

SEARCHING FOR THE POINT OF NO RETURN  
IN THE FAILURE OF THE OSLO PEACE PROCESS

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But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" (Genesis 22.11)



A tree by the Israeli Knesset. The photo was taken on January 2, 2010.

## Abstract

Millions of people live in Israel and the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories. The Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization, representing Palestinians, signed the Oslo Accords in 1993 and put an official end to the Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation, today known as the First Intifada. Many hoped that the Oslo agreement would become the foundation for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the attempts to achieve peace failed, and another uprising, the Second Intifada, followed in 2000. The paper examines the reasons why the process did not lead to the settlement of the conflict. An examination of the failure should give us insights to the failure and lessons for future negotiations. The premise of the thesis is that people's lives are valuable regardless of their class, religion or ethnicity, and the paper does not address matters of religion. The paper consists of four parts: introduction; presentation and analysis; conclusion; and suggestion. To present my arguments I hypothesize that Palestinian extremist organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad destroyed the Oslo peace process by carrying out a series of suicide bombings. I then present two antitheses: 1) The Israeli occupation policy and settlement activities fueled the Palestinian extremists to a certain extent and 2) The PLO failed to renounce violence. I conclude the suicide bombings by Hamas and Islamic Jihad damaged the peace process badly. However, the Israeli occupation policy and settlement activities drove the Palestinian extremists to a certain extent. Also, the PLO failed to renounce violence. I suggest that in future negotiations, Israel halt the settlement expansions and the Palestinian representatives unequivocally renounce violence throughout the process. Such stances will enhance the chance for peace regardless of extremists' attempts to ruin the process. I further suggest Israelis and Palestinians establish and maintain open dialogue as a peace process moves forward. The research is based on literature, interviews, and observations.

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## Introduction

In the following introduction, I will explain why I am interested in the subject, describe my recent trip to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, and give a brief history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the basic facts of the Oslo peace process. This will lead to the second part of the thesis: presentation and analysis.

## My interest

As a native of Japan, I am often asked why I am interested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I never really had a clear answer until recently, when I realized I was haunted. I began reading news articles on the region in high school. It was in the late 1990s, when Israel and the Palestinian Authority were negotiating the terms for a settlement. In the following few years, I would often read international briefs on the Palestinian suicide bombings. I was appalled. I did not understand why people wanted to blow themselves up to kill others.

Some might associate Japanese people with Kamikaze suicide missions (more commonly Tokko in Japanese). As a product of post-World War II Japanese education, I have a hard time understanding the concept and rationale, if there is any, of suicide attacks. Essentially, we are taught the tactics were ill-guided, poor, ineffective in advancing military goals, and cruel to those who were ordered to undertake the missions. At the same time, it may be true that through the education, we are cultivated to think about the circumstances of the Tokko pilots.



Did they have a choice? Were they really pleased to die for the nation? Do we understand what Japanese leaders were faced with and were thinking back then and what they wanted to achieve with the missions? Discussion still continues, and there certainly are people who attempt to sway the public's opinions. A series of questions made me refrain from drawing any conclusion about the tactics, whether those of the Japanese military during the WWII or those of Palestinians in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Because of a lack of understanding, I elected not to call the suicide bombers "terrorists." Palestinian suicide bombings continued.

In 2001, September 11 in the United States only made the situation in Israel and the occupied territories worse. As the world was paralyzed by terrorism, some Israeli politicians were apparently taking advantage of the tide of public opinion, equating the suicide bombers with the 9/11 hijackers and masterminds, and attempting to disregard one seemingly obvious factor behind the Palestinian suicide attacks - the occupation. For me, the biggest emotional blow came in the following year when newspapers reported first female Palestinian suicide bombers. I cried in despair. I was haunted by the sense of guilt stemming from the fact that I was living in such a peaceful country as Japan in the early 21st century. Darin Abu Aisha. Wafa Idris. After nearly a decade, I still remember the names of the first female Palestinian suicide bombers reported in Japanese newspapers. The stories weren't long. Only a few sentences. I attempted to imagine the situations they were in. It was my assumption that women in the Arab world were less engaged in politics. If so, how much must they have gone

through before undertaking such fanatic actions? What drove them to become human bombs?

It was about then I began studying Arabic. After I finished the second year of undergraduate study at Seikei University, a private school in Tokyo, I went to study the language in Damascus. I subsequently received my first bachelor's degree from Seikei. I later began studying journalism in the United States in the hope of becoming a journalist reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I believed and still believe impartial reporting will help inform the public and promote healthy discussion in society. I dedicated more than four years of my stay in the U.S. to study and practice reporting. In this paper, however, I will violate the fundamental principle of reporting - not to state one's opinion - for one reason. I have opinions about the conflict. I genuinely hope Israelis and Palestinians will settle the conflict and live in peace and security. I also know there really isn't a comfortable vantage point from which one can speak fairly and objectively about the Arab-Israeli conflict. Politics, beliefs, history and hopes are all intertwined. I attempt to make an objective analysis. However, I do not claim the paper is a product of objective, impartial research or reporting. It is rather a note of my understanding of the conflict and the peace process in the 1990s. I believe revealing my background helps readers understand my standpoint and opinions and take them into account as they read the paper.

## Recent trip

To do the background research for this thesis, I traveled to Israel and the Palestinian territories for the first time in my life. I spent a month in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Hebron from Dec. 16, 2009-Jan. 17. Not only did I observe ordinary people's lives, I conducted more than a dozen formal interviews. The interviewees included journalists, researchers, and peace activists, as well as representatives from Jewish and Palestinian neighborhoods in Hebron. I kept notes of my activities and observations throughout the trip. When interviewing people, I made sure interviewees knew that I was particularly interested in the peace process in the 1990s because people's ideas might have altered after the years of the Second Intifada and the Israeli aggression into the Gaza Strip in December 2008-January 2009.

## History

### Arab-Israeli conflict

The conflict has its roots in the 1890s when Jewish settlers first moved from European countries and the Zionist movement began to establish the foundations for a future Jewish state in Palestine, an area that had an overwhelming Arab majority (Peretz 2001). Zionism sought a Jewish state in order to liberate Jews in Europe from anti-Semitism and discrimination (Smith 2008). The region had been a central reference point among Jewish people as their homeland, Eretz Israel (Land of Israel), since the expulsion of the Jewish people in the 2nd

century (Palmowski 2008 d). The territory at stake was small and had few natural resources. However, the conflict often brought international attention because the land is sacred to three major religions, because the area is adjacent to the large oil-producing nations, and because the former Soviet Union and the United States both had interests in the region (Peretz 2001).

Great Britain pledged to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine by issuing the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917. The declaration promised to preserve the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish residents. Palestinian Arabs made up 90 percent of the population in Palestine at the time. Post-World War I settlements divided the land into several pieces: Palestine and Iraq became British mandates and Syria and Lebanon became a French mandate. The covenant of the League of Nations required mandate powers to prepare the residents for future self-government. However, the condition became null because the Palestine Mandate incorporated the Balfour Declaration. The Palestine Mandate was a victory for the Jewish national movement, Zionism (Smith 2008).

Palestinian Arabs began to feel threatened, especially by well-organized Jewish institutions. Attacks on Jewish settlers by Palestinian Arabs peaked in Hebron in 1929 and around the territory in 1936-1939 (Palmowski 2008 d). The Palestinian Arab revolt occurred in response to increasing Zionist immigration from Europe to Palestine. The surge of immigration came as Adolf Hitler took the helm of Germany in 1933 and the Nazis implemented racist laws against Jews. A British investigatory commission led by Lord Peel recommended in 1937 the partition of

Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Both side opposed the recommendation, arguing their portion should be larger. In addition, the Peel Commission report suggested the ruler of Transjordan administer the Palestinian state. The report triggered the most violent revolt the area had seen to that date. British troops crushed the Arab revolt in 1939. Meanwhile, Arab states began to show serious concern about the future of Palestine. Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, meanwhile, sought to establish his rule in Palestine by cooperating with Zionism (Smith 2008).

The British government changed its course over Palestine as World War II erupted in early 1939. Britain published a white paper which proposed that land purchases by Jews should be frozen and Jewish immigration capped at 15,000 per year for five years. Britain meant to calm Arab sentiments in neighboring countries. If implemented fully, the proposal would have given Palestine an independent state in 10 years as an Arab nation with a Jewish minority. The Zionists were determined to remain cooperative with Britain for the duration of the war against Nazism and to fight Britain thereafter. The Zionist leadership, at the same time, sought a new superpower that could sponsor their enterprise. They found it in the United States. President Harry S. Truman understood calls for immediate immigration of Jews from Europe in light of the horrors of the Holocaust. British leaders, who were faced with rebellion and terrorist attacks in Palestine, opposed Truman. Britain gave up the matter of Palestine to the United Nations in February 1947 (Smith 2008).

The United Nation General Assembly on November 29, 1947 voted for the division of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state (The United Nations). Jerusalem became an international enclave. A civil war broke out between Jews and Arabs as British forces withdrew (Peretz 2001). Arabs and Jews fought over the territory for several months from the UN vote through the end of British Mandate in Palestine (Fraser 2001). Hours after David Ben-Gurion declared the independence of Israel in May 14, 1948, several Arab League member states: Egypt; Iraq; Lebanon; Syria; and Transjordan announced intervention against the new nation, deploying army units to join local irregulars (Peretz 2001). There was virtually no central command in the Arab forces (Fraser 2001). The Arab states occupied southern and eastern Palestine and east Jerusalem, including the Old City (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010). The UN imposed a truce for four weeks, starting on June 11, 1948. During the period, Israel reinforced its troop strength to 60,000 (MacDonald 2010). Czechoslovakia, a member of the Soviet bloc, supplied Israel with weapons (Fraser 2001) and Israel eventually won the war (Peretz 2001). Israelis were fighting to defend the first Jewish state since the Roman era and were acutely aware of what had happened during the recent Holocaust (Fraser 2001). Israel occupied Negev and territories up to the former Egypt-Palestine border except the Gaza Strip by early 1949 (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010). At the end of the war, Israel gained about 2,000 square miles (5,200 square kilometers) outside the UN partition plan, controlling more than 75 percent of Palestine (Peretz 2001). Israel and the Arab states: Egypt; Jordan; Lebanon; and Syria separately signed armistice agreements sponsored by the UN (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-

Israeli wars." 2010). The agreements gave the Gaza Strip to Egypt and eastern Palestine on the west bank of the Jordan River, including the Old City of Jerusalem, to Jordan. The parties did not reach a peace agreement despite the efforts made through the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (Peretz 2001).

The war was a disaster for the Palestinian Arabs who lost their state (Fraser 2001). More than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes to neighboring Arab states, mainly Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Many moved to the Gaza Strip as well. The UN General Assembly, as it established the UN commission on December 11, 1948, resolved that the refugees who wish to return to their homes should be allowed to do so at an earliest possible time and those who elect not to return should be compensated for their property. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East was set up to assist the refugees for the time being. Arabs demanded return of refugees or compensation to them and Israeli withdrawal from the land it gained as a result of the war. Israel insisted on direct negotiations. The Arab states refused to recognize Israel or to have any relations with it. The United States proposed, among other things, plans to integrate refugees into the hosting countries as part of the regional economic development. The proposals failed (Peretz 2001).

New military regimes came to power in Syria and Egypt in 1949 and in 1952 respectively. The regimes sought to abolish Western supervision in the region and proclaim Arab national identity. Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt symbolized

the new wave of radical nationalism and the strength of the Arab world (Peretz 2001). Nasser took a hostile position to Israel (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010). Israeli leaders regarded Nasser as a threat. Israeli agents exploded bombs at U.S. and Egyptian properties in Alexandria and Cairo in 1954 in an effort to undermine Egypt-the West relationships. Israel attacked Gaza in February 1955 in retaliation for infiltrators and guerrillas who were coming from the border. Egypt continued to deny the passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal. Israel began to buy a large amount of military equipment from France. Egypt failed to purchase weapons from Western countries and struck a deal in 1955 to buy them from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's support shifted from Israel to Syria and Egypt (Peretz 2001). Britain and the United States informed Egypt that they would not financially support the building of Aswan Dam (Fraser 2001).

Nasser's Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company in 1956, threatening British and French regional interest. The two powers struck a deal with Israel: Israel would invade Egypt; and France and Britain would intervene as peace brokers, regain control of the canal (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010) and overthrow the Egyptian president (Peretz 2001). Israeli forces attacked the Sinai Peninsula in October 1956 (World Encyclopedia 2008). They captured the Gaza Strip and Sharm al-Sheikh on the Strait of Tiran. British and French air forces bombed Egyptian air bases. An Anglo-French paratroop landed near the canal (Fraser 2001). The United States and the Soviet Union in atypical unity condemned the tripartite attack and joined the UN in demanding immediate



withdrawal of invaders. The Soviet Union threatened to attack Britain and France and the United States withheld oil supplied to the two nations. The invading nations soon withdrew (Peretz 2001). The UN Emergency Force was established along the Strait of Tiran, and Israel was guaranteed free passage for its vessels (Fraser 2001). Israel withdrew in March 1957. Although Egypt lost, many Arabs saw the Suez Crisis as an Egyptian victory (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010). Nasser enjoyed reputation as a defender of Arab nationalism for resisting the attacks from European imperial powers and Israel. Israel, as it was withdrawing troops from the Sinai, declared any future blockade of the Tiran Straits by Egypt would be considered as a legitimate cause of war (Smith 2008). The UN force moderated the frontier between Egypt and Israel. Meanwhile, Israel and Syria and Jordan clashed over the Jordan River water sources. Israel planned to divert water from the Jordan River to Negev. The Arab League stated in 1960 Israel's plan was an act of aggression.

Israel's regional strategy was to maintain overwhelming military superiority over all Arab enemies. Israel purchased advanced weapons from France. French experts helped Israel start a nuclear reactor and weapons program while Israel itself developed a sophisticated arms producing capability (Peretz 2001).

Palestinian activism revived in the mid-1960s (Fraser 2001). The Palestine Liberation Organization was established in 1964 as an umbrella organization to represent Palestinian interests. Its goals were to liberate Palestine from foreign powers, to gain independence from Arab states, and to ensure the return of

Palestinian refugees. Harakat al-Tahrir al-Filistin (Palestine Liberation Movement), or Fatah in Arabic acronym, dominated the PLO. Yasser Arafat led Fatah, thus the PLO (Oxford Dictionary of Islam "Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)." 2003). In 1967 Palestinian raids fueled Arab-Israeli tensions (Fraser 2001). Syria intensified its bombings of Israeli villages from the Golan Heights. The Israeli Air Force shot down six Syrian fighter jets (Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010). Egypt's Nasser escalated the situation by demanding the UN Emergency Force withdraw and announcing a blockage of the Strait of Tiran (Fraser 2001). Israeli leaders chose to undertake a preemptive attack against Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. Jordan was involved once it fired on Israeli-controlled Jerusalem (Peretz 2001). Israel destroyed the Egyptian air force on the ground, drove Syrian army out of the Golan Heights, and captured control of Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and the West Bank from Jordan. The genius behind the Israeli ground campaign was Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin (Fraser 2001). Israel now established the sole control of Jerusalem (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010) and occupied the entire pre-1948 Palestine. Israel immediately annexed East Jerusalem and declared that a unified Jerusalem would be the capital of the state of Israel (Smith 2008).

After the war, tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union escalated. The United States began to supply Israel with major weapons and economic assistance while the Soviet Union greatly increased support for Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. The division of the superpowers made impossible to settle the conflict through the UN. Washington supported the Israeli position that territory could

be returned after a final peace agreement which guarantees Israel's security. Moscow supported UN resolutions that condemned Israel and suggested Israel return territory it gained during the 1967 war. A British-sponsored compromise broke the stalemate in November 1967. Both the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to Security Council Resolution 242. Nonetheless, parties disagreed on the interpretation of part of the resolution that called for withdrawal of Israeli armed forces "from territories" occupied during the war. Arab states, the Soviet Union, and many other UN members insisted on the full withdrawal while Israel and the United States argued partial withdrawal would be sufficient to meet the resolution requirements (Peretz 2001). Israel insisted on the exclusion of the word "the" before "territories" during the negotiations (Smith 2008).

After the 1967 war, most Arab states scaled back their demands for Israeli action necessary to achieve a peace agreement. The Arab states once demanded Israeli withdrawal to the 1947 UN partition lines and the full right of return for all refugees. After the war, they only demanded, based on Resolution 242, that Israel withdraw to the 1949 armistice lines (as a result of the full withdrawal from the territory Israel gained in the 1967 war) and solve the issue of refugees, possibly using alternative methods to repatriation. Palestinians lost confidence in the defeated Arab states and shifted their support to local Palestinian groups that were attempting to liberate the nation by guerrilla wars (Peretz 2001). The PLO was reorganized under the leadership of Chairman Yasser Arafat. Armed Palestinian actions against Israel began at home and abroad (Fraser 2001). The Palestinian position was described in the PLO charter modified in 1968. The

charter declared armed struggle as a means to achieve their goal. Palestinian groups opposed international efforts to resolve the conflict when the Palestinian political goal of self-determination was not considered in a resolution (Smith 2008). The nature of the conflict transformed from the one between Israel and Arab states to the one between Israel and Palestinians. Most Palestinian groups sought the total control of the land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan Valley but they maintained that Jews in Palestine before the establishment of Israel would be welcomed in their secular, democratic state (Peretz 2001).

Most Arab states supported the Palestinian nationalism, but many Arab leaders looked on the Palestinians as antagonists. In Jordan, for instance, armed Palestinian groups established a state within a state, threatening the royal family (Peretz 2001). PLO guerrillas and King Hussein's troops fought in September 1970 (Fraser 2001). The PLO factions: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine called for the overthrow of conservative Arab governments before attacking Israel (Smith 2008). When the Jordanian army regained the control of the border, most Palestinian organizations withdrew to Lebanon because Syria and Egypt rejected autonomous Palestinians and guerrilla strongholds inside the nations (Peretz 2001).

Egypt and Syria invaded Israel on October 6, 1973, the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. The fighting lasted 18 days (World Encyclopedia 2008). Egypt attacked Israel across the Suez Canal and Syria on the Golan Heights. After suffering

severe casualties, the Israeli army pushed back and established forces on the bank west of the canal (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010). The October War cast a shadow on Israeli invincibility. Oil-exporting Arab states also successfully used their oil card (Fraser 2001). The United States and the Soviet Union almost engaged in the war when Moscow threatened to deploy forces to help Egypt. Both delivered airborne resupplies to their allies. Tensions subsided once the battle ended, and the two superpowers joined UN Security Council Resolution 338, reaffirming the previous resolution 242 (Peretz 2001). The UN supervised the following disengagement agreements (World Encyclopedia 2008). Israel and Egypt reached a cease-fire agreement in November and peace agreements on January 18, 1974. A UN peacekeeping force separated the two armies. Israel and Syria entered into a cease-fire agreement on May 31, 1974, which established a UN buffer zone between the two armies and provided the exchange of prisoners of war (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010). U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's diplomatic efforts resulted in the cease-fire (MacDonald 2010). The PLO was awarded observer status at the United Nations in November 1974 despite the strong objections by Israel and the United States (Smith 2008).

Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat expressed his desire to visit Jerusalem for peace negotiations with Israel in November 1977, opening a new era of the Arab-Israeli relations. It was first time for a head of an Arab state to travel to Israel for direct peace talks. U.S. President Jimmy Carter invited the two parties to Camp David in September 1978 as the negotiations were about to stall, and he

convinced the two parties to sign agreements for peace (Peretz 2001). Israel and Egypt formally signed a peace treaty, known as the Camp David Accords, on March 26, 1979 and ended the state of war that had lasted for three decades. Egypt recognized Israel's right to exist, and Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010). The peace treaty was the first one between Israel and an Arab state and a milestone in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Smith 2008). However, Egypt was alienated from other Arab states because Syrian and Palestinian territories were still occupied (Peretz 2001). Hostility remained between Israel and other Arab states (World Encyclopedia 2008). Disputes over the interpretation of the accords subsequently developed. Egypt understood the agreement was aimed for a full Palestinian self-government while Israel insisted it would only offer autonomy (Peretz 2001).

The quarrel between Israel and the Palestinians continued (Fraser 2001). Israeli leaders believed the PLO, based in Lebanon, was stirring up Palestinian resistance in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. When the Lebanese civil war erupted in 1975, Israel supported anti-Palestinian Maronite forces. Israel carried out air strikes and invasion in southern Lebanon in 1978 (Peretz 2001). The Israeli Likud Party intensified its efforts to retain the Golan Heights and the Palestinian territories. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin annexed the Golan Heights in 1981 and with his ally Ariel Sharon expanded the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. U.S. President Ronald Reagan tolerated the Israeli settlement activities because the United States saw Israel as a vital ally against the Soviet Union coalition. The United States began protesting Israeli

settlement activities only after the Palestinian intifada erupted in December 1987 (Smith 2008).

On June 5, 1982, Israel bombed Beirut and southern Lebanon, where the PLO had a number of bases. Israel invaded Lebanon on the following day, and by June 14, Israeli forces encircled Beirut (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010). The siege of the capital triggered international condemnation (Peretz 2001). Israel agreed to stop its aggression and to begin negotiations with the PLO. However, after delay of negotiations and Israeli bombing of west Beirut, the PLO left the city for Tunisia under the supervision of the multinational force comprised of American, French, and Italian troops (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010). Meanwhile, Bashir Gemayel, leader of the Maronite militia, who had sought to expel or destroy the PLO, was assassinated. The Israeli army allowed the Lebanese right-wing Christian militias to enter the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. The militia slaughtered hundreds of Palestinian refugees in the camps (Smith 2008). After a multinational force replaced Israeli forces in west Beirut, suicide car bombers killed 78 French and 241 American marines at their bases. Israeli forces evacuated most of Lebanon in 1985 and withdrew from a security zone in southern Lebanon in 2000 (Fraser 2001).

On December 9, 1987, rioting erupted among Arabs living in the occupied Palestinian territories: the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and in Jerusalem. The mass, popular rebellion, known as the intifada, was directed against the Israeli occupation since 1967 (Encyclopædia Britannica "Arab-Israeli wars." 2010).

Palestinian Arabs attempted to liberate the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oxford Dictionary of Islam "Arab-Israeli Conflict." 2003). After Jordan discarded its claim to the West Bank, the PLO declared it the independent state of Palestine in 1988 (Palmowski 2008 d). The PLO recognized UN Resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis for peace talks (Peretz 2001). The PLO renounced terrorism (World Encyclopedia 2008), agreed to mutual recognition with Israel (Peretz 2001), and showed its desire to reach a peace agreement with Israel based on a two-state solution (Oxford Dictionary of Islam "Arab-Israeli Conflict." 2003). The move opened a dialogue between the United States and the PLO, which soon broke up. Arab states continued to demand that Israel withdraw from all territories occupied in the 1967 war, recognize the PLO, and allow creation of an independent Palestinian state. Israel refused to negotiate with the PLO and kept building settlements in the occupied territories, instead of returning them (Peretz 2001).

The Gulf War in 1990 brought a breakthrough toward resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. U.S. President George H. W. Bush decided to forge a military alliance with Arab armies to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait. The Bush administration promised Syria and Egypt that the United States would restart the Arab-Israeli peace talks after the war (Smith 2008). The United States brokered peace talks in 1991 after the Gulf War ended. Israel agreed that Palestinians representatives as part of the Jordanian delegation would join the conference to be held in Madrid in October 1991 provided no one was affiliated with the PLO (Peretz 2001). The talks were a landmark in the context of the Arab-Israeli



conflict because Israel directly negotiated with Arab states and Palestinians for the first time. The parties reached no formal agreements (Smith 2008). The Israeli election in June 1992 replaced the hard-line Likud administration with a new government led by Labor Party's Yitzhak Rabin. The Rabin government and the Palestinians joined a series of secret negotiations in Oslo, Norway, which resulted in mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO (Peretz 2001).



Orthodox Jewish men pray at the Western Wall. The photo was taken on December 27, 2009.



Children playing by the Dome of the Rock. The photo was taken on January 4, 2010.





A woman prays at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The photo was taken on January 14, 2010.

### Oslo peace process

Representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel finalized the negotiations for the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-government Arrangements on August 20, 1993 and signed the agreement in Washington, D.C. on September 13, 1993. The Declaration of Principles is the initial agreement of what is collectively known as the Oslo Accords. The event was significant because

the two parties entered into an agreement for the first time (Will 2008). The agreement was the breakthrough in the quest for a comprehensive peace solution in the Middle East (Palmowski 2008 c). For the first time in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the political aspiration of the Palestinians was recognized as part of the resolution of the conflict (Smith 2008). Norwegian diplomats brokered the secret negotiations. The PLO recognized the state of Israel and renounced violence. Israel recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The PLO agreed to revise the part of its charter that declared destruction of Israel (Encyclopædia Britannica "The Declaration of Principles and Cairo Agreement." 2010). Prior to the event, the parties mutually recognized each other by exchanging letters on September 9 1993 (Peretz 2010). For years, Israel had refused to recognize or contact the PLO, designating it as a terrorist organization. Rabin entered the Oslo agreement because he believed that it would enhance Israel's security, that it would moderate the hatred toward Israel in the Middle East, and that it would result in economic prosperity (Barnea 2007). For Rabin, Arafat was the only Palestinian leader who could possibly deliver peace. Arafat was short of money after being alienated from his main financial supporters during the Gulf War and was losing influence to Islamist groups in the occupied territories. Arafat accepted the idea of Palestinian autonomy in order to gain a foothold in Palestine (Encyclopædia Britannica "The Oslo Accords." 2010).

The Declaration of Principles offered an agenda for following negotiations to set up an interim self-government authority and an elected council for the

Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip within five years. The negotiations were to lead to a permanent conflict settlement between the parties based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The clock for the five-year transition period was to begin with Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, and the permanent status negotiations, which would cover the status of Jerusalem, borders, Jewish settlements, Palestinian refugees, and security arrangements, were to begin by the third year of the transitional period (Peretz 2010). While the PLO dreamed of a Palestinian state as the final outcome of the agreement, Rabin envisioned a more limited arrangement and rejected the establishment of a Palestinian state (Smith 2008). Once Israel withdrew from Gaza and Jericho, the Palestinians were to assume responsibility over education, health, police, social welfare, taxation, and tourism. Israel would remain responsible for external security, foreign affairs, and settlements in Gaza and Jericho for the duration of the transition period. A protocol to the Declaration of Principles called for the establishment of an Israeli-Palestinian joint economic development in the fields of communications, electricity, energy, environment, human resource, industry, labor, trade, transportation, and water resources (Peretz 2010). The Palestinians were believed to benefit from a large sum of foreign aid from the United States and other countries and also from economic arrangements with Israel designed to foster employment and trade (Encyclopædia Britannica "The Declaration of Principles and Cairo Agreement." 2010).

The implementation of the Declaration of Principles did not go smoothly. The parties disagreed over the international supervision of elections for the Palestinian council, the redeployment of Israeli troops, the size of the Jericho area, and the status of settlements. In Israel, the Likud party and others opposed negotiating with the PLO and surrendering any territory to the Palestinians. The PLO factions including Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for Liberation of Palestine objected to the accord (Peretz 2010). Meanwhile, a Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Muslim worshipers in Hebron on February 25, 1994. A subsequent Israeli investigation found the available evidence indicated that Goldstein acted alone (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1994), contrary to the Palestinian public perception. Nine out of 10 Palestinians thought Goldstein acted with the corporation of the Israeli army (Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research 1994). A Palestinian extremist group Hamas carried out suicide bombings in retaliation in Afula and Hadera, Israel, in April 1994. Israel and the PLO agreed to a series of principles for Palestinian autonomy, known as the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, on May 4 1994. The most controversial issue remained the status of East Jerusalem (Palmowski 2008 a). A week after a Tel Aviv suicide bombing, Israel and Jordan signed a comprehensive peace treaty on October 26 1994. Many other Arab states began to contact with the Jewish state, disregarding the old taboos (Encyclopædia Britannica "Challenges to peace." 2010).

Representatives from Israel and the PLO signed the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip in Taba, Egypt on September 24, 1995. The parties

again signed the agreement on September 28, 1995 in Washington, D.C. The agreement, often referred to as Oslo II or Oslo B since it followed up the original Declaration of Principles, resulted in the establishment of the Palestinian Authority that governs the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Migdalovitz 2010). The Oslo II agreement required a phased withdrawal of Israeli troops from the West Bank during the half-a-year period as Palestinian police would assume authority in the territories. The Oslo II was a crucial step toward Palestinian autonomy, but left a number of issues unresolved, one of which was the status of Hebron (Palmowski 2008 c). The self-government expanded to include areas with other major Palestinian cities, but excluded East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements. The Oslo II agreement also established a complex system that divided the West Bank into three zones (See Map 1): the area fully controlled by the Palestinians, the area under Palestinian civil authority with Israeli military control and the area under Israeli control (Encyclopædia Britannica "Oslo II and Rabin's assassination." 2010). Israel and the PLO were to start final status negotiations on other significant issues such as borders, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem. Israel did not guarantee a sovereign Palestinian state (Peretz 2010). In a subsequent election, the PLO earned 75 percent of the seats on the Palestinian legislative council and Arafat became the president of the Palestinian Authority (PA) (Peretz 2010).



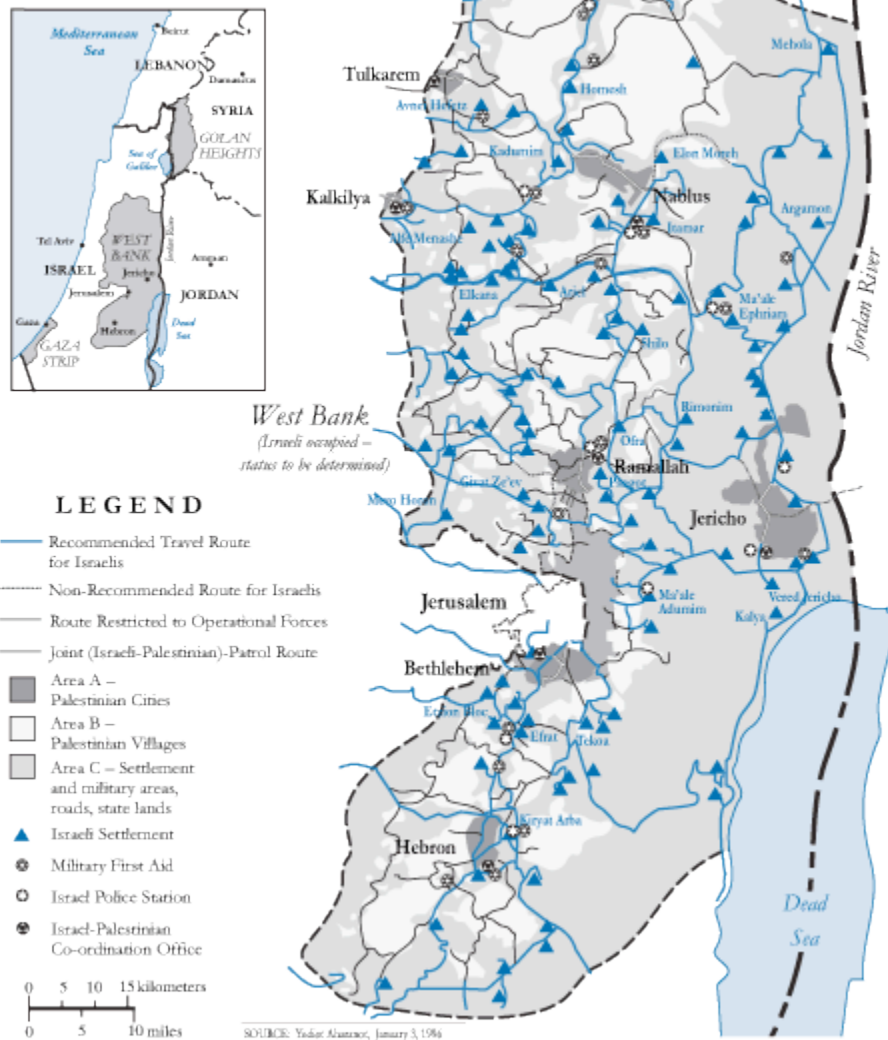


Source: Yediot Aharonot, October 6, 1995

Map 1: Oslo II, outlining areas A, B, and C    Courtesy of Foundation for Middle East Peace/ Jan deJong

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli religious fanatic Yigal Amir in November 4, 1995, two years after signing the Declaration of Principles. The assassination took place shortly after the Israeli Knesset passed Oslo II. Rabin attended a peace rally in Tel Aviv to appeal to his supporters on that day. Israeli popular support for the peace process surged. (Encyclopædia Britannica "Oslo II and Rabin's assassination." 2010). Labor Party's Shimon Peres, who assumed the prime minister's role, attempted to capitalize the sympathy for Rabin and win the presidential election ("Israel, History, A new political landscape" *Encyclopedia Britannica* 2010). Meanwhile, he ordered his intelligence service to assassinate Yahya Ayyasha, a Hamas member believed to be the mastermind of previous suicide bombings (Smith 2008). Peres's campaign efforts were faced with a series of Palestinian extremists' suicide bombings after the killing of Ayyasha (Encyclopædia Britannica "A new political landscape." 2010). Benjamin Netanyahu became the prime minister in May 1996, formed a more conservative administration, and refused to further withdraw troops from the occupied territories (Palmowski 2008 a). The implementation of the Gaza-Jericho Agreement and Oslo II was stalled (See Map 2 for the plans). American Likud sympathizers such as Richard Perle and Douglas Feith, authors of a Clean Break report, encouraged Netanyahu to abandon the Oslo process (Smith 2008). Little hope remained to salvage the peace process in 1997, when Israel moved forward with the construction of a Jewish settlement Har Homa in East Jerusalem (Peretz 2010).

## Road Map for IDF Redeployment – the West Bank – 1996



Map 2: Road map for IDF redeployment – the West Bank – 1996    Courtesy of  
Foundation for Middle East Peace/ Jan deJong

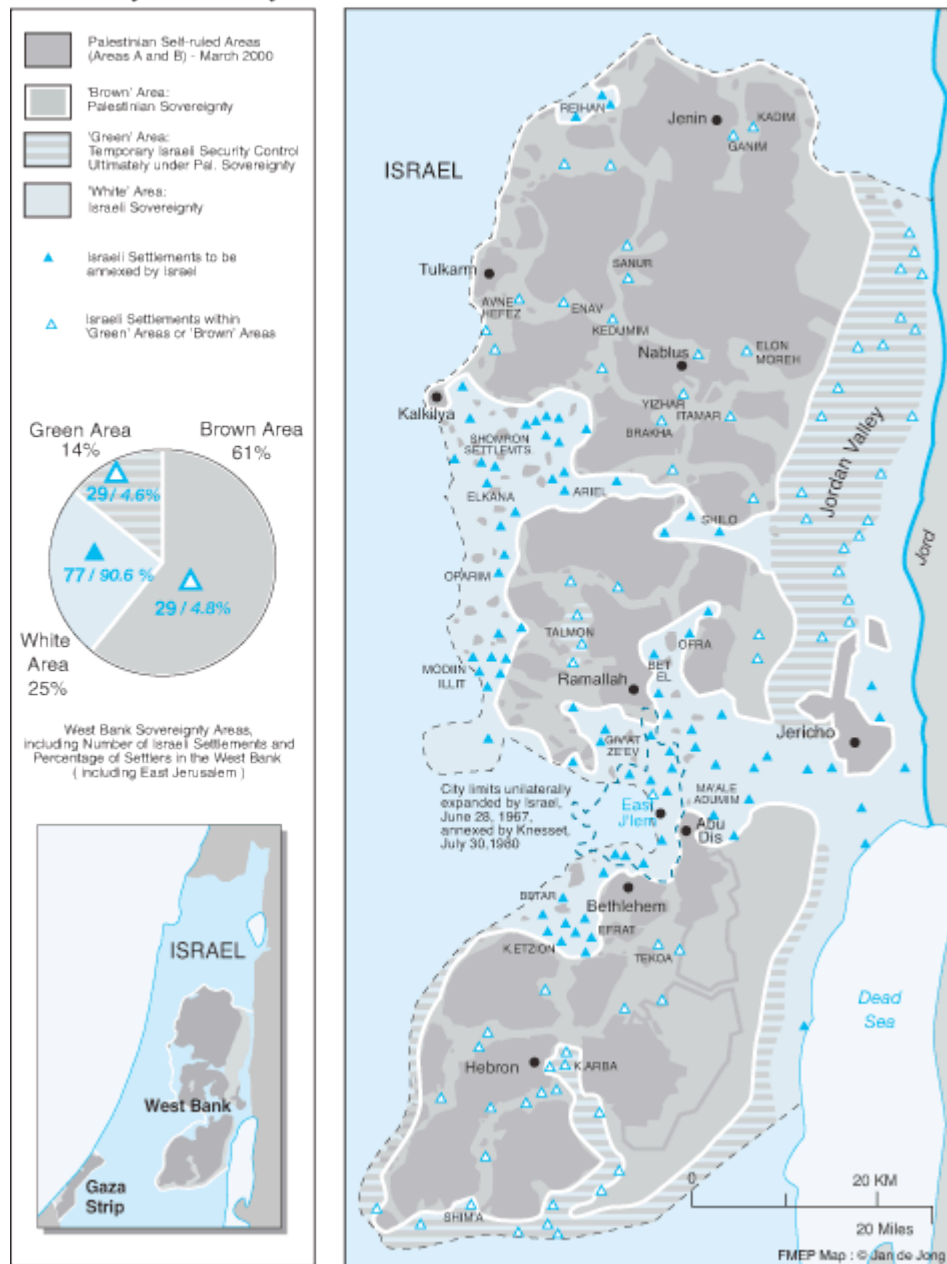
Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and the PA President Yasser Arafat  
subsequently signed the Wye Accord at the Wye Plantation in Maryland on

October 23, 1998. U.S. President Bill Clinton mediated between the parties. Israel promised to withdraw from the West Bank. The PA in turn agreed to U.S. Central Intelligence Agency monitoring to curb terrorism (The Oxford Essential Dictionary of the U.S. Military 2001). The agreement aimed at reviving the peace process after the collapse of the Gaza-Jericho and Oslo agreements. Israel pledged to withdraw 13 percent of the West Bank territory within 90 days and transfer a further 14 percent of the Israeli-Palestinian control to the Palestinian National Authority. Palestinians were to receive a transit corridor which connects the Gaza strip and the West Bank. In return, Arafat once again promised to revise the PLO charter that sought the abolition of the state of Israel. Israel refused to implement most aspects of the agreement in light of growing tensions between the Palestinians and the Israeli army (Palmowski 2008 e).

Former army Chief of Staff Ehud Barak defeated Netanyahu in 1999. Barak promised to settle the conflict with the Palestinians and Syria and to redeploy Israeli forces from south Lebanon (See Map 3 for a final status proposal by Israel). Barak did withdraw the forces in mid-2000 from south Lebanon. However, negotiations with Syria failed (Peretz 2001). U.S. President Clinton hosted a summit at Camp David in July 2000 to renew discussion between Israel and the PA. Arafat stated he could not concede Palestinian rights, demanding full Palestinian sovereignty in East Jerusalem, and rejected Barak's suggestion to share Jerusalem (Encyclopædia Britannica "The Barak gamble." 2010). The negotiation failed. Subsequent scholarly research indicates that Barak never made official Israeli offers but used Clinton to present Israeli proposals as

American (Smith 2008). The Palestinians erupted in violence after Likud leader Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount or Haram al-Sharif in September 2000 to demonstrate Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. Hundreds were killed in subsequent violent confrontations by the spring of 2001. Most of them were Palestinians (Encyclopædia Britannica "The second intifadah." 2010). The Israeli army re-occupied much of the West Bank by March 2002 and practically nullified all the agreements in the 1990s (Palmowski 2008 e).

**West Bank Final Status Map  
Presented by Israel - May 2000**



Map 3: West Bank final status map presented by Israel – May 2000    Courtesy of Foundation for Middle East Peace/ Jan deJong

## Presentation and Analysis

Before I discuss the hypothesis and antitheses on how the Oslo peace process failed, I must note that there are many Israelis and Palestinians who have told me that they were not sure if “Oslo” failed. It is certainly true that the Oslo peace process brought a series of accomplishments. As noted in the introduction, shortly before the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993, Israel and the PLO mutually recognized each other in writing. Israel had refused to contact with the PLO even at the Madrid Conference of 1991 because it considered the Palestinian group a terrorist organization. Israel and the PLO entered into an agreement for the first time in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More importantly perhaps, the Palestinian political aspiration was recognized as integral part of the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, for the first time. Further, one year into the peace process, Jordan signed a comprehensive peace agreement with Israel, becoming the second Arab state after Egypt to have a peace treaty with Israel. Many other Arab states began to make contact with the Jewish state. Oslo II of 1995 led to the establishment of the legislative council and the Palestinian Authority, a self-government in the occupied territories.

I recognize the Oslo peace process redefined the nature of the conflict and was a breakthrough. I do not underestimate how much the Oslo peace process had achieved. However, I would like to maintain that the Oslo peace process failed, simply because the process did not solve the conflict nor end the occupation but led to yet another uprising in 2000. Although many Israelis and Palestinians

have reservations about calling the peace process a failure, I think the sentiment is in large part a reaction to the remarks of the people who openly deny the benefits and prospects of peace or who have lost hopes in peace between Jews and Arabs. Naysayers to peace are far from negligible in the region.

A few theories may explain why the Oslo peace process did not work. Shlomo Gazit, adjunct senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv says (conversation with author December 24, 2009) the Oslo peace process left the final status issues (such as the status of Jerusalem, borders, settlements, and Palestinian refugees) for future negotiations. The optimists might hope that beginning the implementation of the process would help the parties reach a final agreement to settle the conflict. "The result was exactly the opposite," Gazit says. "Knowing that the ultimate goal will be the final agreement, it started a competition on both sides of creating facts [and] trying to impose certain conditions that will help each side to have a better deal at the [end]." The goals the Palestinians saw at the end of the process were different from those Israelis imagined. The Palestinians dreamed of a Palestinian state as the final outcome of the process while the Israelis expected a more limited arrangement and rejected the idea of a Palestinian state (Smith 2008). Khalid Qawasmi, the minister of local government for the PA, says (conversation with author January 8, 2010) the Oslo agreement was designed to establish "temporary measurements" on the grounds which were believed to become the foundation of a Palestinian state. Palestinians wanted a Palestinian state and Israelis felt the end result would be a Palestinian autonomy. Because each side envisioned a



different end result, Oslo did not work.

Gazit says the second theory is that the behavior of both sides such as terrorist actions and continued Israeli settlement expansion were contradictory to the spirit of the agreement. It is not rare to hear each side charge the other with responsibility for the failure. The approach of my thesis, like Gazit's second theory, is contrary to that position. By synthesizing one hypothesis and two antitheses at the end, I intend to show the failure should not be solely attributed to one party. The focus of my research is more on local and practical matters than on terms and strategies of negotiations. While I often found agreement among literature, observations and interviews, some arguments and narratives provided by interviewees, seem to contradict others. When this happened, I did not rule out these explanations as wrong, believing people's perception about a single incident can vary, let alone their perspectives on the factors and elements that had existed during a several-year period. The structure of my arguments is following.

## Presentation

Hypothesis: Palestinian extremists' organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad destroyed the Oslo peace process by carrying out a series of suicide bombings. Several factors make us believe Hamas and Islamic Jihad destroyed the Oslo peace process.

1) By looking at the establishment and development of the organizations, it is abundantly clear that the Palestinian terrorist organizations intended to ruin the Oslo peace process.

2) The Palestinian terrorist organizations carried out a series of suicide bombings, often targeting civilian population in Israel, in the midst of peace negotiations between Israel and the PLO.

3) These suicide bombings terrorized the Israeli public and trampled their fragile hope for peace with the Palestinians.

Antithesis A: Hamas and Islamic Jihad alone did not bring the process to the end. Palestinian violence was to a good extent driven by the Israeli actions, especially its occupation policy and settlement activities. Several factors make us feel compelled to believe Israeli occupation policy and settlement activities were driving Palestinians to violence.

1) The number of Palestinians killed by Israelis was greater than that of Israelis killed by Palestinians during the early stages of the Oslo peace process.

2) In some instances, Palestinian terrorist organizations acted in revenge for the killings of Palestinians by Israelis.

3) The Israeli occupation spread seeds of violence among Palestinians.

4) Settlement expansion and related land confiscation and expropriation angered Palestinians.

5) Israeli settlement activities not only expropriated Palestinian land and violated human rights, but also brought religious settlers to the forefront of disputes.

6) The Israeli government restricted movement of Palestinians by imposing

closure on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, revoking work permits and placing checkpoints, in response to growing violence.

Antithesis B: Hamas and Islamic Jihad alone did not bring the process to the end. The PLO failed to unequivocally renounce violence, undermining the Israeli negotiators' confidence in the group. Many arguments make us feel compelled to believe PLO leadership was not fully committed to relinquishing terror and violence.

- 1) PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat was silent after the Afula suicide bombing.
- 2) A week after Arafat signed the Gaza-Jericho agreement, Arafat called for a Jihad to recover Jerusalem in a speech made in a closed-door gathering.
- 3) The PLO did not revise its charter despite its promise to do so under the Oslo agreement.
- 4) The PLO failed to prevent its own members from attacking Israelis although the number of cases involving the PLO was far less than that of other Palestinian organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Conclusion: The extremists damaged the peace process badly. However, they were to a certain degree driven by the Israeli occupation policy and settlement activities. The PLO leaders failed to renounce violence. For the parties to resolve the conflict, leaders of Palestinian terrorist organizations may not resume suicide bombings. Terrorism will not lead to the end of the occupation. Commanders of suicide missions must realize people are not military assets. In future negotiations, I suggest Israel halt the settlement expansion and stop fueling Palestinian extremists and that the Palestinian representatives unequivocally

renounce violence throughout the process and do the best job to contain violence against Israelis. Some degree of violence will always emerge. However, such stances will enhance the chance for peace regardless of extremists' attempts to ruin the process.

## Analysis

Hypothesis: Palestinian extremists' organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad destroyed the Oslo peace process by carrying out a series of suicide bombings. Several factors make us believe Hamas and Islamic Jihad destroyed the Oslo peace process.

1) By looking at the establishment and development of the organizations, it is abundantly clear that the Palestinian terrorist organizations intended to ruin the Oslo peace process.

2) The Palestinian terrorist organizations carried out a series of suicide bombings, often targeting civilian population in Israel, in the midst of peace negotiations between Israel and the PLO.

3) These suicide bombings terrorized the Israeli public and trampled their fragile hope for peace with the Palestinians.

1) By looking at the establishment and development of the organizations, it is abundantly clear that the Palestinian terrorist organizations intended to ruin the Oslo peace process. Hamas was established by Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi with Shaykh Ahmad al-Yasin as a spiritual leader in December 1987 when the Palestinian uprising erupted in the territories. Hamas is an acronym for Harakat al-

Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah (Islamic Resistance Movement) (Oxford Dictionary of Islam " Hamas." 2003). The organization is dedicated to the destruction of Israel and to the establishment an Islamic state in Palestine. Hamas states in its charter published in 1988 that Palestine is an Islamic homeland that should not be given up to non-Muslims and that engaging in holy war to gain control of Palestine from Israel is a religious duty. Israel imprisoned the founder Shaykh Ahmad Yasin in 1991 and arrested and deported hundreds of Hamas members. Hamas opposed the 1993 Oslo agreement between Israel and the PLO (Encyclopædia Britannica " Hamas." 2010).

Palestinian Islamic Jihad was founded in the late 1970s and associated Islamist appeals with terroristic methods (Encyclopedia Americana. " Hamas." 2010). Like Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad operates mainly in the occupied territories. Unlike Hamas, though, it has no network of clinics, mosques, or schools and focuses entirely on violence and terror. One of Islamic Jihad's founders Fathi Shiqaqi was killed by Israeli agents in 1995 (Oxford Dictionary of Islam " Islamic Jihad of Palestine." 2003).

PA Local Government Minister Qawasmi says Hamas from the beginning had a different political agenda than the PA. While the PLO holds the two-state solution as part of its nation building program, Hamas wanted an Islamic state in the historic Palestine. Much like the Israeli right wing, the Palestinian extremists intended to ruin the on-going peace process since it would not accomplish their goal of controlling the entire holy land. The basic Hamas position, as part of their

interpretation of Islam, is that Islam eventually has to triumph and Islam needs to be in control of the holy land, says Jonathan Ferziger, Bloomberg lead political correspondent in Tel Aviv and a former United Press International Jerusalem bureau chief (conversation with author December 22, 2009).

Some may attempt to establish legitimacy of Hamas, particularly because of its charitable work. It is true that the Hamas charitable branch provides necessary social and educational aid for Palestinians in the occupied territories. Hamas uses the majority of its budget for educational and social welfare programs (Oxford Dictionary of Islam "Hamas." 2003). People in the Gaza Strip thought Hamas made a positive influence on their lives as it built hospitals and schools (Palmowski 2008 b). However, Hamas' charitable functions are an integral part of Hamas as a single entity, as is the operation of Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, its armed wing. Secrecy surrounding the organization makes the distinction between the various functions difficult, if not impossible. Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades says on its website that the military wing has the principle of secrecy in organization and recruitment and that the only leadership knows the number of members. The cells work independently under the instructions of the leadership (Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades 2010). Generally, Palestinian activists do not discuss what they are doing with people outside the small cells of fellow activists, not even with family members. Family members do not tell Israeli authorities about what roles they may have played (Jean-Klein 2000: 112).

Israel, the United States, the European Union and other nations designate

Hamas as a terrorist organization because of its methods of resistance, its determination to destroy Israel, and its opposition to peace negotiations. The internal leadership based in the occupied territories is known to be more flexible than the external leadership based in Damascus, Syria. Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, named after a sheikh killed during a Palestinian resistance against the British occupation in 1935, is believed to be more closely tied to the external leadership (Encyclopedia Americana "Hamas." 2010).

2) The Palestinian terrorist organizations carried out a series of suicide bombings, often targeting civilian population in Israel, in the midst of peace negotiations between Israel and the PLO. From September 13, 1993 through September 2000, 161 people were killed by suicide bombings, according to the Israeli government website (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008 b). The number of Israeli civilians killed by Palestinians spiked in 1994, totaling 57 (46 in Israel and 11 in the occupied territories). The number was highest during the period from 1988-1997 (See chart and graph 1 for civilian casualties and chart and graph 2 for security force casualties), according to a report published by B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights group (Kadman 1998: 8). In other words more Israeli civilians were killed by Palestinians in 1994 than any given year during the First Intifada. The increase resulted from Palestinian suicide bombings (Kadman 1998: 7). When Mahmoud al-Zahar, head of Hamas in the Gaza Strip and former foreign minister, was asked about suicide bombers, he laughed and said Israel has F-16s and Hamas has suicide bombers. "He sees them as military assets," Ferziger says.

Israeli civilians killed by Palestinians			
Year	in the OT	in Israel	Total
1988	6	2	8
1989	3	17	20
1990	4	13	17
1991	7	7	14
1992	11	8	19
1993	28	9	37
1994	11	46	57
1995	6	10	16
1996	3	37	40
1997	4	24	28

**Israeli civilians killed by Palestinians: Blue in the OT; Red in Israel**

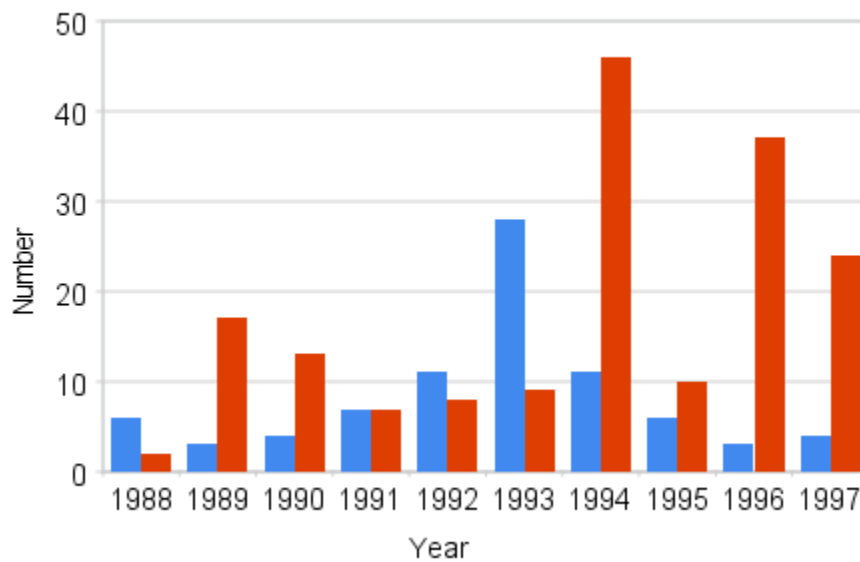


Chart and graph 1: Israeli Civilians killed by Palestinians. The figures are for December 9, 1987-December 8, 1997. In addition to the figures in the graph, one Israeli civilian was killed in 1995 by Palestinian security forces. Source: B'Tselem 1998



Israeli security forces killed by Palestinians			
Year	in the OT	in Israel	Total
1988	4	0	4
1989	6	5	11
1990	3	2	5
1991	4	1	5
1992	14	1	15
1993	17	7	24
1994	11	4	15
1995	9	20	29
1996	4	15	19
1997	0	0	0

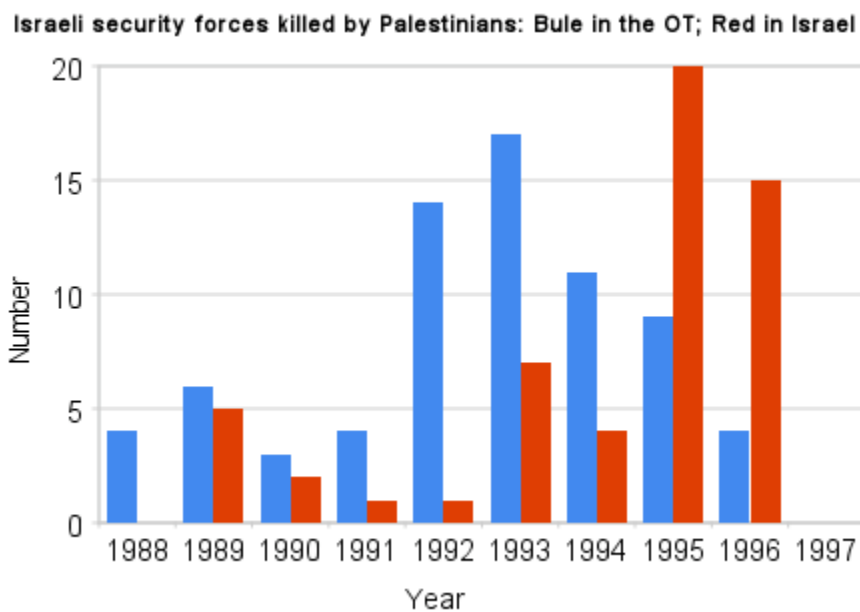


Chart and graph 2: Israeli security force members killed by Palestinians. The figures are for December 9, 1987-December 8, 1997. In addition to the above figures, 16 Israeli security forces were killed by Palestinian security forces. One was killed in 1994 and 15 in 1996. Source: B'Tselem 1998.

Following the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian economy was expected to experience a period of sustained, rapid growth. Although performance was not as great as it was hoped, the economy steadily grew through 1999. Israel imposed a strict closure in response to the Second Intifada in 2000 (The World Bank 2007: 6). GDP for the West Bank and Gaza increased from 2.8 billion USD 1994 to 4.2 billion USD in 1999. The Palestinian economy grew 3-13 percent each year (The World Bank 2010) (See chart and graph 3). The World Bank figures are only available since 1994. Ferziger says that years ago, the economy of the West Bank and Gaza was built on a number of Palestinians working in Israel. Palestinians worked at restaurants, hotels, and shops in Israel. They would get up at 5 o'clock in the morning, cross checkpoints, and take trucks to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa, and other places. This enabled the economy of the West Bank and Gaza, not to thrive, but to remain stable. Every time there was a suicide bombing, however, Israeli authorities closed borders and checkpoints. It wasn't really until the Second Intifada that Israel severely restricted the number of people who could come into Israel, which started to hurt the Palestinian economy badly.

Indicator	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
GDP (current US\$)	2,828,494,080	3,220,099,840	3,361,387,776	3,701,277,952	3,944,403,712
GDP growth (annual %)	-	6.01	2.90	12.65	12.06
GDP per capita (current US\$)	1,195.32	1,301.23	1,298.84	1,367.54	1,407.56
Indicator	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
GDP (current US\$)	4,168,899,328	4,113,261,312	3,332,382,208	2,832,538,368	3,144,395,520
GDP growth (annual %)	8.77	-5.55	-14.79	-10.08	6.11
GDP per capita (current US\$)	1,436.82	1,369.19	1,071.35	879.52	942.99

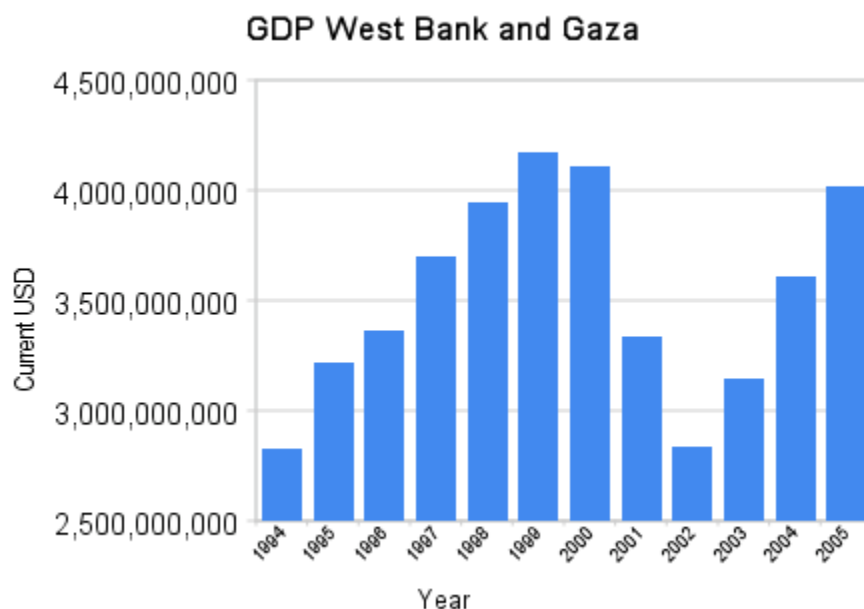


Chart and graph 3: GDP of the West Bank and Gaza, Source: The World Bank 2010

During the First Intifada, a number of restrictions such as regular curfews and closures by Israeli authorities kept the economic situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from improving, says Nabil El-Jabari, the chairman of the Board of Trustees of Hebron University and a delegate to the Madrid Conference in 1991 (conversation with author January 11, 2010). Not many workers were able to go into Israel. The Gulf War brought further restrictions and isolation (as PLO

Chairman Arafat supported the Saddam Hussein's invasion to Kuwait). The Madrid Conference brought a great hope to the Palestinians inside and outside the territories as they foresaw the end of the occupation. The negotiations in Oslo, however, did not have a direct influence on the Palestinians because they ran secretly. The return of the PLO to the Palestinian territories (in 1994) brought greater hope than did the Madrid Conference. A number of investors and Palestinians living abroad decided it was a good opportunity to start investing in the West Bank and Gaza. "It brought a lot of hope and a lot of money," El Jabari says. The situation lasted until 2000 when people started to realize the failure of the Oslo peace process and the Second Intifada began. Israeli authorities separated villages and town from each other. People could not travel within the territories and could not invest in or export from the territories. The economy went down very quickly. In 2001, the time when restrictions were at their tightest, people would not travel more than a few miles without a checkpoint. He says terrorist attacks in the '90s brought in some restrictions on the Palestinians, but did not have a great influence on the economy of the Palestinians as they were still thinking of development and people were coming with investment.

PA Local Government Minister Qawasmi says ordinary Palestinians genuinely wanted to live in peace when Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo agreement. They sought peace not because of Israeli pressure but because of each Palestinian's real need. During the seven years of the Oslo era, the donations and aid from the international community created job opportunities and improved living conditions of Palestinians. Israelis were trying to build a better economic

environment for Palestinians. He says, "It was more open, easier to go to Israel to work and to have economic relations with the Israelis." He noted the intention of Israelis was to convince Palestinians that their life could be better without a full-fledged Palestinian state.

Qawasmi says Palestinian suicide bombers generally have a combination of motives. These include religious feelings and resistance to Israeli behavior. He knew a couple of bombers personally, including a teacher of his children and another from the Qawasmi family. They were normal people, but they somehow reached a point where they believed God asked them to do something and they would be rewarded for their actions in paradise. The Israeli behavior fueled them to reach that point. He noted, however, in the 1990s, the Israeli government more or less understood the needs of the Palestinian people and it was not putting obstacles in front of the ordinary Palestinians who would like to work and live in Israel. The bombers in the '90s were more driven by religious feelings than resistance to Israeli behavior. Many suicide bombings took place in 1996, just before the Israeli election. He says, "I think Hamas at that time they were interested to ruin what is going on [in the peace process]."

El-Jabari says there is a big difference between a man who gives an order to commit a suicide bombing and a man who carries it out. The one who gave the order had one thing in his mind: "to make Oslo fail." The person who blew oneself up did so because he was very desperate.

3) The suicide bombings terrorized the Israeli public and trampled their fragile hope for peace with the Palestinians. The Palestinian extremist groups often targeted Israeli civilians without any military or strategic goal beyond creating terror. Targets of attacks were often buses running on main streets and crowded places for shopping, which would maximize the number of people who would witness the incidents or could easily relate to the victims. The planners and bombers were terrorists by definition.

In May 4, 1996, for instance, a bomber detonated a 44-pound nail bomb and killed 13 (12 civilians and one soldier) at the intersection of Dizengoff Street and King George St, both main arteries in Tel Aviv. The bombing took place just outside a popular shopping mall, the Dizengoff Center. A small memorial inscribed in Hebrew was set up at the northwest corner of the intersection. Next to the memorial is a tree that has lumps. Israelis say the surface of the tree grew to cover the holes made by pieces of metal. In Israel, it is common to see security personnel open people's bags and use hand-held metal detectors at entrances to shopping malls, central bus stations, university campuses, and any other place where many people gather.

Dina Feller, a member of the Peacekeepers in Democracy, says (conversation with author December 25, 2009) after the Oslo agreement, terrorist attacks surged in the heart of Tel Aviv. "Many people say 'Oh, we went to Oslo, and we wanted to compromise. And you see they come with the terrorism and they explode and kill innocent people,'" she says. "So this is what made many people

change their mind." Members of the Peacekeepers in Democracy meet every Friday at the place where Israeli Prime Minister Rabin was gunned down by an Israeli right wing fanatic. They sing songs he loved and discuss the prospects of peace. She still believes there will be peace with Arabs, but she says religious rabbis who believe the country only belongs to the Jews are convincing many other Israelis of their beliefs. The veteran journalist Ferziger says suicide bombings changed the way Israelis think about Palestinians and the peace process. So many people stopped riding buses. Everywhere they went, they were afraid that there was going to be a suicide bombing because they never knew when somebody was going to blow themselves up. He says, "I remember when I was on a bus, I would start looking at people, hum, 'Are you going to blow yourself up?'"

The terror attacks in Israel stirred vicious and unprecedented incitement against Rabin and the Oslo process among Israelis, especially the religious conservatives. The suicide bombings completely marginalized the military occupation and the settlements in the public discussion. The harassment of Palestinians by the extremist settlers was forgotten. "The causal triangle of the settlements, the military occupation, and terrorism was broken," Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar write. "History started conveniently with the Palestinians assaults on innocent Jews." (2007: 148).

The year 1996 saw the largest number of Israelis, including both civilians and members of security forces, who were killed by suicide bombings during the 1990s - 59 people (See chart and graph 4). As discussed in the introduction, 1996

was the year when Labor Party leader Shimon Peres, who assumed the role of the prime minister after Rabin was assassinated, was trying to capitalize the public sympathy for Rabin and win the presidential election. Meanwhile, he ordered Israeli intelligence service to kill Yahya Ayyasha, the Hamas member believed to be behind the previous suicide missions. Peres' campaign was faced with a series of Palestinian suicide bombings. Hamas aggression undermined Israeli confidence in compromise with the Palestinians (Palmowski 2008 b) and led to the emergence of more conservative government led by Benjamin Netanyahu, practically extinguishing any prospect of meaningful developments in peace talks.



Date	Location	Death	Group responsible
4/6/1994	Afula	8	Hamas
4/13/1994	Hadera	5	Hamas
10/19/1994	Tel Aviv	22	Hamas
11/11/1994	Netzarim junction	3	Islamic Jihad
1/22/1995	Beit Lid junction	21	Islamic Jihad
4/9/1995	Gaza Strip	8	Islamic Jihad
7/24/1995	Ramat Gan	6	Hamas
8/21/1995	Jerusalem	4	Hamas
2/25/1996	Jerusalem	26	Hamas
2/25/1996	Ashkelon	1	Hamas
3/3/1996	Jerusalem	19	Hamas
3/4/1996	Tel Aviv	13	Hamas
3/21/1997	Tel Aviv	3	Hamas
7/30/1997	Jerusalem	16	Hamas
9/4/1997	Jerusalem	5	Hamas
10/29/1998	Gaza Strip	1	

**The number of people killed by suicide bombings per year**

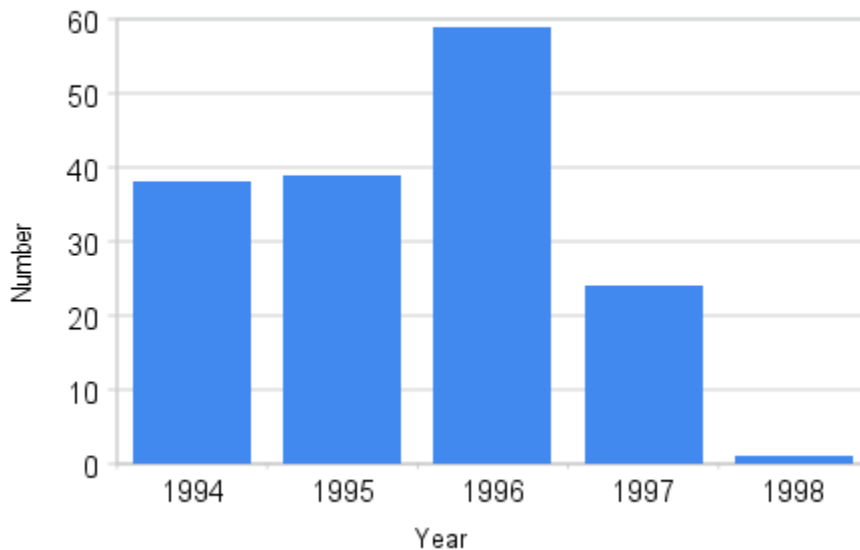


Chart and graph 4: The number of people killed by suicide bombings

Source: The dates, locations, and death toll from Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008 b. The parties responsible from Robert Pape 2005.



The intersection outside the Dizengoff Shopping Center became the target of the suicide bombing on May 4, 1996. The photo was taken on December 20, 2009.

Antithesis A: Hamas and Islamic Jihad alone did not bring the process to the end. Palestinian violence was to a good extent driven by the Israeli actions, especially its occupation policy and settlement activities. Several factors make us feel compelled to believe Israeli occupation policy and settlement activities were driving Palestinians to violence.

1) The number of Palestinians killed by Israelis was greater than that of Israelis killed by Palestinians during the early stages of the Oslo peace process.

- 2) In some instances, Palestinian terrorist organizations acted in revenge for the killings of Palestinians by Israelis.
- 3) The Israeli occupation spread seeds of violence among Palestinians.
- 4) Settlement expansion and related land confiscation and expropriation angered Palestinians.
- 5) Israeli settlement activities not only expropriated Palestinian land and violated human rights, but also brought religious settlers to the forefront of disputes.
- 6) The Israeli government restricted movement of Palestinians by imposing closure on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, revoking work permits, and placing checkpoints, in response to growing violence.

1) The number of Palestinians killed by Israelis was greater than that of Israelis killed by Palestinians during the early stages of the Oslo peace process. Since I argued previously that the number of Israelis killed by Palestinians surged after the Oslo agreement in 1993, it is probably fair to note the number of Palestinians who were killed by Israelis during the Oslo period. To be brief, the figure significantly dropped in comparison to those during the First Intifada, according to the same B'Tselem report (Kadman 1998: 3). During the 10 year period from 1988-1997, the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces in the occupied territories dropped from its peak at 290 people in 1988 to 166 in 1993, 112 in 1994, 56 in 1996, and 18 in 1997. The figures include those who died while in custody (See chart and graph 5). After Israel redeployed its forces from part of the occupied territories in accordance with the Oslo agreement, the number of Palestinians killed by security forces sharply declined. The decrease began in

1994 in the Gaza Strip and in 1995 in the West Bank. The number of Palestinians killed by Israeli civilians in the occupied territories showed a general declining trend during the period except 1994, when a Jewish settler killed 29 people in the Tomb of Patriarchs in Hebron (Kadman 1998: 4 and 6) (See chart and graph 6). Palestinian casualties were generally decreasing. However, the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces in the territories in 1994, 112, for instance, would be surprisingly high in the context of Israeli casualties (See charts and graphs 1 and 2).

Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces in the OT	
Year	Number
1987	22
1988	290
1989	286
1990	126
1991	96
1992	136
1993	166
1994	112
1995	38
1996	56
1997	18

**Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces in the occupied territories**

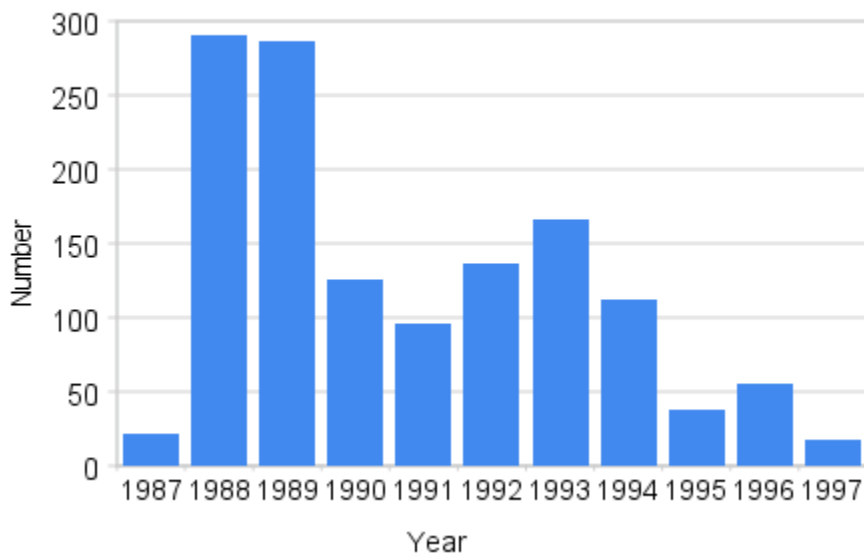


Chart and graph 5: Palestinians killed by Israeli Security forces in the occupied territories. The figures are for December 9, 1987-December 8, 1997 and include Palestinians who died while in custody. In addition to the numbers in the graphs, Israeli security forces shot and killed 18 members of the Palestinian security forces in the occupied territories. Source: B'Tselem 1998

Palestinians killed by Israeli civilians in the OT			
Year	Number		
1988	20		
1989	19		
1990	19		
1991	8		
1992	1		
1993	16		
1994	39		
1995	3		
1996	5		
1997	3		

**Palestinians killed by Israeli civilians in the occupied territories**

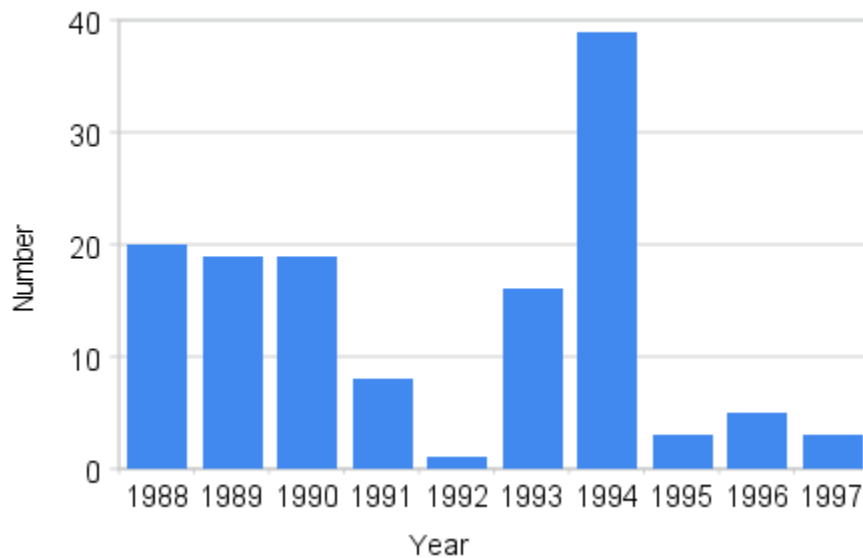


Chart and graph 6: Palestinians killed by Israeli civilians in the occupied territories. The figures are for December 9, 1987-December 8, 1997. Source: B'Tselem 1998.

2) In some instances, Palestinian terrorist organizations acted in revenge for the killings of Palestinians by Israelis. On December 1, 1993, two Israelis were shot to death from a moving vehicle, when they stopped because of engine trouble on the side of the road to Ramallah. Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility and stated the attack was carried out in retaliation for the killing of a Hamas leader Imad Akel by Israeli forces in Gaza. On July 19, 1994, an Israeli lieutenant was fatally wounded in an ambush near Rafiah. Hamas took responsibility and said the attack was "a response to the massacre at the Erez checkpoint." On Nov 11, 1994, three soldiers were killed at the Netzarim junction in the Gaza Strip after a Palestinian riding on a bicycle detonated explosives strapped around his body. Islamic Jihad said the attack was to avenge the killing of Islamic Jihad leader Hani Abed a few days earlier. On March 31, 1994 an Israeli was found dead in an apartment. A leaflet of the DFLP found near his body explained the murder was carried out in revenge for the shooting of one of the DFLP member by an Israeli citizen (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008 a).

The cycle of violence seems unbreakable when Israel's firm policy of hunting down any terrorist responsible for killing Israelis (Schmemmann 1996 a and b) and the Palestinian extremists' practice of retaliation are combined. As I mentioned above, Hamas began to carry out suicide bombings in 2004 in retaliation for the killing of 29 Muslims by a Jewish settler, Baruch Goldstein, in February of that year (Pape 2005: 66). Shimon Peres ordered his intelligence agency to assassinate Yahya Ayyasha, the Hamas mastermind behind previous suicide

bombings. Hamas carried out multiple suicide bombings in retaliation for the assassination in 1996 (Schmemmann 1996 c and d).

3) The Israeli occupation spread seeds of violence among Palestinians. Israel has occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem since 1967.

Palestinians fought to end the occupation during the First Intifada. El-Jabari of Hebron University says the Israeli occupation itself is unjust and unfair and must be considered a form of terrorism. He condemns Palestinian terrorists who harm innocent people, but he also condemns the occupying Israelis and settlers who terrorize Palestinians and make their life miserable on a regular basis. "As long as there is occupation, because occupation is violence, it will be met with violence," he says. He notes Palestinians are not against Jews who lived among them but are against the Israeli occupation. He believes if people are under occupation, it is their right to resist the occupation. Adli Daana, secretary general of International Palestinian Youth League, thinks (conversation with author January 14, 2010) human beings are more important than land and that suicide bombings are acts of terrorism, but people should dig deep and search for the roots of the violence. People, under pressure, can go out of their minds and become violent. Suicide bombers attack Israelis out of despair, believing there is no life after such events as their father being tortured in Israeli jails or his brother being killed by the Israelis. "These people (young suicide bombers) should be talking about fun, sex, traveling, changing the world, ...their lives, future, what they are going to do, dreams, hopes, wishes," Daana says. "Instead of that, they feel that Israel may be depriving them of all their rights, and they want to [retaliate against] it in this



counterproductive way." Daana says he is absolutely against the attacks against civilians. He runs the organization based in Hebron and aims at empowering the Palestinian youth through international exchanges, work camps, and training. He also helps them with job searches and employment.

4) Settlement expansion and related land confiscation and expropriation angered Palestinians. During the pre-Oslo negotiation and following periods, the settlements construction accelerated at an unprecedented rate. Thousands of elected officials and civil servants, some more openly than others, have helped with the Jewish settlement project over the years. Israeli society has been relatively quiet about the project perhaps because the lives of most Israelis have not been hindered while the settlements have been destroying the lives of the Palestinians (Zertal and Eldar 2007: xviii).

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin announced a freeze of settlement constructions in the occupied territories to boost diplomacy and repair relationships with the United States prior to the Oslo Accords. However, during his term, previously planned construction continued and the settler population increased (Encyclopædia Britannica "The Rabin government." 2010). Although the Oslo agreement in 1993 did not explicitly ban the establishment of new settlements, in the Oslo II agreement in 1995, Israel and the PLO agreed not to change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the final status talks. Rabin's freeze did not apply to construction to meet "natural growth" or construction projects in the Greater Jerusalem area and the Jordan Valley. "[C]ontrary to the expectations raised by the Oslo Process, the Israeli

governments have implemented a policy leading to the dramatic growth of the settlements” (Lein 2002: 15-16). The Israeli government under Rabin’s leadership invested a large sum of money in paving bypass roads to the settlements in the West Bank solely for the settlers (Barnea 2007).

The population of the West Bank settlements, not including East Jerusalem jumped from 111,600 people in 1993 to 192,976 in 2000, a 73 percent increase. In the Gaza Strip, the population increased 39 percent from 4,800 in 1993 to 6,678 in 2000. In East Jerusalem, the population rose 13 percent from 152,800 in 1993 to 172,250 in 2000, according to the Foundation for Middle East Peace (See chart and graph 7).

Settlement Population 1972-2008					
Year	West Bank	Gaza Strip	East Jerusalem	Golan Heights	Total
1972	1,182	700	8,649	77	10,608
1973-1982	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1983	22,800	900	76,095	6,800	106,595
1984	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1985	44,100	1,900	n/a	8,700	158,700
1986	n/a	n/a	103,900	n/a	n/a
1987-1988	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1989	69,800	3,000	117,100	10,000	199,900
1990	78,600	3,300	135,000	10,600	227,500
1991	90,300	3,800	137,300	11,600	243,000
1992	101,100	4,300	141,000	12,000	258,400
1993	111,600	4,800	152,800	12,600	281,800
1994	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1995	133,200	5,300	157,300	13,400	309,200
1996	142,700	5,600	160,400	13,800	322,500
1997	154,400	5,700	161,416	14,300	335,816
1998	163,300	6,100	165,967	14,900	350,267
1999	177,411	6,337	170,123	15,313	369,184
2000	192,976	6,678	172,250	15,955	387,859
2002	214,722	7,277	175,617	16,503	414,119
2003	224,669	7,556	178,601	16,791	427,617
2004	234,487	7,826	181,587	17,265	441,828
2005	258,988	0	184,057	17,793	460,838
2006	268,400	0	186,857	18,105	473,362
2007	276,462	0	189,708	18,692	484,862
2008	295,380	0	n/a	19,083	n/a

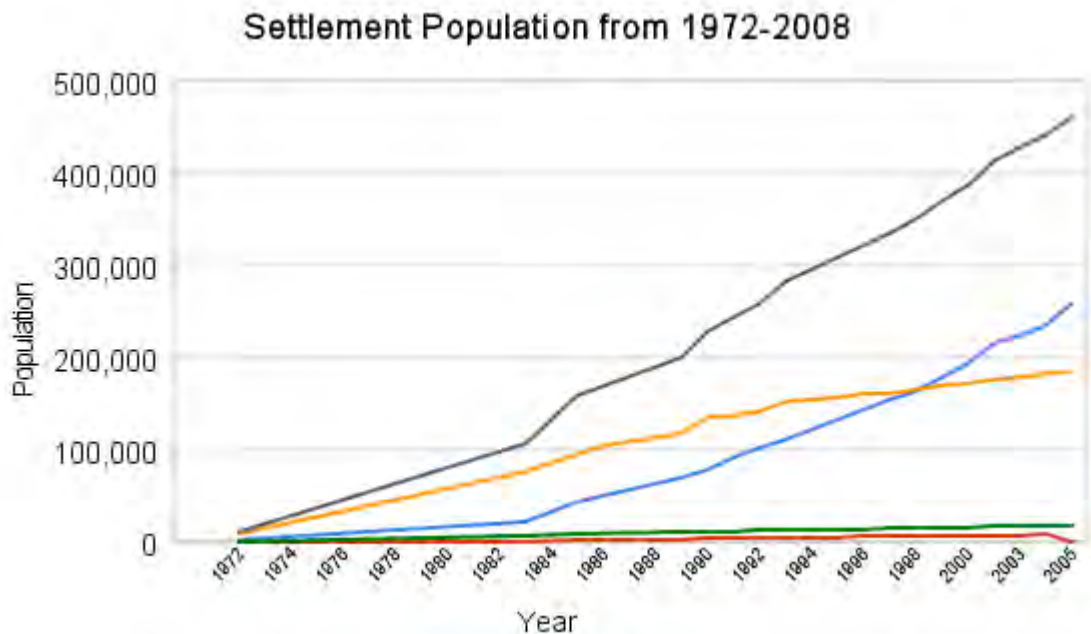


Chart and graph 7: Population of Israeli Settlements. Total in gray, the West Bank in blue, East Jerusalem in orange, the Golan Heights in green, and the Gaza Strip in red. Source: Foundation for Middle East Peace

The settlements in the occupied territories violate two international humanitarian laws that stipulate the rules applying to states during war times and occupation: The Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits the occupying power from transferring its own civilians into the territories it occupies, and the Hague Regulations bans the occupier from creating permanent facts in the territory it occupies. Israel claims that international humanitarian law is not completely binding on its activities in the occupied territories. The Israeli position never gained any support in the international community (Lein 2002:

37-41). U.S. ambassadors to the United Nations such as George Bush and William Scranton as well as Secretary of State Cyrus Vance have stated the settlements are illegal (Mark 2002: 12).

Israel encouraged Israeli citizens to move from Israel to the West Bank, by offering significant financial benefits and incentives, some directly to citizens and others through local authorities (Lein 2002: 46). The price of the land in the occupied territories can be about half the price of land inside Israel, says Eyal Hareuveni, the researcher in charge of the settlements and East Jerusalem at B'Tselem (conversation with author December 30, 2009). Because the Israeli government subsidizes the contractors who build the infrastructure, the price of housing becomes cheaper. The settlers also receive highly subsidized mortgages. Types of housing range from large suburban houses to apartments in high rise buildings, depending on the area. There also are incentives for education systems and factories in the settlements.

Israel seizes land, mainly by declaring it as state land. Israel employs three other methods for seizure: requisition for military necessities; labeling land as abandoned property; and expropriation for public needs (Lein 2002: 46). Nafez Assaily, general director of Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace explains (conversation with author January 11, 2009) the process of seizure from Palestinians' eyes. Israeli authorities "always" confiscate land for security reasons. The army then opens the land and facilitates the project for settlers to take it. Sometimes settlers come and dig the land to build houses. "This is the way

how they steal our lands," he says. When Kiryat Arba was established just east of Hebron in 1968, the site first emerged as army barracks. Some months later, civilians began to live there. The site then became a civilian settlement, surrounded by the army that protects the residents. The Arab owners of the land and the houses that were located on it received nominal compensation (Zertal and Eldar 2007: 25). Assaily says the land confiscation continued before, during, and after the Oslo peace process.

Hareuveni says a settlement, once established, expands to fulfill the needs of the residents: schools; houses for the elderly; and infrastructure, often at the cost of local residents' human rights. The local residents may lose land. Their freedom of movement and access to water is restricted.

Residential developments in the occupied territories that have not been through the legal due process of the Israeli government are referred to as outposts.

Hareuveni says, however, given the Israeli government financial support for the outposts, one cannot say outposts were not given any approval from the government. If the Israeli government wishes to dismantle outposts, it would be easy. The distinction between settlements and outposts is the Israeli internal discourse. B'Tselem's position is that both of them violate international humanitarian laws.

Philip Wilcox, a former consul general of the United States in Jerusalem from 1988-1991, says the Oslo process failed because the PLO representatives who were based in Tunis at the beginning of the negotiations did not know much

about the spread of the settlements and how the balance of power had shifted between the settlers and Israeli governments. The PLO representatives did not foresee “the disastrous consequences” of relinquishing Palestinians’ insistence on a settlement freeze (Zertal and Eldar 2007: 140).

5) Israeli settlement activities not only expropriated Palestinian land and violated human rights, but also brought religious settlers into the forefront of disputes. After the 1967 war, Israeli politics divided into two camps: the maximalists who sought to control the entire Land of Israel and the minimalists who believed that the war created tangible chances for peace with Arabs. Two groups Gush Emunim and Kach emerged in maximalist extremism. Gush Emunim, established in 1974, is a modern religious messianic movement. The decisive victory in the 1967 war convinced the founding members of the group that God finally decided to redeem the Jewish people. Gush Emunim members started establishing settlements in the West Bank. Gush Emunim’s anti-Arab aggression grew out of settler vigilantism and a feeling that the Israeli army was not able to fully protect them from Palestinian violence. Kach established by Rabbi Meir Kahane in 1971 mostly engaged in protest, conflict, and street demonstration. The group failed to establish a settlement and never recruited more than several hundred members. Extremists on the maximalist camp saw the continued expansion of the settlements as a reconfirmation of the messianic promise. (Sprinzak 1998: 118, 119, and 122).

For settlers, Israel is the region encompassing the West Bank, says the journalist

Ferziger, because places like Hebron, Nablus, Silo, Jericho, and other places were some of the most important places in Jewish history. Most of the events in the Bible took place in the West Bank and Jerusalem. He says, "It doesn't mean a lot for them to come to Tel Aviv." He noted it is cheaper to live in the West Bank settlements and many who are not religious live in the territories as well. A poll showed that 37.8 percent of settlers moved to Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) primarily for economic reasons while 33.5 percent did so for religious/ideological reasons (Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research 1995).

Hareuveni of B'Tselem says some areas are more prone to violence than others. Hot spots are South Hebron, Suseya and Karmel in southern West Bank and Yizhar and Itamar near Nablus. Israelis inhabit Hebron or deep inside the West Bank primarily for religious reasons. They are more likely to cause violent clashes with the Palestinians since they believe, as part of a very extreme interpretation of Judaism, the land is theirs and that nobody else is supposed to be there. On the other hand, the settlers who live close to the Israeli border and don't have any direct daily contact with the Palestinians are less likely to engage in violence.

Daana of International Palestinian Youth League says the armed settlers are the source of problems. He says the settlers are civilians, but they have guns and that the state of Israel allows them to make an assessment of whether their life is in danger. If they so determine, they can shoot Palestinians. "The settlers can shoot

you (a Palestinian) in the street and say what, 'This person tried to attack me,'" Daana says. "Since he is a civilian, the Palestinian would be blamed for being killed and they (Israeli authorities) would take (accept) the story of the settler. This has happened so many times, actually all the times."

The single worst act of settler's violence against Palestinians during the Oslo period happened in February 25, 1994, when a Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein sprayed bullets into a crowd of Muslim worshipers in the Cave of the Patriarchs, killing 29 people. It was a time when Israeli government was preparing to withdraw its army from from Gaza and Jericho. The implementation of the Gaza-Jericho agreement had begun two weeks earlier. For the settlers, stopping Oslo and salvaging the land became the most urgent goal (Zertal and Eldar 2007: 119).

Goldstein was a student of Rabbi Meir Kahane, who established Jewish Defense League in the United States in 1968 and Kach as its Israeli branch. In Kahane's teaching, Jewish violence against the enemies was not a necessary evil for self-defense but rather the action to be sanctified and glorified. Goldstein learned the idea of legitimate killing from Kahane. Gush Emunim and Kach both strongly opposed the peace process since both groups believed redemption could only take place with in the Land of Israel, including the occupied territories (Sprinzak 1998: 120-21.) An expert on Jewish extremists Ehud Sprinzak writes, "The determination of an Israeli government to recognize the PLO, to first implement Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza, and to eventually evacuate most of the territories and facilitate the creation of a Palestinian entity



constituted unquestionably the worst thing that could ever happen to Zionist messianism in Israel (1998: 122)."

The period of time soon after the First Intifada was very turbulent and brought "just massive confusion," says David Wilder, spokesman for the Jewish Community of Hebron, who knew Goldstein (conversation with author January 8, 2009). Many Jews had been killed and some were still being killed and the government wasn't doing anything to stop it. Goldstein, as a doctor, was informed by the army that there would be an attack in Hebron so he would be prepared if something happened. Some say he thought if people are going to be killed, they should be Arabs, not Jews. Others say he was under tremendous psychological stress. He dealt with so many people who were injured or killed by Arabs that he broke. "I don't know what is true," he says. Goldstein must have practiced as a doctor for about 10 years. The night before the incident, Arabs were screaming "Itbach al Yahud (Slauter the Jews)" at the Tomb of Patriarch. The army didn't do anything about it. In the next morning, Goldstein went down and did what he did. People's reactions varied in the Jewish neighborhoods. Some understood what he did. Some didn't. Some opposed it. Others said that was good. People whose lives Goldstein saved as a doctor found it very difficult to say anything bad about him. Some made a distinction between the Baruch Goldstein they knew before and the Baruch Goldstein after the incident.

Some prominent figures in the government demanded Rabin uproot the Jewish settlement from the center of Hebron. After much thought, Rabin decided to

evacuate part of the Jewish neighborhood of Hebron. The talks to remove the Jewish settlement in Hebron spread quickly through the settlements and the religious communities. A leader of the settlers threatened the government that if it evacuates the settlers from Hebron, "10,000 supporters would invade the town," and if the government removed them by force, "50,000 settlers would come and replace them." Rabin changed his mind. He later said that diplomatically it was his obligation to remove the Hebron settlers after the Goldstein massacre, but politically the action was not possible (Zertal and Eldar 2007: 125-126).

The Israeli government subsequently outlawed Kach and its sister organization Kahane Chai on March 14, 1994. Israel made it illegal to belong to Kach or any other organization that aimed at "the establishment of a theocracy in the biblical Land of Israel and the violent expulsion of Arabs from that land" (Haberman 1994 a).

6) The Israeli government restricted movement of Palestinians by imposing closure of the West Bank and Gaza, revoking work permits, and placing checkpoints. Israel took the measures in response to growing violence. As I discussed above, the Oslo peace process, designed to shift authority from Israel to the Palestinians, divided the West Bank into different parts: the area under Palestinian control; the area under Israeli security control but the Palestinian civil administration; and the area under total Israeli control. Oslo agreements fragmented the Palestinian territories as the Palestinians sought control over

major Palestinian cities. More roadblocks were set up after the Baruch Goldstein massacre and following violent incidents, says Lisa Talesnick, a former Boston Globe correspondent, the founder of Israel News Today and a peace activist (conversation with author January 15, 2010). The number of road side shootings surged where Palestinians fired at settlers as they were driving by the settlers' cars on the roads. A soldier Nachshon Wachsman was kidnapped by members of Hamas at the time. Israeli authorities reacted to the surge of violence with more closures and roadblocks. It became difficult for the Palestinians to travel around the territories. Hareuveni of B'Tselem says there weren't checkpoints in the West Bank until the beginning of the '90s, and the placement of checkpoints, chronologically, paralleled the start of the Oslo peace process. Palestinians began to feel the impact of movement restrictions as the Oslo process unfolded.

Talesnick of Israel News Today says the violence Palestinians suffered under the occupation and from the settlement expansion was less pinpointed than the violence Israelis experienced. She recognizes that not all settlers went to the territories believing all the land belongs to Jews and that all Palestinians should be removed. However, given that the Israeli government had taken the land from Palestinians who could have used it for their agriculture and had set it aside for settlers, the mere fact of going to live in a settlement, regardless of their intention, was the statement that said the land was eventually going to belong to Jews and that Palestinians would be out. The Palestinians' lifestyle of raising their own food on the land was slowly being eaten away as the Israeli government

took more land away from them. "Their sustenance is decreasing," she says. Palestinians couldn't support their families - a blow to their livelihoods. More water was allocated to the settlers than to the Palestinian villagers - another blow. Israelis built separate roads for the settlers, curving through Palestinian land - another blow. Israelis put roadblocks to protect settlers, restricting Palestinians' freedom of movement - another blow. She has heard very distressing anecdotes. An old man had to travel to another part of the Palestinian territories to get an eye operation, but he couldn't pass the roadblock and waited, waited and waited - only to go blind. A Palestinian couldn't attend his sister's wedding or see the birth of his brother's child. "Things that should be available for a person to live a reasonable daily life are taken away one by one," she says. When one compares a story of settlers destroying olive trees and agricultural fields and a story of Palestinians blowing up a bus, the former is not as violent as the latter, but one has to look at the Palestinians' situation in entirety. "I think this (the violence Palestinian suffered) is societal violence rather than pinpoint violence," she says.

Assailly of Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace says the Israelis are not solely responsible for the failure. The Second Intifada could be as much against the Palestinian Authority as against Israel. He says the Oslo process was not clear for ordinary Palestinian people since the PLO struck a deal with Israel in secret talks, followed by many different negotiations at different locations. Assailly likens the Oslo peace process to winding tunnels where an exit to another branch is hard to see. "It was dark," he says.

Antithesis B: Hamas and Islamic Jihad alone did not bring the process to the end. The PLO failed to unequivocally renounce violence, undermining the Israeli negotiators' confidence in the group. Many arguments make us feel compelled to believe PLO leadership was not fully committed to relinquishing terror and violence.

- 1) PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat was silent after the Afula suicide bombing.
- 2) On May 11, 1994, a week after Arafat signed the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, Arafat called for a Jihad to recover Jerusalem in a speech made in a closed-door gathering in Johannesburg.
- 3) The PLO did not revise its charter despite its promise to do so under the Oslo agreement.
- 4) The PLO failed to prevent its own members from attacking Israelis although the number of cases involving the PLO was far less than that of other Palestinian organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

1) PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat was silent after the Afula suicide bombing. He didn't wish to condemn Palestinians' aggression against Israelis in the eyes of his own people. When the Hamas suicide bombing killed eight Israeli civilians, including teenagers, in Afula on April 6, 1994 (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008 a), Arafat remained silent (Kuttler and Hutman 1994). The attack was first to claim civilian casualties by Palestinian suicide bombings in Israel. Hamas carried out the bombing in retaliation for the mass killing by Baruch Goldstein in Hebron (The British Broadcasting Corporation 1994). Israeli and the U.S. officials demanded the PLO Chairman condemn the attack (Haberman 1994 b).

He later claimed he issued a condemnation to UN reporters (Kuttler 1994) and sent a letter, expressing his regret and rejection of the attack, to U.S. President Bill Clinton (Hoffman 1994). Following the suicide bombing in Hadera, which happened a week later, he expressed his regrets over the incident that killed innocent people (Helm 1994; Haberman 1994 c; and Hoffman 1994).

2) On May 11, 1994, a week after Arafat signed the Cairo agreement, Arafat called for a Jihad to recover Jerusalem in a speech made in a closed-door gathering in Johannesburg. He went on to characterize Oslo as a convenient peace that could be disregarded if the situation would allow. "He would never convey a clear message of peace and reconciliation to the Israeli public," a former Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami writes. "Throughout his life as a terrorist and guerrilla leader, Arafat avoided an open confrontation with his rivals in the movement. He preferred to co-opt them (2006: 214-215)."

Wilder of the Jewish Community of Hebron says Faisal Al-Husseini, a Fatah leader, likened Oslo to a Trojan horse. In other words, "it was a way for them to get their foot in the door," he says. Arabs had no intention in making peace with Israel. They spelled peace p-i-e-c-e, in stead of p-e-a-c-e. Arabs intended to get what they could get by diplomacy and whatever they can't get by diplomacy, they meant to take it by force. Arabs didn't want the peace process to succeed in the first place. They were not interested in the peace Israel wants because they wanted all of the state of Israel. He says, "It's very difficult to make peace with people who don't want peace."

3) The PLO did not revise its charter despite its promise to do so under the Oslo agreement. The Palestinian National Covenant, or the PLO charter, states that the Palestinians, regardless of religion, who were residents prior to 1947 would be citizens of Palestine. Any condition or obligation imposed by the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate, the UN partition plan, and the establishment of Israel that abolishes the rights of Palestinians was void. The Covenant suggests that all Palestinians form a united front to liberate Palestine. In 1988, Arafat affirmed the PLO's recognition of UN Resolution 181 which divided Palestine into two states in 1947. With the affirmation, he practically recognized Israel's right to exist (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics 2009). The mutual recognition letters Israel and the PLO exchanged in September 1993 affirmed the part of the covenant that denied Israel's right to exist was no longer valid (Ben-Ami 2006: 211). On December 14, 1998, the PLO National Council convened in Gaza and "voted by show of hands to reaffirm" that the charter had been amended to remove anti-Israeli statements. U.S. President Clinton was present at the meeting (Mark 2002: 6). The PLO did not revise the charter itself. Jimmy Carter writes when he pushed Arafat to fulfill his Oslo promise to modify the charter to accept Israel's existence, the PLO chairman was equivocal in his reply (2006: 140). Gazit of the Institute for National Security Studies says some argue that the PLO was not ready to co-exist with an independent state of Israel. "The only interest and purpose of the PLO and Yasser Arafat at that time was a process that will give benefits to the Palestinians and will weaken Israel," he says.

4) The PLO failed to restrain its own members from attacking Israelis although the number of fatal cases of such attacks was far less than for other Palestinian organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad. An Israeli resident was kidnapped by three people on October 29, 1993 from a farm near Ramallah. The Israeli was murdered and his body was burned. Three Fatah members were subsequently convicted of the murder. Another Israeli was found murdered in his apartment near Gedera. A leaflet of the DFLP, a PLO faction, was found near his body, explaining why the murder was carried out (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008 a). Some may argue because the PLO was headquartered in Tunis until May 1994, it was not able to exercise good control over large parts of the occupied territories. PA Local Government Minister Qawasmi says both Israel and the PLO had serious intentions of containing radicals and fundamentalists inside their societies at the beginning. They believed violent actions, whichever side those actions come from, would not help move negotiations forward. Initially, the number of Palestinian security forces was limited by the Oslo agreement. When Hamas activities surged, the PLO requested to increase its security force and Israel accepted.

The intentions of the PLO leaders may be questionable. Meanwhile, what ordinary Palestinians were thinking about the Oslo peace process is yet to be examined, says Talesnick of Israel News Today. Ordinary Palestinians indeed wanted the end of the Israeli occupation, but they probably didn't have time and resources to give much thought to the issue of what an end to the occupation would mean and which organizations they should support to accomplish this



goal. The peace talks became known to the public in 1993. Only after the Oslo peace process started, did it become legal to belong to the PLO. It had been illegal to wave a PLO flag. The leadership had been constantly arrested and killed by Israelis. The occupation made it very difficult for Palestinians to organize groups and when they did, there was a lot of anger and violence. There wasn't much room in the society for sane organizations to be formed. Talesnick says moderate, stable Palestinians were just spending all of their time and efforts to keep their families alive and their children out of jail. "That was a huge, huge effort," she says. "If you could do that, you were a hero." On the other hand, "the dream" they had was very radical - getting everything back to Palestinians and making the land for them again. The idea had never had time to transform into something more moderate.

Conclusion: Palestinian extremists' organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad damaged the Oslo peace process badly by carrying out a series of suicide bombings. The Palestinian terrorist organizations intended to ruin the process because of their ideological beliefs. The extremists carried out scores of suicide attacks, targeting Israeli civilian population in the middle of peace talks. The bombings terrorized the Israeli public and trampled their hope for peace, leading to the emergence of more conservative government in Israel. However, the failure of the Oslo peace process should not be solely attributed to the Palestinian terrorist organizations because Palestinian violence was to a certain extent driven by Israeli actions, especially the occupation policy and settlement activities. In fact more Palestinians were killed by Israelis at the early stages of the Oslo peace

process than Israelis. In some cases, Palestinian terrorist organizations acted in revenge for the previous killings of Palestinians by Israelis. Further, the Israeli occupation which started in 1967 had spread the seeds of violence among Palestinians. The Israeli settlement expanded during the peace process, taking over Palestinian land instead of returning it to them. The settlements also brought religious settlers in close contact with Palestinians, causing disputes. In response to growing violence, the Israeli government restricted movement of Palestinians more tightly than before, further complicating the circumstances Palestinians were in. Meanwhile, The PLO who pledged to renounce violence failed to do so, undermining confidence given to them by Israeli public and negotiators. PLO Chairman Arafat refused to condemn the first Palestinian terrorist attack in Israel that caused Israeli casualty and continued to call for Jihad to recover Jerusalem. The PLO leadership failed to revise its charter that denied the existence of Israel despite its promise to do so under the Oslo agreement and allowed some members of PLO to conduct attacks against Israelis. The Oslo peace process resulted in the failure for the combination of these factors.

To bring the conflict to the end, leaders of Palestinian terrorist organizations may not resume suicide bombings. Suicide bombings terrorize Israelis but will not lead to the conflict resolution. Commanders of suicide missions must realize their people are not military assets. I suggest Israeli leaders, looking toward the goal of ending the occupation, halt settlement expansion and stop nurturing extremist elements in Palestinian society. Palestinian representatives should unequivocally

renounce violence throughout the process and do the very best to contain violence against Israelis. Some degree of violence will always emerge. I believe, however, such positioning of the two parties will enhance the chance for peace regardless of extremists' attempts to ruin the process.

## Suggestion

### Way to make peace

Ordinary Israelis and Palestinians need to foster relationships and keep open dialog as peace talks unfold between their governments. The governments should at least not disrupt such grassroots activities. This may sound cliché but the official peace efforts do not seem to be moving in this direction. The Israeli government has been building the walls, separating Israel from the occupied territories. Some Palestinian officials are reportedly considering unilaterally declaring the statehood. The unilaterally-declared statehood will not likely lead to a peace treaty with Israel, leaving issues of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, and borders unsolved. A clear separation won't be achieved anyway because of the proximity of holy sites. Israelis and Palestinians, unless they each deny the others' access to holy places, will always face each other in the locations like the old cities of Jerusalem and Hebron. Without dialogue and trust building activities, further extension of separation will result in confrontations at these points.

Daana of International Palestinian Youth League says young Palestinians do meet

Israelis through international conferences, symposiums, seminars, workshops and so forth, but the organization does not have what they could call a direct bilateral project with Israelis. There is a reason for that: Israelis cannot come to the occupied territories and most Palestinians in the West Bank need permission to go to Israel. Daana says it is very difficult to convince Palestinian children in Hebron that there are ordinary Israelis who are just like they are, given that the only Israelis they have contacts with are the settlers and the soldiers. It is impossible to simply preach that there are many caring Israelis whom he has befriended. The chance for Palestinian children to meet ordinary Israelis is "unfortunately very little," he says.

Armed struggles run against the spirit of open dialogue. Fortunately, many Palestinians began to realize the value of non-violent struggle as opposed to armed struggles that have been the proclaimed means of liberating Palestine for decades. Assaily of Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace, for instance, preaches non-violence because his staff and he care about children. He says, though, "Those who are adults, they will not be changed." He says suicide bombings are wrong. Palestinians have the right to choose violent struggles and may fight against those who are armed in the occupied territories whether they are soldiers or settlers, but they should not go to Tel Aviv with a bomb to kill civilians.

At the organization, Assaily teaches how to communicate with colleagues, opponents, family members in time of tension, mistrust and frustration in a non-

violent way. He also teaches Hebrew and Jewish traditions to understand commonality between Jews and Muslims. "Two thirds of our religion comes from the Old Testament," he says. Non-violence is his strategy to fight against the occupation. He is not interested in armed struggles. "Occupation is evil," he says. "No way that occupation can be [tolerated], whether Israeli occupation, American occupation, or Arab occupation. If Palestine will occupy somebody else, it's wrong. Iraqi occupation to Kuwait is wrong. Whatever occupation, wherever, whoever is wrong."



Nafez Assaily, general director of Library on Wheels for Nonviolence and Peace, teaches how to communicate in time of tension, mistrust and frustration in a

non-violent way. He also teaches Hebrew and Jewish traditions to understand commonality between Jews and Muslims. The photo was taken on January 11, 2010.

The Israeli military is a behemoth. Arab nations have never won a war with Israel. Suicide bombings and other acts of violence terrorize Israeli civilians, but will not bring the conflict to the end. Many nation-states have achieved independence by violent means. However, such movements, especially by Muslims in the 21st century, have a high likelihood of being linked to terrorism and deprived of legitimacy. Wilder of the Jewish Community of Hebron does the job effectively. He says some segments of Islam are extremely radical and violent and aim to Islamicize the world. One of the ways to prevent it is to "stop acquiescence to terror." If people give in to terrorists, terrorism will continue. If terrorists are successful in achieving their end - the Palestinian state, they are going to use terror throughout the Western world.

The settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires compromises of both parties because there is no single guiding principle to solve all sensitive issues. The very U.N. Resolution 242 adopted after the 1967 war, based on which Arab states demand Israel withdraw to the 1949 armistice lines, offers a vague definition of "territories." As I stated in the introduction, Arab states and many other UN members insisted on the full withdrawal while Israel and the United States argued that partial withdrawal would satisfy the resolution requirements.

The leading Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem suggests in its report that the Israeli government dismantle all the settlements while respecting human rights of settlement residents (Lein 2002: 134). The suggestion is practically undeliverable in light of 300,000 and 200,000 residents living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, respectively. Most, if not all, superpowers that could broker the negotiations have many grounds to be accused because of their past actions.

Gazit of the Institute for National Security Studies remembers authoring an article just before the Camp David summit in 2000. In the commentary he stated that both sides have to understand the problems and positions of the other party. He suggested the U.S. President Bill Clinton, the host of the meeting, tell PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to head the Israeli team and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak to lead the Palestinian team. Gazit says it was a gimmick and didn't expect the president to read his article to begin with, but the commentary conveyed the problem of ongoing negotiations. He says, "My point was [that an] Israeli political leader that is negotiating with the other side must really understand what are the most important issues for the other side and what is the give-and-take that he can negotiate with them about."

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is personal. Many in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories are involved in the conflict, physically and emotionally. "Israel is a small country," Israelis often say. Indeed, the conflict is ongoing in a tiny fraction of the Middle East. Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are comparable to two U.S. metropolitan areas in its size and population. Hebron, the largest city in the

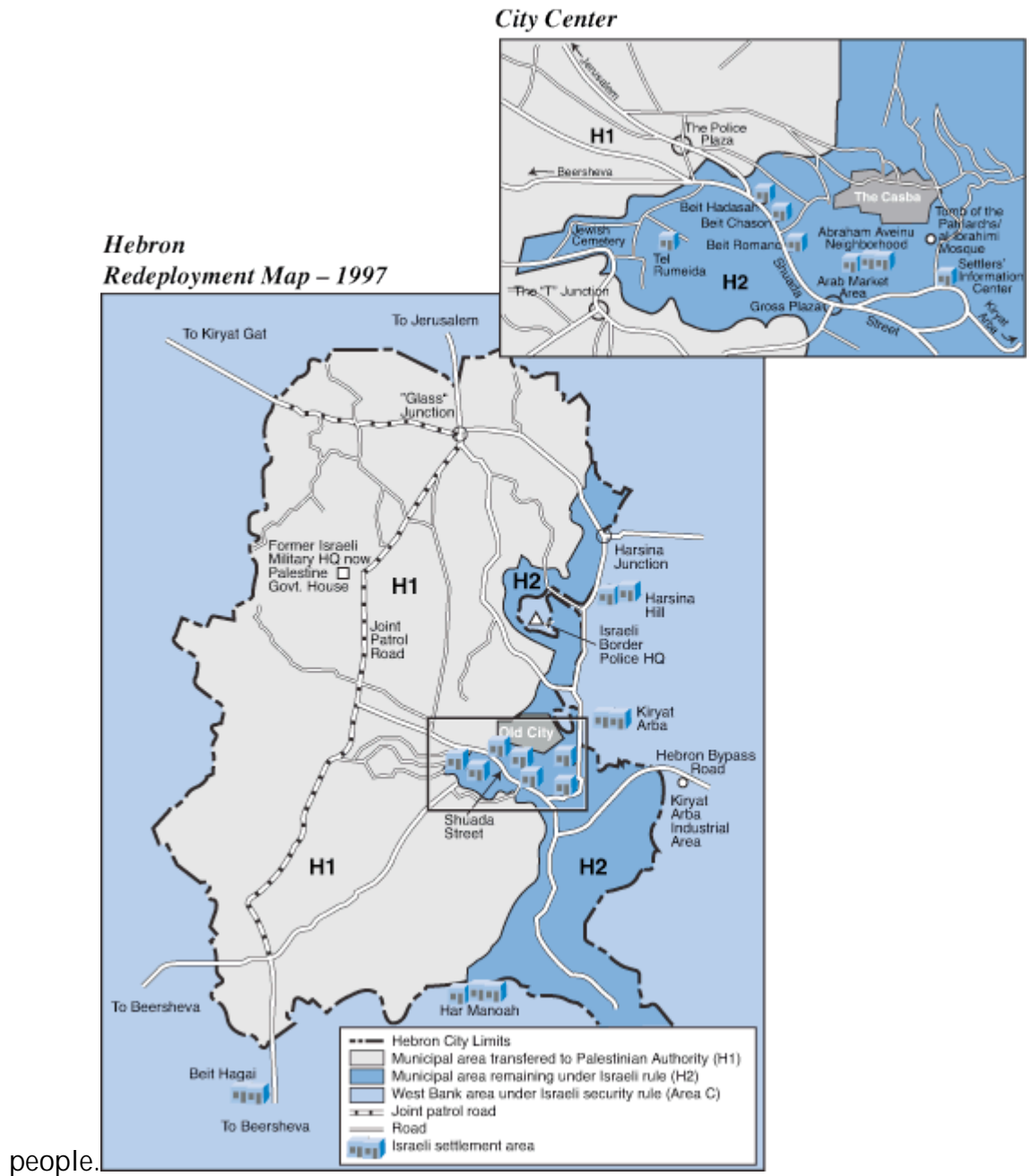


West Bank, is much smaller. In Israel, where military service is mandatory for men and women, many people live or have lived as members of armed forces. The distinction had been blurred among Palestinian police, irregulars and stone throwing civilians. Each individual carries his or her personal memory of the conflict, and virtually everyone knows someone killed in the conflict. In the absence of dialogue, people on the other side will easily become faceless enemies. Talesnick of Israel News Today says she saw troubling psychological conditions among refugee children who don't know how to get out the cycle of violence. There has been so much manipulation inside the camps to keep the people poor on purpose. In some cases, children are being cultivated to be ready to be fighters when they are needed.

#### Separation in place in the case of Hebron

The case of Hebron demonstrates the necessity of open dialogue and limits of the policy based on total separation as a means to achieve viable, lasting peace among Israelis and Palestinians. The separation between Jewish neighborhoods and Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem seems voluntary as of today. However, in the southwestern West Bank city of Hebron, the official separation policy is already enforced, minimizing the daily contacts between Jews and Palestinians (See Map 4 for the separation lines). There aren't many "Jews" or "Palestinians" in town. Many Jewish residents of the settlements in the Old City of Hebron and nearby Kiryat Arba call Palestinians "Arabs," disregarding Palestinian political aspiration for self-rule, let alone statehood. Many Palestinians in Hebron call them "settlers," questioning the legality of their presence in Hebron. In the

following paragraphs, I will briefly explain how such perspectives have been developed in Hebron. The animosity may not necessarily be the result of the separation policy, but it is clear that the total separation policy will not ease the hostile attitudes that are contrary to viable relationships and peace making between the two



Map 4: Hebron redeployment map in May 1997    Courtesy of Foundation for Middle East Peace/ Jan deJong

Hebron is one of the four holy cities in Judaism along with Jerusalem, Tiberias and Zefat. In Islam, Hebron is one of the four holiest cities, which include Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. Abraham (Ibrahim) is believed to have lived in Hebron for an extended period of time and have purchased the Cave of Machpelah to bury his wife Sarah. The cave later became the family tomb. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wife Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah are believed to have been buried in the cave, according to tradition (Encyclopædia Britannica "Hebron." 2010). The Ibrahimi Mosque stands over the cave. The mosque was a 12th century Crusader church. Monuments of the patriarchs are found inside the mosque. (Kraeling 2010).

Hebron was a Muslim Arab city with a small Jewish community in the early 20th century. It became a center of the rioting along with other areas in Palestine under the British Mandate. In 1929, 67 Jews were killed in the Arab riots. After the Arabs began rioting in 1936, the rest of the Jewish community left Hebron (Encyclopædia Britannica "Hebron." 2010). Tensions intensified in part because of continued Jewish immigration to Palestine in response to the rising anti-Semitism in Europe (Palmowski 2008 d). Entrance to the Tombs of Patriarchs was prohibited to non-Muslims by the Mamluk Sultan in 1267. After the 1967 war, the tombs were opened to all worshipers. Both Muslim and Jewish

services were held in the cave, and the upper sanctuary split between Jewish and Muslim sections. Orthodox settlers came to live in Hebron in 1968, creating quarters and enclaves of Jewish communities inside and outside the city. The Israeli government approved the presence of the settlers in Hebron in 1970. The Old City became a center of violent confrontation. Many Arab residents left the Old City (Encyclopædia Britannica "Hebron." 2010).

On October 29, 1982, a group of settlers installed booby-trapped grenades on the stairs at the Hussein School in Hebron. Two people were injured. On July 7, 1983, Palestinians killed Aharon Gross, an 18-year-old student at a Hebron yeshiva, in the market. A group of young residents from Kiryat Arba turned over dozens of vegetable stands at the Arab market (Zertal and Eldar 2007: 85-86). On July 26, 1983 armed settlers came to the Islamic University of Hebron (Hebron University) and shot three students to death. They threw hand grenades. Many other students and staff were injured (Dountas 1983).

As I have discussed, in February 1994, Goldstein killed worshipers at the Ibrahimi Mosque. Hamas carried out suicide bombings in retaliation. Israel and the PA reached an agreement called Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron on January 17, 1997 (United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine 1997). Part of Hebron came under Palestinian rule, while the other part remained under Israeli control. Hebron was the last of seven major Palestinian cities to be transferred to the PA (Everett-Heath 2010). After the

transfer, Hebron Rehabilitation Committee was established to restore the vitality of the Old City (Encyclopædia Britannica "Hebron." 2010).

Walid S Abu Alhalaweh, the director of public relations of Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, says (conversation with author on January 12, 2010) the committee was formed in 1996 by a decree from the PA President Arafat in order to preserve the historical houses and revive the neglected Old City of Hebron and to prevent Israeli settlement expansion. In 1996, there were only 400-500 Palestinians living in the Old City. The committee restored 900 apartments and brought 4,500 people back. The families in the Old City are offered a series of benefits in housing, renovation, water, electricity, health insurance, and taxation, but he says the committee cannot offer them safety. The committee also runs a few programs such as job creation project and legal service for the victims of Israeli violence.

PA Local Government Minister Qawasmi says a big wall exists between the Palestinians and Israelis nowadays. "They don't trust each other," he says. Palestinians see themselves as victims of the Israeli occupation. Israelis feel the Palestinian actions have not helped in forging confidence between peoples. Qawasmi who grew up and has a home in Hebron says Palestinians do not feel any comfort or sympathy with local settlers for two reasons. First, the Hebronites feel that it is not fair that Israelis could come to their old properties when a number of Palestinians cannot return to their original properties which they lost after the war in 1948. Secondly, more importantly, the settlers who came to Hebron were very fanatic. The settlers believe Hebron is a biblical city promised

to them by God and they do not believe Palestinians have the right to live there.

Qawasmi says before the First Intifada, Israelis could travel and shop freely in the West Bank. Once the intifada broke, their activities were restricted by Israeli authorities, and settlers didn't feel safe to travel around either. A big wave of hatred toward the Israeli settlers surged in Palestinian society as if the entire nation rose against the occupation. He says, "They see each of the soldiers and each of the settlers as an enemy." The Palestinian-Israeli relationship began to deteriorate. After the Oslo agreement, the relationship was more or less normalized. In Palestinian society, it was not very encouraged to have ordinary relations with the Israelis because they were thought to be occupiers, but people did not care much. In some cases, Palestinians who were believed to be collaborators with the Israeli authorities were killed by other Palestinians. He says the incidents were rare. A B'Tselem report says 67 Palestinians were killed for "allegedly" being collaborators since transfer of powers to the PA on May 18, 1994 through December 8, 1997 (Kadman 1998: 7). Abu Alhalaweh of Hebron Rehabilitation Committee says Palestinians in Hebron feel the peace process only lasted from the Hebron Protocol of 1997 through 2000. During the two years, though, the area was filled with a peaceful atmosphere. Every shop was open. Both Palestinians and settlers were walking and driving on Shuhada Road. "It was totally... a shared life," he says. Qawasmi says another surge of hatred again erupted as the Second Intifada began.

Wilder says it's a stereotype to say everybody in the Arab neighborhoods is a

terrorist. Jews and Arabs lived together in Hebron for many years and good relationships existed between them in the beginning of 20th century. However, people can be whipped into a frenzy and become terrorists as evidenced in the Arabs slaughter of Jews in 1929 in Hebron. "This is done by the people's neighbors, the ones that they got along with very well, the ones that they were friendly with," he says. "They weren't all terrorists either, but they participated in a slaughter."

Abu Alhalaweh of Hebron Rehabilitation Committee says in the 1929 massacre, there were some Palestinian families who protected the Hebronite Jews. Palestinians in Hebron don't have any problems with religion and that Christians, Jews, and Muslims are welcomed to live there. Palestinians in Hebron would like the Hebronites who used to live in Hebron before 1948 to return there so they can have good social and business relationships together as did they in the past. The committee keeps good relationships with Israeli peace organizations and likes to work with them. Abu Alhalaweh says the settlers who are in the Old City of Hebron are newcomers. They came to Hebron because of the Ibrahimi Mosque (the Cave of Machpelah or the Cave of the Patriarchs).

Wilder of the Jewish Community of Hebron says the relationship between Jews and Arabs started to deteriorate during the First Intifada because Arabs who were seen speaking with Jews were suspected to be collaborators and would be killed. The B'Tselem reports says, citing The Associated Press, from the beginning of the First Intifada to the end of April 1996, 830 Palestinians were killed for the suspicion of collaboration. An Israeli Defense Force spokesperson supplied the

B'Tselem other figures - 1068 Palestinians from the First Intifada through November 1997 (Kadman 1998: 7). Wilder says the Second Intifada came after the Oslo era, and Arabs started shooting Jews. Since then, there had not been very good relationships between Jews and Arabs. "They don't like us," he says, "and the truth is we don't like them." Hebron has always been known to be a more extreme Islamic city. Hamas and Islamic Jihad were more dominant than Fatah there. He doesn't have any idea about today's factional breakdown, but he doubts that it has changed. Wilder says things are relatively calm. However, he notes that he must always be careful about saying such things because all of a sudden something happens. Several photos of his friends were hanged on the walls. They were all killed in the conflict. "It's part of the war that we have here," Wilder says.





The buildings and the sky at the Jewish neighborhood of Hebron. The photo was taken on January 7, 2010.

### Why we need peace

Both Israelis and Palestinians will benefit from peacefully ending the occupation and solving issues between the parties. For Israelis, the end of the occupation means reduction of military deployments into the occupied Palestinian territories. Even after peace treaties with hostile nations in the Middle East, Israel as a sovereign state will need to maintain its military might. However, the end of occupation and a peace agreement with the PA will reduce the number of Israeli soldiers who are killed or injured due to the conflict and help relieve

anxiety among parents of the youngsters who are obliged to serve for the military. A former Israeli soldier who had served in East Jerusalem for four years told me that his mother told him she did not sleep for the duration of his service. In Israel, both Jewish and Druze men and women are obligated to military service at age of 18. Christians, Muslims and Circassians may voluntarily serve for the military. The term is three years for men, one year and nine months for women, and 4 years if they become officers. Reserve obligation continues until age of 41-51 for men and 24 for women (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency 2008). The Israeli-Palestinian conflict stands between Israel and peace treaties with other Middle Eastern nations, including Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. The end of conflict opens up the doors to peace treaties with those nations, easing the “constant threats” Israelis often talk about.

After visiting many holy places and significant locations in the Oslo peace process, I recall working female Israeli soldiers more vividly than anything. Of course, not all of them have to embark on dangerous missions. Many carry weapons at bus and train stations, but that is because they are simply required to do so. I saw some of them hanging out with young men in uniform in the evening. I saw many texting at bus stations and taking group photos with tourists by the Western Wall. But I also saw them standing as guards at the entrances to the Ibrahimi Mosque (or the Cave of Machpelah.) They were checking passports of passengers at a junction on the way to Jerusalem from Hebron. They were standing between chanting Jewish students and Palestinians and international protesters in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, separating the

two sides. I may be applying an outdated masculine way of thinking - women are to be protected. Nonetheless, after returning to the United States, the first thing I thought, upon hearing about a clash between Jewish students and protesters, was the safety of the soldiers.



Israeli soldiers and others making a group photo by the Western Wall. The photo was taken on January 3, 2010.

As for Palestinians, the end of occupation and a statehood based on a peace agreement with Israel will greatly reduce their security risks. As we have seen from December 2008-January 2009, Palestinians under the occupation are exposed to tremendous security risks. The Israeli government killed 1,400 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip during a three-week-long campaign. A majority of them were non-combatants. The Israeli government will undertake such a mission again if it deems it necessary. The peace treaty and establishment of sound diplomatic relationships will reduce the probability of such a campaign happening again.

The end of occupation and a self-rule based on a peace agreement will help relieve Palestinians from trauma caused by the occupation. The words of Daana of International Palestinian Youth League demonstrate how deeply the Israeli occupation has troubled the Palestinians. The words were part of his response to my question if his organization was making any effort to meet people from Israeli organizations. "We are being discriminated against. This people came out of the blue and changed the system and the world," Daana says. "...It's our country, it's our land and it's our place. It's not about our hate or hatred...I can meet with anybody...and we can talk as long as there are bases to talk about because we cannot say that there is absolute rightness in the Israeli perspective or there is an absolute rightness in the Palestinian position or vice versa....[but] there should be a logic. This country by all means is occupied. It is occupied. Everybody on earth knows that this place is occupied, period. This place is occupied. This occupation is illegal, period. What Israel does in the occupied territories or ... what they do

for Palestinians is illegal by UN Security Council resolutions, by the common law, [and] by any common sense as well. You know that ... this country (Israel) is acting against the international law." Daana says the occupation causes psychological trauma among Palestinian youth because they grow up seeing that they have been discriminated and that they have to ask Israeli authorities for permissions to do virtually everything. "People living in the H2 area (under Israeli control) in the Old City, they need a permission to (cross a checkpoint to) enter their home and to live in their home. What kind of life this could be?"

Statehood will allow the Palestinian government to bring refugees from surrounding nations to the territories, put an end to their temporary status and create a state any Palestinian can call home. Palestinians today are divided into four groups, as Daana explained to me. First, those who left or were driven out of the country in 1948. Second, those who stayed in 1948, become Israeli citizens, and hold Israeli passports. Third, when Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem in 1967, the Jewish state annexed East Jerusalem. Those who live in East Jerusalem under the Israeli occupation have blue identification cards. They can obtain an Israeli laissez-passer that says their nationality is Jordanian and that they are residents of Jerusalem. Fourth, those who live in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and hold green identification cards, like Daana. Each group of Palestinians has special circumstances. Danna says the refugees generally lack necessary documentation in the hosting countries and have been living in underprivileged conditions. In Lebanon, for instance, there are many jobs Palestinian refugees are barred from. If they choose to leave the

hosting countries, they may not be able to return since some governments only issue departure permits. Hareuveni of B'Tselem says Palestinians in East Jerusalem are given a status of residence. They need to prove their "center of life" is in East Jerusalem. When a Palestinian goes to study abroad for many years or marries someone and moves into the West Bank, they may lose residency in Jerusalem. The Israeli government started to revoke the residency of Palestinians in East Jerusalem in the late 1990s, as part of the on-going policy to limit the number of Palestinians in East Jerusalem. Daana says the green card holders need to obtain permissions to go to Jerusalem and other parts of Israel. Permits specifically state how long the documents are valid and from what time to what time they may enter Israel. Israeli authorities deny permits to those about whom they have security concerns.

Normalized relationships will allow Palestinians to visit religious sites located on the Israeli side, notably those in Jerusalem. As a carrier of a foreign passport, I was able to travel back and forth between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories without hassle. I crossed the checkpoint south of Jerusalem twice on my way from Hebron. Almost all other passengers of the Palestinian bus were carriers of Israeli passports. No blue or green card holders. I was recalling conversations I had with Palestinian youth in Hebron. One of them, a West Bank resident and a green card holder, said he remembers going to Al-Aqsa Mosque when he was a child. He would like to go to Jerusalem again. To do that, he would need to obtain a permit. As I was approaching the holy city, I felt pain. I could not reconcile my situation with the situation in which hundreds of thousands of



Palestinians are placed. I felt perplexed when I saw a road sign in Jerusalem with three languages: Hebrew; English; and Arabic projecting an oriental aura. I found it hypocritical for Israeli authorities to put up signs in Arabic and at the same time to deny access to the city for those who would be helped by the signs. When I saw a stream of international tourists through a bus window in front of Jaffa Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem, I felt devastated and thought the occupation was unjust.



Tarpat Junction separates the Jewish neighborhood and the Palestinian neighborhood in Hebron. The photo was taken on January 7, 2010.

In closing

Open dialogue will create people in the middle who do not support the colonization of the West Bank territories in recognition of Palestinian existence and who do not support the recovery of historical Palestine in recognition of Israeli existence. Talesnick of Israel News Today says the most interesting thing ever said during the Oslo process was by Uri Savir, one of the chief negotiators of the process. Through one-to-one contact with Palestinians, Savir became friends with Palestinian negotiators. What brings about change is friendship. He understood that the negotiators on the other side were good, intelligent people who he could work with. A personal friendship with a Palestinian changed Talesnick as well whose family has a strong Zionist background. She covered the Oslo process together with a Palestinian journalist, and they became good friends. She says, "All of my blocks to the Palestinian side dropped, and her blocks to Israel dropped, so I understood that's what makes a change." Today she runs a peace project, All Nations Cafe, which promotes one-to-one meetings of Israelis and Palestinians. She thinks the laws prohibiting Israelis from being in Palestinians areas and Palestinians from being in Israel are the obstacles to peace. She says, "As a result of people feeling more comfortable with each other, politics will follow." She says the radical Palestinian dream of liberating Palestine is transforming into something more moderate today. Feller of the Peacekeepers in Democracy believes that Israelis will have to cooperate with Palestinians. "We start some cooperation, something together, economics, cultural [or otherwise]," she says. "They are not bad, and we are not bad, and we are people, so people want the same things. We have to go that way." In my perspective, those who



have more resources at their disposal and room in their heart should reach out to the others. Those are Israelis in Tel Aviv at the national level and Palestinians in the case of Hebron, where Jewish neighborhoods, particularly the ones in the Old City, appear underprivileged.



Members of the Peacekeepers in Democracy meet every Friday to sing songs and discuss the prospect of peace at the place where Rabin was assassinated. The photo was taken on December 25, 2009.

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