

explainity explains: The Israel-Palestine Conflict

On October 7th, 2023, the terror organization Hamas carried out an attack on Israel. Since then, thousands of people on both the Israeli and Palestinian side have lost their lives, reigniting the conflict in the Middle East. The Middle East conflict is a rather complex and, above all, very old conflict. The dispute revolves around a piece of land that's not even as big as Brandenburg— Yet its consequences are felt across the entire world.

The region we know today as Israel has been the home to many different peoples across history: Jews, Romans, and Arabs. When the British forces conquered this land during World War 1, it was inhabited primarily by Palestinian Arabs. Simultaneously, Jews were persecuted and displaced from many countries across the world. The idea of a dedicated Jewish state emerges precisely in the area where Jews had settled over two thousand years ago, and that is now inhabited by Palestinians: The present-day Israel.

The British supported this idea but made a fairly consequential miscalculation. They promised the same piece of land to both the Jewish people and the Palestinian population that was already living there. From that point onwards, Jewish people from all over the world were allowed to immigrate into present-day Israel. During the persecution of Jews in the Second World War, immigration numbers rose steadily. The Jewish population hoped they could finally live in peace here.

They bought land and settled down, displacing the Palestinians originally living there. Conflicts were inevitable and escalated over time. Consequently, in 1947 the British withdrew their troops, leaving it to the United Nations to find a solution to the problem. And a solution, at least in the short term, is found: the region was divided! A partition plan dictated that each party gets roughly half of the land.

While the Jewish population celebrated their newly founded state of Israel, the remaining Palestinian population felt displaced from their land. The surrounding Arab nations also reject the establishment and declared war on the country on its very first day of its existence. Israel managed to win this war, but over the following decades, many more wars continue to shake the region.

Ultimately, Israel maintains the upper hand. The Palestinians however, now without an organized military at all, are desperate. Some of them turn to a different weapon: terrorism. Today, Israel controls an area larger than what was originally allocated to them in the UN partition plan. To protect themselves against Palestinian terror attacks, they even built a wall.

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And the disputes haven't stopped: They mainly revolve around 5 points:

First, the border: A Palestinian state is supposed to be established so both Palestinians and Israelis can live peacefully side by side. There is no clear consensus however over the division of territories.

Second, the settlements: Israel is constructing new settlements and houses, primarily on land that is officially Palestinian territory. This leads to even more Palestinians being displaced from their homes.

Third, the city of Jerusalem: Jerusalem holds immense religious significance for both Jewish Israelis and Muslim Palestinians. The Western Wall for Jews and the Temple Mount for Muslims are located there.

Fourth, the right of return for Palestinian Refugees: Millions of Palestinians were forced to flee their homes during the conflicts. They seek to return, but Israel prohibits it, suggesting that the refugees should find a new home in Palestinian territory or neighboring countries.

Fifth, water: Israel is located in a desert, further intensifying the dispute over land that contains precious water resources.

Terror and violence have led to a lack of trust between the parties, which makes negotiating a lasting peace agreement even more difficult.

Until a solution to the Middle East conflict is found, the cycle of violence will continue.

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