

**Forum:** Security Council (SC)

**Issue:** The situation in Palestine

**Student Officer:** Angelos Talpa

**Position:** Deputy President

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## INTRODUCTION

The situation in Palestine is an ongoing military and political conflict between the internationally unrecognized State of Palestine and the official UN Member State of Israel. Since the formation of Israel, the relations between those two States are characterized by tension and political instability. The topic has a wide historical background that determines the current actions of both sides. At the moment, the situation is a multifaced conflict that has a great impact on worldwide geopolitics. At the heart of the Palestinian issue lies a variety of factors detonating the conflict including long-established political disputes, ethnic disagreements, and even different religious beliefs that have caused the creation of religious movements interfering in the war.

The extent of the crisis has caused the majority of nations, especially the P5 that have great influence over the political sector, to address the issue in one or another way. Since the start of the conflict, there have been reported over 40.000 casualties and millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs), while the injured ones are reaching the 100.000<sup>1</sup>. This dispute may have started as a geopolitical crisis, but it has also led to a humanitarian one. The international community has tried to address both aspects of the conflict by raising awareness, sending humanitarian aid, passing resolutions calling for ceasefires and condemning the actions of both sides.

However, achieving political and humanitarian stability in the region of Palestine remains a significant challenge. Addressing this topic is crucial seeing that it could lead to a further crisis in the Middle East involving great military powers such as Iran and Iraq. The Palestinian issue is a topic that involves many aspects mainly because of its historical background, and that is why proposing a feasible solution is highly demanding. Therefore, it is important that the international community continues fighting for an agreement between the two states, giving an end to a great historical dispute.

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<sup>1</sup> *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory | Home Page*, <https://www.ochaopt.org/>.

## DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

### **Ceasefire**

“[A]n agreement, usually between two armies, to stop fighting in order to allow discussions about peace”<sup>2</sup>. Ceasefires can be proposed by the Security Council, the only UN body that its resolution are legally binding.

### **Hamas<sup>3</sup>**

A Palestinian Islamic movement, the “sole ruler of Gaza after violently ejecting political rivals in 2007.” Its goal is the establishment of a Palestinian Islamic State and the full destruction of Israel. The group’s name stands for Islamic Resistance Movement, and it currently has an armed wing.

### **Hezbollah**

“Hezbollah, political party and militant group that first emerged during Lebanon’s civil war as a militia after the Israeli invasion of that country in 1982. Since the 2000s it has been one of the foremost political forces in Lebanon.”<sup>4</sup> Their implication with the Palestinian issue is seen since the start of the war, openly supporting Hamas and fighting Israel.

### **Internally displaced persons (IDPs)**

According to the UN, “Internally displaced people (IDPs) have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution or disasters, however, unlike refugees, they remain within their own country.”<sup>5</sup>

### **International City**

“An international city is an autonomous or semi-autonomous city-state that is separate from the direct supervision of any single nation-state.”<sup>6</sup> The UN Partition Plan called for Jerusalem to remain an international city because of East Jerusalem which belongs to Palestine’s West Bank.

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<sup>2</sup> “CEASEFIRE | English meaning - Cambridge Dictionary.” *Cambridge Dictionary*, 24 July 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ceasefire>.

<sup>3</sup> “What is Hamas and Why is It Fighting with Israel in Gaza?” *BBC Breaking News, World News, US News, Sports, Business, Innovation, Climate, Culture, Travel, Video & Audio*, 7 Oct. 2023, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67039975?0=utm\\_source=ground.news](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67039975?0=utm_source=ground.news).

<sup>4</sup> “Hezbollah | Meaning, History, & Ideology.” *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hezbollah>.

<sup>5</sup> “Internally Displaced People.” *UNHCR*, <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/internally-displaced-people>. Accessed 11 July 2024.

<sup>6</sup> “What Does International City Mean?” *Definitions.net*, [www.definitions.net/definition/international%20city#:~:](http://www.definitions.net/definition/international%20city#:~:).

## **Jews**

Most of the times the term “Jew” gets implicated with “citizen of Israel”. Even though, “Jew, [is] any person whose religion is Judaism. In the broader sense of the term, a Jew is any person belonging to the worldwide group that constitutes, through descent or conversion, a continuation of the ancient Jewish people, who were themselves descendants of the Hebrews of the Bible (Old Testament).”<sup>7</sup>

## **Nakba<sup>8</sup>**

The Nakba, “catastrophe” in Arabic, was a devastating period for Palestinians in 1948. It was a period full of mass killings, deportations, and town destructions occurred by Zionists militants. During the Nakba, nearly 70.000 Palestinians were displaced both internally and externally almost overnight. In 2023 the UN commemorated that mass displacement for the first time after 75 years. Arabs remember the Nakba period every May 15th.

## **Two - state solution**

The two-state solution is a proposed framework concerning the Situation in Palestine that calls for the creation of two states in the region, the existing Jewish State (Israel) and one independent state for Palestinians (Palestine).

## **Two - tier system**

A two-tier system occurs in situations when segregation is the main aspect of a nation’s policy. In our topic, a two-tier system was found after the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel, where the Jews had all the privileges and the rights while Palestinians had only obligations.

## **Zionism**

“Zionism is a religious and political effort that brought thousands of Jews from around the world back to their ancient homeland in the Middle East and reestablished Israel as the central location for Jewish identity”<sup>9</sup>. Its main goal was the establishment of a Jewish State in their ancient homeland.

# **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

## **Historical Background**

### The creation of Israel and the Nakba

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<sup>7</sup> “Jew | History, Beliefs, & Facts.” *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Jew-people>.

<sup>8</sup> Moussa, Sanaa. “UN marks 75 years since displacement of 700000 Palestinians.” *UN News*, 15 May 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136662>.

<sup>9</sup> *Zionism - Meaning, Definition & Religious | HISTORY*, 13 July 2017, <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/zionism>.

As previously stated, the conflict has a rich historical background that led to the current situation. In the early 20th century, a religious and political movement called Zionism rose in Europe. Zionists dreamed of an established Jewish state in their ancient homeland, meaning the area of today's Israel and Palestine. Meanwhile, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire which ruled part of the Middle East during World War I (WWI), Britain took control of the area known as Palestine. During that time the population of the area consisted of an Arab majority and a Jewish minority brought by the Zionist movement. Both nations claimed the land as their own for religious and political reasons.

On November 2, 1917, Britain's foreign secretary Arthur Balfour sent a letter addressed to Lionel Walter Rothschild, an important person in the Jewish hierarchy known as the "Balfour Declaration". This Declaration committed Britain to establish a national home for Jewish people in Palestine, showing Britain's support for Zionism and the creation of a Jewish State. Thus, the international community gave Britain the responsibility of aiding the Jews with all needs to form a State in the area of Palestine. At this time, Jews were located in various countries, especially in Europe, hoping to go back to their ancestral homeland as their religion states.

For the period 1923-1948, Britain adhered to their responsibility by aiding in the mass Jewish immigration to Palestine. During World War II (WWII), when the Holocaust occurred, many Jews tried to flee Europe to escape from the rising Nazism. That is when the Arabs of Palestine, who consisted of the 90% of the population, were alarmed. After the end of WWII, in 1947 the United Nations (UN) proposed the "United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine" (Resolution 181), calling for the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish States with Jerusalem being an international city. The resolution was rejected by the Arabs seeing that it called for the provision of 55% of their land to the Jews.<sup>10</sup>

In the next two years (1947-1949), a series of killings, massacres, illegal deportations, town demolitions and internal displacements followed. They were carried on by Zionist armed groups that aimed at the "liberation" of Palestine from the Arab population, so the Jews could easily settle down in their new State. The Zionist movement took control of nearly 78% of the Palestinian area, leaving the Arab populations with the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Palestinians refer to this period as the "Nakba", meaning "catastrophe" in Arabic.<sup>11</sup> The Nakba urged many Palestinians to flee their homeland becoming refugees. Thus, on May 14, 1948, Israel declared its formation. This led to the 1948 Arab - Israeli war between the Jews and combined Arab forces from Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Transjordan (Jordan). The war came to an end in 1949 after a successful ceasefire implemented by the UN and with several ambush agreements between Israel and the Arab States.

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<sup>10</sup> Alsaafin, Linah. "What's the Israel-Palestine conflict about? A simple guide." *Al Jazeera*, 9 October 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/whats-the-israel-palestine-conflict-about-a-simple-guide>.

<sup>11</sup> Alsaafin, Linah. "What's the Israel-Palestine conflict about? A simple guide." *Al Jazeera*, 9 October 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/whats-the-israel-palestine-conflict-about-a-simple-guide>.



**Image 1:** “UN Partition Plan for Israel and Palestine in 1947”<sup>12</sup>

### The years after the formation of Israel

After the end of the war, Palestinian refugees were found in Israeli territories and nearby Arabic states. In 1950, Jordan took administrative control of the West Bank and Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip. Several years later, in 1964 an organization named “The Palestine Liberation Organization” (PLO) was founded. The organization’s goal was the unification of various Arab groups to create a liberated Palestinian State in Israel. In 1967 Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank splitting Jerusalem into two administrations, the West one controlled by Israel and the East one controlled by Jordan. As a result, a two-tier system was created in Israel. The Jews had all the rights and privileges of an Israeli citizen when Palestinians were forced to live under military control without any particular rights. This segregation led later on to movements and protests that aimed the liberation of the Palestinians and the re-establishment of their human rights.

During 1987-1993 several protests took place by Arab populations. That is when Hamas was formed, an Islamic movement aiming at the destruction of Israel and the formation of a Palestinian State. Hamas formed an armed wing that conducted several attacks on Israel

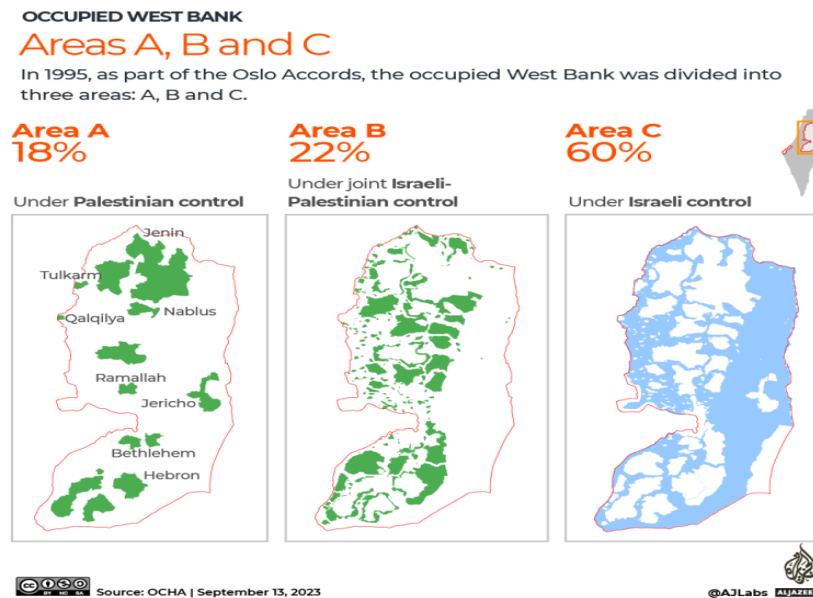
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<sup>12</sup> “UN partition plan for Israel and Palestine in 1947.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations-Resolution-181#/media/1/1695871/3081>.

throughout the years resulting in Israel adopting a harsh policy against the Palestinians. The policy included mass killings, deportations, the destruction of houses, and full control over Palestinian areas. Because of Palestine’s unrecognized status, the Arab League recognized the PLO as the political and legal representative of Palestine, giving PLO a status of governance.

The first action towards a peaceful agreement between the two nations was a series of secret talks in Norway called the Oslo Accords. During the Oslo Accords, the PLO recognized Israel as a State and granted them control over the 60% of the West Bank. Thus, the West Bank was split into small but numerous locations controlled either by Palestinians, Jews, or both. These Accords became official over a ceremony performed by former President Bill Clinton at the White House of the United States of America.

Despite these Accords, the region was found again in conflict. Since then, several attacks have taken place both in Israel and Palestine by Israel’s Army or Hamas’ representatives. An example of that is the suicide bombers sent by Hamas to harm Israeli populations, damaging the already damaged relations between the two States. After two years in 1995, Israel built an electrical fence and concrete wall in the Gaza Strip, taking full military control of Palestinian areas and further splitting Palestinian populations.



“Representation of the Oslo Accords”<sup>13</sup>

Recent years

<sup>13</sup> Alsaafin, Linah. “What’s the Israel-Palestine conflict about? A simple guide.” *Al Jazeera*, 9 October 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/whats-the-israel-palestine-conflict-about-a-simple-guide>.

The tension between Israel and Palestine never ended. Despite the agreement settled in the Oslo Accords, Israel continued to occupy Palestinian land, build Jewish settlements and blockades around Arab-controlled areas of the West Bank. These settlements according to international law, the UN's General Assembly, the UN's Security Council and the International Court of Justice are considered illegal since they violate the Fourth Geneva Convention.<sup>14</sup> The number of people living in these settlements has increased over the years. After PLO's leader's death in 2004, Palestine organized general elections for the first time with Hamas winning a majority. After a civil war between Hamas and Palestine's main political party "Fatah", Hamas expelled Fatah in 2007 taking over the governance of the State. After that, Israel implemented a general blockade on the Gaza Strip accusing Hamas of terrorism. The blockade began to be implemented in June 2007 and continues till today.

### Current situation

Because of disagreement between the General Assembly and the Security Council, the United Nations does not recognize Palestine as a sovereign State. However, the UN granted Palestine in 2012 an "Permanent Observer State" status, meaning that they have the right to participate in UN discussions without bearing the right to vote.<sup>15</sup> Several attempts of granting a UN Membership to Palestine have occurred, but they were rejected by the United States.

Israel still has control of the West Bank and claims Jerusalem to be its capital despite Jerusalem's international city status, while Palestine claims East Jerusalem as their land and future capital. Hamas is supposed to be Gaza's ruler. After several wars in Gaza started by Hamas militants in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2021, Hamas launched an attack against Israel on October 7, 2023. This attack included thousands of rockets that killed many people and an armed group of gunmen passing the Israeli borders. The casualties varied.<sup>16</sup> Hamas also took Israeli hostages back to Gaza demanding Israel's surrender to release them. The conflict escalated rapidly with both sides committing massacres and atrocities. The conflict is still ongoing with around 40.000 casualties reported, half of them being deaths of non-fighting civilians.<sup>17</sup> The international community acted rapidly by sending humanitarian aid, passing resolutions calling for peaceful agreements, raising awareness and condemning the actions of both Israel and Palestine. Even though, difficulties were faced implementing these actions mainly because of Palestine's unrecognized status.

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<sup>14</sup> Kershner, Isabel. "Are West Bank Settlements Illegal? Who Decides?" *The New York Times*, 18 November 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/18/world/middleeast/israel-west-bank-settlements.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Bajornas, Rick. "Palestine's status at the UN explained | UN News." *UN News*, 18 April 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/04/1148351>.

<sup>16</sup> "What is Hamas and Why is It Fighting with Israel in Gaza?" *BBC Breaking News, World News, US News, Sports, Business, Innovation, Climate, Culture, Travel, Video & Audio*, 7 Oct. 2023, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67039975?0=utm\\_source=ground.news](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67039975?0=utm_source=ground.news).

<sup>17</sup> Bennett, Brian. "What We Know About the Death Toll in Gaza." *Time*, 17 May 2024, <https://time.com/6979208/israel-gaza-death-toll/>.

Apart from these, nearly half of the Palestinian population is located in refugee camps in the southern part of Gaza called Rafah. Palestinians have been requested to move to Rafah with the hope that they will be accepted in Egypt through their mutual border, the “Rafah crossing”. Despite the importance of the situation, Egypt has been rejecting Palestinian refugees fearing a possible instability in their national security.

Other Islamic nations and organizations such as Iran and Lebanon’s “Hezbollah” have been implicated in the conflict, by aiding Hamas with military equipment and launching attacks against Israel. Hezbollah has declared its unconditional enmity against Israel, launching attacks since the start of the war in the Northern Israel-Lebanon border.<sup>18</sup> The most recent attacks occurred in April 2024 when Iran launched an airstrike towards Israel dealing minimal damage to Israeli territories. These implications have been considered crucial for the outcome of the conflict.

### ***The main recent causes of the conflict***

Considering the historical background of the situation, it becomes evident that several key factors contributed to the main causes of this conflict. By analyzing the events leading up to the present, one can identify significant political, social, and economic influences that have played a crucial role.

#### The question of Palestinian refugees

As stated before, the Nakba caused many displacements both internally and externally. Many refugees found temporary homes in refugee camps in nearby states or Israel. The difference between these two situations is that Israel never allowed Palestinian refugees in Israel to return to their State despite the UN’s Resolution 194 that calls for the right of return for Palestinian refugees.<sup>19</sup> Seeing that, the issue of the return of refugees can be considered as a factor in the conflict.

Moreover, because of Palestine’s internationally unrecognized status, Palestinian refugees face difficulties in getting recognized by the international community. During the current armed conflict, Palestinian refugees have not been accepted by nearby countries such as Egypt<sup>20</sup>. Egypt is considered a stakeholder to the question of the refugees seeing that between Gaza’s “Rafah” city and Egypt, exists the known “Rafah crossing”. Rafah is placed next to Egypt, making the Rafah crossing the only way of fleeing Gaza from the West side. Even though, the UN’s Security Council proposed a resolution calling for the forced displacement of Palestinian refugees in Egypt through Rafah, but it was rejected after a veto implemented by USA.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Nytimes.com." *The New York Times - Breaking News, US News, World News and Videos*, 22 July 2024, [www.nytimes.com/2024/07/22/world/middleeast/israel-hezbollah-gaza-war.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/22/world/middleeast/israel-hezbollah-gaza-war.html).

<sup>19</sup> “Resolution 194.” *UNRWA*, <https://www.unrwa.org/content/resolution-194>.

<sup>20</sup> Neuman, Scott. “Egypt doesn’t want Palestinian refugees from Gaza. Here’s why.” *NPR*, 12 December 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/12/12/1218388766/egypt-israel-gaza-palestinians-hamas>.

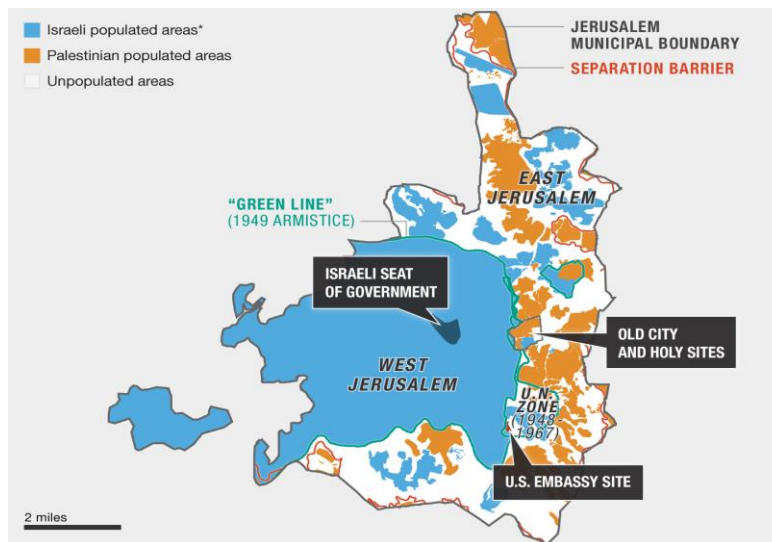
<sup>21</sup> Stern, Itay. “A timeline of events leading up to Israel’s Rafah offensive.” *NPR*, 8 May 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/05/08/1249657561/rafah-timeline-gaza-israel-hamas-war>.

## The Jewish settlements in the West Bank

Israel since 1967, has built around 130 settlements in the West Bank. “More than 400,000 Israeli settlers now live in the West Bank alongside more than 2.6 million Palestinians.”<sup>22</sup> These settlements are considered illegal by United Nations bodies and according to international humanitarian law. Despite ICJ’s ruling about the illegality of the settlements, Israel refuses to acknowledge it claiming that Jewish people already existed in the area for thousands of years. This obviously causes tension between the two states as they both claim the West Bank is theirs.

## The status of Jerusalem

The status of Jerusalem is a complicated issue. According to the UN Partition Plan, Jerusalem should have remained an international city within the West Bank not belonging to either side. Even though, after various occupations of the West Bank, Jerusalem has lost its integrity and international status. Currently, East Jerusalem belongs geopolitically to the West Bank, while the West side is under Israeli control. Both sides claim East Jerusalem to be their capital for historical and religious reasons. The international community does not accept either allegations except for the USA which recognizes East Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.



“Map of Jerusalem”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Kershner, Isabel. “Are West Bank Settlements Illegal? Who Decides?” *The New York Times*, 18 November 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/18/world/middleeast/israel-west-bank-settlements.html>.

<sup>23</sup> “Understanding the Map of Jerusalem - or Trying to.” *MPR News*, 13 May 2018, [www.mprnews.org/story/2018/05/13/npr-understanding-the-map-of-jerusalem--or-trying-to](http://www.mprnews.org/story/2018/05/13/npr-understanding-the-map-of-jerusalem--or-trying-to).

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

### *Iran*

Iran is considered a key Hamas and Palestine ally. Despite stating that they would not get involved in the conflict<sup>24</sup>, Iran supports Hamas' actions as part of their Islamic brotherhood and is considered major rivals with Israel and the United States. Even though, Iran got slightly involved in the issue on 13 April 2024 when they launched an unprecedented missile attack against Israel, aiming at the Nevatim airbase. The attack was successfully countered by Israeli and US forces, saving Israeli territory from being damaged.<sup>25</sup> Seeing that Iran is a major country in the Middle East bearing great military power, its involvement may alter the outcome of the conflict. However, the Iranian government still aims at an objective stance without escalating further tensions.

### *Türkiye*

Türkiye is one of Palestine's allies, it openly supports Hamas and has stated a strong disagreement with the Israeli actions. However, it stands with Egypt on the question of the Palestinian refugees, claiming that a forced displacement into Egypt via Rafah is not a feasible solution.<sup>26</sup> Türkiye seeks diplomacy as their main approach by trying to maintain good relations with Israel, but has also sent humanitarian aid to Gazans. Moreover, the Turkish public has conducted several pro-Palestine protests, condemning Israel's actions. Türkiye's leader president Erdogan stated that "What Israel's prime minister was doing in Gaza, is not any less than what Hitler did" giving the world a first glance about Türkiye's stance on the conflict<sup>27</sup>. Lastly, Türkiye has stopped trade relations with Israel, halting all import and export transactions as an action of support towards the Palestinians.

### *Egypt*

Egypt is considered a main stakeholder for the humanitarian aspect of the Palestinian conflict. Egypt and Gaza share a border in the city of Rafah located in Gaza, which has been considered the only way of evacuation through the west. Even though, Egypt rejects the opening of the border for Palestinian refugees to pass as they consider it a threat to their national

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<sup>24</sup> Fassihi, Farnaz. "Iran Faces a Dilemma in the Israel-Hamas War." *The New York Times*, 1 November 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/01/world/middleeast/iran-israel-hamas.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Picheta, Rob. "Why Iran attacked Israel and what comes next." *CNN*, 15 April 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/04/14/middleeast/why-iran-attack-israel-intl/index.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Ceylan, Azra, et al. "Turkey rejects exile of Palestinians, stands with Egypt." *Reuters*, 14 October 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-rejects-exile-palestinians-stands-with-egypt-2023-10-14/>.

<sup>27</sup> "What is behind Turkey's staunch support for Hamas in Gaza?" *BBC*, 2 January 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67861266>.

security.<sup>28</sup> That may seem detrimental for the outcome of the conflict since the Rafah region is currently overcrowded by nearly half the Palestinian population, causing food and water shortages.<sup>29</sup> Historically, Egypt has an uneasy relationship with Palestine seeing that they occupied the Gaza Strip in 1967, and they were the first Arab country to recognize Israel.

### **Lebanon**

Lebanon is highly involved in the Palestinian armed conflict. Since October when the conflict started, an Islamic group located in Southern Lebanon named Hezbollah has been fighting Israel in support of Hamas and Palestine.<sup>30</sup> Hezbollah are backed up by Iran which unconditionally supports Palestine and aims at the destruction of Israel. Moreover, on 28 July an attack was reported against Israel that caused the death of twelve children. Hezbollah has rejected the responsibility of the attack, but Israel does not accept their claims.<sup>31</sup> The situation between the two States might escalate quickly seeing that Israel has responded by planning attacks against the Hezbollah and that Hezbollah has Iran's full military support.

### **United States of America (USA)**

The United States of America despite being located far from the region, it is considered a key country involved in the conflict. The USA was the first country to recognize Israel's formation in 1948 and it is currently Israel's biggest ally. It is also the only Member State to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, causing confusion regarding its stance on the Palestinian issue. Historically the USA has supported the idea of the two-state solution performing many actions towards a peaceful agreement between the two States involved. However, it has exercised its veto power over detrimental issues discussed in the Security Council such as Palestine's international recognition, the forced displacement of Palestinian refugees in Egypt and several ceasefires proposed. The most recent ceasefire proposed by the United States was the one of 10 July 2024 calling for a three-phase ceasefire to end the armed conflict. It has also been involved in the interception of Iranian missiles launched against Israel in April 2024. The United States have stated an uninvolved status in the conflict.

### **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)<sup>32</sup>**

The OCHA is the main UN organization involved in the Palestinian issue. It has the task of coordinating the actions made towards the issue and the monitoring of events. It organizes humanitarian aid provision; it cooperates with organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Red Cross and keeps track of the conflict casualties. In the official OCHA website

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<sup>28</sup> Neuman, Scott. "Egypt doesn't want Palestinian refugees from Gaza. Here's why." *NPR*, 12 December 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/12/12/1218388766/egypt-israel-gaza-palestinians-hamas>.

<sup>29</sup> Ioanes, Ellen. "Israel-Hamas War: What is Egypt's position in the conflict?" *Vox*, 15 October 2023, <https://www.vox.com/2023/10/15/23918218/israel-hamas-war-egypt-humanitarian-crisis-gaza-israel-palestine-rafah-crossing>.

<sup>30</sup> "Nytimes.com." *The New York Times - Breaking News, US News, World News and Videos*, 29 July 2024, [www.nytimes.com/live/2024/07/29/world/israel-gaza-war-lebanon-hezbollah](http://www.nytimes.com/live/2024/07/29/world/israel-gaza-war-lebanon-hezbollah).

<sup>31</sup> "The Israel-Hezbollah war that No one Wants could finally Blow up." *CNN*, 29 July 2024, [edition.cnn.com/2024/07/28/middleeast/israel-hezbollah-war-blow-up-analysis-intl/index.html](http://edition.cnn.com/2024/07/28/middleeast/israel-hezbollah-war-blow-up-analysis-intl/index.html).

<sup>32</sup> *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory | Home Page*, <https://www.ochaopt.org/>.

information about the condition of Palestinian people can be found and several fundraising campaigns to aid the organizations involved. OCHA's task is considered of high peril and importance since the provision of food, water and medical assistance is a key factor in addressing the issue. The people involved work under extreme conditions bear great responsibility. The OCHA has also the responsibility to ensure equal humanitarian help provision keeping track of the areas in need. It also reports to the secretary General and the international community about the situation of the people, informing the general public.

### ***Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)***<sup>33</sup>

The PLO was founded in 1964 and its primary goal was to unite Arab states and establish an independent Palestinian State. The PLO was founded as a reaction to Israel's actions against Palestine and while at first it was an organization fighting for Palestinians, its role changed throughout the years. Because of Palestine's unrecognized status, the Arab League recognized the PLO as Palestine's international representative, giving it a form of government. The PLO represented Palestine in many cases with the main one being the Oslo Accords. During that time, Israel recognized the PLO as the sole representative of Palestine and the PLO recognized Israel as a State. That is considered the first approach of the two States for a peaceful agreement. Thus, the PLO plays a vital role for the recent events concerning Palestine since it is the organization that represents it worldwide.

## **TIMELINE OF EVENTS**

| <b>DATE</b>      | <b>DESCRIPTION OF EVENT</b>  |
|------------------|--|
| 2 November 1917  | The Balfour Declaration sent by the British Arthur Balfour to the Jewish community, stating Britain's support for the Jewish effort to establish a Jewish State. |
| 29 November 1947 | The UN Partition Plan for Palestine is proposed and passed, calling for land to be given to the Jews to establish a two-state mandate.                           |
| 1947 - 1949      | The Nakba period, when mass killings, deportations and destruction of homes against Palestinians occurred, initiated by Zionist armed groups.                    |
| 14 May 1948      | Israel declares its formation.   |

<sup>33</sup> PLO, 7 May 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/plo>.

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|----------------------------|--|
| 15 May 1948 - 20 July 1949 | The 1948 Arab - Israeli war between armed forces from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon against Israel initiated by Israel's formation. It ended with a UN ceasefire resolution and peace agreements between Israel and the Arab States. |
| 1950                       | Jordan takes control over the West Bank; Egypt occupies the Gaza Strip   |
| 1964                       | The PLO is formed. At first, it was just an organization fighting for Palestinian rights. Later on, it became the sole representative of Palestine.  |
| 1967                       | Israel takes control of the Gaza Strip and West Bank.  |
| 1987                       | The formation of Hamas, a closed Islamic brotherhood fighting for the creation of a Palestinian State.   |
| January 1993               | The Oslo Accords take place, a series of secret talks between Israel and Palestine to come to a peaceful agreement.  |
| 1995                       | Israel builds blockages and electrical fences around Gaza, taking full military control of the region.   |
| 23 December 2016           | The Security Council condemns the creation of the illegal Israeli settlements and demands that they cease them all.  |
| 7 October 2023             | Hamas launches an attack against Israel. It is the most recent conflict between the two States, and it is still ongoing.   |
| 15 November 2023           | The Security Council calls for a ceasefire in order to deliver basic humanitarian aid to people in need.   |
| 22 December 2023           | The General Assembly acknowledges Palestine's right to self-determination.   |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 25 March 2024      | The Security Council demands a ceasefire for the Ramadan period to deliver safely humanitarian aid.   |
| 13 - 14 April 2024 | Iran launches a missile drone attack against Israel supporting Palestine.   |
| 18 April 2024      | The United States exercises its veto power over the resolution calling for the provision of UN Membership to the State of Palestine.  |
| 3 May 2024         | Turkey all trading actions between them and Israel, showing its support for Palestine.  |
| 10 June 2024       | The proposal of a permanent 3-phase ceasefire by the Security Council to give an end to the armed conflict.   |
| 19 July 2024       | The International Court of Justice offers their advisory opinion on the Palestinian conflict condemning Israel and stating that their actions are considered illegal under international law. |
| 28 July 2024       | The Hezbollah launches an attack against Israel killing twelve children. Israel responds by planning attacks on Hezbollah.  |

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### *Balfour Declaration*

While not an official UN document, the Balfour Declaration is a public statement in the form of a letter (67 words) sent by the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs Arthur Balfour to the Jewish community, stating Britain's support for the Jewish effort to establish a State in the region of Palestine. After that statement, Britain was found with the responsibility of aiding the Jews in the creation of their State. It is highly linked to the topic since it shows the international community's first support for the Jewish actions of taking over Arabic land in Palestine.

### **General Assembly Resolution 181, 29 November 1947 (A/RES/181)<sup>34</sup>**

The UN Partition Plan was proposed on 29 November 1947 in the UN's General Assembly. To end the tensions between Israel and Palestine, the resolution called for the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish States. According to the Plan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip would be under Palestinian control, while the rest land would be given to the Jews to establish their new State. Jerusalem, despite being part of the West Bank, would be considered as an international city not belonging to either side.

### **General Assembly Resolution 194, 11 December 1948 [A/RES/194 (III)]<sup>35</sup>**

The Nakba caused many Palestinians to become refugees in nearby States and Israel. Israel, despite the UN's urges never let the refugees return to Palestine. The resolution 194 states the right of refugees to return to their countries after an occupation, urging Israel to let them do so. It is of high importance since it protects a basic human right. Despite the Assembly's urges, the remaining refugees and their descendants have not returned to their homes until today.

### **Security Council Resolution 2334, 23 December 2016 [S/RES/2334 (2016)]<sup>36</sup>**

The Security Council in this resolution condemns Israel for the illegal settlements built in the West Bank. The resolution clearly affirms that the settlements do not abide by international law and that they should be dismantled. Even though, Israel has chosen not to respect the Council's decision, stating that Jewish settlers could be found in the area long before Palestine's creation. Thus, these settlements are still located in the West Bank.

### **Security Council Resolution 2712, 15 November 2023 [S/RES/2712 (2023)]<sup>37</sup>**

This Security Council resolution passed on 15 November 2023 addresses the humanitarian aspect of the conflict. The SC condemns both sides for their actions and demands they operate under international law. It states clearly that the fighting has to stop for a couple of days for passages to be opened for humanitarian organizations to aid people in need. It also demands the immediate release of the hostages taken by Hamas, stating that children and non-fighting civilians are not part of the conflict. This resolution is considered crucial for the protection

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<sup>34</sup> "Future Government of Palestine." *United Nations Digital Library System*, [digitallibrary.un.org/record/667160?ln=en&v=pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/667160?ln=en&v=pdf).

<sup>35</sup> "Palestine-Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator." *United Nations Digital Library System*, [digitallibrary.un.org/record/210025?ln=en&v=pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/210025?ln=en&v=pdf).

<sup>36</sup> "Resolution 2334 (2016) /." *United Nations Digital Library System*, Dec. 2016, [digitallibrary.un.org/record/853446?ln=en&v=pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/853446?ln=en&v=pdf).

<sup>37</sup> "Resolution 2712 (2023) /." *United Nations Digital Library System*, Nov. 2023, [digitallibrary.un.org/record/4027698?ln=en&v=pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4027698?ln=en&v=pdf).

of civilians and their human rights, despite the fact that until today these rights are not respected by either side.

### **General Assembly Resolution 194, 22 December 2023 (A/RES/78/192)<sup>38</sup>**

This GA Resolution passed on 22 December 2023, affirms the right of Palestinians to self-determination. The UN also acknowledged the right to establish a Palestinian State. Self-determination is a demanding legal context that has to be taken into consideration when talking about the Palestinian issue. It also calls on all UN Member States to support the Palestinian people, something that it can be considered crucial.

### **Security Council Draft Resolution 312, 18 April 2024 (S/2024/312) (vetoed)<sup>39</sup>**

This Draft Resolution suggested the provision of UN Membership State status to the unrecognized State of Palestine. The resolution was particularly important for the people of Palestine, especially refugees, as they would be easier admitted on a global level. However, the resolution never reached the General Assembly as it was vetoed by the United States of America.

### **Security Council Resolution 2735, 10 June 2024 [S/RES/2735 (2024)]<sup>40</sup>**

In this resolution adopted by the Security Council, a three-phase ceasefire strategy is outlined. This ceasefire aims at the ending of the Palestinian conflict bearing in mind the various casualties it has caused. It calls for the return of civilian hostages, the release of Palestinian refugees, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian occupied areas, and the use of diplomacy for further agreements between the two States. It ends by adding that the negotiations must take place in less than six weeks, but if they pass this limit, they shall continue till the ceasefire is implemented. The resolution's importance can be seen in the seriousness of its demands, bringing a possible end in the long-standing conflict.

### **International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion, 19 July 2024<sup>41</sup>**

The ICJ in this Advisory Opinion states the illegality of Israel's actions against Palestinian civilians and Palestinian territories. It highly condemns Israel as they do not respect international humanitarian law. In the case it is also stated the consequences that Israel should face for

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<sup>38</sup> "The Right of the Palestinian People to Self-determination :." *United Nations Digital Library System*, Dec. 2023, [digitallibrary.un.org/record/4032442?ln=en&v=pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4032442?ln=en&v=pdf).

<sup>39</sup> *Official Document System - UN*, [documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/107/12/pdf/n2410712.pdf?token=5jpHyd6ETyQYmrdMx&fe=true](https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/107/12/pdf/n2410712.pdf?token=5jpHyd6ETyQYmrdMx&fe=true).

<sup>40</sup> "Security Council Resolution 2735 (2024) [on Ceasefire in the Gaza Strip]." *United Nations Digital Library System*, June 2024, [digitallibrary.un.org/record/4051310?ln=en&v=pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4051310?ln=en&v=pdf).

<sup>41</sup> *Cour Internationale De Justice - International Court of Justice | INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE*, [www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf](https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf).

violating the Palestinians' right to self-determination and causing uncontrolled non-fighting civilian casualties. The case is of high importance since it reflects the international court's opinion on the Palestinian question and on Israel's actions throughout the conflict.

## **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

### ***The provision of humanitarian aid***

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has affected a lot of civilians in many aspects. Currently food, water and medical shortages have caused for many people to suffer. After several General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the international community has sent a huge amount of humanitarian aid to help people in need. The UN's OCHA has been given the task to coordinate the aid provided and monitor the situation. UN bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and NGOs work together to provide medical assistance to non-fighting civilians especially in refugee camps where most people are located.<sup>42</sup> Humanitarian aid is provided under extreme conditions and is crucial for the outcome of the conflict. Apart for the UN as a whole, Member States have delivered monetary funds to support the humanitarian organizations, while individuals have aided by organizing fundraising and awareness campaigns.

### ***Raising awareness campaigns***

For the past year raising awareness campaigns about the Palestinian issue have taken over the internet and social media. Apart from the official UN platforms that report daily on the conflict, major social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter have various users spreading news about the current situation. News reporting entities like the BBC, CNN and New York Times have been using these platforms to inform the public about recent activities regarding UN decisions, Member States' actions and individuals' opinions on the matter. Moreover, fundraising campaigns have been organized through social media to aid international organizations and NGOs in their activities supporting Palestinian people. Raising awareness on the matter is considered a great approach to the issue since it is the only feasible way in which the general public can help the situation. Celebrities and worldwide respected individuals can help in shaping the public's opinion, mobilizing more people towards peace and diplomacy. However, it is crucial to maintain an objective stance, always aware of possible misinformation.

### ***The proposal of ceasefires***

For the past months, the Security Council has proposed several ceasefires concerning the Palestinian question. Their goal was the temporary end the conflict for humanitarian aid to be safely delivered and negotiation talks to take place. However, the ceasefires found the United States as their enemy since they have exercised their veto power over the resolutions. As a result, only a few ceasefire resolutions have been passed and successfully implemented. The latest

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<sup>42</sup> Zagout, Abed. "How is the UN helping civilians in Gaza?" *UN News*, 13 January 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/01/1145472>.

ceasefire proposed included a three-phase plan in which is outlined the strategy for an ultimate ceasefire ending the conflict. The ceasefire considers the need of humanitarian aid provision and the need for diplomatic talks to take peace.

### ***The condemnation of both sides***

The General Assembly and the Security Council have condemned both parties involved for their illegal actions concerning humanitarian law in several resolutions. Moreover, the UN's Secretary General Antonio Guterres has acknowledged the situation in Palestine, and it's causes and has highly condemned Israel's actions in several speeches. Explicitly, he has stated that "The Palestinian people have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation" and that "Nothing can justify the deliberate killing, injuring and kidnapping of civilians – or the launching of rockets against civilian targets" amongst other statements.<sup>43</sup> Recently, on 19 July 2024 the International Court of Justice made a public statement about its Advisory Opinion on the issue, claiming that Israel does not abide by international law and their actions are clearly illegal. While it might seem like an unimportant attempt, the condemnation of the parties' actions plays a vital role in the shaping of the international community's opinion. It highlights the illegality of the conflict and supports the use of peace and diplomacy.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### ***Posing sanctions to both sides***

The Security Council is the only UN body that can pose sanctions to a Member State. As mentioned previously the Palestinian conflict has been considered illegal by many important organs such as the ICJ and the UN Secretariat. Legally binding Security Council resolutions and ICJ decisions that called for ceasefires to provide humanitarian aid, the immediate release of hostages and adherence to international humanitarian law have not been taken into consideration by both parties. Thus, sanctions could be posed to the parties involved for their inability to adhere to such decisions. However, the Observer State status of Palestine may be an obstacle in fulfilling this solution and must be taken into consideration when negotiating about such actions.

### ***Creating refugee camps in nearby States***

Palestine currently faces a great issue concerning their refugees. Since the Nakba period, refugees have always been a part of Palestinian and Israeli territory not being able to return to their homeland. Nowadays, during the armed conflict, nearly half of the Palestinian population is located in refugee camps in Rafah with Egypt rejecting their passage through the Rafah crossing. Refugee camps in nearby States, funded and supported by UN bodies specialized in finance and healthcare could be created, so as for Palestinian people to live in better conditions than the ones

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<sup>43</sup> "Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council - on the Middle East | United Nations Secretary-General." *the United Nations*, 24 October 2023, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2023-10-24/secretary-generals-remarks-the-security-council-the-middle-east%C2%A0>.

they currently face. Concerning the Member States that will host such camps, several perks may be provided by UN decisions urging them to accept the changes and aid the development of these plans.

### ***Appeal to the ICJ about Jerusalem's status***

The status of Jerusalem is also a key factor of the Palestinian issue. What started to be an autonomous international city resulted in being split into two parts with both sides claiming it. An appeal for an advisory opinion for the status of the city could be made to the ICJ, so as to have the legal background of the issue. ICJ cases are not legally binding and can be rejected by Member States, however having an International Court specialized in such issues settle the situation can help in the shaping of the international community's opinion.

### ***Discussing the "Two-State Solution"***

The Two-State Solution has been an attempt to solve the issue for many years. However, the negotiation talks never concluded and the solution was never implemented. The Two-State solution that is backed up by many countries and calls for the creation of two independent States in the area of Israel could be a feasible way of approaching the issue. It is crucial to outline the terms of the plan and its impact in the Israeli geopolitics.

### ***Promoting diplomacy and negotiations***

Peace and Security is one of the UN's fundamental principles. Peace can be achieved in crucial situations like the Palestinian conflict only by promoting diplomacy and negotiation talks. Such promotion may occur by urges of the General Assembly and the Security Council or even by organizing several conferences and forums on the issue. These forums will place the negotiation of the two sides as its primary goal, discussing the main factors that led to the current situation.

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