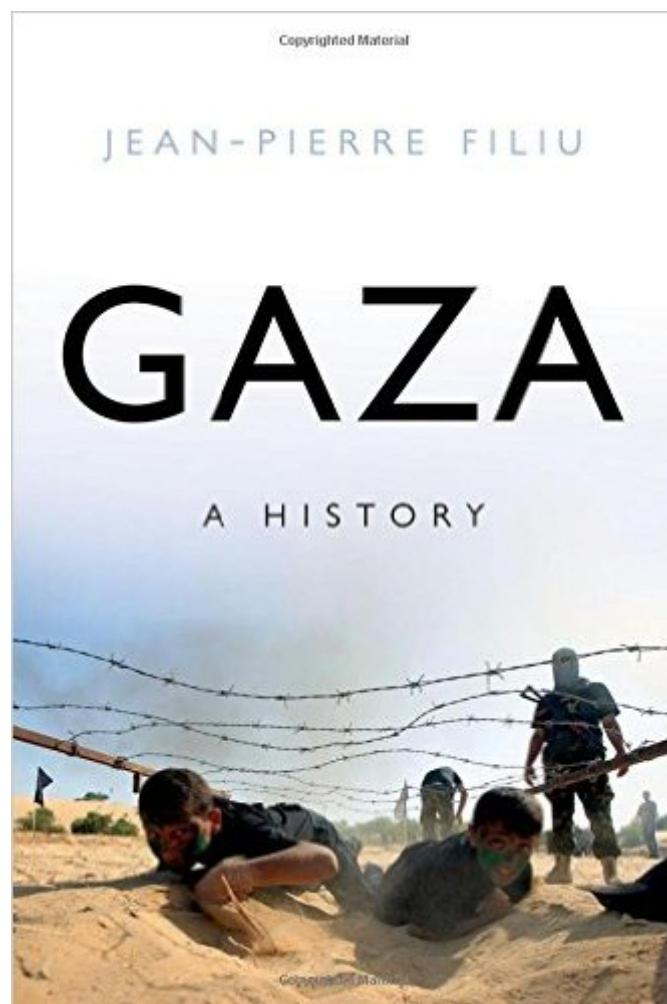


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Gaza: A History (Comparative Politics And International Studies)



Synopsis

Gaza has become synonymous with conflict and dispute. Though only slightly larger than Omaha, Nebraska at 140 square miles, the small territory of Gaza has been a hot spot for bitter disputes between sparring powers for millennia, from the Ancient Egyptians up until the British Empire and even today. Wedged between the Negev and Sinai deserts on one side and the Mediterranean Sea on the other, Gaza was contested by the Pharaohs, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Fatimids, Mamluks, Crusaders, and Ottomans. Then in 1948, 200,000 people sought refuge in Gaza-a marginal area neither Israel nor Egypt wanted. It is here that Palestinian nationalism grew and sprouted into a dream of statehood, a journey much filled with strife. Though small in size, Gaza's history is nothing short of monumental. Jean-Pierre Filiu's *Gaza* is the first complete history of the territory in any language. Beginning with the Hyksos in 18th century BC, Filiu takes readers through modern times and the ongoing disputes of the region, ending with what may be in store for the future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book ought to be read together with Ramzy Baroud's "My Father was a Freedom Fighter", for the personal dimension of life in Gaza from 1948 until the end of last century.

Must read

Great history books put events in context, bring the historical figures to life, and let you know why those events and figures are important. The worst history books are rote recitals of names, dates and events. I picked up an advance review copy of *Gaza*, by Jean-Pierre Filiu, hoping it would give me some insight into how we got to the current cycle of violence in the region. It does provide some of that. *Gaza* sits at the intersection of Egypt and the Levant. Armies and empires crossed back and forth across the region for millennia. The current plight came during the creation of Israel. Palestinian refugees piled into the area around Gaza City and Israel herded the mass of those expelled in 1948. As Egypt and Israel fought in the area, the Gaza Strip was left relatively untouched. The Gaza problem could have been prevented in 1949, Ben Gurion's offer to annex the Gaza Strip as part of Israel was rejected by Egypt at the Lusanne conference. Instead, we have seen three generations of terrorism and oppression. Unfortunately, *Gaza* is not a great history book. It falls closer to the other end of the spectrum. The recital of events gets particularly tiresome as the book approaches the last twenty years. The cycle of attacks from Gaza and escalating reprisals from Israel are repetitive. It could be twenty years ago or last month, similar events continue.

A historical review starting with pre-biblical times which is brief. The main focus is on the present conflict and is written from a Palestinian view point. Although there is an attempt by the author to be objective, his description of Israel's responses to terror is demeaned and described as a really bad thing while totally ignoring what lead up to the response. It does describe the conflict between Palestinian factions but the bias is obvious. If you want an objective historical account and its relationship to the broader middle east, this is not the book for you.

I knew what I was getting when I saw this book in the library: A French Arabist's "history" of *Gaza* and its wars with Israel. And that's what this is. Our author manages to tell us whether the civilian killed by Israel was a baby or an infant but we are not told any details of Israel civilian dead. Bad, bad Jews, good, good Palestinians. Yawn, been there, read that. I didn't finish this book but I doubt I missed any surprises.

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