



Significant obstacles to peace between Israel and the Palestinians

Palestinian statehood

Recognizing Israel

Land borders

Dividing Jerusalem

Israeli settlements

Palestinian refugees

Palestinians have asked the United Nations for recognition as a state.

The state would encompass the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, areas Israel captured in 1967 and since populated with half a million settlers living among about 4 million Palestinians.



ISRAELIS

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insists that an agreement must come through peace talks.

A U.N. grant of statehood for the Palestinians would be an implicit recognition of the pre-1967 borders. Netanyahu says the old borders would leave Israel vulnerable to attack.

PALESTINIANS

Palestinians say they turned to the U.N. in frustration after years of failed negotiations.

Even though the recognition bid is sure to be derailed – either by insufficient support or a U.S. veto in the Security Council – the Palestinians stand a good chance of a General Assembly status upgrade that would grant them access to U.N. agencies and international courts.



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Israel has made it a requirement for peace talks that the all Palestinians take part in recognizing Israel. President Mahmoud Abbas and his PLO have done that, but the Islamic militant Hamas, ruling Gaza, has not.



ISRAELIS

For Israelis, refusing to recognize the Israel as a Jewish state is a deal breaker for peace talks.

Even the PLO, which recognizes Israel, refuses to call it a Jewish state.

Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, is labeled a terrorist organization by the U.S. and Israel. It garnered much of its political support by opposing the existence of Israel.

PALESTINIANS

Recognizing Israel as a Jewish state would essentially require the Palestinians to accept that most refugees will be denied the “right of return” to what is now Israel.

They would have to live in the Palestinian state instead.

Palestinian leaders have refused to accept this.

Israel & Palestinians: Neighbors in conflict



DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

DECADES OF DISCORD

THE LAND

Obstacles to peace

Next steps

U.N. negotiations

Key players

U.S. involvement

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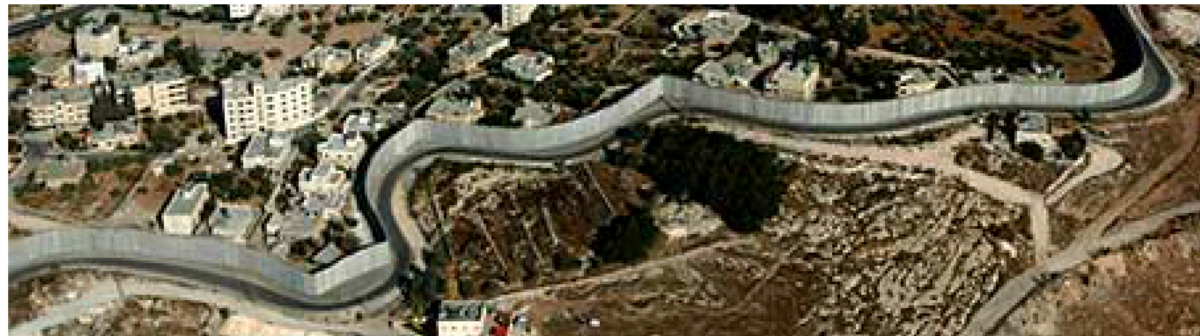
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Drawing borders for a Palestinian state is a challenge, particularly for Jerusalem and the West Bank. Israel does not claim Gaza, but it wants to keep parts of the West Bank. President Obama suggests that the two sides agree on territory swaps to accommodate that. Both sides have agreed to the principle in the past but differed over the amounts. Israel's current leaders are cool to the concept.



ISRAELIS

Israel does not want to divide Jerusalem, and it wants to keep parts of the West Bank, where more than a quarter million Israelis live.

Finding a way to redraw the map and keep most settlements within Israeli borders would require some creative cartography.

Gaza is simple enough, because Israel does not challenge the pre-1967 line and removed its relatively few settlers from the territory in 2005.

PALESTINIANS

Palestinians claim all of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem for their state.

They say they are already making a significant concession by recognizing Israel, which is part of what they consider Palestine.

They are prepared for minor adjustments along the pre-1967 war lines but insist on sovereignty over all of east Jerusalem, including the Old City, with sites holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews.



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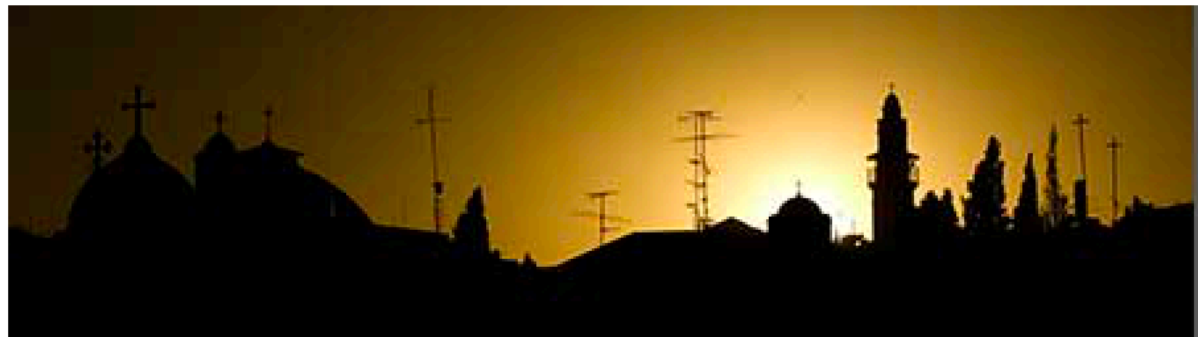
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The walled Old City, an area of less than a square kilometer, houses some of the world's holiest sites for Jews, Muslims and Christians. Neither Israel nor Palestine could easily give it up to the other. Past talks have included the possibility of each side controlling its own religious sites or dividing the area by communities, but both sides have failed in finding a way to separate the city.



ISRAELIS

Israel considers the undivided city of Jerusalem as its eternal capital.

After 1967, Israel expanded the municipal borders into the West Bank. Over the years it has ringed the Arab-populated part of the city with Jewish neighborhoods.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel will not divide Jerusalem, and Jerusalem's mayor, Nir Barkat, says it is no longer a practical possibility.

PALESTINIANS

To the Palestinians, Jerusalem is the heart of their country.

It is difficult to see them accepting a merely face-saving formula – such as access to, or some sovereignty over, their holy sites.

In the past they have considered accepting Palestinian neighborhoods and allowing Israel to keep Jewish neighborhoods in east Jerusalem, but both parties appear to have hardened their positions now.



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Some 500,000 Israelis live in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, in what are considered illegal settlements by the Palestinians and the international community. The settlements complicate the drawing of borders for a potential future Palestinian state as they are scattered across the occupied West Bank.



ISRAELIS

Negotiations collapsed after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu allowed a 10-month slowdown on settlement construction to expire in September 2010.

In a speech to Congress, Netanyahu referred to the West Bank as the Jews' historical heartland and vowed never to divide Jerusalem.

PALESTINIANS

Palestinians continue to demand Israel freeze new construction in Jewish settlements.

With east Jerusalem included in this along with the West Bank, that means freezing construction in areas where about a half-million Israelis live.



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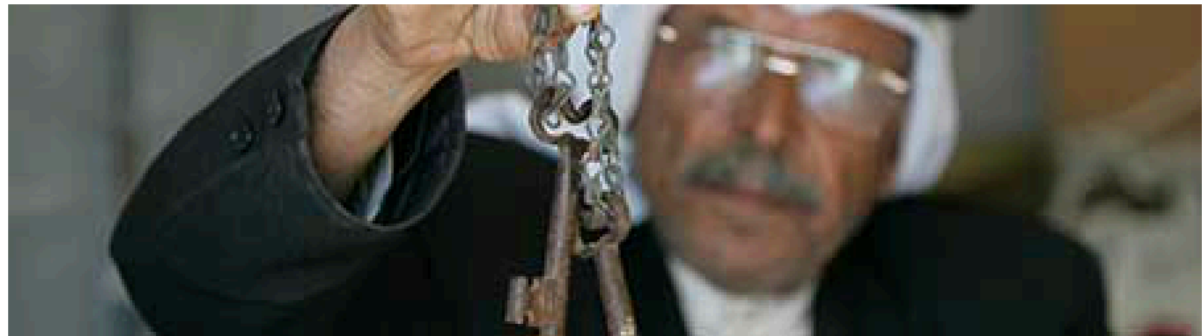
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The Palestinians have always demanded a “right of return” for Palestinian refugees and their millions of descendants to their families' previous homes in Israel – even though in most cases the homes, and in some even the villages, no longer exist.



ISRAELIS

For Israelis across the political spectrum this is a non-starter.

The main reason they did not annex the West Bank and Gaza – and the reason why many are willing to part with such strategic territories – can be boiled down to a desire to ensure their Jewish majority.

PALESTINIANS

Palestinian officials hint that a formula is possible that would satisfy everyone.

An example would be the right declared in principle but implemented only for a small number. Proposing that climbdown from the universal “right of return” would require stature and courage that no Palestinian leader has displayed.

Disenfranchised youth who have never seen their ancestral land, sometimes carry keys to vanished family homes.

Israel & Palestinians: Neighbors in conflict

DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

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THE LAND

Overview

West Bank

East Jerusalem

Gaza Strip

Golan Heights

Geographic resources, religious sites and clashing ideologies contribute to the chronic conflicts between Israel and its neighbors.

OCCUPIED TERRITORIES | NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

West Bank

Jordan

East Jerusalem

Lebanon

Gaza Strip

Egypt

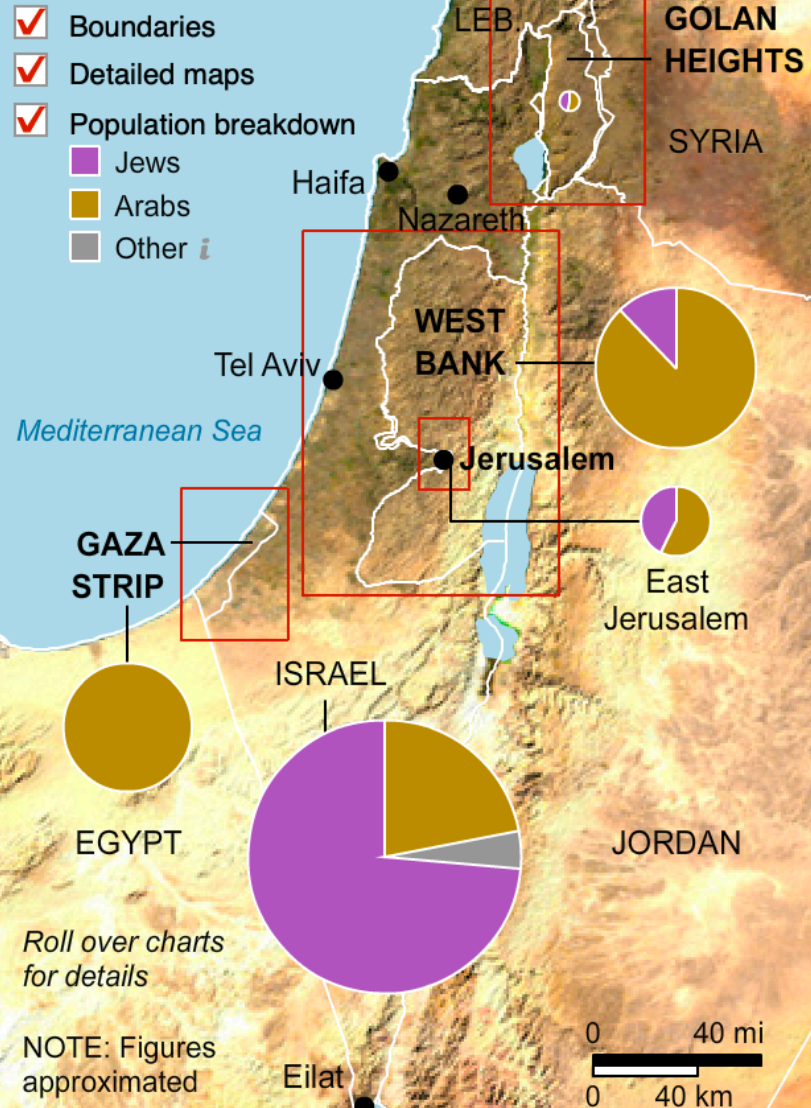
Golan Heights

Syria

WEST BANK

Israel maintains a tight hold on much of this hilly Palestinian territory.

It has annexed land through the construction of the barrier wall, settlement communities and military facilities, as well as implementing restrictions on Palestinian movement and access.



GAZA STRIP & EGYPT

Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty in 1979.

The Gaza Strip had been part of Egypt prior to the 1967 war. Israel had also taken the Sinai Peninsula, but returned it following the peace treaty.

Access to the densely-populated, poverty-stricken Palestinian territory continues to be controlled by Egypt and Israel.

Tensions between the two neighbors has been on the rise after five Egyptian policemen were killed in Israel's recent retaliation against Gaza militants. Israelis had to evacuate their embassy in Egypt after it was stormed by protestors.

GOLAN HEIGHTS & SYRIA

The U.N. implemented a buffer zone between Syrian and Israeli forces in 1974. The two countries continue to have acrimonious relations.

The core of the conflict is the Golan Heights, a mountainous area Syria lost to Israel in 1967. Syria wants it all back as terms for peace while Israel considers the area to be a strategic asset.

The Arab uprising has violently struck Syria as security forces have killed hundreds of protesters and detained thousands.

EAST JERUSALEM

The holy city's eastern sector is claimed by both the Palestinians and the Israelis. Nestled against the hills, it includes sites sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.

Palestinians want it to be the capital of a future state that would include the West Bank and Gaza.

Israel considers the undivided city of Jerusalem as its eternal capital.

LEBANON

Israel has tense relations with its northern neighbor. In 2006, it fought a bitter month-long war with the Lebanese militia, Hezbollah.

JORDAN

Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in 1994.

The West Bank had been part of Jordan prior to the 1967 war. Jordan relinquished claims to the territory in 1988 when the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) took over.

Jordan, a key U.S. ally, has a large Palestinian population and accommodates refugees, despite limited resources.



Green Line, *i* 1949 Armistice

The Green Line became the border between Israel and Jordan after Israel gained independence. Israel captured and annexed the West Bank in 1967. Since the action has never been recognized internationally, the land is referred to as an occupied territory.

West Bank Barrier *i*

Status as of July 2011

Israel has been constructing a barrier – part fence, part cement wall – to separate Israel from the West Bank. Much of it is located within the West Bank, effectively annexing parts of the territory to Israel.

Israeli settlements *i*

Outposts: Illegal according to Israeli law

Built-up: Structures

Outer limits: Used land

Municipal areas: Claimed land

OSLO INTERIM AGREEMENT (1994-99) *i*

The 1993 Oslo Accords created three different categories of administrative areas in the West Bank. The categories continue to apply today, although since the Second Intifada, Israel has regularly disregarded Area A status in its security operations.