The Israeli-Palestinian conflict: A chronology

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Updated November 6, 2023 at 4:34 p.m. EST | Published October 9, 2023 at 11:59 a.m. EDT

A surprise, coordinated assault on Israel by <u>Palestinian militant group Hamas</u> — one of the deadliest and most brazen attacks in years — and the Israeli siege and strikes on Gaza that followed, brought renewed attention to an old and continuing problem: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has <u>vexed the Middle East for decades</u>.

The roots of the conflict and mistrust are deep and complex, predating the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Both Palestinians and Israelis see the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea as their own, and Christians, Jews and Muslims all hold parts of the land as sacred. The past seven decades have brought war, uprisings and, at times, glimmers of hope for compromise. Here is a timeline beginning around 1948, including the <u>latest violence in the Gaza Strip</u>:

World War I: The question of Palestine

The Ottoman Empire had controlled that part of the Middle East from the early 16th century until control of most of the region was granted to the British after World War I.

Both Israelis and Palestinians were struggling for self-determination and sovereignty over the territory, developing respective movements for their causes.

As World War I began, several controversial diplomatic efforts — some contradicting each other — by the Great Powers tried to shape the map of the modern Middle East, including the Palestinian territories. Palestinians cite a series of letters in 1915 to 1916 between Mecca's emir and the British high commissioner in Egypt, known as the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence, as outlining a promise of an independent Arab state.

In 1916, the Sykes-Picot Agreement secretly negotiated between Britain and France planned to carve up the Middle East into spheres of influence, and determined that the land in question was to be internationalized.

In 1917, Britain's foreign secretary, Lord Arthur Balfour, expressed his government's support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" in a letter to Baron Walter Rothschild, the head of the British wing of the influential European Jewish banking family.

To Israelis, the missive marks a formal utterance of the Israeli state's right to exist; to Palestinians, it was an early sign of their dispossession. The declaration also noted that it was "clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine," nodding to the overwhelming majority Arab population in the region at the time. (About 90 percent of the population was Muslim in 1850, and about 80 percent in 1914.)

Large-scale Jewish immigration followed in succeeding decades, including during Nazi persecution and the Holocaust. Both sides continued to assert their right to establish a state.

1948: Israel declares independence

After World War II, nearing the end of the British Mandate for Palestine, the United Nations General Assembly in 1947 passes Resolution 181, urging the partition of the land into two independent states — one Arab and one Jewish. Religiously significant Jerusalem is to be under special international administration. The plan is not implemented after the Arab side rejects it, arguing that it is unfavorable to their majority population. Violence in the regional conflict grows.

Israel declares independence in May 1948. The next day, a coalition of Arab states, allied with Palestinian factions, attack Israeli forces in what becomes the first of several Arab-Israeli wars. In the end, Israel gains control of an even larger portion of territory — not including the areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. An estimated 700,000 Palestinians flee or are driven from their land in what Palestinians refer to as the "Nakba," or "catastrophe" in Arabic.

July 1956: The Suez Crisis

Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal, a vital trade route connecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Israel invades Egypt, followed by forces from Britain and France. A peace deal, backed by the United States and Soviet Union, ends the fighting. But the canal is blocked by sunken ships and doesn't reopen until 1957.

June 1967: 1967 war

In June of 1967, a war known as the "Six-Day War" or the 1967 Arab-Israeli War breaks out amid lingering conflicts, including Egypt's continued blockade of shipping into the Gulf of Aqaba. Israeli warplanes strike Egyptian airfields, and Israeli ground forces enter the Sinai Peninsula. Jordan joins the fighting alongside Egypt, but Israeli forces have the upper hand after nearly wiping out Egypt's air power. Israel takes control of the Gaza Strip, Sinai, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and predominantly Palestinian East Jerusalem. The Arab armies suffer massive losses.

September 1972: Munich Olympics attack

At the 1972 Munich Summer Olympics, a group of Palestinian extremists from the Black September group raid the Olympic Village dorm where Israeli athletes are housed. They kill two athletes and take nine others as hostages, all of whom are killed soon after.

October 1973: Yom Kippur War

A coalition of Arab nations, led by Egypt and Syria, launches a surprise, coordinated attack on Israel on Yom Kippur, a Jewish holy day. The Arab forces initially gain ground but are driven back by an Israeli counteroffensive aided by supplies from allies, including the United States. Both sides see heavy death tolls.

September 1978: Camp David Accords

A peace agreement between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, known as the Camp David Accords, is brokered in September 1978 by U.S. President Jimmy Carter. It lays the foundation to a peace deal between the two countries the next year, including Israel's eventual withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. It also sets out a framework for a process of Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza. Potential Palestinian peace proposals are discussed but never carried out.

December 1987: First intifada

A Palestinian uprising, or intifada, brings largely spontaneous clashes, protests and civil disobedience against Israeli occupation in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel, leading to harsh Israeli military crackdowns. Unrest continues for years, with many killed or injured on both sides.

1993: Oslo accords

The first of two pacts, known as the Oslo accords, are signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), setting out a peace process based on previous U.N. resolutions and charting the expansion of a limited Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. (A follow-up accord is signed in 1995.) The agreements create the Palestinian Authority to oversee most administrative affairs in those areas. The PLO is recognized by Israel and the United States as a negotiating partner. Left unresolved, however, are key issues such as Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the status of Jerusalem, which is viewed by the Palestinians as the capital of any future state.

1995: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin assassinated

On Nov. 4, 1995, Yitzhak Rabin, 73, the fifth prime minister of Israel, is fatally shot in the back by a right-wing Jewish extremist who aimed to derail the peace process with Palestinians. Rabin was departing a peace rally attended by more than 100,000 in Tel Aviv.

The shooter, Yigal Amir, who was in his 20s, opposed the Oslo accords on religious grounds, telling police that he acted on the "orders of God" to stop holy land from being handed to Palestinians. He has never expressed regret for the killing and is serving a life sentence.

2000: Second intifada

The second intifada, or Palestinian uprising, begins after riots broke out following a visit by right-wing Israeli political figure Ariel Sharon (later prime minister) to a compound in Jerusalem that is venerated in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Clashes and other violence continue until 2005, leaving hundreds dead on both sides.

2006: Hamas elected in Gaza

Israel withdraws its troops from Gaza in 2005. The Palestinian militant group Hamas wins legislative elections the next year, leading to political strains with the more moderate Fatah party controlling the West Bank.

After Hamas's 2007 takeover of the Gaza Strip, Israel imposes a 16-year blockade on the small, overcrowded Palestinian enclave that is home to 2 million Palestinians. Limiting the mobility of goods and people in and out of the territory, Israel has deepened Gaza's humanitarian crisis, the United Nations says. Most Gazans live in refugee camps and rely on U.N. rations.

The West Bank, home to 3 million Palestinians — and more than a half-million Jews living in settlements deemed illegal under international law — is occupied by Israel and subject to its military administration.

Several rights groups have said Israel's regime over Palestinians amounts to "apartheid."

In a 2022 report, Amnesty International said it analyzed "Israel's intent to create and maintain a system of oppression and domination over Palestinians," including through "territorial fragmentation; segregation and control; dispossession of land and property; and denial of economic and social rights." The group concluded: "This is apartheid."
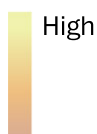
December 2008: Israel attacks Gaza

Israel begins three weeks of attacks on Gaza after rocket barrages into Israel by Palestinian militants, who are supplied by tunnels from Egypt. More than 1,110 Palestinians and at least 13 Israelis are killed.

November 2012: Israel kills Hamas military chief

Israel kills Hamas military chief Ahmed Jabari, touching off more than a week of rocket fire from Gaza and Israeli airstrikes. At least 150 Palestinians and six Israelis are killed.
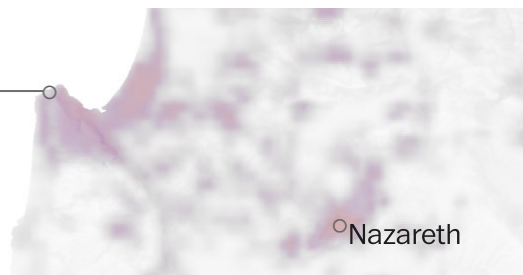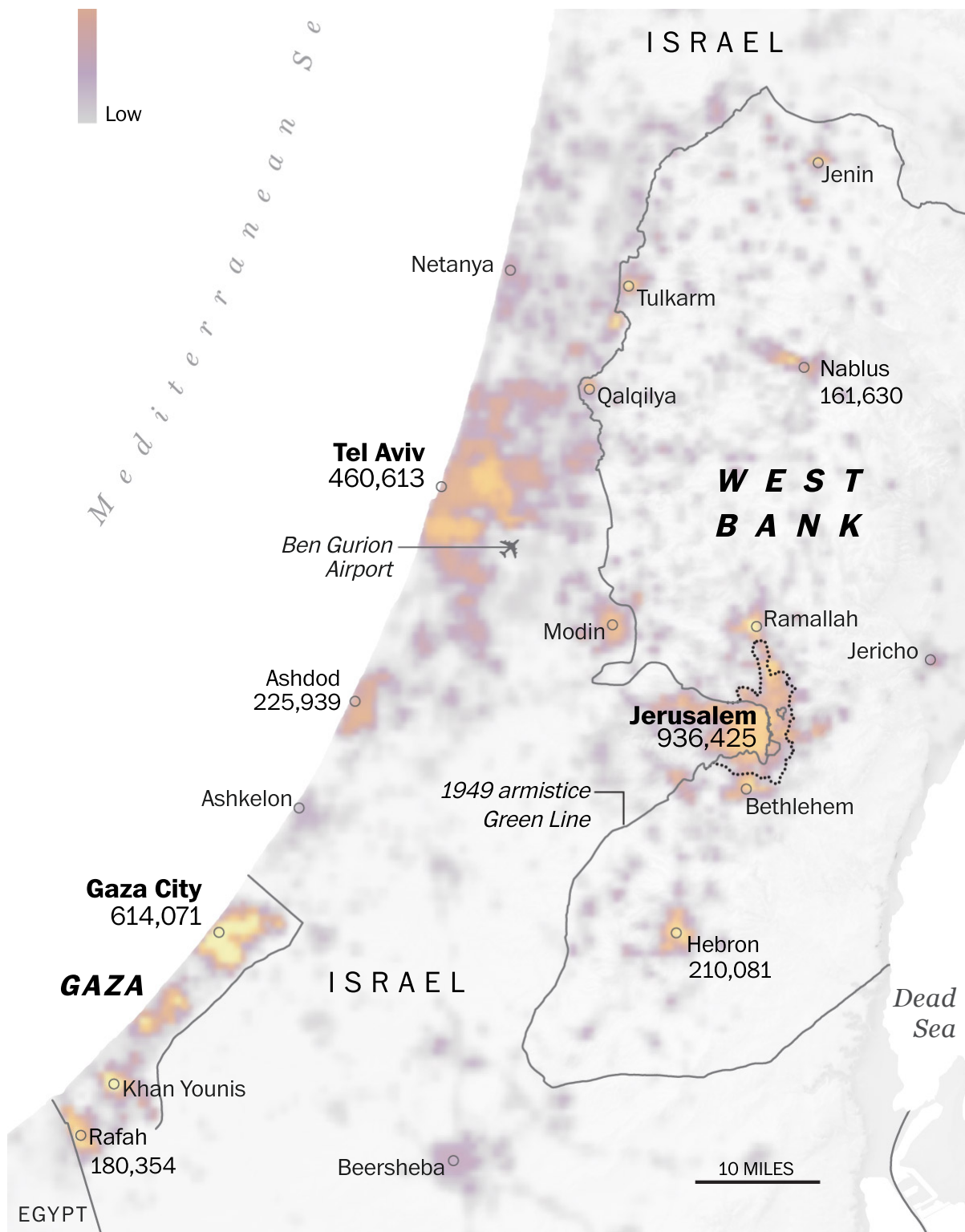
Population density

High

Haifa
2019 population:
285,316

Nazareth

ISRAEL

Jenin

Netanya

Tulkarm

Nablus
161,630

Qalqilya

Tel Aviv
460,613

*Ben Gurion
Airport*

**W E S T
B A N K**

Modin

Ramallah

Jericho

Ashdod
225,939

Jerusalem
936,425

*1949 armistice
Green Line*

Bethlehem

Ashkelon

Gaza City
614,071

GAZA

I S R A E L

Hebron
210,081

*Dead
Sea*

Khan Younis

Rafah
180,354

Beersheba

10 MILES

EGYPT

M e d i t e r r a n e a n   S e

Low

Summer 2014: Hamas kills three Israeli teenagers

Hamas militants kill three Israeli teenagers kidnapped near a Jewish settlement in the West Bank, prompting an Israeli military response. Hamas answers with rocket attacks from Gaza. A seven-week conflict leaves more than 2,200 Palestinians dead in Gaza and 73 dead on the Israeli side.

December 2017: U.S. recognizes Jerusalem as capital

The Trump administration recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and announces that it plans to shift the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv, stirring outrage from Palestinians.

2018: Protests in Gaza

Protests take place in Gaza along the fence with Israel, including demonstrators hurling rocks and gasoline bombs across the barrier. Israeli troops kill more than 170 protesters over several months. In November, Israel stages a covert raid into Gaza. At least seven suspected Palestinian militants and a senior Israeli army officer are killed. From Gaza, hundreds of rockets are fired into Israel.

May 2021: Israeli police raid al-Aqsa Mosque

After weeks of tension in Jerusalem lead to Israeli police raiding al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the holiest sites in Islam, Hamas fires thousands of rockets toward the city, prompting Israel to retaliate with hundreds of airstrikes. In the fiercest fighting since at least 2014, more than 200 are killed in Gaza and at least 10 killed in Israel.

Spring 2022: String of terrorist attacks in Israel

A spate of violence on Israelis by Palestinians leaves 14 Israelis dead in a handful of attacks between March 22 and April 8. In response, Israel clamps down on militants and activists, and launches the "Break the Wave" military operation in the West Bank, which makes 2022 a particularly deadly year.

Israeli forces kill 146 Palestinians in the West Bank in 2022, a death toll higher than in any other year since the United Nations began keeping records in 2005. Israel's Foreign Ministry says Palestinians killed 29 Israelis that year.

December 2022: Netanyahu sworn in for sixth term

Benjamin Netanyahu is sworn in again as Israeli prime minister, after winning an election that gives him his sixth term and elevates a once-fringe bloc of far-right politicians into powerful seats. He cobbles together the most far-right government in Israeli history, which critics say has begun to crush any prospect of a two-state solution.

It's also the most pro-settler government, with some members encouraging an expansion in settlement activity in occupied Palestinian territories. Settler violence against Palestinian civilians, with settlers emboldened by the government, surges too.

January 2023: Israeli raid on Jenin

Israeli forces raid the Palestinian city of Jenin, killing nine people in a shootout. The next day, a Palestinian gunman kills seven people, including children, during prayers at an East Jerusalem synagogue.

Summer 2023: Retaliatory attacks flare

Tit-for-tat attacks flare.

Israel launches surprise airstrikes across the Gaza Strip in May, killing three top militants and 10 others, including women and children, health officials say. That sets up a five-day bout of violence that kills at least 33 people in Gaza and two in Israel.

On June 19, Israeli forces raid Jenin, deploying helicopter gunships to the West Bank for the first time since the second intifada.

The next day, two Hamas gunmen open fire at a hummus restaurant at an Israeli settlement, killing four Israelis.

Hundreds of Israeli settlers then rampage through Palestinian villages, torching homes and cars, and shooting at residents, according to local officials. Israel also carries out its first drone strike in the West Bank since 2006, killing three suspected militants.

In July, Israel stages an air and ground attack with 1,000 soldiers backed by drone strikes against a refugee camp inside Jenin, killing 12 people. The operation marks the start of an "extensive counterterrorism effort" that the Israel Defense Forces says will continue indefinitely.

October 2023: Israel says it's 'at war' after Hamas attack

Netanyahu formally declares war on Hamas on Oct. 8 following a surprise assault by Hamas militants that came a day after the 50th anniversary of the start of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Israel says at least 1,400 Israelis were killed in the surprise attacks on Oct. 7 that saw gunmen hunting down Israeli civilians in their homes around border areas.

Israel responds with major airstrikes in Gaza that Gaza's Health Ministry says have killed more than 10,000 Palestinians.

Claire Parker, Steve Hendrix, Shira Rubin, and Hazem Balousha contributed to this report.