

# Aftermath of the 1967 War: Israel and the West Bank and Gaza



*Israel 101: Pages 16-17*

## Rationale and Goals

The 1967 War was a watershed event in the Middle East. Israel successfully defended itself against Arab countries' renewed effort to destroy it. In repulsing attacks, Israel captured extensive territories—the Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and Gaza. One consequence of the war and of Arab leaders' refusal to make peace afterwards was Israel's military administration of the West Bank and Gaza. Today, Israel's "occupation" of the territories is a highly charged issue, one frequently dominated by misinformation. This unit is designed to present the basic facts and larger context of Israel's administration—its origins, why it continued, how Israel tried to improve the lives of the population, efforts Israel has made to compromise and negotiate peace, Israeli settlements and Israel's legitimate claims to the territories.

The specific goals are:

- To present the larger context and show that the "occupation" and its continuation have been a direct result of the Arab-Israeli conflict and of Arab leaders' refusal to make peace. (Israel did not "occupy" any land when Arab leaders prepared for war against it in 1967.)
- To emphasize that the current negative connotations of "occupation" are historically shortsighted and do not fit Israel's case. Israel never sought to acquire the West Bank and Gaza. Rather, these territories fell to Israel during its defensive 1967 War. Furthermore, the West Bank is disputed territory—both Israelis and Palestinians have legitimate claims to it—so the term "occupied" territory does not apply.
- To underscore that Israel was forced to continue its administration of the territories because no Arab countries would make peace and accept sovereignty over the areas and because Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza refused to accept Israel's offers for autonomy.
- To emphasize that Israel tried, and succeeded, in bettering the lives and civil liberties of the Palestinians during its administration of the territories.
- To emphasize that when the PLO agreed to make peace in the Oslo Accords, Israel effectively ended the "occupation," with 98 percent of Palestinians becoming self-governing under the Palestinian Authority by 1998. Today, civil administration of Gaza is entirely in the hands of Hamas, and of the West Bank is entirely in the hands of the Palestinian Authority, which has a civil administration, a police force, and its own government agencies.
- To emphasize that while Israel's settlements in the West Bank are politically contentious, they are not illegal. Israel has legal, historical, and security claims to the West Bank, but has tried to reach a compromise with the Palestinians about future borders.

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## Discussion Questions

- Why did the “occupation” occur, and then continue? How did the reasons for its occurrence and continuation until the Oslo Accords fit into the pattern of other Arab-Israeli wars? (Israel did not “occupy” any land over the pre-1967 border before the war.)
- What is “occupation”? Is it illegal? (International law and treaties regulate how civilian populations should be treated during wars and military occupations. They do not identify occupations as inherently illegal unless they occur as a result of aggressive wars to seize another nation’s territory. Furthermore, the West Bank and Gaza are disputed territory with both Palestinians and Israelis having claims to it.) Is it always bad? How do you think Israel’s occupation is similar to or different from the U.S. occupations of Japan and/or Germany after World War II or to Egypt’s occupation of Gaza and Jordan’s occupation of the West Bank between 1949 and 1967?
- Why do you think that Palestinians never made claims to the West Bank and Gaza for their own state between 1949 and 1967 when Jordan and Egypt controlled these areas? Why did they begin to make these claims only after 1967? What insight does this give you about some of the root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict?
- After Israel’s victory in the 1967 War, Israeli Ambassador Abba Eban remarked that “This is the first war in history which has ended with the victors suing for peace and the vanquished calling for unconditional surrender.” Why do you think Eban said this and how true do you think his statement is? (Consider, for example, the Khartoum Declaration and the “Three NOs.” )
- What do you think Israel did well during its administration of the territories? What could Israel have done better?
- What are the competing claims that Israelis and Palestinians have for rights to West Bank territory? Which arguments do you think are the most persuasive?
- Should Israeli Jews have a right to establish communities in the West Bank and Gaza? Should Israel follow a similar policy with regard to Arabs in Israel? Why or why not?
- Palestinians often claim that Israelis are “stealing” Palestinian land when they build settlements. Do Palestinians mean they own the land or that they want the land to be in the borders of their future state? What is the difference between personally owning land and having sovereignty? How would this distinction affect discussions about the conflict?
- Israel ceded governance of Palestinians to the Palestinian Authority, leaving 98 percent of Palestinians self-governing by 1998, and withdrew from all of Gaza in 2005. Why do you think this has not eased the conflict?
- The impact of Israeli “settlements” and “settlers” is often described very negatively in the press. Given what you have learned about them, how do the settlements harm the Palestinians?

# Activities

## Activity 1

### *Arguments to Consider*

#### **Preparation:**

**Estimated time:** 1-2 class periods • **Materials:** Handout of the “True or False” page

**Background:** Some of the most controversial arguments about the Arab-Israeli conflict revolve around the 1967 War and its aftermath. The following activity first challenges students to determine whether a series of controversial statements are true or false and gives them an opportunity to check their knowledge.

#### **Activity:**

1. Give each student a copy of the “True or False?” handout on the following page. Have them fill it out without consulting *Israel 101* (about 15 minutes).
2. Have the students work in groups of two or three to check how their answers match the information in Unit 7 (pages 16-17) in *Israel 101* (about 20-30 minutes).
3. Discuss the students’ answers in class (about 20 minutes).

**Wrap-up:** This activity encourages students to test their knowledge about Israel’s policies in the territories and can ground them in some basic facts they may not get if they follow the issue in the media.



# Activities

## Activity 1

### *True or False?*

**Instructions:** Tell students to answer “true” or “false” for each of the following statements and to give the reasons for their answers. (Teacher answer sheet is on the next page.)

Statement	True	False	Facts supporting my answer
In 1967, Israel took over the West Bank and Gaza in an act of pure aggression.			
Palestinians had sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza until 1967.			
After 1967, Israel tried to end its governance of the Palestinian population.			
During Israel’s administration of the territories (1967-1994), the lives of Palestinians deteriorated in terms of health, prosperity, and personal liberty.			
During the Oslo process, Israel turned civil governance of the Palestinians over to the Palestinian-elected government.			
Israel completely withdrew from all of Gaza and four communities in the northern West Bank, uprooting the Jewish settlements there.			
Israel has no historical claims to the West Bank.			
By 1997-8, Israel no longer occupied major population centers in the West Bank. Ninety-eight percent of Palestinians were self-governing under the PA.			
The pre-1967 borders pose no security threat to Israel.			
The pre-1967 boundary, also called the Green Line, is an internationally recognized border.			
The Israeli settlements in the West Bank are legal.			

# Activities

## Activity 1

### *Teacher Answer Sheet with References*

Statement	True	False	Facts supporting my answer
In 1967, Israel took over the West Bank and Gaza in an act of pure aggression.		X	
Palestinians had sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza until 1967.		X	
After 1967, Israel tried to end its governance of the Palestinian population.	X		
During Israel's administration of the territories (1967-1994), the lives of Palestinians deteriorated in terms of health, prosperity, and personal liberty.		X	
During the Oslo process, Israel turned civil governance of the Palestinians over to the Palestinian-elected government.	X		
Israel completely withdrew from all of Gaza and four communities in the northern West Bank, uprooting the Jewish settlements there.	X		
Israel has no historical claims to the West Bank.		X	
By 1997-8, Israel no longer occupied major population centers in the West Bank. Ninety-eight percent of Palestinians were self-governing under the PA.	X		
The pre-1967 borders pose no security threat to Israel.		X	
The pre-1967 boundary, also called the Green Line, is an internationally recognized border.		X	
The Israeli settlements in the West Bank are legal.	X		

# Activities

## Activity 2

### *Testing the Media's Knowledge about Settlements*

#### **Preparation:**

**Estimated Time:** 2 class periods. • **Materials:** Internet access or TV stories/newspaper articles about the conflict

**Background:** When reporters discuss the conflict, they often appear to be unaware of some of the basic facts in Unit 7. This activity will give students an opportunity to assess the media's knowledge. Since articles and TV reports appear regularly about the conflict, have students search for and pick a recent article that makes reference to the issues in Unit 7 and write a report assessing its accuracy. (Students can work in pairs.) This activity will also help students learn to use critical thinking skills about what they hear and read in the media.

#### **Activity:**

Give students the information in the background and have them spend one class period (or assign this as homework) to find an article about the Arab-Israeli conflict.

1. Students should carefully read the chosen article.
2. Students should write a short essay or list the facts in the article, evaluating their accuracy.
3. Students should then present their findings to the class.
4. Conduct a class discussion touching on some of the following issues:
  - How accurate was your journalist?
  - What were some of the issues your journalist got wrong? How many of the journalists repeated the same error?
  - What were the main errors/correct points in all the articles?
  - What does this research tell you about how to read media reports? What critical thinking would you use to evaluate reports? (What sources did the journalist use? How reliable were the sources? How much did s/he assume the reader already knew? Did s/he have a bias? What was it?)
  - What is the impact of these errors in public opinion about the conflict?
  - What background do you think is necessary for journalists to have when they are assigned to cover stories as complicated as the Arab-Israeli conflict?
  - Would you want to write a letter to the editor correcting the error? Why or why not?

**Wrap-up:** The fact that something is in the media does not necessarily mean it is a fact. It is important to keep an open mind but also to use the media critically, especially when it comes to conflicts that have a long history.

# Activities

## Activity 3

### *Short Research Project: What is “Occupation”? A Comparative Analysis*

#### **Preparation:**

**Estimated Time:** 2 class periods • **Materials:** *Israel 101*, reference materials, including the Internet

**Background:** One of the most important consequences of the 1967 War was Israel’s military administration of the West Bank and Gaza. In current debates about the conflict, the term “occupation” is used regularly, and there are multiple occupations around the world today which get almost no media attention and consequently make Israel seem like a singular case. The purpose of this activity is to broaden students’ perspectives, and have them put the question of occupation in a larger context.

#### **Activity:**

1. Explain to students the background described above.
2. Divide students into pairs, and have them briefly research other “occupations.” They can search on their own for different cases (by visiting [www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/disputes.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/disputes.htm) and [www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/index.html](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/index.html)) or research one of the following:
  - The U.S. occupation of Japan after World War II. (The U.S. still has troops in Japan.)
  - The U.S. occupation of Germany after World War II. (The U.S. still has troops in Germany.)
  - Jordan’s occupation of the West Bank and Egypt’s occupation of Gaza (1949-1967).
  - Iraq’s and Turkey’s occupation of Kurdish peoples and territory.
  - Britain and the Falkland Islands.
  - Morocco’s occupation of the Western Sahara (which Algeria claims).
  - Spain’s cities of Ceuta and Melilla located in Morocco.
  - China and Tibet.
  - Competing claims over Kashmir.
3. As they research these other territorial and nationalist conflicts, they should keep in mind the following questions:
  - When and why did the occupation begin?
  - What claims does the occupying power have?
  - How much land is involved?
  - What security issues are involved?
  - How has the occupying power treated the population?
  - How much world attention has been focused on this conflict?
  - How much violence has been associated with this conflict?
  - What other nations are involved, supporting one or the other side?
  - What solutions have been suggested?
  - What is the likelihood that the conflict will be resolved?
  - How does this situation compare to Israel’s situation with the territories?

# Activities

## Activity 3

4. Discussion. Have the student pairs report on their findings, and then raise the following questions:

- Was the “occupation” good or bad? How do you decide? (For example, the U.S. occupation of Japan and Germany and Britain’s occupation/claims to the Falkland Islands were constructive.)
- Are these conflicts with competing national movements or are they sovereign nations fighting over who gets control of a disputed territory and its people, or both?
- Why don’t these territorial disputes get more attention in the media? Why does the Palestinian-Israeli dispute get so much more attention? (Perhaps because of the violence or because of the nations that support the Palestinians?)
- How was or is Israel’s military administration of the territories different from these other cases?

**Wrap-up:** Israel is not alone in the world in having a territorial dispute. But unlike many of these other conflicts, Israel has tried to resolve the conflict through territorial compromise.

# Resources

## **Internet**

Israel and the “Occupation” or Disputed Territories and Settlements

Eugene Rostow, “Bricks and Stones; Settling for Leverage; Palestinian Autonomy,” *The New Republic*, April 23, 1990, and “Resolved, Are the Settlements Legal?” *The New Republic*, October 21, 1991, archived at [www.bjeny.org/254.htm](http://www.bjeny.org/254.htm)

Dore Gold, “Legal Acrobatics: The Palestinian Claim that Gaza is still Occupied even after Israel Withdraws,” [www.jcpa.org/brief/brief005-3.htm](http://www.jcpa.org/brief/brief005-3.htm)

Dore Gold, “From ‘Occupied’ Territories to ‘Disputed’ Territories,” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, January 2002, [www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=254&PID=0&IID=1115](http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=254&PID=0&IID=1115)

Efraim Karsh, “What Occupation?” *Commentary*, August 2002, [www.spme.net/cgi-bin/facultyforum.cgi?ID=471](http://www.spme.net/cgi-bin/facultyforum.cgi?ID=471)

Overview of Disputed Territories

“What about the Settlements?” (with good links to other sources) at [palestinefacts.org/pf\\_current\\_settlements.php](http://palestinefacts.org/pf_current_settlements.php)  
[www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfaarchive/2000\\_2009/2003/2/disputed%20territories-%20forgotten%20facts%20about%20the%20we](http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfaarchive/2000_2009/2003/2/disputed%20territories-%20forgotten%20facts%20about%20the%20we)  
[www.standwithus.com/news\\_post.asp?NPI=912](http://www.standwithus.com/news_post.asp?NPI=912)  
[www.standwithus.com/actions/020502.asp](http://www.standwithus.com/actions/020502.asp)  
[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/52\\_Remembering67.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/52_Remembering67.html)  
[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths/mf7.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths/mf7.html)

Israeli settlements in the Disputed Territories—[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths2/Settlements.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths2/Settlements.html)  
[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/5\\_settlements.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/5_settlements.html)

Israeli settlements and international law—[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/settlelaw.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/settlelaw.html)

Living conditions for Palestinians in the Disputed Territories post-1967  
[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths/mf18.html#u](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths/mf18.html#u)

U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 (November 1967): proposed plan for peace involving Israeli withdrawal from territories captured in 1967 War—[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/meaning\\_of\\_242.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/meaning_of_242.html)

Borders before and after 1967 War—[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/6\\_67border.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/6_67border.html)

Jerusalem (pre- and post-1967)—[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/8\\_Jerusalem.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/talking/8_Jerusalem.html)

## **Key People**

Yitzhak Rabin—[www.zionism-israel.com/bio/Rabin\\_biography.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/bio/Rabin_biography.htm)  
[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/rabin.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/rabin.html)

Moshe Dayan—[www.zionism-israel.com/bio/biography\\_moshe\\_dayan.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/bio/biography_moshe_dayan.htm)  
[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Dayan.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Dayan.html)

Gamal Nasser, president of Egypt—[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Nasser.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Nasser.html)

# Resources

## ***Books***

Michael Oren (2002). *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford University Press).

## ***Videos***

The 1967 War and the continuing attacks against Israel. The 1968 film *Never Again to be Denied* at Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive at [w3.castup.net/spielberg/index.aspx?lang=en&id=255](http://w3.castup.net/spielberg/index.aspx?lang=en&id=255)

Selection of documentary footage, historians' analyses, and other videos pertinent to the 1967 War and its aftermath at [www.sixday-war.co.uk/movies2.htm](http://www.sixday-war.co.uk/movies2.htm)

