J Street Education Fund

Congressional and Leadership Delegation to Israel and the Palestinian Territory

Briefing Book

MAY - JUNE, 2016
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gaza</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Street Position</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts and Figures</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Political Situation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian International Initiatives</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The International Criminal Court</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Street Position</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ABOUT J STREET EDUCATION FUND (JSEF)**

The J Street Education Fund is the charitable arm of the pro-Israel, pro-peace movement. Through community engagement, education and programming, we advance a vision of Israel that is secure, democratic and the national home of the Jewish people. We support policies grounded in shared US and Israeli interests as well as Jewish and democratic values, leading to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and we promote vibrant and respectful discourse about Israel in the Jewish community, on campuses and beyond.
INTRODUCTION
Planning and Packing

PACKING LIST

Below is a recommended packing list for your visit to Israel and the Palestinian territory.

☐ Personal/tourist passport – Israel requires that your passport be valid for 6 months after the planned date of departure.
☐ Clothing for layers
☐ Comfortable clothes for walking, including sneakers or other good walking shoes
☐ Appropriate business attire for meetings with officials
☐ Tie for men and equivalent for women.
☐ Modest dress for visits to religious sites, the West Bank, Bethlehem
☐ Long pants or skirts that cover your knees, shirts that cover your shoulders and/or a shawl
☐ Daypack for outings
☐ Reusable water bottle
☐ Camera
☐ Toiletries
☐ bring any medications or first aid supplies you normally use
☐ Appliances you usually use
☐ Electric converters, transformers or adapters for American appliances (110v to 220v)

NOTE: The hotels may have some converters, adapters, and transformers to offer their guests.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURES IN MAY/JUNE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramallah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TIME
At the time of your visit, Israel and the Palestinian territory will be 7 hours ahead of US Eastern Time – meaning that at 12pm EDT in Washington DC, it will be 7pm in Israel and the Palestinian Territory.

MONEY AND EXPENSES
Exchange Rate
The new Israel Shekel (NIS) is both used in Israel and the Palestinian Territory. Money can be exchanged at the airport, post office and any bureaux de change on the street, hotels, ATMs or major banks. It is also best to bring US dollars as well as Israeli Shekels. Please note that 200 shekel notes are not easily traded, and one should try and avoid receiving them when exchanging money.

The current exchange rate is **3.79 NIS to 1 US dollar**, but these rates may be subject to slight change.

VAT
Israel assesses a Value Added Tax (VAT) of 16.5% on goods and services. Prices should include this tax. For purchases over $50, you can get a refund of the tax at the airport’s customs office before you leave. When you make your purchase, the merchant should put it in a clear plastic bag with a copy of the receipt inside. Keep the original. The bag must be sealed and remain unopened in order to get the refund.
# Useful Words in Hebrew and Arabic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Sha-lom</td>
<td>Mar-ha-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Bru-chim ha-ba-eem</td>
<td>As-sal-ama al-ay-kum (response: wa-al-ay-kum as-sal-aam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you?</td>
<td>Ma shiom-cha? (to a man), Ma shiom-ech? (to a woman)</td>
<td>Kayf el-hal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>Beh-se-der</td>
<td>Kwah-yiis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>Toe-da</td>
<td>Shoo-kran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse me</td>
<td>Slee-cha</td>
<td>Aa-sif</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>Beh-va-ka-sha</td>
<td>Min fad-lik (to a woman), Min fad-lak (to a man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re welcome</td>
<td>Beh-va-ka-sha</td>
<td>Af-wan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Na-am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Lo</td>
<td>La</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td>Le-hee-tra-ot</td>
<td>Ma-a as-sal-ama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much?</td>
<td>Ka-ma ze oh-leh?</td>
<td>Ahd-aysh?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need help</td>
<td>A-nee tzree-cha ez-ra</td>
<td>Sa-id-oo-ni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where?</td>
<td>Ay-foh?</td>
<td>Wen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Mish-ta-ra</td>
<td>Bo-lees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>Bet cho-leem</td>
<td>Mus-tash-fa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>Bahnk</td>
<td>Bahnk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATM</td>
<td>Kas-po-mat</td>
<td>Mak-een-a al-sar-af al-aal-ee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Kes-ef</td>
<td>Ma-saari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Shuk</td>
<td>Suk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Area and Country Codes**
Israel: 00 972  
Tel Aviv: 3  
Jerusalem: 2  
U.S.: 001

**Hotels**
- **David InterContinental**  
  12 Kaufman Street  
  Tel Aviv, Israel 61501  
  Tel: 03-795-1111
- **David Citadel**  
  7 King David  
  Jerusalem, Israel 94101  
  Tel: 02-621-2121

**US Consulate General**
- **Jerusalem**: 02-630-4000  
  After Hours: 02-622-7230
- **Tel Aviv**: 02-519-7475  
  After Hours: 03-519-7575

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US State Department Travel Warnings

Israel, The West Bank and Gaza

December 16, 2015

The security environment remains complex in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. U.S. citizens need to be aware of the continuing risks of travel to areas described in this Travel Warning where there are heightened tensions and security risks. The security situation can change day to day, depending on the political situation, recent events, and geographic area. A rise in political tensions and violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank has resulted in injuries to and deaths of U.S. citizens. The Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority both make considerable efforts to police major tourist attractions and ensure security in areas where foreigners frequently travel. Although these efforts to reduce the threat are not 100 percent effective, hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens safely visit Israel and the West Bank each year for study, tourism, and business. This replaces the Travel Warning issued February 18, 2015.

The Department of State strongly warns U.S. citizens against travel to the Gaza Strip and urges those in Gaza to leave immediately when border crossings are open; U.S. government employees are not allowed to conduct official or personal travel to Gaza.

U.S. citizens should consider the rules U.S. government employees must follow when planning their travel:

- With the exception of Jericho and Bethlehem, U.S. government employees are prohibited from personal travel to the West Bank. There are some restrictions on the personal travel of U.S. government employees to Bethlehem, listed in the section below on the West Bank;
- U.S. government employees are prohibited from using public and inter-city buses (and associated bus terminals) throughout Israel and the West Bank. From mid-October until the end of November 2015, there was a temporary prohibition on using the Jerusalem light rail north of the City Hall stop on Jaffa Road; and
- U.S. government employees must obtain advance approval if they wish to travel to the following locations:
  - within 7 miles of the Gaza demarcation line;
  - within 1.5 miles of the Lebanon border;
  - north and east of the Sea of Galilee;
  - on or east of Route 98 in the Golan; and
  - south of Be’er Sheva.

The U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem are continuously monitoring the security situation. As conditions change, they can make adjustments, as necessary, to these travel restrictions on U.S. government employees. Please review the security messages at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem for the most current information.
Major Metropolitan Areas

Personal safety conditions in major metropolitan areas, including Tel Aviv and Haifa and surrounding regions, are comparable to other major global cities. Nonetheless, political and religious tension associated, in part, with access to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem has led to increased levels of violence, particularly in Jerusalem and the West Bank, not seen in those areas in a decade. Since October 2015, attacks on individuals and groups have occurred with increased frequency in East and West Jerusalem, Hebron, and Bethlehem, as well as various other places in the West Bank and Israel, including Tel Aviv. There is no indication that U.S. citizens have been specifically targeted based on their nationality, although perceived religious affiliation may have been a factor in some violent attacks on U.S. citizens. More than 12 U.S. citizens have been among those killed and injured in multiple attacks in 2014 and 2015. U.S. citizens involved in or observing demonstrations have sustained serious injuries. Therefore, the Department of State recommends U.S. citizens avoid all demonstrations for their own safety.

The Department of State also recommends that U.S. citizens maintain a high state of situational awareness, be aware of their surroundings at all times, avoid any unattended items or packages, and report any unusual or suspicious activities or items to police or other security officials. See below for specific safety and security information regarding Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Israel’s northern region.

Travelers should be aware of the potential for military conflict between Israel and foreign terrorist organizations like Hamas. Such attacks can occur with little or no warning. During the conflict in Gaza in July and August 2014, long-range rockets launched from Gaza reached many locations in Israel and the West Bank—including Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and cities in northern and southern Israel. The Government of Israel’s Iron Dome rocket and missile defense system successfully intercepted many rockets. However, rocket and mortar impacts also caused four deaths of Israeli citizens living near Gaza, as well as injuries and property damage. There have been additional small arms fire and mortar and rocket launches from Gaza into southern Israel on several occasions between September and December 2014 and again between May and November 2015 that resulted in limited property damage.

Visitors to and residents of Israel and the West Bank should familiarize themselves with the location of the nearest bomb shelter or other hardened site. We advise all U.S. citizens to take note of guidance on proper procedures in the event of rocket attacks or other crisis events by visiting the website of the government of Israel’s Home Front Command. Consult municipality websites, such as those for Jerusalem, for locations of public bomb shelters and other emergency preparedness information. Visitors should seek information on shelters from hotel staff or building managers.

Travelers should also be aware of the heightened state of alert maintained by Israeli authorities along Israel’s border with Egypt. There have been cross-border incidents from Egypt, including rocket attacks and ground incursions. Rockets and mortars were launched from Sinai, Egypt in the direction of Ellat and Israel’s Negev region in January, July, and August 2014, and July 2015.
Jerusalem

U.S. citizens visiting and living in Jerusalem should be aware of the numerous political, cultural, and religious tensions that permeate the city. These sensitivities have the potential to fuel rallies, protests, civil unrest, acts of terrorism, and retaliatory attacks against groups and individuals. Demonstrations are a regular occurrence throughout Jerusalem. Even peaceful demonstrations can turn violent with little or no advance warning. Since October 2015, there have been frequent clashes between protesters and Israeli authorities, checkpoints and barriers have been set up by Israeli security forces that restrict movement of residents, and acts of terrorism have taken place, resulting in death and injury, including to U.S. citizens. Travelers should be aware that protests and violence have occurred across Jerusalem, including in some West Jerusalem neighborhoods, and in East Jerusalem neighborhoods such as Sheikh Jarrah, Shufat, Beit Hanina, Mt. of Olives, As Suwaneh, Silwan, Shuafat Refugee Camp, Issawiyyeh, Tsur Baher, and within the Old City. Skirmishes, violent clashes and demonstrations also have occurred in the northern parts of Jerusalem near the Qalandia Checkpoint, and Checkpoint 300 located in the southern part of Jerusalem near Bethlehem.

From mid-October until the end of November 2015, U.S. government employees were temporarily prohibited for security reasons from using the Jerusalem Light Rail north of the City Hall stop along Jaffa Road. Travel to the Old City is also periodically restricted for U.S. government employees, including on Fridays during Ramadan. The Department of State advises U.S. citizens to exercise caution in and around the Damascus, Lions', and Herod’s gates to the Old City as these locations have been the scene of past attacks.

The number of violent incidents resulting in the death of bystanders remains high. The frequency of such incidents often increases following Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount access restrictions, in response to random attacks, or during Israeli National Police (INP) operations in predominantly Palestinian neighborhoods. The INP often deploys a heavy presence in many of the neighborhoods that have seen clashes and may restrict pedestrian and vehicular traffic to some of these neighborhoods without notice. U.S. citizens are advised not to enter any neighborhoods restricted by the INP and to avoid any locations with active demonstrations, clashes, or a heavy police presence.

The clashes and violence have not been anti-American in nature. However, politically-motivated violence in Jerusalem claimed the lives of U.S. citizens who were inside a synagogue in November 2014 and a U.S. citizen who was riding a bus in October 2015. Other U.S. citizens have been injured in such attacks. In July 2015, an attack on participants at the Jerusalem gay pride march resulted in the death of one person and injuries to several others, including a U.S. citizen.

Travelers are reminded to exercise caution at Islamic religious sites on Fridays and on holy days, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan. The INP often imposes restrictions on visitors to the Old City’s Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, and has closed access for temporary periods without advance notice. Many orthodox Jewish communities in and around Jerusalem restrict vehicle traffic on Shabbat, and entering these neighborhoods with a vehicle may result in protests and violence.
The West Bank

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to exercise caution when traveling to the West Bank due to the complex security situation there. Increasingly frequent and violent clashes between Israeli security forces, Israeli settlers and Palestinian residents of the West Bank have resulted in the death and injury to U.S. citizens and others.

U.S. citizens considering travel to the West Bank should take into consideration the danger of death, injury or kidnapping of U.S. citizen residents and visitors in the West Bank evident from incidents in 2014 and 2015. On October 1, 2015, a U.S. citizen man and his Israeli wife were shot and killed on the road between Alon Moreh and Itamar, near Nablus. In November 2015, a U.S. citizen studying in Israel was one of three people killed by a gunman who fired shots into their vehicle in Gush Etzion, and another was injured by a gunshot near the Cave of the Patriarchs/ Ibrahim Mosque. In September 2015 five U.S. citizens were attacked and their car destroyed in Hebron.

Demonstrations and violent incidents can occur without warning, and vehicles are sometimes damaged by rocks, Molotov cocktails, and gunfire on West Bank roads. U.S. citizens have been injured or killed in such attacks in the past. There have also been an increasing number of violent incidents involving Israeli settlers and Palestinian villagers in the corridor stretching from Ramallah to Nablus, including attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinian villages and attacks by Palestinians on settlements. U.S. citizens can be caught in the middle of potentially dangerous situations, and some U.S. citizens involved in political demonstrations in the West Bank have sustained serious injuries. During periods of unrest, the Israeli government may restrict access to and within the West Bank, and some areas may be placed under curfew. All persons in areas under curfew should remain indoors to avoid arrest or injury. Security conditions in the West Bank may hinder the ability of U.S. government officials to offer timely assistance to U.S. citizens.

Personal travel in the West Bank by U.S. government personnel is permitted to the towns of Jericho and Bethlehem, and on Routes 1, 443, and 90. U.S. government employees traveling to Bethlehem must comply with the following additional security requirements: The Rachel’s Tomb/Gilo crossing and areas adjacent to the Ayda and Al Azza refugee camps are restricted; and travel in Bethlehem must be completed between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm. These restrictions change periodically based on the current security environment. Please review the security messages at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem for current information. The Rachel’s Tomb checkpoint between Jerusalem and Bethlehem has seen an increase in public demonstrations, which have the potential to become violent. U.S. government employees may also engage in personal travel to Qumran off Route 90 by the Dead Sea and to the Allenby Bridge crossing to Jordan, as well as stops at roadside facilities along Routes 1 and 90. All other personal travel by U.S. government personnel in the West Bank is prohibited. U.S. government personnel routinely travel to the West Bank for official business, but do so with special security arrangements.
WHY THIS MATTERS
The Importance of a Two-State Solution

J Street believes that urgently reaching a sustainable two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is both a fundamental American interest and essential to the survival and security of Israel as a democratic, national homeland for the Jewish people. In the seventh decade following its establishment, Israel and most of her neighbors have yet to secure internationally recognized borders or to make peace.

With the Jewish and Arab populations between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea at near-parity, demographic trends preclude Israel from maintaining control over all of Greater Israel while remaining a democratic state and a homeland for the Jewish people. As then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said in November 2007, “if the day comes when the two-state solution collapses, and we face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights, then, as soon as that happens, the State of Israel is finished.”

The two-state solution represents the best and the only way to ensure that Israel remains a democracy and a national home for the Jewish people. The two-state solution has been American policy across four administrations and has been endorsed in principle by each of the current Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

The contours of a two-state solution are well known. President Clinton outlined the parameters in 2000, and progress on this basis was made in Taba in 2001 and under Israeli Prime Minister Olmert in 2008 - indeed, multiple reports have indicated that the parties have come very close to a final agreement several times. Various initiatives have spelled out the principles. Teams of international experts have produced meticulously detailed plans as to how a two-state agreement could be successfully implemented. The question is not one of feasibility, but of political will and desire to make the critical compromises needed to move forward.

Unfortunately, time and political will in the region are in short supply and it appears to many observers that the window of opportunity for achieving a two-state solution is rapidly closing.

While majorities of both the Israeli and Palestinian populations continue to support a two-state solution, the influence of rejectionists and extremists is steadily increasing on both sides. The power of the violent terrorist faction Hamas represents a continual threat to the leadership and authority of the Palestinian Authority. The Global BDS Movement opposes Israel’s existence and does not distinguish between Israel and the Occupied Territory. The current Israeli governing coalition is packed with senior ministers and officials who openly push for major settlement expansion and reject the idea of a Palestinian state.

All of these rejectionists champion their own one-state ideology, each of which would doom Israel's existence as a democratic state and Jewish national home. With every new settlement announcement and every act of violence, citizens on both sides become more dejected while hatred and mistrust grow. Meanwhile, growing radicalization throughout the Middle East makes it more likely that in the absence of an agreement, ever more extreme ideologies may take root in the West Bank and Gaza.

This status quo is unsustainable. Without strong and decisive action toward a real solution, it will only continue to degenerate. We do not have the luxury of waiting for a riper time to pursue peace; now is that time.
The Importance of American Leadership

US- ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP
The United States was the first country to recognize Israel as a state in 1948. Since then, Israel has become, and remains, America’s most reliable partner in the Middle East. Israel and the United States are bound closely by historic and cultural ties as well as by mutual interests. The US-Israel bilateral relationship is strong, anchored by over $3 billion in Foreign Military Financing annually. In addition to financial support, the US participates in a high level of exchanges with Israel, to include joint military exercises, military research, and weapons development. Through the Joint Counterterrorism Group and a semi-annual Strategic Dialogue, the US and Israel have enhanced their cooperation in fighting terrorism.

The United States is Israel’s largest single trading partner. The top five US exports to Israel are: diamonds, machinery, agricultural products, aircraft, and optic and medical instruments. The top five US imports from Israel are: diamonds, pharmaceutical products, machinery, optic and medical instruments, and agricultural products. US direct investment in Israel is primarily in the manufacturing sector, as is Israeli investment in the United States. The United States and Israel have had a free trade agreement since 1985, serving as the foundation for expanding trade and investment between the two countries by reducing barriers and promoting regulatory transparency. To facilitate economic cooperation, the two countries convene a Joint Economic Development Group each year to discuss economic conditions in both countries and possible economic reforms for the coming year. The US and Israel also coordinate scientific and cultural exchanges through the Binational Science Foundation, the Binational Agricultural Research and Development Foundation, and the US-Israeli Education Foundation.

THE US LED PEACE PROCESS
The United States is committed to realizing the vision of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian state as the homeland of the Palestinian people, alongside the Jewish State of Israel.

Following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger began a process of "shuttle diplomacy" between Israel and its neighbors to mediate disengagement agreements. Kissinger’s efforts produced three such pacts: two between Israel and Egypt and another between Israel and Syria. These efforts marked the first major US attempt to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and served as a stepping-stone toward the Israel-Egypt peace treaty signed at Camp David in 1978.

Building on Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s 1977 visit to Jerusalem, President Jimmy Carter hosted Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin for talks at Camp David. The talks produced two agreements. One, an outline of an Egypt-Israel peace treaty—signed in 1979—called for the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for peace. The second, peace talks between Israel and its other neighbors and a resolution to the "Palestinian problem," remained unfulfilled, with Arab States shunning Egypt for its actions.
In 1981, Saudi Crown Prince Fahd proposed a peace plan entailing an Israeli withdrawal from all territory gained in the 1967 War, removal of Israeli settlements, and a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. The Arab League adopted the plan at a 1982 summit in Fez, Morocco. The so-called Fez initiative drew tacit support from the United States and Europe, but Israel rejected it, citing insufficient security guarantees. Israel also rejected US President Ronald Reagan’s proposal for Palestinian autonomy in association with Jordan, as did the Palestine Liberation Organization under Yasir Arafat.

On September 13, 1993, Shimon Peres and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas signed a Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, commonly referred to as the “Oslo Accord,” at the White House. Israel accepted the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians, and the PLO renounced terrorism and recognized Israel’s right to exist in peace. Both sides agreed that a Palestinian Authority (PA) would be established and assume governing responsibilities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over a five-year period. Then, permanent status talks on the issues of borders, refugees, and Jerusalem would be held. While President Bill Clinton’s administration played a limited role in bringing the Oslo Accord into being, it would invest vast amounts of time and resources in order to help Israel and the Palestinians implement the agreement.

Indeed, seeking to address the “final status” issues—refugees, borders, security, and Jerusalem—President Bill Clinton sponsored talks at Camp David. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered a proposal that included a Palestinian state in Gaza, much of the West Bank, and a large part of East Jerusalem—more than 90 percent of the occupied territories. In exchange, Palestinians had to end the conflict and forego future claims on Israel. Palestinian President Yasir Arafat rejected the offer, and many experts questioned domestic Israeli support for Barak’s plan. Endorsed by the Quartet—the United States, Russia, the UN, and the EU—the road map calls first for security guarantees followed by creation of a Palestinian state with “provisional borders.” Only after these first steps would final-status negotiations commence. In proposing this in 2002, George W. Bush became the first US president to endorse a Palestinian state, calling for “two states, living side by side in peace and security.” The Annapolis process hoped to retain elements of the road map.

After prolonged negotiations with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, the United States unveiled a Joint Understanding in which leaders from both sides agreed to a new round of diplomacy. US President George W. Bush presented the document to representatives of over forty nations and international organizations at a widely publicized conference in Annapolis, Maryland.

In 2009, President Obama gave a historic speech in Cairo reaffirming the US’s commitment to a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine, and personally pledging the pursuit of this goal during his presidency. Indeed, the Obama administration has made important efforts to bring the two parties to the negotiating table and reach a mutually agreed upon peace deal. In July 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry, announced his goal to “achieve a final-status agreement over the course of the next nine months” between Israel and Palestine. Over that period, bilateral meetings between Israeli negotiators Tzipi Livni and Yitzhak Malko and Palestinian negotiators Saeb Erekat and Mohammad Shtayyeh were held, as well as proximity talks between each side and American leadership. The perceived turning point in the negotiations came during the second of Israel’s four promised batches of prisoner releases. Amid anguished protests in Jerusalem, various plans for nearly 20,000 settlement units were pushed forward over five days.
(some were later withdrawn), which in turn angered Palestinian leadership. In April 2014 Israel suspended the negotiations after Fatah and Hamas signed a reconciliation pact, with Netanyahu remarking that “Israel will not negotiate with a Palestinian government backed by Hamas, a terrorist organization that calls for Israel’s destruction.”

**THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Support for a Two-State Solution**

- 72% support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- 67% believe it is both:
  - Necessary to strengthen Israel’s security and its Jewish and democratic character
  - An important security interest for the United States

**Support for US Engagement in Resolving the Conflict**

- 84% believe that the United States should play an active role in helping the parties to resolve the conflict
- 70% would support US engagement even if it meant stating US disagreements with both Israelis and Arabs
- 69% would support the US pressuring both parties to make the compromise

**J STREET POSITION ON CURRENT AMERICAN LEADERSHIP**

Rather than simply push for more unguided, direct bilateral talks between leaders who have proven unable to conclude an agreement, the time has come for the United States and its international partners to put forward a plan articulating the broad consensus parameters for a negotiated two-state solution.

Such parameters are not an immutable formula to be imposed, but should serve as a benchmark against which the Israeli and Palestinian publics - as well as the international community - could
judge the seriousness of both parties. It would also provide much needed cover to pro-two-state leaders on both sides to push for changes that would be needed to realize a two-state solution.

J street encourages the US Government to consider setting out this vision in a resolution before the United Nations Security Council, a body that has spoken credibly on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict many times in the past, unlike many other UN organs which have a shameful history of anti-Israel bias. Yet, the precise venue for putting forward this plan is ultimately not of paramount importance, so long as it has the backing of key international players from the moment it is put forward. Whether the parameters are articulated by the President in a major policy speech, or issued as a statement by a multilateral group such as the P5+1, they will have the desired impact if they are then clearly and publicly backed by the broader global community, including the European Union and the Arab League.

Information for this section taken from the following sources:


AREAS and ISSUES
ISRAEL

J Street Policy Positions

J Street is the political home for pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans. J Street unequivocally supports the existence of the State of Israel as a democracy and a national home for the Jewish people and believes that the best way to guarantee its future is through the realization of a two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a comprehensive regional peace.

J Street aims to redefine and expand the very concept of what it means to be pro-Israel. No longer should this “pro-” require an “anti-.” In the 21st century, we have reached a moment in history where supporting a Palestinian state is the only way to ensure Israel's survival as a democracy and a national home for the Jewish people. Being pro-peace is, indeed, being pro-Israel.

J Street does not accept that the world must be seen through the prism of “us-vs-them” conflict – that we must look at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a zero sum game. We do not see the world only in black and white. To be pro-Israel in our movement is to recognize that history is filled with shades of gray and that the only way forward to a better future is a win-win solution that leads to two states for two peoples.

We share a vision of Israel laid out in its Declaration of Independence – of a country that Jews can always go to be safe and as a thriving democracy that reflects the highest values of the Jewish people: justice, equality, treating your neighbor as you wish to be treated yourself.

J Street recognizes the acute dangers that lurk in the world, particularly in the Middle East. But it is our movement and our ideas that offer the best path to the very security that Israelis, Palestinians and all people in the region desperately seek. Only through peace will there be security for both peoples and only through peace will Israel maintain its existence as a democracy and a national home for the Jewish people.

BACKGROUND

Following the end of the second world war, the British withdrew from their mandate in Palestine. The UN proposed partitioning the area into Arab and Jewish states, an arrangement rejected by the Arabs. Nonetheless, an Israeli state was declared on May 14th, 1948, and the Israelis subsequently defeated the Arabs in a series of periodic wars, without ending the deep tensions between the two sides.

On April 25th, 1982, Israel withdrew from the Sinai pursuant to the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty. In keeping with the framework established at the Madrid Conference in October 1991, bilateral negotiations were conducted between Israel and Palestinian representatives and Syria to achieve a permanent settlement. Israel and Palestinian officials signed on September 13th,
1993 a Declaration of Principles (also known as the Oslo Accords), enshrining the idea of a two-state solution to their conflict and guiding an interim period of Palestinian self-rule. Outstanding territorial and other disputes with Jordan were resolved on October 26th 1994 on the Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace.

Progress towards a permanent status agreement with the Palestinians was undermined by Israeli-Palestinian violence between 2001 and February 2005. Israel in 2005 unilaterally disengaged from the Gaza strip, evacuating Israeli settlements and its military while retaining control over most points of entry into the strip. The election of Hamas to head the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006 froze relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA).

In 2006, Israel engaged in a 34-day conflict with Hezbollah in Lebanon in June to August 2006 and a 23-day conflict with Hamas in the Gaza strip during December 2008 and January 2009. Since then, fighting between Israel and Hamas has halted and resumed as several times, as well as the collapse and re-establishment of negotiations between the two parties.
Israel at a Glance

**GEOGRAPHY**

*Area:* 20,770 sq km

*Comparatively:* slightly larger than New Jersey

**Land Boundaries:**

- Egypt: 208 km
- Gaza Strip: 59 km
- Jordan: 307 km
- Lebanon: 81 km
- Syria: 83 km
- West Bank: 330 km

Limited arable land and natural fresh water

**POPULATION**

*Total:* 7,821,850

*(includes Golan Heights and Golan sub-District and East Jerusalem)*

- 19,400 Israeli settlers in the Golan Heights
- 200,000 Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem

*Annual Growth Rate:* 1.46%

**ECONOMY** *(World, Bank 2014)*

Technologically advanced market economy

**Major exports:** high technology equipment, cut-diamonds, pharmaceuticals, raw materials

**GDP:** $304.2 billion

- GDP per capita: $37,032
- GDP Growth 2013-2014: 2.8%

**Population below poverty line**

*($7.30 per person per day):* 21%

**Unemployment:** 6.3%

**Youth Unemployment:** 10.7%

**Imports:** $69.73 billion

- US: 11.3%

**Exports:** $63.21 billion

- US: 28.5%

**Ethnicity**

- 74.9% Jewish
- 25.1% Non-Jewish

**Percent of Jewish Israelis Born in**

- 73.7% Israel
- 17.9% Europe
- 5.2% Africa
- 3.2% Asia

**Religion**

- 75.1% Jewish
- 17.4% Muslim
- 2% Christian
- 3.9% Other
- 1.6% Druze
2. **Yesh Atid**

The party was founded in 2012 by popular television anchor Yair Lapid to appeal to middle-class voters who were frustrated with Israel's political system. Although he gained great wins in 2013, Lapid's party lost seven seats in the last election. This was partly due to perception by voters that Lapid did not deliver on his economic promises. The 2015 elections were triggered after Netanyahu and Lapid were unable to agree on a budget and the Prime Minister pushed Lapid out of his coalition. With 11 seats Yesh Atid are now the 4th largest party overall and a key component of the opposition.

Lapid has stressed that "there's no other game in town but the two-state solution," and one of his deputies, former Israeli security chief Yaacov Peri, is a major proponent of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks based on the Arab Peace Initiative. Lapid himself as recently advocated an embrace of a "regional approach" to peace, with the Saudis taking a major role. As a member of the Netanyahu coalition, Lapid threatened to topple the government over settlement expansion and the Prime Minister's resistance to negotiate with the Palestinians. At the same time, Lapid announced his 2013 candidacy in the settlement of Ariel. He has said, "I don't think that the Arabs want peace," and that the status of Jerusalem is not up for negotiation.

3. **Hatnuah**

Former foreign minister and Kadima leader Tzipi Livni founded Hatnuah and campaigned on the idea that peace with the Palestinians was necessary and possible. After the 2013 election, she was the first to join the Netanyahu coalition as justice minister and chief peace negotiator. In the wake of the collapse of the Kerry initiative and the coalition, Livni announced a joint slate with Labor, the Zionist Union, which garnered 24 seats.

Livni has played a major role in past peace negotiations and has argued that only a two-state solution can allow Israel to keep its "values as a Jewish, democratic state." She has blamed Israeli settlements for "preventing [Israel] from reaching a resolution" and "[making] it impossible to defend Israel around the world."

4. **Meretz**

The progressive Meretz party was founded in 1992 and was considered a key player in the Labor coalitions of the 1990s, and has recently seen its popularity rise after struggling over the past decade. Meretz is one of the last Israeli factions to consider itself leftist, campaigning on issues of social justice, equality and peace with the Palestinians. It was the only Zionist party to oppose the summer 2014 escalation in Gaza. In the 2015 election Meretz received 5 seats.

Faction leader Zehava Gal-On is fiercely critical of Netanyahu's diplomatic policies, attacking him for expanding settlements and refusing to negotiate with the Palestinians or use the Arab Peace Initiative as a basis for talks. Meretz has expressed its support for Palestinian efforts to achieve statehood at the United Nations.
The Current Political Situation

The last Israeli Knesset elections, held on March 17, 2015 elected Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party by a six seat advantage over the Zionist Union.

Netanyahu announced the formation of a new government on May 6, 2015. Largely considered the most right wing government in Israel's history, the coalition includes a number of Haredi parties and only has a two seat majority (61-59). Given this narrow majority and the differing priorities within the coalition parties, many analysts have concluded that the government is susceptible to breakdown and another election is likely to be held before Netanyahu's official term ends.

There have been a number of controversial policy proposals in the current government's legislative agenda, including a bill enshrining Israel as the "Jewish Nation-State", which critics such as former President Shimon Peres argue will, "destroy Israel's democratic status both at home and abroad." Furthermore, Netanyahu's agreement with Habayit Hayehudi (Jewish Home) stipulates that the government will take steps to legitimize unauthorised settlement outposts in the West Bank.

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7 https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33478.pdf
9 http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/08/us-israel-politics-legislation-factbox-idUSKBN0NT17Y201505
JERUSALEM

J Street Policy Positions

Jerusalem’s ultimate status and borders should be negotiated and resolved as part of an agreement between official Israeli and Palestinian authorities and endorsed by both peoples.

J Street believes that Israel’s capital is in Jerusalem and will be internationally recognized as such in the context of an agreed two-state solution. We believe that the surest way to achieve that international recognition for the Israeli capital in Jerusalem is through a negotiated and viable two-state solution whereby — as outlined in the Clinton parameters and subsequent discussions between the parties — Jewish areas of Jerusalem are secured as the capital of Israel and Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem become the capital of the future Palestinian state.

Negotiations have produced creative ideas for resolving the hardest issues, including sovereignty and management arrangements for the Old City and the Holy Basin that guarantee all Jews freedom of access and worship at the Western Wall, as well as freedom of access and worship for all peoples to their respective holy sites.

In advance of a negotiated resolution, all sides should refrain from unilateral actions – including new construction of Jewish housing in the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, evictions, demolitions and mass revocations of Palestinians’ residency status— that will make the ultimate resolution of this issue even more difficult. J Street is therefore deeply concerned by ever-increasing tensions in Jerusalem and recent provocative actions being taken by the Israeli government and settler groups there, including approval of new Israeli housing construction in Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, the eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, and reports that Israel has stripped record numbers of Palestinians of their Jerusalem residency status in recent years.

American elected officials should respect the need for the permanent status of Jerusalem to be determined in the context of a negotiated two-state solution, and refrain from steps, rhetorical or practical, that inflame an already tense situation – for instance, calling for the immediate relocation of the American Embassy to Jerusalem.

J Street believes that Israel’s capital is in Jerusalem and will be internationally recognized as such in the context of an agreed two-state solution.
Background

OLD CITY

The ancient city of Jerusalem is central to the religion and the nationalism of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, both Muslim and Christian, alike. This makes it the most emotional and volatile of all the issues in dispute between the two parties.\textsuperscript{12} The religious significance for all three peoples is profound. The Western Wall, a small section of the structure surrounding the Temple Mount, the site where Herod's Temple once stood, is the holiest place according to Judaism. Jews turn to face the Temple Mount in prayer and believe the Third Temple will be built at its site upon the coming of the Messiah. For Muslims the Temple Mount, or Haram al Sharif, as it is called in Arabic, is believed to be the site of the Prophet Muhammad's journey to Jerusalem and ascent into heaven. It is also the site of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is built on the site where Jesus was believed to be crucified and then buried and resurrected. Within the church are the last four stations of the cross along the Via Dolorosa and is thus an important place of pilgrimage for Christians.

GREATER JERUSALEM

Beyond this crucial religious significance, Jerusalem is seen by both Jews and Palestinian Arabs, as having national and cultural importance. Since it was the central city in the Kingdom of Judah, it is the only identifiable capital in Jewish history. After Jewish exile by the Romans in 70 A.D. the Jewish community in the city diminished drastically, yet was never extinguished completely. The city also became the symbolic focus of the Zionist movement before the establishment of the State of Israel and during the early building of the nation. For Palestinians, Jerusalem was the cultural and commercial centre of local society. The position of Jerusalem as the natural capital city of Palestine was entrenched during the rise of Palestinian nationalism in the mid 19th and early 20th century, both due to the city's historically religious and cultural importance.\textsuperscript{13}

Israel took control of East Jerusalem, including the Old City, after the 1967 war. In 1980, Israel passed a law which officially annexed the area of East Jerusalem, which went beyond the traditional boundaries of Jerusalem. However this action has not yet been recognised by any international organisation or other country including the United States.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, Israel joined the predominantly Arab population of East Jerusalem with the western, predominantly Jewish populated, part of the city it had controlled since 1948. \textsuperscript{15} The Israeli government sees a difference between settlements in the West Bank and settlement in East Jerusalem, which it calls "neighborhoods." This distinction is not recognised by international law or by any other nation.

To date, the international community has not formally recognised either Israeli or Palestinian sovereignty over Jerusalem. Under the original partition plan by the UN in 1947, Jerusalem was supposed to be under international jurisdiction. Currently, however, the international community generally supports plans to divide Jerusalem, with the creation of a capital city for Israel in western Jerusalem and a capital city for Palestine in East Jerusalem, with the old city under joint jurisdiction or under the trusteeship of an international body or coalition.

\textsuperscript{12} http://tmepp.org/issues/jerusalem/
\textsuperscript{13} ibid
\textsuperscript{14} ibid
\textsuperscript{15} https://www.fes.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33475.pdf
Jerusalem at a Glance

GEOGRAPHY

Area: 49 sq miles
Elevation: 2,575 ft (above sea level)
Climate: mixed subtropical, semiarid climate with dry summers and cool rainy winters
East: city looks down on the Dead Sea and across to the Jordan River to the arid mountains of eastern Jordan
West: city faces the coastal plains and mediterranean sea

POPULATION

Total: 815,300
Arab: 300,200
Jewish: 515,200

Population of areas added post-1967:
Arab: 297,900 (60%)
99% of the Arab population of the whole city
Jewish: 199,650 (40%)
39% of the Jewish population of the whole city

Population increase: 1.5%
Arab: 2.6%
Jewish: 0.9%

Median age: 24 years-old

Religiosity

Jewish population
- 15% defined themselves as very religious
- 60% as religious
- 21% not very religious
- 4% not religious

Non-Jewish population
- 8% very religious
- 48% as religious
- 21% not religious
ECONOMY

Poverty: 48% of population living under the poverty line, 60% of children living under the poverty line

Arab population: 77% of households live under the poverty line

Jewish population: 21% of households live under the poverty line, 56% of which are ultra-orthodox

Unemployment: 8% unemployed in labor force over the age of 15

Labour force participation rate for women: 40%

Employment sectors

- 48% employed in the public sector
- 3% in financial sector
- 12% commercial services

18 Ibid
Area A
Under full control of the Palestinian Authority and comprised primarily of Palestinian urban areas.

Area B
Under Palestinian civil control, Israeli security control and comprising the majority of the Palestinian rural communities.

Area C
Under full Israeli control, except over Palestinian civilians.

Palestinian designated
Nature reserve

Special case (Hebron H2)

1949 Armistice lines
(Green line)

Jerusalem municipality borders

Selected Israeli Settlements

The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of CRS concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Map source: CRS, adapted from the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
THE WEST BANK and SETTLEMENTS

J Street Policy Positions

One of the starkest threats to the two-state solution — and therefore to Israel’s Jewish and democratic nature — is the relentless expansion of Israeli settlements on the West Bank, and J Street has long supported calls for a settlement freeze. Against the backdrop of decades of failed peace efforts, the Israeli settlement movement has pushed the Israeli government single-mindedly and successfully to implement its vision of a single state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Continued settlement growth undermines the prospects for peace by making Palestinians doubt Israeli motives and commitment, and by complicating the territorial compromises that will be necessary in final status talks. The arrangements that have been made for the benefit of settlers and for security — checkpoints, settler-only roads, the route of the security barrier — have all made daily life more difficult for Palestinians, deepening hostility and increasing the odds of violence and conflict. Settlements have strained Israel’s economy, military, and democracy and eroded the country’s ability to uphold the rule of law. A majority of Israelis have recognized this reality and oppose settlement expansion, yet their views have been outweighed by a small, vocal pro-settlement minority.

We recognize that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict pre-dates the establishment of the first Jewish settlement on the West Bank and do not seek to place blame for the present conflict on individual settlers personally. We do, however, hold Israeli policy — implemented by governments of all political backgrounds over decades — responsible for creating the current situation that threatens the security and the future of the national home of the Jewish people.

The solution to the conflict starts with the establishment of an internationally-recognized border through negotiations between Israel and a new state of Palestine. This border will be based on the pre-1967 Green Line, with equivalent swaps of land that allow established Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and some of the large settlement blocs close to the Green Line to be incorporated into the state of Israel. In return, land of equivalent quantity and quality will be swapped from within the pre-1967 Green Line. Settlers who would be relocated within the future border of Israel to make peace possible would be compensated.

Ultimately, the question of settlement expansion should become moot — because the real issue that needs to be addressed and settled quickly is the route of the border between Israel and Palestine. A mutually agreed border drawn according to the international consensus position described above could allow 75 percent or more of all settlers to remain in their current locations. Those settlements will then become part of Israeli recognized sovereign territory and construction there will be able to continue according to the laws and zoning ordinances of those localities.
Yet, until a negotiated border is established, we believe Israel should halt the building and expansion of West Bank settlements as further building directly threatens the cornerstone of any agreed-upon resolution to the conflict: the ability to divide the land into two states.

**Toward that end, we believe that:**

1. **The US government should adopt policies that more strongly convey meaningful American opposition to settlement expansion.**

   Since the early 1980s, the United States has labeled Israeli settlement expansion "illegitimate" or described it as "unhelpful" to the prospects for peace, softening its prior view that such activity is, in fact, illegal under international law. In the face of what amounts to a mild rebuke, the Israeli government has moved full speed ahead with an aggressive program of settlement construction and expansion.

   J Street believes that the US government should undertake a thorough review of its policy regarding settlement expansion, considering at a minimum:
   - Returning to defining West Bank settlements as "illegal," as was the position of the US government before the 1980s and as is the view of the United Nations and most other countries including all of the European Union.
   - Announcing that the next time a balanced resolution, which includes condemnation of the settlements is brought to the UN Security Council, the US will consider, based on the overall text, not exercising its veto.

2. **American Jewish organizations and leaders should speak out against settlement expansion, be transparent about funding to settlements that flows through communal institutions and consider ending funding for projects and activities in the settlements that impede a two-state solution.**

   J Street is deeply concerned that the pre-1967 Green Line separating Israel and the occupied territory is being effectively erased both on the ground and in the consciousness of Israelis, Jews and others around the world.

   The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will require establishing a border through negotiations between Israel and the new state of Palestine – based, as noted previously, on the pre-1967 Green Line with adjustments. Until that border is negotiated, the Green Line remains the internationally-recognized separation between the state of Israel and the territory won in the Six Day War in 1967.

   A disturbing and growing lack of awareness of the Green Line is partially responsible for the 47-year occupation fading from the consciousness of the Israeli and international Jewish publics. Efforts to erase the Green Line from maps and from public awareness serve the interests only of those who seek to establish control over all the territory to the Jordan River.
One step American community groups, businesses, schools and governments could take to foster memory of the distinction between pre-1967 Israel and the subsequently occupied territory would be to use only maps that include the pre-1967 Green Line – a visual reminder of the Green Line and its significance.

More significantly, many American Jewish communal institutions pass contributions through their foundations and other tax-exempt structures to institutions and programs operating on the West Bank. Many of those same organizations' members don't even realize that the institutions they support are doing this. Communal institutions should provide full transparency to supporters regarding the source, amount and purpose of funds transferred through their accounts to institutions and programs on the West Bank.

3. The Israeli government should pursue through negotiations an internationally-recognized border with a new Palestinian state.

With a border established through negotiations on the basis of the pre-1967 lines with equivalent swaps, Israel would be able to build to its heart's content in communities within the borders of the State of Israel. This would result in an internationally-accepted state for the Jewish people in 78 percent of historic Palestine, a magnificent achievement that will assure the security and future of Israel for generations to come.

Accordingly, J Street has called on the government of Israel and on the PLO to indicate acceptance of the principle of two states for two peoples established on the basis of the pre-1967 lines with equivalent swaps.
Background

**THE WEST BANK**

From the early 16th century through 1917, the area now known as the West Bank fell under Ottoman rule. Following World War I, the Allied powers (France, UK, Russia) allocated the area to the British Mandate of Palestine. After World War II, the UN passed a resolution to establish two states within the Mandate, and designated a territory including what is now known as the West Bank as part of the proposed Arab state. Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War the area was captured by Transjordan (later renamed Jordan). Jordan annexed the West Bank in 1950. In June 1967, Israel captured the West Bank and East Jerusalem during the 1967 Six-Day War. With the exception of East Jerusalem and the former Israeli-Jordanian border zone, the West Bank remained under Israeli military control until Israel transferred security and civilian responsibility for many Palestinian-populated areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the Palestinian Authority (PA) under a series of agreements signed between 1994 and 1999. Negotiations to determine the permanent status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip stalled after the outbreak of an intifada in mid-2000.

In early 2003, the “Quartet” of the US, EU, UN, and Russia, presented a roadmap to a final peace settlement by 2005, calling for two states — Israel and a democratic Palestine. Following Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat’s death in late 2004 and the subsequent election of Mahmud Abbas (head of the Fatah political faction) as PA president, Israel and the Palestinians agreed to move the peace process forward. Israel in late 2005 unilaterally withdrew all of its settlers and soldiers and dismantled its military facilities in the Gaza Strip and re-deployed its military from several West Bank settlements but continued to control maritime, airspace, and other access. In early 2006, the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, won the Palestinian Legislative Council election and took control of the PA government. Attempts to form a unity government failed, and violent clashes between Fatah and Hamas supporters ensued, culminating in Hamas’s violent seizure of all military and governmental institutions in the Gaza Strip. Fatah and Hamas have made several attempts at reconciliation, most recently signing an agreement in April 2014 following the collapse of US-brokered peace talks with Israel. The factions, however, have been unable to implement details on governance and security, and the status quo remains with Hamas in de facto control of the Gaza Strip and the PA governing the West Bank.
SETTLEMENTS

The first West Bank settlements were constructed following the 1967 war. West Bank residential settlement building proliferated in the late 1970s with the advent of the pro-settler Gush Emunim ("Bloc of the Faithful") movement and the 1977 electoral victory of Menachem Begin and the Likud Party. Existing settlements were expanded and new ones established by all Israeli governments, throughout the 1990s and 2000s despite the advent of the Madrid-Oslo peace process with the Palestinians. Since around 1999 the settler population has grown at roughly twice the total Israeli population growth rate, with the ratio having been even higher in some previous years. Over the years, the Israeli government has withdrawn settlements in other parts of the country, including complete abandonment in the Sinai Peninsula, following the peace agreement with Egypt, and most recently when Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza strip in 2005. Israeli settlers in the West Bank live under civil law, whilst Palestinian residents of the West Bank are subject to military law. The Israeli government is currently in the process of constructing a separation barrier that roughly tracks the Green Line but also departs from it in some areas. The intended purpose of the barrier is to prevent terrorism from entering Israel. However, critics see it as a mechanism for Israel to unilaterally determine borders between itself and any future Palestinian State.

It is important to note that, the international community in general, considers Israeli construction on territory beyond the Green Line as illegal, violating the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Specifically, article 49 (6), which stipulates that “the occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population onto the territory that it occupies.”

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23 http://femep.org/issues/settlements/
24 http://www.bloombergview.com/quicktake/israeli-settlements
The West Bank at a Glance

**GEOGRAPHY**

Area: 5,860 sq km*

Land: 5,640 sq km

Water: 220 sq km

Landlocked

Irrigated land: 240 sq km**

Current issues: adequacy of freshwater supply, sewage treatment

**POPULATION**

Palestinian population: 2,731,052 (83%)

Israeli population: 356,000 (17%)

Urban population: 75% of total population

**ECONOMY**

Please note: it is difficult to find data which aggregates data on the economy in Gaza and the West Bank. The two regions differ greatly in the economic status and therefore data has been presented separately in this briefing book. This means, however, that statistics are less accurate and should be treated as estimates only.

GDP: $4.4 billion

Unemployment: 16%

Youth Unemployment: 26%

Israel employs 12% of West Bank labor force

Poverty: 18% living under the poverty line

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25 CIA Factbook

*Includes West Bank, Latrun Salient, and the northwest quarter of the Dead Sea, but excludes Mt. Scopus and East Jerusalem. Jerusalem No Man's Land are also included only as a means of depicting the entire area occupied by Israel in 1967

**Includes Gaza Strip

Map source: U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNOSAT, with additional data from UNRWA; adapted by CRS.
the volume of imported supplies before the establishment of the blockade. Since the initial implementation of the blockade in 2005, restrictions on materials allowed to be entered into the Strip have been eased. However, the siege is still deemed by most human rights organizations as causing a serious humanitarian crisis in the area. Hamas has responded to the siege by regularly raining rockets into southern Israeli towns from Gaza, with periodic outbreaks of violence occurring between the two parties since 2006.

28 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7545636.stm
Gaza Facts and Figures

**POPULATION**
1.79 million
- Refugees: 1.25 million
- Median Age: 18.2
- Population Growth: 2.9%
- Urban Population: 75.3%

**ECONOMY**
- Real GDP Growth Rate: -10.5%
- GDP per capita: $1,190
- Export commodities: fruits, vegetables, flowers
- Import commodities: food, consumer goods
- Unemployment: 45.1%
- Population under the Poverty Line: 39%

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Current Situation

The summer 2014 conflict lasting approximately 50 days between Israel and Hamas (along with other Palestinian militants based in Gaza) was the third major conflict between the two parties in the past six years, with previous conflicts occurring in December 2008-January 2009 and November 2012. Though distinct, each arguably has featured mutual tests of military capability, domestic political cohesion, and deterrence in times of political change. This round of fighting, however, was the most destructive since Israel's disengagement in 2005, killing more that 2,000 people in Gaza, 66 Israeli soldiers and five Israeli civilians,\(^30\) as well as injuring more than 10,000 Gazans and nearly 850 Israeli civilians and soldiers.\(^31\) The devastation to Gaza's infrastructure was unprecedented, leaving about 30% of the population displaced from their homes at some point during the conflict.

Reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in Gaza are being pursued by the international community as well as regional powers. Shortly after the Egypt brokered ceasefire on August 26, 2014, the United Nations brokered a “Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism” among Israel, the PA, and Hamas. The mechanism is intended to distance Hamas from the reconstruction process by involving the PA and UN more directly and advancing the following objectives:

- a. Enable the [PA] to lead the reconstruction effort;
- b. Enable the Gazan private sector;
- c. Assure donors that their investments in construction work in Gaza will be implemented without delay;
- d. Address Israeli security concerns related to the use of construction and other “dual use” material.

However, reports indicate that importing construction materials remains complicated and is proceeding relatively slowly. In many respects, UNRWA, other international organizations and non-governmental organizations take care of the day-to-day humanitarian needs of many of Gaza's residents. They have played more significant roles during and after the summer 2014 conflict in providing temporary shelter, other assistance, and trying to facilitate reconstruction. However, international donations have not kept pace with stated needs, possibly at least partly owing to global economic factors as well as to humanitarian crises in Syria, Iraq, and other places.

During the Summer 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict, a number of incidents took place involving UNRWA schools. These included damage inflicted on some schools sheltering Palestinian civilians that led to a number of deaths and injuries, and also included possible illicit use of vacant UNRWA schools by Palestinian militants to store weapons. The incidents triggered public debate regarding actions both by Israel and by UNRWA. In November 2014, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon formed an independent board of inquiry. The inquiry published a report on June 22 2015, detailing the actions of Israeli forces in Gaza and Hamas's launch of rockets and mortars into Israel. The report concluded that both Israeli and Palestinian militants were responsible for violations of international law that could amount to war crimes.

\(^30\) http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_10_03_english.pdf  
\(^31\) http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_10_03_english.pdf
There have been allegations of UN bias against Israel, particularly in the UN inquiry into the 2014 Gaza war. The head of the inquiry William Schabas resigned after allegations of bias due to his consultancy work for the Palestinian Liberation Organization. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon admitted in a speech to Israeli students in Jerusalem that Israel “has been weighed down by criticism and suffered from bias — and sometimes even discrimination” at the UN.

### Major Israel-Hamas Conflicts Since 2008

**December 2008-January 2009: Israeli code name “Operation Cast Lead”**
- Three-week duration, first meaningful display of Palestinians’ Iranian-origin rockets, Israeli air strikes and ground offensive
- Political context: Impending leadership transitions in Israel and United States; struggling Israeli-Palestinian peace talks (Annapolis process)
- Fatalities: More than 1,100 (possibly more than 1,400) Palestinians; 13 Israelis (three civilians)

**November 2012: “Operation Pillar of Defense (or Cloud)”**
- Eight-day duration, Palestinian projectiles of greater range and variety, Israeli airstrike, prominent role for Iron Dome
- Political context: Widespread Arab political change, including rise of Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt; three months before Israeli elections
- Fatalities: More than 100 Palestinians, six Israelis (four civilians)

**July-August 2014: “Operation Protective Edge/Mighty Cliff”**
- About 50-day duration, Palestinian projectiles of greater range and variety, Israeli air strikes and ground offensive, extensive Palestinian use of and Israeli countermeasures against tunnels, prominent role for Iron Dome
- Political context: Shortly after (1) unsuccessful round of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, (2) PA consensus government formation and end of Hamas’s formal responsibilities for governing Gaza, (3) prominent youth killings
- Fatalities: More than 2,100 Palestinians, 71 Israelis (five civilians), and one foreign worker
Background

The region of Gaza, a 25-mile long, 7-mile wide finger of land along the Mediterranean at the border between Israel and Egypt, has been at the center of geopolitical tug-of-wars for its entire existence. After the 1948 Israeli-Arab war, the Armistice Agreement gave Jordan control over the West Bank region of Palestine while Egypt gained control of Gaza. Gaza became densely populated with Arab refugees expelled from the newly independent Israel. While in the West Bank, Jordan offered citizenship to many of the refugees, Egypt did not extend the offer to Gazans; they remained under Egyptian military rule until Israel reoccupied the strip following the 1967 war.

The first organized Palestinian uprising or “intifada” against Israeli rule came from a refugee camp in northern Gaza in 1987 and quickly spread across the region. During the revolt, which brought international attention to the Palestinian cause, the political party known as Hamas was created as a Palestinian extension of the popular Muslim Brotherhood Organization that had already swept through Egypt and much of the Arab world. Hamas gained momentum in the occupied region, especially in Gaza, by establishing educational and social programs for disenfranchised Palestinians. However, amongst the international community and Israel, Hamas has been criticised for calling for the destruction of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state, and for outwardly rejecting peace negotiations, explicitly stating in its manifesto that “there is no solution for the Palestinian problem except by Jihad.” Indeed, the organisation’s tactics of resistance to Israel through terror attacks and suicide bombings, caused the, EU (2001, US (1997), UK (2001), Canada (2002), Japan, Australia (2003), and Israel to categorise Hamas as a terrorist organisation.

Hamas’ militancy strained the 1993 Oslo Accords, brokered between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which relinquished control of parts of occupied Gaza and the West Bank to a semi-autonomous government, the Palestinian Authority, in exchange for an agreement to stem the violence. The Palestinian Authority’s inability to halt attacks from groups like Hamas and its mismanagement of the occupied areas, combined with Israel’s refusal to dismantle the remaining settlements, fractured the accord and led to a second Palestinian Intifada in 2000.

Israel unilaterally disengaged from Gaza in 2005, dismantling Jewish settlements and removing IDF forces from the strip. In 2006, Hamas cemented its increased popularity in Gaza winning 74 out of 132 seats in parliamentary elections, and thus edging out rival group Fatah, a more secular offshoot of the Palestinian Authority led by President Mahmoud Abbas, a result that shocked Israeli and Western observers. Fatah’s refusal to relinquish control following the election forced an explosive week-long showdown between western-backed Fatah forces and Hamas; the infighting culminated with the expulsion of Fatah security forces from Gaza and a de facto divide of the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority between the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip and the West Bank, which remained under Fatah control.

Following the battle, Israel imposed a blockade on Gaza in an attempt to strangle the Strip’s economy and undermine Hamas’ ability to govern. As well as sealing off all border crossings, the land, sea and air blockade resulted in Israeli control over food, fuel, electricity, water and materials entering the Strip, with 1.5 million Gazans now relying on less than a quarter of

27 http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1870148,00.html
Iran and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

J Street believes that Iran obtaining nuclear weapons would pose a very serious threat to American and Israeli interests and to peace and stability in the Middle East and around the world. J Street strongly condemns the Iranian regime’s vile anti-American, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic rhetoric, its outrageous support for acts of international terrorism, its destabilizing and bloody meddling in the affairs of its neighbors, and its deplorable domestic human rights record.

J Street therefore strongly endorses American and international efforts to ensure that Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon. We have supported the Obama administration’s approach on the issue, which has emphasized strong international sanctions leading to diplomacy.

To that end, J Street lobbied for the passage of multiple rounds of strong sanctions against the Iranian regime. We also supported President Obama’s early and successful effort to secure unprecedented multilateral sanctions through the United Nations Security Council.

J Street strongly supports the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreed by Iran, the United States and five major world powers on July 14, 2015. We worked tirelessly to ensure the agreement was not rejected by Congress, because we believe that it blocks all of Iran’s paths toward developing a nuclear weapon and is underpinned by a robust regime of international monitoring and inspections. The JCPOA thereby advances US security interests and removes an existential threat to Israel.

With Congressional review of the JCPOA completed, J Street has adopted four principles on next steps regarding Iran to help ensure the successful implementation of the nuclear agreement while advancing policies that complement that effort and advance priorities that strengthen the security interests of the United States, our ally Israel, and our partners in the region:

1. J Street will oppose the inevitable effort to treat the nuclear agreement like a foreign policy version of the Affordable Care Act, with direct or stealth efforts to kill it in the cradle. We anticipate legal challenges, riders to defund US contributions to the IAEA, and myriad efforts to pass new sanctions to blow up the agreement. This is the “Groundhog Day” scenario. Opponents will find new and increasingly desperate ways to dismantle what they failed to derail through the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. Some of these efforts will be dressed up in tempting terminology but will be no less destructive. We have to remain vigilant and steadfast.

2. Like the oath every doctor swears to uphold, the goal should be to “do no harm.” In many ways, the debate engendered by the INAPRA has been heartening in that so many lawmakers took the time to dive deeply into the issues, seeking out expert analysis, and reasonably, soberly measuring the agreement’s strengths and weaknesses. It has been a marked contrast to some of the hurried policy-making that lead the United States into the Iraq War and empowered Iran a decade ago. Rushing to pass new legislation too quickly, without weighing
all its potential implications and consequences, would not be in the actual interests of the United States, Israel, or our other allies.

3. We should identify the constructive steps to a) strengthen our ally Israel and our Middle Eastern partners and b) counter dangerous Iranian behavior such as its support for terror proxies or its destabilizing activities in Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon. Many times in the last months, the point has been made correctly by deal proponents that Soviet aggression in places like Afghanistan did not prevent the United States from reducing the risk of nuclear confrontation; likewise, today we must be able to continue and enhance US efforts to address the full range of threats posed by Iran and a deeply unstable region.

4. J Street will engage above and beyond the purely legislative arena. While there are going to be legislative efforts that will be constructive, Congress has many ways to impact the policy process without necessarily passing even a single piece of legislation. Congressional travel to the Middle East and to Europe that underscores our continued opposition to Iranian misbehavior and our commitment to Israel, speeches and congressional letters, and engagement with our P5+1 partners to send a unified message about planning for snap-back sanctions are imperative. After a domestic debate that has showed our partners divisions at home and a presidential race that may only highlight those divisions, sending messages of commonality are equally important.
Palestinian International Initiatives

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT ACTIONS

In early January 2015, Palestinian leaders deposited an instrument of accession for the “State of Palestine” to become party to the Rome Statute of the ICC, after declaring acceptance in late December 2014 of ICC jurisdiction over crimes allegedly “committed in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, since June 13, 2014.” Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas signed the Rome Statute, and other international agreements on April 1st. Palestinian leaders publicly anticipate providing information to the ICC on alleged Israeli crimes regarding both the Summer 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict and settlement activity in the West Bank. In the hopes that the courts will take action to reprimand and pressure Israel regarding its policies in the occupied territories.

The Obama Administration and some Members of Congress have criticized the Palestinians’ ICC related actions. The State Department spokesperson has argued that the Palestinians are ineligible to accede to the Rome Statute, and has also indicated opposition to an apparently retaliatory move by Israel to freeze the transfer of tax and customs revenues to the PA that Israel collects on the PA’s behalf. Furthermore, both the US and Israel have objected to a unilateral approach by the Palestinians to international bodies, arguing that they undermine chances for a negotiated peace deal.

UNITED NATIONS

The PLO has pursued a number of international initiatives that are part of a broader effort to obtain greater international recognition of Palestinian statehood, and apparently to place international legal or economic pressure on Israel in order to strengthen the PLO’s hand in negotiations. Some 130 out of 193 U.N. member states have reportedly formally recognized the state of Palestine that was declared by the PLO in 1988, mostly outside of the group of North American and Western European countries that are the PA’s main financial patrons and exercise considerable political influence in the region.

In the fall of 2014, Sweden became the first Western European country to formally recognize Palestinian statehood, and nonbinding resolutions in favor of recognition have been passed in houses of parliament in a number of other European countries, including the United Kingdom, France, and Spain. In December 2014, the European Parliament passed a resolution expressing support in principle for Palestinian statehood.

On November 29, 2012, the U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution 67/19. The resolution changed the permanent U.N. observer status of the PLO (recognized as “Palestine” within the U.N. system) from an “entity” to a “non-member state.”

The Palestinians and Arab states are reportedly planning to arrange for the introduction of another U.N. Security Council draft resolution seeking to establish parameters for resuming Israeli-Palestinian talks, amid speculation that the change in composition of the Council from 2014 to 2015 might augur well for the draft resolution’s chances at garnering nine votes. The
United States has stated its willingness to veto draft resolutions that seek to dictate the terms of an Israeli-Palestinian final-status agreement outside negotiations. It is unclear whether US officials would veto a document establishing broad parameters governing the negotiations’ resumption, scope, and conduct.

Information for this section taken from the following resources:


Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement

Background

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS Movement) is a global campaign attempting to increase economic and political pressure on Israel to comply with their stated goals of:

1. “Ending Israel’s occupation and colonization of all Arab lands occupied in June 1967 and dismantling the wall

2. Recognizing the fundamental rights if the Arab- Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality

3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194”

The tactics employed for the achievement of these stated goals are:

1. **Boycotts:** calling for consumers not to buy goods as well as businesses not to sell products, either made in Israel or by Israeli companies. Calling for international institutions and individuals not to collaborate with Israeli cultural and academic individuals and institutions.

2. **Divestment:** Ensure that university investment portfolios and pension funds are not used to finance Israeli companies

3. **Sanctions:** Imposed by the international community to demonstrate disapproval for Israel’s actions
J Street Positions

The question of boycotts, divestment and sanctions is likely to grow in importance in the months and years ahead, especially in the absence of a credible diplomatic vehicle for reaching a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The issue is already rolling campuses and beginning to make an impact on Capitol Hill. J Street has a well-thought out and principled position to guide its work.

Below are the bedrock principles that guide us in responding to and dealing with BDS.

**Principle #1: We do not advocate for or support any boycott, divestment or sanctions initiative whatsoever**

**Principle #2: J Street has always been and remains opposed to the Global BDS Movement**

J Street advocates for a two-state solution and a secure, Jewish, and democratic future for Israel. The Global BDS Movement does not support the two-state solution, recognize the right of the Jewish people to a state, or distinguish between opposition to the existence of Israel itself and opposition to the occupation of the territory beyond the Green Line. Further, some of the Movement’s supporters and leaders have trafficked in unacceptable anti-Semitic rhetoric. The Movement is not a friend to Israel, nor does its agenda, in our opinion, advance the long-term interests of either the Israeli or Palestinian people.

**Principle #3: We do not oppose boycott, divestment, or sanctions initiatives that explicitly support a two-state solution, recognize Israel’s right to exist, and focus only on occupied territory beyond the Green Line**

These kinds of initiatives are different than those advocated and initiated by the Global BDS Movement.

It is critical to maintain the distinction between boycott and divestment efforts which work against the interests of Israel, and initiatives which are limited to opposing the occupation.

While we do not oppose these initiatives, we do not support them, either.

**Principle #4: There is a fundamental distinction between the State of Israel and the territory that it controls over the Green Line, and that distinction must be maintained**

J Street believes it is vital for the future of Israel that this distinction be maintained, and clarified wherever it is now obscured. Funds contributed to the settlement movement help perpetuate the occupation and blur the distinction between democratic Israel and the occupied territory beyond the Green Line.
Our work on this principle takes place at three basic levels: individual, communal, and governmental.

**Individual:** We believe that individuals should have as much information and agency as possible when deciding how to contribute money to Israel. Individuals should be able to choose for themselves whether they wish to purchase products made in the occupied territory.

**Communal:** We believe that non-profit organizations and institutions have an obligation to provide the members of their communities with maximum transparency about how, where, and why funds are spent in Israel and in Israeli-controlled territory.

Organizations should make clear whether and to what extent they contribute funds to projects in the settlements. If they have an internal policy prohibiting, limiting or permitting the contribution of funds to projects in the settlements, they should make this policy public.

**Governmental:** Since 1967, the United States government, through nine presidential administrations, has clearly insisted that the settlement enterprise in occupied territory is illegitimate and counterproductive to Israel’s interests and the cause of regional peace and stability. Until 1981 the U.S. government labeled the settlements “illegal” under international law.

J Street has urged the Obama Administration to reiterate the position that the settlements are illegal.

We believe that the actions of the U.S. government should line up with this long-standing policy of opposition to settlements, and we will advocate for it to maintain and enforce that policy through its actions. Further, we will oppose legislative efforts at the state and federal level which, by blurring the distinction between Israel and the territory it controls over the Green Line, acts to contravene that longstanding policy.

**Principle #5: The Global BDS Movement can only be successfully opposed with a genuine commitment to ending the occupation and achieving a two-state solution**

Opposition to the Global BDS Movement that refuses to countenance any criticism of the occupation or of Israeli policy will never succeed in winning over any Movement supporters, and will only drive more and more frustrated and concerned people into their camp. It is precisely the wrong approach, and it is having a devastatingly counter-productive effect, especially on campus.

We are confident that our policy and approach - pro-Israel, pro-peace, anti-occupation - is by far the most effective means of countering the Global BDS Movement and maintaining support for Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state. It is rooted in a recognition of the real problems facing Israelis and Palestinians, and based on the progressive values and desire for pragmatic action that motivate students and activists.
Principle #6: Efforts to exclude BDS Movement supporters from public forums and to ban them from conversations are misguided and doomed to fail. We support publicly debating and otherwise engaging with supporters of the BDS Movement.

We are strong advocates of publicly debating BDS Movement supporters. We have proudly participated in such debates in the past and we will continue to do so. We are confident that our arguments against the BDS Movement are strong enough to win on their own merits, without the need to resort to attacks and exclusion.

Further, J Street is opposed to rhetoric that refers to the Global BDS Movement as a form of terrorism or violence. Such attacks oversimplify and misrepresent a complicated phenomenon, and they trivialize the horrific acts of actual terrorism and violence which Israel has faced and continues to face.