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Israeli and Arab Conflict

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May 15, 1948, is known to Arabs as "al-Nakba," or the Catastrophe. That is the day when the state of Israel was declared and the last of the British troops left. The very next day, five Arab armies from surrounding countries invaded the new state. These forces were then defeated by the Israeli army. Over the next several years, the Arab countries surrounding Israel and Palestine competed to lead Arab forces against the new Israel.

The Conflict Continues

In 1964, the **Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)** was formed. The PLO was made up of several Palestinian political groups in different countries. Their goal was to take Palestine back from the Israelis. In 1969, *Yasser Arafat* became the leader of the PLO. Five years earlier, Fatah, a secret armed group that Arafat had founded, made its first attacks on Israel. Arafat served as the leader of the PLO until his death in 2004. During the 35 years of Arafat's leadership, Israel elected several different leaders, known as prime ministers.

The 1967 Six-Day War occurred in June, and changed the face of the Middle East conflict. Israel was able to double the amount of land it controlled. This also helped to spread hope and confidence throughout all of Israel and to its supporters.

Another 500,000 Palestinians fled their homes during this conflict, joining the hundreds of thousands already displaced by years of fighting between Jewish and Arab forces. Many of these people ended up in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.

For the next several years, and still today, Israeli and Arab forces have attacked and counter-attacked one another. Attempts at peace agreements have been made, with the help of other nations, including the United States. So far, no treaty or agreement has been successful in bringing peace to the region.

In 1971, the PLO was expelled from its base in Jordan by the Jordanian army. They moved to Lebanon. A terrorist group called "Black September" was formed by Palestinian militants. The following year, at the Olympics in Munich, Germany, this group took 11 Israeli athletes hostage. All of the athletes were killed along with five of the terrorists and one policeman.

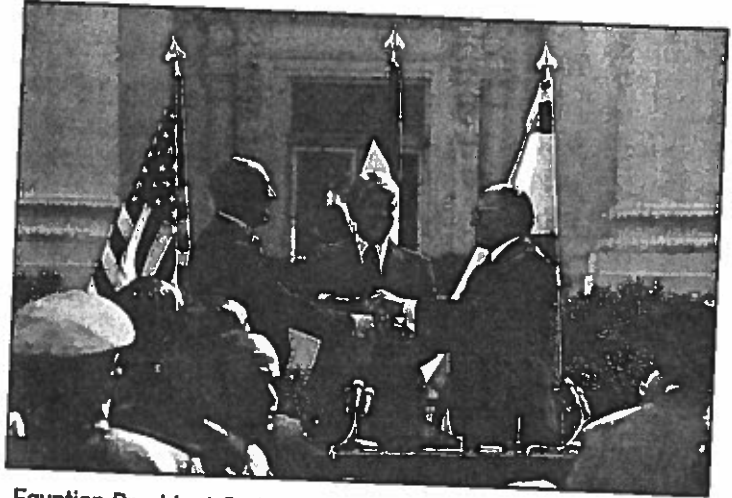
Attempts at Peace

Menachem Begin became prime minister of Israel in 1977, during the U.S. presidency of *Jimmy Carter*. President Carter helped Prime Minister Begin and Egyptian President *Anwar Sadat* work out an agreement. The agreement is called the Camp David Accords.

The three leaders met at Camp David in the U.S. Begin agreed to remove all Israeli troops from the Sinai Peninsula and return the land to Egypt. Other Arab countries were not happy about this agreement. They stopped doing business with Egypt. In 1981, Sadat was assassinated by troops in the Egyptian army.

In 1982, the Israeli army invaded Lebanon. Led by defense minister **Ariel Sharon**, they drove the PLO out of Lebanon. Many of the Palestinians who had settled in Lebanon were living there in refugee camps. When the PLO left, these camps had no military troops to defend them.

A Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon was attacked by Lebanese allies of the Israelis during this time. Hundreds of refugees were killed. The Israeli government decided that Sharon should have acted to prevent the massacre. Because of this event, Sharon gave up his job as defense minister.



Egyptian President Sadat, President Carter, and Israeli Prime Minister Begin sign the Camp David Accords, a peace agreement.

Hezbollah and **Hamas** are two important Arab groups that were founded in the mid-1980s. Hezbollah is from Lebanon. Hamas is based in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Both groups are supported by Syria and Iran and are made up of Muslims. Over the last 25 years, both groups have each led attacks on Israel. These attacks have often been very violent and have killed many civilians.

The late 1980s and the 1990s saw continued fighting between Israelis and Arabs. Often civilians were involved, and thousands have been killed. There have been treaties and agreements that unfortunately, have not led to peace in the region.

In 2004, Arafat died and was succeeded by **Mahmoud Abbas**. In 2005, President Abbas successfully convinced Hamas and other groups to temporarily and unofficially stop their attacks on Israelis. President Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon agreed to a ceasefire, which is when fighting stops between two groups. Sharon agreed to withdraw Israeli forces and settlers from a contested region of land called the Gaza Strip. By early September of 2005, the Israelis had left, and Palestinians took control of the region.

In July of 2006, war broke out again between Hezbollah and Israeli forces. Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers and killed eight, and Israel responded with a full-scale attack on Hezbollah's bases in Lebanon. The fighting lasted about a month. Hezbollah proved to have a larger and better-organized army than the Israelis had believed. The United Nations helped both sides agree to end the fighting.