

You are in: [World: Middle East](#)

Front Page Thursday, 12 October, 2000, 19:23 GMT 20:23 UK

[World](#)[Africa](#)[Americas](#)[Asia-Pacific](#)[Europe](#)[Middle East](#)[South Asia](#)[From Our Own Correspondent](#)[Letter From](#)[America](#)[UK](#)[UK Politics](#)[Business](#)[Sci/Tech](#)[Health](#)[Education](#)[Entertainment](#)[Talking Point](#)[In Depth](#)[AudioVideo](#)

## Analysis: Israel's gravest crisis



There have been too many funerals - on both sides

By the BBC's Robin Lustig, who has spent the past week talking to Israelis and Palestinians for Radio 4's [World Tonight](#) programme

The people of Israel - Jewish Israelis and Arab Israelis alike - are facing one of the gravest crises in their history.

The violence of the past two weeks in Israel itself, together with daily clashes on the West Bank and in Gaza, has brought them to the brink of war.

Israel has faced many crises in its history. It was born out of war in 1948 and it has been threatened many times.

But this crisis is different: no army is massing on its borders - this time, the enemy is within.

Arab and Jew, often neighbours, rarely friends, now live in fear.

### Pessimism

I have never encountered such universal pessimism as there is now in Israel.

Usually at times of crisis, people say to you: "Yes, we are going through a bad period, but it will pass."

This time, they say: "It is very bad now, and we fear it will get



An ultra-orthodox Jew holds a baby - and a gun

Search BBC News Online

[Advanced search options](#)[Launch console for latest audio/video](#)[BBC ONE TV NEWS](#)[WORLD NEWS SUMMARY](#)[BBC NEWS 24 BULLETIN](#)[PROGRAMMES GUIDE](#)

### Full special report

#### Key stories

[Attack in pictures](#)[Israel's gravest crisis](#)[End of peace process?](#)[Anger in Arab world](#)[Q&A: What next?](#)

#### Viewpoints

[Palestinians' anger](#)['Myth of victimhood'](#)

#### Key players

[Barak's hopes fade](#)[Arafat on the edge](#)[Ariel Sharon: hardliner](#)[AUDIO VIDEO](#)[Best of BBC coverage](#)[INTERACTIVE](#)[Land and Conflict map](#)[Key Issues](#)[TALKING POINT](#)[Is the peace process dead?](#)

▶ The BBC's Robin Lustig talks to Israeli Jews in Jerusalem

▶ [real 28k](#)

▶ The BBC's Robin Lustig talks to Israeli Arabs in Nazareth

▶ [real 28k](#)

worse."

Every time there is a killing, there is a funeral. And at every funeral, emotions run high and anger flares.

Israeli troops - Jewish Israelis - have killed at least 14 Israeli citizens - Arab Israelis - over the past two weeks.



Israeli troops take cover at a shootout in Nablus, West Bank

The anger is everywhere.

In Nazareth, the hometown of Jesus Christ, now the biggest Arab town in Israel, hundreds of Jewish youths went on the rampage and attacked Arab targets.

Two Arabs died, while the police - according to Arab accounts - ignored the violence coming from Jewish "vigilantes".

### The 'beast' within

Over the past few days, I have spoken to dozens of ordinary Israelis, Jews and Arabs, and to senior officials on both sides.

All of them agree that this crisis is more serious and more dangerous than any that has gone before.

Faisal Hussein, the senior Palestinian official in Jerusalem, told me it may soon be time to demand an international military force to protect Palestinians from Israeli forces.

Yossi Beilin, the Israeli justice minister and architect of the Oslo peace accords of 1993, spoke despairingly of the 'beast' which lurks inside both Israelis and Palestinians and which must now urgently be brought back under control.



Anger at the funeral of Sami Abu-Jazer, a 9-year-old boy killed by Israelis



Armed Jews at the settlement of Yitzhar

### See also:

[12 Oct 00 | Middle East Israel hits back after killings](#)

[12 Oct 00 | Media reports Israeli deputy premier: 'It's war'](#)

[12 Oct 00 | Business Oil hits 10-year high](#)

[12 Oct 00 | Business Conflict hits Israeli shares](#)

[11 Oct 00 | Media reports Israel 'reaping Arab whirlwind'](#)

### Internet links:

[Hezbollah](#)

[Palestinian National Authority](#)

[UN Security Council](#)

[Israel Defence Forces](#)

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

### Other top Middle East stories:

[New raids as Mid-East crisis deepens](#)

[Blast holes US warship](#)

[Oil retreats from 10-year high](#)

[Battle for the cup in Lebanon](#)

[Israeli deputy premier: 'It's war'](#)

[Anger across Arab world](#)

[In pictures: Mid-East erupts](#)

[Israel's Arabs: Enemies within?](#)

Links to top Middle East stories are at the foot of the page.

Most worryingly of all, perhaps, is what seems to be a total loss of confidence on both sides in the idea that problems can be solved by negotiation.

Jewish Israelis say they have no faith in the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat - the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak says much the same.

Palestinians, meanwhile, say there is no point in negotiating while Israeli soldiers are using live ammunition and helicopter gunships to deal with protesters.

Neither Mr Barak nor Mr Arafat seems to be in control of events.

The streets are in charge. Vengeance is in the air and the violence looks set to continue.

I have never felt so fearful for the future of this blood-soaked region.



Vengeance is in the air

---

## Links to other Middle East stories



[^^ Back to top](#)

[News Front Page](#) | [World](#) | [UK](#) | [UK Politics](#) | [Business](#) | [Sci/Tech](#) | [Health](#) | [Education](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [In-Depth](#) | [Talking Point](#) | [Audio/Video](#)

---

[>To BBC Sport](#)