

“The State of Israel... will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel... We extend our hand to all neighbouring States and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.”

Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel



David Ben Gurion declaring Israel's Independence on May 14, 1948.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Public Diplomacy Division
Information and Visual Media Department



State of Israel
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Living in peace with all its neighbors has always been a central value that the Jewish National Movement has strived to achieve.

All Israeli heads of government since 1948 have called upon Arab leaders to come to the negotiating table.

Israel seeks to avoid war and has always been keen to solve conflicts by compromise. All Israeli-Arab wars were triggered by Arab aggressions and forced upon Israel.

The treaties between Israel and Egypt, and between Israel and Jordan, as well as good relations with several other Arab countries, prove that peace and friendly relations between Israel and the rest of the Arab world are feasible.

The recent history of negotiations with Palestinian leaders shows that, time after time, Israel has presented far-reaching peace proposals, made major concessions, relinquished extensive tracts of land, uprooted civilian communities (also known as “settlements”), withdrawn forces and taken steps to enable the Palestinians to establish the foundations of self-government.

In return, the Palestinians have refused to accept the far-reaching peace proposals. The Palestinian leaders have promoted virulent hate speech against Israelis and Jews, and encouraged terror acts such as suicide bombings and rocket attacks that targeted civilians, killing and injuring thousands. Additionally, the Palestinian leadership is conducting an ongoing

campaign of de-legitimization against Israel in the international arena, denying Israel's right to exist.

The Palestinians rejected the November 29, 1947 UN partition plan that would have created two States - an Arab one and a Jewish one - in mandatory Palestine. Following the independence of Israel in 1948, the Arab Palestinians and their Arab patrons appeared more interested in destroying Israel than in establishing a Palestinian State. In all the years (1949-1967) that the West Bank was held by Jordan and Gaza was held by Egypt, no moves were made to establish a Palestinian State in these territories.

Israel has always been willing to compromise and every Israeli government - including the present one - has been prepared to make major sacrifices for the sake of peace. Peacemaking requires difficult concessions on both sides. Peace can only be achieved through direct, earnest negotiations without preconditions which bridge gaps and resolve all outstanding issues.



The conflict is asymmetric: confronted with threats of annihilation by Arab extremists even before it gained its independence, Israel cannot allow itself to lose even one war.

To this day, Israel seeks to establish a lasting peace and to foster prosperity to all people in the region.

Peace with Egypt and Jordan

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was the first Arab leader to respond positively to Israel's calls for peace, when he visited Israel on November 19, 1977 and met Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

President Sadat's decision to recognize Israel, to express his genuine intentions by addressing Israeli legislators directly in the Knesset (Israel's parliament) in Jerusalem and to engage in negotiations directly and without preconditions was the turning point that made peace possible between the two nations.

The peace treaty was signed on 26 March 1977, bringing the 30-year State of war between Israel and Egypt to an end.

The courage of both leaders, Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, is to this day credited with changing the geopolitics of the entire Middle East, opening the path for peace between Israel and the Arab world, and shaping a new agenda of political relations in the region.



"We are in for a new beginning to a new life - the life of love, prosperity, freedom and peace." Anwar Sadat 1977, Knesset. Credit: GPO



PM Begin: "no more war, no more bloodshed". Credit: GPO

Peace with Jordan followed on October 26, 1994, after three years of talks ensuing from the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, when King Hussein of Jordan and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the second historic peace treaty.

In these two peace treaties, leaders on both sides realized that the key to peace is mutual recognition, direct negotiations and standing up to violence.



Peace with Jordan, 1994. Credit: GPO

1991

25 Years of Struggle for Peace

The Madrid Peace Conference

Held under US and Soviet auspices, it brought together representatives of Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinians. The formal proceedings were followed by bilateral negotiations between the parties and by multilateral talks addressing regional concerns.

1993

Oslo Accords - the first agreement between Israel and the PLO

Following months of intensive behind-the-scenes contacts in Oslo between negotiators for Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), a Declaration of Principles (DOP) was formulated, outlining self-government arrangements for the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The PLO officially pledged to renounce the use of terrorism and to invalidate those articles in its covenant which deny Israel's right to exist, while committing itself to a peaceful resolution of the decades-long conflict. In response, Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.

1994

- Gaza Jericho Agreement - Enables first time Palestinian self-government in Gaza Strip and Jericho area.
- Diplomatic relations established with Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania.
- Israel-Jordan peace treaty signed.

1995

- Interim Agreement - Broadened Palestinian self-government in West Bank and Gaza Strip. Around 90% of Palestinians live under Palestinian Authority.

1996

- Escalation of Palestinian terrorism against Israel.
- Israel opens trade representation offices in Oman and Qatar.

1998

- Israel and the PLO sign the Wye River Memorandum to facilitate implementation of the Interim Agreement.
- Upsurge of Palestinian terror attacks; more Israelis were killed by Palestinian terrorists in the 5 years following the Oslo Accord than in the 15 years preceding it.

2000

- Israel withdraws fully from the Security Zone in southern Lebanon as recognized by the UN.
- **Camp David summit**
In the US, with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PA Chairman Yasser Arafat. Arafat rejected Israel's unprecedented proposal brokered by the US President, and left the summit without an agreement.
- **Arafat launches renewed wave of Palestinian terrorism and violence known as second Intifada; thousands of Israelis murdered or maimed in suicide bombings.**
- Morocco, Tunisia, Oman and Qatar sever diplomatic relations with Israel under Palestinian pressure, followed in 2009 By Mauritania.

2005

Disengagement from Gaza

Israel completely disengaged from the Gaza Strip in hopes of creating a renewed opportunity for peace. Israel dismantled 25 communities (including four communities in northern Samaria - West Bank) and fully removed its armed forces together with 8,000 civilians, an operation that cost billions of dollars and caused deep national trauma.

Israel had hoped that the Gaza disengagement would lead to a reduction in terrorist attacks, an increase in mutual trust, and ultimately to a comprehensive peace agreement with the Palestinians. However, rather than seizing the opportunity to manage and develop the Gaza Strip for the benefit of its citizens, the Palestinians destroyed all that remained of the Israeli infrastructure, including highly productive greenhouses, and renewed attacks on Israel from Gaza. The painful sacrifice made by Israel was not reciprocated with any effort to bring peace.



Evacuation of Settlements. Credit: GPO

2006

Second Lebanon War

Hezbollah launches missile attacks against Israel from the southern Lebanon areas evacuated by Israel six years earlier and, in a cross-border raid, kills eight Israeli soldiers and kidnaps two others, provoking a new war.

2007

Hamas violently takes control of the Gaza Strip in a bloody battle with the Palestinian Authority. Since then, far from building a viable future for Gazans, Hamas instead invests in building up its military arsenal and its network of terror-related tunnels, much to the detriment of the Palestinian people.

2008

PA Chairman Abbas rejects Israeli PM Ehud Olmert's new far-reaching offer, known as the Annapolis Parameters.

2009

- Hamas fires over 10,000 rockets and mortars from the Gaza Strip into Israel - leading to Operation Cast Lead.
- In a gesture of goodwill to renew the peace process with the Palestinian Authority, Israel freezes settlement construction for 10 months, without getting any response from the PA.

2012

- Hamas firing hundreds of rockets into Israeli territory provokes Operation Pillar of Defense.

2014

- March- PA chairman Abbas fails to respond to US State Secretary Kerry's proposal to renew negotiations with Israel.
- Operation Protective Edge - provoked by Hamas renewing its massive rocket fire on Israeli civilians from the Gaza Strip, after kidnapping and murdering 3 Israeli teenagers in the West Bank.

Obstacles to Peace with the Palestinians

Over the years, and to this day, Israeli leaders have aimed to achieve lasting peace with the Palestinians, supported by the vast majority of Israeli citizens from both the right and left sides of the political spectrum.

Unfortunately, Palestinian terrorism and their leaders' refusal to engage in direct negotiations without preconditions remains a major obstacle to peace.

Palestinian leaders have steadily rejected win-win compromises, adhering rather to a zero-sum approach. To this day, they deny that Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people, claiming exclusive rights despite the Jewish people's presence in the Land of Israel for some 3,000 years, and reject the historical, moral and legal grounds for the existence of the State of Israel as the nation-State of the Jewish people.

Palestinian leaders still undermine peace efforts by demanding that millions of Palestinians be allowed to settle inside sovereign Israel, while insisting on expelling every Jew from the West Bank, historical Judea and Samaria.

Leaders of Hamas as well as many in the PLO and PA (the Palestinian Authority, led by the Fatah faction) often openly declare their will to take over the entirety of Israel to establish a Palestinian State, not next to, but instead of the State of Israel.

A Palestinian reconciliation government that relies on Hamas, a terrorist organization that calls for the destruction of Israel, will be contradictory to peace efforts as long as Hamas does not recognize Israel and desists from terrorism, as per the principles laid out by the International Quartet on the Middle East (comprising the USA, EU, Russia and UN).

Under Palestinian authority, all too often freedom of expression is repressed, corruption and embezzlement of public funds is rampant, torture and abuse of political opponents and minorities is not uncommon, and arbitrary execution may be the fate of those who support unauthorized cooperation with Israel.

The PA leadership regularly diverts a significant portion of the international aid it receives, in order to reward terrorists and their families.

The Palestinians enjoy the automatic support of the Arab League's 22 members, as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, comprised of 57 members. which has an overwhelming influence over many of the Non-Aligned States. As a result, anti-Israel resolutions are usually passed at the UN and other international forums by an automatic majority, such as in the case of recent UNESCO resolutions that distort history and distance peace and reconciliation.

Given the negative Palestinian attitude towards negotiation and compromise, it is clear that the Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria (also known as the settlements), are not the main obstacle to peace, while being an issue that has been mutually agreed to be negotiated in a final status agreement.

The history of war and terror targeting Israeli civilians that began decades before a single Israeli soldier ever set foot in the West Bank or Gaza, points to the real reason there is no peace. Peace will be attainable, when Palestinian leaders and influencers cease all calls to violence and rejection of Israel, and instead start promoting recognition and cooperation.



A bus suicide bombing attack carried out by a Palestinian terrorist in Haifa, 2001. Credit: GPO

Terrorism and the Peace Process

Palestinian and Arab terrorism predates Israel's control of the territories in the West Bank, and even the existence of the State of Israel itself.



The Baltimore News, 1929, article on the Hebron Massacre

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964, three years before Israel took control of the West Bank. During the 1970s and 1980s, various terrorist organizations under the PLO launched numerous bloody attacks inside Israel and internationally - Hijacked airplanes, a ship and buses; suicide bombings, the murder of eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games; stabbing, shooting and vehicle ramming attacks on civilians.

Moreover, Palestinian terrorism has often peaked during those periods when agreements were close at hand, despite repeated Palestinian commitments to renounce violence and terrorism. This occurred at the height of the Oslo process in the mid-1990s, and after Israel's unprecedented peace proposals at Camp David and Taba in 2000, which saw the start of the violent second Intifada.

One of the main ongoing issues in the Israel-Palestinian peace negotiations is the essential need to end terrorism in order to establish a peaceful relationship between Israelis and Palestinians.

On Israel's northern border, Iran's proxy Hezbollah is effectively controlling southern Lebanon in violation of UN decisions. Despite Israel's complete withdrawal to the Blue line, established by the UN, Hezbollah builds-up its military capabilities, including thousands of rockets aimed at Israel.

The Refugees

Arab Palestinian refugees were the direct outcome of Arab aggression against Israel in May 1948, launched by the neighboring Arab States and the local Arab population, after Arab leaders rejected the November 29, 1947 UN partition plan that would have created States for both the Palestinian Arab and Jewish people. Many Arabs Palestinian who lived in areas where the fighting took place abandoned their homes at the urging of Arab leaders, or due to fear of the fighting, and settled in the neighboring Arab countries.

During this period there were innumerable refugees fleeing wars and conflict in many parts of the world. Almost all of these refugees were resettled. Moreover, about 800,000 Jews – roughly the same number of the Palestinian refugees— were expelled from Arab



Jews from Iraq arrive in Israel 1951. Credit: GPO

countries such as Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen and North Africa, where they had lived for centuries. These Jews found refuge in Israel, where they were absorbed as citizens.

Rather than have Palestinian refugees come under the umbrella of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), established by the Refugee Convention, a separate UN agency named UNRWA (UN Relief and Works Agency) was created by the UN General Assembly to deal only with the Palestinian refugee population.

Unlike UNHCR, UNRWA's mandate was limited to providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugee population, but did not include finding actual solutions to their refugee status through, for example, their integration in host countries or resettlement in third countries. In so doing, there was a profoundly cynical attempt to maintain the Palestinian refugee situation as an open wound, using it as a perpetual weapon in an ongoing war of de-legitimization against Israel, at the expense of the actual welfare and lives of the Palestinian refugees themselves.

Under international law, refugee status is recognized on an individual basis and cannot be inherited. By the standards of the Refugee Convention, most Palestinians who receive UNRWA assistance today do not qualify as refugees. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of the approximately 5 million Palestinians who receive some form of assistance from UNRWA are second-to-fourth generation descendants of the original Palestinian refugee population – many of whom have citizenship of third countries

(for example, approximately 2 million Palestinians enjoy Jordanian citizenship). Thus, in case of Palestinians who were eligible for refugee status in the past, that status ceased to apply when they acquired new citizenship in third countries, in accordance with Article 1(C)(3) of the Refugee Convention. Moreover, according to some reports, more than 95% of the recipients of UNRWA's assistance were born years after the establishment of Israel and were not personally displaced in 1948.

At the same time that the Palestinians are calling for a State of their own, they also claim that the State of Israel should absorb in its own area millions of Palestinians who are the descendants of the 1948 refugees. No such right exists under international law. The influx of millions of Palestinians into the State of Israel would spell the end of Israel as the nation-State of the Jewish people.



Jewish refugees absorption camp in Pardes Hanna, December 1950

Hamas' ruthless rule over Gaza

In 2007 the radical Islamic terrorist organization Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in a bloody coup against the Palestinian Authority.

Hamas established a de-facto terror-State backed by Iran on Israel's southern border. It imposed its fundamentalist agenda on the population of Gaza, applying the principles of Sharia law, repressing women, abusing individual freedoms, and violently persecuting its opponents.

Hamas is an internationally recognized terrorist organization, regarded as such by the US, Canada, the EU and many other nations and organizations. It is responsible for murdering and injuring thousands of Israelis and for constant human rights violations against the Palestinian people.

Instead of investing in the economic development and the welfare of Gaza's inhabitants, for over a decade, Hamas has exploited the Gaza Strip and its civilians to make it a terrorist stronghold. Since the Israeli disengagement in 2005, Hamas has launched more than 11,000 rockets and mortars at Israeli towns (*IDF blog*) and provoked three major military confrontations with Israel.

Hamas teaches Palestinian kids to hate Israel and Jews, organizing summer camps where children simulate kidnapping and murdering Israelis.

Hamas fires rockets from UN schools, mosques, and hospitals, intentionally endangering the lives of Palestinian women, children, and men and using civilians as human shields.

Hamas continues to build attack tunnels that infiltrate into Israeli territory. Hamas organizes and carries out terror attacks in the West Bank and within the State of Israel and continues to call for a third Intifada (violent uprising)

No one who wants true peace or a better future for the Palestinians could even consider duplicating Gaza's reality in the West Bank. All those who suggest further Israeli withdrawal in the West Bank must take the lessons of Gaza into account.



The Expanding Rocket Threat:

	Operation Cast Lead - 2008 Mortar - 10 km\ 6 miles Qassam - 16 km\ 10 miles Grad Rocket - 20 km\ 12 miles Grad Rocket (Advanced) - 45 km\ 28 miles
	Operation Pillar of Defense - 2012 Fajar 5 Rocket\ M75 - 75 km\ 45 miles
	Operation Protective Edge - 2014 R160 Rocket - 150 km\ 90 miles

Challenges of today

Despite its complexity, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is far from being the main problem of the Middle East. Drastic shifts in the region since 2011 indicate that the major rift in the region is that between the Sunni extremists, led by ISIS and the Shiite extremists, led by Iran. The deadly wars taking place in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere in the Middle East are the main regional destabilizers, and have global

repercussion.

Moreover, attempts by the Islamic Republic of Iran to establish regional hegemony, its ongoing support for worldwide terrorism, its race to nuclear capabilities and its direct involvement in many conflicts, including the Syrian war, make it the biggest challenge to peace and stability for Israel, for moderate Arab States, and for the world at large.



