

Isratin:

The One-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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War in the 20th Century

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An anxious crowd of two hundred and fifty people gathered and waited outside the Tel Aviv Museum on May 14, 1948. Within the next thirty-two minutes, the State of Israel was formally established. After nearly two millennia in exile, the Jewish homeland was reborn. The next day, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq attacked Israel, prompting the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Within the next sixty years, several other wars would be fought over the Israeli-Palestinian question. Today, the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, or Arab-Israeli Conflict, remains a critical obstacle to world peace and stability in the Middle East. Though peace talks have been in progress for decades, numerous issues continue to obstruct success in the negotiations. If a viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is not created and implemented, the conflict will continue to plague the region with terrorism and war. Despite many proposed solutions, obstacles such as Jerusalem, the Israeli settlements, and Palestinian terrorism impede significant progress in the peace talks. With the numerous issues regarding the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, the best solution is a gradual reintegration of Palestinians into the Holy Land, a relaxation of tensions between the various factions, and the beginning of serious negotiations towards an eventual one-state solution.

History

In order to fully comprehend the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an understanding of the region's bloody history must first be attained. The origin of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict goes as far back as the Biblical era. The Israeli claim to Palestine goes to the story of Abraham, where God promised Canaan to Abraham and all his descendants. Canaan is the historical name of the region known today as the Levant, roughly encompassing modern-day Israel, Lebanon, and parts

of Syria. A famine drove the Jews to Egypt, where they are enslaved until Moses led them out of Egypt. According of the Book of Exodus, the Jews, led by Joshua, conquered the Palestinian city-states and established the Kingdom of Israel. In doing so, the numerous tribal groups in the region, ancestors to the Palestinians, are subjugated. Biblical tradition places the conquest of Jerusalem by King David to roughly 1000 BCE.¹ After the death of King Solomon, the Israelite kingdom collapsed into civil war and is split into the Kingdom of Israel in the north and the Kingdom of Judah in the south.

In 722 BCE, the unstable northern Kingdom of Israel is destroyed by the Assyrian Empire. By 586 BCE, the southern Kingdom of Judah is also conquered by the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar.² It is during the Babylonian conquest that the Temple of Solomon is destroyed. A large number of the Jewish middle and upper class are sent to Babylon, during a period known as the Babylonian Captivity. The destruction of the Jewish kingdoms marks the beginning of the long Jewish Diaspora, in which the Jewish people begin to migrate out of the Levant. However, the Babylonian Empire is soon overrun by the Persians, and by 539 BCE, Cyrus the Great completed his conquest of the Babylonians.³ The former Jewish kingdoms are made into Persian satrapies, and the Jews are allowed to return to Israel. The end of the Babylonian Captivity is known as the Return to Zion, or Aliyah. In 516 BCE, the Second Temple of Jerusalem is built over the ruins of the Temple of Solomon (the First Temple).⁴

The region is once more conquered when Alexander the Great invaded the Persian Empire in 332 BCE.⁵ After Alexander's death, the region is briefly ruled by his heirs until it is conquered by Ptolemy I Soter, one of Alexander's generals.⁶ Antiochus III the Great of the Seleucid dynasty seized the region from the Ptolemaic dynasty in 200 BCE, and Antiochus IV

Epiphanes outlawed the Jewish rites and desecrated the Temple in 167 BCE.⁷ For the next seven years, the Jewish priest Mattathias led the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucids, and Judas Maccabeus finally purified the defiled Temple in 164 BCE. Under Simon Maccabeus, brother to Judas Maccabeus, the Hasmonean Kingdom of Israel is founded.⁸

In 63 BCE, Pompey the Great conquered the region for the Romans, though the Parthians retook the Levant and placed Antigonus II Mattathias as King of Judea in 40 BCE. However, in 37 BCE, Herod the Great, supported by the Romans, ended the Hasmonean dynasty and established his Herodian dynasty, creating a Roman client-kingdom in Judea.⁹ In 10 BCE, the renovations for the Second Temple are completed, and the new temple, known as the Temple of Herod, is dedicated by Herod. The birth of Jesus took place circa 5 BCE. By 6 CE, the region is made into a Roman province known as Judaea.¹⁰

In 66 CE, a full-scale Jewish rebellion erupted, lasting until 74 CE. Known as the First Jewish-Roman War, the revolt resulted in the destruction of the Second Temple and the sacking of Jerusalem by the Roman Emperor Titus Flavius in 70 CE.¹¹ The revolt ended when the Jewish garrison at Masada committed a mass suicide in 73 CE. In 132 CE, the Emperor Hadrian changed the name of the province from Judaea to Syria Palaestina. The same year, the third of the three major Jewish rebellions, known as the Bar Kokhba revolt, threw the region into chaos.¹² Following the revolt, Jewish repression was eased, and when the Roman Empire split, the region was controlled by the Eastern Roman Empire, known as the Byzantine Empire. Under Byzantine rule, Jerusalem flourished as a center for Christianity, though significant Jewish communities still existed. However, when Islam was founded by Muhammad in 622, possession of the Levant changed once more.

By the time of Muhammad's death, the Muslim armies dominated the entire Arabian Peninsula. By 638, the Arab armies, led by the Caliph Umar, reached and conquered Jerusalem.¹³ The Umayyad Caliphate was founded in 661, and during this period, waves of Bedouins began to settle in the region. In the following centuries, Islam became the dominant religion in Palestine. In 691, Caliph Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount, and in 705 CE, the Al-Aqsa Mosque was also erected on the Temple Mount.¹⁴ In 750, the Umayyad Caliphate was overthrown by the Abbasids, and possession of the region changed to the Abbasid Caliphate. The region was later dominated by the Egyptian Tulunids in 878 and the Fatimids in 970. The conquest of the region by the Seljuk Turks in 1071 initiated the two centuries of war known as the Crusades.¹⁵

The First Crusade begins in 1095, initiated by Pope Urban II and led by countless European nobles. The original goal of the Crusades was to place the region where Jesus lived and died in Christian control. Supported by the Byzantine Empire, the Crusaders finally seized Jerusalem in 1099.¹⁶ The same year, the County of Edessa, the Principality of Antioch, the County of Tripoli, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem are created. Within this Crusader states, the Arab and Jewish populations were heavily persecuted, often massacred or sold into slavery. Despite the success of the First Crusade, possession of Jerusalem would change several more times within the following centuries.

In 1187, the Egyptian Ayyubids, led by Saladin, decisively defeated the Crusaders at Hattin, and retook Jerusalem in the same year.¹⁷ This spurred the famous Third Crusade, led by Richard I the Lionheart of England, Philip II Augustus of France, and Frederick I Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire. Ultimately, the crusade was unsuccessful and Jerusalem remained in

Arab hands until 1229, where negotiations between Emperor Frederick II and Sultan Al-Kamil led to the return of Jerusalem to the crusaders. The Arabs took control once the treaty expired, though Thibaut of Champagne would once more diplomatically acquire Jerusalem, though the Ayyubids retook Jerusalem in 1244. By this time, the Kingdom of Jerusalem was greatly reduced, with a capital at Acre.¹⁸ It would merely serve as a puppet in the wars between the Egyptians and the Mongols.

As the Mongols expanded towards the west, Palestine became a primary front for the battles with Egypt, now controlled by the Mamluks. At the Battle of Ain Jalut in 1260, the Mamluks, led by Sultan Qutuz, successfully defeated the Mongols, ending their path of conquest. Sultan Baibars, Qutuz's successor and assassin, captured the Crusader stronghold at Acre in 1291, removing the European presence in Palestine and ending the Crusades. The Holy Land remained in Mamluk hands until it was conquered by Sultan Selim I of the Ottoman Empire in 1517.¹⁹ It remained part of the Ottoman Empire until World War I.

During the 19th Century, the concept of a Jewish homeland in Palestine rose in popularity, beginning the movement known as Zionism. The popularity of the Zionist movement led to a large amount of Jewish immigrants from Europe. Among the many Zionist leaders was Theodor Herzl, who helped create the First Zionist Congress at Basel and the World Zionist Organization in 1897. His two books, *Der Judenstaat* and *Altneuland* envisioned a Jewish homeland unlike the State of Israel today.²⁰

During World War I, the Ottoman Empire sided with the Central Powers and Germany. Palestine was invaded by the British Empire and its allies in the Sinai and Palestine campaign of the Middle Eastern theatre. A string of British victories in the region led to a British occupation

of the region. On November 2, 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour wrote what would be known as the Balfour Declaration:

“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country”²¹

The Balfour Declaration greatly increased the amount of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, and further advocated the Zionist movement. It remains a vital part in the Israeli claim to Palestine. On December 9, 1917, the Ottoman garrison in Jerusalem officially surrendered to the British.²² Two days later, Field Marshal Allenby entered the city on foot out of reverence for the city and to a cheering crowd. After the end of World War I, in 1922, the League of Nations offered the British Empire a Mandate for Palestine, which Britain accepted. This created the British Mandate of Palestine, further increasing Jewish immigration and supporting the Zionist cause.

After World War II, the British decided to leave Palestine. In an attempt to solve Zionist question, the United Nations passed the 1947 UN Partition Plan for Palestine on November 29, 1947.²³ The resolution was passed, but was never implemented because fighting between the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine erupted soon after. The surrounding Arab states promised to invade Israel as soon as it declared independence. As the British withdrew, fighting increased, though the Arab states could not invade until the British completely withdrew. On

May 14, 1948, the last of the British forces left Haifa, and Israel formally declared independence.²⁴

Immediately after Israel declared independence, the Arab states of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq attacked. Though they were initially successful, the Israelis eventually won. The war is known internationally as the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, while it is known by Israel as the War of Independence.²⁵ Despite the Israeli victory, the Arab states refused to recognize Israel, and they would not for another thirty years. The remainder of the territory for the proposed Arab state, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were occupied by Jordan and Egypt respectively.

The removal of U.N. peacekeeping troops prompted the 1967 Six Days' War between Israel and an alliance of Egypt and Syria. By the end of the war, Israel occupied the West Bank, Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula.²⁶ On October 6, 1973, also the day of Yom Kippur, one of Judaism's holiest holidays, combined forces of Egypt, Syria, and expeditionary forces of Iraq and Jordan attacked and invaded Israel. Though the Israeli Defense Forces were initially unprepared, they managed to repel the invaders at great cost. In November 1974, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), founded in 1964, was granted observer status in the United Nations.²⁷

As a result of the Yom Kippur War, Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin conducted secret negotiations at Camp David in Maryland. The results of these negotiations were the Camp David Accords, but more importantly, the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty.²⁸ The treaty included mutual recognition for both countries, making Egypt the first Arab nation to officially recognize Israel. It also included the cessation of the state

of war that existed since 1948 and the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces and civilians from the Israeli-occupied Sinai Peninsula.

Despite the hope for an Arab-Israeli peace in the Middle East, a Palestinian assassination attempt on the Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom resulted in the 1982 Lebanon War, also known as the First Lebanon War.²⁹ In addition, the continuation of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and occupation of the Palestinian Territories led to the First Intifada in 1987. Though the uprising resulted in over a thousand Palestinian casualties, it drew international attention to Israeli oppression of the Palestinians. In the Madrid Conference of 1991 that followed the First Intifada, the United States and Israel ceased to view the Palestine Liberation Organization as a terrorist group.³⁰

The First Intifada prompted Israeli and Palestinian leadership to meet at Oslo, Norway in 1993. The resulting agreement, known as the Oslo Accords, or more formally as the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, was signed on September 13, 1993, in the presence of PLO representative Mahmoud Abbas, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, and US Secretary of State Warren Christopher.³¹ The agreement allowed the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), responsible for the administration of territory under its control. In addition, Israel recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. In return, the PLO recognized the existence of Israel and its right to live in peace, and renounced the use of terrorism and violence to achieve its aims.³² Various other terms regarding economic cooperation and regional development were agreed upon and accepted.

The following year, in 1994, Israel and Jordan signed the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty, ending the state of war between Israel and Jordan. In doing so, Jordan became the second Arab country to officially recognize Israel. In July 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat were invited by then-President Bill Clinton to hold the Middle East Peace Summit at Camp David, also known as Camp David II. Ultimately, the summit was unsuccessful in creating a solution to the conflict. In late September 2000, Palestinians launched the Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada.³³ Meanwhile, in 2006, Hezbollah, a fundamentalist terrorist group, attacked Israel from Lebanon, beginning the 2006 Lebanon War, also known as the Second Lebanon War. The conflict was indecisive, with both factions claiming victory, though Israel was unable to end the Hezbollah missile attacks. As a result, Israel constructed a barrier around the entirety of the West Bank and began the withdrawal of all Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip, which was completed in 2005.³⁴ In the Palestinian legislative elections of 2006, Fatah lost to the fundamentalist radical group Hamas.

With the Israeli withdrawal and the Hamas political victory, conflict ensued between Hamas and its rival, Fatah, within the Gaza Strip. Hamas triumphed in the Battle of Gaza in 2007, and managed to take control of the Gaza Strip.³⁶ The radical terrorist organization then proceeded to fire missiles into southern Israel. Egypt and Israel responded with a blockade of the Gaza Strip that continues to this day. In addition, Israel invaded the Gaza Strip in the three-week Gaza War, which resulted in a ceasefire in January 2009 and a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The Direct Negotiations began in September 2010 between US President Barack Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud

Abbas. There has been no significant progress due to Netanyahu's refusal to extend the settlement freeze that began in late 2009.³⁷

Obstacles to Peace Process

There are numerous obstacles to a successful peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as the status of Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem is holy to three major religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. In the Old City of Jerusalem are the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, the remains for the Jewish Temples and the holiest sites in Judaism. Located atop the Temple Mount is the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the place where the Prophet Muhammad supposedly ascends to heaven, making it the third holiest site in Islam. The Palestinian people, of whom the large majority is Muslim, often come in conflict with the Jews over possession of Jerusalem. The majority of the international community does not recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital despite Israel's Jerusalem Law proclamation passed in 1980, which confirmed a united Jerusalem as Israel's capital.³⁸ The Palestinian National Authority continues to proclaim East Jerusalem as its capital, causing questions as to the status of Jerusalem during the peace process.

Another major obstacle to the peace process is the right of return for Palestinian refugees that were displaced after the 1967 and 1973 wars. A large amount of these refugees live in refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, though even larger numbers have been displaced to neighboring countries such as Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.³⁹ Near the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the United Nations General Assembly passed UN General Assembly Resolution 194, of which Article 11 states:

Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible; Instructs the Conciliation Commission to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation, and to maintain close relations with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and, through him, with the appropriate organs and agencies of the United Nations;⁴⁰

Despite this, Israel has continued to deny Palestinian refugees the right of return. This denial continues to cause much anger among many Palestinians who claim they have an inherent right of return to their homeland, simply because they or their ancestors have resided there before the establishment of Israel. Israel denies the right of return because the sudden influx of several million refugees would eventually cause Israel's Jewish population to become a minority and therefore, undermine Israel's status as a "Jewish homeland."⁴¹

One of the largest obstacles to a successful peace for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the Israeli settlement program in the Palestinian territories, and in particular, the West Bank. Nearly half a million Jews live in over a hundred settlements built since the beginning of Israel's occupation in 1967.⁴² As the number of Israeli settlements increase, the amount of the land to be allotted to a Palestinian state decreases, thus making the issue of settlements a source of tension in negotiations. Palestinian authorities claim that the Israeli settlements are an effort to annex the

West Bank and minimize any possibility of a Palestinian state in the region. To make matters worse, Israeli communities are located in the most fertile regions of the West Bank. If Israel were to annex these regions, a new Palestinian state would not be economically sustainable without much international aid. The Palestinian National Authority has demanded that Israel halt settlement expansion in order to successfully hold peace talks. The Israeli government, however, continues to expand its settlements despite international condemnation for its actions.⁴³ The majority of the international community, including the United States, does not recognize the legitimacy of the settlements.

Perhaps the largest obstacle to the peace process is Palestinian political violence and fundamentalist terrorism against Israel. Arab and Palestinian organizations that have conducted acts of violence against Israel include the Palestine Liberation Organization, Hamas, Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Fatah, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Abu Nidal Organization. Events such as the 2000 Ramallah Lynching, the Passover Massacre, Hamas' missile attacks on Israel, and various other bombings, murders, kidnappings, hijackings, stabbings, shootings, and stone-throwing continue to agitate Israeli-Palestinian relations and negotiations.⁴⁴ Palestinian violence has incited Israeli military retaliation, such as the Gaza War and Operation Defensive Shield, causing international criticism over Israeli brutality. However, Palestinian violence has led to increased Israeli security measures, such as the Israeli West Bank barrier and the system of checkpoints that greatly restrict travel into and out of the West Bank. This physical isolation is another source of Palestinian anger, though the Israelis are unwilling to remove these security measures for fear of fundamentalist terrorism. Until Palestinian violence has stopped and Israel feels secure, the peace process cannot progress.

Casualties

As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues, the amount of casualties continues to increase. Every year, Palestinians continue to commit acts of violence against Israelis, which incites Israeli retribution against the Palestinians. The cycle continues to spiral until there is an end to the conflict. From September 2000 to November 2010, over six thousand Palestinians were killed by the Israeli Defense Forces. Over two hundred Israeli civilians were killed by the Palestinians, while there were over 250 Israeli soldiers killed by the Palestinians. To make matters worse, over six hundred Palestinians were killed by other Palestinians, revealing a lack of national unity within the Palestinian territories.⁴⁵ Thousands more Palestinians and Israelis were killed during the 20th Century in events such as the 1967 Six Day War, or the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The continued Israeli occupation continues to take the lives of many Palestinians in the region. Palestinian violence such as the Second Intifada remains a strong memory for the Israelis, who are compelled to seek retribution for deaths of friends and family. If the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not peacefully resolved, it will continue to take the lives of men and women in the region.

Continued Threat

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to be a major obstacle to world peace today. Despite numerous attempts at reconciliation, the peace process has not yet created a viable solution that both factions find agreeable. The Israeli ten-month settlement freeze has not been continued by the Netanyahu government, and Israel's settlement program continues to strain the

peace process. In addition, Palestinian violence continues to be a threat to Israeli national security, and the PLO remains the only Palestinian organization that has renounced violence. Other extremist and fundamentalist groups such as Hamas proclaim the destruction of Israel as their ultimate goal, accepting no other compromise. Until solutions are found for the various obstacles to negotiations, there will be no success in the peace process for the conflict.

The most difficult aspect of the peace process is the negotiations. The Israeli government and the Palestinian National Authority are rarely willing to meet for peace talks unless the United States pressures them into it. The unwillingness of either side to cooperate with the peace talks generally result in a deadlock for the negotiations. For example, the Palestinian National Authority is not willing to meet with the Israeli representatives until Israel is willing to freeze their settlement expansions. However, the Israelis are not willing to do so, jeopardizing the peace talks. In addition, past agreements and treaties have been broken despite a stated commitment by both parties. These various factors lead to much distrust between the Israelis and the Palestinians, making honest negotiations even more difficult to achieve. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict will continue to threaten homes and lives until the leadership of both sides is willing to trust each other and negotiate. However, this trust can only be earned when both sides can demonstrate their commitment and dedication to peace in the region.

Proposed Solutions

The most popular and internationally accepted of the proposed solutions to the conflict is the two-state solution. It is the solution currently discussed by all parties involved by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The two-state solution proposes the creation of a Palestinian state using the

occupied territories of the 1967 war.⁴⁶ This state would coexist peacefully with Israel, and Palestinians living in the occupied territories as well as refugees would be given citizenship for this proposed state. The two-state solution has been proposed since the 1947 UN Partition Plan, though this was accepted by the Israelis and rejected by the Palestinians. In recent times, the Palestinian National Authority and the Arab League have been willing to accept a two-state solution, though there is still discontent as to the division of Jerusalem, and in particular, the Temple Mount.⁴⁷

One of the proposed alternatives of the two-state solution is the Arab Peace Initiative. Proposed by then-Crown Prince King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia at the Beirut Summit of the Arab League in 2002, the peace initiative attempts to create a lasting peace between the Arab world and Israel. This excerpt from the Beirut Declaration lists the terms of the initiative, beginning with the demands from Israel:

(a) Complete withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan Heights, to the 4 June 1967 line and the territories still occupied in southern Lebanon. (b) Attain a just solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees to be agreed upon in accordance with the UN General Assembly Resolution No 194. (c) Accept the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since 4 June 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital. In return the Arab states will do the following: (a) Consider the Arab-Israeli conflict over, sign a peace agreement with Israel, and achieve peace for all states in the region, (b) Establish normal relations with Israel within the framework of this comprehensive peace.⁴⁸

Despite the declaration, the Israeli government has yet to issue an official response to the offer. Israeli politicians who have responded welcome the gesture, but there have been varying opinions ranging from support to criticism. The Palestinian National Authority has strongly supported the initiative. George Mitchell, the US Special Envoy to the Middle East, has stated in March 2009 that President Obama intends to include the Arab Peace Initiative into US foreign policy.⁴⁹

Another proposed solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the three-state solution. The proposal attempts to create peace by returning to the situation that existed from the 1949 Armistice Agreements and the 1967 Six Day War. The West Bank and East Jerusalem would be ceded to Jordan and the Gaza Strip would be ceded to Egypt. The proposal avoids the creation of a Palestinian state completely, as the feasibility of a two-state solution is beginning to be questioned.⁵⁰ However, as the two-state solution is still the officially accepted solution, the three-state solution, sometimes called the Egyptian-Jordanian solution, has received little attention.

Another popular approach to the peace process is the one-state solution, or the binational solution, which proposes the creation of a single state including Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. It is commonly known as “Isratin,” a portmanteau of “Israel” and “Falastin,” Arabic for “Palestine.” One of the proponents of such a solution includes citizenship and equal rights for all inhabitants in the proposed state, regardless of religion or ethnicity.⁵¹ Though the two-state solution remains the most popular, the one-state solution is gaining popularity as both Israelis and Palestinians begin to doubt the possibility of a successful two-state solution.

A variation of the one-state solution is known as the Saif Islam Qaddafi proposal, named after its creator, the son of Muammar al-Qaddafi, the leader of Libya. It proposes the creation of

a binational Jewish-Palestinian state called the “Federal Republic of the Holy Land.” This new republic would be partitioned into five administrative regions, with Jerusalem as a city-state. All Palestinian refugees would be allowed to return, and there would be UN supervision for free and fair elections on the first and second occasions. All weapons of mass destruction would be removed from this state, and the Arab League would recognize this new state. The proposal has received little media attention, though al-Qaddafi has championed it on several occasions.⁵²

Proposed Solution: One State for Peace

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not one that can be easily resolved. There are many obstacles that continue to obstruct the peace process, such as Jerusalem and the Israeli settlements. The fact that the most Israelis and Palestinians continue hate each other make the process very difficult. Any solution to the conflict cannot be implemented overnight, especially not the one-state solution. Both the Israelis and the Palestinians are not yet ready to cooperate and work together for the future. The peace process will take years, perhaps even decades before it is complete. Regardless of the time it will take, it is important that all sides do not lose hope for peace in the region. It is possible and accomplishable, though it will take sacrifices from all sides. For the sake of the next generation, this generation of leaders in Israel, Palestine, and the United States must work together to successfully create a peace process and put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

There are numerous prerequisites and preliminary steps that must be completed in order for the peace process to begin. The Palestinian National Authority will not negotiate until the Israeli government calls a halt to the settlement program. The international community, and

particularly the United States, must put pressure on Israel to halt its settlement program. Even after a successful freeze on the settlement expansions, the United States and the international community must continue to place pressure on Israel to commit to the peace process and take the necessary steps to promote a lasting peace. If the Palestinian National Authority will not negotiate, there is no chance of creating a lasting and successful peace in the region. Likewise, the Palestinian National Authority must denounce and attempt to reduce violence among the Palestinian populace and gain the trust of the Israeli government, a process that will take years to complete. The international community must place pressure on the Palestinian Authority and the Arab League to commit to a negotiated peace in the region. Before negotiations can begin, each government must show their respective dedications and commitments to the peace process, or there will only be broken promises.

The United States has an instrumental role in ensuring Israel complies with the peace process and adheres to its terms. As Israel is the largest recipient of US aid after Iraq, the United States has a central role in the peace process.⁵³ If Israel does not cooperate with the peace process, the United States must, for the sake of peace, utilize a more aggressive form of diplomacy. By threatening to cut off substantial areas of aid and support, the United States can ensure the commitment of Israel to the peace process. If Israel does not cooperate, the United States must cut off its aid to Israel. This aid could easily be used to aid other poorer countries, or perhaps, the Palestinians. This is a vital step to peace in the Middle East because the Arab League must believe that the United States is not devoted to Israel, but rather, to a lasting peace in the region. Though Israel is an unofficial but committed ally of the United States and it maintains a very special relationship with the US, it cannot continue to thwart the peace process

as it has done in the past. If the United States wants to be viewed as a guardian of peace in the world, then her allies must also uphold that doctrine. The US Government must adopt a stricter policy with Israel, not only for peace, but also for its own image in the Middle East.

Besides ensuring the commitment of Israel to peace, the United States must also hold the Palestinian National Authority to the peace process. The Palestinian National Authority must reduce hostility and violence towards the Israelis among its own people. Such a process will require years, perhaps even decades. However, it is extremely difficult to convince the Palestinian Authority to do so, as the more radical Palestinians are difficult to convince. Hence, the United States should promise aid to the Palestinian Authority in return for stopping terrorist attacks on Israel. As the period of time in which there is no violence increases, the aid to the Palestinian Authority should increase as well. As the Palestinian territories are currently in need of aid for a variety of economical and social issues, the Palestinian National Authority will accept the offer. It would make sense for the Palestinians to desire and work for peace, because that would mean the end of their oppression by the Israelis. The United States must take an active role in the peace process because it has the ability to greatly influence both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

The one-state solution is the only solution that can create a successful and lasting peace in the region. However, such a solution cannot be implemented until the situation in the Middle East is ready. The peace process should begin with direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. These negotiations should be mediated by the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the members of the Arab League. The negotiations will be held in biannual conferences, where the main objective is to negotiate a

peace between the Arab world and Israel following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. There are numerous important reasons why a peace must first be negotiated between the Arab world and Israel. In order to establish a peace in the future, all parties must be able to forget and forgive past wrongs. The purpose of the peace process is not only to right past grievances, but more importantly, to create a lasting peace for posterity. The secondary objective of the conferences is to evaluate and oversee the implementation of the peace plan. The conferences must guide the peace process to a successful conclusion.

The conferences will solve the major obstacles in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to create peace. The creation of a single state in the region will end most territorial disputes, including that of Jerusalem, which will not be divided. Palestinian refugees will be given the right of return and the new government will provide the appropriate compensation for these refugees. The Palestinians will renounce violence and Israel will halt its settlement program. The conferences must also begin planning for the creation of the binational state. A new constitution must be drafted and the new government must be ready for establishment. The conferences must ensure that there is a peaceful transition from the status quo to the binational state. With the solution of the major issues in the conflict, the road to peace will be open.

There are vital aspects during the negotiations that must be addressed properly by the mediating countries. Both the Israelis and the Palestinians must make an effort to understand the demands and concerns of the other side. The negotiations must address comprehensively the concerns of both sides in the conflict. The path to peace is not a one-sided affair; each country must be willing to make sacrifices for the sake of peace in the region. A solution cannot satisfy only one side, as it must be a compromise between the nations. Both Israelis and Palestinians

must realize that security for one side must mean security for the other. Israeli security and defense cannot mean the loss of Palestinian security, because that would only cause additional Palestinian violence, creating a threat to Israeli security once more. The Palestinians cannot threaten the Israelis without bringing retribution upon themselves from the Israelis. In the peace process, if only the Palestinians comply with the agreed treaty, then there is still no peace. Both sides must not only be willing to make demands, but also concessions. Only through understanding of the concerns and pains of each other will the negotiations be successful.

Before the implementation of a peace plan can begin, the barriers between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples must first be destroyed. It is a long-term process that can take years or even decades to be completed. Peace can only truly exist when there is tolerance and understanding between peoples. An Israeli and international joint effort to provide aid should be made to improve the standard of living in the Palestinian territories. Projects to improve infrastructure and agriculture in the region will create jobs for Palestinians and make the region economically viable. However, such an endeavor would also increase the interaction between Israelis and Palestinians and help to promote understanding. For the Palestinians, the image of the Israeli people would improve significantly. The Israelis will not be seen as the enemy who took their lands away, but more as the friends who helped to make life better. Cooperation will breed understanding at the human level, and understanding is the beginning of peace.

For the members of the younger generation, the way to peace lies in education and interaction. Israeli education must include unbiased education on Islam, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its history, and the Palestinian people. Such an education would promote Israeli understanding for the Palestinians from an early age. On the Palestinian side, there must be

unbiased education on Judaism, the conflict and its history, and the Israeli people. In time, schools will be set up where both Israelis and Palestinians can attend, creating a society where peaceful coexistence is possible. Direct interaction will teach Israelis and Palestinians about each other even more quickly. By educating Israelis and Palestinians on each other, each will begin to see similarities, which will breed understanding.

The increased understanding between Israelis and Palestinians will decrease violence and terrorism. It will take years, even decades to accomplish, but it will contribute greatly to peace in the region. Palestinian violence is fed by hatred and vengeance, both of which are fed by misunderstanding. The foundation of terrorism is built on such hatred and desire for vengeance. As long as the memories of past wrongs continue to exist in Palestinian minds, so will the cycle of revenge continue. Education, cooperation, and integration all serve to destroy the misunderstandings and create understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. By helping the Palestinians, the Israelis take away the reasons for Palestinian hatred and vengeance. The memories of past wrongs are replaced by the memories of aid and camaraderie, breaking the cycle of revenge and alienating terrorists. By taking away hatred and revenge, the Israelis will also take away the terrorists' supply of Palestinians willing to commit acts of violence against Israel. By improving the Palestinians' standard of living and reeducating both Israelis and Palestinians about each other, Israel is also putting an end to Palestinian violence and terrorism.

Some of the greatest threats to peaceful coexistence are the fundamentalist radical groups such as Hamas, and to a certain extent on the Israeli side, the political party Likud. By giving both Israelis and Palestinians a chance to understand each other, the reasons for mutual hatred are slowly taken away. Once the Israelis and the Palestinians understand each other, they will see

reasons to like each other and to cooperate. Eventually, the radical idealism of Hamas will be isolated from the Palestinian populace that will see diplomacy as a solution over violence. The Palestinians will begin to support Fatah instead of Hamas. Likewise, as the Israelis become more understanding of the Palestinians and willing to work with them, political parties that support diplomatic steps to peace such as Labor or Kadima will gain support instead of Likud.

As Palestinian violence and terrorism decreases, Israel must end its settlement program. Construction of new settlements should either stop, or these new settlements should be presented to the Palestinian National Authority for control. Younger and small settlements should be evacuated and the settlement itself should be given to the Palestinian National Authority. Appropriate compensation will be given to the settlers. Older settlements that are large enough should be kept as is, though new settlers must not be allowed to settle there. At this time, Palestinians should be allowed to move into these new settlements if possible, in order to create communities in which Israelis and Palestinians can fully coexist. The barriers around the West Bank should be torn down, and the checkpoints should reduce security measures to allow free access between Israel and the West Bank.

Years, perhaps decades into the beginning of the new peace process, when the mutual hatred between both sides has died down, the one-state solution can begin. The ideal plan is one similar to the Saif Islam Qaddafi proposal, but with modifications. A single state will be created in the form of a federal republic. There will be two major states in the new nation: Israel and Palestine. Jerusalem will become a city-state and remain undivided, with access for all citizens to all parts of Jerusalem. Each will be able to have its own constitution and code of laws, but there will also be a federal government with a federal constitution. The naming of the new country will

be decided upon with the drafting of the federal constitution. There will be equal rights for all religions and ethnicities. Free and just elections will be held under UN supervision for the first three occasions. The Arab League and the international community will recognize this new nation and normalize relations with it. All Palestinian refugees will be allowed to return, and the new federal government will be responsible for appropriate compensation. United Nations peacekeeping troops will be stationed in the nation until they are deemed unnecessary by the UN Security Council.

Israel's opposition to a one-state solution derives from its desire to remain a "Jewish state." A one-state solution would create a population where the Israeli Jews would quickly become an ethnic minority compared to the Palestinian Arabs. Such a situation would naturally occur in a few generations regardless, as the population of the Israeli Arabs begins to increase. Already, there are around 1.3 million Israeli Arabs in Israel, just fewer than twenty percent of the nation's population.⁵⁴ A nation in which there are numerous ethnic groups is common in the Middle East, and the current State of Israel is one of those states, regardless of a one-state solution or not. The proposed one-state solution, however, allows the new country to be divided into "states" that maintain a level of autonomy. While the Israelis would lose the claim of a "Jewish state," such an ideal could still exist under the federal government in one of the newly created "states" of the country. The Israeli Declaration of Independence itself states that Israel will "be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex."⁵⁵ If Israel were to remain strictly a "Jewish state," there would have to be some sort of persecution of the Arab population in Israel, an infraction on the very basis of Israel's founding.

Such an act would also increase tensions between Israel and Palestine. Safety and security from persecution for Jews cannot become the reason more persecution in the world. The dream of a solely “Jewish state” is one that must be forgotten for the sake of a peace in the Middle East.

Advantages of Proposed Solution

There are numerous advantages to this variation of the one-state solution. First, the one-state solution would be easy to implement. A *de facto* one-state solution exists today, as Israel continues to occupy the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The only difference would be the cessation of violence and hostilities, and the establishment of equal rights for all religions and ethnicities. In addition, with the one-state solution, Jerusalem will remain undivided and there will be free and open access for all the citizens of the new state. There will be no need to deal with the extensive Israeli settlements on the West Bank. Additionally, any territorial disputes that would have arisen from the settlements in a two-state solution can be avoided in a one-state solution. Furthermore, the creation of one government in the region decreases the possibility of a radical group takeover in the proposed Palestinian state such as the 2006 Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip. The actions taken in the first part of the plan are non-binding to a one-state solution and these actions merely seek to lessen the tension in the conflict and create the stage for peace.

The one-state solution also has numerous advantages over a two-state solution. The creation of a Palestinian state alongside of an Israeli state would not necessarily spell the peace that is desired. The two-state solution does not solve all the major obstacles to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and thus, would only be a recipe for increased conflict. Neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians find it acceptable to divide Jerusalem; yet, the division of Jerusalem is a

major aspect of the two-state solution. Even if divided, the concept of having two national governments based within the same city would easily create tension. Perhaps the largest question is the division of the Temple Mount. Regardless of how the Temple Mount is divided, any tensions between the two governments of Israel and Palestine would only create violence at the Temple Mount.

The two-state solution also does not solve the problem of the right of return for Palestinian refugees. The current Palestinian territories cannot easily accommodate the addition of over three million additional refugees from Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.⁵⁶ The influx of such a large population would easily cause civil strife within the new Palestine. In addition, there are tens of thousands of Palestinians who were forced off of their homes located in Israel. The creation of a Palestinian state means that there is no chance for them to return to their former homes in Israel. Furthermore, a Palestinian state would give Israel a reason to evict its own Israeli Arabs and force them into Palestine.

The issue of the Israeli settlements would also be difficult to solve in a two-state solution. As Israeli settlements increase, the amount of land in the West Bank continues to decrease. The likelihood of moving all the Israeli settlers off of the West bank and back into Israel is also extremely low. It has been argued that the land taken by the settlements could simply be ceded to Palestine from other regions of Israel. However, the settlements continue to occupy some of the most fertile regions of the West Bank. Though it is possible for Israel to cede its own land for Palestine, the ceded land would most likely be situated on the border between Israel and Palestine. Regardless, it would not be as fertile as the land occupied by the settlements. Such an

act would also seemingly legitimize Israel's settlement program, something that would anger the Palestinian populace.

Finally, the creation of a separate Palestinian state can easily cause the region to spiral further into conflict. If a radical group such as Hamas were to rise to power in Palestine, it would easily mean major conflict between Israel and the new Palestine. The new Palestinian state could easily be subject to intimidation and coercion by the superior Israeli Army. The Israelis would not feel secure if the Palestinians would to create an army, knowing that there are still large amounts of Palestinians who have claims and land in Israel.⁵⁷ Terrorist groups could also find safe haven in Palestine, where they could threaten Israeli security from closed borders. The two-state solution also makes no major effort to ensure the recognition of Israel by its neighbors. Peace in the region is not only between Israel and Palestine, but also between Israel and the Arab nations. A two-state solution that is implemented with solving the many other problems in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would only bring about larger conflict and greater security issues.

Conclusion

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to threaten world peace and security today. By looking at the history of the Levant, it is easy to see that the region has been fought over for thousands of years. The many concerns and issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are reflected in its history of war and destruction, conquest and blood. Despite the many attempts at peace in the past few decades, there is still much tension in the region. These attempts will continue to fail because they do not address and solve all the issues that are at the core of the problem. Both the Israelis and the Palestinians continue to make demands, but both fail to realize that the path to

peace does not create a victor. The satisfaction of one side cannot mean the loss of the other. Leaders and negotiators must seek common ground and use it to achieve a lasting peace. In order to create peace, the mutual concerns between both sides must be understood, addressed, and solved. As it can solve most of the concerns and problems that obstruct the peace process, the creation of one state in the region is the best solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States must put pressure on both Israel and Palestine to commit to the peace process. The Israelis must freeze their settlement program and the Palestinians must reduce political violence and terrorism. Understanding must be created between the Israelis and the Palestinians at a personal level and at a human level. In order for the peace process to be successful, both sides must see their similarities instead of their differences. The hatred passed from fathers to their sons must not be passed to the next generation. It is a process that will take years, even decades, to complete. A successful peace in the Levant cannot be created overnight or in a matter of days. It is a long-term process, bringing two groups of people who have been at war for decades together. The creation of a binational state with the Israelis and the Palestinians will set a new precedent for peace in the world. It will show to other nations that peace between two different religions and ethnicities is possible and attainable. It will show the world that regardless of how different people are from each other, they are still human beings. Hatred and misunderstanding have been seeded in the past to create a world of war, violence, and destruction. If the human race intends to endure and prosper, it must first throw down its arms and embrace each other in the name of cooperation, brotherhood, and peace.

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