



## Arab-Israeli Fatalities Rank 49th

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[Daniel Pipes](#) and Gunnar Heinsohn

Colaboraciones n° 1999

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The Arab-Israeli conflict is often said, not just by extremists, to be the world's most dangerous conflict – and, accordingly, Israel is judged the world's most belligerent country.

For example, British prime minister [Tony Blair](#) told the U.S. Congress in July 2003 that “Terrorism will not be defeated without peace in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine. Here it is that the poison is incubated. Here it is that the extremist is able to confuse in the mind of a frighteningly large number of people the case for a Palestinian state and the destruction of Israel.” This viewpoint leads many [Europeans](#), among others, to see Israel as the most menacing country on earth. But is this true? It flies in the face of the well-known pattern that [liberal](#)

[democracies](#) do not aggress; plus, it assumes, wrongly, that the Arab-Israeli conflict is among the most costly in terms of lives lost.

To place the Arab-Israeli fatalities in their proper context, one of the two co-authors, [Gunnar Heinsohn](#), has compiled statistics to rank conflicts since 1950 by the number of human deaths incurred. Note how far down the list is the entry in bold type.

### **Conflicts since 1950 with over 10,000 Fatalities\***

- 1 40,000,000 Red China, 1949-76 (outright killing, manmade famine, Gulag)
- 2 10,000,000 Soviet Bloc: late Stalinism, 1950-53; post-Stalinism, to 1987 (mostly Gulag)

- 3 4,000,000 Ethiopia, 1962-92: Communists, artificial hunger, genocides
- 4 3,800,000 Zaire (Congo-Kinshasa): 1967-68; 1977-78; 1992-95; 1998-present
- 5 2,800,000 Korean war, 1950-53
- 6 1,900,000 Sudan, 1955-72; 1983-2006 (civil wars, genocides)
- 7 1,870,000 Cambodia: Khmer Rouge 1975-79; civil war 1978-91
- 8 1,800,000 Vietnam War, 1954-75
- 9 1,800,000 Afghanistan: Soviet and internecine killings, Taliban 1980-2001
- 10 1,250,000 West Pakistan massacres in East Pakistan (Bangladesh 1971)
- 11 1,100,000 Nigeria, 1966-79 (Biafra); 1993-present
- 12 1,100,000 Mozambique, 1964-70 (30,000) + after retreat of Portugal 1976-92
- 13 1,000,000 Iran-Iraq-War, 1980-88
- 14 900,000 Rwanda genocide, 1994
- 15 875,000 Algeria: against France 1954-62 (675,000); between Islamists and the government 1991-2006 (200,000)
- 16 850,000 Uganda, 1971-79; 1981-85; 1994-present
- 17 650,000 Indonesia: Marxists 1965-66 (450,000); East Timor, Papua, Aceh etc, 1969-present (200,000)
- 18 580,000 Angola: war against Portugal 1961-72 (80,000); after Portugal's retreat (1972-2002)
- 19 500,000 Brazil against its Indians, up to 1999
- 20 430,000 Vietnam, after the war ended in 1975 (own people; boat refugees)
- 21 400,000 Indochina: against France, 1945-54
- 22 400,000 Burundi, 1959-present (Tutsi/Hutu)
- 23 400,000 Somalia, 1991-present
- 24 400,000 North Korea up to 2006 (own people)
- 25 300,000 Kurds in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, 1980s-1990s
- 26 300,000 Iraq, 1970-2003 (Saddam against minorities)
- 27 240,000 Columbia, 1946-58; 1964-present
- 28 200,000 Yugoslavia, Tito regime, 1944-80
- 29 200,000 Guatemala, 1960-96
- 30 190,000 Laos, 1975-90
- 31 175,000 Serbia against Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, 1991-1999
- 32 150,000 Romania, 1949-99 (own people)
- 33 150,000 Liberia, 1989-97
- 34 140,000 Russia against Chechnya, 1994-present
- 35 150,000 Lebanon civil war, 1975-90
- 36 140,000 Kuwait War, 1990-91
- 37 130,000 Philippines: 1946-54 (10,000); 1972-present (120,000)
- 38 130,000 Burma/Myanmar, 1948-present
- 39 100,000 North Yemen, 1962-70
- 40 100,000 Sierra Leone, 1991-present
- 41 100,000 Albania, 1945-91 (own people)
- 42 80,000 Iran, 1978-79 (revolution)
- 43 75,000 Iraq, 2003-present (domestic)
- 44 75,000 El Salvador, 1975-92
- 45 70,000 Eritrea against Ethiopia, 1998-2000
- 46 68,000 Sri Lanka, 1997-present
- 47 60,000 Zimbabwe, 1966-79; 1980-present
- 48 60,000 Nicaragua, 1972-91 (Marxists/natives etc.)
- 49 51,000 Arab-Israeli conflict 1950-present

- 50 50,000 North Vietnam, 1954-75 (own people)
- 51 50,000 Tajikistan, 1992-96 (secularists against Islamists)
- 52 50,000 Equatorial Guinea, 1969-79
- 53 50,000 Peru, 1980-2000
- 54 50,000 Guinea, 1958-84
- 55 40,000 Chad, 1982-90
- 56 30,000 Bulgaria, 1948-89 (own people)
- 57 30,000 Rhodesia, 1972-79
- 58 30,000 Argentina, 1976-83 (own people)
- 59 27,000 Hungary, 1948-89 (own people)
- 60 26,000 Kashmir independence, 1989-present
- 61 25,000 Jordan government vs. Palestinians, 1970-71 (Black September)
- 62 22,000 Poland, 1948-89 (own people)
- 63 20,000 Syria, 1982 (against Islamists in Hama)
- 64 20,000 Chinese-Vietnamese war, 1979
- 65 19,000 Morocco: war against France, 1953-56 (3,000) and in Western Sahara, 1975-present (16,000)
- 66 18,000 Congo Republic, 1997-99
- 67 10,000 South Yemen, 1986 (civil war)

\*All figures rounded. Sources: Brzezinski, Z., *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty-first Century*, 1993; Courtois, S., *Le Livre Noir du Communisme*, 1997; Heinsohn, G., *Lexikon der Völkermorde*, 1999, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Heinsohn, G., *Söhne und Weltmacht*, 2006, 8th ed.; Rummel, R., *Death by Government*, 1994; Small, M. and Singer, J.D., *Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars 1816-1980*, 1982; White, M., [“Death Tolls for the Major Wars and](#)

[Atrocities of the Twentieth Century,”](#) 2003.

This grisly inventory finds the total number of deaths in conflicts since 1950 numbering about 85,000,000. Of that sum, the deaths in the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1950 include 32,000 deaths due to Arab state attacks and 19,000 due to Palestinian attacks, or 51,000 in all. Arabs make up roughly 35,000 of these dead and Jewish Israelis make up 16,000.

These figures mean that deaths Arab-Israeli fighting since 1950 amount to just 0.06 percent of the total number of deaths in all conflicts in that period. More graphically, only 1 out of about 1,700 persons killed in conflicts since 1950 has died due to Arab-Israeli fighting.

(Adding the 11,000 killed in the Israeli war of independence, 1947-49, made up of 5,000 Arabs and 6,000 Israeli Jews, does not significantly alter these figures.)

In a different perspective, some 11,000,000 Muslims have been violently killed since 1948, of which 35,000, or 0.3 percent, died during the sixty years of fighting Israel, or just 1 out of every 315 Muslim fatalities. In contrast, over 90 percent of the 11 million who perished were killed by fellow Muslims.

*Comments:* (1) Despite the relative non-lethality of the Arab-Israeli conflict, its renown, notoriety, complexity, and diplomatic centrality will probably give it continued out-sized importance in the global imagina-

tion. And Israel's reputation will continue to pay the price. (2) Still, it helps to point out the 1-in-1,700 statistic as a corrective, in the hope that

one day, this reality will register, permitting the Arab-Israeli conflict to subside to its rightful, lesser place in world politics.