

## Population

The Palestinians are a people totaling about 9.4M. 3.8 million Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem. About 1.1M live inside the "green line" (1948–49 border of Israel) as citizens of Israel, but are Palestinian Arabs. About 5.5M Palestinians are refugees living in the Diaspora.

Palestinians speak Arabic. The majority is Muslim, and about 1/5 Christian. They commonly observe Land Day on 30 March, commemorating the Arab resistance to Israeli land confiscation in the Galilee in 1976.

## Origins

The Canaanites were the Palestinians' ancestors who first settled the land of Canaan from 3000 BC. Between 1200 and 975 BC, the "Sea People" settled on Canaan's coast and became known as Philistines. Around 1000 BC, David became king of the Jews in the area. From 722 BC, the country was divided among the coastal Phoenicians and Canaanites in the hinterland, the southern Kingdom of Judaea and the northern Kingdom of Israel, which collapsed under the Assyrians in 722 BC.

Roman Emperor Caesar integrated the districts of Judaea, Samaria and Galilee. Palestine became an integral part of the Arab world. Byzantines, Crusaders, Mamluks, Turks and Egyptians successively ruled the area before the British installed their mandate in 1916.

## Historical Background

To serve their alliances and interests in the region, the British promised an independent Arab State to Husain—ruler of Hijaz—to ensure the Ottoman Empire's collapse (Hijaz was its eastern front). Simultaneously, Britain entered into a shared spatial control agreement with the French through the 1916 Sykes-Picot Treaty, and to the European Zionist leaders promised a "national home for the Jewish people" through the 1917 Balfour Declaration.

In the interim, the first Zionist organizations had been purchasing small land plots in Palestine and with British support possessed 6% of lands by the mid-1940s. The Zionist colonial project with its influx of Jewish settlers threatened the indigenous Arab inhabitants, and they mounted a large-scale revolt in 1936–39. The British were overwhelmed and relinquished their mandate in 1946 to the young United Nations Organization. After the Nazi Holocaust, most Western States supported the creation of a "national home" in Palestine for Jews. In November 1947, the UN General Assembly proposed a partition of Palestine into an Arab State and a Jewish State, granting 53% of the land to a Jewish State, although Jews constituted less than 30% of the total population. The Arab League, siding with Palestine, refused the imposed partition and the first Arab-Israeli war ensued.

On 14 May 1948, the Jewish colony proclaimed the State of Israel in Palestine. In response, forces from the surrounding Arab countries invaded and fought until Egypt signed an armistice agreement with Israel in January 1949, followed by Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. By war's end, Israel occupied 77% of historical Palestine. Ethnic cleansing

and destruction of 531 Palestinian villages by Zionist forces made refugees of some 770,000 Palestinians, and internally displaced over 80,000. In 1967, Israel seized the Jordanian-annexed West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula (later returned), and Syria's Golan Heights.

## Institutionalized Discrimination

Upon its creation, the State of Israel established a legal regime that has subsequently been used by its national agencies to systematically discriminate against the Palestinian population in Israel, and in the territories occupied since 1967.

- **The Law of Citizenship** (1948) establishes eligibility for citizenship status, but citizenship without "Jewish nationality" offers no basis for many fundamental rights;
- **The Law of Return** (1950) creates the exclusive "nationality right" for Jews from anywhere to come as "nationals" to the lands Israel occupies to claim a superior legal status and full rights, which are denied to the indigenous minority of Palestinian citizens; The Law of Citizenship (1948) and the Law of Return (1950) extend an absolute preference to Jews in obtaining Israeli citizenship and rights to adequate housing, land, water and other national resources.

Israel denies reparation rights, including return, to Palestinians displaced and refugees since 1947. Meanwhile, the institutionalized discrimination and dispossession of Palestinians as chartered by the World Zionist Organization/Jewish Agency and Jewish National Fund are enshrined in Israeli legislation and ground policies having continuous material effect on Palestinians.



After Britain takes control in 1920, the Jewish portion of Palestine's population grows from one-tenth to one-third by 1947, when Jews own almost 7 percent of the land—mostly in the north and west—with the rest living in cities.



A U.N. plan offers 53 percent of the land for a Jewish state and 47 percent for an independent Arab state, with Jerusalem declared an "international" city. The fate of Arab towns remaining within the Jewish state is not explicitly addressed.



By war's end, 418 Arab towns have been depopulated, and Israel controls 78 percent of the land (where some Arab towns remain), with the West Bank left to Jordan to prevent a Palestinian state there, and Egypt in control of the Gaza Strip.



Israel's plan for a Palestinian state includes isolated Arab pockets of Jerusalem and a network of Jewish settlement roads (not shown) dividing the West Bank into 24 pieces, its eastern edge under Israeli control without formal annexation.

POPULATIONS	Palestinian	Jewish	Israeli
Under foreign rule			
Self-rule			