

# From Past to Present: A Century of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

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## **From Past to Present: A Century of the Israel-Palestine Conflict**

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a long-standing and complex issue that emerged in the early 20th century as Ottoman rule in the region came to an end. This area, now encompassing present-day Israel and Palestine, remained under Ottoman Turkish control for nearly four centuries, from the early 16th century until the empire's dissolution following World War I. While the Ottoman Empire typically provided stability, it also saw periods of peaceful coexistence among its diverse religious and ethnic communities.

The challenges in this region extend beyond political complexities, encompassing theological and historical aspects. This region, with Jerusalem as its focal point, is considered sacred by the Abrahamic faiths, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Within this revered landscape, one can find essential religious sites for adherents of these three faiths often referred to as "holy ground."

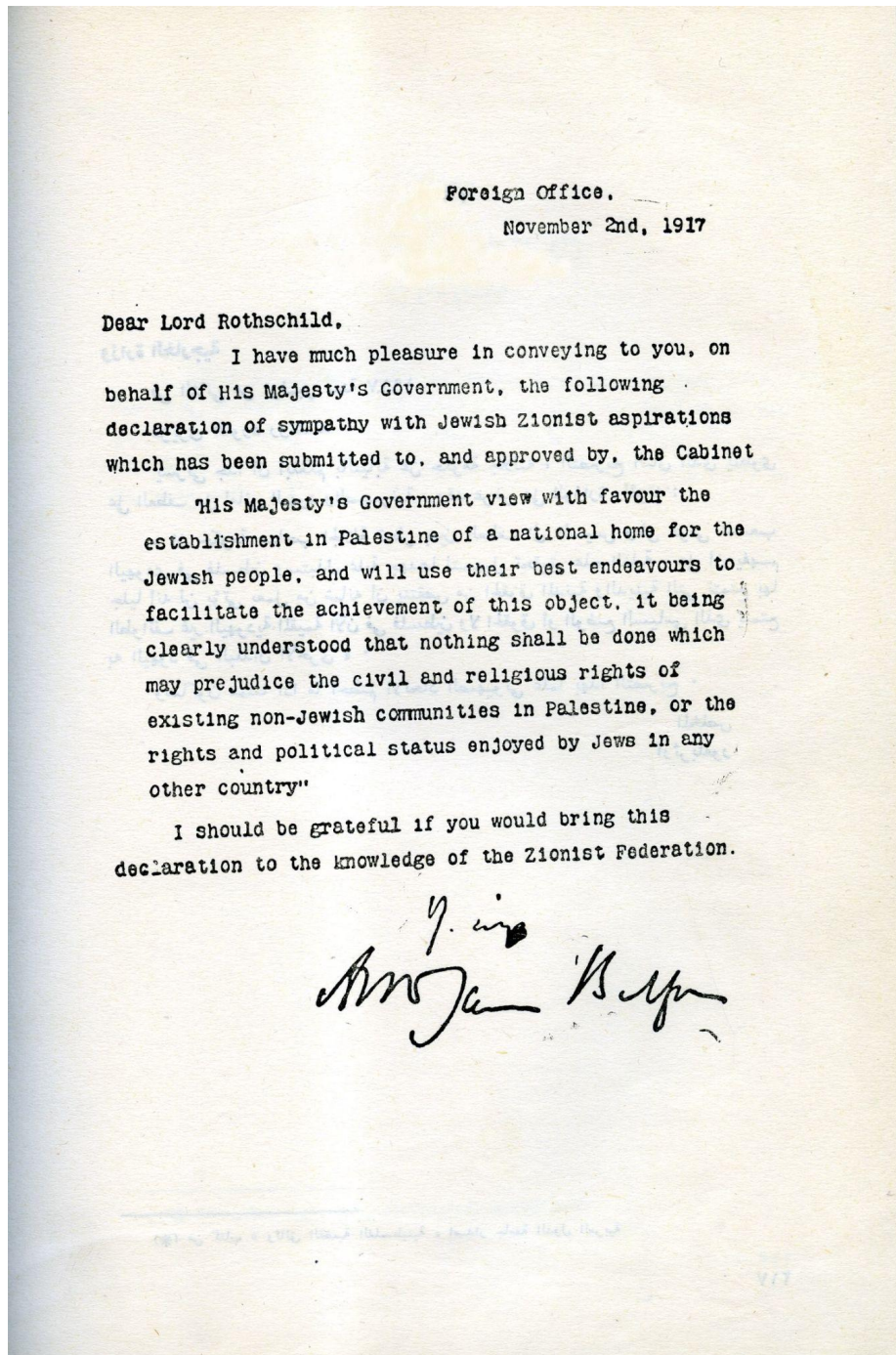
However, since the signing of the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916, a secret pact between Britain and France to define their areas of influence in the Middle East following World War I, the entire Middle East has seen a series of complex events and changes. The Sykes-Picot agreement resulted in the division of territories formerly under Ottoman rule and often these divisions occurred without taking into account the ethnic and religious sensitivities of the local populations. Syria and Lebanon came under French control, while Iraq and Palestine were placed under British administration.

While it's challenging to provide a comprehensive overview of the Israel-Palestine conflict in a single response, we can highlight significant developments during this period. The conflict endures, characterized by ongoing violence, expansion of settlements, and a lack of substantial progress toward a two-state solution. International efforts persist in the pursuit of a peaceful resolution, yet the core issues of the conflict remain unresolved, for nearly a century.

**(1917): Zionism and Balfour Declaration:** The concept of a Jewish state was officially documented in the Balfour Declaration during World War I. This declaration, issued on November 2, 1917, by British Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur James Balfour, expressed support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. It was addressed to Lord Rothschild, a prominent British banker and a well-known supporter of the Zionist movement.

Zionism, a political and ideological movement that emerged in the late 19th century, advocated for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine during the Ottoman Empire. Theodor Herzl, often hailed as the father of modern political Zionism, outlined this vision in his 1896 book, "The Jewish State" (published in German as "Der Judenstaat"). Herzl's ideas played a pivotal role in the eventual creation of modern Israel. In addition to Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, who played a vital role in securing the Balfour Declaration and later became Israel's first

President, was a key figure. The Balfour Declaration marked a significant milestone in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, setting the stage for subsequent tensions and competing claims to the land. It's important to acknowledge the diverse range of Jewish opinions on Zionism.



Source: Déclaration Balfour de 1917

<https://www.palquest.org/en/historictext/6705/balfour-declaration>

**In 1918**, following the conclusion of World War I and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the British government made promises not only to the Jewish population but also to the Arab communities. As part of the post-war settlement and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the sons of Hussein, a prominent Arab leader, were appointed as the monarchs of Transjordan (later Jordan), Syria, and Iraq with the consent and support of the British government. This decision was influenced by the aspirations of many Arab leaders, including Sharif Hussein, who played a pivotal role in the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire. They sought greater autonomy and self-determination within their Arab territories and aimed to establish a distinct political and national identity. This desire for self-determination led them to collaborate with the British in the post-war period.

**(1922-1948): British Mandate for Palestine**

On July 24, 1922, the League of Nations which later became the United Nations, granted Britain a mandate to oversee the administration of Palestine. Britain indicated its interest in Zionism and articulated its intention to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish state. The British Mandate for Palestine (until 1948) had been a significant escalation in tensions between Jewish and Arab communities, largely due to the increased Jewish immigration.

From 1922 to 1947, a significant influx of Jewish immigrants made their way to the region, mainly driven by the rise of fascism in Europe. These immigrants originated from diverse locations, including the Soviet Union, Poland, the Baltic countries, and, during the 1930s, from Germany. Notably, a substantial number of Jewish immigrants also arrived from Iraq and Yemen during this period. The questions of land ownership and immigration played a pivotal role in escalating tensions during the mandate period.

**(1947)**: The United Nations put forward a partition plan for Palestine, suggesting the creation of distinct Jewish and Arab states. This proposal gained approval from Jewish leaders but faced rejection from Arab leaders, ultimately resulting in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

**(1948)**: The Arab-Israeli War began on May 15, when Israel declared its independence as a Jewish state upon the British withdrawal from Palestine. In response, several Arab nations, including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Lebanon, declared war on Israel, with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria launching invasions into Israeli territory.

This marked the onset of a prolonged conflict between Israel and its neighboring Arab states. The war ultimately led to the establishment of the State of Israel and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, an event they refer to as the Nakba, meaning "catastrophe."

**(1949):** Israel and several Arab states reached an armistice agreement. Israel had gained approximately 50% more land than what had initially been allocated to it by the UN partition plan.

**(1956):** Israel, along with Britain and France, launched an invasion of Egypt, with Israel occupying the Sinai Peninsula. Under pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union, they were ultimately compelled to withdraw.

**(1964):** The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was established in Cairo with the support of the Arab League. The PLO articulated its objective as the use of armed struggle to bring about the destruction of Israel and the establishment of an "independent Palestinian state" which aimed from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

**(1967): The Six-Day War:** It took place when Israel launched a preemptive attack against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Israel successfully gained control of the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank along with East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. Following the conclusion of this conflict, Israel initiated a settlement program in the territories it had captured. The Six-Day War of 1967 significantly reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the region and marked the beginning of Israeli settlement expansion in these newly occupied areas.

**(1968-1970):** The conflict continued between Israel and Egypt following the Six-Day War. It included irregular fighting in the Sinai Peninsula. The war ended in a ceasefire.

**(1969):** Yasser Arafat was named the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). He served as the leader of the PLO for 25 years and became one of the most prominent figures in the Palestinian struggle.

**(1972):** On September 5th, during the Munich Olympics, the Palestinian group Black September carried out an attack that resulted in the deaths of eleven members of the Israeli Olympic team and one German police officer.

**(1973):** On October 6th, the Yom Kippur War, also known as the October War, commenced with a surprise attack on the Jewish Day of Atonement. Egypt and Syria managed to reclaim territories in Sinai and the Golan Heights, which had been lost during the Six-Day War. Nevertheless, despite their initial gains, they were eventually compelled to retreat due to Israeli military counteractions.

**(1979):** The return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt marked a historic milestone, a result of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty that emerged from the Camp David Accords. These crucial negotiations were mediated by the President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, and Egypt's President at the time, Anwar Sadat, played an instrumental role.

The treaty's terms encompassed Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and laid the groundwork for normalizing diplomatic relations between Egypt and Israel. Consequently, Egypt officially recognized Israel as a legitimate, sovereign state.

Egypt's decision to recognize Israel, the first Arab nation to do so, had a big impact on the Arab world. As a result of this, Egypt's membership in the Arab League was suspended due to its peace agreement with Israel. This significant change also led to the Arab League moving its headquarters to Tunis.

**(1981):** On October 6, Anwar Sadat was assassinated by members of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization during a military parade. The assassination was in retaliation for Sadat's recognition of Israel.

**(1982):** Israel initiated an invasion of Lebanon, citing the removal of PLO fighters as its primary objective due to perceived threats along its border. This led to the PLO relocating to Tunis after being expelled from Lebanon during a six-month invasion, although its activities within Lebanon were notably reduced compared to the pre-1982 era. By August 1983, the Israeli army had withdrawn from the majority of Lebanese territory, maintaining only a self-declared "security zone" in the southern region of the country.

**(1987):** A significant turning point occurred with the outbreak of the first Intifada, a grassroots Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. "Intifada" is an Arabic term that translates to "uprising" or "shaking off" in English. Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip initiated a series of general strikes, riots, and campaigns of civil disobedience. In response, the Israeli army used tear gas, plastic bullets, and live rounds to control the unrest.

**(1990s):** The Oslo Peace Accords. It marked a series of pivotal agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO):

*In 1993, a significant step toward peace occurred when the PLO recognized Israel, and, in return, Israel acknowledged the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people*

*-The Interim Self-Government Agreements of 1993 established the foundation for Palestinian self-rule in certain areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a five-year interim period.*

*-In 1995, a territorial division plan was implemented in the West Bank, which divided the region into Areas A, B, and C, each signifying varying degrees of Palestinian and Israeli control.*

*-Regarding security arrangements, the accords detailed essential security cooperation between both parties.*

*However, despite these significant steps, the Oslo process ultimately did not culminate in a comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*



**(1995):** On November 4, Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by Yigal Amir, an Israeli student opposing the Middle East peace plan.

**(2004):** The Second Intifada, began when Palestinians rioted after a visit by Israel's Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem—the period between 2004 and 2005 witnessed a surge in violence, including suicide bombings and Israeli military responses, further straining Israeli-Palestinian relations.

On July 9, 2004, the International Court of Justice ruled that the Israeli separation barrier violated international law and must be removed.

**(2005):** The Gaza Disengagement Plan involved Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip while maintaining control over its borders and access points. This withdrawal was followed by a series of conflicts referred to as the Gaza Wars.

**(2006):** The Fatah-Hamas Conflict saw the outbreak of violence between two prominent Palestinian political parties, Fatah and Hamas, primarily centered in the Gaza Strip. This conflict highlighted their divisions in approaching the issue of Israel. Fatah supported a two-state solution, advocating for the coexistence of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. In contrast, Hamas rejected Israel's right to exist and pursued a different approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**(2012):** Palestine was granted non-member observer status at the United Nations on November 29. This status allows Palestine to participate in General Assembly debates and activities, but it does not grant full UN membership.

**(2010-2020):** Throughout a decade, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict persisted, characterized by recurring episodes of violence and turmoil, particularly in the Gaza Strip. This period saw numerous cycles of hostilities, including the 2014 Gaza War, resulting in significant casualties and widespread damage, echoing historical trends. The ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank remained a contentious issue, further complicating the prospects of a two-state solution. The blockade on the Gaza Strip, maintained by Israel due to security concerns, had a detrimental impact on the living conditions of Gaza's residents, contributing to ongoing tensions. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict retained its profound complexity and unresolved nature during this decade, with enduring challenges mirroring those of previous years.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the region has faced continuous turmoil since the Sykes-Picot Agreement after the Ottoman Empire's decline. These ongoing conflicts not only threaten regional stability but also pose a significant risk to global geopolitics and the potential for a major worldwide conflict.

It is crucial to emphasize the need for international efforts to quell the violence, adhere to international norms, and safeguard the rights of ordinary people. Diplomacy and negotiation should be the chosen path toward a more peaceful and stable future. The pursuit of a two-state solution, achieved through collaboration, holds the promise of a just and equitable resolution, offering hope for lasting peace.



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