

# Newsbytes

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

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## Happy Birthday Israel!

Everything you ever wanted to know about Israel at 71

*As Israel celebrates its 71st anniversary, ISRAEL21c brings you a fascinating statistical snapshot of this remarkable country.*

By ISRAEL21c Staff    MAY 7, 2019

As night falls on May 8, 2019, Israel will kick off its 71st birthday celebration in the usual Yom Ha'atzmaut (Independence Day) style with cookouts, aerobatic shows, silly string, torch-lighting ceremonies and festive fireworks across the nation.

In only seven decades, Israel has proven it's possible to do the impossible at home and abroad, whether greening deserts with world-leading technological knowhow, rescuing people in distress in distant lands, or sending the smallest-ever spacecraft to the moon.

The list of Israeli accomplishments is truly staggering, especially considering the huge amount of resources that must be devoted to defense alone.

Last year, ISRAEL21c brought you a timeline, “70 Years of Israeli achievement,” and a fantastic companion film, “70 Years of Israeli Milestones in 165 Seconds.”

Now we've delved into the statistics to present a fun and fascinating by-the-numbers picture of Israel at 71.

### Who we are

As of May 2019, Israel's population is 9,009,000. About 74.2% are Jews, 21% Muslim or Christian Arabs, and the rest non-Arab Christians and others. (Central Bureau of Statistics)

Citizens aged 0-20 comprise 43% of Israel's population. The largest group within that category is 5- to 14-year-olds (18%). The latter category is largest in Jerusalem, making up 21% of its population. (Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem)

Jerusalem is Israel's most populous city, with about 883,000 residents. Tel Aviv-Yafo (Jaffa) comes in second (439,000) and Haifa third (280,000). (Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem)

In Tel Aviv, the largest population segment by age is 35-44 (about 17%), while in Haifa the two highest population groups are ages 5-14 and 35-44 (12% each). (Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem)

The most common family name in Israel is Cohen (one in 50 people). Agbaria is the most common surname among Muslims, Khoury among Christians and Halabi among Druze. (Central Bureau of Statistics)

The most common first names for boys in Israel are Muhammad, Yosef, Ariel, Omer, Adam, David, Daniel, Lavi, Eitan and Uri. The most popular names for girls are Tamar, Abigail, Miriam, Sarah, Adele, Yael, Noa, Shira, Noya and Lia. (Population and Immigration Authority, 2017-2018)

## **We're a high-tech superpower**

Israel hosts about 8,200 active high-tech companies. (IVC Research Center)

30 Israeli venture capital funds raised \$2.55 billion in 2018, the largest sum ever raised by Israeli VCs and 69% more than in 2017. (IVC)

Israel ranks fifth overall on the 2019 Bloomberg Innovation Index, moving up from #10 in 2018. In the R&D Intensity category, Israel ranks #1.

Israel's expenditure on research and development (R&D) as a percentage of its GDP (4.21%) is the highest in the world. (OECD)

Israel ranks #2 among top 10 countries for scientific research, based on the number of scientific research papers released, the number of patents registered, the percentage of GDP spent on R&D and the number of researchers per 1,000 people. (RS Components)

More than 350 multinational corporations have R&D centers in Israel, including IBM, Intel, Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Merck, HP Indigo, J&J, GE, Siemens, Qualcomm, Applied Materials and Samsung. Israel has the world's highest per capita number of such centers. (IVC, Ministry of Economy and Industry)

Every year, about 1,400 startups are founded in Israel and some 800 shut down. (Israel Innovation Authority)

Thirteen Israeli-founded companies with headquarters or development offices in Israel are "unicorns," privately held startups valued at \$1 billion or more: Payoneer, Taboola, Outbrain, Gett, Infinidat, ironSource, eToro, OrCam, Lemonade, Fiverr, JFrog, WalkMe and Via. (TechAviv)

The most lucrative acquisition of an Israeli company took place in 2017, when Intel bought Jerusalem-based Mobileye for \$15.3 billion.

Intel is making the largest-ever corporate investment in Israel: An \$11 billion production plant planned in Kiryat Gat.

Intel, which employs about 12,800 Israelis in five centers throughout the country, is the most active foreign corporate investor in Israel, putting \$435 million into more than 90 Israeli companies — \$120 million in 2018 alone. (IVC, Intel Capital Israel)

## **We're healthy, happy and long-lived**

Israel has the lowest rate of diet-related deaths in the world. (Global Burden of Disease Study, Institute

of Health Metrics and Evaluation)

Israel ranks fifth in the world for healthy longevity and 11th in the world for overall happiness. (2018 United Nations World Happiness Report)

Average life expectancy for Israeli men is 80.7, and 84.6 for women, as of 2017. (Central Bureau of Statistics)

Israel ranks 10th on the 2019 Bloomberg Healthiest Country Index. 88.6% of Israelis say they are pleased with their lives. (Central Bureau of Statistics) 85% of Israelis over the age of 20 feel safe walking alone in the dark in their residential area. (Central Bureau of Statistics)

### **We are a tree, fruit and veggie empire**

In 1948, about 2% of Israel was covered in trees. Now it's up to around 8.5%. Since its establishment in 1901, Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael-Jewish National fund (KKL-JNF) has planted more than 240 million trees in Israel.

Israel is one of the only countries in the world that ended the 20th century with more trees than it had at the start. (KKL-JNF)

As of the end of 2018, every Israeli has access annually to an average 152 kilograms of fruit and 154kg of vegetables. (Central Bureau of Statistics)

In 2017, the leading crops produced in Israel were potatoes, tomatoes, carrots and peppers on the vegetable side; and bananas, apples, avocados and grapes on the fruit front. (Central Bureau of Statistics)

Citrus fruit is Israel's largest agricultural export, adding up to \$230 million in 2017. The value of all Israel's fresh and processed agricultural exports was about \$2.2 billion in 2016. (Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development)

### **We have a flourishing tourism industry:**



The Western Wall in Jerusalem is Israel's most visited tourist site. Photo by Mendy Hechtman/FLASH90

In 2018, Israel welcomed a record-breaking 4,120,800 million incoming tourists.

The Western Wall in Jerusalem is the most-visited tourist site, followed by other sites in Jerusalem's Old City: the Jewish Quarter, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Via Dolorosa, Mount of Olives and the Tower of David Museum. Outside Jerusalem, the most popular tourist sites are Masada, the Church of the Annunciation, Tel Aviv Port, Capernaum and

Caesarea. (Ministry of Tourism)

In 2018, almost half of all Israelis (4.1 million) traveled abroad – 2.2 million of them once, and 1.9 million twice or more. (Central Bureau of Statistics)

The Israel Hotel Association lists 370 member hotels, encompassing a total of 54,864 rooms. This number

does not include hundreds of small boutique hotels and bed-and-breakfasts (tzimmers) across Israel.

The most expensive hotel rooms in Israel are the Noble Suite at Waldorf Astoria Jerusalem and the Presidential Suite at the Ritz Carlton Herzliya, each approximately \$5,000 per night in high season.

### **We invest heavily in water desalination and conservation**

Israeli households, industry and agriculture consume 2.1 billion cubic meters of water every year. (Mekorot National Water Carrier)

Israel recycles 87% of its wastewater for agriculture, much more than any other country in the world. Some 31% of irrigation water originates from wastewater treated at more than 150 plants. (Mekorot)

Sixty to 80% of Israel's municipal water, adjusted according to season and real-time demand, flows from large coastal desal plants in Sorek, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Palmachim and Hadera. (Mekorot) Sorek is the largest seawater reverse osmosis desalination plant in the world. The 100,000-square-meter facility can produce 624,000 cubic meters of water daily — 20% of domestic water consumption. (IDE Technologies)

### **We know the birds and the bees**

As of 2019, Israel counts some 545 resident species of birds. (Israeli Birding Portal)

Every year some 500 million birds of 150 to 200 species migrate across Israel in their twice-yearly pilgrimage to and from warmer climes in March and November.

Israel has about 500 beekeepers with a total of 110,000 hives. (Israeli Honey Board)

Israel's annual honey yield is about 3,000 tons. About 1,600 tons of honey is consumed by Israelis every Rosh Hashana to symbolize the hope of a sweet Jewish New Year ahead. (Israeli Honey Board)

### **We're extraordinarily well educated**

Twelve Israelis have been awarded Nobel prizes: S.Y. Agnon, Menachem Begin, Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, Daniel Kahneman, Aaron Ciechanover, Avram Hershko, Robert Aumann, Ada Yonath, Dan Shechtman, Michael Levitt and Arieh Warshel.

Israel has the highest number of engineers and scientists per capita. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Israel ranks third among OECD countries for the percent of its population that has attained higher education and fifth for its total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Israel boasts a literacy level of 97.8% of citizens above the age of 15. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Israel is home to 66 institutions of higher education: Seven research universities, one open university, 23 teacher-training colleges, 21 academic colleges and 14 private colleges. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)  
A small Israeli-Arab village in the Lower Galilee has one of the highest numbers of doctors per capita in the world.

### **Tel Aviv trivia**

Coastal Tel Aviv-Yafo boasts many distinctions apart from being the heart of Israel's startup culture.

Tel Aviv is the world's 10th most expensive city, tied with Los Angeles. (The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2019 Worldwide Cost of Living Survey)

Tel Aviv is Israel's most expensive residential area. The average price of owner-occupied dwellings was ₪2,176,700 (\$610,053) in the second quarter of 2018 (GlobalPropertyGuide) and 68 apartments priced at over ₪5 million (\$1.3 million) were sold in Tel Aviv during the first half of 2018 (madlan.co.il).

Time Out of London ranks Tel Aviv the best city in the Middle East.

There are 13 beaches along Tel Aviv-Yafo's coastline, visited by some 8.5 million people annually. (Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality) Tel Aviv has the highest number of pet dogs per capita in the world, at one pooch per every 17 residents. (Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality)

Tel Aviv has been called the world's top destination for vegan tourists (Daily Meal) and vegan capital of the world (The Independent). The highest concentration of vegan restaurants is in the Florentin neighborhood. Of the 21 Israeli residents listed on the Forbes 2019 World Billionaires list, many live in Tel Aviv — including the wealthiest Israeli man, Roman Abramovich (who was listed by Forbes as Russian although he got Israeli citizenship in 2018) and Shari Arison, the richest woman in Israel.

### **Random awesome factoids**

Israel has more than 230 museums, believed to be more museums per capita than any other country in the world. (CNN Travel)

Israel shipped \$61.9 billion worth of goods around the globe in 2018. The top five exports are gems and precious metals (24% of total exports), electrical machinery and equipment (13.8%), pharmaceuticals (9.1%), optical, technical and medical apparatus (8.6%) and machinery including computers (7.8%). (World's Top Exports)

There are more vegans (5%) and vegetarians (8%) per capita in Israel than anywhere else in the world.

Every day, Osem produces one million bags of Bamba, Israel's top-selling snack. Surveys show that 90% of Israeli families buy Bamba on a regular basis.

Israel has won nine Olympic medals since 1952: one gold in sailing, one silver in judo, and seven bronze (four in judo, two in sailing and one in canoeing).

Israeli rhythmic gymnast Linoy Ashram set a world record with a score of 20.65 points in the clubs event at the Rhythmic Gymnastics World Challenge Cup Championship in 2018.

Guinness World Records certified in April 2019 that Isaak Hayik of Or Yehuda, Israel, is the oldest soccer player in the world.

A new Guinness World Record was set for most people using virtual reality displays at the same time, when Israeli company Mobileye made a presentation to 1,867 business leaders at the 2017 YPO Edge conference in Vancouver, Canada.

# A Looming Crisis in the Mideast

by Ahmed Charai

May 9, 2019 at 7:00 am



<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/14193/looming-crisis-mideast>

Pictured: An illustrative image of rockets fired by Hamas toward Israel from the Gaza Strip. (Image source: IDF/Flickr)

After raining down some 600 rockets that killed four Israelis this past week, the Netanyahu government responded with overwhelming force, deploying jet fighters to carry out multiple air strikes, killing 23 Gaza residents including a pregnant woman, according to Palestinian Authority officials. (The pregnant woman and her child, however, are now confirmed as having been

killed by a Palestinian rocket that fell short.)

And, so, the cycle of violence makes another cruel revolution. What makes the events of the past week different from earlier rockets-and-retaliation episodes? The reaction of Arab intellectuals and other thought leaders in Muslim world.

Consider the tweet of Dr. Turki Al-Hamad, a well-known Saudi author and thinker. He tweeted: "It's a repeating loop: rockets [are fired] from Gaza into Israel, Israel bombs [Gaza], someone or other mediates, the fighting stops – and the common Palestinian folks pay the price. This is 'resistance,' my friend. Iran and Turkey are in trouble, and the Palestinians are paying the price."

Note his use of scare quotes around resistance and his willingness to blame Iran and Turkey, two Muslim-majority nations, instead of the Jewish state. This marks a real rhetorical change.

And many influential Arab voices echoed the thoughts of Dr. Al-Hamad.

Muhammad Aal Al-Sheikh, a frequent contributor to the Saudi daily Al-Jazirah, tweeted: "The Persian ayatollahs have instructed their servants, Hamas, to escalate [the conflict] with Israel, and they obeyed. The result is seven Palestinians dead, versus one Israeli wounded. [The death toll increased after his tweet.] The Persians are tightening the pressure on the U.S. and Israel in retaliation for Trump's decision, and the victims are the people of Gaza."

Over and over again, tweets from journalists and intellectuals in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states (except, notably, Qatar), show a shift in elite Arab opinion. Many blame Iran and cite the suffering of ordinary Palestinians, which is considerable. Air strikes have denied Palestinians access to clean drinking water, electricity to run their hospitals, and wrecked the roads which bring food and aid.

Few doubt the analysis that Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, is acting on orders from Tehran. Iran's Foreign Ministry Condemned what it called Israel's "savage" attack on Gaza, and blamed "unlimited US support" for Israel, the semi-official Fars news agency reported. Iran is a major funder for Hamas, Iran's goal is to be the vanguard of the Islamic world and to be the regional power. They want to be a pan-Islamic

power, so supporting groups like Hamas and Hezbollah is Iran's best way to transcend the Sunni-Shiite divide. Trump admin now appears to be reviving the 12-point plan presented by Mike Pompeo a year ago after America pulled out of the Iranian nuclear accord.

Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton, said the dispatch of the huge naval vessel is designed to deliver a message to Iran, and warned that any attack on American interests or those of its allies would be met by "unrelenting force."

## **To Give Young Arabs Hope**

While Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates remain major funders of the Palestinian Authority, its support for the Palestinian cause has become more complicated in recent years. Each nation has essentially made common cause with Israel against Iran. It is significant that the state-run media in Saudi and the UAE each sympathize with the Palestinian people, rather than their leaders.

This creates an important opening for President Trump's "deal of the century," whose primary architect is his son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner. It suggests that Kushner's plan may be able to attract significant Arab support and that the Saudis and Gulf Arab may pressure Palestinian officials to accept the plan, or, at least, sit down and negotiate its terms.

What is Kushner's plan? While no document or detailed account has emerged, Kushner himself discussed it in broad terms in a recent speech at the Washington Institute, a D.C.-based think tank.

"We've put together, I would say, more of an in-depth operational document that shows what we think is possible, how people can live together, how security can work, how interaction can work, and really, how you try to form the outline of what a brighter future can be," Kushner said. He said he has also created a "business plan" to create jobs and economic growth in the war-torn disputed territories. Kushner has avoided the term "two-state solution" and the plan is believed to be more focused on economics than political issues, like where to draw borders or the "right of return." Those two items stalled previous talks.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told CNN that Kushner's plan will be a departure from previous peace plans over the past 40 years. "Our idea is to put forward a vision that has ideas that are new, that are different, that are unique, that tries to reframe and reshape what's been an intractable problem that multiple administrations have grappled with, multiple administrations in Israel as well."

The plan is believed to include aid grants to the Palestinians in the range of \$30 to \$40 billion and make it easier for West Bank Palestinians to land jobs in Israel and to start businesses in Palestinian-controlled lands. But even these details are speculations.

All we can say with confidence is that the Kushner plan is built around economics, not politics. It began with a simple insight: for most Palestinians under the age of 40, the wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973 are ancient history. Instead of yearning for the political redemption of lost lands, younger Palestinians are demanding jobs, housing, education, and the hope of more prosperous lives. Why not, Kushner asked, build a new peace plan on the new generation rather than the demands of the older one?

Kushner is gambling that economic realities will trump political demands, which have defined the conflict for almost 70 years.

It is too soon to say whether this approach will work. But the tweets from Arab journalists, intellectuals and other thought leaders suggest a larger shift is underway on the Arab Street; that the greater Muslim world now cares more about the economic welfare of ordinary Palestinians than politics. If that is the case, the Kushner plan may have more of chance of success than many observers expect.

# Tornadoes have hit 6 states with unusual frequency in 2019

By John Roach, AccuWeather staff writer

Mississippi has experienced a historic start to the tornado season in 2019.

A state with an average of 21 tornadoes through April has seen roughly four times as many, with 83 through the first four months of the year, according to data from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The tornado data is preliminary and subject to revision.

The Magnolia State averages 45.1 tornadoes a year and has already been hit with more twisters this year than each of the last four full years. Mississippi suffered a worse start in 2011 when a whopping 131 tornadoes touched down through April, largely a result of the four-day 2011 Super Outbreak that struck the southeastern U.S., resulting in \$11 billion in damages and leaving an estimated 321 people dead.

Other states have experienced an above-normal start, too; Alabama (71 tornadoes compared to an average of 22 through April), Georgia (53 compared to 14) and Missouri (44 compared to 16) also have been uncharacteristically hard hit early. Other less tornado-prone states with above-normal activity so far include Virginia (19 compared to an average of 3), and Pennsylvania (15 compared to 2). The list of top 10 states with the most tornadoes in 2019 appears at the bottom of this article.

“This season is being remembered so far by what happened in the early part of March with the big tornado outbreak during which 23 people died -- that surpassed the death toll [of 10] easily from all of last year,” said AccuWeather Lead Long-Range Meteorologist Paul Pastelok. “Some very destructive tornadoes have already been seen this season across the South and Southeast and we do feel it’s still going to be rough through the early part of May.” Mississippi had 44 confirmed tornadoes on April 18 and 13 on April 13, including three EF2 tornadoes in Vicksburg.

The number of tornadoes that have hit some areas of Mississippi, such as Vicksburg, is “absolutely unprecedented,” Vicksburg Mayor George Flaggs, a 66-year-old lifelong resident, told AccuWeather. “In 1953 we had a devastating one hit the downtown area and that probably impacted the city the most. But this year’s tornadoes [on April 13] were more widespread than that -- it hit the city, the business district and then residential areas.”

There have been 545 tornadoes nationally through May 6, according to NOAA. Historically, an average of 321 tornadoes occur in the U.S. through the end of April, based on a 25-year average. AccuWeather predicts there will be roughly 325 tornadoes nationally in May and roughly 200 in June. The 25-year average is 269 for May and 229 for June as tornado season typically eases up later in the summer and into the fall.

That doesn’t mean places like Vicksburg won’t be ready for anything. “Vicksburg people are resilient -- they tend to turn toward each other in times of crisis,” Flaggs told AccuWeather. “We have our emergency management team keeping people alert through texts, emails and all of social media. We prepare as best as we can.”

Here are the top 10 states hit by tornadoes in 2019. The NOAA data is preliminary through May 6 and not confirmed.

Mississippi - 83	Alabama - 71	Texas - 62	Georgia - 53	Missouri - 44	Louisiana - 28
Oklahoma - 24	Kansas - 20	Virginia - 19			