

# Israel

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♥? In rocky relationship with Middle East Countries ★ Declared a state in 1948



## History

Israel was declared a state in 1948, but for thousands of years it has been the homeland of the Jewish people. Archaeological evidence places the Jews in Israel during Biblical times, and there has been a continuous Jewish presence in the land of Israel ever since.

## Land for Peace

Israeli leaders have demonstrated a willingness to give up land for peace. After the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, Israel completely withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula. In 2000, Israel offered to withdraw from all of Gaza and up to 97 percent of the West Bank. Then, in 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew all its troops and Jewish families from the Gaza Strip in an act of good faith. In 2008, Israel again offered roughly 98 percent of the West Bank as well as East Jerusalem for a future Palestinian capital, in return for recognition and peace.

## Religion

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by law. Five religions are officially recognized: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, the Baha'i faith, and Druzeism.



## Politics

Political parties in the 120-member Knesset are elected by popular vote with a dozen parties represented in a typical election.



## Education

Israel is home to some of the top research universities in the world, such as Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University and the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology.

