



Security Council

Topic 1: The Israel-Palestine Issue

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1. Definition of Key Terms

Israeli West Bank Barrier: the barrier erected by Israel along with checkpoints following the second intifada, dividing it from Palestinian Territories. The barrier stands along the demarcation line of the 1949 armistice, including land that Palestine claims as its own.



Israeli Settlements: Areas in Palestinian land which are inhabited by a majority of Israelis and are de facto under Israeli control.

West Bank: The eastern and biggest part of Palestine, bordering with Israel and Jordan, it is nowadays divided into three areas as decided in the Oslo Accords. The competences of either side vary depending on the area a location is in. (See paragraph 6)

Gaza Strip: The western part of Palestine, bordering with Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea, currently under a multilateral terrestrial and maritime blockade and scenario of a serious humanitarian crisis, since it is one of the most densely populated and isolated areas in the world.

Right to Return: The right of Palestinians whose ancestors had been displaced in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war to go back to their original lands.

One-State Solution: According to this proposal, there should be one State which would comprise both Israel and Palestine. This also includes the concept that either one party or the other lacks the requirements to be a sovereign State, thus making the other the one and only political entity governing the area.

Two-State Solution: According to this proposal, Israel and Palestine should be two separate sovereign States and recognize each other. Both States would have full autonomy in their territories; however, where the border should be is debated.

Disengagement: withdrawal of military forces, political influence, etc. from an area.

2. Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the major ongoing conflicts in the world, as it has been for over half a century. The question of Palestine is one of the most recurrently discussed issues in the Security Council as well as the General Assembly. Only in the 73rd session of the GA, a staggering amount of 21 resolutions were passed on this matter.

As of this day, the UN has failed to produce and pass a viable solution to resolve this issue. In the late 1990s important steps towards a lasting peace were made, especially thanks to the diplomatic and political efforts of the two statesmen Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, but the pacification process ultimately failed, and today the future looks bleak.

It is however evident that the current situation is unsustainable, with people living in a constant climate of tension, wherein leaders choose to ignore basic human rights such as the right for peaceful assembly and association, with the pretext of enhanced security or national unity.



The United Nations need to act quickly so as to guarantee said rights, and make both sides come to an agreement and to a stable peace, or else the already unstable situation might degenerate and escalate into a major conflict.

3. Background Information

In 1948, the territory of the British Mandate for Palestine was divided into two sovereign States: the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. Palestine and the Arab States bordering Israel did not comply with the decision of the United Nations, as they believed it to be a theft of their land, and therefore a military coalition formed by Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Yemen attacked it.

Israel did however withstand the invasion, and fought its way beyond the border established in 1948, until an armistice was signed. Egypt and Jordan respectively acquired the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, while Israel took over a significant amount of the would-be Palestinian State, including West Jerusalem.

Following the war, an estimated amount of more than 700,000 Palestinians either chose or were forced to migrate elsewhere, abandoning their home, and most of them were put into refugee camps, and many of them died in the process. As no Palestinian Authority existed at the time, Egypt and Jordan provisorily annexed the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, respectively. To provide humanitarian aid to the fleeing Palestinians, the United Nations created the UNRWA.

In 1967 the tensions between Israel and the neighboring Egypt and Jordan reached a breaking point. The *causus belli* was the closure of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli maritime trades, resulting in Israel launching a series of preemptive airstrikes which annihilated its belligerents' air force, as well as a ground invasion, conquering the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The United States presidency brokered a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, the Camp David Accords, and a peace treaty with Jordan was signed in 1994. Both Arab states withdrew their claim on the West Bank or Gaza, and the question of the Palestinian Territories became a major global issue.

Because of the lack of representation for Palestinians, the Palestine Liberation Organization was created in 1964. At first it was viewed by the US and Israel as a terrorist organization, but they withdrew the accusation following the 1993 Oslo Accords. Israel recognized it as the sole legitimate representative of Palestinians, and the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist, and agreed not to engage in violent protests.

The negotiations culminated with the 2000 Camp David summit, which failed, and every side blamed the other. This caused a significant growth of discontent among civilians, and when



Israeli PM Ariel Sharon provocatorily visited the Temple Mount, he was met with stones thrown at him by Palestinians, resulting in a clash between the police and civilians. Both the visit and the reaction were deplored by the UNSC.

This provocation led to what became known as the Al-Aqsa intifada, a violent uprising of the Palestinian people supported by both the Palestinian Authority and more extremist Islamic groups, such as Hamas. The Palestinians targeted Israelis with rocks, stabbings and suicide bombings, and Israel retaliated with its military forces, the IDF. The final tally of the intifada was around 1,000 Israelis killed by Palestinian civilians and around 3,000 Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces.

The high rates of violence in the West Bank led to the construction of the Israeli West Bank Barrier, which has caused the number suicide bombings to drop. Although it was supposed to be a temporary method of reducing violence, it still stands to this day, and most of the protest and the subsequent illegal killings of Palestinians happen in front of it.

After the end of the second intifada, Israel planned and implemented a complete disengagement from the Gaza Strip, seeking reconciliation with Palestine, going as far as to displace Israeli graveyards, and granting the Palestinian Authority full control of the area except for the territorial waters, the border and the airspace.

In 2006 legislative elections were held in Palestine, and they were won by Hamas, while Fatah (the PLO) came in second. Hamas is an outspoken critic of the Oslo Accords, and has vowed never to recognize Israel as an independent State, and its victory may have occurred due to the erection of the separation wall and the abuse of violence in Israel's iron fist policy to suppress the Intifada.

Fatah was reluctant to concede the victory, and tension rose between the two main Palestinian parties, until in 2007 Hamas' fighters enacted the takeover of Gaza, which resulted in 120 deaths and the separation of the Palestinian Territories into two entities: the West Bank governed by Fatah, and the Gaza Strip governed by Hamas.

Following the Battle of Gaza, Hamas refused to disavow violence, and Israel and Egypt closed their borders with Gaza, starting a blockade. This was catastrophic for Gazan economy, which collapsed with no exports, and following multiple rocket strikes Israel (Gaza's only energy provider) started a series of energy cuts, which were later ruled to be unlawful by the Israeli Supreme Court. Israel has also introduced limitations on humanitarian supplies, going as far as to only allow a few specific kinds of food to be introduced in Gaza. Needless to say, the blockade has dramatically limited Gazans' freedom of movement. The Palestinian Authority supports the blockade, as it views it as a necessary measure to fight Hamas.

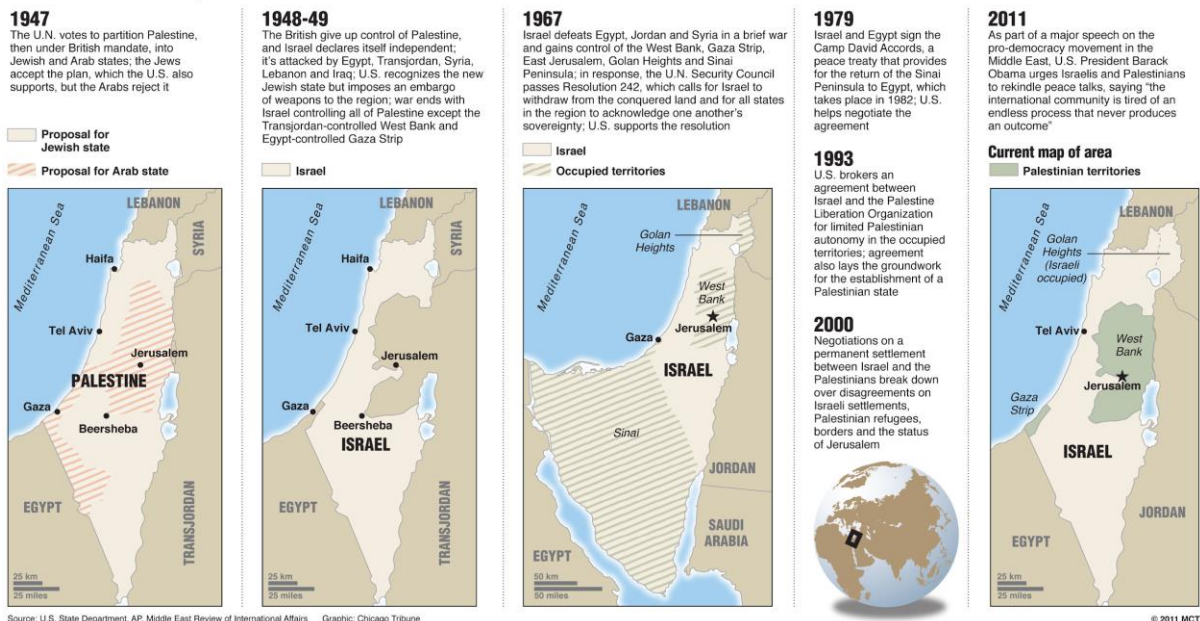
After the takeover, Hamas has started to indiscriminately target Israel with short-range "qassam" rockets, which are more often than not intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome defence

system, and Israel frequently retaliates with airstrikes that have also targeted public facilities such as hospitals. In 2009 Israel launched a ground offensive in order to discourage future rocket strikes, allegedly using disproportionate force and controversial weapons such as white phosphorous which struck UNRWA headquarters, and the other side allegedly used civilians as human shields. The rocket launches have continued, but they have been reduced following the Gaza War.

In the last few years, one of the burning issues is the question of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Although they are in Palestinian land, the Israeli government retains full authority on these areas, and it has not only refused to freeze their expansion, but rather incentivized it. It is highly unlikely that Israel will ever agree to dismantle the settlements or to cede them to a future Palestinian State.

Current Mideast boundaries defined by past wars

President Barack Obama's effort to jump-start peace talks between Israeli and Palestinian leaders has stoked debate about what a proposed Palestinian state would look like. Obama proposes using borders in place before Israel took control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the 1967 Middle East war, with land swaps that would allow it to retain some territory inside the West Bank. Here is a review of how the boundaries of Israel and the Palestinian territories have changed since the late 1940s.



4. Major Parties Involved

○ State of Israel

The State of Israel was established in 1948, and has had a troubled coexistence with its neighbours ever since. Because of the high percentage of Jews inhabiting the British Mandate for Palestine, along with the atrocities targeting them during the Second World War, it was divided into two different States, namely Israel and Palestine. The state religion is Judaism, but there is also a significant Muslim minority, and at the

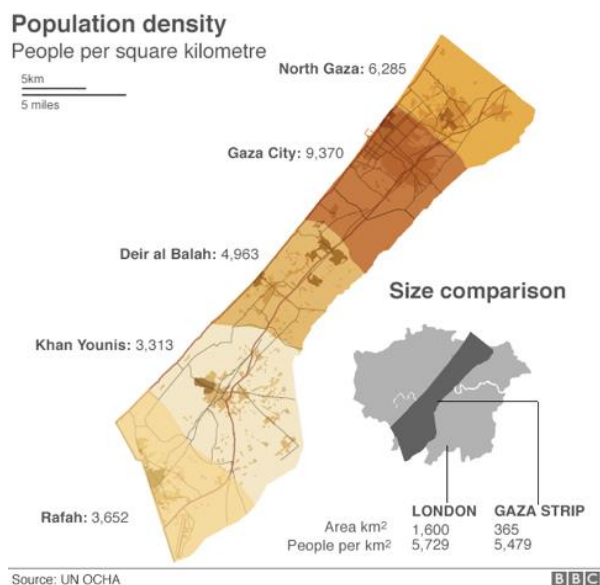
same time the official language is Hebrew alongside Arabic, officially used for the Arab minority. Despite its relative small size, it is one of the world's biggest — when it comes to military expenditures (about 5% of its GDP), and it has an advanced army. It is currently in an administrative limbo, with no party having attained a working majority out of the latest elections; nonetheless, the Prime Minister is Benjamin Netanyahu, known for his controversial stances concerning Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

○ **Palestinian Authority (Fatah)**

The Palestinian Authority is the current ruling party in the West Bank, following the troubled aftermath of the 2006 legislative elections in Palestine. Although Palestine is supposed to control its territory, its power is undermined by Israel, with daily intrusions in the lives of Palestinians such as having to cross the border wall, checkpoints, and abuse of violence against protestors. While its authority supposedly extends to both the West Bank and Gaza, it does not retain any kind of power in the latter, which is in fact controlled by Hamas.

○ **Hamas**

Hamas is a political party that won the elections in 2006, and has consistently acquired more power, especially in the Gaza Strip. It is recognized as a terrorist organization by most western countries, including the United States and the European Union. It currently is the main party in Gaza, alongside a number of radical militias such as the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, forming the Alliance of Palestinian Forces, which rejects the Oslo Accords.



5. Timeline of Events

- 1948 - Arab-Israeli War
- 1967 - Six Days War
- 1978 - Camp David Accords
- 1987-91 - First Intifada
- 1993-95 - Oslo Accords
- 2000-05 - Second Intifada
- 2000-ongoing - Building of the Barrier and Checkpoints



- 2005 - Israeli Disengagement from Gaza Strip
- 2006 - Palestinian Elections
- 2007 - Hamas' Takeover in Gaza
- 2008-09 - Gaza War

6. UN Involvement

The Security Council has passed over one hundred resolutions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Here is a list of the most significant ones:

1. Resolution 50 - Regarding the Arab-Israeli War
2. Resolution 233 - Regarding the Six-Day War
3. Resolution 242 - Regarding the Yom Kippur War
4. Resolution 1073 - Regarding the Status of Jerusalem
5. Resolution 1322 - Deploing Israel PM Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount and the following violence
6. Resolution 1397 - Calling for a two-state solution
7. Resolution 1860 - Calling for the termination of any kind of violence between Israel and Hamas
8. Resolution 2334 - Demanding Israel to stop building settlements

7. Official Documents and Treaties about the Issue

○ **Camp David Accords**

A treaty between Israel and Egypt upon the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories acquired following the Six-Day War, mainly the Sinai Peninsula, the recognition of Israel by Egypt and the establishment of an independent, democratically elected Palestinian Authority. They were started by an initiative of Egyptian president Sadat, who firstly addressed the Knesset in Jerusalem and secondly flew all the way to the United States to entertain peace talks with Israelis, mediated by US President Carter, whose determination and delicacy in reconciling the two sides were decisive for the success of the plan. The relations between Israel and Egypt were subsequently normalized, and this sparked outrage amid the Arab world because a satisfactory solution on crucial issues such as the status of Jerusalem and the right to return had not been found, and Egypt was isolated by its Arab allies.

○ **Oslo Accords**

Thanks to these agreements, the PLO recognized Israel, which for its part recognized the former as the legitimate representative of Palestinians, leading to the division of the West Bank in three areas: Area A/B, with respectively extensive and partial



delegation of power to the Palestinian Authority and Area C, with no to little power granted to it. They started the Oslo Process, a series of meetings between the two sides culminating with the 2000 Camp David summit. Despite bilateral eagerness to come to an agreement, they failed to solve some major issues, such as the questions of the status of Jerusalem, the Palestinian right to return, and the Israeli settlements.

○ **2003 Roadmap For Peace**

An initiative of the Quartet on the Middle East (UN, EU, USA and Russia) and signed by Israel (with reservations) and Palestine, it describes the process whereby both states should enact a two-state solution. It is divided into different phases: phase 1, focusing on the eradication of extremism in Palestine and building adequate Palestinian institutions, while also calling for the freezing of the Israeli settlement growth; phase 2, a transitional phase focusing on reforms of the Palestinian legislation and the subsequent promotion of Palestinian international recognition; phase 3, including a lasting bilateral agreement, the end of the conflict and the international recognition of both states. According to this roadmap, the situation should have been solved by 2005, however some of Israeli reservations, such as the ruling out of the freezing of settlements, along with Hamas' refusal of the plan and public outrage went on to freeze the pacification process, as many of the goals had not been fulfilled in time.

8. Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Over the years, there has been a significant number of conferences and talks to find a resolution and unfreeze the diplomatic relations between both sides:

- Lausanne Conference
- Madrid Conference
- Taba Summit
- Annapolis Conference
- Mitchell-led Talks
- Kerry-led Talks

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