



Arna's Children

A Study Guide

Compiled by Roberta McNair for the California Film Institute

A Place in the World

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Children and terrorism

The study guide provides comprehension, analysis, and discussion questions, as well as class and individual activities and suggested research resources.

Objective

This study guide aims to provide a framework for students to analyze and understand the documentary film genre, this documentary film in particular, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general, the “Battle of Jenin,” and the effects of these conflicts on children. Through analysis, discussion, and comprehension of these topics, students will achieve a greater understanding not only of their place in this world but also the place of those children born into a conflict not of their making.



Children in Jenin

An allegory for the Israeli-Palestinian question

Suppose your family has a house. One day bad guys kick you out of the house. Then it's sold, and it's sold again. Then finally you come back to the house and say, "I'm home!"

Whose house is it?

(Thanks for this allegory go to Rabbi Mark Glickman, Woodinville, Washington.)

About the Film



Children in the audience at the 1994 performance

Arna's Children: How the children of a Palestinian theater group got involved in the Intifadah

A film by Juliano Mer Khamis

Writers and directors—Juliano Mer Khamis and Dannie Danniel

Producers—Osnat Trabelsi and Pieter van Huystee

Broadcasting company—IKON Television

International sales—First Hand Films, Esther van Messel

Length—85 minutes

The film tells the story of a theater group that was established by Arna Mer Khamis. Arna came from a Zionist family and in the 1950s married a Palestinian Arab, Saliba Khamis. On the West Bank, she opened an alternative education system for children whose regular life was disrupted by the Israeli occupation. The theater group that she started engaged children from Jenin, helping them to express their everyday frustrations, anger, bitterness, and fear. Arna's son Juliano, the codirector of this film, was also one of the directors of

Jenin's theater. With his camera, he filmed the children during rehearsal periods from 1989 to 1996. He went back to see what happened to them in 2002. Shifting back and forth in time, the film reveals the tragedy and horror of lives trapped by the circumstances of the Israeli occupation.



After the "Battle of Jenin" in 2002

Subjects for Discussion and Research

1. The subject of Israel and Palestine might be the most divisive one in much of the modern world. The United States has long been a supporter of Israel and its right to claim the territory it won in the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. Since the rise of what is called Islamic Extremism and the bombing of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, many Americans have felt vindicated in their support of Israel and condemnation of the Palestinian fight against Israel.

Others in the world, including Americans, have long felt sympathy, if not support, for Palestinians who had to leave their homes in what became Israel in 1949. After Israel claimed the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the end of the Six-Day War in 1967, some of Israel's righteousness tarnished, especially when Jewish settlements were established. What Israel claimed was a defense of their security was argued by

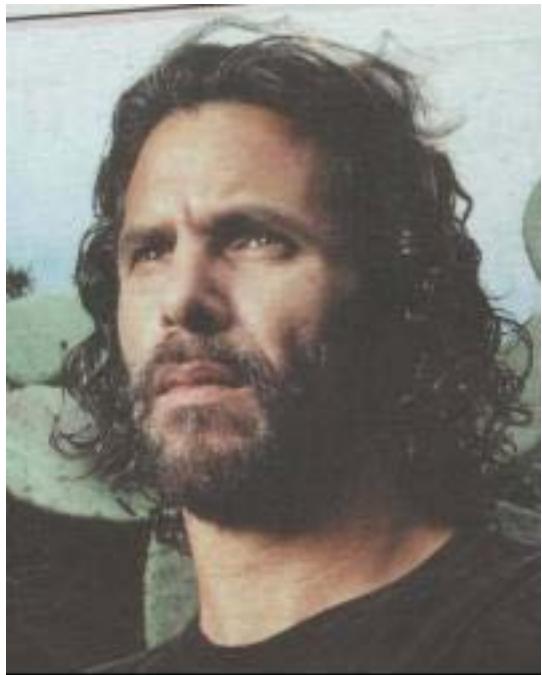
others to be a disenfranchisement and occupation of the Palestinian people. Those who express support for the Palestinians may face accusations of anti-Semitism, while those who maintain support for Israel may be faced with questions about the morality of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

Arna's Children gives little history or background on the conflict. The filmmakers assume the audience knows the context and choose to present the situation in very personal terms. Juliano Mer Khamis met the young men of 2002 when they were little boys, and he clearly sympathizes with the children and people of Jenin. Yet he unflinchingly shows the choices each boy makes in the conflict and their consequences. Yussef and Nidal especially, Juliano tells the audience, killed Israelis who were not soldiers in their suicide attack.

Did you feel sympathy, or even empathy, for the children/young men in the film, knowing how some of them died? Did it make a difference how they died?

If the story had been told by a traditional documentary filmmaker—so that what appeared on the screen was objective reporting, with no narrative voice—would you have felt sympathy for the children/young men?

About the Directors



*Juliano Mer Khamis, top,
Danniel Danniel, bottom*

Juliano Mer Khamis is the son of Arna Mer Khamis and Saliba Khamis. He is an Israeli actor with numerous performance credits in American, Israeli,

and European films, as well as Israeli stage productions.

Mer Khamis is also the founder of the Freedom Theater, the offshoot of Arna's school in Jenin. The original theater group, which was the subject of his documentary with co-writer and co-director Danniel Danniel, closed after Arna's death in 1995. Mer Khamis established the Freedom Theater in February of 2006.

He was inspired to do so after learning that Zakaria Zubaidi, leader of the Jenin branch of al-Asqa Martyrs Brigades and one of Arna's former theater pupils, said he wanted to re-establish ties with the Jewish peace movement.

Mer Khamis' professional acting career in Israel came to an abrupt end at the onset of the second Intifada. When one of Arna's former pupils carried out a suicide attack in Israel, Mer Khamis dedicated a poetry reading to his dear friend, Yussef. Mer Khamis was vilified in the Israeli press. Mer Khamis also wrote an article about Ashraf Abu-Alheji's death, which can be found in the appendix to this study guide.

Mer Khamis used the footage from his first encounters with the children in Arna's theater, rehearsal and performances, and his return to Jenin in 2002 to create *Arna's Children*.

Danniel Danniel is an Israeli-born writer and director. He lives in and works primarily in The Netherlands. He collaborated with Juliano Mer Khamis to write and direct *Arna's Children*.

Subjects for Discussion and Research

2. Juliano Mer Khamis enjoyed a vital career as an actor in Israel until he expressed his support for the children he knew in Jenin at a poetry reading and in published articles (see <http://cosmos.ucc.ie/cs1064/jabowen/lPSC/php/authors.php?auid=2249>, <http://cosmos.ucc.ie/cs1064/jabowen/lPSC/php/cs.php?byauid=2249>, www.imdb.com/name/nm1637576/, and www.imdb.com/name/nm0451131/).

After this, he did not act in another film until 2006. Do you feel that Juliano knew what the fallout from his open support of Palestinians could do to his career? If he knew, why do you think he chose to speak out anyway? If there were a situation in which your future career and livelihood could be crippled, could you act publicly as a matter of conscience or out of love?

Background on Jenin

Jenin is located in the northern part of the West Bank, an area bordered by Israel, Jordan, and the northwest quarter of the Dead Sea. The West Bank is a small area of land, by American standards, comparing roughly to the area of the state of Delaware, the second smallest of the United States. It has a temperate climate, with cool-to-mild winters and warm-to-hot summers.



Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip

While 17 percent of the land in the West Bank is suitable for farming (arable), the availability of fresh water is a long-term concern for its inhabitants. Drought is common, and the aquifers in the West Bank's highlands, located mostly in the West Bank's central-to-southern areas, near Jerusalem, are a major source of water for Israel.



West Bank beyond the Green Line (in green)

Jenin is one of 19 refugee camps in the West Bank. It was established in 1953 and is the third-largest camp. Most of the families in the camp originally lived in villages in only a few miles away, from which they fled after Israel's victory in the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948. Many of these villages are visible from Jenin, but they are across the "Green Line" in Israel. The term Green Line is used to refer to the 1949 Armistice lines established between Israel and its opponents, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, at the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. The Green Line separates Israel from these countries as well as from territories Israel annexed after the 1967 Six-Day War, including the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

While some residents of the camp work in the agricultural sector, many rely on employment in Israel, across the border. However, there is a 50-percent unemployment rate in the West Bank, a huge increase from under five percent in the 1980s. This change coincided with Israeli border closures starting between 1992 and 1996.

About two-and-a-half million people live in the West Bank, and the registered refugee population of the Jenin camp was 15,496 in 2005. Of that population, 2205 families received emergency food rations and 392 families were declared special hardship cases by the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA), which provides education, social services, healthcare, and emergency aid to refugees in the Middle East.

Almost 44 percent of the population in the West Bank is under the age of 14. The median age is 18, making this a very young population. However, of the approximately 6,800 children in Jenin, the UNRWA puts the number of students in school in 2005 at only about 2,800. Sixty percent of the people in Jenin live below the poverty line, due in part to a decline in income and an increase in birth rate.

Schools in the West Bank were closed after the inception of the First Intifada, in 1993, which saw a general uprising of Palestinians against Israeli rule. What distinguished this movement, which lasted until 1993, was the participation of young men a boys—many of whom attended schools and universities—in the protests, throwing stones at the Israeli forces and civilians. It was because of these school closures that Arna Mer Khamis originally came to

Jenin to establish an alternative source of education for the children there.

In 1995, with West Bank unemployment rates at 20 percent, the Jenin camp came under the Palestinian Authority for self-rule, after the redeployment of Israel's troops. Previously, the area was administered by the Israeli military. The years 1995 to 1998 saw the beginnings of an economic recovery. It was short-lived, however, with the outbreak of violence toward the end of 2000, which triggered tight Israeli closures of Palestinian self-rule areas, severely affecting work and employment. In 2001, and even more strongly in 2002, Israeli military measures in Palestinian Authority areas resulted in the destruction of the economic infrastructure, widespread business closures, and a sharp drop in incomes.

Jenin has felt a large impact from the barrier—a security wall—built between Israel and the West Bank. In early 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin began discussions on how to implement a barrier separating Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank. In June 2001 a grassroots organization called “Fence for Life—The Public Movement for The Security Fence” began the effort for the construction of a continuous security fence. “Fence for Life” urged the government to build a continuous fence as speedily as possible, and without any connection to the political future of the areas it separates, with a goal of hermetically sealing off the Palestinian territories from Israeli population center to prevent the terrorist acts by

Palestinians against the people living in Israel.

Parts of the barrier are built on land confiscated from Palestinians. Early drafts for the fence put construction into the West Bank, rather than along the Green Line, but later barrier routes allocate more segments to be built on the Green Line itself. As of November 2003, the barrier extended inside most of the northwestern and western edges of the West Bank, sometimes close to the Green Line, and sometimes running further east. In some places there are also secondary barriers, creating a number of completely enclosed enclaves.

In some areas of the West Bank, the fence has caused great economic hardship. The Israeli Human Rights center B'Tselem noted, for example, that “thousands of Palestinians have difficulty going to their fields and marketing their produce in other areas of the West Bank. Farming is a primary source of income in the Palestinian communities situated along the Barrier’s route, an area that constitutes one of the most fertile areas in the West Bank. The harm to the farming sector is liable to have drastic economic effects on the residents—whose economic situation is already very difficult—and drive many families into poverty.”

Security is the stated reason for constructing a barrier along the Green Line. The statistics on the success of suicide attacks across the Green Line before and after its construction support the security argument. During the 12-month period from August 2003 to July 2004, three suicide bombers launched attacks from areas where the

fence was completed, but they resulted in no deaths or injuries. In contrast during the preceding 12 months, from September 2002 to August 2003, 73 attacks were successfully carried out from these areas, in which 293 Israelis were killed and 1,950 were wounded. The decrease in casualties was not due to a decrease in attempted terrorist attacks; from August 2003 to July 2004 Israeli security forces prevented dozens of planned attacks in the final stages of their implementation and uncovered 24 explosive belts and charges intended for use these attacks, due to restricted access into Israeli areas.



Security barrier between Israel and the West Bank

On October 25, 2004, in a letter from the Israeli mission to Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN, Israel’s

government stated that a number of restrictions east of the barrier have been lifted as a result of the barrier's success, including a reduction in checkpoints from 71 to 47 and roadblocks from 197 to 111. The Jerusalem Post reported in the same period that for some Palestinians who are Israeli citizens living in the Israeli Arab town of Umm El-Fahm (pop. 42,000) near Jenin, the barrier has "significantly improved their lives" because, on one hand, it prevents would-be thieves or terrorists from coming to their town and, on the other hand, it has increased the flow of customers from other parts of Israel who would normally have gone to the West Bank, resulting in an economic boon for them. On the other hand, the barrier has divided families and adversely affected business and commerce within the West Bank's wall.

Sources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israeli_West_Bank_barrier
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jenin>
www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/westbank/jenin.html
<http://lexicorient.com/e.o/intifada.htm>

Subjects for Discussion and Research

3. The proportion of inhabitants in Jenin who are children is much greater than in American cities and towns. In Oakland, for example, 25 percent of the population is under the age of 18, compared to 44 percent of the West Bank's population being under age 14. Add to this Jenin's poverty and unemployment rates, and this creates a

very hard situation for children. Discuss what life might be like in the Bay Area with such a high percentage of children, especially children who live in poverty.

4. Read the article "Palestinian Children Bear the Brunt of Violence and Occupation" at

<http://www.counterpunch.org/pmcnamara1.html>. Note the statement: "Of the 826 Palestinians killed by the Israeli Defense Forces in the current intifada [the al-Aqsa Intifada, begun in September 2000] approximately 26 percent were children under age 18." As McNamara describes the situation, Palestinian children suffer from poverty, lack of adequate medical care, and constant violence. Put yourself in the place of a child who has never known peace and who has been taught since birth that he is the subject of an occupying force in his land. Could you, at your age, join a fight like the Intifada?

The “Battle of Jenin”

A Palestinian child, who sees all this with his eyes, becomes the suicide bomber of tomorrow. Thus Sharon and his chief of staff, Shaul Mofaz, create the terrorist infrastructure.

—Uri Avnery, April 16, 2002

The Battle

The Battle of Jenin took place in April 2002 in Jenin's Palestinian refugee camp as part of Operation Defensive Shield, a large-scale military operation conducted by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the largest conducted in the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War.

On April 3, 2002, Israeli troops, tanks, and helicopters surrounded the area of Jenin in the northern West Bank as part of Israel's Operation Defensive Shield that followed a series of deadly bombings against civilians in Israel. The IDF determined that many Palestinian suicide bombers had come from the refugee camp at Jenin, and the Israeli army was determined to "smoke out the terrorist nest." According to the IDF, Israel chose not to bomb the spots of resistance using aircraft as it entered, but rather to take hold of the city using infantry, although there appears to have been a limited use of helicopters. The IDF entered the city of Jenin and the refugee camp adjacent to it, declared them a closed military area, prevented all access, and imposed a round-the-clock curfew.



Area of Jenin razed by Israeli tanks and bulldozers

Armed Palestinian fighters staged an ambush on the IDF on April 9. After the ambush, the IDF changed tactics, presumably in order to continue the operation without risking more Israeli deaths, and began operating the heavily armored IDF Caterpillar D9 bulldozers. Before April 9, bulldozers were mainly used to clear booby traps and open routes to armored fighting vehicles. After April 9, the bulldozers demolished each house that was allegedly used by the militants to attack Israeli soldiers, and other houses in order to widen alleyways or to secure locations for IDF troops. Some Palestinians claim that there were cases when the IDF bulldozed houses while there were people inside.

The introduction of the heavily armored bulldozers, which shrugged off explosives and rocket-propelled grenades alike, and the threat of being buried alive, caused the Palestinian militants to surrender. Later, IDF forces withdrew gradually from the refugee camp under international pressure.

By the time of the IDF withdrawal and the lifting of the curfew on April 18,

at least 52 Palestinians, of whom up to half may have been civilians, and 23 Israeli soldiers were dead. Many more were injured. Bulldozers had destroyed about 150 buildings, with many others rendered structurally unsound. Around 435 families were left homeless. After the conflict, Israeli reports claimed that eight to nine percent of the houses within the refugee camp were destroyed, largely within an area of intense house-to-house fighting of approximately 100 meters by 100 meters.

The IDF countered that it took great care to avoid civilian casualties, the opposite of Palestinian claims, and took higher Israeli casualties as a result. Rather than implementing a massive air attack to flatten the area, the IDF engaged Palestinians in house-to-house fighting that spared civilians as much as possible. Their reports concluded that noncombatant casualties would have been even lower if the Palestinian terrorists had not used civilians as shields and decoys.

The Aftermath

As the fighting began to subside, the IDF prevented ambulances and medical personnel from reaching the wounded within the camp, despite repeated requests to the IDF to facilitate access for ambulances and humanitarian delegates, including those of the United Nations. From April 11 to April 15, United Nations and other humanitarian agencies petitioned and negotiated for access to the camp with IDF and made many attempts to send in convoys, with no success. At IDF headquarters on Apr 12, United Nations officials were told that United Nations humanitarian staff

would be given access to the affected population. However, such access did not materialize on the ground, and several more days of negotiations with senior IDF officials and personnel of the Israeli Ministry of Defense did not produce the necessary access, despite repeated assurances. On April 18, senior United Nations officials criticized Israel for its handling of humanitarian access in the aftermath of the battle and, in particular, its refusal to facilitate full and safe access to the affected populations in violation of its obligations under international humanitarian law.

The UNRWA mounted a large operation to deliver food and medical supplies to needy refugees who had fled the camp and to Jenin's hospital, but representatives were not allowed to enter the camp until April 15, 12 days after the start of the military operation. UNRWA relief teams immediately began distributing water, food, blankets, and kitchen kits to the needy. With assistance from the Government of Sweden, the UNRWA set about making the camp population safe from the many hundreds of items of unexploded ordnance, both Palestinian and Israeli, littering the camp. The Agency also distributed cash assistance to those who had lost their homes and needed to rent temporary accommodation.

In July of 2002, the UNRWA and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Red Crescent Society signed an agreement in which the UAE would donate \$27 million for the UNRWA to rebuild the center of the camp and re-house all of those made homeless. With this donation the Jenin Rehabilitation Project was created to build 435 new

homes, repair around 1,500 that had been damaged, and rebuild community infrastructure in the camp, including a school.

The Jenin Rehabilitation Project suffered a number of major difficulties because of the extremely tense situation in Jenin. There were regular Israeli military incursions into the camp, including one in November of 2002, when Iain Hook, the project's British manager, was shot and killed by an Israeli sniper while in the UNRWA compound in the camp. Repeated curfews prevented work from taking place and closures to the camp repeatedly halted the transport of building supplies. Threats to the security of the project team by armed Palestinian groups also stopped work.

The Project decided not to rebuild under the same crowded conditions that existed before the area was destroyed. New land was purchased by the UAE outside of the existing camp for some of the new shelters and to enable wider streets and more space to be created in the camp. Immediately following the fighting, Israeli authorities prevented the international press from entering the refugee camp for two weeks, which potentially delayed the ability of the world community to assess the damage. This contributed to early reports of a "massacre" in Jenin, which were not supported by the events.

Initially the United Nations called for an investigation of Israel's actions in Jenin, but dropped the probe when it did not find evidence of massacres by Israeli forces in Jenin. American congressmen and others, however, called for an investigation of the

UNRWA, because of their oversight at the Jenin refugee camp, to determine the degree of terrorist recruitment and activity in Jenin.

One More Aftermath

On December 11, 2002, the Israeli board of censors banned the documentary *Jenin, Jenin* by director, Mohammed Bakri, an Arab Israeli. The film is about the battle in Jenin, it was the first film banned in Israel for 15 years.

Israel's film ratings board said the documentary "distorted presentation of events in the guise of democratic truth which could mislead the public." It declared that the public could be misled into thinking that Israeli soldiers had committed war crimes. The board judged the documentary to be a "one-sided propaganda film."

Both Israeli and Arab commentators saw the decision by the ratings board as unnecessary and misguided. Raanan Shaked, a commentator in the Israeli daily *Yedioth Achronoth*, wrote, "The ratings board—and the cable companies which also decided to pull the plug on the film—consider the Israeli public ... to be complete idiots incapable of judging a cinematic work for themselves."

The documentary was filmed in the weeks immediately after the Israeli offensive in Jenin. The Palestinian leadership claimed there had been a massacre—an allegation now discredited—while Israeli army insisted there had been no massacre but only intensive fighting between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian militants.

Most Jenin residents, unlike the Palestinian leadership, did not claim there had been a massacre, but they did claim there had been war crimes, with Palestinian civilians buried alive by Israeli bulldozers. The film reflects these claims. It also shows the destruction of a large part of the Jenin refugee camp and interviews with residents claiming that there had been war crimes.

Sonya David-Elmalea, a spokeswoman for the board, said the body banned the film because it falsely depicts fictional events as truth. She stated that the film was “propaganda that represents a biased view of the group with whom Israel finds itself at war.”

Sources:

- www.palestinehistory.com/issues/massacre/mass10.htm
- www.palestinefacts.org/pf_1991to_no_w_jenin_2002.php
- www.commondreams.org/headlines02/1212-06.htm
- www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/westbank/jenin.html
- www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/isource/Peace/ciawb.html (with data cited from the CIA World Factbook)
- www.guardian.co.uk/israel/comment/0,10551,685169,00.html

Subjects for Discussion and Research

5. Operation Defensive Shield was precipitated by an escalation of Palestinian suicide bombings and attacks, such as the one by Yussef and Nidal. Young men like them—born and raised in refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip—were involved in

most of these bombings and attacks. Does knowing this affect your opinion of these kinds of actions? How and why?

6. Jenin's children and their parents learned from Arna and Juliano that all Jews are not their enemies. If someone like Arna had established schools and theaters all over the occupied areas, with the same kind of consistent contact and breaking of stereotypes, do you think it would have made a difference to those children as they grew older. Do you think some of them would have chosen not to fight and kill Israelis?

7. Israel maintains that its actions in 2002, as well as constructing the barrier, are in the name of security to Israel. Some Israelis argue that without these efforts, Israel's very existence is in jeopardy. Based on what you've learned about life in Jenin from this source and from *Arna's Children*, do you agree with Israel's position? Why or why not?

Arna and Her School

Arna Mer was born in 1929 to Jewish parents in what was then called Palestine. In 1948 at the age of 18, Arna joined the Jewish Brigade, participating actively in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Soon after the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, she began a lifetime of campaigning for peace, justice, and human rights in her homeland—which most often meant acting and speaking out uncompromisingly for the rights of the Palestinian people.

Arna joined the Communist Party, and she became Arna Mer-Khamis when she married a Palestinian, Saliba Khamis, who was the secretary of Israel's Communist Party. After the Six-Day Arab-Israeli war of 1967, she was imprisoned several times for protests and demonstrations against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

It was at the time of the Palestinian uprising, or Intifada, in 1987 that Arna saw the need to establish centers for children affected by the violence around them. She founded the organization Care and Learning to respond to their needs.



Arna Mer Khamis and Saliba Khamis

Care and Learning's first target was the prisons where hundreds of Palestinian children were held in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. Arna mobilized Israeli lawyers to intercede on the children's behalf, and, together with volunteers, regularly visited prisons, talked with parents outside the gates, and provided support.

All schools in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) were closed from 1988 to 1990 by the Israeli authorities. To supplement the informal, home-based "popular learning" developed by Palestinian women's committees in this period, Care and Learning sent volunteers to the Jenin area regularly on weekends, armed with paper, crayons, and paints, to give the children a chance to express themselves creatively. These sessions were organized in the streets, with at many as 200 to 300 children taking part.

Arna was a teacher, with a degree in Special Education and Art Therapy, and she developed a graded series of booklets designed to stimulate learning in creative, nonconventional ways. Being fluent in Arabic, she could teach Palestinian women who were not teachers how to use her materials.

After the schools reopened, many children aged eight to 10 were illiterate, and a survey by Care and Learning of 1,000 children in the Jenin area revealed that 47 per cent had been involved in physical clashes with soldiers, which included shootings, beatings, and gassing.

In response to this situation, Care and Learning opened four Children's

Houses in Jenin and the neighboring refugee camp—educational and cultural centers designed to give the children an oasis of quietness, learning, and creativity to offset the frightening and confusing influences of life under military occupation. The theater was built with a grant that Arna received when she was awarded an Alternative Nobel Prize in Stockholm for her activity in the Jenin refugee camp. By 1993, the Children's Houses had over 1,500 children enrolled in their activities and staff consisting of 15 paid para-professionals and 25 volunteers.

The theater closed in 1995, after Arna's death from cancer. She is survived by her children Spartak Mer Khamis and Juliano Mer Khamis. The building that housed Arna's theater was destroyed in Apr 2002, during the "Battle of Jenin."



Arna Mer Khamis

Sources:

www.arna.info/Arna/herstory.php

Subjects for Discussion and Research

8. Read the entire text of Arna's speech in Stockholm

(www.arna.info/Arna/herstory.php,

making allowances for some irregularities in the transcription, please). Her message is one of peace, but she is clear in her condemnation of how the Palestinian people—especially children—have suffered under what she terms the "Israeli occupation." Yet Arna was Jewish, born in what was then Palestine. She fought for establishing a Jewish state in 1948, when she was only 18.

Can you understand from what the film presents why Arna changed direction and worked to achieve independence for the Palestinian people? If not, does learning more about the history of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples since 1949 make it clearer?

9. Arna was born to a Jewish family in Palestine and grew up in what she called a "Jewish 'Moshava.'" She spoke of that time in an interview (www.arna.info/Arna/articles.php?id=5), saying, "Before 1948, Arabs and Jews were living together in harmony and fraternity. However, in a span of a few months the creation of the state of Israel caused racism and contempt towards the 'Arab,' an attitude that did not exist before. Arabs and Jews should live together. This is possible, as not only is there no other alternative, but it occurred in the past."

Based on the material in the Appendix **Israel and Palestine: Historical Background**, and what you have learned about Arab-Israeli relations from the film and the material in this guide, is Arna's statement a view of something that can be achieved or an impossible dream? Why?

10. On their way to Jenin for a last visit before she died, Arna told Juliano about her time in the Jewish Brigade in 1948. She is blunt in describing her activities at the time, including chasing people into the streets in Tel Aviv. At the time, Arna reveled in the “courage, beauty, and power,” and acknowledges that it was because she was young and wild. How do you think age is relevant as Arna recounts the events? Does age mitigate her actions then, and if so, does age mitigate the actions of the young men in Jenin?

The Children of the Theater



Actors in rehearsal in Jenin

Defense of Children International issued a report in 2004 on the status of the rights of Palestinian children. It is entitled, "Israel's violations of the right to life and security and the rights of children deprived of their liberty during the second Intifada." What follows are some of the determinations from the report.

Israeli restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement since September 2000, along with Israeli military actions in the OPT, has caused a dramatic downturn of the Palestinian economy and a significant decline in the Palestinian standard of living. An estimated 60–70% of the Palestinian workforce is unemployed and over half the population is reliant upon direct food aid. Pre-existing conditions have been exacerbated in many parts of the West Bank since 2002 due to Israel's ongoing construction of the West Bank Segregation Wall.

Constituting over half the population, and as the most vulnerable and dependent sector of society, Palestinian children are disproportionately affected by

Israeli policies. Inability to access medical care, poverty levels that affect nutritional intake and interruptions in some immunization programs have all lead to an overall decrease in the status of children's health and an increase in malnutrition and anemia rates. Spiraling poverty, curfews and closures, the devastation of basic infrastructure, the ever-present threat of violence, and the deliberate destruction of homes and schools have provoked a serious decline in the quality of education and the loss of school days.

School closures in the West Bank coincided with the first Intifada in 1987. Arna Mer Khamis established her educational efforts in Jenin because of these closures. In her speech at the ceremony in Stockholm, Sweden, where she accepted "The Right Livelihood" award, Arna stated:

An entire nation stands before us deprived of human rights, where children grow up surrounded by imagery of soldiers, stones, and guns. They are scarred, they are threatened, and they are vulnerable. Their cries of suffering are drowned by loud speakers, screaming about law, order, security, and progress. The refugee camp was erected 45 years ago, and its children and grandchildren were born facing Israeli occupation to this very day.

Their wounds are deep although they are not bleeding, their souls and spirits are wounded, their development handicapped. They are children beaten and shocked, who have witnessed their parents and

siblings being humiliated by soldiers. They are children who have experienced long interrogation in prison. Children who have been prevented from studying, when their schools, kindergartens were closed down. These children who know the Jew, the Israeli, only as a soldier shooting to kill and who beats and humiliates.

It was into this atmosphere and life that the children of Arna's school were born and raised. Ashraf and Ala lived next door to one another, but both of their homes were destroyed in 1992, when they were only nine years old. Ala's home was bombed by the Israeli army, but the damage was not isolated. Yussef—the one who could always make everyone laugh—was Ashraf's best friend. Along with his younger brother, Nidal, Yussef and many other children found a refuge at Arna's school.

Zakaria and his brother Daud, Majdi, and Mahmoud attended Arna's school as well. Each of these children shared the rage felt by Ashraf and Ala, because they had experienced their own losses and humiliation.

When these children met Arna, she was most likely the first Jew any of them had met who was not a soldier in the IDF or other Israeli authority. As some of the children express in the film, before Arna, every Jew was assumed to be an enemy and an oppressor.

All of these children participated in the play directed by Arna's son Juliano. They laughed and played, dressing up in costumes and performing in front of appreciative audiences. Ashraf, who had a lead role in the play, said, "Acting is

like throwing a Molotov cocktail." It was a way to keep himself and other Palestinians out of the gutter. He felt "strong and alive" onstage, and he wanted to become a famous actor, "the Palestinian Romeo."



1994 performance

These boys developed a close relationship to Juliano, as a teacher, director, and friend. Yet when they first met Juliano, some of them admit seven years later, they thought Juliano was spying for the occupation. Yussef had wondered why an Arab wouldn't do what Arna and Juliano had done for the children.

We learn in the film that the children who found an oasis away from care and oppression in the school and theater could not avoid the realities of day-to-day life in a refugee camp in the West Bank. Five years after the play, Yussef and Nidal became suicide attackers in Israel. Ashraf died fighting in the "Battle of Jenin." Ala, who survived the battle but was wanted by the IDF for his participation and suspected terrorist activities, was later killed by the IDF.

Four of the young men we met as children died only a few years after

Arna. Of the others, we learn that Daud, Zakaria's brother, is in jail. Zakaria is actively involved in the al Aqsa Intifada as a soldier. Majdi is alive, and states that he was at home with his family and not armed during the battle.

Mahmoud evades directly answering Juliano's questions, when Juliano interviews him in 2002. Juliano asks Mahmoud about Yussef and Nidal's suicide attack, but Mahmoud only replies, "People are under pressure." Mahmoud's mother is more forthcoming with her feelings. Noting that one of her sons is dead, another has run away, and a third is in prison, she asks if it wouldn't be better if Mahmoud's destiny was the same as Yussef and Nidal's. She has already reminded them that Mahmoud is alone because all of his friends are dead. She remembers, however, that "in Arna's day" they had the theater and each other and that Arna loved them.

Sources:

www.arna.info/Arna/speach.php

www.dci-pal.org/english/display.cfm?DocId=287&CategoryId=2

Subjects for Discussion and Research

11. Read the articles at www.counterpunch.org/sunil1.html and www.icpa.org/il/vp441.htm, which give vastly different perspectives on children and their role in the conflicts between the Israeli army and Palestinian militants. Do you find one argument more persuasive than the other? Why? What are the strengths and weaknesses in each of the articles.

12. Juliano Mer Khamis returned to Jenin to establish the Freedom Theater in 2006. He had been contacted by a nurse in the West Bank, Jonatan Stanczak, whom Zakaria Zubaidi, the leader of the al Aqsa Intifada in Jenin, had approached regarding reestablishing ties to the Jewish peace movement. It was Zakaria's family that had originally provided a space for the theater, donating the top floor of their house. It was also Zakaria of whom Ala implied cowardice, when Zakaria remained in hiding under the ruins of a house for five days during the battle while Ala continued fighting. Is the Zakaria who inspired the Freedom Theater in 2006 consistent with the Zakaria we see as a young adult in 2002? If yes, why, and if not, why not?

13. In 2000, following reports that more than 40 Palestinian children were killed by Israeli forces, with allegations that the soldiers targeted the children, other reports surfaced that Palestinian children were being taught to hate and kill Jews in a "Sesame Street"-like program called the "Children's Club" (see

www.teachkidspeace.org/doc146.php and

www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=17707, and watch www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAHHjfUXeRY). Discuss the effects of teaching children to hate before they arguably can understand the concept. Even if the children in *Arna's Children* were not exposed to the "Children's Club," how likely is it that they could have grown up without learning hatred toward Jews and Israel?

Additional Resources

Relevant films

***Another Road Home*, US 2002**

(documentary).

Shortly after the Six-Day War in 1967, Danae Elon's highly educated parents, noted Israeli author Amos Elon, and former correspondent and literary agent Beth Elon, hired a Palestinian man named Musa, the father of eleven children, to take care of their six month old daughter on a daily basis. It was a job he would continue for the next twenty years until she was grown and he was able to save enough money to send all eight of his sons to America for education and career opportunities. The last time Danae saw Musa, in 1991, he proudly showed her the house he constructed in the Palestinian village of Battir. Then, against the mounting tensions of the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian Intifada, the two families lost track of each other. During that time Danae began to realize how much of an influence Musa had on her life and sought to reconnect with him. Her quest led her from her home in New York to Paterson, New Jersey, then to Battir in the occupied territories, and back to her birthplace in Jerusalem. As they carefully break the silence, the encounters between Danae and Musa's sons, and eventually Musa himself, bring to the surface an emotionally complex story that is ultimately heartwarming and optimistic.

***The Children of Ibdaa*, US 2002**

(documentary).

The Children of Ibdaa: To Create Something Out of Nothing is about a Palestinian children's dance troupe from a West Bank refugee camp. The children use their performance to express the history, struggle, and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The video intertwines the vibrant and sometimes somber stage performance with images and interviews depicting life

under occupation in a refugee camp. The video also chronicles a unique visit taken by the children to visit their grandparents' villages in present day Israel.

***The Making of a Martyr*, Canada 2006**

(documentary).

On Mar 24, 2004, 15-year-old Hussam Abdu was apprehended at an Israeli checkpoint with bombs strapped around his waist. Instead of detonating the bomb, Hussam voluntarily surrendered and is now serving time in prison. Since the start of the Palestinian intifada, an alarming number of suicide bombers have been children aged 18 and under. Through a series of candid and thought provoking interviews, "The Making of a Martyr" brings the audience into a part of Palestinian culture previously ignored, by uncovering those who are facilitating children to take their own lives. The film features interviews with leaders of the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, families of suicide bombers, Palestinian children imprisoned for participating in suicide missions, a Palestinian child psychologist, and more. The film gives its audience a troubling insight into the concept of martyrdom as it is being taught to Palestinian children.

***Stealing Innocence*, US 2003 (drama).**

Two girls—one Israeli and one Palestinian—share a special friendship despite their cultural differences and the war raging around them in this gripping portrayal of the ongoing hostilities in the Middle East, seen through the eyes of the girls. They are best friends even though one is Israeli and one is Palestinian. Events spin out of their control, testing their friendship to destruction. The tragedy leaves its victims without dignity or hope, giving a human dimension to the violence in the Middle East.

***Palestine Is Still the Issue*, US 2002**

(documentary)

In 1977, the award-winning journalist and filmmaker, John Pilger, made a documentary called *Palestine Is the Issue* (1977). He told how almost a million Palestinians had been forced off their land in 1948, and again in 1967. In this in-depth documentary, he has returned to the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel to ask why the Palestinians, whose right of return was affirmed by the United Nations more than half a century ago, are still caught in a terrible limbo, refugees in their own land, controlled by Israel in the longest military occupation in modern times. In a series of extraordinary interviews with both Palestinians and Israelis, John Pilger weaves together the issue of Palestine. He speaks to the families of suicide bombers and their victims; he sees the humiliation of Palestinians imposed on them at myriad checkpoints and with a permit system not dissimilar to apartheid South Africa's infamous pass laws. He goes into the refugee camps and meets children who, he says, "no longer dream like other children, or if they do, it is about death."

Frontiers of Dreams and Fears, Palestine 2001 (documentary)

Offering a rare glimpse into one side of the Middle East conflict, this film explores the lives of a group of Palestinian children growing up in refugee camps. The film focuses on two teenage girls, Mona and Manar. Although living in refugee camps miles apart, the girls manage to communicate and become friends with each other despite the overwhelming barriers separating them. The film reveals their lives and dreams and their growing relationship, at first through email, then culminating in their dramatic meeting at the fence that separates them at the Lebanese/Israeli border.

Relevant reading

Why Do They Hate Me: Young Lives Caught in War and Conflict

Lauren Holliday. 1999.

This non-fiction choice contains abridged versions of several books that give insight to various conflicts going on worldwide, and how these impact young people.

Children of Israel, Children of Palestine: Our Own True Stories

Lauren Holliday. 1998

What is it like to grow up in the war zone of the Middle East? That is the subject of this disturbing collection, which begins with memories about childhood before the 1948 war and ends with accounts of young Palestinians and Israelis growing up now. Some remember the rage for revenge ("I dreamed of killing each and every one of them"); many are overwhelmingly sad ("How painful to be a visitor in one's own country"). What connects them is a longing for peace; the question is, At what price? Holliday says in her eloquent introduction that there is no sweet upbeat solution of easy neutrality, no call "to kiss and make up," but there is hope in their agreeing to tell their stories in a book together. They are listening to each other, and they make us hear all sides.

The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East

Sandy Tolan. 2006

The title of this moving, well-crafted book refers to a tree in the backyard of a home in Ramla, Israel. The home is currently owned by Dalia, a Jewish woman whose family of Holocaust survivors emigrated from Bulgaria. But before Israel gained its independence in 1948, the house was owned by the Palestinian family of Bashir, who meets Dalia when he returns to see his family home after the Six-Day War of 1967. Journalist Tolan (*Me & Hank*) traces the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the parallel personal histories of Dalia and Bashir and their

families—all refugees seeking a home. As Tolan takes the story forward, Dalia struggles with her Israeli identity, and Bashir struggles with decades in Israeli prisons for suspected terrorist activities. Those looking for even a symbolic magical solution to that conflict won't find it here: the lemon tree dies in 1998, just as the Israeli-Palestinian peace process stagnates. But as they follow Dalia and Bashir's difficult friendship, readers will experience one of the world's most stubborn conflicts firsthand.

Strangers in the House: Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine

Raja Shehadeh. 2002.

In this autobiography of a Palestinian living in Israel, Shehadeh, a lawyer and founder of Al-Haq, an affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists, reminisces about growing up "in the shadow of home" and coming to terms with the political situation in which he was born. It wasn't until he was an adult that he finally understood the work of his father, Aziz, an early advocate of the two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict who was murdered in 1985. In a strong voice that is without diatribe, melodrama, or anger, Shehadeh describes the uncertainties of life during a period of national difficulty. Readers will get a glimpse into the emotional and political turmoil of the region and possibly form a better understanding of the troubles in the Middle East. This book also shares the insight of one man's journey and the maturity that allowed him to see his life in context.

Still Small Voices

John and Janet Wallace. 1989.

Profiles of twelve Palestinians and Israelis. Among them are Jewish fundamentalist Miriam Levinger, Islamic fundamentalist Sheikh Bassam Jarrar, the

Issawi family of Palestinian guerrillas, Christian politician Hanna Siniora, and Rabbi Shlomo Riskin. The authors aim to show the reasons for each person's belief in the righteousness of his or her own cause.

Relevant Websites

Peace Child Israel, which promotes dialog and teaches conflict resolution between Israeli and Palestinian students through drama.

<http://www.mideastweb.org/peacechild/>

Seeds of Peace, which works to secure lasting peace in the Middle East by bringing together Arab and Israeli teenagers, aged 13 to 15. <http://www.mpdn.org/seeds.htm>

Opinion piece by Marianne Albina, a Palestinian activist, entitled "Palestinian children are not terrorists."

http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/195275_palestinian15.html

Article by Juan Cole entitled "How Israel's occupation affects Palestinian children."

<http://hnn.us/articles/987.html>

Information about Uri Avnery and Gush Shalom, a peace movement for Israel and Palestine.

<http://www.rightlivelihood.org/recip/gush.htm>

Article by Uri Avnery entitled, "In Jenin I founded ..." on the seeds of the "Battle of Jenin." <http://www.gush-shalom.org/archives/article190.html>

Biographical information on Amos Oz, Israeli-Palestinian peace activist, novelist, and participant in the Geneva Accord for Middle East peace.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/oz.html>

Text of the Geneva Accord, Oct 19, 2003, which proposes a blueprint for peace in the Middle East.

<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article5019.htm>

Israel and Palestine: Historical Background

The timeline below is adapted from MidEast Web.org, the Website of the MidEastWeb for Coexistence R.A., whose goal is to provide Middle East goals, facts, and views.

1300? BCE Migration and conquest of Canaan by the Philistines and Israelite tribes. Map of Canaan.

1000? BCE Jewish conquest of Jerusalem; reign of David; After the death of David's son, Solomon, the kingdom split into two: Israel in the north, Judea in Jerusalem and the south.

721 BCE Fall of Israel (Northern Kingdom) to Assyria.

586 BCE Fall of Judea (Southern Kingdom) to Babylon and destruction of the first temple.

About 539 BCE Fall of Babylon. Jews allowed to return to Judea. Tradition has it that Ezra and Nehemiah led this return, and later rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, but the walls were apparently not built until 100 years later.

About 519 BCE Rebuilding of the Second Temple under Persian rule.

331 BCE Alexander the Great conquers Persia. The land was subject to Egyptian rule after his death, followed by Seleucid Syrian rule.

313 BCE Ptolemy of Egypt rules Jerusalem and Judea.

170 BCE Antiochus Epiphanes rules Judea.

166 BCE Revolt of Judah Maccabeus against Syrian Hellenic dynasty.

About 61 BCE Roman conquest of Jerusalem by Pompeii. Land is divided into various provinces.

40 BCE Reign of Herod the Great; Herod conquered Jerusalem in 37 BCE. Herod

began an extensive restoration of the temple about 20 BC.

4 BCE Probable year of birth of Jesus. Jesus was crucified between 31 and 33 CE.

66-73 CE First Jewish revolt. Fall of the Jewish Second Temple to Romans in 70 CE.

133-135 Second Jewish revolt under Bar Kochba_crushed. Judea renamed Palestina. Jews are banned from Jerusalem by Hadrianus Caesar.

313 Roman Emperor Constantine legalizes Christianity.

614 Persians conquer Judea and Jerusalem.

622 Hegira of Mohammed. Islam is founded.

628 Emperor Heraclius defeats Sassanid Persians, reconquers Jerusalem.

About 638 Arab conquest of Jerusalem. (slightly earlier or later according to different sources). Caliph Omar provides the Christians of Jerusalem with the Covenant of Umar guaranteeing their protection. Land divided into the *Jund* of Filastin, in the south (capital in Al-Lod and later in Ramlah), and the *Jund* of Urdunn in the north, with capital in Tiberias (Tabariyeh).

641 Arab conquest of Egypt.

705 Dome of the Rock (Omar) mosque is completed by Caliph Abd' al Malik ibn Marwan, who rules from Jerusalem.

715 The Al-Aqsa Mosque is completed by the Caliph Walid.

717 Caliph Suleiman builds Ramlah.

750 Rise of the Abbasids in Baghdad, full of the Umayyad dynasty in Damascus.

969 Fatimid conquest. Churches and synagogues of Jerusalem destroyed.

1071 Battle of Manzikert. The Byzantine emperor Romanus IV Diogenes is defeated by the Seljuk Turks, opening Asia Minor to

- Turkish invasion. Seljuks devastate Jerusalem.
- 1099 Crusaders conquer Jerusalem, slaughter most Jewish and Moslem inhabitants, expel Jews.
- 1187 Salah-ed-din (Saladin) reconquers Jerusalem.
- 1229 Jerusalem briefly held by Crusaders.
- 1244 Rise of Mamlukes. Jerusalem taken by Muslims.
- 1260 Battle of Ayn Jalut (Nazareth)—Holagu (Mongols) defeated.
- 1291 Crusaders defeated at Acre and evicted from Palestine.
- 1453 Constantinople falls to Ottoman Sultan Mehmed.
- 1517 Ottoman Turkish conquest of Palestine.
- 1537–41 Muslim walls built around Jerusalem by Suleiman the Magnificent.
- 1799 Napoleon conquers Jaffa but retreats before Acco (Acre); Napoleon's Proclamation of a Jewish State was stillborn, and his declaration of equal rights for Jews was repealed in part in 1806.
- 1831 Egyptian Conquest of Palestine area by Mehmed Ali of Egypt, who rebelled against the Ottomans. He was forced to withdraw in 1840 under pressure by European allies.
- 1834 Jerusalem families including the Abu Ghosh clan revolt against Egyptian rule. The rebellion is eventually crushed.
- 1839 Tanzimat—reorganization program—is proclaimed in the Ottoman empire.
- 1840 Blood libel (accusation that Jews kill Christian children to use their blood for Passover Matzoth) against Damascus Jewry.
- 1843 First Zionist writings of Rabbi Alcalay and of Rabbi Kalischer, *Emuna Yeshara*.
- 1844 First census in Jerusalem shows 7120 Jews, 5760 Muslims, 3390 Christians.
- 1856 Ottoman reforms (Tanzimat)—including requirement to register ownership of land and pay taxes on it.
- 1860 First Jewish settlement (Mishkenot Sha'ananim) outside Jerusalem walls.
- 1878 First Zionist Settlement—Petah Tikwa.
- 1892 Railroad from Jaffa to Jerusalem.
- 1897 First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland.
- 1906 Beginnings of Zionist socialist movements. First Congress of Poalei Tziyon in Poltava, under the leadership of Ber Borochov.
- Jul 3, 1908 The Young Turks revolt breaks out in the Ottoman empire, and is eventually led by Enver Pasha; Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II is forced to restore the constitution of 1876, entailing the creation of a new parliament, and indirect representative elections. 'Abd al-Hamid is then deposed (27 Apr 1909), and his brother Mehmet V installed. Policies for the 'Turkification' of the Ottoman territories promulgated through 1909, resulting in the creation of societies promoting pan-Arab ideas.
- 1908 First Arabic newspaper in Haifa, *al-Karmil*, popularizes opposition to selling land to Zionists.
- 1909 Foundation of Tel Aviv by Zionists (called Ahuzat Bayit) near Jaffa; foundation of first Kibbutz—Degania.
- 1911 *Filastin*, large Arabic newspaper, launched in Jaffa.
- Jun 15, 1914 Anglo French agreement on Baghdad railroad and Mesopotamia.
- Aug 1914 Start of WW I.
- Nov 1914 Allies at war with Turkey.
- Dec 17, 1914 British protectorate in Egypt; Prince Husein Kemal becomes Khedive.
- Apr 25, 1915 Anglo-French landing at Gallipoli.

- Jul 1915 Husayn-McMahon Correspondence—Britain promises independence for Arabia.
- Jan 6–8, 1916 Allies evacuate Gallipoli.
- Apr 29, 1916 British surrender to Turks at Kut, in Mesopotamia.
- May 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement divides up Fertile Crescent between France and Britain into zones of influence, recognizing Arab independence in part of the land.
- Jun 1916 Husayn of Arabia proclaims revolt against the Turks urged on by British promises of independence and with support of T.E. Lawrence for military operations. In Oct or Nov he was proclaimed king of Saudi Arabia, but the British supported Saud, who had been in control of Riyadh since 1902, and who made a pact with the British in 1915.
- Jan 1, 1917 Britain, France and Italy recognize Husayn as king of the Hejaz.
- Nov 2, 1917 British issued the Balfour Declaration, viewed by Jews and Arabs as promising a “National Home” for the Jews in Palestine.
- Dec 1917 Gen. Sir Edmund Allenby captures Jerusalem from Ottomans for the British. Col. Reginald Storrs is appointed military governor.
- Apr 1918 Zionist commission arrives in Palestine.
- Jun 1918 Emir Feisal and Dr. Weizmann meet near Aqaba.
- Oct 1918 British and Arabs occupy Damascus; French occupy Beirut and Alexandretta.
- Nov 1918 First Muslim-Christian association formed in Jaffa to oppose the creation of a Jewish homeland. Another was formed in Jerusalem soon after. Armistice between Allies and Germany, Nov 11.
- 1936–1939 Arab Revolt led by Haj Amin Al-Husseini. Over 5,000 Arabs were killed, according to some sources, mostly by British. Several hundred Jews were killed by Arabs. Husseini fled to Iraq and then to Nazi Germany.
- Nov 29, 1947 UN Partition Resolution (GA 181)—Palestine was to be divided into a Jewish State and an Arab State; Jerusalem was to be internationalized. The resolution is supported by both the US and USSR. Arab countries and Arab league refuse to recognize the resolution.
- Dec 1, 1947 Arab riots in Jerusalem. Beginning of Arab blockade of Jerusalem. The period to May 1948 is characterized by numerous skirmishes, road ambushes, riots, bombings, and massacres, whether organized by one or the other side or spontaneous.
- Jan 1948 Arab Salvation Army (also called Arab Liberation Army—ALA) admitted to Palestine by the British, following a promise not to attack Jewish settlements. Their leader, Fauzi Al-Kaukji may have entered Palestine only in Mar. Jewish Agency concludes arms deal with Czechoslovakia, but most arms do not arrive until Jun 1948, after the British have left. The UN, including the US, had placed an arms embargo on Palestine.
- Jan 16, 1948 Jewish convoy to Gush Etzion intercepted.
- Feb 1948 Anti-British riots in Baghdad against new British-Iraq treaty bring down pro-British government.
- Mar 1948 Provisional Jewish government formed in Tel-Aviv. Convoy to Gush Etzion ambushed in Nebi Daniel. Arabs begin to flee Haifa.
- Apr 6–8, 1948 Arab blockade of Jerusalem is broken temporarily by operation Nachshon. Death of Abd-El-Qader Al-Husseini at Kastel—the foremost Palestinian military leader is shot by a Jewish sentry when he wanders into Jewish held Kastel in the Jerusalem corridor thinking it is in Arab hands.

- Apr 9, 1948 Deir Yassin Massacre—Jewish dissident underground groups Irgun and Lehi kill over 100 Palestinian civilians in the Jerusalem village of Deir Yassin.
- Apr 13, 1948 Hadassah Convoy Massacre—In retaliation for Deir Yassin, Arabs kill Jewish medical personnel and sick persons on their way to Hadassah hospital.
- Apr 13–20, 1948 Operation Har'el launched by Haganah at conclusion of Operation Nachshon, does not succeed in opening the road to Jerusalem.
- Apr 1948 Arab flight from Haifa continues; Arab flight from Jaffa.
- Apr 22–31 1948 Operation Misparayim launched by Haganah to assume control of Haifa after British withdrawal and attacks by Arab forces and Irgun.
- May 12, 1948 Haganah captures Tsfat (Safed). Arab population flees the city before it is captured.
- May 13, 1948 Jaffa surrenders to Haganah.
- May 13, 1948 Kfar Etzion Massacre—In retaliation for Deir Yassin Massacre, Arabs kill about 128 Jewish defenders at Kfar Etzion, after they had surrendered.
- May 14, 1948 Remaining kibbutzim of Gush Etzion surrender. British High Commissioner Cunningham leaves Palestine. State of Israel declared on Friday May 14, in advance of the Sabbath.
- May 15, 1948 British leave Palestine. Israel War of Independence (1948 War). Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia declared war on Israel. Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian invasion began.
- May 17, 1948 Haganah captures Acco (Acre). Most of the Arab population flees the city before it is captured.
- May 18, 1948 Syrian army captures Masada and Merom Hagolan.
- May 28, 1948 Jewish quarter of the old city of Jerusalem falls to the Jordan Legion. About 300 Haganah defenders taken prisoner and sent to Jordan. The entire quarter including 58 of the 59 synagogues is demolished by the Arab mob despite efforts of the Legion.
- Jun 11, 1948 First truce begins, lasting until 8 Jul.
- Jun 23, 1948 Irgun's Altalena ship brings weapons and 940 immigrants to Palestine, a violation of UN embargo.
- Jun 28, 1948 Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte, a UN mediator, presents first peace plan—Jerusalem to be Arab.
- Jul 08, 1948 Egyptian army breaks truce, due to end Jul 9. Attacks from neighborhood of Majdal (Ashdod). Israeli counterattack at Faluja unsuccessful. This phase of the war is known as “the ten days,” and included Mivtza Dani—the Israeli conquest of Lydda (Lod) and Ramla, breaking the Arab siege of Jerusalem, and creating thousands of refugees, as well as advances in the north.
- Jul 10, 1948 Arab League announces the establishment of a temporary Palestinian civilian administration over Arab held-areas of Palestine, but it is never implemented.
- Jul 12, 1948 Egyptians attack Kibbutz Negba with armor and massive troop concentrations. Israelis suffer 5 dead, 16 wounded, Egyptian casualties 200–300 dead and wounded.
- Jul 19, 1948 Second truce in Palestine.
- Sep 17, 1948 Bernadotte assassinated in Jerusalem, and Lehi members are suspected. Bernadotte, who had been instrumental in saving about 21,000 Jews in WW II, was proposing to “relieve” Israel of the Negev and force return of the Palestinian refugees. The latter proposal was adopted in UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

Sep 22, 1948 Palestinian States—AHC communiqué announces the establishment of the Government of All Palestine (APG; *Hukumat 'Umum Filastin*); Declaration of Independence proclaimed by Hajj Amin to Palestine National Council in Gaza (30 Sep t-1 Oct) on Oct 1, with Hajj Amin as President of the PNC, Ahmad Hilmi 'Abd al-Baqi as PM, Jamal al-Husayni as Foreign Minister, in the Mandate territory of Palestine, with the flag of the 1916 Arab Revolt. Jerusalem as capital, Gaza as seat of government. Recognized and sponsored by Egypt and Arab League, who sought to forestall 'Abdullah's plan to annex West Bank; strongly opposed by Jordan. Ahmad Hilmi continued to represent Palestine in the League until his death in September 63.

Oct 15, 1948 Second truce ends; Israeli offensive breaks Egyptian siege of Israeli settlements in the Negev (operation Yoav). Beersheva is taken. In the north, operation Hiram defeats the Arab Liberation army. IDF massacres in Eilabun, Saliba, Safsaf, Jish, Hule, Majd el-Krum, Bi'na, Dier el assad and Arab al-Mawassa.

Dec 11, 1948 UN Resolution 194 calls for cessation of hostilities, return of refugees who wish to live in peace. The resolution reflected UN and US anger over the assassination of Bernadotte.

Dec 1948 Israelis advance into Egypt; Nokrashy Pasha, Egyptian PM, assassinated.

Dec 19, 1948–Jan 7, 1949 Israeli Operation Horev conquers Gaza and enters Sinai. Intervention by British and US forces Israel to withdraw. Israel shot down several British reconnaissance planes, apparently unarmed (four Spitfires and one Tempest) Jan 7, 1949.

Mar 7–10, 1949 Operation Uvda—IDF captures southern Negev including Eilat with no resistance.

Feb–Jun 1949 Israel and Arab states agree to armistice in separate agreements. Israel gained about 50% more territory than was

originally allotted to it by the UN Partition Plan. The war created about 780,000 Palestinian refugees who fled or were evicted from Jewish held areas. Gaza fell under the jurisdiction of Egypt. The West Bank of the Jordan was occupied by Jordan and later annexed, consistent with secret agreements with the Jewish leadership made before the outbreak of hostilities.

Apr 3, 1949 Armistice—Israel and Arab states agree to armistice. Israel gained about 50% more territory than was originally allotted to it by the UN Partition Plan.

Oct 29, 1956 Suez Campaign. In retaliation for a series of escalating border raids as well as the closure of the straits of Tiran and Suez canal to Israeli shipping, and to prevent Egyptian use of newly acquired Soviet arms in a war, Israel invades the Sinai peninsula and occupies it for several months, with French and British collaboration.

May 1964 PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) founded with the aim of destroying Israel. The Palestinian National Charter (1968) officially called for liquidation of Israel.

May 1967 Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser closes the straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and dismisses UN peacekeeping force. Negotiations with US to reopen the Straits of Tiran fail.

Jun 5–10, 1967 Six-day war. Israel destroys the Egyptian air force on the ground, conquers and occupies Sinai and Gaza, then conquers the West Bank from Jordan, and Golan Heights from Syria. UN resolution 242 called for Israeli withdrawal, establishment of peace.

Oct 6, 1973 Yom Kippur War (Oct War). In a surprise attack on the Jewish day of atonement, Egypt retook the Suez canal and a narrow zone on the other side. Syria reconquered the Golan Heights. Following massive US and Soviet resupplying of the

- sides, Israel succeeded in pushing back the Syrians and threatening Damascus. In Sinai, the IDF crossed the Suez Canal and cut off the Egyptian Third Army.
- Mar 26, 1979 Peace treaty signed between Egypt and Israel.
- Jun 7, 1981 Israel destroys Iraqi nuclear reactor in daring raid.
- Oct 6, 1981 Egyptian President Anwar Sadat is assassinated while on the reviewing stand of a victory parade.
- Jun 6, 1982 Massive Israeli invasion of Lebanon to fight PLO.
- Sep 13, 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles—Israel and PLO agree to mutual recognition.
- Sep 28, 1995 Oslo Interim Agreement signed. Palestinian Authority to be established.
- Nov 4, 1995 Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin assassinated by right-wing Israeli fanatic Yigal Amir. Rabin is replaced by Shimon Peres.
- Jun 1996 Right-Wing Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu elected Prime Minister in Israel, replacing Shimon Peres.
- Sep 1996 Al-Aksa tunnel riots—Arab sources spread the false rumor that a gate opened in an underground tunnel tourist attraction by the Israeli government, endangered the foundations of the Al-Aqsa mosque. This caused several days of rioting and numerous casualties.
- Jan 18, 1997 Israel and Palestinians reach agreement on Israeli redeployment in the West-Bank city of Hebron.
- Oct 1998 Wye River Plantation talks result in an agreement for Israeli redeployment and release of political prisoners and renewed Palestinian commitment to correct its violations of the Oslo accords including excess police force, illegal arms, and incitement in public media and education.
- May 17, 1999 Israel elects Labor party leader and Former General Ehud Barak as Prime Minister in a landslide. Barak promises rapid progress toward peace.
- Mar 2000 Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations fail when Hafez Assad rejects an Israeli offer relayed by US President Clinton in Geneva.
- Sep 28, 2000 Palestinians initiated riots after Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount, which is also the location of the Haram as Sharif holy to Muslims.
- Sep 11, 2001 Terror attacks on World Trade Center in NYC and the Pentagon carried out by fanatic Islamic Al-Qaida group headed by Osama Bin Laden initiate US war on terror. Israel and Palestinians agree to a cease fire, but it is not implemented.
- Feb 6, 2001 Right-wing Likud leader Ariel Sharon elected Prime Minister in Israel replacing Ehud Barak and promising “peace and security.”
- Mar–Apr 2002 Israel conducts operation Defensive Wall in the West Bank, following a large number of Palestinian suicide attacks on civilian targets. Operations include the “Battle of Jenin.” Saudi peace initiative adopted at Beirut summit.
- Jan 28, 2003 Elections in Israel give wide margin (40 seats) to right wing Likud party, returning PM Ariel Sharon for another term.
- Mar 19, 2003 US begins invasion of Iraq by a strike against a building where Saddam Hussein and other leaders are meeting. Baghdad falls, Apr 9.
- Jul 9, 2004 International court of Justice (ICJ) rules that the Israeli security barrier violates international law and must be torn down.
- Nov 11, 2004 Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat dies.

- Jan 9, 2005 Mahmoud Abbas elected President of the Palestinian National Authority.
- Jan 10, 2005 Ariel Sharon forms unity government with Labor and United Torah Judaism parties in Israel.
- Apr 2005 Ariel Sharon visits US President George Bush at his Texas ranch. Syrian Army leaves Lebanon, officially ending Syrian occupation.
- May 26, 2005 Mahmud Abbas visits US President George Bush at the White House, an important symbolic gesture signaling US backing for Abbas and Palestinian aspirations. Israel releases 400 Palestinian prisoners including some with blood on their hands. Britain confirms "low level" negotiations with Hamas.
- Jun 2005 Violence flares in Gaza. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visits Palestinian and Israeli leaders to ensure coordination of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Israeli PM Ariel Sharon and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas meet in Jerusalem. Jun 21, 2005 Sharon announces that Palestinians have promised to coordinate regarding Gaza withdrawal. PM Abbas postpones Palestinian legislative elections in order to change the election law, amidst growing concern that Hamas will trounce Abbas's Fatah party in the elections. Lebanese elections give a decisive majority to the opposition to Syria, led by Saad Hariri, son of slain leader Rafiq Hariri.
- Aug 15, 2005 Disengagement—Israeli evacuation of Gaza settlements and four West Bank settlements began on Aug 15 and was completed Aug 24.
- Jan 4, 2006 Ariel Sharon suffers a massive stroke, leaving the leadership of Israel and the new Kadima party in the hands of Ehud Olmert.
- Jan 26, 2006 Radical Islamist Hamas movement wins an upset victory in Palestinian Donor countries suspend direct aid to the Hamas until they are willing to recognize Israel and participate in peace process. Hamas smuggles in cash through the Rafah crossing with the connivance of European monitors in order to pay salaries.
- Mar 2006 Over 40 Qassam rockets fall on Sderot. IDF responds with shelling of launching sites and IAF raids to kill leaders of Popular Resistance Committees, Islamic Jihad, Hamas and Fatah Al-Aqsa brigades involved in the attacks.
- Mar 28, 2006 Ehud Olmert elected PM of Israel, heading Kadima party coalition.
- May 11, 2006 Palestinian Prisoners in Israeli jails issue document of national unity calling for a state in West Bank and Gaza Strip and right of return for Palestinian refugees. Hamas government rejects the document and Hamas prisoners who signed it repudiate it. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced that he will hold a referendum on approval of the document if the factions cannot agree. On Jun 28 a revised prisoners' document is issued, supposedly agreed to by Hamas and Fatah. However not all factions agree and Abbas decides to hold a referendum.
- Jun 2006 Israeli-targeted killings in Gaza and West Bank continue, while Hamas fires about 90 Qassam rockets into Sderot and other Western Negev communities. IDF denies killing civilians the beach, and points out that shrapnel recovered from the victims does not come from IDF shells.
- Jun 25, 2006 Following announcement of a "truce" agreement by the PNA, Hamas kidnap Israeli soldier from Israeli army outpost inside Israel, and kill two others. They demand release of Palestinian prisoners. Israel refuses to negotiate, demands release of soldier.
- Jun 27, 2006 Hamas, Fatah sign Palestinian Prisoners' Document, supposedly cementing national unity. Israel begins operation Summer Rains, invades Gaza strip to recover kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit and stop Qassam rocket fire.

Jul 12, 2006 Hezbollah terrorists cross the blue line border with Lebanon, attack an Israeli patrol, killing 3 and capturing 2 soldiers. Hezbollah begins a series of rocket attacks on northern Israel. In subsequent days, Israel carries out massive but selective bombing and artillery shelling of Lebanon, hitting rocket stores, Hezbollah headquarters in Dahya quarter of Beirut and al-Manara television in Beirut, and killing over two hundred persons, many civilians. Hezbollah responds with several hundred rocket attacks on Haifa, Tiberias, Safed and other towns deep in northern Israel, killing 13 civilians, and a Hezbollah Iranian supplied C-802 missile hits an Israeli missile cruiser off the coast of Beirut, killing 4. Hezbollah rocket also sinks at least one foreign neutral ship and damages an Egyptian one. G-8 meeting calls for cessation of violence, return of Israeli soldier and disarmament of Hezbollah in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1559 and UN Security Council Resolution 1680.

Aug 14, 2006 Lebanon Cease fire, based on UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

Nov 26, 2006 Israelis and Palestinians announce truce to apply to Gaza strip. Israeli incursions and arrests continue in West bank, as do Palestinian terror attempts. In Gaza, Israel holds to the truce, but rocket fire from Gaza continues.

Dec 23, 2006 Meeting between Israeli P.M. Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Abbas; Olmert promises to improve quality of life for Palestinians and remove checkpoints, but in practice no real changes occurred

Jan 29, 2007 Palestinian suicide bomber kills three in Eilat.

Feb 2007 Israeli renovations near the Mughrabi gate of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem spark widespread unrest in the Arab world, over false charges that Israel is destroying the mosque.

Feb 8, 2007 Palestinian Unity Agreement in Mecca. Hamas and Fatah agree to share power, based on vaguely worded agreement. Hamas officials reiterate that they will never recognize Israel. US and Israel insist that the new government must recognize right of Israel to exist, disarm terrorist groups and agree to end violence.

Feb 19, 2007 Trilateral Israeli-Palestinian-American summit with Secretary of State Rice, PM Ehud Olmert and President Abbas ended with no visible result.

May 20 2007 Start of confrontation in Lebanon Palestinian Refugee camp Naher el Bared between Lebanese security forces and Fatah al Islam (Al Qaeda) militants, evidently sponsored by Syria.

Jun 15, 2007 Hamas Coup—Hamas forces attack Fatah in Gaza and drive them out of the Gaza strip in brutal coup. President Mahmoud Abbas dissolves the unity government, but Prime Minister Haniyeh insists that the government is still in power. A summit in Sharm El Sheikh (Jun 25) attended by Egypt, Jordan, Egypt and Palestinians pledges support to the Abbas government, but Egypt calls for reunification with Hamas.

Sep 2, 2007 End of confrontation between Lebanese army and Fatah al Islam in Nahr el Bared refugee camp. About 220 militants and over 40 civilians were killed in the fighting.

Sep 6, 2007 Israeli air raid on claimed Syrian nuclear structure. The structure is destroyed. The raid proves that Syria lacks an effective air-defense system.

Sep 19, 2007 In Beirut, unidentified assailants detonate a car bomb assassinating Christian Phalange party MP Antoine Ghanem, the 8th anti-Syrian figure killed in the past 3 yrs.), reducing the governing coalition's parliamentary majority to 67 of 128 seats only 6 days

before parliament is to convene to elect a new president by simple majority.

Nov 13, 2007 In Gaza, Hamas forces fire on Fatah demonstrators during commemoration of the death of Yasser Arafat, killing 7 and wounding 55.

Nov 26-28 US convenes Middle East Summit in Annapolis, MD. Israelis and Palestinians agree to implement roadmap under US monitoring and to negotiate continuously with the aim of reaching a final status agreement by the end of 2008.

Jan 2008 A tour of the Middle East by US President George Bush apparently fails to achieve support for US Middle East policy goals. However, Israelis and Palestinians pledge to negotiate seriously regarding "core issues" such as Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees. Israeli government issues contradictory declarations regarding status of a building freeze in West Bank settlements and areas of East Jerusalem annexed in the Six Day war.

Jan 20, 2008 After Israel cuts Gaza fuel supplies in retaliation for rocket and sniper fire from Gaza, Gaza power plant, supplying about 20% of Gaza's electricity, is shut down by Hamas, precipitating condemnation of Israel and international outcry.

Jan 23, 2008 After months of preparation, Hamas blasts holes in Gaza/Rafah barrier, allowing hundreds of thousands of Gazans to enter Egypt freely. Border breach is partly closed by Egyptians by Jan 28, but reopened by Hamas and eventually resealed by Egypt.

Feb 13, 2008 Assassination of Hezbollah terror mastermind Imad Moughnieh in Damascus.

Feb 27-Mar 3 Large scale Israeli raid in Gaza kills over 100.

Mar 6 Terror attack by Palestinian in Jerusalem's Yeshivat Merkaz Harav kills 8.

May 9, 2008 Hezbollah takes over Sa'ad Hariri-owned media, puts Hariri under house arrest in Beirut, threatens coup, after Lebanese government tries to dismiss an official belonging to Hezbollah, and close down private Hezbollah communications network. Lebanese army, government eventually "solve" crisis by capitulating to all Hezbollah demands in "compromise" settlement.

Jun 19 Israel-Hamas truce in Gaza.

Jun 29 Israel-Hezbollah prisoner swap deal approved.

Jul 1, 2008 Three Israelis killed and over 50 wounded in a bulldozer attack in Jerusalem. Police shot and killed the militant attacker.

Jul 11, 2008 Border patrolman Lance Corporal David Chriqui, 19, of Rishon Lezion, critically wounded in a militant attack in the Old City of Jerusalem. He died Jul 23.

Jul 22, 2008 Copycat bulldozer attack in Jerusalem wounds 16 Israelis.

Jul 28, 2008 Fatah arrests about 50 Hamas activists in West Bank.

Jul 30, 2008 Hamas forces in Gaza detained 160 supporters of the rival Fatah movement after three explosions, including one that killed six people, a Palestinian human rights group says

Aug 4, 2008 Israel permits Fatah loyalists fleeing Gaza repression by Hamas (Hilles clan) to cross to Gaza

Aug 17, 2008 Israeli cabinet approves release of 200 jailed Palestinians.

Aug 23, 2008 Two boats of volunteer activists break Gaza blockage for the first time. Israel permits them to arrive and depart.

Aug 2008 Gaza doctors affiliated with Fatah begin strike against Hamas gov't.

- Sep 5, 2008 Israel allows shipment of 1,000 rifles plus ammunition for Palestinian National Authority forces.
- Sep 16, 2008 At least 11 killed in internecine Palestinian fighting in Gaza.
- Sep 17, 2008 In primaries held after PM Olmert forced to resign over financial improprieties, Tzipi Livni elected to head Kadima party in Israel, form new government.
- Sep 21, 2008 PM Olmert announces intent to resign.
- Sep 22, 2008 15 hurt in Jerusalem when Palestinian motorist stages car attack, running over pedestrians.
- Oct 20, 2008 IDF demolishes three illegal West Bank outposts.
- Oct 23, 2008 IDF authorizes 500 additional PA police in Hebron
- Oct 23, 2008 86-year-old Avraham Ozeri killed and a police officer was moderately wounded in Jerusalem by a stabbing attack launched by 21-year-old Mohammad Elmadan, from a village near Bethlehem.
- Oct 26, 2008 Tzipi Livni announces she cannot form a coalition because of Shas party financial demands and opposition to concessions in Jerusalem, calls for new elections.
- Nov 4, 2008 Barack Obama elected President of the United States. Arab world hopes for radical change in United States Middle East policy.
- IDF discovers tunnel into Israel being built from Gaza, launches incursion to destroy it. Six Hamas gunmen killed. Hamas and others launch about 35 rockets into Israel in the coming days and IDF retaliates. Operations continue for several days. Both sides insist they want the truce to continue.
- Nov 9, 2008 Quartet meeting at Sharm el Sheikh reaffirms support for Annapolis peace negotiations process.
- Hamas cancels participation in the Egyptian hosted Palestinian unification meeting that was to begin in Cairo.
- Dec 19, 2008 Hamas announces that the "lull" (tahidiya) has expired and that it will not be renewed. Rocket fire from Gaza is stepped up.
- Dec 24, 2008 About 60 rockets and mortar shells are launched at Israel by Hamas and associated groups from Gaza.
- Dec 27, 2008 Israel launches Operation *Oferet Yetzuka* (Operation Cast Lead) with continuous air strikes at rocket launching facilities, factories, smuggling tunnels, Hamas command and control centers. About 400 Palestinians are killed by Dec 31. Hamas broadens rocket strikes to include Israeli towns and cities as far away as Beersheba and Yavneh.
- Jan 18, 2009 Israel announces unilateral cease fire in Operation Cast Lead, after killing about 1,300 Palestinians and losing a total of 13 Israeli dead. Hamas declares a cease fire later the same day, but sporadic rocket fire continues, along with IDF retaliations.
- Feb 10, 2009 Israeli elections give a majority to a bloc of right-wing parties. Though the dovish center Kadima party gets the largest number of votes of any party, the right wing Likud party eventually formed a government together with the Israel Labor party and the right wing Yisrael Beiteynu Party
- Jun 1, 2009 UN Human Rights Council investigative panel led by Judge Richard Goldstone enters the Gaza strip to investigate alleged Israeli war crimes, leaving Jun 4. Israel refused to cooperate.
- Jun 4, 2009 Address by President Obama in Cairo, Jun 4, 2009—Historic speech of rapprochement with the Arab and Muslim world also has direct implications for Israeli–Palestinian conflict, since the President calls for an end to Israeli construction of new housing in settlements

in the occupied territories, as well as Arab recognition of Israel.

Jun 13, 2009 Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared re-elected President of Iran in elections denounced as blatantly fraudulent.

Jun 14, 2009 Address by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Begin-Sadat Center, Jun 14, 2009—Netanyahu acceded to Obama demand that Israel support creation of a Palestinian state, but refuses to end construction of housing in Israel's West Bank settlements. Backed by US, Palestinians refuse to start peace talks with Israel unless all Israeli construction stops in West Bank and Jerusalem.

Aug 2009 First Fatah congress in 20 years, issued Fatah Foreign Policy Program, Aug 11.

Aug 26, 2009 Palestinian Authority issues an EU backed plan to declare a state unilaterally within two years.

Nov 2009 Israeli P.M. Netanyahu announces settlement construction freeze to end Sep 26, 2010.

Dec 2009 US announces another clandestine Iranian nuclear facility at Qom and it is inspected by IAEA.

Mar 8, 2010 Announcement of construction in Ramat Shlomo (east Jerusalem) by Israeli Minister of the Interior Eli Yishai embarrasses US VP Joe Biden, as he arrives to kick off indirect ("proximity") talks between Israelis and Palestinians.

Apr 26, 2010 (approximate date) Israel and US evidently tacitly agree to East Jerusalem construction freeze.

May 31, 2010 Turkish ship Mavi Marmara, chartered by IHH is boarded by Israeli commandos after attempting to run the Gaza blockade. The Mavi Marmara was part of a flotilla of "humanitarian aid." Other ships are diverted to Ashdod and their cargoes of cement, used clothing and outdated medicines are shipped to Gaza by

Israel. IHH personnel on Mavi Marmara beat Israeli commandos and attack them with various weapons prepared in advance, including possibly guns, kidnapping several. Israelis open fire killing 9. Major crisis in Israel-Turkey relations and international outcry. IHH may have ties to Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Subsequently it was found that there were no humanitarian supplies on the Mavi Marmara.

Jun 9, 2010 UN Security Council votes sanctions against Iran (Resolution 1929) because of Iranian refusal to curtail uranium enrichment program and cooperate with IAEA. Resolution is weakened to meet Chinese and Russian objections. Brazil and Turkey vote against the resolution. Lebanon abstains.

Jun-Jul 2010 Israel announces that it is easing the Gaza blockade, bowing to international pressure.

Jul 13, 2010 Israel announces public investigation (Turkel commission) of flotilla incident. The investigation is closed in Aug with no public acknowledgement of serious intelligence failures. UN launches independent probe.

Aug 20, 2010 US announces direct Israeli-Palestinian talks

Aug 31, 2010 Drive-by shooting Palestinian attack kills four Israelis including pregnant woman in south Hebron area. Fatah al Aqsa brigades and later Hamas take "credit." Palestinian Authority arrests hundreds of alleged Hamas members. Hamas vows to continue attacks.

Sep 2, 2010 Direct Israeli-Palestinian talks open in Washington with Egyptian President Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah in attendance at the initial ceremonies. The sides agree to meet every two weeks.

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A Chronicle of Empty Graves

By Juliano Mer Khamis, May 25, 2002

It is very difficult to write when you know that the readers of these lines could be family members who have lost their dearest. Their pain echoes in my ears.

But it is also difficult to remain silent. I have no intention of writing of my feelings as a resident of the city, neither as an Arab nor as a Jew. I assume that the newspapers will have their fill of "authorized" commentators on Arab affairs, on co-existence (which never was) of "deep shocks", hatred, conciliation (especially merchants), and, of course, on security.

I want to tell the story of Ashraf. These are not words of praise or blame. This is a monologue of predetermined death. These are cold facts, statistics for the future or, as Ashraf called it, "A Chronicle of Empty Graves."

Ashraf was born in 1979– into the jaws of the Occupation. He wanted to be an actor. We met in 1988 at the Jenin refugee camp where I performed, together with my mother Arna, for the sake of "The Children of the Stones."

Ashraf also wanted to write a play. An intelligent child, uninhibited by oppression, who loved to dream. In the mornings he would throw stones at the soldiers and at nights memorize texts of a play we put on stage at the camp. He was only nine then.

His brother was imprisoned in an Israeli prison for his part in that Intifadah. His mother offered the roof of her house to serve as our rehearsal space. His father hated the border

checkpoints. His little sister always sat in a corner, frightened and strange, staring at us.

Ashraf was arrested and beaten by the border police. For a long time after his release he proudly carried his wounded hand. His father was fired from his place of work. His Jewish employer could not stand his absences. Ashraf went out to look for a job to support his family. Rehearsals went on without him. His friends said that they saw him pass by in the night, sparing with words and always in a hurry.

We met again in 1992 , when he was only thirteen. His speech was fluent and captivating. Ashraf wants to be a "Shahid." His friends mocked him. His parents treated this as youthful frivolity. But he held his ground. His little sister, who had stopped speaking ever since soldiers burst into their house and took her brother, would hold on to his pants so as to keep him near. Her love for him was proof of the justice of his path and strengthened his spirit. Ashraf want to avenge the vengeance for all. The fervor of his words and his secretive actions entertained those around him.

The Intifadah was at its peak. And then it happened. His brother was convicted in military court and sentenced to eight years in prison. Their house was blown up by the military and totally demolished. Ashraf cried. Television cameras of foreign broadcasters documented his tears. "I would rather die standing than live on my knees," he would say. This was a bad omen.

Ashraf did not die. The Oslo agreements were a reason for a party to

which everyone was invited. He was dressed like a bridegroom. A local hero. A winner. His family moved to live with his uncle. Jenin the city and the adjacent refugee camp were included in Area A. Ashraf went to look for work.

I met him during one of my visits to the Jenin market. This time he was dressed in the uniform of a policeman and strutted like a peacock. I did not conceal my disappointment and reminded him that “power corrupts,” as the cliché tells us.

In a telephone conversation several months later he told me that he had left the police force and that, in fact, nothing had changed and he had no intention of participating in the “conspiracy,” as he now called the Oslo agreements.

“We have become subcontractors of Israel,” he said. “They expropriated land from my grandfather to expand the settlement above Jenin ... and as Palestinian police we are supposed to guard the settlers against harm.” “There is a border barrier every meter.” “I work in Area C, secretly move through Area B and sleep in Area A like a cow who goes back to her enclosure after pasture.” “Double occupation”—he hurled these words at his father who had, in the meantime, found work in the local market.

The tension in the territories rose. Eight years of “Oslo.” Eight years of direct and indirect occupation. The territories are divided into cantons. The barrier checkpoints increase and the humiliation continues. The number of settlers multiplies. Lands are expropriated. Bypass roads disfigure the

West Bank, chopping up its width and length. “They are working us over”— yelled Ashraf into the telephone. I invited him to visit me in Haifa. He never came. [Israeli Prime Minister Ariel] Sharon went up to the “Temple Mount.” A closure was imposed on the territories. Ashraf went underground.

I traveled to Jenin at the peak of the “El Akza” Intifadah. The roads around the city were dug up to prevent the passage of cars. The military did nothing to protect the sewage system or the electricity. The camp was in total darkness. I managed to sneak in with the help of a friend from a nearby village. Ashraf’s mother opened the door for me and, as usual, invited me in quickly. I was afraid. The atmosphere was harsh. Paralyzing. The mother counted the wounded and the arrested, they did not speak of the dead. “Ashraf is gone,” she said. “He went to fight,” she was tough and did not disclose any worry or protest. In previous visits I would be at their house as at mine—not hesitant with my words. This time it was different. My hosts, who sensed my embarrassment, did not spare me from their anger and rage at the occupation, as if I were its representative. They are humiliated, hungry, cold, and dark. I offered my help but it was peremptorily rejected. We separated.

Ashraf exploded himself in the South of the country. His body was never brought to burial.

His words; “It is better to die standing than to live on one’s knees” still reverberate inside me.

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