

Palestine-Israel: THE BASIC FACTS

Timeline:

1897 A European Jewish political movement, the **Zionist movement**, has for some years been seeking to secure a national home for the Jewish people. After considering homelands in Africa and S America, the Zionist conference of 1897 settles on Palestine, then part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire.

1917 The Balfour Declaration: the British Government promises Lord Rothschild a 'national home' for Jews in Palestine, while upholding 'the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities'. (At this time only 5% of the population is Jewish — 95% are Palestinian Muslims and Christians.)

1918 After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, **Britain occupies Palestine** and from 1918 to 1948 sponsors Jewish colonial immigration from Europe and the US. **Britain crushes all Palestinian revolts.**

1948 After numerous terrorist attacks by Zionist militias, such as the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, **Britain leaves**, after handing the matter over to the UN, which assigns **55% of Palestine** to the proposed state of Israel (map 2). At this time Jews constitute only **1/3** of the population and own only 6% of the land.

1948–49 Israel kills 13,000 Palestinians and drives 750,000 from their towns and villages in the Nakba ('Catastrophe'), occupying 78% of historic Palestine (map 3). Descendants of these refugees live today in some 100 refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza. **UN resolution 194** calls on Israel to allow the return of the refugees; the resolution is ignored. Over 400 Palestinian villages are subsequently razed to the ground.

1967 Israel occupies the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip (the 'Occupied Territories') during the 6-day war with Egypt, bringing all of historical Palestine under Israeli rule. **UN resolution 242** calls on Israel to withdraw from the territories. It fails to do so, and initiates a system of increasingly brutal military control over the territories.

1987 Israeli settlement of the Occupied Territories grows steadily, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Palestinians rise up in the first non-violent **Intifada** ('uprising'), calling for self-determination and an independent Palestinian state.

1993–5 The US brokers a series of agreements between the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships. The 'Oslo Accords' are intended as a first step towards Palestinian self-rule, with a staged withdrawal from the Occupied Territories by Israeli troops. However, **illegal Israeli settlements** in the Occupied Territories double in number during the 'peace process'. By the year 2000 there are about 350,000 Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories.

2000 Israel's increasingly brutal military rule and its widespread seizure of Palestinian land for settlement building ignites a **second Intifada**. Thousands are killed as Palestinian towns and refugee camps are invaded and shelled by Israeli tanks and targeted by F16 bombers.

2002 The Arab governments declare they are **prepared to recognise Israel** within the pre-1967 borders at the Beirut Conference. Israel ignores this offer, violently invades every Palestinian city except Jericho and starts building a separation wall, largely on Palestinian land.

2005 Israel pulls out its 8000 illegal settlers from the Gaza Strip (which has a population of 1.4 million Palestinians) — and settles another 30,000 in the West Bank. It then seals off the Gaza Strip.

2006 After elections judged free and democratic by the UN, the Islamist Hamas party comes to power. Israel abducts and imprisons 35 Hamas MPs and many supporters and subjects Gaza to major military attacks, destroying the only power plant. Backed by Western powers, **Israel imposes a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip.**

2008–9 Israel breaks a six-month ceasefire with Hamas and for three weeks bombs and shells Gaza, reducing 25% of the buildings to rubble, including homes, schools, mosques, police stations and the university. **Over 1,300 Palestinians are killed, about a third of them children.** 13 Israelis are killed. The UN-sponsored Goldstone Report condemns Israeli actions as war crimes.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, after visiting the West Bank, declared: 'it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa.' He saw 'the humiliation of the Palestinians at checkpoints and roadblocks, suffering like us when young white police officers prevented us from moving about'.

Palestine and occupation



Palestine before the creation of Israel



UN partition plan for Jewish and Arab states. Rejected by Arabs



Israel occupies Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank



