

ISRAEL AT WAR

ISRAEL, HAMAS, AND THE GAZA ARENA

A Timeline

FEBRUARY 1949 | EGYPT OCCUPIES THE GAZA STRIP

The Israel-Egypt armistice agreement at the conclusion of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war leaves Egypt in control of a 365-square-kilometer slice of the former British Mandate for Palestine henceforth known as the Gaza Strip. The territory absorbs over 160,000 Palestinian refugees fleeing the newly established State of Israel.

1970s | ISRAEL BEGINS ESTABLISHING SETTLEMENTS IN THE GAZA STRIP

As in the West Bank, the Israeli government allows Israeli citizens to establish civilian communities in territory not formally under the country's sovereignty.

DECEMBER 1987 | HAMAS IS FOUNDED

An offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza, Hamas (an Arabic acronym for "the Islamic resistance movement") commits itself to armed resistance against Israel (including attacks targeting its civilians), the annihilation of the Jewish state, and the establishment of an Islamic regime in its stead. The party emerges as the primary rival to the secular Fatah party of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. The United States lists Hamas as a terror organization in 1997.

2000-2005 | THE SECOND INTIFADA

A violent Palestinian uprising rocks Gaza and the West Bank. Palestinian militants associated with Hamas and other factions carry out suicide bombings and shooting attacks against Israeli civilians.

JANUARY 2006 | HAMAS WINS THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY'S LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

In a stunning defeat for the Fatah party of Western-backed PA President Mahmoud Abbas, Hamas wins a plurality of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council. Following the formation of a Hamas-led government, Israel imposes sanctions and the U.S and EU suspend aid to the PA.

JUNE 1967 | ISRAEL OCCUPIES THE GAZA STRIP

Preemptive Israeli aerial strikes in the face of an impending invasion lead Israel to a dramatic military victory over Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. In addition to Gaza, Israel conquers Syria's Golan Heights, the Jordanian-annexed West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. Shortly after, Israel annexes East Jerusalem and establishes a temporary military governance system to administer the other occupied territories.

1987-1993 | THE FIRST INTIFADA

Targeting both soldiers and civilians, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza carry out a violent uprising against Israel's military rule.

JULY 1994 | THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY IS ESTABLISHED, CREATING PALESTINIAN SELF-RULE IN GAZA

As part of the Oslo peace process, the interim governing body led by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat is intended to serve as a vehicle for Palestinian statehood. Except for Israeli settlements and military bases, all of Gaza comes under PA administration, alongside the West Bank city of Jericho. A year later, its jurisdiction is extended to include most Palestinian populated areas of the West Bank.

SEPTEMBER 2005 | ISRAEL DISENGAGES FROM GAZA

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government withdraws all of Israel's military and settlers from the Gaza Strip, a unilateral move that was not coordinated with the Palestinian Authority. Israel also dismantles four West Bank settlements in northern Samaria.

JUNE 2006 | HAMAS KIDNAPS GILAD SHALIT; OPERATION SUMMER RAINS

Hamas militants kidnap Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and hold him hostage in Gaza. Israel initiates a ground operation that targets Hamas' military capabilities in the Gaza Strip with the goal of securing Shalit's release. The operation ends with Israel withdrawing its forces and Hamas ceasing its rocketfire, but Shalit remains in captivity.

JUNE 2007 | HAMAS SEIZES GAZA, OUSTS THE PA; ISRAEL AND EGYPT BLOCKADE GAZA

Despite the formation of a Fatah-Hamas unity government months earlier, tensions between the factions lead to deadly clashes in Gaza. Within several days, Hamas manages to seize control of all PA institutions in Gaza and takes over the territory. President Mahmoud Abbas dissolves the unity government, prompting the U.S. and the EU to resume aid to the PA and Israel to release withheld tax revenue. Israel and Egypt begin to seal their borders with Gaza.

OCTOBER 2011 | ISRAEL FREES 1,027 HAMAS PRISONERS IN EXCHANGE FOR GILAD SHALIT

Marking a departure from years of Israel rejecting Hamas' demand for a prisoner swap to free the captured soldier, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reaches a prisoner exchange agreement with Hamas.

NOVEMBER 2012 | OPERATION PILLAR OF DEFENSE

In response to a barrage of rockets launched from Gaza, Israel kills Hamas military leader Ahmad Jabari in an airstrike. Hamas launches rockets at Israel and Israeli airstrikes target Hamas capabilities in Gaza. The conflict ends after eight days in a ceasefire brokered by Egypt and the U.S.

2014 | ISRAEL BEGINS ALLOWING QATARI FUNDS TO ENTER GAZA

In the aftermath of Protective Edge, Prime Minister Netanyahu's government allows Qatar to deliver millions of dollars in cash to Hamas in Gaza. Israel maintains this unconventional policy vis-a-vis Hamas for the next five years as an economic carrot in exchange for quiet.

NOVEMBER 2019 | OPERATION BLACK BELT

A wave of Palestinian Islamic Jihad rockets prompts Israel to kill PIJ commander Baha Abu al-Ata in a targeted airstrike on Gaza. A ceasefire is reached after two days of Israeli airstrikes targeting PIJ targets in Gaza and PIJ rockets aimed at Israeli communities. Hamas does not directly participate in the hostilities.

SEPTEMBER 2021 | ISRAEL BEGINS INCREASING ENTRY PERMITS FOR GAZANS

The Bennett-Lapid government issues 7,000 entry permits to allow Gazans to work in Israel. Months later, it increases the number of permits to 20,000. This system provides Israel with a new economic lever to encourage quiet from Hamas. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett pledges not to continue allowing the transfer of suitcases of Qatari cash into Gaza. The U.N. begins distributing Qatari aid directly to needy Gazan families.

DECEMBER 2008 | OPERATION CAST LEAD

Israel carries out a 22-day ground and aerial military operation in Gaza in response to Hamas rockets targeting Israeli civilian communities. The operation ends with a unilateral Israeli ceasefire in response to U.S. assurances that it would help Israel curb the flow of arms to Hamas.

MARCH 2012 | OPERATION RETURNING ECHO

In response to lethal cross-border attacks carried out by the Gaza-based militant group Popular Resistance Committees in August 2011, Israel kills PRC commander Zuhair al-Qaissi in an airstrike on Gaza. PRC and Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants in Gaza launch rockets at Israeli communities and Israeli airstrikes target their military capabilities in the Strip. Hamas does not directly participate in the hostilities.

JULY 2014 | OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE

The capture and murder of three Israeli teenagers by Hamas and a reprisal murder of a 16-year-old Palestinian by Israeli extremists prompts an Israeli crackdown on Hamas in the West Bank and a wave of Hamas rockets launched at Israel from Gaza. The ensuing seven-week war sees an Israeli ground invasion into Gaza and ends in an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire.

MARCH 2018 | WEEKLY GAZA BORDER PROTESTS BEGIN

Palestinians hold protests at the Israeli border fence in response to the U.S. decision to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Hamas militants among the crowds often attempt to breach the fence, prompting Israeli soldiers to respond with lethal force. The weekly protests continue through December 2019.

MAY 2021 | OPERATION GUARDIANS OF THE WALLS

In response to protests against the pending eviction of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah and clashes between Israeli police and Palestinians on the Temple Mount, Hamas and PIJ launch rockets at Israeli cities. Israel responds with airstrikes on Gaza. In parallel, Arabs and Jews clash in Israel's mixed cities, instigated by extremists on both sides. After over two weeks of hostilities, Hamas and Israel agree to a ceasefire brokered by Egypt, Qatar, and the U.N.

AUGUST 2022 | OPERATION BREAKING DAWN

Amid intelligence reports that Palestinian Islamic Jihad is planning on carrying out an attack on Israeli civilians near the Gaza border, Israel pre-emptively launches airstrikes against PIJ targets in the Strip. PIJ responds with rocket attacks. The three-day escalation ends with an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire. Hamas does not directly participate in the hostilities.

OCTOBER 2023 | A SURPRISE ATTACK ON SIMCHAT TORAH

Thousands of Hamas militants break through the Gaza-Israel barrier and invade Israeli communities in an unprecedented terror attack. They kill more than 1,400 Israelis and kidnap over 200, who likely are currently being held in Gaza. Israel responds with a relentless bombing campaign against Hamas targets in Gaza, resulting in thousands of reported Palestinian civilian casualties. Israel prepares to invade Gaza, with the goal of dismantling Hamas' regime. This conflict is ongoing.

MAY 2023 | OPERATION SHEILD AND ARROW

Following the death of imprisoned PIJ official Khader Adnan, who was on a hunger strike in Israeli custody, PIJ launches a barrage of rockets at Israel. Israel responds by striking PIJ targets in Gaza. An Egyptian-brokered ceasefire comes into effect after five days. Hamas does not directly participate in the hostilities.

Jewish Refugees From Arab Countries

An estimated 820,000 Jews fled violence and discrimination in their Arab homelands between 1948-1972.

