

# The arab-israeli conflict



Middle East has not known peace for many years; Israel-Arabic conflicts have seen many lives wasted as each camp argues its rights to the land in dispute. The cause of the conflicts is very complicated. The present Israel nation was originally Canaan and was conquered in 1250 B. C by the Jews. King Solomon reigned over the land from 961-922 B. C after which the land was split into two kingdoms. The southern region (Judah) was conquered by Babylonians who chased the residents (Jews) to exile. It was not after 70 years that the Jews started going back to Israel and reconstructed the Solomon temple that had been destroyed. The Jews settled in the land but 63 B. C Judea was incorporated as a Roman province in Palestine. The Jews kept protesting against the Roman rule, the protests were put down by Emperor Titus. The Temple of Solomon was destroyed shortly after this (70 A. D). This was the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora. Emperor Hadrian allowed the Jews to return back to Israel during his reign; 118-138 BC. Then there was a revolt in 133 A. D the Jews were burnished from Jerusalem, and it was utterly destroyed. In 638 A. D the Arabs conquered the former land of Israel and occupied it. They latter established mosques in the land especially at Al-Asqa where Jerusalem was located and Al-Qods, at an area where the Muslims believe Prophet Mohamed ascended. The land remained under the control of Muslims until the Jews were mandated to occupy the land by the United Nations so as to establish Israel (Thompson, 1992).

### **Zionist Movement- Return Of Israelites**

Zionist movement (Jews in Diaspora) started claiming back the land that was originally theirs: where Israel stood. When in 1897 they started taking root and demanding their land back, the Palestinians had already fully occupied that land. The core of the conflict between the Jews/ Israel and the Arabs/

Palestinians is: both claim the same land to be rightfully theirs. 25, 000 Jewish immigrants moved into Palestine in 1903 and between 1904 and 1914 another batch of 40, 000 immigrants came in. They started living amidst 500, 000 Arabs. Ottoman Turks controlled Palestine until they were forced out by British and Arab forces. Later on (1917), the British colonial power committed themselves to help restore Palestine to the Jews (Balfour declaration). Over the following years the Zionist movement continued to bring in more Jews to Palestine (Eisenberg, 2002).

### **Start Of Conflict- Establishment Of Israel**

The increase of the Jews in Palestine stirred up the Arabs to oppose their threatened nation. In 1937 the British proposed a need to divide the land between Jews and Palestinians. The Jews were to take 1/3rd of the land including the coastal plain and Galilee. The Arabs rejected the proposal demanding the end of Jewish migration. They embarked on establishing a single and unified Arabic state but with a provision to provide protection for the minority (Jews). The UN was handed the mandate of handling the conflict by the British in 1947. Immense conflicts were faced as hundreds of thousands of Jews were displaced by the Nazis. The UN proposed for division of the land (56. 47% to Arabs and 43. 53% to Jews) a proposal that was rejected by the Arabs. The Jews started forcing the Palestinians out of their villages by 1947 December (Tessler, 1994).

On 14th May 1948 the Nation of Israel was proclaimed, and without delay the British troops left. This was followed by frequent wars between the Arabs and Israel. The Jews made more progress towards the Palestinian land. There was massacre upon Palestinians and many fled to Egypt, Lebanon and Trans-

Jordan. The Jews conquered the coastal plains, Negev and Galilee. Just one day after the establishment of Israel nation, forces from Iraqi, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan invaded Israel only to be crushed. Egypt took the Strip of Gaza as Jordan took the land around Jerusalem: West Bank totaling to 25% of Palestinians land (Tessler, 1994).

### **Arab Attack Of Israel**

Since 1948 the Arab nations have kept on plotting their attack of Israel to capture back the land they believe is theirs. Arab governments formed Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1969, with the aim of getting back Palestinians land. In 1967 a seven days war erupted between Palestine and Israel lasting for six days whereby Israel was able to capture Sinai and Gaza from Egypt. The United Nations Security council issued “ Security Council resolution 242” calling upon Israel to withdraw their forces from conflicted territories. About half a million Palestinians were displaced during the war. The Syrians and Egyptians tried in vain to gain back their land hence launching offensive forces against Israel. The Arab forces made advance towards Sinai and the Golan Height which they lost after 3 weeks in the Yom Kippur war. Israel was able to regain the western of Suez Canal. The wars harmed Israel such that it had to be dependent on United States for economic, military and diplomatic support. PLO launched attacks to Israel in 1970 and other subsequent terrorist attacks until 1974 when it was decided by United States “ state department” that there was a need to mind of Palestinians interests if peace was to be achieved (Tessler, 1994).

Israel Establishment of Settlements- Peace Hopes Shrink

**Peace Deals**

In 1977, the Arabs felt insulted by the Israel's right-wing Herut party resolution not to compromise on the boundaries of the land they had seized in 1967's war hence they started establishing settlements in the entire land where Palestinians had been displaced (Kellerman, 1994). The hopes for peace started manifesting when Anwar Saddat, Egyptian president, in 1977 visited Israel. He was the first Arab leader to recognize the nationality of Israel. With the facilitation of US President Jimmy Carter, Saddat and Israel Prime Minister, Menachem, met in Camp of David: Maryland to initiate a peace talk. They signed a peace deal in March 1979. From this Sinai was returned to Egypt. Arabic nations felt betrayed by Egypt which led to Saddat's assassination in 1981. The hope for Middle East peace was diminished by the assassination (The Middle East and North Africa, 2004).

In 1982 the Israel army launched a raid against Lebanon with the intention of wiping the Palestinians gorillas that were based near Israel's north boarder. Israel ended up pushing to Beirut expelling PLO from eh country. For cease fire it was agreed that PLO had to leave the country hence the Palestinians refugees were left defenseless. This made it possible for a massacre to the refugees by phalangists, Israel allies, which made the security minister Ariel Sharon to resign (Talhami, 2003).

The terrorist attacks continued until September 1995 when the Oslo II peace accords were signed in Egypt, also countersigned in Washington on 28th of the same month. Oslo II deal raised objection from both camps as the Israel religious leaders felt their land was given up and Palestinians did not appreciate it (Seliktar, 2009). This led to the assassination of Rabin on 4th

November 1995. The hoped-for peace was crushed as conflict returned in to their full swing 1996 where Islamic militant groups carried out series of suicide bombings. The Hamas and Jihad groups vowed not to compromise on their religious rights. Netanyahu who had campaigned against the Oslo accords was in the forefront leading the Israelites to build settlements in the land in dispute. He facilitated the building of tunnel of “ Architectural purposes” in the site where Al-Aqsa mosque was supposed to be (Ullian, 2008). He was pressured by US to restore 80% of Hebron.

The peace between Israel and Syria was the major concern of Ehud Barak who came in after Netanyahu. Barak had committed himself to withdrawing Israel force in Lebanon which he did by May 2000. Arafat and Barak were called upon by Bill Clinton, US president, to conclude on the peace talks and strike the final deal. Though Barak made many compromises so as to attain the desired peace, Arafat refused them arguing there is no way they would give up the Arab land occupied by Israel. The Israelites were not backing Barak in this move hence voted Ariel Sharon in, instead of Barak. Sharon was a hardliner who would not compromise any of the Israelites land to the Arabs. Peace was hard to attain as both the Israelites and the Arabs were not ready to give up on the lands that they believed to be rightfully theirs; any leader who showed interest to compromise on the land of his subject for the sake of peace was furiously dealt with by the citizens. Sharon regretted for his failure to kill Arafat when he was presented with an opportunity. Sharon stood out for his country’s rights and unlike many other Israel leaders who had agreed to compromise their stand for the sake of peace his demands

were that the bombers and Islamic fighters had to put their arms down for Israel to retreat (Seliktar, 2009).

### **Peace Prospect**

The prospect of peace between Israel and her neighboring Arabic countries is hard to achieve. Both sides of the camp continues to argue that each have right over the land in dispute. The Israelites have over years once and again argued that they were in that land before the Arabs: to them it is their ancestral land. Using the Bible and the Torah as their historic references they argue that God gave the land to the Israelites as their eternal home. Israel is the eternal home for the Jews. This was and still is the goal of the Zionist movement: to restore all the Jewish people in Diaspora back to their home, Palestine. The Palestinians on the other hand have a very sound argument as to why they are the real owners of the land. They have claimed that from 638 B. C when they conquered the land they have been occupying it as their sovereign land. To them they had conquered the land in a fair and square manner, which used to be the approach to states origin. They argue that the Israelites with the help of Americans and the British stole the land from them hence they have no place they can call their home (Pappé, 2006).

### **Initiatives To Negotiate For Peace**

As we talk today there are no talks that are taking place. Both sides have retreated from the negotiation table with the United States making every effort to bring them back to the table. George Mitchell who is the United States special envoy made a plan to be used in the attempt to end the violence; this has not bared fruits as the Arabs are not willing to compromise their position, each side is tabling demands that must be met for them to sit

together for negotiations. The CIA through its director George Tenet has tried to negotiate for a cease fire to no success. Deaths and destruction has become the order of the day between Israel and the Arab nations in the Middle East (Cordesman, 1984).

### **Saudi's Position**

Each nation is tabling demands that can never be achieved if a peace deal is to be struck. For example the Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al- Saud the Prince of Saudi Arabia issued a plan for the achievement of peace between Israel and Arabic nations. The plan states that Israel has to withdraw to the areas that it occupied prior to 1967war. This is the only agreement that Arabic countries would settle for if they have to keep their arms down otherwise they will fight for their rights to eternity. There is no any other way that Arabic countries will return full diplomatic relations, security guarantees and normalized trade to Israel.

On 7th December 2003 Ehud Omert: Israel prime minister proposed unilateral withdrawal from some large parts of Gaza and West Bank and abandon some Jewish Settlements. It was trial balloon for Sharon. On 18th December Sharon allowed Palestinians authority to forge ahead in complying with Israel's roadmap to peace. This was criticized by the US government warning against pre-empting of the maps outcomes. Many were alarmed that such a move may jeopardize the security of Israel hence advocated for a need of a reciprocal dispensation in return for withdrawal.

Some other team of negotiators who were led by Yossi Beilin a former Israel Justice Minister and Yasser Abed Rabbo, a former Palestinian Information



Minister following a 2 and a half years of secret negotiations. The two parties signed unofficial suggestions on plan to restore peace. The plan was dubbed the Geneva accords. This was not a cease fire plan but a comprehensive and detailed plan that would aim at deliberating on all the issues at stake; the major focus being Jerusalem issue and the refugee issue. The proposal was met with denunciations from both camps; Israel government and Palestinian authorities stated their non committal to the plan nevertheless welcomed Europeans government officials and US administration like the Secretary of State Collin Powel to the negotiations.

The conflict between Israel and Arabic nations as it has been outlined on this paper is so pronounced that to bring the two parties to the negotiation table in itself a very demanding task. There are many conferences that have been organized so as to deliberate on peace deals but many times hitting a hard rock. Most of Islamic resistance movements are adamant to attend the peace conferences arguing that there is nothing to discuss as the solution to peace can only be achieved with Israel vacating from the Arabic land. For them they can never sit down to deliberate on how they will share a land that is rightfully theirs. Most have sated categorically that there is no solution to conflict rather that by Jihad. They perceive any call for compromise as toying with Palestine. Arabs perceive the Israelites as hypocrites punishable by God and the believers, Muslims, should no compromise the demands of Allah. The negotiations are perceived as opposed to the principles of Hamas: an Islamic movement. The negotiations are also seen as infringement of the Islamic Faith. For such negotiations to bear fruits Hamas has to recognize the State of Israel which they are not ready or willing to do.

Over the years some peace agreements have been signed only to break after a short while. The diplomats hold to this ground; if peace agreements were signed before, why not yet again. Israel over the years has offered peace deals to the Arabs only to receive a deaf ear, which leads to Israel gaining more trust from the diplomats. Many Israel Prime Ministers have come to power promising peace to no success except some sittings and agreements that are never binding. As Israel continues to seek peace through negotiations Palestine has been strategizing on how to get back the land they believe to be theirs.

When Israel withdrew from the strip of Gaza they hoped that peace between Israel and Palestine would be attained, this was not to be propelling diplomats from all over the world to declare their wish to renew the negotiations. In January 2007 US secretary of state declared that she would meet Presidents Abbas and Olmert, Israel's Prime minister, to map up a plan of establishing Palestine State. There were no fruits bared from the meeting. This was just another attempt, which diminishes yet again any hopes of ever getting Palestine and Israel to settle for a permanent solution.

If peace is to be found in Middle East the diplomats should shift their focus no more pertinent issues rather than waste time discussing peace between Israel and Palestine which one can not really hope in. As long as the two nations are not willing to compromise their positions peace will never be experienced between the two. Both will continue to claim the ownership of various parts of the land on religious or legal rights basis. Wars in Middle East can be reduced to a great degree if the diplomats were to concentrate on other peace threatening issues affecting Middle East like how to stop the

Hamas who are still fighting Iraq, and the Taliban against Afghanistan, Iran continued threats to use nuclear weapons to wipe out Israel, Zionism conferences that are used to strategize the next move by the Jews, those threatening the existence of some other nations need to be seriously dealt with like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Tehran President, who have openly declared that Israel should be wiped out (Al-Jazeera, 2005) among many other issues that continue to threaten the peace of Middle East and that of the world at large.

### **Conclusion**

Over the years Israel has been in constant wars with the neighboring Arabic countries. Arab nations have initiated four major wars against Israel. The first war in 1948 which was a war of independence, the 1956 war that was known as the Sinai war, the 1967 war that lasted six days and the 1973 war known as Yom Kippur War. In all the four wars Israel defended herself winning all the wars. Later on the Israel army would withdraw from most of the areas it would capture during the war (Israel Science and Technology- Homepage, 2010). There are many treaties that have been signed between Israel and the Arabic countries. Nevertheless the peace pursuit has not been successful since the parties involved have severally contravened some of the articles within the treaties. Arab countries as outlined in this paper have a feeling that Israel is not interested in reaching the peace since they have been found to break their side of bargain every time initiating conflicts between the parties. Its incumbent therefore for there to be an outside force that should ensure that each of the parties involved do not break the treaties otherwise its in vain that the leadership continues to have one sitting after

another deliberating peace deal that they are sure not planning to implement (Dinstein, 1989).

Diplomats interested in the peace of Middle East continue to focus their attention on the conflict between Israel and Palestine in the endeavor to attain Middle East peace. The reality on the ground contradicts this move since the persistent wars in this region for about sixty years have not involved Palestine-Israel conflict per se. There is no hope that the conflict between Israel and Palestine can be solved since Hamas groups are not ready to negotiate any deals with Israel as they do not recognize Israel as a nation. Israel has made uncountable initiatives to establish peace to no avail. The diplomats should start thinking of other means to settle more pressing and threatening issues of Middle East such as stop uprisings in Lebanon and Afghanistan, stop the terrorist funding by Syria and Iran, stop Iran from uranium enrichment among many other ills. The most crucial of all is to look into the source of conflict between Palestine and Israel and help them lay down policies that will establish eternal peace.

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