

Oslo Peace Accords

The Oslo Peace Accords are a pair of agreements signed between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). They were signed by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, the leader of the PLO.

There were two agreements that were signed: The Oslo I Accord signed at Washington D.C in 1993 and the Oslo II Accord signed at Taba, Egypt in 1995. The accords established limited Palestinian self-rule in parts of Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The Oslo Peace Accord has been in the news lately following the announcement of the United State's Middle East Peace Plan, the Palestinian authorities planned to pull out of the Oslo Peace Accord.

This article will further discuss the Oslo Peace Accord within the context of the IAS Exam.

Background of the Oslo Peace Accords

The Oslo Accords shows remarkable similarity to the Camp David Accords. The Camp David Accords were a series of agreements which normalised relations between Egypt and Israel in 1978, following the Yom Kippur War 5 years prior.

The Camp David Accord themselves envisioned autonomy for the local Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza. There were concerns about continued Israeli settlement in the West Bank with the number of settlers rising. But the Israeli government refused to talk to the Palestinian Liberation Organization, because they considered the PLO a terrorist organisation. As a result the Camp David Accords left this issue on the backburner.

The situation changed in the 1990s when Israel decided to recognise the PLO as the representatives of the Palestinians and began to negotiate directly with them. Like the Camp David Accords years before, the Oslo Accords were aimed at an interim agreement allowing for initial steps, followed by a complete settlement in a 5-year period.

Objectives of the Oslo Peace Accords

Following secret negotiations in Oslo, the State of Israel recognised the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian People and as an equal partner in negotiations. The accords that would be formulated had the following objectives

The Oslo process started after secret negotiations in Oslo, resulting in the recognition by the PLO of the State of Israel and the recognition by Israel of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and as a partner in negotiations.

- Facilitating Palestinian Self Government
- Withdrawal of Israeli Military from Palestinian Territories, and security duties to be handed over to the Palestinian authorities for maintaining security.
- A protocol for free elections in Palestinian territories was to be agreed upon.
- Building of a framework of an independent Palestinian state.

What did the Oslo Peace Accords achieve?

In 1993 the representatives of the Israeli government and the PLO arrived in Norway to begin the negotiations. Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yassir Arafat led their respective delegations. Delegates from the Norwegian government, led by deputy foreign minister Jan Egeland acted as mediators between the two sides.

The Oslo I accords also set up a follow-up agreement for the Oslo II accords which included discussions of how the city of Jerusalem would be governed or rather, who would govern it as both sides claimed it as their respective capital. Other issues included borders, securities and the rights of Israeli settlers in the West Bank

The Oslo II accord gave the Palestinian Authority limited control over the Gaza and the West Bank regions, while allowing Israel to annex much of the West Bank, and established the groundwork for mutual cooperation between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority. One of the provisions of the accords prohibited both sides from committing violence against each other.

Result of the Oslo Peace Accord

Despite the hope that the peace between Israel and Palestine would become a reality, it became immediately apparent that this was not to be the case. The Palestinian authorities blamed Israel for not living up to some of the agreements of the Oslo Accords. Especially the agreement on troop withdrawal.

Although the settlement of Israelis in the West Bank was slowed at the behest of the United States, they began picking up in the early 2000s.

At the same time, it was found that the violence between Israelis and Palestinians had escalated since the accords were signed. The violence escalated whenever the Palestinian Authority gained power leading to the susceptibility that they had failed to control Gaza and the West Bank effectively.

The negotiators from both sides did reconvene at Camp David but no headway was made on a more comprehensive treaty and the talks collapsed as a result.

Matters came to a head, when in September 2000, the Palestinian militants declared a “Second Intifada”, calling for an escalation of violence against Israelis. The resulting violence ended any hopes of peace and no solid negotiations have been held between the two sides since then.

Despite many provisions of the Oslo Accords have been implemented, many others have been abandoned in their entirety