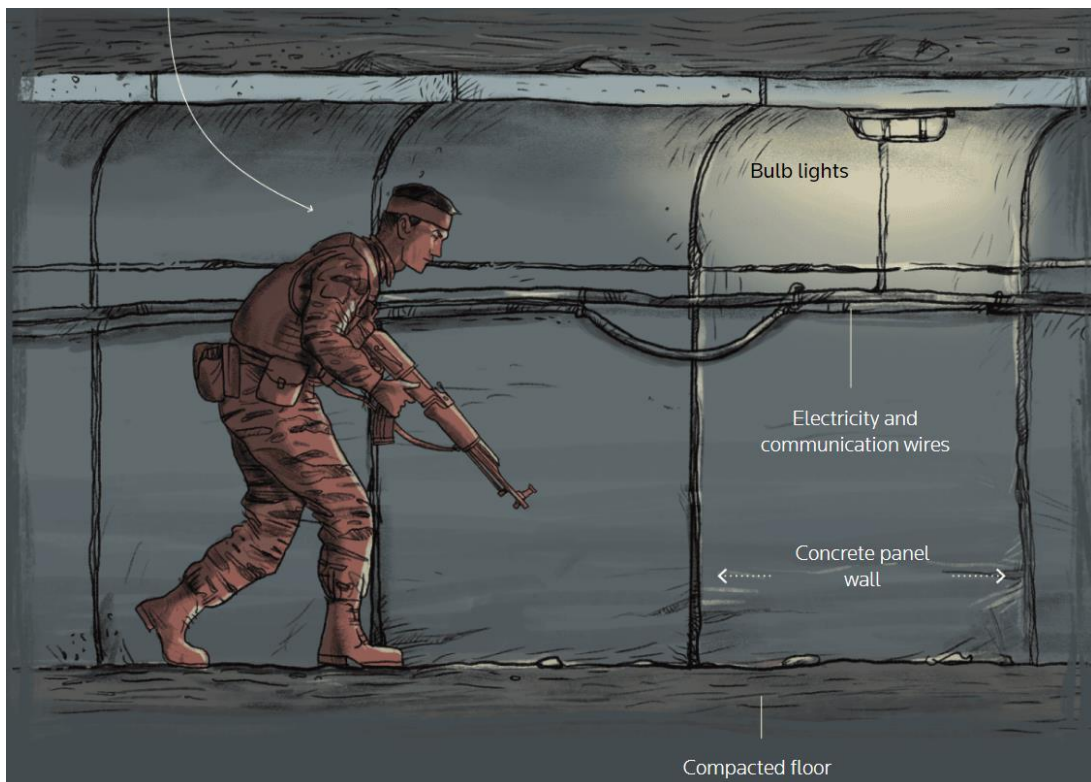
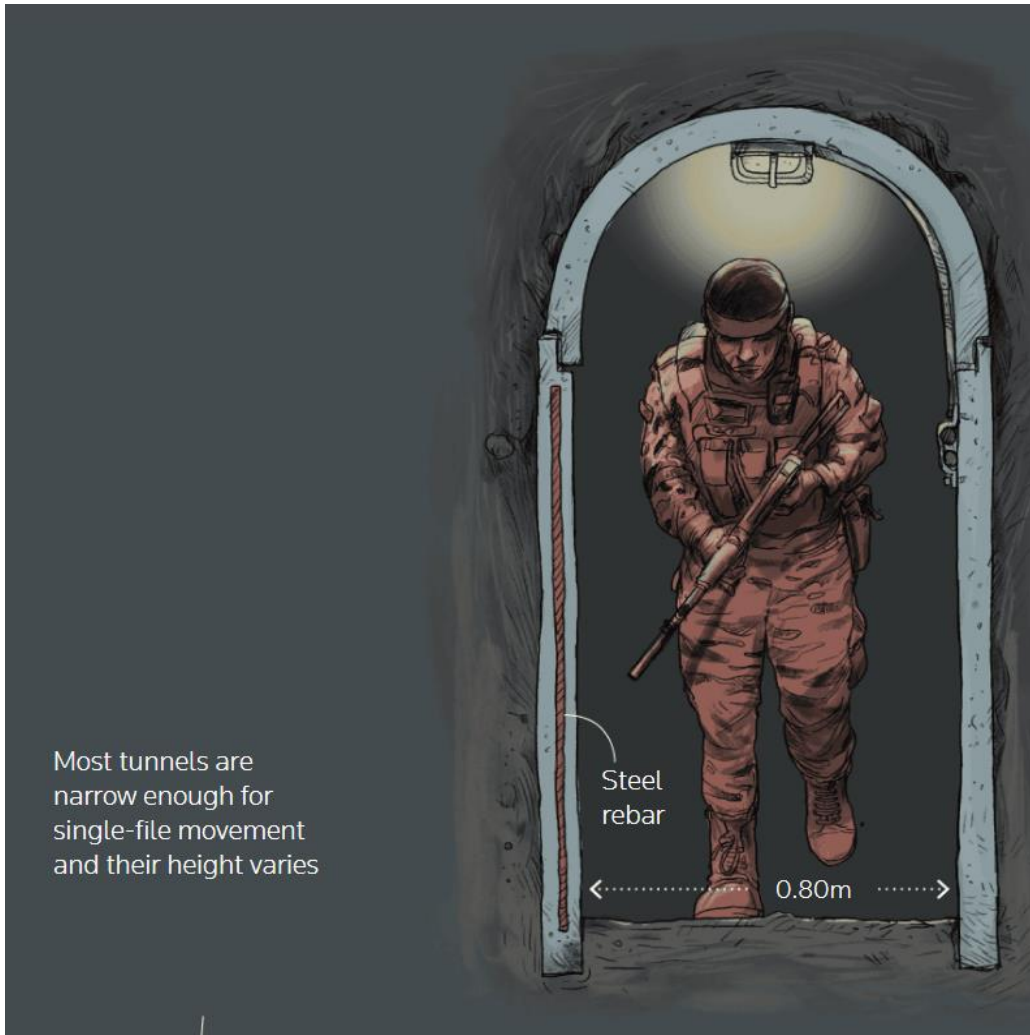
*An Israeli soldier stands in a room inside a tunnel underneath Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, November 22, 2023. REUTERS/Ronen Zvulun*

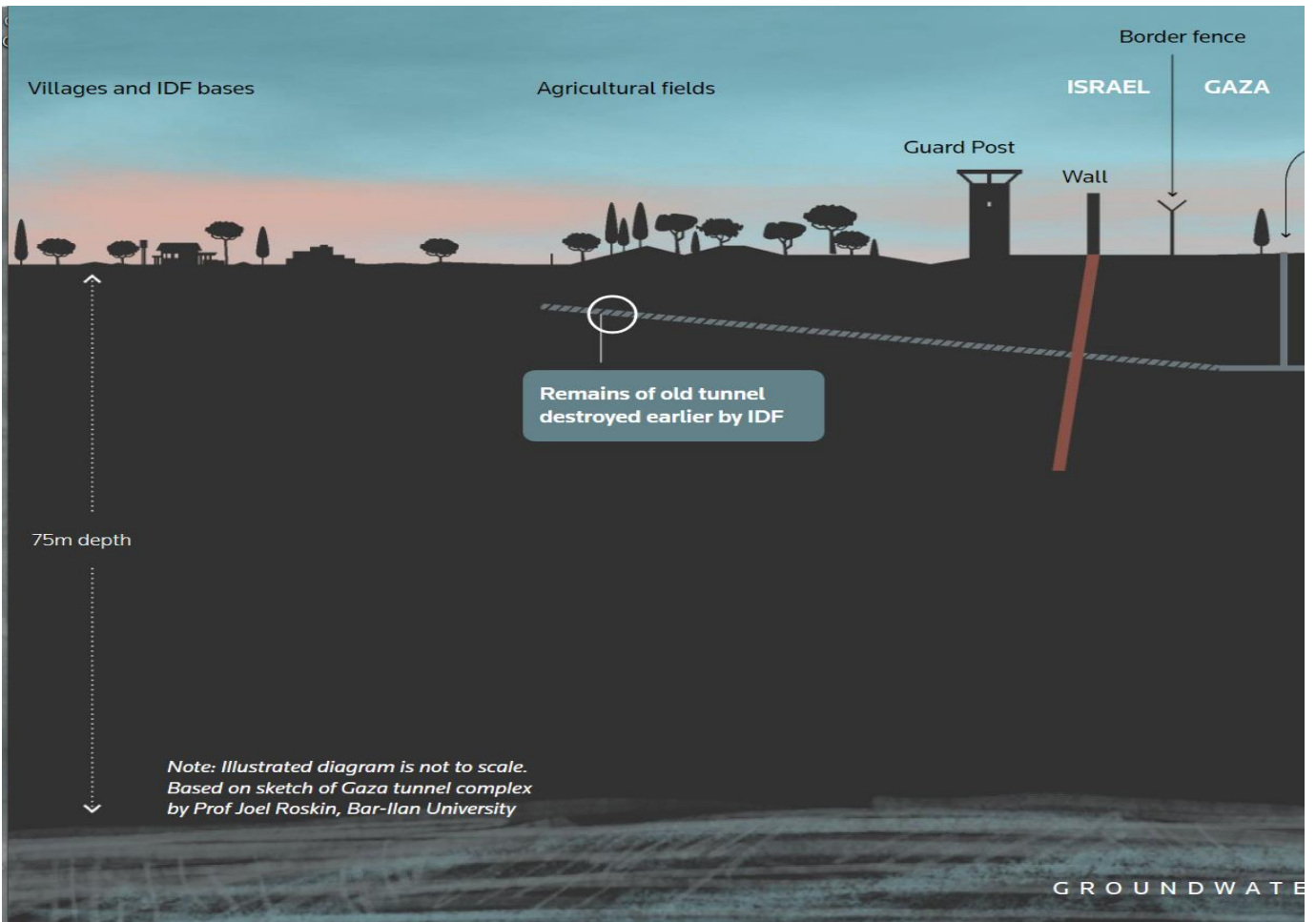
“Inside, you hear nothing. If an air strike hit directly above or nearby, it would no doubt register, but anything a few blocks away, you would probably hear nothing that far underground,” Zvulun said.

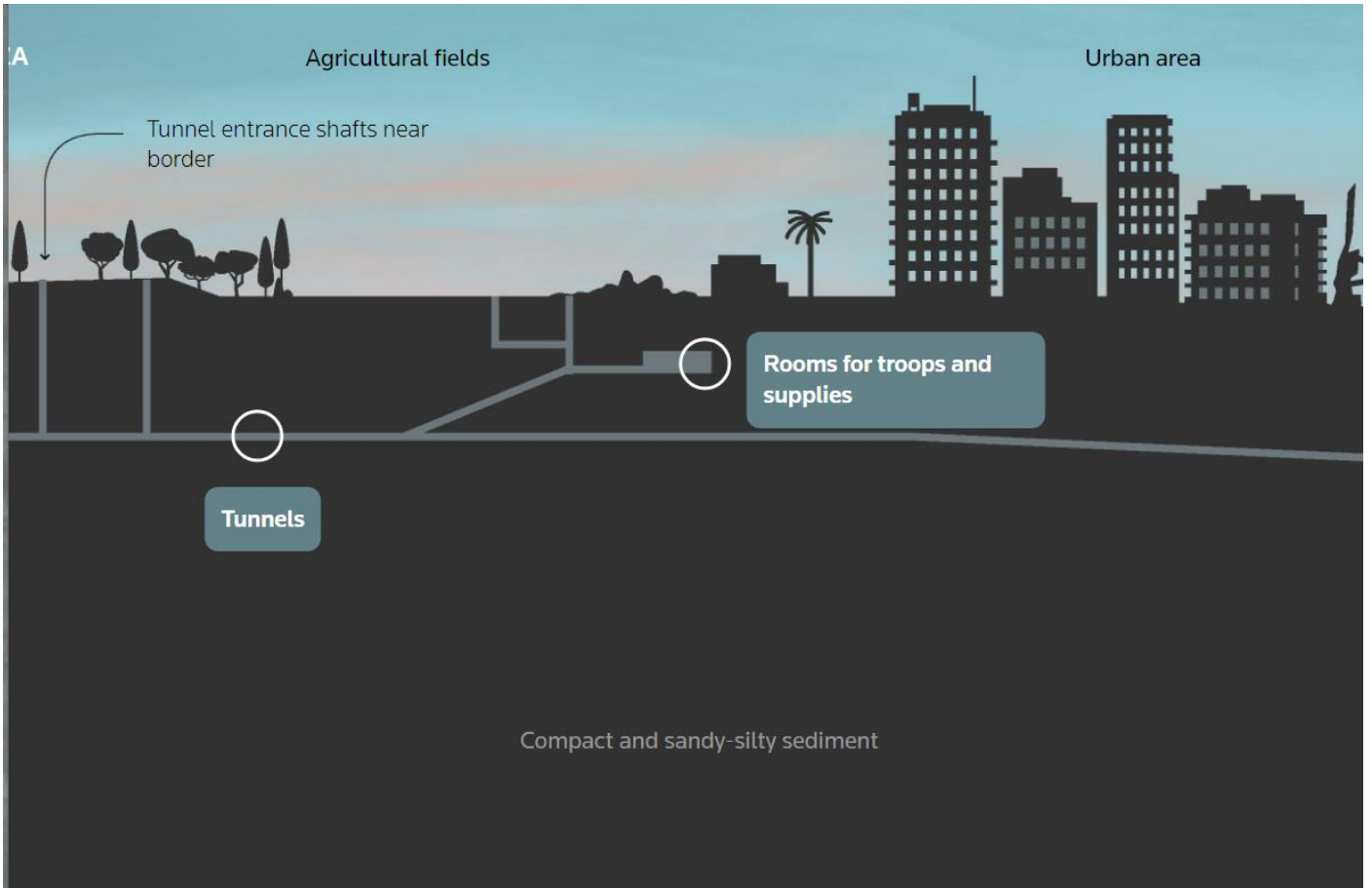
Israel accuses Hamas of deliberately locating its tunnels, rocket-firing sites and other military infrastructure near schools and hospitals, and in densely populated areas, using civilians as human shields. Hamas rejects the accusation. Meanwhile, Palestinian human rights groups say they have asked the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate Israel on war crimes charges for carrying out air strikes on civilian areas.

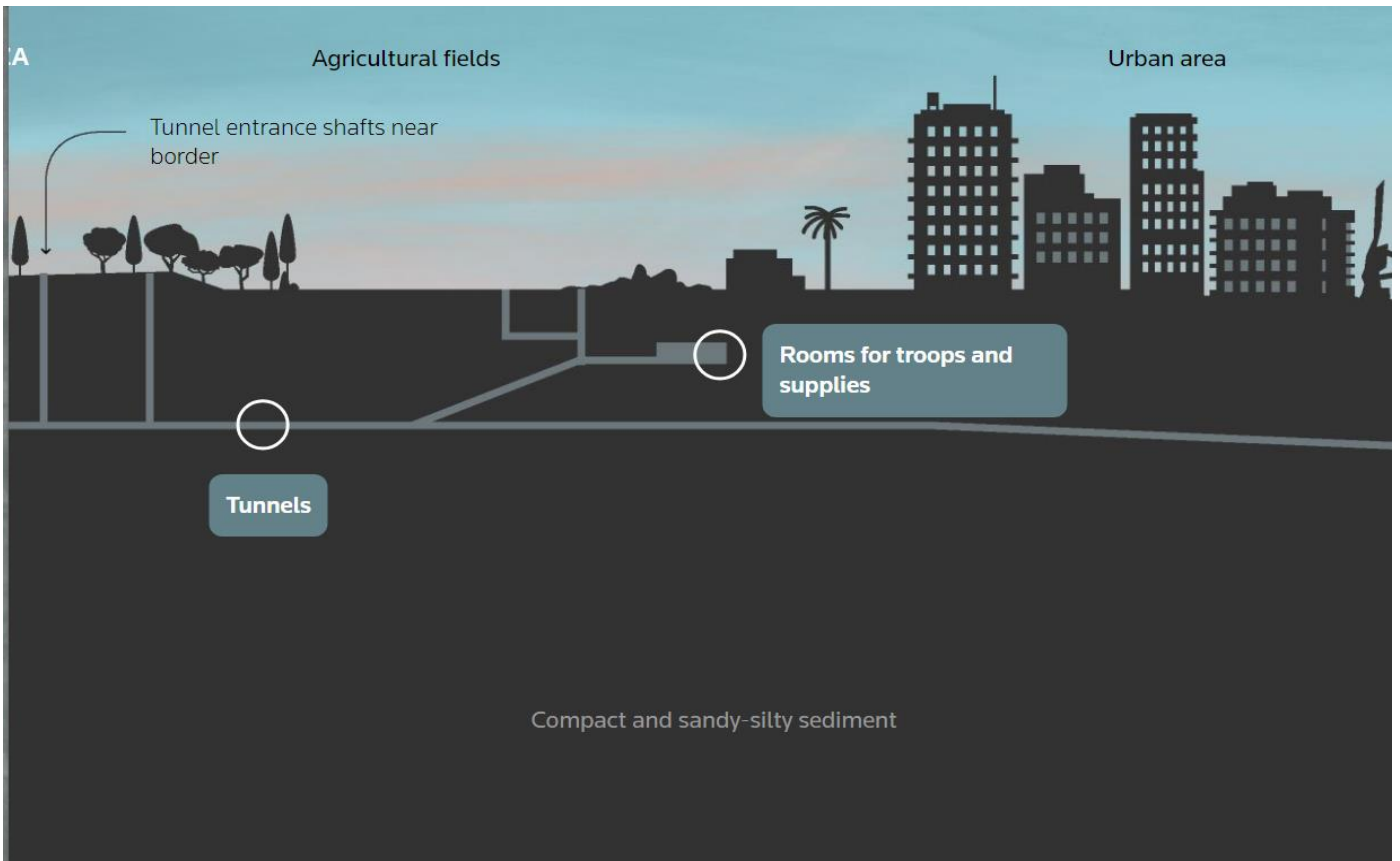
The IDF says it has taken steps to minimize casualties and abides by the rules of war. It has pledged to continue its military operation until Hamas is destroyed, the hostages released and any threat to Israel from Gaza is removed.

The ICC said in a statement to Reuters that it had extensive contacts with Palestinian civil society groups as part of an investigation of possible war crimes in Palestinian territories that it opened two years ago, covering the period back to 2014. “This cooperation, combined with other investigative actions, has allowed the Office to collect considerable information with respect to alleged crimes committed in Gaza,” it told Reuters

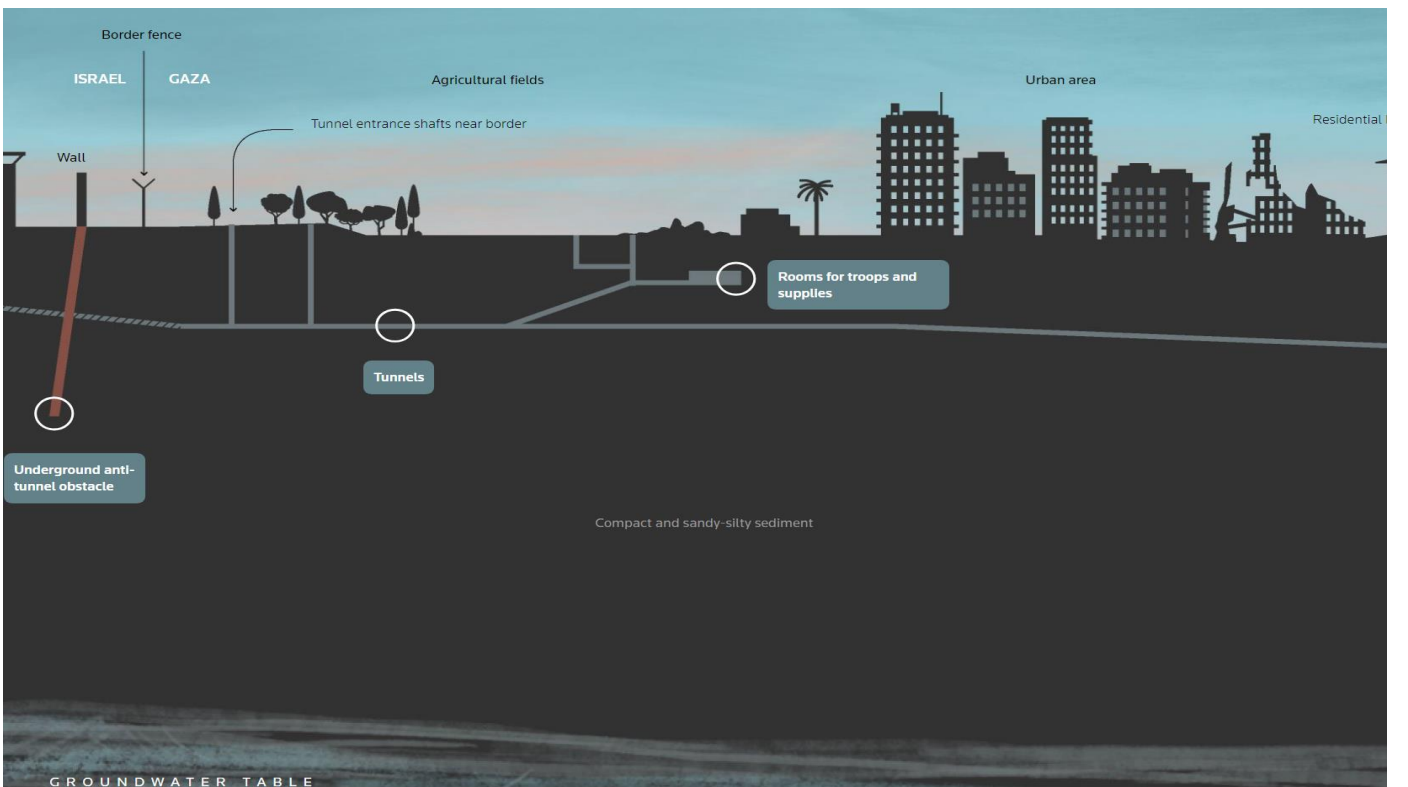












## TUNNEL WARFARE

Israel's military said its ground forces had uncovered around 1,500 Hamas tunnels and shafts throughout the Gaza Strip, as of Dec. 19.

"Dismantling Hamas's underground strongholds in the north, center, and south is a significant step in dismantling Hamas, and it takes time," military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari told a press briefing. The network has been in construction for years. In the early 1990s, Egyptian and Israeli forces reported finding cross-border tunnels used to smuggle weapons, supplies and militants from Egypt into Gaza. Tunnel-building became easier after Israel pulled its troops and settlers from Gaza in 2005. Two years later, Hamas seized full control of the Gaza Strip from President Mahmoud Abbas's Palestinian Authority. The tunnel-makers are thought to have dumped much of the excavated soil into the sea, making it difficult to detect the scale of their activities, according to Israeli security sources. The rest is used for construction. In previous conflicts, the IDF failed to decommission the tunnel network. After a brief 2014 conflict, in which the Israeli military said it neutralized 32 Hamas tunnels, the militant group showed Reuters that parts of its network were untouched. And following the last round of hostilities in 2021, Hamas' leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, said the group had more than 500 km of tunnels, of which the Israelis destroyed only a fraction. The IDF has not publicly estimated how large the tunnel network may be.



*An Israeli soldier secures a tunnel underneath Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, November 22, 2023.  
REUTERS/Ronen Zvulun*

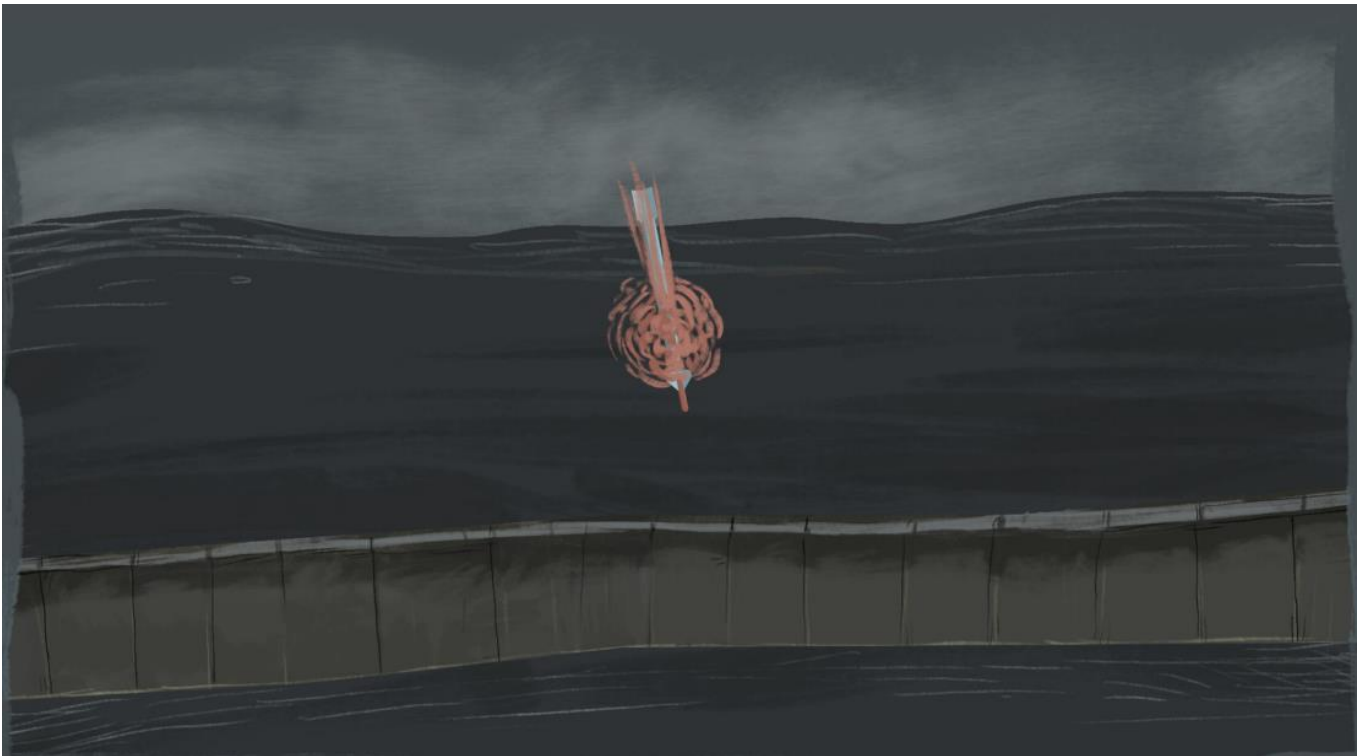
## TACKLING THE TUNNELS

During the current conflict, the Israeli air force has typically first bombed the area above suspected tunnels to flatten any structures. Then bulldozers are used to uncover the tunnel shafts and locate any booby traps or improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Finally, ground troops go in to destroy, or to seal off, the tunnels and shafts, according to two security sources and IDF footage reviewed by Reuters.

Israel says it is doing what it can to spare civilians. Israel's Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Herzl Halevi said on Dec. 26 the military was being "focused and precise in its actions". However, some of Israel's staunchest allies - including the United States, Britain and Canada - have urged it to do more to reduce civilian deaths from what President Joe Biden has called "indiscriminate bombing".

Eyal Pinko, a former senior official with Israel's intelligence services until 2017, said part of the challenge was that it was hard to precisely locate the whereabouts of tunnels: even Israel's Ground Penetration Radar (GPR) was only effective to 15 or 20 meters below ground for major tunnels. Below that depth, it would struggle to detect anything at all, he said. "They are digging very, very low and this is very problematic," Pinko said, adding that some tunnels could be 70 or 80 meters deep. "There is a huge intelligence gap about those tunnels."

"They ( Hamas ) are popping up from tunnels and you don't know that there is a tunnel over there." The IDF declined to provide specific details on its tactics in locating and destroying the tunnels.



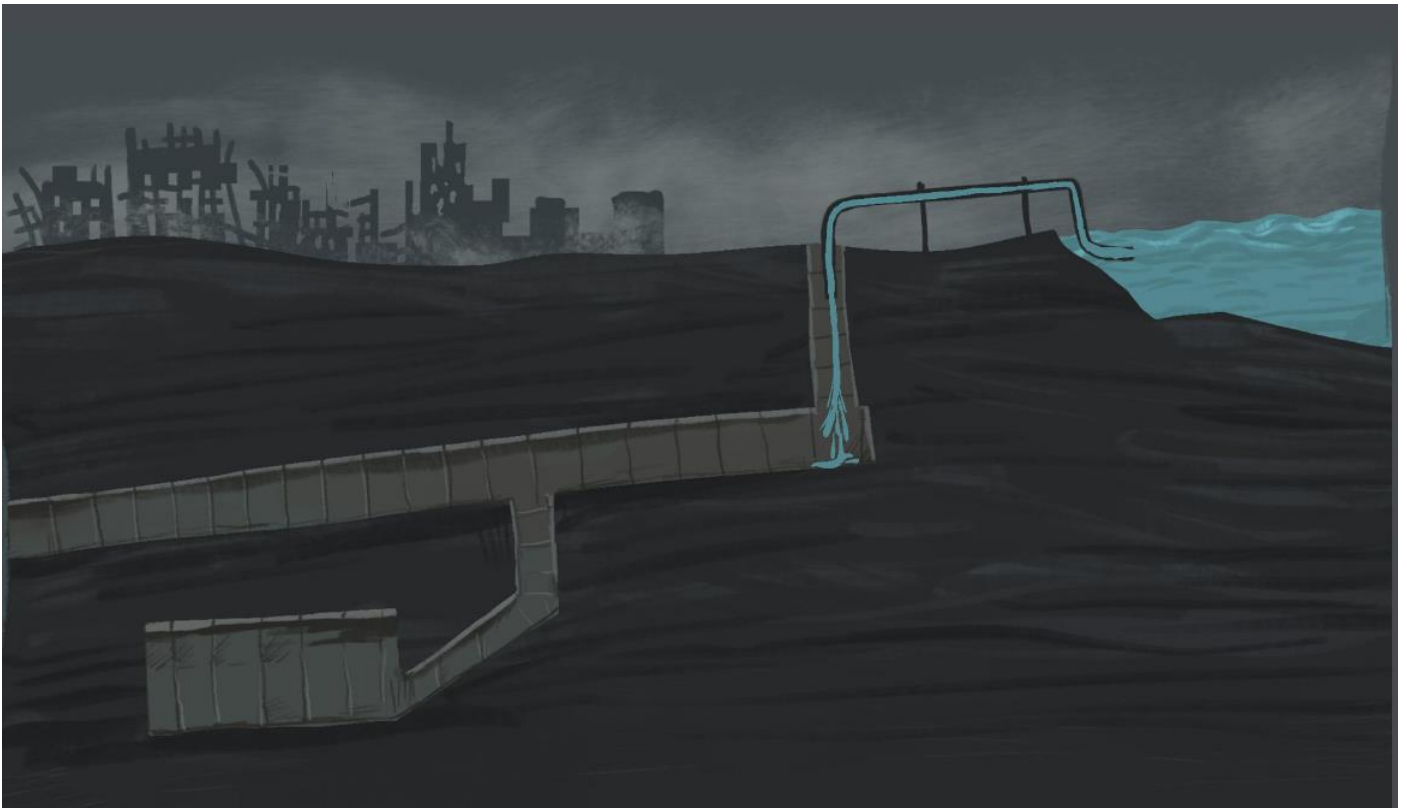
Once inside the tunnels, specialists including the Combat Engineering Corps' elite Yahalom unit use a wide variety of methods to search, record and destroy the tunnels, including K-9 dog units fitted with cameras, and explosive gel charges.

Four military experts say that clearing the tunnels manually would be a lengthy process and expose soldiers to the risk of booby traps or ambush by concealed Hamas fighters. The Israeli military said it had lost 167 personnel during the Gaza operation, as of Dec. 28, many of them killed by attacks launched from the tunnel network.

The military is experimenting with drones to search the tunnels without risking the lives of soldiers.

“The biggest problem in deploying drones underground right now is they get maybe a hundred feet into a tunnel network, then the tunnel makes a right or left turn and they completely lose signal,” said Blake Resnick, CEO of U.S. based drone maker BRINC, who said it is testing drones with the Israeli military. The latest drones being tested have a networking facility that allows its operators to fly one a few hundred feet into a tunnel, until the structure changes direction. “They can land that drone, use it as a repeater, and then send in another drone deeper into the network,” he said. “And they can do that, practically as many times as they want.”

He said a new generation of drones they were testing has thermal imaging, night vision illuminators, and front-facing lidar sensors that create a 3D map of their environment as they fly.



After President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power in Egypt in 2014 and decided to shut down the cross-border tunnel network in southern Gaza, he ordered it flooded with sea water.

However, the risk of killing Israeli hostages may make that an unlikely option for Israel. There was outcry in Israel in mid-December after three hostages were accidentally shot dead by Israeli forces, when they were waving a white flag.

*Sources:*

*Israel Defense Forces; "A Case Study of Thin Concrete Wall Elements Subjected to Ground Loads, by Davide Elmo and Amichai Mitelman, MDPI; Haaretz; Bar-Ilan University - Prof. Joel Roskin; Britannica; Geological Survey of Israel; Natural Earth; SRTM*

*Development by Sudev Kiyada, Han Huang and Jitesh Chowdhury*

*Additional reporting by Ronen Zvulun and Jiawei Wang, Edited by Daniel Flynn*

Hamas built an underground war machine to ensure its own survival

**Vowing self-sufficiency, Hamas turned a maze of tunnels in Gaza into weapons factories and well-stocked fortifications.**

**A year after the war began, parts of the group remain deeply entrenched.**

[THE WASHINGTON POST](#) [Joby Warrick](#) and [Loveday Morris](#) October 5, 2024



An Israeli soldier secures a tunnel beneath al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City in November 2023. (Ronen Zvulun/Reuters)

AMMAN, Jordan — Six months before the Oct. 7 attack, [Hamas](#)'s top leader in the [Gaza Strip](#) was meeting with visiting Palestinian businessmen in the enclave when he made a shocking disclosure. Hamas was planning something big, Yahya Sinwar told his guests.

“There’s going to be a surprise,” he said, according to one of the participants in the meeting, which has not been previously reported. While offering no details, he intimated that preparations had long been underway in Gaza itself, within Hamas’s network of underground fortresses. Of the allies and partners assisting the effort, he mentioned only one.

“God will help us,” he said.

Sinwar’s secret plan would reveal itself on a Jewish Sabbath morning one year ago as waves of attackers [swarmed Israeli villages](#) and military bases, killing about 1,200 people and taking some 250 hostages. But the nature of Sinwar’s preparations — how, exactly, the group armed itself for the assault while simultaneously engineering a sophisticated, multilayered defense against the inevitable Israeli military response — would become clear only gradually, in the weeks and months of heavy fighting that followed.

Evidence accumulated over the past year has brought new clarity to Hamas’s operational planning before Oct. 7, revealing how and from where it obtained the means for both the attack itself and a carefully considered resistance phase that was designed to last up to 12 months. It shows how, despite years of

isolation within a densely populated strip of land the size of Philadelphia, Hamas acquired an astonishing arsenal of rockets, explosives and small arms, while constructing the financial and defensive networks that enabled Sinwar and his followers to hold out for months under a determined assault by one of the world's most capable militaries.

Across Israel's northern border, the Lebanese militia [Hezbollah is in disarray](#) after Israeli forces killed the group's leader and decimated its command structure in a series of recent operations that revealed a deep penetration of the group by Israeli intelligence.

But a year after the Oct. 7 attacks, Sinwar, who studied Israeli tactics during years in prison and later became notorious for brutally rooting out suspected Israeli collaborators, has not only survived but is already laying the groundwork for the group's reemergence, according to Hamas officials interviewed by The Washington Post.

This article is based on interviews with more than two-dozen Israeli, U.S. and Arab military and intelligence analysts, many of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence assessments. The Post also interviewed current and former Hamas and Palestinian Authority officials, some of whom, like the businessman who met with Sinwar in the spring of 2023, spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

The accounts describe how Hamas, under Sinwar's leadership, became relentlessly focused on achieving self-sufficiency, including a capacity to produce its own weapons and explosives, and carry out elaborate operations involving thousands of participants, while maintaining complete secrecy.

## UNCHECKED WAR

A year that began with Hamas' devastating attack in Israel has spiraled into catastrophe for Gazans and triggered a wave of violence in Lebanon, with tens of thousands of people killed — and no end in sight.

The group relied on outsiders for money and advice. It raised tens of millions of dollars, some of it from Iran, but much of it siphoned from aid money, [charitable contributions](#), tax revenue and — after Oct. 7 — shareholder deposits stolen from Gazan banks. Hamas commanders traveled to Tehran for training, Israel Defense Forces officials say, and made multiple trips to Lebanon, where Iran had established an operations room to coordinate military planning and share technical know-how.

But the Hamas that Sinwar built was no mere proxy group, officials and experts said. Mindful of Israel's ability to cut off Gaza from the world, Hamas spent years perfecting a war machine that could make its own munitions, carry out operations without outside approval or even knowledge, and then allow its fighters to disappear inside an elaborate underground maze — a warren beneath the streets of the seaside enclave estimated to consist of hundreds of miles of interlinked, reinforced passages, rooms and bunkers.

Hamas's tunnels are its greatest engineering feat and, to Sinwar, the key to its survival.

“We succeeded in making manufacturing factories underground,” Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas’s political bureau from Gaza, said in an interview with The Post, “because we knew that one day all the channels would be closed.”

Hamas today is, without question, a badly diminished force. The group has lost its top civilian leader along with dozens of military commanders and an estimated 15,000 fighters, according to regional intelligence officials. Cash and weapons stockpiles are dwindling; swaths of the Strip lie in ruins; and [at least 40,000 Palestinians](#) have been killed, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants but says the majority of the dead are women and children. Many of the group’s estimated 5,700 tunnel shafts have been destroyed by Israeli bombs.

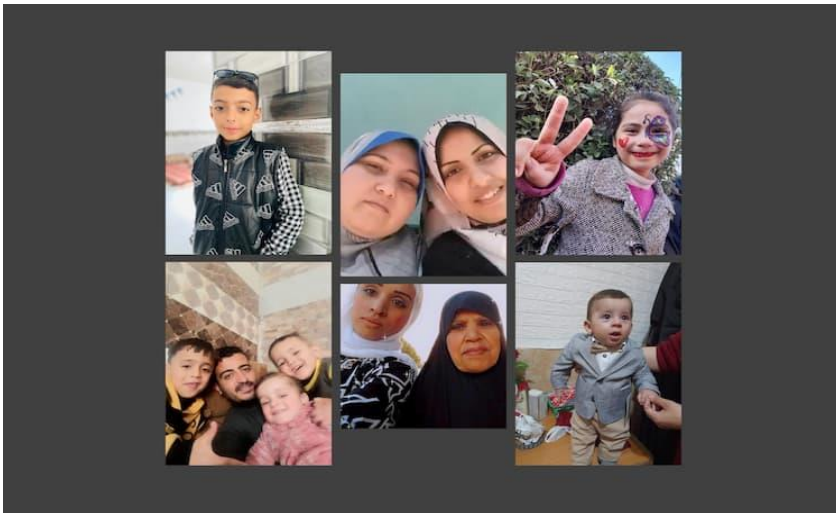
Yet Hamas fights on. The group’s capabilities and tactics, revealed over the past year, have repeatedly challenged the conventional thinking about Hamas that existed before Oct. 7, 2023. They also raise new concerns about the organization’s ability to reconstitute itself in Gaza or elsewhere.

#### [How Joe Biden lost his grip on Israel’s war for ‘total victory’ in Gaza](#)

The female soldiers who predicted Oct. 7 say they are still being silenced



‘The land is full of blood’:  
An Israeli kibbutz  
where Oct. 7 never ends



[Gaza's uncounted dead](#)



[Israel has bombed much of Gaza to rubble. What will it take to rebuild?](#)





### [American Jews cope with the fallout a year after the Oct. 7 attacks](#)

Many analysts had believed that Hamas was heavily dependent on Iran and had smuggled in large shipments of Iranian-made rockets and missiles while making new ones in large underground factories. Yet a year later, IDF investigators in Gaza have turned up surprisingly few Iranian-made weapons, and no large-scale factories for mass assembly of rockets and missiles. Instead, they mostly found small workshops where metalworkers with simple lathes turned scavenged pipes and agricultural chemicals into components for explosive projectiles to be lobbed into Israeli villages.

After the IDF's May invasion of Gaza's southernmost city, Rafah, an Israeli commander reported finding [no new active smuggling tunnels](#) leading into Egypt, as many experts had believed existed. In the previous decade, when Gazans ran contraband through hundreds of tunnels along the border, Israeli forces would sometimes seal off the shafts with concrete, only to later discover that Hamas had drilled new passageways through the barriers. The group even tweaked rocket designs so that the components were small enough to fit through twists and turns in the reconfigured passageways.

Yet after the Rafah invasion, intelligence analysts concluded that most of Hamas's supply of imported weapons and components had entered overland, in trucks and cars passing through border crossings controlled by Egypt and Israel. The rest arrived years ago, before [Egypt destroyed](#) thousands of underground passageways and created a mile-wide system of barriers along its border with Gaza.

But the biggest surprise, U.S. and Israeli officials say, was the tunnels within Gaza. Israeli war planners well understood the challenge IDF soldiers faced in trying to defeat a foe that could move fighters and supplies freely through underground passages. But the size, scale and complexity of the Gaza "metro," as it came to be dubbed, far exceeded Israeli estimations. IDF officials in interviews described their dismay after picking their way through bunkers 30 feet beneath Gaza's streets, only to find shafts leading to deeper tunnels buried 120 feet underground.

“Their eyes were bulging,” said a former U.S. counterterrorism official who visited Hamas-built tunnels as a guest of the IDF. “They had no idea of the labyrinth. Can you image 150 kilometers of tunnels? The reality was several times bigger.”

### **‘WE WILL COME TO YOU WITH ENDLESS ROCKETS’**

In private conversations and in public speeches before Oct. 7, Sinwar could not restrain himself from bragging about what his group had achieved. Outside Gaza, his words were mostly dismissed as empty

“We will come to you, God willing, in a roaring flood,” [Sinwar warned Israelis](#) at a rally for his supporters in Gaza on Dec. 14, 2022. “We will come to you with endless rockets, we will come to you in a limitless flood of soldiers, we will come to you with millions of our people, like the repeating tides.”

Sinwar, who had long dreamed of inflicting a savage blow that could disrupt the status quo with Israel, “made sure the money and material was there for many years,” said Abu Hamza, 33, a Hamas commander in the West Bank town of Jenin. Abu Hamza spoke on the condition that he be identified by his nom de guerre for security reasons.

“Hamas built really well for this thing,” Abu Hamza said. Inside the tunnels, Hamas was “hiding weapons and making their own,” while laboring to ensure that Hamas could withstand any Israeli counterstrike.

“In Gaza we were working day and night, day and night, 24 hours,” said Hamad, the member of the group’s political bureau. “We prepared a lot, not for one year or two years.”

But even homemade weapons require parts that must be brought in from the outside. Hamad said getting components past the Israeli blockade was a constant challenge. Almost every facet of weapons production, from machine tools to agricultural chemicals for explosives, was either labeled for civilian use or hidden inside shipments of food or other everyday wares.

“We are in the situation that pressures us to do everything, and collect everything,” he said. “We face a very dangerous country, with a lot of technology and weapons. It’s not easy to fight Israel. We knew this equation very well.”

### **HOMEMADE ARSENAL**

The Israeli response to Oct. 7 began in earnest with a ground invasion three weeks later by an IDF force that eventually grew to 100,000 fighters. Within days, Israeli soldiers were venturing into Hamas’s tunnels, often with underground surveillance drones or bomb-sniffing dogs in the lead.

The images posted by the IDF in the weeks that followed offered the first glimpse into what Hamas had wrought underground. Among the initial findings were armories filled with weapons — thousands of them, of every make and description: North Korean-made F-7 rocket-propelled grenades, Bulgarian rifles, Iranian 60mm mortars and Italian-designed TC/6 mines, a copy of which is produced in Egypt.

But IDF officials eventually concluded that up to 80 percent of Hamas’s weapons were manufactured in Gaza, by the group itself. Among the homemade arms: antitank IEDs (improvised explosive devices),

Claymore-type antipersonnel mines and thermobaric rocket-propelled grenades. Hamas — perhaps [drawing inspiration from Islamic State fighters](#) who used similar tactics in the 2017 battle for Mosul, Iraq — learned to modify small commercial drones to drop explosives, IDF officials said.

Hamas's specialty is short- and medium-range rockets, such as the M-75, a copy of the Iranian-made Fajr-5, capable of striking targets as far away as Tel Aviv. More common is the Qassam, named after a legendary Syrian Arab nationalist from the 1920s and featuring a design developed by Hamas more than 20 years ago. Hamas weaponeers have assembled [thousands of Qassams](#) from steel water pipes, shaping the metal into rocket bodies using metal presses and lathes, and packing the warheads with hundreds of pounds of explosives made from sugar and potassium nitrate fertilizer.

While limited in range, a single Qassam costs only a few hundred dollars to make. The Israeli military's Iron Dome antimissile system shot down thousands of such rockets in the days after Oct. 7, but at a cost of roughly \$50,000 per launch.

By January, the IDF had stumbled upon Hamas's manufacturing hubs. Israeli soldiers found dedicated fabrication centers for producing small arms, ammunition and explosives, and other workshops for crafting the cylindrical frames for rockets. Some of the production facilities consisted of interconnected underground chambers that formed crude assembly lines. These were not factories, in the traditional sense. But they served the purpose.

"They are essentially labs with lathes," said Matthew Levitt, a former Treasury Department counterterrorism official who has studied Hamas and its tunnels for more than a decade.

The largest of the manufacturing hubs discovered up to now consisted of a complex of underground workshops and street-level warehouses, raided by IDF forces in January beneath a crowded district in Khan Younis, a city in central Gaza. Connected by tunnels, it amounted to a weapons assembly line that extended nearly half a mile, according to an IDF weapons expert who analyzed the site.

"There were many different capabilities within the same location," the IDF official said. "It was such a large operation, it took us about a week to process it."

Secretly, and out of the view of satellite surveillance cameras, the group had created a "Hamas military industrial complex" that could produce a variety of cheap weapons in vast quantities, said Levitt, who now serves as the director of the Reinhard counterterrorism program for the Washington Institute of Near East Policy. "Some of the weapons even had Hamas branding on them," he said.

### **CITIES BENEATH CITIES**

The IDF had long known about the threat posed by tunnels. After Hamas used cross-border tunnels to [abduct Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit](#) in 2006, Israeli forces deployed special sensors along the border that allowed them to hear, see and map efforts to dig new passages into Israeli territory. Yet the size and complexity of the group's tunnels within Gaza itself surprised everyone, including Israel's vaunted intelligence services and their U.S. counterparts.

“Nobody understood how extensive the tunnels were, or that there were so many different types of tunnels,” said [Dana Stroul](#), the deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Middle East during the first three years of the Biden administration.

Echoing a common assessment among U.S. and Israeli military officials, Stroul said the failure to grasp the many dimensions of Hamas’s most important strategic asset was “part of the intelligence failure” of Oct. 7, and one that has not yet been fully reckoned with. Fighting an enemy that can move horizontally and vertically, through a battlefield situated in heavily populated urban terrain, posed a formidable military challenge, she said.

“I don’t know that any modern military has faced the complexity of the battlefield that the IDF faced in Gaza,” she said.

The tunnels served to hide weapons production, according to Israeli, U.S. and Arab analysts, but they also served as a communications network, supply depot, highway system, logistics pipeline, bomb shelter and field hospital, officials said. Hidden tunnel shafts were used as staging grounds for ambushes. Underground living quarters became command centers and detention facilities for Israeli hostages.

Costing, at minimum, hundreds of millions of dollars — money that Hamas diverted from humanitarian and economic development projects intended to improve the lives of ordinary Gazans — the tunnel system by Oct. 7 extended more than 300 miles, longer than the New York City subway, or about the distance from Tel Aviv to southern Turkey. The IDF acknowledges there is no practical way to destroy the entire system.

The IDF eventually became adept at fighting underground. But Maj. Gen. Dan Goldfus, an Israeli commander dubbed by local media as the IDF’s “tunnel destroyer,” said his forces initially faced a steep learning curve.

“All our definitions of tunnel shafts, tactical tunnels, strategic tunnels — none of that applies there,” Goldfus told the Hebrew-language newspaper *Israel Hayom* in August. “It’s all one large network; you can enter it at the [northern] Erez Crossing and emerge in Rafah [on the Egyptian border]. Everything there is connected to everything.”

Goldfus described a moment of wonder in February when the IDF arrived at Sinwar’s hastily vacated underground command center, a suite of well-appointed bunkers buried deep beneath the streets of Khan Younis.

“We reached senior officials’ compounds and we studied this infrastructure ... this center of strength, its importance,” Goldfus told the newspaper. “It slowly became revealed to us before our eyes. And when I understood it — what can I say, hats off.”

## **SURVIVING THE SIEGE, EYEING A COMEBACK**

By the day of the Oct. 7 assault, Hamas’s well-trained military wing numbered about 35,000, including a vanguard of 6,000 shock troops who burst into Israel early that morning for the attack the group dubbed

“Operation al-Aqsa Flood.” Hamad, the political bureau member, said the idea was to shake Israel to its core and force its leaders to end the siege on Gaza, halt settler expansion in the West Bank and curtail raids on the al-Aqsa Mosque, which sits atop Jerusalem’s Temple Mount, known in Islam as the Noble Sanctuary and revered by both Muslims and Jews. He said he was not aware of Oct. 7 planning in advance.

But Sinwar, Hamad said, also understood that Israel would respond with devastating force. Much of the planning and preparation in the years preceding the attack was devoted to ensuring that Hamas would not only survive the blow but also quickly recover so it could strike again.

The tunnels, amply stocked with provisions and weapons to last many months, would play a key role. But so would Hamas’s reserves of cash.

Hamas is believed to have socked away hundreds of millions of dollars in cash and cryptocurrencies before Oct. 7, much of it from tax revenue collected from Gazans as well as [financial aid given by Qatar](#) — with the tacit approval of Israeli leaders — in recent years to keep the enclave’s economy from collapsing.

Hamas has used the cash over the past year to pay fighters in the group’s military wing, who Hamad said are still being “looked after,” even as the roughly 2 million civilians in Gaza have been forced into destitution.

The money has also enabled Hamas to retain a functioning public sector to meet the basic needs of Gazans, the officials said. The group’s payroll includes 50,000 workers, including teachers, doctors, sanitation crews and more. Whatever money is left serves as a vital lifeline for Gazans struggling to feed their families at a time when many businesses and shops have been shuttered or destroyed. Hamas regularly announces collection points and times for aid recipients, with new locations posted every month.

“I don’t know where the money comes from,” said an employee of the Gaza Justice Ministry. “What I care about now is finding something to satisfy my two children’s hunger.”

Yet a year into the conflict, the tap appears to be finally running dry. Beginning in the spring, many Gazan workers began drawing only half their normal salaries, when they were paid at all.

With Israel’s unrelenting assault and a dearth of humanitarian trucks bearing food and other necessities reaching Gaza, Hamas may be reaching a tipping point, at least with regard to its supply of money and other vital resources, say analysts. While Hamas was prepared for an extended siege, a year of IDF operations in Gaza — combined with stricter controls by Israelis at border crossings — have nearly drained Hamas’s coffers, officials said. Hamad maintains that Hamas still has “channels” to ensure cash flow into Gaza, but he declined to elaborate.

Still, one of Hamas’s key assets remains available to the group with a nearly inexhaustible supply. Analysts say Gaza’s devastation is spurring recruitment, driving legions of embittered or desperate youths into the arms of Hamas.

“There is no shortage of young volunteers,” a senior Arab intelligence official said. “Perhaps they are not as well trained, but they will help Hamas make up for its losses. These are the people who have lost families, and they have one motive: revenge.”

Hamas, still in survival mode, appears already to be shifting to a new phase of conflict that could more easily harness the energy of its newest members. Social media postings by Hamas’s military wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, have begun to promote the tactics of an insurgency, such as bombings using IEDs.

One illustration, titled “The Hunting,” depicts three Israeli soldiers approaching a pair of mines. A Hamas operative in the foreground extends his hand to touch the remote-control trigger.

“What is hidden,” it warns, “is immense.”

## MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

The [Israel-Gaza war](#) has gone on [for over a year](#), and tensions have spilled into the surrounding [Middle East region](#).

**The war:** On Oct. 7, [Hamas militants](#) launched an unprecedented [cross-border attack](#) on Israel, killing about 1,200 people and taking civilian hostages. We’re [tracking how many hostages remain in Gaza](#). Israel declared war on Hamas in response, launching a ground invasion that [fueled the biggest displacement](#) in the region since [Israel’s creation in 1948](#). In July 2024, [Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed](#) in an attack Hamas has blamed on Israel.

**Cease-fire:** Israel and Lebanon’s Hezbollah [agreed to a cease-fire deal in November 2024](#), bringing a tenuous halt to more than a year of hostilities. Here’s [what to know about the deal’s terms](#) and how it will be enforced.

**Hezbollah:** Hostilities between Israel and [Hezbollah](#), a militant organization backed by Iran, have escalated over the past year, leading to an [Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon](#). Israel’s airstrikes into Lebanon have [grown more intense and deadly](#), killing over 1,400 people including [Hasan Nasrallah](#), Hezbollah’s longtime leader. The [Israel-Lebanon border has a history of violence](#) that dates back to Israel’s founding.

**Gaza crisis:** In the Gaza Strip, Israel has waged one of this century’s [most destructive wars](#), killing tens of thousands and plunging at least half of the population into “[famine-like conditions](#).” For months, Israel has resisted pressure from Western allies to allow [more humanitarian aid into the enclave](#).

**U.S. involvement:** Despite [tensions between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and some U.S. politicians](#), including President Biden, the United States supports Israel with [weapons](#), funds [aid packages](#), and has [vetoed](#) or [abstained](#) from the United Nations’ cease-fire resolutions.

# UNDERGROUND NIGHTMARE: HAMAS TUNNELS AND THE WICKED PROBLEM FACING THE IDF

[MODERN WAR INSTITUTE](#) John Spencer 17 October 2023



Image credit:  
[Israel Defense Forces](#)

If Israel launches a ground campaign into Gaza to clear the dense areas of Hamas military capability—and all indications are that it intends to—Israeli forces can expect to face a [wide range of challenges](#). Some of these are common features of modern urban warfare history, while others stem from the unique characteristics of Gaza's urban terrain. But one challenge spans both categories: tunnels. Subterranean spaces have featured in other urban battles—not only recently but stretching back to ancient history. But the scale of the challenge in Gaza, where hundreds of miles of tunnels crisscross below ground in the enclave, is entirely unique. This expansive underground complex is the wicked problem—one for which no perfect solution exists—awaiting Israeli ground forces.

Tunnel warfare is not new. From medieval mining and countermining, its long history extends through the subterranean component of the World War I battles of the Somme, Vimy Ridge, and Messines to the deep natural and manmade tunnels used at Mariupol, Bakhmut, and Soledar during the ongoing war in Ukraine. The US military's experience with tunnels includes the Civil War sieges of [Vicksburg, Mississippi in 1863](#) and [Petersburg, Virginia in 1864](#), the massive underground complexes of the Vietnam War, and both to al-Qaeda and ISIS tunnels in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq. In Vietnam, where North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces used miles of tunnel networks to protect their supply routes, military forces, and bases in places like [Cu Chi](#), the problem became so severe that it forced the development of new tactics such as sending soldiers, called tunnel rats, into tunnels armed with only a pistol and flashlight.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are very aware of the presence of Hamas tunnels in Gaza. They often [refer to the group's tunnel systems](#) as the "metro." The destruction of these tunnel complexes was

one of the objectives of previous ground campaigns into Gaza, in 2008 and 2014. In total, there were believed to be [over three hundred miles](#) of tunnels in 2021, when Israel claimed to have destroyed sixty miles of tunnels during an eleven-day bombing campaign. Even if those tunnels have not been rebuilt or replaced, that means that it is likely that there remain hundreds of miles of intricate, complex, and deep tunnel infrastructure in Gaza. It is a veritable city underneath the cities on Gaza's surface.

In the event of a ground campaign launched by Israel, Hamas would use its tunnels both defensively and offensively. The way it employed these spaces against the IDF [during Israel's 2014](#) Operation Protective Edge offers clues about what to expect in the days and weeks ahead.

Defensively, Hamas will use tunnels to escape IDF observation and attack. Any Hamas military capability that survives Israel's current air campaign will mostly be deep underground. Hamas will have already placed its leadership, fighters, headquarters, communication, weapons, and supplies like water, food, ammunition in its tunnel complexes to prepare for the ground assault by Israeli forces. The tunnels will allow fighters to move between a series of fighting positions safely and freely under massive buildings, even after the IDF drop thousand-pound bombs on them. Hamas tunnels often have generator power, air ventilation, water pipes, and stockpiles of food that will allow the group's fighters to better withstand the most basic challenges, like normal exhaustion, that result from urban siege and isolation. Hamas leaders and fighters will use the tunnels to remain mobile to escape entire sections of the combat area when they feel they are about to be decisively attacked or surrounded. Importantly, Hamas has also dug a large portion of its tunnels under, and connected to, civilian sites like school, hospitals, and mosques in dense urban areas. Among other reasons for doing so, this is part of its defensive [lawfare](#) strategy.

Offensively, Hamas tunnels allow the group's forces to conduct protected and surprise attacks. They will use the tunnels to infiltrate behind IDF positions to surprise Israeli forces that might not be as well prepared or equipped for combat as those spearheading the campaign, like those in logistical areas. Interconnected tunnels under urban areas will allow Hamas to move quickly between prepared attack positions with caches of sniper rifles, antitank munitions, rifle-propelled grenades, and other weapons and ammunition. Tunnels will be the vital element of Hamas's guerrilla warfare strategy. Its fighters will form small hunter-killer teams that move underground, pop up, strike, and pop quickly back into a tunnel. Hamas also uses the tunnels to hide and move rockets. These rockets can be remotely detonated or transported to hidden launch sites at the last minute. Hamas will also have many tunnels rigged with hundreds of pounds of explosive to function as tunnel bombs under main roads and buildings that the IDF might be lured into.

Entering tunnels presents unique tactical challenges, many of which cannot be addressed without specialized equipment. In some cases, it can be impossible to breathe without oxygen tanks in tunnels, depending on their depth and air ventilation. It can also be impossible simply to see. Most military night-vision goggles rely on some ambient light and cannot function when it is entirely absent. Any military navigation and communication equipment that relies on satellite or line-of-sight signals will not work underground. A weapon fired in compact spaces of tunnels, even a rifle, can produce a concussive effect that can physically harm the firer. A single defender can hold a narrow tunnel against a much superior force. Of course, not all military tunnels and bunkers are the same. I have seen firsthand the wide variety, having been in North Korean invasion tunnels discovered in South Korea, Iraqi military bunkers, defensive bunkers



and tunnels in Nagorno-Karabakh, and Hezbollah tunnels along the Israeli-Lebanese border. Two features typical of Hamas tunnels are important to note. First, Hamas tunnels are almost all very narrow, largely because of the prefabricated concrete sides and tops Hamas favors to build them. The [average Hamas tunnel](#) is just two meters high and a meter wide, making entering, moving through, fighting in them extremely hard. Second, because of Israel's advancements tunnel detection and destruction, Hamas has dug its tunnels deeper and deeper. In 2020, Israel found a Hamas tunnel that descended [230 feet](#) below the surface, the deepest found up to that point.

On the other side of the equation, there are a number of particular capabilities available to the IDF to deal with the challenge of Hamas tunnels. I have studied the phenomenon of subterranean warfare in conflicts around the world, have worked with leading scholars and experienced military practitioners to better understand its role in urban warfare, and am a founding member of first and only [International Working Group on Subterranean Warfare](#). Of all the forces I have studied, the IDF has done the most work to prepare for dealing with tunnels in war.

The IDF has the capability to find, recover hostages from, clear, neutralize, and destroy tunnels. There are specialized units like the [IDF Combat Engineering Corps's Yahalom Unit](#), an elite commando unit whose soldiers specialize in finding, clearing, and destroying tunnels. The large force includes subordinate units like Sayfan, which trains to handle the threat of unconventional weapons, Samur, which specializes in entering, clearing, and destroying tunnels. The Yahalom is one of the largest units in the world that trains, mans, equips, experiments, and develops new ways to deal with underground warfare. The IDF's [canine unit, Oketz](#), has dogs trained for operating underground. And the IDF, police, and intelligence services all have special units—like Sayeret Matkal, the Yamam, and others—who share best practices for dealing with terrorists and combatants underground.

The Yahalom and other IDF units also have special equipment specifically developed for tunnels. Tunnel reconnaissance units, for example, use [ground and aerial sensors](#), ground-penetrating radar, drilling equipment, and other systems to find tunnels. There are [radios and navigation technologies that to work](#) underground, [night-vision goggles](#) that use thermal and other technologies to see in complete darkness, and a [suite of remote or wire-controlled](#) flying or crawling robots that can look into and map tunnels without risking soldiers. The IDF also uses [virtual reality training simulators](#) that allow soldiers to train for underground warfare even when they aren't at the physical training sites that include subterranean environments.

Israel has also developed special tactics for dealing with tunnels once they are found. It has a wide range of [ground-penetrating munitions](#) like the [GBU-28](#), which can penetrate [one hundred feet into the earth](#) or through twenty feet of concrete. IDF ground forces also have multiple types of explosives to collapse or seal tunnels. They also have plenty of bulldozers they can use to seal tunnels—a tactic the US Marines employed when it sealed Japanese defenders in their caves and tunnels during the last part of [the 1945 Battle of Iwo Jima](#). When multiple Hezbollah tunnels were discovered along Israel's northern border during Operation Northern Shield in 2017, the IDF poured truckloads of wet cement into the tunnels to close them. Egypt is known for trying to neutralize Hamas cross-border smuggling tunnels along its border with Gaza by [flooding them with seawater and sewage](#).

But the hard truth is that the depth and scale of Hamas tunnels in Gaza will surpass Israel's specialized capabilities. It may come down to IDF infantry and engineers dealing with tunnels as they discover them. It will also not be a simple matter of finding and destroying Hamas tunnels for several reasons. Gaza is not the mountainous and sparsely populated terrain of Afghanistan, for instance, where in 2017 the US military dropped America's most powerful nonnuclear bomb—the 21,600-pound GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb—on an ISIS cave and tunnel complex. Moreover, Hamas will likely put weapons and explosives in tunnels that can trigger unintended explosions elsewhere or travel through to other parts of the tunnel network, causing damage where the IDF didn't foresee. Finally, Hamas will likely put civilians and hostages in their tunnels as human shields. All of this means that Israel will have to take a deliberate approach to each of the tunnels they will discover.

There is no uniform solution to the problem that tunnels will present Israeli ground force, undoubtedly one of the biggest they will face in Gaza. Dealing with each tunnel will require a situation-dependent mix of capabilities. But above all, given the scale and complexity of the underground infrastructure in Gaza, one thing is certain: overcoming the challenges posed by tunnels will require a lot of time.

John Spencer is chair of urban warfare studies at the Modern War Institute, codirector of MWI's Urban Warfare Project, and host of the [Urban Warfare Project Podcast](#). He is also a founding member of the [International Working Group on Subterranean Warfare](#). He served twenty-five years as an infantry soldier, which included two combat tours in Iraq. He is the author of the book [Connected Soldiers: Life, Leadership, and Social Connection in Modern War](#) and coauthor of [Understanding Urban Warfare](#).

The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official position of the United States Military Academy, Department of the Army, or Department of Defense.

## CAN ISRAEL CONQUER GAZA'S TERROR TUNNEL NETWORK?

Extending over 500 kilometers, according to Hamas claims, "Globes" examines some of the weaponry that could help defeat Gaza's ruling regime.

[GLOBES](#) [Assaf Gilead](#) 1 Nov 2023



Elbit's MPR 500 explosives credit: Elbit Systems

16 years of rule in the Gaza Strip have allowed Hamas to build defenses through a labyrinth of tunnels and underground caverns, the like of which no terrorist organization has ever built before. Hamas claims that the network comprises 1,300 tunnels, spanning over 500 kilometers. For comparison, London's underground railway (the tube) extends over 400 kilometers. However, Hamas's claims should be viewed skeptically. In Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021, for example, the IDF said it had hit 100 kilometers of tunnels overall.

Regardless, this is the most expensive and grandiose construction project that has ever been carried out in the Gaza Strip. According to estimates, the cost of excavating each meter ranges between \$200 and \$300, so total excavation cost about \$150 million. The Hamas tunnel network, according to various reports, is as complex as a road network with main tunnels for fast movement, bypass tunnels, sea tunnels for the exit and entry of terrorist boats, and tunnels that even allow traveling on motorcycles.

The tunnels include countless explosive charges, trap doors and other booby-traps that could endanger the lives of anyone who enters them. The military pressure currently being exerted by the IDF and the Shin Bet in the Gaza Strip is aimed at damaging the infrastructure and leadership of Hamas and obtaining

information about the fate of the hostages, but the tunnels, often called the Gaza Metro, pose a massive challenge. From the shafts, Hamas terrorists fire rockets all over the country, and most of the activists and are hiding inside them and apparently the 240 hostages are being kept captive there.

Although the terrorist organizations have prepared for a long stay underground, it won't be easy for them. "It is difficult for terrorists to live for such a long time without sun, light and clean air," says Dr. Harel Horev, a historian and expert on Palestinians at Tel Aviv University's Moshe Dayan Center. "The tunnels are very humid and require constant ventilation, which leaves them more vulnerable."

He adds that the tunnels represent part of Hamas's security doctrine as well as of the pro-Iranian axis of resistance's doctrine called "forward defense." "It is a concept in which a terrorist organization wins wherever it exists and in which the role of the citizens is to protect the terrorists. Therefore, you will not find that Hamas provides shelter for the residents of Gaza in the tunnels, apart from their family members, because their role is to be outside and absorb the IDF's bombings."



[Israel combats the Kornet anti-tank missile](#)

[Poor Gaza, rich Hamas](#)

### **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE VARIOUS TUNNELS INSIDE GAZA**

Prof. Joel Roskin, a geomorphologist and geologist in Bar-Ilan University's Department of Geography and Environmental Studies distinguishes between three types of tunnels. Firstly shallow tunnels at a depth of 10 meters, where activities that are accessible to the ground take place and can be detected relatively easily using ground-penetrating radar. These tunnels are connected to rocket launch shafts. Secondly, tunnels at a depth of 20-30 meters where Hamas terrorists store most ammunition and logistical equipment, and where most soldiers stay. Thirdly tunnels at a depth of up to 75 meters, where the headquarters and nerve centers of Hamas are located.

In Prof. Roskin's estimation, the Hamas leadership that remains in Gaza and the abducted Israelis are located at this lowest depth. "The groundwater is right at this depth, and it is possible that Hamas pumps it to supply itself with water during a siege," he explains. "There is electricity, food and equipment in the tunnels, and you can hardly feel the bombings from above. However, the generators that supply electricity to the tunnel system need air, so it is estimated that they are close to the surface, and this is the Achilles heel of the tunnels."

## THE TOOLS TO FIGHT AGAINST THE UNDERGROUND THREAT

Since the war broke out in Gaza, the Israel Air Force has been hitting as many targets as possible. Before the infantry and tanks entered the fray deep in Gaza and in particular into the terror tunnels. Among other things, the IDF is achieving this through bunker-buster bombs.

"Bloomberg" reports that in the past Israel has procured from Boeing GBU-39/B small diameter bombs for \$735 million. These bombs each weigh 110 kilograms and can be fired from a distance of 64 kilometers and penetrate concrete bunkers 100 centimeters thick.

In addition to these US armaments, the Israel Air Force also possesses Elbit Systems MPR-500 multi-purpose rigid penetration and surface attack bomb. Weighing 250 kilograms, the bomb is designed to penetrate concrete walls and explode afterwards. Considered more reliable than comparable bombs, it has been proven in previous operations in targeted countermeasures that allow surgical damage to apartments where terrorists are hiding, without damaging the entire building. The bomb can penetrate, according to estimates, to a depth of 30 meters and even deeper.

In addition, the UK "Daily Telegraph" reported last week that the IDF has a special device known as a "sponge bomb". This is a chemical device that swells into a large lump of sponge and hardens to seal a tunnel. The purpose of the bomb is to block tunnels and prevent terrorists from escaping, or to encourage them to exit through controlled openings. However, according to the report in the UK, the sealing ability of the bomb is limited, and therefore cannot deal with all types of tunnels.

This week, the IDF also unveiled a special robot for tunnel warfare, which is in the service of the Samur unit of the Engineering Corps., the engineering unit for special missions. The robot resembles the ones that NASA sends for missions on Mars: it is a kind of rover that includes five cameras and one pair of pliers. The robot transmits images from the depths of the tunnels to soldiers and military headquarters, and is also capable of detecting and initiating explosive charges.

The robot enters the tunnels before the engineering soldiers, clears the way ahead and gathers information. However, according to the estimates, the robot's ability to operate at a great distance from the control position is limited, and this is due to the difficulty in transmitting electromagnetic signals when underground. In addition to robots, the "Daily Telegraph" published information about drones equipped with night vision that penetrate underground tunnels.

Along with the IDF's technological advantage, the Hamas tunnels are built to deal with the IDF's toolbox, according to various reports. Some of the tunnels are built to thwart smart robots by building stairs and special slopes. Also, some of the tunnels are built in a "zig-zag" pattern, which disrupts communications. One of the questions that arise recently is why the army does not simply flood the tunnels, thus drowning the Hamas terrorists. In 2018, the IDF tried to do this on the northern border, when it flooded the Hezbollah tunnels with water, then with bentonite (a water-absorbing mineral), and finally with another material including cement and thus filled the tunnel from Lebanon.

However, Hamas may have built a drainage system that includes canals and ponds. "Flooding with sewage has proven itself in the past on the Egyptian side (in 2015, Egyptian President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi ordered the flooding of a tunnel from the Gaza Strip after an incident at the border).

"It is a liquid that does not permeate easily, it is viscous and also has an unpleasant gas effect," explains Roskin.

### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAMAS AND HEZBOLLAH TUNNELS?**

According to Roskin, the soil in Gaza is soft and makes it easy to dig tunnels, which made it possible to build an entire underground city in Gaza. "The ground in the center of the strip is made up of loess soil, a mixture of sand, clay and calcareous biochemical sediment, which makes the digging task relatively easy, although it is much more difficult the deeper you go," he says. "For comparison, the chalky soil in southern Lebanon is much harder."

In addition, unlike the Gaza Strip, a relatively small area of 540 square kilometers, Hezbollah has a larger geographical space to spread out and dig in, including buildings and thick vegetation. Therefore, the Lebanese terrorist group is not required to move its entire logistical and human organization underground.

**‘SMART BOMBS’ ON TARGET AT AIR HQ POST :  
ARMS: LASERS GUIDED EXPLOSIVES WITH UNPRECEDENTED  
ACCURACY,  
BOOSTING ROLE OF U.S. TECHNOLOGY.**

**LOS ANGELES TIMES** Jan 19 1991 Sara Fritz and Karen Tumulty

WASHINGTON — It was like a scene from “Star Wars.” With pinpoint accuracy, a U.S. F-111 fighter plane dropped a 2,000-pound, laser-guided bomb down the air shaft of the Iraqi air defense headquarters and blew the massive building to smithereens.

Pictures of the successful air raid over Baghdad were proudly displayed Friday by U.S. commanders as evidence that modern technology has provided U.S. forces with an unprecedented ability to attack the headquarters of the enemy’s top echelon.

The purpose of such bombing, according to military experts, is to “decapitate” the Iraqi military--not necessarily by killing President Saddam Hussein and his top commanders, but by disrupting the command and control system by which Hussein communicates with his troops in the field.

For the first time in history, U.S. forces are able to take advantage of their technological superiority to target enemy command and control systems at the outset of a war, a strategy that American commanders believe already has undermined Iraq’s ability to strike back.

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“I think to date we have been quite successful,” declared Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the allied forces. Added President Bush: “As each hour goes by, they are going to be relatively less able to respond.”

Yet experts caution that precision bombing of Hussein’s command structure, no matter how accurate, does not guarantee a shorter war with fewer allied casualties.

“It’s a big armed forces; it’s a big command and control structure,” said William E. Odom, a retired Army lieutenant general and former head of the National Security Agency. “It’s going to take a long time.”

Throughout the ages, it has been a dream of military commanders to wage a quick and easy war by mounting a successful attack on enemy commanders operating behind the lines--leapfrogging the masses of enemy tanks, artillery and fortified positions that make traditional warfare such slow and bloody work. And although this dream has never been realized, American military commanders saw a rare opportunity in Iraq.

Accordingly, in the initial days of the air assault, they assigned a very high priority to crippling or destroying command and control facilities. Only moderate resources were devoted to hitting the tens of thousands of

Iraqi tanks and artillery pieces dug into massive fortifications along the Kuwaiti border. Those would be dealt with in due course, Gen. Colin L. Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff, indicated.

Similarly, the estimated 700 planes of the Iraqi air force--when they failed to mount a direct challenge to U.S. and allied planes--were dealt with only in passing.

The theory was that, if decapitation were successful, the effectiveness of the Iraqi planes and ground forces would be significantly reduced or conceivably even eliminated.

And as U.S. military planners saw it, Hussein's military may be particularly vulnerable to attacks on its command and control structure.

The Iraqi military relies on a Soviet-style command structure, which is particularly vulnerable to a "decapitating" attack. Field commanders, even those 375 miles from Baghdad on the Kuwaiti border, are not permitted to move without orders from the central command.

Furthermore, technology appears to be working in favor of the United States and against the Iraqis. Like most modern armies, the Iraqi military depends heavily on electronic communications, which can be disrupted by an enemy with the high-tech equipment of the American forces. At the same time, U.S. forces have the ability to attack Iraqi military command posts, even those in residential areas, without necessarily killing innocent citizens.

As the pictures unveiled by U.S. military officials on Friday clearly demonstrate, the development of laser-guided bombs enables U.S. warplanes to drop bombs down the air shafts of command centers, much as space pilot Luke Skywalker did in the movie "Star Wars."

In general, the system such a plane is equipped with first matches infrared images of its potential target against satellite photographs. It then beams its laser on the target, and the reflected laser energy automatically focuses the bomb's guidance system on the target.

The system not only is more accurate than conventional targeting, but it also allows for faster delivery and thus limits the plane's exposure to hostile ground fire.

With the help of these so-called "smart bombs," U.S. warplanes have destroyed the Iraqi Ministry of Defense in downtown Baghdad as well as the air force headquarters and other command targets. In addition, the palace of Saddam Hussein was hit, perhaps by a Tomahawk missile fired from a ship in the Persian Gulf.

Such an offensive is unprecedented, according to Paul Stares, author of a forthcoming book on wartime command titled "Command Performance." "I don't think, in the past, there has ever been as massive and coordinated a campaign of command suppression," he said.

In effect, said former NSA chief Odom, U.S. forces are trying to accomplish in two weeks what it took them two years to do against Germany and Japan during World War II. "We haven't seen this kind of bombing, with this kind of weapons, in this short a period before," he said.



Although there is no way of knowing exactly how much damage U.S. attacks have done to the Iraqi command structure, many experts and members of Congress agree with Bush's assessment that the strategy so far has been as successful as can be expected.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), himself a former Navy pilot who was shot down in Vietnam and spent five years in a Hanoi prisoner-of-war camp, believes that the Iraqi military would be mounting a much more effective counterattack if its command and control system were still intact.

"It's obvious that we were able to sever it," he said.

Still, there is a limit to what the strategic bombing of Iraqi command headquarters can accomplish. Despite the accuracy of American weapons, there is no way to target a particular commander, not even Hussein. U.S. military leaders have insisted from the beginning of the conflict that they had no plans to go after him.

"We are not targeting any individual," Bush reiterated on Friday.

Moreover, experts believe that although communications between the top officers and their field commanders can be disrupted, they probably cannot be destroyed. Since U.S. troops moved into the Persian Gulf in August, the Iraqis have had five months to bury their communications lines underground and develop backup systems.

"You are not going to run into a circumstance when Saddam Hussein can't reach anybody," said Warren L. Nelson, a military analyst for the House Armed Services Committee. "The idea is that you just make it difficult for him."

The Iraqis will eventually adjust, said Jeff Shaffer of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "In the long run," he said, "(Hussein) becomes acclimated to the effects of heavy bombing. He will adapt to the air power. His capabilities will be greatly reduced, but he will learn to deal with it."

According to U.S. military officials, there is considerable evidence that Hussein's orders are still reaching his men in faraway posts. For example, it is unlikely that Iraqi forces would have fired Scud missiles at Israel without direct orders from their top commander.

"We believe he is still maintaining control over the elements of his forces," said Rear Adm. John M. McConnell, director of intelligence for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And Lt. Gen. Thomas W. Kelly, director of operations, added: "We think Saddam Hussein is still in charge, (although) I don't know how effective his command and control is."

And while there is little doubt among U.S. military officials that their strategy of strategic bombing has been successful in weakening the Iraqi command system, it is not necessarily a good idea to destroy it.

Nuclear-weapons experts have long pondered the question of whether, by destroying the top Soviet military command in the event of an East-West conflict, the United States might also eliminate the possibility of surrender. And although Bush has ruled out the use of nuclear weapons in the Persian Gulf, a similar dilemma exists for U.S. military planners in Iraq.

Some experts are asking: What happens if Iraqi top commanders never receive the information that their forces in the field have been defeated? Or what happens if these commanders, having decided to surrender, cannot control their troops?

As author Stares put it, "It's a paradox. There's a delicate balance between weakening the command structure and destroying it so it cannot rein in the troops when the time comes."

Times staff writer Melissa Healy contributed to this report.

## GAZA'S UNDERGROUND: HAMAS'S ENTIRE POLITICO-MILITARY STRATEGY RESTS ON ITS TUNNELS

[MODERN WAR INSTITUTE AT WEST POINT](#) John Spencer 18 Jan 2024

The use of tunnels in wars is not new. Seeking advantages by using either natural or man-made spaces underground is as ancient as warfare itself—from stories of tunnels being used to win massive battles [in the bible](#) to underground spaces becoming key factors to urban battles, like [Mariupol](#) and [Bakhmut](#), in the ongoing war in Ukraine. Modern nations including the United States, China, and North Korea invest billions in deep-buried military bunkers and tunnel complexes. But what Israel has faced in Gaza represents a unique first in war—namely, a case in which tunnels form one of two pillars, along with time, of a combatant's political-military strategy.

Before the Israel-Hamas war, both the presence of Hamas tunnel networks and their growth over the years were very well known. The network was referred to as Gaza's "[Metro](#)" or "[lower Gaza](#)." The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and scholars [estimated before the war](#) that there were three hundred miles of tunnels ranging from [fifteen feet to over two hundred feet](#) below the surface. The estimates were wrong.

After three months of close combat and discovering [over 1,500 tunnel shafts and underground passages](#), the IDF has learned enough to require the estimates to be revised. Israeli forces have unearthed massive invasion tunnels [two and a half miles long](#), underground manufacturing plants, luxury tunnels with painted walls, tile floors, ceiling fans, and air conditioning, and a complex, layered, labyrinth underneath all areas of Gaza. The [new estimates](#) say the network may include between 350 and 450 miles of tunnels, with close to 5,700 separate shafts descending into hell.

New estimates also indicate the construction of this subterranean network could have cost Hamas as much as [a billion dollars](#). The group has poured resources over fifteen years not just into constructing tunnel passages, but for blast doors, workshops, sleeping quarters, toilets, kitchens, and all the ventilation, electricity, and phone lines to support what amount to underground cities. As much as 6,000 tons of concrete and 1,800 tons of metals have been used in this subterranean construction.

The sheer size of Hamas's underground networks may, once fully discovered, be beyond anything a modern military has ever faced. One of the last conflicts that involved a large amount of tunnel complexes was the Vietnam War. American forces and others faced some [tunnel complexes](#) that ranged up to forty miles in length and one of the most concentrated places of tunnels, near Saigon at Cu Chi, contained 130 miles of passageways.

There are larger military tunnel complexes in the world. China is believed to have three thousand miles of tunnels and bunkers capable of withstanding nuclear attacks in a network that has been called the "[Underground Great Wall](#)." Some estimates show North Korea has over [five thousand tunnels](#) and infrastructure that includes [multiple underground air bases](#) with runways, radar sites, and submarine ports inside mountains.

But more importantly than the scale of the tunnels in Gaza, the Israel-Hamas war is the first war in which a combatant has made its vast underground network a defining centerpiece of its overall political-military strategy.

In the past, and even in most cases today, military tunnels and bunkers have been built specifically to gain a *military* advantage. They are used for smuggling, kidnapping, and invading or defending territory. Underground spaces enable militaries to conserve capabilities by avoiding detection and strike, to hold terrain by using the tunnels for mobile defense tactics, or even offensively to use guerrilla tactics to attrit the attacking force.

For the first time in the history of tunnel warfare, however, Hamas has built a tunnel network to gain not just a military advantage, but a *political* advantage, as well. Its underground world serves all of the military functions described above, but also an entirely different one. Hamas weaved its vast tunnel networks into the society on the surface. Destroying the tunnels is virtually impossible without adversely impacting the population living in Gaza. Consequently, they put the modern laws of war at the center of the conflict's conduct. These laws restrict the use of military force and methods or tactics that a military can use against [protected populations and sites](#) such as hospitals, churches, schools, and United Nations facilities. Almost all of Hamas's tunnels are built into civilian and protected sites in densely populated urban areas. Much of the infrastructure providing access to the tunnels is in protected sites. This complicates discriminating between military targets and civilian locations—if not rendering it entirely impossible—because Hamas does not have military sites separate from civilian sites.

Hamas's strategy is also not to hold terrain or defeat an attacking force. Its strategy is about time. It is about creating time for international pressure on Israel to stop its military operation to mount.

Hamas is globally known for using [human shields](#), which is the practice of using civilians to restrict the attacker in a military operation. The group wants as many civilians as possible to be harmed by Israeli military action—as one of its officials put it, "[We are proud to sacrifice martyrs](#)." It wants the world's attention on the question of whether the IDF campaign is violating the laws of war in attacking Hamas tunnels that are tightly connected to civilian and protected sites. It wants to buy as much time as is needed to cause the international community to stop Israel. Its entire strategy is built on tunnels.

The tactical challenges Hamas tunnels present to Israel are thereby compounded by strategic challenges. To deal with tunnels at the tactical level, Israel has demonstrated some of the world's [most advanced units](#), methods, and capabilities to find, exploit, and destroy tunnels. From specialized engineer capabilities and [canine units](#) to the [use of robots](#), [flooding to clear tunnels](#), and both aerial-delivered and ground-emplaced explosives, to include [liquid explosives](#), to destroy them. Arguably, no military in the world is as well prepared for subterranean tactical challenges as the IDF. But the strategic challenge is entirely different. To destroy many of the deep-buried tunnels, the IDF has required bunker-busting bombs, which Israel is [criticized for using](#). And most importantly it has required time to find and destroy the tunnels in a conflict in which Hamas's strategy is aimed at limiting the time available to Israel to conduct its campaign. Hamas's strategy, then, is founded on tunnels and time. This war, more so than any other, is about the underground and not the surface. It is time based rather than terrain or enemy based. Hamas is in the

tunnels. Its leaders and weapons are in the tunnels. The Israeli hostages are in the tunnels. And Hamas's strategy is founded on its conviction that, for Israel, the critical resource of time will run out in the tunnels.

*John Spencer is chair of urban warfare studies at the Modern War Institute, codirector of MWI's Urban Warfare Project, and host of the [Urban Warfare Project Podcast](#). He is also a founding member of the [International Working Group on Subterranean Warfare](#). He served twenty-five years as an infantry soldier, which included two combat tours in Iraq. He is the author of the book [Connected Soldiers: Life, Leadership, and Social Connection in Modern War](#) and coauthor of [Understanding Urban Warfare](#).*

*The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official position of the United States Military Academy, Department of the Army, or Department of Defense.*

## ISRAEL TARGETS HAMAS'S LABYRINTH OF TUNNELS UNDER GAZA

[BBC News](#) David Gritten 13 Oct 2023

**Israel says it is striking parts of a secret labyrinth of tunnels built underneath the Gaza Strip by Hamas, as it continues to retaliate for the Palestinian Islamist militant group's unprecedented cross-border attack on Saturday.**

"Think of the Gaza Strip as one layer for civilians and then another layer for Hamas. We are trying to get to that second layer that Hamas has built," an **Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson said in a video on Thursday.**

"These aren't bunkers for Gazan civilians. It's only for Hamas and other terrorists so that they can continue to fire rockets at Israel, to plan operations, to launch terrorists into Israel," they claimed.

It is very difficult to assess the size of the network, which Israel has dubbed the "Gaza Metro" because it is believed to stretch beneath a territory that is only 41km (25 miles) long and 10km wide.

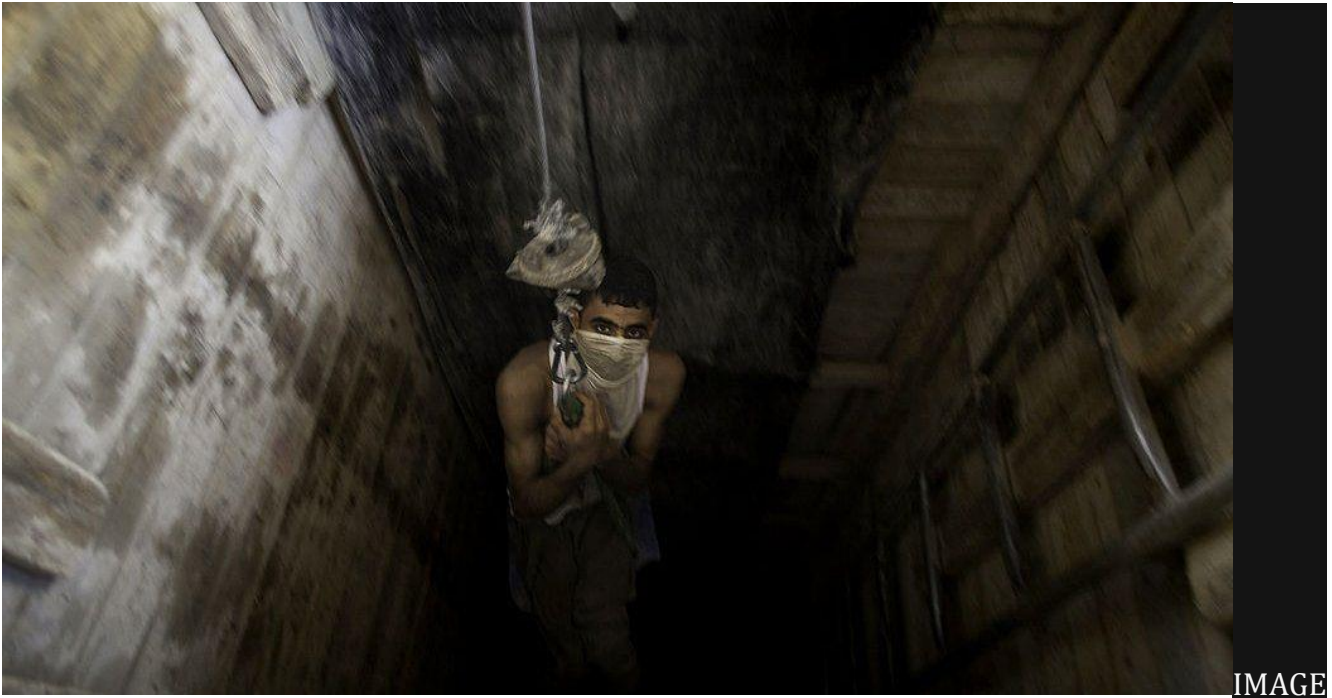
Following a conflict in 2021, the IDF said it had destroyed more than 100km of tunnels in air strikes. Hamas meanwhile claimed that its tunnels stretched 500km and that only 5% were hit. To put those figures into perspective, the London Underground is 400km long and is mostly above ground.

Tunnel construction began in Gaza before Israel withdrew its troops and settlers in 2005.

But it was ramped up after Hamas took control of the Strip two years later, which prompted Israel and Egypt to begin restricting the movement of goods and people in and out for security reasons.

At its peak, **almost 2,500 tunnels running underneath the Egyptian border were used to smuggle in commercial goods, fuel and weapons** by Hamas and other militant groups.

The smuggling became less important to Gaza after 2010, when Israel began allowing more goods to be imported through its crossings. Egypt later shut the smuggling down by flooding or destroying the tunnels.



**SOURCE, GETTY IMAGES**

Tunnels were dug under the Egyptian border to bring in all kinds of goods and weapons

Hamas and other factions also started digging tunnels to attack Israeli forces.

In 2006, militants used one underneath the border with Israel to kill two Israeli soldiers and seize a third, Gilad Shalit, who they held captive for five years.

**In 2013, the IDF discovered a 1.6km-long, 18m-deep tunnel lined with a concrete roof and walls** leading from the Strip to land near an Israeli kibbutz after residents heard strange sounds.

The following year, Israel cited the need to eradicate the threat of attacks by militants using such "terror tunnels" under the frontier for a major air and ground offensive in Gaza.

The IDF said its forces destroyed more than 30 tunnels during the war. But a group of militants were also able to use one to mount an attack in which four Israeli soldiers were killed.

"The cross-border tunnels tend to be rudimentary, meaning they have barely any fortification. They are dug for a one-time purpose - invading Israeli territory," says Dr Daphné Richemond-Barak, an expert on underground warfare who teaches at Reichman University in Israel.

"The tunnels inside Gaza are different because Hamas is using them on a regular basis. They are probably more comfortable to be in for longer periods of time. They are definitely equipped for a longer, sustained presence."

"The leaders are hiding there, they have command-and-control centres, they use them for transport and lines of communication. They are equipped with electricity, lighting and rail tracks. You can move around more and stand."

She says Hamas appears to have "perfected the art" of tunnel building and warfare in recent years, having learned a huge amount by observing the tactics of Syrian rebel fighters in Aleppo and jihadist militants from the Islamic State (IS) group in Mosul.



WEB SITE News report, February 2015: Quentin Sommerville was blindfolded before gaining access to a Palestinian Islamic Jihad tunnel

The tunnels inside Gaza are believed to be as much as 30m (100ft) below the surface and have entrances located on the bottom floors of houses, mosques, schools and other public buildings to allow militants to evade detection.

Building the network has also come at a cost to the local population. The IDF has accused Hamas of diverting millions of dollars given to Gaza in aid to pay for the tunnels as well as tens of thousands of tons of cement intended for rebuilding homes destroyed in previous wars.

It is possible that a cross-border tunnel was used by Hamas militants during last weekend's attacks in Israel, in which at least 1,300 people were killed, most of them civilians, and more than 150 others were taken as hostages. There were reports that a tunnel exit was discovered near the kibbutz of Kfar Aza, where dozens of civilians were massacred.

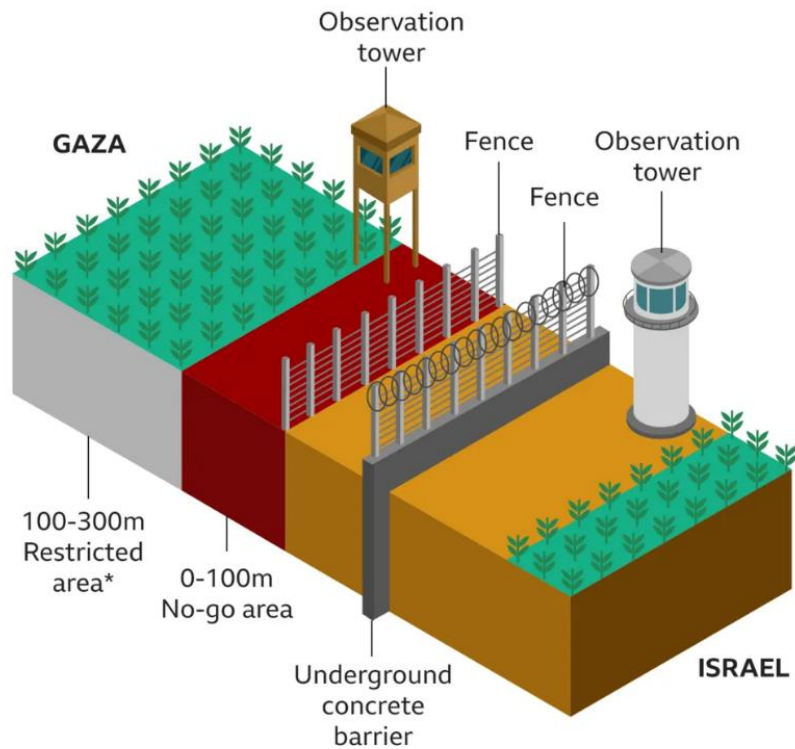
If that is confirmed, the tunnel would have been built beneath the underground concrete barrier studded with sophisticated anti-tunnel detection sensors which **Israel finished installing at the end of 2021.**

Dr Richemond-Barak says it would be a shock, but stresses that no tunnel detection system is fool-proof.

"This is why tunnels have been used for time immemorial in war, because is there no way to prevent them."



## Israel's border fence with Gaza



\*Access only for farmers and on foot

Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

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She also cautions that it is unrealistic for the Israeli establishment and general public to believe it will be possible for the IDF to destroy Hamas's entire network of tunnels in Gaza, as hundreds of thousands of troops mass nearby for a possible ground operation.

"There will be parts of the network where civilians, for whatever reason, will not evacuate... Some parts of the underground network are unknown. And for some of them the collateral damage will be too high."

Destroying the tunnels will also lead to a significant loss of life - among Israeli forces on the ground, Palestinian civilians and the hostages, she warns.

More than 1,500 Palestinians in Gaza, many of them civilians, have already been killed in retaliatory Israeli air strikes since Saturday.

"Hamas is very good at using human shields. Once a strike is imminent and they know it, they will put innocent civilians on top of buildings. That has forced Israel to cancel strikes many times," Dr Richemond-Barak says.

"Having mastered the technique, Hamas could easily use it in the context of the tunnels and simply put Israeli, American and other hostages inside them."

During the 2021 conflict, a series of devastating air strikes in Gaza City brought three residential buildings crashing to the ground, killing 42 people. The IDF said it targeted underground tunnels, but that when they collapsed the building's foundations collapsed too.



**Three Buildings collapsed in Gaza City in 2021 after tunnels nearby were hit in an Israeli air strike**

The tunnel network will also negate the advantages that the IDF has in terms of technology and intelligence, magnify the difficulties of urban warfare, and pose a lethal threat to Israeli troops, according to Dr Richemond-Barak.

"First of all, Hamas has had plenty of time to booby-trap the entire network," she says. "They could just let the soldiers enter into the tunnel network and then eventually blow the whole thing up."

"They could kidnap [the soldiers in surprise attacks]. And then you have all the other risks - running out of oxygen, fighting the enemy in one-on-one combat, and rescuing wounded soldiers becomes virtually impossible."

She adds: "Even if you don't go inside the tunnel, to secure an area where you suspect that tunnels might be present is very different from just securing an area in general. Here, you have to secure something that is invisible."

The Israeli forces will, however, have some ways to mitigate the risks.

**According to Colin Clarke, director of research at the Soufan Group security consultancy,** these might include sending drones and unmanned vehicles into tunnels to map them and identify booby traps before soldiers clear them.

Warplanes could also drop "bunker busting" bombs, which penetrate deep into the ground before detonating. However, they would pose a risk of collateral damage due to the dense urban terrain.

## **IDF: TROOPS DESTROYED 130 HAMAS TUNNEL SHAFTS IN GAZA SINCE START OF GROUND OP**

**Forces uncover tunnel next to UNRWA school in Beit Hanoun, also find entrances next to structure with car batteries, thought to be hooked up to tunnel air filtration system**

[TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) By [Emanuel Fabian](#) and [ToI Staff](#) 8 November 2023



IDF troops in Gaza exposing an entrance to a Hamas tunnel, November 2023. (IDF/Screenshot)

Some 130 tunnel shafts in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed since Israel launched its ground operation last month to dismantle Hamas's terror infrastructure in the Palestinian enclave, the Israel Defense Forces said Wednesday.

Israel has vowed to destroy the terror group, which has ruled Gaza since 2007, following its surprise mass assault on southern Israel October 7, in which terrorists invaded and killed some 1,400 people mainly in their homes in civilian communities and at an outdoor music festival, amid shocking acts of brutality that they widely documented. Terrorists also took some 240 hostages of all ages, who are believed to be held captive in underground areas in Gaza.

Israel responded to the shock attack with widespread aerial strikes in the enclave and later a ground operation, during which troops of the Combat Engineering Forces have been working to clear routes for ground forces to maneuver, locate and destroy Hamas assets, including tunnels and rocket launchers. Hamas is known to operate a vast network of tunnels underneath the enclave for smuggling goods and weapons, and moving fighters. Clearing and collapsing these tunnels has been crucial to Israel's efforts to fight Hamas as it deepens and widens its ground offensive.

Israel has repeatedly warned that it is heavily targeting Gaza City and other areas in northern Gaza, where Hamas is believed to have its main bases of operations, [including under Shifa Hospital](#), and extensive underground installations.

On Wednesday, the IDF said troops of the 460th Brigade with engineering forces found a number of tunnel entrances next to a structure with car batteries, which are thought to be hooked up to the tunnel's air filtration system.



Israeli soldiers inspect a tunnel entrance in the northern part of the Gaza Strip, in an image released by the military on November 3, 2023. (Israel Defense Forces)

The military also said troops located and destroyed a Hamas tunnel adjacent to an UNRWA school in the Beit Hanoun area in northern Gaza.

The IDF said the 252nd Reserve Division captured the area in recent days, engaging in battles with Hamas operatives and demolishing the terror group's infrastructure, including tunnels, compounds and launch positions. According to the military, since the beginning of the fighting, the 252nd Division has killed hundreds of Hamas operatives, including senior members, in Beit Hanoun and Jabaliya.

#### Advertisement

Also Wednesday, the military said forces of the Nahal Infantry Brigade captured a Hamas training camp in northern Gaza that included a staging ground where operatives had prepared weapons and food to carry out an attack. Within the camp, several tunnel entrances were found.

All of the tunnels were destroyed, the IDF said.

On Wednesday, a military official said in a briefing that Israel will likely see "achievements" regarding the tunnels "in the coming days," and that if troops need to, "they will enter them."

"Hamas has descended into an advanced and fortified underground system and built a number of protective mechanisms. Some of the tunnels can be attacked from the air," the official said. "The ground entry of the IDF exposes the enemy's infrastructure and the engineering corps has begun with the destruction of shafts and tunnels."

Israel's toll of slain soldiers since the ground offensive in Gaza rose to 33 on Wednesday with the announcement of the death of First Class Jonathan Chazor, a soldier in the Air Force's elite Shaldag unit, who was killed fighting Hamas terrorists in northern Gaza a day earlier, and of Staff Sgt. Noam Yosef Abou, of the Nahal Brigade's 931st Battalion, who was killed in action earlier Wednesday, fighting against Hamas terrorists in the northern Gaza Strip.

Separately, two soldiers of the Combat Engineering Corps' 7107th Battalion, a soldier of the 460th Brigade's 198th Battalion and a soldier of the 460th Brigade's 196th Battalion were seriously wounded in separate battles in Gaza Wednesday.

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different. To destroy many of the deep-buried tunnels, the IDF has required bunker-busting bombs, which Israel is [criticized for using](#). And most importantly it has required time to find and destroy the tunnels in a conflict in which Hamas's strategy is aimed at limiting the time available to Israel to conduct its campaign. Hamas's strategy, then, is founded on tunnels and time. This war, more so than any other, is about the underground and not the surface. It is time based rather than terrain or enemy based. Hamas is in the tunnels. Its leaders and weapons are in the tunnels. The Israeli hostages are in the tunnels. And Hamas's strategy is founded on its conviction that, for Israel, the critical resource of time will run out in the tunnels.

*John Spencer is chair of urban warfare studies at the Modern War Institute, codirector of MWI's Urban Warfare Project, and host of the [Urban Warfare Project Podcast](#). He is also a founding member of the [International Working Group on Subterranean Warfare](#). He served twenty-five years as an infantry soldier, which included two combat tours in Iraq. He is the author of the book [Connected Soldiers: Life, Leadership, and Social Connection in Modern War](#) and coauthor of [Understanding Urban Warfare](#).*

*The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official position of the United States Military Academy, Department of the Army, or Department of Defense.*



## **ISRAELI FORCES SEIZE RAFAH BORDER CROSSING IN GAZA, PUTTING CEASE-FIRE TALKS ON KNIFE'S EDGE**

**Israeli tanks have seized control of Gaza's vital Rafah border crossing  
as Israel brushed off urgent warnings from close allies and moved into the southern city**

[abc NEWS](#) SAMY MAGDY Associated Press, MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press, and LEE KEATH  
Associated Press May 7, 2024

CAIRO -- Israeli tanks seized control of Gaza's vital Rafah border crossing on Tuesday as Israel brushed off urgent warnings from close allies and moved into the southern city even as cease-fire negotiations with Hamas remained on a knife's edge.

The foray came after hours of whiplash in the Israel-Hamas war, with the militant group on Monday saying it accepted an Egyptian-Qatari mediated cease-fire proposal. Israel, however, insisted the deal did not meet its core demands.

The high-stakes diplomatic moves and military brinkmanship left a glimmer of hope alive — if only barely — for an accord that could bring at least a pause in the 7-month-old war that has devastated the Gaza Strip. The Israeli incursion overnight appeared to be short of the full-fledged offensive into Rafah that Israel has planned, and it was not immediately known if it would be expanded. The looming operation has raised global alarm over the fate of around 1.3 million Palestinians crammed into the city — and threatened to widen a rift between Israel and its main backer, the United States.

U.S. President Joe Biden warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu again on Monday against launching an invasion of the city after Israel ordered 100,000 Palestinians to evacuate from eastern parts of Rafah.

The Israeli 401st Brigade entered the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing early Tuesday, the Israeli military said, taking “operational control” of the crucial border point. Footage released by the military showed Israeli flags flying from tanks that seized the area. Details of the video matched known features of the crossing. Both the Rafah crossing and the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza — the two main routes for entry points for aid to the beleaguered territory — have been closed for at least the past two days. Though smaller entry points still operate, the closure is a blow to efforts to maintain the flow of food, medicine and other supplies that are keeping Gaza's population alive at a time when officials say the northern part of the enclave is already experiencing “full-blown famine.”

Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the U.N. humanitarian affairs office known as OCHA, said Israeli authorities have denied it access to the Rafah crossing. He warned that disruption at Rafah could break the fragile aid operation, saying all the fuel keeping the humanitarian work moving comes through the crossing.

“It will plunge this crisis into unprecedented levels of need, including the very real possibility of a famine,” he said. The Israeli military “is ignoring all warnings about what this could mean for civilians and for the humanitarian operation across the Gaza Strip.”

The military also carried out a flurry of strikes and bombardment across Rafah overnight, killing at least 23 Palestinians, including at least six women and five children, according to hospital records seen by The Associated Press.

Mohamed Abu Amra said his wife, two brothers, sister and niece were killed when a strike flattened their home as they slept. “We did nothing. ... We don’t have Hamas,” he said. “We found fire devouring us. The house was turned upside down.”

The Israeli military claimed it seized the Rafah crossing after receiving intelligence it was “being used for terrorist purposes.” The military did not provide evidence to immediately support the assertion, though it said Hamas fighters near the crossing launched a mortar attack that killed four Israeli troops and wounded others near Kerem Shalom on Sunday.

The military also said that ground troops and airstrikes targeted suspected Hamas positions in Rafah. An Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesperson declined to immediately comment on the Israeli seizure of the crossing.

Egypt has previously warned that any seizure of Rafah — which is supposed to be part of a demilitarized border zone — or an attack that forces Palestinians to flee over the border into Egypt would threaten the 1979 peace treaty with Israel that’s been a linchpin for regional security.

Israel’s plans to attack Rafah have also raised fears of a dramatic surge in civilian deaths in a campaign of bombardments and offensives that has killed more than 34,700 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials. The assault has leveled large swaths of the territory and left people scrambling for food, water and medicine.

The Rafah operation has also deepened the divide between Netanyahu and Biden over the conduct of the war. Netanyahu says attacking Rafah — which Israel says is Hamas’ last major stronghold in the territory — is crucial to the goal of destroying Hamas after its Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel.

In that unprecedented Hamas raid, militants killed some 1,200 people and took around 250 others as hostages back to Gaza. Israeli critics say Netanyahu is concerned about his government’s survival, since hard-line partners in his coalition could bolt if he signs onto a deal before a Rafah invasion.

In their call Monday, Biden told Netanyahu that a cease-fire deal was the best way to win the return of the hostages still held by Hamas and believed to number around 100, along with the bodies of around 30 others.

As Israel announced it would push ahead with operations in Rafah, it said the cease-fire proposal that Hamas agreed to did not meet its “core demands.” But it said it would send a delegation to Egypt to continue negotiations.

An Egyptian official and a Western diplomat said the draft Hamas accepted had only minor changes in wording from a version the U.S. had earlier pushed for with Israeli approval. The changes were made in consultation with CIA chief William Burns, who embraced the draft before sending it to the Palestinian

group, the diplomat and official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the internal deliberations.

The White House said Burns was discussing the Hamas response with the Israelis and other regional officials.

According to a copy released by Hamas after its acceptance, the proposal outlines a phased release of the hostages alongside the gradual withdrawal of Israeli troops from the entire enclave and ending with a “sustainable calm,” defined as a “permanent cessation of military and hostile operations.”

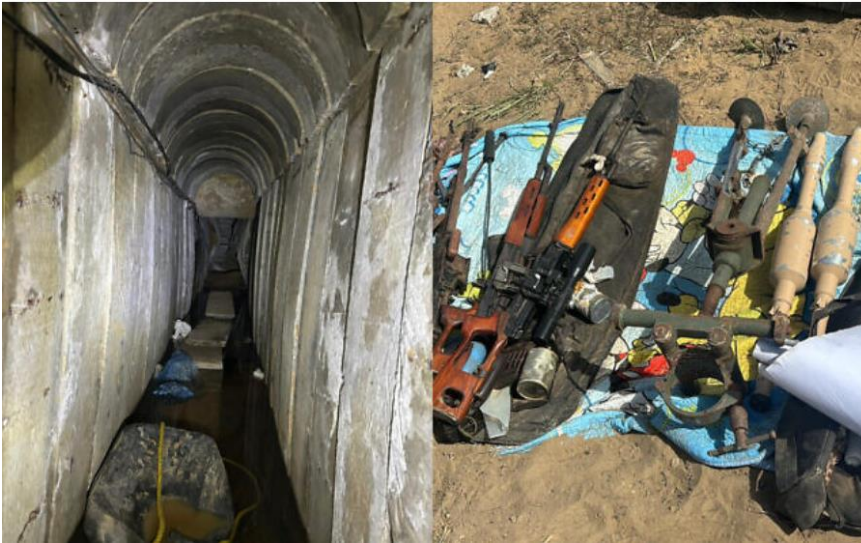
In the first, 42-day stage of the cease-fire, Hamas would release 33 hostages — including women, children, older adults and the ill — in return for the release of hundreds of Palestinians in Israeli prisons, and Israeli forces would withdraw from parts of Gaza. The parties would then negotiate the terms of the next stage, under which the remaining civilian men and soldiers would be released, while Israeli forces would withdraw from the rest of Gaza.

Hamas has demanded an end to the war and complete Israeli withdrawal in return for the release of all hostages. Publicly, Israeli leaders reject that trade-off, vowing the war will continue until the hostages are all released — and Hamas is destroyed.

## **IDF ASSESSES MUCH OF HAMAS TUNNEL NETWORK STILL IN ‘GOOD FUNCTIONAL STATE’ – REPORT**

Military said to believe Hamas retains limited ability to approach, possibly cross border; civil security heads disturbed, want destruction of tunnels to be top priority

[TOI STAFF](#) 8 July 2024



A handout image released on April 7, 2024, shows a 900-meter-long tunnel uncovered by the IDF in the al-Amal neighborhood of Khan Younis, along with weapons discovered inside. (Israel Defense Forces)

After nine months of war, much of Hamas’s tunnel network is still in a “good functional state” in many parts of Gaza, and the terror group still has the capacity to organize raids close to the border with Israel and possibly even across it, Hebrew media reported Monday.

The Hamas tunnels are in good shape in the refugee camps of central Gaza, most of Rafah in the south, and Shejaiya in the north, according to Channel 12 news, which cited what it said was a recently written IDF assessment.

In Khan Younis, in the south of the Strip, many tunnels that were targeted by the IDF have been fixed, as have the factories in the area that produce concrete to build the tunnels, the report said.

Even though the IDF has been focused on tackling Hamas in Rafah in recent weeks, functional tunnels in the area enable terror operatives to get close to the Israeli border, and only a few routes have been destroyed on the Philadelphi Route, along the Gaza-Egypt border, according to the report.

Tunnels in Gaza City are in a medium to good state, and enable Hamas to gain proximity to the Israeli border, it added.

Overall, were the war to end now, the report said, “Hamas still has the capacity to organize an incursion close to the border and perhaps even across it, [albeit] not on the scale of the past.”



IDF soldiers operate inside a Hamas tunnel in Gaza in this undated photo from the 2023-2024 Israel-Hamas war. (Courtesy IDF Spokesperson's Unit)

The report noted that the IDF remains heavily focused on tackling the Hamas tunnel network, and is gradually destroying it, including near the border. However, the report said that the heads of the civil defense squads for communities along the border who have read the document are troubled by its findings, and want the work of neutralizing the tunnels done as a first priority.

The civil defense squads were among the first to respond to Hamas's October 7 massacre, and many fought for hours to defend their communities alone before security forces could muster a response.

Nonetheless, the report noted that military chiefs, "given the achievements to date" in the war, still said that if a deal can be negotiated with Hamas, "it is right to stop now to get back the hostages."

Since launching a ground offensive in the wake of the October 7 massacre — in which Hamas-led terrorists killed some 1,200 people and took around 251 hostages — Israeli forces have worked to destroy the tunnels, uncovering more and more of the Gaza-ruling terror organization's underground network.

Senior Israeli defense officials in January **assessed** that Hamas's Gaza tunnel network was between 350 and 450 miles long, an astounding figure given that the enclave is only some 140 square miles in total size.

A defense official told The Times of Israel that it could take years to dismantle the tunnels, noting that underground passages must be mapped and checked for booby traps and hostages before Israeli forces can destroy them.

## **IDF UNCOVERS LARGEST-EVER HAMAS ATTACK TUNNEL, NEAR NORTHERN GAZA BORDER CROSSING**

**Massive underground network is 50 meters deep in some places  
and wide enough for vehicles;  
footage from Strip shows terror group building passages with tunnel-boring machines**

**THE TIMES OF ISRAEL** Emanuel Fabian 17 December 2023



A soldier stands at the entrance  
to a large Hamas tunnel  
found near the Erez border crossing  
in the northern Gaza Strip,  
in a handout image published  
December 17, 2023.  
(Israel Defense Forces)

The Israel Defense Forces on Sunday revealed the largest-ever Hamas attack tunnel discovered by the military, in the northern Gaza Strip, close to the Erez border crossing with Israel.

The tunnel, of which around four kilometers (2.5 miles) were uncovered by the IDF, goes down some 50 meters (165 feet) underground in some areas and appears to be wide enough for vehicles to pass through. It did not enter Israeli territory.

One of the shafts was found just 400 meters (a quarter mile) from the Erez Crossing, which until Hamas's October 7 onslaught facilitated the movement of Palestinian civilians into Israel for work and medical care. The IDF said that over the last few weeks, the Combat Engineering Corps' elite Yahalom unit and the Gaza Division's Northern Brigade used "advanced intelligence and technological means" to uncover the "strategic" tunnel network, scan it and clear it of any potential threats.

A map viewed by The Times of Israel showing the route of the tunnel has not been permitted for publication. The tunnel has several branches and junctions, along with plumbing, electricity and communication lines, according to the IDF. In some parts of the tunnel, troops found blast doors, which the IDF said were intended to prevent Israeli troops from entering.



Soldiers stand in a large Hamas tunnel found near the Erez border crossing in the northern Gaza Strip, in a handout image published December 17, 2023. (Israel Defense Forces)

It said the tunnel allowed for the movement of vehicles, and “many weapons” belonging to Hamas were found inside.

“Its width indicates that it was intended to have been used for vehicle-borne raids against civilians in the Gaza border communities,” said the commander of the Gaza Division’s Northern Brigade, Col. Haim Cohen, in a video statement.

Cohen said none of the branches entered Israeli territory.

This video file cannot be played.(Error Code: 102400)

During the ongoing fighting in Gaza, Hamas has carried out several attacks against troops from the tunnel network, according to the IDF. It added that several days ago, [several Hamas gunmen were killed inside the tunnel.](#)

The IDF said that the ground offensive against Hamas in Gaza has provided “a lot of information about Hamas’s terror tunnels project.”

With the announcement, the IDF also published footage obtained from the Gaza Strip showing Hamas engineers constructing the tunnel. The footage showed members of the Palestinian terror group using specialized equipment to dig the tunnel.

According to the IDF, the construction of the tunnel involved a team of dozens of Hamas terrorists “who came especially for its construction from Khan Younis [in the southern Gaza Strip] to the north of the Gaza Strip.”

It said the tunnel project was led by Muhammad Sinwar, the commander of Hamas’s southern brigade, and brother of Hamas’s Gaza leader Yahya Sinwar.

The IDF also released footage obtained from the Gaza Strip, showing Muhammad Sinwar in a car driving through the major tunnel.

The IDF said the materials used to build the tunnel “have not been seen so far in Hamas tactical tunnels.” It said the tunnel-boring machines used in the construction had been smuggled into the Strip.

According to military estimates, Hamas has invested millions of dollars in its tunnel network across the Gaza Strip.

“Since the beginning of the war, as well as during these days, the IDF has been working to locate and destroy dozens of attack tunnel routes, as part of the systematic dismantling of Hamas infrastructure,” it said.

In a press conference Sunday night, IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said the tunnel was “no ordinary tunnel. It’s a city. A terrorist city underground that Hamas dug and built instead of investing money in the residents of Gaza.”

Advertisement



Hamas construction work of a major tunnel in the northern Gaza Strip, in an image obtained by the Israeli military published December 17, 2023. (Israel Defense Forces)

“We will continue to uncover the terrorist cities of Hamas underground, soon we will uncover more cities that we will take care of, we will kill terrorists [inside them] and destroy them,” he said, adding that the IDF is aware of at least three similarly sized tunnels in Gaza.

Last week, the IDF announced that soldiers had discovered more than 800 tunnel shafts in the Strip since the beginning of the ground offensive targeting Hamas that began in late October, some 500 of which had already been destroyed.

The IDF has also carried out a [successful trial of pumping seawater](#) into the vast network of tunnels beneath Gaza, a move aimed at destroying the Palestinian terror group’s subterranean network of passages and hideaways and at driving its operatives above ground.

Asked about concerns that the tactic might harm the hostages — some of whom are being held in Hamas tunnels — IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said in a press conference Thursday that the army operates based on intelligence it has regarding where it believes the hostages are located and that it will not take steps that harm them.





Hamas construction work  
of a major tunnel in  
the northern Gaza Strip,  
in an aerial image published  
by the Israeli military  
December 17, 2023.  
(Israel Defense Forces)

IDF forces have been battling Hamas on the ground in the Gaza Strip since late October. War erupted after the terror group's October 7 massacre, which saw some 3,000 terrorists burst across the border into Israel from the Gaza Strip by land, air and sea, killing some 1,200 people and seizing over 240 hostages of all ages, mostly civilians.

In response, Israel vowed to eliminate Hamas, and launched a widescale offensive in Gaza. The Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza has claimed that more than 18,800 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the war. However, the number cannot be independently verified and is believed to include some 7,000 Hamas and Hamas-affiliated terror operatives as well as civilians killed by misfired Palestinian rockets. It is believed that 128 hostages remain in Gaza, not all of them alive. During a week-long truce, Hamas released 105 hostages. Four hostages were released before the truce, and one was rescued by troops. The bodies of eight hostages have also been recovered and three hostages have been mistakenly killed by the military. The Israel Defense Forces has confirmed the deaths of 21 of those still held by Hamas, citing new intelligence and findings obtained by troops operating in Gaza.

## HAMAS BUILT AN UNDERGROUND WAR MACHINE TO ENSURE ITS OWN SURVIVAL

**Vowing self-sufficiency, Hamas turned a maze of tunnels in Gaza into weapons factories and well-stocked fortifications.**

**A year after the war began, parts of the group remain deeply entrenched.**

[THE WASHINGTON POST](#) [Joby Warrick](#) and [Loveday Morris](#) October 5 2024



An Israeli soldier secures a tunnel beneath al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City in November 2023.  
(Ronen Zvulun/Reuters)

AMMAN, Jordan — Six months before the Oct. 7 attack, [Hamas](#)'s top leader in the [Gaza Strip](#) was meeting with visiting Palestinian businessmen in the enclave when he made a shocking disclosure. Hamas was planning something big, Yahya Sinwar told his guests.

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“There’s going to be a surprise,” he said, according to one of the participants in the meeting, which has not been previously reported. While offering no details, he intimated that preparations had long been underway in Gaza itself, within Hamas’s network of underground fortresses. Of the allies and partners assisting the effort, he mentioned only one.

“God will help us,” he said.

Sinwar’s secret plan would reveal itself on a Jewish Sabbath morning one year ago as waves of attackers [swarmed Israeli villages](#) and military bases, killing about 1,200 people and taking some 250 hostages. But the nature of Sinwar’s preparations — how, exactly, the group armed itself for the assault while simultaneously engineering a sophisticated, multilayered defense against the inevitable Israeli military response — would become clear only gradually, in the weeks and months of heavy fighting that followed. Evidence accumulated over the past year has brought new clarity to Hamas’s operational planning before Oct. 7, revealing how and from where it obtained the means for both the attack itself and a carefully

considered resistance phase that was designed to last up to 12 months. It shows how, despite years of isolation within a densely populated strip of land the size of Philadelphia, Hamas acquired an astonishing arsenal of rockets, explosives and small arms, while constructing the financial and defensive networks that enabled Sinwar and his followers to hold out for months under a determined assault by one of the world's most capable militaries.

Across Israel's northern border, the Lebanese militia [Hezbollah is in disarray](#) after Israeli forces killed the group's leader and decimated its command structure in a series of recent operations that revealed a deep penetration of the group by Israeli intelligence.

But a year after the Oct. 7 attacks, Sinwar, who studied Israeli tactics during years in prison and later became notorious for brutally rooting out suspected Israeli collaborators, has not only survived but is already laying the groundwork for the group's reemergence, according to Hamas officials interviewed by The Washington Post.

This article is based on interviews with more than two-dozen Israeli, U.S. and Arab military and intelligence analysts, many of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence assessments. The Post also interviewed current and former Hamas and Palestinian Authority officials, some of whom, like the businessman who met with Sinwar in the spring of 2023, spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

The accounts describe how Hamas, under Sinwar's leadership, became relentlessly focused on achieving self-sufficiency, including a capacity to produce its own weapons and explosives, and carry out elaborate operations involving thousands of participants, while maintaining complete secrecy.

### **Unchecked War**

**A year that began with Hamas' devastating attack in Israel has spiraled into catastrophe for Gazans and triggered a wave of violence in Lebanon, with tens of thousands of people killed — and no end in sight.**

The group relied on outsiders for money and advice. It raised tens of millions of dollars, some of it from Iran, but much of it siphoned from aid money, [charitable contributions](#), tax revenue and — after Oct. 7 — shareholder deposits stolen from Gazan banks. Hamas commanders traveled to Tehran for training, Israel Defense Forces officials say, and made multiple trips to Lebanon, where Iran had established an operations room to coordinate military planning and share technical know-how.

But the Hamas that Sinwar built was no mere proxy group, officials and experts said. Mindful of Israel's ability to cut off Gaza from the world, Hamas spent years perfecting a war machine that could make its own munitions, carry out operations without outside approval or even knowledge, and then allow its fighters to disappear inside an elaborate underground maze — a warren beneath the streets of the seaside enclave estimated to consist of hundreds of miles of interlinked, reinforced passages, rooms and bunkers.

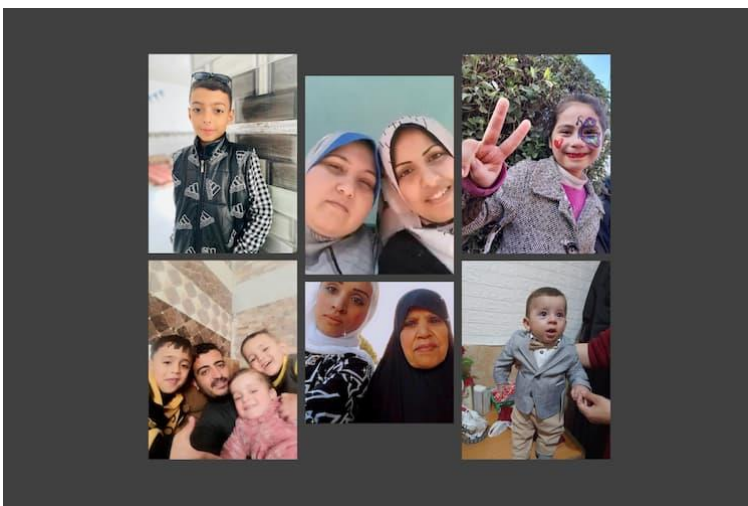
Hamas's tunnels are its greatest engineering feat and, to Sinwar, the key to its survival.

"We succeeded in making manufacturing factories underground," Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas's political bureau from Gaza, said in an interview with The Post, "because we knew that one day all the channels would be closed."

Yahya Sinwar, then Hamas's top leader in the Gaza Strip, attends a rally in Gaza City on Oct. 1, 2022. He became head of the Hamas political bureau in 2024 after the death of Ismail Haniyeh. (Mahmud Hams/AFP/Getty Images)

Hamas today is, without question, a badly diminished force. The group has lost its top civilian leader along with dozens of military commanders and an estimated 15,000 fighters, according to regional intelligence officials. Cash and weapons stockpiles are dwindling; swaths of the Strip lie in ruins; and [at least 40,000 Palestinians](#) have been killed, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants but says the majority of the dead are women and children. Many of the group's estimated 5,700 tunnel shafts have been destroyed by Israeli bombs.

Yet Hamas fights on. The group's capabilities and tactics, revealed over the past year, have repeatedly challenged the conventional thinking about Hamas that existed before Oct. 7, 2023. They also raise new concerns about the organization's ability to reconstitute itself in Gaza or elsewhere.



### [Gaza's uncounted dead](#)

[Israel has bombed much of Gaza to rubble.. What will it take to rebuild?](#)

Many analysts had believed that Hamas was heavily dependent on Iran and had smuggled in large shipments of Iranian-made rockets and missiles while making new ones in large underground factories. Yet a year later, IDF investigators in Gaza have turned up surprisingly few Iranian-made weapons, and no large-scale factories for mass assembly of rockets and missiles. Instead, they mostly found small workshops where metalworkers with simple lathes turned scavenged pipes and agricultural chemicals into components for explosive projectiles to be lobbed into Israeli villages.

After the IDF's May invasion of Gaza's southernmost city, Rafah, an Israeli commander reported finding [no new active smuggling tunnels](#) leading into Egypt, as many experts had believed existed. In the previous decade, when Gazans ran contraband through hundreds of tunnels along the border, Israeli forces would sometimes seal off the shafts with concrete, only to later discover that Hamas had drilled new passageways through the barriers. The group even tweaked rocket designs so that the components were small enough to fit through twists and turns in the reconfigured passageways.

Yet after the Rafah invasion, intelligence analysts concluded that most of Hamas's supply of imported weapons and components had entered overland, in trucks and cars passing through border crossings

controlled by Egypt and Israel. The rest arrived years ago, before [Egypt destroyed](#) thousands of underground passageways and created a mile-wide system of barriers along its border with Gaza. But the biggest surprise, U.S. and Israeli officials say, was the tunnels within Gaza. Israeli war planners well understood the challenge IDF soldiers faced in trying to defeat a foe that could move fighters and supplies freely through underground passages. But the size, scale and complexity of the Gaza “metro,” as it came to be dubbed, far exceeded Israeli estimations. IDF officials in interviews described their dismay after picking their way through bunkers 30 feet beneath Gaza’s streets, only to find shafts leading to deeper tunnels buried 120 feet underground.

“Their eyes were bulging,” said a former U.S. counterterrorism official who visited Hamas-built tunnels as a guest of the IDF. “They had no idea of the labyrinth. Can you image 150 kilometers of tunnels? The reality was several times bigger.”

### ***‘We will come to you with endless rockets’***

In private conversations and in public speeches before Oct. 7, Sinwar could not restrain himself from bragging about what his group had achieved. Outside Gaza, his words were mostly dismissed as empty boasts.

“We will come to you, God willing, in a roaring flood,” [Sinwar warned Israelis](#) at a rally for his supporters in Gaza on Dec. 14, 2022. “We will come to you with endless rockets, we will come to you in a limitless flood of soldiers, we will come to you with millions of our people, like the repeating tides.”

Sinwar, who had long dreamed of inflicting a savage blow that could disrupt the status quo with Israel, “made sure the money and material was there for many years,” said Abu Hamza, 33, a Hamas commander in the West Bank town of Jenin. Abu Hamza spoke on the condition that he be identified by his nom de guerre for security reasons.

“Hamas built really well for this thing,” Abu Hamza said. Inside the tunnels, Hamas was “hiding weapons and making their own,” while laboring to ensure that Hamas could withstand any Israeli counterstrike.

“In Gaza we were working day and night, day and night, 24 hours,” said Hamad, the member of the group’s political bureau. “We prepared a lot, not for one year or two years.”

But even homemade weapons require parts that must be brought in from the outside. Hamad said getting components past the Israeli blockade was a constant challenge. Almost every facet of weapons production, from machine tools to agricultural chemicals for explosives, was either labeled for civilian use or hidden inside shipments of food or other everyday wares.

“We are in the situation that pressures us to do everything, and collect everything,” he said. “We face a very dangerous country, with a lot of technology and weapons. It’s not easy to fight Israel. We knew this equation very well.”

## **HOMEMADE ARSENAL**

The Israeli response to Oct. 7 began in earnest with a ground invasion three weeks later by an IDF force that eventually grew to 100,000 fighters. Within days, Israeli soldiers were venturing into Hamas’s tunnels, often with underground surveillance drones or bomb-sniffing dogs in the lead.

The images posted by the IDF in the weeks that followed offered the first glimpse into what Hamas had wrought underground. Among the initial findings were armories filled with weapons — thousands of them,

of every make and description: North Korean-made F-7 rocket-propelled grenades, Bulgarian rifles, Iranian 60mm mortars and Italian-designed TC/6 mines, a copy of which is produced in Egypt. But IDF officials eventually concluded that up to 80 percent of Hamas's weapons were manufactured in Gaza, by the group itself. Among the homemade arms: antitank IEDs (improvised explosive devices), Claymore-type antipersonnel mines and thermobaric rocket-propelled grenades. Hamas — perhaps [drawing inspiration from Islamic State fighters](#) who used similar tactics in the 2017 battle for Mosul, Iraq — learned to modify small commercial drones to drop explosives, IDF officials said.

A cache of Hamas weapons is displayed at a military base in southern Israel on Oct. 20, 2023. (Heidi Levine for The Washington Post)

Hamas's specialty is short- and medium-range rockets, such as the M-75, a copy of the Iranian-made Fajr-5, capable of striking targets as far away as Tel Aviv. More common is the Qassam, named after a legendary Syrian Arab nationalist from the 1920s and featuring a design developed by Hamas more than 20 years ago. Hamas weaponeers have assembled [thousands of Qassams](#) from steel water pipes, shaping the metal into rocket bodies using metal presses and lathes, and packing the warheads with hundreds of pounds of explosives made from sugar and potassium nitrate fertilizer.

While limited in range, a single Qassam costs only a few hundred dollars to make. The Israeli military's Iron Dome antimissile system shot down thousands of such rockets in the days after Oct. 7, but at a cost of roughly \$50,000 per launch.

By January, the IDF had stumbled upon Hamas's manufacturing hubs. Israeli soldiers found dedicated fabrication centers for producing small arms, ammunition and explosives, and other workshops for crafting the cylindrical frames for rockets. Some of the production facilities consisted of interconnected underground chambers that formed crude assembly lines. These were not factories, in the traditional sense. But they served the purpose.

"They are essentially labs with lathes," said Matthew Levitt, a former Treasury Department counterterrorism official who has studied Hamas and its tunnels for more than a decade.

The largest of the manufacturing hubs discovered up to now consisted of a complex of underground workshops and street-level warehouses, raided by IDF forces in January beneath a crowded district in Khan Younis, a city in central Gaza. Connected by tunnels, it amounted to a weapons assembly line that extended nearly half a mile, according to an IDF weapons expert who analyzed the site.

"There were many different capabilities within the same location," the IDF official said. "It was such a large operation, it took us about a week to process it."

Secretly, and out of the view of satellite surveillance cameras, the group had created a "Hamas military industrial complex" that could produce a variety of cheap weapons in vast quantities, said Levitt, who now serves as the director of the Reinhard counterterrorism program for the Washington Institute of Near East Policy. "Some of the weapons even had Hamas branding on them," he said.

### **CITIES BENEATH CITIES**

The IDF had long known about the threat posed by tunnels. After Hamas used cross-border tunnels to [abduct Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit](#) in 2006, Israeli forces deployed special sensors along the border that

allowed them to hear, see and map efforts to dig new passages into Israeli territory. Yet the size and complexity of the group's tunnels within Gaza itself surprised everyone, including Israel's vaunted intelligence services and their U.S. counterparts.

"Nobody understood how extensive the tunnels were, or that there were so many different types of tunnels," said [Dana Stroul](#), the deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Middle East during the first three years of the Biden administration.

Echoing a common assessment among U.S. and Israeli military officials, Stroul said the failure to grasp the many dimensions of Hamas's most important strategic asset was "part of the intelligence failure" of Oct. 7, and one that has not yet been fully reckoned with. Fighting an enemy that can move horizontally and vertically, through a battlefield situated in heavily populated urban terrain, posed a formidable military challenge, she said.

"I don't know that any modern military has faced the complexity of the battlefield that the IDF faced in Gaza," she said.

The tunnels served to hide weapons production, according to Israeli, U.S. and Arab analysts, but they also served as a communications network, supply depot, highway system, logistics pipeline, bomb shelter and field hospital, officials said. Hidden tunnel shafts were used as staging grounds for ambushes. Underground living quarters became command centers and detention facilities for Israeli hostages.

Costing, at minimum, hundreds of millions of dollars — money that Hamas diverted from humanitarian and economic development projects intended to improve the lives of ordinary Gazans — the tunnel system by Oct. 7 extended more than 300 miles, longer than the New York City subway, or about the distance from Tel Aviv to southern Turkey. The IDF acknowledges there is no practical way to destroy the entire system. The IDF eventually became adept at fighting underground. But Maj. Gen. Dan Goldfus, an Israeli commander dubbed by local media as the IDF's "tunnel destroyer," said his forces initially faced a steep learning curve.

"All our definitions of tunnel shafts, tactical tunnels, strategic tunnels — none of that applies there," Goldfus told the Hebrew-language newspaper *Israel Hayom* in August. "It's all one large network; you can enter it at the [northern] Erez Crossing and emerge in Rafah [on the Egyptian border]. Everything there is connected to everything."

Goldfus described a moment of wonder in February when the IDF arrived at Sinwar's hastily vacated underground command center, a suite of well-appointed bunkers buried deep beneath the streets of Khan Younis.

"We reached senior officials' compounds and we studied this infrastructure ... this center of strength, its importance," Goldfus told the newspaper. "It slowly became revealed to us before our eyes. And when I understood it — what can I say, hats off."

### **SURVIVING THE SIEGE, EYEING A COMEBACK**

By the day of the Oct. 7 assault, Hamas's well-trained military wing numbered about 35,000, including a vanguard of 6,000 shock troops who burst into Israel early that morning for the attack the group dubbed "Operation al-Aqsa Flood." Hamad, the political bureau member, said the idea was to shake Israel to its core and force its leaders to end the siege on Gaza, halt settler expansion in the West Bank and curtail

raids on the al-Aqsa Mosque, which sits atop Jerusalem's Temple Mount, known in Islam as the Noble Sanctuary and revered by both Muslims and Jews. He said he was not aware of Oct. 7 planning in advance.

But Sinwar, Hamad said, also understood that Israel would respond with devastating force. Much of the planning and preparation in the years preceding the attack was devoted to ensuring that Hamas would not only survive the blow but also quickly recover so it could strike again.

The tunnels, amply stocked with provisions and weapons to last many months, would play a key role. But so would Hamas's reserves of cash.

Hamas is believed to have socked away hundreds of millions of dollars in cash and cryptocurrencies before Oct. 7, much of it from tax revenue collected from Gazans as well as [financial aid given by Qatar](#) — with the tacit approval of Israeli leaders — in recent years to keep the enclave's economy from collapsing. Hamas has used the cash over the past year to pay fighters in the group's military wing, who Hamad said are still being "looked after," even as the roughly 2 million civilians in Gaza have been forced into destitution.

The money has also enabled Hamas to retain a functioning public sector to meet the basic needs of Gazans, the officials said. The group's payroll includes 50,000 workers, including teachers, doctors, sanitation crews and more. Whatever money is left serves as a vital lifeline for Gazans struggling to feed their families at a time when many businesses and shops have been shuttered or destroyed. Hamas regularly announces collection points and times for aid recipients, with new locations posted every month. "I don't know where the money comes from," said an employee of the Gaza Justice Ministry. "What I care about now is finding something to satisfy my two children's hunger."

Yet a year into the conflict, the tap appears to be finally running dry. Beginning in the spring, many Gazan workers began drawing only half their normal salaries, when they were paid at all.

With Israel's unrelenting assault and a dearth of humanitarian trucks bearing food and other necessities reaching Gaza, Hamas may be reaching a tipping point, at least with regard to its supply of money and other vital resources, say analysts. While Hamas was prepared for an extended siege, a year of IDF operations in Gaza — combined with stricter controls by Israelis at border crossings — have nearly drained Hamas's coffers, officials said. Hamad maintains that Hamas still has "channels" to ensure cash flow into Gaza, but he declined to elaborate.

Still, one of Hamas's key assets remains available to the group with a nearly inexhaustible supply. Analysts say Gaza's devastation is spurring recruitment, driving legions of embittered or desperate youths into the arms of Hamas.

"There is no shortage of young volunteers," a senior Arab intelligence official said. "Perhaps they are not as well trained, but they will help Hamas make up for its losses. These are the people who have lost families, and they have one motive: revenge."

Hamas, still in survival mode, appears already to be shifting to a new phase of conflict that could more easily harness the energy of its newest members. Social media postings by Hamas's military wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, have begun to promote the tactics of an insurgency, such as bombings using IEDs.



One illustration, titled "The Hunting," depicts three Israeli soldiers approaching a pair of mines. A Hamas operative in the foreground extends his hand to touch the remote-control trigger.

"What is hidden," it warns, "is immense."

**PART L-1**

**LEBANON**

## WAR WITH ISRAEL

### WOULD DEEPEN LEBANON'S MYRIAD CRISES

[REUTERS](#) June 7 2024

BEIRUT, June 7 (Reuters) - The conflict between Hezbollah and Israel is unfolding against a backdrop of deep financial and political crises in Lebanon, adding to the risks for the fragile country should hostilities [spiral](#) into full-blown war.

The Iran-backed Hezbollah and Israel have been [trading fire](#) since the onset of the [Gaza war](#) in October. Both sides say they are prepared for possible escalation as mediators struggle to secure a Gaza ceasefire. Though the conflict has been relatively contained so far, it is weighing heavily on a country where five years of domestic crises have hollowed out the state.

Here's an overview of Lebanon's troubles:

#### ECONOMIC MELTDOWN

Lebanon continues to be afflicted by a catastrophic financial collapse which hit the country in 2019. Caused by decades of profligate spending and corruption by the ruling elite, the meltdown sank the currency, impoverished swathes of people, paralysed banks, and fuelled the biggest wave of emigration since the 1975-90 civil war.

The World Bank has described it as one of the sharpest depressions of modern times. Lebanon's economy shrank from \$55 billion in 2018 to \$31.7 billion in 2020. The government has yet to enact reforms needed for recovery.

The lingering impact of the crisis was captured in a World Bank report in May which found poverty had more than tripled in Lebanon over the past decade, reaching 44% of the population.

It found that one-in-three Lebanese was poverty stricken in 2022 in five surveyed governorates, including Beirut. While new Beirut restaurants serve the rich, the World Bank report said three out of five households had cut back on food spending.

The [International Monetary Fund](#) said in May a lack of action on necessary economic reforms continued to exert a heavy toll on the economy and people. It said there was no credible and financially viable strategy for the banking system.

Tourism and remittances helped the economy find a temporary bottom by 2022 and early 2023, according to the World Bank. Prior to the onset of the Gaza war, the economy was projected to expand slightly in 2023 by 0.2%. But after hostilities began, the forecast changed to a contraction of between 0.6% and 0.9%.

#### POLITICAL TENSIONS

Lebanon has not had a head of state or a fully empowered cabinet since Michel Aoun's term as president ended on Oct. 31, 202, leaving an unprecedented vacuum.

The government of Prime Minister Najib Mikati has been serving in a caretaker capacity since then. Filling the presidency and installing a fully empowered government requires a deal among Lebanon's deeply divided factions.

On one level, the standoff reflects rivalries among Maronite Christians, for whom the presidency is reserved in Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system.

On another, it reflects a power struggle between the Iran-backed Shi'ite movement Hezbollah - which propelled its ally Aoun to the presidency in 2016 - and opponents who have long opposed the group's possession of arms and say it has unilaterally embroiled Lebanon in conflict again.

With politicians showing no compromise in the tussle over state power, a compromise on the presidency may demand the type of foreign mediation that has saved Lebanon from previous such standoffs.

### **SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS**

Thirteen years since Syria's conflict broke out, Lebanon remains home to the largest refugee population per capita in the world: about 1.5 million Syrians - half of whom are refugees formally registered with the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR - in a country of approximately 4 million Lebanese.

Funding for the Syria crisis is dropping, reflecting fatigue among donors grappling with other conflicts around the world. Despite their differences, parties from across Lebanon's political spectrum agree the Syrians should be sent home.

## ISRAEL'S VICTORY IN LEBANON

[INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR](#) Brian Carter December 2, 2024

Israeli operations in Lebanon have defeated Hezbollah and compelled the group to end its involvement in the October 7 War. On November 26, Israel and Hezbollah reached a ceasefire deal that ended Hezbollah's attacks into Israel and required the group to disarm in southern Lebanon.[1] These conditions achieve the stated Israeli war aim of safely returning displaced citizens to their homes in northern Israel. The ceasefire ensures the Israeli right to self-defense against any future threat that Hezbollah may pose as well.[2] Hezbollah, on the other hand, is severely degraded and has failed to achieve its stated war aim of compelling Israel to accept a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.[3] Israel's victory and Hezbollah's defeat have drastically changed the security landscape in the Middle East by limiting Hezbollah's ability to deter Israel. Though Israel has won this round of conflict in Lebanon, Hezbollah will almost certainly begin reconstituting its forces and likely try re-entrenching itself in southern Lebanon at some point. The United States and Israel must ensure that Hezbollah adheres to the ceasefire. If Hezbollah violates the ceasefire, the United States must permit Israel to use force to disrupt Hezbollah's efforts to rebuild its forces and the threat that it poses to Israel.

### Israel-Lebanon Ceasefire

As Reported by Israeli Army Radio on November 26, 2024



Israel-Lebanon Ceasefire Terms	Stipulations in US "Guarantee Letter"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Israel Defense Forces (IDF) withdraw from Lebanon by January 26, 2025.</li> <li>Hezbollah withdraws from southern Lebanon</li> <li>Hezbollah and the IDF end offensive operations.</li> <li>Any sale, supply, and production of weapons or weapons-related materiel to Lebanon will be under the supervision of the Lebanese government</li> <li>The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) dismantle all non-state military infrastructure, prevent Hezbollah's rearmament, and deploy to southern Lebanon to play a predominant security role. This security role will include deployments to the borders and border crossings</li> <li>UNIFIL and an independent committee advised by the United States and France will monitor ceasefire compliance. This ceasefire is not codified in the text of the agreement. Israel and Lebanon will report any violations of the ceasefire to the committee</li> <li>Both Israel and Lebanon have "an inherent right to self-defense"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The United States and Israel will share "sensitive intelligence" about violations, including Hezbollah infiltration into the LAF</li> <li>The United States may share information provided by Israel with third parties, including the committee and the Lebanese government, to allow these parties to address ceasefire negotiations</li> <li>The United States will "cooperate" to interdict the transfer of weapons and personnel from Iran to Lebanon</li> <li>The United States recognizes Israel's right to respond to threats from Lebanon</li> <li>Israel can act at any time against violations in southern Lebanon</li> <li>Israel can act anywhere in Lebanon if Lebanon is unwilling or unable to stop violations, including the illegal transit of weapons into Lebanon</li> <li>Israel will have intelligence overflight rights over Lebanon</li> </ul>

Source: Israeli Army Radio[4]

Hezbollah entered the war on October 8, 2023—one day after Hamas' ground attack into Israel. Hezbollah began firing almost daily drone, missile, and rocket attacks targeting towns and military sites in northern Israel.[5] These attacks led thousands of Israeli citizens to evacuate, leaving many of them displaced for over a year.[6] The stated Hezbollah objectives were to fix some Israeli forces along the border and compel Israel to accept a ceasefire with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.[7] Israel tried to attrit Hezbollah forces along the border in response by conducting intermittent shelling and airstrikes into Lebanon targeting Hezbollah leaders and logistics.

Israel eventually decided to conduct major operations into Lebanon in summer 2024 to make Hezbollah unwilling to continue attacks. Israel began this campaign by conducting airstrikes targeting key leaders, including Hassan Nasrallah, and detonating thousands of pagers and hand-held radios belonging to Hezbollah members across Lebanon.[8] These efforts disrupted Hezbollah forces and paralyzed the group temporarily. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) exploited this disruption by launching ground operations against disorganized Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon.[9] The IDF cleared the surrounding border towns in Lebanon and seized key terrain, such as ridgelines from which Hezbollah would fire into northern Israel.

These Israeli operations made serious progress toward securing citizens in northern Israel by addressing the most immediate threats that Hezbollah posed. The IDF ground operations disrupted the ability of Hezbollah to fire coordinated, large-scale rocket barrages into northern Israel.[10] The IDF also destroyed key offensive capabilities that Hezbollah had in southern Lebanon, such as tunnels meant to support ground attacks into northern Israel.[11] Hezbollah had long planned for its powerful offensive military unit, the Radwan Force, to use these tunnels to conduct attacks into Israel that would be similar to what Hamas did on October 7, 2023.[12] These ground attacks are part of a concept developed by Iran and its Axis of Resistance to use ground warfare and information operations to destabilize Israel and ultimately erode the viability of an Israeli state.[13]

The IDF designed its campaign to facilitate a political settlement rather than to destroy Hezbollah entirely. Israeli political leadership ordered the IDF to create conditions that would return citizens to northern Israel, which did not imply destroying Hezbollah as a military organization. The Israeli campaign—in line with the orders from Israeli political leadership—severely degraded Hezbollah, destroyed key capabilities in southern Lebanon, and destroyed the willingness of its leaders to continue fighting. That led Hezbollah to accept the ceasefire deal on November 26, despite having failed to achieve its stated objective of forcing an end to fighting in the Gaza Strip. But destroying all of Hezbollah's ability to attack Israel would have been tantamount to destroying Hezbollah as a military organization, which would require a much greater military effort than what Israeli political leadership ordered the IDF to do. Destroying Hezbollah would have presumably required the IDF to capture Beirut to destroy Hezbollah military and political leadership and destroy the long-range strike capabilities that Hezbollah has deeper in Lebanon. Such an operation would risk destabilizing Lebanon and entail a years-long military commitment.

Although Hezbollah can still break the ceasefire and fire into Israel at any time, the strategic threat that it poses to Israel is far diminished. The large Hezbollah rocket and drone barrages in the days before the ceasefire will inevitably draw comparisons between this ground campaign and the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah

War, in which Hezbollah fired hundreds of rockets just before Israel agreed to the ceasefire.[14] Hezbollah sought to prove in 2006 that it had won the war and likely aimed to do so again in 2024 by firing rockets at much higher rates leading up to the ceasefire deal.[15] The IDF inflicted far greater damage to Hezbollah in this campaign than it did in 2006, however. The IDF has killed nearly all of the top Hezbollah commanders, degraded the Radwan Force, destroyed kilometers of offensive tunnels, and demonstrated the Israeli ability to rapidly inflict massive casualties upon Hezbollah at relatively little cost.[16]

Israel's victory in Lebanon and its defeat of Hamas drastically improved Israel's security situation by removing the immediate threats posed by Iranian-backed groups around the Israeli periphery. Israel is thus redefining the security landscape of the Middle East in fundamental ways—at least temporarily.

Hezbollah will almost certainly try to reconstitute its forces and very likely with Iranian support, however.

Hezbollah therefore still poses a strategic threat to Israel, despite being defeated in this round of conflict.

The United States and Israel must ensure that Hezbollah continues to adhere to the ceasefire and does not rearm in southern Lebanon. The United States and Israel will also need to hold the guarantors of the ceasefire accountable. The ceasefire relies on UNIFIL and the Lebanese state to implement many of its provisions, including preventing Hezbollah from rearming. But UNIFIL and the Lebanese state proved unable and unwilling to fulfill this same responsibility after UN Security Council Resolution 1701 ended the Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006, raising questions about whether they could enforce the latest ceasefire.

Washington must therefore continue to support the Israeli right to use force against Hezbollah efforts to rearm and re-entrench in southern Lebanon. Failing to prevent Hezbollah from rearming will increase the risk of a new war in the years ahead dramatically. And there is no guarantee that a future Israel-Hezbollah war will be as contained and short as this one was.

## **IS HEZBOLLAH WEAKENED AS LEBANON SHIFTS TOWARDS NEW GOVERNANCE?**

**Lebanon has a new president and prime minister  
– but can they challenge groups like Hezbollah for political and military dominance?**

[ALJAZEERA Justin Salhani](#) 21 Jan 2025 2 1 Jan 2025



Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Nawaf Salam, left, shakes hands with President Joseph Aoun at the presidential palace in Baabda, Lebanon on January 14, 2025, the day after his appointment

[Handout/Lebanese Presidency Press Office via Reuters]

**Beirut, Lebanon** – A new president. A new prime minister. And the sense that Hezbollah, arguably the most powerful group in the country, has been weakened.

It has been a potentially transformative few weeks in Lebanon, particularly when taken in the context of a political system that often appears frozen.

[Israel must withdraw from Lebanon by January 26 deadline: President Aoun](#)

[Macron urges Israel to accelerate troop withdrawal from southern Lebanon](#)

[Who is Nawaf Salam, Lebanon's PM-designate amid political shift?](#)



The developments have been a cause for celebration among many Lebanese, but they also could lead to questions for the entire political class, including Hezbollah.

Hezbollah, a Shia political group and militia, has dominated Lebanon for the better part of the past two decades. But in the past few months, it has suffered numerous setbacks, including the loss of most of its senior members, including its leader Hassan Nasrallah, in its war with Israel and subsequently the fall of its staunch ally, Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria.

"Hezbollah still has legitimacy," Ziad Majed, a Lebanese political researcher, told Al Jazeera. "It will have to accept to be a strong – and it will be strong – Lebanese party like all the others but without the ownership of the decision of war and peace."

### **Hezbollah's 'hand cut off'**

Hezbollah helped [Joseph Aoun](#) get the required number of votes to become president by backing him in the second round of voting on January 9. But the group, which had planned to support incumbent Najib Mikati in the vote for prime minister on January 13, abstained after it became clear [Nawaf Salam](#), the former president of the International Court of Justice, would win.

Hezbollah MP Mohammad Raad said the group had extended a hand to the nation by voting for Aoun but Salam's nomination saw that "hand cut off".

The Iranian-backed group feels that many of its opponents in government are taking advantage of the losses it suffered in Israel's war on Lebanon.

In his first speech as prime minister-designate, however, Salam promised to unite the Lebanese people and spoke to issues that impact the Shia community deeply after [Israel's war on the country](#). Israel's attacks on Lebanon focused predominantly on areas with high Shia populations, even in areas where many locals said Hezbollah military infrastructure or fighters were not present, including southern Lebanon, much of the Bekaa Valley and Beirut's suburbs widely referred to as [Dahiyeh](#).

Much like Aoun's speech a few days earlier, Salam said he would work to make sure Israel's military withdraws "from the last occupied inch of [Lebanese] land" and the areas impacted by Israel's devastating attacks would be rebuilt.

"Reconstruction is not just a promise but a commitment," he said.

"He is smart enough to find the appropriate ways to try to be inclusive," Karim Emile Bitar, an international relations professor at Saint Joseph University in Beirut, told Al Jazeera. "I do not think he will try to exclude the Shia constituency from participating in government and state building, but this is a decision the Shia parties have to make."

Hezbollah is, however, in a precarious position. For years, Hezbollah and its allies were politically and militarily influential enough to block decisions they opposed, such as government formations that didn't satisfy their needs. In one of the most well-known examples of the group's power, Hezbollah deployed fighters to the streets of Beirut in May 2008 after the Lebanese government ordered the dismantling of the group's private telecommunications network, forcing the state authorities to backtrack.

But the [fall of the al-Assad regime in Syria](#) has made receiving weapons more difficult and removed a key regional ally for the group.

## MONOPOLY ON WEAPONS

Under the terms of the ceasefire with Israel, Hezbollah is supposed to move north of the Litani River, which runs across southern Lebanon from north of Tyre in the west to just south of Marjayoun in the east, and the Lebanese army is to deploy in southern Lebanon after the Israelis withdraw from the territory.

Hezbollah has said its military infrastructure must only be removed from the south, but Israel has recently attacked targets north of the Litani that it said are associated with Hezbollah. However, some officials in Israel and the United States – and even Lebanon – have said Hezbollah's military infrastructure should be targeted anywhere in Lebanon. This leaves questions over whether all parties have the same understanding of the ceasefire.

Aoun and Salam have both spoken about the state having a monopoly on weapons and deploying to southern Lebanon, a clear message to Hezbollah that its military supremacy may be over.

Whether Hezbollah will accept that is a different matter. On Saturday, Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem warned that Hezbollah must be included in any incoming government.

“[No one can] exclude us from effective and influential political participation in Lebanon as we are a fundamental component of the country's makeup and its renaissance,” Qassem said before adding that no force was able to “take domestic advantage of the results of the [Israeli] aggression, for the political path is separate from the situation of the resistance [Hezbollah]”.

Lebanon's new leaders have promised to ensure Israel withdraws from every centimetre of southern Lebanon and to rebuild its destroyed homes and villages in what analysts believe is an effort at extending a hand to the Shia community.

Hezbollah is under pressure from its constituencies in the south, the Bekaa Valley and Dahiyeh to rebuild their homes and lives. For that, analysts said, Lebanon will need international aid. This could lead Hezbollah to accept the new political direction for Lebanon for the time being.

“Either [Hezbollah] allows the rebuilding to happen in a way that is state-led and has sufficient legitimacy from [Arab] Gulf donors who are willing to put their money in, or it's not going to happen,” Nadim Houry, executive director of the Arab Reform Initiative, said.

And there are indications that, despite the rhetoric from some, Hezbollah may be open to a more conciliatory path, at least in the short term.

“The important thing is to rebuild state institutions, achieve political, financial and economic reform, implement the ceasefire agreement and follow up on the implementation of the Taif Agreement,” Qassem Kassir, a political analyst close to Hezbollah, told Al Jazeera, referring to the 1989 pact designed to end the 15-year Lebanese Civil War. “The issue of confronting the Israeli enemy is one of the priorities.”

Play Video

2:13

### New hope in Salam

The partnership of Aoun and Salam signals a shift away from the traditional blocs of political power in Lebanon as well as the billionaire prime minister profile of some of Salam's predecessors, including Saad Hariri and current caretaker Premier Mikati.

Many Lebanese said Salam's designation as prime minister in particular is a boon for the country and its hopes at reforms.

"I am very hopeful," said Dalal Mawad, a Lebanese journalist and author who counts Salam as a mentor.

"He embodies the justice and accountability and the rule of law that we want to see in Lebanon."

"What we can say is that Nawaf Salam's nomination definitely augurs well for the future of Lebanon," Bitar said. "Most Lebanese are optimistic for the first time in a couple of decades or at least for the first time since 2019."

Salam's name first began to be circulated for the premiership shortly after the mass protests that broke out on October 17, 2019. He is widely seen as someone who, despite being from a prominent political family – his relatives include former Prime Ministers Saeb Salam and Tammam Salam – is outside the traditional political oligarchy.

In his first speech as prime minister-designate, Salam spoke about building "a modern, civil and just state".

He also spoke about achieving "justice, security, progress and opportunities".

He spoke specifically of justice for the victims of the August 4, 2020, Beirut port blast and the 2019 bank crisis when depositors were suddenly stripped of access to their money and no officials or banks were held accountable.

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Lebanese media reported on Tuesday that the investigation into the blast, which had been derailed by Lebanese political groups including Hezbollah, would resume shortly.

Play Video

2:56

### **Struggles ahead**

Despite the focus of many on Hezbollah, all of Lebanon's most powerful parties have taken advantage of the system to avoid accountability or block political agendas they oppose.

The next challenge for Aoun and Salam will be to deliver on their statements as they confront a political system built on sectarianism.

Lebanon's sectarian system "necessitates new approaches", Majed said, adding that Lebanon was in need of a monopoly on violence by state institutions and weapons and "a strategy to defend Lebanon from real Israeli hostilities".

Under the current sectarian system, Lebanon is managed by a handful of political parties and leaders with deeply rooted support and control over the state's institutions. These leaders, who span Lebanon's religious sects, are accused of using these resources and their political power to build their patronage networks, holding people accountable to them rather than the state.

These powers have become entrenched in their positions and resistant to change.

"We need to make fundamental, structural reforms in Lebanon to the political system, and I do not know if that is doable," Hilal Khashan, a political scientist at the American University of Beirut and former colleague of Salam's, told Al Jazeera.

Appointing strong or new leaders in positions of power is not all that is needed to root out the deeply entrenched corruption and clientelism. Salam, for example, is not the first technocrat to take a prominent role in Lebanon.

“The difference is that, in the past, technocrats came to power when the political class wanted to procrastinate,” Houry said. “They were never brought in with any legitimacy, which depended on the political class, so they didn’t have the capacity or support to put in place most of their reforms.”

But today, the myriad crises in Lebanon mean the political class understands it has to let some reforms happen – even if it will likely continue to oppose systemic changes.

Salam and Aoun will have to tackle questions of economic stability, security and national dialogue without isolating any community and while managing foreign relations, including Israeli aggression. The series of issues to address is long and arduous.

Analysts, however, said Salam and Aoun have a unique opportunity. The collapse of the al-Assad regime, a constant meddler in Lebanese affairs, the weakening of Iran and the willingness of the international community to provide foreign aid and backing to Lebanon’s new leaders mean there is support for a reform agenda that wasn’t previously there.

Even with positive conditions, confronting the deeply entrenched and resilient Lebanese political class will still be a back-breaking endeavour. Many analysts said that despite their positivity over Salam’s appointment, they held doubts about whether anyone could uproot the Lebanese political system.

Still, Khashan said, Salam “is the right man for the period”.

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## LEBANON FINALLY ELECTS A PRESIDENT

**CSIS Will Todman January 10 2025**

Lebanon's parliament [elected](#) General Joseph Aoun as president on January 9, 2025, ending a two-year stalemate. Parliament had failed to elect a president 12 times following the end of the previous president's term in October 2022. Aoun has served as the commander of the Lebanese army since March 2017.

### Q1: WHY DID THIS HAPPEN NOW?

**A1:** Aoun's election is a manifestation of Hezbollah's weakness. Israel's [war](#) has forced Hezbollah into survival mode and its ability to shape Lebanese politics is diminished. At the same time, the revolution in Syria has reduced Iran's influence in the broader Levant as it [cut](#) its land bridge to Lebanon. Arab and Western powers seized on this moment of weakness and made a [coordinated push](#) for Lebanese politicians to elect a president that Hezbollah could not veto.

### Q2: WHAT DOES AOUN'S PRESIDENCY MEAN FOR HEZBOLLAH?

**A2:** Aoun's presidency could help Hezbollah in the short term. It increases the chances of Israeli troops withdrawing from southern Lebanon and of Lebanon securing international funding for reconstruction in areas where many of its supporters live.

But securing these short-term goals could undermine Hezbollah's influence in the long term. If the Lebanese army expands its presence into areas formerly controlled by Hezbollah, it will be more challenging for the group to rebuild its capabilities. And if President Aoun alone is credited with securing international funding for reconstruction, it could further the sense that Hezbollah [abandoned](#) its constituents during and after the conflict with Israel.

### Q3: WHO ARE THE WINNERS?

**A3:** Many Lebanese hope that a new government will act to address the many crises they face, including the [financial collapse](#) since 2019, hosting [1.5 million](#) Syrian refugees, and the [damage](#) caused by Israel's war with Hezbollah. Although there are no easy solutions, recovery depends on an empowered government and international support. Aoun's close ties with the Lebanese Armed Forces strengthen his leverage in negotiations with Lebanon's sectarian leaders, improving his chances of breaking through the deadlock. Arab and Western powers are clear winners. The "Quint," consisting of the United States, France, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt, had been [trying](#) to end Lebanon's political stalemate for years and saw Aoun as the most promising candidate.

Saudi Arabia now has a chance to rebuild the influence it lost in Lebanon over the past decade and to cement Hezbollah's and Iran's losses. It can offer financial assistance in pursuit of its interests in Lebanon, including strengthening state institutions, curbing [Captagon trafficking](#), and enacting economic reforms. The United States has long provided support for the Lebanese Armed Forces to counter Hezbollah and is comfortable working with Joseph Aoun.

**Q4: WHAT CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD FOR PRESIDENT AOUN?**

**A4:** First, President Aoun must nominate a prime minister to form a government, which parliament must then approve. Despite his resounding victory, apportioning cabinet positions among political parties will be challenging. The process will reveal the extent to which Hezbollah and its allies have been weakened and what conditions they extracted from Aoun during negotiations prior to the vote in parliament.

Next, Aoun must prevent renewed fighting when the 60-day ceasefire expires on January 26 and ensure the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon. His influence over the Lebanese Armed Forces will help in expanding their presence in areas previously controlled by Hezbollah. However, he lacks leverage to force Israel to exercise restraint in Lebanon, especially as president-elect Trump has indicated a more lenient approach to Israel's military actions.

President Aoun will also have to reassure international donors that Lebanon's recovery is worth investing in. His government will likely need to take steps to strengthen judicial independence and oversight in Lebanon and make a show of cracking down on corruption. Those moves will face fierce opposition from Lebanon's political elite, which has consistently worked to obstruct accountability.

**Q5: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR U.S. INTERESTS IN LEBANON?**

**A5:** The Trump administration is likely to see Lebanon as less of a strategic priority following Aoun's election. The United States' three priorities in Lebanon were countering Hezbollah's ability to threaten Israel, limiting Iran's presence, and preventing total state collapse. Israel's campaign against Hezbollah, the fall of Bashar al-Assad, and the election of Joseph Aoun have advanced all three of those priorities. U.S. attention is likely to shift away from Lebanon toward Syria, Iraq, and Iran. The Trump administration will be happy to let Arab Gulf states foot the bill for Lebanon's recovery and deal with its messy politics.

*Will Todman is the deputy director and senior fellow in the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.*

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**PART L-2**

**HEZBOLLAH**



## WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH

**Military experience gained fighting in Syria's civil war and generous support from Iran have made the Shiite militant group a formidable foe for Israel.**

**But at the same time, its political clout among Lebanon's populace may be waning.**

**COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS** Kali Robinson Sept 20 2024

### SUMMARY

- Hezbollah wields significant power in Lebanon, where it operates as both a Shiite Muslim political party and militant group.
  - It violently opposes Israel and Western powers operating in the Middle East, and it functions as a proxy of Iran, its largest benefactor.
- The group has faced unprecedented scrutiny from the Lebanese public amid the country's political and economic crisis.

### INTRODUCTION

Hezbollah is a Shiite Muslim political party and militant group based in Lebanon, where it has fostered a reputation as "a state within a state." Founded during the chaos of the fifteen-year Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), the Iran-backed group is driven by its violent opposition to Israel and its resistance to Western influence in the Middle East.

Hezbollah is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and many other countries, and has deep-rooted military alliances with repressive, anti-Israel regimes in Iran and Syria. Cross-border clashes between Hezbollah and Israel have escalated in recent years, particularly amid Israel's ongoing war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. An expanded war between the two longtime adversaries appeared closer than ever following a [string of major Israeli attacks](#) on Hezbollah in the summer of 2024.

**1943:** After twenty-three years as a French mandate, Lebanon gains independence. Its new leaders sign the National Pact, which creates a government system dividing power among the major religious groups.

1970

**1971:** The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) relocates its headquarters from Jordan to Lebanon.

**1975–1990:** Lebanon's civil war rages as the country's religious, political, and ethnic sects vie for control, leading to invasions by Israel and Syria and the involvement of the United States and other Western forces, as well as the United Nations.

1980

**1983:** In April, Beirut's U.S. embassy is bombed, killing 63 people. In October, suicide attacks on barracks housing U.S. and French troops kill 305 people. A U.S. court decides Hezbollah is behind the attacks.

**1984:** A car bombing attributed to Hezbollah kills dozens of people at the U.S. embassy annex in Beirut.

**1985:** Hezbollah releases its first manifesto.

**1992:** In March, the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires is bombed in an attack attributed to Hezbollah. Later this year, Hassan Nasrallah becomes Hezbollah's secretary-general after Israeli forces assassinate his predecessor. Hezbollah wins eight seats in Parliament after participating in national elections for the first time.

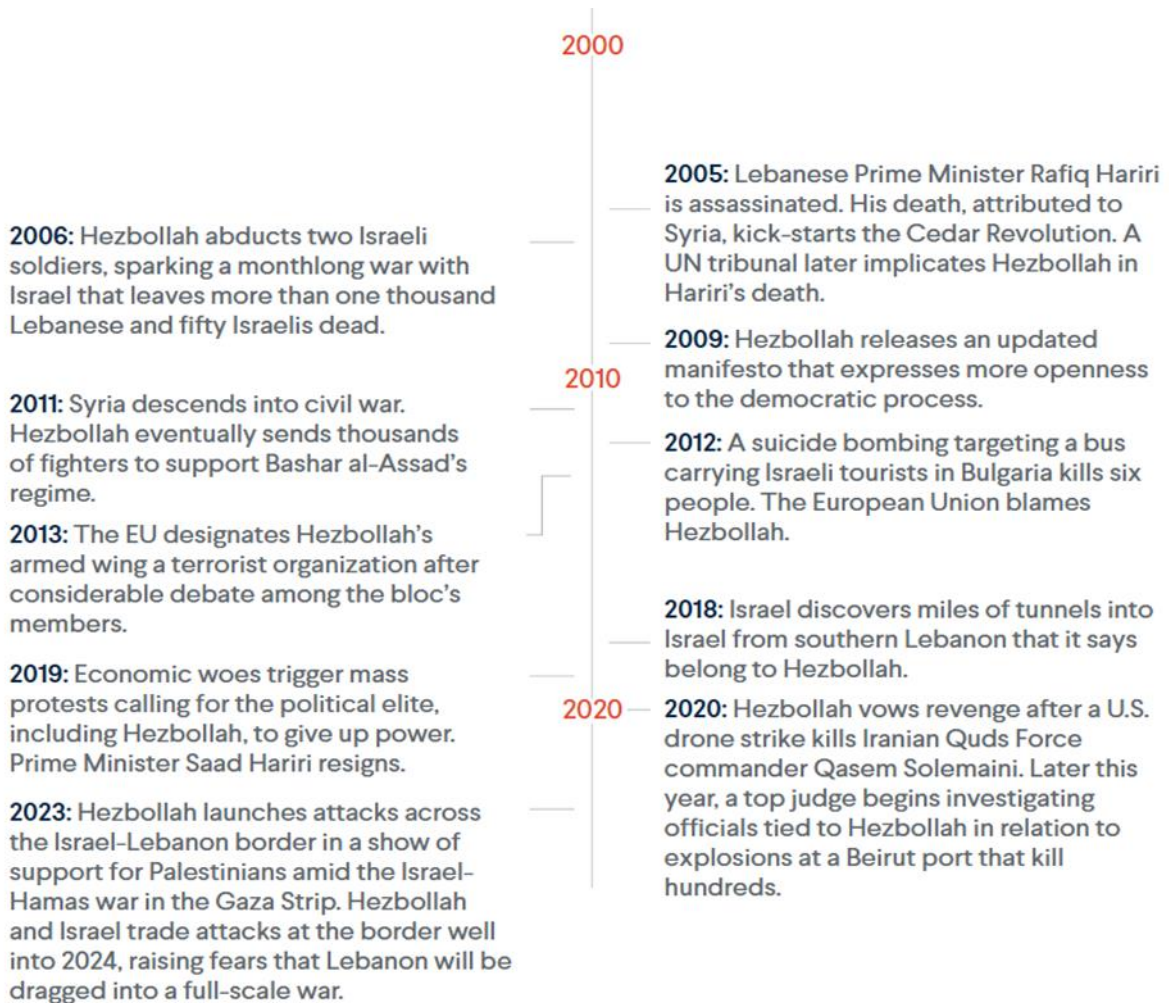
1990

**1989:** Lebanon's parliamentarians meet in Taif, Saudi Arabia, and sign an agreement to end the civil war and grant Syria guardianship over Lebanon. The agreement also orders all militias except for Hezbollah to disarm.

**1997:** The United States designates Hezbollah a foreign terrorist organization.

**1994:** Car bombings at Israel's London embassy and a Buenos Aires Jewish community center are attributed to Hezbollah.

2000



Source: CFR research.

COUNCIL *on*  
FOREIGN  
RELATIONS

## HOW DID HEZBOLLAH ORIGINATE?

Hezbollah emerged during Lebanon's civil war, which broke out in 1975 when long-simmering discontent over the large, armed Palestinian presence in the country reached a boiling point. Various Lebanese sectarian communities held different positions on the nature of the Palestinian challenge.

Under a 1943 political agreement, political power is divided among Lebanon's predominant religious groups—a Sunni Muslim serves as prime minister, a Maronite Christian as president, and a Shiite Muslim as the speaker of Parliament. Tensions among these groups evolved into civil war as several factors upset the delicate balance. The Sunni population had grown with the [arrival of Palestinian refugees](#) in Lebanon, while Shiites felt increasingly marginalized by the ruling Christian minority. Amid the infighting, Israeli forces invaded southern Lebanon in 1978 and again in 1982 to expel Palestinian guerrilla fighters that used the region as their base to attack Israel.

A group of Shiites influenced by the theocratic government in Iran—the region's major Shiite government, which came to power in 1979—took up arms against the Israeli occupation. Seeing an opportunity to

expand its influence in Arab states, Iran and its [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC) provided funds and training to the budding militia, which adopted the name Hezbollah, meaning “The Party of God.” It earned a reputation for extremist militancy due to its frequent clashes with rival Shiite militias, such as the Amal Movement, and its attacks on foreign targets, including the 1983 suicide bombing of barracks housing U.S. and French troops in Beirut, in which more than three hundred people died. Hezbollah became a vital asset to Iran, [bridging Shiite Arab-Persian divides](#) as Tehran established proxies throughout the Middle East.

Hezbollah bills itself as a Shiite resistance movement, and it enshrined its ideology in a [1985 manifesto](#) that vowed to expel Western powers from Lebanon, called for the destruction of the Israeli state, and pledged allegiance to Iran’s supreme leader. It also advocated an Iran-inspired Islamist regime, but emphasized that the Lebanese people should have the freedom of self-determination.

### **HOW IS IT ORGANIZED?**

Hezbollah is led by Hassan Nasrallah, who took over as secretary-general in 1992 after Israel assassinated the group’s cofounder and previous leader, Abbas al-Musawi. Nasrallah oversees the seven-member Shura Council and its five subcouncils: the political assembly, the jihad assembly, the parliamentary assembly, the executive assembly, and the judicial assembly. The [U.S. State Department estimates](#) [PDF] that there are tens of thousands of Hezbollah members and other supporters worldwide.

Hezbollah controls much of Lebanon’s Shiite-majority areas, including parts of Beirut, southern Lebanon, and the eastern Bekaa Valley region. Although Hezbollah is based in Lebanon, its manifesto clarifies that its operations, especially those targeting the United States, are not confined by domestic borders: “The American threat is not local or restricted to a particular region, and as such, confrontation of such a threat must be international as well.” The group has been accused of planning and perpetrating acts of terrorism against Israeli and Jewish targets abroad, and there is [evidence of Hezbollah operations](#) in Africa, the Americas, and Asia.

Iran provides most of Hezbollah’s training, weapons, and funding, sending the group hundreds of millions of dollars each year, according to the State Department. Hezbollah also receives some support from the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, as well as financing from legal businesses, international criminal enterprises, and the Lebanese diaspora.

### **WHAT ROLE HAS IT PLAYED IN LEBANESE POLITICS?**

Hezbollah has been a fixture of the Lebanese government since 1992, when eight of its members were elected to Parliament, and the party has held cabinet positions since 2005. The party marked its integration into mainstream politics in 2009 with an updated manifesto that was less Islamist than its predecessor and called for “true democracy.” The most recent national elections, in 2022, saw Hezbollah maintain its 13 seats in Lebanon’s 128-member Parliament, though the party and its allies lost their majority.

Hezbollah essentially [operates as a government](#) in the areas under its control, and neither the military nor federal authorities can counter this, Arab Barometer analysts MaryClare Roche and Michael Robbins write for *Foreign Affairs*. It manages a vast network of social services that include infrastructure, health-care facilities, schools, and youth programs, all of which have been instrumental in garnering support for Hezbollah from Shiite and non-Shiite Lebanese alike. Even so, Arab Barometer polling in 2024 found that “despite Hezbollah’s significant influence in Lebanon, relatively few Lebanese support it.”

At the same time, Hezbollah maintains its military arm. Under the 1989 Taif Agreement, which was brokered by Saudi Arabia and Syria and ended Lebanon’s civil war, Hezbollah was the only militia allowed to keep its arms. The International Institute for Strategic Studies [estimated in 2020](#) that the militia had up to twenty thousand active fighters and some twenty thousand reserves, with an arsenal of small arms, tanks, drones, and various long-range rockets. Analyst and Brigadier General (Ret.) Assaf Orion, of Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies, says [Hezbollah possesses](#) “a larger arsenal of artillery than most nations enjoy,” and a 2018 report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies called it “[the world’s most heavily armed non-state actor](#).” In June 2024, experts speculated that Hezbollah has [150,000–200,000 rockets and missiles](#) of various ranges.

Critics say Hezbollah’s existence violates UN Security Council Resolution 1559—adopted in 2004—which called for all Lebanese militias to disband and disarm. The UN Force in Lebanon (UNFIL), first deployed in 1978 to restore the central government’s authority, remains in the country and part of its mandate is to encourage Hezbollah to disarm.

***“Hezbollah is the world’s most heavily armed non-state actor.”***

*Center for Strategic and International Studies*

In October 2019, Hezbollah became a target of mass protests. Government mismanagement and years of slow growth had saddled Lebanon with one of the world’s [highest public debt burdens](#), at 150 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP). Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese citizens disillusioned by the economic slump called for the government, including Hezbollah, to cede power to a new, technocratic leadership. The formation of a Hezbollah-backed government under Prime Minister Hassan Diab in January 2020 failed to appease antiestablishment protesters, who saw it as a win for the country’s entrenched elites.

Unemployment, poverty, and debt soared under the new government, and demonstrations persisted for months despite lockdowns amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The protest movement spanned religious backgrounds, and even fellow Shiites [openly criticized](#) Hezbollah.

The group faced [further censure](#) in August 2020, when a UN-backed tribunal found Salim Jamil Ayyash, a Hezbollah affiliate, guilty of the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Ayyash and the other three living defendants, who were acquitted, were tried in absentia. The whereabouts of the four are not publicly known, and Hezbollah has refused to surrender them to the tribunal.

What is Hezbollah’s connection to Syria?

Hezbollah finds a loyal ally in Syria, whose army occupied most of Lebanon during Lebanon’s civil war. The Syrian government remained as a peacekeeping force in Lebanon until it was driven out in the 2005 Cedar Revolution, a popular protest movement against the foreign occupation. Hezbollah had unsuccessfully

pushed for Syrian forces to remain in Lebanon, and has since remained a stalwart ally of the Assad regime. In return for Tehran's and Hezbollah's support, experts say, the Syrian government facilitates the transfer of weapons from Iran to the militia.

*Hezbollah's experience fighting in Syria has helped it become a stronger military force.*

Hezbollah publicly confirmed its involvement in the [Syrian Civil War](#) in 2013, and it sent some seven thousand militants to assist Iranian and Russian forces in supporting the Syrian government against largely Sunni rebel groups. Hezbollah [withdrew many of its fighters](#) in 2019, attributing the decision to the Assad regime's military success. Analysts say fighting in Syria helped Hezbollah become a [stronger military force](#), while some Lebanese complain that focusing on the war led the group to neglect its domestic duties. Hezbollah's support from Sunnis in particular has waned over the group's backing of the Assad regime. Hezbollah's involvement in the war also opened it to further attacks by Israel, which regularly launches air strikes against Iran-allied forces in Syria.

### **WHERE DOES IT STAND ON ISRAEL?**

Israel is Hezbollah's main enemy, dating back to Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon in 1978. Hezbollah has been blamed for attacks on Jewish and Israeli targets abroad, including the 1994 car bombings of a Jewish community center in Argentina, which killed eighty-five people, and the bombings of the Israeli Embassy in London. Even after Israel officially withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000, it continued to clash with Hezbollah, especially in the disputed Shebaa Farms border zone. Periodic conflict between Hezbollah and Israeli forces escalated into a monthlong war in 2006, during which Hezbollah launched thousands of rockets into Israeli territory.

The group reiterated its commitment to the destruction of the Israeli state in its 2009 manifesto. In December 2018, Israel announced the [discovery of miles of tunnels](#) running from Lebanon into northern Israel that it claimed were created by Hezbollah. The following year, Hezbollah attacked an Israeli army base—the first serious cross-border exchange in more than four years. In August 2021, Hezbollah fired more than a dozen rockets in response to Israeli air strikes in Lebanon; it was the first time the group claimed responsibility for rockets fired into Israel since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war.

### **HOW HAVE THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES TREATED THE GROUP?**

U.S. policymakers see Hezbollah as a global terrorist threat. The Bill Clinton administration designated Hezbollah a foreign terrorist organization in 1997, and several individual Hezbollah members, including Nasrallah, are labeled "[specially designated global terrorists](#)," which subjects them to U.S. sanctions. In the mid-2010s, the Barack Obama administration provided aid to Lebanon's military with the hope of diminishing Hezbollah's credibility as the country's most capable military force. However, Hezbollah's and the Lebanese military's parallel efforts to defend the Syrian border from the Islamic State and al-Qaeda-affiliated militants made Congress [hesitant to send further aid](#) [PDF], for fear that Hezbollah could acquire it.

In 2015, the U.S. Congress passed the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act, which sanctions foreign institutions that use U.S. bank accounts to finance Hezbollah. Lawmakers amended it in 2018 to include additional types of activities. Additionally, the Donald Trump administration sanctioned some of Hezbollah's members in Parliament as part of its "[maximum pressure](#)" campaign against Iran. While

Trump's approach disrupted Iran's economy, analysts say the country's [increasingly self-sufficient proxies](#) have weathered the worst of the sanctions.

President Joe Biden's administration has continued sanctioning individuals connected to Hezbollah's financing network, including Ibrahim Ali Daher, head of the group's Central Finance Unit. In 2021, the Treasury Department [announced sanctions](#) targeting an international finance network accused of laundering tens of millions of dollars through regional financial systems to benefit Hezbollah and Iran. The European Union (EU) has taken a less aggressive approach to Hezbollah. The bloc designated Hezbollah's military arm a terrorist group in 2013 over its involvement in a bombing in Bulgaria and its backing of the Assad regime. In 2014, the EU's multinational police agency, Europol, and the United States created a joint group to counter Hezbollah's terrorist activities in Europe. In recent years, several European countries have taken a stronger stance. The United Kingdom deemed all of Hezbollah a terrorist group in 2019, followed by the German government in 2020.

Hezbollah has scorned the largely Sunni Gulf Arab countries over their relations with the United States, Israel, and European powers. The Gulf Cooperation Council—comprising the seven Arab states of the Persian Gulf, with the exception of Iraq—considers Hezbollah a terrorist organization. Additionally, Saudi Arabia and the United States co-lead the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center, created in 2017 to [disrupt resource flows](#) to Iran-backed groups such as Hezbollah.

### WHAT'S HAPPENED AMID THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR?

Following Hamas's October 2023 assault on Israel, the Iran-backed [Palestinian militant group](#) based in the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah began firing rockets, mortars, and drones across the Israel-Lebanon border in a show of what the group's leaders called "solidarity" with its [militarily inferior](#) ally. Many experts say that Iran and Hezbollah likely advised and trained Hamas on how to attack Israel, though Hamas maintains that neither was involved in planning its 2023 operation.

Israel-Hezbollah clashes and tensions have only intensified in 2024, fueling concerns of a wider regional war. Israel blamed Hezbollah for a missile strike in the Golan Heights in late July that killed twelve children, an attack the group denies. Israel responded shortly after by [targeting Fuad Shukur](#), a senior Hezbollah commander in Beirut, in a strike that also reportedly killed three civilians and wounded dozens more. In September, Israel also ramped up air strikes on Hezbollah military infrastructure in Lebanon and is suspected of conducting thousands of coordinated bombing attacks against Hezbollah members, remotely detonating their private electronic devices. Many Mideast observers, including senior U.S. military officials, expressed concern that Israel was preparing for a ground invasion of Lebanon.

#### Recommended Resources

CFR's Center for Preventive Action tracks the [instability in Lebanon](#).

CFR Senior Fellow Ray Takeyh unpacks [Hezbollah's view](#) of the war in the Gaza Strip.

For *Foreign Affairs*, Arab Barometer's MaryClare Roche and Michael Robbins explain [what Lebanon really thinks of Hezbollah](#).

CFR's Christina Bouri takes a closer look at the [history of tensions](#) between Hezbollah and Israel.

This Backgrounder by CFR's Kali Robinson discusses the role of Hezbollah's Palestinian partner [Hamas](#).

This Backgrounder looks at Iran's [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#).

## TIMELINE OF TERROR

### A CONCISE HISTORY OF HEZBOLLAH ATROCITIES

[THE HENRY JACKSON SOCIETY](#)

# HEZBOLLAH

## FORMATION

IN 1982, THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT CONDUCTED 'OPERATION PEACE FOR GALILEE' WHICH HAD FIVE NATIONAL SECURITY GOALS, ACCORDING TO MAJOR GEORGE SOLLEY, A FORMER U.S. MARINE AND MILITARY HISTORIAN OF THE FIRST LEBANON WAR. THESE WERE "(1) ELIMINATE THE PLO THREAT TO ISRAEL'S NORTHERN BORDER; (2) DESTROY THE PLO INFRASTRUCTURE IN LEBANON; (3) REMOVE SYRIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE BEKAA VALLEY AND REDUCE ITS INFLUENCE IN LEBANON; (4) CREATE A STABLE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT; AND (5) THEREFORE STRENGTHEN ISRAEL'S POSITION IN THE WEST BANK<sup>1</sup>."

THE SHI'ITE LEADERS IN LEBANON DEBATED HOW TO RESPOND. SOME FAVOURED AND ADVOCATED FOR A MILITANT RESPONSE AND SUPPORTING AN IRAN-LIKE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC IN LEBANON AND FORMED HEZBOLLAH ("THE PARTY OF GOD"), THEREBY ABANDONING THE AMAL MOVEMENT<sup>2</sup>, WHICH WAS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SHI'A MUSLIM MILITIAS IN LEBANON DURING THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR<sup>3</sup>. HEZBOLLAH'S FORMATION WAS THEREFORE A DIRECT REACTION TO ISRAEL'S OCCUPATION OF SOUTHERN LEBANON. IDEOLOGICALLY, THE GROUP TOOK ITS INSPIRATION FROM THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAN LED BY AYATOLLAH RUHOLLAH KHOMEINI. INDEED, THE IRANIAN REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS (IRGC) TRAINED, ARMED AND FUNDED HEZBOLLAH UPON THE GROUP'S FORMATION, AS THE IRGC CONTINUES TO DO TO THIS DAY<sup>4</sup>. SYRIA, TOO, WAS AN EARLY PATRON OF HEZBOLLAH FOR REASONS HAVING MORE TO DO WITH REALPOLITIK THAN IDEOLOGICAL SYMPATHY: DAMASCUS WANTED TO MAINTAIN ITS OWN ALLIANCE WITH IRAN, EXPLOIT A PLATFORM IN LEBANON FROM WHICH TO ATTACK ISRAEL OR THE UNITED STATES, AND PROP UP A BULWARK AGAINST THE POLITICAL PREDOMINANCE OF THE AMAL MOVEMENT<sup>5</sup>.

Go to  
[Timeline of Terror](#)  
For site



## **ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH CEASEFIRE COMES INTO EFFECT, HALTING NEARLY 14 MONTHS OF FIGHTING**

**Streams of cars seen heading toward southern Lebanon  
even as IDF IN ISRAEL warns civilians not to return to villages yet;  
IDF strikes in Beirut continues until an hour before start of truce**

[ToI Staff Emanuel Fabian](#) 27 November 2024

### **ALSO SEE VIDEO**

***ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH CEASEFIRE DEAL: A MODEL FOR GAZA?***

### **AT END OF THIS ARTICLE**

**A ceasefire between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon came into effect at 4 a.m. on Wednesday, bringing an end to almost 14 months of Hezbollah-initiated fighting across the northern border, which began the day after the October 7, 2023, Hamas terror onslaught in southern Israel.**

The agreement, which Israel's national security cabinet approved in a vote of 10 ministers to one on Tuesday night, will reportedly provide for a 60-day transition period, during which the IDF will withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon, while the Lebanese Army will deploy some 5,000 troops south of the Litani River, including at 33 posts along the border with Israel.

Hezbollah forces will leave southern Lebanon, and its military infrastructure will be dismantled. The US has also reportedly provided a side letter specifying Israel's rights to respond to any violations of the ceasefire.

A copy of the ceasefire deal was not published before it came into effect.

While Hezbollah has said that it accepts the ceasefire proposal, a senior official with the terror group said Tuesday that it had yet to see the agreement in its final form.

"After reviewing the agreement signed by the enemy government, we will see if there is a match between what we stated and what was agreed upon by the Lebanese officials," Mahmoud Qamati, deputy chair of Hezbollah's political council, told the Al Jazeera news network.

"We want an end to the aggression, of course, but not at the expense of the sovereignty of the state" of Lebanon, he said. "Any violation of sovereignty is refused."

Troops of the Air Force's Shaldag unit operate at the Litani River in the eastern sector of southern Lebanon, in a handout image released on November 26, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

Nevertheless, the ceasefire appeared to hold early Wednesday morning, with signs of celebration in Beirut, a day after Israel carried out its most intense wave of airstrikes in the Lebanese capital since the start of the fighting.

As the ceasefire came into effect, Col. Avichay Adraee, the IDF's Arabic-language spokesman, warned Lebanese civilians not to return to villages in southern Lebanon yet.

“With the ceasefire agreement coming into effect, and in accordance with its provisions, the IDF continues to be prepared in its positions in southern Lebanon,” Adraee said. “Do not move towards the villages that the IDF evacuated or towards IDF forces in the area. For your protection and the safety of your families, avoid reaching the area.”

He added that the IDF would inform them “of the safe date to return to your homes.”

Nevertheless, Reuters reported that streams of cars carrying people displaced by the months of fighting were seen heading south, just over an hour after the ceasefire took effect.

Bursts of gunfire could be heard across Beirut after the ceasefire took effect, although it was not immediately clear if the shooting was celebratory, as gunfire has also been used in recent weeks to alert residents who may have missed Israeli evacuation warnings.

Both Israel and Hezbollah continued fighting in the hours leading up to the ceasefire, and earlier on Tuesday, the IDF said it had struck 20 sites within two minutes in the southern suburbs of Beirut, after issuing evacuation warnings.

Seven buildings targeted in the strikes were used by Hezbollah for the management and storage of funds, the IDF said, including headquarters, vaults and branches of the Al-Qard al-Hasan association, known to be used by the terror group as a quasi-bank.

The other 13 sites included a Hezbollah aerial forces center, an intelligence division command room, weapon depots, and other military infrastructure, the IDF said.

Hezbollah too, continued to launch rockets and drones at Israel in the hours leading up to the ceasefire, setting off alarms across central and northern Israel.

Long-range rocket fire at around 10:20 p.m. on Tuesday set off alerts in Pardes Hanna, Hadera, Harish and several nearby towns, as well as communities close to the Lebanon border. The IDF said a short while later that air defenses had successfully downed three missiles. There were no reports of injuries as a result of the missile fire.

Meanwhile, the IDF continued to issue evacuation warnings for additional buildings in Beirut’s southern suburbs ahead of airstrikes against Hezbollah assets, and airstrikes were reported in the capital less than an hour before the truce came into force.

At the same time, the Syrian Red Crescent reported that a volunteer had been killed and another had been injured in alleged Israeli strikes on the Lebanon-Syria border.

According to Syria’s state news agency SANA, Israeli warplanes had hit the Arida and Dabousiya border crossings with Lebanon, in the Tartus Governorate.

Some 18 people were injured in the strike on the Arida border crossing, SANA reported, and an unspecified number of people were injured at the Dabousiya crossing, as well.

In a statement, the Red Crescent said that its volunteers had been “performing their humanitarian duty of rescuing the wounded early on Wednesday” when the strikes were launched.

The strikes were said by the medical organization to have damaged several ambulances and work points. There was no immediate comment from the IDF regarding the reports.

The US Central Command also said on Tuesday night that it had carried out an airstrike in Syria, targeting “an Iranian-aligned militia weapons storage facility.”

In a brief statement, it said that the strike was a response to an attack on US forces in the area the previous day and that its purpose was to “degrade their [Iranian-aligned forces] ability to plan and launch future attacks on US and Coalition forces who are in the region.”

## **ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH CEASEFIRE DEAL: A MODEL FOR GAZA?**

[DW News](#) 27 Nov 2024 13min 54sec

A ceasefire deal to end the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah has come into effect after Beirut residents endured the most intense day of Israeli strikes since the war began. At least 42 people were killed by Israeli strikes across Lebanon on Tuesday, according to local authorities. This morning, cars crowded the main roads as thousands of displaced Lebanese started to return south. Some people were celebrating the end of hostilities, at least for the moment. Under the truce agreement, Israeli and Hezbollah troops are to gradually withdraw from southern Lebanon, to be replaced by the Lebanese army, which says it is already "taking the necessary measures" to move in. Northern Israeli residents are also returning to their homes. What are the main obstacles for this agreement to hold? If it eventually works, could this ceasefire become a model for a similar agreement in Gaza?

## HOW HEZBOLLAH HOLDS SWAY OVER THE LEBANESE STATE

**This paper illustrates the power of Hezbollah in Lebanon and shown by the storage of missiles and its decision to join with Hamas in fighting against Israel**

**CHATHAM HOUSE Lina Khatib June 2021**

— Hezbollah is a hybrid actor, enjoying state legitimacy in Lebanon and operating both within and outside the state without being accountable to the state. It has grown in status to be able to influence and control the state in Lebanon from within state institutions as well as outside them.

— Hezbollah's power in Lebanon is not achieved through sheer coercion; it has consolidated control through elite pacts and by taking advantage of weaknesses in the Lebanese state system and infrastructure.

— Other ruling parties in Lebanon make use of alliances and exploit some of the same weaknesses, among them lax finance and public contract legislation and measures, for their own benefit. But unlike other parties, Hezbollah is able to exert its upper hand over its political allies to extend its influence indirectly.

— Hezbollah stands out among all political actors in Lebanon in having de facto control over Lebanon's border with Syria. It also stands out for the extent of its use of the Port of Beirut to transport drugs, weapons and explosive material both in and out of Lebanon without any state oversight of its operations or inspections of the hangars it controls.

— Various ministerial statements have since 2008 enshrined Hezbollah's exceptional right to possess and use weapons in the name of national defence, without delineating Hezbollah's duties or responsibilities in return; this enables it to use force at its own discretion under the pretext of national security. Hezbollah diverges greatly from other political parties in Lebanon in that its own security apparatus plays a central role in the group's ability to hold sway over Lebanese state institutions, whether military or civilian.

— Having hybrid status is ideal for Hezbollah. It can rule Lebanon without facing the prospect of civil war or international sanctions on the country. This status also lets it function as the de facto authority in Lebanon without having to address the needs of the Lebanese people.

— Although Hezbollah uses the rhetoric of reform, its ministers and parliamentarians have not sought to implement reforms in the state system, thereby contributing to maintaining the status quo that benefits them.

## THE COMING CONFLICT WITH HEZBOLLAH

[CSIS](#) March 21, 2024 [Seth G. Jones](#), [Daniel Byman](#), [Alexander Palmer](#), and [Riley McCabe](#)

### [Audio Brief](#)

### THE ISSUE

*Although the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza has captured the world's attention, there is a serious risk of war between Israel and Hezbollah, according to a new assessment by CSIS. Since October 7, 2023, there have been over 4,400 rocket, missile, and other stand-off attacks by Israel and Hezbollah combined. Hezbollah has also repeatedly violated UN Security Council Resolution 1701 by deploying forces and firing anti-tank guided missiles and other stand-off weapons against Israel from the zone between the Blue Line and the Litani River, according to CSIS geolocation analysis. The United States needs to increase its diplomatic engagement to prevent what could become a much wider and more violent war in the Middle East.*

#### Introduction

Shortly after Hamas's brutal terrorist attacks in southern Israel on October 7, 2023, Israel nearly launched a preventive war against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. Israeli intelligence assessed that Hezbollah fighters were on the verge of crossing the border into northern Israel as part of a multi-pronged attack. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) deployed fighter aircraft that awaited orders to strike targets in Lebanon. Israeli officials apparently notified the White House around 6:30 a.m. on October 11, 2023, that they were considering preventive strikes and requested U.S. support. But senior U.S. officials, including President Joe Biden, pushed back. According to CSIS interviews with U.S. officials, they were worried that Israeli strikes in Lebanon would unnecessarily trigger a regional war and were skeptical of Israel's intelligence that an attack was imminent.[1]

Although Israel did not launch a preventive war, the possibility of an Israel-Hezbollah conflict looms over the region. Israel faces a dilemma. It can risk war with Hezbollah, but in the process, a war would broaden the fighting in a way that makes the current war in Gaza look like a minor dust-up. Israel could also wait, which would avoid war now with Hezbollah, but this could risk a more serious conflict in the future with a foe that is better armed and capable and that could control the timing of a war to its advantage.

To better understand the prospects of war, this brief asks several questions. What factors shape the possibility of war? What are Hezbollah's capabilities today? What are Israel's options? What options does the United States have to mitigate or prevent a war?

To answer these questions, this analysis includes a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative information. It compiles data on Israeli and Hezbollah strikes along the Israel-Lebanon-Syria border, geolocates Hezbollah attacks against Israel in the zone between the Blue Line and the Litani River, and examines satellite imagery of Israeli strikes against Hezbollah targets. It also assesses Hezbollah's military capabilities, including compiling data on Hezbollah's stockpile of 120,000 to 200,000 short-range guided ballistic missiles, short- and intermediate-range unguided ballistic missiles, and short- and long-range unguided rockets. Finally, it draws on interviews the authors conducted with U.S. and Israeli officials on a trip to Israel.

The analysis makes three main arguments. First, the security situation has dramatically worsened in recent months for several reasons: the October 7 attacks profoundly increased Israeli insecurity; the displacement of over 150,000 civilians on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border has created growing pressure, particularly in Israel, to alter the security situation so that civilians can return; Hezbollah and Iranian-linked groups in Lebanon and Syria continue to stockpile stand-off weapons that can hit Israel; and Hezbollah continues to violate UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701. Taken together, these factors have created a volatile situation in an already tense Middle East.

Second, violence between Israel and Hezbollah has already started to climb after nearly two decades of low-level conflict. Since October 7, there have been more than 4,400 violent incidents concentrated around the Blue Line and the Golan Heights involving Israel and Hezbollah, according to CSIS analysis. In addition, CSIS analysis indicates that Hezbollah's anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) have struck Israeli forces from concealed launch sites less than three kilometers from the Blue Line on at least 17 occasions since October 7, a clear violation of UNSCR 1701.

Third, the United States needs to increase diplomatic efforts to prevent an all-out war, which would be devastating for both Lebanon and Israel and ignite a broader conflagration in an already combustible region, including triggering more attacks on U.S. forces.

The rest of this brief is divided into four sections. The first examines the evolving security landscape. The second section assesses Hezbollah's capabilities and force disposition, particularly along the Israel-Lebanon border. The third section analyzes Israel's objectives and options. The fourth section explores U.S. policy options.

## **THE CHANGING SECURITY LANDSCAPE**

**GO TO SITE TO ACCESS REMAINDER OF ARTICLE**

## THE THIRD LEBANON WAR BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HEZBOLLAH HAS BEGUN. WHAT'S NEXT?

This shows Hezbollah's role in joining with Hamas against Israel.

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Examples of Israel's response and the role of Hezbollah in Lebanon  
by Chatham House is shown above

### [NEW ATLANTICIST](#) [Alex Plitsas](#)

Since the heinous terrorist attack on October 7, 2023, Israel has waged a war against Hamas to ensure that this type of attack cannot happen again. To do so, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu set a goal of demilitarizing Hamas in Gaza and ensuring that it can no longer govern. Simultaneously, Iran's largest terrorist proxy force, Hezbollah, has fired more than 8,000 rockets, missiles, and mortars into Israel, killing civilians and soldiers alike, and displacing nearly 100,000 Israeli citizens in the north. For months, world powers have been engaging in back-door diplomacy trying to head off a war to no avail. Hezbollah has refused to move its forces from near the Israeli border to the Litani River, approximately nineteen miles north, as required by United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1701, which stipulates that any forces other than UN peacekeepers or Lebanese military must vacate.

Hamas has been severely degraded in Gaza, and Hezbollah has refused to move, so last week Israel began a new approach. This approach is in line with the one it has taken in Gaza that resulted in the [first hostage deal](#) in late November 2023. Israel has decided to exert military pressure on Hezbollah to try and force a settlement and repatriation of displaced persons in northern Israel. Here are the steps Israel has taken in the past week:

**First**, Israel [modified](#) the goals of the ongoing war to include returning citizens to their homes in Israel. This was a government action to make the impending military and intelligence operations conducted by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Mossad in Lebanon a part of the war and to allocate resources accordingly.

**Second**, Israel initiated a sabotage campaign against Hezbollah leaders and senior fighters. Israel had placed explosive charges inside [beepers and radios](#) that Hezbollah had ordered for primary and back-up command and control during war. Each device was filled with just enough explosives to severely injure or kill the user, and thousands of the devices went off on September 17 and 18.

**Third**, Israel [launched](#) a targeted strike in Beirut on September 20 that took out almost all of Hezbollah's Radwan Unit leadership during a secret meeting. Radwan Units are Hezbollah's special operations forces.

**Fourth**, Israel saw preparations for a massive attack against Israel and took preemptive strikes [on September 21](#) against missile and rocket launchers and storage sites in Lebanon. Israel's [Iron Dome](#) shot down those rockets and missiles that did manage to launch.

Fifth, Israel initiated a massive aerial bombardment campaign targeting remaining stockpiles, depots, and launchers in southern Lebanon on Monday. We can expect to see days if not a week or more of additional bombing campaigns targeting what Israel says are thousands of Hezbollah targets in Lebanon. Israel's aim is to systemically degrade Hezbollah's rocket and missile inventory, which was estimated to be between 120,000 to 150,000 at the beginning of the war. This is being done to try and prevent Hezbollah from overwhelming Israel's Iron Dome with significantly larger barrages of rockets and missiles. So far Israel has been successful in doing so.

The length of the third war will depend largely on how quickly Hezbollah will come to the table.

Israel's sabotage campaign, preemptive strikes, and airstrikes against rocket launchers and storage depots appear to have taken Hezbollah by surprise. The group has yet to respond in a meaningful way.

Hezbollah's operations are likely in disarray as many senior leaders have been killed or wounded in the past week. In creating that disarray, Israel has demonstrated its ability to penetrate and collect operational intelligence on Hezbollah.

What comes next will depend on Hezbollah. So far, Israel has largely left Beirut alone, but bombardments of Hezbollah targets there and elsewhere in the country could follow if Hezbollah refuses to budge on the issue of moving north of the Litani River. If that does not work, Israel will likely be forced to launch a ground invasion into southern Lebanon to push Hezbollah out. That hasn't happened in nearly twenty years. While this would be a significant military expansion for Netanyahu's government, there does appear to be broad political support. National Unity Party chairman Benny Gantz, who resigned from Israel's wartime cabinet in June, [stated](#) Monday that he would support a ground invasion of Lebanon if that is what is required.

A ground invasion into southern Lebanon would be required if the IDF is unable to take out Hezbollah's positions, weapons stockpiles, and launch sites in the area between the border and the Litani River. This would involve armored units, artillery, infantry, and special forces sweeping through the area, conducting raids, and targeting Hezbollah positions. Israel would prefer to avoid doing so given the risk to ground forces. But if it feels a ground invasion is a necessary step, it may seek to soften the battlefield as much as possible using aerial bombardment, as it has done in Gaza, prior to deploying ground forces. Again, that will depend on whether Hezbollah voluntarily withdraws north of the river and on whether Israel determines it can accomplish its mission from the air alone.

The Second Lebanon War lasted for thirty-four days in 2006. The length of the third war will depend largely on how quickly Hezbollah will come to the table. Another important question: What will Iran do? Tehran may, for example, push for a quick end to preserve Hezbollah, as it may not want to lose its largest proxy force in the region. Hezbollah would play a key retaliatory role if Israel were to strike Iran's nuclear sites, a problem that is still simmering in the background of an increasingly volatile regional conflict.



## HEZBOLLAH VS. HAMAS: KEY DIFFERENCES IN MILITARY POWER

[Newsweek](#) [Jesus Mesa](#) Jun 24 2024

More than eight months after  [Hamas](#) launched its surprise attack on Israel, triggering a brutal war in Gaza that shows no immediate signs of abating, a different Iran-backed militant group is threatening to draw Israel into a new front on its northern border.

Increasing clashes between  [Hezbollah](#) and the  [Israel Defense Forces \(IDF\)](#) along the Israel-Lebanon border are raising fears that the conflict in Gaza could spread into an all-out regional conflagration.

Hamas and Hezbollah, both labeled as terrorist organizations by the U.S.,  [EU](#) and several other governments, are skilled in asymmetrical warfare. Both groups are supported by  [Iran](#) and consider Israel to be their arch enemy. But while Hamas is more or less contained to Gaza — with its brutal Oct. 7 assault on southern Israel a notable exception — Hezbollah has transformed itself over the years, under the leadership of Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, into an influential political party and regional powerbroker.

"Hamas has increasingly received funding, weapons, and training from Iran, but it is not as controlled by Iran as Hezbollah, which is almost entirely backed by Iran and follows its directives," Julie M. Norman, associate professor in politics and international relations at UCL, recently wrote for *The Conversation*. Here is an overview of the military capabilities of both militant groups.



Members of Hamas (left) and Hezbollah (right) display their strength during separate military parades. Hamas fighters march in Gaza, brandishing rifles and wearing green headbands, while Hezbollah militants, carrying yellow flags, participate in a ceremony...

More **Getty Images**

## HAMAS: GUERRILLA TACTICS



Israeli soldiers secure a tunnel that Hamas reportedly used on October 7th to attack Israel through the Erez border crossing on January 07, 2024 in Northern Gaza. Hamas has built a sophisticated network of tunnels... More **Noam Galai/Getty Images**

Hamas, established in 1987 as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, operates primarily in the Gaza Strip. Its military wing, known as the al-Qassam Brigades, has developed a network of tunnels underneath Gaza that it uses for guerrilla warfare, making detection difficult for Israeli forces.

Hamas is well-known for producing and acquiring improvised rockets, mortars, explosives, anti-tank guided missiles, and shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles (MANPADS). The group tends to focus on quantity over quality, moving its weaponry through its extensive tunnel network to evade detection.

Hamas has a range of rockets, including the M-75, R-160, and J-80, capable of reaching up to 50 miles. These rockets, along with Iranian and Syrian-sourced long-range rockets, are crucial to their offensive capabilities. Estimates of their rocket stockpile vary widely, with numbers ranging from 5,000 to 20,000, according to Israeli officials.

Some reports suggest Hamas also has a significant supply of anti-tank guided missiles, including the Russian-made Kornet and North Korean Bolsai missiles, which pose a threat to Israeli ground forces.

Read more [Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)

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### [UN General Assembly Approves Resolution Demanding Immediate Gaza Ceasefire](#)

- [UN Sends Additional Troops to Syria After Israel Seizes More Territory](#)
- [Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei Blames US, Israel for Assad's Downfall](#)
- [Israel Strikes Over 250 Syrian Targets, Denies Tanks 'Approaching' Capital](#)

Hamas has recently introduced suicide drones modeled after the Iranian Ababil-2 for targeting and kamikaze missions. When it comes to small arms, Hamas fighters primarily use older Chinese and Russian-made assault rifles, machine guns and grenades. Their arsenal includes AK-47 variants, sniper rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns.

After months of grinding war, Hamas has lost a significant chunk of its fighting force, though those estimates vary widely. Reports indicate that Hamas originally had around 30,000 fighters before Oct. 7. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) claim to have killed approximately 12,000 Hamas operatives since then.

### **HEZBOLLAH: ADVANCED MILITARY CAPABILITIES**

Hezbollah, founded in 1982 and primarily based in Lebanon, has far more advanced military capabilities compared to Hamas. With substantial funding and supplies from its patrons in Tehran, Hezbollah's arsenal includes sophisticated rockets, missiles, drones and anti-ship weapons.

Israel believes Hezbollah possesses around 150,000 rockets and missiles, including the Iranian Fateh-110 and Zelzal-2, capable of striking deep into Israeli territory with high precision. This large and sophisticated arsenal has the potential to overwhelm Israel's Iron Dome air-defense system in the event of an all-out war.

The group also extensively employs drones, such as the Shahed 136, for reconnaissance and offensive operations, enhancing Hezbollah's ability to gather intelligence and carry out targeted attacks.

Hezbollah's arsenal includes advanced Russian-made Yakhont and Chinese Silkworm anti-ship missiles, each with a range of about 186 miles. Although Israeli air superiority largely remains unchallenged, Hezbollah's anti-aircraft defenses have seen marked improvements.

With over 100,000 fighters as claimed by Nasrallah, its long-serving leader, Hezbollah boasts a fighting force considerably larger than that of Hamas. And like Hamas, the group has developed an extensive network of tunnels in southern Lebanon, providing strategic advantages and protection against Israeli airstrikes.

Hezbollah's military strategy involves the use of precision-guided munitions and high-yield missiles that represent a significant threat to specific targets that eclipses the less-sophisticated rockets and mortars lobbed into Israel by Hamas.

The Lebanese group's readiness for large-scale conflict, combined with its advanced arsenal, presents a formidable challenge to Israeli defense systems — which partially explains why the U.S. and Israel's other allies have been urging calm.

## HEZBOLLAH'S STRUGGLE AGAINST ISRAEL

[CSIS](#) Nicholas Blanford May 14 2024

Jon Alterman: Nicholas Blanford is a Beirut based security consultant. He's also a non-resident Senior Fellow with the Atlantic Council. He's the author of, *Killing Mr. Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East* and *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle Against Israel*. Nicholas Blanford, welcome to Babel.

**Nicholas Blanford:** Thank you, Jon.

**Jon Alterman:** As you've written for many years, there are a range of Lebanese attitudes toward Hezbollah. In general, in Lebanon, have the last six months been good for Hezbollah or bad for Hezbollah?

**Nicholas Blanford:** To be honest, it's probably the same. The division in Lebanon has been so strong and divisive over Hezbollah's weapons and its military aspirations, that what has happened in the last six months is a continuation of the political divisions of Hezbollah's intervention in Syria, Hezbollah's alleged role in the assassination of Rafik Hariri, and so on. What has been going on for the last six months is an expansion of the tensions and schisms between Hezbollah, its supporters, and other components in Lebanon that we've been seeing since at least 2005.

**Jon Alterman:** Lebanese have complicated and often hostile attitudes toward Palestinians in Lebanon. What is Hezbollah's attitude toward Palestinians in general and toward Hamas in particular?

**Nicholas Blanford:** Well, of course the Palestinian cause has been right at the forefront of Hezbollah's ideology, right from the very beginning. In their "Open Letter Manifesto" in 1985, they called for the obliteration of Israel and the liberation of Holy Jerusalem as one of their central ideological pillars. During the Al-Aqsa Intifada over 20 years ago now, they were very supportive of the various Palestinian factions providing training, financing to an extent, weapons manufacturing skills, and so on and so forth to help the various Palestinian groups in the West Bank and Gaza.

So obviously that's playing out now with what Hezbollah calls its support front along the blue line, along the Lebanon-Israel border, to try and somewhat divert Israeli war efforts from Gaza toward Israel's northern border. The relationship with Hamas is a bit more complicated. The relationship began in the early 1990s after the Israelis expelled around 400 Hamas militants into Lebanon. This is where Hezbollah reached out to Hamas and the relationship developed from there. Ideologically, they're fairly different. Obviously, Hamas is part of the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni organization, and Hezbollah is a Shia organization that looks to Iran for its doctrinal and ideological goals.

But nonetheless, they have this relationship. It went under some strains back in 2012-2013 at the beginning of the conflict in Syria. Hamas was headquartered in Damascus at the time and essentially switched sides. They went with the mainly Sunni opposition against the rule of President Assad and broke away from the so-called axis of resistance, which groups Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and so on. But Hamas eventually came cap in hand back to the Iranians and back to Hezbollah, when it became clear, around 2018, that President Assad was not going anywhere.

So, there's a more complicated relationship between Hezbollah and Hamas. On a grassroots level, there's not much love for Hamas amongst Hezbollah fighters. They quietly call Hamas the back stabbers for switching sides in Syria. So, it's fairly ironic that what is happening in South Lebanon over the last six months, with more than 300 people dead and a lot of destruction and damage to Lebanese border villages, is essentially for the sake of coming to the support of Hamas and Gaza.

**Jon Alterman:** Are you surprised there's not more of an effort to assist Hamas, or do you think there was more effort than you would've expected to assist Hamas as this battle rages in Gaza?

**Nicholas Blanford:** Well, I think it was clear that Hezbollah was going to do something. They did it on October 8th. They did a very pro-forma shelling of Israeli positions in the Shebaa farms. This was standard, it was understood, but of course, the fighting continued. Initially in fact, on October 9th, the fighting began with Palestinian Islamic Jihad staging an incursion across the border into Israel from South Lebanon. There was a heavy clash, an Israeli colonel was killed, the Israeli retaliatory shelling was heavier than one would expect, it killed a bunch of Hezbollah guys, and then we had the tit-for-tat that really got underway from that point on.

The bottom line here is that the Iranians do not want Hezbollah to get involved in full scale war with Israel for the sake of Hamas. Hezbollah is far too important for Iran. It's a key component of Iran's deterrence architecture. So, while the fighting along the Lebanon-Israel border has gone on for much, much longer than Hezbollah was expecting, it has more or less stayed at a fairly persistent level. It's well below the threshold that would see both Hezbollah and Israel escalate into a larger conflict, either a limited one confined to South Lebanon or a full-scale conflict which would probably go regional.

**Jon Alterman:** You understand more about Hezbollah's decision-making process than anybody I know. How would you describe it as it relates to regional conflict or as it relates to Iran? Ambassador Jeff Feltman, the former U.S. ambassador to Lebanon said, "Hezbollah's Lebanese role is secondary to its ties with Iran. If Hezbollah ever has to choose between Iran and Lebanon, Lebanon becomes roadkill." Does he have it right?

**Nicholas Blanford:** I think he's correct, yes, because of the ideological links between the leadership of Iran and Hezbollah. At the end of the day, Hezbollah plays a key role as a deterrence asset for the Iranians. If one day the Americans, the Israelis, or a combination of the two and more perhaps, decide it's time to go after Iran's nuclear facilities or try to decapitate the regime, then this is when Hezbollah could get that phone call from Iran who says, "Right, it's payback time. We need you to go into action."

Now, that would probably necessitate a full-scale war with Israel, a war that the Lebanese definitely don't want, but this is the discipline. This is the link between Hezbollah and Iran. Hezbollah would have no choice but to push ahead with it. And Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah of course, would have to try to justify this to an angry and skeptical domestic audience in Lebanon.

**Jon Alterman:** You've lived in Lebanon for decades. You wrote this book about Hezbollah more than a decade ago. What do you think the major inflection points in Hezbollah's evolution have been? What are the things that shifted Hezbollah's direction?

**Nicholas Blanford:** When you're analyzing Hezbollah's actions and the choices that it makes, for me, the key component of all this is that Hezbollah wants to maintain, sustain, and nurture what it calls its

“resistance priority.” The resistance priority is essentially its right to bear arms and to act independently, if necessary, of the Lebanese state. Every action that they've taken when there's been a sudden shift in behavior has been because of a change of circumstances in Lebanon and potentially a threat to Hezbollah. In the 1980s, we had a chaotic situation in Lebanon during the country's civil war. You have this zealous new organization backed by the Iranians emerging. It was the era of suicide bombing against the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Marine barracks, and the kidnapping of Westerners.

But in 1990, the civil war comes to an end and there's suddenly a new reality. The Syrians are now calling the shots in Lebanon, and Hezbollah had to accept that if it wanted to continue pursuing its resistance priority of fighting the Israeli occupation in South Lebanon. During the 1990s, they were beginning to win plaudits, praise, and respect from Lebanese of all confessions for the prowess they were demonstrating in South Lebanon. That, of course, culminated with the Israeli withdrawal in May 2000. So suddenly we have another inflection point. How do you continue to justify resistance when there's no occupation left to resist? There were gradually more calls in Lebanon saying, "Hezbollah you did a great job kicking the Israelis out of Lebanon, but you should really think about putting down your weapons and going into politics." Then in 2005, Rafik Hariri was assassinated. The country politically split into two camps, one headed by Hezbollah and the other headed by factions backed by the West. Then you had for the next decade this massive polarizing effect in the country, augmented by the 2006 war, where Hezbollah, for the first time after the Hariri assassination, joined government. This was in July of 2005. The Syrians had gone after Hariri's assassination, so Hezbollah no longer had that kind of protective fig leaf. They had to take a step deeper into Lebanese politics to defend that resistance priority.

This has continued. The intervention in Syria was highly controversial at the time. They took about a year and a half to go from outright denying any involvement in Syria to justifying why they were in Syria. This has continued to the extent now that we saw in the Thawrat, the popular uprising in October of 2019 when Lebanon went into this massive economic collapse. And you had people of all different backgrounds and sects coming into the center of Beirut and protesting against the political elite. It was actually Hezbollah's supporters that were coming up and defending the oligarchs, if you like.

They've undergone these various inflection points. They've evolved in their discourse and in their behavior, but the bottom line is it's all about protecting that resistance priority.

**Jon Alterman:** Is this because Hassan Nasrallah is shrewd? Is it because he's agile? Is it because he's deeply strategic? To what extent does this reflect Nasrallah's vision, his skill? Or is Nasrallah just a figurehead and other people or other groups are calling the shots?

Nicholas Blanford: Well, Nasrallah has developed this aura over the 30 years that he's been Secretary General. When his predecessor and mentor Abbas al-Musawi was killed in February 1992 in a helicopter attack on his motorcade, there was a kind of collective shock within Hezbollah because al-Musawi was a revered figure. He was the head of the resistance in the 1980s. And people were wondering, "How on earth are we going to be able to continue without him?"

Well, two days later the Shura Council met, and they elected Hassan Nasrallah as the new Secretary General. People knew of him because he was the protégé of al-Musawi, but he was relatively young and inexperienced. However, he very much grew into the role. Back then, the Secretary General could serve

two consecutive three-year terms, but after his two terms were up, they recognized this guy was the leader for good. So, he is a smart guy. He's got a lot of very good advisors. This is definitely not a one man show. Hezbollah is very much kind of an institution.

Nasrallah is extremely good with the media. He's extremely good with messaging, with information operations, and propaganda. He is very, very effective. One day, I guess we're going to have a situation where Nasrallah is no longer on the scene, and one can imagine that there's going to be another collective intake of breath amongst Hezbollah's cadres about who's going to take over and how effective the new leader is going to be.

Jon Alterman: You wrote a couple of months ago now that Israelis and Hezbollah are probably ready to be led to an off ramp that leads to a cessation of hostilities. Do you think they're still waiting at that off ramp? Has anything changed or are they just all waiting?

**Nicholas Blanford:** I think they're waiting. The war, the fighting in South Lebanon has continued for far longer than they were expecting. And that was actually admitted in an interview by NBC with Sheikh Naim Qassem, who's the number two of Hezbollah.

But it's very important for Hezbollah to come across that it won, that it prevailed. So it has to save face. I think even more so than two months ago, Hezbollah's ready to be led to the off ramp, but somebody needs to hold their hand and guide them to the off ramp. And I think it's the same with the Israelis. I think the Israelis want this to end. The Israelis have got about 80,000 people who have been evacuated from their homes in the North, and they need to get them back.

Tactically at the moment, I think the Israelis have the upper hand on the day-to-day fighting. They're not really losing any soldiers. They're using their technology and air power, especially to locate and target senior Hezbollah field commanders, which is causing Hezbollah a certain amount of headache. So this could continue, although the Israeli government does have the pressure of the 80,000 folks that need to get back to their homes.

**Jon Alterman:** And how many Lebanese have been pushed out of the South in the context of this conflict?

**Nicholas Blanford:** In northern Israel, it was a kind of a mandatory evacuation. In Lebanon, it's more voluntary. The Lebanese in the border district have been doing this for decades. When things get too difficult, they've got the bags packed by the front door, and they're in the car and heading north. So the figures vary, but it's between 90,000 to 120,000 Lebanese who are believed to have left.

**Jon Alterman:** Does that create political pressure in Lebanon or is Lebanon in such political straits right now that it just gets absorbed into the noise?

**Nicholas Blanford:** Politically, everything has ground to a halt in Lebanon. Before this kicked off in October, the main political issue was to try to elect a new president. That has just been pushed aside now. The Lebanese government is acting in a caretaker capacity because of the lack of a president, so its powers are limited. It certainly doesn't have the strength to step in and go to Hezbollah and say, "Enough, stop the fighting. You're causing too much damage to the south, and you're risking plunging the country into a major war with Israel that we do not want."

So, people are basically wringing their hands in frustration if they are politically opposed to Hezbollah, and everyone else is just holding their breath and waiting to see what emerges from all this.



**Jon Alterman:** You've described the split over Hezbollah as basically a fault line that runs through Lebanese society. Do you see a way to heal that division or to bridge it or to somehow bring Lebanese together?

**Nicholas Blanford:** I think it's going to remain an open, festering wound for so long as there's the broader conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. Unless there's some kind of rapprochement between the West and Iran, something that settles the region and calms everything down, and a solution for the Palestinian cause, all these regional fissures, tensions, and stresses are going to continue to be played out in Lebanon. I don't really see any way, unless there's some kind of regional shift or a regional settlement, that things will change much here.

**Jon Alterman:** What Hamas did on October 7th intended to terrorize Israelis and target civilians. Is that the kind of thing Hezbollah might contemplate or might be capable of? Is that something that Israelis need to include in the potential Hezbollah playbook going forward, or is it so different from what Hezbollah has done that it's not really within the realm of possibility?

**Nicholas Blanford:** What Hamas did on October 7th in terms of crossing the security fence and going into the Gaza envelope is straight out of Hezbollah's playbook. Hezbollah's been training to do exactly this since at least 2006, and Nasrallah mentioned in a speech in 2012 that, "the time may come when I'll ask the guys to go and liberate Galilee." In other words, cross the border and move into northern Israel.

In terms of the atrocities that were committed on October 7th, I don't see Hezbollah doing that at all. That is simply not Hezbollah's playbook. What I would see them doing is crossing the border and potentially seizing some of the border settlements. Some of them are quite exposed with one or two roads connecting them to the rest of Israel. Hezbollah could mount ambushes there to prevent Israeli troops from coming up to try to rescue whoever's remaining in the settlement. But beyond that, I see them going in from the sea, using hang gliders exactly as Hamas did, and attacking military and infrastructure targets. So yes, this is definitely what Hezbollah's been training to do for maybe two decades.

**Jon Alterman:** And if you had to guess, is that what the next Israeli war with Hezbollah would look like? Would it be about crossing the border, or would it be Hezbollah unleashing the tremendous missile arsenal it has and getting into an air war with Israel? Obviously, you can have a combination of those, but do you think this war would principally be fought with soldiers or principally fought with missiles?

**Nicholas Blanford:** Both. But again, it does depend on the scope of the war. At the moment, there's a lot of speculation that if the Israelis feel that they need to come into Lebanon, that they won't stage a full-scale invasion of Lebanon and won't necessarily go after Lebanese infrastructure to, as some Israeli politicians like to say, knock Lebanon back to the Stone Age. They could do a limited incursion. And the idea behind this would essentially be to come into South Lebanon, up as far north as the Litani River 25 plus kilometers north of the border, and essentially rubbleize Shia villages, in particular those where Hezbollah may be based. They would go after whatever military infrastructure they could find of Hezbollah's, kill as many Hezbollah people as possible, and then pull back to the blue line.

Now, this is not a solution, of course. There's nothing to stop Hezbollah from coming back into South Lebanon afterwards, and it would be very bloody. And in some respects, once Israeli troops are on the ground in South Lebanon, the playing field begins to level a bit in Hezbollah's favor as Hezbollah's had

more than 17 years to prepare the ground in South Lebanon for exactly this eventuality. So, if you have a full-scale invasion the Israelis would take a lot of casualties. It'd be very bloody and very destructive from the Lebanese side as well.

But I think the war would be limited, so you wouldn't have Hezbollah, for example, firing their ballistic missiles into Tel Aviv. They will be saving that in case the Israelis one day decide, "Right, we need to go after Hezbollah properly, and we're going to destroy Lebanon in the process." And that's the moment when you will have what the Iranians did two weeks ago, but on a much, much larger scale and with no previous warning. The country will go into lockdown for the duration. No one's going to work, no one's going to school, no one's going to university, no civilian aviation traffic, and no civilian maritime traffic. And you're going to have a level of destruction from the blue line going all the way down to Tel Aviv and beyond.

**Jon Alterman:** Are you confident the two sides have deterred each other for the time being?

Nicholas Blanford: I think so. I think the fact that we had 17 years of near total calm, from the 2006 war until October 8th, was testimony to that. Now, I can understand the trauma felt by Israelis after October 7th, and the fears of those Israelis who are living cheek by jowl with Hezbollah along the northern border. But they did enjoy 17 years of calm. There's no reason to suppose that once the war in Gaza is over, if things calm down between Hezbollah and Israel, that the calm couldn't last another 17 years. Assuming no one is going to go after the regime in Iran, you could have another 17 years of complete calm along the blue line.

Jon Alterman: Nicholas Blanford, thank you very much for joining us on Babel.

Nicholas Blanford: My pleasure, Jon. Thank you.

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT HEZBOLLAH'S ESCALATION AGAINST ISRAEL

[AJC](#) September 29, 2024

Since the October 7, 2023, terror attack by Hamas on Israel that killed over 1,200 people, there have been near-daily attacks by Hezbollah, another Iranian-backed terror group based in Lebanon. Hezbollah has fired over 10,000 rockets at Israel.

Over the last ten months, Israel has taken an approach of active defense at its border with Lebanon, but concerns over Hezbollah and its Iranian sponsors launching a wider war against Israel are growing. In fact, [Hezbollah has reportedly as many as 150,000 missiles and rockets pointed at Israel.](#)

Here is what to know about Hezbollah, its ties with Hamas, and the Israel-Hamas war.

### THE LATEST:

#### ISRAEL ELIMINATES NASRALLAH

On September 27, [Hezbollah terror chief Hassan Nasrallah was assassinated in a precise Israeli airstrike in Beirut](#) along with several other senior terror commanders. After Nasrallah's death was confirmed, [AJC posted the following on X](#): "For decades, Hassan Nasrallah, longtime leader of Hezbollah, an Iran-backed terrorist organization, orchestrated attacks that killed Jews, Muslims, and Christians across the Middle East, Europe, and Latin America, along with hundreds of American troops. His days of terrorizing the world are over."

#### Israel's defensive air campaign to end Hezbollah rocket threat, return civilians home

After nearly a year of daily Hezbollah rocket attacks on northern Israel, which have displaced over 60,000 civilians and turned the northern border into a war zone, the Israeli government has launched a large-scale defensive air campaign to neutralize the Hezbollah threat.

In a video message on September 23, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are working to "change the balance" in the north by dismantling Hezbollah's missile arsenal. "We do not wait for a threat; we anticipate it," Netanyahu said, as Israeli jets targeted southern Lebanon and the Beqaa Valley. He emphasized that Israel is eliminating senior Hezbollah officials, terrorists, and missile stockpiles, with more operations to follow. "Whoever tries to hurt us, we hurt them even more," he vowed, adding that Israel is systematically destroying thousands of missiles aimed at its cities and citizens.

The IDF has issued evacuation warnings to civilians in southern Lebanon and Lebanon's Beqaa Valley, advising them to avoid Hezbollah sites.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog told Sky News that Israel's goal is to restore security and allow its citizens to return home, while blaming Hezbollah for igniting the conflict, warning of its potential to escalate dramatically.

"It is clearly a very dangerous situation and clearly has a potential of escalating dramatically," he said.

## HEZBOLLAH LEADERS PLANNING AN INVASION OF NORTHERN ISRAEL

Senior Hezbollah commander Ibrahim Aqil was killed in a precision Israeli airstrike in Beirut's Dahiyeh neighborhood, a Hezbollah stronghold, on September 20.

Aqil, a member of Hezbollah's Jihad Council, held a position equivalent to the head of the Operations Division and was closely tied to the elite Radwan Force, responsible for planning ground operations inside Israel. He was also implicated in the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, which killed 63 people, and was wanted by the U.S. State Department, which had offered a \$7 million bounty for information leading to his capture.

The strike not only eliminated Aqil but also up to 15 other Hezbollah commanders, including Ahmed Wahbi, who was involved in plans to invade Israel's Galilee region. The operation dealt a severe blow to Hezbollah, destabilizing its leadership.

This marks the second recent assassination of a high-ranking Hezbollah official by Israel, following the July 30 killing of Fuad Shukr, a key figure in the 1983 U.S. Marine Barracks bombing. Shukr was also wanted by the U.S., with a \$5 million bounty on his head.

**Listen to AJC's People of the Pod**

[\*From Rocket Attacks to Exploding Pagers: Michael Oren on Escalating Tensions Between Israel and Hezbollah\*](#)

## PAGER AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES EXPLOSIONS

Hezbollah head Hassan Nasrallah conceded that the terror group suffered a "major and unprecedented" blow following the explosions targeting the terror group's pagers, walkie-talkies, and other electronic devices on September 17 and 18. According to Lebanese officials, the blasts killed at least 37 people and injured nearly 3,000, mainly Hezbollah terror operatives, prompting Nasrallah to vow retaliation. Israel has not claimed responsibility for the explosive devices.

As tensions rise, Israel's Security Cabinet updated its war objectives to prioritize the safe return of displaced northern residents, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu emphasizing that this cannot happen without military or diplomatic action against Hezbollah.

## HEZBOLLAH MURDERS TWELVE KIDS AND TEENS

On July 27, 2024, Hezbollah launched an Iranian-made rocket, killing 12 Israeli civilians and wounding over 30 near a soccer field in Majdal Shams. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged a "harsh response" and called the Druze victims "brothers." The U.S. National Security Council confirmed Hezbollah's responsibility, supporting Israel's right to retaliate. The American Jewish Committee urged global action to hold Hezbollah and Iran accountable for targeting civilians.

On July 30, the IDF launched an airstrike in the Beirut suburb of Dahiyeh, targeting Fuad Shukr, also known as Hajj Mohsin, a senior adviser to the terror group's leader Hassan Nasrallah and head of the terror group's precision missile project. The IDF said that Shukr was behind the deadly rocket attack that killed 12 children on July 27.

## WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH'S ROLE IN THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR?

Since October 8, Hezbollah has fired more than 8,000 rockets, anti-tank missiles, and explosive UAVs at Israeli civilian and military targets. In response, Israel has struck thousands of Hezbollah targets in both Lebanon and Syria, killing more than 482 Hezbollah terrorists, including some senior commanders such as Fuad Shukr and Ibrahim Aqil. On the Israeli side, [21 civilians and up to 20 IDF soldiers and reservists have been killed by Hezbollah](#), in addition to the hundreds killed by Hamas.

At least 60,000 Israelis have been evacuated from the northern border since October 8, due to the Hezbollah threat. More than [21,500 acres](#), much of them forest preserves, have been burnt as Hezbollah rockets spark fires in the north.

While there has been a long list of Hezbollah attacks, the growing frequency and intensity of attacks appear to be escalating in recent weeks, with the IDF vowing a more forceful response.

On February 8, Hezbollah fired 30 rockets at northern Israel, just hours after an Israeli drone hit a Hezbollah senior commander. That strike was reportedly in retaliation for an earlier Hezbollah launch at an Israeli military base that wounded three IDF soldiers.

[\*Hamas' October 7 Massacre Plan Was Inspired by Hezbollah's Radwan. Here's What to Know About the Elite Terror Unit.\*](#)

On February 12, two Israelis were seriously wounded when a Hezbollah rocket hit the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona. Two days later on February 14, another Hezbollah barrage killed one person and injured at least eight in a strike on the Israeli city of Safed and a nearby army base.

Since then, Israel has stepped up attacks in northeastern Lebanon's Baalbek, a Hezbollah stronghold.

On February 26, Hezbollah claimed to fire 60 rockets at an Israeli military base in the Golan Heights. The strike was reportedly in retaliation for an Israeli airstrike in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley that killed at least two Hezbollah terrorists, in what was reported to be the deepest attack into Lebanese territory since October 8.

On March 12, Hezbollah fired more than 100 rockets into northern Israel.

Recently, Hezbollah fired one of its heaviest barrages yet, firing 150 rockets into northern Israel after Israel killed Abu Taleb and three other Hezbollah fighters on June 11. Taleb is the most senior Hezbollah official killed since this round of fighting began.

Shortly after, on June 20, Hezbollah blasted northern Israel with about 45 rockets after a Hezbollah field commander was murdered in an Israeli drone strike.

Top Israeli officials have repeatedly threatened to go to war in Lebanon following the IDF's campaign to rescue hostages and dismantle Hamas in Gaza, to push Hezbollah away from the border, north to the Litani River, per UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which was enacted to end the 2006 Second Lebanon War. The head of the IDF's Northern Command Maj-Gen. Ori Gordin has indicated that the IDF's goal "to change the security situation in the north in a way that will allow the residents to return safely and with a sense of security," and said that the IDF is continuing "to prepare for the expansion of the war and going on the offensive."

[\*A Spider Web of Terror: How Iran's Axis of Houthis, Hezbollah, and Hamas Threaten Israel and America\*](#)

## WHAT IS THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN LEBANON?

Due to decades of corruption and sectarianism, the political and security situation in Lebanon is unstable and complex. The Iranian-backed terrorist organization Hezbollah is one reason why. More on Hezbollah is in the section below.

In August 2020, a massive explosion at the port of Beirut caused widespread destruction and led to political unrest, with many Lebanese blaming the government for the negligence that led to the explosion.

In October 2020, the Lebanese government resigned in response to widespread protests and pressure from the international community. Since then, the country has struggled to form a new government, with various political factions vying for power and struggling to agree on a new cabinet.

Lebanon is still without a fully functioning government. The prime minister-designate, Najib Mikati, has been attempting to form a new government for months.

The absence of a government has exacerbated Lebanon's already dire economic situation, with the country facing severe shortages of essential goods and services, including fuel, electricity, and medical supplies. The ongoing political crisis and economic collapse have led to protests and social unrest in Lebanon, with many Lebanese calling for a change in the country's political system and the end of corruption and sectarianism.

## WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH'S ROLE IN LEBANON?

Hezbollah has been involved in Lebanese politics since the early 1990s and has been represented in the Lebanese parliament since 1992.

The [Iranian-backed terror organization](#) has been able to gain political power in Lebanon through a combination of popular support from Lebanon's Shi'ite Muslim community, which represents the largest religious faction in the country, and its military strength thanks to support from Iran, which has allowed it to maintain a significant influence in Lebanon's political affairs.

Currently, Hezbollah holds seats in the Lebanese parliament and has representation in the current caretaker government, including two ministerial positions.

Hezbollah's involvement in Lebanese politics has been controversial within the country, with the terror organization using its political power to advance its own interests and undermine the sovereignty of the Lebanese state. Furthermore, Hezbollah is seen as Iran's proxy in Lebanon, and the terror organization has been able to maintain a significant military and political presence in the country thanks in part to Iran's backing.

### [What to Know About Media Bias in Coverage of Hamas' Attack on Israel](#)

[According to the Washington Institute](#), Hezbollah undermines Lebanese security and stability, by carrying out political assassinations and has built its own parallel governance structure.

"Unlike many violent nonstate actors, which have only limited access to the formal economy and are heavily reliant on shadow economies, Hezbollah is able to benefit from the formal, regulated economy and simultaneously run its own parallel, shadow economy, which sucks from and undermines the formal economy."

## WHAT IS HAMAS AND PALESTINIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD'S CONNECTION TO LEBANON?

Lebanon has a significant population of Palestinian refugees who have been living in the country for decades. Lebanon has refused to grant these Palestinians citizenship, and as such, they have been stuck as permanent refugees for several decades. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) estimates that there are some 470,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon.

Israeli officials have for several years warned about Hamas's increasing role in Lebanon. [According to a memo](#) from former Israeli Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon, "Hamas has been building its own military force covertly in Lebanon. Hamas has recruited and trained hundreds of fighters, mostly men of Palestinian origin."

Saleh Al-Aroui, the founding commander of Hamas's military branch, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, was [reportedly behind the April 2023 rocket attacks from Lebanon](#). Al-Aroui, who used to be based in Turkey full-time, was assassinated in an Israeli drone strike in January 2024 in the Beirut suburb of Dahiyeh, a stronghold of Hezbollah.

[What to Know About the Gaza Strip, Terrorist Rocket Attacks, and More](#)

## WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HAMAS AND HEZBOLLAH?

Amid the rocket attacks on Israel in April 2023, [Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh](#) along with other senior Hamas officials, including Saleh Al-Aroui, met with Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, where the two terror factions [discussed deepening cooperation](#), including intensified "resistance in the West Bank and Gaza" as well as the "readiness of the axis of resistance," referring to Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian, and other Iranian-backed terror groups in the Middle East.

While Hamas and Hezbollah are both terrorist organizations that share a common goal of destroying Israel, there are some important differences between the groups. Hamas is primarily a Palestinian organization based in the Gaza Strip, while Hezbollah is a Lebanese organization with a strong presence in Southern Lebanon.

Hamas is an offshoot of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood, while Hezbollah is a Shi'ite Muslim organization that shares close religious and strategic ties with Iran. Hamas's primary focus is on the Palestinian issue and the establishment of a Palestinian state and the eradication of Israel. While Hezbollah is similarly dedicated to the eradication of Israel, it also has a broader regional and international agenda through its ties with Iran. Hezbollah has been involved in the civil war in Syria as well [as carrying out terror attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets](#) in Latin America such as the [1994 AMIA bombing](#), the Burgas terror attack in Bulgaria, and elsewhere. AJC has been at the [forefront of encouraging](#) the European Union to designate Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organization.

Despite these differences, Hamas and Hezbollah have maintained close ties and have provided each other with support over the years. Iran, a key supporter of both terror organizations, has played a significant role in facilitating this relationship. Hezbollah has reportedly provided Hamas with training and weapons, while Hamas has offered political and moral support to Hezbollah in its conflicts with Israel.

[Tough Questions on Israel Answered](#)

## HOW DOES IRAN SUPPORT HAMAS AND HEZBOLLAH?

Iran [has long been known to provide support](#) to both Hamas and Hezbollah. Iran's support for these groups is part of its broader strategy to increase its influence in the region and counter the influence of Israel and the United States. It sees these groups as proxies that can carry out its interests and goals in the region, including opposing the West and calling for Israel's destruction.

To support Hamas, Iran provides financial aid, weapons, and training. Hamas is based in Gaza, a Palestinian territory that is bordered by Egypt and Israel. Its border with Israel is under a security blockade, so Iran's support is crucial for Hamas to maintain its military capabilities. Iran provides Hamas with rocket technology and expertise, including advanced training, which has enabled Hamas to launch rockets into Israel during conflicts.

As for Hezbollah, Iran has been its main supporter and patron since the terror group was founded in the early 1980s. Iran provides financial support, weapons, and training to Hezbollah. Iran has also been known to provide Hezbollah with rockets and other advanced military technology, which has allowed the group to launch attacks against Israel and maintain a significant military presence in Lebanon.

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## HEZBOLLAH: WHAT WEAPONS DOES IT HAVE?

[CNN World](#) by [Lou Robinson](#) and CNN staff September 29, 2024

**(Go to site to see diagrams)**

Hezbollah is believed to be the most heavily armed non-state group in the world. Backed by Iran and based in the eastern Mediterranean country of Lebanon, the Shiite Islamist group has been engaged in confrontations with Israeli forces on Lebanon's southern border since October 8.

Hezbollah first fired at Israel to protest the war in Gaza, demanding a ceasefire there as a condition to end its attacks. Cross-border hostilities have since escalated, culminating in the death of Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, in an Israeli strike on the Lebanese capital Beirut.

The cross-border conflict and recent developments have raised the specter of a regional conflagration and amplified intense diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions. Though no match for Israel's military might, Hezbollah's increasingly sophisticated arsenal has the potential to inflict significant damage on Israel.

Israel would also have to contend with Hezbollah's strategic depth. The group is part of an Iran-led axis of militants spanning Yemen, Syria, Gaza and Iraq. Some of these groups have increased coordination significantly since October, when Israel launched a war in Gaza after Hamas-led militants attacked the country. This axis is known in Israel as the "ring of fire."

For nearly a year, Hezbollah's partners in the region have been engaged in a simmering conflict with Israel and its allies. Yemen's Houthis have sporadically fired at vessels in the Red Sea, an artery of global trade, as well as on Israel. Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of hardline Shiite factions, has also launched attacks on US positions in that country. The axis has conditioned the cessation of those hostilities on a ceasefire in Gaza, rebranding themselves as a "supportive front" for Palestinians in Gaza, as described by a senior Hezbollah leader.

In September, Israel stepped up its direct confrontation with Hezbollah. In [back-to-back attacks](#), hundreds of Hezbollah's pagers and walkie-talkies exploded, killing at least 37 people and injuring thousands, before an Israeli [airstrike](#) on Beirut killed a senior Hezbollah commander. In response, Hezbollah has [vowed](#) "a battle without limits."

Following the twin communications attacks, Hezbollah launched what it said was a ballistic missile at Israel, targeting the headquarters of Israel's intelligence service Mossad. It is believed to be the first ballistic missile to be launched by militant group toward Israel. The strike, which was intercepted, reached near the bustling city of Tel Aviv.

Hezbollah's fighting force emerged from the rubble of Israel's 1982 invasion of Beirut. At the time, it was a rag-tag group of Islamist fighters supported by Iran's fledgling Islamic Republic. This was followed by a meteoric rise in the group's military and political might. In 2000, its guerrilla fighters forced Israeli forces to withdraw from south Lebanon, ending a more-than-20-year occupation. In 2006, it survived a 34-day war with Israel that wreaked havoc on Lebanon.

During Syria's uprising-turned-civil war in the 2010s, it fought on behalf of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as he brutally quashed armed opposition forces and inflicted a huge civilian death toll. As it fought in the trenches of that nearly decade-long war, Hezbollah became seasoned in urban warfare and solidified its

alliances with other Iran-backed groups fighting in Syria. It also cleared a vital supply route for weapons between Iran and Lebanon, via its partners in Iraq and Syria, further bolstering its arsenal.

Hezbollah's military capabilities have notably grown since its last war with Israel in 2006. Military analysts estimate Hezbollah to have between 30,000 and 50,000 troops, but earlier this year its leader Nasrallah claimed it has more than 100,000 fighters and reservists. The group is also believed to possess between 120,000 and 200,000 rockets and missiles.

Experts say the group's biggest military asset is the long-range ballistic missile, of which it is estimated to have thousands, including 1,500 precision missiles with ranges of 250–300 kilometers (155–186 miles). Throughout its decades-long conflict with Israel, Hezbollah has been engaged in asymmetric warfare. It has sought to grow its political and military might, while seeking to establish deterrence despite Israel's military superiority.

But Hezbollah threads the needle carefully. Provoking Israel's full firepower could significantly degrade the group's capabilities, setting it back years – if not decades – and destroying large parts of Lebanon, which has buckled under the weight of its years-long financial crisis.

The group has already lost more than around 500 fighters, including commanders, in border confrontations with Israel since October, according to Hezbollah statements and a CNN tally. On the Lebanese side of the border, over 94,000 people have been displaced. The impact on Israel has also been considerable, with more than 62,000 people displaced from its northern border area, and scores killed, including soldiers and civilians.

As the confrontations at the border continue, Hezbollah has sought, with some success, to undermine Israel's vaunted missile defense system known as the Iron Dome. It has tried to do so by attacking its platforms and overwhelming it with swarms of drones and short-range missiles in order to open a path for other projectiles to reach deeper into Israeli territory.

The full extent of Hezbollah's arsenal is not clear. In response to Israel's twin wireless device attacks, Hezbollah fired a barrage of missiles across the border into northern Israel, and said it hit an air base with [Fadi 1 and Fadi 2](#) missiles – a longer-range weapon not known to have been used so far in nearly a year of conflict.

Hezbollah's chances of survival in an all-out war with Israel is hinged on whether or not it can outsmart these systems which have in recent months intercepted thousands of airborne weapons from Iran, Gaza and Lebanon.

Because of Hezbollah's growing power, a possible all-out war between Israel and Lebanon would thrust the Middle East into uncharted waters. The diplomatic effort to prevent it is likely to continue at a breathless pace.

CNN's Rachel Wilson contributed to this report.

## HASSAN NASRALLAH'S KILLING TRANSFORMS AN ALREADY DEADLY REGIONAL CONFLICT

[NPR](#) September 28, 2024 [Daniel Estrin](#) [Ruth Sherlock](#) [Willem Marx](#)

Israel's [killing of Hassan Nasrallah](#), the long-time Hezbollah leader, has transformed an already complex and deadly regional conflict, with a broad array of potential outcomes for Israel, Gaza, Lebanon and beyond.

Prior to the powerful series of airstrikes that hit several residential buildings in southern Beirut on Friday, analysts in the Mideast had speculated that Nasrallah had left Lebanon following the widespread [pager explosions](#) earlier this month, but then soon after returned, as the United States presented an initiative that would lead to a 21-day ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel.

[Middle East crisis — explained](#)

[Who was Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader killed by Israel?](#)

Those thousands of remotely detonated blasts — subsequently sourced to walkie-talkies too — had targeted members and allies of Hezbollah, and represented a significant blow to the group. A subsequent Israeli airstrike had then killed Hezbollah's chief of staff, and by Friday the Israeli military says Nasrallah was meeting with several other senior commanders.

Amer Al Sabaileh, a Jordanian security expert and close observer of Hezbollah, said the fact Nasrallah was willing to take the high risk to his life of gathering with other Hezbollah commanders amid Israel's campaign indicates the group was in crisis after two weeks of crippling Israeli attacks.

"The level of shock among Hezbollah cannot be measured," Al Sabaileh said. "Simply, they never expected that Israel would initiate and would continue, and does not stop attacking Hezbollah."

[Middle East](#)

[Israel has killed Hezbollah's top leader of 32 years in an airstrike](#)

And the regional consequences could be significant too, according to Sanam Vakil, director of the Middle East and North Africa program at the British think tank Chatham House.

"Iran will be looking for some way to turn the tables and save some face," Vakil wrote in a long series of online posts about the killing and its impact on Iran's so-called "[axis of resistance](#)" that includes Hezbollah, Hamas and other militant groups like the Houthis in Yemen. "The axis has not proven effective at providing Iran deterrence against Israel, or a Gaza cease-fire."

But Orna Mizrahi, an Israeli security expert from the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, said Israel's successes in degrading Hezbollah's leadership structure and military capabilities could be leveraged to reach a lasting agreement that would force Hezbollah forces back from Lebanon's border with northern Israel.

"The weakened and battered state of Hezbollah provides a short window of opportunity to diminish its strategic capabilities further before civilian harm prompts international pressure on Israel to cease

operations,” she wrote in an analysis. “Simultaneously, Israel must develop a coordinated exit strategy with the U.

[Middle East crisis — explained](#)

[Netanyahu defies calls for a cease-fire at the U.N., as Israel strikes Lebanon](#)

Hezbollah’s succession plans and the process by which Nasrallah may be replaced are opaque, but should follow a blueprint that saw his own elevation more than 30 years ago, according to Nick Blanford, a nonresident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council’s Middle East Programs and long-time expert of Hezbollah based in Beirut.

“The morale blow is going to be massive for Hezbollah, but technically it should be a repetition of what happened in '92,” says Blanford. “The Shura Council sits down and they elect somebody else.”

## WARRING WITH SHADOWS

**PERSPECTIVES** Catherine Perez-Shakdam September 2024

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### An infiltrator's exposé of Iran's spiritual and ideological war on Jews

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*Catherine Perez-Shakdam*

#### DISCLAIMER:

*The views expressed in this article are that of the author and do not necessarily express the views of Jewish Futures. This article was written on 5 July 2024 and is therefore reflective of events up to this date.*

In the labyrinthine world of geopolitics, where ideologies clash and power struggles manifest in the most gruesome of spectacles, there exists a profound spiritual dimension that often goes unexamined. The Islamic Republic of Iran's relationship with the State of Israel and the Jewish diaspora is one such dynamic, steeped in a spiritual and ideological zeal that demands scrutiny.

During a rare and unsettling meeting with Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, back in 2017, I was struck by the chilling clarity of his intentions. His words—"we seek to destroy the sons and daughters of Jacob"—revealed a sinister aim not just to destroy Jews physically, but to sever the divine covenant

between God and Israel. My journey into the heart of Iran's regime began with a complex infiltration that exposed me to the regime's core ideologies and strategies. Detailed in my account "The Mossad Agent Who Never Was: Inside Iran's Regime", I navigated the corridors of power under the guise of an academic and researcher, unravelling the depths of Iran's state-sponsored antisemitism and its broader geopolitical ambitions.

Whilst there, I gained unprecedented access to its inner circles, offering a rare glimpse into the radical ideologies driving the regime's policies. These revelations weren't mere abstractions; they emerged from firsthand encounters, underscoring the perilous trajectory Iran's leadership is charting, especially against Israel and the Jewish people. My role was not for personal gain but a dire warning to others. In Tehran's shadowy political landscape, my survival depended on a flawless concealment of identity, with exposure meaning far more than just expulsion—it was a matter of life and death.

This essay offers my reflections based on my experiences at the heart of the Islamic Republic, unmasking the regime's destructive ambitions and urging Jews worldwide to recognise and respond to the existential threat they face.

Iran's genocidal agenda against Jews extends beyond the borders of Israel, casting a long

shadow over Jewish communities worldwide. The regime's fervour is rooted in a deep-seated hatred for what Jews represent: a covenantal relationship with the Divine, a beacon of moral law and a symbol of resilience against tyranny. This spiritual animosity is not new; it echoes the ancient enmities that have periodically erupted throughout history. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran has managed to harness this age-old hatred and weaponise it in unprecedented ways.

Central to the regime's strategy is its manipulation of the Palestinian cause. By championing the plight of Palestinians, Tehran has positioned itself as a defender of Muslim rights against what it portrays as "Zionist oppression". This clever ruse serves multiple purposes: it garners support from the Muslim world, diverts attention from Iran's own repressive practices and amplifies antisemitism under the guise of anti-Zionism. The regime's ideologues have adeptly leveraged the Palestinian struggle, transforming it into a vehicle for their broader geopolitical and theological ambitions.

This manipulation extends to a quasi-hypnotic influence over the Middle East, and now, alarmingly, the West. Through a relentless propaganda campaign, Iran has co-opted various communities into believing a pernicious lie—that liberation and freedom require the destruction of the Jewish people.

*Image courtesy of Catherine Perez-Shakdam*



This narrative of liberation through annihilation is not merely a political strategy but a profound inversion of values, a grotesque parody of justice.

Iran's fiery rhetoric and actions are not confined to inflammatory speeches and militant support; they manifest in systematic attempts to delegitimise and dehumanise Jews globally. By fostering an environment where antisemitism can flourish, Iran seeks to create a world in which the Jewish state is isolated and Jewish communities are vulnerable. This is evident in their backing of militant proxies like Hezbollah and Hamas, groups that openly call for the destruction of Israel and have a history of perpetrating violence against Jews.

### The other side

The ideological framework of the Islamic Republic is antithetical to the principles of Judaism. While Judaism celebrates life, sanctity and the moral imperatives of justice and mercy, Iran's theocratic regime glorifies martyrdom, death and an apocalyptic vision of divine justice that is fundamentally despondent. This cult of death, masquerading as the ultimate expression of piety, is in truth a negation of the divine light that Judaism seeks to illuminate in the world.

The spiritual war that the Islamic Republic of Iran wages against Jews is not merely a battle

for territory or political dominance; it is a cosmic struggle between life-affirming values and a worldview that venerates destruction. The regime's agenda is nothing short of genocidal, aiming to eradicate not only a people but also the very covenantal relationship that defines their existence. This war transcends the tangible; it is a battle for the soul of humanity.

October 7 was a macabre display of this genocidal agenda. Hamas' systematic targeting of women and girls, the atrocious ferocity of their attacks, was not a simple exercise in revenge but an expression of a deep-seated desire to defile Jewish women as they guarantee the continuation of the Jewish line—the vessel within which light is forever renewed and expressed. We cannot speak of October 7 without attesting to this dimension of the conflict. If we fail to see the dark design of the regime, we may be forced to endure such painful ordeals again—Hamas leaders have already expressed their desire to make it so.

Kabbalistic teachings describe evil in several profound ways, referring to it as the *"Sitra Achra"* (the Other Side) and *"klipot"* (husks or shells), representing forces of impurity and negativity that obscure the divine light. The Islamic Republic's actions, cloaked in the language of divine mission, are the epitome of

these Kabbalistic concepts. They represent an inversion of the values that Judaism upholds.

Until we acknowledge the spiritual dimension of this fight, we are condemned to prolong it. Unless we learn to name the evil we wrestle against, we won't be able to bring it down. Jewish tradition teaches us that understanding the nature of our adversary is crucial to overcoming it. As my grandfather, a Holocaust Survivor, so often used to say, "in order to fight one's enemy one needs to give it its proper name."

The Holocaust sought the physical destruction of the Jewish people; the Ayatollahs' ambition is to disconnect our ties with the Divine. This war against Israel is actually a war against God—a rebellion akin to that of Pharaoh, who saw himself as divine.

As we navigate the treacherous waters of modern geopolitics, let us not lose sight of the deeper, spiritual battle that underpins it. To confront the Islamic Republic of Iran, we must muster not only our political and military resources but also our moral and spiritual fortitude. Only by doing so can we hope to preserve the covenant and ensure the survival of the values that make us truly human.

### The spiritual dimension of antisemitism

The battle waged by the Islamic Republic against Israel and the Jewish diaspora is fundamentally spiritual. Antisemitism, that ancient and insidious poison, thrives on this perceived threat, seeking to dismantle the very values and beliefs that form the bedrock of Jewish identity.

Khamenei's chilling admission underscores the spiritual warfare in which Iran is engaged. By aiming to destroy the 'sons and daughters of Jacob,' the regime targets the very foundation of Jewish faith and continuity. Iran's regime seeks to erase not only the biological line of the Jewish people but also to annihilate the source of its spiritual traditions, its ethos and its collective memory. By targeting the cultural and spiritual foundations of these communities, Iran's leadership aims to sever the connections that bind past, present and future generations. This is an assault on the very concept of identity, intending to create a world devoid of the values that have underpinned human dignity and societal progress.

The resurgence of the blood libel, that mediaeval calumny, exemplifies the depths of this spiritual and ideological conflict. This grotesque myth, which accuses Jews of using the blood of innocents for ritual purposes, has been revived and repurposed by the Islamic Republic to vilify Israel and the Jewish people. This pernicious accusation, adapted to the modern political landscape, is used to paint Jews



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*This war transcends the tangible; it is a battle for the soul of humanity*

as inherently evil and corrupt.

Recent claims by Iranian propagandists suggest that Israel's efforts to secure the return of hostages are an injustice to Palestinians. This twisted narrative defines acts of self-defence and humanitarian concern as evidence of Jewish malevolence. By framing Israel's legitimate security measures and humanitarian efforts as proof of corruption, the Iranian regime employs a classic tactic of projection. They accuse their enemies of the very atrocities they themselves are willing to commit, thereby ensnaring the unwary and the gullible in a web of deceit.

This projection is not merely rhetorical; it serves a strategic purpose. By casting Jews as bloodthirsty aggressors, the Islamic Republic seeks to dehumanise them, making it easier to justify acts of violence and oppression against them. This dehumanisation process is crucial for maintaining internal cohesion and external aggression within the regime's ideological framework, as it creates a scapegoat for the regime's failures and a rallying point for its supporters.

Moreover, the weaponisation of victimhood is a grotesque and macabre fascist play that the Iranian regime has mastered. By positioning themselves as the ultimate victims of Western and Zionist conspiracies, they deflect criticism and garner sympathy from those who view anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism as paramount values. This strategy has ensnared many in the West, who, for fear of being labelled racist or Islamophobic, become architects of their own oppression. They silence themselves and others, reinforcing the very structures of control and

repression that the Iranian regime relies upon.

The Islamic Republic's focus on the Palestinian cause has been a central tenet of its foreign policy, not out of genuine concern for Palestinian rights, but as a means to amplify antisemitism and galvanise support for its broader geopolitical ambitions. The plight of the Palestinians has been co-opted as a tool to foster hatred against Jews, portraying their liberation as inherently tied to the destruction of the Jewish state. This narrative has a quasi-hypnotic hold over many in the Middle East and increasingly in the West, where communities have been duped into believing that true liberation and freedom necessitate the complete erasure of the Jewish people.

The challenge for the global Jewish community and its allies is to recognise and counter this existential threat, understanding that the battle is as much about preserving a way of life and a spiritual legacy as it is about physical survival.

Iran's ideological framework glorifies martyrdom and death, contrasting sharply with the Jewish emphasis on life and its sanctity. This inversion of values manifests in the regime's support for terrorist organisations like Hamas and Hezbollah, which use violence and terror as tools of resistance and power. The veneration of suicide bombers and the celebration of death as a path to divine favour are stark reminders of this perverse ideology.

In contrast, Judaism's reverence for life is reflected in its laws, traditions and ethical teachings. The Talmudic principle of *pikuach nefesh*—the obligation to save a life—illustrates the paramount importance of life in Jewish thought. This fundamental divergence in values highlights the spiritual chasm between the Islamic Republic's ideology and the principles upheld by Judaism, its injunctions are our best weapons in this great war.

The broader implications of this struggle

are clear: the values that have shaped western civilisation are rooted in Jewish teachings. The Islamic Republic's war against Jews, therefore, is a war against these fundamental values.

## The urgent need for awareness and action

In the current struggle against the darkness represented by the Islamic Republic of Iran, we must muster a resolve and moral clarity that is unwavering. Jewish texts and traditions offer profound insights into confronting evil. The Torah and the Talmud are replete with exhortations to stand firm against wickedness. In the Book of Deuteronomy, we are reminded that when facing an enemy, we should not be afraid because God is with us.<sup>1</sup> This passage underscores the necessity of courage and the divine support that bolsters us in the face of formidable foes.

We learn from our Sages in a Talmudic discussion that mercy and compassion are virtues to be extended towards those who seek peace and righteousness, not towards those who embody and perpetuate evil. Extending mercy to the wicked is seen as a distortion of divine justice and an abrogation of our moral duty. As Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus states, "Anyone who becomes merciful upon the cruel one will end by being cruel to the merciful."<sup>2</sup>

In another tractate of the Talmud, we find the principle of *Din Rodef*, (the Law of the Pursuer) which permits preemptive action against someone who is pursuing you with the intent to kill.<sup>3</sup> This concept underlines the imperative of self-defence and the protection of innocent lives. It is a stark reminder that in the face of existential threats, decisive action is not only justified but required.

Judaism emphasises the importance of confronting evil. The texts assert that one must actively pursue justice and eradicate wickedness from the world. This pursuit of justice is not passive; it requires active engagement and, at times, the use of force to ensure that righteousness prevails.

In this struggle, we must reclaim the narrative. The weaponisation of victimhood by the Iranian regime and its proxies is a grotesque inversion of justice. By portraying themselves as defenders of the oppressed, they mask their own oppressive actions and manipulate global perceptions. We must expose this deceit and affirm the true nature of their agenda.

The battle we face transcends the physical realm. It is a spiritual war, a confrontation between light and darkness. Our resolve must be unbreakable, our moral clarity undimmed. When we stand firm against the forces of evil, we honour the covenant that binds us to the divine and ensure the preservation of a just and righteous world.



<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 20:1-4 <sup>2</sup> Midrash Tanchuma, Metzora 1 <sup>3</sup> Sanhedrin 73a

## WHY ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH TENSIONS RISK BOILING OVER NOW

[CNN WORLD](#) Nadeen Ebrahim June 7 2024

Israel and the Lebanese Iran-backed Islamist group Hezbollah are ramping up cross-border attacks after months of low-intensity fighting, prompting the Israeli military to warn this week that it is prepared to launch a large-scale attack on its northern border.

With both sides trading fire for more than eight months, experts say Israel feels it can no longer ignore its northern front or delay taking action there.

A full-blown war appears to have become more likely – even if both sides have no desire for one, analysts believe.

Here's what we know:

### WHY ARE ISRAEL AND HEZBOLLAH FIGHTING?

Lebanon and Israel have officially been in a state of war for decades. Israel launched a devastating invasion of Lebanon in 1982, sending tanks all the way to the capital Beirut, after coming under attack from Palestinian militants in the country. It then occupied southern Lebanon for 22 years until it was driven out by Hezbollah in 2000. In Lebanon, Hezbollah is officially considered a “resistance” group tasked with confronting Israel, which Beirut classifies as an enemy state. Much of the Western world has designated Hezbollah a terrorist organization.

Since then, the two sides have traded fire sporadically, but tensions boiled over in 2006 when Israel went to war in southern Lebanon after Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers. More than 1,000 Lebanese were killed in that conflict, mostly civilians, as well as 49 Israeli civilians and 121 soldiers. Two years later, Hezbollah [returned the remains](#) of the kidnapped soldiers in exchange for the release of Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, as well as the bodies of militants Israel was holding.

The latest hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah started after Hamas led an attack on Israel on October 7, killing 1,200 people and abducting 250, according to Israeli authorities. That prompted Israel to go to war with Hamas in Gaza, during which it has levelled much of the territory and killed more than 36,000 Palestinians. Hezbollah has said that its current round of fighting with Israel is to support the Palestinians in Gaza.

The military capability of the Lebanese group has grown since 2006, when it relied largely on inaccurate [Soviet-era Katyusha rockets](#). Today, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah says his group boasts more than 100,000 fighters and reservists. The group is also believed to possess 150,000 rockets that could overwhelm Israel's defenses if an all-out war breaks out.

### WHY ARE TENSIONS FLARING UP NOW?

The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah has been gradually intensifying since October 8, said Heiko Wimmen, project director for Iraq, Syria and Lebanon at the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think tank. It's a “slow-motion escalation” that “inches upwards,” he said.



But both sides have come closer to war of late as clashes across the border have grown in number and scale. “There is clearly an escalation,” said Wimmen, particularly in terms of deaths on each side of the border and the type of weaponry Hezbollah has been deploying.

An Israeli reservist was killed in a Hezbollah strike on a village in northern Israel on Wednesday, bringing the total number of soldiers killed on the Israeli side to 19.

**RELATED ARTICLE** Tensions ramp up on Israel-Lebanon border as IDF warns decision is approaching on fresh offensive

Israel and Hezbollah have also been striking much deeper into each other’s territory than they were at the beginning of the war, when fighting was confined to a roughly [4-kilometer \(2.5-mile\) radius](#) of the border on either side.

Hezbollah has fired 35 kilometers into Israel, while Israel has targeted areas of Lebanon more than 120 kilometers north.

Cross-border attacks from Lebanon this week led to large fires blazing through Israel’s northern region, which Israel attributed to rocket fire from southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah said it had launched a “swarm of drones” at Israeli military sites.

On Wednesday Hezbollah said it had targeted Israel’s Iron Dome defense system in the northern village of Ramot Naftali, using a guided missile. Israel Defense Forces spokesperson Lt. Col. Peter Lerner told a briefing Thursday: “I can’t confirm that at this stage. I can’t confirm that this happened at all.”

Amal Saad, a lecturer at Cardiff University and an expert on Hezbollah, [said the group’s escalation](#) “is a marked departure from prior flare-ups that have occurred since October 8.”

“This stage transcends merely responding to Israeli attacks and restoring deterrence; it involves conveying new messages and strategies,” Saad wrote on X.

The conflict has become “very visible” and “difficult to ignore,” said Wimmen, of the International Crisis Group, adding that Israeli officials feel compelled to respond, or at least be seen as responding, amid pressure to react from far-right ministers in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government.

There is a push within government and the Israeli army to take action in the north, Ronni Shaked, a scholar at the Truman Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, told CNN. “Nobody can live in this situation.”

### WHAT ARE BOTH SIDES SAYING?

Rhetoric has been fiery from both sides, but experts say neither side wants a full-blown conflict.

Netanyahu [in December warned](#) that Beirut would turn into Gaza if Hezbollah chose to start an all-out war. But Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich this week poured cold water on the prospect of a wider war, saying the IDF isn’t interested in broadening the war to eliminate Hezbollah. The military is “telling us right now that it doesn’t want to... launch an attack in the north, fight and defeat Hezbollah, and overwhelm it and create a security zone.”

During his visit to the northern city of Kiryat Shmona [near the Lebanese border](#) on Wednesday, Netanyahu said Israel was prepared for “very intense action” in the north.

“Whoever thinks that they can hurt us and that we will sit idly by is making a big mistake,” the prime minister said. “One way or another, we will restore security to the north.”

Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's second-in-command, told Al Jazeera on Tuesday that the group had assessed that recent threats from Israel were not serious.

"Either way, we have decided not to widen the battle and we do not want an all-out war. But if it is imposed on us, we are ready and we won't retreat," Qassem said, adding that Hezbollah will end its attacks on Israel once the war in Gaza stops.

### **IS A FULL-BLOWN WAR LIKELY?**

Experts say that while both sides may not choose to start an all-out war, their escalatory actions may still trigger one inadvertently.

Wimmen of the International Crisis Group said that Israel and Hezbollah are unlikely to take a conscious decision to start a war. However, the more intense the conflict becomes, the deeper each side strikes into the other's territory and the heavier the weapons used, the more likely it is that "something goes wrong," he said.

Netanyahu is under intense pressure from the opposition and members of his coalition to take action in the north, especially given that so many Israelis have been displaced from the area.

More than 53,000 Israelis have been forced to leave their homes in the north, the IDF said. In Lebanon, more than 94,000 people have been displaced from areas and towns near the border with Israel since the conflict started, according to figures released Tuesday by the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health.

"All Hezbollah strongholds must be burned and destroyed. War!" said Israeli far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir in a statement this week.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid [also slammed the government](#), saying: "The north goes up in flames and Israeli deterrence burns with it.

"The government has no plan for the day after in Gaza, no plan to return the residents to the north, no management, no strategy. A government of total abandonment," Lapid said on X.

The US has cautioned against escalation, worried it might spin out of control. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said Wednesday the United States is "incredibly concerned" about the risk of escalation, adding that the Biden administration is engaged in diplomatic conversations "to try to avoid that conflict from escalating beyond control."

Shaked, the Truman Institute scholar, said that despite Hezbollah's assertions that its attacks on Israel are in support of Gaza, the group's strategy is likely to be closely coordinated with its closest ally Iran – especially with so much at stake.

## Q&A: BEHIND THE DATA ON THE ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH WAR

[ACLEd](#) Ameneh Mehvar Middle East Regional Specialist 1 Nov 2024

Since mid-September, the nearly yearlong tit-for-tat exchanges between Hezbollah and Israel have sharply escalated into what is effectively a war. Israel has pummeled Lebanon with an unprecedented airstrike campaign and launched a limited ground offensive into southern Lebanon. Undoubtedly, Hezbollah has suffered major losses during this period, but as is often the case with such intense military campaigns, civilians are bearing the brunt of the violence.

Despite Israel's military successes, a decisive victory for Israel, or the stabilization of the security situation that would allow Israeli evacuees to return to the north, is not yet fully guaranteed.

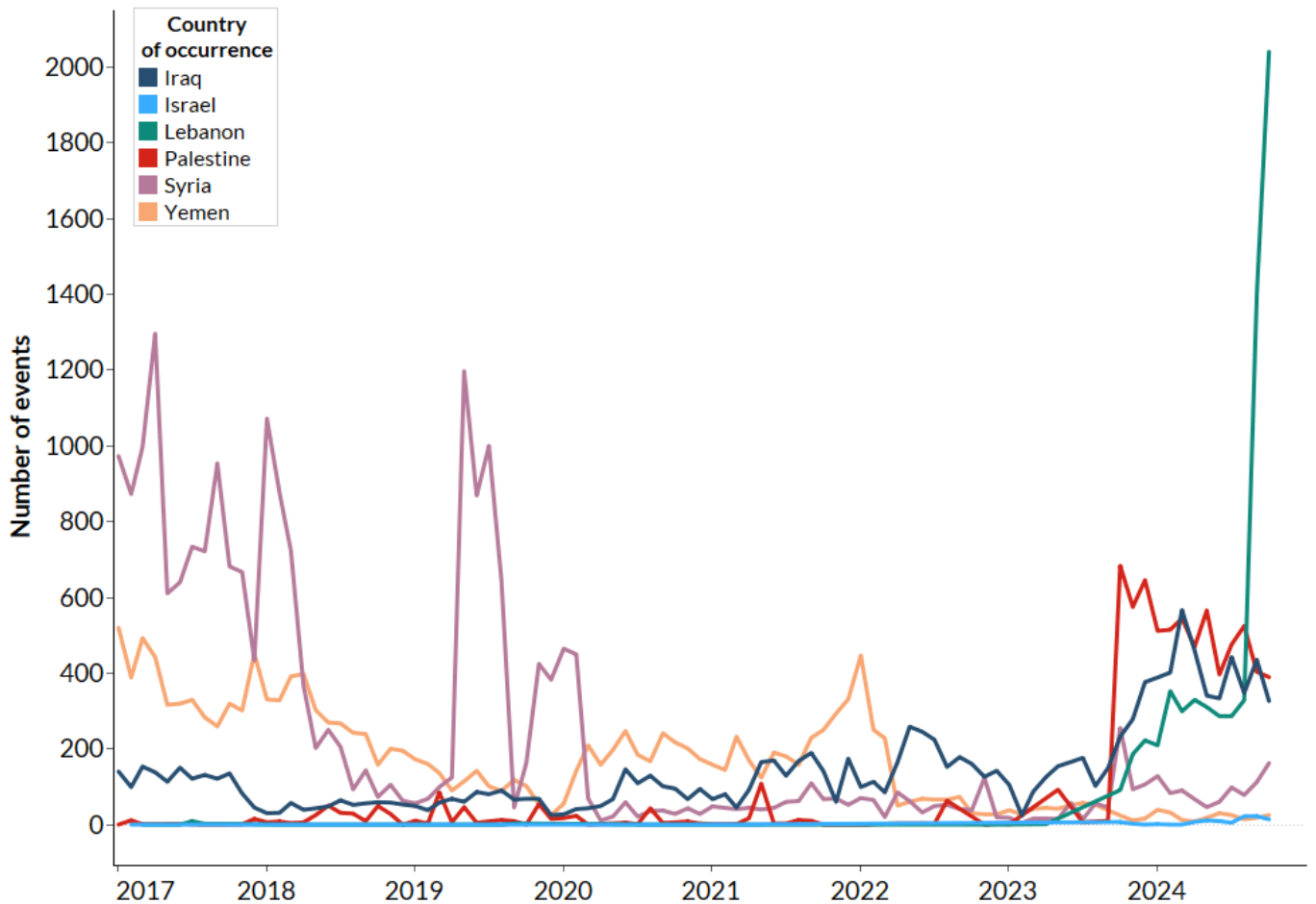
In this Q&A, ACLED Middle East Regional Specialist Dr. Ameneh Mehvar walks us through what ACLED data tell us about the scale and impact of Israel's airstrikes and ground operation in Lebanon. Mehvar also discusses Hezbollah's strikes in Israel and offers expert analysis on how the situation may evolve in the coming months.

What is the scale of Israel's bombardment on Lebanon?

In the past few weeks, from 16 September to our last data cutoff on 25 October, we have recorded over 3,250 Israeli airstrike events in Lebanon. To put this in perspective, our data for the Middle East dating back to 2017 shows that the number of airstrike events in Lebanon during both September and October was higher than in any other month we've recorded in the region (*see graph below*).<sup>1</sup> This includes the number of airstrike events in Syria in April 2017, which included US-led coalition forces' air campaign against the Islamic State.

## Monthly air/drone strikes in the Middle East

1 January 2017 - 25 October 2024



### HOW DO THESE AIRSTRIKES DIFFER FROM THOSE ISRAEL HAS CARRIED OUT IN GAZA?

The number of Israel Defense Forces (IDF) airstrikes we recorded in Lebanon in September and October both far surpass the number recorded in Gaza for any single month over the past year. However, airstrikes in Gaza have been more lethal on a per-month basis, given its small size, high population density, and the challenges civilians have faced in evacuating combat zones. So far, despite the very intense airstrikes in some parts of Lebanon, Israel does not appear to have engaged in a carpet bombing of Lebanon similar to that in Gaza.

### WHERE ARE ISRAEL'S AIRSTRIKES TARGETING?

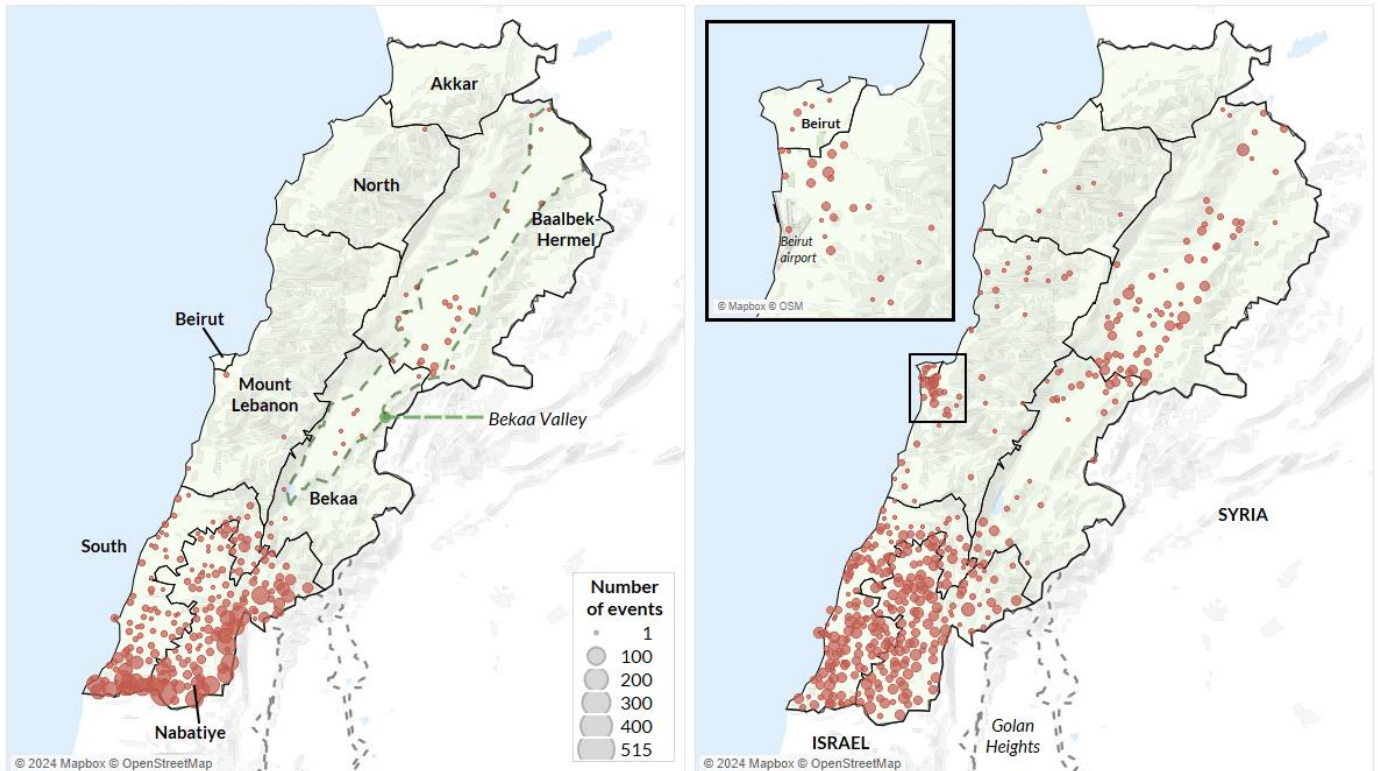
The primary focus of airstrikes has been on Hezbollah's strongholds in the south, the Bekaa Valley in the east, and the suburbs of Beirut (see maps below).

## IDF airstrikes in Lebanon



7 October 2023 - 16 September 2024

17 September - 25 October 2024



But the IDF has also conducted airstrikes far from Hezbollah's strongholds. For example, on 14 October, a strike on a Christian community near the northern town of Tripoli killed over 20 people, including 12 women and two children. While it is unlikely that Israel intended to target these civilians, there was reportedly just one Hezbollah member among the displaced family in the house that was targeted.

As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has stated, Israel will "strike Hezbollah without mercy everywhere in Lebanon,"<sup>2</sup> so such airstrikes may continue as more of the Shiite community, including potential Hezbollah members, seek refuge in other parts of the country.

This also has the potential to lead to social friction, given Lebanon's sectarian divides, as people in other areas may become increasingly reluctant to receive displaced Shiites out of fear that Israel will target them or their properties.

### HOW HAVE CIVILIANS BEEN AFFECTED?

As in Gaza, Israel is demonstrating a high tolerance for inflicting significant civilian casualties in pursuit of military goals.

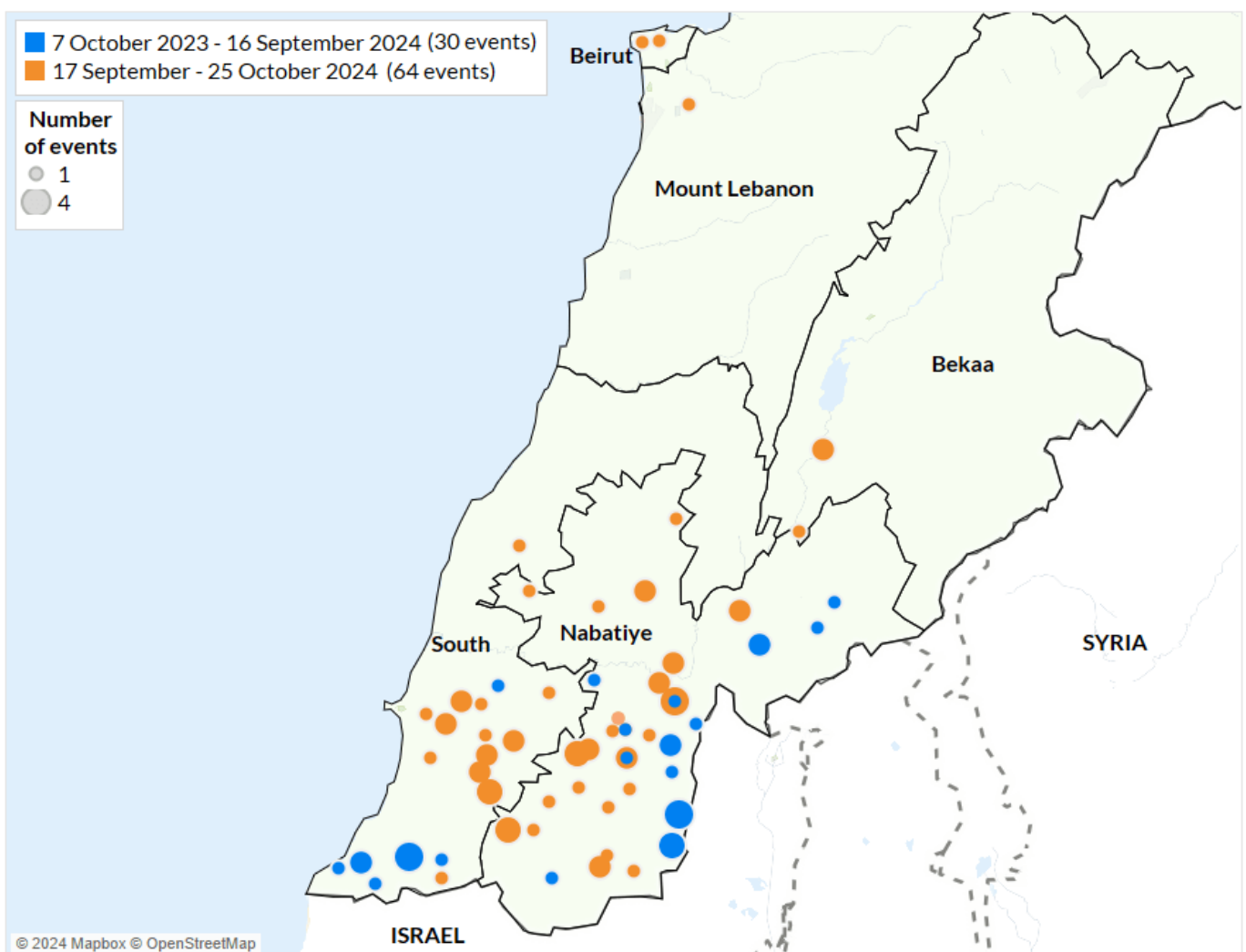
Since Hezbollah has stopped announcing its fighters that have been killed, we lack clarity on the breakdown of militant and civilian fatalities. But, reports from the Lebanese Public Health Ministry indicate that many of those killed are women and children. For instance, on 23 September — Lebanon's deadliest day in decades — more than 550 people were killed, with over a quarter being women and children.

Another related issue is Israel's approach to defining and targeting individuals based on what it considers 'involvement' with an armed group, rather than strictly distinguishing between combatants and non-

combatants. In the context of Lebanon, where Hezbollah is not only an armed group but also a political and social entity that operates schools, hospitals, and charities, this can lead to significant risks for civilians. One case that illustrates this is the attacks targeting the health sector in Lebanon. Since October 2023, we have recorded over 90 incidents involving health and rescue workers or health facilities, many affiliated with Hezbollah or the Amal movement, being hit in Israeli attacks. Around 70% of these incidents have occurred since 17 September (see map below) and have ranged from Israel targeting rescue workers conducting recovery and rescue operations to strikes on hospitals, medical centers, and ambulances.

## IDF attacks on health workers

7 October 2023 - 25 October 2024



### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ISRAEL'S GROUND OPERATION IN LEBANON?

Information and reporting on Israel's ground operation remain relatively limited, especially from the Israeli side. However, the reports we do have suggest that the operation has primarily focused on the Bint Jubayl and Marjayun districts in the Nabatiye governorate, in the central part of southern Lebanon along the border. It also extends southwest into the Tyre district in the South governorate.

These areas along the border, where Israeli troops are currently operating, were subjected to heavy airstrikes and shelling over the past year, which has continued into October (see maps below). So, Israel

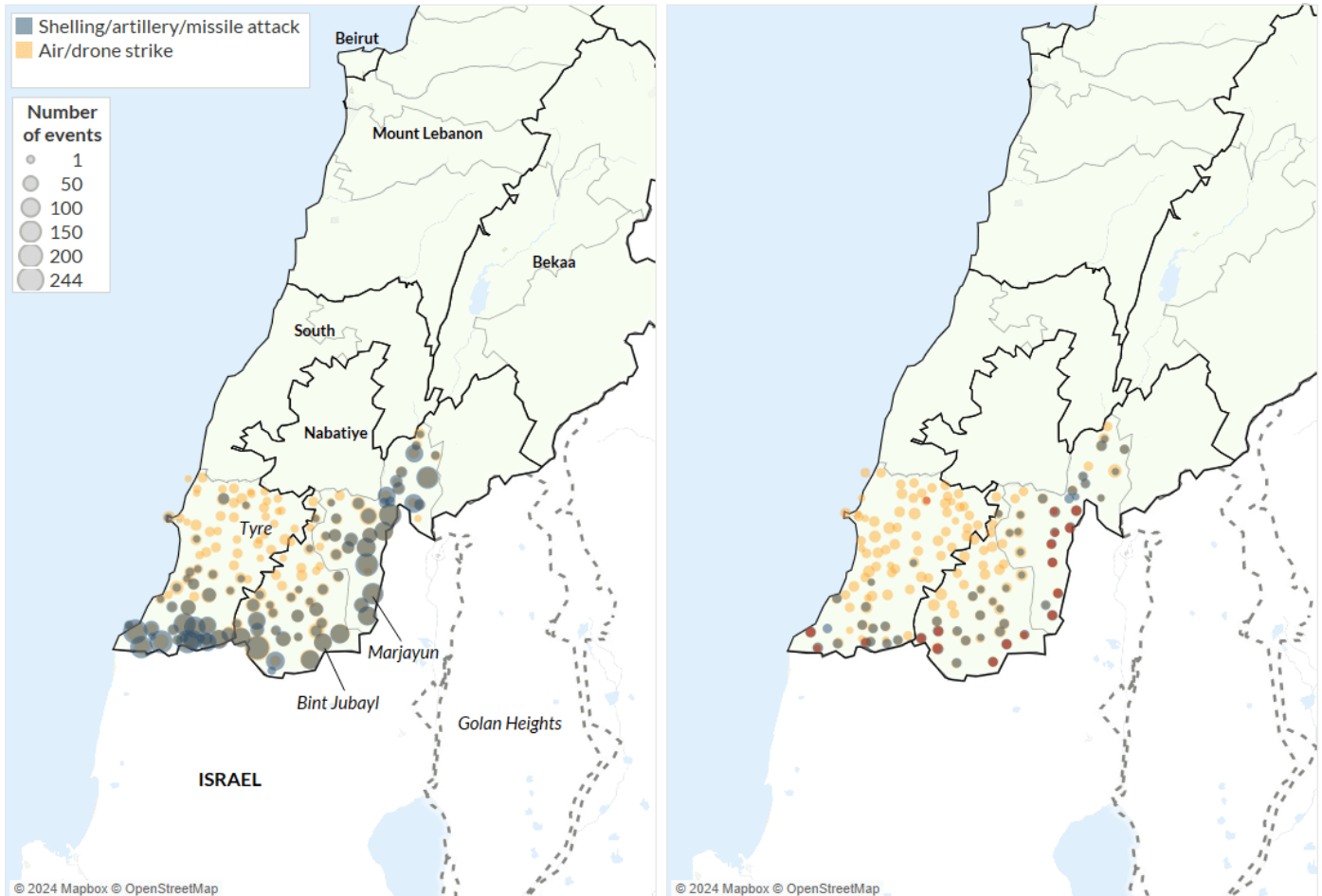
had already laid the groundwork for its troops to move in and fully clear the area, both above and below ground, likely with the aim of creating a buffer zone near the border.

## IDF activity in Marjayun, Tyre, and Bint Jubayl



7 October 2023 - 30 September 2024

1 - 25 October 2024



### HOW HAS HEZBOLLAH RESPONDED?

While Israeli outlets suggest that the IDF has so far encountered limited resistance, based on the available reports, we record over 50 armed clashes during the first four weeks of the ground operation (*see map below*). This indicates that Hezbollah is still attempting to conduct an organized defensive battle in some of the villages near the border. Additionally, we have documented over 60 other events since the start of October in which Hezbollah forces have carried out one-sided attacks, such as detonating IEDs or firing rockets, anti-tank missiles, or mortars at Israeli forces on the ground in Lebanon, continuing to inflict casualties on Israeli soldiers.

# Hezbollah's military engagement with the IDF during the ground invasion

1 - 25 October 2024



## HAS HEZBOLLAH INCREASED ITS ROCKET, MISSILE, AND DRONE ATTACKS ON ISRAEL?

Yes, Hezbollah has continued to launch projectiles and drones into Israel. Although Israel's air defense systems still intercept most projectiles, since the intensification of violence last month, Hezbollah has increased both the scale and the geographic scope of its attacks.

It is true that we are still not observing the regular use of precision-guided missiles or the previously feared thousands of daily rocket launches into Israel. However, Hezbollah is still firing hundreds of rockets into Israel and the occupied Golan Heights daily. It has also increasingly targeted areas deeper inside Israel (*see map below*), occasionally using more sophisticated weapons, and has employed drones — which are harder to detect and track — which have reportedly caused fatalities among IDF soldiers. For example, on 13 October, four soldiers from the Golani Brigade were killed near Binyamina, nearly 70 kilometers south of the border with Lebanon. So, the level of violence Hezbollah has maintained has been sufficient not only to prevent Israeli evacuees from returning to their northern communities but also to disrupt life further into central Israel.

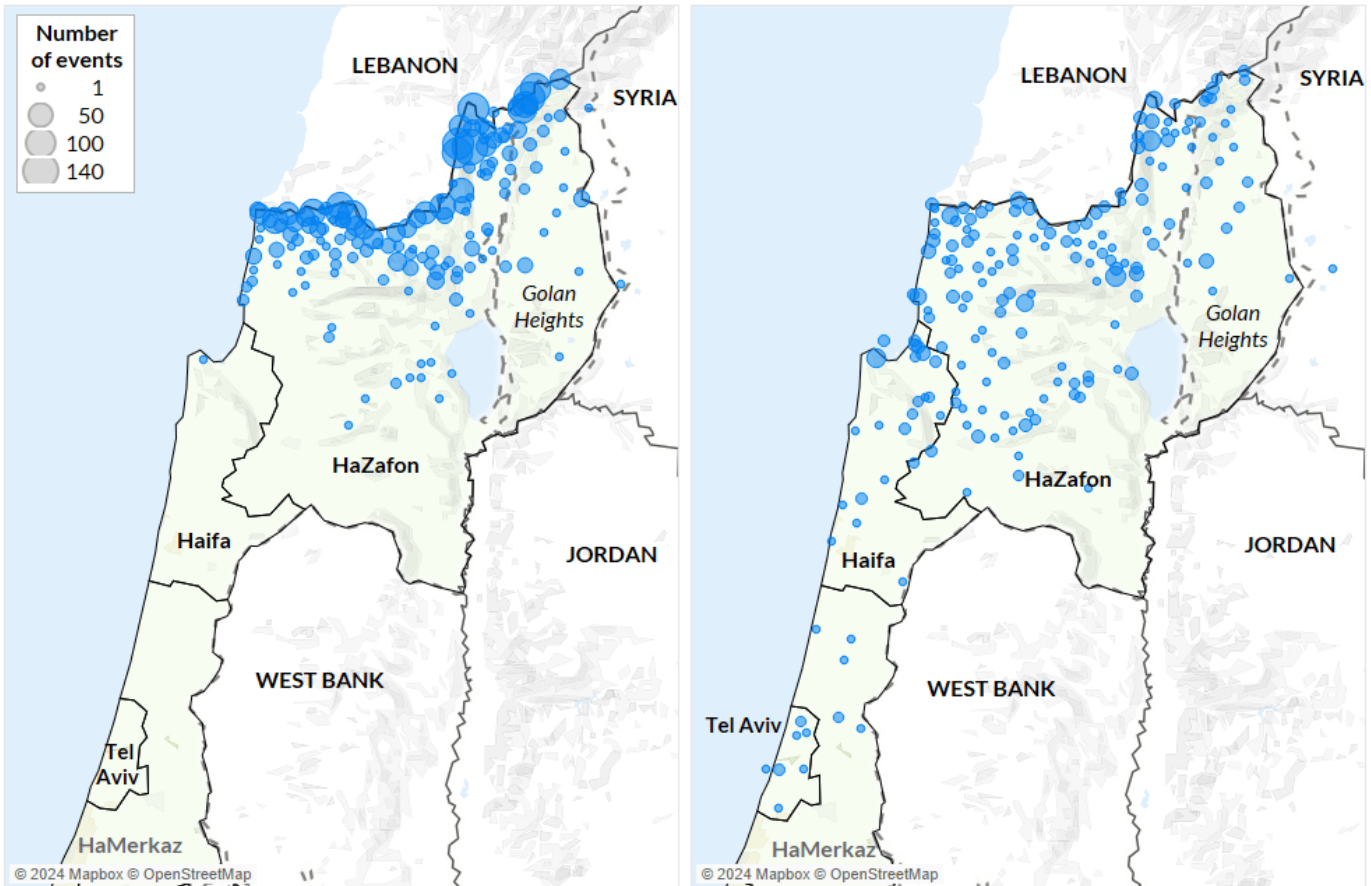


## Hezbollah attacks in Israel and in disputed or occupied territories in Syria



7 October 2023 - 16 September 2024

17 September - 25 October 2024



### HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE SUCCESSFUL?

We'll have to wait and see if US-led diplomatic efforts at this stage will at least lead to a temporary ceasefire while broader negotiations over the implementation of an 'enhanced' version of UNSC resolution 1701 continue. The return of Israeli evacuees would require Hezbollah to stop firing rockets into Israel; short of Israeli ground troops moving deep into Lebanon to fully dismantle Hezbollah's military capabilities — an unlikely scenario — only a political solution can achieve this aim in the short term. Israel's military establishment appears to be in favor of an agreement amid significant military and intelligence successes of Israel in recent weeks. But, it is not clear if Israel's political leadership thinks that enough has been done yet.

If negotiations at this stage remain fruitless and Israel decides to remain on the ground, it could face two options: establishing a narrow tactical strip for a limited period to generate more pressure for a diplomatic settlement or a broader, permanent security zone in southern Lebanon, similar to the area it controlled from the mid-1980s to 2000. This latter scenario, in particular, could drag Israel into a protracted conflict, bogging down the IDF in southern Lebanon, exposing soldiers to guerrilla attacks, and recreating an occupation situation similar to that following the 1982 Israeli invasion, which might eventually increase Hezbollah's domestic support. This option seems unlikely based on the IDF's public statements, but the volatility of

developments in the region, as well as domestic political considerations in Israel and the upcoming US elections, leaves the future uncertain.

## **ISRAELI STRIKE ON BEIRUT KILLS HEZBOLLAH MEDIA HEAD, HEZBOLLAH CONFIRMS HIS DEATH**

[Reuters](#) Nov 17 2024

### **SUMMARY**

- **Strike hit multi-storey building in central Beirut**
- **Afif was long-time adviser to late Hezbollah leader Nasrallah**
- **Chief media officer had addressed reporters on Nov. 11**

Lebanese armed group Hezbollah confirmed its media relations chief Mohammad Afif was killed by an Israeli strike on a building in central Beirut on Sunday.

Israel has rarely hit senior Hezbollah personnel who do not have clear military roles, and its air strikes have mostly targeted Beirut's southern suburbs where the group has its heaviest presence.

Israel's military, which earlier declined to comment, issued a statement late on Sunday reporting it had "eliminated" Afif. The Lebanese health ministry said the strike had killed one and injured three.

People search through the rubble of a destroyed building at the site of an Israeli airstrike in central Beirut's Ras el-Nabaa neighborhood, Lebanon, Nov. 17, 2024.

A second, separate strike later on Sunday hit Mar Elias street, another central area rarely targeted by Israeli bombs, Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV reported. The Lebanese health ministry said that strike killed at least two people and wounded 22.

Hezbollah and Israel have been trading fire for more than a year, since the group began launching rockets at Israeli military targets on Oct. 8, 2023. That was a day after its Palestinian ally Hamas attacked southern Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking another 250 hostage, Israeli authorities say.

In late September, Israel expanded its military campaign in Lebanon, heavily bombing the south and east and the southern suburbs of Beirut alongside ground incursions on the border.

Israel's campaign in Lebanon has in the last year killed 3,841 people and wounded nearly 15,000 others, the Lebanese health ministry said on Sunday, a toll that did not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Hezbollah rockets fired across the border have killed dozens of Israelis, including soldiers and civilians, Israel says.

Palestinians react in front of the bodies people killed in an Israeli strike, at the al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on Nov. 17, 2024.

Israel's counteroffensive in Gaza has killed more than 43,000 Palestinians, according to the territory's health ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count.

In addition to targeting Hezbollah, the escalation has killed several soldiers of the Lebanese military, including two who died on Sunday when Israel attacked an army post in the southern town of Al-Mari, the Lebanese army said on X.

Two other soldiers were wounded, it said.

The strike in Beirut targeting the Hezbollah official hit the Ras al-Nabaa neighborhood, where many people displaced from the southern suburbs by Israeli bombardment have sought refuge.

The Lebanese security sources said a building housing offices of the Ba'ath Party had been hit, and the head of the party in Lebanon, Ali Hijazi, told the Lebanese broadcaster Al-Jadeed that Afif had been in the building.

Ambulances could be heard rushing to the scene, and guns were fired to prevent crowds approaching.

The Lebanese broadcaster showed video of a building whose upper floors had collapsed and civil defense workers at the scene.

Afif was a longtime media adviser to Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in an Israeli air attack on the southern suburbs of Beirut on Sept. 27.

He managed Hezbollah's Al-Manar television station for several years before taking over the group's media office.

Afif hosted several press conferences for journalists among rubble in Beirut's southern suburbs. In his most recent comments to reporters on Nov. 11, he said Israeli troops had been unable to hold any territory in Lebanon, and that Hezbollah had enough weapons and supplies to fight a long war.

Now that the dust has settled, following the ceasefire agreement between Hezbollah and Israel, it is crucial to ask whether this deal will last. Let's face it, we've been here before.

In 2006, Hezbollah and Israel fought viciously for more than a month for reasons not dissimilar to today's context. By conducting a cross-border raid against Israeli troops, Hezbollah sought to alleviate some pressure on Hamas, which was battling with Israel in Gaza.

The operation backfired, triggering a devastating conflict that led to the killing of roughly 1,100 Lebanese and 160 Israelis, and to massive displacement and damage to infrastructure in southern Lebanon. At home, Hezbollah was heavily criticized by most of Lebanese society for its unilateral decision, but, as always, it evaded accountability thanks to its guns.

## **1701**

That time, a combination of military fatigue, lack of an exit strategy, and US-led international pressure brought an end to Israel–Hezbollah hostilities on 14 August 2006. However, no solid plan was devised to prevent the fighting from happening again.

**In principle, the current ceasefire is not dramatically different from UN Resolution 1701.**

UN resolution 1701 called for all the right things: the deployment of Lebanese troops and UN peacekeepers to southern Lebanon, the withdrawal of the Israeli army and Hezbollah from that area and the disarmament of the latter. Yet hardly any of them materialized.

[Israel](#) regularly violated Lebanese sovereignty and airspace. Hezbollah quickly rearmed and built an extensive military infrastructure in southern Lebanon. The Lebanese army never deployed. And UN troops were only given a symbolic mandate.

In principle, the current ceasefire is not dramatically different from 1701. The Israeli army is expected to withdraw from southern Lebanon as Hezbollah pulls its fighters and arms from the border area to about 20 miles north of the Litani river.

A truce of 60 days will ensue, during which the Lebanese army will deploy about 5,000 personnel to the border and join the existing UN peacekeeping force. During this transition phase, Lebanon and Israel, with international assistance, will negotiate the vital issue of land border demarcation to remove an important source of friction between them.

### **Déjà vu?**

This sounds like déjà vu. After all, Hezbollah is not disarmed and retains sufficient combat capacity to hurt Israel and prevent its residents in the north from returning to their homes – a key objective of the Israeli government. Israel has the green light from the US to attack the group whenever it deems necessary. And it's not at all clear if the roles of the Lebanese army and the UN force will be any more effective this time around.



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#### [Hezbollah faces an uncertain future after the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah](#)

This also assumes that the Lebanese army receives the financial support it desperately needs from friendly international powers, including the US, France and the UK, to adequately deploy: the Lebanese government cannot provide that kind of funding due to the country's economic collapse.

Some will point to the fact that a new and more robust monitoring mechanism, in which the US and France act as referees, will make a return to arms between Israel and Hezbollah less likely.

Such diplomatic muscle undergirding the agreement can be helpful, but it's not likely to be a decisive or transformative factor.

Indeed, the enhanced diplomatic structure of 1701 isn't the real reason why things look different this time around. Instead, it is the entire strategic environment that has considerably changed, in large part in Israel's favour, due to its relentless military machine and virtually unconditional US support. Israel has never used its military might like this before, nor has Washington provided it with such unreserved support.

**By agreeing to the terms of the ceasefire... Hezbollah has essentially abandoned Hamas and with it the whole notion of strategic interdependence.**

Hezbollah and its ally [Iran](#) will never admit it, but they have suffered a strategic setback. Their aim was to link all the regional battlefields in which Iran had influence to bleed and overwhelm Israel. But Israel has blocked that goal, rather successfully, through brute force.

#### **Article 2nd half**

Until very recently, Hezbollah's condition to stop its attacks was for Israel to end its campaign against Hamas. Yet by agreeing to the terms of the ceasefire, which clearly dissociates Lebanon from Gaza, Hezbollah has essentially abandoned Hamas and with it the whole notion of strategic interdependence, at least for now.

#### **Not a lasting victory**

Hezbollah didn't come to this conclusion alone. Iran saw how its ally was getting battered by Israel, and like a good corner in a boxing match threw the towel in the ring to prevent its boxer from getting crushed. Of course, none of this means that Israel has achieved a lasting victory, or that Iran won't find a way to rehabilitate its regional network of militias.

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##### **[Will the next US president invest in Middle East stability or walk away?](#)**

But this time, given the magnitude of the damage, physical and psychological, that Israel has inflicted on its adversaries, it will take much longer than before. Risk-averse Iran also has to think twice about how Israel might react to even the attempt to resurrect its regional strategy.

Donald Trump, the president-elect, will sustain US support for Israel, but he will return to the Oval Office in January with a desire to end wars in the Middle East (and possibly in Ukraine).

If his goal is to expedite a peace deal while isolating Iran and its allies, there is no better way to achieve that than by the expansion of the Abraham Accords, which Trump can take credit for starting in his first term.

An expanded [Abraham Accords](#) could ultimately grant the Palestinians an independent state and normalize relations between Saudi Arabia (and with it the Arab and Muslim worlds) and the Jewish state.

That kind of peace will be far more powerful and lasting than any temporary deterrent Israel will create through military force.

*A version of this article was first published in [the Guardian](#).*

## THE FRAGILE ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH TRUCE IS HOLDING SO FAR, DESPITE VIOLATIONS

[AP](#) [ABBY SEWELL](#) and [MELANIE LIDMAN](#) January 4 2025

BEIRUT (AP) — A [fragile ceasefire](#) between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah has held up for over a month, even as its terms seem unlikely to be met by the agreed-upon deadline.

The deal struck on Nov. 27 to halt the war required [Hezbollah](#) to immediately lay down its arms in southern Lebanon and gave Israel 60 days to withdraw its forces there and hand over control to the Lebanese army and U.N. peacekeepers.

So far, Israel has withdrawn from just two of the dozens of towns it holds in southern Lebanon. And it has continued [striking what it says are bases belonging to Hezbollah](#), which it accuses of attempting to launch rockets and move weapons before they can be confiscated and destroyed.

Hezbollah, which was severely diminished during nearly 14 months of war, has threatened to resume fighting if Israel does not fully withdraw its forces by the 60-day deadline.

Yet despite accusations from both sides about hundreds of ceasefire violations, the truce is likely to hold, analysts say. That is good news for thousands of Israeli and Lebanese families displaced by the war still waiting to return home.

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[Netanyahu suggests Israel might not complete its withdrawal from Lebanon by a ceasefire deadline](#)

[At least 3 killed, 40 injured after Israeli forces fire on protestors in Lebanon](#)

[Diminished Hezbollah is weaker by toppling of Bashar Assad](#)

“The ceasefire agreement is rather opaque and open to interpretation,” said Firas Maksad, a senior fellow with the Middle East Institute in Washington. That flexibility, he said, may give it a better chance of holding in the face of changing circumstances, including the ouster of Syria’s longtime leader, Bashar Assad, just days after the ceasefire took effect.

With Assad gone, Hezbollah lost a vital route for smuggling weapons from Iran. While that [further weakened Hezbollah’s hand](#), Israel had already agreed to the U.S.-brokered ceasefire.

Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on Oct. 8, 2023 — the day after Hamas launched a deadly attack into Israel that ignited the ongoing war in Gaza. Since then, Israeli air and ground assaults have killed more than 4,000 people in Lebanon, including hundreds of civilians. At the height of the war, more than 1 million Lebanese people were displaced.

Hezbollah rockets forced some 60,000 from their homes in northern Israel, and killed 76 people in Israel, including 31 soldiers. Almost 50 Israeli soldiers were killed during operations inside Lebanon.

Here’s a look at the terms of the ceasefire and its prospects for ending hostilities over the long-term.

### WHAT DOES THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT SAY?

The agreement says that both Hezbollah and Israel will halt “offensive” military actions, but that they can act in self-defense, although it is not entirely clear how that term may be interpreted.

The Lebanese army is tasked with preventing Hezbollah and other militant groups from launching attacks into Israel. It is also required to dismantle Hezbollah facilities and weapons in southern Lebanon —

activities that might eventually be expanded to the rest of Lebanon, although it is not explicit in the ceasefire agreement.

The United States, France, Israel, Lebanon and the U.N. peacekeeping force in Lebanon, known as UNIFIL, are responsible for overseeing implementation of the agreement.

“The key question is not whether the deal will hold, but what version of it will be implemented,” Maksad, the analyst, said.

### **IS THE CEASEFIRE BEING IMPLEMENTED?**

Hezbollah has for the most part halted its rocket and drone fire into Israel, and Israel has stopped attacking Hezbollah in most areas of Lebanon. But Israel has launched regular airstrikes on what it says are militant sites in southern Lebanon and in the Bekaa Valley.

Israeli forces have so far withdrawn from two towns in southern Lebanon - Khiam and Shamaa. They remain in some 60 others, according to the International Organization for Migration, and around 160,000 Lebanese remain displaced.

Lebanon has accused Israel of repeatedly violating the ceasefire agreement and last week submitted a complaint to the U.N. Security Council that says Israel launched some 816 “ground and air attacks” between the start of the ceasefire and Dec. 22, 2024.

The complaint said the attacks have hindered the Lebanese army’s efforts to deploy in the south and uphold its end of the ceasefire agreement.

Israel says Hezbollah has violated the ceasefire hundreds of times and has also complained to the Security Council. It accused Hezbollah militants of moving ammunition, attempting to attack Israeli soldiers, and preparing and launching rockets towards northern Israel, among other things.

Until it hands over control of more towns to the Lebanese army, Israeli troops have been destroying Hezbollah infrastructure, including weapons warehouses and underground tunnels. Lebanese authorities say Israel has also destroyed civilian houses and infrastructure.

An Israeli couple can see buildings in southern Lebanon that were damaged during the war from an overlook in northern Israel, on Nov. 30, 2024. (AP Photo/Leo Correa, File)

### **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE CEASEFIRE HAS BEEN IN PLACE FOR 60 DAYS?**

Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanese towns has been slower than anticipated because of a lack of Lebanese army troops ready to take over, according to Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, a military spokesman. Lebanon disputes this, and says it is waiting for Israel to withdraw before entering the towns.

Shoshani said Israel is satisfied with the Lebanese army’s control of the areas it has already withdrawn from, and that while it would prefer a faster transfer of power, security is its most important objective.

Israel does not consider the 60-day timetable for withdrawal to be “sacred,” said Harel Chorev, an expert on Israel-Lebanon relations at Tel Aviv University who estimates that Lebanon will need to recruit and deploy thousands more troops before Israel will be ready to hand over control.

Hezbollah officials have said that if Israeli forces remain in Lebanon 60 days past the start of the ceasefire, the militant group might return to attacking them. But Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Kassem said Wednesday that, for now, the group is holding off to give the Lebanese state a chance to “take responsibility” for enforcing the agreement.



In a speech Saturday, he took a more threatening tone.

“Our patience may run out before or after the 60 days,” he said. “When we decide to do something you will see it directly.”

Over the final two months of the war, Hezbollah suffered major blows to its leadership, weapons and forces from a barrage of Israeli airstrikes, and a ground invasion that led to fierce battles in southern Lebanon. The fall of Assad was another big setback.

“The power imbalance suggests Israel may want to ensure greater freedom of action after the 60-day period,” Maksad, the analyst, said. And Hezbollah, in its weakened position, now has a “strong interest” in making sure the deal doesn’t fall apart altogether “despite Israeli violations,” he said.

While Hezbollah may not be in a position to return to open war with Israel, it or other groups could mount guerilla attacks using light weaponry if Israeli troops remain in southern Lebanon, said former Lebanese army Gen. Hassan Jouni. And even if Israel does withdraw all of its ground forces, Jouni said, the Israeli military could continue to carry out sporadic airstrikes in Lebanon, much as it has done in Syria for years.

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This story has been updated to correct the year to 2024, not 2023, in the paragraph on alleged violations of the ceasefire.

#### **[ABBY SEWELL](#)**

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**PART M**

**SYRIA**

## HOW THE OVERTHROW OF SYRIA'S ASSAD IMPACTS ISRAEL AND THE U.S.

[AJC](#) December 11, 2024

**Update:** After years of relative stalemate, the Syrian Civil War erupted in recent weeks, leading to the downfall of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whose family has ruled the country for over 50 years. In a lightning operation, an Islamist rebel group swiftly recaptured Aleppo, Syria's second-largest city, in late November, leading to a domino effect and the eventual overthrow of the Assad regime on Dec. 7.

This monumental shift in Syria unfolds against the backdrop of Israel's ongoing [defensive war against Iran and its terror proxies, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza](#).

However, the collapse of the Assad regime is a double-edged sword for Israel. While it is a setback for Iran's regional influence by eliminating a key ally in its "Axis of Resistance," Iran still remains a global threat to Israel and Jewish communities. It also risks destabilizing Israel's northern border. A power vacuum could empower radical Islamist groups or hostile actors, heightening threats to Israel's security and regional stability.

Addressing this, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria as a "historic day for the Middle East," attributing it to Israeli actions against Hezbollah and Iran, but warned it is "fraught with significant dangers."

Here is what to know about the situation in Syria and why it matters for Israel and the United States.

### WHO ARE THE REBELS THAT OVERTHREW THE ASSAD REGIME?

The rebel offensive that led to the overthrow of the Assad regime is primarily being led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), an Islamist terrorist group operating in Syria. It was formed in 2017 as a rebranding of Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, though HTS claims to have severed ties with al-Qaeda. HTS seeks to establish a governance model based on its interpretation of Islamic law and controls much of northwestern Syria, including parts of Idlib Province near the border with Turkey. HTS is considered a terrorist organization by the United States due to its ties with al-Qaeda.

HTS is led by Abu Mohammed al-Golani. Al-Golani, whose real name is Ahmed al-Sharaa, was born in an upscale Damascus neighborhood and was drawn to radical Islam after the 9/11 attacks carried out by Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Al-Golani says his nom de guerre is a reference to his family's roots in the Golan Heights, claiming that his grandfather had been forced to flee from there after Israel gained control of the strategic region during the 1967 Six-Day War.

### [What's Next for Syria and What's at Stake for Israel, America, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and More](#)

Following the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, al-Golani left Syria and joined al-Qaeda in Iraq, where he was subsequently detained for five years. When the uprising against Assad's rule began in March 2011, al-Golani returned home and founded the Al-Nusra Front, Syria's branch of al-Qaeda.

In addition to HTS, several other rebel groups are also active in Syria, with the U.S.-backed Kurdish forces in the east, Druze rebel groups in the country's south near Jordan and Israel as well as the Free Syrian Army.

## WHY IS THIS HAPPENING NOW?

Recent rebel offensives against the Assad regime in Syria reflect a convergence of regional instability and shifting geopolitical priorities. For over a decade, the Assad regime relied heavily on allies like Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah to maintain power, with those entities' military support enabling significant victories against the rebels, such as the recapture of Aleppo in 2016.

However, these allies are now grappling with their own wars. Russia remains bogged down in its unlawful war against Ukraine, diverting resources and attention from Syria. Meanwhile, Iran and Hezbollah have been attacking Israel since the October 7 Hamas massacre in Israel. In response, Israel has intensified its military actions against Hezbollah, targeting Hezbollah's leadership and infrastructure, degrading its operational capacity, and conducting airstrikes on Iranian arms transfers in Syria. Iran has also [launched two direct attacks on Israel](#) in April and October 2024, to which Israel has responded. This situation has left Assad with diminished external support and weakened defenses.

The resulting power vacuum has emboldened Syrian rebel factions, who view Assad's weakened position as an opportunity to regain ground and influence. Their offensives are not only aimed at challenging Assad's authority but also reshaping Syria's fractured political landscape.

## WHY DOES THE SITUATION IN SYRIA MATTER TO ISRAEL?

The civil war in Syria has long presented a complex challenge for Israel, intertwining historical conflicts, territorial disputes, and evolving security threats. Syria has officially been at war with Israel since the Jewish state's founding in 1948. A critical flashpoint in that conflict remains the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau Israel captured during the 1967 Six-Day War. While Israel formally annexed the Golan Heights in 1981, a move that the United States recognized in 2019, much of the international community, including Syria, continues to consider the territory part of Syria. This longstanding dispute over the Golan Heights remains a persistent source of tension between Israel and Syria.

The Assad regime's alliance with Iran and its terror proxy Hezbollah directly impacts Israel's national security. Syria serves as a strategic corridor for Iranian influence, enabling weapons transfers to Hezbollah and hosting Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) operations. This positions Syria as a critical node in Iran's "Axis of Resistance," aimed at countering Israel and Western allies in the region.

## WHAT ACTIONS IS ISRAEL TAKING TO DEFEND ITSELF?

The situation between Israel and the Syrian government has long been shaped by the 1974 Separation of Forces Agreement, brokered by the U.S. after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, it aimed to stabilize tensions and prevent future hostilities. It established a ceasefire, required both sides to withdraw forces from conflict zones, and created a United Nations-supervised buffer zone on the Golan Heights, monitored by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). Both parties also agreed to limit military forces near the buffer zone.

With the fall of the Syrian government and desertion by the Syrian military, the Israeli military announced on Dec. 7 that it had deployed troops to the buffer zone in the Golan Heights for the first time since the 1974 Separation of Forces Agreement, citing precautions against potential chaos following the fall of the Assad regime. While emphasizing that it would not intervene in Syria's internal events, the IDF stated the deployment is temporary but could be extended depending on developments.

### [What Every American Should Know About U.S. Aid to Israel](#)

Over a 48-hour period following the Assad regime's collapse, the IDF conducted a massive pre-emptive campaign in Syria, dubbed "Arrow of Bashan," which targeted and significantly diminished the former Assad regime's strategic military assets. The operation aimed to prevent advanced weaponry from falling into hostile hands following the regime's recent collapse.

The IDF reported striking over 350 strategic targets, including airbases, weapon depots, chemical weapons sites, and naval vessels, across multiple locations in Syria, such as Damascus, Homs, Tartus, Latakia, and Palmyra. This destroyed an estimated 70-80% of Syria's former strategic military capabilities. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated, "We have no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of Syria, but we certainly do intend to do what is necessary to ensure our security."

Israel's concerns stem from the potential for these weapons to empower groups like Hezbollah or jihadist elements. Netanyahu warned the emerging Syrian regime: "If this regime allows Iran to reestablish itself in Syria, or allows the transfer of Iranian weapons...we will respond forcefully and exact a heavy price."

## WHAT DOES THE OVERTHROW OF THE ASSAD REGIME MEAN FOR IRAN AND ITS TERROR PROXIES?

It is no question that the fall of the Assad regime is a significant setback to Iran's regional strategy its war against Israel. The collapse of the Syrian government severs its primary Arab ally and key member of the "Axis of Resistance" that includes Hezbollah, Hamas, pro-Iranian Iraqi Shi'a militias. Notably, Syria serves as a critical conduit for Iran's influence, allowing for the transfer of weapons and support to Hezbollah in Lebanon as well as to Palestinian terror groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Without Assad, Iran now faces logistical hurdles, reduced strategic depth, and a weakened ability to coordinate with its allies. This could leave [Hezbollah](#) isolated, limit Iran's capacity to confront adversaries like Israel, and embolden regional rivals such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

### [A Spider Web of Terror: How Iran's Axis of Houthis, Hezbollah, and Hamas Threaten Israel and America](#)

Despite the setback, Iran and its terror proxies remain committed to Israel's destruction. While it loses a key ally in its war against Israel, Iran's global threat to Israel and Jewish community remains. From its regional

ambitions, pursuit of nuclear weapons, and network of terror proxies, Iran will continue to work to destabilize the Middle East and pose a threat to global stability.

### **WHO ARE THE KEY PLAYERS IN SYRIA?**

As a result of the ongoing civil war, the country has largely been divided into different spheres of influence.

#### **The Syrian government:**

Before the launch of the new rebel offensive, the Syrian government, led by President Bashar al-Assad, controlled most of western Syria, including the capital, Damascus, and major cities like Homs, Hama, and Latakia. These areas were supported by Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah.

#### **Syrian rebels:**

The northwest, primarily Idlib Province and parts of Aleppo, is under the control of rebel factions, particularly Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), alongside some Turkish-backed groups. These areas experience regular airstrikes by the Syrian government and Russia.

#### **Kurdish forces:**

In the northeast and parts of eastern Syria, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), dominated by Kurdish militias, hold sway. This region includes oil-rich areas like Deir ez-Zor and Hasakah. U.S. forces are based in these areas and provide support to the SDF to counter the Islamic State.

**Russia:** Syria hosts Russia's only naval base outside the former Soviet Union, located in Tartus on the Mediterranean coast, and an airbase in Latakia. Russia provides military, political, and diplomatic support to ensure the Assad regime's survival.

#### **Iran/Hezbollah:**

Iran and Hezbollah are deeply involved in Syria, supporting President Bashar al-Assad through military aid, strategic bases, particularly near Damascus, and proxy fighters to maintain regional influence and counter Israel. Iran provides funding, weapons, and IRGC personnel, while Hezbollah operates fighters and bases near the Israeli border, using Syria as a corridor for advanced arms transfers.

#### **[What is Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Why is it Designated a Terror Group by the United States?](#)**

#### **Turkish-occupied areas:**

Northern border zones are controlled by Turkish-backed forces after military incursions targeting Kurdish groups. Turkey maintains a presence to prevent Kurdish autonomy near its border.

#### **The United States:**

The U.S. has approximately 900 soldiers in Syria, primarily in the northeast and southeast regions. The majority are stationed to support the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in combating the remnants of the Islamic State and to prevent a resurgence of the group. A smaller contingent operates out of the al-Tanf garrison in the southeast, along a strategic corridor used by the Islamic State and Iranian-backed militias from Iraq.

#### **The Islamic State:**

Though largely defeated territorially, Islamic State cells operate in desert areas, particularly in central and eastern Syria, conducting insurgent activities against all factions involved in Syria.

## **ISRAEL WIPES OUT 80 PER CENT OF SYRIA'S MILITARY, INCLUDING ITS ENTIRE NAVY**

**The entire Syrian navy has been decimated in an attack by Israel,  
with 80 per cent of the Assad regime's military destroyed in the past two days.**

[NEWS.COM.AU](https://www.news.com.au) [Shannon Molloy](#), December 11 2024

The entire Syrian navy has been decimated in an attack by Israel, with 80 per cent of the Assad regime's military destroyed in the past two days.

After two days of relentless bombing, Israel has destroyed Syria's entire navy and crippled the country's other key military assets.

The Israeli Defence Force has carried out 350 strikes of "strategic targets" since Saturday afternoon as Syrian opposition rebels seized control of Damascus and brought an end to [the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad](#).

In an operation dubbed 'Bashan Arrow', the IDF first took out air defences before shifting focus to weapons stockpiles, armouries and missile production facilities in the capital as well as Homs, Tartus, Latakia and Plymyra.

Overnight, the Israeli Navy destroyed 15 vessels in ports on the coast, which formed virtually the entirety of Syria's naval force.

As a result of the two-day campaign, an estimated 80 per cent of the former regime's defence force capabilities have been destroyed, the IDF said, to keep it "out of the hands of extremists".

Under Assad's rule, Syria became a key ally of Iran and a thoroughfare for weapons sent to terrorist groups, including Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, Israel has said.

Its key concern since the fall of the regime has been that Syrian weapons could be seized by "hostile" forces in the country.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has extended a tentative olive branch to Syrian rebels, saying he "would like to form relations with the new regime", while issuing a stern warning.

Sponsored content

"If this regime allows Iran to re-establish itself in Syria, or allows the transfer of Iranian weapons or any other weapons to Hezbollah, or attacks us — we will respond forcefully and we will exact a heavy price from it," Mr Netanyahu said in a video statement.

### **REBELS APPOINT INTERIM PM**

The group responsible for toppling the Assad regime, Hayat Tahrir al-Shams (HTS), has appointed a caretaker prime minister.

Mohamed al-Bashir will lead the country until at least next March, the group said, in a bid to ensure a peaceful transition of power.

In a televised address, Mr al-Bashir said his priority was to restore "stability and calm" and revealed he has met with members of the former Assad regime.

“The meeting was under the headline of transferring the files and institutions from the government of the ousted regime to the transitional government in order to receive these files and conduct business,” he said. “This means that there will be a Syrian government that will handle these files and manage the business during a transitional period, God willing, that may end on March 1.”

The end of the dictatorship might “present an opportunity” for the White House to find Tice or at least determine what happened to him, spokesperson John Kirby said.

### **SYRIANS STORM THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE IN DAMASCUS**

There were jubilant scenes throughout the city as word spread, with...

What will happen to Assad now? Bashar al-Assad’s net worth remains enormous, with the Damascus palace takeover revealing strings of luxury cars and designer goods.

### **RUSSIA’S ROLE IN ASSAD ESCAPE**

The Kremlin arranged the “secure” transport of Assad and his family from Damascus to Moscow as the capital fell to rebel forces, Russia has confirmed.

The country’s deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov was interviewed on NBC today, reiterating reports on Monday that Assad and his entourage had been granted asylum.

“He is secured, and it shows that Russia acts as required in such an extraordinary situation,” Ryabkov told the US news channel.

Russia had co-ordinated the escape of Assad and his family “in the most secure way possible”, he added. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been killed under the Assad regime’s watch, including scores of political prisoners detained and imprisoned in barbaric jails.

Since Assad was deposed at the weekend, there have been renewed calls for the dictator to face trial at the International Criminal Court of Justice.

Asked whether Russia would hand him over, Ryabkov pointed out Russia is not a party to the court’s convention.

“I have no idea what is going on with him right now,” Ryabkov said.



## SYRIA IN MAPS: WHO CONTROLS THE COUNTRY NOW ASSAD HAS GONE?

[BBC News](#) By the Visual Journalism team 10 December 2024

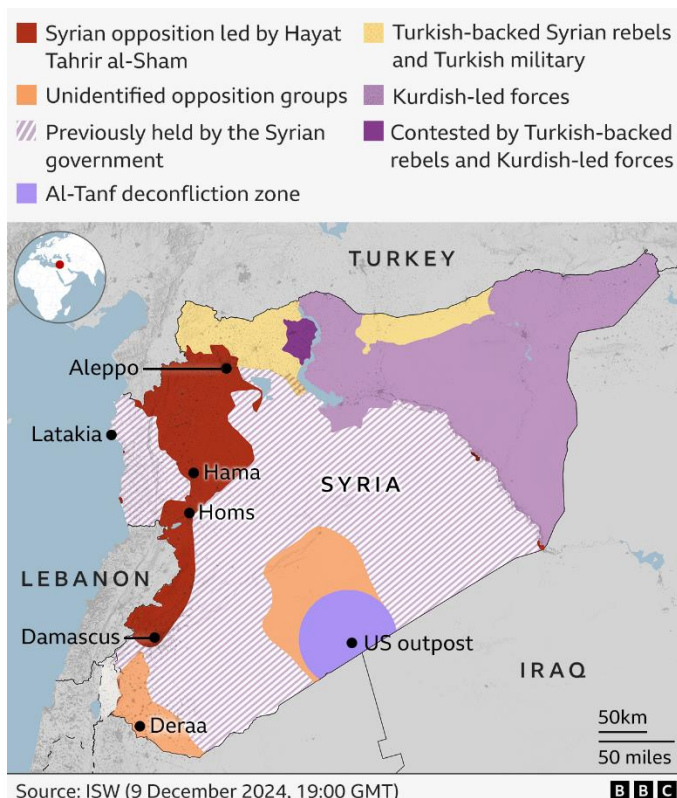
**In just two weeks, Syrian rebels have swept from their enclave in the north west to capture a string of major cities, before reaching the capital Damascus and toppling President Bashar al-Assad 13 years after the start of the country's civil war.**

In convoys of small vehicles and motorbikes, fighters led by the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) moved rapidly along the north-south highway which forms the country's main spine to take Damascus without resistance.

But while many in the country are celebrating the downfall of a family dynasty that ruled Syria with an iron fist, the future is uncertain and the situation on the ground remains in flux, with a number of different rebel groups controlling different parts of the country.

- [Live updates on the downfall of Assad](#)
- [Watch: BBC reports from inside Damascus](#)
- [What has just happened in Syria?](#)
- [Analysis: End of Assad rule will reshape region's balance of power](#)

### WHO CONTROLS WHAT TERRITORY IN SYRIA?



The fall of the Assad regime was brought about by the sudden and unexpected advance by HTS rebels but, although the group controls Syria's main cities, it does not govern the whole country. Syria has for years been controlled by a patchwork of rebel groups including HTS in Idlib and Kurdish-led groups in the country's north east, some of which have also taken territory in recent days and weeks. None of the rebel groups will mourn the falling of the Assad regime, but finding a consensus over how to run the country could still prove difficult and in the north of the country there have been clashes between competing factions.

### HOW DID THE REBELS REACH DAMASCUS?

After years locked behind frozen frontlines, the rebels mounted a lightning advance, culminating in the toppling of the president and takeover of the capital at the weekend.

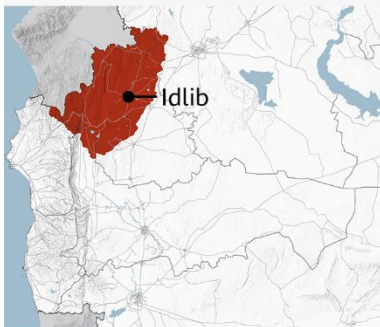
After taking Syria's second city Aleppo at the end of November, the rebels continued their offensive, moving south to take control of the city of Hama last Thursday.

The advance continued at pace, with Syria's third city, Homs, falling on Saturday shortly before government forces also lost control of the capital.

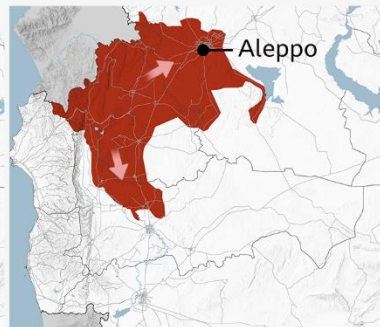
### How Syrian rebels advanced from north

Areas controlled by militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)

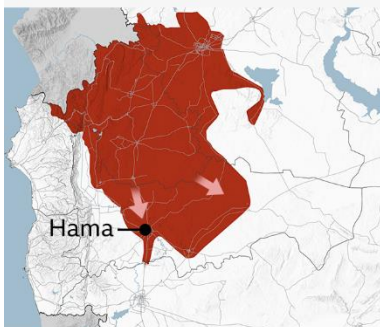
**Oct 2024:** HTS holds small area near Syria's border with Turkey



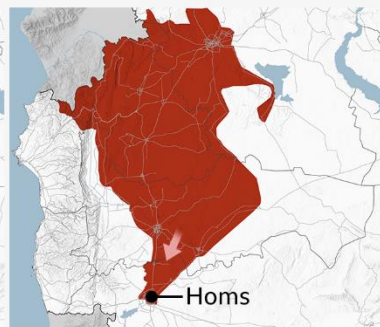
**3 Dec:** It takes Aleppo in a few days and then advances south



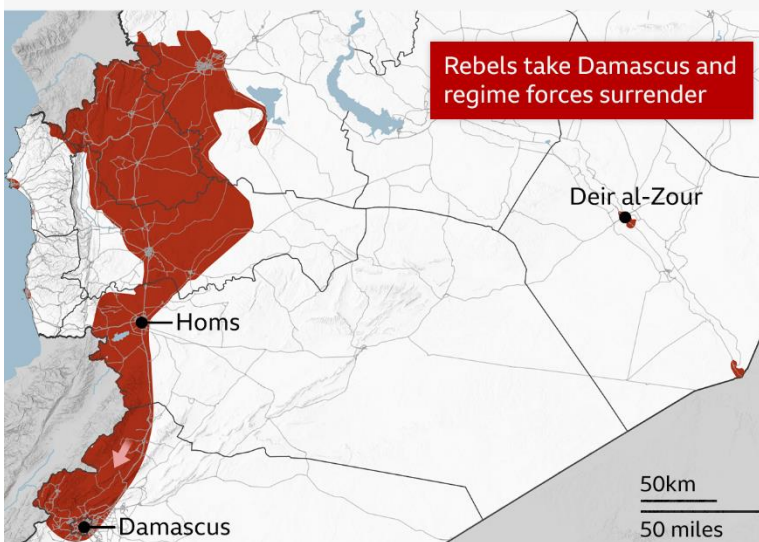
**5 Dec:** After taking Hama, HTS heads towards the city of Homs



**7 Dec:** The group captures Homs and continues push to Damascus



**8 Dec:** Opposition forces claim 'historic victory'



Source: Janes, ISW (9 December 2024, 19:00 GMT)

**BBC**

**MAP: WHERE IS SYRIA AND HOW ARE ITS NEIGHBOURS INVOLVED?**

Syria, with a population of about 22 million people, is located on the east coast of the Mediterranean sea. It borders Turkey to the north, Lebanon and Israel to the west and south west, Iraq to the east and Jordan to the south.

Turkey, Western powers and several Gulf Arab states have backed varying elements of the Syrian opposition to varying degrees during the conflict.

The Lebanon-based Hezbollah movement, backed by Iran, has fought alongside the Syrian regime army but has been severely weakened by its conflict with Israel. This has been seen as a key reason why the rebel advance was so successful.

Israel, concerned by what it calls Iran's "military entrenchment" in Syria, has launched air strikes against Syria's military.



Source: OpenStreetMap

**B B C**

## HOW HAS ISRAEL RESPONDED?

Israeli warplanes have reportedly been carrying out hundreds of airstrikes across Syria, targeting Syrian Army military facilities, including weapon warehouses, ammunition depots, airports, naval bases and research centres.

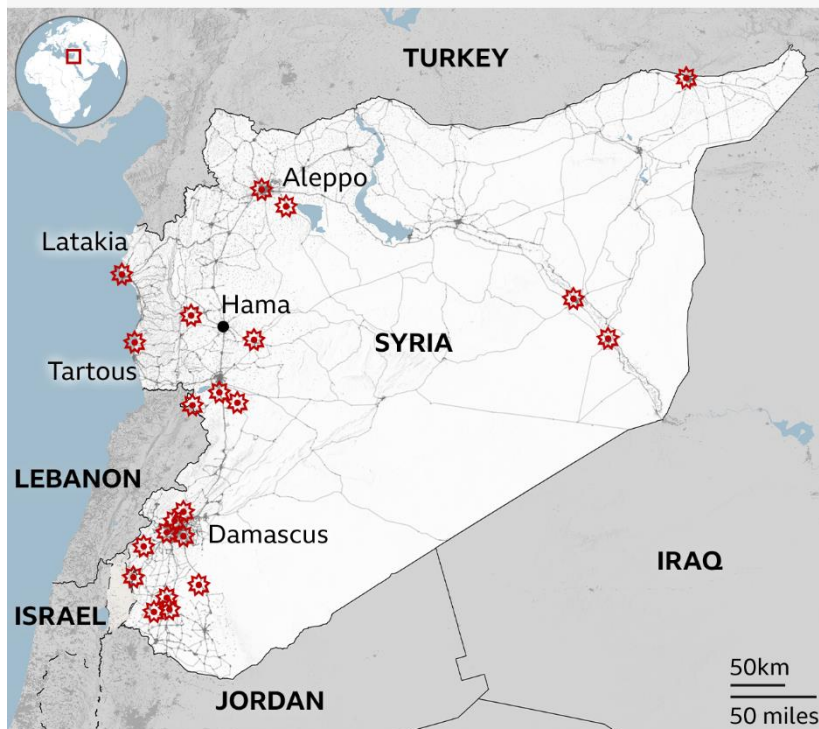
The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) says it has documented more than 300 strikes by Israel since the fall of the Assad regime on Sunday, including on the capital, Damascus, Aleppo and Hama.

Reports say that many of the facilities hit have been completely destroyed.

Israel says its actions are to prevent weapons falling "into the hands of extremists" as Syria transitions into a post-Assad era.

### Israeli strikes on targets in Syria since 8 Dec

Weapon warehouses, ammunition depots, airports, naval bases and research centres have reportedly been targeted



Some  represent strikes on multiple locations

Source: ISW, Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (09:00 GMT, 10 Dec)

**B B C**

2019.

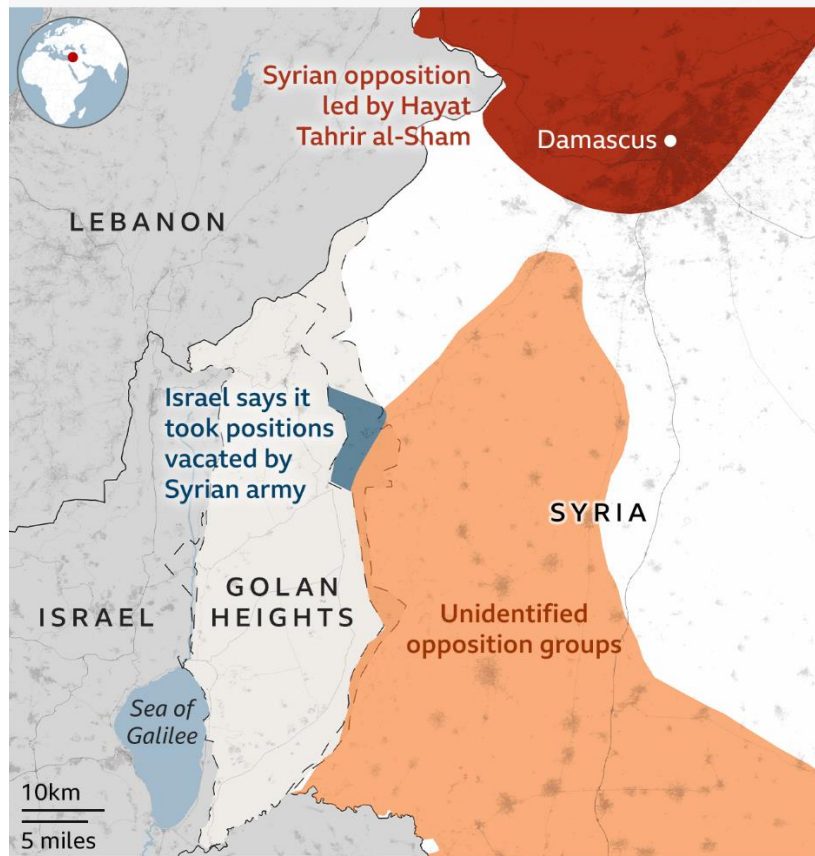
Israel also says it has [temporarily seized control](#) of a demilitarized buffer zone in the Golan Heights, saying the 1974 disengagement agreement with Syria had "collapsed" with the rebel takeover of the country.

It denies reports it has tanks approaching Damascus but says some troops are operating in Syrian territory beyond the buffer zone.

The Golan Heights is a rocky plateau about 60km (40 miles) south-west of Damascus.

Israel seized the territory from Syria in the closing stages of the 1967 Six-Day War and unilaterally annexed it in 1981. The move was not recognised internationally, although the US did so unilaterally in

## Israel creates 'buffer zone' near Golan Heights



Source: ISW (8 December 2024, 19:00 GMT)

BBC

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN NORTHERN SYRIA?

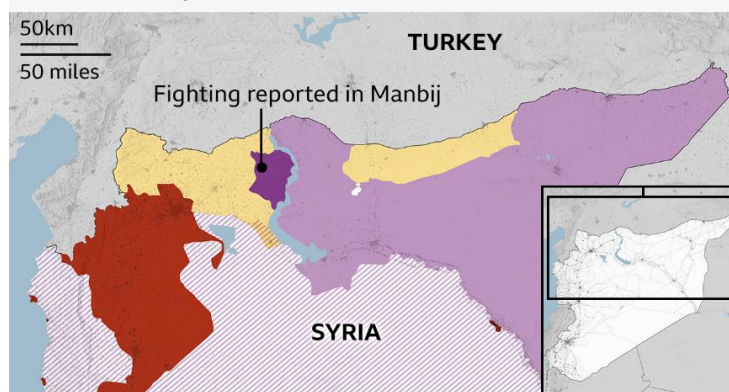
In the northern city of Manbij there have been clashes between Turkish-backed forces and Kurdish-led rebels.

Both sides claimed to have taken parts of the city and fighting is reported to be ongoing in some neighbourhoods.

Analysts at the Institute for the Study of War said they could not yet ascertain who was in control of Manbij.

### Opposing rebel groups clash in the north

- Syrian opposition led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham
- ▨ Previously held by the Syrian government
- Kurdish-led forces
- Turkish-backed Syrian rebels and Turkish military
- Contested by Turkish-backed rebels and Kurdish-led forces

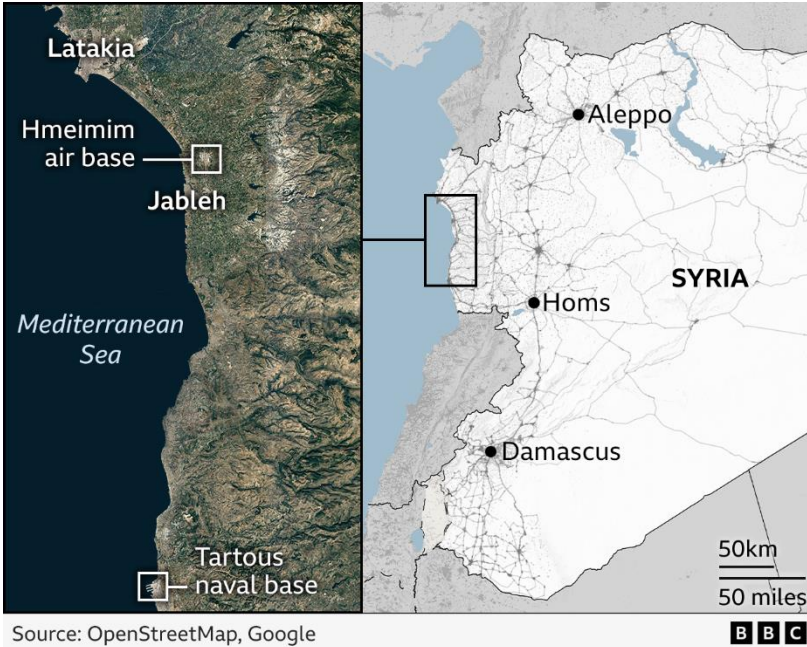


Source: ISW (9 December 2024, 19:00 GMT)

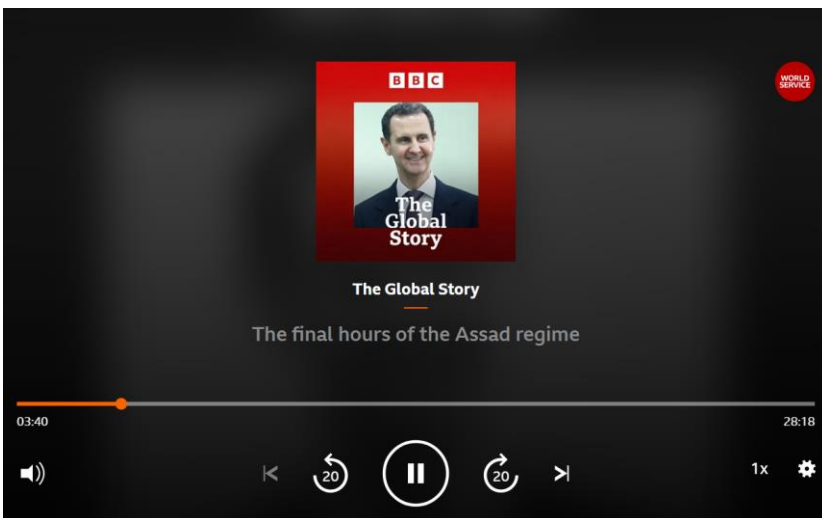
BBC

## RUSSIAN BASES IN SYRIA

In 2015, Russia sent thousands of troops to Syria to help keep President Assad in power. In return for this military assistance, Russia was given 49-year leases on two key military bases.



The port at Tartous is Russia's only major overseas naval base and also its only naval base in the Mediterranean. Along with the air base at Hmeimim, which is often used to fly Russia's military contractors in and out of Africa, the two bases play an important role in Russia's ability to operate as a global power. The Kremlin has said it will hold discussions with Syria's new administration on the future of both sites.



LINK

[The Final Hours of the Assad Regime](#)

## **ASSAD'S FALL IN SYRIA WEAKENS IRAN BUT MAY FUEL ISLAMIST RESURGENCE**

**REUTERS** [Samia Nakhoul](#) and [Andrew Mills](#) December 9, 2024

- **Summary**

- Assad's downfall a strategic victory to anti-Iran camp
- Fear rise over a power vacuum; resurgence of extremist groups
- Assad's allies, Iran and Russia, grapple with loss of influence

The ouster of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, after rebel forces swept into Damascus this weekend, shattered Iran's network of influence in the Middle East but Israel, the United States and Arab powers must now deal with the risk of instability and extremism from the mosaic of forces that replaces him.

Chief among the rebel forces that ended 50 years of brutal dynastic rule by Assad and his father was [Hayat Tahrir al-Sham \(HTS\)](#), a Sunni Muslim group previously affiliated with Al Qaeda that is designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. and the U.N.

Western and Arab nations fear that the HTS-led rebel coalition may seek to replace Assad's regime with a hardline Islamist government, or one less able or inclined to prevent the resurgence of radical forces, three diplomats and three analysts told Reuters.

"There is strong fear inside and outside the region of the power vacuum that Assad's sudden collapse may cause," said Abdelaziz al-Sager, director of the Gulf Research Center, a think tank focused on the Middle East. He cited the civil wars that followed the toppling of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein in 2003 and Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The senior Western diplomat in the region, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Reuters that - with the rebel forces fragmented - there was no plan for how to rule Syria, a complex nation divided into various sects and ethnic groups, each with its own regional power base.

The senior diplomat expressed fears that lawlessness in Syria could allow the flourishing of extremist groups like Islamic State (IS), which in 2014 swept through large swathes of Syria and Iraq and established an Islamic Caliphate before it was driven out by a US-led coalition by 2019.

U.S. President Joe Biden on Sunday welcomed Assad's toppling and said he should be "held accountable" for his despotic rule but he warned that his departure was a moment of ["risk and uncertainty"](#). U.S. forces on Sunday conducted dozens of strikes within Syria against IS to prevent it reasserting itself.

The speed of Assad's ouster, just two weeks since the rebel offensive began, took many in the White House by surprise. A senior U.S. official said Washington was now seeking ways to communicate with all the rebel groups, not just HTS.

So far, Washington had mostly thrown its support behind Syrian Kurdish groups, such as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), whose areas of control are in northeast Syria. These groups, however, are in conflict with one of the main victorious rebels factions, the Syrian National Army (SNA), backed by regional power broker, Turkey, which opposes Kurdish influence.

Assad's allies, Tehran and Moscow, who propped up his rule for 13 years with military support, men and airpower, also face far-reaching implications from his precipitous downfall.

Moscow - which has given Assad and his family asylum - has two major military bases in Syria, its main footprint in the Middle East. Its naval base in Tartous on the Mediterranean has been a staging post to fly military contractors in and out of Africa.

For Tehran, its alliance with Assad - a member of the minority Alawite sect, an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam - was a cornerstone of its powerbase in a predominantly Sunni region wary of Shi'ite Iran.

Assad's departure shattered a pivotal axis of influence, eroding Tehran's ability to project power and sustain its network of militia groups across the Middle East, particularly to its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon. A senior Iranian official told Reuters on Monday it had opened a [direct line of communication](#) with the rebels in an attempt to "prevent a hostile trajectory".

Israel's year-long military campaign has already severely weakened the military power of Hezbollah and Palestinian group Hamas in Gaza.

Assad offered Iran a vital conduit for arms shipments to rebuild Hezbollah. Jonathan Panikoff, a former U.S. deputy national intelligence officer for the Middle East, said his ouster could make it more difficult for Hezbollah to rearm, increasing the prospects that a ceasefire with Israel agreed last month would hold.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed the ousting of Assad as an "historic day" that followed the blows delivered by Israel against Iran and Hezbollah. He said he had ordered Israeli forces to seize areas along the bordering buffer zone to ensure Israel's security.

Israeli forces carried out air strikes against suspected chemical weapons and missile sites on Monday to prevent them from falling into the hands of hostile actors, the foreign minister said.

Carmit Valensi, a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), a think tank for Israeli security policy based in Tel Aviv, said that - despite the risk of a prolonged period of chaos and violence in Syria - Assad's fall could benefit Israel.

Item 1 of 2 A damaged picture of Syria's Bashar al-Assad lies on the floor inside Qamishli international airport, after Syrian rebels announced that they had ousted Syria's Bashar al-Assad, in Qamishli, Syria, December 9. REUTERS/Orhan Qereman

"Despite concerns over the rise of extremist elements near the border and the lack of a clear authority in charge, the military capabilities of the rebels, in their various forms, aren't comparable to those of Iran and its proxies," she said.

### **CALLS FOR NEW CONSTITUTION, ELECTIONS**

Marwan al-Muasher, vice president for studies at the U.S.-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Assad's exit could provide an opportunity for Syrians to establish an inclusive political governance through an orderly transition that avoided a power vacuum that would allow extremist groups to gain ascendancy.

Hadi Al-Bahra, the head of Syria's main opposition abroad, told Reuters on the sidelines of the Doha Forum on Sunday that Syria should have an 18-month transition period to establish "a safe, neutral, and quiet environment" for free elections.



Al-Bahra, President of the Syrian National Coalition, said Syria should draft a constitution within six months, on which the first election would be a referendum. He said the opposition had asked state employees to report to work until the power transition, and assured them that they would not be harmed.

But Syria's political opposition has little influence on the ground in Damascus, where armed groups hold sway, and many Syria watchers remain skeptic.

HTS' leader, Abu Mohammed al-Golani, addressed huge crowds at the medieval Umayyad Mosque in central Damascus on Sunday, promising a new chapter for the region and that Syria would become "a beacon for the Islamic nation".

There are, however, questions about whether Golani's form of strict Islamist ideology would be accepted throughout Syria, a country where a moderate and liberal form of Islam prevails and with a mixed Christian, Alawite, Druze and Kurdish population.

Both Western and Middle Eastern officials expressed concern about the unity of Syria, with key territories, including those along borders with Iraq and Turkey, under the control of different sects and ethnic groups: these divisions, which were entrenched by a bloody 2011 uprising, present a growing threat to national stability.

The analysts and diplomats who spoke to Reuters warned of the risk of a free-for-all conflict - akin to the wake of the toppling of Gaddafi in Libya or Saddam in Iraq - in which armed groups from different Islamist, ethnic and ideological shades fight for supremacy over territory. Such a failed state in Syria would have a major impact on neighbors Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, they said.

### **RIVALRY AMONG REBELS**

Syria's opposition comprises a broad spectrum from moderate groups such as the SNA to jihadi elements within the HTS, each with its own vision for Syria's future, ranging from secular democracy to Islamic governance.

"Each one of these rebel group is vying for supremacy; each one wants to be in charge. Each one thinks they can be Bashar al-Assad, and each one has allegiance to a foreign party funding his group," said al-Sager. "They will clash unless there is an effort by the UN and some regional countries with influence to unify them."

Turkish-backed forces dominate in the north, while U.S.-aligned Kurdish groups, such as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), hold sway in northeastern Syria.

In a sign of the tensions between the groups, the Turkey-backed SNA seized swathes of territory, including the city of Tel Refaat, from U.S.-backed Kurdish forces at the start of the recent offensive. On Sunday, a Turkish security source said the rebels entered the northern city of Manbij after pushing the Kurds back again.

Still, some analysts say that an orderly transition is possible, arguing that well-established government institutions in Damascus remain capable of carrying out duties.

They also point to the rebels' experience of governing in enclaves across Syria that they have managed in some cases for more than a decade. The rebel alliance, led by HTS, made a point of offering clemency for members of the security forces when it seized Aleppo, Syria's second-largest city, late last month and promised the sizeable minority populations that [it would preserve their way of life.](#)

But Hassan Hassan, an expert on Islamist groups in the Middle East based in Washington, said that concerns persisted among these minority groups now that the rebels had captured Damascus.

"There is uncertainty about what will happen next, particularly about religious influence and how (Islamic) laws may evolve," he said.

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Reporting and writing by Samia Nakhoul; Additional reporting by Andrew Mills in Doha, James Mackenzie in Jerusalem and Steve Holland in Washington; Editing by Daniel Flynn

## FIRST, THEY CAME FOR SYRIA'S JEWS ...

### Questions and concerns about what may happen to the minority groups under a new regime

[ins](#) (Jewish News Syndicate) Lyn Julius December 27 2024/INS

*Lyn Julius is the author of "Uprooted: How 3,000 Years of Jewish Civilization in the Arab World Vanished Overnight" (Valentine Mitchell, 2018).*



The Christian community in the Syrian capital of Damascus celebrates its first holiday after the fall of the Assad regime, on Dec. 24, 2024.  
Photo by Asaad Syria/Flash90

The burning of a [Christmas tree](#) by gunmen in the Syrian city of Hama is a sinister portent of what minorities might expect under the evolving situation in the country.

The dominant group in charge, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, has sent out messages reassuring religious and ethnic groups that they will be protected. It blamed "foreign fighters" for the tree burning, but can HTS be trusted? Its leader, Abu Mohammad al-Julani, has jettisoned his *nom de guerre* and his Kalashnikov rifle, preferring to be known by his real name of Ahmed al-Sharaa. Projecting his new image of moderation and respectability, he has donned a suit to receive visiting diplomats. The United States has recently [scrapped](#) a \$10 million bounty on his head.

Is it being too hasty? HTS is an Islamist group with roots in Al-Qaeda and has been designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States, United Kingdom, United Nations and European Union. A *BBC* reporter asked al-Julani if Syria would become another Afghanistan for women, and he said there was no reason to ban women's education. He did not specify if they would be segregated. When asked if he would ban alcohol, however, al-Julani hedged, saying it would not be up to him but to a committee of legal advisers. He was not asked about his jihadi past.

To understand what the future might lay in store for minorities, look no further than the treatment of Christians in Idlib province, which slipped into HTS's control about 10 years ago. Properties were

confiscated and religious rituals restricted, although there was more freedom in recent times, one Christian [told](#) the *BBC*.

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The system has been plagued by corruption, nepotism and arbitrary rule and is policed by militias who are only answerable to themselves.

According to a [report](#) by the Atlantic Council published in 2016, the judicial system in Idlib “is akin to jungle law, in which the powerful use it to impose their rule on the others. The military factions use the judiciary to encroach on civilian affairs. Traditional Islamic concepts like *sharia* and *ijtihad* (freedom for judges to make new rulings not based on precedence) are exploited to eliminate armed groups’ enemies and reinforce the control of militants and their associates.”

Judgment in a case depends on whether you can influence the judge. “The law has turned into a weapon to settle scores, imposing the rule of military factions, and undermine civil institutions,” said the article. “The situation under Bashar al-Assad’s reign was not much better, the only difference is that extremist groups rely, at least theoretically, on Islam and *sharia* law to justify their arbitrary rule.”

So, what might happen to the minorities now? The Alawites, the ethnic group to which the Assad family belonged, are the most vulnerable to revenge attacks.

The Kurds are already in HTS’s sights, as their aspirations to self-determination are diametrically opposed to those of HTS’s Turkish patron.

Syria’s Christian community has dwindled from 11% to 2% of the population in the last 15 years. They could find themselves as subjugated *dhimmis* under sharia law.

Indeed, their fate could mirror that of the Jewish minority, whose tragic story has barely been told—until now.

A Jewish population of 30,000 in 1948 has declined to just three people. A [new report](#) by Justice for Jews from Arab Countries charts the extinction of this millennial-old Jewish community, which suffered decades of human-rights abuses, torture and dispossession. It puts a figure on their material losses at \$10 billion in today’s prices. If taken together with the losses of Jews in nine other Arab countries, the total could run to hundreds of billions of dollars.

Not only have the Jews lost their property, they have lost their roots and their history. The region is the poorer for having lost its Jews.

The Jews’ plight might seem marginal in the bigger picture, given that 500,000 Syrians have died in the country’s brutal civil war. Now that Assad’s Syria has been revealed as a slaughterhouse, one could argue that minority rights are a luxury that only democracies can afford. But state abuse of its minorities did, and can still, degenerate into the abuse of everybody’s rights. The treatment of minorities is the litmus test of the health of a society.

It is too late to save the Jews, but the Christmas tree burning is a wake-up call. The global community must not just stand by: It should keep a close watch on the treatment of minorities, safeguard the Christians' right to practice their religion and hold Syria's new leaders to account for the slightest deviation.

**PART N**

**'IRAN AXIS OF RESISTANCE'**

## WHAT IS IRAN'S 'AXIS OF RESISTANCE'?

[REUTERS](#) April 13, 2024

Iran said it launched dozens of attack drones at Israel on Saturday, in an assault that could trigger a major escalation between the regional archenemies.

Iran had vowed to [retaliate](#) against Israel for an airstrike on its embassy compound in Damascus, adding to concerns about the potential for further escalation of conflict in the Middle East.

Iran has so far played no direct role in the conflict that has spread through the region since the onset of the [Gaza war](#) six months ago, while backing groups that have taken part by attacking Israel, U.S. interests, and Red Sea shipping.

Built up over years or decades of Iranian support, the groups describe themselves as the "Axis of Resistance" to Israel and U.S. influence in the Middle East.

The Axis includes not only Hamas, the Palestinian group that ignited the war by attacking Israel on Oct. 7, but also: the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon; the Houthi movement in Yemen; various Shi'ite armed groups in Iraq; and Syria.

### LEBANON'S HEZBOLLAH

[Hezbollah](#), meaning "Party of God", was set up by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in 1982 with the aim of fighting Israeli forces that had invaded Lebanon that year. The heavily armed group, also an influential political player, shares Iran's Shi'ite Islamist ideology and is widely regarded as more powerful than the Lebanese state.

Hezbollah has served as a model for other Iranian-backed groups across the region, some of which it has advised or trained. The United States and other governments including U.S.-allied Gulf Arab countries list Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation.

The group has been mounting near-daily attacks on Israeli targets at the Lebanese-Israeli border since early October, prompting the heaviest exchanges of fire between the enemies since a full-scale war in 2006.

Hezbollah says its attacks have helped to stretch the Israeli army while also uprooting tens of thousands of Israelis who have fled homes near the border. Israeli air and artillery strikes have forced tens of thousands of Lebanese to flee.

Israeli security sources say Israel has killed some 240 Hezbollah fighters including top commanders in Lebanon since Oct. 7, in addition to a further 30 killed in Israeli strikes in Syria.

Overall, this equals Hezbollah's losses in the 2006 war.

A [U.S. envoy](#) has been engaged in efforts to prevent the violence from spiralling into an even bigger conflict.

### YEMEN'S HOUTHIS

The [Houthi movement](#) established control over large parts of Yemen during a civil war that began in 2014 when it seized Sanaa and overthrew the government, which was backed by Saudi Arabia, the region's

leading Sunni Muslim power and Iran's main rival for regional influence. The Houthis belong to the Zaydi sect of Shi'ite Islam and have long had friendly ties to Iran.

The Yemen war pitched them into conflict with Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies who, wary of Iran's broadening sway, intervened in the war in 2015 in support of the ousted government. Saudi Arabia has in recent years backed diplomatic efforts to end the war, last September [hosting Houthi negotiators](#) in Riyadh. The Houthis announced on Oct. 31 they had entered the conflict by firing drones and [missiles towards Israel](#).

In November, they expanded their role by attacking shipping in the southern Red Sea, saying they were aiming at vessels belonging to Israelis or heading to Israeli ports - though some of the targeted ships had no known Israeli links.

The campaign prompted the United States and Britain in January to launch air strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen. The Houthis declared all U.S. and British ships and warships taking part in "the aggression" would be targets for its strikes.

The attacks have [disrupted international commerce](#) on the shortest shipping route between Europe and Asia, leading some shipping companies to reroute their vessels.

The United States believes [Iran's Revolutionary Guards](#) (IRGC) have been helping to plan and carry out the Houthi missile and drone attacks. Iran denies involvement.

Sources told Reuters in January that commanders from the IRGC and Hezbollah are on the ground in Yemen [helping to direct](#) and oversee Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping. The Houthis denied any Hezbollah or Iranian involvement.

The United States returned the Houthis to its list of designated terrorist groups in response to the shipping attacks.

The Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis has long accused Iran of arming, training and funding the group. The Houthis deny being an Iranian proxy.

### **ISLAMIC RESISTANCE IN IRAQ**

Shi'ite groups with ties to Iran emerged as powerful players in Iraq after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, and developed militias with tens of thousands of fighters.

An umbrella group of Shi'ite Islamist armed factions called Islamic Resistance in Iraq began targeting U.S. forces stationed in Iraq and Syria in October, saying they aimed to respond to Israeli attacks on Palestinians in Gaza and to resist U.S. forces deployed in Iraq and the region.

The attacks stopped after a drone strike killed three U.S. soldiers in Jordan on Jan. 28, prompting heavy retaliatory U.S. airstrikes on Iran-linked targets in [Syria and Iraq](#).

Reuters reported in February that the head of Iran's Quds Force [asked the militias to lie low](#) to avoid U.S. strikes on their senior commanders, destruction of key infrastructure or even a direct retaliation against Iran.

On April 1, Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for an aerial attack on [Eilat](#) in Israel.

Shi'ite armed groups fighting as part of Hashd al-Shaabi, or the Popular Mobilisation Forces, had played a leading role in Iraq in battling the ultra-hardline Sunni Islamist Islamic State group, which controlled swathes of Iraq and Syria between 2013 and 2017.



While members of these Shi'ite armed groups receive state salaries and are technically under the authority of the prime minister, they often operate outside the Iraqi military chain of command.

The groups that targeted U.S. forces included Kataib Hezbollah and the Nujaba group, both of which are closely linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Their arsenal includes explosive drones, rockets and ballistic missiles.

The groups are designated terrorist organisations by the United States.

## **SYRIA**

The Syrian government led by President Bashar al-Assad is part of the Axis of Resistance but has not played any direct role in the current conflict.

However, Syrian territory has been an arena of escalation.

This has included attacks by Iran-backed militias on U.S. forces in the east, Israeli airstrikes in Syria against Iranian personnel and members of Hezbollah, and occasional exchanges of fire between the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and southwest Syria.

The Syrian government has for decades been a close ally of Iran, and Iran-backed forces have deployed across much of Syria since arriving more than a decade ago to aid Assad in the Syrian civil war. Tehran and Damascus says Iranian forces are in Syria in an advisory role at the government's invitation.

## **IRAN'S SHADOW NETWORK: THE AXIS OF RESISTANCE EXPLAINED**

[IRANWARE](#) [Ata Mahamad](#) December 4 2024

Iran has increasingly used the term “Axis of Resistance” to describe a network of state and militia forces united against Israel and the United States in the Middle East.

After the Hamas-Israel war began on October 7 last year, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, then Iran’s Foreign Minister, was often called the “Foreign Minister of the Axis of Resistance.”

Before he died in a helicopter crash in May, he often said that “the fingers of the region’s resistance forces are on the trigger.”

The “Axis of Resistance” has become one of the most frequently used phrases in the rhetoric of Iranian officials.

They consistently emphasize the strength and unity of the forces, presenting it as a symbol of solidarity and resistance against the Islamic Republic’s enemies.

One of the central objectives of the Axis of Resistance is to confront Israel and the United States, countries referred to as the “Great Satan” and the “Little Satan” by Iran.

In the early days of the war, Hassan Nasrallah said, “To the Americans, I say that threats and fear-mongering against us and the resistance movements in our region - whether they are movements or nations - are futile.

“You know, we received messages that if operations in the south continue, the U.S. not only plans to bomb you in Lebanon but also to bomb Iran... These fleets of yours in the Middle East waters do not scare us now, nor have they ever frightened us in the past.”

These objectives are not new. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the Iranian government has established its opposition to Israel and the United States. Subsequent regional developments have provided Tehran with opportunities to pursue these goals.

In 2015, Ali Akbar Velayati, an international affairs advisor to Iran’s Supreme Leader, identified Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine as the “Axis of Resistance,” saying that the “primary duty” of these countries is not only to resist foreign domination but also to prevent U.S. influence in the region.

### Axis of Resistance: A Strategy

In the view of officials and supporters of the Islamic Republic, the “Axis of Resistance” was established as a response to the global hegemonic system, which seeks to integrate the Middle East and Islamic countries into its order.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic claims to promote a new regional order and the creation of an Islamic civilization.

Ebrahim Fayaz, a professor at the University of Tehran, said, “The Axis of Resistance has now transformed from mere militarism into a civilizational dimension. It represents a geographical dimension of Islam and the Middle East and aims to shape the future.”

Tehran officials emphasize their influence in at least four capitals - Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut, and Sana'a - as a demonstration of their regional power.

The Islamic Republic claims to have gained influence by leveraging tools such as technological advancements, public opinion management, and religious democracy.

In the Islamic Republic's narrative, the influence comes from the Axis of Resistance and its objectives, with its overarching goal being opposition to U.S. and Israeli influence in the Middle East.

Consequently, some describe the Axis as an "anti-hegemonic" force that seeks to alter regional dynamics in favor of Tehran's vision and the so-called "Islamic liberation" forces.

Mohanad Hage Ali, a senior researcher on the Middle East at the Carnegie Center, likens the Iranian-backed proxy groups to "a kind of NATO for militant groups."

The Axis of Resistance is not the Islamic Republic's only strategy to confront hegemony. On one hand, they have threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz or launch missile attacks on the oil infrastructure of the Persian Gulf's Arab states. On the other hand, hostage-taking is another key element of their approach.

Mohsen Rafighdoost, a former IRGC commander, said, "None of the world's superpowers or regional powers dare to attack Iran. On one hand, the Islamic Republic possesses military capabilities that even the U.S. does not have. On the other, we have hostages from global powers, and if attacked, we would eliminate them within half an hour. Inshallah, circumstances will come for us to carry this out."

What Are the Reasons Behind the Formation of the Axis of Resistance?

Various theories attempt to explain how the Axis of Resistance emerged. One theory suggests it is rooted in Iranian nationalism, which identifies the West as an enemy.

This perspective is deeply influenced by historical experiences, such as the bitter events of the Qajar dynasty and moments like the 1953 coup, which intensified mistrust toward the West.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution, with its slogan of "Independence," amplified this sentiment, positioning Iran as the leader of a new front against Western dominance, particularly the United States and Israel.

In his book *Axis of Resistance: The Islamic Republic of Iran and Regional Order*, Mehdi Shapouri outlines additional theories about the rise of this coalition.

One view argues that after the Soviet Union's collapse and the end of the Cold War, a power vacuum emerged in the Middle East, and the Axis of Resistance formed in response.

Another perspective suggests that regional pressures following the Islamic Revolution pushed the Islamic Republic to engage with non-state actors and establish the Axis.

The most widely accepted theory says that Iran actively created and supported the Axis based on the ideology of the Islamic Revolution.

All these theories attribute a central role to the Islamic Republic. From the start, Ruhollah Khomeini labeled the U.S. as the "Great Satan" and Israel as a "cancerous tumor" in the heart of the Islamic world.

In a speech after the revolution, Khomeini said, "We fight because we are men of battle. We will export our revolution to the entire world because our revolution is Islamic. And until the call of 'There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger' echoes across the globe, our fight will continue.

"As long as there is resistance anywhere in the world against the oppressors, we will stand with them. We defend the defenseless people of Lebanon and Palestine against Israel."

This doctrine of exporting the Islamic Revolution and resisting the U.S. and Israel forms the foundation of the Axis of Resistance.

A pivotal moment that accelerated this strategy was the U.S. intervention in Kuwait in 1991 and the establishment of its first military base there.

To counter this threat, Tehran intensified efforts to strengthen or establish predominantly Shia groups across the region.

By providing financial, ideological, and military support, Iran empowered these militia groups. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), particularly its Quds Force, has played a vital role in coordinating these movements, from Hezbollah in Lebanon to the Houthis in Yemen and various groups in Africa. This strategy enables Iran to maintain both regional and transregional influence.

Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran launched an ideological project aimed at uniting the Islamic world against "Zionism."

In one of his well-known speeches, Khomeini said, "I announce my support for the resilient Palestine and dear Lebanon," and addressed Muslims and the oppressed worldwide, "Rise, unite and defend Islam," he said.

These declarations reflected a deep belief in the framework of exporting the revolution. Grounded in the Islamic values of the 1979 Revolution, the Islamic Republic expanded its revolutionary ideology beyond its borders, supporting movements and groups across the Middle East that adopted "anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist stances."

These efforts laid the foundation for what would later become known as the Axis of Resistance. The Islamic Republic's constitution explicitly underscores this ideological mission.

The constitution envisions the formation of a "unified global Islamic community" through support for Islamic and popular movements and the triumph of the oppressed over the oppressors.

Military institutions such as the army and the IRGC are tasked with extending Islamic governance, while other entities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are required to collaborate in this mission and avoid compromising with oppressors.

## **A SPIDER WEB OF TERROR: HOW IRAN'S AXIS OF HOUTHIS, HEZBOLLAH, AND HAMAS THREATEN ISRAEL AND AMERICA**

[AJC](#) January 19 2024

This week President Biden re-designated Yemen's Houthis as a global terrorist group amid its increasing attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea. Meanwhile, in Lebanon, the Hezbollah terror group continues to threaten Israel's northern border, and the Israel-Hamas war continues as Hamas still holds more than 100 Israeli hostages taken on 10/7.

Matthew Levitt, Fromer-Wexler Fellow & Director of the Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at the Washington Institute, joins us to help make sense of the renewed terror threat, how these terror groups are coordinating their strategy and attacks, and what the U.S., Israel, and its allies are doing to fight back against Iran and its terror proxies.

*\*The views and opinions expressed by guests do not necessarily reflect the views or position of AJC.*

### **Episode Lineup:**

- (0:40) Matthew Levitt

### **Show Notes:**

**Go Deeper:** [Get the Facts About Iran's Unprecedented Attack on Israel](#)

**Explainer:**  [Hamas' 10/7 Massacre Plan Was Inspired by Hezbollah's Radwan. Here's What to Know About the Elite Terror Unit.](#)

**Learn:** [5 Things to Know About the Houthis, Their Attacks on Israel and the U.S., and Their Treatment of Yemen's Jews](#)

**Listen – People of the Pod on the Israel-Hamas War:**

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- [Countering the Denial and Distortion of the 10/7 Hamas Attack](#)
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Transcript of Interview with Matthew Levitt:

**Manya Brachear Pashman:**

This week the US military struck a Houthi arsenal in Yemen that had threatened US Navy vessels in the Red Sea. It was America's fourth strike on Houthi turf since November 19. Meanwhile, the Hezbollah terror group continues to violate a UN Security Resolution and threaten Israel's border, and Hamas still holds more than 100 Israeli hostages taken during the October 7th invasion and massacre.

What do all these terror groups have in common? Returning here to discuss is Matthew Levitt, the Fromer-Wexler Fellow & Director of the Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at the Washington Institute.

Matt, welcome back to People of the Pod.

**Matthew Levitt:**

Thank you so much for having me.

**Manya Brachear Pashman:**

So let's start with the terror group making the latest headlines. The Houthis? Who are they and why has the Biden administration just re-designated them a terrorist organization?

**Matthew Levitt:**

So the Houthis are a separatist group in Yemen, based in the north of the country. They are Shia, and they get support from Iran. But they're not exactly the same kind of Shia as Iran. And they aren't exactly the kind of proxy that says jump when Iran says how high.

This is a relationship of convenience and my enemy's enemy. And they both hate the United States and the west and hate Israel. And the Houthis have been for years an ineffective, and for the Iranians an inexpensive and risk free way to complicate things for the Saudis. So for years, the Houthis were shooting at the Saudis when the Saudis were involved in the Yemeni war, after the Houthis had taken over.

And that's one of the reasons why things are a little sensitive right now, because there have been efforts to try and negotiate a ceasefire between the Houthis and the Saudis. The Saudis aren't happy with what the Houthis are doing right now in the Red Sea. But they also don't want to rock the boat.

The Houthis have as part of their mantra printed on their flag, Death to Israel, Death to America, Death to Jews, all three, they're not particularly, you know, unclear. And so they have flown drones towards Israel that have been shot down, they have fired ballistic missiles at Israel, some of which have been shut down by US Navy vessels, at least one was shut down by the Saudis. Just pause to think about that for a minute. The Saudis weren't thinking this was aimed at them, the Saudis shut down a Houthi missile aimed at Israel, which suggests that the Israel-Saudi reconciliation track, while very much on pause, is not over. And the Israelis have shot down some including for the first time ever using the arrow anti-missile system, which shot down a ballistic missile in lower outer space.

Now, the Houthis have tried to leverage their position geographically by targeting ships in the Red Sea. They claim that they are targeting only those ships that are owned in whole or in part by Israel or have serviced Israeli ports. They've hit some American ships as well. They're clearly getting intelligence from the Iranians on this. And it has disruptive international freedom of navigation.

And you have now a new problem in terms of getting things where we need them to be to stock our shelves, because boats that would normally go up the Red Sea and through the canal are now going around South Africa.

**Manya Brachear Pashman:**

And this volatility on the part of the Houthis is also compounded by what's going on with Hamas, and also Hezbollah. Is Iran the common denominator here, Matt? I mean, is that what all these terror groups have in common, or is there much more?

**Matthew Levitt:**

So it's true, the Houthis claimed that what they're doing is in support of the Palestinians. But what we are seeing for the first time put into action is the strategy that was developed by the late Qasem Soleimani, the head of the Quds Force, who was killed in Iraq several years ago. And that strategy was what he called uniting the fronts. And so this idea that across the spectrum, and it really is a spectrum of proxy, activity of sponsorship.

Hezbollah is at one end very, very close to Iran, the Houthis, I would argue, are at the other end, and Hamas is kind of somewhere in between. Getting them all to be able to coordinate their activities, when push comes to shove. Now, Hamas for its part is very happy with the Houthis. They're quite disappointed with Hezbollah.

There are reports in the Arabic press, that Hamas expected that Hezbollah would get much more involved and Hezbollah didn't when they saw the US naval presence, you know, two aircraft carriers. Whatever the specifics, Hamas have been very vocal about how displeased they are with the level of support they're getting from Hezbollah, though that has been significant. And they're pretty pleased with the support they're getting from the Houthis, which is outsized what might have otherwise been expected from the Houthis.

**Manya Brachear Pashman:**

So the alignment of these groups with Iran, what exactly does that mean? Does that mean that Iran is pulling the strings? Are they funding the activities? All of the above? I mean, you mentioned the goal of coordinating all these proxies, but does coordinating go as far as collaborating?

**Matthew Levitt:**

So I don't want to get into a semantic discussion of what exactly is the difference between collaborating and coordinating. I think what's important to understand here is that it's not like in the movies, where everybody's getting together at a meeting with evil laughs, coordinating all that they're doing. There have been some meetings, we know that for at least the past few years. Iranian Quds Force, Hamas, Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad had been meeting at what they call, their term not mine, a joint operations room in Beirut. What all is coordinated is not entirely clear. You've had Iranian and some Shia militants from Iraq, the Hashd ash-Sha'bi making statements recently about how, you know, generally things are coordinated right now.

Frankly, the level of coordination took a hit with the assassination of Qasem Soleimani. And there was no one with the gravitas to kind of bring all these proxies together. So they actually leaned on Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary General of Lebanese Hezbollah to come in and serve that role not only kind of mediating between the various Iraqi Shia militant groups, but also the others, the Hamas is that Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Houthis. So they're not all sitting around a big conference table. And you'll do this and you'll do this, but they're all getting support—financial and often weapons from Iran. There is some significant cross pollination in some personalities.

So for example, for the first time this week I've seen in the open source, Israelis say that the head of the Redwan special forces unit in southern Lebanon that has been firing anti tank guided missiles into Israel multiple times a day is a guy known as Abu 'Ali Al- Tabataba'i. He was in southern Lebanon for many years. Then he was sent to Syria, where he worked with Iraqi Shia militants and Quds Force. Then he was moved from there to Yemen, where Hezbollah had a very, very small contingent, maybe a couple of dozen. But the fact that they sent someone that senior was telling. I actually wrote a piece of Foreign Affairs about this years ago, when it came out that he was sent to Yemen. He was designated by the US Treasury, there's a Rewards for Justice from the State Department to reward out for his head. Well, he now is back from Yemen, got a promotion and is the overall head of the Redwan unit. And he has at this point, all kinds of personal relationships.

And so there's a little bit of cross pollination, you might talk about the people you know, from back when you went to college together. And back in the day the Al Qaeda would talk, did you go to the duranta camp in Afghanistan? Do you remember that trainer? Well, now there's a similar thing going on in the Shia extremists milieu? Did you go to the camps together? Were you in Iran at the same time, or Iraq or Lebanon at the same time? Which trainer did you have, who did they send to you? And so there is coordination happening, but I don't think it's Houthis. Sometime this morning, you're going to be targeting a ship.

On the flip side, there is some open source information about ships that you can find and their ownership. But it's clear that the Iranians are also providing them information that is not public. And they're also clearly working with Hezbollah. If you go back to October 7 itself, the plotline of October 7, fire a bunch of missiles under that cover, infiltrate across the border, take as many civilian communities as possible, kill a bunch of people, kidnap others across the border.

That was the Hezbollah plan that the IDF Northern Command was preparing and training to deal with for years. And it was Hamas who used it, so you can see some of that connectivity.

**Manya Brachear Pashman:**

Ah, exchanges of strategy.

**Matthew Levitt:**

Strategy and more. It's not every tactic. It's not every every instance, but there is certainly overall strategy that they're coordinating. There certainly is communication. There certainly is movement of funds and of weapons. And, and this is the first time we're seeing that type of coordinated effort involving militants from Iraq, Iranian assets in Syria. You know, at one point, the Iranians flew a drone and crashed it into a school and a lot. The drone flew down. Jordan didn't cross into Israel until the very end went into a lot. It was a school where children evacuated from communities in the south, are being educated. I don't know if it's luck. I think it is. I don't think the Iranians had intelligence to know exactly what time class got out. But it was, you know, a couple of hours after class got out could have been much, much worse. And even just today, there are reports of things being shot towards Israel, around the Red Sea.

**Manya Brachear Pashman:**

So are we at risk of a wider war? Or does anything stand in the way of that?

**Matthew Levitt:**



Yes. We really are at the brink of a regional war. And I see a lot of people, a lot of press saying that Israel has done something which brings us to the brink of a regional war. And I challenge that Israel is responding to not only the attack on October 7, but to all kinds of attacks. Still, the United States also is not bringing the region to the brink of war, when United Kingdom strike Houthi assets in an effort to prevent them from being able or to deter them from carrying out attacks on vessels in the Red Sea. Ultimately, this really comes down to how far do Iran and its spectrum of proxies want to push the envelope.

I think at the end of the day, they're actually quite happy with what's going on. So long as the fighting in the Gaza Strip continues, I think they feel justified in saying this can go on. They have said, Hezbollah and others have said, that this can stop when the fighting of the Gaza Strip stops. Whether that is what they actually mean or not is something only time will tell. But I think at the end of the day, the decision about whether or not this spills into a broader regional war doesn't rest with Israel or the United States or the United Kingdom, those that are responding to the aggression.

But it's the aggressors. How far does Hezbollah want to push this? For a long time, Hezbollah was only hitting military targets in the north and now they're selectively hitting some civilian targets. Killed a mother and her son in their home in northern Israel just a few days ago. Generally, they're still hitting military targets but it's escalating a little bit in response to the Israeli assassination of Hamas leader Saleh al-Arouri, which was a big deal because they killed him in Hezbollah stronghold.

They hit some pretty significant Israeli military targets, a radar installation on the Hermon mountains and Northern Command Headquarters near Safed.

Those appear to be one offs. Do the Shia militias do something more? Do Iranian assets in Syria try and infiltrate more drones or rockets? Do the Houthis get lucky and hit something particularly big and bark something more. There's lots of ways for this to unintentionally, to escalate. But I do think that all parties right now don't want a regional war.

That said, Hezbollah, Iran, the Houthis, the Shia militias in Iraq, certainly Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, some of the groups that we're seeing very active in the West Bank right now are quite happy to see this level of pressure on Israel and starting the first of what I think they want to be a trend, of these types of coordinated assaults.

**Manya Brachear Pashman:**

So why don't they want a wider war? What is their goal?

**Matthew Levitt:**

They all have as part of their goal, their *raison d'etre*, destroying Israel, kicking the United States out of the region, undermining Western powers in the region, etc. But they all also understand that you go too far, and you open up this to a much broader conflict. The United States has barely gotten involved. They've done a few very, very small things in Yemen. They have been very supportive to Israel's effort to defend itself.

While the US has sent significant forces to the region, they have not done anything, for example, regarding Hezbollah in Lebanon. They've not done anything in terms of the Hashed al-Shaabi in Iraq attacking Israel, though they have responded very, very, very few times, I might add, to the significant number of times Iraqi Shia militants have struck at US military targets in Iraq and Syria. They understand that this could get much

bigger. And ultimately, Iran understands that if things escalate too much, that the fight is going to come to Iran. And it won't stop.

They also really don't want Hezbollah in particular, to go too far in the moment. Because all those rockets that the Iranians have provided to Hezbollah in violation of UN Security Council resolution 1701, since the 2006 war, they're not there primarily for this. They're there to deter Israel and anybody else from attacking Iran's nuclear program, which by the way, the Iranians have been pushing the envelope on throughout this period of conflict since October 7.

And if anybody should attack Iran or its nuclear program, this is seen as Iran's best second strike capability. It's why Hezbollah has basically not fired almost anything other than the Kornet anti tank guided missiles, fired a couple of other short range things. But none of the precision guided missiles under the longer range missiles, that's all, but that powder is dry. That's all for now. And I think Iran doesn't want those spent right now, and also doesn't want these to escalate to the point where the Israelis go ahead and try and take them out under the cover, or in the context of this current conflict.

So there's a strategic set of goals and they believe in, you know, the concept of muqawima, of resistance. There's this idea of muqawima patience, right? This, from their perspective is what God wants, it will eventually happen.

This past three months, this is a huge step on the road to resistance victory. This is a huge success in terms of galvanizing multiple forces to unite the fronts. Doesn't all have to happen right now. But they believe that this is very much a sign that they're on the right path, and it's a step in what they would consider to be the right direction.

**Manya Brachear Pashman:**

Well, Matt, thank you so much. I appreciate you explaining who these terror groups actually are and helping our listeners better understand the headlines.

**Matthew Levitt:**

It's always a pleasure. Thanks so much for having me. And if you want more, there's plenty more at [WashingtonInstitute.org](http://WashingtonInstitute.org). Thank you for the work you're doing and for having me on the show.

# WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT IRAN'S BALLISTIC MISSILE ATTACKS AND ISRAEL'S EFFORTS TO DEFEND ITSELF

[AJC](#) October 26, 2024

**Update:** In the early hours of October 26, Israel launched precise airstrikes targeting Iranian military sites in response to months of attacks from Iran, including direct assaults on October 1 and April 14. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed that the strikes, conducted 1,600 kilometers from Israel, targeted air defense batteries and ballistic missile manufacturing sites in several waves across multiple locations in Iran. The operation, named "Days of Repentance," involved dozens of aircraft, including fighter jets, refuelers, and spy planes, highlighting the mission's complexity. After the strikes, the IDF reported no changes to civilian guidelines, though assessments of potential Iranian retaliation continued.

As the sun set over Israel on October 1, millions of Israelis rushed to bomb shelters as the Iranian regime launched hundreds of ballistic missiles. It marks the second direct Iranian strike on Israel since April, alongside ongoing assaults by its proxies, Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, since October 7. Here's what to know about Iran's attacks on Israel and Israel's efforts to defend itself against Iranian aggression.

## WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THE IRANIAN ATTACK ON OCTOBER 1?

According to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the aerial attack by Iran comprised more than 180 ballistic missiles, the largest single ballistic missile attack ever.

With assistance from the U.S. and other allies, Israel's multi-layered air defense system, which consists of the [short-range Iron Dome](#), medium-range David's Sling, and long-range Arrow 3 air defense systems, intercepted most of the aerial attacks.

Most of the ballistic missiles, which have the capability of carrying a nuclear warhead, were shot down inside of Israel by the long-range Arrow 3 air defense system. The Iranian regime's ballistic missiles can reach Israel in 12 minutes, unlike the drones or cruise missiles that were used in its [April attack on Israel](#). Tragically, shrapnel from an intercepted ballistic missile killed a Palestinian man in the West Bank. No other casualties were reported.

Not all of the missiles were intercepted. Footage circulating on social media shows Iranian missile impacts in central Israel, including at a school.

"Iran made a 'big mistake tonight,' and it will pay for it," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the Iranian missile attack on Israel, which he confirmed "failed" due to Israel's advanced air defense system. Netanyahu warned that those who attack Israel, from Hamas leaders to Hezbollah commanders, "will understand" the country's resolve, calling for global support against Tehran, and emphasizing, "Israel is on the move, and the axis of evil is retreating."

IDF spokesman Daniel Hagari said Israel would respond appropriately to the attacks.

"We are on high alert both defensively and offensively. We will defend the citizens of Israel. This [missile] fire will have consequences. We have plans, and we will act in the time and place that we choose," he said. Shortly before missile strikes began on Israel, two terrorists affiliated with Hamas from the West Bank town of Hebron, armed with an assault rifle and a knife, launched an attack in Jaffa, a Tel Aviv suburb. They shot and stabbed civilians on the city's light rail and continued their assault on Jerusalem Street. While no direct connection to the missile strikes has been established, the attacks occurred in close proximity.

### **Why did Iran attack Israel?**

Bottom line: Iran's end game is to eliminate the Jewish state. The Iranian regime openly calls for the annihilation of Israel. This attack is simply the latest in a decades-long genocidal campaign against Israel and the Jewish people. The regime's proxies have also targeted American military installations in the Middle East; in January, three U.S. military personnel were killed in a drone attack in Jordan.

Israel has faced indirect Iranian attacks for decades through its terror proxies such as [Hezbollah in Lebanon](#), Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad from Gaza and the West Bank, and more recently, [the Houthis in Yemen](#).

In April, Iran conducted its first-ever direct attack on Israel, launching some 300 missiles and drones at the Jewish state, the vast majority of which were shot down by Israel and its allies. It said that this attack was in retaliation for an April 1 strike that killed Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a top commander in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC) in Syria.

In a statement today, Iran said that the attack on Israel was in retaliation for Israel's assassination of Hezbollah terror chief Hassan Nasrallah in September, Hamas's leader Ismail Haniyeh in July, and other key figures in Iran's terror network.

### **How is the international community responding?**

U.S. President Joe Biden authorized the military to aid Israel's defense against Iranian attacks and to "shoot down missiles targeting Israel."

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan stated that Iran's missile attack on Israel "appears to have been defeated and ineffective" and warned of "severe consequences" for the strike. Sullivan highlighted that nearly 200 Iranian missiles were intercepted by U.S. and Israeli defense units, adding that despite the escalation, no casualties were reported in Israel, though a Palestinian man was killed in the West Bank.. In remarks about the attack, U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said that "the entire world should condemn" Iran's attack.

Several world leaders and allies of Israel issued statements strongly condemning the Iranian attack and offering support for Israel, including the [U.K.](#), [Germany](#), [Austria](#), the [Netherlands](#), [Czechia](#), [Romania](#), and many others.

### **How is AJC responding?**

As soon as the attack began, AJC CEO Ted Deutch [took to Twitter](#) to express his support for Israel's right to defend itself and called on the Jewish people to do the same: "Tonight, Iran has declared war on Israel by launching hundreds of ballistic missiles aimed at Israel's 10 million people," said Deutch. "Israel will strike back hard. As it defends its people, Israel is also defending our values. Israel will win, and the world will be better for it. Stand with Israel now, more than ever. Am Yisrael Chai."

Later he issued [a broader statement, emphasizing AJC's support for Israel](#): “American Jewish Committee stands in unwavering solidarity with the people of Israel and is praying for their safety as we condemn this latest act of aggression from the Iranian regime, which openly calls for the annihilation of Israel and the Jewish people.

Ahead of the UN Security Council's Oct. 2 meeting, American Jewish Committee (AJC) sent an urgent [open letter to members](#), calling for global economic sanctions on Iran and pleading for a reimposition of the ballistic missile sanctions that expired last October under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

When the UN restrictions expired last year, 48 states pledged to maintain their sanctions on Iran, calling Iran's missile program “one of the greatest challenges to international nonproliferation efforts.”

### **What AJC CEO Ted Deutch Is Saying**

#### **How You Can Take Action**

Join AJC, the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, in [calling on elected officials to support Israel as it continues to fight for its survival](#), battling a seven front war orchestrated by the Iranian regime and its terror proxies.

**PART O**

**UNWRA and UNHCR**

## GOVERNMENT DONORS TO UNRWA

<b>UNRWA TOP 20 GOVERNMENT DONORS IN 2018 (US\$)</b>					
<b>This chart shows how reliant UNRWA is on Western donors</b>					
	<b>EUROPE</b>	<b>AMERICAS</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>ARAB</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
EU (including ECHO)	178,989,326				178,989,326
Germany	177,439,447				177,439,447
Saudi Arabia				159,956,771	159,956,771
UK	92,754,569				92,754,569
Sweden	64,999,762				64,999,762
USA		60,429,282			60,429,282
UAE				53,800,000	53,800,000
Qatar				51,499,779	51,499,779
Kuwait				50,000,000	50,000,000
Japan			44,999,224		44,999,224
Netherlands	36,278,753				36,278,753
United Arab Emirates				27,828,599	27,828,599
Australia			26,746,123		26,746,123
Denmark	22,677,756				22,677,756
Belgium (including Flanders)	19,055,991				19,055,991
Italy	18,774,000				18,774,000
France (including municipalities)	17,090,974				17,090,974
Ireland	16,017,103				16,017,103
Finland	15,498,794				15,498,794
Luxembourg	15,261,693				15,261,693
<b>Total</b>	<b>674,838,168</b>	<b>60,429,282</b>	<b>71,745,347</b>	<b>343,085,149</b>	<b>1,150,097,946</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>100%</b>
			<b>US\$</b>	<b>%</b>	
		<b>Non-Arab</b>	<b>807,012,797</b>	<b>70%</b>	
		<b>Arab</b>	<b>343,085,149</b>	<b>30%</b>	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1,150,097,946</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**In 2023 donations were USA \$422,004,945**

**Out of \$1,463,868,250**

**Why does such a high proportion of the UNRWA regular budget come from Western countries and such a low proportion from Arab countries?**

## WHAT DOES TRUMP'S UNWRA AID CUT MEAN FOR PALESTINIANS AND THE MIDDLE EAST

[IIS](#) Elisabeth Marten Sara Fouad Almohamadi@sfalmohamadi

The Trump administration is set to pull funding worth hundreds of millions of dollars from the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees.

The United States has announced it will cut all funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The decision is part of a plan to liquidate as a political issue the refugee status of millions of Palestinians. The US aims to strip many of them of their refugee status and thus end the justification for UNRWA, obliging the Arab countries that host the Palestinians to 'share the burden' and take care of them. Ultimately, the US wants to eliminate the issue of refugee status from negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

UNRWA's final budget in 2017 was estimated at \$1.14 billion, with a [cash deficit](#) amounting to \$77 million. The US has, until recently, given it about \$355 million a year. Beyond its disastrous impact on the Palestinian people, this reckless US policy will probably see the Arab world asked to compensate for the financial losses caused by UNRWA cuts and substantiate its solidarity with the Palestinians. Gulf states may also face pressure to increase support for UNRWA and Arab nations that have been hosting the refugees for decades.

### WHAT IS UNRWA – AND WHY HAS DEMAND FOR ITS HELP GROWN?

UNRWA was created in 1949 to help and protect the rights of Palestine refugees, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA has [granted](#) refugee status to 'persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict'. Breaking with the normal standards of international humanitarian law, the refugee status is also offered to their descendants.

The agency was launched in 1950 to meet the needs of about 750,000 Palestinian refugees. Today, some [5 million](#) are eligible for UNRWA services: 810,000 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, 1.3 million in the Gaza Strip, 2.2 million in Jordan, 450,000 in Lebanon and 527,000 in Syria.





UNRWA's Gouraud Camp in Baalbek town, 90km northeast of Beirut, Lebanon. 01/04/1959. Credit: UN

UNRWA faces an increased demand for its services due to the refugees' vulnerability and poverty, as well as their growing numbers. Nearly one-third of registered Palestinian refugees live in camps across Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The rest live in and around the cities and towns of the host countries, and in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

### **WHY IS THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ENDING AID TO UNRWA?**

UNRWA is funded by UN member states, the European Union (which gave [nearly \\$143 million in 2017](#)) and some private donations. 92% of the agency's budget comes from government contributions, including one third from the US. In January the State Department released \$60 million for the agency and announced it would withhold another [\\$65 million](#) for 'future consideration'. In August the State Department said the US would no longer fund 'this [irredeemably flawed operation](#)', and criticised other countries for not sharing the funding burden.

The decision is partly motivated by economic concerns. The Trump administration has repeatedly expressed discontent over America's 'disproportionate' contribution to multilateral bodies and initiatives, such as [NATO](#) and UN peacekeeping operations.

However, there is also a broader political dimension. In 2018 senior Trump advisor Jared Kushner [told US officials](#): 'It is important to have an honest and sincere effort to disrupt UNRWA. This [agency] perpetuates a status quo, is corrupt, inefficient and doesn't help peace.'

According to Kushner, UNRWA has perpetuated the status quo by protecting Palestinian's refugee status for 70 years. A [2017 census](#) found that only 175,000 Palestinian refugees or their descendants lived in Lebanon, against the 450,000 officially registered to UNRWA (probably because of marriages and departures). The results also showed that the majority in some camps, like Shatila, were displaced Syrians and not Palestinian refugees. Moreover, in Lebanon, Palestinian refugees have been prohibited from working in skilled professions and owning property. Officially, Arab governments have followed the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) demands to keep alive the Palestinian issue, by not offering refugees

opportunities that would deprive them of their Palestinian identity and the future right to return to their homeland.

But, with its decision, the Trump administration has also decided to punish the Palestinians following the declaration by [Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas](#) that the US will no longer be a mediator in the peace process due to its 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Trump and his advisors, especially Jared Kushner, have repeatedly accused the Palestinian leadership of blocking the peace process. The US also shut down the office of the Palestinian representation in Washington after the International Criminal Court decided to open a preliminary [‘information and outreach procedure’](#) sparked by a Palestinian request to investigate possible crimes committed by Israel on Palestinian territories.

### **HOW WILL TRUMP’S UNRWA CUT AFFECT THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE – AND THE COUNTRIES HOSTING PALESTINIAN REFUGEES?**

UNRWA has been very convenient for Arab governments which have been reluctant to support the economic cost of the Palestinian problem. Jordan, for instance, has always faced economic problems and has been severely impacted by the spillover of the Syria conflict since 2011. The country [cannot afford](#) to lose UNRWA’s support.

More broadly, the host countries (Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) are unlikely to integrate the Palestinians without compensation, possibly from Israel and the international community, as they do not feel responsible for the consequences of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. They will not make any unilateral efforts without a negotiated and comprehensive regional peace agreement that specifies compensation and reparation mechanisms. Even though Kushner has rightly addressed the exceptionality and incongruity of the Palestinian refugee problem, he has not provided the Arab states with what they view as a just and sustainable solution.

When Kushner claimed that UNRWA ‘doesn’t help peace’ he was addressing the very sensitive issue of the ‘right of return’. Israel, worried about its own demography, would never accept a massive Palestinian homecoming under a future peace deal. Even Palestinian leaders, in private, doubt their future state could handle a huge influx of new citizens. Israel often blames UNRWA and the Palestinian leadership for letting Palestinians nurture this hope. Indeed, in the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the UN General Assembly has repeatedly extended UNRWA’s 1949-defined [mandate](#), most recently extending it until 30 June 2020.

[But as UNRWA mentioned in a recent official statement](#): ‘The responsibility for the protracted nature of the Palestine refugee-hood, the growing number of refugees and the growth in needs, lies squarely with the parties and in the international community’s lack of will or utter inability to bring about a negotiated and peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The attempt to make UNRWA somehow responsible for perpetuating the crisis is disingenuous at best.’

*UNRWA... has never been the cause but rather the symptom of the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate*

UNRWA cannot be blamed for the Palestinian refugee issue, as it has never been the cause but rather the symptom of the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate. The agency certainly needs in-depth reforms to accommodate the current Palestinian reality. These should cover a re-examination of the basis for granting registration and a framework for more effective and efficient services (the UN itself has found UNRWA

vulnerable to [‘misappropriation, graft and corruption’](#)). But the core problem of the agency’s existence will not be resolved until Israel and the Arab States negotiate a comprehensive peace agreement.

### **HOW WILL TRUMP’S UNRWA CUT AFFECT THE ARAB WORLD, ESPECIALLY THE GULF STATES?**

Other state donors will have to compensate for the loss caused by US withdrawal. None of the Arab states are interested in abandoning UNRWA. The agency provides millions of Palestinians with education, health care, social services, infrastructure, and help during emergencies such as conflict in Gaza and the war in Syria. Arab states, especially the Gulf states are left with almost no choice but to fill that funding vacuum, which is exactly the result the US has been looking for.

Therefore, the first consequence is a financial one. In April the UAE announced a [\\$50 million contribution](#) and an extra \$15 million for the [upcoming school year](#). At the same time, Saudi Arabia and [Qatar](#) promised to donate \$50 million. In February Kuwait announced a [\\$900,000 donation](#) to the agency’s Syria Regional Crisis Appeal, and in March [an annual aid contribution of \\$2,000,000](#).

[Saeb Erekat, Head of the PLO Executive Committee, has said](#): ‘They [The United States] want to terminate the role of UNRWA by proposing direct aid to the countries hosting the Palestinian refugees and sideline the UN agency’. The US has indeed proposed a direct wiring of donations to the host countries, without specifying the amounts or mechanisms, including a system for repartition between the different countries. Would the US provide money directly to the Syrian government they are in conflict with, or to the Hamas Government, which is recognised as a terrorist organisation – but which controls the territory of Gaza, where a million people are dependent on support from UNRWA and other humanitarian agencies? The answer is no. Would they impose conditions on the aid to Lebanon and Jordan, such as downsizing the number of Palestinian refugees? Probably.

If the US succeeds in delegitimising UNRWA, there will be serious consequences for the region. Someone will have to fund help for thousands of people who would otherwise be deprived of it. This load will likely rest on the European Union and the Gulf States. Neither Lebanon nor Jordan have the economic and financial capacity, infrastructure or social climate to do the job that UNRWA was doing. After 70 years with little or no integration of their Palestinian population, and a seven year influx of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees, an abrupt reset of the Palestinian refugee issue is likely to cause a humanitarian crisis and inter-community violence.

Moreover, the US decision is likely to fuel greater resentment if it’s followed by further attempts to undermine Arab states’ credibility on the Palestinian issue. Since the beginning of his presidency, Donald Trump and his so-called peace team have claimed to be aiming to negotiate a comprehensive peace plan – an ‘ultimate deal’ – that could be endorsed by Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt.

But in reality they have mostly sought to punish the Palestinians, and paid no attention to Arab allies’ demands not to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. At a recent UN Security Council meeting US ambassador Nikki Haley said that the Palestinian’s Arab neighbours and their allies were ‘generous with their words’, but complained that those words ‘would not do not feed, clothe, or educate [a single Palestinian child](#)’. UAE Ambassador to the UN Lana Nusseibeh responded: ‘With our total donation of more than \$125

million just last year, we believe that we are doing our part to address the immediate needs of the Palestinians.'



Donald Trump, Jared Kushner and Benjamin Netanyahu. Credit: Israel MFA

The obvious pro-Israel stance of the US administration has even led it to publicly attack its Arab allies. This aggressive and somewhat insulting attitude is likely to affect the already limited appetite of the Arab countries to support the US peace plan. King Salman of Saudi Arabia has already shown he understands the potential backlash from the Arab public opinion, [rapidly rebalancing](#) his son Mohammad Bin Salman's warmer tone toward Israel.

In April King Salman announced a donation of \$150 million to the Palestinian Islamic Waqf Programme in Jerusalem. He also stressed that a peace plan must include [East Jerusalem](#) as the Palestinian capital, closing the door to speculation on a reset of Saudi Palestine policy. The US administration has perhaps placed too much hope in Mohammed Bin Salman, as the King seems to be the person who decides Riyadh's Palestine policy. And he has not – so far – shown any intention to sell out Jerusalem and the Palestinians.

#### **HOW HAVE GULF STATES HANDLED THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE ISSUE UP TO NOW?**

Saudi Arabia has always been concerned with the Palestinian refugee issue, defending the Palestinian's right to return or to be compensated, and in 2002 sponsored the Arab Peace Initiative proposing a comprehensive solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. At an Arab League meeting this month Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al Jubeir said: 'the Palestinian cause is the [top priority and concern](#) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which seeks to achieve the legitimate rights of the Palestinians'. At the meeting Arab ministers said they regretted Washington's decision to suspend funding to UNRWA and expressed concerns regarding its humanitarian consequences.

Three GCC member states, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, are among the [top 20 UNRWA donors](#). According to their [2017 pledges](#), Saudi Arabia donated \$53 million, the UAE almost \$13 million and Kuwait \$9 million (mainly in support of Palestine refugees in Syria). Qatar gave \$1 million and Oman donated about \$668,000.

Gulf private or state-funded foundations have also donated. These include the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development (\$4.89 million), Dubai Cares (\$3.84 million), the Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation (\$1.5 million), Kuwait Patients Helping fund (\$200,000), and the Royal Charity of Bahrain (\$13,660).

### **HOW DOES TRUMP'S UNWRA CUT AFFECT THE REGIONAL BALANCE OF POWER?**

Competition to fill the gap left by the US may fuel greater tension and bipolarization in the region. Saudi Arabia and Qatar are already competing to show their solidarity with the Palestinians. So far, the two governments have pursued diverging strategies of influence, fuelling inter-Palestinian division.

Saudi Arabia has supported the Fatah political movement, mainly by offering monthly contributions to the Palestinian Authority. They recently announced the transfer of [\\$80 million](#) (at a rate of \$20 million a month between April and July 2018). Qatar has been playing a central role in the reconstruction efforts in Gaza since the 2014 war, and has mostly supported the Hamas government and Gazan civil society. In 2016, for example, it pledged a [one-time payment](#) of \$31 million to cover the pay of 23,800 civil servants. In 2017, an electricity crisis that has caused protests in the Gaza Strip was eased after Qatar donated [\\$12 million](#) to buy fuel. In February Mohammed al Emadi, Qatari Envoy for Gaza Reconstruction, pledged [\\$9 million](#) for fuel, food and medicines.

Competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran has also reached unprecedented levels in recent years, and both rivals have claimed to champion the Palestinian cause. Saudi Arabia has historically provided the Palestinians with more aid than Iran, and the Islamic Republic has exacerbated inter-Palestinian tensions by supporting and arming Hamas in Gaza. But it has also expertly nurtured anti-Saudi feelings by supporting conspiracy theories on an Israeli-Saudi alliance against Iran and the Palestinians. The Palestinian issue remains central to the regional battle for influence.

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## WHICH SIDE IS UNRWA ON?

[COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS](#) from [Pressure Points](#) and [Middle East Program Elliott Abrams](#)  
September 1, 2014

The war in Gaza has brought UNRWA, the UN agency dealing with Palestinian "refugees," back into the news-- mostly because UNRWA schools were used to shoot rockets at Israel.

The failings of UNRWA were examined here ("[Ending UNRWA and Advancing Peace](#)") in December, 2011, although today they seem even worse. The UNRWA employees union is under Hamas control, and it's clear that the staff is riddled with Hamas "activists." The Israeli commentator and former Knesset member Einat [Wilf](#) wrote yesterday that

now, with the fighting over, it is time for Israel to do what it should have done decades ago -- remove the layer of protection and legitimacy it grants to UNRWA. Israel should recognize UNRWA for what it is -- a hostile Palestinian organization that perpetuates the dream of the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel -- and treat it accordingly.

So now there are two compelling reasons to end UNRWA. Its cooperation with Hamas, and the way in which it has been permeated by Hamas, constitute one reason. The second is that UNRWA is engaged in the perpetuation and expansion of the "Palestinian refugee problem" rather than its solution. Here is the explanation I gave in 2011:

Since the end of the Second World War, millions of refugees have left refugee camps, and refugee status, and moved to countries that accepted them—quickly or slowly—as citizens. Post-World War II Europe was an archipelago of displaced persons and refugee camps, housing 850,000 people in 1947—Czechs, Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, Latvians, Greeks, and many more nationalities. By 1952, all but one of the camps had closed. Hundred of thousands of Jewish refugees from Europe went to Israel after 1948, and then hundreds of thousands more arrived from Arab lands when they were forced to flee after 1956 and 1967. The children and grandchildren of these refugees, born after their arrival, were never refugees themselves; they were from birth citizens of the new land, as their parents had become immediately upon their own arrival. In this process many nations and agencies have played wonderful roles, not least the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The exception to this refugee story is the Palestinians. In most of the Arab lands to which they fled or travelled after 1948 they were often treated badly, and refused citizenship (with Jordan the major exception) or even the right to work legally. And instead of coming under the protection of UNHCR, they had a special agency of their own, UNRWA, the UN Relief and Works Agency. In the decades of its existence, it has not solved or even diminished the Palestinian refugee problem; instead it has presided over a massive increase in its size, for all the descendants of Palestinian refugees are considered to be refugees as well. Once there were 750,000; now there are five million people considered by UNRWA to be "Palestinian refugees." And UNRWA is now the largest UN agency, with a staff of 30,000. UNHCR cares for the rest of the world with about 7,500 personnel.

Which side is UNRWA on? Its supporters would say "on the side of Palestinian refugees," but instead the agency appears to be on two other sides: its own, always expanding its own empire and responsibilities, and on the side of Hamas.

Any transition to UNHCR would need to be slow and careful, but it should begin. One good way to start is to demand independent studies and planning for such a step (independent because you obviously can't leave this work to UNRWA itself, nor should all of it be conducted within the UN system). For example, a plan might start in one country (such as Jordan or Lebanon) rather than in Gaza. Or it might start by redefining "refugee" the normal way. The United States should begin, after a set future date, to move funding from UNRWA to UNHCR. If UNRWA or the UN refuse, so be it: let those who insist on retaining UNRWA, its pernicious definition of "refugee," and its ties with Hamas pay the freight.

Such a transition will be extremely difficult and take years. That's clear--but it's time to begin. The Gaza war has illuminated once again the ways in which Hamas has been acting as a parasite feeding on this UN agency--to which the United States is the largest donor. Time for a change.

## CREATION OF UNRWA

### WIKIPEDIA

Created in December 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a relief and human development agency which supports more than 5 million registered Palestinian refugees, and their descendants, who fled or were expelled from their homes during the 1948 Palestine war as well as those who fled or were expelled during and following the 1967 Six Day war. Originally intended to provide jobs on public works projects and direct relief, today UNRWA provides education, health care, and social services to the population it supports. Aid is provided in five areas of operation: Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; aid for Palestinian refugees outside these five areas is provided by UNHCR.

It also provided relief to Jewish and Arab Palestine refugees inside the state of Israel following the 1948 conflict until the Israeli government took over responsibility for Jewish refugees in 1952. In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate, most recently extending it until 30 June 2017.

UNRWA is the only agency dedicated to helping refugees from a specific region or conflict and is separate from UNHCR. Formed in 1950, UNHCR is the main UN refugee agency, which is responsible for aiding other refugees all over the world. Unlike UNRWA, UNHCR has a specific mandate to aid its refugees to eliminate their refugee status by local integration in current country, resettlement in a third country or repatriation when possible. **Only UNRWA allows refugee status to be inherited by descendants.**

UNRWA has had to develop a working definition of "refugee" to allow it to provide humanitarian assistance. Its definition does not cover final status.

Palestine refugees are defined as *"persons whose regular place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict."*

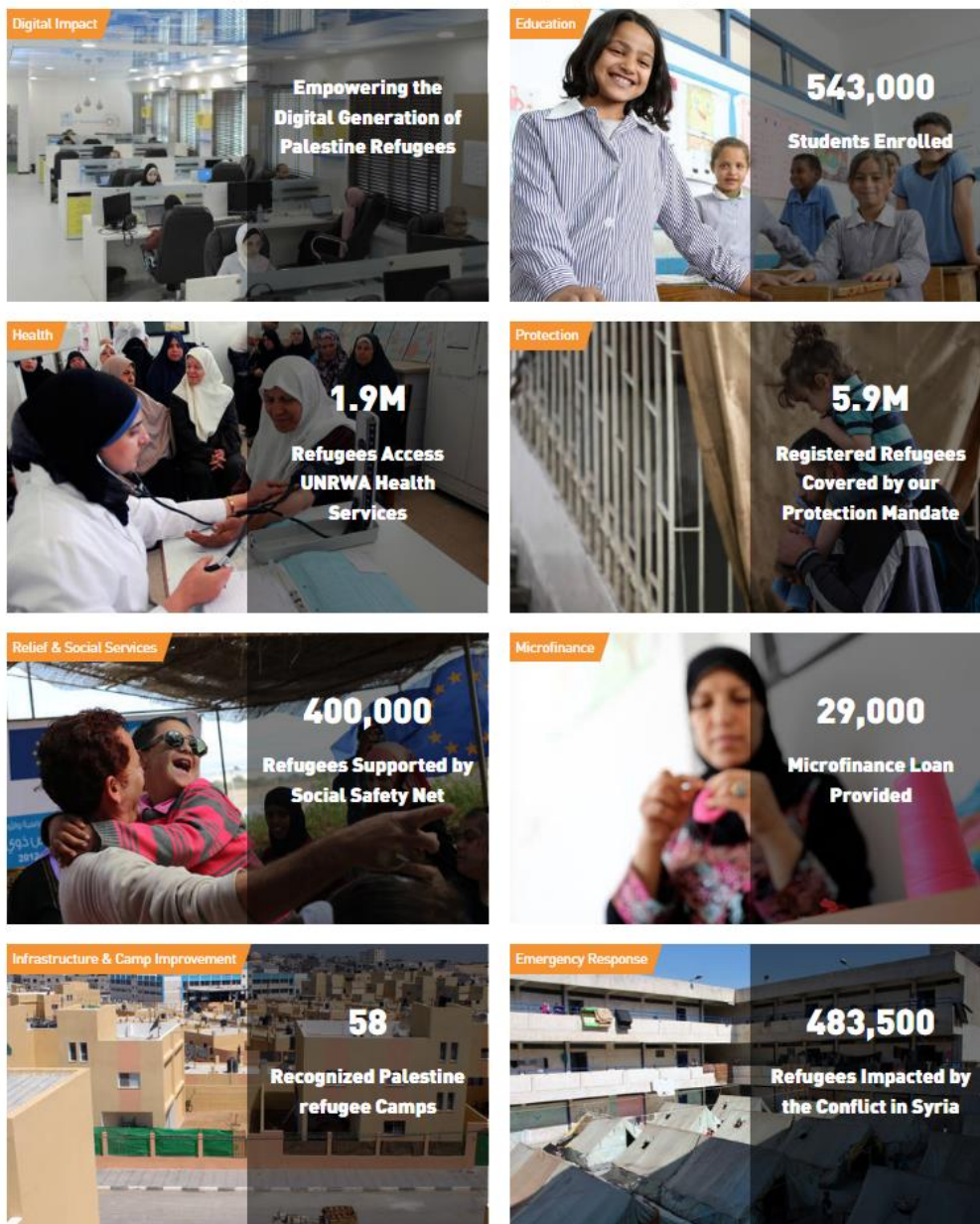
UNRWA services are available to all those living in its area of operations who meet this definition, who are registered with the Agency, and who need assistance. The descendants of Palestine refugee males, including adopted children, are also eligible for registration as refugees. When the Agency began operations in 1950, it was responding to the needs of about 750,000 Palestine refugees. Today, some 5 million Palestine refugees are registered as eligible for UNRWA service.



## WHAT UNRWA DOES

### UNRWA (2024)

UNRWA human development and humanitarian services encompass primary and vocational education, primary health care, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and emergency response, including in situations of armed conflict.



### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND STATISTICS BULLETIN

UNRWA is committed to advancing the human development of Palestine refugees through the achievement of the following five strategic outcomes under the Agency's Medium-Term Strategy 2016-2022 (MTS):

- Strategic Outcome 1: Refugees' rights under international law are protected and promoted

- Strategic Outcome 2: Refugees' health is protected and the disease burden is reduced
- Strategic Outcome 3: School-aged children complete quality, equitable and inclusive basic education
- Strategic Outcome 4: Refugee capabilities strengthened for increased livelihood opportunities
- Strategic Outcome 5: Refugees are able to meet their basic human needs of food, shelter and environmental health

MTS Strategic Outcomes reflect the Agency's commitment to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Read more about [UNRWA and the Sustainable Development Goals](#).

### **UNRWA IN GAZA - KEY STATISTICS**

- 1.4 million registered refugees out of 1.9 million total population (approximately 74 per cent)
- 8 refugee camps
- Over 13,000 staff
- 274 schools for over 278,000 students
- 22 health centres
- 16 relief and social services offices
- 3 micro-finance offices
- 11 food distribution centres for almost one million beneficiaries
- 5 maintenance and 8 infrastructure and camp improvement branch offices to ensure refuse disposal, insect/pest control and regular maintenance works

## THE UNRWA-HAMAS LINKAGE

### ISRAEL GOVERNMENT

<b>Update 31/7/24</b> <b>Lazzarini's empty statement on membership in "armed</b> <a href="#">Read</a>	<b>Update 14/7/2024</b> <b>Exposed UNRWA educators Who are HAMAS/PIJ operatives</b> <a href="#">Read</a>	<b>Update 11/7/24</b> <b>Israel send UNRWA a list of 100 terrorists it employs</b> <a href="#">Read</a>
<b>Update 26/6/24</b> <b>New data: UNWRA's role in delivery shrank in May</b> <a href="#">Read</a>	<b>Update 29/5/24</b> <b>Israel's analysis of UNWRA's "High-Level Action Plan"</b> <a href="#">Read</a>	<b>Update 26/4/24</b> <b>Q&amp;A following the report on the Review Group on UNWRA</b> <a href="#">Read</a>

#### Update 22/12/24: key developments this month

1. Switzerland, the Netherlands and Sweden decided to stop funding UNRWA.
2. On 8 December the New York Times [published an exposé](#) reaffirming Israeli claims on Hamas' extensive infiltration of UNRWA.
3. On 18 December, Israel's Ambassador to the UN sent a letter on UNRWA to the presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council in response to the letter by the UN Secretary General ([download as PDF](#))
4. Media [reports](#) cited sources within the UN saying that Secretary General Guterres is personally involved in "shooting down" offers by UN agencies to replace UNRWA in several activities in the Gaza Strip.
5. UNRWA Commissioner General Lazzarini continued to repeatedly refer to Israel's public diplomacy concerning UNRWA, including this web page, as "disinformation", still without proving any of it false.

#### Update: 30/9/24: **CONFIRMED - Hamas commander in Lebanon doubled as UNRWA school principal**

UNRWA confirmed that the Hamas leader in Lebanon, Fatah Sharif, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike, was an UNRWA employee. Sharif doubled as a school principal and headed the UNRWA Teachers' Association in Lebanon. UNRWA chief Lazzarini says he didn't know Sharif was a Hamas commander. Just like he said he didn't know about a Hamas server farm which the IDF uncovered under UNRWA's Gaza HQ, the militarization of UNRWA schools by Hamas and the hundreds of other active terrorists UNRWA employs. The more Israel's claims are proven true, the more Lazzarini dismisses them as "disinformation". He has not fired a single employee for membership in a terrorist organization.

Lazzarini should say what is by now obvious: UNRWA's quasi-state scale and near-total reliance on local staff, which are unique in the UN system, make it indefensible against massive terror infiltration. It is an unsustainable and dangerous anomaly. UNRWA can and should be phased out in Gaza in a responsible manner. Terrorism must be delinked from humanitarian operations.

**Update 6/8/24: UN probe confirms participation of UNRWA staff in 7.10 massacre.**

The probe by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) proves that Israel's assertions about the involvement of UNRWA employees in the October 7 massacre are credible and true.

In addition to the nine employees that the UN's investigative team determined were involved in the October 7 massacre, other workers - about whom the team claimed there was insufficient evidence - were also involved in the massacre. They are members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the UN must fire them immediately and not sweep the issue under the rug.

By not firing them, the UN Secretary-General and UNRWA's Commissioner General are brazenly demonstrating their determination to continue employing members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad even after having been presented with incriminating evidence to this effect. It is time for donor governments to wake up and stop funneling their taxpayers' money to members of designated terrorist organizations.

**Update 31/7/2024: Six months have passed since the UNRWA-Hamas scandal broke (see the full details below) and Commissioner General Lazzarini continues to mislead the UN agency's donor countries.**

Six months have passed since the UNRWA-Hamas scandal broke (see the full details below) and Commissioner General Lazzarini continues to mislead the UN agency's donor countries. In late June, five months after he was first informed that UNRWA employees took part in the October 7th massacre in Israel, Lazzarini stated for the first time that "membership in any militant or armed group or entity is prohibited" for UNRWA staff.

**This statement is not only too late, but also far too little.** Here is why:

1. **Lazzarini came short of clarifying whether UNRWA considers Hamas a "militant or armed group".**  
Such clarification is required since only recently the UN's humanitarian chief stated that for the UN "Hamas is not a terrorist group...it is a political movement." This view renders Lazzarini's statement meaningless. He should clarify explicitly that UNRWA prohibits membership of Hamas, leaving no room for other interpretations. By doing so, he would align himself with the Colonna Report which named Hamas and Islamic Jihad as militant groups.
2. **Lazzarini did not state that membership in an armed group is a sufficient cause for not hiring a person by UNRWA or terminating his or her employment.**  
The revised UNRWA staff rules (revised in June) do not even define membership in an armed group as a "serious misconduct", for which the Commissioner General has the authority to dismiss employees. Had Lazzarini been serious, he would have stated clearly that members in such groups will be dismissed from UNRWA, full stop.
3. **Lazzarini has not taken any action to enforce the prohibition on membership in armed groups.**

The "Action Plan" presented by UNRWA to its donors did not contain steps to identify and dismiss employees who are members of armed groups. It only included adding "mandatory questions regarding outside and political activities" during the recruitment process and some revisions in the wording of hiring contracts. In other words, nothing was put in place to prevent UNRWA from

employing members of armed groups other than those who come forward and confess being as such.

4. **After receiving from Israel a list of 100 UNRWA staff who are Hamas or PIJ's military operatives, Lazzarini neither suspended them nor launched an independent investigation of those claims.**

Israel shares sensitive intelligence only with its closest intelligence partners (and did so regarding UNRWA as well). It is up to the UN to investigate its infiltration by terrorist groups instead of trying to whitewash it. Given the vociferousness with which Lazzarini and UNRWA profess a commitment to neutrality, and the gravity of the allegations, donor countries should demand swift action by UNRWA. The gap between UNRWA's pretensions of submitting its staff lists for vetting and its glaring inaction when presented with lists of terror-implicated staff must be bridged.

5. **Lazzarini's practice is concerning in light of reports that he personally intervened to reinstate an UNRWA employee in Lebanon who was dismissed in March for being a prominent member of Hamas.**

Lazzarini's lack of transparency in this case raises further concern that he either does not consider Hamas an armed group or lacks the will or ability to prevent Hamas members from being employed by UNRWA.

**By these actions, Lazzarini continues to substantiate Israel's key argument:**

the UN is incapable of running a state-like enterprise in Gaza without being infiltrated by terrorist organizations. UNRWA in Gaza can and should be replaced, without hampering the humanitarian assistance. Lazzarini's statements, reform and "Action Plan" are a smoke screen. Governments and their taxpayers should not fall for them. As long as Lazzarini refuses to take action against UNRWA staff who are Hamas and PIJ operatives, donor countries that continue to fund UNRWA are indirectly funding Hamas. Simple as that.

## **BACKGROUND**

Since Hamas' savage attack against Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup> 2023, the IDF has been operating in Gaza to eliminate Hamas' military and governance capabilities and free the Israeli hostages. During this operation, a wealth of new intelligence has been gathered on Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and other terror organizations. Israeli forces have retrieved millions of documents in captured enemy material. **This new intelligence exposed two related issues:**

**first, the involvement of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) employees in the October 7<sup>th</sup> massacre.**

**Second, the deep and systemic infiltration by those terror organizations, particularly Hamas, into the ranks of UNRWA.**

### *What are the new findings on UNRWA in Gaza?*

***The collection and analysis of the new information is still ongoing, yet it is already clear that a significant share of UNRWA's employees in Gaza serve in the ranks of Hamas and other terror organizations, including in military positions.***

*Israel has [sent](#) UNRWA an official letter with a list of 100 terror operatives employed by the agency with their names, ID and military ID numbers.*

—

**Over 10% of senior UNRWA educators in Gaza (school principals or deputy principals, directors or deputy directors of training centers) were found to be members of Hamas or Islamic Jihad ([click here for details](#)).**

—

Over thirty UNRWA facilities in Gaza have been found to contain terror infrastructures such as tunnel shafts, reflecting a deeply concerning, and possibly systematic, abuse of the status of these facilities for terrorist purposes. Hamas operated a high-end server farm directly under UNRWA's Gaza headquarters, with communication and electricity cables connecting both compounds.

Intelligence shows that Hamas considers UNRWA an essential asset both for maintaining its rule over Gaza and for exploiting its facilities to build terror infrastructure. It is not a case of "a few rotten apples", as some have tried to portray it.

Multiple times in the past, Israel provided UNRWA with information on members of Hamas that are employed by the agency, yet no action was taken.

#### **WHAT DID ISRAEL DO WITH THE INFORMATION?**

In January, as the full details were still being gathered, Israel discretely shared the initial details with UNRWA's High Commissioner, Phillipe Lazzarini. This included the names of twelve UNRWA employees, who had been identified at the time as having participated in the October 7<sup>th</sup> massacre.

Subsequently, the UN Secretary General ordered an investigation by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) strictly on the involvement of those twelve employees in the October 7<sup>th</sup> massacre. In addition, the Secretary General appointed an external Review Group to examine UNRWA's neutrality mechanisms, chaired by Former French Foreign Minister, Catherine Colonna. **In early March, both bodies visited Israel where they received detailed briefings and information, including raw intelligence, exposing the full depth and breadth of the terror infiltration into UNRWA.**

In parallel, the information was shared with Israel's intelligence partners and was presented to the relevant officials in UNRWA's donor countries.

**The often-repeated claim that Israel did not share information on the UNRWA-Hamas nexus is entirely false.**

#### **UNRWA IN GAZA IS BEYOND REPAIR**

As the new revelations on UNRWA were being gathered, and following a thorough inter-agency assessment, Israel concluded that the terror infiltration into UNRWA's Gaza operations poses a grave security risk and seriously jeopardizes the humanitarian efforts. Furthermore, it was concluded that the problem cannot be fixed by reforms or the introduction of new "neutrality mechanisms" in UNRWA, for two key reasons:

**First**, contrary to most of the donor governments, UNRWA – like the UN itself – does not regard Hamas as a terrorist organization. As recently as February 2024, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths publicly stated that "Hamas is not a terrorist group for us, as you know, it is a political

movement." Moreover, reforms will not change the basic fact that UNRWA in Gaza is the only UN entity in the world which runs a state-like enterprise employing 13,000 local staff members, managed by a small number of international staff, in an area controlled by a terrorist organization with a genocidal agenda (the Hamas Charter openly states that: *"Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it"*). UNRWA has yet to show any inclination to investigate the affiliation of over 2000 of its staff in Hamas and other terrorist organizations, nor to dismiss them. It also has not declared whether it considers employing Hamas militants as a breach of its neutrality.

**Secondly**, over the past decade UNRWA announced various reforms and new "mechanisms" ostensibly aimed at ensuring its neutrality to address public scandals and concerns by donors. However, an analysis of those measures shows that they were ineffectual and never fully implemented. This reflects either a lack of will or a lack of ability to apply steps which effectively prevent terror infiltration. For example, UNRWA boasts of conducting quarterly "neutrality inspection" of its facilities, yet those checks, conducted by local staff (who may or may not be Hamas members), according to [UNRWA's own website](#), look only for political slogans in posters and graffiti, not for any evidence of abuse by terrorist organizations:

**"Installation inspections include checks for: (i) proper use and placement of signage, including: flags, UN sign/logo, no weapons sign; (ii) ensuring that the building is free of political slogans, flags, posters and other markings; (iii) a short questionnaire for the installation manager on any experiences related to incursions, unauthorized activity and harassment of staff..."**

A 'neutrality breach' according to UNRWA's definition is "taking sides in hostilities or engaging in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature." Infiltration by a terror organization that then exploits UNRWA facilities to further their terror organization's objectives goes far beyond a mere neutrality breach. It undermines all other humanitarian principles, including humanity, impartiality and independence. UNRWA's attempt to frame the issue as merely one concerning neutrality is misleading and points to ineffective solutions. Preventing terror infiltration of such massive enterprises requires tools that UN agencies in the field do not have, starting with the ability to define local terrorist organizations as such.

### **UNRWA can be replaced in Gaza gradually without hampering the humanitarian effort**

After the exposure of the extent of terrorist infiltration of UNRWA, Israel's humanitarian policy has been to shift focus to working with responsible aid organizations that aren't compromised by terrorist organizations. The priority has been to do so without hampering the goal of increasing and improving the humanitarian assistance provided to the civilian population in Gaza. This policy was devised and approved after a thorough assessment of UNRWA's role in the humanitarian effort and its functioning since October 7<sup>th</sup>. The assessment concluded as follows:

1. **UNRWA has underperformed logistically on the ground since October 7<sup>th</sup>**, including inter alia by failing to scale up its operations in a timely fashion while simultaneously trying to take lead in multiple operational areas in which it did not have deep expertise. UNRWA has attempted to create a monopoly on the distribution of aid in Gaza at the expense of other humanitarian agencies, and the cluster system that the UN applies in all other humanitarian missions worldwide. Instead of adopting a professional, solutions-oriented approach, UNRWA's top leadership prioritized their political and media campaign against Israel which included countless baseless accusations and

disinformation.

**UNRWA's functions in Gaza can be gradually transferred to more professional providers.** For example, for a period of six weeks in February and March 2024 UNRWA didn't make a single request to take aid to the north of Gaza where it was needed most. Instead, the food relief was brought by other actors such as the private sector, other UN agencies and international NGOs. Since the start of the war, UNRWA was responsible for bringing in 15% of the aid, compared to 27% by the Egyptian Red Crescent and 20% by the World Food Program (WFP). There are many other responsible humanitarian actors, including other UN organizations and over 43 NGOs currently operating in Gaza, who can take a larger role in aid distribution.

In the longer run, UNRWA's state-like function as a provider of basic services, such as education, health and garbage collection, could and should be transferred to local civilian authorities in post-Hamas Gaza.

Hamas, a designated terrorist organization, has repeatedly demonstrated that it prioritizes terror over the wellbeing of Gazan civilians. It exploits them as human shields and views a humanitarian crisis as an integral part of their war strategy. The effectiveness of the humanitarian efforts in Gaza, and the safety of the people involved in it, requires their complete delinking from Hamas. Unfortunately, the UN's and UNRWA's leadership have chosen to understate the severity of this unprecedented scandal, leading to what might go down as one of the biggest whitewashes in the history of the United Nations.

**Pursuant to these assessments, Israel is effecting a graduated replacement of UNRWA in Gaza, without hampering the humanitarian effort.**

**Both UN review processes cannot offer a path to safely resume funding to UNRWA in Gaza.**

The two reviews have very strict and limited terms of reference (TORs). The OIOS has been mandated to investigate only the involvement of the initial twelve UNRWA employees whose names were provided in January. The Review Group chaired by Ms. Colonna has been explicitly instructed by the TOR given to it by the Secretary General not to investigate any allegations of breaches of neutrality by UNRWA "nor make any findings of fact in respect of them." Its mandate is limited to examining UNRWA's internal mechanisms to preserve its neutrality. Furthermore, it does not intend to examine whether UNRWA's reports and public communications abide by the principles of neutrality and impartiality.

**To summarize, both review processes lack the mandate and the expertise to provide donors with answers to the following questions:**

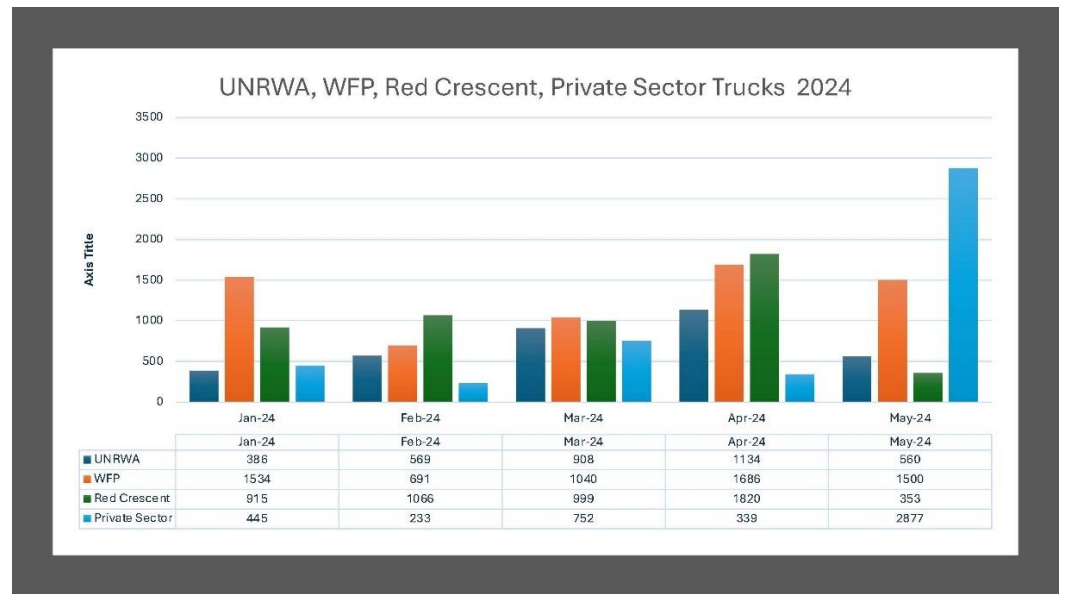
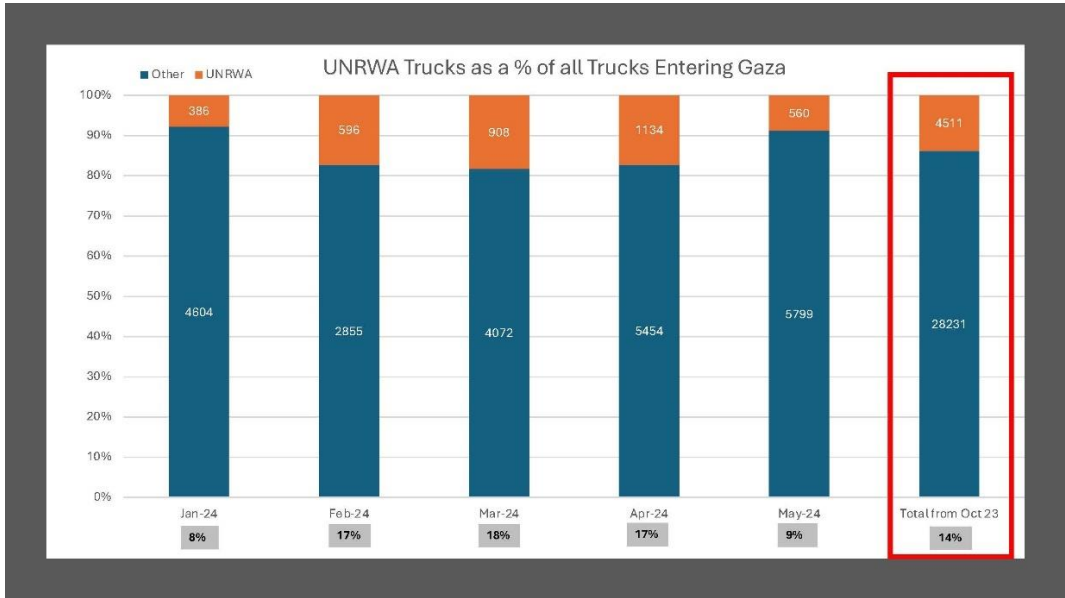
- **Has UNRWA been deeply infiltrated by designated terrorist organizations?**
- **Is UNRWA's exposure to terror infiltration in Gaza beyond repair?**
- **Can UNRWA be replaced in Gaza without hampering the humanitarian effort?**

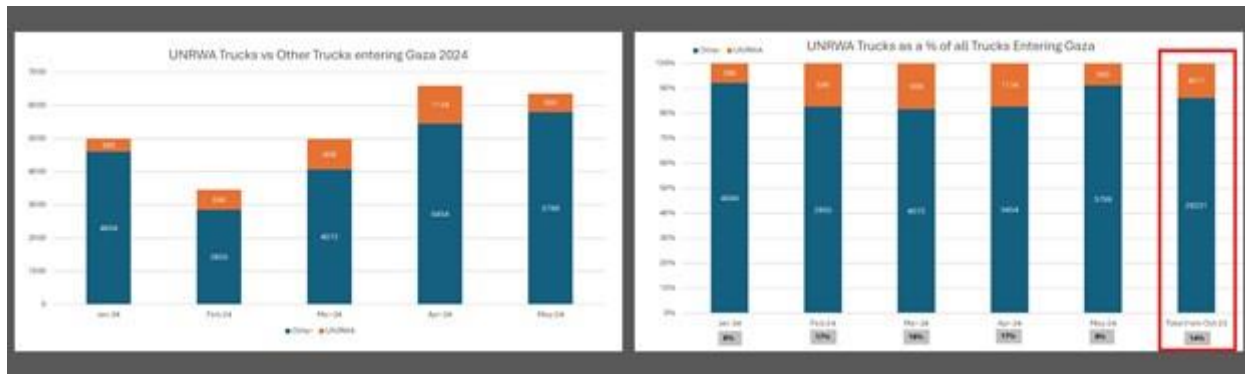
**Israel's assessment has resulted in affirmative answers to all three questions.**

It is therefore up to governments, parliaments and the public in donor countries to make their own assessments and answer those questions before the flow of tax-payers' money to UNRWA, and through it to Hamas, continues.

**Israel is willing to engage and provide all the information that can help such a process.**







[Click here for much more information](#)  
[on the pervasive Anti-Israel Bias in key United Nations Agencies](#)

### Q&A following the report of the Review Group on UNRWA

[Go to site to read answers](#)

Q: Did the Review Group examine Israel's claims regarding UNRWA's penetration by terror groups ?

Q: Did the Review Group find that Israel did not share evidence substantiating its allegations against UNRWA?

Q: So did Israel share evidence on its allegations on the UNRWA-Hamas linkage or not ?

Q: What is the Review Group's position on UNRWA's employment of members of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

Q: Is it true that "the Israeli Government has not informed UNRWA of any concerns relating

Q: Are the Review Group's recommendations sufficient for addressing UNRWA's terror infiltration

Q: Did the Review Group adequately address the abuse of UNRWA facilities for terrorist purposes?

Q: What do the Review Group's findings say on UNRWA's independence?

Q: Did the Review Group properly address the issue of incitement ?

Q: Did the Review Group examine UNRWA's mechanisms for maintaining the neutrality of its public communications ?

## **ISRAEL'S ANALYSIS OF UNRWA'S HIGH-LEVEL ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COLONNA REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. UNRWA published (May 13, 2024) a High-Level Action Plan for implementation of the recommendations contained in the Colonna report (submitted to the UN Secretary-General on April 22, 2024).**

This action plan focuses on what UNRWA calls "quick wins," those actions within UNRWA's control that can be implemented in the short term with minimal or no additional financial resources required. However, despite the grave allegations concerning the massive infiltration of Hamas into the ranks of UNRWA-Gaza, and despite the clear position of Colonna's report, which stated that employment by UNRWA of Hamas or Islamic Jihad members would be a violation of the principle of neutrality<sup>[1]</sup>, UNRWA's action plan completely ignores the most crucial issue – how to tackle the problem of massive employment of terrorist operatives in UNRWA-Gaza. In this, it utterly fails.

### **2. UNRWA's action plan does not mention Hamas in any way, nor the massive infiltration of terrorist operatives into the ranks of UNRWA.**

Therefore, no concrete suggestions are made regarding what to do with those terrorist operatives. No commitment is made to fire members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad employed by UNRWA; no statement is made about not employing such individuals in the future; no real suggestions are made on how to deal with the use of UNRWA facilities for military purposes. In addition, no real action on the issue of incitement in the textbooks is proposed (thus, UNRWA remains dependent on the goodwill of the Palestinian Authority on this issue). The Action Plan includes mainly cosmetic recommendations that mostly deal with structural changes in the organization and its working methods, without addressing the deeper problems.

### **3. On the neutrality of staff**

UNRWA concurred with Colonna's recommendations that the existing mechanisms on this issue should be strengthened, "while recognizing the role of the host countries and of Israel". However, adding "mandatory questions regarding outside and political activities" during the recruitment process or refining the wording in the hiring contracts are not a real solution that would prevent the employment of members of terrorist organizations. It should be emphasized that thus far, despite several requests on the part of Israel, UNRWA has not provided Israel with a digital list of its employees that includes their exact places of employment, including the addresses of these work places. Moreover, the action plan includes no in advance (i.e. prior to the hiring of the employee) and not after the fact. For the time being there is no agreed upon vetting mechanism between Israel and UNRWA, and it seems that UNRWA's action plan intends to keep it this way. The Action Plan does not include any commitment by UNRWA to dismiss members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad or not to employ them in the future.

### **4. On the neutrality of installations,**

it must be clear that "strengthening the questionnaire for assessments of installations" or providing infographics on this issue, as suggested by the action plan, will not prevent Hamas from using UNRWA's facilities for their purposes. The only solution is to ensure from the outset that no Hamas or PIJ operatives are employed by UNRWA and to dismiss the existing ones who are currently employed by the agency. The

Action Plan ignores the fact that several UNRWA school principals are Hamas operatives, including some who are part of the Nukhba, the elite force of Hamas, that led the massacre of October 7.

**5. On the issue of education, one cannot ignore the fact that four well-known independent NGOs and research centers<sup>[2]</sup> have concluded that UNRWA's textbook and education system are suffused with incitement against Jews and Israelis.**

Therefore, "inviting Host countries to review the textbooks", as suggested in UNRWA's action plan, is like turning a blind eye to reality. Moreover, continuing the dialogue with the Palestinian Authority "to review issues of concern related to UN values and UNESCO standards" has already proven futile, since no progress has been made over the years. As mentioned in Colonna's report, the fact that the textbooks are issued by the PA "does not relieve UNRWA of its responsibilities when these textbooks are used in UNRWA or UNRWA-funded schools. UNRWA needs to implement a zero-tolerance policy on this issue"<sup>[3]</sup>. While Colonna's report makes it clear that it is up to UNRWA to take action concerning this matter and prevent incitement in its textbooks and school system, UNRWA's action plan tries once again to transfer the responsibility to host countries. The most basic step - a decision not to use textbooks that include incitement, glorification of terrorism or anti-Semitism – is simply absent. Moreover, the continued employment of teachers, school principals and deputy school principals who are members of the terrorist organizations Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad, guarantees the continued incitement in UNRWA's school system.

However, UNRWA's action plan once again completely disregards this problem.

<sup>[1]</sup> Colonna's independent review group final report, p. 20: "Any involvement in a militarized group that promotes discrimination or violence, such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad, violates the principle of neutrality".

<sup>[2]</sup> IMPACT-SE, the Georg Eckert Institute, UN Watch and the David Bedein Center for Near East Policy Research.

<sup>[3]</sup> Colonna's independent review group final report, p. 41.

### [WHAT HAPPENED IN ISRAEL ON OCTOBER 7](#)

Update 22/12/24: key developments this month [back to update](#)

Update: 30/9/24: CONFIRMED - Hamas commander in Lebanon doubled as UNRWA school principal. [back to update](#)

Update 6/8/24: UN probe confirms participation of UNRWA staff in 7.10 massacre. [back to update](#)

Update 31/7/2024: Update 31/7/24: Lazzarini's empty statement on membership in "armed groups". [back to update](#)

[Update 14/7/2024: Exposed: UNRWA educators who are Hamas/PIJ operatives](#)

[Update 11/7/24: Israel send UNRWA a list of 100 terrorists it employs](#)

[Update 26/6/24: latest statistics show decline in UNRWA's share of aid deliveries to Gaza in May](#)

[Update 29/5/24: Israel's Analysis of UNRWA's High-Level Action Plan for Implementation of the Colonna report recommendations](#)

[Update 26/4/24: Q&A following the report of the Review Group on UNRWA](#)

## UNRWA AND THE JEWS

### How 3000 years of Jewish civilisation in the Arab world vanished overnight'

(Valentine Mitchell)

*in 1948. Some 3,000 Jews fled East Jerusalem.*

[JEWISH NEWS](#), Lyn Julius, Sep 2, 2018, the author of 'Uprooted'

The news that the US is no longer funding UNRWA (the UN Relief and Relief Agency) should remove one of the major obstacles to settling the conflict between Israel and the Arabs. UNRWA has been perpetuating the delusion that the Palestinians are in transit to their permanent home in Israel and that one day they will return. If the 'refugees' come under the umbrella of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the focus will be on rehabilitation and resettlement in their host countries.

It is not generally known that UNRWA was established with the aim of helping refugees on both sides of the conflict.

According to [Don Peretz \(Who is a Refugee?\)](#) initially UNRWA defined a refugee "as a needy person who, as a result of the war in Palestine, has lost his home and his means of livelihood." This definition included some 17,000 Jews who had lived in areas of Palestine taken over by Arab forces during the 1948 war and about 50,000 Arabs living within Israel's armistice frontiers. Israel took responsibility for these individuals, and by 1950 ([Wikipedia](#) 1952) they were removed from the UNRWA rolls leaving only Palestine Arabs and a few hundred non-Arab Christian Palestinians outside Israel in UNRWA's refugee category.

At the time there was no internationally recognised definition of what constituted a refugee. In 1951, The UN Refugee Convention agreed the following definition:

*"A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."*

This definition certainly applies to the 850,000 Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in Arab countries, synagogue burnings, arrests and riots. Returning to these countries would have put – and still does -their lives at risk.

The burden of rehabilitating and resettling the 650,000 Jewish refugees who arrived in Israel was shouldered by the Jewish Agency and US Jewish relief organisations, such as the Joint Distribution Committee. They were shunted into transit camps or ma'abarot. The conditions were appalling.

From an early stage in the conflict, the UN was co-opted by the powerful Arab-Muslim voting bloc to skew its mandate and defend the rights of only one refugee population – the Palestinians. The UN dedicated an agency, UNRWA, to the exclusive care of Palestinian refugees. There are ten UN agencies solely concerned with Palestinian refugees. These even define refugee status for the Palestinians explicitly: one that stipulates that status depends on 'two years' residence' in Palestine. The definition makes no mention of 'fear of persecution' nor of resettlement. Palestinian refugees are the only refugee population in the

world, out of 65 million recognised refugees, permitted to pass on their refugee status to succeeding generations, even if they enjoy citizenship in their adoptive countries. It is estimated that the current population of Palestinian 'refugees' is 5,493, million. Instead of resettlement, they demand 'repatriation', an Israeli red line. (This begs the question: why would any Palestinian wish to return to an evil, 'apartheid' Israel?)

In contrast to the \$17.7 billion allocated to the Palestinian refugees, no international aid has been earmarked for Jewish refugees. The exception was a \$30,000 grant in 1957 which the UN, fearing protests from its Muslim members, did not want publicised. The grant was eventually converted into a loan and paid back by the American Joint Distribution Committee, the main agency caring for Jews in distress.

Yet on two occasions the UN did determine that Jews fleeing Egypt and North Africa were bona fide refugees. In 1957, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, August Lindt, declared that the Jews of Egypt who were 'unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of the government of their nationality' fell within his remit. In July 1967, the UNHCR recognised Jews fleeing Libya as refugees under the UNHCR mandate.

Needless to say, no Jew still defines himself as a refugee. Despite the initial hardships, they are now all full citizens of Israel and the West. As such, they are a model for the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in their host countries or in a putative state of Palestine alongside Israel.

For any peace process to be credible and enduring, the international community would be expected to address the rights of all Middle East refugees, including Jewish refugees displaced from Arab countries. Two victim populations arose out of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Arab leadership bears responsibility for needlessly causing both Nakbas – the Jewish and the Arab. As the human rights lawyer Irwin Cotler observes: 'Put simply, if the Arab leadership had accepted the UN Partition Resolution of 1947, there would have been no refugees, Arab or Jewish.'

## **UNRWA HAS CHANGED THE DEFINITION OF “REFUGEE”**

**FOREIGN POLICY**, Jay Sekulow, August 17, 2018

Last week, Foreign Policy published a story about Palestinian refugees that claimed I am among the “activists trying to strip Palestinians of their status.” The article obscured basic facts about the matters at hand—both my own role as a policy advocate and the questions that lawmakers in Congress are presently considering that pertain to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). I feel compelled to correct the record on both points.

This requires first understanding the legal facts. UNRWA was founded in 1949 through U.N. General Assembly Resolution 302 at the conclusion of the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948, aiming for “the alleviation of the conditions of starvation and distress among the Palestine refugees” from that conflict. The agency defines Palestinian refugees as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.”

In 1965, UNRWA changed the eligibility requirements to be a Palestinian refugee to include third-generation descendants, and in 1982, it extended it again, to include all descendants of Palestine refugee males, including legally adopted children, regardless of whether they had been granted citizenship elsewhere. This classification process is inconsistent with how all other refugees in the world are classified, including the definition used by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the laws concerning refugees in the United States.

Under Article I(c)(3) of the 1951 U.N. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, a person is no longer a refugee if, for example, he or she has “acquired a new nationality, and enjoys the protection of the country of his new nationality.” UNRWA’s definition of a Palestinian refugee, which is not anchored in treaty, includes no such provision.

Last month, members of Congress introduced a bill asking that with respect to refugees under UNRWA the policy of the United States should be consistent with the definition of a refugee in the Immigration and Nationality Act, such that “derivative refugee status may only be extended to the spouse or minor child of such a refugee” and “an alien who was firmly resettled in any country is not eligible to retain refugee status.”

Foreign Policy’s article includes a claim that deserves closer scrutiny and reflects the sleight of hand often performed by UNRWA. The author writes:

“Palestinians, [Sekulow and his organization] claim, are the only refugees in the world who pass on their refugee status through the generations. The view is not shared by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the State Department, which maintain that multiple generations of Afghan, Bhutanese, Burmese, Nepalese, Thai, Tibetan, and Somali people have been recognized as refugees.” The clear implication of that paragraph, and the similar claims made by UNRWA, is that the laws I have

cited above are wrong, that UNRWA's definition of a refugee is consistent with the standard definition, and that in all of these cases the descendants of refugees are considered to be refugees as well. In actuality, what the article has done is to conflate two different issues.

The 1951 refugee convention has a lengthy definition of refugee that is personal: A refugee is a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." In registering refugees on this basis, the UNHCR interprets the convention as requiring "family unity," and it implements the principle by extending benefits to a refugee's accompanying family, calling such people "derivative refugees." Derivative refugees do not have refugee status on their own; it depends on the principal refugee. UNRWA's definition is also personal: Palestinian refugees are "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict," but it also registers "descendants of Palestine refugee males, including adopted children." The status for descendants is not dependent upon accompanying the principal refugee.

Here is where the sleight of hand comes in: Of course it is possible for there to be multiple generations of refugees, if the multiple generations all fit the primary 1951 definition of a refugee. For example, if the granddaughter of a refugee is also outside the country of her nationality due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted, she too is a primary refugee. But she is not a refugee due to descent, because there is no provision for refugee status based on descent in the 1951 refugee convention or in internationally accepted practices for refugees who are not Palestinian refugees.

Those are the laws. Now, consider the broader political facts. Since the end of World War II, millions of refugees have left refugee camps and have been resettled elsewhere, including hundreds of thousands of Jewish people who were forced out of Arab countries. Many hardworking agencies have played a role in making sure that the descendants of these refugees were never refugees themselves. These agencies include the UNHCR, whose mandate is to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people, and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement to a third country.



## IS UNRWA'S HEREDITARY REFUGEE STATUS FOR PALESTINIAN'S UNIQUE ?

[EMET News Service](#), January 17 2019 Kohelet Policy Forum

*Summary ... UNRWA's claim that their hereditary refugee status for Palestinians is not unique is simply untrue. There is no parallel and no precedent, even in protracted conflict situations, for the manner in which UNRWA transfers the "registered refugee" status, automatically, through the generations, while refusing to take any actions that would end this status. While UNHCR provides certain services on a case-by-case basis to the children of refugees, it does not make refugee status hereditary. This is one of many differences in UNRWA's treatment of its population from the general practices used by UNHCR. All these differences are designed by UNRWA to maximize the population counted as "Palestine Refugees" and perpetuate their status.*

*[The use here of the word "Palestinian(s)" is the author's choice. There are no such people as the "Palestinians".—ed]*

See also below [THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES:  
A CASE STUDY IN INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAUD](#)

For almost 70 years, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has created a unique category of "registered refugee" status — one that is automatically passed down to one's descendants. Under UNRWA's rules, the children and grandchildren of a Palestine refugee, and all their descendants thereof, are automatically considered 'refugees from Palestine'. Amid ongoing criticism of UNRWA's role in purposefully perpetuating the Palestinian "refugee" problem, the agency has attempted to obfuscate its policy.

UNRWA has claimed that its hereditary refugee practice is not unique, and is also practiced by the main international refugee agency, UNHCR. This background paper aims to clarify this issue.

UNRWA - Redefining refugee status There are two separate UN agencies in charge of aiding refugees: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA). UNRWA was established in December 1949 and UNHCR in December 1950. UNHCR is responsible for all refugees except those from Mandatory Palestine, who fall within UNRWA's exclusive jurisdiction.

The UNHCR determines refugee status based on criteria from international law, in particular, the Refugee Convention from 1951, which defines a refugee as "A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

In certain cases, UNHCR gives refugee services — but not status — to the immediate family of a refugee but it does so in a manner that significantly differs from UNRWA's policy:

It is not automatic — it is based on a case-by-case review of whether the actual situation merits it. When it does, UNHCR gives certain services to the children of refugees. UNHCR does not automatically add the children and grandchildren of refugees to the count of refugees and does not automatically define them as refugees. Even if a child of refugees is given refugee services, the grandchild will not be eligible for status or services. UNRWA, on the other hand, automatically grants such children refugee status, resulting in exponential growth of refugee numbers.

UNHCR does not define as refugees people who acquired new citizenship. The Refugee Convention of 1951 has a cessation clause, which clearly says that a person ceases to be a refugee if he acquires a new citizenship. UNRWA acts differently: More than 2 million 'Palestine Refugees' hold Jordanian citizenship, most of whom have been born in Jordan and have lived there their entire lives and are still called 'refugees'. In addition, based on recent official census, probably 2/3 to 3/4 of the 1 million refugees registered by UNRWA in Lebanon and Syria have left those countries over the decades, with many acquiring citizenships of Western countries. Yet, UNRWA refuses to check their situation and take them off its registration rolls. UNHCR tracks individual refugees and takes them off its rolls as soon as they have acquired a status, such as third country citizenship, that ends their refugee status. This is another reason UNRWA's numbers never decline.

UNHCR does not define as 'refugees' people who are internally displaced, that is, who have moved within the same territory. "Palestine refugees" living in the 'West Bank' or Gaza Strip were in fact internally displaced since they have never crossed the internationally recognized border of Mandatory Palestine. UNRWA considers these people as refugees, and their children and grandchildren, and all their descendants, as well.

UNHCR makes efforts to ensure refugees are resettled or locally integrated where they are staying, thereby ending their refugee status. UNHCR does not exclusively promote repatriation as sole solution, as UNRWA does, but also rehabilitation in country of refuge or in third countries.

Repatriation, rehabilitation and resettlement are considered equally legitimate means of ending a refugee status. They are promoted based on expediency — that is which could achieve the goal of ending the refugee status most quickly. UNRWA refuses to promote local rehabilitation and resettlement, and actually makes no effort to end the individual refugee status of the Palestinians, arguing that "it's not in its mandate". It actually is. This is the main reason that UNRWA's numbers grow exponentially whereas the numbers of refugees in other, shorter duration, protracted refugee situations, decline over time.

UNHCR's longest significant number of recorded refugees is from Afghanistan — from the early 1980s. UNHCR does not have in its records refugees that have been defined as such for 70 years. UNRWA does. Such persistence of refugee status has no parallel.

UNRWA reports of 5.5 million refugees. These are the descendants of roughly 700,000 registered Palestine refugees from the war of 1948. These numbers include more than 2 million 'refugees' who hold Jordanian citizenship. They also include a larger number of 'refugees' who live in the 'West Bank' and Gaza strip: They are citizens of the 'Palestinian Authority' or 'State of Palestine' and at the same time claim to be

'refugees from Palestine'.

According to the rules applied by UNHCR, these people are not refugees.

UNRWA's claim that their policy is identical to UNHCR's is a lie and shows that they are not a neutral humanitarian organization but rather a political actor aimed at perpetuating the Palestinian refugee problem.

See also ['The MiddleEast Piece - What is UNRWA?'](#)

## UNRWA SEMI-STATE INSTITUTION

[fanak](#), Chronicle of the Middle East and North Africa

In retrospect, UNRWA is the only UN agency to have worked for such a long time in the exclusive service of one particular category of refugees – the ‘Palestine refugees’. **Over the years, it has gradually established itself as a semi-state institution in the fullest sense, taking on responsibilities traditionally assigned to national governments. Its staff, the vast majority of whom come from the refugee communities, has grown fivefold since 1951, from about six thousand to 30,000 in 2009.**

However, UNRWA’s linkage with the refugees is only predicated on humanitarian considerations. Its definition of a ‘Palestine refugee’ was elaborated for operational purposes only. It did not determine who is a Palestinian refugee, but rather who is eligible for its assistance programs. While it has evolved over time, its core elements have remained the same: normal place of residence in Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and loss of means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict. Descendants of male Palestine refugees have also been eligible to register on a voluntary basis with UNRWA. Since 1951, the number of ‘Palestine refugees’ has increased fivefold, from 876,000 refugees to 4.7 million refugees in 2008. This represents about 90.8 percent of the total number of refugees in the Middle East; and about three-quarters of the estimated total Palestinian refugee population disseminated around the world.

From the outset, UNRWA’s assistance mandate has been regarded by the refugees not just as a temporary international charity venture, but as an entitlement and, even more, a recognition by the international community of their status as refugees endowed with vested rights, namely the right of return to Palestine and/or to receive compensation as recommended in UNGA resolution 194 (III) (11 December 1948).

UNRWA’s identification with the political dimensions of the Palestinian refugee issue may have been reinforced by its status as the only significant UN stakeholder in charge of Palestinian refugee affairs, following the de facto demise of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) in the early 1950s, and the de jure exclusion of the Palestinian refugees from the UNHCR coverage. As a result, although registration with UNRWA was never officially meant to have any political implications, it has nevertheless been regarded by the refugees as a legal justification for their vested humanitarian and political rights. This is understandable since the ‘registration card’ it provides has constituted an official – and often unique – piece of documentary evidence attesting to their link with pre-1948 Palestine.

## UNRWA ANNUAL REPORT 2016 - GAZA

The Gaza Strip is home to a population of approximately 1.9 million people, including 1.3 million Palestine refugees.

For the last decade, the socioeconomic situation in Gaza has been in steady decline. The blockade on land, air and sea imposed by Israel following the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007, entered its 10th year in June 2016 and continues to have a devastating effect as access to markets and people's movement to and from the Gaza Strip remain severely restricted.

Years of conflict and blockade have left 80 per cent of the population dependent on international assistance. The economy and its capacity to create jobs have been devastated, resulting in the impoverishment and de-development of a highly skilled and well-educated society. The average unemployment rate is well over 41 per cent – one of the highest in the world, according to the World Bank. The number of Palestine refugees relying on UNRWA for food aid has increased from fewer than 80,000 in 2000 to almost one million today.

Over half a million Palestine refugees in Gaza live in the eight recognized Palestine refugee camps, which have one of the highest population densities in the world.

Operating through approximately 12,500 staff in over 300 installations across the Gaza Strip, UNRWA delivers education, health and mental health care, relief and social services, microcredit and emergency assistance to registered Palestine refugees.

On 7 July 2014, a humanitarian emergency was declared by UNRWA in the Gaza Strip, following a severe escalation in hostilities, involving intense Israeli aerial and navy bombardment and Palestinian rocket fire. Hostilities de-escalated following an open-ended ceasefire which entered into force on 26 August 2014. The scale of human loss, destruction, devastation and displacement caused by this third conflict within seven years was catastrophic, unprecedented and unparalleled in Gaza.

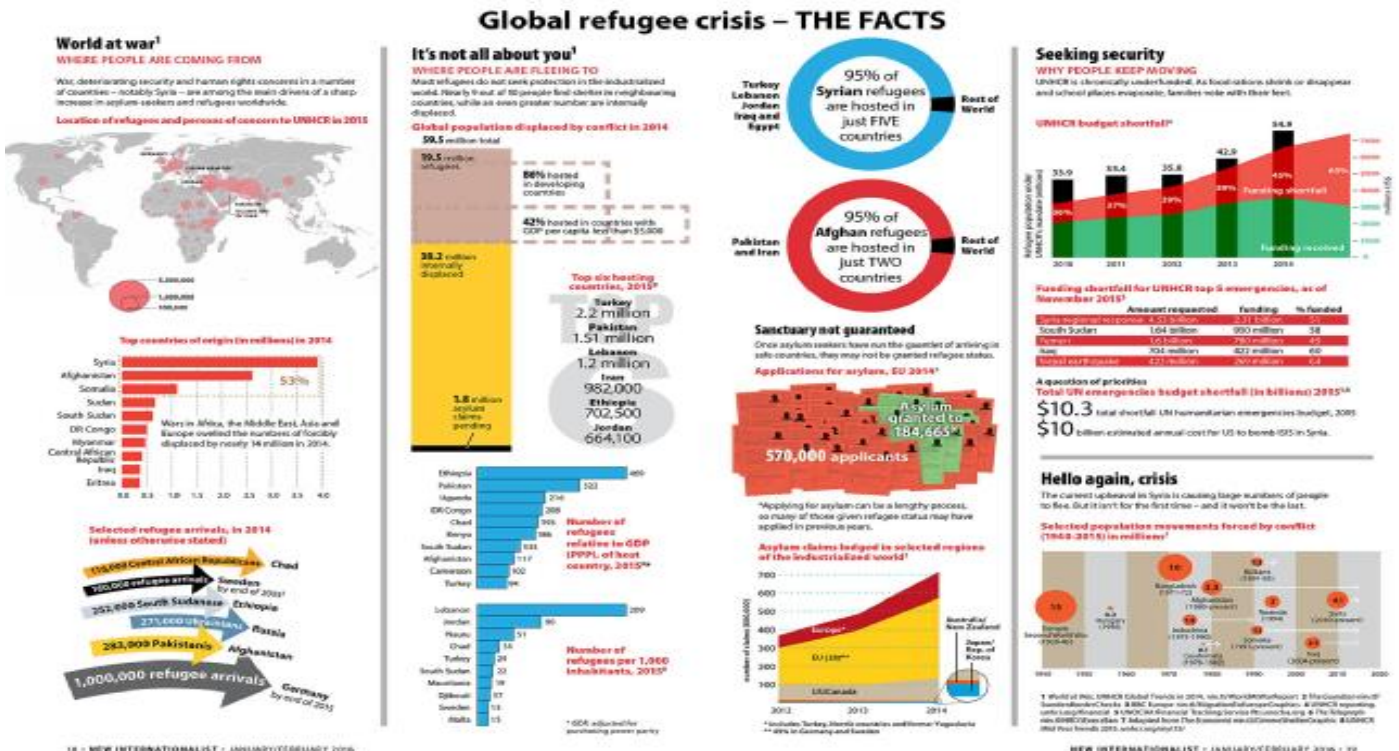
UNRWA mounted an extraordinary response during the 50 days of hostilities which highlighted its unique position as the largest UN organization in the Gaza Strip and the only UN Agency that undertakes direct implementation.

The human, social and economic costs of the last hostilities are set against a backdrop of a society already torn by wide-spread poverty, frustration and anger, heightening vulnerability and political instability. The compounded effects of the blockade and repeated armed conflicts and violence have also had a less visible, but quite profound, psychological impact on the people of Gaza. Among Palestine refugee children, UNRWA estimates that a minimum of 30 per cent require some form of structured psychosocial intervention. Their most common symptoms are: nightmares, eating disorders, intense fear, bed wetting.

In recent years, UNRWA has made significant improvements to its services in Gaza, such as its schools of excellence and excellent health services initiatives. It also better targets its

assistance to the poorest of the poor through the implementation of a proxy-means tested poverty survey. UNRWA continues to:

- Improve the academic achievement, behaviour and values of school students
  - Construct desperately needed infrastructure, including schools and shelters
  - Improve the quality and targeting of its food and cash assistance to the poorest of the poor
  - Promote gender equality and human rights for all
  - Nurture entrepreneurship by supporting the private sector
- Facts & Figures**
- 1.3 million registered refugees out of 1.9 million total population
  - (approximately 70 per cent)
  - 58 refugee camps
  - Almost 12,500 staff
  - 267 schools for over 262,000 students
  - 21 health centres
  - 16 relief and social services offices
  - 3 micro-finance offices
  - 12 food distribution centres for almost 1,000,000 beneficiaries.



## SHOULD UNRWA BE ABOLISHED?

**FROM**

[https://www.jewishwikipedia.info/abolishing\\_UNRWA.html](https://www.jewishwikipedia.info/abolishing_UNRWA.html)

**WHY UNRWA  
(United Nations Relief and Works Agency)  
SHOULD BE ABOLISHED**

<b>UNRWA an Obstacle to Peace</b>	<b>No Need for UNRWA</b>	<b>Jewish UNRWA – The US Aid for Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries</b>	<b>Why Should UNRWA be Abolished. A Tale of Two “Refugee” Organizations: UNRWA vs. UNHCR</b>	<b>UNRWA Condemns the Palestinians to Refugee Status in Perpetuity</b>	<b>The Trouble with UNRWA</b>
<b>Should UNRWA Continue to Exist?</b>	<b>Semi-state</b>	<b>The UNRWA Dilemma</b>	<b>Preferential Treatment</b>	<b>UNRWA: The UN Agency that Creates Palestinian Refugees</b>	<b>Israeli PM Calls for Dismantling of UN Palestinian Refugee Agency (UNRWA)</b>
<b>UNRWA: an Obstacle to Peace?</b>	<b>Refugees Who Insist on the Impossible</b>	<b>Dismantle UNRWA</b>	<b>Dilemmas of Prolonged Humanitarian Aid Operations: The Case of UNRWA</b>	<b>UNRWA’s Anti-Peace Curriculum Violates UN Charter</b>	<b><a href="#">Outgoing Jerusalem Mayor Lays Out Plan to Oust UNRWA from City (Oct 2018)</a></b>

See Also

[FDD UNRWA Exposed: Examining the Agency’s Mission and Failures](#), January 30 2024

### EINAT WILF SPEAKS AT UN BRIEFING ON UNRWA (YouTube)

[Einat Wilf](#) 10 May 2024 33min 10sec

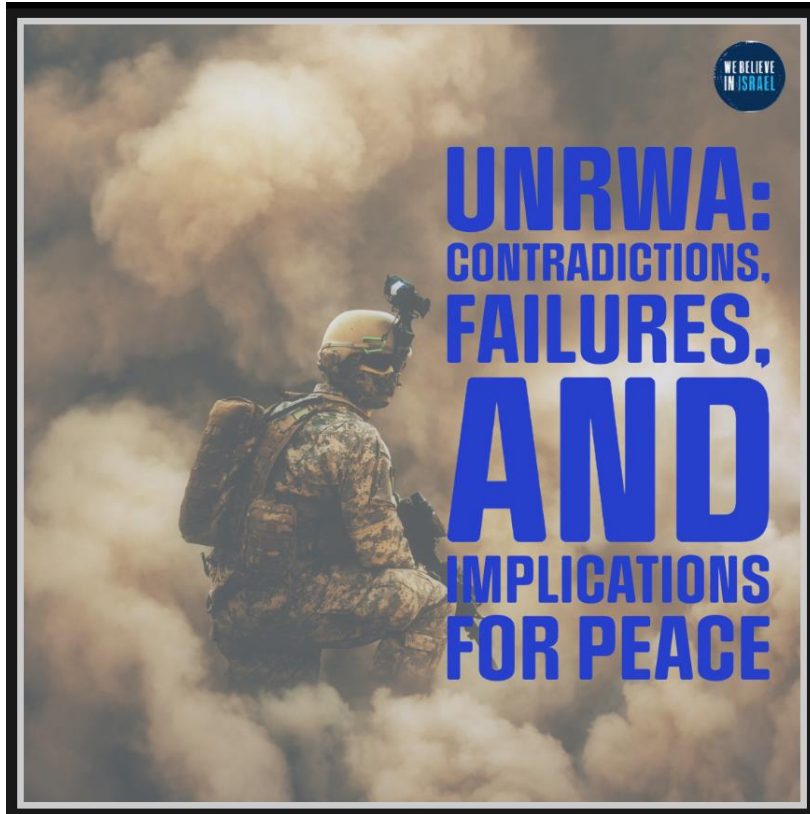
Dr. Einat Wilf explains the essence of UNRWA at a briefing to UN delegations at the UN HQ in NYC hosted by Israel’s Ambassador to the UN. This briefing provides a summary of UNRWA’s history and how it became the ideological backbone of the Palestinian vision of violent “return” as manifested on October 7th, and how UNRWA has given birth to every terrorist organization from Black September to Hamas.





## UNRWA CONTRADICTIONS, FAILURES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PEACE

[WE BELIEVE IN ISRAEL](#) Catherine Perez-Shakdam 19 Nov 2024



The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) presents a critical yet under-examined element in the broader context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While it was established in 1949 to provide temporary relief for Palestinian refugees displaced during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, UNRWA has evolved into an entity that perpetuates, rather than resolves, the refugee issue. Its continued operations raise significant questions about the agency's alignment with international legal norms, the Oslo Accords, and its impact on the geopolitical landscape.

At the heart of UNRWA's controversy lies its unprecedented definition of Palestinian refugeehood. Unlike the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which operates under a mandate to provide durable solutions for refugees through repatriation, resettlement, or local integration, UNRWA uniquely permits refugee status to be inherited indefinitely. According to UNRWA's own records, the initial population of 750,000 refugees in 1948 has expanded to over 5 million today—a nearly sevenfold increase. This exponential growth contrasts starkly with other global refugee populations, where numbers typically decline due to resettlement and integration initiatives.

Several [studies](#) by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA), [highlight](#) that this hereditary definition not only violates UNHCR norms but also obstructs any realistic resolution of the refugee crisis. By

perpetuating a narrative of grievance and victimhood, UNRWA has institutionalised a cycle of dependency, effectively ensuring that generations of Palestinians remain refugees in perpetuity.

The [Oslo Accords](#), signed in 1993, represented a pivotal moment in Israeli-Palestinian relations, aiming to lay the groundwork for mutual recognition and eventual peace. A critical component of Oslo was the transfer of governance responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority (PA), including education, healthcare, and social services within Palestinian territories. This decentralisation was intended to build Palestinian self-reliance, reduce dependency on international aid, and prepare the PA for eventual statehood.

However, [UNRWA's operations have actively undermined this framework](#). By maintaining control over refugee camps and running parallel systems for education and healthcare, UNRWA has created enclaves of influence that bypass PA governance. A 2021 study by the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) underscores that these camps often function as autonomous zones, fostering radicalisation and limiting the PA's capacity to assert authority.

Moreover, UNRWA's educational curriculum, documented extensively by organisations such as [IMPACT-se](#), has been found to include antisemitic and anti-Israeli content. This directly contravenes Oslo's emphasis on fostering coexistence and peace. Textbooks used in UNRWA schools frequently glorify violence and deny Israel's right to exist, effectively indoctrinating a new generation into a cycle of hostility.

The financial operations of UNRWA further complicate its legitimacy. Historically, Western nations have borne the [overwhelming burden of funding](#) the organisation. By 1972, six Western countries had contributed \$735 million to UNRWA, while the combined contributions of five wealthy Arab states amounted to just \$8.5 million—barely 1% of the total. Today, the trend persists. A 2022 Congressional Research Service report noted that the United States remains UNRWA's largest single donor, contributing approximately 30% of its \$1.6 billion annual budget. In contrast, Arab states collectively account for a fraction of the funding.

This disparity raises significant ethical and practical concerns. UNRWA allocates approximately \$298 per Palestinian refugee annually, compared to \$2.80 per refugee in Sudan under UNHCR. This inequity not only diverts critical resources from more urgent global crises but also reinforces perceptions of a politicised agenda.

The intersection of UNRWA's operations with terrorism is [also a growing concern](#). [Reports have revealed that UNRWA facilities](#), including schools and hospitals, have been [used by Hamas to store weapons and ammunition](#). Moreover, documented instances of UNRWA employees actively participating in terrorist activities underscore systemic vulnerabilities within the organisation.

UNRWA's operational framework, far from alleviating the plight of Palestinian refugees, has entrenched a system of dependency, radicalisation, and conflict. By deviating from international norms and undermining the Oslo Accords, the agency perpetuates the very crisis it was established to resolve. Without meaningful reform, UNRWA will continue to serve as a barrier to peace, rather than a bridge toward resolution.

Policymakers must confront these realities and recalibrate their approach, ensuring that international aid serves the cause of stability and coexistence rather than perpetuating division and hostility.

## UN SAYS NEARLY 100 GAZA AID TRUCKS LOOTED, THE WAR'S WORST THEFT 'IN TERMS OF VOLUME'

United Nations officials don't specify who carried out the weekend ambush  
on humanitarian convoy;

Hamas says it killed more than 20 'gang members involved in looting'

[TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) 19 Nov 2024 4:23 am By [Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#)



Illustrative:  
Palestinians storm trucks loaded with  
humanitarian aid  
in the central Gaza Strip  
on May 18, 2024.  
(AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana, File)

Nearly 100 trucks carrying food for Palestinians were violently looted on Saturday after entering Gaza in one of the worst aid losses during 13 months of war in the enclave, where hunger is deepening, two UN agencies told Reuters on Monday.

The convoy transporting food provided by UN agencies UNRWA and the World Food Program was instructed by Israel to depart at short notice via an unfamiliar route from Kerem Shalom border crossing, said Louise Wateridge, UNRWA Senior Emergency Officer.

Ninety-eight of the 109 trucks in the convoy were raided and some of the transporters were injured during the incident, she said, without detailing who carried out the ambush.

"This ... highlights the severity of access challenges of bringing aid into southern and central Gaza," she told Reuters.

"The urgency of the crisis cannot be overstated; without immediate intervention, severe food shortages are set to worsen, further endangering the lives of over two million people who depend on humanitarian aid to survive."

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said there was "severe damage to the trucks and in some cases, total loss of cargo on the trucks," calling the incident the worst instance of looting in Gaza "in terms of volume."



Illustrative:  
 Armed and masked Palestinians  
 seen on trucks loaded  
 with international humanitarian aid  
 entering Gaza through the  
 Israeli Kerem Shalom Crossing  
 in the southern Gaza Strip,  
 April 3, 2024.  
 (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)

The Hamas-controlled Gaza interior ministry said over 20 “gang members” involved in looting aid trucks were killed during an operation carried out by Hamas security forces in coordination with tribal committees. “More than 20 members of gangs involved in stealing aid trucks were killed in a security operation carried out by security forces in cooperation with tribal committees,” the ministry said in a statement.

#### Advertisement

“Today’s security operation will not be the last,” it said, adding that “the phenomenon of truck thefts... has severely impacted society and led to signs of famine in southern Gaza.”

The statement called the operation “the beginning of a broad security campaign that has been long planned and will expand to include everyone involved in the theft of aid trucks,” who Hamas threatened to treat with “an iron fist.”

A WFP spokesperson confirmed the looting and said that many routes in Gaza were currently impassable due to security issues.



Illustrative:  
 Palestinians loot  
 a humanitarian aid truck  
 as it crosses into the Gaza Strip  
 in Rafah, December 17, 2023.  
 (AP Photo/Fatima Shbair, File)

The Israeli military has said that attacking and stealing aid is an ongoing problem, especially in southern Gaza. COGAT, the military body in charge of humanitarian aid to Gaza, has said convoys are attacked by

Hamas terrorists and known crime families. The military did not have an immediate response to the weekend's attack.

An Israeli official said Israel had been working to address the humanitarian situation since the start of the war, adding that the main problem with aid deliveries was UN distribution challenges.

A UN aid official said on Friday that access for aid to Gaza had reached a low point, with deliveries to parts of the Israeli-besieged north of the enclave all but impossible amid the ongoing war sparked by Hamas's devastating October 7, 2023, terror onslaught in southern Israel.

## UNRWA COMPARISON WITH UP-TO-DATE REACTIONS

**The Gulf states' support for UNRWA has long been shaped by a combination of politics and established aid practices.**

### UNRWA'S FUNDING CRISIS: WILL THE GULF STATES STEP UP?

In late January, a group of countries led by the United States announced their decision to suspend or review funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), a UN agency that was set up in 1949 to provide humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees. The decision was prompted by Israeli allegations that 12 of the agency's over 30,000 employees participated in Hamas' 7 October attacks. UNRWA has warned this will compromise its ability to continue delivering vital humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees in Gaza and has called on the affluent Gulf states to fill the resulting gap in funding.

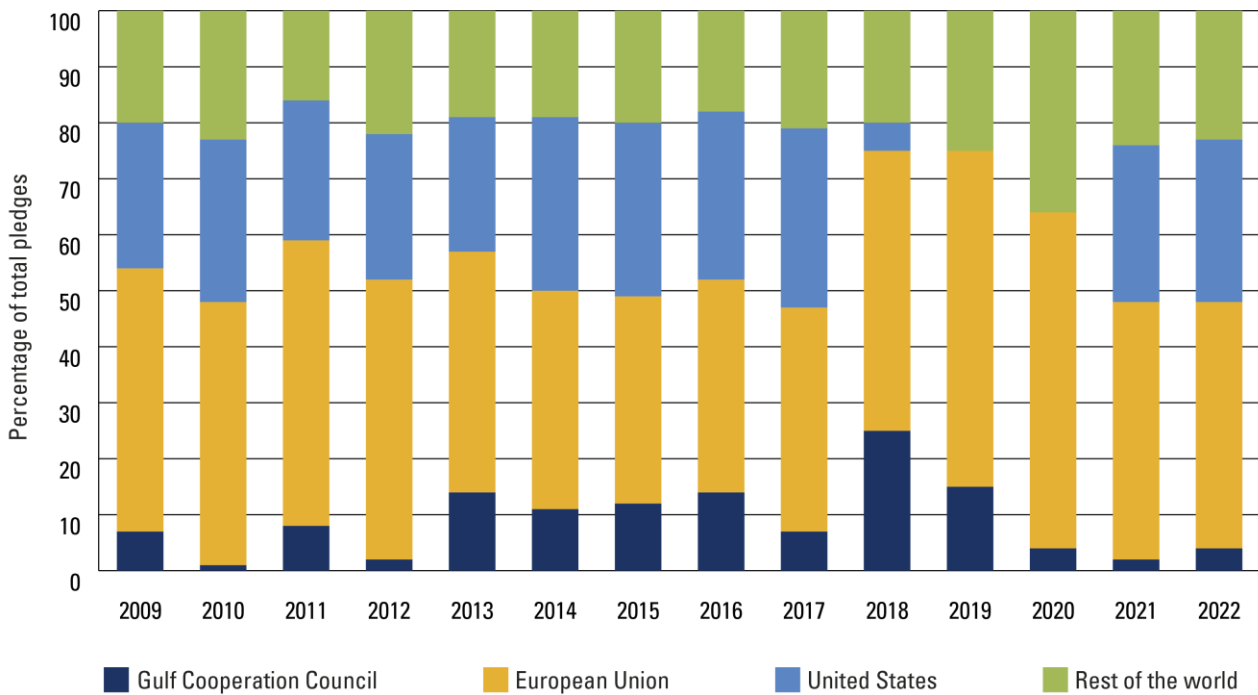
The Gulf states are significant but inconsistent donors to UNRWA. Saudi Arabia, the largest Gulf donor, has pledged sums to the agency ranging from US\$3.6 million in 2010 to over US\$151m three years later. Although the Gulf states have a long track record of disbursing aid to the Palestinians and have been critical of the recent suspension of UNRWA's funding, their tepid response to the agency's calls points to their complex relations with both UNRWA and the Palestinian leadership. It also reflects broader Gulf aid practices that favour bilateral over multilateral channels of assistance.

### UNRWA'S FINANCIAL TROUBLES

UNRWA, which [serves](#) almost six million Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria by providing healthcare, housing and education, is funded mostly through voluntary commitments by donor states, international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The agency has faced recurrent funding challenges. Firstly, the Palestinian refugee population has [increased](#) almost sixfold since the agency's creation, outpacing the growth in donor contributions. The Syrian civil war has also [displaced](#) 280,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria, placing additional demands on UNRWA services. Secondly, annual pledges are voluntary and unpredictable, rising or falling by substantial margins from one year to the next. These changes in contribution size are often in response to outbursts of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, but they are also contingent on the political will of donor states.

The decision to suspend funding came from some of UNRWA's biggest donors, including the European Union, Germany and the US. Between 2009 and 2022, the US was UNRWA's largest single donor, contributing 23% of the agency's total budget, according to UNRWA figures. The EU bloc accounted for another 46% of all contributions, while the six Gulf states accounted for only 10% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of total UNRWA pledges by donor, 2009–22



Source: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

©IISS

This is not the first time that Western states have suspended their funding to UNRWA. In 2018, US president Donald Trump cut funding to the agency to punish the Palestinians for criticising the United States' decision to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and [pressure](#) them into accepting Trump's 'deal of the century' – a peace plan for Israel–Palestine that was widely criticised by Palestinians. This time, however, the decision taken by 18 Western governments and Japan to suspend or review their funding could leave a much bigger gap in the agency's finances. Combined, the 18 donor states [accounted](#) for over US\$777m or 66% of all pledges made to UNRWA in 2022. The impact this will have on UNRWA's budget is not fully clear yet, especially because a few donors, including the [European Commission](#), [Australia](#), [Canada](#) and [Sweden](#), have already reversed their funding freezes.

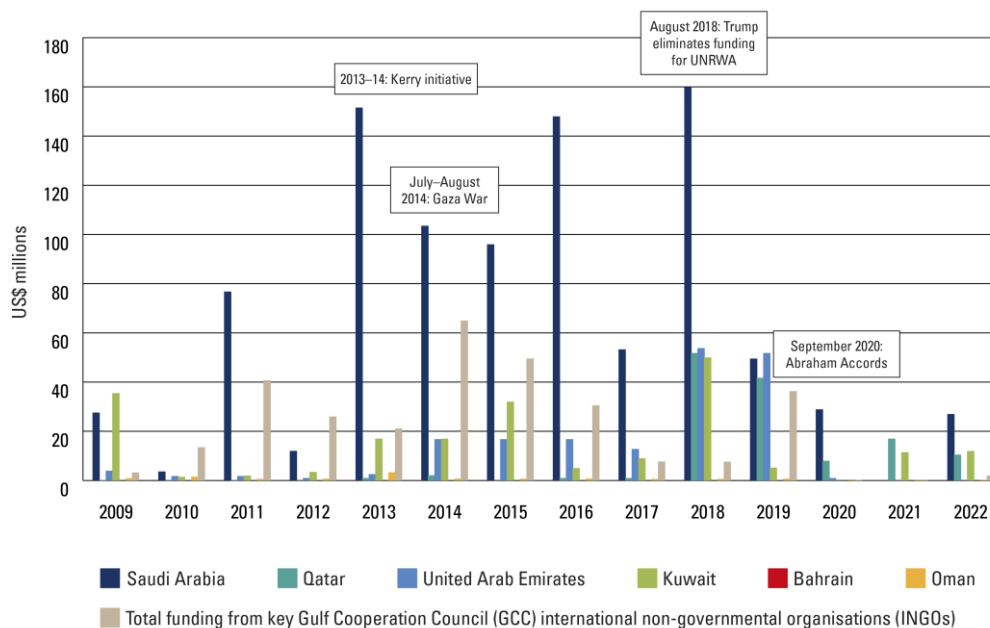
### GULF DONOR SUPPORT FOR UNRWA

UNRWA's Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini has explicitly called on the Gulf states to step up, [touring](#) Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to raise additional funds for the agency. All four Gulf donor states [criticised](#) the decision to suspend UNRWA's funding. In February 2024, the [UAE](#) donated US\$5m to support UNRWA's relief efforts in Gaza, and a month later, Qatar and Iraq [pledged](#) US\$25m each. In late March, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, Saudi Arabia's official humanitarian agency, [pledged](#) US\$40 million.

Nevertheless, there are several factors that cast doubt over the strength of the Gulf states' commitment to funding UNRWA. When Trump halted US aid to the agency in 2018, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE [announced](#) additional contributions of US\$50m each to help fill the gap. However, UNRWA data shows that all the Gulf states, bar Oman, ended up reducing their overall funding the following year (see Figure 2). Even Kuwait and Qatar, which refrained from lending support to the Trump administration's 'deal of the century' or establishing diplomatic ties with Israel, lowered their commitments to the agency. The Gulf states' history of bowing to US pressure to cut funding for UNRWA implies that they do not view the agency's upkeep as a core priority, and it bodes ill for the prospect of a surge in Gulf funding for the agency this time around.

For the Gulf states, history colours their current attitudes towards UNRWA. They have not developed a sense of ownership vis-à-vis the agency, which was funded by the US and other Western powers in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. As a mainly Western creation, albeit with Arab states' assent, the Gulf states view the agency's upkeep as a primarily international, not regional, responsibility. Moreover, the Gulf states' unstable relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) – the faction recognised by the UN as the official representative of the Palestinian people, with which UNRWA has been closely associated – have also affected their willingness to support the agency. During the Baghdad Summit of 1978, the Gulf states [pledged](#) over US\$155m to the PLO and about US\$94m to a joint Jordanian–Palestinian fund meant to finance reconstruction projects. After PLO leader Yasser Arafat sided with Iraq during the 1990–91 Gulf War, however, the Gulf states grew distrustful of the Palestinians and withheld aid until the al-Aqsa intifada began in 2000. Although the Gulf states' relationship with the PLO gradually recovered, it has recently deteriorated again as several states, including Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have moved closer to Israel since the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020.

Figure 2: **GCC funding for UNRWA (governments and INGOs), 2009–22**





Beyond the political dynamics of their relations with the Palestinian leadership, the Gulf states also have a demonstrable preference for channelling aid directly to recipients rather than indirectly through multilateral agencies. Although the Gulf states do not report systematically on aid, official Saudi sources [estimate](#) the country's support to the Palestinians at over US\$6 billion between 2000 and 2018, only a small portion of which was channelled through UNRWA. By supporting the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank or, in Qatar's case, the Hamas-controlled government in Gaza, Gulf states increase their influence directly over Palestinian political actors. Whereas, by supporting UNRWA, their influence is greatly diluted. As a result, Gulf aid pledges for Gaza, especially in the aftermath of spikes in conflict, have seldom been followed by significant increases in Gulf funding for UNRWA. For instance, the GCC states [pledged](#) US\$1.6bn in reconstruction aid for Gaza following the 2008–09 Gaza War, but only US\$28m of that was earmarked for UNRWA's projects. Similarly, although the Gulf states [pledged](#) over US\$1.9bn in reconstruction aid for Gaza in the aftermath of the 2014 Gaza War, only Kuwait doubled its pledge to the agency. Contributions from the other five Gulf states either remained constant or decreased.

The Gulf states also support the agency indirectly through international organisations with which they are closely affiliated and through state-backed charities in the region. The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) – to which the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states collectively [contribute](#) nearly 45% of its paid-up capital – plays a significant role. The IsDB stepped up its contributions to UNRWA following the 2014 Gaza War and the United States' defunding of UNRWA in 2018, though it has struggled to maintain a steady funding commitment to the agency. In 2019, the IsDB established an endowment to support UNRWA. The fund is capitalised by voluntary Organisation of Islamic Cooperation member-state and private-sector contributions, though its activities remain modest. Other entities affiliated with the Gulf states including the [GCC](#) and the [Arab Monetary Fund](#) (the six Gulf states approximately 37% of the fund's capital according to 2022 figures) have also funded small-scale UNRWA projects through the IsDB.

Meanwhile, over the previous decade, NGOs from the UAE – notably the Emirates Red Crescent (ERC) and Dubai Cares – were among the region's largest non-government donors to the agency. Following the 2014 Gaza War, during which over two thousand Palestinians were killed, the ERC and Bahrain's Royal Charity Organization significantly increased their contributions that year to almost US\$43m and US\$5.8m respectively, overtaking many donor nations.

In light of the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, UNRWA has [warned](#) that it may be forced to cease or downsize operations if funding does not resume. If the Gulf states choose not to follow through with pledges of additional support, then UNRWA's continued ability to operate may be at risk. In such a scenario, the Gulf states would be unlikely to shoulder the financial burden of humanitarian and economic aid for Gaza so long as their own geostrategic interests are not clearly served in the process.

# THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN UNWRA AND UNHCR

## CLAUDE.AI

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are two separate organizations within the United Nations system, but they have distinct mandates and areas of operation.

### UNHCR:

1. **Mandate:** UNHCR is the global organization dedicated to protecting refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people, and assisting in their voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement to a third country.
2. **Scope:** UNHCR has a global mandate and operates in various countries and regions around the world where there are refugee situations.
3. **Beneficiaries:** UNHCR's primary beneficiaries are refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless people, and other groups of concern.

### UNRWA:

1. **Mandate:** UNRWA was established specifically to provide relief and humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees who were displaced from their homes during the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.
2. **Scope:** UNRWA operates primarily in the Middle East region, specifically in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.
3. **Beneficiaries:** UNRWA's beneficiaries are Palestinian refugees and their descendants who were displaced from their homes in what is now Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

### Key differences:

1. UNHCR has a global mandate, while UNRWA's mandate is focused on Palestinian refugees in the Middle East region.
2. UNHCR deals with various refugee situations and displaced populations worldwide, while UNRWA exclusively serves Palestinian refugees.
3. UNHCR is funded through voluntary contributions from governments and private donors, while UNRWA receives a significant portion of its funding from the United Nations regular budget and voluntary contributions.

Despite their different mandates and areas of operation, both organizations work towards providing protection, assistance, and durable solutions for displaced populations, albeit with different target groups and geographical scopes.

**The UNHCR and UNRWA have different functions and areas of operation, which stem from their distinct mandates and historical contexts.**

**UNHCR's Functions:**

1. **Protection:** UNHCR plays a crucial role in ensuring the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, and other persons of concern, advocating for their rights and providing legal assistance.
2. **Emergency assistance:** UNHCR provides emergency relief, such as shelter, food, water, and medical care, to populations affected by conflict, natural disasters, or other emergencies.
3. **Durable solutions:** UNHCR facilitates durable solutions for refugees, including voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement to a third country.
4. **Statelessness:** UNHCR works to prevent and reduce statelessness by providing legal and technical assistance to governments and promoting accession to relevant international conventions.

**UNRWA's Functions:**

1. **Education:** UNRWA runs one of the largest school systems in the Middle East, providing primary and vocational education to Palestinian refugee children.
2. **Health care:** UNRWA operates a network of primary healthcare facilities, providing essential medical services to Palestinian refugees.
3. **Relief and social services:** UNRWA provides food assistance, cash assistance, and other social services to Palestinian refugees, particularly those living in poverty or facing emergencies.
4. **Camp infrastructure and improvement:** UNRWA manages and maintains infrastructure in Palestinian refugee camps, including repairs, construction, and camp improvement projects.

Regarding the Jewish population and UNRWA, it is important to note that UNRWA's mandate is specifically focused on Palestinian refugees and their descendants. Jewish refugees who left or were displaced from the region during the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict and subsequent events were not included in UNRWA's mandate. Instead, they were assisted by other organizations, such as the Jewish Agency for Israel and various international aid agencies.

Many Jewish refugees from Arab countries sought refuge in Israel, which was established as a state in 1948. Israel accepted and absorbed a significant number of Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, providing them with citizenship, housing, and integration assistance.

In summary, while UNHCR has a global mandate to assist various refugee populations, UNRWA's specific mandate is to provide assistance and protection to Palestinian refugees in the Middle East region. The Jewish refugees from the region were not covered by UNRWA's mandate and instead sought refuge and assistance through other channels, primarily in Israel.

**UNHCR and UNRWA** have different definitions of who qualifies as a Palestinian refugee, which contributes to the difference in the number of beneficiaries they serve.

**UNHCR:** UNHCR's definition of a refugee is based on the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. According to this definition, a refugee is someone who has fled their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

**UNHCR** does not have a specific category for Palestinian refugees. Palestinian refugees who meet the general refugee definition are included in UNHCR's global refugee statistics, but they are not separated or counted as a distinct group.

As of the end of 2022, UNHCR reported assisting around 92.7 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, including refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons.

**UNRWA:** UNRWA has a specific definition for Palestinian refugees, which includes:

1. Palestinians who resided in Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948 and lost their homes and livelihoods as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.
2. Descendants of those Palestinian refugees, including legally adopted children.

**UNRWA's definition is more expansive than UNHCR's**, as it includes not only the original refugees but also their descendants, regardless of their current circumstances or location.

As of January 2023, UNRWA reported serving around 5.8 million registered Palestinian refugees in its areas of operation:

- Jordan: 2.4 million
- Lebanon: 475,000
- Syria: 538,000
- Gaza Strip: 1.5 million
- West Bank: 918,000

It's important to note that while UNHCR and UNRWA have different definitions and numbers, their mandates complement each other in addressing the needs of displaced populations, with UNHCR focusing on a global scale and UNRWA specifically assisting Palestinian refugees in the Middle East region.

Here are the numbers for UNHCR and UNRWA, including their total beneficiaries and breakdown by function and location:

**UNHCR: Total Beneficiaries** (as of end 2022): 92.7 million forcibly displaced people worldwide

Functions:

1. **Protection:** UNHCR provides protection and assistance to all 92.7 million people under its mandate.
2. **Emergency assistance:** In 2022, UNHCR provided emergency assistance to around 20.2 million people affected by conflict or natural disasters.
3. **Durable solutions:** In 2022, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 598,000 refugees, the resettlement of 107,800 refugees, and the local integration of an undisclosed number.
4. **Statelessness:** UNHCR reported assisting around 4.3 million stateless people in 2022.

**UNRWA: Total Beneficiaries** (as of January 2023): 5.8 million registered Palestinian refugees

Functions:

1. Education: UNRWA runs 715 schools, providing education to around 535,000 Palestinian refugee students.
2. Health care: UNRWA operates 144 primary healthcare facilities, serving around 3.5 million Palestinian refugees.

3. Relief and social services: UNRWA provided food assistance to around 1.8 million Palestinian refugees and cash assistance to around 438,000 Palestinian refugees in 2022.
4. Camp infrastructure and improvement: UNRWA manages and maintains infrastructure in 58 recognized Palestinian refugee camps.

**Breakdown by Location:**

- Jordan: 2.4 million registered Palestinian refugees
- Lebanon: 475,000 registered Palestinian refugees
- Syria: 538,000 registered Palestinian refugees
- Gaza Strip: 1.5 million registered Palestinian refugees
- West Bank: 918,000 registered Palestinian refugees

It's worth noting that while UNHCR's mandate is global, UNRWA's mandate is specifically focused on Palestinian refugees in the Middle East region, which accounts for the difference in the total number of beneficiaries and the geographical distribution of their operations.

**Here are the numbers for administration and services provided by UNHCR and UNRWA:**

**UNHCR: Total Staff (as of 2022): Around 20,000 personnel, including 11,400 national staff and 8,600 international staff.**

**Administration and Services:**

1. Protection: UNHCR has a dedicated Division of International Protection that coordinates and oversees the organization's protection work globally.
2. Emergency assistance: UNHCR has a Division of Emergency, Security, and Supply that manages emergency preparedness and response operations.
3. Durable solutions: UNHCR has a Division of Resilience and Solutions that facilitates voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement programs.
4. Statelessness: UNHCR has a dedicated Statelessness Section that works to prevent and reduce statelessness worldwide.

**UNRWA: Total Staff (as of 2022): Around 28,000 staff members, with over 24,000 working as teachers or healthcare workers.**

**Administration and Services:**

1. Education: UNRWA operates 715 schools with over 22,000 educational staff members, serving around 535,000 students.
2. Health care: UNRWA operates 144 primary healthcare facilities with over 3,500 health staff members, serving around 3.5 million Palestinian refugees.
3. Relief and social services: UNRWA has a dedicated Relief and Social Services Program that provides food assistance, cash assistance, and other social services to Palestinian refugees in need.
4. Camp infrastructure and improvement: UNRWA has a dedicated Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Program that manages and maintains infrastructure in 58 recognized Palestinian refugee camps.

In terms of administration, UNHCR has a headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and a network of regional and country offices worldwide. UNRWA has its headquarters in Amman, Jordan, and field offices in its areas of operation (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza Strip, and the West Bank).

Both organizations rely heavily on voluntary contributions from governments, intergovernmental organizations, and private donors to fund their operations and provide essential services to their respective beneficiaries.

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## UNHCR

### THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (ALSO KNOWN AS THE UN REFUGEE AGENCY)

[Wikipedia](#)

UNHCR was established on 14 December 1950 and succeeded the earlier United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country.

UNHCR's mandate has gradually been expanded to include protecting and providing humanitarian assistance to whom it describes as other persons "of concern," including internally displaced persons (IDPs) who would fit the legal definition of a refugee under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol, the 1969 Organization for African Unity Convention, or some other treaty if they left their country, but who presently remain in their country of origin. UNHCR presently has major missions in Lebanon, South Sudan, Chad/Darfur, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan as well as Kenya to assist and provide services to IDPs and refugees in camps and in urban settings.

UNHCR maintains a database of refugee information, ProGres, which was created during the Kosovo War in the 1990s. The database today contains data on over 11 million refugees, or about 11% of all displaced persons globally. The database contains biometric data, including fingerprints and iris scans and is used to determine aid distribution for recipients. The results of using biometric verification has been successful. When introduced in Kenyan refugee camps of Kakuma and Dadaab in the year 2013, the UN World Food Programme was able to eliminate \$1.4m in waste and fraud. To achieve its mandate, the UNHCR engaged in activities both in the countries of interest and in countries with donors. For example, the UNHCR hosts expert roundtables to discuss issues of concern to the international refugee community.

#### **UNHCR REFUGEE DEFINITION**

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

## 2024 GLOBAL TRENDS ON FORCED DISPLACEMENT

### [UNHCR](#)

**Global Trends** The latest Global Trends report, published in June 2024, provides key statistical trends on forced displacement. It includes the latest official statistics on refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced and stateless people, as well as the number of refugees who have returned home. At the end of 2023, an estimated 117.3 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing the public order. Based on operational data, UNHCR estimates that forced displacement has continued to increase in the first four months of 2024 and **by the end of April 2024 is likely to have exceeded 120 million.** The increase to 117.3 million at the end of 2023 constitutes a rise of 8 per cent or 8.8 million people compared to the end of 2022 and continues a series of year-on-year increases over the last 12 years. One in every 69 people, or 1.5 per cent of the entire world's population, is now forcibly displaced. This is nearly double the 1 in 125 people who were displaced a decade ago.

### 117.3 million

Over 117.3 million people were forcibly displaced at the end of 2023.

### 1 in 69

This equates to more than 1 in every 69 people on Earth.

### 12 years

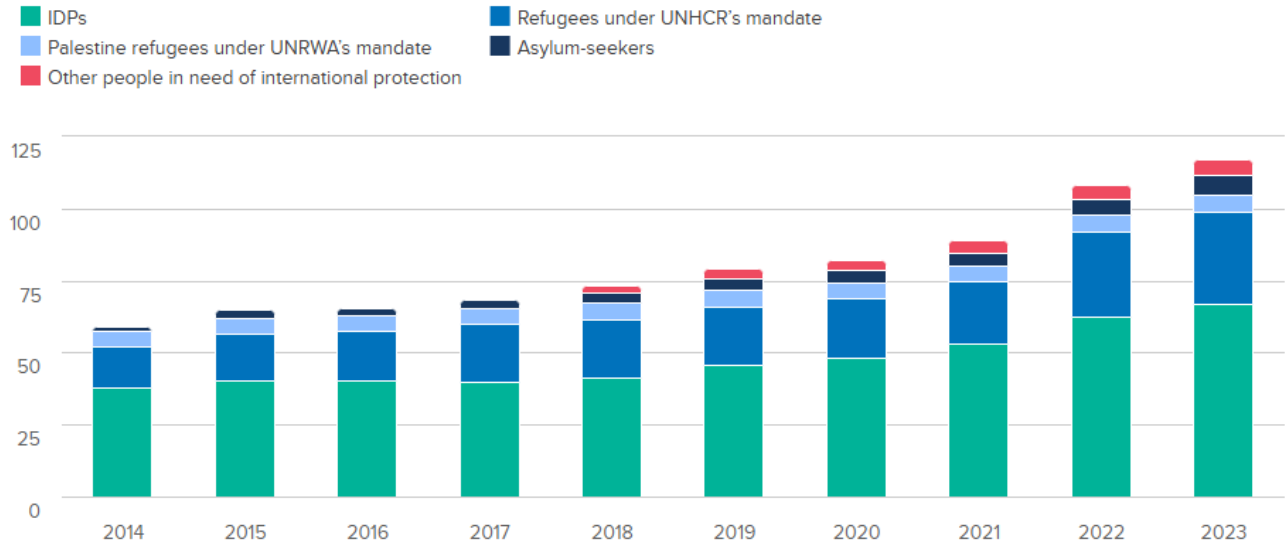
The number of displaced people has increased every year for 12 years.

*“Behind these stark and rising numbers lie countless human tragedies. That suffering must galvanize the international community to act urgently to tackle the root causes of forced displacement.”*

**Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees**



## People forcibly displaced worldwide | 2014 – 2023



Some Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate in Gaza have also been internally displaced. In this graph, these internally displaced refugees under UNRWA's mandate are only counted once, under the figure for 'Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate'.

[FOR CONTINUATION GO TO SITE](#)

## **GLOBAL TRENDS 2022**

**UNHCR's Global Trends report presents the latest numbers of refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced and stateless persons worldwide.**

[Download the full Global Trends report](#)

### **Annexes**

[Download tables 1 through 23](#) (.zip)

[Download table 5](#) (.xlsx)

### **Database**

The full data set is available at [Refugee data finder](#).

All data are provisional and subject to change.

## **THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES A CASE STUDY IN INTERNATIONAL FRAUD**

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#), James Cooper, November 29 2017. James Cooper is a practicing lawyer in the Greater Toronto Area.

What if you discovered that the overwhelming majority of Palestinian refugees never actually left Palestine in 1948, that they just evacuated from those portions of Mandate Palestine which constituted the frontline in what was promised to be a war of extermination of the Jewish population that lived within the confines of the war zone?

What if you found out that, in the vast majority of cases, those refugees did not scatter across the world or settle hundreds of miles from the land in which they were born? What if the truth was that in many cases, masses of those alleged refugees relocated tens of miles from their original homes, living not amidst any foreign majority population, but rather in territories where they constituted the majority and yet refused to exercise – or to demand – any kind of sovereignty for themselves?

What you are about to learn is the chronicle of an international legal fraud that has been perpetrated over the course of seven decades. The main financier and facilitator of this fraud is the institution known as the United Nations, specifically conducted through its member nations and through the offices of one of its constituent bodies, known as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

In 1948, an estimated 800,000 Palestinians evacuated the contested portions of Mandate Palestine, having summoned in five neighboring Arab armies to exterminate the 600,000 Jewish residents living amid the frontlines that would eventually be bounded by the armistice borders of the State of Israel.

According to the UNRWA's website ([unrwa.org](http://unrwa.org)), there are currently 5 million people registered as Palestinian refugees, among whom 1.5 million live in 58 refugee camps aided by UNRWA, spread throughout the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and East Jerusalem (yes, there are Palestinian "refugees" in Jerusalem).

Most of the original cohort of 1948 Palestinian refugees are no longer alive. The burgeoning population of Palestinian refugees you see today are the descendants of that original cohort – mostly third or fourth generation refugees, the world's only case of long-term, intergenerational refugee status inheritance. If you thought that, to be counted as a Palestinian refugee, one must live in a refugee camp, you are mistaken. According to the UNRWA's own figures, only 30% of Palestinian refugees actually live in what the UNRWA liberally denotes as "camps", but which are more accurately described as UN-supported shantytowns. The rest – 70% – live outside those "camps", overwhelmingly under the sovereignty and de facto governance of fellow Palestinians.

The UNRWA has not been accorded any legal capacity to determine who is a Palestinian refugee under international law. As a relief and aid agency, the UNRWA has its own particular definition as to who is

eligible to receive UNRWA-funded services, whether in the camps themselves or anywhere else where UNRWA operates, including East Jerusalem.

The UNRWA defines Palestinian refugees as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict” – in other words, applicable to any Arab resident who lived in Palestine at any time less than two years before the creation of the State of Israel, whether they had resided in Palestine as a recent migrant worker or as a resident with deep ancestral ties to the land.

According to the UNRWA, any descendant of a Palestinian male refugee – and their adopted children – are eligible to be registered as refugees for the purposes of receiving UNRWA aid services. Presumably, a Palestinian female refugee who married a non-refugee is ineligible to have her descendants registered for UNRWA aid.

Regardless of the questionable eligibility requirements, the important point to keep in mind is that UNRWA registration lists cannot be taken as a legal census of Palestinians considered as refugees under international law. At best, it is a registrant list for persons entitled to call upon various aid services from the UNRWA.

As the UNRWA makes clear, it does not administer, police, or manage the “refugee camps” it works in. Rather, the governing host authority provides the land, police, and overall governance, while the UNRWA merely administers humanitarian aid and education services through the installations it manages within and outside the perimeters of those “camps.”

Other than paying the salaries of UNRWA’s core staff, the United Nations itself does not provide the bulk of the UNRWA’s funding. Rather, the agency is kept afloat through voluntary donations, with close to 50% of those donations provided by the American government (the largest donor), followed by the European Union. Since only Congress has the power to approve and allocate any portion of American government spending, it can be said that the operations of UNRWA are substantially underwritten by Congress and the American taxpayer.

Under international law, Palestinian refugee status is subject to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status on Refugees (the UN Convention) , which applies the generally applicable definition of a refugee, and likewise determines the factors for the cessation of refugee status. There is, in fact, no international instrument of law that designates the UNRWA as a body competent to legally define and determine which Palestinian is or is not a refugee for the purposes of international law.

Again, to reiterate, the UNRWA is little more than the agency designated to provide aid and services to Palestinians that the UNRWA defines, according to its own peculiar criteria, as “refugees” (i.e. registrants entitled to receive UNRWA aid services).

As mandated by the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, the agency tasked with overseeing the protection of the rest of the world’s refugees is the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). To be clear, the UNHCR is not a judicial body in any sense of the term. Nevertheless, it provides determinations of refugee status (and the cessation of such status) in accordance with the relevant provisions of the 1951 UN Convention. Signatories to the UN Convention look to UNHCR in considering which individual, or groups, are entitled to refugee protection.

For practical reasons, UNHCR does not administer aid to Palestinians who receive such aid under the UNRWA system. A widely held myth is that UNRWA sets aside a special definition under international law for Palestinian refugees, while UNHCR applies a general definition for all other refugees. As previously noted, UNRWA is not set up to legally define which Palestinians are refugees under international law. Another widely held myth is that UNRWA has the legal power to convey hereditary refugee status on Palestinians it considers as entitled to receive its services. Most clearly, it does not. Whether any particular Palestinian has retained or ceded their refugee status under international law is subject to factors considered by reference to the UN Convention. Under the UN Convention, as interpreted by UNHCR, a child of a refugee may acquire derivative refugee status – in a sense, inheriting the refugee status of the original refugee applicant.

However, this inter-generational refugee situation is often parsed in the context of protections accorded to coherent family units. Family unity is considered a desired goal under the refugee protection system, particularly where the aim is to maintain the services and protections of the family unit in an asylum country.

With regard to the very unique Palestinian situation, there are certain clear determinations that can be made under international law with respect to those who clearly do not have refugee status under any rudimentary analysis of the applicable UN Convention.

For instance, in the May 30, 1997 Note on Cessation Clauses, the UNHCR Standing Committee indicated, “Cessation of refugee status therefore applies when the refugee, having secured or being able to secure national protection, either of the country of origin or of another country, no longer needs international protection.”

Note that the underlying concern here is “international protection”, not necessarily repatriation to the country of origin. With respect to the Palestinian situation in Jordan – a de facto Palestinian State with 70% of the population being of Palestinian origin – the UNRWA counts over 2 million residents as “refugees”, though virtually all of them live outside of “camps” and have full rights of citizenship. By any stretch of the imagination, it must be conceded that the Palestinians in Jordan have been able to secure national protection in another country (i.e. Jordan, though this country was once part and parcel of Palestine before the East Bank portion was severed and rechristened as Transjordan).

In short, their situation has long since triggered the cessation clauses of the UN Convention. While the UNRWA may continue in its efforts to provide 2 million Jordanian citizens with aid services – and freely label them as “refugees” – their policy has absolutely no bearing or substance under international law. That removes 2 million Jordanian Palestinians from the “refugee” ledger.

Then, what about the Palestinian “refugees” in East Jerusalem? Under Israeli law, not only do they have permanent residency rights, but they also have the right to elect to take on Israeli citizenship, though most elect not to. But – and this is a key point – under any reasonable interpretation of refugee law, one cannot elect to stay a refugee, particularly when one already has access to, and the benefits of, national protection in the country in which one resides. So much for the Palestinian “refugees” in Jerusalem.

What, then, of the Gaza Strip, where the UNRWA registers roughly 70% of its residents – 1.3 million out of a population of 1.9 million – as “refugees”? According to UNRWA, there are eight refugee “camps” in Gaza,

but they are more accurately termed as urban enclaves or neighbourhoods indistinguishable from any other crowded urban enclaves in Gaza. Nevertheless, the UNRWA insists on labeling these neighbourhoods as “camps”, though residents are free to stay or leave as they wish.

More problematically, from the perspective of refugee law, is the question as to whose “national protection” they are under. More than 20 years ago, the Palestinians of Gaza were governed by the Palestinian Authority as per the Oslo Accords. As of 2006, this “refugee” population has been under the “national protection” of Hamas. It may very well be the world’s only “refugee” population that fields its own missile arsenal, army, and a criminal justice system (of sorts).

According to Palestinian “Refugee” President Mahmud Abbas, 70% of the population of the Gaza Strip retains the theoretical right to “repatriate” a few miles across the border into the State of Israel. It may be the first instance in the annals of refugee law in which the bulk of the “refugee” population yearns to surrender their status as the majority population in their own country, and to seek minority status within the confines of the state next door in which they never had any citizenship. By any stretch of the imagination, the cessation clauses of the UN Convention have long since been triggered by the residents of the Gaza Strip. That removes a further 1.3 million Palestinians from the “refugee” ledger.

And now on to the West Bank, where the UNRWA has registered 775,000 “refugees”, with 25% of them spread across 19 “camps”. As the UNRWA freely admits, however, it does not run these “camps.” Rather, the responsibility for the administration and governance of these camps rests with the host authority, which just happens to be under the auspices of the Palestinian President. In other words – like their counterparts in Gaza – the “refugees” themselves serve as the hosts and administrators of their own “refugee” camps. Under refugee law, repatriation to the original country of one’s nationality is just one option to bring about an end to one’s refugee status. Another option lies in integrating oneself into the local host population. But what if the local host population just happens to be your fellow nationals? Unless an international jurist can raise a persuasive argument that 775,000 West Bank “refugees” are unable to sufficiently integrate with themselves in the West Bank, I would argue that here is a good case for removing a further 775,000 West Bank Palestinians from the refugee ledger.

All of which leaves us – according to the UNRWA’s trustworthy figures – 450,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and around 500,000 in Syria (though those numbers have no doubt diminished substantially over the last few years, in light of the current turmoil in these countries). In terms of the UN Convention, these residents are able to present a comparatively stronger case for maintaining their legal status as refugees, or at least the need for international protection. For one thing, over the course of decades, they have formed a minority population in the midst of a majority population that otherwise disparages them and that has historically denied them full participation as citizens in line with the host residents.

With regard to the Palestinians in Syria, they remain vulnerable to the spillover of bloody civil war that has recently fragmented the country. However, when one looks closer, one must ask: Does a theoretical need for refugee protection in this instance necessarily lead to a need to repatriate the population to the country of origin, much less to the State of Israel?

As noted above, the governing concern of the UN Convention is that the refugee achieve some kind of practical protection, whether that comes from repatriation or from integration into the local host population.

As of this writing, certainly the Palestinians in Syria – along with almost all Syrians, incidentally – may be considered a population in need of physical protection. Currently, the option of local integration is not practicable.

But in light of the current demography of Palestinians who reside within the borders of what formerly constituted Mandate Palestine, there are far more practical options to consider than mass settlement of Syrian and Lebanese Palestinians within the borders of the State of Israel.

Let us examine, for instance, this notion of “repatriation.” Under refugee law, there is no right to be repatriated to an ancestor’s house or neighbourhood that you had never lived in. Even with the provisional stipulation that refugee protection status can be inherited under international law, the repatriation rights of the stateless grandson cannot be equated with those of the grandfather who was forced to abandon his house and neighbourhood.

In the event the Palestinian grandson one day crossed the border from Syria into what was once Mandate Palestine, and chose to settle securely either in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, or Jordan, his refugee status would come to an end, despite the fact that he nevertheless wished to reclaim the grandfather’s house over the border in that part of the former Palestine Mandate that now comprises the State of Israel. In short, there is absolutely no special or intrinsic right under refugee law for any Lebanese or Syrian Palestinian to “repatriate” into the State of Israel as opposed to those areas of the former Palestine Mandate where the Palestinians effectively comprise the host population.

Even under the most generous and liberal reading of the UN Convention, a mass repatriation of such a population to the State of Israel would be discouraged and avoided on practical grounds alone. More to the point, what exactly makes the borders of the State of Israel the necessary go-to destination for an alleged Palestinian refugee?

As noted, the aspiration of refugee protection law is to repatriate a refugee within their “country of origin” or among their “nationality of origin”. The Palestinians who evacuated the contested frontlines of a portion of the Palestine Mandate, which eventually became the State of Israel, cannot maintain – under any principle of refugee law – an inherited, inter-generational right to repatriate to the same home, neighbourhood, or town once occupied by one’s ancestor.

In practice, refugee law simply does not operate on that level of particularity. Rather, the unit of international redress is the state or nationality of origin. Under refugee law, a Palestinian cannot “reacquire” Israeli nationality or citizenship rights because they never had such rights to begin with,. A “return” to your grandfather’s former house in Haifa may very well be considered as a return to the ancestral homestead, but under refugee law, it could not be considered as a “return” to your nationality of origin, particularly in a situation where your nationality of origin has subsequently coalesced as an autonomous authority elsewhere in another portion of what was once Mandate Palestine.

Thus, even when – at least for the sake of argument – one stipulates and concedes that Palestinian refugee status might be inherited, and that – after 70 years – there might exist some kind of right in refugee law for repatriation of the descendants of the original refugees, it is difficult to argue in good faith that such refugees by rights must be settled in the portion of their former “country of origin” that now comprises a

foreign nationality (i.e. Israeli), rather than in the portion of their country of origin that comprises their own nationality (i.e. Palestinian).

Up to this point, I have stipulated that – as of 1948 – there exists a “nationality of origin” that one could describe as “Palestinian.” In truth, it would be anachronistic and wholly inaccurate to accept such a stipulation on its face. The 1948 invasion of Palestine by five Arab nations – in concert with the Arabs of Mandate Palestine – was premised on incorporating Palestine as part of the greater Arab nation, and was based on the ideology of pan-Arab nationalism, itself founded by the leader of the Arab community in Palestine, Haj Amin al-Husseini. .

As late as 1964, the PLO Charter defined its national goal as providing for the armed liberation of Palestine, for the express purpose of incorporating it into the greater Arab nation.

With respect to refugee law, the relevant time frame of reference is the year 1948. In short, we must look at the circumstances that existed at the time the refugee crisis first arose. At that time, all sources were consistent with the collective understanding that the Arabs of Palestine viewed themselves not as “Palestinian” in nationality, but rather as citizens of the greater Arab nation. On that basis, the armies of five neighbouring Arab states were called in by the Arab leadership of Palestine to claim all of Mandate Palestine for the greater Arab nation, in accordance with the ideology of pan-Arab nationalism.

It is a crucial – yet conceptually subtle – point – to emphasize. If, indeed, the Arabs of Palestine declared themselves as fellow belligerents and as fellow citizens, of the greater Arab nation that invaded the newly formed State of Israel in 1948, then their self-declared “nationality of origin” on this date would arguably be shared with the citizens of their fellow co-belligerents, among whom were the Jordanians, Syrians, and Lebanese. In short, all the belligerents against the newly formed State of Israel – including the Arab leadership of Mandate Palestine – declared war against the Jewish State on the basis of their shared nationality as members of the greater Arab nation, whether Sunni, Shiite, or Christian.

According to the nationalized dynamics of the conflict, the Arab nationals of one part of Mandate Palestine sought refuge among fellow Arab nationals in other portions of Mandate Palestine, and across the border with fellow Arab nationals in the neighbouring Arab states.

What set the Palestinian Arabs apart in those neighbouring Arab states was not due to any inherent cultural or ethnic differences, but rather due to the political and legal need to keep them demographically intact and isolated from the host population, so as to retain their refugee status and their political use as part of the regional toolkit in the ongoing war to bring about the collapse of the State of Israel.

A suitable frame of reference would be the mass population exchanges that accompanied the partition of Pakistan from a portion of India in 1947. Upon the creation of Pakistan, millions of Muslims were uprooted and “repatriated” into the newly created Muslim state of Pakistan, while masses of Hindu adherents were evacuated from areas that would comprise Pakistan, and “repatriated” into the Hindu majority state of India. With respect to the India-Pakistan crisis, there has been no international call for several million Hindus to be “repatriated” back into the territories that were incorporated into the Muslim majority state of Pakistan. It would be an absurd request in any case, in light of the fact that there would be no “nationality of origin” for these Hindu residents to “reacquire” in the Muslim state of Pakistan.



So, too, with the respective Jewish and Arab populations that were displaced in the wake of the creation of the State of Israel. An estimated 800,000 Middle Eastern Jews were expelled, or fled, from various countries around the Arab world, and subsequently integrated with their fellow Jews within the State of Israel.

Over the course of decades, there has been no sustained call for the Jewish refugees of the Middle East to be repatriated back to their original homes, or to be compensated en masse. By contrast, the Arab refugees from the 1948 war were effectively “weaponized” by the Arab World as demographic cannon fodder to be employed against the State of Israel, to be held in place in refugee settlements – again, mostly within the borders of Mandate Palestine – for the sole purpose of sustaining their legal status as refugees under international law.

Thus, up until 1967, both Egypt (in the Gaza Strip) and Jordan (in both Jordan and the West Bank) opted to permanently warehouse masses of Palestinians in refugee “camps” within the borders of Mandate Palestine for no reason at all, except to preserve for them the legal option of being repatriated across the border of the State of Israel.

With the active support of the oil-rich Gulf States, and in collusion with the Soviet Union (up until 1967) – and thereafter, with the European Union – the UNRWA would serve as the educational and “humanitarian” instrument by which an intergenerational refugee population would be educationally nourished on an identity of grievance, victimhood, and, above all, a fervent desire to destroy the very state in which they were demanding to be repatriated – incidentally, an ongoing circumstance of belligerence according to which the UN Convention advises against repatriation.

After 1967, once Israel acquired the territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, an initial effort was made by the Israeli government – in its new role as the Administrative Authority in these territories – to dismantle the refugee settlements and to prod the “refugees” to integrate with the other Palestinian Arab residents of the area who weren’t registered by the UNRWA.

But the “refugees” – and the United Nations – were having none of it. So long as the UNRWA umbrella remained in place, the legal fiction could be sustained that any Palestinian Arab receiving aid by the UNRWA preserved a future ticket to settle in the State of Israel.

In time, when even the majority of Palestinians drifted out of the physical boundaries of the “camps” – which were now “camps” only in the sense that they had UNRWA installations set up within the boundaries of these designated crowded neighborhoods – the UNRWA brand was such that you no longer even needed to reside in a “camp” in order to sustain your refugee status. So long as you were registered with the UNRWA, and thus eligible to receive its services, you would be deemed a Palestinian “refugee” in the eyes of the US State Department, the European Union, and most of the other member states of the UN. While integration into the local host community would be sufficient to end refugee status under the UNHCR system, the UNRWA umbrella remained in place – and would be repeatedly renewed by the UN – in order to artificially and indefinitely sustain Palestinian refugee status. Under the UNRWA umbrella, local integration would be wholly irrelevant in determining the end of one’s refugee status; henceforth, repatriation – into the Jewish State – would be considered as a valuable and viable bargaining chip to be placed on the table, at least so long as one was registered with UNRWA.

As we have seen, the overwhelming majority of Palestinian refugees do have a number of options available to end their refugee status. Those options, in turn, challenge the underlying rationale for refugee protection law, which is to mitigate the refugee's vulnerable position with practical solutions.

In other words, if the refugee is presented with a viable option to improve their unfortunate circumstances, yet the refugee elects instead to maintain the status quo in order to preserve future options currently unavailable to that refugee (i.e. they want to voluntarily maintain their legal status as a refugee without triggering the cessation clauses), that stance can justifiably be viewed as insincere, as fraudulent, as evidence of bad faith conduct.

All of which brings us to the legal fraud that forms the basis of the Palestinian refugee claim. Under common law, when a party claims a personal injury, they have a duty to mitigate their losses, even while seeking redress for the alleged tort committed against them.

For seventy years, the Palestinians have claimed to suffer a grievous tort at the hands of the Jewish population they had initially sought to "throw into the sea." Back in 1948, under international law, the newly formed State of Israel was under absolutely no legal obligation to accept a hostile population back into the domain of the once contested frontline.

By point of contrast, the Palestinians who remained within the borders of the State of Israel – after the initial cessation of hostilities in 1949 – happened to come from villages and towns where the population refrained from threatening the viability and physical safety of the newly formed state and its Jewish inhabitants. That population has since grown more than ten-fold over the course of several decades, sharing in the full rights of Israeli citizenship.

In the two decades from 1949 to 1967, the overwhelming bulk of internally displaced Palestinians continued to reside in the portions of Mandate Palestine that did not comprise the State of Israel, among a host population that was overwhelmingly Palestinian in origin. In that time frame, there was neither any plea nor request for "camp" residents to be integrated into the local host population, whether among their fellow countrymen in the West Bank, in Gaza, in Jordan, or among their fellow Arab neighbours in Syria and Lebanon.

Nor in that time frame was there any call or desire to exercise any kind of sovereign national governance over those portions of Mandate Palestine where they constituted the overwhelming majority.

If, in the case of Syria and Lebanon, the host governments made a concerted effort to maintain the minority Palestinian population in their second-class status, it is telling that no effort or request was made by these residents to resettle themselves among their "countrymen" in Gaza, the West Bank, or Jordan. On the one hand, they claimed to "suffer" on account of their extended refugee status, yet on the other hand, took every measure to ensure that they would not do anything to trigger the legal cessation of their refugee status.

In order to maintain the legal fiction of an ongoing refugee "crisis", both the Arab World and the West – in collusion with the Soviet Union – did everything possible to ensure that Palestinian refugee "camps" would stay in place, even as they evolved into crowded urban enclaves. So long as the UNRWA would continue to offer services there and continue to designate these enclaves as "camps", the legal fiction could continue in perpetuity.

Even as the majority of Palestinian “refugees” left the “camps” for more desirable accommodations, the remnant that chose to stay on in these “camp” /UNRWA-serviced enclaves would continue to be shown to the world as Exhibit A in the showpiece of Palestinian “suffering”.

However, lost in all this extended propaganda – even to much of the Israeli public – was this notion of Palestinian choice, of Palestinian agency, of the failure to mitigate one’s presumed injuries.

Against the evidence of that course of conduct, the incessant call for the “refugees” to repatriate en masse, from the Palestinian enclave of their portion of Palestine, into the Jewish enclave of the remaining portion, could only be seen for what it was – a strategy intended to demographically dissolve the Jewish polity within the borders of the State of Israel.

Since the signing and implementation of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinians have taken some element of sovereign control over the Gaza Strip and over significant portions of the West Bank, denoted as Areas A and B. And yet, in these areas alone, a combined total of roughly 2 million Palestinian “refugees” claim the theoretical right to leave their “country of origin”, and to settle instead within the borders of the State of Israel, to live among six million Jews as a hostile minority.

The US State Department – for the sake of “peace” – continues to underwrite the legal fiction that the Palestinians suffer a legitimate refugee “crisis” that somehow requires Israel’s participation and concessions to resolve.

In the meantime, the Palestinians continue on as history’s most astoundingly unique case study in refugee crisis management. Where other refugee populations tend to diminish in the space of a few years, this one grows inter-generationally by orders of magnitude, mostly by means of natural growth rather than through ongoing displacement. Where other refugee populations look for any viable option to get out of the camps, this one seeks out funding, services, and indoctrination activities to keep a credibly sustainable mass of their population in the camps. While most refugee populations will do anything to end their legal status as refugees, this one will do anything to keep their legal status as refugees from ending.

In recent years, the Palestinian President has presented the international community with a truly puzzling legal conundrum to work through. If, on the one hand, you intend to argue that – thanks to the Oslo Accords – you now preside over a quasi-sovereign political entity that is internationally recognized as the “State of Palestine”, then under what principle of refugee law can you credibly maintain the argument that a significant proportion of your citizens nevertheless require the “protection” of being “repatriated” to the alien state next door?

The answer: You can’t credibly maintain this legal paradox. Yet in collusion with the majority of member states that comprise the United Nations, you can fraudulently maintain the illusion that your arguments are indeed credible under international law.



<b>UNWRA TOP 20 GOVERNMENT DONORS IN 2018 (US\$)</b>					
<b>This chart shows how reliant UNWRA is on Western donors</b>					
	<b>EUROPE</b>	<b>AMERICAS</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>ARAB</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
EU (including ECHO)	178,989,326				178,989,326
Germany	177,439,447				177,439,447
Saudi Arabia				159,956,771	159,956,771
UK	92,754,569				92,754,569
Sweden	64,999,762				64,999,762
USA		60,429,282			60,429,282
UAE				53,800,000	53,800,000
Qatar				51,499,779	51,499,779
Kuwait				50,000,000	50,000,000
Japan			44,999,224		44,999,224
Netherlands	36,278,753				36,278,753
United Arab Emirates				27,828,599	27,828,599
Australia			26,746,123		26,746,123
Denmark	22,677,756				22,677,756
Belgium (including Flanders)	19,055,991				19,055,991
Italy	18,774,000				18,774,000
France (including municipalities)	17,090,974				17,090,974
Ireland	16,017,103				16,017,103
Finland	15,498,794				15,498,794
Luxembourg	15,261,693				15,261,693
<b>Total</b>	<b>674,838,168</b>	<b>60,429,282</b>	<b>71,745,347</b>	<b>343,085,149</b>	<b>1,150,097,946</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>100%</b>
			<b>US\$</b>	<b>%</b>	
		<b>Non-Arab</b>	<b>807,012,797</b>	<b>70%</b>	
		<b>Arab</b>	<b>343,085,149</b>	<b>30%</b>	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1,150,097,946</b>	<b>100%</b>	

## **WHY SOME COUNTRIES HAVE SUSPENDED ITS UNRWA FUNDING**

***Editors Note: The United Nations has two 'refugee organisations'. UNRWA who is responsible for Palestinian Refugees and UNHCR who is responsible for refugees in the rest of the world. UNRWA has taken on the additional function of education, health and camps, has 30,000 employees with Europeans being responsible as senior executives They now have different refugee definitions. UNHCR only accepts refugees from the country they left while UNRWA changed the definition to include the refugees descendants. UNRWA has now over 5 million refugees while few original refugees still survive.***

**REUTERS** January 30, 2024

GENEVA, Jan 29 (Reuters) - Major donors to the U.N. Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) have suspended funding after [allegations](#) emerged that around 12 of its tens of thousands of Palestinian employees were suspected of involvement in the Oct. 7 attacks in Israel by Hamas.

### **WHAT DOES UNRWA DO?**

UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) was established in 1949 by a U.N. General Assembly resolution, following the war surrounding the founding of Israel, when 700,000 Palestinians fled or were driven from their homes.

Today it directly employs 30,000 Palestinians, serving the civic and humanitarian needs of 5.9 million descendants of those refugees, in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and in vast camps in neighbouring Arab countries. In Gaza, it employs 13,000 people, running the enclave's schools, its primary healthcare clinics and other social services, as well as distributing humanitarian aid. Its services in Gaza have increased in importance since 2005, when Israel and Egypt imposed a blockade causing an economic collapse with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world.

Since Israel launched its war following the Oct. 7 attacks, around a million Gazans, or nearly 45% of the enclave's population, have been sheltering in UNRWA schools, clinics and other public buildings.

Nearly the entire Gazan population now relies on UNRWA for basic necessities, including food, water and hygiene supplies.

More than 150 UNRWA staff have been killed since the start of the conflict, making it the deadliest conflict ever for U.N. employees.

### **WHO ARE ITS MAIN DONORS?**

Contributions from United Nations member states, including regional governments and the European Union, account for more than 89% of the agency's funding. It also receives funding from the regular U.N. budget and financial contributions from other U.N. bodies.

In 2022, its top government donors were the United States, Germany, the European Union, Sweden, Norway, Japan, France, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland and Turkey.

Countries including the United States, Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland have suspended their funding of the agency in the wake of the allegations.

### **WHAT ARE ISRAEL'S ALLEGATIONS?**

A six-page [Israeli dossier](#) shared with the United States and reviewed by Reuters says 12 UNRWA staff members took part in the Oct. 7 attacks, including nine who worked as teachers in the agency's schools. Ten of them directly participated in the raid into Israeli territory, during which fighters killed 1,200 people and captured more than 240 hostages, and two others were summoned to assist the raid.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the number of UNRWA staff that participated in the raid was 13. The dossier says Israel also has wider evidence that UNRWA has employed 190 Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants.

### **WHAT DOES UNRWA SAY ABOUT THE ISRAELI ALLEGATIONS?**

UNRWA says it acted swiftly to fire staff after being alerted of Israeli evidence that they participated in the Oct. 7 attacks. It believes the cuts to its funding now could jeopardise its entire mission and dramatically worsen an already catastrophic humanitarian emergency in Gaza.

"It is shocking to see a suspension of funds to the agency in reaction to allegations against a small group of staff, especially given the immediate action that UNRWA took by terminating their contracts and asking for a transparent independent investigation," [UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini](#) said.

A spokesperson for the agency said on Monday that UNRWA would not be able to continue operations in Gaza and across the region beyond the end of February if funding did not resume.

UNRWA has been under financial strain for years. In January 2023, it appealed for [\\$1.6 billion in funding](#), saying its operations were at risk.

### **WHAT HAS ISRAEL SAID ABOUT UNRWA OVER THE YEARS**

Israeli authorities have long called for the agency to be dismantled, arguing that its mission is obsolete and it fosters anti-Israeli sentiment among its staff, in its schools and in its wider social mission. UNRWA strongly disputes this characterisation.

UNRWA is "perforated with Hamas", Netanyahu said on Monday. "In UNRWA schools they've been teaching the doctrines of extermination for Israel - the doctrines of terrorism, glorifying terrorism, lauding terrorism".

[Netanyahu](#) has in the past called on the United States, Israel's top ally and the agency's biggest donor, to roll back its support. He praised the Donald Trump administration for defunding the agency.

UNRWA has also faced other controversies in the past. In 2019, the head of the agency resigned amid a [misconduct inquiry](#). In 2014, the head of the United Nations expressed alarm after [rockets](#) were found at a vacant UNRWA school and later went missing. Reporting by Gabrielle Tétrault-Farber Editing by Peter Graff

**PART P**

**ABRAHAM ACCORDS**



# ABRAHAM ACCORDS

## ChatGPT said:

The Abraham Accords represent a watershed moment in Middle Eastern geopolitics, shifting the region's dynamics by normalizing relations between Israel and several Arab countries. Each member of the accords had unique motivations, reactions, and domestic implications. Below is a deeper dive into the reactions of each member:

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## 1. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

### Official Government Reaction:

The UAE's decision to normalize relations with Israel, announced in August 2020, was presented as a move that would halt Israeli plans to annex parts of the West Bank. This allowed the UAE to position itself as a key player in Middle Eastern peace efforts while advancing its own national interests, particularly in technology, defense, and trade.

- **Leadership Response:** Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ) characterized the agreement as a pragmatic step toward de-escalating tensions in the region. The UAE maintained that the accords aligned with their long-term vision for promoting stability, economic prosperity, and modernization in the Gulf.
- **Strategic and Economic Motivation:** The UAE saw normalization as an opportunity to enhance its strategic alliances, particularly in defense and technology sectors. Both countries are among the most technologically advanced in the region, and their collaboration is expected to bring economic growth, particularly in fields such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, healthcare, and tourism.

### Public and Domestic Reaction:

#### Public sentiment within the UAE was generally mixed:

- **Pro-Normalization View:** A portion of the Emirati public, particularly the business and elite classes, supported the accords for the economic and diplomatic benefits they would bring. These benefits included increased tourism, investment, and tech exchange.
- **Pro-Palestinian Concerns:** However, a sizable segment of the population, particularly those with ties to the Palestinian cause, expressed unease. Many viewed the agreement as a betrayal of longstanding Arab solidarity with Palestinians and a deviation from the Arab Peace Initiative, which stipulated normalization only after Israel withdrew from the occupied territories.

The government largely controlled the public discourse around the accords, and dissent was mostly subdued. The media promoted the accords as a positive step, reflecting the UAE's controlled political environment where criticism of government decisions is rare.

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## 2. BAHRAIN

### Official Government Reaction:

Bahrain followed the UAE, signing the Abraham Accords in September 2020. Bahrain's government, led by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, hailed the move as a way to promote regional stability and security. Bahrain's leadership framed the agreement as an extension of its historical commitment to coexistence and religious tolerance, pointing to the country's small but significant Jewish community as evidence of its pluralism.

- **Strategic Interests:** Bahrain has close ties with the United States, and its decision to normalize relations with Israel was seen as partly motivated by its strategic dependence on U.S. security guarantees, particularly in the face of tensions with Iran. Bahrain hosts the U.S. Fifth Fleet, and this military presence was a factor in Bahrain's decision-making, as the accords align with U.S. policy in the region.

### Public and Domestic Reaction:

#### The domestic reaction in Bahrain was more contentious than in the UAE:

- **Government Support:** The Bahraini monarchy framed the agreement as a way to safeguard national security and maintain Bahrain's alliances, especially with the U.S. and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.
- **Protests and Opposition:** However, the country has a significant Shia Muslim population, which historically has been marginalized by the Sunni-led government. Shia groups, along with many Sunni citizens, opposed normalization with Israel, seeing it as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause. Protests erupted in various parts of Bahrain, though they were limited due to the government's tight control over dissent.

The opposition to the accords in Bahrain was also rooted in wider regional dynamics, particularly Bahrain's rivalry with Iran. Many Shia Bahrainis perceive normalization with Israel as aligning the country more closely with Israel and the U.S. against Iran.

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## 3. MOROCCO

### Official Government Reaction:

Morocco's decision to normalize relations with Israel, announced in December 2020, was tied to U.S. recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the contested Western Sahara. For decades, Morocco had sought international recognition of its claim to this region, making the accord a diplomatic win for the Moroccan monarchy.

- **Strategic Benefit:** The U.S. recognition of Morocco's Western Sahara claims was a significant geopolitical gain, and in return, Morocco agreed to re-establish diplomatic ties with Israel, which had been suspended since 2000 during the Second Intifada. King Mohammed VI emphasized Morocco's historical connection with Jewish communities and positioned the agreement as part of a broader peace process that could benefit Palestinians.

**Public and Domestic Reaction:**

Morocco has one of the largest Jewish diaspora communities in the Arab world, and this historical connection was used to justify the deal. However, the reaction within Morocco was more critical compared to the Gulf states.

- **Government Messaging:** The Moroccan government presented the agreement as pragmatic, focusing on the strategic benefits related to the Western Sahara. King Mohammed VI also reassured the public that the deal would not affect Morocco's support for Palestinian statehood, attempting to balance the normalization with Israel and domestic pro-Palestinian sentiments.
- **Public Opposition:** Despite these assurances, many Moroccans, particularly Islamists and left-wing parties, condemned the agreement. Large segments of the population view the Palestinian cause as central to Arab identity and solidarity. Protests were held across Morocco, with demonstrators accusing the government of abandoning the Palestinians in exchange for geopolitical gain in Western Sahara.

The Moroccan leadership has sought to navigate this opposition carefully, emphasizing the cultural and historical ties between Morocco and the Jewish community while maintaining its rhetorical support for Palestinian rights.

## 4. SUDAN

### Official Government Reaction:

Sudan's decision to join the Abraham Accords in January 2021 was a significant shift in its foreign policy. For decades, Sudan had been one of Israel's fiercest opponents, and it had hosted the infamous 1967 Arab League summit that produced the "Three No's" resolution: no peace, no recognition, and no negotiations with Israel.

- **Economic Motivation:** Sudan's transitional government, led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, pursued normalization as a pathway to economic relief. Sudan was struggling under the weight of sanctions and a severe economic crisis. The U.S. offered to remove Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terrorism—a move that opened the door for much-needed international aid and debt relief—in exchange for Sudan agreeing to normalize ties with Israel.

Public and Domestic Reaction:

**Sudan's decision was controversial and triggered widespread opposition, particularly among Islamist groups and pro-Palestinian factions.**

- **Opposition to Normalization:** Many Sudanese viewed the normalization agreement as imposed by external pressure, particularly by the U.S., rather than a genuine desire for peace with Israel. Political factions, including the military, civilian leaders, and Islamist groups, were divided on the issue.
- **Economic Imperatives:** Sudan's leadership defended the move as a necessary step to reintegrate the country into the global economy. The transitional government emphasized that without normalization, Sudan would remain isolated and impoverished. Nonetheless, protests erupted in

several cities, with many Sudanese accusing their government of betraying the Palestinian cause for financial incentives.

The transitional government was particularly fragile during this period, and the normalization deal added another layer of complexity to Sudan's volatile political landscape.

## 5. ISRAEL

### Official Government Reaction:

Israel viewed the Abraham Accords as a historic and strategic achievement. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu championed the deals as a breakthrough in Israel's longstanding efforts to gain regional recognition without resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict first. Israel's official narrative emphasized that the accords shattered the traditional Arab consensus that peace with Israel could only come after a resolution to the Palestinian issue.

- **Strategic and Economic Gains:** The accords were seen as validating Netanyahu's foreign policy approach. They opened up new opportunities for trade, investment, and security cooperation with the Arab world. Israel hoped to further isolate Iran diplomatically by forging closer ties with Arab states, particularly the Gulf countries.

### Public Reaction:

#### The Israeli public largely supported the Abraham Accords:

- **Widespread Approval:** Many Israelis celebrated the accords as a sign of growing acceptance of Israel in the Arab world. The agreements with the UAE and Bahrain, in particular, promised new economic opportunities, and Israelis were quick to take advantage of new travel and business links.
- **Criticism from the Left:** Some on the Israeli left expressed concern that normalization with Arab states without resolving the Palestinian issue would perpetuate the status quo of occupation and conflict. However, these voices were in the minority, as the accords enjoyed broad political support across the Israeli spectrum.

The accords also strengthened Netanyahu's domestic position at the time, as he could point to concrete foreign policy achievements amid domestic political challenges.

## 6. UNITED STATES

### Official Government Reaction:

For the Trump administration, the Abraham Accords were framed as a signature foreign policy success. The administration argued that it had reshaped the Middle East by advancing peace between Israel and Arab states without needing to resolve the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- **A New Approach:** President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo presented the accords as part of a new paradigm in the Middle East. Instead of focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the Trump administration prioritized countering Iranian influence and promoting security cooperation between Israel and the Sunni Arab states.

### Public and Political Reaction:

- **Bipartisan Praise:** The accords were generally well-received in the U.S., with bipartisan praise for promoting peace and stability in the Middle East. Even critics of Trump’s foreign policy acknowledged that the agreements represented a positive step forward.
- **Criticism:** However, some critics argued that the accords neglected the Palestinian issue and could deepen Palestinian isolation. They also pointed out that the agreements were transactional in nature, with the U.S. offering significant incentives—such as arms sales to the UAE and recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara—in exchange for normalization.

The Biden administration, while more focused on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, continued to support the Abraham Accords, seeing them as a foundation for future peace efforts in the region.

## 7. PALESTINIAN REACTIONS

While the Palestinians were not a direct party to the Abraham Accords, their reaction was significant and underscored the continued complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Palestinian Authority (PA):**

**The Palestinian Authority (PA)**, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, vehemently opposed the accords, condemning them as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause and the Arab Peace Initiative. The PA argued that by normalizing relations with Israel without resolving the issue of Palestinian statehood, the Arab signatories had undermined the prospects for a two-state solution.

- **Diplomatic Fallout:** The accords exacerbated tensions between the PA and the Arab states involved. Abbas recalled Palestinian ambassadors from the UAE and Bahrain in protest, and Palestinian officials warned that the agreements would weaken the Arab world’s leverage in negotiations with Israel.

### **Hamas:**

The Gaza-based militant group Hamas, which has governed the Gaza Strip since 2007, also rejected the Abraham Accords, accusing the Arab states involved of betraying the Palestinian cause. Hamas warned that the accords would embolden Israeli policies of settlement expansion and occupation.

- **Public Protests:** In Gaza and the West Bank, protests erupted against the accords, with demonstrators condemning the normalization agreements as a stab in the back by fellow Arabs.

### **Broader Arab Public Reaction:**

**Across the Arab world**, public opinion was largely negative, especially in countries that did not participate in the accords. In countries like Jordan and Egypt, which already had peace agreements with Israel, there were fears that the Abraham Accords would marginalize the Palestinian cause and normalize the status quo of occupation and settlement.

**CONCLUSION:**

The Abraham Accords marked a historic shift in the Middle East's political landscape, with Israel normalizing relations with several Arab countries for the first time in decades. The reactions from each member reflected a mix of pragmatic geopolitical considerations and domestic pressures. While the accords were celebrated by some as a breakthrough for peace and cooperation, they also deepened divisions, particularly with regard to the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The broader implications of the Abraham Accords continue to unfold, as more countries may consider normalization with Israel, while the Palestinian issue remains a deeply contentious and unresolved factor in regional politics. quietly turns four

## AS THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR CONTINUES, THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS QUIETLY TURNS FOUR

[ATLANTIC COUNCIL](#) MENASource [Marcy Grossman](#) Sept 11 2024

As Canada's ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from 2019 to 2022, I had a diplomatic front-row seat and occasional behind-the-scenes views into the quiet yet consistent progress that eventually led to the Abraham Accords. While I wasn't surprised when the declaration was announced in 2020, I hadn't anticipated how rapidly and warmly relations between Israel and its neighbors—Bahrain, the UAE, and later Sudan and Morocco—would evolve.

Despite the turmoil in the Middle East since October 7, 2023—the pain, suffering, polarization, and destruction of land and hope—the Abraham Accords are still alive. They have laid a foundation far beyond any one conflict for greater peace in the region. Reflecting on their fourth anniversary, this piece explores where the Abraham Accords started, where they are today, and where they are headed.

### WHERE IT STARTED

The seeds of the Abraham Accords were planted well before 2020. Longstanding hopes for peace began to become a reality publicly when the UAE named 2019 the "[Year of Tolerance](#)," celebrating the diversity of religious life in the country. Among other milestones, the UAE invited Israel to participate in the [Dubai 2020 World Expo](#), welcomed [Pope Francis](#) for a landmark visit to the Arab world, signed the [Document of Human Fraternity](#) with the Catholic Church, and announced the construction of the [Abrahamic Family House](#)—a mosque, church, and synagogue coexisting on the same campus in Abu Dhabi. For those paying attention, like I was, the ground was shifting—the UAE of 2019 that was building a synagogue was clearly a country that had greater ambitions wdirir



Abrahamic Family House



[Wikimedia](#) | © [OpenStreetMap](#)

#### General information

<b>Location</b>	Cultural District, <a href="#">Al Saadiyat Island</a> , <a href="#">Abu Dhabi</a> .
<b>Town or city</b>	<a href="#">Abu Dhabi</a>
<b>Country</b>	<a href="#">United Arab Emirates</a>
<b><a href="#">Coordinates</a></b>	<span><span><span><span><span>24.530933°N</span> <span>54.406101°E</span></span></span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>﻿</span></span><span><span><span>24.530933°N 54.406101°E</span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>24.530933; 54.406101</span></span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>24.530933; 54.406101</span></span></span></span></span></span>
<b>Construction started</b>	2019
<b>Completed</b>	2023
<b>Opened</b>	1 March 2023 <sup>[4]</sup>
<b>Inaugurated</b>	16 February 2023
<b>Governing body</b>	<a href="#">Higher Committee of Human Fraternity</a>
<b>Affiliation</b>	<a href="#">Imam Al-Tayeb Mosque</a> <a href="#">St. Francis Church</a> <a href="#">Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue</a>

#### Technical details

**Size** 82,882 sq ft (7,700.0 m<sup>2</sup>)

#### Design and construction

**Architect(s)** [David Adjaye](#)

**Architecture firm** [Adjaye Associates](#)

#### Other information

**Public transit access** Bus Route 94 ([Bus Schedule](#))



Model of the site and its three main buildings

The **Abrahamic Family House** (**Arabic**: بيت العائلة الإبراهيمية) is an [interfaith](#) complex on [Saadiyat Island](#) in [Abu Dhabi](#). The undertaking was inspired by the [Document on Human Fraternity](#) signed by [Pope Francis](#) on behalf of the [Catholic Church](#) and [Ahmed El-Tayeb](#) on behalf of the [al-Azhar Mosque](#) on 4 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi. It houses the [St. Francis Church](#), [Imam Al-Tayeb Mosque](#) and [Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue](#) in separate structures.<sup>[2][3][4]</sup>

The implementation of the project is supervised by the [Higher Committee of Human Fraternity](#) (HCHF).<sup>[5][6]</sup>

The project was announced by [Abdullah bin Zayed](#), Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, on 5 February 2019 at a meeting of the [Higher Committee of Human Fraternity](#) at the [New York Public Library](#).<sup>[6][5][7]</sup>

It was officially inaugurated on 16 February 2023 by Lt. General [Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan](#), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, and [Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan](#), Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence.<sup>[8][9]</sup>



## History

### Purpose

The Abrahamic Family House aims to serve as a community for [inter-religious dialogue](#) and exchange and be a physical manifestation of the Document on Human Fraternity.<sup>[7][10][6]</sup> It will provide learning resources as well as spaces for worship.<sup>[6]</sup>

The complex seeks to represent interfaith co-existence, preserves the unique character of the religions represented and build bridges between [human civilization](#) and the Abrahamic messages.<sup>[7][5][9]</sup>

### Design



The design of the Abrahamic Family House has been prepared by the award-winning architectural and design firm [Adjaye Associates](#), headed by Ghanaian-British architect [David Adjaye](#),<sup>[11]</sup> who unveiled the plan of the project during a [New York City](#) event.<sup>[12][13]</sup>

The three cubic houses of worship sit upon a secular visitor pavilion,<sup>[12][13]</sup> and aim to represent the diverse worshippers, residents, and visitors of Abu Dhabi. Adjaye highlighted that he wanted to “create a building that starts to dissolve the notion of hierarchical difference – it should represent universality and totality – something higher, that enhances the richness of human life”.<sup>[12][14]</sup> The design of this religious complex comprises three unaligned cubes sitting on a [plinth](#), and each of them has a different orientation.<sup>[13]</sup> The silhouette of the building makes the cubes look unified, and each of them is illustrated with colonnades, screens and vaults.<sup>[13]</sup> The site also includes a cultural center that will promote the values of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence while the unique character of each faith is preserved.<sup>[5]</sup>

The space's design is similar to that of the Tri-Faith Commons in the US.<sup>[15][11][16]</sup>

### NAMING OF CHURCH, MOSQUE, AND SYNAGOGUE

The three houses of worship have been named after the [Grand Imam](#) of [Al Azhar](#), [Ahmed El-Tayeb](#), the [Catholic friar St. Francis of Assisi](#), and the 12th century Jewish philosopher and rabbinical scholar [Moses Ben Maimon](#) – Imam Al-Tayeb Mosque, St. Francis Church, and Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue, respectively.<sup>[17][18][9]</sup>

### IN POPULAR CULTURE

The Abrahamic Family House inspired a symphony titled "Symphony of Three" composed by [Ihab Darwish](#), [John Debney](#) and [David Shire](#).<sup>[19]</sup> The symphonic performance commissioned and produced by [Abu Dhabi Festival](#), and co-produced by Ihab Darwish, Zofia Jeziorna<sup>[20]</sup> and Robert Townson,<sup>[21]</sup> brought<sup>[22]</sup> together vocal ensembles, composers and musicians from Christian, Jewish and Muslim backgrounds to celebrate dialogue among different faiths.<sup>[23]</sup>

Then, on September 15, 2020, history was made as 700 guests gathered at the White House to witness the normalization of relations between Israel and two Arab nations: the UAE and Bahrain. Then-US President Donald Trump presided over the signing of the Abraham Accords, alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan, and Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani. Shortly after this milestone, Israel expanded its diplomatic ties by announcing agreements with Sudan on October 23, 2020, and Morocco on December 10, 2020.

In the immediate aftermath, the accords were well-received by the governments involved, who viewed them as opportunities to enhance economic ties, security cooperation, and diplomatic relations. The agreements were heralded by many as the “dawn of a new Middle East,” as Trump [noted](#), marking the most significant transformation in regional geopolitics in a generation and the most important step toward peace and stability in the Middle East since the Israel-Jordan peace agreement twenty-five years earlier.

### THE EARLY YEARS

Between 2020 and 2023, diplomatic relationships flourished with the establishment of mutual embassies, air and trade corridors, political and cultural advocacy activities, strategic military agreements, and people-to-people ties. Groundbreaking bilateral and multilateral forums, like the [Negev Summit](#) in Israel, the [Negev Forum Steering Committee](#) in Bahrain, and the [Atlantic Council’s N7 Initiative](#), were established, fostering unprecedented regional collaboration. High-level visits and joint initiatives that once seemed unimaginable brought together innovators, investors, experts, academics, and [women leaders](#), further strengthening these new relationships. Economic ties flourished, with trade between the Abraham Accords countries surging from practically nothing in 2019 to an estimated [\\$10 billion](#) over the first three years.

Israel and the UAE saw the most significant trade, tourism, and innovation advancements following the Abraham Accords: Annual bilateral trade surged, reaching almost [\\$3 billion](#) by 2023, driven by a historic free-trade agreement and numerous business partnerships. Tourism flourished, with over [one million](#) Israelis visiting the UAE by 2023, facilitated by [106](#) weekly direct flights between the two countries. Both nations established embassies, engaged in security cooperation, and collaborated on innovation and technology projects. Cultural exchange programs further deepened these ties, promoting mutual understanding. Joint initiatives in areas like renewable energy and space exploration broadened the scope of their partnership.

### FOUR YEARS LATER

As their fourth anniversary arrives, the good news is that the Abraham Accords remain intact. Despite the Gaza war, none of the signatories have backtracked from their normalization agreements: No ties have been permanently broken, and no country has withdrawn from its commitments or closed its embassy—a powerful diplomatic signal that the relationships are enduring. Ambassadors from Israel, Bahrain, and the UAE continue to play active roles, maintaining diplomatic channels and fulfilling their duties to sustain these historic ties. Trade between the signatory nations continues, fostering economic prosperity, and security and airspace cooperation also remain largely in place.

However, the period between 2020 and 2023, characterized by hundreds of signed agreements, booming tourism, and vibrant public diplomacy, has given way to a more subdued phase. October 7, 2023, and its implications for all of the signatory countries have shifted the posture from very open and public to very

private. People-to-people ties have been limited, public celebrations have been muted, and much of the once-public diplomacy now happens behind closed doors.

A look at the social media channels of the embassies reflects this shift. The [Israeli Embassy](#) in Bahrain is focused on the fate of hostages and advocating for their safe return. Israeli Ambassador to the UAE [Amir Hayek](#) emphasizes positive messages and sticks to sharing holiday wishes while recognizing milestones in the UAE. Emirati Ambassador to Israel Mohamed al-Khaja has been publicly quiet throughout 2024, albeit sharing Passover [wishes](#) in April. His most recent substantial [post](#) on X was issued on the third anniversary of the accords in September 2023.

Nevertheless, despite these challenges and the current state of the Middle East, there is still room for hope, and here are the reasons why:

1. **A foundation of principles:** The Abraham Accords [declaration](#) was more than just a political agreement. It was a statement of shared principles: a commitment to “strengthening peace in the Middle East and around the world based on mutual understanding and coexistence, as well as respect for human dignity and freedom.” The aspirations of the Abraham Accords represent universal values that resonate globally—and that are more relevant than ever today.
2. **Shifting security alliances:** Security alliances have shifted, enabling better responses, particularly from [Israel](#) and the [UAE](#), to shared regional challenges ranging from the Red Sea attacks to Iran and from the Houthis in Yemen to Hamas.
3. **People-to-people engagement:** The Abraham Accords are a warm peace built not just on politics but also on people-to-people ties, offering a powerful counter to dehumanization, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia. The [Abrahamic Family House](#) is a testimony to that enduring faith in shared humanity. The site recently ranked among Time Magazine’s “[2024 Greatest Places in the World to Visit](#)” and is just one example of the signatories’ ongoing commitment to coexistence and understanding.
4. **Prosperity as a pathway to peace:** Economic cooperation between Israel and the Abraham Accords countries continues, paving the way for peace by addressing key drivers of conflict like poverty, unemployment, and inequality and by shifting the focus to collaboration, innovation, and mutual benefit. In August, Israel Aerospace Industries [announced](#) plans to establish a presence in Abu Dhabi, where it will convert Emirati aircraft into freighters. This move highlights the UAE’s ongoing commitment to building ties with Israel, even as regional tensions rise.
5. **The essential role of women:** To ensure the long-term success of the Abraham Accords, integrating women equally in policy-making, decision-making, and programming will be crucial. [Research](#) shows that when women are actively engaged in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding, negotiations are more effective, peace is more enduring, and broader segments of society benefit. Including women across all sectors—economy, education, environment, politics, and the legal system—will foster a more prosperous, sustainable, and peaceful future for the countries involved in the Abraham Accords and the entire region.

As the Abraham Accords turn four years old, they stand as a testament to the power of diplomacy and the pursuit of shared interests, even in a region as complex and historically fraught as the Middle East.

However, the future of the accords cannot be fully realized without a sustainable and just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While the accords have faced [criticism](#) for sidelining the Palestinian issue, there is still potential for them to serve as a framework that encourages renewed dialogue. Additionally, the potential inclusion of Saudi Arabia—the most influential Arab nation—in the Abraham Accords would be a transformative development. While Riyadh has [shown](#) interest, any formal move toward normalization would likely hinge on meaningful progress toward resolving the Palestinian situation. Riyadh’s participation would not only bolster the accords but could also set the stage for even broader regional acceptance of Israel, further reshaping Middle Eastern geopolitics and potentially opening new avenues to address Palestinian concerns comprehensively.

Looking ahead, the survival and success of the Abraham Accords will depend on a continued commitment from all parties to maintain open dialogue, strengthen economic ties, and foster people-to-people connections capable of transcending political tensions. It is essential for signatory countries to reaffirm their dedication to these agreements, not only as a means of advancing their national interests but also as a broader contribution to regional stability. The Abraham Accords may not have solved all of the region’s problems, but they have undeniably shifted the geopolitical landscape in a positive direction: toward lasting peace and cooperation in the Middle East.

***Marcy Grossman** is a nonresident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council’s Rafik Hariri Center and Middle East Programs and former Canadian ambassador to the United Arab Emirates.*

## Further reading

Thu, Mar 7, 2024

[While wars rage on, women wage peace in the Middle East](#)

MENASource By [Marcy Grossman](#)

On International Women’s Day this year, the world needs more voices echoing the resounding calls for peace and justice in the face of ongoing conflicts.

Tue, Feb 7, 2023

[The UAE and Israel have a history of strong female leadership. Women must take substantial roles in the next phase of the Abraham Accords.](#)

MENASource By [Marcy Grossman](#)

To have a sustained and enduring peace in the region after the signing of the Abraham Accords, women must also be equally included and reflected in policy-making, decision-making, and programming.

[IsraelMiddle East](#)

**Fri, Sep 29, 2023**

**[Cultivating change: Women as catalysts for agricultural transformation in the MENA regio](#)**

**MENASource By [Marcy Grossman](#)**

By engaging women in decision-making leadership roles and providing them with access to education and training, a wellspring of innovative solutions can be unlocked to address challenges in agriculture, food security, and water security.

[IsraelMiddle East](#)

**PART Q**

**PALESTINIANS REFUSED CITIZENSHIP**

**BY ARAB COUNTRIES**

# ARAB COUNTRIES WHO DO NOT ALLOW PALESTINIANS TO BECOME CITIZENS

ChatGPT said: (24 Sept 2024)

## 1. LEBANON

### Policy:

- Lebanon has the strictest policies against granting citizenship to Palestinians. Lebanese law prohibits Palestinian refugees from naturalizing, owning property, and working in several professions.

### Reasons:

- Sectarian balance: Lebanon's political system is based on a delicate balance between Christian, Sunni, and Shia Muslim communities. Palestinians, who are predominantly Sunni, would disrupt this balance if given citizenship, potentially empowering the Sunni population.
- Political tension: Palestinians are seen as a destabilizing force because of their involvement in Lebanon's civil war (1975-1990). Many Lebanese fear granting them citizenship would risk further conflict.

### Impact:

- Around 180,000–250,000 Palestinians live in Lebanon, many of them in 12 refugee camps with poor living conditions.
- Palestinians are barred from over 70 professions, have limited access to healthcare, education, and social services, and face extreme poverty. The inability to own property further entrenches their marginalization.
- Palestinians in Lebanon are highly dependent on UNRWA for basic services, but the agency's underfunding limits its ability to meet their needs.

### Analysis:

Lebanon's refusal to naturalize Palestinians is driven by concerns over domestic stability, but it has created severe humanitarian consequences for Palestinians. This policy leaves Palestinians in a cycle of poverty and marginalization. Their inability to integrate into Lebanese society increases their dependence on international aid, which is increasingly unstable.

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## 2. JORDAN

### Policy:

- Jordan has a complex relationship with its Palestinian population. The majority of Palestinians who arrived after 1948 were granted Jordanian citizenship, but a significant number, especially those from Gaza, remain stateless and without full citizenship rights.

### Reasons:

- National identity concerns: While Jordan's Hashemite monarchy has been supportive of Palestinians, there is concern about the growing political influence of Palestinians in Jordan, who already make up over half of the population. Granting citizenship to all would shift the balance of power within the country.
- Security concerns: Palestinians without citizenship, especially from Gaza, are seen as potential security risks due to tensions with Israel and internal pressures.

**Impact:**

- About 370,000 stateless Palestinians in Jordan (mainly from Gaza) face severe limitations. They have residency permits but cannot access the same healthcare, education, or employment opportunities as full Jordanian citizens.
- Jordan's economic struggles mean that even Palestinians with citizenship experience high unemployment and economic difficulties, but stateless Palestinians face even more significant barriers to socio-economic mobility.

**Analysis:**

Jordan's situation is shaped by its political and demographic considerations. While the country has integrated many Palestinians, those without citizenship remain marginalized. This duality reflects Jordan's attempt to balance Palestinian integration with its own internal stability. However, the large population of stateless Palestinians continues to face poverty and exclusion, which risks becoming a source of future instability.

### 3. SYRIA

**Policy:**

- Before the civil war, Syria offered more rights to Palestinians compared to other Arab countries, allowing them access to education, work, and some government services. However, they were not granted citizenship.

**Reasons:**

- Pan-Arab solidarity: Syria has historically framed its policy as one of support for the Palestinian cause, advocating for their right of return rather than their integration into Syrian society.
- Geopolitical concerns: The Assad regime used the Palestinian issue as part of its broader political stance against Israel, and naturalizing Palestinians could weaken its position.

**Impact:**

- Before the civil war, around 560,000 Palestinians lived in Syria, but the conflict has displaced many of them. Around 120,000 Palestinians fled Syria, and those who remain live in deteriorating conditions, especially in war-torn camps like Yarmouk.
- Displaced Palestinians face similar restrictions in neighboring countries like Lebanon and Jordan, where they are not offered citizenship and endure further deprivation.

**Analysis:**

Syria's initially supportive policies have been devastated by the civil war, leaving Palestinians in a desperate situation. The country's refusal to naturalize Palestinians, while framed as solidarity, has left



them vulnerable to both state violence and the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Their situation remains precarious, especially as the conflict drags on.

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#### 4. KUWAIT

**Policy:**

- Before the Gulf War, Kuwait was home to around 400,000 Palestinians, but after the war, Kuwait expelled the majority of its Palestinian population due to the PLO's support for Saddam Hussein's invasion. Today, only around 70,000–80,000 Palestinians remain.

**Reasons:**

- Political retaliation: Kuwait's expulsion of Palestinians after the Gulf War was a direct response to the Palestinian leadership's support for Iraq. This severed the relationship between Kuwait and the Palestinian community.
- Economic concerns: Kuwait, like other Gulf states, operates a kafala system that ties residency to employment, and Palestinians are treated as foreign workers without any pathway to citizenship.

**Impact:**

- Palestinians in Kuwait live under the kafala system, with their residency tied to their jobs. They are denied access to citizenship and the rights that come with it, such as property ownership and social services.
- The expulsion of Palestinians in 1991 destroyed many lives and scattered the Palestinian population across the region. Those who remain have precarious legal status and limited rights.

**Analysis:**

Kuwait's policies are heavily shaped by the geopolitical fallout from the Gulf War. While Kuwait no longer expels Palestinians en masse, the country continues to deny them citizenship, leaving them in a vulnerable position. The kafala system further restricts their freedom and rights, reinforcing their status as temporary workers rather than long-term residents.

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#### 5. SAUDI ARABIA

**Policy:**

- Saudi Arabia, like the other Gulf states, does not offer citizenship to Palestinians and treats them as expatriates under the kafala system.

**Reasons:**

- Demographic and national security concerns: Saudi Arabia has a large expatriate population, and granting citizenship to Palestinians (or any foreign group) would alter the social and political dynamics within the kingdom. The state is also wary of granting citizenship to groups that could pose a political challenge.
- Solidarity: Saudi Arabia has consistently framed its policy as one of support for the Palestinian cause, emphasizing their right to return to their homeland rather than integration into Saudi society.

**Impact:**

- An estimated 240,000–300,000 Palestinians live in Saudi Arabia, where they are part of the expatriate labor force. Their residency is dependent on employment, and they have no path to citizenship or access to state welfare programs.
- Palestinians in Saudi Arabia, like other expatriates, face restrictions on movement, job opportunities, and social mobility, with the risk of deportation if they lose their employment.

**Analysis:**

Saudi Arabia's approach reflects its broader policy towards foreign workers, viewing Palestinians as a temporary workforce rather than a group to integrate into society. While the kingdom has provided financial support for the Palestinian cause, its treatment of Palestinian residents is marked by their exclusion from citizenship and social benefits, limiting their long-term stability and rights.

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## 6. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

**Policy:**

- The UAE, like its Gulf neighbors, does not grant citizenship to Palestinians, treating them as foreign workers under the kafala system.

**Reasons:**

- Economic and social hierarchy: The UAE operates a highly stratified society, with citizens enjoying privileged access to resources and welfare, while the large expatriate population, including Palestinians, is excluded from these benefits. Granting citizenship to foreign workers would disrupt this system.
- Political considerations: Like other Gulf countries, the UAE has historically framed its refusal to naturalize Palestinians as a form of solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

**Impact:**

- There are around 100,000–200,000 Palestinians in the UAE, many of whom have lived there for decades but remain foreigners with no path to citizenship.
- Palestinians are dependent on employment for residency, which creates uncertainty and limits their ability to settle permanently. They cannot access state-provided housing, healthcare, or education benefits reserved for Emirati citizens.

**Analysis:**

The UAE's policies reflect its broader treatment of expatriates, where citizenship is reserved for a small elite. Palestinians, while able to work and live in the UAE, remain highly vulnerable due to their exclusion from the state's citizenship and social welfare system. The kafala system enforces this exclusion, perpetuating their status as temporary residents.

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## 7. IRAQ

### Policy:

- Palestinians in Iraq were once granted special residency status under Saddam Hussein but have faced persecution since his fall in 2003. Most Palestinians in Iraq are stateless and face severe discrimination.

### Reasons:

- Political backlash: Palestinians were favored by Saddam Hussein's regime, and after his downfall, they became targets of harassment by sectarian militias and the Iraqi government.
- Security concerns: In post-2003 Iraq, Palestinians are seen as politically dangerous due to their association with the previous regime.

### Impact:

- The Palestinian population in Iraq has dropped from 34,000 to around 10,000–15,000 since the U.S. invasion. Many have fled persecution and violence, while those who remain face discrimination, lack of legal protection, and severe poverty.
- Palestinians in Iraq live in a state of constant fear and instability, with limited access to work, healthcare, and education.

### Analysis:

Iraq's treatment of Palestinians has drastically worsened since the fall of Saddam Hussein, with many fleeing due to targeted violence. The Iraqi government has shown little interest in granting citizenship or improving conditions for Palestinians, leaving them in a state of vulnerability and persecution.

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## CONCLUSION

Across the Arab world, Palestinians face varying degrees of exclusion and statelessness. While the official justification for these policies is often framed as support for the Palestinian cause, the actual impact has been profound humanitarian suffering. Millions of Palestinians live without basic rights, vulnerable to poverty, exploitation, and displacement. This issue highlights the complex intersection of geopolitics, national security, and identity politics in the Arab world, where domestic concerns often outweigh humanitarian considerations.

### EDITORS NOTE (for detail go to [Council on Foreign Relations](#))

**The *kafala* system regulates the lives of tens of millions of migrant laborers in the Middle East, but growing outrage over human rights abuses, racism, and gender discrimination has fueled calls for reform.**

- The *kafala*, or sponsorship, system gives private citizens and companies in Jordan, Lebanon, and most Arab Gulf countries almost total control over migrant workers' employment and immigration status.
- The system arose from growing demand in Gulf economies for cheap labor, and the desperation of many migrants in search of work and the opportunity to send money home to their families.
- Calls for reform have grown since preparations for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar drew international scrutiny.

**PART R**

**VIDEOS**

## VIDEOS - OVERVIEW

### **WARFARE BETWEEN GAZA AND ISRAEL STARTED ON OCTOBER 7 2023 WITH THE INVASION OF ISRAEL BY GAZA**

with a [barrage of at least 3,000 rockets](#) launched against Israel and vehicle-transported and [powered paraglider](#) incursions into Israel. The [IDF](#) estimated that about 3,000 militants invaded southern Israel, with additional waves of Gaza citizens entering through the breached fences later in the day.<sup>[34]</sup> In total the attackers killed 1,139 people:<sup>[1]</sup> 695 Israeli civilians (including 38 children),<sup>[39]</sup> 71 foreign nationals, and 373 members of the [security forces](#).<sup>[9][40]</sup> About 250 Israeli civilians and soldiers were [taken as hostages to the Gaza Strip](#), including 30 children, with the stated goal to force Israel to exchange them for [imprisoned Palestinians](#), including women and children.<sup>[41][42][43][44]</sup> Many cases of [rape and sexual assault](#) reportedly occurred, but Hamas officials denied the involvement of their fighters.<sup>[45][46][47][48]</sup>

[WIKIPEDIA](#)

OCT. 7 2023

On the morning of October 7, 2023, Hamas invaded Israel from Gaza in a massive surprise terrorist attack against civilians by air, land and sea.

Hamas' terrorists recorded their barbaric atrocities on body cameras and cell phones to proudly display their crimes and gloat about them.

Many of these cameras were recovered from neutralized terrorists.

Now the whole world can see Hamas' unfathomable savagery.

[SATURDAY-OCTOBER-SEVEN.COM](#)

**VIDEOS BY [Israel Defence and Security Forum \(IDSF\)](#)**

**HAVE BEEN REGULARILY PUBLISHED SINCE NOVEMBER 28 2023**

**THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT (MARATHON)  
VIDEO MARATHONS**

**PART 1**

There is a lot to learn about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and that's why we have DOZENS of 5-Minute Videos devoted to the topic. We've split this playlist into two parts, and here is the first.

[PRAGER U](#)

10 Oct 2023 58min 58sec

**PART 2**

There is a lot to learn about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and that's why we have DOZENS of 5-Minute Videos devoted to the topic. We've split this playlist into two parts, and here is the second.

[PRAGER U](#)

10 Oct 2023 1hour 5min 3sec

**ORIGINS OF THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT**

**PART I: TO 1949**

[Henry Abramson](#)

19 Nov 2023 29min 10sec

**PART II: 1949 – 1993**

[Henry Abramson](#)

26 Nov 2023 31min 29sec

**PART III:**

**FROM OSLO TO  
OCTOBER 7 2023**

[Henry Abramson](#)

3 Dec 2023 30min 59sec

**RESULT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

**HOW THE FIRST WORLD WAR  
CREATED  
THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICTS**

[THE GREAT WAR](#)

8 December 2023 23min 26sec

The modern Middle East is a region troubled by war, terrorism, weak and failed states, and civil unrest. But how did it get this way? The map of today's Middle East was mostly drawn after the First World War, and the war that planted many of the seeds of conflict that still plague Israel, Palestine, Iraq, Syria and even Iran today.

**HOW BRITAIN STARTED  
THE ARAB ISRAELI CONFLICT**

[Free Documentary - History](#)

3 March 2021 52min 35sec

The bitter struggle between Arab and Jew for control of the Holy Land has caused untold suffering in the Middle East for generations. It is often claimed that the crisis originated with Jewish emigration to Palestine and the foundation of the state of Israel. Yet the roots of the conflict are to be found much earlier – in British double-dealing during the First World War. This is a story of intrigue among rival empires; of misguided strategies; and of how conflicting promises to Arab and Jew created a legacy of bloodshed which determined the fate of the Middle East

**THE MYSTERY OF THE JEWS**

[Simpletoremember](#) 13 Jan 2015 20min 52sec

Who are the Jews? What impact have the Jews had on the world? A powerful short film that reveals the real story behind "The Mystery of the Jews". With remarkable insights by renowned historians, world leaders and perceptive authors. "The Mystery of the Jews" challenges the normative conception of human history. <http://simpletoremember.com/>

**ISRAEL SET TO DESTROY HEZBOLLAH, IRAN NEXT -  
SEPTEMBER 30 IDSF DAILY BRIEFING. THE LIST STARTS ON NOV28 2023**

[IDSF Daily War Briefing](#)

**JEWISH LAND  
BETWEEN THE JORDAN RIVER AND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA**

[Children of the Jewish Holocaust](#) 30 Jan 2015 1hour 21min

Eli E. Hertz, one of the community's most learned experts on the Arab-Israeli conflict, examined the instruments that laid down the Jewish legal right to settle anywhere in Judea and Samaria, western Palestine, a 10,000 square mile area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, an entitlement unaltered in international law and valid to this day.

Eli Hertz discussed our rights to the Jewish homeland, and prepared us to challenge Arab myths surrounding Jewish rights to historical Palestine. Eli's lecture offered new insights into the challenges presently facing the Jewish people. significance of these accords in [#ThePrintVideo](#)

**HISTORY OF ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT**

[History on Maps](#) 30 July 2021 10min 55sec

This video presents the History of Israel-Palestine conflict that rooted a few thousand years ago.

**EINAT WILF 1 RIVER TO SEA  
...JEWS: SOVEREIGN STATE ...ARABS: NO JEWISH STATE**

[ResearchersToTrust](#) 7 July 2024 11min 19sec

**EINAT WILF 2 RIVER TO SEA2  
...JEWS DECLARE INDEPENDENCE ARAB NEIGHBORS JOIN IN THE WAR**

[ResearchersToTrust](#) 9 July 2024 10min 51sec

**EINAT WILF 3 RIVER TO SEA3  
...WAR ENDED WITH ARMISTICE NOT PEACE  
NO ARAB COUNTRIES ACCEPT REFUGEES**

[ResearchersToTrust](#) 15 July 2014 11min 24sec

**EINAT WILF 4 | RIVER TO SEA  
...'RIGHT OF RETURN' USED AS TOOL FOR WAR TO CONTINUE**

[ResearchersToTrust](#) 21 July 2014 12min 14sec

## **DOES THE QURAN PREDICT THE END OF ISRAEL? || USTADH WAHAJ TARIN**

[Ustadh Wahaj Tarin](#) 10 Feb 2024 21min 41sec

A detailed analysis of the Quranic prophecy pertaining to the Children of Israel and their rise and fall.

## **WHY SOME ARAB STATES SIDE WITH ISRAEL | MAPPED OUT**

[DW News](#) 22Jun 2024 13min 50sec

Leaders of most Arab countries condemn Israel and the war in Gaza. Yet, some Arab governments maintain close ties with the state of Israel. They have a common enemy – and face an uneasy balancing act.

## **THE REAL REASON BEHIND THE OBSESSION MANY MUSLIMS HAVE WITH ISRAEL (AND IT'S NOT THE PALESTINIANS)**

[travelingisrael.com](#) 2 Dec 2024 11min 57sec

The Real Reason Behind the OBSESSION many Muslims have with Israel (and it's not the Palestinians)

## **THE ISLAMIC VIEW OF ISRAEL**

[TBN Israel](#) 13 Dec 2024 13min 31sec

Join Mati Shoshani as he explores the deep-rooted tensions and narratives shaping Muslim-Jewish relations with author Moriel Bareli. Bareli shares insights from his undercover conversations with Muslims worldwide about Jerusalem's historic streets to the broader ideological divides. Despite enormous challenges, Shoshani gives hope for understanding and coexistence in the Holy Land. Watch now on TBN Israel! Read more in Bareli's new book, When A Jew And A Muslim Talk, here: <https://moriel-bareli.co.il/en/gius-c...>

## **THE ROLE OF "JEWS" AND "ISRAEL" IN SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS ACROSS THE ARAB WORLD**

[INSS ISRAEL](#) 30 August 2023 38min 50sec

## **HOW HAMAS WAS FORMED AND WHICH NATIONS SUPPORT THE TERROR GROUP?**

[Firstpost](#) 7 Oct 2023 7min 4sec

Hamas launched large-scale attacks into Israel. What is Hamas, the terror organisation that governs Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

How was the group founded and which nations support the terror group? Will the actions of Hamas instigate an all-out war between Israelis and Palestinians. Palki Sharma tells you more.

## **PALESTINE VS ISRAEL WHAT IGNITED THE ONGOING CONFLICT PROMISES & BETRAYALS**

[Timeline – World History](#) 9 Oct 2023 52min 11sec



This is how British double-dealing during WW1 ignited the conflict between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East. This is a story of intrigue among rival empires; of misguided strategies; and of how conflicting promises to Palestine and Israel created a legacy of bloodshed which determined the fate of the Middle East. Avi Shlaim, Professor of International Relations at Oxford University, calls it 'one of the best historical documentaries on the Middle East I have ever seen'.

### **SHOCKING VIDEO OF FAMILY HELD CAPTIVE BY HAMAS AFTER KILLING TEENAGE DAUGHTER**

[BBC News](#) 23 Oct 2023 3min 36sec

More harrowing stories about how people were killed in the Hamas attacks in Israel are still emerging. One teenager who had just celebrated her 18th birthday died after being shot while trying to prevent the gunmen breaking into the safe room in her home in Nahal Oz, close to the border with Gaza. Her family were held captive in the house and her father was taken hostage. The mother has been speaking about her family's terrible ordeal. She's said she wants the world to see the reality of the atrocities that took place during the Hamas attacks. Reeta Chakrabarti presents BBC News at Ten reporting by Anna Foster in Israel.

### **ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR: HOUSE TO HOUSE FIGHTING IN GAZA AS DEAD NEAR '10,000'**

[Channel 4 News](#) 5 Nov 2023 20min

Another large barrage of explosions has been reported in northern Gaza in the past hour, with reports communications and the internet have again been cut off. The Israeli army said today it had now struck "over two and a half thousand terror targets". More than 9,400 people have now been killed, according to figures from the Gaza health ministry - appointed by Hamas, which is designated a terrorist organisation by the UK.

### **WHY ISRAEL AND IRAN ARE ENEMIES | MAPPED OUT**

[DW News](#) 1 Dec 2023 13min 24sec

On April 13, 2024, Iran launched missiles and drones toward Israel, vowing retaliation for a deadly strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria, reportedly by Israeli forces. It was the Islamic Republic's first direct attack on its bitter enemy. Prior to the strikes, Iran and Israel had been engaged in a years-long shadow war — and attacks by the Iran-backed militant Islamist group Hamas on Israel in October 2023 had moved the conflict to a whole new level. What are the roots of the Iranian-Israeli conflict? And what role does Israel's number one ally, the US, play in it?

### **HORRORS OF HAMAS ATTACK ON ISRAEL INVESTIGATED**

[Channel4 News](#) 13 Dec 2023 8min

Israel is still a nation reeling from the trauma of the 7th October attacks, when around 1,200 people, mainly civilians, were killed by Hamas. Now more disturbing details are coming to the fore of horrific sexual violence perpetrated during the attacks.

The attacks began in the early morning with **A ROCKET BARRAGE** of at least 3,000 rockets launched against Israel and vehicle-transported and **POWERED PARAGLIDER** incursions into Israel.<sup>[24][25]</sup> Hamas fighters breached the **GAZA-ISRAEL BARRIER**, seizing the military bases around the barrier then overrunning Israeli communities, including in **BE'ERI**, **KFAR AZA**, and **NIR OZ**, and at the **NOVA MUSIC FESTIVAL**.<sup>[26][27]</sup> The attacks resulted in 1,139<sup>[F]</sup> deaths—including the killing of 695 Israeli civilians (36 of whom are children), 71 foreign nationals, and 373 members of the **SECURITY FORCES**.<sup>[G][32]</sup> Approximately 250 Israeli civilians and soldiers were **TAKEN AS HOSTAGES TO THE GAZA STRIP**, including 30 children, with the stated goal to force Israel to release **PALESTINIAN PRISONERS**.<sup>[33][34][35][36]</sup> Numerous accounts of **RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT** by Hamas fighters have been reported, which Hamas has denied.<sup>[37][38][39][40]</sup> (WIKIPEDIA)

## **FAILURE AT THE FENCE (FULL DOCUMENTARY)**

[Frontline PBS](#) 20 Dec 2023 28min 3sec

A visual investigation in collaboration with [@WashingtonPost](#) provides a detailed examination of how Hamas was able to breach Israel's vaunted security barrier on Oct. 7, 2023, and carry out its attack.

## **FROM THE SECOND INTIFADA TO OCTOBER 7TH (WITH DANIEL GORDIS)**

[EconTalk](#) 1 Jan 2024 1hr 4min

Over the 25 years he's lived in Israel, author Daniel Gordis of Shalem College has seen many chapters of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, beginning with the Second Intifada that followed the Oslo Accords. Listen as he and EconTalk's Russ Roberts discuss why Hamas's massacre of October 7th is different and an existential threat to Israel. They also speak about why Israelis are demanding a different response to Hamas than they have in the past, and how and why this war will change Israel and the Jewish People.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO GAZA AFTER THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR?**

[The Wall Street Journal](#) 25 Jan 2024 6min 27sec

Several proposals have been put forward to end the conflict between Israel and Hamas with the U.S., Egypt and Qatar pushing to de-escalate in phases. But major sticking points about who should govern Gaza are blocking progress as Israel doesn't want to govern and is against the top contender, the Palestinian Authority. So why is coming to a consensus for a ceasefire or peace deals so difficult? WSJ looks at where the key players stand, and why they're having trouble finding common ground.

## **DOES THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY FUND TERRORISM? EXPLAINED**

[Unpacked](#) 22 Feb 2024 12 min 36sec

The Palestinian Authority's "Martyr's Fund," also known as "Pay to Slay," pays the families of Palestinian terrorists who are imprisoned or killed for acts of terrorism against Israeli civilians. Despite attempts by Israel and other countries to both deter terrorism and incentivize the PA to end its "pay to slay" policy, the PA continues to find creative ways to successfully financially incentivize terrorism.

### **ISRAEL DAILY NEWS – WAR DAY 157, MARCH 11, 2024**

[ILTV Israel News](#) 11 March 2024 25min 27sec

Day 157 of the war in Gaza and still, no hostage deal has come through, despite the Ramadan holiday starting, and security is predicted to be unstable in the region. And much more.

### **THE GREAT MISINTERPRETATION: HOW PALESTINIANS VIEW ISRAEL**

[Shalem College](#) Haviv Rettig Gur 14 Mar 2024 1hr 43min

This program was made possible by the Asper Center for Zionist Education at Shalem College which provides an academic platform for meaningful engagement with Zionist ideas and history. Learn more at: <https://rb.gy/ly5cdr>

This lecture was delivered in January 2024 at the Shalem College Fear No Evil Study and Solidarity Mission, a program which brought 36 North American college students to Israel for a 10-day intensive learning experience

### **THE GREAT MISINTERPRETATION: HOW PALESTINIANS VIEW ISRAEL - HAVIV RETTIG GUR**

[Shalem College](#) 14 Mar 2024 1 hour 44 min

This program was made possible by the Asper Center for Zionist Education at Shalem College which provides an academic platform for meaningful engagement with Zionist ideas and history. Learn more at: <https://rb.gy/ly5cdr>

This lecture was delivered in January 2024 at the Shalem College Fear No Evil Study and Solidarity Mission, a program which brought 36 North American college students to Israel for a 10-day intensive learning experience.

### **EINAT WILF**

[Einat Wilf](#) 18 Mar 2024 1hour 16min

Dan Senior hosts Dr. Einat Wilf on a journey into the history of the conflict from the end of the Ottoman Empire until October 7 while examining the trends in the conflict and the conflicting ideologies of the parties. The conversation ends with a discussion about the possibility of peace and the changes required to reach it.

## **NETANYAHU: ISRAEL WILL STAND ALONE IF U.S. WITHDRAWS AID JERUSALEM DATELINE - MAY 10, 2024**

[CBN NEWS](#) 10 May 2024 24min 13sec

Netanyahu says Israel can fight with it's fingernails if Biden limits ammunition for deeper Rafah attack: Is Gaza death toll being used as propaganda? Some say yes. Suing advocacy groups for instigating university protests as second Hamas front.

## **ISRAEL FACES IRANIAN-BACKED HAMAS TO THE SOUTH AND HEZBOLLAH TO THE NORTH**

[60 Minutes](#) 13 May 2024 13min 56sec

Israel, preparing for a possible Rafah invasion, faces increased tension with the U.S. over the Gaza humanitarian crisis. To the north, it's also confronting Hezbollah attacks coming in from Lebanon.0020

## **THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT EXPLAINED ON A MAP**

[Geo History](#) 18 May 2024 33min 45sec

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, from the Ancient History of the Jews, until today.

## **ICC ARREST WARRANT FOR THE PRIME MINISTER MAY 21 IDSF DAILY BRIEFING**

[IDSF Daily War Briefing](#) 21 May 2024 30min 3 sec

Danny Seaman provides an update on the war and discusses the meaning of the ICC Arrest warrants for the Prime Minister and Minister of Defense sees the meaning of the ICC Arrest warrants for the Prime Minister and Minister of Defense

## **CAN ANTISEMITISM BE DEFEATED? MAY 22 IDSF DAILY BRIEFING**

[IDSF Daily War Briefing](#) 22 May 2024 30min 3 sec

Dr. Dan Diker discusses the success that Hamas and the PA have had in the international arena since October 7th, turning the villains into the victims, and frames the war into a much broader context.

## **WHAT IS HAPPENING TO WESTERN EUROPE? - MAY 29 IDSF DAILY BRIEFING**

[IDSF Daily War Briefing](#) May 29 2024 28min 55sec

Ambassador Eli Yerushalmi discusses the recent decision of Spain, Norway, and Ireland to recognize a Palestinian State, and what is happening across Europe

## **COGNITIVE WARFARE TO DELEGITIMIZE ISRAEL - MAY 30 IDSF DAILY BRIEFING**

[IDSF Daily War Briefing](#) May 30 2024 25min 22sec

Danny Seaman provides a war update and also talks about cognitive warfare

## **WHY SOME ARAB STATES SIDE WITH ISRAEL | MAPPED OUT**

[DW News](#) 22 Jun 2024 13min 50sec

Leaders of most Arab countries condemn Israel and the war in Gaza. Yet, some Arab governments maintain close ties with the state of Israel. They have a common enemy – and face an uneasy balancing act.

## **WHY THE MIDDLE EAST IS SO IMPORTANT TO THE US**

[BBC World Service](#) 16 Jul 2024 10 min 23sec

In that time friends have become foes, enemies have become allies and the United States of America has maintained an eager interest in the region - but why? Here are three reasons why the US is so involved in the Middle East. [00:00](#) Introduction [00:39](#) Middle Eastern oil and American weapons [02:58](#) US allies in the Middle East [06:20](#) Security threats and war in the Middle East [09:43](#) Power and influence in the Middle East

## **HAMAS IN GAZA | JERUSALEM DATELINE - AUGUST 23, 2024**

[CBN News](#) 23 Aug 2024 21min 49sec

IDF pounds Hamas and Hezbollah, Yahya Sinwar asks to not be killed. Analysis from John Waage re:U.S.& Israeli politics and Israel's war to exist. Iran's use of terror to control, without support of its people. Theodore Herzl, father of modern Zionism.

## **ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR: 11 MONTHS, 11 KEY MOMENTS 6 ISRAELI HOSTAGES KILLED, NO CEASEFIRE|**

[WION Wideangle](#) 5 Sept 2024 23min 31sec

Israel has recovered bodies of six hostages killed by Hamas from Gaza. Who are these 6 hostages? Massive Protests have erupted across Israel demanding action to save other hostages. Will there be any Ceasefire? Lebanon and Israel continue to exchange heavy fire As the war enters 12th month, we look at some key moments

## **OPERATION ORCHARD: THE EXPLOSIVE RAID ON SYRIA'S NUCLEAR FACILITY**

[Wonder](#) 7 Sept 2024 48min 16sec

The episode of Black Ops details a high-stakes Israeli operation to dismantle a secret Syrian nuclear reactor with the aid of Mossad and elite special forces, following intelligence that North Korea was assisting Syria. It describes the meticulous planning and execution of both an aerial strike, Operation Orchard (also known as Operation Outside The Box), and the subsequent assassination of General Muhammad Sulan to prevent Syria from reconstituting its nuclear program.

## **WHEN WILL HAMAS BE DESTROYED? - SEPTEMBER 9 IDSF DAILY BRIEFING**

[IDSF](#) 9 Sept 2024 20min 55sec

Brigadier General Res. Amir Avivi talks about the progress in the war in Gaza and the timeline until Hamas ceases to operate as a military and governmental entity. He also discusses the extent of damage that the IDF has caused to Hezbollah in southern Lebanon as well as the uptick of terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria.

## **WITNESSING TUNNELS UNDER KID'S BEDROOMS | ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR**

[Sky News](#) 14 Sept 2024 4min 55sec

Sky's Alistair Bunkall has visited Rafah in Gaza, where the city "is now a wasteland" after being "totally flattened" after months of war. Sky News was granted permission by the Israeli military to enter Gaza - though our team's movements were restricted and the material we gathered had to be authorised by the IDF. Read more here: <https://news.sky.com/story/tunnels-un...> [#skynews](#) [#israelhamaswar](#) [#middleeast](#) [#gaza](#)

## **NEW HOSTAGE DETAILS SHOCK ISRAEL; RELEASED HOSTAGES SPEAK OUT OF HORRIFIC HAMAS CRUELTY**

[TBN Israel](#) 15 Sept 2024 10min 18sec

Yair Pinto reports on the Hamas hostage crisis inflicting national heartbreak upon Israelis and the uncertain path towards the release of the remaining hostages. Hear from released hostages as they speak about the cruel, inhumane conditions they suffered under Hamas captivity, and from the mother of 23-year-old murdered American-Israeli hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin. Please join us in praying for the safe release of all remaining hostages.

This program was made possible by the Asper Center for Zionist Education at Shalem College which provides an academic platform for meaningful engagement with Zionist ideas and history. Learn more at: <https://rb.gy/ly5cdr>

## **HILLEL NEUER TESTIFIES BEFORE U.S. CONGRESS ON UNRWA AND THE COLONNA REPORT**

[UN Watch](#) 11 June 2024 26min

Delivered, May 17, 2024, before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Global Human Rights and International Organizations, U.S. House of Representatives, Hearing on Eliminating U.S. Aid to Terrorists – New Policies for the U.S. Government and Its Partners.

## **ANOTHER PRO-PALESTINIAN DESTRUCTION PROTEST BEGINS IN UK: COMPANIES DESTROYED BY ISLAMISTS**

[Traveller](#) 12June 2024 3min 36sec

Another Pro-Palestinian Destruction Protest Begins In UK: Companies Destroyed By Islamists: Dprt All  
Join us as we cover the latest Pro-Palestinian destruction protest in the UK, where companies were destroyed by Islamists. Stay tuned for updates and analysis on the situation.

## **WHY SOME ARAB STATES SIDE WITH ISRAEL | MAPPED OUT**

[DW News](#) 22June 2024 13min

Leaders of most Arab countries condemn Israel and the war in Gaza. Yet, some Arab governments maintain close ties with the state of Israel. They have a common enemy – and face an uneasy balancing act.

## **DECONSTRUCTING THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT: AN IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF HISTORY AND ILLUSIONS**

[Einat Wilf](#) 14 July 2024 1hour

The evolution of two key aspects over decades: the perpetuation of the Palestinian vision and the global mentality that led to the events of October 7, 2023. Dr. Wilf challenges prevailing illusions, addressing the roots of the conflict and the need for a radical vision to transform societies. Gain unique insights and confront the difficult questions surrounding the Middle East.

## **HAMAS IN GAZA | JERUSALEM DATELINE - AUGUST 23, 2024**

[CBN News](#) 23 Aug 2024 21min 49sec

IDF pounds Hamas and Hezbollah, Yahya Sinwar asks to not be killed. Analysis from John Waage re:U.S.& Israeli politics and Israel's war to exist. Iran's use of terror to control, without support of its people. Theodore Herzl, father of modern Zionism

## **IDSFISRAEL AT WAR: THE JEWISH PEOPLE'S PODCAST**

[The Jewish People's Policy Institute](#) 29 Sept 2024 44min 28sec

In this special episode, we discuss the significance of the elimination of Hezbollah Chief Hassan Nasrallah and the implications for Israel and the region going forward.

## VIDEOS – GAZA AND HAMAS

### THE SURVIVOR'S GUIDE TO GAZA

[SBS Dateline](#) 13 July 2016 23min 51

Gaza will be unliveable by 2020 according to the UN, with daily life already a struggle to find food and shelter, but Dateline finds the people bringing innovation and inspiration to the fight for survival.

Dateline reporters scour the globe to bring you a world of daring stories. Our reputation is for fearless and provocative reporting. Australia's beloved, award winning and longest running international current affairs program.

For more on Brett Mason's story, go to the SBS Dateline website... <http://bit.ly/29qC9X4>

### ISRAEL'S DISENGAGEMENT FROM GAZA HISTORY OF ISRAEL EXPLAINED

[Unpacked](#) 1August 2019 12min 9sec

This week, we're journeying to the Gaza Strip, a 25-mile long strip of land on Israel's southern border. Although Israel pulled out of Gaza almost 15 years ago, many people believe it still controls this small piece of land. Although some 8,800 Jews once lived in Gush Katif in the south of Gaza, Israeli life there ended there in 2005. During a long, hot summer, the country came to terms with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's unilateral decision to withdraw 100% of Israeli military forces and civilians from the territory.

So, why is Israel still embroiled with this tiny patch of land that it handed over a decade-and-a-half ago? How did the withdrawal take place? What has taken place since? And has the gamble to pull out of Gaza paid off? Let us know what you think in the comments below.

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE ISRAEL-GAZA CONFLICT

[HENRY ABRAMSON](#) 12 May 2024 1hour 2 min 52sec

A brief review of the history leading up to the current conflict. Part One of the Project Witness webinar series.

### HAS LIFE IN GAZA BECOME UNLIVABLE?

[The Newsmakers](#) 11 Mar 2020 25min 57sec

The Gaza strip is one of the most densely populated places on earth, and one of the most impoverished. Existence there means unsafe drinking water, few jobs, even fewer basic necessities and almost no chance of leaving. So, has life in Gaza become unlivable? And what responsibility does Israel have?

Efraim Inbar President of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, Mustafa Barghouti Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Dave Harden Former USAID Assistant for the West Bank and Gaza expose and prevent several Hamas terrorist attacks. He wrote a 2010 autobiography titled Son of Hamas.



## **VIDEO SHOWS ISRAELI MISSILES INTERCEPTING INCOMING ROCKETS NEAR GAZA**

[CNN](#) 8 Oct 2023 10min 56sec

CNN's Nic Robertson reports from Zikim, Israel, as missiles from Israel's Iron Dome defense system intercept rockets fired from Gaza just miles away.

## **HAMAS: THE TERROR GROUP BENT ON DESTROYING ISRAEL - AND THEMSELVES**

[Daily Mail](#) 12 October 2023 13min 2sec

They were one of the pioneers of the suicide bomb and have waged a decades-long campaign of terror against Israel. Hamas, founded as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, took control of Gaza after winning a shock election there in 2006 and now rules with an iron fist. On Saturday, they led an attack into Israel which killed at least 1,200 people - most of them civilians - with such brutality that the terror group is now being compared to ISIS. Their goal seems to have been to provoke Israel into a devastating ground war in Gaza in order to derail a new peace effort and send the Middle East spiralling back into conflict.

These are the deep contradictions at the heart of Sunni Hamas, their perhaps unlikely allies in Shia Iran, and how - together - they threaten to destabilise the world.

## **WHO IS FUNDING HAMAS? | DW BUSINESS SPECIAL**

[DW News](#) 14 October 2023 14min 58sec

The terror attacks against Israel have drawn new attention to the Hamas movement in the Gaza Strip – and its backers. Host Marie Sina is joined by Matthew Levitt, director of the Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. They discuss Hamas' main sources of funding, its ties to Iran and Russia, and the humanitarian situation for Palestinian civilians.

## **GRAPHIC RAW FOOTAGE: MASSACRE ACROSS ISRAEL FROM THE EYES OF HAMAS**

[Israel Defence Forces](#) 18 Oct 2023 10min

**WARNING: This video contains extremely graphic footage recovered from the Hamas invasion and massacre in southern Israel on October 7th, 2023.**

[0:05-3:08](#): Footage from car dashcams and security cameras showing Hamas entering Israeli communities, shooting civilians in their cars and as they were running away, and looting their bodies and vehicles. At [2:58](#), we see a Hamas terrorist throw a grenade into a bomb shelter; an Israeli runs out and the terrorist shoots him as he is running away

[3:12-8:10](#): Footage recovered from terrorists' cameras as they invaded the southern towns of Be'eri, Kfar Aza, Kissufim, and Re'em and broke into homes. At [6:35](#), we see a terrorist shoot the wheels of a parked ambulance. At [8:04](#), we see terrorists standing still in the midst of a red alert siren ("tzeva adom"),

due to their own rockets that they were firing into southern Israel at the same time as their invasion and massacre.

[8:13-10:49](#): Extremely graphic: the aftermath of the massacre in the Israeli southern towns. We see homes, including children's bedrooms, covered in blood; endless rubble; people burned alive in their cars; and a dog shot and disfigured.

## **WHO IS HAMAS? | EXPLAINED**

[Unpacked](#) 21 October 2023 15 min

On October 7, 2023, Hamas attacked Israeli civilians in southern towns and communities bordering the Gaza Strip, in what was the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Israel quickly declared war against the Gaza-based terrorist organization. With wars between Hamas and Israel breaking out every few years, one has to wonder...what is Hamas and how did it arise as the sole power governing Gaza today?

## **ISRAEL "SCREENS RAW, UNEDITED REAL-TIME FOOTAGE" OF HAMAS' OCT 7 MASSACRE, SCARRING PROOF SHOWS THIS**

[TIMES NOW](#) 23 October 2023 5min 7sec

Israeli govt led by Benjamin Netanyahu released unseen footage of the deadly attacks launched by Hamas militants on October 7 in Israel. Israel released "raw and unedited footage" of Hamas' atrocities on the October 7 weekend as captured by Hamas militants' bodycams. Watch for details.

## **GAZA IN JEWISH HISTORY**

[Henry Abramson](#) 9 Oct 2023 16min 3sec

A brief overview of Gaza in Jewish history, from the Bronze Age to the present day.

## **'SON OF HAMAS' TACKLES UNIVERSITY ANTISEMITISM, EXPOSES HAMAS 'HOLY WAR' TO WIPE OUT JEWS**

[CBN News](#) 9 Nov 2023 1:09

The son of a co-founder of Hamas is speaking out against the Palestinian terrorist group once again, this time to a pro-Israel, anti-disinformation group on the campus of the University of Michigan on Tuesday night.

As CBN News has reported, Mosab Hassan Yousef, the son of Hamas co-founder Sheikh Hassan Yousef, defected from the terrorist group in the late '90s and secretly worked with Israel's security services to

## **WHERE DOES HAMAS GET ITS MONEY? A LOOK AT THE MILITANT GROUP'S FINANCIAL NETWORK**

[CNA](#) 9 Nov 2023 2min 5sec

As the Israel-Hamas war enters its second month, the militant group's sources of funding are coming under closer scrutiny. The United States has signalled its intent to issue fresh sanctions targeting not just members of Hamas, but also those affiliated to the group. However, crippling its funding network will not be easy. CNA's Steve Lai explains.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF GAZA STRIP THE GAZA STRIP CONFLICT EXPLAINED: THE ESCALATING TENSION BETWEEN GAZA & ISRAEL**

[TBN Israel](#) 12 Dec 2023 11min 9sec

TBN Israel's Mati Shoshani breaks down the complex history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, beginning in 1947. Learn how the Gaza Strip was first established, the Oslo Accords' peacemaking effort and why Israel pulled its citizens and military from Gaza in 2005. Is the Gaza Strip truly the "biggest open prison in the world?" Watch now on TBN Israel!

### **IF HAMAS SURRENDER, THE WAR WILL END TOMORROW': ISRAELI GOVERNMENT**

[Sky News](#), Eylon Harvey 28 Dec 2023 10min

Israeli government spokesperson, Eylon Levy has told Sky News the war "will end tomorrow" if Hamas surrenders. Meanwhile Mr Levy said "a mistake was made" after "incorrect munition" was used in a strike on a refugee camp in central Gaza which killed at least 68 Palestinians.

### **DID 67 WORDS SPARK THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT? HAMAS EXPLAINED (PART 1/8)**

[CNA](#) 20 Jan 2024 23min  
C

In 1917, a controversial pledge was made. With just 67 words, the British promised to support the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Could this declaration have sparked the conflict?

Watch the full series: <https://cna.asia/israel-hamas-war>

### **HOW HAMAS FUNDS ITS \$1 BILLION WAR CHEST**

[4 News](#) Helia Abrahami 24 Feb 2024

Iran is thought to support Hamas financially to the tune of 100 million dollars a year.

But most of the one billion dollar war chest the group is thought to have accumulated, comes from investments.

From tower blocks in Turkey to copper mines in Sudan, Hamas' financial network spreads far and wide, carefully constructed to avoid Western sanctions. And some of it could also be hiding in London.

### **ISRAEL DAILY NEWS – WAR DAY 213 MAY 06, 2024**

[I24News English](#) 6 May 2024 25min

Day 213 of the war in Gaza and Israel commemorates victims of both the Holocaust and October 7th, in a heartbreaking memorial day. And much more.

### **CIVIL WAR IN GAZA: PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION DECLARES WAR ON HAMAS! PALESTINIANS JOIN ISRAEL**

[DCM](#) 6 May 2024 8min

Civil War in Gaza: Palestine Liberation Organization Declares war on Hamas! Palestinians Join Israel

## **SHOULD ISRAEL MAKE A DEAL WITH HAMAS**

[Kosher Tube](#) 8 May 2024 25min

In this Video you will find out about Should Israel make a deal with Hamas May 8 IDSF Daily Briefing 1

## **ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR - WHAT HAS ISRAEL ACHIEVED? WHAT IS ITS END GOAL?**

[Kings and Generals](#) 23 May 2024 19min 28sec

Kings and Generals animated historical documentary series on Modern Affairs continues with a video on the continuation of the conflict in Gaza, as the Israel-Hamas War goes on and Israel is attacking Rafah. Previously in this series we talked of the Israeli invasion of Gaza, as Israel invades south Gaza. The clashes between the IDF and Hezbollah continue in south Lebanon and the Houthi's attack the sea trade, leading to the operation Prosperity Guardian.

## **IDO AHARONI & DAN SHUEFTAN: THE REAL STORY OF OCTOBER 7TH**

[TAUVOD](#) Jun 2024 40min 55sec

Dr. Dan Schueftan is an Israeli academic and chairman of the National Security Studies Center at the University of Haifa. He also serves as a senior lecturer at Haifa University's School of Political Sciences. He was a visiting Professor (2012-2014) at the Department of Government at Georgetown University in Washington DC and a lecturer at the Israel Defense Forces National Defense College. For the last four decades he has been a consultant to Israeli decision makers and to the top echelon of Israel's Prime Minister's Office, Foreign Ministry, Defense Ministry, the IDF and The National Security Council.

[01:09](#) - What is the meaning of 7.10.23? [02:55](#) - Attacks from the public and the media [05:00](#) - Nationalism [06:17](#) - Progressiveness [08:30](#) - Pluralism [11:20](#) - Hamas VS extreme Islam [13:43](#) - Human rights [15:00](#) - United Nations Organization [18:00](#) - Demographics of the State of Israel [24:00](#) - Common threat - Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood [29:00](#) - US policy in the Middle East

## **HAMAS'S OCTOBER 7 ATTACK: A MINUTE-BY-MINUTE BREAKDOWN**

[The Military Show](#) 7 Oct 2024 22min 5sec

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a highly coordinated and devastating attack on Israel, leading to the deaths of over 1,200 people, making it one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in history. In this video, we provide a minute-by-minute breakdown of the events leading up to and during the attack, revealing how it was carefully planned for nearly three years. From rocket barrages to ground infiltrations, discover how this catastrophic day unfolded in Israel.

## TEL AVIV AND OCTOBER 7

[DW Documentary](#) 7 Oct 2024 42min 34sec

The Hamas terror attack of 7 October 2023 has had profound consequences in Israel, Gaza and beyond. This film asks how those in Tel Aviv have reacted to the subsequent war, and what they expect the future will bring.

In the summer of 2023, DW's Kai Steinecke was in Tel Aviv filming a lifestyle series. He met nightclub owners, creatives, restaurateurs, LGBTQ activists and architects, all working in what was a lively, liberal metropolis. Then came October 7th, and everything changed.

In May of 2024, the same people return to speak about their experiences in the wake of the attack, how daily life has changed for them, and what the future may hold for their country.

The result is a moving personal documentary and a portrait of a very different city to the one that was recorded a year ago. The square in front of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art has been renamed "Hostages Square", with empty chairs commemorating the kidnapped. At the once-bustling Carmel Market, many stalls are now deserted. And cultural center Habima Square, famous for its theatre and orchestra, now has a large illuminated sign stating: "Bring them home".

We accompany several people into their personal spaces as they show us how their individual, day-to-day lives have changed. The documentary lays these contrasts bare by juxtaposing present-day scenes with those filmed before October 7th, back when Tel Aviv was the "capital of cool" — a world-famous party city with the Middle East's largest spaces devoted to queer life and culture. Now, the city and the country are in shock.

One example is fun-loving bureka vendor Kobi Shmuel, who was drafted into the army and had to close his stall at Carmel Market. He was initially deployed in the Gaza Strip, where one of his comrades was killed. Or architect Shiraz Solomon, who showed us last year how she turned an old Templar building into luxury housing. Now the architect is helping others build bunkers for Israelis and accessible apartments for those injured in the war. The Palestinian workers that used to work on her construction sites are no longer allowed to enter the country.

Muhammad Zoabi, a university student and LGBTQ activist from an Arab-Muslim family, is dealing with the fact that a friend and fellow student was kidnapped at the Nova Festival on October 7th and has not been heard from since.

Shani Goldstein had led DW host Kai Steinecke through Tel Aviv in the original 2023 production. But now, because of the October 7th attack, the co-presenter has lost her jobs as a model and radio host. She doesn't understand why Israel is becoming increasingly internationally isolated as an aggressor.

These stories and others provide personal insights into a traumatized society. The film is a contemporary document that, despite deep sadness, also offers hope for a time after the war.

## **OCTOBER 7TH SURVIVOR RECOUNTS HORRORS WITNESSED AT NOVA FESTIVAL BY HAMAS | YAIR PINTO**

[TBN Israel](#) 8 Jun 2024 11min 39sec

Join Yair Pinto as he travels to Re'im forest, the site of the Nova Music Festival where Hamas killed hundreds of festival-goers and took at least forty hostages. Hear from terrorist attack survivor Rafaela Treistman as she recounts witnessing the savage attack and losing her boyfriend, Ranani Nidejelski Glazer. Please join us in praying for the release of the hostages, the truth about the war against Hamas to be told, and for the peace of Jerusalem.

### **LIVE: October 7<sup>th</sup>: One Year Later**

[ABC News](#) 7 Oct 2024 59min 6sec

Monday marks one year since the Israel-Hamas war began, the deadliest war in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. ABC News' Matt Gutman anchors from Tel Aviv. Martha Raddatz, Ian Pannell and Josh Einiger join to discuss the rising tensions in the Middle East.

### **WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR PALESTINIANS IN GAZA?**

[Unpacked](#) 17 July 2024 26min

Life for Palestinians in Gaza under Hamas has been extremely difficult. Palestinian civilians lack basic water, sanitation, and electricity infrastructures, as well as access to upward economic mobility and the rights to freedom of speech and self-expression. The constant suffering from rampant political and economic corruption has left civilians in Gaza with a sense of despair and a longing for a change in leadership.

### **THE NAZIS AND THE ARABS OF PALESTINE: THE UNTOLD (YET DOCUMENTED) CONNECTION**

[travellingisrael.com](#) 7 Aug 2024 18min

The Nazis and the Arabs of Palestine: the Untold (yet Documented) connection

### **THE EXTRAORDINARY ASSASSINATION OF ISMAIL HANIYEH IF YOU'RE LISTENING**

[ABC News In-depth](#) 16 Aug 2024 16min

In the early hours of July 31st this year, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in the Iranian capital Tehran. It's presumed Israel was behind the killing, with reports detailing a complex operation by its spy agency Mossad. So, if it was Israel that did this, why did they do it in such an extraordinary manner, and in Iran of all places? The answer tells us a lot about the complex political situation Israel finds itself in, where it feels the need for revenge, but only in a way that doesn't alienate its allies. Matt Bevan takes a look.

## **HAMAS ATTACK DEVASTATES ISRAEL**

[TBN Israel](#) 3 Oct 2024 52min10sec

Join Yair Pinto and Mati Shoshani as they **reflect on a year of war, survival, and resilience in Israel** since the events of October 7th, 2023. They discuss the challenges, the unity of the nation, and the lessons learned with personal stories from the frontlines. Mati and Yair also explore the impact on Israeli society, politics, and the military's response while looking ahead to a future of hope and strength. Stay up-to-date with the latest developments here on TBN Israel.

## **IDF STILL DESTROYING GAZA TUNNELS JERUSALEM DATELINE**

[CBN News](#) 16 Aug 2024 25min

No surrender from Hamas, U.S. pressure on Israel to take hostage deal. Evidence of Oct. 7 atrocities & Hamas planning, intv. with Adele Raemer in destroyed home. Roundtable re: fallacy of Western thinking, Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast in Sept in NYC.

## **SINWAR ON THE RUN IN A BURQA?**

[CBN News](#) 27 Aug 2024 24min

Israel plans no letup on Hezbollah & Yahya Sinwar reportedly evading capture in a burqa. Sheba Medical Center readies underground facilities, the US may be supporting Hezbollah with taxpayer dollars and UNIFIL fails to keep peace in Lebanon.

## VIDEOS – LEBANON AND HEZBOLLAH

### HEZBOLLAH: THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL MILITANT GROUP?

[DW News](#) 12 Jun 2020 11min 15sec

A terrorist organization? A militant group? A political party? On this episode of Unpacked we explain everything you need to know about Lebanon's Hezbollah — Iran's ally, Israel's enemy and one of most powerful actors in the Middle East.

#### WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH?

[Unpacked](#) 21 Sept 2022 11min

When Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini took control of Iran in the Islamic Revolution of 1979, no one could have predicted that would be a catalyst for the formation of the terrorist organization Hezbollah, or “Party ` God.” Since its inception, Hezbollah has grown from a small militant group in Lebanon to a massively well-funded organization hell-bent on destroying Israel. Despite retaliation from the Israel Defense Forces, Hezbollah’s power continues to grow and remains a serious threat to Israeli lives; a fact which will remain until true peace is found between Israel and Lebanon.

#### WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH

#### AND HOW DIFFERENT ARE THEY FROM HAMAS?

[Firstpost](#) Unpacked 15 Oct 2023 6min

After Hamas launched its terror attacks on Israel, Hezbollah too opened fire on Israel in the North. Because of this, Israel has beefed up its security presence on the Northern border with Lebanon. What is the Hezbollah group and how are they different from Hamas? On what aspects are the two groups alike and how do world powers see them? Hezbollah has outrightly shown support for Hamas' terror attacks on Israel, the question is whether Hezbollah join forces with Hamas or not.

### BRIGITTE GABRIEL’S AMAZING PERSONAL STORY AND LESSONS WE CAN TAKE FROM IT (EP 70)

[Common Sense with Dr. Ben Carson](#) 13 November 2023 50min 1sec

The implications of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine are far-reaching. The rise of radical Islamist groups like Hamas and the continued support for their anti-Israel agenda poses a threat not only to Israel but also to the stability of the entire Middle East. Dr. Carson welcomes national security analyst Brigitte Gabriel to the show to discuss her personal experiences growing up during the Lebanon Civil War and living in Israel. Her latest bestseller is “Rise: In Defense of Judeo-Christian Values and Freedom.” With her unique perspective, Gabriel shed light on the complexities of the Middle East and the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine. Her powerful story serves as a reminder of the importance of understanding the history and current dynamics of the region. Together, they delve into the key themes discussed in the interview, providing an in-depth exploration of each topic and analyzing their implications and potential impact. It is crucial for individuals to educate themselves about the complexities of the region as the war continues.



## HOW POWERFUL IS LEBANON'S MILITANT FORCE?

[Task & Purpose...](#) 14 Nov 2023 23min 50sec

(No Description)

## WITH WHAT CAN HEZBOLLAH THREATEN ISRAEL?

[Binkov's Battlegrounds](#) 8 Dec 2023 19min 41sec

This video explores what exactly could Hezbollah do, if it wanted to go into full-scale missile war with Israel? What sort of weapons and capabilities does it have? And what would be the final outcome of such a move against Israel? Watch the video to find out!

## WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH AND HOW IS IT LINKED TO THE ISRAEL-GAZA WAR?

[Al Jazeera English](#) 1 Feb 2024 12min29sec

The war in Gaza has reignited the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah - and there fears it could escalate into a full-blown war. What is Hezbollah? How did the group emerge in Lebanon? And where does Iran fit in? [#AJStartHere](#) with Sandra Gathmann explains. (go to site to see topics covered)

## LEBANON CRISIS: THE LAST HOPE

[Best Document](#) 19 April 2024 42min 26sec

Long considered the Switzerland of the Middle East, Lebanon is now going through the worst economic crisis in its history. 80% of the population lives below the poverty line. In one year, food prices have jumped 500% due to galloping inflation.

For Riad, who runs a grocery store in the suburbs of Beirut, business has become hellish. Every morning, calculator in hand, he changes the labels of his products according to the day's exchange rate. An operation all the more complex as his store is plunged into darkness, due to lack of electricity. The Lebanese government no longer provides more than two hours of electricity per day in the country. It is impossible for the population to heat, light or use their refrigerator. Taking advantage of the situation, a network of private generators has emerged.

The Lebanese pound, the local currency, has lost 90% of its value. The only ones to get away with it are those who are paid in dollars. The greenback, which is exchanged for a fortune against the local currency, has given birth to a new privileged social class in the country. A salesman in an international pharmaceutical company, Joseph lives like a king in a ruined Lebanon. Thanks to his new purchasing power, he repaid his house loan in two months, instead of... twenty years!

In a bankrupt state, plagued by corruption, six out of ten Lebanese citizens now dream of leaving the country. In Tripoli, in northern Lebanon, Mohammed and his son left by sea to reach Germany. Although their trip was cut short off the Turkish coast, the young father is still ready to take all the risks to reach the European El Dorado.

## **THREATENS ISRAEL BORDER**

[TBN Israel](#) Yair Pinto 27 April 2024 14min

Join Yair Pinto as he travels to the Israel-Lebanon border to report on Hezbollah's vast underground tunnel system. Learn about North Korea's role in developing these tunnels, what the terrorist organization is hiding in them and Israel's innovative solution to combat them. As tensions along the northern border continues to escalate, is all-out war with Hezbollah close? Don't miss this episode of My State on TBN Israel!

## **UNMASKING HEZBOLLAH - DRUG TRAFFICKING AND TERROR (1/3)**

[DW Documentary](#) 18 May 2024 51min

In 2008, the United States launched "Project Cassandra". The aim was to uncover how Hezbollah uses drug trafficking and money laundering to finance its military and terrorist activities. The three-part series tells the story of the project.

By 2008, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration had gathered sufficient evidence to show that Hezbollah had transformed from a military and political organization into an international crime syndicate. They were making billions from drug and arms trafficking, money laundering and other criminal activities. "Project Cassandra" was the ambitious, top-secret project designed to stop them.

On 4 August 2020, the city of Beirut was devastated by the explosion of hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate stored in the port. All eyes turned to Hezbollah, a Shiite party and militia linked to Iran that controls a large part of Lebanon. Despite pressure from both citizens and the international community, Hezbollah (literally: the "party of God") refused to allow any independent investigation into the causes of the explosion.

Hezbollah emerged in 1982 as a resistance organization against the Israeli occupation. Even then, it was supported by Iran. For 40 years, its fighters have infiltrated all areas of the Lebanese state and risen to become the country's dominant force.

In the mid-2000s, however, a handful of police officers from the American Drug Enforcement Agency (D.E.A.) attempted to bring down Hezbollah. They operated in the greatest secrecy. The code name of their operation: Cassandra. Their investigation begins in the United States, in the still-smoldering ruins of the World Trade Center.

The three-part series tells the story of "Project Cassandra," based on the testimony of DEA agents and other people involved. It also tells the story of the rise of Hezbollah and provides insights into complex geopolitical contexts.

## **UNMASKING HEZBOLLAH - WHO WAS BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION OF RAFIC HARIRI? (2/3)**

[DW Documentary](#) 18 May 2024 51min

In 2008, the United States launched "Project Cassandra." The aim was to uncover how Hezbollah uses drug trafficking and money laundering to finance its military and terrorist activities.

The three-part series tells the story of the project. This three-part series tells the story of "Project Cassandra" through the testimony of DEA agents and others who were directly involved. It is a story that helps explain the history and rise of Hezbollah and brings a complex geopolitical story to a wider audience. The assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri on February 14, 2005 sent Lebanon and the international community into shock. All eyes turned to Syria, which was accused of being behind the assassination. Bashar al-Assad's army, which had occupied part of the country, was forced to withdraw under pressure from the local population. With the Syrian withdrawal, Hezbollah lost a long-standing ally and protector. And it also found itself in the spotlight: suspected of complicity in the murder of Hariri.

## **UNMASKING HEZBOLLAH - MONEY LAUNDERING IN EUROPE (3/3)**

[DW Documentary](#) 18 May 2024 51min 55sec

In 2008, the United States launched "Project Cassandra". The aim was to uncover how Hezbollah uses drug trafficking and money laundering to finance its military and terrorist activities. The 3-part series tells the story of the project.

France has been the country of choice for Hezbollah fighters seeking asylum since 2010. France offers several benefits, including the possibility of integrating into a large Lebanese community and freedom of movement on European territory. Paris became a center for laundering money from the cocaine trade.

The D.E.A., the American Drug Enforcement Agency, alerted the French police. Together they opened a new chapter of Operation Cassandra, named "Operation Cedar," after the tree that symbolizes Lebanon.

## **IS ISRAEL ON THE BRINK OF WAR WITH LEBANON?**

[The Newsmakers](#) 7 Jun 2024 25min

Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged an intense retaliation for Hezbollah's attacks, some of which have led to perilous wildfires. This comes in the wake of Iran's warning that Israel will suffer a significant defeat against Hezbollah. Can tensions be diffused, or will Israel's war on Gaza extend to Lebanon?

## **HOW CLOSE ARE ISRAEL AND HEZBOLLAH TO AN ALL-OUT WAR?**

[DW NEWS](#) 29 July 2024 14min

The rocket strike from Hezbollah has renewed fears of an all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah. We take a look at the military capabilities both sides could draw upon. And for more on this, we talk to Efraim Halevy. He is a former head of Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad. He assesses for us how likely an open conflict is. DW correspondent Tania Krämer is following developments from Jerusalem. We ask her what this "severe response" against Hezbollah – that Netanyahu announced today – might look like...

## **ISRAEL LAUNCHES STRIKES IN LEBANON AND HEZBOLLAH FIRES HUNDREDS OF ROCKETS**

[BBC News](#) 25 Aug 2024 10min

Israel's military says it has conducted pre-emptive air strikes against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon after detecting plans for a significant attack against its territory.

Hezbollah also confirmed it had started "phase one" of an extensive attack on Israel, firing 320 Katyusha rockets and drones targeting 11 military sites.

About 100 fighter jets "struck and destroyed thousands of Hezbollah rocket launcher barrels" in more than 40 sites, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said.

At least one person was killed after an Israeli airstrike on a car in the southern Lebanese town of Khiam, according to the country's health ministry.

It is a major escalation in tensions, and follows the killing of a Hezbollah commander in Beirut almost a month ago.

## **HOW AND WHY DID ISRAEL BLOW UP HEZBOLLAH'S PAGERS?**

[The Telegraph](#) 18 Sept 2024 27min 25sec

It reads like something out of a spy thriller: thousands of pagers belonging to Hezbollah fighters exploded on Tuesday, killing at least 12 and wounding nearly 3,000 people. We bring you the remarkable story behind the attacks, believed to be caused by explosives planted in the devices by Israeli agents.

The Telegraph's Senior Foreign Correspondent Roland Oliphant tells us whether the plot against Iran-backed Hezbollah could trigger an all-out regional war. Plus, Jotam Confino reports from Israel on how local media are reacting to the audacious plot.

## **INSIDE THE 'GROUNDBREAKING' PAGER AND RADIO EXPLOSIONS TARGETING HEZBOLLAH**

[CNN](#) 19 Sept 2024 24min 23sec

At least 20 people were killed and more than 450 were injured after walkie-talkies detonated in Lebanon, according to officials, a day after a wave of pager explosions killed at least 12 people and injured more than 2,800. Catch up on CNN's coverage

## **HEZBOLLAH LEADER CALLS WALKIE TALKIE AND PAGER ATTACKS 'A DECLARATION OF WAR'**

[ITV News](#) 19 Sept 2023 10min 46sec

Nasrallah has accused Israel of two waves of attacks which 'crossed red lines', as Foreign Secretary David Lammy urges all British nationals to leave Lebanon.

## **ISRAEL ISSUES EVACUATION WARNING AS IT 'DEEPENS' ATTACKS ON LEBANON**

[Al Jazeera English](#) 23 Sept 2024 18min 3sec

People in Lebanon are receiving text messages and phone calls from a Lebanese number, instructing them to immediately move away from any posts used by Hezbollah, Reuters reports. Earlier, an Israeli military spokesperson issued a similar warning in a televised statement, stating that the message was being "distributed in Arabic on all networks and platforms in Lebanon." The Israeli army has been urging Lebanese civilians to "move away" from Hezbollah sites it plans to target and announced that it will carry out more "extensive and precise" strikes against Hezbollah. This marks the first warning issued by Israel's military to the Lebanese people since the Gaza war erupted nearly a year ago. Lebanese Minister of Information, Ziad Makary, reportedly received a call with a voicemail urging the evacuation of a building, according to the agency.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz says the military will act with full force - and won't stop until the threat of Hezbollah is removed.

Al Jazeera is covering this story from various locations. Zeina Khodr is near Tyre, where large explosions have taken place, and Imran Khan is reporting from southern Lebanon, where Israeli airstrikes are ongoing. Dorsa Jabbari brings updates from the capital, Beirut, while Zein Basravi, reporting from Amman, covers the Israeli army's stance. Al Jazeera's defence editor, Alex Gatopoulos, is in the studio providing military analysis.

## **WHAT THE ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT MEANS FOR LEBANON**

[DW News](#) 23 Sept 2024 14min 36sec

Israel's military began carrying out what it described as "extensive strikes" against Hezbollah, telling residents to evacuate areas close to buildings that are used by the militant group.

The new wave of airstrikes on Lebanon follow a weekend in which both sides exchanged hundreds of rockets. Some struck close to the Israeli port city of Haifa. Israel's defense minister says the operations will continue until residents can return to evacuated areas near the northern border with Lebanon. Hezbollah has said it will fight on until a cease-fire is secured in Gaza.

## **'IMMINENT CATASTROPHE' AS ISRAEL AND HEZBOLLAH RAMP UP RETALIATIONS**

[Times Radio](#) 23 Sept 2024 16min 48sec

"This long-feared full out regional conflict between these actors and Israel could occur at any moment."

The UN has warned of 'imminent catastrophe' in the Middle East as attacks between Israel and Hezbollah continue to escalate, says journalist Hunter Williamson.

## **ISRAEL GOES ON THE OFFENSIVE NEWS ON THE 700 CLUB**

[CBN News](#) 24 Sept 2024 5min 49sec

## **ISRAEL UNLEASHES HELLFIRE: 500 HEZBOLLAH TERRORISTS DECIMATED**

[Briefly](#) 24Sept 2024 5min

Israel unleashed a devastating aerial assault on Hezbollah, eliminating 500 terrorists in a single day. With 1,300 targets hit and more strikes to come, the message is clear: Israel will not wait for threats—it will destroy them. As Hezbollah retaliates, tensions are skyrocketing, and the stakes couldn't be higher.

## **HEZBOLLAH FIRES MISSILE AT TEL AVIV**

[BBC News](#) 25 Sept 2024 12min 55sec

Hezbollah has fired a missile towards the Israeli city of Tel Aviv early on Wednesday morning.

The Israeli military says air raid sirens sounded around Tel Aviv and central Israel, but the missile was intercepted and there were no reports of damage or casualties.

Hezbollah said the attack was directed at the headquarters of Israeli intelligence agency Mossad - in support of the "valiant and honourable resistance" of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and "in defence of Lebanon and its people".

Israel has been blamed for the pager and walkie-talkie attacks which set off the fighting last week, but it has not claimed responsibility for them.

Israeli media said this is the first time that Hezbollah has targeted the Tel Aviv metropolitan area.

The Israeli military says it has launched a new wave of strikes in southern Lebanon and the Beqaa area, describing them as "extensive".

## **JOHN KIRBY WEIGHS IN ON DEATH OF HEZBOLLAH LEADER HASSAN NASRALLAH**

[CNN](#) 29 Sept 2024 7min 38sec

White House national security communications adviser John Kirby responds to Israel's assassination of Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah

## **HEZBOLLAH FIRES 100+ ROCKETS IN MASSIVE ATTACK| ISRAEL ARMY HQ HIT SAFED, GALILEE, HAIFA STRUCK**

[TIMES NOW](#) 30 Sept 2024 3min 33sec

Hezbollah has released a video of its rocket attack on Israeli Army's Northern Command HQ near Safed region in north Israel. The rocket barrage comes after Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah was killed in an Israeli strike in Lebanese capital Beirut. Hezbollah fired nearly a 100 rockets at Israel. Watch this video for more information.#

## **IRAN ATTACKS ISRAEL AFTER LEBANON INVASION AND HEZBOLLAH KILLINGS**

[Channel 4 News](#) 1 Oct 2024 49min 48sec

Israel is invading Lebanon and Iran is attacking Israel.

Every one of these countries now at war, with tens of millions of people braced for what comes next.

A massive attack of ballistic missiles targeted cities across Israel, the revenge Iran promised after Israel killed the Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. It came as Israeli forces crossed the border into Lebanon telling people across the south to evacuate.

So far there has been no fighting between Israeli forces and Hezbollah, but two waves of Iranian missiles have been launched into central and southern Israel. It's not known how many struck targets on the ground.

Meanwhile Israeli airstrikes have struck across Lebanon all day, including in Beirut, and there has also been a suspected terror attack in Tel Aviv with at least six reported dead and nine injured.

There have also been attacks in Gaza, Syria and the Red Sea. The fighting that blew up almost a year ago is on the verge of becoming a full-blown regional war.

## **ISRAEL HEZBOLLAH LIVE | IDF ATTACKS HEZBOLLAH TUNNELS IN LEBANON, WHAT HAPPENED?**

[MIRROR NOW](#) (when recorded watching now - 1 Oct 2024)

*Started streaming 11 hours ago)*

*Israel Hezbollah Live | IDF Attacks Hezbollah Tunnels In Lebanon, What Happened?*

## **LIVE ISRAEL VS HEZBOLLAH WAR | IDF HITS HEZBOLLAH HARD, 1000 HEZBOLLAH ROCKET LAUNCHERS DESTROYED**

[ET Now](#)

Started streaming 20 Sept 2024

## **HOW ISRAELI FORCES ARE CARRYING OUT GROUND OPS TO DESTROY HEZBOLLAH'S TUNNELS**

[CNN-News 18](#) 4 Oct 2024 9min 48

Israel's defense forces continue their offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon, targeting the intricate network of tunnels used by the militant group. The Israeli army has been conducting covert ground operations for a year to dismantle these infrastructures in Lebanese villages near its border.

## **GROUND INCURSION INTO LEBANON BEGINS**

[CBN News](#) 2 Oct 2024 24min 44sec

The IDF in Lebanon, pushing Hezbollah away from Israel's border. A look at Hezbollah tunnels, blasted out of bedrock. CBN doc "The Genius of Israel", innovative trauma therapy by Israeli psychiatrist Gary Quinn and online series 'Israel Unfiltered'.

## **HEZBOLLAH'S UNDERGROUND TUNNELS EXPOSED!**

[Briefly](#) 10 Oct 2024 6min 2 sec

Tensions escalate as Lebanon's southern region mirrors Gaza's underground warfare. Hezbollah's vast tunnel network—spanning hundreds of kilometers—is a military backbone, built with Iranian and North Korean expertise. These underground cities house weapons, command centers, and provide safe haven from Israeli strikes. As Israel ramps up airstrikes on Hezbollah positions, questions loom: Could Lebanon's fate resemble Gaza's? With Hezbollah's rockets continuing to rain down on Israel, the region teeters on the brink of deeper conflict. Can Lebanon avoid Gaza's trajectory?

## **HEZBOLLAH PLOT TO MASSACRE NORTHERN ISRAEL UNDERCUT BY IDF**

[TBN Israel](#) 19 Oct 2024

TBN Israel's Yair Pinto travels to the Israel-Lebanon border to report on the Israel-Hezbollah conflict. Avraham Levine of the Alma Research Center gives an updated assessment of Hezbollah's military strength following intense IDF strikes eliminating its command structure and operations to dismantle its infrastructure. Could Iran enter into the conflict directly? Watch now on TBN Israel.



**AMAZING! UPDATE FROM ISRAEL. HAMAS IS DONE!**

[IsraelMyChannel](#) 20 Oct 2024 11min39sec

**FOUND NASRALLAH'S BUNKER  
HIDING \$500M IN GOLD, CASH UNDER BEIRUT HOSPITAL**

[CRUX](#) 22 Oct 2024 8min 21

The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) on Oct 21 said that an underground bunker was found beneath a Beirut hospital following airstrikes targeting Hezbollah's financial network. The Israeli military spokesperson claimed the bunker contained "at least \$500 million in cash and gold."

**AMAZING! UPDATE FROM ISRAEL. HAMAS IS DONE!**

[IsraelMyChannel](#) 20 Oct 2024 11min39sec

**ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH CEASEFIRE DEAL: A MODEL FOR GAZA?**

[DW News](#) 27 Nov 2024 13min 54sec

A ceasefire deal to end the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah has come into effect after Beirut residents endured the most intense day of Israeli strikes since the war began. At least 42 people were killed by Israeli strikes across Lebanon on Tuesday, according to local authorities. This morning, cars crowded the main roads as thousands of displaced Lebanese started to return south. Some people were celebrating the end of hostilities, at least for the moment. Under the truce agreement, Israeli and Hezbollah troops are to gradually withdraw from southern Lebanon, to be replaced by the Lebanese army, which says it is already "taking the necessary measures" to move in. Northern Israeli residents are also returning to their homes. What are the main obstacles for this agreement to hold? If it eventually works, could this ceasefire become a model for a similar agreement in Gaza?

## VIDEOS – SYRIA

### **OPERATION ORCHARD: THE EXPLOSIVE RAID ON SYRIA'S NUCLEAR FACILITY**

[Wonder](#) 7 Sept 2024 48min 16sec

The episode of Black Ops details a high-stakes Israeli operation to dismantle a secret Syrian nuclear reactor with the aid of Mossad and elite special forces, following intelligence that North Korea was assisting Syria. It describes the meticulous planning and execution of both an aerial strike, Operation Orchard (also known as Operation Outside The Box), and the subsequent assassination of General Muhammad Sulan to prevent Syria from reconstituting its nuclear program.

### **LIVE: ISRAEL ANNIHILATES SYRIA'S MILITARY ASSETS AFTER REBEL TAKEOVER | VANTAGE WITH PALKI SHARMA**

[Firstpost](#) 10 December 2024 1hour 1min 20sec

Israel has pounded Syria with hundreds of airstrikes since the fall of the Assad regime, destroying much of the country's military capabilities. The offensive, focused on eliminating Syrian weapons stockpiles and research facilities, has drawn condemnation from the Arab world and raised fears of a wider conflict in West Asia. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claims the attacks are pre-emptive, aimed at preventing arms from falling into the hands of extremist groups or Iranian-backed forces. The Syrian Navy appears to have been completely destroyed, with reports of extensive damage inflicted on port facilities. The new Syrian government, led by rebel forces, is yet to retaliate, but faces a precarious situation. With their military significantly weakened and Israeli troops stationed near Damascus, the rebels are under immense pressure. Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has accused Israel and the US of plotting the fall of the Assad regime. Israel's aggressive strategy in Syria is seemingly a high-risk gamble. On Vantage tonight, Palki Sharma tells you more.

### **ISRAEL ATTACK TODAY | ISRAELI NAVY ATTACKS LATAKIA PORT LIVE | SYRIA ISRAEL WAR | SYRIA NEWS | N18G**

[CNN-News18](#) 12 December 2024 Live

watching now Started streaming 11 hours ago [#syrianews](#) [#israelsyriawar](#) [#news18live](#)

Drone footage from Syria's Latakia showed damage caused to ships in the port on Wednesday (December 11) after Israel said it had conducted strikes on Syrian naval facilities.

Over the past 48 hours, following the collapse of the government of President Bashar al-Assad, the Israeli military said jets had conducted more than 350 strikes on targets including anti-aircraft batteries, military airfields, weapons production sites, combat aircraft and missiles.

In addition, missile vessels struck the Syrian naval facilities of Al-Bayda port. Fifteen Syrian naval vessels were docked in Latakia.

Israeli officials said the strikes across Syria were aimed at destroying strategic weapons and military infrastructure to prevent them being used by rebel groups that drove Assad from power, some of which grew from movements linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State.

## **ISRAEL ATTACKS HUNDREDS OF MILITARY TARGETS IN SYRIA**

[Channel 4 News](#) 10 Dec 2024 34min 7sec

Two days after the collapse of the Assad regime, the new de facto government is slowly taking shape, with the leader of the HTS stronghold in Idlib appointed as interim Prime Minister. And all as Syria continues to face Israeli incursions on land and sea.

## VIDEOS – ISLAMIC JIHAD

### OPERATION SHIELD AND ARROW STRIKING ISLAMIC JIHAD SITES IN GAZA

[CBN News](#) 12 May 2023 22min 27sec

Operation Shield and Arrow intercepting rockets and striking Islamic Jihad sites, examining how Israeli Jews and Arabs feel about Biblical Judea and Samaria

Incursion into Israel from Lebanon:

Palestinian Islamic Jihad group claims responsibility

### WHAT IS THE PALESTINIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD, THE GROUP BLAMED BY ISRAEL FOR GAZA HOSPITAL BLAST?

[The Print](#) 22 November 2023 4min

In 1974, Fathi Al-Shiqaqi, a refugee born in Rafah in Gaza shifted to Egypt to study medicine. There he hosted study circles in his apartment in al-Zigazag, where Palestinian students would gather to discuss everything from politics, to religion, to philosophy. These are the individuals who first moved back to Gaza in 1981 and formed the Palestinian Islamic Jihad -- the organisation Israel blames for the blast at the Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza, killing 500 people. What is this group, considered by many to be the second largest militant organisation operating in Gaza? Keshav Padmanabhan explains.

### GAZA'S MOST VIOLENT TERRORIST ORGANIZATION EXPLAINED

[Unpacked](#) 1 May 2024 12min 39sec

Beneath the media spotlight on Hamas lies a lesser-known but fiercely radical group: Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). PIJ has honed the brutal art of terror to imperil the notion of peace in the Middle East. From its foundation by Dr. Fathi Shaqaqi, a nerdy, poetry-loving, Gaza-born pediatrician with a penchant for revolutionary thought, to its reputation for pioneering suicide attacks, the PIJ's tactics have fueled a generational war against compromise and coexistence.

Harboring a dualism of nationalism and radical Islamism, the last three decades have proven PIJ's unyielding resolve to destroy Israel.

### INCURSION INTO ISRAEL FROM LEBANON: PALESTINIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD GROUP CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY

[Al Jazeera English](#) 9 Oct 2023 7min 33sec

The Palestinian armed group Islamic Jihad has taken responsibility for the incursion into northern Israel, from Lebanon.

Earlier on Monday, the Israeli military said its soldiers, backed by helicopters, killed fighters who attempted to infiltrate from Lebanon.

Some residents on the Lebanon-Israel border have left their homes, out of fear of escalation on that front. Al Jazeera's Ali Hashem joins us on the line from Southern Lebanon for the latest developments.

## VIDEOS – GAZA TUNNELS

### **WHY THE MAZE OF TUNNELS UNDER GAZA IS KEY TO THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR**

[The Wall Street Journal](#) | 26 October 2023 5min 43sec

Israel is gearing up for a possible ground offensive of Gaza. Underneath the Palestinian enclave sits a labyrinth of tunnels used by Hamas as a key military asset. These tunnels were used by Hamas militants in Israel's seven-week war on Gaza in 2014 allowing for Hamas to hide weapons, equipment and troops. WSJ's Rory Jones – who visited them in 2014 – explains how they pose a unique challenge to Israel and could make urban combat costly for both Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians.

### **HAMAS TUNNEL NETWORK | ISRAELI MILITARY IS REPORTEDLY FLOODING HAMAS TUNNELS IN GAZA**

[CNN-News 18](#) | 13 Dec 2023 4min 34sec

The Israel Defense Forces has begun flooding Hamas' extensive network of underground tunnels beneath the Gaza Strip.

The US officials cited in the report reveal that last month, the IDF installed five large water pumps near the al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City, each capable of pumping thousands of cubic meters of seawater per hour, and recently added two additional pumps.

### **INSIDE HAMAS' TUNNELS UNDER AL SHIFA HOSPITAL IN GAZA**

[shiezoli](#) | 22 Nov 2023 15min 22sec

IDF releases footage from Hamas' expansive tunnel network under Gaza's primary medical center, revealing a series of well-appointed underground spaces

### **HOW DID HAMAS BUILD "HIGH-TECH" TUNNELS BELOW GAZA? VANTAGE WITH PALKI SHARMA**

[Firstpost](#) | Dec 2023 8min 17sec

Israel has uncovered a tunnel below the house of top Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar. The tunnel had elevators, electricity shafts and storage spaces. How did Hamas build this vast network of tunnels? Palki Sharma tells you

## **HAMAS TUNNEL HOW IS IT MADE**

[AiTelly](#) 11 Nov 2023 4Min47sec

Hamas tunnels use different tunneling methods, ranging from simple manual strategies to slightly advanced methods like forepolling and drilling blasts. They also employ reinforced concrete to support the underground structures, which are divided into approximately 7 to 8 levels deep underground. These tunnels are intentionally dug deep to protect against bunker-buster bombs like the one mentioned. The network comprises an estimated 1,300 tunnels, spanning a total length of around 500 kilometers which translates to 310 miles. Some of these tunnels delve as deep as 70 meters (230 feet) underground. Reports indicate that the majority of the tunnels are merely two meters high and two meters wide.

## **HOW ISRAEL'S FORCES PLAN TO DESTROY THE HAMAS-OPERATED TUNNEL SYSTEM**

[DW News](#) 20 Oct 2023 7min 1sec

If Israel launches its ground offensive into Gaza, its forces will presumably have to deal with hundreds of kilometers of tunnels under the territory. The network is used by militant-Islamists Hamas and other jihadist groups. It is also believed to contain Hamas command centers

## **IDF UNCOVERS PROOF OF HAMAS HEADQUARTERS UNDER SHIFA HOSPITAL**

[TBN Israel](#) 28 Oct 2023 3min1sec

TBN Israel's Yair Pinto reports from the frontlines of the Israel-Gaza War while on active duty with the IDF. Pinto breaks down how the IDF has uncovered irrefutable proof of the existence of a major HAMAS headquarters located under the Shifa Hospital compound. Pinto encourages believers to continue praying for the destruction of Hamas and the peace of Jerusalem. Stay up-to-date with the latest developments here on TBN Israel.

## **INSIDE THE HAMAS TUNNELS LYING UNDERNEATH AL SHIFA HOSPITAL IN GAZA**

[Times Radio](#) 23 Nov 2023 8min 49sec

"The tunnel comes up in a mosque and goes back to the hospital, comes out in a school, goes back to the hospital - that's the system."

Israeli soldiers explain the tactics Hamas uses to carry out their attacks.

## **HOW DID HAMAS BUILD "HIGH-TECH" TUNNELS BELOW GAZA?**

Vantage with Palki Sharma

[Firstpost](#) 21 Dec 2023 8min17sec

Israel has uncovered a tunnel below the house of top Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar. The tunnel had elevators, electricity shafts and storage spaces. How did Hamas build this vast network of tunnels? Palki Sharma tells you.

## **ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR: 700 TERROR TUNNEL SHAFTS IN AFAH, 50 TO EGYPT ISRAEL SAYS**

[LiveNOW from FOX](#) 18 May 2024 13.00min0sec

Nearly 700 tunnel shafts have been identified in Rafah with 50 tunnels leading directly from Gaza's southernmost city into Egypt, Israeli attorney Gilad Noam told the International Court of Justice on Friday. Noam was representing Israel during the two-day emergency hearing after South Africa had called for the ICJ to order a stop to Israel's full-scale operation into Rafah.

During the hearing, Noam explained that Hamas was using the tunnels to supply itself with weapons and ammunition, but that the tunnels could even be used to smuggle hostages out of Gaza.

More than 100 of the hostages kidnapped by Hamas and other terror groups from Israel on Oct. 7 are believed to still be in Gaza, more than seven months later.

Israel has said it will move forward with its full-scale operation into Rafah, in part, to rescue those remaining hostages.

Dr. Asaf Romirowsky, the Executive Director of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East joined LiveNOW from FOX's Josh Breslow to discuss the latest developments in the Middle East, including the newest information on the fight between Hezbollah and Israel.

## **ISRAEL RELEASES VIDEO OF GAZA TUNNEL WHERE IT SAYS HAMAS KILLED 6 HOSTAGES**

[Associated Press](#) 10 Sept 2024 1min 26sec

The Israeli military has released video footage of a Gaza tunnel where it says six hostages were recently killed by Hamas. The discovery of the hostages' bodies last month sparked a mass outpouring of anger in Israel. Read more: <https://bit.ly/4gidHWq>

## **ISRAEL CUTS OFF HAMAS' OXYGEN, TAKES CONTROL OVER PHILADELPHI CORRIDOR**

[Briefly](#) 30 May 2024 6min 33sec

Israeli Defence Force (IDF) announces control over the Philadelphi Corridor, a critical 14 km stretch along the Gaza-Egypt border known as 'oxygen for Hamas.' The Israeli military discovered at least 20 smuggling tunnels and numerous rocket launchers, revealing Hamas's extensive underground network. This strategic move will reshape the landscape of the conflict.

## **AIRSTRIKES IN GAZA KILL 14; ISRAELI FORCES SHOW TUNNEL SYSTEM**

[CBS News](#) 14 Sept 2024 2min 31sec

Israeli airstrikes have hit southern Gaza overnight, killing at least 14 people. One strike was captured by the rooftop camera where a local CBS News team is based. Meanwhile, the Israeli military gave CBS News a glimpse of the extensive network of Hamas-built tunnels uncovered under Rafah.

## **VIDEOS – GOLAN HEIGHTS**

### **WHY IS THE GOLAN HEIGHTS SO IMPORTANT?**

[The National News](#) 2 Aug 2018 2min 34sec

The Golan Heights is one of the most prized pieces of land in the Middle East and it has been that way for millennia. It officially belongs to Syria, but Israel has occupied it since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, a seizure considered illegal under international law. Here's a look at how and why it's such an important region.

### **THE GOLAN HEIGHTS ITS BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, AND GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

[FAI STUDIOS](#) 7 Jan 2020 9min 35sec

A video update from Dalton Thomas about the escalating conflict in the Middle East and why we are investing into the establishment of the Golan Heights Legacy Center on Israel's strategic borders of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. In this dispatch Dalton explains why the Golan Biblically, historically, militarily, and geopolitically consequential.

### **TRUMP ANNOUNCES RECOGNITION OF GOLAN HEIGHTS AS PART OF ISRAEL**

[Fox News](#) 25 Mar 2019 12min 44sec

President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are expected to make an announcement on recognition of the Golan Heights as part of Israel.

### **HOW DO THE DRUZE RESIDENTS OF THE GOLAN HEIGHTS IDENTIFY AT THE BALLOT BOX?**

[i24NEWS English](#) 22 Oct 2022 8min 4sec

We zoom in on the town of Majdal Shams on the Israel-Syria border, to find out how the growing number of Druze Israeli citizens may vote in the upcoming election.

### **GOLAN HEIGHTS ATTACK: WHY THE GOLAN HEIGHTS IS A MIDDLE EAST FLASHPOINT**

[WION](#) 29 July 2024 2min 55sec

A rocket attack on a football pitch in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights killed at least 12 young people. The attack has sparked fears of a wider regional Middle East conflict. Hezbollah denied taking responsibility, but Israel has blamed the Lebanese group for the deadly attack.



## **ISRAEL BOMBS BEIRUT IN REVENGE FOR GOLAN HEIGHTS ROCKET; STRIKES HEZBOLLAH STRONGHOLD**

[Firstpost](#) 31 July 2024 12min 40sec

Almost 10 months after the Israel-Hamas war began, today, the spotlight has turned from Gaza to the Golan Heights. Twelve children were killed after a rocket strike hit a football pitch in the Golan Heights, an Israel-annexed territory disputed with Syria. Israel says it is the deadliest attack on its people since October 7. Israel has vowed revenge and has said the enemy will pay a heavy price. The attack forced Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to shorten his US trip and return home. For a war with already widening fronts, why is the focus now on Golan Heights? What is the significance of this disputed territory? What is the Golan Heights dispute? Watch this video for details.

## VIDEOS – WEST BANK

### ISRAEL SETTLEMENTS PART 1

[Unpacked](#) 10 Oct 2019 11min 13sec

There are few words more divisive in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than “settlements.” Some people believe Israelis have every right to live in the West Bank / Judea and Samaria. Others believe Israel’s presence there is a key reason for the ongoing conflict.

And that’s not to mention the countless views of everyone in the middle of these two extremes.

Because the Israeli settlements are such a major issue, we’ve created a series of five videos to look at this controversial subject from every angle.

In the coming weeks, we will get stuck into this thorny topic. To start with, we’re going back to basics and looking at what the settlements are and how they came into being.

### ISRAEL SETTLEMENTS PART 2

[Unpacked](#) 17 Oct 2019 `11min 52sec

This week, we’re continuing our in-depth look at the Israeli settlements. To get a better understanding of the subject, we’re jumping back to biblical times to unpack the Jewish connection to Judea and Samaria (the West Bank).

As with everything Jewish, it all starts with Abraham. This was a man who spent much of his time on the move - much of it in what we now call the West Bank.

And it wasn’t just Abraham. His descendants (and later, generations of Jewish people) also spent a lot of time in Judea and Samaria, creating a long-lasting connection with places such as Hebron, Shechem (Nablus), Beit El, Gilgal and Gibeah.

A connection that couldn’t be broken through thousands of years of exile.

Fast forward to the 20th century where events in two separate communities - the ancient city of Hebron and the modern agricultural village of Kfar Etzion - took on a powerful symbolism for Jewish resettlement in the West Bank.

### ISRAEL SETTLEMENTS PART 3

[Unpacked](#) 24 Oct 2019 11min 13sec

When you hear the words “Israeli settler,” you probably think religious, radical, living in the middle of nowhere. But the truth is there are all kinds of settlers and all kinds of settlements.

There are so many reasons people live in the settlements - and they’re not always what you think. Some settlers live in the West Bank for ideological reasons; others live there because it’s cheap.

Some settlers are religious; others are secular. Some settlers made a conscious decision to live in Judea and Samaria; others grew up there and want to be close to family.

This week we’re breaking through the stereotypes, shutting down the misconceptions and learning a thing or two about the settlers and the settler movement.

### PALESTINIANS SETTLEMENTS PART 4

**UNPACKED** 31 Oct 2019 12min 10sec

This week, we're looking at the Israeli settlements from another angle: the Palestinian perspective. We don't (and can't) speak for the Palestinians, and we're not trying to tell their story. However, to unpack the settlements, we have to consider the Palestinian viewpoint.

To do so, we're using facts compiled by various organizations and experts, along with first-hand accounts to get a better understanding.

**PALESTINIANS SETTLEMENTS PART 5****UNPACKED** 7 Nov 2019 8min 50sec

In the final episode of our Israeli settlements mini-series, we look at the six core issues at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and examine the different attempts at peace over the years.

Time and again solutions have been put forward, but so far they've come to nothing.

But it doesn't mean peace is impossible.

It's been 25 years since Israel and Jordan signed a peace deal and although things have been on the cold side lately, the peace is still holding. As is the peace agreement with Egypt, which was signed in 1979.

So, if these countries - once Israel's fiercest enemies - could put their differences aside and make peace, why can't the Palestinians?

Do you think there will ever be peace between Israel and the Palestinians? What do you believe are the main stumbling blocks?

**WHY DID ISRAEL BUILD A WALL AROUND THE WEST BANK?****UNPACKED** 11 Oct 2023 14min 21sec

[Note: This video was created before the horrific attack by Hamas on the people of southern Israel and the outbreak of the October 2023 war.

The separation barrier that divides the West Bank from western Israel, often referred to as the Apartheid Wall, is the source of much debate in both Israeli and Palestinian societies. For some, it serves to protect Israeli citizens. For others, it enforces an unequal system of oppression of Palestinians. And while for many it is simply a visual reminder of the continued failure of the peace process, Israel remains a land of hope.

## VIDEOS - YEMEN

### **PALESTINIANS ARE STILL REWARDING TERRORISTS WITH SHOCKING 'PAY TO SLAY' POLICY**

[CBN News](#) 18 Dec 2021 4min 10sec

After American student and veteran Taylor Force was murdered in a terror attack in Israel, his parents began a campaign to end the Palestinian government policy known as "pay to slay". They won a major victory in 2018 when the Taylor Force Act became law, but Stuart and Robby Force recently discovered their work isn't finished.

Now, they're back on Capitol Hill working to pass legislation that goes even further than the Taylor Force Act to close a loophole that's allowing banks to make payments to terrorists.

Read the full s

story from CBN's Abigail Robertson: <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/israel/2...>

### **WHO ARE THE HOUTHIS ATTACKING RED SEA SHIPS? YEMEN'S HIDDEN AGONY**

[Best Documentary](#) 11 Jan 2023 58min 48sec

Sanaa, in Yemen: this city is cut off from the world. In the last years, a terrible war has rendered it isolated. Millions of inhabitants are living under an embargo, in one of the most inaccessible places on the planet.

### **DIRTY WAR IN YEMEN: 7 YEARS OF CRUELTY, FAMINE AND SUFFERING | INVESTIGATIVE DOCUMENTARY**

[Java Discover](#) 5 Sept 2023 58min 50sec

After seven years of war, there is no end in sight to the suffering in Yemen. In this exclusive film, we report on the situation in the north-west of Yemen, held by the Houthis. 21 million people live in this enclave. There, since 2015, out of sight, a dirty war has been going on. Sana'a, North of Yemen. One of the most inaccessible places on the planet. For the past six years, Ansar Allah, a political and military movement created by powerful families from the North, has seized control. But Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are determined to reinstall the ousted Yemeni president. They see the Houthi rebels, who belong to the Zaydist branch of Islam, as heretics who pose a threat to Wahhabism. Using weapons provided by the West, they relentlessly bombard the North in a dirty war. Over 230,000 Yemenis have already died. A strict, expertly maintained embargo is also starving the population. According to UN agencies, Yemen is facing one of the worst famines in the world with 400,000 children reportedly at risk of death. New diseases have appeared since the beginning of the war and there has been a sharp increase in babies born with abnormalities. But the war in Yemen is about more than just competing religious ideologies. Yemen owns substantial and underexploited oil reserves and controls roads leading to the Suez canal.

This documentary was first released in 2021.

### **WHO ARE THE HOUTHIS ATTACKING RED SEA SHIPS?**

[BBC News](#) 22 Dec 2023 6min 21sec

Global supply chains could face severe disruption as a result of the world's biggest shipping companies diverting journeys away from the Red Sea.

Attacks by Houthis in Yemen on commercial vessels in recent weeks have resulted in many firms deciding to avoid one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

The Houthi group has declared its support for Hamas and has said it is targeting ships travelling to Israel. But who are the Houthis? What are their motivations? And what are their links to Iran? The BBC's analysis editor Ros Atkins explains.

### **YEMEN: HOUTHİ FURY**

[ARTE.TV Documentary](#) 11 Sept 2024 25min 18 sec

The Houthis rule a third of Yemen with an iron fist, after ten years of civil war. Their ideology is as ferociously anti-American and antisemitic, as it is pro-Palestine with young people indoctrinated into a strict religious view of the world that burns with anger.

### **EGYPT & EAST AFRICAN SHIPPERS SUFFERS AS YEMEN'S HOUTHİ REBELS DISRUPT INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING**

[The New Africa Channel](#) 25 Dec 2023 10min 33sec

It is no secret that East Africa plays a pivotal role in the arteries of global trade, serving as a crucial link between the resource-rich continent and the bustling markets of Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Its strategic location on the Red Sea and Indian Ocean has attracted maritime activity for centuries, and today, its modern ports and vital waterways handle a significant portion of the world's goods. (Go to site for remainder of text)

### **HOW YEMEN IS WRECKING THE ENTIRE GLOBAL ECONOMY**

[RealLifeLore](#) 17 Jan 2024 37min 27sec

### **JORDAN TO ISRAEL'S RESCUE? AMMAN SENDS GOODS TO TEL AVIV VIA LAND ROUTE EVADING RED SEA HOUTHİ SIEGE**

[Times New World](#) 6 Feb 2024 4min 35sec

Arab nations Jordan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are reportedly helping Israel bypass the Houthi threat in the Red Sea as it wages war on Gaza. The UAE is transporting goods to Israel via Jordan on a new land route, as per a report by the Middle East Eye. Israel-linked ships have been targeted and attacked by the Yemeni Houthis in the Red Sea to pressurize Tel Aviv to end its deadly assault on Gaza since the Oct 7 Hamas attack. Angry Jordanians have held protests across the country denouncing the transportation of goods to Israel while demanding the government sever ties with Tel Aviv. Watch for details.

## **THE WAR IN YEMEN, MAPPED**

[Johnny Harris](#) 17 May 2024 22min 8sec

The war in Yemen has created one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, and it's been made worse by outside actors. Countries using the war in Yemen as a proxy to increase their own power and influence, but with a massive human cost.

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The Houthis rule a third of Yemen with an iron fist, after ten years of civil war. Their ideology is as ferociously anti-American and antisemitic, as it is pro-Palestine with young people indoctrinated into a strict religious view of the world that burns with anger.

## **TORN APART - YEMEN IN THE GRIP OF THE HOUTHİ MILITIA**

[DW Documentary](#) 24 Sept 2024 28min 26sec

The Houthi movement has established totalitarian rule in northern Yemen. Who are these militants who invoke the Prophet Mohammed, fire rockets at Israel and paralyze world trade with their attacks on Red Sea shipping?

Ten years of civil war have brought Yemen to its knees. In the north, Houthi militias have established a strictly isolated dominion in which oppression, displacement and hunger are rife. It's a police state, where the security apparatus monitors where people go and what they say. Meanwhile, international organizations describe the situation in Yemen as one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters.

Ten years ago, Yemen's capital, Sanaa, was captured by Houthi fighters, forcing the internationally recognized government to the south. Today, patched-together flags of both Yemen and Gaza fly over the walls of the old city center. The atmosphere is fueled by Houthi propaganda. Israel's attacks on Gaza bring back memories in Yemen, where thousands of civilians have died in airstrikes by the Saudi-led, Western-backed military alliance. Everywhere, there are pictures of militiamen who have been killed in the fighting — often, they look like children.

Recently, Houthi attacks on Israel and on ships in the Red Sea have brought the militia back into the public eye. Waging what they describe as a holy war helps them domestically, allowing them to divert people's dissatisfaction towards an external enemy.

This documentary provides a rare look at the Houthis and the territory they control. The filmmakers meet fighters, but also the victims of Houthi militias — Yemenis fighting desperately for their children's survival, who have almost given up hope of peace.

## VIDEOS – TEACHING PALESTINIAN CHILDREN

### SENATE HEARING: PALESTINIAN EDUCATION & THE FUTURE OF PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

[palwatch](#) 31 May 2010 5min 10sec

US Senator Arlen Specter, US Senator Hillary Clinton, Palestinian Media Watch director Itamar Marcus and others discuss the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace and the issue of Palestinian education and indoctrination to violence and hatred in Palestinian society.

#### WHAT DOES THE UN TEACH PALESTINIAN CHILDREN AT UNRWA SCHOOLS?

[The Line of Fire](#) 8 Aug 2014 12min14sec

What does the UN teach Palestinian children at UNRWA schools? (H/T to Israel Resource News Agency, Center for Near East Policy Research) [Show transcript](#)

#### CHILLING FOOTAGE OF KINDERGARTNERS RE-ENACTING TERRORIST DRILLS IN GAZA

[New York Post](#) 8 Jun 2016 1min 3sec

Footage has surfaced of one of the most unsettling kindergarten graduation ceremonies ever. Young children in Gaza are shown re-enacting terrorist training activities, demonstrating how young people are being indoctrinated over there.

#### WHAT ARE PALESTINIAN CHILDREN READING IN THEIR TEXTBOOKS?

[i24NEWS English](#) 16 May 2019 5min0sec

Articles: <https://www.i24news.tv/en> Live: <https://video.i24news.tv/page/live?cl...>  
Replay: <https://video.i24news.tv/page/5a97b81...>

#### HOW THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY ABUSES ITS CHILDREN | PART 1 OF 6

[Videos The Israel Group](#) 1min 36

#### INSIDE THE GAZA SUMMER CAMPS TRAINING CHILDREN TO BE THE NEXT GENERATION OF TERRORISTS

[CBN News](#) 19 Jul 2021 3min 18sec

When summer camp for kids comes to mind you might think of swimming, boating and hiking. Summer camp in the Gaza Strip is more like a military boot camp.

## **THE ROLE OF “JEWS” AND “ISRAEL” IN SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS ACROSS THE ARAB WORLD**

[INSS ISRAEL](#) 30 August 2023 38min 50sec

In today's podcast, INSS researcher Adi Kantor sits down with Arik Agassi, COO and Head of Global Partnerships at the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-se), and an expert in the field of global policy and education. Agassi leads the work of a think tank that analyzes curricula around the world through UNESCO-defined standards. IMPACT-se's work stimulates positive changes in school textbooks, and its policy recommendations have been used as roadmaps by many governments for introducing systematic reforms in national curricula worldwide. What is the role of a textbook in an era of social media? What influence does it have on young readers, and what role does it play in state policy? How are “Jews” and “Israel” perceived in textbooks across the Arab world? What explains the differences between countries, and what role do educators have? And, finally, what can be done in order to reduce the spread of antisemitic and anti-Israel texts in these books?

### **WAR THROUGH THE EYES OF GAZA'S CHILDREN**

[The New York Times](#) 30 Oct 2023 3min 17sec

At a U.N. camp in southern Gaza, children have been forced to flee their homes and live in squalid conditions while trying to make sense of a war with no end in sight.

### **‘SON OF HAMAS’ CO-FOUNDER DENOUNCES GROUP AT UN, EXPOSES SAVAGE' INDOCTRINATION OF PALESTINIAN KIDS**

[CBN News](#) 21 Nov 2023 30min 12sec

The son of a co-founder of Hamas blasted the terror organization in a blistering half-hour speech at the United Nations on Monday.

Mosab Hassan Yousef, the son of Hamas co-founder Sheikh Hassan Yousef, defected from the terrorist group in the late '90s and secretly worked with Israel's security services to expose and prevent several Hamas terrorist attacks. He wrote a 2010 autobiography titled Son of Hamas.

Yousef, 45, now endeavours to expose the true face of Hamas' genocidal death cult.

### **UNRWA HAVE CREATED A PALESTINIAN TERRORISM EDUCATION SYSTEM.**

[AIJAC](#) 3 Dec 2023 7min 0sec

UNRWA have created a Palestinian terrorism education system.

### **WHAT ARE PALESTINIAN CHILDREN READING IN THEIR TEXTBOOKS?**

[i24NEWS](#) English December 2023 5min 0 sec



## **THE PALESTINIAN CURRICULUM: WHAT UNRWA HELPS TEACH CHILDREN IN GAZA**

[AIPAC](#) 1 Feb 2024 19min 7 sec

Marcus Sheff is the CEO of Impact-SE, an international research, policy and advocacy organization that monitors and analyzes education around the world. Impact-SE uses internationally derived standards of peace and tolerance to examine curriculum. This includes looking at how textbooks teach respect for one another, peace making, historical accuracy and gender equality. If misused, textbooks are can be an authoritative tool that have the power to radicalize. UNRWA is a UN agency which is sworn to teach peace and tolerance, but instead teaches children about violence. UNRWA uses Palestinian Authority textbooks that teach Palestinian children antisemitism and that are absent of peaceful messaging. Curriculum that teaches extremism is a threat to Israel, the peace process and the United States and its interests and values. Sheff explains how change in curriculum in the Middle East is possible, seen through the UAE's complete transformation of education.

## **ITAMAR MARCUS: WATCHING PALESTINIAN MEDIA IS HEARTBREAKING, BUT KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT**

[First Century Foundations](#) 14 Feb 2024 41min 19

in this episode of our Keeping it Israel: BATTLE FOR TRUTH podcast series, Jeff talks to Itamar Marcus, Founder and Director of Palestinian Media Watch, one of the foremost authorities on Palestinian ideology and policy. Marcus was appointed by the Israeli government to represent Israel in negotiations on incitement with the Palestinian Authority in 1999. He makes regular presentations to legislators, governments, and other decision-makers about PA leaders, education, sports, etc. His book Deception (<https://palwatch.org/page/16397>) was acclaimed by the founder of Human Rights Watch, Robert Bernstein, as "one of the most important books you handle in your lives."

## VIDEOS – IRAN

### **WHY ISRAEL AND IRAN ARE ENEMIES | MAPPED OUT**

[DW News](#) 1 Dec 2023 13min 24sec

On April 13, 2024, Iran launched missiles and drones toward Israel, vowing retaliation for a deadly strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria, reportedly by Israeli forces. It was the Islamic Republic's first direct attack on its bitter enemy. Prior to the strikes, Iran and Israel had been engaged in a years-long shadow war – and attacks by the Iran-backed militant Islamist group Hamas on Israel in October 2023 had moved the conflict to a whole new level. What are the roots of the Iranian-Israeli conflict? And what role does Israel's number one ally, the US, play in it?

### **THE REAL REASON**

### **BEHIND THE CONFLICT BETWEEN IRAN AND ISRAEL | MAPPED OUT**

[DW News](#) 2 DEC 2023 13MIN

Iran and Israel are bitter enemies. The attack by Iran-backed terror group Hamas has moved the conflict to a whole new level. In “Mapped Out” we look at what the Iranian-Israeli conflict in the Middle East is really about – and what role Israel’s number one ally, the US, plays in it.

### **Inside Iran: What Happened to Iran’s Women-led Uprising?**

[VICE News](#) 23 Dec 2023 28min 39sec

VICE News gains exclusive access inside Iran, to find out what's happened in the country since Mahsa Amini's death. Since Iranian women led a nationwide uprising, Iran's security forces have cracked down with brute force. Isobel Yeung meets those brave enough to speak out and meets the authorities in charge.

### **Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthis: Iran’s ‘Axis of Resistance,’ Explained**

[The Wall Street Journal](#) 5 Jan 2024 6min 33sec

Iran-backed groups connect to form a land bridge across the Middle East and form an alliance that Tehran calls the ‘Axis of Resistance.’ This land bridge can be used to transport equipment and personnel, but also allows for positions in Iraq and Syria to attack U.S. interests or threaten Israel closer to its borders. WSJ explains what to know about the alliance that includes Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen.

## WHY DOES IRAN HATE ISRAEL? | EXPLAINED

[Today Unpacked](#) 21 April 2024 11min 29sec

Historically, Israel's wars were fought against its direct neighbors, and Iran is on the other side of the Arabian peninsula. And Palestinians are Arabs, so the Arab world has historically showed solidarity with them by opposing Israel. But Iranians are Persian, not Arab. Additionally, most of Israel's enemies are Sunni. But Iran is a Shi'a country and the Sunni and Shi'a have been at war for centuries. And lastly, Iran and Israel used to be close allies. So all this begs the question - why does Iran hate Israel so much?

[00:00](#) Intro [01:22](#) Islamic Republic of Iran vs Western values [02:56](#) Western imperialism [04:33](#) Regional politics (Shiite vs Sunni) [06:40](#) The Islamic Revolution's global vision [08:10](#) Westernization [09:36](#) Justice (Adl) [11:10](#) Popular opposition to Iranian regime

## A Spider Web of Terror: How Iran's Axis of Houthis, Hezbollah, and Hamas Threaten Israel and America

[American Jewish Committee](#) 29 Feb 2024 17min 10sec

This week President Biden re-designated Yemen's Houthis as a global terrorist group amid its increasing attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea. Meanwhile, in Lebanon, the Hezbollah terror group continues to threaten Israel's northern border, and the Israel-Hamas war continues as Hamas still holds more than 100 Israeli hostages taken on 10/7.

Matthew Levitt, Fromer-Wexler Fellow & Director of the Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at the Washington Institute, joins us to help make sense of the renewed terror threat, how these terror groups are coordinating their strategy and attacks, and what the U.S., Israel, and its allies are doing to fight back against Iran and its terror proxies.

## FIVE REASONS WHY IRAN IS INVOLVED IN SO MANY GLOBAL CONFLICTS

[BBC World Service](#) 28 Mar 2024 15min

Iran is one country that always seems to be mentioned when it comes to ongoing deadly conflicts around the world, as well as the new flashpoints in the Middle East.

Click here to subscribe to our channel <https://bbc.in/3VyyriM>

From the war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas, to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as the civil war in Syria, Iran has played an indirect role in the fighting, even from afar.

The country's tensions with the US, which have gone on for decades and its defensive strategy all play a part but to understand more, here's an in-depth look at the five main reasons why Iran is involved in so many different conflicts.

## **ISRAEL IRAN MISSILES DRONE ATTACK EXPLAINED**

[AiTelly](#) 26 April 2024 9min 28sec

## **IF ISRAEL AND IRAN GO TO WAR - WHO WINS?**

[The Military Show](#) 26 Jun 2024

Imagine the Middle East's peace shattering in an instant! A bold Iranian strike against Israel in response to an April assault in Damascus sparks a crisis. As missiles arc over the sky, the first hour sets the tone for a major confrontation. Will Israel retaliate? Watch the conflict unfold and its global implications.

## **HOW POWERFUL IS IRAN REALLY? | MAPPED OUT**

[DW News](#) 27 Jun 2024 14min 13sec

Iran is successfully projecting power across the Middle East, causing instability through its proxy militias such as Hezbollah and Hamas and disrupting trade routes. That's despite a failing economy and dwindling domestic support for the Islamic fundamentalist regime in Tehran. What are the key strategies it has mastered? And how powerful is Iran really?

## **ISRAEL PLANS RETALIATION AFTER IRAN MISSILE ATTACK**

[TBN Israel](#) 2 Oct 2024 32min 10sec

Israel is responding with strength following yesterday's massive missile strike by Iran, marking one of the largest assaults on the country. The IDF has announced plans for retaliation, with airstrikes and military operations underway. Additionally, a terror attack in southern Israel has been reported, and the situation remains critical.

In a new development, Israeli forces have launched a ground invasion into southern Lebanon, targeting Hezbollah strongholds in response to escalated tensions in the region. The conflict is rapidly intensifying, and TBN Israel is here to provide real-time updates as these events unfold.

Join us in prayer for the safety of the Israeli people, the IDF soldiers on the front lines, and for a swift resolution to this conflict. Your continued support is crucial to helping us provide the latest updates and coverage during these dangerous times.

## **IRAN ATTACKS ISRAEL LIVE | TEHRAN GEARING UP FOR 2ND ATTACK? | WARNING ISSUED FOR NETANYAHU, ALLIES**

[MIRROR NOW](#) (2 Oct 2024)

**STARTED STREAMING ON 2 Oct 2024** [#live](#) [#israel](#) [#iran](#)

Iran Attacks Israel Live | On October 1, Iran launched over 200 missiles at Israel, prompting nearly 10 million Israelis to seek refuge in bomb shelters. Iran warned of a larger attack if Israel retaliates and called on the U.S. and Europe to prevent Israel's response. The strikes were reportedly in retaliation for the recent killing of Hezbollah leader Nasrallah and Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh by Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu condemned the attack and hinted at strong retaliation. Watch the video for more.

### **HAMAS, HEZBOLLAH AND HOUTHIS: IRAN'S 'AXIS OF RESISTANCE,'**

[The Wall Street Journal](#) 5 Jan 2024 6min 33sec

Iran-backed groups connect to form a land bridge across the Middle East and form an alliance that Tehran calls the 'Axis of Resistance.' This land bridge can be used to transport equipment and personnel, but also allows for positions in Iraq and Syria to attack U.S. interests or threaten Israel closer to its borders.

### **ISRAEL-IRAN TENSIONS: US BRACES FOR IRAN'S 'AXIS OF RESISTANCE'**

[WION Fineprint](#) 2 Aug 2024 8min 54sec

Tensions in West Asia are at an all-time high after the deaths of Hamas Chief Ismail Haniyeh and the Hezbollah leader Fuad Shukur. Iran has warned of a retaliatory attack and there are two scenarios that are likely here- Iran could either opt for a staggered response or undertake immediate coordinated attacks with the help of its proxies.

### **ISRAEL VS HAMAS | AXIS OF RESISTANCE READIES AGAINST ISRAEL ISRAEL VS IRAN**

[moneycontrol](#) 14 Aug 2024 6min 24sec

With Iran vowing revenge, the 'Axis of Resistance' — Hezbollah, Hamas, and Houthis — poses a multi-front threat. Its combined arsenal, from missiles to guerilla tactics, threatens to spiral the Gaza conflict into a region-wide war

## **WHAT IS THE AXIS OF RESISTANCE AND CAN IRAN STILL RELY ON IT? | START HERE**

[Al Jazeera English](#) 11Nov 2024 11min 56sec

The Axis of Resistance is a network of groups that have been a key part of Iran's defence strategy for years. But we've now seen Israel and Iran attack each other directly, while Israel has invaded Lebanon to go after the biggest group in the Axis, Hezbollah. So what does this mean for the balance of power in the region, and where does the Axis of Resistance fit into it now? [#AJStartHere](#) with Sandra Gathmann explains.

## **MONAJAT/THE NIGHTINGALE OF IRAN: A PERSIAN SELIHOT CONCERT**

[B'nai Jeshurun](#) 29 Sept 2024 1hour 48min 45sec

## VIDEOS - UNRWA

### **THE UN's SECRET WAR AGAINST ISRAEL**

[Israel Advocacy Move](#) 9Jan 2025 24min 13sec

In this mini-documentary we expose how the UN has been hijacked and is now one of the greatest existential threats Israel faces.

### **HOW DOES UNRWA IMPACT PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS?**

[Stand With Us](#) 12 Sept 2018 4min 14sec

Millions around the world were made refugees in the 1940's. Over 70 years later, they are not refugees anymore. So why are Palestinian Arabs perpetually referred to that way? WATCH our new video on the controversy surrounding UNRWA - the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

### **BRIGITTE GABRIEL'S AMAZING PERSONAL STORY AND LESSONS WE CAN TAKE FROM IT (EP 70)**

[Common Sense with Dr. Ben Carson](#) 13 November 2023 50min 1sec

### **'THEY CELEBRATED': UNRWA STAFF CAUGHT PRAISING HAMAS FOR OCTOBER 7 MASSACRE**

[Sky News Australia](#) 28 Jan 2024 6min 48sec

Sky News host James Morrow says people knew UNRWA staff "celebrated" the October 7 attacks on Israeli people before the UK finally suspended its funds to the organisation.

The UK's decision came after UNRWA staff were accused of participating in the massacre of October 7. "Back in November I reported on this at The Daily Telegraph that many, many, many people who were teachers, officials, doctors, nurses with UNRWA, they were all on their social media 'oh glorious day' 'how wonderful the rape and murder of all these Israeli citizens couldn't come soon enough, thank Allah for that'," Mr Morrow said.

"But there's a broader point to this, when I went to Penny Wong's office about that, they said they seemed quite concerned – it did seem at the time like they knew that there was a problem here.

"This whole idea of the UN refugee works agency, the whole point of that, that has created three or four generations of people who still consider themselves refugees."

### **HAMAS TERROR TUNNEL FOUND UNDER GAZA CITY HEADQUARTERS OF UN AGENCY**

[The Sun](#) 11 Feb 2024 9min 53sec

## **BENEATH UNRWA HQ IN GAZA**

[TBN Israel](#) 11 Feb 2024 9min 39sec

TBN Israel's Yair Pinto reports on the Israel-Hamas War. He explains how IDF's discovered a Hamas facility hidden beneath the UNRWA headquarters in Gaza City. This extensive tunnel network, equipped with sophisticated infrastructure, challenges UNRWA's claims of ignorance. With weapons, ammunition, and critical intelligence tools found within UNRWA's premises, this report questions the neutrality of international organizations in conflict zones.

## **IDF FINDS EXPOSES HAMAS INFRASTRUCTURE BENEATH UNRWA HQ IN GAZA**

[TBN Israel](#) February 9min 39sec

TBN Israel's Yair Pinto reports on the Israel-Hamas War. He explains how IDF's discovered a Hamas facility hidden beneath the UNRWA headquarters in Gaza City. This extensive tunnel network, equipped with sophisticated infrastructure, challenges UNRWA's claims of ignorance. With weapons, ammunition, and critical intelligence tools found within UNRWA's premises, this report questions the neutrality of international organizations in conflict zones. Stay up-to-date with the latest developments here on TBN Israel. Please join us in praying for the peace of Israel and Jerusalem.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT FOR A FUTURE BEYOND UNRWA (FULL EVENT)**

[UN Watch](#) 26 Feb 2024 3hours 4 min 26 sec (broke into linkable chapters)

## **EINAT WILF SPEAKS AT UN BRIEFING ON UNRWA**

[Einat Wilf](#) 1 May 2024 33min10sec

Dr. Einat Wilf explains the essence of UNRWA at a briefing to UN delegations at the UN HQ in NYC hosted by Israel's Ambassador to the UN. This briefing provides a summary of UNRWA's history and how it became the ideological backbone of the Palestinian vision of violent "return" as manifested on October 7th, and how UNRWA has given birth to every terrorist organization from Black September to Hamas.

## **IDF STATEMENT ON UNRWA WORKERS INVOLVED IN THE OCT. 7 MASSACRE**

[Israel Defence Forces](#) March 2024 8min 3 sec

## **HILLEL NEUER TESTIFIES BEFORE U.S. CONGRESS ON UNRWA AND THE COLONNA REPORT**

[UN Watch](#) 11Jun 2024 26min 46sec

Delivered, May 17, 2024, before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Global Human Rights and International Organizations, U.S. House of Representatives, Hearing on Eliminating U.S. Aid to Terrorists – New Policies for the U.S. Government and Its Partners.



## **UNRWA: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED AND WHAT WILL HAPPEN?**

[UKLFI Charitable Trust](#) 11 Nov 2024 1hour 5min 20sec

This is a recording of a UKLFI Charitable Trust webinar on "UNRWA: What Have We Learned and What Will Happen?" With Dr Einat Wilf and Dr Adi Schwartz, chaired by Natasha Hausdorff which took place on Sunday 10 November 2024. Dr Einat Wilf and Dr Adi Schwartz wrote an important book titled "The War of Return" which was published in English in 2020. In it they explained how UNRWA had created a permanent "refugee" problem and fostered the "right of return" of Palestinian "refugees" which is now a fundamental obstacle to peace in the Middle East. Events since October 2023 have also exposed the involvement of UNRWA staff and the use of UNRWA facilities and resources in terrorist activities.

## **HAMAS COMMAND ROOM INSIDE UNRWA HQ IN GAZA; IDF FINDS DRONE, WEAPONS CACHES AND MORE**

[The Economic Times](#) 12 July 2024 2min 38sec

IDF troops have located weapons and a command room used by Hamas at UNRWA's headquarters in Gaza City. The troops raided the compound on July 08 following intelligence indicating Hamas' presence inside the UNRWA HQ in Gaza City. The UNRWA HQ has not been in use in recent months. The IDF raided the compound earlier this year, discovering a major Hamas tunnel network that passed beneath it. In the latest operation, the IDF said the commandos captured Hamas operatives who attempted to flee the UNRWA facility. Commando Brigade troops also found parts of Hamas drone, a command room used to observe Israeli forces and dozens of weapons, including rockets, machine guns, mortars, explosive devices, grenades and drones that drop bombs. In a nearby university building, the IDF said the commandos located an underground bomb-making lab and additional weapons.

## **UN HEAD ADMITS HAMAS TUNNELS BUILT UNDER UN BUILDINGS!**

[J-TV Jewish Idea...](#) 25 Sept 2024 3min 30sec

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, admits there are Hamas tunnels under UNRWA buildings in Gaza - as if this is normal...

## **"ROTTEN TO ITS CORE!" ISRAEL BANS UN PALESTINIAN REFUGEE AGENCY**

[TALK TV](#) 29 Oct 2024 12min 59sec

Israel has banned the UN Palestinian agency UNRWA from operating in the country, citing alleged involvement of some staffers in the October 7th attack and claiming some have membership in Hamas. The legislation has alarmed the United Nations and some of Israel's Western allies who fear it would further worsen the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Israeli Foreign Ministry Special Envoy Fleur Hassan-Nahoum accuses banned aid agency UNRWA of "actively facilitating and enabling the terrorism of Hamas".

She tells Talk's Alex Phillips: "UNRWA is complicit with a terrorist group that is taking advantage of its own people."

**HILLEL NEUER ON ABC AUSTRALIA: “UNRWA IS ROTTEN TO THE CORE”**

[UN Watch](#) 30 Oct 2024 8min 11sec

Hillel Neuer's October 29th appearance on ABC Australia to discuss recent Israeli legislation limiting UNRWA's operations and to discuss UNRWA's well-established ties to terrorism.

**TRUMP'S AID FREEZE SENDS SHOCK WAVES ACROSS AFRICA**

[DW News](#) 2 February 2025 8min 45sec

Many African governments and aid organizations have reacted with shock and confusion after US President Donald Trump ordered a freeze and review of foreign aid. Despite a reversal on life-saving aid, particularly for HIV treatments, it remains unclear what will happen after the review. Questions remain about what else will be funded and who exactly will receive it. The US is the world's largest single aid donor and a key provider of humanitarian assistance to Africa. So a freeze or reduction in aid could have devastating consequences for millions, and put lives at risk. Last year, the United States provided nearly \$7 billion in humanitarian aid to sub-Saharan Africa, according to USAID. This funding covered a wide range of support, including HIV prevention, malaria treatment, agricultural assistance, and initiatives to combat the effects of climate change. In 2024, UN agencies received the largest share of funding, totaling over \$3 billion, followed closely by US government bodies and US-affiliated NGOs.

**TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ORDERS SWEEPING FREEZE OF FEDERAL AID**

[MSNBC](#) 28 January 2025 2 min 18sec

The White House is pausing federal grants and loans starting at 5pm on Tuesday.

**TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS COMING ON U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL,  
GAZA FUNDING**

**PART S**

**PEACE TREATY 2023 WAR ISRAEL-GAZA**

## EDITORS NOTE

After over a year of fighting, death, and destruction, a ceasefire deal was agreed by Israel and Hamas from January 19, 2025. This had three stages each lasting 42 days with changes likely at any time..

- **In the first stage**, 33 Israeli hostages comprising women, children, elderly, and wounded, the release of XXXXXX Palestinian prisoners. It is unknown whether Israeli hostages will be alive or not. In addition there will be Israeli withdrawal from large cities in Gaza allowing residents to return to their homes and a significant increase in the flow of humanitarian aid.
- **In the second stage**, younger Israeli male hostages will be released in return for more Palestinian prisoners. Israel will then agree to end the war.
- **In the third phase**, the war will end, the bodies of Israelis and Palestinians held by the other side will be exchanged, Israeli troops will withdraw completely from the Gaza Strip, and the reconstruction of Gaza will begin. Reconstruction will restart under Qatar, Egypt and the UN

### ChatGPT defined it as follows

The ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, initiated on January 19, 2025, is structured into three phases, each with specific actions and objectives.

#### Phase 1: Initial Ceasefire and Hostage-Prisoner Exchange

- **Duration:** Six weeks
- **Actions:**
  - Hamas is to release 33 Israeli hostages, including women, children, some older men, and the sick, at regular intervals. [bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com)
  - In exchange, Israel will free approximately 1,900 Palestinian prisoners. [ft.com](https://www.ft.com)
  - Facilitation of increased humanitarian aid into Gaza.
  - Reopening of the Rafah crossing to allow wounded Palestinians to seek medical treatment in Egypt.

As of now, 17 Israeli hostages have been released, and Israel has freed 400 Palestinian prisoners.

[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

#### Phase 2: Negotiations for Remaining Hostages and Military Withdrawal

- **Focus:**
  - Discussions aimed at the release of the remaining Israeli hostages.
  - Negotiations concerning the withdrawal of Israeli military forces from Gaza.

#### Phase 3: Final Agreements and Reconstruction

- **Objectives:**
  - Return of the bodies of deceased hostages.
  - Initiation of comprehensive reconstruction efforts in Gaza.

This structured approach aims to de-escalate the prolonged conflict, address humanitarian concerns, and lay the groundwork for long-term stability in the region.

- **Trump's plan for dealing with Gaza's emigrants was described on this Reuters web site of January 22 2025  [Hamas' tight grip on Gaza complicates plan for lasting peace](#).**

Jordan and Egypt to accept more Palestinian refugees and floats his plan to 'clean out' Gaza. Initially this was rejected by them both. If accepted this would solve the 'problem'

- **[Syrian Refugee Camps in Jordan](#)**

**Jordan is home to Za'atari, Azraq, and Mrajeeb Al Fhood refugee camps for Syrian refugees. However, a great number of Syrian refugees are living in Jordan. However, only 18 percent of refugees in Jordan live in refugee camps.**

#### **Zaatari camp**

Zaatari Camp is under the joint administration of the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) and UNHCR. UNHCR is the lead on Protection, Health, Shelter and Site Planning, Security, Community Mobilization, Basic Needs, and Livelihoods.

Za'atari camp, the larger of the three camps, hosts almost 80,000 refugees and is located 10km East of the Northern Jordanian city of Mafraq.

#### **Mrajeeb Al Fhood camp**

Mrajeeb Al Fhood is a refugee camp for refugees fleeing the Syrian War. It is located in Mrajeeb Al Fhood, a stretch of arid plains some 20 kilometers east of Zarqa – Jordan. It was opened in April 2013 to cope with the overflow from the Zaatari refugee camp. Mrajeeb Al Fhood camp hosts 4,196 refugees.

#### **Azraq camp**

Azraq camp management is co-coordinated by the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) and UNHCR. The camp has the potential to be expanded to accommodate 120,000 – 130,000 refugees at maximum capacity.

Azraq camp hosts 38,000 refugees and is located northeast of the country.

#### **Help Syrian Refugees in Jordan**

Donating to Syrian refugees improves their quality of life and their living situations. Refugee lack every aspect of living. Whatever you think they might need, they probably need it in addition to many other things. Therefore, whatever you can do to give donations to Syrian refugees, just do it; your contributions will be noticed and will make a difference in their lives.

#### **Medical Assistance Donation**

Because there aren't enough clinics, refugees living in camps, require various medical assistance to prevent the spreading of diseases and help keep all refugees general health.

- Health Points.
- Medicine.
- Medical personnel
- Medical supplies.

#### **Food Assistance Donation**

Food baskets are vital when people rely entirely on food handouts due to emergencies or refugee circumstances.

Food baskets may contain a staple like wheat flour or rice.

- Lentils, chickpeas, or other pulses.
- Vegetable oil (fortified with vitamins A and D).
- Sugar.
- Iodized salt.

### **Shelter Assistance Donation**

Shelters assist in keeping refugees as safe as possible by providing them with a roof over their heads that shelters them from all types of weather. The most critical items required by refugees are those for their homes.

As a result, supporting organizations that offer these kinds of aid and donations benefit refugees. One of those groups is Bonyan, eager to contribute these supplies for the houses of refugees and other forms of assistance.

### **Education Assistance Donation**

The best environment for kids to educate, make friends with kids from their neighborhood, and hone their talents is at school.

However, some parents have trouble locating their children's essential school supplies each year. We should help kids receive the supplies they need to finish their education and keep up with children worldwide. After all, children have a fundamental right to quality education. Children may require our assistance to fill in the gaps if they don't have enough school materials to start the year.

- **The UNHCR described its role in dealing with refugees**

Following the outbreak of armed conflict in Sudan in April 2023, large numbers of civilians have been forced to flee to Egypt and other neighboring countries in search of safety. In response to this emergency, UNHCR has expanded its work with the Government of Egypt and partners to register and assist forcibly displaced people arriving in the country. UNHCR is present in various parts of the country, including Cairo, Alexandria, and other governorates delivering lifesaving assistance to those most in need. Furthermore, UNHCR Egypt works towards ensuring the inclusion of refugees in the education and health systems and carries out community projects to enhance the inclusion of the refugee community and promote the livelihoods and well-being of refugees, among many other initiatives.

On the other hand, UNHCR also supports Syrian refugees who fled their war-torn land and started seeking asylum in Egypt in 2012. Representing diverse socio-economic and religious backgrounds, the number of Syrians registered with UNHCR Egypt rose dramatically from 12,800 at the end of 2012 to more than 153,000 people at the end of 2023. As a result of the Sudanese and Syrian crises, Egypt now hosts the largest number of registered refugees and asylum-seekers in its history.

- **the close link of UNHCR with Gazan**

- **How many Gazan's can go to Jordan?**

Assad has been overthrown and Syrians are returning home. Gazzans will be able to **apply to replace them**

○

## TRUMP'S PLAN FOR U.S. TO "TAKE OVER" GAZA AMID ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASEFIRE REJECTED BY ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES

[CBS NEWS](#) [Haley Ott](#) February 5, 2025

Allies and adversaries of the United States reacted with shock and disapproval Wednesday to President Trump's announcement of plans for the [United States to "take over" the Gaza Strip](#).

Mr. Trump's suggestion that the Palestinian territory — part of the land that many people hope will eventually become an independent Palestinian state — be redeveloped into a "Riviera of the Middle East," owned by the U.S., sent diplomatic shockwaves around the world.

### PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELI HOSTAGE FAMILIES REACT TO TRUMP'S PLAN

Mr. Trump's announcement worried some Israeli hostage family members, and it drew immediate condemnation from Palestinian civilians and from Hamas, which warned it could threaten the [fragile Gaza ceasefire agreement](#).

"We came very close to dying, but we survived with the grace of God," resident Moeen Mohsen told CBS News' team in Gaza City. "Unfortunately, there came a decision to displace us. We reject it in its entirety. We are still holding on to our right to live."

"We will not allow prejudice to the rights of our people, which we have struggled for many decades and made great sacrifices to achieve," the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, was quoted as saying by the Palestinian news agency Wafa. The PA has limited authority over the other, larger Palestinian territory, the Israeli-occupied West Bank, which is run separately from Gaza.

"These calls represent a serious violation of international law, and peace and stability in the region will not be achieved without the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," Abbas said. Negotiations have begun over the terms of the second phase of the ceasefire deal, which has seen [18 hostages released by Hamas](#) and other militants in Gaza since it came into effect on January 19, including one man who is an American citizen.

In the current, six-week first phase of the deal, Hamas is to free more hostages every week in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners being released from Israeli jails.

If the deal holds, the hostage and prisoner exchanges will continue, with a total of 33 Israeli captives set to be released during the first phase. If the agreement falls apart, those releases could come to an end, and that prospect has worried some family members of those still held hostage in Gaza.

"We are shocked. We didn't know about it, but it was clearly not a move pulled from the hip," Ronen Neutra, the father of Israeli soldier Omer Neutra, who was killed in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 terrorist attack that sparked the war and whose body is still being held in Gaza, told the Israeli news outlet Ynet on Wednesday.

"We want to remind Trump and Netanyahu that human lives are at stake, and we need to return them as a top priority, and only after that if we want to make changes," Neutra said.

Hamas condemned Mr. Trump's plan, calling it "a crime against humanity, and a reinforcement of the law of the jungle at the international level."

The U.S.- and Israeli-designated terrorist group said it was demanding "urgent regional and international action to put an end to these malicious plans, because any attempts to implement such plans will destabilize security in the region and beyond."

"We demand that the mediators, especially the United States, oblige the occupation [Israel] to implement the ceasefire agreement in its three stages without procrastination or manipulation, as we are committed to implementing the agreement as long as the occupation commits to it, and any manipulation in implementing the agreement may cause it to collapse," senior Hamas political official Basem Naim said in a statement.

### **AMERICA'S PARTNERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST REJECT TRUMP'S GAZA PLAN**

Regional powers, including American allies that had [already rejected earlier suggestions](#) by Mr. Trump that the more than 2 million Palestinians in Gaza be relocated to other countries, also spoke out against the plans the U.S. president iterated on Tuesday.

Egypt's foreign ministry stressed the importance of a two-state solution to create a Palestinian nation.

Jordan's royal court put out a statement as the country's King Abdullah II met with Mahmoud Abbas of the PA on Wednesday.

"His Majesty King Abdullah II stresses the need to put a stop to [Israeli] [settlement expansion](#), expressing rejection of any attempts to annex land and displace the Palestinians," the statement said.

Saudi Arabia quickly said it would not reestablish ties with Israel — a bilateral relationship that Mr. Trump has [long hoped to foster](#) — without the creation of a Palestinian state.

"Saudi Arabia rejects any attempts to displace the Palestinians from their land," Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry said in a statement Wednesday. "Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has affirmed the kingdom's position in 'a clear and explicit manner' that does not allow for any interpretation under any circumstances."

### **REACTION TO TRUMP'S GAZA PLANS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

Countries outside the Middle East also reacted swiftly to Mr. Trump's proposal.

"France reiterates its opposition to any forced displacement of the Palestinian population of Gaza, which would constitute a serious violation of international law, an attack on the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians, but also a major obstacle to the two-state solution and a major destabilizing factor for our close partners Egypt and Jordan as well as for the entire region," French foreign ministry spokesperson Christophe Lemoine said in a statement Wednesday.

U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer reiterated Britain's support for a two-state solution when asked about Mr. Trump's plan during a parliamentary session Wednesday.

Palestinians in Gaza "must be allowed home. They must be allowed to rebuild, and we should be with them in that rebuild on the way to a two-state solution," Starmer told Britain's House of Commons.

Russia and China also both released statements Wednesday supporting a two-state solution.

Israel's current government — its [most far-right, nationalist leadership](#) in decades — and its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who stood next to Mr. Trump as he made his plans public on Tuesday at the White House, [have made it clear](#) they are not interested in working toward a two-state solution.



Dr. Sanam Vakil, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Program at the British Chatham House think tank, said Mr. Trump's "provocative" comments "could be trying to disrupt conventional thinking on a longstanding conflict that has yet to be resolved or produce viable solutions."

"He equally wants to show continued commitment to Israel to placate supporters and high-level donors in the United States and shore up Netanyahu's fragile political balance of power to help the prime minister engage in phase two ceasefire negotiations," Vakils said. "More broadly, this is also part of his extreme deal-making strategy that will lay the ground for broader Israeli-Saudi normalization talks. He could be using this to pave the way to promote Saudi normalization in exchange for no annexation."

Vakil said there was a risk that Mr. Trump's statements could, in the near term, lead to a delay in the release of further Israeli hostages in the current phase of the ceasefire.

## TRUMP AIDES DEFEND GAZA TAKEOVER PROPOSAL BUT WALK BACK SOME ELEMENTS

[REUTERS](#)



### Summary

- Russia, China, Germany and Saudi Arabia condemn it
- Critics warn of possibly violating international law
- U.S. public opinion opposes new conflict zone entanglements
- Netanyahu urges consideration of Trump's "remarkable" proposal

WASHINGTON/CAIRO, Feb 5 (Reuters) - President [Donald Trump](#)'s top aides staunchly defended his push to transfer Palestinians out of Gaza and have the U.S. take over the war-ruined enclave, but they also backed away from elements of his proposal in the face of international condemnation.

A longtime New York property developer, Trump drew rebukes on Wednesday from world powers Russia, China and Germany, which said it would foster "new suffering and new hatred." Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia rejected the proposal outright.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday that Trump's proposal was "remarkable" and urged that it be explored, even as he was not specific about what he believed Trump was offering.

Barely two weeks in the job, Trump shattered decades of U.S. policy on Tuesday with a vaguely worded announcement saying he envisioned transforming Gaza into the "Riviera of the Middle East" where international communities could coexist after nearly 16 months of Israeli bombardment devastated the coastal strip and killed more than 47,000 people, according to Palestinian tallies.

At a White House briefing on Wednesday, press secretary Karoline Leavitt hailed his Gaza proposal as historic "outside of the box" thinking but stressed that the president had not committed to putting "boots on the ground" in the territory. She declined, however, to rule out the use of U.S. troops there.

At the same time, Leavitt walked back Trump's earlier assertion that Gazans needed to be permanently resettled in neighboring countries, saying instead that they should be "temporarily relocated" for the rebuilding process.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio also said the idea was for Gazans to leave the territory for an "interim" period of reconstruction and debris-clearing.

In an interview with Fox News, Netanyahu only vaguely addressed Trump's proposal, saying he did not believe the president was suggesting sending U.S. troops to fight Hamas in Gaza or that the United States would finance rebuilding efforts there.

Netanyahu, who met with Trump at the White House on Tuesday, said he supports Trump's suggestion that Gazans be free to leave and return to the war-ravaged area.

"They can leave, they can then come back. They can relocate and come back," he said.

"It's a remarkable idea and I think it should be really pursued, examined, pursued and done, because I think it will create a different future for everyone," Netanyahu said without offering specifics.

It was unclear whether Trump would go ahead with his proposal or, in keeping with his self-image as a shrewd dealmaker, was simply laying out an extreme position as a [bargaining](#) ploy. His first term was replete with what critics said were over-the-top foreign policy pronouncements, many of which were never implemented.

**Trump's son-in-law and former aide, Jared Kushner, last year described Gaza as valuable waterfront property, and on Tuesday Trump made similar claims as he called for the permanent resettlement of the more than 2 million Palestinians from there.**

Some experts said the proposed actions could violate international law. Others described his ideas as unworkable. Human rights advocates said it would amount to "ethnic cleansing."

"Everybody loves it," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office earlier on Wednesday, referring to his Gaza idea.

Trump's proposal, however, appears to run counter to U.S. public opinion, which polls have shown is overwhelmingly opposed to new entanglements in conflict zones following lengthy military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Trump frequently asserted during the 2024 election campaign and since returning to office that he would end what he called "ridiculous" wars and prevent others from starting.

His Gaza proposal drew broad condemnation from Democratic lawmakers but [confusion and skepticism](#) from some fellow Republicans, while others praised the moves as bold.



Item 1 of 9 A Palestinian sits among the rubble of buildings destroyed during the Israeli offensive, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip February 4, 2025.

REUTERS/Hatem Khaled

[1/9]A Palestinian sits among the rubble of buildings destroyed during the Israeli offensive, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip February 4, 2025. REUTERS/Hatem Khaled [Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab](#)

"I thought we voted for America first," Republican Senator Rand Paul said on X. "We have no business contemplating yet another occupation to doom our treasure and spill our soldiers blood."

On a trip to Guatemala, Rubio, apparently seeking to counter the wave of global criticism, insisted Trump's proposal was not a hostile move but a generous one that expressed "the willingness of the United States to become responsible for the reconstruction of that area."

In contrast, Leavitt said U.S. taxpayers would not foot the bill and that Trump would strike a deal with regional partners.

## 'TRUMP CAN GO TO HELL'

Jordan's King Abdullah, who will meet Trump at the White House next week, said he rejected any moves to annex land and displace Palestinians. Egypt said it would back Gaza recovery plans, following a ceasefire that took effect on Jan. 19, without Palestinians leaving the territory.

In Gaza, Palestinians living among the wreckage of their former homes said they would never accept the idea.

"Trump can go to hell, with his ideas, with his money, and with his beliefs. We are going nowhere. We are not some of his assets," said [Samir Abu Basel](#), a father of five in Gaza City displaced from his house by the war.

Since taking office on Jan. 20, Trump has talked about a U.S. takeover of Greenland, warned of the possible seizure of the Panama Canal and declared that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state.

Some critics have said his expansionist rhetoric echoes old-style imperialism, suggesting it could encourage Russia in its [war in Ukraine](#) and give China justification for invading self-ruled Taiwan.

[World leaders](#) said they remained supportive of the two-state solution that has formed the basis of U.S. policy in the region for decades, which has held that Gaza would be part of a future Palestinian state that includes the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said, before a meeting with Netanyahu, that the Pentagon was "prepared to look at all options" related to Gaza. Experts say a major deployment of U.S. forces would be needed to secure Gaza if Trump implements his proposal.

## 'RIDICULOUS AND ABSURD'

An official from the Palestinian militant group Hamas called Trump's proposal "ridiculous and absurd." Hamas ruled the Gaza Strip before the war there, which was triggered by its October 7, 2023, cross-border attack on Israel in which 1,200 people were killed and 250 abducted, according to Israeli tallies.

"Any ideas of this kind are capable of igniting the region," Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters, saying Hamas remains committed to the ceasefire accord with Israel and negotiating its next phase.

What impact Trump's proposals have on indirect talks over the second stage of the Gaza ceasefire and hostage-release deal was unclear. Hamas has adamantly insisted it wants to remain in Gaza while Netanyahu has vowed to destroy the group and never allow it to again rule the territory.

Trump's proposal raises questions about whether Saudi Arabia would be willing to join a renewed U.S.-brokered push for a historic normalisation of relations with Israel.

Saudi Arabia, a pivotal U.S. ally in the Middle East, said it would not establish ties with Israel without the creation of a Palestinian state, contradicting Trump's claim that Riyadh was not demanding a Palestinian homeland.

Trump would like Saudi Arabia to follow in the footsteps of the United Arab Emirates, a Middle East trade and business hub, and Bahrain, both of which signed the Abraham Accords in 2020 and normalised ties with Israel.

But on Wednesday, the kingdom's foreign ministry said Saudi Arabia rejected any attempts to remove Palestinians from their land and said Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had affirmed this position in "a clear and explicit manner."

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## TRUMP WANTS JORDAN AND EGYPT TO ACCEPT MORE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AND FLOATS PLAN TO 'CLEAN OUT' GAZA

[AP](#) [ZEKE MILLER](#) and [WILL WEISSERT](#) January 26, 2025

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (AP) — President [Donald Trump](#) said he would like to see Jordan, Egypt and other Arab nations increase the number of [Palestinian refugees](#) they are accepting from the Gaza Strip, potentially moving out enough of the population to “just clean out” the war-torn area to create a virtual clean slate.

During a 20-minute question-and-answer session Saturday with reporters aboard Air Force One, Trump also said he has ended his predecessor’s hold on sending 2,000-pound bombs to Israel. That lifts a pressure point meant to reduce civilian casualties during [Israel’s war with Hamas](#) in Gaza, which is now halted by a tenuous ceasefire.

“We released them today,” Trump said of the bombs. “They’ve been waiting for them for a long time.” Asked why he lifted the ban on those bombs, Trump responded, “Because they bought them.”

0:00 / 12

### **AUDIO: Trump’s comments on Gaza**

*Aboard Air Force One Saturday, President Donald Trump said he wants Jordan and Egypt to accept more Palestinian refugees and floats a plan to ‘clean out’ Gaza and has spoken to Jordan’s King.*

Trump has built his political career around being unapologetically pro-Israel. On his larger vision for Gaza, Trump said he had call earlier in the day with [King Abdullah II](#) of Jordan and would speak Sunday with President [Abdel Fattah el-Sissi](#) of Egypt.

“I’d like Egypt to take people, and I’d like Jordan to take people,” Trump said. “You’re talking about probably a million and a half people, we just clean out that whole thing.”

Trump said he complimented Jordan for having successfully accepted Palestinian refugees and that he told the king, “I’d love for you to take on more, cause I’m looking at the whole Gaza Strip right now, and it’s a mess. It’s a real mess.”

Such a drastic displacement of people would openly contradict Palestinian identity and deep connection to Gaza. Still, Trump said the part of the world that encompasses Gaza, has “had many, many conflicts” over centuries. He said resettling “could be temporary or long term.”

“Something has to happen,” Trump said. “But it’s literally a demolition site right now. Almost everything’s demolished, and people are dying there.” He added: “So, I’d rather get involved with some of the Arab nations, and build housing in a different location, where they can maybe live in peace for a change.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a statement Sunday, thanked Trump for “keeping your promise to give Israel the tools it needs to defend itself.” He did not mention Trump’s suggestion on Palestinian refugees.

***AUDIO: Trump’s comments on Gaza, continued***

*Aboard Air Force One Saturday, President Donald Trump said he would like to see Jordan, Egypt and other Arab nations increase the number of Palestinian refugees they are accepting from Gaza, to “clean out” the war-torn area to create a virtual clean slate.*

But Jordan’s foreign minister, Ayman Safadi, told reporters that his country’s rejection of the proposed transfer of Palestinians was “firm and unwavering.”

Sen. Lindsay Graham, a Trump ally, was asked on CNN’s “State of the Union” about what Trump meant with his remark about Palestinians. “You know, I really don’t know,” said Graham, R-S.C.

“The idea that all the Palestinians are going to leave and go somewhere else, I don’t see that to be overly practical,” Graham said. He added, though, that Trump should keep talking to Mideast leaders, including Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and officials in the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

“I don’t know what he’s talking about. But go talk to MBS, go talk to UAE, go talk to Egypt,” Graham said. “What is their plan for the Palestinians? Do they want them all to leave?”

Trump has offered nontraditional views on the future of Gaza in the past. He suggested after he was inaugurated on Monday that Gaza has “really got to be rebuilt in a different way.”

The new president added then, “Gaza is interesting. It’s a phenomenal location, on the sea. The best weather, you know, everything is good. It’s like, some beautiful things could be done with it, but it’s very interesting.”

Resuming delivery of large bombs, meanwhile, is a break with then-President Joe Biden, who halted their delivery in May as part of an effort to keep Israel from launching an all-out assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah. A month later, Israel did take control of the city, but after the vast majority of the 1 million civilians that had been living or sheltering in Rafah had fled.

“Civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs and other ways in which they go after population centers,” Biden told CNN in May when he held up the weapons. “I made it clear that if they go into Rafah ... I’m not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah, to deal with the cities, that deal with that problem.”

The Biden pause had also held up 1,700 500-pound bombs that had been packaged in the same shipment to Israel, but weeks later those bombs were delivered.

Trump’s action comes as he has celebrated the first phase of a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel that has paused the fighting and seen [the release of some hostages](#) held by Hamas in Gaza in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.



Negotiations have yet to begin in earnest on the more difficult second phase of the deal that would eventually see the release of all hostages held by Hamas and an enduring halt to the fighting.

If the remaining hostages are not released, the Israeli government has threatened to resume its war against Hamas, which launched a massive assault against Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

## **‘WHEN HE WANTS SOMETHING, IT HAPPENS.’ ISRAEL’S FAR RIGHT APPLAUDS TRUMP’S GAZA PLAN**

[CNN World](#) Tim Lister, CN January 28, 2025

US President Donald Trump has doubled down on his proposal to [“clean out” Gaza](#) by removing Palestinians living there to Jordan and Egypt, a plan which has appalled some allies but has been quickly embraced by Israel’s far right.

Having first floated the idea Saturday, Trump warmed to his theme Monday, saying of Gaza’s population: “I’d like to get them living in an area where they can live without disruption and revolution and violence so much.”

He has not specified whether such emigration would be voluntary. The forcible displacement of civilians “can constitute a war crime and/or crime against humanity” depending on the context, [according](#) to the United Nations.

“I think you can get people living in areas that are a lot safer and maybe a lot better and maybe a lot more comfortable,” he said on Monday.



[video](#)

[Related video Trump: Gaza is ‘literally a demolition site right now’](#)

While there has been no response from the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, the idea was applauded by far-right Israeli politicians.

[Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich](#), who leads the Religious Zionism party, said Trump had recognized that Gaza was “a breeding ground for terror,” and “there is no doubt that in the long run, encouraging migration

is the only solution that will bring peace and security to the residents of Israel and alleviate the suffering of Gaza's Arab residents."

Smotrich, who also has a ministerial position in the defense ministry, said he was working on a plan to implement Trump's vision. "When he wants something, it happens," he said. Smotrich has been advocating for what he calls "the voluntary emigration of [Gaza Arabs](#) to countries around the world" since 2023.

But the idea of displacement, voluntary or otherwise, is [horrifying to Jordan and Egypt](#) and likely alarming to other Arab allies of the US, threatening decades of international consensus about the [right of Palestinians to a homeland](#). Ayman Safadi, Jordan's foreign minister, said Sunday: "Jordan is for Jordanians and Palestine is for Palestinians."

"Our rejection for the deportation is steadfast and unchanging."

Trump said the removal of Palestinians might be temporary or "long-term," but Arab critics allege that Palestinians have never been allowed by Israel to return to land once removed.

Neither Egypt nor Jordan would contemplate being party to a repeat of the Palestinian '[Nakba](#)' or '[catastrophe](#)' in 1948. Roughly 700,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes when the state of Israel was born. A second iteration would be tantamount to condoning and supporting ethnic cleansing.

Much like [Denmark hopes](#) Trump will abandon his ideas for US control of Greenland, the moderate Arab states will be praying that the US President forgets about transferring the Gazans.

The comparison was not lost on Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who said in an interview with Sky News Tuesday that "Palestine cannot be deleted and Palestinians cannot be expelled. My suggestion: Instead of Palestinians, try to expel Israelis to Greenland. Take them to Greenland so you can kill two birds (with) one stone."

### **Saudi-UAE silence**

Jordan and Egypt seem likely to huddle with their allies in the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in an effort to present a united front.

So far, the Saudis and Emiratis have remained publicly silent on the Trump plan. King Abdullah II of Jordan has also said nothing about his call with Trump on Saturday. But the Jordanian court pointedly released a read-out of his call Monday with new Secretary of State Marco Rubio, which may have been an effort at damage limitation.

The statement said they discussed ways to "enhance regional security and stability...and means to strengthen the strategic partnership between Jordan and the United States, as well as keenness to maintain coordination and consultation on various issues."

The response from Cairo was more puzzling. A senior Egyptian official denied that President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi had spoken with Trump, despite the latter's assertion Monday that they had spoken. Trump declined to say directly if the Egyptian president had an opinion on taking additional Palestinian refugees.

"He's in a very rough part of the world, to be honest, as they say, it's a rough neighborhood, but I think he can do it," Trump said.

The Egyptian official added that readouts between the Egyptian president and heads of state are released when they take place. The Egyptian Presidency itself has made no comment about any call and the White House hasn't released a readout.

Trump also appears to have nodded towards the belief among some Israelis that Gaza isn't really Palestinian land anyway.

"You know, when you look at the Gaza Strip, it's been hell for so many years, and it just seems to be this – various civilizations start here, started thousands of years before," he said Monday.

That fits right in with the perspective of people like the former Israeli Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir, who leads the Jewish Power party.

Trump's remarks will also encourage the idea among some Israeli right-wing groups such as Nachala that Israel should establish settlements in Gaza. [Daniella Weiss](#), who leads Nachala, told CNN last year: "No Arab, I'm speaking about more than two million Arabs. They will not stay there. We Jews will be in Gaza."

### **Foreign aid as potential leverage**

After a year of transformative upheaval in the Middle East, even the idea that millions of Palestinians might be moved from their homes is potentially a source of still greater instability. Sisi has previously said that taking in Gazans would threaten Egypt's peace agreement with Israel because of the risk that some of them would resume fighting the Jewish state from within his country's borders.

The risk is existential to Jordan, which has more than a million refugees from neighboring countries as well as about 2.4 million registered Palestinian refugees. Indeed, more than half of its inhabitants are of Palestinian descent, and its demography would be transformed by another influx. But Jordan cannot afford to dismiss Trump's idea out of hand. A country of few resources, its 2023 budget deficit stood at 5.1% of its economic output, and a fifth of its workforce is unemployed. It is heavily reliant on foreign aid and is [the](#) second biggest recipient of US aid in the Middle East after Israel, with more than \$1.7 billion delivered in 2023.

Trump has already moved to put foreign aid and tariffs at the center of a foreign policy whose first tenets have been more stick than carrot. That will not be lost on the Jordanian and Egyptian governments now in the crosshairs. Egypt is the region's [third-biggest recipient](#) of US aid, with \$1.5 billion delivered in 2023.

"I wish he would take some," Trump said of Sisi on Monday, referring to Gazans. "We help them a lot, and I'm sure he can help us, he's a friend of mine."

Were Trump to persist with the idea, the prospect of extending the Abraham Accords to include normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia – a centerpiece of his Middle East policy – would also be jeopardized. While Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has close personal ties with Trump, he has repeatedly made clear that normalization is linked to a [pathway to a Palestinian state](#). Emptying Gaza would not fit with that priority.

*CNN's Sarah El Sirgany, Nadeen Ebrahim and Jomana Karadsheh contributed to this report.*



## THE MAN WITH THE PLAN: DC PROF SENT TRUMP STUDY ON GAZA RELOCATION, DEVELOPMENT IN JULY

GWU economics professor Joseph Pelzman wrote detailed proposal for Trump's team; says 'you have to destroy the whole place, restart from scratch'

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Tal Schneider](#) 7 February 2025,



Model illustration of a new Gaza Strip, from the X account of Dr. Kobby Barda; inset: Professor Joseph Pelzman (courtesy)

US President Donald Trump's proposal to relocate Gaza's Palestinians and then redevelop the Gaza Strip has sent shockwaves worldwide. Rejected by the Arab world and much of the international community, it has been welcomed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as an idea that "could change history," "worth listening carefully to," and "the first original idea that has been raised in years."

For one man in Washington, however, the proposal Trump unveiled when hosting Netanyahu at the White House on Tuesday came as no shock: George Washington University [Professor Joseph Pelzman](#).

An expert in economics and international relations and head of the university's Center of Excellence for the Economic Study of the Middle East and North Africa (CEESMENA), Pelzman authored the plan and submitted it to Trump's team as early as July 2024.

**Professor Joseph Pelzman (courtesy)**



The details of Pelzman’s plan were first made public by Dr. Kobby Barda, an Israeli historian specializing in American politics and geo-strategy, during a discussion he held with Pelzman on the podcast [“America, Baby!”](#) in August 2024. “I figured, well, why don’t I write sort of an out-of-the-box perspective on how to fix Gaza after the war is finished,” Pelzman told Barda. “The paper went to the Trump people because they were the ones who initially had an interest in it – not the Biden people. I was asked [by Trump’s team] to think outside the box on what do we do after [the war], as nobody was really talking about it.”

Pelzman’s paper, titled “An Economic Plan for Rebuilding Gaza: A BOT Approach,” has since been published in the *Global World Journal*. (He wrote it up in July, but it was [put online](#) in October.)

**Professor Joshep Pelzman speaks about his Gaza redevelopment plan with podcaster Dr. Kobby Barda on 25 August 2024 (in English)**

**It presents a viewpoint whereby Gaza’s economy has reached absolute rock bottom. Pelzman cites World Bank data, which states that between 2007 and 2022, Gaza’s annual GDP growth averaged 0.4%, while per capita GDP declined by 2.5% per year due to high population growth.**

**Moreover, because of the war that erupted following Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the destruction in Gaza has become so extensive that it is beyond repair or reconstruction, according to the professor. In fact, according to Pelzman, no private or international investment entity would enter Gaza as things stand. “You have to restart it from scratch,” he told Barda.**

Pelzman presented additional data, already known to the public: As of 2022, Gaza’s unemployment rate stood at 45%, and 53% of the population lived below the poverty line, compared to about 13% of the Palestinians living in the West Bank. According to World Bank estimates from March 2024, cited by Pelzman, approximately 1.2 million people in Gaza were homeless and destitute “due to Hamas actions.” Additionally, 62% of the buildings still standing had sustained severe damage that rendered them uninhabitable and 90% of the main roads had been destroyed.

“You have to destroy the whole place, you have to restart from scratch,” Pelzman said on Barda’s podcast. “And then you have an economy which actually has three sectors: you have tourism potential, you have agriculture potential, and then you have – because a lot of them are smart – high-tech.”

He said his plan “started with a three-sector model of Gaza, but it requires that the place be completely emptied out. I mean, literally emptied out, dug up from scratch – and the concrete can be recycled.

“This is a triangular-sector model, but its implementation requires the area to be completely vacated so that the destroyed concrete can be recycled – ensuring that nothing remains of the vertical construction extending deep underground.”

The plan presented by Pelzman, who previously worked with USAID on economic developments in China, utilizes the BOT method – Build-Operate-Transfer – a model implemented in developing countries.

According to this method, private sector companies and organizations enter into investment partnerships with governmental entities, receiving a property lease from the government for 50-100 years.

Under this system, a private entity constructs and operates the project for several decades, after which ownership is transferred to a public authority. During the operational period, the private entity is allowed to charge fees for the use of the infrastructure.



People walk amid collapsed buildings along Saftawi Street in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on February 5, 2025 (Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)

### **CHINA-STYLED HOUSING UNITS**

In his research paper, Pelzman characterizes his approach as treating Gaza “from a purely economic perspective,” which seeks “the investment solution to a failed experiment” – namely, the Gaza Strip since Israel withdrew from it in 2005.

Among other things, Pelzman’s plan would see a Gaza Strip powered entirely by solar energy, traversed by a light rail system and serviced by air- and sea-ports. The Strip will be independent of Israel for its energy needs.

Meanwhile, he writes, “there are no ex-ante restrictions on the mobility of local residents to exit Gaza.” According to Pelzman’s plan, “the cost of this massive reconstruction of Gaza will range from \$1 to \$2 trillion and will take 5 to 10 years to complete.” His estimate is based on a model that analyzes a Gazan post-war economy driven by the agriculture, tourism and tech sectors.





Displaced Palestinians walk on a road to return to their homes in the northern Gaza Strip, January 28, 2025. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)

Pelzman envisions restaurants, hotels and other luxury amenities on the Strip's western, seafront side; and residential buildings – “[People’s Republic of China]-styled 30-floor housing units” on the eastern side. In between, he writes, will be agricultural areas and greenhouses. The reconstruction will require “the complete excavation of the terror tunnels,” though Pelzman says the IDF has already done much of the work.

Pelzman indicates repeatedly in his paper that his preferred mode for Gaza’s governance is e-government, meaning government that makes use of technological means. In particular, “the exchange of funds between residents and businesses will be exclusively via an online exchange network,” precluding the need for paper money, credit cards or foreign aid. The Strip will have no monetary authority and “all capital flows will be controlled by foreign stakeholders.”

Furthermore, Pelzman suggests that experts appointed by the foreign shareholders would oversee an educational system based on deradicalization, “with external oversight to assure the development of a skilled population.” Pelzman suggests importing curricula – from kindergarten to university – from the educational models of the UAE or Saudi Arabia, based on their recent reforms and Sunni-Sufi Islamic teachings.



US President Donald Trump (R) and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu take questions during a press conference in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on February 4, 2025. (ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS / AFP)

Security must be assigned to “partners who share the common interest of removing Hamas and their co-conspirators from any role,” and are “interested in demilitarizing Gaza permanently.”

Per Pelzman, Hamas has no property rights in Gaza, under the 1993 Oslo Accords, which he says were left intact when Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005.

## **TRUMP: US WILL 'TAKE OVER' GAZA, LEVEL IT AND CREATE 'THE RIVIERA OF THE MIDDLE EAST'**

**In press conference with PM, president proposes US replace Hamas in Gaza,  
doesn't rule out possibility of sending troops;  
says he'll soon announce policy on Israel annexing West Bank**

**THE TIMES OF ISRAEL** [Jacob Magid](#) and [Lazar Berman](#)



US President Donald Trump (R) and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu take questions during a press conference in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on February 4, 2025.

(ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS / AFP)

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump on Tuesday declared his desire for the United States to “take over” and “own” the Gaza Strip, again stunning a global audience hours after doing so with his [call for permanently relocating](#) the coastal enclave’s entire population.

“The US will take over the Gaza Strip, and we will do a job with it too. We’ll own it,” Trump said in prepared remarks at the start of a joint press conference with visiting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the two leaders met in the Oval Office.

There had been speculation that Trump would use his Tuesday meeting with Netanyahu to urge him to commit to carrying out the second phase of the ongoing Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal. The prime minister is under pressure from his far-right coalition partners to resume fighting at the conclusion of the first phase next month.

But Trump avoided publicly leaning on Netanyahu at all, instead praising his leadership and seemingly offering him a political lifeline by getting fully behind an idea — emptying Gaza — that has long been endorsed by the Israeli far right, and thereby giving ultranationalist lawmakers an incentive to keep the government intact.

The proposal also seemed likely to swing focus away from the hostage talks, or at least shake them up. Israel and Hamas are set to begin negotiations this week on the terms of the second phase of the ceasefire in Gaza, which is supposed to see the release of the remaining living hostages in exchange for Israel permanently ending the war — something that would likely leave Hamas in power, falling short of Netanyahu's pledge to fully dismantle the terror group's military and governing capabilities.

To fulfill that pledge, Trump on Tuesday proposed that the US be the one to replace Hamas in Gaza, offering an alternative that Netanyahu could get behind after the premier repeatedly rejected the Palestinian Authority in that role — the preference of the Biden administration and Arab allies.

Whether Trump's proposal is viable was another question, as was what it would mean for the 79 remaining hostages in Gaza, whom Hamas has sought to leverage as an insurance policy to remain in power.

Still reading from his prepared remarks, highlighting that this was not an off-the-cuff idea thrown around during his regular banter with reporters, Trump said he envisioned “long-term [US] ownership” of the Strip. “We will be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other weapons on the site, [for] get[ting] rid of the destroyed buildings, level[ing] it out, creat[ing] an economy development that will supply unlimited numbers of jobs and housing to the people of the area,” Trump said.

“[We've got to] do something different. You just can't go back. If you go back, it's going to end up the same way it has been for 100 years,” he said, adding that other leaders in the region backed his idea.

“It should not go through a process of rebuilding and occupation by the same people that have... lived there and died there and lived a miserable existence there,” Trump said of Gaza. He added that he planned to visit the enclave as well as Israel and Saudi Arabia, without saying when.

Trump insisted the Palestinians “have no alternative” but to leave the “big pile of rubble” that is Gaza after over 15 months of Israeli bombardments aimed at dismantling Hamas in response to the terror group's October 7 onslaught.

The US president reiterated his belief that Palestinians should be removed from the “hellhole” of the Strip and placed in one or multiple other countries “with humanitarian hearts.”

Trump, since returning to office, has insisted that Egypt and Jordan volunteer to serve as hosts for the Gazans, but the two countries have adamantly rejected the idea, arguing that it would destabilize them and that the Palestinians should be allowed to remain on their land, just as Israelis are.

He said the “world's people” would be the ones to live in Gaza once the US finishes rebuilding it, and that while the Palestinians could be among them, the enclave will become an “international” hub.

“Gaza is a hellhole right now. It was before the bombing started, frankly, and we're going to give people a chance to live in a beautiful community that's safe and secure,” he said.

“I don't want to be cute, I don't want to be a wise guy,” Trump said and then referred to Gaza as potentially “the Riviera of the Middle East. This could be something that could be so magnificent.”

It is not the first time the former property tycoon has spoken about the Palestinian territory in terms of real estate, saying in October it could be “better than Monaco.”

Last year, Trump’s son-in-law and former senior White House adviser Jared Kushner described Gaza as “waterfront property that could be valuable,” adding that he would “do his best to move the people out and then clean it up.”



A Palestinian woman hangs laundry as children climb debris in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on February 4, 2025. (Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)

Asked whether American troops would be sent to Gaza, Trump said, “As far as Gaza is concerned, we’ll do what is necessary. If it’s necessary, we’ll do that.”

The response and Trump’s broader plan for a US takeover of Gaza appeared to be a departure from his previous policy of reducing the US military presence in the region, rather than bolstering it.

The last time the US sent troops to Gaza — or at least to the enclave’s shores — was to try and set up a temporary port to help funnel in humanitarian aid last year. But poor weather conditions forced the dismantlement of the platform just several weeks after it was set up at the direction of then-president Joe Biden.

#### **Palestinians fume as some Republicans cast doubt**

Trump’s plan doesn’t seem contingent on whether or not Gaza’s population of roughly two million people even want to leave, and the Palestinian envoy to the United Nations quickly insisted that they don’t.

“Our homeland is our homeland,” said Riyad Mansour. “And I think that leaders and people should respect the wishes of the Palestinian people.”

Hamas in a statement decried Trump's vision. "We reject Trump's statements in which he said that the residents of the Gaza Strip have no choice but to leave, and we consider them a recipe for creating chaos and tension in the region."



Steve Witkoff, US President Donald Trump's special envoy for the Middle East, arrives for a press conference with the US president and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House in Washington, on February 4, 2025. (Andrew Caballero-Reynolds / AFP)

Trump's Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff said Palestinians need not be tied to the land they're currently on in order to have a better life.

"A better life is not necessarily tied to the physical space that you are in today," he said in an interview with Fox News shortly after the Trump-Netanyahu press conference.

"A better life is about better opportunity, better financial conditions, better aspirations for you and your family. That doesn't occur because you get to pitch a tent in the Gaza Strip and you're surrounded by 30,000 munitions that could go off at any moment," said Witkoff, who visited Gaza during a trip to the region last week. "Gaza today is uninhabitable and will probably be uninhabitable for at least the next 10 to 15 years."

Earlier Tuesday, the envoy tore into the ceasefire framework crafted by Biden, which he helped to finalize in Doha last month, arguing that it unrealistically envisioned a Gaza reconstruction process of five years when the effort would take much longer.

Even some Republicans chafed at Trump's proposal.

"We'll see what our Arab friends say about that," said Trump ally and Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham. "I think most South Carolinians would probably not be excited about sending Americans to take over Gaza. It might be problematic."



US President Donald Trump (right) and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrive for a news conference in the East Room of the White House, Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

### **'JAW-DROPPING' AWE FROM NETANYAHU**

Standing at a podium beside Trump, Netanyahu hailed the president as Israel's "greatest friend" and praised his "willingness to think outside the box."

"You say things others refuse to say. And after the jaws drop, people scratch their heads and they say, 'You know he's right,'" the prime minister said, adding that Trump's plan could "change history" and was worth "paying attention to."

Netanyahu was making the first visit of a foreign leader to the White House since Trump assumed office.

The two have had tense relations in the past, but Netanyahu has seized on the Republican's return to power after his ties with Biden became increasingly frayed over Israel's conduct of the war in Gaza.

"You are the greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House," said Netanyahu, listing Trump's policies toward the Jewish state in his first term, including leaving the Iran nuclear deal, brokering the Abraham Accords, and moving the US embassy to Jerusalem.

"You've picked up right where you left off," he said.



US President Donald Trump listens as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks during a news conference in the East Room of the White House, February 4, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

“Your leadership has brought hostages home,” said Netanyahu. He added that Trump freed up munitions allegedly withheld by the previous administration, ended “unjust sanctions against Israeli citizens” — referring to sanctions on violent settlers — “confronted antisemitism, stopped funding UNRWA, and renewed maximum pressure against Iran.”

All this has been done by Trump in just two weeks, he said. “Can you imagine where we’ll be in four years?”

Israel, said Netanyahu, has been changing the face of the Middle East since the Hamas onslaught of October 7, 2023.

“We have defeated some of America’s worst enemies. We took out terrorists that were wanted for decades for shedding rivers of American blood,” the premier said.

“Israel has never been stronger and the Iran terror axis has never been weaker,” he said.

But to secure Israel’s future and bring peace to the region, “we have to finish the job,” added Netanyahu, reiterating pledges — which some have criticized as conflicting — to return all the hostages and remove Hamas from power in Gaza.





People walk past an electronic billboard that shows US President Donald Trump, left, shaking hands with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman with text that says: 'We are ready,' in Tel Aviv, February 3, 2025. (AP Photo/ Ariel Schalit)

"Israel will end the war by winning the war," Netanyahu promised. This, in turn, will "usher in the peace with Saudi Arabia and with others."

He said he believes "peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia is not only feasible; it's going to happen."

If Trump had had another half-year in his first term, it would already have happened, said the prime minister. "I'm committed to achieving it, and I know the president is committed to achieving it. And I think the Saudi leadership is interested in achieving it."

But shortly after the press conference concluded, Saudi Arabia issued a statement reiterating that it would not normalize ties with Israel before a Palestinian state is established. The statement was specifically in response to Trump's claim earlier in the day that Riyadh has not, in fact, conditioned Israel normalization on a two-state solution.

While Trump gave much for the Israeli right to gush about, he told reporters in the Oval Office with Netanyahu earlier in the day that he did not support Israel reestablishing settlements in Gaza. "I don't see it happening. It's too dangerous for people. No one wants to be there. [Israel's] warriors don't want to be there. Their soldiers don't want to be there."



A right-wing demonstration supporting the reestablishment of Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip, in Sderot, December 26, 2024. (Erik Marmor/Flash90)

Asked at the press conference whether he'd back Israel annexing the West Bank, Trump said he'll likely be "making an announcement" on the matter at some point in the next four weeks.

"We're discussing that with many of your representatives. You're represented very well... [but] we haven't been taking the position on it yet," Trump said during the press conference to a reporter who signaled that he supported annexation.

Regarding the hostages, Trump said the US would get "somewhat more violent" if Hamas did not release all of them, "because they would have broken their word."

"We also see eye to eye on Iran," said Netanyahu — the same Iran, he noted, that "tried to kill us both: they tried to kill you, Mr. President, and through their proxies, they tried to kill me."



US President Donald Trump, right, meets with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Oval Office of the White House, February 4, 2025, in Washington. (Andrew Caballero-Reynolds / AFP)

“We are both committed to rolling back Iran’s aggression in the region and ensuring that Iran never develops a nuclear weapon,” Netanyahu said.

Trump seemed a bit less militant, and expressed his desire to address the Iranian nuclear threat through diplomatic means.

“If we could solve this problem without warfare, without all of the things that you’ve been witnessing over the last number of years, I think it would be a tremendous thing,” the president said.

Asked whether he’d back an Israeli strike on Iran, Trump responded, “We’ll have to see what happens.”

*Agencies contributed to this report.*

## **EGYPT SAID PRIVATELY WARNING TRUMP'S GAZA PLAN ENDANGERS PEACE TREATY WITH ISRAEL**

**Officials say message has been passed to State Department and members of Congress  
and also conveyed to Israel**

**and its Western European allies, including Britain, France and Germany**

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL AP](#) and [ToI Staff](#)6 February 2025, 4:21 pm

CAIRO — Egypt has launched a behind-the-scenes diplomatic blitz to try to head off US President Donald Trump's proposal for the mass relocation of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

Egypt has warned that such a plan could undermine its peace treaty with Israel, a cornerstone of stability and American influence in the Middle East for decades.

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi has not publicly responded to Trump's stunning proposal that most of Gaza's population of 2.3 million Palestinians be relocated and the United States take charge of rebuilding the territory. The 15 months of fighting between Israel and Hamas, which began when the Palestinian terror group led thousands of terrorists on a devastating invasion of southern Israel, had reduced large parts of Gaza to rubble before a fragile ceasefire took hold last month.

But Egyptian officials, speaking Wednesday on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door talks, said Cairo has made clear to the Trump administration and Israel that it will resist any such proposal, and that the peace deal with Israel — which has stood for nearly half a century — is at risk.

One official said the message has been delivered to the Pentagon, the State Department, and members of the US Congress. A second official said it has also been conveyed to Israel and its Western European allies, including Britain, France, and Germany.

A Western diplomat in Cairo, also speaking anonymously because the discussions have not been made public, confirmed receiving the message from Egypt through multiple channels. The diplomat said Egypt was very serious and viewed the plan as a threat to its national security.

The diplomat said Egypt had rejected proposals from the Biden administration and European countries to take in some Gazan refugees early in the war, which was sparked by the Hamas-led October 7, 2023, attack in southern Israel that killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians. The earlier proposals were broached privately, while Trump announced his plan at a White House press conference alongside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Trump administration has already dialed back aspects of the proposal after it was widely rejected internationally, saying the relocation of Palestinians would be temporary. US officials have provided few details about how or when the plan was intended to be carried out.

In a social media post on Thursday, Trump said Israel would turn Gaza over to the United States after the war and that no US soldiers would be needed for his plan to redevelop it.

The Palestinians have vehemently rejected Trump's proposal, fearing that refugees would never be allowed to return.

Saudi Arabia, another key US ally, has also rejected any mass transfer of Palestinians and says it will not normalize relations with Israel — a key goal of the Trump administration — without the creation of a Palestinian state that includes Gaza.

Saudi Arabia's former intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal on Thursday slammed Trump's proposal, calling it a "mad ethnic cleansing plan" in lockstep with the agenda of Israel's far right.

"It is a fantasy to think that ethnic cleansing in the 21st century can be condoned... There's no way that I can explain it," he said, warning that the plan will cause "more conflict and more bloodshed."

He called on the international community to take the matter up in the United Nations, but noted that "with the American veto, I cannot expect that there will be much success in passing any resolution."

Trump and Israeli officials have depicted the proposed relocation from war-ravaged Gaza as voluntary, but the Palestinians have universally expressed their determination to remain in their homeland.

Trump and Israeli officials have not said how they would respond if Palestinians refuse to leave. But Human Rights Watch and other groups say the plan, if implemented, would amount to "ethnic cleansing," the forcible relocation of the civilian population of an ethnic group from a geographic area.

Defense Minister Israel Katz said he has ordered the military [to make preparations](#) to facilitate the voluntary emigration of large numbers of Palestinians from Gaza through land crossings as well as "special arrangements for exit by sea and air."

There were no immediate signs of such preparations on the ground and Israeli officials stressed that this was only for Palestinians who wanted to leave.

### **US OFFICIALS SCALE BACK TRUMP'S PROPOSAL**

Trump said he wanted to "permanently" resettle most of Gaza's population in other countries and for the United States to take charge of clearing debris and rebuilding Gaza as a "Riviera of the Middle East" for all people. He did not rule out the deployment of US troops there.

US officials later [appeared to walk it back](#), saying the relocation of Palestinians would be temporary and that Trump had not committed to putting American boots on the ground or spending American tax dollars in Gaza.

The Egyptian officials said their government does not believe the Palestinians need to be relocated for reconstruction to proceed and is committed to the creation of a Palestinian state in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, territories Israel gained control of in the 1967 Six Day War.

Israel's government is opposed to Palestinian statehood and has said it will maintain open-ended security control over both Gaza and the West Bank. Israel annexed East Jerusalem in a move not recognized by most of the international community and considers the entire city its capital. Trump during his first term of office moved the US embassy to Jerusalem in a move seen as giving legitimacy to Israel's holding of the unified city.

Last week, Egypt hosted a meeting of top diplomats from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates — which was the driving force behind the 2020 Abraham Accords Trump brokered with Israel. All five Arab nations rejected the transfer of Palestinians out of Gaza or the West Bank.

In an editorial on Thursday, Egypt's main state-run daily, Al-Ahram, warned that "the Arab countries' independence, their peoples' unity and their territorial integrity are under grave threat."

## **PM CALLS TRUMP'S GAZA PLAN 'REMARKABLE'; KATZ TELLS IDF TO PREP FOR VOLUNTARY EMIGRATION**

**Netanyahu says Palestinians 'can relocate and come back,' stresses he does not expect US to supply troops on the ground or funds to carry out effort**

**THE TIMES OF ISRAEL** [Lazar Berman](#), [Sam Sokol](#) [Tol Staff](#) 6 February 2025,

WASHINGTON — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offered an endorsement on Wednesday of US President Donald Trump's proposal to relocate Gazans from the Strip while work is carried out to rebuild it, calling the plan "remarkable."

"This is the first good idea that I've heard," Netanyahu said in an interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity. "It's a remarkable idea. And I think it should be examined, pursued, and done — because I think it will create a different future for everyone."

The comments marked Netanyahu's first full-throated endorsement of the idea that Trump floated on Tuesday during a joint press conference in the White House.

In the wake of Trump's declaration, Defense Minister Israel Katz on Thursday said he had instructed the military to prepare a plan that would enable Gazans seeking to leave the Strip voluntarily to do so.

Appearing to surprise Netanyahu and shocking much of the world, Trump suggested during his prepared remarks that "the US will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it too. We'll own it and be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other weapons on the site, level the site and get rid of the destroyed buildings, level it out.

"The only reason the Palestinians want to go back to Gaza is they have no alternative," Trump said, suggesting they be "permanently" relocated to other nations.

The White House later [sought to soften](#) the comments, saying the relocation was meant to be temporary. Speaking to Hannity a day later, Netanyahu said: "I don't think [Trump] talked about sending US troops to complete the job of destroying Hamas — that's our commitment, that's our job and we're absolutely committed to it."

"I also don't think he said he's going to fund it. He said that neighboring states, wealthy states, would do it," Netanyahu added.

"But the actual idea of allowing Gazans who want to leave to leave — I mean, what's wrong with that?"

Netanyahu continued. "They can leave, they can then come back, they can relocate and come back."

Arab allies have long rejected any possible displacement of Gazans from the Strip, refusing throughout the war to take in any significant number of refugees. Egypt and Jordan have in recent days denounced Trump's suggestion that they absorb Gazans, while Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have also called such an idea untenable.

Netanyahu said during his Fox News interview that after 16 months of war in Gaza, "so far, we have decimated most of Hamas's military — but not all. There is still some left, and we'll make sure that it's not there when this war ends. And it could end very quickly."

The prime minister reiterated his commitment to bringing home all of the hostages being held in Gaza, including those who are no longer alive: “We intend to do that. I won’t talk here [about] how we intend to do it, but it’s something that’s in my mind, it’s also on the president’s mind.”

The entrance of Trump into the White House, said Netanyahu, and his commitment to preventing a nuclear Iran, “elevates the spirit of Israelis, it elevates the spirit of all those who want to see a different Middle East, a prosperous and peaceful Middle East. I think it changes the global equation.”

In a statement Thursday, Katz welcomed Trump’s “courageous plan, which could enable a wide swath of the population in Gaza to leave to various places around the world.”

He said he had ordered the military to prepare a plan by which any resident who wants to can emigrate to any nation willing to take them in. The plan would provide for exits through land crossings, as well as “special arrangements” for departure via maritime and aerial routes, he said.

“Gaza’s residents should be allowed the freedom to exit and emigrate, as is the practice anywhere around the world,” Katz suggested, adding that Trump’s plan could advance “rehabilitation plans in a demilitarized Gaza that poses no threat in the post-Hamas era, which will take many years.”

Taking aim at countries critical of Israel throughout the war, Katz suggested potential destinations such as Spain, Ireland, Norway and other countries that have leveled “false accusations” against Israel, arguing that if those nations refuse to accept Palestinians, “their hypocrisy will be exposed.”

He also mentioned Canada, which has “an organized immigration program” and has “previously voiced a willingness to absorb Gazan residents.”

Far-right Israeli politicians hailed Katz’s announcement, welcoming the possibility of Gazans exiting the Strip for other destinations as an ideal “solution.”

“I congratulate the defense minister on his decision to instruct the IDF to prepare to fulfill our role in the migration plan to allow the departure of Gazans from Gaza to receiving countries,” said Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

“As we have been saying for many years, and even more so since the beginning of the war, there is no other realistic solution that will ensure peace and security for Israel and personal wellbeing for the residents of Gaza.”

Otzma Yehudit chairman Itamar Ben Gvir called Katz’s instructions an “important step, which recognizes that the real solution for Gaza is no longer dreams of ‘reconstruction’ and a return to the previous situation, but a fundamental change in reality.”

Ben Gvir added that “the possibility of voluntary departure is a necessary step to ensure the security of Israeli citizens and to strengthen Israeli deterrence.” He called on the government “to move forward with determination, remove every bureaucratic obstacle, and ensure that this option becomes a reality as soon as possible.”

Trump’s bombshell proposal, which was scant on details, [sent shockwaves](#) through much of the world on Tuesday, [including among many](#) in his own Republican Party, and [reports varied](#) on how many people had known about the announcement ahead of time.

By Wednesday, several top US officials [sought to walk back](#) some aspects of Trump's comments, saying the removal would only be temporary, though Trump had said he hoped Gazans "wouldn't want to return" to Gaza if they were set up in new homes elsewhere in the world.

Netanyahu himself appeared surprised by the pronouncement following the two leaders' sit-down White House meeting, not commenting directly on it during his own remarks, but praising Trump for "your willingness to puncture conventional thinking, thinking that has failed time and time and time again, [and] your willingness to think outside the box with fresh ideas."



**TRUMP'S 'EXTREME MAKEOVER:  
GAZA EDITION' HAS MANY FLAWS.  
ONE OF THE WORST IS ITS ABSENT MORALITY**

**Hamas brought war down upon Gaza with its mass slaughter in Israel on October 7.  
That doesn't mean the US has the right to ship out all its residents  
and develop it as real estate for others**

**[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [David Horovitz](#) 5 February 2025**

***This Editor's Note was sent out earlier Wednesday in Tol's weekly update email to members of the Times of Israel Community. To receive these Editor's Notes as they're released, join the Tol Community [here](#).***

The conventional expectation ahead of the Trump-Netanyahu summit on Tuesday was that the two leaders would publicly present a warm, united front that reflected their broadly similar positions on getting the hostages out of Gaza, destroying Hamas, advancing normalization with Saudi Arabia, and keeping Iran from the bomb. And that, behind closed doors, the president, the prime minister and their teams would **tussle constructively over their differences and chart a joint course forward.**

**Instead, we got the president announcing that the United States intends to take over from Hamas in Gaza, encourage and achieve the evacuation of its entire populace, level the "hellhole," redevelop it like a strip of real estate, and then sell off the new housing to the international community — including Palestinians, he allowed when asked, but evidently not Gazans, *all of whom*, he specified in the Oval Office, will be permanently "resettled in areas where they can live a beautiful life and not be worried about dying every day." A case of "Extreme Makeover: Gaza Edition."**

To radically understate, the Trump Gaza-for-anyone-but-Gazans bombshell, as dropped in the course of his Oval Office appearance with Netanyahu and the full-scale press conference that followed soon after, prompts some profound concerns:

### **1. HOW IS THIS MEANT TO WORK? PART I**

The neighboring states Trump is repeatedly urging to absorb large numbers of Gaza's 1.8 million Palestinians don't want to do so. They consider it a betrayal of the Palestinians but, far more importantly, they also rightly fear it would destabilize their own broadly restless, unhappy, and potentially insurrectionist masses.

Meanwhile, at least some Gazans doubtless would rather live in peace, liberated from the decades-old threat of being gunned down at any moment, as the president noted, but only if they were truly being moved to somewhere better, and with the opportunity to return home should Gaza actually become livable. Evacuation will be widely unpalatable if the small print on the relocation deal is that they can never return to

the place where they were born, and that it is to be usurped by US government-organized real estate developers building, as the president put it, “**the Riviera of the Middle East.**”

## **2. HOW IS THIS MEANT TO WORK? PART II**

Israel has been seeking for 16 months since Hamas’s invasion and slaughter to destroy Gaza’s ruling terror group, to significant effect, but not, as Netanyahu repeatedly highlights, to the point of total victory. This has cost tens of thousands of lives in Gaza — perhaps half of them Hamas gunmen and half not — and hundreds of lives of Israeli soldiers.

Is Trump about to send US forces to fight alongside the IDF in an effort to complete the job? “If it’s necessary, we’ll do that,” he said, when asked at the press conference about the possibility of deploying American troops. Or is the idea to encourage all Gazans, including all Hamas terrorists, gunmen and supporters, to board the buses and the boats to unknown climes, in the expectation that the mere act of their relocation will render all of them “wonderful people,” as Trump described Gazans, and a boon to their new host countries, solving the problem of monstrous Hamas terrorism at a stroke?

## **3. MORALITY**

What regard is being paid to the morality of what might be termed Trump’s “War to Prosperity” plan? By what international right does the US intend to occupy, empty, and repopulate a territory that, indeed, has no legitimate sovereign government, but is also not open and available to the United States simply by virtue of its desire to take it over?

By extension, what message does the very unveiling of this intention convey, say, to China as regards Taiwan, or Russia as regards Ukraine?

“A better life is not necessarily tied to the physical space that you are in today,” proclaimed Steve Witkoff, Trump’s Middle East envoy, in an interview later Tuesday. What might the likes of Putin seek to make of that? And let’s not even contemplate what Israeli Jews would say if someone attempted to make that argument about us.

There are international legal provisions for the temporary relocation of civilian populations at risk in times of war, but with the essential proviso that such evacuation is genuinely voluntary and temporary. As Trump made clear several times on Tuesday, however, what he is planning is permanent.

## **4. WHAT OF THE HOSTAGES?**

Barely mentioned in the Oval Office comments or the main press conference, where does the Trump plan leave the 79 Israeli hostages still in Gaza? Families of some hostages who were in Washington planning a press conference after the White House summit canceled their event as they struggled to understand how what was being said would impact the fates of their loved ones.

Will Hamas now lay down its arms, raise a white flag, and depart the combat zone? Or will it abrogate the current deal before the still-unfinalized second phase, in which 24 living male hostages are to be released, or even during the current first phase, in which 20 more hostages have yet to be freed, 12 of them living?

## **5. AN ANNEXATION POLICY IN FOUR WEEKS**

What are we to make of the president’s curiously precise prediction that he would be announcing his administration’s position on the matter of Israeli annexation of the West Bank in the next “four weeks.” That

coincides with the end of the 42-day phase one, at which point Bezalel Smotrich has threatened to take his Religious Zionism party out of the coalition if Israel does not resume its military campaign against Hamas. Is this a Trump carrot, along with his Gazan-free Gaza blueprint and the insistence — denied by Riyadh — that normalization can be had with Saudi Arabia without a Palestinian state, in a package designed to enable Netanyahu to maintain his governing majority?

If so, is Trump, in return, expecting Netanyahu to stick with the current Gaza deal at least until all living hostages have been returned — a goal the president has repeatedly endorsed and championed? But if that is the case, why has Trump unveiled a plan that would appear to put those hostages' lives at greater risk?

### **AFTER THE JAWS DROP**

These are by no means the only concerns and questions surrounding the surreal proceedings we watched unfold on Tuesday.

The look on Netanyahu's face, a mixture of embarrassment and glee, suggested (as is [now being reported](#)) that he was hearing for the first time at least some of what Trump was telling the world, and so did the prime minister's rather halting response: "President Trump... sees a different future for that piece of land... He has a different idea... I think it's worth paying attention to this... I think it's something that could change history..."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) and US President Donald Trump (R) participate in a news conference in the East Room of the White House, February 4, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci) Israelis have been here before to some extent — almost exactly five years ago — when the same US president, with the same prime minister at his side, [unveiled his Israeli-Palestinian "Peace to Prosperity" plan](#).

That White House event prompted a chaotic period in which Netanyahu wanted to believe that he had been given carte blanche to annex the settlements and the Jordan Valley within days, until Jared Kushner was dispatched to disabuse him of the notion.

A major difference this time is that Israel is in the midst of a grueling multifront war, with dozens of its people held hostage, and the margins for misunderstandings and outright missteps are even narrower than in our fraught regional norm.

It could be — it could *well* be — that for all the president's repeated insistence on the necessity of his Gaza plan, what we saw on Tuesday was a characteristic Trumpian deliberate overreach gambit: the unveiling of a proposal so radical and so unpalatable that it shifts the various forces that are complicating his goals — from Hamas, to Egypt and Jordan, to the Saudis, even to Iran — and blasts open a viable path to weaken, marginalize and eliminate shared American and Israeli enemies, and jolt reluctant potential allies.

Nine months after the 2020 annexation fiasco, it should be remembered, Trump was able to [broker the Abraham Accords](#), complete with a widely [reported assurance](#) to the United Arab Emirates that annexation was off the table for at least a few years.

"You cut to the chase. You see things others refuse to see. You say things others refuse to say," Netanyahu extolled Trump in his prepared remarks at the press conference. "And after the jaws drop, people scratch their heads and say, 'You know? He's right.'"

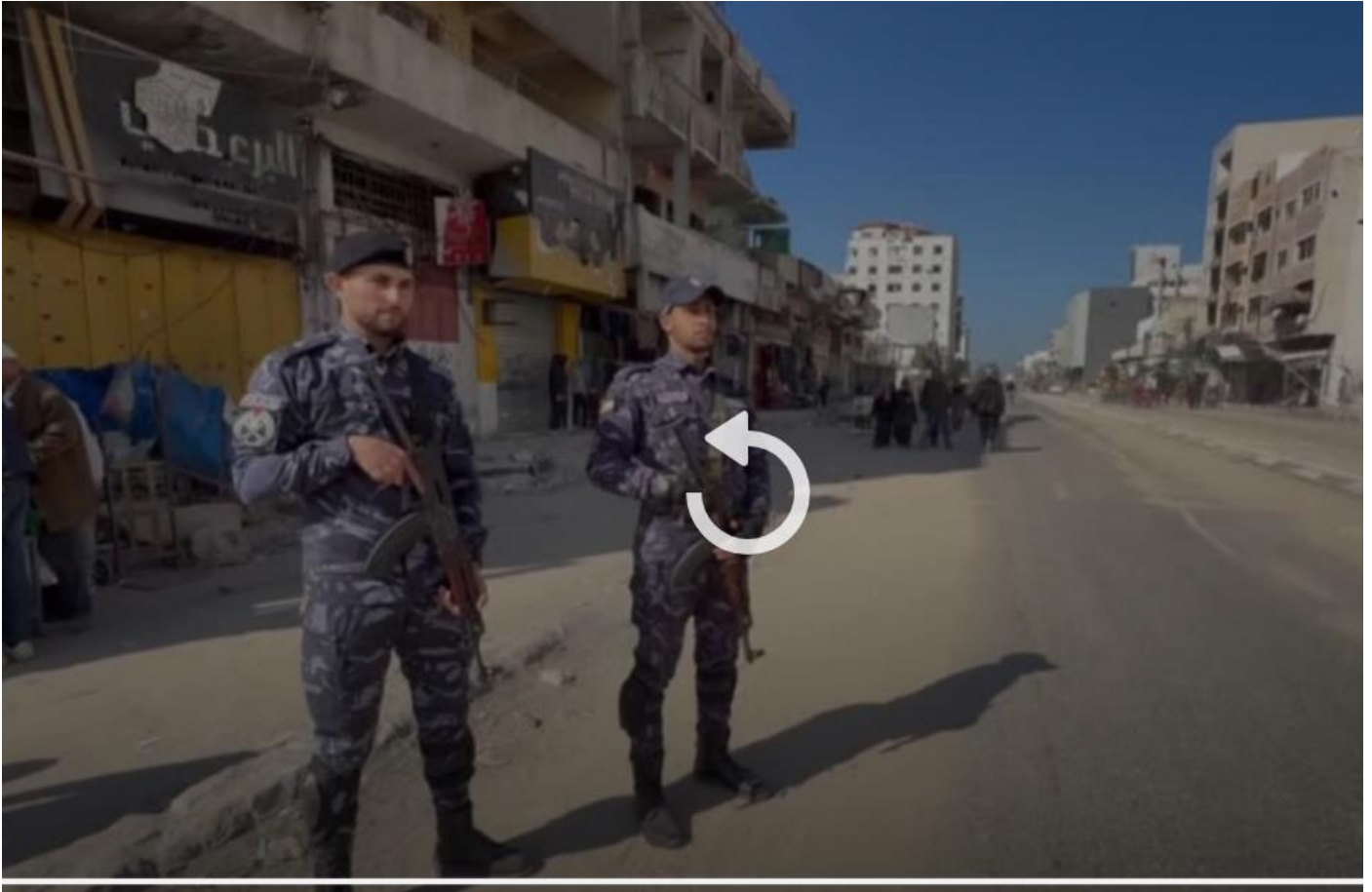
Except this time, the vision is short on morality, legitimacy and practical applicability.

Gaza is indeed a blighted, blood-drenched territory, from where despicable barbarians set out to slaughter Israelis 16 months ago. And in the war that Hamas brought down upon it, Gaza has indeed been rendered largely uninhabitable for many years to come.

Israel, with the support of a patently empathetic US president and his team, needs to ensure that a future Gaza is a dependable, allied neighbor, not another genocidal threat. What Gaza isn't is a real estate fixer-upper.

## HAMAS' TIGHT GRIP ON GAZA COMPLICATES PLAN FOR LASTING PEACE

[REUTERS](#) [Nidal Al-Mughrabi](#) January 22, 2025



### SUMMARY

- Hamas maintains control over Gaza's administration and security forces
- Israel faces dilemma with Hamas' entrenched power in Gaza
- Ceasefire deal divides opinion in Israel, future peace uncertain

CAIRO, Jan 22 (Reuters) - In neighbourhoods levelled by 15 months of war with Israel, Hamas officials are overseeing the clearance of rubble in the wake of Sunday's ceasefire. The group's gunmen are guarding aid convoys on Gaza's dusty roads, and its blue-uniformed police once again patrol city streets, sending a clear message: Hamas remains in charge.

Israeli officials have described a parade of jubilant Hamas fighters that celebrated the ceasefire on Sunday in front of cheering crowds as a carefully orchestrated attempt to exaggerate the Palestinian militant group's strength.

But, in the days since the ceasefire took effect, Gaza's Hamas-run administration has moved quickly to reimpose security, to curb looting, and to start restoring basic services to parts of the enclave, swathes of which have been reduced to wasteland by the Israeli offensive.

Reuters spoke to more than a dozen residents, officials, regional diplomats and security experts who said that, despite Israel's vow to destroy it, Hamas remains deeply entrenched in Gaza and its hold on power represents a challenge to implementing a permanent ceasefire.

The Islamist group not only controls Gaza's security forces, but its administrators run ministries and government agencies, paying salaries for employees and coordinating with international NGOs, they said.

On Tuesday, its police and gunmen – who for months were kept off the streets by Israeli airstrikes – were stationed in neighbourhoods through the Strip.

"We want to prevent any kind of security vacuum," said Ismail Al-Thawabta, director of the Hamas-run Gaza government media office. He said that some 700 police were protecting aid convoys and not a single truck had been looted since Sunday – a contrast to the massive theft of food by criminal gangs during the conflict.

A spokesperson for the United Nations in Geneva confirmed on Tuesday there had been no reports of looting or attacks on aid workers since the ceasefire took effect.

In recent weeks, Israeli airstrikes have targeted lower-ranking administrators in Gaza, in an apparent bid to break Hamas' grip on government. Israel had already eliminated Hamas' leadership, including political chief Ismail Haniyeh and the architects of the Oct. 7 attack, Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif.

Despite the losses, Al-Thawabta said the Hamas-run administration continued to function.

"Currently, we have 18,000 employees working daily to provide services to citizens," he said.

The Hamas-run municipalities had begun on Sunday clearing the rubble from some roads to allow vehicles to pass, while workers repaired pipes and infrastructure to restore running water to neighbourhoods. On Tuesday, dozens of heavy trucks ferried debris from destroyed buildings along the enclave's dusty main arteries.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has not articulated a vision for Gaza's postwar future beyond insisting the Islamist group can play no role and stating that the Palestinian Authority – a body set up under the Oslo peace accords three decades ago that partially administers the occupied West Bank - also cannot be trusted under its current leadership. The Israeli government did not respond to Reuters' questions.

Joost Hiltermann, of the International Crisis Group, said Hamas' firm grip on Gaza presented Israel with a dilemma.

"Israel has a choice, to continue fighting in the future and killing people - and that hasn't worked in the past 15 months - or it can allow an arrangement where the Palestinian Authority takes control with Hamas' acquiescence," Hiltermann said.

Hamas' military capability is hard to assess because its rocket arsenal remains hidden and many of its best trained fighters may have been killed, Hiltermann said, but it remains by far the dominant armed group in Gaza: "Nobody is talking about the PA taking over Gaza without Hamas' consent."

While senior Hamas officials have expressed support for a unity government, Mahmoud Abbas, the head of the Palestinian Authority and a longtime adversary of Hamas, has not given his assent. Abbas's office and the Palestinian Authority did not respond to a request for comment.

### Gaza and its main crossing points



■ Main crossing points into Gaza

Source: Datawrapper, Reuters

A map showing Gaza and the main crossing points of Erez, Rafah and Kerem Shalom into the enclave

## FRESH NEGOTIATIONS

[Under the terms of the ceasefire](#), Israel must withdraw its troops from central Gaza and permit the return of Palestinians to the north during an initial six-week phase, in which some hostages will be released. Starting from the 16th day of the ceasefire, the two sides should negotiate a second phase, expected to include a permanent ceasefire and the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops. Reconstruction, [expected to cost billions of dollars and last for years](#), would only begin in a third and final phase.

The deal has divided opinion in Israel. While there was widespread celebration of the return of the first three hostages on Sunday, many Israelis want to see Hamas destroyed for its Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel in which 1,200 people were killed and more than 250 taken hostage.

Even before the ceasefire took effect, members of Netanyahu's cabinet said they favoured returning to war to remove Hamas from power, once hostages have returned home. Three far-right ministers resigned.

"There is no future of peace, stability and security for both sides if Hamas stays in power in the Gaza Strip," Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said on Sunday.

A spokesman for Hamas' armed wing, Abu Ubaida, told Reuters the militant group would honour the terms of the ceasefire and urged Israel to do the same.

Fifteen months of war have left Gaza a wasteland of rubble, bombed-out buildings and makeshift encampments, with hundreds of thousands of desperate people sheltering from the winter cold and living on whatever aid can reach them. More than 46,000 people have been killed, according to Palestinian health authorities.

The ceasefire deal calls for 600 trucks of aid per day to reach Gaza. Al-Thawabta, the spokesman for the Hamas-run administration, said it was liaising with UN bodies and international relief organizations about security for aid routes and warehouses, but the agencies were handling the distribution of aid.

A U.N. damage assessment released this month showed that just clearing away the more than 50 million tonnes of rubble left in the aftermath of Israel's bombardment could take 21 years and cost up to \$1.2 billion.

On Sunday, as Hamas' security forces paraded on the streets, some residents had expressed pride that it had survived the onslaught.

"Name me one country that could withstand Israel's war-machine for 15 months," said Salah Abu Rezik, a 58-year-old factory worker. He praised Hamas for helping to distribute aid to hungry Gazans during the conflict and trying to enforce a measure of security.

"Hamas is an idea and you can't kill an idea," Abu Rezik said, predicting the group would rebuild. Others voiced anger that Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack had brought destruction to Gaza.



"We had homes and hotels and restaurants. We had a life. Today we have nothing, so what kind of a victory is this?" said Ameen, 30, a Gaza City civil engineer, displaced in Khan Younis. "When the war stops, Hamas must not rule Gaza alone."

## NO RIVALS

Since 2007, when Hamas drove out the Palestinian Authority dominated by the rival faction Fatah after a brief civil war, it has crushed opposition in Gaza. Supported by funds from Iran, it built a feared security apparatus and a military organization based around a vast network of tunnels - much of which Israel says it destroyed during the war.

The Palestinian Authority still pays the wages of thousands of government employees in Gaza involved in health and education, who report to ministries in the West Bank, and it provides support to many families of Palestinians killed or jailed by Israel. While the Authority says it is the only body with the legitimacy to govern post-war Gaza, it has no presence in the enclave and little popular support, polls show.

Israel has floated tentative ideas for post-war Gaza, including coopting local clan leaders - a number of whom were immediately assassinated by Hamas - or using members of Gazan civil society with no militant ties to run the enclave. But none has gained any traction.

Key donors, including the United Arab Emirates and U.S. President Donald Trump's new administration, have stressed that Hamas - which is designated as a terrorist organization by many Western countries - cannot remain in power in Gaza after the war.

Diplomats have been [discussing models involving international peacekeepers](#), including one that would see the United Arab Emirates and the United States, along with other nations, temporarily overseeing governance, security and reconstruction of Gaza until a reformed Palestinian Authority is able to take charge.

Another model, supported by Egypt, would see a joint committee made up of both Fatah and Hamas run Gaza under the supervision of the Palestinian Authority.

Michael Milshtein, a former Israeli military intelligence officer now at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies in Tel Aviv, described Hamas' public willingness to discuss a unity government as "cosmetic".

"As long as they are behind the scenes, handling matters, they don't care that there will be a committee as a front," he said.

On Monday, shortly after taking office, Trump expressed skepticism about the Gaza ceasefire deal, when asked if he was confident that all three phases of the agreement would be implemented. He didn't elaborate further.

A spokesperson for the Trump camp did not respond to a request for comment.

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Additional reporting by Maayan Lubell and James Mackenzie in Jerusalem, and David Gauthier-Villars; editing by Daniel Flynn

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## ANALYSIS-HAMAS' TIGHT GRIP ON GAZA COMPLICATES PLAN FOR LASTING PEACE

[REUTERS](#) Nidal al-Mughrabi January 22, 2025



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(Additional reporting by Maayan Lubell and James Mackenzie in Jerusalem, and David Gauthier-Villars; editing by Daniel Flynn)

## **EIGHT HOSTAGES FREED FROM GAZA AS ISRAEL RELEASES 110 PALESTINIAN PRISONERS AFTER DELAY**

**ABC NEWS** Thursday 30 January

### **In short:**

Chaos plagued the most recent release of hostages in Gaza on Thursday.

Eight people were freed by militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, but crowds swarmed two of the captives, who eventually made it to safety.

### **What's next?**

Israeli delayed the release of 110 Palestinian prisoners and detainees in protest.

**[abc.net.au/news/israel-hamas-war-prisoner-swap-delayed/104879052](https://www.abc.net.au/news/israel-hamas-war-prisoner-swap-delayed/104879052)**

Terror group Hamas has released eight hostages in Gaza and Israel has freed 110 Palestinian prisoners in the latest handover as part of the ongoing ceasefire agreement.

The handover marked the third round of exchanges in the deal between Israel and Hamas, which is now in its second week, but was delayed earlier by chaotic scenes in the enclave.

The sight of armed fighters escorting Israeli hostages through a crowd of thousands of onlookers caused Israeli leaders to briefly delay the release of the Palestinian prisoners, underscoring the fragility of the current truce.



A large crowd in Gaza swarmed when Israeli hostage Arbel Yehoud was being transferred to the Red Cross on Thursday. (ABC News)

The eight captives released by Hamas and Islamic Jihad were three Israelis and five Thai nationals, who were freed in two locations around Gaza.

Israeli authorities had criticised the transfer of two hostages, Arbel Yehoud, 29, and 80-year-old Gadi Moses, who had to battle a swarming crowd in Khan Younis — in the strip's south — to reach a waiting Red Cross convoy.

The country delayed the scheduled release of 110 Palestinian prisoners and detainees in protest, but within hours buses had arrived in the West Bank city of Ramallah carrying some of the prisoners.



Female Israeli soldier Agam Berger released from captivity in Gaza.

The prisoners were met by cheering crowds in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory, with men chanting "we sacrifice our souls and blood for you".

The weeks-long truce will see 33 hostages being held in Gaza exchanged for the release of around 1,700 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.

The next transfer is expected to take place on Saturday, local time.



A young boy offers chocolates to militants in Khan Younis ahead of Thursday's hostage transfer. (ABC News)



Ms Yehoud's release is expected to unlock a key component of the ceasefire, and pave the way for displaced people sheltering in Gaza's southern areas to return to their communities in the north — or in many cases, what's left of them.

As part of its ground invasion, Israel's military had effectively cut the strip in two with forces occupying what the IDF referred to as the Netzarim Corridor.

It meant Palestinians who had fled their homes on one side were blocked from returning.

It had been expected to reopen earlier in the ceasefire, but Israel delayed it until Ms Yehoud — a civilian — was released, accusing Hamas of breaking the deal, by freeing other captives first.

Earlier, Hamas handed over Israeli soldier Agam Berger as the prisoner exchange began in northern Gaza's Jabalia area.

The five Thai farm workers released by Hamas were expected to be taken to hospital inside Israel.

Thailand's PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra posted on social media after the hostages were released that she was "elated".

"The Thai Government, including everyone here in Thailand, have long been waiting for this very moment," her statement read.



A crowd has gathered at the scene of the hostage handover. (*Reuters: Dawoud Abu Alkas*)

The five Thai hostages have been named as Watchara Sriaoun, Pongsak Tanna, Sathian Suwannakham, Surasak Lamnau and Bannawat Saethao.

A total of 31 Thais were taken captive as part of Hamas' October 7 attack.

The country was estimated to have roughly 30,000 citizens in Israel at the time, mostly working in the agricultural sector.



Islamic Jihad militants joined their Hamas allies for Thursday's transfer in Khan Younis. (ABC News)

This prisoner swap adds to the three Israeli civilians and four soldiers — all women — that have been released so far in the ceasefire, which began on January 19.

In return, Israel has released 290 Palestinian convicts and detainees.

Of the 110 freed as part of Thursday's swap, 20 are expected to be deported from Israel and the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank immediately.

Zakaria Zubeidi, a former leader of a Palestinian militant group jailed for attacks that killed several Israelis, was among those released.

Zakaria Zubeidi, a former commander of the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, gestures after being freed on Thursday. (Reuters: Ali Sawafta)

More than 250 hostages were abducted in the Hamas attack in Israel on October 7, 2023.

Around half were released the following month during the war's only previous truce, and others have been recovered dead or alive during the fighting.

Israel still lists 83 captives in Gaza, with around 30 declared dead in absentia.

## ISRAEL-HAMAS HOSTAGE DEAL: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

[AJC](#) January 25, 2025

On January 19, the first three hostages freed under the deal—[Romi Gonen, 24, abducted from the Nova music festival, and Emily Damari, 28, and Doron Steinbrecher, 31](#), taken from their homes in Kibbutz Kfar Aza—were reported to be in relatively good physical condition. Follow AJC's Explainer, [Who Are the Israeli Hostages Being Released? Full Schedule and Latest Updates](#), for real-time updates. AJC also breaks down what you need to know about the [Palestinian Prisoners Freed in the Hostage Agreement](#). On Wednesday, 467 days since grandparents, mothers, children, and wives were torn from their families and held captive in Gaza, the Israeli government and Palestinian terror group Hamas announced a hostage release deal. The deal, brokered by international partners including the U.S., Egypt, and Qatar, follows over 15 months of conflict that began on [October 7, 2023, when Hamas terrorists stormed southern Israel](#), massacring over 1,200 Israelis and taking 251 hostages.

Here's what you need to know about the deal: Hamas is releasing hostages, including Israeli and American citizens, while Israel is releasing Palestinian security prisoners, including those convicted of terrorism and serving life sentences.

### WHAT ARE THE PHASES OF THE DEAL?

According to the reports on the agreement, the deal involves a significant exchange of hostages for convicted Palestinian terrorist prisoners, alongside changes to Israeli troop positions in Gaza and humanitarian measures.

As of January 17, 2025, Hamas and other terror groups inside Gaza still hold 94 of the 251 hostages taken from Israel on October 7, 2023, including at least 34 of whom are dead, according to the Israeli government. An additional four hostages were already being held by Hamas, including the bodies of Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul, who died during Israel's Operation Cast Lead in Gaza in 2014. Hamas is also holding captive Israelis Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, who crossed into Gaza on their own accord in 2014 and 2015, respectively.

[The Israeli Hostage Deal is a Moment for Relief, But Not Celebration](#)

Read Now: Op-Ed by AJC CEO Ted Deutch in The Miami Herald

### PHASE ONE

The three-phase agreement covers a span of six weeks and includes the release of 33 hostages, including 12 women and children, men ages 50 and above, and injured civilians, including two Americans.

Three hostages will be released on the first day, and four more on the seventh day. After that, three hostages will be released every seven days, and the final 14 will be released in the final week of the first phase. Among these, five female Israeli soldiers would be exchanged for 50 Palestinian security prisoners each, including 30 serving life sentences for terror.

On Saturday, January 25, [Hamas released four hostages: Naama Levy, Liri Albag, Daniella Gilboa, and Karina Arieiv](#). The agreement also includes [the release of Palestinian security prisoners](#), including those who are serving long prison terms for terrorism.

[Kfir, 1, and Ariel Bibas, 5, are the only children still in captivity](#), along with their parents Yarden and Shiri, are expected to be included in the release of hostages in phase one. [Dual Israeli-American citizens Sagui Dekel-Chen, 36, and Keith Siegel, 65](#), also would be in this group. Additionally, the oldest hostage, [Shlomo Mantzur, 86](#), would be included. The current condition of these hostages is unknown, though Israel is expected to receive a full status report on all 33 after seven days.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AJW HOSTAGE LIST</b>  <b>Number in Bracket shows position in</b>  <b>Time of Israel list</b>  <b>of Phase 1 Hostage Freedom List</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#">Times of Israel</a> 17 Jan 2025</p>
<p>Doron Steinbrecher, 31 <b>(Released) (30)</b>  Romi Gonen, 23 <b>(Released) (10)</b>  Emily Damari, 27 <b>(Released) (12)</b>  Liri Albag, 19 <b>(Released) (1)</b>  Karina Arieiv, 20 <b>(Released) (3)</b>  Danielle Gilboa, 20 <b>(Released) (11)</b>  Naama Levy, 20 <b>(Released) (21)</b>  Arbel Yehud, 29  Ariel Bibas, 5  Kfir Bibas, 2  Shiri Silberman Bibas, 33  Agam Berger, 21  Ohad Ben-Ami, 58  Gadi Moshe Moses, 80  Keith Siegel, 65  Ofer Calderon, 54  Eli Sharabi, 52  Itzik Elgarat, 70  Shlomo Mansour, 86  Ohad Yahalomi, 50  Oded Lifshitz, 84  Tsahi Idan, 50  Hisham al-Sayed, 36  Yarden Bibas, 35  Sagui Dekel-Chen, 36  Yair Horn, 46  Omer Wenkert, 23  Sasha Trufanov, 28  Eliya Cohen, 27  Or Levy, 34  Avera Mengistu, 38  Tal Shoham, 39  Omer Shem-Tov, 22</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Liri Albag</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Itzhik Elgarat</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Karina Arieiv</a></li> <li>4. <a href="#">Ohad Ben-Ami</a></li> <li>5. <a href="#">Ariel Bibas</a></li> <li>6. <a href="#">Yarden Bibas</a></li> <li>7. <a href="#">Kfir Bibas</a></li> <li>8. <a href="#">Shiri Silberman Bibas</a></li> <li>9. <a href="#">Agam Berger</a></li> <li>10. <a href="#">Romi Gonen</a></li> <li>11. <a href="#">Danielle Gilboa</a></li> <li>12. <a href="#">Emily Damari</a></li> <li>13. <a href="#">Sagui Dekel-Chen</a></li> <li>14. <a href="#">Yair Horn</a></li> <li>15. <a href="#">Omer Wenkert</a></li> <li>16. <a href="#">Alexander Troufanov</a></li> <li>17. <a href="#">Arbel Yehud</a></li> <li>18. <a href="#">Ohad Yahalomi</a></li> <li>19. <a href="#">Eliya Cohen</a></li> <li>20. <a href="#">Or Levy</a></li> <li>21. <a href="#">Naama Levy</a></li> <li>22. <a href="#">Oded Lifshitz</a></li> <li>23. <a href="#">Gadi Moshe Moses</a></li> <li>24. <a href="#">Avera Mengistu</a></li> <li>25. <a href="#">Shlomo Mansur</a></li> <li>26. <a href="#">Keith Siegel</a></li> <li>27. <a href="#">Tsahi Idan</a></li> <li>28. <a href="#">Ofer Calderon</a></li> <li>29. <a href="#">Tal Shoham</a></li> <li>30. <a href="#">Doron Steinbrecher</a></li> <li>31. <a href="#">Omer Shem-Tov</a></li> <li>32. <a href="#">Hisham Al Sayed</a></li> <li>33. <a href="#">Eli Sharabi</a></li> </ol>

Additionally, during this phase, Israel agreed to withdraw from specific population centers in Gaza, facilitate the return of displaced Palestinians to northern Gaza, and allow the entry of 600 humanitarian aid trucks daily, up from roughly 250 per day, while maintaining control of the strategic Gaza-Egypt border region known as the [Philadelphi Corridor](#). This border has been used by Hamas to smuggle into the Gaza Strip vast amounts of weapons which the terror group then utilizes to carry out attacks on Israel.

It's important to note that during Phase One, there are no restrictions on Israel's ability to continue its efforts to defend Israelis from threats emanating from Gaza.

### [Understanding the Israel-Hamas Hostage Agreement - AJC Advocacy Anywhere](#)

AJC Jerusalem Director Lt. Col. (res) Avital Leibovich and AJC Chief Policy and Political Affairs Officer Jason Isaacson share their insights.

## PHASE TWO

The rest of the remaining hostages, numbering 65, will only be freed if the sides can agree on a second phase for the truce.

The deal stipulates that negotiations for the second phase are to begin 16 days after implementation of phase one and with the goal being the release of all remaining hostages, a permanent ceasefire, and the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza.

The release of the remaining 65 hostages will only be freed if the sides can agree on a second phase for the truce. These negotiations will begin approximately two weeks into the halt in the fighting.

The second phase involves the release of all remaining hostages, primarily male Israeli soldiers, in exchange for additional Palestinian prisoners and a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

Among those released in the second phase could potentially be [American Edan Alexander, 21, who joined the IDF after graduating from high school in New Jersey](#). He was on duty the morning of October 7. His family last saw him in a propaganda video released by Hamas shortly after Thanksgiving.

## PHASE THREE

The third phase would see the return of remaining hostages' bodies in exchange for a Gaza reconstruction plan spanning three to five years, supervised by international entities.

Four Americans are presumed dead, with their bodies still being held: Itay Chen, 19; Omer Neutra, 23; Gadi Haggai, 73; and Judi Weinstein Haggai, 70. The bodies of 37 hostages have already been recovered and brought back to Israel by Israeli troops.

The full scope of the plan for a post-war Gaza has yet to be determined, including who would govern the territory. Israel has insisted that Hamas, [which is sworn to Israel's destruction and has controlled the territory since 2007](#), should not be involved in a post-war Gaza. The Israeli government has also opposed the involvement of the Palestinian Authority, which administers portions of the West Bank and administered Gaza [before its ouster by Hamas in 2007](#).

## WHO ARE THE PALESTINIAN TERROR PRISONERS BEING RELEASED BY ISRAEL?

On January 19, the first set of 90 Palestinian prisoners were released in exchange for three hostages held by Hamas - Romi Gonen, Doron Steinbrecher, and Emily Damari.

[The prisoners to be released include prominent figures linked to Palestinian terror groups](#), such as Khalida Jarrar, 62, of the U.S.-designated terror group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

(PFLP); Dalal Khaseeb, 53, sister of former Hamas leader Saleh Arouri; and Abla Abdelrasoul, 68, wife of detained PFLP leader Ahmad Saadat, who ordered the 2001 assassination of Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Ze'evi.

Israel has already insisted that high-profile prisoners such as Marwan Barghouti will not be one of them. Pro-Palestinian activists have long called for the release of Barghouti, a leader of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, who still exercises influence from behind bars. Barghouti was convicted in 2004 on five counts of murder and sentenced to five life sentences and 40 years for orchestrating a number of deadly attacks on Israel during the First and Second Intifadas.

Activists also have called for the release of Ahmad Sa'adat, secretary-general of the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine \(PFLP\)](#), who was imprisoned for his role in the assassination of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi in 2001.

PFLP is a decades-old internationally designated terrorist organization that partnered with a West German terror group in 1976 to hijack an Air France flight, diverting it to Entebbe, Uganda. They murdered the Fogel family in 2011, carried out the 2014 Jerusalem synagogue massacre, and killed 17-year-old Rina Shnerb in 2019. PFLP was also involved in Hamas' October 7 massacre of Israelis.

Additionally, slain [Hamas terror leader Yahya Sinwar](#), the architect of the October 7 massacre, whose body is being held by Israel, will also not be released, according to Arab media reports.

### WHAT IS AJC SAYING?

American Jewish Committee welcomed the first stage of the agreement that secures the release of 33 hostages abducted during Hamas' October 7, 2023, massacre of Israelis. [AJC CEO Ted Deutch](#) expressed gratitude to "the Biden Administration, the incoming Trump Administration, and other global partners" while emphasizing the need to "ensure that every hostage is reunited with their loved ones."

Ted added: "We cannot wait to see the first hostages come home to their families, but the critical work to free every hostage – regardless of age, gender, or nationality – must continue. The international community must persist in its efforts to ensure that every hostage is reunited with their loved ones."

[Click here to read the full AJC statement](#)

### HOW ARE ISRAELI AND WORLD LEADERS REACTING?

Israeli President Isaac Herzog acknowledges the "deeply painful, challenging, and harrowing" terms of the hostage release deal, but emphasizes its necessity, urging sensitivity toward affected families and vowing to "continue to act with all our might until every stage of the deal is realized and the last hostage returns." Israeli Opposition Leader Yair Lapid emphasizes the need to secure the return of all hostages, thanking international partners, including Presidents Trump and Biden, and pledging political support "until the last hostage" comes home. National Unity chairman Benny Gantz welcomes the deal, urging efforts to use the ceasefire period to recover all abductees and apply pressure to replace Hamas, stating, "It is possible." In a statement, U.S. President Joe Biden hailed "many months of intensive diplomacy" by the U.S., Egypt, and Qatar. "My diplomacy never ceased in their efforts to get this done," the outgoing president said.

In subsequent on-camera remarks, Biden said he was “deeply satisfied this day has finally come, for the sake of the people of Israel and the families waiting in agony, and for the sake of the innocent people in Gaza, who suffered unimaginable devastation because of the war.”

President-elect Donald Trump wrote on social media: “This EPIC ceasefire agreement could have only happened as a result of our Historic Victory in November, as it signaled to the entire World that my Administration would seek Peace and negotiate deals to ensure the safety of all Americans, and our Allies.” He added, “I am thrilled American and Israeli hostages will be returning home to be reunited with their families and loved ones.”

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, among the first Arab leaders to comment on the Gaza cease-fire, highlighted “more than a year of tireless efforts, brokered by Egypt, Qatar, and the United States,” and stressed “the urgent need to accelerate the delivery of humanitarian aid to address the current catastrophic humanitarian situation.”

### **WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE PREVIOUS ISRAEL-HAMAS AGREEMENT AND HOSTAGE RELEASE?**

In an agreement reached on November 21, 2023, between Israel and Hamas, 50 Israeli hostages abducted during the October 7 attacks were released in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners and a four-day pause in fighting, later extended to allow the release of 108 hostages in total.

The phased releases included women, children, and elderly individuals, many from Kibbutzim like Nir Oz and Be’eri, which suffered devastating losses.

Additionally, foreign hostages were also included in the phased releases. Among them were 10 Thai nationals and one Filipino released in the initial group on November 24. Additional Thai nationals were freed in subsequent releases, including four on November 25 and three on November 26. These workers had been abducted during the October 7 attacks while living and working in southern Israel.

What has AJC been doing to advocate for the release of the hostages?

Since Hamas’ attack on October 7, [AJC has worked tirelessly alongside more than 50 hostage families](#), advocating globally to keep their stories front and center with officials, including over 200 members of Congress, diplomats, and faith leaders. Through nearly 500,000 messages sent from its online action center, AJC supporters worldwide have urged immediate action to bring the hostages home, while the organization facilitated congressional vigils, roundtables, and high-level meetings to amplify families’ voices.

AJC has also engaged the global diplomatic community, connecting officials from 20+ countries with families of hostages and organizing impactful advocacy events across Europe and the U.S. From meetings with UN leaders in New York to community events in Los Angeles, Dallas, and Philadelphia, AJC has mobilized leaders, celebrities, and civic groups to push for the hostages’ release, emphasizing unity and relentless efforts to #BringThemHomeNow.

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## HAMAS AND ISRAEL TRADE BLAME OVER DEAL VIOLATIONS. WILL THE FRAGILE CEASEFIRE AND HOSTAGE AGREEMENT HOLD?

[CNN World](#) Nadeen Ebrahim and Dana Karni, January 25 2025

The fragility of [the truce between Israel and Hamas](#) was laid bare on Saturday, after Israel accused Hamas of withholding a hostage, prompting a [halt in the movement](#) of Gazan civilians back to their homes in the north.

[The ceasefire deal](#) was already a brittle agreement, with Israeli statements often calling it a “framework” as opposed to a deal.

Tensions escalated this week when 29-year-old Arbel Yehud, a civilian who Israel says should have been freed Saturday, was not [among the four women released](#). Israel, in turn, did not allow Gazan civilians to return north past the Netzarim Corridor, which was meant to take place Saturday under the ceasefire and hostage deal.

Complicating the matter is that Yehud is not being held by Hamas. A senior source in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement (PIJ), another militant group in the Strip, told CNN that it is holding Yehud and that she “will be released under the terms of the agreed-upon prisoner exchange deal.”

Both Hamas and Israel have accused the other of failing to stick to their end of the bargain, raising questions about how well the ceasefire that took more than 15 months to reach would hold.



[Related article](#) [Four hostages freed but Israel blocks people in Gaza returning north](#)

“This is a very delicate matter,” Gershon Baskin, a former Israeli hostage negotiator who used to speak to Hamas through backchannels, told CNN.

Baskin explained that Hamas “will not give anything for free,” in reference to Yehud’s captivity. He added that “Israel’s threat not to allow the displaced to move north” does little to convince Hamas to help push for her release.

The former negotiator warned that “carrying out the threat” of not allowing displaced Palestinians to move north “could lead to a halt in the release of the hostages” and advised Israel to try to keep the deal alive. “It is better for Israel to talk less and let the mediators do more,” Baskin added, urging Israel to “convey to Qatar and Egypt that it is ready to adopt the three-week deal that Hamas agreed to in September.

### **‘How will the US respond?’**

Israeli military spokesperson Daniel Hagari said on Saturday that “Hamas didn’t fulfil the agreement in terms of its obligation to return civilians first,” adding that “we will insist that Arbel Yehud return” along with the rest of the hostages.

Hundreds of displaced people [were seen fleeing in panic](#) after the Israeli military opened fire on Saturday to prevent them from crossing into northern [Gaza](#) to return to their homes, CNN footage showed. The Israeli military said it was ‘unaware of any harm’ after its troops fired ‘warning shots in order to distance’ a crowd in Gaza.

Hamas said that Israel “continues to procrastinate in implementing the terms of the ceasefire agreement and the prisoner exchange by maintaining the closure of al-Rasheed Street and preventing the return of displaced persons walking from the south to the north.”

The Palestinian militant group added that it holds Israel “responsible for any delays in the implementation of the agreement and the repercussions that may arise on the remaining phases.”

There are questions as to how the United States under [President Donald Trump](#) would respond to the violations alleged by both sides.

Gazans hoping to return to their homes in northern Gaza take cover after the Israeli military opened fire to prevent them from crossing into the area on Saturday, January 25.

An Israeli official told CNN Saturday that Israel asked the Trump administration to push on Hamas to abide by the terms of the deal and free Yehud. The message was sent to Trump’s Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, the official added. CNN has reached out to Trump administration for comment.

The ceasefire “framework,” as Israel refers to it, “was hardly ironclad from the get-go,” Dr H.A. Hellyer, senior associate fellow at Center for American Progress and the Royal United Services Institute, told CNN. “The question is now, after clear violations by the Israelis, how will the US respond? Will they use pressure to ensure adherence, or are we seeing the breakdown of this pause in hostilities so soon after the signing?” Hellyer said.

### **A CHOREOGRAPHED SHOW OF FORCE**

Tensions simmered as the second exchange of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners took place. The militant group used it to [choreograph a poignant show](#) of force despite Israel’s warnings.

[Propaganda video released by Hamas](#) after the four Israeli hostages were freed showed the women paraded before a crowd as they received certificates for their release and souvenir keychains. CNN does not know the circumstances under which the hostages were speaking, including whether they were speaking under duress.

In the nearly three-minute video, the four women are seen seated inside a van, smiling and posing. The women were seen thanking Hamas' military wing, the Al Qassam Brigades, "for the good treatment," including for providing food and water. They also thanked them for "protecting" them from shelling. None of the four women are native Arabic speakers. In the video, they can be heard speaking in Hebrew accents.

Hamas' propaganda videos have left a sour note over the years. Previous Hamas' videos of the four soldiers' kidnapping by Hamas on October 7, 2023 had gone viral. The women were dressed in civilian clothes at the time of their taking, including pajamas when they were pulled from their bedrooms. Videos showed them covered in blood.

Experts say that deals like this are bound to be filled with complications, especially as Hamas tries to use what leverage it has over Israel, and as Israel tries to retrieve hostages while destroying the group.

Yohanan Tzoreff, a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv, said concerns about violations, delays, or crises come with "any deal with an organization like Hamas."

Such concerns "are rooted in the many past grievances between the two sides, numerous bloody conflicts, and, of course, the heinous attack carried out by Hamas on October 7," Tzoreff said.

"The issue of hostage release became a test for both sides," he said, adding that Israel "finds itself facing a dilemma: how to secure the hostages' release while fully achieving the second goal of dismantling Hamas."

CNN's Tim Lister, Abeer Salman, Mohammad Al Sawalhi, Eyad Kourdi, Ibrahim Dahman and Jeremy Diamond contributed reporting.

## **INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING**

### **THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT**

**SIS professor Boaz Atzili explains how a ceasefire agreement hopes to bring a long-awaited albeit fragile peace to the region.**

[AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON](#) Nicole Hassenstab | January 29, 2025



After over a year of fighting, death, and destruction, a ceasefire deal agreed to by both Israel and Hamas began on January 19, 2025. This deal is comprised of three stages, the first of which is currently underway. Key demands from both sides are being met under this ceasefire, including the return of Israeli hostages, an increase in humanitarian aid for Gaza, and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the densely populated areas of Gaza. To explain the intricacies of this agreement and the fragile peace it may bring, we asked SIS professor Boaz Atzili some questions.

#### **HOW DID THIS CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT COME INTO PLACE?**

##### **WHAT MADE ISRAEL AND HAMAS BOTH AGREE?**

The ceasefire agreement that is being implemented at the time of writing is almost the exact framework agreement that has been “on the table” at least since May. Hamas, in essence, agreed to the framework from the start and just demanded guarantees that it would lead to the end of the war and full Israeli withdrawal. Israel disagreed to commit to ending the war. The Biden administration tried but failed to press Israel into signing the ceasefire. The Trump administration, on the other hand, applied much heavier pressure and public threats, which resulted in Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s Prime minister, signing the deal. This is, however, a detailed agreement only for stage 1, and at this point, only a framework agreement for stages 2 and 3.

## **WHY DID THIS AGREEMENT STICK WHEN PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS HAVE FAILED?**

We cannot yet say that this agreement will stick, as it is still a fragile agreement. It has begun to be implemented but has already faced hurdles and is vulnerable to provocations and manipulation because of the complex and lengthy nature of the agreement. We don't know yet if this attempt will succeed. Whether it will be fully implemented depends, in my opinion, predominantly on whether the mediators will continue to apply heavy pressure on both sides to continue to comply, and especially on Israel to agree to an end of the war or a long-term ceasefire.

## **THE CEASEFIRE WILL TAKE PLACE IN STAGES.**

### **WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THOSE STAGES, AND WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR EACH ONE?**

There are three stages, each of them lasting 42 days. In the first stage, being implemented now, 33 Israeli hostages comprised of women, children, elderly, and wounded, will be returned in return for the release of a large number of Palestinian prisoners. It is unknown whether the Israeli hostages returned in this stage will be alive or not. This stage also includes Israeli withdrawal from the large cities in Gaza, allowing residents of northern Gaza to return to their homes and will allow for a significant increase in the flow of humanitarian aid. In the second stage, younger Israeli male hostages will be released in return for more Palestinian prisoners. Israel will then agree to end the war. In the third phase, the war will end, the bodies of Israelis and Palestinians held by the other side will be exchanged, Israeli troops will withdraw completely from the Gaza Strip, and the reconstruction of Gaza will begin. As of right now, stages two and three are only agreed to in principle so far. /dd>

## **HOW WILL THE CEASEFIRE BE MANAGED?**

### **ARE THERE ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS IN PLACE FOR BOTH PARTIES?**

There is a verification mechanism for this agreement based in Cairo that includes representatives from Israel, Hamas, and the mediators—The US, Egypt, and Qatar. This mechanism has already been tested when a crisis broke out on January 25. Israel claimed that Hamas breached the deal by avoiding the release of the last living Israeli civilian hostage and in turn, did not allow Palestinians from northern Gaza to return to their homes. The mechanism, however, seems to have worked as intended and solved the issue within one day.

### **ONE OF THE KEY ASPECTS OF THE CEASEFIRE IS THE RELEASE OF THE REMAINING ISRAELI HOSTAGES. WHAT IS THE SENTIMENT FROM FAMILIES?**

The families of the hostages are not of one ideology politically, but for all of them, the last 15 months have been a nightmare. Many feel that in addition to the need to fight against the Hamas terrorists who kidnapped or murdered their family members, they also need to fight Israel's government, which wants to continue the war for politically partisan reasons and does not, in fact, prioritize the release of hostages, which entails the end of the war. A significant majority of Israelis prioritize returning the hostages for any price, but that view is not prevailing within the governing coalition. The families of the hostages, like many Gazans, are yearning to get their loved ones back and to start the journey of recovery.

**WHAT DOES THIS CEASEFIRE MEAN GOING FORWARD?  
IS THIS THE BEGINNING OF A LONGER PEACE PROCESS?**

The ceasefire could lead to a larger movement towards peace, but that depends on two main factors: First, the Trump administration's vision for regional peace is one based on commercial interest. Second, Saudi Arabia, which is situated at the core of this vision, would not advance in that direction without Israel agreeing to at least a path toward a future Palestinian state. The current Israeli government is unlikely to agree to such a plan. The question, then, is whether President Trump will be willing to press the Israeli hard-right government, which is otherwise a very close ally, to allow that path for peace.

**WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL AID LOOK LIKE DURING THE CEASEFIRE? HOW ARE  
OTHER COUNTRIES SUPPORTING THE CEASEFIRE  
AND A POTENTIAL FUTURE PEACE PROCESS?**

The international aid that has been allowed into Gaza since the start of the ceasefire is vastly greater than what Gaza received before the agreement. Yet, even if we assume that all three stages of the deal will be implemented and the war will come to an end, the future of Gaza is fragile. The entire economy of the region is ruined, and about 90 percent of the buildings and infrastructure are damaged or destroyed. Arab Gulf states and other international actors are willing to invest heavily in the reconstruction of Gaza, but not if Hamas returns to control it, which they rightfully perceive to bring no end to the cycle of violence.

## WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT ISRAELI HOSTAGES TAKEN BY HAMAS

[AJC](#) January 15 2025

### JANUARY 14 2025

On October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists waged the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust — slaughtering more than 1,200 Israelis and taking 240 civilians hostage.

Here is what is known about the people taken hostage on October 7, the history of Hamas' hostage-taking, how Israel has responded in the past, and the latest on hostage negotiations.

### WHAT IS THE LATEST ON THE HOSTAGES?

**On January 15, 2025**, AJC welcomed first stage of agreement securing release of 33 hostages. [Read AJC's statement here.](#)

While Israel has remained committed to diplomatic negotiations to release the hostages held by Hamas as part of a wider ceasefire deal with the terror group, Israeli security forces have also carried out several high-risk and complex hostage rescue operations in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas continues to hold more than 90 hostages, including at least 34 deceased individuals, following the abduction of approximately 251 people during the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

Recent negotiations in January 2025, mediated by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States, have led to a draft agreement proposing a phased release of Israeli hostages for Palestinian terrorist prisoners, alongside changes to Israeli troop positions in Gaza and humanitarian measures.

The three-phase agreement would commence with the release of 33 hostages, including women, children, elderly individuals, and injured civilians, over six weeks.

**Murder of six Israeli hostages:** The bodies of six hostages abducted by Hamas on October 7 were found in a tunnel in Rafah, Gaza, shortly after they were murdered by the terror group. The hostages were [Hersh Goldberg-Polin, 23](#); Eden Yerushalmi, 24; Ori Danino, 25; Alex Lobanov, 32; Carmel Gat, 40; and Almog Sarusi, 27.

The hostages, including Israeli-American Hersh Goldberg-Polin, had been taken from the Nova music festival and Kibbutz Be'eri. An autopsy revealed they were killed 48 to 72 hours before their bodies were recovered. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) stated that the murders occurred just before they reached the site, and there were no clashes with the terrorists in the tunnel. U.S. President Biden and Israeli officials expressed their grief and anger, condemning Hamas and pledging continued efforts to secure the release of remaining hostages.



**August 2024 hostage rescue operation:** On August 27, 2024, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) successfully carried out a complex rescue operation in the southern Gaza Strip, freeing 52-year-old Farhan Al-Qadi, father of 11, a member of the Bedouin community in southern Israel. Al-Qadi, who is said to be in good health, had been abducted by Hamas-led gunmen during the attacks on October 7, 2023, from Kibbutz Magen, one of the communities near the Gaza border that was heavily targeted.

Shortly after his rescue, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told al-Qadi that “the whole nation of Israel is excited by his rescue.”

The prime minister said he will “continue to do everything to bring all of the hostages home.”

**June 2024 hostage rescue operation:** On June 8, 2024, the Israel security forces carried out a highly planned and complex operation in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, resulting in the rescue of four Israeli hostages: Noa Argamani, 26, Almog Meir Jan, 21, Andrey Kozlov, 27, and Shlomi Ziv, 41. These hostages had been captured by Hamas on October 7, 2023, during the massacre at the Nova music festival. The operation involved an unusual daytime raid, which IDF commanders believed would offer a tactical surprise despite the increased risks. The mission required weeks of preparation, including building models of the apartments where the hostages were believed to be held based on intelligence reports. During the raid, IDF special forces, some disguised as displaced Palestinians or Hamas militants, encountered heavy resistance from Hamas terrorists. The mission led to intense firefights, especially during the withdrawal phase, and one Israeli officer was killed.



**February 2024 hostage rescue operation:** In the early hours of February 12, Israeli security forces successfully rescued two hostages who were being held in the southern Gazan city of Rafah. The operation was only the second known rescue of its kind since the war began - Israeli soldier Ori Mehidish was freed during a military operation in October. The two hostages, Fernando Simon Marman, 60, and Louis Har, 70, were evacuated to a hospital near Tel Aviv and were listed in good condition despite being held in captivity for 129 days.

Both men are dual Israeli-Argentinian citizens and were taken hostage from the same house in Nir Yitzhak, a kibbut near Gaza. They were taken hostage along with Clara Marman, who is Fernando's sister and Louis's partner. Clara was freed during the November 2023 ceasefire.

"Fernando and Louis, welcome home," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said in a statement](#). "I salute our brave fighters for the daring action that led to their release."

### **HOW MANY HOSTAGES DOES HAMAS HAVE IN GAZA?**

With the end of the ceasefire in November 2023 and the resumption of hostilities in Gaza, Israel believes that over 94 of the 251 hostages remain, including two children, although the IDF has confirmed the deaths of 34 hostages due to new intelligence and findings from soldiers in Gaza.

Hamas is also holding two Israeli civilians who entered the Strip in 2014 and 2015, as well as the bodies of two IDF soldiers who were killed in 2014.

### **WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE DEAL TO DELIVER MEDICINE TO THE HOSTAGES**

On January 17, Israel reached an agreement with Hamas, brokered by Qatar and France, for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to deliver medicine to the hostages held in Gaza. Many of the remaining hostages are elderly and require medication for chronic conditions. In exchange, additional humanitarian aid for Palestinian civilians will be transferred to Gaza.

The entry of medical aid into Gaza is the first agreement reached between Israel and Hamas since the week-long hostage release deal in November.

### **HERE'S WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE HOSTAGE RELEASE IN NOVEMBER 2023**

An agreement between Israel and the Palestinian terror group Hamas was reached on November 21 for the release of 50 Israeli hostages, who were among the 240 people taken by the terror group during the October 7 attack on Israel. In exchange for their release, Israel would release 150 Palestinian prisoners held in Israel, and maintain a four-day pause in fighting. This pause was extended by several days, which led to the release of 108 hostages in total before hostilities resumed on December 1. The agreement was announced after weeks of negotiations that involved the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, who acted as a mediator with the Hamas terror group.

AJC welcomed the announcement of an agreement brokered by the United States, with assistance from Qatar and Egypt, for the release of 50 of the hostages [abducted by Hamas and other terrorists from southern Israel on October 7](#).

### **[Debunking the False Equivalency Between Israeli Hostages and Palestinian Prisoners](#)**

AJC is relieved that these hostages are slated to be returned home and deeply appreciates the role of President Biden and his administration, and other world partners, in securing their release.

The work to free every hostage – irrespective of age, gender, or nationality – cannot stop. The global community must continue efforts to ensure that every single hostage will be reunited with their loved ones and ensure that this humanitarian issue remains at the forefront of all global efforts in the region. [Please click here to read the full AJC statement.](#)

**First release:** The first group of Israeli hostages was released on November 24, which included 13 women and children, the youngest being two years old and the oldest being 85. They were turned over by Hamas to the International Committee of the Red Cross, who transported them from Gaza into Egypt and then flown into Israel. In addition, 10 Thai nationals and one Filipino, who were also taken hostage by Hamas on October 7 were also released.

Among those released in the first group was Doron Katz Asher, a 34-year-old Israeli-German citizen, and her two daughters, Raz 4, and Aviv 2, who were taken from their grandmother's home in Kibbutz Nir Oz. Their grandmother, Efrat Katz, was murdered by Hamas. [In a tearful reunion](#), the family was reunited with their father, Yoni. Raz told her father, "I dreamed we were going home" to which he replied, "Now the dream came true, we're home, that's it."

**Second release:** On November 25, the second group of hostages was released after a delay by the terror group Hamas that lasted several hours and threatened to shatter the fragile deal. Four Thai nationals were also released. The second group of 13 Israeli hostages – all women and children – included six members of an extended family from Kibbutz Be'eri, where Hamas terrorists slaughtered more than 130 people on October 7.

Among those released in the second group included Emily Hand, 9, an Israeli-Irish citizen who was at a sleepover at her friend's house and was initially thought to be killed. She was eight when she was abducted and turned nine while in captivity. Also released was 13-year-old Hila Rotem, who said she was separated from her mother, who was taken hostage by Hamas, just days before her release. Under the terms of the agreement, no child should be separated from their mother when released.

**Third release:** On November 26, 14 Israelis, including the first U.S. citizen, and three Thai nationals were released by Hamas.

Among those released on November 26 was four-year-old Avigail Idan, a dual Israeli and U.S. citizen, who marked her fourth birthday while in captivity. Both her parents were murdered by Hamas during the October 7 attack. She was hiding at a neighbor's house when she was abducted, while her father was shot and killed while protecting his family from Hamas terrorists. Her brothers, Michael, 9, and Amalya, 6, hid in a closet for 14 hours survived, and now live with their aunt and uncle.

**Fourth release:** On November 27, 11 Israeli hostages were released. All of the hostages were abducted from Kibbutz Nir Oz during the Hamas massacre.

Among those released are the children of Renana Gomeh, Or Yaakov, 16, and Yagil Yaakov, 12.

Renana [spoke to AJC's People of the Pod in October](#) about her efforts to bring her children home. Nine Israeli children remain in Gaza after the fourth day of the truce.

The uncle of Or and Yagila Yaakov said that Hamas terrorists had branded the teenage boys using a motorcycle exhaust pipe so they could be identified if they ran away.

“They were drugged, they were treated so bad, but at least they are with us,” Yaniv Yaakov said in an event alongside Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen.

**Fifth release:** After the truce was extended by two days, 12 hostages were released on November 28 - 10 Israelis and two Thai nationals. Of the 10 released, 8 of them were elderly women, and one teenage girl and her mother were released. Most of the hostages released were from Kibbutz Nir Oz, where nearly half of the 400 residents were murdered or abducted by Hamas terrorists on October 7. The release also came despite a violation of the truce by Hamas earlier in the day when Israeli troops in northern Gaza were targeted by Hamas explosives and gunfire.

**Sixth release:** On the seventh day of the truce between Israel and Hamas, the terror group released eight Israeli hostages from captivity. Two women, Mia Schem, 21, and Amit Soussana, 40, were released on the afternoon of November 30th, while six others were returned to Israel shortly before midnight.

While in captivity, Mia was in a propaganda video released by Hamas. In the video, Mia's hand appeared wounded and was being treated. Mia's aunt said that she was [operated](#) on in Gaza by a veterinarian.

“She underwent trauma. She’s thin, she’s weak,” Vivian Hadar, Mia's aunt, said to Israeli reporters. “We’re happy she’s with us. It’s really tough to see her like this,” Hadar adds.

Hamas also released a propaganda video [regarding the Bibas family](#). The family - father Yarden, mother Shiri, and their sons Ariel, 4, and baby Kfir - were abducted on October 7. The terror group, in an unverified claim, said on November 29 that Shiri, Ariel, and Kfir had been killed during an Israeli bombardment. The video released by Hamas appeared to show Yarden Bibas alive. It is believed that Yarden has been held separately from the rest of his family.

IDF Spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari refuted the claims by Hamas.

“The Hamas terrorist organization presented harsh documentation of Yarden Bibas,” Hagari said. “Our hearts are with the entire Bibas family. We will continue to return all our captives.

[\*\*Meet Kfir and Ariel Bibas: The Youngest Hostages Still Held By Hamas in Gaza Since October 7, 2023\*\*](#)

“Hamas employs psychological terror against the families of the captives,” Hagari added. “Its purpose is to exert pressure, to harm our resilience.”

Kfir, who was only ten months old when he was taken captive, is the youngest hostage being held by Hamas.

### **PRIOR HOSTAGE RELEASES:**

On October 16, Hamas released its first video of a hostage, Israeli-French citizen Mia Schem. Mia was shown lying on a bed with her right arm being bandaged, while she pleaded to be returned to her family. Mia was captured by Hamas terrorists while attending the music festival where over 360 concertgoers were killed by terrorists.

On October 20, two Israeli-American hostages were released by Hamas, Judith, 59, and Natalie Raanan, 17.

On October 23, two additional hostages were released, Nurit Cooper, 79, and Yocheved Lifshitz, 85. Both were abducted from their homes in Kibbutz Nir Oz. Their husbands reportedly remain in Gaza.

On October 30, Ori Magdich, an Israeli soldier who was kidnapped by Hamas on October 7, was rescued by Israeli special forces on Monday. The soldier is in good health and met with her family, according to the IDF.

Also on October 30, Hamas released a video of three hostages: Yelena Tropenov, Daniel Aloni, and Rimon Kirsht. In the video, Aloni called on Netanyahu to free them and release Palestinian prisoners. Netanyahu's office called the video "cruel Hamas-ISIS psychological warfare" and that the Israeli leader is "doing everything to bring all the hostages home."

### **[Hold Hamas Accountable: Stick to the Deal and Release the Hostages](#)**

Join AJC and urge your elected officials to sustain pressure on Hamas, and to ensure that every hostage held in Gaza, regardless of age, gender, or nationality, is freed.

### **WHAT ARE ISRAEL AND THE U.S. DOING TO RELEASE THE HOSTAGES?**

Israel and the United States are pursuing a combination of military, diplomatic, and intelligence efforts to secure the release of hostages held by Hamas.

Israel has conducted several high-risk military operations to rescue hostages, such as the one in June 2024, where four hostages were freed. These operations are often based on precise intelligence and involve elite IDF units. The Israeli government has made it clear that rescuing hostages is a top priority, even as these missions come with significant risks, including civilian casualties in Gaza. Israel is also using diplomatic channels to negotiate for the release of hostages. This includes indirect negotiations through intermediaries such as Egypt and Qatar, which have traditionally played roles in mediating between Israel and Hamas.

The United States has been actively involved in diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire and facilitate hostage releases. President Joe Biden's administration has been in close contact with both Israeli and regional leaders to mediate a resolution. The U.S. is pushing for a permanent ceasefire that could create conditions for the safe return of hostages.

The U.S. has supported Israel's right to defend itself and has provided military aid and intelligence support to help Israel in its operations. This includes sharing intelligence that might be useful in locating hostages and advising on military operations such as the June 2024 hostage rescue operation.

### **HOW MANY AMERICANS AND OTHER FOREIGNERS WERE TAKEN HOSTAGE?**

The level of Hamas' brutality against Israeli civilians was unimaginable. With over 1,200 killed and thousands more injured, it was one of the deadliest terror attacks in world history. Yet Israelis were not the only victims of Hamas's carnage, many citizens from other countries were among the dead or taken hostage.

According to U.S. President Joe Biden, 22 Americans so far are confirmed dead. An additional 20 Americans are still missing. The president promised to do everything in his power to bring these hostages home.

### **[What the Mother of Hostage Edan Alexander Wants the World to Know](#)**

"I've directed my team to share intelligence and deploy additional experts from across the United States government to consult with and advise Israeli counterparts on hostage recovery efforts," Biden said.

Biden added: "Because as president, I have no higher priority than the safety of Americans being held hostage around the world," he added.

Biden has spoken with family members of some of the Americans believed to be held hostage in Gaza. "They're going through agony, not knowing what the status of their sons and daughters, husbands wives, children," Biden.

During his visit to Israel on October 18, Biden met with some of the families of those held hostage by Hamas and reiterated that freeing the hostages remained his top priority.

On October 20, two Israeli-American hostages were released by Hamas, Judith and Natalie Raanan.

"Today, we have secured the release of two [Americans taken hostage](#) by Hamas during the horrific terrorist assault against Israel on October 7," Biden said in a statement following their release.

"Our fellow citizens have endured a terrible ordeal these past 14 days, and I am overjoyed that they will soon be reunited with their family, who has been wracked with fear," he says.

According to the Israeli government, 138 of the hostages have foreign passports, including 54 Thais, 15 Argentinians, 12 Germans, 12 Americans, six French, and six Russians. There is also one Chinese hostage, one Sri Lankan, two from Tanzania, and two from the Philippines.

### [\*\*Meet the Seven American Hostages Still Held By Hamas\*\*](#)

#### **WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF HAMAS HOSTAGE-TAKING?**

Hamas has a long history of extreme violence targeting Israeli civilians, including suicide bombings and rocket attacks. Hamas employs various strategies to take Israelis hostage, including cross-border raids and exploiting tunnels to infiltrate Israeli territory from Gaza. They use hostages as bargaining chips for prisoner exchanges and as propaganda tools to gain international attention. These tactics are condemned as violations of international law, and Israel typically refrains from negotiating with terrorists, opting for military or other measures to secure hostages' release.

#### **HERE ARE SOME NOTABLE PAST HOSTAGES TAKEN BY HAMAS:**

- The 1994 kidnapping of Israeli soldier Nachshon Wachsman, which ended tragically when Wachsman was killed by Hamas in a failed rescue by IDF forces
- The 2006 capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who was held for over five years before a prisoner exchange secured his release in 2011
- The 2014 kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers, Eyal Yifrach, Naftali Fraenkel, and Gilad Shaar, led to increased tensions and contributed to Operation Protective Edge in 2014.

Further, Hamas has also held the two bodies of slain Israeli soldiers - Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul - from the 2014 Operation Protective Edge, and two Israeli citizens - Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, who are believed to be alive.

Yet the current situation of over 200 civilians and soldiers being taken hostage is without precedent. The value of human life has been completely exploited by Hamas.

[\*\*Renana Gomeh's Sons Were Taken Hostage by Hamas: What She Needs You to Do to Bring Them Home Now\*\*](#)

## **HOW HAS ISRAEL RESPONDED IN THE PAST TO HAMAS HOSTAGE-TAKING?**

The Israeli government and society place a very high value on human life, including those taken captive by terrorists. Israel has a long-standing policy of doing whatever it can to secure the release of its citizens who have been taken hostage or captured by terrorist groups. This commitment to the well-being and safety of its citizens is deeply ingrained in Israeli society and government.

The current situation of over 250 civilians and soldiers being held hostage by Hamas is without precedent in Israeli history.

In the past, Israel's response to Hamas hostage-taking incidents has included negotiations, military operations, blockades, targeted assassinations of Hamas leaders and militants, and even larger-scale military campaigns, depending on the specific circumstances and severity of the situation. Negotiations have been used to secure the release of hostages, often involving prisoner exchanges, while military operations have been employed for rescue missions, sometimes resulting in casualties. The most notable case was of Gilad Shalit in 2011, who was released in exchange for over 1,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israel.

Israel has also imposed blockades and restrictions on the Gaza Strip to weaken Hamas and conducted targeted assassinations of key Hamas figures involved in hostage-taking or terrorism.

While we, of course, do not know how this will end. We will continue to update our resources and call for the hostages to be immediately returned home.

## EXPERTS REACT: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASE-FIRE AND HOSTAGE DEAL

By [ATLANTIC COUNCIL](#) experts January 15 2025

Now comes the even harder part. On Wednesday, negotiators from Israel and Hamas [agreed](#) to a cease-fire in Gaza and the release of the remaining hostages taken by the terrorist group during its October 7, 2023 attack.

The deal, mediated by US, Qatari, and Egyptian officials, will take place over three phases, each slated to last six weeks. **During the first phase**, Hamas will release thirty-three hostages—women, children, and those over fifty years of age—and Israel will release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, begin to withdraw from some areas, and facilitate a significant increase in humanitarian aid into Gaza. **In the second phase**, Hamas is slated to free the remaining male hostages while Israel withdraws from Gaza. **The third phase** would include the return of deceased hostages and the beginning of reconstruction.

Does this deal, which now heads to the Israeli cabinet for approval, really mark the end of the war? What's next for Gaza's reconstruction, Israel's security, and wider regional efforts such as Israeli-Saudi normalization? Below, Atlantic Council experts share their answers to these and other pressing questions.

### CLICK TO JUMP TO AN EXPERT ANALYSIS:

[Jonathan Panikoff: The war has widened the gap over the prospect of a two-state solution](#)

[Shalom Lipner: The “Trump effect” will help Netanyahu sell this deal to his hard-liners](#)

[Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib: The deal risks freezing the conflict with no political horizon](#)

[Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley: Israel's military victory has come at immeasurable cost to its global standing](#)

[Carmiel Arbit: Is this the end of the “bromance” between Trump, Netanyahu, and the Israeli far right?](#)

[Liz Cathcart: The disparities are striking, but there is never an “equal” hostage deal](#)

[Danny Citrinowicz: Now Israel needs to aim for normalization with Saudi Arabia](#)

[Thomas S. Warrick: Who governs postwar Gaza when the shooting stops?](#)

[Marc Polymeropoulos: The human cost of the war in Gaza is about to become clear—with repercussions for the region](#)

[Alex Plitsas: Now for the hard part—a long-term solution for Gaza](#)

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## THE WAR HAS WIDENED THE GAP OVER THE PROSPECT OF A TWO-STATE SOLUTION

The cease-fire between Israel and Hamas is likely to end this long and painful chapter for both Israelis and Gazans. Gaza is completely destroyed, with tens of thousands of innocent lives lost over the past fifteen months. Israel is safer today than it was on October 6, but at a painful [cost](#) of more than four hundred Israel Defense Forces (IDF) members killed and hundreds more injured.

In addition to the deaths and devastation in both Gaza and Israel, the war will be remembered for widening the gap over the prospect of a two-state solution. For many [Arab](#) states and [European](#) nations, the conflict was a turning point to reprioritize or declare their support for a sovereign and independent state of Palestine. At the same time, Israelis across the political spectrum remain fundamentally horrified and gobsmacked by the idea that after the suffering they've experienced—October 7 was the greatest single-day loss for the Jewish people since the Holocaust—anyone would think that now is the time to create an independent state of Palestine. Many in Israel would view such an outcome as increasing the odds of more October 7–type attacks happening. Moreover, the war may also be remembered as leading to a rise in global anti-Semitism, with a recent [study](#) finding a worldwide surge of such views among adults, especially younger ones.

**But the war has also reshaped the Middle East in more unexpected ways.** After months of tit-for-tat attacks between Hezbollah and Israel—prompted by the Lebanon-based group attacking Israel on October 8 and originally vowing not to stop until there was a cease-fire in Gaza—Hezbollah today is utterly diminished. Most of its military capabilities have been destroyed, and its leadership has been eliminated. That result is reshaping Lebanon, where a new [president](#) and [prime minister](#) are taking power, giving hope to many in the country that, for the first time in decades, Hezbollah will not be controlling the strings. The war has also helped lead to the end of the Assad regime in Syria, and it has put Iran in its weakest position in the region since the 1979 Revolution.

**What comes next for Israel, Gaza, and the region is less clear.** The ceasefire has multiple stages that if broken could result in a resumption of fighting. But the reality is that Hamas is battered and much of the group's leadership has long sought an end to the conflict. In Israel, the Netanyahu government is also unlikely to break the ceasefire. President-elect Donald Trump has made clear that he wants a sustainable ceasefire in place by the time he gets into office. Breaking the deal could endanger Israel's relationship with the new Trump administration and it could potentially jeopardize coordination and Israeli policy preferences being given due consideration when it comes to Iran. Iran is, after all, the issue that Netanyahu views as the most important in the relationship. Longer term, the reconstruction of Gaza, the security of Israel, and the future of normalization all remain unclear.

But those will all be the next set of challenges to address. Today, most people in Gaza will simply rejoice at not having to fear explosions from Israeli missiles and gunfire; and in Israel, most will rejoice in the knowledge that the hostages, at long last, will come home.



—[Jonathan Panikoff](#) is the director of the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative and a former deputy national intelligence officer for the Near East at the US National Intelligence Council.

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## THE “TRUMP EFFECT” WILL HELP NETANYAHU SELL THIS DEAL TO HIS HARD-LINERS

The hopeful moment of an imminent cease-fire between Israel and Hamas comes with the subtext of circumstances that have facilitated the signing of this agreement—which has been on the table since last May—only now. US President Joe Biden has [attributed](#) apparent changes of heart to “extreme pressure” on Hamas, a transformed “regional equation” that has put Iran and Hezbollah on the defensive, and also “dogged and painstaking American diplomacy.” Israel’s calculus has been impacted similarly by mounting IDF casualties, vociferous calls to liberate the hostages and, in a different vein, Netanyahu’s improved prospects to garner political support for the controversial bargain.

But the real game-changer has been, to [quote](#) incoming National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, “the Trump effect.” The president-elect’s ominous (if amorphous) [threat](#) that “all hell will break out in the Middle East” unless the captives are released before his inauguration energized the parties to reach a compromise before that deadline, lest they suffer those consequences. Additionally, from the perspective of Israel’s government, expectations that the incoming administration will offer strong support for Jerusalem on a host of issues—e.g. confronting Iran, cementing relations with Saudi Arabia, and supporting Jewish settlement in the West Bank—provided extra impetus to placate Trump.

Those aspirations will also play a pivotal role in Netanyahu’s struggle to keep his parliamentary majority intact. Although he should have enough votes to approve the deal, many of his core allies are vehemently opposed to any framework that would suspend the pursuit of “total victory” over Hamas, as he has promised repeatedly to achieve. Their objections will feature prominently when the cabinet convenes to consider the package on Thursday. The prime minister, who has assured these critics that Israel will not relent in its campaign to dismantle Hamas, will be encouraging their instincts to remain in the coalition and wait to [advance](#) their policy priorities under Trump—however [dubious](#) that opportunity may prove to be.

Meanwhile, this latest halt in the fighting will be no less tentative. Under the terms of the arrangement, Hamas will be securing freedom for about one thousand convicted terrorists, doubling the quantity of humanitarian aid coming into Gaza, and benefiting from extensive IDF pullbacks. The [pledge](#) of Waltz that “Hamas has to be destroyed to the point that it cannot reconstitute” notwithstanding, the possibility of the group’s resurgence—in the absence of any other authority—cannot be discounted.

—[Shalom Lipner](#) is a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative who previously worked in foreign policy and public diplomacy during his time at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem, where he served in the administration of seven consecutive Israeli premiers.

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## THE DEAL RISKS FREEZING THE CONFLICT WITH NO POLITICAL HORIZON

The declaration of a ceasefire and hostage deal between Hamas and Israel is a welcome respite for the more than two million Palestinian civilians trapped in a vicious war they didn't start and were powerless to stop. Though much can go wrong between now and the time of the implementation of the deal on January 19, not to mention the potential impasse once the first phase is over, the absence of war may indeed provide space for a more optimistic pathway forward. Gazans will experience relief from the horrors of the relentless Israeli bombardment and attacks that have killed and maimed so many in the coastal enclave. However, Palestinians in Gaza will emerge out of this deal with the greatest humanitarian, political, and strategic losses. Not a dollar of reconstruction money will go into Gaza as long as Hamas controls the coastal enclave and in the absence of a political horizon.

The most significant risk ahead is that there will be a potential freezing of the conflict, in which Gaza remains destroyed and in ruins, entirely dependent on a few hundred trucks per day to sustain the population and stabilize the humanitarian catastrophe. This, of course, would allow Hamas the best of two worlds: It would not be responsible for actual governance or providing for its populace, but it would benefit from a steady stream of goods and items it can siphon and tax. Once again, such a scenario would be horrendously painful for the civilian population in Gaza, many of whom have no homes to return to and are unable to sustain themselves beyond the scope attainable through basic humanitarian and commercial aid and supplies.

It's tempting for analysts to examine alternatives to Hamas's rule now that there is an impending cease-fire. Such discussions are not only premature but also have ultimately proven irrelevant to the intractably static nature of Gaza's governance landscape, which has hardly changed for almost two decades. This remains true even though Hamas is financially, politically, and militarily severely weakened, with little to no prospect for replenishing the material resources and geopolitical ballast that have enabled it to remain afloat for so many years in Gaza.

Most painful of all, many in Gaza are asking why their loved ones are dead or maimed, their homes destroyed, their businesses shattered, and their lives in shambles. These sacrifices were imposed upon them and feel utterly useless to the Palestinian national project for freedom and independence. The incoming US administration's regional priorities, coupled with the possibility of a rejuvenated push for a peace process, may be the only hope for Gaza's recovery, reconstruction, renaissance, and evolution.

—[Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib](#) is a resident senior fellow with the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Middle East Programs.

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## ISRAEL'S MILITARY VICTORY HAS COME AT IMMEASURABLE COST TO ITS GLOBAL STANDING

The forty-two-day cease-fire just agreed to by Israeli and Hamas negotiators is a whimpering close to a conflict that began with shock and awe. It started, of course, with a heinous attack that left more than one thousand people dead in Israel and humiliated the vaunted IDF. More than a year of bombing and fighting followed, which left tens of thousands of Palestinians dead and injured and destroyed the basic infrastructure that supports health, education, housing, and more. The very futures of Palestinian survivors and those coming into the world soon have been blighted by a deliberate strategy. The full extent of the impact of that strategy will be known soon.

The cost for the release of even one thousand prisoners is one Palestinians likely count as far too dear. Hamas, in the short term, is the clear loser.

Israel won. But it may be a Pyrrhic victory.

The conflict gave Israel the opportunity to strike crippling blows against its most dangerous foes: Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. But the brutality of its conduct has undoubtedly cost Israel in terms of economic strength, global reputation, and international standing. The latter two will not be revived soon. Israel is more isolated from the region and beyond than anyone could have imagined on October 8, 2023.

In the long term, however, Hamas's actions reminded the world of Occupied Palestine. This war reminded the world that Palestinians are not a "non-people," as acknowledged by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [on Tuesday](#) at the Atlantic Council. And Hamas's provocation led the Israeli government to show just how ruthless its treatment of Palestinians can be. The unrelenting response to the October 7 attack stripped away Israel's reasonable, humane, peace-loving, good guy image for millions of people around the world, including in the United States.

### THAT IMAGE WILL TAKE A LONG TIME TO RESTORE.

**HAMAS IS LIKELY TO ABIDE BY THE CEASE-FIRE. PALESTINIANS HAVE EVERYTHING TO LOSE IF IT DOESN'T. AS WE SAW DURING THE WAR, THE DRIVER OF WHAT HAPPENS NEXT—WHETHER THE CEASE-FIRE LASTS PAST THE FIRST PHASE—IS ISRAEL.**

—[Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley](#) is a nonresident senior fellow at the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative of the Atlantic Council's Middle East Programs and at the Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. Abercrombie-Winstanley served as the US ambassador to the Republic of Malta and as special assistant for the Middle East and Africa to the secretary of state. Her Middle East assignments included election monitoring in the Gaza Strip and an assignment where she supported gender equality in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the first woman to lead a diplomatic mission there.

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## IS THIS THE END OF THE “BROMANCE” BETWEEN TRUMP, NETANYAHU, AND THE ISRAELI FAR RIGHT?

Wednesday’s announcement of a cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas was met with a feeling of elation around the world and agony for many in Israel. In its first phase, the agreement would ensure the release of at least thirty of Israel’s hostages and would be accompanied by much-needed relief in Gaza. The agreement marks a clear victory for both Trump and Biden, Biden who had worked tirelessly to secure a cease-fire for the past fifteen months and whose terms were largely adopted, and Trump for his ability to push it over the finish line through threats alone. That the incoming and outgoing administrations were able to work together hand in glove to push this over the finish line is not only a powerful demonstration of the United States’ bipartisan approach to the region; it also signifies a decorum in the transition of power that many in the United States crave.

However welcome by many, the agreement and its timing also expose Netanyahu for his deluge of failures in handling the war, thus explaining his continued reticence to accept it. Netanyahu had promised to secure the release of all hostages—and to the devastation of so many Israelis, too many will come home in body bags. Hamas has not been decisively defeated in the ways that he had promised his people—to the contrary, Netanyahu’s failure to support a meaningful pathway to new governance in Gaza has only created a power vacuum in the Strip where extremism will fester and Hamas—either in name or ideology—could reemerge in time. And while details of the agreement are still unfolding, it would appear that Netanyahu’s maximalist positions demanding Israeli control over both the Philadelphi and Netzarim corridors through the final stages of a cease-fire have both been largely abandoned, at least in practice.

If the agreement proceeds, the beginning of Trump’s term could mark an end to Netanyahu as chief negotiator in this conflict and, more strikingly, an end to the “bromance” between the two leaders before Trump even moves into the Oval Office. Members of the Israeli far-right—once proudly donning their MAGA hats—are faced with the reality that their ambitions for a continued conflict and possible resettlement of Gaza are not shared by the United States’ new president.

Netanyahu’s woes in managing his far-right flank will worsen and yet their power in Israel will diminish as Trump, who has made clear that he wants the conflict to be over and to move on to a long sought-after regional deal with the Saudis, will exert only greater influence in determining whether a second or third phase of the cease-fire is achieved. Perhaps this will give Netanyahu the political cover he will need to survive, but it will also only bring him closer to a moment of reckoning in which he must face his public for his responsibility in allowing October 7 to happen—and his failure to deliver a decisive victory in response.

—[Carmiel Arbit](#) is a nonresident senior fellow for Middle East Programs and the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council.

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## **THE DISPARITIES ARE STRIKING, BUT THERE IS NEVER AN “EQUAL” HOSTAGE DEAL**

As part of a deal reached between Israel and Hamas, thirty-three living and deceased Israeli hostages held by Hamas in Gaza are set to be released. In exchange, Israel will [reportedly](#) release thirty Palestinian prisoners for every Israeli civilian and fifty for every Israeli female soldier released.

Does this disproportionate exchange make for a bad deal? On the surface it may seem so, making it difficult to remember the core of the problem of hostage taking—the hostages that Hamas took and held for nearly fifteen months were innocent individuals: civilians, soldiers, parents, and children. There would be no “equal” deal for these hostages when talking about humans being held as pawns. Countries negotiating for hostage releases must do what is needed to get their people home. And, in this case, Hamas effectively used the hostages they are holding to get to this point.

These releases only represent a third of the approximately one hundred hostages Hamas continues to hold. It was expected that this deal would not include the release of all hostages held, as the agonizing and lengthy negotiations to reach a deal involve not only the exchange of people held but also a cease-fire and options for increased aid. While the release of thirty-three hostages held by Hamas in Gaza is not the perfect outcome, it is a good one. It means thirty-three fewer individuals suffering the horrific conditions of being held hostage and thirty-three families who can have closure, in addition to the other positive outcomes for civilians in Gaza.

This deal will reportedly last forty-two days. Looking past those forty-two days for the hostages and Gaza alike, there is little clarity. Though the deal could allow for more hostage releases in subsequent phases, the work continues as there is no certain path for the release of the remaining hostages, prolonging their suffering and that of their families, communities, and countries fighting for their freedom.

*—Liz Cathcart is a member of the Atlantic Council Counterterrorism Project and the executive director of Hostage US.*

## **NOW ISRAEL NEEDS TO AIM FOR NORMALIZATION WITH SAUDI ARABIA**

The prisoner-of-war deal concluded between Israel and Hamas is a bad deal for Israel, but one that it had no choice but to implement. Israel has a moral obligation to return its abductees even at the heavy price of releasing terrorists and accepting Hamas remaining in the Gaza Strip.

But in order for this deal to serve Israel’s strategic interests, there must be political continuity in the form of Israeli consent to the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza, and the utilization of this move to promote diplomatic normalization with Saudi Arabia.

Because 2025 appears to be a decisive year regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, the deal in Gaza will make it possible to focus international attention on Iran. Together with an Israeli-Saudi normalization, greater focus on Iran will strengthen the Israeli posture in the Middle East.

If Israel seeks to return to the war in Gaza, then it will find the Trump administration and the whole international community against it. Israel must complete the cease-fire agreement in Gaza and Lebanon. It must also work with the new US administration and with Arab neighbors to strengthen the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the West Bank, and offer a political horizon based on what US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the [“deal of the century”](#) during Trump’s first term.

“Absolute victory” for Israel will only come from normalization with Saudi Arabia, not any other military move.

—[Danny Citrinowicz](#) is a nonresident fellow with the Atlantic Council’s Middle East Programs and a member of the Atlantic Council’s [Iran Strategy Project](#) working group. He previously served for twenty-five years in a variety of command positions units in Israel Defense Intelligence.

## WHO GOVERNS POSTWAR GAZA WHEN THE SHOOTING STOPS?

Despite the talk about the sticking points in the negotiations, the real sticking point underlying everything still has not been resolved: Who will control postwar Gaza? Hamas wants to ensure it has the ability to rebuild and re-arm, and Israel is equally determined to prevent this. The agreement calls for postwar arrangements to be discussed during phase two, but make no mistake, no one is ready for what this will really require.

Both the [outgoing Biden administration](#) and the [incoming Trump administration](#), as well as the Netanyahu government, understand that the essential requirement for a lasting peace is that Hamas has no role in postwar Gaza. Even Hamas surrogates are signaling that Hamas knows it will have to [step back from governing Gaza—for now](#). What is needed is a workable postwar plan that puts Gaza under international administration for a transitional period. But [how that is set up](#), and who participates in it, will make the difference between success and failure. The [bare-bones plan](#) outgoing US Secretary of State Antony Blinken described on Tuesday at the Atlantic Council would not succeed as is in preventing Hamas’s eventual return.

Given the tensions in Israeli politics—Netanyahu reportedly agreeing to the [expansion of Israeli settlements](#) in the West Bank carries real dangers—prospects for a negotiated outcome in the next [twelve weeks](#) are extremely slim. Fighting could resume. Trump’s presidency will toughen Netanyahu’s position, and the Palestinians really need to take to heart what incoming Trump National Security Advisor Mike Waltz said on January 15: [“There is nothing but downside”](#) to holding out. The Trump administration will likely step back for a while and wait to see what the Israelis and Palestinians are able to do on their own.

The tensions in Palestinian politics also create a different danger. Just as Israel has failed to come up with a viable postwar plan, the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah is in even worse shape. The voices that dominate Palestinian civil society want international recognition of the justice of the Palestinian cause,

apparently failing to recognize that the people they are talking to are not able to deliver what they want. Ramallah and Palestinian civil society need to broaden who they talk to about the future of Palestine.

—[Thomas S. Warrick](#) is a nonresident senior fellow in the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative and a former deputy assistant secretary for counterterrorism policy in the US Department of Homeland Security.

## **THE HUMAN COST OF THE WAR IN GAZA IS ABOUT TO BECOME CLEAR —WITH REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE REGION**

The human cost of the war will become even more evident as a cease-fire takes effect. The visuals over the next several days and weeks will not only be jarring, but also may have political repercussions.

The Israeli hostages, who have likely endured unspeakable suffering, including rape and torture, will now be seen up close and personal by the Israeli public, who will then relive the trauma of October 7. This may reignite anger against Hamas and the Palestinians as a whole and further harden Israeli views toward a future two-state solution.

At the same time, this outcome may cause a backlash against Netanyahu, who essentially accepted an agreement that was on the table for many months. It was a delay that increased suffering and likely led to the death of some of the hostages. Let's not forget that a tenet of Israel's social compact with its citizen soldiers is that it will go to any lengths to bring them home if they are captured. There is a legitimate question as to whether Netanyahu adhered to this sacrosanct compact.

In addition, as Gaza opens up to the international press and to aid organizations, and as reconstruction efforts begin, the world is going to see devastation and death at every corner, on a truly dramatic scale. There are likely hundreds of bodies (or more) still buried in Gaza under tons of rubble. Entire neighborhoods are flattened. The humanitarian situation is dire. While some countries in the region may now see an opportunity for further normalization with Israel, many in the Arab world will get even more of a sense of the immense horror in Gaza as it opens up, and they could then question any rapid pace of change with Israel.

—[Marc Polymeropoulos](#) is a nonresident senior fellow in the Forward Defense practice of the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. He worked for twenty-six years at the Central Intelligence Agency before retiring in July 2019 at the senior intelligence service level.

## **NOW FOR THE HARD PART—A LONG-TERM SOLUTION FOR GAZA**

Despite the length of time and difficulty of the negotiations, this interim deal is actually the easier part. The difficult part is the long-term solution to the conflict and release of the remaining hostages. There is still no clear picture of the long-term governance and security in Gaza that would be required to facilitate reconstruction at the end of the conflict.

Hamas wants complete and total withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and a permanent end to hostilities. Israel still sees Gaza as a security issue that will require a military presence, and there is currently no partner for peace or stability who can be relied upon to administer Gaza.

If Hamas and the Palestinian people in Gaza reject a security force and governing authority, then it could lead to a protracted insurgency in Gaza. As previously noted, Israel and Hamas had reached an interim security deal a year ago that failed to advance a broader peace. So, while the deal should be celebrated, there is still a lot of difficult work ahead to define Gaza's future and Israel's security.

—[Alex Plitsas](#) is a nonresident senior fellow with the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative, the head of the Atlantic Council's Counterterrorism Project, and a former chief of sensitive activities for special operations and combating terrorism in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

[https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react/everything-you-need-to-know-know-about-the-israel-hamas-cease-fire-and-hostage-deal/?mkt\\_tok=NjU5LVdaWC0wNzUAAAGYFFOicExaEFRaUyruiUbcVVZaxC-l2hXPxETx-H\\_pE90ySlocX4U6y\\_aH904SQmm6QcbOj3E-aXUNdhpiNqInlwKxX2NaJcjsE8sTtXvpURqv5g](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react/everything-you-need-to-know-know-about-the-israel-hamas-cease-fire-and-hostage-deal/?mkt_tok=NjU5LVdaWC0wNzUAAAGYFFOicExaEFRaUyruiUbcVVZaxC-l2hXPxETx-H_pE90ySlocX4U6y_aH904SQmm6QcbOj3E-aXUNdhpiNqInlwKxX2NaJcjsE8sTtXvpURqv5g)



## HAMAS AND ISRAEL TRADE BLAME OVER DEAL VIOLATIONS. WILL THE FRAGILE CEASEFIRE AND HOSTAGE AGREEMENT HOLD?

[CNN World](#) Nadeen Ebrahim and Dana Karni, January 25 2025



Gazans hoping to return to their homes in northern Gaza run after the Israeli military opened fire to prevent them from crossing into the area on Saturday, January 25.

The fragility of [the truce between Israel and Hamas](#) was laid bare on Saturday, after Israel accused Hamas of withholding a hostage, prompting a [halt in the movement](#) of Gazan civilians back to their homes in the north.

[The ceasefire deal](#) was already a brittle agreement, with Israeli statements often calling it a “framework” as opposed to a deal.

Tensions escalated this week when 29-year-old Arbel Yehud, a civilian who Israel says should have been freed Saturday, was not [among the four women released](#). Israel, in turn, did not allow Gazan civilians to return north past the Netzarim Corridor, which was meant to take place Saturday under the ceasefire and hostage deal.

Complicating the matter is that Yehud is not being held by Hamas. A senior source in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement (PIJ), another militant group in the Strip, told CNN that it is holding Yehud and that she “will be released under the terms of the agreed-upon prisoner exchange deal.”

Both Hamas and Israel have accused the other of failing to stick to their end of the bargain, raising questions about how well the ceasefire that took more than 15 months to reach would hold.



[Related article Four hostages freed but Israel blocks people in Gaza returning north](#)

“This is a very delicate matter,” Gershon Baskin, a former Israeli hostage negotiator who used to speak to Hamas through backchannels, told CNN.

Baskin explained that Hamas “will not give anything for free,” in reference to Yehud’s captivity. He added that “Israel’s threat not to allow the displaced to move north” does little to convince Hamas to help push for her release.

Ad Feedback

The former negotiator warned that “carrying out the threat” of not allowing displaced Palestinians to move north “could lead to a halt in the release of the hostages” and advised Israel to try to keep the deal alive.

“It is better for Israel to talk less and let the mediators do more,” Baskin added, urging Israel to “convey to Qatar and Egypt that it is ready to adopt the three-week deal that Hamas agreed to in September.

‘How will the US respond?’

Israeli military spokesperson Daniel Hagari said on Saturday that “Hamas didn’t fulfil the agreement in terms of its obligation to return civilians first,” adding that “we will insist that Arbel Yehud return” along with the rest of the hostages.

Hundreds of displaced people [were seen fleeing in panic](#) after the Israeli military opened fire on Saturday to prevent them from crossing into northern [Gaza](#) to return to their homes, CNN footage showed. The Israeli

military said it was 'unaware of any harm' after its troops fired 'warning shots in order to distance' a crowd in Gaza.

Hamas said that Israel "continues to procrastinate in implementing the terms of the ceasefire agreement and the prisoner exchange by maintaining the closure of al-Rasheed Street and preventing the return of displaced persons walking from the south to the north."

The Palestinian militant group added that it holds Israel "responsible for any delays in the implementation of the agreement and the repercussions that may arise on the remaining phases."

There are questions as to how the United States under [President Donald Trump](#) would respond to the violations alleged by both sides.



Gazans hoping to return to their homes in northern Gaza take cover after the Israeli military opened fire to prevent them from crossing into the area on Saturday, January 25. CNN

An Israeli official told CNN Saturday that Israel asked the Trump administration to push on Hamas to abide by the terms of the deal and free Yehud. The message was sent to Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, the official added. CNN has reached out to Trump administration for comment.

The ceasefire "framework," as Israel refers to it, "was hardly ironclad from the get-go," Dr H.A. Hellyer, senior associate fellow at Center for American Progress and the Royal United Services Institute, told CNN. "The question is now, after clear violations by the Israelis, how will the US respond? Will they use pressure to ensure adherence, or are we seeing the breakdown of this pause in hostilities so soon after the signing?" Hellyer said.

A choreographed show of force

Tensions simmered as the second exchange of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners took place. The militant group used it to [choreograph a poignant show](#) of force despite Israel's warnings.

[Propaganda video released by Hamas](#) after the four Israeli hostages were freed showed the women paraded before a crowd as they received certificates for their release and souvenir keychains. CNN does not know the circumstances under which the hostages were speaking, including whether they were speaking under duress.

In the nearly three-minute video, the four women are seen seated inside a van, smiling and posing. The women were seen thanking Hamas' military wing, the Al Qassam Brigades, "for the good treatment," including for providing food and water. They also thanked them for "protecting" them from shelling. None of the four women are native Arabic speakers. In the video, they can be heard speaking in Hebrew accents.

Hamas' propaganda videos have left a sour note over the years. Previous Hamas' videos of the four soldiers' kidnapping by Hamas on October 7, 2023 had gone viral. The women were dressed in civilian clothes at the time of their taking, including pajamas when they were pulled from their bedrooms. Videos showed them covered in blood.

Experts say that deals like this are bound to be filled with complications, especially as Hamas tries to use what leverage it has over Israel, and as Israel tries to retrieve hostages while destroying the group.

Yohanan Tzoreff, a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv, said concerns about violations, delays, or crises come with "any deal with an organization like Hamas."

Such concerns "are rooted in the many past grievances between the two sides, numerous bloody conflicts, and, of course, the heinous attack carried out by Hamas on October 7," Tzoreff said.

"The issue of hostage release became a test for both sides," he said, adding that Israel "finds itself facing a dilemma: how to secure the hostages' release while fully achieving the second goal of dismantling Hamas."

CNN's Tim Lister, Abeer Salman, Mohammad Al Sawalhi, Eyad Kourdi, Ibrahim Dahman and Jeremy Diamond contributed reporting.

## ISRAEL FREES 90 PALESTINIAN SECURITY PRISONERS, WHO ARE WELCOMED WITH HAMAS FLAGS

After 3 civilian hostages released from Gaza, Israel releases inmates, mostly female, to West Bank or East Jerusalem – first of up to 1,904 Palestinians to go free in phase one of deal

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [ToI Staff](#) and [Agencies](#) 20 Jan 2025

Israel released 90 Palestinian security prisoners early Monday morning, hours after Hamas released three civilian hostages Sunday on the first day of a ceasefire with the terror group in the Gaza Strip, the Israel Prison Service (IPS) said in a statement.

Most of the inmates, who included terror convicts but reportedly none convicted of murder, were taken to the West Bank town of Beitunia, where a crowd of hundreds cheered and chanted and some climbed atop the lead bus and unfurled Hamas flags.

They were joined by others waving the flags of Fatah, Islamic Jihad and several other Palestinian factions, including terror groups, as well as the Palestinian flag and the flag of Lebanon's Hezbollah terror group.



The 90 Palestinian prisoners released on Monday included between 62 and 69 women, according to contradictory media reports. The IPS statement did not provide a breakdown. (Video)

According to the Haaretz daily, Israel freed 62 women — including one minor — and 28 men, including eight teenagers. The Ynet news site reported that 69 women were set free, including one minor, alongside eight male minors and 13 adult men. Similarly, the Associated Press said before the release that it had seen a list of inmates set for release that included 69 women.

Ahead of the return of the Israeli hostages, the IPS bused the first round of Palestinian prisoners to Ofer Prison in the West Bank, where Israeli security forces and Red Cross representatives verified each prisoner's identity and performed medical checks on them before releasing them in coordination with security forces and the government.

The prisoners include 78 West Bank residents, released at the Beitunia Checkpoint near Ofer Prison. The remaining 12 East Jerusalem residents were transported to the city and released back to their homes from the Russian Compound detention center.

As the release was delayed by several hours, Ynet reported that Israeli security officials were blaming the Red Cross, accusing the organization's staff of deliberately stalling the process with the purported motive of making Israel seem like it was not complying with the deal's terms. But after a short while, the release went ahead.

The deal, signed Friday, is broken into three phases. During the first, 42-day phase, Hamas will release a total of 33 Israeli hostages — women, children, and elderly, wounded, or sick men — not all of whom are alive. Israel, in return, will release up to 1,904 Palestinian security prisoners and detainees, including more than 150 terrorists convicted of murder and several serving multiple life sentences for deadly terror attacks. The next release of hostages and prisoners is due Saturday. In just over two weeks, talks are to begin on the far more challenging second phase of the ceasefire agreement.

The youngest prisoner freed Monday was Mahmoud Aliowat, 15, who was convicted of carrying out a shooting attack in the City of David area of Jerusalem, wounding two people, when he was 13.

The list also included, according to AP, Khalida Jarrar, 62, a leading member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a terror group that carried out attacks on Israelis decades ago, including plane hijackings.

Jarrar was accused of masterminding the 2019 [bombing](#) that killed 17-year-old Rina Shnerb at a spring in the West Bank. As part of a plea deal, Jarrar was charged with “illegal association” and sentenced to two years in prison in 2021.

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Jarrar, 62, was again arrested in late 2023 and since held under indefinitely renewable administrative detention — a controversial tool enabling detention without charge that Israel uses against terror suspects in cases where disclosing the evidence against them in court could harm national security. The practice, primarily used against Palestinians, has been criticized by rights groups.



Rina Shnerb, 17, who was killed in a terror attack in the West Bank on August 23, 2019 (courtesy)

Dalal Khaseeb, 53, the sister of former Hamas second-in-command Saleh Arouri, was also on the list, which was provided by Hamas. Arouri was killed in an Israeli strike in a southern Beirut suburb in January 2024.

Also listed for release, according to AP, was Abla Abdelrasoul, 68, the wife of detained PFLP leader Ahmad Saadat who ordered the assassination of Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Ze'evi in 2001 and has been serving a 30-year sentence.

Haaretz also noted the inclusion on the list of East Jerusalem residents Nawal Abed Fatiha, an Israeli citizen who in 2020 stabbed a 70-year-old Israeli man with a knife in Jerusalem, and Ibrahim Zamar, who in April 2023, when he was 15, [shot two people](#) at the entrance to the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.

A 2015 shooting attack in Jerusalem's Sheik Jarrah neighborhood; Ibrahim Zamar, who carried out the attack, is to be released on January 19, 2025 in exchange for three Israeli women taken hostage by the Hamas terror group.

None of the inmates set free in the first batch have been convicted of murder, Haaretz reported. The adult men were being held for relatively minor offenses like incitement, identifying with terrorism and disorderly conduct, according to Ynet.

Almost all the hostages set for release by Hamas were abducted from Israel during the October 7, 2023, onslaught led by the Palestinian terror group, in which 1,200 people were killed, mostly civilians, and 251 taken hostage into the Strip.

For each of the living women, children and elderly, 30 Palestinian prisoners will be released; for all nine sick hostages, 110 prisoners will be released; for each of the female IDF soldiers, 50 prisoners will be released; for hostages Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, who have been held in Gaza for a decade, 30 prisoners will be released for each, in addition to 47 Palestinians released in the 2011 Shalit deal and since

rearrested; and for the bodies of hostages in the first stage, Israel will release the more than 1,000 Gazan detainees.



The 33 hostages set to be returned in phase one of the Gaza ceasefire deal. Row 1 (L-R): Romi Gonen, Emily Damari, Arbel Yehud, Doron Steinbrecher, Ariel Bibas, Kfir Bibas, Shiri Bibas; Row 2: Liri Albag, Karina Arieiv, Agam Berger, Danielle Gilboa, Naama Levy, Ohad Ben-Ami, Gadi Moshe Moses; Row 3: Keith Siegel, Ofer Calderon, Eli Sharabi, Itzik Elgarat, Shlomo Mansour, Ohad Yahalomi, Oded Lifshitz; Row 4: Tsahi Idan, Hisham al-Sayed, Yarden Bibas, Sagui Dekel-Chen, Yair Horn, Omer Wenkert, Sasha Trufanov; Row 5: Eliya Cohen, Or Levy, Avera Mengistu, Tal Shoham, Omer Shem-Tov  
(all photos courtesy)

Following the first phase of the deal, Israel and Hamas are to engage in continued negotiations over a permanent ceasefire, as the terror group releases the remaining hostages and Israel releases more Palestinian security prisoners.

It is believed that 91 of the 251 hostages abducted by Hamas on October 7 remain in Gaza, including the bodies of at least 34 confirmed dead by the IDF.

Hamas released 105 civilians during a weeklong truce in late November 2023, and four hostages were released before that. Eight hostages have been rescued by troops alive, and the bodies of 40 hostages have also been recovered, including three mistakenly killed by the Israeli military as they tried to escape their captors.

Hamas is also holding two Israeli civilians who entered the Strip in 2014 and 2015, as well as the body of an IDF soldier who was killed in 2014. The body of another IDF soldier killed in 2014, Oron Shaul, was recovered from Gaza in an Israeli military operation announced on Sunday.

*Charlie Summers contributed to this report.*



## WHO ARE THE PALESTINIAN PRISONERS FREED IN THE HOSTAGE AGREEMENT

[AJC](#) January 24 2025

During [the first phase of a hostage release agreement with the Hamas terror group](#), Israel will exchange more than 1,900 Palestinian security prisoners for 33 of the remaining hostages in Gaza over [42 days](#).

Among those released are 737 detainees and security prisoners, some of whom are serving life sentences for murder.

The high price Israel must pay to [bring home the men, women, and children held captive since October 7, 2023](#), becomes all the more clear when you know who the prisoners are and what they've done.

### HOW ARE THE EXCHANGE NUMBERS CONFIGURED?

In exchange for an untold number of hostages' bodies, either kidnapped dead or alive, held in Gaza, Israel will release more than 1,000 Gazans who, though they did not participate in the October 7 terror attack, were believed to have ties to Hamas. Most, if not all of them, were detained by IDF troops during Israel's efforts in Gaza to secure evacuated areas and collect intelligence about Hamas operations.

The breakdown of the remaining 900 prisoners in the exchange is this: Israel will release 30 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for each of the living women, children, and elderly taken from Israel on October 7 and 50 prisoners for each of the five female IDF soldiers. To secure the release of all nine hostages now facing health concerns, Israel will release 110 more prisoners. Even Israelis held in captivity in Gaza prior to October 7, 2023 are part of the agreement: Ethiopian-Israeli Avera Mengistu and Bedouin Arab Israeli Hisham al-Sayed, who have been held in Gaza after crossing the border in 2014 and 2015, will be exchanged for 30 prisoners each plus 47 additional Palestinians who had been re-arrested after being freed in the 2011 deal with Hamas to secure the release of IDF Soldier Gilad Shalit. Yahya Sinwar, the mastermind of the October 7 attack, was also among the 1,027 prisoners released during the Shalit deal. He was [killed by the IDF in October 2024](#).

### WHO ARE THE PRISONERS BEING FREED?

The majority of Palestinians to be released during the first stage of the hostage deal are Gazans who did not participate in the October 7 attack, but were detained as part of the IDF's efforts to remove Hamas elements or influence from Gaza.

However, among the 737 security prisoners that are to be released in the first phase are members of Fatah or the terror groups Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), many of whom have been

serving life sentences for murder and terror attacks. They include three architects of the Jerusalem bus bombing on June 11, 2003, the perpetrator in a 2018 terror stabbing in the West Bank, and one of the organizers of a December 2002 attack inside the kitchen of a yeshiva, killing two students and two IDF soldiers.

[\*\*Who Are the Israeli Hostages Being Released? Full Schedule and Latest Updates\*\*](#)

**Here are some of the murderers slated to be released as part of the agreement:**

**Zakaria Zubeidi**

Terrorist Zakaria Zubeidi, the former Jenin commander of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, was detained in 2019 for his part in shootings near Beit El in the West Bank. He also is tied to multiple terror attacks, including a bombing that killed six people at a Beit Shean polling station where members of the Likud party were casting votes in the 2002 primary.

In September 2021, he and five PIJ terrorists escaped from the Gilboa Prison, a maximum-security penitentiary in northern Israel, only to be captured days later.

**Iyad Jradat and Ahmed Dahiri**

Iyad Jradat, one of five PIJ terrorists charged with assisting that prison break, is also set to be freed under the agreement. He is serving a life sentence for orchestrating the 2003 terror attack in Moshav Gadish, killing one and wounding four others. Ahmed Dahiri, a senior PIJ official convicted of the murder in that terror attack, will also be freed.

**Mahmoud Atallah**

Mahmoud Atallah has been serving a life sentence plus 15 years for killing a Palestinian woman he suspected of collaborating with Israel. Atallah also was indicted in September for raping a female prison guard at Gilboa Prison and sexually abusing two others. Those women have asked that he be forced to return and stand trial after this prisoner swap.

**Wael Qissam, Wissam Abbasi and Muhammad Odeh**

Wael Qissam, Wissam Abbasi, and Muhammad Odeh carried out five bombings across Israel between March and June 2002, killing 35 people and wounding hundreds.

All three are members of the so-called Silwan Squadron, a Hamas terror cell named for its members' East Jerusalem neighborhood.

**Ahmed Barghouti**

Ahmed Barghouti, operational commander for the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, has been serving 13 life sentences in Israel for involvement in terror attacks in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem that killed six people, including a police officer. A close aide to Marwan Barghouti, he was arrested alongside him in Ramallah in 2002. Ahmed was responsible for supplying weapons to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, also known as the military wing of Fatah.

**Khalida Jarrar**

Khalida Jarrar, a Palestinian Authority lawmaker from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a decades-old anti-Israel group designated a terrorist organization by the U.S., Canada, Japan, and the European Union for its numerous terror attacks and plane hijackings. Members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine terror group stormed outposts and watchtowers of the Israeli Defense Forces on October 7, according to videos shared by the PFLP. It has since fought alongside Hamas and other terrorists inside Gaza.

Jarrar was accused of orchestrating the 2019 bombing that killed 17-year-old Rina Shnerb and wounded her brother and father at a popular hiking spot in the West Bank. As part of a plea deal, Jarrar was charged with “illegal association” and sentenced to two years in prison in 2021. Her most recent arrest was on December 26, 2023.

[\*Israeli Hostages Freed: Inside the Emotional Reunions, High-Stakes Negotiations, and What's Next\*](#)

**Khalil Jabarin**

Khalil Jabarin stabbed Ari Fuld, a father of four, multiple times in the back and neck as he was standing outside a West Bank supermarket in 2018.

Severely wounded, Fuld pursued and shot Jabarin as he attacked three others but collapsed and died later in a hospital.

As part of its “pay-for-slay” policy, the Palestinian Authority paid Jabarin’s family a monthly stipend as a reward for murdering the Israeli, with plans to increase the amount the longer Jabarin remained behind bars. In 2023, it doubled the stipend from \$522 to \$1,044. It’s unclear if the family will continue to receive the monetary reward after Jabarin’s release.

## WHO ARE THE PALESTINIAN PRISONERS RELEASED IN EXCHANGE FOR ISRAELI HOSTAGES?

**Israel released 110 Palestinian prisoners on Thursday,  
in exchange for three Israeli hostages held in captivity in Gaza**

[ABC NEWS](#) Associated Press Isabel Debre January 30 2025

RAMALLAH, West Bank -- Israel released 110 Palestinian prisoners on Thursday in exchange for three Israeli hostages held in Gaza. Five Thai workers held captive in the enclave were also freed in a separate deal with Thailand. Thursday's [prisoner-for-hostage swap](#) marked the third round of exchanges as [a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas](#) entered its second week.

Most of the prisoners stepped off the Red Cross bus and onto the shoulders of jubilant supporters in the occupied West Bank, where U.N. data shows that one in five Palestinians has passed through Israeli jail and the release of prisoners is a [source of joyous national celebration](#) — a homecoming in which almost all Palestinians felt they could partake.

But 23 of them serving life sentences for more serious crimes were transferred to Egypt before further deportation.

The prisoners released Thursday were all men, ranging in age from 15 to 69.

Here's a look at some prominent Palestinian prisoners released since the ceasefire deal went into effect on Jan. 19.

[Zakaria Zubeidi](#) is a prominent former militant leader and theater director whose [dramatic jailbreak](#) in 2021 thrilled Palestinians across the Middle East and stunned the Israeli security establishment.

Zubeidi once led the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade — an armed group affiliated with Fatah, the secular political party that controls the Palestinian Authority — that carried out deadly attacks against Israelis during the second intifada, or Palestinian uprising, between 2000 and 2005.

After the intifada in 2006, Zubeidi co-founded a theater in his hometown of Jenin refugee camp, a hotbed of Palestinian militancy, to promote what he described as cultural resistance to Israel. Even today, the Freedom Theater in Jenin refugee camp puts on everything from Shakespeare to stand-up comedy to plays written by residents.

In 2019, after Zubeidi had already served years in prison for attacks in the early 2000s, Israel arrested him again over his alleged involvement in shooting attacks that targeted buses of Israeli settlers but caused no injuries.

Zubeidi, who was released Thursday, had been awaiting trial in prison. He denies the charges, saying that he gave up militancy to focus on his political activism after the intifada.

In 2021, he and five other prisoners tunneled out of a maximum-security prison in northern Israel, an escape that helped solidify Zubeidi's image among Palestinians as a folk hero. All six were recaptured days later.

In a room packed with family members and supporters smiling, laughing, and jostling for a view of him, Zubeidi shouted to be heard over the frenzy and expressed thanks for God and his loved ones. He

searched for words as reporters thrust microphones toward him, offering Islamic prayers to those wounded and killed in Gaza.

Rather than set off to Jenin camp after being freed, he stayed in Ramallah on Thursday night. Israel launched an extensive military raid earlier this month in the Jenin camp that so far has killed at least 18 Palestinians and sent scores of families fleeing.

“May God grant victory to our brothers in the Jenin camp,” Zubeidi said. His son, Mohammed, was killed in an Israeli drone strike last September in the camp.

Palestinian medics, who have raised concerns about the conditions of detainees emerging from Israeli detention, said Zubeidi looked weak and malnourished. Dr. Mai Al-Kaileh, who examined him, said his ribs had been shattered and he had lost a startling amount of weight.

“His condition is very difficult,” she said. “It’s not good.”

A Hamas militant during the second intifada, Abu Warda helped organize a series of suicide bombings that killed over 40 people and wounded more than a hundred others. Israel arrested him in 2002, and sentenced him to 48 terms of lifetime imprisonment, among the longest sentences it ever issued.

As a young student, Abu Warda joined Hamas at the start of the intifada following Israel’s killing of Yahya Ayyash, the militant group’s leading bomb maker, in 1996.

Palestinian authorities said at the time that Warda had helped to recruit suicide bombers — including his cousin, his cousin’s neighbor and a classmate at the Ramallah Teachers College — whose attacks targeting crowded civilian areas in Israeli cities killed scores of people in the early 2000s.

Warda was released on Thursday.

An activist in Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Aradeh, was sentenced to life in prison for a range of offenses going back to the second intifada. Some of the charges, according to the Israeli Prison Service, included planting an explosive device and attempting murder.

He was credited with plotting the extraordinary prison escape in 2021, when he and five other detainees, including Zubeidi, used spoons to tunnel out one of Israel’s most secure prisons. They remained at large for days before being caught.

From an impoverished and politically active family in [Jenin, in the northern occupied West Bank](#), Aradeh has three brothers and a sister who have all spent years in Israeli prisons.

He was welcomed as a sort of cult hero in Ramallah on Saturday as family, friends and fans swarmed him, some chanting “The freedom tunnel!” in reference to his [jailbreak](#). When asked how he felt, Aradeh was breathless.

Over and over he muttered, “Thank God, thank God.”

All three men hail from the neighborhood of Silwan, in east Jerusalem, and rose within the ranks of Hamas. Held responsible for a string of deadly attacks during the second intifada, the men were sentenced to multiple life sentences in 2002.

They were accused of plotting a suicide bombing at a crowded pool hall near Tel Aviv in 2002 that killed 15 people. Later that year, they were found to have orchestrated a bombing at Hebrew University that killed nine people, including five American students. Israel had described Odeh, who was working as a painter at the university at the time, as the kingpin in the attack.

All three were transferred to Egypt last Saturday. Their families live in Jerusalem and said they will join them in exile.

Three brothers from the prominent Abu Hamid family of the Al-Amari refugee camp in Ramallah — Nasser, 51, Mohammad, 44, and Sharif, 48 — were also deported to Egypt last Saturday. They had been sentenced to life in prison over deadly militant attacks against Israelis in 2002.

Their brother, a different Nasser Abu Hamid, was one of the founders of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade. He was also sentenced to life in prison for several deadly attacks. His 2022 death from lung cancer behind bars unleashed a [wave of angry protests](#) across the West Bank as Palestinian officials accused Israel of medical neglect.

The family has a long arc of Palestinian militancy. The mother, Latifa Abu Hamid, 72, now has three sons exiled, one still imprisoned, one who died in prison and one who was killed by Israeli forces. Their family house has been demolished at least three times by Israel, which defends such [punitive home demolitions](#) as a deterrent against future attacks.

Al-Tous had held the title of longest continuous Israeli imprisonment until his release last Saturday, Palestinian authorities said.

First arrested in 1985 while fighting Israeli forces along the Jordanian border, the activist in the Fatah party spent a total of 39 years behind bars. Originally from the West Bank city of Bethlehem, he was among the prisoners exiled.

**PART T**

**GAZA HOSTAGE VIDEOS**

## **TRUMP'S GAZA PLAN: WHY DON'T EGYPT & JORDAN WANT PALESTINIANS? CONNECTING THE DOT**

[DD India](#) 31 Jan 2025 20min 11sec

Former U.S. President Donald Trump has proposed relocating over a million Palestinians from Gaza to Jordan and Egypt to facilitate rebuilding efforts, a plan widely condemned as ethnic cleansing. Arab nations, including Jordan and Egypt, have firmly rejected the idea, citing national security concerns and the potential erosion of Palestinian statehood. Critics argue that the proposal aligns with Israeli far-right interests, seeking to strengthen settlements in Gaza. Palestinian leaders and displaced residents have vowed to resist forced displacement, drawing parallels to the 1948 Nakba. Trump's remarks further complicate an already fragile ceasefire, adding tension to ongoing diplomatic efforts led by Qatar and Egypt.

## **PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP SAYS HE WANTS US TO 'TAKE OVER' GAZA AND RESETTLE PALESTINIANS |**

[BBC News](#) 5 February 10min 14sec

US President Donald Trump says he wants the US to "take over" Gaza, take a "long-term ownership position", and turn it into the "Riviera of the Middle East".

## **UNREALISTIC? HOW TRUMP'S GAZA PLAN COULD SUCCEED & RESHAPE ISRAEL, MIDDLE EAST**

[TBN ISRAEL](#) 6 Feb 2025 1hour 37sec

Join Yair Pinto and Mati Shoshani as they discuss Hamas facing total defeat in Gaza as discussions emerge about relocating Palestinians to neighboring Arab countries. In this episode, we explore the bold plan introduced by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu, which aims to remove Hamas from power, rebuild Gaza, and reshape the Middle East's political landscape. We dive into the implications for Israel, the Palestinians, and the broader region, analyzing how this unprecedented proposal could impact future relations with Arab states, the Abraham Accords, and the fight against Iranian influence. Plus, we examine the potential fallout from global powers and the UN

## **ANALYSIS: US PRESIDENT TRUMP CONSIDERS RELOCATION OF GAZANS**

[VOAAFRICA](#) 7 February 2025 4min 39sec

US President Donald Trump proposed the deployment of troops in Gaza to help with the repatriation of Palestinians there to other Arab countries and with the rebuilding of the strip. As the Middle East reckons with such a potentially dramatic shift in population, what would the repatriation logistics be? VOA's Philip Alexiou talks with Moses Tesi, a Professor of Political and Global Affairs at Middle Tennessee State University, for the answers.



## **FORMER IDF GENERAL REVEALS WHAT'S REALLY BEHIND THE LATEST HOSTAGE DEAL**

[Jerusalem Press Club](#) 16 Jan 2025 27min 2sec

Brigadier General (Res.) Amir Avivi, founder and chairman of the Israel Defense and Security Forum (IDSF), provides critical insights into the ongoing military situation and potential hostage deal. In this exclusive interview, Gen. Avivi breaks down: 📌 Israel's three main war objectives, 📌 Analyzes Hamas's current military capabilities, 📌 Discusses the strategic implications of the proposed hostage deal. Aviv also addresses: 📌 The humanitarian situation in Gaza, 📌 The northern front with Lebanon, 📌 Shares his perspective on long-term regional security.

Drawing from his extensive military experience as former Deputy Commander of the Gaza Division and other senior IDF roles, Avivi offers a unique strategic assessment of the evolving situation. Avivi was a guest at a special day of briefings held by JPC in Tel Aviv on January 15

## **HAMAS CLAIMS VICTORY OVER ISRAEL IN HOSTAGE DEAL; IRAN & RUSSIA**

[WATCHMAN NEWSCAST LIVE](#) Erick Stakelbeck 17 Jan 2025 27min 53sec

With a hostage/ceasefire deal with Israel about to take effect, Hamas is declaring victory. But is the terror group in reality on its last legs? Plus, Iran and Russia today signed a 20-year strategic partnership. What does this dangerous alliance mean for Israel and the West? Watch now!

## **HAMAS RELEASES ISRAELI HOSTAGES BREAKING | HOSTAGES HANDED OVER TO RED CROSS? FEMALE HOSTAGES FREED ?**

[Oneindia News](#) 19 January 2025 3min 15sec#

BREAKING: Hamas has released three Israeli hostages, including Romi Gonen, Emily Damari, and Doron Steinbrecher. The hostages have been handed over to the Red Cross and are now being transported to the Netzarim Corridor. Israeli Air Force helicopters are prepared to evacuate the hostages for medical treatment following initial checkups at an army facility. This release marks a crucial development in the ongoing hostage situation, as Israel continues to negotiate with Hamas amidst the ongoing conflict.

## **THE PALESTINIAN 'PAY TO SLAY' PROGRAM | EXPLAINED**

[Unpacked](#) 22 Feb 2024 12min 36sec

The Palestinian Authority's "Martyr's Fund," also known as "Pay to Slay," pays the families of Palestinian terrorists who are imprisoned or killed for acts of terrorism against Israeli civilians. Despite attempts by Israel and other countries to both deter terrorism and incentivize the PA to end its "pay to slay" policy, the PA continues to find creative ways to successfully financially incentivize terrorism.

Chapters [00:00](#) Intro [00:36](#) Terrorist payments from the PLO [03:03](#) Financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority [03:55](#) The PA's Martyr's Fund [05:01](#) The Second Intifada [05:39](#) The Prisoners and Released Prisoners Law [06:35](#) Israeli attempts to disincentivize terrorists [07:08](#) Western countries cut off PA funding [08:23](#) Israeli withholds tax revenue from the PA [08:58](#) Failure to end Pay to Slay [10:00](#) U.S. resumes

payments [10:44](#) Palestinian support for Pay to Slay [11:09](#) PA exploitation of Palestinians [11:44](#) Palestinian resistance and martyrdom

See also [Payments to Palestinians in Prisons and as Martyrs](#)

## **ISRAEL GAZA CEASEFIRE FIRST PALESTINIAN PRISONERS RELEASED FROM ISRAEL**

[CNN-NEWS18](#) 20 Jan 2025 6min 55sec

The release of the first Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails marks a significant moment in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This move is part of a larger prisoner exchange deal or diplomatic agreement between the two parties, often resulting from intense negotiations. These releases typically involve the freeing of individuals detained for various offenses, ranging from political activism to militant actions. The event is widely celebrated among Palestinians, as released prisoners are seen as heroes of resistance, while Israel may view the release as a concession or a step towards peace. Such exchanges are usually accompanied by public outcry, protests, or celebrations on both sides. The political and humanitarian implications of these releases can influence future negotiations, with each side interpreting the gestures differently. Ultimately, these releases underscore the complex and ongoing struggle for justice, freedom, and recognition in the region.

## **ELISE STEFANIK BASHES THE UN FOR ANTI ISRAEL & “ANTI SEMITIC ROT” (WATCH)**

[Stories to Inspire](#) 21 Jan 2025

"Rep. Elise Stefanik's UN Ambassador Hearing: Standing for Israel and Moral Clarity" In a pivotal Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) outlines her vision as President Donald Trump's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Emphasizing the need for moral clarity, Stefanik pledges to combat antisemitism, defend Israel on the world stage, and reform the UN. From her role in the historic congressional hearing exposing antisemitism in higher education to her plans to build on the success of the Abraham Accords, Stefanik lays out a roadmap for leadership that aligns with Trump's "America First" policies. Discover how Stefanik plans to address key global challenges, hold the UN accountable, and ensure U.S. taxpayer dollars never fund terrorism. Her testimony sheds light on the urgent need for reform within the UN and the importance of upholding strong U.S.-Israel ties. Watch this deep dive into the contentious and groundbreaking hearing that is shaping America's diplomatic future at the UN.

## **HAMAS' TIGHT GRIP ON GAZA COMPLICATES PLAN FOR LASTING PEACE**

[REUTERS](#) 22 Jan 2025 1min 45sec

Following a ceasefire deal, the Palestinian militant group Hamas appears to have a firm grip on power. Here is what that means for a permanent ceasefire with Israel <https://reut.rs/3CkOwTU>

See Transcript for text

## **WHO ARE THE TERRORISTS THAT ISRAEL HAS RELEASED?**

[January 30 IDSF Daily Briefing](#) 30Jan 2025 28min 51sec

In this video, Lt. Colonel Res. Maurice Hirsch discusses the issue of releasing terrorists in exchange for Israeli hostages. He shares the details of who some of the terrorists who were released today, and the crimes they committed. He then analyzes the extent to which freeing terrorists lays the foundation for future acts of terror, and weighs in on capital punishment as a means of deterrence.

## **GAZA CEASEFIRE: CHAOTIC HAMAS HOSTAGE RELEASE AS ISRAEL FREES PRISONERS**

[Channel 4 News](#) 30 Jan 2025 3min 17sec

Israel has released 110 Palestinians held in prison, after chaotic scenes surrounding the handover of Israeli and Thai captives who were freed earlier today in Gaza, surrounded by a surging crowd. and Israel, as well as how Israel's order for the agency to leave Gaza could devastate humanitarian efforts.

## **HAMAS USING ISRAELI HOSTAGE RELEASES TO RETAKE GAZA? IDF STAFF SERGEANT VET WARNS**

[CBN News](#) 30 Jan 2025 10min 56sec

Eight more hostages have been released by Hamas, including three Israelis and five Thai nationals. However, is Hamas using these Israeli hostage releases to reconquer Gaza? Is this deal worth it? Is this deal ensuring Hamas lives to terrorize another day? Former IDF Staff Sergeant Jonny Daniels is here to bring us the latest.

## **HAMAS'S HANDBOOK: TERRORISTS' PLAN TO 'TORTURE OR KILL' ISRAELI HOSTAGES**

[Times Radio](#) 23 Oct 2023 4min 41sec

A handbook recovered from Hamas fighters after the October 7th attacks details how Hamas plans to use hostages capture during attacks on Israeli settlements, says Graeme Wood, staff writer for The Atlantic

## **DOCTOR DESCRIBES ABUSES SUFFERED BY HAMAS HOSTAGES**

[CBS Sunday Morning](#) 17 Dec 2023 5min 18sec

About 100 Israeli hostages, kidnapped by Hamas during the terrorists' October 7 assault on Israel, have been released after more than 50 days in captivity. Dr. Itai Pessach (whose team at Sheba Medical Center, near Tel Aviv, interviewed and examined many of them) describes to CBS News' Lesley Stahl the harrowing physical and psychological abuses he says Hamas perpetrated upon its captives, from branding to rape, as well as the traumas that people on both sides of the border war are experiencing.

## **"PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE!" COUSIN OF RELEASED ISRAELI HOSTAGE DESCRIBES HER ORDEAL**

[TalkTV](#) 24 Jan 2025 10min 13sec

Tony Moss, second cousin to released Hamas hostage Emily Damari, joins Russell Quirk on Talk to give an update on her condition.

Moss talks about what he describes as the 'psychological torture' of awaiting her return, and says the family didn't know if she would do so dead or alive. Despite this fear, Emily did make it back and is said to be recovering from captivity very well.

## **ISRAELI HOSTAGES DEFIANCE ON HAMAS STAGE REVEALED**

[J-TV: Jewish Ideas](#) 29 Jan 2025 6min 22sec

Their courage is other-worldly.

[Transcript](#)

## **ISRAELI HOSTAGES REVEAL HORRORS OF HAMAS' BRUTAL TORTURE**

News on The 700 Club - February 3, 2025

[CBN News](#) 3 Feb 2025 14min 23sec

## **HAMAS YET TO RELEASE 20 MORE HOSTAGES IN PHASE 1, CHEATING ISRAEL DEAL? HOW WILL CAPTIVES WALK FREE?**

[TIMES NOW](#) 3 Feb 2025 6min 37sec

For now, the fragile Gaza ceasefire holds. 20 Israeli hostages yet to be released in Phase 1 of the deal. Ceasefire in the Gaza Strip took hold in January. 8 of the hostages listed for release in Phase 1 are dead. Who are the 20 hostages yet to be released in Phase 1? Ceasefire pact holds for now, but next phase will be harder. Will Gaza ceasefire survive beyond the first phase? Will the mighty IDF resume its campaign to destroy Hamas? Gaza ceasefire: Terms may change & the entire deal may sink. Will Israel exit the Gaza deal & bleed Hamas all over again? Middle East tinderbox - Gaza Strip in ruins... Destruction, food shortages and the spread of diseases. Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack triggered the Gaza war... The big question - With Iran weakened, can Hamas re-arm? Palestinian militants see no path to a win, time to give up?