

Through the Eyes of the Victims

The Story of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Alex Awad

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Dedication

To my mother, Huda Awad, who became a victim of the 1948 Arab/Israeli War when her husband (my father) was killed during crossfire between the Israeli and Jordanian armies. She overcame the tragedy and became a shining inspiration to her seven children.

And to my wife, Brenda, who has stood by me for twenty-nine years and has willingly identified with the victims through living and serving among them.

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FOREWORD

For many years, visitors to the Holy Land have been content to visit the holy sites. It helps them come in touch with the past and the historical roots of their faith. The dream for many Christian visitors is to "walk where Jesus walked" and to have their faith revitalized.

At the same time, Palestinian Christians have, for years, encouraged visitors to take time and meet the indigenous Christians of the land and familiarize themselves with their life and concerns. Gradually, a growing number started to heed the call and include in their itinerary set times to meet the living stones of the land. In fact, Christian responsibility demands a knowledge and relationship with the brothers and sisters of the faith. It is important to be exposed to Eastern Christians whose faith dates back to the early Christian centuries; to Islam, one of the major religions in the world today; to the interplay between politics and religion in the Middle East; and not least, to the Israel/Palestine conflict and the prospects for peace and reconciliation.

The Rev. Alex Awad has had a rich experience of speaking to groups both in the Holy Land as well as abroad. With the use of maps, he has been successful in relaying the story of the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and the urgent need to establish a just peace so that all the people of the region can live in freedom and security. In this booklet, Alex presents a few resources that can prove beneficial for the reader's quest for information and understanding of the problem, as well as the desire for fairness in seeking a solution. Besides the commentary about the maps, the reader finds four useful appendices: a glossary of important terms, questions and answers about the conflict, relevant excerpts from international law, and a selected bibliography for those who are interested in pursuing their study.

It is unrealistic to expect that most people in the West are aware of the Israel/Palestine conflict. After all it is not the only major conflict in our

world today. Yet it is one that is capable of igniting a regional and, possibly, a world conflagration. Unfortunately, the Palestinian story and their experience of suffering had to be set, historically, against the Jewish story and Jewish experience of suffering. Whereas, the Jewish story is familiar in the West, the Palestinian story is not only unknown, it has been marred by prejudice, stereotyping, and myths. There is a desperate need to help western Christians understand the background to the conflict. There is much political and historical ignorance about the founding of the state of Israel. There is confusion also about the interpretation of certain Biblical texts that some Christians believe are related to the conflict. Furthermore, the media in the West has, generally, been biased towards Israel. There has been an anti-Palestinian sentiment among many people. The Palestinians have been cast as terrorists. People see them as the initiators of violence, set to destroy Israel that is, generally, viewed as a peace-loving country.

It has been our experience time and again that when western Christians come with an open mind to see for themselves, to listen to the story, and to experience first hand the agony and predicament of the Palestinians, many are, literally, turned around. They discover that Israel is not as innocent as they supposed, and the Palestinians are not as bad as they had been led to believe. As the Bible says, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

At the basis of the conflict, however, is an issue of justice. The maps in this booklet show clearly the injustice inflicted against the Palestinians in 1948. How can we achieve enough justice that will allow the Palestinians and the Israelis to share the land and live in peace and harmony? The Palestinians are looking to international law and United Nations resolutions for a solution. Since 1967, Israel has been occupying Palestinian territory and oppressing its citizens. With the use of American made weapons, it demolishes Palestinians homes, restricts their movement and places them under siege, hinders them from receiving needed medical care, assassinates their leaders, confiscates their land, builds illegal colonies on it, and shatters their economy. The injustice which the Palestinians have been subjected to

by the Israeli Government today can be summarized in the word of the Prophet Isaiah, "You are always planning something evil, and you hasten to murder innocent people. You leave ruin and destruction wherever you go, and no one is safe when you are around. Everything you do is unjust. You follow a crooked path, and no one who walks that path will ever be safe" (Isaiah 59:7-8).

The only way forward is the way of justice. This specifically means the end of the Israeli occupation to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and allowing the Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination in the establishment of their own sovereign state along side the state of Israel. Since the land belongs to God and all of us are foreigners and tenants (Leviticus 25:23), there is no other way except to share the land under God and be good stewards of it.

It is my hope that this booklet will help the reader to move from information to advocacy, and from understanding to commitment. The reader is urged to pray for all the people of the Holy Land, Palestinians and Israelis, so that both nations can live in peace and security. The essence of the words of the prophet Isaiah can be paraphrased, "The doing of justice will bring peace, and the work of justice will bring quietness and security for ever" (Isaiah 32:17).

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INTRODUCTION

There is no shortage of public information on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Volumes have been written, documenting in great detail what has brought the Middle East to its current crisis. Furthermore, the conflict receives much media coverage around the world. Those who wish to pay attention to the tragic events in Palestine, in our age of global communication, will find that information is only a click of the mouse away.

So why then write another political history of the conflict? First, the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians is, perhaps like no other, a battle of information. The stories of both peoples about what has transpired in historical Palestine are so different that they run on almost parallel tracks, rarely converging. Despite the fact that information on the conflict is abundant, the Palestinians consistently feel that their story is left out. Palestinians perceive that the Israeli perspective virtually saturates public discourse, leaving the Palestinians voiceless, misunderstood and stereotyped. Thus, by necessity, Palestinians must take every opportunity possible to share their story. We do not want our history written by those who oppress us.

Second, this small book is meant to fulfill a specific purpose. I regularly give lectures to groups of people who are only just beginning to be acquainted with the Arab-Israeli conflict. After the lecture, interested individuals usually come and ask me for a copy of the lecture and the map transparencies that I use to illustrate stages of the conflict. I find that people would benefit from having a tangible resource to take with them, to help them remember the information, pass it on to others, and find ways to make sense of the ongoing struggle. This document is not meant to be comprehensive analysis of history and current events, but a summary of the conflict from a Palestinian perspective. The target audience is Western Christians, to whom I most often lecture and whose influence I wish was more strongly felt in the Holy Land. The map transparencies are available for individuals who wish to use them in teaching about the conflict.

The main body of the essay is followed by thirteen commonly asked questions I am asked along with their answers and several appendices. I suggest that the reader first take a look at Appendix I, a glossary of words that are helpful in understanding the conflict and how certain words are used in this text. Appendix II documents sections of international law that are relevant to the conflict. Appendices III and IV provide a bibliography for further reading and a list of organizations working for justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.

I want to express appreciation to all who heard the lecture or read the manuscript and offered advice in assuring its usefulness and accuracy. My deep gratitude goes to Nathan Musselman whose help in completing the script has been invaluable.

An old man and his granddaughter at their tent in the Jalazone camp near Ramallah, West Bank (UNRWA Photo 1951).





Palestinian farmer working on his land. Nearby, an Israeli colony threatens his way of life.

CHAPTER 1: THE LECTURE

Challenging Common Perceptions on the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Many Christians in the West look at the Arab-Israeli conflict from a perspective that has been strongly influenced by a virtually uncontested interpretation of biblical history and prophetic analysis. Pro-Zionist groups such as AIPAC, a powerful Jewish-American lobby, have also had a significant effect on peoples' perceptions, be they Christian or not. These groups influence many US institutions, including the government, media, and other powerful religious groups. In addition, Hollywood, with its blockbuster movies depicting Arabs as terrorists, has contributed much to a Western bias against Arabs in general. These factors, combined with the tragic history of the Jews in Europe, form the frame of reference through which Westerners usually view the Arab-Israeli conflict. The purpose of this essay is to conduct a short survey of various factors in Arab-Israeli history in order to shed another light on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Myth of Perpetual Jewish-Arab Hostility

A prevalent myth concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict is that Arabs and Jews are eternal enemies. In fact, Arabs and Jews lived side by side in relative harmony for hundreds of years. To generalize that they have been fighting for thousands of years or "since Day One" is a false analysis of history.

Some base their assumptions concerning perpetual Jewish-Arab conflict on the story of Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Isaac, fighting when they were children. Taken from a common sense approach, the idea that two brothers squabbling spells permanent war for their descendants is ridiculous. How many of you know of siblings who fight from time to time? Does that mean they will never be friends? The Bible relates the account of Ishmael and Isaac coming together to bury their father. This shows that they were reconciled as adults.

Further, the claim that Jews are direct descendants of Isaac, and that Arabs are direct descendants of Ishmael is historically inaccurate. This assertion may have had validity in ancient times, but it does not hold today. It makes the incorrect assumption that there is still a pure line of blood traced from Issac to present day Jews, and from Ishmael to present day Arabs.¹ The people of the world have intermingled to such a great extent that it is absurd and self-fulfilling to claim that whole nations are continuing a four thousand year old quarrel.

Some Christians think the ancient conflict between the Jews and Philistines has carried over to this day. It is true that throughout the Old Testament, the Jewish people fought with many different tribes including the Jebusites, the Canaanites, the Ammonites, the Hittites, and the Philistines (a Caucasian tribe from the Greek islands). Palestinians are the descendants of all of these people including the Jews. However, the claim that the Philistines of old are the Palestinians of today is completely false. The two have very little in common besides the similarity of their names.

Further, none of these people were Arabs. As a matter of fact, the word 'Arab' rarely appears in the Bible. Why is this? It is because the Muslim Arabs did not come to Palestine until the 7th century AD. Furthermore, when they did invade Palestine they did not fight with the Jews. The Romans had already dispersed the Jews, first in AD 70 and later in AD 135. Jerusalem's name was changed to Aelia Capitolina, and no Jew was allowed to live in Jerusalem, on penalty of death. Thus, when Muslim Arabs invaded Palestine in the 7th century they fought with the Byzantines (Romans who accepted Christianity) who had been ruling Palestine for several hundred years. After the Muslim leader Caliph Omar achieved victory in Jerusalem he cancelled the ban on Jews in the city and invited them to return in a declaration known as the Covenant of Omar.

The Jews lived in various parts of the Middle East under Islamic rule and were protected along with Christians as a "people of the Book."² They were not given the same privileges and status as Muslim citizens, but they were

not endangered in their normal daily lives. The land of Palestine remained under various Islamic rulers from the middle of the 7th century until the fall of the Ottomans, with the exception of the Crusader period. From AD 1099 until their final expulsion in AD 1291, the Crusaders, who were from Europe, ruled with an iron fist and in their conquest massacred Jews, Muslims and Christians alike.

If the people of the Middle East did not historically persecute Jews, where did the Jews suffer their most tragic experiences? One does not have to look back far to see that this happened in Europe. Though they were mistreated all over Europe, Jews suffered particularly in Spain, Russia, and Germany.

Before 1492, Muslim Moors ruled the southern half of Spain. Under their control, the approximately one million Jews living in Spain experienced what is referred to as the "Golden Era" in the Jewish Diaspora. Along with highly cultured Muslim and Christian Arabs, Jews flourished in the fields of science, business, medicine, music, art, and literature. But after the Christian north drove out the Moors, Jews would not experience the benevolent rule they had formerly enjoyed. The Spanish Inquisition in the Middle Ages threatened the very existence of the Jewish people. Under its threat not one person could profess that he or she was a Jew. Any Jew who did not convert to Christianity was baptized by force, banished, or killed.

In Russia and Eastern Europe, the pogroms were instigated. These included a number of harsh and brutal measures of discrimination against Jews. Many were killed by hostile Christian citizens. Others who were spared from such massacres were unjustly forced off their property, leaving their homes and possessions behind, never to return to them.

Of course, the worst atrocities against Jews took place in Germany under Nazi rule prior to and during the Holocaust. In attempting to create a nation (and even a world) full of the "superior Aryan race," Hitler and the Nazis made a plan to systematically eliminate the Jews as well as other "inferior"

ances. Jews, however, were specifically targeted. The Holocaust culminated in the slaughter of six million Jews in concentration camps and the dispossession of land and property of untold others.

The history of the Jewish people gives clear evidence that Jews who lived in the Middle East and North Africa fared much better than those who lived in Europe. Arabs and Jews lived as neighbors for thirteen centuries in relative harmony and there is no historical reason why they could not continue to live as good neighbors in the future.

The Makings of a Palestinian Catastrophe: The Birth of Zionism

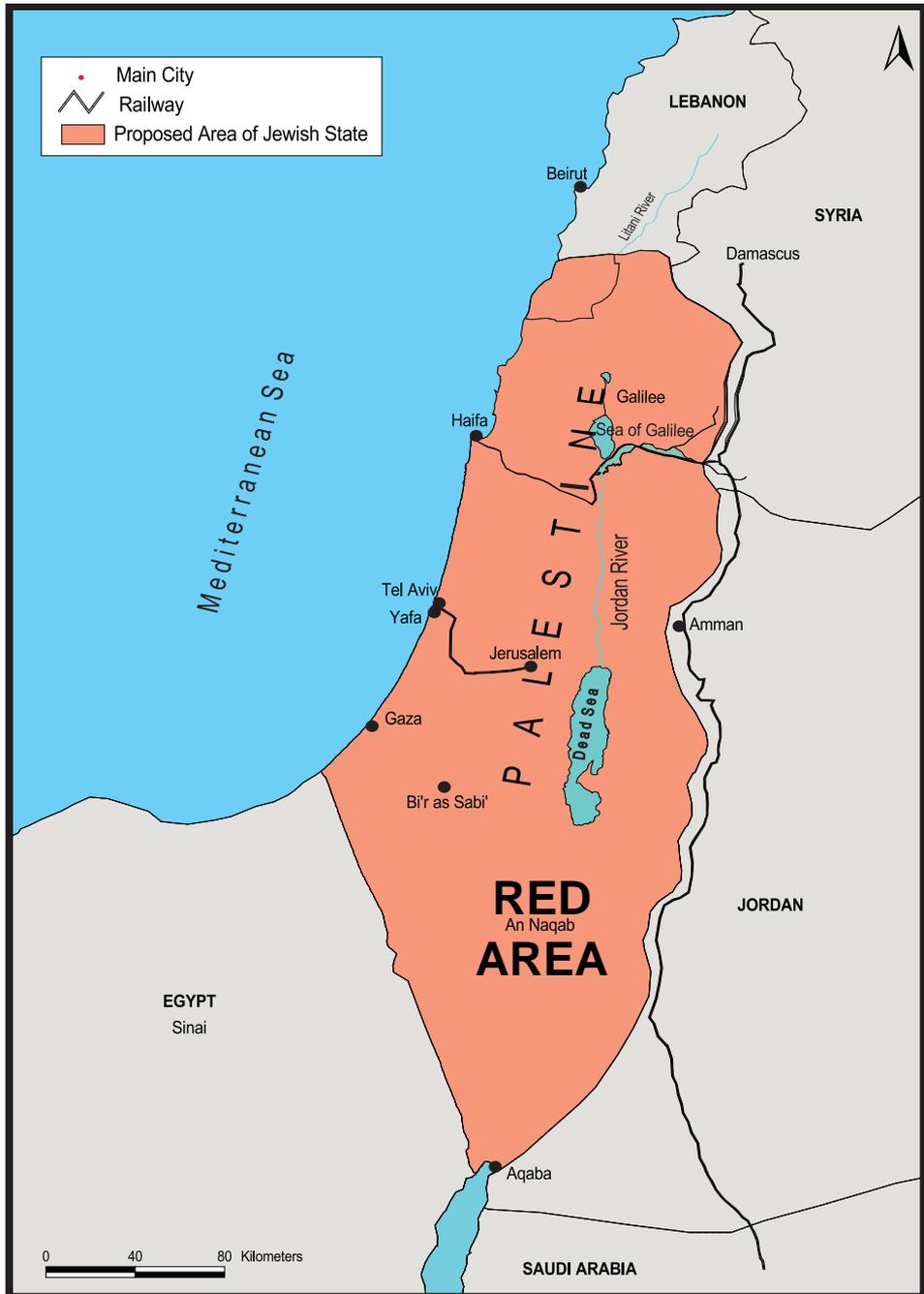
Why then in the last 55 years have Arabs and Jews engaged in five bloody wars and hundreds of smaller but very lethal confrontations? To understand the beginnings of the conflict, we must consider the suffering of Jews in Europe that has just been addressed. Theodore Herzl, a German Jew living in the 19th century, shared with many other European Jews the belief that Jews could not achieve respect, let alone freedom from persecution, in Europe. At the same time, nationalism was spreading all over the continent. It was becoming more and more natural for like people from a certain region to desire a sovereign state. Provoked by the persecution of Jews in Europe and inspired by the rise of nationalism in the continent, Herzl and others started the Zionist movement, whose goal was to establish a homeland for all Jews in some part of the world.³ It is important to realize that Zionism, though it identified with historical Jewish identity, was a completely secular ideology. Besides looking to the possibility of forming a state in Palestine, Herzl looked for a homeland in Uganda, Argentina, and other countries. Herzl's aspirations were not based on the Biblical conception of a promised land.

Zionist Plan for Palestine (Map 1)

It was finally decided that Palestine was the best area to establish a Jewish state. When Herzl was alive though, the percentage of Jews in Palestine

ZIONIST PLAN FOR PALESTINE 1919

MAP 1



was very small. The vast majority of people in Palestine were Muslim and Christian Arabs. The establishment of a Jewish state meant the transfer of Jews from all over the world to Palestine.⁴ However, the Zionists did not intend to coexist with the indigenous people of the Holy Land in building their state.⁵ Instead, they felt that they should have a state and government that was decidedly Jewish with as few Gentiles as possible.

The preceding map shows clearly the Zionists' intent and aspirations. They hoped to make a state in all of Palestine plus territories that are considered today part of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan as shown by the red shaded area on the map.

At this time the Ottoman Empire was in control of Palestine. Though the Empire was quite large, stretching over much of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, its power was diminishing. It was correctly called the "sick old man of Europe" and the Zionists' decision to settle in Palestine had much to do with this fact.

Britain Occupies Palestine

The British began to colonize Palestine in 1919 after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. They received a mandate over Palestine from the League of Nations in 1922. Even before Britain received its mandate, many influential Zionists were trying to sway the British to support their nationalistic aspirations. They experienced a great measure of success. This was notably seen in the form of the Balfour Declaration written in 1917. British Foreign Secretary, Sir Arthur Balfour, informed Lord Rothschild, a British representative of the Zionist organization's political committee, "His Majesty's government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...." Balfour made no references to Palestinian Arabs as a people, even though they comprised about ninety percent of the population. He only mentioned continuation of the "civil and religious rights" of "non-Jewish communities." There was not even a hint in Balfour's letter that the Arabs had any right to nationhood.

The significance of the Balfour Declaration is that it reflected the pro-Zionist attitude of the superpower at the time - the power that would heavily influence the future of both Palestinians and Jewish Zionists.

Zionist ideology was, to say the least, difficult for the indigenous population of Palestine to accept. The occupying British had the complex job of trying to pacify both the Arabs and the Jews while at the same time pushing their own political goals.⁶ The British realized they could not give the Zionists such a vast expanse of land at the expense of the indigenous population. However, they continued to allow Jewish immigration and assured Zionist leaders that the Jews would be able to establish their state in Mandate Palestine. All of this was in accordance with the Balfour Declaration. A continual stream of Jews flowed into Palestine.

The British support for Zionists was against the wishes of the Arab population. The Palestinian Arabs also had national aspirations. They wanted to establish an independent state of Palestine, free from British control. Yet they felt that their demands were being ignored while those of Jews were being fulfilled. Angry about the injustice of their British occupiers and seeing their land being gradually overtaken by a foreign people, the Palestinians revolted in 1936.

Peel Commission Plan - 1937 (Map 2)

In the midst of the Arab Revolt, the British sent a commission of inquiry under Lord Peel to determine the causes of the rebellion. While the Peel Commission was operating, the Palestinian leadership decided to halt their six-month general strike. The commission found the causes of the uprising to be the Palestinians' desire for independence and their fear of the establishment of the Jewish national home. Nevertheless, it recommended that the land of Mandate Palestine be divided into three zones, as shown in the following map of the Peel Commission Partition Plan of 1937. Not surprisingly, the uprising resumed in full force following the results of the commission's inquiry.

THE PEEL COMMISSION PARTITION PLAN, JULY 1937

MAP 2



The British decided to give the yellow zone to the Jewish people to make their state. The red zone was to be given to the Palestinians. The green zone was designated as a zone to remain under British mandatory control.

The British bias in favor of Jews was clearly shown by the recommendations of the plan. In 1937 the Arabs of Palestine owned over 94% of the land, while Jews (native Palestinian Jews and recent immigrants together) owned less than 6% of the land. Of the 1,401,794 people living in Palestine at the time, 395,836 (or about 28%) were Jewish.⁷ Half the population in the yellow zone itself were Arabs. The Peel commission suggested that 250,000 Palestinians be evacuated from this area to make room for a Jewish state.⁸ These Palestinians felt that it was grossly unfair to take part of their country from them and give it to a foreign people. Those living in the yellow zone had no desire to leave their cherished homes.

The Zionist response to the Peel partition plan was mixed. Many did not approve because they believed the land allocated to them was not enough. However, both David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizman, Zionist leaders at the time, united in accepting the partition in principle, though their ultimate aspirations encompassed larger, unspecified borders. The most important thing for these leaders was sovereignty. They did not feel that they would be confined to the established borders and could expand in the future.⁹

The Palestinians were aware of the Zionists' tactics and their leaders totally opposed the partition plan. Mind you, all of Palestine - the yellow, red and green areas combined - is only approximately the size of the state of Maryland. We are talking about a very small territory.

Thus, the interests of the Palestinians and the Jews led both parties to reject the decisions of the Peel Commission. This opposition to the Peel Commission plan consequently resulted in no enforcement of the partition. Subsequent negotiations failed to bridge the rift. Attempting to provide a better solution, the British government issued the "MacDonald White Paper" in 1939. In this document the British rescinded the 1937 partition decision,

stating that the Balfour Declaration "could not have intended that Palestine should be converted into a Jewish State against the will of the Arab population of the country." Instead, the White Paper declared that Palestine would become independent in 1949 as a unified state in which both Arabs and Jews would share in government.

The Arab rebellion had been suppressed by the beginning of World War II. The Zionists though, feeling support for their plans weakening and angry at British restrictions on immigration at a time of Nazi persecution of European Jewry, developed resistance of their own to the British. Some efforts focused on increasing illegal immigration to Palestine. Other more extreme groups began a campaign of assassinations, bombings and terrorism.¹⁰ The Irgun, a militant Zionist group led by Menachem Begin, the future prime minister of Israel, began to attack British administrative buildings and police personnel, along with bombing Palestinian gathering places. The Irgun engineered the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946. Later on, a group called LEHI (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) waged a campaign of assassinating British officials.¹¹

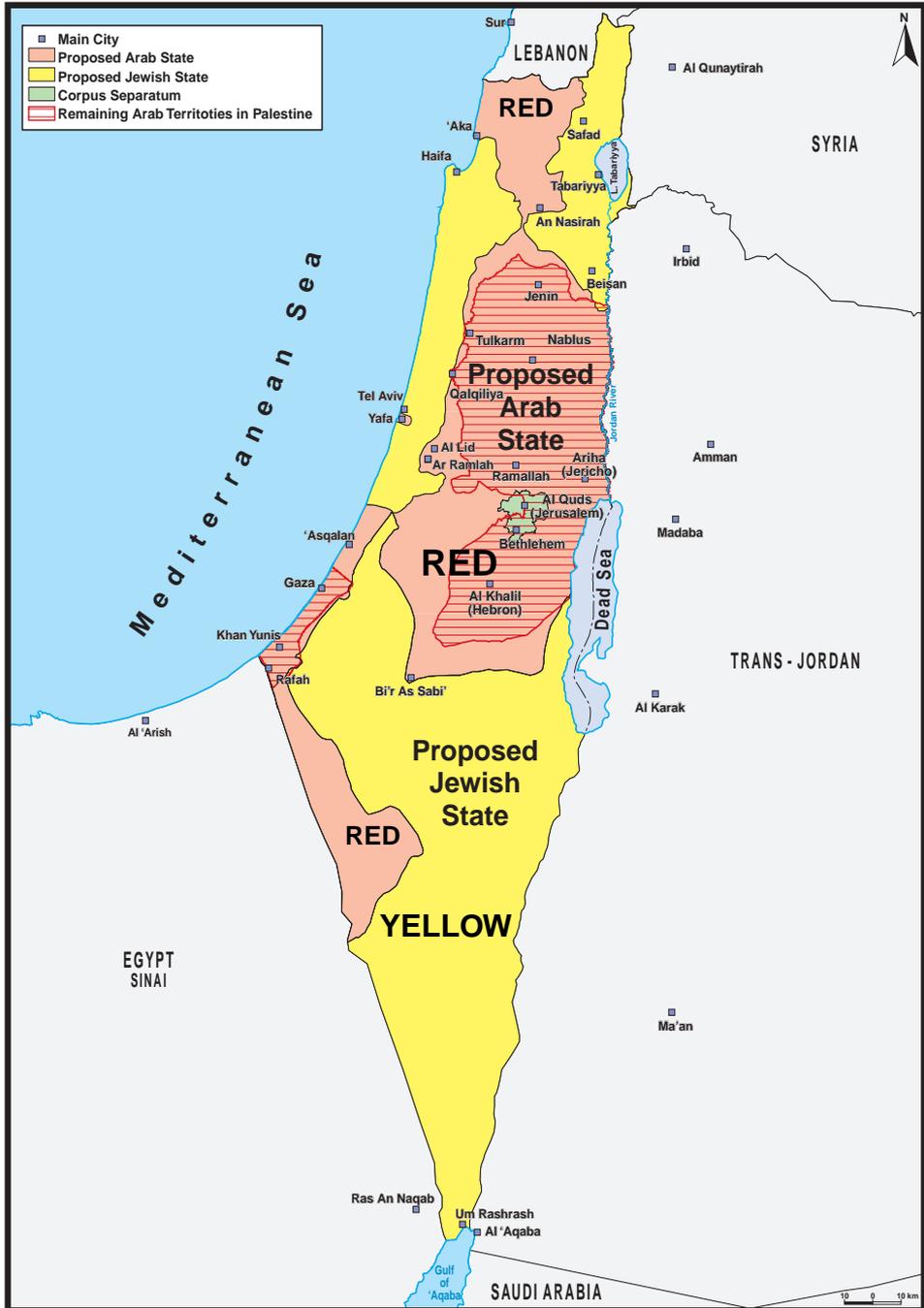
This tri-party conflict between the Palestinian Arabs, the Jews and the British continued until 1947. At this time the British, recognizing their failure at ruling the area and pressured to concentrate on rebuilding post-war Britain, decided to wash their hands of the whole problem, and turned it over to the United Nations.

The United Nations Partition Plan - 1947 (Map 3)

In 1947 the United Nations debated what should be done with Palestine. The central question was whether to propose a single country for both Arabs and Jews or partition the land into two states. In the end, on November 29 1947, the UN voted 33 to 13 with 10 abstentions in favor of a new partitioning of the country. The UN partition plan was based on a Zionist plan that US President Truman had endorsed in August 1946. As indicated on the map, red would be the Palestinian state, yellow would be the (now larger) Jewish

THE UNITED NATIONS PARTITION PLAN, 1947

MAP 3



state, and the smaller green area would be the internationally-governed zone which included Jerusalem.

Once again there were objections from both Jews and Arabs. Some Jews felt they were not offered enough. However, most Jews in the Jewish Agency, led by the ever-pragmatic David Ben-Gurion, decided to accept the partition. The Palestinians, who still accounted for about 65% of the population, did not understand why 35% of the population which was Jewish was being granted 54% of Palestinian land. At this time, Palestinians owned about 87.5% of the total area of Palestine, while Jews owned 6.6 % of the total lands. The remaining 5.9% was "state land" as classified by the British Mandate.¹² Losing so much of their land to a foreign people was not acceptable to the Palestinians, and their leadership did not agree to it.

Why did the United Nations propose such a generous division to the Jews in 1947? The most obvious answer is the Holocaust. It was the end of World War II, and all of Europe felt guilty for what had happened to the Jews. Members of the U.N. - Russia, France, England, and the US - all wanted to make it up to the Jewish people. They wanted to solve the Jewish problem. However, unfortunately for the Palestinians, neither Germany, nor the U.S., nor any other country in the world welcomed the Jews. Instead, they planned to divide Palestine, giving a large portion to the Jewish people. Imagine if, against the will of Americans, the Zionists decided to create their independent homeland in an American state. How would most Americans react?

The Catastrophe (Al-Nakba): 1948

Despite the fact that the Palestinian people and the Arab nations did not accept the partition plan, the Zionists embarked upon a campaign to enforce the partition themselves.¹³ They began evicting the Palestinians who lived in the yellow zone. The ethnic cleansing of historic Palestine was not incidental, but instead resulted from a clear strategy to fulfill Zionist desires for a state with a Jewish majority and government.

The beginning of the campaign to cleanse Palestine of Arabs happened at Deir Yassin, a village near Jerusalem, on April 9, 1948. Before the outbreak of the war, members of the Irgun and Stern Gang, a more extreme branch of the former group, entered the village and proceeded to massacre its inhabitants. It is agreed that at least 130 were murdered, but there are some estimates asserting that as many as 250 people were killed on that bleak day. After raiding the village, the Zionist forces took some survivors and paraded them through Jewish areas of Jerusalem. They later took them to a quarry and shot them in cold blood.¹⁴ News of Deir Yassin spread, putting terror in the hearts of hundreds of thousand of Palestinians. Zionist forces proved their belief that without the expulsion of the Palestinian residents from their land, Zionist goals, as defined by the Zionist leadership, would be untenable. Thus began the Arab-Israeli War of 1948.

The Arab countries were reluctant to enter into a war, hoping instead for western intervention. In the end however, Jordan, Egypt and several other Arab countries went to war against Israel. Their efforts were too little too

Nahr-el-Bared refugee camp near Lebanon, set up in 1948 to shelter Palestinian refugees (UNRWA Photo 1952).



late. While the 1948 war is typically heralded as a miraculous victory for Israel, the historical facts prove otherwise. Judging based on the comparative military capabilities of both sides, it is no surprise that Israel was victorious.¹⁵ By the time the war ended, the state of Israel managed to conquer even more Arab land, again changing the map of the Palestine.

There were several attempts throughout the war to establish a cease-fire and re-assess the partition plan. But the Zionists stalled and impeded such efforts for as long as possible, at times resorting to extreme measures. For instance, on September 17, 1948 a Swedish diplomat named Count Folke Bernadotte was gunned down in Jerusalem in a carefully planned assassination. Just one day earlier Bernadotte had released an alternative to the UN partition plan that he thought might bring about peace. The Zionists were not happy with Bernadotte's assessment and LEHI, whose leaders included future Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, took the diplomat's life to halt the plan.¹⁶

1949 Armistice (Map 4)

Everything in yellow became the state of Israel. This area constituted 78% of Mandate Palestine, 22% more than what was allocated by the UN. The remaining 22% was taken by Jordan and Egypt. Jordan held the portion of land that today we call the West Bank, named because of its position on the west bank of the Jordan River, and annexed it. The Egyptians retained a small piece of land on the Mediterranean shore, which today we call the Gaza Strip. What was left for the Palestinians? Nothing. In addition, Jerusalem was divided. East Jerusalem became an Arab city. West Jerusalem became an Israeli city.

Palestinians leaving their homeland after Israeli occupation in 1948 (UNRWA).



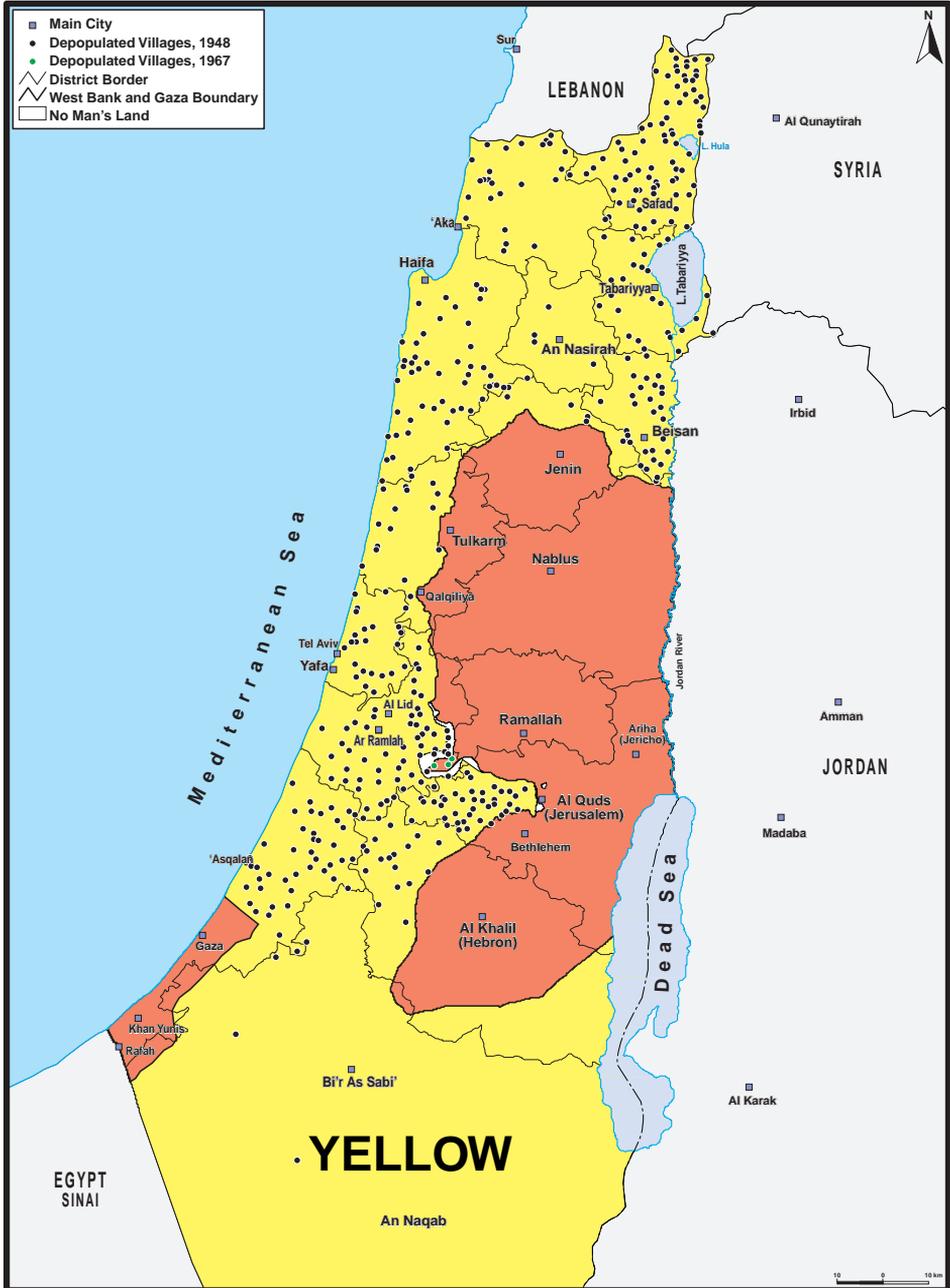
The Aftermath of the Arab-Israeli War - 1948 (Map 5)

The underlying human tragedy of 1948 can be best understood from this map. The black dots represent the 418 Palestinian towns and villages that were either destroyed or depopulated. They were either flattened by Israeli bulldozers or cleared of residents to provide homes for Jews. Zionist forces would surround a Palestinian village and tell the inhabitants that they had one or two hours to get out. If they chose to stay, they would be wiped out along with the town. In several cases, as in Deir Yassin, massacres took place.

80% of the Palestinians living in the yellow zone fled from fear or were evicted by Zionists. Most of those that were not forced out lived on the periphery of the Zionist military action and managed to stay primarily because a cease-fire was signed. Additionally, and despite the enormous injustice and violence of the Zionists toward the Palestinians, expelling all Palestinians would have taken a degree of military overkill that would not

MAP 5

DEPOPULATED PALESTINIAN VILLAGES IN 1948 AND 1967



have been politically acceptable, particularly in light of the recent horror the Jews had themselves experienced under the Nazis.

The 750,000 Palestinians who did flee lost everything that they had in 1948, and became refugees. Just as Jews in Europe were forced from their homes due to pogroms, Palestinians were forced to leave their homes and land due to Zionist ethnic cleansing. In what may be termed a 20th century "trail of tears" refugees from all over the yellow zone trekked to Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and other surrounding states. Their journey was terrible. Most of them went on foot and lost those who were weak as they traversed harsh wilderness areas to reach safety.

Though some Palestinians realized they would not return to their homes, many thought they were going away for a couple of weeks. They left with the clothes on their backs and their keys in their pockets, running away with the expectation of returning. But the Israelis took control of the country, fortified the borders, and no Palestinian - man, woman or child - was allowed to go back. Any Palestinian who tried to return was shot and killed at the border. The majority of Palestinians who left their country ended up in refugee camps.

Today, after more than half a century, refugee camps are still scattered throughout the West Bank the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. About 1.2 million Palestinians are living in these camps. This does not include over four million Palestinian refugees scattered in countries throughout the Middle East and the world who do not live in camps. The problem of these five million plus Palestinian refugees has never been solved. They have never been compensated, and it is very unlikely that they will ever be reunited with their homeland.

This scattering of the Palestinians, referred to as Al-Nakba ("The Catastrophe" in Arabic), created a very volatile situation, demographically and politically, both in Palestine and the rest of the Arab world. You cannot shove almost a million people out of their homes and think you will live in

peace and security. The tragedy explains much of the tension between the Arabs and the Jews over the last fifty years.

The United Nations has made many resolutions stating that the Palestinians have a right to return to their homeland. The United States, however, repeatedly uses its veto power in the UN Security Council to block any resolution that requires significant concessions by Israel, including the return of the refugees. So the Palestinians have had to stay where they are. United States policy in the Middle East in the last fifty years has in effect prolonged the conflict. Thus America is a fundamental part of the problem.

The fact that many refugees live in camps remains a problem. Wherever they went in the Arab world they enlisted the help of those governments to get back home. Consequently, there have been many Arab-Israeli wars in the Middle East.

The Six-Day War: 1967 (Map 6)

Israel waged war against the Arabs in 1967, with specifically expansionist intentions.¹⁷ In this war Israel took the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Gaza Strip and the whole Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. The result was many more refugees. A big problem became even bigger. In annexing East Jerusalem, Israel defied UN Resolution 181 of December 1947, which holds all of Jerusalem to be under international control.

Apart from the war of 1948, no other event shaped the fate of the Palestinian people or framed the current conflict more than the 1967 war. Now all of historical Palestine and all its Palestinian inhabitants were under Israeli occupation. The years that followed revealed the true nature of Zionism as an expansionist ideology as it systematically colonized the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Every month Palestinians saw more and more of their land confiscated for Israeli use. Under the rule of a military regime, life for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip became

intertwined with humiliation, detention without a fair trial, torture, curfews, and violent suppression of dissent.

The Yom Kippur War and Camp David

Some Israeli leaders were well aware of the implications of their actions on the Palestinian and Arab peoples. Sometime after the 1967 War, then Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan made a statement that seemed to reflect the skepticism among many Israelis about the likely success of a negotiated peace settlement with the Arab world. He said: "It is not true that the Arabs detest the Jews for personal, religious, or racial reasons. They consider us, reasonable from their point of view, as Westerners, foreigners, invaders who have seized an Arab country to make a Jewish state . . . seeing that we are forced to realize our objectives expressly against the will of the Arab people we have to live in a state of permanent war."

Dayan's statement was prophetic. On October 6, 1973, on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur and during the Muslim month-long fast of Ramadan, the Arab countries resumed hostilities against Israel. In the beginning, the Arabs pressed their advantage. Syria gained back part of the Golan Heights. Egypt was able to regain some of the Sinai Peninsula. But the United States, under the leadership of President Nixon, once again sided with Israel, providing them with aid and weapons. In the end, Israel recaptured the Golan Heights and most of the Sinai Peninsula.¹⁸

When Jimmy Carter became president of the US, he brought Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Camp David where, in 1979, they signed the first Arab-Israeli Peace Accord. According to this accord, all of the Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt and Egypt became the first Arab nation to recognize Israel as a legitimate state in the Middle East.

Lebanon - A No Win War: 1982-1998

For the next decade and a half, Israel was forced to defend its northern borders. On the northern border between Israel and Lebanon, Palestinians kept up their struggle to infiltrate Israel and return to their homes by attacking settlers in the North. It is important to understand that Palestinians were living in deplorable conditions in refugee camps. The refugees were not assimilated in Lebanon, as the predominantly Christian-led government did not want to tilt the balance of political power by having Muslim refugees become citizens. Because the United Nations could not enforce resolutions to have the refugees repatriated in Israel, they were stuck in these camps in intolerable conditions.



A family in Burj el Shamali camp near Sidon, Lebanon, awaits its turn in the distribution of tents (UNRWA Early 1950s).

In 1982, Israel launched an enormous military offensive into Lebanon. The purpose of the effort was, in part, to stop Palestinian infiltration on its northern border. Israel had larger plans in mind though which were the true guiding forces for its strategy in the war. It had long been a dream of many Israeli leaders to install a Christian dominated government in Lebanon that would be compliant to Israeli wishes. Israel also desired this government to keep the country out of Syria's sphere of influence. Then Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, who commanded the assault and others in the Israeli government, also intended to eradicate the Palestinian Liberation Organization and liquidate its leader Yasser Arafat from Lebanon.

During the invasion and occupation of Lebanon, Israel unleashed a barrage of unrestrained military force against the Lebanese, causing the death of many innocents. Israel made an incursion northward all the way to Beirut, leaving a trail of destruction marked by the shelling and bombing of civilian areas. A horrific war crime that took place under Israeli supervision during this time was the massacre at the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps near Beirut. A pro-Israeli Lebanese group made up of Phalangist Christians entered the camps, which at that time were under Israeli control, and proceeded to murder hundreds.¹⁹

Despite Israel's efforts, its plans backfired. Lebanon's Christian puppet government fell, Syria's hold on the country grew much stronger, and the war destabilized Lebanon for many years to come. Israel continued to occupy southern Lebanon for eighteen years, stationing a large military force there. However, under the leadership of the PLO (by then exiled to Tunis) and Hezbollah, the Palestinians continued to try to push the Israeli army out of Lebanon and regain their homeland by force. Thereafter, Israel was never free from conflict at the Israeli-Lebanese border. Both sides suffered losses, though Palestinians suffered a hundred fold. The Israelis and the Lebanese fought in this area until May 24, 2000 when Israeli troops under the leadership of Prime Minister Ehud Barak pulled out of Lebanon. An uneasy truce has held since then.

Jewish Colonies 1967-2000 (Map 7)

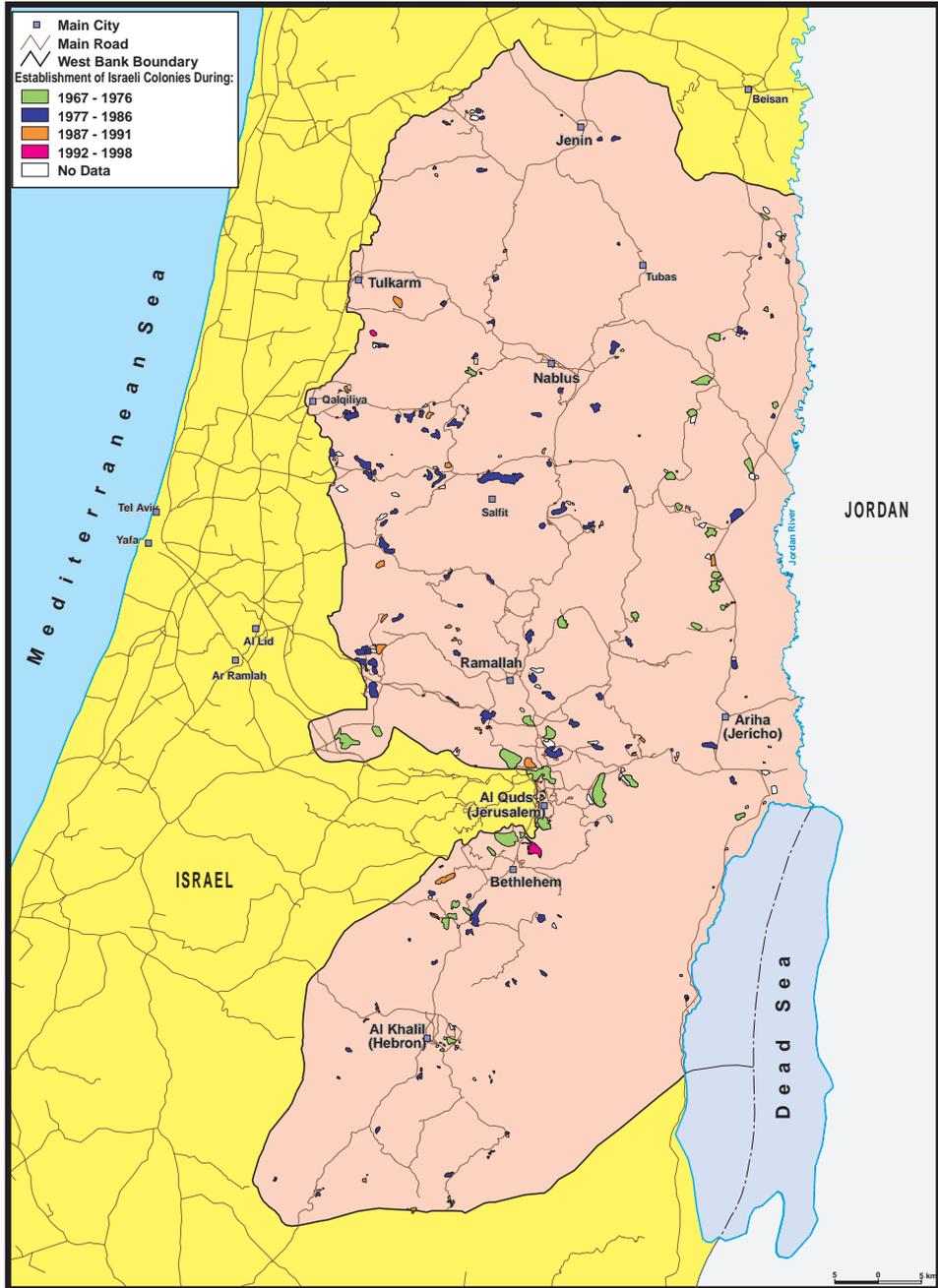
The territory still occupied by Israel, namely the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights, remains the bone of contention to this day. The Palestinians, prior to and since the Oslo Peace Process, have been asking Israel to give back the areas occupied in 1967, namely the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in a deal they call "land for peace." The Syrians are asking for the return of the Golan Heights in a similar deal. There is support for such a plan among Israelis themselves. Many Israelis feel that the only way to make peace with the Arabs is by allowing the Palestinian people to have the West Bank and Gaza Strip for their own state, and to return the Golan Heights to Syria.

One of the most difficult obstacles to a peace agreement is the Israeli policy of building colonies (often referred to as settlements) in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel also has settlements in the Golan Heights, but I am focusing on the Palestinian-Israeli settlement problem. Despite objections by the Palestinians and United Nations resolutions calling for a halt to colony building on Palestinian lands, the Israeli government, with the help of American taxpayers' money, continues to build Jewish colonies throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This map shows the pattern of colony building carried out since the 1967 Six-Day War. It is not difficult to see the gradual takeover of Palestinian lands designated by the green, purple, orange, red and white areas.

The UN has repeatedly affirmed that the Geneva Convention of 1948, which forbids the occupying power from transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, is applicable to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Israeli government is a signatory party to the Geneva Convention, yet violates it with every housing unit it builds on Palestinian land. Since the Johnson administration the US has concurred that Israeli colonies are illegal. Nevertheless, Israel continues to receive ever-stronger support from the US. The United States has vetoed UN Security Council resolutions calling for the halting of colony construction. Furthermore,

JEWISH COLONIES IN THE WEST BANK FROM 1967 TO 1998

MAP 7



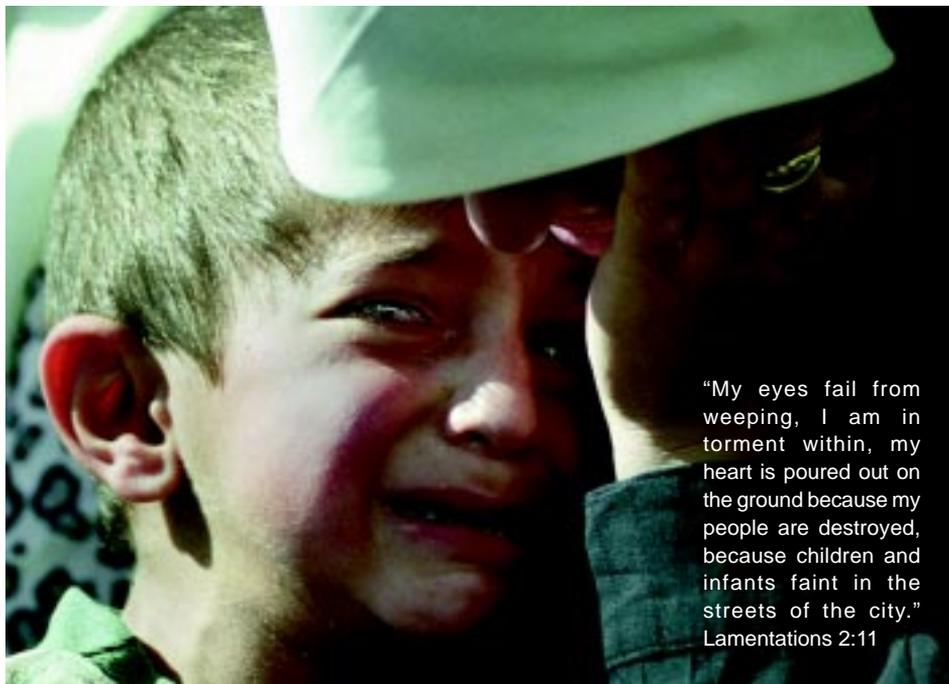
every year the United States gives three billion dollars of its taxpayers' money (\$13-16 million a day) to Israel. This enormous influx of funds bloats the Israeli government's budget, freeing up funds for colonization. In addition to spending funds to build housing units in the colonies, Israel offers very attractive incentives and substantial subsidies to Jews from other countries to live in the Israeli colonies, which make this move as easy and as inexpensive as possible.

In addition to the colonies, the Israeli authorities confiscate Palestinian land for roads to connect the colonies together and to Israel proper. These roads, often called by-pass roads because they "by-pass" Palestinian localities, are not built for Palestinian use and are in full control of the Israeli army, which routinely closes them to Palestinian traffic.

What has developed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is a system of segregation, not unlike the system of apartheid in South Africa, in which the Jewish colonists enjoy a higher standard of living, expropriate Palestinian land for their own use, and consume a disproportionate amount of water and other natural resources. At the same time that Israel built tens of thousands of houses for Jews in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, it launched a program of demolishing the houses of Palestinians. Since 1967 Israel's military government destroyed over 4,000 Palestinian homes in the West Bank. All these injustices are enforced by an enormous military regime and a legal system that applies different standards to Palestinians than to Israelis.

Intifada (1987-1993)

Because the Palestinians were a people under occupation with no government to speak for them, they had few resources at their disposal with which to curb Israeli aggression and abuse of Palestinian human rights. Whatever resistance they attempted was quickly quelled by the Israeli military. But on December 8, 1987, in an incident that ignited much popular tension, four Palestinians were killed in a traffic accident in the Gaza Strip. Rumors



"My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within, my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city."
Lamentations 2:11

quickly spread that this was not an accident but a deliberate attempt to kill Palestinians. This event unleashed the fury of Palestinians and would have far reaching implications.

The next day young Palestinians were on the streets confronting Israeli soldiers with nothing more than stones. Responding to rocks with gunfire, the soldiers shot and killed a 15-year old boy who became the first martyr of the Intifada (Intifada literally means "shaking off" and is the Arabic term used for the Palestinian uprising). The rage of Palestinians grew, and the Intifada soon spread to every town and village in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Dayan's belief that the Jews of Israel must live in a permanent state of war with the Arabs was realized once again. But this time, it was a war between an unarmed Palestinian population against one of the best military forces in the world.

Why did these unarmed youths go to the streets in protest of this powerful army? Throughout their childhoods, these youths had been living in towns

and villages whose streets were patrolled daily by the soldiers of a foreign (i.e. Israeli) army. Their schools were arbitrarily closed. Their family and friends were thrown into prison and tortured. Their homes were destroyed as punishment for defying their oppressors. They were punished severely merely for displaying the colors of the Palestinian flag in public places or for writing slogans on walls. Their parents were being humiliated at checkpoints and in searches. Why did the youth go to the streets? To fight for their peoples' freedom and human rights.

Though the importance of the youth in the Intifada should not be underestimated, the Intifada was embraced by Palestinians of all ages. In addition, while the most well known image of the Intifada to the outside world is that of a stone throwing Palestinian, the struggle of the Palestinians at this time was primarily nonviolent. Nonviolent strategies used by the Palestinians included peaceful demonstrations and marches, obstruction (placing bodies in front of bulldozers, blocking roads), non-cooperation with the occupation forces (refusing to work in Israeli factories, to pay taxes, to carry identification cards, etc.), boycotts of Israeli goods and strikes. Perhaps the most important nonviolent resistance to Israeli occupation took the form of building up Palestinian society. This involved creating an infrastructure independent of Israel including schools, hospitals, factories, and other services. In addition, the Palestinians organized themselves into committees that provided for the needs of the population and united them in a common struggle.

As John R Gee describes it in *Unequal Conflict: The Palestinians and Israel*, "The Intifada was the greatest struggle mounted within their homeland by the Palestinians since the 1936-39 revolt. It brought into action women and young people on a scale unknown before in Palestine ... [it] showed the world that the Palestinian people as a whole absolutely rejected Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip."

Treacherous Pathway to an Illusive Peace: The Oslo Accords

The Intifada proved to be a powerful force in providing recognition to the rights of Palestinians and legitimacy to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It paved the road that led to the White House lawn where on September 13, 1993, the Declaration of Principles was signed by President Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin.

Nevertheless, the road to the White House was a rocky one. In November 1988, the Palestine National Council (PNC) had convened in Algiers where it acknowledged Israel's right to exist, renounced terrorism and announced the constitution of the Arab State of Palestine, which was soon recognized by ninety states. As a consequence of these actions the PLO began talks with the US Administration. However, the talks lost momentum and came to a halt. Diplomatic stagnation set in on the threshold of the Gulf War and as a result of the PLO's ill-conceived and ill-fated decision to throw its support behind Saddam Hussein. The decision to support Saddam Hussein carried an expensive tag for the PLO. It was excluded from the Madrid Conference on the Middle East and denied further financial aid by its chief backers, the Gulf States.

Meanwhile, the involvement of the Islamic resistance movement (Hamas) in Intifada actions in the West Bank and Gaza and the involvement of Zionist extremists in the political life of Israel posed a serious threat to what little public security existed for the Israelis and Palestinians alike. Early in 1992, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, leader of the right-wing Likud Party, called an election for June. Former Prime ministers Shimon Perez and Yitzhak Rabin, leaders of the Israeli Labor Party, fought a vigorous campaign and regained power. These leaders were in favor of talking to the PLO and making peace with the Palestinians.

Oslo I (Gaza/Jericho) Agreement - 1994 (Map 8)

In the summer of 1993 secret negotiations were held in Oslo between

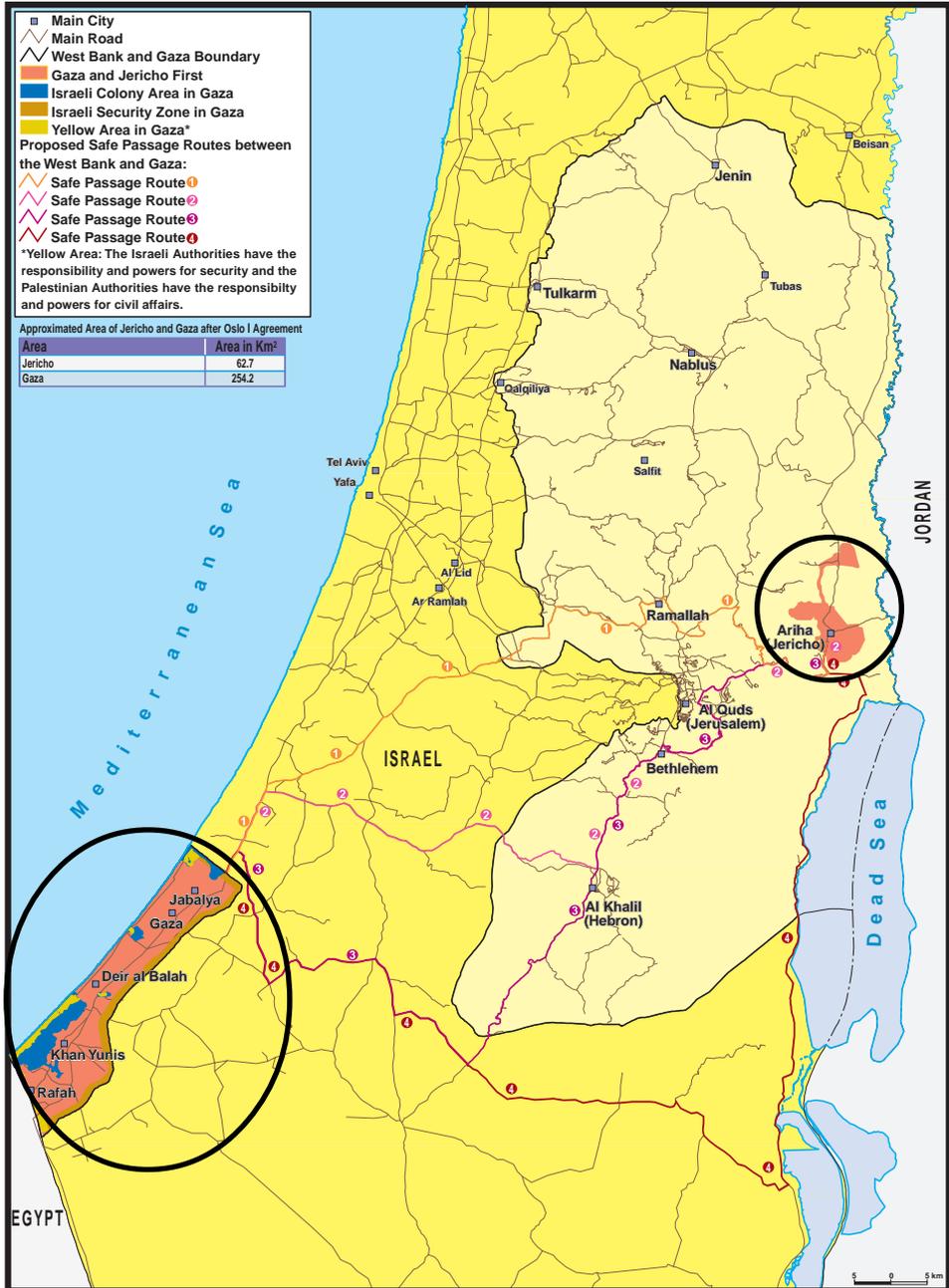
representatives of Israel and the PLO. Johan Joegen Holst, the Norwegian Foreign Minister, hosted these meetings. The negotiations ended on September 9 with an exchange of letters between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel and President Yasser Arafat of the PLO. On September 13

The largest of the three Bethlehem refugee camps, Dheisheh houses about 10,000 Palestinian refugees. This photo was taken in 1959, when concrete huts had been built for the refugees



OSLO I (GAZA JERICO) AGREEMENT ON MAY 4TH, 1994

MAP 8



on the White House lawn, in the presence of President Clinton, the two leaders signed a Declaration of Principles (DoP), followed by several more agreements popularly known as the Oslo Accords. These agreements were based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which call for Israel to withdraw from the areas it occupied in the 1967 war.

In accordance with Oslo I, the Israeli army pulled its troops out of Jericho and most of Gaza, formally granting to Palestinians a limited autonomy. The DoP outlined a transitional period not exceeding five years with "permanent status negotiations" beginning not later than the beginning of the third year of the interim period. The agreement proclaimed, "It is understood that these [permanent status] negotiations shall cover remaining issues, including Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and cooperation with other neighbors, and other issues of common interest."

It was hoped that through the experiences of peacemaking leading up to the final status talks, there would emerge among Israelis and among Palestinians the trust and confidence needed to make the compromises necessary to resolve the most weighty matters. Due to many stops and delays though, the original time period has stretched beyond what was outlined in the agreements. During this time, Israeli colonization of the West Bank and Gaza Strip continued relentlessly, making it increasingly difficult for Palestinians to perceive that the Israelis were interested in peace.

Oslo II Interim Agreement-September 28, 1995 (Map 9)

The vision of the Oslo Accords was for Israel to return the land of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the Palestinians in stages. This was to be done by dividing the West Bank land into three different categories: A, B, and C. Both civil jurisdiction and security control would be granted to the Palestinian Authority in A areas. Civil jurisdiction would also be granted to the Palestinian Authority in B areas, but here Israel would retain security control. Finally, C areas would be under complete Israeli jurisdiction. The

Palestinians hoped that the process of handing over land would go smoothly. That is, they expected C areas to become B areas, which would then become A areas. Eventually, all of the West Bank would be under full Palestinian control. The Palestinians' hopes were only partially realized, but even getting there was not easy.

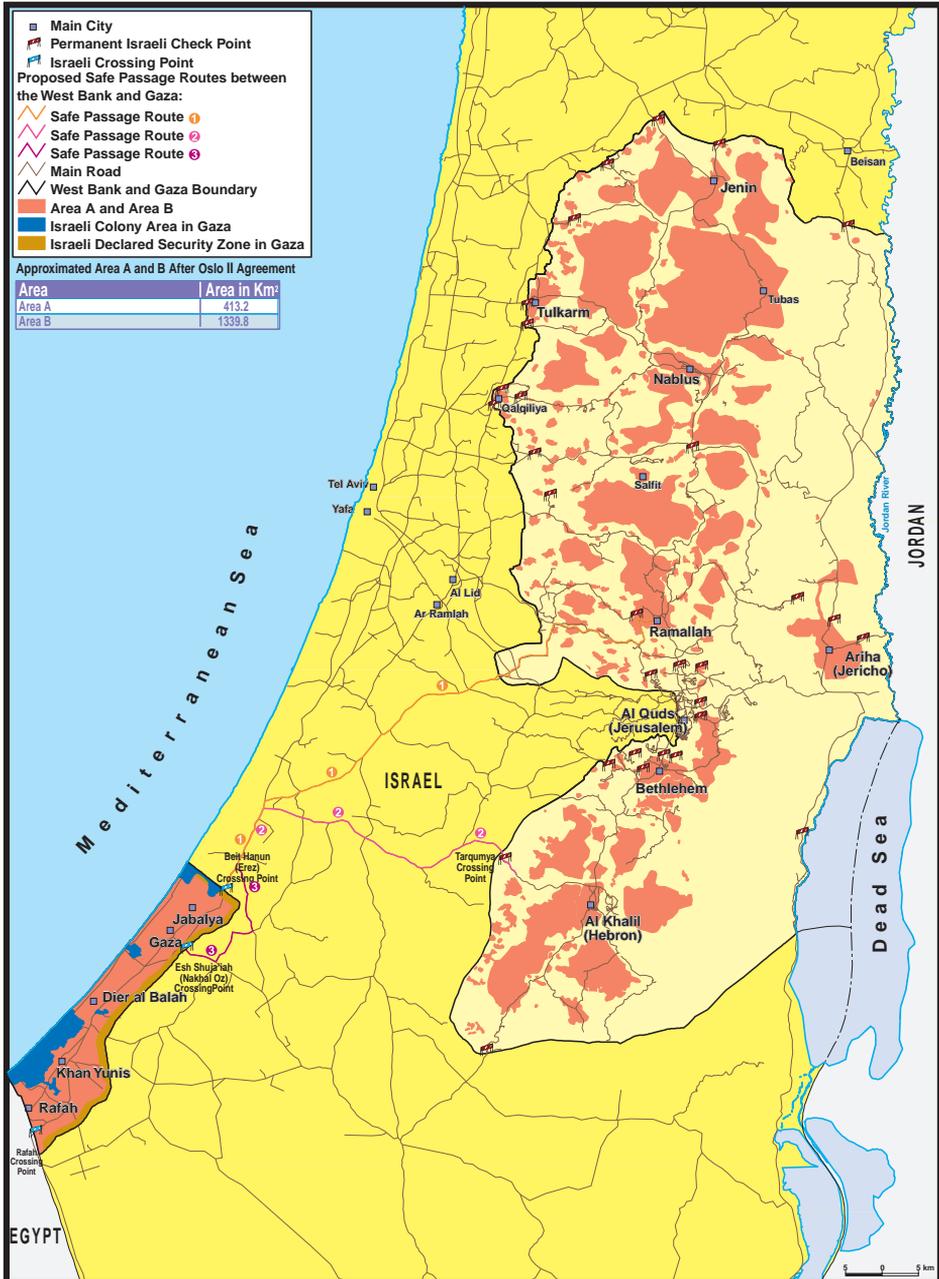
When Israeli leaders signed the peace agreements with Palestinians, they often did so without approval of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament. They had to return to the legislature and argue for the treaties that they had signed to be passed. While the treaties were approved, they often went through by only a few votes margin in favor. The Israeli leaders in favor of land for peace always had to deal with fierce opposition. In addition, Labor, the party that signed the Oslo Accords, was defeated in the Israeli elections in 1996. The elected Likud Party, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, was far less conciliatory to Palestinians, and tried its best to stop the process of returning land to the Palestinians. These factors caused the process of returning land to the Palestinians to be very slow and difficult.

As a result of Oslo II, which was signed in 1995, the Palestinians, with great struggles and many delays, gained limited autonomy over the areas in red seen on map 9. Area A consisted of major city centers and amounted to 3% of the West Bank. 24% of the West Bank was designated Area B. The remaining 73% of the West Bank was allocated to Area C.

Since Oslo II there have been several negotiations resulting in Israeli military withdrawals from further areas of the West Bank. These have increased the A areas and subsequently decreased the C areas. The PA now has A status in about 17% of the West Bank, but Israel still retains ultimate authority over movement into and out of these areas. The practical implications of this are that Israel can and frequently does impose arbitrary "closures" on the population centers contained within area A, effectively turning them into large Bantustans or ghettos. B areas now consist of 22% of the land of the West Bank. Residents in these areas are, if anything, even worse off than those of area A, as they have no police protection, little civil

OSLO II INTERIM AGREEMENT ON SEPTEMBER 28TH, 1995

MAP 9



representation, and their access to roads and resources such as water are even more compromised. Area C, approximately 60% of the West Bank, still remains under total Israeli occupation.

As you can see from the map, the West Bank has been effectively carved up into noncontiguous sections, making it virtually impossible for Palestinians to achieve their aspirations for a future Palestinian state. Some Palestinians refer to this as the "Swiss Cheese" state. Would you be able to accept such terms, knowing that they would ultimately institutionalize the very occupation that you had struggled against and sacrificed under for so long?

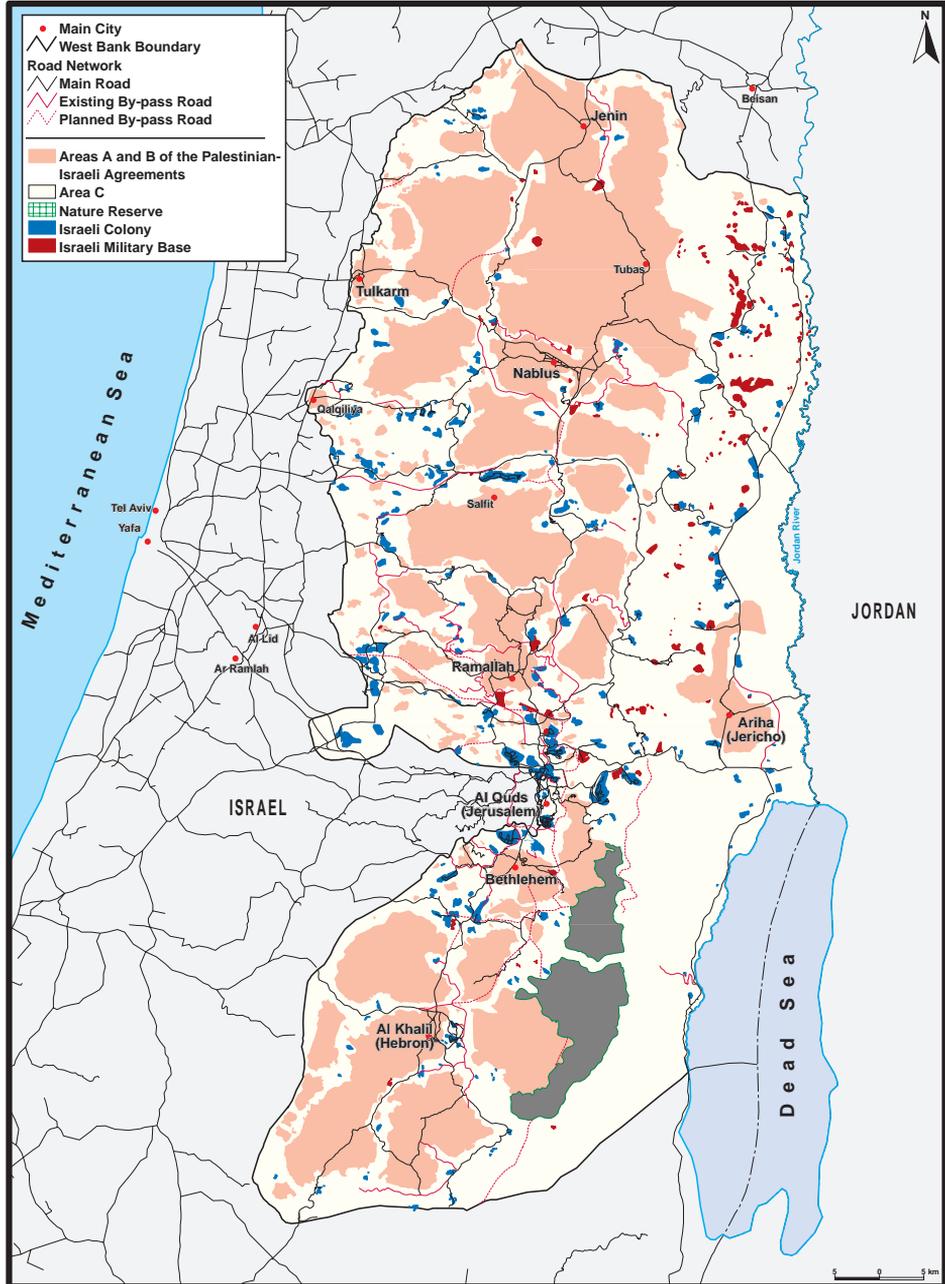
Palestinian Land Under Occupation-2000 (Map 10)

Not only this, but Israeli colonies and bypass roads are choking the Palestinians on all sides. This map shows the seriousness of the encroachment on Palestinian lands. According to Israeli sources, there are approximately 400,000 colonists living in the territories. About 200,000 of these live in colonies in East Jerusalem. Tens of thousands of housing units have been built for them while at the same time the Israeli occupation forces have systematically destroyed Palestinian houses and denied building permits for construction in Palestinian neighborhoods. Huge amounts of land have been confiscated for the colonies and for the by-pass roads that connect them. Literally every day Palestinians witness their farms and houses razed, their land stolen, their water siphoned off and denied to them, and at the same time see the Israelis profiting from all this. Piece by piece their land is being taken away from them.

Though the Palestinians had hoped that the Oslo accords would end, or at least reduce such oppression, it did not. In fact, Israeli colonization increased during the "peace process." Instead of being used to build confidence between the Israelis and Palestinians, the interim period established in the DoP was instead taken advantage of by the Israelis as a cover for colonization, with the intention of leaving as little as possible to the Palestinians in the event that final status talks ever actually took place.

PALESTINIAN LAND UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION, 2000

MAP 10



Though the Palestinians gained some autonomy in Areas A and B, they found these areas functioned primarily to control them and isolate them from each other. They gained a quasi-government of sorts, but then came to realize that this government was, in effect, more of an agent for Israeli/American interests than a source of empowerment and self-determination as well as plagued by rumors of corruption and mismanagement.

Al-Aqsa Intifada

For these reasons, among others, we are now witnessing a breakdown in the Oslo process. It is in this context that Ariel Sharon's notorious visit to the Haram Al-Sharif (or Temple Mount) on September 28, 2000 flanked by 1000 armed policemen took place. Had Sharon come at a less tense time, or had he decided to cancel going to a sight as provocative as the Temple Mount, the recent crisis that started in September 2000 may have been prevented. Sharon agitated millions of Muslims around the world, but especially Palestinian Muslims. Naturally, Palestinians all over the West Bank and Gaza Strip protested. Israel responded to the typical Palestinian protests of stone throwing fiercely, with machine gun fire, and killed more than ten Palestinians in the process. This inflamed Palestinians and started the cycle of violence that has continued to this day. Palestinians have termed the current uprising against Israel the Al-Aqsa Intifada, referring to the mosque at the Temple Mount.

At the time of this writing, violence and oppression at a level not seen in Palestine since the 1967 War is sweeping the land. The Palestinian economy is in shambles due to the Israeli closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian political leadership is struggling for survival, not always in ways that are helpful to the Palestinian population as a whole. This, combined with the cycle of violence between Palestinian resistance and regular Israeli bombardment of Palestinian towns and cities, creates a very volatile situation.

People on all sides of the conflict will find the days ahead difficult and the solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict evasive. But peace is not impossible.

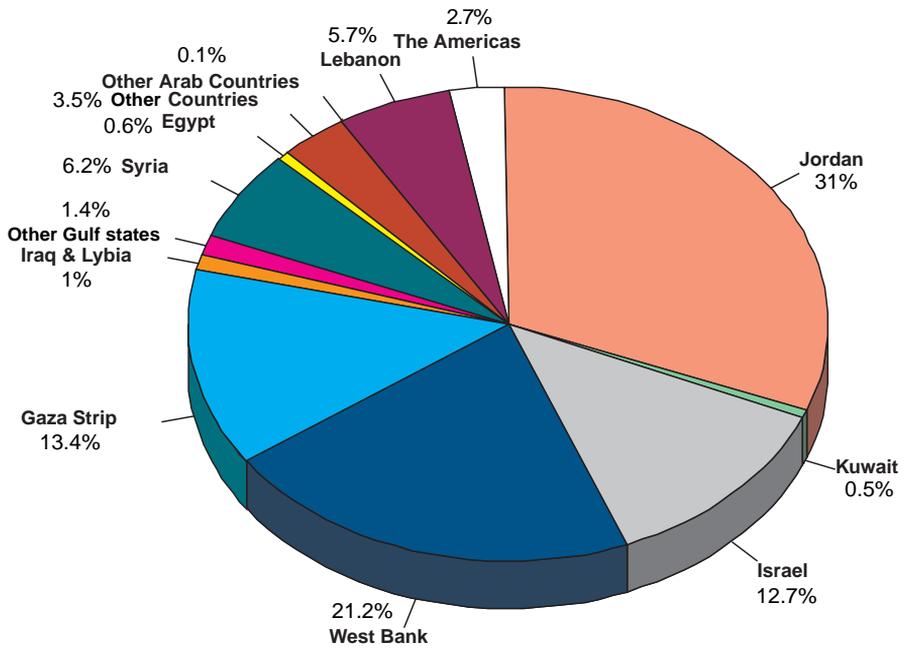
We must not fall into the trap of perceiving the current situation as normal and inevitable. However, whatever peace is created must be founded in large part on the recognition of the historical dispossession of the Palestinians from their land and the denial of their fundamental human rights.

Where Are the Palestinians Today?

The following chart illustrates the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict upon the indigenous people of Palestine. Only half of the Palestinians live today in their native land: The West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel proper. Notice the parts that show the large number of Palestinians living in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Many of them continue to live in poverty and misery in crowded refugee camps. In 1947-1948, with its partition of Palestine the UN, pressured by the US, Zionist organizations, Christian fundamentalists and other Western countries, created the state of Israel. They solved the Jewish problem. They did that however at the expense and at the demise of the Palestinians. In the process, they created a crisis that has threatened world peace for over half a century.

Do the Palestinians have a vision of peace and reconciliation with their Israeli neighbors or are they struggling aimlessly? The following chapter will answer this and other questions that Palestinians are frequently asked.

Palestinian Population Worldwide



The total Palestinian population number was 7.788 millions

Source: Salman Abu-Sita



A typical scene from the Intifadah. Palestinian youths throw stones at Israeli soldiers who respond with machine gun fire.

CHAPTER II

Common Questions about the Arab-Israeli Conflict

1. What is the Palestinian vision of peace?

(Contributed by Palestinian attorney Jonathan Kuttab)

Most Palestinians have a clear vision of workable peace between themselves and Israel. While they feel a great injustice was done to them when the state of Israel was created over their lands, and the bulk of their population displaced by incoming Jews from all over the world, and hundreds of villages destroyed, they know the clock cannot be turned back. While they wish for their plight to be acknowledged, they know they cannot seek absolute justice, but must settle for relative justice that takes note of the present realities on the ground.

For this reason, the majority of Palestinians feel a just peace can be obtained by granting them a state in those areas occupied in 1967 (the West Bank and Gaza) in return for abandoning their claim to the rest of Palestine (78%), which became the state of Israel in 1948. This two-state solution would allow Israel to legitimately exist side by side with the state of Palestine. Of course this would mean that the Jewish settlements illegally erected in the occupied territories would have to be evacuated, and perhaps their buildings made available to absorb the returning refugees. Many observers, including Israelis feel that these settlements are not only illegal and unjust, but form a constant source of tension and friction, and would render a lasting solution impractical and unworkable (See section on Israeli colonies/settlements).

The new state can be demilitarized (with no tanks, heavy artillery or fighter jets, and apache helicopters). This would be out of deference for Israel's security fears, but would also remove the burden of heavy military spending and allow Palestinians to concentrate on building a new peaceful state.

Palestinians would also like an acknowledgement of their right to return to

their homeland from which they were expelled or fled. If Jews can claim the right to return to Palestine after 2000 years, surely the Palestinians can claim the right to return to their homes, which they were driven from within the living memory of this generation. Realistically, however, this right would not be exercised by most Palestinians in the new Palestinian state, and only a fraction of the refugees would be allowed, for humanitarian and other reasons, to return to what is now Israel. Palestinians can also get compensation to enable them to settle wherever they choose, including the new state of Palestine.

Jerusalem would be a separate and unique issue. Though Israel captured the city in 1967, it forms an integral part of the occupied territories, and therefore legally should be part of the new state of Palestine and under Arab sovereignty. Yet it is such an emotionally important site for both Israelis and Palestinians and for people of all three monotheistic faiths, that perhaps it should not remain under the exclusive sovereignty of any one state, but should be shared in a manner that ensures its accessibility, and freedom of religion for everyone, including the wider international



A Palestinian car destroyed after a night of Israeli shelling (2001).

community of Jews, Moslems, and Christians. Thus it can be a capital for both states, and still enjoy a unique shared status for both countries and for the international community. This Palestinian vision, I believe, is shared by a majority of Palestinians.

It slowly and painfully developed over time, and there are still those who hold out for more, claiming all of Palestine for Arabs, or arguing for a bi-national state in all of Palestine/Israel. Yet I truly believe this vision constitutes a reasonable compromise that will be supported by an overwhelming majority of Palestinians. It will enable future generations of Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace and security.

2. Why do Palestinians use "terrorism"?

Terrorism is an atrocious phenomenon that creates untold misery in the world. One need only look at the sight where the World Trade Center in New York City once stood to understand its dreadful consequences. The killing of thousands of innocents that took place there is horrific and utterly inexcusable. Indeed, it is impossible to defend the killing of anyone who dies in other similar attacks such as suicide bombings in an Israeli street or restaurant.

Even though terrorism is indefensible and deserves universal condemnation, we must recognize that it comes in different shapes and forms. It cannot be denied that governments around the world have terrorized their citizens and those of other nationalities. Rarely though, is the term "terrorist" used to describe the actions of such governments. Terrorism is relegated to the acts of rebel movements, revolutionaries, or weak nations who do not fall in line with the will of the world powers. Within these groups are some extreme organizations whose motives are fanatical, like the group that attacked the World Trade Center. Yet it is wrong to assume that because the acts of those perpetrators were senseless, "terrorists" as a whole do not have valid grievances they are trying to communicate. It is wrong for terrorists to kill innocents in addressing their ill treatment, but the way they react does not nullify their injury.

In all likelihood, the first image that crosses the minds of most Westerners upon hearing the word "Palestinian" is a kaffiye (headdress) covered terrorist. Such an image, far from being indicative of an entire population, only reflects a small yet highly visible minority. We must have the maturity to go beyond simplistic assumptions about ethnic groups. To brand all Palestinians as terrorists is the same as branding all black Americans as drug-dealers and criminals, all Mexicans as lazy, and all Southerners as racists. Stereotypes are inaccurate, hurtful, and dangerous. None of these stereotypes have any validity. As a whole, Palestinians are hard workers, many of whom rise before dawn to enter Israel and do manual labor and return to their homes at dusk. They love their children and are hoping to make a better future for them. Palestinians long for true peace and security. Just like any other people, they are not happy being in a state of perpetual war. "Terrorist" and "Palestinian" are far from being synonymous terms.

Palestinian terrorism is not the result of blind hate for Israel or the Jewish people. The Palestinian struggle against Israel in all its forms is a direct result of the occupation of their land and the suffering of their people under that occupation. To illustrate this point, take a look at the settlement of Har Homa that stands on a hill North of Bethlehem. In spite of the fact that the hill, which the Palestinians call Jabal Abu Ghnaim, is in the occupied West Bank, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decided to build a Jewish settlement there. Palestinians objected and the international community condemned the move. Israeli and Palestinian peace groups demonstrated peacefully against its construction. But Israel dismissed all of the above, and went ahead with its plans. The first step in construction was the clearing of thousands of beautiful green trees, a unique feature of the hill. Palestinian popular anger finally boiled over and a number of Palestinians began to demonstrate violently against Israel's actions, throwing rocks at Israeli soldiers. In retaliation, the Israelis fired back with live bullets, killing several Palestinian protestors and injuring hundreds. Though Palestinians eventually stopped protesting, their anger did not go away. Such recurring incidents create fertile ground for terrorism.

People often say Israel does not deserve terror in response to its confiscation of Palestinian land and continued occupation over the Palestinian people. "What Israel does," they say, "is not terror." Yet Palestinians cannot but see Israel's policies as terror. They daily suffer as they see their land being taken, their ancient trees being destroyed, their houses being arbitrarily demolished, their freedom of movement denied, and in short, their basic rights and dignity trampled. Madeleine Albright once said in defense of Israel: "Terror is not a valid response to bulldozers." Imagine though that these bulldozers are destroying houses in Texas to create a Chinese colony that would be economically and politically run by China. Imagine that Americans did not have the great military power they have now, and were virtually helpless to defend this illegal annexation of their land. Wouldn't most Americans consider such acts terrorism? How would they react?

Israeli brutalities against Palestinians and the tacit support of the United States to these brutalities have brought Palestinians to utter despair. Consequently, a small minority of Palestinians perpetrate violent acts against Israeli soldiers and civilians because they do not perceive of any more effective way to fight the occupation. Such members of the Palestinian community may be wrong, tactically and morally, in choosing such a strategy. But they are not exceptionally violent, hateful, shortsighted, or vengeful compared to their equivalents in Israel.

People seem to forget that the tactics used today by the more extreme members of Palestinian society were first tested and used in Palestine not by Arabs but by Jewish underground militias during their struggle against British rule, when the power balance was shifted against the Zionists. Many today also forget that some of Israel's former prime ministers (Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir) were leaders in these militias. Chairman Arafat's history of violent tactics pales compared to that of the current prime minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon. The only difference is that the atrocities of Sharon were committed while wearing a general's uniform.

There is no moral defense for detonating a bomb in a crowded area, or any other act of violence against civilians. The point is that there is a double standard set firmly in place that demonizes any Palestinian use of violence while legitimizing that of Israel. This double standard distorts the reality of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation and of the occupation itself, resulting in widespread misunderstanding and detrimental policy decisions by world governments.

3. Why Do Palestinians Continue To Fight?

From our apartment in Beit Safafa, which is sandwiched between Bethlehem and Gilo (a Jewish settlement near Bethlehem), we frequently hear heavy artillery exchanges between Israeli troops and Palestinian fighters. As the months of fighting roll on, the number of Palestinian casualties increases. Those who pray for peace and yearn to see effective reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians must ask the question: Why do Palestinians continue to fight?



Smoke billows during Israeli shelling of Beit Jala, a predominately Christian Palestinian town (2001).

Palestinians have no US made Apache helicopters like the Israelis. Neither do they have tanks equipped with the most sophisticated instruments of destruction. They have no F-16's or any weaponry that would match the Israeli lethal air force that is used against them. They don't have the support of the world's leading economic and military power. Yet they continue to fight. Their economy is collapsing. According to a recent report, before the uprising the average income of a Palestinian was 10 times lower than the average income of an Israeli. Today, it is 20 times lower. Their human losses are great. Since the beginning of the current uprising, over 600 Palestinians were killed, and thousands were injured, some of them handicapped for life. The Palestinian population is under a perpetual siege, imprisoned in their cities and villages that are surrounded by Israeli troops, tanks and Jewish settlements. When Palestinians move from place to place within their territories they risk their very lives. Hundreds of their youth are incarcerated and tortured in Israeli jails. During the fighting their bullets hardly make it to the Israeli side, but in retaliation, Israel comes at them like a tornado and destroys their homes, olive trees, and crops. The losses of the Israelis are nothing compared to the Palestinians' economic, social, emotional and human losses. Yet they continue to fight. So why do Palestinians continue to fight?

Israeli leaders paint an inaccurate picture by insisting that Yasser Arafat and the PLO are inciting Palestinians to fight. The truth is that Arafat and his forces have for the last seven years been arresting Palestinian activists who threatened to fight Israelis. Quite often, Arafat's security forces and police stood between Palestinian stone throwers and Israeli soldiers to prevent or stop confrontations. Israel, the White House and the American media have criticized Arafat for his alleged unwillingness to stop Palestinian attacks against Israel. Certainly, Arafat cannot be credited with putting his life, political or physical, on the line for peace. However, Ariel Sharon cannot be credited with that either. Arafat is working with many forces including vehement internal opposition from Palestinian groups and much of the Palestinian populace, who feel he was too accommodating to Israel. In addition, the Palestinian Authority's security infrastructure is slowly, but

surely, being destroyed by Israel. Israeli missiles bomb Palestinian police headquarters whenever a substantial injury against Israel occurs. Such bombings are intended to have the affect of deterring further Palestinian attacks against Israel, but they have the opposite affect: increased hatred towards and willingness to attack Israel. The Israeli bombing of these centers is certainly not helpful to Palestinian attempts at arresting extremists. Arafat does not hold all the cards. It is deceitful for Israel to claim that he does, and it is naïve for the U.S. to accept Israel's story.

Some hold that Palestinians are fighting because of religious promises of paradise. While it is true that some Palestinian fighters believe in and hope for a future paradise, these aspirations are not the reason they fight. Paradise and the virgins provide only a marginal hope and incentive for a fighter who has already decided to give his life for his cause. According to Islam, a Muslim can receive the same hope by making a religious pilgrimage to Mecca called the Hajj.

Freedom is what Palestinians are fighting and dying for. Palestinians struggle for full independence on part of their historic homeland, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Anyone who assumes that Palestinians fight to destroy the state of Israel needs to answer a few thought-provoking questions: Why did Palestinian violence against Israel significantly reduce after the signing of the Oslo peace accords? Why were Israelis starting to enter Palestinian towns casually and without fear? Why, while there was still a light of hope with the peace talks, did the majority of Palestinians condemn suicide attacks? All of these point to a Palestinian population willing and capable of living side by side with Jewish Israel. But when people are inflicted with the amount of suffering Palestinians have experienced and given no hope, it is inevitable that they become desperate and callous, as many Palestinians have now become. What is less well known about the Israeli-Arab conflict is that Israel has systematically taken steps to prevent the achievement of Palestinian independence. Palestinians are the ones who, for over 50 years, have been and continue to be the victims of massive ethnic cleansing, deportations, land confiscation, house demolitions, and

all forms of discrimination, crushing their aspirations and depriving them of their dignity.

One may ask, if the Palestinians are fighting for such a noble cause, why do they resort to suicide bombings and other terrorist activities? Though this question has already been answered, I will briefly touch on it. Some nationals of any country who are repeatedly denied justice, constantly crushed by superior military power, and consistently deprived of their due treatment in the international arena, will, out of desperation, resort to radical means of resistance to achieve their legitimate rights. The absence of justice in Palestine is the foremost inducement for Palestinian radicalism.

Israel and the United States (albeit unintentionally) have conspired to deny Palestinians justice. They are thus responsible for creating a situation conducive to terrorism. Further, the U.S. is accountable for giving Israel weapons to kill suspected terrorists. These weapons were supposed to be used in self-defense but are being used to carry out internationally-banned political assassinations.

In addition, through the repeated use of its veto privilege at the Security Council, the US has consistently shielded mischievous Israel. It has indirectly encouraged Israeli state terrorism against the Palestinian population. Closing all avenues to fairness and equity, the US and Israel have created an atmosphere of desperation that expresses itself in Palestinian radicalism.

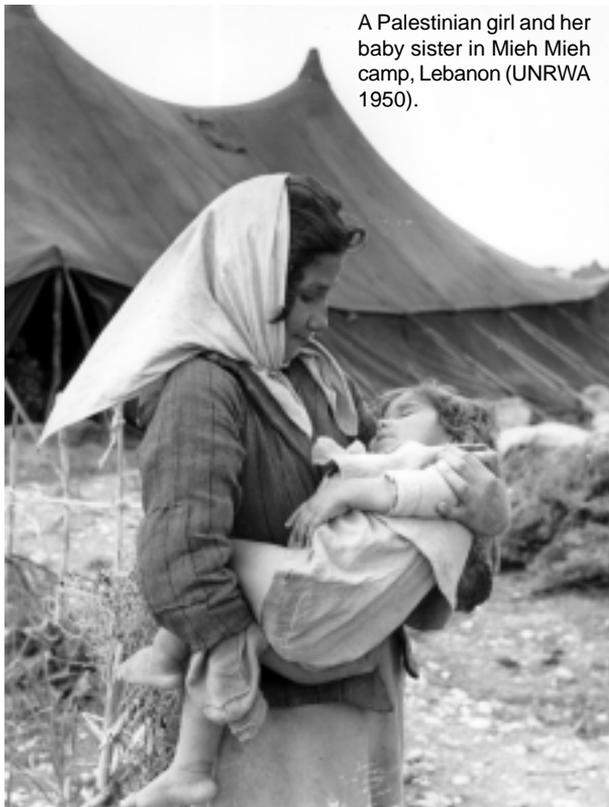
Only an end of Israeli aggression against Palestinians and a balanced US policy in the Middle East culminating in a Palestinian state could put an end to the Palestinians' desire to fight.

Why Palestinians continue to fight might be a legitimate question, but the more important questions are why does Israel continue to occupy Palestinian lands and why does the US continue to support this illegal occupation?

4. Isn't the return of the Palestinian refugees to their land in what is now Israel proper an impossible request?

The passage of over fifty years since the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from their land and the predominance of Israel's rhetoric in defining the Arab-Israeli conflict has resulted in the near deterioration of the recognition of the Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homes. Despite the fact that their right to return is clearly documented in international law, any serious suggestion of exercising that right is thought of in public discourse as impractical, if not lunatic.

The self-identity of the State of Israel is narrow enough and brittle enough that the return of the Palestinian refugees is equated with that state's destruction. The return of the approximately five million Palestinian refugees



A Palestinian girl and her baby sister in Mieh Mieh camp, Lebanon (UNRWA 1950).

to Israel would indeed run counter to the Zionist goal of a Jewish state with an overwhelmingly Jewish majority and total Jewish control.

This reality is not just or fair for the Palestinians. Yet the vast majority of Palestinians understand the limitations imposed on them and are willing to work toward some reasonable agreement with the Israelis. It is important to realize that most of the Palestinian refugees would not return to their land in

Israel even if permitted to do so. The refugees and their descendants have been living in exile for several generations and have gone on with their lives. Many of them have escaped life in the refugee camps and have begun successful careers. Others have married people from the countries to which they were exiled. For the most part, these people are not going to leave everything they have worked for in Jordan or Syria or Lebanon and return to nothing in Palestine.

What the Palestinians want more than anything else is the recognition that they were wronged. Thus far, Israel has refused to even acknowledge accountability for the expulsion of the Palestinians in either the 1948 or the 1967 war, much less apologize for the tragedy. The predominant Israeli perspective expresses no responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem. One popular Israeli myth puts the blame on the Arab countries who supposedly told the Palestinians to leave their homes until the Israelis were defeated and they could return. In fact, the Arab leaders did not call on the Palestinians to leave and wanted them to stay where they were. There is no documentation that proves otherwise. It is possible that there were exceptional cases in which Palestinians were asked by the Arab armies to evacuate certain villages that were dangerously close to Arab military maneuvers. But there is little evidence even for this. The Palestinians fled from their homes because they were either under direct Israeli military pressure to do so, or they were frightened by Israeli atrocities in other Palestinian villages whose residents did not flee fast enough.

The Palestinians deserve the recognition that they were grievously wronged. If Israel will do this it will be possible to come to some agreement on the refugee problem. This may involve some combination of financial compensation and repatriation of refugees in Israel for the purpose of family reunification. The Israelis are still receiving compensation from Germany for the wrongs done to them and their parents during Nazi rule. This is fair and just. Why should the Palestinians be denied that same fairness and justice?

5. Why did the Palestinians reject the UN partition plan of 1947?

The United Nations' partition plan of 1947 was an unfair proposal drafted by the Israelis and advocated by the United States. In hindsight it may be true that the partition plan gave the Palestinians more than they currently have. But the Palestinians did not then know what was to befall them. At the time what they did know was that the plan gave the majority of their land to a foreign people who were not willing to share the land with them. In 1947 the Jews owned less than 7% of the land but received 54% in the UN plan. Such an arrangement was inconceivable to the Palestinians. The UN partition plan was not a binding document to be forced upon the people of Palestine, but a plan to be agreed upon by the parties. The Palestinians decided to reject it. The Zionists had mixed feelings about it, some not thinking the Jews received enough. But in the end the Jews not only accepted it but took more than the UN plan suggested during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

6. Why are the United States and Israel such strong allies?

The relationship between the United States and Israel is a long and complicated one. After World War I and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, France and Britain divided the Middle East between their colonial rule. For the next couple of decades the United States' involvement in the region was minimal. The rise of US strategic interest in the Middle East corresponded with the emergence of the oil industry in many Arab countries and US dependence on this resource. However, the Zionists had also been courting US favor and by the end of World War II had convinced the American government that the emerging Jewish State was a strategic asset in the region.

Upon Israel's declaration of independence on May 14, 1948, the US immediately recognized the state. Shortly thereafter the Soviet Union did the same. From the end of World War II until the late 80s the Cold War framed the context of the US-Israeli alliance. In the 1950s the relationship

was shaky. The United States had two primary goals in the Middle East: first, to secure the oil resources of the Arab states and second, to prevent the region from falling within the Soviet sphere. It was not at all clear in the first decade of Israel's history that the country was firmly in the American camp and at times the US government's need to court the oil-rich Arabs was an obstacle to its relationship with Israel. By the end of the 1950s, however, Israel was firmly under the wing of the United States. At this time Israel's main role as ally to the US was to provide intelligence from inside the Soviet Union by way of the Jews still living there. In time Israel became the United States' key ally in the Americans' paranoid war against the spread of Communism, mainly in covert operations, not only in the Middle East but also in Africa and Latin America. When the United States' hands were unable politically to become directly involved in countries like Angola, South Africa, Columbia, or Guatemala they simply had the Israelis do the job for them. By time of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the relationship was sealed.

As the alliance grew, the two countries became entangled in a booming weapons trade, including Israeli acquisition of nuclear technology, which trapped each in a mutual web of dirty secrets. In addition, the powerful lobbies of the weapons industries allied themselves to the Jewish lobbies and together became a major source of money and information for figures in both the Republican and Democratic parties. These forces, with powerful allies in both governments and the media, have succeeded in shaping Israel's image and the Arab-Israeli conflict into an almost unquestioned political discourse.

Today the Cold War is over, but not the US-Israel relationship. In fact, US moral and material support of Israel has only increased since the fall of the USSR. The two countries have found new mutual enemies in the form of the "terrorist threat" and "rogue states" such as Iraq. Furthermore, support of Israel has by now become a given within the American political system. In addition to the political and economic ties, the support of Israel has become a domestic issue in the United States in the sense that it has become part of

American culture. An American politician has little hope of winning an election with a platform that is critical of Israel. One major reason for this is the centrality of Israel in the growing American evangelical movement. For many evangelicals the formation and expansion of the state of Israel is considered to be a necessary step in the fulfilling of God's will and the return of Jesus. Though most Israelis have great antipathy toward this evangelical movement as it seeks their conversion to Christianity, the Israeli government has not passed up the opportunity to tap this human and financial resource. Furthermore, being friends of Israel continues to have a place in the American liberal's mind, mainly because of their desire to overcome anti-Semitism and guilt concerning the Holocaust. In today's discourse, criticism of Israel is often equated with anti-Semitism.

In sum, America's relationship with Israel is the result of over fifty years of perceived common strategic interests in political, economic, and cultural fields. The relationship did not form spontaneously but from many years of intentional effort between political, economic and religious figures from both countries. Though much of this courtship occurred behind closed doors and in corridors of power, it is important not to interpret the relationship through a simplistic conspiracy theory framework. The US-Israeli relationship has never been a completely friendly and trusting one. Both governments keep each other in the dark when it suits their interests. Weapons dealers are first and foremost interested in profits and not friendship. Furthermore, there are influential people from both countries who dissent from the status quo and question the relationship's integrity and its strategic advantage to the United States. These people are in the minority, however, and until they receive more support from their colleagues and the public they will remain fairly powerless to challenge the US-Israel alliance and thus the US approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

7. Wasn't the Palestinian identity invented for political purposes?

Some make the accusation that the Palestinian identity was invented in the era of Israeli independence in order to assert Arab claim to the land of

Palestine. Before this invention, they assert, the Arabs living between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River were not a distinct people but part of the surrounding Arab peoples. It sometimes follows that there is no reason that the Palestinians could not be relocated in Jordan or other Arab countries.

This accusation in itself has political motivations and hides a more complex reality. "Palestine" came into being as a political unit in Roman times. Throughout subsequent occupations the name remained, though the political boundaries changed slightly from time to time.

Under the Ottomans, who ruled Palestine before the British, the land of Palestine was part of a larger region that also included what is today Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Damascus functioned as the administrative capital of the area. The region that became Mandate Palestine under the British was divided into the three districts of Jerusalem, Acre, and Nablus. The people in Palestine had a unique self-conception, distinct from other Arab peoples. They were proud of their Arab ancestry but considered themselves descendants not only of the Arab conquerors of the 7th century, but also of the indigenous peoples of the land who had lived there from time immemorial. In the years preceding the fall of the Ottoman Empire a nationalistic movement emerged among the Arabs in which they demanded independence from the Ottomans. Palestinians participated in this movement for national independence. Certainly not all the people of Palestine felt as strongly, but the nationalists represented a common sentiment in the land.

During the British Mandate, Palestine was a distinct political unit, separated from other lands under the Mandate such as Trans-Jordan. The end of World War II witnessed a process of de-colonization in which indigenous peoples all over the world, including the Palestinians, demanded independence from the colonial powers. This was not a new demand, but the continuation of the struggle of the Palestinians for independence from foreign rule. But as the European countries pulled out of their colonies the Palestinians became the victims of the world's one remaining colonial enterprise: the Zionist one.

This is not to say the concept of the Palestinians as a distinct people was not further crystallized in the period of Israeli independence. The Palestinians suffered a unique tragedy among the Arab peoples and this certainly reinforced their identity as a unique people. But this process of coming together as a people does not in any way de-legitimize their claim to the land. Social identity always develops over time and is never static. Take the concept of American for example. The concepts of the United States as a political entity and of American as a social entity are infantile compared to that of Palestine and Palestinian. Furthermore, the United States only exists in its current form because of the annihilation of the land's indigenous inhabitants. The American social identity continues to develop to this day. Yet if a foreign power forced the American people from their homes, no one would doubt their right to return and receive compensation.

The idea that the Palestinians are not a distinct people stems from the desire of some to erase the Palestinian claim to their land. It also finds roots in the kind of racism and ignorance that lumps the Arab peoples into a homogenous mass. Anyone who is familiar with the Arabs knows that they are a very diverse people with a multiplicity of cultural and national traditions. This is as true for the Palestinians as it is for the Iraqis, Saudis, or Lebanese. The era of Israeli independence was not the catalyst for the concept of the Palestinian people but instead the catalyst for the effort to make them disappear.

8. Wouldn't the situation of the refugees be better if the Arab countries would have accepted them more openly and wouldn't have used them for political reasons?

The 750,000 refugees from the 1948 war fled primarily to countries that border Palestine: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. To this day refugees live in poor conditions in refugee camps. The Palestinian refugee problem has fallen on the shoulders of the Arab countries in which they reside. The history of the relationship between the refugees and the Arabs of their host

country has sometimes been a dark one. No doubt the Arab governments have at times used them for political purposes. But it is not fair to blame the Arab countries for their plight. The neighboring Arab countries did not have the resources to deal effectively with the Palestinian refugees. They were poor and still handicapped by their experience under colonial rule in the years after 1948. Yet they opened their borders and let the refugees in. Jordan in particular absorbed an enormous number of the refugees, even granting them citizenship. Today the majority of Jordan's population is Palestinian. Many non-Palestinian Arabs in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt remain quite poor, some living in worse conditions than the Palestinian refugees. Yet these Arab countries continue to lend them services and protection.

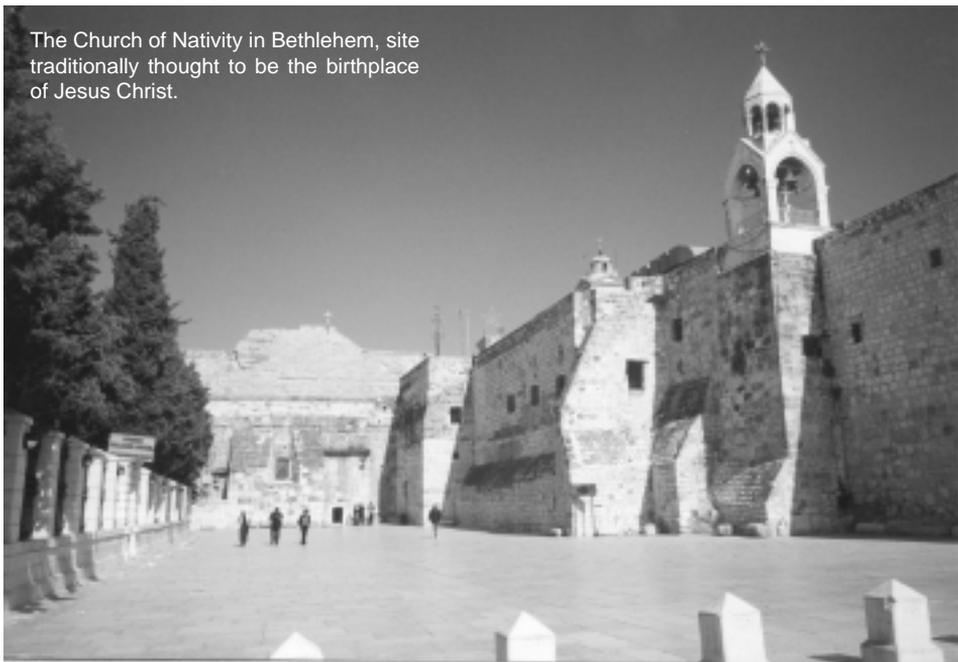
All this is not to whitewash the plight of the refugees or their treatment by Arab countries. The central point is that it is unreasonable to blame the refugee problem on those who accepted them rather than those who drove them from their homes. Despite UN resolutions calling for the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees to their land, Israel has not been held accountable for their actions in expelling them. Scapegoating the Arab nations is one of the Israeli strategies to divert attention away from itself.

9. What is the Christian-Muslim relationship like in Palestine?

Christians and Muslims have been living side by side in Palestine for over 1,300 years. Palestinians of both faiths share a common history, culture, and language. They have struggled through times of trouble together and enjoyed times of plenty together. Generally, the Christian minority has fared well living with the Muslim majority and under Muslim rule. Palestine has always been known in the Middle East to be a place of particular tolerance. Despite some tensions caused by the Crusades, colonialism or radical Islamic invaders, Palestinian Christians and Muslims have succeeded in building Palestinian society together.

Thus, most Palestinian Christians are surprised when they hear reports from the West about the persecution of Christians by Muslims in Palestine. Such reports are by and large inaccurate and are based on a false understanding of the Muslim religion as well as misinformation spread by the Israeli government and their Christian Zionist allies. In typical colonial fashion, the Israeli government has always attempted to incite division within the Palestinian society and has not refrained from playing the religious card. For instance, when former Prime Minister Netanyahu wanted to pass a law making it illegal to evangelize in Israel, his government received criticism from a campaign by evangelicals around the world. To divert attention from this criticism Netanyahu's office released a report claiming that the PA was persecuting Christians by locking up Muslim converts to Christianity in jail. The report was circulated widely in the US media and churches, as usual without confirming the report with the Palestinian Christians. When Palestinian evangelicals heard the report they launched their own investigation that revealed that the few prisoners in question were in fact not genuine converts and that they were in jail for collaborating with Israel.

The Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, site traditionally thought to be the birthplace of Jesus Christ.



Such false information spread to the West about the persecution of Christians is unquestioningly accepted and propagated by many. At the same time it breeds division within Palestinian society and, in effect, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Despite hundreds of years of fair treatment by Muslims, life has had its difficulties for the minority Christian community, and within it are anxieties that are common to most minorities throughout the world, including tendencies toward exclusivism and paranoia. The occupation tends to agitate these anxieties. A small number of Palestinian Christians have even come to believe the anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Israelis and their misinformed Western Christian allies. For instance, in the current Al-Aqsa Intifada Palestinians have been shooting at the Israeli colony of Gilo from the Palestinian town of Beit Jala, which has an unusually high percentage of Christians. When these Palestinians draw Israeli fire, some Palestinian Christians complain that the Muslims are drawing it intentionally to Christian homes. This is nonsense. The vast majority of the Palestinians participating in armed resistance to Israeli colonization are Muslim because the vast majority of Palestinians are Muslim. A small number of Christians, however, have also joined this resistance. Since the Intifada broke out Palestinians have been shooting from towns and cities all over the West Bank and Gaza Strip, whether Muslims or Christians inhabit them. Houses of Muslims are destroyed by Israeli shelling right along with the Christian houses in Beit Jala and throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Furthermore, many of the Muslim residents of these towns also become upset when the gunmen fire from around their homes. It is a natural and reasonable response. But when some Christians turn this into some kind of Muslim conspiracy against them they are being shortsighted and narrow-minded, causing unnecessary division within the Palestinian community.

Though relations have been better and though Muslims and Christians still have progress to make in coming to a healthy majority-minority relationship, they continue to live in relative harmony. They work together, eat together, and struggle through Israeli occupation together. Their survival is in fact

bound together as one Palestinian people. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Palestinian leadership. Arafat in particular has bent over backwards to reach out to the Christian community, appointing a higher than proportioned number of Christians in the government, making appearances at Christian celebrations, and even marrying a Christian.

Hopefully Christian-Muslim relations will be even better in the future. For this to happen, all Palestinians must come together to celebrate and define their Palestinian identity in resistance to the divisive effects of the occupation and of foreign misunderstanding.

10. The Palestinians and other Arabs want the land that Israel conquered from them returned. But Israel won the wars with the Arabs, shouldn't they get the spoils?

Throughout history humans have used the methods of war to advance their interests. The 20th century was quite possibly the bloodiest, most violent one humanity has experienced. That being true, one must question whether human civilization has taken any significant steps forward. Yet there have always been efforts by some to minimize war and its destructive effects. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the sharp increase in our ability to kill one another, the struggle to find peaceful ways to resolve conflict has grown stronger. The concept of might makes right has significantly given way to concepts of justice, peace, and freedom for all people. Since the mid-20th century, these concepts have been articulated and institutionalized like never before in the form of international law. Despite problems of enforcing international law, it does offer a foundation upon which mutual respect among nations may be built.

In the history of the State of Israel, however, we can see a consistent digression from standards widely recognized by the world as the minimum of appropriate stately behavior. Basic international law clearly prohibits territorial gain by way of warfare in order to ensure that less powerful nations and peoples are not at the mercy of powerful military forces, as was the



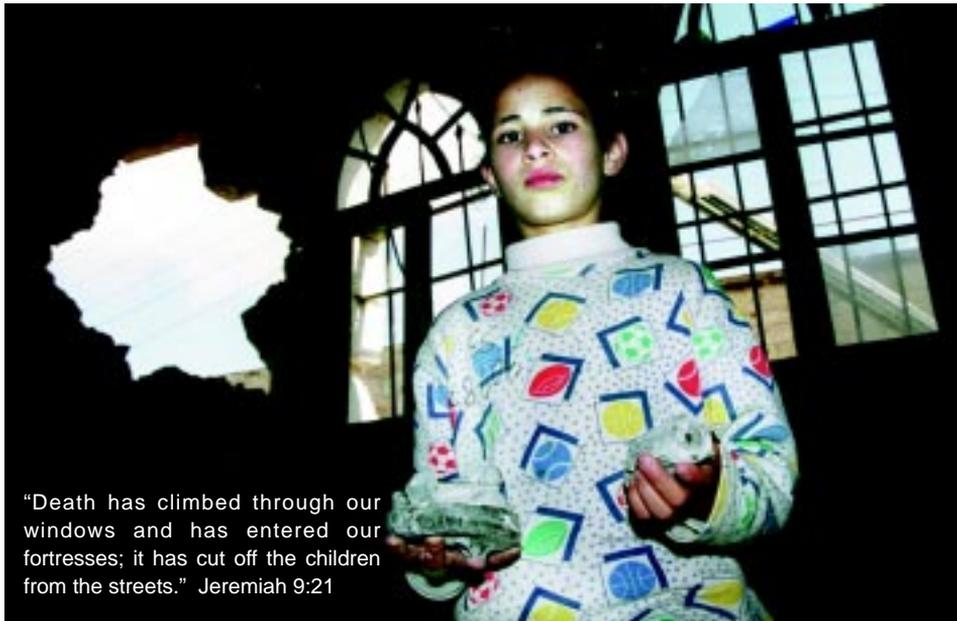
A Palestinian building severely damaged by Israeli shelling (2001).

case in the past. The history of Israel is a history of colonization. Generally, the colonial era is thought of as a thing of the past. But in its goals and its methods, Israel is a classic example of a colonial enterprise against the indigenous Arabs of Palestine. The wars Israel fought served expansionist purposes, just as its continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip does. That Israel has not been held accountable despite wide criticism by the world community and continues its land grabbing does not reflect its right to the land, but its privileged position in a world dominated by its chief supporter, the United States. This virtual immunity undermines all the lessons learned from the war-torn 20th century and seriously weakens the legitimacy of those efforts to ensure the 21st century will be more peaceful and more just.

11. Why didn't Arafat accept the proposals offered to him by Barak during the Camp David talks in July 2000?

First a point of clarification: There were no formal proposals made in the Camp David talks, only ideas being tossed back and forth. None of the offers from either side were clearly defined. In fact, real negotiations did not take place until after Arafat said no to the initial Israeli offer. Some progress was later made in the talks in Taba, but there was not significant time to follow through on them.

It is true that Barak opened issues up for discussion that had up to that time been taboo in Israeli negotiations. But the claim, by both Barak and Clinton, that the Israelis offered Palestinians "generous concessions" is completely erroneous. The Israeli government has never been generous to the Palestinians. In the 2000 Camp David talks, the Israeli offers on every subject, from Jerusalem to the refugees to the borders of a Palestinian state, fell short of even minimum Palestinian needs. The perception that Israel's concessions were generous stems from a completely skewed perception



"Death has climbed through our windows and has entered our fortresses; it has cut off the children from the streets." Jeremiah 9:21

that considers anything more than nothing a generous offer. Furthermore, such a perception ignores the fact that any power or land that Israel has in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (or for that matter in any of historical Palestine) was taken from the Palestinians and is not Israel's to give in the first place, but only to return to its rightful owner. The willingness of the Palestinians to accept the legitimacy of the Israeli state, to share Jerusalem, and to settle for only 22% of Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are enormous concessions in themselves. In the West however, these sacrifices are seen not as concessions but instead as somehow owed to the Israelis. This perception is taken for granted because Israel has the necessary power to define what is expected from negotiations and to control the implementation of any agreement reached.

Even the offers Barak did make were not, in reality, as good as they sounded in news clips. The offer of neighborhoods in East Jerusalem for a Palestinian state capitol amounts to several crowded and disconnected villages surrounded by Israeli colonies and roads, and are not at all suitable for a Palestinian capitol. Further, Israel wanted to keep complete control of over half of the Old City of Jerusalem, and to share sovereignty on the Islamic shrines there. This was not acceptable to Palestinians.

Barak's offer of 94% of the West Bank was equally disingenuous. Whenever Israeli officials speak in percentages they do not include the territorial waters of the Dead Sea, East Jerusalem, or the strip of no-man's-land in the calculation. This strategy has two main purposes. First, it serves to spread the false assumption that these areas are not actually part of the West Bank but part of Israel. Second, by decreasing the actual size of the West Bank in their calculations the Israeli officials are able to bloat their withdrawal percentages. Thus, the Israeli 94% is in actuality only 88.9%. When also taking into account repeated Israeli claims to annex what they call "Greater Jerusalem," the percentage shrinks again to 86.5%. In addition, Barak insisted on retaining security control over the Jordan Valley for an unspecified number of years. The Jordan Valley amounts to 10% of the West Bank, thus leaving only 76.5% for a sovereign Palestinian State.

If this wasn't bad enough, Barak also failed to offer just concessions on issues of water and economic relations, thus keeping the fledgling Palestinian "state" in a position of servitude. The final two nails in the coffin of the Camp David talks were the Israeli refusal to take responsibility for the Palestinian refugees and Barak's insistence that in the event of Arafat signing an agreement, all further Palestinian claims and grievances would be null and void.

When Arafat rejected the proposals brought forth by the Americans and Israelis both attacked him publicly, pushing the Palestinians further into a political corner. This complete failure of the negotiating process to bring justice to the Palestinians was one of the factors behind the Intifada that broke out after Ariel Sharon's notorious visit to the Haram Al-Sharif on September 28, 2000. Throughout the peace process the world has been treating the Palestinians as if it were their fault that they live in Palestine, allowing Israel to demand concessions as though it were the Palestinians who are keeping the land under military occupation, demanding that the Palestinians stop fighting with the Israelis as though it were the Palestinians who were aggressively colonizing the land. If negotiations are to function to bring peace to the Middle East they must cease being a platform for Israeli and American political bullying and reflect a genuine effort toward justice for all concerned parties.

12. What about prophecy? Did not God give Palestine to the Jews? If God did give the land to the Jews, why do Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims want to fight God and his chosen people over the possession of the Holy Land?

There are many Biblical references in the Old Testament that state that God gave the Holy Land to Abraham and his descendants including the ancient Jewish people. In Genesis 12:1-5 God promises Abraham to give the land of Canaan to him and to his descendants. Similar promises are repeated throughout the Old Testament. The challenge for us today is to search for answers to the following questions:

- 1. Are these promises unconditional?***
- 2. Are these promises perpetual? Never-ending?***
- 3. Do Old Testament prophecies relating to the land in the old covenant continue to have significance and fulfillment within the framework of the new covenant?***
- 4. Does God have a special or different plan for the Jewish people?***

I. Are these promises unconditional?

The OT is full of evidence that these promises are conditional to the faithfulness and obedience of the people of Israel to God. Examine the following references:

And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you (Leviticus 18:28).

Keep all my decrees and laws and follow them, so that the land where I am



A mural at the Bethlehem Bible College, a Palestinian institution, is sprayed by Israeli bullets (2001).

bringing you to live may not vomit you out. You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. But I said to you, "You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations (Leviticus 20:22).

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers" (Genesis 17:1).

These and many other references clearly show that ancient Israel's possession of the land was conditional upon Israel's obedience to God. When Israel failed to obey God, the people were driven out of the land. The Babylonian exile and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and consequent expulsion of the Jewish people are two examples of removal from the land due to ancient Israel's rebellion against God.

Today, over 80% of the Jews in Israel and around the world are either secular or non-religious traditionalists. Only 20% of the Jewish population consider themselves religious. Many leading Zionists who were among the visionaries and founders of the state of Israel were atheists. Modern Israel is not a nation under God and does not claim to be so. The trail of violence and injustice in the history of Israel in the last fifty years is the clearest evidence that current Israel is not the Israel of the Bible or the Israel of the covenant. God's promises to ancient Israel were conditional upon Israel's obedience. For evangelicals in particular it should be a concern that Israel today continues to reject its Messiah, ban missionary activities and prosecute and persecute those who attempt to share the good news of Jesus Christ. To idealize the religious significance of modern Israel is to close our eyes to the spiritual, religious and moral realities of the modern Jewish state.

II. Are these promises perpetual? Are they never-ending?

In the past, God promised ancient Israel the land and God gave them the land. The promises were kept. Some Christians read in the Old Testament of promises and prophecies that were given four or five thousand years ago and they strive to seek modern fulfillment to these prophecies that have already been fulfilled. Some of these prophecies were given to the Jews when they were exiled in Babylon. Their message was to give hope to the exiles and prepare them to be restored to the land. These prophecies do not address the Arab-Israeli conflict and the current situation in the Middle East. It is unfortunate that these verses are taken out of context to address the current situation. Such manipulation of the Word of God is unfair to the biblical record and very harmful to all Palestinians but especially to the Palestinian Christian community. How long must the Bible be used as a manual to promote and enforce military occupation? How often must the Palestinians be subjected to the cruelties and brutalities of military conquests sanctioned by theories of divine involvement?

III. Do Old Testament prophecies relating to the land in the old covenant continue to have significance within the framework of the new covenant?

To respond to this question we must understand the similarities and differences of the two covenants. Biblical scholars have written volumes on this theme but to briefly address this question, I'll point out to five major elements in the two covenants; namely, the priesthood, the sacrifice, the temple, the nation, and the land.

The Priesthood

God instituted the OT priesthood. Aaron, Moses' brother, became the first High Priest. In the Pentateuch detailed instructions are given for the management of the institution of the priesthood. The writers of the New Testament, however, described a new type of priesthood, the priesthood of all believers. Peter in his first epistle addressed new converts (Jews and Gentiles) when he wrote:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people

belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10).

The writer of the book of Revelation carries the same theme when he writes:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen (Revelation 1:5-6).

The priesthood in the old covenant was limited to one of Israel's tribes. In the new covenant however we see that all who believe are members of a royal priesthood. In comparing the priesthood of the old with the new covenant, the writer of the book of Hebrews explains that the old priesthood must diminish to make way for a new and permanent one.

But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them (Hebrews 7:24-25)

By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear (Hebrews 8:13).

Thus the priesthood of the Old Testament expired to make way for a new priesthood.

The Sacrifice

In the old covenant animal sacrifices were an essential part of worship but in the new covenant Jesus became the eternal sacrifice to atone for all sins.

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest (Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins,

he sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:11-12).

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Hebrews 9:13-14).

These verses and many like them reflect a dramatic change in the concept of sacrifice between the two covenants. Where the sacrifices in the old covenant demanded an animal, the new covenant writers present Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice to atone for all sins and for all people and for all times. Thus the sacrificial order of the Old Testament was expired to make way for a new sacrificial order.

Present day refugee camp in Bethlehem (2001).



The Temple

Not only did the new covenant abolish the need for animal sacrifices and cancel the Levitical priesthood, it also abolished the need for a central temple. Instead of the temple in Jerusalem, the church of Jesus Christ, the redeemed from all nations, became the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Notice how Jesus responds to his disciples' amazement at the grandeur of the temple in Jerusalem:

Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down" (Luke 21:5-6).

Paul in the three following verses had this to say about the Temple:

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

The verses above have two messages; first, that God's grace on the temple in Jerusalem was expired and the temple was condemned to destruction. That temple had to be destroyed in order for a new temple to be established. And second, the new temple is now made up of the body of Jesus Christ, the church.

The Nation

According to the old covenant God chose a family: Abraham and his descendants. From that family, God created nations and from these nations God chose one to be a light to all the other nations. That nation, Israel, from which came the prophets and the law, became known as God's chosen people. With the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and the ushering in of the new covenant, the gates of God's grace were open to the entire human race. Jews and Gentiles now can have equal access to all the privileges and responsibilities of being the people of God. Who are God's people according to the new covenant? The following verses give the answer.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Ephesians 2:14-22).

In the text above the apostle Paul writes to Gentiles in Ephesus and explains to them their new place in Christ in accordance with the new covenant. Believing Gentiles and believing Jews make up one body, the body of Christ. Paul repeats this same theme when he addresses Gentiles in the city of Colossae; he writes:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12).

Peter addressed Jews and Gentiles scattered throughout the Roman Empire when he wrote:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1Peter 2:9-10).

It is obvious from the verses above that the concept of nationhood was modified in the new covenant. Where in the old covenant God's people were the Jewish nation, in the new covenant all who received the grace of God through Jesus Christ became the people of God. John states this fact clearly when he wrote:

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (John 1:11-13).

Thus Israel's privilege as a chosen nation of God was annulled in order to encompass all believers in Christ be they Jews or Gentiles.

The Land

Just as the old covenant concepts of priesthood, sacrifice, temple, and nationhood were expired and modified in the new covenant, so also was that of the land. In the old covenant the land was important to house God's chosen people and to provide a place for a central temple where the priesthood could function. But since the basic features of the covenant had changed, there was no more need for a specific land territory to house the new covenant. For this reason the concept of the Promised Land was modified in the new covenant to become the kingdom of God. When contemporaries of Jesus asked him about the place of that kingdom, he responded by saying, "*the kingdom of God is within you.*" By placing the

kingdom in the hearts of the faithful, Jesus globalizes the concept of the kingdom of God. A kingdom that is present throughout the world need not to be limited to a specific land territory.

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21).

The Samaritan woman who met with Jesus at the well also had difficulties with the concept of "sacred" territory. When she discovered that Jesus was the Messiah, she immediately asked him a question that had puzzled Jews and Samaritans for years: "Which is the right place? Which real estate does God favor?" Examine her question:

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem" (John 4:19-20).

The response of Jesus to this question is of utmost important to all who continue to be confused about the issue of the land. First, Jesus did not tell her that Jerusalem (where Jews worshiped) or Gerizim (where Samaritans worshiped) is the right place of worship. Second, Jesus directed her attention to a new era in God's dealing with humanity. Notice: "Yet a time is coming and has now come." Jesus is referring here to the time when God is no more concerned about land, territory or a centralized place of worship but rather in the spiritual attitude of the worshiper. To emphasize the land is to live in the old covenant. God's Holy Land is the human heart. For this reason as we start reading the Gospels, we see no significance given to the land but to the kingdom of God.

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation

is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (John 4:21-23).

Another de-emphasis of Jesus on the issue of the land is seen in the dialogue that took place between Jesus and his disciples just before the ascension of Christ.

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:6-8).

The concern of the disciples was over a physical and territorial kingdom of God on earth, with Jerusalem its capital and Christ its king. Jesus rejected their proposal and directed their attention to the spreading of the kingdom of God through the sharing of the Good News, starting from Jerusalem and reaching to the utmost part of the world. Thus Jesus de-emphasized the territorial or local land concept of the kingdom of God, and emphasized the spiritual and global concept.

What does all of the above have to do with the current Arab-Israeli conflict?

The Arab-Israeli conflict is mainly a conflict over land possession. Christians who continue to confuse the concept of territory in the old and the new covenants believe that even under the new covenant the land is significant and the land belongs solely to the Jewish people. We have seen however that in the new covenant even the concept of a promised land is expired to give way to the new concept of the kingdom of God, which resides in every believer's heart.

IV. Does God have a different plan for the Jewish people?

Some may argue that while the above argument is true for Gentile believers it is not true for Jews. They may further argue that God has a special plan for the Jews that is different from God's plan for the Gentiles. I do not accept this argument for the following reasons:

1. God's plan in the new covenant included both Jews and Gentiles. The plan provided salvation and blessing to both Jews and Gentiles. In the New Covenant the two are reconciled to make one. To promote an additional plan for the Jews is to contradict Paul's statement:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26-29).

2. There is no mention of a special plan for the Jews in the New Testament that is separate from God's saving plan for the Gentiles. Those who advocate the concept of a special plan for the Jews at the present time or in the future have to depend on Old Testament references to justify their theory. Paul's discussion in Romans chapters eleven and twelve highlights the spiritual restoration of the Jewish people through Jesus Christ, not a physical or territorial restoration. Paul's argument is based on his strong belief that the restoration of the Jewish people depends upon their acceptance of Jesus Christ.

3. To have a special plan for the Jewish people or for any other people is to diminish the power and the effect of the salvation that God has provided for all of us through the death

of Jesus Christ on the cross. The best that God could provide for the Jewish people has already been provided through Jesus Christ.

Is God through with the Jewish people?

I say with the apostle Paul, "By no means!"

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew (Romans 11:1-2).

The gates of God's mercy are ever opened to both Jews and Gentiles. Paul also highlights this theme when he wrote:

"The covenant was modified but God's passion to gather Jews and Gentiles to his kingdom have not changed. As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all" (Romans 11:28-32).

These promises are spiritual and have nothing to do with occupying a piece of land or forcibly subjugating another nation through superior military might, political maneuvering and economic manipulation. These promises can be actualized by a humble return of the Jewish people to God, accepting God's plan for their restoration and salvation. Misinterpretation of the scriptures in order to give divine sanction to the Zionist occupation of Palestine has contributed significantly to the turmoil in the Middle East and global unrest. It has brought much suffering, bloodshed and loss of life to millions. This misinterpretation of scripture has caused much anguish and

frustration to Arab Christians and is a stumbling block preventing Arabs and Muslims throughout the world from responding to Christ and understanding Christianity.

13. What can we do as Westerners to work for peace between Palestinians and Israelis?

The Western world bears much of the responsibility for the plight of the Palestinian people. The horrible history of anti-Semitism, culminating in the tragedy of the Holocaust, was the creation of the West. By attempting to solve the "Jewish question" by way of a state in Palestine, the West only created yet another problem, the "Palestinian question." Furthermore, Israel's occupation of Palestinian land continues to find legitimacy in the Western world, particularly in the United States. This is a responsibility the West carries, whether it wants it or not. But rather than wallow in guilt or helplessness, the West must look to the future with determination and find ways to contribute to peace. The following are general suggestions.

1) Educate yourself. To a large extent the battle between the Israelis and Palestinians is a battle of information as both sides attempt to win the support of the international community. The various players in the conflict have vastly different understandings of the conflict's history, as well as of current events. It takes effort to wade through the mass of information, particularly if you want to find a genuine Palestinian perspective. The contacts listed in Appendix IV of this essay are a start.

2) Educate others. This can take many forms. It is important to challenge at every opportunity the one-sided story presented to people in the West, particularly in the United States. When one hears false stereotypes or myths concerning the conflict or the people involved one should not let the comment slide but instead confront it for what it is. Education of children in the context of family, church, and school is critical. One may also take the initiative to educate the public at large. This may involve presentations at church, writing letters to the editors of local or national newspapers, writing

to members of congress and other government leaders, or forming local advocacy groups for cooperative efforts with other concerned individuals.

3) Work for change within the church. The denominational structures of the church are often underestimated in their power to effect broad global issues. Several denominations have already made strong statements of support for the Palestinians. But much more could be done. The church provides a ready-made institutional framework in which large numbers of people can be educated and mobilized. If this could be brought to bear upon governments like that in the US, politicians may think twice before giving virtual unconditional support to Israel. Furthermore, much theological work must be done that takes into account both the Palestinian and the Jewish experience of the past hundred years. Some theologians since the Holocaust have put significant effort into rethinking the Christian theology that contributed to the anti-Semitism that provided the backdrop for Auschwitz. This work must be continued, and anti-Semitism must be removed from our churches. At the same time, and with no less importance, theology that marginalizes the Palestinian people and legitimizes their suffering must be challenged. As in the political realm, those who have sought to correct Western wrongs against the Jewish people in the theological realm have ended up wronging the Palestinian people, including Palestinian Christians, in the process. The church must find a way to theologically conceptualize the history of the Palestinians and the Israelis without marginalizing either of them.

4) Join those already working on Middle East issues. Across Europe and the Americas are many advocacy and human rights groups that are working on Middle East Issues. Contact some of them and find out how to get involved in supporting their work.

5) Public protest. One way of voicing concerns to the government while simultaneously educating the public is to organize and/or participate in vigils, marches, rallies, or other forms of public protest. Organizing such events takes work but can be very fruitful if planned well, and they succeed in

getting attention.

6) Financial contributions. Any financial contributions to Palestinians in order to ease their economic and social difficulties must be done responsibly, in a spirit of solidarity, and with the aim of doing justice, as opposed to patronizing charity. Keeping this in mind, there are ways to share one's financial resources with the Palestinians.

7) Intercession. Our faith in a loving, merciful and just God must motivate us to intercede on behalf of all the peoples of Israel and Palestine until all hostilities are terminated and peace is restored to the land.



A land owner being shot while protesting the confiscation of his land. He holds the title to his land in his hand.

NOTES

1 To give just one example of how this is impossible, let us take a look at the histories of many Muslims who now live in Palestine. The ancestors of some present day Muslims were Jewish at the time of Christ. Many of them became Christians after Christ proclaimed his Gospel and the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as the state religion. Finally, many of these Christians converted to Islam when Muslims conquered the Holy Land during the 7th century AD. In effect, many Arab Muslims in Palestine may have just as much if not more Jewish blood than the millions of Jews of European descent, who mixed and intermarried with Gentile Europeans for centuries.

2 Caliph Omar led the first Arab conquest of Palestine. "Never in the sorry story of conquest up to that day, and rarely since, were such noble and generous sentiments displayed by a conqueror as those extended to Jerusalem by Omar" (Report by Sir William Fitzgerald on the Local Administration of Jerusalem. Jerusalem: British Government Printer, 1945), p. 4. When the Arabs recaptured Jerusalem in 1187 under the command of Saladin, the military leader echoed Omar's actions, showing reverence and compassion for the city and all its Christian, Jewish and Muslim inhabitants. Historian Stanely Lane-Poole says of Saladin: "If the taking of Jerusalem were the only fact known of Saladin, it were enough to prove him the most chivalrous and great hearted conqueror of his, and perhaps any, age" (Lane-Poole, Stanley. *Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*. Beirut: Khayats, 1964), p. 234. The purpose of commenting on the just treatment of Jews under Arab rule here and elsewhere in this essay is not to suggest that relations between the two communities were always completely smooth and peaceful. The point is that the Jews fared better under Arab rule than under alternative rulers and that relations between the two peoples are certainly not doomed to violence and strife.

3 In 1896 his definitive treatise, *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State), Herzl integrated prevailing Zionist ideas and outlined a program of implementation.

The following year Herzl convened the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. The World Zionist Organization, which would henceforth institutionalize Zionist diplomacy and operations, was born during the Congress. Keren Kayemeth founded another Zionist institution, the Jewish National Fund, in 1901. The JNF was founded in order to acquire land in Palestine that would subsequently be exclusively Jewish (Walid Khalidi. *Before Their Diaspora*. Institute for Palestine Studies, 1991), p. 35.

4 The Zionist Program, adopted at the First Zionist Congress, read as follows: "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law. In order to attain this object the Congress adopts the following means: 1) The systematic promotion of the settlement of Palestine with Jewish agriculturalists, artisans, and craftsmen. 2) The organization and federation of all Jewry by means of local and general institutions in conformity with local laws. 3) The strengthening of Jewish sentiment and national consciousness. 4) Preparatory steps for the procuring of such government assets as are necessary for achieving the object of Zionism." (Lapidoth, Ruth and Moshe Hirsh. *The Arab-Israeli Conflict and its Resolution: Selected Documents*. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1992), p. 1.

5 Herzl stated his intentions quite clearly when he said, "...both the expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly... [by] spiriting the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country." - Edward Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," *The Edward Said Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000)

6 In the fight against the Ottoman Empire during World War I, the British sought support from all quarters. But in the process it made contradictory commitments to the Arabs and the Zionists. In addition to wanting victory over the Ottomans, Britain wanted control of the Suez Canal. The Zionists won the public relations battle and assured Britain they would be a secure

ally in guarding the canal. Significantly, the people of Palestine were never seriously consulted. Instead, Britain negotiated in this period with the Sherif of Mecca as Keeper of Islam's holy sites even though the Palestinians were not under his political authority (*The Question of Palestine*. New York: United Nations, 1979), p. 4-5.

7 *A Survey of Palestine*. Jerusalem: British Government Printer, 1945-1946.

8 *The Question of Palestine*. New York: United Nations, 1979, p. 14-15.

9 In a speech to the World Zionist Organization in August, 1937 Ben-Gurion announced that although "there could be no question... of giving up any part of the Land of Israel, ... it was arguable that the ultimate goal would be achieved most quickly by accepting the Peel proposals."

10 Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988) p.120

11 George W. Ball and Douglas B. Ball, *The Passionate Attachment* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), p. 85

12 *A Survey of Palestine*. Jerusalem: British Government Printer, 1945-1946.

13 In fact, a strategic plan called "Plan Dalet" apparently had been prepared well in advance, and was put into action as soon as British control was weak enough to ensure success.

The Jewish offensives were designed not only to secure control in the areas allotted to the Jews, but also to extend into areas designated in the UN partition plan as for the Arabs (*The Question of Palestine*. New York: United Nations, 1979), p. 20.

14 Sheila Cassidy, "Assault and Massacre," *Remembering Deir Yassin: The*

Future of Israel and Palestine ed. Daniel McGowan and Marc H. Ellis (Brooklyn, New York: Olive Branch Press, 1998)

15 Much has been made of the "miraculous" victory of the Israelis in 1948 and of the mortal danger the young state found itself in against the Arab armies. In fact, there was nothing miraculous about it and the state of Israel was not in danger of destruction. The same could be said of all of the other wars between Israel and the neighboring Arab states. Under the British Mandate the Jews were not only permitted to form governing bodies under the Jewish Agency. They were allowed to have arms and were actually trained to use them in militias and police units organized by the British to quell the Palestinian uprising. They were also permitted to import the necessary equipment to form their own weapons industry, which remains a centerpiece of the Israeli economy to this day. By 1946 the Haganah, the Jewish Agency's army, numbered some 62,000 soldiers. On March 25, 1946 the Head of Command of the Jewish Resistance Movement wrote to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry: "As far as the strength of the Arabs in Palestine are concerned, we are in possession of well-founded information. There is no doubt that the Jewish force is far superior in organization, training, planning and equipment, and that we ourselves will be able to handle any attack or rebellion from the Arab side without calling for any assistance from the British or the Americans. If you accept the Zionist solution [partition and a Jewish state in the greater part of Palestine] but are unable or unwilling to enforce it, please do not interfere, and we ourselves will secure its implementation." The political and military organization of the Jews allowed them to prepare for the war to come. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Arabs were not given these privileges nor were they even allowed to have weapons. In addition, the armies of neighboring Arab countries had insufficient capabilities and their leaders little political clout as they were also handicapped by colonial rule (Walid Khalidi. *Before Their Diaspora*. Institute for Palestine Studies, 1991), p. 306-313.

16 Andrew and Leslie Cockburn, *Dangerous Liaison: The Inside Story of the US-Israeli Covert Relationship* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), p.35.

17 The 1967 war began when the Israeli air force flew into Egyptian airspace and wiped out almost the entire Egyptian air force as the planes sat on their airstrips in the Sinai. It is popular wisdom that the pre-emptive strike by the Israelis was made because Egyptian President Nasser was ordering military movements that suggested he intended to wipe out Israel. But the fact is that Israel was not forced to lash out at Egypt and could have avoided war altogether, as revealed by three key Israeli generals and politicians. Ezer Weisman, commander of the air force and one who did much of the operational planning for the war said in 1972 that there was no "threat of destruction" in 1967. Yitzhak Rabin, the Chief of Staff in the Israeli Defense Forces in 1967, echoed these sentiments when he stated, "I do not believe that Nasser wanted war. The two divisions he sent into Sinai on May 14 would not have been enough to unleash an offensive against Israel. He knew it and we knew it" (Cockburn, Andrew and Leslie. *Dangerous Liaison: The Inside Story of the US-Israeli Covert Relationship*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), p. 153-154. Menachem Begin, then a minister in government stated: "The Egyptian Army advances in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him" (*Palestinians: Life under Occupation*. Nancy Murphy. Brattleboro, VT: Brattleboro Printing, 1991), p. 10.

18 The massive American airlift of equipment to Israel during the 1973 war was the largest in history until the even larger 1990 Persian Gulf buildup. Nevertheless, the impact of the airlift on the fighting itself was minimal. Very little of the heavy equipment actually reached the battlefield before the shooting stopped on October 24. Says one Pentagon official: "Israel didn't need the airlift of arms - it was a psychological and morale booster" (Cockburn, Andrew and Leslie. *Dangerous Liaison: The Inside Story of the US-Israeli Covert Relationship*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), p. 174-175. Israel did not need an emergency shipment of weapons because, as in the past, the country's military was well-equipped and well-funded due to long-standing policies of heavy arms trading, a strong military-industrial complex, and support from abroad.

19 On September 14, 1982 the centerpiece of Israeli political control over Lebanon, Lebanese President Bashir Gemayel, was assassinated in a bombing. Their plans dashed, the Israelis decided to complete the job of wiping out the Palestinian Liberation Organization from Lebanon themselves. Two days later, the Israeli army general staff issued Order Number 6 to Israeli soldiers in Beirut, which declared that "searching and mopping up the camps [Sabra and Shatilla] will be done by the Phalangists and the Lebanese army." The Israeli-backed Christian Phalangists were eager to avenge the killing of their leader Bashir Gemayel. Then Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon met with the Phalangist leadership and granted them the perfect opportunity to carry out their revenge. From September 16 to 18 the Phalangist militia combed through the refugee camps brutally killing all who came across their path. Throughout the massacre, the Israel troops surrounded the camps, turning back any of the refugees who tried to escape. The Israelis had every opportunity to observe the slaughter going on inside the camps from their positions but they did not stop it. The Israeli soldiers even lit up the camps with flares for the Phalangists at night. It is estimated that the Phalangists killed between 800 and 2,000 people in Sabra and Shatilla. Shortly after the war in Lebanon an Israeli investigation of the massacre, the Kahan Commission, found that Ariel Sharon bore "personal responsibility," eventually forcing him to step down as Defense Minister (Friedman, Thomas. *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. London: Harpers Collins, 1993) p. 156-166. Though significant, the Kahan commission exempted the Israel army and its commanders from their direct responsibility for the massacre and failed to investigate the political motives behind it. Sharon was soon reinstated as Minister of Industry and Trade in the next Israeli government. Less than twenty years after the Kahan Commission Ariel Sharon, who could be indicted for war crimes if held accountable, became the Prime Minister of Israel.



Muslim worshippers, restricted from worshipping at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, gather near a Palestinian checkpoint for prayers.

Israeli checkpoints keep Palestinian Muslims and Christians from entering the holy sites of Jerusalem.



APPENDIX I

Glossary of Terms for the Arab-Israeli Conflict

The following list is not meant to be exhaustive, but meant to be sufficient for a general understanding of the conflict. It must be said that many of these terms inevitably carry political connotations. The reader may find different definitions for the same words in sources that have a different perspective on the conflict than the author.

Anti-Semitism: Hatred of Jews and/or other Semitic people. Although Arabs are, ethnically speaking, Semites, the term “anti-Semitism” is rarely used to refer to hostility toward Arabs.

Arab: A person who speaks the Arabic language and identifies herself or himself with the Arab culture.

Arab Christian: An Arab who believes in Jesus as the Messiah. Arab Christians consider themselves descendants of the early church. There are approximately 25 million Arab Christians around the world, 15 million of whom live in the Middle East and North Africa. Of all the Arab countries, Egypt has the largest Christian population while Lebanon has the highest number of Christians as a percentage of its total population. In Palestine, Arab Christians make up less than 2% of the population, a number between 180,000-200,000..

Arab Muslim: An Arab who believes in Allah (God), that Muhammad was God’s final prophet, and in the Qur’an as the God’s final revelation. While most Arabs are Muslim, only 20% of all Muslims are Arabs.

By-pass road: Roads built in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Israeli government intended to link Israeli colonies to each other and to Israel Proper. They are called by-pass roads because they by-pass Palestinian communities. These roads are under Israeli control and require the forceful

takeover of Palestinian lands and properties by Israel and Israeli settlers for the purpose of establishing Jewish neighborhoods and colonies in Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and in East Jerusalem. The words “seizure” and “expropriation” are often used to express the same meaning.

Confiscation: Any property or asset in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip that came under Israeli control after the 1967 War. Israel continues to confiscate Palestinian land to this day. The words “seizure” and “expropriation” are sometimes used with the same meaning.

East Jerusalem: According to the 1947 UN Partition Plan, the city of Jerusalem is supposed to be an internationalized city under the UN’s trusteeship. But in 1948 Israel conquered the western half of Jerusalem and it became a divided city. Then, in 1967, during the Six-Day War, Israel conquered and occupied the eastern half of the city. On June 28, 1967 Israel unilaterally expanded the borders of East Jerusalem from 6.5 km² (the boundaries as designated by Jordan) to 70.5 km². This area is sometime called “Greater Jerusalem” and includes land from many West Bank villages while avoiding populated Palestinian areas. Today when people speak of East Jerusalem they sometimes mean that part of the city that was under Jordanian jurisdiction (6.5 km²) and at other times they mean that part of the expanded East Jerusalem (70.5 km²).

Gaza Strip: The territory on the Mediterranean southwest of Israel Proper. The Gaza Strip was defended by Egypt in the 1948 war and conquered by the Israelis in the 1967 war. It is home to approximately one million Palestinians.

Green Line or 1949 Armistice Line: The Green Line refers to the boundary line between Israel Proper and the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But its proper name is the 1948 Armistice Line, agreed upon by the Arab countries and Israel after the 1948 War and still recognized as Israel’s border by the international community.

Hamas: One of largest and most active Islamic resistance movements.

Besides using radical means to fight the occupation for the liberation of Palestine, Hamas is heavily engaged in humanitarian and educational services to the poor of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Intifada: An Arabic word that literally means “to shake off.” Used to express the Palestinian revolt or rebellion against Israeli occupation.

Israel Proper: That territory defined by the borders of the Jewish state after the 1948 war.

Israeli Palestinian: Palestinian Arabs who are citizens of Israel. These Arabs are those who were not forced out of Israel Proper and their descendants who stayed in Israel Proper and retained Israeli citizenship.

Israeli/Jewish Colony: Israeli colonies, sometimes called Jewish colonies, are Israeli built-up areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They are often referred to as “settlements.” However, the word “colony” more clearly identifies that the Israelis living in the West Bank and Gaza are living on someone else’s land.

Israeli: A citizen of the State of Israel.

Jew: A person born of a Jewish mother or who converted to the Jewish faith.

Jihad: An Arabic word that literally means “struggle.” It is sometimes interpreted “holy war”, but in fact it means any struggle against evil in society or within the individual. In Islam, the “inner Jihad”, the struggle against ones own evil, is said to be the most important struggle.

Messianic Jew: A Jew who accepts Yeshua (Jesus) as their Messiah and continues to observe Jewish customs and traditions.

Oslo Accords: Peace accords signed between Israel and the Palestinian

Authority after secret negotiations in Oslo, Norway. Oslo I was signed on May 4, 1993 and returned Jericho and most of the Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. Oslo II was signed September 28, 1995 and divided the West Bank into areas A, B, and C, with varying degrees of Palestinian control. The accords have been central in defining the relationship between the Palestinians and Israelis since their signing.

Palestine: The Romans first applied the name Palestine to the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Though the official borders changed slightly from occupation to occupation, this sliver of land continued to be called Palestine. Today the word carries strong political connotations. Generally Palestine refers to the 27,090 km² political unit designated by the British Mandate that took possession of the region from the Ottoman Empire during the first World War. In 1988, the Palestinian National Assembly (Parliament in exile) adopted the two-state solution as a settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with the purpose of establishing the State of Palestine in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Thereafter, “Palestine” started to refer to the West Bank and Gaza. But very few endorsed this definition. With the advent of the Oslo agreements, the term “Palestinian Territories” was added to the conflict’s lexicon. This term came to mean the areas in which the Palestinian National Authority has jurisdiction; that is area A and area B according to the Oslo Accords. In sum, “Mandate Palestine” refers to the 27,090 km² area, the “Palestinian State” refers to the West Bank and Gaza areas as they were before the 1967 war, and the “Palestinian Territories” refer to those areas over which the Palestinian National Authority exercises some level of self-rule.

Palestinian Arab: An Arab native to Palestine or her/his descendants. This includes Palestinians both inside and outside the Green Line.

Redeployment/Withdrawal: Withdrawal refers to the pulling out of military forces from portions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Israeli’s prefer to call such action “redeployment” which implies that the troops merely relocated their positions and may move back at any time, without a

transfer of sovereignty

West Bank: The territory west of the Jordan River, defended by Jordan in the 1948 war and conquered by the Israelis in the 1967 war. The West Bank is home to about two million Palestinians.

Zionism: The nationalistic philosophy that developed among the Jews in Europe in the mid to late 19th century that aspires to create a homeland for the Jewish people.

“Though, I cry, I’ve been wronged. I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice.” Job 35:9



Palestinian cars, identified by different license plates, are not allowed entry into Israel proper. Palestinians are detained when caught trying to cross illegally.



APPENDIX II

-Selections from International Law Relevant to the Arab-Israeli Conflict
-Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948

Article 17: No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

UN General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 11, 1948

Paragraph 11: Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property.

Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949

Article 27: Protected persons... shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be protected especially against acts of violence.

Article 31: No physical or moral coercion shall be exercised against protected persons, in particular to obtain information from them or from third parties.

Article 33: No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all means of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited.

Article 47: Protected persons who are in the occupied territory shall not be deprived, in any case or in any manner whatsoever, of the benefits of the present Convention by any change introduced, as the result of the occupation of a territory, into the institutions or government of the said territory.

Article 49: Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the occupying

power or to that of any other country occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive... The occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.

Article 50: The Occupying Power shall, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children.

Article 53: Any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, to the state, or to other public authorities, or to social or cooperative organizations, is prohibited.

Article 56: To the fullest extent of the means available to it, the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining... the medical and hospital establishments and services, public health and hygiene in the occupied territory... Medical personnel of all categories shall be allowed to carry out their duties.

Article 58: The Occupying Power shall permit ministers of religion to give spiritual assistance to the members of their religious communities.

Article 71: Accused persons who are prosecuted by the Occupying Power shall be promptly informed in writing, in a language which they understand, of the particulars of the charges preferred against them, and shall be brought to trial as rapidly as possible.

Article 146: High Contracting Parties undertake to enact any legislation necessary to provide effective penal sanctions for persons committing, or ordering to be committed, any of the grave breaches of the present Convention as defined in the following Article.

Article 147: Grave breaches... shall be those involving any of the following acts, if committed against persons or property protected by the present

Convention: willful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments, willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement of a protected person, compelling a protected person to serve in the forces of a hostile power, or willfully depriving a protected person of the rights of fair and regular trial prescribed in the present Convention, taking of hostages and extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly.

Article 148: No High Contracting Party shall be allowed to absolve itself or any other High Contracting Party of any liability incurred by itself or by another High Contracting Party in respect of breaches referred to in the preceding Article.

Both Israel and the US are High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 'Protocol 1'

Article 79: Journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered as civilians.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966

Article 12: 1) Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence. 2) Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own.

Article 19: Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this rights shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing, or print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966

Article 1: 1) All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of this right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. 2) All Peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based on the principle of mutual benefit and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.

Article 6: All State Parties to the present Convention recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take steps to safeguard this right.

Article 12: The State Parties to the present Convention recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Article 13: The State Parties to the present Convention recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

UN Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967:

Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security.

1. Affirms that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles: (i) Withdraw of Israeli armed

forces from the territories occupied in the recent conflict; (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force...

2. Affirms further the necessity... For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem.

UN Security Council Resolution 267 of July 3, 1969:

The Security Council... reaffirming the established principle that acquisition of territory by military conquest is inadmissible... censures in the strongest terms all measures taken to change the status of Jerusalem; confirms that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel which purport to alter the status of Jerusalem, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, are invalid and cannot change that status.

UN Security Council Resolution 338 of October 22, 1973:

2. Calls upon the parties concerned to start immediately after the cease-fire the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) in all of its parts;

3. Decides that, immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations shall start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

UN Security Council Resolution 465 of March 1, 1980:

Affirming once more that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, is applicable to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, Deploring the decision of the Government of Israel officially to support Israeli

settlements in Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967... Taking into account the need to consider measures for the impartial protection of private and public land property, and water resources, Bearing in mind the specific status of Jerusalem and, in particular, the need to protect and preserve the unique spiritual and religious dimension of the Holy Places in the city, Drawing attention to the grave consequences, which the settlements policy is bound to have on any attempt to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East,

6. Strongly deplores the continuation and persistence of Israel in pursuing those policies and practices and calls upon the Government and people of Israel to rescind those measures, to dismantle the existing settlements and in particular to cease, on an urgent basis, the establishment, construction and planning of settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem;

7. Calls upon all States not to provide Israel with any assistance to be used specifically in connection with settlements in the occupied territories...

UN Security Council Resolution 681 of December 20, 1990:

Gravely concerned at the dangerous deterioration of the situation in all the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, and at the violence and rising tension in Israel...

5. Calls on the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to insure respect by Israel, the occupying power, for its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention...

APPENDIX III

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Israeli Politics/Society

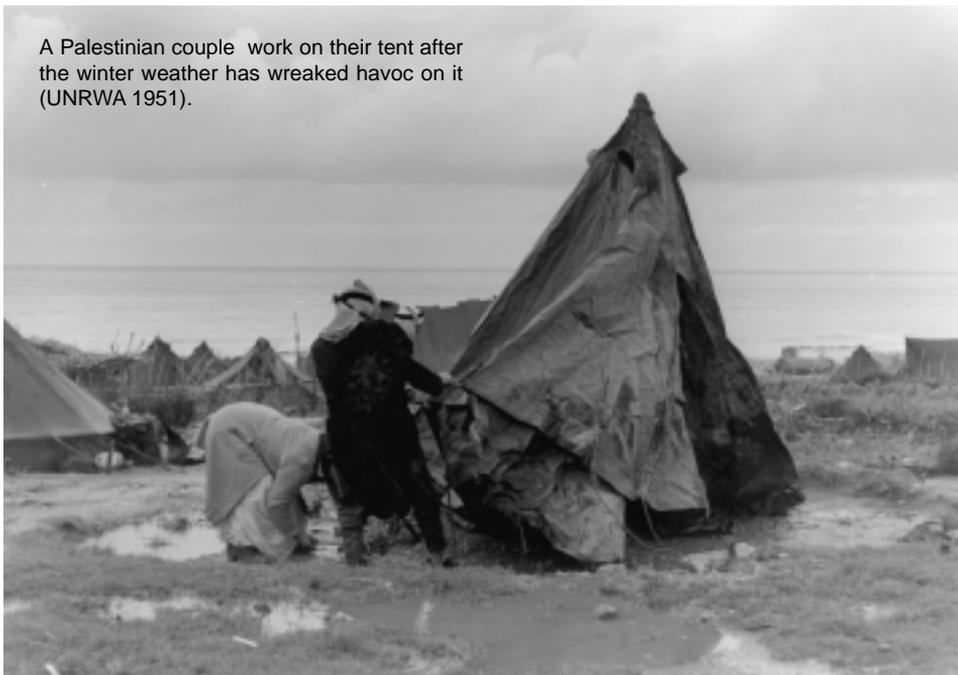
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A Palestinian couple work on their tent after the winter weather has wreaked havoc on it (UNRWA 1951).



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APPENDIX IV

Resources for More Information and Involvement

Alternative Information Center
www.alternativenews.org
aicmail@alt-info.org
Jerusalem and Bethlehem
Research, Advocacy

Applied Research Institute
www.arij.org
postmaster@arij.org
Bethlehem
Research, Environment

BADIL
www.badil.org
info@badil.org
Bethlehem
Refugees, Advocacy

Bethlehem Bible College and
The Shepard's Society
www.bethlehembiblecollege.edu
Bethbc@planet.edu
Bethlehem
Christian Education, Relief

B'tselem
www.btselem.org
mail@btselem.org
Jerusalem
Human Rights, Advocacy

The Center for Policy Analysis on
Palestine
www.palestinecenter.org
info@palestinecenter.org
Washington
Research, Public Policy

Christian Peacemaker Teams
www.prairienet.org/cpt
cpt@igc.org
Chicago
Nonviolent action, Advocacy, Delegations

Churches for Middle East Peace
www.cmep.org
cmepdc@aol.com
Washington
Advocacy, Ecumenical work, Public policy

Gush Shalom
www.gush-shalom.org
info@gush-shalom.org
Tel Aviv
Advocacy, Nonviolent action

Institute for Palestine Studies
www.ipsjps.org
ips@ipsjps.org
Washington
Research

LAW
www.lawsociety.org
law@lawsociety.org
Jerusalem
Human Rights; Environment

Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group
www.lebnet.com/phrmg
eid4hr@aquanet.co.il
Jerusalem
Human Rights

Peace Now
www.peacenow.org.il
peacenow@actcom.co.il
Jerusalem
Human Rights

Israel/Palestine Center for Research and
Information
www.ipcri.org
ipcri@ipcri.org
Jerusalem
Research

Palestinian Academic Society for the
Studies of International Affairs
www.passia.org
passia@palnet.com
Jerusalem
Research

Not in My Name
www.nimn.org
info@notinmyname.org
Evanston, IL
Nonviolent Action, Advocacy

Jews United Against Zionism
www.netureikarta.org
rabbiweiss@netureikarta.org
New York, NY
Grassroots organizing, Public
Education

Jewish Unity for a Just Peace
www.junity.org
info@junity.org
Evanston, IL
Grassroots Organizing

Foundation for Middle East Peace
info@fmep.org
Washington, DC
Research, Public Policy

Union of Health Work Committees
www.gaza-health.org
Gaza City
Medical

Council for Palestinian Restitution and
Repatriation
www.rightofreturn.org/frames.html
info@rightofreturn.org
Washington, DC
Advocacy, refugees, relief

Holy Land Trust
www.holylandtrust.org
Palestine@holylandtrust.org
Bethlehem, Palestine
Education, Advocacy

INTERPAL
www.interpal.org
info@interpal.org
London
Relief, Development

The Palestine Children's Relief Fund
www.wolfnet.com/~pcrf
THEPCRFAOL.COM
Relief among Palestinians

