

# Zionism: a Settler-Colonial Ideology

Israel is presently led by an extreme right-wing government, but any claim that *the* problem is Netanyahu and his fascist ministers is not credible.

The thread running through the history of Israel since 1948 is that of a country based on anti-Palestinian racism, which is itself the product of a racist ideology – Zionism. But what is Zionism?

## The Starting Point

The First Zionist Convention took place in Basel, Switzerland in 1897 and adopted the Basel programme. *“Zionism aims at establishing for the Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine.”*

It called for establishing a Jewish nation-state in Palestine with a Jewish majority. The Zionist movement mainly agreed that the Arab people who lived there must be removed, either by agreement or by force.

This attitude was later summarised by an influential Zionist, Vladimir Jabotinsky.

*“A voluntary reconciliation with the Arabs is out of the question either now or in the future. If you wish to colonise a land in which people are already living, you must provide a garrison for the land, or find some rich man or benefactor who will provide a garrison on your behalf. Or else, give up your colonisation.”*



*Palestinians flee from Gaza's beaches onto boats during the Palestinian Nakba, 1949. (Photo: UNRWA)*

## Balfour Declaration

In 1917 the British government declared support for a “national home for the Jewish people.” The Mandate given to Britain by the League of Nations had a central purpose - denying the Palestinians their right to self-determination by imposing direct British rule, while helping a Jewish administration to form.

Jewish refugees emigrated to Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s. Though only a small percentage of German Jews supported Zionism initially, the Nazi persecution after 1933 forced many to leave. Most went to the USA but many also to Palestine

During the 1920s and 1930s, Palestinians were angered by the denial of independence and fear of economic and political subjugation by Jewish immigrants. This resulted in numerous conflicts between Muslim and Christian Palestinians and Jewish settlements.

## Israel born in Terrorism and Violence

After World War II a sharp rise in Zionist attacks in Palestine put pressure on the British Labour government to allow the creation of a Jewish state. The Stern gang and Irgun, led by Menachem Begin (a future Prime Minister of Israel) carried out bomb attacks, kidnappings and murders. Targets were not just British police officers and soldiers but Palestinians and Jews who opposed the Zionists' plans. ►