



Educator's Guide

What Was the First Intifada?

When people hear the word “Intifada” (“tremor” in Arabic), they are often thinking of the Second Intifada, which began in 2000. But did you know there was a First Intifada, in 1987-1991? What happened during this time? Who was at odds against one another, and what caused the friction? This video explores the events of this difficult period in Israeli history, both within Israel and in the world’s eye.

Use this video and prompts to learn about, and especially learn from, this time period in Israeli history: <https://unpacked.education/video/what-was-the-first-intifada/>

Further Reading

1. Uri Milstein, “It Has Been 30 Years Since the Outbreak of the First Intifada”
<https://www.jpost.com/Magazine/IT-HAS-BEEN-30-YEARS-SINCE-THE-OUTBREAK-OF-THE-FIRST-INTIFADA-532851>
2. Avraham Sela, “The First Intifada: How the Arab-Israeli Conflict Was Transformed”
<https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-first-intifada-a-watershed-moment-1.5272288>
3. Eric Black, [A Dialogue of Two Monologues](#)
4. Neil Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories*, pp. 197-201
5. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-first-intifada/>

Review – Did the students understand the material?

1. The First Intifada spanned which years?
 - a. 1983-1986
 - b. 1987-1993 (correct)



- c.** 1994-2000
 - d.** 2001-2003
- 2.** In what ways was the First Intifada different than the Second Intifada?
 - 3.** What did Israelis and Palestinians look like in the media?
 - 4.** What is the PLO and what was its role in this story?
 - 5.** Name a few possible causes for the First Intifada.

Discussion Questions

- 1.** Many describe the footage of the Intifada with teenagers throwing rocks against soldiers with tanks to be the moment that Israel went from the “David” in world opinion to the “Goliath” on the world stage. Do you think this depiction of Israel is fair and accurate?
- 2.** How was the First Intifada a turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship?
- 3.** Eric Black describes two different depictions of the Intifada.

From an Israeli perspective, “a campaign of terrorism against Israel [was launched] against Israel by the population of the occupied territories. Israel responded with counterterrorism measures, based on a policy of using the least force necessary to pacify the territories.”

From a Palestinian perspective, “Equating any Palestinian action to liberate their homeland with “terrorism” is one of the favorite tricks of Israel’s leaders...When Israel, with the strongest military in the region, with U.S. arms and subsidies, with a nuclear arsenal, kills far more Arab civilians, women and children in bombing raids against refugee camps, it is only defending itself.”

Is there a way to empathize with both of these perspectives while also deeply understanding what Israel was up against?



Reflection Questions

- 1.** What do you think the average Israeli experienced during this tense time? What about the average Palestinian?
- 2.** What effect does the media have in shaping people's opinions? How do you see this today?
- 3.** Does learning about the First Intifada change your view of Israel in any way? How so?
- 4.** If you had to explain the First Intifada to someone who knew nothing about Israel, what would you say?
- 5.** During the intifada, and witnessing the violence, Israelis felt there could be only four possibilities for the Palestinian Arab population in the West Bank and Gaza:
 - a. Allow Palestinians to become full citizens of Israel with full democratic rights
 - b. Allow Palestinians to remain as residents but not citizens, and live as second class citizens
 - c. Encourage Palestinians to leave their homes and relocate to a neighboring Arab country
 - d. Return to the idea of separation of the two peoples which was examined in the 1930's and 1940's.

Which of these four responses would you advocate for after viewing the film and thinking over these questions?