

SAIMUN 2017 Research Report

Committee: Security Council

Issue: The situation in Palestine and Israel

Student Officer: Hye Jin Jang, Deputy President

1. Description of Issue

Anti-semitism is an issue that dates back thousands of years and throughout several significant historical events; the issue of the situation in Palestine and Israel, is not. Arguably, even, the conflict between the parties involved in the conflict could be said to not have been caused by any of them, rather by a set of flawed decisions and meddling by external parties, which is a common source of problems in the region. Regardless of the cause, it is certain that the situation in Israel and Palestine is a complex one with a history that's often confusing, involving many borders, a number of wars and uprisings, as well as intentionally vague and ineffective treaties.

The issue between the parties involved in basic terms, is on territory. Of course, in reality it is much more complex than that; everyone desires different things and even within the parties there are internal problems that affect the resolution of the conflict.

The geographic region of Palestine is home to many significant religious and historical sites to both Judaism and Islam; historically it has been under the rule of many different empires and entities and it is based on the above that claims have been made to its land. A number of wars have been waged over the territory and some of those wars fought due to the wounded pride of losing said territory--the difficulty of historic shame and national pride from these battles have impeded the peace process. Internal mutiny within the Palestinians have also led to separations, where people who previously fought for the same cause are now fighting each other, as well as their common perceived opposition. Perhaps most important however, are the civilians affected during this process--people displaced and forcibly removed from their homes, people without food and water, people who suffer through no fault of their own.

It is clear however, that a solution is long overdue as the conflict has been active for more than half a century now, beginning in 1948 with the very declaration of independence of Israel, to the passing of resolution 2334 by the United Nations in 2016, while bullets and rockets are traded,

civilians are held in a chokehold as resources dwindle and access to living essentials are limited. Perhaps naive and idealistic, but without a path to peace, the ideological aims and political agendas will ultimately mean nothing.

2. Definition of Key Terms

Anti-semitism

Anti-semitism means the hatred of and prejudice against Jewish people based on irrational generalisations. It has a deep rooted and complex history and the anti-semitic persecution of Jews, while not the trigger to the start of Zionism, has played a role in the rise of the movement.

Fatah

Formerly a militant group and terrorist organisation, Fatah is the largest political party in the State of Palestine and the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, is the party's leader. The group holds much more moderate approaches to the situation involving Israel, as opposed to Hamas' violent tactics. Fatah is currently based in the West Bank and has more influence over it, as Gaza was taken over by Hamas.

Gaza Strip

Bordering Israel to its northern and eastern borders, Egypt to its southern ones, and the Mediterranean Sea to its coast in the west (see Figure.1), the Gaza Strip is an area of land that has historically been and still is deeply embroiled in the conflict involving the State of Israel, the State of Palestine and the parties that oppose them. Only within the 20th and 21st century the Gaza Strip has been occupied by many different states and political entities which include the Ottoman empire, the British empire, the State of Israel, Egypt, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, the Palestinian Authority, and Hamas.



Figure. 1 Location and map of the Gaza Strip (From: Gaza Strip, retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Gaza-Strip>)

Since the early 1990s, Israel has limited movement in and out of Gaza, but the restrictions were tightened in 2007 when the terrorist organisation Hamas took over the administration and control of the area from the Palestinian Authority. The blockade Israel has put on Gaza involves restricting goods exported and imported by Gaza, as well as the movement of its citizens by air, sea and land, its fishing rights, its agricultural production, its access to necessities such as food and water, and also its ability to receive aid and humanitarian relief.

Gentile

Gentile is a term used to denote people and things that are not Jewish.

Hamas

Hamas is a Sunni-Islamic militant group currently governing the Gaza Strip. It was founded during the wake of the first Intifada in 1987 as a part of the Muslim Brotherhood opposing the State of Israel. Hamas is comprised of two wings: one providing welfare services and the more infamous military one, the Izzedine al Qassam Brigades, whose roles consist of providing security for the group and Gaza, but also terrorist attacks and strikes on Israel.

Hamas' charter declares a desire to eliminate the State of Israel and favours the creation of a Palestinian nation in the area comprising of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Despite its wish for the establishment of a Palestinian state, the organisation refuses to cooperate with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and the Palestine Authority and efforts to form a single Palestinian government has failed. Hamas rejects all treaties and deals between the PA and/or PLO regarding the issue and a schism between them resulted in Hamas' forcefully taking Gaza in June 2007. In Gaza, where it is based, Hamas operates a number of healthcare services, schools, orphanages and other social welfare and religious institutions.

Intifada

The term 'intifada' refers to the major Palestinian uprisings against Israel starting in 1987 and 2000 respectively. The two Intifadas saw Palestinians protesting against Israel with both violent and nonviolent methods, such as boycotting Israeli products, refusing to pay taxes, demonstrations, but also throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at Israeli military and police.

Jerusalem

A historically and religiously significant city in both Judaism and Islam. It is currently divided into west Jerusalem (governed by Israel) and east Jerusalem (governed by the PA). Both the State of Israel and Palestine claim it is their political capital, but it is not perceived as such by the international community.

Nakba

Literally meaning 'catastrophe' in Arabic, the 'Nakba' describes the Palestinian exodus during the first Arab-Israeli war, in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Nakba saw

700,000 Palestinians displaced from their homes and opinions differ on what exactly caused it; some believe that they were forcibly removed from towns and villages by the newly found Israeli army and others blame the Arab coalition's aggression. Many of the fleeing civilians became refugees living in camps in neighbouring countries.

Despite this event, Israel has made no formal recognition of it and institutions educating people about the Nakba will receive no funding or support from the government of Israel.

Oslo Accords

The Oslo Accords are a series of agreements and negotiations signed by the PLO and the State of Israel after Israel's decision to abandon its stance on refusing to negotiate with Palestinians. The secret meetings between the two parties were held in private in Oslo, Norway, hence, the name of the accords.

The Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles were signed in Washington, USA in 1993, stating that Israel would pull out all of its military in the West Bank and certain parts of Gaza, but some important issues were intentionally left out in the declaration. The declaration was inherently flawed, but as the PLO had few supporters at the time, it was viewed as the first step to a solution. The peace process for the conflict is sometimes referred to as the Oslo Accords because of this.

As opposed to the PLO, Hamas does not recognise the Oslo Accords.

Palestine (geographic region)

What comprised as Palestine the region varied at different points in history but in this context, it is made up of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza--the land which constituted Mandatory Palestine when under British rule.

Palestinian Authority/Palestinian National Authority (PA/PNA)

Although some states which do not recognise the State of Palestine may intentionally use the Palestinian Authority to refer to it, commonly, the name 'State of Palestine' and 'Palestinian Authority' is used interchangeably when referring to the the State of Palestine. More specifically,

‘Palestinian Authority’ refers to the government administration of Palestine in the West Bank essentially created in 1993 following the Oslo Accords. Initially it also oversaw Gaza Strip, but due to the takeover of Gaza by Hamas in 2007, it is solely concentrated in the West Bank. Fatah plays a strong role in PA.

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)

Separate from Fatah and the PA, but includes many members of both parties, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation is an organisation made of many smaller political parties and resistance movements representing Arab Palestinians in achieving statehood and the return of refugees to their occupied homeland.

It is important to note that while the PA, Fatah, and the PLO are strongly linked together and hold many similar beliefs, they are not the same thing and cannot be used interchangeably.

Settlements

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the term ‘settlements’ refers to the numerous Israeli communities established in what is considered Palestinian territories, although they are also present in surrounding Arab land. As of 2015, the population of Israeli settlers in the West Bank numbered at 547,000 and the number of settlements and outposts at 247, but the country has consistently encouraged an increase in settlements by subsidising properties and housing units in the area. Israel previously had settlements in Gaza as well, but all Israeli citizens and troops were evacuated in 2005 as part of a disengagement plan. (Heller, 2013)

Settlements are considered as illegal occupation and part of an effort to absorb Palestinian land by the international community. In December 2016, the UNSC adopted resolution 2334 on the situation concerning Palestine, hoping to cease the development and growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, on the basis of their non-existent legal validity. (Baker, 2016)

West Bank

Like Israel and Gaza, the West Bank is also part of the region of Palestine (see figure 2) and was previously under British governance. It includes the eastern part of Jerusalem. Following the first

Arab-Israeli war though, it was seized and governed by Jordan until the Six Day War in 1967, where Israeli military advancements gained it. Since the Oslo Accords in 1993 administration of it fell to the newly created Palestinian Authority, which still governs it now.



Figure. 2 Location and map of the West Bank (From: West Bank, retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/place/West-Bank>)

Despite a number of treaties and agreements by all parties that Israel would withdraw from the West Bank, the area still has a large amount of Israeli settlements.

Zionism

In 1896, *Der Judenstaat* ('The Jewish State), written by Theodor Herzl, was published. In the book, Herzl, a Jewish author and journalist argued for the establishment of a Jewish state in the land that is now known as Israel. Herzl's claims were based on his own personal experience with anti-semitism in France, which led him to believe that Jews would never be accepted by a gentile society in which anti-semitism is a constant. He proposed that Jewish assimilation would never

work because of this and the only way for Jews to live in peace is to do so in their own nation, particularly one built on historically Jewish land: the region of Palestine. Herzl's beliefs essentially makes up modern and political Zionism and is the stream of Zionism that is most well-known, but other interpretations also exist. (Theodor Herzl, n.d.)

3. Timeline of Key Events

Event	Description
<p>14 May 1948 State of Israel declares independence</p>	<p>Following the end of the British Mandate of Palestine and adoption of resolution 181 by the General Assembly and the partition plan which divided Palestine into the West Bank, Gaza and Israel, the State of Israel declared its independence.</p>
<p>15 May 1948 - March 1949 First Arab-Israeli War</p>	<p>Immediately after Israel's declaration of independence, an Arab coalition of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon (who declared war, but only took part in one battle) invaded the Palestinian land surrounding Israel.</p> <p>The fighting resulted in the seizure of Gaza by Egypt, the West Bank by Jordan (then Transjordan) and the displacement of 700,000 Palestinian civilians, who became refugees in camps in neighbouring countries.</p>
<p>1967 Second Arab-Israeli War</p>	<p>The second Arab-Israeli war, referred to as the "Six-Day War" broke out due to a combination of past conflict, escalating tensions and the intentional spread of misinformation by outside parties.</p> <p>The war was fought between an Arab coalition consisting of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, against Israel, with Israel fighting the coalition on three different fronts. The war ended in a humiliating defeat for the Arab coalition, despite Israel being vastly outnumbered and ended in Israel occupying Gaza, the West Bank, the entirety of Jerusalem</p>

	as well as the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula. (Summary of the Six-Day War, n.d.)
<p>1987-1991</p> <p>The first Intifada</p>	<p>The first Intifada began in 1987, due to no exact reasons or any particular cause. It was not an organised uprising by any particular group, but instead saw large numbers of uprising-unexperienced Palestinian civilians taking to the streets to protest against the State of Israel in both violent and nonviolent ways. Protesters held demonstrations, refused to pay Israeli taxes, boycotted Israeli products, etc. as well as throw Molotov cocktails and rocks, as they had no weapons to make use of.</p> <p>In response, Israel shut down schools, did massive arrests of Palestinians and employed especially brutal tactics such as breaking the bones of protesters to break up demonstrations. Over 1,000 Palestinians were killed during the Intifada, one fifth of which were children.</p>
<p>13th September 1993</p> <p>The Declaration of Principles is signed by Israel and the PLO</p>	<p>President Yitzhak Rabin of Israel and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat signed the Declaration of Principles in Washington D.C, USA in September 1993 with the presence of president Clinton. The Declaration was meant to be a five year plan, after which final negotiations would be put into place. In the declaration, Israel is required to withdraw its troops from the West Bank and Gaza, where the PLO would govern. It is the first of the Oslo Accords. The final negotiations would not be discussed upon until 2000.</p>
<p>1994</p> <p>The Palestinian Authority is created</p>	<p>The PLO established the Palestinian Authority and elections were held in which Fatah and its leader, Yasser Arafat became the first president of the State of Palestine. The Palestinian Authority became the entity that governed the West Bank and Gaza and still</p>

	governs the West Bank today.
<p>2000</p> <p>The 2nd Intifada</p>	<p>Already unhappy with the treatment received by Palestinians in the Oslo Accords, an uprising broke out again when future president Ariel Sharon, alongside a large number of guards, went to the Temple Mount, a Muslim place of worship. This was seen as an act of provocation by Palestinians and so protests once again began. Israel used more than 1 million bullets aimed at the protesters within the first three weeks of the uprisings--a more bloody fate was set for the second Intifada. The bullets were not the only employment of violence; airstrikes and tanks soon followed. It was during this Intifada that Hamas and other resistance movements began carrying out suicide bombings and terrorist attacks on Israel.</p>
<p>2002</p> <p>The separation barrier between the West Bank and Israel is authorised</p>	<p>A wall between Israel and the West Bank was constructed in 2002, when Israel realised that the one-state solution of absorbing Palestinian territory into Israel would compromise its identity and proposed that a solution of keeping the two apart would protect it, but it is reluctant to give up any territory.</p>
<p>2005</p> <p>Israel pulls out of Gaza and evacuates citizens and personnel</p>	<p>In 2005, Israel completely withdrew all of its troops from Gaza as well as civilians living in Israeli settlements in the area. Despite this, Gaza could still be considered as an Israeli occupied territory, because Israel still controls all movement in and out of Gaza as well as the blockade it has been placed under.</p>
<p>2006</p> <p>Hamas wins a majority of the seats in the Palestinian Legislative</p>	<p>In 2006 elections were held in Gaza and the West Bank to decide on a new president, after the passing of Arafat, as well as the new members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, of which Hamas won the majority of seats, by a small margin.</p>

<p>Council; Mahmoud Abbas becomes president of Palestine following Yasser Arafat</p>	
<p>June 2007 Hamas breaks off from Fatah in the Palestinian Legislative Council and seizes control of Gaza; Israel tightens the blockade on it</p>	<p>The collaborative effort between the two parties to govern Palestine ultimately fell apart due to a conflict of viewpoints--Fatah was too moderate, whereas Hamas refused to recognise the State of Israel. This schism resulted in Hamas gaining control of Gaza and completely breaking away from the PA. This caused Israel to tighten the blockade already limiting Gaza's movement and resources even more.</p>
<p>2011 Mahmoud Abbas asks for a membership of the UN for Palestine and is rejected</p>	<p>Palestine tried to gain a full membership to the UN in 2011, but was rejected. President Mahmoud had petitioned for a full membership status for his country, but the UNSC did not have the simple majority of nine votes needed for the petition to pass. Mahmoud would to get statehood for Palestine again, except in the General Assembly and only with the status of an observing member state in the UN (meaning that it can participate in assemblies, but cannot vote); Palestine was granted this status with UN resolution 181 in the General Assembly. (Primer on Palestine, n.d.)</p>
<p>2014 War breaks out between Hamas and Israel</p>	<p>The Israeli-Hamas war of 2014 broke out when three Israeli students were murdered by Hamas and a Palestinian boy was killed in response to them. When war sparked between Israel and Hamas, Israel launched a ground invasion of Gaza and began destroying the supply tunnels Hamas had built in and out of Israel. The two sides fought and traded fire with each other until August, when Israel withdrew from Gaza after dealing heavy damage and displacing</p>

	25% of the population there and killing a disproportionate amount of Palestinians compared to their losses.
23rd December 2016 The UNSC votes on resolution 2334 to dismantle Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory	Resolution 2334 was proposed to the UNSC by Egypt, whom was pressured into withdrawing it by some parties. The resolution asks for Israel to cease the development and establishment of settlements in Palestinian territory and calls the act a violation of international law without any legal validity. It passed with no votes against on 23rd December 2016, with 14 votes for and one abstention from the USA. (Baker, 2016)

4. Positions of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies on the Issue

The Arab League

All but two members of the Arab League reject Israel’s existence as a state and does not recognise it; diplomatic relations do not formally exist between the ones who do not recognise Israel and Israeli passports are denied entry into those nations. The Arab League have staunchly supported the creation of a Palestinian state since the Israeli independence declaration. The two exceptions are Egypt and Jordan, who abide by their respective peace treaties with the State of Israel.

The European Union

The European Union previously supported the State of Israel, but as human rights violations committed by Israel escalated, support slowly waned and the EU turned critical of Israel’s actions, deeming them aggressions. However, the European Union rarely directly interferes into the conflict and both of its P5 members on the Security Council, the UK and France, have not used their veto powers to block a resolution condemning Israel’s actions.

Hamas

As stated above, Hamas is an Islamic militant group who opposes the existence of the State of Israel and does not recognise it at all. Even from its beginnings, Hamas has built itself on the elimination of the State of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state. However because of the recent tightening of the blockade on Gaza, it is possible that Hamas will have to reconsider its position on the State of Israel eventually as economic and welfare development in the Gaza Strip are heavily stunted.

State of Israel

The State of Israel does not favour the recognition of a Palestinian state and although it has never stated that it wishes to reclaim all of Palestine under its governance, it has also been very reluctant in withdrawing from its occupied Palestinian territories, and continues encouraging settlements in them.

State of Palestine/Palestinian Authority

The State of Palestine obviously supports its own statehood, but what that means has varied at different points in history, the current Abbas administration appears to be pursuing a two-state solution the issue and has been appealing to the international community for formal recognition and diplomatic ties, of which includes a membership in the UN, although not as a member with voting rights. The PA is much more moderate than Hamas when it comes to the process of achieving its goals, as it does not believe in the destruction of Israel, rather, it recognises the country as part of the Oslo Accords.

United States of America

The USA has consistently been a strong ally of the State of Israel in the issue and an adversary to the PA and Hamas as it possesses the veto power in the UNSC and is not reluctant to use it when presented with a resolution critical of Israel. Whilst it is not interested in directly involving itself in the issue, it has participated in the Oslo Accords as an observer and prefers to let the parties decide for themselves their path to peace. It is keen on maintaining good relations with Israel due to the country's geographical position.

5. Suggested Solutions

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is an crisis that has an overwhelming amount of problems, as such there is no such thing as an overall solution. One would have to gauge both parties in this conflict and their backers to see what their goals and strategic interests are, then one can solve the syndrome that so heavily affects the region.

Sovereignty

Perhaps the biggest and most damning issue at hand between the two belligerent parties is the issue of statehood, and the boundaries of their states should they be recognised. Currently almost all members of the Arab League save Egypt and Jordan do not recognise the State of Israel whereas the majority of the world does not recognise Palestine as sovereign nation as shown by its non-voting status in the United Nations. Although one can drown themselves in would-be solutions, not many of them are realistic in which the Israeli state, the party with the upper hand in this conflict, will accept.

The two-state solution; this is the most idealistic scenario to happen between the parties in this conflict, a scenario where the State of Israel and the State of Palestine would recognise each other as sovereign states and shall be treated as such. Yet the difficulty facing this solution here is that both sides want something different, whilst the Palestinians (and by extent its Arab allies) want the borders to return to the pre-1967 days where there were little to no Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The Israelis on the other hand are unlikely to view the Palestinians and Arabs in a trusting light due to the fact that the neighbouring Arab countries have for long despised the existence of Israel as a state and has continuously launched offensive invasions against Israel, losing each time.

In order to get Israel to negotiate on the same playing field with Palestine, the Arab states and Palestine must understand that cooperation and lobbying with the United States is needed as it is the United States that continuously vetos resolutions in the Security Council that seek to slander or condemn the State of Israel. Conversely, Arab nations would have to understand that reassurances to Israel are needed in order for there to be a chance in which Israel would open up

to any of their suggestions or demands. More importantly, in order to have the staunch views of Israel whittled away, the Arab states and Palestine must make Israel feel safe as it is constantly under threat from Hamas, Hezbollah, and possible ISIS in the future should Syria not be able to contain ISIS's influence to outside of the Levant.

Security

Another issue in the region, especially with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In order to make headway with the State of Israel in negotiations, the people involved in the conflict need to feel comfortable and safe. All parties involved in the issue have historically violent actions which have caused them to have an inherent distrust in each other, as such everyone must feel as though they are not under the risk of an impending invasion or war when brought to the negotiation table or as though they are compromising their ideologies and identity. Such is the case with Hamas, who has been both the perpetrator and the victim of attacks and strikes; any negotiations with Israel would compromise an important part of the group's charter, which is the desire to destroy the State of Israel and establish an Islamic state in the geographical region of Palestine.

Likewise both Israel and the PA have reason to suspect each other as well as Hamas of not being willing or able to uphold any negotiations or even of approaching the table in a peaceful and earnest manner. Even as all parties pursue their respective agendas regarding their wants and needs in the region, it is clear that they cannot be fully achieved without uncertain losses in terms of security and manpower, a trade-off that needs to be considered.

One of the biggest problems in this conflict as with many other conflicts that have yet to come to successful negotiations, is the distrust everyone has for each other as well as the lack of earnestness and willingness to compromise. Until these problems rooted in historical conflicts and prejudiced thoughts can be eradicated or lightened, the path to peace continues to be impeded. (Melamed, 2016)

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