

The Israel Briefing Book

*The Source For Everything You
Need to Know About Israel*



*A Publication of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise
Edited by Dr. Mitchell Bard
Compiled by Elie Berman*

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American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE)

Dr. Mitchell Bard – Executive Director

Elie Berman – Research Director

2810 Blaine Dr.

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Tel: 301-565-3918

Fax: 301-587-9056

Email: aiceresearch@gmail.com

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ISRAEL OVERVIEW

Information on all aspects of Israeli society, history, government, culture, innovation, and people

Agriculture | Archaeology | Architecture | Culture & Arts | Education

Environment | Governance | Health | Immigration | Israeli Arabs

Israel Defense Forces | Science & Technology | Sports | Water | Women



Agriculture

The history of scientific research in [Israel](#) is an integral part of the story of the return of the Jewish people to its homeland.

[Theodor Herzl](#) (1860-1904), the first to actively promote the idea of a modern Jewish state in the Land of Israel, envisaged it not only as the physical home of the Jewish people but also as a major scientific center that could revolutionize the world. This desire to transform the land, then a barren and disease ridden region, into a modern state was a key factor in subsequent scientific inquiry and technological development.

Agricultural research, specifically, dates back to the end of the 19th century with the establishment of the Mikveh Israel School (1870). The Agricultural Station, set up in [Tel Aviv](#) in 1921, eventually developed into the Agricultural Research Organization (ARO), today Israel's major institution of agricultural research and development.

Today, [agriculture](#) in Israel is comprised of plant crops, afforestation and gardening, raising livestock, and livestock products. Diversification and growth in types of plant crops and livestock breeding has increased over time. Methods of cultivation have also improved, and Israel continues to develop more efficient forms of irrigation, greenhouses, and mechanical equipment for processing and harvesting crops.

Additionally, despite the fact that Israel's geography is not necessarily conducive to agriculture, Israel is at the forefront of the world in agricultural research and development. Israeli farmers and scientists have teamed with researchers throughout the world to establish new and innovative technologies to maximize efficiency, minimize waste and create greater output. They have also developed new ways of making agriculture thrive in arid and semi-arid climates such as Israel.

Research and Development

The agricultural sector is based almost entirely on [R&D](#), implemented by cooperation between farmers and researchers.

Through a well-established extension service system, research results are quickly transmitted to the field for trial and implementation, and problems are brought directly to the scientist for solutions. Agricultural R&D is carried out primarily by the [Ministry of Agriculture](#)'s Agricultural Research Organization. Most agricultural research institutes in Israel maintain close relations with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the [United Nations](#), ensuring a continuous exchange of information with other countries.

Israeli agriculturists have pioneered agricultural biotechnology, trickle-drip irrigation, soil solarization and the sustained use of industrial waste water for agriculture. These advances have been applied to marketable products, ranging from genetically-engineered seeds and biopesticides to light-degradable plastics and computerized irrigation/fertilization systems.

Israeli-designed and manufactured computers are widely used to coordinate daily farming activities, such as guiding fertilizer injection, while monitoring all environmental factors; supplying feed for livestock mixed according to tested, least-cost, best-yield proportions; and providing a temperature and humidity controlled environment for poultry. In addition, a variety of equipment designed for tilling, sowing, planting, harvesting, collecting, sorting and packing has been developed, manufactured and implemented.

Through scientific breeding and advanced genetic testing, Israel has made itself the undisputed world leader in per capita milk production. Israel's dairy cows have increased their average milk yield per cow from 6,300 liters in 1970 to nearly 12,000 liters today, more than double the rate of the [United States](#) and [United Kingdom](#) and nearly triple that of [China](#) and [India](#).

By harvesting sperm and ova from cattle of superior bloodlines, Israel has been able to upgrade its own herd as well as share its advances in their field with other countries, engaging in what has been jokingly called "dairy diplomacy." In 2011, for example, when the South Korean dairy industry was hard hit by an epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease, Israeli innovation was called on to provide inoculations for healthy cows and give solutions to help increase milk production in a short time period.

Agriculture has also benefited from a broad range of general scientific research and R&D developments, including automated plant tissue culture, biological insecticides, disease-resistant strains and biological fertilization.

Making optimal use of scarce water, harsh land, and a limited labor force has led to revolutions in agricultural methods. The search for water-saving techniques spurred the development of many types of computer-controlled irrigation systems, including the drip method, which directs water flow straight to the root zone of plants. As the result of intensive research, the huge underground reservoir of brackish water under the western [Negev](#) is now being successfully exploited to produce crops such as prime quality tomatoes for European and American winter markets. Research relating to the electromagnetic treatment of water to improve animal health and crop yields is also producing promising results.

One of the earliest Israeli industrial innovations to reach international markets was the drip irrigation system, based on a concept pioneered in the 1890s by a researcher in [California](#). In drip irrigation, water and nutrients are discharged directly to the area around the plant's root system, so that much smaller amounts can be used more efficiently. This also enables farmers to provide the precise amounts of water at the rate required by different crops. Today, the system is computer-controlled. Drip irrigation has allowed the country to develop one of the most efficient water systems in the world, which it needs badly, since it uses up virtually every drop of available water each year. Israel has also become the world's leading producer of drip-irrigation systems, exporting them to [Holland](#), [the Former Yugoslavia](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), the Far East, East Africa and [Central](#) and [South America](#).

Israel is also a leader in the development of mechanized systems used to speed up harvesting and other operations. Locally designed and manufactured computers have been developed to coordinate farming activities; these perform functions such as guiding fertilizer injection while monitoring relevant environmental factors, or supplying feed for livestock mixed according to tested least-cost/best-yield proportions.

Agriculture and the Economy

Today, agriculture represents a mere 2.7% of the Israeli gross domestic product (GDP) and just under three percent of exports, compared to an average of 30% of exports during the 1960s - the heyday of the famous Jaffa orange.

Nevertheless, despite the decline in its importance relative to other economic branches, agriculture has grown in absolute terms and played an important part in Israel's economy for more five decades. In 2010, the total amount of land devoted to agriculture was 3,887 thousand dunams, nearly three times the amount of devoted



land from 1948. Out of that area, field crops comprised 1,316 thousand dunams, vegetables 741 thousand dunames, citrus 176 thousand dunams, and aquaculture made up an additional 22 thousand dunams.

While the high-tech industry has boomed in Israel, agriculture remains of major importance, especially in areas such as the Arava and the [Jordan Valley](#) where it provides almost the sole means of livelihood. In 2010, only approximately 50,000 people were employed in farming, constituting less than two percent of the country's workforce.

In monetary terms, Israel produces around 90 percent of its food requirements.

In 2010, Israel's total input of resources invested in agriculture was 15.6 billion shekels - 31.1% for fodder, 14.3% other inputs, 12% depreciation, 12% for fuel, lubricants and electricity, 8.7% chicks, seeds and seedlings, 8.4% water, 5.8% packing and transport, 4.5% pesticides, and 3.3% for fertilizers and manure.

The country's output of final products in 2010 was 26.5 billion shekels, an increase of more than 10 billion shekels from input. This was made up by 23.4% vegetables, potatoes, and melons; 20% other fruits; 18.2% cattle, sheep and goats; 17.8% poultry; 5.5% citrus fruit; 5.3% field crops; 4% flowers and garden plants; and, 5.7% miscellaneous.

International Collaboration

Many of Israel's innovative agricultural methods and advanced agricultural technologies have been shared with the United States and other nations around the world. This international collaboration and cooperation benefits not only those countries receiving Israeli know-how to maximizing and improving their agricultural products, it also helps Israel build friendships and break down barriers that will enable it to continue to make advancements into the future.

Under the auspices of the [Binational Agricultural Research & Development Foundation](#) (BARD), Israeli, American, Canadian and Australian farmers and scientists have collaborated on more than 1,100 projects over the past three decades. This BARD-sponsored research has led to innovative developments, new technologies and renewed focus in drip irrigation, pesticides, fish farming, livestock, poultry, disease control and farm equipment. Some examples of these projects include: improving wheat-seed proteins; spray technology that reduces pesticides; control of pathogens; identification of QTL's; and, control of post-harvest decay in fruits and vegetables.

Due to the success and quick implementation of BARD projects, other collaborative programs have been set up between Israel and Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, the European Union and various states in the United States.

One such program is the [International Arid Lands Consortium](#) (IALC), which connects researchers from Israel with those in a number of universities across the United States as well as the Egyptian and Jordanian governments to work on developing and applying new applications in arid and semi-arid farming technologies. Since 1993, the IALC has funded nearly 100 projects with more than \$12.4 million. The knowledge gained from this collaboration has been used to benefit countries from [Kenya](#) and [Ethiopia](#), to [Uzbekistan](#) and [Kazakhstan](#), to [Australia](#) and [Brazil](#).

Agriculture and the Future

A combination of sophisticated, applied science, determination and government support have helped Israel's farmers to modernize and adapt to changing geopolitical, market and climatic conditions, creating a strong base from which to proceed in the coming decades.

Israel's agriculture continues to thrive, and supplies most of the country's food needs, though profitability in export sectors has declined sharply in recent years. Among the numerous problems the crop-growing sectors have contended with since the State was founded, water scarcity remains the principal - and growing - threat. Nevertheless the ongoing introduction of new and recycled water sources, coupled with altered irrigation methods and more water-efficient crops, promises long-term security.

By the year 2020, Israel's population is expected to grow to around 8.5 million. This will cause huge increases in demand for agricultural produce and products; but urban use of land and water will also increase enormously. The amount of fresh water allocated for agriculture was reduced radically, by 50 percent (to 580 million cubic meters), in 2000. By 2020, it is unlikely to exceed this amount, and may well be considerably less. At the same time, the amount of suitable land available for farming (360,000 hectares) will also be some 18 percent less than at present.

Part of the higher demand - notably for field crops (such as cereals, oilseeds and sugar) and for milk products, fish and beef - will have to be met by increased imports. Nevertheless a substantial part of the additional requirements will have to come from increased domestic production. Sweeping changes - like a 33% increase in the labor force and a reduction in irrigated field crops, such as cotton - will be required to make water available for growing fruit and vegetables for the local market.

A study by the Ministry of Agriculture, Israel is predicated to, by 2020, be able to increase production of agricultural goods. This is certainly consistent with historic development. Except for brief, sporadic declines, agricultural output has grown almost uninterruptedly since [1948](#).



Archaeology

[Archeology](#) provides a invaluable link between Israel's past and present.

Due to [Israel](#)'s long and rich prehistoric and ancient history, and its small size, the country maintains the highest ratio of ancient sites per area in the world.

The Israel Antiquities Authority has counted more than 14,000 sites and some 6,000 archaeological excavations and surveys have been carried out in the area (including in the [Sinai Peninsula](#), the [Gaza Strip](#) and the [West Bank](#)). Thus, Israel is the most intensively excavated region in the world today. Some of the most important discoveries have been found in [Qirbet Qumran](#), [Hazor](#), [Megiddo](#), Rehov, [Bet Shean](#), [Caesarea](#), Banias, the [Negev](#), and [Tel Dan](#).

The thousands of uncovered sites not only provide an opportunity to study the rich history of Jewish civilization in the area they also shed light on the culture, society and daily life of Israel's many other inhabitants throughout the centuries.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

The trove of scrolls now known as the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#), discovered in 1948 in the caves of Qumran near the western shore of the [Dead Sea](#), is widely considered the most important archaeological find ever made in Israel. The dry desert climate of the desert region meant that the parchments were amazingly well-preserved, and historians have been able to uncover their secrets. Over more than sixty years the scrolls have significantly enriched the fields of [archaeology](#), comparative theology, [Hebrew](#) and Aramaic studies, and early [Christian](#) history.

The scrolls, some found by bedouins and other by archaeologists in the 1950's, are now housed at the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. They contain Isaiah A, Isaiah B, the Habakkuk Commentary, the Thanksgiving Scroll, the Community Rule (or the Manual of Discipline), the War Rule (or the War of Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness), and the Genesis Apocryphon, the last being in Aramaic. Nearly a third of the documents that were found in the caves contain the books of the Old Testament, save for the [Book of Esther](#).

"The Dead Sea Scrolls represent a turning point in Jewish history," stresses Dr. Adolfo Roitman, curator of the Shrine of the Book. "They reveal the link between Biblical Israel and the Jewish culture of the Talmudic period."

"Not only are the scrolls the oldest known copy of the [Old Testament](#)," Dr. Magen Broshi, former curator of the museum, explains, "but they belonged to the [Essenes](#), a mysterious ascetic Jewish sect that existed about 2,000 years ago and is believed to have had a great influence on the early Christians."

Western Wall Tunnels

The [Western Wall Tunnels](#) are a series of uncovered portions of biblical streets and tunnels in the area immediately surrounding the [Temple Mount](#) in Jerusalem. The project, which commenced in the aftermath of Israel's victory in the [Six-Day War](#), is still continuing today as more and more structures are uncovered every year.

The tunnels project is an important avenue for exposing information relating to numerous periods in the history of the city of Jerusalem, information which otherwise would be near-impossible to attain. The Temple Mount area is a site of utmost religious importance to Jews, Christians and Muslims, and artifacts uncovered through excavation in the tunnels have had great archaeological and historical importance.

Within the tunnels, which are open to tourists on guided tours, archaeologists have found [two-thousand year old ritual purity baths](#) as well as other Jewish artifacts that historians believe help prove the existence of the Jewish temple in the area.

Canaan

[Ashkelon](#) is the oldest and largest seaport in ancient Canaan, one of the "five cities" of the [Philistines](#), north of Gaza and south of [Jaffa](#).

Archaeological excavations begun in 1985 have revealed accumulated rubble from successive Canaanite, Philistine, Phoenician, [Iranian](#), [Hellenistic](#), [Roman](#), [Byzantine](#), [Islamic](#), and [Crusader](#) occupation.

The ancient city of Hazor, the largest and richest archeological remain in Israel, is located in the upper [Galilee](#), north of the [Sea of Galilee](#). The fortified city was the largest Canaanite city of the 2nd millennium [B.C.E.](#) In the Bible, Hazor is described as *"the head of all those kingdoms"* (Joshua 11:10).

Hazor was totally destroyed by fire at the end of the Late Bronze Age (around 1200 B.C.E.). The conflagration is mentioned in the Bible, emphasizing the complete destruction of Hazor during the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites (Joshua 11:13): *"But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only; that did Joshua burn. "*

Megiddo

One of the largest city mounds in Israel (covering an area of about 15 acres) and rich in archeological finds, Megiddo is an important site for the study of the material culture of biblical times.

A total of 20 cities were built at Megiddo, one above the other, over the course of 5,000 years of continuous occupation; from the time of the first settlement at the end of the 6th millennium BCE to its abandonment in the 5th century BCE. The area was a site of great importance in the ancient world, as it guarded the western branch of a narrow pass and an ancient trade route which connected [Egypt](#) and [Assyria](#). Because of its strategic location at the crossroads of several major routes, Megiddo survived several major battles throughout history.

In 2005, the remains of a church were discovered that are believed to be from the third century, a time when Christians were still persecuted by the [Roman Empire](#). Among the finds is a large mosaic with a [Greek](#) inscription stating that the church is consecrated to [Jesus Christ](#). The mosaic is very well preserved and

features geometrical figures and images of fish, an early Christian symbol. It is speculated that this may be the oldest church in the Holy Land .

Rehov

Rehov was the site of an important Bronze and [Iron Age](#) Canaanite city.

Tel Rehov, a large earthen city mound in the [Jordan Valley](#), is approximately five kilometres south of Bet She'an and three kilometres west of the Jordan River. The site represents one of the largest ancient city mounds in Israel. The Iron Age II levels of the site, in particular, have emerged as a vitally important component in the current debate regarding the chronology of the [United Monarchy of Israel](#). Important data has also been forthcoming regarding the Early Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age and medieval occupation of the site.

Other Excavations

The excavation of the Roman city of Bet Shean was the largest single excavation undertaken in Israel since 1986. Significant finds have been uncovered from the ancient city, which was also inhabited during the Byzantine period and the early Arab period.

A large-scale excavation is being undertaken at Caesarea on the seacoast. Two of the largest constructions to have been unearthed are the Herodian port and amphitheatre.

At Banias, at the foot of [Mount Hermon](#), excavations are unearthing sections of the city built by Philip, the son of Herod. Another large excavation is taking place at Tel Maresha (Marissa) near [Beit Govrin](#) in the coastal plain. The findings will hopefully fill gaps in knowledge of the Hellenistic period.

In the Negev, the excavation at [Hatzeva](#) has led to the discovery of remnants of a defended settlement from the end of the First Temple period and of the Roman period, which have been identified with the biblical Tamar. An Edomite ritual site rich in cultic objects has also been unearthed.

Among recently unearthed inscriptions of importance are stelae from Tel Dan. These basalt shards carry remnants of Aramaic writing from the ninth century B.C.E. One inscription recalls the "King of Israel" and also "the House of David" as the name of the sovereign's house in [Judea](#). This is the first time that the name of David has come to light outside the Bible.

Architecture

Israeli [architecture](#) is a mixture of centuries of historical building styles and prevailing international design trends. Notably eclectic, modern Israeli buildings combine traditional materials and motifs with the needs of modern, urban populations.

The architecture in Jewish towns and settlements in modern Israel was conditioned, on the whole, more by the urgent housing requirements of the various immigration periods than by any other consideration. The aesthetic aspect mostly reflected the trends prevalent in the architects' countries of origin.

Architectural styles in Israel include the Le Corbusier style, the Brazilian and the Japanese, brutalism, and plasticism. There are also attempts to adapt foreign ideas to specific conditions in Israel, particularly in terms of protection against the sun, and to draw inspiration from ancient Oriental architecture. Here and there one can find regional motifs, such as the use of a vaulted concrete shell, or the mixture of concrete and stone.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is a city like no other – it has fired people's imaginations in every generation, is revered by adherents of the three monotheistic faiths, and its modern city is inhabited by a fantastic mosaic of humanity. Jerusalem also boasts an amazing variety of architectural styles in its public buildings and private dwellings. The style of each reflects the culture of a particular group of residents and a particular period in the city's history.

Until 1860, almost all of Jerusalem's residents lived in the Old City, whose walls contained old houses and building built by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566). Crowded conditions in the Old City led Jerusalemites to look for housing solutions outside the walls, and [new neighborhoods were built](#) beginning in the late nineteenth century.

The first neighborhood outside of the [Old City](#) of [Jerusalem](#), called [Mishkenot Sha'ananim](#) ("Tranquil Dwellings"), was built in 1860 by the wealthy Jewish philanthropist [Moses Montefiore](#). Influenced by Mediterranean architecture, Montefiore designed the settlement of terraced row houses with red roof tiles. Since then, this style of construction - terraced house with red-tiled roof - has become a prototype for Jewish residences all over Israel.

Starting with [Mishkenot Sha'ananim](#), the neighborhoods that sprang up around the new city of Jerusalem were constructed in the building styles of the founders' homelands. "Thus the new Jerusalem grows by accessions from every part of the globe," Edwin Sherman Wallace, United States consul in Jerusalem wrote in 1898.

[Arabs](#) in Jerusalem began building European-style mansions and villas that integrated Islamic decoration. Meanwhile, West Jerusalem developed into a number of distinct neighborhoods: the [Bukharan Quarter](#), the Russian Compound, and the [German colony](#), each using the city's signature Jerusalem stone, but adding on distinct architectural elements.

Jerusalem stone, a white or cream-colored marble found in the hills surrounding the city, became a required building material under the [British Mandate](#) and is still used almost exclusively today to line the facade of new building built in Jerusalem.



In 2008, the Jerusalem municipality introduced

Tel Aviv

Far less eclectic in its influences, the "white city" of [Tel Aviv](#) was modeled after European cities such as [Odessa](#), Moscow, and Warsaw. The architects of the city's first buildings did not take into consideration the Mediterranean climate in their replication of the wide windows, attics, turrets and towers of Europe's more temperate environment.

The Le Corbusier style was a strong influence on Israeli architects such as Arie Sharon, Zev Rechter, Dov Carmi, Yosef Neufeld and Sam Barkai who emulated the clean-cut and efficient "white cities" of southern [Spain](#), the [French](#) Riviera, southern [Italy](#), [Greece](#) and [Turkey](#). These architects also modeled Tel Aviv on the cities of North Africa with their cubist-like flat roofs and white walls broken up into small units.

Tel Aviv became a model of the "modern" Mediterranean, a "white city" not intended to be a reflection of Odessa or Warsaw, but as a pure Mediterranean creation, which truly suited local climate and atmosphere.

Today, architectural design in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area is heavily influenced by the steel and glass towers of New York and [Tokyo](#). Metropolitan infrastructure mimics the car-based urban and suburban sprawl of Europe and America. Tel Aviv has become Israel's commercial and high-tech hub and its skyscrapers are a symbol of this success. The Azrieli Center in downtown Tel Aviv includes Israel's second tallest building, the so called Circular Tower, which measures 614 feet and 49 floors in height. Israel's tallest building, Ramat Gan's Moshe Aviv Tower, stands 801 feet tall and is located in the *bursa*, Israel's diamond exchange.

Early 20th Century

During the early 20th century, the Orientalist style grew in popularity, integrating Arab decorations, desert motifs, and [Bedouin](#) images into Israel's architecture. Notable buildings from this period combined European monumentality and function with Orientalist motifs in a style occasionally termed "Eclectic Romanticism." On the outside, Tel Aviv's first public building, the [Herzliya Gymnasium](#), designed by Yosef Berski in 1910, is a stately imperial building, but on the inside incorporates colorful Arabic ornamentation. The structure contains features from [Mesopotamia](#) and local Arabic elements, inside the contours of a monumental European building.

[Haifa's](#) old [Technion](#) building, designed by Alexander Baerwald, along with the Beit Bialik in Tel Aviv and the [YMCA](#) in [Jerusalem](#), combined a [Byzantine](#) truncated dome-shaped ceiling, biblical-style ceramics, Islamic wooden bay windows and narrow arched windows, and art deco elements with multi-story concrete buildings.

Kibbutzim and Moshavim

At the same time, the rural communities of Jewish [kibbutzim](#) and [moshavim](#) were sprouting up all over Israel. These flourishing communities eventually became the symbol of the new, small Israeli state.

These original settlements were made up of small, white-walled houses with red roofs, laid out in geometric plans with surrounding gardens. These settlements were mostly based around a central meeting area and were designed with ease of movement as a priority, usually completely different from traditional Arab villages.

The Bauhaus

In the 1930s, the [Bauhaus](#) style became very popular in Israel, as architects who had studied in the German design academy of the same name fled [Germany](#), bringing with them their modernist style. Examples of the Israeli Bauhaus style can be found in Tel Aviv and some neighborhoods in Jerusalem.

According to art and design writer, Jessica C. Kraft, the Bauhaus style is characterized by “streamlined structural elements, the absence of ornamentation and a strict adherence to the international style dogma of ‘form follows function.’”

Architects such as Arie Sharon, Zev Rechter, and Dov Carmi were influential in building up Tel Aviv with Bauhaus’ space-efficient, light-filled structures.

International Modernism

In the 1950s, Israeli architects turned to International Modernism, associating the country with the European architectural style rather than the surrounding Arab states. Jerusalem’s Givat Ram campus of the [Hebrew University](#) showcased the graceful simplicity of the International style.

Toward the end of the 1960s, Israeli architecture returned to a blend of local and international styles. The Bat Yam municipal building, designed by Eldar Sharon, Zvi Hecker, and Alfred Neumann, best exemplifies this era. In the form of an ancient [Egyptian](#) ziggurat, the façade is made up of colorful Islamic latticework patterns while still managing to command an iconic monumental presence.

The 1970s was characterized by the "brutalist" architecture found in other Western countries and influenced by the American architect Paul Rudolph. The style was comprised of large concrete slabs and unaltered industrial materials, projecting an image of Israel’s strength in the wake of the country’s 1973 military defeat. On Mount Scopus, the Ram Karmis faculty of humanities building’s watchtowers and imposing outer walls appear almost fortress-like. Also during the 1970s, tourism expanded considerably, becoming one of Israel’s main industries, which prompted the construction of a number of large hotels and resorts countrywide.

Mosher Safdie

Through the 1970s, 80s and 90s, [Moshe Safdie](#) established himself as Israel's first internationally recognized architect. He designed many monumental and public spaces including the [Hebrew Union College](#), The [Holocaust Museum at Yad Vashem](#), the David Citadel Hotel in Jerusalem, and the Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv. Safdie's structures epitomized the fusion of past and present architectural style. His designs incorporated elegant white stone, rounded arches, and vibrant, multistoried exteriors.

Postmodernism



Postmodernism and its diverse aesthetics dominated Israeli architecture in the 1990s. In this era, form and design was adopted for its own sake, but the style soon lost popularity because of its frivolity. Despite this, many Israeli postmodern buildings hold a great deal of significance. The Supreme Court Building in Jerusalem, designed by Ram Karmi and Ada Karmi-Melamede, references the city's long history by incorporating architectural elements taken from [Herodian](#), [Crusader](#), Greek, and [British](#) buildings in the [old city](#), and also illustrates several bible passages on justice. The building points both toward the [Knesset](#) (the parliament) and to the city (the people).

Culture & Art

Despite the constant threat of terrorism and war, [Israel](#) is home to a thriving and vibrant [cultural life](#) symbolized by internationally renowned artists, musicians and actors.

Israeli artists, writers, dancers, actors and [musicians](#) have made an impact far beyond their number, while an increasing variety of international festivals and events, such as the Israel Festival, the Jerusalem International Book Fair, the International Poetry Festival, the Karmiel Dance Festival and many others, have become notable events in the world's cultural calendar. Increasingly, Israeli movies and television programs are being praised across international borders and Israel has become one of the more attractive places for world-renowned singers and musical bands to kick off tours in Europe and Asia.

History

Despite the paucity of its population, [Pre-state Israel](#) had a rich cultural life of its own.

Literature, especially, flourished with national poet [Chaim Nahman Bialik](#) and writer [Shmuel Yosef Agnon](#) leading the way. Years later, in 1966, Agnon would receive Israel's only [Nobel Prize](#) for literature to date. In the words of fellow Nobel Prize winner [Nelly Sachs](#), Agnon embodied the future of the Jewish people.

In 1936, renowned [Polish](#)-born violinist, Bronislaw Huberman, founded the [Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra](#), which subsequently became the [Israel Philharmonic Orchestra](#). Its opening concert was conducted by Arturo Toscanini.

The [Bezalel Academy of Art](#), which had been founded by the [Bulgarian](#)-born Professor [Boris Schatz](#) in [Jerusalem](#) in 1906, had already trained a generation of painters, sculptors, carpet weavers, craftsmen and craftswomen, whose work was widely appreciated and had even been shown in exhibitions abroad. Painters such as [Reuven Rubin](#), [Anna Ticho](#), Mordechai Ardon, Yosef Zaritsky, Marcel Janco; the sculptors Yitzhak Danziger, Avraham Melnikoff, Chana Orloff and others, were beginning to receive international recognition.

The [Habimah Theater](#), founded in Moscow in 1917, had moved to [Tel Aviv](#) in 1931 and attracted large and appreciative audiences for its dramatic offerings, which included works by local playwrights.

Literature

In the world of [Hebrew literature](#), a group of writers, known as the "*Palmach Generation*" (the [Palmach](#) was the striking force of the [Haganah](#), the forerunner of the [Israel Defense Forces](#)) emerged in Israel. These writers, who had fought in the 1948 [War of Independence](#), included S. Yizhar, Haim Gouri, Hanoach Bar Tov, Benjamin Tammuz, Aharon Megged, Yoram Kaniuk, Igal Mossinson, Moshe Shamir and the poets Yehuda Amichai, Natan Alterman and Uri Zvi Greenberg. The work of these writers was often cast in the heroic mold called for by the times. They set the tone for artistic creation in other fields as well, and can be seen as the starting point of contemporary Hebrew cultural activity.

These literary icons were succeeded by the so-called "*Generation of the State*" writers. These writers were profoundly influenced by the preceding generation, and focused on the creation of the State of Israel and her existentialist struggle as a new nation. Several of these writers have gained substantial international



recognition, and their works are widely translated. They include Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, Yehoshua Kenaz and Aharon Appelfeld.

“*Generation of the State*” writers were followed by a new wave of Israeli literary icons, including David Grossman, Yeshayahu Koren, Meir Shalev and Haim Be'er. These authors continue to have a major influence on the local literary scene and are widely published abroad.

An important phenomenon in recent local writing is the predominance of women, whose voice was relatively unheard during the early years of the State. These female writers include Shulamith Hareven, Amalia Kahana-Carmon, Shulamit Lapid, Yehudit Hendel, Savyon Leibrecht, Nava Semel, Nurit Zarchi, Batya Gur, and the poets Dahlia Ravikovich and the late Yona Wallach.

A new literary style focused on the good life, the pursuit of happiness, the debunking of hitherto sacred causes - often in a surrealist, anarchic, iconoclastic, and at times even nihilistic, has surfaced in the writings of Yehudit Katzir, Orly Castel-Bloom, Etgar Keret, Irit Linor, Gadi Taub, Alex Epstein, Esty Hayim and several others, all of whom might be loosely termed the “*Post-Zionist Generation*.”

Another important strand in Israel's cultural life is the burgeoning of a strong ethnic consciousness on the part of writers of Sephardi background. In literature, this trend is evident in the works of Shimon Ballas, Sami Michael and Eli Amir, all born in Iraq, Amnon Shamosh, born in Syria, Albert Suissa, born in Morocco and Yitzhak Gormezano-Goren, born in Egypt.

Music

The arrival of nearly a million immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the late 1980's and early 1990's had a critical impact on Israel's cultural life in all its facets, but none more than in the field of music.

Since then, Israel has seen a proliferation of new orchestras, chamber music groups, choirs and soloists, and music education in the country has been immeasurably enriched. Soloists such as [Yitzhak Perlman](#), Pinhas Zuckerman, Daniel Barenboim and Shlomo Mintz have left an indelible mark on the stages of concert halls and in recording studios all over the world.

Opera, as well, received a tremendous boost from the massive Russian immigration. In particular, opera in Israel has entered a new era with the opening in 1995 of the magnificent Opera House in Tel Aviv's new Golda Center for the Performing Arts.

Israel is well known for its famous classical orchestras, including the [Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra](#) (IPO), overseen by world-renowned manager, Zubin Mehta. The IPO frequently tours the world and currently has a subscriber base in the tens of thousands. A few notable Israeli classical musicians are, Daniel Barenboim (piano, conductor), Dudu Fisher (cantor, opera singer), Yaacov Bilansky Levanon (composer, violinist), Itzhak Perlman (violin), Yavgeni Shapovalov (opera singer), Pinchas Zukerman (violin, viola).

Though not geographically in Europe, Israel is allowed to participate in the annual Eurovision Song Competition which pits top musical contenders from every nation in the region against each other to determine a winner. Israeli artists have participated in the contest thirty-four times since 1973. Israel has won three times: 1978 (Izhar Cohen, "A Ba Ni Bi"); 1979 (Gali Atari, "Hallelujah"); and, 1998 (Dana

International, "Diva"). It has also placed twice two times: 1982 (Avi Toledano, "Hora"); and, 1983 (Ofra Haza, "Chai").

Popular Israeli music ranges from hard rock to hip hop to reggae, with many talented bands and musicians in every style.

Israeli rock tends to be softer than American or British rock. A number of famous Israeli bands are [Kaveret](#) (known in English-speaking countries as [Poogie](#)), [Mashina](#), [Hayeudim](#), [Aviv Geffen](#), [Shlomo Artzi](#), and [Arik Einstein](#). Popular rock festivals like the Arad Festival and the Red Sea Festival in [Eilat](#) attract tens of thousands of young people.

Alternative music, including metal and punk, has also been gaining popularity in the country since the 1980s. Salem and Orphaned Land are two well-known bands, as well as Sleepless, Eternal Grey, Lehavoth, Kehei Na'atza, and Useless ID. Hip hop and rap music has also made its way to Israel. Israeli artists such as Subliminal, Hadag Nahash, Ha Shevet, and Muki have been pioneers in the style new to the country.

Internationally-renowned singer Idan Raichel has had immense success for his distinctive musical blends of reggae and electronics with traditional Hebrew, Ethiopian and Middle Eastern musical styles. His most famous album, called "The Idan Raichel Project," has sold more than 120,000 copies worldwide and carries a 3x Platinum Israeli certificate.

Theater & Dance

Israeli [playwrights](#) such as Hanoach Levin, Yehoshua Sobol, Shmuel Hasfari are very popular in the country. Hillel Mittelpunkt. Levin, who wrote thirty-four plays before his untimely death in 1999, has been far and away Israel's most prolific and prominent playwright.

[Dance](#) is yet another field that has seen vast changes.

Prior to 1948, dance in the country was mainly folk dance, perfected by dancers such as the [Russian](#)-born Rina Nikova, or the Tel Aviv-born Baruch Agadati, who created a local dance idiom from a skein of Russian, Balkan, and local Arab influences, and meeting at regular folk dance festivals, beginning in 1944 at Kibbutz Dalia. Since then, several professional groups and dance schools have come into being, notably the Batsheva and Bat Dor groups, the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company and the Israel Ballet.

Film & Television

Only relatively recently did Israel begin to develop a [cinema industry](#), though in recent years both movies and television shows produced in Israel have gained widespread international acclaim.

The more successful films still tend to draw on the Israeli experience, the Arab-Israel conflict, [Holocaust](#)-related topics and so on, rather than on themes of a broader, more universal nature. The industry is severely handicapped by lack of funding and investment. Budgets have been cut, pledges for new funds ignored, and the only film laboratory in the country has closed down.



The Council for Quality Films, a publicly funded institution, has provided some help. Despite the condition of the industry, well-known film makers such as Boaz Davidson (*Eskimo Limon*), Assi Dayan (*Givat Halfon Eina Ona* or *Halfon Hill Does not Respond*, *The life according to Agfa*, *A Whale in Sharton Beach*), Eytan Fox (*Yossi & Jagger*, *Walk on Water*), Amos Gitay (*Kadosh*, *Kedma*, *Alila*), Dover Kosashvili (*Late Marriage*), Elia Suleiman (*Divine Intervention*, *Chronicle of a Disappearance* and *Cyber Palestine*), Uri Zohar (*Lul*, *Metzitzim* or *Peeping Toms*), *Hor Ba-Levana* (*A Hole in the Moon*) have continued to pursue the art form.

The Israel Film Festival, started in 1982, spotlights the country's culturally diverse film and television industry. Showing more than 550 films to over 700,000 viewers in the United States, the festival focuses on enhancing the American view on Israel and promoting open-mindedness and acceptance.

Since 1964, Israel has had nine movies nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, including four nominees since 2007 alone. These more recent movies include: *Beaufort* (Joseph Cedar, 2007); *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman, 2008); *Ajami* (Yaron Shani, 2009); and, *Footnote* (Joseph Cedar, 2011).

Even more recently, Israeli television programming has become a new beacon of Israeli exports to the world. "Homeland," a mini-series action thriller that debuted in 2011 and broke the American premier channel Showtime's ratings record for a first-year series, was based off the Israeli show "Hatufim" (Prisoners-of-War). NBC's new 2011 game show, "Who's Still Standing?" is also an Israeli import. Likewise, the former HBO series, "In Treatment," starring Gabriel Byrne that ran for three seasons, was bought from Israel.

In 2012, it's assumed that nearly half a dozen shows in development at U.S. networks are based on hit Israeli series, their themes and language tweaked for American audiences. "The two countries [Israel and the U.S.] have a lot in common, whether it's in social values or storytelling," Gideon Raff, the creator of "Hatufim" and an executive producer on "Homeland," said.

Visual Arts

In 1965, the [Israel Museum](#) in [Jerusalem](#), the country's largest and most important museum, opened. It has many divisions, notably those of archeology and Judaica, which include the collections from Bezalel as well as the Shrine of the Book which houses the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#); the Ruth Youth Wing; departments for photography and design, classic art and above all, extensive collections of modern Israeli art on permanent display and in temporary exhibitions, as well as the country's major repository of modern sculpture in the Billy Rose Sculpture Garden.

The Israel Museum was sometimes accused of neglecting Israeli art in favor of contemporary international art, but in recent years, major strides have been taken to broaden the museum's activities in this sphere. Other important venues where one can view modern Israeli art are the [Tel Aviv Museum](#), the Ramat Gan Art Museum, Mishkan Omanut in [Kibbutz Ein Harod](#) and smaller museums throughout the country, as well as private galleries, most of which are concentrated in the Tel Aviv area. The museums showcase modern Israeli and international art, Holocaust memorial exhibitions, [Islamic Art](#), and scientific exhibits.

In addition to painters and sculptors, the country's artistic life comprises a host of talented craftspeople (ceramicists, silver and goldsmiths, weavers, calligraphers, glass blowers, etc.), many of whom specialize in modern interpretations of traditional Jewish ceremonial objects.

Education

[Education](#) in Israel is a precious legacy that dates back to biblical times.

Following the tradition of past generations, education continues to be a fundamental value in Israel's society and is recognized as the key to its future. The educational system aims to prepare children to become responsible members of a democratic, pluralistic society in which people

from different ethnic, religious, cultural and political backgrounds coexist.

The educational system is based on Jewish values, love of the land and the principles of liberty and tolerance. It seeks to impart a high level of knowledge, with an emphasis on scientific and technological skills essential for the country's continued development.

History & Challenges

When the [State of Israel](#) was founded in 1948, a fully functioning education system was already in existence. Developed and maintained by the pre-state Jewish community, education was an important facet of society with Hebrew - which had been revived for daily speech at the end of the 19th century - as the [language of instruction](#). In fact, the first school whose curriculum was taught entirely in Hebrew was established in Rishon Lezion already in 1889.

However, since shortly after the establishment of the state, the education system has faced the enormous challenge of integrating large numbers of immigrant children from over 70 countries thereby fulfilling Israel's raison d'être as the historic homeland of the Jewish people.

The mass immigration of the 1950s, mainly from postwar Europe and Arab countries, was succeeded in the 1960s by a large influx of Jews from North Africa. In the 1970s, the first sizable immigration of [Jews from the Soviet Union](#) arrived, followed intermittently by smaller groups. Since the beginning of the 1990s, over one million Jews from the former Soviet Union have come to Israel, with tens of thousands more still arriving each year. Additionally, over two mass movements, in 1984 and 1991, almost the entire [Jewish community of Ethiopia](#) was brought to the country. Over the years, many Jews from the Americas and other Western countries have also settled in Israel.

In addition to meeting urgent demands for more classrooms and teachers, special tools and methods have had to be developed to help absorb youngsters from many cultural backgrounds into the school population. Programs designed specifically to meet the needs of the newcomers include preparation of appropriate curricular aids and short-term classes to introduce immigrant pupils to subjects not learned in their countries of origin, such as the Hebrew language and Jewish history. Special courses were initiated to train teachers to deal with immigrant youngsters, and retraining courses for immigrant teachers have facilitated their employment in the education system.

At the same time, the Ministry of Education is involved in an ongoing process of bringing educational standards in line with modern pedagogic practices, such as mandating gender equality, upgrading teacher status, broadening humanistic curricula, and promoting scientific and technological studies. A key aspect of its policy is to provide equal opportunities in education for all children and to increase the number of pupils passing matriculation examinations.



Primary & Secondary Education

School attendance is mandatory and free from age 6 to 18. Formal education starts in primary school (grades 1-6) and continues with intermediate school (grades 7-9) and secondary school (grades 10-12). About nine percent of the post-primary school population attend boarding schools.

The multi-cultural nature of Israel's society is accommodated within the framework of the education system. Accordingly, schools are divided into four groups: state schools, attended by the majority of pupils; state religious schools, which emphasize Jewish studies, tradition, and observance; Arab and Druze schools, with instruction in Arabic and special focus on Arab and Druze history, religion, and culture; and private schools, which operate under various religious and international auspices.

Most hours of the school day are devoted to compulsory academic studies. While the subject matter to be covered is uniform throughout the system, each school may choose from a wide range of study units and teaching materials, provided by the Ministry of Education, which best suit the needs of its faculty and pupil population. With the aim of enhancing pupils' understanding of their society, each year a special topic of national importance is studied in depth. Themes have included democratic values, the Hebrew language, immigration, Jerusalem, peace, and industry.

The majority of secondary schools offer academic curricula in science and in the humanities.

Technological schools train technicians and practical engineers on three levels, with some preparing for higher education, some studying towards a vocational diploma, and others acquiring practical skills. Agricultural schools, usually in a residential setting, supplement basic studies with subjects relating to agronomy. Military preparatory schools train future career personnel and technicians in specific fields required by the Israel Defense Forces. Yeshiva high schools, mainly boarding schools, with separate frameworks for boys and girls, complement their secular curricula with intensive religious studies and promote observance of tradition and a Jewish way of life. Comprehensive schools offer studies in a variety of vocations, ranging from bookkeeping to mechanics, electronics, hotel trades, graphic design, and more.

Higher Education

Higher education plays a pivotal role in the economic and social development of Israel.

Almost a quarter of a century before the state came into being, the [Technion Israel Institute of Technology](#) in [Haifa](#) was opened (1924) to train engineers and architects and the [Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#) was founded (1925) as a center of higher learning for youth in the Land of Israel and to attract Jewish students and scholars from abroad.

Accorded full academic and administrative freedom, Israel's institutions of higher education are open to all those who meet their academic standards. New immigrants and students lacking the necessary qualifications may attend a special preparatory program, which upon successful completion enables them to apply for admission.

Most Israeli students are over age 21 when they begin their studies, after three years' compulsory military service for men and two years for women. Until the early 1960s, students pursued higher education mainly to

acquire knowledge, while in recent years they have been more career-oriented, with larger numbers enrolled in the wide range of professional studies now offered. At present, well over half of Israelis in the 20-24 age group are enrolled in one of the country's institutions of postsecondary or higher education.

Today, there are eight universities in Israel:

School	Established	Location	World Ranking
Technion-Israel Institute of Technology	1924	Haifa	131
Hebrew University	1925	Jerusalem	101-150
Weizmann Institute of Science	1934	Rehovot	346
Bar Ilan University	1955	Ramat Gan	570
Tel Aviv University	1956	Tel Aviv	266
University of Haifa	1963	Haifa	510
Ben Gurion University	1967	Beersheba	448
The Open University	1974	n/a	n/a

Students can also choose from a selection of a few dozen academic colleges or colleges of education. Many of these smaller colleges operate under the auspices of one of the major universities, making it possible for students to begin studying for a degree near their home and complete it at the university's main campus.

Some specialized institutes provide various disciplines in art, music, dance, fashion, nursing, rehabilitation therapies, teaching, and sports. Several private degree-granting colleges offer subjects in great demand such as business administration, law, computers, economics, and related topics. At some, additional tracks are available, leading to certificates or vocational diplomas in a variety of subjects ranging from technology and agriculture to marketing and hotel trades.

Education Statistics

Israeli [expenditure on education](#), in billions of shekels per year, has more than doubled since 1990, from below \$30 billion to more than \$66.5 billion in FY2010. The spending on education in 2010 represented 8.2% of the Israeli GDP.

In 2011, a private research firm identified the top ten countries worldwide according to the percentage of population with postsecondary, or tertiary, education. [Israel ranked second highest](#) with 45% of its population having attained such a level of education, trailing only Canada which hit 50%. Despite its small size and

compulsory service in the military, Israel outpaced Western nations such as Japan (44%), the United States (41%), the United Kingdom (37%) and Finland (37%).

Israel ranks among the world average, measured by the average of OECD nations, in [enrollment rates](#) for students of all ages. Its 83% enrollment rate (2008) for children between the ages of 3 and 4 is more than 10 percentage points higher than the OECD average. The enrollment rates for student ages 15 to 19 and 20 to 29, however, fall off the pace slightly, however officials disregard this statistic mostly because of conscription into military service for all 18 year olds.

Since independence in 1948, the number of [primary schools](#) - both Arab and Jewish - has more than quadrupled from only 512 in 1948 to more than 2,600 in 2011. Likewise, the number of students in these schools have risen by more than eight times, from 101,000 in 1948 to nearly 900,000 today. [Secondary education](#) has also seen a similar rise. There are now just under 2,300 secondary schools in Israel (99 in 1948) with more than 630,000 students (10,200 in 1948).

When Israel attained independence enrollment at its two universities totaled only about 1,600. In the 2010-11 academic year, some [250,000 students attended](#) the country's institutions of higher learning. Of these, 49% attend universities, 38% are enrolled in academic colleges, and 12% attend colleges of education. Thousands of additional students also take courses through the Open University.

Innovations in Education

Israel has a lot to offer in the field of education, particularly as it relates to at-risk youth. This has been a focus since the founding of the state because of the unique demands of educating children who survived the Holocaust, many of whom were orphans, and meeting the needs of the large immigrant population, which includes youth from under-developed nations like Ethiopia.

Despite the sometimes vast cultural differences in the different immigrant groups within Israel, many common problems and common needs have been found and programs to support them developed. These include: early childhood intervention, family support, day care, school dropouts, academic underachievement, alienated youth, employment of new technologies and absorption of immigrants.

Many programs dealing with these problems developed in Israel offer better solutions that are around educational facilities in the rest of the world. Israel's smaller size may be an advantage in making it possible to conceptualize the problems more clearly and to design programs to deal with them more effectively.

[Click HERE](#) to learn more about Israeli innovation in education and how it has benefited Americans in particular.

Environment

For Israel, concern for all living things and prohibitions against environmental degradation may be traced back to biblical sources. Indeed, the first chapters of the [Book of Genesis](#) emphasize the vital link between humanity (*adam*) and the earth (*adamah*) and introduce the concept of stewardship by enjoining man to work the earth and to watch over it.

Israel's rebirth in modern times was sparked by this age-old commitment of the people to their land. Inspired by this profound sense of heritage, efforts are also being made to both preserve what is currently there and reintroduce plant and animal life which existed in biblical times and have since either disappeared from the region or are threatened with extinction.

In juxtaposition to its small geographical size, a wide range of physical conditions and a rich variety of flora and fauna characterize Israel. The country's location at the junction of three continents, coupled with the climatic changes throughout the history of this region, has been largely responsible for the great diversity of species.

Biogeographical Diversity

Though only 470 kilometers from North to South, Israel boasts a wide range of [biogeographical regions](#). Between the snowy slopes of [Mount Hermon](#) in the north and the southern coral reefs in the [Gulf of Eilat](#), lie arid desert, lush oases, Mediterranean woods, and the lowest point on earth—the [Dead Sea](#).

Israel's location at the crossroads of Asia, Europe and Africa has endured large climatic changes over its history and accounts for the vast diversity of species within the region. This wealth of species is expressed with some 2,600 plant species (150 of which are indigenous to Israel), 7 amphibian, nearly 100 reptile, over 500 bird and about 100 mammal species.

Israel is sldo situated at the meeting point of three phytogeographical regions - Mediterranean, Irano-Turanian and Saharo-Arabian - and contains a diverse collection of herbaceous plants, especially annuals and geophytes, typical of all three. Species widely distributed over the entire Mediterranean climate region reach their southern limit of distribution in Israel. Saharan or Asian desert species reach their northern limits of distribution in this country while Irano-Turanian species reach their western limit here. Israel is the northernmost limit for the presence of plants such as the papyrus reed and the southernmost limit for others like the bright red coral peony.

Israel possesses one of the world's largest assortments of wild wheat, barley, oat, and legumes. Israel's forests feature a diverse and exotic collection of tree species, including [Jerusalem](#) pines, oaks, carobs, terbiths, cypresses, Judas trees, acacias, olive and almond trees, and eucalyptuses.

History of Enviornmental Protection

In the first two decades following independence, Israel accorded high priority to intensive development programs: new towns were built, modern agricultural programs were introduced, water sources were tapped and roads and airports were constructed. The rapid growth rate of population, industry and agriculture led to



environmental degradation, which was further aggravated by the concentration of industrial and urban activities along the coastal strip, where two-thirds of the population reside.

The roots of Israel's nature protection movement may be traced back to the organization of a small group of nature lovers and scientists around a specific issue: the draining of [Lake Hula](#) and its surrounding swamps in order to combat malaria and reclaim the land for agriculture during the 1950's. This small group of conservationists, who fought for the preservation of a small area of swampland as a nature reserve, understood that the death of the swamps would spell the death of the valley's indigenous [flora and fauna](#) as well. Their successful campaign assured not only the survival of the Hula habitat, but the birth of Israel's nature protection movement.

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), the country's largest non-governmental environment organization, has been instrumental in raising public awareness of nature and environmental protection. Founded in 1953, SPNI has initiated dozens of campaigns aimed at the protection of unique Israeli landscapes, wildlife, natural environment, and open spaces, from the adverse effects of development. Other private organizations, such as the [Jewish National Fund](#) and Kerem Kayemet were also influential in the raising awareness about the need for environmental protection.

In 1963, the National Parks Authority was established in order to prepare and maintain park areas for the general public as well as preserve historical and environmental sites. The following year, the Parks Authority named the Lake Hula area as Israel's first declared nature reserve.

In 1973, the Israeli Cabinet established the Environmental Protection Service (EPS) as the country's first environmental government body. This was an important step in the creation of a comprehensive and modern environmental administration in Israel.

In December 1988, the government established the Ministry of the Environment. The decision reflected a positive change in the national determination to tackle environmental issues. In recent years, Israel has embarked on a new journey, taking its first steps on the path toward sustainable development - development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Environmental Conservation Today

Israel maintains a serious commitment to nature conservation and protection today. Israel's modern development has led to rapid growth in population, standard of living, and consumption but also increases in solid waste, hazardous chemical production, and water usage combined with reduced air quality and field and coastline degradation.

Work is being done to map out the country and determine each region's environmental vulnerability. Israel recognizes that, for assuring sustainable development, methods must be developed to conserve biodiversity, protect vital water sources, control air pollution in densely populated areas, upgrade wastewater treatment and expand effluent recovery, provide for pesticide-free agricultural produce and assure safe disposal, treatment and recycling of solid and hazardous waste.

Consequently, both Israel's environmental industries and its academic institutions have invested in broadening their research and development activities. At the same time, stringent new standards, accompanied by tough enforcement, along with educational initiatives and public campaigns are increasing the environmental consciousness and responsibility of government and civil society alike.

The main issue facing Israel in her nature conservation efforts is habitat fragmentation.

In 1995, Israel created a new afforestation master plan, which recognized the status of forests as the site of vital natural vegetation, biological diversity, and open spaces and called for a total of 162,000 hectares of woodlands and open areas—over 15% of Israel's total land area north of [Be'er Sheva](#).

The government has also designated 105 tracts of land, or 3% of the 205 square kilometer Mediterranean region, and nearly 20% of the desert region as protected nature reserves, many of which overlap with land used for military training.

Israel's air quality has been greatly affected by the country's recent increase in energy production, industry, and transportation. Low sulfur fuel has been introduced to combat sulfur dioxide concentrations, but automotive pollutant emissions have increased dramatically, playing a major role in the deterioration of the country's quality of air. Israel has taken steps to lessen sulfur dioxide output by initiating the use of lead-free gasoline, catalytic converters, and diesel fuel with lower sulfur content. In addition, Israel acts in accordance with international resolutions on ozone depletion and climate change.

Israel's rapid growth in population, standard of living, and consumption over the past twenty to thirty has also led to a 4%-5% annual increase in solid waste. To deal with this increase, environmentally conscious landfills have come to replace illegal garbage dumps and a solid waste management policy is being introduced. They focus on reduction of waste, recycling, recovery, and incineration.

In recent years, efforts have focused on restoring the country's ailing rivers, which have either dried up or become sewage conduits as a result of industrial discharge, municipal sewage, overpumping or just general abuse. The road toward restoration was opened with the inauguration of a National River Administration in 1993 to oversee the restoration of the country's rivers. Twelve coastal rivers and two rivers in the eastern basin are currently undergoing restoration according to approved master plans, which include cleanups, soil conservation and landscape and park development. The results are evident in rivers throughout the country - whether the Alexander River where egg laying and basking areas were set aside for giant soft-shell turtles, or the Kishon River where dramatic improvements in water quality have occurred as evidenced by monitoring results.

International Collaboration

Through its advances in environmental protection and conservation over the past fifty years, Israel has now been able to share its expertise through environmental collaboration with other countries around the world. Moreover, it has also teamed with the Palestinian Authority and neighboring Jordan to ensure bilateral protection of regions that fall in both countries.

The [Environment Working Group](#) endeavors to enhance the ability of regional parties in the Middle East to deal with maritime pollution, wastewater treatment, environmental management and desertification. The working group has endorsed the 1994 [Bahrain Environmental Code of Conduct for the Middle East](#) which



focuses on the following principles, accepted by all the parties involved: natural resources must be preserved and any adverse environmental activities avoided; peace and environmental protection are interdependent and regional parties will cooperate on environmental issues; each country will facilitate and promote public awareness to the need for environmental conservation.

In addition, Israel and Jordan have a [bilateral pact](#) on environmental protection and nature conservation. Likewise, Israel has cooperated with the Palestinians to [battle pollution](#).

With the United States, Israel has long had [cooperation in environmental protection](#) as both nations share the value and interest in quality of environment.

Governance

In the State of Israel, as in other democratic states, the democratic rule is rooted in the following principles and institutions: basic laws that lay down the order of government and of the citizens' rights; the holding of elections to the house of representatives and to municipal councils every few years, following which, a central government and local authorities are set up, based on the principle

of the rule of the majority, with the rights of the minority guaranteed by law; the principle of the separation between the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judiciary, to which the institution of state control has been added; freedom of the press.

Electoral System

The elections in Israel are general, equal and secret. On the national level they are held at least once every four years, and on the municipal level at least once every five years. Israel has a system of proportional representation, and the whole state is considered a single constituency. Every party running for election presents a list of candidates, and the number of candidates entering the house of representatives is proportional to the percentage of support the list receives. Every citizen over the age of 18, whose name appears in the list of voters, may vote.

Basic Laws

Even though it was stated in the Proclamation of Independence—read by David Ben-Gurion at the ceremony in which the State of Israel was declared—that the Constituent Assembly, which turned into the First Knesset, would draft a constitution for Israel, this was not done due to differences of opinion with the religious parties. In place of a constitution, it was decided to legislate a series of basic laws, which in the future would together form the constitution. This task is now—46 years after the establishment of the State—close to completion, and there are several articles in the existing basic laws which can only be amended by an absolute majority (the support of more than 60 MKs) or a special majority (which is large than an absolute majority) of the Knesset members. The existing basic laws are:

- Basic Law: President of the State
- Basic Law: The Knesset
- Basic Law: The Government
- Basic Law: The Judiciary
- Basic Law: The Israel Defense Forces
- Basic Law: Jerusalem
- Basic Law: Israel Lands
- Basic Law: The State Comptroller
- Basic Law: The State Economy
- Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty
- Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation

Legislative Branch: The Knesset

The Knesset is the house of representatives of the State of Israel. The Basic Law on the Knesset, states that the seat of the Knesset is Jerusalem, and that upon election it will have 120 members. The law deals with the

elections to the Knesset and with the essence of the service, the work and the immunity of the Knesset, its committees and its members. The law does not define the authority of the Knesset and details regarding the way its functions appear in its regulations.

A new Knesset starts to function after general elections are held, which determine its make-up. The President of the State opens the first session of a new Knesset and immediately passes its running onto the eldest Knesset member. At this meeting the Knesset members declare their allegiance, and the Speaker of the Knesset and his deputies are elected.

The Knesset fulfills its functions by means of two arms: the plenary in which all the Knesset members sit, and the Knesset committees. The plenary holds debates within the framework of legislation, government statements, motions for the agenda, motions of no-confidence and questions, and the deliberations usually end with a vote.

Before a bill reaches the plenary for debate, it must go through a fixed process of preparation. A bill may be presented by an individual Knesset member, a group of Knesset members, the Government as a whole or a single Minister.

When a Ministry initiates a bill, a memorandum on the proposed law is passed on first of all to the Ministry of Justice so that its legal aspects may be examined, to the Ministry of Finance for examination of its economic and budgetary aspects, and to the rest of the Government Ministries for their comments. If the memorandum is approved, the bill is passed on for formulation toward its being presented to the Knesset, and which this draft is approved by the Government, it is presented to the Knesset for first reading. Private members' bills, which do not require Government approval, are presented to the Knesset for preliminary reading, after which each law must pass three readings in the plenary.

In first reading the bill is presented to the plenary and a short debate takes place on its content. After that it is passed on to the appropriate Knesset committee for detailed discussion and redrafting, should this be necessary. After the committee has completed its work, the bill is returned to the plenary, and committee members who have reservations present them. At the end of the debate on the bill in second reading, a vote takes place on each article in it, and unless it is found necessary to return it again to the committee, the third reading takes place and a vote is taken on the bill as a whole.

A bill which has passed third reading is signed by the presiding Speaker, and is later published in the Official Gazette, with the signature of the President of the State, the Prime Minister, the Knesset Speaker and the Minister responsible for the law's implementation. Finally the State seal is placed on it by the Minister of Justice.

Knesset members are entitled to present to the Knesset Speaker motions for the agenda that deal with issues on the national agenda.

The content of a motion, which is approved by the Knesset Presidium, is passed on to the Minister responsible for the issue being raised, so that he can prepare a response. In the debate the proposer of the motion explains his motion, and after it is debated a decision is taken, on the basis of a vote in the plenary, whether to hold a more extensive debate on the issue in the plenary, to pass it on for debate in a committee which will then lay on the Knesset table its proposals, or to reject the motion. A motion for the agenda may also be raised as an urgent motion, which comes up for immediate debate, should the Knesset Presidium be willing to accept the urgency of the matter raised.

A motion of no-confidence in the Government is also a sort of motion for the agenda. Such a motion can only be presented by parties which are not represented in the Government, and their intention, in addition to protesting against the Government policy, is to try and bring it down by means of a vote. So far, a Government has been brought down in Israel only once by a vote of no-confidence—on March 15, 1990.

Parliamentary questions are questions directed by a Knesset Member to the appropriate Minister, regarding an action which was taken, or should have been taken and was not. Questions are one of the means at the disposal of the Knesset members to criticize and supervise the activities of the Government. The Minister answers the question in writing or orally.

The Knesset plenary decides on most issues on its agenda by means of a vote, and resolutions are adopted by a majority. A majority usually means the majority of those present at the meeting. There are, however, resolutions which require an absolute majority, and others which require a special majority.

The function of the committees, in addition to dealing with bills, is to supervise the work of the Government Ministries and to hold debates on issues within the realms for which they are responsible, and which are of public interest. By means of the committees, the Knesset maintains direct contact with the Government Ministries, and receives information from Ministers or their representatives.

Executive Branch: The Government

Until after the elections to the 13th Knesset, it was the President who assigned the task of forming a new Government to the head of the list with the best chances of succeeding, who was also usually the head of the largest party in the Knesset. The Government required the approval of the Knesset, so that it needed to represent a coalition supported by a majority of the Knesset members, even if not all of its supporters were actual members in it.

According to the amendment to the Basic Law: The Government, which was adopted toward the end of the 12th Knesset, as of the elections to the 14th Knesset, simultaneous elections will take place for the Knesset and a directly elected Prime Minister. As in the past, the new Prime Minister will have to present the Ministers in his Government to the Knesset, as well as the distribution of portfolios amongst them, and obtain its confidence. At the time of presenting his Government, the new Prime Minister will announce its basic guidelines, which will constitute the new Government's work plan. After the Knesset will express its confidence in the new Government, the Prime Minister and his Ministers will declare their allegiance before the Knesset. During its service, all the members of the Government will be collectively responsible for the activities of all the Ministers, and for the Government as a whole.

Most of the Ministers are responsible for one or more Government Ministries, but can also serve as a Minister without Portfolio. Ministers do not have to be Knesset members, while Deputy Ministers—and there can be more than one Deputy Minister in each Ministry—must be members. The addition of new Ministers to the Government in the course of its term of office, or a change in the distribution of functions among them, requires the Knesset's approval.

It is the Government which determines its own working arrangements and the manner in which it adopts decisions. It usually meets for one weekly meeting on Sundays, though in urgent cases additional meetings may be called. The Government may also act by means of standing or occasional Ministerial Committees, some of whose decisions require the approval of the Government as a whole.



A Government which has resigned or has been brought down by a vote of no-confidence, continues to serve until a new Government is formed, and is then called a transitional Government.

The number of Ministries maintained by the Government varies from time to time according to the needs and to coalition constraints.

Judicial Branch: The Court System

The courts deal with cases of persons charged with a breach of the law. Charges are brought up by citizens against other citizens, by the state against citizens, and even by citizens against the state.

The sessions of the courts of law are usually public, unless it is decided to hold closed hearings under special circumstances. When more than one judge is presiding, and the judges do not agree on a verdict, the opinion of the majority is decisive. Israel does not have trials by jury.

The cases brought to the courts are of two types: criminal cases and civil cases. A criminal case is one involving a transgression of the social order, and its intention is to punish the offender, if his guilt has been proven. In a civil case the plaintiff is a private person or association and the defendant is a private person or association. The subject of the trial is the demand that a contract signed between the parties be fulfilled, a debt is returned or compensation is paid for damages caused. In a civil trial there is no punishment, but a duty to pay financial or other compensation.

There are three instances in the regular courts: magistrate courts, which have the authority to try light and intermediate offences, or civil cases in which the sum claimed is no higher than a million shekels (approximately U.S. \$300,000); district courts, which try serious offenses, and civil cases in which the sum claimed is more than a million shekels (approximately U.S. \$300,000); and the Supreme Court, which sits in Jerusalem. The number of judges serving on the Supreme Court is determined by the Knesset. The judges elect a permanent President of the Supreme Court and a deputy from amongst themselves.

The Supreme Court is involved in two realms: The first is to hear appeals for verdicts given by district courts. In this capacity it is called the Supreme Court of Appeals. The verdict of the Supreme Court of Appeals is final. The second is to hear appeals by persons who feel that they have been wronged by one of the State authorities or statutory bodies. In this capacity the court is called the High Court of Justice. The High Court of Justice functions by means of orders.

In addition to the ordinary courts there are special courts, which are authorized to deal with specific matters only. The most important amongst these are the military courts, the labor courts, and the religious courts. There are religious courts of the four main religious denominations: Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze. Each religious court can only try cases applying to members of its own religious community who are citizens of the State or permanent residents. Since matters of personal status in Israel are usually decided on the basis of religious laws, the religious courts deal with them.

The Presidency

The President of the State is elected by the Knesset in a secret vote, and primarily fulfills ceremonial functions as head of State.

Candidates for the presidency are customarily proposed by the large parties, and are usually well-known public figures. The President is appointed for a period of five years, which can be extended by a further five years.

The functions of the President are defined in the Basic Law: The President of the State. In addition, the President assumes public functions and activities in accordance with the customs which have crystallized on the issue, and with his personal inclinations. Amongst the President's formal functions are signing laws (even though he has no control over their content) opening the first meeting of the first session of a new Knesset, receiving the credentials of new ambassadors of foreign states, approving the appointment of civil and religious judges, the State Comptroller and the Governor of the Bank of Israel, pardoning prisoners or commuting their sentences, etc. In the past it was also the President who decided who to approach after general elections with the task of trying to form a new Government, but this function will cease to exist as of the elections to the 14th Knesset, when the Prime Minister will be directly elected.



Health & Medicine

Since its inception, [Israel](#) has been very successful in pursuing effective [Public Health policies](#).

Israel's high standards of health services, top-quality medical resources and research, modern hospital facilities, and an impressive ratio of physicians and specialists to population are reflected in one of the highest average life expectancies in the world. Despite its status as a young nation composed of immigrants principally from North Africa, the [former Soviet Union](#) and Central Europe, Israel's quality of life is still very high. Israel also managed to absorb thousands of [Holocaust](#) survivors in addition to many immigrants suffering from tuberculosis, malnutrition, heart disease and every type of cancer.

Over the past twenty years, Israel has also become a world leader in medical technology innovation and Israeli doctors and institutions have made significant contributions in virtually every field of medicine.

Public Health

The [Zionist Movement](#) in [pre-state Israel](#), which combined the traditional Jewish concern for all people with an emphasis on societal needs, regarded public health as a top social, political and economic priority.

By the time Israel declared its [independence](#) in 1948, a national health infrastructure was already in place. Mother-and-child care centers (Tipot Halav) administered vaccinations to new-born babies and advised parents on proper care of infants. Health insurance funds (Kupot Holim) offered day-to-day consultations with doctors and specialists, and insured members for hospitalization.

Despite Israel's commitment to providing health services for all of its citizens, by the early 90's some six percent of Israelis were not insured through one of the four existing health funds - Kupat Holim Clalit, Maccabi, Me'uhedet and Le'umit.

In 1994, the [National Health Insurance Law](#) was enacted and it was implemented the following year, rectifying this situation. Since then, all citizens have their health insurance paid by a tax on income (up to 4.8%) while their employer's portion is collected by the National Insurance Institute and passed on to the health insurance fund of the individual's choice. The country's sick funds and the [Ministry of Health](#) provide health services, including public clinics, preventive medicine, hospitals, research, dental care, private physicians, and government administration.

Health & Medicine Statistics

Israel's [national expenditure on health](#) is slightly below average for countries in the OECD. In 2010, the country spent approximately 57 million NIS on health & medicine accounting for 7.5% of the national GDP. This placed towards the bottom of countries, though the average expenditure was only a slightly higher 9%.

In 2008, Israel spent just under 53 million NIS, of which 43% was allocated to public clinics and preventive medicine, 34% to hospitals and research, and another 9% for dental care. As a comparison, Israel spent only 10.5 million NIS on health in 1971.

The 2010, the average [life expectancy](#) in Israel was 81.5 years, up by nearly 3 years on average since 2000. Jewish females had the highest life expectancy at 83.7 years while Muslims males had the lowest, at 76.8 years.

The [infant mortality rate](#) in 2010 was 3.6 deaths per 1,000 live births. This rate has dropped significantly since the mid-1990's, when the rate was hovering above 6 deaths per 1,000 live births.

In 2009, the main causes of death in Israel were heart diseases, diabetes, cerebrovascular diseases, ill-defined causes, kidney disease, lung and trachea diseases, and other malignant neoplasms.

At the end of 2010, there were 5,262 HIV carriers and 494 [AIDS](#) patients living in Israel. The Ministry of Health diagnosed 411 new cases of HIV (278 males, 133 females) in 2010 and 31 Israeli's died from the disease that same year.

In the 2006 estimate, Israelis aged 65 and over represent 9.8% of the population, those ages 15-64 make up 63.9%, and children up to the age of 14 and younger represent 26.3%.

Successes in Israel

University research results are put into practice by the public health system, while the Israel Council for Public Health runs campaigns to raise public awareness of relevant issues. In addition to increasing longevity and reducing infant mortality, Israel has completely eradicated a range of diseases, such as malaria, polio and diphtheria, which had plagued the country in its formative years.

As in most western countries, heart disease and cancer are the biggest killers. Successful educational campaigns have greatly reduced the level of smoking and the incidence of skin cancer caused by the sun's rays. Israel has the lowest percentage of new HIV positive victims in the western world, with just a few hundred new cases each year. This is largely attributable to comprehensive sex education programs offered in the country's high schools.

The country has also made significant strides in combating nutritional deficiencies. In the early years of the State, agricultural infrastructure was, in part, planned in conjunction with the Ministry of Health's nutritional recommendations. Today, the diet of Israelis favors vitamin-rich fresh fruit and vegetables.

Medical Technology Innovations

There is virtually no area of medicine to which Israeli devices have not made [significant contributions](#). Cardiology, genetics, neurology and ophthalmology are but a few of the [medical sciences](#) benefiting from advanced Israeli technology. From neonatology to gerontology to the latest in telemedicine, Israeli scientists, universities and companies are working to benefit the entire health system, from physician, to patient, to medical administrators and insurers.

Israeli medical and biotechnological scientists have created state-of-the-art surgical lasers; computerized no-radiation diagnostic instrumentation for [breast cancer](#); an intelligent medical sensor used to track and direct instruments to an exact location in the heart or other organs via a real-time virtual image; the fully flexible wave guide fiber for endoscopic surgery; unique computerized monitoring systems for critical care patients;

pain-relieving transcutaneous devices; a revolutionary autoclave design to combat AIDS and other infectious diseases; and many more.

The most important resource in Israel is its human capital, including the flood of Russian-speaking scientists, engineers and programmers, who immigrated in the 1990s. Many of them excel in math, physics, material sciences and medical electronics. In addition, over the years, close cooperation has developed between medical research institutions and industry. This cross-fertilization has bridged the once impenetrable gap between basic and applied science and has made it easier for innovative technology to arrive at your doctor's office. Few today would argue against the rapidity of advancements by medical manufacturers, based on the most updated research and development that has taken place in the country's universities and research institutes.

Local scientists have developed methods for producing a human growth hormone and interferon, a group of proteins effective against viral infections. Copaxone, a medicine effective in the treatment of multiple sclerosis, has been developed in Israel. Genetic engineering, including cloning, has resulted in a wide range of diagnostic kits based on monoclonal antibodies, along with other microbiological products.

In aesthetic medicine, Israel has pioneered electro-optic medical devices that apply proprietary pulsed light technology for non-invasive treatment of skin cancer and benign lesions, as well as for treatment of varicose veins, skin rejuvenation and hair removal. In neonatology, Israel has introduced an early warning monitor, which senses lowered breathing and pulse levels and could prevent SIDS.

Israel has made significant theoretical and practical contributions to the [biotechnology](#) revolution and has developed an advanced infrastructure of medical and paramedical research as well as bioengineering capabilities. Biotechnology, biomedical and clinical research account for more than half of all scientific publications. Israeli scientists developed a pill-size combination of a digital camera, battery, radio transmitter, and light source, which patients can swallow as a non-surgical imaging of the gastrointestinal tract.

Israeli companies have developed a broad range of innovative optical glass rods as active media for solid-state medical lasers and high intensity luminescence. Israel has also developed a system for real-time thermal images of blood flow through exposed coronary arteries, without ingesting toxic contrast materials or exposure to radiation. Also newly introduced is an infrared blood test of hemoglobin and hematocrit and an award-winning device that attaches to a standard catheter to indicate correct insertion of an infusion needle into a vein.

Immigration

Despite their dispersal throughout the world, the Jewish people never abandoned the ideal of resurrecting their national home in the land of Israel.

The longing to return and settle in this homeland was also never lost. Throughout the centuries following their expulsion by Rome in 70 CE, Jews maintained a presence in the Land and uninterrupted contact with Jews abroad enriched the cultural, spiritual and intellectual life of both communities.

When the [State of Israel](#) was established in May 1948, its [Proclamation of Independence](#) stated:

"The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and the ingathering of the exiles; it will foster the development of the country for all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel"

In his speech opening the inaugural [Knesset](#) in 1949, Israeli President [Chaim Weizmann](#) echoed this sentiment and made clear that the aim of the Jewish state would be, before everything else, "to gather in the exiles from all parts of the world."

Since that time, Israel has absorbed millions of Jewish immigrants from all over the world, creating an immense melting pot of cultural heritage and societal traditions.

The Law of Return

Passed by the government of Prime Minister [David Ben-Gurion](#) in 1950, the [Law of Return](#) is one of the most important, and sometimes controversial, piece of legislation probably ever passed by an Israeli [Knesset](#).

The [Law of Return](#) grants every Jew in the world the automatic right to [immigrate](#) to Israel - in [Hebrew](#) called *aliyah* - and immediately become a citizen of the state. The first line of the legislation read thus:

*"Right of aliyah** 1. Every [Jew](#) has the right to come to this country as an oleh (immigrant).**"*

After a number of court cases and amendments, the law was changed in 1970 under the stewardship of Prime Minister [Golda Meir](#) to stipulate what exactly the government meant by "[every Jew](#)." The amendment stated that those born to a Jewish mother, those with a Jewish maternal grandmother, those who had converted to Judaism, or those married a Jew by those distinctions could be accepted for the immediate citizenship.

The law has come under international scrutiny from pro-Palestinian groups for claims that it runs counter to democratic ideals, but the legislation is consistent with international law including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination Article I(3) which allows for preferential immigration treatment of some groups, provided there is no discrimination against a specific group. In general, the Law of Return is a form of "positive" discrimination and the Israeli government does nothing to discriminate or disqualify non-Jews wishing to gain Israeli citizenship.

Absorption/*Klita*

Because Israel has had to absorb millions of immigrants from all sorts of economic, cultural and regional background, various institutions and programs have helped, or tried to help, integrate immigrants into Israeli society.

Following independence, was in a grievous economic condition, was still very bruised from the [War of Independence](#), and found it difficult to provide for the hundreds of thousands of immigrants flooding the country after being exiled from neighboring Arab countries. Much effort was devoted toward absorbing the immigrants: *ma'abarot*, or transitional immigrant camps, were erected in areas in the country. These camps were first made of only tin shacks and tents though they were later supplemented with permanent dwellings. The *ma'abarot* also helped create employment opportunities, schools taught [Hebrew](#), and the educational system was expanded and adjusted to meet the needs of children from many different backgrounds.

The *merkaz klita*, or absorption center, was developed in the late 1960's to accommodate the increased immigration that occurred during that time and to replace the more squalid *ma'abarot*. These centers combined Hebrew language immersion with long-term accommodation for families. With representatives of all the major ministries ideally on hand or on call, these centers were supposed to cushion the entry of the new immigrant into Israeli society. By the late 1970s, at the height of immigration from the United States, there were more than twenty-five absorption centers housing almost 4,000 new immigrants.

The most ubiquitous absorption program is *ulpan*, or intensive [Hebrew language](#) school. Some *ulpan*'s were funded by local municipalities, others by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, or the Jewish Agency. Because they were heavily subsidized, *ulpan*'s were free or charged only nominal fees to new immigrants. Today, *ulpan*'s are still a key element for immigrants to become integrated as full members of Israeli society.

Rescue Operations

Upon establishment, Israel immediately became a beacon of hope and freedom for Jews around the world suffering from persecution. Unfortunately, the Jews in these areas either lacked the financial capability or the legal ability to leave their country of origin and emigrate to Israel.

Israel, therefore, determined that it would not only welcome any Jew who came but it would also go and rescue Jews from wherever they were oppressed as this was the main reason behind the establishment of the state in the first place.

In 1949, Israel led [Operation "Magic Carpet"](#) which airlifted more than 45,000 Jews out of Yemen, representing practically the entire Jewish population in the Arab nation. Upon hearing of the mission, Jews trekked to the Yemeni capital of Aden from all over the area in order to be taken to Israel. This operation, and others like it to bring Jews from Arab lands to Israel, nearly bankrupted the country, but proved that Israel would do everything to save Jews.

In 1951, Israel airlifted nearly 100,000 Jews out of Iraq in [Operation "Ezra & Nehemiah."](#) While many of these Iraqi Jews were wealthy businessmen and professionals, the Iraqi government only allowed those to leave the country who agreed to forfeit all of their worldly possessions. Despite having to liquidate their bank accounts and close their businesses, the Jews proudly left Iraq for Israel.

Years later, from 1985 to 1991, Israel completed the most unprecedented rescue operations in history when they airlifted thousands of Ethiopian and Sudanese Jews to safety in Israel. Operations "[Moses](#)," "[Joshua](#)," and "[Solomon](#)" led more than 40,000 of these Jews out of [Africa](#) and marked the first time in world history that blacks had been taken out of Africa for the purpose of granting them freedom.

Around the same time, the flood gates of emigration out of the former Soviet Union were finally opened to Russian Jews after immense pressure was put on the regime by the United States and Israel. From 1990 to the end of 2010, more than 987,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union had made their home in Israel.

Immigration Statistics

Between 1948 and 2011, 3,092,729 people [immigrated into Israel](#).

This number is made up of people from [more than seventy countries](#), including: Former Soviet Union (1,209,264); [Morocco](#), [Algeria](#) and [Tunisia](#) (354,852); [Romania](#) (276,586); [Poland](#) (173,591); [Iraq](#) (131,138); and the [United States](#) (94,753).

Israel has absorbed immigrants from every continent. The largest [single year immigration](#) from each continent are as follows:

- Africa: 45,281 immigrants in 1956 (1,937 in 2010).
- America & Oceania: 12,885 immigrants in 1971 (4,151 in 2010).
- Asia: 103,396 immigrants in 1951 (1,415 in 2010).
- Europe: 189,650 immigrants in 1990 (9,127 in 2010).

In 2010, Israel took in [16,633 immigrants](#). Among these were 1,652 from Ethiopia; 266 from South Africa; 351 from Argentina; 523 from the United Kingdom; 1,775 from France; 2,801 from the United States and Canada; and, 7,158 from areas of the former Soviet Union.

Overall, immigration to Israel has been associated with "[growth waves](#)" which hit high points during the immigration of Jews from Arab countries between 1948 and 1952, immigration from Ethiopia in the 1970's and 1980's, and immigration from the former Soviet Union in the 1990's.



Israeli Arabs

[Israel](#) is home to a highly diverse population from many different ethnic, religious, cultural and social backgrounds.

Israel is not a theocracy; it is governed by the rule of law as drafted by a democratically elected parliament. Israel has no state religion, and all faiths enjoy freedom of worship. It is informed by Jewish values and adheres to many Jewish religious customs (such as holidays), but this is similar to the [United States](#) and other nations that are shaped by the Judeo-Christian heritage and also have expressly religious elements.

Of Israel's more than [7.8 million citizens](#) in 2012, more than 1.6 million, constituting just over 20 percent, are [Arab Israelis](#), many of whom are descendants of residents living there from before the establishment of the [State of Israel](#).

Although defined collectively as Arab citizens of Israel, the Arab Israeli sector includes a number of different, though primarily Arabic-speaking, groups each with its own distinct identity. [Muslim Arabs](#), the largest group, constitute three-quarters of the Arab Israeli sector and most are [Sunni Muslims](#). Nearly one-tenth of Israel's Muslim Arabs are [Bedouins](#), formerly nomadic shepherds. Christian Arabs form the second largest group in the Arab Israeli sector. The [Druze](#), some 110,000 Arabic-speakers living in 22 villages mostly in northern Israel, is a separate cultural, social and religious community.

Equal Rights

Arab Israelis are citizens of Israel with equal rights. Arabic, alongside [Hebrew](#), is one of Israel's national languages.

In 1948, Israel's [Declaration of Independence](#) called upon the Arab inhabitants of Israel to "participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions."

The political involvement of the Arab sector is manifested through both national and municipal elections. 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. Arab citizens run the political and administrative affairs of their own municipalities and advance Arab interests through their elected representatives in the [Knesset](#), Israel's parliament.

In 2012, Arabs parliament members held eleven seats in the [eighteenth Knesset](#), representing around 10% of the legislative body. These Arab MK's represented three Arab-majority parties: [United Arab List](#), [Hadash](#), and [Balad](#). Arabs have been elected to the Knesset in every election since the 1960's.

Arab Israelis have also held various government positions, including that of deputy minister, a position that Druze MK [Ayoob Kara](#) currently holds in PM Netanyahu's [thirty-second government](#).

Furthermore, Arab Israeli's have also held positions of leadership in Israel's [Supreme Court](#). In 1999, Abdel Rahman Zuabi became the [first Arab to sit on the Supreme Court](#) when he received a nine-month placement and in 2004 Salim Joubran became the first Israeli Arab to be selected for a permanent appointment to the country's highest court. Joubran rules in every case the court hears, irregardless of who or what is being tried,

as was proven when he ruled with the other judges in the eventual rape conviction against former Israeli President [Moshe Katzav](#).

Israel has extensive [anti-discrimination laws](#). Moreover, since the founding of the State, the status of [Arab Israeli women](#) has been significantly improved by legislation stipulating equal rights for women and prohibiting of polygamy and child marriage. Israel remains the only country in the Middle East where women enjoy equality in rights and personal freedoms, including the right to vote and be elected to local and national office.

The only legal distinction between Arab and Jewish citizens is not one of rights, but rather of civic duty.

Since Israel's establishment, Arab citizens have been exempted from compulsory service in the [Israel Defense Forces \(IDF\)](#). This exemption was made out of consideration for their family, religious and cultural affiliations with the [Palestinians](#) and the rest of the Arab world, given the on-going conflict. Still, volunteer military service is encouraged and IDF service was made mandatory for Druze and Circassian men at the request of their community leaders. Bedouin Arabs also serve voluntarily in the IDF and many join the special ["Yahav" rescue unit](#).

Arab Israeli Identity

As a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual society, Israel has a high level of informal segregation patterns.

While groups are not separated by official policy, a number of different sectors within the society have chosen to lead a segregated lifestyle, maintaining their strong cultural, religious, ideological and/or ethnic identity.

The vast majority of Arab Israelis have chosen to maintain their distinct identity and not assimilate.

The community's separate existence is facilitated through the use of Arabic, a separate Arab/Druze school system; Arabic literature, theater and mass media; and maintenance of independent Muslim, Druze and Christian denominational courts which adjudicate matters of personal status. Though they coexist as two self-segregated communities, over the years Jewish and Arab Israelis have come to accept each other, acknowledging the uniqueness and aspirations of each community and participating in many joint endeavors.

Advances

In the years since the founding of the State of Israel, the [Arab Israeli community sector](#) has made great strides in almost every area of development.

For example, the median years of schooling of Arab Israelis rose over a 35-year period (1961-1996) from 1.2 to 10.4 years. Infant death rates per thousand live births decreased significantly during that same 35-year period. In the Muslim population, the rate dropped from 46.4 per thousand births to 10.0; among Christians the decrease was from 42.1 to 6.7; among the Druze it dropped from 50.4 to 8.9 deaths.

These advances are particularly striking when comparing Arab citizens of Israel to their brethren living in neighboring countries. However, it is also clear that much work must be done to close the gap between Arab and Jewish Israelis.

There are several factors that explain the reason why the gap between economic development in the Arab sector and that of the Jewish sector has yet to be closed. The average family size in the Arab sector is far higher than that of Jewish families, which greatly reduces the relative number of financial providers per dependent. Average Arab family income is further reduced due to the lower rates of female participation in the work force. [Education](#) levels in the Arab sector are relatively lower than those in the Jewish sector, often leading to lower incomes.

The majority of Arab Israelis live in small communities with limited economic infrastructure. This contributes to employment in unskilled or semiskilled fields, as well as the higher overall rates of unemployment. Service in the Israeli Defense Forces gives veterans certain economic and other benefits. Although Arab Israeli youth who do not volunteer for army service gain a two-to-three year head start in their higher education or in joining the workforce, this does not always compensate for missing out on the benefits and training enjoyed by veterans.

Israel Defense Forces

Formed out of the ashes of the Holocaust when more than six million Jews were murdered, the State of Israel dedicated itself to the ideal of Jewish defense and security for the future. The [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF), or *Tzahal* in Hebrew, is the

actualization of this ideal.

The IDF is comprised of the [Army](#), [Air Force](#), and [Navy](#) and today ranks among the world's most battle-tested and well-trained armed forces. Since its founding in 1948, the IDF has fought in ten wars or extended conflicts and has taken part in some of the most daring missions in the history of modern warfare.

The IDF mission statement is, "To defend the existence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the State of Israel."

History & Founding

Before the official establishment of Israel in 1948, there were a number of Jewish armed organizations that [operated in defense of the land](#).

The main organizations were the [Haganah](#) and its commando-strike forces called the [Palmach](#), which answered to the elected leadership of the [Yishuv](#). Other armed defense groups, namely the [Lehi](#) ("Fighters for the Freedom of Israel", also known as the Stern Gang) and the [IZL](#) (Etzel or "National Military Organization") operated independently. These organizations were often at odds with the political leadership of the Yishuv and their actions, sometimes described as terrorism, were regularly condemned by [David Ben-Gurion](#) and other leaders.

It was only natural that when Israel's independence was declared the new government would establish a single, unified armed force. Thus, on May 28, 1948, the Provisional Government of Israel issued [Defense Army of Israel Ordinance No. 4](#) signed by Prime Minister [Ben-Gurion](#), established the Israel Defense Forces.

The IDF was comprised of the Haganah (in particular, its operational branch, the Palmach) and former elements of the [Jewish Brigade](#) that fought under the [British](#) flag during [World War II](#).

After the establishment of the IDF, the two Jewish underground organizations, the Etzel and Lehi, joined the defense forces in a loose confederation, but were allowed to operate independently in some sectors until the end of the [War of Independence](#), after which the organizations were disbanded and their members integrated on an individual basis into the IDF.

Principles, Ethical & Moral Codes

The [Spirit of the IDF](#) is the code of the values of the [IDF](#) and stand as the foundation of all of the activities of every IDF soldier.

These guidelines of operation are the ethical code of the IDF and the expression of the identity, values and norms of the IDF. They are applied by every soldier, officer, unit and corps to shape their mode of action.

The Spirit of the IDF is based on three fundamental values: **Defense of the State, its Citizens and Residents; Patriotism and Loyalty to the State;** and, **Human Dignity**. Soldiers are therefore obligated to protect human life and dignity, valuing every individual regardless of origin, religion, nationality, gender, status or position while also protecting Israel from any and all threats to its existence.

Under this [Ethical Code](#), it is Israel's policy to only use force of arms for the purpose of subduing the enemy to the necessary extent. In times of both war and peace, servicemen exercise purity of arms and use force for the purpose of achieving their mission, without inflicting unnecessary injury to human life or limb; dignity or property, of both soldiers and civilians, with special consideration for the defenseless.

National Military Service

All Jewish, Israeli citizens are conscripted for service into the IDF at the age of 18, men serving for a minimum of three years and women for 21 months. Special deferments to this law may be granted to outstanding students, citizens from the [Haredi](#) (ultra-Orthodox) community, those with medical deficiencies or those with heightened professional skills such as musical talent or sports ability. New [immigrants](#) may also be deferred from service or serve for shorter periods of time depending on their age and personal status on entering the country.

The percentage of draftees requesting to join combat units in the [ground and infantry forces](#) has risen dramatically over the last decade after a falloff during the extended period of the Israeli occupation in southern Lebanon during the 1980's and 1990's.

Following their regular service, men may be called for reserve service of up to one month annually, until the age of 43-45 (reservists may volunteer after this age), and may be called at any time of crisis for emergency active duty. In most cases, reserve duty is carried out in the same unit one served with in active duty.

[Druze](#) Arabs and [Circassians](#), like Israeli Jews, are required to serve in the IDF. In recent years, some Druze officers have reached positions in the IDF as high as Major General and many have received orders of distinction. Unlike the United States Army, homosexuals are allowed to openly serve in the military.

Service is not mandatory for all other Israeli minorities (notably [Israeli Arabs](#) but also [Black Hebrews](#) and others). However, a large number of [Bedouin](#), as well as some Christian Arabs and even a few Muslim Arabs, volunteer. Six Israeli Arabs have received orders of distinction as a part of their military service.

Women in the IDF

As opposed to every other nation around the world, in Israel women are conscripted into military service alongside the men.

Except for their service in the [War of Independence](#) (when all able bodied individuals were needed to fight), however, were not allowed to serve in combat units in the IDF until 1994. That year, under appeal by a female immigrant from South Africa, the High Court ruled that some combat roles be open to female soldiers. In 2000, the Equality amendment to the Military Service law stated that the right of women to serve in any role in the IDF is equal to the right of men.

Since then the number of women serving in all sorts of combat roles, from the artillery and infantry corps to naval and air forces, has skyrocketed.

Today 90% of all military positions in the IDF are available to women . Some specialized units, such as Karakal, a unisex combat unit, and the elite canine unit, Oketz, are open to women. Various positions in the artillery and armored divisions are also tasked by women. Women also serve in the Sachlav unit of the Military Police, the Samag unit of the Border Police, and the Yasam special patrol unit of the Israeli police.

In 2001, the [Air Force](#) graduated its [first ever female combat fighter pilot](#), Lt. Roni Zuckerman. Four years later, in 2005, a [second female passed the intensive fighter pilot course](#) and two other female soldiers graduated to serve as transport pilots. During the [Second Lebanon War](#) in 2006, female helicopter pilots took part in field missions alongside their male counterparts.

In October 2011, 27 female combat soldiers completed the IDF Ground Forces Officers Training Course along with 369 male soldiers and were promoted to the rank of second lieutenant. The new female officers serve in a wide range of combat units from artillery to Caracal and tanks.

In December 2011, the 163rd graduation ceremony of the [Israeli Air Force](#) Flight Academy saw five female pilots complete the arduous and elite program.

Technological Prowess

The [IDF](#) is one of the most high-tech armies in the world, possessing top-of-the-line weapons and computer systems. The development of a sophisticated defense industry has also led to a great deal of exports, which today account for a majority of Israel's revenues and allows the country's defense industry to compete against some of the largest companies in the world.

The [Israeli security industry](#) maintains a very high reputation for its guns, armored fighting vehicles (tanks, tank-converted APCs, armoured bulldozers etc) and rocketry (missiles and rockets). The Air Force is considered one of the world's best, with American-made [F-15 Eagles](#), F-16 Fighting Falcons, and [Apache helicopters](#). Israel also designs and in some cases manufactures, aircraft (Kfir, Lavi) and naval systems (patrol and missile ships). Much of the IDF's electronic systems (intelligence, communication, command and control, navigation etc.) are also Israeli-developed.

The Israeli government-owned [defense industries](#) include world-renowned companies such as Israel Military Industries (IMI), Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), and the Rafael Arms Development Authority. Rafael has become a world leader in such varied categories as passive armor, naval decoys, observation balloon systems, acoustic torpedo countermeasures, ceramic armor, air-breathing propulsion, and air-to-air, air-to-surface and surface-to-surface missiles.

Currently, Israel is the only country in the world with an anti-ballistic missile defense system (the [Arrow](#)) and the only country to have operational success with anti-missile systems (the [Iron Dome](#)). Israel is also working with the United States on developing a tactical high energy laser system against medium range rockets (called Nautilus THEL).



Israel can launch reconnaissance satellites into orbit, a capability shared only by [Russia](#), the United States, the [United Kingdom](#), [France](#), [China](#), [India](#), and [Japan](#). Both the satellites ([Ofeq](#)) and the launchers (Shavit) were developed by the Israeli security industries.

Israel is also thought to have a [nuclear capability](#), although the Israeli government has never confirmed this. The Federation of American Scientists estimates that Israel probably has 100-200 nuclear warheads, which can be delivered by airplanes or ballistic missiles. The Jericho II missile is reported to have a range between 1,500 and 4,000 km, and therefore can target sites as far away as central Russia, [Iran](#) and [Libya](#).

Science & Technology

When Israel declared independence in 1948, its small population was immediately forced to deal with very real existential threats from the neighboring Arab nations as well as figure out ways to absorb hundreds of

thousands of refugees fleeing persecution in other areas of the world. Given the country's struggle for survival and the urgency of providing for the most basic needs of a population which tripled itself in a decade, it was hard to imagine that Israel would make significant progress in economics or technology.

And yet, now more than 60 years after its establishment, Israel has become an economic and technological powerhouse.

Much of the progress is due to innovative abilities in the applied sciences and technology. As a country almost bereft of natural resources, special emphasis was placed on the need for advanced education and scientific research. In fact, the combination of the educational and scientific infrastructure with the country's most pressing problems unexpectedly made for a creative synthesis which set development into motion.

Education and Technology

[Israel](#) today boasts seven top-level institutions of higher education including one of the world's most highly respected institutes of technology.

An emphasis on education was already a core principal for the Jewish community in [Pre-state Israel](#) and two of Israel's leading universities were founded before the establishment of the state: The [Technion-Israel Institute of Technology](#) was established in Haifa in 1924 and the [Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#) was founded the following year in 1925.

Israel ranks as having one of the world's highest percentages of citizens engaged in scientific and technological research and development in relation to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In 2010, approximately 200,000 first-degree students were enrolled in Israel's universities and colleges and nearly 32% of all these students specialized in engineering, medicine or the sciences. In addition, out of the nearly 14,000 students who graduated in 2010 with masters or other advanced degrees, 32% received diplomas in engineering, applied mathematics, sciences or medicine.

This education has created a large boost in employment in this fields as well. While education and business remain the most populated sectors of the Israeli workforce, the percentage of engineers, doctors and other such advanced fields has grown. In 2010, out of every 100 Israeli employees just over 15 people worked in these specialized fields, a percentage nearly double that of the [United States](#).

Research and Development in Industry

Israel has a chief scientist in the [Ministries of Agriculture](#), Communications, [Defense](#), National Infrastructure, [Health](#) and [Industry](#) to promote and encourage science-based high-tech industries. Each chief scientist acts as an advisor to the minister on matters of industrial research and development, promotes cooperation with foreign countries, and provides financial aid to worthy research and development projects.



The Law for the Encouragement of Industrial Research and Development is aimed at developing science-based export-oriented industries, capable of creating employment and improving the country's balance of payments. The chief scientist of the Ministry of Industry and Trade is responsible for implementing this law, and provides [R&D](#) grants to industries seeking to export their products. If a project fails, the government's money is lost; if it succeeds, the entrepreneur pays back three percent of the grant yearly until the sum is repaid.

Israel has also signed [bilateral R&D cooperation agreements](#) with the [United States](#), [Canada](#), members of the European Union, [India](#) and [Singapore](#). The aim of the agreements is to encourage contacts between Israel and overseas companies to facilitate joint ventures in R&D, manufacturing and marketing. The establishment of joint ventures with foreign industrial firms has often utilized the strength of the Israeli firm in innovation and those of the foreign firm in large-scale production and market penetration. Joint ventures have been undertaken in areas such as electronics, software, medical equipment, printing and computerized graphics, with many actively assisted by these bi-national frameworks.

Another way Israel has excelled in R&D is through bilateral foundations set up between itself and the United States such as the [Binational Science Foundation](#) (BSF) and the [Binational Industrial Research and Development Fund](#) (BIRD). The foundations are able to bring together scientists, researchers and industrialists in both countries who use government grants and private seed money to develop new technologies and innovate new practices.

BIRD, for example, has funded more than 830 projects in total and more than 235 different projects since 2001 alone. The cumulative sales of products developed through BIRD projects have exceed \$8 billion and BIRD has received nearly \$100 million in royalty repayments from projects. BSF, meanwhile, has awarded some \$480 million to more than 4,140 research projects involving more than 2,000 scientists from more than 400 institutions located in 46 states. BSF has also documented no less than 75 new discoveries made possible by its research grants and counts 37 Nobel Prize and 19 Lasker Medical Award laureates among its joint partners.

Technological incubators were introduced in 1991 to encourage the development of innovative ideas by individual entrepreneurs, whose companies were too small or whose ideas were too risky to fit into the Ministry of Industry & Trade's regular research and development program. The establishment of the incubators coincided with mass immigration from the [Former Soviet Union](#), which brought an estimated 65,000 engineers to Israel, many of them experts in their field but lacking capital and experience with a free enterprise economy. Incubators assist entrepreneurs to complete their projects and turn them into commercially viable ventures. They provide assistance in recruiting R&D staff, perform marketing and feasibility studies, and provide physical facilities, professional and managerial guidance and assistance in recruiting investment capital.

Medicine & Biotechnology

Israel has made significant theoretical and practical contributions to the [biotechnology](#) revolution and has developed an advanced infrastructure of medical and paramedical research as well as bioengineering capabilities. Clinical medicine and biomedical research account for over half of all scientific publications. The country's industrial sector has increased its activities in the medical field to capitalize on its extensive knowledge base.

Local scientists have developed methods for producing a human growth hormone and interferon, a group of proteins effective against viral infections. Genetic engineering, including cloning, has resulted in a wide spectrum of diagnostic kits based on monoclonal antibodies, along with other microbiological products.

Sophisticated medical equipment for both diagnostic and treatment purposes has been developed and marketed worldwide, such as computer tomography (CT) scanners, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) systems, ultrasound scanners, nuclear medical cameras and surgical lasers.

Other innovations include a controlled-release liquid polymer to prevent accumulation of tooth plaque; a device to reduce both benign and malignant swellings of the prostate gland; the use of botulin to correct eye squint; and a miniature camera encased in a swallowable capsule used to diagnose gastrointestinal disease.

Energy & Optics

Extensive development of alternative [energy sources](#) such as [solar](#), thermal and wind energy has been a response to the country's lack of conventional energy sources. As a result, Israel is a leader in the solar energy field at every level and the world's largest per capita user of residential solar water heaters. Recently a new, high-efficiency receiver to collect concentrated sunlight has been developed that will enhance the use of solar energy in industry as well.

An advance in harnessing wind energy has been the production of a wind turbine with a flexible, inflatable rotor. Technology utilizing pond water with a certain degree of salinity and mineral composition to absorb and store solar energy has been developed. Geothermal power stations, capable of extracting heat from the ground and converting it to steam for powering turbines, are now being tested. A newly approved project, developed by a team of scientists at the Technion, uses dry air and water (even sea or brackish water) to produce energy through 1,000-meter high chimneys.

Optics, electro-optics and lasers have been growing rapidly as industrial fields. Israel is a world leader in fiber-optics, electro-optic inspection systems for printed circuit boards, thermal imaging night-vision systems and electro-optics-based robotic manufacturing systems.



Sports

As in most of the world, sports are both an important part of Israeli society and a big business.

The most popular sports in Israel are soccer and basketball, though Israeli athletes have excelled in a wide range of sports and some have even advanced to the most advanced levels of competition in Europe and the United States.

Israel has taken part in every summer Olympics games since 1952, has qualified for the World Cup once and the UEFA Champions League four times, and has won the Euro-League basketball championship five times.

In addition, Israel hosts the quadrennial Maccabiah, or International Jewish Olympics, which have become an worldwide spectacle drawing some of the finest Jewish athletes.

Major Sports in Israel

Soccer and basketball are far and away the most popular spectator sports in the country and Israeli teams have taken full advantage of their opportunity to compete in both national leagues and in Europe.

As in the rest of Europe and the Middle East, soccer is king in Israel. Israel's most impressive soccer achievement came in 1970 when the country qualified for the World Cup finals in Mexico for the first — and so far the only — time. At that time only 16 teams reached the finals and the side performed honorably, forcing draws with Italy and Sweden, though going out in the first round.

The Israeli domestic soccer league, called the Israeli Premier League, was founded in 1999 and has 16 teams from around the country. In 2012, the Israeli Premier League placed seventeenth in UEFA rankings, its highest placement since 2005 when it was ranked 16th. This league has been won by Maccabi Haifa seven times, by Hapoel Tel Aviv twice and Beitar Jerusalem twice. The winner of the Israeli league gets an automatic placement in UEFA Europa League third qualifying round.

The Israeli Basketball Association, Israel's professional basketball league, is comprised of eleven teams based mostly in cities in the center of the country, including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Herzilyah, though there are also teams in Haifa, Ashkelon, and Ashdod. Maccabi Tel Aviv is the most successful of these teams and has historically dominated the league. Maccabi Tel Aviv has also won the Euroleague championship five times, in 1977, 1981, 2001, 2004 and 2005.

Women's basketball is also a flourishing sector and major matches can attract several thousand spectators. The championship is usually fought between Elitzur Ramla and Elitzur Holon.

Baseball was attempted to be introduced into Israel through the Israel Baseball League in 2007. The IBA became the first professional baseball league in the Middle East, but in its first season it failed to draw better athletes and more fans and was disbanded after just the inaugural season.

Israeli Athletes Internationally

[Omri Casspi](#) is currently the most famous Israeli athlete on the international scene. Casspi, who began his professional career in the Israeli Basketball Association, became the first Israeli-born player to be drafted by a team in the United States' National Basketball Association (NBA).

In 2009, the Sacramento Kings took Casspi with the 23rd overall pick in the first round of the draft and the Israeli debuted in October of that same year. In 2011, Casspi played in all of Sacramento's 71 games, starting 27 of them. On June 30, 2011, Sacramento traded Casspi and a future draft pick to the Cleveland Cavaliers.

[Shay Doron](#), currently playing in professional basketball in Israel, was a big star in womens colleg basketball in the United States and is one of the best players in the history of the University of Maryland Terrapins in the NCAA. In 2006, Doron led her squad to a national championship over arch-rival Duke Blue Devils. Doron is ranked in the top 10 for field goal attempts, assists, steals, three-pointers, and three-point attempts in school history and she started more games than anyone else in Maryland women's basketball history. In 2007 she was drafted into the WNBA by the New York Liberty.

[Yossi Benayoun](#) is one of Israel's most famous international soccer stars, currently playing for Arsenal, on loan from Chelsea, in the English Premier League. Benayoun, a midfielder, is nicknamed the "Diamond from Dimona" (Dimona is his birth city in Israel) and also plays for the Israeli national soccer team. From 2005 to 2012, playing for West Ham, Liverpool, Arsenal and Chelsea, Benayoun scored 28 goals in 174 appearances on the pitch.

Israel at the Olympics

Israel has competed in the Olympic games since 1952 and the country's participants have medalled seven times.

In the 1988 Seoul Olympics, Eitan Friedlander and Shimshon Brockman finished fourth in the 470 sailing category and would certainly have won a medal had the duo not refrained from participating on [Yom Kippur](#), thus forfeiting one crucial race.

The country won its first Olympic medal at the 1992 Barcelona games, when judoka Yael Arad (women's under 61 kg. category) took a silver medal and Oren Smadja (judo, men's under 78 kg. category) won a bronze medal.

At the [2004 Athens Games](#), [Gal Friedman](#) won Israel's first, and so far only, gold medal, when he placed first in mistral sailing. That year 36 Israeli athletes competed in 13 different sports and Israeli judo champion [Ariel Ze'evi](#) also took home a bronze medal in Men's Half-Heavyweight (100kg) Judo.

At the most recent summer games, the [2008 Beijing Games](#), 39 Israeli's competed in 10 sports, making it the second largest Israeli delegation to the Olympics, one less than the team that went to the [2000 Sydney Games](#).

Tragically, however, Israel's greatest impact on the Olympics was during the [1972 Munich games](#), when PLO terrorists brutally massacred 11 Israeli athletes and coaches, in what has come to be known as the "[Munich Olympic Massacre](#)."

The Maccabiah



Held in Israel every four years, the [Maccabiah Games](#) is named for Jewish warrior Judah Maccabe who fought against the ancient Greeks.

The Maccabiah Games are now considered the third largest international sports competition in the world.

Many notable athletes have competed in the Maccabiah, including swimmers [Mark Spitz](#) and [Jason Lezak](#), gymnast Mitch Gaylord, golfer Corey Pavin, basketball players [Ernie Grunfeld](#) and Danny Shayes and tennis player [Dick Savitt](#).

The first Maccabiah games, held in 1932, were nicknamed the “White Horse Olympics” because [Tel Aviv](#) mayor Dizengoff led a parade honoring the games through the city streets while riding a white horse. Approximately 390 athletes from 14 countries participated in the competition.

The most recent games, the 18th incarnation held in 2009, featured approximately 6,000 athletes from 53 countries in addition to 3,000 athletes from Israel. Predictably, Israel took home the most medals (367), with the United States (146) and Russia (34) placing second and third respectively.

Water

Water is considered as a national resource of utmost importance in Israel as it is vital to ensure the population's well-being and quality of life and to preserve the rural-agricultural sector.

Located on the edge of a desert belt, however, Israel has always suffered a [scarcity of water](#). Archeological discoveries reveal that local inhabitants even thousands of years ago were already concerned with water conservation, as evidenced by a variety of systems designed to collect, store, and transfer rainwater from one place to another.

As maximum use has been made of all freshwater sources, ways are being developed to exploit marginal water resources through the recycling of waste brackish water, and desalination of seawater.

To overcome regional imbalances in water availability, most of Israel's freshwater sources are joined in an integrated grid. Its central artery, the National Water Carrier, completed in 1964, brings water from the north and central regions, through a network of giant pipes, aqueducts, open canals, reservoirs, tunnels, dams and pumping stations, to the semi-arid south.

Water Usage and Resources

In 2009, Israel's total water consumption sat at 1.811 million cubic meters which was divided among agricultural needs (1.016 million cubic meters), domestic needs (685 million cubic meters), and industrial needs (110 million cubic meters). That same year, Israel's total water production was only a slightly higher 1.849 million cubic meters.

Israel's main freshwater resources are: [Lake Kinneret](#) - the Sea of Galilee; the Coastal Aquifer - along the Mediterranean Sea; and the Mountain Aquifer - under the Carmel mountain range. Additional smaller regional resources are located in the Upper Galilee, Western Galilee, Beit Shean Valley, [Jordan Valley](#), the Dead Sea Rift, the [Negev](#) and the Arava. The long-term average quantity of replenishable water from major water resources amounts to about 1,850 MCM per year.

The scarcity of water is not only an environmental, social, and political issue, but is also a security risk, as it affects Israel's economy and plays a role in peace talks.

For years, Israelis have participated at the cutting edge of water conservation technology. Israel maintains approximately 60 billion cubic feet of renewable water per year, 65 percent of which is used for irrigation, and the remaining 35 for industrial and municipal purposes.

Israel's national water company, the government-owned Mekorot Water Company Ltd, manages the country's water resources and the development of new sources. Mekorot produces about two-thirds of the country's water, and provides water for all cities, industries, and agricultural areas in Israel. Privately-owned water companies supply the rest.

The shortage of water in the southern, semi-arid region of Israel required the construction of an extensive water-delivery system that supplies water to this region from resources in the north. Thus, most of the country's fresh water resources were inter-connected into the National Water Carrier, commissioned in 1964. The National Water Carrier, an integrated network of pumping stations, reservoirs, canals, and pipelines, supplies a blend of surface and groundwater. Water not required by consumers is recharged into the aquifer

through spreading basins and dual-purpose wells. Recharging of aquifers helps to prevent evaporation losses and, in the coastal area, intrusion of seawater. The National Water Carrier supplies a total of 1,000 major consumers, including 18 municipalities and 80 local authorities.

Environmental deterioration has worsened due the rapid growth of agriculture, industry, and cities. The coastal region, home to the majority of citizens and the country's industry, is also the site of such environmental legislation as the Mediterranean Action Plan, concerning shore inspection, clean-ups, and pollution reduction. Groundwater pollution is mainly caused by chemical fertilizers, pesticides, seawater intrusion, and industrial and household wastewater. The quality of drinking water is kept under strict supervision.

After drawing on nearly all of its readily available water resources and promoting vigorous conservation programs, Israel has long made it a national mission to stretch existing sources by developing non-conventional water sources, while promoting conservation. These efforts have focused on the following: reclaimed wastewater effluents; intercepted runoff and artificial recharge; artificially-induced rainfall - cloud seeding; and desalination.

Water Conservation and Water Use Efficiency

Water conservation is the most reliable and least expensive way to stretch the country's water resources, and the challenge is being met in all sectors. Public water conservation campaigns coupled with technical and economic measures are being applied to reduce consumption and to increase awareness of water scarcity.

Israeli engineers and agriculturalists have developed and implemented the revolutionary drip system, which has reduced water consumption by 50-70% compared with gravity irrigation, and by 10-20% compared to sprinkler irrigation. Recently, growers have been introducing the first generation of ultra-low application rate (minute irrigation) drip emitters for soil-less media in greenhouses. Considered even more advanced and efficient than the drip system, they create optimal air-water relationships in the plants' root zones.

Micro-spraying and micro-sprinkling irrigation accessories have also been developed, mainly for use in orchards, where each tree is irrigated by its individual sprayer.

In the domestic and urban sectors, conservation efforts focus on improvements in efficiency, resource management, repair, control and monitoring of municipal water systems. Citizens are urged to save water. The slogan "Don't waste a drop" is known in every home in Israel. Parks have been placed under a conservation regime, including planting drought-resistant plants and watering at night.

Water Management Policy

In 1959, a comprehensive water law was passed, making water resources public property and regulating water resource exploitation and allocation, as well as pollution prevention and water conservation. Under the law, all available water resources are made accessible to consumers, as directed by the Water Commissioner. The Water Commissioner is responsible for implementing the government's policy, ensuring sufficient water supply of the required quality and reliability, while conserving and preserving water resources.

In February 2005, an agreement was signed to establish a second [seawater desalination plant](#). The \$85 million plant is located in the Palmahim area and, after becoming fully operational in 2007, will produce 30 million cubic meters of purified water a year. This project follows a plant built at [Ashkelon](#), which produces 100 million cubic meters of pure water.

On August 6, 2005, Israel and [Turkey](#) signed a groundbreaking agreement in which Turkey exports 1.75 billion cubic feet of water from its Manavgat River to Israel each year for the next 20 years. While the Turkish water is expected to fulfill only about three percent of Israel's needs during the 20-year period, it is Israel's first water import agreement and a further expansion of burgeoning economic ties between the two countries. The deal, which will be worth \$800 million to \$1 billion, "will create a new reality in the region," former Israeli Foreign Minister [Shimon Peres](#) said. "I hope that Turkey will be the major supplier of water to the region."

Still at issue is the actual transporting of the water to Israel, which is expected to entail a high cost. Oil tankers will likely be used, but must first be refurbished to make them safe for hauling water.



Women

The [State of Israel](#) was established on the principle of equality of social and political rights for all its citizens irrespective of religion, race or sex.

This image is, however, somewhat misleading. There are many areas in which traditions, social institutions, religious rules, and even laws have kept women at a disadvantage: in the workplace, in divorce proceedings, in national service and even as victims of violence. Changes in the political and economic climate, such as the Middle East conflict onflict in the Middle East and the influx of thousands of guest workers, have created new problems.

There are still difficulties facing women in Israel today, but overall the women's movement has fought for, and won, many advancements for their place in society. Today, women are represented in every level of government, a woman judge presides over the Supreme Court, a woman sits in the highest command of the IDF and women take positions in all of the top high-tech industries.

Legal Status

Israel's [Declaration of Independence](#) was one of the first of its kind to include sex as a group classification for the purpose of equal rights. It stated, "The State of Israel will maintain equal social and political rights for all citizens, irrespective of religion, race or sex."

Since then, there have been a number of pieces of legislation aimed at implementing the principle of gender equality.

The 1951 Women's Equal Rights Law equated the legal status of women to that of men and prohibited discrimination on grounds of sex. The 1988 Equal Employment Opportunities Law similarly prohibited all forms of discrimination in the workplace on the basis of gender, marital status and parenthood. This law recognizes sexual harassment as a form of discrimination in the workplace, which is subject to civil and criminal sanctions.

In 1998, the [Israeli Prevention of Sexual Harassment Law](#) was enacted, prohibiting sexual harassment and prejudicial treatment in a broad range of situations involving relationships of power and dependence. That same year the Knesset established the [Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women](#) which is authorized to encourage, coordinate, promote and monitor the government's and the local authorities' activities regarding women's status, to promote legislation and to advise the government on the enforcement of laws promoting the status of women. It is also expected to initiate research and to enhance public awareness through the media and education.

Further, the Israeli judiciary has contributed greatly to the advancement of women's rights. The [Supreme Court](#) has declared the principle of gender equality to be a fundamental tenet of the Israeli legal system.

In 2010, [women](#) represented just over 50% of Israel's population and their average [life expectancy](#) was 82.4 years, compared to 78.6 years for men.

Education & Employment

In 2010, 23.7% of Israeli women above the age of fifteen had between 13 and 15 years of formal [education](#), compared with only 21.3% of males in the same bracket. Conversely, though, 3.4% of all Israeli women had no schooling compared to just 1.2% of men.

In 2010, women accounted for 57.9% of all [university and college](#) students graduating with their first degree, amounting to 24,810 in absolute numbers. Women also represented 54.7% of all first-degree students in Israel. During the 2000's, Israel ranked seventh in the Western world with regard to the percentage of women studying in higher education facilities.

Since the establishment of the state, the ratio of [unemployment](#) among females has been slightly higher than that of males, though it dipped lower than the male ratio for the first time in 2009. That year, 7.5% of the women civilian labor force (109,000) was unemployed in comparison with 7.6% of men (122,000).

In 2010, there were 1.34 million women working either full or part time in the civilian labor force compared with 1.55 million men. In terms of equal economic participation in the workforce for women, Israel was ranked 15th out of the 31 nations in Europe, Asia, North America and Oceania by the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Within the women workforce, the majority of women have jobs as clerical workers, sales agents, social service workers, or associate professionals and technicians. 93,000 women worked in the high-tech sector, of which more than half had knowledge-intensive positions.

Average gross work income per month for Israeli women in 2009 was 6,280 NIS, compared to 9,500 NIS for men.

In the 2008/09 academic year, women made up just under 30% of all academic staff at Israeli universities and colleges, with the majority of those being lecturers in the humanities and social sciences.

Government & Public Life

Since the establishment of the [State of Israel](#), only ten women have served as cabinet ministers, including Prime Minister [Golda Meir](#) and Vice Prime Minister [Tzipi Livni](#). Of the twenty-four (24) ministers in the eighteenth [Knesset](#) (2009-Presnet), only two - [Limor Livnat](#) (Culture & Sport Minister) and Sofa Landver (Immigration Absorbition Minister) are women. Another three women - Lea Nass, Gila Gamliel and Orit Noked - hold deputy minister positions and a final woman, [Tzipi Livni](#), is leader of the opposition.

In the eighteenth [Knesset](#), elected in 2009, there are 24 women out of the 120 members, representing 20%, as compared to an average of 17.6% among the member states of the [European Union](#). This 20%, though, does represent the highest number of women who have served in a government, up from a record low of 8 in 1981 and 9 in 1996.

In the [eighteenth Knesset](#), six women sit on the Finance Committee and two belong to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. In addition, the Committee on the Status of Women, the Science & Technology Committee and the Subcommittee on Trafficking in Women are all headed by women.



Israel is one of the only countries to have been led by a female Prime Minister. Known as the “Iron Lady” of Israeli politics, Prime Minister [Golda Meir](#) served from 1969 to 1974, and was only the third woman to serve as Prime Minister in the world.

Beyond politics, women have become a central part of the Israeli judicial system.

For many years at least one of Israel's [Supreme Court](#) justices has been a woman. At present, five women sit as judges on the 15-person Supreme Court and one of them, [Dorit Beinisch](#), is the current President of the Court. Beinisch served for ten years as a justice on the Supreme Court, from 1995 to 2005, and in September of 2006 she was sworn in as the first woman to ever hold the position of Supreme Court President, succeeding [Aharon Barak](#).

Women also comprise nearly 51% of all magistrate and district court judges, making it very likely that more women will be appointed to the Supreme Court in the future. Additionally, more than 44% of all lawyers registered in Israel are women.

Sixty percent of public servants are women, but most are concentrated in the lower ranks of the civil service. Affirmative Action legislation was enacted to improve women’s representation in higher ranks. Since the founding of the State, only four women have served as mayors of municipalities. One of the four was a Christian Arab. In 2012, there was only one woman municipality mayor - Miriam Fireberg of [Netanya](#). Additionally, in 2012, there were many women local representatives though only one woman, Yael German, was serving as a mayor of a local authority.

Many political parties now necessitate a minimum number of women on all party lists, but these requirements are not yet implemented on all levels of party activity. In addition to legislative change, the work of government bodies, non-government women's organizations and grassroots activist groups are instrumental in directing and channeling the intellectual power and leadership potential of Israeli women. In recent years, legislation has been proposed to obligate parties to open their ranks to women, by curtailing government support to parties with less than 25% women candidates.

Military & National Service

As opposed to every other nation around the world, in Israel women are conscripted into military service alongside the men.

Except for their service in the [War of Independence](#) (when all able bodied individuals were needed to fight), however, were not allowed to serve in combat units in the IDF until 1994. That year, under appeal by a female immigrant from South Africa, the High Court ruled that some combat roles be open to female soldiers. In 2000, the Equality amendment to the Military Service law stated that the right of women to serve in any role in the IDF is equal to the right of men.

Since then the number of women serving in all sorts of combat roles, from the artillery and infantry corps to naval and air forces, has skyrocketed.

Today 90% of all military positions in the IDF are available to women . Some specialized units, such as Karakal, a unisex combat unit, and the elite canine unit, Oketz, are open to women. Various positions in the

artillery and armored divisions are also tasked by women. Women also serve in the Sachlav unit of the Military Police, the Samag unit of the Border Police, and the Yasam special patrol unit of the Israeli police.

In 2001, the [Air Force](#) graduated its [first ever female combat fighter pilot](#), Lt. Roni Zuckerman. Four years later, in 2005, a [second female passed the intensive fighter pilot course](#) and two other female soldiers graduated to serve as transport pilots. During the [Second Lebanon War](#) in 2006, female helicopter pilots took part in field missions alongside their male counterparts.

In October 2011, 27 female combat soldiers completed the IDF Ground Forces Officers Training Course along with 369 male soldiers and were promoted to the rank of second lieutenant. The new female officers serve in a wide range of combat units from artillery to Caracal and tanks.

In December 2011, the 163rd graduation ceremony of the [Israeli Air Force](#) Flight Academy saw five female pilots complete the arduous and elite program.

Women's Organizations

The exact number of women's NGOs operating in Israel is estimated at 100. They vary tremendously in size, ideology, socio-economic characteristics of their members, activities and goals. Some of the major organizations are the Israel Women's Network (IWN), [Na'amat](#), Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), and Emunah.



FACT SHEETS

Facts, Expert Analysis, and Talking Points on the issues and contentious hot-topics in the Arab-Israeli conflict

On Israel: Israel at 63 | 1949 “Green Line” | Settlements | Liberal Democracy | Security Fence

On the Palestinians: Unilateral Independence | “Right of Return” | Refugees | Abbas | Hamas

On Middle East: Iranian Threat | Nuclear Proliferation | Arab Spring | Christians | Iran Sanctions

Israel at 63: Statistical Glimpse

Geography

Israel stands at the crossroads of [Europe](#), [Asia](#) and [Africa](#). Geographically, it belongs to the Asian continent.

Its western border is the Mediterranean Sea; to the north it is bound by [Lebanon](#) and [Syria](#); to the east by [Jordan](#); and, to the south by the Red Sea and [Egypt](#).

Long and narrow in shape, Israel is about 290 miles (470 km) long and 85 miles (135 km) across at its widest point. Its total area is 22,072 sq km, of which 21,643 sq km is land area ([Sea of Galilee](#): 164 sq km; [Dead Sea](#): 265 sq km). Israel's total land border measures 857 km, its Mediterranean coastline 194 km, and 12 km on the Red Sea.

The only river in Israel: The Jordan River, approximately 250 km. *Main streams:* Alexander, Besor, Hadera, Yarqon, Sa'ar, Qishon, and Soreq.

Geographical Regions

Selected elevations:

Arid zones	45%	Mt. Hermon (Golan)	7,300 ft.	2,224 m.
Plains and valleys	25%	Mt. Meron (Upper Galilee)	3,964 ft.	1,208 m.
Mountains	16%	Mt. Ramon (Negev)	3,396 ft.	1,035 m.
Rift valley	9%	Mt. of Olives (Jerusalem)	2,739 ft.	835 m.
Coastal strip	5%	Mt. Tabor (Lower Galilee)	1,930 ft.	588 m.
		Mt. Carmel (Haifa)	1,792 ft.	546 m.
		Dead Sea (lowest point on earth)	- 1,368 ft.	- 417 m.

Natural resources

Raw materials for construction of buildings and roads: gravel and stone, sand, kurkar, clay, limestone, gypsum, and tuff.

Raw materials for manufacturing: potash, bromine, magnesium, salt, phosphates, sand, clay, and limestone.

Energy sources: natural gas, oil shale.

Climate

Israel is on a "climatic crossroad", which is a transitional area between a temperate and arid climate.

The southern and eastern areas of Israel are characterized by an arid climate, while the other areas are characterized by a Mediterranean climate. Due to this climatic formation, there is high variability in the amount of precipitation from year to year, and in the different areas of the country.

The highest temperature ever recorded in Israel was 54°C (June 21, 1942); The lowest temperature ever recorded was -13.7°C (February 7, 1950)

People

	1980	1990	2011
Population	3,921,700	4,821,700	7,836,000
Civilian labor force	1,318,100	1,649,900	3,150,500
Jews in Israel (% of world Jews)	25	30	~ 45%
Life expectancy:			
- Females	75.7	78.4	83.7
- Males	72.1	75.7	80.4
Infant mortality (1000 live births)	15.6	9.9	3.6
School population	1,200,700	1,451,300	1,500,000
% of population with 13 years or more of formal schooling	19.2	25.3	46.0

Population by Religion

Jews	75.3%
Muslims	20.5%
Christians	2.0%

Population Distribution

Urban localities	91.7%
Rural localities	8.3%

Largest cities by population

Jerusalem	773,800
Tel Aviv-Yafo	395,000
Haifa	265,600

Druze	1.7%	Of which: Moshavim Kibbutzim	3.6% 1.7%	Rishon Lezion	229,000
Not classified	0.5%			Ashdod	211,300

Immigration

Immigrants by Continent 1948-2010

Europe	1,845,051
Africa	505,624
Asia	435,007
America & Oceania	258,042
Unknown	31,590

Immigrants by Year of Immigration

1948-1951	688,000
1952-1959	272,000
1960-1969	374,000
1970-1979	346,000
1980-1989	154,000
1990-1999	956,400
2000-2011	302,493

Economy

	1980	1990	2009
Gross Domestic Product (NIS millions)	116	111,804	768,339
Net exports of goods (US\$ billions)	5,291.9	11,603.1	42,065.4
thereof:			
Industrial products (excl. diamonds)	3,340.4	7,696.8	34,838.7
Agricultural products	555.7	657.2	1,229.9
Net imports of goods (US\$ billions)	7,845.7	15,107.1	46,928.4



Tourists arriving	1,065,800	1,131,700	2,321,400
Air passengers	2,847,000	3,720,000	10,574,000
Freight shipped by air (in tons)	105,800	194,160	264,563
Production of electricity (millions of kilwatt/hours)	12,400	20,900	53,179
Private cars	410,000	803,000	1,946,749

Education

First Year University Students by Top Field of Study (Total 55,045 students)

Social Sciences	24.4%
General Sciences/Mathematics	11.5%
Engineering/Architecture	15.6%
Business/Administration	13%
Arts/Education/Literature	16.6%

1949 Armistice: The “Green Line”

After armistice with the Arabs ended the 1948 War of Independence, [Israel](#) sought peace with its neighbors for nearly the entire next two decades before being forced again to defend itself against Arab aggression in [1967](#). Upon defeating the invading Arab armies in just six days, Israelis thought the Arab leaders would realize they could not defeat Israel militarily and would instead choose the path of peace. Instead, the [Arab League](#) declared following the war: "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it...."

Israel would not have captured the [West Bank](#) or reunified [Jerusalem](#) if [King Hussein](#) of Jordan had heeded the [warning](#) of Prime Minister [Eshkol](#) to stay out of the war. Instead, the Jordanian army was ordered to attack and, in the course of defending itself, Israel eventually took control of these territories.

The Arab states lobbied the [UN](#) to require that Israel withdraw from "all the" territories it captured. This is the demand made by the Arab League in a plan put forward by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah. The [UN rejected this formulation](#), though, when it adopted [Resolution 242](#) because the [Security Council](#) understood the 1949 armistice lines were not secure or defensible.

Since 1967, Israel consistently says that in the context of a peace agreement it would be prepared to withdraw back to the 1949 armistice lines with slight modifications - that is, to a new border that meets Resolution 242's requirements of being secure and ensuring territorial inviolability.

After the [1967 Six-Day War](#), Israeli Foreign Minister [Abba Eban](#) told the [United Nations](#):

“The June [1967] map is for us equivalent to insecurity and danger. I do not exaggerate when I say that it has for us something of a memory of Auschwitz.”

President Lyndon Johnson [also rejected the idea](#) that Israel should withdraw to the pre-war frontier:

"There are some who have urged, as a single, simple solution, an immediate return to the situation as it was on June 4....this is not a prescription for peace but for renewed hostilities."

The Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded in 1967:

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

More than three decades later, Lieutenant General (Ret.) Thomas Kelly, director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Gulf War, reiterated Israel's strategic concern:

"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."

In 1995, Israeli Prime Minister [Yitzhak Rabin](#) - the leader who came the closest to making peace with the Palestinians - reiterated that Israel cannot return to the de-facto 1967 boundary. "The border of the State of Israel ... will be beyond the lines which existed before the Six Day War," said Rabin. "We will not return to the June 1967 lines."

In 2004, President [George W. Bush sent a letter](#) to Prime Minister [Ariel Sharon](#) that outlined U.S. policy concerning the possible borders of Israel and Palestine. "It is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return [by Israel] to the armistice lines of 1949," Bush wrote. His letter was [overwhelmingly supported](#) by both houses of the [U.S. Congress](#).

If forced to withdraw back to the 1949 armistice lines, Israel would lose almost all of its tactical, strategic, geographic and topographic military advantages.

Tactically, a missile shot at Israel from inside the [West Bank](#) could land in any city as well as Israel's main international ports in under two minutes, negating the possibility for any counter-measures to intercept the warhead. *Strategically*, Israel would lose early warning radar stations and its control over the [Jordan Rift Valley](#) where the [IDF](#) protects Israel from illegal weapons smuggling into the [West Bank](#). *Geographically*, within the 1949 lines Israel would be diminished to only 9 miles at its narrowest point and every major city would fall within short missile range. *Topographically*, the [West Bank](#) and [Golan Heights](#) provide more than a 3,000 foot incline over the coastal plain- giving this up would enable the Arabs to have unfettered access to attack major Israeli population centers and transportation hubs from highly defensible positions.

[President Bush](#) put the border issue in perspective:

"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."

A withdrawal to the 1949 armistice lines, however, is not even satisfactory to the radical Islamists. [Hamas](#) and [Islamic Jihad](#) have made clear that they will not end their [terrorist](#) campaign against Israel even if the Jewish state withdraws to the pre-war frontier. It is the mere existence of a Jewish state - in any form - that these and other [Muslim](#) extremist organizations have said they will never accept .

When [Egypt's Anwar Sadat](#) declared he was prepared to make [peace](#), and matched his words with deeds, Israel [withdrew completely from the Sinai Peninsula](#), dismantled every Jewish [settlement](#) in the region, and turned over its oil fields and radar stations. When Jordan's [King Hussein](#) agreed to make [peace](#), Israel agreed to return the small swath of Jordanian territory it held.

To date, Israel has withdrawn from approximately 94 percent of the territories it captured in 1967. In return for peace with [Syria](#) and an end to Palestinian terror, Israel is prepared to withdraw from much of the remaining 6% in dispute. In truth, the whole fight over the [West Bank](#) now boils down to an area of about 200 square miles out of the more than 26,000 originally captured by Israel.

Israel remains committed to trading land for peace, and never annexed the [West Bank](#) or [Gaza Strip](#) because it expected to return part of these territories in negotiations. When the Palestinians finally declared that they

would recognize Israel and renounce terrorism, Israel agreed to begin to withdraw. Plans to withdraw from additional territory were scuttled by Palestinian terrorism and their violation of the [Oslo agreements](#).

For peace, Israeli Prime Minister [Ehud Barak offered](#) to withdraw from 100% of the [Gaza Strip](#) and 95-97% of the [West Bank](#), that is, to the 1949 armistice lines with minor modifications. He also agreed to dismantle settlements, and allow the Palestinians to establish a state with east Jerusalem as its capital if they would end the conflict.

[Arafat](#) rejected the offer and did not even offer a counterproposal.

Israel offered to negotiate a return of the [Golan Heights](#) to [Syria](#), and a succession of Prime Ministers declared a readiness to concede this strategic high ground in exchange for peace. Neither Syrian President [Hafez Assad](#) nor his Bashar, who succeeded him, have been prepared to follow Sadat and Hussein's example and offer peace in return.

In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew from the [Gaza Strip](#). The [disengagement plan](#) also involved the dismantling of four settlements in northern [Samaria](#).

In 2006, Prime Minister [Ehud Olmert](#) proposed a plan in which Israel would evacuate most of the settlements in the [West Bank](#), while holding onto five large [settlement blocs](#). This plan, known as "Realignment" would be executed unilaterally if Israel cannot negotiate an agreement with the Palestinians. The plan sought to permanently define Israel's borders with a future Palestinian state, and ensure that Israel will maintain its Jewish majority. The breakout of the [Second Lebanon War](#) in the summer of 2006 and the EU's opposition to an Israeli unilateral withdrawal led to the plan's demise.

In 2011, President [Barak Obama](#) called on Israel to use the 1949 lines as a basis for peace negotiations and assured that Israel's strategic depth would be maintained through "mutually agreed land swaps." "Israeli's and Palestinians," [Obama pledged](#), "will negotiate a border that is different than the one that existed on June 4th, 1967."

Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) has made clear that he is ready and willing to negotiate the border as President Obama said, and he maintains that Israel cannot be expected to move back to the 1967 lines. "I am willing to make painful compromises to achieve peace," Netanyahu [said before a joint session of Congress](#) on May 24, 2011. "I recognize that in a genuine peace, [Israel] will be required to give up parts of the Jewish homeland."



Settlements in the West Bank

Jewish settlements in the West Bank have drawn serious ire

from the international community for their supposed illegality and, even worse, their purported impediment to advancing the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. While Israeli's debate vociferously the logic behind establishing communities in territory that may one day be ceded for the creation of a Palestinian state, the settlements merit is unquestionable - the right of Jews to live in the West Bank is clear and legal.

History

Jews have actually been living in Judea and Samaria, the area commonly referred to as the [West Bank](#), for hundreds of years - far longer than any Palestinian has lived in the area. In fact, the only time in recent history that Jews did not live in the area was between 1948 to 1967, when the occupying Jordanian government prohibited Jews from remaining in the West Bank.

After conquering the West Bank following the 1967 Six-Day War, [Israel](#) sought peace with its Arab neighbors for two decades before the first Jewish community was even established in the [West Bank](#). No Arab leader, though, was willing to negotiate at the time and Israel decided to allow the building of cities in the region.

Israel did not begin to build large numbers of settlements until after 1977. That is also when [Egypt negotiated peace](#). Israel froze settlement building afterward in the hope that other Arab states would follow Egypt's example. None did.

Israel built then allowed the building of more settlements in the 1980's and 1990's; [King Hussein](#) of Jordan, meanwhile, made [peace with Israel](#), and settlements were not an issue. Likewise, during the Oslo agreements in the early 1990's, Israel did not agree to dismantle any settlements or freeze construction and the Palestinians agreed.

In 2005, after several years of bloodshed, terror and stalled peace talks with the Palestinians, Prime Minister [Ariel Sharon](#) implemented his [disengagement plan](#) and completely withdrew every Israeli soldier and settler from the [Gaza Strip](#). Israel safely evacuated more than 8,500 Israeli settlers and destroyed more than 10 settlements.

Legality

Jews should have a right to live anywhere. To say they are not allowed to live there is the definition of anti-Semitism, discrimination and bigotry.

Neither the [Declaration of Principles](#) of September 13, 1993, nor the [Interim Agreement](#) contain any provisions prohibiting or restricting the establishment or expansion of Jewish communities in the [West Bank](#) or [Gaza Strip](#).

Additionally, [Settlements](#) do not violate the [Fourth Geneva Convention](#), which prohibits the forcible transfer of people of one state to the territory of another state that it has occupied as a result of a war. The intention of this protocol was to insure that local populations who came under occupation would not be forced to move. Jews are not being forced to go to the West Bank (nor are Palestinians being forced to stay or go); on the contrary, they are voluntarily moving back to places where they, or their ancestors, once lived before being expelled by others.

Moreover, to say that Israel illegally annexed the territory from its prior "owners" holds no water. The West Bank never legally belonged to [Jordan](#) and certainly not to the Palestinians, who were never the sovereign authority in any part of the land. The British, who controlled the land during the Mandate Period, withdrew any legal claims they had to the territory; the Ottoman Empire who held the area before the British no longer exists.

The question of the future status of [settlements](#) - whether they will be destroyed entirely, fall under Palestinian authority or be annexed to Israel - is the subject of final status [negotiations with the Palestinians](#). The fact that Israel continues to agree to discuss the matter illustrates a willingness to compromise on this issue.

"Consensus" Settlements

An estimated 80 percent of the settlers live in what are in effect suburbs of major Israeli cities such as [Jerusalem](#) and [Tel Aviv](#). Virtually the entire Jewish population believes Israel must retain these areas to ensure its security, and that they could be brought within Israel's [borders](#) with [minor modifications](#) of the [1949 Armistice lines](#). President Obama has reiterated his belief that Israel should hold on to these major population centers with the caveat that the Palestinians would receive equal land in return.

Of the 122 officially recognized West Bank [settlements](#), with an estimated population of 303,900 in 2010, more than 60 percent of the Jews live in just five [settlement](#) blocs (Ma'ale Adumim, Modiin Ilit, Ariel, Gush Etzion, Givat Ze'ev) near the [1949 Armistice lines](#). The Arab city of [Nablus](#) alone is larger than those six Jewish cities put together. It is inconceivable that Israel would evacuate large cities such as Ma'ale Adumim, with a population of more than 35,000, even after a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Even [Yasser Arafat](#) grudgingly accepted at [Camp David](#) the idea that the large [settlement blocs](#) would be part of Israel.

Bloc Name	No. of Communities	Population	Approximate Area (sq. miles)
Gush Etzion	18	54,939	10
Ariel	15	41,720	47
Ma'ale Adumim	6	40,210	28
Givat Ze'ev	5	12,916	3



Modiin Illit	4	51,773	2.2
Total	48	201,558	90.2

As the table shows, these are large communities with thousands of residents. Evacuating them would be the equivalent of dismantling major American cities the size of Maryland's capital, Annapolis, Juneau, Alaska, or Augusta, Georgia. On a proportional basis, compared to the total population of the country, these blocs would be the equivalent of U.S. municipalities with populations ranging from a half million (e.g., Boston, Denver, Seattle, Washington, D.C.) to 1.7 million (e.g., Philadelphia and Houston).

- [Ma'ale Adumim](#) is a suburb of Israel's capital, barely three miles outside [Jerusalem's](#) city limits, a ten-minute drive away. Ma'ale Adumim is not a recently constructed outpost on a hilltop; it is a 30-year-old community that is popular because it is clean, safe, and close to where many residents work. It is also the largest Jewish city in the territories, with a population of 34,324 (Dec 2009). Approximately 6,000 people live in surrounding settlements that are included in the Ma'ale bloc. Israel has long planned to fill in the empty gap between Jerusalem and this bedroom community (referred to as the E1 project). The corridor is approximately 3,250 acres and does not have any inhabitants, so no Palestinians would be displaced. According to the [Clinton plan](#), Ma'ale Adumim was to be part of Israel.
- The [Gush Etzion Bloc](#) consists of 18 communities with a population of more than 54,000 just 10 minutes from [Jerusalem](#). Jews lived in this area prior to 1948, but the Jordanian Legion destroyed the settlements and killed 240 women and children during Israel's [War of Independence](#). After Israel recaptured the area in [1967](#), descendants of those early settlers reestablished the community. The largest of the settlements is the city of Betar Illit with nearly 35,000 residents as of December 2009.
- The **Givat Ze'ev bloc** includes five communities just northwest of [Jerusalem](#). Givat Ze'ev, with a population of just under 11,000, is by far the largest.
- **Modiin Illit** is a bloc with four communities. The city of Modiin Illit is the bloc's largest with more than 46,000 people situated just over the [Green Line](#), about 23 miles northwest of [Jerusalem](#) and the same distance east of [Tel Aviv](#).
- [Ariel](#) is now the heart of the second most populous [bloc](#) of settlements. The city is located just 25 miles east of [Tel Aviv](#) and 31 miles north of [Jerusalem](#). Ariel and the surrounding communities expand Israel's narrow waist (which was just 9 miles wide prior to [1967](#)) and ensure 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 [1949 Armistice Line](#), extending approximately 12 miles into the [West Bank](#). Nevertheless, [Barak's](#) proposal at [Camp David](#) in 2000 included Ariel among the settlement blocs to be annexed to Israel; the [Clinton plan](#) also envisioned incorporating Ariel within the new borders of Israel.

Would the incorporation of settlement blocs prevent the creation of a contiguous Palestinian state? A look at a [map](#) shows that it would not. The total area of these communities is only about 1.5% 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 cutoff east Jerusalem, but even 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](#).

Ultimately, Israel may decide to unilaterally disengage from the [West Bank](#) and determine which settlements it will incorporate within the borders it delineates. Israel would prefer, however, to negotiate a peace treaty

with the Palestinians that would specify which Jewish communities will remain intact within the mutually agreed border of Israel, and which will need to be evacuated. Israel will undoubtedly insist that some or all of the “consensus” blocs become part of Israel.



Israel's Liberal Democracy

In a region of autocracies and theocracies, [Israel](#) shines

as a beacon of freedom and hope in the Middle East. Its diverse culture, open society and guaranteed civil and political liberties for all citizens, regardless of race, religion, gender or creed, follows closely to Western democratic tradition. It's liberal democracy, in fact, is the main reason that Israel has been able to have remarkable economic development despite being in a neighborhood surrounded by uncompromising enemies.

Israel's Population

The people of Israel come from more than 100 countries. They represent diverse ethnic, religious, and racial groups. Roughly half the [population](#) has origins in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Of Israel's 7.8 million residents, 75.5 percent are Jews, 20.2 percent are Arabs (mostly [Muslim](#) but also some [Christians](#)), and 4.3 percent include [Druze](#), [Baha'is](#), Circassians and others not classified by religion.

Israel's Arab citizens enjoy equal rights with Jewish citizens of the state. [Israeli Arabs](#) participate in all aspects of Israeli life, from menial jobs to [Supreme Court justices](#). In fact, [Abdel Rahman Zuabi](#), the first Arab to sit on the Supreme Court, took his seat on March 3, 1999, and in May 2004, [Salim Jubran](#) was selected as the first Arab to hold a permanent appointment as a Supreme Court Justice.

[Hebrew](#) and Arabic are the two official languages of the state.

Guaranteed Civil Liberties

All the freedoms and liberties that Americans hold dear from their bill of rights and constitution, are equally protected in Israel.

Israelis enjoy freedom of speech and press, freedom of assembly and the right to petition government, and, most importantly, the freedom of religion.

Freedom of Speech & Press

Israel's [free press](#) is one of the most vibrant in the world. Unlike the mostly government-controlled media outlets in the region, Israeli journalists can report on all aspects of Israeli life, and do not hesitate to criticize their government's failings. Journalists in neighboring Arab countries who expressed similar views about the Palestinian Authority or other Middle Eastern regimes, for example, would likely face arrest — or worse.

Many major news outlets from around the world - including the BBC, CNN and Fox News - station their Middle East bureaus and correspondents in Israel. One reason is because Israel is so well-known for its genuine freedom of speech and the press. News media experts know that about Israel and feel more comfortable basing their enterprises in Israel than in other, less-free parts of the region.

Freedom of Assembly & Petition

Israel also recognizes the freedom of assembly and the right to petition the government without the threat of harassment or imprisonment.

Over the past few decades, millions of Israelis have turned out for all sorts of political rallies - sometimes voicing support for their government and, very often, to bitterly protest its policies.

In 2005, Israelis led tens of large-scale demonstrations through the streets of Jerusalem protesting the government's decision to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip. From 2007 to 2011, thousands of Israelis joined in protests together with the Shalit family in voicing their concern that the government was not doing enough to bring home their captured son, IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. And, in July 2011, hundreds of thousands of Israelis from all walks of life, socio-economic and religious backgrounds demonstrated in the streets of Tel Aviv against the rising cost of living and the breakdown of public services such as education and healthcare.

While Arab residents of Muslim Middle East nations made international headlines across the world for finally taking to the street in the face of brutal repression to protest their tyrannical rulers, Israelis have been freely protesting all sorts of political choices ever since the creation of the state.

Freedom of Religion

Israel's [Declaration of Independence](#) guarantees [freedom of religion](#) for all, regardless of which religion one may choose.

Each religious community in Israel has the right to found its own religious schools, councils, and courts, and they are even given jurisdiction to preside over matters of personal status such as marriage and divorce. The holy places of each religion are controlled by officials of that faith, not the Israeli government.

A popular slogan is that [Jerusalem](#) should be free and accessible to all faiths. Indeed it should be — but it has only had such openness since Israel assumed responsibility for the entire city in 1967. Today, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Bahai's, Druze and all others are free to pray at any of their holy sites.

Women's Rights

Israel is the only country in the Middle East that provides full equality for [women](#). In the Palestinian Authority and most Arab states, women are treated as second-class citizens, often denied the right to vote or work in most fields, and, in the case of [Saudi Arabia](#), they are not even allowed to drive a car. Worse, abuse of women, such as “honor killings” and spousal rape, is tolerated and accepted in society.

Women in Israel are protected by law from discrimination and abuse, and they have been engaged in all walks of life, from homemaker to combat soldier to prime minister. In September 2006, Dorit Beinisch was sworn in as Israel's first female Supreme Court President. In 2011, a tradition of women graduating from the Israeli Air Force's elite fighter pilot school reached a new high when five recruits successfully finished the intensive training.



Additionally, women comprise nearly 51% of all magistrate and district court judges, making it very likely that more women will be appointed to the Supreme Court in the future. Additionally, more than 44% of all lawyers registered in Israel are women.

For extensive coverage of women in Israel's public life, [CLICK HERE](#).

Gay & Lesbian Equality

Israel is one of the most progressive countries in the world in terms of recognizing differences based on sexual orientation. Israeli law forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation.

In 2006, Israel hosted "Love Without Borders: WorldPride," a weeklong event organized by LGBT activists from around the world. In 2012, Israel's largest city, Tel Aviv, was named the World's Best Gay City by participants in an international competition. The Israeli city garnered a whopping 43 percent of votes in the online survey, ranking it far above other, more famous places such as New York City, Sydney and San Francisco.

By contrast, homosexuals are not protected in Arab and Muslim states, and they are often imprisoned and sometimes executed. In the Palestinian Authority, sodomy carries a jail term of three to 10 years

Politics & Elections

Israel's [elections](#) are a model of the democratic process.

While the United States has only two major parties that are often criticized for being too similar, Israeli voters typically have more than a dozen [parties](#) to choose from, representing a wide variety of political views. After the most recent election in 2009, 15 different parties won representation in the [Knesset](#), including three Arab parties with eight representatives.

Additionally, Israel's political parties represent a wide range of views - their are Jewish nationalistic parties, secular and religious parties, communist parties, green leaf parties, Arab and Jewish parties and a slew of others.

Israel's Democracy in Comparison

Arabs living under the oppression of the [Palestinian Authority](#) and [Hamas](#) in [Gaza](#) do not enjoy these rights nearly to the extent that people living in Israel do, so it is not surprising that, despite their grievances, Palestinians tell pollsters the nation they admire most is Israel, and Israeli Arabs say they prefer to live in Israel rather than in a Palestinian state.

Israel is not a perfect society. While Israelis enjoy far greater freedom than any of their neighbors, they have not achieved the equality in all areas to which they aspire, but that is true of the United States and all the other western democracies as well. If the United States has not yet achieved this goal in more than 200 years, no one should be surprised that Israel has fallen short in just 56, but the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness for all Israeli citizens continues.

Israel's Security Fence

Along much of the frontier separating [Israel](#) from the [West](#)

[Bank](#), there are either no barriers of any kind, or easily avoidable ones. 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](#)" to prevent Palestinian terrorists from infiltrating into Israel.

Israel did not want to build a fence, and resisted doing so for more than 35 years. If anyone is to blame for the construction, it is [Hamas](#), [Islamic Jihad](#), and the other Palestinian [terrorists](#). Now a large majority of Israelis support the construction of the security fence; in fact, both Jews and Arabs living along the Green Line favor the barrier to prevent penetration by thieves and vandals as well as terrorists. The fence has also caused a revolution in the daily life of some Israeli Arab towns because it has brought quiet, which has allowed a significant upsurge in economic activity.

The security fence does create some inconvenience to Palestinians, but it also saves lives. The deaths of Israelis caused by terror are permanent and irreversible whereas the hardships faced by the Palestinians are temporary and reversible.

It is not unreasonable or unusual to build a fence for security purposes. Many other nations have fences to protect their borders (the United States is building one now to keep out illegal Mexican immigrants), and Israel already has fences along the frontiers with [Lebanon](#), [Syria](#), and [Jordan](#), so building a barrier to separate Israel from the [Palestinian Authority](#) is not revolutionary.

A security fence already exists around the [Gaza Strip](#) and, to date, not one suicide bomber from that area has infiltrated Israel, while approximately 250 came from the [West Bank](#) in the last 33 months. Approximately 75 percent of the suicide bombers who attacked targets inside Israel came from across the border where the first phase of the fence was built.

The fence is not expected to be impregnable. It is possible that some terrorists will manage to get past the barrier; nevertheless, the obstacle will undoubtedly make it far more difficult for incursions and thereby minimize the number of attacks. This is already evident from data showing a 30% drop in the [number of terrorist attacks](#) that took place in [2003](#) compared to 2002. Similarly, there was a 50% decrease in the number of victims murdered by terrorists in 2003 compared to the previous year. There were 17 suicide bomber attacks inside Israel that emanated from the northern part (Samaria) of the West Bank during the months April-December 2002. In contrast, since construction began on the anti-terrorist fence, throughout all of 2003 only 5 suicide bomber attacks emanated from the same area. The value of the fence in saving lives is evident from the data: In 2002, the year before construction started, 457 Israelis were murdered; in 2003, 8 Israelis were killed.

Even the Palestinian terrorists have admitted the fence is a deterrent. On November 11, 2006, [Islamic Jihad](#) leader Abdallah Ramadan Shalah said on [Al-Manar TV](#) the terrorist organizations had every intention of continuing [suicide bombing](#) attacks, but that their timing and the possibility of implementing them from the [West Bank](#) depended on other factors. "For example," he said, "there is the separation fence, which is an obstacle to the resistance, and if it were not there the situation would be entirely different."



Critics have complained that the fence is being built beyond Israel's pre-1967 cease-fire line, but the so-called "Green Line" was not an internationally recognized border, it was an armistice line between Israel and Jordan pending the negotiation of a final border. 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 route of the fence must take into account topography, population density, and threat assessment of each area. To be effective in protecting the maximum number of Israelis, however, it must incorporate some of the [settlements](#) in the [West Bank](#).

Most of the fence runs roughly along the Green Line. The fence is about a mile to the east in three places that allows the incorporation of the [settlements](#) of Henanit, Shaked, Rehan, Salit, and Zofim. The most significant deviation from the pre-1967 line is a bulge of less than four miles around the towns of Alfei Menashe and Elkanah where about 8,000 Jews live. In some places, the fence is actually *inside* the "Green Line."

Another place where it is necessary to deviate from the "Green Line" is near Ben-Gurion International Airport. The fence must be placed far enough away from the airport to prevent terrorists from threatening civilian aircraft. This requires a band of territory of approximately six miles.

The updated route is to run about 32 miles around [Jerusalem](#), but only 25 percent has been completed. The government has set September 1, 2005, as the deadline for completing the Jerusalem barrier. An estimated 55,000 Jerusalem Arabs from four neighborhoods are expected to be on the Palestinian side of the fence while 180,000 Arab residents of the city remain on the Israeli side of the barrier. Thousands of Arabs moved to more central East Jerusalem neighborhoods to stay on the Israeli side of the fence. Representatives of some Arab neighborhoods have gone so far as to petition the Israeli [Supreme Court](#) to order the Defense Ministry to reroute the fence to be on the Israeli side.

To alleviate the inconvenience caused by the fence around [Jerusalem](#), the government approved passages through the barrier to facilitate movement in and out of the city. In addition, the government allocated millions of dollars for the municipality to provide special services to Arab residents of [Jerusalem](#) who will be adversely affected by the fence.

The original route was 458 miles; however, the plan has been repeatedly modified. As a result of the June 2004 [Supreme Court decision](#), the route was altered to move the barrier closer to the 1967 cease-fire line and to make it less burdensome to the Palestinians. The fence is now expected to cover approximately 500 miles and incorporate just 7 percent of the [West Bank](#) — less than 160 square miles — on its "Israeli side," while 2,100 square miles will be on the "Palestinian side." To date, more than 320 miles of the fence has been completed, but little progress has been made in the last three years.

The land used in building the security fence is seized for military purposes, not confiscated, and it remains the property of the owner. Legal procedures are already in place to allow every owner to file an objection to the seizure of their land. Moreover, property owners are offered compensation for the use of their land and for any damage to their trees. Contractors are responsible for carefully uprooting and replanting the trees. So far, more than 60,000 olive trees have been relocated in accordance with this procedure.

The Bush Administration was resistant to the idea of including the second largest Jewish [settlement](#), Ariel, because it would require the fence to extend about 12 miles into the [West Bank](#). Excluding Ariel, however, places about 20,000 Jews who have already been subject to multiple terrorist attacks to further danger. Israel

decided to build a fence around Ariel, but said in February 2005 it would be incorporated within the main fence at a later stage.

Every effort is being made to exclude Palestinian villages from the area within the fence and no territories are being annexed. The land used in building the security fence is seized for military purposes, not confiscated, and it remains the property of the owner. Israel is providing agricultural passageways to allow farmers to continue to cultivate their lands, and crossing points to allow the movement of people and the transfer of goods. Contractors are responsible for carefully uprooting and replanting the trees. So far, more than 60,000 olive trees have been relocated in accordance with this procedure.

Legal procedures allow every owner to file an objection to the seizure of their land. In addition, Israel has budgeted \$22 million to compensate Palestinians for the use of their land. As of September, Palestinians had filed \$2.2 million in compensation claims.

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 and [ruled](#) that the construction of the security fence is consistent with international law and was based on Israel's security requirements rather than political considerations. It also required the government to move the fence in the area near [Jerusalem](#) to make things easier for the Palestinians.

Though the Court's decision made the government's job of securing the population from terrorist threats more difficult, costly, and time-consuming, the Prime Minister immediately accepted the decision and began to reroute the fence and to factor the Court's ruling into the planning of the rest of the barrier.

Palestinians continue to challenge the route of the fence and the Court has issued a number of decisions, some favoring the existing route and others, the petitioners. For example, in June 2006, the Court ordered Israel to tear down a two-mile stretch of fence around Zufin, a settlement near the [West Bank](#) town of Kalkilya and reroute it to accommodate Palestinians in the area.

The Palestinians will also benefit from the fence because it will reduce the need for Israeli military operations in the territories, and the deployment of troops in Palestinian towns. Onerous security measures, such as curfews and checkpoints, will either be unnecessary or dramatically scaled back. The fence may also stimulate the Palestinians to act against the enemies of peace because the barrier has shown them there is a price to pay for sponsoring terrorism.

Only a tiny fraction of the barrier (less than 3% or about 15 miles) is actually a 30 foot high concrete wall, and that is being built in specific locations where it will prevent Palestinian snipers from shooting at cars as they have done for the last three years along the Trans-Israel Highway, one of the country's main roads. The remainder is a fence similar to that used throughout the United States, but with a network of barriers, underground and long-range sensors, unmanned aerial vehicles, trenches, land mines and guard paths. Passage through the fence will only be permitted through guarded gates.

A growing number of Israelis have come to the conclusion that the best solution to the conflict with the Palestinians is separation. Once the fence is completed, Israel *could* decide to unilaterally withdraw behind the fence. Should Israel take unilateral action, the fence still need not demarcate a permanent political border. The Palestinians could negotiate a settlement whereby the fence would be moved or torn down. If the Palestinians live in peace with Israel, people and goods could flow freely back and forth; however, if the Palestinians



remained committed to violence and unwilling to coexist with their Israeli neighbors, the barrier could be sealed.

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 with the Palestinians. Israeli negotiators have always envisioned the future border to be the 1967 frontier with modifications to minimize the security risk to Israel and maximize the number of Jews living within the State.

Palestinian charges that a fence would have the effect of creating a ghetto are nonsense. Prime Minister [Sharon](#) accepted the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state on their side of the barrier.

After the fence is finished, Israel will have to decide whether to allow Jews to remain in [communities on the “wrong” side](#) of the fence (where they would not benefit from the security the fence provides), offer them compensation to move, or forcibly evacuate them to the Israeli side.

The security fence is expected to run approximately 500 miles. The fence will snake just east of the "Green Line" and incorporate the largest Jewish cities in the [West Bank](#). As of July 2009, only about 300 miles (60%) of the barrier was completed and much of the rest was tied up by petitions to the Israeli [Supreme Court](#) and Justice Ministry deliberations. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, work is now being done on mostly constructed sections of the fence and areas that have to be rerouted in response to court rulings. The number of fully completed sections has not increased in 15 months and the barrier's overall length has increased by only about 25 miles in the last two years. The Defense Ministry previously projected the fence would be completed by 2010, but now it does not give an end date.

The United States is building a fence along part of its border with Mexico and that is to prevent illegal immigrants from coming into the country, not terrorists who seek to murder American citizens. Ironically, the [UN](#), which passed a resolution condemning Israel’s barrier, is building its own fence to improve security around its New York headquarters.

Palestinian Unilateral Declaration of Independence

In an effort to bypass peace negotiations with [Israel](#), the [Palestinian Authority](#) has repeatedly threatened to seek a vote the [UN General Assembly](#) to ratify their unilateral declaration of independence for Palestine (UDI). The UDI would request that a State of Palestine be internationally recognized by the United Nations on the 1967 borders with Israel - the so called "[Green Line](#)" - and that Palestine subsequently be admitted as a full member into the UN.

The Palestinians would have you believe this is the only way to solve the conflict, but in actuality a Palestinian unilateral declaration of independence would only exacerbate problems in the volatile region and could actually prove detrimental to the Palestinian cause of independence.

Circumvent Negotiations

The United States, EU and Israel have made clear that the only way to make true progress in establishing an independent Palestinian state is through direct negotiations between the parties involved.

Israeli leaders have repeatedly offered to negotiate a peace agreement and offered territorial concessions of as much as 97 percent of the [West Bank](#), in addition to the 100 percent of [Gaza](#) Israel has already evacuated. Israel, along with the United States and European Union, remain committed to the creation of an independent Palestinian state through direct negotiations aimed at achieving mutual recognition, agreed borders and security arrangements, and an agreement to end the conflict.

- "For the Palestinians, **efforts to delegitimize Israel will end in failure**. Symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the United Nations in September won't create an independent state. Palestinian leaders will not achieve peace or prosperity if Hamas insists on a path of terror and rejection. And **Palestinians will never realize their independence by denying the right of Israel to exist.**"
[Barack Obama](#), U.S. President
- "We view this unilateral action on behalf of the Palestinian Authority to be not helpful. **No unilateral actions like this are helpful in terms of establishing a long-run peace in the Middle East.** Canada views the action as very regrettable and **we will be opposing it at the United Nations.**"
[Stephen Harper](#), Canadian Prime Minister
- "**We don't think a unilateral resolution can help advance peace**, not by Palestinians or by Israelis. **The way to advance peace is via negotiations.**"
[Silvio Berlusconi](#), Italian Prime Minister
- "**Peace will only come from negotiations.** It will be a negotiated peace. It cannot be imposed from the outside – not by any power and certainly not by one-sided UN resolutions. Peace requires negotiations. **It requires mutual compromise.** Palestinians compromise; Israel compromises; we both compromise."
[Benjamin Netanyahu](#), Israeli Prime Minister



- **“There is no substitute for face-to-face discussion** and for an agreement that leads to a just and lasting peace. That is the only path that will lead to the fulfillment of the Palestinian national aspirations... **Nor is it viable to build the institutions of a future state without the negotiations that will ultimately create it.”**
[Hilary Clinton](#), U.S. Secretary of State
- **“France hopes that [the Palestinians] use the occasion [upcoming UN assembly] for reopening the path to dialogue rather than risking a futile and dangerous diplomatic confrontation.”**
Alain Juppe, French Foreign Minister
- **“The German government believes unilateral steps could be counter-productive ... We think negotiations are the right way.”**
Guido Westerwelle, German Foreign Minister
- **“[UDI] does not do any good whatsoever ... the plan for a unilateral declaration of the [Palestinian] state is not supported by the Netherlands.”**
Uri Rosenthal, Dutch Foreign Minister
- **“A premature, unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood would not only undermine rather than resolve the Israeli-Palestinian peace process**, but would constitute a standing affront to the integrity of the United Nations, international agreements and international law ... **unilateral actions by either party cannot prejudge the outcome of negotiations** and will not be recognized by the international community.”
Fiamma Nirenstein, Enrico Piannetta, Gianni Vernetti, Rossana Baldi, Italian Parliament Deputies
- **“Unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state would be a huge mistake.** A peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians is essential, but it can **only be achieved through honest negotiations** - not by any party imposing a unilateral decision.”
Jose Maria Aznar, former Spanish Prime Minister
- **“Unilateral actions will not bring peace to our region ... Many have recognized that Palestinian attempts to create a state by bypassing negotiations [will lead to] potential consequences of mistrust and unmet expectations that could lead to violence. There are no shortcuts to statehood. [The Palestinians] cannot bypass the only path to peace.** They will have to get off the bandwagon of unilateralism.”
Ron Prosor, Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations
- **“We [Israelis] want to be able to negotiate** but we won't be able to negotiate if they are attacking our legitimacy in every international court. We're not going to negotiate under fire and it's a mistake for the Palestinians to think that we would. **The Palestinians have achieved a tremendous amount over the last 18 years and all of that could be at risk.** The Palestinians risk all that has been achieved if they go forward with this and that would be a great tragedy.”
[Michael Oren](#), Israeli Ambassador to the U.S.

By going straight to the United Nations, the Palestinians would circumvent negotiations and dismiss years of US and EU policy regarding successfully solving the conflict. Successive Israeli administrations- including [Netanyahu](#), [Olmert](#), [Sharon](#) and [Barak](#) - have all made overtures of peace through negotiations that were denied by the Palestinians, with no counteroffers proposed. Obtaining the UDI would push Israel away from the negotiating table while not succeeding in solving any of the core issues – the status of [Jerusalem](#), refugees ‘[right of return](#)’, [access to water](#), etc.

Violate International Law and Frameworks for Peace

A UDI would constitute a violation of every agreement signed between the Israeli's and Palestinians, would contravene the UN's own [Security Council](#) Resolutions 242, 338 and 1850 – all stipulating a mutually negotiated solution while rejecting unilateralism – and would destroy the frameworks for Middle East peace which have been created over the past few decades.

- “Declares its support for negotiations ... and its commitment to the **irreversibility of the bilateral negotiations** ... Supports the parties agreed principles for the bilateral negotiating process ... Calls on both parties to ... **refrain from any steps that could undermine confidence or prejudice the outcome of negotiations.**”
[UN Security Council Resolution 1850](#) - December 16, 2008
- “Firs the United States remains committed to my vision and to its implementation as described in the roadmap. The **United State will do its utmost to prevent any attempt by anyone to impose any other plan.**”
[George W. Bush letter to Ariel Sharon](#) - April 14, 2000
- “Recognizing the necessity to create a positive environment for the negotiations, **neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank** and the Gaza Strip in accordance with the Interim Agreement.”
[Sharm el-Sheik Memorandum](#) - September 4, 1999
- “**Neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank** and Gaza Strip pending the outcome of permanent status negotiations.”
[Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement \(Oslo II Accords\)](#) - September 28, 1995
- “**Disputes** arising out of the application or interpretation of this Declaration of Principles, or any subsequent agreements pertaining to the interim period, **shall be resolved by negotiations** through the Joint Liaison Committee to be established pursuant to Article X above.”
[Declaration of Principles \(Oslo I Accords\)](#) - September 13, 1993
- “**Affirms that** ... a just and lasting peace in the Middle East should include the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied ... Requests the Secretary-General ... to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned **in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement.**”
[UN Security Council Resolution 242](#) - November 22, 1967

Intensify the Conflict, Demonize Israel and Set Dangerous Precedents

Unlike negotiations, a UDI may very well intensity the conflict and would reward the Palestinians for their intransigence in refusing to make any concessions. Additionally, the UDI would put undue pressure on Israel which would isolate and demonize the Jewish state around the world.

- [Hamas](#), which is an internationally regarded terrorist organization that refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist and has terrorized Israeli citizens for decades, would gain de-facto legitimacy as the governing power of the Palestinian Authority (if Hamas and Fatah reconcile). Through the first eight months of 2011 alone, Hamas has already [launched more than 450 rockets](#). Does it make sense for the UN to recognize a state as an entity that is engaged in making war on a current member state?
- A UN declaration will not change the situation on the ground as Israel is not bound by any General Assembly resolutions and has made clear it has no intention of accepting the UDI. On the contrary, the situation may grow worse for the Palestinians as Israel may feel justified to take its own unilateral measures, which could be detrimental to the PA's interests.
- Rather than peace, the UDI may promote violence. Since the Palestinians will not achieve independence by declaration, the people may grow frustrated by the failure of their leaders to satisfy their aspirations. EU Parliament Chief Jerzy Buzek noted, for example, that "unilateral declarations can be sometimes even dangerous" and Buzek expressed concern that Palestinian riots could get out of hand. Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby also discouraged Abbas from his present course, saying "The unilateral appeal to the U.N. Security Council and U.N. General Assembly could be a very dangerous move for the Palestinians during this period.
- "Palestine" lacks the infrastructure and legitimacy required for statehood. The PA cannot support itself; it is totally dependent on international aid to pay its bills. The territory and government is divided between Gaza and the West Bank. Abbas, as leader of the UDI campaign, represents only a small fraction of the Palestinian people and has repeatedly canceled elections for fear of losing power.
- EU Parliament Chief Jerzy Buzek noted that "unilateral declarations can be sometimes even dangerous" and noted his concern that Palestinian riots could get out of hand, reminiscent of those protests taking place across the Middle East during the so called "Arab Spring." Echoing Buzek's worries, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman ominously predicted that the failure of the Palestinians to win recognition could potentially lead to "bloodshed on a scale which has yet to be seen here before." Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby is also concerned with the possibility that UDI would be physically dangerous. "The unilateral appeal to the U.N. Security Council and U.N. General Assembly could be a very dangerous move for the Palestinians during this period and I propose that Abbas reconsider the handling of the matter," Elaraby said.
- The UDI could jeopardize Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in more than 40 spheres of activity, chief among them the security coordination that has blossomed between the IDF and PA forces on anti-terrorism over the past decade. Economic collaboration and international funding of Palestinian government could also be jeopardized. The U.S. Congress is currently debating proposing a law that would prohibit the United States from aiding the Palestinian Authority if they declare independence through the UN while still aligned with Hamas.
- By allowing the Palestinians to request statehood without amending their official "state charter" would amount to the U.N. negating its own policies on expressly forbidding members to call for the ethnic cleansing of another people. Both the Fatah (PA) and the Hamas charters openly call for the elimination of Israel and Palestinian President Abbas even outwardly says that he will not allow a single Jew to remain in the future Palestinian state. There is no way to understand Abbas' statement other than his expressed desire to see Jews ethnically cleansed from the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

- The UDI makes no provisions for Israel's security. Unlike Security Council Resolution 242 which explicitly says that states in the region have the "right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force." The new Palestinian "state" would not be required to recognize Israel, end the conflict with Israel or cease terror. "Palestine" would also have no restrictions on its ability to threaten Israel's security. While past peace talks envisioned a future Palestinian state would be demilitarized, a UN-declared state would have no such obligation. Given the ongoing threat of rockets and terrorist infiltration, Israel would have to prepare for the possibility of a significantly increased threat to its security from the West Bank and Gaza.
- A UN endorsement of the UDI would undermine its prohibition against member states calling for the ethnic cleansing of another people. The Hamas charter openly calls for the elimination of Israel; meanwhile, Abbas has said that he will not allow a single Jew to remain in the future Palestinian state. Abbas' statement is a call for ethnically cleansing Jews from the West Bank and East Jerusalem.
- The new Palestinian "state" would be not demilitarized, such as Israel has made a condition for peace, and therefore any Israeli response to terrorism emanating from the Palestinian territories would be met with world condemnation and deemed an "invasion" of a foreign, sovereign country. Despite protecting its citizens and acting in self-defense, Israel would easily be portrayed in the media as an aggressor and be shunned in the international community.
- Recognizing Palestine at the UN could undermine international stability by setting a dangerous precedent for separatist movements to declare independence and seek UN endorsement. If one group is given recognition - the Palestinians - the UN would be holding a bad double standard if it did not also accept other groups claims. In Europe alone, multiple groups could follow this path, such as the Basques and Catalonians in Spain, the Flemish in Belgium, the Roma in Romania, the Corsicans in France, and the Albanians in Macedonia. In addition, Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, Tamils in Sri Lanka and others across Europe as well could follow the same path.



Palestinian “Right of Return”

In the media and in interviews with Palestinian leaders, we often hear and

read statements asserting that the [Palestinian Refugees](#) have a right to return to Israel. As will be shown, these statements are based on an erroneous reading of the relevant texts. We will discuss the subject from three points of view: general international law, the most relevant UN resolutions, and various agreements between Israel and her neighbors.

General International Law

Several international human rights treaties deal with the freedom of movement, including the right of return.¹ The most universal provision is included in the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which says: "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country."²

The question arises, who has the right of return, or: what kind of relationship must exist between the State and the person who wishes to return? A comparison of the various texts and a look at the discussions which took place before the adoption of these texts lead to the conclusion that the right of return is probably reserved for nationals of the State.³

Even the right of nationals is not an absolute one, but it may be limited on condition that the reasons for the denial or limitation are not arbitrary.

Moreover, according to Stig Jagerskiold, the right of return or the right to enter one's country in the 1966 International Covenant "is intended to apply to individuals asserting an individual right. There was no intention here to address the claims of masses of people who have been displaced as a by-product of war or by political transfers of territory or population, such as the relocation of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe during and after the Second World War, the flight of the Palestinians from what became Israel, or the movement of Jews from the Arab countries."⁴

Relevant UN Resolutions

The first major UN Resolution that refers to the refugees is [Resolution 194](#) (III) of 11 December 1948, adopted by the [General Assembly](#).⁵ This Resolution established a Conciliation Commission for Palestine and instructed it to "take steps to assist the Governments, and authorities concerned to achieve a final settlement of all questions outstanding between them." Paragraph 11 deals with the refugees: "The General Assembly ... resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible."

Though the Arab States originally rejected the Resolution, they later relied on it heavily and have considered it as a recognition of a wholesale right of repatriation.

This interpretation, however, does not seem warranted: the paragraph does not recognize any "right", but recommends that the refugees "should" be "permitted" to return. Moreover, that permission is subject to two conditions - that the refugee wishes to return, and that he wishes to live at peace with his neighbours. The violence that erupted in September 2000 forecloses any hope for a peaceful co-existence between Israelis and masses of returning refugees. The return should take place only "at the earliest practicable date." The use of the term "should" with regard to the permission to return underlines that this is only a recommendation.

One should also remember that under the [UN Charter](#) the General Assembly is not authorized to adopt binding resolutions, except in budgetary matters and with regard to its own internal rules and regulations.

Finally, the reference to principles of international law or equity applies only to compensation and does not seem to refer to the permission to return.

It should also be borne in mind that the provision concerning the refugees is but one element of the Resolution that foresaw "a final settlement of all questions outstanding between" the parties, whereas the Arab States have always insisted on its implementation (in accordance with the interpretation favourable to them) independently of all other matters.

As a result of the [Six-Day War](#) in 1967, there were a great number of Palestinian displaced persons (i.e. persons who had to leave their home and move to another place in the same State). These were dealt with by the [Security Council Resolution 237](#) of 4 June 1967,⁶ which called upon the government of Israel "to facilitate the return of those inhabitants [of the areas where military operations have taken place] who have fled the areas since the outbreak of hostilities". The Resolution does not speak of a "right" of return and, like most Security Council resolutions, it is in the nature of a recommendation. Nevertheless, Israel has agreed to their return in various agreements, to be studied later.

Of great importance in the Arab-Israel peace process is [Security Council Resolution 242](#) of 22 November 1967.⁷ In its second paragraph, The Council "Affirms further the necessity ... (b) for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem." The Council did not propose a specific solution, nor did it limit the provision to Arab refugees, probably because the right to compensation of Jewish refugees from Arab lands also deserves a "just settlement". There is no basis for the Arab claim that Resolution 242 incorporates the solution recommended by General Assembly Resolution 194 of 1948 analyzed above.

Agreements between Israel and Her Neighbours

Already in the [Framework for Peace in the Middle East](#) agreed at [Camp David](#) in 1978 by Egypt and Israel the refugee problem was tackled: it was agreed that a "continuing committee" including representatives of Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians should "decide by agreement on the modalities of admission of persons displaced from the West Bank and Gaza in 1967" (Article A,3).⁸ Similarly, it was agreed that "Egypt and Israel will work with each other and with other interested parties to establish agreed procedures for a prompt, just and permanent implementation of the resolution of the refugee problem" (Article A,4).

In the [Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements](#) of 1993 between Israel and the Palestinians, again it was agreed that the modalities of admission of persons displaced in 1967 should be decided by agreement in a "continuing committee" (Article XII).⁹ The issue of refugees should be negotiated in the framework of the permanent status negotiations (Article V,3). The 1995 [Israeli-Palestinian Interim](#)



[Agreement](#) on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip adopted similar provisions (Articles XXXVII,2 and XXXI,5).¹⁰

Somewhat more detailed is the relevant provision (Article 8) in the [Treaty of Peace between Israel and Jordan](#) of 1994.¹¹ As to the displaced persons, they are the object of a text similar to the above ones. As to the refugees, the Peace Treaty mentions the need to solve their problem both in the framework of the [Multilateral Working Group on Refugees](#) established after the 1991 [Madrid Peace Conference](#), and in conjunction with the permanent status negotiations. The Treaty also mentions "United Nations programmes and other agreed international economic programmes concerning refugees and displaced persons, including assistance to their settlement."¹²

None of the agreements between Israel and Egypt, the Palestinians and Jordan grants the refugees a right of return into Israel.

Conclusions

This short survey has shown that neither under the international conventions, nor under the major UN resolutions, nor under the relevant agreements between the parties, do the Palestinian refugees have a right to return to Israel. According to Palestinian sources, there are about 3.5 million Palestinian refugees nowadays registered with UNRWA.¹³ If Israel were to allow all of them to return to her territory, this would be an act of suicide on her part, and no state can be expected to destroy itself.

Great efforts should be made by all those involved, and with the help of friendly outside powers, to find a reasonable, viable and fair solution to the refugee problem.¹⁴

Footnotes

1) The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13(2); The 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12(4); The 1963 Protocol IV to the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 3(2); The 1969 American Convention on Human Rights, Article 22(5); The 1981 Banjul Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Article 12(2) - see Sir Ian Brownlie, ed., *Basic Documents on Human Rights*, 3rd edition, Oxford 1992, pp. 21, 125, 347, 495, 551. For additional examples, see Paul Sieghart, *The International Law of Human Rights*, 1985, pp. 174-78.

2) Article 12(4).

3) Some experts are of the opinion that the right of return applies also to "permanent legal residents" - see e.g. the discussion that took place in the sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, as reported in the Report by Chairman Rapporteur Mr. Asbjorn Eide, UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/45, of 28 August 1991, at p.5. The Human Rights Committee established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has adopted an interpretation according to which the right of return belongs also to a person who has "close and enduring connections" to a certain country - UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.I/Add.9, 2 November 1999, at pp. 5-6.

4) Stig Jagerskiold, "The Freedom of Movement", in Louis Henkin, ed., *The International Bill of Rights*, New York, 1981, pp. 166-184 at p. 180.

5) General Assembly Official Records, 3rd session, part 1, 1948, Resolutions, pp. 21-24.

- 6) Security Council Official Records, 22nd year, Resolutions and Decisions, 1967, p. 5.
- 7) Ibid., pp. 8-9.
- 8) UN Treaty Series, vol. 1138, (1987), no. 17853, pp. 39-45.
- 9) International Legal Materials, vol. 32, 1993, pp. 1525-44.
- 10) The full text was published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, and in Kitvei Amana, vol. 33, No. 1071, pp. 1-400 (Israel's publication of treaties). For excerpts, see International Legal Materials, vol. 36, 1997, pp. 551-647.
- 11) International Legal Materials, vol. 34, 1995, pp. 43-66.
- 12) Article 8, para. 2(c), at 49-50.
- 13) According to various estimates, the number of refugees in 1948 was between 538,000 (Israeli sources), 720,000 (UN estimates) and 850,000 (Palestinian sources). The enormous growth in the number for UNRWA purposes is the result of the fact that UNRWA has adopted a very broad definition of Palestinian refugees, which is much broader than the one adopted in the generally recognized 1951-1967 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. For the UNRWA definition, see Don Peretz, *Palestinians, Refugees, and the Middle East Peace Process*, Washington, 1993, pp. 11-12. For the definition adopted by the international conventions, see UN Treaty Series, vol. 189, (1954, No. 2545, pp. 137-221, at pp. 152-156.
- 14) See e.g. Donna E. Arzt, *Refugees Into Citizens: Palestinians and the end of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, New York, 1997; Joseph Alpher and Khalil Shikaki, *The Palestinian Refugee Problem and the Right of Return*, Harvard University, 1998.

**Professor Ruth Lapidoth is a Professor of International Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem*



Palestinian Refugees

The story of the Palestinian refugees dates back a number of decades to the late 1940's and the establishment of the State of Israel. Despite the resettlement of millions of refugees around the world through the help of international

organizations and welcoming countries, the Palestinian refugees remain in their state of squalor across the Middle East and, amazingly, their numbers only continue to grow.

The Palestinian refugee problem certainly seems like one of the more intractable issues within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, despite propaganda and all sorts of allegations and accusations, Israel is not the reason why there now number nearly 5 million Palestinian refugees.

History

During the 1947-48 Israeli [War of Independence](#), initiated by the surrounding Arab countries, thousands of Palestinians did in fact leave their homes and flee the area. But this was done for a variety of reasons and not merely because Israel would want to kick them out. Thousands of wealthy Arabs left in anticipation of a war, thousands more responded to Arab leaders' calls to get out of the way of the advancing armies, a handful were expelled, but most simply fled to avoid being caught in the cross fire of a battle.

The beginning of the Arab exodus can be traced to the weeks immediately 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.

All of those who left fully anticipated being able to return to their homes after an early Arab victory, as Palestinian nationalist Aref el-Aref explained:

The Arabs thought they would win in less than the twinkling of an eye and that it would take no more than a day or two from the time the Arab armies crossed the border until all the colonies were conquered and the enemy would throw down his arms and cast himself on their mercy.

Meanwhile, 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.

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...."

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.

Caught in the Middle

Throughout the period that preceded the [May 15 invasion](#) of the Arab regular armies, large-scale military engagements, incessant sniping, robberies and bombings took place. In view of the thousands of casualties that resulted from the pre-invasion violence, it is not surprising that many Arabs would have fled out of fear for their lives.

The second phase of the Arab flight began after the Jewish forces started to register military victories against Arab irregulars. Among the victories were the battles for [Tiberias](#) and [Haifa](#), which were accompanied by the evacuation of the Arab inhabitants.

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."

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.'"

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" (*London Daily Mail*, August 12, 1948).

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."

In early April, an estimated 25,000 Arabs left the [Haifa](#) area following an offensive by the irregular forces led by Fawzi alQawukji, and rumors that Arab air forces would soon bomb the Jewish areas around Mt. Carmel. 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." In fact, [David Ben-Gurion](#) had 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. By the end of the battle, more than 50,000 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](#) (*New York Times*, April 23, 1948).

In Tiberias and Haifa, the Haganah issued orders that none of the Arabs' possessions should be touched, and warned that anyone who violated the orders would be severely punished. Despite these efforts, all but about 5,000 or 6,000 Arabs evacuated Haifa, many leaving with the assistance of British military transports.

[Syria's UN](#) delegate, Faris el-Khouri, 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.”

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. 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.”

As fear and chaos spread throughout Palestine, the early trickle of refugees became a flood, numbering more than 200,000 by the time the provisional government declared the independence of the State of Israel.

Once the invasion began in May 1948, most Arabs remaining in Palestine left for neighboring countries. Surprisingly, rather than acting as a strategically valuable “fifthcolumn” in the war, the Palestinians chose to flee to the safety of the other Arab states, still confident of being able to return. 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: The 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 Palestine, enthusiastically welcoming the advancing armies. Days and weeks passed, sufficient to accomplish the sacred mission, but the Arab armies did not save the country. They did nothing but let slip from their hands Acre, Sarafand, Lydda, Ramleh, Nazareth, most of the south and the rest of the north. Then hope fled (*Middle East Journal*, October 1949).

As the fighting spread into areas that had previously remained quiet, the Arabs began to see the possibility of defeat. As the possibility turned into reality, the flight of the Arabs increased—more than 300,000 departed after May 15 — leaving approximately 160,000 Arabs in the State of Israel.

The Arabs' fear was naturally exacerbated by the atrocity stories following the attack on [Deir Yassin](#). The native population lacked leaders who could calm them; their spokesmen, such as the Arab Higher Committee, were operating from the safety of neighboring states and did more to arouse their fears than to pacify 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. “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” (*The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 591).

Although most of the Arabs had left by November 1948, there were still those who chose to leave even after hostilities ceased. An interesting case was the evacuation of 3,000 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 (*New York Times*, March 4, 1949).

Arab Leaders Provoke Exodus

A plethora of evidence exists demonstrating that Palestinians were encouraged to leave their homes to make way for the invading Arab armies. The U.S. Consul General in Haifa, Aubrey Lippincott, wrote on April 22, 1948, for example, that “local mufti-dominated Arab leaders” were urging “all Arabs to leave the city, and large numbers did so.”

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.”

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.”

Benny Morris, the historian who documented instances where Palestinians were expelled, also found that Arab leaders encouraged their brethren to leave. Starting in December 1947, he 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” (*The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 590).

The Arab National Committee in Jerusalem, following the March 8, 1948, instructions of the Arab Higher Committee, ordered women, children and the elderly in various 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” (Morris, *Middle Eastern Studies*, January 1986). Morris also documented that the Arab Higher Committee 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” (*The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 592).

Morris also said that in early May units of the Arab Legion reportedly 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 like 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.”

The Secretary of the Arab League Office in London, Edward Atiyah, 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.”

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.

“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 alJanub* (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.”

On April 3, 1949, the Near East Broadcasting Station (Cyprus) said: “It must not be forgotten that the Arab Higher Committee encouraged the refugees' flight from their homes in Jaffa, Haifa and Jerusalem.”

“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).

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.”

“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.”

Even Jordan's King Abdullah, writing in his memoirs, blamed Palestinian leaders for the refugee problem:

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.

Expulsions of Arabs

The [Haganah](#) did employ psychological warfare to encourage the Arabs to abandon a few villages. [Yigal Allon](#), the commander of the [Palmach](#) (the “shock force of the Haganah”), said he had Jews talk to the Arabs in neighboring villages and tell them a large Jewish force was in Galilee with the intention of burning all the Arab villages in the Lake Huleh region. The Arabs were told to leave while they still had time and, according to Allon, they did exactly that.

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 an area 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.”

As was clear from the descriptions of what took place in the cities with the largest Arab populations, these cases were clearly 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 to insure clear lines of communication. 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” (*The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 592).

How Many Refugees?

Many Arabs claim that 800,000 to 1,000,000 Palestinians became [refugees](#) in 1947-49. The last census was taken in 1945. It found only 756,000 permanent Arab residents in Israel. On November 30, 1947, the date the [UN voted for partition](#), the total was 809,100. A 1949 Government of Israel census counted 160,000 Arabs living in the country after the war. This meant no more than 650,000 Palestinian Arabs could have become [refugees](#). A report by the UN Mediator on Palestine arrived at an even lower figure — 472,000.

A second refugee population was created in [1967](#). After ignoring warnings to stay out of the war, [King Hussein](#) launched an attack on [Jerusalem](#), Israel's capital. The UN estimated that during the fighting 175,000 Palestinians had fled for a second time and approximately 350,000 left for the first time. About 200,000 moved to Jordan, 115,000 to Syria and approximately 35,000 left Sinai for Egypt. Most of the Arabs who left had come from the West Bank.

When the Security Council empowered U Thant to send a representative to inquire into the welfare of civilians in the wake of the 1967 war, he instructed the mission to investigate the treatment of Jewish minorities in Arab countries, as well as Arabs in Israeli-occupied territory. Syria, Iraq and Egypt refused to permit the UN representative to carry out his investigation.



UN Resolution 194

Through November 2003, 101 of the 681 UN resolutions on the Middle East conflict referred directly to [Palestinian refugees](#). Not one mentioned the Jewish refugees from Arab countries ([Jerusalem Post](#), December 4, 2003).

The United Nations first took up the refugee issue and adopted [Resolution 194](#) on December 11, 1948. This called upon 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.

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. As 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."

At the time the Israelis did not expect the refugees to be a major issue; they thought the Arab states would resettle the majority and some 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. In fact, they unanimously rejected the UN resolution.

The [General Assembly](#) subsequently voted, on [November 19, 1948](#), to establish the United Nations Relief For Palestinian Refugees (UNRPR) to dispense aid to the refugees. The UNRPR was replaced by the [United Nations Relief and Works Agency \(UNRWA\)](#) on December 8, 1949, and given a budget of \$50 million.

UNRWA was designed to continue the relief program initiated by the UNRPR, substitute public works for direct relief and promote economic development. The proponents of the plan envisioned that direct relief would be almost completely replaced by public works, with the remaining assistance provided by the Arab governments.

UNRWA had little chance of success, however, 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 originally foreseen by the Agency as a means of alleviating

the Palestinians' situation. The Arab governments and 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.

While Jewish refugees from Arab countries received no international assistance, Palestinians received millions of dollars through UNRWA. Initially, the United States contributed \$25 million and Israel nearly \$3 million. The total Arab pledges amounted to approximately \$600,000. For the first 20 years, the United States provided more than two-thirds of the funds, while the Arab states continued to contribute a tiny fraction. Israel donated more funds to UNRWA than most Arab states. The Saudis did not match Israel's contribution until 1973; Kuwait and Libya, not until 1980. As recently as 1994, Israel gave more to UNRWA than all Arab countries except Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Morocco. In 2003, the United States contributed more than \$134 million of UNRWA's \$326 million budget (41%). All of the Arab countries *combined* contributed less than \$11 million (3%) and \$7.8 million of that was from Saudi Arabia, meaning the rest of the Arab world contributed less than \$3 million (1%).

Israel's Attitude Toward Refugees

When plans for setting up a state were made in early 1948, Jewish leaders in Palestine expected the population 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.”

Israel could not simply agree to allow all Palestinians to return, but consistently sought a solution to the refugee problem. Israel's position was expressed by [David BenGurion](#) (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 counterclaims 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.

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....”

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; agreed to release refugee accounts frozen in Israeli banks (eventually released in 1953); offered to pay compensation for abandoned lands and, finally, agreed to repatriate 100,000 refugees.



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.

Despite the position taken by the Arab states, Israel did release the Arab refugees' blocked bank accounts, which totaled more than \$10 million. In addition, through 1975, the Israeli government paid to more than 11,000 claimants more than 23 million Israeli pounds in cash and granted more than 20,000 acres as alternative holdings. Payments were made by land value between 1948 and 1953, plus 6 percent for every year following the claim submission.

After the [Six-Day War](#), Israel allowed some West Bank Arabs to return. In 1967, more than 9,000 families were reunited and, by 1971, Israel had readmitted 40,000 refugees. By contrast, in July 1968, Jordan prohibited persons intending to remain in the East Bank from emigrating from the West Bank and Gaza.

Arab Attitudes Toward the Refugees

The UN discussions on refugees had begun in the summer of 1948, before Israel had completed its military victory; consequently, the Arabs still believed they could win the war and allow the refugees to return triumphant. The Arab position was expressed by Emile Ghoury, the Secretary of the Arab Higher Committee:

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.

The Arabs demanded that the United Nations assert the “right” of the Palestinians to return to their homes, and were unwilling to accept anything less until after their defeat had become obvious. The Arabs then reinterpreted Resolution 194 as granting the refugees the absolute right of repatriation and have demanded that Israel accept this interpretation ever since.

One reason for maintaining this position was the conviction that the refugees could ultimately bring about Israel's destruction, 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 (*Al-Misri*, October 11, 1949).

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.

Although demographic figures indicated ample room for settlement existed in [Syria](#), Damascus refused to consider accepting 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 a large number of refugees, but proved unwilling. Lebanon insisted it had no room for the Palestinians. In 1950, the UN tried to resettle 150,000 refugees from Gaza in [Libya](#), but was rebuffed by Egypt.

[Jordan](#) was the only Arab country to welcome the Palestinians and grant them citizenship (to this day Jordan is the only Arab country where Palestinians *as a group* can become citizens). 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.

In 1952, the UNRWA set up a fund of \$200 million to provide homes and jobs for the refugees, but it went untouched.

The plight of the refugees remained unchanged after the [Suez War](#). In fact, even the rhetoric stayed the same. In 1957, the Refugee Conference at 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 (*Beirut al Massa*, July 15, 1957).

The treatment of the refugees in the decade following their displacement was best summed up by a former UNRWA official, Sir Alexander Galloway, in April 1952: "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."

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 1970's and early 1980's. Instead, thousands of South Koreans and other Asians were recruited to fill jobs.

The situation grew even worse in the wake of the [Gulf War](#). [Kuwait](#), which employed large numbers of Palestinians but denied them citizenship, expelled more than 300,000 of them. "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 (*Jerusalem Report*, June 27, 1991).

UNRWA & the Refugees Today

By the end of 2010, the number of Palestinian refugees on [UNRWA rolls](#) had risen to nearly 5 million, several times the number that left Palestine in 1948. In just the past three years, the number grew by 8 percent. Today, 42 percent of the refugees live in the territories; if you add those living in Jordan, 80 percent of the Palestinians currently live in "Palestine." Though the popular image is of refugees in squalid camps, less than one-third of the Palestinians are in the 59 [UNRWA-run camps](#).

The following chart details the dispersement of Palestinian refugees as of December 2010:

Field of Operations	Official Camps	Registered Refugees	Registered Refugees in Camps
Jordan	10	1,999,466	350,899



Lebanon	12	455,373	227,718
Syria	9	495,970	149,822
West Bank	19	848,494	206,123
Gaza Strip	8	1,167,361	518,147
Agency total	58	4,966,664	1,452,709

During the years that Israel controlled the Gaza Strip, a consistent effort was made to get the Palestinians into permanent housing. The Palestinians opposed the idea because the frustrated and bitter inhabitants of the camps provided the various terrorist factions with their manpower. Moreover, the Arab states routinely pushed for the adoption of UN resolutions demanding that Israel desist from the removal of Palestinian refugees from camps in Gaza and the West Bank. They preferred to keep the Palestinians as symbols of Israeli “oppression.”

Now the camps are in the hands of the [Palestinian Authority \(PA\)](#), but little is being done to improve the lot of the Palestinians living in them. Netty Gross of the [Jerusalem Report](#) (July 6, 1998) visited Gaza and asked an official why the camps there hadn't been dismantled. She was told the Palestinian Authority had made a “political decision” not to do anything for the nearly half a million Palestinians living in the camps until the final-status talks with Israel took place. In fact, between June 2000 and June 2003, the number of Palestinians living in camps in the PA has increased by nearly 50,000 (8 percent) and the overall number of refugees has grown by 11 percent.

For decades the refugees have held the UN responsible for ameliorating their condition. Though many Palestinians are unhappy with the treatment they have received from their Arab brothers, most refugees focus their discontentment on “the Zionists,” whom they blame for their predicament rather than the vanquished Arab armies.

Mahmoud Abbas – Obstacle to Peace

[Israel](#), the [United States](#) and most of the international community were pleased when [Mahmoud Abbas](#) was [elected](#) in 2005 as President of the [Palestinian Authority \(PA\)](#). Expectations were high that [Abbas](#) would radically alter the policies of his predecessor, consolidate his power, reform the [PA](#), and put an end to years of senseless violence that had [claimed many innocent lives](#) on both sides and had left Palestinians with a feeling of hopelessness.

Abbas, however, has done little since then to deserve the faith the international community placed in him.

Rather than taking tangible steps toward peace, [Abbas](#) has done nothing but bypass and evade bilateral negotiations with Israel while incessantly repeating the longstanding irredentist demands of the [PLO](#). Moreover, Abbas' insistence that Israeli intransigence - not Palestinian - has stalled the peace process, displays an incredibly narrow and hazy grasp on recent history. Abbas's power, prestige and popularity have dramatically weakened over the years, both internationally and amongst the Palestinian people, and the evidence is overwhelming that he is the biggest obstacle to making peace with [Israel](#).

Abbas's refusal in both January 2012 and October 2011 to discuss tangible peace initiatives with Israel through talks facilitated by Jordanian [King Abdullah](#) and the [Mideast Quartet](#) - a grouping of [Russia](#), the EU, US and [UN](#) - barely made news headlines. Likewise, his requirement that Israel meet a set of strict preconditions before negotiations - including a [settlement](#) construction freeze, acceptance of a [Palestinian state](#) based on [pre-1967 lines](#), and the release of Palestinian prisoners not included in the [Gilad Shalit exchange deal](#) - was also mostly excused by an international media all too quick to make excuses for the Palestinian leader.

These recent refusals are far from the first times that the Abbas government has responded to Israeli [peace initiatives](#) with blank stares and impossible demands. In fact, they reflect a longstanding trend of evading negotiations that Abbas has maintained from his predecessor [Yasser Arafat](#). Despite at least three successive Israeli administrations voicing support for compromise, Abbas has shown no willingness to meet [Israel](#) halfway.

In 2005, when Israeli PM [Ariel Sharon](#) ordered the [evacuation](#) of all Israeli civilian and military personnel from the [Gaza Strip](#), [Abbas](#) had an opportunity to announce that he would support the “end of occupation” and would begin to build the infrastructure of a state. Instead, he emphatically opposed the withdrawal, preferring “occupation” to a position where Palestinians could actually enjoy independence. [Abbas](#), however, was given the benefit of the doubt by external analysts because of his relatively moderate tone.

Abbas wasted yet another golden opportunity for peace in 2008. That year, Israeli PM [Ehud Olmert](#) made an offer for peace so overt that US Secretary of State [Condoleezza Rice](#) called it “amazing” and warned that “[Yitzhak Rabin](#) had been killed for offering far less.” Olmert's offer called for Israeli withdrawal from approximately 94% of the [West Bank](#), the creation of a pasage from the [West Bank](#) to [Gaza](#), and the equal “swapping” of land so that [Israel](#) could annex its major settlement blocs. Olmert even proposed to divide [Jerusalem](#) and absorb a few thousand [Palestinian refugees](#). [Abbas](#), though, refused to consummate the deal.

As Israeli daily *Haaretz* noted, "aficionados of the Palestinians again found a million and one reasons why the peace-loving Palestinian leader had refused the offer."

In 2009, [Abbas](#) again refused to negotiate, this time with new [Israeli](#) Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), and rejected the Israeli leader's offer to immediately resume talks without preconditions. Perfidiously playing the game of diplomacy, Abbas's chief negotiator [Saeb Erekat](#) called on the Arab countries to suspend the [Arab peace initiative](#) and called on the international community to isolate [Netanyahu](#) for "sabotaging" the [peace process](#). [Abbas](#), meanwhile, said he hoped the [Obama Administration](#) would force [Netanyahu](#) out of office and declared his willingness to wait years until that happened.

In 2010, [Abbas](#) made clear that he refused to even sit in the same room with the Israelis and the [Obama administration](#) had to levy all of its political power just to pressure the Palestinians into "proximity talks" with U.S. special envoy [George Mitchell](#). Not surprisingly, these talks yielded little progress. Abbas's senior aide, Tayeb Abdel Rahim, said that Israel's request to launch direct negotiations was "unacceptable." Even after [Israel](#) placed a [ten-month moratorium](#) on settlement construction in the West Bank, [Abbas](#) refused to sit with the Israeli leaders.

In 2011, [Abbas](#) finally took tangible steps in the peace process - only in the wrong direction. His political party, [Fatah](#), declared war on normalization with [Israel](#) and discounted peace talks as useless. Later, [Abbas](#) agreed to a reconciliation agreement with [Hamas](#) despite the fact that it is an internationally recognized terrorist organization and vows to never negotiate with [Israel](#). And, in September, [Abbas](#) tried to completely bypass negotiations once and for all, with the tacit support of the international community, by [officially requesting](#) that the [United Nations](#) recognize the independence of a [unilaterally declared Palestinian state](#).

[Mahmoud Abbas](#) has consistently refused to negotiate a deal now with three different Israeli prime ministers and there is no reason to expect that a change in Israeli leadership would make him any less intransigent. [Abbas](#) has proven time and again that he is either incapable or unwilling to deliver on any agreement, yet despite this fact, [Israel](#) has repeatedly been asked by external actors to make gestures to the Palestinians.

Not surprisingly, no offer has ever been sufficient. If [Israel](#) releases prisoners, it is not enough; if [Israel](#) agrees to withdraw troops or dismantle checkpoints, it makes no impression on [Abbas](#).

The [United States](#) and the international community continue to place all their faith in a man whose track record suggests that he will remain the principal obstacle to any progress in the [peace process](#). Rather than continuing to pressure [Israel](#) to make concessions, it is past time to look and work for a Palestinian leader who will respect not only the hopes of [Israel](#) but the wishes of his own people, the majority of whom would prefer to live in peace rather than continue to pursue a futile and endless strategy of "resistance."

Hamas: Terrorist Organization

[Hamas](#) is the Arabic acronym for "The Islamic

Resistance Movement" (*Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya*). It grew out of the ideology and practice of the [Islamic](#) fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood movement, was legally registered in [Israel](#) in 1978 by [Sheikh Ahmed Yassin](#), the movement's spiritual leader, and has since wreaked terror upon the State of Israel in its quest to annihilate the Jewish State. Since 2007, Hamas has controlled the [Gaza Strip](#).

The goal of [Hamas](#) is clear. As stated in the organization's [covenant](#), the Islamic Resistance Movement "strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine." Its [platform](#) states that "there is no solution for the Palestinian question except through [jihad](#) (holy war)." The group warns that any Muslim who leaves "the circle of struggle with [Zionism](#)" is guilty of "high treason." No negotiations or compromises are possible.

[Israel](#) has long feared that if [Hamas](#) was not destroyed, it would establish a terrorist base on its doorstep and since 2007, that fear has been actualized after Hamas violently took control of Gaza and continued in earnest to rain rockets down on Israeli civilian areas in the southern part of the country.

Israel has been widely condemned and criticized for its blockade of the Gaza Strip, setup to disrupt the flow of illegal arms to Hamas, and its multiple incursions into Gaza in order to destroy Hamas terror networks and protect Israeli citizens. These critics of Israel say that Hamas was elected "democratically" by the Palestinians and therefore Israel does not have a legal right to continue to occupy the area or blockade their borders. In an ideal world Israel would not have to blockade Gaza, but the situation is far from ideal. As the *Wall Street Journal* noted, "Palestinians need to understand that the exercise of self-government carries consequences."

Since their election, [Hamas](#) leaders have [reaffirmed](#) their commitment to liberating all of Palestine and said they have no intention of disarming. The Palestinian institutions that had been bound by [agreements](#) to stop the violence, confiscate illegal weapons, end smuggling and cease incitement are now controlled by the very people most responsible for terror, gun running, and the use of the media and schools to demonize Israel and Jews.

Israel has vowed to fight against the threat posed by [Hamas](#) but it has also holds open the possibility of negotiating peace with leaders of the [Palestinian Authority](#), provided they step up to the plate and start dismantling the terrorist infrastructure, accepting all previously contracted agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, and repudiating those parts of the Hamas covenant denying Israel's right to exist.

Apologists for [Palestinian terror](#) sometimes argue that [Hamas](#) shouldn't be labeled a terrorist organization because only some members engage in murder while others perform charitable or political activity. A false distinction is made between the "political" and "military" wings of [Hamas](#). All of the activities of [Hamas](#) are intertwined, and serve the organization's primary objective laid out in its [covenant](#). Hamas's former leader, [Sheikh Ahmad Yassin](#), denied that [Hamas](#) had uncoordinated wings: "We cannot separate the wing from the body. If we do so, the body will not be able to fly. [Hamas](#) is one body." And the "political" leaders of [Hamas](#) freely admit their relationship to the murderers. "The political leadership," former [Hamas](#) spokesman, '[Abd al-'Aziz ar-Rantisi](#) once said, "has freed the hand of the [Izz ad-Din al-Qassam] brigades to do whatever they want against the brothers of monkeys and pigs [i.e., Jews]."

While [Hamas](#) does engage in social work, this is closely connected to the “armed struggle.” Various charitable activities are used to recruit young Palestinians for terrorist operations. Hospitals, mosques, sport clubs, libraries, and schools serve not only their expected roles, but also act as covers for hiding weapons, obtaining supplies, and indoctrinating future suicide bombers. In May 2009, the Palestinian Health Ministry reported that Hamas raided 46 ambulances, that had been sent as humanitarian aid from neighboring Arab states, of the medical equipment they contained and then used them as military vehicles to arrest citizens.

The education system is used to incite young Palestinians to become martyrs. “The children of the kindergarten are the *shaheeds* [martyrs] of tomorrow,” read signs in a [Hamas](#) -run school, while placards in classrooms at al-Najah University in the [West Bank](#) and at [Gaza’s](#) Islamic University declare that “Israel has nuclear bombs; we have human bombs.” In August 2008, Hamas replaced hundreds of striking members of the local teachers' union with Hamas loyalists, purging the Gaza public school system of its political rivals.

[Hamas](#) operatives use Islamic charities and social welfare programs to skim and launder funds, and to earn money to live on while they engage in terrorism. Recipients of [Hamas](#) charity also understand there is a quid pro quo. If they are asked to provide assistance, whether it be to hide weapons, provide a safe house for a fugitive, or act as a courier, few are likely to refuse.

The United States government recognizes the connection between the charitable activities of [Hamas](#) and its terrorist campaign, which is why the Treasury Department [designated](#) six senior Hamas political leaders and five charities as terrorist entities. According to Treasury, “the political leadership of Hamas directs its terrorist networks just as they oversee their other activities.”

Threat from Iran

[Iran](#) is one of the foremost, self-proclaimed enemies of the West and one of the most serious threats to stability in the Middle East.

The Iranian government's extreme interpretation of [Islamic law](#), and its anti-Western philosophy, inspire the rise of Islamic extremists across the world. Iran is also one of the principal [state sponsors of terror](#), proudly delivering weapons to [Hezbollah](#) members in [Lebanon](#) and terrorists affiliated with the [Palestinian Authority](#). Additionally, the regime in Iran continues to provide safe haven for terrorists, including some of al-Qaeda's senior leaders such as Yasin al-Suri, Saif al-Adel and Abu Muhammad al-Masri who have been hunted by the United States for over a decade. Moreover, Iranian agents have been implicated in many anti-Western and anti-Israel terrorist attacks, including bombings that have killed U.S. servicemen in Iraq and the foiled attempt to assassinate [Saudi Arabia's](#) ambassador to the U.S. in October 2011.

But above all these concerns, the most menacing threat that Iran poses to international security and stability emanates from the fact it is harnessing nuclear energy for the purpose of developing a nuclear bomb. In 2005, Iran made its first advance in the production of enriched uranium and subsequently established a secret nuclear research center to train scientists in all aspects of atomic technology. Intelligence released in 2012 shows that Iran has now amassed some 10,000 functioning centrifuges and has streamlined the uranium enrichment process enough that when they convert their five tons of low-grade fissile material into high-grade material, it would be enough to make about five to six bombs.

Analysts believe that it will take Iran nine months, from the moment an order is given, to assemble their first explosive device and another six months to be able to reduce it to the dimensions of a missile payload. Iran continues to work on long range missiles, but even now has weapons capable of reaching Israel, parts of Eastern and Southern Europe, the Arabian peninsula, and American bases in the Middle East.

There is now little disagreement as to the intentions of the Iranians. [United States](#) Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said in January 2012 he believes Iran is one year away from developing a nuclear weapon. "The United States ... does not want Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. That's a red line for us," Panetta said. "If they proceed ... with developing a nuclear weapon then we will take whatever steps are necessary to stop it."

In response to the growing sense of urgency, [President Obama](#) has [imposed sanctions](#) against companies doing business with Iran, the Treasury Department has worked to [freeze Iranian financial assets](#) and new measures have been passed by Congress to halt transactions with Iran's Central Bank.

In Europe, Maj. Gen. Vladimir Dvorkin, head of the Moscow-based Center for Strategic Nuclear Forces, is convinced that if the Iranians are "able to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles in the near future ... they will most likely be able to threaten the whole of Europe." This fear has led countries such as [France](#), [Germany](#) and [Great Britain](#) to spearhead a European Union effort to convince Iran to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

In January 2012, the European Union ratcheted up the pressure by voting to embargo Iranian oil and to freeze the assets of Iran's central bank. "We will not accept Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. Iran has so far had no regard for its international obligations and is already exporting and threatening violence around its region," British Prime Minister David Cameron, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in a joint statement.

The [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) (IAEA) has confirmed that Iran is developing nuclear weapons and reiterated the need to address this situation as soon as possible. In November 2011, the IAEA [released a report](#) confirming that Iran is working to build a nuclear weapon and raising the alarm that the world must take steps to prevent Iran from achieving their goal. Director General Yukiya Amano said "It is my responsibility to alert the world. From the indicators I had, I draw the conclusion that it is time to call the world's attention to this risk."

Across the Arab Middle East, the Iranian nuclear program is raising grave concerns with regards to Iran's intentions for regional dominance. In 2009, then-Egyptian President [Mubarak](#) said, "A nuclear armed Iran with hegemonic ambitions is the greatest threat to Arab nations today." In 2011, [Saudi Arabian](#) government officials noted, "We cannot live in a situation where Iran has nuclear weapons ... If Iran develops a nuclear weapon, that will be unacceptable to us." Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal has implicitly noted that if Iran achieved nuclear weapons it would "lead to untold and possibly dramatic consequences" including an arms race across the Middle East. [Jordan](#), [Egypt](#), [Yemen](#), [Algeria](#), [Morocco](#), [Tunisia](#), the [UAE](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#) have all signed nuclear cooperation agreements that raise the possibility of nuclear proliferation in the region.

A nuclear Iran would also limit Israel's ability to protect itself from Iranian sponsored terrorists in the region, in particular [Hezbollah](#) in [Lebanon](#) and [Hamas](#) in Gaza. As Israeli Minister of Defense [Ehud Barak](#) puts it, if Iran had nuclear capability, then retaliating against an attack from [Hamas](#) or [Hezbollah](#) "would be tantamount to an attack on Iran," and would thus restrict an aggressive range of operations.

Israel has repeatedly stated that it cannot tolerate a nuclear armed Iran. Consequently, Israel has been vocal in advocating an international sanctions regime that is sufficiently punitive to convince the Iranians to abandon their project. In the absence of sufficiently restrictive sanctions, the fear is that a military response will be necessary. Israeli Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Strategic Affairs [Moshe Ya'alon](#) noted that there is little daylight between Israeli and American intelligence estimates on how close Iran is to pass a point of no return where it will be difficult if not impossible to stop them from building a weapon. As [Ehud Barak](#) explained, Iran is closing in on its "immunity zone" - the point when its accumulated know-how, raw materials, experience and equipment (as well as the distribution of materials among its underground facilities) would mean any military strike would fail in derailing the nuclear project.

Major recent developments in the ongoing saga of the Iranian nuclear program:

- In **February 2012**, Iranian President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#) inaugurated three new nuclear projects including the loading of the country's first domestically made nuclear fuel rods into the Tehran Research Reactor, Iranian state TV reported. A European diplomat in Vienna said that [Iran](#) "wants to show that they have the technical expertise to master the fuel cycle." Additionally, the nuclear plants at Natanz and Fordow are now able to enrich uranium to 20% and will use a new type of centrifuge, the 174 IR-1, capable of three times higher enrichment speeds than previous models. There are around 9,000 centrifuges at these central Iranian plants, a 50% increase from the previous amount. ([Jerusalem Post](#), [Haaretz](#) Feb 15, 2012; [American Enterprise Institute](#), Feb 21, 2012)
- In **February 2012**, the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) (IAEA) reported that their inspectors were unable to obtain any new information on the Iranian nuclear program as Tehran refused to answer questions

raised in the agency's November 2011 [report](#). A senior American official characterized the IAEA meeting as "foot-dragging at best and a disaster at worst." U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said, "My view is that right now the most important thing is to keep the international community unified in keeping that pressure on, to try to convince Iran that they shouldn't develop a nuclear weapon, that they should join the international family of nations and that they should operate by all the rules that we all operate by." ([New York Times](#), February 3, 2012)

- In **January 2012**, Israel Vice Prime Minister and Strategic Affairs Minister Moshe Ya'alon said that Israel believes "Iran's nuclear development is clearly intended for military purposes." This came in the wake of an Iranian request from the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) (IAEA) to begin enriching their uranium to a 90% grade. 90% is generally viewed as an indication of weapons-grade material. ([Israel Hayom](#), January 31, 2012)

- In **January 2012**, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said that the United States believes Iran is one year away from developing a nuclear weapon and possibly two years shy of being able to mount it on a deliverable weapons system. "The United States ... does not want Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. That's a red line for us. And it's a red line obviously for the Israelis so we share a common goal here," Panetta said. "If they proceed and we get intelligence that they're proceeding with developing a nuclear weapon then we will take whatever steps are necessary to stop it," he added. ([Haaretz](#), January 30, 2012)

- In **January 2012**, the European Union adopted an "unprecedented" resolution calling for an embargo on Iranian oil and petroleum imports to European nations. Europe has been one of the leading importers of Iranian oil and an embargo of this nature is meant to show Iran the West's resolve in working towards an end to development in its nuclear weapons program. The EU foreign ministers also passed a resolution freezing all assets of the Iranian central bank in Europe. ([BBC](#), January 23, 2012)

- In **January 2012**, Yukiya Amano, director general of the IAEA, made clear that he believes the Iranians are developing nuclear energy in order to create atomic or nuclear bombs and that he feels the Iranians have been less than open about their true intentions. "What we know suggests the development of nuclear weapons," Amano said in his interview with the Financial Times of Germany. "I have absolutely no reason to soften my report," he added. "It is my responsibility to alert the world, from the indicators I had, I draw the conclusion that it is time to call the world's attention to this risk." Iranian representatives to the IAEA responded to the comments by saying their country was open to discussing any issues about their nuclear energy program in a series of talks scheduled in Tehran for the end of January. ([Reuters](#), January 19, 2012)

- In the **Winter 2011/2012**, a string of suspicious explosions hit various sites in Iran and killed a number of Iranian nuclear scientists.

- On November 12, an explosion at a Revolutionary Guard Corps weapons depot near Tehran (in Karaj) killed 17 soldiers, including an IRGC rocket expert and long-range missile research specialist. ([Washington Post](#), November 12, 2011)
- On November 28, a large explosion rocked the Iranian city of Isfahan (where a military complex is located) as the government issued conflicting reports thought to deny any notions of damage by way of sabotage on its nuclear sites. ([Telegraph](#), November 28, 2011)
- On November 30, there was a blast on a military facility in the Iranian city of Khorramabad near the Iran-Iraq border.

- On December 14, there was an attack against a plant that manufactures a particular type of steel that is used for nose cones and other parts of missiles. ([Foundation for the Defense of Democracies](#), December 14, 2011)
- On January 11, 2012, nuclear scientist Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan was assassinated when a bomb detonated in his car. Iranian Lawmaker Kazem Jalali immediately blamed both the U.S. and Israeli intelligence services for the strike, though both categorically denied any involvement. ([CNN](#), Jan 11, 2012).

- In **December 2011**, Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal noted that if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, “[it] would compel Saudi Arabia...to pursue policies which could lead to untold and possibly dramatic consequences”. One of his officials clarified the vague statement by saying, “We cannot live in a situation where Iran has nuclear weapons and we don’t. It’s as simple as that. If Iran develops a nuclear weapon, that will be unacceptable to us and we will have to follow suit.” ([New York Times](#), December 6, 2011)

- In **November 2011**, the [IAEA](#) Board of Governors [adopted a resolution](#) calling on Iran to comply, fully and without delay, to its obligations under resolutions passed by the [United Nations Security Council](#) and to intensify their dialogue with in order to resolve questions regarding their nuclear development. The resolution expressed support for a diplomatic, negotiated solution to the growing problem in order to restore international confidence in the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. This resolution came on the heels of yet another [IAEA report](#) - the fourth released in 2011 alone - that confirmed fears that Iran seems to be working towards the development of a nuclear weapon.

- In **November 2011**, the US government took two distinct, yet tangible steps to halt funding to Iran in an effort to curb its nuclear programs. These steps by the [Obama Administration](#) sent an unequivocal message to the Government of Iran that it will continue to face increasing international pressure until it addresses the international community's legitimate concerns regarding the nature of Iran’s nuclear program.

- On November 19, President Obama signed [Executive Order 13590](#) that imposed sanctions on anyone doing business with Iran's energy or chemical programs. If a person is found to have provided a good, service, technology, or support to Iran described in E.O. 13590, the Secretary of State, in consultation with other agencies, has the authority to impose sanctions on these people or businesses, including prohibitions on foreign or banking transactions and property transactions in the United States.
- Additionally, the US Department of the Treasury identified Iran as a [jurisdiction of primary money laundering](#) concern under Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act based on Iran's support for terrorism, pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and the illicit and deceptive financial activities that Iranian financial institutions - including the Central Bank of Iran - and other state-controlled entities engage in to facilitate Iran's illicit conduct and evade sanctions

- On **September 3, 2011**, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released a report on the Iranian nuclear program that expressed grave concern on Tehran's experimental work to develop nuclear weapons, saying that it is becoming "increasingly concerned" at the advancements. The IAEA said Iran has begun deploying so-called second-generation centrifuges at its largest uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz, which could allow the country to produce nuclear fuel at three times its current rate. ([Wall Street Journal](#), September 3, 2011).

- In **September 2011**, Iran moved its most critical nuclear fuel production to a highly guarded underground military facility outside the city of Qum, where - according to intelligence officials - it is less vulnerable to an air or cyberattack such as the 2010 Stuxnet computer worm that reportedly set back Iran's nuclear program by a year or two. ([New York Times](#), September 2, 2011).

- In **June 2011**, a UN panel of experts, which was convened after the UN Security Council imposed stiffer sanctions against Iran in 2010, released a report which compiled information provided by Security Council member nations, monitors sent to various countries where unauthorized Iranian activity has been uncovered and input from outside experts on Iran's development of medium- and long-range missiles, nuclear program and weapons-smuggling operations. The report warned: "Iran's circumvention of sanctions across all areas, in particular the use of front companies, concealment methods in shipping, financial transactions and the transfer of conventional arms and related materiel, is willful and continuing. Iran maintains its uranium enrichment and heavy water-related activities, as noted in reporting by the International Atomic Energy Agency, and in the area of ballistic missiles, continues to test missiles and engage in prohibited procurement." According to the report, in a period of less than six months, the Iranians launched Sejil and Shahab 3 missiles on three occasions, and conducted an additional trial of the Fateh-110 missile. ([Haaretz](#), June 10, 2011).

- In **April 2011**, scientists from Iran's atomic energy program announced that they had successfully tested advanced centrifuges for enriching uranium and were less than a month away from starting Iran's first commercial nuclear reactor. Though the advances were not yet fully implemented, the announcements countered international perceptions that Iran's nuclear program had suffered significant setbacks during a series of cyber attacks on the country's main uranium enrichment facilities in 2009 and 2010 and prompted some experts to redraw their forecasts for how quickly the country could build an atomic arsenal ([Washington Post](#), April 14, 2011).

- A **January 2011** summit of six world powers meeting with Iran to discuss freezing its uranium enrichment program, failed after two days of negotiations in which Iran demanded an end to UN sanctions and an agreement that it could continue to enrich. Tehran rejected proposals for improved UN monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities and the revival of a subset of international talks focusing on Iran shipping out a limited amount of its enriched uranium in exchange for fuel for its research reactor ([Jerusalem Post](#), January 22, 2011).

- In **January 2011**, the top-secret Manhattan Project published a study warning against Western complacency over Iran's nuclear drive as they found that Tehran had boosted its capacity to build an atomic bomb during 2010. According to the Federation of American Scientists, after examining data provided by the IAEA, the enrichment capacity of gas centrifuges at Iran's main enrichment plant in Natanz was more efficient in 2010 than in previous years ([AFP](#), January 21, 2011).



Nuclear Proliferation in MidEast

While the immediate focus of

international attention has been on stopping [Iran](#) from obtaining the ability to build nuclear weapons, an equally worrisome development is that the Iranian drive to obtain a nuclear bomb has stimulated a regional race for nuclear technology to counter the perceived threat from a nuclear Iran.

Like [Iran](#), at least twelve other Middle Eastern countries have either announced plans to explore atomic energy or have signed nuclear cooperation agreements: [Saudi Arabia](#), [Algeria](#), [Egypt](#), [UAE](#), [Jordan](#), [Morocco](#), [Tunisia](#), [Turkey](#), [Syria](#), [Kuwait](#), [Qatar](#), and [Oman](#). (Two other countries - [Yemen](#) and [Libya](#) - cancelled their nuclear programs) Also like Iran, each of these countries have explicitly stated that they are only interested in peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

The fear is now that these countries may follow the Iranian example and work toward building a nuclear bomb to protect themselves in any future nuclear arms race.

As [President Obama](#) noted in March 2012, "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 ... so the threat of proliferation becomes that much more severe ... 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."

These [Middle East nations](#) are increasingly apprehensive about the threat of a nuclear [Iran](#) and the failure of the international community to take decisive actions to prevent Tehran from achieving its nuclear ambitions. If the West is going to protect its interests in the region and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, it is vital now that Iran be stopped so steps can be taken to rein in these new efforts to join the nuclear club.

These are some of the recent developments across the Middle East:

Saudi Arabia

- In May 2008, the U.S. and [Saudi Arabia](#) agreed to establish a nuclear cooperation relationship and Saudi Arabia joined the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI).
- In August 2009, the Saudi minister of water and electricity announced that the kingdom was working on plans for its first nuclear power plant.
- In July 2010, Saudi Arabia and [France](#) announced the signing of a nuclear cooperation pact in order to develop atomic energy.
- In February 2011, Saudi Arabia and France signed a bilateral cooperation agreement for the development of nuclear power.
- In January 2012, a senior official noted, "We cannot live in a situation where Iran has nuclear weapons and we don't ... If Iran develops a nuclear weapon, that will be unacceptable to us and we will have to follow suit."
- Prince Turki al-Faisal noted that if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, "[that] would compel Saudi Arabia...to pursue policies which could lead to untold and possibly dramatic consequences".
- In January 2012, King Abdullah signed an agreement with China for cooperation in the development and use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

UAE

- In January 2008, UAE signed a deal with a French company to build two nuclear reactors.
- UAE signed a nuclear framework agreement with [France](#) for cooperation in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful, civilian purposes.
- [UAE](#) and U.S. signed an agreement in April 2008 to establish peaceful nuclear energy cooperation and formalized that MOU in January 2009.
- In May 2009, President Obama approved the agreement on nuclear energy cooperation.
- The agreement with the U.S. follows the public launch of a UAE policy document outlining potential development of a domestic nuclear power plant.
- In August 2009, UAE joined the IAEA Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management.
- In May 2010, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs, said they were developing nuclear technology in a "transparent, safe, secure, and peaceful" manner and outlined the UAE's policy to "develop its nuclear energy programme in a responsible manner".
- In March 2011, the UAE accepted a \$20 billion bid from a South Korean consortium to build four commercial nuclear power reactors, total 5.6 GWe, by 2020.
- In June 2011, a national opinion poll found strong support for nuclear technology development with 85% of respondents believing in the importance of nuclear energy.

Jordan

- In 2007, [Jordan](#) established its Committee for Nuclear Strategy and set out a program for the development of nuclear power.
- In mid 2008, Jordan signed an agreement with the Atomic Energy of Canada to conduct a study on building a reactor using natural uranium fuel for power.
- In December 2008, Jordan signed an MOU with Korea Electric Power Corp to carry out site selection and feasibility study on nuclear power projects.
- In November 2009, Jordan signed an \$11.3 million agreement with WorleyParsons for the pre-construction phase of a 1000 MWe nuclear power plant.
- In February 2011, Jordan and Turkey signed a nuclear cooperation agreement.
- In 2012, Jordan announced plans to start building a nuclear power plant in 2013 for operation by 2020 and a second one for operation by 2025.
- Jordan signed nuclear cooperation agreements with France, Canada, UK and Russia, in respect to both power and desalination.
- Jordan signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with China, covering uranium mining and nuclear power.
- Jordan also has cooperation agreements with South Korea, Japan, Spain, Italy, Romania, Turkey and Argentina related to infrastructure for nuclear power.

Turkey

- Early in 2006, the port city of Sinop was chosen to host a commercial nuclear power plant.
- In August 2006, [Turkey](#) announced plans to have three nuclear power plants total operating by 2015. Discussions had been under way with Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd regarding two units as an initial investment.



- In 2007, a bill concerning construction and operation of nuclear power plants and sale of their electricity was passed by parliament and subsequently approved by the President. The bill provided for the Turkish Atomic Energy Authority (TAEK) to set the criteria for building and operating the plants.
- In February 2008, preparatory work began to build a second nuclear power plant in Sinop.
- In May 2008, a civil nuclear cooperation agreement with the USA entered into force.
- In May 2010, Russia and Turkey signed an intergovernmental agreement for to build and operate a nuclear plant with four reactors in Akkuyu.
- In June 2010, a nuclear cooperation agreement with South Korea was signed to build the second Sinop plant with four nuclear reactors.
- In 2011, the government announced intentions for three further nuclear power plants with four reactors each, all to be operational by 2030.

Egypt

- In September 2006, [Egypt](#) announced it would revive long dormant plans to construct a nuclear energy.
- In March 2007, Energy and Electricity Minister Hassan Younis announced plans to construct 10 nuclear-powered "electricity-generating stations" across the country.
- [Russia](#) and Egypt signed a nuclear cooperation accord in March 2008.
- In 2009, the Egyptian Nuclear Power Plant Authority (NPAA) and WorleyParsons Limited concluded a \$160 million contract with services to include "site and technology selection studies and carries through to design, construction management, commissioning and start-up of the 1,200 MWe nuclear power plant."
- In 2010, Cairo formally requested nuclear energy training assistance from the Korea International Cooperation Agency
- As of June 2011, Egypt's transitional government was planning to invite international companies to bid for their reactor construction project at El-Dabaa.

Kuwait

- In March 2009, [Kuwait](#) setup a national nuclear energy commission, in cooperation with the IAEA, to consider the development of a nuclear technology program.
- In April 2010, it signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with France relating civil nuclear energy applications, including electricity generation, water desalination, research, agronomy, biology, earth sciences and medicine.
- In September 2010, announced intention to build 4 nuclear power reactors by 2022 but this plan was scrapped in mid-2011.
- In June 2010, Kuwait signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the U.S. Government on nuclear safeguards and other nonproliferation topics.
- By December 2010, Kuwait had nuclear cooperation agreements with USA, Russia and Japan.

Algeria

- In January 2007, Algeria and Russia signed an agreement to investigate the establishment of a nuclear power facility.
- In June 2007, Algeria signed a nuclear cooperation accord with the USA to begin generating nuclear energy for civilian purposes.
- During 2008, Algeria signed other nuclear technology agreements with Argentina, China, and France.
- In February 2009, the government announced that it planned to build its first nuclear power plant to be operating about 2020.

- [Algeria](#) has one of the most advanced nuclear-science programs in the Arab world and is considering the role that nuclear power might play in its domestic energy mix.

Morocco

- In 2007, nuclear power company Areva signed an agreement with Morocco's Office Cherifien des Phosphates (OCP) to recover uranium from phosphoric acid.
- In October 2007, [Morocco](#) signed a nuclear energy cooperation agreement with France to develop a nuclear power plant near Marrakesh.
- In January 2010, government announced plans for two nuclear reactors to start operation after 2020.
- In January 2011, the government approved plans to set up a nuclear safety agency and draft a law on nuclear security.

Qatar

- Qatar was actively involved in the GCC decision of December 2006 to pursue nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.
- In April 2008, [Qatar](#) announced a plan to build a nuclear plant.
- In May 2008, Qatar sent experts to a meeting of the IAEA in [Vienna](#).
- In 2010, Qatar raised the possibility of a regional project for nuclear generation.

Tunisia

- In December 2006, [Tunisia](#) signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with France focused on nuclear power and desalination.
- In April 2008, the nuclear cooperation agreement with France was amplified to include the possible construction of a nuclear power plant.

Syria

- From 2001-2007, [Syria](#) is believed to have been building a gas-cooled reactor similar to the plutonium production unit at Yongbyong in North Korea (this plant was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike in 2007 and all remains were subsequently demolished by the Syrian government).
- In 2011, the Syrian Atomic Energy Commission published a proposal for a new nuclear power plant by 2020.

Oman

- In June 2009, [Oman](#) signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with Russia.
- In February 2010, a delegation of U.S. experts met with Oman's Nuclear Steering Committee regarding areas of potential future cooperation in nuclear technology.

“Arab Spring:” Upheaval in Egypt

On January 25, 2011, thousands of Egyptian protestors rushed Tahrir square in Cairo, as well as numerous other locations around [Egypt](#), and demanded the resignation of President [Hosni Mubarak](#) and the implementation of a new, democratically-oriented government. On the morning of February 12, after more than two weeks of brutal government resistance, Vice President [Omar Suleiman](#) announced Mubarak’s resignation from the presidential post.

Following Mubarak's step down, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, led by Commander-in-Chief Mohamed Tantawi, took temporary control of governing Egypt's transition to democracy. In the months after its rise to power, the Council released numerous official statements in which it assured the country of its intention to suspend the four decades old emergency laws, provide a safe transition to democracy through open elections, honor all regional and international obligations and ensure that peace and security be maintained for all citizens of Egypt.

It has now been more than a year since the revolution began and, as expected, Egypt has undergone dramatic changes – both for better and worse.

Given Egypt’s importance in maintaining stability, power balance, and peace in the Middle East, as well as its close alliance with the United States, it is important to keep track of the nation's progress as it continues down the path of reformation and change.

Relations with Israel

Peace Deal

Since signing a [peace deal with Israel in 1979](#), Egypt and the Jewish state have remained diplomatically friendly and maintained at worst a cold peace. Though many in the Egyptian public opposed the deal with [Israel](#), Mubarak fully honored the terms of the agreement signed by his predecessor [Anwar Sadat](#). The peace deal led to a softening of tensions between the two countries and even helped facilitate the signing of a 15 year contract for Israel to buy natural gas from Egypt at a slightly below-market price.

The new temporary government in Egypt, more responsive to the wishes of the people, may be aiming to renege on both treaties with Israel citing solid support for such a change. A recent poll suggested that more than 50% of Egyptians are in favor of tearing up the decades old peace agreement and 36% would support overhauling it with major changes.

Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi said that “any issue is negotiable” and referred specifically to the stipulation in the peace treaty that [Sinai](#) remain a demilitarized zone.

Presidential candidate [Amr Moussa](#) has said that, if elected, he would not seek to scrap the treaty or the peace that it entails. He maintains, however, that the direction of peace between the countries is very much

dependent on future Israeli policy. “We want to be a friend of Israel,” Moussa said, “but it has to have two parties, it is not on Egypt to be a friend. Israel has to be a friend, too.”

On the other hand, [Mohammed ElBaradei](#), another potential presidential candidate, has made it clear that he would not necessarily honor the peace treaty with Israel. “If Israel attacked [Gaza](#), we would declare war against the Zionist regime,” ElBaradei was quoted as saying by the Tehran Times. In February 2011, however, ElBaradei had suggested that the peace deal with Israel was “rock solid” and that “Egypt will continue to respect it.

Another presidential candidate, Muhammad Salim al-Awa, made a public address on Egyptian television in which he explicitly called for “affirmation of the enmity” with Israel, namely to officially recognize that “Israel is an enemy ... the enemy of all the Arab and Muslim countries, with Egypt first and foremost.” He said that the Egypt-Israel accord is not a peace deal but rather a truce, meaning that it is temporary and does not mean that Egypt must treat Israel as an ally or a friend.

On July 23, 2011, though, the head of Egypt's ruling military council Field Marshall Mohammed Tantawi announced publicly that the Egyptian government intends to obey all previously signed international agreements - including the Egypt-Israel peace accord - and that Egypt will continue to work towards achieving peace in the Middle East.

On September 17, 2011, Moussa reiterated his position that the 1979 peace treaty is untouchable. Moussa, quoted by the Kuwaiti paper Al-Jurida, said that “the treaty has become a historical record.” Though he had originally noted that he would not seek to scrap the treaty if elected president, Moussa had later noted that the treaty could definitely be amended since it is “neither a Quran nor a Bible.

On September 27, 2011, Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Amr told the Associated Press that Egypt will always respect the 1979 landmark U.S.-brokered peace treaty with Israel.

In January 2012, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, which now has a plurality in the parliament, announced that it will not change the industrial zones jointly managed by Egypt and Israel to promote trade between the two peace partners. However, on January 26, a Brotherhood spokesman told a London-based Arabic-language newspaper that the Muslim Brotherhood's position of “reject[ing] any request from the [Israeli] Embassy to meet with leaders of the Brotherhood [is] clear and not up for discussion.” Israel insists that it is open to the new Cairo government and is happy to conduct dialogue with anyone willing to talk with them, but the Brotherhood's spokesman said further that “our group is not prepared to conduct dialogue with Israel - that is our decision.”

Natural Gas Treaty

The gas treaty that supplies Israel with around 40% of its natural gas supply has also come under considerable heat in the new government. Since the revolution began in January, the pipeline has been attacked five times by terrorists, causing major blockages in shipments to Israel that in turn have forced considerable price hikes and shortages. Israel's Minister of National Infrastructures [Uzi Landau](#) estimates that electricity prices will rise by some 20% and the Israel Electric Company has stated that the cost of these attacks to the Israeli economy is liable to reach some 3-3.5 billion shekels.

No organizations have taken responsibility for the attacks, though many Egyptians point an accusing finger towards groups operating out of the [Gaza Strip](#), namely al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad and Jaish al-Islam. The success that these groups have had in attacking the pipeline and subsequently escaping law enforcement underscores how they are considerably exploiting the increasingly lawlessness that is taking over the Sinai Peninsula.

Many Egyptians are weary of the gas deal with Israel, believing that Israel is paying below-market prices, and have called on the government to halt the flow and keep the gas in Egypt. In fact, the former government oil minister who was in charge of maintaining the deal with Israel, is rumored to soon be tried in court on charges that he "wasted public money" to the tune of almost \$800 million.

On May 5th, the Arabic newspaper *Al-Masry Al-Youm* reported that Egyptian government officials would seek to raise the sale price to almost double what Israel pays currently. Specific details on the future of the deal have yet to be revealed. In early July, the Egyptian finance minister announced his intention to raise the price of gas to Israel by some 2.5 billion shekels, and another senior Egyptian official even offered an assessment that the attacks on the gas pipeline "is expected to continue unless implementation of the [gas] agreement in its present format is not halted."

After the fifth attack against the pipeline in late July, Amit Mor, CEO and energy specialist at the Eco Energy Consulting Firm in Israel, spoke about the Egyptian-Israeli gas deal. "It is crucial to Israel that the Egyptian government establishes security control, especially in northern Sinai to secure the natural gas pipeline to Israel," Mor said. "I think the major consumers and government all have given up on the supply of Egyptian gas to Israel." He added, "The resumption of the full contractual obligation of gas supply to Israel can be used as a test-case of the Egyptian government to maintain its international obligations visa- vis foreign direct investments in Egypt on the one hand, and its future relations with Israel on the other."

On September 27, 2011, unknown assailants blew up the pipeline for the sixth time since [President Mubarak](#) was ousted in February, causing a large explosion and huge flames of up to 15 meters into the sky.

On November 25 and 27, 2011, respectively, saboteurs blew up Egypt's gas pipeline to Jordan and Israel, west of al-Arish in Sinai. The November 27 attacks included two consecutive explosions. These mark the seventh and eighth times the pipeline has been attacked since Mubarak's stepped down in February 2011.

Public Discourse

On May 15, 2011, thousands of Egyptians marked Palestinian "[Nakba](#)" day in Cairo by demonstrating in front of the Israeli embassy in the city. Despite the awkward relations, Egyptian security cracked down on the demonstration. The Egyptian Health Ministry estimated the number of protestors injured at over 350.

Conspiracy theories about Israeli influence in Egyptian politics also continue to spread both in the media and through government sources despite the beginning of an era of accountability and more open democracy. In June, Deputy Prime Minister Yehia El-Gamal told the Lebanese news site Al-Nashra that Israel was inciting sectarian strife between Muslims and Christians in the country. On July 20, minister Ayman Abu-Hadid responded to calls that an Egyptian export had been the cause of an E.Coli epidemic that killed almost 50 Germans by blaming Israel. "Israel is waging a commercial war against Egyptian exports," he explained, and with that the case was closed.

Such conspiracy theories, touted often under the Mubarak regime, lie close to the heart of Egyptian society and it may take more than a popular uprising to change this discourse. "Conspiracy theories are part of the texture of our culture," Hani Henry, a psychology professor at the American University in Cairo, told The Media Line. "Even if we have a democratic government, the problem will not go away." He says blaming Israel for Egypt's problems could be both a cynical attempt by politicians to distract the public or an honest belief that Israel is constantly conniving against Egypt. In either case however, conspiratorial thinking is deeply ingrained in the Egyptian mindset.

In the wake of the IDF mistakenly killing 5 Egyptian soldiers during an assault on terrorists that had committed the August 15 terror attacks that killed 8 Israelis just inside the Sinai border, protests and demonstrations broke out in Cairo. Some of the demonstrations were centered near the Israeli embassy in the city with protesters calling for the ouster of the Israeli ambassador and many were holding Palestinian flags and chanting pro-Palestinian slogans.

On August 23, protesters outside of the residence of Israeli ambassador to Egypt, Yitzhak Levanon, forced the Egyptian police guarding the compound to remove the Israeli flag from the top of the residence. This follows a similar event from August 21 when protesters outside the Israeli embassy scaled the 15 story building and replaced the Israeli flag with an Egyptian one, in full view of Egyptian soldiers and police officers. The two flags were both thrown into the large crowds who proceeded to tear it up and chant anti-Israel slogans. On August 26, the Israeli Foreign Ministry demanded that the government in Egypt replace the two flags saying that the incident borders on a violation of international law. On August 30, Cairo's Israeli Embassy replaced the Israeli flag.

At the beginning of September 2011, the Egyptian government built a concrete wall to surround the compound housing Israel's embassy in order to protect it from violent demonstrations. It did little to help. On September 9, a horde of around 4,000 protesters gathered at the newly erected wall and used hammers and other tools to destroy the concrete barrier. After knocking down the wall, the protesters entered the compound, climbed the outside of the building and again tore down the Israeli flag flying overhead. Witnesses relate that cheers of happiness and calls to destroy Israel were heard amongst the crowd as the flag was thrown to the ground and eventually burned.

Then, on the evening of Friday, September 10, thousands of Egyptian activists who had come to Tahrir Square to protest domestic Egyptian issues walked two miles to the Israeli Embassy and began demolishing a security wall surrounding the embassy. By 12:30 a.m., the protesters had completely destroyed the wall and were setting police cars on fire. A handful of protesters reached the entrance hall and threw pamphlets from the foyer out of windows. At 2 a.m., Defense Minister Ehud Barak reported that Israel appealed to the United States to help guard its Cairo embassy, and thirty minutes later, U.S. President Barack Obama told Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu that "I will do all that I can." According to reports from many reputable newspapers, it was indeed the U.S. intervention that enabled the rescue of the six Israeli security guards who were trapped inside the embassy.

As of September 19, Israeli embassy staff have reoccupied the building and resumed their work. According to former Israeli ambassador to Egypt Zvi Mazel, "Hatred towards Israel is the only common ground for the deeply divided forces battling for control in Egypt" right now. On November 20, Israeli ambassador Yitzhak Levanon returned to Cairo through Istanbul.

Gaza/Egypt Border and Sinai



[Relations with Israel](#) continued to dwindle on May 25, 2011, when the temporary government announced that it would officially open the border crossing between Egypt and the [Gaza Strip](#). Israeli diplomatic officials had urged Egypt to continue blockading the [Hammas](#) government in Gaza, but to no avail. "Israel has no problem with civilian goods getting into the Gaza Strip," said an Israeli government official, who would discuss Israel's position only on the condition of anonymity. "Our focus is on preventing Hamas from building up its very deadly terrorist military machine."

Former Israeli [Shin Bet](#) chief and current Parliament member Avi Dichter ([Kadima](#)) said that Egypt opening its Gaza border is less important than its continued policy regarding illegal smuggling. "What's important is not whether the crossing is open or not," said Dichter, "but whether the Egyptian policy has changed" with regards to their attempts to halt the smuggling business.

Unfortunately, Egyptian security forces have mostly been unattentive to the smuggling problem from Sinai into Gaza as the large bedouin tribes in the peninsula have taken advantage of the lack of responsible and coordinated security measures to move large amounts of weapons into Gaza. "They've all gone home," laughs Mosaad, a powerful bedouin leader from a small village near the Gaza border. As of July, according to highly credible intelligence sources, terrorist groups in Gaza have amassed more than 10,000 rockets of all types and thousands of anti-tank missiles and even possibly hundreds of anti-aircraft missiles. The continued buildup in Gaza means that Hamas and Islamic Jihad will be even more capable of disrupting life in southern Israel and of posing a greater danger to [IDF](#) forces operating in the area.

But smuggling is not only going in the direction of Gaza; the bedouins also help to smuggle Palestinians out of the strip and into Sinai - many of whom are innocent people looking for a better life, though some also come to join radical organizations who are attempting to sabotage Egypt's transition to democracy. One of these groups, Takfir-wal Higma, has already shown its growing strength after it attacked a protest in the northern Sinai city of [El-Arish](#), killing a number of protesters and handing out flyers that called for Jihad, said they were linked to Al-Qaeda and told Egyptians that Islam is the only true faith and they need to dismantle the [Camp David treaty](#) with Israel. Egyptian security forces noted that there were a good number of Palestinians that joined Takfir-wal Higma on the raid, and at least one of them was killed in the melee. "The terrorists were joined by members of Palestinian factions and they are currently being questioned by military intelligence. We arrested 12 assailants including three Palestinians," the head of security in northern Sinai, General Saleh al Masry said.

After the deadly terrorist attack in Israel on August 18 that killed eight people, the lawlessness and porous nature of the Sinai border is becoming ever more evident. Israel has said that a group of no fewer than 15 terrorists left Gaza, entered the Sinai and then crossed into Israel to execute their attack. They attempted to retreat and escape along the same corridor but were tracked by the IDF and at least 7 of the terrorists were killed in the ensuing battles. Regrettably, in the melee of the battle, the IDF mistakenly killed five Egyptian border guards when attack helicopters fired on their positions just inside the Sinai-Israel border.

Diplomatic tensions rose quickly in the wake of these deaths, with wire reports that Egypt had withdrawn their ambassador from Tel Aviv floating around, but in the end PM Netanyahu and FM Barak were able to ease tensions at least slightly by having an apology hand delivered to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry in Cairo.

Ilan Grapel

In early June 2011, American-Israeli citizen Ilan Grapel was arrested along with hundreds of other foreigners in Cairo under suspicion of spying and inciting violence. Though all the other prisoners were quickly released, the Egyptian police kept Grapel in custody. Egypt then charged Grapel with being an agent of the [Mossad](#), the secretive Israeli spy organization with agents all over the world, and accused the 27 year old student of "inciting sedition, spreading rumors, and urging protesters toward friction with the armed forces and to commit acts of violence."

Grapel, an Israeli citizen by birth who grew up in the United States, earned a bachelors degree in international studies from Johns Hopkins University in [Baltimore](#) and is currently in law school at Emory University in [Atlanta](#). After his studies in Baltimore, Grapel moved back to Israel where he was drafted into the paratroopers division of the Israeli [infantry corps](#). He served in the [Second Lebanon War](#) in 2006 during which he was wounded in battle. He is described by friends as "very liberal, very open-minded" and "pro-conciliation" and was supposedly unaffiliated with all political groups.

A picture of Grapel in uniform from his service in the Israeli [paratroopers](#) unit was uncovered by the Egyptian authorities and was quickly spread by the media in Egypt with the attached headline, "Mossad officer who tried to sabotage the Egyptian revolution." More pictures of Grapel in the [IDF](#) and during his visit to Egypt before the arrest were also found and distributed through the Egyptian media networks.

Grapel's family, who say that Ilan was in Egypt for a legal aid project, deny any allegations that their son is a Mossad spy. "He's a good boy, he was over there doing good work," Irene Grapel, Ilan's mother said. "I hope that he'll be free based on who he is. He's not a Mossad spy by any means." The Israeli government, as well, denied the charges that Ilan is a spy working for their interests.

On June 19, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that Israel offered to exchange three Egyptian prisoners for the release of Grapel but were turned down by Egyptian authorities. Since Grapel was visiting Egypt on his American passport, Israeli officials have not been allowed to meet with him.

On July 9, the Egyptian attorney general announced that Grapel's detention in jail would be extended at least 15 more days to allow the authorities more time to continue their investigation into his alleged spying. The American embassy in Egypt continued, at the time, to work for his release before an indictment could be handed down.

In mid-October, Egyptian officials confirmed that Israel and Egypt had reached a prisoner-exchange agreement that would see free Grapel and have all charges against him dropped. Coming in the wake of the Egyptian-brokered exchange between Israel and Hamas that swapped more than [1,000 Palestinian prisoners](#) for kidnapped IDF soldier [Gilad Shalit](#), the Grapel deal took place on October 27 and included the release of 25 Egyptian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

Grapel finally returned to Israel after spending more than 5 months in jail, first charged with espionage which was then dropped to incitement. The prisoners released for Grapel, whom Israel says are not security prisoners but rather smugglers or illegal immigrants, crossed back into their home country via the Taba crossing in the Sinai.

Relations with Iran



Under Mubarak's regime, ties between Egypt and the [Islamic Republic of Iran](#) had been cut for more than 30 years. With the ascent of a government that is more in tune with public sentiment, relations between the two influential Middle East nations is beginning to thaw quite rapidly.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar-Salehi and his Egyptian counterpart, Nabil al-Arabi, have already initiated discussions to reestablish their diplomatic ties. In March 2011, after the Iranian leadership called on Egypt to take a "courageous step" to reunite the two countries, Minister al-Arabi noted that Cairo was ready "to open a new page with Iran" and noted that "the Egyptian and Iranian people deserve to have mutual relations." Al-Arabi added that, "Iran is not an enemy [of Egypt]. We have no enemies."

[Amr Moussa](#), Egyptian presidential hopeful and former secretary-general of the [Arab League](#), also reiterated Egypt's desire to open bilateral relations with Iran. In an interview with the Washington Post, Moussa said that "Iran is not the natural enemy of the Arabs ... [Egypt] has a lot to gain by peaceful relations with Iran."

Relations with Hamas

Despite Israeli objections, the new government in Cairo has decided to reopen the Egyptian border with [Gaza](#) at Rafah, in essence making a statement that Egyptian relations with [Hamas](#) will be restored. The border has been closed since 2007 when Mubarak decided to blockade the Strip and fight against smugglers who were funneling weapons and ammunition into Gaza through elaborate tunnels from Sinai. The government even built a subterranean steel wall to prevent smuggling.

In April, Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi called "shameful" Egypt's 2007 decision to close and blockade the Gaza border. Presidential hopeful Amr Moussa added that "blocking Gaza and enforcing the siege along Gaza — people didn't like that," and that he is hopeful Egypt will normalize relations with the Palestinians.

On May 4th, the military government hosted [Hamas](#) and [Fatah](#) leaders in Cairo and brokered the unity agreement between the leading Palestinian political parties. Bringing Hamas leaders into Cairo was viewed in Egypt and Gaza as an historic development coming after years of government antagonism towards the Islamic party and support for their rivals, Fatah. However, Mustafa Labbad, head of the Al-Sharq center for Regional and Strategic Studies, said that "Egypt's role in this reconciliation is a matter of national security rather than a change in its political ideology." [Amr Moussa](#) indicated that Hamas should not be viewed as a terrorist organization.

On May 9th it was reported that Egypt is now using its leverage with Hamas to push for a renewed effort to release kidnapped Israeli soldier [Gilad Shalit](#). Though Egypt has been involved with formulating past efforts at reconciliation in this matter, Hamas usually viewed their assistance with suspicion and talks rarely moved past initial stages. Hamas security personnel are believed to have met with their counterparts in Egypt in the beginning of May to discuss potential deals for Shalit.

On May 25th the government announced that it would officially reopen the border between Egypt and Gaza. "Egypt has been under significant domestic and regional pressure to open the crossing and change the policy on Gaza," said Elijah Zarwan, a Cairo-based analyst with the International Crisis Group think tank. "I think there's been recognition for a while that the crisis in Gaza had been a ticking bomb on Egypt's doorstep." "The decision is a correction of an immoral and ineffective policy of the past," said Nabil Fahmy, a former

Egyptian ambassador to the U.S. “It reflects a posture that Egypt will pursue policies in line with those of everyone else in the Middle East.”

The Muslim Brotherhood

Under toppled President Mubarak, the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) was officially banned, though it was tolerated within limits - notably being allowed to operate in mosques and within religious capacities. For years, Mubarak’s government used military trials and security sweeps to repress the group in an effort to dispel its power and weaken its ranks. Despite these efforts, the Brotherhood kept a relatively broad support network across Egypt which they continued to build through their religious, social and charity endeavors. In a 2005 parliamentary election, the Brotherhood won 20% of the seats, despite the election being purposefully rigged by Mubarak.

Though the Brotherhood kept a surprisingly low profile during the January 25th revolution, a recent poll by the Pew Research Center found that about 75% of Egyptians said they had either a favorable or a very favorable opinion of the Brotherhood. Seizing on this support, the group has since built a legitimate political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, and is gaining confidence that it can take more parliamentary seats in the November elections. “They have substituted the dictatorship of Mubarak with the dictatorship of the Muslim Brotherhood,” said Naguib Sawiris, the second wealthiest man in Egypt and founder of the Free Egyptians Party. “That’s where Egypt is going now ... It’s not a fair fight.”

The [Muslim Brotherhood](#) remains one of the more organized, experienced and powerful organizations in [Egypt](#). Mustafa Kamal Al Sayyid, a political-science professor at the American University in Cairo, said that there is no serious competitors to the Brotherhood right now and “there are no other political parties that could claim to get the support of as large a number of people.” Nabil Famy, dean of the School of Public Affairs at the American University in Cairo and a former ambassador to the [United States](#), echoed this sentiment when he said that all other parties “have not had enough time to mature” as has the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood initially said it would not field a candidate in the presidential elections, yet on May 12th a senior member of the organization, Abdel Moneim Abul Futuh, announced his intention to run for president-though he will run as an independent. Many observers fear that Abul Futuh’s candidacy will draw votes from the large Islamist population and help the Brotherhood gain more power, though another group leader, Sobhi Saleh, said that “Abul Futuh's decision counters the Brotherhood's official decision.” On their official webpage, the Brotherhood says it had no intention of honoring Abul Futuh’s decision and made clear that he would not be officially representing their organization.

A poll published on April 22 in the state-run *Ahram* newspaper showed Abul Futuh - even before his campaign started - and outgoing [Arab League](#) chief Amr Moussa, with the highest voter support at 20 percent, while [Mohamed ElBaradei](#), a retired [UN](#) diplomat, had 12 percent support.

The Brotherhood then announced its formation of a new political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, that would run under their platform in the upcoming elections.

On June 22, the Brotherhood announced its decision to join with the Pakistani Muslim political party of Jamaat e Islami to solve global issues that Muslims face and to promote Islam's true image. On July 5, the party expelled five of its more outspoken youth leaders in a sign that its established leadership wants to buttress the brotherhood's organizational and ideological rigidity against those party members who yearn for

wider political and religious freedoms. The ejected members were the founders of their own political party after they decided not to join the brotherhoods newly created Freedom and Justice Party. One of the expelled members, lawyer Islam Lotfy, spoke out. "The Muslim Brotherhood is out of step," Lotfy said. "It is against the concept of revolution. Its literature never called for a revolution to change the government. That was too radical. They wanted to gradually change society from within. I used to think like that," he added, "but it got us nowhere. We were like the man pushing the stone up the hill and having it roll back over him."

In mid-July, the former spokesman of the Muslim Brotherhood, Kamal al-Halbawi called on Egypt and Iran to "take the necessary steps" to get rid of Israeli, American and even Saudi Arabian influences on Egyptian society. "Both nations [Egypt and Iran] underline the necessity for Muslim nations to maintain solidarity and unity to annihilate this cancerous tumor (Israel)," he reiterated.

In a troubling sign to those in the West that see the Brotherhood as a radical organization, many Egyptians in the ruling Supreme Council have begun to cultivate ties with the Brotherhood as that organization distances itself from the original January 25th protestors. On July 25, Major General Mohammed al-Assar, a member of the Supreme Council, praised the Brotherhood and noted that they are playing a constructive role in the development of a "new" Egypt. "Day by day, the Brotherhood are changing and are getting on a more moderate track," he said in a speech in Washington at the United States Institute of Peace. "They have the willingness to share in the political life ... they are sharing in good ways."

On January 23, 2012, the first democratically elected Egyptian Parliament saw the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party take a plurality of 47% of the vote, a huge win for the group that was technically banned under Mubarak and was still supposedly on the fence in terms of public opinion.

In the wake of their resounding victory, the Brotherhood announced that it still categorically rejects dialogue with Israel and that this position is "clear and not up for discussion." Brotherhood spokesman Mahmoud Ghazlan said it would "reject any request from the Israeli embassy to meet with leaders of the Brotherhood." He added, "It is illogical to open dialogue, any dialogue, given the current Israeli policies against the Arab peoples," he said. "We will reject any request from the Israeli embassy to meet with leaders of the group."

Democracy

Constitution

On March 19, 2011, with nearly an 80% approval vote from a record turnout, the Supreme Council passed a number of amendments to the Egyptian constitution that established, among other things, presidential term limits, nomination procedures, judicial oversight for elections and rules governing the implementation of a state of emergency. While the passing of these amendments is an optimistic sign, the transition to a democratic government will not be easy and will necessitate a patient approach.

Nadya Khalife, a Middle East and North Africa women's rights researcher, noted how the amendments to the constitution did not explicitly allow for females to be elected into power. "It is unacceptable for a constitution that is supposed to allow for a transition toward democracy and a new Egypt to even give the possibility of excluding women from public office," Khalife said. "After women fully participated in the movement to oust President [Hosni Mubarak](#), it is offensive to suggest that a woman cannot be president."

On July 12, the ruling military Supreme Council announced that it was drafting new ground rules for a new constitution and that it planned to adopt "a declaration of basic principles" to govern the drafting of said constitution. This move was initially welcomed in Egypt and was seen as a concession to the demand for a "bill of rights" style guarantee, but legal experts see this merely as a ploy by the military to strengthen, protect and potentially expand its own power.

Some are already criticizing the military's plans as a usurpation of the democratic process. Ibrahim Dawrish, an Egyptian legal scholar involved in devising a new Turkish constitution to reduce the political role of its armed forces, said the Egyptian military appeared to be emulating its Turkish counterpart. After a 1980 coup, the Turkish military assigned itself a broad role in politics as guarantor of the secular state, and in the process, contributed to years of political turbulence. "The constitution can't be monopolized by one institution," he said. "It is Parliament that makes the constitution, not the other way around."

Military Tribunals

Another step that the new government needs to take to ensure more democratic advances is to end the practice of trying arrested civilians before military courts, courts widely believed by Egyptians to be corrupt and unjust towards the actual severity of the crimes. "Egypt's military leadership has not explained why young protesters are being tried before unfair military courts while former Mubarak officials are being tried for corruption and killing protesters before regular criminal courts," said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "The reliance on military trials threatens the rule of law by creating a parallel system that undermines Egypt's judiciary."

Basic Liberties

Human Rights Watch is also concerned about the lack of freedoms with regard to open speech and expression, bulwarks of a good democracy.

For example, on April 11th, blogger Maikel Nabil was sentenced by a military court to three years imprisonment for using "inappropriate language" and defaming the military. HRW Director Stork commented that the "three-year sentence may be the worst strike against free expression in Egypt" and was imposed after an unfair military style trial. Stork added, "State institutions, including the military, should never consider themselves above criticism. It is only through a public airing of abuses and full accountability measures that [Egypt](#) can hope to transition away from past human rights violations."

A few days after the sentence, the Supreme Council announced it would review cases "of all young people who were tried during the last period."

Finally, on January 24, 2012, Egypt's ruling military court released Nabil.

In mid-July, the host of a popular TV political commentary show, Dina Abdel-Rahman, was fired from her station after repeated criticism of the actions of the ruling military council. Gamal Eid, a human rights lawyer, said her firing was a warning to others. "Fear of the military is still great," he said. "I expect a clash between the two sides," said analyst Hala Mustafa. "There exists a huge gap in their vision and tempo. Unlike the revolutionaries, the generals want to reform the system from within while they want to bring it down and build a new one in its place."

Elections

Though national parliamentary elections were originally scheduled to be held in September 2011 to determine the next leaders, the ruling military council announced on July 20 that elections be pushed back to November. In addition, Major General Mamdouh Shahin, the military council's legislative adviser, said that international election monitors will not be allowed to observe the elections on the grounds of national sovereignty.

“This is a very terrible development,” says Bahey El Din Hassan, director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. “It was usual to hear this from the Mubarak regime because the elections were always fraudulent.”

On January 23, 2012, the first democratically elected Egyptian Parliament in more than 60 years began with thousands of Egyptian people demonstrating outside in celebration and protest. 47 percent of the 498 legislators belong to the Muslim Brotherhood, including the elected parliament speaker, Saad el Katatni, a prominent Brotherhood member. Another 25 percent of the parliament is represented by Salafis, a more radical Islamic group who last year said democracy was a violation of God's law but now claim they see government as the way to bring about God's law.

Mubarak Trial

On August 3, 2011, a bedridden Hosni Mubarak was wheeled into an Egyptian courtroom to face charges stemming from allegedly ordering the killing of protesters during the January 25th revolution. Along with his sons, Gamal and Alaa, and former Interior Minister Habib el-Adly, Mubarak denied culpability and entered a plea of not guilty. “I deny all these charges and accusations categorically,” Mubarak said. Mubarak faces the possibility of a death sentence if convicted. After the proceedings, Judge Ahmed Refaat adjourned the trial until August 15, saying that he needed time to review the plethora of motions raised by attorneys on both sides.

Developments in Human Rights

Despite assurances that peace and security would be kept for all citizens of [Egypt](#) in the aftermath of a revolution that sought to end years of abuses and unite the various religious sects, the human rights situation in Egypt has yet to improve. There have yet to be advances made for women’s rights, freedom of speech and religious protection for [Christian Copts](#) and other minorities.

From the middle of February until early March 2011, the ruling military council was charged with abusing demonstrators and even torturing detainees. “The Supreme Military Council has been ignoring credible reports of arbitrary arrest and torture,” said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “There can be no break from the abuses of the past while security forces - including military personnel - abuse people with impunity.” In addition, the Egyptian army continued its practice of arresting civilians and holding them in military prisons, even subjecting them to harsh interrogations and tribunals without lawyers. Egypt’s authorities even refuse to release lists of those they have imprisoned and hold numerous men without solid charges. While there are no totally reliable statistics of the number of people being held in detention, human rights groups estimate that at least 5,000 people have been imprisoned since the military council took over.

On March 8, 2011, the harassment and victimization of women in public continued unchanged as gangs of men attacked women marching for International Women's Day in Cairo's Tahrir Square, the same site where earlier demonstrations that included hundreds of women helped lead to the demise of the Mubarak regime. Soldiers intervened to disperse the mobs only before telling the women it was wrong from them to demonstrate in public. "If the International Women's Day attacks are any sign of what is to come, women's ability to participate in political life may be at risk," said Nadya Khalife, Human Rights Watch Middle East and North Africa women's rights researcher. "As Egypt moves toward elections, officials need to provide protection for women who wish to demonstrate publicly, and ensure that anyone attacking peaceful protesters is held to account."

On March 24, 2011, the Egyptian cabinet passed legislation that outlawed public demonstrations and strikes despite the fact that it was these exact things that helped spark revolution. "This virtually blanket ban on strikes and demonstrations is a betrayal of the demands of Tahrir protesters for a free [Egypt](#), and a slap in the face of the families whose loved ones died protesting for freedom," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "Any genuine transition toward democracy must be based on respect for the basic rights of the people, including their right to demonstrate."

On May 7 and 8, 2011, the [Christian Copt](#) community, a very small religious sect that suffered greatly at the hands of Muslim extremists during the Mubarak era, was attacked by Muslim Salafi's who fired guns and threw Molotov cocktails at churches and homes. Twelve Copts were killed in the riots and no fewer than 230 sustained injuries; in addition, three churches, an apartment complex, two houses and a Coptic-owned building were torched. Despite being alarmed to the riots and fires, the Egyptian fire brigade and military were incredibly slow to respond and, once they did, were held back from assisting by throngs of Salafi extremists. Renowned Muslim liberal writer Nabil Sharaf el Din said, "The army is either incapable or is an accomplice to the Salafi's ... If the army does not takes a stern position with the Salafi's they will look real bad."

On May 11, Parliament voted to extend for two years the Emergency Law for which most Egyptians protested to have repealed once and for all after Mubarak's fall. The law, in place since the 1981 assassination of Sadat, gives the government unlimited power in arresting and detaining prisoners without cause, denying freedoms of speech and assembly and maintaining a special security court to rule in most criminal cases. Mubarak used the law primarily to keep a lid on the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) and other opponents of his regime.

The emergency law represents one of the toughest laws against basic civil liberties and human rights. Though officials say the provisions will be used only in cases of terrorism and drug trafficking, and not on a widespread scale as was the case under Mubarak, many do not believe their words. "Even the claim that emergency powers will now be limited to terrorism and drug trafficking cases only is false," said Hossam Bahgat, executive director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights. "More dangerously, the culture of exceptionalism stays, and with it the message that security agencies are still above the law."

Sarah Leah Whitson, director of the Middle East and North Africa for Human Rights Watch, added "they use this law to prosecute any political activist who criticizes the government." Martin Scheinin, the [UN](#) special representative on terrorism and human rights, noted, "Basically there is no legal certainty as long as there is an emergency law in place."

On May 31, the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information released a statement saying that the questioning of journalists or bloggers was an attempt to silence critics and create "an atmosphere of fear." It

warned: "The military council is committing a grave mistake if it continues to shut the mouths of those criticizing it. The council is not made up of angels."

On June 1, Egypt's Interior Minister Mansour el-Essawy in a rare move ordered an investigation into reports that a detainee was tortured to death while in police custody.

On July 13, the Supreme Council announced that it would be retiring more than 600 senior police officers in an attempt to mollify concerns of protestors over the continued employment of police officers loyal to Mubarak who have been heavily involved with wrongdoing and brutality. At least 18 generals and 9 other senior officers were forced into retirement after accusations arose that they were all involved in killing protestors during the January uprising. Hundreds of other policemen were shifted to clerical work and many will also be forced into retirement.

Ahmed Ragheb, a human rights advocate who runs the Hisham Mubarak Law Center and helps lead a police reform project, called on the government to continue such practices of suspending police officers accused of violent behavior. "We want them to suspend all of the officers who were accused of any human rights violations," he said, and he faulted the ministry for failing to identify the officers removed from their posts.

On July 23, despite the announcement of the retirings, thousands of protestors led a non-violent march on the Defense Ministry in Cairo to push demands that more police officers responsible for the killing of some 800 protestors be brought to justice. The protestors, though, were attacked by bands of armed men wielding clubs and firebombs while the anti-riot police and military stood by without intervening. More than 300 protestors were injured during the confrontation, many seriously.

According to an Egypt-based NGO report, approximately 93,000 Coptic Christians have left Egypt since March 19, 2011, and the Egyptian Federation of Human Rights chair predicts the number may increase to as high as 250,000 by the end of this year. Of the thousands who left, about 42,000 went to the United States while others have settled in Canada (17,000), Australia (14,000), the Netherlands, Italy, England, Austria, Germany and France (20,000 went to Europe).

On October 9, a Christian demonstration spurred by anger at a recent attack on a church led to a violent night of clashes between Coptic Christians and Egyptian police. 24 people died and over 200 were wounded in the outburst of violence.

On January 24, 2012, Egypt's ruling military court released a pro-Israel Egyptian blogger, Maikel Nabil, after about 10 months in prison for denouncing the military, which has held power since former president Mubarak's ouster in February 2011.

On January 26, Egyptian officials barred six Americans working for large well-known, publicly funded U.S. organizations promoting democracy in Egypt from leaving the country, prompting outrage from American officials and the public. "These organizations have been operating for years. They meet with the government. Their funding is known. There can be no motivation except a desire to control and silence the human rights community," a Human Rights Watch in Cairo employee said.

Sources:

Associated Press ([September 27, 2011](#)), ([November 20, 2011](#)), ([January 22, 2012](#)); *Al-Masry Al-Youm* ([September 17, 2011](#)), ([September 25, 2011](#)); *Assyrian International News Agency* ([May 8, 2011](#)); Bloomberg ([Feb. 6, 2011](#)); Carnegie Endowment ([March 1, 2011](#)); *CBN* ([April 6, 2011](#)); *CNN* ([August 10, 2011](#)); Christian Science Monitor ([July 21, 2011](#)); *Dawn-Pakistan* ([June 23, 2011](#)); *FARS News Agency* ([July 13, 2011](#)); *Haaretz* ([May 5, 2011](#)), ([May 9, 2011](#)), ([May 10, 2011](#)), ([June 19, 2011](#)), ([July 9, 2011](#)), ([July 23, 2011](#)), ([October 11, 2011](#)), ([November 28, 2011](#)); Human Rights Watch ([March 11, 2011](#)), ([March 25, 2011](#)), ([March 28, 2011](#)), ([April 11, 2011](#)), ([April 29, 2011](#)); *Huffington Post* ([June 13, 2011](#)), ([June 25, 2011](#)); Institute for National Security Studies ([July 28, 2011](#)); *Israel Hayom* ([August 25, 2011](#)); *Jerusalem Post* ([July 20, 2011](#)), ([September 11, 2011](#)), ([October 27, 2011](#)), ([January 24, 2012](#)), ([January 26, 2012](#)); *Los Angeles Times* ([May 8, 2011](#)), ([June 27, 2011](#)), ([July 6, 2011](#)); MEMRI ([July 5, 2011](#)); Middle East Monitor ([May 12, 2011](#)); MSNBC ([May 31, 2011](#)), ([July 25, 2011](#)); *New York Times* ([May 12, 2010](#)), ([July 13, 2011](#)), ([July 16, 2011](#)), ([October 9, 2011](#)); OnIslam.net ([May 12, 2011](#)); *Reuters* ([May 12, 2011](#)), ([January 26, 2012](#)); Slate ([May 9, 2011](#)); *Time* ([August 10, 2011](#)); *Wall Street Journal* ([May 2, 2011](#)), ([August 10, 2011](#)); *Washington Post* ([April 19, 2011](#)), ([May 10, 2011](#)), ([May 25, 2011](#)), ([August 3, 2011](#)), ([January 24, 2012](#)); *Washington Times* ([July 5, 2011](#)); *Ynet* ([May 28, 2011](#)), ([July 5, 2011](#)), ([July 9, 2011](#)), ([September 9, 2011](#)), ([September 27, 2011](#))



Christians in the Middle East

Christians comprise a little more than two percent of

the population of [Israel](#). Christians are free to practice their faith and have full and unfettered access to their holy sites. Christians, like Jews and [Muslims](#), also have their own bodies to decide matters of personal status, such as marriage and divorce, and control their religious shrines.

The treatment of Christians in the rest of the Middle East, however, is a completely different story.

During [Islamic rule](#) in the Middle East, non-Muslims usually had a choice between death and conversion, but Jews and Christians, who adhered to the Scriptures, were considered protected peoples — *dhimmis* — under Islamic law. This “protection” did little, however, to insure that Jews and Christians were treated well by the Muslims. On the contrary, the dhimmi, being an infidel, had to acknowledge the superiority of the true believer — the Muslim.

The inferior status of Christians was reinforced through a series of regulations that governed the behavior of the dhimmi. For example, dhimmis, 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).

By the twentieth century, the status of the dhimmi in Muslim lands had not significantly improved. A British diplomat observed 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.”

Today, Israel is the only place in the Middle East where Christians face no restrictions on the practice of their faith. The only time in modern history that [Jerusalem](#) has been free and accessible to all has been since Israel assumed control in 1967.

During [Jordan’s occupation of Jerusalem](#) from 1948 to 1967, limited numbers of Israeli Christians were grudgingly permitted to briefly visit the [Old City](#) and [Bethlehem](#) at Christmas and Easter. Laws imposed strict government control on Christian schools, and the requirements that the Koran be taught. Because of these repressive policies, many Christians emigrated from Jerusalem. Their numbers declined from 25,000 in 1949 to less than 13,000 in June 1967.

Radical Islamists target not only Jews, but Christians, who they also view as impediments to their goal of reconstituting the Islamic empire. In [Saudi Arabia](#), for example, all citizens must be Muslims and it is illegal to import, print or own Christian religious materials.

The Palestinian territories have been especially inhospitable to Christians, and the community has steadily declined from 15 of the Arab population in 1950 to less than 2 percent today. [Bethlehem](#) and [Nazareth](#), which once had overwhelming Christian majorities, now are dominated by the Muslim population. Bethlehem Christians have complained of raids by a neighboring Muslim Bedouin tribe and the purchase of lands in their neighborhoods by Muslim Hebronites that is liable to further marginalize them in their own enclave. They are

particularly troubled by the Islamization of public life in the Bethlehem area and by the imposition of Muslim codes of conduct, especially regarding women.

Given present trends, few, if any, Christians may be living in these cities in another decade.

Palestinian authorities in the West Bank have assumed political supervision of the Church of the Nativity and other key Christian sites. Palestinian converts to Christianity have been harassed and Christian cemeteries desecrated. The *London Times* reported in 1997, long before the current wave of violence, that life in Bethlehem under Palestinian rule had become “insufferable for many members of the dwindling Christian minorities.”

The only Arab country that had a significant Christian presence in the last century was [Lebanon](#), where Christians once were a majority. A combination of civil war, Muslim oppression, and Syrian aggression has led to the deaths of thousands of Christians and the emigration of thousands more. Today, fewer than one million Christians live in Lebanon.

Roughly 6 percent of the population of [Egypt](#) is Christian, mostly from the Coptic Orthodox Church. Islam is the official state religion, however, and many laws and customs favor Muslims. It is nearly impossible to restore or build new churches, Christians are frequently ostracized, and Muslims are prohibited from converting to Christianity. Despite dozens of mob assaults and attacks on Christian homes, villages and towns in Egypt each year, no Muslim to date has been convicted for the crimes. One such incident in Naga Hamadi, on January 6, 2010, involved a drive-by shooting on a crowd of Christians leaving a Coptic Christmas service. The massacre killed seven and left 26 seriously wounded. During the Arab Spring Revolution from January 2011 through new years of 2012, the Coptic Christians came under brutal attacks by Muslims and whatever minor protection they had been afforded by the government was completely destroyed. Many churches were burned down and people assaulted.

In Iran, "the printing of Christian literature is illegal, converts from Islam are liable to be killed, and most evangelical churches must function underground." Christians are not allowed to testify in an Islamic court when a Muslim is involved and they are discriminated against in employment.

Failure of Iran Sanctions

More than three years have passed since Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi's December 2008 statement that "Iran will never suspend uranium enrichment." His prediction now

seems mostly accurate and analysts predict that the Iranians could [produce a nuclear bomb](#) in anywhere from six months to five years.

"We haven't really moved one inch toward addressing the issues," [Mohamed ElBaradei](#), then director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency told the *Los Angeles Times* in 2010. In a 2012 interview with the Financial Times of Germany, Yukiya Amano, new director general of the IAEA, announced that "what we know [about Iran's nuclear program] suggests the development of nuclear weapons."

The entire world seems to agree that [Iran](#) should not be allowed to develop nuclear weapons. Since the military option to deter Iran is a scenario that few want, or believe can work, the principal tactic that has been adopted to prevent Iran from creating a bomb is sanctions. Sanctions, imposed either unilaterally or multilaterally, are a peaceful and diplomatic avenue to make hardships for the regime - both economically and politically - to put them in a situation where a choice must be made between continuing the nuclear program or watching their country suffer. These sanctions have been internationally accepted since the adoption of the UN's [Security Council Resolution 1737](#).

The [United States](#) and European Union have been the biggest supporters of sanctions against the Iranian regime and have been passing bills to impose sanctions for a number of years. Through the West's leadership, many international shipping agencies, traders, bankers and global insurance companies have also pulled their dealings with Iran.

Unfortunately, though, it seems these moves have so far done little to deter [Iran](#) from its nuclear ambitions.

Former CIA director Leon Panetta said that while sanctions carry the possibility to create serious economic problems and weaken the Iranian government, they do little to deter Iran's "ambitions with regards to nuclear capability." Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) said that sanctions have not done nearly enough to affect a change in Iran's nuclear program and, in testimony before a Senate intelligence committee in February 2012, CIA Director James Clapper said, "The sanctions as imposed so far have not caused [Iran] to change their behavior or their policy."

While the efficacy of the sanctions themselves is debatable, they are doomed for failure if not implemented correctly and unwaveringly supported. The United States, though, has had issues fully implementing sanctions against Iran. The [Congress](#) and [White House](#) have passed a number of sanctions bills - in [June 2010](#), [November 2011](#), and [February 2012](#) - but the efficacy of these bills have been severely weakened by waivers attached to them allowing the U.S. to delay their implementation. [President Obama's Executive Order 13590](#), imposing sanctions on Iran's central bank, was delayed more than six months as fear of rising oil prices kept the President from implementing the order. To date, no U.S. Administration has fully implemented the previous sanctions on Iran in place since [1996](#).

Likewise, European Union sanctions have fallen mostly on deaf ears. The EU has at times been unable to completely restrain nations from dealing with Tehran and, more importantly, Iran has been one of Europe's major foreign oil exporters. This need for crude oil has allowed Iran the maneuverability to get around sanctions, as profit from sales lessens the financial impact of sanctions. In January 2012, however, the EU finally passed an "unprecedented" resolution to embargo all Iranian oil and, to support its implementation set to begin in summer 2012, [Saudi Arabia](#) has promised to fulfill Europe's gas needs.

Also minimizing the impact of sanctions are UN member nations that supported [Resolution 1737](#) in 2006 but continue to trade with Iran, proving to Iranian leaders that UN resolutions and international threats need not be taken seriously. [Russia](#), [China](#) and [India](#), for example, have enabled the Iranians to get past any negative consequences that sanctions may apply. In fact, Russia and China both vigorously oppose sanctioning the regime. In 2012, Russia's Foreign Ministry said that sanctions are "deeply mistaken policy" and would be unlikely for Iran to "make any concessions or any corrections to its policies" because of sanctions.

2012

- In March 2012, Pakistan emerged as an enhanced importer of Iranian oil and has proceeded with plans to build a natural gas pipeline to the Islamic Republic, despite warnings from US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that this would interfere with the West's sanctions. "We can't afford to be selective where we receive our energy supplies from," Pakistan Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar said Thursday. "It is in our national interest to get energy from wherever we can."
- In January 2012, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) published a study confirming that the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL) has renamed nearly a quarter of its shipping fleet (90 out of 123 vessels) in order to evade international sanctions. Additionally, the company has reflagged many of its ships so that shippers and maritime security agencies do not know they are moving Iranian vessels. Additionally, SIPRI noted that Iranian weapons smugglers are using respectable shipping companies out of Europe to move illegal weapons into Iran; though this was mostly done without the consent or knowledge of the companies.
- In January 2012, India, the world's fourth-largest oil consumer, said it would not take steps to cut oil and petroleum imports from Iran despite the US and European sanctions. "It is not possible for India to take any decision to reduce the imports from Iran drastically, because among the countries which can provide the requirement of the emerging economies, Iran is an important country amongst them," Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee said.

2011

- In November 2011, the EU was shown to account for nearly 20% of all Iranian oil purchases in the first half of 2011, which helped to nullify the effects of any sanctions imposed against the Islamic regime. Italy, Spain and France were the leading purchasers of Iranian oil in 2011.
- In August 2011, Iran received 1 billion euros (\$ 1.4 billion) from [India](#) for overdue oil debts. Indian refiners expect Iran to resume 400,000 barrels a day of oil exports in September 2011, since India began paying its debt that Iran Deputy Oil Minister Ahmad Qalebani said amounted to \$4.8 billion.



- A January 2011 examination of German government trade statistics revealed that German export trade to Iran increased from \$4,159,920,000 between January and October 2009 to \$4,175,687,000 during the same time period in 2010. Iranian imports to Germany climbed to \$909,176 between January and October 2010 when compared to \$574,261 during the identical time frame in 2009.
- At the start of 2011, [Iran](#) was the second largest [OPEC](#) exporter, after Saudi Arabia, and during January - November 2010 generated revenues of \$64 billion, an \$11 billion increase over the full-year 2009 figure. Iran has also been chosen by OPEC members for the cartel's 2011 presidency.
- [Swiss](#) energy giant EGL signed a 25-year deal with the National Iranian Gas Export Company to buy 5.5 billion cubic meters of Iranian natural gas per year, starting in 2011, for approximately \$20 billion.

2010

- A July 2010 AFP report revealed China has invested an estimated \$40 billion in Iran's [oil](#) and gas sector. According to Iran's Deputy Oil Minister, "The volume [of Chinese investment] in upstream projects is 29 billion dollars." He also added that China signed contracts worth an additional \$10 billion in petrochemicals, refineries and oil and gas pipeline projects.
- In January 2010, a top Russian arms trade official said Russia still considered Iran a valuable customer for its weapons and that no international agreements bar Russia from selling weapons to Tehran. In June 2010, despite the passing of [UN Security Council Resolution 1929](#), Russia still said sanctions do not forbid the delivery of S-300 air-defense missiles to Iran.
- As of January 2010, there were around 1,000 Italian companies active in Iran, including Fiat, Ansaldo, Eni, Danieli, Duferco, and Maire Tecnimont, which signed a €200 million (~\$287 million) gas deal with Iran. Other Italian companies, such as Carlo Gavazzi Space, have even equipped the regime's military and contributed to Iran's satellite program.
- From 2000-2010, the U.S. Treasury Department granted nearly 10,000 special licenses to American companies so they could sell products in Iran and other countries the U.S. considers sponsors of terrorism. Most of the licenses were granted under a law allowing trade in humanitarian goods, though they included products as diverse as cigarettes and chewing gum.

U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONS

This relationship is stronger and deeper than meets the eye, covering cooperation on national issues such as defense and foreign aid to collaboration on the state and city levels

Congress & Israel | State-to-State Cooperative Agreements

Bi-national Foundation | Strategic & Military Cooperation



Congress & Israel

For decades, the State of Israel has been able to rely on strong support and encouragement from both houses of the Congress of the United States.

From Congressional votes on key issues such as recognition of a unilaterally declared Palestinian state

or military aid to Israel to letters personally submitted by congressmen to the President or other government authorities to urge continued support for Israel and fighting terrorism, Congress has consistently lent a steadfast hand to Israel - both in times of peace and at times of war.

Listed below are the major votes and letters dealing with Israel and America's interests in the Middle East, separated by congressional house.

Senate

- [Key Votes: 1949 - 2012](#)
- [Letter - Urging President Obama to Take Tougher Stance Against Syria](#) (August 2011)
- [Letter - Urging President Obama to Sanction Iran](#) (August 2011)
- [S. 185 - Opposing Unilateral Declaration of Palestinian Statehood](#) (June 2011)
- [S. 138 - Calling on UN to Rescind Goldstone Report on Operation Cast Lead](#) (April 2011)
- [Letter - Recommending the U.S. Fully Honor Commitment to Israel](#) (April 2011)
- [Letter - Urging Administration to Press Palestinian Authority on Incitement](#) (March 2011)
- [Letter - Urging President Obama to Press President Abbas on Peace Process](#) (September 2010)
- [Letter - Affirming Israel's Right to Self-Defense Following Gaza Flotilla Incident](#) (June 2010)
- [Letter - Underscoring US-Israel Relationship](#) (April 2010)
- [Letter - Pressing President Obama on Arab Role in Peace Process](#) (August 2009)
- [Letter - Peace Principles Towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict](#) (May 2009)
- [S. 10 - Supporting Israel in its War Against Hamas](#) (January 2009)
- [Letter - Supporting Israel's Quest for Peace](#) (June 2008)
- [S. 522 - Recognizing Israel's 60th Birthday](#) (April 2008)
- [S. 534 - Condemning Hezbollah & Hamas, Supporting Israeli Self-Defense](#) (July 2006)
- [S. 2370 - Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act](#) (June 2006)
- [Letter - Urging President Bush to Oppose Hamas in Palestinian Elections](#) (Dec 2005)
- [S. 2292 - Global Anti-Semitism Review Act](#) (October 2004)
- [S. 247 - Expressing Solidarity with Israel](#) (May 2002)

House of Representatives

- [Key Votes: 1949 - 2012](#)
- [H.R. 2105 - Iran, North Korea & Syria Nonproliferation Reform/Modernization Act](#) (Dec 2011)
- [Letter - Calling on President Obama to Tighten Sanctions on Syria](#) (August 2011)
- [H.R. 268 - Commitment to Negotiated Settlement of Israel-Palestinian Conflict](#) (July 2011)
- [Letter - Supporting Continued Aid to Israel and the Palestinian Authority](#) (March 2011)
- [Letter - Urging Government to Stress Importance of Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty](#) (March 2011)
- [H.R. 1765 - Opposing Unilateral Declaration of Palestinian State](#) (December 2010)
- [Letter - Affirming Israel's Right to Self-Defense Following Gaza Flotilla Incident](#) (June 2010)
- [H.R. 867 - Condemning Goldstone Fact-Finding Report into Operation Cast Lead](#) (Nov 2009)

- [Letter - Peace Principles Towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict](#) (May 2009)
- [H.R. 34 - Supporting Israel's Right to Defense Itself Against Terrorism from Gaza](#) (January 2009)
- [H.R. 2761 - Terrorism Risk Insurance and Revision Act](#) (September 2007)
- [H.R. 4939 - Prohibiting Assistance to the Palestinian Authority](#) (June 2006)
- [Letter - Calling On UN Sec-Gen Annan to Fight Anti-Semitism Worldwide and at UN](#) (Aug 2005)
- [H.R. 1828 - Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act](#) (2003)
- [H.R. 1646 - Clearer Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital](#) (September 2002)
- [H.R. 392 - Expressing Solidarity with Israel](#) (May 2002)
- [H.R. 5272 - Peace Through Negotiations Act](#) (September 2000)

Joint Resolutions

- [Letter - Reaffirming the US-Israel Bond](#) (March 2010)
- [Letter - Urging President Bush to Stick to his Peace Principles](#) (May 2003)
- [J.R. 102 - Commemorating 50th Anniversary of Founding of Modern State of Israel](#) (April 1998)
- [J.R. 36 - Authorizing Contribution by the US for the Relief of Palestine Refugees](#) (Mar 1949)
- [P.R. 73 - Endorsing the Balfour Declaration](#) (September 1922)

Reference & General Information

- [Key Votes](#)
- [The Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act](#)
- [Jewish Members of Congress](#)
- [U.S. Legislation Regarding Iran](#)
- [Joint Statement of the U.S.-Israeli Interparliamentary Commission on National Security](#)
 - [Findings of the U.S.-Israeli Interparliamentary Commission on National Security](#)
- [PLO Compliance Report](#)



State-to-State Agreements

The United States-Israel relationship extends beyond only the national

level and incorporates collaboration and coordination on the state level as well.

In 2012, at least thirty-three (33) states and the District of Columbia had either established bilateral organizations with various branches of government in Israel or had signed formal agreements with the Jewish state. The various bilateral organizations include chambers of commerce - organizations that seek to incorporate Israeli businesses and develop innovative technologies to bolster the economy of individual states - as well as technology collaboratives and university-based research institutes. Formal agreements and memoranda of understanding include everything from promoting tourism to improving trade relations to exchanging scientists at research institutes.

Listed below are general summaries of each state's formal agreements with Israel. Click on any state for a more detailed listing of their cooperation with Israel.

[Alabama](#)

Formal Agreements:

- 1997: Gov. Fob James led a trade mission to Israel and signed a formal [Memorandum of Intent](#) to promote and improve trade relations, encourage investments and technology transfers and promote the exchange of ideas and company representatives, engineers, scientists and other specialists.

[California](#)

Formal Agreements:

- November 2009: Assemblyman Bob Blumenfield (D-San Fernando Valley) officially signed AB 1032 calling for an immediate Memorandum of Understanding between California and Israel to foster technology development, business development and educational opportunities in solar energy and the environmental technology industries.

- June 2008: Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) in Herzliyah, Israel to tighten cooperation and existing relations between ICT and the City of LA's homeland security apparatuses. The LAPD and the LA-World Airports would receive new training and education programs on counter terrorism.

- October 1999: Gov. Gray Davis visited Israel and signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) for cooperation in the area of biotechnology, bio-informatics and bio-agriculture so as to create an increased commercial and research linkages.

- May 1998: Gov. Wilson and Israeli Minister of Trade and Industry Natan Sharansky signed a [Memorandum of Intent](#) to encourage the growth of trade and investment relations with the prospect of expanding the growing economic cooperation between California and Israel.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *California Israel Technology Collaborative*: Founded by alumni and faculty of UCLA, CAL-I-TC is based on finding and encouraging opportunities for high technology transfers and innovation. It encourages partnerships between the major Israeli universities and the California business and investment communities.
- *California Israel Chamber of Commerce*: The CICC is dedicated to strengthening business and trade relations between California and Israel.
- *Southern California Israel Chamber of Commerce*: The SCICC is dedicated to fostering bilateral business, trade and investment opportunities between Southern California- primarily cities such as Los Angeles and San Diego- and Israel.

Colorado

Formal Agreements:

- July 2010: Gov. Bill Ritter signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research (BIDR) in Israel's Negev desert with the stated goal being to "encourage voluntary interaction and cooperation and to promote friendship between the two parties for their mutual benefit."
- July 2010: Department of Natural Resources and Agriculture signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Desert Agro Research Center in Israel that is focused on water and agriculture research and development in arid and semi-arid climates.
- July 2010: Colorado School of Mines established workforce-development ties with the Israel Institute of Technology (Technion) to help develop the discovery of a vast natural gas reserve off Israel's coast.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Colorado Israel Chamber of Commerce*: The CICC helps foster economic and business development opportunities between Colorado and Israel.

Connecticut

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Connecticut Israel Exchange Commission*: CONNIX was established in 1998 by Gov. William O'Neill to help expand economic, scientific, educational, technological, commercial, industrial and cultural cooperation and exchange. It no longer receives state funding though David Baram is hoping to resurrect the commission.

District of Columbia (Washington, DC)



Bilateral Organizations:

- *US Israel Business Initiative*: The first DC-based effort to advanced and strengthen US-Israel commercial relations at all levels. Formed by the US Chamber of Commerce.

Florida**Formal Agreements:**

- March 2011: Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer facilitated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for international collaboration and strategic relations between the Florida Hospital and Sheba Medical Center at Tel HaShomer. Among the many areas of collaboration are robotic surgical training, medical simulation, and stem cell transplant.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Florida-Israel Institute*: The Florida legislature created FII to enhance educational, research, economic and cultural exchanges between Florida and Israel. It is administered by Florida Atlantic University and Broward Community College.

- *Florida Israel Business Forum*: The FIBF's mission is to actively promote bilateral trade, commerce, and economic relations between Florida and Israel.

- *America Israel Chamber, Florida Chapter*: The Florida Chapter of the AIC sponsors events and offers networking opportunities that promote and enhance business-to-business connections between Florida and Israel. The Chamber assists in promoting trade and joint business ventures between Israel and Florida.

Georgia**Bilateral Organizations:**

- *Georgia-Israel Exchange*: Gov. Zell Miller created GIE in 1992 to explore emerging technology in both industry and agriculture, enhance trade, encourage tourism and jointly participate in economic development programs.

- *Georgia Department of Economic Development, Israel Office*: The GDED promotes trade, investment, and tourism in Israel through its office located in Jerusalem.

- *American Israel Chamber of Commerce, Southeast Division*: Based in Atlanta, the SE Division of AICC helps Israeli businesses explore new markets and develop business relationships with companies in Georgia as well as Alabama, Mississippi, North and South Carolina and Tennessee.

Hawaii**Formal Agreements:**

- December 2008: Governor Linda Lingle and Shai Agassi, CEO of Better Place, signed a Memorandum of Understanding centered on a plan to bring an electric-car network to Hawai'i, thus creating a model for the adoption of electric cars in the U.S.
- May 2004: Gov. Lingle signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the state of Hawaii and Israel to encourage cooperation concerning agriculture and aquaculture research and development.

Illinois

Formal Agreements:

- June 2006: Illinois and Israel signed an MOU committing both sides to enhancing joint technology research and development in the homeland security sector.
- 1988: Gov. James Thompson signed a Memorandum of Intent that created the Illinois-Israel Initiative, which calls for projects of mutual economic benefit through improved trade, technology development, science, agriculture and tourism.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Chicago Israel Business Initiative*: CIBI seeks to leverage cooperation between the city of Chicago with the Israel Trade and Investment Center to encourage Israel-based businesses to locate their North American headquarters in the immediate Chicago area.
- *American Israel Chamber of Commerce, Chicago*: The AICC-C is tasked with developing business relationships between Illinois and Israeli companies.

Indiana

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Indiana Economic Development Corporation, Eastern Mediterranean Office*: Headed by American oleh to Israel, Sherwin Pomerantz, the IEDC-EM looks to match companies in Indiana and Israel to develop joint business ventures and bilateral trade to enhance the economies of both states.

Louisiana

Bilateral Organizations:

- *World Trade Center of New Orleans*: Though not exclusively setup to deal with trade between Louisiana and Israel, the WTC New Orleans has facilitated the expansion of at least nine Louisiana-based companies into Israel.

Maryland

Formal Agreements:



- November 2006: The Office of the Governor signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Israeli Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor that focuses on bilateral cooperation in private sector industrial research and development.
- 2004: Israel and Maryland entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to create the Maryland-Israel Development Fund (MIDF) that supports collaborative technology development and commercialization conducted in partnership between Maryland and Israeli businesses.
- November 2003: Governor Bob Ehrlich signed a cooperative agreement to establish the Maryland-Israel Homeland Security Partnership. The partnership will allow homeland security professionals from Maryland and Israel to share "best practices" used to respond to terror threats.
- November 2003: Gov Ehrlich signed a partnership with the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture to establish the Collaborative Marine Biotechnology R&D Program.
- May 1988: Governor William Donald Schaefer signed the Maryland-Israel Exchange which was designed to develop and expand ventures in the fields of trade, tourism, science and technology, communications, agriculture, aquaculture and transportation.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Maryland Israel Development Center*: MIDC promotes trade and investment and fosters bilateral economic development between Israel and Maryland.
- *Maryland Israel Collaborative Marine Biotechnology Research and Development Program*: Established by Gov. Ehrlich, the R&D partnership puts together the University of Maryland's Biotechnology Institute (UMBI) with a number of Israeli research institutions through the guidance of administration of BARD. The program promotes collaborative aquaculture research that are of mutual benefit to both Maryland and Israel for various shared aquaculture and marine biology challenges.

[Massachusetts](#)

Formal Agreements:

- March 2011: Governor Deval Patrick and Israeli Chief Scientist Avi Hasson signed a memorandum of understanding that will allow for further collaboration in research and development (R&D) programs between Massachusetts and Israeli companies.
- March 2011: Housing and Economic Development Secretary Greg Bialecki announced a collaboration between UMass Lowell's NanoManufacturing Center of Excellence and Shenkar College of Engineering and Design in Israel. Researchers at both institutions will investigate fabrication processes for materials with potential to reduce costs for maintaining and servicing aircraft.
- June 2008: Massachusetts lawmakers approved a \$1 million life sciences initiative that would authorize joint academic and industrial research and business exchanges with Israel and calls for the creation of trade

facilities for pilot projects with the Government of Israel and the Boston Haifa International Life Sciences Institute.

- May 1987: The Massachusetts Office of International Trade and Investment signed a general accord with the State of Israel to stimulate trade, investment, education and medicine collaboration between the two regions.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *New England Israel Business Council*: The NEIBC provides a variety of formal and informal venues for networking, for making connections between Israel and New England people and companies and for seeking advice on doing business in these two regions. NEIBC hosts annual business summits and also setups various other conferences.

- *Boston Israel Cleantech Alliance*: BICA connects cleantech investors, entrepreneurs, academic researchers and government officials in Israel and Boston. Among their main objectives, BICA aims to foster increased economic, scientific, and educational relations between Boston and the State of Israel.

Michigan

Formal Agreements:

- February 2011: Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine in Rochester signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Emek Medical Center in Haifa that encourages collaborative research and the sharing of scientific knowledge between the two institutions and leveraging the medical expertise of both institutions to advance the science and practice of medicine.

- November 2008: Governor Jennifer Granholm signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Eli Yishai to establish a working group between the two governments that will focus on energy efficiency and technology that will improve water quality and increase water re-use.

- 1988: The Michigan-Israel Technology Venture was established to foster exchanges of information and technology, and an Economic Development Cooperative Agreement was signed the same year to promote trade and investment.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Michigan Israel Business Bridge*: The MIBB was established to facilitate business and investment opportunities between Michigan and Israel for their mutual economic benefit. MIBB brings new business to Michigan and creates jobs by encouraging Israeli businesses with new technologies to establish their North American business centers in Michigan.

Minnesota

Formal Agreements:



- 1987: Gov. Rudy Perpich established the Minnesota-Israel Exchange (MNIX) to foster cooperation and promote trade, investment, science and industry.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *American Israel Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Minnesota*: AICCM serves its members by being the best resource and catalyst for developing strategic alliances between the business communities of Minnesota and Israel. The Chamber's goal is to provide services to companies in Minnesota and Israel who want to do business together.

Missouri

Formal Agreements:

- 1988: Gov. James Thompson signed a Memorandum of Intent that created the Missouri-Israel Initiative calling for projects of mutual economic benefit through improved trade, technology development, science, agriculture and tourism.

Nebraska

Formal Agreements:

- 1993: Governor Ben Nelson signed a [*Memorandum of Understanding*](#) to promote trade and exchanges related to agriculture.

New Jersey

Formal Agreements:

- October 2003: Governor James McGreevey and Vice Prime Minister Ehud Olmert signed an MOU officially declaring collaboration in the Life Sciences.

- November 1996: Memorandum of Intent concerning a joint Israel-New Jersey Program to Promote the Establishment of Environmental Management Systems.

- November 1996: MOU between the Commission on Science and Technology of the State of New Jersey and The Ministry of Science of the State of Israel.

- November 1996: The New Jersey-Israel Cultural Cooperation Committee Memorandum of Intent.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *New Jersey Israel Commission*: Established in 1988, the NJIC fosters and enhances the relationship between New Jersey and the State of Israel with regard to economic development and bi-lateral trade, education and culture and tourism.

- *New Jersey Department of Commerce and Economic Development, Israel Office*: The DCED branch located in Ra'anana has successfully negotiated tens of economic schemes between New Jersey and Israel, principally in the high-tech arena. Several American-based companies working with Israel have relocated to New Jersey, in order to enjoy the benefits available through these offices.

New Mexico

Formal Agreements:

- June 2008: Gov Bill Richardson signed an agreement of cooperation with Israeli Minister of Industry Eli Yishai that spells out a process to create strategic partnerships to cooperate on the advancement of joint water and energy technologies.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *New Mexico-Israel Business Exchange* - This new bilateral institution is building a dynamic network of people and organizations from New Mexico and Israel with innovative products, demonstrated know-how, and adaptive problem solving strategies. The mission of the NMIBE is to raise awareness of Israel's entrepreneurial activities within New Mexico, to offer support to individuals and organizations interested in pursuing opportunities with Israeli businesses and organizations to encourage collaborative relationships between New Mexico and Israeli companies, and to improve the environment for successful business ventures.

New York

Formal Agreements:

- September 2009: Gov. David Patterson signed an MOU with Israel's Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer on industrial R&D cooperation in the areas of nanotechnology, biotechnology, and public and internal security.

- 1989: Gov. Mario Cuomo created the International Partnership Program to promote exchanges with Israel in culture, tourism and economic development.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *American Israel Chamber of Commerce of Industry, New York Office*: The AICCI is devoted to bringing US and Israeli businesses together while advocating for policies that encourage investment, increase the flow of trade, investment and transfer of technology between Israel and the US.

North Carolina

Formal Agreements:



- 1994: Gov. Jim Hunt established an International Commission that includes task forces to stimulate trade and exchanges with Israel in business, academia, arts and culture, education and social services. The North Carolina-Israel Partnership (NCIP) was created in 1996 to manage the cooperative projects.
- 1993: The governments of North Carolina and Israel signed a far reaching and broad agreement that led to the establishment in 1996 of North Carolina-Israel Development Centers in both places as well as an Israeli center for people with autism based on a North Carolina model.

North Dakota

Formal Agreements:

- May 2008: The Energy & Environmental Research Center (EERC) at the University of North Dakota announced the development of a long-term partnership with Israel to address critical energy security issues facing both Israel and the United States.

Ohio

Formal Agreements:

- June 2010: Ohio Clean Technologies Group signed an MOU with LN Green Technologies Incubator in Haifa which outlines a plan for Ohio Clean Technologies and LN Green Technological to cooperate and share resources with the objective of bringing new alternative energy technological applications to market in the United States.
- September 2009: The Dayton region and the Israeli city of Haifa signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at boosting economic development in both locations.
- February 2006: The city of Akron earmarked a \$1.5 million investment from local public and private sources in a Netanya-based technological incubator. In exchange for the investment, any companies that are created from the incubator will then base their US headquarters in Akron, a move which will provide local jobs and income tax to the city, plus dividends from part ownership in the companies.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Ohio Israel Agricultural Initiative*: Launched by the Negev Foundation with help from Senator George Voinovich, the OIAI was established to improve agricultural trade and development between Israel and the state of Ohio through the farmers, research institutions and trade associations of both places.
- *Ohio Israel Chamber of Commerce*: The OICC is an enterprise solutions provider that works to create collaborative relationships between companies seeking to commercialize technologies in both places.
- *Dayton Region Israel Trade Alliance*: The DRIT Alliance seeks to identify and assist in realizing opportunities for sustainable business collaboration between Israel and communities in the Dayton region of Ohio.

Oklahoma

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Oklahoma-Israel Exchange*: OKIE was created by Gov. David Walters to stimulate mutually beneficial projects. In 1994, the legislature established a permanent OKIE Commission to develop joint projects in energy, agriculture, trade, water use and conservation, and cultural and educational exchanges.

Oregon

Formal Agreements:

- October 2010: Governor Ted Kulongoski signed an MOU with Israel "to develop and strengthen economic, industrial, technological and commercial cooperation".

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Oregon Israel Business Alliance*: OIBA was formed through the leadership of Governor Ted Kulongoski and various Israeli government officials and seeks to leverage cooperation between the states in forestry and water technology.

Pennsylvania

Formal Agreements:

- June 1997: Governor Tom Ridge signed Pennsylvania's first cooperative agreement with Israel to "seek to enhance technological research and economic development as well as to increase cultural awareness in order to promote a deeper understanding of shared values through the economy, arts, technology and education."

Bilateral Organizations:

- *America Israel Chamber of Commerce, Central Atlantic Region*: AICC-CAR seeks to further business relationships between companies in the Greater Philadelphia Region and Israel. Serves locations throughout Pennsylvania and even in bordering states.

South Carolina

Formal Agreements:

- 1992: Gov. Carroll Campbell, Jr. signed a [*Memorandum of Intent*](#) to establish a South Carolina-Israel Exchange to promote trade, investment, agriculture, education and tourism.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *American-Israel Chamber of Commerce Southeast Division* - Though based in Atlanta, the Southeast Division of the AICC was established in 1992 to help Israeli businesses explore new markets and develop

business relationships with companies in Georgia as well as South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina and Tennessee. AICC-SD boasts over 450 members today and has earned the reputation as one of the most successful and effective bi-national business organizations in the United States. Since its founding, AICC-SD has been involved in completed transactions valued at over \$700 million, thereby contributing to the economies of both Israel and the Southeastern United States.

- *South Carolina-Israel Collaboration* - Launched in January 2012, this major joint program will coordinate cooperation between South Carolina and Israel around six relevant areas: biomedical, advanced materials, sustainable systems, transportation, defense/security, and insurance/health IT. The Collaboration will strengthen existing SC-Israel business and research relationships, work to create new partnerships, and raise awareness of this collaboration on both sides.

South Dakota

Formal Agreements:

- September 2009: Rapid City Economic Development Partnership signed an MOU with the Israeli weapons manufacturing company, TDI Arms, to open a plant in the city and create a number of new full time positions for South Dakota residents.

Tennessee

Formal Agreements:

- 1996: Gov. Don Sundquist signed the Tennessee-Israel Cooperation Agreement to promote cooperation between the two countries in trade, arts, culture, education, tourism and university/industry alliances.

Texas

Formal Agreements:

- December 2010: University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center entered into a cooperative agreement with the Rabin Medical Center in Israel to collaborate on faculty and student exchange programs, as well as the development of joint studies, research and training activities, and other educational programs of mutual interest.

- 2002: MOU was signed to foster collaborative practical and applied research between agricultural scientists areas of high priority to both Texas and Israel.

- 1992: A Memorandum of Intent was signed between the two governments with a focus to broaden the Texas-Israel SemiArid Fund (see 1985), encourage greater participation and to prove, through applied research, that the similarities in agriculture between Texas and Israel can be a lesson for both partners.

- 1985: Texas-Israel Semi-Arid partnership was created after the signing of an MOU between the Texas Department of Agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture of the State of Israel to work together on projects of mutual agricultural benefit to the peoples of Israel and Texas.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Texas Israel Chamber of Commerce*: TICC's aim is to boost the economies of Texas and Israel by helping member companies develop important business relationships with each other and explore new market opportunities. The Chamber is strongly supported by Gov Rick Perry of Texas as well as by Israel's Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labor.
- *Texas Israel Exchange*: TIE was created in 1984 to promote mutually beneficial agriculture R&D and to foster the expansion of trade between the states.
- *Texas BARD Program*: Texas-BARD is an offshoot of the BARD Fund that looks to exclusively develop solutions to mutual agricultural problems that will in turn foster the development of trade, mutual assistance, and business relations between Texas and Israel.

Vermont**Bilateral Organizations:**

- *Vermont Israel Agricultural Exchange*: VIAE promotes agricultural research and cooperation in such areas as the treatment of Mastitis (a cattle disease), genetic engineering, aquaculture, integrated pest management and sustainable agriculture. The State allocates approximately \$10,000 for VIAE, which is run out of the Department of Agriculture.

Virginia**Formal Agreements:**

- September 2008: Gov Timothy M. Kaine and Ambassador of Israel Sallai Meridor signed an agreement to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the Commonwealth of Virginia and the State of Israel on private sector industrial research and development.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Virginia Israel Advisory Board*: VIAB serves as the bridge for Israeli companies who want to establish and/or expand their business in the USA and locate in Virginia.
- *Virginia Israel Commission*: VIC is dedicated to investigating the cultural, educational and economic development opportunities between the two states.
- *Norfolk Program/Tochnit Norfolk*: Seeks to lure Israeli companies to Norfolk, home to the worlds largest naval base, by using incentives for collaboration between Israeli companies and Norfolk-based companies.
- *Virginia Israel Technology Alliance*: VITAL's mission is designed to help post-incubator, commercial-ready Israeli companies build strong foundations for growth in the U.S., and bring their products to market in Virginia.



- *US Israel Business Exchange*: Based in Vienna, US-IBEX is an independent, non-profit organization. It was created as an initiative of the Embassy of Israel in collaboration with the Greater DC business community in March 2000 to help Israeli and American companies to create opportunities for collaboration.

Washington

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Washington Israel Business Council*: WIBC's mission is to support economic growth in Israel and Washington State through stimulation and promotion of mutual commercial and educational collaboration.

Wisconsin

Formal Agreements:

- November 2009: Governor Jim Doyle and Israeli Minister of Industry, Trade and Labor Benjamin Ben-Eliezer signed a memorandum of understanding and a bilateral cooperative trade agreement with the hopes of promoting collaboration and a strong working relationship between Wisconsin and Israel in research and development.

Bilateral Organizations:

- *Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Global Ventures, Israel*: Formed in December 2010, the DOC Global Ventures office builds and strengthens bilateral ties with Israel.

- *Committee for Economic Growth of Israel*: CEGI was established to help expand and grow trade between Israel and the state of Wisconsin, in particular, and the entire US in general. It deals with business promotion in both Wisconsin and Israel, much the same as the various Chambers of Commerce.

Binational Foundations

American and Israeli cooperation extends far beyond foreign aid

and military collaboration.

For more than forty years, the two nations have facilitated the collaboration of their brightest minds on hundreds of different innovative scientific, business and agricultural projects. Working together, researchers and developers in the two nations have been able to create inventions and new techniques that would have been impossible for either to discover independently. These developments have led to the creation of thousands of jobs, millions of dollars in revenue and, on a far greater scale, have led to improvements in medicine and other areas that directly save lives.

Listed below is summarized information on these binational foundations; more in-depth analysis on each foundation in addition to external links and updated data on ongoing projects can be found in separate articles by clicking the links in each paragraph.



[CLICK HERE](#) to find out how BIRD, BARD & BSF grants have benefitted each state in the USA.

Binational Industrial Research and Development Foundation

The [Binational Industrial Research and Development Foundation \(BIRD\)](#) was established by the [U.S.](#) and Israeli governments in 1977 to generate mutually beneficial cooperation between the private sectors of the U.S. and Israeli high tech industries, including start-ups and established organizations. BIRD provides both matchmaking services between U.S. and Israeli companies, as well as funding that covers up to 50 percent of project development and product commercialization costs. BIRD's scope extends to Communications, Life Sciences, Electronics, Electro-optics, Software, Homeland Security, Renewable and Alternative Energy and other sectors of the hi-tech industry.

In the last decade alone, BIRD has funded more than 830 projects in total and more than 235 different projects.

BIRD has teamed with many leading companies in the U.S., for example: American Red Cross, AOL, Bayer Pharmaceutical, Eastman Kodak, General Dynamics, General Electric, IBM and Johnson&Johnson, among many others. In addition, nearly 40 Israeli companies that have had projects sponsored by BIRD are now traded on Wall Street, adding to Israel's surge in the high-tech and industrial fields.

BIRD supports approximately 20 projects annually. The cumulative sales of products developed through BIRD projects have exceed \$8 billion and BIRD has received nearly \$100 million in royalty repayments from projects. The top five states in which BIRD has funded: 266 projects in California, 90 in Massachusetts, 88 in New York, 64 in New Jersey and 26 in both Virginia and Florida.

During 2011, the BIRD Foundation approved more than \$16 million in funding for eighteen new projects commencing between Israeli companies and their American counterparts in eleven different states and the District of Columbia.

Eitan Yudilevich, Ph.D., *Executive Director*

BIRD Foundation
Kiryat Atidim, Building 4, Floor 15
Tel Aviv, Israel 61581
Email: eitan@birdf.com
Web: www.birdf.com

Binational Agricultural Research and Development Fund

The [Binational Agricultural Research and Development Fund \(BARD\)](#) was created in 1978 with endowment contributions of \$40 million by both the United States and Israel to which each country augmented another \$15 million in 1984. BARD funds innovative agricultural projects and awards grants based on research it feels will have the greatest impact in the world. In addition, BARD also provides support for post-doctoral fellows with the objective of enabling young scientists to acquire new skills and techniques while becoming professionally established in the agricultural research community.

During its more than 30 years of operation, BARD has funded over 1000 projects in nearly every U.S. state with a total investment of more than \$250 million. It is difficult to break down the impact on a state-by-state basis, but, overall, an independent economic review team estimated dollar benefits of 10 BARD projects to total \$440 million to the United States alone, by conservative estimate through the year 2010. An additional \$300 million will accrue in benefits to Israel. The returns from these 10 projects alone exceed, by far, the total investment in the BARD program since its inception in 1979.

An external review of BARD's performance in its first 20 years found that the foundation supported a very high caliber of research and development projects and attracted proposals from the top echelon of scientists. The final scientific reports are subject to peer review and two-thirds of the projects were classified as excellent or outstanding. The projects also generate a large output of scientific papers, many of which are published in the most prestigious journals.

BARD-sponsored research has led to new technologies in drip irrigation, pesticides, fish farming, livestock, poultry, disease control and farm equipment. BARD also conducts a fellowship program and supports joint workshops.

Yitzhak Spiegel, *Director*

BARD
Pitzuach Building, Room 411
HaKiryat HaChaklait, Derech Hamakabim
Rishon LeZion, 75359, Israel
Contact Telephone: (+972)-3-9683834

Email. bard@bard-isus.com

Web. <http://www.bard-isus.com/>

Binational Science Foundation

The [United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation \(BSF\)](#) is a grant-awarding institution that promotes research cooperation between scientists from the United States and Israel. BSF's income is derived from interest on an endowment of \$100 million. Each government contributed \$30 million in 1972 and added another \$20 million each in 1984.

BSF was established by the American and Israeli governments in 1972 after much cooperative work by then Israeli Ambassador Yitzak Rabin and US Assistant Secretary of State, Joseph Sisco. Since that time, BSF has awarded more than 4,140 research grants, worth nearly \$480 million and involving more than 2,000 scientists from more than 400 institutions located in 46 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. Most of the proposals and awards were in basic research; however, grants were also given to applied and technological research. Proposals are submitted by individual scientists through their institutions, and are evaluated on the basis of their scientific merit, as well as the degree of cooperation. Grant requests can be made for a period of up to four years.

Proposals are evaluated by a peer review process. Assistance in the review and evaluation of proposals is rendered by science advisers. Advisers are recruited on a part-time basis from among senior research scientists in Israel and the U.S. Each of them is assigned a group of proposals in his or her field of specialization with the charge to select suitable referees. Final recommendations for grant awards are made by the science advisers' panels, together with the Executive Director, and are presented to the Board of Governors for approval.

BSF-sponsored studies are highly successful in achieving their two main goals: strengthening the US-Israel partnership through science and promoting world-class scientific research for the benefit of the two countries and all mankind. The BSF grants help extend research resources to achieve milestones that might not otherwise be attainable; introduce novel approaches and techniques to lead American researchers in new directions; confirm, clarify and intensify research projects; and provide unmatched access to Israeli equipment, facilities and research results that help speed American scientific advances.

BSF has documented no less than 75 new discoveries made possible by its research grants and counts 37 Nobel Prize and 19 Lasker Medical Award laureates among its joint partners.

As Peres, the current President of Israel, noted, "The support of the United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation will prepare the next generation of US and Israeli scientists for a leadership role in our global community." BSF supports research in Life Sciences, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Exact Sciences.

Yair Rotstein, *Executive Director*

United StatesIsrael Binational Science Foundation
8 Hamarpeh St.
Har Hotzvim
Jerusalem, Israel 91450
Tel. 972-2-582-8239



Fax. 972-2-582-8306

Email. bsf@bsf.org.il

Web. <http://www.bsf.org.il/>

United State-Israel Education Foundation

The [United States-Israel Educational Foundation \(USIEF\)](#), established by the Governments of the United States and Israel in 1956, is responsible for the administration of Israel's participation in the Fulbright Program.

In the years since USIEF's establishment over 1,000 US citizens and over 1,300 Israelis have taken part in a variety of Fulbright exchanges. US alumni have made their mark primarily in the academic world. Israeli Fulbright alumni fill leading roles in academia, in government, in medical and social services, and in literature.

In addition to its main mission, administration of the Fulbright Israel exchanges, USIEF carries out a number of complementary activities:

USIEF's StudyUSA Educational Counseling Center provides accurate, comprehensive, current, and unbiased information on post-secondary educational opportunities in the United States. The Center's services cover the entire range of options, from one-year technical courses, English language programs and distance learning, through associate and bachelor's degree programs, and up to post-graduate programs leading to professional degrees in law and medicine and MA and PhD degrees in all disciplines.

USIEF's Fulbright-Israel conference program provides a platform for appearances by US Fulbright Fellows and other US guests and by Israeli Fulbright alumni. The program includes special lectures and symposia on a wide variety of topics. A major theme within the program is higher education policy and the development of higher education systems.

United State-Israel Science & Technology Commission

The [U.S.-Israel Science and Technology Commission \(USISTC\)](#) was established in March 1993 by then US President Bill Clinton after recognizing the potential for greater cooperation in these important areas. Its mission is to encourage high-tech industries in both countries to engage in joint projects; foster scientific exchanges between universities and research institutions; promote development of agricultural and environmental technologies and assist in the adaptation of military technology to civilian production.

In 1993, the United States and Israel each committed \$5 million annually for three years, for a total of \$30 million. The American contribution was made without requiring additional appropriations. Approximately half of the U.S. money comes from the Department of Commerce, with the other half coming from the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Defense, State, Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The Commission is co-chaired by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce and Israel's Minister of Industry and Trade. The Commission includes representatives from U.S. and Israeli government agencies and ministries (the Environmental Protection Agency, the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Health and Human Services,

State and Defense and their counterpart Israeli Ministries). The Commission also has a joint high-level advisory panel comprising private sector representatives from both countries, including leaders from academia and industry. The commission meets twice a year, once in the United States and once in Israel. It is administered on a day-to-day basis by the Commission's Executive Director at the U.S. Commerce Department's Technology Administration.

Currently, the Commission's efforts are focused in three areas: biotechnology/life sciences; information technology; and harmonization of standards and regulations. Binational strategic panels established in each of the above areas are working on many joint projects involving the private sectors of each country.

Texas-BARD

The [Texas-BARD program](#) is a grant program designed to promote mission oriented, strategic and applied, collaborative agricultural research and development activities conducted jointly by scientists in Texas and Israel. Texas-BARD was created by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), Texas-Israel Exchange Fund (TIE), and the Binational Agricultural Research and Development Fund. Funded projects are expected to yield applicable results within 3-5 years. Benefits would result through developing solutions to mutual agricultural problems that will in turn foster the development of trade, mutual assistance, and business relations between Texas and Israel. The TIE and BARD Boards may award a total amount of up to \$1.5 million cooperatively.

The fund is focusing on the following topics:

- Efficient use and management of soil and water for agriculture
- Post harvest food technologies – quality, safety and security
- Horticulture, field and garden crops – including floriculture and drought tolerance
- Aquaculture

Each project is limited to a maximum award of \$50,000 (\$25,000 from TIE and \$25,000 from BARD) per year, not to exceed a duration of three years and a maximum amount of \$150,000 (\$75,000 from TIE and \$75,000 from BARD) for the three-year period.

Maryland-BARD Program

In November 2003, the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute (UMBI) and the [US-Israel Binational Agricultural Research and Development](#) fund (BARD) established a framework for conducting collaborative aquaculture research between UMBI and Israeli scientists – the [UMBI/BARD Program](#). [Maryland](#) and Israel each contributed \$250,000 to fund the program.

The objective of the program is to promote and competitively support mission-oriented collaborative aquaculture research and development activities, conducted jointly by UMBI and Israeli scientists, that will be of mutual benefit by providing solutions to mutual aquaculture problems and open new horizon to advancing aquaculture in both Maryland and Israel.

This fund will provide grants of 1-3 years with a maximum total budget (to all parties) of \$75,000 to \$100,000/year, to be equally divided between the UMBI and Israeli scientists. Research will focus on:



- Search and discovery of novel marine natural products and pharmaceuticals produced by marine organisms
- Development and improvement of seed production and hatchery technologies (reproduction and early life stages) in finfish and shellfish of economic interest to Maryland and Israel.
- Development of high efficiency and environmentally compatible aquaculture diets.
- Development of environmentally-compatible, recirculated aquaculture systems for species of economic interest to Israel and Maryland.
- Controlling fish diseases in recirculated, dense aquaculture systems.
- Development of new products for aquaculture, including ornamental fish.

Cornell University-BARD Program

Cornell University and the [U.S.-Israel Binational Agricultural Research and Development fund \(BARD\)](#) have established a framework for collaborative agricultural research between Cornell and Israeli scientists - the [Cornell University/BARD Program](#) (Cornell/BARD fund). The objective of the program is to promote and competitively support mission-oriented collaborative agricultural research and development activities, conducted jointly by scientists in Cornell and Israel that will be of mutual benefit by providing solutions to mutual agricultural problems.

This is a unique program between Cornell and Israeli scientists that allows Israeli scientists to have access to a new source of funds when they work with Cornell scientists. The total available funding for the current year (2003-2004) is \$500,000 and the maximum amount that will be awarded to a single project is \$300,000. To implement this program, Cornell was required to have matching funds but, because of the university's budget situation, new matching funds were not available. Therefore, Cornell agreed to use faculty salaries as a match. The result is that Cornell faculty will not have access to any new funds in this program. Only state-supported Cornell scientists are eligible for this program and they can use their full state salaries as a match (no other matching funds are allowed). It is Cornell's hope that Israeli scientists who are funded will enhance our mutual research programs through visiting scientists, graduate students and other personnel. The traditional BARD program, in which Cornell faculty have been very successful, will continue to provide new funds to both US (Cornell) and Israeli scientists.

The program will focus on three general topics:

- Alleviation of biotic and abiotic stresses on agricultural commodities
- Food quality, safety and security
- Plant, animal and microbial genomics related to agriculture

Strategic Cooperation

Since its establishment as a state, the reality of life in [Israel](#) has forced the small nation to defend itself against constant existential threats. As a result, Israel has become a world leader in designing techniques and technologies

for many strategic and military arenas, including homeland security, counter-terrorism and aerial warfare among others. Allied with the United States, the world's lone superpower, Israel has been able to bolster its qualitative military advantage while also providing unequalled support and training for America's armed forces.

Israel and the United States work together to develop training techniques, superior technology and innovative equipment that will lead each nation to protect their homelands and safeguard their citizens to the best of their ability. The two countries work together in counter-terrorism, aviation and border security, cyber defense, bioterrorism, missile defense and other areas.

Joint cooperation between the U.S. and Israel extends to include intelligence sharing in addition to technology development and troop training. Also, because of its strategic location and its unquestionable reliability as an ally, the U.S. has found Israel to be an ideal place for training, maintenance, and prepositioning of material and supplies.

In the United States, Israeli innovation has helped the American government both decrease its own military spending while still minimizing casualties and maximizing security. Israeli weapon systems such as tactical air drones, unmanned vehicles and planes, navigation and targeting systems and assault rifles and grenades are currently employed by various levels of American armed forces across the world.

Learn more about Israeli weapons systems in the US military, [CLICK HERE](#).

In addition, the United States sends thousands of soldiers each year to train with Israeli forces and learn from their experience in urban warfare and counter-terrorism. These training programs have included ground-based infantry training in Israel's modern counter-terrorism center as well as computer-based battle simulations for naval and air forces.

Learn more about joint training between the United States and Israel, [CLICK HERE](#).

The strategic alliance with the United States has enabled Israel to maintain a qualitative advantage over its enemies in the Middle East while providing its soldiers with state-of-the-art weaponry. America has supported the development of systems such as the Iron Dome, the first successfully used anti-missile system in the world that Israel employs in the south to protect its cities from the onslaught of rockets fired by Palestinian terrorists in Gaza. The United States has also provided Israel with F-16 fighter planes to equip the Israeli Air Force and it also maintains an emergency weapons stockpile for Israel in the case of another large-scale regional war.

For more information on US benefits to the Israeli military, [CLICK HERE](#).



MAPS

Understand the conflict with a more complete view of the region.

Palestine: British Mandate (1920) | Division of the Mandate (1923) | UN Partition Plan (1947)

Arab Invasion (1948) | Armistice Lines (1949) | Cease-Fire Lines (1967)

UNRWA Refugee Camps | Flying Time to Israel | Vulnerability from the West Bank

Hezbollah Rocket Capability | Hamas Rocket Capability | Israel's Relative Size



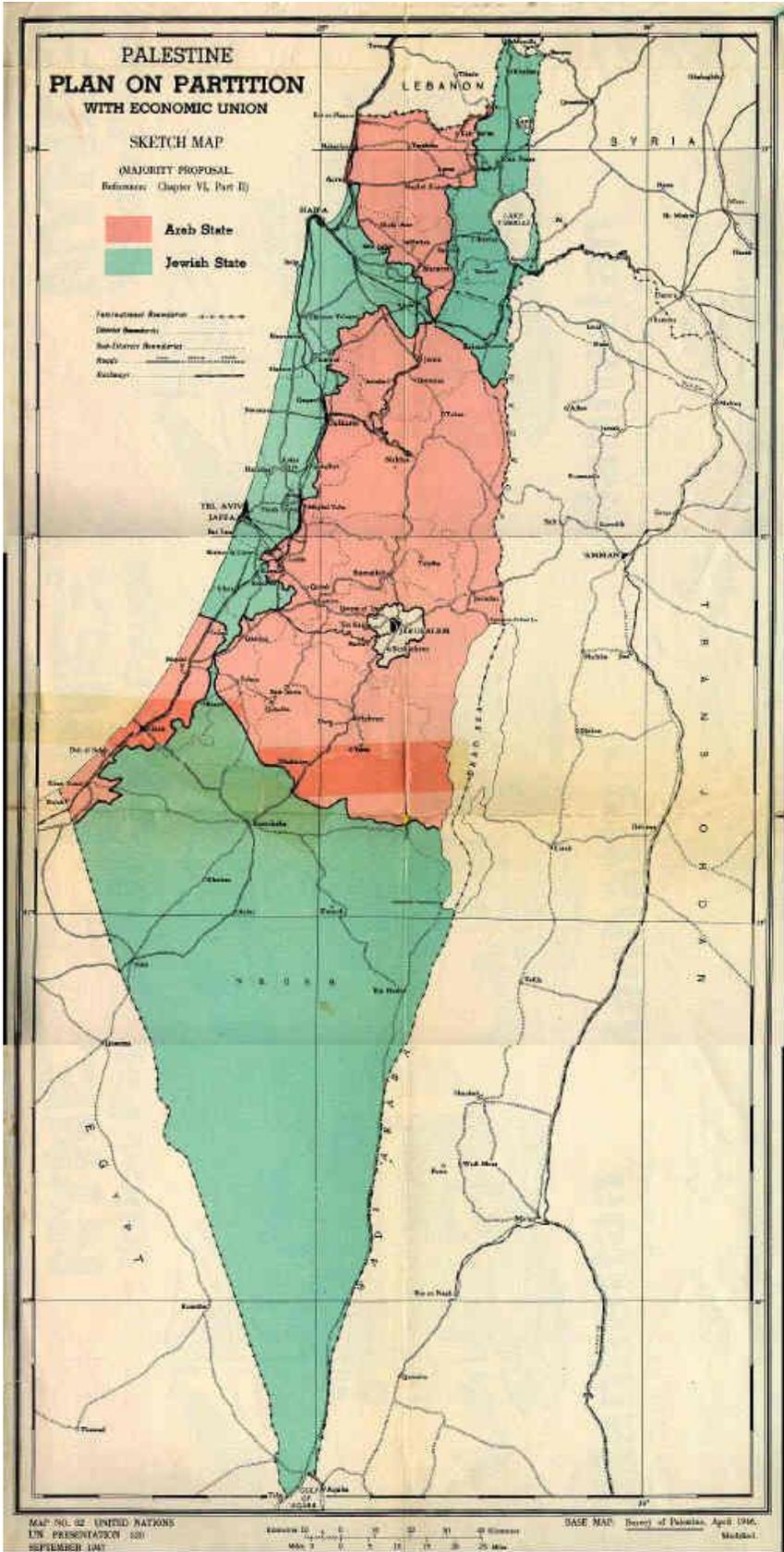
Area Allocated for Jewish National Home
San Remo Conference, 1920





Great Britain's Division of the Mandated Area, 1921-1923

United Nations Partition Plan (September 1947)

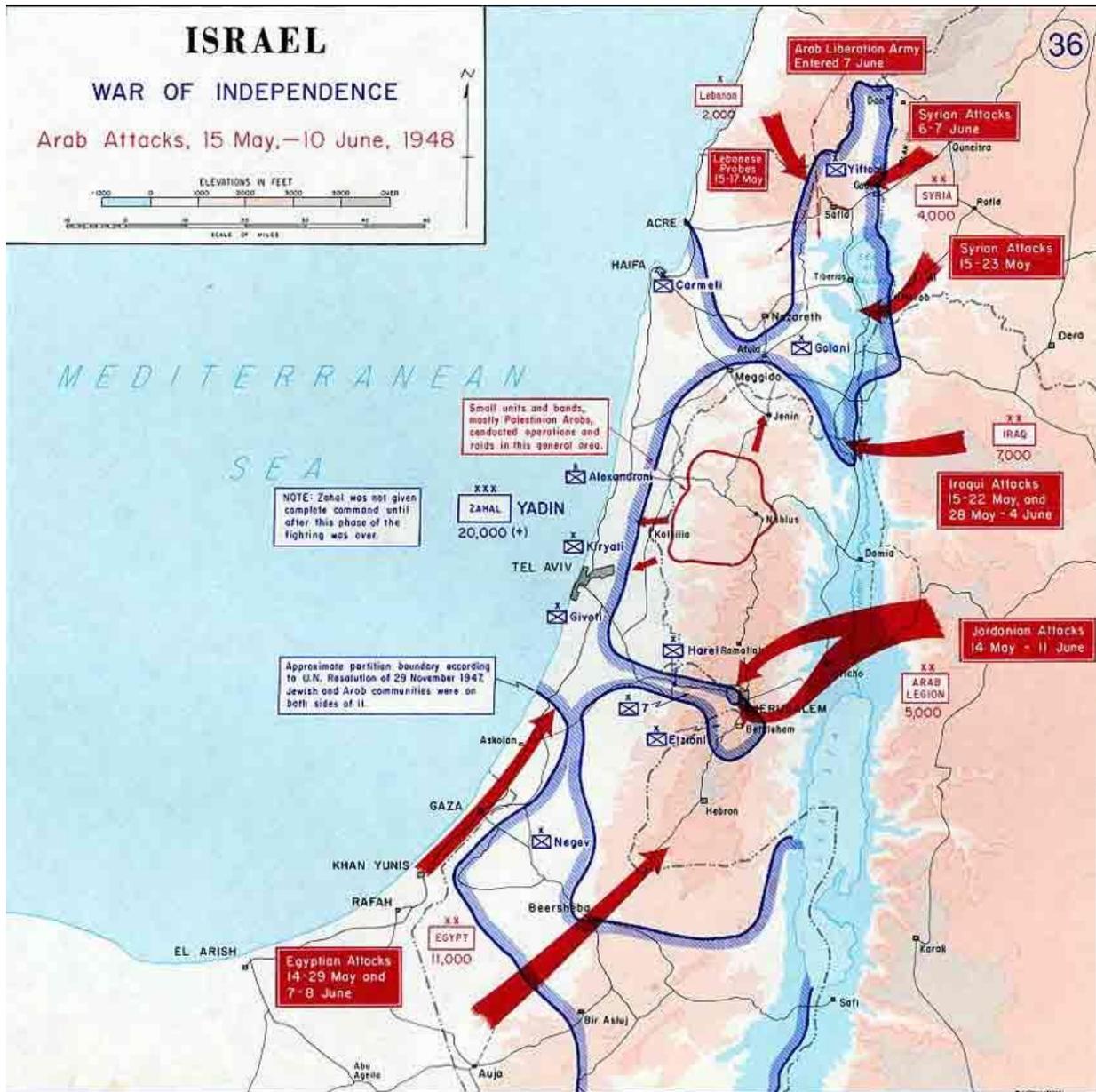


The Jewish State (Israel) is demarcated in the green while the future Arab State (Palestine) is marked in pink.

Jerusalem was to become an internationalized city separated from both countries.

The Jews were allotted less than 25% of the original land given by the Balfour Declaration (1917).

The vast majority of the land given to the Jews in this plan was the barren Negev desert in the south.



Arab Invasion in 1948

Armies from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon all attacked the fledgling Jewish state the day after it declared independence in May 1948.



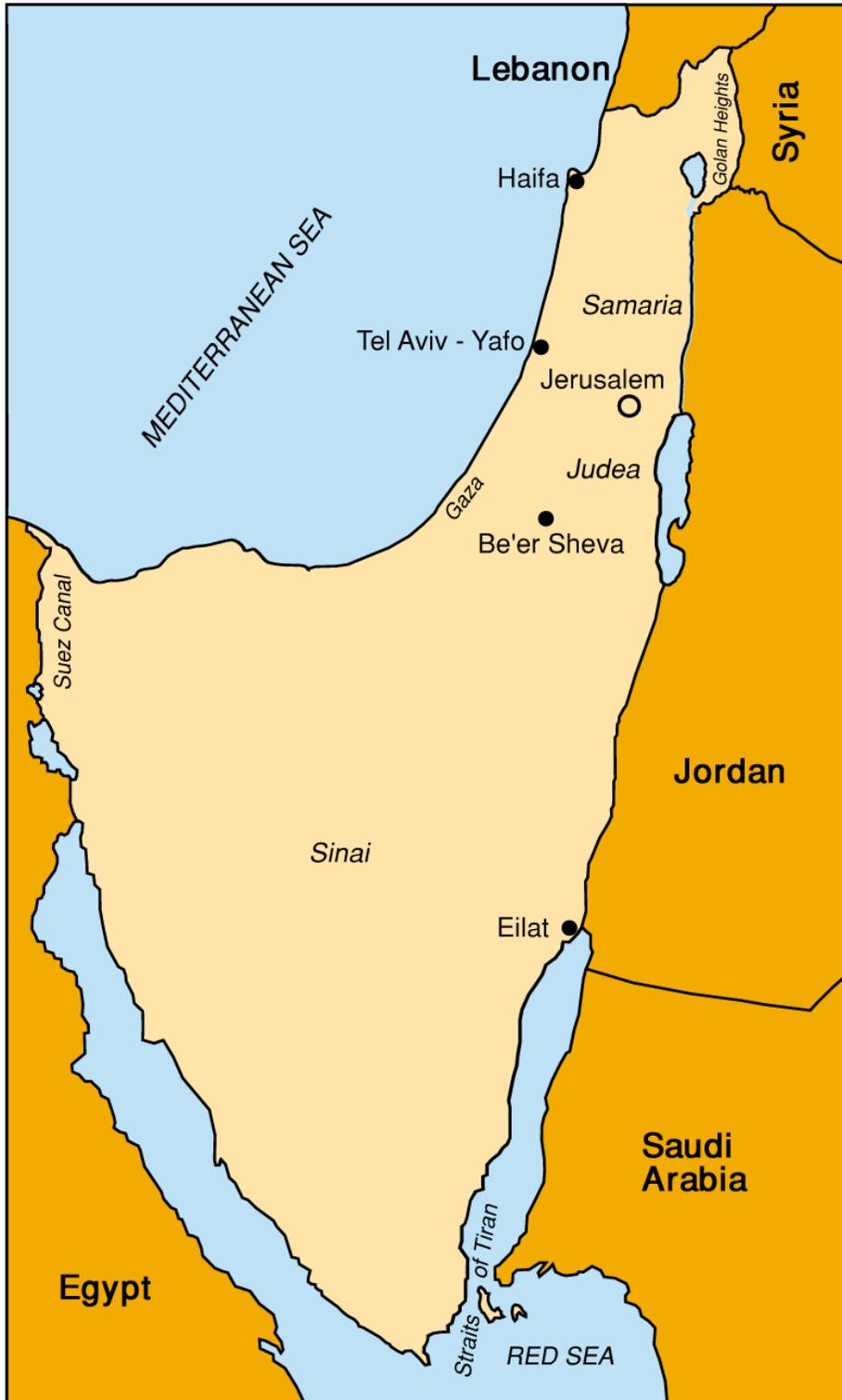
Armistice Lines, 1949

1949 Armistice

Following Israel's victory over the Arab forces in 1948, armistice was forced and Israel actually gained territory from the fighting.

The lines demarcated here are the ones the Palestinians demand Israel return to despite the fact that the Arabs had not even accepted the smaller Jewish state under the Partition plan.

It is from these lines that Israel was also forced to defend itself in 1967 from yet another Arab onslaught.



Cease-Fire Lines After the Six-Day War

Cease-Fire Lines After 1967 War

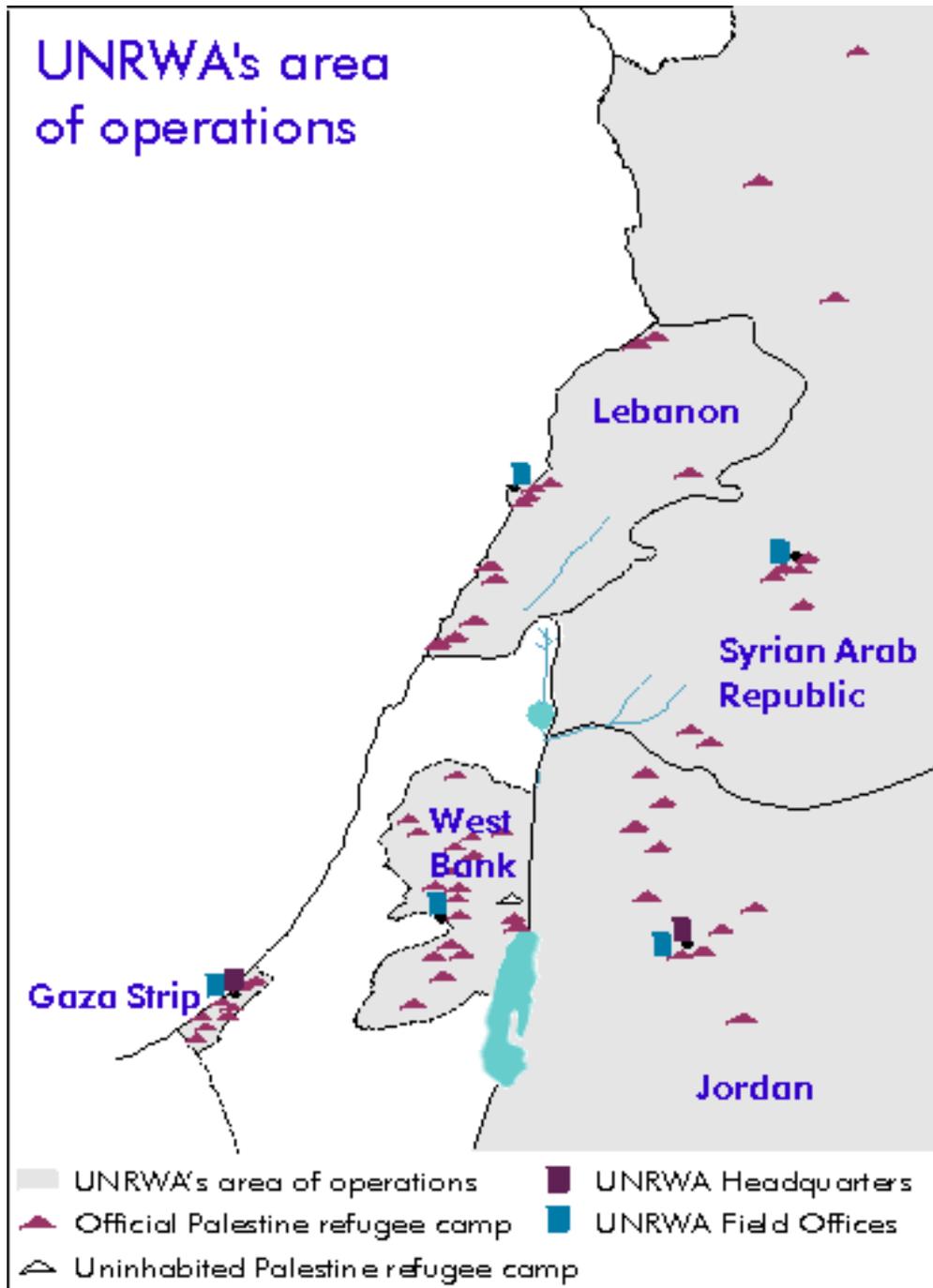
Like in 1948, six Arab armies invaded Israel in 1967.

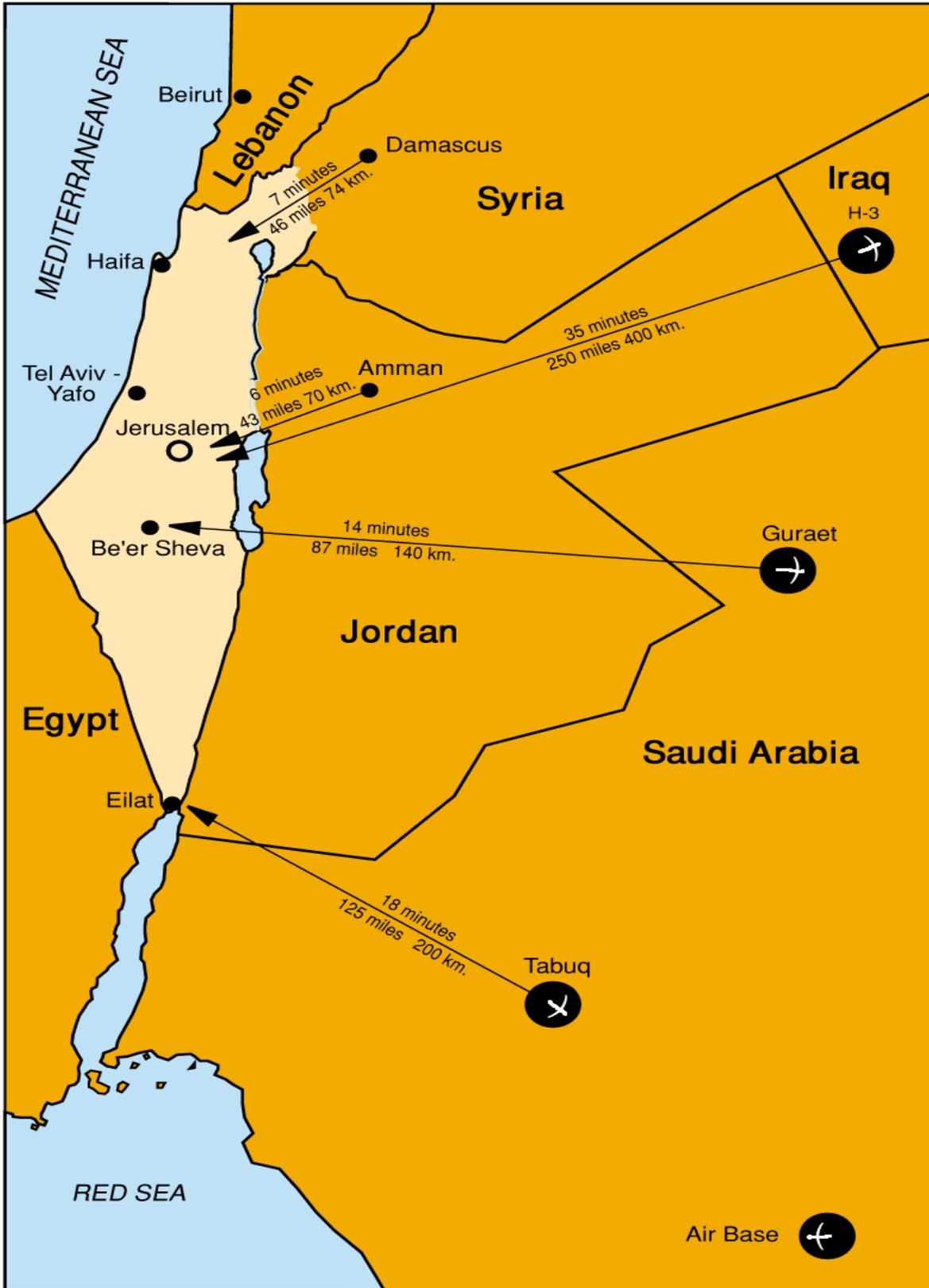
In only six days, the Israeli forces succeeded in defeating all the armies and conquered the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank/Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt.

In the early 1980's, Israel withdrew entirely from Sinai in exchange for peace with Egypt.

In 2005, Israel withdrew entirely from the Gaza Strip in hopes of peace with the Palestinians.

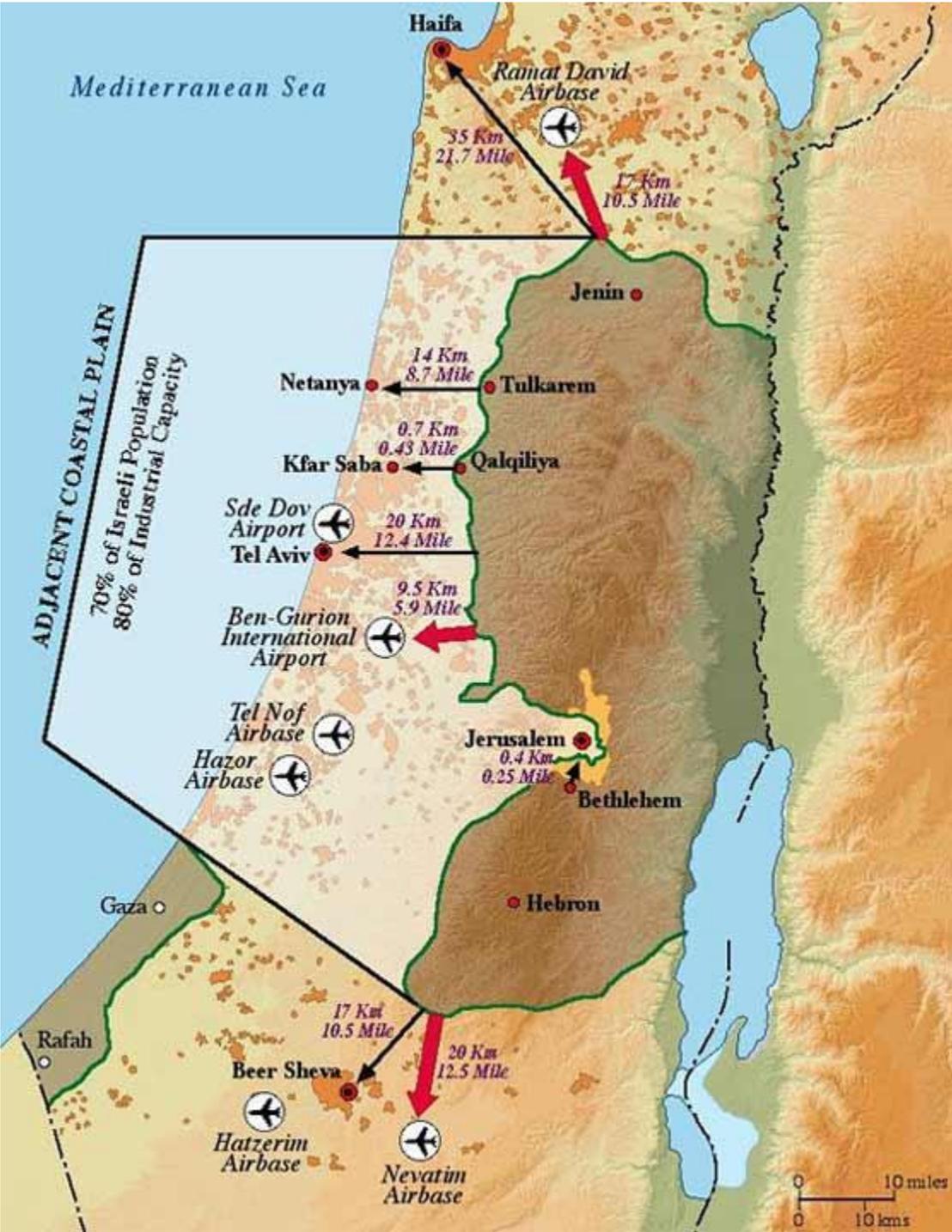
Jordan has removed claims of sovereignty from the West Bank.



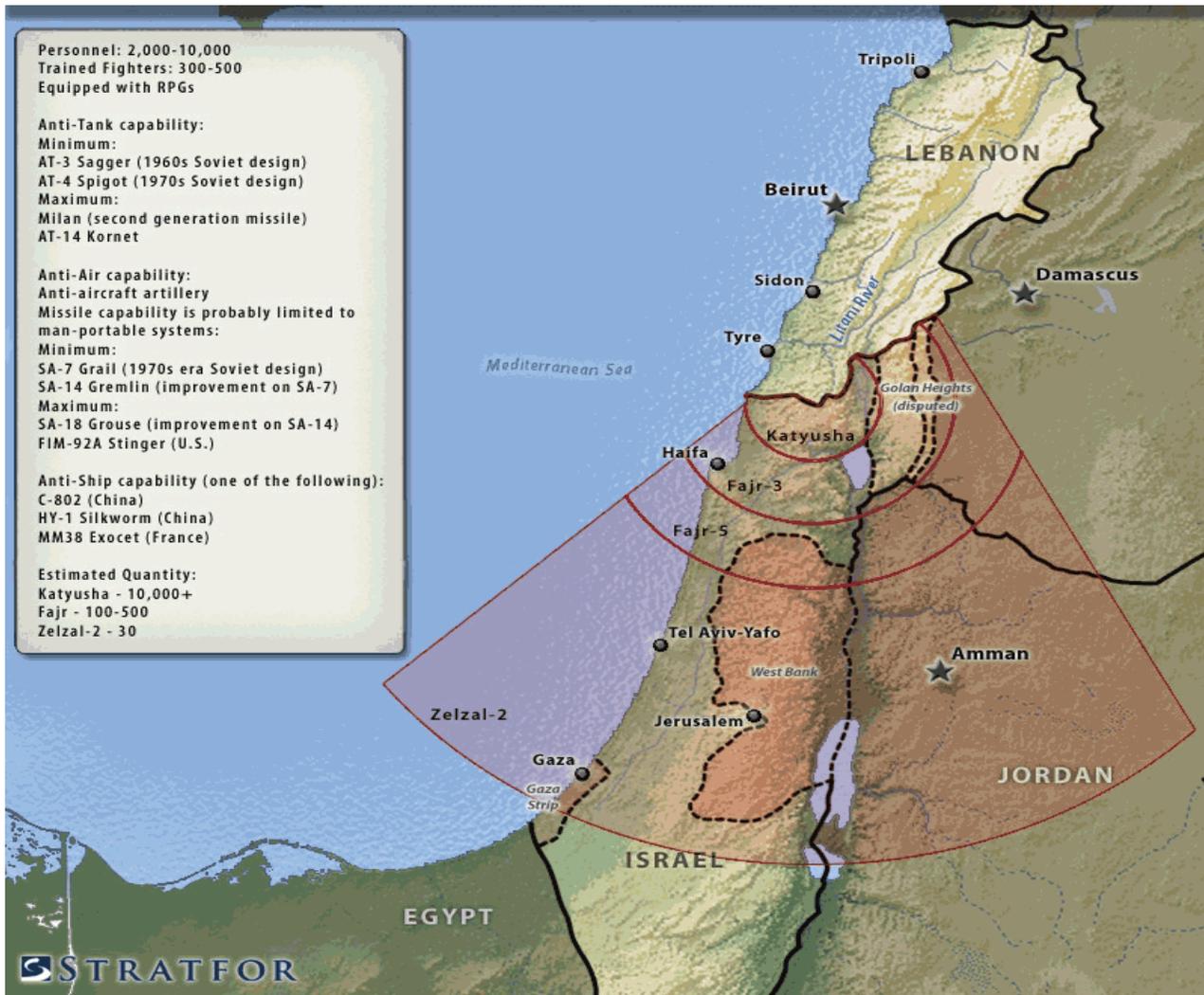


The Aerial Distances and Flight Times to Israel

Israel's Vulnerability from the West Bank



Hezbollah Rocket Capabilities to Attack Israel from Lebanon



KATYUSHA

Artillery rocket used by Hezbollah. The generic term 'Katyusha' is used to describe a number of different rockets, potentially including the: Haseb, Noor, Arash and Shahin-1/2.



Length: 3m
Diameter: 122mm
Range: 12 miles
Warhead: 40 lbs

On the battlefield, Katyusha launchers are mounted on trucks and fired in salvos. To do meaningful damage to a population center, Katyushas would have to be fired in much larger salvos than the small volleys so far reported.

FAJR-3 & FAJR-5

'Dawn' in Arabic. At least two of the rockets that have struck Haifa have been Fajr-3s.



Fajr-3
Length: 5.2m
Diameter: 240mm
Range: 28 miles
Warhead: 100 lbs

Fajr-5
Length: 6.48m
Diameter: 333mm
Range: 45 miles
Warhead: 200 lbs

The Fajr-3 and -5 are essentially very large artillery rockets.

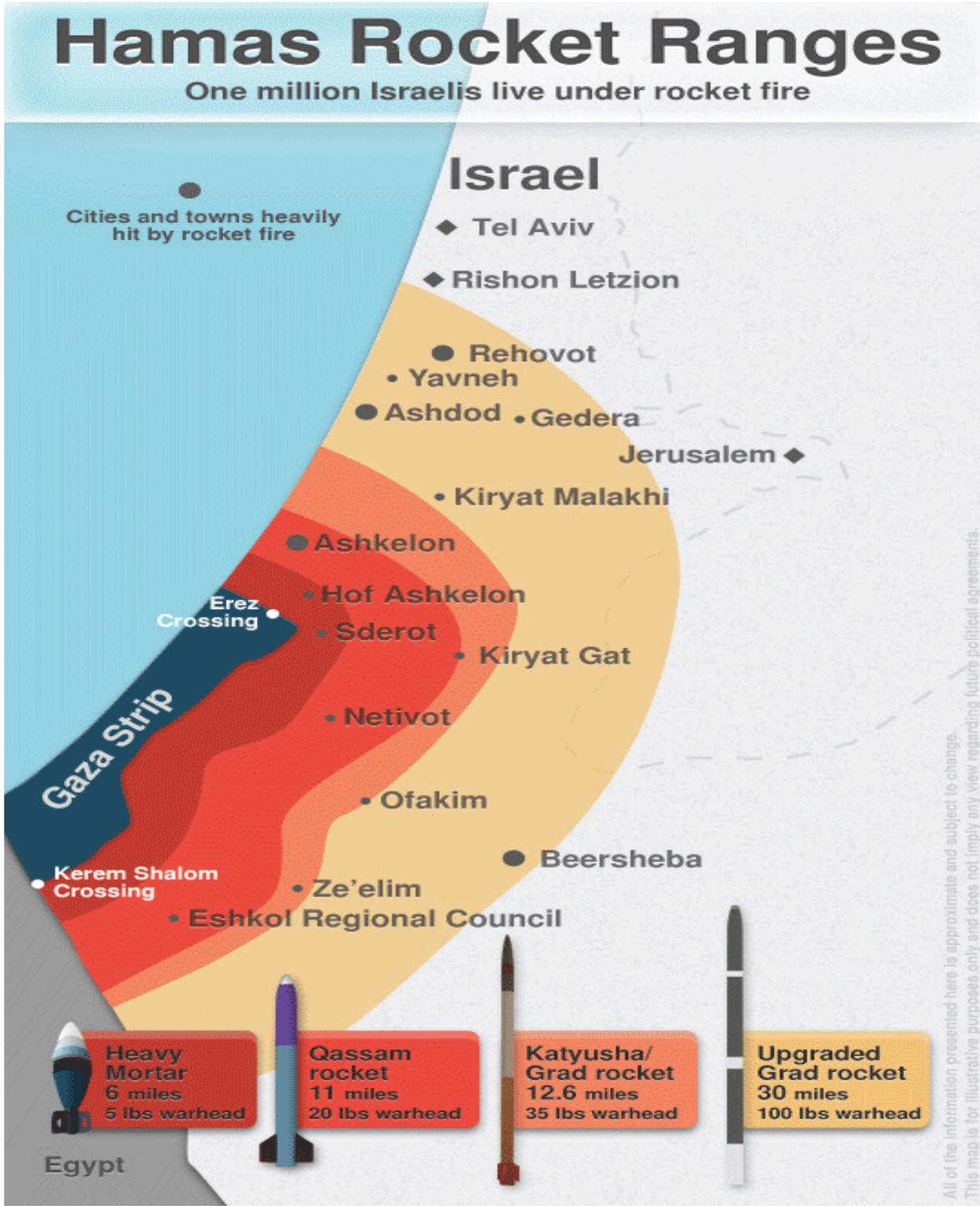
ZELZAL-2



Length: 8.3m
Diameter: 610mm
Range: 130 miles
Warhead: 1300 lbs

The Zelzal is thought to be a derivative of the 1960s era Soviet FROG-7.

Hamas Rocket Capabilities to Attack Israel from the Gaza Strip

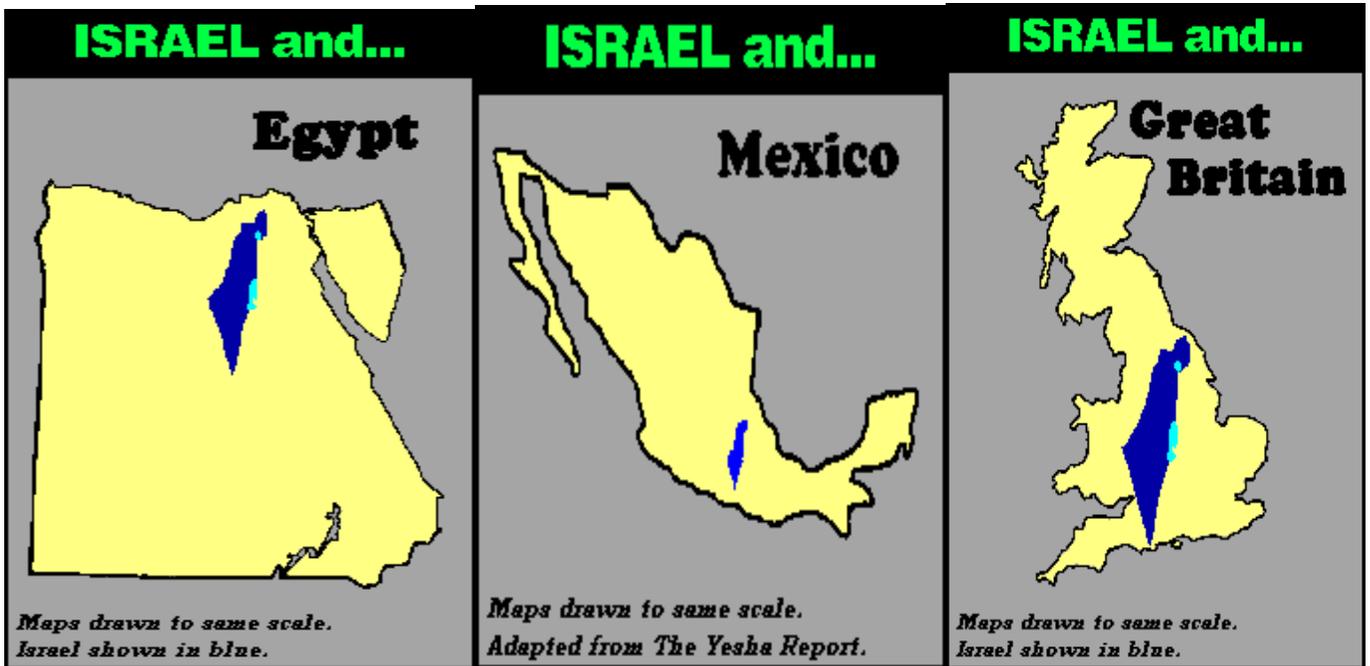
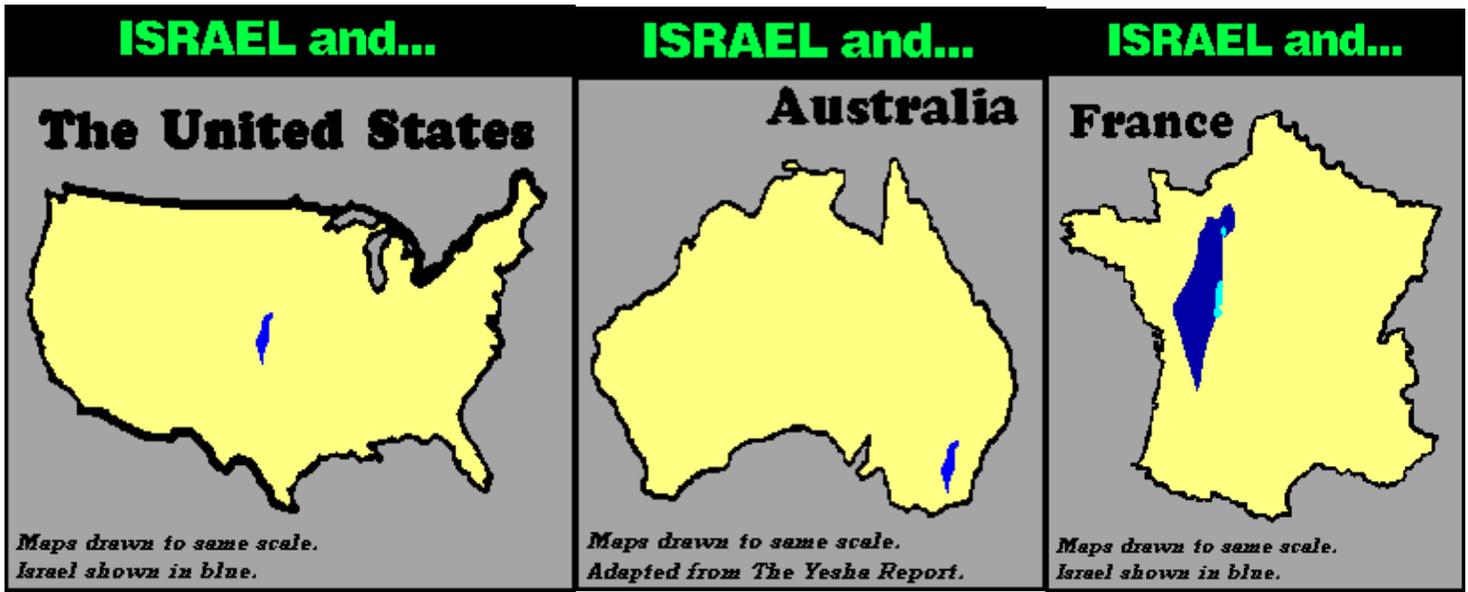


RELATIVE GEOGRAPHICAL SIZE OF ISRAEL

How does Israel compare, in terms of geographical size, to other places around the world?

The maps in this collection are based on material from various sources - some are original scans though most were constructed from digital maps which were then scaled to the correct size and superimposed using computer graphics software. Israel is portrayed including all areas under its jurisdiction.

For more maps of Israel's relative size - [CLICK HERE](#)



American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE)

The AMERICAN-ISRAELI COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISE (AICE) was established in 1993 as a non-profit 501© (3), non-partisan organization to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship by emphasizing the fundamentals of the alliance and the values that our nations share. Tangibly, this means developing social and educational programs in the U.S. based on innovative, successful Israeli models that address similar domestic problems, and bringing novel U.S. programs to Israel. These cooperative activities, which stem from out common values, are called *Shared Value Initiatives*.

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 facilitate the formation of partnerships between Israeli and Americans.
- To publicize joint activities, and the benefits accruing to America and Israel from them.
- To explore issues of common historical significance and interest to the peoples and governments of the United States and Israel.
- To sponsor research, conferences, and documentaries.
- To serve as a clearinghouse on joint U.S.-Israeli activities.
- To provide educational materials on Jewish history and culture.
- To promote scholarship in the field of Israel studies.

AICE also runs the **Jewish Virtual Library**, a comprehensive online Jewish encyclopedia covering everything from anti-Semitism to Zionism. Visit us: www.JewishVirtualLibrary.org

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