

## **This Conflict Israel-ly Bad News for Gaza**

Israel is a first-world country located in the Middle East that borders Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon,

and Syria (NationsOnline, n.d.). It has 3 official languages: English, Hebrew, and Arabic.

Israel's population was 8.172 million in 2017 and experiences a growth rate of approximately

1.92% each year (Trading Economics, n.d.). It is linked to 2 disputed territories: West Bank and Gaza. All of these areas together take up 8,522 mi<sup>2</sup> of space, which is about the size of

New Jersey. (NationsOnline, n.d.)

Although Israel is located in a desert, receives only about 2-6 inches of rainfall each year, is

below the UN definition for water quality, and only 20% of its land is arable, the country is

able to use agrotechnology in order to produce 95% of its own food requirements

(FactsAboutIsrael, n.d.). 24.7% of Israel, or 5339 acres, are used for agriculture

(FactsAboutIsrael, n.d.). Over 80% of Israel's agriculture is based on kibbutzim and

moshavim, which are communities that work together to maintain a piece of land and then

trade as a unit with the outside world (FactsAboutIsrael, n.d.). Israel mainly exports almonds,

dates, avocados, pomegranates, and olive oil, and is a world-leader in agricultural

technologies (FactsAboutIsrael, n.d.). Some of these technologies include microirrigation,

algoculture, water conservation techniques, brackish-water aquaculture fed by underground

aquifers, and the development of new strains of potatoes that can grow in a desert climate and be irrigated with saltwater (FactsAboutIsrael, n.d.). Israel also reuses 80% of its water and conserves through methods such as drip irrigation, which has made it a water surplus nation

(FactsAboutIsrael, n.d.).

“Now, Rachel,” you’re probably thinking as you read this paper, “if everything is so great in

Israel, why did you choose this as a topic? What’s the point of writing about a country that’s

already solved its main food-related issues?” To this I respond, “I chose Israel not only because I am Jewish, but also because of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. This dispute has created such deep rifts so that pro-Palestinian countries and even Gaza - which is currently occupied by the Israeli army - are suffering from the same issues Israel has already solved.”

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict dates back to the end of WWI, when the Ottoman Empire fell

and the British had control of Palestine (Green, 2015). England had previously promised

modern-day Israel to both the Zionists (a group that wanted a Jewish country that would offer

a haven from international anti-semitism in the biblical Jewish homeland) and the

Palestinians (the mainly Muslim Arabs who already lived on that land and considered it their home) (Vox, 2016). England, using the same “divide and rule” tactics that still

cause

problems in India, set in a rift between the Zionists and Palestinians (Green, 2015). As Jews

began moving to Israel by the thousands, the Palestinians became angry that they were being

forced out of their homes (Green, 2015). After some violence, the British placed limits on

Jewish immigration and promised the Palestinians a country in ten years; this angered both

sides (Green, 2015). But then the Holocaust happened, and mass amounts of Jewish refugees

fled their home countries, bringing an influx of refugees to Palestine (Vox, 2016).

After

WWII ended, the British handed their colony to the UN, which voted to split the territory into

two roughly equal masses that jigsawed together, with Jerusalem as an international zone

(Green, 2015). After this decision, the Arab-Israeli War broke out, in which Israel seized 33%

more land than the UN decreed (Green, 2015). The Arab-Israeli war also displaced over

700,000 Palestinians, whose descendants number about 7 million today, and established the

borders of the West Bank and Gaza that are still held today (Vox, 2016). The Six Day War led

to Israel briefly occupying a larger territory; Israel retained its occupation of Palestinian

territories (Vox, 2016). The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) governed the

Palestinian areas (and still runs the West Bank) as well as led the resistance against Israel

(Vox, 2016). Israeli citizens spread into and colonized the West Bank illegally, which further

infuriated the Palestinians (Green, 2015). Then there was the First Intifada,  
a

peaceful-turned-violent protest of Israel, which ended with Israelis brutally ending  
the

conflict and led to the formation of the Palestinian Authority, the Oslo Accords, and

HAMAS, a democratically elected “terrorist” organization that currently runs Gaza and  
wants

Israel to not exist, whatever the cost (Vox, 2016). Palestinians, losing hope that they will  
have

their own state, rose up in the Second Intifada, which was much more violent than the first

(Vox, 2016). After the Palestinians were suppressed, Israel felt that it would probably not be

at peace nor recognized for a long time, and built walls around Palestinian areas, but so  
that

the Israeli settlements in their area were on the Israeli side (Green, 2015). Ever since  
then,

HAMAS and Israel have been basically at war because neither government will recognize the

other’s right to exist (Green, 2015).

Gaza is a strip of land adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea and Egypt, and is about 360  
km<sup>2</sup>,

slightly more than twice the size of Washington, DC (World Factbook, 2020). Since  
Gaza

was physically separated from Israel in 2005, it has been suffering from poverty and lack  
of

resources. While most of Israel has access to clean water due to the country’s  
extensive

desalination and conservation, only 10% of households in Gaza have access to clean water (Medeazza, 2019). Most of the homes in Gaza have a toilet; however, sewage treatment plants can't handle the surplus of raw sewage because only 4-5 hours of electricity are supplied daily in Gaza (Medeazza, 2019). In Gaza, military checkpoints may not allow

Palestinians into Israel, limiting job availability and access to healthcare (WHO, 2011/Gisha,

2019). Gaza's unemployment rate reached 52 percent in 2018; 74.5 percent of women in Gaza are unemployed (Gisha, 2019). Of the jobs available, about 34% pay irregularly or have

cut checks (Gisha, 2019).

I know, I know. This is a paper about food security. So here's a kicker: In 2018, about 1.3

million people, or over 68 per cent of households in Gaza, were severely or moderately food insecure (OCHA, 2018). This is despite the fact that 69 percent of Gaza households already

receive food assistance (OCHA, 2018). The main cause of this food insecurity is poverty (OCHA, 2018). Another cause is the strict barriers; many farmers are unable to access their

crops because it is on the other side of the wall (PulitzerCenter, 2019).

Now, the obvious solution would be to solve the Israeli Palestinian Conflict so that Gaza

could reopen its borders with Israel and people could find jobs, healthcare, food, and all that

jazz outside of Gaza. The most popular proposed overall solutions are the UN-approved two-state solution, which would split the territory into two equivalent pieces of land and two different countries, and the one-state solution, which would have Jews and Palestinians living in the area together peacefully. (Beauchamp, 2018). However, with Israelis and Palestinians

unable or unwilling to negotiate, it makes more sense to lessen the conflict and lift Gaza out of poverty rather than attempt to solve it outright.

One of the most visible reminders and perpetrators of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict is the

militarized barrier separating Gaza from Israel. Walls historically and currently have made conflicts worse (Dear, 2016). The Berlin Wall, for example, was built to separate the socialist

East Germany and the capitalist West Germany at the start of the Cold War (History.com,

2009). This wall trapped the suffering citizens that wish to leave or find opportunity

elsewhere (History.com, 2009). This can be seen in Israel right now; the Gazans are being

physically divided in the midst of a conflict, and it is trapping the Palestinians in a bad

situation. A less strict border that allowed Gazans to get jobs in Israel would bring down

unemployment and poverty in Gaza. Granted, there is the withstanding issue of HAMAS,

which is the reason the barrier was originally built. I think that the Israelis that

currently

patrol borders could be better put to work in a TSA-style checkpoint between Gaza and Israel.

There could be metal detectors and bag checks. Since it is very hard to check a car for bombs

and other dangers, and since the roads in Gaza are still in poor shape, commuting Gazans

could keep their cars outside of the border and within the walls of Gaza there could be a

“taxi” service. The taxis could transport people to the border and drive people back to their

homes. These taxis could have government-regulated rates to make sure the commuters are

not exploited. This would not only keep border security relatively intact but also employ

more Gazans and allow the money from jobs in Israel to percolate through Gazan

communities

.

Israel should also focus more on counteracting the underlying causes of terrorism and

HAMAS’s rise to power. Violence against innocent citizens only further divides Israelis and

Palestinians, and gives HAMAS more support as people turn further against Israel.

HAMAS

won the 2006 election in Gaza because the Gazans were weakened by conflict and saw a

party that worked independently of the government to help the needy and fight back against

Israel (Recknagel and O’Rourke, 2006). HAMAS appeals to Gazans by creating opportunities and constructing hospitals, for example (Kean, 2019). If Israel remedies the issues and works

against issues which create appeal for HAMAS, it will no longer have that appeal. Israel should dedicate its resources to helping the poor citizens, supporting businesses, doing youth outreach. By working to help needy Gazans and replace the hate against Israel with tolerance, Israel will be able to shake HAMAS's foundation. Israel could also show itself more positively by creating jobs for Gazans. The citizens could be employed by Israeli companies in expanding agrotechnology in Gaza, which would also help to make more food available, further directly counteracting food insecurity. Organizations such as the UN and Heifer International could also help with both aid and creating more income opportunities in Gaza.

Another step forward would be to counteract this internalized bias towards Israelis by

Palestinians and vice versa. Whitney Houston once said, "I believe the children are the

future". In 1865 when the Civil War ended, Jim Crow laws which restricted

African-Americans were implemented (History.com, 2019). These laws restricted where

African-Americans could live or work, kept them from voting, and segregated everything

from water fountains to prostitutes (History.com, 2019). One of the main ways that

segregation and prejudice were combatted was the desegregation of schools (History.com,



2019). Having people of different origins and school teaches acceptance and counteracts

racism (“The Importance...”, 2019). Gazans and Israelis currently face a similar situation to

African-Americans and whites in the Jim Crow era. The Israelis have restricted the rights of

Palestinians similarly to how whites once made policies against African-Americans.

By

sending children from Gaza and Israel to the same schools, we can teach them that there is no

reason to hate the other. These more open-minded youth will grow up and be able to communicate and negotiate better than their parents, and they could bring the peace we wish

for now.

I know that it seems simplistic to try to solve the mighty Israeli-Palestinian Conflict with

TSA checkpoints and sending children to different schools. But the advanced solutions aren't

working. So I say we should start simplistic, and work our way up. The priority should be on

helping people on a small scale rather than solving the conflict outright. If the UN worked on

helping food security in Gaza rather than negotiating its existence, things maybe wouldn't be

so bad. And maybe, just maybe, UN officials could come up with a better solution than a high

school student.

Reference

s

Agriculture in Israel - Agricultural Technology: Facts about Israel. (n.d.). Retrieved

January

26, 2020, from <https://www.factsaboutisrael.uk/agriculture-in-israel/>

Beauchamp, Z. (2018, May 14). What are the "two-state solution" and the "one-state solution"? Retrieved January 24, 2020, from <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/20/18080094/what-are-the-two-state-solution-and-the-one-state-solution>

Dear, M. (2016, August 16). The World Is Full of Walls That Don't Work. Retrieved January 26, 2020, from <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/08/donald-trump-2016-wall-wont-work-214167>

Gisha. (2019, March 13). Unemployment rate in Gaza reaches new record-high of 52 percent in 2018. Retrieved January 26, 2020, from <https://gisha.org/updates/9840>

Green, J. (2015, January 28). Retrieved January 22, 2020, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wo2TLIMhiw>

History.com Editors. (2009, December 15). Berlin Wall. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/berlin-wall>

History.com Editors. (2018, February 28). Jim Crow Laws. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws>

Kean, T. (2019, March 11). Head of 9/11 Commission on five ways to prevent the spread of terrorism. Retrieved January 26, 2020, from <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2018/12/07/head-911-commission-five-ways-prevent-spread-terrorism>

Medeazza, G. von. (2019, February 14). Searching for clean water in Gaza. Retrieved January 26, 2020, from <https://blogs.unicef.org/blog/searching-clean-water-gaza/>

Nationsonline.org, K. K.-. (n.d.). Israel - Country Profile - Nations Online Project.

Retrieved

January 26, 2020, from  
<https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/israel.htm>

OCHA. (2018, December 14). Food insecurity in the oPt: 1.3 million Palestinians in the Gaza

strip are food insecure. Retrieved January 26, 2020, from  
<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/food-insecurity-opt-13-million-palestinians-gaza-strip-are-food-insecure>

Pulitzercenter. (2019, November 25). Food Is the First Frontier of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Retrieved January 26, 2020, from  
<https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/food-first-frontier-israeli-palestinian-conflict>

Rferl. (2006, January 26). Why Did Hamas Win The Palestinian Poll? Retrieved January 26, 2020, from <https://www.rferl.org/a/1065113.html>

The Importance of Diversity in the Classroom. (2019, January 17). Retrieved January 26,

2020, from <https://www.teachtci.com/the-importance-of-diversity-in-the-classroom/>

The occupied Palestinian territory: providing health care despite the lack of a stable environment. (2014, March 18). Retrieved January 26, 2020, from  
<https://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/wbgs/highlights/february2011/en/>

The World Factbook: Gaza Strip. (2018, February 1). Retrieved January 26, 2020, from

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/gz.html>

Trading Economics. (n.d.). Israel - Rural Population. Retrieved from

<https://tradingeconomics.com/israel/rural-population-percent-of-total-population-wb-data.html>

Vox. (2016, January 20). Retrieved from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRYZjOuUnIU>