

Israel's Timeline: From Ancient to Contemporary Times

A Brief Modern History of Arab-Israeli Relations

1897 - Present

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Date	Event	Description
1897	First Zionist Congress	Organized by Theodor Herzl, the modern Zionist movement was officially founded in 1897 in Basel Switzerland. Convinced that the tragedy of the long history of oppression and persecution of Jews would not be solved until Jews could live in a land of their own, these early Zionists committed themselves to a national liberation movement of the Jewish people by a return to their ancient homeland, Israel.
1915	McMahon-Hussein Correspondence	Before World War I, promises were made to both Arabs and Jews regarding states of their own in the Middle East. In a letter to Sherif Hussein, British High Commissioner McMahon promised to grant independence to Arabs in the Region.
1917	Balfour Declaration	The British Balfour Declaration promised to create a Jewish homeland in the region comprising the ancient Land of Israel. <i>"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their</i>

		<p><i>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></p>
<p>1920-1947</p>	<p>British Mandate Established</p>	<p>After World War I, the League of Nations divided the region between the British and the French. Britain was given the Palestine Mandate on land comprising modern-day Israel, the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jordan. The Mandate incorporated the Balfour Declaration. But, in 1921, Britain partitioned the original mandate and created Transjordan east of the Jordan River. In 1922, Britain rescinded provisions dealing with Jewish settlement in the Transjordan section of the Palestine Mandate. Thus, the area available for a Jewish homeland was significantly reduced. During the British Mandate period, idealistic Jewish Zionists came to develop the land as well as to escape persecution in Europe that preceded the Holocaust. During the same period, the Arab population nearly doubled from natural increase and immigration from neighboring Arab countries. The Jewish population formed community organizations, labor unions, political bodies, and built roads, schools, hospitals and other infrastructure for an independent state. Arab resistance to Jewish immigration grew causing the British to shut down Jewish immigration.</p>
<p>1939-1945</p>	<p>World War II and the Holocaust</p>	<p>Nazi Germany attacked and conquered most of Europe. Preceding and during the war, the Nazis carried out genocide against Jews, known as the Holocaust. This resulted in the murder of 6 million Jews. Although the Jewish population of Palestine gave military support to Britain during the war, the British refused to allow the Jews to flee the Holocaust and enter Palestine. After the war, Jewish resistance was conducted against the British policy of continued denial to the Jewish displaced persons, the remnant of European Jews who had survived the Holocaust and had no where else to go.</p>
<p>1947</p>	<p>U.N. Partition Plan</p>	<p>In 1947, in the midst of growing tensions between Arabs, Jews and the British, Britain announced its plan to pull out of the region and turned the question of sovereignty over to the United Nations. On November 29, 1947 the U.N. General Assembly voted to strike a compromise by partitioning Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state and to internationalize the city of Jerusalem. Although it was less than they hoped for, the Jews accepted the partition, but the Arabs in Palestine and the Arab states rejected the partition. Immediately after the U.N. partition vote, Arabs in Palestine, seeking to block Jewish statehood, attacked Jews causing a civil war.</p>

1948	1948 War	<p>On May 14, 1948, after Great Britain withdrew from Palestine, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, proclaimed the independence of the new State of Israel. The following day, Arab armies from Egypt, Transjordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq attacked the new Jewish state. This was the first Arab-Israeli war, called by the victorious Israelis the "War of Independence." As a result of the 1948 war, approximately 700,000 Arabs fled from the areas over which Israel obtained jurisdiction and became refugees. The Arabs who remained became Israeli citizens and now comprise approximately 20% of Israel's population. Also, in the aftermath of the war, over 900,000 Jews were forced to flee Arab countries, with about two-thirds of them being absorbed by Israel. As a result of its defensive war, Israel obtained twenty percent more land than the U.N. partition allotted. Transjordan captured the West Bank and East Jerusalem (the Old City,) later annexed them, and officially changed its name to Jordan. Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip. Jews were evicted from the Old City and not allowed access to their holy sites there, most of which were destroyed by the Jordanian army. The Arab countries would not enter into a peace agreement with Israel. Armistice boundaries were established and remained until 1967.</p>
1967	Six-Day War	<p>In May of 1967, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq moved their armies to Israel's borders. Egypt closed the international water way, the Straits of Tiran, to all Israeli shipping, an act of war according to international law. These actions were accompanied by publicly stated intentions of Arab leaders to destroy Israel. After weeks of fruitless diplomacy at the U.N., Israel launched a preemptive strike against the Arab armies mobilized on its borders, and a six-day war ensued between Israel and Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq. As a result of the war, Israel captured the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. Israel removed the barriers in the Old City and allowed all religions free access. Israel retained control of these lands pending peace treaties with the Arab parties.</p>

<p>1967-1970</p>	<p>Attrition Battles</p>	<p>After the defeat of the Arab armies, Yasser Arafat assumed leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (P.L.O.), founded in 1964 under Egyptian sponsorship. The Palestinian National Covenant called for the destruction of Israel. Between 1967 and 1970, Israeli citizens and military were subject to ongoing attacks from terrorists based in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt in the “War of Attrition”. Numerous airplane hijackings and terrorist attacks were also carried out outside of Israel. During this time, the U.N. attempted to negotiate a peace agreement between Arab countries and Israel over the territories captured by Israel in the 1967 war. Israel maintained that Jerusalem would remain a unified city, with all religions having access to their holy sites, and was open to returning other territories in exchange for peace and recognition. In spite of Israel’s willingness to enter into peace talks, Arab nations met in Khartoum, Sudan in 1967, and declared their unwillingness to negotiate with, or recognize, Israel. At the same time, the Israeli government approved the building of settlements in the Sinai, Gaza and the West Bank territories to act as security outposts and to prevent attacks on major population centers. Some Jews settled this newly acquired territory for religious reasons believing that the strong biblical Jewish connection to the land gives them the same right to live there as elsewhere in the land of Israel. In 1970-71, after an attempt by the PLO to overthrow Jordan’s King Hussein, the Jordanian army managed to evict the PLO. Calling the event “Black September”, the PLO moved its base of operations to Lebanon.</p>
<p>1973</p>	<p>The October War or Yom Kippur War</p>	<p>In 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year. After initial Arab military successes, Israel pushed back the attack. Following the war, Israel retained the territories captured in 1967, but withdrew from territories it entered during the October War. For many Israelis, the 1973 war reinforced the strategic importance of the buffer zones gained in 1967. Israel and Egypt eventually entered into an interim agreement brokered by the United States whereby Israel withdrew from parts of the western Sinai.</p>
<p>1978</p>	<p>Camp David Accords</p>	<p>In 1978, Menachem Begin of Israel and Anwar al-Sadat of Egypt signed agreements in Camp David, paving the way to the peace treaty signed in 1979.</p>

1979	Egypt and Israel Sign a Peace Agreement	In 1979, Egypt became the first Arab country to officially recognize Israel and to sign a peace treaty with the Jewish state. Israel returned to Egypt the entire Sinai peninsula it had captured in 1967, removing Jewish families from their homes established there. This agreement became a model for Israel's "land for peace" policy.
1982	The 1982 Lebanon War	In 1982, after P.L.O. units in Lebanon increasingly attacked the north of Israel, Israel launched an attack on the P.L.O. and Syrian troops stationed in Lebanon. The Israeli army prevailed in the battles. As a result of the war, the P.L.O. leadership was expelled from Lebanon to Tunisia. After Israel became drawn into a Lebanese civil war, Israeli public opinion led Israel to withdraw most of its troops from Lebanon in June 1985. Until 2000, Israel maintained a military presence in a section of southern Lebanon inhabited by the terrorist organization Hezbollah. The Israeli troops' mission was to contain Hezbollah and thus to create a buffer zone between Lebanon and the north of Israel.
1987-1993	The First Intifada	In 1987, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank engaged in an uprising, or <i>intifada</i> , against Israeli control of these territories. They were rebelling against what they called repressive Israeli treatment in these territories it was administering. Israeli citizens were targeted and killed. Israel responded with increased military force in the territories, in an effort to put a stop to the violence.
1993	The Oslo Accords	The Oslo Accords were a set of agreements signed in 1993 between Israel and the P.L.O. The Oslo Accords created the Palestinian Authority, which had responsibility for administering territories that would be placed under its control. The accords called on Israel to gradually withdraw its military presence from the Gaza Strip and areas in the West Bank, while leaving Israel the right to defend itself and its citizens, including those living in the territories. For the first time the P.L.O. formally recognized Israel, renounced violence, and publicly expressed acceptance of peaceful coexistence with Israel. Israel also formally recognized the P.L.O. as the representative of the Palestinian people. The Oslo Accords were intended to be an interim agreement that would lead to a permanent settlement with Israel giving up land in return for peace and security. However, they have never been fully implemented.

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1994	Israel and Jordan Sign a Peace Treaty	In 1994, after successful U.S.-led negotiations, Jordan became the second Arab country to recognize Israel, and the two countries signed a peace treaty. Trade, business relations, tourism, cultural exchanges, and scientific cooperation between the two nations have increased since the agreement was signed, albeit at a slow pace.
1999-2000	The Camp David Peace Process	American President Bill Clinton brought Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to Camp David in an attempt to have them reach agreement on a peace treaty. Although the negotiations were carried out in secret, participants President Clinton and Dennis Ross reported that Barak agreed to almost all of Arafat's demands including an independent Palestinian state with a capital in East Jerusalem. However, Arafat did not accept the deal and instead of two states living side by side in peace, further conflict ensued.

<p>2000- Present</p>	<p>The Second Intifada</p>	<p>In September 2000, Ariel Sharon, a retired Israeli general and leader of the party in opposition to Prime Minister Barak, visited the Temple Mount, a site revered by Jews worldwide as the site of the second Temple and by Muslims as the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Palestinians instigated riots at the holy site, charging that Sharon's visit was a provocation. The riots marked the beginning of the second Intifada, known to Palestinians as the Al-Aqsa Intifada. This conflict, markedly more violent than the first Intifada, has caused great bloodshed and suffering on both sides. Increased numbers of Palestinian suicide bombings have killed hundreds of Israeli civilians and injured thousands. Aimed at destroying Palestinian terrorist infrastructure in response to the bombings, Israel carried out military actions in the territories which resulted in terrorists being killed as well as many civilian casualties. As of August 2008, the Second Intifada has not officially ended, although the violence has been greatly reduced.</p>
<p>2002 – present</p>	<p>Israel Begins Constructing a Security Barrier</p>	<p>In 2002, Israel decided to build a security barrier to separate the Israeli population from Palestinian terrorist operations in the West Bank. Since its construction, the barrier has been shown to be very effective in reducing the number of suicide bombings in Israel that originate in the West Bank (by about 90%).</p>
<p>2002</p>	<p>Arab Peace Initiative is Proposed</p>	<p>In March 2002, then Crown Prince, now King, Abdullah, of Saudi Arabia, proposed a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict which was endorsed by all members of the Arab League. The proposal offered Israel peace in return for Israeli withdrawal from all territories captured in the 1967 war, Israeli recognition of an independent Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a "just solution" for Palestinian refugees. The Arab League endorsed the proposal again at the Riyadh Summit in 2007. The proposal is viewed by some as a major breakthrough because, previously, most Arab nations had ruled out peace, recognition, or even negotiations with Israel. Israel has welcomed the proposal, but has reservations about several elements of it. Negotiations have not ensued because the Saudis have demanded that as a pre-condition of meeting with Israel, Israel must first withdraw to the 1967 borders. This pre-condition is unacceptable to Israel.</p>

<p>2003</p>	<p>The Roadmap for Peace is Proposed</p>	<p>The Roadmap for Peace is a plan for peace that was proposed in 2003 by the “Quartet”: the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations. The Roadmap involves reciprocal steps by the Israelis and Palestinians with the ultimate goal of an independent Palestinian state and a secure Israel. The Roadmap is divided into three phases, but has never progressed past the first. The basic principles of the Roadmap, however, were reaffirmed at the Annapolis Conference in 2007.</p>
<p>2005</p>	<p>Israel Disengages from Gaza</p>	<p>In 2005, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon began a process that led Israel to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip and four West Bank settlements as part of a larger policy of “disengagement,” or the separation of Israel from Palestinian territories. The Gaza disengagement was very controversial domestically, because Israeli soldiers were required to uproot Israeli citizens who wanted to remain in their communities in Gaza. Nevertheless, Israel decided to remove itself from this territory so that the Palestinians living there could govern themselves. Since Israel withdrew from Gaza, the number of rockets fired by terrorists from Gaza into Israel has increased dramatically.</p>
<p>2006</p>	<p>Hamas is Elected</p>	<p>In 2006, Palestinians elected a majority of Hamas members to the Palestinian Authority’s legislature over the P.L.O.’s Fatah party that had previously been in power and had conducted negotiations with Israel. Fatah controls the executive branch while Hamas controls the legislature of the Palestinian Authority. Hamas is identified as a terrorist organization by most Western countries. In its charter, Hamas calls for the destruction of Israel and for the killing of Jews. The group has claimed responsibility for hundreds of terrorist attacks. Israel has refused to conduct negotiations with a terrorist organization aimed at its destruction. Israeli and Fatah leaders have continued to negotiate. In 2007, Hamas carried out a coup and took over control of Gaza. Today, there are, in effect, two Palestinian governments: Hamas in Gaza and the Executive officers of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah in the West Bank.</p>

2006	The 2006 Lebanon War	<p>In 2006, Hezbollah, a terrorist organization based in Southern Lebanon, crossed the Lebanon-Israel border and attacked an Israeli army unit, killing three soldiers and kidnapping and then killing two more. At the same time, Hezbollah began to launch rockets over northern Israel. Israel responded with air strikes, an air and naval blockade, and a ground assault aimed at destroying the Hezbollah terrorist infrastructure. Because Hezbollah operations are based in Southern Lebanon's civilian neighborhoods, Israel's retaliation resulted in loss of civilian lives as well as property damage. Approximately one million Lebanese fled their homes in southern Lebanon, and about one million Israelis fled their homes in northern Israel or took refuge in bomb shelters. Hostilities officially ended 33 days later with a U.N.-brokered ceasefire. Both Israel and Lebanon are rebuilding their countries in the aftermath of the war. Hezbollah has rearmed with over 40,000 rockets smuggled into Lebanon.</p>
2007	Annapolis Conference	<p>On November 27, 2007, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice organized a conference between Israel and the Palestinian Authority's Fatah leaders which was attended by many Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and Syria. The Annapolis conference marked the first time that a two state solution was publicly referred to as the mutually agreed-upon framework for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nonetheless, Israelis and Palestinians have not reached a formal agreement, and conflict continues.</p>