



## Israel-Palestine

---

 [drishtiias.com/printpdf/israel-palestine](https://drishtiias.com/printpdf/israel-palestine)

### Why in the news?

---

Palestine has rejected the US-Bahrain led **Peace to Prosperity economic workshop** on the ground that it says nothing about ending Israeli occupation.

### Israel-Palestine Conflict

---

- The seeds of the conflict were laid in **1917** when the then British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour expressed official support of Britain for a Jewish "national home" in Palestine under the Balfour Declaration. The lack of concern for the "rights of existing non-Jewish communities" i.e. the Arabs led to prolonged violence.
- Unable to contain Arab and Jewish violence, **Britain withdrew its forces from Palestine** in 1948, leaving responsibility for resolving the competing claims to the newly created United Nations. The UN presented a partition plan to create independent Jewish and Arab states in Palestine. Most Jews in Palestine accepted the partition but most Arabs did not.
- In **1948**, the Jewish declaration of Israel's independence prompted surrounding Arab states to attack. At the end of the war, Israel controlled about 50 percent more territory than originally envisioned UN partition plan. Jordan controlled the West Bank and Jerusalem's holy sites, and Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip.
- **1964: Founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)**
- **1967: In Six-day Arab- Israeli war**, Israeli forces seize the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank & East Jerusalem from Jordan and Sinai Peninsula & Gaza strip from Egypt.
- The United Nations grants the PLO observer status in **1975** and recognizes Palestinians' right to self-determination.
- **Camp David Accords (1978):** "Framework for Peace in the Middle East" brokered by U.S. set the stage for peace talks between Israel and its neighbors and a resolution to the "Palestinian problem". This however remained unfulfilled.

- **1981:** Israel effectively annexes the Golan but this is not recognized by the United States or the international community.
- **1987: Founding of Hamas**, a violent offshoot of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood seeking "to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine" through violent jihad.
- **1987:** Tensions in the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza reached boiling point resulting in the First **Intifada** (Palestinian Uprising). It grew into a small war between Palestinian militants and the Israeli army.
- **1988:** Jordan cedes to the PLO all the country's territorial claims in the West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem.
- **1993:** Under the **Oslo Accords** Israel and the PLO agree to officially recognize each other and renounce the use of violence. The Oslo Accords also established the **Palestinian Authority**, which received limited autonomy in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.
- **2005:** Israel begins a unilateral withdrawal of Jews from settlements in Gaza. However, Israel kept tight control over all border crossings (blockade).
- **2006: Hamas scores a victory in Palestinian Authority elections.** The vote leaves the Palestinian house divided between Fatah movement, represented by President Mahmoud Abbas, and Hamas, which will control the cabinet and parliament. Efforts at cohabitation fail almost immediately.
- **2007: Palestinian Movement Splits** after few months of formation of a joint Fatah-Hamas government. Hamas militants drive Fatah from Gaza. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas appoints a new government in Ramallah (West Bank), which is quickly recognized by the United States and European Union. Gaza remains under Hamas control.
- **2012-** UN upgrades Palestinian representation to that of "non-member observer state".
- **2014-** Israel responds to the kidnapping and murder of three Jewish teenagers in the West Bank by arresting numerous Hamas members. Militants respond by firing rockets from Gaza. Clashes end in uneasy Egyptian-brokered ceasefire.
- **2014-** Fatah and Hamas form a unity government, though distrust remains between the two factions.

## The Territorial Puzzle



- **West Bank:** The West Bank is sandwiched between Israel and Jordan. One of its major cities is Ramallah, the de facto administrative capital of Palestine. Israel took control of it in the 1967 war and has over the years established settlements there.
- **Gaza:** The Gaza Strip located between Israel and Egypt. Israel occupied the strip after 1967, but relinquished control of Gaza City and day-to-day administration in most of the territory during the Oslo peace process. In 2005, Israel unilaterally removed Jewish settlements from the territory, though it continues to control international access to it.
- **Golan Heights:** The Golan Heights is a strategic plateau that Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 war. Israel effectively annexed the territory in 1981. Recently, the USA has **officially recognized** Jerusalem and Golan Heights a part of Israel.

- **Palestinian Authority-** Created by the 1993 Oslo Accords, it is the official governing body of the Palestinian people, led by President Mahmoud Abbas of the Fatah faction. Hobbled by corruption and by political infighting, the PA has failed to become the stable negotiating partner its creators had hoped.
- **Fatah-** Founded by the late Yasir Arafat in the 1950s, Fatah is the largest Palestinian political faction. Unlike Hamas, Fatah is a secular movement, has nominally recognized Israel, and has actively participated in the peace process.
- **Hamas-** Hamas is regarded as a terrorist organization by the U.S. government. In 2006, Hamas won the Palestinian Authority's legislative elections. It ejected Fatah from Gaza in 2007, splitting the Palestinian movement geographically, as well.

## Two-State Solution

---

- The “two state solution” is based on a UN resolution of 1947 which proposed two states - one would be a state where Zionist Jews constituted a majority, the other where the Palestinian Arabs would be a majority of the population. The idea was however rejected by the Arabs.
- For decades, it has been held by the international community as the only realistic deal to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### Why is the solution so difficult to achieve?

- **Borders:** There is no consensus about precisely where to draw the line – with Israel building settlements and constructing barriers in areas like the West Bank that creates a de facto border. This makes it difficult to establish that land as part of an independent Palestine, breaking it up into non-contiguous pieces.
- **Jerusalem:** Both sides claim Jerusalem as their capital and consider it a center of religious worship and cultural heritage making its division difficult.  
 In December 2017, Israel declared Jerusalem as its capital and the step found support from the USA, intensifying the situation in the region.
- **Refugees:** Large numbers of Palestinians who fled their homes in what is now Israel, during the preceding wars as well as their descendants believe they deserve the right to return but Israel is against it.
- **Divided Political Leadership on Both sides:** The Palestinian leadership is divided - two-state solution is supported by Palestinian nationalists in West Bank but the leadership in Gaza does not even recognize Israel. Further, while successive Israeli Prime Ministers - Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert and Benjamin Netanyahu - have all accepted the idea of a Palestinian state, they have differed in terms of what it should actually comprise.

## Global Stand on Israel -Palestine Conflict

---

- Nearly **83%** of world countries have **officially recognized Israel as a sovereign state** and maintain diplomatic relations with it.
- However, at the same time, many countries are **sympathetic to Palestine**.

## What do both parties want?

---

- Palestine wants Israeli to halt all expansionary activities and retreat to pre-1967 borders. It wants to establish a sovereign Palestine state in West Bank and Gaza with East Jerusalem as its capital.
- Palestine wants Palestine refugees who lost their homes in 1948 be able to come back.
- Israel wants it to be recognised as a Jewish state. It wants the Palestine refugees to return only to Palestine, not to Israel.

## India's Stand

---

- India was one of the few countries to oppose the UN's partition plan in November 1947, echoing its own experience during independence a few months earlier. In the decades that followed, the Indian political leadership actively supported the Palestinian cause and withheld full diplomatic relations with Israel.
- **India** recognised Israel in 1950 but it is also the first non-Arab country to recognise **Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** as the sole representative of the Palestinian. India is also one of the first countries to recognise the statehood of Palestine in 1988.
- In the **2014, India favored UNHRC's resolution to probe Israel's human rights violations in Gaza**. Despite supporting probe, **India abstained from voting against Israel in UNHRC IN 2015**.
- As a part of **Link West Policy**, India has **de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018** to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- In **June 2019, India voted in favor of a decision introduced by Israel in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization
- So far India has tried to maintain the image of its historical moral supporter for Palestinian self-determination, and at the same time to engage in the military, economic, and other strategic relations with Israel.

## Way Forward

---

The world at large needs to come together for a peaceful solution but the reluctance of the Israeli government and other involved parties have aggravated the issue more. Thus a balanced approach towards the Israel-Palestine issue would help to maintain favorable relations with Arab countries as well as Israel.

For Mind Map