

Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East Conflict: A Political, Religious, and Historical Analysis from a Christian Perspective

Disclaimer: *This paper uses publicly available information alongside my understanding of the Bible and Israel's history to present a Christian perspective on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. While every effort has been made to present the information accurately and respectfully, the views expressed reflects my interpretive approach and is offered to support thoughtful dialogue and peace in the Middle East. This paper does not reflect the views of any particular church or organisation but my personal understanding as a Christian believer.*

Executive Summary

This paper examines the Israeli–Palestinian conflict through three essential lenses: political dynamics, religious motivations, and historical foundations. It argues that the conflict cannot be understood—or resolved—without acknowledging Israel's ancient covenantal claim to the Holy Land, the long-standing presence of Palestinians in parts of the Holy Land, and the influence of regional powers such as Iran. The paper concludes that Gaza should be recognised as a Palestinian state, the West Bank should remain under Israeli sovereignty with provisions for coexistence, and long-term peace requires demilitarisation, regional cooperation, and respect for biblical principles. The recommendations presented are personal opinions intended to contribute to broader discussions on peace and stability.

Introduction

The most recent war between Israel and Gaza (7 October 2023–10 October 2025) has dominated the international stage almost daily. During the conflict, an estimated 70,000 Palestinian lives were lost, including a significant number of civilians, women, and children. This occurred despite the fact that the war was triggered by the invasion of southern Israel by Hamas and its allied groups, an attack that resulted in the deaths of over 1,200 Israelis and the taking of approximately 250 hostages.

The war brought immense suffering to the people of Gaza and drew widespread international condemnation of the actions of the Israeli military. Some world leaders have gone as far as recognising the State of Palestine, isolating Israel, and calling for a renewed push toward a two-state solution. The situation in the Middle East has often been described as a cycle of “endless wars,” and some have even called for a return to the pre-1948 status quo.

I am inclined to believe that these wars are likely to continue. Ceasefires and peace agreements may occur, but only on a temporary basis. It seems the world is still far from finding a lasting solution to the situation in the Middle East.

In my view, a meaningful solution can only be reached once three key questions are satisfactorily addressed:

- To what extent are the recurrent wars political?
- To what extent are they religious?
- What historical factors contribute to the conflict, and what complexities are involved?

In answering these questions, it is necessary to consider what the Holy Scriptures say and to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit regarding where the voices of Christians should stand.

To what extent are the wars political?

It is no secret that nations—especially those in conflict—often seek a “balance of power.” Political friction among major global players such as the United States, Russia, China, Germany, the UK, and France is not surprising. However, in such rivalries, responsible nations must exercise caution to ensure their actions do not escalate into full-scale wars like World War I and World War II. Adherence to international agreements in the interest of peace and stability remains essential.

In the Middle East, it is evident that countries such as Israel, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Qatar seek to establish themselves as regional superpowers. The relationship between Iran and Israel, in particular, is widely regarded as an existential threat rather than a mere struggle for regional influence.

Israel faces ongoing conflict for political reasons. Iran has established, funded, and armed a network of proxies known as the “Axis of Resistance,” including Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and various groups in Syria and Iraq. These groups share a central objective: the destruction of Israel. When they chant slogans such as “Death to Israel” and “Death to America,” they mean them literally.

Israel occupies a uniquely vulnerable position. It is surrounded by missiles, rockets, and armed groups on nearly every side. With the partial exception of its borders with Saudi Arabia and, to some extent, Jordan, Israel anticipates threats of terrorism from multiple directions. A major challenge is that many of the armed groups surrounding Israel are not controlled by legitimate state authorities. This undermines the possibility of diplomacy, as these groups often disregard international laws governing warfare and embed themselves within civilian populations.

Iran’s sponsorship of armed groups targeting Israel is well-known. Iran views Israel as its primary obstacle to regional dominance and seeks its destruction. Addressing the political dimension of the conflict therefore requires confronting state-sponsored terrorism, particularly from Iran. While this is easier said than done, Iranian leaders must reassess their foreign policy, and Iranian citizens must consider electing governments willing to engage more constructively with the Western world.

The people of Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen (under Houthi control) have suffered immensely not only because of Israeli military actions but also because Iran continues

to arm non-state organisations whose confrontations with Israel repeatedly end in defeat and devastation.

I am confident that Israel can coexist peacefully with its neighbours, provided its territorial integrity is respected. I do not believe Israel seeks recognition from every Middle Eastern country; rather, it expects neighbouring governments to prevent existential threats from emerging within their territories. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan have made notable efforts to minimise security threats against Israel, though continued vigilance is needed to prevent weapons smuggling.

Israel also carries a responsibility from the God of Avraham, Isaac, and Jacob: to love mercy, act justly, and walk humbly with God.

To what extent are the wars religious?

To fully understand any conflict, one must consider the “Social Graces”—the cultural, social, and religious factors shaping the identities of different groups, including Israelis and Palestinians. These elements play a significant role in the dynamics of the conflict.

In my view, the war involving Israel, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Iran is not merely political; it is also deeply religious. Religion influences politics, and politics influences religion. The current Israeli government is deeply rooted in religious identity, and the foundations of Israeli politics are intertwined with Judaism. Similarly, Palestinian politics is strongly influenced by Islam, as are Hezbollah and the Houthis. Shared religious ideologies unite these groups with Iran and much of the broader Muslim world.

Several examples illustrate the religious dimension:

- Many predominantly Muslim countries condition their recognition of Israel on the establishment of a two-state solution.
- Large numbers of Muslims worldwide have marched against the war in Gaza. I am not convinced that all participants have direct ties to Gaza or Palestinian heritage; rather, many march in solidarity with a broader Islamic cause.
- Many Muslims in influential positions in the Western world have been outspoken in their criticism of Israel.
- Calls to “globalise the Intifada” have become widespread. This phrase is often associated with advocating violence or terror-based actions against Jewish people.

Groups fighting Israel—such as Hamas (Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya, meaning “Islamic Resistance Movement”), Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah (“Party of Allah”), Islamic State, and the Houthis—frame their actions in explicitly religious terms. They believe they are carrying out the will of Allah through jihad (holy war) against Israel and the perceived enemies of Islam. The existence of Israel, the only non-Muslim-majority state in the Middle East, is viewed by many religious and political

groups as a major obstacle to establishing a global Islamic order. Even those who do not engage directly in violence may support such goals financially or ideologically.

I am not suggesting that all Muslims interpret the Quran or Hadith in the same way, nor that all Muslims support violence against non-Muslims. I am convinced that millions of Muslims are peaceful and committed to non-violent solutions. However, it is widely understood that many Muslims anticipate the eventual establishment of a global Islamic kingdom. Some—such as those in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Indonesia, and various non-state religious groups—pursue this vision through non-violent means. Yet it is also true that a significant number of Muslim groups believe in using violence against Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims who refuse to convert to Islam.

Violence carried out by groups such as Islamic State, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Hamas, Hezbollah, Boko Haram, Al-Shabab, and others is rooted in their ideological beliefs. Wherever such groups operate, violence and persecution of non-Muslims tend to follow. It is therefore unsurprising that Israel faces constant conflict, as these groups openly seek its destruction.

Thus, while the conflict between Israel, Hamas, Hezbollah, and other groups in the Middle East is political, it is also undeniably religious.

The Historical Context and Factors behind the Endless Wars

To fully understand how the conflict is rooted in the history of the Middle East, it is essential to consider the historical factors at play.

Israel was established through a covenant with God at Mount Sinai (Horeb) and inherited the Holy Land—the land promised to Avraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom God renamed Israel. This land includes both the modern State of Israel and the West Bank, and it was given to the people of Israel as an inheritance “forever.” The Jews received the Law (Torah), and the Word of God was delivered to them at various times through the Prophets.

Muslims should acknowledge that the Quran supports Israel's claim to the Promised Land and respect this inheritance regardless of their differences with Israel. In Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:20–21 and Surah Al-Isra 17:104, it is stated that the Holy Land—central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—was ordained for the children of Israel, for them to dwell securely in the land that was promised to them.

The Palestinian Context (The Palestinian Cause)

The relationship between Israeli Jews and Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank is often compared to Apartheid South Africa. The Apartheid system legally enforced oppression, segregation, and racial inequality. Services and privileges were allocated according to race, with White South Africans receiving the highest standard of living, followed by mixed-race groups (referred to as “Coloureds” in the South African context) and the Indian population. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the Black

African majority and the indigenous peoples, who endured systemic injustice, torture, and discrimination until the system collapsed in the 1990s.

Because of the oppression and the impact of colonisation on African communities, many African leaders resisted Apartheid until the dawn of democracy in 1994. Figures such as Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Steve Biko, Chris Hani, Thabo Mbeki, and Jacob Zuma were central to this struggle. Many of these leaders were labelled “terrorists” at the time; Nelson Mandela, for example, was only removed from the U.S. terrorist list in 2008.

Similarities with the Apartheid System

Some parallels are drawn between Apartheid South Africa and the situation between Israel and the Palestinians, particularly regarding persistent violence and the sense of injustice felt by Palestinians. This sentiment is not solely due to the recent war between Israel and Gaza but also stems from events in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Reports of home demolitions, land seizures, and other forms of violence—often involving settlers and sometimes occurring under the protection of the IDF or police—contribute to Palestinian frustration.

As a result, many Palestinians aspire to “liberate themselves from occupation.” Slogans such as “Free, Free Palestine” and “From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free” are common at marches worldwide. Within this context, post-Apartheid South Africa has positioned itself as a leading voice in the Palestinian cause. In December 2023, South Africa accused Israel of war crimes and genocide in Gaza and brought a case before the International Court of Justice.

Palestinian leaders from both Gaza and the West Bank are often regarded as heroes, liberators, or champions of the “resistance.” In many developing nations and among Eastern-aligned countries, leaders of groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah are sometimes viewed in a similar light to figures like Nelson Mandela. Supporters argue that these groups are resisting what they perceive as oppressive Israeli occupation. Even within the Western world, some voices argue that Israeli actions contribute to the conflict, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu maintains that Israel is fighting terrorism and jihadist movements. From this perspective, some observers draw comparisons to the South African Apartheid system.

However, in my view, the situation between Israel and the Palestinians cannot be narrowly equated with Apartheid South Africa.

Differences Between Apartheid South Africa and the Israel–Palestinian Situation

Although certain similarities exist, there are significant differences between the two contexts. The most fundamental difference concerns the nature of the claim to the land.

In South Africa and other colonised nations, liberation movements had a justifiable claim to the land, which had been taken from them, and they sought to restore their sovereignty. By contrast, the Palestinian claim to “liberate Palestine” is not based on a historically recognisable or biblically grounded claim. When examined through the

lens of Scripture, the Holy Land (Israel) belongs to the Jews—the descendants of Avraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom God renamed Israel. At most, the Palestinian claim can be described as contested or disputed.

Many Palestinians advocate for a return to the pre-1947–1948 period, when they were the demographic majority in the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. For roughly 1,500 years prior, people of Palestinian heritage gradually became the majority. However, Jewish communities have always existed in the land, even though they became a minority due to repeated wars, expulsions, and the impact of empires such as Rome.

The Israelites' claim to the Holy Land predates Palestinian presence by millennia, rooted in God's covenant with Avraham as recorded in Genesis 15 and 17. Genesis 17 states:

“I will establish an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you... The whole land of Canaan... I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you.” (NIV).

On that day, circumcision was given as the sign of the covenant, and God emphasised that the promise would continue through Isaac, who had not yet been born.

According to the historian Flavius Josephus, Avraham lived between 2100 BCE and 1900 BCE. The Exodus is estimated around 1446 BCE, and the Israelites entered the land roughly 40 years later. This gives the Jewish people nearly 4,000 years of connection to the Holy Land and over 3,500 years of nationhood in the land.

It is therefore inaccurate to claim that the ancient Israelite kingdoms took the land from “Palestinians.” When God gave the land to Israel, it belonged to the descendants of Canaan—not to Palestinians. The Canaanite groups displaced by Israel are well documented in Scripture: the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Girgashites (Numbers 34; Deuteronomy 7:1–2; Joshua 3:10; 11:3; Nehemiah 9:8).

Most of these groups were destroyed, while some survivors were absorbed into Israelite society, such as the people of Geshur and Maakah (Joshua 13:13). The Bible also records the Gibeonites, who made a treaty with Joshua (Joshua 9), and individuals like Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11–12). Palestinians are not descended from these groups; they are of Arabic origin and should not be confused with the Samaritans, who emerged after the Babylonian exile.

Both the Christian Bible and Jewish Scriptures (the Torah, Psalms, and Prophets) affirm Israel's claim to the land. During the time of Jesus, the land was overwhelmingly Jewish, with well-documented groups such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, ordinary Israelites, and Samaritans. Although Israel was under Roman occupation, Jerusalem and the surrounding regions were still part of ancient Israel.

In the New Testament, there is no reference to any Palestinian groups. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the ancestors of today's Palestinians were not present in the Holy Land during the time of Jesus. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judah, in the

province of Judea—not in “Palestine.” His ministry was directed toward Jews and Samaritans, and there is no biblical account of Him encountering “Palestinians.” This period was approximately 2,025 years ago.

Decline of Jewish Communities (70 AD onwards)

Throughout Israel’s history, the Jewish people have repeatedly faced wars initiated by those seeking their destruction. In most cases, Israel has not been the aggressor, yet it has consistently confronted kingdoms, nations, and groups that plotted against it.

Following successive wars with the Roman Empire, the destruction of the Temple of the LORD at Jerusalem in 70 AD, many Jews emigrated from the Holy Land through forced expulsions, and their collective ability to resist Roman oppression weakened. The Romans held numerous misconceptions about the Jewish people, prompting the historian Flavius Josephus to write extensively about Jewish history and faith in the 1st century AD. During this same period, the New Testament books were written to strengthen Christian believers who were enduring severe persecution.

The name Palestine is believed to derive from the Philistines of Gaza. However, it became widely used by Roman authorities after the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135 AD). Emperor Hadrian officially renamed the Holy Land “Syria Palaestina” in an attempt to punish the Jews and erase their historical connection to the land. Many Jews were killed or brutally persecuted, leading to widespread emigration. The Arabic term Filastin continued during Islamic rule, and the British government also retained the name “Palestine” after World War I (1914–1918).

Although the name Palestine originates from the Philistines, many credible sources state that present-day Palestinians do not descend from the Philistines of the Bible. The Philistines were taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and unlike the Jews, there are no records of their return. Even if some may have returned, their historical territory was Gaza—not the West Bank nor the rest of Israeli territory.

Furthermore, fewer than 1% of present-day Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank identify as Samaritans. The Samaritans of the Bible emerged after the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom (722 BCE) and again after the Babylonian exile (597–539 BCE). They were a mixed population formed through intermarriage between Israelites and non-Israelite groups. Therefore, the modern conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is not a continuation of any ancient conflict involving the Samaritans.

The Rise and Expansion of Islam- 610 AD onwards

The rise of Islam around 610 AD, along with its rapid expansion and military campaigns across the Levant, significantly altered the demographics of the Holy Land. Jerusalem was besieged and conquered between 636 and 638 AD by the Rashidun Caliphate. During this period, various Arab groups migrated into Jerusalem and surrounding regions. Except for the Crusader period (1099–1187), Islamic dominance over the Holy Land remained largely uninterrupted until the 20th century. Although Jewish and Christian communities continued to live in the land, Islam became the dominant religion, and it was during this era that the ancestors of present-day Palestinians emerged.

During the Umayyad Dynasty (661–750), the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque were constructed on the Temple Mount. Jerusalem subsequently became the third holiest city in Islam after Mecca and Medina. Jewish tradition, however, maintains that the Al-Aqsa Mosque was built on the exact site of the Temple of the LORD, which the Romans destroyed in 70 AD. The Romans prevented the rebuilding of the Temple and suppressed any attempts to restore it. This remains one of the most contentious issues in the modern conflict.

Modern-Day Israel After 1948

This period is widely known: following the Second World War, large numbers of Jews returned to their ancestral homeland. Initially, the British—who held colonial authority over the region—cooperated with Jewish leaders. However, they later shifted from supporting the re-establishment of a Jewish state to advocating for a majority-Palestinian Islamic state. Eventually, the British government handed the issue over to the United Nations.

Why International Bodies Like the UN are Part of the Problem

The United Nations has contributed to the problem by adopting solutions that fail to give adequate consideration to the political, religious, and historical complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Increasing international pressure has been placed on Israel to cede the West Bank to a Palestinian state. Many countries have already recognised the State of Palestine, and boycotts of Israel's participation in international events—as well as protests targeting Israeli teams—have become widespread. Some governments also appear more sympathetic to groups such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, either because of their support for the broader Palestinian cause or in response to the devastation caused by the war in Gaza.

This is not to suggest that Palestinians should not have a state of their own. The essential question is **where** that state should be located. Gaza could be recognised as a Palestinian territory or state, provided it is demilitarised and not used as a base for terrorism against Israel.

The international community—especially presidents, foreign ministers and UN ambassadors from Christian-majority nations—should ensure that their recommendations align with biblical principles. Israel is a nation established through an everlasting covenant with the God of Israel, the God of the Bible, who identifies Himself as the Creator of heaven, earth, and all that exists. From a Christian perspective, dividing the borders of Israel without explicit approval from the LORD God Almighty is tantamount to acting against His will.

Recommendations

The starting point must be an acknowledgment that the Holy Land rightly belongs to Israel in both the historical and present sense. Israel's claim to the land outweighs that of the Palestinians by a significant margin. Israel's covenant and inheritance of the

Holy Land is affirmed by nearly all authoritative religious texts. The Christian Bible, the Torah, and even the Quran recognise Israel's rightful claim to the land.

Gaza should be recognised by all parties—including Israel—as a Palestinian state, and its territorial integrity must be respected. As Gaza is expected to be governed by the Board of Peace until it can be safely handed over to a Palestinian government, ongoing security measures must be implemented to minimise any future threats to Israel.

It must also be acknowledged that Palestinians have lived in the Holy Land—particularly the West Bank—for approximately 1,500 years. This long presence complicates any sudden or short-term solutions to the conflict. However, as argued throughout this paper, the West Bank falls within Israeli territory and therefore cannot be fully recognised as a Palestinian state. To address this reality, the following steps are recommended:

a)

Maintain the current status quo for as long as peaceful coexistence is possible. The Palestinian Authority should continue governing the areas under its partial control (Area A) and joint control (Area B). The Israeli government should continue administering Area C and East Jerusalem while ensuring overall security.

b)

Palestinians who are unwilling or unable to cooperate with Israel should be encouraged to immigrate voluntarily to Muslim-majority countries of their choice, subject to those countries' approval and discretion.

c)

To facilitate voluntary migration, the international community should establish a fund to support Palestinians who choose to relocate. UN member states—including Israel—should contribute to this fund.

d)

Israel should retain the right to permanently exile Palestinians who are suspected or convicted of terrorism offences, with the option of requesting financial support from UN-raised resources where applicable.

e)

Willing countries—preferably Muslim-majority nations—should cooperate with the UN to build housing and establish communities for Palestinians within their own territories, where Palestinians from the West Bank may be welcomed either as naturalised citizens or as refugees.

f)

Muslim-majority countries should take a more proactive role in combating Islamic extremism and terrorism. It is essential to ensure that financial support sent to fellow Muslims is not used to fund acts of violence or terrorism. Muslims are free to practice

their faith and pursue their aspiration for an Islamic kingdom, just as Christians do, but such goals must be pursued through non-violent means.

g)

If any country or island is willing to host a second Palestinian state in addition to Gaza, such initiatives should be welcomed and funds to support such initiatives can be raised through the United Nations.

h)

A solution to the issue of the Jewish Temple and the Al-Aqsa Mosque should be discussed by a multi-faith panel consisting of religious Jews, Messianic Jews, Christians, Muslims, and representatives of other faiths, with the aim of finding a viable and respectful resolution and at the same time acknowledge the significance of the historical Jewish Temple and Jerusalem.

Demilitarisation of Both the West Bank and Gaza

To ensure sustainable peace and stability in the Middle East and prevent the recurrence of terrorism and conflict, the West Bank must be fully demilitarised and remain so in the future. In my view, Gaza and the West Bank should only be permitted access to basic ammunition necessary for policing and civil administration. The Palestinian Authority must ensure that no armed groups operate within the West Bank.

Israel will retain its right to defend itself and deter acts of terrorism. However, Israel should work closely with the Board of Peace in Gaza and with the United Nations wherever possible and minimise unilateral actions.

The State of Israel must also ensure that violence perpetrated by Israeli citizens—particularly in the West Bank—is stopped, and that offenders are brought to justice. This will help build confidence that peaceful resolutions are achievable both in the short and long term.

The Arab League and the broader Muslim community should continue to play an important role in promoting peaceful resolutions by encouraging Palestinian political and religious leaders to pursue non-violent approaches.

Conclusion

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is one of the most complex and enduring struggles in modern history. Its roots are deeply intertwined with political rivalries, religious convictions, and historical claims that span thousands of years. Any attempt to resolve the conflict must therefore take into account the full breadth of these dimensions rather than relying on simplified narratives or short-term political pressures.

From a historical and biblical perspective, Israel's connection to the Holy Land is ancient, well-documented, and affirmed by the foundational texts of Judaism,

Christianity, and Islam. The covenantal promise given to Avraham, Isaac, and Jacob forms the basis of Israel's enduring claim to the land. At the same time, Palestinians have lived in parts of the Holy Land—particularly the West Bank—for approximately 1,500 years, and their presence cannot be dismissed. This dual reality creates a complex landscape in which both historical legitimacy and contemporary demographics must be acknowledged.

The political dimension of the conflict is further complicated by regional power struggles, particularly the influence of Iran and its network of proxy groups. These groups openly seek Israel's destruction, making long-term peace difficult to achieve. The religious dimension adds another layer of complexity, as both Jewish and Islamic identities are deeply tied to the land, to Jerusalem, and to sacred history. These factors cannot be ignored in any meaningful peace process.

The recommendations presented in this paper aim to balance these realities. They recognise Israel's historical and covenantal claim to the land while also acknowledging the long-standing presence of Palestinians and the need for a humane, practical, and sustainable approach to coexistence. The recognition of Gaza as a Palestinian state, the demilitarisation of both Gaza and the West Bank, voluntary migration options, and the involvement of Muslim-majority nations in promoting non-violent solutions all form part of a broader framework for stability.

Ultimately, lasting peace will require courage, honesty, and a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths. International bodies such as the United Nations must approach the conflict with a deeper understanding of its historical and religious foundations rather than relying on political expediency. Likewise, regional actors—both Jewish and Muslim—must commit to rejecting extremism and pursuing peaceful coexistence.

For Christians, the conflict also carries spiritual significance. Israel's existence is tied to an everlasting covenant with the God of the Bible, and any decisions affecting its borders should be approached with reverence and caution. At the same time, Christians are called to seek justice, mercy, and peace for all people, including Palestinians who have suffered greatly.

The path forward is undoubtedly challenging, but peace is not impossible. It requires a balanced approach that respects Israel's divine and historical inheritance while also addressing the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people. Only through such a comprehensive and principled framework can the cycle of conflict begin to break and a more stable future emerge for the entire region.