

The Arab-Israeli conflict is a struggle between the Jewish state of Israel and the Arabs of the Middle East. It has continued for many decades and there has been no peaceful solution so far.

FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO 1948

Many religions look upon the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea as their homeland. This historic land is called Palestine. Before the birth of Christ, the Jews also lived here. Later on, the Romans invaded the area and made it Christian. The Jews were driven away and had to live in other parts of the world.

Muslims also think of Palestine as a holy place. In the Middle Ages the land was ruled by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire and more and more Arabs came to Palestine.

In the middle of the 19th century, Jews started to think about coming back to Palestine. This idea was called Zionism. By the beginning of the 20th century, more and more Jews came back to Palestine and started a new life there.

At the end of World War I the Turks were defeated and Great Britain ruled Palestine. The British helped the Jews and wanted to create a new country for them. During the Second World War about 6 million Jews were murdered by German Nazis in the Holocaust. Those who survived had no place to go.

In 1947, the United Nations decided to divide Palestine into two states: Israel for the Jews and Palestine for the Arabs. The Jews accepted the plan but the Arabs didn't want the Jews to take over their country.

When the British left Palestine in 1948, Israel declared its independence. At once, Arab countries started to attack the new state but Israel fought back and won. It also expanded its territory and occupied more land than the UN gave it. Other Arab countries—Egypt, Syria and Jordan—took over the Arab part of Palestine. Over 700,000 Palestinians became refugees. Most of them fled to Israel's neighbours.

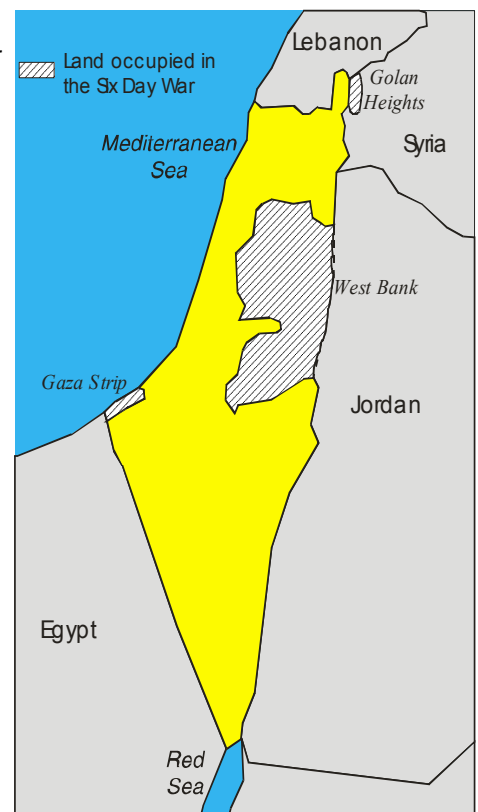
FROM 1948 TO THE PRESENT

Since the war of 1948, Israel has had to fight three more wars against its Arab neighbours. In 1956 Egypt took control of the Suez Canal from Great Britain and France. Together with Israel, these two countries attacked Egypt and, for a short time, Israel took control of the Sinai peninsula.

In May 1967, Egypt's president Nasser prepared for another attack on Israel. He closed Israel's only route to the sea and soldiers from all the Arab countries marched to Israel's border. However, Israel attacked first and surprised its enemies. In a war that lasted only six days, Israel defeated the Arabs and took over some of their land:

- the Golan Heights from Syria
- the West Bank from Jordan
- the Gaza Strip from Egypt.

It also took control of East Jerusalem.



The fourth and last war took place in October 1973. It surprised Israel because Egypt and Syria attacked on Yom Kippur, one of Israel's **holiest** days. Israel fought back and **defeated** the Arabs once again. They took control of the Sinai **Peninsula**, but gave it back to Egypt two years later.

In the late 1970s Egypt saw that it could not win a war against Israel, so it became the first Arab country to make peace with the Jewish state.

In 1982 Israel **invaded** Lebanon, its northern neighbour. The PLO, an organisation thought fought for the **rights** of the Palestinians , **continued** to attack Israel from southern Lebanon. Israel's soldiers stayed in Lebanon until 2000.

Towards the end of the 1980's Palestinians in the **occupied lands** started to protest against Israel's **rule**. This was known as the first Intifada. There were demonstrations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Arabs stopped working for Israelis and some towns stopped paying **taxes** to the Israeli **government**. Israel had to use more and more **force** to get these territories under control.



Israeli soldiers patrol South Lebanon in 1982

PEACE TALKS OF THE 1990S

At the beginning of the 1990s, the PLO **realized** that its only hope was to make peace with Israel. In 1993 an **agreement** was **signed** between the PLO and Israel. The PLO **recognised** Israel's **right** to exist and Israel promised to give back some of the land that it took away in 1967. It also **agreed** to **talks** on a Palestinian state. By the end of the century, more and more land was given back to the Palestinians and they also set up their own **government** in these areas.

But when the peace talks slowed down in 2000, the second Intifada began. Palestinian **suicide bombers** started blowing themselves up in Israeli towns , killing many Israelis . In return, Israel's army took control of most parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Today, **lasting** peace is farther away than ever before, because there are **extremists** on both sides who don't want to live together peacefully.



Yitzhak Rabin, Bill Clinton and Yassir Arafat sign an historic agreement in Oslo in 1993

THE NEW MILLENNIUM

During the second Intifada Israel sent soldiers to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. They started building a **fence** around the **occupied** territories.

In 2006 Hezbollah, an extremist group, took control of Lebanon, Israeli soldiers were kidnapped and **rocket attacks** were **launched** against northern Israel. As **retaliation** Israel **invaded** Lebanon to stop the attacks.

In the Gaza Strip Hamas, another **paramilitary** organization, has become more powerful and today controls the Gaza Strip. It started **launching attacks** against Israel. Israel reacted by sending more troops into the area.



Second Intifada between 2000 and 2005

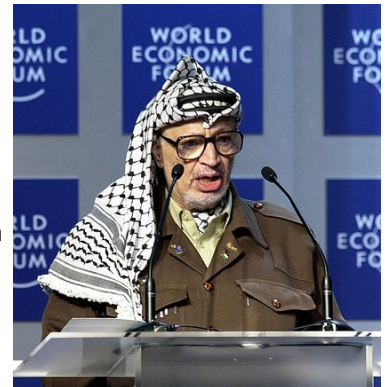
THE PLO

The Palestine Liberation Organisation is a political group that fights for the rights of the Arab people in Palestine. Its main goal is to create an independent state for these people. Today there are more than 4 million people who live in the lands that are occupied by Israel.

The PLO is made up of people from all social classes—doctors, lawyers, teachers and , of course, people from the working classes. There are also radical members, who hate the Israelis and don't want to live in peace with them.

The PLO was founded in 1964 . Yassir Arafat was their leader for over 35 years. He died in 2004. The organisation has never had a real home. Over the years they have been in Jordan and Lebanon, but they are not very welcome anywhere.

Today, the PLO controls some parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip , where they also have their own government. In the past few years Arafat's successor Mahmoud Abbas has had problems controlling groups that want to destroy Israel. Radical Palestinians put bombs on their bodies and blow themselves up in crowded areas.



Yassir Arafat—Founder of the PLO

THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

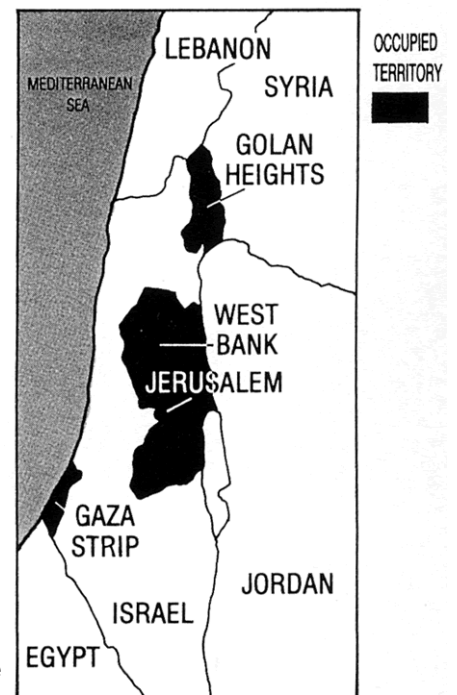
The Gaza Strip is a very narrow piece of land on the Mediterranean coast—where Egypt and Israel meet. The land is flat and sandy. It originally belonged to Egypt but the Israelis captured it in 1967 and were in power there until 1994. Most people are very poor Arab refugees. Some of them go to Israel to work there every day.

The West Bank lies between Israel and Jordan , west of the Jordan River. About 2 million people live here. Most of them are Arabs but when Israel took over the area after the Six day war in 1967 they built many settlements for Jewish people. The region is hilly and only about one fourth is farmland. The eastern part falls down to the Jordan valley. Much of the West Bank is dry and doesn't get a lot of rain. The Dead Sea lies in the south-eastern corner of the West Bank. It is the lowest place on the earth's surface—about 400 metres below sea level.

In 1994, Israel started to pull back its troops from the West Bank. The area came under control of the PLO, which patrolled the area with its own police.

When violence started to erupt after 2000, Israel sent its army back to protect the Jewish towns there.

The Golan Heights is a hilly area in the south-western corner of Syria. It overlooks the Jordan Valley. Up to 1967 it was a part of Syria, but in the Six Day War Israel captured the Golan Heights because the Syrian army was threatening Israeli settlements near the border. Today, Syria wants this region back and has said there can be no peace with Israel unless it returns this land.



Israeli settlement in the West Bank

JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is the capital and one of the **holiest** cities of Israel. For **centuries** Jerusalem has been the home of Christians, Jews and Muslims. About 70 % of the city's population are Jews. The rest are Muslims and a small number are Christians. There are three holy days in the city. Muslims **celebrate** their day of rest on Friday, Jews on Saturday and Christians on Sunday.

The city has a **population** of about 600, 000. It lies 65 kilometres east of the Mediterranean Sea. In 1948 Jerusalem became a **divided** city when Israel took control of the western part. Israel took over the whole city in the Six Day War of 1967 . Today , both Israelis and Palestinians **look upon** Jerusalem as their capital.

THE 3 PARTS OF THE CITY

The city is **divided** into three parts :

1. The Old City is the historical heart. It is about one square kilometre big and lies in the eastern part of the city. It has stone walls around it that are up to 12 metres high. Many **gates** lead from the outside into the Old City : the Jaffa Gate, St. Stephen's Gate, Damascus Gate and others.
The Old City is **divided** into four neighbourhoods : the Armenian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim quarters. The roads are made of **cobblestone** and haven't been changed for centuries. Markets with small shops can be found **throughout** the Old City. They sell **jewels**, food, souvenirs and other **items**. The central place of the city is the Dome of the Rock, a **shrine** that stands on **Temple Mount**.
2. West Jerusalem is the most modern part of the city. It has **broad** roads with fashion shops, hotels and restaurants, as well as office buildings.
3. East Jerusalem , north of the Old City, is the place where most of Jerusalem's Arabs live. The houses are very old and sometimes **shabby**.

Jerusalem has many **mosques**, **synagogues** and churches which show that religion is important in daily life. The Jews' holiest **shrine** is the Wailing Wall. Many Jews go there and pray . Other Jewish sites are King David's **tomb** and the **Tomb** of the Prophets.



Dome of the Rock



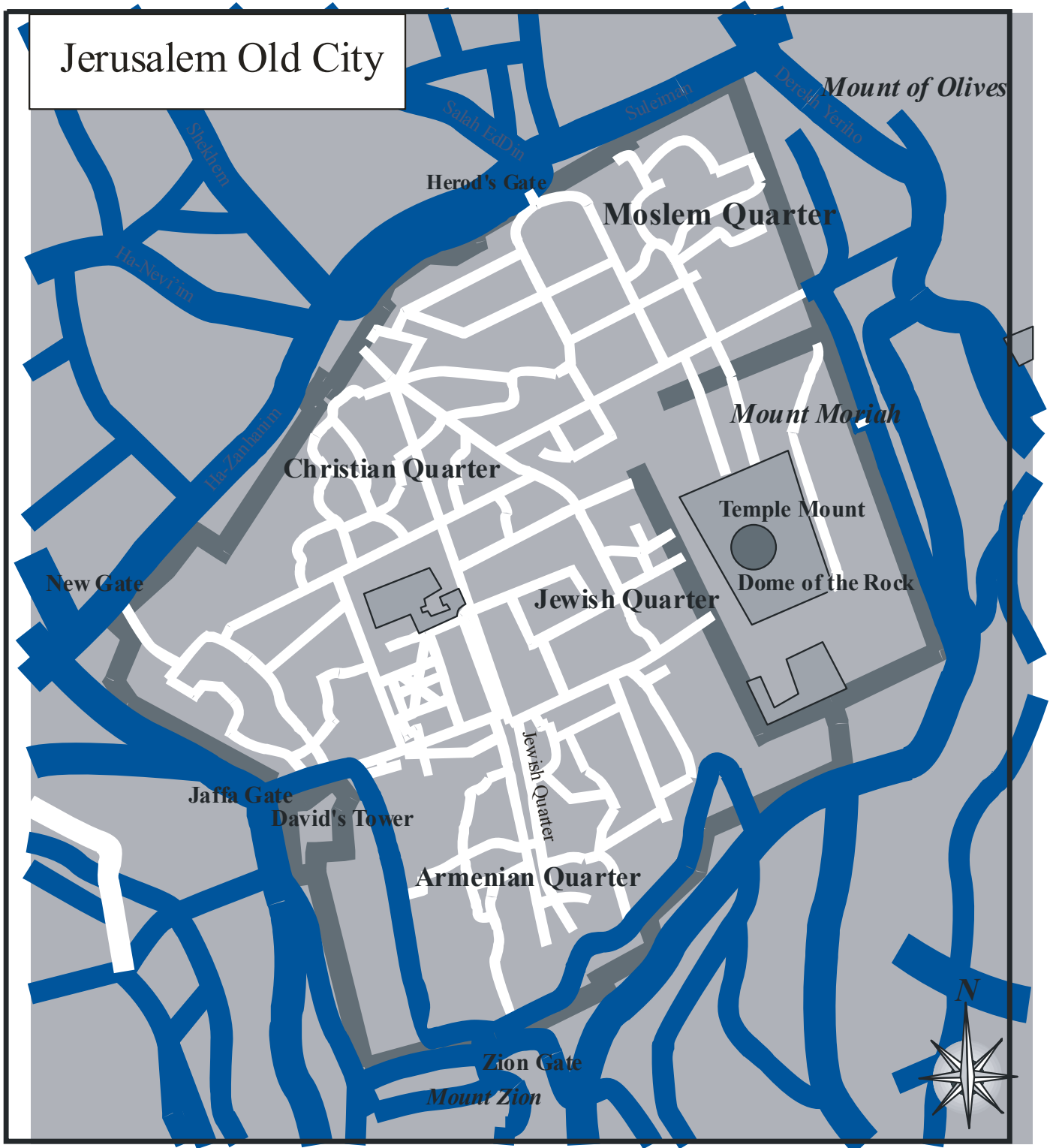
Damascus Gate



Arab Market in the Old City



Panoramic view of Jerusalem



TIMELINE

1947
The United Nations decides to divide Palestine into two states.

1948
The British leave Palestine. Israel declares its independence. The first Arab—Israeli war begins.

1956
Second Arab—Israeli war .
Britain, France and Israel fight against Egypt because of the Suez Canal.

1964
The PLO is founded.

1967
Six Day War—Israel wins and occupies the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights.
It starts building villages and towns for new settlers in these areas.

1973
Yom Kippur War.
Israel defeats the Arabs and occupies the Sinai Peninsula.

1979
Israel and Egypt make peace at Camp David, USA.

1982
Israel invades southern Lebanon and keeps its army there for 18 years.

1987
First intifada begins in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

1993
Israel and the PLO sign a peace agreement in Washington.

1994
Israel starts pulling out of the occupied territories. The PLO starts building up a police force.

2000
Second intifada begins.

2006
 Hamas wins election in Gaza and takes over power.



WORDS

accept = to take something that someone gives you

agree = to say yes

agreement = when two or more people, parties or countries promise to do something

belong = own, have, if something is yours

border = the line between two countries

broad = wide

capture = to get control of land that belonged to an enemy during a war

celebrate = to have fun and enjoy yourself

century = a period of one hundred years

cobblestone = small round stones that are put into a road

continue = to go on or keep on ...

decade = a period of 10 years

declare = to say officially

defeat = to win against someone

destroy = to damage something so that it cannot exist any longer

divide = to separate into two or more parts

driven away = they had leave

enemy = someone who hates you and wants to fight against you

erupt = to break out

expand = to become bigger or larger

fence = a structure made out of wood or metal to keep people out of your land

fly–fled = to leave a place very quickly because it is dangerous

force = power or strength

found–founded = to start an organisation

gate = the part of a wall that you can open to let people in or out

goal = aim, what you want to achieve

government = the people who rule a country

Holocaust = the killing of millions of Jews during World War II

holy = connected with God and religion

in power = in control

independence = political freedom

invade = to take control of a town or country with an army

item = things or objects

jewels = very expensive stones, like diamonds

launch = start

lawyer = someone who has the job of telling people about the rules in a country or defending them in court

look upon = watch, observe

mosque = a building in which Muslims pray

narrow = opposite of wide

occupied lands = the parts of the Middle East that are controlled by the Israelis but do not belong to them

occupy = to be in control of something

Ottoman Empire = a large country with its centre in Turkey. It controlled large parts of Eastern Europe and North Africa until World War I

paramilitary = an illegal group that is organized like an army

patrol = to check a place to see if there is no danger

peninsula = a piece of land with water on three sides

population = the number of people in a city or country

prepare = to make plans

protect = defend, guard

pull back = get out of

realize = start to understand

recognise = accept

refugee = someone who has to leave his home country during a conflict or a war

retaliation = to attack someone who has done something bad against you

rights = things that you are legally allowed to do

rocket attack = to fight against someone with a weapon that is fired like a big gun

route = a way between two places that ships, planes, buses etc. use

rule = to govern a country

sea level = the average height of the sea; used for measuring mountains and other places

settlement = a group of houses and building where people live, mostly in places where not many people have lived before

shabby = they are in a bad condition

shore = the land that is along the part of an ocean = (the same as "coast" or "beach")

shrine = a holy place that people visit to pray

sign = to put your name under a document or a piece of paper

social classes = the organization of people in groups depending on what jobs they have and how much they earn

solution = answer to a problem

struggle = fight

suicide bombers = people kill other people when they put bombs on their bodies and blow themselves up

surface = the top part of something

survive = to live on after a dangerous situation

synagogue = a building where Jewish people meet to pray

talks = discussions between groups or governments

tax = money that everybody has to pay to his government

Temple Mount = famous tourist attraction in Jerusalem

threaten = to say that you want to kill or hurt somebody

throughout = in every part of

tomb = a stone object above or below the ground in which a dead person lies

troops = soldiers

violence = fighting