



This file photo released by the Israeli Government Press office (GPO) shows Israeli tanks advancing through hilly terrain on the Golan Heights during the Six-Day War.



Formation of the Israeli Mirage fighters in 1967.

## THE WAR THAT NEVER ENDED

*Today is the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War of 1967. As Israel handed a crushing defeat to its neighbouring Arab states and vastly expanded its territory, the Six-Day War marked a turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and sealed the tragic fate of Palestinians for decades to come.*

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"The world watched through my camera [as] this soldier shot the boy in cold blood, and his life was not in any danger at all. If this situation happened for an Israeli shot by Palestinian, they would kill him or at least put him in jail for forever." These are the words of Imad Abushamsiya, the man who filmed an Israeli soldier shooting a disarmed Palestinian man in the head in Hebron more than a year ago. The footage led to charges being filed against the IDF soldier, Elor Azaria, who was sentenced to prison for only 18 months this February by a military judicial panel. The father of Abdel Fattah al-Sharif, the dead Palestinian man, bemoaned the sentence saying, "If someone is arrested for throwing a rock, they get a two-year sentence. In this case, a soldier murdered and got a year and a half."

Right before he was shot in the head at close range, Abdel Fattah al-Sharif lay incapacitated on the ground severely wounded from gunshots after he stabbed an Israeli soldier. Elor Azaria then approached al-Sharif shouting "Stand back!" and pulled the trigger.

Part of al-Sharif's head was destroyed. His brains lay on the floor. His blood sliding down the road while Israeli soldiers and settlers walked about unbothered.

Why kill a man who's already on the ground?

Had Abushamsiya not captured the footage of al-Sharif's brutal killing and had it not been picked up by world media, Elor Azaria would have gotten away with cold blooded murder like many before him.

Indiscriminate, extrajudicial killings of Palestinian men, women and children by Israel are nothing new and always justified from a "defensive" standpoint. Any and all acts of resistance of Palestinians in Israel's apartheid state are branded as "terrorism". And accusations of knife attacks and stone-throwing against Palestinians are thrown around devoid of the context of settler violence and prison-like conditions in which Palestinians live.

Israel's voracious appetite for settlements has also grown with time. When the Israelis and Palestinians first began peace talks the number of West Bank settlers was somewhere around 100,000. Today, it has grown four-fold to 400,000. The present settlements don't necessarily look like temporary housing or mobile homes clumped together. They have taken on a more concrete form: flourishing cities with shopping malls and recreation centres and luxurious

villas on scenic hilltops.

What we understand as "occupied territories" came in force due to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 in November 1967 in the aftermath of the Six-Day War fifty years ago on this day. The war of June 5-10, 1967 changed the fate of Israel and Palestine and the course of history as we know it. On June 5, 1967 Israel launched preemptive strikes on Egyptian airfields after the latter placed a blockade on the Straits of Tiran cutting off Israel's access to the Red Sea.

The Six-Day War solidified Israel's position as a regional power and it became a force to be reckoned with.

The area under Israeli occupation tripled after the war (although Israel would later cede control of Sinai and part of Golan Heights). It is said that the Six-Day War remained an open wound for the Arab world from which it would never recover. Palestinians became disillusioned with the failure of the Arab states and the war became a defining moment for the resurgence of Palestinian nationalism. The aftermath of the war also saw Israel deepening its

who were refugees of the catastrophic 1948 war, tragedy had struck twice. Palestinian villages of Imwas, Yalo, and Bayt Nuba, Surit, Beit Awwa, Beit Mirsem, Shuyukh, Al-Jifilik and many more were demolished and refugee camps emptied.

Despite Israel's pyrrhic victory in 1967 which handed it total control over the Palestinian population, the ugliness of war did not end there. Since the Six-Day War Israel has unleashed a number of military operations on various pretexts.

I vividly remember watching with horror and disgust Israel's onslaught on

no army.

The purported aim of the slickly named Operation Protective Edge was to stop Hamas from firing rockets into Israel which caused a total of eight deaths and 60 injuries. Israeli strikes on the other hand killed 2,314 Palestinians and injured 17,125. The seven-week conflict saw Israel kill more Palestinian civilians in 2014 than any other year since the Six-Day War.

For some time there was a belief that Israel's international image had been damaged as the world witnessed with disbelief the human cost of the offensive in Gaza. Conversations about the urgency to bring an end to this conflict were revived and much was questioned, such as Israel's rhetoric about Hamas "using women and children as human shield" as justification for bombing hospitals and homes. But what changed?

There has been no shortage of peace deals, negotiations and UN resolutions. And there has been no shortage of excuses as to why peace talks have repeatedly failed. The truth of the matter is that Israel prefers the status quo. For Israel, the cost of granting Palestinians the right to self-determination and right to return is too high. And Israel has no intention of implementing the 1967 lines—the armistice lines from before the Six-Day War when Israel expanded its territory beyond the "Green Line" borders delineated by the 1949 Armistice Agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Even former president Obama was an advocate of Palestine-Israel borders based on the 1967 lines with "mutually agreed swaps". But now with Trump in office, the demands for a Palestinian state are at risk of being further de-legitimised and Israel's project of colony-building will see a boost.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one that simply refuses to surrender to peace. The Palestine question has repeatedly been co-opted by the self-serving interests of Arab states and that continues to be the case. Then there is the desire for a Jewish state catalysed by the anxiety of Holocaust which remains deeply ingrained in the psyche of Israelis. For Israel the moral costs of occupation will never be high enough to change the calculus. Why would it when it has a *carte blanche* to do what it wants? Meanwhile, for Palestinians, it has come down to surviving, by any means necessary, in the world's largest open-air prison.

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In this 1968 photo from the UN Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, archive, Palestinian refugees have just arrived in east Jordan in a continuing exodus of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The signboard at the back reads "Jericho 8 km, Jerslm (Jerusalem) 43 km."

PHOTO: AP/G.NEHMEH, UNRWA PHOTO ARCHIVES

(Nasser's blockade was a result and a part of the broad and extremely complex Arab-Israeli conflict.) Jordan and Syria soon joined the war against Israel. Despite being heavily outnumbered, over the course of only six days Israel vanquished Arab armies to claim a decisive victory and seized control of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula.

relationship with the US and the necessity of American support for an independent Israel.

The Six-Day War effectively sealed the tragic fate of the Palestinians. The 1967 Palestinian exodus resulted in the flight of 280,000 to 325,000 Palestinians—both during and after the war—from Israeli-occupied territories. For many of the displaced Palestinians,

Gaza unfold on social media back in 2014. I had never seen anything like it. The minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour updates of bombings and evacuations and hashtags had turned Twitter and Facebook into the latest battleground to rally public opinion by exposing the atrocities unleashed on Gazans. Israel claimed to be defending itself from a population with no navy, no air force,