

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1967 WAR

50 years of religious freedom in Jerusalem

Although the Jewish people won independence in Israel during the 1948 War, their holiest city – Jerusalem – remained divided by mine fields and barbed wire. For nearly twenty years the eastern part of the city was occupied by Jordan, which destroyed over 50 synagogues, barred Jews from their holy sites, and restricted access for Christians. Israel's victory in the [1967 War](#) led to the reunification of Jerusalem, and religious freedom for Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike.

From 1949-1967, Jordan denied or heavily restricted religious freedom in Jerusalem.

- Jordan captured Jerusalem's Old City in 1948, and expelled all of its Jews. They later destroyed and looted over 50 Jewish synagogues, turning many into animal stalls and latrines. For the first time in over a thousand years, Jews were barred from living near and praying at their holiest sites.¹
- Jordan also restricted Christian access to holy places, imposed strict controls over Christian schools, and prohibited Christian institutions from buying real estate in Jerusalem.²

Since 1967, Israel has ensured religious freedom for all in the holy city.

- Israel's reunification of Jerusalem meant that Jews could finally access their holy sites again.
- As a democracy, Israel was determined to protect the rights of Christians and Muslims as well. After reunifying the city, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan said that, "their full freedom and all their religious rights will be preserved. We did not come to Jerusalem to conquer the Holy Places of others."³
- Israel's 1967 Protection of Holy Sites Law "safeguards the holy sites of all religious groups including in Jerusalem".⁴
- Seeking to reduce the religious dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel granted Islamic religious authorities jurisdiction over the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, which is also The Temple Mount – Judaism's holiest site. This is the one place in Jerusalem where it is illegal for Jews and Christians to openly pray.⁵
- Today there are over 50 churches and 33 mosques operating freely in Jerusalem. Access is only restricted when there are specific threats to the security and wellbeing of people of all faiths.

Peacemaking efforts have been undermined by continuous attempts deny Jewish ties to their holy sites in Jerusalem.

- Palestinian leaders and foreign organizations like UNESCO continue to publicly deny or erase Jewish history, identity, and rights in the holy city. In doing so, they undermine efforts to negotiate a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians, and ultimately harm both peoples.

¹ British Israel Communications and Research Centre, "BICOM Briefing: History and politics of Jerusalem," May 2017, at <http://www.bicom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Jerusalem-factsheet-19-May-with-map-1.pdf>; Jewish Virtual Library, "History of Jerusalem: Jordan's Desecration of Jerusalem," at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jordan-s-desecration-of-jerusalem-1948-1967>

² Mitchell G. Bard, "Myths and Facts," American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2017, at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/images/mf2017.pdf#page=221>; Van De Vyer, J.D., and John Witte, Jr. Religious human rights in global perspective. The Hague: Nijhoff Publ., 1996. Pg.380

³ Shragai, Nadav. "The Israeli Relinquishment of the Temple Mount." Jerusalem Center For Public Affairs. Accessed March 30, 2017. <http://jcpa.org/al-aksa-is-in-danger-libel-temple-mount/>

⁴ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Israel and the Occupied Territories," State Department, September 13, 2011, at https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168266.htm

⁵ Ibid.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1967 WAR

50 years of missed opportunities for peace

In 1967 Israel took control of the Sinai Desert, Golan Heights, West Bank, and Gaza in a war of self-defense. In response, the UN adopted Resolution 242, calling on Israel to withdraw from territory in return for secure borders and peace with its neighbors. Israel agreed to this formula and has sought compromise on the basis of “land for peace” for 50 years. Unfortunately, Palestinian leaders have missed every opportunity to end the conflict.

Israel initially offered to return land to the Arab states, in exchange for peace.

- Weeks after the war, Israel’s government voted unanimously to return the Sinai to Egypt and the Golan Heights to Syria for peace. The Arab League responded with its infamous Khartoum resolution: no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations.⁶
- In 1968 Israel offered much of the West Bank and Gaza to Jordan in secret negotiations, but was again rejected. Before 1967, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) specifically excluded these areas from its territorial demands. After the ‘67 war, this began to change.⁷
- Israel and Egypt made peace in 1979, as Israel returned the Sinai and removed Israeli settlements from the area. Unfortunately, the PLO did not follow suit. They continued to commit terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians and call for Israel’s destruction.⁸

The 1993 Oslo Accords signed by Israel and the PLO seemed like a major breakthrough.

- Optimism was in the air. Israel withdrew from parts of the West Bank and Gaza, and the Palestinian Authority (PA) was created to govern 98% of the Palestinians in these areas. Jordan also gave up its claim to these territories and in 1994 became the second Arab state to make peace with Israel.
- Suicide bombings and incitement against Israelis by Palestinian leaders and terrorist groups undermined Israeli support for the peace process, leading to delays in its implementation.

Israel made major peace offers in 2000 and 2008, but Palestinian leaders said no.

- In 2000 Israeli PM Ehud Barak agreed to withdraw from Gaza and 97% of the West Bank, dismantle numerous settlements, and allow East Jerusalem to become the capital of a Palestinian state. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said no and launched a brutal campaign of terrorism against Israeli civilians instead. US President Bill Clinton called this, “a colossal historic blunder.”⁹
- In 2008 Israeli PM Ehud Olmert offered to give the Palestinians virtually all of the West Bank and Gaza for a Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said no and made no counteroffer.¹⁰
- In 2014 and 2016 Palestinian leaders rejected outlines of a peace agreement presented by the US. In 2016 their stated reason was, “it is not possible for us... to recognize a Jewish state.”¹¹

⁶ Bruno Brasilio Rissi, et al, Long Lasting Peaces, at <https://books.google.com/books?id=-ETKCGAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>; League of Arab States, “LAS 1967 Khartoum resolution, 1 September 1967” UNISPAL, September 1, 1967, at <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/1FF0BF3DDEB703A785257110007719E7>

⁷ Reuven Pedatzur, “The Jordanian Option, the Plan That Refuses to Die,” *Haaretz*, July 25th, 2007, at <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/the-jordanian-option-the-plan-that-refuses-to-die-1.226164>; Jewish Virtual Library, “Palestine Liberation Organization: The Original Palestine National Charter,” 1964, at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-original-palestine-national-charter-1964>

⁸ David Remnick, “The Old Man,” *The New Yorker*, November 22nd, 2004, at <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/11/22/the-old-man-3>

⁹ Jonathan Lis, “Clinton: Arafat Made Colossal Blunder’ Over Camp David Offer,” *Haaretz*, November 13th, 2005, at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/clinton-arafat-made-colossal-blunder-over-camp-david-offer-1.173943>

¹⁰ The Tower, “Abbas Admits For the First Time That He Turned Down Peace Offer in 2008,” *The Tower*, November 17th, 2015, at <http://www.thetower.org/2580-breaking-abbas-admits-for-the-first-time-that-he-turned-down-peace-offer-in-2008/>

¹¹ Ben Birnbaum and Amir Tibon, “The Explosive, Inside Story of How John Kerry Built an Israel-Palestine Peace Plan – and Watched It Crumble,” *New Republic*, July 20th, 2014, at <https://newrepublic.com/article/118751/how-israel-palestine-peace-deal-died>; Adam Rasgon, “Palestinians not thrilled with Kerry either,” *Jerusalem Post*, December 30th, 2016, at <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/ANALYSIS-Palestinians-not-thrilled-with-Kerry-either-476962>