

# **“THE PALESTINIAN ISRAELI CONFLICT”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Palestine is located in South-West Asia and is in the heart of the Middle East. To its north is Syria and Lebanon, to its south the Gulf of Aqaba and the Sinai Peninsula, and on its east is Jordan. Historic Palestine was once a land stretching from the Mediterranean coast east across the Jordan River, and from the Gulf of Aqaba north beyond the Sea of Galilee. Today this geographical area is divided into the state of Israel (established in May 1948), and the West Bank (including eastern Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip which Israel occupied in 1967. The struggle between the Israelis and the Palestinians is one of the most enduring and explosive of all the world's conflicts with its roots in historic claim to the land. For the Palestinians the last 100 years have brought colonization, expulsion and military occupation, followed by a long and difficult search for self-determination and for coexistence with the nation they hold responsible for their suffering and loss. For the Jewish people of Israel, the return to the land, they believe to be the land of their forefathers, after centuries of persecution around the world, has not brought peace or security. Palestinian cities, villages, and most of the refugee camps were transferred to a self-governing Palestinian Authority in the 1990s under the Madrid/Oslo 'peace process.' The area, however, remains under Israeli occupation with the bulk of the land area under full Israeli military control.

The Palestinian conflict is the single issue that has generated the largest number of resolutions in the United Nations. Although Palestine can be described as a small territory, and the Palestinians—the indigenous Arab people of Palestine— a relatively small population, numbering 6.8 million in 1996, the Palestinian problem has loomed large on the international scene. Nearly all Third World states in Africa and Asia and some in Latin America severed diplomatic relations with Israel after the Israeli-Arab war of 1973. Earlier, in 1967, the former Soviet bloc countries cut diplomatic ties with Israel as a consequence of the June War of that year. Indeed, many Third World governments expelled the Israeli diplomatic missions from their capitals and offered their premises to the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO], internationally recognized in 1974 as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

## Chapter 1

### Historical Background (1799-1916)

#### 1.1 French and British vision

"The tragedy in Palestine is not just a local one; it is a tragedy for the world, because it is an injustice that is a menace to the world's peace" (Toynbee, 1968). Our story starts here in 1799, outside the walls of Acre in Ottoman-controlled Palestine. An army under Napoleon Bonaparte besieged the city, all part of a campaign to defeat the Ottomans and establish a French presence in the region. In search of allies, Napoleon issued a letter, offering Palestine as a homeland to the Jews, under French protection. He called on the Jews to 'rise up' against what he called their oppressors. Napoleon's appeal was widely publicized. But he was ultimately defeated. In Acre today, the only memory of him is a statue atop a hill overlooking the city. Yet Napoleon's project for a Jewish homeland in the region under a colonial protectorate did not die. Forty years later, the plan was revived by the British, this time, as a means of thwarting the rising power of Egyptian governor Mohammad Ali. In 1840 British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston wrote to his ambassador in Constantinople urging him to convince the Sultan and his entourage to open Palestine for the immigration of Jews. At that time, there were estimated to be no more than 3,000 Jews in Ottoman-controlled Palestine. Over the years, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased, helped on by wealthy benefactors. One of these was the French Aristocrat Baron Edmond de Rothschild. He began visiting Palestine in the 1880's and became one of the Jewish community's leading sponsors.

#### 1.2 Zionism

Edmond de Rothschild began visiting Palestine in the 1880's and became one of the Jewish community's leading sponsors. He spent over 14 million French Francs to establish 30 Jewish settlements. The most important was Rishon Le Zion, founded in 1882. Today the remains of Baron Rothschild lie in a mausoleum in northern Israel. It's a popular site for Israeli schoolchildren, learning about the wealthy patron who bankrolled Jewish-settlement-building in Palestine over 100 years ago. In 1885 the term "Zionism" was first coined by Austrian writer

Nathan Birnbaum. It is derived from the word Zion, one of the biblical names for Jerusalem. Zionism came to mean the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine but not all Jews supported this. "Of course there were Jews in the country under Ottoman rule. But they weren't Zionists, they were local Jews. The Jews who came from Europe especially Eastern Europe in the late 19th century wanted to assert a new Jew." (Cohen, Interview, 2008). In 1896, Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian journalist wrote a book called "The Jewish State". It is considered one of the most important texts of early Zionism. Herzl envisioned the founding of a future independent Jewish state during the 20th century. His colleague, Max Nordau, sent two rabbis to Palestine to investigate the prospects for a Jewish state there.

The report of the rabbis concluded: "The bride is beautiful but she is married to another man." The rabbis understood that Palestine's spouse was the Palestinian society rooted in its soil. In 1897, Herzl with Birnbaum and Nordau convened the First Zionist Congress in the Swiss city of Basel. The Congress adopted a program for the establishment of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine.

Herzl openly lobbied for this. He contacted the major European powers to persuade them to protect such an entity. Herzl was the father of the Zionist state but he didn't create the Zionist ideology. Herzl didn't hold a conference to bring these countries together. He exploited the competition between them. He told each one he'd secure their interests if they supported the establishment of a Jewish state at the expense of the others. In 1907 the British government set up a committee to devise a strategy toward the Muslim-Arab population of the Ottoman empire. The committee's report submitted to British Prime Minister Henry Campbell-Bannerman in 1907, recommended establishing a so-called 'buffer state' in Palestine. The report proposed this state be hostile to its neighbors and friendly to Europe. The aim was to divide the region - and so assure Britain's continued imperial dominance.

Such a foreign body would be dependent on European colonialism. Its survival would be guaranteed in return for keeping surrounding states weak. The Europeans also believed the Jews to be closer to them than the Arabs. A Jewish state here would be better for them. In 1907, Chaim Weizmann, a chemist who had emerged as a leader among British Zionists, visited Palestine for the first time. He set out to establish a company in Jaffa to develop the land of

Palestine, a practical means to pursue the Zionist dream of building a Jewish state. His venture was supported by Baron de Rothschild.

Within three years a major deal was struck. The Jewish National Fund, set up to buy land in Palestine purchased some 2471 acres in the Marj Bin Amer region of northern Palestine. The sale to the Jewish National Fund had dire consequences for the thousands of Palestinian farmers living on the land. Over 60,000 Palestinians in the Marj Ibn Amer area were forced to leave. If the 'Nakba' signifies the expulsion of the Palestinian citizen from his land and the seizure of his land, then the Nakba began decades before 1948. "This was a more drastic form of colonialism than the average classical European colonialism, in the sense that the purpose was actually not only to exploit the locals, but to drive them out." (Pappe, Interview, 2008)

### **1.3 Sykes-Picot Agreement (19<sup>th</sup> of May 1916)**

From the very early moment the Zionist movement targeted Palestine as the place for Jewish independence and statehood and it was clear that there were Palestinians on the land. Zionists leaders and common people alike got used to the idea that the only way of making Palestine a Jewish state is by causing the Palestinians to leave. Expelling the farmers accomplished two aims: seizing the land or the 'Judaization' of the land and replacing Arab farmers with Jews from Eastern Europe and Yemen. A Jewish militia known as "Hashomer" - was established to protect the growing number of Jewish settlements. Jews held demonstrations to demand the recognition of Hebrew as an official language under Ottoman rule. The Arabs and Palestinians were aware of the concept of Zionism from day one. It's a racist movement seeking capital to colonize land and exploit religion to create a homeland for the remaining Jews of the world. This was clear in the writings of Najib Azuri and Najib Nassar. In 1908, Najib Nassar, a Palestinian pharmacist, began publishing a newspaper called "Al-Karmel." In it, he warned of Zionism as a movement aimed at displacing the Palestinians. He wrote: "The Jewish state would be a poisonous dagger in the heart of the Arabs." The outbreak of World War I in 1914 created new opportunities to reshape the Middle East. During the war the British planned to secure the area of Palestine, which lay close to the Suez Canal especially as the British had a presence in Egypt. They favored the Zionist Organization as a partner in a strategic colonial order. In 1915, a secret memorandum was presented to the British cabinet under the title, "The Future of

Palestine." It was drafted by Herbert Samuel, a British politician and Zionist committed to Palestine becoming a home for the Jewish people.

In the document, Samuel advised the time was 'not ripe' for the establishment of an autonomous Jewish state in Palestine. He recommended instead that Palestine be annexed to the British empire, describing this as the 'most welcome' solution to the supporters of the Zionist movement. He expressed the hope that under British rule, and over time, more Jews would settle in the land and grow into a majority, among what he called the 'Mahammedans of Arab race. Samuel's recommendations were taken into account in the secret British-French agreement, formulated by British Politician Sir Mark Sykes and French diplomat Francois Georges-Picot.

The Sykes-Picot agreement opened the way for the establishment of a Jewish state. In 1917, the British cabinet, headed by Prime Minister David Lloyd George, pledged to establish a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. The pledge came in the form of a letter from the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, to the influential British Zionist Lord Walter Rothschild. Balfour represented the British government. When he wrote his letter to Lord Rothschild, it was on behalf of the British government. Rothschild played the role of lobbyist to encourage the British government to take a stance regarding the Jews in Palestine. Behind all this stood Chaim Weizmann heading the World Zionist Organization.

## Chapter 2

### Catastrophes (1917-1983)

#### 2.1 Balfour Declaration (2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1917)

On the late 19th century, the Ottoman Empire ruled over what we know as Palestine. the population there, according to Ottoman records from 1878 was 87% Muslim, 10% Christian and 3% Jewish. Everybody spoke Arabic as the daily language. Ottoman Palestine was, in short, a place in which people of different religious faiths lived peacefully together.

The late 19th century was the golden age of nationalism in Europe, and no place was crazier than the Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire, in which at least 10 different nations all wanted their own state. and in that hyper-nationalistic Empire lived a Zionist journalist named Theodor Herzl who was convinced that the Jewish people needed to leave Europe and settle in their own state instead of assimilating into European nations. The concept of Jewish nationalism came to be known as Zionism. It's important to keep in mind that most Zionists were secular Jews, so they imagined Israel as a state for Jews more than a Jewish state.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I and the establishment of the Palestine Mandate, the British colonial power began implementing its plan of creating a Jewish state on Palestinian land. At the same time, the Zionist movement was lobbying Western powers to support the mass migration of Jews to Palestine and recognize a Jewish claim to the land.

“Britain had no moral or political or legal right to promise the land that belonged to the Arabs to another people, so the Balfour Declaration was both immoral and illegal”. (Shlaim,1994). In 1917, the British government, hoping to gain the support of Jewish people, issued the Balfour Declaration, promising, "The establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," a bold-promise considering that Palestine was still technically Ottoman as they hadn't yet lost World War I. Of course, they would soon, but it turned out that the British were over-promisers when it came to Palestine, because a year before the Balfour Declaration, the British had secretly promised the French that they would divide the Arab territories and the British

would keep Palestine. Furthermore, in 1915, other British officials had promised the ruler of Mecca, Sharif Hussein, that he would rule over an Arab state including Palestine if he led an Arab revolt against Ottoman rule, which Hussein promptly did. So basically the British had promised Palestine to the Meccans, to themselves, and to the Zionists.

Shortly after the end of the war, the British established a colony in Palestine with the idea that they would rule until the Palestinians were ready to govern themselves. Meanwhile, the British established separate institutions for Muslims, Christians, and Jews, making it difficult for Palestinian Christians and Muslims to cooperate and easier for the British to "divide and rule" the inhabitants of Palestine. Meanwhile, the British did attempt to honor the Balfour Declaration's promise to "facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions".

The Balfour Declaration declared British support for a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. The declaration was made in a letter written by Britain's then-Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour, to Baron Rothschild, a leader of the British Zionist movement. The letter was endorsed by Britain's then-Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who became a Zionist in 1915.

The letter stated the British would "use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object". For Zionists, this was a clear victory. "The crucial British accomplishment [to help Zionists] was allowing the Jews to have their own army." (Sitta,1948)

The influx of Zionists to Palestine, supported by the British, was met by fierce Palestinian resistance. The purchases of land by Jews for Zionist settlement displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians from their homes. The entire process was facilitated by the British.

## **2.2 Resistance**

Between 1920 and 1939, the Jewish population in Palestine increased by over 320,000 people. In fact, by the 1938, Jews were just under 30% of the population of Palestine. Along the way the Palestinian began to think of themselves as the Palestinian nation, and that growing sense of nationalism erupted in 1936, when the Palestinians revolted against the British. But with the help of Jewish militias, the British brutally suppressed the Palestinian revolt.

While the Palestinian leadership in Jerusalem insisted on continuing negotiations with the British to resolve the simmering tensions, Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam, a Syrian leader living in Haifa since 1922, began calling for an armed revolt against the British and the Zionists.

In 1935, Al-Qassam was surrounded by British forces and killed along with some of his men. His resistance inspired many Palestinians. By 1936, an Arab rebellion erupted against British imperialism and Zionist settler-colonialism.

“The battle for Palestine was lost by the Palestinians not in 1948 but in the late 1930s, because Britain completely smashed to the ground the Arab revolt and the Arab irregular forces.” (Shlaim,1994). By 1939, the British had smashed the rebellion. The Palestinians found themselves fighting two enemies: British colonial forces and Zionist militia groups. Although the British had backed mass Jewish immigration to Palestine, the colonial power began to limit the number of Jews arriving to the country in an attempt to quell Arab unrest.

The new limit on immigration upset the Zionists. They launched a series of terrorist attacks on British authorities to drive them out. “I cannot imagine Zionism without violence whether before or after the establishment of the state of Israel.” (Sayegh, interview, 2008). The Zionists continued to further advance their dream of creating a Jewish state on Palestinian land. Meanwhile, it became obvious that Palestinian resistance forces were outnumbered and outgunned.

### **2.3 UN Role and Catastrophes**

The Zionist strategy of expelling Palestinians from their land was a slow and deliberate process. According to Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, Zionist leaders and military commanders met regularly from March 1947 to March 1948, when they finalized plans to ethnically cleanse Palestine. “A small group of Zionist leaders and military commanders met regularly. For a whole year planning the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. They didn't decide about it in a day.” (Pappé, interview,2008)

But in the aftermath, the British issued a white paper, limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine and calling for the establishment of a joint Arab and Jewish state in Palestine within 10 years.

This left no one happy, the Zionists were angry at Britain for limiting the Jewish immigration and the Palestinians were unhappy about the prospect of giving up on their land for the Zionists. And then came World War II, which was actually quite a peaceful time in somehow in Palestine. But then it ended and tensions resumed, and the British realized that colonies like Palestine were far more trouble than they worth, so they handed the issue of Palestine over to the newly created United Nations.

So in November of 1947, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into separate Palestinian and Jewish states. The partition plan called for two states roughly equal in size, but the borders made no sense! and soon after the plan was announced, the 1948 Arab-Zionist war broke out, with Zionists on the one side, and the Palestinians and some Arab states on the other. The Zionist won, and when an armistice was signed in 1949, Israel occupied a third more land than they would have under the UN proposal. Meanwhile, Jordan controlled and latter annexed the West Bank and the old city of Jerusalem, and Egypt controlled the Gaza strip.

By early 1948, Zionist forces had captured dozens of villages and cities, displacing thousands of Palestinians, even while the British Mandate was still in effect. In many cases, they carried out organized massacres. The Zionist movement's message was simple: Palestinians must leave their land or be killed.

As the date (May 14, 1948) selected by the British for their Palestine Mandate to expire approached, Zionist forces hastened their efforts to seize Palestinian land. In April 1948, the Zionists captured Haifa, one of the biggest Palestinian cities, and subsequently set their eyes on Jaffa. On the same day British forces formally withdrew, David Ben-Gurion, then-head of the Zionist Agency, proclaimed the establishment of the state of Israel.

Overnight, the Palestinians became stateless. The world's two great powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, immediately recognized Israel.

As the Zionists continued their ethnic cleansing campaign against the Palestinians, war broke out between neighboring Arab countries and the new Zionist state. The UN appointed Swedish diplomat, Folke Bernadotte, as its mediator to Palestine. He recognized the plight of the Palestinians and attempted to address their suffering. His efforts to bring about a peaceful

solution and halt to the ongoing ethnic cleansing campaign ended when he was assassinated by the Zionists in September 1948.

Over 800,000 Palestinians exiled from their homes and became refugees in the surrounding Arab Countries. And more than 13,000 had been killed by the Israeli military. And to Israelis, this was the beginning of their nation; to the Palestinians, it was the Nakba, the catastrophe, as they became stateless.

The UN continued to push for an armistice deal between Israel and those Arab countries with whom it was at war. Bernadotte was replaced by his American deputy, Ralph Bunche. Negotiations led by Bunche between Israel and the Arab states resulted in the latter conceding even more Palestinian land to the newly founded Zionist state. In May 1949, Israel was admitted to the UN and its grip over 78% of historic Palestine was consolidated. The remaining 22 percent became known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees remained in refugee camps, waiting to return home. While the Zionist movement sought first and foremost to remove Palestinians from their land, it also tried to erase Palestinian heritage and culture. The overall objective was nothing short of an attempt to wipe Palestine off the world map. The Palestinian Nakba did not end in 1948. The ethnic cleansing of historic Palestine is still happening, and so too is Palestinian resistance.

Over the next 18 years, nothing changed territorially, and then, in 1967 Israel and several Arab states went to war again. it was called the Six-Days War because it lasted six days. Israel won and then gained control over the West Bank, the Gaza strip, the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. And Over 350,000 Palestinians exiled from their homes and became refugees. Then the UN passed Resolution 242, which outlined a basic framework for achieving peace, including Israel withdrawing from the territory acquired in the war and all participants recognizing the rights of both a Palestinian and an Israeli state to exist, which did not happen. After the war, the broader Israeli-Arab conflict morphed into a more specific Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

PLO was founded in 1964 as a result of the Palestinian nationalist movement with the aim to establish an independent state for the Palestinians. It was formed because Palestinians did not trust their protection with other Arab nations and wanted to fight independently for their rights

and for a homeland that Israel had taken away from them. The meeting was held in Jerusalem after the Arab-Israeli war with its first leader being Ahmed Shukairy. The footing for establishing such an organization was laid down in 1964 in Cairo at an Arab League meeting where some parties believe that the reason for its establishment was Arab nations duplicity.

#### **2.4 Sabra and Shatila Massacre 1982**

On September 16, 1982, Christian Lebanese militiamen allied to Israel entered the Palestinian refugee camp of Shatila and the adjacent neighborhood of Sabra in Beirut under the watch of the Israeli army, and began a slaughter that caused outrage around the world. Over the next day and a half, up to 3500 Palestinian and Lebanese civilians, mostly women, children, and the elderly, were murdered in one of the worst atrocities in modern Middle Eastern history.

For Palestinians, the Sabra and Shatila massacre was and remains a traumatic event, commemorated annually. Many survivors continue to live in Sabra and Shatila, struggling to eke out a living and haunted by their memories of the slaughter. To this day, no one has faced justice for the crimes that took place. The Sabra and Shatila massacre serves as a powerful and tragic reminder of the vulnerable situation of millions of stateless Palestinians, and the dangers that they continue to face across the region, and around the world.

## **Chapter 3**

### **First intifada (1987-1994)**

#### **3.1 The Uprising**

The grassroots protests of 1987 escalated into full-blown riots involving much of civil society, from organizations, union groups to newly created institutions to the ordinary population who came out in large numbers on to the streets led by rock-throwing youths.

As the protest movement developed, more sophisticated missiles, such as the Molotov cocktail, were used and occasional operations by resistance fighters against the Israeli occupation forces and its installations were carried out.

The uprising began on 9 December, in the Jabalia refugee camp after an Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) truck collided with a civilian car, killing four Palestinians. In the wake of the incident, a protest movement arose, involving a two-fold strategy of resistance and civil disobedience, consisting of general strikes, boycotts of Israeli Civil Administration institutions in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, an economic boycott consisting of refusal to work in Israeli settlements on Israeli products, refusal to pay taxes, refusal to drive Palestinian cars with Israeli licenses, graffiti, barricading, and widespread throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails at the IDF and its infrastructure within the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel reacted by killing and deporting Palestinian residents, closing universities and making mass arrests. By December 1987 a full-scale uprising had broken out in the Gaza Strip. It continued for 6 years.

#### **3.2 Inventive Tactics**

The Intifada (or popular uprising) marked a new era in mass resistance in Palestine, signaling an end to years of passivity. Lacking the necessary arms to face the Israeli military, people in the occupied territories invented their own ways of fighting back. Many young men took to wearing masks and ambushing the Israeli army with a rain of stones.

Initially the Intifada was led by the Unified National Command, a loose grouping of Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) bodies. Later, the PLO incorporated with the command to take credit for leading the Intifada.

Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) defied the secular national movement, especially in Gaza, and sought to take over the leadership of the Intifada. It saw the new developments as a deliberate relinquishment of the rights of the Palestinian people. Hamas continued to carry out field operations against the Israeli forces, insisting that armed resistance was the only way to win back Palestinian rights.

The Intifada developed more sophisticated tactics. The military operations and stone-throwing were backed by a network of well-organized strikes, the boycotting of Israeli goods, closures and demonstrations.

### **3.3 Refugees Resistance**

The refugee camps became major centers for action. The goals of the Intifada won broad sympathy from the governments and people of Arab and Muslim countries, while Arabs in Israel took the side of their blood brothers.

They considered the Intifada to be a rebirth of the 1976 uprising, later known as the “day of the land”, which saw demonstrations and strikes in protest against the confiscation of Arab land for use by Jewish settlers in the north of Israel.

In June 1988, a new way of resistance to back the stone-throwers was adopted. Palestinian resistance fighters set fire to 500 Israeli interests over a 27-day period.

Israel had demanded the international community put pressure on the Intifada leaders to give up armed resistance. Yet, in July 1988 the Israeli authorities did not prevent a group of Jewish extremists from digging a new tunnel between the two Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, al-Buraq Wall and the al-Aqsa mosque.

### **3.4 Appeal to The People**

Muslim clerics, through mosque loudspeakers, appealed to the people to defend their holy sites. Muslim Arab Palestinians rushed to stop the digging. The Israeli police forces were brought in leading to bloody clashes in and around al-Aqsa.

Later, fighting spread throughout Palestine. There were dozens of Palestinian casualties. A state of emergency was declared, and Palestinian cities, towns and villages were put under siege. Schools and universities were closed.

The Intifada carried on throughout the early 1990s. On 9 October 1990 Israeli forces killed 19 Palestinians in clashes with stone-throwers, and in December 1992, 413 Palestinians were deported to the inhospitable borders with Lebanon.

As the first Gulf war was underway in 1991, Iraq ceased to be a major power in the Middle East. The Palestinians felt that they had lost a substantial backer, and this resulted in rapid developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The peace process, started in Madrid in 1991, led to secret negotiations in Oslo, Norway, and by 1993 Arafat recognized Israel's right to exist and signed a peace agreement.

In 1994, the Palestinians were given limited autonomy in parts of the occupied Palestinian territories. By that time, tension began to ease and the popular uprising petered out, amid high hopes for a better future.

According to the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, 1124 Palestinians lost their lives in the first Intifada. Some 16,000 were imprisoned and many were routinely tortured. Fewer than 50 Israeli civilians were killed. Between 23,600-29,900 Palestinian children required medical treatment from IDF beatings in the first 2 years.

## **Second Intifada(2000-now)**

### **Frustration**

On 28 September 2000, the opposition leader, heavily guarded by Israeli soldiers and policemen, walked in to al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. It was a move certain to provoke an angry reaction from the Muslim population, who hold the mosque to be the third holiest site in Islam. Fighting broke out between the Palestinians defending al-Aqsa and security forces guarding Sharon. Seven Palestinians were killed in the fighting and thus the second Intifada - Intifadat al-Aqsa - was started.

But the unarmed struggle came amid a backdrop of discontent. Palestinians in the self-rule territories had become increasingly resentful over their lack of economic development as promised by the Oslo peace accords. They found that the superpowers, which hosted the peace process, did little to back them.

The Intifada was – and still is - an expression of a deep disappointment and frustration over the ongoing disrespect and denial of basic rights for Palestinians caused by the occupation - including the right to free access to Jerusalem, security and development, and the refugees' right to return.

In two days, the Intifada spread across Palestine and into Israel. The Israeli army faced off against unarmed civilians. On the fourth day, 20 Palestinians were killed by Israeli bullets, missiles, tanks, and helicopters, including the 12-year-old Palestinian Mohammad al-Dura, who was killed in front of TV cameras by the Israelis as he was hiding behind his father.

The situation in the Middle East took a dire turn when Israel reoccupied the Palestinian territories, in violation of the peace accord of 1993 signed with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

## **Resistance**

The Palestinian people fiercely resisted the occupation and Palestinian factions chose armed resistance, while the Palestinian authority saw negotiations as the appropriate way to solve the conflict.

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) declared 6 October 2000 "a day of rage," urging Palestinians to attack Israeli army outposts in the occupied territories. Israeli troops, who had been securing the ancient Jewish site of Joseph's tomb in Palestinian-controlled Nablus, withdrew.

Palestinians moved in quickly, dismantling and burning parts of the tomb. The event triggered angry protests by Jewish settlers who reportedly blocked roads in the area and prevented Palestinians from passing. The next day, 8 October, a mosque was burned down in the northern Israeli city of Tiberias.

In the wake of continuing violence, hopes of a final peace agreement were abandoned. Most Palestinians, however, saw the outbreak of the confrontations as an inevitable result of repressive occupation and a "peace process" leading to nowhere.

Inside Israel, the government had been most affected by what it saw as a rebellion of Arab Palestinian Israelis who participated in pro-Intifada actions in northern Israel, blocking major streets in Haifa and Jaffa. Thirteen of the protesters were killed by Israeli police.

Palestinians in Israel, who number one million and make up approximately 20% of Israel's population, have long been treated as second-class citizens. Their action was to show solidarity with their fellow citizens in the occupied territories, and to show their dissatisfaction with the unjust treatment by the Israeli authorities. Their action gave Israel two options: to become a secular state without Jewish domination or to become an apartheid state – like South Africa from the 1960s until 1994.

As the Israeli occupation continued throughout 2001, Palestinian factions retaliated by launching counter attacks inside Israel, in an attempt to force Israel to stop its attacks against civilians and withdraw from the Palestinian territories.

Several Palestinian resistance organizations, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades started to send self-sacrificing fighters, whose duty it was to blow themselves up inside Israel, taking as many people with them as possible.

Israel retaliated with disproportionate attacks against Palestinian villages, towns and cities, and started a program of assassinations, using intelligence information to kill field operatives and political leaders of the Intifada, including Palestinian Authority members.

This intelligence effort needed informers from inside the Palestinian territories to be recruited. Israeli intelligence tried to initiate a dispute among Palestinians by manipulating vulnerable Palestinians to turn informer.

On 7 March 2001, Sharon, on the right-wing Likud party, became prime minister of Israel. He started his term with a military campaign in the Palestinian self-rule territories. He wanted to eliminate “terrorism”, a term used to describe Palestinian factions that insist on armed resistance to drive Israel out of Palestinian territories. The action sparked resistance. Israel held the Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat responsible for “terrorism”, and gave itself the green light to crack down on Palestinian “terrorist” groups.

The Israeli military actions escalated and often gave scant regard for the civilian population. In one of the attacks on Gaza, an Israeli F-16 warplane fired a missile into a Gaza City neighborhood and killed at least 11 people, including many children, and a Hamas leader Salah Shahada, the target of the strike. More than 100 people were reported injured. Bodies were buried under the rubble of five destroyed houses, and body parts lay scattered across the debris. The targeting of a Hamas leader in the middle of a densely populated center was widely criticized. It also initiated Hamas retaliation.

## **The US Role**

As the confrontation got tougher, the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks were seriously undermined. The US began to express discontent with Arafat as the head of the Palestinians – even though he is a democratically elected leader. The US made bids to create a substitute

leadership “able to achieve peace with Israel”. Both Israel and the US promoted the idea that Arafat was deeply involved in terror and an obstacle to the peace process.

US president George Bush said in January 2002 that he was disappointed with Arafat, and suspended the US mediation mission headed by General Anthony Zinni. Bush’s attitude came after a CIA report on 13 January 2002 said that the agency had become convinced of Arafat’s direct involvement in the controversial shipment of the Karine A, a ship owned by the Palestinians and filled with arms acquired in Iran. The Israelis seized the ship near Gaza on January 3, 2003.

The US and Israel called for “reforms”. Bush wanted a Palestinian leader “not compromised by terror”. Meanwhile, Palestinian factions’ commitment to armed resistance sparked debate among Palestinian politicians and intellectuals on whether armed resistance was serving the cause.

Bush reaffirmed the US’s commitment to Palestinian statehood. The international community made clear its willingness to support Palestinian claims to statehood if the violence stopped, but did not support Israel and the US’s demand for the removal of Arafat.

On 12 March 2002 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1397, “affirming a vision of a region where two states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders”. The “quartet”— made up of the US, the European Union, Russia, and the UN — endorsed Bush's vision of a Palestinian state within three years of a ceasefire and meaningful Palestinian reform.

In late February 2003, Israeli sources revealed a paper submitted by the Palestinian authority to Israel. It offered a Palestinian pledge to stop armed operations against Israel in return for the gradual withdrawal of the Israeli army to its pre 28- September 2000 locations.

In late February, Saudi Arabia announced a peace plan by which Israel would withdraw from all occupied Arab land in return for normal ties with all the Arab states and a formal end to the state of war between the Arab nations and Israeli.

The Saudi plan was unanimously endorsed at an Arab League summit in Beirut, Lebanon, on March 28. Hours after the Arab initiative, Israel launched a widespread offensive against Palestinian territories killing and injuring scores of Palestinians.

## **Now**

The second Intifada is still alive until now. The death toll, including both military and civilian, is estimated to be about 8000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israelis, as well as 64 foreigners. It's obvious that it will not stop until a major change happen in Palestine. The Palestinians are not going to stop resisting and the Israeli still avoiding the United Nations agreements and the international peace visions.

“Expelling people from their homes is a war crime. As well as preventing them from returning. Israel didn't just commit a war crime in 1948 but continues to commit one to this day.”  
(Sitta,1948)

## Conclusion

Palestine is the historical name for the region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. The land was first inhabited as long ago as 9000 BC. The Hebrews (ancestors of today's Jews) settled in Palestine in 1900 BC and had formed the kingdom of Israel, ruled by King David, by 1000 BC. Palestine was then taken over by a series of foreign powers. The Arabs took control of the area during the Islamic expansion of the seventh century AD. It is from these Arabs that modern-day Palestinians are descended.

Palestine was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire from AD 1516 until the empire was defeated in World War I (1914–18). During the war period, both Arabs and Jews were made promises by the British concerning the future fate of Palestine. The British controlled Palestine from 1920 to 1948. In 1947, the United Nations (UN) divided Palestine into two states, one Jewish, and the other Arab. When the independent state of Israel was declared on May 15, 1948, the Arab forces of Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Transjordan advanced into Palestine. After the ensuing war in 1949, the West Bank came under Jordanian rule, the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian rule, and the remainder of Palestine came under Israeli rule. In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed in Jerusalem. Yasser Arafat became the head of the PLO in 1969.

In a June 1967 war, Israel captured the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Also in that year, Israel annexed East Jerusalem. The West Bank and Gaza Strip have since been called the Occupied Territories. Most of the residents there are Palestinian Arabs. December 1987 marked the beginning of the Intifada—an ongoing popular uprising of Palestinians against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Israeli government and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles (DOP) in September 1993, resolving that Israeli troops would leave the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas. In 1994, limited Palestinian self-rule was established in Jericho and the Gaza Strip. Fighting continues over the question of a fully independent Palestinian homeland.

There are more than 4.5 million Palestinians in the world. About 2 million of them live in Israel and the Occupied Territories—the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Most of the rest live in neighboring Arab countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The UN lists 2 million Palestinian refugees. During the war years of 1947–49, between 700,000 and 800,000

Palestinians were driven from their homes. When Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, another 300,000 Palestinians became refugees (and 150,000 who were already refugees were forced to move again).

Military occupation has given Palestinians a few gifts - though this doesn't justify the occupation. One gift is a relatively friendly and human society - hospitality, sharing and generosity are notable in Palestine. Foreign visitors are frequently deeply stirred by this. Another gift is attitude: Palestinians have faced stuff others avoid; they've come out of the wiser for it.

This is indeed a Holy Land: there's something in the energy of the land, in its 'place memory' and its inspiring and tragic history which makes it special, whether or not you're a believer in any of the three faiths rooted here. There's something very alive about this land. Their insecurity creates a spiritual and human edge which makes the Palestinians very interesting people.

There's something else too. You notice it when you cross the separation wall from Israel into the West Bank. Strangely, Palestine feels like a happier country, even under duress. In our day, when globalization and corporatization have extended their tentacles across the globe, this social strength is rare. While Israel has won the conflict militarily, arguably the Palestinians have won it socially and spiritually.

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