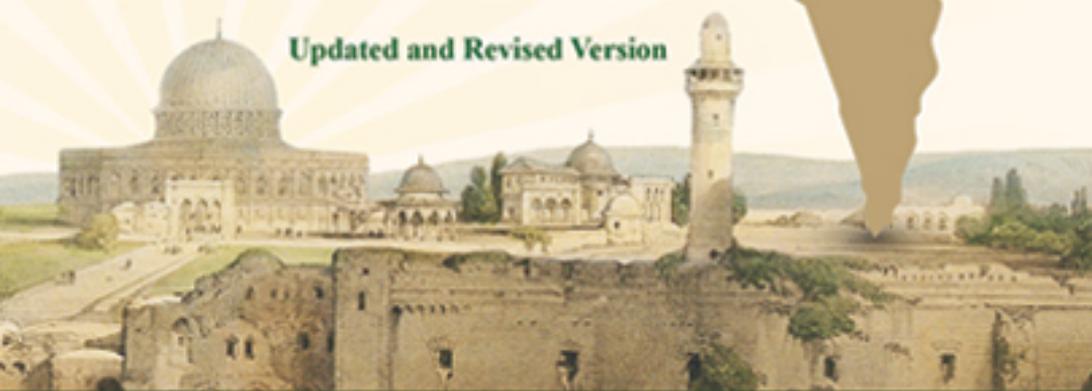


# **Basic Facts on the Palestine Issue**

**Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh**

**Updated and Revised Version**



Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations

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**Al-Zaytouna Centre**  
For Studies & Consultations  
Beirut - Lebanon

## **Basic Facts on the Palestine Issue**

**حقائق وثوابت في القضية الفلسطينية**

*Haqa'iq wa Thawabit fi al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah*

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**P.O. Box:** 14-5034, Beirut, Lebanon

**Tel:** + 961 1 803 644

**Tel-fax:** + 961 1 803 643

**Email:** info@alzaytouna.net

**Website:** www.alzaytouna.net

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## Introduction

This booklet seeks to present an intensified and concise database, on which an Islamic understanding of the Palestine issue is built. It gathers all the information, facts, fundamentals and concepts that the author believes are indispensable to those who deal with the Palestine issue. It is a concise book that is too small to include details or endnotes. Despite all that, the author based his information on reliable scientific sources. Titling the book “Basic Facts..” doesn’t necessarily mean that they are ultimate facts, since it is a human endeavor susceptible to error. The door is open to every advice and orientation.

This edition comes after numerous editions of this booklet that were published over the past twenty years. However, this edition is an updated and revised one, until 2020; and there is another edition that has provided for the first time pictures and illustrations.

We thank Almighty Allah that publishing this book was facilitated. Hundreds of thousands of Arabic copies were printed in Egypt, UAE, Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco and Malaysia. It was also translated into several languages, such as English, French, German, Swahili, Urdu, Bahasa Malaysia, Indonesian, Albanian, Kurdish, Turkish, Farsi, Tatar, and Thai.

**Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Professor of Palestine Studies and Modern and Contemporary Arab History, former head of Department of History and Civilization at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and now the general manager of al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.





## 1 The Land of Palestine

The name “Palestine” is designated to the south western part of *Bilad al-Sham* (i.e., countries of Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon). It is an Arab Muslim land situated on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, west of the Asian continent. It is the connecting link between Asia and Africa. Palestine is, also, distinguished by its close proximity to Europe. At the same time, it is located in the heart of the Arab world and the Muslim world, connecting their two wings. This makes it of great strategic importance. It is bordered on the north by Lebanon, to the northeast by Syria, to the east by Jordan and to the south by Egypt. The area of historic Palestine, according to its present known boundaries, is 27,009 km<sup>2</sup>. It is distinguished by the diversity of its terrain, and enjoys a moderate Mediterranean climate.

## 2 An Ancient Civilized Land

The land of Palestine is amongst the oldest inhabited parts of the world. There are ruins dating back to the Old Stone Age (500 thousand – 14 thousand BC) and the Middle Stone Age (14 thousand – 8 thousand BC), which is called in Palestine the Natufian culture. According to contemporary archaeological discoveries, it is the first land that experienced the transformation of primordial human life to a sedentary and agricultural one, i.e., before about 11 thousand years (9000 BC). The world’s oldest city, Jericho, was founded in Palestine about 8000 BC. It has since remained a splendid abode of various civilizations until our time.



### 3 The Religious Significance of Palestine

Palestine has a unique place in the heart of every Muslim. It is, according to the *Quran*, a sacred and blessed land.<sup>2</sup> It contains *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the first *Qibla* or direction of Muslim prayer, the second mosque consecrated to *Allah* (SWT) (God) on earth and the third most sacred mosque in Islam. It is also the land of *Al-Isra'* (i.e., The Night Journey). To its sacred realm, the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) was taken on a miraculous night journey. It is the land of the prophets. Many of the prophets mentioned in the Holy *Quran* were born, raised, and buried in its soil may the peace of *Allah* (SWT) be upon them all. From an Islamic perspective, it is the land of the Gathering and Resurrection and the centre of the abode of Islam. It is the abode of the victorious and righteous, people who adhere to the truth, till the day of resurrection.

The land of Palestine is also holy to Jews and Christians. The Jews regard it as their promised land, the focal point of their history and the resting place of their prophets. The centres of their holy sites are in Jerusalem and Hebron. The Christians consider it the cradle of their religion, as '*Issa* (P.B.U.H)—Jesus—was born there and conveyed his mission in it. The great centres of Christianity, namely Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth are in Palestine.

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<sup>2</sup> In the Islamic understanding, the borders of sacredness and blessing of Palestine's land is not necessarily confined to today's known geographical borders. These borders were set by the British occupation in the period 1922–1923. The "blessing" includes all of Bilad al-Sham.

#### **4 Muslims, the Heirs of the Monotheism Banner**

From an Islamic perspective, Muslims believe that they are the true heirs worthy of carrying out the mission and the legacies of David, Solomon, the Prophets of the Children of Israel and their venerable forefathers, of those who ruled Palestine for a period of time under the banner of monotheism (*Tawheed*). The legitimacy of their rule was transferred to Muslims because they are the ones who raised the banner of monotheism after those prophets and have pursued their path.

#### **5 The Muslim Civilized Rule**

During their rule of Palestine, the general attitude of Muslims—especially in Jerusalem—was civilized and based on tolerance, coexistence, justice and benevolence toward those of different religion, ethnicity and social status (ensuring the rights of Jews, Christians and others, protecting them and preventing any offence or unjust acts against them). Furthermore, Muslims opened the doors to the followers of other religions to fully participate (on the same footing) in building the Islamic Civilization. While, historically, the general attitude of the others who ruled Palestine was a negative one that failed to coexist with other religions, oppressing their followers and trying to get rid of them; as the Romans, Crusaders and others did before, and as well as the Israelis do these days.

#### **6 The People of Palestine**

The oldest people to inhabit Palestine and inscribe their mark upon it are the “Canaanites.” They came from the Arabian Peninsula



about 4,500 years ago; hence the first known name of the Land was the “Land of Canaan.” The present day Palestinians are the descendants of the Canaanites, the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean, i.e., the PLST (Peleset) or the Philistines, and Arab tribes who inter-married with them thereafter. Although various peoples had ruled Palestine, the land’s indigenous people continued to inhabit it uninterruptedly. The overwhelming majority of these inhabitants embraced Islam, and on its advent, they adopted the Arabic language as their *lingua franca*. Thus, the Arab and Islamic identity of Palestine has been uninterruptedly established since the Islamic *Futuh* (conquests) in 15 AH/ 636 CE and until today, though a big part of the population has been forcibly expelled by the Israeli occupation in 1948.

## **7 The Right of Muslims to the Land of Palestine**

The Jewish claim of their historical rights in Palestine is not equivalent to the claims of Arabs and Muslims. Indeed, the sons of Palestine inhabited and developed the lands for more than 1,500 years before the Children of Israel established their state. They continued to inhabit it during the existence of that state and after Jewish links with Palestine were severed. The Jews ruled over parts of Palestine, and not all of it, for about four centuries (1,000–586 BC).<sup>3</sup> Their rule faded away as did the rule of other foreign powers, like the Assyrians, Persians, Pharaohs, Greeks and Romans, while the Palestinian people remained firmly rooted in their land.

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<sup>3</sup> After the death of Solomon (P.B.U.H) in 923 BC, his kingdom was divided into two states: Israel in the north was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC; and Judea which fell in the hands of the Babylonians in 586 BC.

With the brief interlude of 90 years during the Crusades, the Islamic rule of about 1,200 years is the longest in Palestinian history (636–1917 CE). The capacity of Jewish people to settle in Palestine was effectively non-existent for about 1,800 years, from 135 CE until the 20th century. During that period, they had no political, civilizational or leadership presence in Palestine. Indeed, their religious teachings prohibited any return to it. As established by several Jewish researchers and scholars,<sup>4</sup> the vast majority of contemporary Jews are in no way related to Palestine, nor are they descendants of the Children of Israel. Almost 80% of Jews today trace their origins to the Khazars (Ashkenaz), who inhabited the northern Caucasus region and were Judaized during the 8th–10th centuries CE. Thus, if members of the Jewish community want to invoke their right of return it should be to the areas which they originally inhabited as opposed to the area of Palestine.

Additionally, the Jewish claim of their historic association with Palestine and their link to it is questionable in face of the fact that the majority of the Children of Israel refused to join Moses in his exodus to the Holy Land. Similarly, most of them refused to return to it from Babylon, though the Persian Emperor Cyrus the Great had offered to guarantee their safety.

## **8 The Origins of the Zionist Movement**

The Zionist movement, that strove to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, owes its existence to the pro-Zionist agitation amongst the European Christians, especially the Protestants since the 16th century, who campaigned for the assembly of the Jews in Palestine.

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<sup>4</sup> Like A. Koestler, A. N. Polak, K. L. Brook, S. Sand, and E. Elaik.



Other factors for this development were the failure of the Jewish enlightenment (*Haskala*) to assimilate them in the societies, in which they resided, as well the rise of nationalist patriotic ideologies and nation states in Europe, on which the “emancipation of the Jews” and their transformation into citizens was based on. In the 19th century, the emergence of the “Jewish Question,” notably in east Europe, and the Russian suppression of the Jews, acted as precipitants to Zionist ambitions in Palestine. In their drive to achieve this goal, the Jews made use of the good offices of some of them who rose to certain positions of influence in Europe and the United States (US). In addition, a number of west European and American countries resisted the absorption of the waves of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, instead they wanted to divert them elsewhere.

### **9** The Danger of the Zionist Project

The establishment of the Zionist entity to fulfil the role of being a “buffer state” and a colonial stronghold, supported by western colonialism, especially the British, represents the pinnacle of the western-Zionist threat. By establishing it in the heart of the Islamic and Arab lands, it would split the two wings of the Islamic world in Asia and Africa into two separate parts. It would obstruct Muslim unity and thereby weaken it. Hence, this would ensure that the Arab and Muslim world remains divided and incapable of any revival, rotating instead in the orbit of subservience, producing raw materials and consuming western commodities. The chances of the Zionist State continuing to enjoy stability and growth in a hostile environment rest upon an assurance that the Muslim states around

it remain weak, fragmented and underdeveloped. Likewise, the likelihood of the revival of the Muslim *Ummah* (nation), its unity, and strength is also dependent upon its ability to end the Zionist occupation of Palestine.

### **10 The World Zionist Organization**

The World Zionist Organization (WZO) was founded in Basle in August 1897 under the leadership of Theodor Herzl. It sought to establish a state for the Jews in Palestine and linked itself to the western colonial projects. It failed to obtain anything substantial until the end of the First World War. The Zionist movement is a racist movement founded on the basis of the Jewish religion, heritage and nationalism. The condition for its success is dependent upon the abrogation of Palestinians' rights in their land and replacing them. There is no fundamental difference among the various strands of Zionist thought, be it secularist, socialist, religious or political. Indeed, all strands of Zionism are unified by the principal common goal of establishing a homeland for the Jewish people.

### **11 The British Adoption of the Zionist Project**

Britain adopted the Zionist project, and on 2/11/1917 issued the Balfour Declaration for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, and managed to complete its occupation of Palestine in September 1918. It contradicted to its pledges of freedom and independence to the Arabs under the leadership of Sheriff Hussein. It, moreover, divided the areas of *al-Sham* and Iraq into spheres of influence between itself and France according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement (May 1916), which planned to make



Palestine under international control. Subsequently, Britain gained control of Palestine by virtue of San Remo Agreement of April 1920. It also managed to include the Balfour Declaration in the mandatory for Palestine, which was acknowledged by the Council of the League of Nations in July 1922.

### **12 Palestine Under Occupation**

During the period of its occupation of Palestine (1918–1948), Britain opened the doors of immigration before the Jews. Their number skyrocketed from 55 thousand in 1918 to 646 thousand in 1948, (i.e., from 8% to 31.7% of the population). It also supported the acquisition of land, so much so, that Jewish ownership increased from approximately 420 thousand donums (1 donum = 1000 m<sup>2</sup>) (1.6% of the land) to about 1.7 million donums (6.3% of the land of Palestine). All this was channelled to the Jews mostly by the British authorities or non-Palestinians. The Palestinian people managed, despite the severe conditions and suffering, to stand firm in their land throughout the 30 years, maintaining their majority population status (68.3%) and controlling most of the land (93.7%). Nonetheless, The Zionist Jews managed, with the active help and cover of the British occupation, to establish economic, political, educational, military and social institutions. By 1948 they had established 292 settlements and formed a military force of about 70 thousand fighters from the Haganah, Irgun and Stern terrorist groups, and prepared to declare their state.

### **13 The Palestinian Resistance 1917–1948**

Although the British empire and great powers policies against Palestine was much larger than the ability of its people to defend, they, nevertheless, rejected the British occupation and the Zionist project, and, therefore, demanded their independence. The Islamic and nationalist movements under the leadership of Musa Kazim al-Hussaini and Haj Amin al-Hussaini spearheaded a number of political initiatives that included mass mobilization and popular uprisings. The first of these was the Jerusalem uprising in 1920, which was followed by similar uprisings in Jaffa in 1921, *al-Buraq* Wall in 1929 and October 1933. The “Jihadiyyah” movement under the leadership of ‘Ezzedine al-Qassam, took an important role in the resistance. Under the pressure of the Palestinian Revolt of 1936–1939, Britain was forced to issue the White Paper of May 1939 promising to enable the independent Palestine State to come into being within 10 years, to prohibit transfers of Palestinian land to the Jews except under very exceptional circumstances, and to prohibit further Jewish immigration after five years. However, in November 1945 after World War II, the British authorities through the Ernest Bevin Statement betrayed these obligations, and new life was breathed into the Zionist project under the auspices of the United States of America.

### **14 The 1947 Partition of Palestine Resolution**

On 29/11/1947, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly issued Resolution No. 181 recommending the partition of Palestine into two states, one Arab and the other Jewish (about 54.7% of the



land going to the Jewish state, 44.8% to the Arab state while 0.5% which includes the area of Jerusalem, was designated as a *corpus separatum* under a special international regime). Within the very context of the UN, the resolutions of the General Assembly are, however, not binding. Besides, Resolution No. 181 contradicted the basis upon which the UN was itself founded, that is the right of people to enjoy freedom and self-determination. Furthermore, the people who were primarily affected, the Palestinians, were never consulted, not to mention as a matter of fact the oppression that was reflected in granting the immigrant Jewish minority the greater portion and the best part of the land.

### **15 The 1948 War and Its Results**

The Zionists announced the creation of their state “Israel” on the night of 14/5/1948. They managed to defeat the Arab armies, which reflected a model of poor leadership, weak coordination and inexperience. To make matters worse, some of them were under colonial influence. The Zionists seized 77% of the land of Palestine (20,770 km<sup>2</sup>) and forcibly expelled 800 thousand inhabitants out of a total of 925 thousand Palestinians outside the area in which they established their state (The Palestinian population was estimated in 1948 to be 1.39 million Palestinians in whole Palestine). They obliterated most of Palestinian villages, and perpetrated dozens of massacres.

As for what remained of Palestine, Jordan officially annexed the West Bank (WB) (5,876 km<sup>2</sup>), while Egypt placed the Gaza Strip (GS) (363 km<sup>2</sup>) under its administration. The UN agreed to Israel’s membership into the world body on condition that it allows the

Palestinian refugees to return to the homes and villages from which they were expelled. But, to this day, Israel adamantly and absolutely refuses to comply with this demand. It is a state that is based on oppression, racism and religious fanaticism. It is an entity with no official borders and no written constitution, thus contradicting the most conspicuous features of a modern civilized state.

### **16 The Nature of the 1948–1967 Period**

The Palestinian leadership was represented in the Arab Higher Commission by its head Hajj Amin al-Hussaini. On 23/9/1948, the Committee established the All-Palestine government in Gaza, and on 1/10/1948, in the Gaza conference, it declared the independence of Palestine. However, it was confronted with the rivalry of some Arab regimes while others ignored it. It was prevented from exercising its authority in what remained of Palestine (WB and GS); while its influence waned abroad in the following years. Throughout the period 1948–1967, the slogans of “Nationalistic Battle” and “Unity is the Way to Liberation” were given much prominence among Arab regimes. They, led by Jamal ‘Abdel Nasser, took the initiative, while the role of the Palestinian leadership was curtailed, clearing the way for a presumable Arab solution.

But the Arab regimes lacked the correct methodology, seriousness and genuine will to fight. They did not learn from the experience of the Tripartite Aggression (Israeli-British-French) on Egypt in 1956, and the Israeli occupation of GS and Sinai. They adopted the Palestinian resistance for several tactical reasons and not as part of a comprehensive strategic plan. Meanwhile, they were engaged in playing on the emotions of the masses instead of preparing them for



liberation, while the “young” Zionist state became, progressively, stronger and more entrenched. Nonetheless, there was Palestinian resistance during this period, where hundreds of border crossings and operations, by individuals and groups, took place.

### **17 The Palestine Liberation Organization**

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964 under the leadership of Ahmad Shuqayri, and with the direct support of Gamal Abdel Nasser, who feared that matters would slip out of his control, after the emergence of secret movements and organizations in the Palestinian scene, especially Fatah whose roots can be traced to 1957. The PLO aimed at liberating all the Palestinian lands occupied in 1948. Its Charter emphasized armed struggle as the only means of liberation. The majority of Palestinians welcomed its emergence and considered it the embodiment of the Palestinian national identity after long years of eclipse.

In early 1965, the Fatah movement fired its first bullet. In 1968, the Palestinian commando organizations, headed by Fatah, joined the PLO. Fatah leader, Yasir ‘Arafat, assumed and maintained the leadership of the PLO since February 1969 until his death in November 2004. In 1974, the Arab regimes endorsed the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. That same year, it was granted permanent observer status in the UN.

### **18 The 1967 War and Its Results**

The June 1967 war resulted in a bitter defeat for the Arab regimes. Within a matter of days, the rest of Palestine was lost.

The WB, including East Jerusalem, as well as GS, were all captured, while 330 thousand Palestinian inhabitants were expelled. At the same time, the Syrian Golan Heights (1,150 km<sup>2</sup>) and Egyptian Sinai (61,198 km<sup>2</sup>) were also occupied.

On the other hand, the defeat led to the rise of the action of the Palestinian national resistance, which took the initiative, while the official Arab nationalist track retreated.

### **19 The Judaization of the Man and the Land**

Israel intensified the judaization of the Palestinian Land and tried to change its Arab and Islamic identity, as well as its civilizational features. It expropriated, or put at its disposal, about 96% of the land it occupied in 1948, including the property of the evicted Palestinians, most of the Islamic charitable endowments (*Awqaf*) and much of the land of those Arabs who remained. The Zionists built hundreds of cities and settler villages in the lands occupied in 1948. After the 1967 war they expropriated vast areas of the WB and persistently and methodically judiaized them. They have built over 160 settlements, more than hundred settlement outposts, and the Separation Wall and they put hundreds of barriers that paralyzed the WB. They also controlled most of water sources, besieged WB and GS and transformed them into two large prisons. While prohibiting the people of Palestine from returning to their homes and villages, Israel opened the doors for Jewish immigration to Palestine. Hence, about 3.29 million Jews immigrated to Palestine between 1948 and 2019 to make their total number around 6.77 million Jews in Israel proper at the end of 2019.



## 20 The Judaization of Jerusalem

Israelis concentrated much of their efforts on the judaization of Jerusalem. They confiscated 86% of the city and filled it with Jewish immigrants (about 560 thousand Jews and 340 thousand Palestinians in East and West Jerusalem in the beginning of 2018). In an area in East Jerusalem, where the *al-Aqsa* Mosque is located, about 220 thousand Jews were settled there, and after it was encircled with a series of settlements that aim at isolating it from its Arab and Islamic surroundings. They declared Jerusalem the eternal capital of Israel.

The Israelis have attached great importance to their control over *al-Aqsa* Mosque. They seized the Western Wall (*Ha'it al-Buraq*) of the Mosque, destroyed the Mughrabi neighbourhood and expropriated its land. They conducted intensive excavations under and around *al-Aqsa* Mosque in a way that threatens the collapse of the Mosque; for until 2017, the number of excavations and tunnels reached 64. They also actively sought to achieve the maximum temporal and spatial division, at a time when the Jerusalemites and the people of Palestine stand steadfastness against them. The Israelis carried out hundreds of incursions into *al-Aqsa* Mosque and dozens of violations, especially after the Oslo Accords in 1993. The most infamous of these attacks was the partial burning of the Mosque on 21/8/1969.

## 21 The Refugees and the Right of Return

The Palestinian refugees have insisted on their right to return to their homes and villages and adamantly rejected all attempts

aimed at their resettlement outside their ancestral land. Although the UN issued a resolution affirming the refugees' right of return to their villages and lands they left in 1948 (Resolution 194 adopted in 1948), and reaffirmed this right over the past years in more than 140 resolutions, none of them has ever been implemented because of the intransigence of Israel and the lack of will and seriousness on the part of the major powers and the international community in coercing it to comply.

The United Nations established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on 8/12/1949, as its work continues to cover the WB, GS, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

In the Beginning of 2020, the number of Palestinian living outside Palestine was estimated to be 6.714 million refugees. Another 2.129 million refugees, from the 1948 occupied territories, live in the WB and GS, in addition to 150 thousand refugees living in the 1948 occupied territories but away from their lands and villages. Therefore, there are about 8.99 million Palestinians suffering refuge and exile, i.e., 67% of the Palestinian people who is estimated to be 13.35 million Palestinians, in the early 2020. This is considered to be the largest number of refugees worldwide. It is also by far the highest ratio of refugees in the globe. The Palestinian refugee problem is, indeed, the oldest and most tragic humanitarian refugee problem of the 20th century, which is still occurring.

## **22 The UN and the Palestine Issue**

From 1949 until the beginning of the 1970s, the UN related to the Palestinian Question as a refugee problem. But, after 1974,



it began to issue resolutions, most of which from the General Assembly, that affirmed the Palestinian right to self-determination, and recognized their struggle (including armed struggle) to restore their usurped rights. The world body further declared Zionism a form of racial discrimination, and upheld the inalienable right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. Notwithstanding, the US and its allies have always been supporting Israel in its rejection, disregard and contravention of these resolutions. The US constantly used its veto in the Security Council to prevent the practical enforcement of any of these resolutions, while, at the same time, it advanced this presumed international “legitimacy” to consolidate the Israeli state on Palestinian land and to entrench its presence there. This, no doubt, exposes the ugly and oppressive face of such “legitimacy.”

Throughout the history of the Palestine issue, the prejudice of the great powers in favour of Israel remains one of the greatest difficulties that face this cause. This bias is crystal clear in their acknowledgement of Israel’s “right” to establish a state on a land that was usurped in 1948, i.e., 77% of Palestine’s land.

### **23 The Palestinian Resistance After the 1967 War**

In some respects, the period 1967–1970 represents the Golden Age of Palestinian resistance and its commando operations. But, since 1971, it was prevented from using Jordan as a haven. Though henceforth concentrating its activities in Lebanon, several attempts were made to uproot it, particularly during the Lebanese civil war of 1975–1990. The continuous Israeli aggression against Lebanon, including its invasion of southern Lebanon in 1978, and

the establishment of a security zone there, and the subsequent 1982 invasion of the southern and middle parts of the country up to the capital Beirut, destroyed the PLO's infrastructure, and compelled it and its fighters to withdraw from Lebanon. Thus, closing all the Arab borders with Israel in the face of the Palestinian resistance.

## **24 The Decline of the Official Arab Support**

Generally speaking, the Palestinian revolution has experienced some of its worst setbacks at the hands of its Arab brothers, who drained its energy and blood in conflicts with regimes that tried to domesticate, control, speak on its behalf, and even jump over it. After the October 1973 war against Israel—which achieved some moral gains for Egypt and Syria—and the recognition in 1974 of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the Arab sense of responsibility towards Palestine began to decline. Following its signature of the Camp David Agreement in September 1978, Egypt, the most powerful Arab power, stepped out of the Arab–Israeli conflict. Similarly, the Iraqi–Iranian war of 1980–1988, and the drop in oil prices in the 1980s, led to a reduction of financial support from the Gulf States to the Palestinian revolution. The subsequent Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the resultant war and far-reaching fragmentation of the Arab and Islamic ranks, in addition to the negative Gulf position towards the PLO, had further exacerbated these setbacks. The demise of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc had also weakened the Palestinian resistance and resulted in the resort of the PLO leadership to the peace settlement. Its activities have, thus, been confined to the “possible political” arena.



## The Emergence of the Islamic Movement

On the other hand, since the midst of the 1970s, the activities of the popular Islamic Palestinian movement have become well-known inside and outside Palestine; it became a major competitor in leading student unions, professional unions, and charitable and community activities. The signs of Islamic resistance organizations also appeared, such as *Usrat al-Jihad* (Family of Jihad) in the late 1970s, in the 1948 occupied Palestinian territories; Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement in 1980 led by Fathi al-Shiqaqi, and *Tanzim al-Mujahidun al-Filastiniyyun* (The Palestinian Mujahidun Organization) established by Sheikh Ahmad Yasin in the early 1980s. During the same period, the Palestinian Muslim Brothers (MB) movement abroad was active in preparing and training resistance groups.

### 25 The First *Intifadah* 1987–1993

The first *Intifadah* (The Uprising of December 1987 – September 1993) seized the initiative for the Palestinians in the WB & GS. The Islamic movement was very prominent to the extent that it has become the fundamental element of the Palestinian resistance; especially the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Hamas*), which officially announced itself at the beginning of the *Intifadah*. The “children of the stones” generation had appeared, social solidarity had manifested, and agents and corruption were fought. The *Intifadah* aroused the sympathy and solidarity of the Arab and Muslim worlds, as well as those of the international community; and the Palestine issue topped the world’s attention. But the prevailing conditions and the compromising mentality of the Palestinian and

Arab leadership neither capitalized nor built upon this support toward liberation. Instead, they exploited it for quick political gains by coming to a peace settlement with Israel.

## **26 The PLO Shift Towards the Peace Process**

With the continued weakening of the PLO, the elements which supported a peaceful settlement with Israel gradually dominated the Organization. This ultimately led to the PLO's decision of November 1988 to declare the State of Palestine and to recognize the UN Resolution No. 181 which recommended the partition of Palestine between the Jews and Arabs. It also recognized the Security Council Resolution No. 242 of November 1967, which related to the Palestinian Question as a refugee problem, and called for the resolution of the conflict by peaceful means. In October 1991 the PLO and Arab states entered into peace negotiations with Israel in Madrid. After almost two years of futile negotiations, the official Palestinian delegation failed to arrive at an agreement with Israel. Meanwhile, since December 1992, parallel secret negotiations were conducted in Oslo, Norway, that led to the drafting of the Oslo Accords or Gaza-Jericho First Agreement. They were officially signed by the PLO and Israel in Washington on 13/9/1993.

## **27 The Gaza-Jericho First Agreement**

Through the Gaza-Jericho First Agreement, the PLO leadership recognized the "right of Israel to exist," and acknowledged the legitimacy of its occupation and ownership of 77% of Palestinian land. It also pledged to stop the armed struggle and the *Intifadah*,



and to abrogate all the clauses in the PLO's National Charter which called for the total liberation of Palestine and the destruction of Israel. It further undertook to solve all problems by peaceful means. By this agreement the PLO practically cancelled itself, its objectives and charter. In return for these far-reaching concessions, the PLO leadership obtained recognition from Israel as the representative of the Palestinian people, and was granted a limited self-autonomous rule in the GS and parts of the WB, pending the resolution of the core issues of the conflict within the next five years.

During more than six years of negotiations, the circle of the self-autonomous rule did not expand, except after the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum, on 4/9/1999, covering GS, and extending its administrative and security control over only 18% of WB (Areas A), and its administrative control over only 22% of WB (Areas B). As for the remaining 60% of WB, the Israeli occupation continues its administrative and security control over it, thus making the control areas of the Palestinian Authority (PA) isolated islands in a sea of occupation, concentrated where there is Palestinian population density. This situation has not changed officially until now (late 2020).

## **28** **Objections to the Oslo Accords**

The Oslo Accords were faced with strong objection from many Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims, which may be summarized in the following points:

1. The leadership of the PLO had unilaterally concluded the Oslo Accords and subsequent treaties without consulting the

Palestinian people, amongst whom sizeable groups—Islamists, leftist, nationalist and even within the ranks of Fatah itself—strongly objected to these deals.

2. The deal did not settle the most important and sensitive issues, that were allowed to drag on pending the “generosity” of the powerful and manipulative Israel. These are:
  - The future of Jerusalem.
  - The future of Palestinian refugees.
  - The future of the Jewish settlements in the WB.<sup>5</sup>
  - The nature of the Palestinian future entity, its jurisdictions, borders and sovereignty over the land.
3. This project complied with the Israeli desire to get rid of the densely populated Palestinian territories, which are overburdened with security and economic problems.
4. The outcome of the agreement is a defective self-rule administration that has limited executive jurisdiction and is connected to the occupation and under its direct hegemony. Israel is empowered to veto all legislations and resolutions issued by the PA. It is also prohibited to recruit its own army, while entry of armaments into “self-rule” territories is strictly conditioned on a prior Israeli permission.
5. Due to its solemn undertaken to refrain from any military resistance against Israel, the self-rule administration found itself obliged to crush any such resistance undertaken by its own people. It became anxious to preserve its “peace” with Israel and to exhibit “good intentions” towards the Israelis. Its

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<sup>5</sup> In the autumn of 2005, the Israelis withdrew from the settlements of GS.



performance in the economic, political and social arenas was very weak, and corruption spread in its organs.

6. The borders remained under Israeli administration, while entering or leaving the PA territories need a prior Israeli consent.
7. The treaties do not pinpoint the Palestinian rights of self determination and the establishment of an independent state. They, furthermore, do not refer to the WB and GS as occupied territories.
8. This Accord made the doors wide open for the Arab and Islamic countries to make agreements and build relations with Israel.
9. More than a quarter of a century after the Oslo Accords, Israel has succeeded in managing the peace process, transforming the PA into an authority that serves its purposes more than those of the Palestinian people, and using the peace process as a cover to Judaize the land and people. For in addition to the programs of Judaizing Jerusalem, Israel has doubled the number of its settlers in WB from about 280 thousand to more than 800 thousand, and doubled the area of settlements and confiscated Palestinian lands. This has happened while it was, on the ground, ignoring the Oslo Accords, adopting the “Trump Deal” and the idea of annexing large parts of WB; and continuing to blockade GS.

### **29** *Al-Aqsa Intifadah 2000–2005*

*Al-Aqsa Intifadah*, which began on 29/9/2000, asserted that the Palestinian people adhere to their right to their land. It also showed the widespread interaction of the Arab and Islamic peoples with the *Intifadah*. It made the Islamic aspect of the Palestine issue quite

clear, while it revealed the Israeli occupation viciousness and the ugly face of those among them who claim to be peace advocates. The *Intifadah* was a clear answer to the peace settlement project that is conducted at the expense of the rights and fundamentals of the Palestinians and Muslim *Ummah*.

The Palestinian people suffered great hardship and misery; and the Israelis have reoccupied most of the PA territories. However, the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and their heroic resistance, in which all Palestinian factions had participated, shook the two pillars on which Israel stands; security and economy.

In September 2005, Israel was obliged to withdraw from GS and dismantle its settlements there, due to the heroic resistance of the Palestinian people. The death of Yasir ‘Arafat who led the PA since its inception and the preoccupation of the Palestinians with the presidential, municipal and legislative elections, as well as the agreement by all factions to calm things down (17/3/2005) had together led to the dwindle of *Al-Aqsa Intifadah*.

### **30 The Political Jostling Between the Settlement and Resistance Trends**

Hamas’ victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, at the beginning of 2006, was an indicator of the rise in the trust placed by the Palestinians in the Islamic movement and the resistance. It was also an indicator that the peace process and the official Palestinian side adopting it were in recession. The Israeli, Palestinian, Arab and international attempts to overthrow and thwart Ismail Haniyyah’s government were evidence of the extent



of their animosity towards the Islamic and resistance movements. It asserts the double standards of those who do not respect the democratic process and elections' results, when it comes to these movements and their supporters.

In June 2007, the PA government and Hamas were compelled to mount a military move to control GS. While the Authority's presidency and Fatah took control of WB, and continued their commitment to the peace settlement, subduing resistance movements. Palestinians suffered from the deepening Palestinian rift and schism, from the deterioration in the role of the institutions that represent the Palestinian people, in particular the PLO, Palestinian National Council (PNC) and the PLC, and from the insistence of a Palestinian faction (Fatah) on its continued domination over official Palestinian institutions and Palestinian decision making.

Several Palestinian reconciliation agreement were signed, the most important of which was in May 2011, however, this agreement (which was followed by several agreements and understandings) has suffered failures, due to the conflict between the settlement and resistance trends, the differences in determining the Palestinian fundamentals, the priorities of national action and national interim program, and due to the Fatah-Hamas confidence crisis and external influences and interventions.

As for the resistance movement, it managed to maintain its position in the Palestinian arena in the 2010s, despite the continued attempts of thwarting, excluding, and delegitimizing it. GS was able to withstand the suffocating siege and three wars with the Israeli occupation (2008/2009, 2012 and 2014), and excelled in developing its military capabilities and the means of "hard and soft"

resistance, including the Marches of Return. Moreover, despite the Israeli repression, and the pursuit of the PA security forces, the resistance continued in Jerusalem and the rest of WB.

### **31 Israel Between the Strategic Progress and Existential Risks**

Within more than seventy years, Israel has reached an advanced strategic position in the heart of the Arab and Muslim world. It has become the place for the largest gathering of the world's Jews (about 47% of the world's Jews). It enjoys a military status superior to the region's armies; an institutionalized political system capable of efficiently managing its differences; an advanced economy and high per capita income, even compared to Western European countries; a scientific, technological and industrial superiority over all the countries of the region; an artificial international "legitimacy" cover, and an unprecedented support of major powers. Israel has achieved remarkable breakthroughs in the normalization with official Arab regimes, and succeeded in managing the peace settlement file in a way that serves its expansionist ambitions and dwarfs and weakens the Palestinian national project.

However, the Zionist project faces strategic challenges and future existential risks, causing Israel anxiety and instability. For the Palestinian people are still steadfast on their land, and their numbers are starting to exceed the number of Jews in historic Palestine.

Second, the strength of the Palestinian resistance has grown, and GS has turned into a "fortress" of the resistance, whose weapons have developed, and missiles have covered the entire area



of historic Palestine. Moreover, the anti-Israel movements abroad have strengthened. Third, Israel has failed to turn into a normal entity in the region, and Arab and Muslim peoples still view it an enemy occupying their holy land, regardless of the positions of some formal regimes. Fourth, the internal Israeli crises have increased, due to the conflicts between religious and secular trends, the increasing problems between Eastern and Western Jews, and the widespread manifestations of decadence and corruption... and others. Fifth, the desire and ability of major powers to directly intervene in the region has reduced, at a time when the region is witnessing drastic (though uneasy) changes, towards the rise of the “revival” powers that would restore the Arab Muslim lead, which would be, sooner or later, on par with Israel and strategically superior to it.

### **32** The Christians of Palestine

Like their Muslim brothers, the Palestinian Christians suffered the same injustice, tyranny and expulsion. They participated in the Palestinian national movement since the British occupation of Palestine and had represented a model of solidarity and national unity in the face of the Zionist Israeli occupation. They participated in defending of the Arabic identity of Palestine, with word, pen and on the battlefield. They asserted their cultural belonging to the region with its identity, language and heritage.

### **33** Islam and Nationalism

Loving one’s country and defending its land, people and holy sites are a religious duty and a human right. Whereas patriotic

feelings and love of people and family are natural behaviour as long as it doesn't contradict the fundamentals of Islam and doesn't diminish the right of others. Working for Palestine, whether in the national, Arab, Islamic or humanistic levels, is working in focused, harmonious and integrated circles that must not be conflicting.

On the other hand, the efforts to solve society's problems, to attain civilizational development, to establish a Muslim state, to strive for an Arab and Islamic unity and to liberate Palestine; are all integrated efforts that serve each other and may coexist without suffering contradiction.

### **34 Islam, Peace and Palestine**

Islam is a religion of peace. Based on Islamic understanding, *Allah* (SWT) is Peace, and the Muslim salutation is that of peace. Paradise is the abode of peace. The relationship between Muslims and others is based on religious tolerance, acquaintance and peaceful coexistence where dialogue prevails. Consequently, Islam is against "terror" and the killing of the innocents. At the same time, Islam is the religion of rightness, justice and liberty. Its followers refuse to oppress or be oppressed, and to be humiliated because of their religion. In the defence of their dignity, land and holy sites, Muslims are willing to strive to resist to the maximum of their capacity. No "peace" in Palestine can prevail if it is built on the oppression of its people, usurping their rights and expelling them from their land. Imposing the conditions of the despotic usurper on a weakened people may lead to a temporary "settlement," but it will not lead to peace. Fighting to liberate Palestine will remain a duty, an honour and a medal on the chest of every honest man.



This is said with total disregard of the strong Zionist and pro-Israeli western media that manipulate the terms “terrorism” and “peace.”

### **35** The Position on Jews

Historically, Muslim relationship with all *Ahl al-Kitab* (the Peoples of the Book, i.e., Jews and Christians) or *Ahl al-Dhimmah* (the Protected Peoples) had been exclusively based on justice and benevolence, and they enjoyed full freedom as well as religious and citizenship rights under Muslim rule. Indeed, the “Jewish Question” and Anti-Semitism started and gained momentum in Europe. The Muslim world, that has nothing to do with this prejudice, had provided a safe haven for the Jews against European religious fanaticism and ultra-nationalism. Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims fight the Zionist aggressors simply because they usurped the land of Palestine, expelled its people from their homeland and transgressed their sacred places. It is, of course, orderly and legitimate for oppressed peoples to resist any oppressive force that seeks to occupy their land, irrespective of its religion or nationality.

### **36** Palestine, the *Ummah*'s Central Cause

When addressing liberation issues and the conflict with colonialism and the enemies of the *Ummah*; the cause of Palestine arise as the central issue of the Muslim *Ummah*; Not only because of its religious and strategic standing, but also because the Zionist project is of aggressive nature, and can not stabilize itself in Palestine, unless Arab and Muslim countries of the region are weak, fragmented and underdeveloped.

The Palestine issue is the uniting issue, on which Arabs and Muslims unite and meet to support it, regardless of their differences.

The Palestine issue is the “Compass,” since it redirects the *Ummah*’s compass against its common enemy, regardless of the ethnic, sectarian and national differences.

The question of Palestine is a “lever” to the *Ummah*, because its liberation is linked to the *Ummah* and its revival, and the model of steadfastness and resistance in Palestine is a great inspiration and momentum for the *Ummah* and its peoples. In the eyes of the *Ummah*, the Palestine issue is a lever to those who support it and strive to liberate it, while it is disgracing for those who fail it. In the struggle over *al-Aqsa*, Jerusalem and the holy Land, the honest becomes known, the negligent is exposed and the hypocrite, the agent and the enemy fail in the eyes of the *Ummah*.

### **37 The Humanitarian Dimension of the Palestine Issue**

Undoubtedly, the Palestine Question has profound and far-reaching humanitarian dimensions. It represents the cry of the oppressed in the face of those who proclaim human rights. It exposes the double standards and sinister character of the “new international order.” It derides the hypocrisy of its “civilization.” The presence of Israel in the heart of the Muslim world, its mobilization of weapons of mass destruction, and the unlimited US and Western support of it, will always be the burning fuse threatening the world peace to explode.

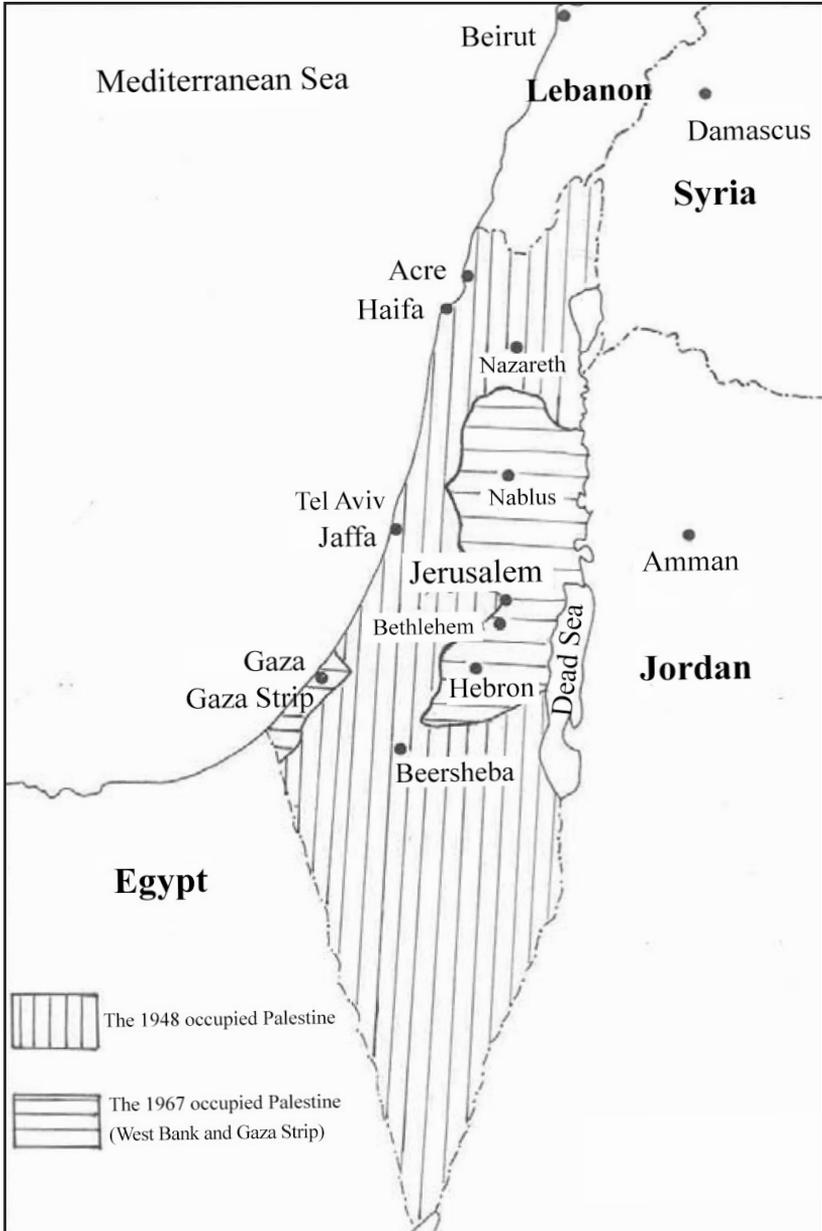
The Zionist movement and its occupation of Palestine is one of the last remaining outposts of traditional western European



colonialism that was obliterated from all parts of the world, and must, sooner rather than later, be expunged from Palestine.

The mission of liberating occupied Palestine is essentially a humane and civilized mission in which all nations and countries should contribute.

## Occupied Palestine



## Basic Facts on the Palestine Issue

### This Book

As this booklet has succeeded in extracting the Basic Facts of this central cause and in presenting them in the frame of an exceptional political, intellectual and civilizational concept... Its pages have become the "Text" that must be memorized and understood by every Arab and every Muslim, rather by every honest human being who seeks truth, justice and fairness... It can be considered the Skeleton that carries all the details of this raging conflict on the land of Palestine.

This "small... but valuable" booklet, which was authored by Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, is the Record of the Prime Cause of Muslims.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad 'Amarah



Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations

مركز الزيتونة للدراسات والاستشارات

P.O. Box: 14-5034 Beirut - Lebanon  
Tel: +961 1 803 644 | Tel/Fax: +961 1 803 643  
info@alzeytouna.net | www.alzeytouna.net

