

# Israel



If Israel had anything to fear from the Arab Spring and the Syrian uprisings, events in the latter part of 2012 and 2013 suggested that uncertainty and confusion had become its biggest concern.

## Palestinian talks

In mid-2013 it looked as though the diplomatic efforts of US secretary of state John Kerry might possibly be succeeding. The word was that after his sixth trip to the region in as many months, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian leader in the West Bank, might be edging towards the negotiating table. Mr Kerry's efforts had at least produced a climate of 'wait and see' rather than the complete indifference that had prevailed since President Obama's brave promises on his first visit to the region in 2008. Nevertheless, no obvious solution to the world's most intractable question lies in sight and its tragic humanitarian crises continues unchecked.

## Europe joins in

But Mr Kerry was not acting alone. The European Union (EU) had made numerous attempts over the years to involve itself in the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Always it let itself be too easily rebuffed and – notionally – the Americans remained in charge. Which is why there has been virtually zero progress. If negotiations were paralysed it was clearly in Israel's interest that they were. Settlement expansion and construction could continue uninterrupted. This is the source of the paralysis that has beset the Mideast. Israel has long had its way with Washington. Europe, in the shape of Messrs Van Rompuy, Barroso and Ashton, showed not indifference but naiveté and even incompetence. Brussels initiatives seemed to be limited to announcements that it would draft regulations requiring exports from the occupied territories to be so labelled. The EU also proposed to issue guidelines barring European institutions from funding any Israeli organisation – private, public or NGO – that was engaged in operations beyond the so-called Green Line, *de facto* Israel's internationally recognised borders before the 1967 war. What does this mean? At face value this doesn't seem to be a big deal. Europeans were certainly entitled to know if they were buying products that Israelis were producing on the West Bank. But few of them would know whether this was a good thing or not. However, by alluding to the 1967 Israeli borders, Europe had touched a number of nerves. Such an observation would have been unthinkable from either Hillary Clinton or even John Kerry. This established an EU position that differed from that of the US. And in the United

## KEY FACTS

**Official name:** Medinat Israel (State of Israel)

**Head of State:** President Shimon Peres (Likud) (since July 15 2007)

**Head of government:** Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (from 1 Apr 2009, re-elected 22 Jan 2013)

**Ruling party:** Coalition led by Likud Yisrael Beiteinu and including Hatnuah (The Movement) and others.

**Area:** 20,700 square km (excluding occupied territories)

**Population:** 7.70 million (2012)

**Capital:** Jerusalem (Israel regards the entire city as its capital although it is not recognised by the UN); Tel Aviv, administrative and diplomatic centre

**Official language:** Hebrew

**Currency:** New shekel (NIS) = 100 agorot

**Exchange rate:** NIS3.57 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

**GDP per capita:** US\$31,296 (2012)\*

**GDP real growth:** 3.10% (2012)\*

**GDP:** US\$240.89 billion (2012)\*

**Labour force:** 3.64 million (2012)\*

**Unemployment:** 6.85% (2012)\*

**Inflation:** 1.71% (2012)\*

**Balance of trade:** -US\$9.34 billion (2012)\*

\* estimated figure

## Nota

Since this article was written, an agreement with Iran was signed in Geneva on 24 November. Under the agreement Iran agreed to curb some of its nuclear activities in return for some US\$7 billion in sanctions relief. US secretary of state, John Kerry, said it was a first step in making sure Iran could not have nuclear weapons. Israel called it an 'historic mistake'. President Netanyahu said that 'We cannot and will not allow a regime that calls for the destruction of Israel to obtain the means to achieve this goal.'

Nations the EU counts for 27 votes; these, on top of the large number of countries whose sympathies lie with the Palestinians, add up to a substantial body of opinion, one that even the coolly indifferent President Obama can neither ignore, nor – possibly – contradict. In simple terms, what the EU had threatened to do was to confine Israel to its internationally recognised legal borders. Settlements or no settlements.

### Still the 'honest broker'?

The US once liked to call itself the region's 'honest broker', gamely holding the balance between the Palestinians and the Israelis. By the beginning of 2013 those days were over. At the beginning of 2013 the very idea seemed vainglorious. Or did it? Israel might have been able to hear what the EU was saying, but when it came to listening there was only one show in town. Washington, for Israel, was where it was at. At which point, enter John Kerry and his hyperactive diplomacy. If serious talks – rather than 'talks about talks' – were to get anywhere at all, many seasoned observers considered it unlikely that they would come from any bilateral talks.

The Netanyahu government claimed to be shocked by the EU statement. Shock was probably the wrong word – surprised probably described things better. Israel was well aware of the 'legal' position. It was reported in the London *Financial Times* that Mr Netanyahu had been on the telephone to Brussels in an effort to achieve at least a postponement of the new EU regulations. The *Financial Times*

reported that Mr Netanyahu had even been 'pleading'. Some Israelis claimed that the EU was threatening the existence of Israel itself. Former Israeli foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, pointed out that the EU had at least implicitly endorsed the sovereignty of pre-1967 Israel. In Washington, the EU position was described as 'unhelpful'. Unhelpful to whom was not made clear.

Perhaps to prevent the Israelis from feeling too isolated, the EU later took the step of declaring that the armed wing of the Lebanese Hezbollah is a terrorist organisation. This at least aligned the EU with the otherwise rather lonely US position. To what extent the EU position influenced Israel in deciding to have talks with the Palestinians was not clear. Secretary of state Kerry had certainly worn his shoe soles thin as he shuttled backwards and forwards. In agreeing to talks about talks, Mr Netanyahu certainly seemed to have made some concessions. However, for any talks to succeed, Netanyahu knows that he faces the entrenched resistance of many Israelis. Having seen what happened in Gaza, they are anxious to prevent anything similar taking place on the West Bank. The idea of reverting to 1967 borders, even if it is a 'land for peace' deal, is simply anathema.

### Friends and neighbours?

Confirming the well known theory that countries don't have allies, they have interests, many Israelis feel more welcome in certain Arabian Gulf states than they do in some parts of the EU. Although Israel and the Arabian Gulf states have not yet

established normal diplomatic relations they have gone a long way in developing shared interests since the Oslo accords were signed in 1993. A first step was that of lifting the boycott of countries that traded with Israel. As Land Rovers (boycotted for some years) appeared on Gulf streets, so, a few years later, Israel opened trade missions in Qatar and Oman. The two top export categories from Israel to the Gulf – sold through third parties and shell companies – are security equipment and technology. When the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* published a report on Israeli arms sales to Arab and Muslim countries, there were flat denials from Egypt and Pakistan. The United Arab Emirates however, which is known to have purchased drone technology, maintained a diplomatic silence.

In 2002, Saudi Arabia went as far as proposing a so-called Arab Peace Initiative, which envisaged a two-state settlement based on Israel's 1967 borders, in return for full economic and diplomatic normalisation. In 2012 Riyadh resurrected its 2002 proposal, even accepting the need for land swaps, a further concession to Israel. Unsurprisingly, in public at least, Israel never responded to the proposal. Nor did Israel show much in the way of concern over diplomatic niceties when Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency calmly assassinated Hamas's security chief in a Dubai hotel room in 2010. Israel has, however, relaxed its opposition to arms sales from Washington to the Gulf states. More, it has shared with them sensitive intelligence on Iran's nuclear activities.

Israel's perceptions of how the US can, or may, treat its 'allies' have also shifted somewhat since the fall of former Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak. The Israelis saw in the shift in the US approach the betrayal of a loyal and long standing 'ally', or client. Alongside Israel, in the Middle East, Hosni Mubarak had been one of the US's two strongest allies. His opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood and his mistrust of both Hamas and Iran had served the US – and Israel – well. Egypt's likely replacement as the region's Muslim strong man did not suit either Israel or the US. Saudi Arabia was perceived to be uncomfortably close to conservative, often extreme, Islamist groups. Both the US and Israel preferred autocratic neighbours; the Arab populism once exemplified by Egypt's General Nasser had been of concern to US and Israeli foreign policy since 1948. However, Israel's ability to influence the domestic politics of Arab countries remains limited. Verbal support was given to

## KEY INDICATORS

## Israel

	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	7.11	7.27	7.43	*7.59	*7.70
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	202.10	194.80	213.10	242.90	*240.89
GDP per capita	US\$	28,409	26,797	28,686	31,986	*31,296
GDP real growth	%	4.0	0.8	4.8	4.7	*3.1
Inflation	%	4.6	3.3	2.7	3.5	*1.7
Unemployment	%	6.1	7.6	6.7	7.0	*6.8
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	56,638.0	45,898.0	55,674.0	62,854.9	*62,320.6
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	64,308.0	45,993.0	58,039.0	71,931.8	*71,665.5
Balance of trade	US\$m	-7,670.0	-96.0	-2,365.0	-9,076.9	*-9,344.9
Current account	US\$m	1,422.0	7,486.0	8,108.0	3,384.0	*-197.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	42,513.2	60,611.4	70,907.3	77,941.8	*75,907.6
Foreign exchange	US\$m	42,324.0	59,091.0	69,265.0	76,100.0	*74,040.0
Exchange rate	per US\$	3.59	3.93	3.74	3.51	3.84

\* estimated figure

Egypt's General Abdel Fatah al Sisi when he deposed the Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi. It later emerged that the Egyptian army generals and Israeli advisors were in contact during the military *coup*.

One commentator argued that following the events in Egypt, Israel and Saudi Arabia had become closer in their respective perceptions of the region than either of them was to the US. The covert Saudi-Israeli support for the *coup* in Egypt 'challenged a central tenet of American policy in the Middle East: that stable government and peace depend on democracy'. The Arab Spring's disparate efforts to introduce democracy to the Middle East and North Africa appeared to have fallen over, at least in Egypt.

In Syria, from an Israeli perspective, things weren't much better. Saudi Arabia and Israel have been working together, albeit separately, their messages conveyed by 'friends' in think tanks in Washington and Doha without any need for face-to-face meetings. At first glance, the Saudi-Israeli opposition to the *éradicateurs* (a French term for those who see no scope for compromise with Islamist politicians, refusing talks with their representatives and often opting for their elimination by force) in Damascus may seem to contradict their support for the same *éradicateurs* in Cairo. Paradoxically, the Brotherhood is among the leading opposition forces inside Syria. Egypt's military commander, General Sisi, opposes military action against Assad, possibly recognising a kindred autocrat. The equation is complex: Saudi Arabia is concerned to wrest Syria away from Iranian influences, a view Israel shares as long as it means that Syria will no longer be a conduit between Iran and Hezbollah. What Israel could not accept would be a Sunni extremist Syria, providing support and shelter for al Qaeda and its associates. Writing in the *New York Times* Edward Luttwak pointed out that 'by tying down Mr Assad's army and its Iranian and Hezbollah allies in a war against al Qaeda-aligned extremist fighters, four of Washington's enemies will be engaged in war among themselves and prevented from attacking Americans or America's allies.'

### Iran talks?

In an October 2013 interview with the London BBC Persian TV service, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu warned of an 'immortal Iran', claiming that Iranians 'deserved better' than their current government and that their lives could get worse if the country gained nuclear

weapons. 'If they get nuclear weapons, this brutal regime will be immortal, like North Korea.'

In his interview – his first with an international Persian-language media organisation – Mr Netanyahu was quoted as saying that 'I'm 64 years old this month. I've decided to just say it like it is.' He added that the recently elected Iranian leader Mr Rouhani, did not 'represent the Iranian people. He represents a desire for change, but it wasn't expressed in a free open election. I don't think he has the mandate to change the real decisions that are made by Khamenei. Khamenei wants nuclear weapons for Iran.'

Shortly after his election as President, Mr Rouhani said that he had 'full power and complete authority' to strike a nuclear deal. However, as Mr Netanyahu said, the ultimate power in Iran lies with the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. In surprisingly mollified tones (which suggested he might have been under some pressure from the White House), Mr Netanyahu told the BBC Persian service that people, himself included, wanted to see 'a diplomatic solution to end Iran's quest for nuclear weapons' adding 'But I want to see a real solution. Not a fake one.' That, said Mr Netanyahu, 'would involve the complete dismantling of Iran's ability to make nuclear weapons.'

Subsequently, the Israeli Prime Minister announced that he would be willing to speak by telephone with President Rouhani. However, he emphasised that he would simply repeat to the Iranian leader what he already knew: that Tehran should stop its nuclear programme. In his October UN General Assembly speech, Mr Netanyahu had called the new Iranian leader 'a wolf in sheep's clothing' intent on deceiving the international community in a bid to relieve the sanctions which were hurting the Iranian economy while keeping their nuclear bomb project intact. In an interview with National Public Radio, Mr Netanyahu had gone so far as saying he would even consider a meeting with Mr Rouhani. There has been no contact between the Israeli and Iranian leaderships since the 1979 Iranian revolution, making the two countries *de facto* regional enemies. Thus, on both sides the fear of the unknown began to prevail. Israel-watchers suspected that Mr Netanyahu's offer targeted not so much Mr Rouhani, but the Israeli electorate, where he was considered by many to have become a rejectionist, not only in the case of Iran, but also in dealings with the Palestinians. Mr Netanyahu has been criticised

at home for isolating Israel over the Iran issue.

Writing in the respected Israeli daily *Haaretz*, Amos Harel noted that the Israeli response to the 'time is running out' argument was surprising. Although public speeches by Israeli leaders still clung to the 'time is running out' party line, Israel was apparently opposed to anything that resembled a 'quick fix', believing a better option to be to tread carefully with the new Iranian administration – and hold more rounds of talks – to ensure that an unsatisfactory deal was not stitched together. Only Tehran, in the view of Mr Harel, 'will benefit from haste'.

Another factor in the argument was the rocky state of the Iranian economy in the face of extensive Western sanctions. This, it was thought, placed Iran at a negotiating disadvantage. The Israeli view was that Mr Rouhani had found himself elected Iranian President largely due to a groundswell of Iranian public opinion that sanctions were proving too much. Israel much preferred to see continued pressure by way of sanctions as a lever to squeeze concessions from Tehran. The keenness of the US and Europe to reach an agreement might prove reassuring to the Iranians, possibly even encouraging them to toughen their negotiating position.

Israel's foreign relations position has weakened steadily since the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011. Relatively friendly nations such as Turkey and Egypt have turned away and in both Europe and the US the perception has begun to prevail that Israel's apparent reluctance to talk to the Palestinians, alongside the continued construction of illegal settlements on the West Bank and Israel's often insensitive treatment of Palestinians, was unacceptable. The tenor of Mr Netanyahu's BBC interview in Washington suggested that one or two home truths had been taken on board. Israel found itself having to stiffen Western resolve in dealing with Iran. As Israel insisted that the West take its time, the question was just how much influence an isolated Israel actually had. Mr Netanyahu's veiled threats that Israel would act alone if necessary to remove the Iranian nuclear threat now risked becoming empty menaces. An isolated Israel, according to Mr Harel, was unlikely to take military action alone and a cooler, war-weary US government appeared to be less than enthusiastic about undertaking any military action in Iran. Unofficially, Mr Harel reported, Israel was ready for compromise. Based on what was reported from after the Geneva P5+1 (US, Russia,

China, UK, and France, plus Germany) talks on the nuclear issue, the Iranians 'were ready for compromise on restraining their enrichment capacity in exchange for quick relief from the sanctions.' However, it was also reported that Iran was refusing demands to close the enrichment facilities, remove all enriched uranium from Iranian territory or allow surprise visits of their facilities by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors. Remarks made by US President Obama after Mr Rouhani's speech to the United Nations, suggested that the US might be prepared to allow Iran to maintain a minimal amount of enrichment capacity. Were Iran and the Western countries to agree to that (it appears that Russia and China will sign off on any compromise acceptable to the other parties), the question was whether Israel would also agree.

Mr Harel's article suggested that the answer, although Israel would not admit it officially, was 'yes'. According to the Tel Aviv-based Prime Source website, in his UN speech Mr Netanyahu had demanded two things on the issue of enrichment: to disassemble both the underground facility at Fordo and the newer, faster centrifuges at Natanz. According to the IAEA's latest report, in August, there were more than 1,000 new centrifuges in Natanz, along with some 15,000 old ones. Mr Netanyahu did not make any demands about the latter group (which would allow for continued low-level enrichment capability at a slower pace). Mr Harel concluded by suggesting that Mr Netanyahu could live with a compromise on this point, even if it was not his preferred solution.

**The economy**

According to its March 2012 assessment of the Israeli economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) considered that Israel's economy remained strong, with its gross domestic product (GDP) growing at an annual 4.7 per cent in 2011, led by robust private consumption and buoyant investment. However, the global downturn has slowed Israeli growth, with 2012 GDP growth estimated at 2.8 per cent. Nevertheless, Israel's fundamentals were strong: inflation and inflation expectations were squarely within the 1-3 per cent target range, unemployment was at historic lows, the net international investment position was in surplus and public debt had fallen steadily to below 75 per cent of GDP. These strengths were also underpinned by Israel's sound institutional frameworks, including fiscal rules

and a new central bank law. Furthermore, following recent discoveries of natural gas fields, Israel could become a net energy exporter before long. (See 'Energy' below)

The IMF noted that as the global and domestic economy slowed, the Bank of Israel (BoI) (central bank) began a monetary easing cycle from September 2011, cutting the interest rate from 3.25 per cent to 2.5 per cent in steps. On the fiscal side, automatic stabilisers were operating fully and the economic slowdown in the latter half of 2011 resulted in lower-than-projected revenue collections and a smaller-than-targeted headline fiscal consolidation. The budget deficit was 3.3 per cent of GDP in 2011 and was projected at around 3.4 per-cent of GDP in 2012, exceeding the target by almost 1.5 percentage points of GDP. Meanwhile, appreciation pressures on the shekel had eased and in mid-2012 the shekel was judged to be at around equilibrium.

Israel's Financial Stability Assessment Programme (FSSA) Update concluded that the financial system was stable, with the BoI maintaining strongly proactive supervisory practices, which pre-empted the systemic risks. Israeli banks' cross border activities were limited, with negligible direct exposures to peripheral advanced European countries. However, Israel's real estate markets had boomed in recent years and banks had significantly increased their exposure to the housing and construction sectors. Moreover, some large corporate groups face rising risk premia in bond markets and sizable debt refinancing needs in the coming period. A little known feature of Israel's social structure, poverty levels remained among the highest in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, despite strong growth. This primarily reflected low labour force participation rates among the Arab-Israeli and Haredi minority populations.

**Energy**

The US government's Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported that in January 2013, according to the *Oil & Gas Journal* (OGJ) Israel's proved reserves of oil were estimated at 12 million barrels and its proved reserves of natural gas at 9.5 trillion cubic feet (tcf). While neither of these figures placed Israel in the top-40 globally, the totals were significantly higher than earlier estimates and positioned Israel to develop its hydrocarbon potential. Energy exploration over recent years has uncovered

significant natural gas resources in Israel, primarily in the country's offshore areas. The Mari-B field – discovered in 2000 – provided the first significant volumes of domestically-produced natural gas to Israel's markets, but in 2012 production plummeted as the field enters the final stages of depletion. In prior years, the Mari-B field had met up to 40 per cent of Israel's natural gas demand.

The EIA notes that Israel began commercial production of natural gas from the Tamar field (located offshore, near Haifa) in 2013. The natural gas produced from the Tamar field is sent to onshore facilities via the existing infrastructure at the Mari-B development site. Until these volumes are secured, Israel agreed to a short-term supply contract for the delivery of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to the state-owned Israel Electric Company. Plans are moving forward on a floating LNG project that will draw from the Tamar field – and the nearby Dalit – to produce up to 3 million tons of LNG per year as soon as 2017.

The most significant find in offshore Israel is the Leviathan field, located approximately 80 miles off the coast and situated in water that is more than 5,000 feet deep. Assessments of the Leviathan field indicate that there could be as much as 17tcf of recoverable natural gas in place. There is a continuing debate inside Israel over how much of this potentially lucrative resource should be set aside for exports and how much should be directed to meet internal demand. The operator – American company Noble Energy – expected initial volumes of 750 million cubic feet per day (cfd) in 2016.

While historically Israel has been an importer of natural gas – most recently through the Arish-Ashkelon pipeline from Egypt – the discoveries of the Tamar and Leviathan fields (among several others) should allow the country to become a significant exporter of natural gas in the next decade. There are competing proposals to develop pipelines and LNG infrastructure to support natural gas exports, but deliberations about how Israel will get its natural gas to market are still going on. In 2011, Israel consumed 13.9 million short tons of coal, mostly for use in electricity generation. That figure is likely to go down as Israel's natural gas sector continues its rapid growth and coal-fired generating capacity is replaced by natural gas-fired generating capacity.

**Risk assessment**

Politics	Fair
Economy	Fair
Regional stability	Poor

## COUNTRY PROFILE

**Historical profile**

The struggle between the Israelis and the Palestinians over historic claims to land is one of the most enduring of all the world's conflicts.

1917 The Balfour Declaration suggested the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.

1922 The Council of the League of Nations assigned to Britain a mandate for the Ottoman Arab territory of Palestine, a region that covered present-day Israel and Jordan, plus the Golan Heights region (claimed by Syria). The British divided the mandate into two parts, designating all lands west of the Jordan River as Palestine and those east of the river as Transjordan. The League of Nations mandate also addressed the goal of restoring a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

1929 Riots in Jerusalem between Arab Palestinians and Jews were sparked by a dispute over the use of the western wall of the Al Aqsa Mosque (the site is sacred to Muslims, and Jews claim it as part of their temple).

1936–39 The Arab Higher Committee opposed Jewish immigration to Palestine and the Peel Commission concluded that the mandate in Palestine was unworkable. Legislation limiting the number of Jewish immigrants into Palestine was introduced by the British government.

1945–46 Many Jews who had survived the Nazi German Holocaust arrived in Palestine and Jewish extremists began to oppose Britain's immigration legislation. Transjordan became independent and was later re-named Jordan.

1947 The UN adopted Resolution 181, establishing Jewish and Arab states within Palestine. A partition plan was based solely on population, with Jerusalem as an international zone under UN jurisdiction. The Jews agreed to the partition; the Arabs refused. Britain withdrew from Palestine.

1948 Conflict ensued between Arabs and Jews. Jewish leaders announced the formation of the State of Israel, open to the immigration of Jews from all countries. Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan joined Palestinian and other Arab guerrillas and invaded Israel. The armistice agreements extended the territory under Israel's control beyond the UN partition boundaries. Many Arabs fled Israel to become refugees in the surrounding Arab countries, ending the Arab majority in the new Jewish state.

1956 Egypt nationalised the Suez Canal and blockaded the Red Sea port of Eilat. Israeli forces attacked and occupied the Sinai Peninsula, later being joined by Britain and France, seeking to regain control

of the Canal Zone. In the face of strong international opposition, particularly from the US, all three withdrew their forces.

1967 Egypt blockaded Eilat again. Israel launched and won the Six Day War, taking control of the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza Strip, which had been Egyptian territory, together with the Golan Heights, formerly claimed by Syria, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which had been united with Jordan since 1950. Around 300,000 Palestinian Arabs fled to Jordan. Israel's settlement policy began with occupation of all territory seized including East Jerusalem, re-unifying the city; such areas became known as the occupied territories.

1968–70 The War of Attrition was a limited war fought between Egypt and Israel, initiated by Egypt as a way to recapture the Sinai from Israel. The war ended without changes to the borders.

1969 Golda Meir became prime minister. 1973 Lebanon was used by the Palestinians as a base for activities against Israel. In retaliation, Israeli commandos raided Beirut, killing three associates of Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) chairman, Yasser Arafat. In the 6 October War (also known as the Yom Kippur War), Egypt and Syria invaded Israel to reclaim some of the land lost in the Six Day War, but despite some early strategic gains by Egypt and Syria, Israel counter-attacked and repelled the invasion, re-conquering the Golan Heights from Syria.

1974 Golda Meir resigned and was succeeded as prime minister by Yitzhak Rabin. Jordan and other Arab countries recognised the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. 1977 President Sadat of Egypt visited Jerusalem.

1978 Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian Prime Minister Anwar Sadat signed peace accords at Camp David in the US. Israel agreed to withdraw from the Sinai.

1981 Israel annexed East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

1982–85 The Sinai peninsula was returned to Egypt in 1982. Israel launched a full-scale invasion of Lebanon. Despite subsequently withdrawing from most of the territory, Israel maintained some troops in Lebanon in order to help secure its own northern border.

1987 The Palestinians launched an *intifada* (uprising) against the Israelis.

1988 The Harakat al Muqawama al Islamia (Hamas) (Islamic Resistance Movement) was formed and began armed resistance to Israeli rule in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

1989 Mass immigration of Jews from the Soviet Union began; many settled in the occupied territories.

1991–93 Israel and the PLO conducted secret negotiations in Oslo (Norway), agreeing an interim peace accord, which was signed in the US. The Oslo Peace Accords laid the basis for transfer of authority from the Israeli military administration to the PLO in the Gaza Strip and an undefined area around the town of Jericho in the West Bank. President Ezer Weizman took office.

1995–96 A follow-up treaty, Oslo II, (known collectively, with the first, as the Accord), envisaged Palestinian autonomy, with Israeli troop units withdrawn from the West Bank. Yasser Arafat was elected president of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the assembly of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

2000 President Ezer Weizman resigned and Moshe Katsav, (Likud), was elected president. Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon without reaching an agreement with Syria on the future of the Golan Heights, still under Israeli control. The Camp David summit aimed at pushing forward the Accord failed when no agreement could be reached; the Palestinians claimed sovereignty over all of east Jerusalem, including Judaism's holiest place of Temple Mount. The right-wing opposition leader, Ariel Sharon, made a provocative visit to Palestinian controlled Temple Mount (called al Haram as Sharif by Arabs) and the second *intifada* was launched. A total blockade was imposed by Israel on the West Bank and Gaza. 2001 Ariel Sharon was elected prime minister. He declared the PNA a terrorist-supporting organisation and launched Operation 'Defensive Shield', invading the PNA-controlled West Bank and Gaza Strip, attacking its institutions and besieging Yasser Arafat's headquarters.

2002 Saudi Arabia proposed a peace initiative, whereby Israel could have normal relations, peace and security with the Arab world if Israel withdrew from captured territories and agreed to recognise a Palestinian state. Israel began building a 640km security barrier, claiming it was the only way to control the infiltration of militant terrorists.

2003 US President Bush unveiled the Middle East Road Map to Peace, to run between 2003–05, with a cease-fire, an end to Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and the creation of an independent Palestinian state. However neither side kept to its timetable and it, *de facto*, failed.

2004 The International Court of Justice ruled that the West Bank security barrier was illegal. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat died.

2005 Sharon and the newly elected Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, signed a truce that planned to bring to an end four years of violence between the two states. Egypt and Jordan agreed to return their ambassadors to Israel. The cabinet approved the removal of Jewish illegal settlers from the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank. Hamas bombed targets in Israel claiming it was not party to the truce. Abbas ordered a crackdown and sacked senior security chiefs. Israeli troops began clearing Jewish settlements from Gaza. Most commercial buildings were left standing but some homes and synagogues were destroyed. Sharon left Likud, a party he had helped found, to form a centrist party, Kadima, a right-of-centre party. Binyamin Netanyahu was elected leader of Likud.

2006 Sharon suffered a massive stroke and was hospitalised; Ehud Olmert became acting prime minister. Kadima won parliamentary elections. Olmert became prime minister after Sharon was declared 'permanently incapacitated' in a coma. Israel became a member of the International Red Cross, adopting a diamond-shaped red crystal as its symbol. Hezbollah paramilitary forces based in southern Lebanon crossed the border and captured two Israeli soldiers. Israel retaliated by invading Lebanon in an attempt to retrieve its soldiers; it inflicted massive damage, especially in the south, to infrastructure, with thousands of homes destroyed and hundreds of civilian casualties. The conflict lasted for 34 days. The Israeli soldiers were not recovered and the whole exercise was considered a failure on behalf of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF).

2007 Raleb Majadele (Labour) was the first Arab Muslim to hold office in Israel. The head of Israel's armed forces General Halutz resigned following an enquiry that criticised poor planning, strategy and execution of the 2006 invasion of Lebanon. A criminal inquiry into Ehud Olmert's role in the privatisation of Bank Leumi began. President Moshe Katsav resigned; Shimon Peres became president. Binjamin Netanyahu was re-elected leader of Likud. 2008 Ehud Olmert resigned as prime minister, due to a damaging corruption case. Tzipi Livni (Kadima) became acting prime minister but was unable to form a coalition government within a constitutionally set period. Israel launched an offensive into the Gaza Strip on 27 December, to deter on-going Hamas rocket attacks on its territories. Despite Israel's claims of targeting Hamas weapons dumps, tunnels running between Gaza and Egypt and Hamas officials, casualties were highest among civilians. In August the government halted the immigration

scheme which had allowed Ethiopians of Jewish descent to settle in Israel.

2009 An Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip left over 1,000 Gaza Palestinians dead and 4,700 wounded, as well as 13 Israelis including two civilians killed by rocket attacks. UN and EU representatives called for a halt to the military action and humanitarian aid to be supplied to Gaza. Israel agreed to a daily aid convoy during a three-hour cease-fire. Israel declared a cease-fire and Hamas announcement it would stop launching missiles into Israel. Early general elections were held. Although Kadima won the most seats in the Knesset it could not form a coalition and became the official opposition. President Peres asked Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud) to form a coalition government, which finally included nationalist and ultra-orthodox Jewish political parties. The UN investigated alleged violations of international law during Israel's conflict in the Gaza Strip and concluded Israeli military action had 'involved varying degrees of negligence or recklessness' and accused the military of war crimes and possible crimes against humanity. Israel rejected the report as showing bias and claiming that Hamas had hidden fighters among civilians in the vicinity of UN properties. The government confirmed that construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank would resume, even if peace talks with the Palestinians were renewed.

2010 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) voted unanimously to admit Israel as a member, despite strong opposition from the Palestinian government. Nine activists were killed by Israeli security forces when they stormed a ship in international waters, attempting to break the blockade of Gaza, resulting in US condemnation. Israel announced that it would ease the Gaza Strip blockade and allow more civilian items into the territory. Israel and Palestine agreed to resume peace talks after a two year gap. Talks began between Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mohmoud Abbas in Washington, hosted by President Obama and chaired by Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. President Obama criticised plans to build a further 1,300 homes in East Jerusalem. The government approved a scheme that would allow a further 8,000 Ethiopians of the Falash Mura community and of Jewish descent to settle in Israel by 2013. Construction began of a barrier along the border with Egypt. The government estimated that up to 700 illegal immigrants cross into Israel from Egypt each week.

2011 In March, despite international disapproval and condemnation by Palestinian authorities, the government approved

the construction of hundreds of Jewish settlers' homes in the occupied West Bank. The so-called 'Nakba' ('catastrophe') bill, which refuses funding to organisations that deny Israel's existence as a Jewish state, was passed in parliament by a majority of 37–25. The construction of a further 942 homes in the Jewish settlement of Gilo on the outskirts of Jerusalem was approved in April, just days before President Peres was due to meet President Obama in Washington. A group of 21 prominent Israelis signed an open letter in May calling on the international community to recognise a Palestinian state in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. In a speech in May, US President Obama said that any future settlement with Palestine must be based on 1967 borders, although 'with mutually agreed swaps, so that secure and recognised borders are established for both states.' Prime Minister Netanyahu rejected the proposal in a speech to the US Congress, saying that 'Israel will be generous on the size of a Palestinian state but will be very firm on where we put the border'. His office had earlier said that President Obama should refrain from demanding Israel withdraw to 'undefensible' 1967 borders. In July parliament passed, by 47 votes to 36, a law banning the boycotting of West Bank settlements. A legal challenge to the ban was announced by civil-rights groups that called it 'deeply undemocratic'. A prisoner swap deal between the government and Hamas involving the young Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, and 'hundreds' of Palestinian prisoners was agreed in the Knesset by 26–3 votes on 11 October. Sargeant Shalit had been held for five years.

2012 Benyamin Netanyahu was re-elected leader of the Likud party on 31 January. Prime Minister Netanyahu condemned the Palestinian deal announced on 7 February under which Hamas-Fatah formed a unity government, saying 'If President Abbas (Fatah) moves to implement what was signed today in Doha, he will abandon the path of peace and join forces with the enemies of peace. You can't have it both ways. It is either a pact with Hamas, or peace with Israel.' A Turkish court began the trial, *in absentia*, of four senior Israeli military commanders for the deaths of nine Turkish activists in 2010. Israel refused to co-operate with the prosecution, but if the military commanders are found guilty of the charges an international warrant of arrest could be issued. On 13 June, the State Comptroller criticised Prime Minister Netanyahu regarding the navy's interception of the Free-Gaza Flotilla, with supplies and aid, saying the decision taken by Netanyahu had 'serious shortcomings'. On 15

October parliament voted to hold early general elections on 22 January 2013; parliament was dissolved. Israel launched air and artillery weapons on Gaza on 13 November in retaliation of Hamas missiles launched at Israel since 4 November. On 17 November, the government mobilised up to 75,000 army reservists. Prime Minister Netanyahu said he was ready to expand the military operation. A ceasefire was agreed on 21 November.

2013 The UN Disengagement Observer Force (Undof), which monitors the only open border crossing between the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights and Syria, lost a number of international peacekeepers as the violence in Syria spread. Austria began withdrawing its 377 UN soldiers from the mission on 12 June, following the withdrawal of troops by Canada, Croatia and Japan. Troops from the Philippines and India remain. On 22 July Mr Netanyahu said he would put any future peace deal with the Palestinians to a referendum. After months of shuttle diplomacy by US secretary of state John Kerry, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators resumed stalled (since 2010) peace talks about talks in Washington. As part of the deal the Israeli cabinet approved (by 13 votes to seven) the release of some 104 long-term Palestinian prisoners. The prisoners will be released in four stages over a number of months and will be linked to progress in the talks. On 12 August the government announced the names of 26 Palestinians due to be released. In a speech to the UN General Assembly on 1 October Mr Netanyahu warned against treating with the Iranian government, describing President Rouhani of Iran as a 'wolf in sheep's clothing' and reiterating that Israel would not allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons. The second of four groups of Palestinians, 26 who had served 19-28 years in prison, was freed on 30 October. On the same day Israel announced approval for the construction of 1,500 housing units at Ramat Shlomo. On 30 October Israeli aircraft attacked a site near Latakia in Syria, destroying missiles intended for the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

### Political structure

#### Constitution

Israel passed the Law and Administration Ordinance on attaining independence, in 1948. In the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel that embodied the principals of law, it was recognised that these principals would evolve in time and circumstances.

Basic laws set out the powers of the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The country functions without a written constitution as Israel's founders wanted to

avoid creating problems between religious and secular Jews and between Jews and the non-Jewish minority.

#### Independence date

14 May 1948

#### Form of state

Parliamentary democracy

#### The executive

Executive power rests with the government (a cabinet of ministers), headed by a prime minister as head of government.

The government may determine its own agenda and executive procedures.

The prime minister is directly elected for four years and cannot be deposed from office without fresh elections.

The prime minister chooses members of the cabinet from either inside or outside the Knesset (parliament). The cabinet is responsible to the Knesset.

The president is Head of State and has a largely ceremonial role; elected by the Knesset every seven years for a maximum of one term.

#### National legislature

The 120-seat unicameral Knesset is elected by proportional representation for a maximum of four years. The country is divided into six *mezoh* (administrative districts).

#### Legal system

The law is based on English common law, components of Jewish religious law and some features of other systems, as appropriate.

The judiciary has constitutionally guaranteed independence. The court system has three levels: the Supreme Court, district courts and magistrates' courts. The court system does not employ juries in Israel.

There is also a separate system of limited and specific tribunals that deal with military, labour law and religious, civil matters.

#### Last elections

22 January 2013 (parliament); 31 June 2007 (presidential).

**Results:** Parliament (2013): Likud Yisrael Beiteinu won 31 seats (out of 120), Yesh Atid (There is a Future) 19, Mifleget HaAvoda HaYisraelit (Israeli Labor Party) 15, HaBayit HaYehudi (The Jewish Home) 12, Shas 11, Yahadut HaTorah HaMeukhedet (United Torah Judaism) (UTJ) 7, Hatnuah (The Movement) 6, Meretz 6, Kadima 2.

Presidential: (first round) Shimon Peres won 58 votes (out of 120), Reuven Rivlin 37, Colette Avital 21. Second round: Rivlin and Avital withdrew and Peres won 86 votes.

#### Next elections

2014 (presidential); 2017 (Knesset)

### Political parties

#### Ruling party

Coalition led by Likud Yisrael Beiteinu and including Hatnuah (The Movement) and others.

#### Main opposition party

Kadima (Forward)

### Population

7.70 million (2012)

**Last census:** November 1995:

5,548,523 (including residents of East Jerusalem and Israelis in Palestinian territories).

**Population density:** 302 inhabitants per square km. Urban population 92 per cent (2010 Unicef).

**Annual growth rate:** 2.5 per cent, 1990-2010 (Unicef).

#### Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

150,000-300,000 (UNHCR 2004)

#### Ethnic make-up

European, Middle Eastern and North African Jews, Arabs and Druze.

#### Religions

The Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Druze, Protestant and Baha'i faiths are all represented. Non-Jews make up 18 per cent of the population. They include 635,000 Muslims, 105,000 Christians (almost all Arabs) and 78,000 Druze. The ultra-orthodox Jewish, or charedi, population has nearly doubled since 1990 to about 600,000, or 10 per cent of Israel's population.

### Education

Education is provided free of charge and is organised by the state. Primary schooling lasts until aged 11.

Secondary schools are divided into four groups: state schools, which are attended by the majority, state religious schools, Arab and Druze schools and Torah schools for ultra-orthodox Jews. Youth Aliya schools specialise in educating new immigrants.

Demand for tertiary education consistently outstrips domestic supply, so that more Israelis study at universities abroad than at home, giving the country a ratio of graduates that is one of the highest in the world. Public expenditure on education typically amounts to around 8 per cent of GDP.

**Literacy rate:** 95 per cent adult rate; 100 per cent youth rate (15-24) (Unesco 2005).

**Compulsory years:** Five to 16

**Enrolment rate:** 98 per cent total primary enrolment, of relevant age group (including repeaters); 88 per cent total secondary enrolment (World Bank).

**Pupils per teacher:** 14 in primary schools

### Health

The ministry of health, the large municipalities, private, non-profit institutions and health insurance funds cater to different

medical facilities. Companies are required to contribute to insurance for their employees to cover hospital treatment. The Histadrut (General Federation of Labour) whose members include 90 per cent of Jewish workers, provide sickness benefits and medical care. About 95 per cent of the population are covered by a health insurance plan.

Smoking is prevalent among 45 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women causing health hazards. It is estimated that 99 per cent of the population have access to safe water and sanitation facilities are universal.

### **HIV/Aids**

**HIV prevalence:** 0.1 per cent aged 15–49 in 2003 (World Bank)

**Life expectancy:** 80 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

**Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate:** 2.9 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef); maternal mortality 5 per 100,000 live births (World Bank).

**Birth rate/Death rate:** 6 death and 21 births per 1,000 people (World Bank)

**Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000):** 4 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012)

**Head of population per physician:** 3.82 physicians per 1,000 people, 2003 (WHO 2006)

### **Welfare**

There is a state-sponsored social welfare system, the National Insurance Institute, which covers the entire population. It is largely financed by compulsory monthly fees collected under the National Insurance Law, with the government providing the remaining funds. The system provides pensions, general disability payments, work injury compensation, child support and other allowances. The Institute also reimburses employers for salaries paid to employees during annual military reserve duty. Citizens disabled during military service are entitled to additional benefits from the defence ministry.

### **Main cities**

Jerusalem (*de facto* capital, estimated population 783,791 in 2012). *Although Israel regards the city as its capital, Palestinians regard a large part of it as their territory; the international community does not recognise it as Israel's capital.*

Tel Aviv (the diplomatic centre), estimated population 390,750 in 2012). Other cities include Haifa (269,502), Ashdod (255,708), Rishon LeZiyyon (250,296), Bersheva (203,787), Netanya (188,601).

### **Languages spoken**

English and European languages are widely spoken. Arabic is the most common language among non-Jews.

### **Official language/s**

Hebrew

### **Media**

#### **Press**

The press has more freedom than in any of its neighbours and the government respects its media.

The mix of newspapers reflects the diversity of the population with Hebrew national dailies vying with Arabic, English and the Russian language newspapers for their readership, although non are exclusive and crossover readership is common.

**Dailies:** In Hebrew *Yediot Aharonot* ([www.ynet.co.il](http://www.ynet.co.il)), a tabloid has the largest circulation, *Haaretz* ([www.haaretz.co.il](http://www.haaretz.co.il)), has a reputation for quality reporting, *Maariv* ([www.nrg.co.il](http://www.nrg.co.il)) is a popular tabloid. In English *The Jerusalem Post* ([www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)), is a broadsheet and *Vesti* is a popular Russian language newspaper.

**Weeklies:** In Arabic *Kul al Arab* ([www.kul-alarab.com](http://www.kul-alarab.com)) is a popular publication of news and current affairs.

**Business:** In Hebrew, *Globes* ([www.globes.co.il](http://www.globes.co.il)), with an English online edition, is a weekly publication along with *The Marker* ([www.themarker.com](http://www.themarker.com)). An online site *Bull* ([www.bull.co.il](http://www.bull.co.il)) covers news from the stock market.

**Periodicals:** In English and German, *Challenge* ([www.challenge-mag.com](http://www.challenge-mag.com)), is a magazine concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, published six times a year.

#### **Broadcasting**

The Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA) ([www.iba.org.il](http://www.iba.org.il)) is the national, public broadcaster, which is funded by licence fees, sponsorship and radio adverts. Al Jazeera broadcasts were restricted in Israel in February 2009 following Qatar's decision to cut ties with Israel. Visas for al Jazeera correspondents were not renewed and access to news briefings were curtailed.

**Radio:** The IBA ([www.iba.org.il](http://www.iba.org.il)) operates a network referred to as Kol Yisrael (Voice of Israel), of eight different stations, the four popular, domestic services include in Hebrew (Network A, B and C) broadcasting news, talk radio, music and (Network D) is an Arabic service. There is also a station for recent immigrants to Israel broadcasting in 13 languages, predominantly Russian. The other three are devoted to classical music, education and Jazz.

Independent radio stations include Arutz 7 ([www.inn.co.il](http://www.inn.co.il)) a national network, all other stations are locally based including 90FM ([www.90fm.co.il](http://www.90fm.co.il)) in Jerusalem, Galgalatz (<http://glz.msn.co.il>) in Beersheva and Radio Haifa (<http://1075.fm>).

**Television:** The IBA ([www.iba.org.il](http://www.iba.org.il)) has two channels, one broadcasting in Hebrew and the other in Arabic. There are other, public commercial stations including Channel 2, with weekly schedules operated by Keshet TV ([www.keshet-tv.com](http://www.keshet-tv.com)) and Reshet TV ([www.rashet.tv](http://www.rashet.tv)), Channel 10 ([www.nana10.co.il](http://www.nana10.co.il)) and Israel Plus ([www.israel-plus.com](http://www.israel-plus.com)) which broadcasts in Russian. There are several cable services and one local satellite service, Yes ([www.yes.co.il](http://www.yes.co.il)). Other, international satellite services are available.

**Other news agencies:** Israel National News: [www.israelnationalnews.com](http://www.israelnationalnews.com)  
Israel News Agency (INA): [www.israelnewsagency.com](http://www.israelnewsagency.com)  
Israeli News Now: [www.israelinewsnow.com](http://www.israelinewsnow.com)  
PR Newswire: [www.prnewswire.co.il](http://www.prnewswire.co.il)

### **Economy**

Israel has a thriving modern economy, based on high technology and communications industries, which is orientated towards exports. The markets for its products lie outside the Middle East, mainly in North America, Western Europe and East Asia. The US is the principal market. As well as high technology equipment, the main exports are cut diamonds, agricultural produce and pharmaceuticals. Israel is reliant on imports for raw materials and oil. Grains also have to be imported, although Israel is otherwise self-sufficient in other agricultural produce.

The IMF judged Israel's banking sector to have come through the global economic crisis relatively unscathed, due to its conservative establishment practices and supervisory regulations that saw much of the selling of asset-backed securities (ABS) in early 2008 before the critical peak of the crisis stuck later that year.

GDP growth in 2008 was 4 per cent, before falling to 0.8 per cent in 2009 as the global economic crisis cut trade. However growth rebounded to 4.8 per cent in 2010 and was estimated to have remained constant at 4.7 per cent in 2011. Israel is a leading trader in raw diamonds with around half of all polished diamonds worldwide processed in Israel. The industry accounted for US\$16 billion in exports of polished diamonds in 2011, through the export of 5.2 billion carats; rough diamond exports amounted to US\$3.9 billion (14.7 billion carats).

Israel benefits from strong overseas investment, and pioneered the harnessing of investment by its diaspora through the issuing of 'Israel Bonds'. Foreign direct investment in 2011 was US\$11.4 billion, a marked increase on the US\$5.2 billion invested

### External trade

Israel had bilateral free trade agreements with, among others, the EU, Turkey, the US, Canada and Mexico.

Exports provide over 95 per cent of GDP, of which 40 per cent are hi-tech industry output and pharmaceutical companies producing generic medicines; cut and dressed precious and semi-precious gems and pearls provide over 35 per cent. The trade and processing of diamonds accounted for US\$7 billion in exports in 2007; the industry is one of the country's largest. Israel has a free trade agreement with the US and is also a signatory of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership agreement, which provides for the introduction of free trade between the EU and 10 Mediterranean countries by 2012.

### Imports

Principal exports are machinery and equipment, software, cut and polished diamonds, agricultural products, chemicals, textiles and clothes.

**Main sources:** US (11.8 per cent of total in 2011), China (7.4 per cent), Germany (6.2 per cent)

### Exports

Principal imports include raw materials, military equipment, investment goods, rough diamonds, fuels, grain and consumer goods.

**Main destinations:** US (28.7 per cent of total in 2011), Hong Kong (7.9 per cent), Belgium (5.6 per cent).

### Agriculture

The agricultural sector contributes around 2 per cent to GDP and employs 5 per cent of the working population.

Israel is largely self-sufficient in food, importing some cereals, sugar beet and animal feeds. Food, beverages and tobacco are exported.

Farms are relatively small but mostly part of *kibbutzim* (larger co-operatives) or *moshavim* (co-operative smallholder villages), sharing machinery etc. The *kibbutz* and *moshav* movement formed the backbone of early Jewish settlement in Palestine before the State's creation in 1948. The *Keren Kayemeth Le Yisrael* (Jewish National Fund) was created in 1901 to buy land for the settlers. Since 1948 it has become involved in land development, especially land reclamation and forestry. Israel's agricultural miracle of the 1950s and early 1960s, with annual growth levels of around 12 per cent, was based on intensive irrigated farming, the rise in domestic demand from new immigrants and the expansion of export markets. From the late 1960s, growth slowed to stagnation by the 1980s. Many blamed the bureaucratic marketing organisations for stifling incentives and others blamed an overemphasis on heavily irrigated cash crops,

such as cotton, which have become increasingly costly to produce and are vulnerable to international competition.

The major crops are fruits (30 per cent of total production), vegetables (14 per cent) and livestock (42 per cent).

About 40 per cent of farm produce is sold locally, 26 per cent to industry for processing and another 26 per cent is exported directly.

Of the total cultivated land area (4,400 square km), over half is under irrigation. The general trend in agriculture is towards greater mechanisation and many agricultural workers have transferred to industry. There is some fish farming; approximately 85 per cent of the total catch of fish is consumed locally.

Between 60,000–70,000 tonnes of timber are harvested annually.

### Industry and manufacturing

The sector contributes around 17 per cent to GDP and employs 28 per cent of the working population.

The growth sectors are the capital intensive, science-based industries, such as aircraft (executive jets and fighters), electronics (telecommunications equipment), biotechnology, agricultural technology, chemicals and mining.

A wide range of goods are made or assembled for the domestic market, including cars, commercial vehicles, electrical goods, paper and paper products.

Israeli governments have historically worked with trade unions and employers to plan economic policy. Key policy elements have been to build up basic industry with state or trade union funds and high-tech industries that are either state-owned (a spin-off from the important arms industry) or privately-owned, but which benefit from government incentives aimed specifically at attracting foreign technology. Industry has long been supported with protective tariffs and subsidies, but Israel is progressively exposing its domestic market to competition from abroad as a result of growing trade with the EU and the US. Exports are vitally important to Israeli industry on account of the small size of the domestic market.

The strength of the Israeli manufacturing industry is increasingly in high technology. Traditional industries, such as food processing, textiles, metals, rubber and plastics and chemicals, are well developed but the future manufacturing base is likely to be in heavy and hi-tech industries, particularly the defence industry. Government policy is to shift from low value labour intensive industries to high value hi-tech industries. These have become increasingly important as labour-intensive industries such as the textile industry relocate to more competitive economies such as

Jordan, Egypt and Turkey where labour costs are lower.

In 2005 the government embarked on its largest privatisation programme since the late 1990s. A stake of 30 per cent of Bezeq Israel Telecom was sold to a private consortium headed by media mogul Haim Saban, for US\$970 million.

### Tourism

Israel offers its visitors a range of religious centres of pilgrimage, as well as ancient, historic and cultural sites and coastal beach resorts. There are six sites on Unesco's World Heritage List, including prehistoric, Phoenician, Roman and modern sites.

Travel and tourism contributed 7.5–8 per cent to GDP in 2011, which has remained fairly constant since 2001. Employment remains at 8.2–8.8 per cent of the total workforce and investment in the industry averages 5.2 per cent of total capital investment (2006–11).

In 2010, there was a total of 3.4 million foreign visitors, of which 641,000 were day visitors (168,000 cruise passengers) and 4.3 million Israeli visitors.

The ability of the tourism industry to expand and grow will depend on the security and political situation in not only Israel but also the Middle East as a whole.

### Mining

The mining sector typically contributes 1 per cent to GDP and employs 1 per cent of the workforce.

There are vast reserves of potash, bromine and periclase in the area of the Dead Sea, the world's most saline lake, and deposits of 600 million tonnes of phosphate rock in the Negev Desert. These evaporites are produced for fertilisers and industrial minerals. Phosphates are mined at Oron (around 1.2 million tonnes per annum); potash is extracted from the Dead Sea at Sodom (approximately 3.5 million tonnes per annum). Israel is the world's second-largest producer of bromine and produces 20 per cent of world output.

### Hydrocarbons

Israel has no oil production of its own and for political and security reasons is reluctant to obtain its hydrocarbons from one single source, particularly one from the Middle East. Currently, Israel obtains most of its oil from Russia and central Asia – Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Other sources include Mexico, Egypt, Angola and the UK. It imports around 230,000 barrels per day (bpd) and it is estimated to have around four million barrels of oil reserves, located underneath gas reserves. There has been significant oil exploration onshore and in the Mediterranean (with the drilling of over 350 wells). In 2004 a

deposit to the east of Kfar Saba was discovered with an estimated billion barrels of oil.

Israel has two oil refineries, at Haifa and Ashdod, with a joint capacity of 220,000bpd, which is sufficient for all of the country's refined oil needs. If the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved then Israel could provide an alternative route for Middle Eastern oil exports from the Gulf to the West. At present, oil exports travel by tanker through the Suez Canal or around southern Africa.

Israel has an estimated 600 million tonnes of recoverable oil shale, producing around 9,000bpd. This reserve is located mainly in the Rotem basin region.

Proven natural gas reserves were 38.9 billion cubic metres (cum) in 2007, found in deposits off the Israeli coast and Gaza Strip coast. In January 2009, a significant natural gas deposit was discovered offshore in the region of Haifa. The deposit had been estimated to hold up to 5.6 billion cum of natural gas, although production may not begin until 2014. An agreement for the start of 1.7 billion cum of natural gas imports (over 20 years) from Egypt via the el Arish-Ashkelon pipeline began in 2008. In April 2012, Egyptian officials said they had scrapped an agreement with Israel to supply natural gas; the gas had amounted to around 40 per cent of Israel's electricity generating needs. The Israeli company Ampal that bought the natural gas called the termination of the contract 'unlawful and in bad faith'.

Imports of coal were 217.9 tonnes in 2007, providing approximately 32 per cent of Israel's energy requirements. All coal imports come primarily from South Africa, Columbia, Australia and Indonesia.

### Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 10.1 gigawatts in 2006, with production at 46.8 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) and consumption at 43.2 billion kWh. Around 70 per cent of electricity comes from coal-fired power stations, 25 per cent from oil-fired stations and the remainder by gas-oil and independent power producers (IPPs). Approximately 97 per cent of fuel requirements are met from imports. Israel's energy security is severely compromised by the lack of peace between Israel and its Arab population and neighbours. The energy infrastructure, including offshore exploration, onshore installations and proposed pipelines connecting Central Asia with Europe are vulnerable to continued attacks.

The Israel Electric Corporation (IEC) is responsible for generating and supplying energy. The government hopes to

increase the participation of the private sector, with the aim of 10 per cent of electricity to be generated by IPPs. A programme of converting oil and coal-fired power stations to natural gas has begun. The delivery of Egyptian gas is subject to production problems and political opposition. Renewable energy supplies include primarily solar which is widely used for domestic hot water heating, although not in commercial generation of electricity.

### Financial markets

#### Stock exchange

Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE)

#### Banking and insurance

The government introduced structural reforms to the banking system in 2005 with the legislation to break the dominance of the largest banks over capital markets. It is intended to open up the banking sector to foreign competition. The top two banks, Hapoalim and Leumi, will be required to sell their mutual funds before 2009 and provident funds by 2008. Smaller institutions have longer to do the same.

#### Central bank

The Bank of Israel (BOI), Jerusalem. It has the sole right to issue currency, create and implement monetary policy, regulate and supervise commercial and other banks, control foreign exchange, maintain foreign currency reserves and publish the only representative exchange rate for the shekel versus foreign currencies.

#### Main financial centre

Tel Aviv

#### Time

GMT plus two hours (daylight saving GMT plus three hours)

#### Geography

Israel is at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, with a coastline of about 270km from the Lebanese border in the north to the north-eastern tip of the Sinai Desert in the south. Israel has borders with Lebanon in the north, Syria in the north-east, Jordan in the east and south-east and Egypt in the south west. There is a short coastline on the Gulf of Aqaba in the south.

Within these internationally recognised borders there are disputed borders between Israel and State of Palestine. Gaza is a strip (around 40km wide) of coastline in the south-west and the West Bank is an area west of the Jordan River, containing Jerusalem and areas west and north of the city, the borders of which have been in dispute since the Six Day War in 1967. The country can be divided into four regions, the coastal plain, the central highlands, the Jordan Rift Valley (which includes Lake Tiberias (also known as the

Sea of Galilee in the bible and Lake Kinneret by Israelis) and the Negev Desert (an area including the Dead Sea, the lowest land point on the planet at 399 metres below sea level). The desert comprises over half the country's landmass and is an extension of the greater Sinai Desert.

#### Hemisphere

Northern

#### Climate

Two climates exist, Mediterranean in the north and an arid sub-tropical in the south. Jerusalem, situated in the central highlands, has summer temperatures in July–August of 19–29 degrees Celsius (C) and 6–14 degrees C in winter (December–January). Tel Aviv on the coast has a more humid climate with summer temperatures of 24–35 degrees C and 19–30 degrees C in winter. Eilat, on the Gulf of Aqaba, records the hottest average summer temperatures of 40 degrees C.

#### Dress codes

Business dress is fairly relaxed, except on formal occasions. In Jerusalem even in the height of summer a sweater is often necessary at night. Tel Aviv, along the coast, is far more humid and evenings are warmer.

It is recommended that business women should wear respectable clothing; bare arms, trousers and short skirts may cause offence to some community members.

#### Entry requirements

##### Passports

All travellers require passports with at least six months validity from the date of entry; proof of return/onward passage and sufficient funds for stay are also required. The Israeli Ministry of the Interior insists that Israeli citizens holding dual nationality must enter and leave Israel on their Israeli passport.

NB When crossing into Israel from any border other than the West Bank, it is important to note that an Israeli stamp, or exit stamp from any of the neighbouring countries, will mean entry is barred to almost any other Arab country. It is possible to request that the passport should not be stamped and a separate form is stamped instead and attached to the passport; the form can be removed when exiting the country.

##### Visa

Israel has agreements with 65 countries for visa-free travel, including most citizens from Europe, the Americas, Australasia and some Asian countries. Transit passengers with onward passage within 24 hours do not require visas. Contact the nearest Israeli consulate for further information.

**Prohibited entry**

Persons carrying a Palestinian identity number will not be permitted to enter Israel through Ben Gurion International Airport if their last departure was through the Allenby Bridge or Rafah border crossings.

**Currency advice/regulations**

There are no restrictions on the import of local and foreign currencies but amounts to be exported should not exceed the amount imported.

Money should only be changed at authorised exchanged outlets.

Travellers cheques are widely accepted.

**Customs**

Video cameras and other electronic items must be declared on entry.

**Prohibited imports**

Fresh meat and fruit and vegetables from Africa.

**Health (for visitors)****Mandatory precautions**

There are no vaccinations required.

**Advisable precautions**

Inoculations and boosters should be current for tetanus and hepatitis A. There may be a need for vaccinations for typhoid, tuberculosis, diphtheria and hepatitis B. Rabies is a risk.

Mains water is normally safe to drink but readily available bottled water is advised for the first few weeks of a visit.

A supply of any regular medicines required should be carried, with their prescription details; medical insurance, which includes emergency evacuation, is recommended.

**Hotels**

There are plenty of hotels in business and tourist centres. Service charge of 15 per cent usually added to bill. Settlement of bills in foreign currency will avoid payment of local taxes. Many hotels quote prices in US dollars.

**Credit cards**

All major credit and charge cards are widely accepted. ATMs are widely available.

**Public holidays (national)****Variable dates**

Purim (Mar), First day of Passover (Apr), Last day of Passover (Apr), Independence Day (May), Shavuot (Pentecost) (Jun), Tisha B'Av (Aug), Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) (Sep/Oct), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) (Oct), First day of Succoth (Feast of Tabernacles) (Oct), Last day of Succot (Oct), Shemini Atzeret (Celebration of Renewal and Thanksgiving) (Oct). The Jewish calendar is based on the lunar and solar cycle. Each month begins with a new moon and runs for either 29 or 30 days; this results in years that are either 12 or 13 months long. The Jewish new year begins in March or April.

The Jewish religious day is Saturday – the *Sabbath* – which begins at nightfall on Friday until nightfall on Saturday. Most public services and shops close early on Friday.

Muslim and Christian holidays are also observed by their respective populations. Thus, depending on the district, the day of rest falls on Friday, Saturday or Sunday.

Jewish year – 5767 (23 Sep 2006–12 Sep 2007): the Jewish calendar is lunar and loses approximately 12 days per year against the Gregorian calendar, therefore every three years a leap or intercalary month is inserted to re-align the calendars.

**Working hours****Banking**

Sun–Fri: 0830–1200; Sun/Tue/Thu: 1600–1800.

**Business**

Sun–Thu: 0800–1730. On Fridays, some businesses stay open until 1230, but most close all day.

**Government**

Sun–Thu: 0730–1430 (Jun–Oct); 0730–1300, 1345–1600 (Nov–May). All government offices close on Friday afternoon and all day on Saturday.

**Shops**

Sun–Fri: 0800–1900; some shops close 1300–1600. Jewish shops observe closing time near sunset Friday evenings; Arabic stores are closed on Friday; Christian shops are closed on Sunday. Shops in hotels are often open until midnight.

**Telecommunications****Mobile/cell phones**

There are GSM 900/1800 roaming facilities available, with coverage throughout Israel and the West Bank.

**Electricity supply**

220V AC, 50 cycles. Most sockets are round and three-pronged so a European adaptor is necessary.

**Weights and measures**

Metric system, but area is usually measured in dunam (1,000 sq metres).

**Social customs/useful tips**

People are hospitable and informal and culturally diverse. Jewish traditions and customs are generally adhered to. Israel is largely secular in character and Mediterranean in style. The Jewish *Sabbath*, from Friday dusk until Saturday dusk is, however, widely observed. Shops close on Friday and do not open again until Sunday morning. Most cinemas and restaurants are closed on Friday night. In most cities over the *Sabbath* there is no public transport (except for taxis), postal service, or banking service. Some religious sections in Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv suburb of Bnei Brak, as well as Tel

Aviv's main street, Rehov Dizengoff, are closed to traffic. The same is true on six Jewish religious holidays.

Punctuality is not a strong point and business visitors should not be surprised to be kept waiting. Business meetings are less formal in character than in northern Europe but the normal courtesies are observed.

It is considered by many a violation of the *Sabbath* to smoke in public places such as restaurants and hotels.

**Security**

Security is tight owing to the threat of terrorist activity, and delays in the ongoing peace process have increased tensions. Business travellers often encounter delays because of security alerts. Prolonged questioning and detailed searches may take place at the time of entry and/or departure. Do not leave bags unattended. In Jerusalem, tourists should exercise caution at religious sites on holy days. Visitors are advised to avoid demonstrations and areas where large crowds are gathering. The theft of passports, credit cards and valuables from public beaches is commonplace. Visitors should carry passports at all times as a form of identity. Money and valuables should be kept out of sight.

**Getting there****Air****National airline:** El Al

El Al has an intensive security check and passengers are advised to arrive for flights in plenty of time.

**International airport/s:** Ben Gurion International (TLV), 20km south-east of Tel Aviv (50km west of Jerusalem); duty-free shop, ATMs, currency exchange, bar, restaurant, hotel reservations, post office, shops, car hire. A rail service to Tel Aviv operates between 0300–0000, journey time 15 minutes. Taxis and buses are available to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

**Other airport/s:** Eilat Central Airport (ETH)

**Airport tax:** None

**Surface**

**Road:** Tourists from Jordan can cross into Israel after obtaining a 'bridge pass' from the Jordanian Interior Ministry in Amman. It is also possible to cross the border at Eilat on the Red Sea coast. The road and bus route, via Cairo and Rafa (Gaza Strip), has been closed.

There is an exit tax of US\$16 at all land border crossings.

**Water:** There are ferry services from Piraeus (Greece) and Larnaca (Cyprus) to Haifa.

**Main port/s:** Haifa, Ashdod and Eilat.

## Getting about

### National transport

**Air:** Arkia operate daily services from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Haifa, Eilat, and other major cities.

**Road:** Main roads are good. Maximum speed 90km per hour.

**Buses:** Buses connect all centres of population; they are frequent and cheap but can be crowded. Buses do not operate from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday.

**Rail:** Services between Tel Aviv and Haifa (hourly). Seats can be reserved. No service Friday evenings or Saturday.

### City transport

**Taxis:** Taxis are metered but flat rates of ten apply so it is advisable to check before any long trips.

From Ben Gurion airport to Tel Aviv centre takes about 30 minutes.

Many offices close on Fridays and consequently traffic flows are better.

For inter-city travel (including Saturdays), *sherut* (share taxis) run between central points in main cities and are not expensive. Some *sherut* companies, including Arieah and Aviv, will accept advance bookings.

### Car hire

International companies have offices in main cities and at Ben Gurion airport. Drivers must be over 21 years and have an international credit card and national or international licence. Seat belts are compulsory for drivers and front-seat passengers. Most road signs on major roads are in English.

## BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

### Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling (IDD) code for Israel is +972, followed by area code and subscriber's number:

Afula	4	Kfar Saba	9
Ashdod	8	Natanya	9
Ashkelon	8	Nazareth	4
Beersheva	8	Raanana	9
Briei Brak	3	Ramat Gan	3
Eilat	8	Rehovot	8
Haifa	4	Safed	4
Holon	3	Tel Aviv	3
Jerusalem	2		

### Useful telephone numbers

International operator: 188

Directory enquiries: 144

Collect calls: 142

Overseas operator: 188

Ambulance: 101

Fire: 102

Police: 100

Correct time: 155

### Chambers of Commerce

America-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 35 Shaul Hamelech Boulevard, PO Box 33174, Tel Aviv 61333 (tel: 695-2341; fax: 695-1272; email: amcham@amcham.co.il).

British-Israel Chamber of Commerce, 29 Hamered Street, PO Box 50321, Tel Aviv 61502 (tel: 510-9424; fax: 510-9540; email: isrbricit@bezeqint.net).

Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce, 84 Ha'ashmonaim Street, PO Box 20027, Tel Aviv 61200 (tel: 563-1020; fax: 561-9027; chamber@chamber.org.il).

Haifa and the North Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 53 Ha'atzmaut Road, PO Box 33176, Haifa 31331 (tel: 862-6364; fax: 864-5424; email: main@haifachamber.org.il).

### Banking

Bank Hapoalim BM, 50 Rothschild Blvd, Tel Aviv 66883 (tel: 567-5777; fax: 567-6015; internet site: www.bankhapoalim.co.il).

Bank Leumi Le-Israel BM, 24-32 Yehuda Halevi St, Tel Aviv 65546 (tel: 514-8111; fax: 566-1872).

The First International Bank of Israel Ltd, Shalom Tower, 9 Ahad Haam St, Tel Aviv 65251 (tel: 519-6111; fax: 510-0316).

Investec Bank (Israel) Ltd; PO Box 677, 38 Rothschild Boulevard, Tel Aviv 61006 (tel: 564-5645; fax: 564-5210).

Israel Discount Bank Ltd, 27-31 Yehuda Halevi Street, Tel Aviv 65136 (tel: 514-5555; fax: 514-5346; internet site: www.discountbank.net).

Union Bank of Israel Ltd, 6-8 Ahuzat Bayit Street, Tel Aviv 65143 (tel: 519-1111; fax: 519-1421).

### Central bank

Bank of Israel, PO Box 780, Kiryat Ben-Gurion, Jerusalem 91007 (tel: 655-2211; fax: 652-8805; e-mail: webmaster@bankisrael.gov.il).

### Stock exchange

Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE), www.tase.co.il

### Travel information

Arkia Israeli Airlines Ltd, (Charter Airline), Sde Dov, PO Box 39301, Tel Aviv, 61392 (tel: 690-2222; fax: 699-1512).

Automobile and Touring Club of Israel (MEMSI), 20 Harakevet Street, PO Box 65144, Tel Aviv 65117 (tel: 564-1122; fax: 566-0493).

Bus Station, Levinsky and Levanda intersection, Nava Sha'anana, Tel Aviv.

Dan Co-operative Society for Public Transport Ltd. (City buses), 39 Shaul Hamelech Blvd., Tel Aviv, 64928 (tel: 693-3333; fax: 693-3511).

Egged Israel Transport Co-operative Ltd (Intercity buses), 142 Petach Tikvah Road, Tel Aviv, 64921 (tel: 692-2211; fax: 696-5354).

El Al Israel Airlines Ltd, Ben Gurion Airport, Lod, 71285 (tel: 971-6111; fax: 972-1442; internet site: www.elal.co.il).

Israel Airports Authority, Ben Gurion Airport, PO Box 137 70100 (tel: 975-5555; fax: 973-1650; www.iaa.gov.il).

Israel Ports and Railway Authority, 74 Derech Petach Tikva, POB 20121, Tel Aviv, 61201 (tel: 565-7000; fax: 512-1048).

Israel Railways, PO Box 18085, Tel Aviv, 61180 (tel: 542-1515; fax: 695-8176).

### Ministry of tourism

Ministry of Tourism, 24 King George Street, PO Box 1018, Jerusalem 94262 (tel: 675-4811; fax: 625-3407; e-mail: doar@tourism.gov.il; internet site: www.travelnet.co.il).

### Ministries

Prime Minister's Office, 3 Kaplan Street, PO Box 187, Kiryat Ben-Gurion, Jerusalem 91919 (tel: 670-5555; fax: 651-2631; email: markal@pmo.gov.il).

Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Centre, PO Box 50200, Bet-Dagan (tel: 948-5555; email: pniot@moag.gov.il).

Ministry of Communications, 23 Jaffa Street, Jerusalem 91999 (tel: 670-6320; fax: 670-6372; email: intmocil@moc.gov.il).

Ministry of Construction and Housing, Kiryat Hamemshala, PO Box 18110, Jerusalem 91180 (tel: 584-7211; fax: 581-1904).

Ministry of Defence, Kaplan Street, Hakiryat, Tel-Aviv 61909 (tel: 569-2010; fax: 691-6940).

Ministry of Education, 34 Shivtei Israel Street, PO Box 292, Jerusalem 91911 (tel: 560-2222; fax: 560-2223; email: info@education.gov.il).

Ministry of the Environment, 5 Kanfei Nesharim Street, Givat Shaul, PO Box 34033, Jerusalem 95464 (tel: 655-3777; fax: 653-5934).

Ministry of Finance, 1 Kaplan Street, Kiryat Ben-Gurion, PO Box 13195, Jerusalem 91008 (tel: 531-7111; fax: 563-7891; email: webmaster@mof.gov.il).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hakiryat, Romema, Jerusalem 91950 (tel: 530-3111; fax: 530-33367; email:

markal@mofa.gov.il; internet site: (Information) [www.israel.org](http://www.israel.org)).

Ministry of Health, 2 Ben-Tabai Street, PO Box 1176, Jerusalem 91010 (tel: 670-5705; fax: 623-3026).

Ministry of Industry and Trade, 30 Agron Street, PO Box 299, Jerusalem 91002 (tel: 622-0220; fax: 624-5110).

Ministry of the Interior, 2 Kaplan Street, PO Box 6158, Kiryat Ben-Gurion, Jerusalem 91061 (tel: 670-1411; fax: 670-1628).

Ministry of Justice, 29 Salah A-din Street, Jerusalem 91010 (tel: 670-8511; fax: 628-8618; email: [feedback@justice.gov.il](mailto:feedback@justice.gov.il)).

Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, 2 Kaplan Street, PO Box 915, Kiryat Ben-Gurion, Jerusalem 91008 (tel: 675-2311; fax: 675-2803).

Ministry of National Infrastructure, 216 Jaffa Street, Jerusalem 91130 (tel: 500-6777; fax: 500-6888).

Ministry of Public Security, Kiryat Hamemshala, PO Box 18182, Jerusalem 91181 (tel: 530-9999; fax: 584-7872).

Ministry of Religious Affairs, 236 Jaffa Street, PO Box 13059, Jerusalem 91130 (tel: 531-1171; fax: 531-1183; email: [tsibor@religinfoserv.gov.il](mailto:tsibor@religinfoserv.gov.il)).

Ministry of Science, Culture and Sport, Kiryat Hamemshala Hamizrahit, POB 49100, Jerusalem 91181 (tel: 541-1111).

Ministry of Transport, 97 Jaffa Street, Jerusalem 91000 (tel: 622-8211; fax: 622-8693).

Office of the President, 3 Hanassi Street, Jerusalem 92188 (tel: 670-7211; fax: 561-0037).

The Knesset, Kiryat Ben-Gurion, Jerusalem 91950 (tel: 675-3333; fax: 652-1599).

#### Other useful addresses

Administration of Rabbinical Courts, 9 Koresh Street, Jerusalem 91012 (tel: 624-8603; fax: 624-5019).

British Embassy, 192 Hayarkon Street, Tel Aviv 63405 (tel: 524-9171; fax: 524-3313).

Central Bureau of Statistics, 3 Kaplan Street, PO Box 187, Kiryat Ben-Gurion,

Jerusalem 91919 (tel: 655-3553; fax: 655-3325).

Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Albert Einstein Square, Talbieh, PO Box 4040, Jerusalem 91040 (tel: 563-6211).

Israel Airports Authority, Ben Gurion Airport (tel: 971-2804; fax: 971-2436). For information on taxes and tariffs (tel: 971-5596).

Israel Convention Bureau (ISCOB), Israel Tourism Administration, PO Box 1018, Jerusalem.

Israeli Broadcasting Authority, Klal Building, 97 Jaffa Street, PO Box 6387, Jerusalem 91063 (tel: 529-1888).

Israel Chemicals Ltd, 123 Hahashmonaim Street, Tel Aviv, 67133 (tel: 563-0232; fax: 561-5391).

Israel Electric Corporation Ltd, 2 Hahagana Boulevard, Haifa, 35254 (tel: 854-8548; fax: 853-8149).

Israel Fuel Corporation Ltd (Delek), Prof. Y. Kaufman Street, PO Box 50250, Tel Aviv, 61500 (tel: 591-5555; fax: 510-2072).

Israel Land Administration (part of the National Infrastructure Ministry), 6 Shamai Street, POB 2600, Jerusalem 94631 (tel: 520-8422; fax: 523-4960).

Israel Shipyards Ltd, Po Box 10630, Haifa Bay, 26118 (tel: 846-0245; fax: 841-0572).

Israel Telecommunication Corporation, PO Box 1088, Jerusalem, 91010 (tel: 539-5333; fax: 625-2506).

Israel Trade Fairs Centre/Israel Convention Centre, PO Box 21075, 61210 Tel Aviv (tel: 422-422).

Israeli Embassy (US), 3514 International Drive, NW, Washington DC 20008 (tel: (+1-202) 364-5500; fax: (+1-202) 364-5560; email: [ask@israelemb.org](mailto:ask@israelemb.org)).

Manufacturers' Association of Israel, Industry House, PO Box 50022, 29 Hamered Street, Tel Aviv (tel: 650-121).

National Coal Supply Corporation Ltd, 155 Bialik Street, Ramat Gan, 52523 (tel: 751-2261; fax: 751-0119).

National Insurance Institute, 13 Weizmann Blvd, Jerusalem 91909 (tel: 670-9211; fax: 670-9792).

National Water Company (Mekorot), 9 Lincoln Street, Tel Aviv, 67134 (tel: 623-0555; fax: 623-0833).

Oil Refineries Ltd, PO Box 4, Industrial Zone, Haifa, 31000 (tel: 878-8111; fax: 872-8319).

Ormat Industries Ltd, Po Box 68, Szydlowski Road, New Industrial Area, Yavne, 70650 (tel: 433-777; fax: 439-901).

Pama Development for Energy and Sources, PO Box 20118, 14 Kalman Magen Street, Tel Aviv, 61200 (tel: 695-8129; fax: 695-8131).

Paz Oil Company Ltd, PO Box 434, 4 Hagefen Street, Haifa, 31003 (tel: 856-7111; fax: 852-2390).

Postal Authority, 237 Jaffa Street, Jerusalem 91999 (tel: 629-0800; fax: 629-0921).

State Comptroller, POB 1081, Jerusalem 91010 (tel: 531-5111).

Tahal Consulting Engineers Ltd (Water), PO Box 11170, 54 Ibn Gvirol Street, Tel Aviv, 61111 (tel: 692-4434; fax: 696-9969).

The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE), 54 Ahad Ha'am Street, Tel Aviv 65202; PO Box 29060, Tel Aviv 61290 (tel: 567-7411; fax: 510-5379; internet site: [www.tase.co.il](http://www.tase.co.il)).

Zim Israel Navigation Co. Ltd, 7-9 Pal Yam Avenue, Haifa, 31000 (tel: 865-2111; fax: 865-2956).

**Other news agencies:** Israel National News: [www.israelnationalnews.com](http://www.israelnationalnews.com)

Israel News Agency (INA): [www.israelnewsagency.com](http://www.israelnewsagency.com)

Israeli News Now: [www.israelinewsnow.com](http://www.israelinewsnow.com)

PR Newswire: [www.prnswire.co.il](http://www.prnswire.co.il)

#### Internet sites

Mercantile Discount Bank: [www.mercantile.co.il](http://www.mercantile.co.il)

Yellow and White Pages: [www.yellowpages.co.il](http://www.yellowpages.co.il)