

# Israel

## Country Overview



**Language:** Hebrew, Arabic, & English

**Religion:** Judaism (75%) Islam (17.5%) & Christian (2%)

**Capital:** Jerusalem

**Currency:** Shekel

**Religion:** Judaism (75%) Islam (17.5%) & Christian (2%)

**Population:** 8.5 million: Ethnically Jewish (75%) Arab (20%)

**Government:** Parliamentary Democracy

**Willow Creek Partner:** Association of Baptist Churches

**Location:** Northern Israel

**Environment:** Urban

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## Conflict Overview

The conflict between Israeli's and Palestinian's has been going on since the region, known as Palestine, was apart of the Ottoman Empire. Starting in 1917 the region was run by the British Empire. When many thousands of European Jews started moving into the region to escape persecution, in a movement called Zionism, conflicts began to escalate. Due to this violence and the desire to create a peaceful land for the Jewish people, in 1947 the United Nations approved a plan to divide British Palestine into a land for Jews called Israel and a land for Arabs called Palestine. Jerusalem remained a special international zone. This plan was not implemented and was seen as a colonial theft by neighboring Arab leaders who invaded in 1948. Israeli forces won the 1948 war, but in doing so pushed beyond the UN-designated borders to claim land in what was designated Palestine, including Western Jerusalem. This conflict created around 700,000 refugees, whose descendants now number more than 7 million.

In 1948 this first major division ended with Israel in control of everything except the Gaza Strip, which was under Egypt control, and the West Bank, which was under Jordanian control. The borders of these territories have been disputed ever since. The second major division occurred in 1967 when another escalation lead to the Six-Day War, which Israel won and resulted in Israel putting the Gaza Strip and the West Bank under military occupation.

At a surface level, Palestinians want to live in a safe land that they believe they have the right to live in. Palestinians want to be free from military occupation and offered the same civil liberties and basic human rights that are given to Israeli citizens. Israel wants to have the state of Israel be a home for the Jewish people. They want to live safely, in a land they believe to be theirs, without fear of rockets, bombs, and other forms of violence, and in a land free of antisemitism.

**About Willow's Partner:** Association of Baptist Churches

This group seeks to empower Baptist Churches in Israel to influence their communities. The network contains 18 churches, which is the largest network of Evangelical churches in all of Israel. Specifically, they focus on encouraging churches to equip and care for women and children in their communities.