

# Israel's 60-Year Quest for Peace

Even before Israel was established, the leaders of the Jewish community in then-British Mandate Palestine sought peace with their Arab neighbors. The State of Israel has remained committed to that goal throughout its history, repeatedly demonstrating its desire to live side-by-side with neighboring states and peoples. Israel's willingness to trade land for peace has led to peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. Likewise, Israel proved its willingness to make bold, painful concessions in order to secure agreements that it hoped would end the conflict with the Palestinians. The current Israeli government continues on this path.

## ► 1918 - 1919 – Early Zionists Reach Out to Arabs

Chaim Weizmann, who was to become the first president of Israel, led a mission to Cairo in 1918 to meet with leading Syrian Arab nationalists. He expressed the Jewish people's desire to live in harmony with the Arabs. The following year, he entered into an agreement with the Arab nationalist leader Emir Faisal, in which the two agreed to support each other's nationalist aspirations.

## ► 1937 – Jews Accept Peel Commission Report

In 1937, Israel's future Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion accepted the recommendations of the official British Peel Commission report as a basis for negotiations. The Commission allocated a very small percentage of Palestine to a Jewish state, while most of the country would have gone to an Arab state and Jerusalem would have remained under the British Mandate. The Arab governments vehemently rejected the plan.



**David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, reads the Jewish state's declaration of independence in 1948.**

## ► 1947 – Jews Accept U.N. Partition Plan

The Jewish community of Palestine, and Zionists worldwide, accepted the partition plan approved by the United Nations that would create a Jewish state alongside an Arab state. They accepted that the plan although the Jewish

state it envisioned was truncated and non-contiguous, without Jerusalem. The Arab states rejected the U.N. resolution, invading Israel in 1948 with the explicit purpose of destroying the Jewish state. Israel won the war.

▶ **1948 – A State is Born**

Declaring independence, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, said Israel would "extend the hand of peace to all its neighbors" as well as "full and equal citizenship and due representation" for the non-Jewish population.

▶ **1967 – Israel's Offer to Withdraw is Rejected**

Days after successfully defending itself in the Six-Day War, Israel offered to return captured territories in return for peace treaties. Egypt and Syria immediately rejected the offer, as did the rest of the Arab League countries.



**In 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (left) and Jordan's King Hussein (right), with the help of President Bill Clinton, signed a peace agreement.**

▶ **1978 – Israel Signs Camp David Accords with Egypt**

Israel agreed to return the entire Sinai Peninsula, an area more than twice the size of Israel, to Egypt in return for a peace agreement and normalization of relations. In 1979, Egypt and Israel signed a Treaty of Peace – the first such treaty between Israel and an Arab country.

▶ **1993 – Israel Inks Oslo Agreement**

Israel granted the Palestinians unprecedented authority over Gaza and parts of the West Bank and commenced negotiations designed to end the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in exchange for a Palestinian agreement to recognize Israel and end terrorism.

▶ **1994 – Israel Establishes Peace with Jordan**

Jordan's King Hussein and Israel's Yitzhak Rabin signed a treaty of peace. Jordan became the second Arab state to formally come to terms with Israel.

▶ **2000 – Israel Makes Historic Offer for Peace**

Following talks at Camp David, Yasir Arafat rejected Israel's far-reaching peace offer and the Palestinians launched sustained terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, by the end of 2000, Israel agreed to President Clinton's

proposals for a final peace between Israel and the Palestinians: Israel would cede all of Gaza, 96% of the West Bank and additional territory from within pre-1967 Israel, recognize an independent Palestinian state, cede parts of eastern Jerusalem to serve as the Palestinian capital, and recognize the right of Palestinian refugees to return to a new Palestinian state. Arafat rejected these proposals as well.

Israel also offered Syria a peace deal in which Israel would withdraw from the Golan Heights, but the deal was rejected.

▶ **2000 – Israel Unilaterally Withdraws from Lebanon**

With backing from the United States, Israel unilaterally withdrew from southern Lebanon after 18 years of maintaining a security zone to prevent attacks on its northern communities. Israel's step toward peace was met with a massive military buildup by the terrorist group Hizballah, which regularly fired rockets into Israel and launched a war against the Jewish state in the summer of 2006 by ambushing and killing three IDF soldiers in Israeli territory and abducting from Israel and subsequently killing two more soldiers.

▶ **2005 – Israel Unilaterally Withdraws from Gaza**

With U.S. support, Israel took a historic step and unilaterally withdrew from Gaza, and parts of the West Bank, providing the Palestinians with an unprecedented chance to prove their intention to fight terrorism and govern effectively. Unfortunately, the Israeli step has been met by nearly 7,000 rockets and mortars fired from Hamas-controlled Gaza.

▶ **2007 – Israel Extends Hand in Peace at Annapolis Conference**

At the U.S.-sponsored Annapolis conference, Israel reiterated its commitment to peaceful negotiations with the Palestinians and Arab states. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said he believes “that there is no path other than the path of peace. I believe that there is no just solution other than the solution of two national states for two peoples.”

▶ **2008 – Israel Continues to Seek Peace Despite Daily Attacks**

Despite daily Hamas rocket fire and other terrorist attacks against its civilians during the year, Israel held intensive negotiations with the Palestinian Authority to reach an agreement covering all remaining issues.

▶ **2009-2010 – Israel Endorses Demilitarized Palestinian State; Implements Settlement Moratorium**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formally endorsed the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state and announced a 10-month moratorium on the construction of new homes in the West Bank.