

Choose 3 events which are particularly important in the history of the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

Describe your chosen events and explain how they have shaped the views of today's

a) Israeli Jews and b) Palestinian Arabs

The current conflict in the Middle East between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs has many historical roots. Several events in the history of this conflict have been very important and also have a strong connection with the current situation between the two sides.

One of these important events was the Nazi Holocaust. During the Second World War the Jews were persecuted by the Nazis and sent to concentration camps. By the end of the war in 1945 6 million Jews were killed and 250,000 were freed from the concentration camps. As news about the holocaust emerged there was widespread sympathy for the Jews especially in the U.S.A. which had a large Jewish population. As a result of this, President Truman said that 100,000 Jewish refugees should be allowed to enter Palestine immediately but the British government knew that this would anger the Arabs and said that that it should be limited to 1,500 Jews a month. This resulted in hatred of the British rule especially among extremist Jewish terrorist groups like the Irgun when in July 1946 they entered the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which were the British military headquarters in Palestine, and set off an explosion killing 88 people. Despite this act of terrorism against the British and many others similar there was *still* worldwide sympathy for the Jewish immigrants. This pro-Jewish sympathy is still present today and is constantly being reinforced by events such as Holocaust Day, recent films such as "Schindler's List" and the teaching of the Holocaust in the school curriculum. This leaves the Jews at a slightly unfair advantage with regard to support from western countries and help from superpowers such as America in comparison to support for the Arabs. Arabs are angered by this sympathy because *they* didn't persecute the Jews in the Second World War but *they* had to deal with the consequences of giving up their land.

The Six Day War of 1967 was a dramatic military victory for the Israelis. In just six days the Israeli army managed to take out most of the surrounding Arab state's air force and regained control of the land that was lost in previous battles. The Israelis had taken Sinai, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem. The Golan Heights were also seized by the Israelis which is a very advantageous military spot because it is an area of high ground on the border of Israel and Syria. The Israelis came out of the war feeling proud and victorious that they managed to take on the three Arab countries by themselves. They were seen as the stronger military side by the rest of the world. The Arab states were left with little land or pride after the humiliation of the war. The PLO

(Palestine Liberation Organisation) began to grow in size because the Palestinians were determined to fight for their homeland after this embarrassing defeat. Terrorism soon started to spread to Europe and other parts of the world like in 1972 when 9 Palestinians seized and killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games. This act of terrorism and others like it were the result of divisions within the PLO which led to the creation of extremist groups who decided that raids on Israel had got them nowhere so far. These extremists were what made the news in the rest of the world so it was often the view with which the whole of the PLO was judged by. Extremism, rooted in this time, is still in operation today. The six day war is also still relevant today because both Jerusalem and the Golan Heights are still under Jewish military control which remains a problem in peacemaking deals with the Arabs.

The Arab-Israeli peace agreement on 13 September 1993 is also a very significant event in the history of the conflict and was an important breakthrough. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat shook hands at the White House in Washington in front of the whole world. It was agreed that Israeli troops would be withdrawn from Gaza and most of the West Bank leaving the Palestinian Council to run it for 5 years after which a final settlement would be decided upon. In return for this the Palestinians were to officially recognise the Jewish state. This agreement however didn't necessarily lead to peace. Although many people (both Israeli and Palestinian moderates) agreed with the peace agreement, looking forward to a more peaceful future, some extremist groups didn't and violence erupted. In 1995 Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a fellow Israeli, a Jewish extremist, who was in opposition to any form of agreement with the Palestinians and any loss of "bible land". As time progressed, the peace didn't. Both sides were unwilling to compromise after the struggling and hardship they had endured to both get their own land, in particular to have Jerusalem as their capital. Even now these views remain and this is why the violence and bloodshed continues. Each side refuses to relinquish land to aid peace believing it to be rightfully theirs.