MYTH 7
Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East

FACT 7
Israel is a democracy for Jews only. It has an ethno-nationalist constitution, military law, systemic discrimination against Palestinians, and colonial practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. A state cannot simultaneously function as a democracy while denying fundamental rights to millions under its control. Israel has 65 laws, including the Nation State Law for Jewish people only, which discriminates against Palestinians, undermining equality. Palestinians are second class citizens denied freedom of movement, assembly, speech, and expression. They are subject to land confiscation and home demolitions, military versus civilian court, detention without charge, checkpoints, limited voting rights, and restrictions on land ownership and housing,

850 military checkpoints

MYTH 8
The Oslo Mythologies

FACT 8
The 1993 Oslo Accords was a deeply flawed "peace" agreement, serving Israel's colonial interests while undermining Palestinian aspirations for statehood and self-determination. During the Oslo talks, Israeli settlements more than doubled. The talks ***promised***

- Palestinian statehood, but the Israeli occupation and military rule continue to this day,
- territorial sovereignty, but West Bank fragmentation into areas A, B, C created more settlements and disconnected Palestinian land
- freedom of movement, but Palestinians still face restricted permits, Israeli-only roads, separation wall, military checkpoints, and military detention
- resources, but Israel restricts land/air/sea/water access, oil/gas reserves, and electricity
- right of return, but refugees are still displaced
- security, but military/settler violence continues
- Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, but the 17+ year illegal Gaza land, air, sea blockade continues.

Dome of the Rock mosque, Jerusalem

MYTH 9
The Gaza Mythologies

FACT 9
Israel has military/technological superiority over Gaza. Framing Gaza as a "threat" obscures Israel's 6 previous Gaza massacres and its war on Gaza after October 7, 2023. After breaking the 2nd phase of ceasefire in January 2025, Israel continued its unprecedented levels of genocide, injury, and destruction of critical infrastructure. Humanitarian aid remains blocked, leaving millions without basic necessities like food, water, electricity, fuel, medical care, shelter, schooling.

- The Gaza blockade is collective punishment of the entire population– prohibited by international law
- Shifting blame to Hamas overlooks Israel's continued occupation of Gaza, including its air, land, and sea blockade – illegal under international law..

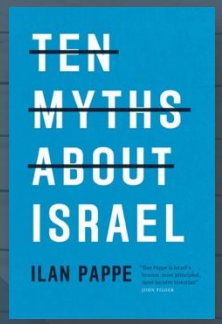
OCHA says 69% of all buildings in Gaza have been destroyed or damaged as of January 2025. Additionally, 92% of housing units have been affected

MYTH 10
The Two-State Solution

FACT 10
Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank has placed over 700,000 settlers in areas meant for a Palestinian state. Settlements on Palestinian land make two states impossible. Maintaining peace requires dismantling apartheid structures and creating a single democratic state for all citizens. The two-state solution is a propaganda tool to deflect international criticism while Israel continues its policies of occupation and apartheid. Palestinian refugees displaced since 1948, must be allowed to return as per international law.

Beyond the Headlines: Unraveling Israeli Myths

based on Ilan Pappe's
Ten Myths About Israel



Ilan Pappe, preeminent Israeli historian, argued in 2017 that many myths about Israel serve to justify its colonialism, displacement, and apartheid policies. The falsehoods persist to this day..

Verso Books. 2017, 2024

MYTH 1
Palestine was an empty land

FACT 1
Zionist settlers arrived to Palestine (1882-1903). Historical records show Palestine's population was 470,000 -- 85% Muslims, 11% Christians, 4% Jews. Early Zionist delegations acknowledged this, stating, "The bride is beautiful but married to another man." Palestinian society included legal systems, land registries, railways and roads, architectural achievements, markets, religious life, and agriculture. It had cultivated 739,750 acres by the eve of the 1948 war. The "empty land" myth justified Israel's ongoing colonization.

19th century Jerusalem. Jaffa, Nablus, Jerusalem, Hebron, and Haifa were major Palestinian commercial centers

MYTH 2
The Jews were a people without a land

FACT 2
This myth was part of a colonial narrative designed to legitimize Zionist settlement in Palestine while ignoring the presence and rights of the indigenous Palestinian population.

For much of history, Jewish identity had been primarily religious. Jews lived in homelands in various countries across Europe and the Middle East, with populations in Iberia (Spain and Portugal), Central and Eastern Europe (Ashkenazi), and the Ottoman Empire (Sephardi and Mizrahi). They maintained cultural and religious ties to those lands..

Zionist leaders reacted to European antisemitism, calling for an independent Jewish homeland, preferably in Palestine. Britain supported it.

MYTH 3
Zionism is Judaism

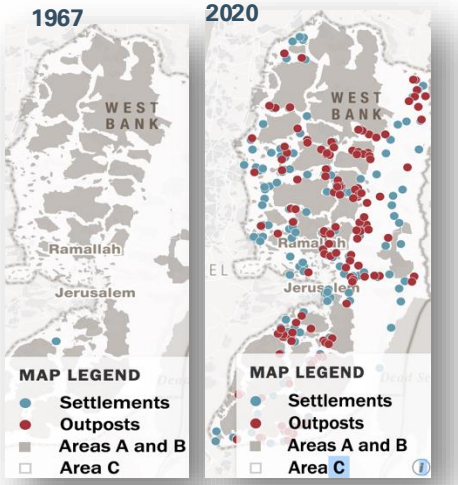
FACT 3
Zionism is a secular political ideology advocating for a Jewish homeland. It emerged in response to European antisemitism. Judaism is a living global faith. Zionism has co-opted Jewish identity to justify its colonial and nationalist agenda. Many Jews – young and old -- oppose Zionism for its secular, nationalist interpretation of traditional Jewish values. Zionism aims to suppress legitimate debate by claiming that those opposing its policies are antisemitic.

Neturei Karta, 'Guardians of the City,' is an anti Zionist, pro-Palestine Haredi Jewish group

MYTH 4
Zionism is not colonialism

FACT 4
Zionism is a settler-colonial project. Despite the claim that Zionism is a "return" to land to which it is historically tied, its goal remains expelling and replacing the indigenous Palestinian population, seizing their land, and establishing a new society.

Israeli outposts (unauthorized) and settlements (authorized) on Palestinian land are illegal under international law. They've grown vastly over time.



crisisgroup.org

MYTH 5
Palestinians voluntarily left their homeland in 1948

FACT 5
Historical evidence shows Zionist leadership had a deliberate plan of ethnic cleansing. Zionist Plan Dalet identified Palestinian targets for expulsion. Over 750,000 Palestinians (50-65% of the population) were forcibly expelled or fled due to violence during the Nakba (1948). Over 500 villages were destroyed to prevent return. Village wells were poisoned. The military conducted dozens of massacres. The brutal Deir Yassin massacre (April 9, 1948) exemplified the fear Israel instilled to force Palestinians to flee.

Nakba, 1948. Mass displacement and dispossession of Palestinians Before the Nakba, Palestine was a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society

MYTH 6
The June 1967 War was an Israeli war of "no choice."

FACT 6
Israel's 1967 war was *not* self-defense. Declassified documents reveal Israel intended to expand territorially and preemptively attacked Egypt on June 5, 1967. After the war, Israel occupied all of historic Palestine (the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza), Sinai, and the Golan Heights, enforcing military rule and refusing to grant basic civil rights to Palestinians.

1947 Partition plan 1947 1949-1967 2005
Green = Palestinian land. White = Israeli settlements