

A History of Palestine: 1800 – 2025

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Introduction: The Land and Its People Before Modernity

Palestine, a land steeped in ancient history and religious significance for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, entered the 19th century as a collection of administrative districts within the vast Ottoman Empire. For centuries, it had been part of Ottoman Syria. The population was overwhelmingly Arab – predominantly Muslim, with significant Christian and smaller Jewish communities, the latter concentrated mainly in the four holy cities: Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias. Society was largely agrarian, organized around villages, towns, and kinship networks, with notable urban centers like Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Gaza, and Nablus serving as hubs for trade, administration, and religious life. While the concept of "Palestine" as a distinct political entity was not formalized under the Ottomans, a regional identity linked to the land existed among its Arab inhabitants.

Chapter 1

Palestine Under Late Ottoman Rule (c. 1800 – 1917)

The 19th century witnessed significant changes. Ottoman administrative reforms (Tanzimat) aimed at modernization, centralization, and integration into the global economy impacted Palestine, altering land tenure laws and local governance structures. European powers increased their influence through consulates, religious missions, and economic investments, particularly noticeable in Jerusalem and coastal cities.

Crucially, this period saw the emergence of Zionism in Europe – a political movement advocating for the establishment of a Jewish national home, primarily in Palestine, the historical Land of Israel. Starting in the 1880s, waves of Zionist immigrants (*Aliyot*), mainly from Eastern Europe escaping persecution and inspired by nationalist ideals, began arriving. They established agricultural settlements and sought to build the foundations of a future Jewish society. This immigration, though relatively small initially, introduced new dynamics and laid the groundwork for future conflict over land and resources.

Simultaneously, early forms of Arab nationalism began to stir across the Ottoman Empire, including in Palestine, influenced by interactions with European ideas and a growing awareness of distinct Arab identity. While initially focused on autonomy within or reform of the Ottoman system, these sentiments would grow into demands for independence, particularly as Ottoman authority weakened. Tensions between the established Arab population and the new Zionist settlers occasionally surfaced, often related to land purchases and differing cultural norms, though widespread conflict was not yet the norm.

Chapter 2

World War I and the British Mandate (1917 – 1947)

World War I dramatically reshaped the Middle East. The Ottoman Empire sided with the Central Powers and was defeated. Britain, seeking wartime alliances and post-war influence, made conflicting promises. Through the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence (1915-16), Britain appeared to promise support for Arab independence in Ottoman territories in exchange for an Arab revolt against the Ottomans. However, the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) secretly divided the region into British and French spheres of influence.

Most significantly for Palestine, the Balfour Declaration (1917) stated British support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," while adding the caveat that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities." This declaration, issued partly to gain Jewish support for the Allied war effort, became a cornerstone of Zionist aspirations but was viewed by Palestinian Arabs as a betrayal of their rights and aspirations for self-determination.

Following the war, the League of Nations granted Britain the Mandate for Palestine (formally approved in 1922), tasking it with governing the territory and implementing the Balfour Declaration. [2, 3, 44, 47] The Mandate period (1922-1948) was marked by:

- **Increased Jewish Immigration:** Facilitated by the British under the Mandate terms, Jewish immigration accelerated significantly, especially in the 1930s due to Nazi persecution in Europe. [3, 5] The Jewish population (the *Yishuv*) grew substantially, developing robust political, economic, and social institutions, including paramilitary groups like the *Haganah*. [2, 37]
- **Growing Arab Resistance:** Palestinian Arabs vehemently opposed the Mandate's pro-Zionist tilt and the escalating Jewish immigration, viewing it as colonization of their homeland. They demanded independence and an end to immigration. This resistance manifested in political protests, petitions, and periodic outbreaks of violence, such as the riots in 1921 and 1929 (including the Hebron massacre). [2, 37]
- **The Arab Revolt (1936-1939):** A major Palestinian nationalist uprising against British rule and Jewish immigration erupted. It involved widespread strikes, boycotts, and armed attacks. The British suppressed the revolt harshly, significantly weakening the Palestinian Arab leadership and military capacity. [3]

- **British Policy Shifts:** Facing escalating violence and conflicting obligations, Britain struggled to manage the situation. Commissions of inquiry proposed various solutions, including partition (Peel Commission, 1937) and limitations on Jewish immigration and land purchases (White Paper, 1939). [44] Neither approach resolved the fundamental conflict.
- **Escalating Violence:** Both communities engaged in violence. Zionist paramilitary groups like the *Irgun* and *Lehi* carried out attacks against British targets and Arab civilians. Arab groups also attacked Jewish settlements and British forces. [37, 44]

Exhausted after World War II and unable to reconcile the conflicting national aspirations, Britain decided to relinquish the Mandate and turned the "Palestine problem" over to the newly formed United Nations in 1947. [3, 17]

Chapter 3

The 1947 UN Partition Plan, the 1948 War, and the Nakba (1947 – 1949)

In November 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181(II), recommending the partition of Mandatory Palestine into two independent states: one Arab and one Jewish, with Jerusalem placed under a special international regime (*corpus separatum*). [3, 7, 17, 27, 34] The proposed Jewish state was allocated about 56% of the land, encompassing a majority Jewish population but also a substantial Arab minority. The Arab state was allocated about 43% of the land, with an overwhelmingly Arab population and a small Jewish minority. [7, 27]

The Jewish Agency, representing the *Yishuv*, accepted the plan as a basis for statehood, albeit with dissatisfaction over the borders. [17] The Arab leadership, including the Arab Higher Committee representing Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding Arab states, rejected the plan entirely. [5, 17, 19, 34] They argued it was unjust, violated the principle of self-determination for the Arab majority, and allocated a disproportionate amount of land, including fertile areas, to the Jewish state. [5, 19]

Violence erupted almost immediately following the UN vote, escalating into a full-scale civil war between Jewish and Arab communities within Palestine. [17, 19, 32] Zionist militias launched offensives, sometimes aimed at securing territory allocated to the Jewish state or expanding beyond it, leading to the displacement of Palestinian Arabs. [5, 13] Arab militias and volunteers attacked Jewish settlements and convoys.

On May 14, 1948, as the British Mandate expired, David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel. [3, 17, 37] The following day, armies from neighboring Arab states (Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq) intervened, formally beginning the first Arab-Israeli War. [3, 19, 32]

The war concluded with armistice agreements signed in 1949. [19, 32] Israel emerged victorious, expanding its territory to control about 77% of former Mandatory Palestine. [3] Transjordan annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip. [3] The envisioned independent Palestinian Arab state never materialized.

For Palestinians, this period is known as the **Nakba** (), meaning "Catastrophe." [5, 13, 19] An estimated 750,000 Palestinian Arabs – roughly half the Arab population of Mandatory Palestine – fled or were expelled from their homes in the territory that became Israel. [3, 5, 13, 29] Hundreds of Palestinian villages were depopulated and destroyed. [13, 29] This mass displacement created a lasting Palestinian refugee crisis, with millions scattered across the West Bank, Gaza, neighboring Arab countries, and beyond. [5, 28] The UN General Assembly passed Resolution 194 in December 1948, resolving that refugees wishing to return

to their homes and live at peace should be permitted to do so. [23, 40, 44, 45, 46]

Chapter 4

Displacement, Occupation, and the Rise of the PLO (1949 – 1967)

The aftermath of the 1948 war left the Palestinian people fragmented and stateless. Hundreds of thousands became refugees in camps in the Jordanian-controlled West Bank, the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip, and neighboring Arab states like Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Their lives were marked by dispossession, poverty, and the yearning to return. UN General Assembly Resolution 194(III), adopted in December 1948, affirmed the right of refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace to do so, or to receive compensation if they chose not to return. [23, 40, 44, 45, 46] However, Israel consistently rejected a mass return, citing security concerns and demographic implications. This resolution, while reaffirmed annually by the UN, remained unimplemented, entrenching the refugee crisis.

Palestinians living within the new State of Israel became Israeli citizens but faced military administration until 1966, discrimination, and land confiscations. Those in the West Bank came under Jordanian rule (formally annexed by Jordan in 1950, a move recognized only by Britain and Pakistan), while those in Gaza lived under Egyptian military administration. Neither Jordan nor Egypt fostered Palestinian statehood aspirations; instead, they integrated or administered the territories according to their own national interests.

Despite the fragmentation, Palestinian national identity solidified in exile and under foreign rule. Disillusionment with existing Arab leadership grew, particularly after the Arab defeat in 1948. New, independent Palestinian political and guerrilla movements began to emerge, often operating underground. The most significant of these was *Fatah*, founded in the late 1950s by figures including Yasser Arafat.

In 1964, under the auspices of the Arab League (largely initiated by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser), the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established in Jerusalem. [4, 10, 19, 20, 24] Initially intended by Arab states to manage and channel Palestinian nationalism, the PLO aimed to represent the Palestinian people and work towards the "liberation of Palestine," which at the time meant the destruction of Israel and the establishment of an Arab state over the entirety of former Mandatory Palestine. [4, 10, 24]

Chapter 5

The 1967 War (Naksa) and Extended Occupation (1967 – 1987)

Growing regional tensions, including border skirmishes (especially between Israel and Syria), Egypt's remilitarization of the Sinai and closure of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, and mutual defense pacts among Arab states, culminated in the Six-Day War in June 1967. [3, 11, 18, 34, 47, 49] Launching preemptive air strikes, Israel achieved a swift and decisive victory against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. [11, 34, 47]

The war's outcome fundamentally altered the conflict's dynamics:

- **Israeli Occupation:** Israel captured and occupied the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, and the Golan Heights from Syria. [11, 18, 34, 47, 49] This brought the entire area of former Mandatory Palestine under Israeli control, along with over a million more Palestinians. [18, 34] For Palestinians, this second major displacement and the loss of the remaining Palestinian territories is known as the **Naksa** (), meaning "setback" or "defeat." [18, 49] Around 300,000 more Palestinians fled or were expelled, many becoming refugees for a second time. [18, 47]
- **UN Security Council Resolution 242:** Adopted in November 1967, this landmark resolution emphasized the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war" and called for the "withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict." [11, 17, 21, 30, 36, 47, 48] It also called for the termination of belligerency and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every state in the area, allowing them to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries. [11, 17, 21] Resolution 242 became a cornerstone for future peace diplomacy (often termed the "land for peace" formula), although interpretations differed, particularly regarding the extent of withdrawal ("territories" vs. "the territories"). [17, 30, 36] It notably referred to Palestinians only in the context of achieving a "just settlement of the refugee problem." [30, 36]
- **Israeli Settlements:** Shortly after the war, Israel began establishing Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, including the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. [1, 18] These settlements, considered illegal under international law by most of the international community, grew significantly over the following decades and became a major obstacle to peace efforts. [26] Israel annexed East Jerusalem shortly after the war, a move not recognized internationally. [18, 49]

- **Rise of the PLO:** The defeat of the Arab armies boosted the influence of independent Palestinian guerrilla organizations like *Fatah* within the PLO. In 1969, Yasser Arafat became the Chairman of the PLO, transforming it from an Arab state-controlled body into an independent Palestinian nationalist umbrella organization dominated by Fatah and committed to armed struggle to liberate Palestine. [10, 19, 20]

Chapter 6

Armed Struggle, International Recognition, and the First Intifada (1967 – 1993)

The PLO, now based mainly in Jordan, stepped up cross-border attacks against Israel. Tensions with the Jordanian government escalated, leading to fierce clashes in 1970-71 known as "Black September," which resulted in the PLO's expulsion from Jordan. [4, 10] The PLO leadership and fighters relocated to Lebanon, establishing a state-within-a-state in the south and Beirut. [4, 10]

From Lebanon, the PLO continued attacks on Israel, leading to Israeli reprisals and interventions in Lebanon, including a major invasion in 1982 aimed at destroying the PLO infrastructure. [1, 10] The 1982 invasion forced the PLO leadership to relocate again, this time to Tunis. [10, 24]

Despite military setbacks, the PLO gained significant international standing. In 1974, the Arab League recognized the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," and the UN General Assembly granted the PLO observer status, with Arafat famously addressing the assembly. [4, 10] Over time, the PLO began to moderate its initial stance, implicitly signaling a willingness to accept a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, particularly after the Palestinian National Council meeting in Algiers in 1988, where it accepted UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and declared a Palestinian state. [4, 24, 30]

Life under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza was characterized by military administration, restrictions on movement and economic activity, land confiscations, and settlement expansion. Palestinian frustration simmered for two decades.

In December 1987, the **First Intifada** (uprising) erupted spontaneously in the Gaza Strip and quickly spread to the West Bank. [1, 12, 16, 37, 38] Triggered by a traffic incident involving an Israeli army truck and Palestinian workers, it grew into a widespread popular movement characterized initially by mass protests, civil disobedience (strikes, tax boycotts), and stone-throwing by youths, though it later involved more violent attacks. [1, 12, 38] The Intifada was largely organized by local committees operating under the umbrella of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), linked to the PLO factions. [16] A new Islamist movement, Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement), also emerged during this period, challenging the secular PLO and advocating for armed struggle based on Islamic principles. [12, 16]

Israel responded with harsh measures, including curfews, mass arrests, deportations, house demolitions, and lethal force ("force, might, and beatings"). [1, 12, 38] The Intifada lasted until 1993, resulting in the

deaths of over 1,000 Palestinians and around 160 Israelis. [1, 38] The uprising significantly altered perceptions, demonstrating the costs of the occupation for Israel and highlighting Palestinian agency, ultimately paving the way for direct negotiations. [1, 12]

Chapter 7

The Oslo Accords, Hope, and Disillusionment (1993 – 2000)

The end of the Cold War, the 1991 Gulf War (which weakened the PLO due to its perceived support for Iraq), and the pressures of the First Intifada created a new diplomatic landscape. [12] Following initial talks in Madrid in 1991, secret negotiations between Israel and the PLO, facilitated by Norway, led to a breakthrough. [3, 12, 37]

In September 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat signed the Declaration of Principles (Oslo I Accord) on the White House lawn. [3, 4, 12, 37] This involved mutual recognition: the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist, renounced terrorism, and committed to resolving the conflict through negotiations; Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. [4, 24]

The Oslo Accords established a framework for a transitional period of Palestinian self-government. Key elements included:

- **Establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA):** Created in 1994, the PA was granted limited autonomy in parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho initially, with subsequent agreements (like Oslo II in 1995) expanding its administrative control. [3, 10, 37] The West Bank was divided into Areas A (full PA civil and security control), B (PA civil control, joint Israeli-PA security control), and C (full Israeli civil and security control, comprising over 60% of the West Bank).
- **Withdrawal of Israeli Forces:** Phased withdrawals from Palestinian population centers were mandated. [1, 12]
- **Negotiations on Final Status Issues:** Crucial issues like Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, and security arrangements were deferred to final status negotiations, intended to conclude within five years. [1]

The Oslo process generated considerable hope initially. Arafat returned from exile to Gaza in 1994. [10] Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1994. [3, 37] However, the process faced immense challenges:

- **Opposition and Violence:** Radical groups on both sides sought to derail the process. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad carried out suicide bombings against Israeli civilians. [39] Israeli extremists

opposed withdrawal; in November 1995, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a right-wing Israeli extremist opposed to the Accords. [37]

- **Continued Settlement Expansion:** Despite the peace process, Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continued, undermining Palestinian trust. [1]
- **Failure to Reach Final Status Agreement:** Negotiations faltered, culminating in the failed Camp David Summit in July 2000, where Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat could not bridge the gaps on core issues, particularly Jerusalem and refugees. [3]

Chapter 8

The Second Intifada and Growing Divisions (2000 – 2007)

In September 2000, following the collapse of the Camp David talks and a controversial visit by then-Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif complex in Jerusalem, the **Second Intifada** (also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada) erupted. [1, 5, 9, 37, 39, 43]

This uprising was significantly more violent than the first. [1, 5, 32, 43] It involved widespread Palestinian demonstrations met by heavy Israeli military force, gun battles between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants, and a devastating wave of Palestinian suicide bombings targeting Israeli civilians inside cities and on buses, carried out primarily by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the *Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades* (linked to Fatah). [5, 9, 32, 39] Israel responded with large-scale military operations, including incursions into PA-controlled areas (like Operation Defensive Shield in 2002), targeted killings of militant leaders, widespread arrests, and tightened closures. [1, 5, 39]

Key developments during this period:

- **High Casualties:** The conflict resulted in the deaths of roughly 1,000 Israelis and 3,000-5,000 Palestinians over approximately five years. [1, 39, 43]
- **Construction of the West Bank Barrier:** Citing security needs and the suicide bombings, Israel began constructing a separation barrier in 2002, consisting largely of fences but also high concrete walls in urban areas. [2, 13, 25, 28, 42, 43] Running mostly inside the West Bank rather than along the 1949 Armistice Line (Green Line), the barrier was condemned by Palestinians as a land grab that annexed territory, restricted movement, and isolated communities. [2, 13, 25, 42] The International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion in 2004 deeming the barrier's route contrary to international law. [25]
- **Arafat's Death and Abbas's Election:** Yasser Arafat died in November 2004. Mahmoud Abbas (*Abu Mazen*) was elected President of the PA in January 2005. [15]
- **End of the Intifada:** Violence gradually subsided, and the Intifada is generally considered to have ended around the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit in February 2005, where Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon declared a mutual cessation of violence. [1, 5, 39]

- **Israeli Disengagement from Gaza (2005):** In August 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew its settlers and military forces from the Gaza Strip (and four small settlements in the northern West Bank). [3, 15, 37, 41] While presented as a move towards peace, it was done without coordination with the PA and left Gaza isolated.

Chapter 9

The Gaza Split, Recurring Conflicts, and Political Stagnation (2007 – 2023)

The post-Intifada period saw a deepening internal Palestinian rift and cycles of conflict centered on Gaza:

- **Hamas Election Victory (2006):** In January 2006, Hamas won a surprise victory in the Palestinian legislative elections, defeating the long-dominant Fatah. [3, 15, 33, 35] This led to international sanctions and boycotts against the Hamas-led government, as Hamas did not meet Quartet conditions (recognize Israel, renounce violence, accept previous agreements). [33]
- **Fatah-Hamas Conflict and Gaza Takeover (2007):** Tensions between Fatah and Hamas, fueled by power struggles and external pressures, escalated into violent clashes. [15, 27, 31, 33, 35] In June 2007, Hamas fighters forcibly took control of the Gaza Strip, ousting Fatah-aligned PA forces. [15, 27, 31, 33, 35] This resulted in a de facto political and administrative split: Hamas governing Gaza, and the Fatah-led PA governing parts of the West Bank under Israeli occupation. [15, 27, 31, 35] Numerous reconciliation attempts between the factions failed to achieve lasting unity. [15, 27]
- **Gaza Blockade:** Following the Hamas takeover, Israel (along with Egypt) imposed a strict land, air, and sea blockade on the Gaza Strip, severely restricting the movement of people and goods, crippling the economy, and contributing to a protracted humanitarian crisis. [15, 26]
- **Recurring Gaza-Israel Conflicts:** The blockade and Hamas rule were punctuated by several major rounds of hostilities between Israel and Hamas (and other Gaza-based militant groups), often triggered by rocket fire from Gaza into Israel and Israeli military operations in Gaza. Significant conflicts occurred in 2008-2009 (*Operation Cast Lead*), 2012 (*Operation Pillar of Defense*), 2014 (*Operation Protective Edge*), and May 2021. [3, 15, 29, 37, 41] These conflicts caused widespread destruction and loss of life, predominantly among Palestinians in Gaza. [15, 29, 37, 41]
- **Stalled Peace Process:** Meaningful negotiations between Israel and the PA remained largely frozen. Settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continued. US-led initiatives, like the Trump administration's "Peace to Prosperity" plan (2020), were rejected by Palestinians. [3, 37] The Abraham Accords (2020) saw normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab states (UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco), bypassing the Palestinian issue and causing Palestinian dismay. [3, 37]

Chapter 10

The October 7th Attack and the Gaza War (2023 – 2025)

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched an unprecedented, large-scale surprise attack on southern Israel from Gaza. Militants breached the border fence, attacking military bases, towns, and a music festival. According to Israeli authorities, approximately 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed, and around 240-250 people were taken hostage into Gaza. [3, 7, 8, 26, 41] Hamas cited the ongoing occupation, the Gaza blockade, settlement expansion, and tensions around Al-Aqsa Mosque as justification. [3]

Israel responded by declaring war on Hamas, launching an intensive aerial bombardment campaign followed by a ground invasion of the Gaza Strip, aiming to dismantle Hamas's military and governing capabilities and secure the return of the hostages. [3, 8] The ensuing conflict became the deadliest and most destructive episode in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's history.

Key developments and the situation as of early 2025:

- **Devastating Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza:** The Israeli military campaign resulted in catastrophic destruction across Gaza. As of late March 2025, Palestinian health authorities reported over 50,000 Palestinians killed, a significant portion being women and children, and over 113,000 injured. [6, 14] Large parts of Gaza were rendered uninhabitable, infrastructure was decimated, and the vast majority of the population (around 1.9 million out of 2.1-2.3 million) was internally displaced, often multiple times, facing extreme shortages of food, water, shelter, fuel, and medical care. [6, 7, 14, 22, 26] International organizations warned of famine and disease outbreaks. [7, 14, 22] Aid delivery was severely hampered by hostilities, Israeli restrictions, and logistical challenges. [6, 7, 14]
- **Ceasefires and Hostage Negotiations:** Several temporary ceasefires occurred, notably one in late 2023/early 2024 that facilitated some hostage/prisoner exchanges and allowed limited aid entry. [8] However, achieving a sustainable ceasefire proved difficult. Renewed hostilities erupted in March 2025 following a collapse of a ceasefire agreement reached in January 2025, leading to further casualties and a halt in aid deliveries for a period. [6, 7, 8, 14] Negotiations involving Qatar, Egypt, and the US continued intermittently, focusing on hostage releases, Palestinian prisoner releases, and a lasting ceasefire, but faced major obstacles.
- **West Bank Violence:** Violence surged in the occupied West Bank, with increased Israeli military raids, settler attacks on Palestinians, Palestinian attacks on Israelis, and hundreds of Palestinians killed

since October 7, 2023. [6, 26]

- **Regional Escalation:** The conflict sparked broader regional tensions, including clashes between Israel and Hezbollah along the Lebanon border, attacks on shipping by Yemen's Houthi rebels, and direct confrontations between Israel and Iran. [8]
- **International Reactions and Legal Action:** The war prompted widespread international condemnation of the scale of civilian casualties and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. South Africa initiated proceedings against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), alleging violations of the Genocide Convention; the ICJ issued provisional measures ordering Israel to prevent genocidal acts and facilitate humanitarian aid. The International Criminal Court (ICC) continued its investigation into alleged war crimes by both sides.

Conclusion: An Unresolved Conflict (Early 2025)

As of early 2025, the situation remains exceptionally volatile. Gaza faces a monumental humanitarian catastrophe and an uncertain future, with immense challenges of reconstruction and governance. The West Bank continues under occupation, with escalating violence and ongoing settlement activity. The Palestinian political landscape remains divided. For Israelis, the trauma of October 7th and the ongoing hostage crisis dominate concerns, alongside regional threats.

The prospects for a just and lasting peace based on a two-state solution appear more distant than ever. The core issues – occupation, settlements, the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, security for both peoples, and Palestinian self-determination – remain unresolved, embedded in layers of history, trauma, and competing narratives. The events of 2023-2025 have added another tragic and complex chapter to the long story of Palestine, leaving the future deeply uncertain.