Forum: Security Council

Issue: Addressing renewed tensions in the Gaza Strip

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INTRODUCTION

Israel and its relations with neighbouring states have long been a subject of debate in a number of United Nations committees and organisations. Due to its geographical location, the state of Israel finds itself at a crossroads of three different continents, but also, perhaps more importantly, at a crossroads of three different religions and cultures. As such, states in the region of the Middle East have run into difficulties in their attempt to coexist and prosper mutually.

Throughout its short history, Israel has constantly been at odds with other states, chief among them Egypt, Jordan and the self-proclaimed state of Palestine, whose existence is not recognised by Israel. Palestine is classified as an observer state in the united Nations meaning it does not have the right to a vote. The 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the Six-Day War, the Yom Kippur War, the First and Second Intifadas all prove that the region is unstable and constantly prone to conflict.

This study guide will set itself apart from another, separate series of conflicts, not between established states, but between Israel and the as of yet widely unrecognised state of Palestine. Conflicts between Jewish and Arabian populations in the area that today constitutes the state of Israel have been as old as the Israeli state itself. Tens of thousands of civilians have lost their lives in the struggle for regional dominance, in which Israel is so far reigning supreme.

Recent events in the Gaza Strip are only a small part of said struggle, which must finally see its end.

As such, the Security Council, guided by the mandate it was assigned, which calls for it to "maintain international peace and security", decides to take decisive action and peacefully end the struggle for dominance.

In this study guide, you will find only a brief and simplified history of modern-day Israeli and Palestinian relations. The study guide and I cannot stress this enough, does by no means offer you a complete overview of happenings of these past 70 years. Important events such as the Six-Day War or the Yom Kippur war have been but mentioned, as it would be unwise to include such lengthy parts of Israel's history, lest the study guide ends up far too long. I would therefore urge you to carry out your own informed and unbiased research based on the sources linked in the bibliography.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip commonly referred to as simply Gaza is a narrow strip of land totalling 365 square kilometres. It is bordered by Israel to the North and East, by Egypt to the South and the Mediterranean Sea to the West. The area is extremely crowded, having one of the highest birth rates in the world, with most of the Muslim majority population living below the poverty line. It is currently administrated by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).[1]
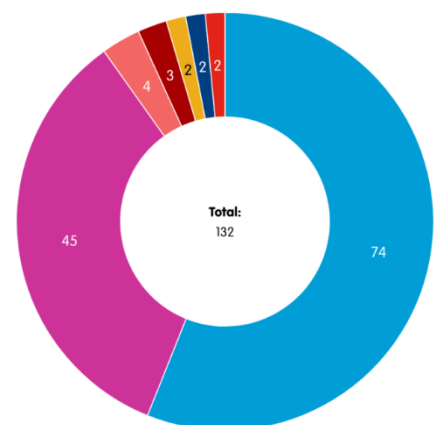
West Bank

The West Bank, so-called because of its location to the West of the Jordan river, is a zone of land considered occupied by International Law. The area is surrounded by Israel, with the exception of the eastern border, which borders with Jordan. The zone, which was occupied as a prize after the Six-Day War in 1967, is home to mostly Palestinians, though Israeli settlers have been forming illegal settlements in it. Administration of the West Bank varies from area to area, with Israeli and Palestinian political groups fighting for control during the past decades. [3]

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA)

The PNA is the institution responsible for the self-governing of the regions claimed by the as of yet widely unrecognized State of Palestine. The institution came into being after the Oslo Accords in 1994 and focused mainly on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The PNA has one legislative chamber, the

Figure 1: Distribution of seats in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative council

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[1] "Gaza Strip." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/place/Gaza-Strip.
[2] Figure 1: "Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) – Mapping Palestinian Politics." *ECFR*, 20 Mar. 2018, www.ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/palestine_legislative_council/.
[3] "West Bank." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/place/West-Bank.

Palestinian Legislative Council, whose seats have not changed since the 2006 elections.[4]

Hamas

Hamas is a political and militant organization fighting for the creation of the State of Palestine. They're centred around Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Fundamentalism. Hamas has been on a political and military campaign against Fatah, the other major organization that rallied around Palestinian Nationalism, which lost the 2006 elections in Gaza, resulting in an armed conflict between the two organizations. Hamas is considered by some Member Nations of the UN to be a terrorist organization, Israel counting itself among these nations.[5]

Fatah

Fatah is the second largest party on the Palestinian side of things, having taken an active part in the struggle for the creation of a Palestinian State since 1959. Having lost political control in the Gaza Strip, they now mainly represent Palestinians of the West Bank in the Palestinian Legislative Council. [6]

Zionism

Zionism is an ideological movement that supports Jewish Nationalism and seeks to form an independent Jewish state across the whole of Palestine. Note that Palestine here is not referring to the State of Palestine but rather an area including modern Jordan, Gaza and Israel.[7]

Israeli Defence Forces (IDF)

The term Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) includes all branches of the Israeli Armed Forces (Navy, Air forces, Army, Coast Guard). The IDF is tasked with protecting the nation of Israel and defending Israeli national interests.

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[4] "Palestinian Authority." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Palestinian-Authority.

[5] "Hamas." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Hamas.

[6] "Fatah." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Fatah.

[7] "Zionism." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Zionism.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Origins of Israeli-Arab hostilities

The Mandate for Palestine

The part of the Middle East where Israel is located was historically always considered by Jews to be their homeland, after Moses brought the newly freed Jews from Egypt to Israel, according to the Book of Exodus. As such, it was home to a large part of the Jewish population already in the early 20th century, albeit with the area being under Ottoman control. Zionist militias helped the British Army liberate the Middle East during the Conquest of Palestine (1918), in return for a part of the newly liberated lands. This put the Arab population at odds with both the Jews and the British, resulting in tension and protests, some of which turned violent.

In 1922, the League of Nations issued the Mandate for Palestine[8] to the British Empire, which called for an equal and even division of Palestine among Muslims and Jews. The issue was that only 11% of the population was Jewish, which meant that the division of Land was unproportionate. The Muslim population saw this as an act of dismissal by the international community, leading to riots and violent demonstrations all throughout the Interwar period.

In the 1930s, just as anti-Semitism was rearing its ugly head across Europe, hundreds of thousands of Jews fled the continent and arrived in Palestine. The arrival of such an incredible number of immigrants into a relatively small place in a rapid fashion disrupted the extremely sensitive and fragile peace in the region, leading to the Arab revolution of 1936, which resulted in 5.000 dead and 14.000 wounded Muslims, further widening the gap between Jews and Muslims. The British Empire resorted, in 1930, to ban immigration, which severely severed their relations with Jews all across the world.

Creation of the State of Israel

Demonstrations, protests and revolts were put on halt during the Second World War, after Arabs and Jews buried the hatchet and partnered with the allies to defeat the axis advance on Egypt and the Middle East. As soon as the war ended, however, Jewish people took up arms and conducted a two-year-long guerrilla campaign against the British in retaliation to the immigration ban. Attacks on Army barracks, police stations, armouries and other military infrastructure called for the mobilization of an ever greater and expensive force, whilst illegal Jewish immigration was further stretching British forces.

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[8]note that Palestine here is referring to an area roughly equal to today's Israel, Gaza and Jordan combined

The brutal campaign proved overwhelming for the crumbling British Empire, which sought an armistice, to no avail, however, seeing as Arabs lobbied for a Muslim state in Palestine, whilst the Jews proposed splitting the region into what is now Israel and other Muslim states. The British announced that they would evacuate Palestine in May of the next year and the United Nations were called in in February 1947, forming the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine in May of the same year.

The committee proposed partitioning the area into an independent Jewish state and an independent Muslim State with Resolution 181. The Jewish Agency [10]accepted Resolution 181, which was also passed in the GA in November 1947, whilst the Arab league, representing Muslim interests, declined the proposal, proclaiming that they would not accept a Jewish State in Palestine.

The Arab League's proclamation was followed up by strikes and riots in Jerusalem in early December 1947. Tensions soon boiled over into a civil war, in which the Palestinians received external support. Arab militias attacked Jewish areas, whose inhabitants in return armed themselves and formed the Haganah ("defence" in Hebrew), an organisation tasked with the protection of the Jewish population. Under the leadership of the Jewish Agency, the Haganah launched an offensive in April 1948, a mere month before the British evacuation of Palestine, managing to secure a large part of Palestine. The offensive ended on May 14th 1948, when Ben-Gurion, the leader of the Jewish Agency, declared the establishment of the Jewish State. The British evacuated Palestine on May 15th, leaving behind a ruined and war-torn region.

Figure 2: The Israeli flag is raised in Eilat, Israel's southernmost city

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The 1949 Armistice Agreements

After the war's end, Israel sought to repair relations with its fellow Middle Eastern states. As such, a series of agreements between members of the Arab League and Israel were signed, under the supervision of the United Nations.

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[9] Figure 2: "Today in History: Winning Eilat with an Ink Flag." *The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com*, 10 Mar. 2016, www.jpost.com/christian-news/today-in-history-winning-eilat-with-an-ink-flag-447516.

[10] the organisation representing Jewish interests in the UN was the Jewish Agency

Of special interest are the agreements between Israel, Egypt and Jordan. Signed in April 1949 and February 1950, a series of agreements between these nations led to the partition of former British Palestine. Israel, as the obvious victor of the conflict, managed to secure large parts of Mandatory Palestine, whilst the Egyptian and Jordanian delegations managed to obtain only the Gaza strip and territory around and in Jerusalem.

History of the Gaza strip hitherto

Since this guide aims to examine tensions in the Gaza strip, in particular, this region is going to be analysed and featured significantly more than the rest of former British Palestine.

Egyptian Occupation

The Gaza strip was occupied by Egyptian forces after the signing of the 1949 Armistice Deals. With immigration to the area substantially higher than usual, due to Israel occupying nearby villages, the Egyptian government failed to properly administrate the area. Widespread poverty, lack of proper medical and educational infrastructure and rising criminality severely hampered the Gaza strip, up until 1956, when the Suez Canal crisis saw the area being cut off from Egypt. After the crisis ended, president Gammal Nasser sought to upgrade the area, creating security forces, establishing a modern local government and developing basic infrastructure. The local government, proving itself incapable of administrating the region, was substituted by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, an Egyptian puppet government that saw a return to conservative and religious values, followed by military conscription into the local branch of the Egyptian Armed Forces, the Palestinian Liberation army.

Israeli Occupation and the Palestinian Exodus

The Six-Day War, which was fought in June 1967, saw Israeli forces manage to conquer an unlikely victory against the concentrated and concentrated efforts made by a coalition of neighbouring Arab governments. Control of the Gaza strip was transferred to Israel after the June 19th peace treaty was signed. Israeli policy in the area was to keep existing structures intact, allowing for a degree of normality in civilians of the Gaza strip lives. Israeli Defence Forces however often intervened in the political scene of the region, forcing the Palestinian Liberation Organisation to pass laws and issue decrees benefiting Israeli economic and strategic interests. In 1968, for example, the Israeli military governor threatened to dismiss the Gaza Strip municipal council, less Palestinian civilians turned in their guns. Such incidents made Israel even more unpopular, resulting in widespread dislike and distrust of the occupational regime and as such, civilian opposition. Armed action against Israeli occupation forces reached its climax in the years 1969-1971, leading to a series of Israeli crackdowns during the following decade.

Meanwhile, Israeli military action in the Middle East during the 60s and 70s saw the occupation of a number of densely populated regions. Residents of these regions, mainly of Arabian nationality and Muslim faith, fled these areas and found refuge in places like the West Bank and, of course, the Gaza Strip. This so-called Palestinian exodus resulted in an estimated 300.00 people entering the Gaza Strip, only to be put in eight enormous refugee camps, in absence of empty and affordable mass housing. Conditions in these camps were horrid. The already strained infrastructure simply could not handle the high numbers of immigrants, resulting in its collapse. In a relatively unexpected turn of events, residents of the Gaza Strip turned not against the new wave of displaced Arab immigrants, but rather the State of Israel, displaying unity and brotherhood.

A constantly growing Palestinian nationalist movement sprung up in Gaza during the late 70s. High birth rates, the Palestinian Exodus and Israeli segregationist policies kept the development index of the area well below that of Israel, which only resulted in further dislike – to put it lightly - of the Israelis. Israeli settlers had moved into the Gaza strip and taken over the few resource- and agriculturally rich areas there were, starving the Palestinian residents of sources of wealth and food. On top of that, unwarranted house searches, beatings, shootings, imprisonments and mock trials carried out by Israeli authorities in an attempt to curb Palestinian nationalism only worsened the already tense atmosphere.

Figure 3: Map showing Palestinian land captured by Israeli forces, as well as the legitimacy of the PNA in these areas (marked in green)
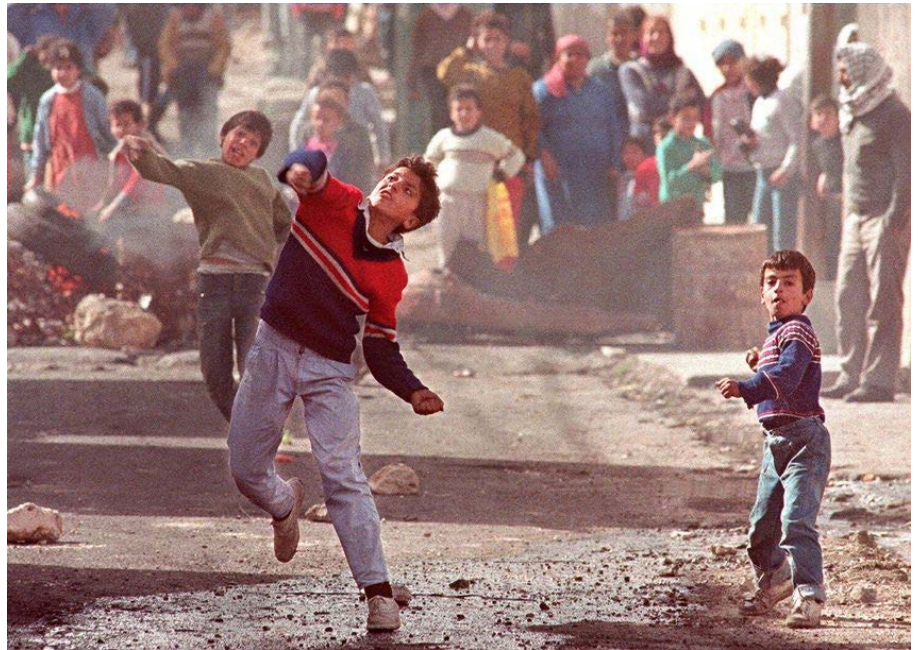
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[11]Figure 3: "Everything You Need to Know About Human Rights in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories." *Amnesty International*, www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories/report-israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories/.

The local government, pressured by Israel, was unable to resolve even the most trivial of issues, leading to further civil unrest. It is estimated that by the end of the 80s, 40% of Gaza residents were working minimum wage jobs in mainland Israel, having to commute to and from their workplace every day. Daily commute passed through a number of checkpoints occupied by the IDF, which searched every single car passing through. This resulted in unwarranted confiscations of common objects and sometimes weapons, further straining Israeli-Arab relations.

Reactionary movements flourished in conditions such as those, and it wasn't long before the people of Gaza took up arms and revolted in what is now known as the First Intifada.

First Intifada, the establishment of Hamas

The PLO, now made up of a confederation of small parties, between which the Palestinian Communist Party and the newly created nationalist party Fatah held a leading role, organised civilians' militias. With tensions at an all-time high, only a spark was needed for a revolt to break out. The fuse was lit on December 8th 1987, when an Israeli tank transport truck crashed on Palestinian cars that were being searched by Israeli customs officials before entering into the Gaza strip at Erez Checkpoint. Four Arabs were killed, three of which lived in the largest of the 8 refugee camps, Jabalya. A funeral was held for the four dead that same evening, which was attended by more than 10.000 people. Soon, the angry crowd picked up weapons and turned the pinned-up aggression of the past two decades into action. Molotov cocktails, crowbars and guns sounded thought the night, and the next day the IDF was called in

Figure 4: Palestinian youths partake in rock throwing counterattacking Israeli police officers, location unknown, First Intifada

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to suppress the rowdy Palestinians. A firefight ensued, in which a teenager was shot killed, along with 16 others who were wounded.

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[12] Figure 4: History.com Editors. "Intifada Begins on Gaza Strip." *HISTORY*, 9 Feb. 2010, www.history.com/this-day-in-history/intifada-begins-on-gaza-strip.

On December 10th 1987, a new nationalist militant organisation was formed. Hamas gained traction in the unstable political environment of the Gaz Strip. By the end of the Intifada, in 1993, the organisation would number tens of thousands of members.

Soon, protests engulfed the rest of what once British Palestine. Rock throwing, tire burning, mass strikes, riots and vandalism were commonplace across communities with a majority Arab presence for the next years.

Israeli defence minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered a number of countermeasures to qualm the riots. Since most of the rioters were of a young age, communities with a great number of youths were focused. Universities and schools were closed down during the Intifada, communities were cut off of Electricity and Water, mass arrests were frequent, property seizures were common and strict curfews were introduced and brutally enforced. It is estimated that throughout the Intifada at least 25.000 Palestinians were locked in their homes at any one time.

In the end, over 1.200 Palestinians were killed by the IDF, with close to 800 more killed by other Arab militant groups during infighting. The IDF illegally and without warrant detained 120.000 Palestinians during the whole span of the Intifada, whilst over 65.000 people were injured. Israeli losses remained low, with official figures showing around 200 killed and 3.100 injured. Immense property damage was caused and Palestinians have yet to rebound economically.

Outcomes and Peace

For the first time in their history, different tribes of Arab people had united and managed to reign supreme over the Israeli State. In the eyes of the world, Palestinians were now entitled to a national state.

Israel's image as a united state, a fortress of western ambitions and a stepping stone against the rise of Islamic extremism in the Middle East was tarnished. Their handling of Palestinian protests was criticised worldwide and the immediate impact on the Israeli economy, and in particular tourism and various services, was felt across the nation.

The first Oslo Accord and the Madrid Conference took place to ensure that peace would, in the end, reign over the region, so that a solution to the Question of Palestine, as it was now called, could be reached. Following these two conferences and their respective treaties, whose content it would be unwise to go into detail, both sides recognised each other as legitimate states, with Palestine recognising all UN resolutions on the matter since 1947 and committing themselves to the two-state solution, and Israel starting to reverse previous aggressive policies, as well as calling back settlers and awarding greater autonomy to local governments, resulting in the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Second Intifada

The Camp David Summit, which took place in July 2000, 7 years after the end of the first Intifada, sought to wrap up the peace process and establish two states in former British

Palestine. Led by Bill Clinton, the conference failed and talks broke down due to the aggressive demands of both Israeli and Palestinian negotiators.

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, elected in 1996, lifted the ban on settling and urged Israelis to move into and take over Palestinian territory. He also backtracked on the promise of giving local governments autonomy, which led the Palestinian National Authority and the PLO to retract support for the Israeli government. The Palestinian people, having yet to see an independent Palestine, were also becoming restless. The stage was now set for a second Intifada.

The Intifada was sparked by a visit a leading Israeli politician made to the Temple Mount on September 28th. The Temple Mount is considered to be the third holiest site of Islam and the holiest site of Judaism, two religions that were very much in a fight against each other for the past 50 years. The visit caused massive outrage between Palestinians, who soon picked up rocks and Molotov cocktails and started rioting in Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Events reminiscent of the first Intifada soon followed and further tensions kept on rising, until October 12th, 2000, when two patrolling Israeli soldiers accidentally entered Ramallah, a Palestinian residential area. The soldiers were arrested by local Palestinian police and rumours quickly spread, resulting in a large crowd numbering over 1000 people gathering outside the jail

Figure 5: Israeli tank on patrol somewhere in the Gaza strip, attacked by rock yielding Palestinian child, second Intifada [13]

where the two soldiers were held, demanding to kill them. The Palestinian masses soon overpowered the guards and entered the jail, whereupon the Israeli soldiers were beaten, stabbed, disembowelled and finally, burned. An Italian TV crew managed to capture a recording of this event, which was soon playing all across Israel, leading to massive protests on behalf of the Israelis.

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[13] Figure 5: "2nd Intifada: 20 Years On Media Still Distorts Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." *Inside Arabia*, 16 Oct. 2020, www.insidearabia.com/2nd-intifada-20-years-on-media-still-distorts-israeli-palestinian-conflict/.

Sectarian violence broke out, with people from all sides reaching for their weapons. Israeli armed and police forces were caught up in violent firefights with Palestinians, who began using bombs and suicide bombers.

Israeli civilians were then targeted.

Palestinian suicide bombers, affiliated with the militant wing of Hamas, attacked malls, residential areas, night clubs and other public places, killing hundreds and injuring thousands, chief among them children and teenagers.

Israeli armed forces retaliated with full-on military attacks featuring armed vehicles and close air support aircraft, resulting in large numbers of Palestinian civilian casualties.

Violence only escalated from that point onward. It would be pointless to continue analysing atrocities committed by one side on the other. Suffice it to say that Israeli security systems completely broke down, leading to a large loss of life and an even larger breakdown in political stability in the country. The international community completely failed to halt the violence, with the US trying and failing, to enforce a cease-fire, whilst Iran actively took part in operations smuggling arms into Palestine.

In the end, over 1.000 Israelis and over 4.500 Palestinians lost their lives during the five-year-long pointless struggle that managed nothing but convincing Israeli civilians that an even tougher approach against Palestine was needed.

Aftermath and outcome

The Second Intifada managed to leave behind it only chaos when it ended in 2006. Unlike what happened during the First Intifada, the people of Palestine were split between themselves, with both Fatah and Hamas supporters clashing amongst themselves, resulting in around 350 further casualties. Brutal campaigns and attacks resulted in a great loss of human life, as both Palestine and Israel saw their public images and reputations shattered and tarnished.

The brutality of the Second Intifada also convinced the Israeli people that there was no peace to be found. A subsequent rise in the popularity of anti-Palestine, right-wing political parties can be found, which explains Benjamin Netanyahu's re-elections from the 2009 elections until June 2020.

The exact same effect was observed in Palestine, where Hamas managed to score a huge political victory and overturned Fatah's former rule over the PNA. The 2006 elections resulted in the radical Islamic party Hamas winning 74 seats, compared to the relatively moderate Fatah, which only scored 45 seats. As such, Palestinian nationalism would be on the rise again, which would further heighten tensions.

Second Intifada to today: 15 years of struggle and division

The 2006 PNA election results have been disputed by an embittered Fatah ever since. Soon, a tuned down civil war erupted in the Gaza Strip, a region with a traditionally pro-Fatah

population. Hamas militants managed to secure the region, which is now considered a Hamas stronghold. Soon, in the name of Islam and Palestinian liberation, mortar shells and rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip against various targets in mainland Israel.

Over the course of two years, between 2005 and 2008, over 2.700 locally produced rockets had been fired into Israel, killing four Israelis and injuring 75 others. In response, the IDF fired over 14.000 howitzer shells into Palestine, killing 59 and injuring 270. A sea, land and air blockade was imposed by Israel, who announced that only humanitarian supplies were to be let through. Hamas militants managed, however, to get a hold of arms, munitions and rockets through secret underground tunnels, the location of many of which still remains unknown to this day.

IDF forces were ordered to invade the Gaza strip in 2008, in order to obstruct the carrying out of further destructive mortar and rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas extremists. Israeli planes carried out pre-invasion bombing on December 27th 2008, before IDF land forces quickly swept through the wrecked and ruined northern Gaza urban areas. Rocket launch and production sites were seized

Figure 6: Rocket Production facility is hit by an Israeli howitzer, December 2008

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and destroyed, before the Israeli high command decided to withdraw from the area, fearing further casualties. Israeli forces had completely withdrawn by January 21st 2009, whilst a cease-fire was signed on the 23rd. The number of Israeli casualties stood at ten soldiers and three civilians killed, with around 500 Israelis wounded, whilst Palestinian casualties stood at around 1.200 killed and 5.300 injured, figures that are a testament to Israeli macabre effectiveness.

In the years following the invasion, various humanitarian crises were observed in the Gaza Strip, from an enormous refugee flow to widespread famine. Both sides were accused of war crimes in a UN Special Committee report published in 2009. The UN Human Rights Council announced in 2012 that more than 75% of infrastructure wrecked during the war has yet to be rebuilt.

Tensions were, inevitably, on the rise after the invasion. Rocket attacks continued,

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[14] Figure 6: "Why Israel Went to War in Gaza." www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/04/israe

[15] Figure 7: "How Israel's Iron Dome Missile Sh www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-203853

Figure 7: Iron Dome missiles are dispatched to intercept rockets

albeit at a lower rate and with worse effectiveness. The IDF blockade was, however, effective at forcing the Gazan economy to kneel. Soon, residents of Gaza could do little but watch as their dwindling food supplies were never supplemented. The unpopularity of the current regime rose, as division gripped the Palestinian people once again. Many supported nonviolence, in stark contrast to those who supported Hamas and their violent campaign of rocket bombings. Meanwhile, in Israel, tensions were also on the rise. Hamas rockets kept pounding Southern Israeli cities, until 2011, when the Iron Dome missile defence system was introduced.

At the same time, a movement known as "Arab Spring" flourished across Northern Africa and the Middle East. Inspired by the Arab Spring, Fatah and Hamas reconciled their differences, in a move that caused widespread panic in Israel. PM Netanyahu commented that the reconciliation of their differences and a united government would mean the end of Israel, which would be targeted by both organisations. IDF special operatives assassinated two highly important Hamas activists, in an attempt to derail a unitary government being sworn in. Predictably, Hamas returned fire and launched hundreds of rockets over the span of three days, between November 10th and 13th 2012. Israel responded with a one-week long rocket barrage, codenamed "Operation Pillar of Defence", which targeted weapons depots, rocket launch sites and other military installations. 55 Palestinians lost their lives.

A final invasion was carried out by Israel in response to Hamas kidnapping and murdering three Palestinian teenagers on June 12th 2014. The invasion aimed to locate and bring to justice the perpetrators of the kidnappings and took a little longer than 7 weeks. Even though the objective was not met, IDF forces were allowed to run rampant in cities and towns across Gaza, further wrecking what little infrastructure there was. As Israeli forces withdrew on 26th August, more than 2.300 Palestinians had lost their lives, with 10.500 being left injured.

The final invasion left the Gaza Strip completely ruined politically, economically, socially and militarily. The people of Gaza picked up the shambles of their day to day lives and went back to constructing them, with new infrastructure and residential areas being (re)constructed. The IDF blockade remains enforced to this day, causing more than 50% of the Gaza Strip's GDP to go down the drain. PM Netanyahu continued his aggressive policy of allowing Israeli settlers to annex Palestinian land, which would soon backfire.

2021 Israel-Palestine Crisis

The Gaza Strip, which was by 2021 slowly but steadily being rebuilt, suffered another conflict in May of that year. Tensions were already heightened, as the COVID-19 pandemic gave Netanyahu's government an excuse to enforce segregationist policies in various holy sites. Hamas rocket attacks had started increasing in number and severity once again. It seemed that the region was ready for its next crisis, which came after six Palestinian families were evicted from Sheikh Jarrah, an area that originally belonged to Palestine but that was slowly being annexed by Israeli settlers. Six Palestinian families were told to leave their homes, which were to be handed over to Israeli settlers, causing further tensions. The final verdict read in favour of the settlers, which triggered protests in al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site of Islam. Police retaliated with rubber bullets, stun grenades and tear gas in a move that has been seen time and again in the region. These protest coincided with the Qadr Night on May 8th, a holy night according to Islam, as it is believed that the Quran was sent down to earth during the Qadr Night.

Figure 8: Building in the Gaza Strip is hit by Israeli Close Air Support, May 13th 2021

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Hamas issued an ultimatum calling for Israeli forces to be withdrawn from the mosque on May 10th, so that Arabs could continue their holy routines, but alas, to no avail. The ultimatum remained unanswered and Hamas militants launched rockets against Israeli residential areas and schools in the morning of the next day. The IDF retaliated with airstrikes all across Gaza, demolishing dozens of buildings, whilst IDF ground troops moved in and enforced crowd control measures, in order to quell the riots that were taking place and inducing a heavy economic cost.

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[16] Figure 8: Nidal Al-mughrabi,Stephen Farrell,Jeffrey Heller. "World Powers Urge Truce As Israel-Palestinian Conflict Rages." *Reuters*, 18 May 2021, www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-gaza-violence-shows-few-signs-slowing-global-diplomacy-ramps-up-2021-05-18/.

The following days saw beatings, mob attacks, shootings, rocket and bomb barrages fired by both sides and other horrible events. As a ceasefire came into effect on May 21st, 13 Israelis and more than 250 Palestinians lay dead, whilst heavy property damage was induced on both Palestinian and Israeli lands.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Israel

Israel has been among the most important countries involved in the issue. Israeli forces and settlers have long been harassing Palestinians in their own land, which Israel formally occupies. Israeli militia has also committed numerous war crimes against civilians. As such, it is extremely important for the state of Israel to cooperate and concentrate on providing a solution to the decade long issue of the state of Palestine, as well as to help combat current shortages all across Palestinian territory, and especially the Gaza Strip.

Palestine, represented by the PNA

The state of Palestine also is a key force in the region. The PNA has, to their credit, recognised the legitimacy of the state of Israel and accepted all relevant UN resolutions. Unfortunately, violent actions undertaken by individuals of the Arab faith and the Palestinian Nationality, pledging allegiance to the militaristic wing of Hamas, have undermined Palestine's public image. It is therefore important for Palestine to cooperate with Israel and reach an affordable and final solution so that the struggle for dominance in the area can finally meet its end.

United States of America

The USA has long been sponsoring the state of Israel's campaign by selling arms and lending political and diplomatic support. Of especial note are the vetoes the USA proposed on a number of UN resolutions condemning and proposing actions against Israel. If a peaceful solution is to be agreed upon, then all sides have to pledge allegiance to the common cause of peace and leave aside political games, for the greater good and prosperity of the Middle Eastern region as a whole.

Hamas

Hamas is a political and militant organization fighting for the creation of the State of Palestine. It was initially created in order to counter attack Israeli attacks. They're centred around Palestinian Nationalism and Islamic Fundamentalism, and as such, are considered a terrorist organisation by the USA, the EU and other nations. Hamas militants have also broken numerous ceasefires on multiple occasions.

Fatah

Fatah is the second largest political organisation in the PNA. Their more moderate stance, less centred around religion, makes them the perfect party with which to form a stable government. A Palestine under Fatah is bound to see political stability and economic prosperity, at least long term, and their cooperation is deemed vital. Therefore, Fatah needs to be recognised and treated as stakeholders.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1949 Armistice Agreements	Signed by Israel, Jordan and Egypt, the agreements divide former British Palestine and
1967 Six-Day War	Israel formally occupies parts of Palestine, between them the Gaza strip.
December 8th 1987	The First Intifada begins
December 10th 1987	Hamas is funded
October 30th – November 1st 1991	The Madrid Conference takes place
Oslo Accords 1993-1995	The Oslo Accords are drafted and signed
July 2000	The Camp David Summit takes place, talks break down The Second Intifada begins
February 8th 2005	The Second Intifada ends
April 2005	First Rocket barrage against Israel is launched
January 2006	PNA elections take place, Hamas scores a grand victory
December 27th – January 23rd	1st Israeli invasion of Palestine after the Second Intifada
2011	Arab Spring, reconciliation of Hamas and Fatah

June 12th – August 26th 2014	2nd Israeli invasion of Palestine after the Second Intifada
May 8th 2021	Protests at the al-Aqsa Mosque are put down violently
May 10th 2021	Hamas Ultimatum goes unanswered, bombings and subsequently May 2021 crisis begin
May 21st 2021	A Cease-fire is agreed upon

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181[17]

UN GA resolution 181, adopted on November 29th, 1947, calls for the partition of former British Palestine into two different states. This is also known as the two-state solution, a plan that the PNA supports.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2443[18]

UN GA resolution 2443, adopted on December 19th, 1968, calls for the creation of a special committee to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people. A number of reports would subsequently be published by said committee, the latest of which was published in 2017 (linked).

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[17] "A/RES/181(II) of 29 November 1947." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/7F0AF2BD897689B785256C330061D253.

[18] "A/RES/2443 (XXIII) of 19 December 1968." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/1FE2116573C8CFBE852560DF004ED05D.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334[19]

UN SC resolution 2334, adopted on December 23rd, 2016, condemns and criticises Israel for the settlements set up by its citizens in Palestinian land. The resolution was passed with 14 votes in favour and one abstention, namely that of the USA.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

There has been a number of previous attempts to solve the Palestinian Question, most of them in the form of peace talks and negotiations between leading Palestinian and Israeli parties. Most negotiations have broken down due to the fact that neither side is willing to accept or back down when faced with the other's demands. Even the talks that have not failed, like for example the Oslo accords, were never correctly implemented because of the same reason.

It is therefore the Security Councils duty to ensure that a new round of peace talks, correctly and fairly moderated, will succeed.

Figure 9: US President Bill Clinton (middle), Israeli PM Ehud Barak and PNA Chairman Yasser Arafat shake hands at the White House, July 2000

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

United Nations-sponsored peace conference

Possibly the most important measure to be taken, a peace conference sponsored by the United Nations, an organisation renowned for its unbiased efforts to promote world peace, would certainly help put an end to the Palestinian people's struggle. Excellent moderation is going to be required through the duration of the talks, as is benevolence on behalf of the conference's partakers and attendees. Whilst benevolence and willingness to cooperate cannot be enforced,

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[19] "Resolution 2334 (2016) S/RES/2334 (2016)." *United Nations Security Council*, www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf.

it is deemed necessary to advance the spirit of cooperation, so as to ensure that the peace conference would have even the slightest degree of success.

United Nations enforced peace mandate

Upon realising that tensions are simply too high – enabled by Hamas and other nationalistic movements, both in Palestine and Israel – for peace to reign supreme, it is deemed necessary to involve the UN peacekeeping force. Only after relative peace at least has been established can negotiations soldier on and reach the desired conclusion. This solution can be characterised as temporary until a treaty is finally signed.

Redistribution of Territory

Shifting demographics have proved that the original two-state solution as we know it can now be considered obsolete. If the Palestinian state is to be created and to coexist with the state of Israel, then new plans on the assignment of territory need to be forged. The best organisation to carry out mapping and surveys, so that these new plans can be forged, would be a United Nations

Figure 10: The two-state solution, as originally imagined in 1947

[20]

Security Council Special Committee, which would be named United Nations Special Committee on redistribution of Territory in Palestine. A new map, based upon local population groups and historical heritage, and agreed upon by all delegations and parties involved, could certainly help advance the cause of peace and prosperity.

ICJ and ICC persecution of war crimes and human rights violations

What was once British Palestine has, throughout the past 70 years, gone through unthinkable tragedies, many of which were caused by malevolent or otherwise wrongdoing organisations and individuals. It is of paramount importance that the people and organisations that have caused unjust harm are tried by a court of law, depending on what crimes and violations they have begone. Only through just trials can the pain of these tragedies be combated and their healing begun, so that the two peoples can one day look back on these events and unite themselves in happiness over the fact that they will have developed far away from the dark past.

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[20] Figure 10: "Two-state Solution | Definition, Facts, History, & Map." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/two-state-solution.

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