

WHAT IS PALESTINE?

Palestine has existed as a named region for roughly 2,500 years and was inhabited over that period by many different peoples.

At the end of the First World War it was brought under British rule. At that time, the population was mixed, with an Arab Muslim majority living together with Jewish and Christian minorities sharing many local Arab traditions.



WHAT ARE ZIONISM, JUDAISM AND ANTISEMITISM?

Judaism is the religion of the Jews. It is about 3000 years old. As with other religions, many people of Jewish heritage identify as Jewish, but do not hold the Jewish faith.

Antisemitism is a form of racism: the hatred of Jews just for being Jews.

Zionism is a political movement which grew in the late 1800s as a response to widespread antisemitism in Europe. Zionism aimed to create a refuge for Jews outside Europe. Zionists encouraged Jews to migrate to Palestine.

Initially only a very small minority of Jews supported Zionism. Even though in 1917 the British government reached an agreement with Zionist leaders to encourage Jewish migration to Palestine, numbers remained small until the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s led to the murder of millions of Jews in the holocaust.

By 1947 there were more than half a million European Jewish refugees in Palestine and Jews formed about one third of the population. Zionist demands for a Jewish state created a conflict with the Palestinians.

The British left Palestine in 1948 in the midst of violence by Zionist militias who massacred thousands of Palestinians and expelled 750,000 from their homes. Neighbouring Arab states intervened unsuccessfully and in 1949 the UN, after negotiating an armistice, recognised Israel, but not its ceasefire borders since Israel now occupied 78% of Palestine – far more than the 55% envisaged in the UN's tentative plan for it.

Israel's Zionist constitution is racist, declaring that Israel is a state **only** for the benefit of Jews. This discriminates against non-Jewish Palestinians and constitutes the **crime of apartheid under international law.** Palestinians have few rights and Palestinian refugees have no right of return to their homes.

Zionism and Judaism are very different. Not all Jews are Zionists and many Zionists are not Jews. Being anti-Zionist is not antisemitic. We must always challenge antisemitism alongside other forms of racism.

Israel does not represent or speak for all Jews. Many Jews worldwide describe themselves as anti-Zionist or non-Zionist. They want to be able to live peacefully in their own countries. Many of the most vocal critics of Israel are Jews. By contrast, in the USA there are many more Christian Zionists than there are Jews.

THE GAZAN PRISON 2007–2023

In 2007 Hamas won elections and assumed power in Gaza. In 2008 Israel launched a siege of Gaza, restricting all movement of people, money and goods across its borders.

Over the next years Israel gradually tightened its grip, turning Gaza into a giant prison camp. Israel permitted a tightly controlled, bare subsistence level of basic goods to be imported and distributed by the UN and local officials. After 2012 the UN and many aid agencies warned that the blockade would render Gaza uninhabitable.

An entire generation of Palestinian children reached adulthood under these conditions.

In this period Israel regularly carried out bombings and assassinations in Gaza, sanitised as “counter-terror operations”. Whenever Palestinians tried in vain to alert the world, whether by small scale violence or peaceful protest, Israel responded with mass carnage, war crimes which Israeli politicians cynically referred to as “mowing the lawn”. In Israel's assault on Gaza in 2014 alone, more than 1400 civilians were killed including 551 children.

2023/5 THE OCTOBER 7TH ATTACK AND THE GAZAN GENOCIDE

On 7th October 2023, a violent Hamas-led uprising broke through Gaza's fortified border fence. 251 Israelis were taken hostage and 1,139 were killed, some by Israeli bombardment. Of these, about 400 were military personnel. On that day war crimes were committed by both sides but lies about extreme atrocities by Hamas were spread by Israel and repeated by western media and politicians to justify the savagery of Israel's response.

Since that day Israel has bombed and shelled Gaza – an area one third of the size of Greater Manchester – with an explosive power equivalent to that of six Hiroshima-type atom bombs. **Almost no civil infrastructure remains.** Electricity, water and sewage systems, schools, universities, hospitals, mosques and churches are gone.

IT'S NOT WAR. IT'S GENOCIDE

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry has formally concluded that Israel's actions in Gaza meet the legal definition of genocide. The UN, the International Association of Genocide Scholars, leading experts and major human rights groups are now all in agreement: it is a genocide. Israel seeks not just to kill or expel the Palestinians from Gaza, but to erase from memory their very history and culture.

The officially recorded Gazan death toll of around 66,000 – some 60% women and children – understates the real scale of the horror. It includes neither those missing nor those who die from epidemics combined with starvation and a lack of medical facilities. **One academic study suggests a true death toll as high as 400,000. Tens of thousands are left with devastating injuries. Roughly 10 Gazan children lose one or more limbs every day.**

