

Intifada

A Crisis of Confidence

Background

- It was a Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, which lasted from December 1987 until 1991 (Madrid Conference). Some date its conclusion to 1993, with the signing of the Oslo Accords
- Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising Against Israeli Occupation by Zachary Lockmann; Joel Beinin eds. 1989
- Nami Nasrallah, 'The First and Second Palestinian intifadas,' in David Newman, Joel Peters (eds.) Routledge, 2013, pp.56–67, p.56
- Economic integration and increasing Israeli settlements such that the Jewish settler population in the West Bank alone nearly doubled from 35,000 in 1984 to 64,000 in 1988, reaching 130,000 by the mid nineties
- Benny Morris (2001). Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001. Vintage. p. 567.

Background

- Palestinian rage with many dimensions
- Worsening economic recession (unemployment)
- Arab summit (Amman) PLO not invite or discussed (November 1987).
- Labor or Likud took serious Palestinian self-rule in the territories.
- "Reagan and the World" by David Kyvig (pg.84)

Background

- The uprising began on 9 December, 1987 in the Jabalia refugee camp after an Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) truck collided with a civilian car, killing four Palestinians. In the wake of the incident, a (organic) protest movement arose, involving a two-fold strategy of resistance and civil disobedience, consisting of:
 - General strikes
 - Boycotts in Gaza Strip and West Bank
 - an economic boycott of refusal to work in Israeli settlements on Israeli products, refusal to pay taxes,
 - Also, refusal to drive Palestinian cars with Israeli licenses, graffiti, barricading and widespread throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails at the IDF and its infrastructure within the Palestinian territories.
- Israel, deploying some 80,000 soldiers and initially firing live rounds, killed a large number of Palestinians.

- The Intifada was not initiated by any single individual or organization. Local leadership came from groups and organizations affiliated with the PLO that operated within the Occupied Territories; such as Fatah, the Popular Front, the Democratic Front.
- Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin added deportations in August 1985 to Israel's "Iron Fist" policy of cracking down on Palestinian nationalism. This was used in 1987.
- Helena Cobban 'The PLO and the Intifada', in Robert Owen Freedman, (ed.) *The Intifada: its impact on Israel, the Arab World, and the superpowers*, University Press of Florida, 1991 pp.70-106, pp.94-5. 'must be considered as an essential part of the backdrop against which the intifada germinated'.(p.95)

Israeli Policy

- Iron Fist policy cruel and harsh or a proportional response?
- Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin said: "We will fight with all our power against any element that tries by violence to upset our full control over Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. I know the descriptions of what is going on in the territories, the way it is interpreted in the media, is not helping the image of Israel in the world. But I am convinced that above and beyond the temporary problem of an image, the supreme responsibility of our government is to fight the violence in the territories and to use all the means at our disposal to do that. We will do that, and we will succeed."
- Rabin added, in defense of the army's use of marksmen and high-powered sniping rifles against rioters: "They can shoot to hit leaders of disorder, throwers of firebombs, as much as possible at the legs after firing in the air fails to disperse the riot."
- John Kifner, New York Times, 12/24/87. Thomas L. Friedman, New York Times, 12/25/87 and 12/31/87, had particularly insightful pieces on how Israel regarded the riots as a public relations problem and how the Palestinians failed to offer a political solution. Also, Glenn Frankel, Washington Post, 12/24/87. Frankel's reporting from Gaza is particularly descriptive.
- Accusations of excessive force (UN)
- Shadow of British Army during Mandate

Crisis

- International condemnation
- December 22, U.N. Security Council voted 14-0-1 to "strongly deplore [Israel's] policies and practices which violate the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories." The United States was the lone abstainer. It was the 58th time the Security Council had passed a resolution critical of Israel since 1948
- Israel 'lost' the moral high ground.
 - no longer the victim
 - nazi-comparison begins
 - anti-Israeli sentiment spreads

US response

- George Schultz after Lebanon disaster of 1983-84 had been timid. But by early 1988 pursued shuttle diplomacy similar to Kissinger. Very active.
- By July 1988, King Hussein of Jordan agreed that Palestinians needed own voice aka PLO. This 'reset' the calculus of who the administration could speak too. Similar with the unity govt. in Israel.
- Split within Reagan administration in wake of Iran-Contra delayed peace efforts, sent mixed signals, and confused allies including Israel.
- Arafat gave UN speech in Geneva in December 1988 where he recognized Israel and offered peace.

US Response

- The emotional impact of Israel's violent suppression of the Palestinians caused the Reagan administration, on the same day that it abstained in the Security Council, to scold Israel for its "harsh security measures and excessive use of live ammunition." The next day Washington urged Israel to use nonlethal riot control methods.
- New York Times, 12/23/87, Resolution No. 605. For earlier abstentions see entries above and Michael Simpson, George J. Tomeh and Regina S. Sherif (eds.). United Nations Resolutions on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, three volumes. Washington, DC, Institute for Palestine Studies, 1988.
- New York Times, 12/23/87.

Outcomes

- The Intifada was recognized as an occasion where the Palestinians acted cohesively and independently of their leadership or assistance of neighboring Arab states
- The Intifada broke the image of Jerusalem as a united Israeli city.
- The success of the Intifada gave Arafat and his followers the confidence they needed to moderate their political programme: At the meeting of the Palestine National Council in Algiers in mid-November 1988, Arafat won a majority for the historic decision to recognise Israel's legitimacy; to accept all the relevant UN resolutions going back to 29 November 1947; and to adopt the principle of a two-state solution.

Outcomes

- Jordan severed its residual administrative and financial ties to the West Bank in the face of sweeping popular support for the PLO
- "Iron Fist" policy, Israel's deteriorating international image, Jordan cutting legal and administrative ties to the West Bank, and the U.S.'s recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people forced Rabin to seek an end to the violence through negotiation and dialogue with the PLO



