

Handout 10-H

## *The Modern State of Israel*

The People of Israel lost their homeland in 586 BC and did not regain it until 1948, a period of more than 2,500 years. The existence of the State of Israel today is largely a result of the Zionist movement, a political and national measure aimed at creating and sustaining a Jewish state in the Middle East.

In 1897 Theodor Herzl formed the World Zionist Organization, which advocated the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Herzl felt the only way for the Jewish people to live in peace was for them to have their own country. The difficulty of achieving this dream was complicated by the fact that there were large populations of Muslims, Christians, and even some Jews who were already living there together in peace for centuries.

Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, and with the support of the newly British-occupied Palestine, a steady immigration of Jews to Palestine began. In the aftermath of the extermination of more than six million Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War, many Western countries began backing the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine, and the migration of Jews boomed. This migration was complimented by a United Nations resolution recommending both an independent Arab and Jewish state in the region (though an Arab state was never formed). On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel issued a Declaration of Independence.

The Arab-Israeli conflict today is attributed to the rise of Zionism and Arab nationalism in the late nineteenth century, which climaxed in the twentieth century. In large part, the ongoing dispute is the result of conflicting claims to the land. Historically, both Jews and Arabs lay claim to the same territory. The conflict has unfortunately boiled over into armed conflict between the two groups, such as in 1948 and 1967, and a broader conflict between Israel's Middle Eastern neighbors.

