

What came first – Palestinian terrorism or Israeli ‘occupation?’ - opinion

Our closest Arab neighbors repeatedly state that terrorism will end only when the “occupation” ends. Despite this claim, they continue to deny Israel’s basic right to exist.

By [WALTER BINGHAM](#)

MAY 14, 2024 02:45

In Arab circles, the question is taboo. Representatives from the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Arab press generally base any discussion on the false premise that the State of Israel has no right to exist in the Middle East, that its presence in the area is a result of the Holocaust, and the Jews have no historic claim to this land. They are “occupiers,” and the violence will cease only when the “occupation” is ended. That is the position of our Arab neighbors.

Let us look at some relatively recent history. This holy land was ruled for 402 years by the Ottoman Turks. It was in 1916, during World War I, when the question arose among the Triple Entente – Russia, Britain, and France – of what would happen to the Ottoman territories if the war led to the disintegration of “the sick man of Europe,” the Ottoman Empire.

As a result, the British and French entered into the Sykes–Picot Agreement, which was to determine the post-war partition of some Middle East lands. Named after its chief negotiators, Mark Sykes of Britain and George Picot of France, it effectively divided the Ottoman provinces outside the Arabian Peninsula into areas of British and French control.

The war ended in 1918 and led to the formation of the League of Nations in 1920, whose purpose was to prevent future wars in Europe. They assigned mandates to govern the ex-Ottoman areas in the Middle East, and ratified the Sykes-Picot Line with alternations, giving Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq to France, and to the British the mandate over Palestine, the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, later adding Transjordan.

The objective of the mandates over former territories of the Ottoman Empire was to provide “administrative advice and assistance” by the mandatory power until such time as they would be able to stand alone.

In Palestine, the mandate required Britain to put into effect the Balfour Declaration, facilitating a “national home for the Jewish people” alongside the [Palestinian Arabs](#).

What more can Israel do to attempt to keep the peace?

That brings us back to the question with which we started. Our closest Arab neighbors, who share the Land of Israel with us, stated that the violence will cease only when the “occupation” ends. Despite this claim, it should be recalled, the extremist Palestinian rejectionist factions repeatedly declared that even if Israel withdrew from Gaza and the West Bank, they would continue their attacks because they refute Israel’s basic right to exist.

It was in August 2005 that [the Israeli government](#) led by Ariel Sharon ordered the complete evacuation of all Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip. Even our dead were exhumed and taken to the mainland. All the infrastructure and agricultural installations were handed over in perfect order to the PA. It was their golden opportunity to establish a viable Palestinian entity. The international community applauded the move and pledged to support the fledgling entity.

A general election in 2006 dismissed the corrupt PA and, in its place, brought the extremist Hamas to power. After what became known as the Battle of Gaza in June 2007, Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip. From then on, millions of dollars of aid money flowed into the Strip, which Hamas diverted to build up a military infrastructure, while the populace was deprived of any benefit unless they became Hamas members.

The result was October 7, 2023. Eighteen years after the end of the “occupation” of Gaza, Hamas terrorists perpetrated the largest atrocity on the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

Until then, the UN, the EU, and the rest of the world chose to ignore Hamas terrorist activities, despite Israel's repeated warnings. More importantly, the basic premise of the Palestinian claim that the "occupation" causes terrorism is historically flawed. [Arab terrorism against Israel](#) existed prior to Israeli control over the West Bank and Gaza as a result of the Six Day War of June 1967, and even prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948.

Let us examine the facts researched and compiled by the now defunct Israel Information Center, which wrote that Arab terrorism was rampant during the wave of anti-Jewish riots in 1920-21, including the brutal murder in Jaffa of prominent Jewish author Yosef Haim Brenner. It was also rampant during the riots in 1929, which included the massacre of the Jewish community in Hebron, and the Arab Revolt of 1936-39, and in many other recorded incidents of wholesale anti-Jewish Arab violence throughout the pre-state period.

On the eve of the UN Partition in November 1947, the terrorism campaign was stepped up, leading to the joint Arab invasion of Israel in 1948-9 and the delineation of the boundaries of the newly established State of Israel. After the War of Independence, Arab terrorism expanded, and in 1952 there were about 30,000 incidents of cross-border violence, ranging from the destruction of property to the brutal murder of civilians. I have a list of 60 documented cases of Arab terrorism, all occurring prior to the Israeli administration of the West Bank and Gaza that began in 1967. Therefore, the oft-repeated Arab claim that the Israeli "occupation" is the cause for Palestinian terrorism is nothing more than an empty retort, repudiated by the facts and disproved by more than a century of historical reality. ■

Walter Bingham, now in his 101st year of life, holds Guinness World Records as the world's oldest working journalist and the oldest active radio host.