



NWIP FACT SHEET

Israel and the Middle East

Israel have not declared itself a nuclear weapon state and shrouds its arsenals in secrecy, but it is estimated that Israel has 100 – 200 nuclear warheads.

The Israeli nuclear program was developed with French assistance in the 1950s and 1960s and has enjoyed the tacit approval of the United States since Nixon. Israel has often repeated a pledge not to be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle Eastern Region and excuse itself with the fact that the US introduced nuclear weapons in the region in the 50s when nuclear warheads were stored in Saudi Arabia. It is believed that Israel does not keep its weapons fully assembled.

It is believed that a small number of F-16s have been fitted for nuclear weapon delivery but the country also posses a land-based ballistic missile. The whole Middle Eastern Region is within range of Israeli nuclear weapons and they are believed to have the capability to make intercontinental ballistic missiles. It is uncertain whether Israel has tactical nuclear weapons, but it cannot be ruled out. It is unknown whether Israel has submarine based nuclear weapons, but they do have submarines that could be fitted to deploy nuclear missiles.

Israel has not signed the NPT and is not believed to have any plans of eliminating its nuclear weapons.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is currently more heated than it has been for a long time and hopes for a peaceful settlement are minor at this point. Many believe that the conflict is the key to not only peace in the region, but on global level as well as it is a key to preventing terrorism.

Several other states in the Middle Eastern region have had or have nuclear weapons programs. It seems to have been ruled out that Iraq had nuclear weapons programs since the first Gulf War in 1991, but there is no doubt that the country had nuclear ambitions before 1991. Iran has been accused of running secret nuclear weapons programs, but it is believed to be a positive development that Iran finally signed on to the NPT additional protocols in early 2004 and thereby allowing unrestricted weapons inspections in the country. Libya have also had nuclear weapons programs but in 2004 president Gadafi announced that Libya would abandon their nuclear ambitions – most likely out of fear of being the next stop in the War on Terror. Egypt had nuclear programs before but unilaterally abandoned them like Argentina and South Africa have.

There is no doubt that if any other state in the region would officially embark on a nuclear policy the stability in the region would seriously deteriorate, but so far all parties seem to be aware of that and no one wishes to be the first to announce an official nuclear program.

Key indicators of development

- * Life expectancy at birth: 78.9
- * Adult literacy rate: 95.1%
- * GDP per capita: 19,790\$
- * Public health expenditure is 8.1 % of the GDP
- * Under-five mortality rate is 6

Israel has signed and ratified the CTBT and is a signatory to the NPT as one of the five official nuclear weapon states.