

Palestinians and Palestine

FICTION vs. FACT Israel & its Arab Neighbors

FICTION: Today's Palestinians are descended from the ancient Philistines and are indigenous to Palestine. Therefore, Jews are foreign occupiers who have stolen land from Palestinians to establish the Jewish State of Israel.

FACT: Palestinian Arabs who live in Israel and the disputed territories today are NOT descended from the Philistines referenced in the Hebrew Bible.

The Philistines were a tribal people who came from islands in the Aegean Sea and settled on Canaan's southern coast – today's Gaza. They were enemies of Israel throughout the period of Judges and Kings but were finally conquered by the Babylonians. By the late fifth century BCE, they ceased to exist as a distinct people group in historical and archaeological records.¹

Therefore, it is impossible for today's Palestinians to be descended from Philistines. They are in fact, Arabs.

FACT: There has never been a Palestinian people distinguishable from other Arabs by language, culture or religion.

Egyptian Yasser Arafat created the Palestinian identity in the 1960s to differentiate between Arabs living in Israel and disputed territories from those in the rest of the Arab world. This narrative gained momentum after the 1967 Six-Day War when Israel legally gained control of Gaza, Judea, and Samaria (also called the West Bank).²

Some Christians who self-identify as evangelical and Palestinian take their false identity one step further by claiming that Jesus was a Palestinian because according to the narrative, Palestinians – not Jews – are the indigenous people of the land. Of course, this assertion is in direct contradiction to the testimony of the Christian Testament and Roman records from the time.

FACT: Palestine has never been an established political entity with distinct borders.

Use of the term "Palestine" in reference to a political entity is historical revisionism, propagated to support the false claim that Jews are foreign occupiers who seek to replace indigenous Palestinians whose name comes from a geographical designation created by the Romans 100 years after the time of Jesus.

FACT: The Hebrew Bible mentions Israel as an identifiable physical location over one thousand times, whereas Palestine does not appear in either the Masoretic biblical text or the Septuagint.

A few specific verse references in the New Testament:

- Judah and Israel: (e.g., Matthew 2:20)
- Judea and Samaria (e.g., Acts 1:8)
- Galilee and Nazareth (e.g., Luke 2:4)
- Zion (e.g., John 12:15)
- Jerusalem (e.g., Luke 19:28, 41)

FACT: The Christian Testament does not reference Palestine, but refers to the following, historically Jewish, regions and cities:

- Jerusalem 146 times
- Capernaum 76 times
- Israel 73 times
- Galilee 64 times
- Judea 55 times
- Nazareth 23 times
- Zion 7 times

FACT: The land of Israel was first called Palestine in 135 CE, when the Roman occupiers renamed the Jewish province of Judea "Syria Palestina" following their defeat of the Jews during the Bar Kochba Revolt.³

Their purpose was to erase the connection of the Jews to their land by replacing its Jewish name with that of their ancient foes – the Philistines.⁴ Since the Roman period, Palestine has referred to the general geographic region south of Syria including land on both sides of the Jordan River and the biblical regions of Judea, Samaria and the Galilee.

Palestine has never referred to an established political entity with distinct borders, but to a broad territory without precise borders.



Yasser Arafat was an Egyptian-born Palestinian who co-founded Fatah. This political movement and terror sponsor joined the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which became one of two dominant parties in Palestinian politics.

Arafat was the PLO Chairman and President of the Palestinian Authority (PA) until his death in 2004.

He is considered the father of Palestine, but also the father of Palestinian terrorism.

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FACT: From 1516-1917, Palestine was part of the Damascus province under the Ottoman Empire. After the defeat of the Ottomans during World War I, the League of Nations assigned management of the territory of Palestine to the British.

In 1922, Transjordan was created from the eastern part of the British Mandate and this territory – which was to be exclusively Arab – became the nation of Jordan in 1946.

The remaining western part of the British Mandate (known as “Mandatory Palestine”) was intended for the establishment of a Jewish National Home in its ancestral homeland. Therefore, the “Palestine Post,” “Palestine Land Development Company,” and “Palestine Philharmonic” were established as Jewish institutions, as part of the effort to restore Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel...”⁵



Jewish residents, as well as all the institutions of Mandatory Palestine, were identified as Palestinian because the territory was known as Palestine.⁶

FACT: Because the Jews of Palestine were known as Palestinians, Arabs living in the land emphasized their distinct identity as Arabs. This continued after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 until Yasser Arafat created the Palestinian identity in the 1960s for the purpose of propagating the political agenda that promotes Palestinian Arabs as the indigenous people of the land.



Palestine Orchestra signage written in Hebrew

The PLO Charter in 1968⁷ used the definition of “Palestinian” to describe the “people of Palestine” as

- “part of the Arab nation.”
- “Arab nationals who were living permanently in Palestine until 1947.”
- “anyone born of a Palestinian father” after 1947, “whether within Palestine or outside it.”
- “Jews who were living permanently in Palestine until the beginning of the Zionist invasion.”

The term Palestinian is currently used to refer to Arabs:

- In Judea and Samaria (otherwise known as the West Bank)
- In the Gaza Strip (which is heavily Egyptian)⁸
- Who fled what became Israel in 1948 (and their descendants wherever they were born)
- Who live in Israel
- Who make up most of the population of Jordan⁹

The people who identify as Palestinian today are NOT distinguishable from other Arabs by language, culture or religion. Before Yassar Arafat’s creation of the Palestinian identity in the 1960s, the Arabs who lived in Mandatory Palestine and the early State of Israel maintained their Arab identity. It has only been since the formation of the PLO that a false Palestinian identity has been promoted for the purpose of delegitimizing the existence of the Jewish State.

PLO Charter - 1968

Article 21: The Arab Palestinian people, expressing themselves by the armed Palestinian revolution, reject all solutions which are substitutes for the total liberation of Palestine and reject all proposals aiming at the liquidation of the Palestinian problem, or its internationalization.

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