

BSAMUN 2024

Security Council

# Addressing the Ongoing Israeli-Palestine Conflict

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## Introduction

The land west of the Jordan River and east of the Mediterranean Sea has been home to one of the most brutal, long-lasting modern disputes, between two major people groups - the Palestinian Muslims, and the Israeli Jews. Curiously, both groups claim to have both a superior historical connection, as well as a superior religious connection to this land, regardless of other ethnic groups who call it home (Druze, Baha'i, Armenian, Circassian, Bedouin, Samaritans). The dispute has brought many bloodsheds forth, most recently during the vicious Hamas orchestrated October 7th attack on Israel, and the exhaustive subsequent Israeli campaign in Gaza. The full extent of this dispute is excessively complex, and it is impossible to paint a full picture through one research report, or one debate. While it is imperative to keep a focus on the current war, this report will attempt to provide you with the necessary context. Still, as a general rule of thumb, it is important to note four things. First, this issue has the most UN resolutions in history, yet continues nonetheless. Second, both sides compare this specific war to their darkest moments, the Palestinians talk about a second Nakba, and the Israelis about a second Holocaust. Third, there is a sense of “knowing the real truth” on either side, with news published incessantly, some before evidential confirmations. Fourth, this war has broad implications, evident by countless protests, international involvements, and the Red Sea crisis. As your president chair, I hope you will take a thorough dive into the issue, bringing your best ideas to engage in a productive, constructive, relevant debate, emulating the situation one day after the ICJ order.

## Key Terms

**UNSC:** The United Nations Security Council.

**ICJ:** International Court of Justice.

**PLO:** Palestinian Liberation Organisation, governs Palestinians in the West Bank.

**ICRC:** the International Committee of the Red Cross.

**Hostages:** People kidnapped and held by an enemy as leverage for a condition or aim.

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**Ceasefire:** Where two opposing parties in war agree to temporarily suspend arms.

**De facto:** Control of power and decision making in practice, even without a legal claim.

**UNRWA:** The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestinian People.

**Guerrilla Warfare:** Unconventional warfare of many minor individual surprise attacks

**Land of Palestine:** A neutral geographical term for the region as a whole, see figure 1.

**Hamas:** Organisation governing Gaza de facto. Refers to itself as a resistance in the name of Alla. It aims to destroy Israel, replacing it with a Palestinian state, as per its charter.

**Oslo Accords:** A 1993 agreement where Israel first recognised the PLO's legitimacy, and the West Bank was divided into three areas, majority of those still under Israeli control.

**The Nakba:** Translates to 'catastrophe' in Arabic. The nationwide displacement of Palestinians - either by choice or through expulsion - following the Arab-Israeli war of 1948/9.

**Zionism:** A late 19th to early 20th century movement believing Jews should resettle the geographical land of Palestine after centuries of exile. Zion is an alternative name for Jerusalem.


**Gaza-Israel Barrier:** Built to block Hamas underground tunnels into Israel's territory

**The 'day after':** Refers to the situation once the current war concludes.

**Red Sea Crisis:** Ships forced to take longer routes due to the Middle-Eastern turmoil, specifically Houthi targeting of cargo destined for Israel, causing the prices of goods to rise.

## General Overview

In the early morning of October 7th 2023, Hamas broke the Gaza-Israel barrier. After first eliminating the few present Israeli military forces ~3,000 Palestinians, including hundreds of non-Hamas-affiliated citizens, commenced the massacre. Some committed various atrocities to anyone in their path at an Israeli music festival. Others rampaged Israeli




beaches, villages and nearby cities, burning houses and kidnapping a total of 253 citizens - the youngest of whom a 10 months old baby - from the two sites. 136 hostages are still there, with at least 32 of whom having been murdered while in Gaza. Hamas killed over 1,200 Israeli citizens, including elderly, children, men, women and pets, while also firing thousands of missiles at Israel. True chaos was inflicted, with the extent of the invasion slowly being unravelled. The next day Hezbollah, an armed group in Lebanon much larger than Hamas, got involved by aerially attacking Israel. Israel was forced to evacuate its citizens from areas near the borders with Gaza and Lebanon, and initiated the devastating ongoing response. This consisted of an extensive aerial bombing campaign of more than 12,000 strikes, a ground invasion with myriads of military personnel, and maintaining control of surrounding seas. Hamas has been building an underground infrastructure of tunnels for years, where many of the hostages are held, and Hamas members hide, proving the fighting gruelling for Israeli soldiers. Throughout, Israeli soldiers found missile launching sites below or adjacent to UNRWA schools, hospitals, mosques and other civilian locations. Israel has been bombing those, bringing much criticism towards it. The campaign has displaced almost 2 million Gazan residents, inching further South each time, now primarily in the city of Rafah on the Egyptian border, unable to cross the fence in place there as well. It too is Israel's next target. The campaign has so far taken more than 25,000 Palestinian lives, destroying at least 50% of buildings in Gaza. Israel set the goals of releasing all hostages and disarming Hamas, removing it from power, both will take months more to complete, extending the war. For perspective, Tel-Aviv is 65km away from Gaza, the same distance as from Amsterdam to Den Haag.

## Major Parties/Countries Involved

**Israel** has been conducting a severe military campaign against Hamas' military wing since October 27th. It aims to remove Hamas from power and release all its hostages. Israel has not constructed a plan for the 'day after', with internal disagreements on what it should look like.

**Hamas** orchestrated the attack which was the catalyst for the current war. It now holds Israeli hostages as leverage for the release of its members held in Israeli prisons, and ceasing the war. While it slowly loses forces due to the Israeli offensive, Hamas maintains some sovereignty.



**The USA** is considered 'Israel's greatest ally', having exercised the right to veto UNSC resolutions regarding the conflict, stating such would interfere with a deal to release the Israeli hostages in Gaza. The USA is also a crucial mediator in the ongoing efforts to reach such a deal.

**Egypt** is the only country that borders the Gaza Strip besides Israel, and is concerned with over a million refugees who could potentially enter. Egypt is also a hostage deal mediator.

**Qatar** has funded Hamas with ~2\$ Billion and has been hosting Hamas leadership before and since the outbreak on October 7th. Qatar is another key mediator for a hostage deal.

**Hezbollah** has fired over 1000 rockets into Israel since October 7th, and is allied with Hamas. It plays an active role in the current war by maintaining a front with Israel around the Israeli-Lebanese border out of solidarity for Hamas. It lost over 200 members since October 7th.

**UNRWA** is expected to provide humanitarian aid to desperate Palestinian civilians. However, at least 10% of its operatives are affiliated with Hamas, and at least 12 UNRWA workers participated in October 7th. Recently, armour has been found at UNRWA school.

**South Africa** has engaged with Hamas in the past, even mid-conflict. South Africa has accused Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinian people in an ICJ case it applied for

**The PLO** has historically been opposed to Hamas, but as the representative body for Palestinians on the international stage, it is expected to retain control in Gaza post-war.

**The Houthis** are allied with Hamas, have fired missiles and armed drones at southern Israel, and blockade cargo ships designated for Israel causing the current Red Sea crisis.

**Iran** has funded Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups with a total of 100\$ million per year. Iran also funds other armed Muslim organisations like Hezbollah and the Houthis.

**The ICRC** has been responsible for humanitarian aid for Gazan civilians and bringing the freed Israeli hostages home, but has been unable to support the hostages during captivity.

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The **ICJ & UNSC** are the relevant UN bodies for this conflict. The former is carrying out a court case regarding the war, and the latter is expected to enforce the former's decisions.

## Timeline of Key Events

### Conflict As A Whole:

**135 CE:** The term 'Palestine' is first used by the Roman as the province Syria-Palestina, coined to dissociate the Land of Judea from the Jews who were expelled from it.

**1882-1939:** The 1st through 5th 'aliyahs', Jews from Europe steadily settle Israel. Caused by proliferation of Zionism, and many anti-semitic massacres in Europe.

**Nov 1917:** Balfour declaration promises a Jewish national home in the land of Palestine.

**March 1920:** Syrian congress, with Palestinian delegates, rejects the Balfour declaration

**1936-1939:** The Great Arab Revolt, previous 'healthy' relationships between Israelis and Palestinians abruptly deteriorate. Arabs demand Jewish immigration to cease.

**1939:** The 'White Paper' specifies that a Jewish state can only be established alongside a Palestinian one. Heavily limited Jewish immigration and rights of Jews to obtain lands.

**November 1947:** UN General Assembly passes a partition plan for the land of Palestine.

**May 1948:** British mandate officially ends without a clear plan for the future. The Jewish settlement declares independence as the Zionist Jewish state of Israel on May 14th 1948.

**1948-1949:** First Arab-Israeli war. Decisively won by the recently declared state of Israel.

**1948:** Beginning of the Nakba. Palestinians lose the war and flee to the West Bank and East Jerusalem occupied by Jordan, and the Gaza Strip occupied by Egypt.

**1948-1967:** Jordan and Egypt occupy the lands, but do not provide a Palestinian state.

**1964:** PLO is formed.

**1967:** Israel takes control of and settles the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip

**1987-1993:** First Intifada, Palestinian uprisings against the Israeli occupation.

**1987:** Hamas is formed as a political entity as a resistance movement in the name of Alla.

**1993:** Oslo Accords, West Bank split into A, B and C areas. Gaza remains under Israel.

**1995:** Israeli PM Rabin murdered by an Israeli citizen opposed to PLO peace negotiations

**2000-2005:** Second Intifada, violent Palestinian attacks against Israeli citizens as protest.

**2005:** Israel withdraws its settlements from Gaza. Palestinians first gain full sovereignty.

**2007:** Hamas becomes the de facto Gaza ruler. Declared hostile and blockaded by Israel.

**2008:** Operation Cast Lead, first war directly between Hamas and Israel

**2011:** Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier kidnapped by Hamas and held for 5 years is freed in exchange for ~1,000 Palestinian prisoners, including Yahya Sinwar, current Hamas leader

**2012:** Operation Pillar of Defense, Israel damages Hamas terror infrastructures in Gaza.

**2014:** Operation Protective Edge, aimed to destroy Hamas's underground tunnel network

### **Ongoing Conflict**

**2014-2023:** Hamas funded, synchronised with Israel, the USA and the UN, to rebuild Gaza. Simultaneously, Hamas invests in constructing expensive underground tunnels.

**October 7th:** Hamas attacks Israel, refer to General Overview for details

**October 9th:** Israel intensifies its existing blockade as a first response to the attack.

**October 7th-10th:** Fighting takes place in the Gaza envelope to eliminate the remaining terrorists in Israeli lands. Magnitude of the attack slowly gets discovered.

**October 13th:** Hamas calls for international anti-semitic actions as signs of solidarity

**Until October 27th:** An Israeli air strike commences against Hamas targets in Gaza

**October 11th:** Only power-plant in Gaza runs out, the Strip is left without electricity.

**October 21st-31st:** 241 humanitarian-aid trucks enter Gaza from the Egyptian border.

**October 27th onwards:** Israel initiates its ground invasion of the Gaza Strip

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**November 10th:** Israel enters Al-Shifa hospital causing international criticism. Israel publishes camera footage presenting the hospital as an October 7th command centre.

**November 14th:** Israel reduces Hamas presence in Northern Gaza to guerrilla warfare

**November 19th:** Houthis attack ships designated for Israel, Red Sea Crisis starts.

**November 24th-30th:** Short truce is reached and extended to release a total of 110 hostages in return for 240 Palestinian prisoners and ceasefire as the deal prolongs

**December 29th:** South Africa applies for a case at the ICJ accusing Israel of genocide

**Month of January:** Humanitarian aid to Gaza averages around 100 trucks per day, many of whom reported as having been looted by Hamas or other Palestinian gangs.

**January 2nd:** Saleh al-Arouri, Hamas senior official in charge of Hamas's military wing in the West Bank and connected to Iran is assassinated by Israel in Beirut.

**January 12/13:** Oral hearings of South Africa and Israel at the ICJ, many protests.

**January 26th:** Discoveries published about UNRWA involvement on October 7th. The USA, UK, Germany, France, Japan, Italy and a dozen more suspend its funding.

**January 26th:** The ICJ publishes its provisional measures.

**January 27th onwards:** UNSC expected to enforce the measures suggested by the ICJ.

Figure 1: Map of the Land of Palestine and nearby nations, Area in yellow indicates Israeli sovereign territory, West Bank & Gaza Strip in grey.





## UN Involvement & Relevant Resolutions

**Balfour Declaration - November 2nd 1917:** A letter by Britain promising the Jews a sovereign state in the land of Palestine

**UN Partition Plan - [GA Resolution 181, November 29th 1947](#):** Called for Britain to leave the land of Palestine and proposed its partition into two states, one Arab and the other Jewish, with Jerusalem as a neutral international zone.

**UNRWA Establishment - [GA Resolution 302, December 8th 1949](#):** Mandating the established organisation to aid and support displaced Palestinians and Palestinian refugees following the war of 1948 and subsequent Nakba events.

**Status of the Dispute - [GA Resolution 58/292, May 6th 2004](#):** Specified the status of the Palestinian territories as 'occupied' and expressed a hope for a two-state-solution to be negotiated in the future.

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**Non-member Observer Status - [GA Resolution 67/19, November 29th 2012](#):** Called for the entry of Palestine as a non-member observer state in the UN, allowed to participate in the international forum under the representation of the PLO.

**Affirming the Two-State Solution - [SC Resolution 1397, March 12th 2002](#):** Called for the cessation of violence between the two states and called for a need for a two-state solution to be reached, which would prove Palestine statehood.

**Handling a Previous Conflict - [SC Resolution 1860, January 8th 2009](#):** During the Israel-Hamas conflict of 2008-9, the SC suggested ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, while condemning Hamas terrorism.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

**Provisional Measures: [Order on South Africa vs Israel, January 26th 2024](#):** Called for Israel to abide by international law and the Genocide convention to minimise civilian harm in Gaza and refrain from damaging evidence for the case.

**Call for Ceasefire: [GA Resolution ES-10/21, October 27th 2023](#):** Under the 10th ever emergency session of the General Assembly, a call for a humanitarian pause was expressed, as one of the conflict specific resolutions.

**Mid-Conflict Humanitarian Resolution: [SC Resolution 2712, November 15th 2023](#):** Adopted by the UNSC to advocate for the Israeli hostages held captive in Gaza, and establish clear corridors to evacuate Gazan civilians away from the warzone.

**Mid-Conflict Resolution: [SC Resolution 2720, December 22nd, 2023](#):** Reminded all relevant parties (did not specify) of international law regarding humanitarian access, obligations in war, release of hostages and deploring of terrorism

## Possible Solutions:

Working towards the release of all Israeli hostages. According to testimonies of released hostages and other forms of evidence, the hostages - civilians included - are suffering. They are held in dire circumstances, enduring physical, psychological and sexual abuse.

Many are held in underground tunnels and have not seen daylight in many days. Their release is imperative to the end of the war.

Maintaining a humanitarian pause. While ceasefires have already been violated by Hamas, a humanitarian pause will allow for Gazan citizens to receive basic necessities.

Providing humanitarian aid. This is another way of supporting the desperate Gazans. However, majority of aid trucks get looted by Palestinian gangs before reaching civilians

Establishing a plan for 'the day after'. Israel has formally deplored the idea of Hamas retaining sovereignty, and is generally disinterested in settling Gaza itself. Thus, an alternative plan for the future of Gaza and its 2 million people is paramount to ending the war. This could be done through establishing a non-Hamas Palestinian governing body.

Forming a stable governing body. Hamas has been using its control over Gaza as a tool to sustain its terror, using international funding to construct underground tunnels rather than aiding civilians. A new body could be formed to take care of Gazan civilians, and appropriately reconstruct the devastated Gaza Strip in the 'day after'.

Retaining an entrusted system of support for Palestinians. UNRWA lost its legitimacy in the eyes of many nations who suspended its funding. However, the desperate need for aid still stands, and the support system could be revised to ensure it is aptly addressed.

Ensuring international humanitarian law is being adequately followed.

Two state solution. Although this has been attempted by the UN and failed many times, a two state solution - as hinted at during the Oslo Accords - could provide both sides with a feeling of satisfaction and be a step towards peace.

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