

Monday 2nd August

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

On 10th May this year, fighting between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza began after weeks of rising Israeli-Palestinian tension in East Jerusalem, that culminated in clashes at al-Aqsa, a holy site revered by both Muslims and Jews. Hamas began firing rockets after warning Israel to withdraw from the site, triggering retaliatory air strikes. A ceasefire ended 11 days of fighting. More than 250 people were killed, most of them in Gaza. Tensions remain high.



It can be helpful to remind ourselves of the background to this conflict. Many Jews were forced from their homeland by the Romans when the Roman Empire ruled this area. In the intervening years, Arab-speaking Muslims, called Palestinians became the dominant ethnic group. In the 1930's, the Great Arab Revolt took place against the British who ruled Palestine after 1918 and the growing Jewish population in Palestine. The British quelled the revolt with the help of Jewish fighters. In 1948 the British left and the Jews in Palestine declared the independence of the new State of Israel. Other Middle Eastern countries invaded to help the Palestinian Arabs, but they lost the war and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled and moved to neighbouring Arab nations to live as refugees.

Two parts of old Palestine did not become part of Israel; Gaza, which was controlled by Egypt, and the West Bank, controlled by Jordan. In the 1950's and 1960's, Palestinians conducted cross-border raids into Israel, often with the aid of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. In 1967, after the Six Day War, Israel occupied these areas and Israeli troops stayed there for years. Israelis hoped they might exchange land won, for Arab countries' recognising Israel's right to exist and an end to the fighting. Israel left Gaza in 2005, but shortly afterwards an extremist group called Hamas won elections and took control there. It refuses to recognise Israel as a country and wants Palestinians to be able to return to their old homes.

The dispute over land and borders continues. The Israelis believe they are entitled to the land of Israel, while the Palestinians believe the same and both refuse to give it up.

A 'two-state solution' to the decades-old conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is the declared goal of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders and the international community. This would be a final settlement that would see the creation of an independent state of Palestine within pre-1967 ceasefire lines in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, living peacefully alongside Israel. However, such a solution still seems a very long way off.

- Ask God for peace to come to this area and its people. Pray for reconciliation between the Jewish and Arab leaders. Pray that the leaders and government officials would have wisdom to lead well.
- Christian leaders from Palestinian backgrounds and Jewish backgrounds are praying together for peace. Pray onlookers will see Jesus through believers in Israel.

- Pray for this ceasefire to hold and for a breakthrough in talks in this seemingly impossible situation.

Source of some content: <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/violence-continues-in-the-holy-land-despite-gaza-ceasefire/>

Tuesday 3rd August

Peace and reconciliation and the need for more workers

Today let us proclaim God's Word over Israel and Palestine and, particularly that it would become real to all Muslim people living there.

In Psalm 91: 1-6 it says:

"Sing to the Lord a new song; Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendour and majesty are before Him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary."

Muslim people will not be able to sing a new song to the Lord unless they hear the truth about Him. More workers are needed in this region of the world with the good news of reconciliation, repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

In the worship song, *Send Me Out* by Steve Fee, the lyrics speak of a willingness to go out and proclaim the good news to all. You can listen to his song here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8ZGQPW7OXg>

- Pray that Muslims in Israel and Palestine will sing a new song to the Lord, because they have come to know of His mercy and grace.
- Pray for more people who are willing to go to this region of the world to be God's hands and feet, bringing words of life and hope and shining a light in these dark places.
- Pray that Muslims will yield all to follow Christ. In 2 Cor 5:15 it says; "and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

Wednesday 4th August

Hamas

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...” Matthew 5:43-44

In the Book of Jonah, we read how God sent Jonah to Nineveh to warn the people that God was going to destroy them because of their wickedness. Jonah did not want to go with this message and then when he finally obeyed God, he was displeased with Him because when the Ninevites repented, God did not bring on them the destruction he had promised. Jonah didn't think the Ninevites deserved God's mercy. They were a brutal people, killing and torturing those in neighbouring countries. In the New Testament, Jesus commended the inhabitants of Nineveh for repenting at the preaching of Jonah.

Many probably view the members of Hamas in a similar way. Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni Islamist political organisation and militant group located in Gaza. It was founded in 1987 to liberate Palestine, including modern-day Israel, from Israeli occupation and to establish an Islamic state in the area that is now Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It governs Gaza independently of the Palestinian Authority.

Hamas' military wing known as the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, has conducted many anti-Israel attacks in both Israel and the Palestinian territories since the 1990s. This has been most notably through suicide bombings and rocket attacks. Hamas was alleged to have carried out three major military campaigns from Gaza against Israel in 2008, 2012 and 2014. It emerged from the 2008 and 2012 conflicts militarily reduced, but with renewed support among Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank for having confronted Israel and survived. Since 2014, violence has flared up from time to time, despite an informal Egyptian-brokered Hamas-Israel truce.

It is mercifully interesting to note that after the fall of Nineveh, the Assyrian people did not disappear, they were simply ruled by others. Assyrians were some of the first converts by the earlier church and they became a thriving Christian community sending missionaries throughout the eastern world. Today there is still an Assyrian Church with an amazing history and communities throughout the world.

While many countries see Hamas as a terrorist organisation, its supporters see it as a legitimate resistance movement. God sees it and its members with mercy and compassion. How wonderful it would be if Hamas also became a Christian community, sending out workers across the Muslim world!

- Pray for followers of Jesus to be like Jonah and bring God's message in the face of potential harm, knowing that Jesus has called them to difficult people and places.
- Pray for repentance amongst members of Hamas and for Jesus to be glorified among those who have committed themselves to this organisation.
- Pray for the Word of God to flood the Hamas group camps and for those who read and hear the words of God to have a deep desire to share it with others.

Sources of some content: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13331522> and <https://www.bible-history.com/biblestudy/nineveh.html>

Thursday 5th August

Palestine - West Bank and the Gaza Strip

Below is a Prayercast video clip of the territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, giving a good insight into these troubled places: <https://vimeo.com/81232380>

West of Syria and Jordan lie some of the most contested and contentious lands on earth, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The West Bank, formerly Judea and Samaria, is landlocked between Israel and Jordan and contains the northwest quarter of the Dead Sea. The Gaza Strip, located between Egypt and Israel, borders the Mediterranean Sea and has historically been a prime location for trade. It contains the city of Jericho, one of the oldest cities in the world.

Since the formation of the Israeli State in 1948, Palestinian life has been dominated by the ensuing issues and conflicts. As many as 10 million have emigrated due to the extremely poor living conditions and the instability of life. The population of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank numbers just over 5 million.

In Gaza, 70% of people live in great poverty and 80% depend on external aid. Only 17% of people have access to the available water resources.

Bethlehem, in the centre of the West Bank, has seen a major loss of Christian influence. From more than 70% being Christian in the mid-20th century, it is now less than 15% today. Throughout the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, military occupation and violent Islamist persecution have practically forced out the dwindling Christian minority, now down to less than 2%. Nearly 99% of Palestinians are unreached with the gospel. They include Palestinian Arabs who we will be praying for tomorrow.

After decades of suffering, oppression and displacement, a 'cry of hope' has risen in the form of the Kairos Palestine document, a historic document of 'faith and work' to build solidarity to make lasting change for all people.

- Pray for the Prince of Peace to bring about meaningful reconciliation between Jewish and Arab Muslim leaders.
- Pray for Christian leaders to live out the gospel boldly, in spite of attack and betrayal and to reach out to their Muslim neighbours.
- There is power and life in the blood of Jesus. Let's pray and proclaim it over Muslims in these territories, that they will accept Jesus and be set free. "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." John 8:36.

Source: <https://prayercast.com/gaza-strip-and-west-bank.html>

Friday 6th August

Palestinian Arabs

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

Palestinian Arabs are one of Frontiers' 100 Priority Peoples for prayer. They are known to be pleasant, generous and friendly. They place a high value on hospitality, and regardless of their financial situation will bestow a wonderful dinner upon their guests. They have traditional dances as well as poetry and music. The women are skilled in traditional Palestinian embroidery.



They have suffered greatly over the years. During the 1948 and 1967 wars between the Israelis and Arabs, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians left, or were forced out of their homes and moved to neighbouring countries to become refugees. Many live in camps in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

The vast majority of these Palestinians long for the same things that people everywhere desire: freedom, peace, economic opportunities, access to adequate health care and a good education for their children. While Palestinians are hard-working, many live in poverty and have few opportunities to change their situation. They are a people known for being fiercely loyal to their families and their faith.

Although most Palestinians living in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon have lived in those countries their entire lives, they are not recognised as citizens or given the same rights. Over 95% of Palestinian refugees are Sunni Muslim, but there is a growing Christian minority. Today, only 1.5 million Palestinians live in Israel and as we read yesterday, just over 5 million live in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

- Pray for Palestinians everywhere to have the opportunity to hear and respond to the good news and for entire Palestinian families to follow Christ, no matter the cost.
- Many Palestinians live as exiles around the world. Pray that they would experience Jesus in those places.
- Pray for Palestinian Muslim background believers to grow as mature disciples and reach out with the message of hope and forgiveness.

Source of most material: <https://www.cryoutnow.org/people-groups.html>

Saturday 7th August

Sometimes We Dance

A Frontiers field worker shares about life in a refugee camp in the Middle East, spontaneous all-women dance parties, and what it looks like to love Muslims.

“A teammate and I pop into the tent of Amira, a woman we know in the refugee camp where we run a learning centre. She greets me with a kiss on my left cheek, right cheek, left cheek, right cheek, then she hugs me with an extra left-cheek kiss to show her happiness.



Last year, a midwife and I visited Amira for prenatal appointments. While the midwife checked on her at her final appointment, I enjoyed watching her children show off the songs and facts they'd been learning at our centre.

Weeks later I visited Amira after her baby died during her Caesarean section. Today my teammate and I sit in her same tidy tent and drink sugary tea. Amira has eyeliner on. I tell her how her blue ankle-length dress and darker-coloured headscarf are good colours on

her. She jumps to her feet and happily tells us that she is going to a wedding later that night. Then she moves the small tea glasses and her children's bed to the side of the room, turns on Arab dancing music, and pulls us to our feet to dance with her.

Sometimes we thank God together in this little tent. Sometimes we beg Him for His intervention in her hard situations. Sometimes we clean up the tea that her children knock over while we try to visit. Sometimes we dance. Spontaneous all-women dance parties still catch me off guard here. But they happen frequently, and they're starting to really grow on me.

I try to forget about how hot it is in my long sleeves and ankle-length dress and leggings, or how I'm too insecure to dance. Instead, I try to think of the women inviting me to spontaneously dance—how they fled their home country due to war, how they are raising their children in a tent through the heat of summer and the cold of winter, how they don't experience a lot of the freedoms I enjoy. I want to do something for them, with them.

My visit gives them a good reason to shoo the men out of the tent for a while, drink tea, and tie colourful scarves around their waists and dance. They dance because they can. They dance because they learned how when they were little. They dance because it feels celebratory in a way that their reality is not.

I'm not always sure why they dance. But it's fun and free. These women inspire me. And dancing with them is one of the ways I can be beside them in their life journey and show them the love of Jesus Christ.”

- Praise God for the resilience of women around the world who continue to celebrate and embrace in spite of grief, trauma and injustice.
- Pray that Amira and Muslim women around the world will discover lasting hope in the message of Christ.
- Ask the Lord to open doors for Frontiers field workers to share deeply with Palestinian women and invite them to follow Jesus.