



WEST BANK

(JUDEA & SAMARIA)

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StandWithUs

10 Facts About Israeli and Palestinian Communities

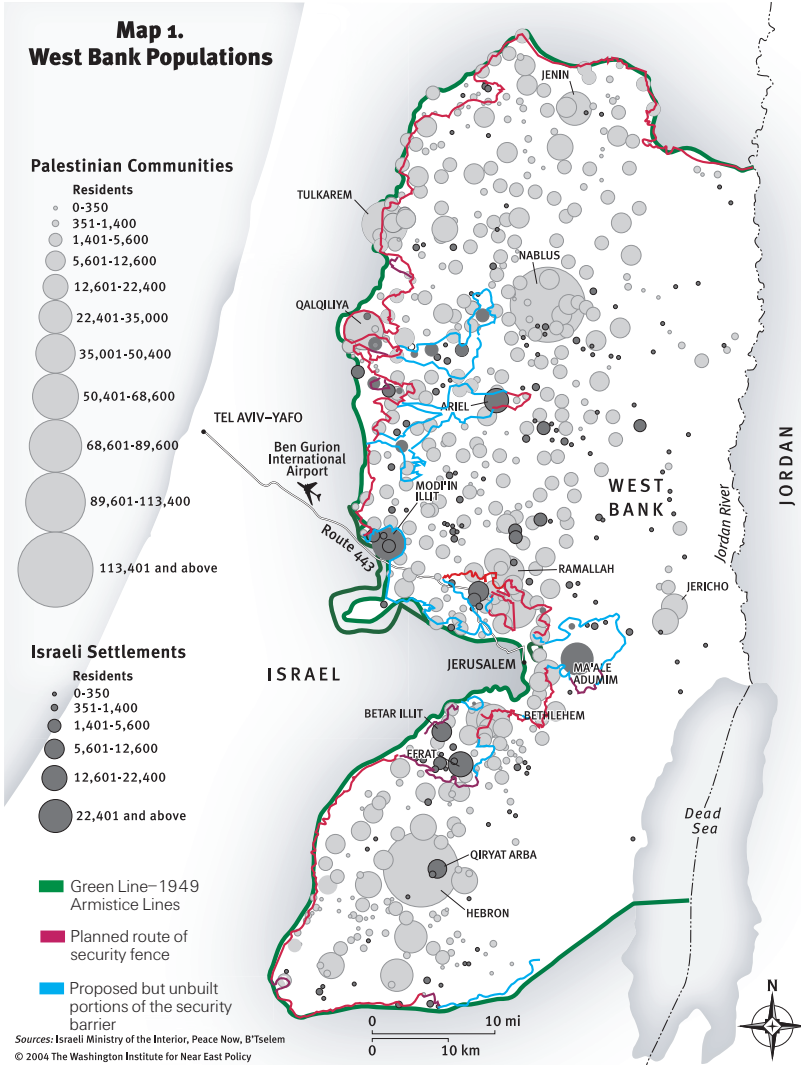
Jews and Arabs have lived in the West Bank for centuries. Today, the borders and status of the area remain to be determined in negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian governments.

- 1** ▶ The West Bank, known as Judea and Samaria for thousands of years, is part of the ancient homeland of the Jewish people. The word “Judaism” comes from this land - Judea. The area is home to ancient sites that are holy for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.
- 2** ▶ Jordan illegally annexed Judea and Samaria following the 1948 War and renamed it the “West Bank”. After Jordan attacked Israel in 1967, Israel took control of the territory in an act of self-defense. Israel offered to give up much of the West Bank for peace in 1968, but Jordan rejected the offer.
- 3** ▶ Historically, no Palestinian Arab state existed prior to the one proposed and discussed in negotiations between Israelis, Palestinians, and the international community. No internationally recognized border has ever separated Israel and the West Bank, because final borders are to be determined through negotiations.
- 4** ▶ As a result of the 1993 Oslo Peace Process, 95 percent of West Bank Palestinians live under the administration of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in land that covers 40 percent of the West Bank. Israel is administering 60 percent of the West Bank, known as “Area C,” until a final peace agreement is reached. This mostly empty area is home to less than 5 percent of all West Bank Palestinians.
- 5** ▶ The number of authorized West Bank Israeli communities has remained virtually the same since 1993, when Israel and the Palestinians signed the Oslo Accords. However, since 1993, the number of structures and people in many of the settlements has grown.
- 6** ▶ The built-up areas of Israeli settlements cover approximately 2 percent of all West Bank land.
- 7** ▶ Seventy-five to 80 percent of Israelis in the West Bank live close to or along the lines between Israel and the West Bank. Peace proposals have consistently focused on incorporating these communities into Israel, in return for portions of Israeli land being allocated to Palestinians.
- 8** ▶ Israel offered to give up nearly all of the West Bank in return for peace in 2000 and 2008. Palestinian leaders said no and made no counteroffers.
- 9** ▶ After waves of brutal suicide bombings by Palestinian terrorist groups in the West Bank, Israel put up checkpoints, built a security barrier, and took other measures to save the lives of its people. This has created hardships for Palestinian civilians, which persist because the conflict remains unresolved and Israeli civilians continue to face threats from the West Bank.
- 10** ▶ There are over 400,000 Jews and up to 2.9 million Palestinians living in the West Bank.

Israeli Settlements Cover Approximately 2 Percent of West Bank Land

The built-up areas of Israeli settlements cover 2 percent of West Bank land, according to Palestinian and Israeli sources.¹ The route of the security barrier incorporates between 5 and 8 percent of West Bank land. Per the Oslo Accords, Israel controls 60 percent of the West Bank (known as "Area C") and is responsible for security matters in another 20% ("Area B"). The Palestinian Authority has full control of 20% ("Area A") and civilian control over Area B.

Communities In The West Bank



¹ www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD244009 and www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LANGID=1&TMID=1116&FID=442&PID=0&IID=2995

Israeli Settlements Today

Sizeable Cities, Small Rural Communities, and Villages

Though the term “settlement” sometimes refers to makeshift dwellings, most Israeli settlements are fully developed communities where people conduct their daily lives. Some are cities with full urban infrastructures, while others are smaller communities that range from residential suburbs to agricultural kibbutzim (cooperative villages) with only a few hundred people. There are also “outposts,” which are not authorized by the Israeli government. The government considers these “outposts” illegal.



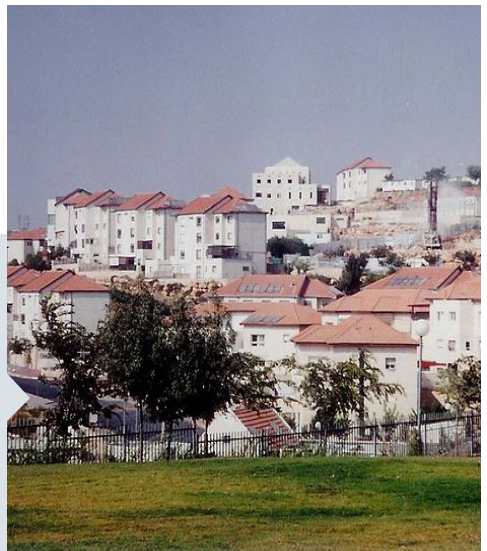
Top: Ma'ale Adumim, a 30-year-old residential city three miles northeast of Jerusalem, was built on vacant, unowned land. With its 40,000 residents (as of 2017), it is the second-largest Jewish community in the West Bank.



Left: Kibbutz Almog guest house. Almog, located in the arid Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea, has 24 families that developed cultivation techniques for salty soil and grow crops for export.

Right: Beitar Illit, located a half mile from the Green Line, was established in 1984.

It is named after the ancient Jewish city of Betar, originally located half a mile away. It is also part of Gush Etzion—a group of Jewish communities that were built in the 1920s, destroyed by Arab forces in the 1948 war, and then rebuilt after 1967.



The Debate Over Settlements

Settlements are controversial inside and outside of Israel. Opponents argue that settlements are an obstacle to peace and endanger Israel's survival as a Jewish and democratic state. Supporters argue that Jews have a moral, legal, historical, and/or religious right to live in all parts of their ancestral homeland and that settlements help Israeli security by giving Israel strategic depth in the West Bank.

Many world leaders and members of the international community cite the Fourth Geneva Convention to argue that the West Bank is occupied by Israel and settlements are illegal under international law. Numerous legal scholars dispute this however, including former Dean of Yale Law School Eugene Rostow, who argued that the "Jewish right of settlement in the area is equivalent in every way to the right of the existing Palestinian population to live there." This is based on the fact that the Palestine Mandate* was established to facilitate the creation of a Jewish national home in 1920, and no recognized state gained sovereignty over the West Bank since then. Jordan's illegal occupation of the territory from 1949 to 1967 was opposed by the international community, and Palestinian leaders rejected numerous offers to create a Palestinian state in return for peace.

Today, a small minority of Israeli Jews live in the West Bank along with the majority Palestinian population. Under international treaties, their governments are responsible for negotiating final borders as part of a peace agreement. Efforts to resolve this issue have focused on incorporating most or all of the settlement population into Israel in return for Israeli land that would go to the Palestinians. Israel has also suggested that just as there are 1.8 million Arab citizens of Israel, Jews who want to stay in the West Bank could be given citizenship in a Palestinian state. However, Palestinian leaders have said they will not allow a single Israeli to live in their state. Until these complex issues are resolved, the status of the West Bank will remain under dispute.



Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in the White House

*For more information about the Mandate, see two articles by Eugene W. Rostow, "Bricks and Stones, Settling for Leverage: Palestinian Autonomy" (1990) and "Resolved: Are the Settlements Legal? Israeli West Bank Policies" (1999), online at www.bjeny.org/254.htm.

Palestinian Communities

Currently, 95 to 98 percent of West Bank Palestinians live on 40 percent of West Bank land (Areas A and B). The remaining 60 percent of the land, called "Area C," is sparsely populated and under Israeli administration per the Oslo Accords. Israelis and Palestinians must negotiate how much and which sections of Area C will be added to territory that is governed by the PA.



Nablus, with 140,000 people, is one of the largest Palestinian cities in the West Bank and is surrounded by vacant, undeveloped land.



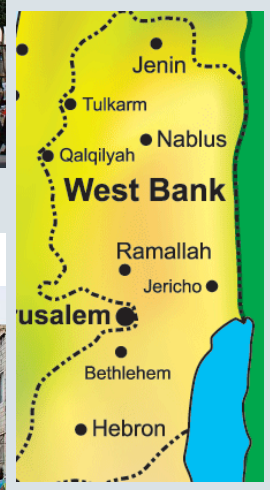
Sixty percent of the West Bank, called "Area C," is virtually vacant land and is inhabited by less than 5 percent of the West Bank Palestinian population. Israeli West Bank communities are all located in Area C.

Palestinian Cities

The Palestinians began governing themselves in 1994 when the PA was established. Today, most Palestinians live in cities like Nablus and Tulkarm and in other communities that are governed by the PA.¹



The Palestinian stock exchange is in Nablus.



Ramallah is the Palestinian political and economic center in the West Bank.

¹ *The CIA World Fact Book* reports that 74.3 percent of the Arab population in the West Bank is urban (2011). www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/we.html

West Bank Safety Measures

Until 2000, Israelis and Palestinians could move freely within the West Bank. This changed after Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat rejected a major peace offer and launched the second intifada—a brutal campaign of suicide bombings and terrorism against Israeli civilians.

Seeing no other way to prevent terrorists from coming in and murdering its people in the streets, Israel put up checkpoints, built a security barrier, and increased its counter-terrorist operations in the West Bank. This undeniably made the lives of ordinary Palestinians more difficult—an outcome Israel did not want. Unfortunately, racist terrorist groups forced Israel to choose between creating hardships for innocent Palestinians and saving the lives of innocent Israelis.

As the threat of terrorism has decreased, many checkpoints and other safety measures have been removed. When Israeli and Palestinian leaders reach a lasting peace agreement, the restrictions that remain can be lifted as well.

Water in the West Bank

Israel supplies water to Palestinians

Water is a precious commodity in this arid region, but Israel uses the same aquifers for its water today that it used before 1967, when it took control of the West Bank. Israeli settlements are connected to Israel's national water system and do not use the PA's water system.

Palestinian access to fresh water grew over 275 percent between 1967 and 2012.* Despite the scarcity of water, Israel agreed in the Oslo Accords to annually give 31 million cubic meters (mcm) of its own water to West Bank Palestinians to supplement their water resources. In fact, Israel has given up to three times more water each year than was agreed upon in the Oslo Accords.¹ Unfortunately some Palestinian communities still face water shortages, primarily because Palestinian leaders have failed to maintain their water infrastructure properly.

* From 66 million cubic meters (mcm) in 1967 to 248 mcm in 2012, according to the Israel Water Authority.

¹ Haim Gvirtzman, "The Israeli-Palestinian Water Conflict: An Israeli Perspective," Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, January 2012, at www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/MSPS94.pdf; Lauro Burkhart, "The Politicization of the Oslo Water Agreement," Missing Peace, 2012, at http://missingpeace.eu/en/wp-content/uploads/pmpeace1/2013/01/MT_Lauro-Burkart.pdf

Settlements, Conflict, and the Peace Process

Settlements are not the cause of the conflict or a primary obstacle to peace.

The chart below correlates progress and setbacks in peace efforts with the number of Israeli settlers and settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.¹

Year	Israeli Settlements	Events
1949–1967	Despite 0 settlements in the West Bank and 0 in Gaza...	465 Israelis were murdered in terrorist attacks. Arab armies mobilized 250,000 troops and, in an act of war, cut off Israel's international shipping, starting the 1967 war.
1979–1994	Despite 120 settlements in the West Bank and 17 in Gaza (population: 136,109)...	The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty (1979) was signed, and Israel uprooted all 7,000 Israelis from settlements in Sinai. The PLO and Israel signed the Oslo Accords (1993). The Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty (1994) was signed.
2000–2004	Despite 123 settlements in the West Bank and 17 in Gaza (population: 246,000)...	Peace negotiations were in progress: Israel offered to uproot most settlements for peace. The Palestinian response: the second intifada: Over 1,000 Israelis were killed; approximately 3,500 Palestinians were killed.
2005–Present	Despite 0 settlements in Gaza...	Israel uprooted all Gaza settlements. Hamas took over and launched over 17,000 rockets and mortars into Israel

Security concerns play a major role in peace negotiations.



Photographer: Hagai Nativ, courtesy of Dr. Martin Sherman, academic director of the Jerusalem Summit

The Palestinian town of Rantis is 4.3 miles from Israel's main international airport. If terrorist groups like Hamas or Islamic Jihad take control, they could attack from the West Bank, with Israel's most important infrastructure and largest population centers in short rocket range.

¹ Mitchell Bard, "Palestinian Policy Mistakes Fuel Settlement Growth," at www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/69_settlegrowth.html; Settlements and population in West Bank from B'Tselem at www.btselem.org/Download/200205_Land_Grab_Eng.doc; Casualties from www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/osloterr.html and www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2000/1/Terrorism%20deaths%20in%20Israel%20-%201920-1999

Reductions in Violence Have Led to Prosperity Despite Israeli Settlements

The West Bank has experienced periods of prosperity, including booms in construction. During the 1970s, the West Bank and Gaza became the world's fourth-fastest-growing economy, ahead of Singapore and Hong Kong, and one of the world's fastest-growing populations.¹ The violent intifada (2000 to 2005) brought economic reversals, but as the Palestinian Authority took measures to control terrorist groups, reduce official anti-Israel incitement, and cooperate with Israel, prosperity began returning to the West Bank.



Jenin—"Herbawi Home Center mall, a new luxury establishment on the city's outskirts. The five-story building is filled with deluxe, foreign-made products....The profit forecasts for the project have been so favorable that the owner plans to open four more shops in the West Bank."²



Rawabi, the first planned Palestinian community in the West Bank



Children play in the swimming pool at the Mukhmas Funland amusement park in Ramallah, July 2007.
(Photo by Rachael Strecher/AP)

Every city in the West Bank has a pool or a recreational complex, and Ramallah has more than 10. In Ramallah, new fitness gyms opened up regularly in 2006, and a new five-star hotel opened in 2010.³ West Bank cities are "bursting with life....The shops are brimming with merchandise, and the markets are teeming with people," *Al-Monitor* reported in 2013.⁴ Still, serious economic challenges remain, and it is clear that the West Bank will not be able to reach its full potential without a peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians.

¹ CAMERA, "Post-War Economic Growth in the West Bank and Gaza," *The Six Day War*, at www.sixdaywar.org/content/growth.asp

² Avi Issacharoff, "Luxury Palestinian Mall Signals Transformation of 'terrorist capital,'" *Haaretz*, June 21, 2009

³ Avi Issacharoff, "West Bank Swimming Pools..." *Haaretz*, August 8, 2007; Ischaroff, "Setting Aside Politics to Lift Weights," *Haaretz*, September 10, 2006; and NPR, "Ramallah: West Bank's Boom Town," May 28, 2009

⁴ Shlomi Eldar, "Visiting Nablus Since Last Intifada Shows Renewed City," *Al-Monitor*, March 12, 2013

Creating the First Palestinian State in History

In 1994, during the Oslo Accords, Israel facilitated the establishment of the first Palestinian government in history, the Palestinian Authority.

Historically, no Palestinian Arab state had ever existed. After the ancient Jewish state fell in the first century, no other nation arose in its place. The region was ruled by a series of empires (Pagan, Christian, and Muslim). During the 1948 war, Egypt and Jordan invaded and occupied the West Bank and Gaza but did not establish a Palestinian state. Even the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) originally excluded the West Bank and Gaza from its territorial demands when it was created in 1964, adding them only after the 1967 war.



PA President Mahmoud Abbas

Today the Palestinian Authority governs 95 to 98 percent of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, and Hamas governs all Palestinians living in Gaza.

If it agrees to withdraw from most of the West Bank in future negotiations, Israel will be giving up portions of its ancient homeland and some of Judaism's holiest sites so that Palestinians can create an independent state for the first time in history. Nevertheless, Israel has repeatedly offered to do so in return for peace.

Hebron: One of Judaism's holiest sites, located in the West Bank.



Cave of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs in Hebron:

According to Jewish tradition, the Hebrew patriarch Abraham bought the cave and surrounding land from a local tribal chief. It is believed that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives are buried here. The cave is Judaism's second holiest site after the Western Wall and Temple Mount, and Jews have prayed here for thousands of years.

Imagine Peace



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Imagine peace in a Middle East where Israel and her neighbors join forces to become a major player on the global stage. With shared technology and resources, the possibilities are endless. But more important is a future filled with peace and prosperity for our children and for generations to come.

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