

## Israel Palestine Conflict

### Why in news?

Recently Hamas, a Palestinian militant group launched a surprise attack on Israel which has led to the outbreak of war between Israel and Palestine.

#### Disputed Territories

- **Gaza Strip** - Home to about 2 million Palestinians, many of them displaced after leaving or being driven from Israel during the War of Independence.
- **West Bank**- About 3 million Palestinians live there, most of them Muslim Arabs. It contains a number of Jewish holy sites, which are visited by thousands of pilgrims every year.
- **East Jerusalem**- Jerusalem itself is a divided, disputed city. It was cut in two after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.
- Israel controlled the western portion and Jordan controlled the east. Israel captured the entire city in the 1967 Six-Day War.

#### City of Jerusalem

- **Abrahamic religions**- Jerusalem and the areas surrounding it hold importance for 3 major Abrahamic religions
  - Judaism
  - Islam and
  - Christianity
- **Western Wall**- The old city of Jerusalem is home to the Western Wall or Wailing Wall, part of the retaining wall of a hill known as Temple Mount, which is sacred to Judaism and Christianity.
- **Jewish faith**- The Wall is the closest that Jews are allowed to get to the Temple Mount platform, and is the most sacred place in the Jewish faith.
- **Al Aqsa**- The Western Wall forms a part of the border of the Al Aqsa compound within which is the mosque that stands at the site from where the Prophet is believed to have ascended to paradise.
- It is considered as the 3<sup>rd</sup> holiest site in Islam, after the mosques in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia.

### What is the history of Israel Palestine conflict?

- **World War I**- Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire home to Arab Muslims, Arab Christians and Jewish communities.
- In the war, Ottoman Empire fell and the League of Nations mandated Britain to govern Palestine.
- It led to increase in Jewish immigration which fuelled tensions between Jewish settlers and Arab Palestinian population.
- **Balfour declaration**- It was issued by the British government in 1917 that endorsed the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It led to an influx of Jewish immigrants to the region.

- **World War II-** The support for a Jewish nation grew significantly in the aftermath of World War II, as the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust of Jewish people came to be fully known.
- **UN Partition plan-** Due to challenges in governing colonies, British handed over the Palestine to UN.
- The partition plan by UN in 1947, recommended separate Jewish and Arab states. It was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by the Arab leaders.



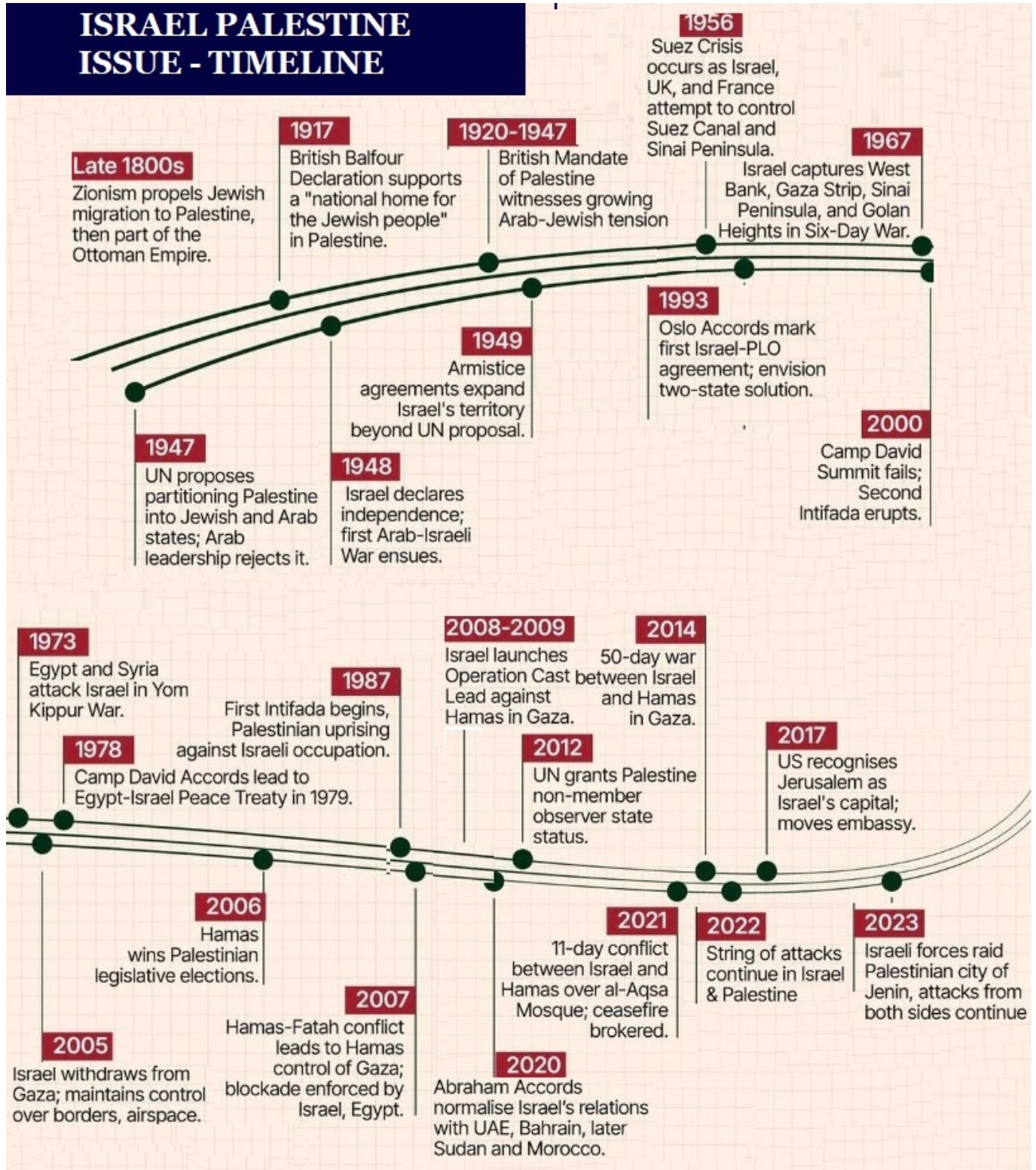
### What is the situation after the independence of Israel?

- **Arab Israeli war 1948-** Israel declared statehood in 1948 leading to invasion by neighbouring Arab states (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria).
- It resulted in Israeli survival and signing of **Armistice Agreements** with territorial changes.
- The territory was divided into 3 parts
  - The Jewish Israel
  - The Arab West Bank
  - Gaza Strip
- The agreement established temporary borders between Israel and neighbouring Arab states.
  - West Bank- It was controlled by Jordan.
  - Gaza Strip- It was administered by Egypt
- **Suez crisis 1956-** Israel, France and UK launched a military campaign against Egypt over nationalisation of Suez Canal.

- During this period, *Israel captured Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip* but withdrew under international pressure in 1957.
- **1967 Six day war**- Israel gained territory including *Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights (Syria)*.
- **1973 Yom Kippur War**- Also known as October War, it began with the surprise attack by Egypt and Syria on Israel during Yom Kippur, the holiest and most solemn day in the Jewish calendar.
- **Camp David Accords 1978** - It established the *"Framework for Peace in the Middle East"* and brought about the end of simmering conflict between Egypt and Israel.

*Egypt became the 1<sup>st</sup> Arab country to conclude a peace treaty with Israel.*

# ISRAEL PALESTINE ISSUE - TIMELINE



## What about the Intifadas?

- Intifada (*uprising or shaking off* in Arabic) refers to sustained period of Palestinian resistance and protest against Israeli occupation and policies.
- **First Intifadas (1987-1993)**- It used civil disobedience and non-violent resistance, leading to international sympathy and recognition.
- **Oslo accords**- It was the first direct Palestinian- Israeli peace agreement.
  - **Oslo I (1993)**- It established the *Palestinian Legislative Council* and set the parameters for the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza over a 5 year



period.

- **Oslo II (1995)**- It included discussion of the future governance of the city of Jerusalem.
- **Two state solution** is the proposed framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by establishing two states for two peoples.
  - Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Palestinian people.
  - In 1993, the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) agreed on a plan to implement this as part of the Oslo Accords, leading to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.
- **Second Intifadas (2000-2005)**- It began after former PM of Israel, Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.
- It involved violent acts like suicide bombings and clashes, causing casualties and damages in the West Bank and Gaza.

### What peace initiatives were endorsed in 2000s?

- **Arab Peace Initiative (2002)**- Arab league endorsed a Saudi Arabia proposal to establish normal relations with Israel in exchange for an independent Palestinian state.
- It includes
  - Withdrawal of Israel from the territories it had occupied in 1967, including the Golan Heights,
  - Settlement of the Palestinian refugee question,
  - Recognition of East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian state.
- **Abraham Accord**- It was signed in 2020 by UAE, Bahrain and Israel mediated by USA to normalise ties between Arab Gulf states and Israel.
- **Middle East Peace Plan**- Also called as the "Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People", it was announced by USA in 2020.
- It didn't materialise as there were difference of opinions.

### What was the recent conflict?

- **Hamas**- It is the *largest Palestinian militant group* formed during first Intifada.
- Founded in 1987
- It has *controlled Gaza* since winning elections in 2006, then wresting militarily control from another leadership group in 2007.
- It is committed to the destruction of Israel and is considered a *terrorist group* by the U.S., the U.K. and other nations.

#### ATTACKS ON GAZA

<b>Operation Cast Lead (2008)</b>	• In the Gaza war or Operation Cast Lead, Israel launched a widespread aerial bombing campaign, targeting more than 100 locations in the densely-populated Gaza Strip.
<b>Operation Pillar of Defense (2012)</b>	• In 2012, Israel killed Ahmed Jabari, chief of Hamas' military wing in Gaza, in a targeted air strike. • Hamas responded by firing a barrage of rockets at nearby Israeli towns. • Israel then embarked on an 8 day military offensive on Gaza called Operation Pillar of Defense.

## Operation Protective Edge (2014)

- Israel's Operation Protective Edge was launched with extensive air raids and artillery strikes on the Gaza.
- The Israeli military launched a ground invasion of Gaza, saying it aimed to stop rocket fire and destroy tunnels leading into Israel.

- **2023 war-** The Hamas group launched surprise attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.
- **Reasons-**
  - No movement on the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks for several years now
  - Israeli government has talked of allowing the expansion of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land, and of the possibility of annexing part of the West Bank
  - Growing perception in Palestinian society that Israel's diplomatic recognition and political acceptance is on the rise

## What is India's stand on Israel Palestine conflict?

- **Post-independence-** Both Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi vowed to support the Palestinian cause as they rejected the idea of two nations on the basis of religion.
- **Regarding Israel-** India announced its recognition of Israel on 1950 and established diplomatic relations in 1992.
- India voted against UN Resolution 181 (II) in 1947, which partitioned Mandatory Palestine between Jews and Palestinian Arabs.
- India also voted against Israel's admission for UN.
- **Regarding PLO-** In 1975, India recognised Palestine Liberation Organisation as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and permitted it an independent office at New Delhi.
- It came up with a strong statement of solidarity for Palestine in Non-Alignment Summit 1983 that was held in Delhi.

*India was one of the last non-Muslim states to recognise Israel, and the first non-Arab state to recognise the PLO.*

- **Cold war dynamics-** The end of the Cold War weakened the Non-Aligned Movement and reduced the ideological hostility towards Israel.
- **Kargil war-** Israel supported India with arms during the Kargil conflict in 1999.
- **2023 war-** India believes in its long-standing support for the establishment of a "sovereign, independent and viable" state of Palestine. India has expressed its support for Israel condemning the terrorist attack by Hamas.

***Operation Ajay** was launched by the Indian government to repatriate Indians from Israel and Palestine through special chartered flights.*

## What lies ahead?

- The normalisation of Israel and Palestine cannot take hold truly unless past annexations and other points of concern are not resolved.

- For a lasting peace and stability in the region, their focus must turn to finding a solution to the question of Palestine.
- India needs to engage with all sides in the complex West Asian region as 90 lakh strong Indian community in the region and connectivity to West Asia and Europe.

### **Mahatma Gandhi's stand on Jewish nation state in Palestine**

- Gandhi wrote an article 'Jews' in Harijan newspaper where he deeply sympathized for the Jewish people who had historically been unjustly persecuted for their religion.
- **Untouchables-** They have been the untouchables of Christianity. The parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close.
- Mahatma declared that for the cause of humanity and to prevent the persecution of the Jewish people, even a war with Germany would be "completely justified".
- But he did not support the creation of Jewish state in Palestine as
- Palestine was already home to Arab Palestinians and the settlement of Jews, which Britain actively enabled was fundamentally violent.
- The idea of a Jewish homeland was fundamentally antithetical towards their fight for greater rights elsewhere in the world.
- **Influence on India's foreign policy-** Gandhi's opinions, and his own anti-imperialism had a profound impact on Jawaharlal Nehru, and was responsible for shaping the nascent country's foreign policy for decades.

### **References**

1. [Indian Express- Third Intifada Hamas Israel escalation](#)
2. [Indian Express- Hams, Hezbollah issue of normalisation](#)
3. [History-Middle East Oslo Accords](#)