INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SIMULATION
MIDDLE EAST SCENARIO

History of Israel and Palestine

The division of the former British mandate of Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 is at the heart of Middle Eastern politics. The diaspora of Jewish people in the post WWII period, following the holocaust, led to the creation of Israel in 1948. This resulted in the displacement of Palestinians. Half a million Palestinian refugees fled Israel to neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. When creating the borders of the Middle Eastern states, access to water became a major factor in determining the boundaries for each state.

Arab/Israeli Crisis 1967.

During the 1967 Six-day war Israel seized Gaza and the Sinai from Egypt in the south, the Golan Heights from Syria in the North, and it pushed Jordanian forces out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. During the 1967 Arab/Israeli conflict, access to water became a major concern. Irrigation systems and the building of dams have put pressure on a delicate ecosystem, causing environmental and health problems.

Middle East in a global context.

Ethnic tensions in the region, mixed with the Western demand for secular, democratic states in the Middle East, have been received with opposition. The United Nations Security Council adopted its first resolution calling for a separate Israeli and Palestinian state on March 12, 2002. The United Nations is concerned for the safety of all civilians in the region.

Kurdish Minorities.

Sixty years ago the Middle East region was still controlled by the British and French. While the history of Jewish and Arab relations date back many centuries, the countries in the Middle East are relatively new. Therefore, many ethnic groups reside in different states and are not united under one nation. The Kurdish people are ethnic minorities living in Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq. Each of these countries has resisted the Kurdish movement to create an independent Kurdistan.

Present Situation.

The current situation and rise in conflict in the Middle East came after a short lived period of optimism and peace. The intifada (uprising) developed after Ariel Sharon toured the al-Aqsa/Temple Mount, a holy site to both Muslim and Jewish people. In addition, after the post September 11th attacks in the United States, American foreign policy has tightened with regards to the Middle East. The ‘War on Terrorism’, starting in Afghanistan with the removal of the Taliban regime and the Al-Qaeda training camps, has now moved towards possible regime change in Iraq.
During the upcoming conference each country and organization should present possible resolutions for the situation in the Middle East. You will need to learn about the various viewpoints on as many issues that affect your country and organization. The situation presented to you is based on historical facts and current news sources. This is by no means an extensive or detailed account of the situation. It is your job to research the issues in detail. I will be providing you with readings, background information, and documentaries. You are also encouraged to bring in sources that you think would benefit the other participants.

As the situation unfolds in the classroom you should follow the news stories. It is important that you look at a variety of sources. Different newspapers and news networks present different perspectives and ideologies. For example, if you are researching the issue of water shortages in the Middle East, you may choose to look at what the *The Economist* and the *The Ecologist* say before presenting your research.