

# Israeli and Palestinian conflict longlasting, no easy solutions

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Columnist

This is not a war fought by armies on a battlefield. It's not about law or punishment. It is a war fought daily by both civilians and uniformed soldiers. The battlefields are street corners, bus stations and shopping malls.

This war changes the rules.

The Middle East conflict has no specific starting date and still endures today. Centuries have passed with the continuation of battle, the deaths of innocent bystanders and a failure to reconcile.

So what started the war between the Palestinians and the Israelis, anyway?

Dispute over land can be found in historical accounts from three of the world's major religions. Islam, Christianity and Judaism have all established proud heritage within the small desert land next to the Mediterranean Sea. The overlap of these religions occurs in Jerusalem's Old City, an area enclosed by a great wall and bursting with biblical importance.

The Temple Mount and Haram al-Sharif Noble Sanctuary, both located on the same hill in Jerusalem, are at the center of the controversy. Each side wishes to protect the integrity of their religious history, which emanates from inside the Old City gates.

For the Jews, the Temple Mount contains the ruins of their holiest temple. For the Muslims, the Al-Aqsa mosque is their third-holiest

site.

On May 14, 1948, Zionist leader Ben Gurion declared Israel as independent, and the land was designated as a Jewish state and refuge.

The announcement brought forth invasions from several surrounding countries. Israeli forces fought with success and were able to gain necessary land at both the northern and southern boundaries. However, the Palestinian tie to the land had yet to be resolved.

Acts of violence continued throughout history. The Yom Kippur War and the Sixth Day War were large military battles over territory and the right of occupancy in the disputed land.

The territory has changed hands and form several times throughout history. It once fell under Ottoman rule and then into the hands of the British. It was not until 1947 that a United Nations proposal gave the Arabs and the Jews specific land ownership.

The sacred city of Jerusalem was made an international enclave. In modern times, the two opposing sides have split themselves within the holy city. Arabs inhabit mostly East Jerusalem while Jews live in the western part of the city.

Modern continuation of the conflict has found its way onto news channels across the world. Graphic footage of bodies, blood and destruction plaster the evening news with the announcement of yet another incident.

Philosophy professor Yoram Lubling was born in Israel, in a



Photo courtesy of KRT Campus

Palestinians try to cut open a vehicle owned by a Hamas activist after it was struck by Israeli tank fire.

small suburb outside the metropolitan city of Tel Aviv. For 22 years, Lubling lived in the country with his parents, who are still residents of Israel.

"When you live in Tel Aviv, what you see on television doesn't reflect the general life," Lubling said. He said Israelis carry out their daily life and continue with their particular lifestyle, despite the threats.

"It's the only way you can combat terrorism," he said.

In recent weeks, the violence has continued with strikes on both Palestinian and Israeli civilians. Israeli air strikes and Palestinian bombing incidents continue to occur throughout the region.

Tension between the two sides has reached new levels. More than 100 victims have been counted during the past week.

"It's much worse than it has ever been before," Lubling said. "We are in uncharted territory."

On March 9, after 48 hours of what news sources call the bloodiest and most violent episode of the conflict, Yassar Arafat's Gaza headquarters was struck by heavy Israeli fire.

The attack came after twin Palestinian suicide bombings killed dozens of people. The attacks oc-

curred within hours of each other.

In Jerusalem, the bombing occurred in a café, bustling with residents enjoying the end of the Jewish Sabbath. In Netanya, a metropolitan city north of Tel Aviv known for its resorts bordering the Mediterranean Sea, two gunmen fired aimlessly at pedestrians and people in a hotel lobby.

The Middle East conflict elevates war tactics to new levels. Civilians take matters into their own hands and act as suicide bombers, killing themselves and those around them.

"It's very difficult to fight a war with a group of people who don't mind dying," Lubling said.

Peace talks between the two nations have been halted in recent weeks due to the elevated violence. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon demanded the suspension of all peace talk attempts until a period of calm occurred.

After the weekend's intense violence, Sharon has stepped back and asked that talks reconvene. Arafat's vulnerable leadership has led to his entrapment in the West Bank. Israeli tanks have been blockading the leader for three months. He was recently allowed to resume travel to Palestinian territory.

Can there be any real solution?

"Every effort, every nonviolent effort should be used to solve the problem," Lubling said. "A solution must come from people who are willing to negotiate."

As violence heightens, the Middle East moves farther away from resuming peace. It has yet to be seen if these religious foes can coexist in the land of their heritage.



Source: Global Policy

Most violence occurs in areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



Photo courtesy of KRT Campus

Smoke is a common sight in Israel, a sign of continuing violence.