

# Palestine - the moral issue of our generation

Picture it, lines of cultivated olive trees spreading a network of lush green across a sweltering biblical landscape, only disturbed as goods are transported on the back of a donkey down a lone dusty track. Crack, the sound of a lone shot, promptly responded to with heavy machine gun fire. Then silence. This parallel universe exists in a land currently dominated by a power struggle, though which is sacred to three of the main religions in the world. You would be forgiven (unless you read the title) for thinking that this sort of behaviour could be apparent all over the world. Indeed it formed part of my image of a hostile world the other side of the English Channel. That was until I listened to a talk by Monica Wusteman from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. An impassioned delivery informed me and others in the room of the bloodied history of the region around Palestine.

The ownership of the land has shifted from Jewish occupation, before being driven out by the Romans over 2000 years ago, to the Arab people whose ancestors arrived about 1300 years ago. Between 1917 and 1946 the Jewish population grew significantly in Palestine, and as a result of the Second World War and the Holocaust, the UN proposed a partition of the land, 56% to the Jews and 44% to the Arab Palestinians. This obstacle

of who owns the land combined with the belief of the Jewish community of needing their own land to defend them resulted in the tensions in the region growing to where we are today. After the first Arab-Israeli war, Israel declared its statehood on 77% of Palestine. As a result of the surrounding Arab nations refusing to recognise Israel, the nation has had to fight a constant battle for survival and in that process the normal rule of law by both sides has been eroded. As Palestinians feel they need to resort to terrorism, the Israelis have increased their attacks on terrorist cells unfortunately resulting in civilian casualties and many displaced.

In a modern world it is hard to look at a situation which stems back on a religious basis for many years. As the situation in Northern Ireland has greatly improved thanks to diplomacy and negotiation, there is perhaps hope for this region. As George Bush, in his last year in power, seeks to carve a differing legacy in the region to his current Iraq linked one, hopefully both sides will be willing to compromise and listen. It would be naïve to point the finger of blame but what is a moral goal for our generation is the human rights issue on both sides and addressing the belief of using terrorism by many young people in the region to get their voices heard.

## ISRAELI / PALESTINIAN CONFLICT - TIMELINE

**May 14, 1948**

Israel declared its independency.  
The State of Israel is created

**1964**

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is created

**1967**

The Six Days War began:  
Palestinian land is seized by Israel

**1973**

Yom Kippur War: Israel is attacked

by a coalition of Arab states

**1987-1993**

The outbreak of the First Intifada:  
popular Palestinian resistance to  
the Israeli occupation

**1993**

Israel and the PLO sign the Oslo  
Accords in renewed peace efforts

**2000**

A new wave of violence; the  
Second Intifada begins

**2004**

Death of the Palestine leader  
Yasser Arafat leads to greater  
uncertainty

**2005**

Israel announced plans to build a  
new fence around the Gaza Strip

**2008**

The war is ongoing and no peace  
agreement has so far been  
successful