

Security Council

The issue of the conflict between Israel and Palestine



Forum: The Security Council

Issue: The issue of the conflict between Israel and Palestine

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Introduction

The Israel-Palestine conflict stands as one of the most enduring and complex geopolitical disputes of modern times. Rooted in historical, religious, territorial, and political factors, this conflict centers around competing claims to the land situated between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The struggle is deeply entrenched in the narratives and identities of both Israelis and Palestinians, each asserting their right to self-determination, sovereignty, and security. Over the decades, this conflict has given rise to multiple wars, uprisings, peace initiatives, and ongoing tensions, defying easy resolution and profoundly impacting the lives of people in the region. Understanding its historical context, the aspirations of both sides and the multitude of factors at play is crucial in comprehending the complexities and challenges inherent in seeking a sustainable and just resolution to this enduring conflict.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Jews, and Arabs both claimed the right to self-determination in historical Palestine.

Then, the British Empire took control of the area known as Palestine followed by the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, which by then ruled that part of the Middle East, in World War One. In this part of the land, there was a Jewish minority but predominantly the region of Palestine was inhabited by an Arab majority, as well as other, smaller ethnic groups. The tensions in the already heated conflict region between the two parties rose when the international community gave the United Kingdom the task of establishing a "national home" in Palestine for Jewish people leading to the Balfour Declaration of 1917. It was a document made by former Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to the Jewish community in Great Britain. The declaration was enshrined in the British mandate over the former region of Palestine and endorsed by the 1922 newly instated League of Nations, a forerunner of the United Nations. The establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948 marked a pivotal moment, resulting in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, leading to a profound refugee crisis that is still present to this day. The whole region nowadays split into the state of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza – was the former territory of Palestine.

When taking a closer look at the dispute and the reasons each side brings up it becomes clear that this 75-year ongoing conflict is a deeply rooted religious, ancestral, and geopolitical topic of debate. For Israelis, the establishment of a homeland after centuries of persecution and the memory of the Holocaust is foundational to their national identity. Conversely, Palestinians view the creation of Israel as the Nakba, or "catastrophe," which led to the dispossession of their land and the denial of their right to self-determination.



Over the years, efforts toward peace have been made through various negotiations, peace accords, and international interventions. The Oslo Accords of the 1990s aimed to establish a framework for achieving a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, yet the envisioned two-state solution has faced numerous challenges and setbacks, including territorial disputes, security concerns, settlements, access to resources, and the status of Jerusalem, a city of immense religious significance for Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike. As of November 21, the casualties of this complex conflict between Israel and the Hamas over 15,000 Palestinians and Israelis have been killed, including fifty-seven journalists as well as over 100 UNRWA aid workers. This governance has led to ongoing political instability and periodic escalations of violence between Hamas and Israel, resulting in numerous conflicts and humanitarian crises, affecting the lives of civilians residing in the Gaza Strip.

The ongoing cycle of violence, including wars, uprisings, and clashes, has perpetuated a humanitarian crisis, impacting civilians on both sides. The Gaza Strip, under the control of Hamas, has experienced recurrent conflicts with Israel, resulting in immense human suffering and infrastructural devastation.

International perspectives on the issue vary widely, with some nations supporting Israel's right to exist and defend itself, while others advocate for the recognition of Palestinian statehood and emphasize the need for a just resolution that addresses the grievances of both parties.

The question of Palestine and Israel remains one of the most enduring and complex geopolitical issue with implications beyond the region, influencing geopolitics, international relations, and efforts toward peace and stability in the Middle East, defying easy solutions and demanding a delicate balance of diplomacy, empathy, and a commitment to human rights and justice for all involved parties.

Definition of Key Terms

Balfour Declaration	A 1917 statement by the British government expressing support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, played a significant role in shaping the conflict's trajectory.
First Intifada	In December 1987, the first intifada broke out in the territories of Gaza, Judea and Samaria, which has the character of a popular uprising. Serious and violent riots begin in the Gaza Strip, soon spread to the territories of Judea and Samaria, and develop into hostile sabotage activity that includes throwing Molotov cocktails, stabbings and attacks, damage to property, serious disturbances, incitement, massive injury and mass murder of suspected collaborationists and other actions. The General Security Service was required for the first time to deal significantly with an unprecedented wave of disturbances in the territories, at the same time as its dedicated operational activity, and had to adjust its activities to deal with the new challenge. In January 1988, the Shin Bet was assigned responsibility for evaluating intelligence in the territories. For this purpose, a special research department was established in the Arab Affairs Division of the Shin Bet.
Gaza strip	The Gaza Strip is a narrow piece of land situated on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, bordered by Israel to the east and north and Egypt to the southwest. It is densely populated and is home to primarily Palestinian inhabitants. The Gaza Strip has been a main point of political tension and conflict due to its significance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It came under Israeli occupation following the 1967 Six-Day War and was later evacuated by Israel in 2005. However, Israel maintains control of its borders, airspace, and territorial waters, imposing strict restrictions on the movement of goods and people in and out of the region. The area has been governed by the Palestinian militant group Hamas since 2007 after it won legislative elections and subsequently ousted the rival Fatah party from the territory in a violent conflict.
Hamas	Hamas - whose name means "Islamic Resistance Movement", is a fundamentalist Sunni Islamic body, and is considered a terrorist group by some nations. Their goal is the destruction of the state of Israel and instead establish a Palestinian Halacha controlling the Gaza Strip. Their governance, resistance against Israel, and rejection of Israel's right to exist have led to ongoing political instability and periodic escalations of violence between Hamas and Israel, resulting in numerous conflicts and humanitarian crises, affecting the lives of civilians residing in the Gaza Strip.
Intifada	The Arabic term for "uprising," referring to Palestinian popular revolts against Israeli occupation, notably the First Intifada (1987-1993) and the Second



Intifada (2000-2005).

Israel

Israel is a country located in the Middle East, situated on the southeastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It shares borders with Lebanon to the north, Syria to the northeast, Jordan to the east, and Egypt to the southwest, while also bordering the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The country is geographically positioned at the crossroads of Africa, Asia, and Europe. The state of Israel was established in 1948, following the declaration of independence, and its capital city Jerusalem, which holds immense religious significance for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Tel Aviv is another major city in Israel and serves as the country's economic and technological hub. Israel is known for its diverse cultural heritage, historical significance, and technological advancements. The country has a complex geopolitical landscape, with ongoing disputes regarding borders, settlements, and the status of Jerusalem, especially about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As a nation, Israel has evolved into a modern democracy with a parliamentary system, fostering innovation in technology, science, and various other industries. It is home to a diverse population, consisting of Jews, Arabs, Druze, and other ethnic and religious groups, contributing to the country's vibrant cultural tapestry.

League of Nations

The League of Nations was an international organization founded in 1920, following the end of World War I. It was established as a result of the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles. The primary objective of the League of Nations was to promote international cooperation, prevent future conflicts, and maintain world peace. The League aimed to prevent aggression between nations through collective security arrangements. Member nations were expected to cooperate in ensuring peace and taking joint action against aggressor nations. One of the League's goals was to reduce the arms race and promote disarmament among member states to prevent the outbreak of war. The League provided a platform for member states to resolve disputes through peaceful means, including arbitration, negotiation, and mediation. It aimed to safeguard the rights and interests of minority groups in various countries, ensuring fair treatment and preventing discrimination. The League of Nations supported efforts to improve living conditions, public health, labor conditions, and economic cooperation among member states. Despite its intentions, the League of Nations faced significant challenges and ultimately failed to prevent the outbreak of World War II. Its effectiveness was hampered by several factors, including the absence of major powers such as the United States, Japan, and later the Soviet Union, which weakened its authority and ability to enforce decisions. The League of Nations was dissolved on April 18, 1946, and its functions and responsibilities were transferred to its successor, the United Nations, which was established after World War II with a revised



structure and expanded membership, aiming to learn from the shortcomings of its predecessor.

Oslo Accords	The Oslo Accords were a set of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that established a peace process for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a mutually negotiated two-state solution. The agreements resulted in limited self-governance for Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip through the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA)
Palestine	Palestine refers to a region in the Middle East that holds historical, cultural, and geopolitical significance. It is situated in Western Asia, primarily between the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Jordan River to the east. The area encompasses parts of modern-day Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Historically, Palestine has been home to various peoples, including ancient Canaanites, Hebrews, Israelites, Philistines, Arabs, and others. It holds religious importance for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as it contains sites considered sacred by adherents of these faiths. The geopolitical status of Palestine is complex and has been a subject of contention for many years. The Palestinian people have sought self-determination and statehood, aspiring to establish an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. However, disputes, conflicts, and negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians have led to ongoing challenges, including territorial disputes, security concerns, and differing political aspirations. The issue of Palestine remains a central focus of international relations, peace talks, and efforts aimed at achieving a resolution that addresses the rights, aspirations, and security of both Israelis and Palestinians.
Palestinian Authority	A semi-autonomous governing body established through the Oslo Accords, exercising limited self-governance in parts of the West Bank.
Right of Return	The Palestinians demand the right of refugees and their descendants, who fled or were expelled during the 1948 war, to return to their homes in what is now Israel.
Shin Bet	The Shin Bet, officially known as the Israel Security Agency (ISA), is Israel's internal security service. It is responsible for counterterrorism, counterintelligence, and maintaining internal security within Israel and the occupied territories, including the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The agency focuses on preventing security threats, such as terrorism, espionage, and other forms of subversion against the State of Israel.
Six-Day War	The Six-Day War of 1967 was a war between Israel and the Arab countries of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Palestinian guerrilla attacks on Israel from bases in



Syria led to increased hostility between the two countries. A series of miscalculations by both sides followed. Syria feared that an invasion by Israel was forthcoming and appealed to Egypt for support. Egypt answered by ordering the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping forces from the Sinai Peninsula and by moving troops into the area. Amid increasingly belligerent language from both sides, Egypt signed a mutual defense treaty with Jordan. Israel, surrounded and fearing an Arab attack was imminent, launched what it felt was a preemptive strike against the three Arab states on June 5, 1967. Israeli forces captured the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank of the Jordan River, the Old City of Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. The status of these occupied territories subsequently became a major point of contention between the two sides. After the Six-Day War, the Shin Bet took over the responsibility for countering terrorism and espionage in the territories of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. The control of these areas leads to an increase in Palestinian terrorism within Israel, in the territories, and abroad.

Two-State Solution

A proposed resolution to the conflict envisions an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, typically based on pre-1967 borders.

Zionism

A movement advocating for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in historic Palestine, primarily emerging in the late 19th century.



General Overview

The conflict between Israel and Hamas, the militant Palestinian group controlling the Gaza Strip, has been a persistent and multi-faceted struggle spanning several decades.

Hamas, founded in the late 1980s, emerged as a resistance movement with the goal of establishing an Islamic state in historic Palestine and contesting Israeli occupation. It gained popularity through its social services and armed resistance against Israel. However, its tactics, including rocket attacks targeting Israeli civilians and using civilian infrastructure in Gaza for military purposes, have drawn condemnation and led to conflict escalation.

Israel, on the other hand, views Hamas as a terrorist organization due to its attacks on Israeli territory and civilians. Israel's stance emphasizes self-defense against threats posed by Hamas' rocket fire, underground tunnels used for infiltration, and the broader security challenges emanating from Gaza.

The cycle of violence between Israel and Hamas has been marked by intermittent periods of relative calm punctuated by intense confrontations, often triggered by specific incidents, such as rocket attacks, Israeli military operations, or clashes in Jerusalem. The confrontations often result in significant civilian casualties on both sides, humanitarian crises in Gaza, and widespread destruction. Efforts to reach a lasting peace agreement between Israel and Hamas, and by extension, the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have been challenging. Attempts at ceasefire agreements brokered by regional and international actors have had limited success in maintaining long-term tranquility.

The situation is compounded by the political divisions within the Palestinian territories, with Hamas controlling Gaza while the Palestinian Authority, governs parts of the West Bank. These divisions have complicated efforts to present a unified Palestinian stance in negotiations with Israel.

International perspectives on the Israel-Hamas conflict vary widely, with some advocating for a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders, while others emphasize Israel's right to defend itself from attacks and insist on the cessation of violence from Hamas.

The Israel-Hamas conflict remains a critical issue with implications beyond the region, influencing geopolitics, international relations, and efforts toward peace and stability in the Middle East. Efforts to address the root causes of the conflict, promote dialogue, and find a sustainable resolution remain imperative for lasting peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Major Parties Involved

Arab States:	Various Arab nations have been involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict, both directly and indirectly. Some have supported Palestinians politically, economically, or militarily, while others have engaged in diplomatic efforts for peace or normalized relations with Israel in recent years.
Fatah	A major Palestinian political party and the leading faction within the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). It holds influence in the Palestinian Authority and has historically engaged in negotiations with Israel for a two-state solution.
Hamas	A militant Palestinian Islamist group controlling the Gaza Strip since 2007. Hamas rejects Israel's right to exist and has engaged in armed resistance against Israel. It is considered a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States, the European Union, and other countries.
Israel	A country established in 1948 in the historic land of Palestine, primarily inhabited by Jewish people. Israel has faced ongoing security concerns, seeking recognition and safety within its borders. It has a strong military and political presence in the region.
Palestinian Authority	A governing body established in parts of the West Bank and previously in Gaza, representing Palestinians in negotiations with Israel. The PA seeks Palestinian statehood, self-determination, and an end to Israeli occupation.
Palestinian Liberation Organization	Established in 1964, the PLO is an umbrella organization representing various Palestinian groups and interests. It sought the establishment of a Palestinian state and was recognized by Israel as the representative of the Palestinian people in peace negotiations.
United States of America	Historically, the U.S. has played a significant role in peace efforts between Israel and Palestine. It has supported Israel economically, militarily, and politically while also advocating for a negotiated solution to the conflict.



Timeline of Events

Nov. 2, 1917	The signing of the Balfour Declaration by the British government
Apr. 19, 1946	Dissolution of the League of Nations
Nov. 29, 1947	Adoption of the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine by the United Nations General Assembly, which however was not implemented. Proposal by the United Nations, recommending a partition of Mandatory Palestine at the end of the British Mandate.
May 14, 1948	Proclamation of the establishment of the State of Israel by David Ben-Gurion and recognition by U.S. President Harry S. Truman on the same day.
Feb. 8, 1949	Foundation of the Israel Internal Security Service known as the Shin Bet, responsible for counterterrorism and counterintelligence
May 15, 1948 – Mar. 10, 1949	The outbreak of the Arab-Israeli War were five Arab nations (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria) invaded territories in the former Palestinian mandate immediately following the announcement of the independence of the state of Israel on the day before
5. Juni 1967 – 10. Juni 1967	Six-Day War was the third of the Arab-Israeli wars with Israel's decisive victory including the capture of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, Old City of Jerusalem, and Golan Heights; the status of these territories subsequently became a major point of contention in the Arab-Israeli conflict.
Dec. 9, 1987 – Sep. 13, 1993	The first intifada began in December 1987 and ended in September 1993 with the signing of the first Oslo Accords, which provided a framework for peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.
Sep. 13, 1993	The First Oslo Accords were signed.
Sep. 28, 1995	The Oslo II Accord created Areas A, B, and C in the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority was given some limited powers and responsibilities in Areas A and B and a prospect of negotiations on a final settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.



Jul.11 – 25, 2000	The 2000 Camp David Summit was a summit meeting at Camp David between United States President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and was an effort to end the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The summit ended without an agreement and its failure is considered one of the main triggers of the Second Intifada.
Sep. 28, 2000 – Feb. 8, 2005	The second Intifada, sometimes called the Al-Aqṣā Intifada, began in September 2000. Although no single event signaled its end, most analysts agree that it had run its course by late 2005. The two uprisings resulted in the death of more than 5,000 Palestinians and some 1,400 Israelis.
2005	Withdrawal of Israeli settlements and military presence from the Gaza Strip.
Mar. 19, 2005	Declaration of the Cairo Declaration which reaffirmed the status of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people through the participation in it of all forces and factions according to democratic principles. The Declaration implied a reform of the PLO by the inclusion of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the PLO.
2006	Hamas won Palestinian legislative elections and gained control of the Gaza Strip.
Jun. 16, 2007	Hamas takes control of the Gaza Strip after violent clashes with Fatah, a rival Palestinian faction.
Dec. 27, 2008 – Jan. 18, 2009	Gaza War/ Operation Cast Lead: Israel launched a military operation in Gaza in response to rocket attacks by Hamas militants. The conflict lasted for three weeks, resulting in significant casualties and damage.
2012	A ceasefire agreement is brokered by Egypt after several days of intense fighting between Israel and Hamas
Jul.8, 2014 – Aug. 26, 2014	Gaza War/ Operation Protective Edge: Launch of an Israeli military operation in response to increased rocket fire from Gaza and the discovery of tunnels used by militants. The conflict lasted for 50 days and resulted in heavy casualties and widespread destruction.



2018	Protests and clashes along the Gaza-Israel border intensify as Palestinians demonstrate against the Israeli blockade and demand the right to return to their ancestral land. The protests, known as the Great March of Return, continue intermittently.
2021	Tensions escalate in Jerusalem, particularly around the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, leading to clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces. Rockets are fired from Gaza towards Jerusalem by Hamas militants, prompting Israeli airstrikes in Gaza in response.
October 7, 2023	The Hamas started the by far most deadly attack on Israel and the resulting war is one of the most devastating to Palestinians, with over 15,000 dead so far, a number that will surely rise further as Israel tries to destroy Hamas completely.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The previous solution proposed to solve the deeply rooted conflict between Israel and Palestine was the so-called “one-state solution.” This implemented the creation of a unitary, federal, or confederate Israeli-Palestinian state, which would encompass all of the present territories of Israel, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights.

The one-state solution is an approach proposed to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by advocating for the establishment of a single, bi-national state encompassing both Israel and the Palestinian territories, such as the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as East Jerusalem. In essence, this solution suggests the creation of a unified country where both Israelis and Palestinians would have equal rights, citizenship, and representation, regardless of their religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. However, there are lots of disputes between the two ethnic groups. Advocates of the one-state solution argue that this model could address the issues of unequal rights, settlements, and territorial disputes by providing a framework for shared governance, equal opportunities, and shared resources. Furthermore, proponents of the one-state solution contend that a single, democratic state with equal rights for all citizens could foster inclusivity, peaceful coexistence, and stability in the region. However, this solution faces significant challenges and criticism. Critics, including many Israelis and Palestinians, raise concerns about the practicality and viability of such a state, considering the deep-rooted historical, religious, cultural, and security-related complexities in the region. Issues like the potential loss of national identity for both Israelis and Palestinians, the distribution of power, security arrangements, and the resolution of territorial claims pose significant obstacles to the implementation of a one-state solution. Furthermore, skeptics argue that the acceptance of a one-state solution by both Israeli and Palestinian

leadership remains elusive due to deeply entrenched historical narratives and conflicting national aspirations. There are concerns that a single, unified state could perpetuate existing conflicts rather than resolve them, leading to continued tension and instability. While the one-state solution has been discussed and debated among scholars, policymakers, and activists, as of now, it has not gained widespread support or formal acceptance from the Israeli or Palestinian leadership, and the focus primarily remains on efforts to negotiate a two-state solution as a means to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Possible Solutions

As of right now the only viable solution to solve this conflict is the Two-State solution. It proposes the establishment of two separate and free states, Israel and Palestine that would be living side by side in recognized borders. The borders would roughly follow the pre-1967 lines (the Green Line), with negotiated land swaps to accommodate Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Jerusalem could potentially serve as the capital for both states, with arrangements for the holy sites acceptable to both Israelis and Palestinians. This solution has been the focus of numerous peace negotiations and is supported by many countries and international organizations. The two-state solution proposed by the Oslo Accords was born out of a series of historical events. A first attempt at partitioning the land in 1948 resulted in an Israeli state but no Palestinian state, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip fell under Jordanian and Egyptian rule, respectively. In the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel captured and occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and other Arab territories, which in the aftermath led to the idea that Israel would exchange land it had captured for peace with its Arab neighbors, including, eventually, the Palestinians. Supporters of the one-state solution argue that the two-state solution, which proposes separate Israeli and Palestinian states coexisting side by side, has become increasingly difficult to achieve due to factors like Israeli settlements in the West Bank, security concerns, and disagreements over the status of Jerusalem. However, many Palestinians and Israelis, as well as the Arab League, have stated that they would accept a two-state solution based on the 1949 Armistice Agreements, more commonly referred to as the "1967 borders". In a poll conducted by The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) in 2002, 72% of both Palestinians and Israelis supported at that time a peace settlement based on the 1967 borders so long as each group could be reassured that the other side would be cooperative in making the necessary concessions for such a settlement. A 2013 Gallup poll found that 70% of Palestinians in the West Bank and 48% of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, together with 52% of Israelis support "an independent Palestinian state together with the state of Israel". Some Israeli journalists suggest that the Palestinians are unprepared to accept any form of a Jewish state. According to one poll, "fewer than 2 in 10 Arabs, both Palestinian and all others, believe in Israel's right to exist as a nation with a Jewish majority. Another poll, however, cited by the US State Department, suggests that "78 percent of Palestinians and 74 percent of Israelis believe a peace agreement that leads to both states living side by side as good neighbors" is "essential or desirable".



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