

# SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT ISRAEL, ZIONISM, AND THE SITUATION WITH THE PALESTINIANS

The Zionist Federation Of New Zealand

## Q. What is Zionism?

A. Zionism is the movement in support of the return of Jewish people to their ancient, ancestral homeland and their right of self-determination therein

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## Q. Is Israel a colonialist state or occupiers of Arab lands?

A. No, Jews have always lived in Israel even when there wasn't a Jewish State there. They have been there for over 3000 years. That means they are indigenous just like Maori are in NZ

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## Q. Is Israel occupying Palestine?

A. No, as there is not currently a Palestinian State. Israel gained the territory of the West Bank/ Judea and Samaria in a defensive war. International Law says that you can't be an occupying nation if you gain territory in a defensive war. There has also never been a country called Palestine. However, Israel has offered to leave the area known as the West Bank so the Palestinians can have their own State, but the Palestinian leadership has always refused any peace offer.

## Q. Do Palestinians have rights too?

A. Yes, Palestinian citizens of Israel have the same rights as any Israeli. If they are living under Palestinian rule they have rights in those areas.

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## Q. Does Israel treat Arabs differently to Jews?

A. No. All Israeli citizens have full rights regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity. Arabs in Israel have equal access to education, health and justice. They are doctors, nurses, lawyers, they serve in the army, police force and are judges in the Supreme courts. They are also members of parliament and until recently they were the third largest party in the Israeli parliament.

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## Q. Are there 7 million Palestinian refugees and why can't they go back to Israel?

A. No, this number is based on including children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of the original 750,000 people who were displaced during the war of 1948. Some of these people have never lived in Israel and are citizens of other countries, including Gaza.

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## Q. Why has there not been peace?

A. The Arabs have been offered a state multiple times and have always refused. For example in 1937, 1939, 1947 and 1967 to the Arab nations and then in 2000 and 2008 to the Palestinians.

Each time, Israel's offer has been rejected and to this day the Palestinian leaders refuse to negotiate with Israel.

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## Q. Why do Jews want to live in the West Bank?

A. Some Jews want to live in the West Bank or Judea and Samaria as it is known in Judaism, as it is part of the biblical land of Israel. It contains many places of biblical significance as well as burial places of our ancestors. Many Israelis and Jews, however, believe that for the sake of peace and saving lives, the land should be given to Palestinians for a homeland as part of a peace deal with Israel.

## Q. Is East Jerusalem part of Israel?

A. East Jerusalem, which includes the Old City, the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, was won by Israel in 1967 following an attack on Israel by Jordan. Jordan occupied East Jerusalem between 1949 and 1967 at which time no Jews were allowed to live there.

In 1980, Israel officially made East Jerusalem part of Israel (annexed) although many countries in the world refuse to accept this. It also offered all Arab Palestinians living there Israeli citizenship but they refused and continue to do so until today. Some have refused due to ideological reasons, others due to fear or retribution from the Palestinian leadership.

So, yes, it is part of Israel at the current time, but that could change under a future peace agreement with the Palestinians.

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## Q. Why can't Palestinians vote in Israeli elections?

A. Those Palestinians who are Israeli citizens can vote in Israeli elections. Those who are not can't. However, if the Palestinian Authority was to ever have elections again, those Palestinians can vote there. It is no different from a New Zealander not being able to vote in Australian elections, or vice versa.

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## Q. What is the BDS and is it bad?

A. BDS stands for Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions. BDS calls for the boycott of Israeli goods, academics, sporting teams etc, as well as for sanctions and for governments and companies to not invest in Israeli companies.

The BDS says it is a peaceful protest movement, but the leaders of the BDS have said they will not stop until Israel no longer exists. It has also in the past attacked businesses owned by Jews or selling Kosher products even when those have not been made in Israel.

The BDS is also very reminiscent of the boycott of Jewish owned businesses in Nazi Germany before the Shoah (Holocaust) and is a tactic that is not applied to other countries where there is a much stronger case of occupation, such as Turkey in Northern Cyprus, Russia in Crimea, or China in Tibet. This is a classic example of double standards and why many people believe the BDS is antisemitic.

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## Q. Why are there lots of check points for Palestinians?

A. Israel issues work permits for thousands of Palestinians to work in Israel every day. Unfortunately for the same reason as the Security Wall, Israel has to make sure that those people entering Israeli cities and work places are not terrorists, hence the check points. They are no different from when you go through security to fly, and whilst they do take a long time for people to pass through, they are an unfortunate necessity. Hopefully one day soon, they can be removed.

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## Q. Can you be both pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian?

A. Yes, many supporters of Israel also support the creation of a Palestinian State as long it is not a threat to Israel's existence.

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**Q. Why has Israel built a security wall?**

A. Israel built a security wall to protect all of its citizens, Jews, Muslims, Christians, etc, from Arab Palestinian suicide bombers who were coming from the West Bank into population centres such as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and blowing themselves up on buses, shopping malls, restaurants etc.

Since the Security Wall has been built (approx. 90% of which is barbed wire and not an actual wall) suicide bombing and similar attacks have dramatically fallen to almost zero. No one wants the Wall, but it has proven it is important at the moment to prevent people from being killed.

You may also hear it being called the 'Separation Wall'. This is because those against Israel are trying to say Israel built it to cut off or 'separate' Palestinians from Jews and from Israel. As the above shows, this is not the case. It is purely a necessity to save lives and hopefully, one day will be able to come down.

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**Q. Why did Israeli police enter the Al-Aqsa Mosque?**

A. The Israeli police entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount because Palestinians had stockpiled large amounts of rocks and concrete slabs to throw at Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall. When a riot broke out, the Police, like in any country, entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque to stop the rioters and to protect those who had come to the Mosque and the Western Wall to pray.

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**Q. What is happening in Sheikh Jarrah?**

A. A property which happened to be owned by Jewish people was rented out to tenants who happened to be Palestinian. The tenants refused to pay rent, so the owners took them to court to get them evicted. This is a legal dispute about property that is going through the courts. It is nothing to do with Israeli government policy, but is being used as an excuse to justify Hamas violence and rocket attacks against Israel.

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**Q. Why are there so few Israeli deaths and so many Palestinian deaths?**

A. Israel protects its people with an anti-missile system. They also build bomb shelters in homes, schools, playgrounds, shopping centres etc

Israel does its best to protect innocent civilians by warning them in advance of an attack, but Hamas fires rockets from densely populated areas and puts its people in harm's way.

Also, 30% of Hamas rockets have fallen misfired, and landed in Gaza often causing casualties which aren't reported in the media.

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**Q. How has social media been used?**

A. Social media has been used to give out a lot of misinformation, but perhaps most disturbingly is that Tik Tok was being used by some Palestinians to post videos encouraging other Palestinians to beat up random Jews in Israel. These beatings were videoed and uploaded to Tik Tok to encourage others to do the same.

**Q. What does "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free" mean?**

A. The word 'River' refers to the Jordan River and the word "Sea" refers to the Mediterranean Sea. The chant is therefore calling for a Palestinian State in all of Israel. In other words it does not see a future where Israel exists at all.

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**Q. Is anti-Zionism the same as Antisemitism?**

A. It is possible to be critical of the Israeli government and not be anti-Zionist. However, often people are critical of Israel's very existence and expect Israel to behave in a different way than other countries (double standards). For example, you would not expect someone to be calling for the end of New Zealand, or Australia, the USA or Britain when criticising their governments.

Also, people often use the same phrases or pictures to criticise Israel as they would have to be against Jews, only they substitute the word "Jew" for "Zionist". For example, Jews/ Zionists control the media or Jews/Zionists control the world's finances.