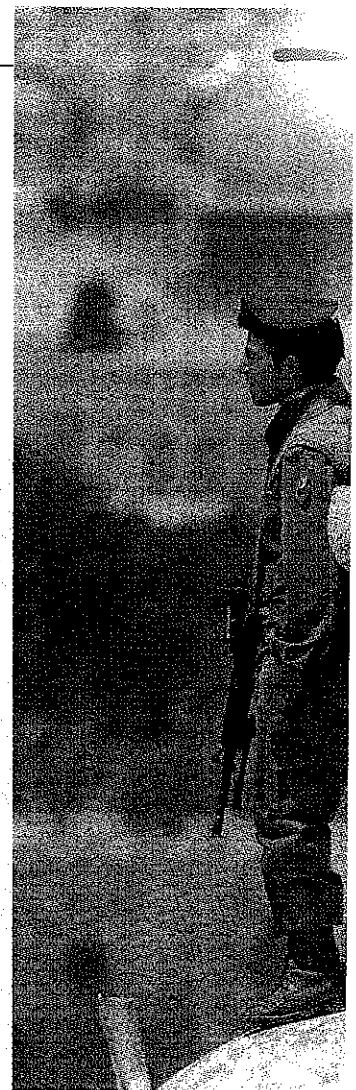
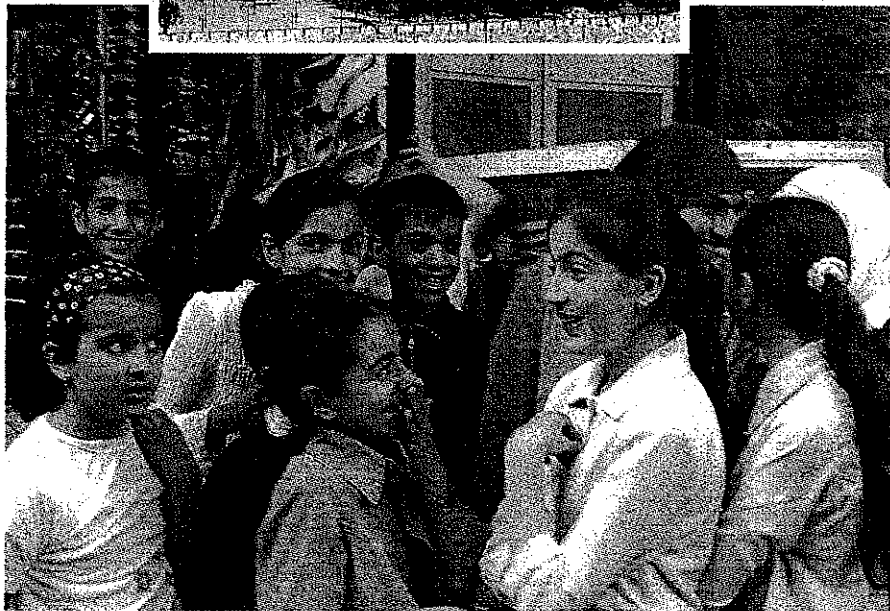


LEFT: Jerusalem's Old City is dominated by the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim shrine. It stands on the site of Judaism's ancient First and Second Temples. BELOW: Israeli students in Jerusalem hang out after school.



## The Middle East: A Land of Conflict

### A new generation of Israelis and Palestinians seeks a path to peace

By Cassandra Nelson

**U**ncertainty, fear, frustration, anger. Although they are on opposite sides of the conflict in the Middle East, most Palestinian and Israeli kids share the same feelings. The ongoing

#### Words to Know

- **intifada:** uprising.
- **perspective:** point of view.
- **settlement:** a village or colony in a foreign territory.

conflict is a disaster for all kids. Since the current Palestinian **intifada** began in September 2000, more than 670 children have been killed, according to reports by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Hundreds of thousands more have been injured, lost a parent or siblings, suffered mental anguish, or been deprived of their basic rights.

Recently, the number of attacks by Palestinian suicide bombers has declined. Israelis credit this to the

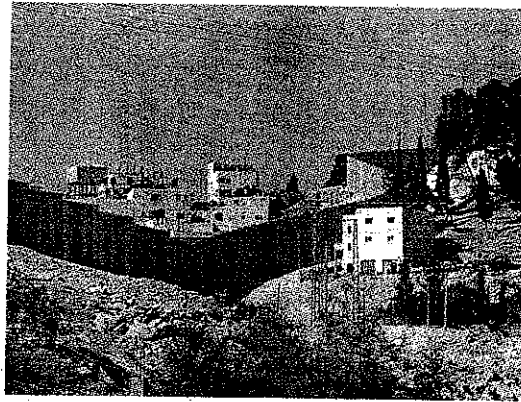
security barrier Israel is building to divide itself from the Palestinian territory of the West Bank. But the fence has not completely stopped attacks on Israelis. And it has not prevented scores of Palestinians from being caught in the crossfire between the Israeli Army and Palestinian militants.

There are many reasons for the continuing violence. But at the core of the problem is simple geography. For Palestinians, the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan



Israeli soldiers stand guard near the Dome of the Rock.

RIGHT: Israelis are erecting a security fence as protection from West Bank terrorists.



BELOW: In the Old City of Hebron, Palestinian children, including these boys, must play on the streets. The Israeli military has closed many playgrounds.



River is the Arab state of Palestine. For Jews, the same area is the land of Israel. Each side views the region's history from a different perspective.

### A Jewish Settler

Thirteen-year-old Eliana Koby is upbeat, energetic, and a good student. She attends a school for arts and drama and dreams of becoming a movie director or an actor someday. Her least favorite subject is history.

But Eliana has also experienced history in a way that many kids never will. When she was 5, she moved with her family from Maryland to Israel. They now live in Tekoa, a Jewish settlement inside the West Bank.

Israel seized the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Gaza

Strip during the Six-Day War in 1967. With the Oslo peace accord of 1993, Israel agreed to begin transferring control of these territories to the Palestinians. But many Israelis believe that the territories belong to Israel. Hundreds of thousands of them have built settlements there to make this point. The United Nations (UN) and many foreign governments say the settlements are illegal.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has announced that he will remove all Jewish settlers from Gaza and four West Bank settlements next year. But many settlers intend to remain, despite the dangers they face living amid Arabs who believe the land is rightfully theirs.

Three years ago, Eliana's older

brother was murdered while hiking in the *wadi* (a dry riverbed or canyon) behind their home. "We are not sure what happened, but the Arabs stoned him to death," Eliana says. "They never caught the people who did it. Since my brother's death, nothing has been the same."

Daily life inside the Tekoa settlement can seem almost normal. Surrounded by a wire fence and a gate with a military guard, about 300 families live in modern two-story homes and apartments. There are two grocery stores and a pizza place, and a community pool is being built. At home, Eliana hangs out with her friends and goes for walks.

Despite her brother's murder, Eliana considers Tekoa her home. "I

want to live in my settlement forever," she says. "It never crossed my mind to want to leave."

**A Palestinian in Hebron**

Tha'lr (*THAY-ler*) Awawa, a 13-year-old Palestinian, lives in the ancient West Bank city of Hebron. In the early 1970s, Israelis began a settlement there. "I feel like I could lose my life sometimes," says Tha'lr, "especially when [Israeli] soldiers stand me against the wall with their guns."

He tells about friends' homes being destroyed by the Israeli military. Israel claims it is looking for terrorists, but Palestinians believe Israel is seeking more land for settlements. The Israeli military also imposes curfews in Hebron that last for days, forcing Tha'lr and his family to remain at home, sometimes without food.

But for Tha'lr, who is in sixth grade, the conflict has affected his education the most. Although his school is just a 15-minute walk from his home, he has to allow at least two hours to get there because he must go through an Israeli military checkpoint. Members of a human-rights organization protect Tha'lr on his route.

At the checkpoint, he and his schoolmates and teachers wait for up to two hours, standing with their bags open for inspection. Some days they are not allowed to pass and must go home for no apparent reason.

"I try to study hard, but now I think all my efforts will go with the wind," says Tha'lr. "How can a student get good grades when he is prevented from attending school?"



These two teens, one Palestinian (*left*) and one Israeli, help to publish *Windows*.

Despite all the hardships, Tha'lr is determined that his family will never leave Hebron. "If we leave, the settlers will take our house and then eventually the whole city," he says. "We do not have to be afraid. It is our home, and we live here."

**A Complex History**

The history of the land where Eliana and Tha'lr live is complex. It is a story of many peoples who settled there, who intermingled with other peoples, or who were pushed out.

In the Bible, the land was first called Canaan, the place God prom-

ised to the Jews. King David had conquered the area by about 1000 B.C., creating a united Israel. After waves of invaders, the land was conquered by Rome in 63 B.C. Most Jews eventually left or were forced out. The Romans called the region "Syria Palaestina"—later Palestine.

Muslim Arabs moved into Palestine from the Arabian Peninsula in the 600s A.D. They were controlled by the Ottoman Empire for centuries, beginning in 1517. As that



**1948**

Israel, led by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, declares its independence. Surrounding Arab countries attack, but Israel wins the war. About 750,000 Palestinians are displaced.

**1964**

The Palestine Liberation Organization is created. Yasir Arafat is named Chairman in 1969. Under Arafat, the PLO launches guerrilla attacks on Israel.

**1967**

In the Six-Day War, Israel captures the West Bank and Gaza Strip, among other territories. (*Above*) Israelis liberate the Wailing Wall in East Jerusalem.



TOP: CASSANDRA NELSON; TIMELINE LEFT TO RIGHT: AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS (2); RON EDMONDS/AP WIDE WORLD PHOTOS; AFP PHOTO/DEER WAKINI/NEWS.COM

**Middle East Crisis Time Line**



Eliana browses at a bookshop.



A Palestinian teen outside her home.

empire crumbled at the end of World War I (1914-1918), Palestinian Arabs saw a chance for their own country.

But more Jews were also moving back, and Jews around the world dreamed of a "national home"—a new Israel. The clash between two peoples who each saw Palestine as their home was inevitable.

The world community has since sought to create both an Arab and an Israeli state in Palestine. The UN adopted such a **partition** (division) plan in 1947, a year before Israel declared itself an independent nation. But making two countries

from this tiny area has so far proved impossible. Acts of violence—from terrorist attacks to full-scale wars—have brought death, destruction, and mistrust on both sides. Stronger Israeli control has caused millions of Palestinians to flee the area, becoming refugees.

### Kids for Peace

For all of the violence, a few brave people continue to work for peace. One group of Palestinian and Israeli teens who call themselves Windows is dedicated to opening a dialogue between kids. The teens

produce a magazine, in both Arabic and Hebrew, which addresses the conflict from both perspectives.

"When we first started meeting, the Palestinian kids thought we were responsible for everything bad the military does to them, just like some Israelis think all Palestinians are suicide bombers," says Tomer Slutzky, a 13-year-old Israeli from Tel Aviv.

Just getting the group together takes months of planning. The Palestinian kids must get permission to cross the military checkpoint and go into Israel. Most of the members complain that their classmates harass them for "talking with the enemy."

But everyone who has joined Windows now believes that meeting kids from the other side is critical to finding a solution. "Peace can't come through signing agreements," says Mohammad Sahar, 14, a Palestinian who lives in a refugee camp on the West Bank. "It will come only from the heart." **JS**

### Your Turn

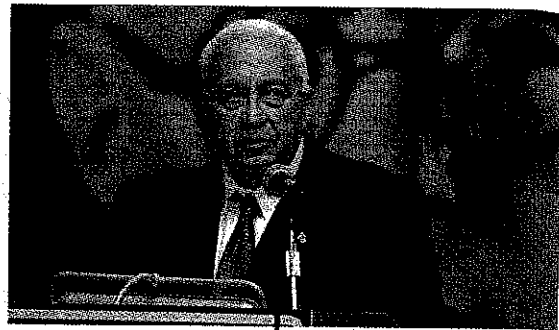
#### THINK ABOUT IT

Would it be possible to create a single country of Jews and Palestinians? Explain your answer.



1978

Israel and Egypt make peace with the Camp David Accords of 1978. But frustration in territories occupied by Israel spurs a Palestinian intifada in 1987.

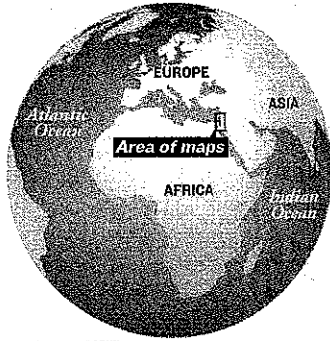


2004

In October, the Israeli Parliament approves Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to remove all Jewish settlements from the Gaza Strip. That month, Arafat is hospitalized in Paris, France, raising questions about the continuity of Palestinian leadership.

1993

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Chairman Arafat sign the first Oslo peace accord, negotiated with the aid of U.S. President Bill Clinton. But Rabin is assassinated in 1995, and the process stalls.



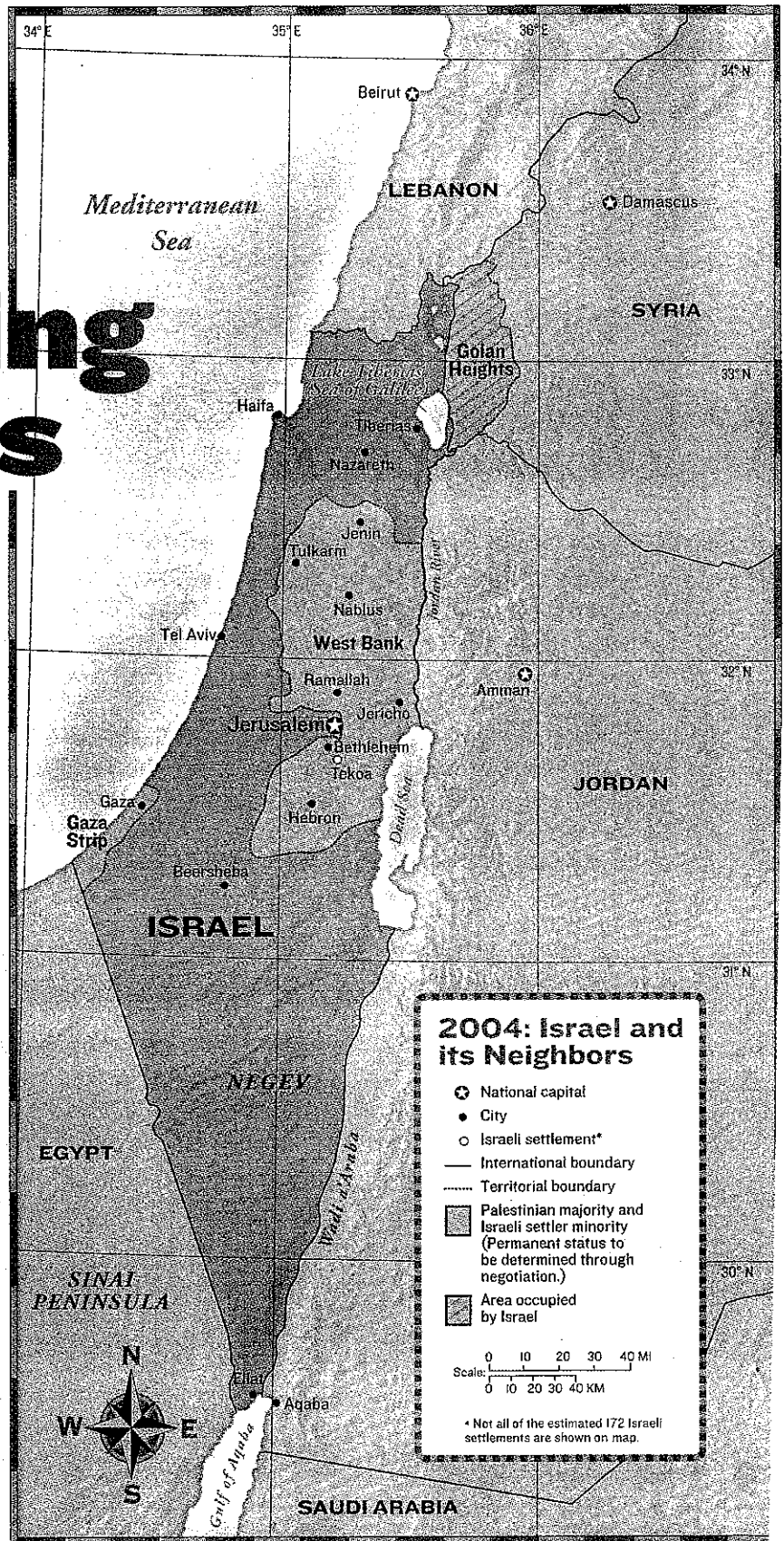
# Changing Borders

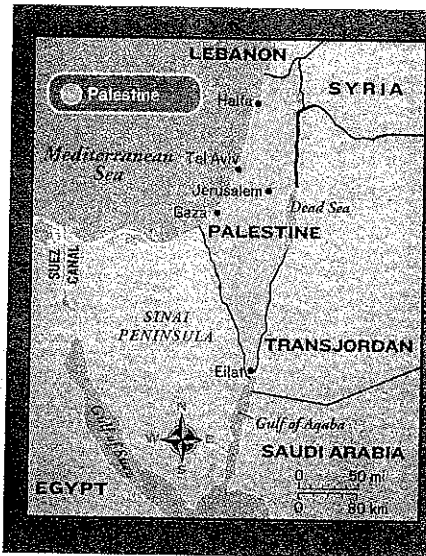
Israelis and Palestinians claim the same homeland in the Middle East. These maps show the disputed areas and how borders have changed over the years.

**T**he present-day state (nation) of Israel was founded in 1948. But its borders are still in dispute. Both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs claim the same land. The Palestinians demand an independent state of their own, with Jerusalem as their capital.

In 1993, leaders of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the first Oslo accord. Israel agreed to hand over the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank to the PLO. In exchange, the PLO agreed to reduce violence caused by militants.

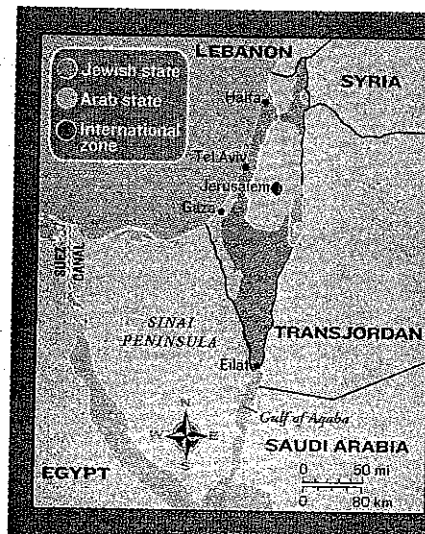
But negotiations for a final settlement proved difficult. By September 2000, the effort had stalled. Palestinian violence erupted, which was answered by Israeli military attacks. In 2003, diplomats from the U.S., Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations (UN) proposed a peace plan known as the "road map." Israeli and Palestinian leaders resumed negotiations, but they soon broke down. In October, the Israeli Parliament approved Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to remove all Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip by the end of 2005.





### 1920: British Mandate

Until the end of World War I in 1918, the Turkish-Ottoman Empire controlled Palestine and most of the Middle East. In exchange for Arab support during the conflict, Britain offered to back Arab demands for independence. Britain also promised to support the creation of a Jewish "national home" in Palestine. In 1920, the League of Nations gave Britain a mandate (authority) to rule Palestine. During the 1930s, Arabs protested as a growing number of Jews moved to Palestine, many escaping persecution by Nazi Germany.



### 1947: UN Partition Plan

Demands for a Jewish state grew after 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust during World War II (1939-1945). But Arabs also asked Britain to fulfill its promises to them. In 1947, the UN proposed a partition (division) that split Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The Jews agreed to the plan; the Arabs did not. On May 14, 1948, Israel proclaimed itself an independent Jewish state. Arabies from neighboring Arab countries attacked the next day, but Israel won the war.



### 1967: The Six-Day War

Israel gained territory after defeating Arab armies in 1948-1949. War broke out again in 1956 and in 1967. In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel gained control of the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria. Israel also occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which Jordan had controlled. Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in 1982 after signing a peace treaty in 1979.

## QUESTIONS

Study the four maps and the information on these two pages to answer the questions.

1. In 1920, the area that now is Israel was known as \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who ruled that area in 1920? \_\_\_\_\_
3. The 1947 Partition Plan called for the creation of which two states? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In which area is Bethlehem, a city sacred to Christians, located? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Israel gained control of East Jerusalem and which four Arab areas during the 1967 War? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which of the four areas did Israel return to Egypt in 1982? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Which of the four areas is entirely occupied by Israel today? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What city is located closest to 32°N, 36°E? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is the capital of Israel? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What plan of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon did the Israeli Parliament recently approve? \_\_\_\_\_

JIM McMANIS/MAPMAN™