

You have learned that all three Abrahamic religions have similar core beliefs and share *many* characteristics. Since the religions of this region are so similar, how come there has been so much conflict over the past 75 years? If it **isn't a religious conflict**, what kind of conflict can it be? Over the next couple of activities, you will learn about one of the biggest causes of conflict for this region. You will find out that it is **NOT** about religion; it is about something else.

1. Introduction



After World War I much of the Middle East was controlled by Western countries. **Palestine**, the area between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas, was controlled by the United Kingdom. The area contained Jews, Christians, and Muslims who had lived together in peace for hundreds of years. Since the area is called Palestine, the people there are called **Palestinians**. That means there are Palestinians who are Muslims and Palestinians who are Christians.

European Jews had experienced a long history of persecution. We have talked about **persecution** before. It is the treatment of someone cruelly or unfairly, especially because of race, religion, or political beliefs.

Because of this persecution, a group of European Jews organized themselves with the purpose of creating a new country only for Jews. The movement they started was called **Zionism**. People who were part of Zionism were called **Zionists**.



Zionists eventually got support from the government in the United Kingdom. The U.K. offered the Zionists land in Africa. The area today is called Uganda.

There was a big debate among Zionists about whether or not they should accept the offer. Zionist leaders eventually turned down the offer in 1903, because they only wanted to create a Jewish country in Palestine. They believed God (Yahweh) gave the land to **them** and that it was **their** property. (The Jews were kicked out of the region by Rome between 66 C.E. - 70 C.E., when the 2nd Jewish Diaspora happened.) The main problem Zionists had was that there were **Palestinian Arabs (Muslims, Christians, and Jews)** already living in Palestine. They had been living there for over a 1,000 years.



After World War I, the U.K. allowed Western Jews to move into the region of Palestine. This angered Palestinians who viewed this as an invasion of Westerners coming and taking their land. Western Jews actually purchased the land, but Palestinians viewed their growing numbers as a threat. The map shows what land was owned by Jews in 1947.

2. Creation and Conflict

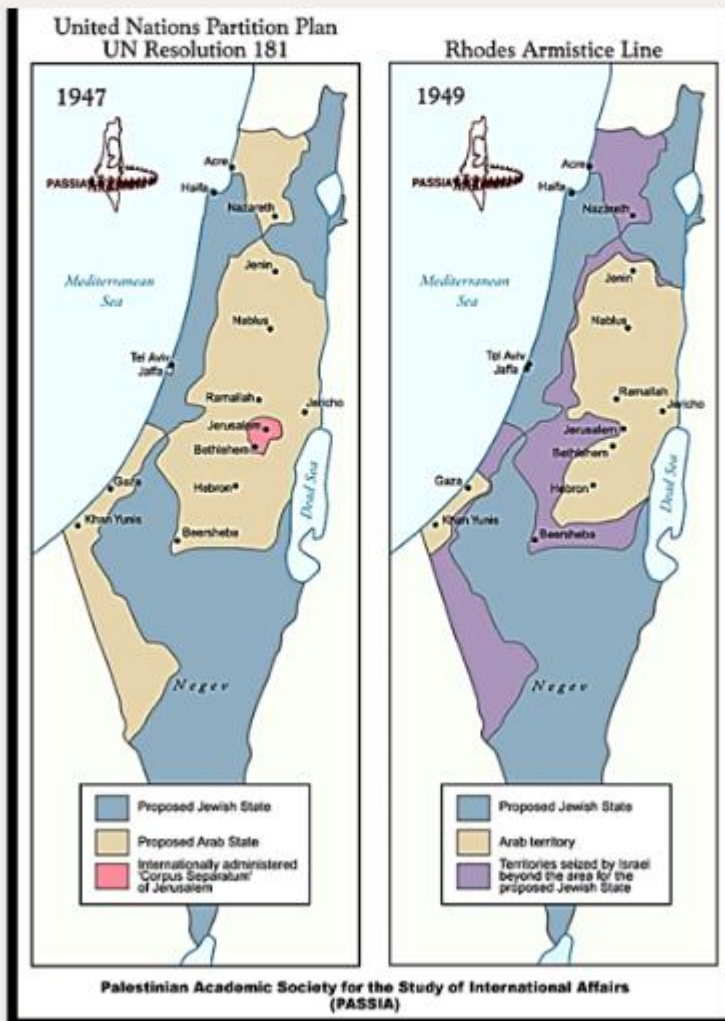
The events of World War II brought the persecution of Jews to a whole new level. When the Allies (France, U.K., U.S.A., and U.S.S.R.) learned of Hitler's concentration camps, where he murdered over 6 million Jews, there was a great deal of sympathy for the Jews. They felt horrible for what had happened and decided to support the Zionists and help create a Jewish country. In 1947, the Allies, through the newly created United Nations, announced a plan that would create a new Jewish country in Palestine. At the time, Jews owned about 7% of the land, but the United Nations planned on giving the Jews about half of Palestine.



Palestinians and neighboring Arab countries refused the plan. While they sympathized with the Jews for what happened during the *Holocaust* (the killing of millions of Jews in Europe), they felt that they shouldn't have to give up *their* land for something that Europeans did. (Most Arabs thought: "Maybe the Europeans should give up some of *their* land, since they were the ones who let it happen.")

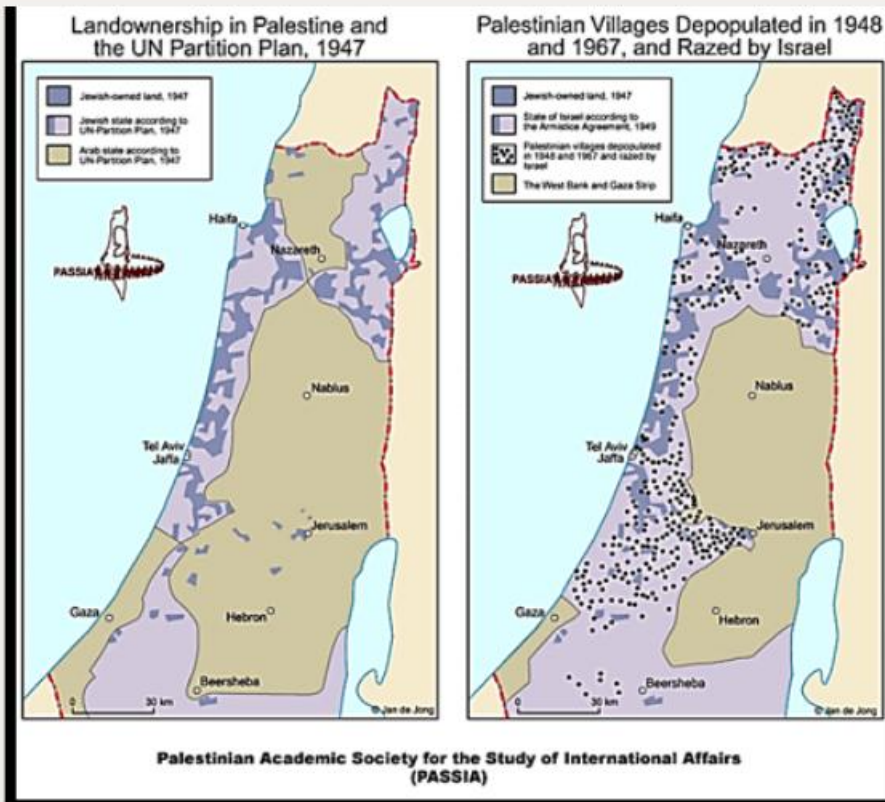
On May 14, 1948 Jews declared their new country of Israel. Both the United States and the Soviet Union immediately recognized the new country. The neighboring Arab countries, however, did not. They sent in their armies to protect the Palestinians and Palestinian land. Their weapons, however, were *inferior* (not as good) as the weapons the Jews had. Jews had purchased their weapons from the United States and Europe.

The war ended in 1949 with Israel controlling more land than the United Nations had planned to give it. An armistice was signed that ended fighting temporarily. The plan was to eventually have a peace treaty between all parties and settle the question of borders. Until the peace treaty, Jordan would control the West Bank and Egypt would control the Gaza Strip. Below you can see the planned country in blue and what Israel occupied in purple.



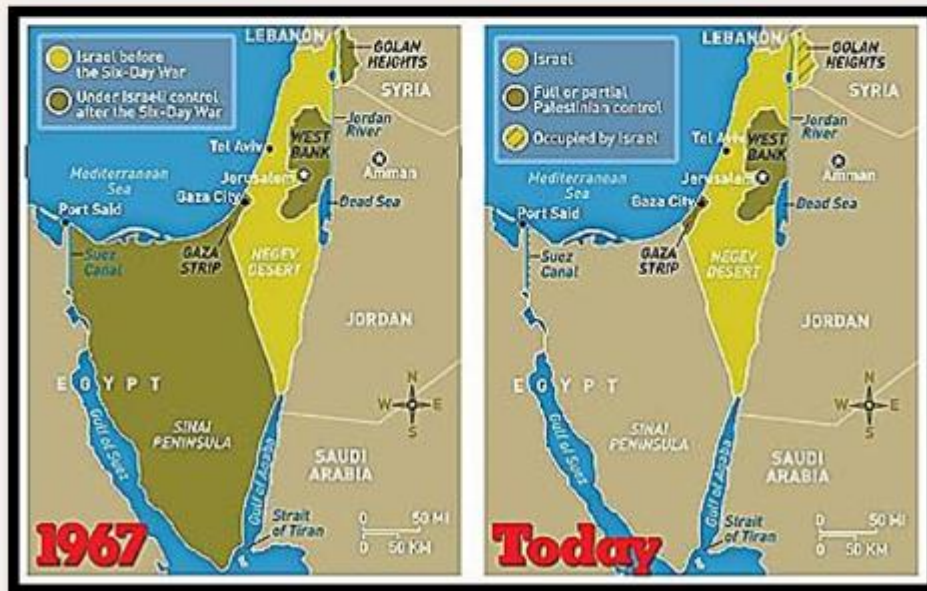


During this war, many Palestinians were either forced from their homes or fled to avoid being caught in the fighting. They became refugees. In the Google Earth activity, you learned about them. Over 700,000 Palestinians became refugees during the war. Many ended up in refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Some also ended up in refugee camps that were set up in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Below is a map of Palestinian villages that were destroyed between 1948 and 1967. The inhabitants of those villages became refugees.



(black dots represent destroyed Palestinian villages)

In 1967, Israel feared that the neighboring Arab countries were preparing to attack. As a result, Israel launched a surprise attack on Egypt. This is the start of the **Six Day War**. By the time the war was over, six days later, Israel had taken all of the land that was supposed to be given to the Palestinians: The **West Bank** and **Gaza Strip**. They also occupied part of Syria called the **Golan Heights**, which you labeled on your maps. Together, they are called the **Occupied Territories**.



After the war in 1967, the United Nations passed **Resolution 242** which called on Israel to remove its forces from the **Occupied Territories** (West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights). It also called on all countries that had been at war with Israel to accept Israel as a country. As of today, Israel has not left the Occupied Territories. Egypt and Jordan have signed peace treaties with Israel, accepting the resolution. Not all Arab countries in the Middle East have yet formally recognized Israel as a country.

[WELCOME TO THE END OF PART 1](#)



Welcome To Part 2!



You've already learned how the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict started with the creation of Israel after WWII. Today, you will learn what has happened during this conflict and what has prevented the two sides from obtaining peace.

3. Terrorism

Palestinians have been frustrated since the end of World War I, which was when the U.K. started allowing Western Jews to move to Palestine. They feel bullied and they feel that their land has been stolen to make up for mistakes Europeans made with regards to the Jews. The Palestinians also feel helpless. They are controlled by Israel, who has a large and modern army. Neighboring Arab countries have tried to help them, but have failed. Some Palestinians looked to history to see what they could do to gain their independence, despite being controlled by a much larger and stronger force.



They looked to the United States and Ireland for inspiration. The United States beat a much larger and better equipped and trained British army. The way Americans did that was by not playing by the "rules" of war at the time. Back in the 1700's, soldiers were supposed to face each other on an open battlefield. The American militia, however, fought by hiding behind trees, firing, and running away. This caused fear among British soldiers which resulted in them not fighting as well. They were not used to that way of fighting. The Americans knew they couldn't win if they "played by the rules", so they didn't play by the rules. They attacked colonists who supported the king and burned down their houses. Today, we could call how the colonists fought and how they treated the king's supporters as **terrorism**.



Modern terrorism can trace its history back to Ireland. In the early 20th Century, the **IRA** (Irish Republican Army) carried out terrorist activities in an attempt to get the U.K. (Great Britain) to grant Ireland its independence. Even after the U.K. granted independence to Ireland, the IRA continued to fight for Northern Ireland to become part of the Republic of Ireland. They would blow up buildings and used car bombs to kill people. The IRA trained Palestinian terrorists as well. In 2005, the IRA officially gave up terrorism. (**Tom Clancy's novel and movie "Patriot Games" deals with the topic of the IRA.**)



Some Palestinians have used terrorism against Israel in an attempt to get their independence. They have used car bombs and **suicide bombers**. (Suicide bombers are people who sacrifice their lives to deliver a bomb.) Not all Palestinians are terrorists and not all the terrorists have been Muslim. One of the biggest terrorist organizations was run by a Christian named Dr. George Habash.

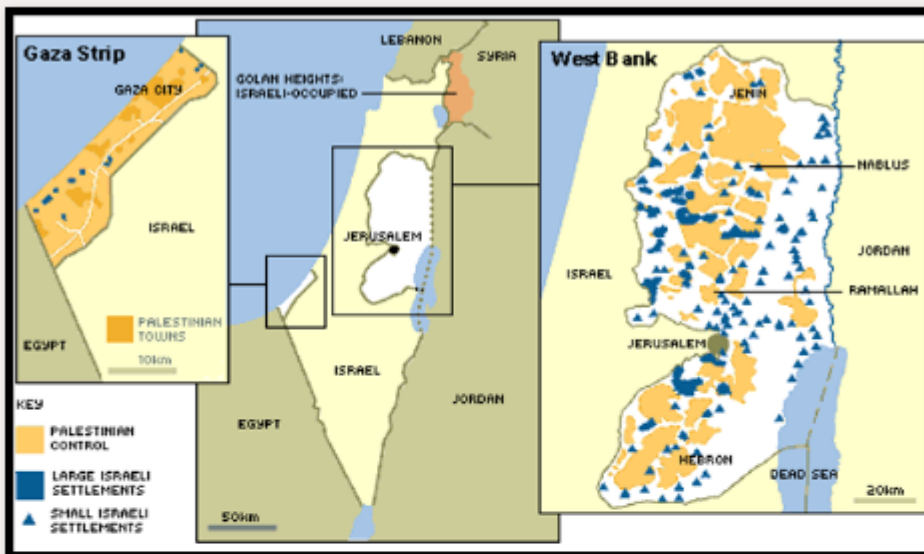
The PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) organized and supported terrorism until 1988. In that year, the PLO's leader Yasser Arafat announced that the PLO no longer supported terrorism. That does not mean that terrorism against Israel has stopped. Suicide bombers and other terrorist acts are still sometimes carried out against Israel, causing death, injury, and damage to buildings.



4. Obstacles to Peace

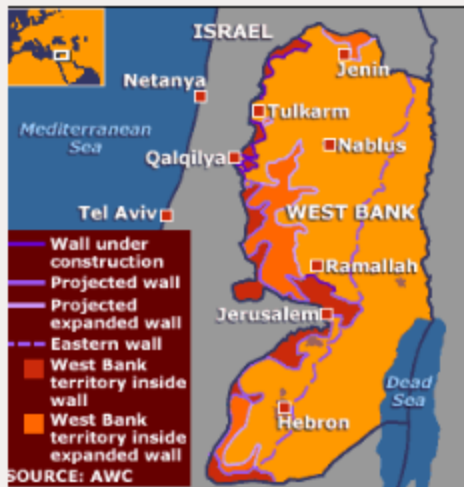
Today, most *Israelis* (citizens of Israel) and Palestinians believe the only way to have peace will be what is called the "**two state solution**." Most Palestinians realize that they will not be able to get back all of Palestine. Most Israeli's realize that they cannot have peace and security if they continue to control the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Since most agree that the solution is to have both Israel, a Jewish country, and Palestine, a Palestinian country, within the larger region called Palestine, why hasn't it happened? There are several **obstacles**, or things in the way, that are preventing the solution from happening.

1) *Israeli Settlements*



After the Six Day War in 1967, Israel started to build Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories. These are towns only for Israeli Jews to live. Most countries, along with the United Nations, view these settlements as *illegal*. In 2005, Israel removed all the settlements from Gaza, but continues to build new settlements in the West Bank today. Palestinians view these settlements as a way for Israel to keep more of the Palestinian land. Settlers believe that God (Yahweh) gave them the land when Abraham moved there. There are over 500,000 Jewish Israeli settlers living in the West Bank. Look at the map to see where the Israeli settlements are located compared to the areas where Palestinians have some local control. The settlements divide up the Palestinian areas into little islands.

2) The Wall



Israel has begun building a wall between Israel and the West Bank. The purpose is to prevent attacks by Palestinians against Israelis. The wall doesn't follow the border between Israel and the West Bank, however. It enters the West Bank to surround many of the Israeli settlements. To the left is a map that shows the border between Israel and the West Bank, as well as the route of the wall. Red and dark orange colors indicate land in the West Bank which is planned to be on the Israeli side of the wall.

3) Hamas / Security

In 1994, Israel granted Palestinians limited control over some local governments as part of a peace plan. This, however, did not stop some Palestinians from attacking Israelis. In 2007, a battle between two Palestinian political parties resulted in one party controlling the Gaza Strip and another party controlling some local governments in the West Bank. The group that controls the Gaza Strip is called Hamas. Hamas is an extremist group which has refused to accept Israel as a country and has refused to give up violent solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After taking control of Gaza, Hamas has allowed rockets to be fired into Israeli territory from Gaza and has itself fired rockets into Israeli territory. The rockets have killed some Israelis and injured many others.



(Qassam Rocket Launchers In The Gaza Strip)



Look at the map. Israelis living within the range of the rockets often live in fear that a rocket attack could come at any time. Israelis, in general, also fear terrorism, such as attacks by suicide bombers. Since Hamas has not accepted non-violent solutions to the conflict, they refuse to speak out against suicide bombers/terrorist attacks. Israel even believes that Hamas directly supports the terrorists. The other main Palestinian political party is called Fatah. In 1988 they gave up terrorism as a solution.

4) Jerusalem



When the United Nations divided Palestine, the plan was to have Jerusalem be an international city. That means that Jerusalem would be its own country. During the war in 1948 after Israel was created, Israel controlled part of the city (**West Jerusalem**). As part of the temporary armistice, Jordan controlled the other part, **East Jerusalem**, which is in the West Bank. Israel took over the entire city during the Six Day War. Palestinians want to have East Jerusalem as their national capital, when they get their independence. Israel, however, wants to keep all of the city.

5) The Right To Return

As you already learned, there are many Palestinian refugees as a result of the conflict. There are currently about 5 million Palestinians waiting to return to their homes. Some live in refugee camps in the Occupied Territories. Others live in refugee camps in neighboring countries, like Jordan and Lebanon. Many of the refugees (or their parents/grandparents) lived in villages that were taken over by Israel. Those refugees want to return to their homes. Now, many realize that those homes are no longer there, but they feel there should be some compensation for the property that they lost. Others actually want to return to their land, even if it is in Israel. Many people in Israel do not want Palestinians to return to land inside the country of Israel, because they are afraid that if Palestinians return, it will make their Jewish country less Jewish. Today, Israel has about 7 million people. If all the Palestinian refugees return to their land within the country of Israel, then they would make up nearly 1/2 of the total population.



