

# Israel Q & A Fact Sheet

## 1 IS ISRAEL AN APARTHEID STATE?

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An Apartheid state is a system of governance that discriminates based on race. According to any definition, Israel is **NOT** an apartheid state. All Israeli citizens share the same rights, benefits, and have the right to vote.

Anti-Israel activists and anti-Semites have tried to delegitimize the State of Israel by calling it an Apartheid State. They hope this false comparison will smear the name of Israel and encourage actions similar to those taken in South Africa. This comparison insults South Africans who suffered under real apartheid. Today in Israel, even though Jews are the majority, the Arab minority enjoy full and equal rights and are represented in every aspect of the market. Arabs vote and are represented in the Parliament (Knesset). They work as judges, in the health system, the police and more. This was not the case in apartheid South Africa.

## 2 WHAT ARE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS?

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This refers to towns Jews had established in Judea and Samaria (The West Bank) post-1967. In most cases these places existed also prior to that time full of vibrant Jewish communities. The dispute surrounds the pre-1967 armistice line, also called the Green Line. The Green Line was drawn from the 1949 Armistice Agreements between Israel and its opponents, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria who attacked by surprise.

According to UN Resolution 242 Israel has a legal right to administer the territories won in 1967 “until a lasting and just peace in the Middle East is achieved.” Today, the West Bank is not occupied territory. Due to Israel’s peace agreement with both Egypt and Jordan, the West Bank is legally Israeli territory. However, because of unresolved peace negotiations, the land has become disputed territory. In addition, Israel evacuated and unilaterally gave up all settlements in Gaza in 2005 in an offer to the Palestinians as “concessions for peace” which quickly became chaos as Hamas, a terror group, took control of the Gaza Strip.

## 3 WHAT IS THE STATUS OF JERUSALEM?

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Jerusalem is sacred to three religions and at the heart of the Jewish Biblical connection to the land of Israel. It is where the Temple of Solomon was built, where King David danced on the streets, and was the capital of biblical Israel.

For Christians, the land is the birthplace and place of crucifixion of Jesus. It is a place full of churches built for all denominations. For Muslims, their third holiest Muslim site, Al- Aqsa is built on top of the Temple Mount, a major Jewish Holy site. The U.S. Embassy has moved to Jerusalem along with Guatemala, Paraguay, Romania and others. This is international acknowledgment of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

## 4 HOW IS THE WEST BANK GOVERNED ?

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The West Bank is divided into three major sections:

In Area A the Palestinian Authority (PA) is in full political control of its citizens, all of which are Palestinian.

Area B is jointly held by the PA and Israel. Here, non-Israeli Arab residents are entitled to the same rights as those living in Area C. The PA has political and police jurisdiction over Arab citizens and Israel has jurisdiction over the security of all residents.

Area C is under full Israeli civil and security control. This region is less densely populated and has both Israeli settlements and non-Israeli Arab towns living side by side.

## 5 DO PALESTINIANS HAVE A JUSTIFIABLE “RIGHT TO RETURN” ?

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During the War of Independence, Israel fought Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. Arab nations warned Palestinian families that they should leave.

Palestinian families who resided on the land for generations fled in false hopes that the Arab Nations would defeat Israel. Surprising both the Western world and the Arab nations, Israel won, legally gaining more territory than the original UN General Assembly resolution intended.

In the process, many of the Palestinians who left became refugees. According to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951, a refugee is an individual who is unable to return to their home-country due to fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion. Palestinian refugees are the only population whose refugee status is passed on to future generations.

The Palestinian “refugee population” is the largest in the world due only to the way it is categorized. Most Palestinian refugees live in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. Depending on local laws, most first, second and third generation refugees are nearly completely reliant on UNRWA, a UN agency created specifically for the Palestinian refugee population despite the existence of UNHCR for all refugees.

This agency does not seek to resettle Palestinians but rather provides social services in effect keeping them in limbo. There are over 5 million UNRWA registered Palestinian refugees. Despite this number, there would only be  $\frac{1}{2}$  million refugees under UNHCR criteria. With the current political climate, Israel is unable to absorb such numbers and even the UN High Commission for Refugees does not demand their full right to return to Israel.

## 6 WHY IS ISRAEL A JEWISH STATE ?

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A Jewish state refers to the national religion and nationality of the people. For over 3000 years the Jewish people have been a nation and community with a Jewish presence in modern day Israel. “Jewish and Democratic” is the Israeli ethos and part of Israel’s Declaration of Independence. Jews are indigenous to the land and though exiled by the Romans, managed to build thriving communities while the land was controlled by the Ottomans. In 1948 the UN

partition plan for Palestine called for a Jewish state. Palestinian recognition of this is a key step in the peace process.

## **7 WHAT IS THE SECURITY BARRIER?**

Due to a sharp rise in terror attacks in 2000, Israel built a security barrier to stop terror attacks on Israeli civilians. The barrier itself is 97% chain link fence and 3% concrete wall and was built out of an existential need to protect, not, as claimed, to create separation. In order to build the barrier Israel did not annex any land in the West Bank and compensated Palestinian land owners who were affected by the barrier. Palestinians reserve the right to file law suits to change the placement of the barrier and have succeeded in numerous suits. It does not violate the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention as it exists to safeguard the lives and rights of Israeli and Palestinian civilians alike.

The barrier is removable when the threat of Palestinian terror ceases and the two sides reach a peace agreement. One year after the barrier was built the number of Israelis murdered decreased by 90%.

## **8 DOES ISRAEL REALLY HELP SYRIANS?**

Israel has been aiding Syria since 2013. The IDF field hospital has treated over 2000 patients. Israel treats any wounded Syrian who reaches the border and if the person is badly wounded they are transferred to a permanent Israeli hospital. Additionally, there are dozens of Israeli NGO's assisting refugees across affected countries, helping those who need it most.

## **9 WHAT ABOUT AFRICAN MIGRANTS & ASYLUM SEEKERS?**

Since 2005 there has been an influx of migrants from numerous African countries that entered Israel illegally hoping for a better life. Today there is a dilemma of how to deal with the issue of illegal immigration. Unfortunately, some Israelis have chosen to act in unacceptable racism and violence towards immigrants and refugees, but this does not reflect Israeli society or government positions. The issue lies in migrants that came to Israel illegally seeking work opportunities, not as refugees escaping war. Israel struggles to differentiate between the two, causing issues. In 2018 the government offered financial compensation for migrants not seeking asylum to return to their countries of origin, but the plan was frozen after strong opposition by Israeli citizens. At the same time, Israel's development agency is involved in sustainable development projects across Africa to try and improve the situation.

## **10 WHAT IS BDS?**

BDS stands for "Boycott, Divest, and Sanction." It is a discriminative campaign against Israel disguised as a human rights movement that originated in South Africa. It is the newest tool in the effort to deny the Jewish people the right to self-determination. BDS singles out Israel alone while ignoring the world's biggest human rights violators such as Saudi Arabia, Syria, Russia, and China. It undermines peace efforts of dialogue and coexistence. In the end of the day, many of their campaigns end up hurting ordinary Palestinians financially as companies such as Soda Stream close their doors and Palestinians lose their jobs in turn. The movement continues the goals of

the 1930's boycotts for the liquidation of Israel and attempts to create bonds with other minority groups by way of false claims. The movement is strong on college campuses across the US, UK, and South Africa.

## 11 WHAT IS ZIONISM?

Zionism is Israel's national identity and the liberation movement of the Jewish people that supports the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland. The movement began in 1897 and called for the restoration of the Jewish nation to its original homeland in Israel. It is the belief that Jews, just as any other nation, are entitled to a homeland. Anti-Israel activists attempt to equate Zionism with racism, but this in itself, is a form of racism. Singling out Jewish self-determination for condemnation while not mentioning the many Muslim & Christian nations that define citizenship by parentage is an unfair comparison.

For more Information about the State of Israel in all of its diversity - please visit:

[www.Israelink.co.za](http://www.Israelink.co.za)