

A Reading and Discussion Guide for
Palestine Peace Not Apartheid by Jimmy Carter

Prepared by the Middle East Peacebuilding Program
www.afsc.org

About this guide

This guide has been developed by the Middle East Peacebuilding Program of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). The American Friends Service Committee carries out service, development, social justice, and peace programs throughout the world.

This guide is intended to facilitate discussion of former president Jimmy Carter's book: *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* by book groups, social action groups, classes, and other interested parties. This guide provides two alternatives for discussing *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*:

- The Book Group Guide (pages 1-2) can be used for general discussions of topics raised in the book.
- The [in-depth] Study Guide (pages 2-4) is intended for in-depth discussion over a series of sessions. It allows for more detailed discussion by incorporating the overview questions into frameworks related by topics and chronology.
- [People for Justice in Palestine has provided a list of some suggested further reading (page 4).]

(Note: Specific page numbers referenced in this guide refer to the hardcover edition.)

We hope that discussion of this important book becomes a vehicle for developing a greater understanding of the issues and forces involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For more resources on line: www.afsc.org/carter-discussion.

About the author and the book

Palestine Peace Not Apartheid was written by former president Jimmy Carter and published by Simon and Schuster in 2006. As president, Carter brokered the historic Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

In *Palestine Peace Not Apartheid*, Carter looks at decades of conflict in the Middle East through the unique viewpoint of an individual who has known and worked with many of the key players in the region. In this book, Carter summarizes key historic events and figures, warns about the acceleration towards apartheid and colonization in the occupied Palestinian territories, and presents his ideas for policies that will ensure peace, sovereignty, security, and justice for both Israelis and Palestinians.

For more information

If you would like more information about the topics covered in *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, check out these websites of interest:

- AFSC Middle East Peacebuilding Program
www.afsc.org/israel-palestine
- B'tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
www.btselem.org/English
- Carter Center www.cartercenter.org
- Churches for Middle East Peace www.cmep.org
- Electronic Intifada <http://electronicintifada.net>
- Jewish Voice for Peace www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org
- U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation
www.endtheoccupation.org

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Palestine Peace Not Apartheid, Simon and Schuster, 2006
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BOOK GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Have you ever lived in or visited Israel or Palestine? Has someone that you know? What impressions do you have of both societies?
2. Writing about growing conflict in the Middle East, Carter says, "The absence of any viable peace initiative [in Israel and Palestine] exacerbates each individual controversy." (p. 13) Do you agree? If so, what do you think is the relationship between the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and broader Middle East tensions?
3. Carter lists what he believes to be the impediments to peace. (p. 13) What do you think are the impediments to peace?
4. What does Carter see as the role of the United States in furthering the peace process? (p. 16) Do you think that the United States can and should play the role of an "honest broker?" What would that mean? Do you agree with Carter that there have been political impediments within the United States that hinder that role?
5. Carter asks, "What is Palestine and who are the Palestinians?" (pp. 55-64) How would you answer that?
6. What were the historic conditions that led to the idea of Zionism? How do you think that the Holocaust and the world's inaction in response to it influenced the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948? (pp. 64-69)
7. The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories has lasted from 1967 to the present. Why do you think the occupation has lasted that long? (pp. 58-59)
8. What was Clinton's famous "final proposal"? (pp. 150-154) What do you think of the terms that were offered? What is your opinion of Barak's response? Of Arafat's response?

9. Carter says that no “generous offer” was made to the Palestinians. (pp. 150-154) Yet that is part of the conventional wisdom which has affected public opinion about Arafat and the Palestinians. How could such a difference of interpretation take place? Is this important to you? If so, how would you try to find out more about this issue?

10. Carter says, “There was no possibility that any Palestinian leader could accept such terms [offered at Camp David] and survive, but official statements from Washington and Jerusalem were successful in placing the entire onus on Yasir Arafat.” (pp.152) What do you think of that statement?

11. How does Carter differentiate the wall as a security measure from what he calls “the wall as a prison”? (pp. 189-203) After reading his description of the wall’s path and effect, what is your impression?

12. What is your analysis of why Israel is building the wall? Why do you think it is being built where it is?

13. If you agree that the wall is not a viable means to ensure Israel’s security, what do you think Israel should do to secure the safety of its citizens?

14. Carter describes what he believes to be the root causes of the conflict. (p. 202) What do you believe to be the root causes? Is this an intractable situation? Why or why not? What do you think is the basis for a viable peace agreement?

15. In the summary section, Carter outlines three possible futures for Israel/Palestine: (pp. 214-216):

- Forcible annexation of Palestine and its legal absorption into Israel
- A system of apartheid with two peoples occupying the same space but completely separated from each other with Israelis totally dominant
- Israeli withdrawal to 1967 borders with land exchanges to allow a significant number of Israeli settlers to remain

What do you think of Carter’s analysis? Do you think these are the alternatives? Which is most likely? Which is most desirable?

16. One of the controversial aspects of the book is Carter’s use of the word apartheid to describe the conditions in the occupied territories. (pp. 189-190) (p.215) After reading his description, do you agree or disagree with this characterization? Do you think this has been helpful to spreading the book’s message or counterproductive?

17. Carter states that: “There are constant and vehement political and media debates in Israel concerning its policies in the West Bank, but because of powerful political, economic, and religious forces in the United States, Israeli government decisions are rarely questioned or condemned, voices from Jerusalem dominate in our media, and most American citizens are unaware of circumstances in the occupied territories.” (p. 209) Do you think this is accurate or inaccurate? Why?

18. One narrative about the Israeli/Palestinian situation focuses on the safety and security of the Israeli people and the survival of Israel. The other narrative focuses on the oppression of the Palestinian people and the denial of the right of the Palestinians to realize their national aspirations. Do you tend to embrace mainly one narrative or the other? What would be the elements of a narrative that embraces the rights and aspirations of both peoples?

19. How do you think Carter’s attitudes and views evolved over the time of his involvement? Have yours changed by reading this book? How?

20. Are there any issues that you think are essential to a viable peace process and have not been dealt with adequately by this book? What are they?

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IN-DEPTH STUDY GUIDE

DISCUSSION 1

Chapter 1 Prospects for Peace

Chapter 2 My First Visit to Israel, 1973

Chapter 3 My Presidency, 1977-1981

Appendix 1 UN Resolution 242

Appendix 2 UN Resolution 338

Appendix 3 Camp David Accords

1. Have you ever lived in or visited Israel or Palestine? Do you know someone who has? What impressions do you have of both societies?

2. Writing about growing conflict in the Middle East, Carter says, “The absence of any viable peace initiative [in Israel and Palestine] exacerbates each individual controversy.” (p.13) Do you agree? If so, what do you think is the relationship between the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and broader Middle East tensions?

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4. What does Carter see as the role of the United States in furthering the peace process? (p. 16) Do you think that the United States can and should play the role of an “honest broker”? What would that mean? Do you agree with Carter that there have been impediments within the United States that hinder that role?

5. What is the gist of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 (See Appendices 1– 2) in relationship to the following?

- a. the occupied territories
- b. Israeli settlements
- c. Israel’s security
- d. the Palestinian refugee situation

Why do you think that there has not been action on these Resolutions to date?

6. How did President Carter respond to Israel's use of U.S. weapons in Lebanon? What was the result? (pp. 44-45) How does that contrast with the George W. Bush administration's response to Israel's use of U.S. weapons against Lebanon in the war with Hezbollah in 2006?

7. Carter says: "For Menachem Begin, the peace treaty with Egypt was the significant act for Israel, while solemn promises regarding the West Bank and Palestinians would be finessed or deliberately violated." (p. 52) (Also see Appendix 3 Camp David Accords) Clearly, Carter sees this as a critical turning point toward Israel "colonizing the West Bank." What do you think of his assessment? What do you think of his characterization of Israel's actions as colonization?

DISCUSSION 2

Chapter 4 The Key Players

Chapter 5 Other Neighbors

Chapter 6 The Reagan Years, 1981-89

Chapter 7 My Visits with Palestinians

Chapter 8 The George H.W. Bush Years

Appendix 6 Arab Peace Proposal

1. Carter asks, "What is Palestine and who are the Palestinians?" How would you answer that? (pp. 55-64)
2. What were the historic conditions that lead to the idea of Zionism? How do you think that the Holocaust and the world's inaction in response to it influenced the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948? (pp. 64-69)
3. What was the response of Arab countries to the establishment of the State of Israel? What do you think were the causes of these actions? (p. 57)
4. The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories has lasted from the 1967 war to the present. Why do you think the occupation has lasted that long? (pp. 58-59)
5. What do you think were the causes and the effects of the First Intifada? (p.105) the Second Intifada? (pp. 149-150)
6. What has been the role of the Arab countries in relationship to the Israel/Palestine situation? (pp. 71-102) What do you think of the Arab League Peace Plan? (pp. 211-212) (See Appendix 6)
7. How did Palestinians describe conditions in the occupied territories to Carter? What was the response of Israeli officials to Carter's inquiries? How do you feel about the conditions in the territories? (pp. 116-127)

DISCUSSION 3

Chapter 9 The Oslo Agreement

Chapter 10 Palestinian Election, 1996

Chapter 11 Bill Clinton's Peace Efforts

Chapter 12 The George W. Bush Years

1. When and what were the Oslo Agreements? Why do you think they failed to bring about peace? (pp. 133-138)

2. Based on Carter's description, what is your impression of Yasir Arafat? (pp. 139-146)

3. When Carter returned to the Palestinian territories to participate in the 1996 elections, what challenges were there to the elections? (p. 141)

4. What is your interpretation of Israel's role in the elections in East Jerusalem? What is your impression of Israeli officials' response to Carter's concerns? (pp. 142-146)

5. What was Clinton's famous "final proposal"? What do you think of the terms that were offered? What is your opinion of Barak's response? Of Arafat's response? (pp. 150-154)

6. Carter says "There was no possibility that any Palestinian leader could accept such terms and survive, but official statements from Washington and Jerusalem were successful in placing the entire onus on Yasir Arafat." (p. 152) What do you think of that statement?

7. Carter says that no "generous offer" was made to the Palestinians. Yet that is part of the conventional wisdom that has affected public opinion about Arafat and the Palestinians. (p.152) How could such a difference of interpretation take place? Is this important to you? If so, how would you try to find out more about this issue?

DISCUSSION 4

Chapter 13 The Geneva Initiative

Chapter 14 The Palestinian Elections, 2005

Chapter 15 The Palestinian and Israeli Elections, 2006

Chapter 16 The Wall as a Prison

Chapter 17 Summary

1. Why was the Geneva Initiative pursued outside the framework of official Israeli/Palestinian/U.S. channels? What do you think of the content of the initiative? (pp. 163-168)
2. Why do you think that Sharon unilaterally withdrew from Gaza? What have conditions been in Gaza since then? What are the causes of these conditions? (pp. 169-176)
3. How does Carter differentiate the wall as a security measure from what he calls "the wall as a prison"? After reading his description of the wall's path and effect, what is your impression? (pp. 189-195)
4. What is your analysis for Israel's building the wall in the manner and on the path that it is taking?
5. If you agree that the wall is not a viable means to ensure Israel's security, what do you think Israel should do to secure the safety of its citizens?

6. Carter describes what he believes to be the root causes of the conflict. What do you believe to be the root causes? Is this an intractable situation? Why or why not? What do you think is the basis for a viable peace agreement? (p. 202)

7. In the summary section, Carter outlines three possible futures for Israel/Palestine: (pp. 214-216):

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11. How did Carter's attitudes and views evolve over the time of his involvement? Have yours changed by reading this book?

12. Are there any issues that you think are essential to a viable peace process and have not been dealt with adequately by this book? What are they?

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unsubscribe : iowapjp-unsubscribe@yahoo.com
post message : iowapjp@yahoo.com
website : www.iowapjp.org

PJP suggests some further reading:

- John Quigley, *THE CASE FOR PALESTINE*, Duke University Press, 2005. He is professor of law at Ohio State University
- Avi Shlaim, *THE IRON WALL: ISRAEL AND THE ARAB WORLD*, W.W. Norton, 2001. Iraqi-born Jew, former Israeli, professor of international relations, Oxford University.
- David Hirst, *THE GUN AND THE OLIVE BRANCH: THE ROOTS OF VIOLENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST*, Third Edition, Nation Books, 2003. Former Middle East Correspondent, *THE GUARDIAN*
- Norman Finkelstein, *IMAGE AND REALITY OF THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT*, Second Edition, Verso, 2003
- Norman Finkelstein, *BEYOND CHUTZPAH*, University of California Press, 2005 (recommended to be read alongside Alan Dershowitz, *THE CASE FOR ISRAEL*,) Professor of Political Science, De Paul University, Chicago, IL.
- Kathleen Christison, *PERCEPTIONS OF PALESTINE*, University of California Press, 1999. Former CIA analyst. Writes about US policy on Palestine and the inability of American officials to recognize that the Palestinians are human beings.
- Tanya Reinhart, *ISRAEL/PALESTINE: HOW TO END THE WAR OF 1948* Second Edition, Seven Stories Press, 2005.
- Tanya Reinhart, *THE ROAD MAP TO NOWHERE*, Verso, 2006. Recently deceased. Professor of Linguistics at Tel Aviv University and columnist for *YEDIOT AHRONOT*, Israeli newspaper.
- Yehezkel Lein et. al, *LAND GRAB: ISRAEL'S SETTLEMENT POLICY IN THE WEST BANK*, a report for B'TSELEM, *THE ISRAELI INFORMATION CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES*, May 2002. Available at www.btselem.org. This report points out, among other things, that the West Bank settler population nearly doubled during the Oslo period, 1993-2000, when Israel was supposedly getting ready to trade land for peace, Settlement activity was heaviest under Ehud Barak, who supposedly was prepared to give up almost all the West Bank to the Palestinians. (p.17). This report largely vindicates Carter's analysis of the problem. It also compares the system in Palestine to apartheid. People who claim that the Israeli government always acts in good faith cannot explain the facts on the ground.