

Courageous Conversations:

An Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue

Glossary of Key Terms

1948 War | First Arab-Israeli War, known by Israelis as the War of Independence – a conflict immediately following Israel's declaration of independence in 1948, during which approximately 1% of the pre-war Jewish population was killed defending the newly declared state. For Palestinians, it marked the Nakba, or catastrophe, of mass displacement and loss.

Al-Aqsa | The Al-Aqsa compound, Islam's third holiest site, is located in Jerusalem's Old City. The compound is the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock on al-Haram al-Sharif, also known as the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site.

Autonomy | Self-governance; the right of an individual or a group to make independent decisions about one's own affairs.

Balfour Declaration | A 1917 statement by the British government supporting the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine while protecting non-Jewish communities' rights and the rights and political status of Jews in other countries. This declaration is sometimes seen as part of conflicting wartime promises by the British including commitment to Arab independence in the region, such as the Hussein-McMahon correspondence.

British Empire | A global power that controlled vast territories, including Britain's control over much of the Middle East after defeating the Ottoman Empire in World War I (1917). The British temporarily administered the British Mandate for Palestine under the League of Nations until mid-May of 1948.

Caricatures | Distorted, exaggerated, or oversimplified representations of people or groups that reduce complex peoples to crude stereotypes, often used to misrepresent, mock, or insult them.

Coalesce | To come together to form one unified whole.

Colonialism | The policy, practice, or system where a foreign power extends control over another territory and dominates its people. This can include:

- **Exploitative colonialism:** where the colonizers are focused on extracting resources for a mother country.
- **Settler colonialism:** where the colonizing power seeks to replace the indigenous population with its own settlers.

Competing Aspirations | The distinct goals and desires of the Jewish Zionist and the Arab Palestinian nationalist movements seeking self-determination in the same land.

Current Israeli government | As of the recording, Israel's government is led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and a right-wing coalition.

Decimation | The severe destruction, reduction in number or quality, of something.

Dehumanization | Seeing or treating people as less than human, stripping away their dignity and individual humanity, and depriving a person or group of positive human qualities.

Diaspora | The dispersion or communities of people living outside their original homeland.

- **Jewish Diaspora:** Jewish communities worldwide outside Israel and the historical scattering of Jewish people from the Land of Israel, especially after the Roman conquest of Judea and destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE.
- **Palestinian Diaspora:** Palestinian Arabs—mostly Muslim and some Christian—living in communities and refugee camps outside of their ancestral homelands, particularly those not residing in Gaza, the West Bank, or as Israeli citizens within Israel. Most include refugees from the 1948 and 1967 wars and their descendants, numbering several million worldwide.

Dr. Salam Fayyad | A Palestinian economist and former Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority known for institution-building, economic development, and pragmatic governance approach.

Endemic | Widespread or regularly found within a particular area or group.

Euro-centric | Focusing on European culture, history, or values to the exclusion of non-European experiences and viewpoints.

Fascist | An authoritarian political ideology, movement, or regime characterized by extreme nationalism, dictatorial and autocratic power, and forcible suppression of opposition.

Gaza Strip | A small, densely populated territory on the Mediterranean coast, bordering Israel and Egypt. It is home to over 2 million Palestinians and has been under Hamas control since 2007.

Genocide | The deliberate and intentional destruction of a particular group of people, often by systematic killing of a large number of people from that group.

Hamas | The Islamic Resistance Movement – founded 1987 as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas is a Palestinian Islamist fundamentalist organization, both a political party and a militant group, with its militant wing designated as a terrorist group by the US, EU, and Israel. After winning a 2006 Palestinian legislative election, Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 and was the primary instigator of the October 7th surprise attack on Israel.

Hamas takeover of Gaza | After winning Palestinian legislative elections in 2006, Hamas violently seized control of the Gaza Strip from Fatah in 2007, leading to a political and territorial split between Hamas rule in Gaza and Palestinian Authority rule in the West Bank.

The Holocaust | The systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators across German-occupied Europe between 1941 and 1945, killing two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population. In Hebrew, it is called the "Shoah," meaning "devastation" or "calamity." Before the Holocaust, there were over 16 million Jews worldwide. As of 2025, the global Jewish population—though growing—has still not returned to that number.

Homogenous | Of the same kind, uniform in composition, or all alike; lacking diversity in characteristics, beliefs, or identities.

Human Shield | A tactic violating international law where militants hide among civilians or use civilian buildings to protect military assets from being targeted and attacked, putting civilians at risk.

IDF | Israel Defense Forces – the military of the State of Israel, including army, navy, and air force.

Intifadas | Two major Palestinian uprisings against Israeli control:

- **First Intifada** (1987–1993): characterized by protests, boycotts, and civil disobedience.
- **Second Intifada** (2000–2005): a more violent uprising involving armed clashes, suicide bombings, and significant casualties on both sides.

Islamist | Political ideology seeking to govern society according to Islamic principles and law.

Israeli hostage crisis | Following the October 7th attack, over 250 Israelis—men and women, children and the elderly, mostly civilians and some soldiers—were taken hostage by militant groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad into Gaza. Reports indicate hostages were subjected to torture and abuse, with some held captive in civilian homes in Gaza. The ongoing captivity of Israelis taken hostage and their plight has deeply traumatized and impacted Israeli society.

Jewish attempts to restore sovereignty | Historical movements and figures, occurring long before modern Zionism, who sought to return to the Land of Israel and reestablish Jewish political autonomy, such as the 614 CE Jewish revolt against Heraclius, and individuals like, Doña Gracia Mendes Nasi in the 16th century, Judah heHasid in the 17th and 18th centuries, and, Judah Alkalai, Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, and the Perushim in the 19th century.

Levant | A historical geographical term referring to a region in the Eastern Mediterranean, including modern-day Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. "Levantine" describes the mix of Eastern and Western cultures that blend Middle Eastern and Mediterranean traditions.

Liberal | Open to new behavior or opinions; generally supporting civil rights, democracy, and individual freedoms, and often supporting compromise, peace efforts, and negotiated diplomatic solutions.

May 14, 1948 | The date Israel declared independence, immediately followed by the invasion of five surrounding Arab armies, leading to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War ending with armistice agreements in 1949.

Military occupation | Refers to Israel's military presence and administration over Palestinian civilian life in parts of the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War, including restrictions on movement, development, and governance.

Mutually Exclusive | Two or more things that cannot both be true or exist at the same time.

Nakba | Arabic for "catastrophe," it refers to the displacement and dispossession of approximately 750,000 Palestinian Arabs from their homes during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

Netanyahu's return to government | Benjamin Netanyahu was first elected Prime Minister in 1996, governing until 1999. After a decade hiatus, he was reelected in 2009, remaining in office since then (with brief interruption in 2021-2022). Netanyahu has been a dominant figure in Israeli politics since the 1990s and is the longest-serving prime minister in Israel's history.

Nuance | Subtle differences, details, and complexities that require careful consideration rather than simple binary, all-or-nothing, black-and-white thinking.

October 7, 2023 | A Hamas-led surprise attack on Israel that killed over 1,200 Israelis and kidnapped more than 250 hostages into Gaza, sparking a war resulting in tens of thousands of deaths and causing extensive destruction in Gaza.

Old City of Jerusalem | The ancient and historic walled core of Jerusalem, home to sites sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, including the Western Wall, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Onus | Something that is one's duty, responsibility, or burden —who is expected to take action or carry blame.

Ottoman Empire | A vast Turkish Islamic empire that existed for over 600 years (1299-1922 CE), controlling much of Southeast Europe, West Asia, and North Africa, including the land of Israel/Palestine from 1517-1917, until its defeat in World War I.

Palestinian Authority | The Palestinian self-government body, led by the Fatah party, that governs parts of the West Bank, established in 1994 as part of the Oslo Accords to govern Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Pontificate | To speak in a pompous, dogmatic way that is overly opinionated, as if delivering an authoritative pronouncement, often without acknowledging humility, empathy, complexity, and nuance.

Pragmatic | Focused on practical and realistic solutions rather than idealistic, abstract, or theoretical ideas.

Raison d'être | French for "reason for being" – the most important purpose or fundamental justification for someone or something's existence.

Rallies on October 8th | Public rallies held in major cities globally immediately following the October 7th attack, where some participants celebrated or justified the massacre and kidnapping of Israeli civilians as resistance, including documented antisemitic rhetoric in places like London, New York City, and Sydney.

Right to exist | The principle that a nation or people has a legitimate claim to self-determination, to maintain a sovereign state, and to continue to live and thrive as a distinct national entity without external threats to their existence.

Self-determination | The right of a people to freely determine their own political status, govern themselves, and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

Settler Violence | Violence perpetrated against Palestinians or their property by extremist factions of Israeli civilians living in settlements built in the West Bank since 1967. Israeli settlers vary in motivation and belief, and not all oppose coexistence.

Surrounded by armies | On May 15, 1948, five Arab nations (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq) invaded the newly declared State of Israel. Arab leaders used rhetoric about pushing the Jews into the Mediterranean Sea, referencing the western coast of Israel.

Sykes-Picot | A secret 1916 agreement between Britain and France to divide the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces into their respective spheres of influence after World War I, drafting artificial borders that disregarded local populations' identities, needs, and aspirations.

Theodor Herzl | Austro-Hungarian Jewish journalist, writer, and political activist, considered the founder of modern political Zionism, organizing the First Zionist Congress (1897) and advocating for a Jewish state in response to rising antisemitism in Europe.

Two-state solution | A proposed resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that envisions two independent states: a Jewish state of Israel and an Arab state of Palestine, existing side-by-side with agreed-upon borders and security arrangements.

Ultra-Nationalist | Extreme nationalism that prioritizes one's nation above all else; often rejecting compromise or coexistence, and often believing their nation is superior and should dominate others.

Unilateral | An action taken by one side alone, without agreement or coordination with other parties.

West Bank | A territory west of the Jordan River, home to approximately 3 million Palestinians and 500,000 Israeli Jews. Jordan annexed the territory following the 1948

Arab-Israeli War, Israel captured it from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War, and it is currently administered partly Palestinian civilian control and partly by Israeli military control.

Zero Sum | A situation where one side's gain is exactly equal to the other side's loss, with no room for mutual or shared benefit; a win-lose scenario.

Zionism | The movement for Jewish national self-determination, the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland, and the reestablishment and development of a Jewish state in some part of the Jewish homeland, the Land of Israel, where Jews have lived and maintained cultural and religious ties for thousands of years.