

Nationalism is the source of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The conflict has gone on for many years. There is a lot of religious history behind the problems they have had. The Middle East has been affected politically, economically, and socially by these conflicts. Many peace agreements have been signed to solve these conflicts, however the tensions between the two are too great to stop.

The history between Israel and Palestine dates back to the second millennium B.C. This is when the Jews migrated to Palestine and established their capital in Jerusalem. The region of Palestine is sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It is sacred to Christians because they believe in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross in the city of Jerusalem. Muslims also find the land sacred because it was in Jerusalem where Mohammed the Prophet of Islam is believed to have ascended into heaven. Both Arabs and Jews consider it a homeland. As a result of religious beliefs, Jerusalem is an important city to many different groups of people.” (Worth, 3-4)

Zionism is the desire for a Jewish national homeland. In 1897, Theodor Herzl convened the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland. Herzl convinced Baron Edmond de Rothschild about the need for a Jewish Homeland Rothschild was a member of a famous family of international bankers. Rothschild purchased land in Palestine for Jewish Settlers. When the Jewish settlers arrived in Palestine, there were Arab peasant farmers living there and had been in Palestine for centuries. Most of the Arabs refused to share their land with the Jewish settlers, which caused much conflict. Jewish immigration continued and by 1914, forty thousand Jewish settlers traveled to Palestine, therefore further increasing the friction between the Jews and Arabs. (Worth, 6-9)

In 1917, the Balfour Declaration was formed. Lord Balfour, the British foreign secretary sent a letter to the Zionist leader, Lord Rothschild. He stated that Britain would do its best to create an establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people. At this point the population of Palestine was 700,000. 547,000 were Muslims, 74,000 were Christian, and only 56,000 were Jews. Palestinians strongly disagreed with the Balfour Declaration and showed their disapproval through protests. (http://www.pna.net/facts/pal_hist.htm)

In 1947, the first Arab Israeli war began. This war was a result of Arabs refusal to accept the partition of Palestine. They believed it went against 1,800 years of Palestine’s history. The partition gave the territory of the ancient Jewish states to the Arabs while the Jews received territory that was non-Jewish. In early December of 1947, fights broke out between Arabs and Jews throughout Palestine. Israelis fought back with a series of carefully planned offensives. As a result, Israel gained twenty-one percent more land than it originally had under the 1947 partition plan. (Ovendale, 133-138)

“On April 7th 1967, Israel attacked Syrian artillery positions in the Golan Heights that were shelling northern Israeli settlements. Israel shot down six Syrian MIG fighters. Nasser then moved his army into the Sinai Peninsula up to the border with Israel. This led up to the Six-Day War. On June 5th 1967, Israel’s air force staged a massive raid on Egyptian airfields and later in the day also destroyed air bases in Syria, Jordan, and Iraq. Over 400 Israeli planes were destroyed, while only 19 Israeli planes were destroyed. By the third day of the Six-Day War, Israel had captured Gaza and all of Sinai up to the banks of the Suez Canal. Israel’s strategic position was greatly enhanced with the control of Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula, all of Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan Heights.” (Peretz, 61-68)

In 1969, another war broke out. This war was a continuation of the 1967 war. This war was called the War of Attrition. Once again Egypt and Israel went to war over the Suez Canal. Once the cease-fire was no longer valid, Egyptian artillery began to damage Israeli outposts along the canal. Nasser wanted to destroy Israel to the point that it would have no choice but to withdraw from the canal. After Israel destroyed Egypt’s air defense system, they used massive air attacks on Egyptian artillery, airfields and deep-penetration raids striking at industrial and civilian targets hundreds of miles into Northern Egypt. Hundreds of civilians were murdered as a result. On August 7th 1970 a cease-fire went into effect. (Peretz, 68-69)

“In 1973, eight Egyptians and six Syrian officers met in Alexandria to finalize the plan for a simultaneous attack on Israeli forces in Sinai and the Golan heights. The attack was planned to take place on October 6th at 2 p.m. because the weather conditions, moonrise, and tides would all be favorable then for the crossing of the canal. It was also Yom Kippur, although this was not a primary consideration. On the date of the attack Israel was almost taken by surprise. Dayan was notified 4 a.m. that Syria and Egypt were going to attack later that day. Reserves were mobilized immediately and a pre-emptive strike by the air force was considered. On October 18th, Israeli forces were driving back the Arab armies and Moscow promoted a cease-fire resolution.” (Ovendale, 218-221)

“In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon with the intent of destroying the Palestine Liberation Organization. Israel assumed that the PLO was involved in shooting and severely injuring the Israeli ambassador in London on June 3rd 1982. Tens of thousands were killed and made homeless in the wake of the invasion, which culminated in the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla. On June 25th, there was a cease-fire.” (Peretz, 81-86)

The Intifada is a Palestine Arab uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza begun in December 1987 from Arabic “shaking off”. The aim of this peace agreement was to permit Arab countries to restore relations with Egypt.

“The Gulf War, which took place in 1991, brought some relief the basic problems of the Middle East. Most Arab states still struggle with authoritarianism and anachronistic autocracy.” (Fernea & Hocking, 261-263)

“Since September 29, 2000, the Israeli military aggression on the Palestinian land has claimed more than 260 lives, mostly young, civilian, and unarmed Palestinians. It has also caused various injuries to more than 10,000 people; many which are critically injured, and will be disabled for life. This high number of Palestinian casualties, within such a short period of time, was mainly due to the excessive force used by the Israeli military. All types of bullets and ammunition, anti-tank missiles, helicopter gun-ships, and tanks were all used against civilian population trying to express their frustration with the continued Israeli occupation of their homeland, and against the Israeli’s who continued to deny their God given right for freedom, dignity, and independence.” (http://www.pna.net/events/economy_under_siege2.htm) “The government in Palestine has gotten more democratic. On January 20, 1996, residents of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip voted in the first democratic election of the Palestinian people. There were 672 candidates from 16 districts who competed for 88 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council. The elections also resulted in the election of the Ra’ees or President of the Executive Authority of the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority. More than 1500 international observers, including representatives of many foreign countries and international organizations, as well as non governmental organizations, participated in overseeing the results of the elections.” (http://www.pna.net/government/plc_back_mopic.htm)

“Palestine is starting to form a representative government. The government has eleven permanent committees. They are the Jerusalem Committee; Lands and Settlements Committee; Committee for Refugees and Palestinians Abroad; Political Committee; Legal Committee; Budget Committee; Committee for the Economy; Committee for the Interior; Education and Social Affairs Committee; Natural Resources and Energy Committee; and the Human Rights, Public Freedoms, and General Purposes Committee. The committees review and propose amendments to legislation, report to the Council, receive constituent complaints, and study and review plans, programs, agreements, and treaties submitted to the Council by the Executive Authority. The committees usually meet twice a week and may hold additional meetings at the call of the chairman, or by request of the Speaker or a majority of the members of the committee, with at least 24 hours notice. The committees meet in secret but can decide to hold public meetings.” (http://www.pna.net/government/plc_committees_mopic.htm)

“Recently the economy of Palestine is weak. The total loss incurred by the Palestinian economy as a result of devastating impact of the Israeli closure and siege policy over the past six weeks is estimated to be about US\$ 774 million. Palestinian industrial, agricultural, tourism, and construction sectors are facing major difficulties in their battle to survive the current Israeli comprehensive closure and siege policy, and to cope with their losses caused by it. As a result of the closure, the earnings of more than 125,000 Palestinian workers in the Israeli market, estimated at US\$ 3.5 million a day, were lost over night. This has caused a subsequent decline in the domestic consumption and in the local production as an inevitable result of the loss of workers income. The gross figure of wage income lost from working in Israel and Israeli settlements and industrial zones over the past six weeks amounts to US\$ 126 million. Merchandise exports to Israel and other regional and international markets through Israeli ports, valued at about an average of US\$ 2.0 million a day, were virtually halted as a result of the closure and siege. The Israeli aggression has also caused extensive and substantial damage to public and private properties in the West Bank and Gaza Strip due to continued bombardment by heavy rocket fire, tanks, and gunships.” (http://www.pna.net/events/economy_under_siege.htm)

“Israel has three levels of political influence. Israel has a president, a prime minister and it has a Knesset, which is a parliament. The president of Israel has little power, but serves as a symbolic and moral center, and in difficult times can play an important role through statements. Israel introduced a system of direct elections for prime minister. With the present system the parliament, the Knesset, no longer has the right to remove a prime minister. The Knesset is a unicameral, and has 120 members. There are a large number of parties represented. With the new political system of

Israel, the Knesset has less power than earlier, but retains direct control over a number of issues as well as budgetary matters.” (http://lexicorient.com/cgi-bin/eo-direct-frame.pl?http://i-cias.com/e.o/israel_2.htm)

“Israel has the highest average living standards in the Middle East. Much of the growth in Israel’s economy has come from its politics that has allowed high deficits on state budgets and foreign trade balance. Agriculture, mining and tourism all contribute to Israel’s booming economy. Israel has a Gross National Product of \$81 billion. It only has an unemployment rate of 6%. That could be why Israel’s economy is so successful.” (http://lexicorient.com/cgi-bin/eo-direct-frame.pl?http://i-cias.com/e.o/israel_2.htm) “Education is free and compulsory for all citizens of Israel. This could be why the literacy rate is almost a hundred percent. Primary school starts from age five to age fifteen. Higher education is achieved through universities. There are six universities in Israel. The life expectancy for people that live in Israel is seventy-seven years old.” (http://lexicorient.com/cgi-bin/eo-direct-frame.pl?http://i-cias.com/e.o/israel_2.htm)

“There have been a lot of peace agreements used to help stop the problems in the Middle East. Some have been successful while others have failed. The Camp David Agreements of 1978, was a successful peace agreement. It helped Egypt and Israel come to peace with one another. Sadat went to Jerusalem to meet Begin to negotiate. Just before the negotiations came to an abrupt halt, president Jimmy Carter met the two leaders at Camp David. Carter convinced both leaders to sign two accords. The first one was called “Framework for Peace in the Middle East” and the other was “Framework for the conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel”. This peace agreement was very successful.” (Peretz, 76-81) Israel and Palestine have had many problems over the years. They still exist today. Many peace agreements have been signed, however they have shown little improvement. The violence continues as the world has struggles to get the two territories to come to peace with one another. The tensions and issues between them, however, are far greater than anyone has been able to overcome.