



Israel — Va-PoReg Country Report

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[for the time before 05/14/1948 see Palestine]

05/14/1948 Start Democratizing Regime: On this day, the British international mandate over Palestine expired. On the same day, David Ben Gurion, the executive head of the World Zionist Organization, issued the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq and Syria invaded former mandatory Palestine and attacked the new Israeli forces. This marked the beginning of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.¹ According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held in 1948. LIED and V-Dem do not provide data for Israel before 1948. In 1948, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as suggesting that political liberties are somewhat present. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive.

01/25/1949 End Democratizing Regime/Start Electoral Democracy: On this date, the first free and fair elections were held for the Constituent Assembly. Universal suffrage was granted since the founding of Israel.² Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED categorized all elections held since 1949 as competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI and CEI score all elections as free, fair and clean. Mapai and Mapam, two Socialist-Zionist parties, won the most seats in the elections. David Ben-Gurion, Mapai's leader, was appointed Prime Minister. He formed a coalition government which excluded the Stalinist Mapam. Chaim Weizmann was elected first President of Israel by the Knesset.³ From February to July 1949, Israel signed individual armistices with Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria equating to a permanent ceasefire. However, actual peace agreements were never signed. The armistices established Israel's new borders, known as the Green Line. Britain released over 2000 Jewish detainees and recognized the state of Israel.⁴ In 1950, the Knesset passed the so-called Law of Return, allowing all persons with Jewish ancestry to settle in Israel. Between 1948 and 1951, the Jewish population in Israel doubled. On 06/05/1967, the so-called Six-Day War broke out. It lasted until 06/10/1967 and was fought between Israel and a coalition consisting of mainly Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Many Palestinians living in Gaza, the West Bank and the Golan Heights were displaced.⁵ Israel emerged victorious from the Six-Day War, leaving it in control of the entire Sinai Peninsula. This sparked the War of Attrition between Israel and Egypt which lasted from 07/01/1967 until 08/07/1971 when an armistice agreement was signed.⁶ From 10/06/1973 until 10/25/1973, the so-called Yom Kipur War took place. It was fought between Israel and a coalition of Arab States led by Egypt and Syria. The main object of the conflict were territories in the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. An armistice was signed to end the conflict.⁷ On 06/07/1982, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) invaded southern Lebanon where the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) had been stationed. By invading and occupying Lebanon, Israel hoped to expel the PLO and Syrian influence in order to sign a peace treaty with a newly installed government led by President Bachir Gemayel. Israel's position was weakened after Gemayel's assassination in September 1982 and Israel began to gradually withdraw.⁸ From 12/08/1987 to 09/13/1993, the First Intifada, a series of violent riots and protests against the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank carried out by Palestinians in the Palestinian Territories and Gaza.⁹ The Second Intifada took place from 09/28/2000 to 02/08/2005. The results of these uprisings and violent clashes were the construction of the Israeli-West Bank barrier and a decrease of violence in the West

Bank. Additionally, Israel disengaged from the Gaza Strip.¹⁰ Following a Hezbollah cross-border raid, the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel war broke out on 07/12/2006 and lasted until 08/14/2006.¹¹ In 2014, the Gaza War occurred. It was a military operation launched by Israel against the Hamas in the Gaza Strip. It lasted for one and a half months and ended on 08/26/2014.¹² Despite the many military conflicts and power struggles, we code this regime as a democracy as power is passed on with respect to free and fair elections within the state of Israel. Political instability arose during the 2019-2022 political crisis. During this period, five elections to the Knesset were held. The last of these elections, which took place in 2022, allowed Netanyahu to return to power as Prime Minister. His coalition has been described as the most right-wing government the country has ever seen. The plans for judicial reform in 2023 were highly controversial with many calling out antidemocratic tendencies of the regime. Nevertheless, elections can still be considered free and fair.¹³ Israel operates as a parliamentary democracy featuring a multi-party system and autonomous institutions that safeguard political freedoms and civil liberties for the majority of its populace. As per FH's classification for 1972 to 1976, the country receives a score of 5 as free, which we categorize as rather free. As per FH's classification for the regime period until 2018, the country is considered free with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework. From 2018 onward, the country receives a score of 5 as free, which we categorize as rather free. However, LIED considers political liberties as absent for the entire time. Whereas V-Dem's PCLI scores them as somewhat present from 1948 to 1969 and in 2018. For the remaining years full political liberties were achieved. As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was on par with or below that of other branches, reflecting executive parity or subordination. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also comprehensive. Despite the judiciary's relatively active role in safeguarding minority rights, there has been discrimination against Arab and other minority groups by political leaders and certain segments of society. As a result of this discrimination, systematic inequalities have emerged across various sectors, encompassing infrastructure, criminal justice, education, and economic opportunity.¹⁴ On 10/09/2023 Israel declared war on Hamas, after Hamas attacked Israel on 07/10/2023 causing casualties and taking hostages. In addition, Israel imposed a total blockade of the Gaza Strip.¹⁵

Electoral Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Decker 2003, Peled 1992, Peled 2011, Reich 2002)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1948_Arab%E2%80%93Israeli_War#

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel_\(1948%E2%80%93present\)#Establishment_years](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel_(1948%E2%80%93present)#Establishment_years)

⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel_\(1948%E2%80%93present\)#Armistice_agreements](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel_(1948%E2%80%93present)#Armistice_agreements)

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six-Day_War#Occupied_territories_and_Arab_displaced_populations

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_Attrition#1967

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippur_War

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1982_Lebanon_War

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Intifada

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Intifada#Background

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Lebanon_War

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Gaza_War

¹³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel_\(1948%E2%80%93present\)#2020s%E2%80%93present](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel_(1948%E2%80%93present)#2020s%E2%80%93present)

¹⁴ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/israel/freedom-world/2023>

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaza_Strip

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