

# Contents

## Preface

- 1 Israel's Roots
  - 2 The British Mandate
  - 3 Partition and the War of 1948
  - 4 The 1956 Suez War and the 1967 Six-Day War
  - 5 The War of Attrition (1967–1970) and the 1973 Yom Kippur War
  - 6 Borders and Boundaries
  - 7 Israel and Lebanon
  - 8 Terrorism
  - 9 The United Nations
  - 10 Refugees
  - 11 Human Rights
  - 12 Jerusalem
  - 13 U.S. Middle East Policy
  - 14 The Gaza Strip
  - 15 The Peace Process
  - 16 Settlements
  - 17 The Iranian Threat
  - 18 The Media
  - 19 The Campaign to Delegitimize Israel
- About the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise  
About the Author

## TABLES

- Jewish Immigration to Palestine  
Palestinian Refugees in UNRWA Camps (2021)  
Jerusalem's Population  
“Consensus” Settlements

## GRAPHS

- Entries to and Exits from Gaza  
Rocket Attacks Launched From Gaza  
Settlement Growth Over Time

## MAPS

- 1—Great Britain's Division of the Mandated Area, 1921–1923
- 2—The Balfour Declaration Britain's Promise to the Jews
- 3—The Partition Plan—1947—UN General Assembly Resolution 181
- 4—Peel Commission Partition Plan, July 1937
- 5—The Arab Invasion, May 15, 1948
- 6—Armistice Lines, 1949
- 7—Terrorist Attacks, 1951–1956
- 8—The Sinai Campaign, 1956
- 9—The Golan Heights Prior to the 1967 War: Distances and Elevations
- 10—Israel before June 1967
- 11—Events Leading to the Six-Day War, May 25–30, 1967
- 12—The Egyptian Front, June 5–8, 1967
- 13—The Battle for Jerusalem, June 5–7, 1967

- 14—Israel after the Six-Day War, June 10, 1967
- 15—Egyptian and Syrian Attacks, Oct. 6, 1973
- 16—Peace with Egypt
- 17—The Golan Heights Ridge Line
- 18—Relative Size of the Golan Heights
- 19—Range of Fire from Judea & Samaria (West Bank)
- 20—Israel—PLO Interim Agreements since 1993
- 21—Flying Times to Israel
- 22—2nd Lebanon War
- 23—Israel's Border with Lebanon (in 2000)
- 24—Range of Fire from Lebanon
- 25—Jewish Refugees from Arab States, 1948–1972
- 26—Divided Jerusalem, 1948–1967
- 27—Distances between Israeli Population Centers and Pre-1967 Armistice Lines
- 28—Range of Fire from Gaza
- 29—The Palestinian Authority's Map of Palestine
- 30—Water Resources
- 31—The Future Borders of Israel and Palestine?
- 32—Israel: Size and Dimensions

### **ADDITIONAL MAPS**

The Gaza Strip  
Oslo Accords Map  
E-1 Zone

## Preface

*The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived, and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and repeated.*

—President John F. Kennedy<sup>1</sup>

*“Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts.”* —Daniel Patrick Moynihan<sup>2</sup>

When *The Arab War Against Israel Myths and Facts* was first published more than 50 years ago, Israel had already fought four wars with Arab states. It seemed the Arab world would never accept the presence of a Jewish state in its midst, and the prospects for peace seemed bleak.

In 1947, the UN was preparing to vote on whether to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. The outcome depended on the Soviet Union and the United States voting for the resolution. At the time, it was thought the two countries would never agree – but they did.

Similarly, skeptics said no Arab or Muslim leader would make peace with Israel. It took nearly 30 years, but Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed a treaty with Israel. Fifteen more years passed before King Hussein of Jordan did the same.

No one thought the Gulf states would agree to peace with Israel until the Palestinian issue was solved. Almost 25 years after Jordan made peace, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates normalized relations with Israel in what became known as the Abraham Accords. Soon after, Morocco and Sudan established formal ties with Israel. The other Gulf states have not yet followed suit but engage with Israel informally. The mutual interest in preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and threatening the region has been a catalyst for these states’ engagement with Israel.

Today, the Arab-Israeli conflict no longer exists. Three of the most hostile countries – Iraq, Syria, and Libya, have been consumed by domestic turmoil. Lebanon is a puppet of Iran, which prevents any improvement in relations with Israel, and it is Hezbollah, not the Lebanese government or army that is at war with Israel.

The conflict is now fomented by Islamists who do not believe Jews should rule over Muslims. Israel is threatened primarily by radical Muslims from Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and the mullahs ruling Iran. These Muslims, as opposed to most living in the Middle East, are not interested in a political agreement; they seek to eliminate the Jewish state.

The Palestinian-Israeli dispute, typically described as a fight between two peoples over one land, has become more challenging to resolve because of the Islamization of the conflict. Hamas casts itself as the defender of Muslim land and the group that will liberate “Palestine.” Not to be

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<sup>1</sup>President John F. Kennedy, Commencement Address at Yale University (June 11, 1962).

<sup>2</sup>Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Steven R. Weisman, Ed. *Daniel Patrick Moynihan: A Portrait in Letters of an American Visionary* (PublicAffairs, October 12, 2010).

outdone, the supposedly secular PLO leaders adopted Islamic rhetoric to incite the Palestinian population.

Not all Muslims hold extreme views; however, enough believe that a Jewish state cannot exist in the Muslim heartland to ensure Israel will face ongoing threats even if additional political agreements are reached.

Meanwhile, Israel's detractors outside the region are engaged in a global campaign to delegitimize Israel with their anti-Semitic boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaign. Though often portrayed as a human rights movement to help the Palestinians, it shares the radical Muslim objective of destroying Israel.

People often ask me to name the most prevalent myth about the Middle East. The answer is the suggestion that Israelis do not want peace.

No one craves peace more desperately than Israelis. They have lived through seven wars and incessant attacks from terrorists for more than six decades. While high school graduates in the United States, England, and elsewhere go to college, most Israelis serve in the military for two or more years. Parents spend sleepless nights worrying about their sons and daughters. You can be sure the parents would prefer that their children attend college rather than having to defend the country. Each time a new peace initiative is launched, hopes are raised that mandatory service will no longer be necessary.

We also hold out hope that another edition of *Myths and Facts* will not be necessary. For now, however, Islamist zealotry, Palestinian intransigence, and efforts to rewrite history and demonize Israel have required the production of this edition to rebut recurring myths and new calumnies.

Israel is not perfect, but our purpose is not to enumerate Israel's flaws; there is no shortage of critics to do that. Our goal is to provide context to help readers understand the complexities of the Middle East.

This book is only meant as an introduction to the issues. We encourage you to study different perspectives to reach your own conclusions. You can find the complete text of this book and much more information in the **Jewish Virtual Library** ([www.JewishVirtualLibrary.org](http://www.JewishVirtualLibrary.org)). We continually update the online edition of *Myths* and post material we could not fit into the book. In addition, AICE disseminates a weekly email with new and updated facts. To sign up, visit the Library.

AICE is especially grateful to the sponsors of this edition: Evelyn and Dr. Shmuel Katz from Bal Harbour, Florida, for recommending a significant grant to AICE in loving memory of the AUSCH and KATZ family members O.B.M. H.Y.D. who perished during the Holocaust in Europe. May their greatness be an inspiration to all people of goodwill.

"Facts are stubborn things," observed John Adams, "and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>John Adams, "Argument in Defense of the Soldiers in Boston Massacre Trial," (December 1770).

The following pages lay out the stubborn facts about the conflict between Israel and its enemies.  
Facts are the best weapons to ensure truth triumphs over fiction.

Mitchell G. Bard, PhD

February 2023

# Chapter 1

## Israel's Roots

[The Jews have no claim to the land they call Israel.](#)

[Palestine was always an Arab country.](#)

[The Palestinians are descendants of the Canaanites and were in Palestine long before the Jews.](#)

[The Palestinians have aboriginal rights to Palestine.](#)

[The British promised the Arabs independence in Palestine.](#)

[The Balfour Declaration did not give Jews a right to a homeland in Palestine.](#)

[Arabs in Palestine suffered because of Jewish settlement.](#)

[Zionism is racism.](#)

[The Zionists could have chosen another country besides Palestine.](#)

[The Zionists were colonialist tools of Western imperialism.](#)

[Israel is a "settler-colonial" state.](#)

### **MYTH**

*The Jews have no claim to the land they call Israel.*

### **FACT**

A common misperception is that all the [Jews](#) were forced into the [Diaspora](#) by the [Romans](#) after the destruction of the [Second Temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#) in the year 70 C.E. then, 1,800 years later, the Jews suddenly returned to [Palestine](#) demanding their country back. In reality, the Jewish people have maintained ties to their historic homeland for more than 3,700 years.

The Jewish people base their claim to the Land of Israel on at least four premises: 1) the Jewish people settled and developed the land, 2) the international community granted political sovereignty in Palestine to the Jewish people, 3) the territory was captured in defensive wars, and 4) God promised the land to the patriarch [Abraham](#).

Even after the Second Temple's destruction and the exile's beginning, Jewish life in the Land of Israel continued and often flourished. Large communities were reestablished in Jerusalem and [Tiberias](#) by the 9th century. In the 11th century, Jewish communities grew in Rafah, [Gaza](#), [Ashkelon](#), [Jaffa](#), and [Caesarea](#). The [Crusaders](#) massacred many Jews during the 12th century, but the community rebounded in the next two centuries as many [rabbis](#) and Jewish pilgrims immigrated to Jerusalem and the Galilee. Prominent rabbis established communities in [Safed](#), Jerusalem, and elsewhere during the following 300 years.

By the early 19th century—years before the birth of the modern [Zionist](#) movement—more than 10,000 Jews lived throughout what is today [Israel](#).<sup>1</sup> The 78 years of nation-building, beginning in 1870, culminated in the [reestablishment](#) of the Jewish State.

Israel's international "birth certificate" was validated by the promise of the [Bible](#); uninterrupted Jewish settlement from the time of [Joshua](#) onward; the [Balfour Declaration](#) of 1917; the [League of Nations Mandate](#), which incorporated the Balfour Declaration; the [United Nations partition resolution](#) of 1947; Israel's admission to the U.N. in 1949; the recognition of Israel by most other states; and—most of all—the society created by Israel's people in decades of thriving, dynamic national existence.

**Nobody does Israel any service by proclaiming its "right to exist." Israel's right to exist, like that of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and 152 other states, is axiomatic and unreserved. Israel's legitimacy is not suspended in midair awaiting acknowledgment... There is certainly no other state, big or small, young or old, that would consider mere recognition of its "right to**

## MYTH

*Palestine was always an Arab country.*

## **FACT**

The Hebrews entered the land of Israel about 1300 [B.C.E.](#), living under a tribal confederation until being united under the first monarch, [King Saul](#). The second king, [David](#), established Jerusalem as the capital around 1000 B.C.E. David’s son, [Solomon](#), built the [Temple](#) soon thereafter and consolidated the kingdom’s military, administrative, and religious functions. The nation was divided under Solomon’s son, with the northern kingdom ([Israel](#)) lasting until 722 B.C.E., when the [Assyrians](#) destroyed it, and the southern kingdom ([Judah](#)) surviving until the [Babylonian](#) conquest in 586 B.C.E. The Jewish people enjoyed brief periods of sovereignty afterward until most Jews were finally driven from their homeland in 135 C.E.

Jewish independence in the Land of Israel lasted for more than 400 years. This is much longer than Americans have enjoyed independence in what has become known as the United States.<sup>3</sup> Israel would be more than 3,000 years old today if not for foreign conquerors.

Though the definite [origins](#) of the word Palestine have been debated for years and are still unknown, the name is believed to be derived from the Egyptian and [Hebrew](#) word *peleshet*, which appears in the [Tanakh](#) no fewer than 250 times. Roughly translated to mean “rolling” or “migratory,” the term was used to describe the inhabitants of the land to the northeast of [Egypt](#) – the [Philistines](#). The Philistines were an Aegean people with no connection ethnically, linguistically, or historically with Arabia.

The words “Palestine” or “Filastin” do not appear in the [Koran](#). “Palestine” is also not mentioned in the [Old](#) or [New Testament](#). It does occur at least eight times in the Hebrew concordance of the [King James Bible](#).

As early as 300 B.C.E., the term [Judaea](#) [Judea] appears, most likely to describe the area where the population was predominantly Jewish. In the 2nd century C.E., the [Romans](#) crushed the [revolt](#) of [Shimon Bar Kokhba](#) (132 CE), during which Jerusalem and Judea were conquered, and the area of Judea was renamed *Palaestina* to minimize Jewish identification with the land of Israel. The Arabic word Filastin is derived from this Latin name.<sup>4</sup>

According to Lewis Feldman, [Rabbi Akiva](#) testified in the second century that Diaspora Jews referred to the land as *Eretz Israel*. The [rabbis](#) never refer to it as Palestine.<sup>5</sup>

Following the [Muslim](#) conquest, place names used by the [Byzantine](#) administration generally continued to be used in [Arabic](#), and “Palestine” became common in Early Modern English. It was used, for example, by the Crusaders in the Middle Ages.

Under the [Ottoman Empire](#) (1517-1917), the term Palestine was used as a general term to describe the land south of [Syria](#); many Ottomans and Arabs who lived in Palestine during this period referred to the area as Southern Syria and not as Palestine.

Palestine was never exclusively Arab, although Arabic gradually became the language of most of the population after the Muslim invasions of the 7th century. No independent Arab or Palestinian state ever existed in the area.

When the First Congress of Muslim-Christian Associations met in Jerusalem in February 1919 to choose Palestinian

representatives for the Paris Peace Conference, they adopted the following resolution:

We consider Palestine as part of Arab Syria, as it has never been separated from it at any time. We are connected with it by national, religious, linguistic, natural, economic, and geographical bonds.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, the [King-Crane Commission](#) found that year that Christian and Muslim Arabs opposed any plan to create a country called “Palestine,” because it was viewed as recognition of Zionist claims.<sup>7</sup>

Historian Bernard Lewis noted, “With the British conquest of the country in 1917-1918 [World War I](#) that Palestine for the first time since remote antiquity became a separate entity, this time in a [mandate](#) held by the British Empire and approved by the League of Nations. The name adopted to designate this entity was ‘Palestine,’ resuscitated from an almost forgotten antiquity.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1937, a local Arab leader, Auni Bey Abdul Hadi, told the [Peel Commission](#), which ultimately suggested the partition of Palestine: “There is no such country as Palestine! ‘Palestine’ is a term the Zionists invented! There is no Palestine in the Bible. Our country was for centuries part of Syria.”<sup>9</sup>

When the distinguished Arab-American historian, Princeton University professor Philip Hitti, testified against partition before the [Anglo-American Committee](#) in 1946, he said, “There is no such thing as ‘Palestine’ in history, absolutely not.”<sup>10</sup>

Likewise, the Arab Higher Committee representative to the United Nations echoed this view in a statement to the [General Assembly](#) in May 1947, which said Palestine was part of the Province of Syria and the Arabs of Palestine did not comprise a separate political entity. A few years later, Ahmed Shuqeyri, later the chairman of the [P.L.O.](#), told the Security Council: “It is common knowledge that Palestine is nothing but southern Syria.”<sup>11</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The Palestinians are descendants of the Canaanites and were in Palestine long before the Jews.*

## ***FACT***

Palestinian claims to be related to the [Canaanites](#) are a recent phenomenon and contrary to historical evidence. The Canaanites disappeared three millennia ago, and no one knows if any of their descendants survived or, if they did, who they would be.

Over the last two thousand years, massive invasions (e.g., the Crusades), migrations, the plague, and other manmade or natural disasters killed off most of the local people. The entire local population has been replaced many times over. During the British Mandate alone, more than 100,000 Arabs emigrated from neighboring countries and are today considered [Palestinians](#).

Sherif Hussein, the guardian of the Islamic Holy Places in Arabia, said the Palestinians’ ancestors had only been in the area for one thousand years.<sup>12</sup> Even the Palestinians acknowledged their association with the region came long after the Jews. In testimony before the Anglo-American Committee in 1946, for example, they claimed a connection to Palestine of more than 1,000 years, dating back no further than the conquest of [Muhammad’s](#) followers in the seventh century.<sup>13</sup>

By contrast, no serious historian questions the more than 3,000-year-old Jewish connection to the land of Israel or the modern Jewish people’s relation to the ancient Hebrews.

**We know that some of those who live in our villages are Jews who converted to Islam after the Muslim conquests beginning in the 7th century, and most of us are the descendants of foreign**



workers who came to British Mandate of Palestine from the various Arab countries in the wake of the Zionist enterprise. By trying to trace our “ancestry” to the Canaanites, we lie to ourselves and demonstrate our silliness and self-deception to the world. And when we try to claim that Jesus was a Palestinian, we make ourselves an international laughingstock.

—Bassam Tawil<sup>14</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The Palestinians have aboriginal rights to Palestine.*

### **FACT**

Israel’s detractors often depict the Jews as newcomers to “Palestine” who are displacing the aboriginal Arab people. The truth is quite different, however, as it is the Jews who are the aboriginal tribe in the land based on their presence in the Holy Land for more than 2,000 years. Of all the people who lived in the area at that time, such as the [Phoenicians](#), [Moabites](#), and Philistines, only the Jews remain today.

The Arabs, however, are not native to “Palestine;” they are aboriginal to Arabia. “Judaism, the Hebrew language and a self-identified ‘Jewish’ People had already been established in the Holy Land for about a thousand years before the 6th-7th century C.E. ethnogenesis in Arabia of the great Arab People.” It is “the Arab people,” who are “the interloping settler population, including newer waves of Arab immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries.” <sup>15</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The British promised the Arabs independence in Palestine.*

### **FACT**

During World War I, the central figure in the Arab nationalist movement was Hussein ibn ‘Ali, the Sherif of [Mecca](#) in 1908. As Sherif, Hussein was responsible for the custody of Islam’s shrines in the Hejaz and was one of the Muslims’ spiritual leaders.

In July 1915, Hussein sent a letter to Sir Henry MacMahon, the High Commissioner for Egypt, informing him of the terms for Arab participation in the war against the Turks. Subsequent letters between Hussein and MacMahon outlined the areas that Britain was prepared to cede to the Arabs in exchange for their help.

The Hussein-MacMahon [correspondence](#) conspicuously fails to mention Palestine. The British argued the omission had been intentional, justifying their refusal to grant the Arabs independence in Palestine after the war.<sup>16</sup> MacMahon explained:

I feel it my duty to state, and I do so definitely and emphatically, that it was not intended by me in giving this pledge to King Hussein to include Palestine in the area in which Arab independence was promised. I also had every reason to believe at the time that the fact that Palestine was not included in my pledge was well understood by King Hussein.<sup>17</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The Balfour Declaration did not give Jews the right to a homeland in Palestine.*

### **FACT**

On November 2, 1917, [Britain](#) issued the [Balfour Declaration](#):

His Majesty's Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

[Emir Faisal](#), son of Sherif Hussein, the leader of the Arab revolt against the Turks, signed an agreement with [Chaim Weizmann](#) and other [Zionist](#) leaders during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference supporting the implementation of Balfour. It acknowledged the "racial kinship and ancient bonds existing between the Arabs and the Jewish people" and concluded that "the surest means of working out the consummation of their national aspirations is through the closest possible collaboration in the development of the Arab states and Palestine." Furthermore, the agreement called for all necessary measures "...to encourage and stimulate [immigration](#) of Jews into Palestine on a large scale, and as quickly as possible to settle Jewish immigrants upon the land through closer settlement and intensive cultivation of the soil." <sup>18</sup>

Faisal had conditioned his acceptance of the Balfour Declaration on Britain fulfilling its wartime promises of independence to the Arabs. These were not kept.

Critics dismiss the Weizmann-Faisal agreement because it was never enacted; however, the fact that the leader of the Arab nationalist movement and the Zionist movement could reach an understanding is significant because it demonstrated that Jewish and Arab aspirations were not necessarily mutually exclusive.

"The Balfour Declaration was not the isolated act of one nation," observed historian Martin Kramer. "It was approved in advance by the Allied powers whose consensus then constituted the only source of international legitimacy. Before Balfour signed his declaration, representatives of other democratic nations signed their names on similar letters and assurances.

The Mandate for Palestine, approved by the 52 governments at the League of Nations on July 24, 1922, expressly referred to "the historical connections of the Jewish people with Palestine" and to the moral validity of "reconstituting their National Home in that country." The term "reconstituting" indicates a recognition that Palestine had been the Jews' home. Furthermore, the British were instructed to "use their best endeavors to facilitate" Jewish immigration, to encourage settlement on the land, and to "secure" the Jewish National Home. The word "Arab" does not appear in the Mandatory award. <sup>19</sup>

The United States was not a member of the League of Nations; however, the U.S. Congress [endorsed](#) the Balfour Declaration on September 21, 1922, which President Warren Harding signed. President Herbert Hoover [reiterated](#) America's support in 1932, as did President [Franklin Roosevelt](#) in [1937](#).

## **MYTH**

*Arabs in Palestine suffered because of Jewish settlement.*

## ***FACT***

Palestine was a sparsely populated, poorly cultivated, and widely neglected expanse of eroded hills, sandy deserts, and malarial marshes for centuries. As late as 1880, the American consul in Jerusalem reported the area continued its historic decline. "The population and wealth of Palestine has not increased during the last forty years," he said. <sup>20</sup>

The Report of the Palestine Royal Commission quotes an account of the Maritime Plain in 1913:

The road leading from Gaza to the north was only a summer track suitable for transport by camels and carts...no orange groves, orchards, or vineyards were to be seen until one reached [the Jewish village of] Yabna...Houses were all of mud. No windows were anywhere to be seen...The ploughs used were of wood...The yields were very poor...The sanitary conditions in the village were horrible. Schools did not exist...The western part, towards the sea, was almost a desert...The villages in this area were few and thinly populated. Many ruins of villages were

scattered over the area, as owing to the prevalence of malaria, many villages were deserted by their inhabitants.<sup>21</sup>

While some Arabs objected to Jews settling in Palestine and objected to the Balfour Declaration, others argued that Jews would improve the condition of [Palestinian Arabs](#). Dawood Barakat, the editor of the Egyptian paper *Al-Ahram*, wrote: “It is absolutely necessary that an entente be made between the Zionists and Arabs, because the war of words can only do evil. The Zionists are necessary for the country: The money which they will bring, their knowledge and intelligence, and the industriousness which characterizes them will contribute without doubt to the regeneration of the country.”<sup>22</sup>

Even a leading Arab nationalist believed the return of the Jews to their homeland would help revitalize the country. According to Sherif Hussein, the guardian of the Islamic Holy Places in Arabia:

The resources of the country are still virgin soil and will be developed by the Jewish immigrants. One of the most amazing things until recent times was that the Palestinian used to leave his country, wandering over the high seas in every direction. His native soil could not retain a hold on him, though his ancestors had lived on it for 1000 years. At the same time, we have seen the Jews from foreign countries streaming to Palestine from Russia, Germany, Austria, Spain, [and] America. The cause of causes could not escape those who had a gift of deeper insight. They knew that the country was for its original sons (*abna' ihi-l-asliyin*), for all their differences, a sacred and beloved homeland. The return of these exiles (*jaliya*) to their homeland will prove materially and spiritually [to be] an experimental school for their brethren who are with them in the fields, factories, trades, and in all things connected with toil and labor.<sup>23</sup>

As Hussein foresaw, Palestine’s regeneration and [population](#) growth came after Jews returned in massive numbers.

A desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds—a silent mournful expanse...A desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action...We never saw a human being on the whole route...There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of the worthless soil, had almost deserted the country.

—Mark Twain’s description of Palestine in 1867<sup>24</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Zionism is racism.*

## ***FACT***

In 1975, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a [resolution slandering Zionism](#) by equating it with racism. Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, which holds that Jews, like any other nation, are entitled to self-determination in their homeland—Israel.

For many Jews, author Howard Jacobson observed, Zionism “was a liberation movement, an escape from the massacres of Eastern Europe, from the anti-Jewish sentiment building in Western Europe, from the demeaning status of second-class citizenship that was the best they could expect in Arab countries, and from the confined life of servitude and superstition to which centuries of contempt and cruelty had reduced them.” Rather than racism, it was a “flight from racism” (emphasis in the original).<sup>25</sup>

Zionism recognizes that Jewishness is defined by shared origin, religion, culture, and history. More than seven million Israeli Jewish citizens from more than 100 countries, including Jews of color from [Morocco](#), [Yemen](#), and [India](#) exemplify the realization of the Zionist dream

The presence of thousands of black Jews in Israel is the best refutation of the calumny against Zionism. In a series of [historic airlifts](#)—labeled Operations [Moses](#) (1984), [Joshua](#) (1985), and [Solomon](#) (1991)—Israel rescued almost 42,000 members of the ancient [Ethiopian Jewish community](#).

**For the first time in history, thousands of black people are being brought to a country not in chains but in dignity, not as slaves but as citizens.**

**—William Safire writing after “Operation Moses” rescued black Jews from Ethiopia<sup>26</sup>**

Israel’s [Law of Return](#) grants automatic citizenship to Jews, but non-Jews are also eligible to become citizens under naturalization procedures similar to those in other countries. For example, [Germany](#), [Greece](#), [Ireland](#), and [Finland](#) have special categories of people who are entitled to citizenship.

[Arab states](#) define citizenship strictly by native parentage. It is almost impossible to become a naturalized citizen in many Arab states, especially [Algeria](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), and [Kuwait](#). Several Arab nations have laws that facilitate the naturalization of foreign Arabs, except Palestinians. [Jordan](#) instituted its own “law of return” in 1954, offering citizenship to all former residents of Palestine, except for Jews and Gazans.<sup>27</sup> In 2004, however, Jordan began revoking the citizenship of Palestinians who lacked Israeli permits to reside in the [West Bank](#).<sup>28</sup>

Zionism does not discriminate against anyone. More than one million [Muslim](#) and [Christian Arabs](#), [Druze](#), [Baha’is](#), [Circassians](#), and other ethnic groups also are represented in Israel’s population. Israel scrupulously protects the religious and political rights of Christians and Muslims. Moreover, anyone – Jew or non-Jew – Israeli, American, Chinese, Indian, black, or white – can be a Zionist.

The 1975 U.N. resolution was part of the Soviet-Arab Cold War anti-Israel campaign. Almost all the former non-Arab supporters of the resolution have apologized and changed their positions. When the General Assembly voted to [repeal the resolution](#) in 1991, only some Arab and Muslim states, [Cuba](#), North Korea, and Vietnam were opposed.

**When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews. You’re talking anti-Semitism.**

**—Martin Luther King<sup>29</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*The Zionists could have chosen another country besides Palestine.*

## **FACT**

In the late nineteenth century, the rise of anti-Semitism led to a resurgence of [pogroms](#) in [Russia](#) and [Eastern Europe](#), shattering promises of equality and tolerance. This stimulated Jewish immigration to Palestine from Europe.

Simultaneously, a wave of Jews immigrated to Palestine from [Yemen](#), [Morocco](#), [Iraq](#), and [Turkey](#). These Jews were unaware of [Theodor Herzl’s political Zionism](#) or European pogroms. They were motivated by the centuries-old dream of the “Return to Zion” and fear of intolerance. Upon hearing that the gates of Palestine were open, they braved the

hardships of travel and went to the “Land of Israel.”

The Zionist ideal of a return to Israel has profound religious roots. Many Jewish prayers speak of Jerusalem, Zion, and the land of Israel. The injunction not to forget Jerusalem, the site of the Temple, is a central tenet of Judaism. The Hebrew language, the [Torah](#), laws in the [Talmud](#), the [Jewish calendar](#), and [Jewish holidays](#) and festivals all originated in Israel and revolve around its seasons and conditions. Jews pray toward Jerusalem and recite the words “next year in Jerusalem” every [Passover](#). Jewish religion, culture, and history make clear that the Jewish commonwealth can be built only in the land of Israel.

In 1897, Jewish leaders formally organized the Zionist political movement, calling for restoring the Jewish national home in Palestine, where Jews could find sanctuary and self-determination and work for the renaissance of their civilization and culture.

Due to the urgency of the plight of Jews in Russia, at the [Sixth Zionist Congress](#) at [Basel](#) on August 26, 1903, Herzl proposed the creation of a Jewish state in [Uganda](#) as a temporary emergency refuge. While Herzl made it clear that this program would not affect the ultimate aim of Zionism, a Jewish entity in the land of Israel, the proposal aroused a storm of protest at the congress that nearly led to a split in the Zionist movement. The [Uganda Program](#), which never had much support, was formally rejected by the Zionist movement at the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905.

## **MYTH**

*The Zionists were colonialist tools of Western imperialism.*

## ***FACT***

The Palestinians and some of their supporters portray the conflict with Israel and Zionism as an anti-colonialist struggle rather than a clash of rival nationalistic movements. Characterizing Israel and Zionism in this way reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of colonialism, which means living by exploiting others. “What could be further from colonialism,” Professor Yehoshafat Harkabi has written, “than the idealism of city-dwelling Jews who strive to become farmers and laborers and to live by their own work?” <sup>30</sup>

Moreover, as British historian Paul Johnson noted, Zionists were hardly tools of imperialists given the powers’ general opposition to their cause. “Everywhere in the West, the foreign offices, defense ministries and big business were against the Zionists.” <sup>31</sup>

Emir Faisal also saw the Zionist movement as a companion to the Arab nationalist movement, fighting against imperialism, as he explained in a [letter](#) to Harvard law professor and future Supreme Court Justice [Felix Frankfurter](#) on March 3, 1919, one day after Chaim Weizmann presented the Zionist case to the Paris conference. Faisal wrote:

The Arabs, especially the educated among us, look with deepest sympathy on the Zionist movement... We will wish the Jews a hearty welcome home... We are working together for a reformed and revised Near East and our two movements complete one another. The Jewish movement is nationalist and not imperialist. And there is room in Syria for us both. Indeed, I think that neither can be a real success without the other (emphasis added).<sup>32</sup>

In the 1940s, the Jewish underground movements waged an anticolonial war against the British. The Arabs, meanwhile, were concerned primarily with fighting the Jews rather than expelling the British imperialists.

“According to the rules of postcolonial discourse,” historian Alexander Yakobson notes, “the Palestinians are in the right by definition and are never responsible for anything.” Moreover, he observes, the “anti-colonialist blindness” created an imprudent expectation that Israel would “crumble from within” since “this wasn’t a real people and a real nation-state, but some ‘invented’ artificial entity.” <sup>33</sup>

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Our settlers do not come here as do the colonists from the Occident to have natives do their work for them; they themselves set their shoulders to the plow and they spend their strength and their blood to make the land fruitful. But it is not only for ourselves that we desire its fertility. The Jewish farmers have begun to teach their brothers, the Arab farmers, to cultivate the land more intensively; we desire to teach them further: together with them we want to cultivate the land—to “serve” it, as the Hebrew has it. The more fertile this soil becomes, the more space there will be for us and for them. We have no desire to dispossess them: we want to live with them.

—Martin Buber<sup>34</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel is a “settler-colonial” state.*

## ***FACT***

Israel’s detractors have shifted mainly from accusing Israel of being an outpost of colonialism to asserting it is a “settler-colonialist” state. Jews are portrayed as “the ‘white settler colonialists, and the Palestinians are given the role of the ‘black’ indigenous” people.”<sup>35</sup> Donna Robinson Divine and Asaf Romirowsky noted this “is the linguistic warrant for bringing an indictment against Israel for denying Palestinians the freedom and justice presumably due to them.”<sup>36</sup>

“Settler colonialism is an ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of indigenous peoples and cultures.”<sup>37</sup> Suggesting this describes Israel, however, ignores the Jewish connection to the land, the history of Israel and Zionism, and the international role in establishing a Jewish state.

Unlike settler colonialists, Alan Johnson notes, “The Jews were returning to a land that had been theirs, in which their religion was born, their temple built, and their Matriarchs and Patriarchs walked. A land that was at the absolute center of Judaism and Jewish peoplehood. The land from which they had been forcibly expelled.”<sup>38</sup>

Upon their return, the international community recognized the land of Israel was the Jewish homeland. This was written into the Balfour Declaration and ratified by the League of Nations. The United Nations subsequently called for the partitioning of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. The only reason the Palestinians do not share the anniversary of statehood with Israel is that they rejected the offer of independence in 1947. They have turned down multiple opportunities since then to achieve statehood.

Following the establishment of Israel, hundreds of thousands of Jews came to Israel from Arab countries that expelled them. This was not an invasion of white Europeans displacing Palestinians. Until the mass immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union, most of the Israeli population was non-white. Even today, only about 30% of Israeli Jews are of European descent.<sup>39</sup>

Thousands of Palestinians were not indigenous to the land. Many Arabs came to Palestine to take advantage of the conditions created by the Jews in the 1920s and 30s. Moreover, rather than be expelled, more than two million are Israeli citizens, and nearly five million live in the disputed territories (2022). If you add the Palestinians in Jordan, which was originally part of Palestine, roughly 75% of the world’s Palestinian population lives in “Palestine.”<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, Israel has done something no colonizer has ever done, withdraw from territory it captured in a defensive war. Israel evacuated the entire Gaza Strip and roughly 40% of the West Bank. Israel offered to withdraw from more than 90% of the West Bank in various peace plans rejected by the Palestinians. In the meantime, about 98% of the Palestinians in the territories are governed by the [Palestinian Authority](#) or [Hamas](#).

The view of Israel as colonialist predated the capture of the disputed territories in [1967](#); hence, the proponents of this

idea fuel Israeli fears that “withdrawal from the territories will only result in a continuation of the anti-colonialist struggle to be waged mere kilometers from Ben-Gurion airport.” <sup>41</sup>

The root of the conflict is the unwillingness to accept the validity of Zionism; that is, the Jewish people are a nation entitled to self-determination in their homeland, Israel. The perpetuation of the colonialist myth ensures its continuation.

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Bahat, ed., *Twenty Centuries of Jewish Life in the Holy Land*, (Jerusalem: The Israel Economist, 1976), pp. 61–63.

<sup>2</sup> Abba Eban, “The Saudi Text,” *New York Times*, (November 18, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> Max Dimont, *Jews, God, and History*, (NY: Signet, 1962), pp. 49–53.

<sup>4</sup> Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929*, (London: Frank Cass, 1974), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Louis H. Feldman, “Some Observations on the Name of Palestine,” *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 1990, Vol. 61, (1990), pp. 1-23.

<sup>6</sup> Randall Price, *Fast Facts on the Middle East Conflict*, (Harvest House Publishers: 2003), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Allen Z. Hertz, “Aboriginal Rights of the Jewish People,” *American Thinker*, (October 30, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Lewis with Buntzie Ellis Churchill, *Notes on a Century: Reflections of a Middle East Historian*, (NY: Penguin Books, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Moshe Kohn, “The Arabs’ ‘Lie’ of the Land,” *Jerusalem Post*, (October 18, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Avner Yaniv, *P.L.O.*, (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Study Group of Middle Eastern Affairs, August 1974), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Al-Qibla* (March 23, 1918), quoted in Samuel Katz, *Battleground-Fact and Fantasy in Palestine*, (NY: Bantam Books, 1977), p. 126.

<sup>13</sup> British Government, “[Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry, 1946, Part VI](#),” (April 20, 1946).

<sup>14</sup> Bassam Tawil, “Muslim Blood and Al-Aqsa,” [Gatestone Institute](#), (October 31, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Allen Z. Hertz, “Aboriginal rights of the Jewish People,” *Times of Israel*, (February 18, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> George Kirk, *A Short History of the Middle East*, (NY: Frederick Praeger Publishers, 1964), p. 314.

<sup>17</sup> Report of a Committee Setup to Consider Certain Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sharif of Mecca in 1915/1916,” U.K. Parliament, (March 16, 1939).

<sup>18</sup> Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 129.

<sup>19</sup> Ben Halpern, *The Idea of a Jewish State*, (MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 108.

- <sup>20</sup> Melvin Urofsky, [American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust](#), (Bison Books: 1995), p. 29.
- <sup>21</sup> Palestine Royal Commission Report, p. 233.
- <sup>22</sup> Neville Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I*, (University of California Press: 1976), p. 8.
- <sup>23</sup> Al-Qibla (March 23, 1918), quoted in Samuel Katz, [Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine](#), (NY: Bantam Books, 1977), 126.
- <sup>24</sup> Mark Twain, [The Innocents Abroad](#), (London, 1881).
- <sup>25</sup> Howard Jacobson, “Advice to a Jewish Freshman,” [Sapir](#), (Autumn 2021).
- <sup>26</sup> William Safire, “Interrupted Exodus,” [New York Times](#), (January 7, 1985).
- <sup>27</sup> Jordanian Nationality Law, Article 3(2) of Law No. 6 of 1954, Official Gazette, No. 1171, (January 1, 1954).
- <sup>28</sup> Michael Slackman, “Some Palestinian Jordanians Lose Citizenship,” [New York Times](#), (March 13, 2010).
- <sup>29</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Socialism of Fools—The Left, the Jews and Israel,” *Encounter*, (December 1969), p. 24.
- <sup>30</sup> Yehoshafat Harkabi, [Palestinians and Israel](#), (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), p. 6.
- <sup>31</sup> Paul Johnson, [Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties](#), (NY: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 485.
- <sup>32</sup> Naomi Comay, *Arabs Speak Frankly on the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, (Printing Miracle Ltd., 2005), p. 8.
- <sup>33</sup> Alexander Yakobson, “If Zionism Were Colonial It Would Have Ended Long Ago,” [Haaretz](#), (October 20, 2018).
- <sup>34</sup> From an open letter from Martin Buber to Mahatma Gandhi in 1939, accessed at [GandhiServe.com](#).
- <sup>35</sup> Alan Johnson, “‘Can’t You See He’s Fooled You All?’: An Open Letter to Peter Gabriel et al explaining why Israel is not a ‘Settler Colonial’ society,” [Fathom](#), (November 2021).
- <sup>36</sup> Donna Robinson Divine and Asaf Romirowsky, “Settler colonialism backfires,” [JNS](#), (July 23, 2021).
- <sup>37</sup> Alicia Cox, “Settler Colonialism,” [Oxford Bibliographies](#), (July 26, 2017).
- <sup>38</sup> Alan Johnson, “‘Can’t You See He’s Fooled You All?’: An Open Letter to Peter Gabriel et al explaining why Israel is not a ‘Settler Colonial’ society,” [Fathom](#), (November 2021).
- <sup>39</sup> Hen Mazzig, “Op-Ed: No, Israel isn’t a country of privileged and powerful white Europeans,” [Los Angeles Times](#), (May 20, 2019).
- <sup>40</sup> “Palestinian diaspora,” [Wikipedia](#); Palestine in Figures 2020, [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](#), (March 2021); The World Fact Book, [CIA](#), (2021); Ofer Aderet, “On Jewish New Year’s Eve, Israel’s Population Reaches 9.4 Million,” [Haaretz](#), (September 5, 2021).
- <sup>41</sup> Yakobson.



## Chapter 2

# The British Mandate Period

[The British helped the Jews displace the native Arab population of Palestine.](#)  
[The British allowed Jews to flood Palestine while Arab immigration was tightly controlled.](#)  
[The British changed their policy to allow Holocaust survivors to settle in Palestine](#)  
[As the Jewish population grew, the plight of the Palestinian Arabs worsened.](#)  
[Jews stole Arab land.](#)  
[The British helped the Palestinians to live peacefully with the Jews.](#)  
[The Mufti was not a Nazi collaborator.](#)  
[The bombing of the King David Hotel was part of a deliberate terror campaign against civilians.](#)

### **MYTH**

*The British helped the Jews displace the native Arab population of Palestine.*

### ***FACT***

[Herbert Samuel](#), a British [Jew](#) who served as the first [High Commissioner](#) of [Palestine](#), placed restrictions on Jewish immigration “in the ‘interests of the present population’ and the ‘absorptive capacity’ of the country.”<sup>1</sup> The influx of Jewish settlers was said to force the Arab *fellahin* (native peasants) from their land. This was when less than a million people lived in an area that now supports more than [nine million](#).

The British limited the absorptive capacity of Palestine when, in 1921, Colonial Secretary [Winston Churchill](#) severed nearly four-fifths of Palestine—some thirty-five thousand square miles—to create a new Arab entity, Transjordan. As a consolation prize for the Hejaz and Arabia (which are both now [Saudi Arabia](#)) going to the Saud family, Churchill rewarded Sharif Hussein’s son [Abdullah](#) for his contribution to the war against [Turkey](#) by installing him as Transjordan’s emir.

The British went further and placed restrictions on Jewish land purchases in what remained of Palestine. By 1949, the British had allotted 87,500 acres of the 187,500 acres of cultivable land to Arabs and only 4,250 acres to Jews. This contradicted Article 6 of the [Mandate](#) which stated that “the Administration of Palestine...shall encourage, in cooperation with the [Jewish Agency](#)...close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not acquired for public purposes.”<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately, the British admitted that the argument about the country’s absorptive capacity was specious. The [Peel Commission](#) said, “The heavy [immigration](#) in the years 1933–36 would seem to show that the Jews have been able to enlarge the absorptive capacity of the country for Jews.”<sup>3</sup>



**MYTH**

*The British allowed Jews to flood Palestine while Arab immigration was tightly controlled.*

***FACT***

The British response to Jewish immigration set a precedent of appeasing the Arabs, which was followed for the duration of the Mandate. The British restricted Jewish immigration while allowing Arabs to enter the country freely. Apparently, [London](#) did not feel that a flood of Arab immigrants would affect the country's "absorptive capacity."

During [World War I](#), the [Jewish population](#) in Palestine declined because of the war, famine, disease, and expulsion by the Turks. In 1915, approximately 83,000 Jews lived in Palestine among 590,000 [Muslim](#) and [Christian Arabs](#).

According to the 1922 census, the Jewish population was 83,000, while the Arabs numbered 643,000.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the Arab population grew exponentially while that of the Jews stagnated.

In the mid-1920s, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased primarily because of anti-Jewish economic legislation in [Poland](#) and Washington's imposition of restrictive quotas.<sup>5</sup>

The record number of immigrants in 1935 (see table) was a response to the growing persecution of Jews in [Nazi Germany](#). The British administration considered this number too large, however, so the Jewish Agency was informed that less than one-third of the quota it asked for would be approved in 1936.<sup>6</sup>

The British gave in further to Arab demands by announcing in the [1939 White Paper](#) that an independent Arab state would be created within ten years and that Jewish immigration was to be limited to 75,000 for the next five years, after which it was to cease altogether. It also forbade land sales to Jews in 95% of the territory of Palestine. The Arabs, nevertheless, rejected the proposal.

## Jewish Immigration to Palestine<sup>7</sup>

1919	1,806	1931	4,075
1920	8,223	1932	12,533
1921	8,294	1933	37,337
1922	8,685	1934	45,267
1923	8,175	1935	66,472
1924	13,892	1936	29,595
1925	34,386	1937	10,629
1926	13,855	1938	14,675
1927	3,034	1939	31,195
1928	2,178	1940	10,643
1929	5,249	1941	4,592
1930	4,944		

By contrast, throughout the Mandatory period, Arab immigration was unrestricted. In 1930, the [Hope Simpson Commission](#), sent from London to investigate the [1929 Arab riots](#), said the British practice of ignoring the uncontrolled illegal Arab immigration from [Egypt](#), [Transjordan](#), and [Syria](#) had the effect of displacing the prospective *Jewish* immigrants.<sup>8</sup>

The British governor of the [Sinai](#) from 1922 to 1936 observed, “This illegal immigration was not only going on from the Sinai, but also from Transjordan and Syria, and it is very difficult to make a case out for the misery of the Arabs if at the same time their compatriots from adjoining states could not be kept from going in to share that misery.”<sup>9</sup>

The [Peel Commission](#) reported in 1937 that the “shortfall of land is...due less to the amount of land acquired by Jews than to the increase in the Arab population.”<sup>10</sup>

### **MYTH**

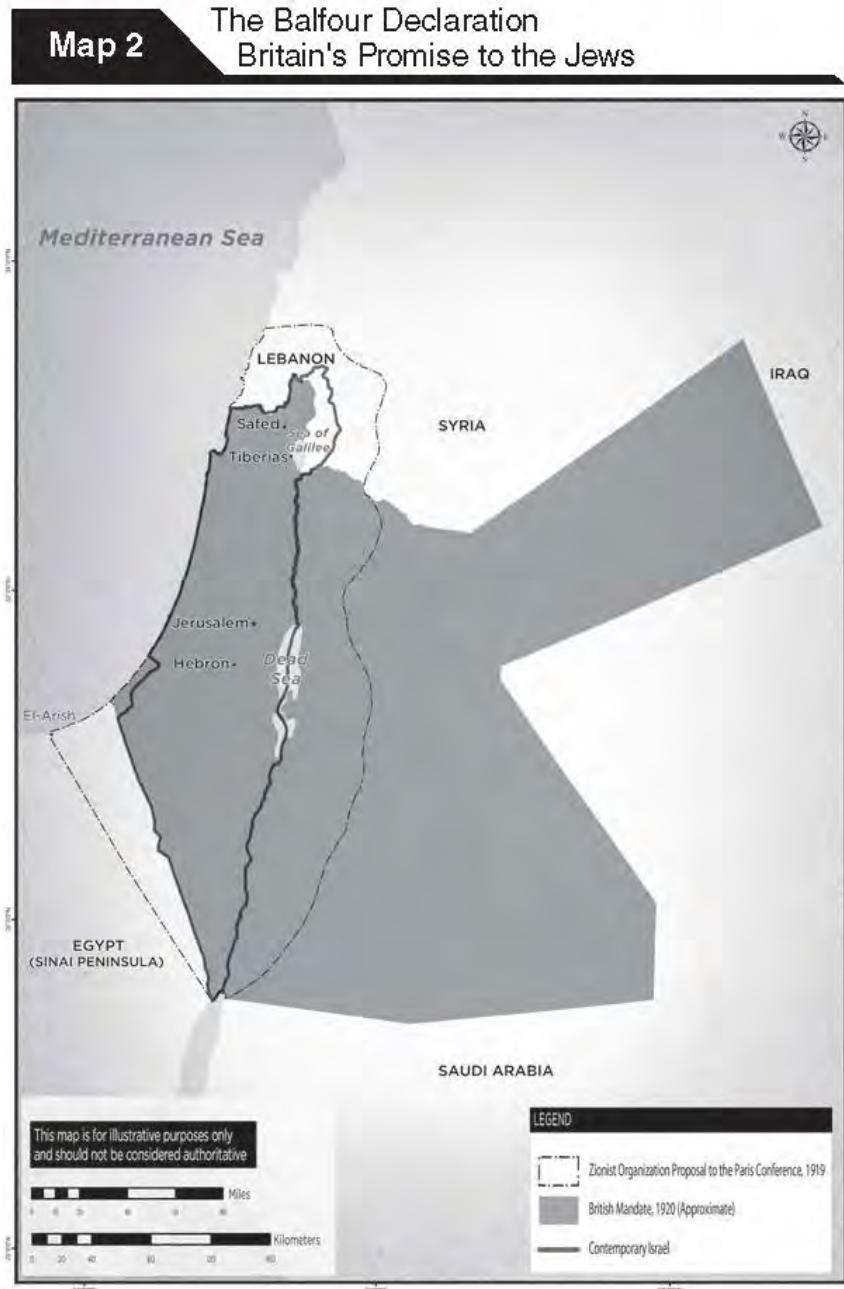
*The British changed their policy to allow Holocaust survivors to settle in Palestine.*

### ***FACT***

The gates of Palestine remained closed for the duration of the war, stranding hundreds of thousands of Jews in [Europe](#), many of whom became victims of [Hitler’s “Final Solution.”](#) After the war, the British refused to allow the survivors of the Nazi nightmare to find sanctuary in Palestine. On June 6, 1946, President [Truman](#) urged the British government to relieve the suffering of the Jews confined to [displaced persons](#) camps in Europe by immediately accepting 100,000

Jewish immigrants. Britain's foreign minister [Ernest Bevin](#) replied sarcastically that the United States wanted displaced Jews to immigrate to Palestine "because they did not want too many of them in New York."<sup>11</sup>

Some Jews reached Palestine, many smuggled in on dilapidated ships organized by the [Haganah](#). Between August 1945 and the [establishment](#) of the State of Israel in May 1948, sixty-five "illegal" immigrant ships, carrying 69,878 people, arrived from European shores. In August 1946, however, the British began to intern those they caught in camps on [Cyprus](#). Approximately 50,000 people were detained in the camps, and 28,000 remained imprisoned when Israel declared independence.<sup>12</sup>



## MYTH

*As the Jewish population grew, the plight of the Palestinian Arabs worsened.*

## FACT

In July 1921, Hasan Shukri, the mayor of [Haifa](#) and president of the Muslim National Associations, sent a telegram to the British government in reaction to a delegation of [Palestinians](#) that went to London to try to stop the implementation

of the [Balfour Declaration](#). Shukri wrote:

We are certain that without Jewish immigration and financial assistance there will be no future development of our country as may be judged from the fact that the towns inhabited in part by Jews such as [Jerusalem](#), [Jaffa](#), Haifa, and [Tiberias](#) are making steady progress while [Nablus](#), [Acre](#), and [Nazareth](#) where no Jews reside are steadily declining.<sup>13</sup>

The Jewish population increased by 470,000 between World War I and [World War II](#), while the non-Jewish population rose by 588,000.<sup>14</sup> The permanent Arab population increased by 120% between 1922 and 1947.<sup>15</sup>

This rapid growth of the Arab population was a result of several factors. One was immigration from neighboring states—constituting 37% of the total immigration to [pre-state Israel](#)—by Arabs who wanted to take advantage of the higher standard of living the Jews had made possible.<sup>16</sup> The Arab population also grew because of the improved living conditions created by the Jews as they drained malarial swamps and brought improved sanitation and health care to the region. Thus, for example, the [Muslim](#) infant mortality rate fell from 201 per thousand in 1925 to 94 per thousand in 1945, and life expectancy rose from 37 years in 1926 to 49 in 1943.<sup>17</sup>

The Arab population increased the most in cities where large Jewish populations had created new economic opportunities. From 1922–1947, the non-Jewish population increased by 290% in Haifa, 131% in Jerusalem, and 158% in Jaffa. The growth in Arab towns was more modest: 42% in Nablus, 78% in [Jenin](#), and 37% in [Bethlehem](#).<sup>18</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Jews stole Arab land.*

### ***FACT***

Despite the growth in their population, the Arabs continued to assert they were being displaced. From the beginning of World War I, however, part of Palestine's land was owned by absentee landlords who lived in [Cairo](#), [Damascus](#), and [Beirut](#). About 80% of the Palestinian Arabs were debt-ridden peasants, semi-nomads, and [Bedouins](#).<sup>19</sup>

Jews went out of their way to avoid purchasing land in areas where Arabs might be displaced. They sought land that was largely uncultivated, swampy, cheap, and—most important—without tenants. In 1920, [Labor Zionist](#) leader [David Ben-Gurion](#) expressed his concern about the Arab *fellahin*, whom he viewed as “the most important asset of the native population.” He insisted that “under no circumstances must we touch land belonging to *fellahs* or worked by them.” Instead, he advocated helping liberate them from their oppressors. “Only if a *fellah* leaves his place of settlement,” Ben-Gurion added, “should we offer to buy his land, at an appropriate price.”<sup>20</sup>

Jews only began to purchase cultivated land after buying all the uncultivated territory. Many Arabs were willing to sell because of the migration to coastal towns and because they needed money to invest in the citrus industry.<sup>21</sup>

When [John Hope Simpson](#) arrived in Palestine in May 1930, he observed, “They [the Jews] paid high prices for the land and, in addition, they paid to certain of the occupants of those lands a considerable amount of money which they were not legally bound to pay.”<sup>22</sup>

In 1931, Lewis French conducted a survey of landlessness for the British government and offered new plots to any Arabs who had been “dispossessed.” British officials received more than 3,000 applications, of which 80% were ruled invalid by the government's legal adviser because the applicants were not landless Arabs. This left only about 600 landless Arabs, 100 of whom accepted the government land offer.<sup>23</sup>

In April 1936, a new outbreak of Arab attacks on Jews was instigated by local Palestinian leaders who were later joined by Arab volunteers led by a Syrian guerrilla named [Fawzi al-Qawuqji](#), the commander of the Arab Liberation Army. By

November, when the British finally sent a new commission headed by Lord Peel to investigate, 89 Jews had been killed and more than 300 wounded.<sup>24</sup>

The [Peel Commission's report](#) found that Arab complaints about Jewish land acquisition were baseless. It pointed out that “much of the land now carrying orange groves was sand dunes or swamp and uncultivated when it was purchased... There was at the time of the earlier sales little evidence that the owners possessed either the resources or training needed to develop the land.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the Commission found the shortage was “due less to the amount of land acquired by Jews than to the increase in the Arab population.” The report concluded that the presence of Jews in Palestine, along with the work of the British administration, had resulted in higher wages, an improved standard of living, and ample employment opportunities.<sup>26</sup>

**It is made quite clear to all, both by the map drawn up by the Simpson Commission and by another compiled by the Peel Commission, that the Arabs are as prodigal in selling their land as they are in useless wailing and weeping (emphasis in the original).**

—Transjordan's king Abdullah<sup>27</sup>

Even at the height of the [Arab revolt](#) in 1938 (which began in April 1936 with the murder of two Jews by Arabs and the subsequent murder of two Arab workers by members of the Jewish underground<sup>28</sup>), the British high commissioner to Palestine believed the Arab landowners were complaining about sales to Jews to drive up prices for lands they wished to sell. Many Arab landowners had been so terrorized by Arab rebels they decided to leave Palestine and sell their property to the Jews.<sup>29</sup>

The Jews paid exorbitant prices to wealthy landowners for small tracts of arid land. “In 1944, Jews paid between \$1,000 and \$1,100 per acre in Palestine, mostly for arid or semiarid land; in the same year, rich black soil in [Iowa](#) was selling for about \$110 per acre.”<sup>30</sup>

By 1947, Jewish holdings in Palestine amounted to about 463,000 acres. Approximately 45,000 were acquired from the mandatory government, 30,000 were bought from various churches, and 387,500 were purchased from Arabs. Analyses of land purchases from 1880 to 1948 show that 73% of Jewish plots were purchased from large landowners, not poor *fellahin*.<sup>31</sup> Many leaders of the Arab nationalist movement, including members of the Muslim Supreme Council, and the mayors of [Gaza](#), [Jerusalem](#), and s sold land to the Jews. As'ad el-Shuqeiri, a Muslim religious scholar and father of [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) chairman [Ahmed Shuqeiri](#), took Jewish money for his land. Even King Abdullah leased land to the Jews.<sup>32</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The British helped the Palestinians to live peacefully with the Jews.*

## ***FACT***

In 1921, [Haj Amin el-Husseini](#) first began to organize *fedayeen* (“one who sacrifices himself”) to terrorize Jews. El-Husseini hoped to duplicate the success of [Kemal Atatürk](#) in [Turkey](#) by driving the Jews out of Palestine just as Kemal had driven the invading Greeks from his country.<sup>33</sup> Arab radicals gained influence because the British administration was unwilling to take effective action against them until they began a revolt against British rule.

Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, former head of British military intelligence in Cairo, and later chief political officer for Palestine and Syria, wrote in his diary that British officials “incline towards the exclusion of [Zionism](#) in Palestine.” The British encouraged the Palestinians to attack the Jews. According to Meinertzhagen, Col. Bertie Harry Waters-Taylor (financial adviser to the military administration in Palestine 1919–23) met with el-Husseini in 1920, a few days before Easter, and told him that “he had a great opportunity at Easter to show the world...that Zionism was unpopular not only with the Palestine administration but in Whitehall.” He added that “if disturbances of sufficient violence occurred in

Jerusalem at Easter, both General [Louis] Bols [chief administrator in Palestine, 1919–20] and General [Edmund] Allenby [commander of the Egyptian force, 1917–19, then high commissioner of Egypt] would advocate the abandonment of the Jewish Home. Waters-Taylor explained that freedom could only be attained through violence.”<sup>34</sup>

El-Husseini took the colonel’s advice and instigated a [riot](#). The British withdrew their troops and the Jewish police from Jerusalem, allowing the Arab mob to attack Jews and loot their shops. Because of el-Husseini’s overt role in instigating the pogrom, the British decided to arrest him. He escaped, however, and was sentenced to ten years in absentia.

A year later, some British Arabists convinced High Commissioner Herbert Samuel to pardon el-Husseini and to appoint him Mufti (a cleric in charge of Jerusalem’s Islamic holy places). By contrast, [Vladimir Jabotinsky](#) and several followers, who had formed a [Jewish defense organization](#) during the unrest, were sentenced to 15 years. They were released a few months later.<sup>35</sup>

Samuel met with el-Husseini on April 11, 1921, and was assured “that the influences of his family and himself would be devoted to tranquility.” Three weeks later, riots in Jaffa and elsewhere left forty-three Jews dead.<sup>36</sup>

El-Husseini consolidated his power and took control of all Muslim religious funds in Palestine. He used his authority to gain control over the mosques, the schools, and the courts. No Arab could reach an influential position without being loyal to the Mufti. His power was so absolute that “no Muslim in Palestine could be born or die without being beholden to Haj Amin.”<sup>37</sup> The Mufti’s henchmen also ensured he would have no opposition by systematically killing Palestinians who discussed cooperation with the Jews from rival clans.

As the spokesman for Palestinian Arabs, el-Husseini did not ask that Britain grant them independence. On the contrary, in a letter to Churchill in 1921, he demanded that Palestine be reunited with Syria and Transjordan.<sup>38</sup>

The Arabs found rioting an effective political tool because of the lax British response toward violence against Jews. In handling each riot, the British prevented Jews from protecting themselves but made little effort to prevent the Arabs from attacking them. After each outbreak, a British commission of inquiry would try to establish the cause of the violence. The conclusion was always the same: The Arabs feared being displaced by the Jews. To stop the rioting, the commissions would recommend that restrictions be placed on Jewish immigration. Thus, the Arabs learned they could always stop the influx of Jews by staging riots.

This cycle began after a series of riots in May 1921. After failing to protect the Jewish community from Arab mobs, the British appointed the [Haycraft Commission](#) to investigate the cause of the violence. Although the panel concluded the Arabs had been the aggressors, it rationalized the cause of the attack: “The fundamental cause of the riots was a feeling among the Arabs of discontent with, and hostility to, the Jews, due to political and economic causes, and connected with Jewish immigration, and with their conception of Zionist policy.”<sup>39</sup> One consequence of the violence was the institution of a temporary ban on Jewish immigration.

The Arab fear of being “displaced” or “dominated” was an excuse for their attacks on Jewish settlers. Note, too, that these riots were not inspired by nationalistic fervor—nationalists would have rebelled against their British overlords—they were motivated by economics, the radical Islamic views of the Mufti, and misunderstanding.

In 1929, Arab provocateurs convinced the masses that the Jews had designs on the [Temple Mount](#) (a tactic still used today to incite violence). A Jewish religious observance at the [Western Wall](#), which forms a part of the Temple Mount, served as a pretext for rioting by Arabs against Jews, which spilled out of Jerusalem into other villages and towns, including [Safed](#) and [Hebron](#).

Again, the British administration made no effort to prevent the violence, and, after it began, the British did nothing to protect the Jewish population. After six days of mayhem, the British finally brought troops in to quell the disturbance. By this time, most of Hebron’s Jews had fled or been killed. In all, 133 Jews were killed and 399 wounded in the pogroms.<sup>40</sup>

After the riots, the British ordered an investigation, resulting in the [Passfield White Paper](#). It said the “immigration, land purchase and settlement policies of the [Zionist Organization](#) were already or were likely to become, prejudicial to Arab interests. It understood the mandatory government’s obligation to the non-Jewish community to mean that Palestine’s resources must be primarily reserved for the growing Arab economy.”<sup>41</sup> This meant it was necessary to restrict Jewish immigration and land purchases.

## **MYTH**

*The Mufti was not a Nazi collaborator.*

## ***FACT***

In 1941, [Haj Amin al-Husseini](#), the Mufti of Jerusalem, fled to Germany and met with [Adolf Hitler](#), [Heinrich Himmler](#), [Joachim Von Ribbentrop](#), and other Nazi leaders. He wanted to persuade them to extend the Nazis’ anti-Jewish program to the Arab world.

The Mufti sent Hitler fifteen drafts of declarations he wanted Germany and [Italy](#) to make concerning the Middle East. One called on the two countries to declare the illegality of the Jewish home in Palestine. He also asked the Axis powers to “accord to Palestine and to other Arab countries the right to solve the problem of the Jewish elements in Palestine and other Arab countries in accordance with the interest of the Arabs, and by the same method that the question is now being settled in the Axis countries.”<sup>42</sup>

In November 1941, the [Mufti met with Hitler](#), who told him the Jews were his foremost enemy. The Nazi dictator rebuffed the Mufti’s requests for a declaration in support of the Arabs, however, telling him the time was not right. The Mufti offered Hitler his “thanks for the sympathy which he had always shown for the Arab and especially Palestinian cause, and to which he had given clear expression in his public speeches.” He added, “The Arabs were Germany’s natural friends because they had the same enemies as had Germany, namely...the Jews.” Hitler told the Mufti he opposed the creation of a Jewish state and that Germany’s objective was destroying the Jewish element in the Arab sphere.<sup>43</sup>

In 1945, [Yugoslavia](#) sought to indict the Mufti as a war criminal for his role in recruiting twenty thousand Muslim volunteers for the SS, who participated in the killing of Jews in [Croatia](#) and [Hungary](#). He escaped French detention in 1946, however, and continued his fight against the Jews from Cairo and later Beirut where he died in 1974.

## **MYTH**

*The bombing of the King David Hotel was part of a deliberate terror campaign against civilians.*

## ***FACT***

British troops seized the Jewish Agency compound on June 29, 1946, and confiscated large quantities of documents. At about the same time, more than 2,500 Jews from all over Palestine were arrested. A week later, news of a massacre of 40 Jews in a pogrom in Poland reminded the Jews of Palestine how Britain’s restrictive immigration policy had condemned thousands to death.

In response to the British provocations, and a desire to demonstrate that the Jews’ spirit could not be broken, the United Resistance Movement planned to bomb the [King David Hotel](#), which housed the British military command and the Criminal Investigation Division in addition to hotel guests. The [Haganah](#) pulled out of the plot and left it up to the [Irgun](#).

Irgun leader [Menachem Begin](#) stressed his desire to avoid civilian casualties and the plan was to warn the British so they would evacuate the building before it was blown up. Three telephone calls were placed on July 22, 1946, one to the hotel, another to the French Consulate, and a third to the *Palestine Post* warning that explosives in the King David Hotel would soon be detonated.

The call to the hotel was received and ignored. Begin quotes one British official who supposedly refused to evacuate the



building, saying, “We don’t take orders from the Jews.”<sup>44</sup> As a result, when the [bombs exploded](#), the casualty toll was high: 91 killed and 45 injured. Among the casualties were 15 Jews. Few people in the main part of the hotel were injured.<sup>45</sup>

For decades, the British denied they had been warned. In 1979, however, a member of the British Parliament provided the testimony of a British officer who heard other officers in the King David Hotel bar joking about a Zionist threat to the headquarters. The officer who overheard the conversation immediately left the hotel and survived.<sup>46</sup>

In contrast to Arab attacks against Jews, which Arab leaders hailed as heroic actions, the Jewish National Council denounced the bombing of the King David.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aharon Cohen, [Israel and the Arab World](#), (NY: Funk and Wagnalls, 1970), p. 172; Howard Sachar, [A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time](#), (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Moshe Aumann, “Land Ownership in Palestine 1880–1948,” in Michael Curtis, et al., [The Palestinians](#), (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1975), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> [Palestine Royal Commission Report](#) (the Peel Report), (London: 1937), p. 300. Henceforth, Palestine Royal Commission Report.

<sup>4</sup> Arieh Avneri, [The Claim of Dispossession](#), (Tel Aviv: Hidenkel Press, 1984), p. 28; Yehoshua Porath, [The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929](#), (London: Frank Cass, 1974), pp. 17–18.

<sup>5</sup> Porath (1974), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Aharon Cohen, p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> Yehoshua Porath, [Palestinian Arab National Movement, 1929–1939: From Riots to Rebellion](#), vol. 2 (London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1977), pp. 17–18, 39.

<sup>8</sup> John Hope Simpson, [Palestine: Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development](#), (London, 1930), p. 126.

<sup>9</sup> C. S. Jarvis, “Palestine,” [United Empire](#) (London), vol. 28 (1937), p. 633.

<sup>10</sup> [Palestine Royal Commission Report](#), p. 242.

<sup>11</sup> George Lenczowski, [American Presidents and the Middle East](#), (NC: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Aharon Cohen, p. 174.

<sup>13</sup> Hillel Cohen, [Army of Shadows](#), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Dov Friedlander and Calvin Goldscheider, [The Population of Israel](#), (NY: Columbia Press, 1979), p. 30.

<sup>15</sup> Avneri, p. 254.

<sup>16</sup> Curtis, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> Avneri, p. 264; Cohen, p. 60.

- <sup>18</sup> Avneri, pp. 254–55.
- <sup>19</sup> Moshe Aumann, *Land Ownership in Palestine, 1880–1948*, (Jerusalem: Academic Committee on the Middle East, 1976), pp. 8–9.
- <sup>20</sup> Shabtai Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From Peace to War*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 32.
- <sup>21</sup> Porath, 80, 84; See also Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows: Palestinian Collaboration with Zionism, 1917–1948*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
- <sup>22</sup> Hope Simpson Report, p. 51.
- <sup>23</sup> Avneri, pp. 149–158; Cohen, p. 37; based on the Report on Agricultural Development and Land Settlement in Palestine by Lewis French (December 1931, Supplementary; Report, April 1932) and material submitted to the Palestine Royal Commission.
- <sup>24</sup> Netanel Lorch, *One Long War*, (Jerusalem: Keter, 1976), p. 27; Sachar, p. 201.
- <sup>25</sup> *Palestine Royal Commission Report* (1937), p. 242.
- <sup>26</sup> *Palestine Royal Commission* (1937), pp. 241–42.
- <sup>27</sup> King Abdallah, *My Memoirs Completed*, (London, Longman Group, Ltd., 1978), pp. 88–89.
- <sup>28</sup> Porath (77), pp. 86–87.
- <sup>29</sup> Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 95.
- <sup>30</sup> Aumann, p. 13.
- <sup>31</sup> Abraham Granott, *The Land System in Palestine*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), p. 278.
- <sup>32</sup> Avneri, pp. 179–180, 224–25, 232–34; Porath (77), pp. 72–73; See also Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows*.
- <sup>33</sup> Jon Kimche, *There Could Have Been Peace: The Untold Story of Why We Failed with Palestine and Again with Israel*, (England: Dial Press, 1973), p. 189.
- <sup>34</sup> Richard Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary 1917–1956*, (London: The Cresset Press, 1959), pp. 49, 82, 97.
- <sup>35</sup> Samuel Katz, *Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine*, (NY: Bantam Books, 1977), pp. 63–65; Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 97.
- <sup>36</sup> Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties*, (NY: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 438.
- <sup>37</sup> Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *O Jerusalem!* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 52.
- <sup>38</sup> Kimche, p. 211.
- <sup>39</sup> Ben Halpern, *The Idea of a Jewish State*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 323.

<sup>40</sup> Sachar, p. 174.

<sup>41</sup> Halpern, p. 201.

<sup>42</sup> “Grand Mufti Plotted to Do Away with All Jews in Mideast,” *Response* (Fall 1991), pp. 2–3.

<sup>43</sup> Record of the Conversation between the Führer and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem on November 28, 1941, in the Presence of Reich Foreign Minister and Minister Grobba in Berlin, *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945*, Series D, Vol. XIII, London, 1964, 881ff in Walter Lacquer and Barry Rubin, *The Israel-Arab Reader*, (NY: Penguin Books, 2001), pp. 51–55.

<sup>44</sup> Menachem Begin, *The Revolt*, (NY: Nash Publishing, 1977), p. 224.

<sup>45</sup> J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, (NY: St. Martin’s Press), p. 172.

<sup>46</sup> Benjamin Netanyahu, ed., “International Terrorism: Challenge and Response,” Proceedings of the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism, July 2–5, 1979, (Jerusalem: The Jonathan Institute, 1980), p. 45.

<sup>47</sup> Anne Sinai and I. Robert Sinai, *Israel and the Arabs: Prelude to the Jewish State*, (NY: Facts on File, 1972), p. 83.

## Chapter 3

# Partition and The War of 1948

[The United Nations unjustly partitioned Palestine.](#)  
[Israel was created to compensate the Jews for the Holocaust.](#)  
[The partition plan gave the Jews most of the land, including all the fertile areas.](#)  
[Israel usurped all of Palestine in 1948.](#)  
[Before 1948, the Palestinian Arabs were never offered a state.](#)  
[The UN should have created a unitary Palestinian state.](#)  
[Arab leaders were prepared to compromise to avoid bloodshed.](#)  
[The Jews started the war with the Arabs in 1948.](#)  
[The United States was the only nation that criticized the Arab attack on Israel.](#)  
[The West's support of Israel allowed the Jews to conquer Palestine.](#)  
[The Arab economic boycott was a response to the creation of Israel.](#)

### **MYTH**

*The United Nations unjustly partitioned Palestine.*

### **FACT**

As [World War II](#) ended, the magnitude of the [Holocaust](#) became known. This accelerated demands for a resolution to the question of [Palestine](#) so the [Displaced Persons](#), survivors of [Hitler's Final Solution](#), might find sanctuary in their own homeland. The existing Jewish community, the [yishuv](#), was also thriving and ready for independence.

The British tried to work out an agreement acceptable to Arabs and [Jews](#), but their insistence on the former's approval guaranteed failure because the Arabs would not make any concessions. The British subsequently turned the issue over to the [UN](#) in February 1947.

**Map 3**

The Partition Plan—1947—UN General Assembly Resolution 181



The UN established a [Special Commission on Palestine \(UNSCOP\)](#) to devise a solution. Delegates from eleven nations went to the area and found what had long been apparent: the conflicting national aspirations of Jews and Arabs could not be reconciled.<sup>1</sup>

When they returned, the delegates of seven nations—[Canada](#), [Czechoslovakia](#), [Guatemala](#), [The Netherlands](#), [Peru](#), [Sweden](#), and [Uruguay](#)—recommended the establishment of two separate states, Jewish and Arab, to be joined by economic union, with [Jerusalem](#) an internationalized enclave. Three nations—[India](#), [Iran](#), and [Yugoslavia](#)—recommended a unitary state with Arab and Jewish provinces. [Australia](#) abstained.

The Jews of [Palestine](#) were not satisfied with the small territory allotted to them by the Commission, nor were they happy that Jerusalem was severed from the Jewish State; nevertheless, they welcomed the compromise. The Arabs rejected UNSCOP's recommendations.

The ad hoc committee of the [UN General Assembly](#) rejected the Arab demand for a unitary Arab state. The majority recommendation for partition was viewed as a more just solution and subsequently [adopted](#) by a vote of 33 to 13 with

ten abstentions on November 29, 1947.<sup>2</sup>

**It is hard to see how the Arab world, still less the Arabs of Palestine, will suffer from what is mere recognition of accomplished fact—the presence in Palestine of a compact, well organized, and virtually autonomous Jewish community.**

*—London Times editorial<sup>3</sup>*

## **MYTH**

*Israel was created to compensate the Jews for the Holocaust.*

## ***FACT***

The Holocaust demonstrated the need for a haven where Jews would control their fate and not be dependent on the goodwill of others. It also gave the quest for statehood greater urgency and generated sympathy for the survivors in the American Jewish community and the general [public](#).

This created a certain amount of pressure on the [Truman administration](#) to support partition. Truman explained his position in his memoirs, “My purpose was then and later to help bring about the redemption of the pledge of the [Balfour Declaration](#) and the rescue of at least some of the victims of Nazism.” He said his policy was neither pro-Arab nor pro-[Zionist](#); it was American because “it aimed at the peaceful solution of a world trouble spot” and “was based on the desire to see promises kept and human misery relieved.”<sup>4</sup>

In May 1947, Soviet delegate Andrei Gromyko said:

The fact that no Western European State has been able to ensure the defense of the elementary rights of the Jewish people and to safeguard it against the violence of the fascist executioners explains the aspirations of the Jews to establish their own State. It would be unjust not to take this into consideration and to deny the right of the Jewish people to realize this aspiration.<sup>5</sup>

This statement was disingenuous; the [Soviet Union's](#) support for creating a Jewish state had nothing to do with the [Holocaust](#) or compassion for the Jews. The Soviets were primarily interested in seeing the British leave Palestine.

Meanwhile, the British were unmoved by the Holocaust; they prevented Jews from going to Palestine to escape the [Nazis](#) and opposed Jewish statehood.

“It is not the case that if there had been no Holocaust there would not have been a State of Israel,” former Canadian Minister of Justice and Attorney General Irwin Cotler observed. “It is the other way around, and we should never forget it: that if there had been a State of Israel – the indigenous homeland for an indigenous Jewish people, there would not have been a Holocaust or the many horrors of Jewish and human history.”<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, as Professor Dov Waxman noted:

The chronological proximity of the Holocaust and Israel's [establishment](#) has led many people to assume that the two events are causally connected and that Israel was created because of the Holocaust. Contrary to this popular belief, however, a Jewish state would probably have emerged in Palestine, sooner or later, with or without the Holocaust.<sup>7</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The partition plan gave the Jews most of the land, including all the fertile areas.*

## ***FACT***

The [partition plan](#) took on a checkerboard appearance largely because Jewish towns and villages were spread throughout Palestine. This did not complicate the plan as much as the high living standards in Jewish cities and villages that attracted large Arab populations, which ensured that any partition would result in a Jewish state that included a substantial Arab population. Recognizing the need to allow for additional Jewish settlement, the majority proposal allotted the Jews land in the northern part of the country, the Galilee, and the large, arid [Negev Desert](#) in the south. The remainder was to form the Arab state.

These boundaries were based solely on demographics. The borders of the Jewish State were arranged with no consideration of security; hence, the new state's frontiers were virtually indefensible.

Overall, the proposed Jewish State comprised roughly 5,500 square miles (about 55% of Palestine), and the population was to be 538,000 Jews and 397,000 Arabs. Approximately 92,000 Arabs lived in [Tiberias](#), [Safed](#), [Haifa](#), and [Bet Shean](#), and another 40,000 were [Bedouins](#), most of whom lived in the desert. The remainder of the Arab population was spread throughout the Jewish state. The Arab State was to be 4,500 square miles with a population of 804,000 Arabs and 10,000 Jews.<sup>8</sup>

Critics claim the UN gave the Jews fertile land while the Arabs were allotted hilly, arid land. On the contrary, approximately 60% of the Jewish state was to be the desert in the Negev, while the Arabs occupied most of the agricultural land.<sup>9</sup>

Further complicating the situation was the UN majority's insistence that Jerusalem remain apart from both states and be administered as an international zone. This arrangement left more than one hundred thousand Jews in Jerusalem isolated from their country and circumscribed by the Arab state.

According to British statistics, more than 70% of the land in what would become Israel belonged to the mandatory government. Those lands reverted to Israeli control after the departure of the British. Jews owned another 9% of the land; Arabs who became citizens of Israel owned about 3%. That means only about 18% belonged to Arabs who left the country before and after the Arab invasion of Israel.<sup>10</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel usurped all of Palestine in 1948.*

## ***FACT***

Nearly 80% of the historic land of Palestine and the Jewish National Home, as defined by the League of Nations, was severed by the British in 1921 and allocated to [Transjordan](#). Jewish settlement there was barred. The UN partitioned the remaining 20-odd percent of Palestine into two states. With Transjordan's annexation of the [West Bank](#) in 1950 and [Egypt's](#) occupation of [Gaza](#), Arabs controlled more than 80% of the Mandate territory, while the Jewish State held a bare 17.5%.<sup>11</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Before 1948, the Palestinian Arabs were never offered a state.*

## ***FACT***

The [Peel Commission](#) in 1937 concluded that the only logical solution to resolving the contradictory aspirations of the

Jews and Arabs was to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and [Arab states](#). The Jews would have received only 15% of eastern Palestine between the [Jordan River](#) and the Mediterranean. A small area, including Jerusalem, was to remain under British control, but 80% of the land was to be united with Transjordan and become independent.

The Arabs rejected the plan because it forced them to accept the creation of a Jewish state and required some [Palestinians](#) to live under “Jewish domination.” [Muslim](#) religious leaders said supporters of the plan were heretics, while the political machine controlled by the [Mufti](#) labeled them traitors.<sup>12</sup>

The [Zionists](#) opposed the Peel Plan’s boundaries because they would have been confined to 1,900 out of the 10,310 square miles remaining in Palestine. Nevertheless, the Zionists decided to negotiate with the British, while the Arabs refused to consider any compromises.

In 1939, the [British White Paper](#) called for establishing an Arab state in Palestine within ten years and limiting Jewish [immigration](#) to no more than 75,000 over the following five years. Afterward, no one would be allowed in without the consent of the Arab population. Though the Arabs had been granted a concession on Jewish immigration and been offered independence—the goal of Arab nationalists—they repudiated the White Paper.

With partition, the Palestinians were given a state and the opportunity for self-determination. This, too, was rejected.



**Map 4**Peel Commission Partition Plan,  
July 1937

## **MYTH**

*The UN should have created a unitary Palestinian state.*

## ***FACT***

At the time of the partition resolution, the Arabs had a majority in western Palestine—1.2 million Arabs versus 600,000 Jews.<sup>13</sup> But the Jews were a majority in Jerusalem and the area allotted to them for a state.

The Jews never had a chance of reaching a majority in the country, given the restrictive immigration policy of the British. By contrast, Palestine's Arab population, which had been declining before the Mandate in 1922, grew exponentially because Arabs from all the surrounding countries were free to come—and thousands did—to take advantage of the rapid economic development and improved health conditions stimulated by Zionist settlement.

The decision to partition Palestine was not determined solely by demographics; it was based on the conclusion that the territorial claims of Jews and Arabs were irreconcilable and that the most logical compromise was the creation of two states. Ironically, that same year, 1947, the Arab members of the United Nations supported the partition of the Indian

subcontinent and the creation of the new, predominantly Muslim state of [Pakistan](#).

## **MYTH**

*Arab leaders were prepared to compromise to avoid bloodshed.*

## ***FACT***

As the partition vote approached, it became clear that little hope existed for a political solution to a problem that transcended politics: the Arabs' unwillingness to accept a Jewish state in Palestine and the refusal of the Zionists to settle for anything less.

The implacability of the Arabs was evident when [Jewish Agency](#) representatives David Horowitz and [Abba Eban](#) made a last-ditch effort to reach a compromise in a meeting with [Arab League](#) secretary Abd al-Rahman Azzam Pasha on September 16, 1947. Pasha told them bluntly:

The Arab world is not in a compromising mood. It's likely, Mr. Horowitz, that your plan is rational and logical, but the fate of nations is not decided by rational logic. Nations never concede; they fight. You won't get anything by peaceful means or compromise. You can, perhaps, get something, but only by the force of your arms. We shall try to defeat you. I am not sure we'll succeed, but we'll try. We were able to drive out the [Crusaders](#), but on the other hand, we lost [Spain](#) and [Persia](#). It may be that we shall lose Palestine. But it's too late to talk of peaceful solutions.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the Mufti and his accomplices silenced supporters of partition. According to one of the Mufti's associates who spied for the [Haganah](#), "The opposition, which was prepared to agree to partition, had to go along with the opponents of partition after they learned of the decision to murder everyone who supported that opinion, even if they were among the greatest [leaders]."<sup>15</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The Jews started the war with the Arabs in 1948.*

## ***FACT***

The Arabs declared they would go to war to prevent the creation of a Jewish state. Jamal Husseini, the Arab Higher Committee's spokesman, told the UN before the partition vote that the Arabs would drench "the soil of our beloved country with the last drop of our blood."<sup>16</sup> After the vote, the chairman of the Arab Higher Committee said the Arabs would "fight for every inch of their country."<sup>17</sup> Two days later, the holy men of Al-Azhar University in Cairo called on the Muslim world to proclaim a [jihad](#) against the Jews.<sup>18</sup>

Husseini's prediction came true almost immediately after the UN adopted the partition resolution on November 29, 1947. The Arabs declared a protest strike and instigated riots that claimed the lives of 62 Jews and 32 Arabs. Violence continued to escalate through the end of the year.<sup>19</sup>

The first large-scale assaults began on January 9, 1948, when approximately 1,000 Arabs attacked Jewish communities in northern Palestine. By February, the British said so many Arabs had infiltrated that they lacked the forces to run them back.<sup>20</sup>

In the first phase of the war, lasting from November 29, 1947, until April 1, 1948, the Palestinian Arabs took the offensive, with help from volunteers from neighboring countries. The Jews suffered severe casualties, and passage along most of their major roadways was disrupted.

On April 26, 1948, Transjordan's [King Abdullah](#) said:

All our efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Palestine problem have failed. The only way left for us is war. I will have the pleasure and honor to save Palestine.<sup>21</sup>

On May 4, 1948, Abdullah's Arab Legion attacked [Kfar Etzion](#). The defenders drove them back, but the Legion returned a week later. After two days, the ill-equipped and outnumbered settlers were overwhelmed. Many defenders were massacred after they had surrendered.<sup>22</sup> This was before the invasion by the regular Arab armies that followed Israel's [declaration of independence](#).

The UN Palestine Commission, which the Arabs and British never permitted to go to Palestine to implement the resolution, reported to the [Security Council](#) on February 16, 1948, that "powerful Arab interests, both inside and outside Palestine, are defying the resolution of the General Assembly and are engaged in a deliberate effort to alter by force the settlement envisaged therein."<sup>23</sup>



The Arabs were blunt in taking responsibility for the war. Jamal Husseini told the Security Council on April 16, 1948:

The representative of the Jewish Agency told us yesterday that they were not the attackers, that the Arabs had begun the fighting. We did not deny this. We told the whole world that we were going to fight.<sup>24</sup>

The British commander of Jordan's Arab Legion, John Bagot Glubb, admitted:

Early in January, the first detachments of the Arab Liberation Army began to infiltrate into Palestine from Syria. Some came through Jordan and even through Amman... They were in reality to strike the first blow in the ruin of the Arabs of Palestine.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the disadvantages in numbers, organization, and weapons, the Jews began to take the initiative in the weeks from April 1 until the declaration of independence on May 14. The [Haganah](#) captured several major towns, including Tiberias and Haifa, and temporarily opened the road to Jerusalem.

The partition resolution was never suspended or rescinded. Thus, Israel, the Jewish State in Palestine, was born on May 14, as the British finally left the country. Five Arab armies ([Egypt](#), [Syria](#), Transjordan, [Lebanon](#), and [Iraq](#)) immediately invaded Israel. Their intentions were declared by Abd al-Rahman Azzam Pasha, secretary-general of the Arab League: "It will be a war of annihilation. It will be a momentous massacre in history that will be talked about like the massacres of the Mongols or the Crusades."<sup>26</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The United States was the only nation that criticized the Arab attack on Israel.*

## ***FACT***

The [United States](#), the Soviet Union, and most other states recognized Israel soon after it declared [independence](#) on May 14, 1948, and immediately condemned the Arabs for their aggression. The United States urged a resolution charging the Arabs with a breach of the peace.

Soviet delegate Andrei Gromyko told the Security Council on May 29, 1948:

This is not the first time that the Arab states, which organized the invasion of Palestine, have ignored a decision of the Security Council or of the General Assembly. The USSR delegation deems it essential that the council should state its opinion more clearly and more firmly with regard to this attitude of the Arab states toward decisions of the Security Council.<sup>27</sup>

On July 15, the Security Council threatened to cite the Arab governments for aggression under the [UN Charter](#). By this time, the [Israel Defense Forces \(IDF\)](#) had succeeded in stopping the Arab offensive, and the initial phase of the fighting ended.



## **MYTH**

*The West's support of Israel allowed the Jews to conquer Palestine.*

## ***FACT***

The Jews won their war of independence with minimal help from the West. In fact, they won despite actions that undermined their military strength.

Although [President Harry Truman](#) supported the partition resolution, many officials in the State Department did not and tried to sabotage the plan. Some of these officials – often called “[Arabists](#)” – were [anti-Semitic](#). Others feared supporting partition would harm our relations with the Arab states (especially the oil producers), and the early Cold Warriors worried that the new Jewish state might side with the Communists or provide an opening for the Soviet Union to spread its influence in the region.

One way was to try to prevent the Jews from obtaining the means to defend themselves. “Otherwise,” Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett argued, “the Arabs might use arms of U.S. origin against Jews, or Jews might use them against

Arabs.”<sup>28</sup> Consequently, on December 5, 1947, the United States imposed an [arms embargo](#) on the region.

Truman did not recognize the embargo as an impediment to partition and went along because he hoped it could avert bloodshed. This was naive given Britain’s rejection of Lovett’s request to suspend weapons shipments to the Arabs and subsequent agreements to provide additional arms to Iraq and Transjordan.<sup>29</sup>

The Arabs had no difficulty obtaining all the arms they needed. Jordan’s Arab Legion was armed and trained by the British and led by a British officer. Meanwhile, the Jews were forced to smuggle weapons, principally from Czechoslovakia. When Israel declared its independence in May 1948, the army did not have a single cannon or tank, and its air force consisted of nine obsolete planes.

Although outgunned, Israel was not outmanned, despite the exponentially larger populations of Arab invaders. The Haganah had 60,000 trained fighters, but the newly formed Israel Defense Forces (IDF) could only arm and mobilize 32,500, roughly the size of the enemy forces.<sup>30</sup> On the eve of the war, Chief of Operations [Yigael Yadin](#) told [David Ben-Gurion](#): “The best we can tell you is that we have a 50–50 chance.”<sup>31</sup>

The lack of participation by Palestinians in the war was particularly striking. Though Palestinians claim a close connection to the land going back centuries and a fervent desire for independence, a surprisingly low percentage fought in 1948. In village after village, Arab residents defied the call to arms, and those who joined often did so “to obtain free weapons for their personal protection and then return home.” The few who joined the fight often deserted; one commander complained the Palestinians were “unreliable, excitable, and difficult to control, and in organized warfare virtually unemployable.”<sup>32</sup>

The Arab war to destroy Israel failed. Indeed, because of their aggression, the Arabs wound up with less territory than if they had accepted partition.

The cost to Israel, however, was enormous. “Many of its most productive fields lay gutted and mined. Its citrus groves, the basis of the yishuv’s Jewish community economy for decades, were largely destroyed.”<sup>33</sup> Military expenditures totaled approximately \$500 million. Worse yet, 6,373 Israelis were killed, nearly 1% of the Jewish population of 650,000. Approximately [10,000 Arabs](#) – from Palestine and the surrounding countries – were killed.

Had the West enforced the partition resolution or given the Jews the capacity to defend themselves, many lives might have been saved.

The Arab countries signed armistice agreements with Israel in 1949, starting with [Egypt](#) (Feb. 24), followed by [Lebanon](#) (March 23), [Jordan](#) (April 3), and [Syria](#) (July 20). Iraq was the only country that did not sign an agreement with Israel, choosing instead to withdraw its troops and hand over its sector to Jordan’s Arab Legion. None of the Arab states would negotiate a peace agreement.

Meanwhile, 40 of the 59 member states of the UN recognized Israel by the end of 1949.

## **MYTH**

*The Arab economic boycott was a response to the creation of Israel.*

## ***FACT***

The newly formed Arab League Council formally declared the [Arab boycott](#) on December 2, 1945: “Jewish products and manufactured goods shall be considered undesirable to the Arab countries.” All Arab “institutions, organizations, merchants, commission agents and individuals” were called upon “to refuse to deal in, distribute, or consume Zionist products or manufactured goods.”<sup>34</sup> As this declaration shows, the terms “Jewish” and “Zionist” were used synonymously. Thus, even before the establishment of Israel, the Arab states had declared an economic boycott against the Jews of Palestine.

As it evolved after 1948, the boycott was divided into three components. The primary embargo prohibits direct trade between Israel and the Arab nations. The secondary boycott is directed at companies that do business with Israel. The tertiary boycott involves blacklisting firms that trade with other companies that do business with Israel.<sup>35</sup>

The objective of the boycott has been to isolate Israel from its neighbors and the international community and deny it trade that might be used to augment its military and economic strength. While undoubtedly isolating Israel and separating the Jewish State from its most natural markets, the boycott failed to undermine Israel's economy to the degree intended. Instead, Israel flourished and enjoyed one of the world's highest economic growth rates for many years.

After learning the extent to which US companies were cooperating with the boycott, and the number of firms on the Arab blacklist, [Congress](#) voted in 1977 to [prohibit](#) U.S. companies from cooperating with the Arab boycott. When [President Carter](#) signed the [law](#), he [said](#) the “issue goes to the very heart of free trade among nations” and that it was designed to “end the divisive effects on American life of foreign boycotts aimed at Jewish members of our society.”<sup>36</sup>

The Arab League boycott remains technically in force but has gradually crumbled. Countries outside the Middle East rarely comply with it, and the primary sanction prohibiting direct relations between Arab countries and Israel cracked when Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel. Later, nations such as [Qatar](#), [Oman](#), and [Morocco](#) negotiated deals with Israel and, in 2020, the Abraham Accords ended the boycotts by the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Saudi Arabia has also engaged in quiet diplomacy with Israel in response to the shared concern over Iran's nuclear program. This mutual interest has not changed the Saudis' official adherence to the economic boycott, which they had pledged to end as a condition for membership in the World Trade Organization.<sup>37</sup>

Separate from the Arab League boycott, a global campaign by individuals, organizations, and some governments – the anti-Semitic boycott, divestment, and sanctions ([BDS](#)) movement – seeks to isolate and, ultimately, destroy Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia. [United Nations Special Committee on Palestine](#) (May 15, 1947).

<sup>2</sup> **Voting in favor of partition:** Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Byelorussian SSR, Canada, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Haiti, Iceland, Liberia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Sweden, Ukrainian SSR, Union of South Africa, USSR, USA, Uruguay, and Venezuela. **Voting against partition:** Afghanistan, Cuba, Egypt, Greece, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen. **Abstained:** Argentina, Chile, China, Columbia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Mexico, the UK, and Yugoslavia. Source: *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1947–48* (NY: United Nations, 1949), pp. 246–47.

<sup>3</sup> *London Times* (December 1, 1947).

<sup>4</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, vol. 2 (NY: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1956), p. 157.

<sup>5</sup> “Discussion of the report of the First Committee on the establishment of a special committee on Palestine,” United Nations documents A/307 and A/307/Corr. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Irwin Cotler, “Auschwitz 75 years later: Universal lessons,” *Jerusalem Post*, (January 22, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Dov Waxman, “Was Israel created because of the Holocaust?” [Oxford Academic](#), (May 18, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p. 292.

<sup>9</sup> Aharon Cohen, *Israel and the Arab World*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), p. 238.

- <sup>10</sup> Moshe Aumann, “Land Ownership in Palestine, 1880–1948,” Academic Committee on the Middle East, (Israel, 1974), p. 18.
- <sup>11</sup> Historic Palestine comprised what is today Jordan (approximately 35,640 square miles), Israel (8,019 square miles), Gaza (139 square miles), and the West Bank (2,263 square miles).
- <sup>12</sup> Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 122–23.
- <sup>13</sup> Arieh Avneri, *The Claim of Dispossession*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1984), p. 252.
- <sup>14</sup> David Horowitz, *State in the Making*, (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 233.
- <sup>15</sup> Hillel Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 124.
- <sup>16</sup> J. C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine*, (NY: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 308.
- <sup>17</sup> *New York Times*, (December 1, 1947).
- <sup>18</sup> *Facts on File Yearbook*, (NY: Facts on File, Inc., 1948), p. 48.
- <sup>19</sup> *Palestine Post*, (January 2, 7, 27; April 1; May 1, 1948).
- <sup>20</sup> *Facts on File 1947*, p. 231.
- <sup>21</sup> Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 322.
- <sup>22</sup> Netanel Lorch, *One Long War*, (Jerusalem: Keter Books, 1976), p. 47; Ralph Patai, ed., *Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel* (NY: McGraw Hill, 1971), pp. 307–8.
- <sup>23</sup> Security Council Official Records, Special Supplement (1948), p. 20.
- <sup>24</sup> Security Council Official Records, S/Agenda/58 (April 16, 1948), p. 19.
- <sup>25</sup> John Bagot Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, (London: Staughton and Hodder, 1957), p. 79.
- <sup>26</sup> “Interview with Abd al-Rahman Azzam Pasha,” *Akhbar al-Yom* (Egypt), (October 11, 1947), translated by R. Green.
- <sup>27</sup> Security Council Official Records, SA/Agenda/77, (May 29, 1948), p. 2.
- <sup>28</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947*, (DC: GPO, 1948), p. 1249. Henceforth, FRUS.
- <sup>29</sup> Mitchell Bard, *The Water’s Edge and Beyond*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1991), pp. 171–75; FRUS, pp. 537–39; Robert Silverberg, *If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem: American Jews and the State of Israel*, (NY: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1970), pp. 366, 370; Shlomo Slonim, “The 1948 American Embargo on Arms to Palestine,” *Political Science Quarterly*, (Fall 1979), p. 500.
- <sup>30</sup> Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *O Jerusalem!*, (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 352; undated letter from Professor Meron Medzini to the author.
- <sup>31</sup> Golda Meir, *My Life*, (NY: Dell, 1975), pp. 213, 222, 224.



<sup>32</sup> Efraim Karsh, “1948, Israel, and the Palestinians – The True Story,” [\*Commentary\*](#), (May 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Sachar, p. 452.

<sup>34</sup> Terence Prittie and Walter Nelson, [\*The Economic War Against The Jews\*](#), (London: Corgi Books, 1977); Dan Chill, [\*The Arab Boycott of Israel\*](#), (NY: Praeger, 1976), p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Prittie and Nelson, pp. 47–48; Sol Stern, “On and Off the Arabs’ List,” *New Republic*, (March 27, 1976), p. 9; Kennan Teslik, [\*Congress, the Executive Branch, and Special Interests\*](#), (CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Bard, pp. 91–115.

<sup>37</sup> “Saudis Flout Vow to End Israel Boycott,” *Jerusalem Post*, (May 29, 2006).

## Chapter 4

# The 1956 Suez War and the 1967 Six-Day War

[Arab governments were prepared to accept Israel after the 1948 war.](#)

[Israel's military strike in 1956 was unprovoked.](#)

[The United States' blind support for Israel was apparent during the Suez War.](#)

[Arab governments recognized Israel after the Suez War.](#)

[Israel's military strike in 1967 was unprovoked.](#)

[Nasser had the right to close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping.](#)

[The United States helped Israel defeat the Arabs in six days.](#)

[During the 1967 War, Israel deliberately attacked the USS Liberty.](#)

[Israel attacked Jordan to capture Jerusalem.](#)

[Israel expelled peaceful Palestinian villagers and prevented their return.](#)

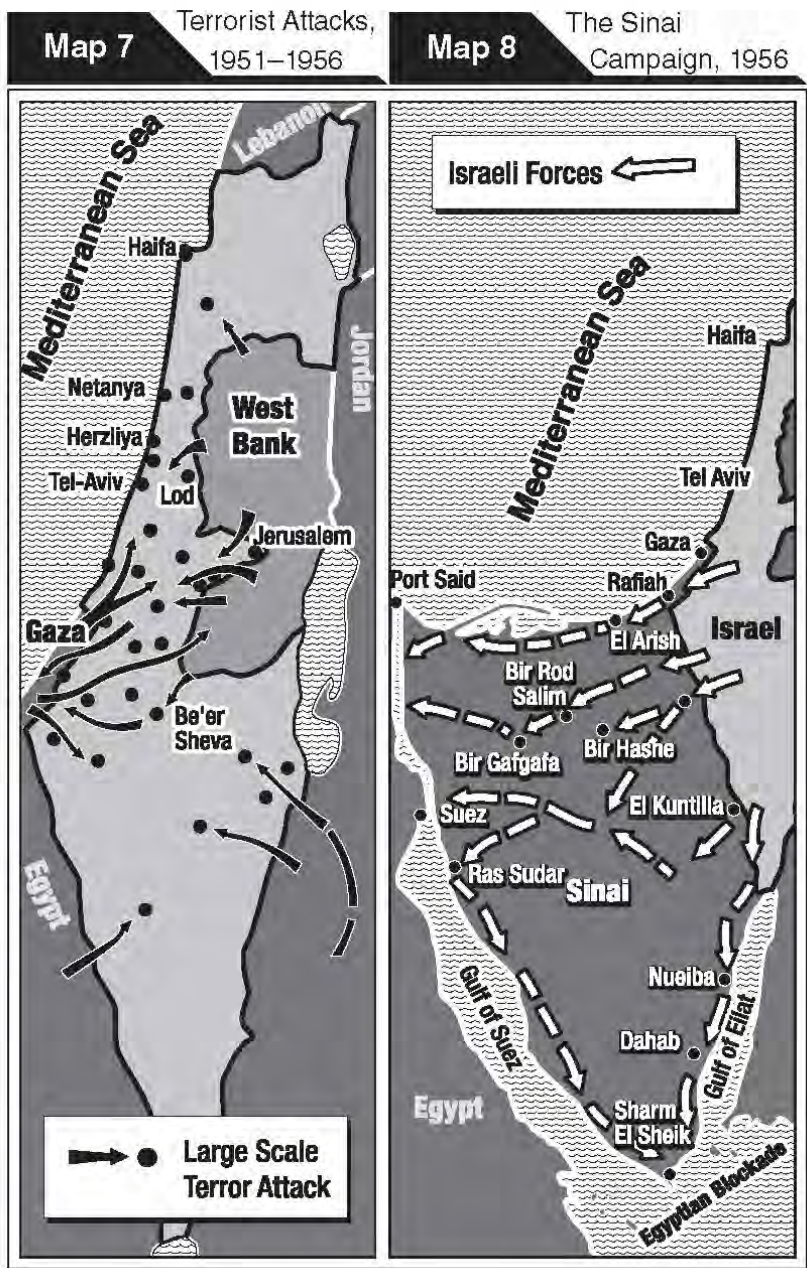
### **MYTH**

*Arab governments were prepared to accept Israel after the 1948 war.*

### ***FACT***

In the fall of 1948, the [UN Security Council](#) called on [Israel](#) and the [Arab states](#) to negotiate armistice agreements. Thanks to UN mediator [Ralph Bunche's](#) insistence on direct bilateral talks between Israel and each Arab state, armistice agreements between [Israel and Egypt](#), [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#), and [Syria](#) were concluded by the summer of 1949. [Iraq](#), which had also fought against Israel, refused to follow suit.

Later, on December 11, 1948, the [General Assembly](#) adopted a [resolution](#) calling on the parties to negotiate peace; all Arab delegations voted against it. After 1949, the Arabs insisted that Israel accept the borders in the 1947 [partition resolution](#) and repatriate the [Palestinian refugees](#) before they would negotiate an end to the war they had initiated. This was a novel approach that they would use after subsequent defeats: the doctrine of the limited-liability war. Under this theory, aggressors may reject a compromise settlement and gamble on war to win everything in the comfortable knowledge that, even if they fail, they may insist on reinstating the status quo ante.



**MYTH**

*Israel's military strike in 1956 was unprovoked.*

**FACT**

Egypt had maintained its state of belligerency with Israel after the armistice agreement had been signed. The first manifestation of this was the closing of the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping. On August 9, 1949, the UN Mixed Armistice Commission upheld Israel's complaint that Egypt was illegally blocking the canal.<sup>1</sup> On September 1, 1951, the Security Council ordered Egypt to open the Canal to Israeli shipping. Egypt refused to comply.

The Egyptian foreign minister Muhammad Salah al-Din said early in 1954:

The Arab people will not be embarrassed to declare: We shall not be satisfied except by the final obliteration of Israel from the map of the Middle East.<sup>2</sup>

In 1955, Nasser began to import arms from the Soviet Bloc to build his arsenal for a future confrontation with Israel. In

the short term, however, he employed a new tactic to prosecute Egypt's war with Israel. He announced it on August 31, 1955:

Egypt has decided to dispatch her heroes, the disciples of [Pharaoh](#) and the sons of [Islam](#) and they will cleanse the land of [Palestine](#)... There will be no peace on Israel's border because we demand vengeance, and vengeance is Israel's death.<sup>3</sup>

These "heroes" were Arab [terrorists](#), or *fedayeen*, trained and equipped by Egyptian Intelligence to engage in hostile action on the border and to infiltrate Israel to commit acts of sabotage and murder. The *fedayeen* operated mainly from bases in [Jordan](#) so that Jordan would withstand the worst of Israel's retaliation, which inevitably followed. The terrorist attacks violated the armistice agreement provision that prohibited the initiation of hostilities by paramilitary forces; nevertheless, the UN Security Council condemned Israel for its counterattacks.

The escalation continued in July 1956 with Nasser's [nationalization](#) of the Suez Canal and Egypt's [blockade](#) of the Straits of Tiran which [interfered](#) with Israel's access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, impeded communication with Asia and East Africa, and violated Israel's right to freedom of navigation.

On October 14, Nasser made clear his intent:

I am not solely fighting against Israel itself. My task is to deliver the Arab world from destruction through Israel's intrigue, which has its roots abroad. Our hatred is very strong. There is no sense in talking about peace with Israel. There is not even the smallest place for negotiations.<sup>4</sup>

Less than two weeks later, on October 25, Egypt signed a tripartite agreement with [Syria](#) and [Jordan](#) placing Nasser in command of all three armies.

The blockade of the Suez Canal and Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, combined with the increased *fedayeen* attacks and the bellicosity of Arab statements, prompted Israel, with the backing of [Britain](#) and [France](#), to [attack Egypt](#) on October 29, 1956. The Israeli attack on Egypt was successful, with Israeli forces capturing the [Gaza Strip](#), much of the [Sinai](#), and Sharm al-Sheikh. Estimates of casualties range from 171 to 231 Israelis and 3,000 Egyptians.

Israeli ambassador to the UN [Abba Eban](#) explained the provocations to the Security Council on October 30:

During the six years during which this belligerency has operated in violation of the Armistice Agreement, there have occurred 1,843 cases of armed robbery and theft, 1,339 cases of armed clashes with Egyptian armed forces, 435 cases of incursion from Egyptian controlled territory, [and] 172 cases of sabotage perpetrated by Egyptian military units and fedayeen in Israel. As a result of these actions of Egyptian hostility within Israel, 364 Israelis were wounded and 101 killed. In 1956 alone, as a result of this aspect of Egyptian aggression, 28 Israelis were killed and 127 wounded.<sup>5</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The United States' blind support for Israel was apparent during the Suez War.*

## ***FACT***

President [Eisenhower](#) was upset by the fact that Israel, France, and Great Britain had secretly planned the campaign to evict Egypt from the Suez Canal. Israel's failure to inform the United States of its intentions, combined with ignoring American entreaties not to go to war, sparked tensions between the countries. The United States subsequently joined the [Soviet Union](#) (ironically, just after the Soviets invaded [Hungary](#)) in a campaign to force Israel to withdraw. This included a [threat](#) to discontinue all U.S. assistance, UN sanctions, and expulsion from the UN (see [exchanges](#) between [Ben-Gurion](#) and Eisenhower<sup>6</sup>).

U.S. pressure resulted in an Israeli withdrawal from the areas it conquered without obtaining any concessions from the

Egyptians. This sowed the seeds of the [1967 War](#).

Before evacuating Sharm al-Sheikh, the strategic point guarding the [Straits of Tiran](#), Israel elicited a promise that the United States would maintain the freedom of navigation in the waterway.<sup>7</sup> In addition, Washington sponsored a UN resolution creating the [United Nations Emergency Force \(UNEF\)](#) to deter future hostilities, assure freedom of navigation of the Straits of Tiran, and prevent *fedayeen* raids from Gaza.

## **MYTH**

*Arab governments recognized Israel after the Suez War.*

## ***FACT***

Israel consistently expressed a desire to negotiate with its neighbors. In an address to the UN General Assembly on October 10, 1960, Foreign Minister [Golda Meir](#) challenged Arab leaders to meet with Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to negotiate a peace settlement. Egyptian president Nasser answered on October 15, 1960, reiterating that his country would never recognize the Jewish State.<sup>8</sup> “The danger of Israel,” he said four years later, “lies in the very existence of Israel as it is in the present and in what she represents.”<sup>9</sup>

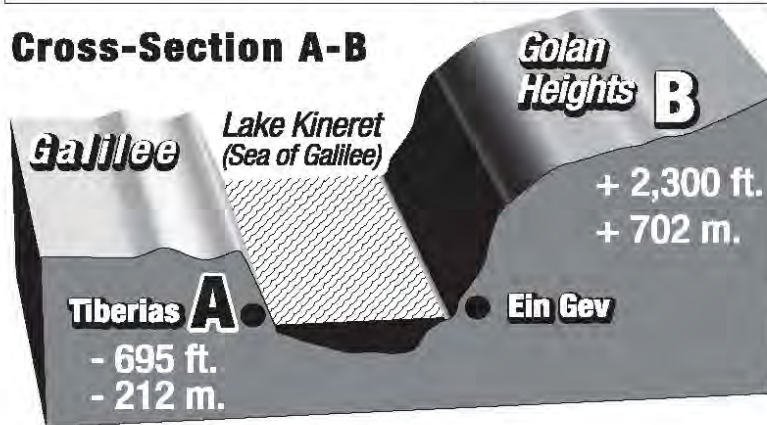
Meanwhile, Syria used the [Golan Heights](#), which tower three thousand feet above the Galilee, to shell Israeli farms and villages. Syria’s attacks grew more frequent in 1965 and 1966, while Nasser’s rhetoric became increasingly bellicose: “We shall not enter Palestine with its soil covered in sand,” he said on March 8, 1965. “We shall enter it with its soil saturated in blood.”<sup>10</sup> A few months later, he declared, “we aim at the destruction of the State of Israel.”<sup>11</sup>

Map 9

The Golan Heights Prior to the 1967 War:  
Distances and Elevations



Cross-Section A-B



## MYTH

*Israel's military strike in 1967 was unprovoked.*

## FACT

A combination of bellicose Arab rhetoric, threatening behavior, and – ultimately – an act of war left Israel no choice but preemptive action. To do this successfully, Israel needed the element of surprise. Had it waited for an Arab invasion, Israel would have been at a potentially catastrophic disadvantage.

In addition to Nasser's verbal threats, Israel was under attack by Arab terrorists. In 1965, 35 raids were conducted against Israel. In 1966, the number increased to 41. In just the first four months of 1967, 37 attacks were launched.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, Syria's attacks on Israeli [kibbutzim](#) from the Golan Heights provoked a retaliatory strike on April 7, 1967, during which Israeli planes shot down six Syrian MiGs. Shortly thereafter, the Soviet Union – which had been providing military and economic aid to both Syria and Egypt – gave [Damascus](#) and [Cairo](#) information alleging a massive Israeli military buildup in preparation for an attack. Despite Israeli denials, Syria decided to invoke its defense treaty with

Egypt.

On May 15, Israel's [Independence Day](#), Egyptian troops began moving into the Sinai and massing near the Israeli border. By May 18, Syrian troops were prepared for battle along the Golan Heights.

Nasser ordered the UN Emergency Force, stationed in the Sinai since 1956, to withdraw on May 16. Without bringing the matter to the attention of the General Assembly, as his predecessor had promised, Secretary-General [U Thant](#) complied with the demand. After the [withdrawal](#) of the UNEF, the Voice of the Arabs proclaimed (May 18, 1967):

As of today, there no longer exists an international emergency force to protect Israel. We shall exercise patience no more. We shall not complain anymore to the UN about Israel. The sole method we shall apply against Israel is total war, which will result in the extermination of Zionist existence.<sup>13</sup>

An enthusiastic echo was heard on May 20 from Syrian defense minister [Hafez Assad](#):

Our forces are now entirely ready not only to repulse the aggression but [also] to initiate the act of liberation itself and to explode the Zionist presence in the Arab homeland. The Syrian army, with its finger on the trigger, is united...I, as a military man, believe that the time has come to enter into a battle of annihilation.<sup>14</sup>

On May 22, Egypt [closed the Straits of Tiran](#) to all Israeli shipping and all ships bound for [Eilat](#). This blockade cut off Israel's only supply route with Asia and stopped the flow of [oil](#) from its main supplier, [Iran](#). The following day, President [Johnson](#) declared the blockade illegal and tried, unsuccessfully, to organize an international flotilla to test it.

Map 10

Israel before June 1967



Nasser was fully aware of the pressure he was exerting to force Israel's hand. The day after the blockade was set up, he said defiantly: "The Jews threaten to make war. I reply: Welcome! We are ready for war."<sup>15</sup>

Nasser challenged Israel to fight almost daily. "Our basic objective will be the destruction of Israel. The Arab people want to fight," he said on May 27.<sup>16</sup> The following day, he added, "We will not accept any...coexistence with Israel... Today the issue is not the establishment of peace between the Arab states and Israel...The war with Israel [has been] in effect since 1948."<sup>17</sup>

[King Hussein](#) of Jordan signed a defense pact with Egypt on May 30. Nasser then announced:

The armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and [Lebanon](#) are poised on the borders of Israel...to face the challenge, while standing behind us are the armies of [Iraq](#), [Algeria](#), [Kuwait](#), Sudan, and the whole Arab nation. This act will astound the world. Today they will know that the Arabs are arranged for battle [and that] the critical hour has arrived. We have reached the stage of serious action and not declarations.<sup>18</sup>

President Abdur Rahman Aref of Iraq joined in the war of words: "The existence of Israel is an error which must be



rectified. This is our opportunity to wipe out the ignominy which has been with us since 1948. Our goal is clear—to wipe Israel off the map.”<sup>19</sup> On June 4, Iraq joined the military alliance with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria.

The Arab rhetoric was matched by the mobilization of Arab forces. Approximately 250,000 troops (nearly half in Sinai), more than two thousand tanks, and seven hundred aircraft ringed Israel.<sup>20</sup>

By this time, Israeli forces had been on alert for three weeks. The country could not remain fully mobilized indefinitely, nor could it allow its sea lane through the Gulf of Aqaba to be interdicted. Israel’s best option was to strike first. On [June 5, 1967](#), the order was given to attack Egypt.

By using the element of surprise, Israeli forces managed to break through the enemy lines after just six days of fighting and were in a position to march on Cairo, Damascus, and Amman. A cease-fire was invoked on June 10.

The victory came at an extremely high cost. In storming the Golan Heights, Israel suffered 115 dead—roughly the number of Americans killed during Operation Desert Storm. Altogether, Israel lost twice as many men—777 dead and 2,586 wounded—in proportion to her total population as the United States lost in eight years of fighting in Vietnam (approximately eighteen thousand Arab fighters died).<sup>21</sup> Additionally, despite the incredible success of the air campaign, the [Israeli Air Force](#) lost 46 of its 200 fighters.<sup>22</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Nasser had the right to close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping.*

## ***FACT***

In [1956](#), the United States gave Israel assurances that it recognized the Jewish State’s right to access the Straits of Tiran. In 1957, at the UN, 17 maritime powers declared that Israel had a right to transit the Strait. Moreover, the blockade violated the Convention on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone, which was adopted by the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea on April 27, 1958.<sup>23</sup>

The closure of the Strait of Tiran was the *casus belli* in 1967. Israel’s attack was a reaction to this Egyptian first strike.

President Johnson acknowledged as much after the war (June 19, 1967):

If a single act of folly was more responsible for this explosion than any other, it was the arbitrary and dangerous announced decision that the Strait of Tiran would be closed. The right of innocent maritime passage must be preserved for all nations.<sup>24</sup>

## Map 11

Events Leading to the Six-Day War,  
May 25–30, 1967



## MYTH

*The United States helped Israel defeat the Arabs in six days.*

## FACT

The United States tried to prevent the war through negotiations, but it could not persuade Nasser or the other Arab states to cease their belligerent statements and actions. Still, right before the war, President Johnson warned, "Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go alone."<sup>25</sup> Then, when the war began, the State Department announced, "Our position is neutral in thought, word, and deed."<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, while the Arabs were falsely accusing the United States of airlifting supplies to Israel, Johnson imposed an arms embargo on the region (France, Israel's other main arms supplier, also embargoed arms to Israel).

By contrast, the Soviets were supplying massive amounts of arms to the Arabs. Simultaneously, the armies of Kuwait, Algeria, [Saudi Arabia](#), and Iraq were contributing troops and arms to the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian fronts.<sup>27</sup>

## **MYTH**

*During the 1967 War, Israel deliberately attacked the USS Liberty.*

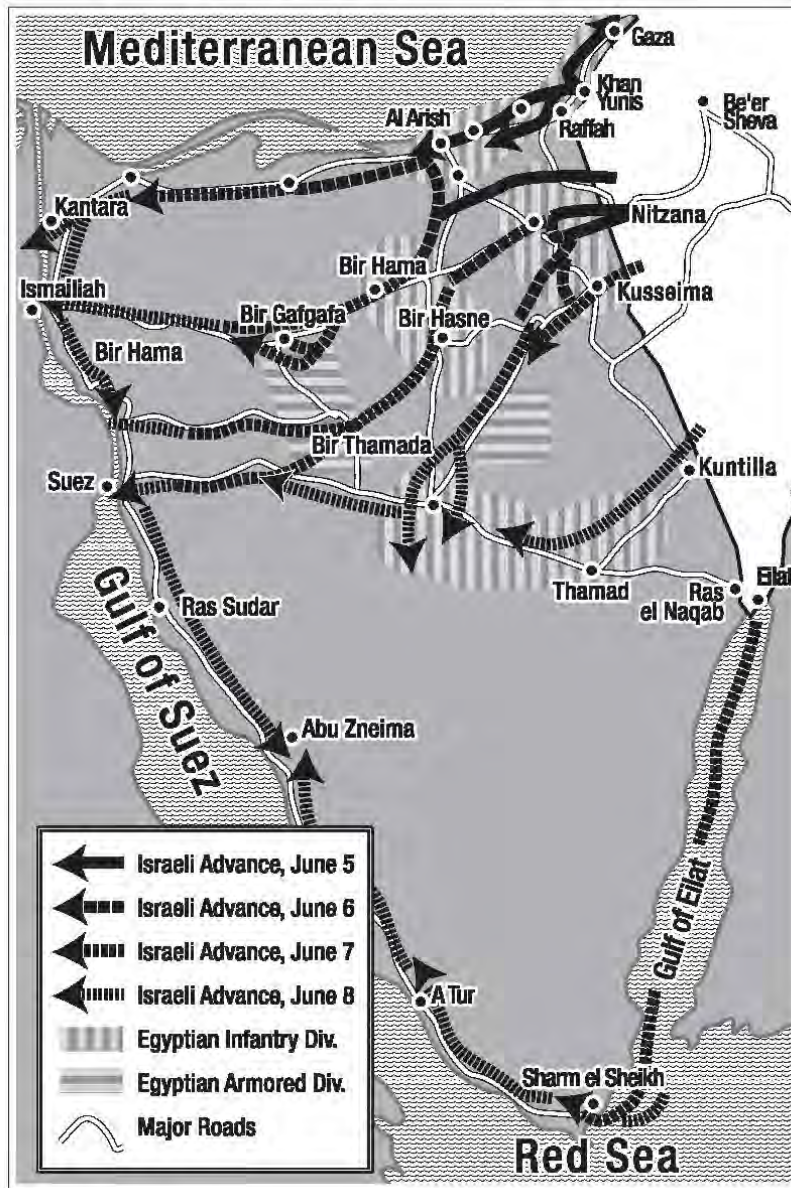
## ***FACT***

Besides not aiding Israel in the war, the United States and Israel actually came into direct military conflict as a result of a series of errors. On June 8, 1967, the fourth day of the war, the Israeli high command received reports that Israeli troops in El Arish were being fired upon from the sea, presumably by an Egyptian vessel, as they had a day before. The United States had announced that it had no naval forces within hundreds of miles of the battlefield; however, the [\*USS Liberty\*](#), an American intelligence ship under the dual control of the Defense Intelligence Agency/Central Intelligence Agency and the Sixth Fleet, was assigned to monitor the fighting. As a result of a series of US communication failures, whereby messages directing the ship not to approach within one hundred miles were not received by the *Liberty*, the ship sailed to within fourteen miles off the Sinai coast. The Israelis mistakenly thought this was the ship shelling its soldiers and warplanes, and torpedo boats attacked, killing 34 members of the *Liberty*'s crew and wounding 171.

The Israeli attack on the *USS Liberty* was a grievous error, largely because it occurred in the “fog of war.” Ten official U.S. [investigations](#), and three official Israeli inquiries, all concluded the attack was a tragic mistake. Israel apologized and paid nearly \$13 million in humanitarian reparations to the United States and to the families of the victims. The matter was officially closed between the two governments by an exchange of diplomatic notes on December 17, 1987. [28](#)

Map 12

The Egyptian Front,  
June 5–8, 1967

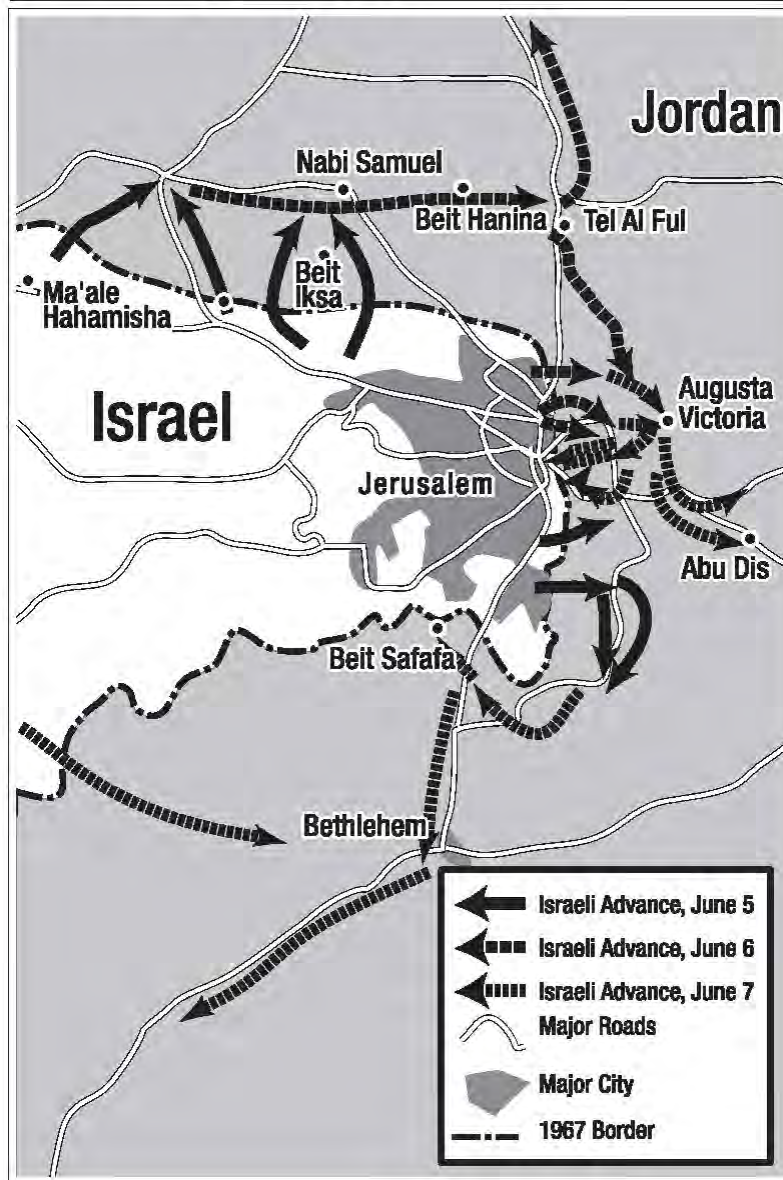


**MYTH**

*Israel attacked Jordan to capture Jerusalem.*

**FACT**

Prime Minister [Levi Eshkol](#) sent a [message](#) to King Hussein saying Israel would not attack Jordan unless he initiated hostilities. When Jordanian radar picked up a cluster of planes flying from Egypt to Israel, however, the Egyptians convinced Hussein the planes were theirs prompting the king to order the shelling of West Jerusalem. It turned out the planes were Israel's and were returning from destroying the Egyptian air force on the ground. Had Jordan not attacked, the status of Jerusalem would not have changed. Once the city came under fire, however, Israel needed to defend it, and, in doing so, took the opportunity to unify the city, ending Jordan's 19 year occupation of the eastern part.

**Map 13**The Battle for Jerusalem,  
June 5–7, 1967**MYTH**

*Israel expelled peaceful Palestinian villagers and prevented their return.*

***FACT***

After Jordan launched its attack on June 5, approximately 325,000 Palestinians living in the [West Bank](#) fled.<sup>29</sup> These were Jordanian citizens who moved from one part of what they considered their country to another, primarily to avoid being caught in the crossfire of a war.

A Palestinian refugee who was an administrator in a [UNRWA](#) camp in Jericho said Arab politicians had spread rumors in the camp. “They said all the young people would be killed. People heard on the radio that this is not the end, only the beginning, so they think maybe it will be a long war and they want to be in Jordan.”<sup>30</sup>

Some Palestinians who left preferred to live in an Arab state rather than under Israeli military rule. Members of various [PLO](#) factions fled to avoid capture by the Israelis. Nils-Göran Gussing, the person appointed by the UN [secretary-general](#) to investigate the situation, found that many Arabs also feared they would no longer be able to receive money

from family members working abroad.

Israeli forces ordered a handful of Palestinians to move for “strategic and security reasons.” In some cases, they were allowed to return in a few days; in others, Israel offered to help them resettle elsewhere.<sup>31</sup>

Following the war, Israel ruled more than three-quarters of a million Palestinians – most of whom were hostile to the government. Nevertheless, more than 9,000 Palestinian families were reunited in 1967. Ultimately, more than 60,000 Palestinians were allowed to return.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Israel’s Complaint to the U.N. Security Council on the Suez Canal Blockade; S-2241,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (July 11, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Middle Eastern Affairs*, (December 1956), p. 461.

<sup>4</sup> *Middle Eastern Affairs*, (December 1956), p. 460.

<sup>5</sup> [Security Council Official Records](#), S/3706, (October 30, 1956), p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> “President Eisenhower & PM Ben-Gurion on Israeli Withdrawal from Sinai (November 7–8, 1956),” [Jewish Virtual Library](#).

<sup>7</sup> Janice Gross Stein and Raymond Tanter, *Rational Decision Making: Israel’s Security Choices*, (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1976), p. 163.

<sup>8</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana Annual 1961*, (NY: Americana Corporation, 1961), p. 387.

<sup>9</sup> Speech by Nasser to the United Arab Republic National Assembly, March 26, 1964, quoted in Yehoshafat Harkabi, [Arab Attitudes To Israel](#), (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Howard Sachar, [A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time](#), (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 616.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Katz, [Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine](#), (NY: Bantam Books, 1985), pp. 10–11, 185.

<sup>12</sup> Netanel Lorch, [One Long War](#), (Jerusalem: Keter, 1976), p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> Isi Leibler, *The Case for Israel*, (Australia: The Globe Press, 1972), pp. 60–61.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Abba Eban, [Abba Eban](#), (NY: Random House, 1977), p. 331.

<sup>16</sup> Leibler, p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> Leibler, p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Leibler, p. 60.

- <sup>19</sup> Leibler, p. 61.
- <sup>20</sup> Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars*, (NY: Random House, 1982), p. 149.
- <sup>21</sup> Katz, p. 3.
- <sup>22</sup> Gerald M. Steinberg, “The Palestinian Time Machine,” *Jerusalem Post*, (April 23, 1999).
- <sup>23</sup> *United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea*, (Geneva: UN Publications, 1958), pp. 132–34.
- <sup>24</sup> Yehuda Lukacs, *Documents on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1967–1983*, (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 7–18; Eban, p. 358.
- <sup>25</sup> Eban, p. 358.
- <sup>26</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency 1963–1969*, (NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), p. 299.
- <sup>27</sup> Sachar, p. 629.
- <sup>28</sup> Hirsh Goodman, “Messrs. Errors and No Facts,” *Jerusalem Report*, (November 21, 1991); Arie O’Sullivan, “Exclusive: Liberty Attack Tapes Revealed,” *Jerusalem Post*, (June 3, 2004); “[Attack on a SIGINT Collector, the U.S.S. Liberty](#),” “Special Series Crisis Collection,” National Security Agency, p. 64; Dan Kurzman, *Soldier of Peace: The Life of Yitzhak Rabin*, (NY: HarperCollins, 1998), pp. 224–27; Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs*, (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Co., 1979), pp. 109–11; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “Remembering the Liberty,” *Washington Post*, (November 6, 1991); L. Wainstain, “[Some Aspects of the U.S. Involvement in the Middle East Crisis, May–June 1967](#),” Institute for Defense Analysis, (February 1968); “Pilot Who Bombed ‘Liberty’ Talks to Post,” *Jerusalem Post*, (October 10, 2003); *Jerusalem Post*, (January 13, 2004). See also, Nathan Guttman, “Memos Show Liberty Attack Was an Error,” *Haaretz*, (July 9, 2003); Hirsh Goodman and Zeev Schiff, “The Attack on the *Liberty*,” *Atlantic Monthly*, (September 1984); The Larry King Show,” (radio), (February 5, 1987); *Washington Times*, (January 12, 2004). For a detailed discussion, see “[The USS Liberty Incident](#),” in the Jewish Virtual Library.
- <sup>29</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana Annual 1968*, p. 366.
- <sup>30</sup> George Gruen, “The Refugees of Arab-Israeli Conflict” (NY: American Jewish Committee, March 1969), p. 5.
- <sup>31</sup> Gruen, p. 4.
- <sup>32</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana Annual 1968*, p. 366.

## Chapter 5

# The War of Attrition (1967-1970) and the 1973 War

[After the 1967 War, Israel refused to negotiate a settlement with the Arabs.](#)

[The Palestinians were willing to negotiate a settlement after the Six-Day War.](#)

[Israel was responsible for the War of Attrition.](#)

[Israel rejected Sadat's reasonable peace offer.](#)

[Israel was responsible for the 1973 War.](#)

[Egypt and Syria were the only Arab states involved in the 1973 war.](#)

### **MYTH**

*After the 1967 war, Israel refused to negotiate a settlement with the Arabs.*

### ***FACT***

By the end of the [war](#), [Israel](#) had captured enough territory to more than triple the size of the area it controlled, from 8,000 to 26,000 square miles (20,000 to 67,000 square km.). The victory enabled Israel to unify [Jerusalem](#) as well as capture the [Sinai](#), the [Golan Heights](#), the [Gaza Strip](#), and the [West Bank](#).

Israel hoped the [Arab states](#) would enter peace negotiations. On June 19, 1967, Israel signaled to the Arab states its willingness to relinquish most of the territory it acquired in exchange for peace. As [Moshe Dayan](#) put it, Jerusalem was waiting only for a telephone call from Arab leaders to start negotiations.<sup>1</sup> But these hopes were dashed in August 1967 when Arab leaders meeting in [Khartoum](#) adopted a formula of three noes: “no peace with Israel, no negotiations with Israel, no recognition of Israel.”

As former Israeli President [Chaim Herzog](#) wrote, “Israel’s belief that the war had come to an end and that peace would now reign along the borders was soon dispelled. Three weeks after the conclusion of hostilities, the first major incident occurred on the Suez Canal.”<sup>2</sup>





## **MYTH**

*The Palestinians were willing to negotiate a settlement after the Six-Day War.*

## ***FACT***

The [Arab League](#) created the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO) in [Cairo](#) in 1964 as a weapon against Israel. Until the Six-Day War, the PLO engaged in [terrorist attacks](#) that contributed to the momentum toward conflict. Neither the PLO nor any other Palestinian groups campaigned for [Jordan](#) or [Egypt](#) to create an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. The focus of Palestinian activism was on the destruction of Israel.

After the Arab states were defeated in 1967, the Palestinians did not alter their basic objective. With one million Arabs coming under Israeli rule, some Palestinians believed the prospect of waging a popular war of liberation had grown. Toward that end, [Yasser Arafat](#) instigated a campaign of terror from the West Bank. From September through December 1967, 61 attacks were launched, most against civilian targets such as factories, movie theaters, and private homes.<sup>3</sup>

Israeli security forces gradually became more effective in thwarting terrorist plans inside Israel and the territories. Consequently, the PLO began to pursue a different strategy – attacking [Jews](#) and Israeli targets abroad. In early 1968, Palestinian terrorists [hijacked the first aircraft](#).

**The Arabs say they want their territory back, but they don't want to talk to us, and they don't want to negotiate with us, and they don't want to recognize us. They want peace by immaculate conception.**

—Abba Eban<sup>4</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel was responsible for the War of Attrition.*

## ***FACT***

Egypt's president [Gamal Nasser](#) thought that because most of Israel's army consisted of reserves, it could not withstand a lengthy war of attrition. He believed Israel would be unable to endure the economic burden and that Israeli morale would be undermined by the relentless casualties. To pursue this strategy of slowly weakening Israel, Nasser ordered attacks on Israel that were calibrated so that they would not provoke an all-out Israeli war in response.

As early as July 1, 1967, Egypt began shelling Israeli positions near the Suez Canal. On October 21, 1967, Egypt sank the Israeli destroyer *Eilat*, killing 47. A few months later, Egyptian artillery began to shell Israeli positions along the Suez Canal, and Israeli military patrols were ambushed.

In the summer of 1970, the [United States persuaded](#) Israel and Egypt to accept a cease-fire. This cease-fire was designed to lead to negotiations under [UN](#) auspices.

On August 7, however, the Soviets and Egyptians deployed sophisticated ground-to-air missiles in the restricted thirty-two-mile-deep zone along the west bank of the Suez Canal. This was a violation of the cease-fire agreement, which barred the introduction or construction of any military installations in this area. The “most massive anti-aircraft system ever created” provided air coverage for Egypt's surprise attack against Israel in [1973](#).<sup>5</sup> Despite Egypt's provocative action, the cease-fire held.

This bloody [War of Attrition](#), as it became known, lasted three years. The Israeli death toll between June 15, 1967, and August 8, 1970, when a cease-fire was declared, was 1,424 soldiers and more than 100 civilians. Another 2,000 soldiers and 700 civilians were wounded. Egypt suffered approximately 5,000 dead.<sup>6</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel rejected Sadat's reasonable peace offer.*

## ***FACT***

Despite the Egyptian violations, UN-sponsored negotiations resumed—additional evidence that Israel was anxious to make progress toward peace. The talks were swiftly short-circuited, however, by UN Special Envoy [Gunnar Jarring](#), when he accepted the Egyptian interpretation of [Resolution 242](#) and called for Israel's total withdrawal to the pre-June 5, 1967, demarcation lines.

On that basis, [Anwar Sadat](#), Egypt's new president expressed his willingness “to enter into a peace agreement with Israel” in a February 20, 1971, letter to Jarring. But this seeming moderation masked unchanging Egyptian irredentism and unwillingness to accept a real peace, as shown by the letter's sweeping reservations and preconditions. The crucial sentences about a “peace agreement with Israel” were neither published nor broadcast in Egypt. Moreover, Egypt refused to enter direct negotiations. Israel attempted to transform the struggling Jarring mission into bilateral discussions

by addressing all letters not to Jarring, but to the Egyptian government. Egypt refused to accept them.

Contrary to revisionist histories suggesting that Israel missed a chance to make peace and avoid the 1973 war by failing to respond favorably to Sadat's initiatives, Sadat did not sound like a leader interested in peace. He threatened to go to war if a political solution was not achieved and demanded Israel's complete withdrawal from the Sinai and a resolution of the [Palestinian refugee problem](#), while at the same time declaring he would never establish diplomatic relations with Israel. He also was unwilling to negotiate because of fears he would anger his financial patrons in [Libya](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#) and possibly lose power. Furthermore, Sadat could not have made peace in 1971 because it would have been from a point of weakness and dishonor.<sup>7</sup>

Five days after Sadat suggested he was ready to make peace with Israel, Mohammed Heikal, the editor of *Al-Ahram* and a Sadat confidant, wrote:

Arab policy at this stage has but two objectives. The first, the elimination of the traces of the 1967 aggression through an Israeli withdrawal from all the territories it occupied that year. The second objective is the elimination of the traces of the 1948 aggression, by the means of the elimination of the State of Israel itself. This is, however, as yet an abstract, undefined objective, and some of us have erred in commencing the latter step before the former.<sup>8</sup>

Sadat was only willing to sign a peace agreement if Israel capitulated to all his demands. This was unacceptable to Israel. Moreover, Israelis questioned Sadat's sincerity after the Egyptian president promised the Palestine National Council meeting in Cairo in 1971 that he would support the PLO "until victory," and declared that Egypt would not accept Resolution 242.<sup>9</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel was responsible for the 1973 War.*

## ***FACT***

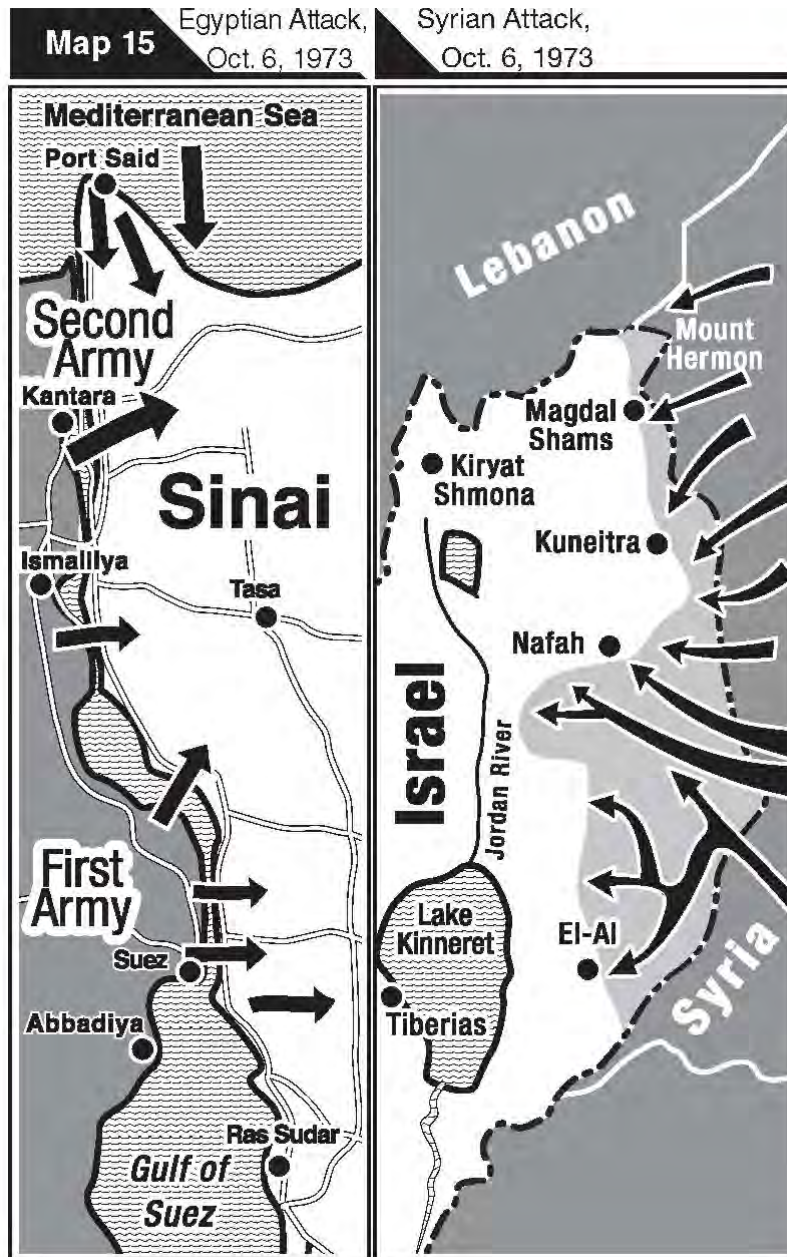
Throughout 1972, and for much of 1973, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat threatened war unless the United States forced Israel to accept his interpretation of Resolution 242—total Israeli withdrawal from territories taken in 1967. In an April 1973 interview, Sadat warned he would renew the war with Israel.<sup>10</sup> But it was the same threat he had made in 1971 and 1972, and most observers remained skeptical.

On October 6, 1973—[Yom Kippur](#), the holiest day in the Jewish calendar—Egypt and [Syria](#) opened a coordinated surprise attack against Israel. The equivalent of the total forces of NATO in Europe was mobilized on Israel's borders.<sup>11</sup> On the [Golan Heights](#), approximately 180 Israeli tanks faced an onslaught of 1,400 Syrian tanks. Along the Suez Canal, fewer than 500 Israeli defenders were attacked by 80,000 Egyptians.

Thrown onto the defensive during the first two days of fighting, Israel mobilized its reserves and eventually repulsed the invaders and carried the war deep into Syria and Egypt. The Arab states were swiftly resupplied by sea and air from the [Soviet Union](#), which rejected US efforts to work toward an immediate cease-fire. As a result, the United States belatedly began its own [airlift](#) to Israel. Two weeks later, Egypt was saved from a disastrous defeat when the Soviets invited Secretary of State [Henry Kissinger](#) to [Moscow](#) and negotiated the terms for ending the war through a [UN Security Council](#) Resolution. The UN, which had failed to act while the tide was in the Arabs' favor, now acted to save them at the behest of the superpowers.

On October 22, 1973, the Security Council adopted [Resolution 338](#) calling for "all parties to the present fighting to cease all firing and terminate all military activity immediately." The vote came on the day that Israeli forces cut off and isolated the Egyptian Third Army and were positioned to destroy it.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the [Israel Defense Forces'](#) ultimate success on the battlefield, the war was considered a diplomatic and military failure. A total of 2,688 Israeli soldiers and approximately 19,000 Arabs were killed.



All countries should wage war against the Zionists, who are there to destroy all human organizations and to destroy civilization and the work which good people are trying to do.

—King Faisal of Saudi Arabia<sup>13</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Egypt and Syria were the only Arab states involved in the 1973 war.*

## ***FACT***

At least nine Arab states, including four non-Middle Eastern nations, actively aided the Egyptian-Syrian war effort.

A few months before the [Yom Kippur War](#) (the Ramadan War to the Arabs), [Iraq](#) transferred a squadron of Hunter jets to Egypt. During the war, an Iraqi division of some 18,000 men and several hundred tanks was deployed in the central

Golan and participated in the October 16 attack against Israeli positions.<sup>14</sup> Iraqi MiGs began operating over the Golan Heights as early as October 8, the third day of the war.

Besides serving as financial underwriters, Saudi Arabia and [Kuwait](#) committed men to battle. A Saudi brigade of approximately 3,000 troops was dispatched to Syria, where it participated in fighting along the approaches to [Damascus](#). Additionally, violating [Paris's](#) ban on the transfer of French-made weapons, Libya sent Mirage fighters to Egypt.<sup>15</sup>

Other North African countries responded to Arab and Soviet calls to aid the frontline states. [Algeria](#) sent three aircraft squadrons of fighters and bombers, an armored brigade, and 150 tanks. Approximately 1,000 to 2,000 [Tunisian](#) soldiers were positioned in the Nile Delta. [Sudan](#) stationed thirty-five hundred troops in southern Egypt, and [Morocco](#) sent three brigades to the front lines, including twenty-five hundred men to Syria.

Lebanese radar units were used by Syrian air defense forces. [Lebanon](#) also allowed Palestinian terrorists to shell Israeli civilian settlements from its territory. Palestinians fought on the southern front with the Egyptians and Kuwaitis.<sup>16</sup>

The least enthusiastic participant in the October fighting was probably Jordan's [King Hussein](#). He had actually warned [Golda Meir](#) that a war was coming, but couldn't tell her when because he had been kept uninformed of Egyptian and Syrian war plans.<sup>17</sup> After the war began, Hussein did send two of his best units—the 40th and 60th armored brigades—to Syria. This force took positions in the southern sector, defending the main Amman-Damascus route and attacking Israeli positions along the Kuneitra-Sassa road on October 16. Three Jordanian artillery batteries also participated in the assault, conducted by nearly 100 tanks.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Lacquer, [The Road to War](#), (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> Chaim Herzog, [The Arab-Israeli Wars](#), (NY: Random House, 1984), p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> Netanel Lorch, [One Long War](#), (NY: Herzl Press, 1976), pp. 139–46.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Alfred Leroy Atherton, Jr., Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, (Summer 1990).

<sup>5</sup> “World: Buildup on the Suez,” [Time](#), (September 14, 1970); John Pimlott, [The Middle East Conflicts from 1945 to the Present](#), (NY: Crescent Books, 1983), p. 99.

<sup>6</sup> Some historians consider the starting date of the War of Attrition in 1968 or 1969. We are using Chaim Herzog's time frame. Chaim Herzog, [The Arab-Israeli Wars](#), (NY: Random House, 1984), pp. 195–221; Nadav Safran, [Israel, the Embattled Ally](#), (MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 266.

<sup>7</sup> Shlomo Aronson, “On Sadat's Peace Initiatives in the Wake of the Yom Kippur War”; Mitchell Bard, [Will Israel Survive?](#) (NY: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 8–9.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Anwar Sadat, [The Public Diary of President Sadat, Vol 2](#), (BRILL: 1978), pp. 33–34.

<sup>9</sup> [Al-Ahram](#), (February 25, 1971).

<sup>10</sup> [Newsweek](#), (April 9, 1973).

<sup>11</sup> Herzog, p. 230.

<sup>12</sup> Herzog, p. 280.

<sup>13</sup> *Beirut Daily Star*, (November 17, 1972).

<sup>14</sup> Trevor Dupuy, *Elusive Victory: The Arab-Israeli Wars, 1947–1974*, (NY: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 462.

<sup>15</sup> Dupuy, p. 376; Herzog, p. 278; Safran, p. 499.

<sup>16</sup> Herzog, pp. 278, 285, 293; p. Dupuy, 534.

<sup>17</sup> Bernard Avishai, “An Unlikely King: Hussein in War and Peace,” *The Nation*, (September 3, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Herzog, p. 300.

# Chapter 6

## Borders and Boundaries

[Israel has been an expansionist state since its creation.](#)  
[Israel seized the Golan Heights and illegally annexed the area.](#)  
[The Golan has no strategic significance for Israel.](#)  
[Defensible borders are unrealistic in an era of ballistic missiles.](#)  
[Israel “occupies” the West Bank.](#)  
[Israel’s security fence is meant to create a Palestinian ghetto.](#)

### **MYTH**

*Israel has been an expansionist state since its creation.*

### ***FACT***

[Israel’s](#) boundaries were determined by the [United Nations](#) when it adopted the [partition resolution](#) in 1947. In a series of defensive wars, Israel captured additional territory. Israel has withdrawn from more than 90% of the area it won in these wars and has repeatedly offered to give up other lands it now controls in exchange for peace and security.

As part of the [1974 disengagement agreement](#), Israel returned territories captured in the [1967](#) and [1973](#) wars to [Syria](#).

Under the terms of the 1979 [Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty](#), Israel withdrew from the Sinai peninsula for the third time. It had already withdrawn from large parts of the desert area it captured in its [War of Independence](#). After capturing the entire Sinai in the [1956 Suez conflict](#), Israel relinquished the peninsula to Egypt a year later.

In September 1983, Israel [withdrew](#) from large areas of Lebanon to positions south of the Awali River. In 1985, all troops were removed except for a small force holding a narrow “security zone” just north of the Israeli border. In 2000, Israel [evacuated](#) entirely from [Lebanon](#).

After signing the [Oslo agreements](#) with the Palestinians, and a [treaty](#) with [Jordan](#), Israel agreed to withdraw from most of the territory in the [West Bank](#) captured from Jordan in 1967. A small area was returned to Jordan, and more than 40% was ceded to the [Palestinian Authority](#). The agreement with the Palestinians also involved Israel’s withdrawal in 1994 from most of the [Gaza Strip](#), which had been captured from [Egypt](#) in 1973.

**From a strictly military point of view, Israel would require the retention of some captured territory in order to provide militarily defensible borders.**

**—[Memorandum for the secretary of defense](#)  
from the joint chiefs of staff, June 29, 1967**

In 2000, Israeli prime minister [Ehud Barak](#) offered to withdraw from 97% of the West Bank and 100% of the Gaza Strip in a final settlement. In addition, Prime Minister [Yitzhak Rabin](#) and his successors offered to withdraw from virtually all of the [Golan Heights](#) in exchange for peace with Syria. These offers were rejected.

In August 2005, all Israeli troops and civilians were evacuated from the Gaza Strip, and the territory was turned over to the control of the Palestinian Authority. In addition, four communities in [Northern Samaria](#) that covered an area larger than the entire Gaza Strip were evacuated as part of the disengagement plan. As a result, Israel has now withdrawn from approximately 94% of the territory it captured in 1967.

Today, the only question is the final disposition of the remaining 6% of the disputed territories in Israel’s possession

(about 136 square miles – 350 square kilometers, roughly the size of [Las Vegas](#)). The Palestinians have turned down multiple offers in which Israel agreed to withdraw from nearly all the remaining land in exchange for land swaps. (That is, in exchange for retaining, say, 4% of the land in the West Bank, Israel would give the Palestinians an equivalent amount of land it controls, such as a swath of territory adjacent to the Gaza Strip). Israel’s willingness to make territorial concessions in exchange for security proves its goal is peace, not expansion.



## **MYTH**

*Israel seized the Golan Heights and illegally annexed the area.*

## ***FACT***

Between 1948 and 1967, Syria controlled the Golan Heights and used it as a military stronghold from which its troops randomly sniped at Israeli civilians in the [Hula Valley](#) below, forcing children living on [kibbutzim](#) to sleep in bomb shelters. In addition, many roads in northern Israel could be crossed only after being cleared by mine-detection vehicles. In late 1966, a youth was blown to pieces by a mine while playing soccer near the Lebanon border. In some cases, attacks were carried out by [Yasser Arafat’s Fatah](#), which Syria allowed to operate from its territory.<sup>1</sup>



Israel repeatedly and unsuccessfully protested the Syrian bombardments to the UN Mixed Armistice Commission, which was charged with enforcing the cease-fire. For example, Israel went to the UN in [October 1966](#) to demand a halt to the Fatah attacks. The Syrian ambassador responded defiantly: “It is not our duty to stop them, but to encourage and strengthen them.”<sup>2</sup>

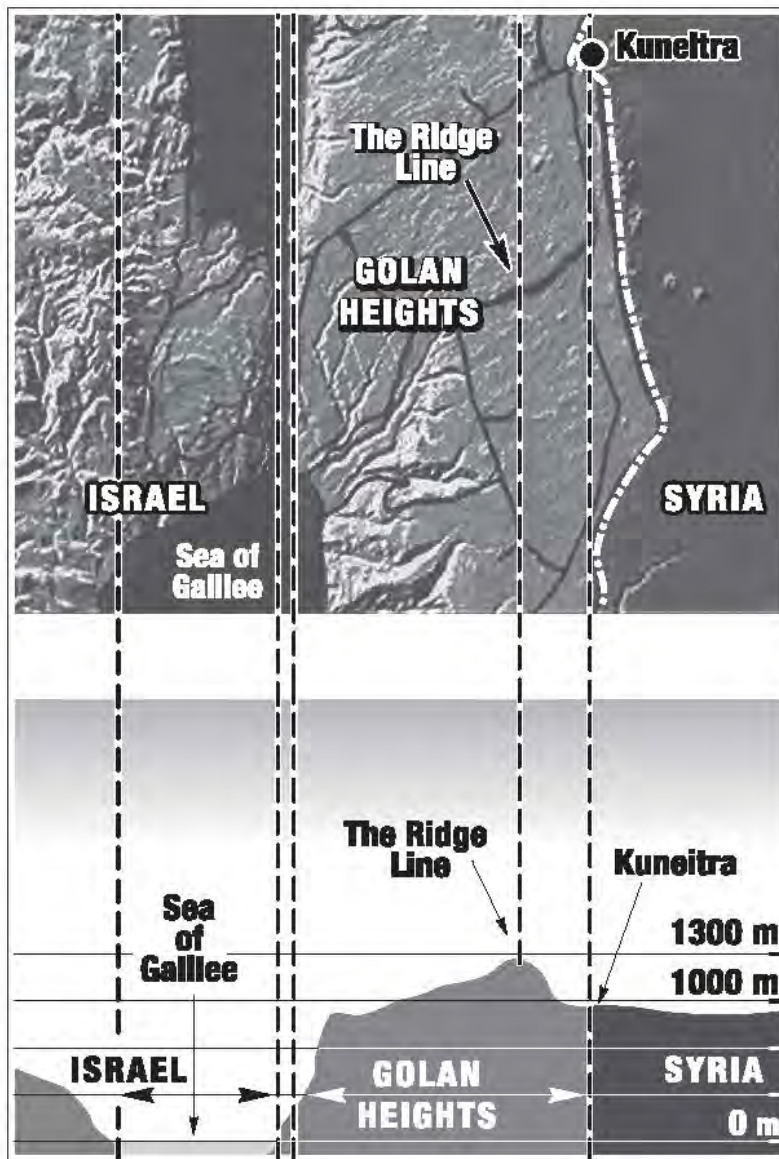
Nothing was done to stop Syria’s aggression. The Soviet Union vetoed a mild Security Council resolution expressing “regret” for such incidents. Meanwhile, Israel was condemned by the UN when it retaliated. “As far as the Security Council was officially concerned,” historian Netanel Lorch wrote, “there was an open season for killing Israelis on their own territory.”<sup>3</sup>

After the [Six-Day War](#) began, the Syrian air force attempted to bomb oil refineries in [Haifa](#). While Israel was fighting in the [Sinai](#) and West Bank, Syrian artillery bombarded Israeli forces in eastern Galilee, and armored units fired on villages in the Hula Valley below the Golan Heights.

On June 9, 1967, Israel moved against Syrian forces on the Golan. By late afternoon, June 10, Israel was in complete control of the plateau. Israel’s seizure of the strategic heights occurred only after nineteen years of provocation from Syria and after unsuccessful efforts to get the international community to act against the aggressors.

On December 14, 1981, the [Knesset](#) voted to [annex](#) the Golan Heights. The statute extended Israeli civilian law and administration to the residents of the Golan, replacing the military authority that had ruled the area since 1967. The law does not foreclose the option of negotiations on the territory’s final status.

Following the Knesset’s approval of the law, Professor Julius Stone of Hastings College of the Law wrote, “There is no rule of international law which requires a lawful military occupant, in this situation, to wait forever before [making] control and government of the territory permanent . . . Many international lawyers have wondered, indeed, at the patience which led Israel to wait as long as she did.”<sup>4</sup>



## MYTH

*The Golan has no strategic significance for Israel.*

## FACT

Syria—deterred by an [IDF](#) presence within artillery range of Damascus—kept the Golan quiet since 1974, except for a few cross-border attacks that spilled over during the Syrian civil war (2011-2022). Syria has supported and provided a haven for numerous [terrorist groups](#) that attacked Israel from Lebanon and other countries. These include the [Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine \(DFLP\)](#), the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine \(PFLP\)](#), [Hezbollah](#), and the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command \(PFLP-GC\)](#).

The Golan – rising from 400 (122 meters) to 1,700 feet (518 meters) in the western section bordering on pre-1967 Israel – overlooks the Hula Valley, Israel’s richest agricultural area. From the western Golan, it is only about 60 miles (97 kilometers)—without major terrain obstacles—to Haifa and [Acre](#), Israel’s industrial heartland. In the hands of a friendly neighbor, the escarpment has little military importance. If controlled by a hostile country, however, the Golan can again become a strategic nightmare for Israel.

Before the Six-Day War, when Israeli agricultural settlements in the Galilee came under fire from the Golan, Israel's options for countering the Syrian attacks were constrained by the geography of the Heights. "Counterbattery fire was limited by the lack of observation from the Hula Valley; air attacks were degraded by well-dug-in Syrian positions with strong overhead cover, and a ground attack against the positions . . . would require major forces with the attendant risks of heavy casualties and severe political repercussions," U.S. Army Col. (Ret.) Irving Heymont observed.<sup>5</sup>

When Israel eventually took these risks and stormed the Syrian positions in 1967, it suffered 115 dead—roughly the number of Americans killed during Operation Desert Storm.

Israel held talks with the Syrians, hoping to reach a peace agreement. Syria insisted, however, that Israel completely withdraw from the entire Golan Heights before even discussing what Syria might do in return. President [Hafez Assad](#), and his son [Bashar](#) who succeeded him, never expressed any willingness to make peace, even if Israel met this demand.

Israel was equally adamant that it would not give up any territory without knowing what Syria was prepared to concede and insisted that Syria agree to normalize relations and sign an agreement that would end the state of war between them. These points are now moot because of the Syrian civil war.

Israel has built radar systems on [Mt. Hermon](#), the highest point in the region. During the best of times, relinquishing the Golan to [Syria](#) without adequate security arrangements could jeopardize Israel's early-warning system against surprise attacks. If Israel withdrew from the Golan and had to relocate these facilities to the lowlands of the Galilee, they would lose much of their strategic effectiveness.

Israel's unwillingness to give up the Golan looks even more prescient today as the civil war in Syria made it clear the northern border of Israel could be threatened by fighters from [Iran](#), Hezbollah, and [ISIS](#). Iran has tried establishing bases in Syria from which it can attack Israel, provoking Israeli airstrikes to prevent Iranian forces and allies from gaining a foothold.

Unless a future leader of Syria dramatically changes its orientation and accepts Israel as a neighbor, it is difficult to imagine any Israeli government considering withdrawing from the Golan Heights. In the short term, Israel adopted a plan at the end of 2021 to double the population of the Golan Heights in the next decade and invest new funds in its development.<sup>6</sup>

**MYTH**

*Defensible borders are unrealistic in an era of ballistic missiles.*

**FACT**

History shows that aerial attacks have never defeated a nation. Countries are only conquered by troops occupying land. One example of this was [Iraq's invasion of Kuwait](#), in which the latter nation was overrun and occupied in a matter of hours. Though the multinational force bombed Iraq for nearly six weeks, Kuwait was not liberated until the Allied troops marched into that country in the war's final days. Defensible borders are those that would prevent or impede such a ground assault.

Israel's return to its pre-1967 borders, which the Arab states want to reimpose, would tempt potential aggressors to launch attacks on the Jewish State—as they did routinely before 1967. Israel would lose the extensive system of early-warning radars it has set up in the hills of Judea and Samaria. Were a hostile neighbor to seize control of these

mountains, its army could split Israel in two: from there, it is only about 15 miles (24 kilometers) —without any significant geographic obstacles—to the Mediterranean.

At their narrowest point, these 1967 lines are within nine miles (14 kilometers) of the Israeli coast, eleven miles (18 kilometers) from [Tel Aviv](#), ten (16 kilometers) from [Beersheba](#), twenty-one from [Haifa](#) (34 kilometers), and one foot (.3 meters) from [Jerusalem](#).

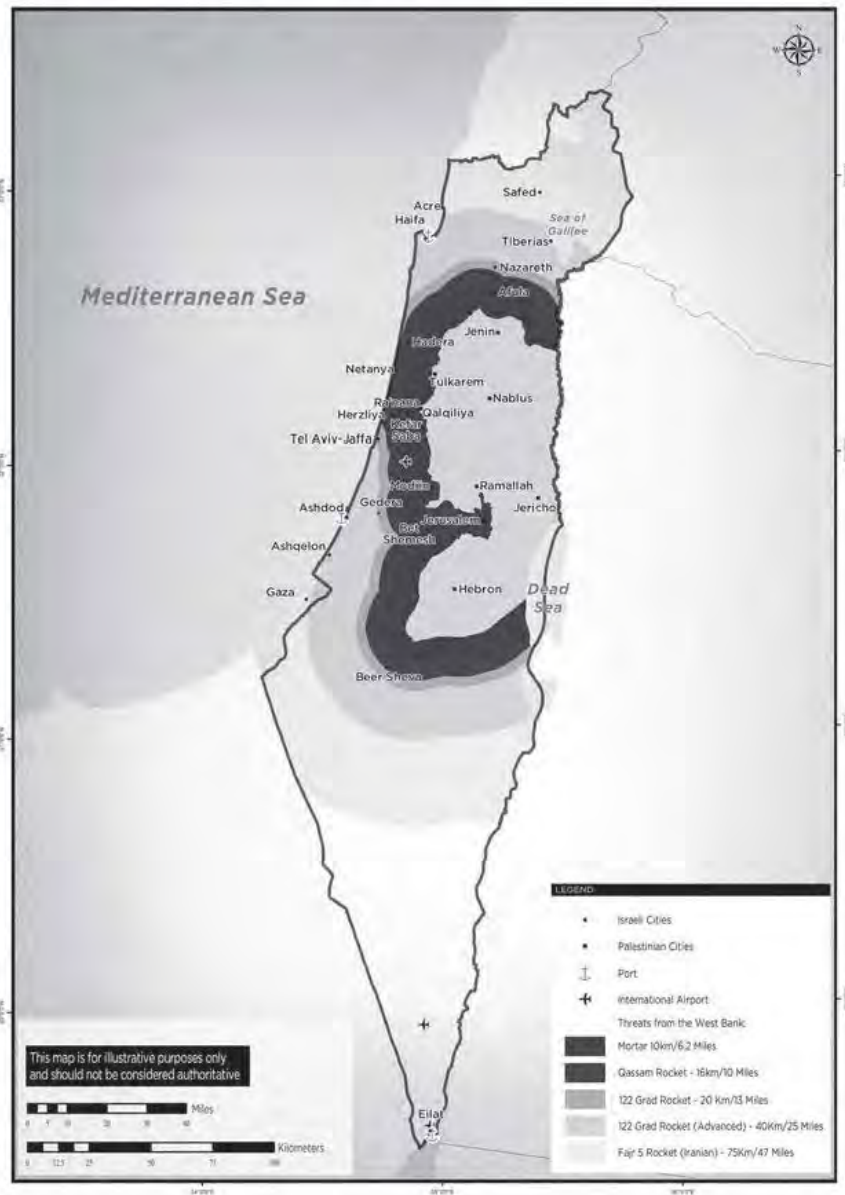
To defend Jerusalem, the U.S. joint chiefs concluded in a 1967 report to the secretary of defense, Israel would need to have its border “positioned to the east of the city.”<sup>7</sup>

**It is impossible to defend Jerusalem unless you hold the high ground . . . An aircraft that takes off from an airport in Amman is going to be over Jerusalem in two-and-a-half minutes, so it's utterly impossible for me to defend the whole country unless I hold that land.**

**—Lieutenant General (Ret.) Thomas Kelly,  
director of operations for the joint  
chiefs of staff during the Gulf War, June 29, 1967<sup>8</sup>**

Control over the [Jordan River Valley](#) is critical to Israeli security because it “forms a natural security barrier between Israel and Jordan, and effectively acts as an anti-tank ditch,” military analyst Anthony Cordesman noted. “This defensive line sharply increases the amount of time Israel has to mobilize and its ability to ensure control over the West Bank in the event of a war.” He added that sacrificing control over the routes up to the heights above the West Bank makes it more difficult for the IDF to deploy and increases the risk of Jordanian, Syrian, or Palestinian forces deploying on the heights.<sup>9</sup>

Even in the era of ballistic missiles, strategic depth matters. The Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, an Israeli think tank considered dovish, concluded: “Early-warning stations and the deployment of surface-to-air missile batteries can provide the time needed to sound an air-raid alert, and warn the population to take shelter from a missile attack. They might even allow enemy missiles to be intercepted in mid-flight . . . As long as such missiles are armed with conventional warheads, they may cause painful losses and damage, but they cannot decide the outcome of a war.”<sup>10</sup>



**MYTH**

*Israel “occupies” the West Bank.*

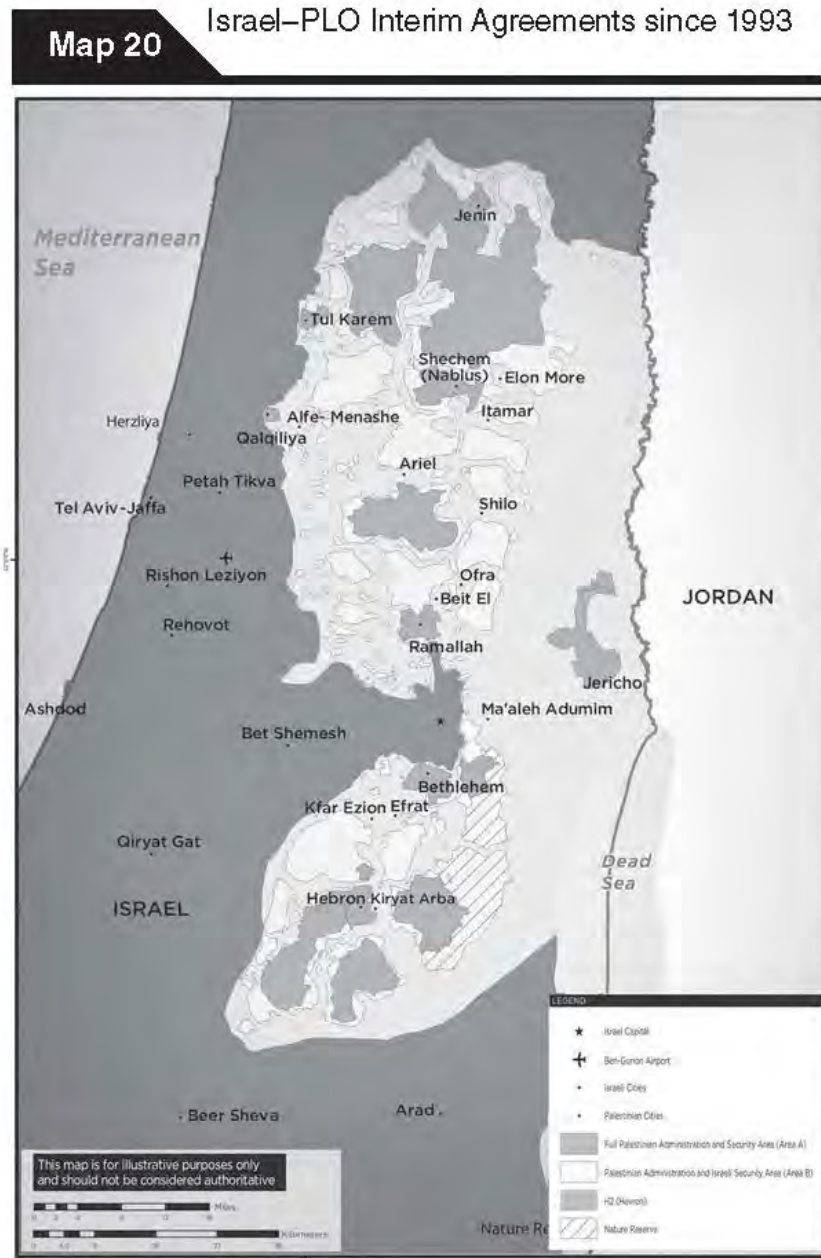
**FACT**

In politics, language matters, and the misuse of words applying to the Arab-Israeli conflict has shaped perceptions to Israel’s disadvantage. As in the case of the term “West Bank,” the word “occupation” has been hijacked by those who wish to paint Israel in the harshest possible light. It also gives apologists an excuse to describe terrorism as “resistance to occupation,” as if the women and children killed by suicide bombers in buses, pizzerias, and shopping malls were responsible for the plight of the Palestinians.

Given the negative connotation of an “occupier,” it is not surprising that Israel’s detractors use the word, or some variation, as many times as possible in their propaganda and when interviewed by the press. The more accurate description of the territories in Judea and Samaria, however, is “disputed” territories.

Israel’s international legal claim to the land goes back to the [Balfour Declaration](#) in 1917, which recognized the Jewish

right to a “national home” in Palestine. This position was reiterated in the [San Remo Resolution](#) (April 1920), the Treaty of Sevres (Art. 95, Aug. 1920), the [Mandate for Palestine](#) (Art. 6, July 1922), the Anglo-American Treaty (Dec. 1925), and Israel’s [admission to the UN](#) in 1949.



The hypocrisy of critics of Israel’s administration of the West Bank is compounded by the fact that other disputed territories around the world are not considered occupied by the party that controls them. This is true, for example, of the hotly contested regions of [Kashmir](#), [Cyprus](#), and Tibet, none of which attract the attention or opprobrium directed at Israel.<sup>11</sup>

Occupation typically refers to foreign control of an area under another state's previous sovereignty. In the case of the West Bank, there was no legitimate sovereign because Jordan had illegally occupied the territory from 1948 to 1967. Only two countries—[Britain](#) and [Pakistan](#)—recognized Jordan’s action. The Palestinians never demanded an end to Jordanian occupation and the creation of a Palestinian state. They also never called for the end of the Egyptian occupation of the Gaza Strip.

**For a Texan, a first visit to Israel is an eye-opener. At the narrowest point, it's only 8 miles from the Mediterranean to the old Armistice line: That's less than from the top to the bottom of Dallas-Ft. Worth Airport. The whole of pre-1967 Israel is only about six times the size of the King Ranch near Corpus Christi.**

**—President George W. Bush<sup>12</sup>**

It is also necessary to distinguish the acquisition of territory in a war of conquest as opposed to a war of self-defense. An occupier is a nation that attacks another and then retains the territory it conquers. One that gains territory while defending itself is not in the same category. This is the situation with Israel, which told [King Hussein](#) that if Jordan stayed out of the 1967 War, Israel would not fight against him. Hussein ignored the [warning](#) and attacked Israel. While fending off the assault and driving out the invading Jordanian troops, Israel came to control the West Bank.

By rejecting Arab demands that Israel be required to withdraw from all the territories won in 1967, [UN Security Council Resolution 242](#) acknowledged that Israel was entitled to claim at least part of these lands for new defensible borders.

Since the [Oslo Accords](#), the case for tagging Israel as an occupying power has been further weakened because Israel transferred virtually all civilian authority in the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority. Israel retained the power to control its external security and that of its citizens, but 98% of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, and 100% in Gaza, came under the PA's authority.

The extent to which Israel has been forced to maintain a military presence in the territories has been governed by the Palestinians' unwillingness to end [violence against Israel](#). The only way to resolve the dispute over the territories is for the Palestinians to negotiate a final settlement. Until now, the intransigence of the Palestinian Authority's leadership has prevented the resumption of talks, which offer the only path to an agreement to ensure a peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.



**MYTH**

*Israel's security fence is meant to create a Palestinian ghetto.*

**FACT**

Israel did not want to build a fence and resisted doing so for more than thirty-five years. If anyone is to blame for the construction, it is [Hamas](#), [Islamic Jihad](#), and the other Palestinian terrorists.

Following the 1967 War, the frontier separating Israel from the West Bank had no physical obstacles to prevent the infiltration of terrorists. In response to dozens of [suicide bombings](#) and daily terrorist attacks against its civilians, Israel decided to construct a [security fence](#) near the “[Green Line](#)” (the 1949 armistice line) to prevent Palestinian terrorists from crossing the border.

It is not unreasonable or unusual to build a fence for security purposes. Israel already had fences along the frontiers with [Lebanon](#), [Syria](#), and [Jordan](#), so building a barrier to separate Israel from the Palestinian Authority was not revolutionary. Most nations have fences to protect their borders and several use barriers in political disputes. For example:

- The [United States](#) built a fence to keep out illegal Mexican immigrants.
- [Spain](#) built a fence to separate its enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla from Morocco to prevent people from sub-Saharan Africa from entering Europe.
- [India](#) constructed a 460-mile barrier in [Kashmir](#) to halt infiltrations supported by [Pakistan](#).
- [Saudi Arabia](#) built a sixty-mile barrier along an undefined border zone with [Yemen](#). The Saudis also built a nearly six-hundred-mile fence on the border with [Iraq](#).
- [Turkey](#) built a barrier in the southern province of Alexandretta, which was formerly in Syria and is an area that Syria claims as its own.
- In [Cyprus](#), the UN-sponsored a security fence reinforcing the island's de facto partition.
- The British built barriers to separate Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods in [Belfast](#).<sup>13</sup>

Ironically, after [condemning Israel's barrier](#), the [UN](#) announced plans to build a fence to improve security around its New York headquarters.<sup>14</sup>

Only Israel's security fence has been the subject of UN condemnation and a ruling by the International Court of Justice; one more example of the double standard applied to Israel.

Most of the fence runs roughly along the "Green Line." In some places, the fence is *inside* this line. Critics have complained about where the fence is beyond Israel's pre-1967 border, but the "Green Line" was not an internationally recognized border; it was an armistice line between Israel and Jordan pending the negotiation of a final border. As Israel's [Supreme Court](#) noted in its [ruling](#) on the barrier route, building the fence along that line would have been a political statement and would not accomplish the principal goal of the barrier, namely, the prevention of terror.

The fence route must consider each area's topography, population density, and threat assessment. To effectively protect the maximum number of Israelis, it must also incorporate some of the settlements in the West Bank.

Most of the barrier is a chain-link fence combined with underground and long-range sensors, unmanned aerial vehicles, trenches, landmines, and guard paths. Less than 3% (about 15 miles) is a 30-foot-high concrete wall, built in areas to prevent Palestinian snipers from shooting at Israeli cars.

Despite Israel's best efforts, the fence has caused some injury to residents near the fence. Israel's Supreme Court took up the grievances of Palestinians (who are allowed to petition the court without being Israeli citizens). It ruled the government had to reduce the infringement upon local inhabitants by altering the path of the fence in an area near Jerusalem.

Palestinians complain that the fence creates "facts on the ground," but most of the area incorporated within the fence is expected to be part of Israel in any peace agreement.

Meanwhile, Israelis living along the Green Line, both Jews and Arabs, are happy because the fence helps prevent penetration by thieves, vandals, and terrorists.<sup>15</sup>

If the Palestinians decide to negotiate an end to the conflict, the fence may be torn down or moved. Even without any change, a Palestinian state could theoretically be created in 93% of the West Bank ( Hamas now controls 100% of the Gaza Strip) if Israel evacuated it entirely without any land swaps. This is very close to the 97% Israel offered to the Palestinians at [Camp David](#) in 2000, which means that while other complex issues remain to be resolved, the territorial aspect of the dispute has been reduced to a negotiation over roughly 90 square miles (233 square kilometers).

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<sup>1</sup> Netanel Lorch, [One Long War](#), (Jerusalem: Keter, 1976), pp. 106–10.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Sinai and Allen Pollack, [The Syrian Arab Republic](#), (NY: American Academic Association for Peace in the Middle East, 1976), p. 117.

Lorch, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> *Near East Report*, (January 29, 1982).

<sup>5</sup> Sinai and Pollack, pp. 130–31.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Lis, “Israel Approves Mammoth Golan Heights Plan in Bid to Double Population,” [Haaretz](#), (December 26, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, June 29, 1967, cited in Dore Gold, “Defensible Borders for Israel,” JCPA, (June 15, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Justus Reid Weiner and Diane Morrison, “Linking the Gaza Strip with the West Bank: Implications of a Palestinian Corridor across Israel,” [JCPA](#), (2007).

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Cordesman, “Escalating to Nowhere: The Israeli-Palestinian War—The Final Settlement Issues,” (DC: CSIS, January 13, 2005), p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> *Israel’s Options for Peace*, (Tel Aviv: The Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1989), pp. 171–72.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas Murray, “‘Occupied Territories’: What about Cyprus, Kashmir, Tibet?” [Gatestone Institute](#), (July 23, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Speech to the American Jewish Committee, (May 3, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Ben Thein, “Is Israel’s Security Barrier Unique?” *Middle East Quarterly*, (Fall 2004), pp. 25-32

<sup>14</sup> [United Nations](#), (May 6, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Yair Ettinger, “Highway, Fence Spur Growth in Wadi Ara,” [Haaretz](#), (July 14, 2004).

# Chapter 7

## Israel and Lebanon

[The PLO posed no threat to Israel in 1982 when Israel attacked Lebanon.](#)  
[Israel was responsible for the massacre of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila.](#)  
[Israel instigated a second war in Lebanon without provocation.](#)  
[Israeli forces deliberately targeted civilians during the war instigated by Hezbollah.](#)  
[The media fairly and accurately covered the second war in Lebanon.](#)  
[Lebanon no longer threatens Israel.](#)

### **MYTH**

*The PLO posed no threat to Israel in 1982 when Israel attacked Lebanon.*

### ***FACT***

The [PLO](#) repeatedly violated a cease-fire agreement reached in July 1981. In the ensuing eleven months, the PLO staged 270 [terrorist](#) actions in [Israel](#), the [West Bank](#), and [Gaza](#), and along the Lebanese and Jordanian borders. Twenty-nine Israelis died, and more than 300 were injured in the attacks.<sup>1</sup> The frequency of attacks in the Galilee forced thousands of residents to flee their homes or to spend large amounts of time in bomb shelters.

A force of some 15-18,000 PLO members was encamped in scores of locations in [Lebanon](#). About 5-6,000 were foreign mercenaries, coming from countries such as [Libya](#), [Iraq](#), [India](#), [Sri Lanka](#), [Chad](#), and [Mozambique](#).<sup>2</sup> The PLO had an arsenal that included mortars, [Katyusha](#) rockets, and an extensive anti-aircraft network.<sup>3</sup> In addition, [Syria](#), brought surface-to-air missiles into Lebanon, creating yet another danger for Israel.

Israeli strikes and commando raids were unable to stem the growth of this PLO army. Israel was not prepared to wait for more deadly attacks to be launched against its civilian population before acting against the terrorists. The final straw occurred abroad on June 3, 1982, when Israel's ambassador to London, [Shlomo Argov](#), was shot and critically wounded by an assassin from the [Abu Nidal](#) faction of the PLO. Israel retaliated by launching an assault on PLO positions in Lebanon on June 4 and 5, and the PLO responded with a massive artillery and mortar barrage on the Israeli population of the Galilee. The threat to northern Israel became intolerable, and the [IDF](#) launched [Operation Peace for Galilee](#) on June 6 to drive out the terrorists.

Former secretary of state [Henry Kissinger](#) defended the Israeli operation: "No sovereign state can tolerate indefinitely the buildup along its borders of a military force dedicated to its destruction and implementing its objectives by periodic shellings and raids."<sup>4</sup>



## MYTH

*Israel was responsible for the massacre of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila.*

## FACT

The Lebanese Christian Phalangist militia was responsible for the massacres that occurred at the two Beirut-area refugee camps on September 16–17, 1982. Israeli troops allowed the Phalangists to enter [Sabra and Shatila](#) to root out terrorist cells believed to be located there. It had been estimated that there might have been up to 200 armed Palestinians in the camps.<sup>5</sup>

When Israeli soldiers ordered the Phalangists out, they found hundreds dead (the Lebanese police estimated the number to be 460, while Israeli intelligence believed the figure was 700–800). The dead, according to the Lebanese account, included 35 women and children. The rest were men: Palestinians, Lebanese, Pakistanis, Iranians, Syrians, and Algerians.<sup>6</sup> The killings were perpetrated to avenge the murders of Lebanese President Bashir Gemayel and 25 of his followers, killed in a bomb attack earlier that week.<sup>7</sup>

Israel had allowed the Phalange to enter the camps as part of a plan to transfer authority to the Lebanese and accepted responsibility for that decision. The [Kahan Commission of Inquiry](#), formed by the Israeli government in response to public anger and grief, found that Israel was indirectly responsible for not anticipating the possibility of Phalangist violence. Subsequently, Defense Minister [Ariel Sharon](#) resigned, and the term of army chief of staff Gen. [Rafael Eitan](#) was not extended.

The Kahan Commission, declared former secretary of state Henry Kissinger, was “a great tribute to Israeli democracy . . . There are very few governments in the world that one can imagine making such a public investigation of such a difficult and shameful episode.”<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, while three hundred thousand Israelis protested the killings, little or no reaction occurred in the Arab world. Outside the Middle East, a major international outcry against Israel erupted over the massacres. The Phalangists, who perpetrated the crime, were spared the brunt of the outrage.

By contrast, few voices were raised in May 1985 when [Muslim](#) militiamen attacked the Shatila and Burj-el Barajneh [Palestinian refugee camps](#). According to [UN](#) officials, 635 were killed and 2,500 wounded. During a two-year battle between the Syrian-backed [Shiite](#) Amal militia and the PLO, more than 2,000 people, including many civilians, were reportedly killed. No protest was directed at the PLO or the Syrians and their allies over the slaughter. International reaction was also muted in October 1990 when Syrian forces overran Christian-controlled areas of Lebanon. In the eight-hour clash, at least 750 Christians were killed—the worst single battle of Lebanon’s [Civil War](#).<sup>9</sup> These killings came on top of an estimated 95,000 deaths that had occurred from 1975–1982.<sup>10</sup>

**Our goal is to liberate the 1948 borders of Palestine . . . [Jews] can go back to Germany or wherever they came from.**

**—Hezbollah spokesperson Hassan Ezzedin<sup>11</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Israel instigated a second war in Lebanon without provocation.*

## ***FACT***

Though this particular conflict officially began on July 12, 2006, the roots could be traced to the preceding twenty-four years dating back to the start of the [first war in Lebanon](#). Following [Operation Peace for Galilee](#) in 1982, during which the IDF sought to drive the PLO from Lebanon, [Iran](#) sent fighters to assist in the creation of a revolutionary Islamic movement, soon called [Hezbollah](#), or “Party of God.” As the Israeli presence in Lebanon lingered, Hezbollah attracted support from those in the southern part of the country who wanted [Israel](#) to withdraw, and its organizational and military infrastructure developed with the help of funding from Iran and Syria.

Hezbollah’s attacks against the IDF eventually compelled Israel to evacuate its personnel from the buffer zone it had created in southern Lebanon. On May 24, 2000, Israel ended its eighteen-year military presence there in cooperation with the United Nations and in compliance with the obligations set down by [Security Council Resolution 425](#).



Hezbollah used Israel's withdrawal as a sign of victory and subsequently took over southern [Lebanon](#), creating a veritable "state within a state" while amassing thousands of tons of weaponry and entrenching themselves in civilian areas with a network of bunkers and fortified bases.

Hezbollah subsequently initiated cross-border raids seeking to abduct or kill Israeli soldiers. In October 2000, mere months after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah terrorists [kidnapped and killed three Israeli soldiers](#)—Benny Avraham, Omar Sawad, and Adi Avitan—and held them hostage for nearly four years before returning their bodies to Israel in a [prisoner exchange deal](#).<sup>12</sup> From 2000 to 2006, Hezbollah carried out multiple attacks against northern Israel that killed both civilians and military personnel.

On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah attacked an IDF patrol. Terrorists killed three soldiers, severely wounded another three, and abducted two—[Eldad Regev](#) and [Ehud Goldwasser](#). An IDF [Merkava tank](#) sent over the border to pursue the guerrillas hit a land mine and exploded, killing the four soldiers inside. Later, another soldier was killed during an attempted rescue operation to recover the bodies of the tank crew.

Israel responded with air and artillery raids against Hezbollah and Lebanese army targets. Hezbollah then fired rocket barrages into northern Israel, some reaching as far south as [Haifa](#). The situation would have been worse if the [Israeli Air Force](#) had not destroyed Hezbollah's most sophisticated and long-range rockets in the first hours of the fighting.

Prime Minister [Ehud Olmert](#) decided to launch a ground attack on July 22, codenamed [Operation Change of Direction](#). By July 25, Hezbollah rockets had killed fifteen Israeli civilians, including several [Israeli Arabs](#), and dozens more had been wounded.

The fighting ended on August 14 with the signing of a United Nations-brokered ceasefire, and the war was officially ended when Israel lifted its naval blockade of Lebanon on September 8, 2006.

After thirty-four days of fighting, Israel lost 121 soldiers, including the two kidnapped soldiers, with more than six hundred injured. In addition, 44 civilians were killed and nearly 1,500 injured. Though estimates vary, Israel claims to have killed more than 500 Hezbollah fighters. More than 1,100 Lebanese civilians were killed, many because they were being used as human shields by Hezbollah.

Meanwhile, the terrorists fired at least 45 rockets into Israel, forcing thousands of Israelis to live in bomb shelters for more than a month, and tens of thousands to move out of rocket range. Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese civilians also fled the fighting, which left billions of dollars in damage on both sides of the border.<sup>13</sup>





## **MYTH**

*Israeli forces deliberately targeted civilians during the war instigated by Hezbollah.*

## ***FACT***

Throughout the war initiated by Hezbollah on July 12, 2006, the media reported casualty totals offered by Lebanese officials as facts with no apparent effort to verify them. When the number of Hezbollah terrorists killed was mentioned at all, it was invariably with a qualifier such as “Israel says” or “Israel claims.” The evidence suggests, however, that it is likely that half or more of the casualties were not innocent civilians, but Hezbollah fighters.

According to Lebanon’s Higher Relief Council, the total number of Lebanese who died in the war was 1,191.<sup>14</sup> No distinctions were made between civilians and terrorists. Press reports usually ignored the fact that it was in Hezbollah and the Lebanese government’s interest to exaggerate the number of civilian casualties to blacken the image of Israel and support their contention that Israeli attacks were disproportionate and indiscriminate. Simultaneously, Hezbollah sought to conceal its casualties to enhance its prestige and make propagandistic claims about the damage it was inflicting on Israel while suffering few losses of its own.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a report that charged Israel with indiscriminate attacks against civilians in [Lebanon](#).<sup>15</sup> Nothing in the report was based on firsthand knowledge by HRW. “There was no dependable method by which HRW could assess the veracity of what it was told by the ‘witnesses,’ many of whom were in areas where the population was sympathetic to, or intimidated by Hezbollah,” analyst Joshua Muravchik observed.<sup>16</sup>

HRW also had no evidence for the scurrilous accusation that civilians were “deliberately” killed. On the contrary, a great deal of evidence was available showing the efforts Israel made to avoid harming noncombatants, such as dropping leaflets to warn civilians to evacuate locations before they were attacked, pinpoint attacks on buildings in neighborhoods that could more easily have been carpet-bombed, and reports of Israeli pilots and others who withheld fire because of the presence of civilians in target areas.

Anyone watching television saw the images of rockets being fired from civilian areas and the photos of weapons and armed men in what should have been peaceful neighborhoods. Numerous witnesses told reporters about weapons caches in mosques and fighters using [UN troops](#) as shields.<sup>17</sup>

HRW had no trouble accepting the word of the Lebanese people it interviewed, but gave no credence to evidence presented by Israel, such as weapons captured in fighting in civilian areas or [videos](#) showing the deployment and launching of rockets from areas that were attacked.

The spurious allegations made by HRW, as well as similar ones published by Amnesty International, were further undermined by a [report](#) issued in November 2006 by the Intelligence and Terrorism Center at the Israeli Center for Special Studies. This publication provided extensive documentation and photographic evidence of “Hezbollah’s consistent pattern of intentionally placing its fighters and weapons among civilians.” It also shows that Hezbollah was “well aware of the civilian casualties that would ensue” from this activity.<sup>18</sup>

The truth did dribble out, though it was largely ignored. For example, the *Daily Telegraph* reported:

Lebanese officials estimate that up to 500 fighters have been killed in the past three weeks of hostilities with Israel, and another 1,500 injured. Lebanese officials have also disclosed that many of Hezbollah’s wounded are being treated in hospitals in [Syria](#) to conceal the true extent of the casualties . . . “Hezbollah is desperate to conceal its casualties because it wants to give the impression that it is winning its war,” said a senior security official. “People might reach a very different conclusion if they knew the true extent of Hezbollah’s casualties.”<sup>19</sup>

The *Kuwait Times* quoted a report that said Hezbollah “buried more than 700 fighters so far, with many more to go.”<sup>20</sup> Military expert John Keegan said Hezbollah losses might have been as high as 1,000 out of a total strength of 5,000.<sup>21</sup>

Tragically, civilians were killed, often because they were used as human shields. Of course, there would have been zero casualties if Hezbollah had not attacked Israel and kidnapped and murdered its soldiers.

## **MYTH**

*The media fairly and accurately covered the second war in Lebanon.*

## ***FACT***

Reporters covering the war from Lebanon were particularly egregious in revealing their own biases based, it seems, on living in the country and developing sympathies for their subjects. More serious, however, was the way some of these correspondents allowed themselves to be used by Hezbollah. In the first Lebanon War, the PLO threatened reporters and made favorable coverage the price of access. Hezbollah learned from their example and influenced much of what journalists could see and report.

CNN’s Nic Robertson, for example, was taken to an area of [Beirut](#) and told that the rubble of buildings was a result of

Israeli air strikes on civilian targets. He repeated the allegation as fact. He had no way of knowing what was in the buildings, whether it was a rocket workshop, a hiding place for Katyushas, the home of a Hezbollah leader, or a command center. In fact, he didn't even know if Israel was responsible for the destruction that he had been shown.

Robertson later admitted that his report had been influenced by his Hezbollah guide. He acknowledged that he had been told what to film and where. "They designated the places that we went to, and we certainly didn't have time to go into the houses or lift up the rubble to see what was underneath."

Robertson said Hezbollah controls south Beirut. "You don't get in there without their permission. We didn't have enough time to see if perhaps there was somebody there who was, you know, a taxi driver by day, and a Hezbollah fighter by night." Unlike what he said on air during his guided reports, Robertson told CNN's Reliable Sources, "there's no doubt that the bombs there are hitting Hezbollah facilities."<sup>22</sup>

Robertson's CNN colleague Anderson Cooper said the group was "just making things up," and gave the example of a tour he was given in which Hezbollah had lined up some ambulances. They were told to turn on their sirens, and then the ambulances drove off as if they were picking up wounded civilians when, in fact, they were simply driving back and forth. "It's a well-coordinated and not-so-subtle piece of propaganda," observed Cooper.<sup>23</sup>

*Time Magazine* contributor Christopher Albritton made clear that reporters understood the rules of the game. "To the south, along the curve of the coast, Hezbollah is launching Katyushas, but I'm loath to say too much about them. The Party of God has a copy of every journalist's passport, and they've already hassled a number of us and threatened one."<sup>24</sup>

Under no duress whatsoever, the *Washington Post's* Thomas Ricks made perhaps the most outrageous charge of the war when he claimed, with no evidence whatsoever, that Israel intentionally left Hezbollah launchers intact because having Israeli civilians killed helped Israel in the public-relations war.<sup>25</sup>

Israel's image was tarred by suggestions that it had targeted Lebanese Christian areas, intimating that Israel was killing innocent Christians rather than restricting its attacks to the Shiite Muslims of Hezbollah. CNN reported, for example, an Israeli strike "on the edge of the city's mostly *Christian* eastern district" that killed ten people. In the next paragraph, however, the report says Israel hit "a building *near a mosque*."<sup>26</sup>

Photographs can be especially powerful, but they can also be misleading or outright fakes. A photo of a baby pulled from the rubble of a building in Qana that appeared on front pages around the world, for example, was exposed as a fake.<sup>27</sup> One of the photographers involved, Adnan Hajj, was discovered to have doctored at least two photographs, one of which was changed to show more and darker smoke rising from buildings in Beirut bombed by Israel, and the other altered the image of an Israeli jet, so it showed three flares being discharged instead of one. Reuters admitted the photos had been falsified, suspended the photographer, and removed all his photographs from its database.<sup>28</sup>

Reporters in Lebanon exaggerated the destruction in Beirut and elsewhere by showing tight shots of buildings hit in Israeli air strikes and rebroadcasting the same images repeatedly. "You would think Beirut has begun to resemble Dresden and Hamburg in the aftermath of [Second World War](#) air raids," observed former *Sunday Telegraph* correspondent Tom Gross. But, Gross notes, "a careful look at aerial satellite photos of the areas targeted by Israel in Beirut shows that certain specific buildings housing Hezbollah command centers in the city's southern suburbs have been singled out. Most of the rest of Beirut, apart from strategic sites such as airport runways used to ferry Hezbollah weapons in and out of Lebanon, has been left pretty much untouched."<sup>29</sup>

While an Israeli strike that killed UN observers drew headlines, little attention was given to reports that Hezbollah was using the UN posts as shields. A Canadian soldier with [UNIFIL](#), for example, reported that his team could observe "most of the Hezbollah static positions in and around our patrol base," and noted that Israeli ordnance that fell near the base was not a result of deliberate targeting, but "has rather been due to tactical necessity."<sup>30</sup>

Over the years, Arab propagandists have learned that one surefire way to get media attention is to scream "massacre"

when Israelis are in the neighborhood. On August 7, 2006, news outlets repeated Lebanese prime minister Fouad Siniora's claim that Israel had committed a "massacre" by killing 40 people in an air raid on the village of Houla. In fact, one person died.<sup>31</sup>

Here are facts the media neglected during the war:

- Two million Israelis lived under the threat of rockets, including approximately 700,000 [Israeli Arabs](#).
- More than 300,000 Israelis were displaced from their homes.
- Fifteen percent of the entire Israeli population lived in bomb shelters.
- Approximately 5,500 homes were damaged by Hezbollah rockets.
- Israel's tourist industry was devastated.
- Towns that are home to important sites of the three major religions came under fire, including [Tiberias](#), [Nazareth](#), and [Safed](#).
- Fires sparked by rockets destroyed 16,500 acres of forests and grazing fields in Israel.

Wars are never easy to cover, and each side of a conflict wants to make its case through the media. Responsible journalists make every effort to ensure the accuracy of their reporting rather than simply repeating whatever they are told.

## **MYTH**

*Lebanon no longer threatens Israel.*

## ***FACT***

On August 11, 2006, the [UN Security Council](#) adopted [Resolution 1701](#) in response to the Israel-Hezbollah war. The resolution called upon the Lebanese government "to secure its borders and other entry points to prevent the entry in Lebanon without its consent of arms and related materials."

In May 2007, United Nations secretary general Ban Ki-moon established the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team (LIBAT) to evaluate Lebanon's compliance with Resolution 1701. The committee concluded that "the performance of the (Lebanese inspection) agencies in stopping ongoing arms smuggling, which is generally accepted as a fact, can only be described as not up to what can be expected."<sup>32</sup>

The committee discovered widespread corruption among Lebanese border police and described the ease by which missiles and militants moved across the Syrian-Lebanese border. The report illustrated the United Nations' skepticism of Lebanese attempts to end the flow of illegal arms into Lebanon when it said, "one would have expected that an occasional seizure of arms . . . would have taken place. If by nothing else, then by pure chance. This lack of performance is worrying."<sup>33</sup>

Lebanon's failure to implement Resolution 1701 poses a direct threat to Israel and to Lebanese stability. Since the war in 2006, large quantities of weapons (including rockets capable of striking as far south as [Tel Aviv](#) and southern Israel), have been smuggled into Lebanon from Syria and Iran. Hezbollah now has an estimated 150,000 rockets, and Israel has become increasingly concerned with Hezbollah's efforts to build precision-guided missiles.

As in past conflicts, Israel's ability to fight Hezbollah is complicated by the cynical deployment of its arsenal. "The enemy has chosen to place its weapons, missiles and rockets among urban areas exploiting the local population as human shields," according to IDF [Chief-of-Staff Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kochavi](#).<sup>34</sup>

A new threat was also exposed was exposed in 2018 when the IDF [destroyed tunnels](#) that extended across the Lebanese border into Israel. Hezbollah planned to move hundreds of fighters through the tunnels with the objective of fighting the next war within Israeli territory.<sup>35</sup>

Hezbollah leader [Hassan Nasrallah](#) has openly declared that "Israel is a cancer" and that the "ultimate goal should be to

remove it.”<sup>36</sup> He has pledged that Hezbollah will not disarm so long as Israel remains a threat.

The UN’s failure to ensure the implementation of its resolution increases the risk of renewed violence between Israel and Hezbollah. This danger has been heightened by Hezbollah’s involvement in the Syrian civil war and the possibility of the group gaining a strategic foothold near the [Golan Heights](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Jillian Becker, [The PLO](#), (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Becker, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> [Jerusalem Post](#), (June 28, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Henry Kissinger, “From Lebanon to the West Bank to the Gulf,” [Washington Post](#), (June 16, 1982).

<sup>5</sup> Zeev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, [Israel’s Lebanon War](#), (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> Becker, p. 212.

<sup>7</sup> Schiff and Yaari, p. 257.

<sup>8</sup> Yitschak Ben Gad, [Politics, Lies, and Videotape: 3,000 Questions and Answers on the Mideast Crisis](#), (United States, Shapolsky Publishers, 1991), p. 204

<sup>9</sup> Ali Jaber, “750 Reported Killed in Lebanese General’s Defeat,” [New York Times](#), (October 19, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Becker, p. 212.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, “In the Party of God,” [The New Yorker](#), (October 14, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> “The Mount Dov abductions,” [Ynet](#), (March 12, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> “Operation Change of Direction,” [Globalsecurity.org](#), (no date).

<sup>14</sup> [Lebanese Higher Relief Council](#), (December 6, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch, “[Fatal Strikes: Israel’s Indiscriminate Attacks against Civilians in Lebanon](#),” vol. 18, no. 3, (August 2006), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Joshua Muravchik, “Human Rights Watch vs. Human Rights: The Cynical Manipulation of a Worthy Cause Has a History,” [The Weekly Standard](#), (September 11, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Alan Dershowitz, “What Are They Watching?” [New York Sun](#), (August 23, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Reuven Erlich, “Hezbollah’s Use of Lebanese Civilians as Human Shields: The Extensive Military Infrastructure Positioned and Hidden in Populated Areas. From within the Lebanese Towns and Villages, Deliberate Rocket Attacks Were Directed against Civilian Targets in Israel,” [Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies \(C.S.S\)](#), (November 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Con Coughlin, “Teheran Fund Pays War Compensation to Hezbollah Families,” [Daily Telegraph](#), (August 4, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> [Kuwait Times](#), (August 30, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> John Keegan, “Why Israel Will Go to War Again—Soon,” [Daily Telegraph](#), (November 3, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> [CNN](#), (July 23, 2006). Also, corrected transcripts from the broadcast.

<sup>23</sup> Anderson Cooper, “Our Very Strange Day with Hezbollah,” [CNN](#), (July 23, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Tom Gross, “The Media War against Israel: The Jewish State Is Fighting Not One Enemy but Two: Hezbollah, and Those Who Peddle Its Propaganda,” [National Post](#), (August 2, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> [CNN](#), (August 6, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> [CNN](#), (August 7, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Reuven Koret, “Hezbollywood Horror: ‘Civil Defense Worker’ Doubles as Traveling Mortician,” [Israelinsider.com](#), (August 3, 2006); “Hezbollywood? Evidence Mounts that Qana Collapse and Deaths Were Staged,” [Israelinsider.com](#), (July 31, 2006); EU Referendum, ([July 31](#), [August 1](#), [August 5](#), 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Ricki Hollander, “A Reprise: Media Photo Manipulation,” [CAMERA](#), (August 9, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Tom Gross, “The Media War against Israel: The Jewish State Is Fighting Not One Enemy but Two: Hezbollah, and Those Who Peddle Its Propaganda,” [National Post](#), (August 2, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> “A Canadian Soldier’s Report from South Lebanon,” [CTV.ca](#), (July 26, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Associated Press, (August 7, 2006); Amos Harel, “One Dead in IDF Strike in Beirut Southern Suburb,” [Haaretz](#), (August 7, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Lebanon wire, [Independent Border Assessment Team Report](#), (June 2007).

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<sup>34</sup> Tal Beeri, “Hezbollah’s Missile and Rocket Arrays: A Tough and Complex Challenge for Israel,” [Alma Research and Education Center](#), (May 6, 2021).

<sup>35</sup> Shimon Shapira, “Hizbullah’s Operational Plan to Invade the Galilee through Underground Tunnels,” [JCPA](#), (December 4, 2018).

<sup>36</sup> Ariel Ben Solomon, “Nasrallah: Israel Is a Cancer and the Ultimate Goal Should Be to Remove It,” [Jerusalem Post](#), (August 15, 2014).

# Chapter 8

## Terrorism

[Palestinians oppose terrorism.](#)

[The Palestinian Authority prevents and condemns terrorism.](#)

[Palestinians do not encourage children to engage in terror.](#)

[Terrorism directed at Israel is motivated by politics, not religion.](#)

[Israel created Hamas.](#)

[Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas are freedom fighters.](#)

[Palestinian women become suicide bombers to liberate Palestine.](#)

[Israel's policy of targeted killings is immoral and counterproductive.](#)

[Palestinian terrorists only attack Israelis; they never assault Americans.](#)

[Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount caused the al-Aqsa intifada.](#)

### **MYTH**

*Palestinians oppose terrorism.*

### **FACT**

Let us stipulate that [Palestinians](#) are unhappy living under [Israeli](#) rule and face many hardships. The question they face is how to improve their situation and, ideally, achieve independence.

To their misfortune, Palestinian leaders have eschewed the one way to reach their goals: negotiation. Instead, since well before Israel's capture of the [West Bank](#) in [1967](#), Palestinians have chosen the path of violence in the misguided belief that they can either inflict enough pain on Israelis to force them to capitulate to their demands or draw enough sympathy to their plight that the international community will pressure Israel on their behalf. The failure of these strategies over nearly 80 years has not convinced them to eschew terror and embrace compromise.

Worse, Palestinian leaders have engaged in constant incitement through sermons, social and conventional media, education, and acculturation, which has inspired men, women, and even children to engage in terrorism. Palestinians have been encouraged to seek martyrdom rather than become doctors, lawyers, and scientists. Rather than peaceful demonstrations, [suicide bombing](#) became a form of Palestinian "protest."

Israel's [agreement to negotiate](#) with the [PLO](#) was predicated on [Yasser Arafat's](#) commitment to cease all violence. The promise of the Oslo agreements was sabotaged by Arafat's refusal to fulfill this obligation and the terrorism that has continued unabated.

Israelis are also aware of the incitement by the [Palestinian Authority](#) and the widespread support for "resistance." Support for a violent uprising reached as high as 54% in [polls](#) of Palestinians in 2021. Other polls found a third or more of Palestinians favoring armed struggle. Perhaps more alarming was a Pew survey, which found that 62% of Palestinian [Muslims](#) said suicide bombings are often or sometimes justified to defend Islam from its enemies. The results were nearly equal in [Hamas](#)-ruled [Gaza](#) (64%) and the [Fatah](#)-governed West Bank (60%).<sup>1</sup>

In an analysis of polls conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), Daniel Polisar found a consistent approval pattern for generic terror attacks against Israelis. What was more disturbing, however, is that when Palestinians were asked their opinions about specific assaults that resulted in the death of [Jews](#), their level of support increased dramatically.<sup>2</sup>

In March 2016, for example, 60% of Palestinians supported "attacks against Israeli civilians within Israel." In June, 65% said they approved a suicide bombing on a [Jerusalem](#) bus that wounded more than twenty Israelis.

Polisar concludes that "would-be terrorists contemplating an attack can be reasonably confident that if they succeed in

killing or injuring Israeli civilians, their actions will earn support and praise in their society—for themselves, their families, and the militant group to which they belong, whether or not they live to enjoy it personally. Indeed, they will be seen as heroes, not only in the communiqués of Hamas, but in the minds of rank-and-file Palestinians.”

People looking for reasons why peace has not been achieved should recognize the role terrorism plays in reinforcing Israeli fears that no concessions will end violence against them.

The bombing yesterday [August 9, 2001] of a crowded pizza restaurant in downtown Jerusalem, which killed at least 14 people and injured around 100, was an atrocity of the sort that must be distinguished from everything else that goes on in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. . . . [T]he deliberate targeting of civilians, including children . . . is a simple savagery that no country can reasonably be expected to tolerate.

—*Washington Post* Editorial<sup>3</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The Palestinian Authority prevents and condemns terrorism.*

## ***FACT***

One of the three prerequisites to Israel’s [recognition](#) of the PLO and subsequent peace negotiations was that the Palestinians cease all terrorism against Israel. Yet, almost from the day Yasser Arafat sent this promise to [Yitzhak Rabin](#) in 1993, assaults have continued. The heinous attacks conducted in the 1990s sabotaged the [Oslo process](#), and the [second intifada](#), combined with the terror and [rocket attacks](#) following Israel’s disengagement from [Gaza](#), convinced most Israelis further territorial concessions would endanger their security.

Since the [first Oslo agreement](#) in September 1993, [more than 1,600](#) Israelis have been murdered by [Palestinian terrorists](#). While it is true that cooperation between the [Palestinian Authority](#) (P.A.) and Israeli security services has contributed to foiling many attacks, Israel could not be as effective if it did not maintain a presence in the [West Bank](#).

In 2021, Palestinian terrorists conducted 54 significant terrorist attacks, the most since 2015. Three Israeli civilians were killed and 34 injured. In addition, there were about 1,700 incidents of rock-throwing and 350 involving Molotov cocktails.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, the [Israel Defense Forces \(IDF\)](#) said it foiled 500 terror attacks in the West Bank. The number of violent incidents by Palestinians, such as riots or stone-throwing, increased nearly 20% to 8,483. A total of 31 Israelis were killed – 23 civilians and eight members of the security forces were killed.<sup>5</sup>

The Palestinian Authority lacks control over the [Gaza Strip](#) and the terrorists operating there but does not condemn their activities. During a meeting with members of Congress visiting the region in March 2022, for example, P.A. Prime Minister [Mohammad Shtayyeh](#) dismissed the more than 4,000 rocket attacks during the violence in May 2021 as “fireworks.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, PA President [Mahmoud Abbas](#) has repeatedly sought an alliance with Hamas, further eroding confidence in him as a “peace partner.”

The PA also glorifies and subsidizes violence against Israel. The PA incites violence through the [media](#) and [indoctrinates students](#) with a belief in martyrdom and hatred of Israel. Hundreds of schools, institutions, streets, squares, summer camps, sporting events, and festivals have been named after terrorists. For example, Muhannad Halabi, a terrorist who stabbed two Israelis to death in the [Old City](#) of Jerusalem, was called a “role model for generations of young” and honored with a memorial and a road named after him.<sup>7</sup>





The time has come for us to realize that using knives (*shibrie*) against the Jews will not yield us even a sliver of land (*shiber*), and we have to change our strategy. We need to talk to the Israelis and get our Palestinian state by peaceful means. They will give it to us: they have offered to do so many times already—otherwise we will not get it at all.

—Bassam Tawil<sup>8</sup>

Rather than acting out of frustration, hatred of Israel, or a desire to “end the occupation,” many Palestinians are financially incentivized to kill Jews. Palestinians and Israeli Arabs convicted of terrorism are entitled to monthly stipends. Men who have served at least five years in Israeli jails, and women who served at least two, are entitled to these “salaries” for life. Despite severe financial difficulties caused partly by a significant reduction in international aid, the P.A. still paid roughly \$193 million to prisoners and released terrorists and another \$78 million to wounded terrorists and the families of dead terrorists in 2021.<sup>9</sup>

This pay-to-slay policy has been widely condemned, and in 2018, Congress passed the [Taylor Force Act](#) to cut American funding to the P.A. if it does not stop paying terrorists. [Australia](#) adopted a similar policy the same year. Israel also [deducts](#) the amount of money the P.A. pays terrorists and their families from the taxes and tariffs Israel collects for the authority.

## **MYTH**

*Palestinians do not encourage children to engage in terror.*

## ***FACT***

Most Palestinians who adopt terror hoping to either end the “occupation” or destroy Israel do so because they freely choose murder over any other option. Palestinian terrorists also use children, however, to do their dirty work.

In one instance, Israeli security forces caught an eleven-year-old boy attempting to smuggle a bomb through a roadblock. Tanzim activists in Nablus promised the boy a large sum of money if he delivered a bag containing a bomb stuffed with bolts to a woman on the other side of the checkpoint. If the boy was stopped and searched, the terrorists who sent him planned to use a cell phone to immediately detonate the explosives he was carrying, murdering nearby soldiers and the boy. An alert Israeli soldier foiled the plan, and the bomb malfunctioned when the terrorists tried to detonate it remotely. A week later, a 14-year-old Palestinian child was found carrying explosives while attempting to pass through a checkpoint near Nablus.<sup>10</sup> Teenagers were caught multiple times trying to smuggle bombs or weapons through the same checkpoint.<sup>11</sup> In February 2022, a 14-year-old Palestinian was shot while throwing Molotov cocktails at civilian vehicles.<sup>12</sup>

Children are also taught that the greatest glory is to die for Allah in battle as a *shahid* (martyr). The PA regularly broadcasts television shows that encourage children to embrace this concept. For example, on the children’s show *From My Country*, which children host, Dalal Mughrabi was praised as a female Palestinian fighter who was called “the Bride of [Jaffa](#).” Mughrabi and other Fatah terrorists hijacked a bus in 1978 and murdered 37 civilians, 12 of them children, and wounded over 70.<sup>13</sup>

The daughter of Hamas’ Ministry of Internal Affairs appeared in a video in May 2021 in which the young girl says, “If we die, we’ll die as martyrs for the sake of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa” and “We’ll return to [Ashkelon](#), [Haifa](#), Jaffa, [Safed](#) and [Beit Shean](#) – to all of [Palestine](#), and we will pray at [al-Aqsa](#)...All of Palestine is one, and Israel will be destroyed.”<sup>14</sup> In October, two young girls sang on PA TV: “In the name of freedom we’ll sacrifice our lives.”<sup>15</sup>

In December 2015, Israeli customs seized 4,000 Palestinian dolls wearing kaffiyehs covering their faces and holding up rocks so they resemble the young Arabs engaged in pelting Israelis. The intent is to teach young Palestinians that it is

normal to throw rocks.<sup>16</sup> But not just rocks. In January 2016, to celebrate the anniversary of Fatah's 51 years of violence, children dressed as terrorists with masks, "toy" suicide belts, guns, and rocket-propelled grenade launchers marched through the streets of [Bethlehem](#).<sup>17</sup>

The indoctrination is having an impact. According to one Palestinian newspaper, 79–80% of children told pollsters they were willing to be *shahids*.<sup>18</sup> Palestinian children now play death games, competing to see who will be the *shahid*. They also collect "terrorist cards," like American kids collect baseball cards. The maker of the Palestinian cards sold six million in just over two years. "I take hundreds of these pictures from children every day and burn them," said Saher Hindi, a teacher at a Nablus elementary school. "They turn children into extremists."<sup>19</sup>

Many Palestinian youngsters have gone from pretending to carrying out actual terrorist attacks. Dozens of minors have been involved in planning, attempting, and conducting suicide bombings. According to one study, 5% of the suicide bombings between 2000 and 2015 were carried out by Palestinians aged seventeen or under.<sup>20</sup>

As Israel began to have greater success in preventing these monstrous attacks, the Palestinians changed tactics and adopted a more low-tech approach to terror. During the wave of violence starting in October 2015 that became known as the "stabbing intifada," at least 40 stabbing, shooting, and car-ramming attacks were conducted against Israeli civilians and security forces by Palestinian individuals under the age of 20. In one case, a 19-year-old Palestinian stabbed an 80-year-old Israeli woman riding a bus before exiting the vehicle and stabbing two more bystanders on the street.<sup>21</sup> On another occasion, two Palestinian girls aged 14 and 16 attacked a 70-year-old Arab-Israeli with scissors in Jerusalem's [Mahane Yehuda Market](#) after mistaking the man for a Jew.<sup>22</sup> In yet another attack, a 17-year-old Palestinian terrorist snuck into a home in the West Bank town of [Kiryat Arba](#) and stabbed a sleeping thirteen-year-old American-Israeli girl to death.<sup>23</sup>

The use of children for terrorist attacks finally led some Palestinian families to protest. The mother of one of three teenagers sent to attack Jews in [Afula](#) said of the letter he had left behind, "My son doesn't know how to write such a letter and never belonged to any groups. Someone older wrote this letter for him." The boy's father added, "Nobody can accept to send his children to be slaughtered. I am sure that whoever recruits children in this kind of unlawful activity will not recruit his own children."<sup>24</sup>

Martin Fletcher interviewed the parents of a fifteen-year-old stopped at the Hawara checkpoint. His parents expressed anger at the [Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade](#), calling its operatives criminals and saying Allah would punish them. The correspondent spoke with the boy and read him a letter from his mother asking him to confess and give Israel all the information about the men who had sent him.<sup>25</sup>

Many of these attacks could be stopped if parents took steps to prevent their children from being radicalized and exploited, but too often, they express pride in the odious crimes their children commit.

**As one of the Islamic fanatics who inspired al-Qaida said: "We are not trying to negotiate with you. We are trying to destroy you". . . They wish to destroy the whole basis of Western society—secular democracy, individual liberty, equality before the law, toleration, and pluralism—and replace it with a theocracy based on a perverted and dogmatic interpretation of the Koran . . . The idea that we should try to appease the terrorists is wrong in every respect. It would not protect us, for nothing acts as a greater incentive to terrorists than the realization that their target is weak and frightened. And it would only weaken the institutions we are trying to protect, and demonstrate to the terrorists that we are—as they frequently allege—too decadent and craven to defend the way of life to which we claim to be attached.**

**—London Daily Telegraph<sup>26</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Terrorism directed at Israel is motivated by politics, not religion.*

## **FACT**

For many years, terrorism against Jews in the Middle East was stimulated primarily by political concerns. The [Arab states](#) used terror as a tool of warfare against Israel; Arabs angry over Israeli policies were often moved to violence, terror attracted international attention to the Palestinian cause, and bloodshed inflicted a human cost on Israelis for failing to capitulate to Palestinian demands.

At least since the days of the [Mufti of Jerusalem](#) in the 1920s, however, religion has played a significant role in inciting violence against Jews.

Most Arabs are Muslims, but not all Muslims are Arabs. Many Muslims inside and outside the Middle East have been persuaded by spiritual leaders such as the Mufti and their own interpretation of the [Koran](#) that Jews are infidels who must submit to the will of Allah. Israeli Jews, moreover, are seen by radical Muslims as the cells in the cancerous body of Israel that is infecting the heart of Islam.

While never disappearing, the political conflict took precedence over the religious one for roughly thirty years following the establishment of Israel. The situation began to change dramatically, however, following the 1979 Iranian revolution when [Ayatollah Khomeini](#) and his successors began publicly calling for Israel's destruction on religious grounds.<sup>27</sup> Iran's establishment of [Hezbollah](#) in [Lebanon](#) led to another escalation in [anti-Semitic](#) rhetoric, with the leaders of Hezbollah routinely calling for Israel's annihilation.<sup>28</sup>

The emergence of Hamas in the Gaza Strip represented yet another step toward Islamizing the conflict. The [Hamas covenant](#) explicitly calls for the destruction of Israel—and Jews everywhere. For example, it states, “Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious. It needs all sincere efforts. The Islamic Resistance Movement is but one squadron that should be supported . . . until the enemy is vanquished and Allah's victory is realized. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine.”<sup>29</sup>

Anti-Semitic sermons are commonplace in Palestinian mosques, courses in schools preach hatred of Jews based on Islamic teachings, and the media is filled with Islamic incitement. To cite a few examples:

Sheikh Khaled al-Mugrahbi delivered a sermon captured on video from a mosque on the [Temple Mount](#) in which he said, “We will go after the Jews everywhere. They won't escape us. The Children of Israel will be wiped out.”<sup>30</sup>

Sheikh Omar Abu Sara offered a sermon at the al-Aqsa Mosque in which he called Jews “the most evil of Allah's creations . . . the most evil creatures to have walked the earth.” He said that Allah turned Jews into “[apes and pigs](#)” and repeated the Hadith, which states that a final battle with the Jews is approaching in which the trees will say: “Oh servant of Allah, oh Muslim, there is a Jew behind me. Come and kill him.” To ensure that his call for genocide was understood, the sheik added: “I say to the Jews loud and clear: The time for your slaughter has come.” And he beseeched Allah to “hasten the day of their slaughter.”<sup>31</sup>

The Mufti of the Palestinian Authority, Muhammad Hussein, said on official PA TV (September 18, 2020), “The texts clearly say that if an inch of the Muslims' lands is stolen, [jihad](#) becomes a personal religious commandment for everyone who is capable of it.” On another occasion, he declared, “The land of Palestine is [waqf](#). It must not be relinquished nor must any part of it be sold... It is the duty of the leaders of the [Islamic] nation and its peoples to liberate Palestine and Jerusalem, to prevent the Judaization in it” (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, March 23, 2015). He also said, “Jerusalem will certainly be liberated and return to the embrace of Islam, noble and strong with its holy

sites and its people, and the evil will pass, Almighty Allah willing” (Official PA TV, Fatwa, September 29, and October 1, 2021).<sup>32</sup>

Palestinian children are encouraged to repeat Koranic slurs against Jews. A young Palestinian appeared on Palestinian Authority T.V., for example, and recited a poem: “You have been condemned to humiliation and hardship O Sons of Zion, O most evil among creations, O barbaric apes, O wretched pigs.”<sup>33</sup>

The popularity of Hamas also influenced a broader Islamization of the conflict among Palestinians. Hamas cast itself as the defender of Muslim land and the group that could liberate Palestine from the [Zionist](#) usurpers.

**If Muslims claim that we are against violence, why aren't we demonstrating in the streets against suicide bombings? Why is it so much easier to draw us into protest against a French ban on the hijab but next to impossible to exorcise ourselves about slavery, stonings, and suicide killings? Where's our collective conscience?**

—Muslim author [Irshad Manji](#)<sup>34</sup>

Not to be outdone, the supposedly secular PLO leaders began to use Islamic themes and rhetoric to inspire and incite the Palestinian population. Addressing Muslims at a mosque in South Africa, Yasser Arafat said, “You have to come and to fight a jihad to liberate Jerusalem, your precious shrine.”<sup>35</sup> In 1996, Arafat told a crowd in Bethlehem, “We know only one word: jihad, jihad, jihad....And we are now entering the phase of the great jihad prior to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state whose capital is Jerusalem.”<sup>36</sup> In 2002, Arafat declared: “Yes, brothers, with our souls and blood we redeem you, O Palestine....This is a sacred bond. We are up to this duty. Allah is great! Glory to Allah and his prophet. Jihad, jihad, jihad, jihad, jihad!”<sup>37</sup>

P.A. president [Mahmoud Abbas](#) has adopted similar rhetoric, repeatedly trying to rally support, for example, by accusing Israel of endangering the al-Aqsa Mosque, a tactic used since the days of the Mufti designed to enrage Muslims around the world. “We are all ready to sacrifice ourselves for al-Aqsa and for Jerusalem,” Abbas has said.<sup>38</sup>

Amid rioting in Jerusalem in 2015, Abbas said: “We bless every drop of blood that has been spilled for Jerusalem, which is clean and pure blood, blood spilled for Allah. With the help of Allah every Martyr (*Shahid*) will reach Paradise, and everyone wounded will be rewarded by Allah. The al-Aqsa is ours, the [Church of the Holy Sepulcher](#) is ours, and they have no right to defile them with their filthy feet.”<sup>39</sup>

Not all Muslims hold such extreme views; however, enough believe a Jewish state cannot exist in the Muslim heartland, and that Jews should never rule over Muslims, to ensure that Islamists will remain a threat to Jews and Israel whether a peace agreement is signed or not. Any agreement that ceded “waqf” land to Israel would give the radicals an excuse to continue their jihad.

## **MYTH**

*Israel created Hamas.*

## **FACT**

Israel had nothing to do with the creation of Hamas. The organization's leaders were inspired by the ideology and practice of the Islamic fundamentalist [Muslim Brotherhood](#) movement founded in [Egypt](#) in 1928.

Hamas was legally registered in Israel in 1978 as an Islamic Association by [Sheik Ahmad Yassin](#). Initially, the organization engaged primarily in [social welfare activities](#) and soon developed a reputation for improving the lives of Palestinians, particularly the refugees in the Gaza Strip.

Though Hamas was committed from the outset to destroying Israel, it took the position that this was a goal for the future and that the more immediate focus should be on winning the hearts and minds of the people through its charitable and educational activities. Its funding came primarily from [Jordan](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#).

The PLO was convinced that Israel was helping Hamas in the hope of triggering a civil war. Since Hamas did not engage in terror initially, Israel did not see it as a serious short-term threat. Some Israelis believed the rise of fundamentalism in Gaza would have the beneficial impact of weakening the PLO, which is what happened. The unintended consequence was to strengthen radical Islamists.

Hamas certainly didn't believe Israel was supporting it. As early as February 1988, the group put out a primer on how its members should behave if confronted by the [Shin Bet](#). Hamas distributed several more instructional documents to teach followers how to confront the Israelis and maintain secrecy.

Israel's assistance was more passive than active; it did not interfere with Hamas's activities or prevent funds from flowing into the organization from abroad. Israel also may have provided some funding to allow its security forces to infiltrate the organization.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, Jordan was actively helping Hamas undermine the PLO and strengthen Jordanian influence in the territories.

Though some Israelis were very concerned about Hamas before rioting began in December 1987, Israel was reluctant to interfere with an Islamic organization, fearing that it might trigger charges of violating the Palestinians' freedom of religion. It was not until early in the [intifada](#), when Hamas became actively involved in the violence, that the group began to be viewed as a potentially more significant threat than the PLO.

The turning point occurred in the summer of 1988 when Israel learned that Hamas was stockpiling arms to build an underground force and that Hamas had issued its covenant calling for the destruction of Israel. At this point, it became clear that Hamas was not going to put off its jihad to liberate Palestine and was shifting its emphasis to "resistance." Hamas has been waging a terror war against Israel ever since.<sup>41</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas are freedom fighters.*

## ***FACT***

When the [United States](#) declared a war on terror and the nations that harbor them after September 11, 2001, Arab states and their sympathizers argued that many of the organizations that engage in violent actions against Americans and Israelis should not be targets because they are "freedom fighters" rather than terrorists. This has been the mantra of the terrorists, who claim their actions are legitimate forms of resistance against the "Israeli occupation."

This argument is deeply flawed.

First, the enemies of Israel rationalize any attacks as legitimate because of real and imagined sins committed by Jews since the beginning of the twentieth century. Consequently, the Arab bloc and its supporters at the [United Nations](#) have succeeded in preventing the condemnation of any terrorist attack against Israel. Instead, they routinely sponsor resolutions criticizing Israel when it acts in self-defense.

Second, "freedom fighters" do not seek to destroy a state or exterminate a people like groups such as Hezbollah, [Islamic Jihad](#), and Hamas.

**You can't say there are good terrorists and there are bad terrorists.**

**— U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice<sup>42</sup>**

Third, nowhere else in the world is the murder of innocent men, women, and children considered a “legitimate form of resistance.” Heinous crimes include: snipers shooting infants, suicide bombers blowing up pizzerias and discos, hijackers taking and killing hostages, and infiltrators [murdering Olympic athletes](#).

Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and several other groups have engaged in these activities for decades and have rarely been condemned or their members brought to justice. They qualify as terrorist groups according to the U.S. government’s definition: “Terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.” Consequently, they should be targets of U.S. efforts to cut off their funding, arrest their leaders, and bring them to justice.<sup>43</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Palestinian women become suicide bombers to liberate Palestine.*

## ***FACT***

It may be that some Palestinian women share the ideology of the terrorists who believe that blowing up innocent men, women, and children will achieve their political objective, but many others are blackmailed into carrying out suicide attacks by sadistic and manipulative Palestinian men.

More than twenty Palestinian women have engaged in suicide attacks. According to one study, 5% of these terrorist acts from 2000 to 2015 were conducted by women.<sup>44</sup> The terrorist organizations that recruit them do so partly because they believe women will generate less suspicion and Israeli soldiers will be more reticent to search them.

Some women have been convinced to engage in terrorist attacks to rehabilitate their reputations in their community if they have acquired a bad name or done something to disgrace their families. Shame is a powerful force in Arab society, and women who are accused of “improper behavior,” such as promiscuity, adultery, or becoming pregnant out of wedlock, may be ostracized or severely punished (e.g., husbands may kill wives who humiliated them in so-called “honor crimes”).

Terrorist organizations have used emotional extortion against these often-vulnerable women to convince them that a suicide attack against Jews may restore their honor or that of their families. Israeli intelligence declassified a report that said Fatah operatives went so far as to seduce women and then, after they became pregnant, used their condition to blackmail them into committing ghastly crimes. The report cited two specific cases, one involved a 21-year-old from Bethlehem who blew herself up in the [Mahane Yehuda](#) market in Jerusalem, killing six and wounding more than 60, and the other was an 18-year-old from the Dehaishe refugee camp, who blew up a Jerusalem supermarket and killed two people and injured 22 others.<sup>45</sup>

Women who engage in terror are also glorified. On International Women’s Day, for example, female suicide bombers, a plane hijacker, a woman who prepared bombs for terror attacks, and a woman who led an [attack](#) on a bus that resulted in the deaths of 35 civilians, including 13 children, were praised. Two of the women have schools named after them.<sup>46</sup>

**Philosophically, the difference between me and the terrorist is that he wants to hurt me and my children and my wife, while I want to hit him and spare his children and his wife . . . because even the killing of one innocent person is unfortunate and should be avoided.**

**— Senior Israeli Air Force pilot<sup>47</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Israel's policy of targeted killings is immoral and counterproductive.*

## **FACT**

Israel is faced with a nearly impossible situation in which it must protect its civilian population from Palestinians who are prepared to commit suicide to murder innocent Jews and indiscriminately fire [rockets](#) into Israeli towns. Israelis would prefer to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians; however, Mahmoud Abbas has been unwilling to engage in face-to-face talks with Israel's prime minister since 2008, and radical Islamists have made clear they will accept nothing short of Israel's destruction.

Outsiders advise Israel to "exercise restraint" rather than respond to terrorism. While this strategy may win praise from world leaders, it does nothing to assuage the victims' pain or prevent further attacks.

When Israel knows a terror attack is imminent, and has identified the masterminds planning it, the government has sometimes chosen to eliminate the threat. Israel's attorney general reviewed the policy and determined that "targeted killing" is legal under Israeli and international law.<sup>48</sup>

Then deputy chief of staff Major General [Moshe Ya'alon](#) explained the policy this way:

There are no executions without a trial. There is no avenging someone who had carried out an attack a month ago. We are acting against those who are waging terror against us. We prefer to arrest them and have detained over 1,000. But if we can't, and the Palestinians won't, then we have no other choice but to defend ourselves.<sup>49</sup>

Targeting terrorists has several benefits. First, it places a price on terror: Israelis cannot be attacked with impunity anymore, for terrorists know that if they target others, they will become targets themselves. Second, it is a method of self-defense: preemptive strikes eliminate the people who would otherwise murder Israelis. While it is true that there are others to take their place, they can do so only with the knowledge they, too, will become targets, and leaders are not easily replaceable. Third, it throws the terrorists off balance. Extremists can no longer casually plan an operation; instead, they must stay on the move, always look over their shoulders, and work much harder to carry out their attacks.<sup>50</sup>

The policy also has costs. Besides international condemnation, Israel risks revealing informers who often provide the information needed to find the terrorists. Soldiers also must engage in sometimes high-risk operations that occasionally cause tragic collateral damage to property and persons.

The most common criticism of targeted killings is that they do no good because they perpetuate a "cycle of violence" whereby the terrorists seek revenge. This is probably the least compelling argument against the policy because the people who wish to kill Jews to become martyrs always find a justification for their actions. Their goal is to destroy Israel, and they will not stop until they achieve their objective.

Meanwhile, nations that urge Israel to exercise restraint have often reacted forcefully in similar situations. For example, the British targeted IRA terrorists in Northern Ireland, and the United States targets [al-Qaeda](#) and [ISIS](#) leaders. The United States has launched hundreds of drone strikes to kill terrorists, and [President Obama](#) ordered the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011.<sup>51</sup>

The policy is supported by a vast majority of Israelis (90% in a July 2001 *Maariv* poll<sup>52</sup>). According to a 2015 AP-GFK poll, the American public also supports the tactic – 60% of Americans favored (13% opposed) the use of drones to "target and kill people belonging to terrorist groups like al-Qaeda."<sup>53</sup>

**In August 2002, we had all the leadership of Hamas—Sheik Yassin and all his military commanders . . . in one room in a three-story house, and we knew we needed a 2,000-pound bomb to eliminate all of them—the whole leadership, 16 people, all the worst terrorists. Think about having Osama bin Laden and all the top leadership of al-Qaeda in one house. However, due to the criticism in Israeli society and in the media, and due to the consequences of innocent Palestinians being killed, a 2,000-pound bomb was not approved and we hit the building with a much smaller bomb. There was a lot of dust, a lot of noise, but they all got up and ran away and we missed the opportunity. So the ethical dilemmas are always there.<sup>54</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Palestinian terrorists only attack Israelis; they never assault Americans.*

## ***FACT***

The PLO has a long history of brutal violence against innocent civilians of many nations, including the United States. Palestinian Muslim terrorist groups are a more recent phenomenon, but they have not spared [Americans](#) either. Palestinian terrorist attacks involving American citizens go back to at least 1970 when more than three dozen Americans were among the passengers who were held hostage when the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine \(PFLP\)](#) hijacked four jets. There have been more than twenty other cases of Americans victimized by Palestinian terrorists. Here are some examples:

- December 20, 2010, an American tourist hiking in the foothills of Jerusalem was stabbed to death by a Palestinian terrorist.
- June 30, 2014, Naftali Frankel (16) was one of three Israeli teenagers kidnapped and murdered while hitchhiking from a yeshiva in Gush Etzion.
- October 22, 2014, three-month-old Chaya Zissel Braun was killed when a Palestinian rammed his car into a light-rail station.
- October 1, 2015, Eitan Henkin and his wife Naama were ambushed and murdered by Palestinian gunmen as they drove with their four children in the West Bank.
- October 13, 2015, Richard Lakin (76) was killed when Palestinians hijacked a bus in Jerusalem.
- November 19, 2015, a Palestinian terrorist opened fire on cars stuck in a traffic jam in Gush Etzion, killing an Israeli, an American tourist, and a Palestinian, and wounding seven others. Five of the wounded were American Yeshiva students. The American fatality was Ezra Schwartz (18).
- March 9, 2016, a Palestinian attacker began stabbing random Israelis at the entrance to the Jaffa Port. One victim was an American tourist, Taylor Force (28), a U.S. Army veteran on a school-sponsored trip to Israel. Palestinian Authority T.V. called Taylor a “settler,” and his killer was honored as an Islamic martyr.<sup>55</sup>
- January 8, 2017, two out of four Israeli soldiers killed in a truck-ramming attack were U.S. citizens.
- May 5, 2019, a rocket fired by terrorists from the Gaza Strip at Ashdod killed Pinchas Menachem Prezuazman (21), a dual American-Israeli citizen, as he was running for shelter.

An even more shocking crime was the murder of another American citizen, Hallel Yaffa Ariel (13), in her bed on June 30, 2016. The response from the Palestinian Authority—the one committed by formal agreement to stop all terrorism—was to fund the mourning tent of the family whose son committed the murder, to send a representative to pay his respects, and to honor the killer as a martyr (making the family eligible for a [monthly stipend](#)).<sup>56</sup>

**In Gaza last week, crowds of children reveled and sang while adults showered them with candies. The cause for celebration: the cold-blooded murder of at least seven people—five of them Americans—and the maiming of 80 more by a terrorist bomb on the campus of Jerusalem’s Hebrew University.**



## **MYTH**

*Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount caused the al-Aqsa intifada.*

## ***FACT***

To believe Palestinian propagandists, the five-year Palestinian uprising, which took more than 1,000 Israeli lives, was caused by the desecration of a Muslim holy place ([Haram al-Sharif](#) – the Temple Mount) by [Ariel Sharon](#) and the “thousands of Israeli soldiers” who accompanied him on September 28, 2000.

The truth is dramatically different.

Internal Security Minister [Shlomo Ben-Ami](#) permitted Sharon to go to the Temple Mount – [Judaism's](#) holiest place – only after calling Palestinian security chief [Jibril Rajoub](#) and receiving his assurance that if Sharon did not enter the mosques, no problems would arise. The need to protect Sharon arose when Rajoub later said that the Palestinian police would do nothing to prevent violence during the visit.<sup>58</sup>

Sharon did not enter any mosques, and the 34 minutes he spent on the Temple Mount were during normal hours when the area was open to tourists.

The day after Sharon's visit, the Voice of Palestine, the Palestinian Authority's official radio station, called on “all Palestinians to come and defend the al-Aqsa Mosque.” The PA closed its schools and bused Palestinian students to the Temple Mount to participate in organized riots. Yasser Arafat also secretly sent a message to Hamas: “I have no problem with Hamas carrying out operations.” Arafat also arranged for the transfer of weapons to Hamas.<sup>59</sup>

Just before [Rosh Hashanah](#) (September 30), when hundreds of Israelis were worshipping at the [Western Wall](#), thousands of Arabs began throwing bricks and rocks at Israeli police and Jewish worshippers. Rioting then spread to towns and villages throughout Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip in what became known as the al-Aqsa intifada.

Imad Faluji, the P.A. communications minister, later admitted the violence had been planned in July after Yasser Arafat's return from peace talks at [Camp David](#), where he rejected the Israeli offer for statehood.<sup>60</sup> This was confirmed by Hamas co-founder [Mahmoud Zahar](#) who said that Arafat instructed his organization to launch terror attacks against Israel after the failure of peace negotiations.<sup>61</sup>

Yasser Arafat's widow, Suha, also confessed that Arafat had planned the uprising. “Immediately after the failure of the Camp David [negotiations], I met him in [Paris](#) upon his return . . . Camp David had failed, and he said to me, ‘You should remain in Paris.’ I asked him why, and he said, ‘Because I am going to start an intifada.’”<sup>62</sup>

An investigatory committee led by former Senator George Mitchell examined the cause of the violence and [concluded](#): “The Sharon visit did not cause the ‘Al-Aqsa Intifada.’”

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# Chapter 9

## The United Nations

[Israel's acquisition of territory during the 1967 war is "inadmissible."](#)  
[Resolution 242 requires Israel to return to its pre-1967 boundaries.](#)  
[Resolution 242 recognizes a Palestinian right to self-determination.](#)  
[The United Nations plays a constructive role in Middle East affairs.](#)  
[Israel enjoys the same rights as any other member of the United Nations.](#)  
[The United States has always supported Israel at the UN.](#)  
[America's Arab allies routinely support U.S. positions at the UN.](#)  
[Israel's failure to implement UN resolutions is a violation of international law.](#)  
[The Human Rights Council has no anti-Israel bias.](#)  
[UNESCO recognizes and protects Israeli sites.](#)

### **MYTH**

*Israel's acquisition of territory during the 1967 war is "inadmissible."*

### **FACT**

On November 22, 1967, the [UN Security Council](#) unanimously adopted [Resolution 242](#), establishing the principles to guide the negotiations for an [Arab-Israeli peace settlement](#).

The first point addressed by the resolution is the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war." Some take this to mean that [Israel](#) must withdraw from all the territories it captured. On the contrary, the reference applies only to an offensive war. If not, the resolution would provide an incentive for aggression. If one country attacks another, and the defender repels the attack and acquires territory in the process, the former interpretation would require the defender to return all the land it won. Thus, aggressors would have little to lose because they would be ensured against the main consequence of defeat.

**This is the first war in history which has ended with the victors suing for peace and the vanquished calling for unconditional surrender.**

**—Abba Eban<sup>1</sup>**

The ultimate goal of 242, as expressed in paragraph 3, is achieving a "peaceful and accepted settlement." This means a negotiated agreement based on the resolution's principles rather than one imposed upon the parties. This is also the implication of [Resolution 338](#), according to [Arthur Goldberg](#), the American ambassador who led the delegation to the UN in 1967.<sup>2</sup> That resolution, adopted after the [1973 War](#), called for negotiations to start immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire.

### **MYTH**

*Resolution 242 requires Israel to return to its pre-1967 boundaries.*

### **FACT**

The most controversial clause in [Resolution 242](#) is the call for the "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict." This is linked to the second unambiguous clause calling for "termination of all claims or states of belligerency" and the recognition that "every State in the area" has the "right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

The resolution does not specify how much territory Israel is required to give up. The Security Council did not say Israel must withdraw from “all the” territories captured during the [Six-Day War](#). This was quite deliberate. The Soviet delegate wanted the inclusion of those words and said that their exclusion meant “that part of these territories can remain in Israeli hands.” The [Arab states](#) pushed for the word “all” to be added; when the Council rejected their idea, they read the resolution as if it were included. The British ambassador who drafted the resolution, Lord Caradon, declared after the vote: “It is only the resolution that will bind us, and we regard its wording as clear.”<sup>3</sup>

The literal interpretation was repeatedly declared to be the correct one by those involved in drafting the resolution. On October 29, 1969, for example, the British foreign secretary told the House of Commons that the withdrawal envisaged by the resolution would not be from “all the territories.”<sup>4</sup> When asked to explain the British position later, Lord Caradon said: “It would have been wrong to demand that Israel return to its positions of June 4, 1967, because those positions were undesirable and artificial.”<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, U.S. ambassador Arthur Goldberg explained, “The notable omissions—which were not accidental—in regard to withdrawal are the words ‘the’ or ‘all’ and the ‘[June 5, 1967 lines](#)’. . . the resolution speaks of withdrawal from occupied territories without defining the extent of withdrawal.”<sup>6</sup>

The resolutions call on the Arab states to make peace with Israel. The principal condition is that Israel withdraws from “territories occupied” in 1967. Since Israel withdrew from approximately 94 percent of the territories when it [gave up the Sinai](#), the Gaza Strip, and portions of the West Bank, it can legitimately argue it has fulfilled its obligation under 242. The resolution rules out the idea that Israel must capitulate to Palestinian demands to withdraw to the 1949 armistice lines.

The Arab states also objected to the call for “secure and recognized boundaries” because they feared this implied they would be expected to negotiate with Israel. The [Arab League](#) explicitly ruled this out at [Khartoum](#) in August 1967.

Ambassador Goldberg explained the phrase was included because the parties were expected to make “territorial adjustments in their peace settlement encompassing less than a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories, inasmuch as Israel’s prior frontiers had proved to be notably insecure.”<sup>7</sup>

The question, then, is whether Israel has to give up any additional territory. After signing peace treaties with [Egypt](#) and [Jordan](#), and [withdrawing to the international border](#) with [Lebanon](#), the remaining territorial disputes are with the [Palestinians](#) (who are not mentioned in 242) and [Syria](#).

The dispute with Syria is over the [Golan Heights](#). Israel repeatedly expressed a willingness to negotiate a compromise in exchange for peace; however, Syria refused to consider even a limited peace treaty unless Israel first agreed to a complete withdrawal. Under 242, Israel has no obligation to withdraw from any part of the Golan without a peace accord with Syria.

Meanwhile, other Arab states—such as [Saudi Arabia](#), Lebanon, [Iraq](#), and [Libya](#), refused to grant Israel diplomatic recognition, even though they have no territorial disputes with Israel. These states have nevertheless conditioned their relations (at least rhetorically) on an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders.

**There are some who have urged, as a single, simple solution, an immediate return to the situation as it was on June 4 . . . [T]his is not a prescription for peace but for renewed hostilities.**

**— President Lyndon Johnson, speech on June 19, 1967<sup>8</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Resolution 242 recognizes a Palestinian right to self-determination.*

## ***FACT***

The Palestinians are not mentioned anywhere in Resolution 242. They are only alluded to in the second clause of the second article of 242, which calls for “a just settlement of the refugee problem,” which may equally apply to [Jewish refugees](#) from Arab countries. Nowhere does it require that Palestinians be given any political rights or territory.

## **MYTH**

*The United Nations plays a constructive role in Middle East affairs.*

## ***FACT***

Starting in the mid-1970s, an Arab-Soviet bloc joined to form what amounted to a pro-Palestinian lobby at the [United Nations](#). This was particularly true in the [General Assembly](#), where these countries—nearly all dictatorships or autocracies—frequently voted together to pass resolutions condemning Israel.

In 1975, at the instigation of the Arab states and the Soviet Bloc, the Assembly approved [Resolution 3379](#), which slandered [Zionism](#) by branding it a form of racism. U.S. ambassador Daniel Moynihan called the resolution an “obscene act.” Israeli ambassador [Chaim Herzog](#) told his fellow delegates the resolution was “based on hatred, falsehood, and arrogance.” [Hitler](#), he declared, would have felt at home listening to the UN debate on the measure.<sup>9</sup>

On December 16, 1991, the General Assembly voted 111–25 (with thirteen abstentions and seventeen delegations absent or not voting) to [repeal](#) Resolution 3379. No Arab country voted for repeal.

In March 2005, the Security Council issued an unprecedented condemnation of a [suicide bombing](#) in [Tel Aviv](#) by [Islamic Jihad](#). Unlike Israeli actions that provoke resolutions, the Council issued only a “policy statement” urging the [Palestinian Authority](#) to “take immediate, credible steps to find those responsible for this terrorist attack” and bring them to justice. The statement required the consent of all fifteen members of the Security Council. The one Arab member, [Algeria](#), signed on after a reference to Islamic Jihad was deleted.<sup>10</sup> The Council has never adopted a resolution condemning a terrorist atrocity committed against Israel.

Israel is the object of more investigative committees, special representatives, and rapporteurs than any other UN member. In addition, the UN devotes millions of dollars to approximately 20 committees dedicated to the Palestinian issue, such as the “Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.”

History has proven the path to peace is through direct negotiations between the parties; however, the UN constantly undercuts this principle. The General Assembly routinely adopts resolutions that attempt to impose solutions disadvantageous to Israel on critical issues such as [Jerusalem](#), the Golan Heights, and [settlements](#).

Israel’s peace treaties have been negotiated without help from the UN, which has impeded resolving conflicts in the region.

## **MYTH**

*Israel enjoys the same rights as any other member of the United Nations.*

## ***FACT***

For 40 years, Israel was the only [UN](#) member excluded from a regional group. Geographically, it belongs in the Asian Group; however, the Arab states barred its membership. Without membership in a regional group, Israel cannot sit on the Security Council or other key UN bodies.

A breakthrough in Israel’s exclusion from UN bodies occurred in 2000 when Israel accepted temporary membership in the [Western European and Others \(WEOG\)](#) regional group. The WEOG is the only group that is geopolitical rather than purely geographical. Its 27 members—the West European states, [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [New Zealand](#), and the [United States](#)—share a Western-Democratic common denominator.

The inclusion of Israel opened the door to representation on the Security Council; however, Israel has yet to be given a seat.

**The treatment Israel receives at the United Nations is obsessive, ugly, bad for the United Nations and bad for peace.**

— UN ambassador Susan Rice<sup>11</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The United States has always supported Israel at the UN.*

## ***FACT***

Many people believe the United States can always be relied upon to support Israel with its [veto](#) in the UN Security Council. The historical record, however, shows that the U.S. has often opposed Israel in the Council.

From 1967 to 1972, the U.S. endorsed the Council's criticism of Israel by its vote of support, or by abstaining on 24 resolutions. From 1973–2020, it did the same on roughly one-fifth of the 200 resolutions adopted during that period.

American officials sometimes convince sponsors to change the language of a resolution to allow them to either vote for or abstain from a resolution. These resolutions are still critical of Israel but may not be so one-sided that the United States feels obligated to cast a veto. In 2011, for example, the Palestinians called on the Security Council to label Israeli settlements illegal and to call for a construction freeze. The U.S. ambassador to the UN tried to convince the Palestinians to change the wording, but they refused. The U.S. vetoed the resolution, but Ambassador Susan Rice still criticized Israeli policy.<sup>12</sup>

The U.S. did not cast its first veto until 1972, objecting to a Syrian-Lebanese complaint against Israel. The U.S. has vetoed a total of 44 resolutions—none since 2018.<sup>13</sup>

Israel's critics can circumvent the threat of an American veto by taking issues to the General Assembly, where nonbinding resolutions pass by majority vote, and support for almost any anti-Israel resolution is assured. From 2015 to April 2022, 125 such resolutions were adopted compared to 15 for [Russia](#), 9 for Syria, 7 for North Korea, 6 for [Iran](#), and zero for countries such as [China](#), [Cuba](#), and Libya.<sup>14</sup>

## **MYTH**

*America's Arab allies routinely support U.S. positions at the UN.*

## ***FACT***

The United States provides a security umbrella for its allies in the Arab world. It also has provided them with billions of dollars in weapons and frequently supports their political ambitions. If those allies are grateful, it does not show at the UN, where, year after year, they vote against the United States—and not just on resolutions related to Israel.

In 2021, 86 resolutions passed with a vote in the General Assembly. Among the Arab states, Somalia voted with the United States most often, but still just 37% of the time (down from 42% in 2020). As a group, the Arab states, including erstwhile allies, voted against the United States on 70% of the resolutions. Syria was at the bottom of the list, opposing the United States 84% of the time.

By comparison, Israel has consistently been at or near the top of the list of America's top UN allies. In 2020, Israel was far ahead of the pack, [voting](#) with the United States 90% of the time, followed by Canada and [Micronesia](#) with a coincidence rate of 77%. Major U.S. allies such as Australia (74%), [Great Britain](#) (74%), and [France](#) (69%) lagged



far behind.

A total of 12 Israel-related resolutions were introduced, 11 of which came to a vote and were adopted. The United States voted for only one. Most of these are one-sided condemnations of Israel that are introduced annually. The Arab states, including those that have established relations with Israel, voted for every anti-Israel resolution.<sup>15</sup>

### **MYTH**

*Israel's failure to implement UN resolutions is a violation of international law.*

### ***FACT***

UN resolutions are documents issued by political bodies and need to be interpreted in light of the constitution of those bodies. Votes at the UN are based on the self-interest of the member states, not legal principles; therefore, resolutions represent political rather than legal viewpoints.

The [UN Charter](#) (Articles 10 and 14) empowers the General Assembly to make only nonbinding “recommendations.” Assembly resolutions are only considered binding on budgetary and internal procedural matters.

The legality of Security Council resolutions is more ambiguous. There is no consensus on whether all Security Council resolutions are binding or only those adopted under Chapter 7 of the Charter.<sup>16</sup> Under Article 25 of the Charter, member states are obligated to carry out “decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter.” Still, it is unclear which kinds of resolutions are covered by the term “decisions.” These resolutions remain political statements by nation-states and not legal determinations.

Israel has not violated any Security Council resolutions, and the Council has never sanctioned Israel for noncompliance.

### **MYTH**

*The Human Rights Council has no anti-Israel bias.*

### ***FACT***

Since 2006, the [UN Human Rights Council \(HRC\)](#) has condemned Israel in 95 individual resolutions compared to 38 for [Syria](#), 14 for North Korea, 11 for Iran, and zero for countries such as China, Cuba, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>17</sup> While Israel is routinely criticized for its behavior, the only references by the HRC to terrorism are applied to “extremist Israelis.”<sup>18</sup>

The most egregious example of anti-Israel bias at the HRC is the yearly discussion of agenda item 7. In June 2007, Council members adopted a resolution that made the “human rights situation in [Palestine](#) and other occupied Arab territories” a permanent part of the Council’s agenda. Hence, Israel’s human rights record must be debated at each session. No other country has a yearly reoccurring agenda item dedicated to it. Over the years, the United States and other like-minded Council members have made unsuccessful efforts to reverse the Council’s decision.

Citing rampant anti-Israel bias and the Council’s ongoing admission of gross human rights violators to its ranks, the United States withdrew from the Council in 2018 and stopped providing funding. Dr. Dan Mou, a longtime member of the Nigerian government, agreed with the decision: “The Commission was becoming increasingly partial in dealing with the issue of Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab nations. When you are so partial, you lose your integrity, autonomy, and impartiality, so it becomes very difficult for people to trust your judgment.”<sup>19</sup>

In a reversal of [President Trump’s](#) position, the [Biden administration](#) announced its intent to rejoin the Council. Mark Cassayre, President Biden’s representative in Geneva, explained: “We know that this body has the potential to be an important forum for those fighting tyranny and injustice around the world. By being present at the table, we seek to ensure it can live up to that potential.”<sup>20</sup>

Soon after, however, the Council appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate possible war crimes and other abuses committed by Israel. The *New York Times* noted this was the third time in seven years the HRC created a one-sided commission to investigate Israel, but this one is different because it is ongoing and will examine “all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict, including systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity.”<sup>21</sup>

The U.S. Mission to the UN in Geneva said: “The United States deeply regrets today’s decision by the Human Rights Council to establish an open-ended Commission of Inquiry into the recent violence between Israel and the Palestinians.... We all should be working to find real solutions to help the Palestinian people and ensuring that terrorist organizations, including  [Hamas](#), do not exploit the situation on the ground, including by indiscriminate firing of rockets, to further their own destructive aims. The actions of the Human Rights Council today do not contribute to peace.... We will continue to advocate for Israel to be treated fairly in the Human Rights Council.”<sup>22</sup>

## **MYTH**

*UNESCO recognizes and protects Israeli sites.*

## ***FACT***

The [United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture \(UNESCO\)](#) has become politicized, and the Palestinians have tried to use the agency to gain recognition for a Palestinian state. That campaign involves delegitimizing Israel and erasing the [Jewish](#) connection to sites in Israel and the disputed territories.

In 2010, for example, UNESCO declared [Hebron’s Cave of the Patriarchs](#) and the [Tomb of Rachel](#) in [Bethlehem](#)— both Jewish holy sites—as Palestinian mosques. In 2016, UNESCO condemned Israeli actions at those sites and Jerusalem, calling for protecting the cultural heritage of “Palestine.” UNESCO erased the centuries-old linkage between Jews and these holy places and referred to the [Western Wall](#) plaza in Israel’s capital by the Arabic name “Al-Buraq Plaza.” The same year, UNESCO erased the Jewish history of Jerusalem by declaring the [Temple Mount](#) holy only to [Muslims](#).<sup>23</sup>

These were all instances where the Palestinians and their supporters sought to delegitimize Israel and lay the groundwork for its destruction. How can Jews claim territory where the UN’s Orwellian historians say they never lived?

In October 2011, UNESCO granted the Palestinians full admission into the organization, the first UN body to do so. This triggered the U.S. to stop payments to the organization.

In December 2018, the United States and Israel [left](#) UNESCO. The U.S. State Department explained America left because of “mounting arrears at UNESCO, the need for fundamental reform in the organization, and continuing ‘anti-Israel bias.’”<sup>24</sup>

In 2022, the [Biden administration](#) was considering returning to UNESCO, reportedly with Israel’s blessing.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Abba Eban, *Abba Eban*, (NY: Random House, 1977), p. 446.

<sup>2</sup> “Middle East Peace Prospects,” *Christian Science Monitor*, (July 9, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> Security Council Official Records, 1382nd Meeting (S/PV 1382), United Nations, (November 22, 1967).

<sup>4</sup> Eban, p. 452.

<sup>5</sup> *Beirut Daily Star*, (June 12, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> “Goldberg: The Truth About Resolution 242,” speech to AIPAC Policy Conference, May 8, 1973, *Near East Report*,

(June 6, 1973), p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> “Address by President Johnson at National Foreign Policy Conference of Educators,” (June 19, 1967).

<sup>9</sup> Chaim Herzog, [Who Stands Accused?](#) (NY: Random House, 1978), pp. 4–5.

<sup>10</sup> “Policy Statement by Security Council on Terrorist Attack in Israel,” Press Release SC/8325, United Nations, (February 28, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Natasha Mozgovaya, “Israel’s Treatment at the UN ‘Obsessive’ and ‘Ugly,’ U.S. Diplomat Says,” [Haaretz](#), (December 15, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Richard Grenell, “Susan Rice Fails to Convince the Palestinians, and Offers a Rebuke to Israel,” [Huffington Post](#), (February 17, 2011); “United States vetoes Security Council resolution on Israeli settlements,” UN News Centre, (February 18, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> [U.S. State Department](#).

<sup>14</sup> “UN resolutions disproportionately condemn Israel,” [UN Watch](#).

<sup>15</sup> “Report to Congress on Voting Practices at the United Nations for 2021,” [U.S. State Department](#), (March 31, 2022).

<sup>16</sup> Bruno Simma, ed., *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 237-241; 407-418.

<sup>17</sup> “UN resolutions disproportionately condemn Israel,” [UN Watch](#).

<sup>18</sup> Lahav Harkov, “UNHRC’s game is rigged, so Israel isn’t playing – Analysis,” [Jerusalem Post](#), (February 12, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> “Racism: UN Human Rights Council must be forthright over Africa’s petition – Dr Mou,” [The Sun](#) [Nigeria], (August 31, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> Michele Kelemen, “Biden Administration To Rejoin U.N. Human Rights Council,” [NPR](#), (February 8, 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Nick Cumming-Bruce, “U.N. Rights Council Orders Inquiry Into Israel After Gaza Strife,” [New York Times](#), (May 27, 2021).

<sup>22</sup> UN Human Rights Council Session on the Israeli-Palestinian Situation,” Press Statement, [U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva](#), (May 27, 2021).

<sup>23</sup> “UNESCO Erases Jewish Connection to Temple Mount, Kotel” [CAMERA](#), (April 19, 2016); “UNESCO Adopts Controversial Jerusalem Resolution,” Associated Press, (October 18, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Marwecki, “Why Did the U.S. and Israel Leave UNESCO?” [E-International Relations](#), (February 14, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> [Barak Ravid](#), “Scoop: Israel wouldn’t oppose U.S. return to UNESCO,” [AXIOS](#), (February 9, 2022).

# Chapter 10

## Refugees

[Israel expelled one million Palestinians.](#)  
[Palestinians were the only refugees of the Arab-Israeli conflict.](#)  
[There were no Jewish refugees from Palestine.](#)  
[The Jews had no intention of living peacefully with their Arab neighbors.](#)  
[The Jews created the refugee problem by expelling the Palestinians.](#)  
[The Arab invasion had little impact on the Palestinian Arabs.](#)  
[Arab leaders never encouraged the Palestinians to flee.](#)  
[The Palestinian Arabs fled to avoid being massacred.](#)  
[Israel refused to allow Palestinians to return to their homes so Jews could steal their property.](#)  
[The UN required that Israel repatriate all Palestinian refugees.](#)  
[Palestinians who wanted to return to their homes posed no danger to Israeli security.](#)  
[An uncaring world ignored the Palestinian refugees.](#)  
[The Arab states have always welcomed the Palestinians.](#)  
[Israel confines millions of Palestinians to refugee camps.](#)  
[The Palestinians are the only refugee population barred from returning to their homes.](#)  
[All Palestinian refugees must be given the option to return to their homes.](#)  
[UNRWA is needed to care for 5.7 million refugees.](#)  
[Palestinians and their supporters care about Palestinian refugees.](#)  
[The United States does not provide aid to Palestinian refugees.](#)  
[UNRWA has removed biased textbooks from its schools.](#)

### **MYTH**

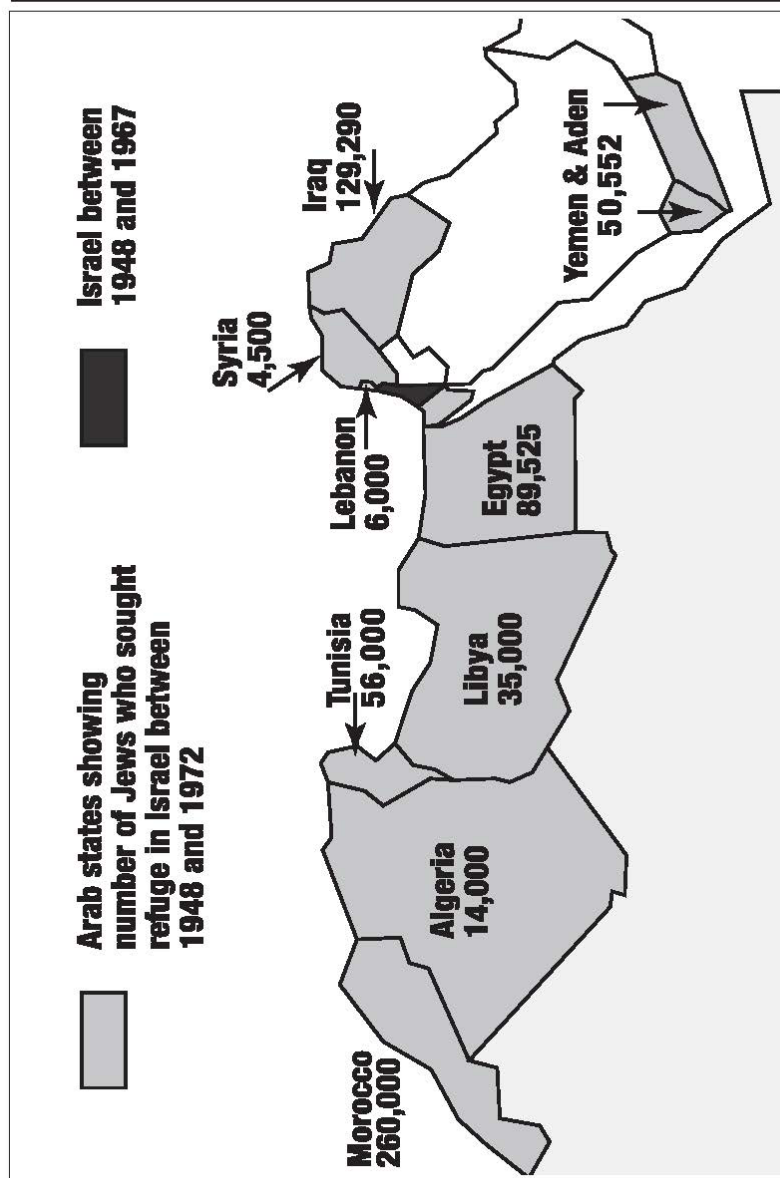
*Israel expelled one million Palestinians.*

### ***FACT***

[Israel](#) is often accused of expelling as many as one million [Palestinians](#) from 1947 to 1949. The last census taken by the British in 1945 found approximately 1.2 million permanent Arab residents in all of Palestine. A 1949 census conducted by Israel counted 160,000 Arabs living in the new state after the [war](#). In 1947, a total of 809,100 Arabs lived in the same area. This means no more than 650,000 Palestinian Arabs could have become [refugees](#). Historian Efraim Karsh analyzed rural and urban population statistics and concluded the total number of refugees was 583,000–609,000. A [report by the UN Mediator on Palestine](#) arrived at an even lower figure—360,000 (as of September 1948) and the [CIA estimate](#) a month earlier was 330,000.<sup>1</sup>

The Palestinians left their homes for a variety of reasons. Thousands of wealthy Arabs left in anticipation of a war, and thousands more responded to Arab leaders' calls to get out of the way of the advancing armies; a handful was expelled, but most fled to avoid being caught in the crossfire of a war.

Map 25

Jewish Refugees from Arab States  
1948–1972**MYTH**

*Palestinians were the only refugees of the Arab-Israeli conflict.*

**FACT**

Although much is heard about [Palestinian refugees](#), little is said about the [Jews](#) who [fled](#) from [Arab states](#). Their situation had long been precarious. During the 1947 [UN](#) debates, Arab leaders threatened them. For example, [Egypt's](#) delegate told the [General Assembly](#): “The lives of one million Jews in [Muslim](#) countries would be jeopardized by [partition](#).”<sup>2</sup>

The number of Jews fleeing Arab countries for Israel in the years following Israel's independence was nearly double the number of Arabs leaving Palestine. Many Jews were allowed to take little more than the shirts on their backs. These refugees had no desire to be repatriated. Little is heard about them because they did not remain refugees for long. Of the 820,000 Jewish refugees between 1948 and 1972, 586,000 were resettled at great expense in Israel and without any offer of compensation from the Arab governments who confiscated their possessions.<sup>3</sup> Israel has consequently maintained that any agreement to compensate the Palestinian refugees must also include Arab reparations for Jewish refugees. To

this day, the Arab states have refused to pay anything to the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were forced to abandon their property before fleeing those countries.

As of 2020, at least 182 out of more than 700 UN General Assembly [resolutions](#) on the Middle East conflict referred directly to Palestinian refugees. The Jewish refugees from Arab countries, however, were not mentioned in any UN resolution.

The contrast between the reception of Jewish and Palestinian refugees is even starker when one considers the difference in cultural and geographic dislocation experienced by the two groups. Most Jewish refugees traveled hundreds—some thousands—of miles to a tiny country whose inhabitants spoke a different [language](#). Most Arab refugees never left [Palestine](#); they traveled a few miles to the other side of the truce line, remaining inside the vast Arab nation they were part of linguistically, culturally, and ethnically.

While Palestinians consider the refugee issue among the most important issues for them, [Jewish refugees](#) from Arab countries should not be forgotten. Moreover, the basis for [Israeli-Palestinian negotiations](#), UN [Security Council Resolution 242](#), does not mention the Palestinians and can apply equally to Jewish refugees.

### Jewish Population in the Arab World

	1948	1958	1968	2011	2020
Algeria	140,000	130,000	1,500	<50	<200
Egypt	75,000	40,000	1,000	100	<10
Iraq	135,000	6,000	2,500	7	4
Libya	38,000	3,750	100	0	0
Morocco	265,000	200,000	50,000	4,000	2,100
Syria	30,000	5,000	4,000	100	0
Tunisia	105,000	80,000	10,000	1,500	1,000
Yemen/Aden	63,000	4,300	500	250	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>851,000</b>	<b>469,060</b>	<b>69,600</b>	<b>~6,200</b>	<b>&lt;3,321</b>

In 2014, the Israeli government dedicated November 30 of every year as a day to honor and remember the Jewish refugees to ensure the younger generation is aware of this chapter of Jewish history. Israeli officials hope that this national recognition will spark international acknowledgment of the plight of these refugees and support for compensating them (and their descendants) for their hardships.

#### **MYTH**

*There were no Jewish refugees from Palestine.*

#### **FACT**

During the [1948 War](#), 97 Jewish villages were attacked and damaged, 11 were destroyed, and six were conquered, resulting in at least 60,000 Jews becoming refugees. Another historian, Benny Morris, estimated the number at 70,000.<sup>4</sup>

While the Palestinian Arabs could move to the part of [Palestine](#) under [Transjordan's](#) control, or a neighboring state, the Jews had nowhere to flee. They remained within the borders of Israel.

The [United Nations Relief and Works Agency \(UNRWA\)](#) is known for assisting Palestinian Arabs; however, its mandate is to support “Palestine Refugees.” The Agency defined a refugee as “a needy person, who, as a result of the

war in Palestine, has lost his home and his means of livelihood.” According to the [UN](#):

In Israel, the Agency has provided relief to two types of refugees, Jews who fled inside the borders of Israel during the fighting, and Arabs displaced from one area in Palestine to another. Jewish refugees at first numbered 17,000, but, during the current summer, all but 3,000 of these have been absorbed into the economic life of the new State.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the Arab states, which refused to solve the refugee issue by resettling the Palestinian Arabs, Israel willingly accepted refugees within its borders. In August 1950, the UN reported 27,000 people in Israel had claimed refugee status, but the Israeli government requested that relief distribution be discontinued because it was assuming responsibility for them.

## **MYTH**

*The Jews had no intention of living peacefully with their Arab neighbors.*

## ***FACT***

Contrary to the specious claims that the Zionists were interested in driving the Palestinians from their land, the [Zionist](#) movement always expected to have a significant Arab population in a future state. [Ze'ev Jabotinsky](#) wrote in the '20s and '30s that Arabs should be treated equally in all sectors of public life and the Jews should do nothing to force them out. In a draft constitution he worked on, he foresaw [Hebrew](#) and [Arabic](#) as official languages, Arabs and Jews serving together in the military, and an Arab vice-minister in every cabinet where the prime minister is a Jew.<sup>6</sup>

In numerous instances, Jewish leaders urged the Arabs to remain in Palestine and become citizens of Israel. The Assembly of Palestine Jewry issued this appeal on October 2, 1947:

We will do everything in our power to maintain peace, and establish a cooperation gainful to both [Jews and Arabs]. It is now, here and now, from [Jerusalem](#) itself, that a call must go out to the Arab nations to join forces with Jewry and the destined Jewish State and work shoulder to shoulder for our common good, for the peace and progress of sovereign equals.<sup>7</sup>

On November 30, the day after the [UN partition vote](#), the [Jewish Agency](#) announced: “The main theme behind the spontaneous celebrations we are witnessing today is our community’s desire to seek peace and its determination to achieve fruitful cooperation with the Arabs.”<sup>8</sup> Israel’s [Proclamation of Independence](#), issued May 14, 1948, also invited the Palestinians to remain in their homes and become equal citizens in the new state:

In the midst of wanton aggression, we yet call upon the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve the ways of peace and play their part in the development of the State, on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its bodies and institutions . . . We extend our hand in peace and neighborliness to all the neighboring states and their peoples, and invite them to cooperate with the independent Jewish nation for the common good of all.

Ultimately, 160,000 Palestinian Arabs remained in their homes and became citizens of Israel.

## **MYTH**

*The Jews created the refugee problem by expelling the Palestinians.*

## ***FACT***

Had the Arabs accepted the partition resolution, not a single Palestinian would have become a refugee. An independent Arab state would now exist beside Israel. The responsibility for the refugee problem rests with the Arabs.

The beginning of the Arab exodus can be traced to the weeks following the announcement of the UN partition resolution. The first to leave were roughly 30,000 wealthy Arabs who anticipated the upcoming war and fled to neighboring Arab countries to await its end. Less affluent Arabs from the mixed cities of Palestine moved to all-Arab towns to stay with relatives or friends.<sup>9</sup> By the end of January 1948, the exodus was so alarming the Palestine Arab Higher Committee asked neighboring Arab countries to refuse visas to these refugees and to seal their borders against them.<sup>10</sup>

A British document indicates officials were aware of the reason Palestinians were fleeing:

The [Palestine] Arabs have suffered a series of overwhelming defeats . . . Jewish victories . . . have reduced Arab morale to zero and, following the cowardly example of their inept leaders, they are fleeing from the mixed areas in their thousands. It is now obvious that the only hope of regaining their position lies in the regular armies of the [Arab states](#).<sup>11</sup>

On January 30, 1948, the [Jaffa](#) newspaper, *Ash Sha'ab*, reported, “The first of our fifth-column consists of those who abandon their houses and businesses and go to live elsewhere . . . At the first signs of trouble they take to their heels to escape sharing the burden of struggle.”<sup>12</sup>

Another Jaffa paper, *As Sarih* (March 30, 1948) excoriated Arab villagers near [Tel Aviv](#) for “bringing down disgrace on us all by ‘abandoning the villages.’”<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, a leader of the Arab National Committee in [Haifa](#), Hajj Nimer el-Khatib, said Arab soldiers in Jaffa were mistreating the residents. “They robbed individuals and homes. Life was of little value, and the honor of women was defiled. This state of affairs led many [Arab] residents to leave the city under the protection of British tanks.”<sup>14</sup>

John Bagot Glubb, the commander of Jordan’s Arab Legion, said, “Villages were frequently abandoned even before they were threatened by the progress of war.”<sup>15</sup>

Contemporary press reports of battles where large numbers of Arabs fled conspicuously fail to mention any forcible expulsion by the Jewish forces. The Arabs are usually described as “fleeing” or “evacuating” their homes.

Jewish forces seized [Tiberias](#) on April 19, 1948, and the entire Arab population of 6,000 was evacuated under British military supervision. The Jewish Community Council issued a statement afterward: “We did not dispossess them; they themselves chose this course . . . Let no citizen touch their property.”<sup>16</sup>

In early April, an estimated 25,000 Arabs left the Haifa area following an offensive by the irregular forces led by [Fawzi al-Qawukji](#), and rumors that Arab air forces would soon bomb the Jewish areas around [Mt. Carmel](#).<sup>17</sup> On April 23, the [Haganah](#) captured Haifa. A British police report from Haifa, dated April 26, explained that “every effort is being made by the Jews to persuade the Arab populace to stay and carry on with their normal lives, to get their shops and businesses open and to be assured that their lives and interests will be safe.”<sup>18</sup> In fact, [David Ben-Gurion](#) sent [Golda Meir](#) to Haifa to try to persuade the Arabs to stay, but she was unable to convince them because of their fear of being judged traitors to the Arab cause.<sup>19</sup> By the end of the battle, more than fifty thousand Palestinians had left.

**Tens of thousands of Arab men, women and children fled toward the eastern outskirts of the city in cars, trucks, carts, and afoot in a desperate attempt to reach Arab territory until the Jews captured Rushmiya Bridge toward Samaria and Northern Palestine and cut them off. Thousands rushed every available craft, even rowboats, along the waterfront, to escape by sea toward Acre.**



[Syria's](#) UN delegate, Faris el-Khoury, interrupted the UN debate on Palestine to describe the seizure of Haifa as a “massacre” and said this action was “further evidence that the ‘Zionist program’ is to annihilate Arabs within the Jewish state if partition is effected.”<sup>21</sup>

The following day, however, the British representative at the UN, Sir Alexander Cadogan, told the delegates that the fighting in Haifa had been provoked by the continuous attacks by Arabs against Jews a few days before and that reports of massacres and deportations were erroneous.<sup>22</sup>

The same day (April 23, 1948), Jamal Husseini, the chairman of the Palestine Higher Committee, told the [UN Security Council](#) that instead of accepting the Haganah’s truce offer, the Arabs “preferred to abandon their homes, their belongings, and everything they possessed in the world and leave the town.”<sup>23</sup>

The US consul general in Haifa, Aubrey Lippincott, wrote on April 22, 1948, that “local mufti-dominated Arab leaders” were urging “all Arabs to leave the city, and large numbers did so.”<sup>24</sup>

Before the Arab invasion in mid-May, Radio Baghdad reported, “Fright has struck the Palestinian Arabs and they fled their country.”<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, an Israeli army order issued on July 6, 1948, made clear that Arab towns and villages were not to be demolished or burned, and that Arab inhabitants were not to be expelled from their homes.<sup>26</sup>

The Haganah did employ psychological warfare to encourage the Arabs to abandon a few villages. [Yigal Allon](#), the commander of the [Palmach](#), said he had Jews talk to Arabs in neighboring towns and tell them a large Jewish force was in Galilee intending to burn all the Arab villages in the [Lake Hula](#) region. The Arabs were told to leave while they still had time, and, according to Allon, they did precisely that.<sup>27</sup>

In the most dramatic example, in the Ramle-[Lod](#) area, Israeli troops seeking to protect their flanks and relieve the pressure on besieged Jerusalem forced a portion of the Arab population to go to a place a few miles away that was occupied by the Arab Legion. “The two towns had served as bases for Arab irregular units, which had frequently attacked Jewish convoys and nearby settlements, effectively barring the main road to Jerusalem to Jewish traffic.”<sup>28</sup>

According to historian Efraim Karsh, 35,078 Palestinians were expelled, less than 6% of the total number of refugees in Karsh’s highest estimate (609,000). Most of these Arabs moved to an area occupied by Transjordan’s Arab Legion only a few miles away. About 2,500 people remained.<sup>29</sup>

As was clear from the descriptions of what took place in the cities with the largest Arab populations, these cases were the exceptions, accounting for only a small fraction of the Palestinian refugees. The expulsions were not designed to force out the entire Arab population. The areas where they took place were strategically vital and meant to prevent the threat of any rearguard action against the Israeli forces and ensure clear lines of communication. Historian Benny Morris notes that “in general, Haganah and [IDF](#) commanders were not forced to confront the moral dilemma posed by expulsion; most Arabs fled before and during the battle, before the Israeli troops reached their homes and before the Israeli commanders were forced to confront the dilemma.”<sup>30</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The Arab invasion had little impact on the Palestinian Arabs.*

## ***FACT***

The Arabs of Palestine expected the Arab armies to drive the [Jews](#) into the sea for their benefit. The Arab leaders, however, were motivated by their interests, and each hoped to grab a piece of Palestine.

Once the invasion began in May 1948, most Arabs remaining in Palestine left for neighboring countries. Rather than acting as a strategically valuable “fifth-column” that would fight the Jews from within the country, the Palestinians chose to flee to the safety of other Arab states, still confident of being able to return to their homes. A leading Palestinian nationalist of the time, Musa Alami, revealed the attitude of the fleeing Arabs:

The Arabs of Palestine left their homes, were scattered, and lost everything. But there remained one solid hope: [t]he Arab armies were on the eve of their entry into Palestine to save the country and return things to their normal course, punish the aggressor, and throw oppressive [Zionism](#) with its dreams and dangers into the sea. On May 14, 1948, crowds of Arabs stood by the roads leading to the frontiers of the former [British Mandate](#) of Palestine and enthusiastically welcomed the advancing armies. Days and weeks passed, but the Arab armies did not defeat the Israelis. Instead, they lost [Acre](#), Sarafand, [Lydda](#), Ramleh, [Nazareth](#), most of the south, and the rest of the north. Then hope fled.<sup>31</sup>

As the fighting spread into previously quiet areas, the Arabs began to see the possibility of defeat. As that possibility turned into reality, the flight of the Arabs increased—more than three hundred thousand departed after May 15—leaving approximately 160,000 Arabs in the State of Israel.<sup>32</sup>

Although most Arabs had left by November 1948, some still chose to leave even after hostilities ceased. An interesting case was the evacuation of three thousand Arabs from Faluja, a village between Tel Aviv and [Beersheba](#):

Observers feel that with proper counsel after the [Israeli-Egyptian armistice](#), the Arab population might have advantageously remained. They state that the Israeli Government had given guarantees of security of person and property. However, no effort was made by Egypt, Transjordan or even the United Nations Palestine Conciliation Commission to advise the Faluja Arabs one way or the other.<sup>33</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Arab leaders never encouraged the Palestinians to flee.*

## ***FACT***

Despite revisionist attempts to deny that Palestinians were encouraged to leave their homes, a plethora of evidence exists. In recent years, more Palestinians have come forward to admit this truth.

*The Economist*, a frequent critic of the Zionists, reported on October 2, 1948:

Of the 62,000 Arabs who formerly lived in Haifa, not more than 5,000 or 6,000 remained. Various factors influenced their decision to seek safety in flight. There is but little doubt that the most potent of the factors were the announcements made over the air by the Higher Arab Executive, urging the Arabs to quit . . . It was clearly intimated that those Arabs who remained in Haifa and accepted Jewish protection would be regarded as renegades.<sup>34</sup>

*Time*'s report of the battle for Haifa (May 3, 1948) was similar: “The mass evacuation, prompted partly by fear, partly by orders of Arab leaders, left the Arab quarter of Haifa a ghost city . . . By withdrawing Arab workers their leaders hoped to paralyze Haifa.”<sup>35</sup>

Starting in December 1947, historian Benny Morris said, “Arab officers ordered the complete evacuation of specific villages in certain areas, lest their inhabitants’ treacherously’ acquiesce in Israeli rule or hamper Arab military deployments.” He concluded, “There can be no exaggerating the importance of these early Arab-initiated evacuations in the demoralization, and eventual exodus, of the remaining rural and urban populations.”<sup>36</sup>

The [refugee] problem was a direct consequence of the war that the Palestinians—and . . . surrounding Arab states—had launched.”

—Historian Benny Morris<sup>37</sup>

Following the March 8, 1948, instructions of the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), the Arab National Committee ordered women, children, and the elderly in parts of Jerusalem to leave their homes: “Any opposition to this order . . . is an obstacle to the holy war . . . and will hamper the operations of the fighters in these districts.” The AHC also ordered the evacuation of “several dozen villages, as well as the removal of dependents from dozens more” in April–July 1948. “The invading Arab armies also occasionally ordered whole villages to depart, so as not to be in their way.”<sup>38</sup>

Morris also said that in early May, units of the Arab Legion ordered the evacuation of all women and children from the town of Beisan. The Arab Liberation Army was also reported to have ordered the evacuation of another village south of Haifa. The departure of the women and children, Morris says, “tended to sap the morale of the menfolk who were left behind to guard the homes and fields, contributing ultimately to the final evacuation of villages. Such two-tier evacuation—women and children first, the men following weeks later—occurred in Qumiya in the [Jezreel Valley](#), among the Awarna [Bedouin](#) in Haifa Bay and in various other places.”

Who gave such orders? Leaders such as [Iraqi](#) prime minister Nuri Said, who declared, “We will smash the country with our guns and obliterate every place the Jews seek shelter in. The Arabs should conduct their wives and children to safe areas until the fighting has died down.”<sup>39</sup>

In his memoirs, Haled al-Azm, the Syrian Prime Minister in 1948–49, also admitted the Arab role in persuading the refugees to leave:

Since 1948 we have been demanding the return of the refugees to their homes. But we ourselves are the ones who encouraged them to leave. Only a few months separated our call to them to leave and our appeal to the United Nations to resolve on their return.<sup>40</sup>

Edward Atiyah, the secretary of the [Arab League](#) office in [London](#), wrote in his book, *The Arabs*: “This wholesale exodus was due partly to the belief of the Arabs, encouraged by the boastings of an unrealistic Arabic press and the irresponsible utterances of some of the Arab leaders that it could be only a matter of weeks before the Jews were defeated by the armies of the Arab States and the Palestinian Arabs enabled to re-enter and retake possession of their country.”<sup>41</sup>

“The refugees were confident their absence would not last long, and that they would return within a week or two,” Monsignor George Hakim, a Greek Orthodox Catholic Bishop of Galilee told the Beirut newspaper, *Sada al-Janub* (August 16, 1948). “Their leaders had promised them that the Arab Armies would crush the ‘[Zionist](#) gangs’ very quickly and that there was no need for panic or fear of a long exile.”<sup>42</sup>

“The Arab States encouraged the Palestine Arabs to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies,” according to the Jordanian newspaper *Filastin* (February 19, 1949).<sup>43</sup>

One refugee quoted in the Jordan newspaper, *Ad Difaa* (September 6, 1954), said, “The Arab government told us: Get out so that we can get in. So we got out, but they did not get in.”<sup>44</sup>

“The Secretary-General of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, assured the Arab peoples that the occupation of Palestine and Tel Aviv would be as simple as a military promenade,” said Habib Issa in the New York Lebanese paper, *Al-Hoda* (June 8, 1951). “He pointed out that they were already on the frontiers and that all the millions the Jews had spent on land and economic development would be easy booty, for it would be a simple matter to throw Jews into the Mediterranean . . . Brotherly advice was given to the Arabs of Palestine to leave their land, homes and property and to stay temporarily in neighboring fraternal states, lest the guns of the invading Arab armies mow them down.”<sup>45</sup>

The Arabs' fear was exacerbated by stories of Jewish atrocities following the attack on [Deir Yassin](#). The native population lacked leaders who could calm them; their spokespeople were operating from the safety of neighboring states and did more to arouse their fears than to alleviate them. Local military leaders were of little or no comfort. In one instance, the commander of Arab troops in [Safed](#) went to [Damascus](#). The following day, his troops withdrew from the town. When the residents realized they were defenseless, they fled in panic. [Palestinian Authority](#) President [Mahmoud Abbas](#), the last person you might expect to confirm this story, admitted that Arabs began emigrating from Safed when the Arab Liberation Army retreated. "In Safed, just like Hebron, people were afraid that the Jews would take revenge for the [massacre in 1929](#)," during which 65 Jews were killed by Arabs in [Hebron](#) and 18 in Safed.<sup>46</sup>

"As Palestinian military power was swiftly and dramatically crushed, and the Haganah demonstrated almost unchallenged superiority in successive battles," Benny Morris noted, "Arab morale cracked, giving way to general, blind, panic, or a 'psychosis of flight,' as one IDF intelligence report put it."<sup>47</sup>

Dr. Walid al-Qamhawi, a former member of the Executive Committee of the [PLO](#), agreed "it was collective fear, moral disintegration and chaos in every field that exiled the Arabs of Tiberias, Haifa and dozens of towns and villages."<sup>48</sup>

As panic spread throughout Palestine, the early trickle of refugees became a flood, numbering more than two hundred thousand by the time the provisional government declared the independence of the State of Israel.

**The tragedy of the Palestinians was that most of their leaders had paralyzed them with false and unsubstantiated promises that they were not alone; that 80 million Arabs and 400 million Muslims would instantly and miraculously come to their rescue.**

**—Jordan's King Abdullah <sup>49</sup>**

These accounts have been bolstered by more recent statements by Palestinians who have become fed up with the phony narrative concocted by some Palestinian and Israeli academics. Asmaa Jabir Balasimah, for example, recalled her flight from Israel in 1948:

We heard sounds of explosions and of gunfire at the beginning of the summer in the year of the "Catastrophe" [1948]. They told us: The Jews attacked our region and it is better to evacuate the village and return, after the battle is over. And indeed there were among us [who fled Israel] those who left a fire burning under the pot, those who left their flock [of sheep] and those who left their money and gold behind, based on the assumption that we would return after a few hours.<sup>50</sup>

An Arab resident of a Palestinian refugee camp explained why his family left in 1948:

The radio stations of the Arab regimes kept repeating to us: "Get away from the battle lines. It's a matter of ten days or two weeks at the most, and we'll bring you back to [Ein Kerem](#) [near Jerusalem]." And we said to ourselves, "That's a very long time. What is this? Two weeks? That's a lot!" That's what we thought [then]. And now 50 years have gone by.<sup>51</sup>

Mahmoud al-Habbash, a Palestinian journalist, wrote in the Palestinian Authority's official newspaper:

The leaders and the elites promised us at the beginning of the "Catastrophe" in 1948, that the duration of the exile will not be long, and that it will not last more than a few days or months, and afterwards the refugees will return to their homes, which most of them did not leave only until they put their trust in those "Arkuvian" promises made by the leaders and the political elites. Afterwards, days passed, months, years and decades, and the promises

were lost with the strain of the succession of events [Arkuvian” is a reference to Arkuv, a figure from Arab tradition known for breaking promises and lying.]<sup>52</sup>

Another Palestinian journalist, Jawad al-Bashiti, explained the cause of the “Catastrophe”:

The following happened: the first war between Arabs and Israel had started and the “Arab Salvation Army” came and told the Palestinians: “We have come to you in order to liquidate the Zionists and their state. Leave your houses and villages, you will return to them in a few days safely. Leave them so we can fulfill our mission (destroy Israel) in the best way and so you won’t be hurt.” It became clear already then, when it was too late, that the support of the Arab states (against Israel) was a big illusion. Arabs fought as if intending to cause the “Palestinian Catastrophe.”<sup>53</sup>

**The Arab armies entered Palestine to protect the Palestinians from the Zionist tyranny but, instead, they abandoned them, forced them to emigrate and to leave their homeland, and threw them into prisons similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live..**

**—Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas <sup>54</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*The Palestinian Arabs fled to avoid being massacred.*

## ***FACT***

The United Nations resolved that Jerusalem would be an international city apart from the Arab and Jewish states demarcated in the partition resolution. Nevertheless, 2,500 Jews living in the [Old City](#) were victims of an Arab blockade that lasted five months before they were forced to surrender on May 29, 1948. Before the surrender, and throughout the siege on Jerusalem, Jewish convoys tried to reach the city to alleviate the food shortage, which, by April, had become critical.

Meanwhile, the Arab forces attempted to cut off the highway linking Tel Aviv with Jerusalem’s only supply route. The Arabs controlled several strategic vantage points, which overlooked the road and enabled them to fire on the convoys trying to reach the beleaguered city with supplies. Deir Yassin was situated on a hill, about 2,600 feet high, which commanded an expansive view of the vicinity and was located less than a mile from the suburbs of Jerusalem.<sup>55</sup>

On April 6, [Operation Nachshon](#) was launched to open the road to Jerusalem. The village of Deir Yassin was on the list of Arab villages to be occupied as part of the operation. The following day Haganah commander David Shaltiel wrote to the leaders of the [Lehi](#) and [Irgun](#):

I learn that you plan an attack on Deir Yassin. I wish to point out that the capture of Deir Yassin and its holding are one stage in our general plan. I have no objection to your carrying out the operation provided you are able to hold the village. If you are unable to do so I warn you against blowing up the village which will result in its inhabitants abandoning it and its ruins and deserted houses being occupied by foreign forces . . . Furthermore, if foreign forces took over, this would upset our general plan for establishing an airfield.<sup>56</sup>

The Irgun decided to attack Deir Yassin on April 9 while the Haganah was still engaged in the battle for Kastel. This was the first major Irgun attack against the Arabs. Previously, the Irgun and Lehi had concentrated their attacks against the British.

According to Irgun leader [Menachem Begin](#), the assault was carried out by 100 members of his organization; other authors say it was as many as 132 men from both groups. Begin said a small open truck fitted with a loudspeaker was driven to the entrance of the village before the attack and broadcast a warning for civilians to evacuate the area, which many did.<sup>57</sup> Others say the alert was never issued because the truck rolled into a ditch before it could broadcast the

warning.<sup>58</sup> One of the fighters said the trench had been filled in and that the truck had continued to the village. “One of us called out on the loudspeaker in Arabic, telling the inhabitants to put down their weapons and flee. I don’t know if they heard, and I know these appeals had no effect.”<sup>59</sup>

Contrary to revisionist histories that say the village was filled with peaceful innocents, evidence shows that both residents and foreign troops opened fire on the attackers. One Irgun fighter described his experience:

My unit stormed and passed the first row of houses. I was among the first to enter the village. There were a few other guys with me, each encouraging the other to advance. At the top of the street I saw a man in khaki clothing running ahead. I thought he was one of ours. I ran after him and told him, “advance to that house.” Suddenly he turned around, aimed his rifle and shot. He was an Iraqi soldier. I was hit in the foot.<sup>60</sup>

The battle was ferocious and took several hours. The Irgun suffered 41 casualties, including four dead.

Surprisingly, after the “massacre,” the Irgun escorted a representative of the Red Cross through the town and held a press conference. The *New York Times*’ subsequent description of the battle was essentially the same as Begin’s. The *Times* said more than 200 Arabs were killed, 40 were captured, and 70 women and children were released. No hint of a massacre appeared in the report.<sup>61</sup>

“Paradoxically,” historian Dan Kurzman observed, “the Jews say about 250 out of 400 village inhabitants [were killed], while Arab survivors say only 110 of 1,000.”<sup>62</sup> A study by Bir Zeit University, based on discussions with each family from the village, arrived at a figure of 107 Arab civilians dead and 12 wounded, in addition to 13 “fighters,” evidence that the number of dead was smaller than claimed and that the village did have troops based there.<sup>63</sup> Other Arab sources have subsequently suggested the number may have been even lower.<sup>64</sup>

In 2017, Israeli scholar Eliezer Tauber published an exhaustive study of the casualties and found that a total of 101 people were killed, 61 in combat (24 armed fighters and the rest family members who were with them); 17 in unknown circumstances; 12 whose deaths are in a “grey zone” whose characterization can be debated; and 11 from a single family killed by a single Irgun member.<sup>65</sup>

The attackers left open an escape corridor from the village, and more than 200 residents left unharmed. For example, at nine-thirty in the morning, about five hours after the fighting started, the Lehi evacuated 40 older men, women, and children on trucks and took them to a base in Sheik Bader. Later, the Arabs were taken to East Jerusalem. Seeing the Arabs in the hands of Jews raised the morale of the people of Jerusalem, who were despondent from setbacks in the fighting.<sup>66</sup> Another source says 70 women and children were taken away and turned over to the British.<sup>67</sup> If the intent were to massacre the inhabitants, no one would have been evacuated.

After the remaining Arabs feigned surrender and then fired on the Jewish troops, some Jews killed Arab soldiers and civilians indiscriminately. None of the sources specify how many women and children were killed, but some were among the casualties (the *Times* report said it was about half the victims; their original casualty figure came from the Irgun).

Women became targets because of men who disguised themselves as women. The Irgun commander reported, for example, that the attackers “found men dressed as women and therefore they began to shoot at women who did not hasten to go down to the place designated for gathering the prisoners.”<sup>68</sup>

Another story was told by a member of the Haganah who overheard a group of Arabs from Deir Yassin who said, “The Jews found out that Arab warriors had disguised themselves as women. The Jews searched the women too. One of the people being checked realized he had been caught, took out a pistol and shot the Jewish commander. His friends, crazed with anger, shot in all directions and killed the Arabs in the area.”<sup>69</sup>

According to Tauber, women were among the dead because they participated in the battle. He also documented one

exceptional case where a group of Arabs left a house to surrender, but an Irgun fighter shot at them with a machine gun. After examining the cause of death of all the villagers, Tauber concluded there was no massacre.<sup>70</sup>

Arab propagandists at the time claimed Jews raped some of the women in the village; however, every villager interviewed denied these allegations. Like many of the claims, this was a deliberate propaganda ploy, but one that backfired. Hazam Nusseibeh, who worked for the Palestine Broadcasting Service in 1948, admitted being told by Hussein Khalidi, a Palestinian Arab leader, to fabricate the atrocity claims. Abu Mahmud, a Deir Yassin resident in 1948, told Khalidi that “there was no rape,” but Khalidi replied, “We have to say this, so the Arab armies will come to liberate Palestine from the Jews.” Nusseibeh told the BBC fifty years later, “This was our biggest mistake. We did not realize how our people would react. As soon as they heard that women had been raped at Deir Yassin, Palestinians fled in terror.”<sup>71</sup>

Upon learning of the attack, the Jewish Agency immediately expressed its “horror and disgust.” It also sent a letter relating the Agency’s shock and disapproval to Transjordan’s [King Abdullah](#).

Arab radio stations broadcast accounts of what happened over the days and weeks that followed, and the Arab Higher Committee hoped exaggerated reports about a “massacre” at Deir Yassin would shock the population of the Arab countries into bringing pressure on their governments to intervene in Palestine. Instead, the immediate impact was to stimulate a new Palestinian exodus.

Just four days after the reports from Deir Yassin were published, an Arab force [ambushed](#) a Jewish convoy on the way to [Hadassah Hospital](#), killing 77 Jews, including doctors, nurses, patients, and the director of the hospital. Another 23 people were injured. This premeditated massacre attracted little attention and is never mentioned by those who are quick to bring up Deir Yassin. Moreover, despite attacks that killed more than 500 Jews in the first four months after the partition decision alone, Jews did not flee.

The Palestinians knew the Jews were not trying to annihilate them; otherwise, they would not have been allowed to evacuate Tiberias, Haifa, or any other towns captured by Jewish forces. By contrast, secretary-general of the Arab League Abd al-Rahman Azzam Pasha made clear the Arabs’ intent in an interview with an Egyptian newspaper (October 11, 1947): “Personally, I hope that the Jews will not force this war upon us, because it will be a war of annihilation. It will be a momentous massacre in history that will be talked about like the massacres of the Mongols or the [Crusades](#).”<sup>72</sup>

References to Deir Yassin have remained a staple of anti-Israel propaganda for decades because the incident was unique.

## **MYTH**

*Israel refused to allow Palestinians to return to their homes so Jews could steal their property.*

## ***FACT***

Israel consistently sought a solution to the refugee problem but would not agree to allow all Palestinians to return. David Ben-Gurion stated Israel’s position (August 1, 1948):

When the Arab states are ready to conclude a peace treaty with Israel this question will come up for constructive solution as part of the general settlement, and with due regard to our counter-claims in respect of the destruction of Jewish life and property, the long-term interest of the Jewish and Arab populations, the stability of the State of Israel and the durability of the basis of peace between it and its neighbors, the actual position and fate of the Jewish communities in the Arab countries, the responsibilities of the Arab governments for their war of aggression and their liability for reparation, will all be relevant in the question whether, to what extent, and under what conditions, the former Arab residents of the territory of Israel should be allowed to return.<sup>73</sup>

The Israeli government was not indifferent to the plight of the refugees; an ordinance was passed creating a Custodian

of Abandoned Property “to prevent unlawful occupation of empty houses and business premises, to administer ownerless property, and also to secure tilling of deserted fields, and save the crops.”<sup>74</sup>

The implied danger of repatriation did not prevent Israel from allowing some refugees to return and offering to take back a substantial number as a condition for signing a peace treaty. In 1949, Israel offered to allow families that had been separated during the war to return, to release refugee accounts frozen in Israeli banks (eventually released in 1953), to pay compensation for abandoned lands, and to repatriate 100,000 refugees.<sup>75</sup>

The Arabs rejected all the Israeli compromises. They were unwilling to take any action that might be construed as recognition of Israel. They made repatriation a precondition for negotiations, something Israel rejected. The result was the confinement of the refugees in camps.

Meanwhile, Israel released the refugees’ blocked bank accounts totaling more than \$10 million, paid thousands of claimants cash compensation, and granted thousands of acres as alternative holdings.

## **MYTH**

*The UN required that Israel repatriate all Palestinian refugees.*

## ***FACT***

The United Nations took up the refugee issue and adopted [Resolution 194](#) on December 11, 1948. This called on the Arab states and Israel to resolve all outstanding issues through negotiations either directly or with the help of the Palestine Conciliation Commission established by this resolution. Furthermore, Point 11 resolves:

that 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 property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which under principles of international law or in equity should be made good by Governments or authorities responsible. Instructs the Conciliation Commission to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of refugees and payment of compensation (emphasis added).

The emphasized words demonstrate that the UN recognized that Israel could not be expected to repatriate a hostile population that might endanger its security. The solution to the problem, like all previous refugee problems, would require at least some Palestinians to be resettled in Arab lands. Furthermore, the resolution uses the word “should” instead of “shall,” which, in legal terms, is not mandatory language.

The resolution met most of Israel’s concerns regarding the refugees, whom they regarded as a potential fifth column if allowed to return unconditionally. The Israelis considered the settlement of the refugee issue a negotiable part of an overall peace settlement. President [Chaim Weizmann](#) explained, “We are anxious to help such resettlement provided that real peace is established and the Arab states do their part of the job. The solution of the Arab problem can be achieved only through an all-around Middle East development scheme, toward which the United Nations, the Arab states and Israel will make their respective contributions.”<sup>76</sup>

The Israelis did not expect the refugees to be a significant issue; they thought the Arab states would resettle the majority and that a compromise on the remainder could be worked out in the context of an overall settlement. The Arabs were no more willing to compromise in 1949, however, than they had been in 1947. They unanimously rejected Resolution 194.

The UN discussions on refugees had begun in the summer of 1948, before Israel had completed its military victory. The Arabs still believed they could win the war and allow the refugees to return triumphant. Emile Ghoury, the secretary of the Arab Higher Committee, explained:

It is inconceivable that the refugees should be sent back to their homes while they are occupied by the Jews, as the latter would hold them as hostages and maltreat them. The very proposal is an evasion of responsibility by those



responsible. It will serve as a first step towards Arab recognition of the State of Israel and partition.<sup>77</sup>

The Arabs demanded that the United Nations assert the “right” of the Palestinians to return to their homes. They were unwilling to accept anything less until their defeat had become obvious. The Arabs then reinterpreted Resolution 194 as granting the refugees the absolute right of repatriation and demanded that Israel accept this interpretation. Regardless of the understanding, 194, like other General Assembly resolutions, is not legally binding.

## **MYTH**

*Palestinians who wanted to return to their homes posed no danger to Israeli security.*

## ***FACT***

When Jewish leaders in Palestine made plans for setting up a state in early 1948, they expected the new nation to include a significant Arab population. From the Israeli perspective, the refugees had been given an opportunity to stay in their homes and be a part of the new state. Approximately 160,000 Arabs had chosen to do so. To repatriate those who had fled would be, in the words of Foreign Minister [Moshe Sharett](#), “suicidal folly.”<sup>78</sup>

In the Arab world, the refugees were viewed as a potential fifth column within Israel. As one Lebanese paper wrote:

The return of the refugees should create a large Arab majority that would serve as the most effective means of reviving the Arab character of Palestine while forming a powerful fifth column for the day of revenge and reckoning.<sup>79</sup>

The Arabs believed the return of the refugees would virtually guarantee the destruction of Israel, a sentiment expressed by Egyptian foreign minister Muhammad Salah al-Din:

It is well-known and understood that the Arabs, in demanding the return of the refugees to Palestine, mean their return as masters of the Homeland and not as slaves. With a greater clarity, they mean the liquidation of the State of Israel.<sup>80</sup>

The plight of the refugees remained unchanged after the [Suez War](#); even the rhetoric stayed the same. In 1957, the Refugee Conference in Homs, [Syria](#), passed a resolution stating:

Any discussion aimed at a solution of the Palestine problem which will not be based on ensuring the refugees’ right to annihilate Israel will be regarded as a desecration of the Arab people and an act of treason.<sup>81</sup>

A parallel can be drawn to the time of the American Revolution, during which many colonists who were loyal to England fled to Canada. The British wanted the newly formed republic to allow the loyalists to return to claim their property. Benjamin Franklin rejected this suggestion in a letter to Richard Oswald, the British negotiator, dated November 26, 1782:

Your ministers require that we should receive again into our bosom those who have been our bitterest enemies and restore their properties who have destroyed ours: and this while the wounds they have given us are still bleeding!<sup>82</sup>

## **MYTH**

*An uncaring world ignored the Palestinian refugees.*

## ***FACT***

The General Assembly voted on [November 19, 1948](#), to establish the United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees (UNRPR) to dispense aid to the refugees. Since then, more than 160 resolutions have been adopted that refer to Palestinian refugees, roughly 22% of all the resolutions on the conflict.<sup>83</sup>

The UNRPR was replaced by the [United Nations Relief and Works Agency \(UNRWA\)](#) on December 8, 1949. UNRWA was designed to continue the relief program initiated by the UNRPR, substitute public works for direct relief, and promote economic development. The plan’s proponents envisioned that direct relief would be almost entirely replaced by public works, with the remaining assistance provided by the Arab governments.

UNRWA had little chance of success because it sought to solve a political problem using an economic approach. By the mid-1950s, it was evident neither the refugees nor the Arab states were prepared to cooperate on the large-scale development projects foreseen initially by the Agency as a means of alleviating the Palestinians’ situation. The Arab governments, and some of the refugees themselves, were unwilling to contribute to any plan that could be interpreted as fostering resettlement. They preferred to cling to their interpretation of Resolution 194, which they believed would eventually result in repatriation.

### Palestinian Refugees in UNRWA Camps (2021)<sup>84</sup>

Area	Camps	Registered Refugees	Refugees in Camps	% in Camps
<a href="#">Jordan</a>	10	2,307,011	390,000	17%
<a href="#">Lebanon</a>	12	479,537	209,474	44%
<a href="#">Syria*</a>	9	568,730	209,474	37%
<a href="#">West Bank</a>	19	871,537	166,468	19%
<a href="#">Gaza Strip</a>	8	1,476,706	592,160	40%
<b>Agency Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>5,703,521</b>	<b>1,567,576</b>	<b>27%</b>
*In 2020, an estimated 438,000 remained in Syria; the rest are in a state of protracted displacement.				

### **MYTH**

*The Arab states have always welcomed the Palestinians.*

### ***FACT***

No one expected the refugee problem to persist after the [1948 War](#). John Blandford Jr., the director of UNRWA, wrote in his November 29, 1951 report that he expected the Arab governments to assume responsibility for relief by July 1952. Moreover, Blandford stressed the need to end relief operations: “Sustained relief operations inevitably contain the germ of human deterioration.”<sup>85</sup> In 1952, the UNRWA set up a fund of \$200 million to provide homes and jobs for the refugees, but it went untouched.

Meanwhile, Jordan was the only Arab country to welcome the Palestinians and grant some citizenship (Gazans were excluded). King Abdullah considered the Palestinian Arabs and Jordanians one people. By 1950, he [annexed](#) the [West Bank](#) and forbade the use of the term Palestine in official documents.<sup>86</sup> In 2004, Jordan began revoking the citizenship of Palestinians who did not have the Israeli permits required to reside in the West Bank.<sup>87</sup>

Although demographic figures indicated ample room for settlement in Syria, [Damascus](#) refused to accept any refugees, except those who might refuse repatriation. Syria also declined to resettle 85,000 refugees in 1952–54, though it had been offered international funds to pay for the project. Iraq was also expected to accept many refugees but proved unwilling. Likewise, Lebanon insisted it had no room for the Palestinians.

After the 1948 War, Egypt controlled the [Gaza Strip](#) and its more than 200,000 inhabitants but refused to allow the Palestinians into Egypt or permit them to move elsewhere. Saudi Arabian radio compared Egypt's treatment of Palestinians in Gaza to [Hitler's](#) rule in occupied Europe.<sup>88</sup>

Little has changed in succeeding years. Arab governments have frequently offered jobs, housing, land, and other benefits to Arabs and non-Arabs, excluding Palestinians. For example, [Saudi Arabia](#) chose not to use unemployed Palestinian refugees to alleviate its labor shortage in the late 1970s and early 1980s, recruiting workers from Asia instead.

The situation grew even worse in the wake of the 1991 [Gulf War](#). [Kuwait](#), which employed large numbers of Palestinians but denied them citizenship, expelled more than 300,000 Palestinians. "If people pose a security threat, as a sovereign country we have the right to exclude anyone we don't want," said Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States Saud Nasir al-Sabah.<sup>89</sup> This expulsion drew no media attention, provoked no UN resolutions condemning Kuwait, and was ignored by pro-Palestinian activists.

**The Arab States do not want to solve the refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don't give a damn whether the refugees live or die.**

**—Sir Alexander Galloway  
former head of UNRWA in Jordan (April 1952)<sup>90</sup>**

Today, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon do not have social and civil rights, are prevented from owning property, and have limited access to public health or educational facilities. The majority relies entirely on UNRWA for education, health, and social services. Considered foreigners, Palestinian refugees are prohibited by law from working in most skilled professions, including medicine, law, and engineering.<sup>91</sup>

The Palestinian refugees held the UN responsible for ameliorating their condition; nevertheless, many Palestinians were unhappy with their treatment by their Arab brethren. Some, like Palestinian nationalist leader Musa Alami, were incredulous: "It is shameful that the Arab governments should prevent the Arab refugees from working in their countries and shut the doors in their faces and imprison them in camps."<sup>92</sup>

Most refugees, however, focused their discontentment on "the Zionists," whom they blamed for their predicament rather than the vanquished Arab armies.

## **MYTH**

*Israel confines millions of Palestinians to refugee camps.*

## ***FACT***

By 2022, the number of Palestinian refugees on UNRWA rolls had risen to more than 5.7 million, several times the number that left Palestine in 1948. Roughly 27%, more than 1.5 million individuals, live in 58 refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. The other two-thirds of the registered refugees live in and around the camps, cities, and towns of the host countries and disputed territories.<sup>93</sup>

**I briefly visited the Balata refugee camp with its 20,000 residents. The camp is inside the West Bank city of Nablus—that is, within the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority (PA) . . . Balata's children, like the children in similar camps in Gaza and neighboring Arab countries, are nurtured on the myth that someday soon they will return in triumph to their ancestors' homes by the Mediterranean Sea. While awaiting redemption, Balata's residents are prohibited, by the Palestinian Authority, from building homes outside the camp's official boundaries.**

**MYTH**

*The Palestinians are the only refugee population barred from returning to their homes.*

**FACT**

After World War II, 12.5 million Germans in Poland and [Czechoslovakia](#) were expelled and allowed to take only those possessions they could carry. They received no compensation for confiscated property. World War II's effects on Poland's boundaries and population were considered "accomplished facts" that could not be reversed after the war. Germans do not expect these millions of deportees, and their children, to return to the countries from which they were expelled, even though their ancestors had lived in those places for hundreds of years.

**If refugees return to Israel, Israel will cease to exist.**

—Gamal Nasser<sup>95</sup>

Another country seriously affected by World War II was Finland, which was forced to give up almost one-eighth of its land and absorb more than 400,000 refugees (11% of the nation's population) from the [Soviet Union](#). Unlike Israel, these were the losers of the war. There was no aid for their resettlement.

Perhaps an even better analogy can be seen in [Turkey's](#) integration of 150,000 Turkish refugees from Bulgaria in 1950. The difference between the Turks' handling of their refugees and the Arab states' treatment of the Palestinians was the attitude of the respective governments. As the Des Moines Register noted:

Turkey has had a bigger refugee problem than either Syria or Lebanon and almost as big as Egypt has . . . But you seldom hear about them because the Turks have done such a good job of resettling them . . . The big difference is in spirit. The Turks, reluctant as they were to take on the burden, accepted it as a responsibility and set to work to clean it up as fast as possible.<sup>96</sup>

Had the Arab states wanted to alleviate the refugees' suffering, they could have adopted an attitude similar to Turkey's.

Another massive population transfer resulted from the partition of [India](#) and [Pakistan](#) in 1947. The eight million Hindus who fled Pakistan and the six million Muslims who left India were afraid of becoming a minority in their respective countries. Like the Palestinians, these people wanted to avoid being caught in the middle of the violence that engulfed their nations. In contrast to the Arab-Israeli conflict, however, the exchange of populations was considered the best solution to the problem of communal relations within the two states. Despite the enormous number of refugees and the relative poverty of the two nations involved, no special international relief organizations were established to aid them in resettlement.

**If there were a Palestinian state, why would its leaders want their potential citizens to be repatriated to another state? From a nation-building perspective it makes no sense. In fact, the original discussions about repatriation took place at a time that there was no hope of a Palestinian state. With the possibility of that state emerging, the Palestinians must decide if they want to view themselves as a legitimate state or if it is more important for them to keep their self-defined status as oppressed, stateless refugees. They really can't be both.**

—Fredelle Spiegel<sup>97</sup>

**MYTH**

*All Palestinian refugees must be given the option to return to their homes.*

## **FACT**

According to the UN, more than 5.7 million Palestinians are refugees. Is Israel obligated to take in some or all of those people?

The [Israeli population](#) is approximately 9.6 million, of which 7,069,000 are Jews. If every Palestinian refugee were allowed to move to Israel, the population would exceed 15 million, and the Jewish proportion would shrink from 74% to 46%. The Jews would be a minority in their own country, the situation they fought to avoid in 1948 and which the UN expressly ruled out in deciding to partition Palestine.

**The demand that the refugees be returned to Israeli territory must be rejected, because if that were to happen, there would be two Palestinian states and no state at all for the Jewish people.**

—Amos Oz<sup>98</sup>

It is often forgotten that most Palestinians now live in historic Palestine, an area including the Palestinian Authority and Jordan. When Palestinians demand to return to “Palestine,” they refer to the area *and* the houses they lived in before 1948. These homes are either gone or inhabited now.

Even respected Palestinian leaders acknowledge that it is a mistake to insist that millions of refugees return to Israel. Palestinian intellectual [Sari Nusseibeh](#), for example, said the refugees should be resettled in a future Palestinian state, “not in a way that would undermine the existence of the State of Israel as a predominantly Jewish state. Otherwise, what does a two-state solution mean?”<sup>99</sup>

In leaked cables from the Palestinian negotiating team, PA president Mahmoud Abbas also admitted this. “On numbers of refugees,” he said, “it is illogical to ask Israel to take 5 million, or indeed 1 million—that would mean the end of Israel.”<sup>100</sup>

Israel has offered to accept some refugees in the context of a peace settlement, as Ben-Gurion said he would do decades ago. If and when a Palestinian state is created, the refugees should be allowed to move there; however, the Palestinian leadership has shown little interest in absorbing its people and still believes it can weaken, if not destroy, Israel by overwhelming the country with refugees.

## **MYTH**

*UNRWA is needed to care for 5.7 million refugees.*

## **FACT**

In 1952, the UN defined refugees as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict” (UNRWA). Given that definition, and the [UN mediator’s estimate](#), UNRWA should have been responsible for fewer than 400,000 refugees. Even if we accept higher estimates, such as Karsh’s calculation of 609,000, that is vastly different from the 5.7 million Palestinians currently considered refugees by UNRWA.

Given the 1952 definition, how many Palestinians could still be refugees?

The war was more than 70 years ago. That means infants at that time would be in their 70s today. Anyone over 18 would be in their 90s. According to the CIA, the life expectancy of Palestinians in the West Bank is 76 years. It would have been lower in the early decades after the war. Today, less than 4% of the population of the West Bank is over 65.<sup>101</sup> Given these statistics, the vast majority of refugees are probably deceased, and UNRWA is no longer needed.

So how does UNWRA justify its existence?

The agency redefined “refugee” to include descendants. According to Jay Sekulow:

In 1965, UNRWA changed the eligibility requirements to be a Palestinian refugee to include third-generation descendants and, in 1982, it extended it again, to include all descendants of Palestine refugee males, including legally adopted children, regardless of whether they had been granted citizenship elsewhere. This classification process is inconsistent with how all other refugees in the world are classified, including the definition used by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the laws concerning refugees in the United States.<sup>102</sup>

The UNRWA website falsely claims that its definition is the same as that of the UNHCR. When columnist Melanie Phillips asked if the UNHCR automatically transferred refugee status to the descendants of refugees, however, she was told that was not true.<sup>103</sup>

If we accept the UNRWA definition, each original refugee would have an average of 9.5 descendants. That has allowed UNRWA to claim the need to provide services to 5.7 million Palestinians.

Also, according to UNRWA's expanded definition, "the children of refugees and their descendants are also considered refugees *until a durable solution is found*" (emphasis added). Solutions to the refugee problem have been found; however, the Arab states and the Palestinians have rejected them.

If the Palestinians object to every solution, is UNRWA obligated to continue to treat them as refugees forever? Shouldn't UNRWA be disbanded since its original mandate to help the refugees of 1948 is no longer relevant since most are dead?

The international community may be beginning to recognize the error of propping up UNRWA. Swiss Foreign Affairs Minister Ignazio Cassis argued in 2018 that the agency is an obstacle to peace and has interfered with the integration of Palestinians in Jordanian and Lebanese societies. He argued that those remaining wards of UNRWA continue to believe in a fantasy that they can one day return home.

"It is unrealistic that all of them can fulfil this dream. Yet the UNRWA keeps this dream alive," Cassis said. "It supplies the ammunition to continue the conflict. By supporting the UNRWA, we keep the conflict alive. It's a perverse logic."

Harkening back to the original postwar vision of the UN, Cassis argued the refugees should be integrated among their fellow Arabs in the countries where they now live. Instead of UNRWA schools and hospitals, he suggested that [Switzerland](#) support facilities to promote the Palestinians' absorption.<sup>104</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Palestinians and their supporters care about Palestinian refugees.*

## ***FACT***

Palestinians and their supporters say they are concerned for Palestinian refugees, yet they are silent regarding the treatment of refugees living in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. They even ignore the welfare of refugees confined to camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Palestinian Authority and [Hamas](#).

Today, the Gaza Strip has [eight refugee camps](#) with a population of more than 590,000. Another [19 camps](#) in the West Bank house 166,468 refugees. That is a total of more than 750,00 "refugees," which, based on CIA population figures, would be more than 15% of the Palestinian population in the disputed territories.

This raises two questions: why does the PA keep these camps intact, and why don't any of the supporters of the Palestinians care?

When Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, the government wanted to move the refugees into permanent housing. The Palestinians opposed the idea, however, and the Arab states routinely pushed for the adoption of UN resolutions

demanding that Israel desist from removing refugees from the camps.<sup>105</sup>

Journalist Netty Gross visited Gaza and asked an official why the camps hadn't been dismantled. She was told the Palestinian Authority had made a "political decision" not to do anything for the Palestinians living in the camps until the final-status talks with Israel took place.<sup>106</sup>

Meanwhile, the Palestinians have received billions of dollars in [international aid](#) but have not moved the refugees into permanent housing. The refugees who remain in camps are there only because the host Arab governments, Hamas, and the Palestinian Authority keep them there.

The Palestinians oppose demolishing the camps because they serve two important purposes. The first is to provide a breeding ground for [terrorists](#) where frustrated and angry refugees are convinced to blame Israel for their plight. The second is to remind the world that Palestinians remain refugees, deserve sympathy because of their squalid living conditions, and should be allowed to return to their homes in what is now Israel.

The international community and supporters of the Palestinians blame Israel for the refugees' plight and make no effort to pressure Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan to give them citizenship or to convince Hamas and the PA to demolish the camps and build permanent housing.

## **MYTH**

*The United States does not provide aid to Palestinian refugees.*

## ***FACT***

Historically, the United States has been the biggest funder of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). As recently as 2017, the U.S. covered nearly one-third of the agency's budget of \$1.1 billion.

Angered by the Palestinians' refusal to restart peace talks with Israel, however, the [Trump administration](#) cut the U.S. contribution in early 2018 from \$364 million to \$60 million before ceasing payments altogether.<sup>107</sup>

Following two years of no payments to UNRWA, the [Biden administration](#) restored \$318.8 million in funding in 2021.

U.S. contributions to UNRWA are subject to various legislative conditions and oversight measures. For example, "No contributions by the United States shall be made to [UNRWA] except on the condition that [UNRWA] take[s] all possible measures to assure that no part of the United States contribution shall be used to furnish assistance to any refugee who is receiving military training as a member of the so-called Palestine Liberation Army or any other guerrilla type organization or who has engaged in any act of terrorism."<sup>108</sup>

## **MYTH**

*UNRWA has removed biased textbooks from its schools.*

## ***FACT***

In April 2017, UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) pledged to modify the curricula in its schools and remove materials that compromised the organization's required political neutrality. For example, UNRWA said it would remove maps of Palestine from the river to the sea, a reference saying "[Jerusalem](#) is the capital of the State of Palestine," and the terms "the occupation," "occupation soldiers," "the prisoners," and "the separation fence" from math or [Arabic](#) exercises.



Image from Palestinian website Alray.ps reproduced by MEMRI

UNRWA’s decision came after UN Watch released a study examining more than 40 Facebook pages operated by schoolteachers, principals, and other employees of UNRWA. “The examples of incitement in this report include UNRWA teachers and staffers celebrating the terrorist kidnapping of Israeli teenagers, cheering rockets being fired at Israeli civilian centers, endorsing various forms of violence, erasing Israel from the map, praising Hitler and posting his photo, and posting overtly anti-Semitic videos, caricatures, and statements.”<sup>109</sup>

The proposed changes in the UNRWA curricula provoked a storm of protest from the Palestinian Authority (PA), Hamas, some UNRWA employees, and Arab members of the [Knesset](#). The PA Education Minister Sabri Saidam declared that Palestinians want “education that will create liberation” from the “occupation.” Knesset Member Ahmad Tibi said, “it is the right of Palestinians under occupation to incite against it,” and Knesset member Hanin Al-Zo’abi insisted that “inciting against the occupation and its crimes is not just a right, but a human obligation.” Hamas’s Refugee Affairs division director, Dr. ‘Issam ‘Adwan, called the curriculum changes “a political crime.”<sup>110</sup>

Aaron Groiss and Ronni Shaked examined 201 textbooks used in grades one to 12, 77 of which were published in 2016 and 2017 by the PA. They found them rife with extreme anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiments. They concluded that PA textbook attitudes toward Jews were “based on three fundamentals: “Delegitimization, demonization, and indoctrination to violent struggle instead of peace.”<sup>111</sup>

Groiss and Shaked found that textbooks suggest Jewish holy places in “Palestine,” such as the [Western Wall](#), [Rachel’s Tomb](#), and the [Cave of the Patriarchs](#), are actually “Muslim holy places usurped by Jews.” The word “Israel” is almost entirely absent, replaced by pejorative terms such as “Zionist occupation.” The Arab-Israeli conflict is referred to as “the Arab-Zionist conflict,” which the report says “signals an intensification of the nonrecognition attitude regarding Israel on the part of the Palestinian educators.”

One example of the demonization of Jews is found in a textbook description of the early Zionist pioneers. “The arrival of the Jewish throngs to Palestine continued until 1948 and their goal was taking over the Palestinian lands and then replacing the original inhabitants after their expulsion or extermination.”

While Palestinian officials often deny they engage in incitement, PA textbooks promote violence to liberate the disputed territories from the “occupation.” In addition to the [West Bank](#), books also discuss liberating areas inside pre-1967 Israel, such as Haifa, Acre, and Jaffa. One 2017 text describes a Molotov cocktail attack on an Israeli civilian bus as a “barbecue party.” Another book glorifies the female terrorist who killed more than 30 civilians in an [attack](#) on another Israeli bus.

In a February 2018 update to the earlier study, Groiss reported that books used by UNRWA, published by the PA since



2016, “are generally more radical than their predecessors.” The new books, for example, “omit the few references that existed in the older ones to the Jewish presence in the country in antiquity.”

The newer books also demonized Israel and Jews in subjects unrelated to the conflict, such as physics, chemistry, biology, and vocational education. Thus, for example, a physics discussion of sound waves states that “the Zionist occupation forces prohibit the call for prayer from the minarets of [al-Aqsa Mosque](#).” The human spine’s importance is demonstrated in biology with “the case of a boy who was severely injured by an object left in the field following ‘the Zionist aggression against Gaza.’”<sup>112</sup>

The furor over changing the textbooks was understandable, given the Palestinian leadership’s desire to infuse future generations with a hatred of Israel and a revisionist history of the region. UNRWA, however, has a legal and moral obligation to purge its schools of textbooks that promote the Palestinian political agenda and to provide students with accurate information that is devoid of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish bias.

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# Chapter 11

## Human Rights

[Arabs cannot be anti-Semitic because they are Semites.](#)

[Jews who lived in Islamic countries were well treated.](#)

[As “People of the Book,” Jews and Christians are protected under Islamic law.](#)

[Modern Arab nations have never been anti-Jewish.](#)

[Israel discriminates against its Arab citizens.](#)

[Israeli Arabs are barred from buying land in Israel.](#)

[Palestinians have the right to sell land to Jews.](#)

[Israel treats Palestinians worse than the Afrikaner government treated Blacks in South Africa.](#)

[Israel is engaged in the “ethnic cleansing” of the Palestinians.](#)

[Israel uses checkpoints to deny Palestinians their rights and humiliate them.](#)

[Israeli checkpoints prevent Palestinians from receiving medical attention.](#)

[Israel persecutes Christians.](#)

[Palestinians do not violate the human rights of their people.](#)

[The Palestinian Authority promotes a culture of peace and tolerance toward Israel.](#)

[Israelis should be prosecuted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court.](#)

[The Palestinian Authority protects women’s rights.](#)

[Israel is trying to silence Palestinian human rights groups.](#)

[LGBTQ Palestinians enjoy the same rights as Israelis.](#)

### **MYTH**

*Arabs cannot be anti-Semitic because they are Semites.*

### ***FACT***

The term “anti-Semite” was coined in Germany in 1879 by [Wilhelm Marr](#) to refer to the anti-[Jewish](#) manifestations of the period and to give the previously used term, “*Judenhass*”—or “Jew-hatred”—a more scientific-sounding name.<sup>1</sup> “[Anti-Semitism](#)” has been accepted and understood to mean hatred of the Jewish people. Dictionaries define the term as: “Theory, action, or practice directed against the Jews” and “Hostility towards Jews as a religious or racial minority group, often accompanied by social, economic and political discrimination.”<sup>2</sup>

The claim that Arabs cannot be anti-Semitic because they are also a Semitic people is a semantic distortion that ignores the history of Arab discrimination and hostility toward Jews. Arabs, like any other people, can indeed be anti-Semitic.

### **MYTH**

*Jews who lived in Islamic countries were well treated.*

### ***FACT***

While [Jewish communities](#) in [Islamic countries](#) fared better overall than those in [Christian](#) lands in [Europe](#) during the nearly 1,300 years of the [Muslim Empire](#), Jews were no strangers to persecution and humiliation among the Arabs. As Princeton University historian Bernard Lewis has written: “The Golden Age of equal rights was a myth, and belief in it was a result, more than a cause, of Jewish sympathy for Islam.”<sup>3</sup>

[Muhammad](#), the founder of [Islam](#), traveled to Medina in 622 C.E. to attract followers to his new faith. When the Jews of Medina refused to recognize Muhammad as their prophet, two of the major Jewish tribes were expelled. In 627, Muhammad’s followers killed between 600 and 900 men and divided the surviving Jewish women and children among themselves.<sup>4</sup>

The Muslim attitude toward Jews is reflected in various verses throughout the [Koran](#). “They [the Children of Israel] were consigned to humiliation and wretchedness. They brought the wrath of God upon themselves, and this because they used to deny God’s signs and kill His Prophets unjustly and because they disobeyed and were transgressors” (Sura 2:61). According to the Koran, the Jews try to introduce corruption (5:64), have always been disobedient (5:78), and are enemies of Allah, the Prophet, and the angels (2:97–98).

Jews were generally viewed with contempt by their Muslim neighbors; peaceful coexistence between the two groups involved the subordination and degradation of the Jews. In the ninth century, Baghdad’s [Caliph al-Mutawakkil](#) designated a yellow [badge](#) for Jews, setting a precedent that would be followed centuries later in [Nazi Germany](#).<sup>5</sup>

When Jews were perceived as having achieved too comfortable a position in Islamic society, anti-Semitism would surface, often with devastating results. On December 30, 1066, [Joseph HaNagid](#), the Jewish vizier of [Granada, Spain](#), was crucified by an Arab mob that proceeded to raze the Jewish quarter of the city and slaughter its 5,000 inhabitants. The riot was incited by Muslim preachers who had angrily objected to what they saw as inordinate Jewish political power.

Similarly, in 1465, Arab mobs in [Fez](#) slaughtered thousands of Jews, leaving only eleven alive, after a Jewish deputy vizier treated a Muslim woman in “an offensive manner.” The killings touched off a wave of similar massacres throughout [Morocco](#).<sup>6</sup>

Other mass murders of Jews in Arab lands occurred in Morocco in the eighth century, where whole communities were wiped out by the Muslim ruler Idris I; North Africa in the twelfth century, where the [Almohads](#) either forcibly converted or decimated several communities; [Libya](#) in 1785, where Ali Burzi Pasha murdered hundreds of Jews; [Algiers](#), where Jews were massacred in 1805, 1815, and 1830; and [Marrakesh](#), Morocco, where more than three hundred Jews were murdered between 1864 and 1880.<sup>7</sup> When Jewish people were not being slaughtered in Morocco, they were subject to heavy taxes and lived in destitute poverty.

Decrees ordering the destruction of [synagogues](#) were enacted in [Egypt](#) and [Syria](#) (1014, 1293–94, 1301–02), Iraq (854–859, 1344), and [Yemen](#) (1676). Despite the Koran’s prohibition, Jews were forced to convert to Islam or face death in Yemen (1165 and 1678), Morocco (1275, 1465, and 1790–92), and [Baghdad](#) (1333 and 1344).<sup>8</sup>

The situation of Jews in Arab lands reached a low point in the nineteenth century. Jews in most of North Africa (including [Algeria](#), [Tunisia](#), Egypt, Libya, and Morocco) were forced to live in ghettos. In Morocco, which contained the largest Jewish community in the Muslim world, Jews were made to walk barefoot or wear shoes of straw when outside the ghetto. Even Muslim children participated in the degradation of Jews by throwing stones at them or harassing them in other ways. The frequency of anti-Jewish violence increased, and many Jews were executed on charges of apostasy. [Ritual murder](#) accusations against the Jews became commonplace in the [Ottoman Empire](#).<sup>9</sup>

As distinguished Orientalist G. E. von Grunebaum observed:

It would not be difficult to put together the names of a very sizeable number of Jewish subjects or citizens of the Islamic area who have attained to high rank, to power, to great financial influence, to significant and recognized intellectual attainment; and the same could be done for Christians. But it would again not be difficult to compile a lengthy list of persecutions, arbitrary confiscations, attempted forced conversions, or pogroms.<sup>10</sup>

## **MYTH**

*As “People of the Book,” Jews and Christians are protected under Islamic law.*

## **FACT**

This argument is rooted in the traditional concept of the “[dhimma](#)” (“writ of protection”), which was extended by Muslim conquerors to Christians and Jews in exchange for their subordination to the Muslims. Yet, as French



philosopher Jacques Ellul has observed, “One must ask: ‘protected against whom?’ When this ‘stranger’ lives in Islamic countries, the answer can only be: against the Muslims themselves.”<sup>[11](#)</sup>

People subjected to Muslim rule often faced a choice between death and conversion, but Jews and Christians, who adhered to the Scriptures, were usually allowed, as *dhimmi*s, to practice their faith. This “protection” did little, however, to ensure that Jews and Christians were treated well by the Muslims. On the contrary, an integral aspect of the *dhimma* was that, being an infidel, they had to acknowledge openly the superiority of the true believer—the Muslim.

In the early years of the Islamic conquest, the “tribute” (or *jizya*), paid as a yearly poll tax, symbolized the subordination of the *dhimmi*.<sup>[12](#)</sup> Later, the inferior status of Jews and Christians was reinforced through a series of regulations that governed the behavior of the *dhimmi*. For example, *dhimmi*s, on pain of death, were forbidden to mock or criticize the Koran, Islam, or Muhammad, to proselytize among Muslims, or to touch a Muslim woman (though a Muslim man could take a non-Muslim as a wife). *Dhimmi*s were excluded from public office and armed service and were forbidden to bear arms. They were not allowed to ride horses or camels, build synagogues or churches taller than mosques, construct houses higher than those of Muslims, or drink wine in public. They were forced to wear distinctive clothing and were not allowed to pray or mourn in loud voices—as that might offend the Muslims.

The *dhimmi* also had to show public deference toward Muslims; for example, always yielding them the center of the road. The *dhimmi* was not allowed to give evidence in court against a Muslim, and his oath was unacceptable in an Islamic court. To defend himself, the *dhimmi* would have to purchase Muslim witnesses at great expense. This left the *dhimmi* with little legal recourse when harmed by a Muslim.<sup>[13](#)</sup>

By the twentieth century, the status of the *dhimmi* in Muslim lands had not significantly improved. H. E. W. Young, the British vice consul in Mosul, wrote in 1909:

The attitude of the Muslims toward the Christians and the Jews is that of a master towards slaves, whom he treats with a certain lordly tolerance so long as they keep their place. Any sign of pretension to equality is promptly repressed.<sup>[14](#)</sup>

**The Arab world is the last bastion of unbridled, unashamed, unhidden, and unbelievable anti-Semitism. Hitlerian myths get published in the popular press as incontrovertible truths. The Holocaust either gets minimized or denied . . . How the Arab world will ever come to terms with Israel when Israelis are portrayed as the devil incarnate is hard to figure out.**

**—Columnist Richard Cohen<sup>[15](#)</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Modern Arab nations have never been anti-Jewish.*

## **FACT**

Arab leaders have repeatedly made clear their animosity toward Jews and Judaism. For example, on November 23, 1937, [Saudi Arabia's King Ibn Saud](#) told British Colonel H. R. P. Dickson, “Our hatred for the Jews dates from God’s condemnation of them for their persecution and rejection of Isa ([Jesus](#)) and their subsequent rejection of His chosen Prophet.” He added, “that for a Muslim to kill a Jew, or for him to be killed by a Jew ensures him an immediate entry into Heaven and into the august presence of God Almighty.”<sup>[16](#)</sup>

When [Hitler](#) introduced the [Nuremberg racial laws](#) in [1935](#), he received telegrams of congratulation from all corners of the Arab world.<sup>[17](#)</sup> Later, during the war, one of his most ardent supporters was the [Mufti of Jerusalem](#).

Jews were never permitted to live in [Jordan](#). Civil Law No. 6, which governed the Jordanian-occupied [West Bank](#), states explicitly, “Any man will be a Jordanian subject if he is not Jewish.” [18](#)

Public school textbooks in some Arab countries have been found replete with hateful portrayals of Jews. According to a study of Syrian textbooks, for example, “the Syrian educational system expands hatred of [Israel](#) and [Zionism](#) to anti-Semitism directed at all Jews. That anti-Semitism evokes ancient Islamic motifs to describe the unchangeable and treacherous nature of the Jews. Its inevitable conclusion is that all Jews must be annihilated.” [19](#)

An [Arabic](#) translation of Adolf Hitler’s [Mein Kampf](#) was distributed in [East Jerusalem](#) and the territories controlled by the [Palestinian Authority \(PA\)](#) and became a bestseller. The official website of the Palestinian State Information Service also published an Arabic translation of the “[Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#).” [20](#)

Arab officials have also resorted to blood libels. [King Faisal](#) of Saudi Arabia, for example, said that Jews “have a certain day on which they mix the blood of non-Jews into their bread and eat it. It happened that two years ago, while I was in [Paris](#) on a visit, that the police discovered five murdered children. Their blood had been drained, and it turned out that some Jews had murdered them in order to take their blood and mix it with the bread that they eat on this day.” [21](#)

**Greeting Pope John Paul II in Damascus, [Syrian President Bashar] Assad launched an attack on Jews that may rank as the most ignorant and crude speech delivered before the pope in his two decades of travel around the world. Comparing the suffering of the Palestinians to that of Jesus Christ, Mr. Assad said that the Jews “tried to kill the principles of all religions with the same mentality in which they betrayed Jesus Christ and the same way they tried to betray and kill the Prophet Muhammad.” With that libel, the Syrian president stained both his country and the pope.**

—*Washington Post* editorial [22](#)

In June 2016, PA President [Mahmoud Abbas](#) declared from the rostrum of the European Parliament that Israeli [rabbis](#) called on their government to poison the water used by [Palestinians](#). [23](#) Other scurrilous allegations made by Palestinian officials include claims that Israel dumped toxic waste in the West Bank, marketed carcinogenic juice to Palestinians, released wild pigs to destroy crops in the West Bank, and infected Palestinians with the AIDS virus. Palestinian officials also have claimed that Israel dropped poison candy for children in [Gaza](#) from airplanes, conducted medical experiments on prisoners and poisoned them, used a “radial spy machine” at checkpoints that killed a Palestinian woman, and spread drugs among young Palestinians to distract them from fighting Israel. [24](#)

The [Arab/Muslim media](#), which is almost exclusively controlled by the governments in each Middle Eastern nation, regularly publish anti-Semitic articles and cartoons, and broadcast hateful television programs. Themes include [Holocaust denial](#), the “exploitation” of the [Holocaust](#) by Zionism, and the odious comparison of Zionism to Nazism. *Al-Ahram*—the most widely circulated Egyptian newspaper—published an article in 2000 accusing Israel of using the blood of Palestinian children to bake [matzahs](#). [25](#)

Arabic social media is also filled with anti-Semitic tropes and calumnies. During the coronavirus pandemic, for example, Israel was blamed for, and compared to the virus, and falsely accused of denying Palestinians aid and testing. [26](#)

As violence in Israel escalated during the “[stabbing intifada](#)” in late 2015, content urging Palestinian violence against Israelis began appearing on social media with increasing frequency. The [Anti-Defamation League](#) published a selection of this content, including diagrams with instructions on where to stab to cause the most damage, and videos in Arabic showing various stabbing techniques, titled “learn how to stab a Jew.” [27](#)

The Palestinian Authority’s media have also contained inflammatory and anti-Semitic material. Here is an example of a sermon broadcast on PA television in 2018:

The Jews bare their fangs whenever they get the chance. They spread corruption in the land, and they sow discord among the servants of Allah.... They tried to kill the Prophet Muhammad whenever they had an opportunity to do so.... Allah cursed them because they violated their covenant, and “[He] turned them into apes, pigs, and worshippers of false deities”....They are among the corrupt of Allah’s creations, and humanity will never be able to coexist with them.... The Prophet Muhammad told us that at the end of days, the Muslims will fight the Jews, until the Jews hide behind the rocks and the trees... and the trees will say: “Oh Muslim, oh servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.” [28](#)

Even Palestinian crossword puzzles are used to delegitimize Israel and attack Jews, providing clues, for example, suggesting that a Jewish trait is “treachery.” [29](#)

## **MYTH**

*Israel discriminates against its Arab citizens.*

## **FACT**

Israel does not discriminate against its [Arab citizens](#). On the contrary, they enjoy the same rights guaranteed to Jews and all other citizens of Israel.

Arabs in Israel have equal voting rights; in fact, it is one of the few places in the Middle East where Arab women may vote. Arabs hold 10 seats in the [25th Knesset](#), half belonging to the Islamic Movement’s political party ([Ra’am](#)), which became the first Arab party to join the [previous](#) governing coalition. Other Israeli-Arab members of the [Knesset](#) belong to other factions.

Israeli Arabs have also held government posts such as ambassador to [Finland](#), consul-general to [Shanghai](#), and the deputy mayor of [Tel Aviv](#). Oscar Abu Razaq was appointed director general of the Ministry of Interior, the first Arab citizen to become chief executive of a key government ministry. [Ariel Sharon’s](#) original cabinet included the first Arab minister, [Salah Tarif](#), a [Druze](#) who served as a minister without a portfolio. In 2022, for the first time, a Muslim judge was appointed to the [Supreme Court](#) (he is not the first Israeli Arab to serve).

More than 300,000 Arab children attend Israeli [schools](#). At the time of Israel’s founding, there was one Arab high school in the country. Today, there are hundreds of Arab schools. In October 2005, an Arab professor was named vice president of the [University of Haifa](#), and the number of Arabs studying for first degrees in Israeli universities and colleges almost doubled from 10% in 2010 to 18% in 2020, while the number studying for second degrees increased from 7% to 15% in the same period.

The sole legal distinction between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel is that the latter are not required to serve in the Israeli army. This is to spare Arab citizens the need to take up arms against their brethren. Nevertheless, [Bedouins](#) have served in paratroop units, and other Arabs have volunteered for military duty. Compulsory military service is applied to the Druze and [Circassian](#) communities at their request.

While there is no institutional segregation, Jews and Arabs have chosen to live separately in all but a handful of cities. Like minorities in other countries, there are differences in the quality of life for Arabs, but these are not imposed by law. Moreover, Israelis have increasingly recognized the need to address these gaps. Hence, in 2015 the government approved a five-year economic package of nearly \$3 billion to promote equality. In addition, 20 different budget areas, including infrastructure, employment, transportation, and education were to be allocated based on the Arab proportion of the population (approximately 21%). [Joint Arab List Party](#) leader Ayman Odeh said the plan “could be a first step to reduce economic and social disparities of the country’s Arab population.” [30](#) In 2020, the plan was extended with another \$500 million committed through 2021. [31](#)

In 2021, the government passed a five-year \$9 billion economic plan focused on developing employment, including raising the percentage of Arab women in the workforce, investing in technological innovation and high-tech, and

developing health services and housing. In 2022, the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation launched a five-year \$70 million program aimed at “incorporating the Arab sector in the high-tech industry.”

Investing in the Arab sector is expected to boost Israel’s [economy](#), give Israeli Arabs a greater sense of equality, reinforce Israel’s commitment to democracy and pluralism, and show Arabs in the region that making peace with Israel can be beneficial.

The [United States](#) has been independent for 246 years and still has not integrated all its diverse communities. Even today, nearly half a century after civil rights legislation was adopted, discrimination has not been eradicated. It should not be surprising that Israel has not solved all its social problems in only 75 years.

## **MYTH**

*Israeli Arabs are barred from buying land in Israel.*

## ***FACT***

In the early part of the century, the [World Zionist Congress](#) established the [Jewish National Fund](#) to purchase land in [Palestine](#) for Jewish settlement. This land, and that acquired after Israel’s [War of Independence](#), was taken over by the government. Of the total area of Israel, 92% belongs to the State and is managed by the Land Management Authority. It is not for sale to anyone, Jew or Arab. The remaining 8% of the territory is privately owned. The Arab Waqf (the Muslim charitable endowment), for example, owns land that is for the express use and benefit of Muslim Arabs. All Arab citizens of Israel are eligible to lease government land.

In 2002, the Supreme Court ruled that the government cannot allocate land based on religion or ethnicity, and may not prevent Arab citizens from living wherever they choose. [32](#)

## **MYTH**

*Palestinians have the right to sell land to Jews.*

## ***FACT***

In 1996, the Palestinian Authority (PA) Mufti, Ikrimah Sabri, issued a *fatwa*, banning the sale of Arab and Muslim property to Jews. Anyone who violated the order was to be killed. At least three land dealers were killed that year. [33](#)

In 1997, PA Justice Minister Freih Abu Middein announced that the death penalty would be imposed on anyone convicted of ceding “one inch” to Israel. Later that month, two Arab land dealers were killed. A year later, another Palestinian suspected of selling land to Jews was murdered.

In 2009, the Chief Islamic Judge of the Palestinian Authority, Tayseer Rajab Tamimi, reiterated that those who rented to Jews or facilitated land transactions would face the death penalty. Later that month, a military court found a Palestinian guilty of selling land to Jews and sentenced him to death by hanging. [34](#)

In 2014, PA President Mahmoud Abbas decreed that any Palestinian who sells land “to a hostile country or its citizens” would be punished with “life imprisonment with forced labor.” The Supreme Fatwa Council, chaired by the PA Mufti Sheikh Muhammad Hussein, said that “anyone selling Palestinian real estate to the enemy a traitor to Allah and His Messenger, as well as to his religion and homeland, and [decreed that] he is to be shunned by all Muslims.” [35](#)

In 2018, a Palestinian American was convicted of selling land in East Jerusalem to Jews and sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor. At the time, 88% of Palestinians agreed people who sold land to Jews were “traitors,” and 64% believed they deserved the death penalty. [36](#)

In April 2021, Sheikh Sabri issued a new *fatwa* making it permissible to kill anyone who sells land to Jews. [37](#)

Nevertheless, Arabs do sell land to Jews. In 2021, for example, three houses were sold in Silwan, and the Arab owners fled.<sup>[38](#)</sup>

The silence over this policy discriminating against Jews is yet another example of how human rights crusaders, especially those critical of Israel, ignore Palestinian abuses. Where else in the world is it a crime to sell land to Jews?

**The charge that Israel is [like old South Africa] is a false and malicious one that precludes, rather than promotes, peace and harmony.**

**—Richard Goldstone, former justice of the South African Constitutional Court<sup>39</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Israel treats Palestinians worse than the Afrikaner government treated Blacks in South Africa.*

## ***FACT***

Even before the State of Israel was established, Jewish leaders consciously sought to avoid the situation that prevailed in [South Africa](#). As [David Ben-Gurion](#) told Palestinian nationalist Musa Alami in 1934:

We do not want to create a situation like that which exists in South Africa, where the whites are the owners and rulers, and the Blacks are the workers. If we do not do all kinds of work, easy and hard, skilled, and unskilled, if we become merely landlords, then this will not be our homeland.<sup>[40](#)</sup>

Today, Jews are a majority of the population, but the Arab minority are full citizens who enjoy equal rights and are represented in all the branches of government.

Unlike Israel, under the discriminatory policies of South Africa, skin color determined every aspect of your life from birth until death. Black South Africans could not vote and were not citizens of the country in which they formed the overwhelming majority of the population. Laws dictated where they could live, work, attend school, and travel. The government killed Black people who protested its policies. By contrast, Israel allows freedom of movement, assembly, and speech. Some of the government's harshest critics are Israeli Arabs who are members of the Knesset.

Israeli society is not perfect – discrimination and unfairness exist there as it does in every other country. These differences, however, are nothing like the horrors of the South African system.

“To be sure, there is more de facto separation between Jewish and Arab populations than Israelis should accept,” observed Richard Goldstone, former justice of the South African Constitutional Court. “Much of it is chosen by the communities themselves. Some results from discrimination.” But, he added, this is nothing like the situation in South Africa where separation was considered an ideal. “In Israel, equal rights are the law, the aspiration, and the ideal; inequities are often successfully challenged in court.<sup>[41](#)</sup>

Still, the European Commission said the use of the word apartheid in connection is inappropriate and an example of anti-Semitism.<sup>[41a](#)</sup>

One glaring example of Palestinian hypocrisy in condemning Israel's treatment of Arabs is the fact that Mahmoud Abbas and other officials send their family members to Israel when they have serious health problems. Abbas's brother-in-law, for example, underwent life-saving heart surgery at the Assuta Medical Center in Tel Aviv. A year earlier, Abbas's wife was also hospitalized in Assuta.<sup>[42](#)</sup> Hamas leaders calling for Israel's destruction also send their loved ones to be saved by Israeli doctors. Ismail Haniyeh sent his daughter, granddaughter, mother-in-law, and niece to Israel. His 17-year-old niece was being treated at Ichilov Medical Center in Tel Aviv after a bone marrow transplant even as his organization was firing rockets at the city.<sup>[43](#)</sup>

The difference between the current Israeli situation and . . . [Afrikaner ruled] South Africa is emphasized at a very human level: Jewish and Arab babies are born in the same delivery room, with the same facilities, attended by the same doctors and nurses, with the mothers recovering in adjoining beds in a ward. Two years ago, I had major surgery in a Jerusalem hospital: the surgeon was Jewish, the anesthetist was Arab, the doctors and nurses who looked after me were Jews and Arabs. Jews and Arabs share meals in restaurants and travel on the same trains, buses, and taxis, and visit each other's homes.

Could any of this possibly have happened under apartheid? Of course not.

—Benjamin Pogrund<sup>44</sup>

The situation of Palestinians in the territories is different. The security requirements of the nation, and a violent insurrection in the territories, forced Israel to impose restrictions on Arab residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip that are not necessary inside Israel's [pre-1967 borders](#). Israeli policy is not based on race but is a result of Palestinian animosity. Palestinians in the territories dispute Israel's right to exist, whereas Black people wanted an end to the discriminatory regime, not the destruction of South Africa.

Despite security concerns, in 2022, some 90,000 Palestinians from the territories were working in Israel. Another 35,000 work in Jewish [settlements](#). Israel was also increasing the number of permits for Gazans.<sup>45</sup> People who are allegedly so persecuted they live in a constant state of fear, anger, and humiliation work side by side with Israelis, earning more money and enjoying superior benefits to what they would receive from Palestinian employers. According to the Palestinian Authority's official newspaper, *Al-Hayat al-Jadida* (September 21, 2014).<sup>46</sup>

- “The only cases in which a Palestinian worker does not receive the salary his Israeli [employer] determined for him are those cases in which the middleman is Palestinian.”
- “Whenever Palestinian workers have the opportunity to work for Israeli employers, they are quick to quit their jobs with their Palestinian employers for reasons having to do with salaries and other rights.”
- “The salaries of workers employed by Palestinians amount to less than half the salaries of those who work for Israeli employers in the areas of the Israel-occupied West Bank.”
- “The [Israeli] work conditions are very good, and include transportation, medical insurance and pensions. These things do not exist with Palestinian employers.”

Many people discovered some of these facts when actress [Scarlett Johansson](#) was attacked for being the spokesperson for SodaStream because the company's factory was in [Ma'ale Adumim](#). This city of roughly 40,000 people, ten minutes from downtown Jerusalem, is considered a “settlement,” one which Palestinian peace negotiators agreed would remain part of Israel if a Palestinian state is established. The company employed hundreds of Palestinians, several of whom spoke out against the call to boycott the company: “Before boycotting, they should think of the workers who are going to suffer,” a young SodaStream worker said. He earned nearly ten times what he was paid before joining SodaStream, which also provided transportation, breakfast, and lunch for its employees.<sup>47</sup> Though the owners of SodaStream denied the boycott had any effect, they decided to move the plant to southern Israel, and some 500 Palestinians lost their jobs (74 were later rehired).<sup>48</sup>

Israel could offer Palestinians in the territories full citizenship, but this would require the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians vigorously oppose this idea and demand full independence.

The glaring differences in the way Israel treats its citizens and the way that the Palestinian Authority, Hamas, and Arab governments treat theirs have led growing numbers of Palestinians in East Jerusalem to apply for Israeli citizenship. When given the choice, many say they would rather live in Israel than Palestine. For example, 54% of Arabs living in East Jerusalem said that if their neighborhood were part of Israel, they would not move to Palestine and when asked what governments they admire most, more than 80% of Palestinians said Israel because they can observe its thriving democracy, and the rights the Arab citizens enjoy there. By contrast, Palestinians place Arab regimes, including their

own Palestinian Authority, at the bottom of the list.<sup>49</sup>

Consider the implication of the claim that Israel is worse than South Africa. That suggests Palestinians would have been better off living as Blacks under Pieter Botha than in democratic Israel.

Does anyone believe that?

## **MYTH**

*Israel is engaged in the “ethnic cleansing” of the Palestinians.*

## ***FACT***

One of the most odious canards hurled at Israel is that it is guilty of “ethnic cleansing.” In 2001, the [UN conference](#) of non-governmental organizations meeting in Durban, South Africa, declared that Israel was guilty of “ethnic cleansing.” Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) accused Israel of this atrocity in 2020 when Israel demolished the homes of Bedouins in the West Bank that were illegally constructed in a military live-fire range.<sup>50</sup> She repeated the charge in 2021 when Israel’s Supreme Court was set to decide whether residents in [Sheikh Jarrah](#) should be evicted from their homes.<sup>51</sup>

The definition of “ethnic cleansing” is “the expulsion, imprisonment, or killing of an ethnic minority by a dominant majority to achieve ethnic homogeneity.”<sup>52</sup> The Holocaust was an example of ethnic cleansing, as was the [Turkish massacre](#) of Armenians and the forced displacement and mass killings in [Rwanda](#).

Historian Hillel Cohen observed that “there is no non-anti-Semitic way to think or say Israel is carrying out genocide against the Palestinians.”<sup>53</sup> The absurdity of the charge is clear from the demography of the disputed territories.

Following the 1948 War, roughly [150,000](#) Arabs were living in Israel. Rather than expel, imprison, or kill them, Israel granted them citizenship. Today, there are more than [two million](#) Arab citizens of Israel, one-fifth of the total population.

What about the West Bank and Gaza?

According to the Israeli 1967 census, the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was 661,700 and 354,000, respectively.<sup>54</sup> In 2021, the [population](#) of the West Bank and Gaza was 2,949,246 and 1,957,062.<sup>55</sup>

In addition, the health of Palestinians has improved by every measure and is comparable if not better than in other Middle Eastern and North African countries.<sup>56</sup>

- In 1967, the life expectancy of Palestinians was 48.7 years; today it is 76 years. The average for 18 other Middle Eastern and North African countries (excluding Israel) is also 76.
- The death rate (per 1,000 population) in 1960-1965, before Israel captured the territories, was 16.7; today it is 3. For the 18 other countries, it is 4.
- The infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) in 1960-1965 was 117; today it is 16 compared to 15 for the other 18 countries.

One reason for the improvement in the health of the Palestinians is that Israel provides world-class medical care to thousands of Palestinians each year, including the families of Palestinian Authority and Hamas officials who seek Israel’s destruction.<sup>57</sup>

“These numbers demonstrate,” Cohen notes, “that Israel, a militarily potent and effective country, could not possibly be trying to *exterminate* the Palestinians. Only deeply prejudiced people, either cynically lying or out of touch with Middle Eastern reality, could say that Israel is conducting a war of extermination against Palestinians” (emphasis in the original).<sup>58</sup>

The real proponents of ethnic cleansing are the Palestinians and advocates of a two-state solution who call for the expulsion of more than 800,000 Jews so Palestinians can achieve ethnic homogeneity in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

I am a proud Israeli—along with many other non-Jewish Israelis such as Druze, Baha'i, Bedouin, Christians, and Muslims, who live in one of the most culturally diversified societies and the only true democracy in the Middle East. Like America, Israeli society is far from perfect, but . . . By any yardstick you choose—educational opportunity, economic development, women and gay's rights, freedom of speech and assembly, legislative representation—Israel's minorities fare far better than any other country in the Middle East.

—Ishmael Khaldi, a Bedouin in Israel's Diplomatic corps<sup>59</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel uses checkpoints to deny Palestinians their rights and humiliate them.*

## ***FACT***

It is not unusual for nations to guard their borders and establish checkpoints to prevent people from illegally entering their countries and to enhance their security. In the case of Israel, the necessity for checkpoints has been created by the Palestinians. By pursuing a violent campaign of terror against Israel's citizens, they have forced Israel to set up barriers to make it as difficult as possible for terrorists to enter Israel to conduct acts of violence. The checkpoints are an inconvenience to innocent Palestinians, but they save lives.

The following are just a few other examples of how checkpoints prevent terrorism:

- On October 23, 2012, a nineteen-year-old Palestinian was caught at the Qalandiya checkpoint with eight pipe bombs he was trying to bring into Jerusalem.<sup>60</sup>
- On July 27, 2014, police stopped a suspicious vehicle at a checkpoint near Beitar Illit and discovered a large explosive device attached to gas cylinders inside the car.<sup>61</sup>
- On June 29, 2015, a female soldier was stabbed at a checkpoint between Jerusalem and Bethlehem.<sup>62</sup>
- On May 10, 2016, an Israeli officer was seriously wounded by an explosive device at the Hizme checkpoint near Jerusalem. Five other explosives were found at the scene.<sup>63</sup>
- On September 18, 2019, a woman ignored calls from police to halt after she entered a vehicle lane at the Qalandiya checkpoint and was shot after she took out a knife and tried to stab a police officer.<sup>64</sup>

Barriers are not set up to humiliate Palestinians, but to ensure the safety of Israeli citizens. Frequently, when Israel has relaxed its policy and withdrawn checkpoints, [Palestinian terrorists](#) have taken advantage of the opportunity to attack Israelis. Still, Israel has dismantled most of its unmanned checkpoints, reduced the number of manned checkpoints, and streamlined the entry process.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, Israel issued “VIP” cards to [PLO](#) leaders and prominent businesspeople that allow them to go through checkpoints without inspection.<sup>66</sup>

While the Israeli checkpoints are frequently criticized, few people are aware that the Palestinians have their own checkpoints. In July 2021, for example, Hamas security forces shot and killed a Palestinian who failed to stop at a checkpoint near Gaza City.<sup>67</sup>

## **MYTH**



*Israeli checkpoints prevent Palestinians from receiving medical attention.*

## **FACT**

Israel balances its security concerns with the medical needs of Palestinians. According to IDF guidelines, any Palestinian in need of urgent medical care is allowed passage through checkpoints. Palestinians are also allowed to enter Israel for routine medical care unless there is a security problem. Even then, Palestinians can appeal decisions and are also offered other options, such as transfer to neighboring states.

**Israeli hospitals extend humanitarian treatment to Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and West Bank. These efforts continued when all other cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis came to a halt during the most recent intifada.**

**—Ishmael Khaldi, a Bedouin in Israel's Diplomatic corps <sup>59</sup>**

Ambulances are stopped and searched at Israeli checkpoints because they have frequently been used to transport terrorist bombs, and many of the murderers who have triggered [suicide bombings](#) in Israel gained access by driving or riding in Red Crescent ambulances. For example:

- On May 17, 2002, an explosive belt was found in a Red Crescent ambulance at a checkpoint near [Ramallah](#). The bomb was hidden under a gurney on which a sick child was lying. The driver, Islam Jibril, was already wanted by the [IDF](#) and admitted that this was not the first time that an ambulance had been used to transport explosives or terrorists. In a statement issued the same day, the International Committee of the Red Cross said that it “understands the security concerns of the Israeli authorities, and has always acknowledged their right to check ambulances, provided it does not unduly delay medical evacuations.” The sick passengers in the ambulance were escorted by soldiers to a nearby hospital.<sup>69</sup>
- On June 30, 2002, Israeli troops found ten suspected Palestinian terrorists hiding in two ambulances in Ramallah. They were caught when soldiers stopped the vehicles for routine checks.<sup>70</sup>
- In December 2003, Rashed Tarek al-Nimr, a chemist in hospitals in Nablus and Bethlehem, supplied chemicals from the hospitals to Hamas for use in making bombs and admitted he used ambulances to transport the chemicals. He also said the Hamas commanders would hide in hospitals to avoid arrest.<sup>71</sup>
- In December 2004, a Hamas agent with forged documents claiming that he was a cancer patient in need of medical treatment from an Israeli hospital was arrested by security forces. Hamed A-Karim Hamed Abu Lihya was to meet up with another terrorist, obtain weapons from allies inside Israel, and carry out an attack. That same month, a man recruited by the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade to plant a bomb on the railway tracks near Netanya tried to use false papers indicating he needed hospital treatment to enter Israel. Another Hamas terrorist planning a suicide bombing was arrested in March 2005 after pretending to be a kidney donor.<sup>72</sup>

On June 20, 2005, Wafa Samir Ibrahim Bas was arrested for attempting to smuggle an explosives belt through the Erez crossing. Bas aroused the suspicion of soldiers at the checkpoint when a biometric scanner revealed she was hiding explosives. When she realized they had discovered the explosive belt, she attempted unsuccessfully to detonate it.<sup>73</sup>

Bas had been admitted on humanitarian grounds to Soroka Medical Center in [Beersheba](#) several months earlier for treatment of massive burns she received because of a cooking accident. After her arrest, she admitted that the [Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade](#) had instructed her to use her medical authorization documents to enter Israel to carry out a suicide attack. In an interview shown on Israeli television, Bas said her “dream was to be a martyr” and that she intended to kill 40 or 50 people—as many young people as possible.

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, a Palestinian obstetrician and gynecologist from the [Jabalia refugee camp](#) in the Gaza Strip, who has worked at Soroka Hospital, wrote that he was “outraged at the cynical and potentially deadly suicide bombing attempt.” Dr. Abuelaish said he does research at the hospital’s Genetic Institute and has warm relations with his

colleagues. “I make a point, whenever I’m at the hospital, of visiting Palestinian patients,” he said. “I also schedule appointments for other Gaza residents and even bring medication from Soroka to needy patients in the Strip. On the very day that she planned to detonate her bomb, two Palestinians in critical condition were waiting in Gaza to be taken for urgent treatment at Soroka.”

Dr. Abuelaish added, “Wafa was sent to kill the very people in Israel who are healing Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and West Bank. What if Israeli hospitals now decide to bar Palestinians from seeking treatment? How would those who sent Bas feel if their relatives, in need of medical care in Israel, are refused treatment?”<sup>74</sup>

By using this tactic, the Palestinians have reinforced the necessity of retaining checkpoints and forced Israel to conduct more stringent inspections, yet another example of how terrorists are making life unnecessarily difficult for innocent Palestinians.

Despite several other cases where Palestinian terrorists tried to take advantage of the “medical route” to infiltrate Israel, tens of thousands of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank are allowed to travel each year to hospitals in Israel to receive treatment from some of the finest medical facilities in the world. This includes thousands of children. Many of these patients, including family members of Hamas leaders, receive life-saving treatments that are not available in the Palestinian territories.<sup>75</sup>

### Case Study

Picture a nineteen-year-old soldier commanding a checkpoint when an ambulance arrives. Inside is a woman who is seemingly pregnant and who appears to be in pain; her husband is also highly anxious.

But the soldier has been warned about an ambulance bearing a pregnant woman who is not really pregnant. The intelligence said that underneath the ambulance’s stretcher a wanted terrorist is hiding with an explosive belt for a suicide attack.

It is a hot day, and there is a long line of cars. His commanders are yelling at him on the two-way radio, “Do not let ambulances through without being thoroughly checked, there may very well be terrorists inside!” To complicate the picture, a news video crew is present.

The soldier must make an incredible number of decisions in a very short time. He is only nineteen and has no medical training. He knows that if he lets the ambulance go through and it contains a terrorist, then innocent people will die, and he will have failed in his mission. On the other hand, if there is not a terrorist in this ambulance, and he delays a truly pregnant woman from reaching a hospital, the lives of the mother and baby could be endangered.

What would you do?

### **MYTH**

*Israel persecutes Christians.*

### **FACT**

While Christians are unwelcome in Islamic states such as Saudi Arabia, and most have been driven out of their longtime homes in [Lebanon](#), Christians have always been welcomed in Israel and treated as equal citizens. Israel is the only Middle Eastern nation where the [Christian population](#) has grown (from 34,000 in 1948 to 182,000 [today](#)).

By their own volition, the Christian communities have remained the most autonomous of the various religious communities in Israel, though they have increasingly chosen to integrate their social welfare, medical, and educational institutions into state structures. The ecclesiastical courts of the Christian communities maintain jurisdiction in matters

of personal status, such as [marriage](#) and [divorce](#). The [Ministry of Religious Services](#) deliberately refrains from interfering in their religious life but maintains a Department for Christian Communities to address problems and requests that may arise.

In Jerusalem, the rights of the various Christian churches to custody of the Christian holy places were established during the Ottoman Empire. Known as the “status quo arrangement for the Christian holy places in Jerusalem,” these rights remain in force today in Israel.

According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 84% of Christians say they are satisfied with life in Israel.<sup>76</sup>

It was during Jordan’s control of the [Old City](#) from 1948 until 1967 that Christian rights were infringed, and Israeli Christians were barred from their holy places. The Christian population declined by nearly half, from 25,000 to 12,646. Since then, the population has slowly been growing.

Israel’s detractors also ignore the precarious plight of Christians under Arab rule, especially under the Palestinian Authority, where approximately 50,000 Christians live among 4.9 million Muslims. The total number of Christians in the Palestinian territories has remained stable since 1967; however, the proportion has dropped from nearly 10% in 1922 to 6% in 1967, to just 1% of the population today. Three-fourths of all Bethlehem Christians now live abroad, and most of the city’s population is Muslim.<sup>77</sup>

Today, approximately 1,300 Christians live among nearly two million Muslims in Gaza. The U.S. State Department said, “According to media accounts, Hamas continued neither to investigate nor prosecute Gaza-based cases of religious discrimination, including reported anti-Christian bias in private sector hiring and police investigations of anti-Christian harassment.”<sup>78</sup>

“As Christians in this very difficult fundamentalist society, they face all kinds of social and political persecution,” said Robert Nicholson, president and founder of the Philos Project.<sup>79</sup>

A survey of Palestinian Christians by the Philos Project found that Palestinian Christians are twice as likely as Muslims to emigrate for both economic and security reasons, including attacks by their neighbors. While critical of Israel, 77% said they were worried about radical Salafist groups, 43% believed that most Muslims do not want them in Palestine, and 44% said they were discriminated against when applying for jobs.<sup>80</sup>

Unlike Christians who enjoy the freedom of speech and religion in Israel, beleaguered Palestinian Christians rarely speak out. “Out of fear for their safety, Christian spokesmen aren’t happy to be identified by name when they complain about the Muslims’ treatment of them . . . [O]ff the record they talk of harassment and terror tactics, mainly from the gangs of thugs who looted and plundered Christians and their property, under the protection of Palestinian security personnel.”<sup>81</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Palestinians do not violate the human rights of their people.*

## **FACT**

A steady drumbeat of criticism of Israel for both real and imagined abuses of Palestinians in the disputed territories appears constantly in the media, reports from human rights organizations, and by students and faculty on college campuses. While Israel may be legitimately criticized when abuses are documented, what is shocking is the hypocrisy of the critics who proclaim concern for Palestinian welfare but express it only if Israel can be blamed. This raises the question as to whether their interest in the Palestinians is genuine or simply a propaganda tool meant to tarnish Israel’s image.

It is a legitimate question, given the near-total silence of these critics regarding the treatment and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians living in the Arab world. Palestinians have lived as second or third-class citizens in Arab countries for

decades, but since the Arab Spring, thousands have been tortured, murdered, and expelled by their fellow Muslims for alleged involvement in terrorism, for being [Sunnis](#) in areas of [Shiite](#) control, or for being deemed disloyal.

According to journalist Khaled Abu Toameh, the plight of the Palestinians in Arab countries became increasingly tenuous long before the Arab Spring.<sup>82</sup> Following the [Iraqi invasion of Kuwait](#), the Palestinians cheered [Saddam Hussein](#). Fearing their disloyalty, Kuwait expelled more than 200,000 Palestinians living and working there. When Hussein was finally driven from power in the second Gulf War, Iraqi Shiites began to take revenge and drove most Palestinians from the country.

Palestinian refugees are not welcome anywhere in the region. And the number swelled due to the Syrian civil war where thousands of Palestinians have been killed, imprisoned, and displaced. The lucky ones who escaped to Lebanon or Jordan are unwelcome and confined to refugee camps. In both countries, Palestinians are prohibited from certain professions. In Iraq, a directive was issued preventing the return of any Palestinian who spends more than three months outside Iraq unless they are granted a visa.<sup>83</sup>

Roughly 98% of Palestinians live under the rule of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Hamas. They deny them basic human rights – freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, women’s rights, and gay rights. No presidential election has been held since 2005, and critics of the government are harassed, arrested, tortured, and sometimes murdered, as was Nizar Banat, who was beaten and killed by security forces for his criticism of the corruption of PA officials.<sup>84</sup>

A report by Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism found that 250 out of more than 2,600 arbitrary arrests made by PA security forces between 2015 and mid-2021 were for either political activity, criticism of the Abbas regime, or participation in protests. Of these, 61% were tortured. The report noted, “Detainees are not the only people impacted by torture; their families are affected as well because they live the details of the harsh experiences for years to come.”<sup>85</sup>

One Palestinian who escaped Gaza said, “Hamas doesn’t make do with thwarting demonstrations. They shut down parties and performances. They don’t allow concerts, and they spread the notion that artists are heretics....The problems also relate to private life. Women have to wear a head covering when they go outside....Of course, the sale of alcohol is forbidden, even to Christians who need it for religious rituals.”

Another Gazan said of Hamas, “They don’t leave citizens any other option; either join them or stay poor. When there is no work and no food, the only option for a better life – if you can call it that – is to join Hamas.”

A third said, “The Hamas government talks about rehabilitation projects, and they get money for it, but the destruction remains. That’s of course not the situation with Hamas’s leaders, who always end up with renovated homes and new cars.”<sup>86</sup>

The lives of Hamas residents were also made hellish by PA President Mahmoud Abbas after he imposed financial sanctions on the Gaza Strip. Salaries were suspended for civil servants who were deemed disloyal, and aid to needy families was cut off, as were payments to transfer sick Gazans to West Bank hospitals and keep the electricity on.<sup>87</sup>

Advocates for Palestinian rights are silent about the cruelties Palestinians suffer unless an excuse can be manufactured to blame Israel.

## **MYTH**

*The Palestinian Authority promotes a culture of peace and tolerance toward Israel.*

## ***FACT***

One of the central elements of the [peace process](#) since the signing of the [Oslo Accords](#) has been the issue of incitement. Signing this [agreement](#) on the White House lawn in 1993, the Palestinians pledged to end the practice of using their media and education system to stoke hatred and intolerance toward Israel. In the decades since, however, the Palestinian

Authority (PA) has blatantly broken this promise and continues to glorify terrorists, publish [maps](#) without Israel, and use the media and schools to promote contempt for Jews and Israel. A whole generation of young Palestinians has grown up in a culture that demonizes Israelis and discourages peace.

Officials from the PA and Hamas, as well as religious authorities, teachers, and the media, routinely incite violence by calling for “popular resistance,”<sup>88</sup> repeating the [libel](#) that Jews are endangering the al-Aqsa Mosque and providing [financial incentives](#) for terror.

It is a sad commentary on Palestinian society that doctors, lawyers, architects, and scientists do not achieve acclaim; rather, it is the murderers of Jews who get their faces and names commemorated on buildings, at soccer matches, and on trading cards.

What hope is there for peace if generations of Palestinians are raised on hatred? Isn't this the real obstacle to peace that should outrage the world?

## **MYTH**

*Israelis should be prosecuted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court.*

## ***FACT***

The Palestinians have for years tried to convince the [International Criminal Court \(ICC\)](#) to charge Israeli soldiers and politicians with war crimes. Nothing the ICC can do will bring the Palestinians one iota closer to statehood.

Seven states were invited to submit opinions to the court. All seven asserted the “State of Palestine” does not presently satisfy the conditions to be considered a state because the Palestinian Authority (PA) does not control the territories.

Nevertheless, the court claimed jurisdiction in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.<sup>89</sup>

When the decision was announced, the State Department issued a [statement](#):

We do not believe the Palestinians qualify as a sovereign state, and therefore are not qualified to obtain membership as a state, or participate as a state in international organizations, entities, or conferences, including the ICC. We have serious concerns about the ICC's attempts to exercise its jurisdiction over Israeli personnel. The United States has always taken the position that the court's jurisdiction should be reserved for countries that consent to it, or that are referred by the UN Security Council.

Similarly, Israel rejected the decision because no sovereign Palestinian state exists. Other countries, including [Germany](#), [Hungary](#), [Australia](#), the [Czech Republic](#), [Austria](#), [Brazil](#), [Uganda](#), and [Canada](#), also expressed opposition to an ICC probe of Israel.<sup>90</sup> Israel has no right of appeal because it is not a member of the court.

Secretary of State [Mike Pompeo](#) said the United States is “gravely concerned about the threat the court poses to Israel. The ICC is already threatening Israel with an investigation of so-called war crimes committed by its forces and personnel in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Given Israel's robust civilian and military legal system and strong track record of investigating and prosecuting wrongdoing by military personnel, it's clear the ICC is only putting Israel in its crosshairs for political purposes. It's a mockery of justice.”<sup>91</sup>

The ICC has only prosecuted 30 cases since it was created in 2002, winning only nine convictions.<sup>92</sup> It is unlikely the court would have better luck finding fault with the democratically elected leaders of Israel or the soldiers of the IDF. Israel would fight any prosecution vigorously and, like the United States, refuse to recognize the court's jurisdiction over its citizens.

As with other bodies, such as the [Human Rights Council](#), the focus on Israel represents a double standard. The ICC is not investigating blatant crimes committed by serial human rights abusers such as [Turkey](#), [China](#), and [Syria](#).

## **MYTH**

*The Palestinian Authority protects women's rights.*

## ***FACT***

Not surprisingly, Israel's demonizers used International Women's Day as an opportunity to attack Israel for its treatment of Palestinians. It was equally unremarkable that none of the groups that claim to be concerned with Palestinian welfare would say a word about the appalling treatment of women by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Palestinian society more broadly.

Similarly, for Women's History Month, a U.S.-based group of Palestinian Arab women calling themselves the "Palestinian Feminist Collective" published a statement endorsed by 83 organizations, including Jewish Voice for Peace, attacking the "Zionist settler colonial project" (they don't recognize the existence of the state they are condemning), which says nothing about the treatment of Palestinian women in the PA.<sup>93</sup>

The Palestinian feminists and other supporters of the Palestinian cause have no problem with the treatment of women in the PA reported by the UN:<sup>94</sup>

- "Palestine" has no domestic violence legislation.
- Sexual harassment is not criminalized.
- "Palestine" does not have comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation.
- Homosexual conduct between consenting adults is criminalized in Gaza, with a penalty of up to ten years of imprisonment.
- There is no legal prohibition on female genital mutilation.
- Abortion for rape survivors is prohibited.
- Muslim women require the consent of a male guardian to marry.
- After divorce, a mother automatically loses custody of her children if she remarries.

Here are some of the findings from the State Department human rights [report](#) on the treatment of women in the PA:

- Rape is illegal under PA law, but the legal definition does not address spousal rape.
- One in five Palestinian women in the West Bank and Gaza reported at least one incident of physical abuse from their husbands.
- Palestinian women were frequently unwilling to report cases of violence or abuse to the PA or Hamas due to fear of retribution or little expectation of assistance.
- The Attorney General's Office and the security services ignored death threats directed at employees and employees' family members at a women's rights organization.
- No PA law specifically relates to sexual harassment, which was a significant and widespread problem in the West Bank and Gaza. Some women claimed that when they reported harassment, authorities held them responsible for provoking men's harassing behavior.
- Women have a right to inheritance but generally received less than men.
- Men may marry more than one wife.
- Hamas enforced a conservative interpretation of Islam in Gaza that discriminated against women.
- Reports of gender-based employment discrimination in Gaza against women were common, and factories often did not hire pregnant or newly married women to avoid the need to approve maternity leave.

One Palestinian man who escaped from Gaza recalled that "a female journalist who was walking outside without a head covering was beaten by Hamas people and taken to the hospital."<sup>95</sup>

A woman who also fled described her experience:

As a woman, life in Gaza was especially difficult for me. The oppression takes different forms. A married woman

needs to get her husband's approval to leave the house, and an unmarried woman can go out only if she is accompanied by a male relative. Traveling with a strange man is forbidden, so there are female taxi drivers only for women. Israel's blockade hurts women in Gaza a lot because the exit permits are given mainly to men. Unemployment among women has increased, and so has domestic violence. In 2014, the daughter of neighbors was murdered, because she was said to be having sexual relations with a strange man. The doctors who examined the body found that she hadn't lost her virginity.<sup>96</sup>

According to the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC), 58 women were murdered in the West Bank and Gaza in 2019-2020, many in "honor killings" where their actions were judged socially or culturally unacceptable and brought dishonor to the family.<sup>97</sup>

"The state of women's rights in Palestine remains at a standstill, and women are still being murdered," according to the Palestinian Human Rights and Democracy Media Center. "Women remain the most prominent victims of the male culture and of the violence that grows out of it, while this culture elevates men beyond the culture of shame, appoints them as masters and guardians of morality – even when they act immorally – and grants them complete immunity."<sup>98</sup>

ASWAT, an organization of Palestinian gay women, says Palestinian society "has no mercy for sexual diversity and/or any expression of 'otherness' away from the societal norms and the assigned roles that were formed for women. ... The Palestinian woman has no right to choose an identity other than the one enforced on her by the male figures in her family and surroundings."<sup>99</sup>

The PA signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) but ignores its provisions. The Supreme Fatwa Council, which is part of the Palestinian government and has no female members, ruled the agreement violates [Sharia law](#).<sup>100</sup> Similarly, the Supreme Commission for Tribal Affairs said provisions of the CEDAW related to inheritance, adultery, homosexuals, and Muslim women who marry non-Muslims "contradict the Palestinian national identity, our Islamic religion, customs and traditions, and we are not obligated to apply them in our society."<sup>101</sup>

The Human Rights and Democracy Media Centers (SHAMS) said the CEDAW was "attacked under false pretenses based on conspiracy theories" and that women suffer from "hate speech and discrimination" while civil society organizations that support their rights "were targeted by systematic campaigns led by the traditional and conservative power centers." The Center said legislation needed to be enacted "to protect the family from violence" and "covers key issues about women's economic and social rights." The Center also said the penal code had to be modernized to increase "the penalties against killers of women."<sup>102</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel is trying to silence Palestinian human rights groups.*

## ***FACT***

On October 22, 2021, Israel's Defense Minister [Benny Gantz](#) designated six Palestinian NGOs as terror organizations. If Israel was interested in silencing Palestinian human rights groups, why choose just these six? According to the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network, there are more than 140 civil society institutions that are part of the overall network, 29 are members of PNGO.<sup>103</sup>

A small number of organizations were targeted because of their links to the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine \(PFLP\)](#). The PFLP, whose goal is to liberate all of "Palestine," is recognized as a terrorist organization by Israel, the EU, the United States, and other countries. It has engaged in high-profile terror attacks against Israel and Jews since 1968, when its hijacking of an El Al flight marked the beginning of the age of air piracy.

The six organizations designated as terrorist organizations are the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCI-P), Union of Palestine Women's Committees (UPWC), Addameer,

Al-Haq, and the Bisan Center for Research and Development. The Israeli government has not publicly released the classified intelligence used to make the designation; however, Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs published a report in 2019 which found:

Hamas and PFLP operatives have infiltrated and adopted seemingly benign NGOs in the Palestinian Authority, Europe, North America, and South Africa, for the purpose of advancing their ideological goal: the elimination of the State of Israel....Moreover, it appears that terrorist organizations view NGOs in the West as a convenient means for raising funds which they could not otherwise obtain.<sup>104</sup>

NGO Monitor has also reported on connections between the PFLP and staff members of the organizations, and some evidence against the organizations has come from statements by other NGO employees.<sup>105</sup> One employee of the UHWC, for example, told police that “the PFLP-affiliated institutions are inter-connected and serve as the organization's lifeline financially and organizationally, i.e., money laundering and financing PFLP activity.” According to Matthew Levitt, “In the arrangement, one NGO would learn how to conduct various types of fraud and money laundering, then pass this knowledge on to the others.”<sup>106</sup>

As Levitt, a former deputy assistant secretary at the U.S. Treasury Department, noted, one way NGOs raise money for the PFLP is to forge documents and receipts they present to their donors with inflated costs. The difference between the amount they receive and the real cost is forwarded to the PFLP. Some employees spend some time working on human rights issues while also serving as operatives for the PFLP. The organizations also have been known to host the PFLP in their offices.

Law student Lea Bilke and former Israeli diplomat Alan Baker observed that Israel's action is consistent with international law norms and obligations. For example, they cite UN Security Council (2001), which refers to the “need to combat by all means” threats to peace and security from terrorism and says that states “shall criminalize the willful provision or collection, by any means, directly or indirectly, of funds by their nationals or in their territories with the intention that the funds should be used ... to carry out terrorist attacks.”<sup>107</sup>

Similarly, Resolution 2642 (2019) states that acts of terrorism are criminal and calls upon states to “more effectively investigate and prosecute cases of terrorist financing and to apply appropriate, effective and proportionate and dissuasive criminal sanctions to individuals and entities convicted of terrorist financing activities.”

Bilke and Baker also note that the Terror Financing Convention holds that “any person commits an offense within the meaning of the Convention if that person ... collects funds with the intention that they should be used, in full or in part, in order to carry out an act which constitutes an offense....”

The fact that the NGOs engage in human rights work does not absolve them of their complicity in supporting a terrorist organization.

One country that responded to the revelations was the [Netherlands](#), which announced in January 2022 that it would no longer fund the UAWC after its investigation found that 34 employees were active in the PFLP. The government had previously suspended donations after two senior UAWC officials were indicted for taking part in a bombing that killed Israeli Rina Shnerb in August 2019.<sup>108</sup> Earlier, the European Union suspended funding to al-Haq and instructed Oxfam to cut funding to the UAWC.<sup>109</sup>

Meanwhile, as journalist Khaled Abu Toameh points out, no publicity or condemnation has been directed at the PA, which “imposes severe restrictions on the activity and finances of Palestinian NGOs.”<sup>110</sup>

## **MYTH**

*LGBTQ Palestinians enjoy the same rights as Israelis.*

## ***FACT***



The most influential Islamic Sunni jurist before his death in 2022, [Qatar-based Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi](#), maintained that the punishment for homosexuality should be death.<sup>111</sup> Legally, gay people are treated differently in the West Bank and Gaza; however, it is socially taboo to be openly gay in either place. In the West Bank, the Jordanian Penal Code has been in force since 1951, which does not outlaw homosexuality. Gaza, however, operates under the British Mandate Criminal Code Ordinance of 1936, which criminalizes sexual acts “against the order of nature” and stipulates penalties of up to 10 years. In addition, “laws against ‘indecent’ are sometimes used, on an irregular and unpredictable basis, to criminalize same-sex acts.”<sup>112</sup>

A survey by Pew asked people from 39 different countries whether “society should accept homosexuality,” 93% of Palestinians said “no,” which ranked 31st, only slightly better than the 98% of Nigerians at the bottom of the rankings.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, a BBC poll of six Muslim countries and the PA found that only 5% of Palestinians believed homosexuality was acceptable, the lowest figure in the survey.<sup>114</sup>

Some gay Palestinians have been killed by the authorities or by family members. Hamas commander Mahmoud Ishtawi, for example, was tortured and killed after being accused of being gay.<sup>115</sup>

Majd, a gay Palestinian man from a village near Jenin admitted that coming out would be dangerous. “If my male relations knew, they would come and beat me or kill me,” he says. “My father couldn’t stand that his son is gay. My parents are religious and see homosexuality as a disease.”<sup>116</sup>

The PA offers no legal protection from discrimination or harassment for LGBTQ people. Palestinian authorities often do the harassing, including extorting gay men by threatening to reveal their secrets. Saif, a 20-year-old student living near Ramallah, for example, said that if it became known that he was gay, he could be murdered. The police keep files on him and other homosexuals to blackmail them into working as spies and informants. Saif said he heard “of guys being called at random and told to come into police stations, with threats their families would be told about their sexuality if they didn’t show up.”<sup>117</sup>

In Gaza, Jamil, a 21-year-old student, says, “Hamas is always on the lookout for gays, and it monitors the social media.” Gay men do sometimes meet in public, “but they try not to be seen together at the same place more than once.” If they want to meet privately, they need to be sure no family members are around. He added that he doesn’t know any lesbians and suggests that it would be much harder for women in the Strip to engage in a same-sex relationship. “There are too many restrictions on girls, things that are controlling them,” he says. “Women don’t dare to talk about those things, even among themselves.”<sup>118</sup>

This is backed up by ASWAT, an organization of Palestinian gay women, which says Palestinian society “has no mercy for sexual diversity and/or any expression of ‘otherness’ away from the societal norms and the assigned roles that were formed for women. ... The Palestinian woman has no right to choose an identity other than the one enforced on her by the male figures in her family and surroundings.”<sup>119</sup>

Gay Palestinians often seek refuge in Israel. Many say they would rather live under house arrest in Israel than at home.<sup>120</sup> According to lawyer Shaul Gannon, from the Israeli LGBT organization Aguda, approximately “2,000 Palestinian homosexuals live in Tel Aviv at any one time.”<sup>121</sup>

Palestinian political organizations do not advocate for LGBTQ rights; however, some organizations based in Israel attempt to aid LGBTQ Arabs and Palestinians. These include Jerusalem Open House, Black Laundry, and Aswat for women. Another, Al-Qaws, was banned in 2019 from conducting activities in the West Bank because a spokesperson for the PA police said, they are “harmful to the higher values and ideals of Palestinian society.” The police said they would arrest members of the group and asked the public to inform them about anyone connected to the group. Subsequently, members of Al-Qaws began receiving death threats. “They are calling us traitors and corrupt people and many are calling for our execution,” one member told the *Jerusalem Post*. “We are afraid for our lives.”<sup>122</sup>

Organizations outside the Middle East that campaign for Palestinian rights, however, are silent when it comes to the persecution of gay people, preferring to accuse Israel of “pinkwashing.”<sup>123</sup>

The Italian gay rights organization Associazione Radicale Certi Diritti condemned the delegitimization of Israel by LGBTQ rights groups that use the term “pinkwashing.” The group said, “The alarming increase in political calls by LGBTI groups to boycott Israel diverts from the real battle these groups should hold, i.e., the advocacy for the promotion of LGBTI rights among the Palestinian people.” The organization praised Israel for being the only state in the Middle East that protects LGBTI rights and condemned the Palestinian Authority and Hamas for not recognizing the rights of the LGTBI community.<sup>124</sup>

Christopher Scott McCannell, a member of the advisory board of A Wider Bridge, a group that promotes connections between LGBTQ Americans and Israelis, admitted, “Israel is not perfect, and Israel has much further to go to provide equality for all but to say that Israel’s acceptance, recognition, and freedom of LGBT citizens is somehow “pinkwashing” is trying to divert attention from the poor record for LGBT Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.”<sup>125</sup>

Israel’s treatment of gay people is unique in the Middle East and a model for much of the world. Unlike the PA, workplace discrimination against gay people is outlawed; the Knesset has openly gay members; the Israel Defense Force has openly gay soldiers and officers, and the Supreme Court has ruled that gay couples are eligible for spousal and widower benefits. Israel has also signed the United Nations’ Gay Rights Protection Resolution (2011) and recognizes a domestic partnership between same-sex couples and foreign gay marriages. Surrogacy is legal, and in vitro fertilization is paid for gay couples.<sup>126</sup>

Gay Palestinians are not the only ones who appreciate Israel’s tolerant attitude. The country’s reputation has made it a major destination for gay tourists, and Tel Aviv has been named one of the most LGBTQ-friendly places in the world.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> \_Vamberto Morais, *A Short History of Anti-Semitism*, (NY: W. W. Norton and Co., 1976), p. 11; Bernard Lewis, *Semites & Anti-Semites*, (NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> \_“Anti-Semitism,” Oxford English Dictionary; Webster’s Third International Dictionary

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# Chapter12

## Jerusalem

[Jerusalem is an Arab City.](#)

[The Temple Mount has always been a Muslim holy place.](#)

[Jerusalem need not be the capital of Israel.](#)

[The Arabs were willing to accept the internationalization of Jerusalem.](#)

[Jordan ensured freedom of worship for all religions in Jerusalem.](#)

[Jordan safeguarded Jewish holy places.](#)

[Israel limits religious freedom in Jerusalem.](#)

[Israel has refused to discuss a compromise on the future of Jerusalem.](#)

[Israel restricts the political rights of Palestinian Arabs in Jerusalem.](#)

[Under UN Resolution 242, East Jerusalem is considered “occupied territory.”](#)

[East Jerusalem should be the capital of a Palestinian state because Jews never lived there.](#)

[The Israeli government wants to destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque.](#)

[Palestinians treat the al-Aqsa Mosque with the reverence it deserves.](#)

[Jews have no right to pray on the Temple Mount.](#)

[The United States should not have recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.](#)

### MYTH

*Jerusalem is an Arab City.*

### FACT

Jews have been living in [Jerusalem](#) continuously for three millennia. They have constituted the largest single group of inhabitants there since the 1840s. Jerusalem contains the [Western Wall](#) of the [Temple Mount](#), the holiest site in [Judaism](#).

Jerusalem was never the capital of any Arab entity. It was a backwater for most of Arab history and never served as a provincial capital under [Muslim rule](#). While the entirety of Jerusalem is holy to Jews, Muslims only revere one site—the [al-Aqsa Mosque](#). “To a Moslem,” observed British writer Christopher Sykes, “there is a profound difference between Jerusalem and [Mecca](#) or Medina. The latter are holy places containing holy sites....But to a Jew, Jerusalem is something very different, indeed unique. Not only is it a city founded by the Jews; it is at the center of Jewish being.”<sup>1</sup>

### Jerusalem’s Population<sup>2</sup>

Year	Christians	Muslims	Jews	Total	% Jewish
1844	3,390	5,000	7,120	15,510	46%
1876	5,470	7,560	12,000	25,030	48%
1896	8,748	8,560	28,112	45,420	62%
1922	4,699	13,411	33,971	52,081	65%
1931	19,335	19,894	51,222	90,451	57%
1948	25,000	40,000	100,000	165,000	61%
1967	12,646	54,963	195,700	263,309	74%
1987	14,000	121,000	340,000	475,000	72%
1988	14,400	125,200	353,800	493,500	72%
1990	14,400	131,800	378,200	524,500	72%
1995	13,500	165,800	420,900	602,700	70%
2000	14,200	196,900	439,600	657,500	67%
2010	14,600	272,200	491,800	788,100	62%

2019	12,900	346,000	559,500	951,974*	59%*
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\*Total as of January 2021 and percentage based on 2019 Jewish population and 2021 total.

## **MYTH**

*The Temple Mount has always been a Muslim holy place.*

## ***FACT***

During the [2000 Camp David Summit](#), [Yasser Arafat](#) said no [Jewish Temple](#) ever existed on the Temple Mount.<sup>3</sup> A year later, the [Palestinian Authority](#)-appointed Mufti of Jerusalem, Ikrima Sabri, told the German publication *Die Welt*, “There is not [even] the smallest indication of the existence of a Jewish temple on this place in the past. In the whole city, there is not even a single stone indicating Jewish history.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Sheik Raed Salah, a leader of the Islamic movement in [Israel](#), said, “The [Zionist](#) movement has invented that this was the site of Solomon’s Temple. But this is all a lie.”<sup>5</sup>

**I would be blind to disclaim the Jewish connection to Jerusalem.**

—Sari Nusseibeh, president of Al-Quds University<sup>6</sup>

These views are contradicted by the book entitled [A Brief Guide to al-Haram al-Sharif](#), published by the Supreme Moslem Council in 1930. The Council, the principal [Muslim](#) authority in Jerusalem during the [British Mandate](#), wrote in the guide that the Temple Mount site “is one of the oldest in the world. Its sanctity dates from the earliest times. Its identity with the site of [Solomon’s Temple](#) is beyond dispute. This, too, is the spot, according to universal belief, on which [David](#) built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.”

In a description of the area of Solomon’s Stables, which [Waqf](#) officials converted into a new mosque in 1996, the guide states: “little is known for certain about the early history of the chamber itself. It dates probably as far back as the construction of Solomon’s Temple . . . According to [Josephus](#), it was in existence and was used as a place of refuge by the Jews at the time of the conquest of Jerusalem by Titus in the year 70 A.D.”

More authoritatively, the [Koran](#) describes Solomon’s construction of the [First Temple](#) (34:13) and recounts the destruction of the First and [Second](#) Temples (17:7).

The Jewish connection to the Temple Mount dates back more than 3,000 years and is rooted in tradition and history. When [Abraham](#) bound his son [Isaac](#) upon an altar as a [sacrifice](#) to [God](#), he is believed to have done so atop [Mount Moriah](#), today’s Temple Mount. The First Temple’s Holy of Holies contained the original [Ark of the Covenant](#). The First and Second Temples were the centers of Jewish religious and social life until the Second Temple’s destruction by the [Romans](#). After the destruction of the Second Temple, control of the Temple Mount passed through several conquering powers. During the early period of Muslim rule in the seventh century, the [Dome of the Rock](#) was built on the site of the ancient temples.

## **MYTH**

*Jerusalem need not be the capital of Israel.*

## ***FACT***

Since [King David](#) made Jerusalem the capital of Israel more than 3,000 years ago, the city has played a central role in Jewish existence. The Temple Mount in the [Old City](#) is the object of Jewish veneration and the focus of [Jewish prayer](#). Three times a day, for thousands of years, Jews have prayed, “To Jerusalem, thy city, shall we return with joy,” and have repeated the [Psalmist’s oath](#): “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.”

For three thousand years, Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish hope and longing. No other city has played such a dominant role in the history, culture, religion, and consciousness of a people as has Jerusalem in the life of Jewry and Judaism. Throughout centuries of exile, Jerusalem remained alive in the hearts of Jews everywhere as the focal point of Jewish history, the symbol of ancient glory, spiritual fulfillment, and modern renewal. This heart and soul of the Jewish people engenders the thought that if you want one simple word to symbolize all of Jewish history, that word would be “Jerusalem.”

—Teddy Kollek<sup>7</sup>

## **MYTH**

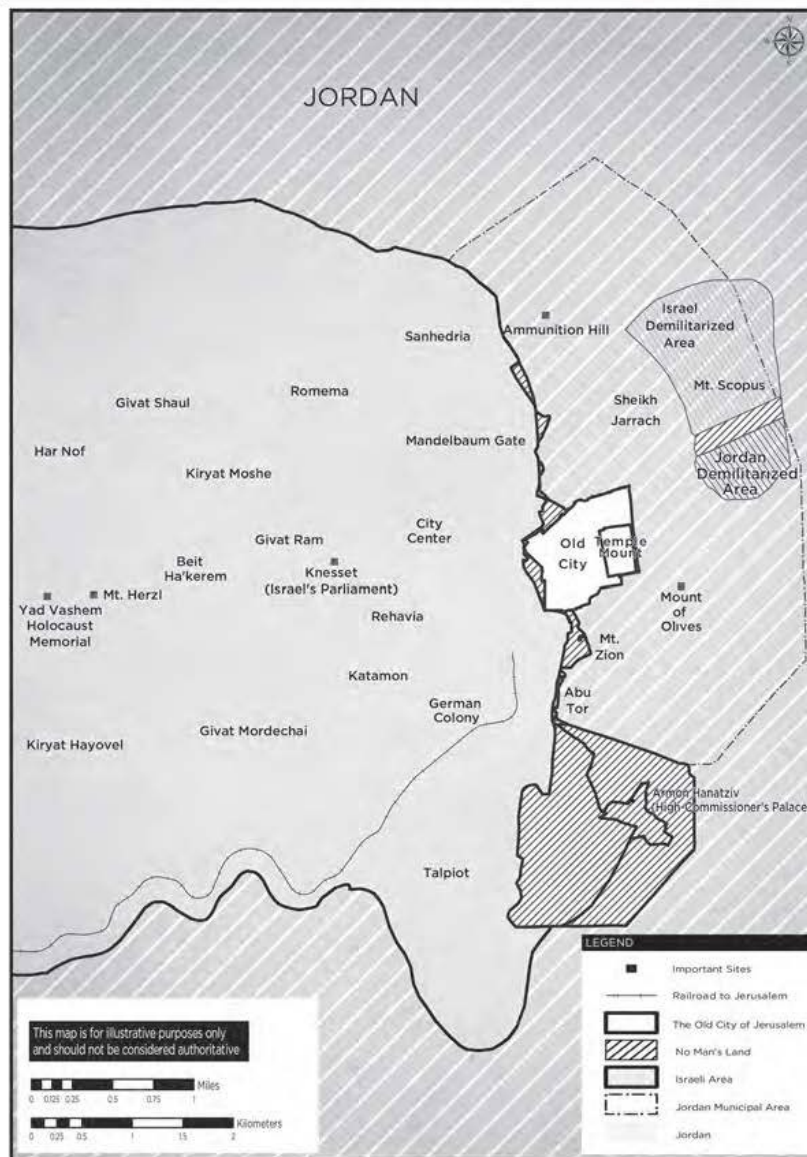
*The Arabs were willing to accept the internationalization of Jerusalem.*

## ***FACT***

When the [United Nations](#) took up the [Palestine](#) question in 1947, it recommended that all of Jerusalem be internationalized. The [Vatican](#) and many predominantly [Catholic](#) delegations pushed for this status. Still, a key reason for the UN decision was the Soviet Bloc’s desire to embarrass [Transjordan’s King Abdullah](#) and his British patrons by denying Abdullah control of the city.

The [Jewish Agency](#), after much soul-searching, agreed to accept internationalization in the hope that, in the short run, it would protect the city from bloodshed and the new state from conflict. Since the [partition resolution](#) called for a referendum on the city’s status after ten years, and Jews comprised a substantial majority, the expectation was that the city would be incorporated into Israel later. The Arab states were as bitterly opposed to the internationalization of Jerusalem as they were to the rest of the partition plan.

In [May 1948](#), [Jordan](#) invaded and occupied East Jerusalem, dividing the city for the first time in its history and driving thousands of Jews—whose families had lived in the city for centuries—into exile. Consequently, the UN partition plan, including its proposal that Jerusalem be internationalized, was overtaken by events.



## **MYTH**

*Jordan ensured freedom of worship for all religions in Jerusalem.*

## ***FACT***

From 1948 to 1967, Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan. Israel made western Jerusalem its capital; Jordan occupied the eastern section. Because Jordan maintained a state of war with Israel, the city became two armed camps, replete with concrete walls and bunkers, barbed-wire fences, minefields, and other military fortifications.

Under paragraph eight of the [1949 Armistice Agreement](#), Jordan and Israel were to establish committees to arrange the resumption of the normal functioning of cultural and humanitarian institutions on [Mt. Scopus](#), use of the [cemetery](#) on the [Mount of Olives](#), and free access to holy places and cultural institutions. However, Jordan violated the agreement and denied Israelis access to the Western Wall and the cemetery on the Mount of Olives, where Jews have buried their dead for more than 2,500 years.

Under Jordanian rule, “Israeli Christians were subjected to various restrictions during their seasonal pilgrimages to their

holy places” in Jerusalem, noted [Teddy Kollek](#). “Only limited numbers were grudgingly permitted to briefly visit the Old City and [Bethlehem](#) at Christmas and Easter.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1955 and 1964, Jordan passed laws imposing strict government control on Christian schools, including restrictions on opening new schools, state control over school finances, the appointment of teachers, and the requirement that the Koran be taught. In 1953 and 1965, Jordan adopted laws revoking the right of Christian religious and charitable institutions to acquire real estate in Jerusalem.

In 1958, police seized the Armenian Patriarch-elect and deported him from Jordan, paving the way for the election of a patriarch supported by [King Hussein’s](#) government. Because of these repressive policies, many Christians emigrated from Jerusalem. Their numbers declined from 25,000 in 1949 to fewer than 13,000 in June 1967.<sup>9</sup>

Israel abolished these discriminatory laws after the city was reunited in 1967.

## **MYTH**

*Jordan safeguarded Jewish holy places.*

## ***FACT***

Jordan [desecrated](#) Jewish holy places during its occupation in 1948–67. King Hussein permitted the construction of a road to the Intercontinental Hotel across the Mount of Olives cemetery. A highway that could easily have been built elsewhere destroyed hundreds of Jewish graves. The gravestones, honoring the memory of [rabbis](#) and sages, were used by the engineer corps of the Jordanian Arab Legion as pavement and latrines in army camps (inscriptions on the stones were still visible when Israel liberated the city).

The ancient [Jewish Quarter](#) of the Old City was ravaged, 58 Jerusalem [synagogues](#)—some centuries old—were destroyed or ruined, and others were turned into stables and chicken coops. Slum dwellings were built abutting the Western Wall.<sup>10</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel limits religious freedom in Jerusalem.*

## ***FACT***

After the [1967 War](#), Israel abolished all the discriminatory laws promulgated by Jordan and adopted a strict standard for safeguarding access to religious shrines. “Whoever does anything that is likely to violate the freedom of access of the members of the various religions to the places sacred to them,” Israeli law stipulates, is “liable to imprisonment for a term of five years.”

The State Department [notes](#) that Israeli law provides freedom of worship, and the Government respects this right.

Defense Minister [Moshe Dayan](#) permitted the Islamic authority, the [Muslim Waqf](#), to continue its civil authority on the Temple Mount even though it is the holiest site in Judaism. The Waqf oversees all day-to-day activity there. An Israeli presence is in place at the entrance to the Temple Mount to ensure access for people of all religions.

Since 1967, hundreds of thousands of Muslims and [Christians](#)—many from Arab countries that remain in a state of war with Israel—have come to Jerusalem to see their holy places. During [Ramadan](#), as many as 150,000 Muslims pray on the Temple Mount.

For security reasons, restrictions are sometimes temporarily imposed on the Temple Mount. Still, the right to worship has never been abridged, and other mosques remain accessible even in times of high tension.

**I also respect the fact that Israel allows for a multifaith climate in which every Friday a**

thousand Muslims pray openly on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. When I saw that, I had to ask myself, where in the Islamic world can 1,000 Jews get together and pray in full public view?

—Muslim author Irshad Manji<sup>11</sup>

While it is the heavenly rather than the earthly Jerusalem that the Church emphasizes, places mentioned in the [New Testament](#) as the sites of Jesus’s ministry have drawn pilgrims and devoted worshipers for centuries. Among these sites are the [Church of the Holy Sepulcher](#), the [Garden of Gethsemane](#), the [site](#) commemorating the [Last Supper](#), and the Via Dolorosa with the fourteen [Stations of the Cross](#).

The rights of the various Christian churches to the custody of the Christian holy places in Jerusalem were defined in the nineteenth century when Jerusalem was part of the [Ottoman Empire](#). Known as the “status quo arrangement for the Christian holy places in Jerusalem,” these rights remained in force during the British Mandate and are still upheld today in Israel.

## **MYTH**

*Israel has refused to discuss a compromise on the future of Jerusalem.*

## ***FACT***

Jerusalem was never the capital of any Arab entity. [Palestinians](#) have no particular claim to the city; they simply demand it as their capital. Nevertheless, Israel has recognized that the city has a large Palestinian population, that the city is important to Muslims, and that making concessions on the city’s sovereignty might help minimize the conflict with the Palestinians. The Palestinians, however, have shown no reciprocal appreciation for the Jewish majority in the city, the significance of Jerusalem to the Jewish people, or the fact that it is already the nation’s capital.

The [Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles \(DoP\)](#) signed in 1993 left open the status of Jerusalem. Article V said only that Jerusalem is one of the issues to be discussed in the permanent status negotiations.

Most Israelis [oppose](#) dividing Jerusalem; still, efforts have been made to find some compromise that could satisfy Palestinian interests.

Anyone who relinquishes a single inch of Jerusalem is neither an Arab nor a Muslim.

—Yasser Arafat<sup>12</sup>

Prime Minister [Ehud Barak](#) offered [dramatic concessions](#) at the [White House Summit](#) in December 2000 that would have allowed the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem to become the capital of a Palestinian state and given the Palestinians control over the Muslim holy places on the Temple Mount. Yasser Arafat rejected the deal.

In 2008, Prime Minister [Ehud Olmert](#) offered a [peace plan](#) that included the partitioning of Jerusalem on a demographic basis. Palestinian President [Mahmoud Abbas](#) spurned the offer.

## **MYTH**

*Israel restricts the political rights of Palestinian Arabs in Jerusalem.*

## ***FACT***

Along with religious freedom, Palestinian Arabs in Jerusalem have political rights. Arab residents are given the choice of whether to become Israeli citizens. Most retain their Jordanian citizenship, however, increasing numbers have applied for Israeli citizenship, and Israel has expedited the process.<sup>13</sup>

Even if a Palestinian state were created, most Palestinians would choose to live in Israel, according to a poll conducted

by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion in June 2015. The poll found that 52% of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem would prefer to be citizens of Israel compared with 42% who would choose citizenship in a Palestinian state.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of whether they are citizens, Jerusalem Arabs are permitted to vote in municipal elections and play a role in the city's administration.

**I'll urge the Muslims to launch jihad and to use all their capabilities to restore Muslim Palestine and the holy al-Aqsa Mosque from the Zionist usurpers and aggressors. The Muslims must be united in the confrontation of the Jews and those who support them.**

**—Saudi King Fahd<sup>15</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Under UN Resolution 242, East Jerusalem is considered "occupied territory."*

## ***FACT***

A drafter of the resolution, U.S. ambassador to the UN [Arthur Goldberg](#), said, "[Resolution 242](#) in no way refers to Jerusalem, and this omission was deliberate . . . Jerusalem was a discrete matter, not linked to the [West Bank](#)."

In several speeches at the UN in 1967, Goldberg said, "I repeatedly stated that the armistice lines fixed after 1948 were intended to be temporary. This, of course, was particularly true of Jerusalem. At no time in these many speeches did I refer to East Jerusalem as occupied territory." Goldberg added that in his speech on July 14, 1967, "I made it clear that the status of Jerusalem should be negotiable and that the armistice lines dividing Jerusalem were no longer viable. In other words, Jerusalem was not to be divided again."<sup>16</sup>

Because Israel was defending itself from aggression in the 1948 and 1967 wars, former president of the International Court of Justice Steven Schwebel wrote, it has a better claim to sovereignty over Jerusalem than its Arab neighbors.<sup>17</sup>

## **MYTH**

*East Jerusalem should be the capital of a Palestinian state because Jews never lived there.*

## ***FACT***

Before 1865, the entire population of Jerusalem lived behind the Old City walls (what today would be considered part of the eastern part of the city). Later, the city expanded beyond the walls because of population growth, and Jews and Arabs began to build in new areas.

By the time of [partition](#), a thriving Jewish community lived in the eastern part of Jerusalem, including the Old City's Jewish Quarter. This city area also contains many sites of importance to the Jewish religion, including the [City of David](#), the Temple Mount, and the Western Wall. In addition, major institutions such as [Hebrew University](#) and the original [Hadassah Hospital](#) are on [Mount Scopus](#)—in eastern Jerusalem.

The only time that the eastern part of Jerusalem was exclusively Arab was between 1949 and 1967, and that was because Jordan occupied the area and forcibly expelled all the Jews.

**There was never a Jewish temple on al-Aqsa [the mosque compound], and there is no proof that there was ever a temple.**

**—Former mufti of Jerusalem, Ikrema Sabri<sup>18</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*The Israeli government wants to destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque.*



## **FACT**

In August 1929, the [Mufti](#) of Jerusalem spread rumors of Jews killing Arabs and a Jewish plot to seize control of Muslim holy places on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. With a rallying cry to defend the al-Aqsa Mosque, Arab mobs looted Jewish shops and attacked Jewish men, women, and children throughout the country. By the end of the rioting, 135 Jews (including eight Americans) were killed and more than 300 wounded.



News report August 30, 1922

This was the first time during the British Mandate that religion directly provoked the conflict in Palestine. However, it would not be the last, as Muslim leaders have found it advantageous to make similar accusations to arouse the local population and the Muslim faithful worldwide.

Similarly, “secular moderates” such as Mahmoud Abbas continue to stoke the religious war between Muslims and Jews. They hope to incite a new Palestinian uprising and, ideally, to inspire a fight to prevent the Jews from destroying the al-Aqsa Mosque. They also seek to prompt negative media coverage of Israel, inspire condemnation from the UN and politicians, and tar Israel’s image. Middle East scholar Bassam Tawil explained:

Our leaders, who are fully responsible for sending these teenagers to throw stones and firebombs at Jews, are sitting in their luxurious offices and villas in Ramallah and rubbing their hands with deep satisfaction. Abbas and several Palestinian leaders in the West Bank would like to see our youths rioting on the streets of Jerusalem and in the Temple Mount’s Al-Aqsa Mosque compound so that they can hold Israel responsible for cracking down on “innocent” Palestinians. Their main goal is to embarrass Israel and depict it as a state that takes tough measures against Palestinian teenagers, whose only fault is participation in “popular resistance.”<sup>19</sup>

For example, Abbas’s Adviser on Jerusalem Affairs, Ahmed al-Ruweidi, warned on April 3, 2022, that a “massacre” of

worshippers at the mosque would be conducted “by the occupation and its settlers.” Abbas’s [Fatah Party](#) said that continued visits of Jews to the Temple Mount would “turn into an open religious war” and that Israeli Foreign Minister [Yair Lapid](#) had promised to allow “Jewish extremists to break into the al-Aqsa Mosque.”<sup>20</sup>

The “Al-Aqsa is in danger libel” frequently is used when Israel engages in any archaeological activity in Jerusalem, even as Palestinians have damaged and discarded relics. For example, when an underground mosque was built, 13,000 tons of dirt containing artifacts from the First and Second Temple periods were sent to garbage dumps, rendering many ruins useless.<sup>21</sup>

The Palestinians often regurgitate the libel even when Israel is engaged in activities outside the Temple Mount and nowhere near the mosques. For example, an Islamic group protested Jewish actions in the nearby village of Silwan because it is “the gateway to al-Aqsa Mosque.”<sup>22</sup>

The most significant international uproar occurred in 1996 when Israel completed digging a tunnel along the length of the Western Wall, revealing two thousand-year-old stones where the street had once been. The project was nowhere near the Temple Mount; nevertheless, the [Arab League](#) falsely claimed Israel wanted “to cause the collapse of the al-Aqsa Mosque so that it can build the Third Temple in its stead.”<sup>23</sup> Palestinians rioted, and attacks on soldiers and civilians resulted in the deaths of 15 Israeli soldiers and dozens of injuries.

**We all know perfectly well that Al-Aqsa mosque is in no danger. Ironically—I am ashamed to admit it—thanks to the Israel Police, Al-Aqsa is the safest mosque in the Middle East.**

**—Bassam Tawil<sup>24</sup>**

[Jews](#), like other non-Muslims, have been going to the Temple Mount since 1967. Still, the Israeli government limits visits by non-Muslims to specific times and insists that visitors show sensitivity to Muslims by dressing modestly, refraining from bringing any Jewish sacred objects with them, or praying. Jews do not enter the mosque; nevertheless, they are often falsely accused of “storming” al-Aqsa.<sup>25</sup>

Palestinians have also begun to refer to the entire Temple Mount as the “al-Aqsa mosque complex” to justify their objections to Jewish visitors and rationalize violence against them.

Extremist Jewish groups suspected of plotting against Muslim shrines are prohibited from the Temple Mount. When their schemes are uncovered, they are arrested.<sup>26</sup>

**The al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher are ours. They are all ours, and they [Jews] have no right to defile them with their filthy feet. We salute every drop of blood spilled for the sake of Jerusalem. This blood is clean, pure blood, shed for the sake of Allah, Allah willing. Every martyr will be placed in Paradise, and all the wounded will be rewarded by Allah.**

**—Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas<sup>27</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Palestinians treat the al-Aqsa Mosque with the reverence it deserves.*

## ***FACT***

With the approval and sometimes incitement of the Waqf and Mahmoud Abbas’s Palestinian Authority, many Palestinians have desecrated their holy places by using them as armories and instigating riots against non-Muslim visitors and the police trying to protect them.

“We contaminate our mosques with our own hands and feet, and then blame Jews for

desecrating Islamic holy sites,” according to Middle East scholar Bassam Tawil. “If anyone is desecrating Islamic holy sites, it is those who bring explosives, stones, and firebombs into Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Jews who visit the Temple Mount do not bring with them stones, bombs, or clubs. It is young Muslim men who are desecrating our holy sites with their ‘filthy feet’” (a reference to Abbas’s slur against Jews visiting the Temple Mount).<sup>28</sup>



Screenshot from [@FahmiLwa](#) (April 16, 2022)

As Tawil noted, Palestinians sometimes stockpile stones inside the mosque to throw at Jewish tourists and worshippers praying at the Western Wall. Israeli police were accused of desecrating the mosque when they were sent to prevent Palestinians from attacking Jews in April 2022; however, photographs and video revealed that Palestinians displayed disrespect for the holy place. In addition to using the mosque as an arsenal, some Palestinians were seen playing soccer and wearing shoes, which is not permitted in the mosque.<sup>29</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Jews have no right to pray on the Temple Mount.*

## ***FACT***

Critics of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem inevitably raise the issue of freedom of worship. They are only interested, however, in the rights of Muslims and Christians, ignoring the fact that they are protected by Israeli law. It is hard to find non-Jews who defend the right of Jews to pray at their holiest site – the Temple Mount.

The Israeli government has prohibited Jews from praying on the Temple Mount out of fear that it will provoke violence by Muslims who deny the holiness of the area to Jews and rewrite history to erase the existence of the first and second temples that stood on the Temple Mount, insist that Jews have no right to pray at an Islamic holy place, and refuse to accept Israeli or Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem or any other part of “Palestine.”

After a court ruled in favor of four teens who had been arrested for praying on the Temple Mount, a higher court reversed the decision, with Judge Einat Avman Muller saying that freedom of Jewish worship on the Temple Mount “is not absolute, and it should be superseded by other interests, among them the safeguarding of public order.”

Before the ruling, police sometimes turned a blind eye to discreet Jewish prayer services, typically held in secluded areas on the 30-plus acres of the Temple Mount that have no significance to Muslims. Still, Palestinian and Muslim officials complained.

“We face constant racist discrimination and infringement on our human rights,” Sheikh Omar al-Kiswani, the director of the al-Aqsa Mosque, told the *New York Times* without explaining how a handful of Jews exercising their freedom of religion encroached on Muslims’ opportunity to do the same.

Azzam Khatib, the deputy chairman of the Waqf council, complained, “Now they’re taking over the whole plaza, with the protection of the police.”<sup>30</sup>

The Palestinians want to redefine the entire Temple Mount as holy and associate it with their identity. “Many Palestinians consider the Aqsa compound the embodiment of Palestinian identity, the animating force behind the aspiration for a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem.”<sup>31</sup>

The Temple Mount has an association with Islam but has nothing to do with Palestinian identity, which is one reason why the Palestinians raised no objections to the [Jordanian occupation](#) of the area for 19 years or its continuing administrative oversight.

The reaction to Jews praying on the Temple Mount raises several questions:

- Why should anyone accept this as a provocation when it does not infringe on the rights of Muslims?
- Why should Jews be denied the freedom to worship at Judaism's holiest place in the capital of Israel?
- If Palestinians react violently, shouldn't *they* be condemned rather than the Jews engaged in prayer?
- What does it say about the prospect of freedom of religion in a Palestinian state if Jews are told they are not permitted to worship at their holy places?

## **MYTH**

*The United States should not have recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital.*

## **FACT**

“International law makes states the sole determinants of their own capital.”<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, of the 190 nations with which America has diplomatic relations, Israel was the only one whose capital was not recognized by the U.S. government before President [Donald Trump's announcement on December 6, 2017](#). The president's recognition of Jerusalem was a long overdue step, which came months after [Russia](#) announced its recognition of Israel's capital.<sup>33</sup>

The president's actions were consistent with the will of [Congress](#), which passed a resolution in 1990 declaring that “Jerusalem is and should remain the capital of the State of Israel” and “must remain an undivided city in which the rights of every ethnic and religious group are protected.” Trump also adhered to the [Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995](#), which required the embassy to be moved to Jerusalem, but had been ignored by successive presidents who used a waiver provided by the legislation to postpone the move if they deemed it in the best interest of the United States.

Critics of the president's action made dire predictions of the Middle East going up in flames because outraged Muslims would violently protest the decision. They also insisted all hope for peace between Israel and the Palestinians would be dashed.

The Muslim world was unhappy with the U.S. decision but did not erupt in violence. The Palestinians declared three “days of rage,” and some violent protests occurred, many staged for the benefit of journalists; however, the reaction in the rest of the Middle East was muted.<sup>34</sup> This was partly because most Arab leaders have reconciled themselves to the reality that Jerusalem is Israel's capital. They also have no interest in upheaval in their countries, especially given their existing domestic problems and external threats from Iran and radical Islamists.

The recognition of Jerusalem did not affect peace negotiations because there were none at the time of the announcement. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has refused to enter talks with Israel since 2008. If anything, Trump's decision may have enhanced the prospects for peace by making clear that the United States believes Jerusalem should remain unified under Israeli sovereignty and that Palestinian demands to have a capital in the city's heart are unrealistic.

As President Trump said, U.S. recognition does not preclude the parties from agreeing on future borders. Indeed, the Trump [peace plan](#) offered the Palestinians a state with a capital in the Jerusalem suburb of [Abu Dis](#), where the Palestinians have already constructed a parliament building.

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Sykes, “Holy City,” [Encounter](#), (February 1968).

<sup>2</sup> John Oesterreicher and Anne Sinai, eds., *Jerusalem*, (NY: John Day, 1974), p. 1; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics; Jerusalem Foundation; Municipality of Jerusalem. Totals include those classified as “other.”

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Dennis Ross, Fox News Sunday, (April 21, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> “The PA Mufti: Jews From Germany Should Return There,” *Die Welt*, (January 17, 2001), [Translation by [MEMRI](#)].

<sup>5</sup> Leon and Jill Uris, *Jerusalem*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1981), p. 13.

- <sup>6</sup>Etgar Lefkovits, “Nusseibeh: Jews Have Bond with Jerusalem,” [Jerusalem Post](#), (November 12, 2001).
- <sup>7</sup>Teddy Kollek, *Jerusalem*, (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1990), pp. 19–20.
- <sup>8</sup>Kollek, p. 15.
- <sup>9</sup>Kollek, p. 16.
- <sup>10</sup>Kollek, p. 15.
- <sup>11</sup>Pearl Sheffy Gefen, “Irshad Manji, Muslim Refusenik,” *Lifestyles Magazine*, (Summer 2004), p. 29.
- <sup>12</sup>Voice of Palestine, Algiers, (September 2, 1993).
- <sup>13</sup>Nir Hasson, “Israel Eases Path to Citizenship for 20,000 East Jerusalem Palestinians,” [Haaretz](#), (November 25, 2020).
- <sup>14</sup>David Pollock, “Half of Jerusalem’s Palestinians Would Prefer Israeli to Palestinian Citizenship,” [Fikra Forum](#), (August 21, 2015).
- <sup>15</sup>Saudi Press Agency, (July 15, 1986).
- <sup>16</sup>Arthur J. Goldberg, “What Goldberg Didn’t Say,” [New York Times](#), (March 12, 1980).
- <sup>17</sup>Stephen M. Schwebel, “What Weight to Conquest?” *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 64, no. 2, (April 1970), 346–47.
- <sup>18</sup>Mike Seid, “Western Wall Was Never Part of Temple,” [Jerusalem Post](#), (October 25, 2007).
- <sup>19</sup>Bassam Tawil. “Palestinians: Why our leaders are hypocrites and liars,” [Gatestone Institute](#). (October 4, 2015).
- <sup>20</sup>Maurice Hirsch, “The PA and Fatah are behind the current terror,” [JNS](#), (April 11, 2022).
- <sup>21</sup>Mark Ami-El, “The Destruction Of The Temple Mount Antiquities,” [JCPA](#), (August 1, 2002); Eric J. Greenberg, “Troubles Mount for Effort To Rescue Temple Artifacts,” [Forward](#), (May 27, 2005); Julie Stahl, “Temple Mount Antiquities Destroyed In ‘Cultural Intifadah,’” [CNS News](#), (July 7, 2008); Nir Hasson, “‘Waqf Temple Mount Excavation Damaged Archaeological Relics,’” [Haaretz](#), (May 17, 2011); Itsik Saba, “Palestinians mark Ramadan by destroying Temple Mount antiquities,” [Israel Hayom](#), (April 29, 2022).
- <sup>22</sup>Rafael Israeli, “From Arab Spring to Islamic Winter,” (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2013), p. 291.
- <sup>23</sup>Nadav Shagari, “The ‘Al-Aqsa Is in Danger’ Libel: The History of a Lie,” [Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs](#), (2012), pp. 100–101.
- <sup>24</sup>Bassam Tawil, “Muslim Blood and Al-Aqsa,” [Gatestone Institute](#), (October 31, 2015).
- <sup>25</sup>See, for example, “Waqf official decries ‘dangerous’ Jewish prayers held discreetly on Temple Mount,” [Times of Israel](#), (August 25, 2021); “Hundreds of Israeli settlers storm Jerusalem’s Al-Aqsa amid tensions,” [Daily Sabah](#), (April 20, 2022);
- <sup>26</sup>“Six extremist Jews arrested for planning animal sacrifice atop Temple Mount,” [Times of Israel](#), (April 14, 2022).
- <sup>27</sup>PA TV (September 16, 2015), translated by [MEMRI](#).
- <sup>28</sup>Bassam Tawil. “Palestinians: Why our leaders are hypocrites and liars,” [Gatestone Institute](#). (October 4, 2015).

“Palestinians are playing soccer at the Al Aqsa mosque,” [YouTube](#), (April 16, 2022).

<sup>30</sup> Ilhan Ben Zion, “Jewish prayers held discreetly at contested Jerusalem shrine,” [AP](#), (August 25, 2021).

<sup>31</sup> Patrick Kingsley and Adam Razon, “In Shift, Israel Quietly Allows Jewish Prayer on Temple Mount,” [New York Times](#), (August 24, 2021).

<sup>32</sup> Aviv Bell, “Flaw in U.S. Policy: Even PLO Recognizes Israel’s Right to West Jerusalem,” [New York Jewish Week](#), (June 17, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Raphael Ayren, “In curious first, Russia recognizes West Jerusalem as Israel’s capital,” [Times of Israel](#), (April 6, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> Bassam Tawil, “The Real Palestinian Response to Trump’s Jerusalem Speech,” [Gatestone Institute](#), (December 7, 2017).

# Chapter 13

## U.S. Middle East Policy

[The creation of Israel resulted solely from U.S. pressure.](#)

[The U.S. supported creating a Jewish state because of the “Jewish lobby.”](#)

[The U.S. and Israel have nothing in common.](#)

[Most Americans oppose a close U.S. relationship with Israel.](#)

[U.S. policy has always been hostile toward the Arabs.](#)

[The U.S. always supports Israel.](#)

[U.S. aid to the Middle East has always favored Israel.](#)

[Israel doesn’t need U.S. military assistance.](#)

[Israel has no strategic value to the U.S.](#)

[The U.S. has the formula to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians.](#)

### **MYTH**

*The creation of Israel resulted solely from U.S. pressure.*

### **FACT**

When the [UN](#) took up the question of Palestine, President [Harry Truman](#) explicitly said the [United States](#) should not “use threats or improper pressure of any kind on other delegations.”<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, some pressure was exerted, and the United States played a crucial role in securing support for the [partition](#) resolution. U.S. influence was limited, however, as became clear when American dependents such as [Cuba](#) and [Greece](#) voted against partition, and [El Salvador](#) and [Honduras](#) abstained.

Many members of the Truman administration opposed partition and tried to undermine U.S. support for establishing a Jewish state. Defense Secretary James Forrestal, for example, believed [Zionist](#) aims threatened American [oil](#) supplies and its strategic position in the region. The joint chiefs of staff worried [Arab states](#) might align themselves with the Soviets. The State Department tried to sabotage partition, fearing its negative impact on U.S.-Arab relations.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union supported partition—primarily to evict the British—the first foreign policy issue on which the soon-to-be Cold War rivals agreed.

Much has been written about the tactics of the supporters of partition, while the behavior of the [Arab lobby](#) has been largely ignored. Arab states and their supporters were no less active in arm-twisting at the UN to scuttle partition.<sup>3</sup>

### **MYTH**

*The U.S. supported creating a Jewish state because of the “Jewish lobby.”*

### **FACT**

President Harry Truman supported the Zionist movement because he believed the international community was obligated to fulfill the promise of the [Balfour Declaration](#) and that alleviating the plight of the Jewish survivors of the [Holocaust](#) was the humanitarian thing to do. A sense of his attitude can be gleaned from a remark he made regarding negotiations over the boundaries of a Jewish state:

The whole region waits to be developed, and if it were handled the way we developed the Tennessee River basin, it could support from 20 to 30 million people more. To open the door to this kind of future would indeed be the constructive and humanitarian thing to do, and it would also redeem the pledges that were given at the time of [World War I](#).<sup>4</sup>

The American public supported the president's policy. According to [public opinion](#) polls, 65% of Americans supported the creation of a Jewish state.<sup>5</sup> This public support was reflected in Congress, where a [resolution](#) approving the Balfour Declaration was adopted in 1922. In 1944, both national parties called for the Jewish Commonwealth's restoration; in 1945, Congress adopted a similar resolution.

Rather than caving to pressure, Truman reacted negatively to the "[Jewish lobby](#)." He repeatedly complained about being lobbied and talked about putting propaganda from the Jews in a pile and striking a match to it. In a letter to Rep. Claude Pepper, Truman wrote, "Had it not been for the unwarranted interference of the Zionists; we would have had the matter settled a year and a half ago."<sup>6</sup>

This was hardly the attitude of a politician concerned with Jewish voters.

## **MYTH**

*The U.S. and Israel have nothing in common.*

## ***FACT***

The [U.S.-Israel relationship](#) is based on the twin pillars of shared values and mutual interests. Given this commonality of interests and beliefs, it should not be surprising that support for [Israel](#) is one of the American people's most pronounced and consistent foreign policy values.

Americans have long admired Israelis, at least partly because they see much of themselves in their pioneering spirit and struggle for independence. Like the United States, Israel is a nation of [immigrants](#). A multicultural society with people from more than 100 nations, nearly half of all Israelis are Eastern or [Oriental Jews](#) who trace their origins to the ancient Jewish communities of the Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East.

Israel has emerged in less than 80 years as an advanced nation with the characteristics of Western society. This is a function of the common Judeo-Christian heritage and the political and cultural norms European and North American immigrants brought to Israel.

While they live in a region characterized by autocracies, Israelis' commitment to democracy is no less passionate than that of Americans. All citizens of Israel, regardless of race, religion, or sex, are guaranteed equality before the law and full democratic rights. Freedom of speech, assembly, and press are embodied in the country's laws and traditions. Israel's independent judiciary vigorously upholds these rights.

The [political system](#) differs from America's—Israel's is a parliamentary democracy—but it is still based on free elections with divergent parties. Israel does not have a [constitution](#) but has adopted "[Basic Laws](#)" that establish similar legal guarantees.

Initially, Israel had a mixed [economy](#), combining capitalism with socialism like the British model. After experiencing severe economic difficulties, mainly attributable to the [1973 Yom Kippur War](#) and the need to spend a disproportionate share of its gross national product on defense, Israel gradually adopted reforms that reduced the role of the state and shifted the country closer to the free market system of the United States. America has been a partner in this evolution.

The special relationship is also reflected in various [shared value initiatives](#), which cover a broad range of common interests, such as the environment, energy, space, education, occupational safety, and health. More than 400 American institutions in 47 states, the [District of Columbia](#), and [Puerto Rico](#) have received funds from [binational programs](#) with Israel. Israel has [direct ties](#) with 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. In addition, the [Free Trade Agreement](#), [Co-operative Development Research Program](#), [Middle East Regional Cooperation Program](#), and various memoranda of understanding with virtually every U.S. governmental agency demonstrate the depth of the bond between countries.

In the 1980s, attention increasingly focused on shared interests. The [Reagan administration](#) saw the [Soviet Union](#) as a



threat to American Middle East interests and Israel as a bulwark of democracy in the region. Reagan formally recognized Israel's role through [strategic cooperation](#) agreements. The United States knows it can count on Israel to help protect American interests.

## **MYTH**

*Most Americans oppose a close U.S. relationship with Israel.*

## ***FACT***

Support for Israel is not restricted to the Jewish community. Americans of all ages, races, and religions sympathize with Israel. This support is also nonpartisan.

The best indication of [Americans' attitude toward Israel](#) is the response to the most consistently asked question about the Middle East: "In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with Israel or with the Arab nations?"

In 91 [Gallup polls](#) dating to 1967, Israel has had the support of an average of 49% of the American people compared to 13% for the Arab states/Palestinians. In 38 Gallup polls conducted since 1996, when "Arab nations" was replaced with "Palestinians," Israel is favored 53%-16%.

Some people have the misperception that sympathy for Israel was once much higher. Before the [Gulf War](#), the peak had been 56%, reached just after the [Six-Day War](#). Since then, support for Israel has reached as high as 64%, most recently in 2018.

Gallup also takes regular [polls on world affairs](#). In 2022, 71% of Americans rated Israel favorably compared to 27% for the [Palestinian Authority](#).

## **MYTH**

*U.S. policy has always been hostile toward the Arabs.*

## ***FACT***

Arabs rarely acknowledge the American role in helping the Arab states achieve independence. President Wilson's stand for self-determination for all nations, and the U.S. entry into World War I, contributed to the dissolution of the [Ottoman Empire](#) and stimulated the move toward independence in the Arab world.

In the past, Arab leaders saw U.S. policy as a zero-sum game whereby support for their enemy, Israel, necessarily disadvantaged them. Arab states tried to force the United States to choose between support for them or Israel and blamed America for their defeats in wars they initiated with Israel.<sup>7</sup> Over time, the alliance with Israel has not harmed relations with Arab states.

The United States has long sought friendly relations with Arab leaders and has, at one time or another, been on good terms with most Arab states. In the 1930s, the discovery of [oil](#) led U.S. companies to become closely involved with the [Gulf Arabs](#). In the 1950s, U.S. strategic objectives stimulated an effort to ally with pro-Western Arab states. Countries such as [Iraq](#) and [Libya](#) were friends of the United States before radical leaders took over those governments. [Egypt](#), hostile toward the United States under [Gamal Abdel Nasser](#), shifted to the pro-Western camp under [Anwar Sadat](#).

Since [World War II](#), the United States has poured economic and military assistance into the region. [Jordan](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [Morocco](#), Egypt, and the Gulf sheikdoms are under its security umbrella. Tensions over U.S. policy toward Israel have dissipated since the signing of the Abraham Accords, apart from Iraq and [Syria](#), which remain technically at war with Israel.

## **MYTH**

*The U.S. always supports Israel.*

## **FACT**

America has been Israel's closest ally; nevertheless, the United States has repeatedly acted against the Jewish State's wishes.

The U.S. effort to balance support for Israel with placating Arab leaders began in 1948 when [President Truman](#) wavered on partition. After the Arab states [invaded](#) Israel, the United States instituted an arms embargo that severely restricted the Jews' ability to defend themselves.

In October 1953, the United States halted economic aid to Israel for three weeks to protest an Israeli project on the [Jordan River](#) in the demilitarized zone.

The United States has been unwilling to insist on projects to resettle [Arab refugees](#). It has also been reluctant to challenge Arab violations of the [UN Charter](#) and resolutions. The United States also opposes Israel at the [UN](#) more often than not and did not use its [Security Council veto](#) to block an anti-Israel resolution until 1972.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of American policy diverging from Israel's occurred when [President Dwight Eisenhower](#) opposed the [Suez War](#) and pressured Israel to withdraw from the territory it captured.

American presidents have sometimes punished Israel. For example, [Ronald Reagan](#) suspended a [strategic cooperation agreement](#) after Israel [annexed](#) the [Golan Heights](#) and held up the [delivery of fighter planes](#) because of unhappiness over an Israeli raid in [Lebanon](#).

In 1991, [President George H.W. Bush](#) delayed approving Israel's request for [loan guarantees](#) to help absorb [Soviet](#) and [Ethiopian Jews](#) because he disagreed with Israel's [settlement](#) policy.

[Bill Clinton](#) and [George W. Bush](#) were considered pro-Israel but criticized Israel numerous times. During the first year of the [al-Aqsa intifada](#), while Bush was president, the United States imposed an arms embargo on spare parts for helicopters because of anger over using U.S.-made helicopters in [targeted killings](#). The Bush administration also punished Israel for agreeing to sell military equipment to [China](#) in 2005.<sup>8</sup>

[Barack Obama](#) was extremely critical of Israeli policy and publicly demanded a freeze on settlement construction. Several other confrontations occurred publicly and privately, along with threats of punitive measures if Israel did not accede to the president's ultimatums. The two countries also bitterly disagreed on how to stop [Iran's nuclear program](#). Because of his approach to Israel and broader Middle East policy, polls in Israel found unprecedented distrust of the president's commitment to Israel. In one 2016 poll, 63% of Israelis rated Obama the worst president for Israel in the last thirty years; [Jimmy Carter](#) was a distant second at 16%.<sup>9</sup>

[Donald Trump](#) did not criticize Israel publicly, but disputes arose over Israeli commercial contracts with China (which were also a cause of tension with his predecessors).

At the outset of his administration, [Joe Biden](#) refrained from public criticism of Israel but was [at odds](#) with Israel over several issues, including settlement construction, reopening the [Jerusalem consulate](#), and his desire to return to the [nuclear agreement](#) with Iran.

**Our society is illuminated by the spiritual insights of the Hebrew prophets. America and Israel have a common love of human freedom, and they have a common faith in a democratic way of life.**

**—President Lyndon Johnson<sup>10</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*U.S. aid to the Middle East has always favored Israel.*

### **FACT**

After Israel's victory in its [War of Independence](#), the United States responded to an appeal for economic [aid](#) to help absorb immigrants by approving a \$135 million Export-Import Bank loan and the sale of surplus commodities. In those early years of Israel's statehood (also today), U.S. aid was seen as a means of promoting peace.

In 1951, Congress voted to help Israel cope with the economic burdens imposed by the influx of Jewish refugees from the [displaced persons](#) camps in Europe and the Arab world. Arab leaders complained the United States was neglecting them, though they had no interest in or use for American aid. In 1951, [Syria](#) rejected offers of U.S. aid. Oil-rich Iraq and Saudi Arabia did not need assistance (yet the Saudis have received aid), and Jordan was, until the late 1950s, the ward of Great Britain. After 1957, when the United States began supporting Jordan and resumed economic aid to Egypt, assistance to the Arab states soared. Additionally, the United States has been the biggest contributor of aid to the Palestinians through the [United Nations Relief and Works Agency \(UNRWA\)](#).

Before 1971, Israel received only \$277 million in military aid, all in the form of loans. The bulk of the economic aid was also lent to Israel. By comparison, the Arab states received nearly three times as much aid before 1971, \$4.4 billion, or \$170 million per year. Moreover, unlike Israel, which received nearly all its aid from the United States, Arab nations have obtained assistance from Asia, Eastern Europe, Russia, and the European Community.

Israel did not begin to receive large amounts of assistance until 1974, following the [1973 War](#), and the sums increased dramatically after the [Camp David agreements](#). Since 1949, Israel has received more than [\\$150 billion](#) in assistance.

In 1998, Israel voluntarily offered to reduce its dependence on U.S. aid, and economic assistance was phased out over the next ten years. Israel subsequently signed a ten-year deal for \$30 billion in military assistance, and, in 2016, a new ten-year agreement was signed worth \$38 billion.

Arab states that have signed peace agreements with Israel have also been rewarded. Since the [peace treaty](#) with Israel, Egypt has been the second largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid (\$1.5 billion annually, mostly military aid, compared to Israel's \$3.1 billion). Jordan has also benefited from higher aid levels since it signed a [treaty](#) with Israel. The multibillion-dollar debts to the United States of both Arab nations were also forgiven. Signatories to the [Abraham Accords](#) also received economic and military inducements.

After the [Oslo agreements](#), the United States began providing [aid to the Palestinian Authority](#). Since the mid-1990s, the Palestinians, among the largest per capita recipients of foreign aid worldwide, have received nearly \$6 billion in U.S. economic assistance.<sup>11</sup>

### **MYTH**

*Israel doesn't need U.S. military assistance.*

### **FACT**

Israel's security has improved dramatically thanks to the Abraham Accords. Previously, Israel had peace treaties with only Egypt and Jordan. Still, enemies along its borders and beyond remain a threat.

In the [Gaza Strip](#), Iran supports  [Hamas](#) terrorists who have bombarded Israel with thousands of [rockets](#) since Israel evacuated the area. Thanks to the lifesaving [Iron Dome](#) missile defense system developed with American funding, it has minimized the threat. The U.S. has also paid to replenish the supply of interceptors used to shoot down incoming projectiles.

Israel also faces danger from [Hezbollah](#), which has amassed more than 100,000 rockets and, with Iran's help, is improving their range and accuracy.

Syria remains technically at war with Israel but has been preoccupied with its civil war. The instability created opportunities for the infiltration of forces from Hezbollah and Iran allied with [Bashar Assad](#). Iran wants to establish a bridgehead in Syria to launch attacks against Israel.

Iran's development of [nuclear weapons](#) poses the most serious threat to Israel. Despite assurances by President Barack Obama that the [nuclear deal](#) he negotiated would stop Iran from developing a weapon, Tehran violated the agreement's terms and moved closer to having the capability to build a bomb. Since the U.S. [withdrew](#) from the deal in 2018, Iran has openly flouted the agreement and was estimated in 2022 to have enough uranium, if enriched to a higher level of purity, to build several nuclear bombs.<sup>12</sup>

Israel must prepare for the worst. It is conceivable that enemies will band together, as they have in the past, to endanger its security. Therefore, Israel must rely on its [qualitative advantage](#) to ensure it can defeat its enemies, which can only be guaranteed by the continued purchase of the latest weapons. New tanks, missiles, and planes carry high price tags, but Israel cannot afford what it needs on its own, so continued aid from the United States is vital to its security.

## **MYTH**

*Israel has no strategic value to the U.S.*

## ***FACT***

In 1952, Gen. Omar Bradley, head of the joint chiefs of staff, believed Israel could supply two of the 19 divisions needed to defend the Middle East. He also expected only three states to provide the West power in Middle Eastern defense by 1955: [Great Britain](#), [Turkey](#), and Israel. Bradley's analysis was rejected because the political echelon decided it was more important for the United States to work with Egypt and, later, Iraq. It was feared that integrating Israeli forces into Western strategy would alienate Arab leaders.<sup>13</sup>

After trying unsuccessfully to build an alliance with Arab states, the National Security Council Planning Board concluded in 1958 that "if we choose to combat radical Arab nationalism and to hold Persian Gulf [oil](#) by force if necessary, then a logical corollary would be to support Israel as the only pro-West power left in the Near East."<sup>14</sup>

Israel's crushing victory over the combined Arab forces in 1967 reinforced this view. The following year, the United States [sold Israel sophisticated planes](#) for the first time. Washington shifted its Middle East policy from seeking a balance of forces to ensuring that Israel enjoyed a qualitative edge over its enemies.

Israel proved its value in 1970 when the United States asked for help bolstering [King Hussein's](#) regime. Israel's willingness to aid Amman, and the movement of troops to the Jordanian border, persuaded Syria to withdraw the tanks it had sent into Jordan to support [PLO](#) forces challenging the king during "[Black September](#)."<sup>15</sup>

By the early 1970s, no Arab state could or would contribute to Western defense in the Middle East. The [Baghdad Pact](#) had long ago expired, and the regimes friendly to the United States were weak compared to the anti-Western forces in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. Even after Egypt's reorientation following the signing of its [peace treaty with Israel](#), the United States did not count on any Arab governments for military assistance.

The [Carter administration](#) began to implement a form of strategic cooperation (it was not referred to as such) by making Israel eligible to sell military equipment to the United States. The willingness to engage in limited, joint military endeavors was viewed by President Jimmy Carter as a means of rewarding Israel for "good behavior" in peace talks with Egypt.

Though reluctant to formalize the relationship, strategic cooperation became a significant focus of the U.S.-Israel relationship when Ronald Reagan entered office. Before his election, Reagan had written, "Only by full appreciation of the critical role the State of Israel plays in our strategic calculus can we build the foundation for thwarting Moscow's designs on territories and resources vital to our security and our national well-being."<sup>16</sup>

Reagan's view culminated in the signing of a [Memorandum of Understanding on "strategic cooperation"](#) in 1981. In 1983, a new agreement was signed creating the Joint Political-Military Group (JPMG) and a group to oversee security assistance, the Joint Security Assistance Planning Group (JSAP).

In 1987, Congress designated Israel as a major non-NATO ally. This law formally established Israel as an ally. It allowed its industries to compete equally with NATO countries and other close U.S. allies for contracts to produce a substantial number of defense items.

**Since the rebirth of the State of Israel, there has been an ironclad bond between that democracy and this one.**

**—President Ronald Reagan<sup>17</sup>**

By the end of President Reagan's term, the United States had prepositioned equipment in Israel, regularly held joint training exercises, began co-development of the [Arrow Anti-Tactical Ballistic Missile](#), and was engaged in a host of other cooperative military endeavors. In 1988, Reagan signed [another MOU](#) encompassing all prior agreements. This agreement institutionalized the strategic relationship.

U.S.-Israel strategic cooperation has continued to evolve. Israel now regularly engages in joint training exercises with U.S. forces, and in 2005, for the first time, also trained and exercised with NATO forces.

The United States often [adopts](#) Israeli-developed weapons systems and enhancements. These include a laser range finder to assist marines in concealed positions with imaging, range finding, and navigation through combat areas; the Iron Fist Light Configuration active protection system for armored personnel carriers; tunnel detection equipment; and Reactive Armor Tiles that protect tanks and the soldiers within them.

In 2007, the United States and Israel signed an MOU formalizing cooperation in [homeland security](#). Even before that, Israel routinely hosted U.S. law enforcement officers and first responders to share knowledge about the prevention of terror attacks and response to emergencies.

The U.S. Central Command incorporated Israel under its coverage during the [Trump adminn](#). Subsequently, the U.S. began working to build a regional alliance including Israel and its Arab allies, which was impossible before the [Abraham Accords](#).<sup>18</sup>

Today, strategic ties are stronger than ever, and Israel has become a de facto ally of the United States. America purchases innovative and advanced Israeli weapons systems works with Israeli defense companies, and shares intelligence.

Most important, Israel remains America's most dependable ally in the region.

## **MYTH**

*The U.S. has the formula to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians.*

## ***FACT***

The European Union, [Russia](#), and the [UN](#) have pursued largely one-sided policies in the Middle East that are detrimental to Israel, disqualifying them as honest brokers. The United States is the only country with the trust of the Israelis and the Arabs, making it the only third party that can play a constructive role in the [peace process](#). Historically, however, [American peace initiatives](#) always fail.

The Eisenhower administration tried to ease tensions by [proposing the joint Arab-Israeli use of the Jordan River](#). The plan would have helped the Arab refugees by producing more irrigated land and reducing Israel's need for more water resources. Israel cautiously accepted the project; the [Arab League](#) rejected it.

[President Lyndon Johnson](#) outlined [five principles for peace](#). “The first and greatest principle,” Johnson said, “is that every nation in the area has a fundamental right to live and to have this right respected by its neighbors.” The [Arab response](#) came a few weeks later: “no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it.”

[President Richard Nixon’s](#) secretary of state, William Rogers, offered a [plan](#) to “balance” U.S. policy but leaned on the Israelis to withdraw to the pre-1967 borders, accept many Palestinian refugees, and allow Jordan a role in [Jerusalem](#). The plan was unacceptable to Israel and, even though it tilted toward the Arab position, was rejected by Arab leaders.

[President Gerald Ford’s](#) secretary of state, [Henry Kissinger](#), had a little more success in his shuttle diplomacy, arranging the [disengagement of forces](#) after the [1973 War](#). He never put forward a peace plan, however, and failed to move the parties beyond the cessation of hostilities to normalization.

[President Jimmy Carter](#) was the model for presidential engagement in the conflict. His mediation helped finalize the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement, but he had wanted to convene an international conference in [Geneva](#) to produce a comprehensive peace deal. Egypt and Israel conducted secret negotiations that laid the foundation for a deal. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat believed Carter’s policy was so misguided he bypassed the Americans to [speak](#) directly to the Israeli people at the [Knesset](#). By doing so, he broke a psychological barrier to peace. That, combined with Israeli Prime Minister [Menachem Begin’s](#) willingness to compromise, allowed Carter to seal the deal at [Camp David](#).

**The United States was the first country to recognize Israel in 1948, minutes after its declaration of independence, and the deep bonds of friendship between the U.S. and Israel remain as strong and as unshakeable as ever.**

**—President Barack Obama<sup>19</sup>**

In 1982, President Reagan announced a [peace initiative](#) that called for allowing the Palestinians self-rule in the territories in association with Jordan. The plan rejected both Israeli annexation and the creation of a Palestinian state. Israel denounced the plan as endangering Israeli security. The plan had been formulated to pacify the Arab states, which had been angered by the expulsion of the [PLO](#) from [Beirut](#), but they also rejected the Reagan Plan.

[George H.W. Bush’s administration](#) succeeded in convening a historic regional [conference in Madrid](#) in 1991, but it ended without any agreements. Moreover, Bush’s perceived hostility toward Israel eroded trust and made it difficult to convince Israelis to take risks for peace.

[President Bill Clinton](#) barely had time to get his vision of peace together when he discovered the Israelis had secretly negotiated an agreement with the Palestinians in [Oslo](#). The United States had nothing to do with the breakthrough at Oslo and little influence on the immediate aftermath. The peace process became increasingly muddled as the United States got more involved.

[Peace with Jordan](#) also required no real American involvement. The Israelis and Jordanians already agreed on the main terms of peace. The obstacle had been [King Hussein’s](#) unwillingness to sign a treaty before Israel reached an agreement with the Palestinians. After Oslo, he felt safe to move forward, and no American plan was needed.

In a last-ditch effort to save his presidential legacy, Clinton put forward a [peace plan](#) to establish a Palestinian state. In this case, Prime Minister [Ehud Barak’s](#) willingness to offer dramatic concessions raised the prospects for an agreement rather than the president’s initiative. Even after Barak agreed to Clinton’s “parameters” that would have created a Palestinian state in virtually all the [West Bank](#) and [Gaza](#), with East Jerusalem as its capital, the Palestinians rejected the deal.

[President George W. Bush](#) also offered a [plan](#), but it was undercut by [Yasser Arafat](#), who obstructed the required reforms of the Palestinian Authority and refused to prevent terrorism. Bush’s plan morphed into the [Road Map](#), which was never implemented because of continuing Palestinian violence.

The peace process only began to move again when Prime Minister [Ariel Sharon](#) made his [disengagement proposal](#), a unilateral approach the State Department opposed. Rather than try to capitalize on the momentum created by Israel’s

evacuation of the Gaza Strip; however, the Bush administration remained wedded to the Road Map that led nowhere.

In his first term, [President Barack Obama's](#) initiatives resulted in losing Arab and Israeli confidence in the United States and enabled Palestinian president [Mahmoud Abbas](#) to avoid negotiations. Ultimately, officials conceded a peace agreement was “not in the cards.”<sup>20</sup>

[President Donald Trump](#) was confident he could barter a deal between the Israelis and Palestinians. His administration had little contact with the Palestinians due to mutual distrust, so no one was surprised when Abbas rejected the “[deal of the century](#)” Trump proposed. Trump did, however, achieve a breakthrough by persuading the [United Arab Emirates](#) and [Bahrain](#) to abandon their longstanding refusal to normalize relations with Israel until a deal with the Palestinians was reached. The [Abraham Accords](#) that emerged were later joined by [Sudan](#) and [Morocco](#). All but Sudan had informal relations before Trump got involved.

[Joe Biden](#) came into office intent on restoring relations with the Palestinians and committing to pursuing a two-state solution. He recognized, however, that neither side was interested in resuming negotiations and was reluctant to put forward yet another U.S. proposal with no chance of success.

The United States can play a valuable role as a mediator, but the parties themselves must resolve their differences. The obstacle to Israeli-Palestinian peace is not the absence of an American framework, a lack of U.S. commitment, or the failure to sufficiently pressure Israel. The impediments have not changed since the first two-state solution was proposed in 1937, namely, the unwillingness of the Palestinians to agree to live in peace in their own state beside a Jewish state and the refusal of radical [Muslims](#) to accept Jews ruling over Muslims or “Islamic land.”

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, (DC: GPO, 1948), pp. 1173–74, 1198–99, 1248, 1284 [Henceforth FRUS 1947].

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell Bard, [The Water's Edge and Beyond](#), (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), p. 132.

<sup>3</sup> FRUS, pp. 1947, 1313; see also, Mitchell Bard, [The Arab Lobby: The Invisible Alliance That Undermines America's Interest in the Middle East](#), (NY: HarperCollins, 2010), pp. 17–36.

<sup>4</sup> Harry Truman, [Years of Trial and Hope](#), Vol. 2, (NY: Doubleday, 1956), p. 156.

<sup>5</sup> John Snetsinger, [Truman, the Jewish Vote, and the Creation of Israel](#), (Palo Alto, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1974), pp. 9–10; David Schoenbaum, “The United States and the Birth of Israel,” *Wiener Library Bulletin*, (1978), p. 144n.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Cohen, [Truman and Israel](#), (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> See Bard, *The Arab Lobby*, pp. 41–65.

<sup>8</sup> Nathan Guttman, “U.S. Stopped Parts Sales during Intifada,” *Jerusalem Post*, (September 22, 2005); Ze'ev Schiff, “U.S. Sanctions Still in Place, Despite Deal over Security Exports,” [Haaretz](#), (August 28, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Shmuel Rosner, “How Bad Do Israelis Think Obama Is? As Bad as a U.S. President Can Get,” [Jewish Journal](#), (April 28, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> “Remarks at the 125th Anniversary Meeting of B'nai B'rith, September 10, 1968,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the USA— Lyndon Johnson*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1970), p. 947.

<sup>11</sup> Jim Zanotti, “The Palestinians: Overview and Key Issues for U.S. Policy,” [Congressional Research Service](#), (January 28, 2021).

- <sup>12</sup> Laurence Norman, “U.N. Says Iran Has Enough Uranium to Produce Nuclear Weapon,” [\*Wall Street Journal\*](#), (May 30, 2022).
- <sup>13</sup> Dore Gold, [\*America, the Gulf, and Israel\*](#), (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p. 84.
- <sup>14</sup> “Issues Arising out of the Situation in the Near East,” (July 29, 1958), [\*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Vol. XII\*](#), (“Near East Region; Iraq; Iran; Arabian Peninsula”), (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), pp. 114–124.
- <sup>15</sup> “Black September plea to Israel,” [BBC](#), (January 1, 2001).
- <sup>16</sup> Reagan Address to B’nai B’rith, cited in Mitchell Bard, “U.S.-Israel Relations: Looking to the Year 2000,” AIPAC Papers on U.S.-Israel Relations, p. 6.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Michael R. Gordon and David S. Cloud, “U.S. Held Secret Meeting With Israeli, Arab Military Chiefs to Counter Iran Air Threat,” [\*Wall Street Journal\*](#), (June 26, 2022).
- <sup>19</sup> President Barack Obama, Statement on the 61st Anniversary of Israel’s Independence, [The White House](#) (Washington, DC, April 28, 2009).
- <sup>20</sup> Laura Rozen, “White House Says Israel- Palestine Peace ‘Not in the Cards’ for Obama,” [\*Al-Monitor\*](#) (November 6, 2015).



## Chapter 14 The Gaza Strip

[Israel is responsible for blockading Gaza.](#)  
[Israel's blockade of Gaza is collective punishment.](#)  
 [Hamas bombards Israel with rockets to end the "occupation."](#)  
 [Hamas rockets do minor damage and are no threat to Israel.](#)  
 [Israel indiscriminately attacks Palestinian targets in Gaza.](#)  
 [Hamas protects Palestinian civilians.](#)  
 [Israel denies health care and medical supplies to Gaza.](#)  
 [Israel did nothing to help Palestinians respond to COVID-19.](#)  
 [Israel was guilty of war crimes in its operations in Gaza.](#)  
 [Israel uses disproportionate force.](#)

### MYTH

*Israel is responsible for blockading Gaza.*

### FACT

[Israel](#) cannot impose a blockade on its own. [Egypt](#) controls the southern border of the [Gaza Strip](#). It also maintains the blockade to prevent [Hamas](#) from obtaining weapons from [Iran](#) and materials it can use to manufacture [rockets](#) to fire at Israeli cities. Egypt demolished dozens of homes along its border with Gaza to create a buffer zone to stop smugglers and extremists from crossing in either direction and built a wall to prevent their use of tunnels under the border.<sup>1</sup>

The Islamic Research Council of Al-Azhar University in Egypt, the voice of [Sunni Islam](#), has publicly supported Egypt's attempts to destroy the smuggling tunnels between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. "It is one of Egypt's legitimate rights to place a barrier that prevents the harm from the tunnels under Rafah, which are used to smuggle drugs and other (contraband) that threaten Egypt's stability," the Council said. "Those who oppose building this wall are violating the commands of [Islamic Law](#)."<sup>2</sup>

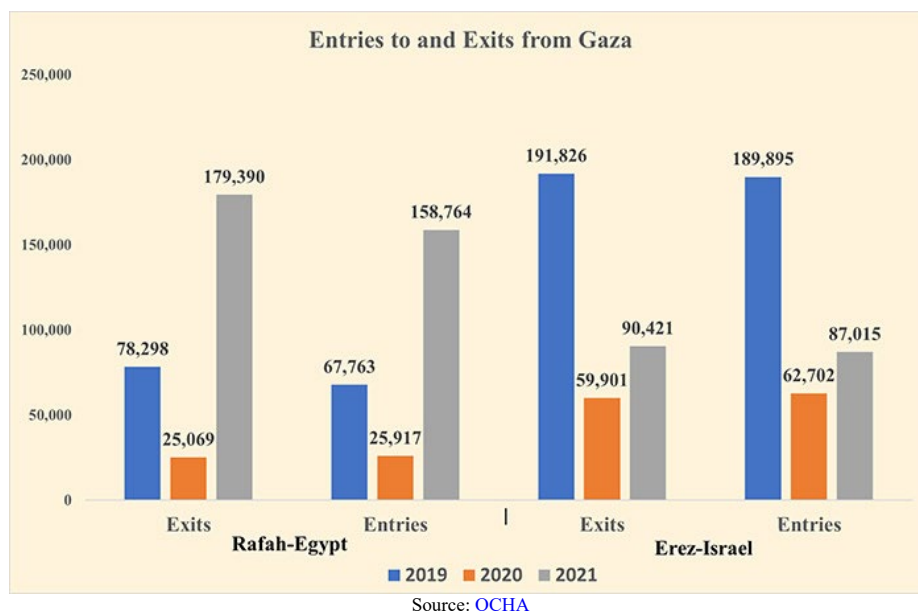
[Palestinian Authority](#) President [Mahmoud Abbas](#) voiced his support of the blockade to U.S. President [Barack Obama](#) when they met at the White House on June 9, 2010. Abbas stated that lifting the blockade would give Hamas access to more weaponry.<sup>3</sup>

### The Gaza Strip



Meanwhile, people, goods, and fuel can enter Egypt through Rafah and the Salah Al-Din crossing. At the border with Israel, the Erez crossing is used for people and the Kerem Shalom for transferring goods and fuel.

In 2021, the [UN](#) recorded 179,390 exits and 158,764 entries via the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt and 90,421 exits and 87,015 entries via the Erez crossing between Gaza and Israel. These figures refer only to the movement of people and are additional to the movement of goods and fuels.



In addition, Israel has also complied with—and exceeded—international law by delivering humanitarian supplies it is not required to provide.

Meanwhile, “peace activists” seeking to break the blockade have not spoken out against Hamas terror or the denial of human rights to [Palestinians](#) by Hamas officials ruling the Gaza Strip. With the possible exception of Turkey, the international community has not opposed the actions of Israel and Egypt because Hamas has refused to meet the conditions for ending the blockade: halting terror attacks, recognizing Israel’s right to exist, and agreeing to abide by past Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

#### **MYTH**

*Israel’s blockade of Gaza is collective punishment.*

#### **FACT**

Critics of Israel’s blockade of Gaza sometimes refer to it as “collective punishment;” however, the term refers to the “imposition of criminal-type penalties to individuals or groups on the basis of another’s guilt.” Israel has done no such thing.

Israel has no obligation to maintain open borders with a hostile territory. The suspension of trade relations or embargoes is a frequent tool of international diplomacy. It has never been regarded as “collective punishment.”<sup>4</sup>

In 2011, the UN [Palmer Committee](#) concluded that Israel’s naval blockade of the Gaza Strip is consistent with customary international law, is legitimate due to the security threat posed by Hamas, and does not constitute collective punishment of Palestinians in Gaza.

International law requires that Israel permit the passage of food, clothing, and medicines for children under 15, expectant mothers, and maternity cases. If Israel believes Hamas will intercept these goods and the enemy will benefit, even these provisions may be prohibited. Israel also need not provide these supplies; it is obligated only to allow others to transfer provisions.

Furthermore, the law does not prohibit Israel from cutting off fuel supplies and electricity to Gaza, withholding commercial items, or sealing its border. Israel is also not obligated to provide minimum supplies to prevent a “humanitarian crisis.”

#### **MYTH**

*Hamas bombards Israel with rockets to end the “occupation.”*

#### **FACT**

“The Palestinians are only resisting occupation” is a favorite talking point of apologists for [Palestinian terrorism](#), and Hamas’ [rocket attacks](#) on Israel’s civilian population are no exception. This fallacy was proven when Israel evacuated all troops and civilians from Gaza in 2005 and was rewarded with increased terrorism instead of peace. Still, Palestinians and their advocates maintain that “the occupation” is the primary motivation for terrorism against Israel.

Unlike Mahmoud Abbas, who makes moderate statements when he wants to win public relations points and extreme ones when speaking to his constituents, the message of Hamas is unequivocal and consistent. As stated in the organization’s [covenant](#), the Islamic Resistance Movement “strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine” and “there is no solution for the Palestinian question except through jihad.”

The head of the Hamas political bureau, [Khaled Meshal](#), spoke plainly during a 2012 rally in Gaza:

Palestine is ours from the river to the sea and from the south to the north. There will be no concession on any inch of the land...We will never recognize the legitimacy of the Israeli occupation, and therefore there is no legitimacy for Israel.<sup>5</sup>

While Israelis lament the loss of innocent Palestinian lives, Hamas rejoices whenever Israelis are murdered. For example, on July 13, 2014, Hamas released a music video celebrating the bombing of an Israeli school bus that killed 16-year-old Daniel Viflic.<sup>6</sup>

This is not the behavior of resistance fighters grudgingly forced to take up arms in defense of their homes and families but a culture of martyrdom in which killing the enemy's children is praised and admired.

Palestinian [Christians](#) in the territories live under similar conditions, and yet they do not engage in terrorism or call for Israel's destruction. This is also true of many other suffering peoples living in far more difficult circumstances than the Palestinians. The intentional murder of civilians is a horrendous abuse of human rights and a war crime; Palestinians are the only people who believe terrorism is a legitimate tactic.

If Hamas were interested in ending the "occupation," it would join rather than oppose peace negotiations. Peace, however, has never been the goal of Hamas. The group's true objective is expressed in the title of a book written by the political adviser to then-Palestinian Prime Minister [Ismail Haniyeh](#) of Hamas: "The End of the Jewish State: Just a Matter of Time."

## MYTH

*Hamas rockets do minor damage and are no threat to Israel.*

## FACT

Since 2000, [terrorists](#) from inside Gaza have fired more than 18,000 Kassam rockets, GRAD missiles, and mortars into Israel since Israel unilaterally withdrew from the area in 2005. These weapons have killed at least 40 Israeli civilians, injured hundreds more, and inflicted heavy damage on schools, synagogues, residential homes, and hospitals.

Like the [Nazi](#) rocket attacks on [London](#) during [the Blitz](#), the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad barrages terrorize all the people within their range. That area has grown as the rockets have become more advanced. All of southern Israel, home to roughly one million Israelis, is in range. Places such as [Sderot](#) and Kfar Azza are so close that residents have mere seconds to find shelter after hearing the warning siren, keeping them in a near-constant state of fear and anxiety. In May 2021, rockets reached [Jerusalem](#) and the outskirts of [Tel Aviv](#). Schools and businesses are forced to close when bombardments grow intense, and citizens evacuate the area.

**If somebody was sending rockets into my house where my two daughters sleep at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to stop that. I would expect Israelis to do the same thing.**

—Barack Obama<sup>7</sup>

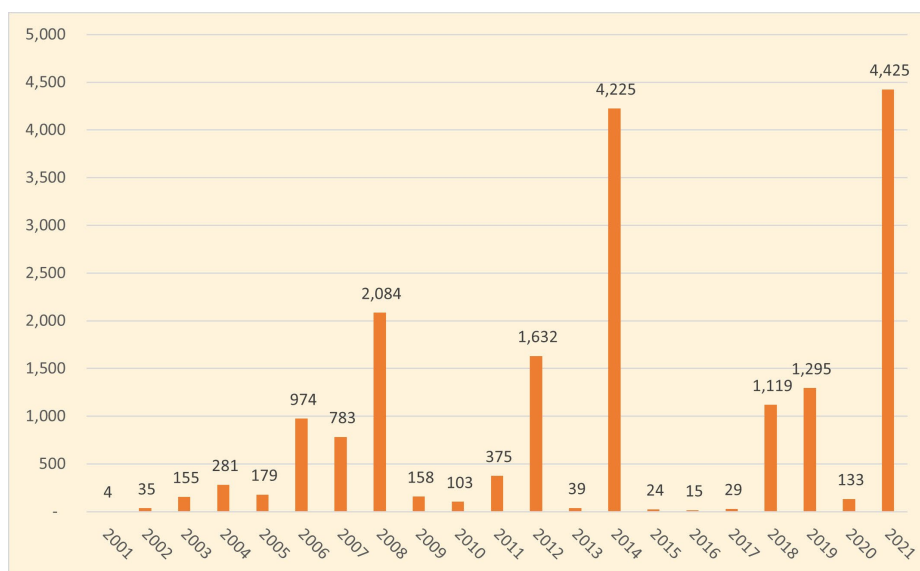
While apologists for Hamas have downplayed the severity of the thousands of rockets and mortars fired into Israel because of the relatively low number of [casualties](#), the damage caused is much more severe and widespread than typically reported by the media.

When the red alert indicates an incoming rocket, Israelis have 15 *seconds* to find shelter. What if you are not near one? How do you get an elderly parent or disabled child to safety in that time?

Imagine how it must be to live under those conditions.

Health officials have reported that many residents must be treated for hearing loss, dizziness, tinnitus, and central auditory processing disorders.<sup>8</sup>

## Rocket Attacks Launched From Gaza



## MYTH

*Israel indiscriminately attacks Palestinian targets in Gaza.*

## FACT

Casualties of war are unfortunate but inevitable. Israel goes to extraordinary lengths to avoid civilian casualties when responding to terror attacks from Gaza. Soldiers drop warning leaflets, use “roof-knocking” rockets and warning shells to alert civilians in buildings, make phone calls to let Palestinians know an attack is coming, maintain lists of protected sites like UN facilities, and fly drones to search targets for civilians before an airstrike.

Palestinian propagandists learned a long time ago that they need only throw a casualty figure out to the media, and it will be published worldwide as fact. In Gaza, the Hamas-run Health Ministry fabricates the number of civilian casualties, and the information is not verified before being disseminated. Hamas is incentivized to falsify the casualty figures because it knows the death of civilians provokes global outrage and prompts accusations that Israel committed “war crimes.”

During [Operation Guardian of the Walls](#) in May 2021, Hamas claimed 248 civilians, including 66 children, were killed by Israel. The Health Ministry does not identify any victims as terrorists or distinguish between civilians killed in Israeli airstrikes and those who died from rockets that misfired or landed inside Gaza. Hamas also counts adolescents as children, some of whom are [terrorists](#).<sup>9</sup>

Consider that Gaza is often said to be one of the world’s most [densely populated](#) places and was hit by approximately 680 rockets fired by Hamas and [Palestine Islamic Jihad](#) (PIJ). How likely is it that a much higher number of casualties were self-inflicted?<sup>10</sup>

Two sources unsympathetic to Israel presented evidence that contradicted the Hamas figures. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said that 128, not 248, civilians were killed. Defense for Children International – Palestine reported one case where “a homemade rocket fired by a Palestinian armed group fell short and killed eight Palestinians, including two children.”<sup>11</sup>

The [IDF](#) said it killed at least 160 terrorists.<sup>12</sup> The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, which meticulously examines the identities of the dead, checked 74 names and found that 16 were killed by misfired rockets, and at least 42 were terrorist operatives. Instead of 74 dead civilians, the number was 16.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, in [Operation Cast Lead](#) in 2008/9, Israel was accused of killing more than 1,400 Palestinians. The IDF acknowledged 1,166 deaths, 295 civilians, 709 terrorists, and 162 who could not be identified. Israel was disbelieved, but Hamas Interior Minister Fathi Hammad later admitted it lost between 600 and 700 men.<sup>14</sup>

No one disputes that some civilians were killed during the May 2021 fighting. The highest death toll occurred when Israel bombed the tunnels in one neighborhood, and surrounding buildings unexpectedly collapsed.<sup>15</sup>

While tragic, the number of deaths was remarkably low, considering Israel struck more than 1,500 targets. By comparison, [President Obama](#) authorized 542 drone strikes that killed 324 civilians.<sup>16</sup>

The director of the [United Nations Relief and Works Agency \(UNRWA\)](#) operations in Gaza, no shill for Israel, acknowledged that the IDF’s attacks were precise and directed at military targets. “They did not hit,” Matthias Schmale said, “with some exceptions, civilian targets.”<sup>17</sup> He was subsequently pilloried by Hamas, forced to recant, and withdrawn from Gaza in a case study of the consequences of telling the truth. Fear of similar treatment is one explanation for the bias of journalists reporting from Gaza.

No innocent Palestinians would be in danger if the Palestinian Authority took the long-promised steps to stop terrorism or if the international community, especially the Arab world, pressured Hamas to stop attacking Israel. No civilians would be in danger if Hamas terrorists did not deliberately hide among them. Israel would also have no reason to target those areas if peace-seeking Palestinians prevented the terrorists from living in their midst and firing rockets from their neighborhoods.

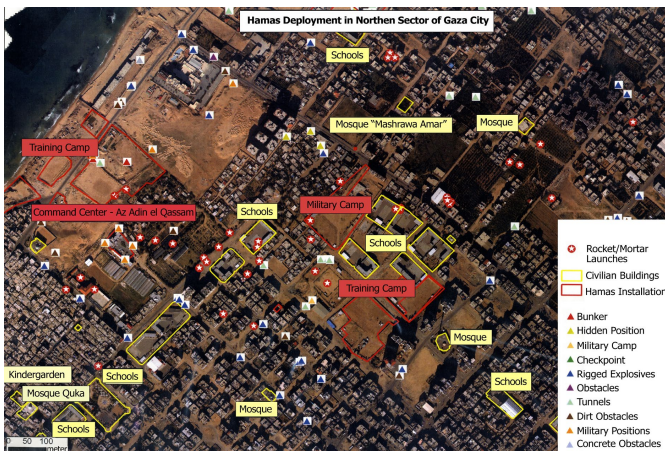
## MYTH

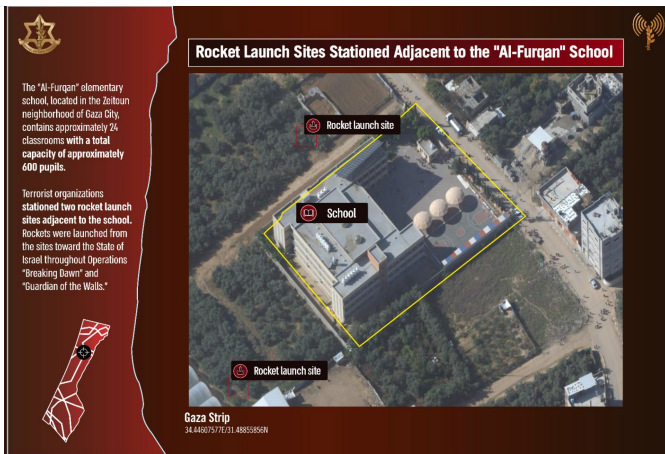
*Hamas protects Palestinian civilians.*

## FACT

Hamas has been shown to use mosques, hospitals, ambulances, and schools to conceal and transport weapons and as bases and hiding places for its fighters on multiple occasions. Many rockets are also fired from near these normally sacrosanct places to attract Israeli fire in the hope that civilians will be killed. Hamas then offers journalists, whose freedom is otherwise constrained to what the terrorists want them to see, “telegenic victims,” children whenever possible.

No matter how much evidence Israel produces to show the risks Hamas is taking with the lives of the innocent, the media is interested only in the body count. From Hamas’ cynical viewpoint, the higher the civilian death toll, the better.





One story even the media could not ignore was the discovery of 20 rockets hidden in a school run by UNRWA.<sup>18</sup> Pretending to have no idea where the missiles could have come from, the agency condemned the “group or groups responsible” without mentioning Hamas.

The story does not end with the discovery of the rockets. UNRWA had to remove them once it became public knowledge that they were on UNRWA property. Rather than destroy the weapons cache, turn it over to Israeli forces, or give them to a neutral institution, they informed “the relevant parties” instead. Thus, UNRWA did know where the rockets came from and returned them to Hamas.<sup>19</sup> More projectiles were later found in a second school.<sup>20</sup> This did not stop Hamas from continuing to use UNRWA facilities to hide their weapons and tunnels. In December 2022, for example, a tunnel was discovered below an elementary school it operates.<sup>21</sup>

The UNRWA cases are proof of Israel’s claim that civilian institutions are being used to store weapons and conceal terror tunnels. Additional evidence demonstrates that rockets are fired from positions near these institutions. Using civilians as shields and sites such as schools and hospitals to store and fire weapons are war crimes. The Palestinian Authority leadership and Hamas are responsible for preventing terror and should be held accountable.

## MYTH

*Israel denies health care and medical supplies to Gaza.*

## FACT

The health of Palestinians has improved by every measure and is comparable, if not better, than in other Middle Eastern and North African countries. One reason is that Israel provides medical care to tens of thousands of Palestinians yearly. Israel also trains hundreds of Palestinian doctors from Gaza.

Despite Gaza being ruled by an organization dedicated to Israel’s destruction and the threat of terrorist infiltration, about 20,000 Gazans enter Israel each month, mainly for medical treatment. This includes family members of terrorists, such as the daughter of Hamas leader [Ismail Haniyeh](#). His 17-year-old niece was treated at Ichilov Medical Center in Tel Aviv after a bone marrow transplant even as his organization fired rockets at the city.<sup>22</sup> The sister of another senior Hamas leader, [Mousa Abu Marzouk](#), was treated in Israel for cancer.<sup>23</sup>

Israel set up a medical facility just outside the Gaza Strip during [Operation Protective Edge](#) and allowed many Palestinians to receive the urgent care they could not have found in Gaza or other parts of the Arab world. This was while Hamas was using the Shifa Hospital (ironically, built by Israel for the safety of the Gazan population) as its military command center to shield its leaders from Israeli attacks.

Amid protests in May 2018, Israel sent trucks loaded with medical supplies, food, and diapers to Gaza. Palestinian officials allowed the delivery of medical supplies but sent back 14 trucks full of food and diapers.<sup>24</sup>

Fewer Gazans were allowed into Israel during the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic. However, tens of thousands of Palestinians were admitted to Israel for medical treatment. Israel provided therapeutics, such as medications for cancer and renal insufficiency.<sup>25</sup> In the first quarter of 2022, Israel approved more than 6,000 patient permit applications; nearly one-third were for children under 18.<sup>26</sup>

Israel allows Palestinians to enter for medical treatment at the risk of admitting terrorists. In 2005, for example, Wafa Samir Ibrahim Bas was arrested attempting to smuggle an explosives belt through the Erez crossing. Bas had been admitted on humanitarian grounds to Soroka Medical Center in Beer Sheva several months earlier for treatment of massive burns she received in a cooking accident.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, Gazans are suffering because of a power play by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who imposed restrictions on Gaza, including halting the supply of medicine and medical equipment to hospitals. In July 2017, for example, the Gaza Strip’s Ministry of Health warned that the lives of some 2,500 Palestinian patients were “in danger” because the PA stopped the transfer of patients from Gaza for treatment abroad.<sup>28</sup> In 2019, the PA halted medical referrals for Palestinians to Israeli hospitals and objected to an American plan to build a hospital in northern Gaza. The PA said the project was an Israeli plot to prevent establishing a Palestinian state and exacerbate friction with Hamas. The [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine \(PFLP\)](#) claimed the new hospital was “an Israeli intelligence base.”<sup>29</sup>

Journalist Bassam Tawil notes, “Abbas, like the rest of the Arab leaders, wants the Gaza Strip to be Israel’s problem alone. Abbas is undoubtedly looking forward to a day when he can hold Israel fully responsible for the coronavirus outbreak in the Gaza Strip.” Tawil added, “He is also likely waiting for the UN and many in the international community to join him in blaming Israel and Jews for the spread of the pandemic among his people while ignoring his responsibility for the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.”<sup>30</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel did nothing to help Palestinians respond to COVID-19.*

## **FACT**

Israel has done a great deal to help the Palestinians contain the coronavirus outbreak that began when 19 people in [Bethlehem](#) tested positive for the disease. Israel quickly provided 250 coronavirus test kits to the Palestinian Authority and began joint training sessions for Israeli and Palestinian medical personnel to study the virus, the protection of medical personnel, and the testing of patients suspected of being virus carriers. The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) also provided Israeli health ministry guidelines on prevention and protection from the virus on its website and Arabic language social media pages.

“We will continue working to help the Palestinian authorities curb the spread of the virus, both as an Israeli interest and for humanitarian reasons,” said Israeli Civil Administration Health Coordinator Dalia Basa. “We will expand medical training to Palestinian personnel as much as possible, as well as the transfer of medical equipment to the Palestinian healthcare system.”<sup>31</sup>

In a tweet, COGAT said on March 7, 2020: “Public health in Israel and the Palestinian territories is always our top priority and particularly at this time. We are making every effort, in collaboration with all the relevant parties, to protect the health and wellbeing of the region’s residents.”<sup>32</sup>

This also applies to Gaza, where the Palestinian Health Ministry confirmed the receipt of test kits and medical equipment from Israel requested by medical personnel in Gaza. “Handling the coronavirus outbreak takes precedence over any political consideration, and without help from Israel, Gaza would be in a tough situation in the case of an outbreak,” said a ministry official.<sup>33</sup>

COGAT delivered coronavirus test kits and protective medical gear to Gaza and coordinated the transfer of tons of disinfectant material from Israeli plants to Palestinian plants. The materials included chlorine and hydrogen peroxide, used for disinfection, preservation of hygiene, and sanitation.<sup>34</sup>

Israel also provided a loan to the Palestinian Authority to help avert an economic and humanitarian crisis.<sup>35</sup> In addition, COVID-19 tests from Palestinians were sent to laboratories at Israel’s [Sheba Hospital](#), which also trained medical staff from Gaza. Other medical workers received training at the Barzilai Medical Center in [Ashkelon](#).<sup>36</sup>

Even before the crisis, Israel was training Palestinian medical workers. In January 2020, five nurses from the Gaza Strip and 11 from the West Bank were invited to Israel for four days of medical training conducted by Israeli physicians. “I am very happy for the chance to attend this advanced trauma course. In Gaza, we have a lot of problems, and Israel can teach us,” Akram Abu Salah, a nurse from the Gaza Strip, told the *Jerusalem Post*. “It’s different than I thought. The people are very nice. You have Jews and Palestinians working together. It minimizes the gaps between us.”<sup>37</sup>

Such cooperation is counter to the anti-normalization campaign of the [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement \(BDS\)](#); however, An-Najah University epidemiologist Zaher Nazzal said, “Whenever there’s a crisis that affects the people’s health, collaboration should be possible.”<sup>38</sup>

The fact that Israel provides life-saving medical care to Palestinians makes little difference to propagandists who have made outrageous claims that, for example, the virus is “Israel’s new weapon” and that it is being deliberately transmitted to Palestinians in Israeli prisons.<sup>39</sup>

Critics who blame the blockade of Gaza for preventing supplies from reaching Palestinians neglect that Egypt controls one border and that nothing prevented medical supplies from being transferred to Gaza from Egypt. Hamas made it more difficult when it briefly shut down the Rafah pedestrian crossing into Egypt in March 2020; shortly after that, the Egyptian Red Crescent delivered medical supplies and humanitarian aid.<sup>40</sup>

In May 2020, the Palestinian Authority refused to accept 14 tons of medical supplies to fight the COVID-19 pandemic because it was delivered by the [United Arab Emirates](#) Etihad Airways through Israel and “constitutes a cover for normalization.”<sup>41</sup>

The decision did not hurt Israel or deter the UAE from improving [ties with Israel](#). It did, however, increase the risk to Palestinians of becoming infected and possibly dying of the coronavirus and angered the emirates. UAE political analyst Majed al-Raeesi tweeted: “Aid in the form of tons of medical supplies is not important. If the assistance was in the form of money/dollars, it wouldn’t have been rejected. May God help ordinary Palestinians against the thieves of the Palestinian Authority.”<sup>42</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel was guilty of war crimes in its operations in Gaza.*

## **FACT**

The Goldstone Commission was created to investigate alleged war crimes during the conflict between Israel and Hamas during Israel’s Operation Cast Lead in Gaza in December 2008/January 2009. No one was surprised when the Commission issued a [report](#) highly critical of Israel, given that it was created by the [UN Human Rights Council \(HRC\)](#), an organization long ago discredited for its obsessive and biased focus on Israel, and that one of the Commission members, Christine Chinkin, had previously accused Israel of war crimes.<sup>43</sup>

The four-person panel, led by Judge Richard Goldstone, based virtually all of its 575-page report on unverified accounts by Palestinians and NGOs. The Goldstone Commission fixated on Israel’s incursion into Gaza while failing to adequately address the provocation – three years of Hamas [rocket bombardment](#) of Israeli towns and villages – that led to the Israeli operation.

When interviewing Gazans, the Commission was chaperoned by Hamas officials.<sup>44</sup> Hence, it was not surprising that investigators made little effort to investigate Hamas’s activities before or during Operation Cast Lead. It was equally unremarkable for the commission to report then that it found no evidence that Hamas fired rockets from civilian homes, that [terrorists](#) hid among the civilian population, fired mortars, anti-tank missiles, and machine guns into Palestinian villages when [IDF](#) forces were in proximity, or that they seized and booby-trapped civilian homes to ambush IDF soldiers. The report refers to Hamas “police” as civilians, absolving them of terrorist rocket attacks against Israeli civilians and their illegal actions in Gaza during the conflict.<sup>45</sup> This directly contradicts the ample photos,

videos, and reports by journalists depicting Hamas militants participating in these illegal activities.<sup>46</sup>

Susan Rice, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, said the report was “deeply flawed” and “we did not see evidence that the Israeli government intentionally targeted civilians.”<sup>47</sup>

Colonel Richard Kemp, former Commander of British Forces in Afghanistan, testified to the Goldstone committee in 2009, “The IDF did more to safeguard the rights of civilians in a combat zone than any other army in the history of warfare.”<sup>48</sup>

In 2011, Goldstone wrote in a *Washington Post* op-ed that his original mandate was “skewed against Israel” and retracted his accusations that Israel intentionally targeted civilians and was guilty of war crimes. Goldstone acknowledged that “civilians were not intentionally targeted [by Israel] as a matter of policy” and that in the aftermath of having thousands of rockets and missiles fired at its cities, Israel had the “right and obligation to defend itself and its citizens against such attacks.”<sup>49</sup>

Goldstone excoriated Hamas for failing to investigate any of the war crimes accusations. By contrast, Goldstone acknowledged that Israel has “dedicated significant resources to investigate” misconduct allegations.

Renouncing his report did not stem the tide of anti-Israel propaganda based on its mendacious claims.

The HRC issued another report following the [2014 Gaza conflict](#), suggesting that Israel and Hamas may have committed [war crimes](#). Given the HRC’s historical bias against Israel, it was not surprising that the investigators equated the firefighters of the IDF with the Hamas arsonists.

The independent High-Level International Military Group, comprised of 11 top generals and former diplomats, came to an entirely different conclusion. The group, led by former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, General Klaus Naumann, found that “Israeli forces acted proportionately as required by the laws of armed conflict and often went beyond the required legal principles of proportionality, necessity, and discrimination.” In some cases, their report said, “Israel’s scrupulous adherence to the laws of war cost Israeli soldiers’ and civilians’ lives.”

The generals did not dispute that the Palestinians suffered a high number of civilian casualties and acknowledged that some were “caused by error and misjudgment;” however, they concluded that “the majority of deaths were the tragic inevitability of defending against an enemy that deliberately carries out attacks from within the civilian population.”<sup>50</sup>

Colonel Kemp told the UN Commission, “the IDF took exceptional measures to adhere to the Laws of Armed Conflict and to minimize civilian casualties in Gaza.” He also criticized those who suggested that Israel make greater efforts to minimize civilian casualties in because none of them knew how to do this. “I conclude that this was because Israel was taking all feasible steps.”<sup>51</sup>

In addition to these investigations, two American legal experts also examined Israel’s conduct. Michael Schmitt and John Merriam lecture on the law of armed conflict at the US Naval War College, and Schmitt also advises on the topic at NATO, Harvard, and Exeter. They concluded that Israel’s “approach to targeting is consistent with the law and, in many cases, worthy of emulation.”<sup>52</sup>

According to the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey, “Israel went to extraordinary lengths to limit collateral damage and civilian casualties.” He was so impressed with Israel’s conduct of the war that he sent a team to Israel to study Israel’s strategies, including lessons about how to limit civilian casualties.<sup>53</sup>

By contrast, Kemp said, Hamas defied the Laws of Armed Conflict by “deliberately targeting the Israeli civilian population, using their own civilian population as human shields and seeking to entice the IDF to take military action that would kill large numbers of Gaza civilians for their own propaganda purposes. There was and is no accountability or investigation of any allegations against Hamas and other extremist groups in Gaza.”<sup>54</sup>

Yet another HRC Commission of Inquiry condemned Israel and ignored Palestinian terrorism a year after Operation Guardian of the Walls. The State Department said it “represents a one-sided, biased approach that does nothing to advance the prospects for peace” and is “a continuation of a longstanding pattern of unfairly singling out Israel.”<sup>55</sup>

The United States and 20 other countries, including Israel, signed a statement that acknowledged that no country is above scrutiny and accountability but also said: “We continue to believe that this long-standing disproportionate scrutiny [of Israel] should end and that the council should address all human-rights concerns, regardless of country, in an even-handed manner.”<sup>56</sup>

Israel does not need outsiders to tell it how to defend itself or how to investigate the actions of its military. The people of Israel expect their soldiers to uphold the highest moral standards and demand that misconduct allegations be promptly and thoroughly probed even when the results may be embarrassing. The wars in Gaza were no exception.

“I am not aware of any nation that has conducted more comprehensive or resolute investigations into its military activities than Israel during and following the 2014 Gaza conflict,” Col. Kemp testified.<sup>57</sup>

Israel examined various charges and acted against soldiers who misbehaved. They will continue to do so without intervention by parties with political agendas who start with the premise that Israelis are guilty and then set out to prove it.

## **MYTH**

*Israel uses disproportionate force.*

## **FACT**

Israel is routinely pilloried for using “disproportionate force” in response to terrorist attacks. Critics never put themselves in Israel’s shoes. Author and peace activist Amos Oz made the point in an interview about Israel’s response to Hamas rocket attacks in 2014’s Operation Protective Edge:

What would you do if your neighbor across the street sits down on the balcony, puts his little boy on his lap, and starts shooting machine gun fire into your nursery?

What would you do if your neighbor across the street digs a tunnel from his nursery to your nursery in order to blow up your home or in order to kidnap your family?<sup>58</sup>

The question he left unasked is: What would you consider a proportionate response to those attacks?

It is easy to condemn Israel from afar, but imagine if terrorists fired thousands of rockets at [Washington](#), [London](#), [Paris](#), [Berlin](#), or any other city. What would the governments do? Would the targets of those rockets demand their governments respond – but only if they could do so without killing civilians?

It's not just hypothetical. In reaction to an attempt to assassinate [President Bush](#) in 1993, the U.S. launched 23 cruise missiles at Iraq's intelligence headquarters and hit a civilian neighborhood. Colin Powell later said this was an "appropriate, proportional" response.<sup>59</sup> After 9/11, the United States used overwhelming force in the war in [Iraq](#), and though civilians were not targeted, thousands were killed.<sup>60</sup> There was no discussion of the need for proportionality.

The IDF [Ethics Code](#) mandates that, whenever possible, soldiers must warn non-combatants that they are in an area where it is dangerous to stay. During its operations in Gaza, the IDF employed a variety of unprecedented efforts to minimize injury to non-combatants, including warning leaflets, phone calls, and non-lethal warning fire. If Israel were not seeking to avoid civilian casualties or, as some charge, targeting them, the number of deaths would be in the thousands, if not the tens of thousands.

Is there another army in the world that warns people to leave an area they intend to attack even though it gives up the element of surprise and allows the terrorists to escape with the civilians? How many other militaries order their pilots to abort bombing missions if civilians are detected in the area?

Proportionality is not simply a numerical comparison. "That comparatively few Israelis have been killed by the unlawful rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza," Judge Richard Goldstone explained, "in no way minimizes their criminality."<sup>61</sup>

Article 51 of the [United Nations Charter](#) reserves the right to self-defense against armed attacks to every nation. "The claim that Israel has violated the principle of proportionality – by killing more Hamas terrorists than the number of Israeli civilians killed by Hamas rockets – is absurd," according to legal scholar Alan Dershowitz. "First, there is no legal equivalence between the deliberate killing of innocent civilians and the deliberate killing of Hamas combatants. Under the laws of war, any number of combatants can be killed to prevent killing even one innocent civilian. Second, proportionality is not measured by the number of civilians actually killed, but rather by the risk posed."<sup>62</sup>

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs [adds](#):

Under the Geneva Conventions, as well as customary international law, if a military objective, such as a missile launcher or weapons stockpile, is placed in the heart of a civilian area, it does not cease being a lawful military objective. The primary responsibility for civilian casualties arising from the "shielding" lies with the party that deliberately placed civilians at risk.

No innocent Palestinian would be in the line of fire if terrorists did not attack Israel and deliberately hide among them. The people know Hamas is building tunnels under their houses and storing weapons in residential neighborhoods, mosques, and schools. They know rockets are launched from populated areas. Why don't they object to being used as human shields?

Click photos to enlarge



Israel's army is fallible. As a democracy, when Israeli soldiers make mistakes in battle, they are called to account for those errors. When non-combatants are injured or killed, investigations are launched, the Israeli public debates the military's actions, and punishments are imposed if courts find soldiers guilty of a crime.

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<sup>2</sup> "Leading Egypt Clerics Back Gaza Tunnel Barrier: Report," [Agence France Presse](#), (January 1, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Barak Ravid, "Abbas to Obama: I'm Against Lifting The Gaza Naval Blockade," [Haaretz](#), (June 13, 2010).



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# Chapter 15

## The Middle East Peace Process

[Anwar Sadat deserves all the credit for the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.](#)  
[Israel must withdraw from the Golan Heights to achieve peace with Syria.](#)  
[Israel's occupation of Lebanese territory impedes peace.](#)  
[Israel has no interest in peace with the Palestinians.](#)  
[Solving the Palestinian question will bring peace to the Middle East.](#)  
[A Palestinian state will pose no danger to Israel.](#)  
[Jews will be welcome in a future Palestinian state.](#)  
[If Israel ends the occupation, there will be peace.](#)  
[The Palestinians have never been offered a state of their own.](#)  
[The Palestinians are being asked to accept only 22% of Palestine.](#)  
[The best option for peace is a one-state solution.](#)  
[The Palestinian education system promotes peace with Israel.](#)  
[Palestinians no longer object to the creation of Israel.](#)  
[Israeli Arabs would prefer to live in a Palestinian state.](#)  
[Israel must negotiate with Hamas.](#)  
[Palestinians want to create a secular democratic state.](#)  
[The Palestinians' top priority is peace with Israel.](#)  
[Palestinian maps reflect their goal of coexistence with Israel.](#)  
[The Abraham Accords were a betrayal of the Palestinians.](#)  
[Israel must make concessions for the peace process to succeed.](#)

### **MYTH**

*Anwar Sadat deserves all the credit for the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.*

### ***FACT***

The peace drive did not begin with President [Anwar Sadat's November 1977 visit to Jerusalem](#). Sadat's visit was unquestionably a courageous act of statesmanship, but it came only after more than a half-century of efforts by [Zionist](#) and [Israeli](#) leaders to negotiate [peace with the Arabs](#).

“For Israel to equal the drama,” said [Simcha Dinitz](#), former [Israeli ambassador to the United States](#), “we would have had to declare war on [Egypt](#), maintain belligerent relations for years, refuse to talk to them, call for their annihilation, suggest throwing them into the sea, conduct military operations and [terrorism](#) against them, declare economic boycotts, close the Strait of Tiran to their ships, close the Suez Canal to their traffic, and say they are outcasts of humanity. Then Mr. Begin would go to [Cairo](#), and his trip would be equally dramatic. Obviously, we could not do this because it has been our policy to negotiate all along.”<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, Israeli Prime Minister [Menachem Begin](#) proved that, like Sadat, he was willing to go the extra mile to achieve peace. Despite the [Carter administration's](#) tilt toward Egypt during the talks, Begin remained determined to continue the [peace process](#) and froze Israeli [settlements](#) in the [West Bank](#) to facilitate the progress of negotiations.

Israel made tangible concessions to Egypt in exchange for only promises. Begin agreed to cede the strategically critical [Sinai Peninsula](#)—91% of the territory won by Israel during the [Six-Day War](#)—to Egypt in exchange for Sadat's pledge to make peace.

Egypt insisted that Jewish civilians leave the Sinai, uprooting 7,000 Israelis from their homes and businesses. Israel lost electronic early-warning stations that provided intelligence on Egyptian military movements; relocated more than 170 military installations, airfields, and army bases; surrendered direct control of its shipping lanes to and from [Eilat](#), as well as one thousand miles of roadways, homes, factories, hotels, health facilities, and agricultural villages; and transferred

the Alma oil field, discovered and developed by Israel.

The status of Taba—a resort town built by Israel in what had been a barren desert area near Eilat—was not resolved by the [Camp David Accords](#). Israel turned the city over to Egypt after an international arbitration panel ruled in Cairo’s favor on September 29, 1988.

Sadat made a courageous decision to make peace with Israel, but Begin’s decision was no less bold, and the Israeli sacrifices were far more substantial than those of the Egyptians.

**The state of Israel wants to give the Palestinians what no one else has heretofore given them—the possibility of establishing a state. Neither the Turks, the English, the Egyptians, or Jordanians gave them such a possibility.**

**—Prime Minister Ariel Sharon<sup>2</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Israel must withdraw from the Golan Heights to achieve peace with Syria.*

## ***FACT***

Given the history, Israel is understandably hesitant to give away the strategic high ground and its early-warning system in the [Golan Heights](#). Nevertheless, Israel repeatedly expressed a willingness to negotiate with [Syria](#) over the area’s future. President [Hafez Assad](#) and his son [Bashar](#), who succeeded him, insisted on a total withdrawal with no compromises. They also were unwilling to agree to Israel’s demand for a peace treaty similar to those Israel signed with [Egypt](#) and [Jordan](#).

The civil war in Syria provided a vivid reminder of why Israel was reluctant to give up the Golan Heights. If they had made a deal with Assad, [ISIS](#), [Hezbollah](#), [Iran](#), and other enemies might be on the [Sea of Galilee’s](#) shores threatening northern Israel. Those enemies remain a danger, but they are further from the border. Israel is unlikely to contemplate any compromises on the Golan Heights unless and until a stable, peaceful government emerges in Syria and the radical forces are expelled.

## **MYTH**

*Israel’s occupation of Lebanese territory impedes peace.*

## ***FACT***

Israel has never had any hostile intentions toward [Lebanon](#) but has been forced to fight two wars because of terrorist threats, first from the [PLO](#) and now Hezbollah, to menace citizens living in northern Israel. In 1983, Israel signed a peace treaty with Lebanon, but Syria forced President Amin Gemayel to renege on the agreement.

Israel [pulled](#) all its troops out of southern Lebanon on May 24, 2000, in coordination with the [UN](#), fulfilling its commitment under [Security Council Resolution 425](#). Still, Hezbollah and the Lebanese government insist that Israel holds Lebanese territory in a largely uninhabited patch called Shebaa Farms. This claim gives Hezbollah a pretext to continue its belligerency toward Israel. The Israelis maintain, however, that the land was captured from Syria.

In January 2005, the [Security Council](#) adopted a [resolution](#) reasserting that the Lebanese claim to the Shebaa Farms area is “not compatible with Security Council resolutions,” affirming that Israel completely withdrew from Lebanon.

Hezbollah effectively controls Lebanon with Iran’s patronage and has built an arsenal of 150,000 rockets aimed at Israel.<sup>3</sup> Given Hezbollah’s commitment to Israel’s destruction, the only way peace can be achieved with Lebanon is if Hezbollah is uprooted either by the Lebanese or by Israel.

## MYTH

*Israel has no interest in peace with the Palestinians.*

## FACT

Israel has an equal or better claim to [Judea and Samaria](#) (the West Bank) than the [Palestinians](#). Judea and Samaria have been home to [Jews](#) for centuries, and the territory has important religious significance to the Jewish people. The Palestinians have been residents dating no earlier than the [Muslim conquest](#). A Palestinian state never existed, so there is no moral or legal obligation to provide Palestinians with sovereignty they never had.

Nevertheless, Israel has repeatedly offered compromises to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians, but they have all been rejected. Under the [Oslo Accords](#), Israel withdrew from roughly 40% of the West Bank and proposed giving up as much as 97% of the territory in exchange for peace. Israel subsequently evacuated the entire [Gaza Strip](#).

The experience following the [disengagement](#) shifted [Israeli opinion](#) to the right. Instead of getting peace, Israel has faced years of terrorism. Consequently, Israelis are much more reluctant to consider territorial compromises. An Israel Democracy Institute survey in July 2022 found that only 32% of Israeli Jews supported a peace agreement resulting in the creation of a Palestinian state.<sup>4</sup> They will need greater confidence in a Palestinian commitment to peace combined with security guarantees before they contemplate further withdrawal.

If no solution is reached, Israel could face a perpetual “Palestinian problem,” but to solve it, Israel’s leaders must avoid endangering the population. The Palestinian demand for a state based on the [1967 border](#) (actually the 1949 armistice line) with Jerusalem as its capital is a non-starter. As [George W. Bush](#) noted in his 2004 [letter](#) to [Ariel Sharon](#), “In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli populations centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949.”

Israelis understand they face a demographic dilemma. If they apply [Israeli sovereignty](#) to the West Bank, over time, the Palestinians will make up a majority, or at least a significant minority of the Israeli population. Israelis would then have to choose between denying Palestinians the right to vote and ceasing to be a democracy or absorbing them and changing the Jewish character of the nation.

Knowing this, successive Israeli governments have acknowledged the desirability of reaching an agreement allowing the Palestinians some form of self-government ([Yitzhak Rabin](#) referred to an “entity,” other Israeli leaders foresaw a state). The question then arises as to the borders of that authority.

The Palestinians have agreed that the major [settlement blocs](#) would be annexed to Israel if an agreement for a Palestinian state was reached.<sup>5</sup> Still, the question of how the Jews living outside those blocs would be treated is unclear. Tens of thousands of residents would need to be evacuated and compensated. Given the trauma, cost, and difficulty of evacuating about 9,000 [Jews from Gaza](#), it is difficult to imagine an Israeli government willing to force at least ten times that many Jews from their homes in Judea and Samaria.

In addition, every Israeli government, and most nonpartisan observers, agree that Israel’s security requires a presence in the [Jordan Valley](#). It is possible that the [security fence](#) could, with some modifications, become a permanent border. Other arrangements would have to be made to minimize the threat to the Israeli population.

Proposals by Prime Ministers [Ehud Barak](#) and [Ehud Olmert](#) offered the Palestinians some authority in East Jerusalem; however, Israeli positions have hardened since then, and it is difficult to envision that such an arrangement would be acceptable now. Nevertheless, a compromise might be possible. For example, [Mahmoud Abbas](#) and [Yossi Beilin](#) agreed in 1995 that a Palestinian capital would be established in the Jerusalem suburb of [Abu Dis](#). The Trump peace plan also proposed Abu Dis as the capital.<sup>6</sup> The Palestinians built a parliament building there, but it was never used, and Abbas no longer supports the idea.

No solution is possible if the Palestinians refuse to accept the permanent presence of a Jewish state.

## **MYTH**

*Solving the Palestinian question will bring peace to the Middle East.*

### ***FACT***

A cardinal view of Arabists is that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the core of all [Middle East](#) problems. According to Middle East scholar Martin Kramer, this “linkage” theory holds that the Israeli-Palestinian issue “practically alone, prompts the rise of terrorists, weakens friendly governments, and makes it impossible for the [United States](#) to win Arabs and [Muslims](#) over to the good cause.”<sup>7</sup>

The Palestinian’s plight is the result rather than the cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict and stems from the Arabs’ unwillingness to accept a Jewish State in the Middle East. Had Arab governments not gone to [war in 1948](#) to block the [UN partition plan](#), a Palestinian state would now be celebrating more than 70 years of independence. Had the Arab states not supported terrorism directed at Israeli civilians and provoked seven subsequent [Arab-Israeli wars](#), the conflict could have been settled long ago, and the Palestinian problem resolved.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian problem is one of many simmering ethnic, religious, and nationalistic feuds plaguing the region. It had nothing to do with the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf wars, the Lebanese Civil War, or the “Arab Spring” upheavals. Similarly, today, there are civil wars in [Syria](#), [Yemen](#), and [Libya](#), conflicts between [Sunni](#) and [Shiite](#) Muslims, and Iranian threats against its neighbors, to name a few of the disputes unrelated to Israel or the Palestinians. “Almost every border in that part of the world, from Libya to Pakistan, from Turkey to Yemen, is either ill-defined or in dispute,” scholar Daniel Pipes noted years before the current turmoil. “But Americans tend to know only about Israel’s border problems and do not realize that these fit into a pattern that recurs across the Middle East.”<sup>8</sup>

If the Palestinian problem were solved, it would not impact the region’s volatility. It would also not bring peace to Israel because radical Islamists such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the regime in [Iran](#) do not accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state in what they consider the Muslim heartland.

**A future Palestinian state must be a democracy that seeks peace with Israel.**

**—Foreign Minister Yair Lapid<sup>9</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*A Palestinian state will pose no danger to Israel.*

### ***FACT***

For many years, the consensus in Israel was that the creation of a Palestinian state would present a grave risk to Israeli security. These fears were well founded, given the long-standing Palestinian [commitment to the destruction of Israel](#) and the later adoption of the [phased plan](#) whereby the Palestinians expressed a willingness to accept a West Bank state in the short term and use it as a base from which to pursue the longer-term goal of replacing Israel.

Starting with the [Oslo agreements](#) in the early 1990s, a radical shift in [opinion](#) occurred. Most Israelis became reconciled to living beside a peaceful demilitarized Palestinian state (though Yitzhak Rabin [never agreed to establish such a state](#)).

The two-state solution is viewed internationally as the best option for ending the conflict, but Israelis still believe it entails risks, a view reinforced by Palestinian actions since Oslo. After returning much of the West Bank and all of Gaza and allowing the Palestinians to govern themselves, terrorism and incitement against Israelis have continued. So far, no concessions by Israel have been sufficient to prompt the Palestinians to end the violence.

Israelis also fear that a Palestinian state will become dominated by Islamic extremists and serve as a staging area for

terrorists, a concern grounded in the experience following the disengagement from Gaza and the efforts of Hamas to take over the West Bank. Another danger, albeit one that has diminished in recent years, is that a Palestinian state could serve as a forward base for Arab nations that refuse to make peace with Israel in a future war.

A Palestinian state would pose no threat in an ideal world, but history and experience make Israelis cautious.

## **MYTH**

*Jews will be welcome in a future Palestinian state.*

## ***FACT***

It is taken for granted that Arabs should be allowed to live in Israel – the Israelis would be rightly condemned for bigotry if they were not – yet proponents of a two-state solution do not criticize the Palestinians for pledging to make their state *judenrein*. [Palestinian Authority](#) President Mahmoud Abbas said, “In a final resolution, we would not see the presence of a single Israeli – civilian or soldier – on our lands.”<sup>10</sup>

Nearly [800,000](#) Jews live in the disputed territories. What Abbas advocates is ethnic cleansing.

More than two million Arabs, 21% of the [population](#), live peacefully in Israel with full civic rights, prompting Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) to note, “There are Arabs who live here, but they can’t contemplate Jews living there.”<sup>11</sup>

Besides being immoral, the Palestinians’ position is also hypocritical. Abbas demands that Palestinian refugees be allowed to move to Israel while simultaneously planning to expel all Jews from the territory where they have lived [for centuries](#).

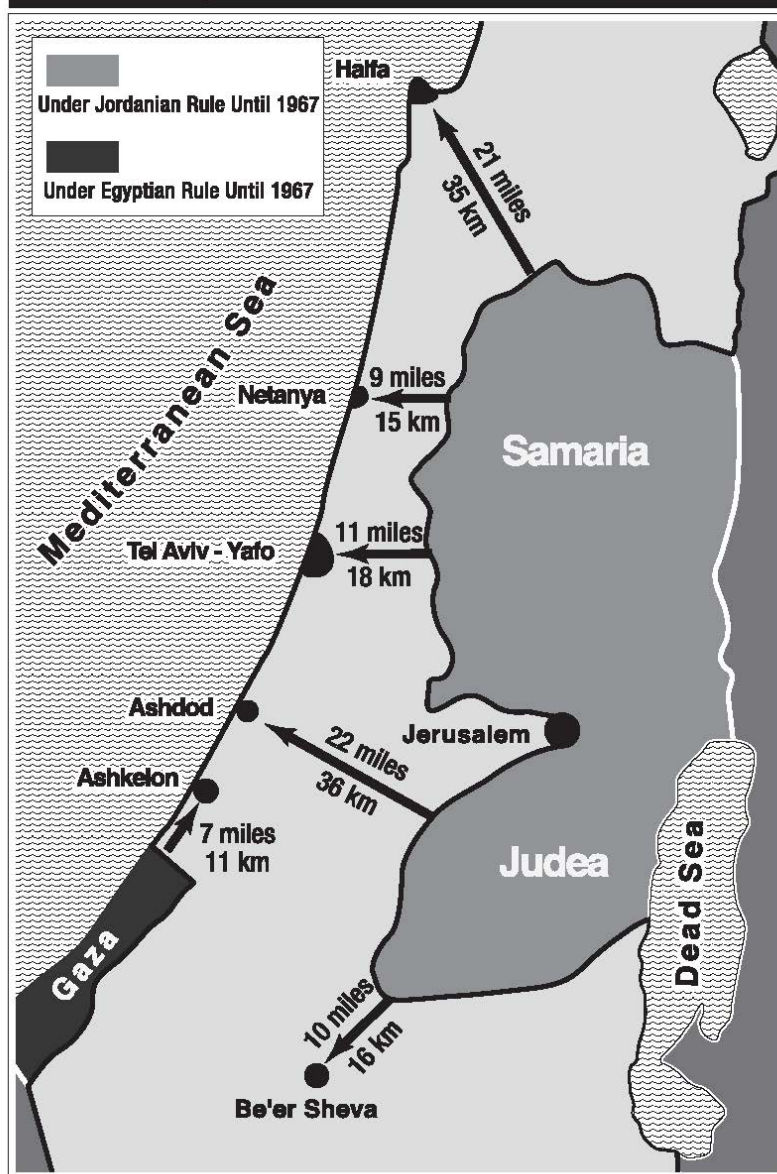
Many [settlement](#) critics share Abbas’ sentiment. They also call for removing all Jews from the West Bank on the pretext that it is a prerequisite for peace.

Why is every Jew expected to be evacuated from the West Bank rather than being given the option of staying? Why should “Palestine” be one of the only countries where Jews cannot live?

If Jews were barred from living in [New York](#), [Paris](#), or [London](#), it would be called [anti-Semitic](#). Barring Jews from the West Bank, the cradle of Jewish civilization should be no less objectionable.

**Map 27**

Distances between Israeli Population Centers and Pre-1967 Armistice Lines

**MYTH**

*If Israel ends the occupation, there will be peace.*

**FACT**

The experience in Gaza offered a stark case study of the fallacy of the once-popular “land for peace” slogan. If the Palestinians wanted to end Israeli control over their lives, they would have cheered Israel’s evacuation of Gaza and done everything possible to make it a success. Instead, they denounced the disengagement. Still, Israel withdrew from every inch of [Gaza](#)—not one Israeli soldier or civilian remains—at a significant emotional and financial cost.

And what has the end of the “occupation” of Gaza brought Israel? Has Israel received peace in exchange for the land?

Since 2005, Israel has been targeted by incessant terrorist attacks and bombarded by more than 16,000 rockets. Terror and incitement also continued unabated from the West Bank, preempting any possibility that Israelis would support additional territorial concessions. Rather than “end the occupation,” Palestinian actions have forced Israel to maintain a presence to ensure the safety of its citizens.



The responsibility for this escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rests with the Palestinians, who have yet again turned their backs on peace. Rather than take the withdrawal of Israel from Gaza as an opportunity to build a future for their children, they instead refused to relinquish their embrace of a culture of hate and death.

—Editorial, Chicago Sun-Times<sup>12</sup>

Slogans are good for bumper stickers, but they are irrelevant to the future of Israel and its neighbors. Israelis have repeatedly shown a desire for peace and a willingness to make painful sacrifices, but nothing they do will end the conflict. Peace will be possible only when the Palestinians demonstrate a desire to coexist with Israel through their actions.

The events following the disengagement caused Israelis to lose faith that any conceivable compromise would end the conflict with the Palestinians. Consequently, most Israelis are in no hurry to offer new concessions; they now demand more stringent safeguards before any additional withdrawals.

### **MYTH**

*The Palestinians have never been offered a state of their own.*

### ***FACT***

The Palestinians have had numerous opportunities to create an independent state but have repeatedly rejected them:

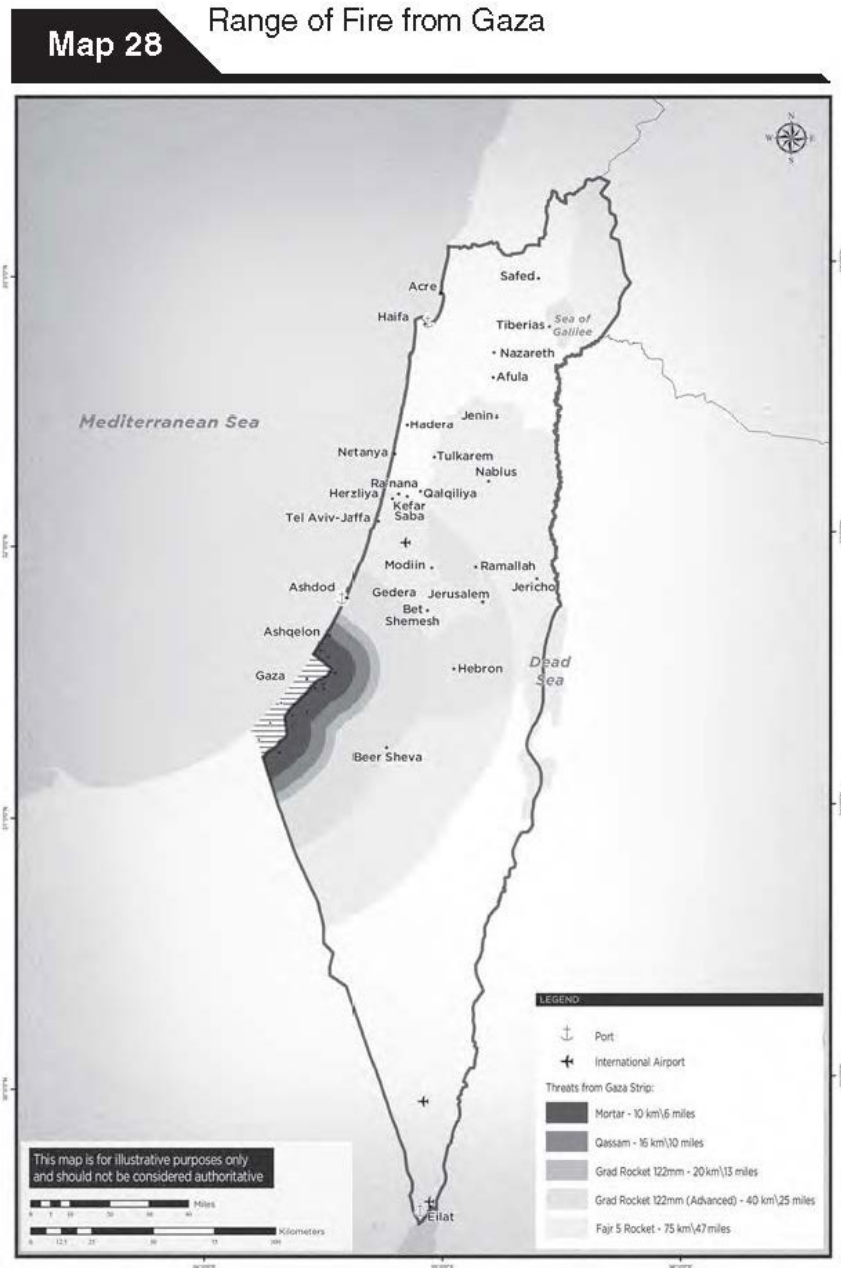
- In 1937, the [Peel Commission](#) proposed the partition of Palestine and the creation of an Arab state.
- In 1939, the [British White Paper](#) proposed the creation of a unitary Arab state.
- In 1947, the [UN](#) would have created an even larger Arab state as part of its partition plan.
- The 1979 [Egypt-Israel peace negotiations](#) offered the Palestinians autonomy, which would almost certainly have led to complete independence.
- The Oslo agreements of the 1990s laid out a path for independence, but the process was derailed by Palestinian terrorism.
- In 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak [offered](#) to create a Palestinian state in all of Gaza and 97 percent of the West Bank.
- In 2008, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert [offered](#) to withdraw from almost the entire West Bank and partition Jerusalem on a demographic basis.
- In 2013-14, the Palestinians took unilateral steps that sabotaged the [Kerry initiative](#).
- In 2020, the Palestinians rejected the [Trump peace plan](#).

In addition, from 1948 to 1967, Israel did not control the West Bank. The Palestinians could have demanded an independent state from the Jordanians but never did.

The Palestinians have spurned every chance for statehood. A variety of reasons have been given for why the Palestinians have, in [Abba Eban's](#) words, “never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity.” Historian Benny Morris has suggested that the Palestinians have religious, historical, and practical reasons for opposing an agreement with Israel. He said, “[Arafat](#) and his generation [which includes Mahmoud Abbas] cannot give up the vision of the greater land of Israel for the Arabs. [This is true because] this is a holy land, *Dar al-Islam* [the world of Islam]. It was

once in the hands of the Muslims, and it is inconceivable [to them] that infidels like us [the Israelis] would receive it.”

The Palestinians also believe that time is on their side. “They feel demographics will defeat the Jews in one hundred or two hundred years, just like the [Crusaders](#).” The Palestinians, Morris says, also hope the Muslims will acquire nuclear weapons that will allow them to destroy Israel.<sup>13</sup>



## **MYTH**

*The Palestinians are asked to accept only 22% of Palestine.*

## ***FACT***

When Israel offered a two-state solution to the conflict, the Palestinians shifted their complaint to the size of the state they demanded. Palestinians say Israel is doing them no favors by offering a state in the disputed territories because it asks them to accept a state in only 22% of Palestine, while Israel keeps 78% percent. This is a compelling point to show the unfairness of the Palestinians’ plight and to suggest Israel’s peace overtures are inconsequential unless you know the history of Palestine and recognize that the truth is precisely the reverse.

Historic Palestine included Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan. It is Israel, including the disputed territories, which is only 22% of “Palestine.” If Israel withdrew entirely from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, it would possess only about 18%. And from Israel’s perspective, it is the Zionists who already sacrificed by accepting the UN’s partition resolution, which allotted the Jewish state only about 12% of the historic land of Israel.

Meanwhile, of the approximately 13.4 million Palestinians worldwide, some [76%](#) (3.2 million in Jordan, 5 million in the disputed territories, and 2 million in Israel) live in historic Palestine.

## **MYTH**

*The best option for peace is a one-state solution.*

## ***FACT***

Some peace advocates believe the only solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is creating one state encompassing Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. “It is simply the recognition of the uncomfortable reality that Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories already function as a single state. They share the same aquifers, the same highway network, the same electricity grid, and the same international borders,” argued Michael Tarazi, a legal adviser to the PLO.<sup>[14](#)</sup>

Nonpartisans’ support for the one-state solution is driven to some degree by despair over the prospect of a two-state solution. Assaf Sharon argued it “is more an expression of moral outrage and political desperation than a well-reasoned proposal.”<sup>[15](#)</sup>

Palestinian leaders prefer that a single Palestinian state replace Israel. Jews who believe in “Greater Israel” favor one state to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state and to assert sovereignty over the historic Land of Israel.

Polls, however, show little popular enthusiasm for this option. A June 2022 poll found that 22% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip support one state for Israelis and Palestinians.<sup>[16](#)</sup> A 2019-2020 survey reported that only 9% of Israeli Jews favored the annexation of Judea and Samaria and establishing one state.<sup>[17](#)</sup>

The principal argument against a one-state solution from Israel’s point of view is demographic. The Jewish [population](#) is 74% of the total. If you add Israel’s current population of 9,450,000 (6,998,000 Jews) with the disputed territories (4.9 million), you get an entity with nearly 14.4 million people, and the percentage of Jews would fall under 50%. Some argue that Israel should not annex Gaza – what would happen to it is unclear – in which case the Jewish population would increase to 56% of the population, but the Palestinians would still make up a significant minority (44% – up from 21% today). Some people question Palestinian population figures, but even if you accept one of the lower estimates, the percentage of Jews will drop significantly; Palestinians would still comprise a much larger proportion of the population than today. The demographic balance would be even more disadvantageous if [Palestinian refugees](#) were allowed to move to the unitary state.

Granting the Palestinians full and equal civil rights could alter the state’s Jewish character. Failure to grant those rights would make the state undemocratic. Because of this dilemma, even the most hawkish Israeli prime ministers have been unwilling to annex the territories, and that was one reason Ariel Sharon decided to evacuate Gaza.

If Palestinians ever achieved a majority, Jews fear they would become second-class citizens and be persecuted as they have historically been in Arab and Muslim countries.

The idea that a single state would end the conflict is also dubious. “In the Middle East, wherever a central regime is imposed on different sectarian/ethnic groups, the consequence is ongoing struggle,” former peace negotiator David Makovsky observed, mentioning the examples of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Libya. Furthermore, he asked, “Does a country that has ingathered Jews from Ethiopia, Syria, Yemen, and throughout discriminated communities in the Middle East suddenly yield that identity?”<sup>[18](#)</sup>

From the Palestinian perspective, should they be expected to accept an outcome that does not allow them to realize their national identity? “Palestinians, too, have persevered,” Makovsky acknowledges. “In their dispersal, in the refugee camps and through two intifadas, they have not surrendered their identity.”

The creation of one state will not erase decades of anger or the religious, cultural, social, and economic differences. “The road to two states is arduous,” Makovsky observes, “but the one-state path guarantees endless bloodshed.”<sup>19</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The Palestinian education system promotes peace with Israel.*

## ***FACT***

Israelis have little confidence in the prospect of peace with the Palestinians because they see how the younger generation is indoctrinated in schools. Rather than use education to promote peace with their Jewish neighbors, schools impart anti-Semitic stereotypes, regurgitate anti-Israel propaganda, and disseminate content provoking hostility and intolerance rather than coexistence.

A study commissioned by the European Union examined 156 textbooks and 16 teacher guides. The report said they present “ambivalent – sometimes hostile – attitudes towards Jews and the characteristics they attribute to the Jewish people” and their “frequent use of negative attributions in relation to the Jewish people...suggest a conscious perpetuation of anti-Jewish prejudice.”

One religious studies textbook asks students to discuss the “repeated attempts by the Jews to kill the prophet” [Muhammad](#) and asks who are “other enemies of Islam.” A math text showed a picture of Palestinians hitting Israeli soldiers with slingshots to describe Newton’s second law of motion. Another textbook “promotes a conspiracy theory that Israel removed the original stones of ancient sites in Jerusalem and replaced them with ones bearing “Zionist drawings and shapes.”

Terrorists are praised, and those killed are referred to as martyrs. Such references appear in science and math books unrelated to the conflict with Israel. In addition, [maps](#) in the texts replace Israel with “Palestine.”<sup>20</sup>

**We have found books with passages that are so anti-Semitic that if they were published in Europe, their publishers would be brought up on anti-racism charges.**

**—French lawyer and European Parliament member Francois Zimeray<sup>21</sup>**

According to a [study](#) of 89 teacher guides by Dr. Arnon Groiss, Israel and the Jewish connection to the land of Israel are delegitimized. Students are supposed to be taught that the Palestinians have a right to all of “Palestine” and that Jews have no claim to the land. Jews and Israel “are depicted as aggressive, barbarous, full of hate and bent on extermination, thus forming an existential threat to the Palestinians.” Maps label Israeli cities with Arabic names.

Rather than a peace curriculum, Groiss says teachers are instructed to encourage “a violent liberation struggle” because “peace and coexistence with Israel are not an option.” The Palestinian refugees are expected to “return to their former residential places in liberated Palestine, not to the State of Israel.” Cities in Israel, such as [Haifa](#) and [Acre](#), are “waiting for liberation.”

The Islamization of the conflict is evident in the portrayal of Jews as the enemies of [Islam](#) and the stress placed on defending and liberating the [al-Aqsa Mosque](#), [jihad](#), and martyrdom. Women are encouraged to emulate terrorists such as Dalal al-Mughrabi and [Leila Khaled](#).

Al-Mughrabi participated in the 1978 [Coastal Road massacre](#) in which 38 Israelis, including 13 children, were murdered. Khaled hijacked a TWA plane from [Rome](#) to [Tel Aviv](#) in 1969 and was prevented from seizing an [El Al](#) flight from [Amsterdam](#) to [New York](#) the following year by Israeli sky marshals.

Another study of 222 textbooks published since 2020 found “a systematic insertion of violence, martyrdom, and jihad across all grades and subjects. Extreme nationalism and Islamist ideologies are widespread throughout the curriculum, including in science and math textbooks. The possibility of peace with Israel is rejected. Any historical Jewish presence in the modern-day territories of Israel and the Palestinian Authority is entirely omitted.”

Despite assurances from Palestinian officials that changes would be made in the 2020-21 curriculum, the report said no substantive changes were made “relating to existing problematic content which supports hate speech, anti-Semitism, incitement, violence, and encouragement of martyrdom and jihad.”<sup>22</sup>

Israelis see what children are taught and despair that the next generation of Palestinians will be intolerant, violent, and uninterested in peace.

## **MYTH**

*Palestinians no longer object to the creation of Israel.*

## ***FACT***

While Israelis celebrate their [independence](#), Palestinians mourn the establishment of Israel on what they call Nakba Day. Had the Palestinians and the Arab states accepted the partition resolution in 1947, the State of Palestine would also celebrate its birthday each year, and Palestinians would not be lamenting “The Catastrophe.”

Palestinians are understandably bitter about their history, but we are repeatedly told that they object to the “occupation” of the territories Israel captured in 1967. If that is true, why isn’t [Nakba Day](#) on the anniversary of the Arab defeat in the [Six-Day War](#)?

The reason is that the Palestinians consider the creation of Israel the original sin, and their focus on that event indicates a refusal to reconcile themselves to the existence of a Jewish State. The  [Hamas Covenant](#) explicitly calls for the destruction of Israel.

As long as the Palestinians treat Israel’s creation as a catastrophe, the prospects for coexistence will remain bleak.

**Palestine means Palestine in its entirety—from the [Mediterranean] Sea to the [Jordan] River, from Ras al-Naqura to Rafah. We cannot give up a single inch of it. Therefore, we will not recognize the Israeli enemy’s [right] to a single inch.**

**—Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar<sup>23</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Israeli Arabs would prefer to live in a Palestinian state.*

## ***FACT***

Israeli Arabs know that, despite its faults, Israel is still a democratic state that offers them freedoms denied to Palestinians living under the rule of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. Hence, most say they prefer to live in [Israel](#) rather than a Palestinian state. One poll found that only 20% of [Israeli Arabs](#) were ready to move to a Palestinian state.<sup>24</sup>

The Palestine News Network surveyed Palestinian Arabs in Jerusalem and found that 93% preferred to remain under Israeli rule and would not give up their Israeli identity cards.<sup>25</sup>

Many of the 330,000 East Jerusalemites depend heavily on Israel for jobs, health care, and unemployment insurance. They do not foresee having the same opportunities or benefits under the Palestinian Authority. When the possibility of dividing Jerusalem was discussed in 2007, Jamil Sanduqa, head of the Shuafat refugee camp, said, “If they put a border

here, we'll move to Haifa and Tel Aviv. You'll have 50,000 people who live here leaving East Jerusalem in minutes.” He added, “I don't want to raise my children on throwing stones or on Hamas,” Sanduqa said.<sup>26</sup>

A land swap is one of the proposals for moving toward a two-state solution. One idea is to shift the border so the 50,000 residents of Umm el-Fahm, plus an additional 150,000 Israeli Arabs who sit on 200 square miles of land just northeast of the West Bank (referred to as the “Arab triangle”), would be a part of a future Palestinian state. The Palestinians swap citizenship; Israel exchanges land. Residents in these towns, however, are vehemently opposed to being part of the deal.

Only 10% of the residents were willing to move to a Palestinian state.<sup>27</sup> “We wish to express our sharp opposition to any initiative taken by the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority with regard to our civil, political, and human rights,” the heads of the Arab regional councils and cities wrote to Prime Minister Olmert and his cabinet members in response to the land swap proposed in 2007. “We wish to make it clear that as citizens of the State of Israel since 1948–1949...the proposed moving of borders will deprive us of these human rights and tear apart the social and economic ties that have been constructed on the basis of a long and difficult struggle.”

One signatory was Sheik Hasham Abed Elrahman, Umm el-Fahm's mayor and head of the Wadi Ara Forum of Arab and Jewish Mayors. He wrote, “I can tell you that we want to work together with the Jewish majority for the betterment of all of Israel. Religiously, politically and socially, we want to remain part of the State of Israel.”<sup>28</sup>

Few Palestinians want to move to “Palestine,” and many who live under the rule of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas would emigrate if they could. According to a 2022 survey, 26% of the residents would like to leave.<sup>29</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel must negotiate with Hamas.*

## ***FACT***

Hamas controls the Gaza Strip; therefore, some people argue that Israel must negotiate with the terror group. Few Israelis believe that Hamas is interested in peace. Still, advocates for negotiations believe a long-term cease-fire agreement could be reached in which Hamas promises to stop firing [rockets](#) and Israel ceases its military operations.

Hamas cease-fires have resulted from the fear that Israel was about to attack them or in response to targeted killings of their leaders. They also accept them to rearm and then, at the time of their choosing, resume assaults.

Hamas also remains committed to its covenant that calls for the destruction of Israel, and its spokespeople make belligerent statements. In 2015, for example, Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal said, “The so-called peace process is futile.

There is no peace. Only the path of Jihad, sacrifice, and blood (will bear fruit).”<sup>30</sup> Three years later, Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh vowed that “we shall never forget Palestine from the [Mediterranean] Sea to the [Jordan] River” and “we shall never recognize Israel!”<sup>31</sup>

The international community set three conditions for lifting economic sanctions on Hamas, which are also prerequisites to any negotiation: Renounce violence against Israel, Recognize Israel, and honor all previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Hamas rejects all three.

It is often said that you don't make peace with your friends, you make peace with your enemies, but this assumes the enemy you are negotiating with is not committed to your destruction.

## **MYTH**

*Palestinians want to create a secular democratic state.*

## ***FACT***

To appeal to the West, Palestinians often say their goal is to create a “secular democratic Palestine,” and supporters of the two-state solution assume a Palestinian state will be secular and democratic. No secular democratic Arab states exist in the Middle East, and a Palestinian state is unlikely to be any different.

In its [draft constitution](#), the Palestinian Authority has already established Islam as the official religion of “Palestine” and Sharia as “a principal source of legislation.” Furthermore, all evidence suggests that a Palestinian state would deny its people human and civil rights Westerners take for granted.

The authoritarian regime of Mahmoud Abbas and the Islamic rule of Hamas in Gaza foreshadow Palestinians’ fate in a future state. Abbas was [elected in 2005](#) but repeatedly canceled elections, remaining in office nearly two decades beyond the end of his term. Abbas does not allow freedom of speech, assembly, or religion. Critics of the regime are jailed, tortured, or, in some cases, executed. Women’s rights are limited, and gay people are persecuted based on Koranic prohibitions on homosexuality. The liberties of Palestinians would be further threatened if [Sharia Law](#) was imposed and the Palestinian state operated under the authority of the Islamists of Hamas.

## **MYTH**

*The Palestinians’ top priority is peace with Israel.*

## ***FACT***

In a June 2022 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) [poll](#), 69% of Palestinians opposed a two-state solution, and only 28% supported it. A Washington Institute [poll](#) the same month had similar results, with 66% rejecting a two-state solution and 31% willing to accept one. That survey also found that 46% believed the top Palestinian national priority is to regain all of historic Palestine, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

When asked in the PSR poll which problem they see as the top priority for the Palestinian Authority, 26% said unemployment and poverty, 25% said corruption in public institutions, and only 16% said continuation of the occupation and settlement construction.

Unlike Israelis, who have mobilized hundreds of thousands of people to demonstrate for peace, Palestinians only organize to protest and riot. They have never had anything analogous to the Israeli Peace Now movement. Their preference for violence is reflected in the PSR poll, which reported that 55% of the Palestinian public support a return to confrontations and armed intifada, and 59% view armed attacks against Israelis inside Israel as serving the national interest in ending the “occupation.” When asked about the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation and building an independent state, 50% chose armed struggle and 22% negotiations.

Is it any wonder that Israelis believe they have no partner for peace?

## **MYTH**

*Palestinian maps reflect their goal of coexistence with Israel.*

## ***FACT***

Palestinian leaders communicate their true goal – a single state of Palestine replacing Israel – through imagery. Map 29 appeared on the Palestinian Authority website and illustrated better than any words the Palestinians’ objective.



The President of the Palestinian Authority, [Mahmoud Abbas](#), is head of its dominant faction, [Fatah](#). The Fatah emblem features a grenade with crossed rifles superimposed on the map of Israel. This emphasizes the dedication of Fatah, along with the other “liberation” groups, to the “armed struggle” against Israel, a euphemism for terrorism against civilians.





Fatah is the largest faction of the PLO, which has an unambiguous emblem:



This is the emblem of the Fatah Youth Movement to ensure that young Palestinians get the message.

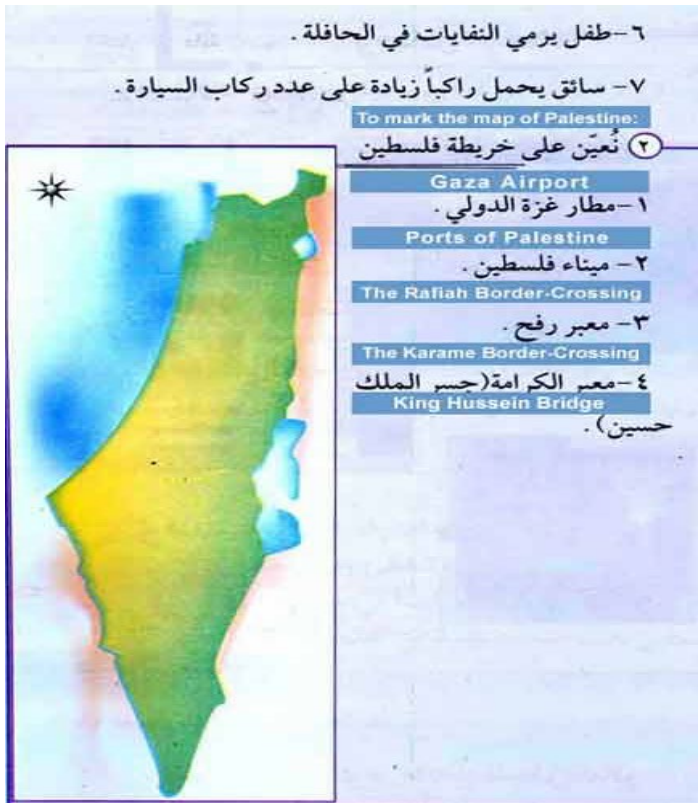


The Palestinian education system is committed to communicating to students of all ages that only one state should exist between the Mediterranean Sea and the [Jordan River](#) – Palestine.

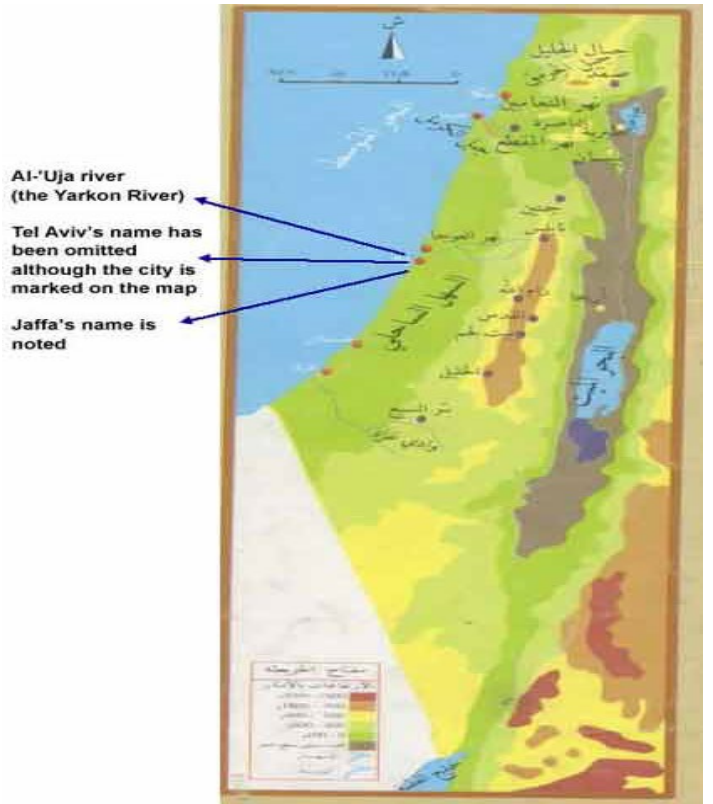


**PA Minister of Education poses with a map of Palestine replacing Israel (February 2, 2017)**

Palestinian [textbooks](#) send a similar message to school children. Here are just two examples:



“Al-Tarbiyah al-Wataniyah” (“National Education”)  
3rd grade, page 49, academic year 2002-2003



“The Geography of Palestine”

Nan Jacques Zilberdik reported, “As part of its protests against the [normalization agreements](#) between Israel and the [UAE](#), [Bahrain](#), and [Sudan](#) – and the fear that more Arab states will follow – Fatah posted the image below [on the Facebook page of the Fatah Commission of Information and Culture, October 28, 2020] with four repetitions of the PA map of “Palestine” that includes all of Israel.”<sup>32</sup>



صمود شعبنا أقوى من كل مشاريع التطبيع والضم والخيانة ... لأن صوت الحق أقوى ...  
هنا باقون ولن نرحل ... فلسطين غاية تُشرف و راية تُرفرف .

#التطبيع\_خيانة  
#لا\_للتطبيع



مفوضية الإعلام والثقافة



While the international community has championed the two-state solution as the best opportunity for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the visual evidence suggests the Palestinians have a different goal.

## MYTH

*The Abraham Accords were a betrayal of the Palestinians.*

## **FACT**

In a dramatic and unexpected joint announcement by the United States, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates on August 13, 2020, Israel and the UAE “agreed to the full normalization of relations.” The agreement followed years of quiet diplomacy and [interaction](#) between the two countries.

The Palestinian Authority condemned the agreement as “a betrayal of Jerusalem“ and an “aggression against the Palestinian people.” Hamas called it “cowardly” and “a blatant assault on our religious, national, and historical rights in [Palestine](#), a treacherous stab in the back of the Palestinian people and their resistance forces, and a miserable attempt to influence their struggle and resistance path aimed defeating the occupation.”<sup>33</sup>

On September 15, 2020, Bahrain joined the UAE in signing what became known as the [Abraham Accords](#). [Morocco](#) and Sudan subsequently agreed to normalize relations with Israel.

For years, the Palestinians exercised a de facto veto over Arab states’ relations with Israel. U.S. officials accepted this and did not use American leverage to change their minds. [John Kerry](#), President [Barack Obama’s](#) Secretary of State,

expressed the conventional wisdom. “I’ve talked to the leaders of the Arab community,” he said in 2016. “There will be no advanced and separate peace with the Arab world without the Palestinian process and Palestinian peace.”<sup>34</sup>

Obama’s policies inadvertently contributed to the Abraham Accords. America’s Gulf allies saw him reducing U.S. support for them while signing a [nuclear deal](#) with their enemy [Iran](#). This encouraged them to seek help from Israel, which shared their concern with Iran’s pursuit of a nuclear weapon.

The [Gulf states](#) also saw the potential benefits of ties with Israel, such as trade and access to technology. They were frustrated by the Palestinians’ unwillingness to make any compromises for peace with Israel. The leaders of the UAE and Bahrain decided they would no longer sacrifice their national interests for the Palestinians.

By removing the veto over their relations with Israel, the Arab states may have improved the prospects for peace by forcing the Palestinians to see that they have no leverage in negotiations and must compromise if they hope to achieve independence.

## **MYTH**

*Israel must make concessions for the peace process to succeed.*

## ***FACT***

The Palestinians, and their supporters worldwide, continue to operate under the impression that Israel must make “goodwill” gestures – such as prisoner releases, settlement freezes, and checkpoint dismantlement – to get the peace process back on track. While the United States and others routinely pressure Israel to make such gestures, the Palestinians are not expected to make any corresponding goodwill gestures.

What seems to be forgotten, however, is that compromises and concessions are supposed to be the subject of peace talks, not a price Israel should be expected to pay to bring the Palestinians to the negotiating table. If the Palestinians are committed to peace, they should be anxious to discuss all the outstanding issues without preconditions. Peace takes two willing parties.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech to AIPAC Policy Conference, (May 8, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> “Sharon: Israel Wants to Give Palestinians Possibility of a State,” [Haaretz](#), (September 24, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Bassem Mroue, “Hezbollah threatens Israel with escalation in border spat,” [Washington Post](#), (July 13, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> [Israel Democracy Institute](#), (July 5-7, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> “They Say, We Say: ‘Even the Palestinians know that settlement blocs are going to become part of Israel,’” [Americans for Peace Now](#).

<sup>6</sup> “Peace To Prosperity,” [The White House](#).

<sup>7</sup> Martin Kramer, “Chuck Hagel and linkage,” [Martin Kramer on the Middle East](#), (January 16, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Pipes, [The Long Shadow: Culture and Politics in the Middle East](#), (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989), pp. 273–74.

<sup>9</sup> “Lapid declares support for two-state solution before EU counterparts,” [i24NEWS](#), (December 7, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Noah Browning, “Abbas Wants ‘Not a Single Israeli’ in Future Palestinian State,” [Reuters](#), (July 29, 2013).

- <sup>11</sup> “Netanyahu: Jew Free Palestinian State Would Be Ethnic Cleansing,” [Algemeiner](#), (January 15, 2014).
- <sup>12</sup> Editorial, *Chicago Sun-Times*, (June 27, 2006).
- <sup>13</sup> *Yediot Aharonot*, (November 23, 2001).
- <sup>14</sup> Michael Tarazi, “Two Peoples, One State,” [New York Times](#), (October 4, 2004).
- <sup>15</sup> Assaf Sharon, “Half a Loaf,” [Boston Review](#), (October 12, 2015).
- <sup>16</sup> [PSR](#), (June 22-25, 2022).
- <sup>17</sup> “National Security Index,” [INSS](#), (2019-2020).
- <sup>18</sup> David Makovsky, “A One-State Solution Is Unworkable,” [Washington Institute](#), (June 21, 2021).
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> “Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research. Report on Palestinian Textbooks,” [Georg-Eckert-Institute](#), (2021).
- <sup>21</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, (October 16, 2001).
- <sup>22</sup> “The 2020–21 Palestinian School Curriculum Grades 1–12,” [IMPACT-se](#), (May 2021).
- <sup>23</sup> Joe Kaufman, “Calls for Palestinian Uprising from Miami,” [Gatestone Institute](#), (May 19, 2011).
- <sup>24</sup> Sammy Smooha, “Still Playing by the Rules,” University of Haifa, (2020).
- <sup>25</sup> “Opinion poll: 93% of Arabs in Jerusalem prefer the survival of Israeli rule,” [Shfa](#) [Arabic], (December 13, 2021).
- <sup>26</sup> Joshua Mitnick, “Better the Devil You Know,” *Jerusalem Report*, (November 11, 2007).
- <sup>27</sup> Sammy Smooha, “Still Playing by the Rules,” University of Haifa, (2020).
- <sup>28</sup> Eetta Prince-Gibson, “Land (Swap) for Peace?” [Jerusalem Report](#), (November 26, 2007).
- <sup>29</sup> “Public Opinion Poll No. 84,” [PSR](#), (June 28, 2022).
- <sup>30</sup> Stuart Winer, “ Hamas Political Leader: Stabbers Are ‘the Most Exalted, Noblest of People,’” [Times of Israel](#), (December 15, 2015).
- <sup>31</sup> “Amid Antisemitic and ‘Death to Israel’ Chants, Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh Vows: We Shall Never Recognize Israel,” [MEMRI](#), (May 11, 2018).
- <sup>32</sup> Nan Jacques Zilberdik, “All of Israel is ‘Palestine’ in Fatah message,” [Palestinian Media Watch](#), (November 3, 2020).
- <sup>33</sup> Steve Hendrix and Kareem Fahim, “Israel-UAE deal condemned by Palestinians, cheered by Egypt and Bahrain,” [Washington Post](#), (August 13, 2020).

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Wulfsohn, “John Kerry mocked for 2016 claim that ‘there will be no separate peace’ between Israel-Arab nations without the Palestinians,” [Fox News](#), (September 16, 2020).



## Chapter 16 Settlements

[Israeli settlements are illegal.](#)

[Settlements are an obstacle to peace.](#)

[Settlements violate the Geneva Convention.](#)

[Israel must dismantle all the settlements for peace.](#)

[Israel plans to annex all the settlements.](#)

[Settlements preclude the creation of a contiguous Palestinian state.](#)

[There are no Palestinian settlements.](#)

[The E1 project threatens the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state.](#)

### **MYTH**

*Israeli settlements are illegal.*

### **FACT**

On November 18, 2019, Secretary of State [Michael Pompeo](#) expressed the [Trump administration's position](#) that “the establishment of [Israeli](#) civilian [settlements](#) in the [West Bank](#) is not per se inconsistent with international law.”<sup>1</sup> The media inaccurately described this as a reversal of longstanding American policy. In truth, the record is more complicated.

[Jews](#) have lived in [Judea](#) and [Samaria](#)—the West Bank—since ancient times. They were prohibited from living in the territories only during [Jordan's](#) occupation from 1948 to 1967. Jews began to settle in the area again after it was captured by Israeli forces in the defensive war fought in [1967](#).

The idea that these Jewish communities are illegal derives primarily from [UN resolutions](#) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), an arm of the [UN](#). The UN does not make legal determinations, only political ones tainted by the overwhelming anti-Israel majority. The ICJ “does not have jurisdiction over all disputes between UN member-states,” according to the Congressional Research Service. In fact, “with the exception of ‘advisory opinions,’ which are non-binding, the ICJ may only resolve legal disputes between nations that voluntarily agreed to its jurisdiction.”<sup>2</sup>

Opinions of the ICJ are routinely ignored by the countries they are directed at, and the Europeans would never accept the idea that they trump the decisions of their judiciaries. Likewise, the [United States](#), [Russia](#), and [China](#) never signed the treaty establishing the court and do not accept its jurisdiction.<sup>3</sup>

Israel does not recognize the court's jurisdiction on the settlement issue. Like other democracies, [Israel](#) has an independent [judiciary](#). As Pompeo noted, its [Supreme Court](#) has “confirmed the legality of certain settlement activities and has concluded that others cannot be legally sustained.”

Legal scholars dispute the ICJ opinion that the settlements violate international law. Stephen Schwebel, formerly president of the ICJ, notes that a country acting in self-defense may seize and occupy territory when necessary to protect itself. Schwebel also observes that a state may require security measures to ensure its citizens are not menaced again from that territory as a condition for its withdrawal.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, [UN Security Council Resolution 242](#) gives Israel the legal right to be in the West Bank. According to Eugene Rostow, a former undersecretary of state for political affairs in the [Johnson administration](#), “Israel is entitled to administer the territories” it acquired in [1967](#) until “a just and lasting peace in the Middle East” is achieved.<sup>5</sup>

The United States has not regarded Israeli settlements as illegal. The oft-cited exception is the opinion of State Department legal adviser Herbert Hansell in the Carter administration. He [argued](#) that establishing settlements in the “occupied territories,” which included the West Bank, the [Gaza Strip](#), the [Sinai Peninsula](#), and the [Golan Heights](#), is

“inconsistent with international law.” This conformed to the views of President [Carter](#) at the time, who was critical of the Israeli settlement policy. Legal scholar Eugene Kontorovich noted, however, that Hansell said the state of occupation would end if Israel entered into a [peace treaty with Jordan](#), which it did in 1994. Nevertheless, the State Department never updated the memo.<sup>6</sup>

[Ronald Reagan](#) rejected Hansell’s opinion of settlements. On February 3, 1981, he said, “I disagreed when the previous Administration referred to them as illegal; they’re not illegal.”<sup>7</sup>

Secretary of State James Baker was asked if the [Bush administration](#) regarded the settlements as illegal, and his answer was, “this is not our policy.”<sup>8</sup>

The Obama policy has also been mischaracterized. Secretary of State [John Kerry](#) and President [Barack Obama](#) were very critical of Israel’s settlement policy, but Kerry did not call them “illegal”; he said they were “illegitimate.”<sup>9</sup> His only statement regarding their “illegality” was when he [mentioned](#) “settler outposts that are illegal under Israel’s own laws.” Obama abstained rather than veto the UN Security Council [resolution](#) labeling settlements illegal, which was generally interpreted as an endorsement of that view; however, it did not affect U.S. policy since he left office shortly thereafter.

In response to criticism that the Trump administration’s decision on the legality of settlements would harm the peace process, which at the time was moribund, Pompeo said the Carter formulation “hasn’t advanced the cause of peace.”<sup>10</sup>

By making explicit that the settlements are not illegal, the United States sent a message to the [Palestinians](#) and their supporters that their misinterpretation of international law cannot be used to coerce Israel to capitulate to their demands. A change in Israel’s settlement policy will only come if that is the will of the Israeli people and advances the peace process.

## MYTH

*Settlements are an obstacle to peace.*

## **FACT**

Settlements have never been an obstacle to peace.

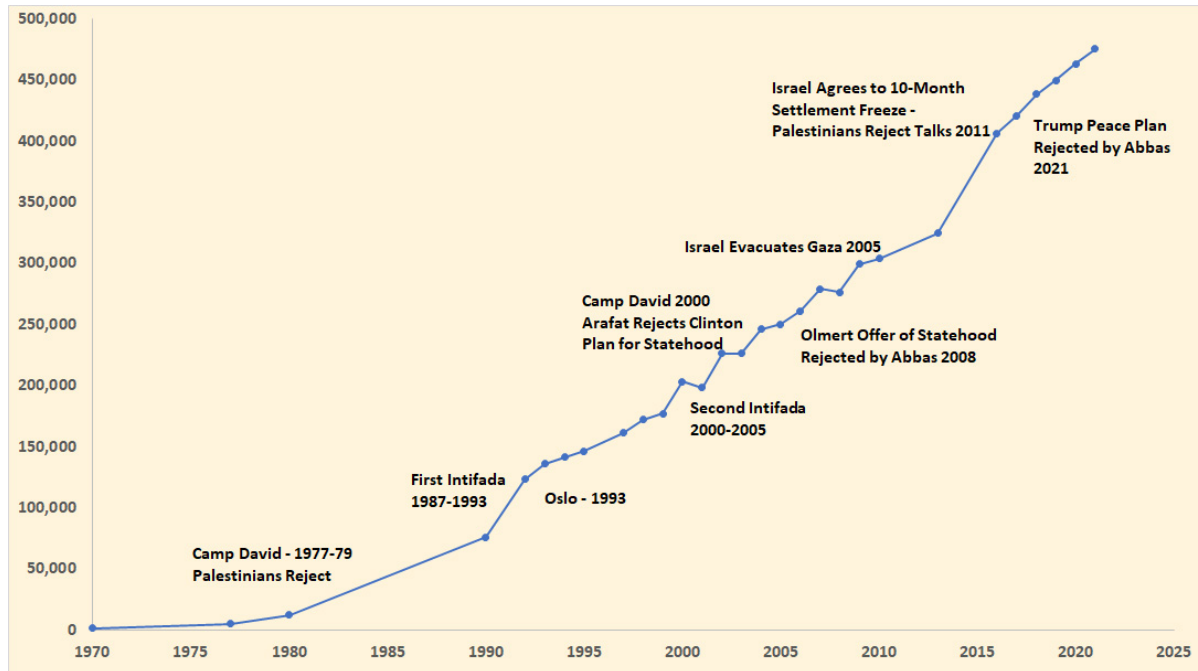
- From 1949 to 1967, when Jews were forbidden to live on the West Bank, Arab leaders refused to make peace with Israel.
- From 1967 to 1977, the [Labor Party](#) established only a few strategic settlements, yet Arab leaders were unwilling to agree to peace with Israel.
- The fact that a [Likud](#) government committed to greater settlement activity took power in 1977 did not stop [Egypt](#) from signing a peace treaty with Israel or Prime Minister Menachem Begin from removing the Jewish settlements in the Sinai.
- Israel froze settlement building for three months in 1978, hoping the gesture would entice other Arabs to join the [Camp David](#) peace process, but none did.
- In 1994, Jordan signed a [peace agreement](#) with Israel, and settlements were not an issue.
- Between June 1992 and June 1996, under Labor Party–led governments, the Jewish [population in the territories](#) grew by approximately 50%. This rapid growth did not prevent the Palestinians from signing the [Oslo accords](#) in September 1993 or the [Oslo II](#) agreement in September 1995. Those agreements left the question of settlements for final status negotiations and did not put any restrictions on them in the interim.
- In 2000, Prime Minister [Ehud Barak](#) offered to dismantle dozens of settlements, but the Palestinians still would not agree to end the conflict.
- In 2005, Israel evacuated all Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and four in Northern Samaria, but terror attacks continued.
- In 2008, Prime Minister [Ehud Olmert](#) offered to withdraw from approximately 94% of the West Bank, but the deal was rejected.

- In 2010, Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) froze settlement construction for ten months, and the Palestinians refused to negotiate until the period was nearly over. After agreeing to talk, they walked out when Netanyahu ended the freeze and had still not returned to negotiations by August 2022.

The settlements do not displace Arabs living in the territories. The media sometimes gives the impression that several hundred Palestinians are forced to leave for every Jew who moves to the West Bank. The truth is that most settlements have been built in uninhabited areas, and even the handful established in or near Arab towns did not force any Palestinians to leave.

Contrary to Palestinian-inspired hysteria about settlement expansion, only five settlements were built in the 1990s.<sup>11</sup> In 2017, work began on the first new settlement in 20 years.<sup>12</sup>

## Settlement Growth Over Time



Settlement activity may *stimulate* peace because it forces the Palestinians to reconsider the view that time is on their side. “The Palestinians now realize,” said [Bethlehem](#) Mayor Elias Freij, “that time is now on the side of Israel, which can build settlements and create facts, and that the only way out of this dilemma is face-to-face negotiations.”<sup>13</sup>

Many Israelis question the wisdom of expanding settlements. Some consider them provocative; others worry that the settlers are particularly vulnerable and note they have been targets of repeated [terrorist attacks](#). To defend them, many soldiers are deployed who would otherwise be training and preparing for a potential future war. Some Israelis also object to the money that goes to these communities and special subsidies provided to make housing more affordable. Still, others feel the settlers are providing the first line of defense and developing land that rightfully belongs to Israel.

The disposition of settlements is a matter for negotiations. The question of where the final border will be between Israel and a Palestinian entity will likely be influenced by the distribution of these Jewish towns in Judea and Samaria (the border with Gaza was unofficially defined following Israel’s withdrawal). Israel wants to incorporate as many Jews as possible within its borders, while the Palestinians want to expel all Jews from any territory they control.

If Israel withdraws unilaterally or as part of a political settlement, many settlers will face expulsion from their homes or voluntary resettlement in Israel with financial compensation.

The impediment to peace is not the existence of Jewish communities in the disputed territories but the Palestinians’ unwillingness to coexist with Israel instead of replacing it.

In the meantime, despite their complaints, thousands of Palestinians work in settlements.

## **MYTH**

*Settlements violate the Geneva Convention.*

## ***FACT***

The [Fourth Geneva Convention](#) prohibits the forcible transfer of people of one state to the territory of another state that it has occupied due to war. The Convention was never meant to apply to a case like the settlements. Morris Abram, one of its drafters, said they were concerned with the types of crimes committed by the [Nazis](#), such as the forcible eviction of Jews for purposes of mass extermination.<sup>14</sup>

This is in no way relevant to the settlement issue. Jews are not being forced to go to the West Bank; on the contrary, they are voluntarily moving back to places where they, or their ancestors, once lived before being expelled by others.

The International Court of Justice's opinion about the illegality of settlements was based on a fallacious interpretation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The ICJ presupposes that Israel is now occupying the land of a sovereign country; however, as former Israeli [Ambassador to the UN Dore Gold](#) notes, "there was no recognized sovereign over the West Bank prior to Israel's entry into the area." Jordan had previously occupied the area.<sup>15</sup>

A country cannot occupy territory to which it has sovereign title; hence, the correct term for the area is "disputed territory," which does not confer greater rights to Israel or the Palestinians. The Palestinians never had sovereignty in the West Bank, whereas the Jews did for hundreds of years.

"The Jewish right of settlement in the area is equivalent in every way to the right of the local population to live there," according to Professor Eugene Rostow, former undersecretary of state for political affairs.<sup>16</sup>

Legal scholar Eugene Kontorovich argues that "Israel has the strongest claim to the land" because "international law holds that a new country inherits the borders of the prior geopolitical unit in that territory. Israel was preceded by the [League of Nations Mandate](#) for Palestine, whose borders included the West Bank."<sup>17</sup>

Adam Baker, a former legal adviser to Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, adds that the "[Oslo Accords](#) instituted an agreed legal regime that overrides any other legal framework, including the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention."<sup>18</sup>

The effort to apply the Convention to Israel reflects a clear double standard. Kontorovich notes that "the significant migration of settlers into an occupied territory under the auspices of the occupying power is a ubiquitous feature of prolonged territorial control." He adds that no one has ever been prosecuted for violating the Convention and, except for a few sentences in an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice, "its interpretation has been confined to academic and political statements – entirely within the particular context of Israel."<sup>19</sup>

## **MYTH**

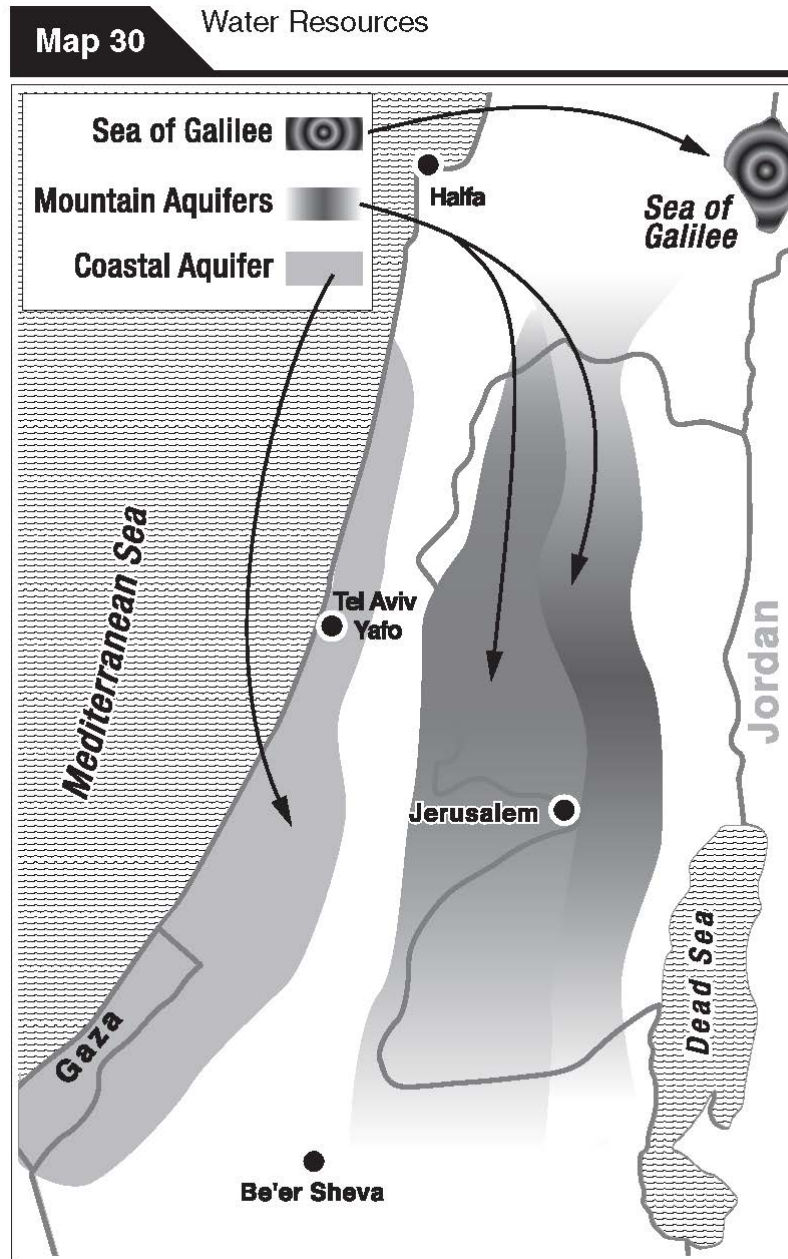
*Israel must dismantle all the settlements for peace.*

## ***FACT***

When serious negotiations begin over the final status of the West Bank, battle lines will be drawn over which settlements should be incorporated into Israel and which must be evacuated. In August 2005, Prime Minister [Ariel Sharon](#) acknowledged that "not all the settlements of today in Judea and Samaria will remain,"<sup>20</sup> while leaked Palestinian negotiating documents indicate the Palestinians were prepared to accept that some settlements would be incorporated into Israel.<sup>21</sup>

In Gaza, Israel intended to withdraw completely; no settlements were viewed as vital to Israel for economic, security, or

demographic reasons. The situation in the West Bank is completely different because Jews have strong historical and religious connections to the area stretching back centuries. Moreover, the West Bank is an area with strategic significance because of its proximity to Israel's heartland, and roughly one-quarter of Israel's [water resources](#) are located there.



The [disengagement](#) from Gaza involved only 21 settlements and approximately 8,500 Jews. Today, nearly 500,000 Jews live in 128 communities on the West Bank. More than 40% of these settlements have fewer than 1,000 citizens, 23% have fewer than 500, and only 13% have more than 5,000. Approximately 71% of the Jews in the West Bank live in five settlement “blocs,” four of which are near the 1949 Armistice Line the “Green Line” (it is incorrect to refer to a 1967 border). Another 330,000 live across Green Line in East [Jerusalem](#).<sup>11</sup>

As the table shows, these are large communities with thousands of residents. Evacuating them would be the equivalent of dismantling major American cities such as Annapolis, [Maryland](#); Olympia, [Washington](#); or Carson City, [Nevada](#).

### “Consensus” Settlements

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Bloc	No. of Communities	Population	Approximate Area (sq. miles)
Ma'ale Adumim	4	49,720	28 (73 sq. km.)
Modiin Illit	4	91,016	2 (5 sq. km.)
Ariel	11	65,253	47 (122 sq. km.)
Gush Etzion	13	37,433	10 (26 sq. km.)
Givat Ze'ev	5	36,635	3 (8 sq. km.)
Betar Illit*	1	66,723	2 (5 sq. km.)
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>346,780</b>	<b>92 (238 sq. km.)</b>

[Ma'ale Adumim](#) is not a recently constructed outpost on a hilltop; it is a 46-year-old suburb of Israel's capital, barely three miles (five km.) outside Jerusalem's city limits, that is popular because it is clean, safe, and close to where many residents work. It is also the third-largest Jewish city in the territories, with a population of more than 40,000. Approximately 10,000 people live in surrounding settlements included in the Ma'ale bloc.

The [Gush Etzion Bloc](#) consists of 13 communities with a population of roughly 40,000, just ten minutes from Jerusalem. Jews lived in this area before 1948, but the Jordanian Legion destroyed the settlements and killed 240 women and children during the 1948 War. After Israel recaptured the area in [1967](#), descendants of those early settlers reestablished the community. The city of Betar Illit, with nearly 70,000 residents, is part of this bloc.

The Givat Ze'ev bloc includes five communities just northwest of Jerusalem. Givat Ze'ev, with a population of more than 20,000, is the largest.

Modiin Illit is a bloc with four communities. The city of Modiin Illit is the largest in all the disputed territories, with more than 83,000 people situated just over the [Green Line](#), about 23 miles (37 km.) northwest of Jerusalem and the same distance east of [Tel Aviv](#).

[Ariel](#), with a population of more than 20,000, is now the heart of the second most populous [bloc](#) of settlements. The city is just 25 miles (40 km.) east of Tel Aviv and 31 miles (50 km.) north of Jerusalem. Ariel and the surrounding communities expanded Israel's narrow waist, which was just 9 miles (15 km.) wide before 1967, and ensures that Israel has a land route to the [Jordan Valley](#) in case Israel needs to fight a land war to the east. It is more controversial than the other consensus settlements because it is the furthest from the Green Line, extending approximately 12 miles (19 km.) into the West Bank. Nevertheless, Ariel is expected to be annexed to Israel if a peace agreement is reached.

Most [peace plans](#) envision Israel annexing sufficient territory – 4 to 6% – to incorporate 75–80% of the Jews in the West Bank. In exchange, the Palestinian entity would get the same amount of land from Israeli territory (possibly in the Negev adjacent to the Gaza Strip). Based on the figures in the table above, only 71% of the settlers would be within Israel's borders if these five blocs were annexed. Roughly one-third of the remaining Jews are expected to move into Israeli territory, bringing the total to 80%. Israel would still have to evacuate approximately 100,000 people.

This would involve another gut-wrenching decision that many settlers and their supporters will oppose with even greater ferocity than the Gaza disengagement. It is hard to imagine any Israeli government agreeing to such a mass transfer of its citizens.

**If settlement-building is now concentrated in areas that the Palestinians themselves acknowledge will remain part of Israel in any future peace agreement, why the obsessive focus on settlements as an “obstacle to peace?”**

—Yossi Klein Halevi<sup>22</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel plans to annex all the settlements.*

## **FACT**

Israel could have annexed the entire West Bank or the settlements at any time since 1967 but has not done so. It is still a possibility, but those are just two options that have been discussed for the disposition of the West Bank. Others include:

- Israel unilaterally delineates its border and determines which settlements it will annex.
- Israel establishes its border along the route of its [security fence](#), incorporating the settlers on its side within Israel and forcing those on the other side to move inside the border.
- Israel annexes the settlement blocs.
- Israel annexes the settlements in the Jordan Valley.
- Israel annexes the settlements in the Jordan Valley and the blocs.
- Israel negotiates a peace treaty with the Palestinians that specifies which Jewish communities will remain intact within the mutually agreed border of Israel and which, if any, will be evacuated.

In 2020, the Netanyahu government considered [applying Israeli sovereignty](#) to some or all the settlements but decided not to as a condition for the [United Arab Emirates](#) and [Bahrain](#) to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

## **MYTH**

*Settlements preclude the creation of a contiguous Palestinian state.*

## ***FACT***

As map 31 indicates, it is possible to create a contiguous Palestinian state in the West Bank even if Israel incorporates the major settlement blocs. The total area of these communities is less than 2% of the West Bank. A kidney-shaped state linked to the Gaza Strip by a secure passage would be contiguous. Some argue that the [E1 project](#) linking Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem would cut off East Jerusalem, but that is not necessarily true, as Israel has proposed constructing a four-lane underpass to guarantee free passage between the West Bank and the Arab sections of Jerusalem.

The map also illustrates that *Israel* would have its contiguity interrupted by the passageway between Gaza and the West Bank.

**MYTH**

*There are no Palestinian settlements.*

**FACT**

Whenever Israel announces plans to build in the West Bank, an international furor erupts with false claims about their illegality. Meanwhile, the world was silent when the [Palestinian Authority](#) announced plans to violate the Oslo Accords unilaterally by canceling the West Bank's division into Area A, B, and C and treating the entire area as sovereign

Palestinian territory.<sup>23</sup> Even before that announcement, the Palestinians built settlements in Area C, where Israel must approve any construction.

Illegal settlements and infrastructure have spread across 250 Area C locations occupying more than 2,000 acres. The PA has offered incentives, such as tax exemptions, discounts for vehicle registration, and jobs for those who settle in Area C.<sup>24</sup> While Israel is pilloried anytime it suggests moving Bedouins from their encampments to another location or permanent housing, nothing is said about the PA's efforts to do the same.

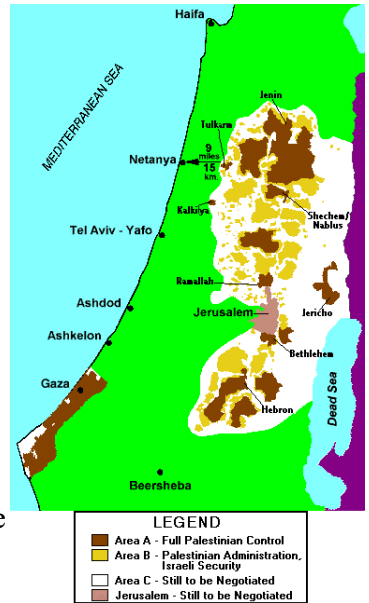


European countries, which routinely criticize Israeli settlements, provide funding for constructing the illegal Palestinian settlements. “European countries – individually, and through the European Union – have pumped hundreds of millions of euros annually into scores of illegal state-building and related projects – called Area C ‘interventions,’” according to investigative journalist Edwin Black.<sup>25</sup>

People who ordinarily would be concerned about water and other environmental issues have ignored the Palestinian building projects, which Black notes “are not natural Arab urban growth or urban sprawl.” He says they are meant to “carve up Area C, sometimes surround Jewish villages, and sometimes push onto Israeli nature or military reserves.”

Palestinians have complained about the slow process of obtaining building permits from the Civil Administration and the high rejection rate. Black related that the number of applications has dropped because the Palestinians “deny Israel’s right to issue them” and “just start building.”

The courts hamstringing Israel’s efforts to stop the illegal construction. Despite lacking citizenship, Palestinians can petition Israeli courts, including the Supreme Court, and do so with the help of well-funded NGOs. A military spokesman told Black, “It can take years to decide .... Meanwhile, they are still building. We can’t do anything about it.” If the court ultimately rules in Israel’s favor, the government is denounced by critics for demolishing the illegal structures.



Another troubling aspect of the Europeans’ funding is their reluctance to look carefully at the organizations they are funding to build up Area C, which includes supporters of the anti-Semitic [BDS](#) movement with connections to terror organizations. Black reports, for example, that European governments have funded the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, which is linked to the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine](#).<sup>26</sup>

Consider the impact on the peace process of the European-backed activities by the PA. By building settlements, the Palestinians are trying to prevent Israel from creating a contiguous area for its future borders, precisely what Israel’s critics accuse it of doing. The Palestinians often complain that a future state would look like Swiss cheese because of the geographic distribution of Jewish communities, but they are creating the holes themselves by establishing isolated settlements separated from the main population centers and nearer Jewish towns. Moreover, by claiming sovereignty in Area C, the Palestinians have violated the Oslo Accords, further undermining Israeli confidence that they can be trusted to honor the terms of any future agreement.

New towns established by the Palestinians in the West Bank should be referred to as “settlements” and condemned with the same ferocity as critics of Israeli construction for creating “facts on the ground.” The West Bank is *disputed* territory; the Palestinians have no sovereign rights there today, nor have they had any in the past which would justify their incursion into Israeli-controlled territory. Those who constantly bemoan the disappearing two-state solution and unilateral actions should be outraged by the Palestinian campaign of creeping annexation and brazen efforts to predetermine the border of any possible state by their illegal construction in areas that Israelis have an equal right to claim as their own.

## **MYTH**

*The E1 project threatens the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state.*

## **FACT**

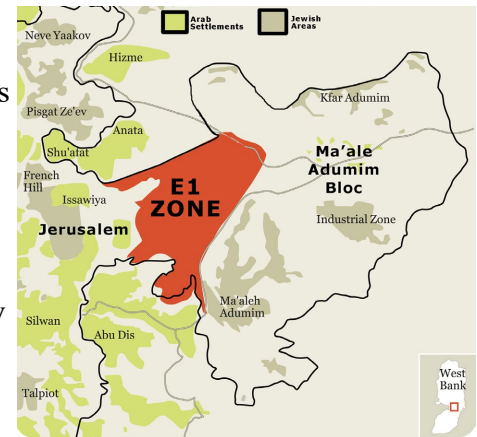
Initially formulated by Prime Minister [Yitzhak Rabin](#) just months before his [assassination](#), the E1 plan is to populate the roughly 4.6 square mile (12 sq. km.) valley between Jerusalem and Ma’ale Adumim, which Palestinians agree will be part of Israel in any future agreement. This “settlement” of some 50,000 people is essentially a suburb just three miles (5 km.) outside the capital. The E1 project envisions the construction of three residential neighborhoods and a commercial-industrial zone.<sup>27</sup> Critics claim the E-1 project would cut off East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank and doom a

two-state solution.<sup>28</sup>

From Israel's perspective, the project is critical for the long-term security of Jerusalem and necessary to prevent Ma'ale Adumim from becoming an isolated island surrounded by a Palestinian entity. To solve the issue of contiguity, Israel has proposed a bypass road to allow Palestinians to travel from north to south in the West Bank without security checkpoints.

The Israeli prime minister announces his intention to complete the plan every few years. Usually, within days, he backtracks under pressure from the United States.<sup>29</sup> The project remains on the drawing board, and much of the infrastructure is already in place, but the project remains in limbo.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians have been furiously building without opposition from abroad to prevent E-1 from being completed. The EU illegally finances hundreds of structures in the Adumim area, which is part of Area C, which the Oslo Accords put under the sole control of Israel.<sup>30</sup> In one case, [Italy](#) began to openly support the illegal [Bedouin](#) encampment of Khan al-Ahmar, including by moving the residents from tents to new structures and building a school for all the Bedouins in the vicinity. The site is located near E-1 to block Israel's plans for the area. Israel's [Supreme Court](#) approved the demolition of the illegal structures and the relocation of the Bedouins; however, international protests and the Israeli [elections](#) in 2019 delayed implementing the decision. Still undecided, the government asked for more time to formulate a position in March 2022 and still had not taken any action by August.<sup>31</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> “Secretary Pompeo Comments on Israeli Civilian Settlement Activity,” [U.S. Department of State](#), (November 18, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Stephen P. Mulligan, “The United States and the ‘World Court,’” [Congressional Research Service](#), (October 17, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Dworkin, “Why America is facing off against the International Criminal Court,” [European Council on Foreign Relations](#), (September 8, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Stephen M. Schwebel, “What Weight to Conquest?” *American Journal of International Law*, (April 1970), pp. 345–46.

<sup>5</sup> Eugene Rostow, “Bricks and Stones: Settling for Leverage,” *New Republic*, (April 23, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Eugene Kontorovich, “Pompeo Busts the ‘Occupation’ Myth,” [Wall Street Journal](#), (November 19, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> “Excerpts From Interview With President Reagan Conducted By Five Reporters,” [New York Times](#), (February 3, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> Paul Claussen and Evan M. Duncan, Eds., [American Foreign Policy Current Documents](#), (NY: William S. Hein & Co., 2008), p. 570.

<sup>9</sup> “Kerry: Israeli settlements are illegitimate,” [Al Jazeera](#), (November 6, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> “Secretary Pompeo Comments on Israeli Civilian Settlement Activity,” [U.S. Department of State](#), (November 18, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Tovah Lazaroff, “Frontlines: Is Settlement Growth Booming?” [Jerusalem Post](#), (December

30, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> “Israel starts work on first new West Bank settlement in 20 years,” [BBC](#), (June 20, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Charles Krauthammer, “The Settlements Are A Spur To Peace,” [Washington Post](#), (November 1, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> Dore Gold, “A long awaited correction,” [Israel Hayom](#), (November 18, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 84, (1990), p. 72.

<sup>17</sup> Eugene Kontorovich, “Pompeo Busts the ‘Occupation’ Myth,” [Wall Street Journal](#), (November 19, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Alan Baker, “The Legality of Israel’s Settlements: Flaws in the Carter-Era Hansell Memorandum,” [JCPA](#), (November 21, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Eugene Kontorovich, “Unsettled: A Global Study of Settlements in Occupied Territories,” [Journal of Legal Analysis](#), Volume 9, Issue 2, (Winter 2017), pp 285–350.

<sup>20</sup> Greg Myre, “Sharon Sees More West Bank Pullouts,” [New York Times](#), (August 29, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Ian Black and Seumas Milne, “Israel spurned Palestinian offer of ‘biggest Yerushalayim in history,’” [The Guardian](#), (January 23, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Yossi Klein Halevi, “The Great Israeli Settlement Myth,” [Los Angeles Times](#), (June 20, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Jack Khoury, “Palestinian Authority Decides to End Division of West Bank Into Areas Set by Oslo Accords,” [Haaretz](#), (August 31, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Yaakov Eliraz, “Israel needs to wake up: The PA is taking over Area C,” [Jewish News Service](#), (July 28, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Edwin Black, “Who’s Funding Illegal Palestinian Settlements in Area C – Nearly 10,000 Cases,” [Jewish News Service](#), (August 15, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Edwin Black, “Who’s funding illegal Palestinian settlements in Area C? Links to terrorists,” [JNS](#), August 21, 2019).

<sup>27</sup> Nadav Shragai, “Protecting the Contiguity of Israel: The E-1 Area,” [JCPA](#), (May 24, 2009); Shragai, “Understanding Israeli Interests in the E1 Area: Contiguity, Security, and Jerusalem,” [JCPA](#), (2013); Shragai, “The End of Building Freezes in the Jerusalem Area,” [JCPA](#), (March 8, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> Adam Chandler, “On The Reactions To Israel’s E-1 Plan,” [Tablet](#), (December 3, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Akiva Novick, “Netanyahu delays E1 construction plans,” [Ynet](#), (January 4, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> “Illegal EU Building In Adumim Region,” [Regavim](#), (February 6, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Hagar Shezaf, “Israel Asks Court for More Time to Decide on Khan al-Ahmar, Citing Ukraine War,” [Haaretz](#), (March 8, 2022); [Regavim](#), (July 24, 2022).

# Chapter 17

## The Iranian Threat

[Iran has no ambition to become a nuclear power.](#)  
[The JCPOA prevents Iran from building a nuclear bomb.](#)  
[Israel has nothing to fear from a nuclear Iran.](#)  
[Iran does not believe that it can win a nuclear war.](#)  
[Iran's nuclear program threatens only Israel.](#)  
[Donald Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA allowed Iran to get closer to a bomb.](#)  
[The only alternative to a nuclear deal is war.](#)  
[Military force cannot prevent Iran from getting a nuclear bomb.](#)  
["Snapback" sanctions ensured Iran would adhere to the nuclear agreement.](#)  
[The Iran deal eliminates the danger of nuclear proliferation.](#)  
[The nuclear agreement put an end to Iran's ballistic missile research.](#)  
[Attacking Iran will create more instability and endanger U.S. interests.](#)

### **MYTH**

*Iran has no ambition to become a nuclear power.*

### **FACT**

Evidence of [Iran's](#) pursuit of [nuclear weapons](#) was revealed in 2002 with the discovery of two previously unknown nuclear facilities in [Arak](#) and [Natanz](#). This was followed by the admission by Pakistan's top nuclear scientist, Abdul Qadeer Khan, that he provided atomic weapons expertise and equipment to Iran.<sup>1</sup>

Secretary of State Colin Powell said in 2004 that U.S. intelligence indicated Iran was trying to fit [missiles](#) to carry nuclear weapons. "There is no doubt in my mind—and it's fairly straightforward from what we've been saying for years—that they have been interested in a nuclear weapon that has utility, meaning that it is something they would be able to deliver, not just something that sits there," Powell said.<sup>2</sup>

The international consensus opposing Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons was reflected by multiple [UN Security Council](#) measures starting with [Resolution 1696](#) in July 2006. This resolution gave Iran a deadline to suspend its uranium enrichment. In December, the UN adopted a similar measure ([Resolution 1737](#)), which added prohibitions on Iran's ability to acquire nuclear material and equipment. On February 22, 2007, the [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) announced that Iran had not complied with the resolutions, prompting Iranian foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki to declare that Iran would never suspend uranium enrichment.<sup>3</sup>

In February 2010, [President Barack Obama](#) announced [sanctions](#) on Iran. The next day Iran announced it had begun enriching uranium to a higher level of purity, 20%, moving a step closer to producing weapons-grade uranium.<sup>4</sup> By May, the IAEA reported that Iran had created a stockpile of nuclear fuel that, with further enrichment, would be sufficient to build two nuclear weapons.<sup>5</sup>

American intelligence assessments estimated that before signing the nuclear deal with Iran – [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#) – in 2015, Iran could build a nuclear weapon within two to three months.<sup>6</sup>

If the Iranians had no interest in a bomb, why did they acquire the means to make one within such a short period?

After [President Donald Trump](#) withdrew the United States from the JCPOA in 2018, Iran accelerated its development of a nuclear capability. The IAEA reported in May 2022 that Iran had enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear bomb.<sup>7</sup> Two months later, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said Iran's nuclear program is "galloping ahead."<sup>8</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The JCPOA prevents Iran from building a nuclear bomb.*

## ***FACT***

On July 14, 2015, the P5+1 ([USA](#), [Germany](#), [France](#), the [United Kingdom](#), [China](#), and [Russia](#)) announced they had agreed with Iran on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Iran wanted to be free of sanctions, and the other signatories hoped to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Verifying Iran's compliance depended on monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Supporters of the deal repeatedly said the IAEA certified Iran's compliance, but this was never true. In 2019, David Albright and Andrea Stricker of the Institute for Science and International Security wrote: "The IAEA has reported that it still has not been able to determine that Iran has no undeclared nuclear facilities and materials and thus cannot conclude that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful." They concluded, "The basic proposition of whether Iran seeks nuclear weapons has not been answered in the three-plus years since the deal commenced."<sup>9</sup>

We know much more today.

Under the agreement, Iran agreed to limit enrichment to 3.7% and cap its low-enriched uranium stock at 660 pounds (300 kilograms) for 15 years. In 2020, the IAEA reported that the stockpile was nearly 12 times the amount permitted and enriched to 4.5% purity.<sup>10</sup>

Israel had called for destroying Iran's nuclear facilities and the centrifuges used to enrich uranium. The *Washington Post* noted that "not one of the country's 19,000 centrifuges" would be dismantled under the agreement.<sup>11</sup> In 2021, Iran installed more centrifuges at Fordow and announced it would increase enrichment levels to 60%, closer to the 90% needed to produce a nuclear weapon.<sup>12</sup> It also installed advanced centrifuges and continued to enrich uranium at Natanz.<sup>13</sup>

Iran agreed to turn its underground enrichment plant at Fordow into a science research center and reduce the number of centrifuges at its Natanz plant. A third reactor constructed at Arak was to be redesigned so it could not produce weapons-grade plutonium.

In 2019, Iran said it had faked pictures of pouring concrete into the reactor's pit at Arak and announced it was resuming activities at the facility.<sup>14</sup> According to Olli Heinonen, a former IAEA deputy director for safeguards, "The reactor has yet to be irreversibly modified not to produce plutonium in quantities of non-proliferation concern."<sup>15</sup>

The IAEA was supposed to have access to information regarding Iran's past nuclear weapons research and verify that it was not developing a nuclear bomb but was obstructed from doing so. The IAEA, for example, was prevented from investigating the [Parchin](#) site, where it is suspected that Iran engaged in research and testing related to building a nuclear weapon. The Iranians tried to conceal the work by removing soil and infrastructure; however, uranium particles discovered at Parchin in 2015, along with satellite imagery and documents from defectors, indicated the base was part of the nuclear program.<sup>16</sup>

Heinonen recalled that it took six months between the time the Natanz plant was discovered and the IAEA was allowed inside. The delay was designed to conceal another research and development site. The same deceptive policy, he said, was used to develop the secret underground facility at Fordo.<sup>17</sup>

Because [President Joe Biden](#) did not reverse Trump's decision to leave the JCPOA, Iran stopped providing data from surveillance cameras in February 2021. Then, after the IAEA board rebuked Iran in June 2022 for failing to cooperate with its investigation into sites where undeclared nuclear material was found, Iran responded by removing 27 cameras monitoring its nuclear activities.<sup>18</sup>

The Agency also has not been allowed to conduct the “anywhere, anytime” inspections President Obama promised to sell the deal to Congress. Though the JCPOA makes no distinction between civilian and military installations, Iran has denied access to military sites, the most likely places for weapons research and development.<sup>19</sup>

The inadequacy of the IAEA verification regime was proven when Israel discovered and stole documents from a secret compound in Tehran detailing Iran’s nuclear weapons activities.<sup>20</sup> Israel later identified a secret warehouse where equipment and material related to Iran’s past or possibly ongoing nuclear weapons efforts were stored. It also held 33 pounds (15 kilograms) of radioactive material that Iran dispersed around Tehran. Iran blocked inspectors from investigating two undeclared sites, presumably to allow time to sanitize them; nevertheless, when they were allowed access, they found traces of radioactive material likely related to nuclear weapons research.<sup>21</sup>

The JCPOA did not prevent Iran from building a bomb; it only increased the “breakout” point—the amount of time it would take Iran to produce enough bomb-grade material for a singular nuclear weapon—to one year. Obama claimed that safeguards would allow the detection of any Iranian effort to “breakout.”

Given the failure to detect and stop nuclear programs in [North Korea](#), [Pakistan](#), and [India](#), there was cause for skepticism. Moreover, even a year may not be enough “for the intelligence community to identify the development, attempt to persuade Iran to refrain from making it, and take action to stop it,” according to Israeli security analyst Ephraim Kam.<sup>22</sup>

Obama subsequently admitted that by “year 13, 14, 15 [of the proposed deal], they [could] have advanced centrifuges that enrich uranium fairly rapidly and, at that point, the breakout times would have shrunk *almost down to zero* (emphasis added).”<sup>23</sup> Rather than reaching that point as early as 2028, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki admitted in April 2022, “Their breakout period is down from about a year, which is what we knew it was during the deal, to just a few weeks or less.”<sup>24</sup> A few months later, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said Iran’s nuclear program is “galloping ahead,” and the Agency had limited visibility on what was happening.<sup>25</sup>

This raises the question: How can Iran advance toward building a weapon when Obama promised “every pathway to a nuclear weapon is cut off” by the JCPOA?<sup>26</sup>

Obama’s Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, contradicted the president when he told the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2016 that “Iran does not face any insurmountable technical barriers to producing a nuclear weapon.” He added, “Iran probably views the JCPOA as a means to remove sanctions while preserving nuclear capabilities.”<sup>27</sup>

The terms of the JCPOA also undermined its objective. The United States had to agree to remove sanctions and unfreeze Iranian assets to win Iran’s approval. That gave Iran billions of dollars (estimates were as high as \$150 billion) for continued covert nuclear weapons development, [terrorism](#), and other malign activities.<sup>28</sup>

One reason to doubt Iran will abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons is the fear that it could lead to the regime’s downfall. Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Khamenei](#) believes [Libya’s abandonment of its nuclear program in 2003](#) eventually hastened the overthrow of [Muammar Qaddafi](#).<sup>29</sup> Iran also believes it has as much right to a bomb as the other countries in the nuclear club.

## **MYTH**

*Israel has nothing to fear from a nuclear Iran.*

## ***FACT***

Jews have learned from painful history that they should take it seriously when someone threatens to kill them. Therefore, no one should be surprised at the alarm expressed by Israel when Iranian president [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#)

said, “This origin of corruption [Israel] will soon be wiped off the Earth’s face!” and Ayatollah Khamenei declared that Israel is a “cancerous tumor that should be cut and will be cut.”<sup>31</sup> Khamenei also said Israel would not exist in 25 years; it would disappear much earlier, [Tel Aviv](#) and [Haifa](#) would be turned to ashes, and Jerusalem would be liberated.<sup>32</sup>

The front page of the December 14, 2021, edition of the *Tehran Times* featured a map of Israel covered with markings for potential rocket attacks with the threatening headline, “Just One Wrong Move!” Beneath the map, the paper wrote, “An intensification of the Israeli military threats against Iran seems to suggest that the [Zionist](#) regime has forgotten that Iran is more than capable of hitting them from anywhere.”<sup>33</sup>



Click on the photo for an enlarged map

Would Iran launch a nuclear attack against Israel and take the risk of an Israeli counterstrike that might destroy the country?

Middle East expert Bernard Lewis said it was possible because Islamists in Iran want infidels to go to hell and believers to ascend to heaven. As evidence, Lewis quotes a passage from [Ayatollah Khomeini](#), cited in an eleventh-grade Iranian schoolbook:

I am decisively announcing to the whole world that if the world-devourers [the infidel powers] wish to stand against our religion, we will stand against the whole world and will not cease until the annihilation of all of them. Either we all become free, or we will go to the greater freedom, which is martyrdom. Either we shake one another’s hands in joy at the victory of Islam in the world, or all of us will turn to eternal life and martyrdom. In both cases, victory and success are ours.<sup>34</sup>

Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad believed the most critical task of the Iranian Revolution was to prepare the way for the return of the Twelfth Imam, who disappeared in 874, bringing an end to [Muhammad’s](#) lineage. [Shiites](#) believe this imam, the Mahdi or “divinely guided one,” will return in an apocalyptic battle in which the forces of righteousness will defeat the forces of evil and bring about a new era in which Shi’a Islam ultimately becomes the dominant religion throughout the world. The Shiites have been waiting patiently for the Twelfth Imam for more than a thousand years, and some fear Iranian leaders might believe they can hasten the return through a nuclear war.

It is this apocalyptic worldview, Lewis notes, which distinguishes Iran from other governments with nuclear weapons.

Iran will not have to use a weapon to influence events in the region. The Iranians can deter Israel or any other nation from attacking Iran or its allies by possessing nuclear capability. For example, when [Hezbollah](#) attacked Israel in 2006, a nuclear Iran could have threatened retaliation against Tel Aviv if Israeli forces bombed Beirut. The mere threat of using nuclear weapons would be sufficient to drive Israelis into shelters and could cripple the economy.

Israel's prime minister must contemplate the following questions: Will immigrants want to come to a country that lives in the shadow of annihilation? Will companies want to do business under those conditions? Will Israelis be willing to live under a nuclear cloud?

If you were prime minister, would you take Iranian threats seriously? Could you risk allowing Iran to acquire nuclear weapons? How long would you wait for sanctions or other international measures to work before acting unilaterally to defend your country? Would you trust a nuclear deal to prevent Iran from getting a bomb, given the failure of the JCPOA to prevent Iran from reaching the nuclear threshold?

I wish Israel did not need defensive weapons of mass destruction or the region's most powerful defense forces. I wish the world had not driven the Jewish State into allocating its limited resources away from its universities and toward its military, but survival must come first, and Israel's military strength is the key to its survival. Anyone who believes that survival can be assured by moral superiority alone must remember the Warsaw Ghetto and the Treblinka gas chambers.

—Alan Dershowitz<sup>35</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Iran does not believe that it can win a nuclear war.*

## ***FACT***

One reason [deterrence](#) worked during the Cold War is that neither the United States nor the [Soviet Union](#) believed it could win a nuclear war without suffering horrific losses. Some argue that Iran knows Israel would use its nuclear weapons to retaliate if Iranian nuclear missiles ever hit it and, therefore, would never risk a first strike.

The problem with this analysis is that Iran's leaders believe they can win a nuclear war.

Khamenei has said, "Sometimes the leaders of the [Zionist](#) regime threaten us....They should know that if they attack us, we will turn Tel Aviv and Haifa into wastelands."<sup>36</sup>

Hashemi Rafsanjani, the President of Iran from 1989 until 1997, said, "Israel is much smaller than Iran in land mass, and therefore far more vulnerable to nuclear attack."<sup>37</sup> In a 2001 speech, Rafsanjani declared: "If one day, the Islamic world is also equipped with weapons like those that Israel possesses now, then the imperialists' strategy will reach a standstill because the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything."<sup>38</sup>

In 2022, when it appeared a new nuclear agreement would be reached, Iranian President [Ebrahim Raisi](#) warned that if Israel attacks any of its nuclear facilities, it "will see if anything from the Zionist regime will remain or not."<sup>39</sup>

Iran is 75 times the size of Israel, with a population of 84 million compared to Israel's [9.7](#) million. This discrepancy explains why Rafsanjani and others believe Iran could survive an exchange of nuclear strikes while Israel would be annihilated.

Iran is also not deterred by the fact that innocent [Muslims](#) would be killed in a strike on Israel. The *Tehran Times* map of missile targets included Jerusalem and Palestinian areas in the West Bank and Gaza (where no Israelis live).<sup>40</sup>

Rafsanjani admitted he wasn't concerned about the fallout from an attack on Israel. "If a day comes when the world of Islam is duly equipped with the arms Israel has in its possession," he said, "the strategy of colonialism would face a



stalemate because application of an atomic bomb would not leave anything in Israel, but the same thing would just produce damages in the Muslim world.” Rafsanjani wasn’t concerned that the destruction of the Jewish State would also result in the mass murder of Palestinians.<sup>41</sup>

A nuclear Iran that is not afraid of the consequences of nuclear war cannot be deterred or contained.

## **MYTH**

*Iran’s nuclear program threatens only Israel.*

## ***FACT***

Israel is not alone in its concern about Iran’s nuclear weapons program. The nations most worried about Iran are its immediate neighbors who have no doubts about the hegemonic ambitions of the radical Islamists in Tehran.

Iran’s Arab neighbors have accused it of threatening the sovereignty and independence of [Bahrain](#) and territories of the [United Arab Emirates](#), “issuing provocative statements against Arab states,” and interfering in the affairs of the [Palestinians](#), [Iraq](#), and [Morocco](#).<sup>42</sup>

Iranian officials renewed claims that it was part of the Persian Empire in statements challenging Bahrain’s sovereignty. The effect of Iran’s saber rattling, journalist Giles Whittell wrote, “is especially chilling in Bahrain as the only [Sunni](#)-led country with a Shia majority that is not at war or on the brink of war.”<sup>43</sup> [Arab League](#) Deputy Secretary-General Ahmad Bin Hali angrily denounced Iran’s claims to Bahrain, while former Bahraini army chief of staff Sheik Maj.-Gen. Khalifa ibn Ahmad al-Khalifa said Iran stirs trouble in many Gulf nations. “[Iran] is like an octopus,” he observed. “It is rummaging around in Iraq, [Kuwait](#), [Lebanon](#), [Gaza](#), and Bahrain.”<sup>44</sup>

The crown prince of Bahrain was the first Gulf leader to accuse Iran of lying about its weapons program. “While they don’t have the bomb yet, they are developing it, or the capability for it,” Salman bin Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa said.<sup>45</sup>

Iran also reasserted its authority over three islands of the United Arab Emirates that it forcibly seized in the early 1970s and continues to occupy. While joint sovereignty was maintained between Iran and the UAE over the Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunbs islands until 1994, Iran increased its military capabilities on Abu Musa, stationed Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps soldiers there, and expelled foreign workers in an attempt to assert complete control of the island. The [UN General Assembly](#), the Arab League, and the Arab Parliamentary Union affirmed their support for the UAE’s claim and determined that Iran illegally occupies the islands.<sup>46</sup>

Iran will never get a nuclear weapon on my watch.

—President Joseph Biden<sup>47</sup>

The Iranian threat is felt in Arab states beyond the Gulf as well. Morocco severed diplomatic relations with Iran in response to the inflammatory statements concerning Bahrain and hostile activity by Iranians inside Morocco. Morocco’s foreign ministry accused the Iranian diplomatic mission in Rabat of interfering in the kingdom’s internal affairs and attempting to spread Shi’a Islam in the nation, where 99% of the population are Sunni Muslims.<sup>48</sup>

[Turkey](#) has also expressed alarm at Iran’s actions. Turkish president Abdullah Gül declared, “Turkey will not accept a neighboring country possessing weapons not possessed by Turkey herself.”<sup>49</sup>

European leaders see Iran as a threat to their interests. French president Nicolas Sarkozy said, “Iran is trying to acquire a nuclear bomb. I say to the French, it’s unacceptable.”<sup>50</sup> German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated, “I’m emphatically in favor of solving the problem through negotiations, but we also need to be ready to impose further sanctions if Iran does not give ground.”<sup>51</sup> “Iran is trying to get a nuclear weapon,” British prime minister David Cameron declared. “It’s in the interests of everyone here and everyone in the world that we don’t get a nuclear arms race.”<sup>52</sup>

“A nuclear-armed Iran,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, “would dramatically increase terrorism by giving terrorists a nuclear umbrella.” Iran’s proxies—Hezbollah and  [Hamas](#)— would then be “emboldened to attack the United States, Israel, and other countries because they will be backed by a power that has atomic bombs.” Furthermore, Netanyahu warned, “A nuclear-armed Iran could choke off the world’s oil supply and could make real its threat to close the Straits of Hormuz.”

“The worst nightmare of all,” Netanyahu added, is that “Iran could threaten all of us with nuclear terrorism.”<sup>53</sup>

The international concern that prompted a series of UN resolutions and condemnation of Iranian behavior has nothing to do with Israel. Most of the world understands that a nuclear Iran poses a direct threat to countries inside and outside the Middle East, raises the specter of nuclear terrorism, increases the prospects for regional instability, and encourages proliferation.

Given the threat posed by Iran, the Arab states, not Israel, lobbied the U.S. government to launch a military attack against Iran. For example, the king of  [Saudi Arabia](#) said the United States should destroy its nuclear programs and “cut off the head of the snake.”<sup>54</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Donald Trump’s withdrawal from the JCPOA allowed Iran to get closer to a bomb.*

## ***FACT***

The Trump administration spent months negotiating an agreement with European allies on strengthening the JCPOA to satisfy the president’s concerns. As *New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens noted, “the same people who previously claimed the deal was the best we could possibly hope for suddenly became inventive in proposing means to fix it.”<sup>55</sup>

The Europeans were unwilling to make significant changes in the agreement and were particularly opposed to reimposing sanctions that would threaten their business opportunities in Iran. Consequently, on May 8, 2018, President Trump [announced](#) that the United States would be exiting the nuclear deal, making good on a campaign pledge to undo an agreement he repeatedly criticized as the worst deal ever.

Iran did not withdraw from the agreement. It remained committed, along with the remaining signatories, to comply with its terms. Iran had been cheating on the deal from the day it was signed but openly began to flout it after the U.S. decision. Trump then reimposed the sanctions his predecessor had lifted. Rather than go along with these snapback sanctions, which Obama had said would be applied for noncompliance, China and Russia opposed any penalties. At the same time, the Europeans confined themselves to desultory criticism and calls for renewed negotiations. The failure to react to the violations emboldened Iran to continue accelerating its advancement toward a nuclear weapons capability.

It was left to President Joe Biden to negotiate a return to compliance by the United States and Iran. After more than a year of talks, and offering a variety of concessions, including reversing sanctions imposed by the Trump administration and easing others, Iran continued to hold out for more compromises while getting closer to building a bomb.

## **MYTH**

*The only alternative to a nuclear deal is war.*

## ***FACT***

The Obama administration cynically used this straw man to suggest that anyone who opposed their policy wanted a war with Iran because that was the only other option. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other opponents of the deal were subsequently painted as warmongers; however, Netanyahu repeatedly said the alternative to a bad deal was not war but a better deal. That would only be possible if Iran’s leaders feared the consequences of continuing their pursuit of a bomb. They did not believe Obama was willing to use military force, weakening his bargaining position and

guaranteeing that an agreement would not meet all his demands to prevent Iran from violating it.

When President Joe Biden met Israeli Prime Minister [Naftali Bennett](#) in August 2021, he assured him that the United States would not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. “We’re putting diplomacy first and see where that takes us,” he said. “But if diplomacy fails, we’re ready to turn to other options.”<sup>56</sup>

It is not war but a credible threat of military action that is required to convince Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions. As Prime Minister [Yair Lapid](#) told Biden when he visited Israel, “The only thing that will stop Iran is knowing that if they continue to develop their nuclear program, the free world will use force.”<sup>57</sup>

### **MYTH\***

*Military force cannot prevent Iran from getting a nuclear bomb.*

### ***FACT***

Former Israeli defense and prime minister [Ehud Barak](#) noted that six countries had pursued nuclear weapons programs in the last generation. “Two were persuaded to surrender their ambition voluntarily: Libya and [South Africa](#). Two were stopped by surgical airstrikes: Iraq and Syria. The final two—Pakistan and North Korea—got the bomb, and got it following a path not so different than the one the ayatollahs are treading today.”<sup>58</sup>

No one can be sure what impact a [military operation](#) would have on Iran’s nuclear program. Would it knock out some, all, or none of the research facilities? If it only knocked out some of them, would that slow down Iran’s progress toward building a bomb? If so, for how long?

Depending on the effectiveness of the use of force, the Iranian program might only be postponed; however, the negotiated agreement also slowed but did not stop Iran’s nuclear activities. An attack might deter Iran for a shorter period than the JCPOA, but, as Barak noted, “A surgical strike on key nuclear facilities in Iran can throw them five years backward, and a repetition would become a major Iranian worry. On the spectrum of military actions, this would be closer to the raid that killed [Osama bin Laden](#) than to the invasion of Iraq.”<sup>59</sup>

Obama insisted the cost of any attack would exceed the benefit. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu argued that the president had it backward. “There’s been plenty of talk,” he said, “about the costs of stopping Iran. I think it’s time we started talking about the costs of not stopping Iran.”<sup>60</sup>

Some analysts have questioned Israel’s ability to conduct a military operation; however, Israel’s then chief of staff, Lieutenant General [Benny Gantz](#), said the country’s military could attack Iran without foreign support. If necessary, he said Israel could fight alone without the help of the United States or other countries. “We have our plans and forecasts ... If the time comes, we’ll decide” on whether to take military action, he said. Similarly, Intelligence Minister Eli Cohen said: “Iran has no immunity anywhere. Our planes can reach everywhere in the Middle East - and certainly Iran.”<sup>61</sup>

Israel’s likely objectives would be to destroy Iran’s main enrichment sites, research and testing facilities for nuclear warhead development, and factories for manufacturing missiles, centrifuges, and other atomic weapons-related equipment. Israel would not have to attack Iran’s nuclear reactors. Israel could launch [attacks](#) from the air, land, and sea, employ cyberattacks and mount special forces operations.

Two impediments to an Israeli attack are said to be the inability to refuel its planes and destroy Iranian facilities buried deep underground. However, Israel now reportedly can fly its [F-35](#) stealth fighter jets from Israel to Iran without mid-air refueling.<sup>62</sup> It also acquired bunker-buster bombs from the United States that could damage, if not destroy, nuclear sites.

Should the United States decide to use [military force](#) against Iran, it has various options. One would be to bomb the nuclear facilities. The U.S. can conduct sustained attacks over an extended period. It also has a more powerful bunker-busting bomb capable of destroying Iran’s facilities.<sup>63</sup> The U.S. is also likely to strike far more targets than Israel,

aiming to take out missile bases, launchers, and production facilities. It could hit Kharg Island, from which Iran exports 90% of its oil and gas, and the port of Bandar Abbas, which is responsible for 90% of Iran's container trade.<sup>64</sup> A broader strike might include refineries, natural gas terminals, railways, bridges, roads, and power plants. A no-fly zone and naval embargo could also be imposed. These measures would damage infrastructure and potentially cripple Iran's economy.

Gen. James Mattis, then head of U.S. Central Command, said in 2013 that the U.S. military "has the ability to bring Iran to its knees." He said, "There are [a] number of means to do that."<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, the United States and Israel have used [cyber warfare](#) to inhibit Iran's pursuit of a bomb.<sup>66</sup> In 2010, a computer worm called [Stuxnet](#) wreaked havoc on Iranian computer systems and led to the destruction or damage of hundreds of centrifuges.<sup>67</sup> Two years later, Iran admitted that another cyberattack infected their computers, allowing the attackers to use them for surveillance. The "[Wiper](#)" program hit Iran's oil ministry and erased its hard drives. It was later used to disrupt Iran's railway and transport ministry.<sup>68</sup> In 2019, the U.S. Cyber Command targeted computer systems that control Iranian missile launches and those used by an Iranian intelligence group believed to be involved in planning attacks against oil tankers.<sup>69</sup>

Israel has also assassinated Iranian nuclear scientists and sabotaged facilities related to developing a weapon.<sup>70</sup> These operations slowed but did not stop Iran's nuclear project.

## **MYTH**

*"Snapback" sanctions ensured Iran would adhere to the nuclear agreement.*

## ***FACT***

The Obama administration sold the nuclear agreement with a promise to "snapback" penalties if Iran failed to comply with the deal.<sup>71</sup> "If Iran violates the [nuclear] agreement over the next decade," President Obama [assured](#) everyone that "all of the sanctions can snap back into place."

The foreign ministers of the six countries that signed the JCPOA agreed. [Security Council Resolution 2231](#) endorsed the nuclear agreement, ended United Nations sanctions against Iran, and called for the reinstatement of sanctions if Iran violated the terms of the JCPOA.

Given the confidence in the deal that Obama and other signatories expressed, why was it necessary to raise the specter of renewing the sanctions before they had even been lifted?

The answer was simple. According to the Royal United Services Institute, it resulted from their "deep distrust" of the deal.<sup>72</sup>

At the time, the *Wall Street Journal* called the idea that sanctions would be snapped back "another Administration fantasy."<sup>73</sup> The editorial was prophetic.

Once the JCPOA was signed, sanctions were removed, and companies from around the world raced to Iran with business proposals. Within weeks, dozens had signed deals worth billions of dollars. The Europeans, Chinese, and Russians then did everything possible to ensure that nothing would prevent trading with Iran regardless of Iranian violations of the JCPOA. China and Russia also had the power to veto any UN Security Council Resolution to reimpose sanctions.

President Trump imposed stricter [sanctions](#) when he [withdrew from the deal](#). The remaining signatories opposed them and took steps to evade them. When Trump unilaterally implemented the snapback option, no country joined the United States.

Joe Biden criticized Trump's actions, but his administration continued to impose [new sanctions](#) on Iran while promising to ease or eliminate them if Iran complied with the JCPOA. Without international backing, however, sanctions have failed to modify Iran's behavior.

Iran openly disregarded its terms because the nuclear deal was built on a "fantasy," and threats of snapback sanctions were hollow.

## **MYTH**

*The Iran deal eliminates the danger of nuclear proliferation.*

## ***FACT***

One of the most severe but understated threats created by Iran's nuclear program is [proliferation](#). President Obama acknowledged the danger when he stated, "It will not be tolerable to a number of states in that region for Iran to have a nuclear weapon and them not to have a nuclear weapon." He added, "Iran is known to sponsor terrorist organizations, so the threat of proliferation becomes that much more severe." Obama continued, "The dangers of an Iran getting nuclear weapons that then leads to a free-for-all in the Middle East is something that I think would be very dangerous for the world."<sup>74</sup>

"If Iran gets nuclear weapons," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu argued, "it would set off a mad dash by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. The world's most volatile region would become a nuclear tinderbox waiting to go off."<sup>75</sup>

Like Iran, Arab countries publicly claim they are only interested in peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Still, the fear is that some or all will follow the Iranian example and try to build a bomb. Since 2006, at least 13 Arab countries either announced plans to explore atomic energy or revived preexisting nuclear programs in response to Iran's nuclear program.<sup>76</sup>

More alarming are the more explicit expressions by Middle East leaders that they will acquire a bomb if Iran builds one. In 2012, before the JCPOA was signed, Saudi Arabia's [King Abdullah](#) warned, "If they get nuclear weapons, we will get nuclear weapons."<sup>77</sup> After the agreement was approved, Saudi prince Turki al-Faisal reiterated that one option for responding to Iran's nuclear ambitions would be "the acquisitions of nuclear weapons, to face whatever eventuality might come from Iran."<sup>78</sup>

In 2019, Turkish President [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#) said, "Some countries have missiles with nuclear warheads," but the West insists that "we can't have them. This, I cannot accept."<sup>79</sup>

Former president [Bill Clinton](#) explained the danger of any country acquiring a nuclear capability. "The more of these weapons you have hanging around, the more fissile material you've got, the more they're vulnerable to being stolen or sold or just simply transferred to terrorists." He added, "even if the [Iranian] government didn't directly sanction it, it wouldn't be that much trouble to get a Girl Scout cookie's worth of fissile material, which, if put in the same fertilizer bomb Timothy McVeigh used in Oklahoma City, is enough to take out 20 to 25% of [Washington, D.C.](#)"<sup>80</sup>

The international community does not have a good record in preventing rogue nations from developing nuclear weapons. Iraq was developing a bomb until Israel destroyed its nuclear reactor in [1981](#). Similarly, Syria managed to build a [secret nuclear facility](#) under the nose of the international watchdogs and was stopped only by an [Israeli military operation](#).

The region will become far more dangerous as the number of countries engaged in nuclear activities grows. More ominously, the expansion of the Middle East atomic club would pose a threat to global peace and stability.

## **MYTH**

*The nuclear agreement put an end to Iran's ballistic missile research.*

## **FACT**

While Iran's nuclear program is of greatest concern, the danger of a conventional Iranian attack with advanced missiles has steadily grown. The National Council of the Resistance of Iran, an Iranian opposition group, said in 1989 that North Korea helped Iran build dozens of underground tunnels and facilities for constructing nuclear-capable missiles.<sup>81</sup>

Iran has repeatedly violated [UN Security Council Resolution 1929](#), which forbids Iran from engaging in “any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using ballistic missile technology” [emphasis added].<sup>82</sup>

Iran continues to develop, test, and build missiles that have a longer range and are more accurate. Some are capable of nuclear weapons delivery.<sup>83</sup> Iran also has an arsenal of [cruise missiles](#) capable of reaching Israel and carrying nuclear weapons.<sup>84</sup>

In 2021, Washington Institute fellow Farzin Nadimi said, “Iran has unveiled ten new ballistic missiles and three new [satellite launch vehicles \(SLVs\)](#) since 2015, along with several new transport and launch systems and methods.” Nadimi also noted that Iran had developed an automated launch system and a more accurate missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead with a range of more than 1,200 miles (1,900 km.). Israel is about 1,100 miles (1,770 km.) from Iran.<sup>85</sup>

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told the Senate in 2016 that “Iran's progress on space launch vehicles—along with its desire to deter the United States and its allies—provides Tehran with the means and motivation to develop longer-range missiles, including ICBMs.”<sup>86</sup>

As early as 2012, the Pentagon expressed concern that Iran's missiles threaten “U.S. forces, allies, and partners in regions where the United States deploys troops and maintains security relationships.”<sup>87</sup>

This proved prescient as Iran launched 16 short-range ballistic missiles in January 2020 that hit two Iraqi military installations housing U.S. troops.<sup>88</sup> Iranian missiles have also targeted the capital of the Iraqi [Kurdish](#) region and Saudi Arabia.<sup>89</sup>

Iran's Arab neighbors do not have missile defenses or the ability to deter an Iranian attack. Iran could “blackmail such states into meeting demands, for example, to raise [oil](#) prices, cut oil production, or even withhold cooperation with the U.S. on which their very survival depends.”<sup>90</sup>

The threat stimulated the [normalization](#) of relations between Israel, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates and increased security cooperation with Saudi Arabia. The United States, Israel, and the Gulf states have discussed a security alliance connecting air defense systems to protect them from Iranian [drone](#) and missile attacks.<sup>91</sup>

Israel lobbied for a ban on ballistic missile development to be part of the nuclear deal, but the United States insisted on keeping that issue separate.

The range of (our) missiles covers all of Israel today. That means the fall of the Zionist regime, which will certainly come soon.

—Iranian General Mohammad Ali Jafari<sup>92</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Attacking Iran will create more instability and endanger U.S. interests.*

## **FACT**

The Middle East is unstable because of ongoing disputes between various Arab states. An increased level of chaos has spread across the region due to upheavals in North Africa, [Yemen](#), and the Persian Gulf, continuing unrest in Iraq and [Afghanistan](#), and the civil war in Syria.

Nevertheless, some, like former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, have warned that an attack on Iran will “haunt us for generations” in the [Middle East](#).<sup>93</sup> If Israel attacks, some analysts worry Iran will strike U.S. targets. However, this would provoke an American response and exponentially increase the punishment inflicted on Iran.

U.S. officials feared dire consequences when Israel attacked nuclear reactors in Iraq (1981) and Syria (2007). Both attacks eliminated potentially destabilizing [weapons programs](#) and discouraged a regional nuclear arms race. They did not harm American interests or provoke greater instability. In the Iraqi case, Israel’s action ensured that the United States would not face the possibility of an Iraqi nuclear response during the 1991 [Gulf War](#).

In the worst case, a strike on Iran would cause a backlash in the region among people angered by an attack on a Muslim nation. It may unite the Iranian people in defense of their country. Rulers of conservative regimes allied with the United States and signatories to the [Abraham Accords](#) would likely be accused of complicity in the attack.

While the pessimistic scenario envisions the Iranian population rallying around its leaders in the event of a military strike, it is also possible that the Iranian people will launch a “Persian Spring” demanding freedom and democracy from the regime that provoked a war. Protests erupted in 2022 unrelated to the nuclear issue that raised hopes for an end to the autocratic rule of the ayatollahs, but even if the government falls that is no assurance the country would abandon its nuclear program as many Iranians support it for nationalistic reasons.

In the short term, an attack on Iran might have a deleterious [impact on oil prices](#) as speculators react to the possibility of reduced supplies. In the long term, an attack could help stabilize the oil market; it would hamper Iran’s ability to threaten [global oil supplies](#) and weaken its position within OPEC, where it has advocated stricter quotas to drive up prices.

A successful strike on Iran could also help free the people of Syria and Lebanon. Without the support of Tehran, Syrian President [Bashar Assad](#) would lose his principal patron in the region, and Syria would no longer serve as a forward Iranian base for threatening Israel. The fall of Iran’s leadership would also weaken Hezbollah in Lebanon, reducing the organization’s ability to terrorize Israel and control Lebanese affairs.

Furthermore, destroying the Iranian program would eliminate the threat of Iranian-sponsored nuclear terrorism and proliferation. It would also signal to the rest of the region that nuclear weapons programs will not be tolerated.

It is easy for opponents of military action to construct nightmare scenarios that will scare the public and sway world leaders away from confrontation with Iran. However, military planners and politicians must weigh the risk of an adverse outcome and the danger posed by inaction against the potential benefits of eliminating Iran’s nuclear program.

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# Chapter 18

## The Media

[Press coverage of Israel is proportional to its importance in world affairs.](#)  
[Media coverage of the conflict is objective.](#)  
[The search for the truth drives journalists covering the Middle East.](#)  
[Palestinian officials say the same thing to Western journalists and their people.](#)  
[Israelis cannot deny the truth of pictures showing their abuses.](#)  
[The press makes no apologies for terrorists.](#)  
[The Palestinian Authority and Hamas place no restrictions on reporters.](#)  
[The media carefully investigates Palestinian claims before publicizing them.](#)  
[Palestinians are never told to lie to journalists.](#)  
[Israel intentionally kills journalists.](#)

### **MYTH**

*Press coverage of Israel is proportional to its importance in world affairs.*

### **FACT**

It is hard to justify the amount of news coverage given to [Israel](#) based on that nation's importance in world affairs or American national interests. How is it that a country the size of [New Jersey](#) routinely merits top billing over seemingly more newsworthy nations such as [Russia](#), [China](#), and [Great Britain](#)?

A variety of reasons explain the disproportional attention Israel receives:

- Jews are news. People are fascinated by the “People of the Book.”
- It is easy to get Israelis to express opinions because, unlike [Palestinians](#), they have no fear of retribution.
- Israel is a Westernized country that is easy to live in. It's safe, beautiful, offers excellent restaurants, and has great nightlife.
- Nearly every location has historical, religious, and political significance.
- Israel has been involved in decades-long conflicts with its neighbors that have drawn other countries into fighting or peacemaking.
- Israel receives the most foreign aid from the United States of any country.

One reason Americans are so knowledgeable about Israel is the extent of coverage. American news organizations usually have more correspondents in Israel than in any country except Great Britain. For example, when Matti Friedman worked in Israel for the Associated Press, the news agency had more than 40 people covering Israel and the territories. “That was more than AP had in China, Russia, or [India](#), or in all of the 50 countries of sub-Saharan [Africa](#) combined,” he said. Those journalists need to generate copy to justify their postings and satisfy their egos. Thus, in 2013, when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict claimed 42 lives, Israel received more publicity than the Syrian civil war, in which nearly 200,000 people died. According to Friedman:

News organizations have nonetheless decided that this conflict is more important than, for example, the more than 1,600 women murdered in Pakistan last year (271 after being raped and 193 of them burned alive), the ongoing erasure of Tibet by the Chinese Communist Party, the carnage in Congo (more than 5 million dead as of 2012) or the Central African Republic, and the drug wars in Mexico (death toll between 2006 and 2012: 60,000), let alone conflicts no one has ever heard of in obscure corners of India or Thailand. They believe Israel to be the most important story on earth, or very close.<sup>1</sup>

Many reporters also suffer from plain ignorance and lack of preparation. Journalist Khaled Abu Toameh recalled one reporter who wanted to set up an interview with [Yasser Arafat](#)—only one problem—he was dead. Another was

convinced there was a Palestinian state with [Jerusalem](#) as its capital in 1948. A third wanted to interview settlers in the [Gaza Strip](#); however, they had all left the area ten years earlier. “Journalists of this type have become quite familiar to me,” Abu Toameh relates. “They board a plane, read an article or two in the *Times*, and feel ready to be experts on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”<sup>2</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Media coverage of the conflict is objective.*

## ***FACT***

When asked to comment on what many viewers regard as CNN’s bias against Israel, Reese Schonfeld, the network’s first president, explained, “When I see them [reporters] on the air, I see them being very careful about Arab sensibilities.” Schonfeld suggested the coverage is slanted because CNN doesn’t want to risk its access to the Arab world.<sup>3</sup> Other networks engage in similar self-censorship.

During fighting in [Lebanon](#), [Hezbollah](#) controlled what journalists could see, film, and write. “Foreign correspondents were warned on entry to the tour [of a southern Beirut suburb],” according to a report by Marvin Kalb, “that they could not wander off on their own or ask questions of any residents. They could take pictures only of sites approved by their Hezbollah minders. Violations, they were told, would be treated harshly.” He added, “The rarest picture of all was that of a Hezbollah guerilla. It was as if the war on the Hezbollah side was being fought by ghosts.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, due to [Hammas](#) restrictions, the media gives the impression that Israel fights invisible threats in Gaza.

Some journalists do not hide their bias. In 2021, more than 400, including reporters from major publications such as the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*, signed an open letter filled with misinformation calling for an end to “decades-long journalistic malpractice” and “obfuscating Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians.” In a reversal of reality, the letter said the media “uncritically repeat Israeli military claims” when it is Hamas allegations that are parroted. The signatories said their obligation is “to get the story right,” ensuring they don’t fail the Palestinian people.<sup>5</sup> Apparently, they don’t believe their responsibility is to the truth and the public.

Palestinians often provide the news that is sent around the world. “By my own estimate,” journalist Ehud Yaari wrote, “over 95% of the TV pictures going out on satellite every evening to the various foreign and Israeli channels are supplied by Palestinian film crews. The two principal agencies in the video news market, Associated PressTN and Reuters TV, run a whole network of Palestinian stringers, freelancers, and fixers all over the territories to provide instant footage of the events. These crews obviously identify emotionally and politically with the intifada, and, in the ‘best’ case, they simply don’t dare film anything that could embarrass the [Palestinian Authority](#). So, the cameras are angled to show a tainted view of the Israeli army’s actions, never focus on the Palestinian gunmen, and diligently produce a very specific kind of close-up of the situation on the ground.”<sup>6</sup>

An Arab reporter explained that Gaza fixers “will report what Hamas wants them to write; photographs the pictures Hamas seeks. They cannot write or film anything that will hurt Hamas’ image. But I don’t blame the fixers,” he said. “I blame the news producers sitting in [London](#) or [New York](#) assigning stories when they know the fixers’ restrictions.”<sup>7</sup>

One example of failing to vet a stringer carefully involved Fady Hanona, who worked for the *New York Times* until the paper was alerted to his history of anti-Semitic tweets.<sup>8</sup> The *Times* also hired a former *Al Jazeera* and Human Rights Watch employee to produce a video that, among other distortions, suggested Israel had no evidence that Hamas was using tunnels for a command center or storing weapons. However, *Al Jazeera* and an Iranian news channel broadcast a video showing tunnels filled with rockets, guns, missiles, artillery shells, storage areas, and a command center.<sup>9</sup>

**We were filming the beginning of the demonstration. Suddenly, a van pulled in hurriedly. Inside, there were Fatah militants. They gave their orders and even distributed Molotov cocktails. We were filming. But these images, you will never see. In a few seconds, all those youngsters surrounded us, threatened us, and then took us away to the police station. There, we**

identified ourselves, but we were compelled to delete the controversial pictures. The Palestinian Police calmed the situation but censored our pictures.

—Jean Pierre Martin<sup>10</sup>

Matti Friedman explained that consumers of news related to Israel need to understand that “many of the people deciding what you will read and see from here view their role not as explanatory but as political. Coverage is a weapon to be placed at the disposal of the side they like.” And most journalists prefer the Palestinian narrative.

Friedman adds:

When journalists, the people responsible for explaining the world to the world, cover the Jews’ war as more worthy of attention than any other, when they portray the Jews of Israel as the party obviously in the wrong, when they omit all possible justifications for the Jews’ actions and obscure the true face of their enemies, what they are saying to their readers—whether they intend to or not—is that Jews are the worst people on earth.<sup>11</sup>

The media also often creates a false moral equivalence between Israel, a Western liberal democracy, and terrorist organizations or the autocratic Palestinian Authority. For example, the BBC’s coverage of the 2021 fighting in Gaza failed to acknowledge that the conflict had been initiated by Hamas, which seeks Israel’s destruction, and that no Palestinians would have been in danger had the terrorists not launched hundreds of rockets into Israel.<sup>12</sup>

Israel is also held to a higher standard than other countries. Arabs and Muslims are often viewed stereotypically, and the press does not find it newsworthy when they abuse each other. Hence, the media rarely reports on the victims when the PA and Hamas violate Palestinians’ [human rights](#). By contrast, columnist Bret Stephens notes:

The Jewish state is expected to conduct its battles with greater regard for the safety of its enemies than for that of its own people. It is expected to make diplomatic concessions that put the lives of its own citizens at serious risk. It is expected to strengthen its “democratic” character, but only if its democratic choices conform to progressive sensibilities. It is expected, when struck, to turn the other cheek.<sup>13</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The search for truth drives journalists covering Israel.*

## ***FACT***

It will be no surprise to learn that journalists in the Middle East share an interest in sensationalism with their colleagues covering domestic matters. The most flagrant examples come from television reporters whose emphasis on visuals over substance encourages facile treatment of the issues. The networks can’t get newsworthy pictures from closed societies such as [Syria](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [Iran](#), or [Libya](#), so events in Israel routinely make headlines while the [Arab world](#) is ignored. For example, when NBC’s correspondent in Israel was asked why reporters turned up at Palestinian demonstrations in the [West Bank](#) they knew were being staged, he said, “We play along because we need the pictures.”<sup>14</sup>

Israel often faces the impossible situation of trying to counter images with words. “When a tank goes into Ramallah, it does not look good on TV,” explains Gideon Meir of the Israeli Foreign Ministry. “Sure, we can explain why we are there, and that’s what we do. But it’s words. We have to fight pictures with words.”<sup>15</sup>

The magnitude of the problem Israel confronts is clear from Tami Allen-Frost, deputy chairman of the Foreign Press Association and a producer for Britain’s ITN news, who observed, “the strongest picture that stays in the mind is of a tank in a city” and that “there are more incidents all together in the West Bank than there are suicide bombings. In the end, it’s quantity that stays with you.”<sup>16</sup>

One cause of misunderstanding about the Middle East, and bias in reporting, is the ignorance of journalists. Few

reporters speak [Hebrew](#) or [Arabic](#), so they have little or no access to primary sources. They frequently regurgitate stories they read in English language publications from the region rather than report independently. Media outlets often rely on stringers—local Arabs who help them find stories—whose biases are often interjected into the coverage. When reporters attempt to place events in a historical context, they often get the facts wrong and create an inaccurate or misleading impression.

The errors made by the press often Israel in an unfavorable light. For example, MSNBC aired graphics like those used in anti-Israel propaganda that suggested Israel destroyed the country of “Palestine.” One of the network’s correspondents, Martin Fletcher, said the map and analysis were “dead wrong,” The network subsequently apologized for using maps that were “not factually accurate.”<sup>17</sup>

More bizarrely, a Finnish journalist filed a factual report but lashed out against those who used it because it conflicted with her bias. Aishi Zidan reported that a [rocket](#) was launched from the backyard of the main hospital in Gaza City (which also served as the Hamas headquarters). This was one of the rare cases where a journalist documented how Hamas used Palestinians, in this case, hospital patients, as human shields. When the story was publicized, she was upset that the revelation distracted attention from Palestinian “victims of war.”<sup>18</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Palestinian officials say the same thing to Western journalists and their people.*

### ***FACT***

Palestinian officials often communicate their views differently in English than in Arabic. They express their true positions to their constituents in their native language. For external consumption, however, spokespeople have learned to use moderate language that appeals to Western audiences. Since Israelis can readily translate what is said in Arabic, they are aware of the views of their enemies. English speakers, however, can easily be fooled by propaganda.

[Yasser Arafat](#) was famous for saying one thing in English to the Western media and something completely different to the Arabic press. Hence, the [Bush administration](#) insisted that he repeat in Arabic what he said in English, particularly condemnations of terrorist attacks and calls to end violence.

When Palestinian peace negotiator [Saeb Erekat](#) was asked for a reaction after the brutal murder of two Israeli teenagers, he said in English that “killing civilians is a crime, whether on the Palestinian or the Israeli side.” The comment was not reported in the Palestinian media.<sup>19</sup>

In an interview with Israeli TV, Palestinian Authority Chairman [Mahmoud Abbas](#) condemned naming a square after Dalal Mughrabi, the Palestinian who led the most lethal terror attack in Israel’s history. When speaking to Palestinians the year before, however, Abbas said, “Of course we want to name a square after her.... We carried out a military action; can I then later renounce all that we have done?”<sup>20</sup>

It is more difficult for Palestinians to get away with double talk today because their Arabic remarks are translated by watchdog organizations and disseminated in English.

## **MYTH**

*Israelis cannot deny the truth of pictures showing their abuses.*

### ***FACT***

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but sometimes the image and the words used to describe it are distorted and misleading. Photographers understandably seek the most dramatic pictures they can find. Those suggesting that brutal Israeli “Goliaths” are mistreating suffering Palestinian “Davids” are especially appealing, but the context is often missing.



In one classic example, the Associated Press circulated a dramatic photo of an angry baton-wielding Israeli soldier standing over a bloody young man. It appeared the soldier had just beaten the youth. The picture appeared in the *New York Times* and spurred international outrage because the caption said, “An Israeli policeman and a Palestinian on the [Temple Mount](#).”<sup>21</sup> The response would have been different if the description had said the Israeli was a policeman protecting an American Jewish student, Tuvia Grossman, who had been riding in a taxi when Palestinians stoned it. Grossman was pulled out of the cab, beaten, and stabbed. A photographer snapped the picture after Grossman broke free and fled toward the officer.

Another example of how pictures can be dramatic and misleading was a Reuters photo showing a young Palestinian arrested by Israeli police in 2001. The boy was frightened and wet his pants. The picture attracted worldwide publicity and reinforced the image of brutal Israelis abusing innocent children. In this instance, it is the context that is deceptive. A second Reuters photographer snapped another picture just before the first, showing the boy participating in a riot against Israeli soldiers. Few media outlets published this photo.

The Palestinians have also learned to stage videos and photos to spread misinformation. In one example of what Professor Richard Landis refers to as “Pallywood,” a video shows Palestinians carrying a stretcher with a corpse. The pallbearers drop the stretcher, and when it hits the ground, the “corpse” gets up and runs away.<sup>22</sup>

A BBC investigation in 2014 found that the hashtag #GazaUnderAttack was used to distribute many bogus photos claiming to show the effects of Israeli air strikes. The BBC discovered that some of the pictures dated to 2009, and others were taken in [Iraq](#) and Syria.<sup>23</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The press makes no apologies for terrorists.*

## ***FACT***

Some news organizations have developed a resistance to the term “terrorist” and replaced it with euphemisms such as “militant” because they don’t want to be seen as taking sides or making judgments about the perpetrators. For example, after a Palestinian suicide bomber blew up a pizza restaurant in downtown Jerusalem, killing 15 people, the attacker was described as a “militant” (*Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, NBC Nightly News). When a Palestinian woman walked into a crowded beach restaurant in [Haifa](#) and detonated a bomb that killed 21 people, including four children, the Reuters account said she had waged an “attack” in retaliation for previous Israeli army actions and that the bombing showed that Palestinian officials had failed to “rein in the militants.”<sup>[24]</sup>

After two Palestinians infiltrated the Israeli town of Itamar in the West Bank and brutally murdered a family of five, including a three-month-old infant, the *Los Angeles Times* described it as part of a “continuing cycle of violence.”<sup>25</sup> After terrorists killed eight Israelis and wounded more than 30 in multiple attacks near [Eilat](#), the *New York Times* referred to the perpetrators as “armed attackers” and reported that Israeli counterstrikes killed Palestinians from a “militant group.”<sup>26</sup>

In 2022, Israel arrested a senior [Palestinian Islamic Jihad \(PIJ\)](#) commander and then targeted other commanders in Gaza to preempt an expected revenge attack. The Associated Press referred to the PIJ commander Israel assassinated as a “senior militant,” as did NBC and *The Guardian*. Following three days of fighting, the *New York Times* reported that a ceasefire ended the battle between Israel and a “Palestinian militant group.”<sup>27</sup>

If any group indiscriminately fired [1,100 rockets](#) at cities in any other country, would it be labeled the same way?

Clifford May pointed out the absurdity of the coverage: “No newspaper would write, ‘Militants struck the World Trade Center yesterday,’ or say, ‘They may think of themselves as freedom fighters, and who are we to judge, we’re news people.’”<sup>28</sup>

In a memo to the *New York Times* foreign desk, former Jerusalem bureau chief James Bennet criticized his paper's reluctance to use the word "terrorism." He said, "The calculated bombing of students in a university cafeteria, or of families gathered in an ice cream parlor, cries out to be called what it is....I wanted to avoid the political meaning that comes with 'terrorism,' but I couldn't pretend that the word had no usage at all in plain English." Bennet acknowledged that not using the term was "a political act in itself."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, an independent inquiry into the BBC's Middle East coverage found that "the BBC should get the language right. We think they should call terrorist acts 'terrorism' because that term is clear and well understood."<sup>30</sup>

**By any logic, militants engaged in warfare don't blow up little babies.**

**—Tom Fiedler, Executive Editor, Miami Herald<sup>30</sup>**

The media sometimes portrays the victims of terror as equivalent to the terrorists. For example, photos are sometimes shown of Israeli victims on the same page with pictures of captured terrorists, giving the impression that a Palestinian pictured in handcuffs is as much a victim as a bloodied woman being helped from the scene of a [suicide bombing](#).

After a 2002 suicide bombing in [Petah Tikva](#), CNN interviewed the bomber's mother, Jihad Titi. The parents of a fifteen-month-old girl killed in the attack, Chen and Lior Keinan, were also interviewed. The interviews with the Keinans were not shown on CNN International in Israel or elsewhere until hours after the interview with Titi's mother had been broadcast several times. CNN subsequently announced a policy change whereby it would no longer "report on statements made by suicide bombers or their families unless there seemingly is an extraordinarily compelling reason to do so."<sup>31</sup>

Often, the problem is a misleading headline, as when a Palestinian opened fire in Jerusalem, killing one Israeli and injuring several others. CNN headlined its report, "One dead, four injured, in suspected shooting attack in Jerusalem; assailant also killed," omitting the shooter was a Palestinian and the casualties were Israelis.<sup>32</sup> After receiving complaints, CNN later corrected the headline to reflect the attack more accurately, " Hamas gunman kills one Israeli, injures four others, in Jerusalem attack; police shoot dead assailant."

## **MYTH**

*The Palestinian Authority and Hamas place no restrictions on reporters.*

## ***FACT***

A case study of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) idea of freedom of the press occurred following the September 11 [terrorist](#) attacks on the United States. An Associated Press (AP) cameraman filmed Palestinians at a rally in [Nablus](#) celebrating. He was subsequently summoned by security officials and told that the material could not be broadcast or his life could not be guaranteed. The cameraman requested that the material not be aired, and the AP never released it.<sup>33</sup>

An AP video showing a rally in the Gaza Strip where some demonstrators carried posters supporting [Osama bin Laden](#) was confiscated. It was returned after "key elements" of the tape had been erased.<sup>34</sup>

When two Israelis were lynched in [Ramallah](#), Palestinian police tried to prevent foreign journalists from recording the incident. One Italian television crew managed to film parts of the attack, and these shocking images made headlines worldwide. Fearing retribution, a competing Italian news agency placed an advertisement in the PA's leading newspaper explaining that it had nothing to do with filming the incident.<sup>35</sup>

If a news organization strays from the pro-Palestinian line, it comes under immediate attack. The Palestinian Journalist's Union complained that the AP presented a false impression of the [intifada](#) that served the Israeli position and constituted a crime against the Palestinian people. The union threatened to adopt all necessary measures against Associated Press staffers as well as against Associated Press bureaus located in the PA if the agency continued to harm Palestinian interests.<sup>36</sup>

In 2002, the Palestinian journalists' union banned journalists from photographing Palestinian children carrying weapons or taking part in activities by terrorist organizations because the pictures were hurting the Palestinians' image. The ban came after numerous photographs were published showing children carrying weapons and dressing up like suicide bombers. Another group, the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate (PJS), issued a similar ban that included photographing masked men. The Foreign Press Association expressed "deep concern" over the effort to censor coverage and the threats of sanctions against journalists who disregarded the ban.<sup>37</sup> Twenty years later, a similar ban was announced by the PJS but was reversed after criticism from Reporters Without Borders, which said it was "very odd, to say the least, for a journalists' union to forbid journalists to do their job."<sup>38</sup>

A Palestinian AFP photographer took a photo with the caption: "An Israeli soldier escorts a Palestinian woman to safety as Palestinian youth clash with Israeli security forces in the center of the occupied West Bank town of Hebron on April 24, 2021." Subsequently, journalist Saeed al-Tawil called on The Syndicate of Journalists, the Ministry of Information, and the Government Media Office to withdraw the photographer's membership for taking "advantage of his image that shows the occupation with an angelic face."<sup>39</sup>

Showing any positive aspect of Israeli behavior is taboo for Palestinian journalists, who also object to cooperation with Israeli reporters. For example, after a [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) committee hosted an Israeli press delegation, the Palestinian Press Syndicate condemned the meeting for undermining Palestinian journalists' work on "exposing the false narrative of the occupation's media." It said such meetings were "a great sin that cannot be tolerated."<sup>40</sup>

According to the 2021 State Department [report](#) on human rights, " Hamas severely restricted freedom of expression, including for members of the press and other media, through arrests and interrogations of journalists as well as harassment and limitations on access and movement for some journalists." Citing Reporters Without Borders, the report said because of the rivalry between Fatah and Hamas, "journalists faced threats, interrogation, arrest without charge, intimidatory lawsuits, prosecutions, and bans on covering certain events." In addition, "media reports indicated PA authorities arrested West Bank Palestinian journalists, social media activists, and protesters who criticized the PA or covered events that criticized the PA. The law restricts the publication of material that endangers the "integrity of the Palestinian state." The result is that "many journalists and activists to self-censor."<sup>41</sup>

During fighting in Gaza, journalists knew that Hamas was using Shifa Hospital as its command post, and yet the media failed to report that patients were being used as human shields. Correspondents were welcome to take pictures of Palestinians killed or wounded, but they were not permitted to show terrorists carrying weapons in the hospital, the rooms where injured Hamas fighters were being treated, or the bunkers where they hid in the basement. Violations of the rules were not tolerated, and journalists dared not cross their Hamas minders. For example, the *Wall Street Journal's* Nick Casey tweeted, "You have to wonder with the shelling how patients at Shifa hospital feel as Hamas uses it as a safe place to see media." Even though he deleted the tweet, Casey was placed on a list of journalists who "lie/fabricate info for Israel."<sup>42</sup>

After the war, a Hamas spokesperson admitted that some journalists were under surveillance and that those who filmed missile launch locations were forced to stop or face deportation from Gaza. " Hamas security personnel would give journalists 'some time to change their message' and 'one way or another' they would be forced to change their reporting."<sup>43</sup>

The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedom documented 123 violations of freedom of the press by Palestinian officials in 2021. The most "blatant attacks" were the arrest and detention of journalists covering protests over the killing of political activist Nizar Banat after his arrest by Palestinian security services. These attacks included beating a group of female journalists.<sup>44</sup>

The PA has also blocked access to news websites, blogs, and Facebook pages that are critical of the PA, Abbas, and other officials.<sup>45</sup>

"Freedom of the media exists only when journalists direct their criticism against Israel," journalist Khaled Abu Toameh

observed. “The Palestinian journalists know that at the end of the day, they need to go back to their family in the West Bank and Gaza without having to worry about masked men knocking on their doors at night.”<sup>46</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The media investigates Palestinian claims before publicizing them.*

## ***FACT***

Palestinians have learned they can disseminate almost any information critical of Israel to the media, and it will be published or broadcast somewhere. Once it is picked up by one media outlet, others inevitably repeat it. Quickly, misinformation takes on the appearance of fact, and while Israel can present evidence to correct the inaccuracies, the damage is already done. Once an image or impression is in someone’s mind, it is difficult, if not impossible, to erase it, and politicians often react based on the initial report.

A typical case involved a Palestinian boy stabbed in a village near a Jewish settlement. The media repeated Palestinian claims that settlers attacked the boy who had actually been killed in a brawl between rival Palestinian clans.<sup>47</sup> On another occasion, [IDF](#) tank fire allegedly killed a ten-year-old Palestinian girl, but she died of wounds from Palestinians shooting in the air to celebrate the return of [Muslim](#) worshipers from Mecca.<sup>48</sup>

During Israel’s [Operation Pillar of Defense](#) in 2012, the eleven-month-old son of a BBC journalist was allegedly killed by Israeli shrapnel. Later, a [UN](#) investigation found that the shrapnel was from a Palestinian rocket.<sup>49</sup>

Palestinians also know they can grossly exaggerate statistics, and the media will repeat the fabricated data until it becomes widely accepted as accurate. This occurred, for example, during the Lebanon War when Yasser Arafat’s brother claimed that Israel’s operations had left 600,000 Lebanese homeless. The number was contrived, but it was repeated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and widely publicized. By the time the ICRC repudiated the figure, it was too late to change the impression that Israel’s military operation to defend itself from terrorist attacks on its northern border had created an unconscionable refugee problem.<sup>50</sup>

The Palestinians were caught lying again when Saeb Erekat told CNN that at least 500 people were massacred in [Jenin](#) and 1,600, including women and children, were missing. Erekat produced no evidence for his claim, and a Palestinian review committee later reported a death toll of 56, of whom 34 were combatants. No women or children were reported missing.<sup>51</sup>

More outrageous than the repetition of Erekat’s lie is that media outlets continued to treat him as a legitimate spokesperson, giving him repeated access to disseminate misinformation.

During conflicts in Gaza, the Hamas-run Ministry of Health provided the media with a steady stream of misinformation about casualties that immediately translated into headlines and stories critical of Israel. This *New York Times* headline was typical, “More Than 30 Dead in Gaza and Israel as Fighting Quickly Escalates,” with the story reporting that “at least 35 Palestinians, including ten children, were killed according to health officials.”<sup>52</sup> It does not say these officials were associated with Hamas.

The press also reported bogus casualty figures during [Operation Cast Lead](#). Hamas claimed more than 1,000 civilians were killed. Israel’s conclusion that 709 of the dead were terrorists was largely ignored. Later, however, Hamas interior minister Fathi Hammad admitted Hamas lost more than 600 men. He also acknowledged in an Arabic broadcast that women, children, and the elderly “formed human shields....to challenge the Zionist bombing machine.”<sup>53</sup>

Another story about civilian casualties was accompanied by a photo that was also typical of Palestinian propaganda. Taken by a freelance Palestinian photographer, it shows a boy in front of the ruins of his house in Gaza City. In the foreground is a pink crib that is in pristine condition despite the home being reduced to rubble.<sup>54</sup> The *Times* and other media outlets used many such pictures, which were staged to make it look as though Israel had intentionally killed

children.

**Inside Gaza, press controlled by Hamas is heavy-handed. There are few press freedoms inside Gaza, and Hamas controls who reports from there and where they can go. While pictures of wounded children being brought to hospitals are clearly encouraged, we rarely see images of Hamas fighters or their rockets being fired into Israel.**

—CNN's Anderson Cooper<sup>55</sup>

The media regurgitated casualty totals produced by Hamas during fighting in May 2021. The Health Ministry claimed 248 civilians died. It did not identify any victims as terrorists or distinguish between civilians killed in Israeli airstrikes and those who died from the nearly 700 rockets that misfired or landed inside Gaza.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said 128 civilians were killed.<sup>56</sup> An Israeli study found that at least 111 casualties belonged to terrorist organizations.<sup>57</sup> Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar admitted that 80 of the dead were terrorists.<sup>58</sup>

Defense for Children International – Palestine reported one case where “a homemade rocket fired by a Palestinian armed group fell short and killed eight Palestinians, including two children.”<sup>59</sup> According to one postwar estimate, as many as 91 Palestinians were killed by Hamas rockets.<sup>60</sup>

While statements by Palestinian officials, such as those regarding casualties, are readily accepted, those by Israelis are routinely reported skeptically. For example, the account of the bombing of a building in Gaza in the *Times* referred to the IDF as frequently accusing Hamas of using civilians as shields as if there was no objective proof of their doing so.<sup>61</sup>

In 2021, CNN provided new guidance to its staff: “We need to be transparent about the fact the Ministry of Health in Gaza is run by Hamas. Consequently, when we cite latest casualty numbers...we need to include the fact it is Hamas-run.”<sup>62</sup> The memo was apparently leaked to *Al Jazeera*, but the policy was either never adopted or quickly dropped because CNN resumed quoting ministry figures without reference to Hamas.<sup>63</sup>

Professor Eytan Gilboa concluded:

The distorted and misleading coverage of the Gaza conflict contributed to the hasty calls made by political leaders, UN officials, and NGOs to prosecute Israel for war crimes. It also contributed to the mass hate demonstrations in Europe and to the sharp rise in [anti-Semitic](#) incidents...The Western media betrayed their audiences who deserve receiving accurate information on Gaza. They should be held accountable for their skewed coverage, but it is doubtful whether they have the courage to heed the advice they so often offer to governments—to investigate their professional and ethical failures and put their house in order.”<sup>64</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Palestinians are never told to lie to journalists.*

## ***FACT***

Hamas spokespeople are articulate and well-prepared to present their case to the media. They have also prepped the civilian population for responding to media inquiries. The interior ministry published guidelines instructing the civilian population on how to contribute to the Hamas propaganda campaign. For example:

Anyone killed or martyred is to be called a civilian from Gaza or Palestine before we talk about his status in jihad or his military rank. Don't forget to always add “innocent civilian” or “innocent citizen” in your description of those killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza.

Begin [your reports of] news of resistance actions with the phrase “In response to the cruel Israeli attack,” and conclude with the phrase, “This many people have been martyred since Israel launched its aggression against Gaza.” Be sure to always perpetuate the principle of “the role of the occupation is attack, and we in Palestine are fulfilling [the role of] the reaction.”

Avoid publishing pictures of rockets fired into Israel from [Gaza] city centers. This [would] provide a pretext for attacking residential areas in the Gaza Strip. Do not publish or share photos or video clips showing rocket launching sites or the movement of resistance [forces] in Gaza.

When speaking to the West, you must use political, rational, and persuasive discourse, and avoid emotional discourse aimed at begging for sympathy. There are elements with a conscience in the world; you must maintain contact with them and activate them for the benefit of Palestine. Their role is to shame the occupation and expose its violations.

Avoid entering into a political argument with a Westerner aimed at convincing him that the Holocaust is a lie and deceit; instead, equate it with Israel’s crimes against Palestinian civilians.

Do not publish photos of military commanders. Do not mention their names in public, and do not praise their achievements in conversations with foreign friends!<sup>65</sup>

Thanks to such instructions, journalists cannot trust interviews with civilians they meet on the street, though many report what they are told. Polish reporter Wojciech said after covering fighting in Gaza, “I couldn’t meet anyone who spoke something other than official propaganda. But some Palestinians, when they were sure my microphone was turned off, told me that they have had enough, but they are afraid. No one would dare to say publicly that Hamas is creating a hell inside Gaza.”<sup>66</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel intentionally kills journalists*

### ***FACT***

The Palestinian Authority (PA) and some other critics of Israel accuse the government of intentionally targeting journalists. One such specious claim was made after the IDF bombed a building in Gaza that housed the headquarters of the Associated Press and other news organizations during [Operation Guardian of the Walls](#). The journalists knew the risks of operating in a war zone and would have had to be blind not to be aware of the Hamas presence in the building, which was targeted because it contained Hamas intelligence assets. No harm came to any journalists because Israel warned them of the attack – not something the IDF would do if it wanted to kill them – and they were all safely evacuated.

One allegation followed the shooting of Shireen Abu Akleh, a Palestinian American correspondent for *Al Jazeera*. Before the cause of her death was investigated, Israel was immediately accused of killing her.

Following a series of attacks by residents of Jenin and its surrounding villages that killed 11 people, Israel launched an operation in the city, a well-known nest of terrorists, to prevent further attacks. Though Palestinian security forces are responsible for keeping the peace in the area, none were on the scene to prevent an outbreak of violence. Abu Akleh, a Palestinian journalist for *Al Jazeera*, chose to report from a conflict area, voluntarily putting herself in danger.

Despite knowing that terrorists were in the area where Abu Akleh was shot, CNN and others convicted Israel without a murder weapon, an autopsy, or the bullet that killed her.<sup>67</sup>

The PA turned a bullet over to American officials. The U.S. Security Coordinator (USSC) [said](#) it could not reach a definitive conclusion regarding the bullet’s origin. Nevertheless, the USSC concluded “that gunfire from IDF positions

was likely responsible for the death of Abu Akleh” but “found no reason to believe that this was intentional but rather the result of tragic circumstances during an IDF-led military operation against factions of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.”<sup>68</sup>

On September 5, 2022, Israeli military investigators concluded that it was “not possible to unequivocally determine the source of the gunfire which hit and killed Ms. Abu Akleh.” The report acknowledged that “there is a high possibility that Ms. Abu Akleh was accidentally hit by IDF gunfire fired toward suspects identified as armed Palestinian gunmen during an exchange of fire.”

The IDF’s Military Advocate General’s Office said it did not intend to pursue criminal charges against any soldiers after the review found “no suspicion that a bullet was fired deliberately at anyone identified as a civilian and in particular at anyone identified as a journalist.”<sup>69</sup>

Palestinians and other detractors were not satisfied; the only possible conclusion in their minds was the one they had preconceived.

Foreign Minister [Yair Lapid](#) said that Abu Akleh worked in the region for more than 20 years without harm. Other foreign journalists in Israel faced no danger from the government. “*Al Jazeera*, a network run by an Islamist state that is openly hostile to Israel, has permanent staff in Israel who are protected by the state the network slanders on a regular basis,” Lapid noted.<sup>70</sup>

Israel has one of the world's highest numbers of foreign journalists per capita. Many are openly hostile toward Israel; nevertheless, they are not banned from covering the news in Israel or the disputed territories. If Israel wanted to silence reporters who write negative things about the country, dozens would be routinely killed, but that does not happen.

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# Chapter 19

## The Delegitimization of Israel

[Anti-Semitism is a result of Israeli policies.](#)

[Supporters of Israel only criticize Arabs and never Israelis.](#)

[The IHRA definition of anti-Semitism stifles criticism of Israel.](#)

[Anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism.](#)

[Academic freedom is a license for any faculty criticism of Israel.](#)

[The BDS movement originated with Palestinians seeking to promote peace and justice.](#)

[BDS proponents advocate a two-state solution.](#)

[The BDS campaign has succeeded in isolating Israel.](#)

[Selective boycotts advance prospects for peace.](#)

[Campus delegitimization campaigns are successful.](#)

[Academic boycotts help the Palestinians.](#)

[Labeling products manufactured in settlements promotes peace.](#)

[Talking about Israel's favorable LGBT policies is pinkwashing.](#)

[Israel has no right to deny entry, detain, or expel BDS activists.](#)

[Anti-boycott legislation violates the First Amendment.](#)

### **MYTH**

*Anti-Semitism is a result of Israeli policies.*

### **FACT**

[Anti-Semitism](#) existed for centuries before the [establishment](#) of the [State of Israel](#). Rather than Israel being the cause of anti-Semitism, it is more likely that dissatisfaction with Israeli behavior and the distorted media coverage of Israeli policies reinforce latent anti-Semitic views.

As writer Leon Wieseltier observed, “The notion that all Jews are responsible for whatever any Jews do is not a [Zionist](#) notion. It is an anti-Semitic notion.” Wieseltier adds that attacks on Jews in Europe have nothing to do with Israel. To blame Jews for anti-Semitism is similar to saying blacks are responsible for racism.<sup>1</sup>

**The view of Israel as a monolithic entity composed of racists and brutal oppressors is a caricature. Israel is a complex society struggling with itself. The forces of good and evil, and many in between, are locked in a daily battle on many different fronts.**

—Uri Avnery<sup>2</sup>

### **MYTH**

*Supporters of Israel only criticize Arabs and never Israelis.*

### **FACT**

Israel is not perfect. Even the most committed friends of Israel acknowledge that the government sometimes makes mistakes, that it has not solved all the problems in its society, and that it should do better. However, supporters of Israel may not emphasize these faults because there is no shortage of groups and individuals willing to do nothing but focus on Israel's imperfections. The public usually has much less access to Israel's side of the story in the conflict with the Palestinians or the positive aspects of its society; therefore, it is necessary to put events in context.

Israelis themselves are their own harshest critics. If you want to read criticism of Israeli behavior, you can pick up any Israeli newspaper and find no shortage of news and commentary critical of government policy. Outside Israel, friends of

Israel frequently express concerns about policies they find objectionable. Many believe Israel should adopt different approaches toward the [Palestinians](#) and speak out against actions perceived as undermining the prospects for peace. Op-eds written by Jews regularly appear in the media advocating, for example, an end to Israel's administration of the [West Bank](#) and a freeze on the construction of [settlements](#).

Nations do not lose their right to exist, however, when they fall short of their ideals.

The openness of debate in Israel has led some to conclude that Americans should not feel constrained from expressing similarly critical views. America is not Israel; Israelis have a common narrative and shared experiences. Americans, even Jews, do not have the same knowledge or expertise about Israel, so critics should be aware that their opinions may be misinterpreted by those who do not know the history or context of the topic.

Israeli encouragement also does not justify criticism, as Israelis do not understand the American milieu and typically only bless critics who agree with them. Leftist Israelis are often happy to encourage American Jews to speak out against rightist governments but are furious with criticism of leftist governments. Similarly, right-wing Israelis may prompt criticism of left-wing governments and object to Americans disagreeing with right-of-center coalitions.

**Israel is the only state in the world today, and the Jews the only people in the world today, that are the object of a standing set of threats from governmental, religious, and terrorist bodies seeking their destruction. And what is most disturbing is the silence, the indifference, and sometimes even the indulgence in the face of such genocidal anti-Semitism.**

**—Canadian minister of justice and attorney general Irwin Cotler<sup>3</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*The IHRA definition of anti-Semitism stifles criticism of Israel.*

## ***FACT***

Ben Jamal, director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), accused Israel of “coordinating a global campaign” that was “designed to frame activism for [Palestine](#) as something hostile, something extremist, as something anti-Semitic.” He insisted that the internationally-recognized definition of anti-Jewish racism written by the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\)](#) “drains anti-Semitism of any meaning.”<sup>4</sup>

Jamal's remark is one example of the increasingly common tendency for non-Jews to tell Jews what constitutes anti-Semitism.

Imagine if Blacks protested statements they considered racist, and the people who made the remarks said they were expressing legitimate criticism and Blacks had no right to say they were racist. No one would accept this argument. The same idea applies to sexist or homophobic remarks or policies.

Jews are treated differently. People making anti-Semitic statements tell [Jews](#) they are the arbiters of what defines anti-Semitism. In the case of the IHRA, it is not only Jews who agreed on the definition; it has been adopted or endorsed by 39 nations, 26 U.S. states, the European Union, the Organization of American States, and the Council of Europe.

Jamal said it was necessary to “oppose the conflation of anti-Semitism with legitimate criticism of Israel that is contained within the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism.”

This is a commonly used straw man used by the definition's detractors, ignoring that it states explicitly: “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic.”

There is a clear distinction, however, between criticism of the policies of Israel's government, which you can read in any Israeli newspaper, and anti-Semitism. The IHRA gives examples of when the line is crossed:

- Accusing the Jews as a people or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the [Holocaust](#).
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic anti-Semitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing [Jesus](#) or [blood libel](#)) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the [Nazis](#).
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

When the Trump administration [announced](#) that the IHRA definition could be used to determine discriminatory intent in violation of the Civil Rights Act, critics echoed Jamal’s comments. Yousef Munayyer, the executive director of the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, for example, said, “This executive order is a clear instrument of oppression, targeting activism for freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people on campuses, and it is just disguised as anti-discrimination policy.”<sup>5</sup>

According to Alyza Lewin, president and general counsel of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, “there is nothing in either the IHRA Definition or the Executive Order that precludes anyone from criticizing the policies of the government of Israel.” She adds, “It is not unlawful in the United States to make racist or anti-Jewish comments. In America, the First Amendment protects your right to express yourself as a bigot.” However, she adds, “the First Amendment does not insulate and prevent those who make racist or anti-Semitic comments from being labeled as racists and anti-Semites.”<sup>6</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism.*

## ***FACT***

To mask their anti-Semitism, many people claim they only hate “Zionists,” “Israelis,” “colonists,” or “settlers,” not Jews, but these are only euphemisms. Opposition to the Jewish state has become a socially acceptable way to express anti-Jewish attitudes. As British author Howard Jacobson observed, “Israel has become the pretext [for anti-Semitism]...All the unsayable things, all the things they know they can’t say about Jews in a post-Holocaust liberal society, they can say again now. Israel has desacralized the subject. It’s a space in which everything is allowed again.”<sup>7</sup>

The European Union issued a statement in 2022 that said, “Anti-Semitic hatred has no place in our world, and it makes no difference if it is disguised as [anti-Zionism](#) or whether it comes from far-right or far-left extremists or from Islamist and other religious fundamentalists. We Europeans cannot – and will not stay indifferent in the face of increasing anti-Semitism.”<sup>8</sup>

**When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews. You’re talking anti-Semitism.**

**—Martin Luther King<sup>9</sup>**

“Not all Jews are Zionists, just as not all Jews observe the [Sabbath](#) or adhere to [kosher dietary rules](#),” explains Alyza Lewin, president and general counsel of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law. “However, just as it is anti-Semitic to attack, harass or discriminate against Jews on the basis of their Sabbath or kashrut observance, so, too, is it anti-Semitic to attack, harass or marginalize Jews who advocate, express, or support the Zionist part of their Jewish identity.”<sup>10</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Academic freedom is a license for any faculty criticism of Israel.*

## **FACT**

The one place in America where anti-Semitism is still tolerated is in the university, where “academic freedom” is often used as a cover to sanction anti-Israel teachings and forums that are anti-Semitic.

In an address on the subject of academic freedom, Columbia University president Lee Bollinger quoted from a report that described a professor as someone whom “no fair-minded person would even suspect of speaking other than as ‘shaped or restricted by the judgment . . . of professional scholars.’”<sup>11</sup> He also spoke about the need for faculty to “resist the allure of certitude, the temptation to use the podium as an ideological platform, to indoctrinate a captive audience, to play favorites with the like-minded, and silence the others.”<sup>12</sup>

Many faculty do not resist temptation and use their position as an ideological platform. Those who abuse their academic freedom, and insist they can say what they want, hypocritically denounce others who exercise their right to criticize them. To suggest that a professor’s views are inappropriate or their scholarship is faulty is to risk being tarred with the charge of McCarthyism.

Legality is not the issue in evaluating the anti-Israel, sometimes anti-Semitic speeches and teachings of faculty and speakers on campus. No one questions that freedom of speech allows individuals to express their views. The issue is whether this type of speech should be given the cover of “academic freedom” and granted legitimacy by the university through funding, publicity, or the use of campus facilities and social media platforms.

A related question is whether the presentations are academic. Few people would claim that a conference in which anti-Black, anti-gay, or anti-female sentiments were expressed would be protected by academic freedom. Yet, that is the shield used to permit attacks on the Jewish people who may euphemistically be referred to as “Zionists,” “Israelis,” “colonists,” or “settlers.”

There is a distinction between legitimate criticism of Israeli policy, which you can read in any Israeli newspaper, and anti-Semitism, in which the attacks against Israel challenge its right to exist or single out Israel among all other nations for opprobrium. A guideline for recognizing the difference is offered by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Anti-Semitism, which has been adopted by 39 countries, including the United States, and 314 higher education institutions worldwide.<sup>13</sup>

The IHRA includes examples of when a line is crossed but explicitly says, “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic.” Author and educator Uri Pilichowski explained the distinction this way:

As in most cases of both accusations and criticism, the defining line of what makes the criticism fair or anti-Semitic is dependent on who is saying it, why they’re saying it, what they’re saying, and how they’re saying it.<sup>14</sup>

When it crosses the line into hate speech or anti-Semitism, it may create a hostile environment that violates the civil rights of Jews. The U.S. Department of Education issued policy guidance in October 2010 clarifying that Jews are protected from discrimination and harassment under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Office of Civil Rights specifies that school districts and institutions of higher education “may violate these civil rights statutes and the Department’s implementing regulations when peer harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, or disability is sufficiently serious that it creates a hostile environment and such harassment is encouraged, tolerated, not adequately addressed, or ignored by school employees.”<sup>15</sup>

**Our position is based upon the belief that it is through cooperation based on mutual respect, rather than through boycotts or discrimination, that our common goals can be achieved. Bridging political gulfs—rather than widening them further apart—between nations and individuals thus becomes an educational duty as well as a functional necessity, requiring**

exchange and dialogue rather than confrontation and antagonism. Our disaffection with, and condemnation of acts of academic boycotts and discrimination against scholars and institutions, is predicated on the principles of academic freedom, human rights, and equality between nations and among individuals.

— Joint Hebrew University/Al-Quds University Statement<sup>16</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The BDS movement originated with Palestinians seeking to promote peace and justice.*

## ***FACT***

The [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions \(BDS\)](#) campaign is a product of the NGO Forum that was held in parallel to the 2001 [UN World Conference against Racism](#) in [Durban, South Africa](#). The Forum’s final declaration described Israel as a state guilty of “racist crimes including war crimes, acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing” and created an action plan. The “Durban Strategy” called for promoting “a policy of complete and total isolation of Israel . . . the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid, military cooperation, and training) between all states and Israel” (para. 424).<sup>17</sup>

The BDS movement deliberately draws a false parallel to South Africa. According to BDS proponents, if South Africa was worthy of a boycott and sanctions campaigns that eventually led to the downfall of that despicable system, “Israel should be subject to the same kind of attack, leading to the same kind of result.”<sup>18</sup>

In 2005, activists issued the “Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS against Israel” to create the false impression that all Palestinians endorse BDS. The movement is primarily directed, however, by outsiders whose lives are unaffected by Israel and who do not have to live with the consequences of their actions.

[Palestinian Authority](#) President [Mahmoud Abbas](#) told South African journalists, “We do not ask anyone to boycott Israel itself . . . We have [relations with Israel](#); we have mutual recognition of Israel.”<sup>19</sup>

Palestinians and Israelis routinely engage in dialogue, cooperation, and trade. The Palestinian Authority signed cooperative agreements with Israel in nearly 40 spheres of activity, from joint security measures to environmental protection and conservation.

The [Histadrut](#) and the Palestine General Federation of Trades Unions (PGFTU) signed an agreement to base future relations on negotiation, dialogue, and joint initiatives to advance “fraternity and coexistence.” Palestinian Arab Universities—despite being hotbeds of anti-Israel activity—maintain links with their Israeli counterparts. Artists, doctors, and businesspeople have formed bonds of mutual benefit, cooperation, and friendship.

Boycotting Israel would devastate the Palestinian economy, which is almost totally dependent on trade with Israel. In 2021, nearly 90% of Palestinian exports went to Israel, and 54% of imports originated there.<sup>20</sup>

More than 100,000 Palestinians working in Israel inject roughly \$5.5 billion into the Palestinian economy annually, the equivalent of about 35% of GDP.<sup>21</sup> Most are paid significantly more than their peers receive from Palestinian employers.

Palestinians are voting with their feet and their pocketbooks against the boycott being pursued in their name.

## **Case Study**

Boycotters targeted SodaStream because of its factory in Mishor Adumim, adjacent to the “settlement” of Ma’ale Adumim. The company was the largest employer of Palestinians in the territories, with nearly 600 workers who enjoyed the same salary, medical insurance, and conditions as the other workers. BDS activists protested outside stores, intimidated shoppers, and vandalized

SodaStream products. Due to financial losses, partly due to the BDS attacks, the company closed the West Bank factory and replaced it with one in the Negev Desert, putting all the Palestinians out of work. Ali Jafar, a shift manager from a West Bank village who worked for SodaStream for two years, said, “All the people who wanted to close [SodaStream’s West Bank factory] are mistaken . . . They didn’t take into consideration the [Palestinian] families.”<sup>22</sup>

The good news is that the company later rehired many Palestinians to work in the Israeli factory.<sup>23</sup>

## **MYTH**

*BDS proponents advocate a two-state solution.*

### **FACT**

Anyone genuinely interested in peace understands that the Palestinian issue is not one-sided and that any pressure must be directed at both parties. BDS proponents, however, are interested only in coercing Israel while holding the Palestinians blameless for the conflict.

Many injustices have resulted from the ongoing failure to resolve the dispute. However, presenting Palestinian grievances out of context without considering similar Israeli concerns is neither fair nor constructive. The advancement of Palestinian rights should not negate those of Israelis.

Moreover, Israel does not need to be bullied to seek peace. Israel has repeatedly offered compromises that would have allowed the Palestinians to establish an independent entity, if not a state. The Palestinians rejected every offer.

BDS advocates reject the [peace process](#) entirely. With their zero-sum approach to everything Israeli, they have no interest in coexistence. While some proponents try to conceal their agenda to win support from people concerned with human rights and social justice, others are explicit: “The real aim of BDS is to bring down the state of Israel,” Professor As’ad AbuKhalil admitted. “That should be stated as an unambiguous goal. There should not be any equivocation on the subject. Justice and freedom for the Palestinians are incompatible with the existence of the state of Israel.”<sup>24</sup>

Since BDS activities are indiscriminate, they harm those Israelis who are most actively campaigning for peace and reinforce the views of those who do not believe that any compromise will satisfy the Palestinians. Rather than encourage negotiation, efforts to isolate Israel make its citizens feel more vulnerable.

Under the false premise of being “apolitical,” BDS proponents claim they are not advocating any solution. In reality, this is purposeful ambiguity, as their goal is the destruction of Israel.

“The problem with BDS,” Professor Ilan Troen has written, “is that it forecloses any possibility of respectful interchange and honorable negotiations between the contending parties for the land that all consider not only theirs, but most consider holy.”<sup>25</sup>

## **MYTH**

*The BDS campaign has succeeded in isolating Israel.*

### **FACT**

The [Arab League boycott](#), which has been in force since 1945, before the creation of the state, did nothing to help the Palestinians achieve independence, nor did it prevent Israel from becoming one of the world’s economic success stories. The BDS campaign has been equally ineffective in isolating Israel diplomatically, economically, and culturally.

Today, Israel has diplomatic relations with 161 countries, more than ever before. Most notable was the establishment of ties resulting from the Abraham Accords with Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, and Morocco.



Economically, Israel is thriving. Israel's largest single trade partner remains the United States. In 2021, U.S.-Israel trade exceeded \$31 billion, and 24 states exported more than \$100 million worth of goods to Israel, led by New York's \$3.5 billion.<sup>26</sup> More than 10,000 U.S. companies do business in or with Israel, including all the major high-tech companies.

Israel's political relations with the European Union have been strained; nevertheless, trade with the EU exceeds that of the United States. Roughly 30% of Israel's imports and exports result from dealing with the EU, and Israel ranks 21st among its trading partners. Total trade with the EU reached \$37 billion in 2021,<sup>27</sup> and Israel is a part of the Euro-Mediterranean free trade area.

Even at "ground zero" for the BDS movement—the [United Kingdom](#)—relations and commercial exchange are flourishing. In 2021, total bilateral trade amounted to nearly \$6 billion, and the two countries were negotiating to create a free trade area.<sup>28</sup>

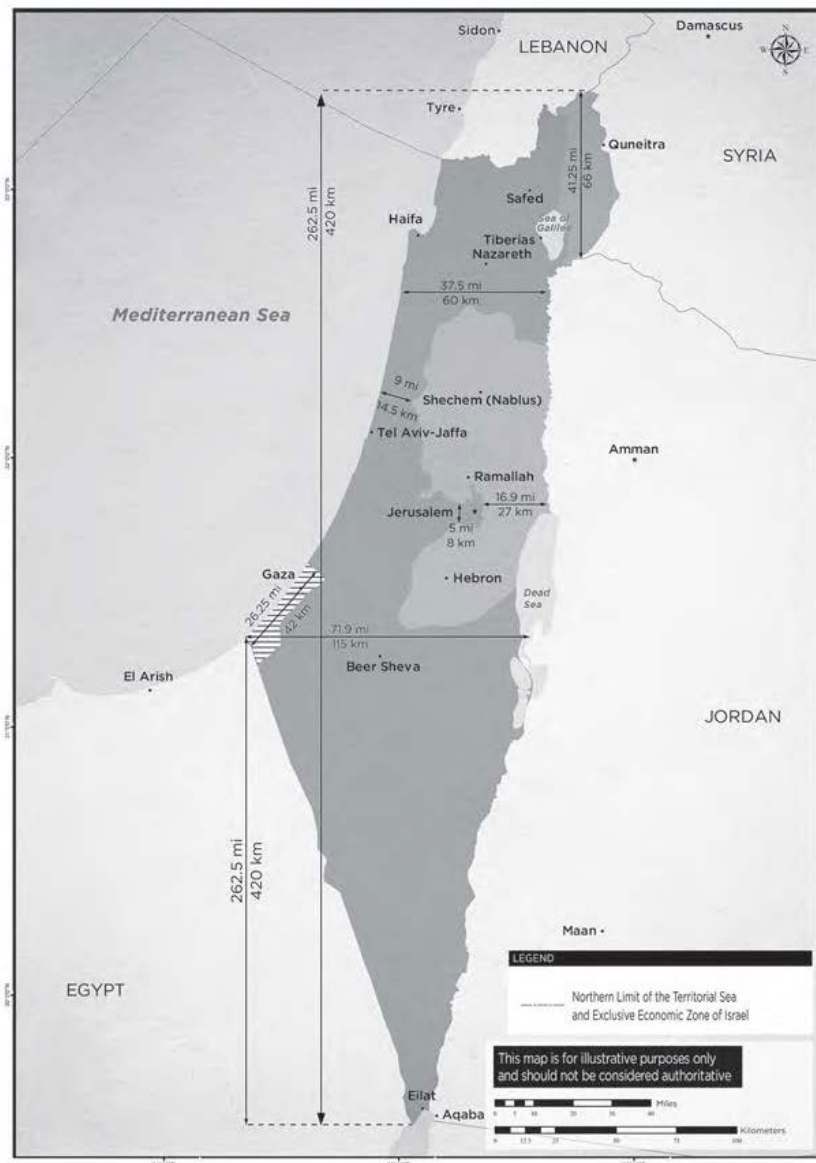
Trade is growing exponentially with countries in [Asia](#), where [China](#) has become Israel's third-largest trading partner. Israel is also expanding ties with [Latin America](#) and has been granted observer status in the Pacific Alliance, an economic trade organization of several major Latin and [Central American](#) countries. Similarly, Israel was granted observer status in the Africa Union in 2022.

Kristin Lindow, senior vice president at Moody's Investors Service and Moody's lead analyst for Israel, told *Forbes*, "The impact of BDS is more psychological than real so far and has had no discernible impact on Israeli trade or the broader economy."<sup>29</sup>

The boycott movement produced a backlash in the United States as 35 states have [adopted](#) laws, executive orders, or resolutions to discourage boycotts against Israel.<sup>30</sup> In 2022, the UK Parliament voted to ban public sector employees from boycotting Israeli investments within their pension funds.<sup>31</sup>

The cultural boycott has been an annoyance, especially when protestors disrupt Israeli cultural events abroad, but A-list celebrities and performers, including Paul McCartney, Elton John, Madonna, Bon Jovi, Andrea Bocelli, Rihanna, Kanye West, Santana, and Alicia Keys, have ignored threats and intimidation to appear in [concerts](#). Israel also hosted the [Eurovision](#) contest in 2019 and the Miss Universe pageant in 2021.

BDS proponents are also hypocrites. They do not advocate giving up all the medical, scientific, and other innovations they benefit from that were developed in Israel or have Israeli-designed components. These include Waze, laptop computers, memory sticks, antivirus programs, iPhones, electric cars, or generic medications made by Teva. The most egregious example may be Omar Barghouti, one of the most prominent activists, who advocated boycotting Israeli universities while attending graduate school at [Tel Aviv University](#).<sup>32</sup>



## **MYTH**

*Selective boycotts advance prospects for peace.*

## ***FACT***

Some Israeli artists, academics, and authors called upon actors to avoid performing in a theater in the West Bank town of [Ariel](#) to protest the Israeli government's settlement policy. While the Israelis boycotting Ariel are primarily [Zionists](#) who oppose the BDS goal of destroying Israel, their protest does nothing to advance the cause of peace. Instead, their actions punish innocent Jews uninvolved in the political conflict and gave legitimacy to the BDS movement. As Rabbi Eric Yoffie, former president of the [Reform Judaism](#) movement, and a frequent critic of Israeli policy, observed:

It is impossible to distinguish between different types of boycotts....Those who claim that they only support the boycott of Ariel but oppose the BDS movement are making distinctions that will not be clear to anyone but themselves. If an internal boycott in Israel is the way that Israelis deal with the question of settlement expansion, what is the basis for objecting when countries and groups hostile to Israel call for a boycott of Israel's academic institutions?<sup>33</sup>

The distinction between Israeli businesses and communities in the territories and the rest of their compatriots cannot be applied in practice. Any steps to isolate and exclude Israelis in settlements also impact Israelis on both sides of the [Green Line](#). Because the economies are interdependent, efforts to punish or damage the settlements injure the broader economy and all Israelis – Jews and non-Jews. Sweeping and targeted boycott campaigns are fundamentally unfair forms of collective punishment.

Like BDS advocates, the selective boycotters blame the conflict only on Israel. Rather than their stated goal of advancing peace, they further entrench maximalist Palestinian demands. No matter how good the intention may be, these boycott advocates only strengthen those who seek Israel's demise.

## **MYTH**

*Campus delegitimization campaigns are successful.*

## **FACT**

The campus divestment campaign was initiated in 2001 by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), a student group at the University of California, Berkeley, in conjunction with the [San Francisco](#) chapter of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. A year later, following the Palestine Solidarity Movement's first conference in Berkeley, the delegitimization movement began spreading to other universities.

Student governments often spend hours debating measures, which are one-sided and accompanied by vitriolic attacks on Israel by BDS proponents. Votes are often scheduled to impede opponents' ability to marshal support or participate, as in cases where they are held on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays.

Still, the campaign has been a total failure. Resolutions have been [introduced](#) in fewer than 2% of America's four-year colleges. The resolutions are defeated nearly two-thirds of the time, and not one of the 47 schools that approved a call for a boycott or divestment from 2005 to Spring 2022 led to university action. On the contrary, administrators have condemned the BDS movement. [Harvard University](#) President Lawrence Summers said the divestment campaign was anti-Semitic.<sup>34</sup> Soon after, Columbia University President Lee Bollinger said he opposed divestment and considered the analogy to South Africa made by activists "both grotesque and offensive."<sup>35</sup>

Even when they fail, BDS advocates often claim victory in the hope that the perception of winning will create momentum for their cause. What they do accomplish is to roil the campus and put Jewish and other pro-Israel students on the defensive.

Perhaps the more severe delegitimization efforts on campus escape public notice because they occur in classrooms where professors use their positions to advance political agendas biased toward Israel. Faculty detractors have also become more vocal, signing petitions, issuing condemnations of Israel in the name of whole departments, and using their university affiliations to imply that their employers endorse their views.

The boycott movement on campus has had no impact on Israeli policy toward the Palestinians. Nevertheless, the mere discussion of BDS allows Israel's detractors to propagate a negative image of Israel that many fear will take root while simultaneously shifting the tenor of debate from the merits of Israeli policies to its right to exist.

Divestment debates often make Jewish students feel persecuted and unsafe. Many are hurt when their peers become part of a movement that seeks to negate their identity.

Honest discussion about Israeli and Palestinian narratives is needed on college campuses. Divestment advocates seek to circumvent an open debate by promoting the Palestinian narrative and delegitimizing Israel's history.

**Israeli academics have never boycotted Palestinian professors, even in the worst days of terror. To the contrary: if you're organizing a conference in Israel, it's almost obligatory to have a Palestinian professor on the podium. Free exchange is what academic freedom means, and**

**Israeli universities have done an admirable job of upholding it in trying times. In contrast, the academic boycott against Israel is itself a gross violation of academic freedom because it explicitly imposes a political litmus test on Israeli scholars. It's radical-style McCarthyism."**

**—Professor Martin Kramer<sup>36</sup>**

## **MYTH**

*Academic boycotts help the Palestinians.*

## ***FACT***

In 2013, the American Studies Association (ASA) passed a resolution calling for an academic boycott of Israel and demanded that American universities end all collaboration with Israeli institutions. Only 17% of the members voted for the resolution, which was the first time the association called for a boycott of any nation.<sup>37</sup>

Like most campus-related BDS “victories,” the ASA vote had no impact on Israel and did nothing to help the Palestinians, many of whom benefit from attending Israeli universities and the collaboration between colleges in the West Bank and Israel. Instead, it provoked a torrent of criticism from the academic community and beyond. Within a month, more than 100 universities rejected the idea of boycotting Israel.<sup>38</sup> Another 50 institutions denounced the ASA’s decision and the association “lost nearly 20% of its affiliated universities.”<sup>39</sup>

Drew Faust, president of Harvard University, said, “the recent resolution of the ASA proposing to boycott Israeli universities represents a direct threat to academic freedoms and values, ideals which universities and scholarly associations should be dedicated to defend.”<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, roughly 2,000 academic institutions representing tens of thousands of faculty disagreed with the minority within the ASA.<sup>41</sup>

The backlash did not stop BDS advocates from persuading other professional associations to follow the ASA’s example. While a handful of minor associations called for meaningless boycotts, larger and more prestigious organizations like the American Historical Association and American Anthropological Association rejected similar proposals.

One group with a history of animosity toward Israel unimpressed by the backlash against the ASA is the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), which voted to boycott Israel in 2022. Only 27% of the members approved of the decision. Afterward, some members of MESA and the Alliance for Academic Freedom (AAF), a group of more than 200 liberal and progressive scholars, condemned the decision saying it “decisively overturns the very guiding principle of academic freedom it previously sought to uphold.”<sup>42</sup>

Another egregious example of an academic boycott that does nothing for the Palestinians was the University of Michigan professor’s admission that he refused to write a letter of recommendation for a student to study in Israel because he supports BDS. More than 1,000 professors signed a petition supporting him and saying they would do the same.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that many other professors may discriminate against students without acknowledging it.

**If we are to look at Israeli society, it is within the academic community that we’ve had the most progressive pro-peace views and views that have come out in favor of seeing us as equals . . . If you want to punish any sector, this is the last one to approach.**

**—Al-Quds University president Sari Nusseibeh on academic boycotts of Israel<sup>44</sup>**

George Washington University Professor Walter Reich observed, “Boycotting Israeli academic institutions not only trashes the sacrosanct academic principle of the free exchange of ideas; it’s also hypocritical and wrong. Most egregiously, it targets Israel to the exclusion of countries with immeasurably worse human-rights records.”<sup>45</sup>

Professor Henry Reichman, first vice president of the American Association of University Professors, said the boycott is

“at best misguided” and “is the wrong way to register opposition to the policies and practices it seeks to discredit.” He added, “it is itself a serious violation of the very academic freedom its supporters purport to defend.”<sup>46</sup>

The BDS movement may have thought the ASA action would act as a clarion call for academics to join their boycott campaign; however, it has primarily attracted extremists committed to demonizing Israel. It has also exposed professors whose research and teaching are ideologically driven.

## **MYTH**

*Labeling products manufactured in settlements promotes peace.*

### ***FACT***

The European Union has called for member states to require goods from the West Bank to be labeled separately from products from the rest of Israel.<sup>47</sup> The EU mistakenly believed this would pressure Israel to evacuate the West Bank and capitulate to Palestinian demands. This cynical campaign does nothing to advance the cause of peace.

As Danielle Pletka of the American Enterprise Institute noted, “Labeling goods made by Israeli businesses in disputed territories, but not goods made in other disputed territories like Kashmir, for example, is an example of blatant anti-Semitism.” It is only Israeli Jews who must be given special treatment while other peoples involved in conflicts are ignored.<sup>48</sup> Though European leaders claim to oppose efforts to boycott and isolate Israel, the labeling campaign supports it.

Moreover, the tactic is counterproductive because it hardens the views of Israelis who believe they are being persecuted and that criticism of their policies is one-sided.

## **MYTH**

*Talking about Israel’s favorable LBGT policies is pinkwashing.*

### ***FACT***

Israel is one of the most progressive countries in the world in terms of recognizing differences based on [sexual orientation](#). Gay pride parades are held every year, and in 2012 [Tel Aviv](#) was named the World’s Best Gay City by participants in an international competition.<sup>49</sup> Israeli law forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation.

By contrast, homosexuals are not protected in Arab and Muslim states and are often imprisoned and sometimes executed. In 2016, for example, a top  [Hamas](#) commander was reportedly killed because he was gay.<sup>50</sup> One gay West Bank Palestinian testified before the [Knesset](#) in 2022 that his family had tried to kill him after they learned of his sexual orientation.<sup>51</sup>

In the Palestinian Authority, sodomy carries a three-to-10-year jail term. In 2019, the PA banned Al-Qaws, a Palestinian queer rights group, from operating in the West Bank.

Gay Palestinians have been known to flee to Israel for safety. In one case, a gay Palestinian seeking asylum in Israel told an Israeli court that Palestinian police had arrested, tortured, and beaten him because he was gay, most of his family disowned him, and he was warned never to return home.<sup>52</sup>

Until 2022, Palestinians who sought refuge were allowed to stay in Israel but could not work legally and had no access to health care or welfare services. Israelis lobbied on their behalf, and the government granted LGBT Palestinians temporary asylum to eliminate these restrictions.<sup>53</sup>

When supporters of Israel point out these facts, critics sometimes accuse them of “pinkwashing”; that is, ignoring Israel’s alleged mistreatment of Palestinians by talking about its good treatment of gays. These issues are entirely

separate, however, and no one who discusses gay rights does so to distract from issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. The same is true for accusations of “greenwashing,” “purplewashing,” “sportwashing,” and similar smears.

In 2016, the Italian gay rights organization Associazione Radicale Certi Diritti condemned LGBT rights groups that use the term “pinkwashing.” The group said, “The alarming increase in political calls by LGBTI groups to boycott Israel diverts from the real battle these group should hold, i.e., the advocacy for the promotion of LGBTI rights among the Palestinian people.” The organization praised Israel for being the only state in the Middle East that protects LGBTI rights and condemned the Palestinian Authority and Hamas for not recognizing the rights of the LGTBI community.<sup>54</sup>

Harvard Professor Alan Dershowitz has noted that this line of attack is a form of bigotry by people who “hate Israel more than they care about gay rights.” Anti-Semites, he says, believe “there must be something sinister at work if Jews do anything positive. The same is now true for the unthinking anti-Israel bigot.” He notes that Israelis most supportive of gay rights are typically also advocates of Palestinian rights. “Pinkwashing,” he concludes, “is an anti-Semitic canard.”<sup>55</sup>

## **MYTH**

*Israel has no right to deny entry, detain, or expel BDS activists.*

## ***FACT***

Israel’s legal and political position is consistent with the behavior of other countries, including the United States, which restricts who may cross their borders. For example, applicants for visas to the United States are asked several questions about their political views and activities.<sup>56</sup> These include:

- Do you seek to engage in espionage, sabotage, export control violations, or any other illegal activity while in the United States?
- Do you seek to engage in terrorist activities while in the United States, or have you ever engaged in terrorist activities?
- Are you a member or representative of a terrorist organization?
- Have you ever ordered, incited, committed, assisted, or otherwise participated in genocide?
- Have you ever committed, ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in torture?
- Have you committed, ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in extrajudicial killings, political killings, or other acts of violence?
- Have you, while serving as a government official, been responsible for or directly carried out, at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom?

The USA Patriot Act allows the Secretary of State to bar admission to the United States to “any alien whose entry or proposed activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States.”

The U.S. government has banned individuals and members of groups convicted of crimes or viewed as potential security threats. The list of people barred or excluded from the United States in the past includes Irish politician Gerry Adams, British singers Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens) and Boy George, Argentine soccer star Diego Maradona, and Austrian diplomat Kurt Waldheim.

Israel’s decision to deny entry to the country is based on several criteria:

1. Individuals with senior positions or significant roles in organizations calling for a boycott of Israel, such as board chairman or board members.
2. Key activists who take a consistent and continuous role in promoting boycotts within the framework of prominent delegitimization organizations or independently.
3. Institutional officials, such as mayors, who promote such activities in an active and ongoing way.
4. People who arrive in Israel as ‘representatives of one of the prominent delegitimizing organizations. For example,

an activist who arrives as a participant in a delegation from a prominent delegitimization organization.”<sup>57</sup>

The government also allows for exceptions based on whether “the extent of damage by denying entry to an individual is greater than the usefulness of denying entry.”

## **MYTH**

*Anti-boycott legislation violates the First Amendment.*

## ***FACT***

In response to the BDS campaign, bipartisan legislation was introduced in Congress to expand the 1977 anti-boycott law. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and others falsely claimed the legislation violates the First Amendment and will criminalize criticism of Israel. Legal scholar Eugene Kontorovich disputed this view, noting that “the ACLU’s position would make many U.S. sanctions against foreign countries ([Iran](#), [Russia](#), [Cuba](#), etc.) unconstitutional.”<sup>58</sup>

Congress never approved the legislation, mainly because of First Amendment concerns. Meanwhile, 35 states have adopted laws, executive orders, or resolutions to discourage boycotts against Israel.<sup>59</sup> Most are similar to the first one adopted in [Tennessee](#) that [decreed](#) that state contracts must include “a written certification that the company is not currently engaged in, and will not for the duration of the contract engage in a boycott of Israel.”<sup>60</sup>

Some of the laws have been challenged by the ACLU. As a result of court decisions, some were modified; however, none have been invalidated. A federal appeals court upheld the constitutionality of Arizona’s law in 2022, denying the claim that it infringed on free speech. Judge Jonathan Kobe said the law did not prevent criticism of Israel or the law. “It only prohibits economic decisions that discriminate against Israel. Because those commercial decisions are invisible to observers unless explained, they are not inherently expressive and do not implicate the First Amendment.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Wieseltier, “Israel, Palestine, and the Return of the Binational Fantasy,” [New Republic](#), (October 24, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Uri Avnery, “The Boycott Revisited,” [Gush-Shalom.org](#), (September 6, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Steve Linde, “Cotler’s Call to Action,” [Jerusalem Post](#), (June 2, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Lee Harpin, “Palestine Solidarity Campaign director says IHRA definition ‘drains antisemitism of any meaning,’” [The JC](#), (March 3, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Jihan Abdalla, “Rights groups slam Trump’s anti-Semitism executive order,” [Al Jazeera](#), (December 11, 2019).

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## **About the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise**

The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE) was established in 1993 as a nonpartisan nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship by emphasizing the fundamentals of the alliance—the values our nations share.

*The objectives and purposes of AICE include:*

- To provide a vehicle for the research, study, discussion, and exchange of views concerning nonmilitary cooperation (Shared Value Initiatives) between the peoples and governments of the United States and Israel.
- To publicize joint activities and their benefits to America and Israel.
- To explore issues of common historical interest to the peoples and governments of the United States and Israel.
- To serve as a clearinghouse on joint US-Israeli activities.
- To provide educational materials on Jewish history.
- To promote scholarship in the field of Israel Studies.

### *Jewish Virtual Library*

The Jewish Virtual Library is one of the world's most popular and comprehensive online encyclopedias of Jewish history, politics, and culture, with more than 25,000 entries, 80,000 pages, and 10,000 graphics. Since 2014, the Library has attracted more than 700,000 visitors per month from more than 230 countries/territories.

### *Combatting Anti-Semitism*

AICE develops materials, ideas, and strategies to help students, faculty, administrators, trustees, and community members preempt and defeat anti-Semitic boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaigns. It also maintains the stopbds.com website as a resource for understanding and responding to the BDS movement.

## About the Author

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- *Israel Matters: Understand the Past—Look to the Future*
- *The Arab Lobby: The Invisible Alliance That Undermines America's Interests in the Middle East*
- *Israel Studies: An Anthology* (co-editor with David Nachmias)
- *Will Israel Survive?*
- *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Middle East Conflict*
- *48 Hours of Kristallnacht*
- *The Founding of Israel*
- *The Complete Idiot's Guide to World War II*
- *1001 Facts Everyone Should Know about Israel* (coauthor with Moshe Schwartz)
- *Forgotten Victims: The Abandonment of Americans in Hitler's Camps*
- *The Nuremberg Trials (At Issue in History)*
- *From Tragedy to Triumph: The Politics behind the Rescue of Ethiopian Jews*
- *The Complete History of the Holocaust*
- *The Water's Edge and Beyond: Defining the Limits to Domestic Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy*

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