

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Letter from the Dais:

Welcome to the United Nations Security Council at Markmun. The purpose of this guide is to provide a starting point for research by introducing key terms and events, and to help delegates focus on the key issues underlying the conflict. As your chairs, we will assist all delegates to help achieve a proper understanding of parliamentary procedures and this guide will serve as the basis for the research. Delegates must do their own research based on what country they represent and that country's policy and use this guide as a base. Godspeed.

Regards,

Dais of UNSC

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Introduction to the committee UNSC:

The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. Such has also been highlighted under Article 1 of the UN Charter. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Important events:

Establishment of British Mandate for Palestine (1920)

United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine (1947)

Britain's withdrawal from the Mandatory Palestine (1948)

Arab-Israeli War (1948-1949)

Six-Day War (1967)

Camp David Accords (1978)

Lebanon War (1982)

First Intifada (1987-1993)

Oslo Accords (1993)

Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin (1995)

The 2000 Camp David Summit (2000)

Second Intifada (2000-2005)

Israeli's withdrawal from Gaza (2005)

Brief History:

The region along the eastern Mediterranean we now call Israel-Palestine had been under Ottoman rule for centuries. It was religiously diverse, including mostly Muslims and Christians but also a small number of Jews, who lived generally in peace. And it was changing in two important ways. First, more people in the region were developing a sense of being not just ethnic Arabs but Palestinians, a distinct national identity. At the same time, not so far away in Europe, more Jews were joining a movement called Zionism, which said that Judaism was not just a religion but a nationality, one that deserved a nation of its own. And after centuries of persecution, many believed a Jewish state was their only way of safety. And they saw their historic homeland in the Middle East as their best hope for establishing it. In the first decades of the 20th century, tens of thousands of European Jews moved there. After World War One, the Ottoman Empire collapsed, and the British and French Empires carved up the Middle East, with the British taking control of a region it called the British Mandate for Palestine. At first, the British allowed Jewish immigration. But as more Jews arrived, settling into farming communes, tension between Jews and Arabs grew. Both sides committed acts of violence. And by the 1930s, the British began limiting Jewish immigration. In response, Jewish militias formed to fight both the local Arabs and to resist British rule. Following World War II, and the horrors of the Holocaust, increased Jewish populations migrated to the area in the Middle East; known as British Palestine at the time. Seeing the area as their historic homeland, migration continued to increase, especially to areas around Jerusalem and other historic cities. As sectarian violence between Arabs and Jews there grew, with the increasing populations in mind, in 1947 the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, which called for the creation of two separate Jewish and Arab states in the Palestinian territories, with the city of Jerusalem, where Jews, Muslims, and

Christians all have holy sites, as a separate entity to be governed by a special international regime. The plan was meant to give Jews a state, to establish Palestinian independence, and to end the sectarian violence that the British could no longer control. The Jews accepted the plan and declared independence as Israel in May 1948. But Arabs throughout the region saw the UN plan as just more European colonialism trying to steal their land. Many of the Arab states (Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq), who had just recently won independence themselves, declared war on Israel in an effort to establish a unified Arab Palestine where all of British Palestine had been. Israel was able to repel the invasion, taking land that was originally reserved for Arab Palestinians in the process, and creating a large Palestinian refugee crisis. The new state of Israel won the war. But in the process, they pushed well past their borders under the UN plan, taking the western half of Jerusalem and much of the land that was to have been part of Palestine. They also expelled huge numbers of Palestinians from their homes, creating a massive refugee population whose descendants today number about 7 million. At the end of the war, Israel controlled all the territory except for Gaza, which Egypt controlled, and the West Bank, named because it's west of the Jordan River, which Jordan controlled. This was the beginning of the decades long Arab-Israeli conflict. During this period, many Jews in Arab-majority countries fled or were expelled, arriving in Israel. In 1967 (5-10 June), Israel and the neighboring Arab states fought another war, known as the 6-day war or the 3rd Arab-Israeli war. When it ended, Israel had seized the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank from Jordan, and both Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. Israel was now occupying the Palestinian territories, including all of Jerusalem and its holy sites. This left Israel responsible for governing the Palestinians – a people it had fought for decades. In 1978 Israel and Egypt signed the US-brokered Camp David Accords and shortly after that, Israel gave Sinai back to Egypt as part of a peace treaty. At the time this was hugely controversial in the Arab world. Egypt President Anwar Sadat was assassinated in part because of outrage against it. But it marked the beginning of the end of the wider Arab-Israeli conflict. Over the next few decades, the other Arab states gradually made peace with Israel, even if they never signed formal peace treaties. But Israel's military was still occupying the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza, and this was when the conflict became an Israeli Palestinian struggle. The Palestinian Liberation Organization, which had formed in the 1960s to seek a Palestinian state, fought against Israel, including through acts of terrorism. Initially, the PLO claimed all of what had been British Palestine, meaning it wanted to end the state of Israel entirely. Fighting between Israel and the PLO went on for years, even including a 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon to kick the group out of Beirut. The PLO later said it would accept dividing the land between Israel and Palestine,

but the conflict continued. As all of this was happening, something was changing in the Israel-occupied Palestinian territories: Israelis were moving in. These people are called settlers, and they made their homes in the West Bank and Gaza whether Palestinians wanted them or not. Some moved for religious reasons, some because they want to claim the land for Israel, and some just because housing is cheap-and often subsidized by the Israeli government. Some settlements are cities with thousands of people; others are small communities deep into the West Bank. The settlers are followed by soldiers to guard them, and the growing settlements force Palestinians off their land and divide communities. Short-term, they make the occupation harder for Palestinians. Long-term, by dividing up Palestinian land, they make it more difficult for the Palestinians to ever have an independent state. Today there are several 6 hundred thousand settlers in occupied territory even though the international community considers them illegal. By the late 1980s, Palestinian frustration exploded into the Intifada, which is the Arabic word for uprising. It began with mostly protests and boycotts but soon became violent, and Israel responded with heavy force. A couple hundred Israelis and over a thousand Palestinians died in the first Intifada. Around the same time, a group of Palestinians in Gaza, who consider the PLO too secular and too compromise-minded, created Hamas. Hamas declared objectives are to liberate Palestine from Israeli occupation and transform the country into an Islamic state. By the early 1990s, it's clear that Israelis and Palestinians must make peace, and leaders from both sides sign the Oslo Accords. This is meant to be the big, first step toward Israel maybe someday withdrawing from the Palestinian territories and allowing an independent Palestine. The Oslo Accords establishes the Palestinian Authority, allowing Palestinians a little bit of freedom to govern themselves in certain areas. Hard-liners on both sides opposed the Oslo accords. Hamas rejected the Oslo Accords and, in a move to scuttle peace talks, initiated a series of suicide attacks against Israeli targets. Not long after Rabin (fifth Prime Minister of Israel) signs the second round of Oslo Accords, an Israeli ultranationalist shoots him to death in Tel Aviv. This violence showed how the extremists on both sides can use violence to derail peace and keep a permanent conflict going as they seek the other side's destruction. Negotiations meant to hammer out the final details on peace drag on for years, and a big Camp David Summit in 2000 comes up empty. Nevertheless, In the Camp David Accords, agreements between Israel and Egypt were signed on September 17, 1978, that led in the following year to a peace treaty between those two countries, the first such treaty between Israel and any of its Arab Neighbours. It led to the return of the Sinai Peninsula, occupied by Israel in the Six-Day War (1967), to Egypt. The UN General Assembly rejected the 'Framework for Peace in the Middle East' also known as the Camp David Summit because the agreement was concluded without participation of

UN and PLO and did not comply with the Palestinian right of return, of self-determination and to national independence and sovereignty. Palestinians come to believe that peace isn't coming and rise in a Second Intifada that began in September 2000 and ended in February 2005, this one much more violent than the first that began in Dec 1987 and ended in Sep 1993. In response, the Israeli government approved construction of a barrier wall around the West Bank in 2002, despite opposition from the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Israeli politics shift right, and the country builds walls and checkpoints to control Palestinians' movements. They're not really trying to solve the conflict anymore, just manage it. The Palestinians are left feeling like negotiating didn't work and violence didn't work, that they're stuck under an ever-growing occupation with no future as a people. In 2005, Israel withdraws from Gaza. Hamas gains power but splits from the Palestinian Authority in a short civil war, dividing Gaza from the West Bank. In 2013, the United States attempted to revive the peace process between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. However, peace talks were disrupted when Fatah-the Palestinian Authority's ruling party-formed a unity government with its rival faction Hamas in 2014. In the summer of 2014, clashes in the Palestinian territories precipitated a military confrontation between the Israeli military and Hamas in which Hamas fired nearly three thousand rockets at Israel, and Israel retaliated with a major offensive in Gaza. The skirmish ended in late August 2014 with a cease-fire deal brokered by Egypt, but only after 73 Israelis and 2,251 Palestinians were killed. After a wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 2015, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced that Palestinians would no longer be bound by the territorial divisions created by the Oslo Accords. In May of 2018, fighting broke out between Hamas and the Israeli military in what became the worst period of violence since 2014. In 2018, For more than six months, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip protested along the fence with Israel demanding their right to return to the homes and land their families were expelled from 70 years ago. The Great March of Return rallies culminated on May 15 to mark what Palestinians refer to as the Nakba, or Catastrophe – a reference to the forced removal of 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and villages to clear the way for Israel's establishment in 1948. In 2018, the Trump administration canceled funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency, which provides aid to Palestinian refugees, and relocated the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a reversal of a longstanding U.S. policy. The decision to move the U.S. embassy was met with applause from the Israeli leadership but was condemned by Palestinian leaders and others in the Middle East and Europe. Israel considers the "complete and united Jerusalem" its capital, while Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. In January

2020, the Trump administration released its long-awaited “Peace to Prosperity” plan, which was rejected by Palestinians due to its support for future Israeli annexation of settlements in the West Bank and control over an “undivided” Jerusalem. The plan had been characterized as requiring too few concessions from the Israelis and imposing too harsh requirements on the Palestinians. In August and September 2020, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and then Bahrain agreed to normalize relations with Israel, making them only the third and fourth countries in the region-following Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994-to do so. The agreements, named the Abraham Accords, came more than eighteen months after the United States hosted Israel and several Arab states for ministerial talks in Warsaw, Poland, about the future of peace in the Middle East. Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas rejected the accords; Hamas also rejected the agreements.

Current Situation:

In October 2020, an Israeli court ruled that several Palestinian families living in Sheikh Jarrah-a neighborhood in East Jerusalem-were to be evicted by May 2021 with their land handed over to Jewish families. In February 2021, several Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah filed an appeal to the court ruling and prompted protests around the appeal hearings, the ongoing legal battle around property ownership, and demanding an end to the forcible displacement of Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem. In late April 2021, Palestinians began demonstrating in the streets of Jerusalem to protest the pending evictions and residents of Sheikh Jarrah-along with other activists-began to host nightly sit-ins. In early May, after a court ruled in favor of the evictions, the protests expanded with Israeli police deploying force against demonstrators. On May 7, following weeks of daily demonstrations and rising tensions between protesters, Israeli settlers, and police during the month of Ramadan, violence broke out at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem, with Israeli police using stun grenades, rubber bullets, and water cannons in a clash with protestors that left hundreds of Palestinians wounded. After the clashes in Jerusalem’s Old City, tensions increased throughout East Jerusalem, compounded by the celebration of Jerusalem Day. On May 10, after several consecutive days of violence throughout Jerusalem and the use of lethal and nonlethal force by Israeli police, Hamas, the militant group which governs Gaza, and other Palestinian militant groups launched hundreds of rockets into Israeli territory. Israel responded with air strikes and later artillery bombardments against targets in Gaza, including launching several air strikes that killed more than twenty Palestinians. While

claiming to target Hamas, other militants, and their infrastructure-including tunnels and rocket launchers-Israel expanded its aerial campaign and struck targets including residential buildings, media headquarters, and refugee and healthcare facilities. On May 21, 2021, Israel and Hamas agreed to a cease-fire, brokered by Egypt, with both sides claiming victory and no reported violations. More than two hundred and fifty Palestinians were killed and nearly two thousand others wounded, and at least thirteen Israelis were killed over the eleven days of fighting. Authorities in Gaza estimate that tens of millions of dollars of damage was done, and the United Nations estimates that more than 72,000 Palestinians were displaced by the fighting. The most far right and religious government in Israel's history was inaugurated in late December 2022. The coalition government is led by Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud party. Opponents have criticized the government's stated prioritization of the expansion and development of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, which would significantly erode the prospects for a two-state solution. The new government has come to power at a tense moment, as 2022 marked the most conflict-related deaths for both Israelis and Palestinians since 2015, according to the UN Middle East envoy.

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