



ISRAEL VS ISRAEL

A film about Israeli Peace Activists



A Documentary by Terje Carlsson

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Israel-Palestine Timeline

Pre WWI: The Middle East region is under the control of the Ottoman Empire for nearly 400 years, and Palestine is inhabited predominantly by Arab Muslims.

1897: The Zionist movement, the modern movement for the creation of a homeland for the Jewish people, is established as a political movement.

1914: The Jewish population in Palestine rises to over 60,000 with approximately 33,000 of these people being recent settlers.

November 2, 1917: British issues the Balfour Declaration supporting the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

May 15, 1948: The Arab-Israeli War. The British withdraw from Palestine. Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia declare war on Israel. Egypt, Syria and Jordan invade. Approximately 750,000 out of 900,000 Palestinian Arabs flee or are expelled from the territories that become the Jewish State.

April 3, 1949: Israel and Arab states agree to armistice. Israel gains about 50% more territory than was originally allotted to it by the UN Partition Plan.

October 29, 1956: The Suez Campaign. Israel invades and occupies the Sinai Peninsula with French and British collaboration in response to border raids and the closure of the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping.

May 1964: The PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) is established at the Arab League summit. Its goal is the "liberation of Palestine" from Israel through armed conflict.

May 1967: Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser closes the straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and dismisses UN peacekeeping forces.

June 5-10, 1967: The June War (Six-Day War). Israel destroys the Egyptian Air Force before the planes can take off. It conquers and occupies the Sinai, the West Bank from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria. On November 22, 1967, the UN unanimously adopts Resolution 242. The resolution is the formula proposed by the Security Council for the successful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in particular, ending the state of belligerency then existing between the "States concerned", Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria & Lebanon. The resolution deals with five principles: withdrawal of Israeli forces, "peace within secure and recognized boundaries," freedom of navigation, a just settlement of the refugee problem and security measures including demilitarized zones. It also provides for the appointment of a Special Representative to proceed to the Middle East in order to promote agreement of a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the principles outlined in the resolution.

1967-1972: Israel starts building settlements in the West bank, Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip. By 1972, about 10,000 people move to these settlements.

October 6, 1973: The October War (Yom Kippur/Ramadan War). In a surprise attack on Yom Kippur (the Jewish day of atonement), Egypt retakes the Suez Canal, and Syria reconquers the Golan Heights.

November 1975: The UN General Assembly passes resolutions inviting the PLO to participate in peace efforts and stresses the “inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.” The UN General Assembly also adopted Resolution 3379, which stated that: “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination.” This resolution is revoked in 1991.

March 1979: United Nations Security Council Resolution 446 is passed. The resolution states that it "the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East". This is the first of many such UN resolutions against the Israeli settlements.

March 26, 1979: The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty signed.

Mar 1, 1980: The UN Security Council Resolution 465 orders Israel to dismantle the settlements.

June 6, 1982: Israel invades Lebanon.

1987 – 1993: The First Intifada (“uprising”) against the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian Territories includes acts of nonviolent civil disobedience, the boycott of Israeli products and demonstrations that include stone-throwing youths.

October 12, 1990: The United Nations passes Resolution 648 which condemns “Israel for violence against Palestinians”

1993: Settlers in the West Bank, Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip total 281,800.

August 1993: The Oslo Accords, also known as the Declaration of Principles, call for the creation of a Palestinian National Authority which is responsible for administration of the territory under its control and the withdrawal of Israeli Defense Forces from parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

September 13, 1993: The Oslo Accords are signed.

November 4, 1995: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated by a right-wing Israeli extremist.

June 1996: Right-wing Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu is elected Prime Minister in Israel.

October 15 – 23, 1998: In the Wye River Summit, Israel agrees to a staged withdrawal from a 13% of the occupied territory in exchange for a commitment by the Palestinian National Authority to suppress terror, eliminate weapons stockpiles and to act against anti-Israel incitement. The U.S. provides Letters of Assurance and offers guarantees to answer Israel's demands concerning provisions in the PLO Charter calling for the destruction of Israel. Despite the agreement, neither the Palestinian Authority's arms-reduction undertakings nor the final transfers of land by Israel are undertaken.

2000: Total settlers grow to 387,859.

September 2000 – 2005: The 2nd Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, consists of the riots of the Palestinian civilian population combined with the military conflict between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the Palestinian civilians. The conflict begins when Palestinian protests breakout after Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visits the al-Aqsa Mosque.

February 6, 2001: Right-wing Likud leader Ariel Sharon is elected Prime Minister in Israel replacing Ehud Barak. He promises "peace and security."

March -April 2002: After a series of violent attacks and suicide bombers by Palestinian militant groups and retaliatory actions by Israeli forces resulting in a large number of casualties on both sides, Operation Defensive Shield is conducted by the Israelis in the West Bank.

2003: The UN declares the Israeli West Bank barrier illegal.

July 9, 2004: The United Nations passes a number of resolutions, and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issues a unanimous ruling stating that portions of the Israeli West Bank barrier that are located within the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law. Prior to the ruling, Israel makes the claim that the ICJ lacks the standing to rule on the legality of the barrier. The United Nations General Assembly passes a resolution demanding that Israel obey the ICJ ruling. 150 nations vote in favor of the resolution, 7 vote against, and 10 abstain.

November 11, 2004: Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat dies.

January 15, 2005: Mahmoud Abbas becomes President of the Palestinian National Authority.

March 2005: The Sasson Report, an official Israeli government report published on 8 March 2005, that concludes that Israeli government agencies discreetly diverted millions of shekels to build West Bank settlements and outposts that were illegal under Israeli law.

May 26, 2005: Mahmud Abbas visits US President George Bush at the White House, an important symbolic gesture signaling US backing for Abbas and Palestinian aspirations. Israel releases 400 Palestinian prisoners. Britain confirms negotiations with Hamas.

June 2005: Violence flares in Gaza. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visits Palestinian, and Israeli leaders to ensure coordination of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Abbas postpones Palestinian legislative elections in order to change the election law, amidst growing concern that Hamas will defeat Abbas's Fatah party in the elections.

August 15, 2005: Israeli evacuation of Gaza and four West Bank settlements begins which causes another eruption of violence. Hamas fires about 40 rockets on Sderot, Israel. Israel responds with massive campaign of arrests in West Bank and targeted killings in Gaza; Hamas pledges to respect cease-fire. Palestinian armed groups argue that the rocket attacks are appropriate and a lawful response to Israeli military operations and the ongoing economic blockade of Gaza. Human Rights Watch says in their report that Hamas should repudiate unlawful rocket attacks against Israeli population centers and hold those responsible for them to account. Human Rights Watch also documents numerous war violations by Israeli forces in Gaza.

October 2005: PNA partial local elections give 55 seats to Fatah, 24 to Hamas. Fighting between Fatah and Hamas in Gaza kills 3.

November 2005: Israeli PM Ariel Sharon, facing internal opposition in the Likud over disengagement, quits the Likud to form a new party, Kadima. The Rafah border is opened for Palestinians in Gaza for passage to and from Egypt.

January 26, 2006: The Hamas movement wins an upset victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections.

March 28, 2006: Ehud Olmert is elected PM of Israel, heading Kadima party coalition.

August 14, 2006: Lebanon Cease fire begins. It is based on UN Security Council Resolution 1701. 1701 is a resolution that is intended to resolve the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict.

November 26, 2006: Israel and the Palestinian Authority implement a truce.

February 8, 2007: Hamas & Fatah Mecca Agreement is an agreement between Fatah and Hamas signed in the city of Mecca after eight days of talks, agreeing to stop the military clashes in Gaza and form a government of national unity.

November 2007: The Annapolis Conference is held. Palestinians demand settlement freeze as precondition for talks; however, Israel stands by plan to build new settlements in East Jerusalem.

January 23, 2008: Hamas blasts holes in Gaza/Rafah barrier, allowing hundreds of thousands of Gazans to enter Egypt freely. Border breach is partly closed by Egyptians on January 28, but reopened by Hamas and eventually resealed by Egypt.

February 27- March 3 2008: Large scale Israeli raid in Gaza kills over 100.

March 2008: The Jerusalem municipality announces plans to build 600 new housing units in East Jerusalem. In response, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice states that settlement expansion should stop and that it is inconsistent with "road map" obligations.

Aug 23, 2008: Two boats of volunteer activists break Gaza blockage for the first time. Israel permits them to arrive and depart.

December 2008 – Jan, 2009: Gaza War (also known as Operation Cast Lead). The conflict results in an estimated 1,166 to 1,417 Palestinian deaths and 13 Israeli deaths. In September 2009, a UN special mission produces a report accusing both Palestinian militants and Israeli Defense Forces of war crimes and possible crimes against humanity.

Jun 1, 2009: UN Human Rights Council investigative panel enters the Gaza strip to investigate alleged Israeli war crimes. Israel refuses to cooperate.

June 4, 2009: Address by President Obama in Cairo. President Obama calls for an end to Israeli construction of new housing in settlements in the occupied territories, as well as Arab recognition of Israel.

June 14, 2009: Netanyahu accedes to Obama's demand that Israel support creation of a Palestinian state, but he refuses to end construction of housing in Israel's West Bank settlements.

August 2009: The 2009 Fatah Movement Assembly begins. More than 2,000 delegates attend the three-day meeting.

August 26, 2009: The government of Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority issues a detailed plan to establish a de-facto Palestinian state within two years, outside the framework of the Roadmap and of the Oslo Interim Agreement.

November 2009: Israeli P.M. Netanyahu announces the end of the settlement construction freeze.

May 31, 2010: The Gaza flotilla raid is a military operation by Israel against six ships of the "Gaza Freedom Flotilla" in international waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Israeli Naval commandos board the Turkish ship MV Mavi Marmara from speedboats and helicopters in order to force the ships to the Israeli port of Ashdod for inspection. The raid results in casualties, draws international widespread condemnation and results in the deterioration of Israel-Turkey relations.

June-July 2010: Israel announces that it is easing the Gaza blockade because of international pressure.

February 2011: The U.S. vetoes a widely supported draft resolution that condemns all Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory as being illegal.

September 2011: Palestinian National Authority launches a diplomatic campaign to gain membership for the State of Palestine in the United Nations. The Security Council has yet to vote on it.

October 2011: Israel and Hamas reach a deal to exchange kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit for 1,027 Palestinians and Arab-Israeli prisoners. Of them 280 were sentenced to life in prison for planning and perpetrating various terror attacks against Israeli targets.

March 2012: The United Nations Human Rights Commission decides to establish a panel charged with investigating "the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem." In reaction to that decision, the government of Israel ceased cooperating with the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights and boycotts the UN Human Rights Commission.

Maps



Summary

Israel vs Israel draws upon the history of the struggle between Palestinians and the Israeli state that has defined this region for much of the twentieth century. Through an examination of Israeli peace activists, *Israel vs Israel* highlights the living conditions of Palestinians, tensions between peace activists and other Israeli citizens, and Israel's failure to comply with UN regulations.

The status of Palestine became an international problem immediately following the First World War. After the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, the Mandate System of the League of Nations places the territory of Palestine under British administration in 1922, a status that lasts until 1947. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations stresses the temporary nature of this relationship and assures that "the wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory." However, Palestine becomes the only Mandate that did not earn the status of an independent state. Instead, the British government supports Zionist attempts to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine based on promises made by the British in the pre-Mandate era. Zionist associations claim a historical connection to the land dating back to the period before the Jewish diaspora over 2000 years ago. In 1917, British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour confirms the government's support for the "establishment in Palestine as a national home for the Jewish people and [His Majesty's Government] will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of the object." The Balfour declaration maintains that the creation of this national home should not infringe upon the rights of the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine. Palestinian residents remain concerned that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine will infringe upon their rights.

While Palestinians continue to request independence during the British Mandate. Large-scale immigration takes place from European Jewish communities which are predominantly from Eastern Europe. Immigration increases as a result of growing persecution in Europe, particularly in areas under Nazi control. The Jewish population increases from 56,000 after the First World War to 84,000 in 1922 to 608,000 in 1946 – an increase of about 725 percent. This increased immigration leads to tensions between the newly immigrated Jewish population and Palestinians. Although the British attempt to mitigate the hostility between these two groups through elected councils and legislation, in 1936 Palestinians demand their independence through a rebellion against British rule and immigration policies. In 1947, the British government brought the question of Palestine to the United Nations.

The United Nations forms a Special Committee to determine the future of Palestine. The UN proposes the division of Palestine into two independent states. The UN recommends dividing the territory of Palestine into eight parts – three for the Jewish state, three for the Arab state, the territory of Jaffa was to form an Arab enclave in Jewish territory, and Jerusalem would fall under a special international regime. Palestinians protests the partition of their land, and Jewish-Arab relations turned violent. The British withdraw early from their governing role within the territory, but the UN is unable to effectively replace them. Jewish leaders expand their territory and occupy Palestinian lands. This leads to the mass exodus of Palestinian Arabs. Israel declares its independence on May 14, 1948. During the war of 1948 between Arab states and the new state of Israel, Israel expands to occupy 77 percent of the territory of Palestine, including most of Jerusalem. Jordan and Egypt occupy the remaining territory assigned to the Arab state, and an independent state of Palestine was not created. Israel joined the United Nations on May 11, 1949. The United Nations treated the question of Palestine a refugee problem.

Tensions between Israel and inhabitants of the Palestinian territories continue and the surrounding Arab states viewed Israel as an illegitimate state. In the 1967 war, Israeli troops seized the remaining Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A second wave of Palestinians fled as a result of the 1967. Israel starts to build the first settlements in West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights. The UN Security Council called for Israel to withdraw from these territories and asserted the need to resolve the Palestinian refugee problem. Further hostilities in 1973 led to the adoption of Security Council resolution 338, which called for a cease-fire. As a result of these disputes, the General Assembly reconfirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinians to self-determination, national independence, sovereignty, and to return to their lands, and established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The dispute over Palestine again reached the surrounding region when Israel invaded Lebanon in June, 1982 partly in an effort to eliminate the PLO.

While a cease-fire agreement was reached, a large-scale massacre of refugees took place. The International Conference on the Question of Palestine responded by creating policies that opposed Israeli settlements and actions against Palestinians. The first intifada (uprising) began in 1987 as a demonstration against the occupation and the expanding settlements whose population has grown to more than 150,000 settlers.

The actions of Israeli forces that led to the death of Palestinian civilians, escalation of non-violent protests, acts of civil disobedience, and stone-throwing youths. The intifada served as a model for many of the protests seen in *Israel vs Israel*. Israeli forces responded to the uprisings with live ammunition, beatings of Palestinians, and other forms of repression. The Palestine National Council declared the establishment of the state of Palestine in 1988.

Peace negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli government led to the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in 1993, and the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO. Through negotiations involving the UN, representatives agreed to the partial withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian territory, the election of a Presidency of the Palestinian Authority, and the creation of a governing administration in Palestinian territories.

Ariel Sharon's (Israeli 11th Prime Minister) visit to Temple Mount in 2000, and his proclamation that the site would remain under perpetual Israeli control, led to the outbreak of the second intifada. The second intifada was marked by extrajudicial killings, bombings, and the reoccupation of areas under Palestinian self-rule. Although it was ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice, Israel began constructing a West Bank separation wall. Acting against UN resolutions, Israel imposed a blockade against Gaza in 2007 that led to a humanitarian crisis. Violence in Gaza led Israeli forces to bombard the region for several weeks. Known as "Operation Cast Lead" in Israel, and the "Gaza Massacre" in Palestinian territories, the military operation caused heavy Palestinian civilian casualties and extensive damage to Gaza's infrastructure.

This history of humanitarian and human rights laws violations has produced activism in many forms in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Although the protests of Palestinians are known, *Israel vs Israel* investigates the voices of a unique group: Israelis protesting against the illegal actions and human rights violations of their government against the Palestinians. Through an examination of four activists and the groups they represent, *Israel vs Israel* demonstrates the tensions between Israeli protestors and other members of Israeli society. Although these activists argue that they are protesting

because of their love of Israel and their desire to make the country a better place, their opponents call them Nazis and traitors.

Israel vs Israel follows activists who speak out against some of the most tangible markers of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the resulting human rights violations: the wall being built in the West Bank, checkpoints, military occupation, and the seizure of land. Although Arik Ascherman, Ronny Perlman, Jonathan Pollack and Yehuda Shaul come from very different backgrounds and maintain different motivations for their activism, all four are fighting to restore equality and human rights to Palestinians.

Arik Ascherman, representing the organization Rabbis for Human Rights, claims that human rights are an essential part of Judaism. All people are created in God's image, argues Ascherman, and therefore should have access to equal rights. Ascherman acknowledges that nationalism and religion can be a dangerous mix, and emphasizes an interpretation of Judaism that privileges human rights over Jewish claims to land. This interpretation conflicts with those emphasizing the historical ties to the land and claiming that their religion justifies the occupation of Palestinian land. Ascherman views Judaism as the solution to, not the cause of, the conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians.

The Jerusalem coordinator for the organization Checkpoint Watch, Ronny Pearlman, spends her days at checkpoints in the West Bank, documenting inhumane treatment and acting as a liaison between soldiers guarding the checkpoints and those trying to pass through. Checkpoints, which are illegal according to international law, are regularly overcrowded and are sites of abuse against Palestinians. Pearlman's activism has caused tensions within her family, as her son does not understand why should she want to protect Palestinians. These tensions between Pearlman and her son, who serves in the army and views Palestinians as jihadists, demonstrate the extent to which tensions over the status of Palestinians permeate every level of Israeli society.

Jonathan Pollack, an activist with Anarchists Against the Wall, has participated in direct actions and protests for years. Pollack argues that the construction of the wall in the West Bank is illegal and immoral, "and it's being done in our name, whether we agree with it or not." Pollack and others protest without weapons, however the military responds as though protestors are staging a military uprising. As a result, demonstrations against the wall often turn violent, and it is primarily unarmed demonstrators who are injured or killed.

Former Israeli soldier Yehuda Shaul founded the organization "Breaking the Silence" in order to bring the voice of soldiers to the debate over the status of Palestine and Palestinians. "Breaking the Silence" collects testimonies of soldiers who served in the Occupied Territories during the Second Intifada. While Shaul works to expose the realities of occupation, he has been called a traitor, terrorist, criminal, and supporter of Hamas for his films and participation in peaceful protests. Shaul and the other activists in *Israel vs Israel* demonstrate their dedication to human rights in the face of opposition from other Israeli citizens as well as the government and the army.

Discussion Questions

1. The United Nations and other international organizations have argued for an independent state of Palestine. What are the obstacles to the creation of this state? Why has it not yet been established?
2. What are some of the discrepancies between UN regulations of Israel/Palestine and the enactment of these regulations? Why do these discrepancies exist?
3. Why are these activists seen as traitors? Do they view themselves as anti-Israel?
4. What are the backgrounds of these activists? What are their similarities and differences?
Why are the backgrounds of these activists essential in understanding the importance of their contributions?
5. What are the activists demanding?
6. Have your class look at UN statements and resolutions on Palestine. Do these justify the actions of the activists? Why or why not? These can be found at <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/B59ECB7F4C73BDBC85256EEB004F6D20> and <http://www.ochaopt.org/default.aspx>
7. Have students look at the websites associated with each of the activists groups discussed in the film (websites listed below). What are the objectives of each group? What are some of the actions they have taken to bring equality to Palestinians? How do they justify their actions?

Additional Resources

Websites:

- Rabbis for Human Rights: <http://www.rhr.org.il/eng/>
- Breaking the Silence: <http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/>
- Anarchists against the Wall: <http://awalls.org/>
- Checkpoint Watch: <http://www.machsomwatch.org/en>
- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Occupied Palestinian territory: <http://www.ochaopt.org/default.aspx>
- West Bank, The World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/we.html>
- Jewish Voice for Peace: <http://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/>

Books:

- “A Path Out of the Desert: A Grand Strategy for America in the Middle East,” by Kenneth M. Pollack.
- “The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace,” by Dennis Ross.
- “Dreams and Shadows: The Future of the Middle East,” by Robin Wright.
- “Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life,” by Sari Nusseibeh with Anthony David.
- “1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War,” by Benny Morris.
- “Lords of the Land: The War Over Israel’s Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007,” by Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar. Translated by Vivian Eden.
- “ Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad,” by Matthew Levitt.