

# Israel-Palestine: What is going on?

The Israeli Palestinian conflict didn't start last week. It's one of the world's most complex, protracted conflicts, with a number of nuanced issues, differing narratives and it's important to understand the history, the players involved and how we got to where we are this week. **Some basic terms:**

**The occupation:** this refers to the Israeli administration of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), since 1967. This means that Palestinians do not have independent state sovereignty.

**Settlements:** this means settlements that Israeli government approves, builds and expands within the OPT. There are approximately 250, and their population varies from 100 to 40,000 in size.

These result in Israeli military presence and control of Palestinians, which limit freedom of movement and independence for Palestinians.

**Gaza strip:** Gaza does not have Israeli settlements or military presence within its borders, but it is under siege. The siege means that Israel controls freedom of movement for Gazans, and the entry of goods and services into the strip.

**Hamas:** a militant antisemitic Islamist group and the ruling power in Gaza. It is designated a terrorist group by Israel, the United States, European Union and others.

Human Rights Watch have released reports on Hamas' treatments of Palestinian people in Gaza, including violent beatings of demonstrators and arrests of journalists.

**Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu:** Bibi is Israel's current PM, and has been for 12 years. In the past two years, Israel has held four general elections, and he has not managed to secure a majority or form a coalition government. He is currently on trial for corruption charges, and protests against him in Israel are widespread.

## So what's happening now?

The current cycle of violence does not exist in a vacuum, and cannot be explained in an instagram post, or in a tweet.

**April:** We posted a timeline of events in April, when there was a number violent incidents where Arabs and Jews attack one another on the street.

This leads to the extremist group **Lehava**, holding a rally in response. The rally calls for “death to the Arabs” and leads to violence and arrests.

The next day Hamas begin to fire rockets into Israel; and several Israelis are injured. In response, the Israeli government shuts Gaza’s fishing Zone.

During Ramadan, Israeli police forces restrict access to the Damascus gate due to COVID. Unrest in Jerusalem escalates to rioting and heavy Israeli police presence, even within Al Aqsa mosque. Police use stun grenades within the mosque.

All the while, in **Sheikh Jarrah** (see our more detailed post and campaign on this), Palestinians are protesting the attempted forced evictions from their homes, which are supported by right wing pro settler groups.

**Note:** one of the major aggravators, is Israeli far-right MK\* Itamar Ben Gvir, who on multiple occasions incites hate and friction. He has been condemned widely by Israeli politicians, leaders and even leading police figures for his actions.

The Sheikh Jarrah protests, coupled with Jerusalem Day marches, lead to violence and conflict in Jerusalem. On Monday 10th May, **Hamas** seize the opportunity, and begin to shoot rockets into Israel.

Hamas' rockets are met with a heavy response from the IDF\*\*. Palestinian and Israeli civilians are injured, including children. Buildings in Gaza, including ones housing residential apartments, and journalists offices, have been destroyed.

\*Member of Knesset, the Israeli parliament

\*\*The Israeli Defence Forces

Hamas have asked for a ceasefire, but Israel have refused. Meanwhile, Hamas have continued to fire rockets into civilian areas, indiscriminately. The IDF continue to bomb Gaza.

All the while, chaos unfolds on the streets of Israel, and the West Bank. There have been several violent clashes between Arabs and Jews, Israelis and Palestinians. Synagogues have been burned. Innocent Palestinian Arab and Jewish citizens have been attacked. Online incitement has fueled the fire of hatred. Police have been accused of using excess force against Arabs and Palestinians.

### **Where we stand:**

There is an urgent need to de-escalate the situation with Gaza but once that happens, things cannot go back to business as usual. There are two sides who are suffering and whose lives are in danger, but we are also equally clear: this is not a conflict of equals. And until the inequality - the occupation - ends, it is impossible to bring anyone the security they need and deserve.

For the sake of both Israelis and Palestinians, the status quo must come to an end.