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## Living Stones: The Uniting Church and Palestine ( /palestine)

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### Some history

Some background on the current context is important. The most significant historical link to note is that Christians have been living in Palestine since the time of Jesus. Over the last two thousand years, there have been many twists and turns in the history of this land, including crusades, religious movements, occupations, invaders and a wide variety of empires and rulers.

#### Limited time?

The organisation, Jewish Voices for Peace, has provided the following video, giving one perspective, what they describe as *Israel Palestine Conflict 101*

(<https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/israeli-palestinian-conflict-101/>).

#### More detail:



Focusing the backstory to the last 500 years, some significant historical events include the following:

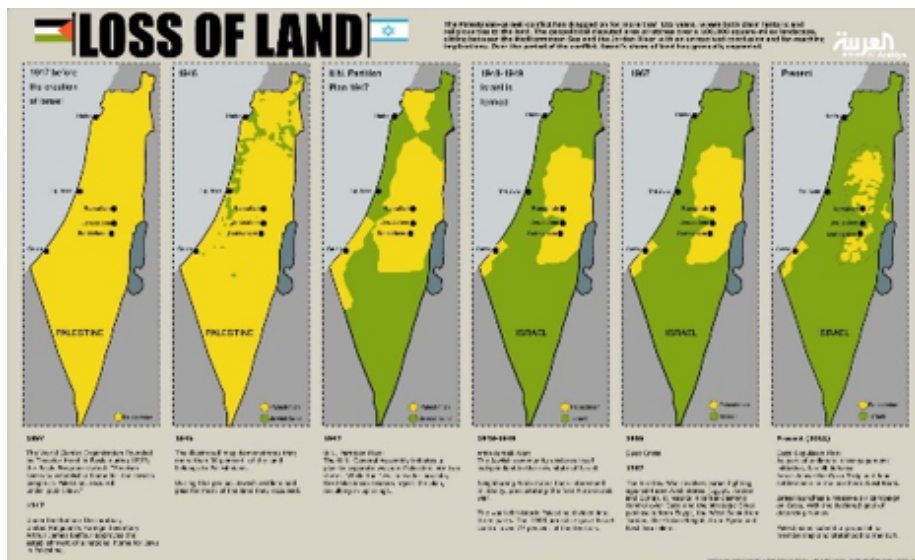
**The Ottoman Empire (1517–1917)**, in which period Palestine was incorporated into the broader Empire. The first Palestinian deputies were elected into the parliament in Constantinople in 1876. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Zionist movement was founded in response to growing persecution in Europe. As a result, thousands of Jews began immigrating to Palestine.

**British Mandate (1917–1948)** in which Great Britain won and then maintained control of Palestine. Central to this period was the Balfour Declaration, which favoured the *“establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that **nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.**”*

**United Nations Partition Plan (1947)** The General Assembly of the United Nations recommended the partition of British Mandate Palestine into two separate states, one for Jews and one for Arabs. Jerusalem was to be an international territory under the UN. Fighting breaks out soon thereafter, as all the surrounding Arab states rejected the partition plan. Palestinians considered the proposal unrepresentative of the demographic distribution of Jews and Arabs living in Palestine at that time.

**Proclamation of the State of Israel (1948)** The British forces withdraw and Fighting breaks out between the new state and its neighbours. The war is known as “Milhemet Haatzma'ut,” or the “War of Independence” by Israelis, but called “al-Nakbah” or “the Catastrophe,” by Palestinians. Some 700,000 Palestinians flee the fighting or are driven out and Israel gains control over large tracts of land, including some five hundred Palestinian villages.

**Six Day War or 1967 Arab–Israeli War (1967)** Israel conducts a pre-emptive attack against Egypt and gains control over territory formerly controlled by Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Israel gains control over the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan. Another 400,000 Palestinians are displaced.



Israel begins establishing settlements in the West Bank, Gaza, and the Sinai Peninsula. Palestinians view this as a violation of international law regarding territory seized during war.

In response to the war, the UN Security Council passes Resolution 242, which calls for the “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict; termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force.” This resolution, with its formula of “land for peace,” is the basis of for all subsequent peace negotiations between Israel, Palestinians, and the surrounding Arab states.

**First Intifada/Uprising (1987)**, as a protest of continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and involved demonstrations, strikes, riots and violence.

**Oslo Accord (1993)**: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin sign a Declaration of Principles. Israel recognized the PLO and gave them limited autonomy (in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza). The PLO in turn gave up its claims to Israel's territory as defined by its borders before the 1967 war.

**Camp David (2000)** The Camp David summit between Ehud Barak, Israel's prime minister, and Arafat, the chairman of the Palestinian Authority, aimed at reaching a "final status" agreement ends after Arafat refuses to accept a proposal drafted by US and Israeli negotiators, including a refusal to withdraw from all land occupied



since 1967.

**Second Intifada (2000-2005)** was triggered when the Israeli Prime Minister visited the Temple Mount, viewed as a provocative act by Palestinians. There was a high number of casualties among civilians and combatants: the Palestinians by numerous suicide bombings and gunfire; the Israelis by tank and gunfire and air attacks, by numerous targeted killings, and by reactions to demonstrations. The death toll, including both military and civilian, is estimated to be about 3,000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israelis, as well as 64 foreigners.

**Commencement of Separation Barrier (2002)** Reportedly the largest infrastructure project in Israel's history, the wall or barrier runs partly along the "Green Line" and partly through the West Bank. Publicly announced as a measure to protect Israelis from Palestinian suicide bombers, Palestinians protest that 85% its route is east of the Green Line, that it divides and separates communities and draw a parallel to the Berlin Wall. When completed, it will be over 700km long.



**Israeli disengagement from Gaza (2005).** Israel settlements were dismantled and the Israeli Army withdrew from Gaza. The brokered agreement was meant to provide bus and truck convoys between Gaza and the West Bank as well as a Palestinian seaport

and airport, which have never been implemented. Israel controls Gaza's coastline and airspace and reserves the right to undertake military operations when necessary. Egypt controls Gaza's Egyptian border.



**2014 Israel-Gaza conflict:** The most recent Gazan conflict took place in July 2014, following increased conflict between Hamas and the Israeli Defence Force amid mutual accusations of violations of the existing ceasefire arrangements. Following initial rocket fire, Israeli launched air strikes and a ground invasion. Over a fifty-day period, 2,220 Palestinians were killed, of whom 1,492 were civilians (551 children and 299 women), 605 militants and 123 of unknown status. Over 10,000 people were wounded. In Israel, 66 Israeli soldiers, 6 civilians (including one child) were killed and 469 IDF soldiers and 261 Israeli civilians were injured

In summary, Palestine has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967. The prospects for a negotiated peace and a "two-state solution" are bleak. Occupied Palestine, consisting of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, is controlled by Israel. Gaza is under a military blockade. Only 11% of Palestine (Area A) is under direct Palestinian control and is subject to incursions. It seems Palestinians have little hope for a better future.

## Want to learn more?

- A History of Modern Palestine, 2003, Ilan Pappé.
- The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, 2006, Ilan Pappé.
- Witness in Palestine: A Jewish American Woman in the Occupied Territories, 2007, Anna Baltzer, Paradigm Publishers
- Palestinian Christians in the West Bank: Facts, Figures and Trends, 2012. Mitri Raheb (Author), Rifat Odeh Kassis (Editor), Rania Al Qass Collings (Editor).
- Arab Christians in Israel: Facts, Figures and Trends (<https://www.middleeastbooks.com/products/arab-christians-in-israel-facts-figures-and-trends-by-johnny-mansour?variant=716082191>), 2012, Johnny Mansour.
- <http://pov-tc.pbs.org/pov/downloads/2001/pov-promises-timeline.pdf> (<http://pov-tc.pbs.org/pov/downloads/2001/pov-promises-timeline.pdf>)



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