

PALESTINE FOR BEGINNERS

a fact sheet - history and issues

For thousands of years until 1948, the place now called Israel was called Palestine.

- Both Palestinians and Jews have been living in the area for thousands of years. Just as today's Jews claim descent from the ancient Khabiru or Hebrews, today's Palestinians claim descent from the Kena'anu, or Canaanites, who founded the city of Jerusalem as well as the city of Jericho.

1948: war of defense or war of conquest?

- In 1947, 33% of the population of Palestine was Jewish, and that minority owned less than 10% of the land. The UN General Assembly -- under heavy pressure from the US government -- suggested giving 54% of the land of Palestine to the Jewish people. The Arab residents of Palestine, making up 67% of the population, objected and questioned the right of the UN to make such decisions. By 1949, Jewish/Zionist forces had conquered 78% of the land.
- 750,000 Palestinians were forced to flee. 418 Palestinian towns and villages were destroyed. Despite international objections, these Palestinians were not allowed to return to their homes after the war.
- In 1949, the UN passed UNGA Res. 194, calling on Israel to compensate the Palestinian refugees or allow them to return. Israel has never agreed to this, even though Res. 194 was a condition for Israel's acceptance into the UN.

Israel discriminates against non-Jewish religions or ethnicities.

- The idea of creating a Jewish state in Palestine came from a European Jewish nationalist movement called "Zionism" which ignored the fact that Palestine already had inhabitants. Both Palestinian Jews and Palestinian Arabs objected to the Zionist movement.
- Although 20% of Israeli citizens are not Jewish, only Jews have complete access to jobs and civil rights.
- Any Jew who arrives in Israel can immediately receive citizenship -- this is the "Law of Return".

Israel attacked Egypt and defeated Jordan in 1967, taking the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of the Jordan River. Its continued occupation of these territories is apartheid-like and illegal.

- The Occupied Territories have never been formally annexed into the nation of Israel, and so over three million Palestinians who remain there are not citizens of any country. They are subjects of a military occupation and have been living under Israeli military laws since 1967. These laws closely resemble the apartheid laws which until recently oppressed the Black majority in South Africa.
 - **Palestinians in the Occupied Territories have no right of free speech.**
 - **Their homes can be entered and searched without warrants.**
 - **They can be arrested without warrant or charge.**
 - **They can be held in jail for up to 6 months without charge or trial.**
 - **They are routinely tortured during interrogation.**
 - **They have no freedom of movement between towns.**
 - **They can be expelled from the country for no reason.**
- **Palestinian farmland and homes are routinely confiscated and demolished to make room for Israeli settlements** and special Israeli-only highways connecting them. The Israeli government subsidizes the building of these settlements and gives financial incentives to certain Israeli citizens to move to them.
- **Israel has prevented the economy of the Occupied Territories from developing.** In the Territories, there is currently over 60% unemployment. Palestinian non-citizens provide cheap labor for Israel when convenient. These policies amount to systematic ethnic cleansing as more Palestinians are forced to leave in order to survive.
- **Israeli settlements are illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention** which forbids an occupier to transfer its own people into the area.
- Israel occupied and then annexed East Jerusalem in 1967. International law forbids acquiring territory by force.
- Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 forced another 250,000 Palestinians to flee. **Millions of refugees and their descendants now live outside Israel/Palestine**, many in impoverished refugee camps. The Palestinian refugees' right to return home is fully recognized by the UN.

There has been no just peace process.

- Israel has never offered an independent state to Palestinians, nor ever offered to share sovereignty in Jerusalem.
- **The 1993 Oslo Accord created nothing more than semi-autonomous Palestinian zones which are almost identical to our Native American reservations** or to the bantustans created to divide and disrupt the Black majority in old South Africa. These scattered areas of Palestinian authority are isolated from each other, and have limited authority over things like sewage and traffic tickets. Real authority remains with the state of Israel.
 - Israel retains the right to veto any laws passed by the Palestinian National Authority.
 - Israeli soldiers are still allowed to search, arrest, and deport Palestinians at any time.
 - Palestinians, though still subject to Israeli authority, are still not able to vote in Israeli elections.
 - Land confiscation and settlement building have accelerated since the Oslo plan was signed.
 - All civil and economic injustices have continued: the Israeli government continues to confiscate land for roads and towns, demolish homes, assassinate people, and block access to jobs, medicine, and schools. Thus it is hard for Palestinians to believe that the Israeli government is negotiating in good faith.
- **The offers of Barak's government in 2000 did not change these facts.** Barak continued to offer Palestinians islands of land surrounded by Israeli settlements and roads. These unconnected islands would render a nation-state economically and politically unviable. Like a prison where guards ring the periphery and pace the halls to maintain control, the Occupied Territories would still be completely controlled by Israel under all current "peace" offers. **Neither the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees nor the Palestinian right to East Jerusalem have ever been acknowledged by Israel.**

The current uprising (Intifada) is a result of over 50 years of injustices and frustration with the lack of good-faith negotiations by Israel.

This is not a struggle between equals. This is resistance by a mostly unarmed, oppressed people against a powerful, well-armed state which has imposed a military dictatorship.

**While both individual and state terrorism have occurred,
Israeli state terrorism is far more prevalent and has taken many more lives.**

The United States subsidizes Israel with 3-5 billion dollars every year in grants and loan guarantees. It also provides Israel with the most modern military technology possible. Our helicopters, rockets, bullets, and tear gas canisters are killing Palestinians. When the US ceases subsidizing Israeli apartheid, Israel will be more likely to negotiate in good faith.

**Israelis, Palestinians and all the peoples of Israel/Palestine deserve justice, economic and civil rights, and self determination. As long as an unjust system is maintained by violence, there will be violent resistance.
To end the violence, end the injustice.**

Tell Congress to stop subsidizing injustice with aid, weapons, and UN vetoes.

**President George Bush: (202) 456-1111, president@whitehouse.gov
Senator Patty Murray: (206) 553-5545, senator_murray@murray.senate.gov
Senator Maria Cantwell: (206) 220-6400, maria@cantwell.senate.gov
Congressional Switchboard: (202) 225-3121**

some books
PALESTINE AND ISRAEL: A Challenge To Justice John Quigley
THE BIRTH OF ISRAEL Simha Flapan
HOW ISRAEL WAS WON Baylis Thomas
THE ARABS AND ISRAEL FOR BEGINNERS Ron David
INTRODUCING THE HOLOCAUST Haim Bresheeth, Stuart Hood and Litza Jansz
BLAMING THE VICTIMS Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.)

some websites
www.electronicintifada.net
www.lawsociety.org
www.btselem.org
www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org
www.sustaincampaign.org
www.gush-shalom.org

developed by the Palestine Information Project

www.palestineinformation.org

palestinejustice@aol.com