

# The Palestinian Issue

## *Historical Background & Contemporary Developments*



**Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh**



Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations

# The Palestinian Issue

## *Historical Background & Contemporary Developments*

**Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh**

**English Version**

**Translated by**

Mr. Karim Traboulsi

Ms. Marilyn Chbeir

**Language Editing by**

Ms. Rana Sa'adah

**Reviewed by**

Mr. Tom Charles



**Al-Zaytouna Centre  
For Studies & Consultations  
Beirut - Lebanon**

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	3
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	5
<b>Introduction</b> .....	7
<b>Chapter One: Background of the Palestinian Issue Until 1918</b>	
<b>First:</b> Palestine .....	11
<b>Second:</b> Palestine’s Religious Status: .....	13
1. Palestine’s Islamic Status .....	13
2. Palestine’s Christian Status .....	15
3. Palestine’s Jewish Status .....	16
<b>Third:</b> Palestine Throughout History .....	17
<b>Fourth:</b> Palestine in the Islamic Era .....	20
<b>Fifth:</b> The Religious and Historical Claims of the Jews in Palestine .....	25
<b>Sixth:</b> Background of the Emergence of the Palestinian Issue in Modern History .....	27
<b>Seventh:</b> The Political Development of the Palestinian Issue Until 1914 .....	30
<b>Eighth:</b> The Palestinian Issue During WWI (1914–1918) .....	35
<b>Chapter Two: Palestine Under British Occupation 1918–1948</b>	
<b>Introduction</b> .....	45
<b>First:</b> Development of the Zionist Project .....	46
<b>Second:</b> The Emergence of the Palestinian National Movement: .....	48
The Palestinian National Movement 1918–1929 .....	49
The Palestinian National Movement 1929–1939 .....	51
<b>Third:</b> The Palestinian Revolt 1936–1939 .....	56
<b>Fourth:</b> Political Developments 1939–1947 .....	60
<b>Fifth:</b> The 1948 War and Its Repercussions .....	66
<b>Chapter Three: The Palestinian Issue 1949–1967</b>	
<b>Introduction</b> .....	77
<b>First:</b> The Arab States and Palestine .....	77
<b>Second:</b> Palestinian National Action .....	79
<b>Third:</b> The Birth of the Fatah Movement .....	83
<b>Fourth:</b> The Establishment of the PLO .....	86
<b>Fifth:</b> The June 1967 War and Its Repercussions .....	87



**Chapter Four: The Palestinian Issue 1967–1987**

**Introduction** .....93  
**First:** The Emergence of the Palestinian Identity .....93  
**Second:** The Armed Palestinian Struggle .....95  
**Third:** Arab States and the Palestinian Issue .....100  
**Fourth:** The Emergence of the Palestinian Islamist Trend .....104

**Chapter Five: The Palestinian Issue 1987–2000**

**Introduction** .....109  
**First:** The *Intifadah* .....109  
**Second:** The Inception of the Hamas Movement .....111  
**Third:** The PLO: From Armed Struggle to Peaceful Settlement .....115  
**Fourth:** The PA .....122  
**Fifth:** Israel .....124

**Chapter Six: The Palestinian Issue 2000–2013**

**Introduction** .....129  
**First:** The Aggression and the Resistance: .....130  
    1. *Al-Aqsa Intifadah* .....130  
    2. The Aggression and the Resistance 2006–2012 .....136  
**Second:** The Internal Palestinian Situation: .....140  
    1. The PA’s Course .....141  
    2. Hamas’ Control over GS, and Fatah’s over the PA in the WB .....149  
    3. Salam Fayyad’s Government .....153  
    4. The Caretaker Government in GS .....157  
    5. The PLO .....164  
    6. The National Reconciliation Path .....168  
**Third:** The Path to Peace Talks: .....178  
    1. The Geneva Accord .....180  
    2. The Arab Initiative .....182  
    3. The Road Map .....183  
    4. Unilateral Separation .....185  
    5. The Return Through Negotiations to the Palestinian State Option .....187  
    6. The One-State Option .....188  
**Fourth:** Jerusalem and the Status Quo .....189  
**Fifth:** The Separation Wall .....194  
**Sixth:** The Israeli State .....197

**Afterword** .....207  
**Index** .....213

## List of Abbreviations

CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GS	Gaza Strip
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ISA	Israel Security Agency (Shabak)
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PA	Palestinian Authority
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP–GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command
PIJ	Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PPP	Palestine People’s Party
PPSF	Palestinian Popular Struggle Front
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCOP	United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
US	United States of America
WB	West Bank
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II
WZO	World Zionist Organization

## Introduction

This study attempts to provide a general overview of the Palestinian issue through the main points of its historical background, thus allowing the reader to better grasp the overall picture and the intertwined factors pertaining to the issue, at any stage, and in a logical sequence, up to the current stage. Indeed we could have examined the Palestinian issue through the lens of themes such as the land, the people, the Zionist program, the resistance, etc., but we believe that such a division would be hard to tackle in a compact study, as it would provide only a general overview of each theme, but not of the overall themes together and in the same context.

This study is addressed to those wishing to become acquainted with the Palestinian issue, particularly those who have little time to read specialized and detailed studies. However, contemporary developments are assessed in detail in Chapter Six, to allow readers to become informed about many events, changes, and complex issues going on around them.

Naturally, this study was written with the belief that the people of Palestine are the rightful owners of their land, and that Palestine is an Arab and Islamic land. This study was developed by following rigorous academic standards, and—wherever possible—was worded in a simple language, with up-to-date information up to 2013, and far from any sensationalism.

This book is a revised and updated edition of the 2002 edition that was printed in Egypt, Kuwait and Malaysia, titled *The Palestinian Issue: Background and Developments Until 2001*.

**Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh**

# Chapter One

*Background of the Palestinian Issue  
Until 1918*

## Background of the Palestinian Issue Until 1918

### *First: Palestine*

Palestine is the name given to the southwestern part of *Bilad al-Sham* (i.e., Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon), located in western Asia, on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. Palestine has a significant strategic location, as it is considered to act as a bridge between Asia and Africa, and as the meeting point of these two wings of the Islamic world.

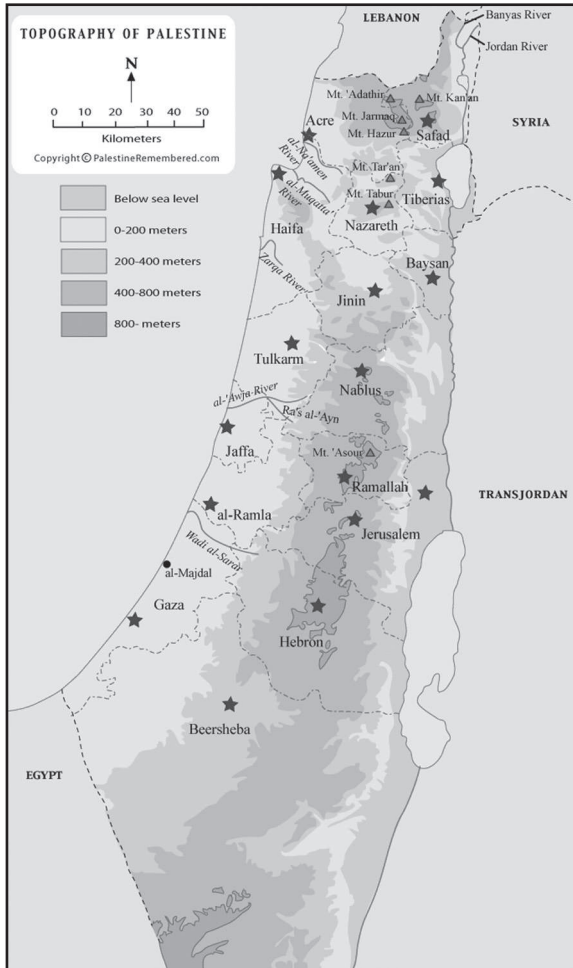
Man has inhabited the land of Palestine since time immemorial, as is evidenced by various excavations and archaeological finds. It is where the first human developments took place, from pastures to agriculture. According to archeologists, Jericho, located in northeastern Palestine, was the first city that was ever built, around 8000 BC.

The oldest known name of this land is the Land of Canaan, since the first known people to have ever inhabited it were the Canaanites, who came from the Arabian Peninsula around 2500 BC. The name Palestine is derived from the Sea Peoples, who possibly came from west Asia Minor and the Aegean Sea around the twelfth century BC. Their name appears in Egyptian engravings as P L S T, and the N was perhaps added later for plural. They lived in the coastal areas and they quickly mingled with the Canaanites, thus leaving no remarkable trace other than giving their name to the land.<sup>1</sup>

As for the land of Palestine, its recognized geographical borders were only defined during the British occupation of Palestine, particularly in 1920–1923. In fact, Palestine's borders have widening and narrowed throughout history, but have generally covered the land situated between the Mediterranean Sea, the Dead Sea and the Jordan River. In the Islamic period, the *Bilad al-Sham* was divided into *ajnad* (singular *jund* or part), and the Palestine *jund* extended from Rafah on the border with Sinai in Egypt to al-Lajjun village located 18 km northwest of Jenin city. But regardless of the divisions made during the various



Islamic eras, Palestine remained part of *Bilad al-Sham*. Such divisions never changed the sentiment of its inhabitants that they belonged to the same Muslim *Ummah* (Nation), while their allegiance to the ruling power did not waver as long as it was Muslim. In any case, Palestine has a surface area of 27,009 km<sup>2</sup> according to contemporary divisions.<sup>2</sup>



Palestine enjoys the moderate climate of the Mediterranean Sea, which is conducive to stability and productivity. It can be divided into three main sections: the coastal plain, the central mountain range, and the Jordan Rift Valley. Most of the Palestinians live on the coastal plain where the ports are located, as well as the centers of trade and economic and agricultural activity. The central mountain range encompasses the Galilee, Nablus, Hebron, and the Negev plateau, with its highest peak being Mount Meron North of Palestine, at 1,207 meters. Palestinian

peasants have lived in these mountains for thousands of years, planting grains, fruits, and vegetables, and breeding cattle. The Jordan Rift Valley, where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea, is considered to be the lowest land elevation (400 meters below sea level) on Earth. It is characterized by its warm climate all year round, and is known for producing palm trees, bananas and vegetables.

## *Second: Palestine's Religious Status*

### **1. Palestine's Islamic Status**

Palestine has a great importance in the eyes of the followers of heavenly religions (i.e., Islam, Christianity and Judaism), who consist around 55% of the world population.

The land of Palestine has a privileged position in the hearts of Muslims, since:

- It is a sacred land according to the Holy Qur'an: *"O my people! Enter the holy land which Allah hath assigned unto you."*<sup>3</sup>
- It is a blessed land according to the Holy Qur'an: *"Glory to ((Allah)) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque [al-Aqsa Mosque], whose precincts We did bless,"*<sup>4</sup> and *"(It was Our power that made) the violent (unruly) wind flow (tamely) for Solomon, to his order, to the land which We had blessed: for We do know all things."*<sup>5</sup>



#### **• Palestine's Location in the Muslim World**

- It is the site of the holy *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the first *Qiblah* [the direction Muslims face when performing their prayers] for Muslims and the third holiest mosque in Islam to which pilgrimage is encouraged, and where prayer is considered to equal 500 prayers in other mosques. In the words of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), *"Do not undertake journey but to three*