

Disappearing Palestine

**Palestinians have lived in the region between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean for many centuries.
But now their very existence in their homeland is under threat.**

Zionism, a European political movement, emerged towards the end of the 19th century; its goal was to secure a national state or home for the Jewish people. At the turn of the 20th century about 5% of the population of Palestine were Jewish, and the vast majority of them regarded themselves as part of Palestinian culture and life. In 1946 a survey produced by the British Mandate (the occupying power at the time) found that 67% were Christian and Muslim and 33% of the population were Jewish. 6% of the land was owned by Jews, with Palestinians owning the rest. The white areas on the map show areas of significant Jewish settlement, the green areas Palestinian.



British suppression of the Palestinian right to self-determination and their encouragement of Zionist colonialism led to increasing violence in Palestine between Zionists and Palestinians, as well as against the British occupiers, including attacks by Zionist forces on British troops. In 1947, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution – which was never enacted – proposing partition of Palestine, to give 56% of the land for a Jewish state (indicated in white on the map) and 44% to a future Palestinian state. Jerusalem was to become a separate entity under international control. The resolution was passed without consulting the Palestinian people, who rejected the partition plan.



This map shows in white the area conquered by Zionist troops and declared the state of Israel on the 14th May 1948. This followed a conflict where Israel seized 78% of the land, resulting in 750,000 Palestinians being forcibly expelled or fleeing violence. Over 500 Palestinian villages were razed to the ground. To this day, in defiance of international law, Israel refuses to allow the return of these refugees. In 1967, in the Six Day War, Israel invaded and occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip (shown in green) and refused to withdraw. Israel also annexed East Jerusalem, in the face of unanimous international opposition.



From 1967 onwards, Israel pursued a policy of colonising the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, building illegal settlements for Israelis and a network of settler-only roads. By 2013, there were more than 500,000 Israeli settlers living illegally in the West Bank. In 2005, Israel dismantled its settlements in Gaza, in preparation to blockade the Strip, which it did in 2006. Israel maintains complete control over Gaza's land, sea and air space. In the West Bank, Israel continues to expand its settlements and to implement a policy of ethnic cleansing in and around Jerusalem.

