

Forum: Security Council

Issue: The Question of the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank

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Introduction

The Gaza Strip and the West Bank are areas near the Mediterranean Sea in the Levant region of the Middle East which together comprise the “state of Palestine”. The areas due to their geographical location and historical importance are prone to both ethnic and religious conflict and hostility. Both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are under Israeli occupation as the area is claimed by both Jews and Arabs as their own.

After the Second World War and the Holocaust; the nation of Israel was founded by the United Nations as a safe haven for the Jews. It was officially recognized as such in 1948.

After the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was dissolved and its colonies in the Middle East were surrendered to the United Kingdom and France. The United Kingdom received the area of current-day Israel and Palestine but noticed insurgencies and rebellion. They founded the Peel Commission to investigate the root of the problem and they found their answer. There were two different ethnic groups which both wanted to rule over the same land.¹

After the Second World War and the Holocaust; the nation of Israel was founded by the United Nations as a safe haven for the Jews. It was officially recognized as such in 1948. The Peel Commission's proposal of a two-state solution a decade earlier had been rejected by the Arab world and after the founding of Israel, the area has been in conflict ever since.

The current humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip escalated to its current level on October 7th 2023 when terrorist group Hamas conducted a terrorist strike on Israel killing around 1200 civilians and military personnel and taking 250 hostage. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu swiftly responded with a military operation with the goal of securing the hostages and destroying Hamas. The conflict is made more complex by the long history of the three monolithic religions in the area dating back to as early as 1500 bc.

¹ [Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory - Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect](#) (Accessed 7.1.24)



The Peel Commission's plan for a two-state solution

Definition of Key Terms

Apartheid

A term used to originally define South Africa's political system of racial segregation and the domination and oppression of a certain racial group by another. Nowadays, it is used rarely in relation to the treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli state.²

Two state solution

In 1937 the Peel Commission proposed a two-state solution, in which the area would be divided in order to form two different nations: the Jewish state of Israel and the Muslim state of Palestine.³

Hamas

An Islamist militant movement which has ruled the Gaza Strip for nearly two decades. After the October 7th attack many international governments such as the US and the EU have classified them as a terrorist organization.⁴

Humanitarian crisis

A humanitarian crisis is an emergency situation that affects an entire community or group of people in a region that involves high levels of mortality and malnutrition. In Gaza, many are left without food, shelter or adequate health services.^{5, 6}

Explanation of the Question

While the history of the Israel-Palestine area dates back to 1500 bc the current conflict took its form after the Second World War with the founding of the nation of Israel in 1948. A decision which angered the Arab world and caused Israel's neighbouring nations Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Syria to launch an offensive against the freshly founded state. This conflict called the Arab-Israeli war was resolved in the peace treaty of 1949 where Israel received more land. The Gaza Strip remained with Egypt and the West Bank with Jordan. The state of Palestine was not formed.

² [Peel Commission | History, Palestine, Significance, & Map | Britannica](#) (Accessed 7.1.24)

³ [Israel's apartheid against Palestinians - Amnesty International](#) (Accessed 7.1.24)

⁴ [The Peel Commission Plan \(1937\)](#) (Accessed 7.1.24)

⁵ [What Is Hamas? | Council on Foreign Relations](#) (Accessed 7.1.24)

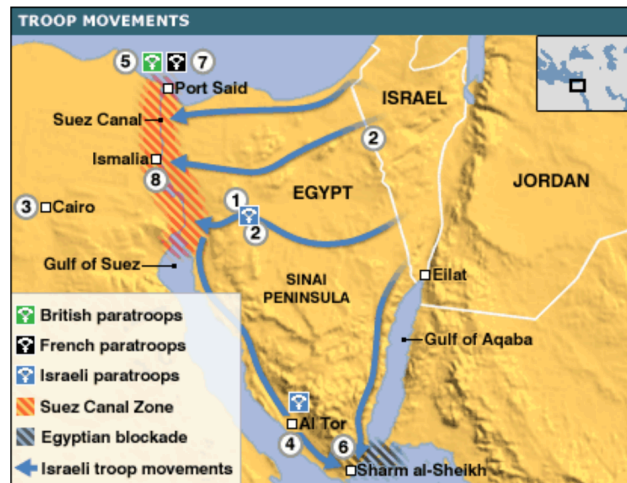
⁶ [Humanitarian Crises: Causes, Effects and Solutions - Iberdrola](#) (Accessed 7.1.24)



The 1947 UN partition plan and the 1949 UN Armistice lines

Suez war in 1956

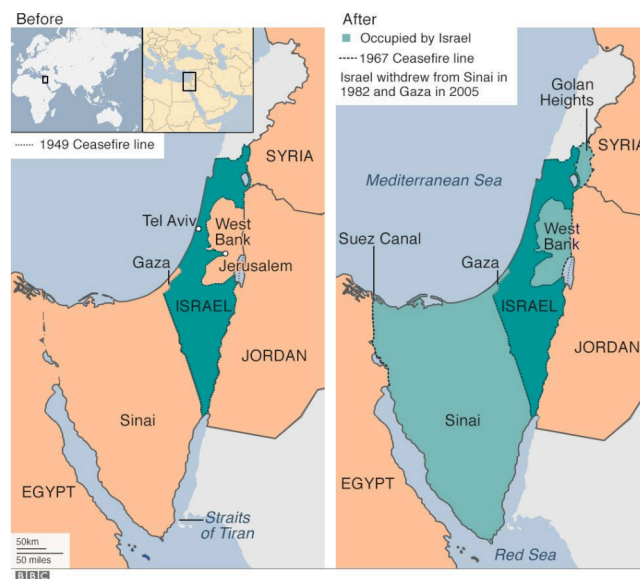
In 1956 the Arab Coalition (Egypt, Syria, Jordan) took it upon themselves to disrupt Israel's existence. Egypt blocked the Gulf of Aqaba so that Israeli ships could not depart from Eilat and took full control of the Suez Canal through which trade from Europe to Asia was made easier. The blockade worried the UK and France and thus with their help Israel took control of the Sinai Peninsula after fending off another attack from the Arab coalition. With pressure from the UN Israel returned control of the Peninsula to Egypt.



Troop movements during the Suez Crisis

The six-day war of 1967

In 1967 the Arab coalition decided to once again attack and overwhelm Israel. Even though their superiority in armed forces, equipment, aircraft and attacking Israel from all sides, the Jews managed to surprise the coalition with preemptive strikes. Due to Israel's strikes, Egypt lost control of the Gaza Strip and the whole Sinai peninsula. Jordan lost the West Bank and Syria the Golan hills.



In 1982 Israel and Egypt made a deal in which Israel gave back the Sinai peninsula to Egypt which it had lost in 1967, but the Gaza Strip still remained in the hands of Israel

Oslo Accords

In the 1990s Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) went through long negotiations about the future of a Palestinian state. During the accords, a series of agreements were passed to resolve conflict.

Oslo I

In 1993 the first Oslo I agreement was passed. Its official name: the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements set to provision mutual recognition between the two states. The PLO formally recognized Israel's right to exist, while Israel recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

The agreement called for the establishment of a Palestinian Authority (PA) to govern some parts of Gaza and the West Bank. What it failed to address were the problems with the borders of the two nations, Jerusalem and security for civilians on both sides.

Oslo II

In 1995 the second Oslo agreement was passed. It's official name: The Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Key Provision was dividing the West Bank into three areas: Area A: Full Palestinian control; Area B: Civil control for Palestine, Israeli security control; and Area C: Full Israeli control.

The agreement established a framework for free and fair elections in Palestinian territories and a mutual security agreement where both sides agreed to cooperate on security and to prevent terrorism.

Israel retreating from Gaza and the election of Hamas

In 2005 the UN pressured Israel to leave the Gaza Strip. The state of Israel agreed in the hopes that the violence would end. As Israel withdrew their soldiers, their presence and their institutions from Gaza a democratic election was able to be held in 2006 which saw the Gazans elect the radical Hamas group into power and thus hostilities continued.

October 7:th terrorist strike

On the night of October 7:th 2023, Hamas carried out a terrorist strike on Israel, killing around 1200 civilians and law enforcement members and taking 250 hostage. The strike was the largest mass murder of Jews after the Holocaust and received international condemnation. Israel followed up with an all-out attack in Gaza with the aim of destroying Hamas.



Present day Israel

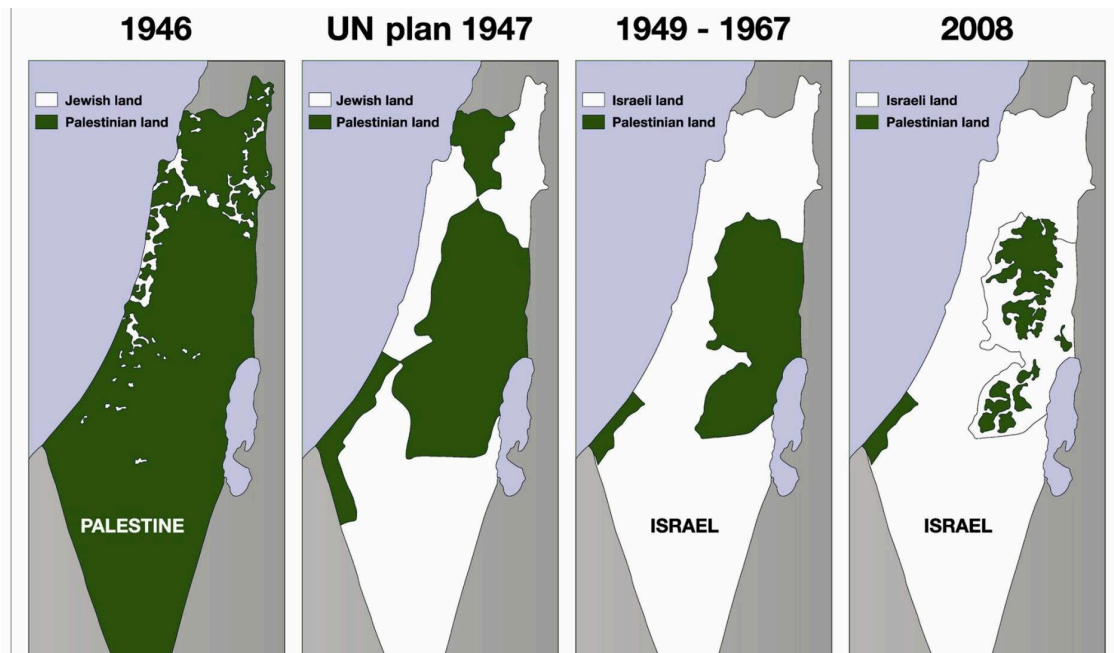
Key Member States and NGOs Involved and Their Views

China

The People's Republic of China has been a consistent supporter of the creation of an independent Palestinian state based on the borders of 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In recent years China has taken the diplomatic route in the Middle East with a wider goal of strengthening its influence in the Arab world by standing for a Palestinian state. In July 2024 the PRC hosted Palestinian organizations such as Hamas in Beijing.

Through their support for the Palestinian cause; China is in diplomatic relations with the state of Israel, as it remains an important economic partner with China being the biggest trade partner in East Asia for Israel. China has called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza and the release of all the hostages.



The United States of America

The United States of America has been actively involved in Middle Eastern conflicts where Israel has been a participant. The USA has fully condemned the October 7th terror strike and called for the release of all Israeli hostages held by Hamas. The US has stood in full support of Israel's right to defend itself.

Israel is one of the few nations the United States can call an ally in the Middle East and thus one of their most important allies. The US is the single biggest supplier of arms to Israel seeing it in their best interest to have a frontline in the Middle East. Between 2019 and 2023 The US accounted for 69% of all arms trade to Israel.

In the UN the United States has stood in full support of Israel's national sovereignty and the right to defend itself while calling for a ceasefire in the Gaza conflict in order to secure the peaceful release of the Israeli hostages.

The outgoing Biden-Harris administration has stood for humanitarian aid for Gaza while supporting a two-state solution for a resolution. The 47th president of the United States Donald Trump has in his previous term as president supported both a two and one-state solution for the conflict and his final stance on the issue is still uncertain.

The United States helped secure a six-week ceasefire and hostage deal through diplomatic measures and negotiations with the help of Egypt and Qatar.

Egypt

Egypt has upheld a multifaceted stance on the issue of Gaza and the West Bank by emphasizing the need for a ceasefire, humanitarian aid, diplomatic mediation and opposition to the activities of Israel in its settlements.

Following months of negotiations Egypt along with the assistance of the United States and Qatar negotiated a mediation to the crises via the six-week ceasefire and hostage deal. As the ceasefire came into effect Egypt was quick to dispatch emergency, medical and humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Egypt has held consistent opposition to Israeli expansion in the West Bank and in the summer of 2024 they condemned and denounced the Israeli plan to legalize five new settlement outposts in the area as a move they called would break the UN Resolution 2334.

Egypt is committed to the two-state solution and for the creation of an independent Palestine based on the borders of 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Russia

The State of Russia has continually emphasized the importance for a ceasefire agreement and advocacy for a two-state solution while drawing criticism to Western countries for their handling of the situation and their position on Israeli actions.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated that Russia “welcomes” ceasefire negotiations between Israel and Hamas, and that it would lead to “long term stabilisation” and create a base for a “comprehensive political settlement” in the area.

Russia supports a two-state solution for the conflict and has continued to criticize the Western countries for their stances on the humanitarian crisis and effects of the war. Zaharova; Moscow's foreign policy adjutant has stated that the West's position “goes beyond morality and law”, referring to their continued arms trade to Israel and failure to raise sanctions or to use diplomatic efforts to end the war.

Russia is close allies with Arabic countries such as Iran, who are deeply opposed to the state of Israel, which itself is a close ally of the western nations such as the United States and EU both hostile to the Russian Federation.

Iran

Throughout the existence of the state of Israel has the Islamic republic of Iran been at odds with them, the current conflict having not been an exception. Iran has continually criticized and strongly condemned the actions of the state of Israel both in respect with Gaza as well as the West Bank.

Ayatollah Khamenei has praised the Palestinian resistance and Hamas for their work in securing the ceasefire deal and for fighting against the Israeli aggression along with strongly condemning and denouncing Israeli claims on the respective areas.

Alongside their close ally nation Russia, Iran has been strongly opposed to Western action in the Middle East and on this issue in particular; stating that through military support of Israel the West is doing their part in destabilising the Middle East and helping in the “genocide” of Palestinians.

Iran has been a strong advocate for Palestinian self-determination, calling for a future creation of a Palestinian state without outside influence.

Timeline of Events^{7 8}

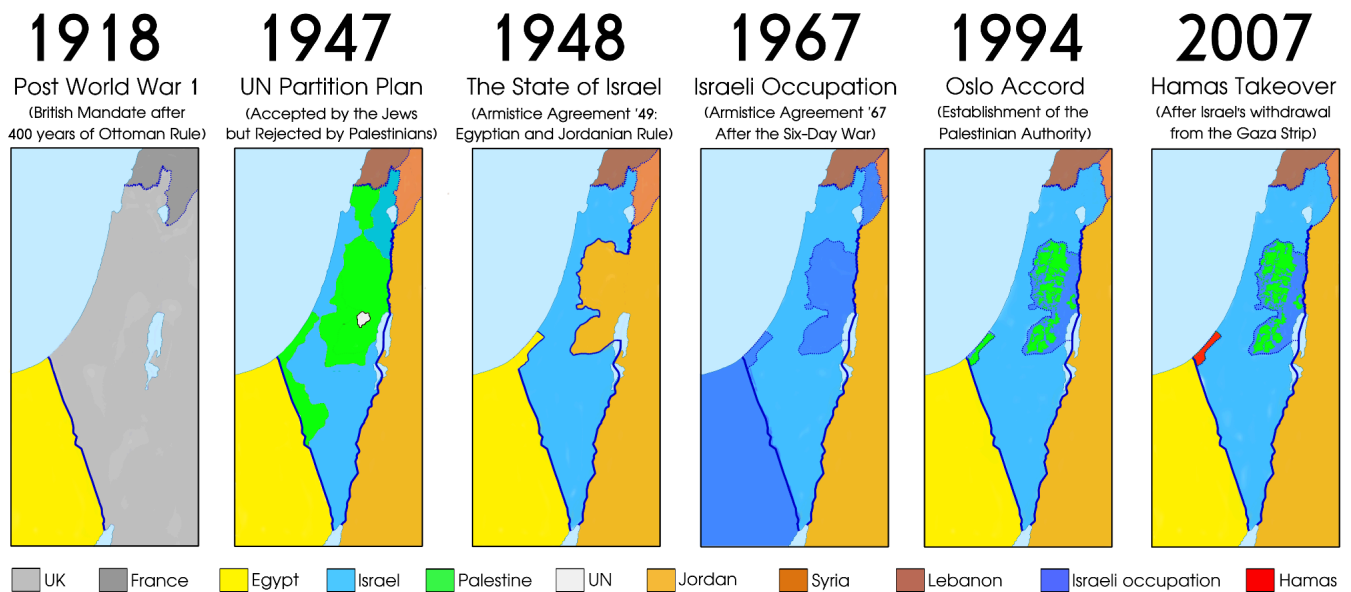
Date	Description of event ^{9 10}
July 7, 1937	Peel Commission's two-state proposal.
May 14, 1948	Founding of Israel.
10.29-11.7, 1956	1956 Suez War.
June 5-10, 1967	The Six-Day War.
October 6-25, 1973	The Yom Kippur War.
March 26, 1979	Israel giving back Sinai.
January 25, 2006	Hamas's Rise to power.
October 7, 2023	Hamas launches a terrorist strike on Israel.

⁷ [Occupied Palestinian territory | United Nations Population Fund](#) (Accessed 7.1.24)

⁸ [China's Approach to Palestine and Israel: Towards a Greater Role? - Middle East Council on Global Affairs](#) (Accessed 7.1.24)

⁹ “The Falklands War: A Chronology of Events.” The History Press, thehistorypress.co.uk/article/the-falklands-war-a-chronology-of-events/. Accessed 3 Dec. 2024.

¹⁰ BBC. “Falkland Islands Profile.” BBC News, 14 May 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18425572. Accessed 3 Dec. 2024.



UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The situation of the West Bank and Gaza has been debated and the UN has been deeply involved in the conflict. It has passed the following resolutions and treaties:

- UN Security Council Resolution 242 (1967)
- UN Security Council Resolution 338 (1973)
- UN Security Council Resolution 446 (1979)
- UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016)
- UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (1948)
- UN General Assembly Resolution 67/19 (2012)

- Oslo Accords (1993-1995)
 - Establishing limited self-governance for Palestine in Gaza and the West Bank.

- Fourth Geneva Convention (1949)
 - Establishing the protection of civilians in occupied territories.

Possible Solutions

A possible solution for the issue of Gaza and the West Bank could be the Peel Commission's dream of a two-state solution, where there would be two independent nations Israel and Palestine. The nation of Palestine were to receive the areas of Gaza and the West Bank. Such a measure would be difficult to get through with all parties appeased. The state of Israel has in recent times been opposed to such a measure.

In addition, a dream of a one-state solution has been floated around. A solution where one unified nation was to stand with all citizens Jews or Muslims equal. Tackling through such a bureaucratic and substantive change would be challenging.

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