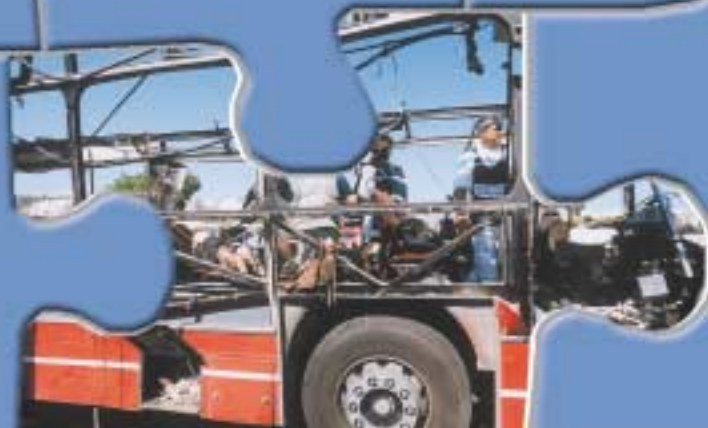


DISPUTED TERRITORIES

**Forgotten Facts
about
The West Bank
and Gaza Strip**



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Forgotten Facts About the West Bank and Gaza Strip

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Introduction

In 1967, Israel fought a desperate war of self-defense and despite dire odds, won. As a result, the Jewish State not only survived, it also came into possession of additional lands, including territory that is of vital importance to its security.

The Six Day War and its consequences still affect the Middle East today. A clear understanding of how and why the territories came into Israel's possession in 1967 and an awareness of Israel's connection to these areas are essential components of any fair and balanced discussion of their current status. This information has taken on particular importance in light of the current situation and Palestinian attempts to reduce a complex conflict to a single issue – Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Palestinians and their supporters are attempting to promote their cause by channeling every event through the prism of the disputed territories. In doing so, they have succeeded in diverting the discussion away from the relevant facts, rewriting or ignoring history and reinventing international law to suit their aims. These facts must not be forgotten.

Facts

By focusing exclusively on “the occupation,” Palestinian spokespersons are obscuring some of the basic facts of the conflict. They never mention why Israel’s presence in the disputed territories began or the reasons for the continuation of the conflict, and ignore the historical and legal context of Israel’s presence there. Following are 4 key issues that the Palestinians deliberately and consistently try to conceal:

Disputed, not “Occupied”, Territory

- The West Bank and Gaza Strip are disputed territories whose status can only be determined through negotiations. Occupied territories are territories captured in war from an established and recognized sovereign. As the West Bank and Gaza Strip were not under the legitimate and recognized sovereignty of any state prior to the Six Day War, they should not be considered occupied territories.
- The people of Israel have ancient ties to the territories, as well as a continuous centuries-old presence there. These areas were the cradle of Jewish civilization. Israel has rights in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, rights that the Palestinians deliberately disregard.

Legality of Israel’s Presence in the Territories

- Despite persistent claims by the Palestinians and their supporters, occupation is not, in and of itself, illegal. It does not violate international law. Rather, international law attempts to regulate situations of occupation through the application of pertinent international conventions and agreements. Therefore, political motivations lie behind the claim that Israel’s presence in the territories is illegal. Israel’s presence in the territories is not illegal.
- Israel’s presence in the territories began in 1967 as a direct result of the aggressive actions of Israel’s neighbors that forced Israel into a war of self-defense.

- UN Security Council **Resolution 242**, which was adopted following the Six Day War, **places obligations on both sides** (as does Resolution 338, adopted following the 1973 Yom Kippur War). **242 does not call for unilateral withdrawal from the territories**. Despite this, the Palestinians focus exclusively on the call for an Israeli withdrawal, ignoring those clauses that place responsibilities on the other parties to the conflict.
- **Resolution 242 does not require Israel to withdraw from all the territories** gained as a result of the 1967 war, as the Arab regimes claim. Instead, the resolution deliberately restricts itself to calling for Israel's withdrawal "from territories" while recognizing the right to live within secure and recognized boundaries.

Terrorism Cannot be Justified

- **Incessant references by Palestinian spokespersons to "the occupation" are used to delegitimize** not only Israel's presence in the territories, but also to justify terrorism.
- Terrorism – the intentional, politically motivated use of violence against civilians and other non-combatants – is clearly beyond the pale of international law. Suicide bombings are a crime against humanity, and **no political goal can ever justify the use of terrorism**.
- **Palestinian terrorism preceded Israel's presence in the territories**. Indeed, the PLO (the Palestinian Liberation Organization) was founded in 1964, three years before the 1967 Six Day War.

Israel's Pursuit of Peace

- **Israel's presence in the territories continued after 1967 as the Arab regimes refused to negotiate** with Israel despite continuous and genuine Israeli offers of peace. For close to a quarter century, the

Palestinians refused to abandon terrorism and conduct peaceful negotiations.

- Even after the Palestinians decided to join the peace process in the early 1990s, **no permanent resolution of the dispute could be reached due to Palestinian terrorism** and their unwillingness to reach reasonable compromises.
- **Israel**, as a democracy, has no desire to control the lives or future of the Palestinians. Israel – which **has made extensive territorial concessions to the Palestinians** since 1993 – has always been willing to make great sacrifices for the realization of peace.

The omission of historical facts allows the Palestinians to avoid responsibility for their role both in creating and perpetuating the situation in the territories. Distortions of international law are part and parcel of Palestinian attempts to delegitimize Israel while justifying the unjustifiable – terrorism.

Territories in Dispute

International Law and Occupation

Palestinian spokespersons and their supporters have expended great efforts to advance their claim that a state of occupation is – by definition – illegal. This ingenuous claim not only ignores international law, but also by its very repetition at every opportunity, attempts to create new international norms.

The claim that any occupation – no matter the reasons for its establishment or its continued existence – is illegal is not consistent with the principles of international law. The international legal system does not outlaw occupation. Rather it uses international conventions and agreements to regulate such situations.

Many states hold onto territory taken in a war – particularly a war of self-defense – until a peace treaty is negotiated. In fact, many situations of dispute exist today around the world in which one side continues to hold territory that another claims. A key difference in the situation regarding the West Bank and Gaza Strip is that Israel has attempted to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the status of these disputed territories ever since they came into Israel's possession.

Claims of illegality are politically motivated as neither international law nor the agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority support this baseless allegation.

Jewish Ties to the Territories

Jews have lived in Judea-Samaria (the West Bank) and Gaza Strip continuously for 4000 years since Biblical times and throughout the centuries since then. Jewish sovereignty there spanned 1000 years and those areas were the cradle of Jewish civilization. Many of the most ancient and holy Jewish sites, including the Cave of the Patriarchs (the burial site of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), are located in these areas. Jewish communities grew in Gaza during the 11th century and other areas, such as Hebron (where Jews lived until they were massacred in 1929), were inhabited by Jews throughout the four hundred years of Ottoman rule and much before. Additional Jewish communities flourished under the British Mandatory administration that replaced the Ottoman Empire in 1918.

The Palestinians often contend that the Jews are foreign colonizers in territory to which they had no previous connection. Indeed, much of the Arab world considers all of Israel – and not just the disputed territories – as a foreign entity in the region. Such claims disregard the continuous ties of the Jewish people with their age-old homeland and the deep bond of the people of Israel to its land, both in biblical and later periods.

These claims also serve to perpetuate the myth that a Palestinian state existed in the area prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. In fact, no independent Arab or Palestinian state ever existed in the area known as Palestine.

Jewish communities in the Land of Israel from ancient to modern times



The Jordanian and Egyptian Occupations

The Jewish presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip ended only with the 1948 War of Independence. Conquering these territories in a war of aggression aimed at destroying the nascent State of Israel, the Jordanians and Egyptians totally eliminated the Jewish presence in the West Bank and Gaza, forbidding Jews to live there and declaring the sale of land to Jews in those areas a capital offense.

It is worth noting that Jordanian and Egyptian rule came about as the result of their illegal invasion of 1948, in open contempt and rejection of UN General Assembly Resolution 181, which would have partitioned the British Mandate territory into a Jewish State and an Arab State. For this reason, the Egyptian and Jordanian seizures of the territories were never recognized by the international community.

The Status of the Territories

The status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip can only be decided by agreement between the parties. During the 1990s, Israel and the Palestinians agreed that the final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is not yet resolved and should be decided in peaceful negotiations.

Furthermore, the fact that there were no established sovereigns in the West Bank or Gaza Strip prior to the Six Day War means that the territories should not be viewed as "occupied" by Israel. When territory without an established sovereign comes into the possession of a state with a competing claim – particularly during a war of self-defense – that territory can be considered disputed.



High school students digging air raid trenches in a Tel Aviv suburb (May 1967)
in view of Arab calls to annihilate Israel on the eve of the Six Day War

A War of Self-Defense

The fact that Israel fought a war of self-defense in the Six Day War in June 1967 was recognized by the world's democracies at the time. It was that defensive war against Arab aggression that resulted in Israel's taking control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Calls for Annihilation

Prior to the start of the Six Day War, a continuous flow of statements by Arab leaders and official media sources left no doubt as to their intentions – not only did the Arab states intend to attack Israel, they meant to destroy it.

- “We intend to open a general assault against Israel. This will be total war. Our basic aim will be to destroy Israel.” (Egyptian President Gamel Abdel Nasser, 26 May 1967)
- “The sole method we shall apply against Israel is total war, which will result in the extermination of Zionist existence.” (Egyptian Radio, “Voice of the Arabs”, 18 May 1967)
- “I, as a military man, believe that the time has come to enter into a battle of annihilation.” (Syrian Defense Minister Hafez al-Assad, 20 May 1967)
- “The existence of Israel is an error which must be rectified... Our goal is clear – to wipe Israel off the map.” (Iraqi President Abdur Rahman Aref, 31 May 1967)

The Arab threats to destroy Israel in the period preced-

ing the war were made when Israel did not control the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Threat to Israel's Existence

Given the strength of the opposing armies and the physical size of the country in 1967, Israel had every reason to fear these threats. It was a small state, surrounded by heavily armed and hostile neighbors. In its pre-1967 boundaries, Israel was only 15 kilometers (9 miles) wide at some places. The armies of Israel's enemies in the West Bank and Gaza were stationed a mere 18 km. (11 miles) from Tel Aviv, 35 km. (21 miles) from Haifa, 11 km. (7 miles) from Ashkelon and only meters from Israeli neighborhoods in Jerusalem.

These threats were not empty rhetoric. Hostile actions by Israel's neighbors left little doubt as to either the seriousness of their intent or their ability to carry out a massive assault on Israel.

In the weeks before the war, a coalition of Arab states – including Egypt, Syria, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Iraq, Algeria and Kuwait – united against Israel. As Egyptian President Nasser said on 30 May 1967, “The armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are poised on the borders of Israel...to face the challenge, while standing behind us are the armies of Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan and the whole Arab nation.... the critical hour has arrived.” War frenzy was sweeping through the Arab world.

Egypt Tightens the Noose

On 15 May 1967, the Egyptians began to move large numbers of troops and armored vehicles into the Sinai Peninsula, ending a ten-year period during which the Sinai was free of hostile forces. While Egyptian troops massed along Israel's border in the south, the Syrian army prepared for war on the Golan Heights in the north. Nasser demanded that the UN Secretary-General withdraw UNEF – the United Nations Emergency Force peacekeepers – from the Sinai, where they had been stationed since 1956. Secretary-General U Thant complied with considerable haste, thus breaking an international promise to Israel. UNEF ceased to function on 19 May, removing the last barrier to the Egyptian war machine. The State of Israel was alone and encircled by armies whose leaders had vowed to bring about its annihilation.

Israel's Defensive Response

In response, Israel began to call up its reserve forces. Having only a small standing army, Israel had to rely on its reservists to repulse any attack. This mobilization of Israel's doctors and teachers, farmers and shopkeepers carried a heavy economic and social burden. Israelis began digging trenches in preparation for aerial attacks and shelling. Yet Israel's leaders chose to wait three long weeks before reacting militarily, in the hope that war could be avoided and a peaceful solution to the crisis could be found.

The Blockade

The situation continued to deteriorate sharply. On 22 May, Egypt blocked the Straits of Tiran, closing off Eilat,

Israel's only Red Sea port, to Israeli ships and Israel-bound foreign vessels. Israel was now cut off from trade with Asia and East Africa. Most significantly, Israel was denied access to its main supplier of oil. President Nasser was fully aware that Israel would regard the closure as an act of aggression.

This move violated the right of innocent maritime passage, in clear contradiction of international law. Traditionally, under international law, a blockade is considered an act of war. Moreover, Egypt's actions violated the 1957 declaration of 17 maritime powers at the UN, that stated that Israel had the right of transit through the Straits of Tiran, as well as the 1958 Convention on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone.

The blockade of the Straits of Tiran was a clear-cut act of aggression. No country can stand by while a major port has been arbitrarily and maliciously blockaded, in violation of international law, particularly when vital shipments – including oil – are at stake. Had Israel responded by attacking Egypt immediately after the imposition of the blockade, this measure could only have been regarded as a justified reaction to Egypt's act of war.

Israel Searches for a Diplomatic Solution...

However, despite the blockade, the daily diet of threats and the hostile military activity, Israel continued to wait. Israel's leadership wanted to exhaust every prospect for a diplomatic solution before reacting. Unfortunately, while there was a great deal of international sympathy for Israel's plight, there was little tangible assistance.

...But is Forced to Respond Militarily

Israel was left with few options. It had been surrounded by approximately 465,000 enemy troops, more than 2880 tanks and 810 aircraft. Given its small geographical size and the relative strength of the opposing armies, had Israel waited for the expected invasion to begin before acting, the results could have been catastrophic for its very survival.

Invoking its inherent right of self-defense, a basic tenet of international law that is enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, Israel launched a preemptive strike against Egypt on 5 June 1967.

Israel's Message of Peace

Israel had no desire to see the fighting spread to its eastern or northern fronts. Prime Minister Levi Eshkol sent out a message of peace to Israel's neighbors: "We shall not attack any country unless it opens war on us. Even now, when the mortars speak, we have not given up our quest for peace. We strive to repel all menace of terrorism and any danger of aggression to ensure our security and our legitimate rights."

Further Arab Aggression

The Syrians responded by bombardments with artillery fire and with long-range guns.

In the east, Jordan was convinced by Egypt that the planes appearing on the radar screens were Egyptian aircraft on their way to attack Israel, and not Israeli planes returning from a strike on the Egyptian Air Force.

On 5 June, Jordan began ground movements and shelling across the armistice lines, including in Jerusalem and on Israel's main airport near Tel Aviv. Despite the attack, Israel sent another message of peace, this time through representatives of the UN. Still, the Jordanian attack persisted.

This may have been one of the most crucial decisions of the war. Had Jordan listened to Israel's messages of peace instead of Egypt's lies, the Hashemite Kingdom could have remained neutral in the conflict, and eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank would have remained in Jordan's possession. However, when the attack on western Jerusalem continued, Israel defended itself and united its capital, divided since 1949. The capture of the Old City of Jerusalem gave Jews access to their holiest sites for the first time in 19 years, while freedom of worship and access to holy sites were now guaranteed to all.

The Post-War Period and Resolution 242

Defensible Borders

On 10 June 1967, at the end of six days of fierce fighting in which 776 Israeli soldiers lost their lives, a cease-fire was reached. Previous cease-fire lines were now replaced by new ones – the West Bank of the Jordan River, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula and a large part of the Golan Heights had come under Israel's control as a result of the war. Syria could no longer use the Golan Heights to launch artillery bombardments on Israeli homes below. The passage of ships to Israel through the Straits of Tiran was ensured. Israel now had defensible borders, and the imminent threat to its very existence was no longer.

Hopes for Peace

When the Six Day War ended, Israelis believed that a new era was beginning, one that would bring peace to the region. Hoping to translate military gains into a permanent peace, Israel sent out a clear message that it would exchange almost all the territory gained in the war for peace with its neighbors.

Furthermore, Israel gave strong indications of its deep desire to negotiate a solution, including through territorial compromise, by deciding not to annex the West Bank or Gaza Strip. This is important evidence of

Israel's intent given both the strategic depth these areas offered and the Jewish people's age-old ties to numerous religious and historical sites, especially in the West Bank.

Arab rejectionism

But Israel's hope for peace was quickly dashed. The Arab states began to rearm and, at the August 1967 Arab League meeting in the Sudan, adopted as their political position "the three nos," principles by which the Arab states were to abide, namely, "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it." The Khartoum Summit's hard-line position forestalled all chances for peace for years. As Israel's then Foreign Minister Abba Eban said, "This is the first war in history which has ended with the victors suing for peace and the vanquished calling for unconditional surrender."

242: A Misrepresented Resolution

Since 1967, United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 has played a central role in the peace process. It may well be one of the most important UN resolutions regarding the conflict – however, it is also one of the most misrepresented.

Resolution 242 (1967)

of 22 November 1967

The Security Council,

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,

Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security,

Emphasizing further that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

1. *Affirms* that the fulfilment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

- (i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
- (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;

2. *Affirms further* the necessity

(a) For guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;

(b) For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;

(c) For guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to designate a Special Representative to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles in this resolution;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

Adopted unanimously at the 1382nd meeting.



The Palestinians often depict the resolution as a simple document whose principal goal is a unilateral and complete Israeli withdrawal from the territories as a precondition for ending the conflict. In reality, the resolution is a balanced and measured instrument whose goal is “the fulfillment of Charter principles” by the “establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.”

“Territories” vs. “The Territories”

As a rule, the Palestinians and their supporters misstate the resolution by claiming that 242 calls for Israel’s withdrawal from “all” the territories, although this is neither the language used in the resolution nor the intent of its framers.

Resolution 242 calls upon Israel to withdraw **“from territories”** occupied in the recent conflict”, not “from **all** the territories” or even “from **the** territories”. The use of the phrase “from territories” was deliberately chosen by the members of the Security Council after extensive study and months of consultations, this despite considerable pressure from the Arab States to include the word “all”. As then US Ambassador Arthur Goldberg would explain in 1973, these notable omissions **“were not accidental.... the resolution speaks of withdrawal from occupied territories without defining the extent of the withdrawal.”**

Secure Borders According to 242

It should be noted that Resolution 242 recognizes the need, indeed the right, for “secure and recognized

boundaries.” By declining to call upon Israel to withdraw to the pre-war lines, the Security Council recognized that the previous borders were indefensible, and that, at the very least, Israel would be justified in retaining those parts of the territories necessary to establish secure borders. As then UK Ambassador Lord Caradon would later state, **“It would have been wrong to demand that Israel return to its positions of June 4, 1967, because those positions were undesirable and artificial.”**

Joint Obligations

The principal UN Security Council resolutions, including 242 (and 338, adopted after the 1973 Yom Kippur War), address all sides of the conflict, and not just Israel. Despite this, Palestinian spokespersons only refer to Israel’s responsibilities under the resolution, ignoring joint responsibilities as well as obligations incumbent on the Arab side, although these clauses form an integral part of the resolution. Among the clauses of 242 clearly aimed at the Arab states, or expressing joint obligations, are:

- “a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security;”
- “termination of all claims or states of belligerency;”
- “respect and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area;”
- respect and acknowledgement of “their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;”
- “freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;”

- “guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones.”

Clearly Israel was not expected to withdraw without the Arab regimes fulfilling their obligations – principally to renounce the use of force and make peace with Israel – and Israel’s withdrawal is certainly not a prerequisite to its fundamental right to live in peace.

Additionally, Resolution 338 – which is invariably coupled with 242 – calls upon the parties to begin negotiations aimed at “establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East”. Taken together, these two resolutions express the Security Council’s determination that peace should be reached through non-violent negotiations between the parties.

Terrorism and “the Occupation” Excuse

Palestinian Manipulation of the Term “Occupation”

“Whoever thinks that the intifada broke out because of the despised Sharon’s visit to the al-Aqsa Mosque, is wrong.... This intifada was planned in advance, ever since President Arafat’s return from the Camp David negotiations, where he turned the table upside down on President Clinton.”

In March 2001, Imad al-Faluji PA Minister of Communications, spoke publicly in Lebanon about the premeditated nature of the violence.

The Palestinians are trying to portray the current wave of violence and terrorism as the spontaneous reaction of a frustrated people to the Israeli “occupation” of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This misrepresentation of the situation ignores the strategic decision made by the Palestinian leadership to abandon negotiations and concentrate on the armed struggle against Israel. It also omits the fact that the Palestinians began to orchestrate the violence that started in September 2000 immediately after they caused the failure of the Camp David peace summit in July of that year.

The claim that “the occupation” caused the wave of violence and terrorism that began in September 2000 soon became the central Palestinian theme. The methodology of Palestinian spokespersons was simple: Answer every question with “the occupation is responsible,” say “the occupation caused it” after every act of terrorism. “Occupation” provided them with a simple buzzword that could be used to condemn Israel at every turn and to absolve the Palestinians of responsibility for their every action. But repeating a lie hundreds of times does not make it true.

Incessant Palestinian references to “the occupation” are aimed, in part, at delegitimization of Israel’s presence in the territories. Palestinian calls to “end the occupation” are being used to mobilize the international community against Israel. Palestinian leaders have long believed that the application of international pressure on Israel is an important component of their strategy to defeat Israel. They believe they can force Israel, through terrorism, to leave the territories without ending the conflict and without achieving a negotiated peace.



**Palestinian Terrorism –
before 1967 and during the
peace process in the mid-90s**

Ambushed bus from
Eilat to Be'er Sheva
(17 March 1954)



The charred remains
of a No. 18 Jerusalem
bus after it was
blown up by a suicide
terrorist bomber at the
intersection of Sarei
Yisrael and Jafo Streets
(25 February 1996)



Jerusalem's Mahane
Yehuda Market after
the bombing by two
Palestinian terrorists
(30 July 1997)

The Palestinians Justify Terrorism

Most abhorrently, the Palestinians use “the occupation” as a justification for the unjustifiable – terrorism. No goal – including ending the so-called occupation – can ever excuse the deliberate slaughter of innocent civilians. Suicide bombings cannot become an acceptable means to induce political change. Targeting children cannot ever be justified.

Palestinian attempts to excuse terrorism by blaming it on “the occupation” are not only morally repugnant, they attempt to corrode the precept that suicide bombings are a crime against humanity. To accept the lie that “the occupation” caused the terrorism helps encourage terrorism itself, while condoning its use is not only immoral but contributes to the perpetuation of the conflict.

The Roots of Palestinian Terrorism

It is not Israel’s presence in the territories that caused terrorism. Rather, the violence is fostered by the hatred of Israel, and nurtured by incessant incitement from Palestinian officials and religious leaders.

It should be remembered that Palestinian terrorism predates Israel’s presence in the territories. Not only were there endless terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians during the two decades that preceded the Six Day War, they even occurred prior to the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel.

The claim that the 1967 “occupation” of the territories caused Palestinian terrorism is particularly specious coming from PLO members, as the Palestine Liberation Organization was created in 1964, three years before the Six Day War, when the West Bank and Gaza Strip were not under Israeli rule.

Terrorism vs. Efforts for Peace

History demonstrates that Palestinian terrorism is not caused by frustration or the absence of hope for a peaceful solution. Horrific waves of attacks have



1

occurred during periods of major advances in the peace process. **Terrorist strikes have often peaked during those times – such as the mid-1990s – when the process has been at its most active and thereby most likely to bring an end to the so-called “occupation.”**

Consequently, claims that Israel’s presence in the territories causes terrorism are false, as they ignore the history of terrorist attacks against Israel and the countless Israeli offers of peace that were rejected by the Palestinians.

The Palestinians Reject Peace at Camp David

In July 2000, the United States hosted a Middle East peace summit designed to address the remaining final-status issues of the Israeli-Palestinian peace



2

1. The Sbarro Restaurant in Jerusalem, after it was blown up by a Palestinian suicide bomber (9 August 2001)

2. Bus No. 960 after it was blown up by a Palestinian suicide bomber, near Yagur junction, Haifa (10 April 2002)

After "analyzing the political positions following the Camp David summit, and in accordance with what brother Abu Amar [Arafat] said, it became clear to the Fatah movement that the next stage necessitates preparation for confrontation."

Fatah Central Committee member Sakhr Habash told the PA daily newspaper Al-Hayat al-Jadida on 7 December 2000.

"The only way to impose our conditions is inevitably through our blood...the power of the intifada is our only weapon. We should not toss this weapon away until the Arab emergency summit is convened and until we gain international protection."

Hassan al-Kashef, Director-General of the PA Ministry of Information, wrote in his Al-Ayyam column of 3 October 2000

process. Israel's willingness to make unprecedented compromises for peace was based on the conviction that only a negotiated settlement could resolve the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Unfortunately, the Palestinian leadership was not willing to end the conflict. Not only was it unwilling to compromise on any of the difficult and complicated issues, it was not prepared to present any reasonable proposals of its own.

International Criticism of the Palestinians

The Palestinian leadership came under international criticism for the failure of the Camp David summit, particularly after the US blamed the Palestinians directly. The international community could not comprehend the Palestinians' reasons for rejecting a most sweeping peace offer, that would have given the Palestinians virtually all that they had been ostensibly demanding.



The remains of the bus blown up by a Palestinian suicide bomber, at "Pat" junction in Jerusalem (18 June 2002)



Prime Minister Ariel Sharon touching the body of 5 month-old Yehuda Haim Shoham, who was murdered in a terrorist attack near Shilo (11 June 2001)



Weapons, rockets and mortars caught on board the ship "Karine A" in the Red Sea that was on its way to the Palestinian Authority for use by Palestinian terrorist organizations (6 January 2002)

Violence as a Strategy

The Palestinian leadership realized that it must act in order to regain international support. The Palestinians adopted a strategy whereby violence would be the primary instrument to divert the world's attention away from Palestinian intransigence at Camp David and put pressure on Israel. The Palestinians hoped that the resulting bloodshed would restore their image as victims and bolster their calls for international intervention, leading to a unilateral Israeli withdrawal while the conflict continues.

A Fundamental Breach

The Palestinian decision to use violence contradicted two core commitments that they made prior to Oslo. Yasser Arafat broke his own pledge by which **“the PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence” and the PLO commits itself “to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations.”** These two core commitments, stipulated in Arafat’s 9 September 1993 letter to the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, were the basis of Rabin’s decision to sign the Oslo Accords.

September 9, 1993

Mr. Prime Minister,

The signing of the Declaration of Principles marks a new era in the history of the Middle East. In firm conviction thereof, I would like to confirm the following PLO commitments:

The PLO recognizes the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security.

The PLO accepts United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

The PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process, and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations.

The PLO considers that the signing of the Declaration of Principles constitutes a historic event, inaugurating a new epoch of peaceful coexistence, free from violence and all other acts which endanger peace and stability. Accordingly, the PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and will assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance, prevent violations and discipline violators.

In view of the promise of a new era and the signing of the Declaration of Principles and based on Palestinian acceptance of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the PLO affirms that those articles of the Palestinian Covenant which deny Israel’s right to exist, and the provisions of the Covenant which are inconsistent with the commitments of this letter are now inoperative and no longer valid. Consequently, the PLO undertakes to submit to the Palestinian National Council for formal approval the necessary changes in regard to the Palestinian Covenant.

Sincerely,

Yasser Arafat
Chairman

The Palestine Liberation Organization

Yitzhak Rabin
Prime Minister of Israel

**Arafat breaks
his own commitment**

The Peace Process

The Palestinian Path of Violence

Since before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and to this day, the Palestinians have refused to take advantage of the many opportunities to reach a negotiated resolution of the conflict. Instead, the Palestinian leadership chose the path of violence, rejecting Israel's every offer of peace. The Palestinians have never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity, as the late Foreign Minister Abba Eban said.

The Road to Peace

The pattern of Israeli appeals for peace being met with Arab rejection and hostile actions continued unabated for more than a decade after the 1967 war. This was first broken in November 1977, when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visited Jerusalem. The subsequent negotiations resulted in the Camp David Accords of September 1978 and the March 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Israel pulled out of the entire Sinai Peninsula. The thirty-year-old state of war between the two countries ended and internationally recognized boundaries were established. It should be noted that every time Israel met an Arab leader, like President Sadat of Egypt and King Hussein of Jordan, who were ready to make peace and who spoke the language of peace to their own people, Israel made peace with them.

The Camp David Accords of 1978 contained a framework for establishing a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, including a detailed proposal for self-government for the Palestinians in the territories as a stipulated prelude to negotiations over the final status of the territories. Sadly, the Palestinians, supported by other Arab leaders, rejected this opportunity. This Palestinian intransigence persisted for some time despite the model of peaceful resolution represented by the Israeli-Egyptian treaty and despite the numerous initiatives put forward by Israel and others.

Photos:

1. President Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin in conversation (19 November 1977)
2. The governor of Port Said presenting the plaque of the city to Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, passing through the town on his return from an official visit to Egypt (21 January 1982)
3. Prime Minister Shamir and Deputy Foreign Minister Netanyahu head the Israeli delegation at the Madrid Peace Conference (October 1991)
4. Senior IDF and Jordanian army officers shake hands at the Israel-Jordan peace treaty signing ceremony (26 October 1994)
5. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin meeting in Cairo with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (2 February 1995)
6. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu conferring with King Hussein of Jordan on the steps of the Royal Palace in Amman (5 August 1996)
7. Prime Minister Ehud Barak (l.) and Foreign Minister David Levy (r.), meeting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Foreign Minister Amr Moussa at the presidential palace in Alexandria, Egypt (29 July 1999)



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Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War and the subsequent changes in the international system and the Middle East did the Palestinians offer to abandon violence and negotiate peace with Israel. In 1991 – 43 years after the establishment of the State of Israel – the Palestinians finally agreed to join the peace process and participate in the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and the 1993 Oslo Accords. Sadly, the Palestinian leadership has not lived up to its commitments to refrain from terror, destroy the terrorist infrastructure and end the incessant incitement to hatred and violence. On the contrary, the Palestinian Authority has aided, abetted and fomented terrorism. Forces directly accountable to Arafat have perpetrated countless acts of terrorism. Palestinian Authority-controlled media has incited the terrorism which has taken so many innocent lives and has greatly damaged the prospects for achieving a negotiated peace.

Israel's Willingness to Compromise

The disputed status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, combined with the refusal of the Palestinians to sign peace agreements with Israel that would define the final borders, means that the precise status of the territories has yet to be determined. And in the negotiations to determine the future status of these disputed territories, Israel's legitimate claims, and not just the Palestinian positions, must be taken into account.

Despite the Jewish people's historic and religious connection to these territories, in order to achieve peace Israel has always been willing to compromise. Israel has no desire to rule over the Palestinians in the territories and Israel's yearning for peace is so strong that all Israeli governments have been willing to make major

sacrifices to achieve this goal. Still, the ongoing terrorism has caused many Israelis to doubt whether the Palestinians are truly interested in peace and whether some of the concessions that Israel was prepared to make two years ago are possible.

For negotiations to succeed, a responsible and moderate Palestinian leadership must emerge, one that has abandoned for all time the goal of destroying Israel and one that actively fights terrorism. Until that happens, Palestinian terrorism will continue to destroy innocent lives and Palestinian extremism will undermine the chance of peace for both Palestinians and Israelis.