



The Israeli-Palestine conflict has been an ongoing problem in the Middle East for over ninety years. It began with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which stated that Palestine will be the new homeland for the Jewish people. Since then it has spawned multiple wars, two intifadas, and the deaths of millions of people. The Israeli-Palestinian history, though varied and long, is a fascinating study into Arab unity and religious fundamentalism. Charles D. Smith, a professor of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Arizona, has devoted much of his academic life to the conflict.

Smith's recent work, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, chronicles the evolution of the conflict from an Arab-Israeli one, to the Palestine-Israeli conflict we see in the media today. Smith has all of the original documents that are referenced throughout the text, including Drafts and Final Text of the Balfour Declaration (p.96), The Churchill White Paper, July 1, 1922 (p.155), and the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of the Israel, May 14, 1948 (pg.218).

Smith begins with the Kingdom of Israel as outlined in the Bible, and makes his way to the Annapolis Conference in 2007-2008. He leaves you with an accurate detailing of the conflict from a researcher's point of view. Smith's book is completely devoid of political bias. Instead he

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Written by Asha Vandanam  
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provides you with straight facts, backed by historical documents, and allows you to build your own conclusions by the end.

The Zionism movement hit its fever pitch post- World War II in Eastern Germany. Zionism's main principle is to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, a land that is sacred to the Jewish people. However, Arabs can also lay claim to Palestine due to its Islamic roots that were set forth by the Prophet Muhammad. The land became heavily contested as both groups fought over who had ownership of this religious place.

Title: Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents

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The frustration over the issue, including settlements in the fertile West Bank and Gaza strip, eventually led to two separate intifadas. Intifada can mean either "shaking off" or "resistance" in Arabic. The First Intifada lasted for six years, from 1987 to 1993 while the Second Intifada started in 2000 and ended in 2005. Unlike the Second Intifada, which is riddled with suicide bombings and sectarian violence, the First Intifada was largely an intellectual movement that had a strong female presence. Intellectuals that were affiliated with the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Movement) were allowed to attend the Oslo Accords in 1993. The Oslo rewards brought together the Israelis and the Palestinians in an effort to reach common ground on the issues at hand. The Second Intifada featured intense Palestinian-Israeli violence that killed over 6,500 Palestinians and Israelis combined.

The First Intifada gave birth to the partition idea, which spawned support for the two-state solution. The PLO supported the two-state solution and acknowledged Israel as its own independent state. While some progress was made in that sense, some key issues still remained stagnant. Between the different groups, further divisions surfaced on how exactly to deal with Israel.

The Oslo Accords sought to remedy this situation. They gathered at Camp David to come to some agreements. Israel promised there would not be anymore settlements on Palestinian land; Palestinians promised there would be an end to violence. While well-intentioned, the Oslo negotiations eventually fell apart. Both parties broke their promises and the Second Intifada occurred. This could be due to the fact that both parties came in with pre-conceived notions and were not as open about hearing the other side.

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Some researchers felt that the Second Intifada was a result of the Oslo Accords, because both parties did not abide by their promises. Other researchers feel that the Second Intifada actually destroyed any potential the Oslo Accords once had.

With the Second Intifada came a swift change in sectarian violence. Gone were the days of rocks and arms that were the staple of the First Intifada. Now the primary weapons of choice were suicide bombers. Israel responded with aerial attacks on communities, especially ones where Palestinian leaders came from. A Palestinian leader did not just get punished for his deeds, his entire community did too.

The Second Intifada came to an end due to the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004. Different Palestinian liberation groups, like Hamas and Fatah began to fight with each other and internally. Eventually the momentum that began the Intifada was lost.

In his epilogue, Smith states that the Israeli-Palestine conflict is about to reach a crossroads. As of April 2009, the Jewish population will become a minority in Israel. Arabs have higher birthrates than their counterparts. With this new development, the possibility of a one-state solution may still be viable (instead of the favored two-state solution by the western world). What exactly will happen is yet to be seen. <sup>8</sup>