

**Arab-Jewish Conflict:
An Examination of Its Origin**

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Abstract

The Jews believe that the land of Jerusalem is their eternal home. This belief contributed to the rise of a Zionist movement in Europe from the 1800s to the early 1900s. That movement promoted the idea of a Jewish “return” to Palestine. Later, the Law of Return established a legal basis for Jews worldwide to immigrate to and obtain citizenship in the State of Israel. It should be noted that after the British Mandate ended in 1948 and the State of Israel was established that year, there was hope that a democratic Israeli constitution would include non-Jewish citizens. That hope was thwarted as the displacement of Palestinians continued—most notably during the Nakba of 1948 and with further large-scale displacements after Hamas attacked Israel on 7th October, 2023. This paper argues that the Israeli-Palestinian crisis dates back more than 73 years and did not begin on 7th October, 2023. Essentially, the Arab-Israeli conflict has roots extending as far back as the Balfour Declaration, which led to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The core issue

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between Arabs and Jews was that Zionism, a Jewish movement, became the primary catalyst in the emotionally charged crisis of the region. The role of Western powers and the Arabs' attitude towards the plight of the Arabs-Palestinians also intensified the ongoing turmoil. The United Nations' attempts to resolve the conflict by proposing two neighbouring states, Palestine and Israel, failed miserably. The American President, Donald Trump's declaration to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and his encouragement for Egypt and Jordan to accept Gaza refugees within their borders, further inflamed Arab resentment. This paper, therefore, discusses the origin of the Arabs and Jewish conflicts in its historical unfolding and proposes some conflict resolution strategies involving pan-Arabism and the Zionist agenda within the context of Jewish Israel and the Arabs-Palestine conflict.

Keywords: Zionism, Jewish Supremacy, Nakba, British Mandate, Racial Discrimination.

Introduction

As the Arab-Islamic civilisation expanded, the Persian and Roman empires were rival powers vying for control of the world. The Arab movement collapsed these two powers in the Middle East, especially the conquest of Jerusalem during the reign of Khalifa Umar bn Khatab and the two empires fell under the dominion of Islamic civilisation. When the Islamic civilisation reached its zenith under the Ottoman Empire, internal schisms and the rise of Western powers contributed to the gradual weakening of Ottoman rulers. The Western powers, especially the British Empire, took administrative control of Jerusalem under the British Mandate. During that period, the Jews endured anti-Semitic violence in Europe during World War II, which further fuelled the desire to create a Jewish state where Jews could settle as a home. Palestine was chosen because of the Jews' historical connection to Jerusalem. This process led to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, after decades of political activity, and this followed earlier statements such

as the Balfour Declaration. The UN and other actors described the intended character as democratic, with the principle that different ethnic and religious groups would be treated equally. The USA later became the main supporter of the Jewish State till date to oversee its interests in the Middle-East. The forceful displacement of the Palestinians led to the first *Nakba* (Catastrophe) of 1948, where Palestinians were massacred and exiled. The Jewish State was never condemned by the international community, and the recent collective punishment and ethnic cleansing of Gaza, which took place between 2023 and 2025, have also not been sufficiently condemned, as there have never been consequences for the Jewish State. In the final analysis, this paper looks at the origin of the Jewish state of Israel and considers the relation of Israel to its Arab-Palestinian neighbour.

The Origin of Arab-Jewish Conflict

The Zionist founders of Israel sought a place to serve Jewish communities, rather than a polity shared equally with the existing Arab inhabitants (Galloway, 2023). The United Nations partition plan of 1947 proposed that both the Arab and Jewish States would draft democratic constitutions guaranteeing equal rights for Jews and non-Jews. But Israel never fulfilled the requirement for a democratic constitution; its government was able to act without constitutional legal restriction. Also, it was accepted in the West as the only democratic State in the Middle East (Beinin, 2014:2).

In essence, the incessant conflicts between Arabs and Jews had their origins in the rise of Zionism as a political ideology in Europe and the arrival of Jewish settlers in Ottoman Palestine in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. To locate the conflict solely from 7 October 2023 without recourse to the period of 1948 is a total aberration of historical truth. Immediately after the creation of the Jewish State, a systematic ethnic cleansing was hatched against the Arabs. The local Arab population opposed this policy of the Zionists, primarily out of fear of territorial displacement and dispossession.

Ashkenazi Jews (Jews of European origin) often emphasised the idea of being God's chosen people. However, many contemporary Jews cannot directly trace descent to the tribe of Judah; historically, the term "Jew" derives from Judea rather than from all twelve ancient Israelite tribes. Jews only represent two (2) of Israel's Ancient 12 tribes, Judah and Benjamin. None of the other 10 tribes were ever referred to as Jews.

Israel as a single kingdom was only ever unified during the rule of two kings, David and his son, Solomon. This was from 1003BC to 930BC. After this, the nation was separated into two: the Northern Kingdom, and Judea, the Southern Kingdom. The ten (10) tribes of Israel were captured by the vast Assyrian Empire in 722 BC and dispersed among the nations throughout the world (Beinin, 2014:3). They were never Jews but have different identities and nationalities now as gentiles. Before the 10 tribes were conquered by Assyria in 722BC, they were known as the Northern Kingdom, Israel, Ephraim, and Samaria. The Northern Kingdom of Israel, the ten, and the Southern Kingdom, the two, were in constant unrest and even in civil war (Horace, 1921:6).

The southern kingdom was known as Judea and Jerusalem. That is where the term Jew evolved and was established. After they were taken captive by Babylon in 597BC, Judea returned to Jerusalem as a small nation in 536BC after Cyrus's edict in 538BC. The Jews/Judeans rejected Jesus Christ as Messiah and had him crucified as foretold in the Biblical scripture. Christianity spread throughout gentile nations, and up until today Christ is still rejected by the Jews, and, in extreme cases, they blaspheme him in their religious writings (Safran, 1979:6).

In the scriptural narration, God was said to have made promises to Abraham to raise a nation for his firstborn, Ishmael, who is the forefather of the Arab nations. They have just as much, if not more, validity to live on the lands God promised to Abraham, because they can prove that they are Semites and also Hebrews. The modern-day Jews, who are Ashkenazi and Khazars, have trouble showing their lineage link to Semites as they are impostors (Safran, 1979:6). Zionism, in ramification, was a political philosophy devoid of any religious creed but was only made colourful with Biblical texts. Moses Hess, a Zionist political thinker postulated that Jews are not a religious group, but a separate nation, a special race, and any modern Jew who denies this is not only an apostate, a religious renegade, but a traitor to his people, his tribe and his race (John, 1988:35). In the Jews' traditional belief, Jerusalem was their eternal origin dated back to the reign of King 'David' who conquered and established Israel as a kingdom (John, 1988:35). Jerusalem came under successive conquerors like the Babylonians, the Assyrians who were said to have destroyed Solomon's Temple in the city and exiled a large number of Jews. About 50 years later, the Persian King,

Cyrus, conquered Babylonia and allowed a group of Jews from Babylonia to rebuild Jerusalem and settle in it. The Persians ruled the land from about 530 to 331BC until Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire around 1st October 331 BC at the battle of Arbela (Vlastimil, 2025). Jerusalem under the new rulers, called Seleucids, allowed the practice of Judaism. But later, one of the kings, Antiochus, tried to prohibit it. Besides, the Jews also encountered persecution under the Roman leadership so much that the Romans slaughtered 600,000 Jews; others were expelled from the country, and the rest were taken into captivity. Since then, the Jews spread over the entire world with the hope of coming back and settling in their lost land. The name Palestine emanated from the Romans, who derived it from Herodotus, who first used the term “Palestine Syria” (Baruchin, 2024). Jerusalem was conquered by the Muslims during the reign of Umar bn Khatabi, and the dominance of the Muslim faith was re-established by Saladin Ayyubi, who gave directives for the Jews to return to the land. However, the root of the modern Arab-Jew debacle came out of the Zionist movement and that of Pan-Arabism. Areas regarded by the Jewish people as their ancestral homeland were also claimed by the Pan-Arab movement as historically belonging to Palestinians, and in the Pan-Islamic context as Muslim lands (Adam, 1948).

The Emergence of Zionist Movement

As a result of persecution, many Jews migrated from Palestine and dispersed across the world. Some Jewish communities moved along east-west routes from Palestine to places such as Iraq, Egypt, Cyrenaica, Morocco, Spain and Portugal. Others took to the Caucasus, and then, to Russia and Poland (Vlastimil, 2025). Nevertheless, Jewish communities existed in the northernmost region of Palestine. As earlier noted, the Jews were persecuted around the beginning of the Christian era, in 70AD and again in 132AD by the Romans and the Byzantine Empire, both of Christian faith. By the Seventh Century AD, Muslim armies moved north from Arabian Peninsula to conquer most of the Middle East, including Jerusalem, at about 638AD under the leadership of Khalid bin Walid. What followed the conquest was a period that witnessed religious harmony among all inhabitants. Many of the Jews who were exiled by the Christian powers were asked to return to Jerusalem by the Muslims. (Adam, 1948:636-637).

The Muslim reign in Jerusalem led to tremendous population growth. For instance, in early 1878, Jerusalem had an estimated population of about 462,465, of which Muslims were about 403,795, Christians 43,659 and 15,011 Jews. In addition, there were perhaps 10,000 Jews with foreign citizenship. By 1881, the figure increased to 565,000 Arabs and 24,000 Jews living in Palestine, while 90% were Muslim and the rest were Christian. It was this era that some of the Jews, under the Ottoman Empire, started to nurse the desire for the establishment of a Jewish State (Adam, 1948:636-637). It should be noted that Palestine was once administered directly by the Ottoman authority from Istanbul, while Jerusalem and Bethlehem remained the Holy centre for Muslims, Christians and Jews. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Jews living in Palestine were devoted to their orthodox religious tenets and their attachment to the land was religious rather than national (Kaleen, 1975: 166). The rise of anti-Semitism in Europe led to the agitation of creating a Jewish State either in Palestine or Argentina. This idea was propagated by Theodor Herzl, who convened the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897 (Alkalai, 2025). It was a strong fraternity call for the revival of national identity and nationality to be embedded in Jewish life and thought, all in Palestine (Kaleen, 1975:171). Zionism thus signifies the movement for the return of the Jews to the Promised Land , which was nurtured from 1896 to 1948. Religiously, the Mountain Zion was the sacramental focal point of Jewish piety, while Israel is the covenant community committed to the rule of God as expressed in the Holy Torah (Kaleen, 1975:172). Therefore, the Jews saw Jerusalem as their “Promised Land” (Hertzberg, 1967: 219).

Pan-Arab Nationalism and Zionist Occupation

The modern Arab–Jewish conflict grew out of the rise of Zionism and the concurrent development of Arab nationalism, especially after the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and through the Mandate period leading up to 1948. When World War I started, the Middle East, including Palestine, had been under the control of the Ottoman Empire for nearly 500 years. During the closing years of their Empire, the Ottomans began to expose their Turkish ethnic identity, asserting the primacy of Turks within the Empire, leading to discrimination against Arabs. The promise of liberation from the Ottomans led many Jews and Arabs to support the Allied Powers during WWI&II.

The British betrayal after the war led to the emergence of widespread Arab nationalism (Hadza, 1920).

However, the Arab nationalist movement clashed with Jewish forces at the Battle of Tel Hai in March 1920, which subsequently led to the development of a local Palestinian form of Arab nationalism, marked by the return of Amin al- Husseini from Damascus to Jerusalem later that year (Hadza 1920). During this period, Jewish immigration to Palestine continued, and some opinions suggest that, though less documented, a similar influx of workers from Syria and neighbouring areas also occurred in the Arab sector. Palestinian Arabs perceived this rapid increase in Jewish immigrants as a threat to their homeland and identity. Additionally, Jewish land purchases and bans on employing Arabs in Jewish-owned industries and farms angered Arab communities. Demonstrations began as early as 1920, protesting what Arabs saw as unfair preferences for Jewish immigrants under the British Mandate governing Palestine at the time (Beinin, 2014: 1).

As Arab nationalism waned, Zionist strategies to dominate Arabs intensified in Europe, leading to numerous riots- most notably in 1929- culminating in the Hebron Massacre, where 67 Jews were killed. From 1930 to 1940, the Arab nationalist movement was responsible for over 116 Arab and 133 Jewish deaths at the Western Wall (Beinin, 2014: 14). This violence escalated when, in the mid- 1930s, Izz Ad- din Al- Qassam founded the Black Hand, an anti- Zionist, anti- British militant organisation. He recruited and trained peasants- by 1935, over 200 men, eventually growing to 800- who carried out attacks against Jewish settlers and engaged Arab youths in vandalism campaigns (Harbabi, 1977: 30). Tensions grew, leading to the Arab revolt in Palestine from 1936 to 1939. In response to Arab pressure, the British mandate reduced Jewish immigration, a policy that persisted until the end of the mandate period, which coincided with the Nazi Holocaust and the flight of Jewish refugees from Europe. Consequently, most Jewish migrants were regarded as settlers by Palestinians, further heightening tensions (Harbabi, 1978:31).

Over 1.4 million Palestinians became citizens of Israel, living inside the country's 1949 armistice borders and comprising about 20 percent of its population. From the foregoing, the population of Palestinians living in the West Bank was about 2.6 million (including 200,000 in East Jerusalem) and

about 1.6 million living in the Gaza Strip. The remaining 5.6 million Palestinian people lived in Diaspora, outside the country they claim as their national homeland (Beinin, 2014:4).

The creation of the State of Israel had become a tragedy to the Arabs, even the promoters of the establishment of Israel kept this reality in their mind, and some of them even loudly advocated for the dispossession of the Arabs. For instance, Smolensk said, “Palestine must become a home for the Jewish people. It is possible to transfer the Arab inhabitants from Palestine to the nearby Arab regions” (Greenberg, 1993). This idea was also echoed by President Donald Trump. He pushes the possibility of relocating the Gaza Strip citizens to Egypt and Jordan, an idea that was rejected by the Arabs.

The United Nation (UN) Partition Plan in 1947 was not accepted and this led to the Arab and Jewish residents fighting each other days after its adoption. The Arab resistance was not as efficient as the Zionist’s in terms of organisation. By early April 1948, the Zionist forces had secured control over most of the territory allotted to the Jewish State in the UN plan and begun to go on the offensive, conquering territory beyond the partition plan. On 15th May, 1948, the British evacuated the disjointed Palestine and Zionist leaders declared the State of Israel (Safran, 1978).

The Palestinian refugees doubled up between 1947 and 1949, to approximately 700,000 living in refugees’ camps. Many of them had claimed that most were expelled in accordance with a Zionist plan to rid the country of its non-Jewish inhabitants. The official Israeli position holds that the refugees fled on orders from Arab political and military leaders (Berger, 1967: 426). One Israeli military intelligence document indicates that, throughout June, 1948 at least 75 percent of the refugees fled due to military actions by Zionist militias, psychological campaigns aimed at frightening Arabs into leaving, and dozens of direct expulsions.

Subsequently, the Palestinians engaged in resistance activities, which resulted in the birth of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in 1969, led by Yasser Arafat as its Chairman. In October 1974, the Arab States acknowledged the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In the same year, United Nations Organisation granted the PLO observer status within the organisation. In 1988, the PLO declared

the independence of Palestine, administering their government at the West Bank (Colin, 1979:239).

To some extent, the Palestinians were granted Israeli citizenship and the right to vote. But in many respects, they were and remained second-class citizens, since Israel defined itself as a Jewish State and the State of only the Jewish people, and Palestinians were non-Jews. The Arabs were also not permitted to become full members of the Israeli Trade Union Federation. About 40 percent of their lands were confiscated by the state and used for development projects like grazing lands that benefited Jews primarily or exclusively. All of the successive governments in Israel had discriminated against the Arab population by allocating far fewer resources for education, health care, public works, municipal government and economic development to the Arab sector (Nasser, 1963:23).

The Palestinians suffered much from their brethren and were deprived of the same rights as the citizens of those Arab States. The situation of the refugees in Lebanon was especially horrible; some key political players in Lebanon blame Palestinians for the Civil War that wracked their country from 1975–1991, and demanded that they be evacuated and resettled elsewhere in order for the Lebanese to maintain peace in their country (Faruq, 2004:127). Some elements of Lebanese Christian population were particularly anxious to rid the country of the mainly Muslim Palestinians because of their fear that the Palestinians threatened the delicate balance among the country's religious groups (Faruq, 2004:127).

The Palestinians' dilemma became terrible under the powerful Zionist agenda. Almost 40 percent of the Palestinian male population has been imprisoned at least once. Torture of Palestinian prisoners has been a common practice since at least 1971. Even though Israel's High Court of Justice forbade the "routine" use of such techniques in 1999. Dozens of people died in detention from abuse due to the accusation of having the intent for terrorism. As early as 2013, Israel built 145 official settlements and about 100 unofficial settlement "outposts" and permitted 560,000 Jewish citizens to move to East Jerusalem and the West Bank (Beinin,2014:7).

Many settlements were built on expropriated, privately owned Palestinian lands. Israel justified its violation of International Law by claiming that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were not technically "occupied" because they were never part of the sovereign territory of any State. According to

this interpretation, Israel is but an “administrator” of territory whose status remains to be determined. The international community has rejected this official Israeli position and maintained that international law should apply in the West Bank and Gaza. But little effort was made to enforce international law or hold Israel accountable for the violations it engaged in since 1967 (Badi, 1960:156).

In the late 1980s, Hamas, an Islamist group, emerged to challenge the Zionist agenda with a more radical method and was thus declared a terrorist group. By the year 2000, the group diminished the authority of the PLO. Israel refused to acknowledge Palestinian national rights and refused to negotiate with the PLO, arguing that it was nothing but a terrorist organisation, and insisted on dealing only with Jordan or other Arab States. Israel emphatically rejected the establishment of a Palestinian State, demanding that Palestinians be incorporated into the existing Arab States (Horace, 1921:10).

As indicated earlier, Britain led other nations in supporting the movement for the creation of a Jewish sovereign nation. The Balfour Declaration set the pace, while the USA was fully informed about the movement, but Germany and Russia did not fully support the Zionist movement. The conquest and establishment of the British mandate in Palestine was a clear testament to the accomplishment of her mission as declared by Balfour. This was the reward for the service rendered by the Jews in fighting alongside Britain in all her wars and emerging victorious. The immigration of Jews into Palestine from 1917 to 1948, when the State of Israel was created, proved that the Zionist plot was accomplished. Similarly, the British mandate definitely favoured the Jewish annexation of Palestine, at the expense of the Arabs (Raphael, 1970). However, the final draft of the mandate stated that Hebrew shall be the official language, alongside Arabic and English (Rober, 1978: 26). In order to mitigate the incessant conflicts, the British called for two conferences: the London Conference of February 1939 and that of October 1946. These conferences failed woefully, as the British government voted in favour of the Jews, and the Arabs rejected the resolutions (Herner, 1974).

Despite the rejection by the Arabs, Britain was the leading figure to intervene and stop the advance of Arab troops during the Arab and Israel War and to ask for an armistice, which allowed the Jews to prepare

themselves better against future conflict. Britain played a decisive role in giving birth to the distressing problem of the Arabs by reducing them to refugees. Similarly, the government of the USA supported the Zionist movement and in 1948, recognised the provisional government of Israel as a sovereign nation (Beinin, 2014:14). The consistent support for Israel was because Israel was playing an important role in furthering the interests of U.S.A in the Middle-East. The United Nations, which was involved after the termination of the British mandate in resolving the conflict, voted in favour of Israel to secure 56 percent of the land and the other most important fertile areas. Hence, throughout the twentieth century, Palestine had become a trouble spot of competing territorial claims and political interests (Colin, 1979:39).

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump's declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was largely criticised worldwide. What the British sought to do was to revisit the UN General Assembly resolution on 29 November 1947, which advocated for the partition of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and the other Arab. The UN partition plan was to divide the country so that each state would have a majority of its own population, although a few Jewish settlements would fall within the proposed Arab State, while hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs would become part of the proposed Jewish State. The territory designated for the Jewish State would be slightly larger than the Arab State (56 percent and 43 percent of Palestine, respectively, excluding Jerusalem), on the assumption that increasing numbers of Jews would immigrate there. According to the UN partition plan, the area of Jerusalem and Bethlehem was to become an international zone (Walter, 1917). In this preamble, the Palestinians argued that the territory allotted to the Jews largely belonged to them, as they have always regarded the Jewish State as a settler colony and had blamed the British for the support of massive Zionist settlement in Palestine against the wishes of the Arab majority.

The Arabs founded a resistance movement known as the *intifada* to resist the occupation by the Jews and towards the emancipation of their land. The masses protested by using stones, sticks, and pebbles against the occupiers. The *Intifada* took place in December 1987, in which the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza began a mass uprising against the Israeli occupation. For the first few years, it involved many forms of civil

disobedience, including massive demonstrations, general strikes, refusal to pay taxes and boycotts of Israeli products. It also included stone throwing and the erection of barricades to impede the movement of Israeli military forces. This uprising drew world attention to the situation facing Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. During the leadership of Yitzhak Rabin as Defence Minister, Israel tried to smash the *intifada* with “force, power and beatings.” From 1987 to 1991, over 1,000 Palestinians were killed, including over 200 under the age of 16 (Beinin, 2014:15). Invariably, Palestinian leaders of the uprising were jailed in 1990, and the *intifada* lost its unified force. Undercover Israeli security personnel disguised themselves as Arabs approached and executed their targets by using sniper methods to kill from a distance. In all these melees, Israel evaded being charged with war crimes by the international community. Political intransigence within the Palestinian community did not help the resistance movement. In one such dispute, Palestinian militants killed over 250 Palestinians suspected of collaborating with the Israeli authorities (Beinin, 2014:16).

It was at the height of this scenario that President George Walker Bush intervened to convey a conference in October 1991 in Madrid with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and the Palestinian authorities which failed woefully as the Israelis insisted the exclusion of the PLO and that the Palestinian desires for independence and statehood not to be directly addressed (Harbabi, 1977:33). In subsequent negotiating sessions held in Washington, The Palestinians were represented by a delegation from the Occupied Territories. Residents of East Jerusalem were barred by Israel from the delegation because the city was part of Israel. Human rights conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip deteriorated dramatically after Yitzhak Rabin became prime minister in 1992. Lack of progress in the Washington talks, human rights violations and economic decline in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip accelerated the growth of radical Islamists in the Palestinians’ struggle. Violent attacks against Israeli military and civilian targets by Hamas and Islamic Jihad further exacerbated tensions (Bernstein, 1977:12).

The second *intifada* was much bloodier than the first. During the first three weeks of the uprising, Israeli forces shot one million live bullets at unarmed Palestinian demonstrators. It was a conscious escalation in the use of force designed to avoid a protracted civil uprising, like the first *intifada*,

the Palestinians won international sympathy. On some occasions, armed policemen, often positioned at the rear of unarmed demonstrations, returned fire. Israel characterised the spreading protests as acts of aggression. Soon, the use of force expanded to include tanks, helicopters, gunships and even F-16 fighter planes. Civilian neighbourhoods were subjected to shelling and aerial bombardment. Officials justified waging full-scale war on Palestinians in the Occupied Territories by arguing that the law enforcement model (policing and riot control) was no longer viable because the military was “out” of Palestinian areas, and because Palestinians possessed (small) arms and thus constituted a foreign “armed adversary” (Masada, 2000).

Left with no option, the second *intifada* witnessed over 150 attacks targeting Tel-Aviv, from the year 2000 up to 2005. In November 2000, Hamas and Fatah began conducting suicide bombings and launching missiles with other armed operations. The State of Israel reacted violently, setting Gaza ablaze based on self-defence, while the Islamic militants escaped, the civilians, especially children, were massacred (Faruq, 2004).

Israel’s Ariel Sharon’s first term as premier coincided with a particularly violent stretch of the second *intifada*. A cycle of targeted killings of Palestinian militants and Palestinian attacks inside Israel culminated in a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv on 27 March 2002, during the Passover holiday. The attack killed 30 Israelis, and in retaliation, Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield, a full-scale tank invasion of the West Bank that lasted for several weeks. Armoured Caterpillar bulldozers razed swathes of the Jenin refugee camp and tanks ringed the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Meanwhile, Israeli forces imposed all-day curfews in seven of the West Bank’s eight major towns. Israel justified this offence as a hot pursuit of terrorist suspects, with the full backing of the George W. Bush administration in Washington (Uri, 1987:9).

The resistance front of Hamas’ attack on 7 October 2023 was seen as a reaction to Israel army air strike that hit Gaza for three days in a row, as West Bank violence intensifies and by 4th October 2023, Gaza Strip protesters received bullet wounds on their ankles. Medics reported that protesters had been deliberately targeted at the volatile boundary of the blockaded Palestinian enclave before 7th October 2023, during which Israeli soldiers killed 234 Palestinians in the West Bank, 52 of which occurred in Jenin

alone, including in its refugee camp, where Palestinians who have searched for safety amid conflict and violence over the years live. Throughout these killings, it took Hamas two weeks before striking Israel in what the world echoed blatant lies on the extent of destruction made and number of hostages taken (Haaretz, 2023).

Benjamin Netanyahu appeared less focused on securing the release of hostages than on the complete eradication of Hamas. Tragically, in the course of this campaign, some hostages were themselves killed in Israeli airstrikes. Reports alleged that ten hostages, including a ten year old child named Milacohen, died in such strikes. Earlier claims that forty babies had been beheaded were later debunked by Israeli newspapers; instead, it was confirmed that one infant was killed on 7th October, 2023 though not by beheading. In contrast, credible reports indicate that more than one hundred Palestinian infants were massacred. Another widely circulated but unsubstantiated claim was that Hamas had constructed tunnels beneath the Shifa Hospital. Subsequent investigations revealed that the supposed tunnel was, in fact, a water reservoir. Despite this, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched further operations at the hospital, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of wounded patients, displaced civilians, and residents. Hundreds more—including the critically ill and their families—were arrested. The IDF also reportedly demolished buildings, destroyed medical equipment, bulldozed hospital courtyards, and even exhumed graves of Palestinians buried nearby. Journalists were likewise reported to have been arrested and tortured, with their equipment destroyed and live broadcast vehicles sabotaged (Haaretz, 2023).

For more than half a century, Palestinians and many of their Arab allies endured the continuous loss of land through systematic seizures. In the late 1940s, Zionist forces displaced approximately 700,000 Palestinians from their homes in what has been widely described as acts of ethnic cleansing. One of the most notorious incidents was the massacre at Deir Yassin, where over 200 villagers—primarily elderly men, women, and children—were killed. The brutality of the attack was widely publicised by its perpetrators to instil fear and trigger mass flight, and many of those who fled have never been permitted to return (Begin, n.d.:162). Menachem Begin, who later became Prime Minister of Israel, openly declared that without Deir Yassin, the State of Israel would not have come into existence. Even in subsequent years,

violent episodes continued during periods nominally described as “peace,” including the Sharafat, Kibya, Kafr Qasem, Al-Sammou, Sabra and Shatila, and Oyon Qara massacres, among others (Begin, n.d.:162).

Many Palestinians who were born in the land were expelled, while priority was given to Jews of European descent to migrate and settle there. By 1948, Palestinians owned more than 90 percent of the land and property, yet almost all of it—farms, homes, and businesses—was seized by Jewish settlers. After forcing Palestinian refugees into exile and denying them the right of return, the new state enacted an “abandoned property” law, which legalised the confiscation of Palestinian assets and transferred them to Jewish ownership. This law went further by prohibiting the resale of such land to Palestinians, thereby entrenching dispossession (Uri, 1987.:22). In the present day, the war on Gaza has claimed the lives of more than 39,900 Palestinians since 7th October, 2023, in the aftermath of the Hamas incursion into Israel. Nearly 70 percent of those killed are women and children, while more than 8,000 others remain missing (Litvak, 1988:148).

As Jewish scholars Ian Lustick and Simha Flapan have demonstrated, the founders of Israel did not seek to build an integrated society where Jews and Arabs could coexist as equals. Instead, they established a system in which Jewish citizens dominate Arabs, creating a separate and unequal order where discrimination is institutionalised. For instance, approximately 90 percent of Israel’s territory has been legally designated as land that can be leased and cultivated only by Jews. Similarly, key institutions such as the kibbutz remain reserved exclusively for Jewish citizens (Uri, 1987:23).

This exclusionary ideology has also been reinforced at the political level. Israeli officials such as Minister Smart Ridge have openly denied the very existence of Palestinians, while the President of Israel has declared that all residents of Gaza bear collective responsibility for Hamas’ actions. Prior to these events, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared before the United Nations General Assembly with a map of Israel that erased all references to Palestine—a symbolic declaration of intent to eliminate Palestinian identity and claim all their lands. Between 2008 and October 2023, roughly 6,000 Palestinians were killed, while thousands more were held in administrative detention without trial. Israel remains one of the few states where juveniles are imprisoned under such conditions (McKernan, 2023).

Conclusion

If Israel were to halt its annexation policies, honour previously agreed commitments such as those outlined in the Oslo process, and pursue negotiated withdrawals from parts of the West Bank and Gaza, popular support for violent resistance could be significantly reduced. The continued failure of the international community to hold Israel accountable for violations of Palestinian human and civil rights has only deepened hostility. Policies of settlement expansion, land confiscation, and the construction of bypass roads under successive governments, particularly during Netanyahu's leadership, have entrenched inequality and prolonged conflict. To move toward peace, the ideology of Jewish supremacy must be discouraged, as it fosters systemic discrimination. A just society should integrate Jews and Arabs as equals in religious, social, and political life. As the region's most established democracy, Israel has a responsibility to safeguard minority rights and ensure equal opportunities for its Arab citizens, whose exclusion from institutions such as the armed forces continues to hinder their social and economic mobility.

Western governments must urgently reassess their policies and support genuine, balanced peace initiatives that address both Palestinian political and human-rights claims and Israel's security concerns. A lasting resolution requires clearly defined and mutually agreed boundaries for Israel and neighbouring Arab states, as well as a fair and transparent determination of Jerusalem's status that respects both Jewish and Arab claims. Other critical issues include the future of settlements, the rights and status of refugees, the principle of return, compensation for displaced Palestinians, equitable allocation of natural resources, and guarantees of mutual security. The political and economic viability of all states in the region, along with the civil and national rights of Palestinians living within Israel, must also be addressed. The international community has a vital role to play in supervising and facilitating a fair settlement, but this will only succeed if Arab states act in unity and if the United States lends its support to a two-state solution, as recently echoed by the British government. Finally, the United Nations' proposal to establish an international force for the protection of Gaza could serve as a necessary buffer against further violence and the dehumanisation of Palestinian civilians.

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