

# Historical Background and General Instructions

## HANDOUT

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### I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### Zionism and Jewish Settlement in Palestine, 1890–1940

The roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict date back to the late nineteenth century, when Jews from several European countries formed the Zionist movement to create a Jewish homeland in an area called Palestine.

The area commonly called Palestine (including the present state of Israel, the territory on both sides of the Jordan River, and the Gaza Strip in the south) lies on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Roughly the size of the state of Maryland, Palestine is a dry, hilly, rocky territory with fertile areas along the coastal plain between Gaza and Haifa, and in the northern valleys east of Acre.

Palestine has been called by many names during a long history of settlement and government by many peoples, from biblical times to the present. Its history has special significance for both the Arabs, who have lived there for many generations, and for the Jews, whose ancestors had lived there in biblical times and who wished to create a new homeland for their people there.

As a people, the Jews share common ancestry, historical experience, and cultural traditions based on their religious beliefs and practices. Before the nineteenth

century, Jews in the Christian states of Europe, the Russian and Ottoman Empires, and the Islamic states of North Africa and the Middle East had experienced nearly a thousand years of **anti-Semitism** (prejudice against Jews). In most of the areas where they lived, Jews had been forbidden to own land, hold public office, or intermarry with non-Jews. They were usually required to live together in a separate part of the village, town, or city, and were occasionally attacked by their non-Jewish neighbors and by government officials for both religious and economic reasons.

In the late 1800s, some Jews started talking about having a Jewish homeland. The talk turned into the Zionist movement. This movement arose at a time when the Jews of Western Europe were enjoying new rights of citizenship, mobility, and property ownership. On the other hand, anti-Semitism was growing stronger in Eastern Europe, especially in Russia. The **Zionists** wanted to free the Jews of Eastern Europe from persecution. They also feared the return of anti-Semitism to Western Europe. They saw the creation of a national homeland for the Jews as the only long-term solution to the problem of anti-Semitism. Not all Jews agreed with the Zionists, however. Most Jews in Western Europe wanted to remain as citizens of their countries, with full civic rights and freedom.

The Zionists continued with their plan despite the limited support they received from other Jews and from European governments. After some internal debate, the Zionist leaders Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizman proposed Palestine as the Jewish homeland.

The Zionists chose Palestine (which they called by its biblical name, Israel) as the Jewish homeland because of its significance as the place where the Jewish people, their religion, and their kingdoms had flourished in biblical times. According to the Hebrew Bible (the religious text of the Jews), God led the Jews into the land

of Israel. During the period from 800 B.C.E. (before the Common era) to the first century C.E., the Jews sometimes ruled in Israel, and sometimes were ruled by others, including the Romans. After the Romans crushed a major Jewish revolt in the year 70, most of the Jewish population in Israel fled or migrated to other areas along the Mediterranean coast. The Jewish **diaspora** (a people in exile from their homeland) lived in many areas of Europe and North Africa for the next two thousand years, but they maintained their religious and cultural traditions, including a belief that God would someday lead their descendants back to Israel.

The Zionists began to encourage and support Jewish immigration to Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century, but the pace of immigration was greatly influenced by other historical events. The first large wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine came in the late 1800s, when many Russian Jews fled persecution during the Russian pogroms (attacks on Jews) of 1881 to 1884. The second came after the end of World War I, when the British government took over Palestine from the Ottoman Empire. During the war, the Zionists had been able to convince the British to support a national home for the Jews in Palestine, and they encouraged settlers to go to Palestine after the war. The third main wave took place from 1933 to 1935, when the Nazi Party, led by Adolph Hitler, came to power in Germany. The Nazis passed the Nuremberg Laws, which began to deprive Jews of their rights as citizens; Jews were still allowed to leave Germany, however, and many did. Jews from Eastern Europe also emigrated during the late 1930s.

### ***What do B.C.E. and C.E. Mean?***

The time period prior to the Common Era is commonly referred to as “B.C.” or “Before Christ” and the period of the Common era as “A.D.” or “Anno Domini” meaning “Year of Our Lord.” While this is accurate for those of the Christian faith, it does not accurately represent the beliefs of non-Christians. Therefore, in this text, “B.C.E.” will refer to “Before the Common Era” and “C.E.” will indicate the time of the “Common Era.”

### ***Why call themselves Zionists?***

Originally conquered by King David, King of the Jews, Mount Zion was, in ancient times, the site of a holy Jewish temple. Zion became a metonym for the city of Jerusalem and the entire Promised Land, in which, according to the Hebrew Bible, God will one day dwell among his chosen people.

As a result of these waves of migration, the Jewish population in Palestine increased dramatically. In 1882, the Jewish population in Palestine was about 20,000. It reached 85,000 in 1914, and by 1937 it was 400,000.

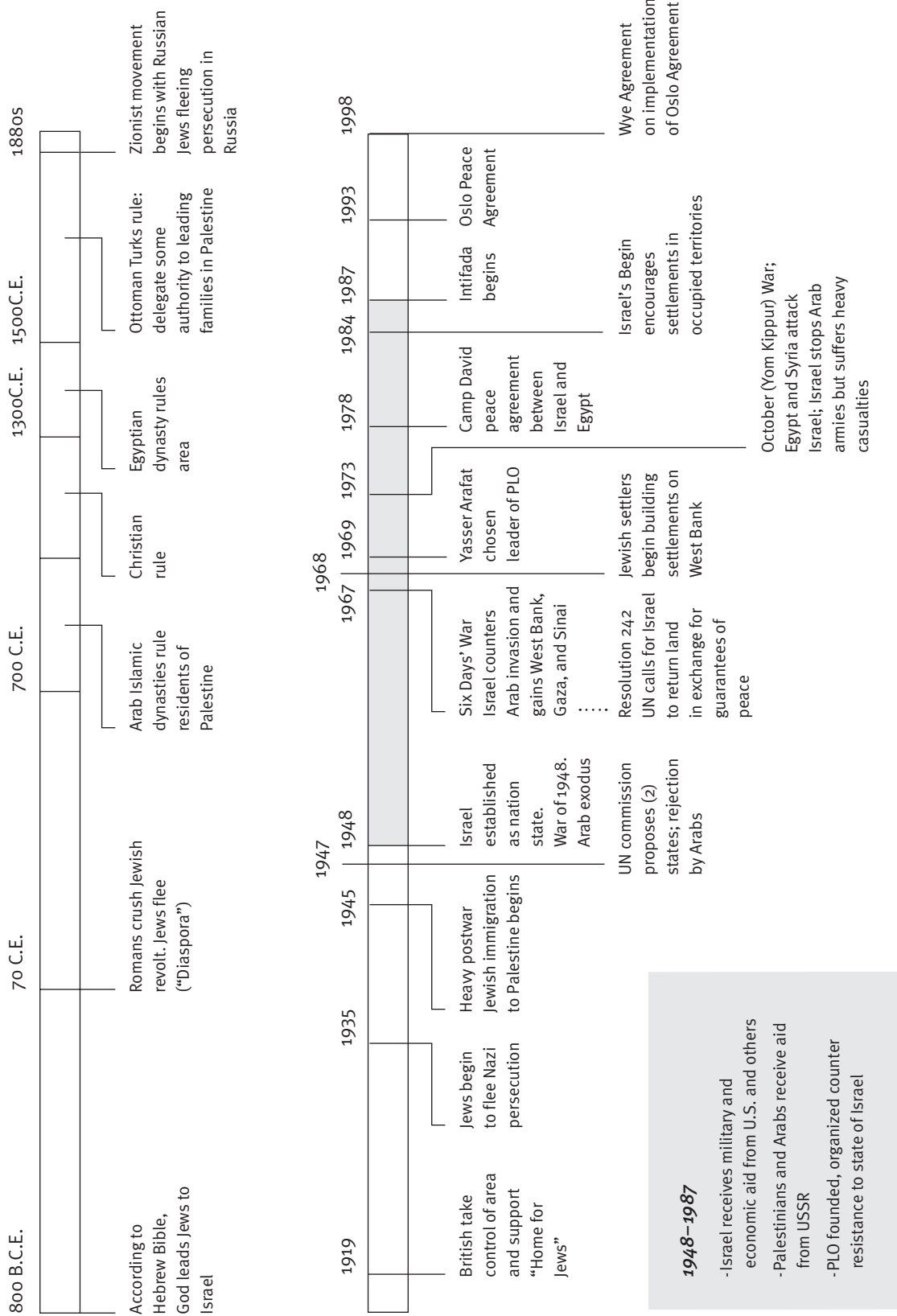
### **The Arabs in Palestine and the Emergence of Conflict, 1880–1947**

The vast majority of people living in Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century were Arabs. As a people, Arabs live in the semi-arid region stretching from North Africa to the Persian Gulf. Arabs share a common culture based on the Arabic language, traditions of family, clan, and government, and the religion of Islam (not all Arabs are Moslem; a significant minority are Christian).

Before the founding of Islam by the prophet Mohammed in the seventh century C.E., most of the people living in the area of Palestine were Christians. Most of the Palestinians adopted the religion of Islam during its rapid spread in the seventh and eighth centuries. From the seventh to the eleventh century, the residents of Palestine were ruled by Arab Islamic dynasties based in Syria and Iraq. After a period of occupation by the Christians during the twelfth century, the area was ruled from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries by the Egyptian Mamluk Dynasty. During the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Turks, a non-Arab people, gained control of the region. The Ottomans ruled over the region until 1920, but they relied on leading Palestinian families based in the towns to enforce laws and collect taxes for them.

In 1880, there were nearly 600,000 people living in Palestine; roughly 520,000 were Moslem Arabs,

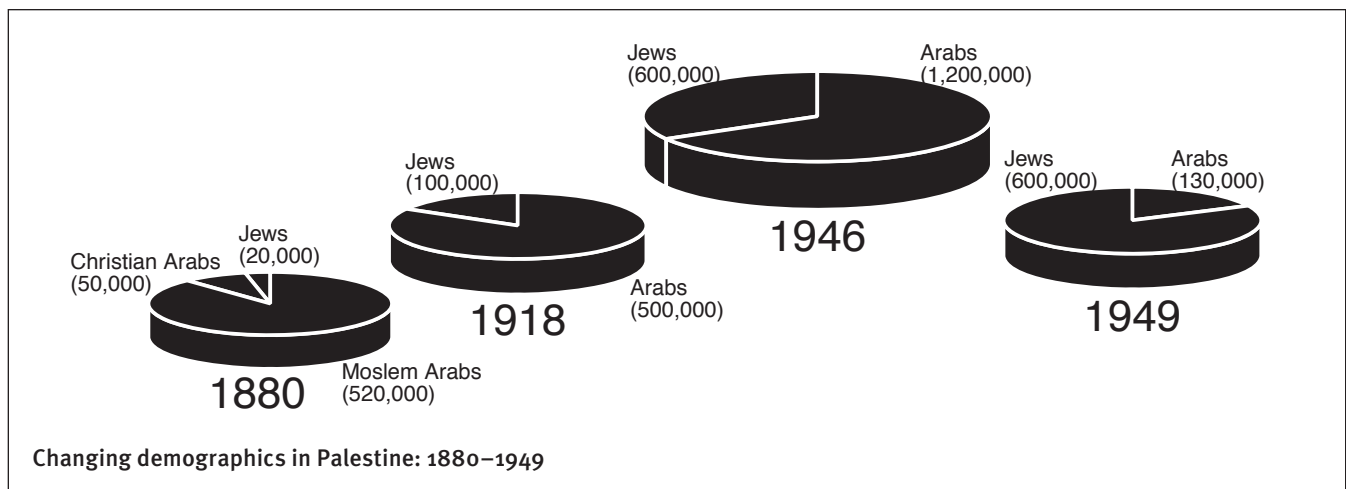
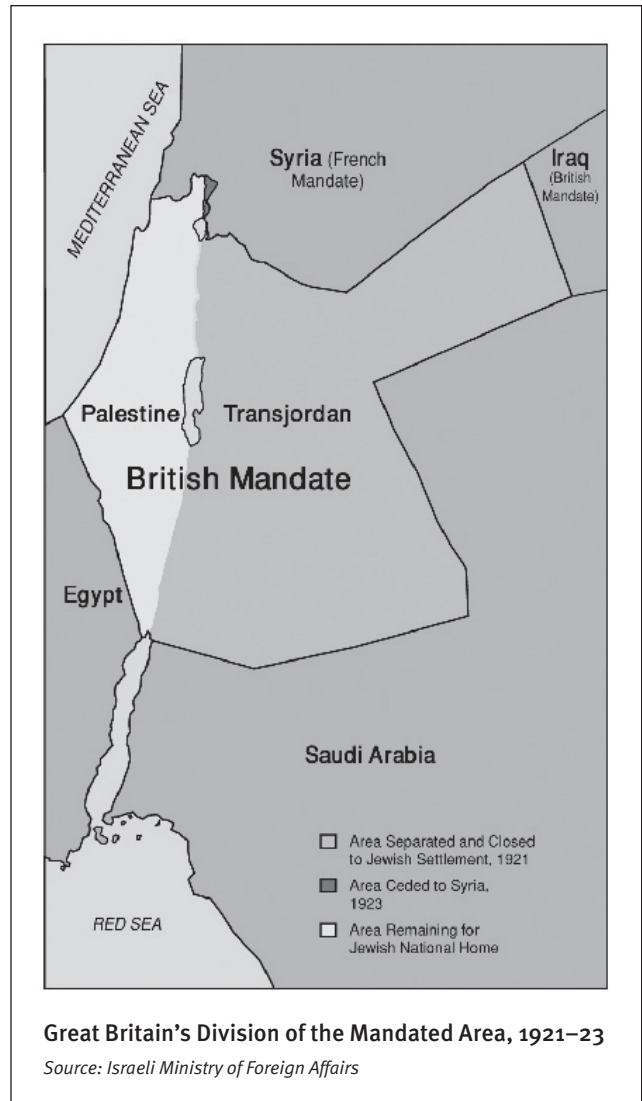
**CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**



50,000 were Christian Arabs, and most of the remaining 20,000 were Jews. Most of the people of Palestine were farmers and herders, though there were also craftsmen and merchants in the towns. Jerusalem, the largest town, had a population of fewer than 50,000.

At the beginning of the period of Jewish immigration, most Palestinian Arabs did not consider themselves to be a distinct people with a claim on a specific territory. They had lived under Ottoman rule for several hundred years, and had little opportunity for self-government. Still, both the leading Arab families in the towns and the farmers in the countryside had a strong attachment to the land of Palestine and to a shared Arab culture. They became increasingly concerned about the pace of Jewish immigration, land buying by the Zionists, and the Zionists' plan to establish a Jewish state. The Palestinian Arabs began to organize political groups to oppose Jewish immigration. More and more Palestinian Arabs began to see themselves as a people whose land and culture were threatened by the Jews.

The political conflict became more intense during the period of British control (1920 to 1947). At the end of the First World War in 1918, the Arabs still outnumbered the Jews in Palestine by 500,000 to 100,000. Nevertheless, they feared the rapid rise in the Jewish population, and demanded that the new British administration in Palestine stop Jewish immigration. Several Arab protest riots against Zionism took place in the early 1920s, and both Arabs and Jews were killed.



The British administration tried to limit violence between the two groups, yet there were disagreements even within the British government on whether or not to continue supporting the Zionist goal of Jewish statehood in Palestine. Both Jews and Arabs became convinced that the British government could not be trusted to resolve their conflicts, which led extremists in both groups to believe that no agreement was possible. The extremists began to attack civilians—the Arabs to frighten the Jews and stop immigration, the Jews to force the Arabs to accept the Zionist plan. A large-scale Arab revolt against the British and the Zionists took place from 1936 to 1939, but was eventually put down by the British government.

The struggle for control of Palestine became more desperate during the Second World War, as more and more Jews from Europe tried to enter Palestine to escape

persecution and death at the hands of the Nazi-controlled German government. Under Hitler's leadership, the Nazis had decided to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Europe. From 1939 to 1945, the Nazis and their allies in the countries they conquered killed approximately six million Jews, more than half of the Jewish population of Europe; this attempted genocide is now known as the Holocaust. During the war, the British did not want to allow large numbers of Jews into Palestine, fearing another Arab revolt at a time when they needed Arab support in their fight against Germany. On the other hand, the British government feared that the Jews in Palestine would revolt unless some European Jews were allowed to enter. The result was a policy of limited Jewish immigration and land purchases that satisfied no one.

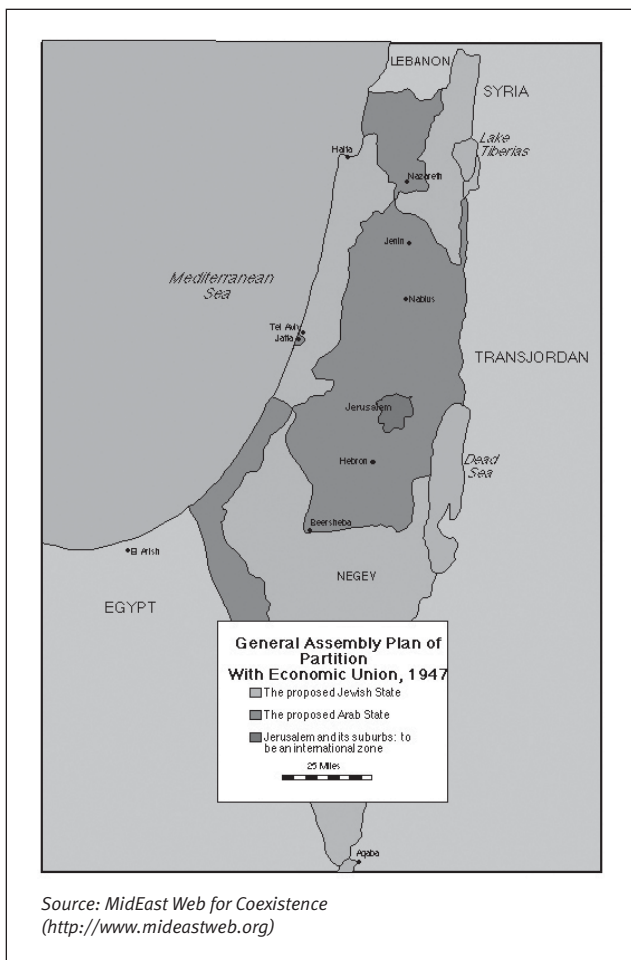
### The Creation of the State of Israel and the First Israeli-Arab War

At the end of the Second World War, both the Arabs and the Jews living in Palestine claimed the land as their own, and demanded the right to create an independent country there for their people. The Jews based their claim on

1. Their religious tradition, which said that God had given the land of Palestine to the Jews
2. The successful settlement of several hundred thousand Jews in Palestine during the twentieth century, and the prospect that up to a million more Jewish refugees from the Holocaust might settle in Israel within the next several years
3. The devastating experience of the Holocaust, which proved that the Jews could never be safe without a country of their own
4. The rejection of the Palestinian Arab claim for statehood, based on the argument that the Palestinians had never had a state and did not exist as a people separate from the several Arab states surrounding Palestine

The Palestinian Arabs based their claim on

1. Their long and continuous history of settlement in Palestine



Source: *MidEast Web for Coexistence*  
(<http://www.mideastweb.org>)

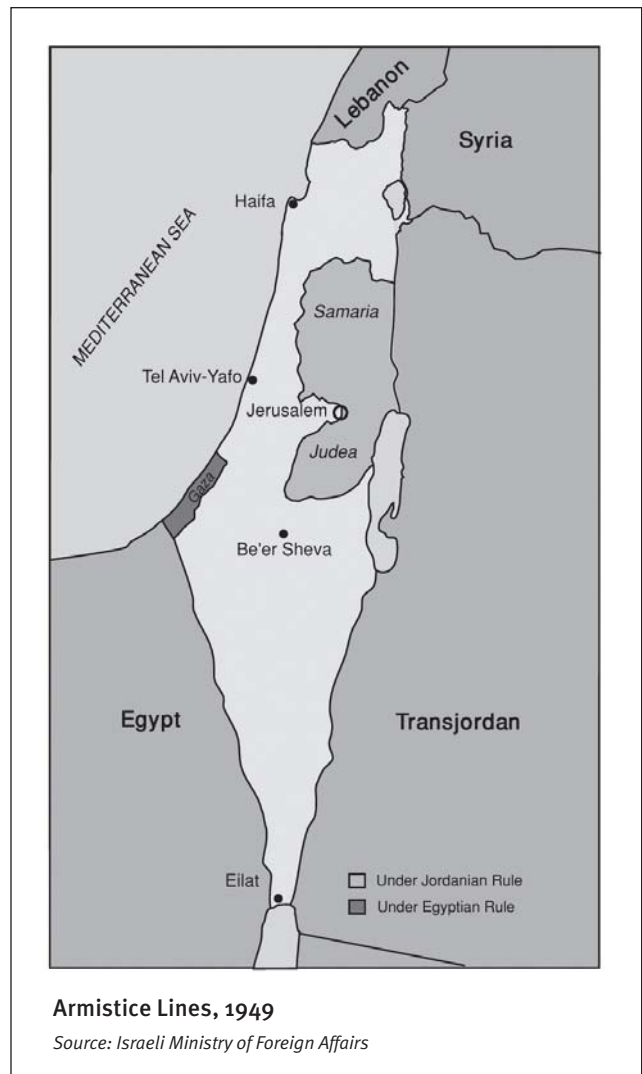
2. Their political and social organization as a people in the twentieth century
3. The injustice of giving control of the government to the Jews because most of them had only recently arrived, they were still a minority of the population, they had taken much of the land by force, and they refused to recognize the Palestinians as a people with equal rights to the land

Neither the Jews nor the Palestinians accepted the other group's claims. From 1944 to 1947, both Arab and Jewish terrorist groups began to attack British government officials. The British decided that they could not settle the conflicting Arab and Jewish claims to Palestine. In 1947, the British turned the matter over to the new United Nations (UN).

A special commission of the UN went to Palestine in 1947. The commission proposed that Palestine be divided into two states—a Jewish state and an Arab state (see map on previous page). The UN recommended that the city of Jerusalem, sacred to Moslems, Jews, and Christians, be placed under international control.

The partition proposal was rejected by the Arabs, who still outnumbered the Jews by about two to one (there were approximately 1.2 million Arabs and 600,000 Jews in Palestine in 1946). The Arabs insisted that all of the territory in Palestine should become a single state with an Arab majority; this state of Palestine would guarantee the rights of the Jewish minority as citizens of Palestine. The Arabs also argued that even though the Jews had suffered greatly in the Holocaust, their suffering did not give them the right to take land that belonged to the Arabs.

When the Arabs rejected the partition proposal, the Zionist leaders in Palestine guessed that the Palestinian Arabs, as well as the armies of the neighboring Arab states of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq



would soon attack to drive the Jews out. The Arab leaders in Palestine also guessed that the Jews would do whatever they could to gain control of the territory that the UN had proposed for the state of Israel. Fighting soon broke out within Palestine. The fighting, and especially a massacre of Arab civilians by Jewish forces in April 1948, forced many Palestinian Arabs to flee.

On the day when the Jewish and Arab states were to be created (May 15, 1948), Arab armies from the surrounding states invaded Palestine to prevent the Jews from taking control. The Jewish forces had superior organization, training, and arms, and succeeded in taking over the areas the UN had proposed for Israel, as well as some of the area proposed for the Arab

The 1947 UN Special Commission proposed dividing Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. Jerusalem, sacred to both Jews and Arabs, would be placed under international control.

state of Palestine. At the end of the first Arab-Israeli war in 1949, more than 650,000 Arabs (roughly half of the Arab population) had fled from Palestine. During and immediately after the war, many Jews who lived in the Arab states of the Middle East emigrated to Israel, because they experienced or feared Arab persecution or because they wanted to become citizens of a Jewish state.

These two movements of people—Palestinians leaving Israel and Jews entering—created a Jewish majority within Israel. At the end of the war, only about 130,000 Arabs remained in the area of Palestine that was now called Israel. About 470,000 entered United Nations refugee camps. Most of the camps were in the West Bank area of Arab Palestine, under the control of Jordan (a state created after the First World War, in the territory immediately to the east of Israel on the east bank of the Jordan River). A smaller number were in the Gaza Strip, controlled by Egypt. The remaining refugees were dispersed into Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, with Egypt and Iraq taking fewer numbers.

After the war of 1948, the governments of the Arab countries and the government of Israel declared a ceasefire, but the Arab states refused to recognize the state of Israel. They claimed that all of the land in Palestine rightfully belonged to the Palestinian Arabs. At the end of 1948, King Abdullah of Jordan annexed the West Bank area that was to have been part of the Arab state of Palestine (when a government annexes territory, it formally makes that territory part of its own land). The Egyptian government annexed the Gaza Strip on its border with Israel; the Gaza Strip was also supposed to have become part of the state of Palestine.

### **Israel, the Arab States, and the Palestinians 1949–1987**

From 1949 to 1987, Israelis and Palestinians continued to seek help from other countries to support their claims to the land of Palestine; neither Israeli nor Palestinian leaders showed much interest in negotiating with each other. The Soviet Union supported the Palestinian cause and gave money, military training, and weapons to several Arab states and to Palestinian

#### ***PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization)***

Created by an organization of Arab governments, the PLO aimed to create and lead a Palestinian state. Led by Yasser Arafat, the PLO used terrorism to advance its cause. However, the PLO has taken a less militant stance in recent years and has engaged in negotiations with representatives from the Israeli government.

paramilitary organizations. The United States and its allies in Western Europe and Japan recognized the state of Israel; the U.S. also gave substantial military and economic support to Israel.

The Israelis had two great advantages in this political and military struggle. In political terms, they had succeeded in establishing a government that controlled the territory, and their claim to statehood had been recognized by a number of powerful countries; the Palestinians had neither a unified territory nor a unified government, and their international allies were not as powerful as Israel's. In military terms, the Israelis quickly established a very strong fighting force with advanced weapons; although they were surrounded by hostile neighbors, they could defeat any individual Arab state. The Palestinians had a resistance movement but no army, and the Arab states on whom they relied for support were not willing to risk their armies against Israel unless they were joined by others.

For the Israelis, a strong military force would be sufficient to defend the state they had established, but unless they made peace with their Arab neighbors, living in Israel would mean living with the constant threat of war or terrorist attack. Further, most Israeli Jews doubted that the Arab states could be trusted to make peace. The Arab states' insistence that Israel had no right to exist brought back recent and terrible memories of the persecution and genocide the Jews had suffered during the Holocaust. Some Jews began to believe that the Arabs wished to not only to regain land the Arabs believed the Jews had taken from them, but also to destroy the Jews as a people.

The Palestinians also faced very difficult choices. They could accept the status quo and try to build new lives in other countries, or as Arab citizens of Israel. They could try to put enough political and military pressure on Israel to force the Israelis to give up part of their land for a Palestinian state. Finally, they could try to build a military force strong enough to defeat and expel the Israelis (that would only be possible with the help of the major Arab states—Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq).

Very few Palestinians were willing to accept the status quo. They felt passionately that the Jews had done them a great injustice, and they were treated as second-class citizens in Israel and in most Arab countries. Few were willing to settle for just part of the land of Israel. The Palestinian leadership and most Palestinians wanted to defeat and expel the Israelis by force. To do so, they needed the support of the Arab armies, but the Arab governments were not always united in support of the Palestinian cause. As a result, key Palestinian leaders turned to terrorism (deliberate attacks on civilians) as the only way to maintain pressure on the Israelis and get international attention for their cause.

### **From the 1948 War to the Six Days' War**

After the end of the 1948 War, the Israeli government gave citizenship rights to Arabs who remained within Israel, but most Jews were suspicious of the Israeli Arabs' loyalties. Israeli Arabs were often treated harshly by Israeli police and military forces. The Israeli government also made it quite difficult for Palestinians who had fled from Israel to reclaim their homes or their land.

Outside of Israel, some Palestinian exiles barely survived in refugee camps that became permanent settlements, while others were successful in finding new homes, jobs, and opportunities in the Arab countries where they resettled. Jordan was the most welcoming of the Arab countries. It granted full citizenship to Palestinians, who constituted two-thirds of Jordan's population after it took control of the West Bank in 1950, and many prospered there. On the other hand, many Palestinians in Jordan suffered in refugee camps, and Jordan's police and military suppressed Palestinian attempts to organize independent political parties in Jordan.

The Arab states, and most Palestinian exiles, never accepted the Jewish state in Israel. They continued to use political and military pressure to try to reclaim Palestine for the Arabs. In 1964, Arab governments, led by Egypt, created the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to represent Palestinian interests in the international community and as a way to control Palestinian nationals who were launching attacks on Israel from Egypt. By the late 1960s, Yasser Arafat and his supporters had emerged as the dominant political group within the PLO. Under Arafat's leadership, the PLO demanded recognition of the Palestinians' claim to statehood. With support from the Soviet Union and several Arab governments, the PLO and other paramilitary Palestinian groups also began to attack Israeli military forces and carry out terrorist acts against Israeli civilians.

In May of 1967, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan moved their forces to the Israeli border to protest a major Israeli raid into the Jordanian-controlled West Bank to destroy Palestinian guerrilla positions. Fearing a full-scale Arab invasion, Israel launched an attack on the Arab forces at the beginning of June. In the Six Days' War of June 1967, Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula (part of Egyptian territory), and the Golan Heights (part of

#### ***Israeli Settlers***

In the Six Days' War of 1967, Israel captured the territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Some religious Jews, believing that Israel had a biblical right to all of the land west of the Jordan River, began to build settlements among predominantly Palestinian populations. When the Likud Party came to power in Israel in 1977, it encouraged the construction of more settlements. Throughout the 1980s, settlers with economic motives joined those with religious motives. During the 1990s, Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union joined religious and economic settlers on the West Bank. As the Israeli settler population grew, Palestinian opposition to settlement increased. The issue of settlers remains a sticking point in negotiations today.

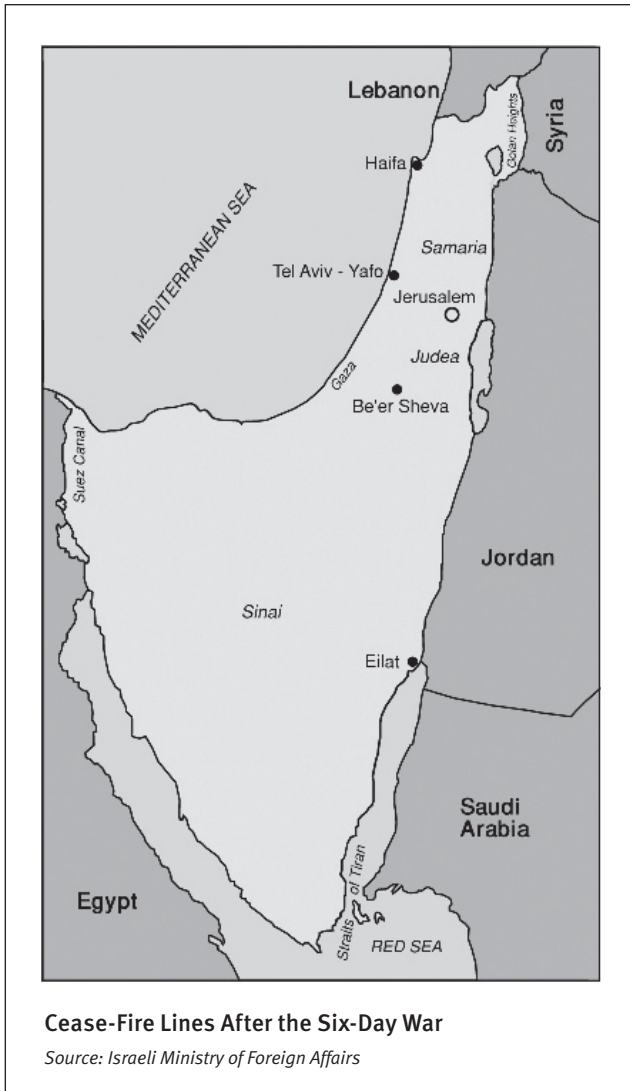


Syrian territory). It also captured the West Bank and Gaza, areas that the UN had said should be part of the state of Palestine in 1947. (The West Bank had come under Jordanian control, and Gaza under Egyptian control in 1948.) When it captured these two territories, Israel took control over approximately 800,000 Palestinians (650,000 in the West Bank and 150,000 in Gaza) who violently opposed the Israeli occupation. Palestinian and Arab leaders demanded that the Israelis withdraw from the territories they had occupied.

After consultation with Israel and the Arab states, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 242, which called for Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories and for all states in the region to recognize

each other's **sovereignty** (a state's right to exist and control its territory) and territorial borders. Resolution 242 also called for a resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem, but it did not call for an independent Palestinian state. The Resolution also left it unclear whether Israel would have to withdraw from all or only part of the territories it had occupied. Resolution 242 has become known as the "Land-for-Peace" resolution, because its core proposal is that Israel should exchange the land it occupied in 1967 for peace with the Arab states.

After Resolution 242, the Israeli government offered to return most but not all of the occupied territories to the Arab states of Jordan and Egypt if all of the Arab governments that had declared war on Israel would agree to make peace; Israel claimed the right to keep some of the occupied territories for strategic reasons. The Arab states refused to accept this offer, demanding the return of all of the territories. They also insisted that the only possible solution to the Palestinian problem was the establishment of a Palestinian state, a position which Israel opposed. From 1967 to 1979, there was little diplomatic progress on the fate of the occupied territories or the Palestinian people.



**Israel, the Occupied Territories, and the PLO from the Six Days' War to Camp David**

Within the West Bank and Gaza (the occupied territories with large Arab populations), the Israelis allowed some local autonomy, including elections for local government officials. Many Palestinians in the occupied territories rejected these Israeli policies as a totally inadequate response to the Palestinian demand for freedom. They wanted to fight against the Israelis until they were forced to leave the territories. Others wanted to accept the Israelis' offer of local self-government while continuing to push for full independence (or confederation with Jordan, an option supported by a number of moderate Palestinians in the West Bank). In the early 1970s, moderate Palestinians with close ties to Jordan won local elections, suggesting that the majority of West Bank residents might be willing to accept some form of Palestinian-Jordanian confederation.

Many Israelis saw the decision to give some autonomy to the territories as a temporary, not a permanent, solution. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, most Israelis supported the idea that Israel was holding on to the occupied territories as a bargaining chip, and would return them to the Arab states of Egypt and Jordan in exchange for peace.

At the same time, however, some religious Israelis began to build settlements in the occupied territories. These Jewish settlers believed that Israel had a right to annex the occupied territories, because they had been the heartland of Israel in biblical times. Under the leadership of the Labor Party, which advocated a negotiated peace with the Arab states, the Israeli government did not stop these settlements, but it did not strongly encourage them, either.

Meanwhile, Yasser Arafat and other leaders of the PLO, which had its base in Jordan, began to consider the possibility that the Palestinians could take over all of Jordan by force, and then build an army strong enough to take back the West Bank and possibly all of Israel. In 1970, King Hussein of Jordan decided that he was losing control of the country to the PLO. He ordered his troops to expel the PLO from Jordan. After bitter fighting, the PLO left Jordan and set up new headquarters in Lebanon.

Though the PLO was badly shaken by this defeat, they reorganized themselves in the Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon. From these bases, they continued to oppose the state of Israel and to organize armed resistance to the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. They also committed more terrorist

acts, including kidnapping Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. This incident ended in the deaths of the Palestinian terrorists and most of the Israeli hostages during a rescue attempt by the German police. World opinion strongly condemned the PLO.

In October 1973, Egypt and Syria attacked Israel to regain the territory that they had lost during the Six Day War. Israel was able to drive the Arab forces back, but only after suffering heavy losses. After the October War, Israeli public opinion began to change in favor of making the occupied territories part of Israel. More Israelis came to believe that the only way to stop the Arab states from trying to recover territory from Israel by force was to defend all of the occupied territories as part of Israel.

As Israeli attitudes hardened against the Arab states and the Palestinians, the PLO began to change its goals. After the killings at the Munich Olympics and the October War, the PLO leaders recognized that their terrorist acts had not succeeded in winning world opinion to their side, and that the Arab states were not going to be able to defeat Israel.

In 1974, the PLO's leaders began to shift their goal from the creation of a Palestinian state in all of the territory of Palestine, to a state that would occupy only the West Bank and Gaza. As the Palestinian leaders began to make public statements signaling their willingness to compromise, world opinion began to turn in the Palestinians' favor. The PLO also succeeded in winning greater support from Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israel's leaders and the Israeli public were not convinced that the PLO had truly renounced the goal of taking over all of Palestine. In 1977, the Israelis voted into power the strongly anti-Palestinian Likud Party, which governed in a coalition with several religious parties under the leadership of Prime Minister Menachem Begin. The Likud government began to encourage Israelis to build settlements in the West Bank, claiming that Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza was essential for strategic reasons. Religious parties also supported this policy because they believed that God had intended that Jews control these territories.

### ***Resolution 242***

“Land-for-Peace” resolution passed by the UN Security Council called for

- Israel to withdraw from occupied territories
- States in the region to recognize each other's right to exist
- Resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem



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Still, it was not clear that the majority of the Israeli people wanted to retain the occupied territories. There were other factors that led many Israelis to vote for the Likud Party, such as evidence of corruption and infighting in the Labor Party, which had governed the country continuously since 1948.

Despite the election of a hard-line anti-Arab government in Israel, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat decided to make peace with Israel. Sadat had decided that Egypt could not regain by force the Sinai territory that it had lost in 1967. He also believed that the economic cost of Egypt's military forces was preventing the country from achieving economic growth. The United States promised Egypt a substantial amount of economic and military aid if it would make peace with Israel. In a move that stunned the world, Sadat visited Israel in November 1977; he was the first Arab leader to do so. He spoke to Israel's national legislature, the Knesset, promising to make peace if Israel would return the Sinai territory and begin negotiating a settlement of the Palestinian problem that recognized the Palestinians' right to a homeland. After his visit to Israel, Sadat was harshly criticized and shunned by the leaders of the PLO and all of the other Arab states.

Israel made peace with Egypt in 1978, with help from the United States. The Israelis returned the Sinai to Egypt, and Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel. Although Sadat had pressed the Israelis to give greater autonomy to the Palestinians living under Israeli rule in the occupied territories, Israeli Prime Minister Begin refused to do so except as part of a comprehensive peace process leading to peace treaties with all of the Arab governments who still refused to recognize Israel's right to exist.

Once again, the PLO leaders and the Palestinian people were frustrated, this time with the limited success of their dip-

lomatic efforts to create a Palestinian state in the occupied territories. The PLO returned to military and terrorist attacks, but was forced out of its bases in Lebanon when the Israelis invaded in 1982. During the 1980s, the PLO was internally divided between those who advocated the continuation of armed struggle, and those who argued that the PLO should try to make peace with Israel in exchange for autonomy and eventual independence for the occupied territories.

Within Israel, public opinion about the occupied territories became even more sharply divided after the invasion of Lebanon. The Peace Now movement strongly opposed the construction of new Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and the apparent intention of the Likud government to maintain permanent control of the territories. They argued that Israel could not give citizenship to the Palestinian population of the territories, more than one million people in the early 1980s, without threatening the Jewish majority in Israel (roughly four million people at that time; there were also approximately one million Israeli Arab citizens). Yet, if Israel denied citizenship to the Palestinians, it would cease to be a democratic state. Therefore, argued the peace advocates, Israel should continue to abide by the

spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 242, which proposed the exchange of land for peace.

Even though the peace advocates had strong arguments, many Israelis felt that the Palestinians could never be trusted to live in peace with Israel. Therefore, the hard-liners argued, the only way to protect Israel was to maintain tight control of the Palestinians. The Likud Party lost its majority in the Israeli Knesset in 1984, but the Labor-Likud coalition government that formed after the very close elections of 1984 did not stop the building of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The Israeli military also continued its iron-fisted policy of arrests, using tear gas and rubber bullets against Palestinian demonstrations in the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli intelligence agents also assassinated a number of PLO terrorists in the Middle East and around the world.

### *Peacemakers in the Process*

In 1947, the British turned over the problems it was having in Palestine to the newly formed United Nations. Over the next 50 years, the UN or other third parties would intervene many times to help bring peace to the region.

- 1967 UN passes Resolution 242, calling for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories and for states to recognize each other's sovereignty; known as the Land for Peace Deal.
- 1977 U.S. promises Egypt financial and military support to make peace with Israel.
- 1978 U.S. President Jimmy Carter assists Israel and Egypt in negotiating peace treaty.
- 1991 In return for Arab support in the Gulf War, U.S. offers to help negotiate peace talks.
- 1993 Norway helps Israel and PLO negotiate Oslo Agreement.
- 1998 Jordan's King Hussein and U.S. President Bill Clinton help Palestinian Authority and Israel negotiate Wye Agreement.

### *Camp David Accords*

In 1978, U.S. President Jimmy Carter negotiated a deal between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat that returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for peace between Israel and Egypt.

Realizing that the Israeli government was strongly opposed to Palestinian self-government, the United States encouraged King Hussein of Jordan to negotiate with the PLO about a possible confederation of the occupied territories with Jordan. The coalition Israeli government that took office in 1984 expressed some support for the Palestinian-Jordanian confederation, but the negotiations broke down when the Israelis refused to negotiate directly with the PLO.

### **The Palestinian Intifada and the Peace Process, 1987–1997**

By the mid-1980s, many Palestinians came to believe that the Israeli government's goal was to drive all Palestinians out of the occupied territories, so that Israel could annex them. The breakdown of negotiations on a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation seemed to confirm that the Israelis would not even accept a proposal that they themselves had made some years earlier.

At the same time, the number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank increased from 15,000 in 1980 to 60,000 in 1986 (compared to roughly 1.2 million Palestinians). Although the number of settlers was still low, the settlers were allowed to draw water for irrigation and household use from the same **aquifers** (underground water basins) that the Palestinians used. As a result, some Palestinian farmers did not get enough water to grow their crops.

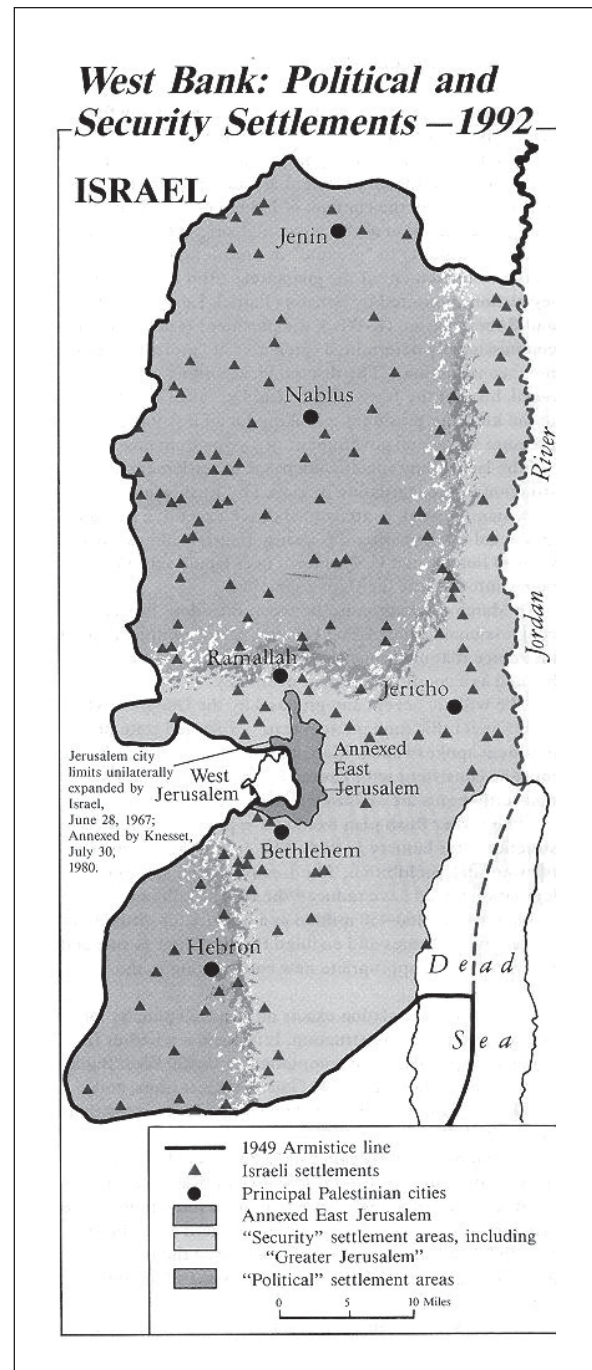
Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza were even more directly harmed by Israeli restrictions on their movement. During the years since 1967, more and more Palestinians had found work inside Israel, mainly as manual laborers. West Bank farms also

produced food for sale inside Israel. As part of the Israeli military policy in the occupied territories, Israel responded to Palestinian demonstrations by closing the border crossings from the territories into Israel. As a result, many Palestinians could not go to their jobs or sell their goods. The punishment was especially severe in Gaza, where there were few jobs.

As Israeli policy hardened against the Palestinians in the occupied territories, the Palestinians began a series of riots and attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians. The Palestinians demonstrated and threw stones, and the Israelis responded by firing tear gas, and beating and arresting demonstrators. This *Intifada* (“shaking off”) began as a spontaneous, grass-roots outburst of anger by the young and poor, with little direction from the PLO leadership. From 1987 to the early 1990s, however, some of the most radical Palestinians involved in the Intifada organized a new political movement called Hamas. Hamas is a militant, extremist, fundamentalist Islamic group which does not recognize the rights of Jews to live in Palestine.

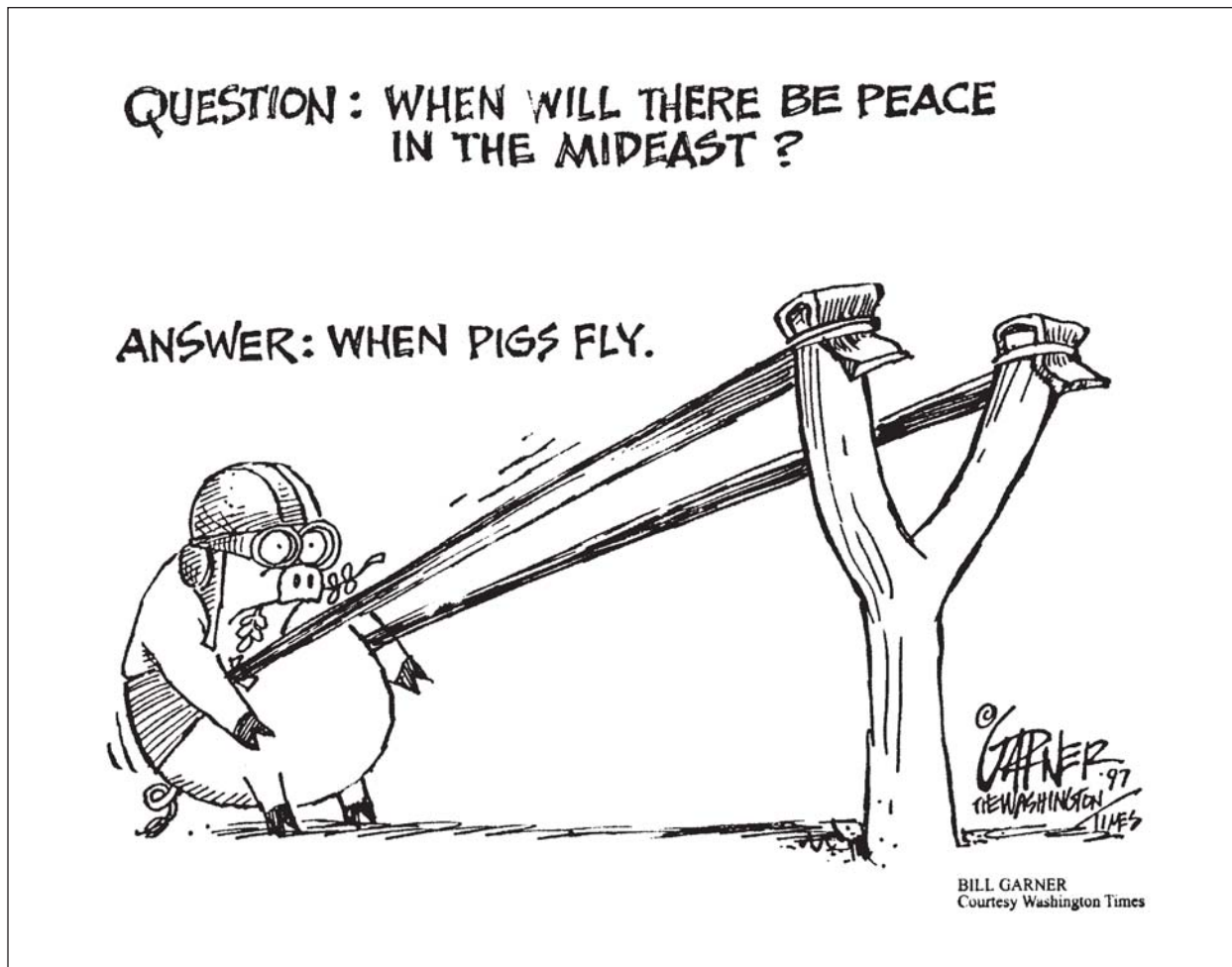
The Israelis responded to the Intifada with harsh measures: arrests, deportations, curfews, destruction of the homes of suspected Intifada leaders, and the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and sometimes real bullets against demonstrators. These repressive measures were not successful in stopping the protests, and they also turned world opinion against Israel.

As the Intifada continued through 1988, it began to change the views of Jordanian, PLO, and Israeli leaders. As a result, Jordan renounced its claim on the West Bank in August of 1988. This removed Jordan as a possible negotiating partner for Israel. Yasser Arafat, the leader of the PLO, decided that he had to make a dramatic change in response to the Intifada and Jordan’s announcement. He needed to act boldly in order to maintain the PLO’s leadership of the Palestinian people and to stop the Israelis from taking permanent control of the territories. In December 1988, he made public statements acknowledging Israel’s right to exist, declaring the independence of the Arab state of Palestine, and demanding that Israel recognize the Palestinians as a people with a legitimate right to govern themselves.



The U.S. and many other governments then urged the Israeli government to begin negotiations with the PLO on autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza.

On the Israeli side, public opinion remained sharply and nearly evenly divided between those who wanted to annex the occupied territories and those who



preferred to give the territories to the Palestinians in exchange for peace. Israeli public opinion did become more favorable to negotiation as the Intifada showed that the occupation was making the Palestinians deeply hostile to Israel. Instead of making Israel more secure, the occupation seemed to many to be making Israel less secure. Israel's government declared that it would not negotiate with the PLO directly, and that it would only make peace with the Palestinians if the governments of the Arab states would also agree to make peace with Israel.

After its victory in the Persian Gulf War in 1991, the United States used its influence with Israel and the Arab countries to restart peace negotiations. At the Madrid Peace Conference, Israel negotiated for the first time with Palestinian representatives from the

occupied territories, as well as representatives of the governments of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, but still refused to include members of the PLO. These negotiations led to some improvement in Israeli relations with its Arab neighbors, but little progress was made on Palestinian issues.

In 1992, a moderate Labor Party government came to power in Israel, under the leadership of Yitzak Rabin, a former general and advocate for a strong Israeli military. Rabin decided that Israel could accept Palestinian self-government in the occupied territories, if the PLO could control the extremists in Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups that had not renounced terrorism. Rabin authorized Israeli representatives to meet secretly with PLO representatives in Norway, to explore the possibility of resolving the

conflict. After a series of secret negotiations in Oslo, Norway, the two sides announced a breakthrough agreement, known as the Declaration of Principles, in 1993. The agreement was greeted with enthusiasm by many governments around the world, and by many Israelis and Palestinians.

Nevertheless, deep distrust remained on both sides. Some Arabs claimed that the agreement was only a way for the Israelis to stop the Intifada and gain permanent control of the occupied territories. Some Israeli Jews declared that the Palestinians would use self-government to build up a military force to attack Israel, and that the territories belonged to Israel because they were part of the land given to the Jews by God.

In 1995 the two sides signed the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This agreement mapped out the areas in which the Palestinians would have substantial control of the territory (the cities); the areas where Palestinians and Israelis would share control (a small part of the countryside); and the areas where the Israelis would retain full control (most of the countryside, where the Israelis had built their settlements). Later that year, Israeli Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated by an extremist Israeli opposed to the peace process.

In 1996, a new Likud government came to power in Israel under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu. This government was not as committed to the peace process as Rabin's government had been. At the same time, Yasser Arafat was having great difficulty preventing Hamas extremists from attacking Israeli civilians. Several incidents in 1996 and 1997—especially suicide bombings by Palestinian terrorists inside Israel, and the construction of more Jewish settlements in the occupied territories—threatened to destroy the peace process and renew the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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## **II. THE HEBRON NEGOTIATION: SETTING AND ROLES**

This negotiation is set in the West Bank town of Hebron, which lies about 25 miles south of Jerusalem. Like Jerusalem, Hebron has great religious significance for both Jews and Moslems. It is the site of the Patriarchs' Cave, known to the Jews as the Cave of Machpelah and to the Muslims as Al Haram El-Ibrahimi. The Patriarchs (Abraham and his descendants) are sacred to both Jews and Moslems. An Islamic mosque has existed above the cave since the thirteenth century. For the Jews, Hebron is also of great historical significance because David was anointed king of Israel there and made it his capital for seven years.

As with the rest of Palestine, Hebron has always had a small Jewish community. Through most of modern history, however, the great majority of its residents have been Arabs. Even before Israel was created, Hebron was a flash point for conflict between Jews and Arabs. It was the site of the massacre of many Jews in 1929, when Arabs rioted and attacked Jews to protest Zionism. The British evacuated the Jewish community there in the early 1930s when Arab rioting broke out again all over Palestine. From that time there was no Jewish community in Hebron, until the state of Israel gained control over the West Bank in 1967. A small group of Israeli Jewish settlers who wanted to live near the Cave of Machpelah established themselves in Hebron under Israeli military protection in the mid-1970s.

Since then Hebron has experienced a cycle of violence and counter-violence. An attack on settlers in May 1980 led to a Jewish response—the car bombing of several Arab mayors. The stabbing death of a yeshiva student in Hebron in 1983 resulted in the random booby-trapping of Arab schools by a Jewish terrorist ring. Before the group was caught, it had planned to blow up the Dome of the Rock/Haram Al Sharif areas on the Temple Mount. A bombing of an Israeli bus killed several Jews and resulted in the machine gunning of an Arab bus. Although the Israeli government attempted to stop terrorist acts by Jews as well as Palestinians, it often reduced prison sentences for Jewish terrorists following

intense pressure from settler groups and right wing politicians. During the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in 1994, an Israeli settler fired an automatic rifle at Palestinians praying in the Al Haram Al-Ibrahimi mosque. The settler killed 29 praying Muslims before he was stopped by Israeli soldiers. The soldiers had long-standing orders not to fire on settlers.

Today, Hebron is one of the strongholds of Hamas, which rejects the peace process. It is also the home of some of the most uncompromising and most heavily armed Israeli settlers on the West Bank.

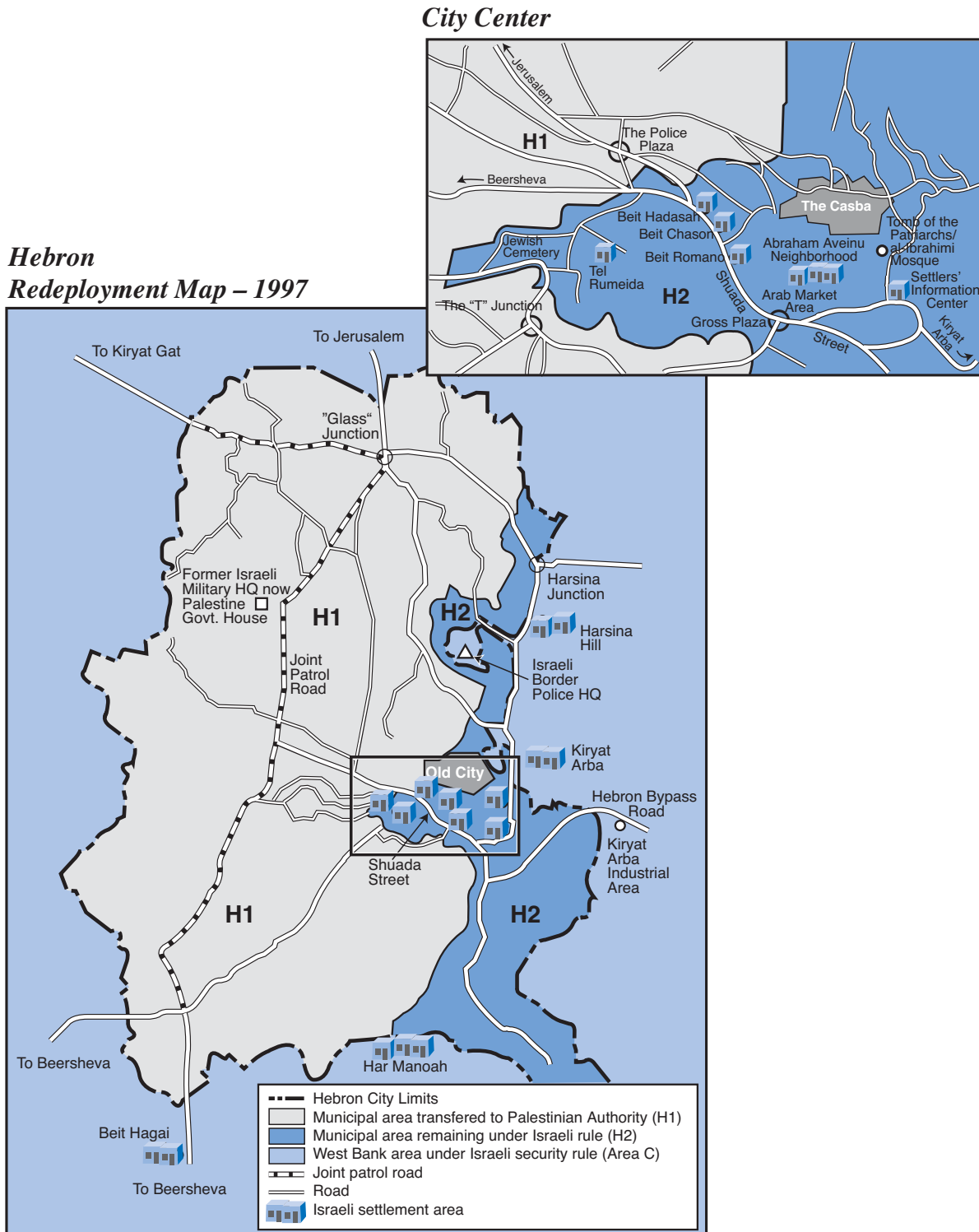
Hebron is the last city from which the Israeli army withdrew. As part of the withdrawal agreement, due to the Jewish settlements, Hebron was divided into two sections, H1 and H2 (see map on page 33). The Palestinian authority has assumed control of H1, while Israel retains control of security in H2 and has the right to pursue suspects into H1 when they are fleeing from H2 (this is called “the right of hot pursuit”). The Hebron agreement limits Palestinian control of territory in the area around the city’s Jewish settlements. Due to the presence of about 450 settlers in the midst of approximately 160,000 Palestinians, the Israeli army has retained control of more than 20 percent of the city’s land area around the cave and the Ibrahimi Mosque. About 15,000 Palestinians live in the area that remains under Israeli control.

### **Setting the Stage for the Role Play**

It is now the spring of 1998. Both Israelis and Palestinians are unhappy with the arrangements for sharing control of Hebron. Most Palestinian people feel that after almost a decade of peace talks, their lives are more difficult than ever. They cannot move freely within Hebron or between Hebron and other areas of the West Bank, either for work or to visit family members. Many are suffering economically and personally as a result. Meanwhile, the Israelis are continuing to build settlements in the West Bank areas that are still under their control. In short, the Palestinians are confined to their densely populated towns in their zones of “autonomy” with little room for expansion while



**Hebron  
Redeployment Map – 1997**



Source: Foundation for Middle East Peace ([www.fmep.org](http://www.fmep.org))

the Israeli settlers get government-subsidized housing, and other benefits.

More and more Palestinians are becoming angry with the PLO leaders who have become officials in the Palestinian Authority, the interim Palestinian government of the West Bank. Some are supporting Hamas, which continues to call for the creation of a Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic state covering all of Palestine. Most feel that the Israelis must set a firm deadline for withdrawing their military forces and turning over all public services and police powers in Hebron to the Palestinian Authority. If the Israelis will not agree to turn over control of the city, then the Palestinians will have to return to the Intifada strategy—confronting the Israelis with violent demonstrations and attacks.

The Israelis are also frustrated with the current arrangements. Although the Israeli military continues to control the area around the Patriarchs' Cave and the settlements, it cannot guarantee the safety of the settlers or its own soldiers from terrorist attacks. There have been several deadly attacks on Jewish settlers, and several riots in the streets near the settlements and the holy sites. The military is spending a great deal of time attempting to control the movements of Palestinians in and out of Hebron, but Hamas members and their supporters can move around the Israeli checkpoints without too much difficulty.

Although the settlers continue to demand full and continuing Israeli control over the holy site and the settlement area, many Israelis fear that confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians in Hebron could trigger violence throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Some members of the Israeli government and military would like to give the Palestinian Authority more control of Hebron, in exchange for Palestinian commitments to protect Israelis' lives and property. Others fear that the Authority cannot control Hamas extremists even if it wants to. The settlers want to maintain Israeli control for an indefinite period of time. Still, others continue to insist that, for strategic and religious reasons, the Israelis should permanently control Hebron and other areas of the West Bank.

### ***Division of Hebron***

H1:

- 80% of Hebron
- Controlled by Palestinian Authority
- Palestinian population: about 145,000

H2:

- 20% of Hebron, includes holy sites
- Controlled by Israeli Army
- Palestinian population: about 15,000
- Jewish population: about 450

To reduce the risk of violent conflict in Hebron, the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority have each agreed to send a three-member delegation to a meeting to discuss the future of the city.

### **The Israeli Delegation**

#### ***1. Israeli military officer in charge of Hebron***

This officer is responsible for security in Israeli-controlled areas in and around the city of Hebron. A career member of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF, the Israeli military), the officer is a pragmatic person who is more concerned with the issue of Israeli military security than with ideological matters. The officer is most concerned about stopping terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens, and is willing to work with the Palestinian Authority to maintain security in Hebron if the Palestinian police can show that they are also serious about stopping terrorist attacks.

#### ***2. Israeli government representative***

This official has been appointed to represent the Israeli government in meetings with Palestinian Authority officials to discuss control of the West Bank. A moderate who negotiated with the Palestinians in Oslo, the representative has won the respect of some

Palestinian leaders, but is also a strong advocate for Israel's interests. The representative believes that peace with the Palestinians is in Israel's interest, but is not sure that the Palestinian Authority can control militant Palestinian groups like Hamas. The representative also realizes the influence that the militant Israeli settlers have on public opinion and on the Israeli government, and wants to make an agreement on Hebron that the militant settlers can also accept.

### ***3. Representative of Israeli settlers in Hebron***

The Israeli government has invited a representative of the settlers to participate in the negotiations in hopes of finding an agreement on Hebron that the settlers can support. This representative is a member of the Jewish settler movement Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful), which built the first Jewish settlement in Hebron after the Six Days' War. The settlers are determined to keep Hebron's holy sites under Jewish control. However, the settlers' representative has realized that the settlers' demand for permanent Israeli control over Hebron (as well as the rest of the West Bank) may not be politically acceptable to the majority in Israel. The settler representative does not want to live under Palestinian rule, or to give up the settlers' right to protect themselves, but does recognize that some compromise may be necessary to ensure the survival of the Jewish settlement in Hebron.

## **The Palestinian Delegation**

### ***1. Palestinian Authority official in charge of Hebron civil government***

The Palestinian Authority official is a high-ranking member of the PLO, and was a participant in the 1992–93 Oslo negotiations with the Israelis. The official is now in charge of the Palestinian civil government in Hebron. The official believes that the Palestinian people can only gain full self-government by making peace with the Israelis. On the other hand, the official is angry that the Israelis have not

yet fulfilled their promise to withdraw fully from the occupied territories and let Palestinians govern themselves. The official still believes that diplomacy is the only long-term solution to the problems in Hebron, but also wants the Israelis to understand that unless the Palestinians gain significantly more control over Hebron's territory, police, and borders, the Palestinian Authority cannot guarantee peace in the city.

### ***2. Palestinian chief of Hebron police***

A high-level PLO official until 1995, this official is now in charge of the Palestinian police force in Hebron. The police chief wants full Palestinian police control over Hebron and does not want the Israelis to have the right to pursue suspected terrorists inside Palestinian-controlled areas. On the other hand, the police chief knows that the Israelis will not give up control over Hebron (or other areas of the West Bank) unless the Palestinian police show that they can stop violence by Hamas and other extremist groups. The chief sees some advantages in cooperating with the Israelis to control both Israeli settlers and Hamas members, if the Israelis will give the Palestinian Authority full control over Hebron.

### ***3. Hamas supporter***

Although Hamas is not officially recognized by either the Israeli government or the Palestinian Authority, the Authority has invited this Hamas supporter to the negotiations in the hope of finding an agreement on the future of Hebron that Hamas can support. The Hamas supporter was one of the leaders of the Intifada in Hebron, and has criticized the PLO and Yasser Arafat for compromising with the Israelis. Hamas is still committed to an armed struggle against Israel until Israel withdraws fully from the occupied territories. The Hamas supporter has made it clear that Hamas is very skeptical about the possibility of making progress by talking to the Israelis, especially when an Israeli settler has been invited to participate in the negotiations. On the

other hand, the Hamas supporter has also made it clear that Hamas is willing to consider suspending the use of force in Hebron if the Israelis will complete their withdrawal from the city.

### International Mediator/Chair

A Norwegian diplomat who has facilitated past negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, the mediator/chair is trusted and respected by both sides. It is important to both the mediator/chair and the Norwegian government to maintain their even-handed neutral reputation so that they can continue to play a constructive role in bringing peace to the Middle East. To do this, the mediator/chair must work to make the negotiations go as smoothly as possible, assuring that everyone gets time to speak about their needs and goals and that all the issues are creatively explored. Although the mediator/chair might help to encourage brainstorming when the parties seem stuck, the mediator/chair knows it is

important to avoid sharing his or her own opinion on the specific options that are generated.

### III. NEGOTIATION ISSUES

The negotiation involves three core issues:

1. **Land:** What areas of Hebron, if any, will stay under Israeli control, and for how long?
2. **Security:** How will Israelis and Palestinians work together to track down, investigate, and arrest suspected Palestinian and Israeli “terrorists” in Hebron?
3. **Border Control:** Who will control the border checkpoints? Who will inspect people and goods at these checkpoints?



#### IV. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE NEGOTIATION

The meeting has been called by the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government. They have asked a Norwegian diplomat to chair the discussion and act as mediator of the meeting. Although the Palestinian Authority representative and the Israeli government representative will make the final decisions, they have agreed to include representatives of the Israeli military, the Palestinian police, Hamas, and the Israeli settlers. These groups were chosen because each is a significant stakeholder with substantial interest in the final status of Hebron.

Prior to the actual negotiation sessions, the participants will prepare by reviewing the facts on the ground and their interests and goals for each agenda item, both individually and then in their same role groups. The Israelis and Palestinians will also have time to hold informal meetings with their own national groups to explore issues together before they meet face to face around the negotiating table.

Next, the negotiations will take place in four sessions. The first three sessions will be devoted to exploring each issue individually, starting with Land, then Security, and finally Border Control. In these sessions everyone will have a chance to explain his or her goals and interests.

After hearing everyone's point of view on an issue, participants will be asked to generate many possible solutions that meet each group's needs for that specific issue. In the fourth negotiating session, the participants will try to develop a package—a comprehensive agreement covering all three issues—that they can recommend to the Israeli Government and Palestinian Authority representatives. The mediator/chair will be responsible for writing down any agreements that the group does reach.

#### V. DEBRIEFING

At the end of the role play there will be some class time devoted to debriefing the negotiations. Everyone who played a role will complete a PEACE Checklist in which they will rate their own performance on each of the Workable Peace skills. Each team will meet to review its performance, provide feedback to team colleagues, and discuss what the team learned as a whole. A member of the group should summarize what is discussed in order to present it to the class. As a whole class you will discuss the group presentations, review some of the key moments in the negotiation, and examine what you've learned about history and conflict management as well as how it relates to your lives.

In brief, the role play will proceed using the following structure:

##### Preparation

- Individual preparation
- Same-role preparation
- Informal meetings within delegations

##### Four Negotiating Sessions

- Negotiations by issue (1/2/3)
- Packaging (4)

##### Debrief

- Written reflection
- Discussion in teams
- Class discussion

