NOVEMBER
THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

BACKGROUND

In November WAC learned about the history of the Holy Land and the current divide between the Muslim Palestinians and Jewish Israelites. The region of Palestine\(^1\) traces its history to Neolithic times; situated in the fertile crescent it was one of the first areas in history to see the development of civilization. The Bronze age saw the development of Judaism\(^2\), which became prominent in the region until the Roman\(^3\) sack of Jerusalem in AD 70, which spurned the Jewish Diaspora\(^4\). The diaspora of the Jewish people and the conquest\(^5\) of Palestine by Muslim caliphates in the seventh century began changing the region’s demographic makeup. Ultimately falling under the rule of the Ottoman Turks, the now Muslim-majority inhabitants of Palestine developed their own sense of ethnicity and culture, agitating for independence\(^6\)—something noted by the British during the Great War.

Promised self-rule, Palestinians fought against the Ottomans for the Allies, only to be denied independence and made a part of Mandatory Palestine\(^7\), a colony of Britain. The denial of a free Palestinian state, coupled with the recently proclaimed Balfour Declaration\(^8\) put the British government in a predicament. Growing nationalism and increasing Zionism\(^9\) was only accelerated by the Second World War, with some agitators going as far as terrorism\(^10\).
In 1948, Israel was established by UN resolution in a two-state solution, angering people on both sides. Since the departure of the British, the region has seen multiple conflicts between Palestinian-backing Arab states and Israel, supported by the United States, eventually leading to the modern-day occupation of the Palestinian territories. Both Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews have their own claims to the Palestine. The Jews from the concept of “ancestral home,” the Balfour Declaration, and the conditions of its 1948 creation—so immediate after the Holocaust. The Arabs, of course, have been living there since the Jewish Diaspora and have developed their own culture and attachment to the region from the introduction of Islam in the seventh century to the present.

The two-state solution seems to be the only way that could please both sides—but it has not. As has been mentioned, there have been numerous wars. Israel has been backed by the United States since the Cold War, with the USSR backing the Arab League, including Egypt and Syria. Many attempts have been made to bring peace to the region, including the Camp David Accords and the Oslo Accords, but the region remains in a state of high tension. Primarily due to what is seen as unlawful occupation, Israel continues to label the West Bank as disputed territory, antagonizing its Arab neighbors with settlements in the territory. In recent years, we have seen tensions escalate to violence just short of war—two intifadas and attacks by organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah, with Israeli retribution just as harsh.

1Palestine, as used here, is referring to the geographic region encompassing modern Israel and its surrounding areas.

2Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic religions in the world; an Abrahamic faith, it went on to influence Christianity and Islam.

3Rome took Palestine with Caesar’s conquest of Egypt, calling the province Judaea. Roman rule over Palestine continued under Byzantium and later passed onto the Muslim Caliphates.
The Sack of Jerusalem in AD 70 led to the mass exodus of Jewish people from their home region, most eventually settling in central and eastern Europe, like Germany and Poland.

The fall of the Roman Empire allowed for the Muslim conquest of the Middle East under the Rashidun Caliphate.

In the latter years of the Ottoman Empire, Palestinians agitated for independence, which was guaranteed to them by Britain if they fought against the Turks. Lawrence of Arabia is a notable figure who fought alongside the Palestinians.

Mandatory Palestine was a British colony in the Middle East established as a temporary regime in the region until independence.

The Balfour Declaration was a 1917 letter written by the British Foreign Secretary which expressed British recognition of a Jewish “national home” in Palestine.

Zionism is a term referring to the movement began in the late 19th century which stressed that the Jews should return to their ancestral homeland.

Terrorist attacks against the British were carried out by both Palestinian and Jewish nationalists; most famous among these was the 1946 bombing of the King David Hotel by Irgun, a Zionist organization, which resulted in 91 deaths.

In 1948, the UN passed Resolution 181 establishing the State of Israel, along with a Palestinian state and a non-partisan Jerusalem.

The Palestine War, Sinai War, Six-Day War, and Yom Kippur War, are just the major conflicts between the Israelis and Arabs that have rocked the region, though many more less major confrontations and skirmishes have occurred.

The Israeli-occupied territories were Sinai, Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights; all taken following the Six-Day War in 1967. Only the Sinai has been returned to Egypt (1982) while the rest remains in Israeli hands despite Israeli presence in these areas as unlawful occupation of Palestine (West Bank and Gaza) and Syria (Golan Heights).

The two-state solution is rooted in the UN Resolution 181, which established both an Israel and a Palestine; the plan was originally turned down by Palestine, who laid claim to the entirety of the territory. Only recently have both factions been turning back to the original two-state plan.
The Arab League was an Egyptian-led coalition of Arab states that supported a Palestinian state and opposed Israel; it also included Jordan, Iraq, and Syria, among others.

The Camp David Accords of 1978 were diplomatic talks between Egypt and Israel done under the arbitration of President Jimmy Carter, called to mediate a peaceful solution to the hostilities between the two states. As a result, Egypt became the first Arab state to officially recognize Israel; three years later Egyptian president Anwar Sadat was assassinated.

The Oslo Accords were a set of agreements between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Israel which aimed at establishing a process by which self-determination could be achieved at a later date. Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, was assassinated by a Zionist extremist as a result of the accords.

Whereas many see the West Bank as Palestinian, Israel calls it disputed territory in justification of its occupation, in essence laying claim to the territory as well. The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is around 90 percent Arab Muslim.

Israeli occupation of the West Bank has led to the flow of foreigners into the territory seeking cheap. Despite criticism and calls to prevent them, they continue to exist as the Israeli government has largely turned a blind eye to the issue.

Intifada, coming from the Arabic word for shivering or tremor, is a term used often to describe uprisings and periods of increased tension and violence. There have been two thus far, the First from 1987–1993, and the more recent from 2000–2005.

Let’s Think About It

Your SWAC leader will prompt you with questions revolving around the same idea: given the history and context, what do you think is the best way to resolve the issues facing Israel and Palestine? Express your thoughts and contribute to discussion with your fellow peers!
MY THOUGHTS ON PALESTINE

(room to write your thoughts)

This lesson plan is meant as an aid for the Faculty Sponsor, President or Vice-President to lead their respective SWAC chapter in the discussion of this two weeks' focus: Israel, Palestine and the Gaza Strip.

Kahoot! Introductory Quiz

Kahoot! is an online Quiz platform. This small ten-question quiz is to test the student’s prior knowledge of the Palestine region and introduce them to the discussion to come. The quiz will require the proctor to have a Kahoot account in order to start. Students will use an electronic device in order to answer. The link is below; click START NOW and select Classic mode. After the Game PIN is generated, students will be able to join the session by accessing kahoot.it on their computer or mobile device. Begin the quiz once all students have joined! This activity shouldn’t take more than 15 minutes.

LINK: https://goo.gl/a14fxF

Lesson Handout

Now is when the handouts should be passed out to students. It is split into two sections, one which covers the history of the Palestinian region and a second which covers the current situation between Israel and its Arab neighbors. It is recommended that the handout be read aloud as a group instead of individually. Take some time after the document has been read to cover the material with the students and make sure that it’s generally understood. Ask questions
to students; get them to summarize what they’ve read and make sure that the students are engaged and understanding. The reading shouldn’t take more than 15 minutes.

**Video Resources**

We have three video resources below that will go over in more detail the current event portion of the handout and expand upon it. Following each link we’ve included a description of the video and possible questions that you can ask students to see what they’ve taken away from watching the clips. Each video clip is between 3 and 10 minutes; coupled with questions, this segment shouldn’t take more than 20 minutes.

**THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: A BRIEF, SIMPLE HISTORY**

**LINK:** [https://goo.gl/FtPzrz](https://goo.gl/FtPzrz)

This video is a concise telling of the Israel-Palestine situation; a close redaction of what is covered in the handout. It includes also includes relevant maps, photographs and video footage which can help illustrate the region’s state of affairs in recent years. This Vox video is around ten minutes long but a good summary and review of what is covered in the reading.

›What is their impression of the situation? Could history have panned out differently to prevent the present conflict or was it inevitable?

**THE ISRAEL-GAZA CRISIS, EXPLAINED IN 3 MINUTES**

**LINK:** [https://goo.gl/hnS3Lg](https://goo.gl/hnS3Lg)

This video is shorter and covers the more modern aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, beginning with the 2014 escalations and attacks by Hamas, as well as Israeli retaliation in the Gaza strip.
 ›In the end of the video, the narrator provides a grim view of the near future; do your students share the same mindset that we will not find peace in the coming years? Are they more optimistic and think otherwise?

**DISCUSSION**

Given the history and context, what do you think is the best way to resolve the issues facing Israel and Palestine? Does being exposed to the nuance and context surrounding the history of the region alter the way you see one side or the other? Do you think any side’s claim is more valid than the other? Who is more at fault? Is there any way you think that both sides could reach reconciliation now? This shouldn’t take more than 10 minutes – total estimated meeting time: no more than 1 hour.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


