The first Intifada

Intifada" means "shaking up" or "shaking off," and is the term applied to the uprisings against Israel in modern times.

Though the term is used in other countries to refer to uprisings against the ruling government, the word has special significance in Israel. Israel’s First Intifada lasted from 1987 until 1991, finally dying off with the onset of the Gulf War.

Though the Palestinians and Israelis had managed to live in relative peace for years with Palestinians entering Israel each day to work and shop, there were Palestinians who felt growing anger with what they saw as the "Israeli occupation" of their rightful land and subsequently grew more militant, and they objected to what they believed was a slow annexation of their land to Israel.

They were also disillusioned with the Arab leadership in general, and the PLO in particular, which they felt had not come to their aid or worked toward their independence.

The Jordanians, no lovers of the PLO themselves, had retreated from the West Bank, taking with them whatever moderation they had been able to exert, and Egypt had withdrawn any claims to the Gaza Strip.

While tensions had been escalating for years, a few specific incidents brought them to the breaking point. In the beginning of December 1987, a Jewish salesman in Gaza was stabbed to death. A few days later, on December 8, an Israeli tank at the Erez Crossing accidentally hit some residents of the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, killing four. The general consensus among Palestinians was that the Israelis hit the group deliberately, as payback for the death of the salesman. The traffic accident is considered the "official" beginning of the First Intifada.

Though the uprising was not officially organized by any one group, the PLO became the de facto head, though it was challenged for leadership rights by the terrorist groups Hamas, which was created at the beginning of the Intifada, and Islamic Jihad.

One of the emerging leaders of the Intifada was Faisal Husayni, the grandnephew of the former Grand Mufti Hajj al-Husayni.

Initially, the attacks were crude and low-tech—stone throwing, tire burning, and road blockades. Soon, though, Molotov cocktails, hand grenades, and explosives entered the mix. Toward the end of the Intifada, suicide bombers were used.

The Palestinians also encouraged the use of children as human shields, to protect their fighters from Israeli fire. The uprising grew more organized, especially with the help of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who initiated terror attacks and kidnapped Israeli soldiers.

The Palestinian rioters did not limit their attacks to soldiers, and set out to harass Jewish civilians as well. But the violence was not even limited to the Jews. Palestinians killed many of their own, those whom they accused of collaborating with the Israelis.
During the Intifada, approximately the same number of Palestinians who were killed by Israelis died at the hands of their fellow Palestinians. By the end of the Intifada, hundreds of Israelis had been killed by Palestinian terror attacks.

>> For Additional Reading:

JMCC
www.jmcc.org/fastfactspag.aspx?tname=87

Wikipedia
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Intifada

MERIP
www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/intifada-87-pal-isr-primer.html

American Diplomacy
www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2006/0103/ca_efaw/efaw_intifada.html