

Forum: Security Council
Issue: The Situation in Israel and Palestine
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Introduction

Since 1920, Palestine and Israel have engaged in back-and-forth violence to have an official country and a land for their own people. The world has seen a divide between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews ever since the colonialism era (1585 - 1763). After the Arab-Israeli War, the First Intifada, and the Second Intifada, Israel controlled most of the land - more than what the UN planned for them to control in the past. This currently still remains the case: the state of Palestine currently includes the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Hamas, an Islamic resistance group, has since launched several attacks on Israel, and the resulting blockade imposed on Palestine, combined with further violence, has resulted in an emergency humanitarian and refugee crisis for Palestinians. Many Palestinians have not only fallen into poverty or become refugees, but also been left without access to clean water due to conflicts with water rights between the two groups and the overpricing of water.

In 2002, the Israelis, claiming to protect citizens, planned to build a wall around the West Bank of the land. However, instead of following the land borders established after the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, the wall would include territories that Palestinians occupied. Yasser Arafat, the former president of the Palestine state, died in 2004, and in the election in 2006, the Hamas won a large number of positions in the parliament. The Palestine Authorities, the former governor of the West Bank, were highly ineffective in preventing the daily attacks and deaths of citizens from Israeli soldiers, and were not able to prevent Palestinian land from being occupied and taken over by Israel. After the election victory, Hamas, on the other hand, would not let this happen considering their history of violent resistance to Israel. However, this also meant that Hamas was willing to engage in war and violence to gain more land for Palestine, which would create more tension between the two sides and endanger civilians. In the past decade, Hamas has launched several attacks on Israel, to which Israel responded with violent invasions of Palestinian territories that have resulted in the deaths of thousands of Palestinian citizens and militants combined.

Palestinians have been denied a state both before and after Israel's formation, while Jewish Israelis were and are still in great need of their own homeland.

Definition of Key Terms

Nationalism

An ideology based on one's loyalty and pride for their nation, often accompanied by commitment to support one's nation's interests, even when at the expense or detriment of other nations.

Zionism was Jewish nationalism, but also specifically the strong desire for Jewish people to have their own state and land.

Refugee

An individual who was forced to leave their nation due to reasons such as violence, war, environmental disaster, or discrimination.

Terrorism

The use of violence or the threat of it in pursuit of an ideological or political aim. A very common case of terrorism is the September 11 attacks against the United States, four extremely disastrous suicide attacks which were carried out by the Islamist extremist group al-Qaeda.

Background Information

History and roots of the conflict

Late 19th century - the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire was created by Turkish tribes and was one of the most powerful empires in the world around the 16th century. In the 19th century, what people know now as Palestine was ruled by the Ottoman Empire, with the population being a Muslim majority and only 3% Jewish. The Ottoman Empire ended in 1922 and was replaced by the Turkish Republic. The late 19th century was an era of extremely common nationalism in Europe, and Jewish people also were convinced that they needed their own state. Though the desires of both sides were reasonable, both desires to have the same land to themselves resulted in persistent fighting over the occupation of said land. Even in areas already occupied by one side, the other would engage in violent takeovers and mobbing in order to drive out civilians to get a hold of the land for their people.

After World War I - the British rule

In the middle of the colonialism era, the British tried to gain the support and trust of Jewish people through the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised that they would make Palestine a national home for Jewish people. After a successful revolt against the Ottoman Empire, Britain

colonized Palestine and separated Christians, Jews, and Muslims, establishing separate institutions for each religion. By 1938, the Jewish population had increased to almost 30% of Palestine’s population. Palestinian Arabs gained a growing sense of nationalism, which led to their desire for Palestine to be their own nation, and revolt against the British. Afterward, the British decided to limit the number of Jewish people immigrating to Palestine and aimed for a combined Arab and Jewish state to develop in the upcoming decade. This not only upset Zionists since the Jewish desperately needed to leave Europe as a result of WWII, but also angered Palestinians as they were forced to wait for a state that they wanted for their own. After WWII, the British handed the Palestinian issue to the United Nations, which was still newly established at the time.

Arab-Israeli War

The Arab-Israeli War was a series of wars between Arab countries and Israel from 1948 to 2006. It included the Suez Crisis, Six-Day War, Yom Kippur War, Lebanon War, and the Second Lebanon War. The religious ties of Palestine to the land of Israel made the country a suitable territorial claim and were perceived by many Zionists as the only permanent solution to the problem that Jewish people faced at the time. To Arab nationalist radicals, Israel was an enemy as they tried to take the land away. After the UN’s plan, many Arabs were against the idea of sharing their land with Israel because they didn’t feel that their land should be taken as a result of the Holocaust. Israel won the war, which also led to domestic repercussions for the Arab side, de-legitimizing the leadership, and leading to coups and instability. After an armistice was signed in 1949, Israel occupied a third more land than what was originally planned for in the UN partition. Territorial changes weren’t the only result: the ongoing wars left innocent civilians in poverty, with many Palestinians becoming refugees, and caused significant harm to populations. For example, the Deir Yassin massacre saw the deaths of 245 men, women, and children.



Caption #1: Comparison of Palestinian and Israeli Land Throughout Time (“Maps: Loss of Land”)

The Six-Day War

“The Six-Day War occurred at a time of heightened tension between Israel and its neighboring Arab countries”. The war began on June 5th, 1967, and lasted 6 days. Israel won the war, resulting in disastrous conditions in Arab countries. “Egypt’s casualties numbered more than 11,000, with 6,000 for Jordan and 1,000 for Syria, compared with only 700 for Israel. The Arab armies also suffered crippling losses of weaponry and equipment”. Furthermore, Israel gained control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which belonged to Palestinians in the UN proposal.

The First Intifada

The First Intifada was a series of Palestinian protests and violent riots against Israel. It began in the late 1980s with Palestinians boycotting Israeli goods and services, but the conflict spiraled after Israeli armed forces treated protesters with violence. The First Intifada also came with the founding of Hamas, an Islamic nationalist organization that controlled the Gaza strip ever since the takeover in 2007. Though considered a terrorist group, Hamas often gained support due to the support and social welfare projects in Gaza, such as building and staffing schools, clinics, and stores. A positive side of The First Intifada was that it resulted in the Oslo Accords and the process for peace within the land based on the UN Security Council resolution 242. These talks, although failing in the end, are often considered the closest ones to achieving success in maintaining peace, with Ehud Barak, the prime minister of Israel at the time, being willing to give up more land than in the past.

The Second Intifada

After the failure of the talks, Ehud Barak’s government was undermined, and Ariel Sharon, who was a prime minister candidate at the time, led around 1000 armed soldiers into the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Ehud Barak was an “Israeli opposition leader,” and led legislators and guards into the temple to assert Jewish claims there. For Muslims, the place was considered the third-holiest place in Islam, so marching with a thousand guards to assert Jewish claims angered many. This eventually led to a large protest, to which the government responded with violence. This resulted in The Second Intifada, which killed more than 3000 Palestinians and around 1000 Israelis.

Humanitarian crisis

After decades of crisis, the Palestinian population had suffered increasing humanitarian needs and conflicts. Out of around 5.3 million Palestinians, 2.1 million are currently in need of humanitarian aid.

Refugees

There are more than 700,000 Palestine refugees who have been displaced. “Nearly one-third of the registered Palestine refugees, more than 1.5 million individuals, live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem”. The land used for refugee camps is mostly leased from local landowners, meaning that refugees don’t own the land of their shelter and still don’t have a stable enough home. In the large majority of camps, there is a high population density with cramped and poor living conditions, often with insufficient or unsafe basic infrastructure necessary for daily life.

Water issues

Issues with water rights and water-sharing are a large and principal part of the conflict between Palestine and Israel. Palestine and Israel share the water sources of the Jordan River Basin, the Mountain aquifer, and the Coastal aquifer. Since 1948 after the creation of Israel, there have been issues with determining which state has the right to use which water source. Due to Israel’s limited water supply, it’s very dependent on water sources in the Palestine territory. To continue holding power over those sources for their people’s use, Israel has been controlling water use in Palestine through the use of quotas that limit their water pumping, as well as requiring Palestinians to “...request authorization prior to any water-development constructions – such as the drilling of new wells”. Furthermore, the price of water for Palestinians was “three times the rate applied in Jewish settlements”. Scholars and scientists have also noted the over-pumping of aquifers since 1970 by Israel. This is an environmental issue for Israel in the future as it is an unsustainable way of living considering how over-pumping aquifers until they’re completely dry can increase the natural aquifer regeneration period to thousands of years.

The Gaza Strip blockade

A blockade was imposed on the Gaza strip in 2007, as Israel believed it was necessary to protect its civilians from Hamas attacks and other terrorism activity, as well as prevent dual goods from entering the Gaza strip. However, the blockade’s effect on the economy and civilian lives was disastrous: imports of commercial goods dropped massively, and Israeli authorities have restricted access to many areas that were once used for agriculture. Furthermore, “Israeli forces restricted access off the Gaza coast, only allowing fishermen to access 50% of the fishing waters”. This was used as a form of punishment, and not only cut off many fishermen from their income, but also decreased the overall food supply for Palestinians. Unemployment levels for the population are one of the highest in the world, with a large number of people trapped in a poverty cycle. More than half of the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip is in need of food assistance, and with the war between Russia and Ukraine, food prices have been rising in Palestine.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Hammas

Hammas' name in Arabic means the Islamic Resistance Movement, and it is extremely against Israel and committed to its destruction. This group started out with two purposes: one, to create an armed struggle against Israel, and two, to support and construct social welfare programs for Palestinians. However, since 2005 when Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, Hammas has engaged in political processes and won seats in the parliament. Violence between Israel and Hammas has killed both Palestinians and Israelis. Israel, the US, EU, and the UK consider Hammas a terrorist group as they are well known for their suicide bombings targeted at Israelis, which were "widely blamed for turning Israelis off the peace process".

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is an umbrella political organization that was created in the 1960s. PLO's aim is to liberate Palestine, achieve self-determination, and aid the return of refugees into their home and property. PLO has helped provide education, health support, and other similar services for Palestinians through their departments. The PLO was recognized by the UN Security Council as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" in 1974. In 1993, the PLO recognized the state of Israel's "...right to exist in peace, accepted Resolution 242 [...] and rejected 'violence and terrorism'," and was thereafter recognized by Israel. In the current situation, Israel holds more power and land, but also fears "...any behaviour that deviates in any way from the narrative that the Palestinian population is compliant and powerless," according to Al Jazeera, as it could lead to Palestinians aligning their resistance forces and fighting against Israel. This was shown through the reaction of Israeli media on October 30 of 2018, after the Palestinian Central Council authorized the PLO to suspend its recognition of Israel.

United States

The United States has been the leading country in helping facilitate cease-fire agreements and peace processes for the conflict. The U.S. has provided Israel with the largest financial aid than any other nation, and Washington has historically seen "Israel as a crucial political and economic ally in the oil-rich Middle East". To this day, the U.S. public's overall view on Israel has remained positive, with more positive views from Republicans. Americans have also historically sympathized more with Israelis, but positive views on Palestinians are increasing. U.S. president Joe Biden has also openly spoken out about the country's continuous support for the two-state solution, but he believes that with the current

violence between the two groups, it is not yet suitable for Palestine and Israel to restart engaging in peace negotiations.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
June 1916	Revolt by Arabs against the Ottoman Empire
November 2 nd , 1917	Balfour Declaration: British plan to create homeland for Jewish in Israel
November 29 th , 1947	UN partitions for Palestine to separate into Jewish and Palestinian states
May 14 th , 1948	Israel declares independence
May 15 th , 1948	Beginning of first Arab-Israeli war
June 5 th , 1967	Start of the Six-day War
December 9 th , 1987	The First Intifada begins
September 13 th , 1993	The Oslo Accord is signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel
September 29 th , 2000	The Second Intifada begins
January 26 th , 2006	Hamas win the Palestine Parliamentary election
May 2021	Violence erupts once again after tension between Israelis and Hamas in Jerusalem

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, 19 November 1947 (**S/RES/181(II)**)

- UN Security Council Resolution 242, 22 November 1967 (**S/RES/242(1967)**)
- UN Security Council Resolution 2334, 23 December 2016 (**S/RES/2334**)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Peace talks

Peace talks have been a common solution for conflicts between two countries. However, peace talks, such as the one after the First Gulf War and the Taba Peace Talks, between Palestine and Israel such as have often ended in violence. Palestinian refugees want to return to their homeland, while Israelis are afraid that will overwhelm Israelis there. With violence from Hamas and from Israel in response, it is difficult to have peaceful talks as people's lives from each side are taken away. It's crucial to ensure the back-and-forth violence is mitigated in order to have successful results from peace talks. Peace talks also need to be followed up by regulation on agreements made on each side to hold each side accountable.

Past UN resolutions

UN resolutions on this issue in the past have often been one-sided or without an actual, clear action plan. Take, for example, the most recent resolution 2334. The resolution touched on obstacles to peace, including terrorism, but only targeted Israel throughout the resolution rather than holding the Hamas or Palestinian Authorities accountable. Many peace negotiation plans have been rejected by Palestinian leaders for including the requirement of recognizing Israel as a Jewish state. In the 1947 UN Partition Plan for the United States, the UN voted for the land of Palestine to be divided into separate Palestinian and Jewish states. However, as expected, the plan also wasn't able to be implemented, and after the plan was announced in the late 1940s, war broke out between Israelis, Palestinians, and other Arab states. When writing resolutions, it's important for them to benefit both sides and have a clear description and steps so meanings aren't ambiguous.

Humanitarian aid

Humanitarian aid is extremely important to Palestinian citizens at this time. However, countries like Turkey and the Gulf Arab states, each with their own ongoing humanitarian crises, have repeatedly failed to fulfill their donation pledges to Gaza. The European Union, Palestinian Authorities' largest donor, delayed their humanitarian aid to Palestine in 2021 upon controversy with Palestinian textbooks containing violent and anti-Semitic texts. This aid delay has crippled many critical sectors in Palestine, and due to the lack of medical tools and aid, "...at least 500 cancer patients, diagnosed since September 2021, have been unable to access adequate, life-saving treatments at occupied East Jerusalem's

Augusta Victoria Hospital, resulting in avoidable deaths.” Furthermore, with the blockade imposed, it is difficult to deliver aid to Palestinians in the Gaza strip. On May 31st 2010, Israeli soldiers entered a ship that was carrying aid for Gaza during the blockade and killed nine activists, claiming it was for self-defense. Instead, funds can be provided to local humanitarian organizations or agreements can be made to build a project to solely deliver humanitarian aid to the Palestinian citizens.

Possible Solutions

One-state solution

This would create a democratic state where Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews live together with equal rights. Those who support this solution often believe the separation of the two sides into two states is too difficult, with the intertwined population and the complicated issues of land borders and rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their land. However, many Israelis view the one-state solution as destructive to the Jewish character in the state as they would become a minority if all Palestinians were offered citizenship, thus eliminating the only Jewish state.

Two-state solution

This would create separate states, one for each side. Israel would maintain a Jewish majority, and Palestine would maintain a Muslim Arab one. For a long time, the two-state solution was supported by most people as it would satisfy the desires of both sides. However, an enormous amount of political and financial effort would be required in order to disentangle the years of ties and pave way for the solution. The current situation, with Israelis occupying a large majority of the territory, isn't pressing enough for Israel to feel the strong need to cooperate in this solution to resolve the conflict. It's mostly the Palestinian citizens who are struggling, and Israel's economy has been thriving for decades, with a very competitive research and pharmaceutical industry as well as low inflation and unemployment rates.

Federation

A similar idea as the one-state solution, but Israeli law is applied to the West Bank, while the Palestinians there are given citizenship and voting rights. The rest of the country would be divided into smaller provinces to maintain a Jewish majority.

Confederation

In this solution, Israel and Palestine would have their own government, but both would work together on discussing and resolving security and economic problems. Citizens from each side can only

vote for their country's corresponding elections, but citizens are allowed to move freely between the two states, and perhaps even have citizenship in both, similar to the policy of the European Union.

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Appendices

More on the history of the conflict

I. Timeline of Events and Details: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VBIBekw3Uk>

II. The Role of Britain in the Issue: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcKljwiQgok>

More on UN involvement

I. List of Security Council Resolutions on the Issue: <https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/security-council/>

II. History of Peace Processes and Meeting: <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/>

III. Getting Stuck on the Issue: <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/05/18/world/meanwhile-in-america-may-18-intl/index.html>

More on solutions

I. Different Solutions and Evaluations: <https://www.rosalux.org.ec/en/options-for-resolving-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict/>

II. More Solutions in Step-by-step Detail: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/01/israeli-palestinian-conflict-2020-what-are-possible-paths-ahead>

III. On reasons for the failure of peace talks: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/why-peace-talks-between-israelis-and-palestinians-keep-failing/>

IV. Evaluation of One-state and Two-state Solution: <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/06/27/assessing-one-state-and-two-state-proposals-to-solve-the-israel-palestine-conflict/>

V. More on Confederation: <https://www.almendron.com/tribuna/confederation-the-one-possible-israel-palestine-solution/>