A Short History of Palestine

In Early Times

Palestine was inhabited by Semitic peoples, including the Canaanites. It is thought that the Israelites emerged as a branch of the Canaanite people.

1000 BCE: When the tribes of Israelites came to Palestine, after their captivity in Egypt, they were united into one kingdom by King David. King Solomon built the first Temple of Jerusalem.

720 BCE: Assyrians attacked the kingdom of Israel and carried many of its inhabitants away as captives.

600 BCE: Babylonian King Nebuchadenezzar attacked the kingdom of Judah, destroying Jerusalem and Solomon's temple in **567 BCE.** Most of the inhabitants were carried into captivity.

539 BCE: Persian King Cyrus defeated the Babylonians and allowed the Jews to return to Palestine.

By 515 BCE: Solomon's temple had been rebuilt.

332 BCE: Macedonians came to power.

70 CE: Roman Emperor Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, leaving only the Western (Wailing) Wall.

132-136 CE: Emperor Hadrian banned Judaism and prohibited Jews from entering Jerusalem, dispersing Jews throughout the world.

From then till **1948**, no Jewish Government has existed in Palestine.

After 136 CE: Palestine was nearly empty of Jews. Remaining inhabitants were the existing peoples of Palestine, other people from neighbouring areas who were free to move around the Roman Empire, and the few remaining Jews.
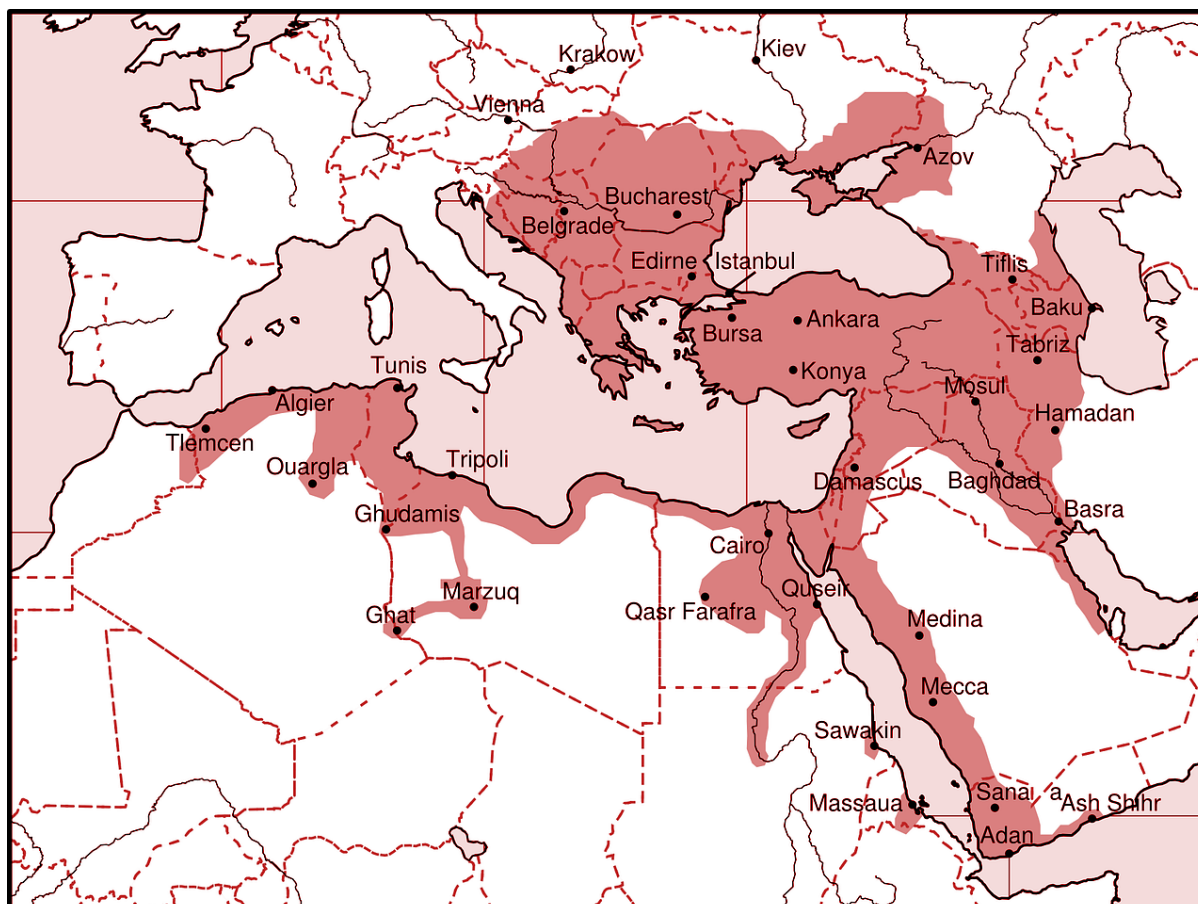
300s CE: Christianisation of the Roman Empire - many local people became Christian, including most of the remaining Jews. Palestine ruled by Eastern Roman Empire, Byzantium.

637 CE: Byzantium's rule ended with the Arab conquest, and Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock were constructed. When Muslims entered, there were no Jews left in Jerusalem.

Gradually the people of Palestine Arabised and many became Muslim. By the end of the Crusades, the majority of Palestinians had become Muslim.

12th century CE: Saladin, the Arab ruler, invited the Jews to return to Palestine. [1]

1516 CE: Palestine was conquered from the Mamluks and made part of the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman Empire

20th Century

In 1916: Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire.

First World War: The Allies sought the support of Arab leaders against Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Arab regions wanted their own independence from the Ottomans.

British Mandate Palestine

SYRIA
(French Mandate)

PALESTINE

IRAQ
(British Mandate)

TRANSJORDAN

Jordan-Saudi
border from
1925

SAUDI
ARABIA

EGYPT

Transjordan was excluded from provisions of Palestine Mandate in 1922

After World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire: The territory of Palestine was assigned to Britain as a Mandate.

Prior to this, the British government had already made commitments to the *Zionist movement, supporting establishing a Jewish home in Palestine. Zionists claimed a historical connection to the land their ancestors had lived in 2000 years earlier.

*Zionism is a national movement, whose goal is the creation of a Jewish national state in Palestine. In 1897, Theodor Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland: *"Zionism strives to create for the Jewish people, a home in Palestine secured by public law"*.

The Balfour Declaration

1917: Foreign Secretary, Lord Balfour, addressed a letter on 2nd November 1917 to Lord Rothschild, to pass on to the British Zionist Federation, stating:

"His Majesty's Government views with favour 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."

1918: Palestinian Arabs made up more than 90% of the population and saw this as a breach of declarations made to them. Britain's declaration of November 1918 assured the Arabs of *"the complete and definite emancipation of the [Arab] peoples... and the establishment of national government and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations"*.

1930-1940: The British facilitated mass Jewish immigration, mainly from Eastern Europe. Numbers swelled in the 1930s, due to Nazi persecution and European anti-semitism. Jewish immigration and land purchases, as well as Britain's role in facilitating both, were contentious issues for Palestinians. These tensions bubbled over during the 1929 Riots and the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939.

1946: Insurgent paramilitary Zionist groups, specifically the Irgun and the Levi, sought to provoke Britain into leaving by unleashing a campaign of terror. This most famously culminated in the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946.

1947: Britain, unable to manage the situation, handed 'The Palestinian Problem' over to the UN.

The Jewish population was now 33% of Palestine, owning 6% of the land.

UN partition plan for Palestine
Arab state · Jewish state · Jerusalem International City

United Nations Resolution 181 called for the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, with Jerusalem to be an enclave under a League of Nations Mandate. The Palestinians rejected the plan, as it gave 55% of Palestine to the Jewish state, including most of the fertile coastal region.

At the time, Palestinians owned 94% of historic Palestine and were 67% of its population.

May 1948: The moment the British mandate ended, Israel announced its establishment, leading to war with the neighbouring Arab states. The Zionist movement captured 78% of historic Palestine, including the larger part of Jerusalem.

Jordan captured the West Bank and Egypt seized Gaza. These represented 22% of historic Palestine.

1949 Armistice Lines
Jordanian occupied · Egyptian occupied · Armistice lines

1948 war: These events led to The Nakba/Catastrophe wherein Israel attempted to systemically ethnically cleanse Palestine of its indigenous Palestinian population. 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their homes.

December 1948: UN Resolution 194 called for the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

The 1967 Arab-Israeli ("6 day") War: Israel occupied the Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, bringing about a second exodus of about 500,000 Palestinians. This tripled the size of Israel's territory.

After the 1967 War
Land occupied by Israel in 1967

Security Council Resolution 242 declared acquisition of territory by war to be inadmissible, and called on Israel to withdraw its armed forces "from territories occupied" in the war. The resolution also called for a cessation of threats or acts of force... and for "a just settlement of the refugee problem".

1982: Egypt recognises the Jewish state in exchange for Israel withdrawing from Sinai.

Settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza Strip lead to a two-tier system, with Jewish settlers afforded rights while Palestinians live under military occupation that discriminates against them and bars political or civic expression.

1992 Oslo Accords: Formation of the Palestinian Authority (PA), an interim government that was granted limited self-rule in pockets of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. The PA formally recognised Israel, but Israel didn't do the same for a Palestinian State.

1995: Israel built an electronic fence and concrete wall around the Gaza Strip, breaking interactions between the split Palestinian territories.

After Israel-Egypt peace treaty, 1982
Land occupied by Israel   Armistice lines

21st Century

2000: Israel began constructing a separation wall in the West Bank - ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice.

2005: Israel withdrew settlers and troops from Gaza but retained control over its borders, seas and airspace.

2006: Hamas won elections in Gaza. Hamas expelled Fatah from the Gaza Strip. Fatah still had control of the West Bank.

June 2007: Israel imposed a land, air and naval blockade on the Gaza Strip, accusing Hamas of "terrorism". Note that Netanyahu had supported Hamas in the past in order to divide the Palestinians:
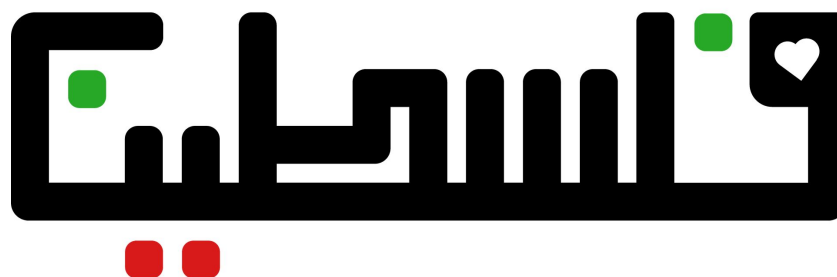
"Prime minister for most of the last 15 years, Netanyahu has been an enabler of Hamas, building up the organisation, letting it rule Gaza unhindered – save for brief, periodic military operations against it – and allowing funds from its Gulf patrons to keep it flush.

Netanyahu liked the idea of the Palestinians as a house divided – Fatah in the West Bank, Hamas in Gaza – because it allowed him to insist that there was no Palestinian partner he could do business with. That meant no peace process, no prospect of a Palestinian state, and no demand for Israeli territorial concessions. None of this was a secret.

In March 2019: Netanyahu told his Likud colleagues:

"Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support bolstering Hamas and transferring money to Hamas … This is part of our strategy – to isolate the Palestinians in Gaza from the Palestinians in the West Bank." [2] [3]

2020: Abraham accords. Agreements to normalise relations between Israel and the UAE, Sudan, Morocco and Bahrain.

In Summary

The essence of the Palestine problem is described by Professor Arnold Toynbee, writing in 1968:

"All through those thirty years, Britain [admitted] into Palestine, year by year, a quota of Jewish immigrants that varied according to the strength of the respective pressures of the Arabs and Jews at the time. These immigrants could not have come in if they had not been shielded by a British <u>chevaux de frise</u>. If Palestine had remained under Ottoman Turkish rule, or if it had become an independent Arab State in 1918, Jewish immigrants would never have been admitted into Palestine in large enough numbers to enable them to overwhelm the Palestinian Arabs in this Arab people's own country. The reason why the State of Israel exists today and why today 1,500,000 Palestine Arabs are refugees is that, for thirty years, Jewish immigration was imposed on the Palestinian Arabs by British military power until the immigrants were sufficiently numerous and sufficiently well-armed to be able to fend for themselves with tanks and planes of their own. The tragedy in Palestine is not just a local one: it is a tragedy for the World, because it is an injustice that is a menace to the World's peace." [4]

Is Israel Guilty Of War Crimes?

Amnesty International accuses Israel of war crimes:

"Amnesty International has documented unlawful Israeli attacks, including indiscriminate attacks, which caused mass civilian casualties, and must be investigated as war crimes… Entire families have been wiped out. Israeli attacks violated international humanitarian law… If the stated intent was to use all means to destroy Hamas, Israeli forces have shown a shocking disregard for civilian lives. They have pulverised street after street of residential buildings, killing civilians on a mass scale, and destroying essential infrastructure, while new restrictions mean Gaza is fast running out of water, medicine, fuel, and electricity." [5]

Does Israel Impose a System of Apartheid?

Amnesty International accuses Israel of imposing a system of Apartheid and of crimes against humanity:

"Israel imposes a system of oppression and domination against Palestinians across all areas under its control: in Israel, OPT [Occupied Palestinian Territories], and against Palestinian refugees, in order to benefit Jewish Israelis. This amounts to Apartheid as prohibited in international law.

Apartheid is a violation of public international law, a grave violation of internationally protected human rights, and a crime against humanity under international criminal law."

"Apartheid can best be understood as a system of prolonged and cruel discriminatory treatment by one racial group of members of another with the intention to control the second racial group."

"Israeli authorities have done this through:

- Dispossession of land and property: decades of discriminatory land and property seizures, home demolitions, and forced evictions.
- Segregation and control: a system of laws and policies that keep Palestinians restricted to enclaves, subject to several measures that control their lives, and segregated from Jewish Israelis.
- Deprivation of economic and social rights: the deliberate impoverishment of Palestinians, keeping them at great disadvantage in comparison to Jewish Israelis." [6]

Is Israel Guilty of Ethnic Cleansing?

UN expert warns of 'ethnic cleansing' of Palestinians:

Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967, warned that "Palestinians are in grave danger of mass ethnic cleansing" and called on the international community to urgently mediate a ceasefire. This population, which has already experienced 5 major wars since 2008, in the context of an unlawful blockade imposed by Israel since 2007", which Albanese says, "has widely been condemned by the international community as collective punishment."

Israel has already carried out mass ethnic cleansing of Palestinians under the Fog of War. Albanese says, "Again, in the name of self defence, Israel are seeking to justify what would amount to ethnic cleansing." [7]

Is this a Genocide?

UN human rights experts call on international community to prevent genocide against the Palestinian people:

"Grave violations committed by Israel against Palestinians in the aftermath of 7 October, particularly in Gaza, point to a genocide in the making, UN experts said today. They illustrated evidence of increasing genocidal incitement, overt intent to "destroy the Palestinian people under occupation", loud calls for a 'second Nakba' in Gaza and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, and the use of powerful weaponry with inherently indiscriminate impacts, resulting in a colossal death toll and destruction of life-sustaining infrastructure.

The bombardment and siege of Gaza have reportedly killed over 11,000 people, injured more than 27,000 and displaced 1.6 million persons since 7 October 2023, while thousands are still under the rubble. Of those killed, about 41 per cent are children and 25 percent are

women. On average, one child is killed and two are injured every 10 minutes during the war, turning Gaza into a "graveyard for children," according to the UN Secretary-General. Almost 200 medics, 102 UN staff, 41 journalists, frontline and human rights defenders, have also been killed, while dozens of families over five generations have been wiped out."

"This occurs amidst Israel's tightening of its 16-year unlawful blockade of Gaza, which has prevented people from escaping and left them without food, water, medicine and fuel for weeks now, despite international appeals to provide access for critical humanitarian aid. As we previously said, intentional starvation amounts to a war crime," the experts said." [8]

References

[1] https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-198759/

[2] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/oct/20/benjamin-netanyahu-hamas-israel-prime-minister?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

[3] https://amp.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2023/nov/13/john-oliver-on-israel-hamas-war-netanyahu

[4] https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-206581/#:~:text=About%20600%20B.C.%2C%20the%20Babylonian,able%20to%20return%20to%20Palestine.

[5] https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/10/damning-evidence-of-war-crimes-as-israeli-attacks-wipe-out-entire-families-in-gaza/

[6] https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2022/02/israels-system-of-apartheid/

[7] https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/un-expert-warns-new-instance-mass-ethnic-cleansing-palestinians-calls

[8] https://www.un.org/unispal/document/gaza-un-human-rights-experts-call-on-international-community-to-prevent-genocide-against-the-palestinian-people-ohchr-press-release/