



Gandhi's Stance on Jewish Nation-State in Palestine

For Prelims: [Mahatma Gandhi](#), [Israel-Palestine Conflict](#), [Balfour Declaration](#)

For Mains: Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, India's stand and Solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict

Source: [IE](#)

Why in News?

The opposition of [Mahatma Gandhi](#) to a **Jewish nation-state in Palestine** has gained renewed attention because of ongoing conflict and tensions between [Israel and Palestine](#).

Why did Gandhi Oppose a Jewish Nation-State in Palestine?

- **The Plight of the Jewish People in Europe:**
 - In the 1930s and 1940s, the **Jewish people in Europe faced extreme persecution and discrimination**, particularly under the [Nazi regime](#) led by Adolf Hitler.
 - The Nazis systematically implemented the Holocaust, resulting in the **tragic loss of approximately six million Jewish lives**, along with numerous other atrocities such as concentration camps, and mass deportations.
- **Gandhi's Sympathy for the Jewish People:**
 - Gandhi had immense sympathy for the Jewish people who had been historically persecuted for their religion.
 - He drew parallels between the treatment of Jews in Europe and **that of [untouchables in India](#)**, emphasizing the **inhumane treatment meted out to both communities**.
 - Gandhi was deeply concerned about the German persecution of Jews and believed that even a war with Germany would be justified to prevent such persecution.
- **The Zionist Movement and Its Goals:**
 - The Zionist movement emerged in the late 19th century, with a goal to establish a **national homeland for Jewish people in Palestine**.
 - Its momentum increased significantly after [World War I](#), encouraged by the [Balfour Declaration of 1917](#), which expressed **support for a Jewish national home in Palestine**.
 - After [World War II](#), in 1947, the [United Nations](#) proposed a partition plan that would divide **Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states**, with Jerusalem as an international city.
 - The plan was accepted by the Jewish leaders but rejected by Arab leaders, leading to violence.
 - Israel was officially declared an independent state on May 14, 1948.
- **Gandhi's Opposition to a Jewish Nation-State:**
 - Gandhi opposed a Jewish nation-state in Palestine, deeming it **wrong and inhumane**. He believed it would be a **crime against humanity** to displace the native Arab population for

the establishment of a Jewish homeland.

- Gandhi felt that the Jews could settle in Palestine only **“with the goodwill of Arabs”**, and for that, they had to **“forgo the British bayonet”**.
- He believed that any religious act, such as **Jews returning to Palestine**, should not be enforced with the bayonet or bomb but should occur with the goodwill of Arabs.
- Gandhi believed that the concept of a Jewish homeland in Palestine contradicted the fight for Jewish rights worldwide. He questioned whether **Jews, who had already settled in various parts** of the world, **would welcome the idea of being forced to leave** those other regions **if Palestine was their sole home**.

How did Gandhi's Stance Influence India's Israel-Palestine Policy?

- Gandhi's opinions and his own anti-imperialism had a profound impact on [Jawaharlal Nehru](#), **India's first Prime Minister**, and was responsible for shaping the nascent country's foreign policy for decades, leading to **India's vote against UN Resolution 181 partitioning Palestine**.
- India recognized the state of Israel in 1950 but established official diplomatic relations in 1992, under Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao.
- India was among the first non-Arab nations to acknowledge the **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)** as the sole Palestinian representative. In 1988, India recognized Palestine as a state.
- However, India's policy also underwent some changes over time, reflecting its strategic and economic interests.
 - Recently, India has shifted towards a [dehyphenation policy](#), balancing its relationships with both Israel and Palestine, with a preference for a [Two-State Solution](#) and the right to self-determination for both nations in a peaceful manner.

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ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a long-standing geopolitical dispute over territory and self-determination in the Middle East.

BEGINNING

- UN adopted **Resolution 181** - the Partition Plan in 1947
- State of Israel created in 1948, sparking the **first Arab-Israeli War** (Israel won)
 - Palestinians displaced
 - Division of territory into - State of Israel, West Bank and Gaza Strip

INITIAL TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS (1956-1979)

- Suez Crisis** and Israeli **invasion of Sinai Peninsula** in 1956
- Six-Day War (1967)** - Israel gained control over Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights

Controversy over Jerusalem as Capital

- Israel view:** Complete and united Jerusalem
- Palestinians view:** East Jerusalem future capital

- Yom Kippur War (1973)** - Surprise attack by Egypt and Syria
- Camp David Accords (1979)** b/w Egypt and Israel

Intifada (Arabic for 'shake off')

- First Intifada - 1987 to 1993**
 - Led to the foundation of Hamas (1987) - a Palestinian political party designated as a foreign terrorist org by US
 - Response - **Madrid Conference 1991** (chaired by the US and Russia)
- Second Intifada - 2000-2005**
- The latest escalation (2023) is being called the beginning of "Third Intifada"

OSLO ACCORDS (MEDIATED BY US)

- First (1993)**
 - Estd framework for **Palestinian self-governance** in West Bank and Gaza
 - Enabled mutual recognition between Israel and Palestine

Second (1995)

- Expanded on Oslo I Accords
- Mandated **complete Israeli withdrawal** from several cities and towns in **West Bank**

POST 2000 CONFLICT AND RESPONSES

- 2013** - US-led peace process began
- 2014-18** - Gaza Conflict (2014)
 - Palestine announced break from territorial divisions under Oslo Accords (2015)
- 2018-20** - US Cancelled funding for Palestinian refugees under UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)
 - US proposed "**Peace to Prosperity**" plan
- 2020 - Abraham Accords**
- 2022-2023:**
 - Israel raids on **Jenin refugee camp**
 - Hamas launched "**Operation AL-Aqsa Flood**" and Israel launched "Operation Iron Swords" (both in 2023)
 - Israel declared a **State of War**
 - India's Stand:**
 - Supports a **Two State solution** for Israel and Palestine
 - Condemned the recent attack** by Hamas on Israel



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q1. Consider the following statements: (2023)

Statement-I: Israel has established diplomatic relations with some Arab States.

Statement-II: The 'Arab Peace Initiative' mediated by Saudi Arabia was signed by Israel and Arab League.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

(a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I

(b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for

Statement-I

(c) Statement-I is correct, but Statement-II is incorrect

(d) Statement-I is incorrect, but Statement-II is correct

Ans: (c)

Q2. The term “two-state solution” is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of (2018)

(a) China

(b) Israel

(c) Iraq

(d) Yemen

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. ‘Too little cash, too much politics, leaves UNESCO fighting for life.’ Discuss the statement in the light of US’ withdrawal and its accusation of the cultural body as being ‘anti-Israel bias’. **(2019)**

Q. “India’s relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back.” Discuss. **(2018)**

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