

# 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. 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 Arabs.)

**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'), ending up with 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** The Palestinians in the Occupied Territories 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 of Palestinians are killed as they resist Israel's huge army.

**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, making access virtually impossible.

**2006 Democratic general elections** in the Occupied Territories bring Hamas to power. The US, supported by the EU, immediately imposes severe sanctions on the Palestinians.

**Archbishop Desmond Tutu, after visiting the Holy Land declared that 'it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa' and that 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.



