



Understand Israel & the Palestinian Territories

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population per sq km



Israel & the Palestinian Territories Today

Prospects for Peace

Optimism about peace between Israel and her neighbours was widespread among both Israelis and Palestinians in the heyday of the Oslo peace process, in the mid-1990s. But following years of suicide bombings, rocket attacks from Gaza and calls by Palestinian Islamists for Israel's destruction, many Israelis have become pessimistic about the chances for peace. Retaliatory strikes from Israel, continuing Israel Defence Forces (IDF) roadblocks, the right-wing composition of Israel's current government, settlement construction and settler violence have had a similar impact on the assessment of many Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has declared his support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but since his right-wing coalition government came to power in 2009, it has continued to expand Jewish settlements and offered only vague answers to Palestinian questions about eventual borders, calling into question Netanyahu's commitment to the eventual establishment of a viable Palestinian state next to Israel.

The leadership of the Palestinian Authority may be similarly hamstrung. Although PA President Mahmoud Abbas and his prime minister, Salam Fayyad, have a long record of support for a two-state solution, they too have seemed reluctant to make any bold moves. Instead, Abbas has been putting great effort into having Palestine admitted to the UN General Assembly as a full member state, a campaign that diplomatic manoeuvres by Israel, the US and some European countries has blocked.

Exclusion of Women

Women serve on Israel's Supreme Court and as government ministers (including, from 1969 to 1974, as prime minister – Golda Meir, of course),

The ancestors of about half of Israeli Jews immigrated from Europe (especially Russia, Romania, Poland, Germany and Hungary) and the Americas, the other half from Africa (eg Morocco and Ethiopia) and Asia (especially Iraq, Iran, Yemen and India).

Top Non-Fiction

The Anatomy of Israel's Survival (Hirsh Goodman, 2011) Analysis of Israel's internal fissures.

The Unmaking of Israel (Gershon Gorenberg, 2011) Looks at domestic threats to Israeli democracy.

Top Films

Sallah Shabbati (Ephraim Kishon, 1964) Satire about life in a 1950s transit camp.

Waltz with Bashir (Ari Folman, 2008) Haunting, personal look at the 1982 Lebanon War.

Yossi & Jagger (Eytan Fox, 2002) IDF officers, secret love.

Documentaries

The Flat (2011) Filmmaker looks at his German-Jewish roots.

Strangers No More (2010) A South Tel Aviv elementary school takes in refugee children.

Precious Life (2010) A Gaza baby fights for medical treatment in Israel.