



Security Council (SC)

Topic 1: The Israel-Gaza crisis

Research report by Zinni Martinelli

Contents

1. Definition of key terms	1
2. Introduction.....	1
3. Timeline of events.....	2
4. Background information	3
5. Major countries involved.....	4
6. UN involvement.....	6
7. Official documents and treaties about the issue.....	7
8. Impact of the issue.....	8
9. Bibliography	8

1. Definition of key terms

Hamas: A Palestinian political and military organization that currently controls the Gaza Strip. Some countries classify Hamas as a terrorist group. However, it is a key player in the conflict, advocating for Palestinian rights and resistance against Israeli occupation.

Iron Dome: A missile defense system utilized by Israel to intercept and destroy incoming rockets and mortar shells, providing defense against attacks from Gaza.

Blockade: Refers to the restrictions imposed by Israel on the movement of goods and people in and out of the Gaza Strip. The blockade has had significant humanitarian implications for the residents of Gaza.

Right of Return: The demand by Palestinian refugees and their descendants for the right to return to their homes and lands from which they were displaced during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

Two-State Solution: A proposed resolution to the conflict calling for the establishment of two separate and independent states, Israel and Palestine, coexisting peacefully alongside each other.

Intifada: An Arabic term meaning "uprising," often used to describe Palestinian movements of resistance against Israeli rule. Notable intifadas include those in the late 1980s and early 2000s.

2. Introduction

The Israel-Gaza crisis is a protracted and intricate conflict that has persisted in the Middle East for decades, with roots tracing back to the late nineteenth century. Fueled by historical, religious, and geopolitical factors, the conflict has resulted in numerous confrontations between Israel and

Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip. Groups such as Hamas in Gaza have launched attacks, and Israel has responded with military operations.

The ongoing conflict intensified following a cross-border Hamas assault on Israeli towns on October 7, 2023, according to Israel, resulting in the reported deaths of 1,200 people and the taking of 240 hostages back to Gaza. Subsequently, Israeli bombardments have caused extensive destruction in the enclave. The 2.3 million residents face a humanitarian disaster, with many left destitute, confined to shrinking areas for safety, and threatened by famine due to a shortage of food supplies.

3. Timeline of events

The Israeli-Palestinian issue traces its roots back nearly a century when, during World War I, Britain pledged to establish a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine under the Balfour Declaration. Following the end of October 1917, British troops assumed control of the territory from the Ottoman Empire, leading to a significant Jewish migration to Palestine, notably accelerated by those fleeing Nazism in Europe.

Prior to the expiration of the British Mandate on May 14, 1948, Zionist paramilitaries initiated a military operation aimed at the destruction of Palestinian towns and villages to expand the borders of the envisioned Zionist state. In April 1948, the village of Deir Yassin witnessed the killing of more than 100 Palestinian men, women, and children on the outskirts of Jerusalem, setting a grim tone for subsequent operations. From 1947 to 1949, over 500 Palestinian villages, towns, and cities were destroyed in what Palestinians term the Nakba, or "catastrophe" in Arabic. An estimated 15,000 Palestinians lost their lives, including victims of numerous massacres. The Zionist movement secured control over 78 percent of historic Palestine, while the remaining 22 percent was divided into the present-day occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip. Approximately 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their homes. Today, their descendants, numbering around six million, reside as refugees in 58 camps across Palestine and neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt.



As violence engulfed Palestine, the issue was brought before the newly established United Nations. In 1947, the UN adopted Resolution 181, which proposed the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. The plan allocated approximately 55 percent of the land to Jews and 45 percent to Arabs, designating Jerusalem as a separate internationalized territory.

The city is presently divided between West Jerusalem, predominantly Jewish, and East Jerusalem, with a majority Palestinian population. On May 15, 1948, Israel declared its establishment. In December 1948, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 194, endorsing

the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

Israel captured East Jerusalem, along with the West Bank, after the Six-Day War in 1967, a move not recognized by the international community. The Old City in occupied East Jerusalem holds

religious significance for Christians, Muslims, and Jews, housing the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound (known to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif and to Jews as Temple Mount).

Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian legislative election, leading to a subsequent conflict in the Gaza Strip with Fatah, resulting in Hamas taking over governance in the strip and escalating tensions with Israel. Israel, along with Egypt, imposed a blockade on Gaza, causing significant economic damage, citing security concerns as justification. International rights groups characterized the blockade as collective punishment, while Israel defended it as necessary to prevent weapons and dual-use goods from entering the territory.

Since the blockade, Israel and Palestinian militants have engaged in attacks. The Palestinian Authority has not held national elections since 2006. Hamas tunnelled under the border wall for cross-border attacks and launched rockets into Israeli territory, leading to multiple conflicts and outright wars. Israel relied on the Iron Dome rocket defence system for protection and responded with targeted strikes into Gaza to minimize the militant threat.

The ongoing conflict began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led Palestinian militant groups initiated an operation named "Al-Aqsa Flood." They targeted Israel with a barrage of rockets, and approximately 3,000 militants breached the Gaza–Israel barrier, attacking neighbouring Israeli communities and military bases. This resulted in the deaths of 695 Israeli civilians, 373 soldiers, and 71 foreigners, totalling 1,139 casualties. Around 240 Israeli individuals, including soldiers, civilians, and foreigners, were taken captive or held hostage in the Gaza Strip with the goal of pressuring Israel to release Palestinian prisoners.

In the initial six days, Israel dropped over 6,000 bombs on targets in Gaza, causing widespread destruction and numerous civilian casualties. Israel implemented a blockade on the Gaza Strip, leading to accusations of using starvation as a weapon and forcing Gazans to consume contaminated, salty water. Subsequently, Israel launched a large-scale ground invasion of Gaza, aiming to destroy Hamas and assume control afterward. Estimates suggest that thousands more bodies may be buried under the rubble, prompting claims of genocide by Israel in Gaza. The extensive civilian casualties have resulted in accusations of war crimes against both Israel and Hamas.

On October 13, 2023, Israel instructed Gazans to evacuate from northern to southern Gaza but also bombed locations to which Palestinians were directed to evacuate. The conflict has triggered a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza due to a limited and irregular flow of food and other humanitarian supplies. The health system is experiencing a partial collapse, with most hospitals out of service, leading to acute shortages of drinking water, food, fuel, and medical supplies. Israel stated that fuel might be diverted by Hamas for military use. Mass detentions have been conducted, with thousands of Palestinians detained or disappeared in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

4. Background information

Between 1918 and 1947, the Jewish population in Palestine experienced a notable increase from 6 percent to 33 percent. This demographic shift caused concern among Palestinians, leading to heightened tensions and culminating in the Palestinian revolt from 1936 to 1939. Simultaneously, Zionist organizations persisted in their advocacy for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Armed Zionist militias initiated attacks on the Palestinian population, resulting in forced displacements.

Zionism, emerging as a political ideology in the late 19th century, advocated for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. In 1980, Israel declared the annexation of East Jerusalem, a move not recognized by the international community, which still considers it an occupied territory. Palestinians aspire to designate East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

In 1993, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Accords, marking the first time the two sides formally recognized each other. A subsequent agreement in 1995 divided the occupied West Bank into three parts – Area A, B, and C. The Palestinian Authority, established following the Oslo Accords, was granted limited rule over 18 percent of the land, while Israel retained effective control over the West Bank. However, the Oslo Accords faced challenges as Israeli settlements, Jewish communities established on Palestinian land in the West Bank, expanded rapidly.

The settlement population in the West Bank and East Jerusalem increased from approximately 250,000 in 1993 to around 700,000 by September 2023. Presently, about three million Palestinians reside in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. The construction of Israeli settlements and a separation wall in occupied territories has fragmented Palestinian communities and restricted their mobility. There are approximately 700 road obstacles, including 140 checkpoints, across the West Bank, with around 70,000 Palestinians holding Israeli work permits crossing these checkpoints for their daily commutes.

Settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are widely considered illegal under international law, and the United Nations has condemned them as a significant obstacle to realizing a viable Palestinian state within the framework of the "two-state solution."

Presently, approximately 5 million Palestinians reside in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, while 1.6 million Palestinians are citizens of Israel, constituting about half of the total Palestinian population. The other half resides in various countries, including Arab nations. Globally, there are around 14.7 million Jews, with 84 percent living in Israel and the United States, and the remainder dispersed in countries such as France, Canada, Argentina, and Russia.

Israel has conducted four extended military assaults on Gaza in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. These offensives resulted in numerous Palestinian casualties, including many children, and extensive destruction of homes, schools, and office buildings. Rebuilding has been hindered by the blockade, which prevents construction materials like steel and cement from reaching Gaza. The 2008 assault involved the use of internationally banned weapons, such as phosphorus gas. In 2014, during the 50-day Operation Protective Edge, Israel killed over 2,100 Palestinians, including 1,462 civilians and nearly 500 children. The assault left about 11,000 Palestinians wounded, 20,000 homes destroyed, and half a million people displaced.

5. Major countries involved

United States of America:

The United States plays a significant role in the Israel-Gaza conflict due to its longstanding support for Israel, which is a key pillar of its Middle East policy. Israel is regarded as a crucial strategic ally for the United States in the region. The partnership is valued for geopolitical reasons, as Israel is seen as a stable and democratic ally amidst the complex and evolving dynamics of the Middle East. Additionally, Israel is a major recipient of US military aid and technology. The United States provides substantial military assistance to ensure that Israel maintains a qualitative military edge

in the region, framing it as support for Israel's capacity to defend itself against potential threats. Moreover, the USA and Israel closely collaborate on counterterrorism efforts, leveraging Israel's expertise and experience in dealing with security threats to enhance intelligence sharing and counterterrorism strategies.

Lebanon:

Israel has engaged in two wars with Lebanon, one in 1982 following the evacuation of Palestinian leaders to Lebanon, and another in 2006 after Hezbollah militants captured two Israeli soldiers. Hezbollah, an Islamist terrorist group based in Lebanon and backed by Iran, has been a recurrent source of conflict with Israeli defense forces. The clashes between Israel and Hezbollah have contributed to regional tensions, with Lebanon being a key arena where geopolitical and sectarian dynamics intersect.

Syria:

Syria has historically hosted Palestinian militant groups and permitted their operations against Israel. The status of the Golan Heights, a Syrian territory captured by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War, remains a contentious issue. Syria's alignment with Iran and Hezbollah further contributes to regional tensions. Syria was one of the five Arab countries that attacked Israel in 1948 after Israel declared independence. In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Syria, along with Egypt, launched a surprise attack on Israel but was ultimately repelled.

Saudi Arabia:

Traditionally, Saudi Arabia has supported the Palestinian cause, providing diplomatic and financial backing to Palestinian groups. However, in recent years, there has been a shift as Saudi Arabia seeks closer ties with Israel, viewing it as a strategic ally against common regional threats, particularly Iran. Reports suggest that Saudi Arabia is nearing a U.S.-mediated agreement to recognize the state of Israel for the first time.

Egypt:

Egypt, along with other West Asian countries, participated in two wars with Israel but became the first Arab country to formally recognize Israel after the 1979 Camp David Accords. Egypt has frequently served as a mediator between Israel and Palestinian factions, including Hamas. With a border shared with the Gaza Strip, Egypt played a crucial role in brokering the 1993 Oslo Accords, laying the foundation for Palestinian self-governance.

Oman:

Oman has provided humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian territories, particularly the Gaza Strip, and has been involved in diplomatic initiatives to support the peace process. Despite recent pushes for normalization, Oman's parliament voted in January 2023 to criminalize ties with Israel.

Qatar:

Qatar hosts some leaders of Hamas in Doha and has been actively engaged in negotiations between Hamas and Israel, including efforts to secure the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas. Qatar has played a mediation role between Hamas and Fatah, contributed significantly to the Palestinian Territories, and funded humanitarian projects in the Gaza Strip. After the October 7 Hamas attacks, Qatar held Israel solely responsible for the conflict.

United Arab Emirates (UAE):

In August 2020, the UAE became the third Arab country to recognize Israel and establish diplomatic relations. Mediated by then US President Donald Trump, the agreement has led to an upswing in trade ties between Israel and the UAE.

Iran:

Iran and Israel were allies during the reign of Iran's last monarch, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. However, relations soured after the 1978-79 Islamic revolution, leading to the severance of all diplomatic and commercial ties with Israel. The hostility escalated after the 1991 Gulf War. Iran, a Shia Muslim country in a predominantly Sunni Arab region, supports Hamas and Hezbollah, engaging in proxy-wars against Israel for at least the last three decades. Israel perceives Iran's potential to build nuclear weapons as a threat to its existence and has reportedly attempted to sabotage Iran's nuclear program.

Iraq:

Iraq opposed the formation of Israel and went to war with it, along with four other Arab countries, in 1948. The war concluded with Israel gaining significant territory. Iraq initially supported Palestinian organizations, but dynamics changed after its invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent Gulf War in 1991 under Saddam Hussein. Iraq's isolation, conflicts with neighboring countries, and the US-led coalition's presence in the region diminished its role in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Following Saddam Hussein's regime's fall in 2003, Iraq played a limited role in regional politics, and armed groups aligned with Iran threatened to target US interests if Washington intervened in Israel's conflict with Hamas in Gaza after the October 7 attacks.

Jordan:

Jordan and Israel have maintained full diplomatic relations since their peace treaty in 1994. Jordan, one of the five Arab countries that attacked Israel in 1948, became the second country after Egypt to recognize Israel. Jordan administered the West Bank from 1948 to 1967, following the Arab-Israeli War, although the annexation was not internationally recognized. Jordan hosts a significant Palestinian refugee population and serves as the official custodian of Christian and Muslim holy places in Jerusalem, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque, even though Israel controls access to them.

6. UN involvement

The United Nations has played a crucial role in addressing the persistent conflict between Israel and Palestine, actively seeking a peaceful resolution. The UN emphasizes the importance of humanitarian access, discourages 'collective punishment,' and calls for the release of hostages.

The UN Security Council has issued numerous resolutions addressing the Israel-Gaza conflict, typically advocating for a two-state solution, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. However, enforcement of these resolutions has faced challenges due to geopolitical dynamics and disagreements among member states.

UN agencies, notably the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), play a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees affected by the conflict. UNRWA supports education, healthcare, and social services for Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip and other areas. The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) investigates and reports on human rights violations related to the Israel-Gaza conflict, often expressing concerns about civilian casualties, displacement, and the impact of hostilities on the civilian population.

Regarding the ongoing crisis in Gaza, the Security Council adopted a resolution with 13 votes in favor, while the US and Russia abstained. The resolution reaffirms the parties' obligations under international humanitarian law, emphasizing the protection of civilians, safety of humanitarian personnel, and the provision of humanitarian assistance. The Council demands that the parties "allow, facilitate, and enable" the immediate, safe, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale directly to the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip.

7. Official documents and treaties about the issue

- **Balfour Declaration (1917):** The Balfour Declaration was a public pledge by Britain in 1917 during World War I, expressing its commitment to establishing "a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. This declaration was included in the terms of the British Mandate for Palestine following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. In contrast to other post-war mandates, the primary objective of the British Mandate in Palestine was to create conditions for the establishment of a Jewish "national home," despite Jews constituting less than 10 percent of the population at that time. The British facilitated the immigration of European Jews to Palestine, leading to a significant increase in the Jewish population from nine percent to nearly 27 percent between 1922 and 1935. Despite the Balfour Declaration's caveat regarding the protection of the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities, the mandate disproportionately favored Jewish self-rule over Palestinian Arab interests. [Source](#)
- **General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947):** Also known as the UN Partition Plan, this resolution proposed the establishment of separate Jewish and Arab states in Mandatory Palestine, with an international administration for Jerusalem. The resolution was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1947, aiming to address the ongoing conflict. [Source](#)
- **Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (1948):** Issued by David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, this declaration on May 14, 1948, officially announced the establishment of the State of Israel. This declaration marked a pivotal moment in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and triggered significant geopolitical consequences. [Source](#)
- **Oslo Accords:** The Oslo Accords consisted of two agreements. Oslo I, signed on September 13, 1993, marked the first recognition between Israeli and Palestinian leadership and included commitments to ending their long-standing conflict. Oslo II, signed in September 1995, provided more detailed structures for the peace process. The accords aimed to establish Palestinian self-determination and a Palestinian state alongside Israel, recognizing limited Palestinian claims to historic Palestine. The agreements led to the creation of the temporary Palestinian Authority (PA) and the division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C, indicating the degree of PA control in each area. However, the final treaty, intended to be reached in five years, did not materialize. The Oslo Accords faced challenges, with Israel maintaining its occupation, conducting raids into PA-administered areas, and opposition from leaders like Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon. The second intifada from 2000 to 2005 and failed attempts to restart talks contributed to the accords' interim clauses becoming the status quo. [Source](#)

- **Security Council Resolution 242 (1967):** Adopted in 1967, Resolution 242 calls for the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied during the Six-Day War, emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war. It also underscores the need for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every state in the area. [Source](#)
- **Security Council Resolution 338 (1973):** Issued in 1973, Resolution 338 urges an immediate ceasefire and cessation of all military activities, implementing Resolution 242 in its entirety. It calls for negotiations to achieve a just and durable peace in the Middle East. [Source](#)
- **Security Council Resolution 2720 (2023):** The text of Resolution 2720 (2023) is not provided. You can refer to the specific content of the resolution on the [UNSCR website](#).

8. Impact of the issue

The Israel-Gaza conflict has left a profound and multi-faceted impact on the region, affecting individuals, communities, and the geopolitical landscape. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is characterized by severe shortages of essential services, including healthcare and education, exacerbated by blockades and restrictions on movement. Civilian casualties, particularly among women and children, have tragically been high due to the densely populated nature of Gaza and military operations in urban areas. As of January 2, 2024, the number of Palestinians killed in Gaza since the outbreak of violence on October 7 is reported as 22,185, with at least 57,000 injured, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Ongoing consequences include displacement and the creation of a large population of Palestinian refugees, both within Gaza and the West Bank. Infrastructure, including homes, schools, and hospitals, has been systematically destroyed, hindering the rebuilding process. The UN humanitarian affairs agency OCHA reports daily demolitions of Palestinian structures. The persistent conflict has had a significant impact on mental health, with stress and trauma prevalent, especially among children growing up amidst violence.

Economically, both Israel and the Palestinian territories face challenges, with the Gaza Strip experiencing high unemployment rates and economic hardship due to trade restrictions. The conflict contributes to regional instability, influencing relations between Israel and neighboring countries. Internationally, the conflict strains diplomatic ties and shapes global perceptions.

The peace process encounters challenges, marked by repeated breakdowns in negotiations and a lack of progress towards a comprehensive agreement. The protracted nature of the conflict and periodic escalations contribute to radicalization and extremism. Efforts to address these impacts and work towards a sustainable resolution continue through diplomatic initiatives, humanitarian aid, and international mediation.

9. Bibliography

- *Experts say Hamas and Israel are committing war crimes in their fight:* <https://www.nytimes.com>

- *Four percent of Palestinians in Gaza dead, wounded or missing since war began:*
<https://www.middleeasteye.net>
- *Hamas leader's killing raises fears of wider war, Israel keeps up bombardment of Gaza:*
<https://www.reuters.com>
- *Israel's war on Gaza: List of key events, day 89:* <https://www.aljazeera.com>
- *Israel-Hamas war:* <https://apnews.com>
- *Israel-Palestine conflict: A brief history in maps and charts:* <https://www.aljazeera.com>
- *Israel-Palestine Conflict: The Key Players* <https://www.indiatoday.in>
- *More than a century on: The Balfour Declaration explained:* <https://www.aljazeera.com>
- *Security Council adopts key resolution on Gaza crisis; Russia, US abstain:*
<https://news.un.org>
- *The Geopolitics of Palestine, Explained:* <https://foreignpolicy.com>
- *War on Gaza: To be a Palestinian child is a curse, not a blessing:*
<https://www.middleeasteye.net>
- *What were the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinians?:*
<https://www.aljazeera.com>