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SOLUTIONS NOT SIDES PRESENTATION SLIDES BRIEFING FOR TEACHERS

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(to help you in case students have questions)

Please read through these materials thoroughly before delivering this presentation to your students.

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PRESENTATION – TEACHER BRIEFING

Why might your students be particularly interested or involved in this issue?

Whilst you will likely encounter students from all backgrounds who feel affected by the conflict in one way or another, there are certain students who may feel more emotionally connected to the conflict and may bring the conflict into their identity and emotional well-being, and some who feel nothing at all.

Religious students:

Jews, Muslims, and Christians have great connection to the land that we now know as Israel and Palestine, especially Jerusalem. As you'll see in the preparation video that students and teachers watch before our sessions, accessible when you book an SNS session, all three Abrahamic faiths have connections to this land and would like to access the holy sites there. However, students of Jewish, Muslim, or Christian backgrounds may not feel affected by this conflict simply because of their religion's history, but because of present-day religious matters in the region.

Let us begin by discussing why Jewish students might feel particularly affected by this:

Jewish people trace their origin back to this land, to over 2000 years ago, where various Jewish tribes, settlements, communities, and nations lived and were exiled from. Jerusalem is particularly important in Jewish prayer traditions and is referred to as 'Zion' in the Hebrew Bible - the place of return for the exiled Jewish people. Today, Israel is referred to as a Jewish state; as the modern-day state of Israel was created to be a safe place for Jewish people from all over the world to go and live in and be citizens of, at a time when they were not safe elsewhere. Many Jewish people around the world today support the existence of Israel as a Jewish state and feel some sort of affection and/or support for the country because of this.

There are still high and rising levels of antisemitism in the UK, and these often flare up when there is conflict between Israel and Palestine. Many British people who are also Jewish experience antisemitism related to Israel-Palestine; they are blamed for the actions of the Israeli military or government, assumed to be loyal to Israel and not to Britain, accused of antisemitic conspiracy theories such as drinking the blood of Christian children, holding the world's political and economic power in their hands, and not caring about the lives of Palestinians, or Muslims. For British teenagers who are also Jewish, the prejudice, discrimination, and racism against them can be extremely difficult to deal with. Added to this, they may be experiencing other pressures from within their communities in relation to Israel and how they should think or feel about it. They are particularly vulnerable to having an emotional reaction to discussing the conflict.

For Muslim students, Jerusalem is a particularly important place due to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Baraq wall and the history of Islam which has its origins in the Middle East, over 1,300 years ago. The majority of Palestinians are Muslim, and within the state

of Israel there are also Israeli citizens who are Muslim or Christian of Palestinian, Syrian, Druze, and other origins. Because the lands assigned to be a Palestinian state by the United Nations, and under agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, are still under an illegal occupation by Israel (the West Bank and East Jerusalem), or under blockade by Israel and Egypt (Gaza), Palestinians do not have political or physical freedom. Many British students who are Muslim may have feelings of sympathy, sadness, desperation, and anger over the current situation for Palestinians. They may feel helpless regarding the situation and unsure where to turn for support. They may also, like Jewish students, feel pressure from within their own communities to think or feel a particular way towards Israel and Palestine. There is also discrimination and prejudice towards British Muslims regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; for example, the view that because British Muslims may support Palestine it automatically makes them antisemitic, that they support or are somehow part of the violence that some Palestinians carry out against Israelis, that they want to destroy Israel, or that they are more loyal to Muslim countries than the UK. They, too, are particularly vulnerable to having an emotional reaction when discussing the conflict.

British students with a Christian background also experience vulnerability when discussing the conflict and should be supported in this process. Christianity originated in the region, and there are many Christian holy sites. However, there are also many Christians living in Israel and Palestine who experience discrimination and often do not feel safe. As they are such a minority, the same focus is not given to them and their issues and experiences aren't particularly well known here in the UK. British students in the UK who are Christian may feel sadness and empathy for the Christians living in Israel and Palestine and may also feel frustrated about the lack of media coverage for their plight. Furthermore, different denominations may show solidarity with either Israelis or Palestinians. For example, Quakers and Catholics tend to support the Palestinians, while Protestants may express solidarity with the Palestinians if they focus more on a theology of human rights, or the Israelis if they focus more on a theology of 'Christian Zionism' or come from Northern Ireland.

British students of other religions and none may also feel sadness, anger, or helplessness at the situation, and many may not feel comfortable discussing it. All in all, for these young people, whilst there is a plethora of information on the conflict online, it really can be a quagmire trying to wade through it whilst also feeling pressures from inside and outside their communities to focus on one particular perspective. Through your guidance, studying the conflict, and support from organisations such as SNS, we can help to give them a solid foundation of knowledge about both sides and prepare them for the challenges and to make up their own minds.

Refugees:

Another group of students who may be particularly vulnerable to sensitivities related to the conflict are refugees and those of refugee background. The majority of Israelis and Palestinians have heritage rooted in refugee experiences; for Jewish Israelis, most fled or were forced out of their homes in Europe, Russia, North Africa, or the Middle East. Few British students will realise that around 1 million Jews expelled from their ancient homelands around the Middle East made their way to Israel and think only that Jews fled to Israel from Europe, especially after the Holocaust. For Palestinians, the 1948

Nakba (meaning catastrophe in Arabic) saw the expulsion and flight of around 600,000 Palestinians from their homes. Many Palestinians still have refugee status today and live scattered across Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and other places around the world. There are now around 6 million Palestinians with refugee status, so refugees in the UK may see their own experiences and stories reflected in those of Israelis and Palestinians. Furthermore, many Palestinian refugees who have been displaced in refugee camps in Syria since 1948 have had to flee Syria due to the war there, and some are now residing in the UK. You may have Syrian refugees in your school whose heritage is Palestinian but have never visited there nor spoken much about this.

Politically active students:

The final group of students to highlight here are particularly politically active students. Israel-Palestine is also a political issue here in the UK, with the tendency of left-wing activists and politicians to side with the Palestinians, and right-wing with the Israelis. Please note that this is a generalisation, and there are plenty of activists and politicians who do not simply pick a side but choose to work down the middle and advocate justice and safety for all. However, the political divide between pro-Israel and pro-Palestine has become particularly prevalent in the last five years through the former leadership of Jeremy Corbyn of the Labour Party, who has been a significant campaigner for Palestinians for decades. Far-right groups are sometimes claiming to support Israel out of anti-Muslim sentiment. Brexit has also had an influence on the debate surrounding Israel-Palestine. The Brexit campaigns and subsequent battles for and against it have seen a resurgence of the debates and discussions around Britain's colonialist and imperialist past.

The Balfour Declaration and subsequent events are subject to much contention by Palestinians and those who support them. However, it is also seen as a period of pride and leadership by many who support Israel, some right-wing activists and politicians (who generally feel pride in Britain's history), and Christian Zionists (often found within the evangelical Christian denominations in the US). There is little middle-ground or complexity in these debates or positions. You may have very politically active students who support Israel or Palestine as a proxy to their right- or left-wing activism. These students may not be personally invested emotionally or vulnerable here, but it may still be an important subject for them.

Preparing for the presentation:

- 1) Watch the [video](#) with the transcript and highlight/make notes at points you think may be of particular interest for your students.
- 2) The Israel-Palestine Overview document is provided to help you explain key events and dates in the conflict at a glance, if students ask you questions about this during the presentation
- 3) The following script is provided for you to make use of when you present to the students:

Slide 2 (after title slide):

- Israel-Palestine has been in the news recently. As a school we care about the people there who have been suffering due to the violence, and about those in our own school community who may be affected in any way. Today, we are using these slides from an organisation called Solutions Not Sides to:
- Provide, as a school, the opportunity to express concern about this issue in a way that is civil and respectful to all members of our community
- Explore some of the historical narratives from both perspectives
- Reflect on how ordinary people have been affected in recent events
- Consider an approach that is centred on finding solutions rather than supporting one side against the other
- Let's start with taking a moment to reflect on whether this issue is important to us personally, and if so, why we feel that it is important.

(If you have time, allow space for students to share their reflection and talk about why this is important to them.)

Slide 3: *If you have time, allow the students to think about what positions people in the UK take in support of Palestine and Israel. If not, skip to next slide.*

Slide 4:

- For many different reasons, people often support these positions of free Palestine or save Israel. It is natural and good to show sympathy and concern for the people on either side, especially if you know some people personally. However, those positions can get stuck, and we end up doing very little to help the people on the ground to find a way forward to a better life
- It can be helpful to try and understand how people think and feel about it, without any pressure to agree. This is so we can have a civil discussion about a difficult topic

Slide 5:

- The tip of this iceberg represents those two positions that many people in this country who are pro-Palestine or pro-Israel support. But under the water are all the reasons why they might hold those positions

- What are some of the reasons for why people feel a strong sense of sympathy or support for Palestine and Israel?

Slide 6:

- Let's have a deeper conversation now, focusing on the situation for the ordinary people on the ground
- The region we are speaking about is situated here on the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea
- These two areas are known as Israel (yellow) and Palestine (green), or you may also hear Palestine referred to as the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The whole area with both together is only about the size of Wales, so it is quite a small territory
- Israel and Palestine are two national movements who both want to have their state in this piece of territory and the borders you see here are based on international resolutions but have not yet been agreed upon or implemented by the Israeli and Palestinian leadership. For this reason, you may have seen maps that do not show these borders and refer to all the land as only Palestine or Israel

Slide 7:

- In addition, the blue areas that you see here in the West Bank are under Israeli control and Palestinians only have the pink areas under their own control
- The yellow areas are under joint control
- The red dots are Israeli settlements where Israeli citizens are living in Palestinian areas, which are illegal under international law

Slide 8:

This is known under international law as an occupation of Palestinian land and Palestinians want it to end.

Slide 9:

Palestinians say that they would like settlement expansion to stop and that the loss of land due to these settlements be addressed in any peace negotiation.

Slide 10:

Palestinians in Gaza live under Palestinian rule, but there is a blockade on Gaza that Palestinians want to end.

Slide 11:

Israelis, particularly those living near the border with Gaza, suffer from rocket attacks by Palestinian militants that they want to end. Around 10 Israelis have been killed in the most recent escalation of violence.

Slide 12:

Palestinians suffer from Israeli air strikes on Gaza that they want to end. Over 200 Palestinians have been killed in the most recent escalation of violence.

Slide 13:

Israelis also want to ensure that in the future, they can live safely without fear of attacks being carried out against unarmed civilians. At the height of the Palestinian uprising in the early 2000s, there was a bomb almost every day for a year in Israel and many still live with that trauma.

Slide 14:

Palestinian citizens of Israel have been campaigning recently alongside Jewish Israelis for equality and counter-racism through large demonstrations in the major cities of Israel.

Slide 15:

- There are many other needs and interests that both Palestinians and Israelis have that you can learn about in a full Solutions Not Sides programme. However, the bottom line is that they are all people, just like us, who deserve a life of dignity, freedom and peace
- Many people hurt are children who have inherited this situation from the previous generations. In order to make a change for the future, we need to understand something of what happened in the past

Slide 16:

- We are now going to watch a 20-minute short film about the history of the region, in which an Israeli and a Palestinian will share some of their societies' reflections on the history
- *(If you have time for a discussion)* After watching the video, you will be welcome to share some of your reflections about why each side wishes to have a home in this land

Slide 17:

Share some reflections about why each side wishes to have a home in this land.

Slide 18:

Many Israelis see Israel as a place where they should be able to live freely and safely as Jews.

Slide 19:

Many Palestinians see Palestine as a place where they should be able to live freely and safely as Palestinians.

Slide 20:

Because we care about the people of Palestine and Israel, we want to see a future in which there is a just and peaceful solution for them. If we support one side to win against the other, then the violence and pain will continue and so will the current situation of...

Slide 21:

Lose-lose.

Slide 22:

As you talk to friends and family and do further research on this issue, think about what a win-win outcome could look like. There are millions of Palestinians and Israelis living in this piece of land and they need to find a way to coexist.

Slide 23:

Should the two-state solution be properly implemented with East and West Jerusalem as the capitals of the two states?

Slide 24:

Should there be some form of single, bi-national state, or perhaps a confederacy where the two states have a certain level of independence but have collaboration on some things?

Slide 25:

- Remember to keep the lives of Palestinians and Israelis and what they need at the heart of your activism – both sides are human beings and deserve our support to demand an end to the violence from their leaders
- The media has many different voices on this issue and a lot are biased towards one side or the other. Follow Solutions Not Sides online for more information and resources. Every week, they issue a news update on current events in Israel-Palestine that draws from diverse news sources so that you can get a broader picture of what is going on
- There are also some other organisations that offer opportunities for British young people to learn and discuss more about the topic
- Look out for the SNS hashtag campaign #IfTheyCanWeCan on social media highlighting example of Israelis and Palestinians standing together to hold their leaders to account and demand peace

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Israel-Palestine: A Beginner's Guide – Transcript

Sharon: Israel and Palestine! Here I am in a land rich in history, beautiful landscapes and cultural diversity. Records of human habitation in this region go back thousands of years, with the stories being passed down through the generations. As in other parts of the world, there have been times of war here and times of peace. The modern era is one of the times of war, and millions of people are now affected by a situation that we should try to understand by finding out as much as we can.

It is useful to get a deeper understanding in order to play a constructive part in making a change. Normally, we get our information through the media, the evening news in our various countries, and the internet. But whose voices are we hearing in the media? We have to be aware that politicians, religious leaders, and journalists are not necessarily going to be neutral in what they say. Also, people who use violence get into the media, but we rarely see people working for justice and peace, as it is not considered interesting 'news'.

We need to hear from the Israelis and Palestinians from civil society, the majority of whom are born into this situation have to decide how to respond to it, and just like the rest of us, want their freedom and a stable, peaceful life.

So where in the world are we? Israel-Palestine is situated on the far eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea. The map that you see here is disputed territory involving many parties; so as a starting point, and so you know what I'm talking about, I'm going to use terminology based on international law and call this area and West Jerusalem, Israel. These areas, the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, I'm going to call Palestine. Israel is an internationally recognised state, with its own government, its own army and full membership in the United Nations. Palestine has observer member status at the United Nations (which basically means they get to observe proceedings), but it does not yet have full recognition as a state, and although they have some of the institutions of government, they don't have control of the territory as their part of the land has been under a military occupation by Israel since 1967, which is why it is also known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

But rather than simply trying to lay blame for this situation, we are going to look from various perspectives at how it has come about, as a more complex understanding can lead to greater possibilities for solutions. Let's start with who lives here now. Here in Palestine, people speak Arabic as their first language, and most people are Muslim, with some Christians and other minorities here too. And here in Israel, most people speak Hebrew and around 70% of the population are Jewish, with a large minority of Arabic-speaking Muslims and Christians as well.

This minority are descendants of the Palestinians who remained in what has since become Israel, and number around 1 million people in a total population of 8 million.

And here in Jerusalem, right on the border between Israel and Palestine, there is a majority of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem and Israelis living in West Jerusalem. So there are people here from lots of different backgrounds and languages– just like in other parts of the world. We know that in many other places such as London, where I come from, people from different backgrounds can live together peacefully, so what’s the problem? Well, the current situation here has actually been created quite recently– within the last century.

Do you know how many different empires and peoples have ruled this region over thousands of years? Well, it’s a lot. There have been ancient Egyptians, various tribes such as Canaanites (which many Palestinians believe were their ancestors), Israelites (which many Israelis believe were their ancestors), Babylonians (that’s now Iraq), Persians (that’s now Iran), Romans (that’s now Italy), Arabs from what is now Saudi Arabia (that was the establishment of the Caliphate), Medieval Europeans (those were the Crusaders). After that, a whole lot of other people ruled the region until the Ottomans (that’s now Turkey). Eventually, the Europeans took control again and yes – it was my great-grandparents’ generation, the British, who ruled the bit of territory that we now call Israel and Palestine.

So, there have been people of all kinds of identities, both ancient and modern, who have connections to this land. Religion has played a part in some of those identities, and religion is often used today as a justification for political positions. But this issue is not only about religion.

You can see that the history of the region is really very complex. Muslims, Christians and Jews have had times of conflict over the centuries, but there have also been times when they have lived together in peace. In fact, these three faiths have a lot in common, and one thing that they all have in common, of course, is that this for them is a holy land. Let’s go and have a look at some of the places of worship here!

This is the Western Wall, the remains of what was once a Temple- the centre of Jewish religion in ancient times. Today, Jews come here to pray, and to insert notes and prayers between the stones in the wall.

The Hebrew Bible describes the Israelites as having established a kingdom in Jerusalem, and Zion was the name used to refer to a particular part of Jerusalem, then later the biblical land of Israel as a whole. Jerusalem is still important in Jewish religious practises and liturgies today. And so is Hebron, in what is now the West Bank, as it is where the tomb of the wife of the prophet Abraham is located.

And here is the church of the Holy Sepulchre. Many Christians believe that this is where Jesus was crucified and buried before his resurrection. Christians from many denominations come here to pray, and to connect with these holy places described in the Bible.

And here are the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Muslims believe that this is where their prophet, Mohammad, was transported on a winged creature in a night journey. They call the foundation wall ‘Al Buraq wall’, and it’s a very sacred place for Muslims where they want to come and pray.

Jerusalem was under Muslim rule for centuries. First, under the Arabs for the first half of the 7th century, then under subsequent Muslim empires, the most recent being the Ottoman Empire. Jerusalem is also important to Muslims as having been the first direction to face for prayer, before it changed to Mecca. Hebron is another holy site for Muslims, who also consider Abraham to be a prophet.

Now, you may feel you belong to any of these faiths, or none of them, but with the majority of people who live here being Muslim, Christian or Jewish, and with millions more worldwide who believe this is a special, holy land, it is very important that people of all faiths and none should be able to come here to see these places for themselves in an environment of freedom and peace. But at the moment, it's modern politics that's stopping this. Let's go and investigate what happened here just a couple of generations ago...

Here I am at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. So why have I brought you here? Do you remember I mentioned that in my great-grandparents' generation at the end of WW1, in around 1920, the British took control of this region? Well, this building was their base of operations, and not long before what was called 'the British mandate on Palestine' began, a political movement called 'Zionism' started among some Jewish people in Europe. As a minority living under Christian populations for centuries, Jews in Europe have suffered some awful persecution at various times, with expulsions, discrimination, and killings happening for hundreds of years. World War II and the Holocaust still hadn't happened at this point, yet even back then, many Jews, particularly in Russia and Eastern Europe, did not feel safe.

One of the movement's leaders approached the British government and asked if they would allow Jewish immigration to British mandate Palestine. In the end the British made a decision; they said yes.

In 1917, the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, signed a controversial letter confirming the decision. So Jewish immigration, of which there had already been some, significantly increased. And although there was already a minority of Jews living here, this was a big change for the region, because the majority of people here at the time were not Jewish – they were Palestinian Muslims and Christians who were living under British rule. The immigration continued in waves right up until the 1940s.

But then World War II broke out, and the Nazi regime led by Hitler started persecuting and killing Jews and some other minorities. Millions of Jews were sent to concentration camps and 6 million of them were murdered in the Holocaust.

It was a deliberate, and organised program of genocide aimed first and foremost at the Jews. British Mandate Palestine began to receive even more Jewish immigrants fleeing the persecution in Europe. Some of them were held in camps like this by the British when they first arrived here. It was a time of terrible, global turbulence and violence, and it was within this context that the conflict here unfolded.

WW2 ended in 1945, and by 1947, the British had become unable to contain the violence that was breaking out here. There were Palestinian revolutions against the British back in 1929 and then in 1936 because they saw them as foreign occupiers and

facilitators of the Zionist movement. But there was also violent resistance by some Jewish groups – the King David Hotel was blown up by one of them in 1946, and there were many other acts of violence by these organised groups. So the British decided to leave. They pulled out, and handed the whole situation over to the United Nations, or the UN; and the UN proposed a plan.

They suggested that the land be divided into two states – one state to be majority Jewish, and the other Palestinian. Jerusalem was proposed to be under international control. But the people living here, and the surrounding Arab countries, had to respond to this proposal. Although there were many who wanted to reject the plan within both the Jewish and Arab communities, two overall positions emerged that became dominant, and led to a final position for each side.

The Jewish people decided to accept the partition plan, and in May 1948, they declared their state on 55% of the land, and gained international recognition. The Arab countries decided to reject the plan for various reasons. These included the view that certain promises made to them previously by the British and French had been broken, that the percentage of land on offer was disproportionate as the Palestinian population was larger than the Jewish one at that time, and that the Palestinians, as the majority inhabitants of the land in 1948, had been treated unfairly. Very soon after the Israelis declared their state, the Arab countries declared war on the new state of Israel.

The outcome of the war was victory for Israel, and a refugee crisis was created. Hundreds of Arab villages such as this one were destroyed and around 780,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled the region and went into refugee camps in surrounding countries and further afield as massacres were carried out in villages such as Deir Yassin. By the time truce lines were agreed in 1949, Israel was in control of around 78% of the total land. With Jordan occupying the West Bank, and Egypt taking control of Gaza.

What did this mean for ordinary people living there at the time and how has this affected the lives of their descendants? It's time now to go and talk to some people here and find out what 1948 means to their respective societies.

Ayala: 1948 for most Israelis is the sentiment of independence and pride in our ability to achieve our own national home for the Jewish people. In 1948 it was very important for us to establish our own safe place because of the persecution we were suffering from for so many years and after more than 2000 years of exile that was the opportunity and we were recognised by all the nations of the world. We got the right to build our own national home in the state of Israel for the Jews. So on Independence Day, we barbecue, we dance, we go out to parties, after that declaration of independence, after the recognition in the United Nations in 1947, people just went out to the street and danced. So for many years it was about dancing and parties. What is most interesting in the Israeli culture is the day before the Independence Day we commemorate and have the Memorial Day remembering all our fallen soldiers and wounded and all the victims of violent attacks inside Israel. It is connected to the Independence Day because that is the story of the Israeli state: sorrow and happiness; pride and memory. For me the most urgent challenge that we're facing as an Israeli

society is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Until we sort this out, we sort our borders and we solve this conflict we can never have peace inside us. I think one of the major problems is the loss of hope that we have in the last decade because of all the negotiations, failure and some Israelis have lost hope. I disagree. Life is more important than land. And blood of people is more precious than any house you build. We should have some faith and we should not predetermine that it couldn't work, we should take the chance. At least try. Give it a try and I feel in the past decade, the Israeli leadership has not tried to really reach a solution.

Wasim: The date 1948 for millions of Palestinians inside and outside the diaspora is the day of Nakba, or catastrophe in English, where approx. 700 000 Palestinians were exiled from their homes and hundreds of Palestinian villages and towns were destroyed. Of course these Palestinians left to neighbouring countries, the majority to Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, and a huge portion stayed in the West Bank and some in Gaza, and even some were misplaced in Israel. For many Palestinians, the day of commemorating the Nakba is the day of speaking about our rights of return, of self-determination and ending the Israeli occupation. It's an event where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, not only in Palestine, but in the diaspora go out into the street and raise the Palestinian flag. The fact is for millions of Palestinians inside and outside [the country], the Nakba will always remain this sore event in history and changed our lives. For me personally I lived in a refugee camp in Syria for around 10 years and I understand how Palestinians refugees see the conflict from the outside rather than the inside. This is a fact, this is something we have to deal with and live with every day. The Palestinian refugee wants to have closure to our conflict with the Israelis and have our own independent state. This is national interest for Palestinians and is something very important for us: to have our rights of self-determination, to be able to speak about equality, about freedom of speech, and about just moving on with our lives and raising our children in peace.

Sharon: So you can see the huge significance of these different narratives in Palestinian and Israeli society, and these are just the reflections of two individuals. There are many other views on these issues within Israel and Palestine. Subsequent generations are now born into this story and grow up with these histories, and they have to choose their response to their respective situations.

Nor has the map remained the way it was after Israeli Independence and the Nakba. There have been many later wars between Israel and the surrounding Arab countries which included Jewish refugees fleeing the Arab states. In June 1967 another war broke out that lasted just 6 days. Israel struck the first blow, but they saw it as a defensive war, and their actions as a pre-emptive move to prevent an imminent attack by the Arab countries following several aggressive steps by Egypt. But the Arab countries saw Israel's strike as an act of aggression and provocation. Israel won that war and gained control of the Sinai in Egypt, the Golan Heights in Syria, and all of Gaza, the West Bank and later East Jerusalem. Israel has since pulled out of Egypt and there's a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, and the Israelis pulled out of Gaza in 2005, although they still control the air space, the naval space, the border, and restrict everything that passes in and out – both goods and people. But until today Israel retains control over the Golan Heights, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Many Israelis state that from their perspective there are security reasons for these measures due to decades of violence, and Gaza's southern border is also sealed and controlled by Egypt. However, Palestinians view this situation as an occupation of land that was intended to be a Palestinian state, following an agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians in Oslo in 1993.

The international community, through laws and resolutions at the United Nations, have declared that Israel's presence there is illegal and that the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, should form a Palestinian state based on the 1967 border lines you saw prior to that war. These are known as the 67 borders. But despite many rounds of negotiations in the past few decades involving Israelis, Palestinians, Americans and other international actors, no agreement has been reached, and in the meantime, Israeli expansion of settlements into the West Bank has been increasing, making the establishment of a Palestinian state more and more difficult.

The tragedy here, is that millions of Palestinians and Israelis have had to live with violence, insecurity and occupation for too long. As members of the international community, and the potential change-makers of tomorrow, we need to learn as much as possible about the situation now, and most importantly, to listen to ordinary Palestinians and Israelis about what they need, and about we can help them to create a better future. So remember, don't be simply pro-Israel or pro-Palestine – above all, be pro-solution.

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ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT OVERVIEW

The First Zionist Congress - Basle 1897

- The first Zionist Congress meets in Basle to discuss Theodore Herzl's book "Der Judenstaat" the Jewish state. The Congress issued the Basle Programme to establish a "home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured by public law" and set up the World Zionist Organisation to work for that end.
- A few Zionist immigrants had already started arriving in the area before 1897. By 1903 there were some **25,000 of them**, mostly from **Eastern Europe**. They lived **alongside about half a million Arab residents** in what was then part of the **Turkish Ottoman Empire**. A second wave of about 40,000 immigrants arrived in the region between 1904 and 1914.

Great War up to Balfour Declaration

- After the Great War, with the Ottoman Empire ousted from Palestine, Britain occupied the region and was assigned it as the mandatory power by the League of Nations on 25 April 1920.
- During this period of change, **three key** pledges were made:
 - In 1916 the British Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, promised **the Arab leadership post-war independence** for former Ottoman Arab provinces.
 - However, at the same time, the secret **Sykes-Picot Agreement between war victors, Britain and France, divided the region under their joint control.**
 - Then in 1917, the British Foreign Minister **Arthur Balfour** committed Britain to work towards "**the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people**", in a letter to leading Zionist Lord Rothschild. It became known as the **Balfour Declaration**.

Arab Discontent

- 1920s and 30s saw **hundreds of thousands of Jews immigrating to Palestine**, this provoked unrest within the Arab community.
- In 1922, a British census showed the Jewish population had risen to about 11% of **Palestine's 750,000 inhabitants**. More than **300,000 immigrants arrived in the next 15 years**.

- Arab-Jewish tensions reached a peak in August 1929 where **133 Jews** were killed by Palestinians and **110 Palestinians** killed by British police.
- Arab revolt began in **1936**, at the same time the Irgun was orchestrating attacks on Palestinian and British targets with the aim of “**liberating Palestine**” by force.
- July 1937, Lord Peel recommended partitioning the land into **a Jewish state** (about **a third** of British Mandate Palestine, including Galilee and the coastal plain) and **an Arab one**. – Peel Commission.
- Palestinian & Arab representatives rejected this and demanded an end to immigration. Violent opposition continued until 1938 when it was **crushed with reinforcements from the UK**.

UN Partition of Palestine

- Britain handed over the responsibility of solving the problem to the UN in 1947. After the Holocaust, there was a sense of a more urgent need for the creation of a Jewish state.
- The UN set up a special committee which recommended splitting the territory into separate Jewish and Palestinian states. Palestinian representatives, known as the **Arab Higher Committee**, **rejected the proposal**; their counterparts in the **Jewish Agency accepted it**.
- The partition plan gave **56.47% of Palestine to the Jewish state and 43.53% to the Arab state**, with an international enclave around Jerusalem. On 29 November 1947, 33 countries of the UN General Assembly voted for partition, 13 voted against and 10 abstained. The plan, which was rejected by the Palestinians, was never implemented.
- Britain announced its intention to **terminate its Palestine mandate** on 15 May 1948 but hostilities broke out before the date arrived.
- The death of British soldiers in the conflict made the continuing presence in Palestine **deeply unpopular in Britain**. In addition, the British resented American pressure to allow in more Jewish refugees - a sign of growing US support for Zionism.
- Both Arab and Jewish sides prepared for the coming confrontation by mobilising forces. **The first “clearing” operations were conducted against Palestinian villages by Jewish forces in December.**

Establishment of Israel

- David Ben Gurion proclaimed that the new State of Israel, came into being at 4pm, 16 May 1948 - The year had begun with Jewish and Arab armies each staging attacks on territory held by the other side. Jewish forces, backed by the Irgun and Lehi militant groups made more progress, seizing areas allotted to the Jewish state but also conquering substantial territories allocated for the Palestinian one.
- The Massacre at Deir Yassin spread fear amongst the Palestinian communities and hundreds of thousands fled to Lebanon, Egypt and the area now known as the West Bank.
- The day after the State of Israel was declared, five Arab armies from Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq invaded Israel but were repulsed. Armistices established Israel's borders on the frontier of most of the Earlier British Mandate Palestine.
- Egypt kept the Gaza Strip and Jordan annexed the area around East Jerusalem now known as the West Bank.

Formation of the PLO

- Up to this point, there had been competition between Arab states to be seen as the head leader of the Arab world's aggression towards Israel - leaving the Palestinians as onlookers.
- They voted in January 1964 for a creation of a Palestinian Authority who could effectively be controlled. The result was the PLO.
- Arafat became the chairman in 1969 and wanted them to be independent, which reflected the wishes of the Palestinian people and his Fatah organisation founded 5 years earlier in secret, gained notoriety for their armed operations against Israel, inflicting heavy casualties in Karameh in Jordan 1968.

The Six Day War 1967

- Arab armies massed on Israel's border, Israel launched pre-emptive airstrike, Israel wiped out Arab armies of Syria Jordan and Egypt, Israel gained West Bank, Gaza all the way through to Sinai and the Golan heights.
- According to the UN, the conflict displaced another 500,000 Palestinians who fled to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

The Yom Kippur (October) War

- Initially, Israel was caught badly off guard as Egypt and Syria made advances in Sinai and the Golan heights, but at the end the IDF recovered and made gains further than the 1967 lines although it gave those up in the ceasefire.
- The war made Israel more dependent on the US for military, economic and diplomatic support.
- Saudi Arabia caused a steep rise in fuel prices when they placed an embargo on oil products being sent to the West for their support of Israel.

Arafat's First UN Appearance

- In the early 1970s the PLO under Yasser Arafat carried out numerous international attacks against Israel, biggest example in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games where 11 Israeli athletes were murdered.
- In 1974 he made a groundbreaking appearance in the UN in which he stated "I come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun...please do not let the olive branch fall from my hand".
- The speech was a watershed moment for the Palestinians in their cause in terms of international recognition – a year later, a US State Department Official stated that **"the legitimate interests of the Palestinian Arabs must be taken into account in the negotiating of an Arab-Israeli peace"**

Israel's Resurgent Right Wing

- Until 1977, Israeli politics had **been dominated** by the **Left Wing – Labour Party**.
- Likud (Right Wing Party) focused on extending Israeli sovereignty in the whole of the earlier British mandate Palestine, as well as claiming Jordanian territory as part of the "Greater Israel" of biblical times.
- Menachem Begin, the new government leader, **increased Israeli settlement** activity in the West Bank and Gaza "creating facts on the ground" to prevent any future territorial compromise over areas captured in 1967.
- Ariel Sharon spearheaded this movement as chairman of the ministerial committee for settlements until 1981.

Israel and Egypt Make Peace

- Egyptian President Anwar Sadat flies to Israel to make speech to the Knesset in 19 November 1977.
- Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David accords in September 1978 outlining **"the framework for peace in the Middle East"** which included **limited autonomy for Palestinians**. A bilateral Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was signed by Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin six months later in **March 1979**.
- The Sinai Peninsula, which Israel had seized in the 1967 war, was returned to Egypt.
- Arab states **boycotted Egypt** for breaking ranks and negotiating a separate treaty with Israel.
- Sadat was **assassinated in 1981 by Islamist elements in the Egyptian army**, who opposed peace with Israel, during national celebrations to mark the anniversary of the October war.

Israel Invades Lebanon 1982

- "Operation Peace for Galilee" launched to expel the PLO from Lebanon who had been launching raids and rocket attacks into Northern Israel.
- The action was triggered by the attempt on the life of Israeli ambassador to London **Shlomo Argov by the dissident Palestinian group Abu Nidal**.
- Israeli troops reached Beirut in August. A **ceasefire agreement allowed the departure of PLO fighters from Lebanon, leaving Palestinian refugee camps defenceless**.
- As Israeli forces gathered around Beirut on 14 September, **Bashir Gemayel**, leader of the Christian Phalange militia, was killed by a bomb at his HQ in the capital. The following day, the Israeli army occupied West Beirut.
- From **16 to 18 September**, the Phalangists - who were allied to Israel - killed **hundreds of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps as they were encircled by Israeli troops in one of the worst atrocities of nearly a century of conflict in the Middle East**. Mr. Sharon resigned from his post as defence minister after a 1983 Israeli inquiry concluded that he had failed to act to prevent the massacre.

The Palestinian Intifada – 1987-1993

- A mass uprising - or intifada - against the Israeli occupation began in Gaza and quickly spread to the West Bank.
- Protest took the form of civil disobedience, general strikes, boycotts on Israeli products, graffiti, and barricades, but it was the stone-throwing demonstrations against the heavily-armed occupation troops that captured international attention.
- The Israeli Defence Forces responded and there was heavy loss of life among Palestinian civilians. **More than 1,000 died in clashes which lasted until 1993.**

PLO Opens Door to Peace 1988

- Israel had difficulty quelling the intifada and this created an issue for the PLO in exile in Tunis, the intifada and civil strife had the backing of the entire Palestinian community living under occupation and the PLO were getting sidelined as the main players in the “revolution”.
- The Palestinian National Council (a government-in-exile) **convened in Algeria in November 1988 and voted to accept a “two-state” solution based on the 1947 UN partition resolution (181), renounce terrorism and seek a negotiated settlement based on Resolution 242, which called for Israel to withdraw from territory captured in the 1967 war, and Resolution 338.**
- The **US began dialogue with the PLO. But Israel continued to view the PLO as a terrorist organisation with which it would not negotiate.** Instead, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir proposed elections in the occupied territories before negotiations on a self-rule agreement.

Madrid Summit 1991

- 1991 Gulf War was a disaster for the PLO whose support for Saddam Hussein isolated them from the wealthy Gulf States.
- Peace negotiations became more attractive to Arafat after Kuwait was liberated but the Israeli hard-line president Yitzhak Shamir did not find it so.
- US Secretary of State: James Baker made numerous diplomatic visits and prepared the ground for a summit in Madrid, Syria agreed hoping a deal for the Golan Heights could be made and Jordan also agreed.

- But **Shamir refused to talk directly with PLO "terrorists"**, so a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation was formed with prominent Palestinian figures- who were not from the PLO - taking part. In the days before the summit, Washington withheld \$10bn of loan guarantees from Israel in a rare moment of discord over the building of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.
- A worldwide audience watched the historic summit begin on 30 October. The old enemies were each given 45 minutes to set out their positions. The Palestinians spoke of a shared future of hope with Israel, Shamir justified the existence of the Jewish state, while Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq al-Shara dwelled on Mr Shamir's "terrorist" past.
- After the summit the US set up separate bilateral meetings in Washington between Israel and Syria, and with the Jordanian-Palestinian delegations.

Oslo Peace Process

- The election of the left-wing Labour government in June 1992, led by Yitzhak Rabin, triggered **a period of frenetic Israeli-Arab peacemaking in the mid-1990s**.
- The government - including the "iron-fisted" Rabin and doves Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin - was uniquely placed to talk seriously about peace with the Palestinians. The PLO, meanwhile, wanted to make peace talks work because of the weakness of its position due to the Gulf War.
- Israel finally agreed to allow PLO participants in peace talks, and Peres and Beilin explored the possibility of a secret forum between the two facilitated by Norway.
- **With the Washington bilateral talks going nowhere**, the secret "Oslo track" - opened on 20 January 1993 in the Norwegian town of Sarpsborg - made unprecedented progress. **The Palestinians consented to recognise Israel in return for the beginning of phased dismantling of Israel's occupation.**
- Negotiations culminated in the Declaration of Principles, signed on the White House lawn and sealed with a historic first handshake between **Rabin and Yasser Arafat** watched by **400 million people around the world**.

Birth of the Palestinian Authority

- May 4 1994, Israel and the PLO reached an agreement in Cairo to implement the 1993 declaration of principles. This included Israel's military withdrawal from most of the Gaza Strip, excluding Jewish settlements and land around them, and from the Palestinian town of Jericho in the West Bank.

- Negotiations were difficult and were almost derailed on 25 February when a Jewish settler in the West Bank town of Hebron fired on praying Muslims, killing 29 people.
- The agreement itself contained potential pitfalls. It envisaged further withdrawals during a five-year interim period during which solutions to the really difficult issues **were to be negotiated** - issues such as the **establishment of a Palestinian state**, the status of Jerusalem, Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories and the fate of more than 3.5 million Palestinian refugees from the 1948 and 1967 upheavals.
- Many critics of the peace process were silenced on **1 July as jubilant crowds lined the streets of Gaza to cheer Yasser Arafat on his triumphal return to Palestinian territory**. The returning Palestinian Liberation Army deployed in areas vacated by Israeli troops and Arafat became head of the new Palestinian National Authority (PA) in the autonomous areas. He was elected president of the Authority in January 1996.

Oslo II and the Assassination of Rabin

- First year of Palestinian self rule was problematic, attacks against Israeli civilians continued. Israel assassinated militant leaders and increased settlement activity whilst limiting PA autonomy.
- The Palestinian Authority quelled unrest by mass detentions. Opposition to the peace process grew among right-wingers and religious nationalists in Israel.
- Against this background, peace talks were laborious and fell behind schedule. But on 24 September the so-called Oslo II agreement was signed in Taba in Egypt, and countersigned four days later in Washington.
- The agreement divided the West Bank into three zones:
 - 1) Zone A comprised 7% of the territory (the main Palestinian towns excluding Hebron and East Jerusalem) going to full Palestinian control;
 - 2) Zone B comprised 21% of the territory under joint Israeli-Palestinian control;
 - 3) Zone C stayed in Israeli hands. Israel was also to release Palestinian prisoners. Further handovers followed.
- Oslo II was greeted with little enthusiasm by Palestinians, while Israel's religious right was furious at the "surrender of Jewish land". **Amid an incitement campaign against Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a Jewish religious extremist assassinated him on 4 November, sending shock waves around the world. The dovish Shimon Peres, architect of the faltering peace process, became prime minister.**

Deadlock

- Conflict returned early in 1996 with a series of devastating suicide bombings in Israel carried out by the Islamic militant group Hamas, and a bloody three-week bombardment of Lebanon by Israel.
- **Peres** narrowly lost elections on 29 May to the right-wing **Binyamin "Bibi" Netanyahu**, who **campaigns against the Oslo peace deals under the motto "Peace with Security"**.
- Netanyahu soon enflamed Arab opinion by lifting a freeze on building new settlements in the occupied territories and provoking fears about undermining Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem **by opening an archaeological tunnel under the compound of al-Aqsa mosque** - one of Islam's holiest sites.
- Despite his antagonism towards the existing peace process, Netanyahu, **under increasing US pressure, handed over 80% of Hebron in January 1997 and signed the Wye River Memorandum on 23 October 1998 outlining further withdrawals from the West Bank.**
- But his right-wing coalition collapsed in January 1999 in disarray over the implementation of the Wye deal. He lost elections on 18 May to Labour's **Ehud Barak** who pledged to **"end the 100-year conflict" between Israel and the Arabs within one year.**
- The five-year interim period defined by Oslo for a final resolution passed on 4 May 1999, but Yasser Arafat was persuaded to defer unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood to give a chance for negotiations with the new administration.

The Second Intifada

- 5 years of peace talks brought no genuine progress and this frustrated the Palestinian people. A new Wye River accord was signed in September 1999 but further withdrawals were hindered by disagreements on other issues such as settlements etc.
- Barak unsuccessfully concentrated on peace with Syria but did secure the withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.
- 2 weeks of negotiations at Camp David was the closest they came to striking a deal between Arafat, Barak and Clinton, Arafat left and flew home to the West Bank a hero with the peace talks dead in the water.
- Ariel Sharon toured the temple mount which was provocative to the Palestinian Muslims and demonstrations began, as they got more violent, the intifada or "al aqsa" intifada began.

Sharon Returns

- By the end of 2000, Ehud Barak was struggling to cope with the upsurge in violence with the intifada.
- With his coalition collapsing around him, he resigned on December 10th to seek a new mandate to deal with the crisis.
- In elections on February 6th, Ariel Sharon was swept into power as the Israeli public turned its back on land for peace deals in favour of a stronger PM who would be tough on the “Palestinian problem”.
- The death toll soared as Israeli airstrikes, incursions into Palestinian controlled areas intensified, and suicide bomb attacks against Israeli citizens increased.
- The US tried to intervene diplomatically using the international community but couldn’t curb the violence.

West Bank re-occupied

- Palestinian militants stepped up their suicide attacks against Israeli citizens in 2002 as the death toll increased at an alarming rate.
- Israel responded by besieging Yasser Arafat’s Ramallah compound and sending in thousands of troops to re-occupy almost the entire west bank.
- Months of curfews and closures followed as Israel conducted operations aimed at destroying the terrorist infrastructure in the west bank.
- One controversial Israeli operation took place in Jenin where they sent in a large incursion force to occupy the city, Palestinians claimed a massacre took place but this was refuted by a UN report.
- US President George Bush outlined the “road map” for peace and called on the Palestinians to replace their leader with one “not compromised by terror”.
- Israel began building what is known as its “security barrier” along the West Bank, Palestinians saw this as an attempt to annex more land.
- Palestinian attacks continued and Israel responded with periodic incursions and a ten day siege in which Arafat’s compound was mostly reduced to rubble.

Road Map Hopes 2003

- After several Palestinian attacks, Israel assassinated the founder of Hamas.
- As Israel and the US refused to speak to Arafat, he appointed Mahmoud Abbas as his new PM.
- The US finally published the road map program towards achieving a Palestinian state with Israel agreeing to stop settlement construction and the Palestinians renouncing violence.
- Sharon got his cabinet to endorse the idea of a Palestinian state peacefully alongside an Israeli one and Abbas renounced terrorism.
- Further negotiations led to the Palestinians halting terrorist attacks and the IDF pulling out of Bethlehem and Gaza.
- In August – the truce collapsed with a spate of tit-for-tat killings, Palestinian suicide bombs and Israeli assassinations and raids.
- After a long power struggle for control of the PA – Abbas resigned his post in early September, Arafat appoint Ahmed Qurej who was an Arafat loyalist.
- Construction of the West Bank barrier continued throughout the year despite international criticism.
- The Israeli cabinet voted to “remove” Mr. Arafat and in December Sharon told the Palestinians he would implement a policy of unilateral separation unless they halted violence.

Arafat Dies 2004

- Palestinian attacks and Israeli air strikes continued, the assassination of Hamas’ spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin caused outrage amongst Palestinians,
- A second senior leader, Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi was killed a month later.
- In April, Ariel Sharon outlined the disengagement plan in which Israel would totally pull out of Gaza, meaning all of the 8,000 settlers and troops were to leave.
- Construction of the west bank barrier continued despite the increasing protests and changes to the route in response to a verdict in the Israeli high court.
- The international court of justice in The Hague pronounced the barrier illegal, but Israel dismissed the “non-binding” ruling.

- Intra-Palestinian political turmoil broke out over the summer as Arafat and the PM Qurej battled with various Palestinian factions over reform of the security forces.
- After numerous Palestinian attacks, Israel launched a bloody and major incursion into northern Gaza.
- Arafat was taken ill and flown to France in late October; he died of a mysterious blood disorder on 11 November.
- Abbas succeeded him as chairman of the PLO – Palestinians went into mass mourning and his body was lifted back to Ramallah by helicopter.

Gaza Pullout 2005

- Mahmoud Abbas was elected president of the PA in January 2005 elections by a landslide.
- Post election attacks by militants threatened to derail the peace talks and thus Abbas deployed Palestinian police to northern Gaza and by February had persuaded Hamas and Islamic Jihad to begin a temporary cessation of violence.
- Abbas met Sharon in Egypt to announce the mutual ceasefire, although the militants stopped short of saying it was official.
- Sharon cracked on with the disengagement but the settlers wanted to stay, the IDF evicted them by force which was clearly emotional for Israel to handle.
- In August 2005, Israel enacted unilateral disengagement plan approved by the Knesset and withdrew its military from Gaza. Israeli citizens who refused to vacate their houses and accept government compensation were forcibly removed by Israeli forces over a number of days.

Rise of Hamas and the Lebanon War 2006

- Hamas won a landslide majority in the Palestinian election at the beginning of the year. Many Western nations, including the US and the EU, consequently cut off aid to the Palestinians citing Hamas as a terrorist organisation.
- Hamas called off 16-month truce with Israel following the Gaza beach blast where a number of Palestinians were killed after Israeli forces shelled the beach. Israel claimed that Hamas were setting off shells from near the beach. Both sides blamed each other for the bloodshed.

- Palestinian militants managed to cross the border and capture Gilad Shalit, a soldier of the IDF. Israel reacted by launching Operation Summer Rains aimed at releasing Corporal Shalit and quelling the alleged firing of Qassam rockets from Gaza.
- On 12th July, the Lebanon War began lasting 34 days. Israel bombed Hezbollah and Lebanese infrastructure, including Beirut's Rafik Hariri Airport, with Hezbollah responding by launching rockets into Israel. Approximately 1200 Lebanese and 150 Israelis were killed.
- Internal conflict between Hamas and Fatah started eventually leading to the split of the PA in 2007.

Annapolis Conference 2007

- Negotiations took place in Mecca between Hamas and Fatah with Mahmoud Abbas and Khaled Meshal signing a deal to form a National Unity Government. Israel failed to recognize the new government saying it won't deal with Hamas.
- In June 2007, three months after the deal was signed, the Palestinian Unity Government was dissolved by Mahmoud Abbas after a Hamas and Fatah battle.
- Israeli Air Forces destroyed an alleged nuclear reactor in Deir el-Zor in Syria.
- Annapolis Conference took place in November 2007 in the US aimed at reviving the peace process, and putting the notion of a two-state solution back on the table. The conference ended with both sides agreeing numerous terms and vowing to continue the peace talks once the conference ended.

Gaza Invasion 2008

- Further fighting erupted between Israel and Hamas at the beginning of 2008 in 'Operation Cast Lead', with severe Palestinian casualties.
- In June, Israel and Hamas signed an Egyptian-brokered cease-fire, briefly ending the fighting between the two sides and ending months of killings at the hands of both forces.
- Valley of Peace initiative created by Israel, Jordan and the PA aimed to improve regional infrastructure, produce clean energy, create jobs, and facilitate regional cooperation.
- In December 2008, Israel launched a full-scale invasion of Gaza to counteract the launching of rockets into Israel.

Netanyahu returns to power 2009

- The invasion continued into the beginning of 2009, when Israel launched a ground offensive into Gaza on 3rd January 2009, coordinating with air and naval intelligence, allegedly striking Palestinian rocket-launching units. The violence on both sides escalated with Hamas increasing its rocket and mortar attacks in Southern Israel.
- The conflict ended on January 18th when Israel unilaterally withdrew, before Hamas shortly withdrew several hours later.
- Figures on both sides are disputed with the number of Palestinian casualties set between 1150 and 1450, and Israelis at 13.
- Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu came to power in April after forming a coalition with the far-right party Yisrael Beiteinu led by Avigdor Lieberman.
- Obama gave a speech in Cairo in June increasing pressure on Israel to accept a two-state solution, also urging Palestinians to renounce violence and recognize Israel's right to exist.

Resumption of Peace Talks 2010

- Violence continued at the beginning of 2010 when the Israeli Air Force targeted weapons tunnels, killing 3 members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.
- Israel launched the Gaza Flotilla Raids against six ships of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla carrying activists, humanitarian aid and construction materials designed for Palestinians in their struggle against the Israeli blockade of Gaza.
- Obama, Abbas and Netanyahu gathered to restart negotiations and direct them towards a two-state solution, with a Jewish state of Israel and the creation of a state for the Palestinian people.

Abbas at the UN 2011

- Four members of Hamas were arrested by Israeli forces for their roles in the 2011 Jerusalem bus bombing that killed one person and injuring 39 others.
- Two weeks later, an Israeli school bus was blown up killing a child on board.
- Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation accord on May 4th.
- Mahmoud Abbas announces in May that he will request a state for the Palestinian people based on the 1967 borders, as well as full UN membership when talking at the UNGA in September.

- In September, Abbas formally requests a bid for statehood at the UN even though the US had vowed to veto the request.
- Gilad Shalit was exchanged for 1000 Palestinian prisoners five years after being captured by Hamas forces.

Violence erupts once again 2012

- Clashes between Hamas and Israel erupted with the deadliest clashes since the 2008 Gaza invasion. Israel and Hamas exchange rocket fire killing and wounding dozens of Israelis and Palestinians.
- Militants opened fire on Israeli soldiers on the Egyptian-Israel border killing one soldier.
- Palestine upgraded from observer status to non-member observer status in the UN signaling the “International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People” every year on November 29th. The agreement allowed the PA access to international institutions such as the ICC with then Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Maliki saying that “as long as the Israelis are not committing atrocities, are not building settlements, are not violating international law, then we don’t see any reason to go anywhere.”

Netanyahu stays in power 2013

- Benjamin Netanyahu wins 23% of the vote and forms a new coalition with Yesh Atid, the Jewish Home, and Hatnuah, signaling a change in approach by joining forces with more centrist and secular structured parties.
- Israeli and Syrian forces exchange fire as Syrian civil war reaches the Golan Heights.
- Peace Talks resume in July, initially in Washington D.C., and then in Jerusalem in August. The peace talks were mired, however, with discussion of prisoner release and settlement building.
- By November, the talks had broken down.

Israel-Gaza conflict 2014

- Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon died in January 2014 after heart failure; however, he had been in a coma since January 2006 after suffering a stroke.
- Hamas and the PA formed a new reconciliation agreement exacerbating tensions with Israel with Netanyahu claiming Abbas was choosing “Hamas, not peace”.

- In June, three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and killed while hiking in the occupied West Bank.
- The uneasy situation on both sides continued into July with militant groups firing rockets into Israel from Gaza.
- Israel responded on July 17th by initiating a ground offensive with bloody fighting ensuing between both sides
- After fighting for seven weeks and attempting several short-term cease-fires, Israel and Hamas agreed to an open-ended cease-fire on Aug. 26 through Egypt-brokered peace talks. The interim agreement still had Hamas in control of Gaza while Israel and Egypt still controlled access to Gaza.
- Since the conflict began in early July, approximately 2,100 Palestinians were killed, with more than 11,000 wounded and 100,000 left homeless. On Israel's side, 64 soldiers and six civilians were killed.

Netanyahu's fourth government 2015

- After a surprise win in the elections, Benjamin Netanyahu formed a new coalition with the Jewish Home party.
- In October, a spate of stabbings occurred on Israelis by Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank with many of the perpetrators shot and killed.
- Israel suspends contact with EU officials over the labeling of goods from Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

The Knife Intifada

- In early September 2015, Jewish groups visited the Temple Mount, a move in contradiction of laws preventing Jews from praying there. This sparked large protests by Palestinians in response.
- The subsequent anger led to numerous stabbings, shootings and car-ramming attacks by Palestinians against Israelis from October 2015- June 2016. This was met with deadly force by Israeli soldiers against attackers and suspected attackers, some of which have been labelled extrajudicial killings, as well as price-tag attacks from Israeli settlers against Palestinians.
- Over the period of the intifada, 38 Israelis and 235 Palestinians were killed. The period had a severely detrimental impact on Israeli and Palestinian relations

PA/Hamas relations oscillate

- In April 2017, the PA ceased paying for Gaza's electricity, causing electricity shortages and cuts. They also cut the salaries of 60,000 civil servants working in Gaza, resulting in massive economic hardships to workers.
- An Egypt-brokered agreement between the parties resulted in the PA taking control over Gaza's border crossings along with promises that a Palestinian election would be held by the end of 2018, which never happened.
- Despite animosity between the factions, there were suggestions in January 2020 that they had found some common ground in opposing the Trump administration's peace plan.

US Recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel

- In December 2017, Donald Trump announced that his US government would recognize Jerusalem as the unified capital of Israel. This was followed by the move of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem soon after.
- Netanyahu's government welcomed the move which saw strong ties being formed with the Trump government in the US.
- The Palestinian Authority saw the move as a destruction of the two-state solution and peace process. Palestinians have repeated over the years that they will not accept any state without East Jerusalem as their capital.
- The announcement was widely condemned by world leaders and was denounced as illegal by the United Nations. Many feared the declaration would spark renewed violence in the region.

Rami Hamdallah Assassination Attempt

- In March 2018, an assassination attempt was made against Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah in Gaza using a roadside bomb. He was visiting the Hamas-controlled Strip to give a speech.
- Abbas was quick to accuse Hamas for being responsible for the attack, which they denied. The attack was seen as an attempt to derail reconciliation talks between Palestinian factions.

The Great March of Return

- Every Friday for almost 18-months following the 30th March 2018, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip gathered at the border fence with Israel to demonstrate against

the ongoing blockade of the Strip and to demand they be allowed to return to the lands they were displaced from in Israel.

- The organisers encouraged a peaceful demonstration and most of it occurred at a distance from the border fence, however Hamas soon endorsed the demonstrations and small groups approached the fence to commit violent acts against Israeli soldiers stationed there.
- Israeli soldiers responded with deadly force at some of the protestors, actions which were condemned by the United Nations General Secretary and other Human Rights Organizations. 183 Palestinians were killed during the period and over 15,000 were injured.
- Another marker of these protests were the launching of incendiary balloons and kites over the fence into Israel which caused large damage to Israeli farmland. One Israeli soldier was killed during the demonstrations and six were injured, as well as five civilians were injured.

The Nation State Law

- In July 2018, Israel passed the controversial Nation State Law as a basic law. The law states, “The right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people” and “Jerusalem, complete and undivided, is the capital of Israel” while affirming “Jewish settlement” as a “national value”. The law also denigrated Arabic to a special status language, secondary to Hebrew.
- Many criticised the law saying it would cause harm to Israel’s democracy and to the rights of minorities. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation saw the law as a legalisation of apartheid.
- The law is particularly impactful on Israel’s many minorities, such as Druze communities in the north who speak Arabic and are Muslim yet serve in the Israeli army and hold citizenship.

Israel-Gaza tensions rise 2018

- In late 2018, a covert IDF operation into Khan Yunis, Gaza was botched, leading to one Israeli soldier and seven Palestinian Hamas militants being killed.
- The following days saw projectiles being fired from Gaza into Israel and an Israeli airstrike on the Strip. Outrage grew on both sides over the handling of the operation and incitement it caused.
- As a result of the Israeli government’s response, Israeli defence minister Avigdor Lieberman withdrew his party from the government coalition triggering an early election.

US recognises the Golan Heights as part of Israel

- During the 1967 war, Israel captured Golan from Syria and formally annexed it in a move that was not internationally recognised and is condemned by the international community.
- On the 21st March 2019, Donald Trump announced via Twitter that the US should recognise Israeli sovereignty over Golan. Many Druze who live in the area protested the announcement. It was seen as a move by Trump to boost Netanyahu's position in the upcoming April 2019 legislative election.
- The move has not been recognised by the United Nations and numerous countries and faced strong opposition from Syria.

PA appoints a new Prime Minister

- In March 2019, Mohammad Shtayyeh was appointed PA Prime Minister. At 61 years old at the time of his appointment, he was relatively young compared to other PLO leaders. President Mahmoud Abbas is over 20 years his senior.
- Unlike his two predecessors, Shtayyeh is a member of Fatah, leading to some consider his appointment as a power grab by Fatah.
- In 2020, Shtayyeh gained popularity due to his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, holding daily press conferences and limiting infection from Palestinians working in Israel.

Netanyahu charged for corruption and fraud 2019

- In November 2019, Netanyahu was indicted in five charges for breach of trust, accepting bribes and fraud.
- His trial was supposed to begin in March 2020 but was delayed due to the coronavirus crisis in Israel. Netanyahu has attempted to pass an immunity bill which was blocked by a special Knesset committee.

Israel Elections 2019-2020

- Israel went to the polls three times between April 2019 to March 2020 as a political deadlock gripped the country while the two major parties, Netanyahu's ruling Likud and former head of the IDF Benny Gantz' Blue and White party fought it out for the premiership.
- Both parties repeatedly struggled to attain a majority vote in the polls. In March 2020, the Joint List, formed of Arab-Israeli and Palestinian parties, gained a record 15 seats.

- Due to the growing coronavirus crisis and economic issues, Netanyahu and Gantz agreed on a power-sharing unity government. Netanyahu will serve for the first 18 months, followed by Gantz for 18 months.

Trump reveals his peace plan 2020

- After ongoing delays to the Trump administration's long awaited 'deal of the century', in January 2020 it was finally released. The plan suggests a two state solution with Israel annexing the Jordan Valley and a complex proposal of land swaps between Israeli settlements in the West Bank and land in the Negev desert.
- The economic section of the plan proposed large financial offers to Palestinians who in exchange would have a demilitarised state with no control of its borders, and Jerusalem was identified as the capital of Israel with no mention of a Palestinian capital within the city.
- The plan was formed with frequent discussions with Israeli officials, whilst no Palestinian authorities were invited to negotiate. The Palestinian Authority rejected the plan in its entirety, citing that it was biased in nature. The plan also faced opposition from Israeli settlers and some of Israel's right-wing due to its envisioning a Palestinian state.

Anti-normalisation protests

- There has been increased pressure against normalisation in the Palestinians territories.
- In April 2020 Hamas arrested Palestinian activists in Gaza for participating in a Zoom conference with Israelis.
- In May the PA ended its security cooperation with Israel in response to Israeli annexation plans.

Israel threatens annexation

- Both Netanyahu and Gantz have presented and advocated annexation of the Jordan Valley in the West Bank, as part of their election campaigns. The annexation would claim large parts of Palestine's Area C into Israel, including some settlement blocs while creating a complex system of land islands and roads to connect the rest of the West Bank.
- Netanyahu announced he would begin annexing parts of the Jordan Valley on July 1st 2020, after receiving approval in the US peace plan, as long as annexation would also lead to the creation of a Palestinian state.

- The July 1st deadline passed without any declaration of sovereignty by Israel. The reasons were Israel and the US's current battles with coronavirus, the looming threat against Netanyahu from his indictment and growing opposition to his leadership in the Israeli public, and strong opposition from the international community. Some countries, including the UK, indicated that an announcement of annexation would classify as a war crime and could lead to sanctions against Israel.
- In August Israel announced it would “suspend” its annexation plans in a deal to normalise relations with the United Arab Emirates in a deal brokered by the USA.

Protests in Israel

- A series of protests launched in Israel over the summer of 2020. In May demonstrations were held over the killing of Iyad al-Hallaq, an autistic man, by Israeli police in East Jerusalem, only days after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, USA.
- Protests against the planned annexation also started in June. In July, the biggest protests Israel has witnessed since 2011 were directly anti-Netanyahu, calling him to resign after Israel's economy has collapsed with mass unemployment following the coronavirus lockdown.
- A timeline of the most recent events in 2021 is available for download from our website.

If you would like to book the SNS programme with the opportunity for dialogue with Palestinian and Israeli peace activists for your students, please [click here](#).