



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER


Prepared by the WDP Committee of Palestine

March 1, 2024

“I Beg You... Bear With One Another in Love”

Country Background Script

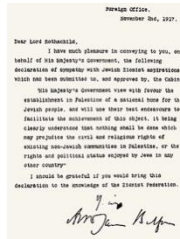
1. Background	Photo/Copyright
<p>Who among you has not heard of this tiny spot in the Middle East, that for over 3000 years has been significant to three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.</p> <p>However, the region is much older and has had many names, depending on the many tribes that have settled at different times in the land. The land has been nourished by an unfolding series of civilizations and structures because of its strategic position as a crossroad to three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe.</p>	<div data-bbox="673 510 909 684" data-label="Image"></div> <div data-bbox="669 686 920 720" data-label="Caption"><p>Sunset in Bethlehem</p></div> <div data-bbox="673 751 813 938" data-label="Image"></div> <div data-bbox="669 938 1104 974" data-label="Caption"><p>Historic map of Palestine from 1893</p></div> <div data-bbox="673 1003 823 1205" data-label="Image"></div> <div data-bbox="669 1205 933 1236" data-label="Caption"><p>A street in Bethlehem</p></div> <div data-bbox="673 1268 823 1470" data-label="Image"></div> <div data-bbox="669 1470 755 1503" data-label="Caption"><p>Camel</p></div> <div data-bbox="673 1535 881 1692" data-label="Image"></div> <div data-bbox="669 1692 1174 1726" data-label="Caption"><p>St. George's Monastery (Greek Orthodox)</p></div> <div data-bbox="673 1757 881 1915" data-label="Image"></div> <div data-bbox="669 1915 1110 1948" data-label="Caption"><p>Jerusalem street vendor selling bread</p></div>

2. Geographical location	Photo/Copyright
<p>The Gaza Strip, or simply Gaza, is located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, bordering Egypt and Israel. The total area of Gaza is 365 square kilometers (141 square miles), with over 2 million inhabitants.</p> <p>In 1967, when Israel occupied the Palestinian territories, Western powers called the region the West Bank, because it was on the west bank of the Jordan River. After the Oslo Accords of 1993-1995, the West Bank was divided into Areas A, B and C.</p> <p>One of the daily challenges that Palestinians face is the restriction of movement on their own land. In order to travel between any of the areas in the West Bank, Palestinians must go through checkpoints.</p>	 <p>Fishing boat in the Port of Gaza City © David Wildman</p>  <p>Sign on the beach in Gaza City © David Wildman</p>  <p>Olivewood nativity set with the Separation Wall in Bethlehem</p>  <p>© Nidal Atrash</p>  <p>Oslo II Map Outlining Areas A, B, and C</p> <p>Areas A, B, and C in the West Bank</p>  <p>Checkpoint 300 between Bethlehem and Jerusalem</p>
3. History	Photo/Copyright
<p>The region has witnessed the invasion of various powers throughout its history, including the Assyrians (8th century BCE), Babylonians (c. 601 BCE), Persians (539 BCE), Greeks (330s BCE), and Romans (63 BCE). Jesus was born during this era of Roman rule and was crucified by an unholy alliance between political and religious</p>	 <p>Jerusalem</p>

authorities.

In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire invaded and ruled the region until the end of World War I.

In the middle of World War I, a letter was sent from Lord Arthur James Balfour (the British foreign secretary) to Lionel Walter Rothschild (a leader of the Anglo-Jewish community). This letter became known as The Balfour Declaration of 1917, and declared the British consent for a national home for the Jews in Palestine. However, the letter clearly stated that the rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine should be respected.



Balfour Declaration of 1917



The Separation Wall surrounding Bethlehem



“We Refuse to be Enemies” sign at the Tent of Nations

Support for the creation of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine increased after the end of World War II, largely because of the Holocaust. When the British announced they were leaving, the United Nations adopted the Partition Plan of 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, which called for the creation of 2 independent states (Palestine and Israel), as well as a special international status for the city of Jerusalem. Although the UN spoke about two states, until today, no sovereign Palestinian state exists.



Display at the United Nations in 2018









Jerusalem



Palestinians in the West Bank are cut off from Rachel’s Tomb by the Separation Wall

Tensions between Israel and its neighbors escalated, and in June 1967, Israel launched a pre-emptive attack. The impact of this Six-Day War was dramatic, and the effects are still felt today. Palestinians call this war the Naksa, or the “setback.” In only six days, the Israeli military seized the

<p>Sinai and the Golan Heights, as well as occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.</p> <p>The 4 maps show the loss of Palestinian land from 1946-2000.</p>	 <p>4 maps showing the loss of Palestinian land from 1946-2000</p>
<p>As of July 31, 2019, 138 of the 193 United Nations member states have recognized Palestine as a state, and the Palestinian flag now flies outside of the United Nations.</p>	 <p>Palestinian flag outside of the United Nations</p>
<p>4. Population</p> <p>It is estimated that there are over 5 million Palestinians living today in Palestine and Israel. 2% of these Palestinians are Christian, among a majority of Palestinian Muslims. The total number of Palestinians around the world amounts to over 12 million in countries as far as the United States, Canada, Brazil, Chile and Honduras.</p>	<p>Photo/Copyright</p>  <p>© Nidal Atrash</p>  <p>Palestinian flags</p>  <p>Palestinian embroidery</p>  <p>The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic, Bethlehem</p>

5. Biblical Sites

Photo/Copyright

Historic Palestine includes Bethlehem (where Jesus was born), Nazareth (where Jesus spent his childhood), the River Jordan (where Jesus was baptized), and Jerusalem (where Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead). The Mediterranean Sea lies to the west of historic Palestine, where Paul and the apostles traveled on missionary journeys to spread the good news of Jesus the Christ.



Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem



Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem © Nidal Atrash



Donkey on the road to Jericho



Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem © Nidal Atrash



Garden Tomb in Jerusalem



Room of the Last Supper, Jerusalem

6. Christianity

Photo/Copyright

In the land from which Christianity spread and different denominations were formed, one can find all forms of Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches.

Jerusalem is the seat of 13 historically recognized churches in the Holy Land and beyond. 75% of Palestinian Christians are from the Greek Orthodox Church. The other churches are: Apostolic Armenian Church, the Roman Catholic (Latin) Church, the Greek Catholic Melkite Church, the Assyrian Orthodox Church, the Assyrian Catholic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church, the Coptic Church, the Ethiopian Church, the Franciscan Custodians of the Holy Land, and the Maronite Church. There is also a Baptist, Presbyterian, and United Methodist presence in Palestine.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem



1 Chronicles 4:10 in Palestinian embroidery



Church of All Nations at the Garden of Gethsemane, Jerusalem



The Church of Saint Porphyrius Greek Orthodox Church in Gaza City © David Wildman



Mural in Bethlehem



Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem



Nativity Church in Bethlehem © Nidal Atrash

7. Culture

Photo/Copyright

Arts and culture keep Palestinian heritage and memory alive. Poetry, visual art, embroidery, dabkeh (traditional folklore dancing), theater and cinema portray Palestinian life.



Handmade ceramics from Hebron






Oud instruments for sale in Jerusalem's Old City






Fabric for sale in Jerusalem Old City



Palestinian embroidery

8. Agriculture	Photo/Copyright
<p>The olive tree is a symbol of deep roots, longevity, and a sustainable livelihood. For this reason, we used the olive tree as a symbol throughout our worship service. Olives and olive oil have been used throughout the history of our region for medicinal purposes, healthy cooking, and to bless the foreheads of people.</p> <p>Another plant in Palestine is the cactus, which originally came from Latin America, but which has become an inseparable element of Palestine. This cactus, called the “prickly pear” bears delicious fruit.</p>	 <p>Olive tree in the garden of Gethsemane, Mount of Olives</p>  <p>Labneh with olive oil</p>  <p>Olive trees in Jerusalem</p>

9. Education	Photo/Copyright
<p>Palestinians place a high value on education, with 95.4% of children enrolled in basic education.</p> <p>There are three different systems of education for Palestinians: Israeli, Palestinian, and the UNRWA schools. Within the Israeli and Palestinian systems, there are public and private schools.</p> <p>Traditionally, most schools have separated boys and girls, but more recently, schools have become integrated.</p>	 <p>Classroom in Gaza © David Wildman</p>  <p>Palestinian Scout Band</p>  <p>Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children in Gaza © David Wildman</p>



Classroom in Gaza © David Wildman



Bethlehem Bible College



Image of children on Separation Wall surrounding Bethlehem

10. Women

Photo/Copyright

There is a perception/belief around the world that women in the Middle East region are passive, silent, and non-influential. However, the role of women in Palestine (both historically and in modern times) is active and influential. Palestinian women are steadfast, strong and courageous. They are active in tilling the land.

Although Palestinian women have played an influential role in society, there is still room for better conditions. An area that still needs further progress for women is in religious institutions. Recently, some Protestant churches have progressed on gender issues, such as ordaining Sally Azar as the first Palestinian female pastor in Palestine.



Mural at Tent of Nations



Mural of Shireen Abu Akleh on Separation Wall surrounding Bethlehem



UNRWA related Women's Center in Gaza © David Wildman



Clergy from around the world at Sally Azar's ordination © Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)



Sally Azar's Ordination © Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)



History of Female Clergy in the Middle East

Many Palestinian women have become prominent figures in society. Some examples are: Dr. Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi (lecturer at Birzeit University, chief peace negotiator and member of Palestinian Government) and Dr. Vera Baboun (lecturer at Bethlehem University, first female mayor of Bethlehem).



Sketches of women at the Women's Programme Center in Gaza © David Wildman



Rose in Jerusalem

11. World Day of Prayer

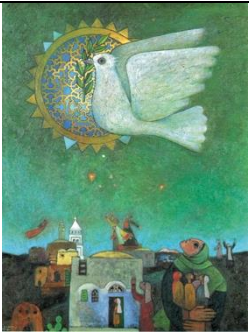

Photo/Copyright

The international World Day of Prayer movement reached Palestine in the 1950s. Some of women who brought the movement to Palestine were the wives of clergy of various denominations.



Women from WDP Palestine

Aida Haddad, the wife of the first local Lutheran Bishop (Daoud Haddad), got involved. She started by participating as a young reader in worship services, and eventually rose to the position of World Day of Prayer coordinator. In 1993, Aida Haddad was the first Palestinian woman to be elected to

<p>serve on the World Day of Prayer Executive Committee.</p>	
<p>Palestine was chosen to write the worship service in 1994, with the theme “Come, See and Act.”</p> <p>Palestine’s involvement with the World Day of Prayer movement has allowed Palestinian women to build bridges with over 100 countries around the world. This has strengthened the Middle East presence and witness. After thirty years, Palestine has been invited once again to write the resource materials for 2024.</p>	 <p>Artwork from 1994 World Day of Prayer service, written by WDP Palestine</p>
<p>12. The Artist and Artwork</p>	<p>Photo/Copyright</p>
<p>The artist represents three Palestinian women praying together in nature in a peaceful place.</p> <p>Olive trees/ branches are a sign of everlasting and abundant life because they can live for thousands of years.</p> <p>The golden roots are underlining the fact that the Palestinians will always exist and as they exist, they will always resist for their rights and freedom.</p> <p>Poppy flowers remind Palestinians of loved ones who have given their lives for their country.</p> <p>Also featured, Traditional Palestinian dresses like the tatreez (embroidery) thobe (dress) or the white scarf.</p>	 <p>Artwork by Halima Aziz, created especially for the 2024 World Day of Prayer service</p>
<p>Halima Aziz (b.1999 in Hagen, Germany) is a passionate Palestinian visual artist and design student based in Germany. Her Mum is from Tulkarm and her Dad is from Gaza. She spent her childhood in Palestine.</p> <p>She was interested in art from an</p>	

early age and has always enjoyed painting. She started painting professionally in 2017 while participating in an art school project.

“I believe that through my artworks and other talented Palestinian artists artworks, people will understand more clearly how we Palestinians feel and what we have to go through. Everyone should care about it because it’s a human right issue. I hope and believe that one day Palestine will be free and that we will be able to peacefully return back to our homes and our families.“

-Halima Aziz



Halima Aziz, artist commissioned by WDP Palestine to create the 2024 artwork

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