

UNHRC BACKGROUND GUIDE

AGENDA: GAZA CONFLICT



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Letter from Executive Board of UNHRC.....	2
Basic Information about a Few Allotments.....	4
Timeline.....	6
The Balfour Declaration.....	10
The Creation of Israel (1948).....	11
The Israeli Palestinian Conflicts.....	17
Hamas: An introduction.....	28
Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza.....	32
Economic Implications.....	33

Letter from Executive Board of UNHRC

Dear Delegates, we are so delighted and excited to welcome you to the United Nations Human rights committee on 30th . The middle east is an area which has faced conflict after conflict for centuries. It is also the home of many religious holy places and the birthplace of three major religions in the world- Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Though the middle east is primarily an islamic area one country can be picked out from all the rest for being wildly different and that is Israel. It was not always this respected in the middle east and has faced war after war conflict after conflict to come to wear it today. In the final Arab war Un resolution was made to divide the land given to the Jews into two parts- Primarily Jewish Israel and primarily muslim- Palestine. I'm Aarna Ranjan, one of your chairs and I really look forward to seeing all of you come up with solutions on how to resolve this conflict. I know you all will do amazing and wish you all the best!

The Great Kofi Annan once said , “ I have always believed that on important issues, the leaders must lead. Where the leaders fail to lead and people are really concerned about it, the people will take the lead and make the leaders follow. “ This quote resonates with me because I share the same sentiment. **THE ONLY WAY CHANGE CAN BE BROUGHT IS THROUGH ACTION, WHETHER IT BE BROUGHT ABOUT BY LEADERS OR PEOPLE.**

Greetings Delegates, this is your Director for this year's UNHRC committee - Pranay Jain. As Director, part of my responsibilities is to maintain decorum in the committee. Think of yourselves as Directors for the world. The world's decorum lies in YOUR hands. We look forward to the craziest ideas and insane (hopefully credible) research because your candy lies at stake. Speak well, research hard and most of all – have fun.

Greetings delegate, My name is Mireya Bhatia and I am your rapporteur for UNHRC 2024. I wish you all the very best and hope you all do amazing! The agenda for this year is very eventful and I hope all of you work towards solutions for the humanitarian crisis.

Namaste Delegates. My name is Shantanu Jha, your chair for this year's MUN Committee. As a student who is extremely interested in world politics, MUNs have served as enriching experiences that have provided me with clarity and knowledge about global issues. However, for me, MUNs are not only about winning but also about meeting new people and getting to know more about their diverse perspectives (sappy right).

My advice is simple. **TAKE ACTION AND YOU WILL DOMINATE COMMITTEE.** With that, I'd like to end with another quote by Barack Obama who said, “ Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change we seek.”

Best of luck delegates!!

Your EB,
UNHRC team.

Basic Information about a Few Allotments

Israel: Although Israel did not start this particular phase of the conflict, they have been criticised for instigating countless human rights violations against civilians, especially in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Israel is the key player in the ongoing conflict and in determining how the humanitarian aspect of this conflict can be resolved, even while meeting their stated political objectives.

Palestine: As a result of the Hamas attacks at the beginning of October, Palestinian civilians have borne the brunt of the Israeli counterattack with more than 21,000 people being killed. As a country whose people are dying and are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, they will be the centre of attention during committee proceedings.

The U.S: The U.S. has remained an ardent supporter of Israel in its fight against Hamas. It has vetoed several ceasefire resolutions in the region and has pledged over \$14.5 billion to Israel in the form of military aid, making it one of the greatest stakeholders in this conflict.

Egypt: Egypt has frequently acted as a mediator between Israel and Palestinian factions, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad groups. It is currently trying to broker a multi-stage plan to end the war in Gaza. In fact, Gaza was seized from Egyptian control by Israel after the 1967 war, although Israel later withdrew from the territory. Egypt has remained vocal in advocating for a ceasefire between Israel and Palestine. It played a pivotal role in brokering the Oslo Accords in 1993 which laid the groundwork for Palestinian self-governance. It is critical since it controls

Iran: Iran is a Shia Muslim country, among several Sunni Arab Countries and has been open in its support of organisations like Hamas and Hezbollah. It has been involved in a proxy war with Israel for the past three decades and is strongly anti-Israel.

Qatar: Some leaders of the Hamas are based in Doha, the capital of Qatar. Therefore, Qatari mediators are holding negotiations with Israel and Hamas to secure the freedom of Israeli women and children who were held captive by Hamas after the October 7th attack. They have provided humanitarian aid to people in the Gaza strip and were critical of Israel, solely blaming them for the conflict due to the violation of the rights of countless Palestinian people.

UAE: The UAE and Israel have not always been on good terms. But in recent years, relations between the two countries have strengthened due to an agreement that was mediated by former President Donald Trump.

Iraq: Ever since the end of Saddam Hussein's reign in 2003, Iraq has been plagued by internal strife. However, in response to the recent conflict, many Iraqi armed groups have aligned

with Iran and have threatened to target US interests, if Washington decides to intervene in the conflict.

Jordan: Jordan and Israel have maintained full diplomatic relations ever since a treaty was brokered between the two in 1994. Jordan is also a home to many Palestinian refugees and has also been the official custodian of several Christian and Muslim holy places in Jerusalem although Israel controls access to them. Queen Rania is a Palestinian; her father was from the West Bank.

Yemen: Yemen is strongly anti-Israel and has warned the US that it would target them with drones and missiles if they interfered in the Gaza conflict. Iran-backed Houthis are attacking US warships in the Red Sea with drones and ballistic missiles.

Russia: Despite having good relations with Tel Aviv prior to the Israel-Hamas conflict, Russia has refused to condemn the initial Hamas attack and has strengthened its relations with Iran which has led Tel Aviv to no longer consider Russia as an ally.

UK: The UK has supported Israel's right to defend itself and has pledged 87 million pounds in humanitarian aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2023. This money was supplied through the use of UN agencies.

France: France has remained on the side of International Law and has called for a ceasefire. They have also pledged between (21 million USD to 108 million USD) to Gaza in the form of humanitarian aid.

China: China has also stressed the need for an immediate ceasefire to end the fighting. They have also stressed the need to ensure that the humanitarian corridors are safe and unimpeded thereby preventing the expansion of the conflict.

Timeline

2nd November, 1917→ The Balfour Declaration, a letter from British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, is published, wherein Britain publicly pledged to establish ‘a national home for the Jewish people’ in Palestine.

29th November, 1947→ The United Nations General Assembly adopts UN Resolution 181, which recommends the partition of the State of Palestine, under British administration, into separate states for the Jews and Arabs, with the Jerusalem Bethlehem region under international administration.

14th May, 1948→ Israel is proclaimed an independent nation by David Ben Gurion, Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, following the end of the British mandate over Palestine. Conflict between Arab and Jewish groups following Resolution 181 intensified into a full-fledged war, with the nations of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and a Saudi Arabian formation under Egyptian command invading the former Palestinian mandate. The war ended in 1949 with Israeli victory, with the signing of armistice agreements between Israel and Lebanon, Egypt, Syria and Iraq.

29th October, 1956→ Following mounting tensions between Egypt, Britain and France following the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Israeli forces attack the Sinai Peninsula, advancing to within 10 miles of the Suez Canal. This was followed by British and French troops being deployed in the regions a few days later, The conflict concluded when Britain and France withdrew their forces by December and Israel relinquished control of the canal to Egypt.

2nd June, 1964→ The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), is launched in Jerusalem, following its proposal during an Arab League Summit in Cairo, Egypt in May 1964. Its goal is to represent Palestinian aspirations for self-determination and a state and for the destruction of Israel.

5th June, 1967→ The Six Day War, a brief conflict from the 5th to the 10th of June, 1967, between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Syria and other Arab states, breaks out, following tensions and military buildup between the warring nations. In the 6 days, Israel defeated the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and captured the Gaza Strip, Sinai Desert, Golan Heights, West Bank and East Jerusalem.

5th September, 1972→ 8 armed members of Black September, a Palestinian terrorist group and a faction of the PLO, break into the Olympics Village in Munich, Germany, forcing their way into the Israeli team quarters, taking 11 members hostage and ultimately killing them.

6th October, 1973→ Egypt and Syrian forces attack the Israeli occupied Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. The US supported Israel while the USSR supported the Arab states, with the two states supplying arms and

ammunition to ensure that their ally emerged victorious. The conflict led to heightened Cold War tensions, finally concluding following a UN brokered ceasefire.

17th September, 1978→ The Camp David Accords are signed by US President Jimmy Carter, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, paving the way for a historic peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, the result of a detailed framework which led to Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula.

6th June, 1982→ Israeli forces launch an operation in southern Lebanon, leading to the First Lebanon War, with the main objective being to remove PLO forces from the region and put the communities in Northern Israel out of the reach of these factions. Following opposition to the war at home and having driven out the PLO, Israeli forces largely withdrew in a phased manner. This marked the beginning of a 22 year long Israeli military presence in the region.

8th December, 1987→ The First Intifada, a period of widespread protests, civil disobedience and violence and terrorism against the Israelis by Palestinians, begins. There were numerous reasons for this, including resentment and frustration regarding Israeli control in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, economic problems and a lack of progress towards realising the Palestinian state. The period however marked the rise of extremist Islamist actors, while also leading to the eventual start of peace negotiations and international spotlight on the region.

30th October, 1991→ The Madrid Peace Conference, a diplomatic effort aimed at initiating bilateral talks and dialogue between Israeli and Arab officials, opens. While the Conference did not lead any change in foreign policy or witness serious negotiations, it did lead to an increase in multilateral talks and negotiations between Israel, Palestine and the Arab states over regional issues, while setting the stage for subsequent peace talks.

13th September, 1993→ The first Oslo Accords, also known as Oslo I are signed. The transitional agreements led to the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships recognising each other for the first time, leading the way to establish a mutual partnership for negotiating border disputes and a Palestinian self government in the form of the Palestinian Authority. These were followed up by the Oslo II Accords in 1995, which went into further detail on the peace process and the potential realisation of the two state solution.

26th October, 1994→ The Jordan Israel Peace Treaty, a bilateral agreement between the two countries, is signed. The Treaty recognised each other's sovereignty and international boundary and led to Israeli respect for Muslim religious institutions in Jordan and Israel, while also promoting peace, security and economic cooperation.

28th September, 2000→ The Second Intifada or the Al Aqsa Intifada, a period of Palestinian uprising and intense conflict against Israeli rule, begins, continuing for several years until 2005. Following the visit of an Israeli political figure to the holy Temple Mount site, seen as a provocation to Palestinians, violence erupted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, soon spiralling into a campaign of terrorism. Following armed attacks, bombings and increasing violence against Israeli civilians and military personnel, Israel stepped up military operations

in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while also constructing the West Bank barrier in 2003 as a protective measure. It however slowly died down, due to both the effectiveness and frequency of Israeli military operations targeting Palestinian militant factions and a truce between Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Prime Minister and Mahmoud Abbas, leader of the PLO.

September, 2005→ Following the Second Intifada, which was marked by violent protests, suicide bombings and riots, Israel decides to completely pull all civilians and military personnel from the Gaza Strip, dismantling all settlements and military infrastructure in the region. The move was part of a disengagement plan put forward by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, to improve Israel's security status following the absence of any peace negotiations with Palestine.

12th July, 2006→ Following a raid by the Iranian backed group Hezbollah on Israeli posts along its border with Lebanon, wherein 3 soldiers are killed and 2 taken hostage, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) retaliate by blockading the enclave and launching air strikes, leading to the Second Lebanon War. The conflict lasted for 50 days, with parts of Southern Lebanon being rendered uninhabitable and a large part of Lebanon being pounded by Israeli munitions. The war ended following a ceasefire and the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force in Southern Lebanon.

14th June, 2007→ Following intense and violent clashes with rival Palestinian faction Fatah, Hamas, an armed group supported by Iran and designated as a terrorist organisation by the US, UK, Israel and others, takes over complete control of the Gaza Strip. Following Hamas' victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006, Western powers temporarily stopped providing aid to the Palestinian Authority, with Israel clamping down on the Gaza Strip and the elected Palestinian government, detaining numerous Hamas officials and legislators. The disagreement between Hamas and Fatah and the PLO led to a period of bloody battles, which ended with Hamas violently wresting control of the Strip.

27th November, 2007→ The Annapolis Conference, an international gathering to officially revive the Israeli Palestinian peace process, is convened in Annapolis, Maryland. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas reached a Joint Understanding, agreeing to launch bilateral negotiations in an effort to conclude a peace treaty and implement the road map for the two state solution.

27th December, 2008→ Following rocket attacks by Hamas from Gaza after an Israeli raid into the Strip, Israel launches Operation Cast Lead, a massive 22 day military assault on the Gaza Strip till 18th January, 2009. The IDF conducted airstrikes and artillery shelling in the first week, followed by two weeks of a joint air and land assault and operation, killing around 1,400 Palestinians. Following enormous international pressure, two days prior to the swearing in of US President Barack Obama, Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew its forces from Gaza, followed by a similar such ceasefire by the Palestinian armed groups. 8th July, 2014→ Following the abduction and killing of three Israeli teenagers while hitchhiking in the West Bank by Hamas, Israel launched a widespread crackdown on Hamas elements in the region, which escalates into Operation Protective Edge. The 51 day campaign, till 26th

August, 2014, led to 2,251 Palestinian casualties, caused by intense aerial shelling and rocket attacks, followed by ground invasion by IDF armoured and infantry elements. The conflict finally ended after a ceasefire brokered by Egypt between Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian factions present in Gaza.

15th September, 2020→ The Abraham Accords, a series of treaties normalising diplomatic relations between Israel and Arab states including Bahrain and Morocco are signed. Facilitated by the US Administration, these agreements led to the normalisation of diplomatic, cultural and economic relations for the signatories, paving the way for the normalisation of ties between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

10th May, 2021→ Increase in tensions surrounding the Al Aqsa Mosque and the dispute over the eviction of Palestinians in East Jerusalem leads to Hamas launching rockets on Israel, igniting hostilities and as a result an 11 day war between Israel and Hamas. The period saw an increase in Israeli airstrikes and Hamas rocket fire, both targeting civilian infrastructure. The conflict was resolved after 11 days as a result of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas that was facilitated by Egypt, Qatar and the US.

9th May, 2023→ Following the death of a Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) leader in Israeli custody, a hundred rockets were fired by the group from Gaza into Southern Israel, in response to which the IDF launches Operation Shield and Arrow. The operation intentionally targeted PIJ, leaving Hamas out of the picture, as it was identified as one of the most volatile forces in the region. A series of airstrikes were carried out in the Strip targeting senior commanders of PIJ, leading to exchange of fire between the group and Israel until 13th May, 2023. While no formal ceasefire was established, the extent of casualties sustained by the PIJ meant a decline in hostilities in violence.

7th October, 2023→ Hamas, the Iranian backed armed group, launches an extremely well coordinated well planned attack on Israeli soil in the early hours, with over 1000 fighters breaching and entering Southern Israel from nearly 30 points in Israel's border wall with Gaza and numerous fighters flying on fan powered paragliders across the border fence, along with a barrage of rockets being launched from the Gaza strip into Israel. With many IDF (Israel Defence Forces) soldiers on leave and the Israeli security apparatus more occupied with tackling internal security threats, not only was there an intelligence failure in intercepting the attack in its early planning stages, but the response to it was also delayed, leading to around 1,200 casualties.

The Balfour Declaration

The Balfour Declaration (November 2, 1917) was a statement of British support for “the establishment on Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” The assurances given to Zionist leaders were made known in a letter sent by the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Arthur James Balfour, to Lionel Walter Rothschild, the 2nd Baron Rothschild of Tring.

The Declaration read- “Foreign Office, 2 November 1917 “Dear Lord Rothschild, I have much pleasure in conveying to you on behalf of His Majesty’s Government the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations, which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet: ‘His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.’ I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation. Yours sincerely, Arthur James Balfour”.

The pivotal role of the Balfour Declaration in almost every aspect of the Palestinian issue cannot be understated. The Declaration fell short of the desires of the Zionists, who had asked for the naming of Palestine as the spiritual home of the Jews, and solely the Jews. Indeed, the declaration specifically stipulated that nothing that impinged upon the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine was to be done. The British government hoped that the declaration would create a positive wave of sentiment from Jewish communities around the world, particularly in the United States. Their fervent hope was that this would pull the United States into supporting the Allied Powers in the First World War, aiding them against the Central Powers. They also supported, in theory, the creation of a pro-British Jewish settlement in Palestine, reasoning that this would help protect the nearby Suez Canal and keep a vital communication route to colonial India open. The Balfour Declaration, both directly and indirectly, led to the formation of the State of Israel in 1948.

The Creation of Israel (1948)

In order to understand the multifaceted nature of modern-day Israel, it is necessary to understand the events which led to its creation, which are explained in this section. The creation of a modern Jewish state There are a number of events which led to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Some key events are –

1. **Zionism** - Zionism was a Jewish nationalist movement with the goal of creating an independent Jewish state in Palestine. It originated in Eastern and Central Europe in the latter stages of the nineteenth century, though its roots can be traced back to the historical region of Palestine, where one of the hills of Jerusalem was known as Zion. In the 1880s, a marked increase in European anti-Semitism and increased Jewish national pride fueled a wave of emigration to agricultural colonies in Palestine, which were financed by the Rothschilds, as well as other wealthy Jewish families. Zionism as a political movement came about in the 1890s, with the Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl causing a minor sensation by campaigning for the creation of a Jewish state as the political solution for both Anti-Semitism and the Jewish desire for a secular identity. Herzl made a bid for international support for the Zionist cause, appealing to the major powers at the First Zionist Congress of 1897. Even after the death of Herzl in 1904, the by-then established Zionist organisation undertook efforts to increase the Jewish population in Palestine, all the while campaigning for international support for their cause. However, these efforts were forced to be limited in their scope as long as Palestine was ruled by the Ottoman Turks. After the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, though, which committed Britain to facilitate the founding of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine, this changed. Britain succeeded in having the Declaration endorsed by the new League of Nations, which formally placed Palestine under British mandate. In 1923, Britain allowed the Hashemite dynasty control of the regions east of the Jordan River, which were collectively known as Transjordan. Transjordan was formally granted full independence in 1946. The land west of the Jordan River, meanwhile, remained under direct British administration until 1948, when the British mandate of Palestine was terminated.
2. **Opposition to Zionism** - The Zionist goal of an independent Jewish state was met with fierce opposition from local Arab leaders. The Arab leaders saw the Ottoman defeat as an opportunity to create an Arab state to fill the newly created political vacuum, or to join a larger Arab entity, in an attempt to revive the Arab empires of the early Islamic period. Although there were British-led attempts to bring the Zionists and the Arabs together in a cooperative government, these failed and eventually led to serious and widespread conflict in the region, culminating in the Arab Revolt of 1936. This period was also marked by the creation of local Jewish defence forces, most notably the Haganah, or 'Defence', which was a branch of the Jewish Agency, who were the organization most responsible for bringing Jews to Palestine in large numbers. The most prominent of these militias were associated with the far right and left of Zionist politics.

The Irgun Zvai Leumi, a splinter group known for their brutality and violent tactics, were associated with the ultra-conservative Revisionist Party, founded by Vladimir Zev Jabotinsky. Another group, the Palmach, although technically a branch of the Haganah, drew inspiration from a Marxist-Socialist party, Achdut HaAvoda.

3. **Immigration** - Jewish immigration to Palestine was encouraged by Britain during the 1920s. However, the effects of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the flight of refugees from Nazi Germany led to a change in government policy. The British government proposed the division of Palestine into two mutually dependent Arab and Jewish states. When this plan was rejected by Arab leaders, the British government made moves to severely restrict Jewish immigration into Palestine in an attempt to retain Arab support against Italy and Germany. Thus, Palestine was largely closed to Jews fleeing persecution in Nazi territories during the Second World War. Despite this, however, the Jewish population of Palestine swelled from under 100,000 in 1919 to over 600,000 by the end of the war, largely through clandestine immigration. After the war, when the true extent of Jewish losses in Europe came to light with the discovery of the scale of the Holocaust, Zionism rode a swell of international sympathy and increased Jewish immigration into Palestine once more. However, this led to an outburst of conflict between Arab and Jewish immigrants. Taken aback by the scale and intensity of the conflict, Britain, under the government of Prime Minister Clement Attlee, attempted to end the British mandate of Palestine, but were unable to do so. The United States of America, who supported the Zionist cause, pressured the British to open the borders of Palestine to the remaining European Jews. However, at the same time, local Arab leaders and opponents to the creation of a Jewish state leaned on the British to put an end to further immigration. Eventually, Britain turned this problem over to the newly formed United Nations. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted for the immediate scission of Palestine into two new states, one Arab and one Jewish. This decision was immediately opposed by the Arabs, who, under the leadership of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, attacked Jews across Palestine as the British withdrew. This evolved into a savage conflict with immense civilian casualties, with notable incidents involving the killing of 100 Arab villagers by a group of Irgun commandos in the village of Deir Yassin and the massacre of 77 members of a Hadassah medical convoy by Palestinian Arabs. The conflict quickly expanded, building up to the Arab-Israeli war of 1948.

4. **The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel** - On May 14, 1948, the day on which the British Mandate over Palestine expired, the Jewish People's Council gathered at the Tel Aviv Museum, and declared the establishment of the new State of Israel. The new state was formally recognized the same night by the United States and three days later by the USSR. However, neither other nations nor the UN could prevent

the new state from immediate invasion from the armies of five neighbouring Arab nations- Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan (now Jordan).

Israeli-Arab conflict - Once the fighting began, the Zionist militia quickly gained an upper hand over the amassed Arab forces, something considerably aided by preexisting intra-Arab rivalries. The Arab forces far outnumbered the Zionists, but the majority of them were poorly trained and ill-equipped for war. In addition to that, Arab supply lines were long and arduous, making resupplying and communications an issue. The strongest of the Arab forces were Transjordan's British-led Arab Legion. However, their ruler, King Abdullah, had made arrangements with the Israelis to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state led by his great rival al-Husseini. Other invading states, such as Iraq and Egypt, also had personal objectives. As a result of this, the Arab forces found themselves in a state of disorganisation and internal tension, and failed to overcome the Zionist forces. The Zionist forces managed to keep Arab forces from entering Tel Aviv or taking Jerusalem during the first months of the war. By June, all sides had accepted a UN cease-fire, allowing the exhausted Zionist forces time to resupply themselves. They drew supplies from a number of sources, including from Soviet-dominated Czechoslovakia, who had deemed the Jewish state a potential ally in the Cold War. Fighting resumed in early July, and continued unabated for months, barring brief truces. The Israelis initially succeeded in beating back the Egyptian and Iraqi forces from the coastal plains, and appeared to be in a position of relative strength. However, the old walled city of Jerusalem, which was held holy by the Jews was occupied by the Jordanians. The Egyptians established control over Gaza, and the Syrians occupied the Golan Heights overlooking Galilee. This fighting was immensely costly to the new State of Israel, with more than 6,000 killed and 30,000 wounded out of a population of just 800,000.

Armistice and Refugees - In 1949, Israel secured the final armistice of the war. At this point, the new state was one-fifth larger than had been previously specified, and rejected a return to the previous partition line. Jordan continued to occupy the West Bank, an area which had been assigned by the UN to the new state of Palestine, which forced over 600,000 Arab refugees to abandon their homes in a mass exodus. Many of these refugees were forced out of their homes by Israeli troops, notably in the villages of Lod and Ramla in the strategic area near Tel Aviv. The Israeli government refused to permit these refugees to return to their homes inside Israel, and Palestinian refugees were forced to live under UN care in camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria. Many Palestinians were to stay in these camps indefinitely. Israel's victory in the war did not bring lasting peace. The Arabs, who were humiliated by defeat and still internally divided, refused to recognize the new Jewish state. In early 1949, the Arab nations announced a state of war with Israel and an organised economic and political boycott of the country.

Israel under Ben-Gurion - David Ben-Gurion was appointed the first Prime Minister of Israel in 1948. Soon after independence, he unified and streamlined the military structure of Israel, allowing them to compete with the Arab invaders. In 1949, elections returned Ben-Gurion to power, although his Mapai (Labour) party did not win a clear majority. This started a pattern, with every Israeli government since having been formed as a coalition. David Ben-Gurion sought a centrist position, and dismissed leftists as pro-Soviets and rightists as enemies of democracy. He managed to add the Zionist religious parties to his secular coalition. The religious parties backed Ben-Gurion on matters of defence and security, while Ben-Gurion in turn supported orthodox monopolies over personal topics such as marriage, divorce, and conversion. Initially, the new State of Israel was impoverished, a condition which only began to change after 1952, when the country began to obtain substantial international aid. Countries Israel obtained aid from included West Germany, which proved to be a highly controversial action and drew protests from rival political parties in Israel.

Post-war tensions - Despite Israel's winning the War of 1948, it soon faced new threats. Arab refugees began to encroach onto Israeli land, and soon, irregular Arab forces drawn from refugee camps began to carry out raids on Israeli villages, farms, and roads. This laid the foundation for the succeeding years, which witnessed a number of Arab-Israeli conflicts, beginning with the Suez Crisis.

Simple Explanation of Two State Explanation

The two-state solution refers to the proposal to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by establishing two sovereign states: one for the Jewish people (Israel) and one for the Palestinian people (Palestine). This idea is based on the notion of partitioning the land to accommodate both national groups, each having their own independent and sovereign state.

The UN mandate that specifically addressed the two-state division of the British Mandate of Palestine is known as **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 (II)**, also known as the **UN Partition Plan for Palestine**. This resolution was adopted on November 29, 1947.

Points in UNGA Resolution 181 (II) to be noted:

Partition of Palestine noting:

The resolution recommended the partition of the British Mandate of Palestine into two independent states, one Arab and one Jewish, with an economic union between them. It also proposed a Special International Regime for the city of Jerusalem, which was to be administered by the United Nations due to its religious significance and diverse population.

Territorial Division between the two states:

The Jewish State was to receive approximately 56% of the land, including the coastal plain, the Negev Desert, and parts of Galilee. The Arab State was to receive about 43% of the land, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and parts of the northern and southern regions of the mandate. Jerusalem and its environs were to be placed under international administration, accounting for 1% of the land.

Economic unity:

The plan proposed an economic union between the two states, which would include joint economic policies, shared transportation systems, and mutual rights to water resources.

SITUATION AFTERWARDS:

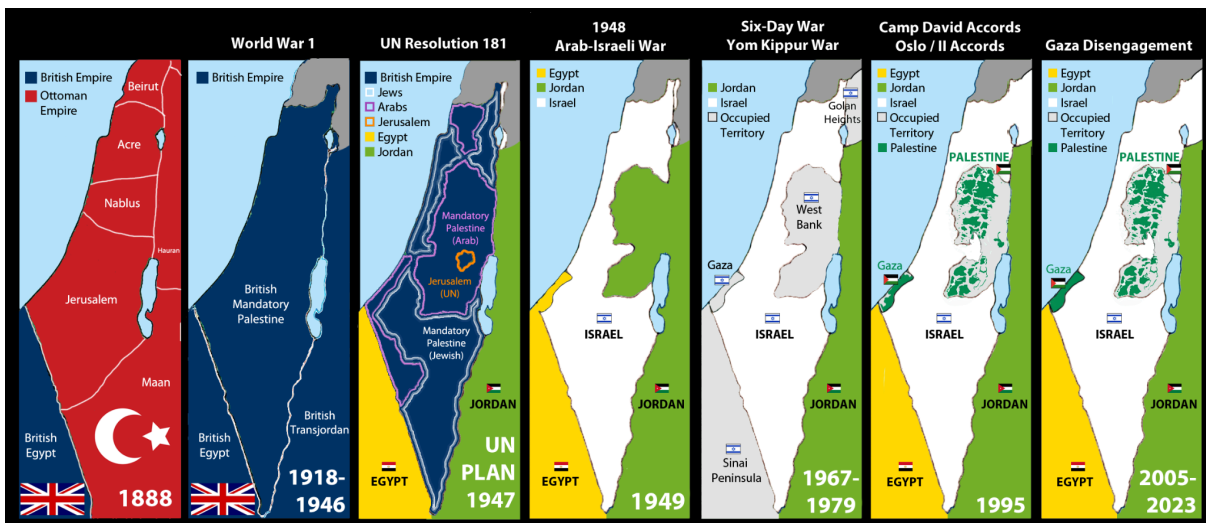
The proposed Jewish State had a population of about 499,000 Jews and 438,000 Arabs. The proposed Arab State had about 818,000 Arabs and 10,000 Jews. Jerusalem had a population of around 100,000 Jews and 105,000 Arabs.

The British were to withdraw from Palestine, and the UN would oversee the transition to the new states. The resolution called for the establishment of a commission to implement the plan and guide the transition.

Jewish Reaction: The Jewish community in Palestine (Yishuv) accepted the plan despite some reservations, as it provided for the establishment of a Jewish state.

Arab Reaction: The Arab states and Palestinian Arab leadership rejected the plan, opposing the division of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state. They argued that it violated the rights of the majority Arab population.

NOTE PALESTINE IS A STATE IT DOES NOT HAVE FIXED BORDERS ACCORDING TO SOME IT IS CONSIDERED TO BE PARTS OF THE GAZA STRIP AND WEST BANK



The Israeli Palestinian Conflicts

The roots of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict can be traced back to a colonial act carried out more than a century ago, the publication of a letter called The Balfour Declaration, which sought to carve out a home state for the Jews from erstwhile Palestine. This conflict has manifested itself through 'acts of support', labelled as terrorism by the international community as well as violence and wars and claimed the lives of thousands of people and displaced millions more. This section of the background guide will be focusing specifically on the major wars and conflicts.

1. **The Suez Canal Crisis (Sinai War)** - On 26th July, 1956, President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, anticipating that the revenue collected by controlling the Canal could help in financing the Aswan Dam and mark the anniversary of the 1952 Coup. These developments drew sharp reactions from the global community, particularly Britain and France. These two nations, viewing this as a threat to their interests in the region and following a deadlock in negotiations with Egypt at the United Nations, resorted to carrying out a secret military operation with Israel against the Egyptians. Israel's involvement was a result of France, which had been covertly supplying military weapons to Israel during the mid-1950s to gain its support in the West Asian region, making a suggestion to the British PM to form a trilateral alliance with Israel. While the British were initially cautious, the French went ahead with their discussions with Israel, who subsequently agreed, seeing the existence of tremendous advantages to be gained. The military plan finally drawn up called for a major attack to be launched by the Israelis on the Sinai on 29th October, 1956, following which British and French forces would intervene in the region on the pretext of the existence of this perceived threat, after which they would issue an ultimatum to the Israeli and Egyptian forces for a ceasefire. If this was not agreed to this would allow the British and French forces to occupy the canal zone. Subsequently, the British and Israelis covertly signed a declaration of intent concerning the joint military operation and all intelligence about the same was severely restricted, even from the US, a major ally, as it had threatened to censure any military action in the region, given the delicate US position in the region. Finally, at dusk on 29th October, ten Israeli brigades attacked the Sinai peninsula. While it was initially seen as an isolated attack, President Nasser nevertheless decided to reinforce defences east of the Suez Canal. When he did receive the British and French ultimatum, he initially thought it to be a

bluff, and only later realised that he was at risk of having his forces cut off east of the Canal, following which he gave a general order for retreat. On 5th November, 1956, the British and French forces landed at Port Said and Port Fuad via parachute drops and helicopters. In the meantime, the invading Israeli forces routed the Egyptian military, occupying the Sinai and parts of the Gaza Strip and halting their advance only 10 miles east of the Canal. Under attack and having been routed by Israeli, British and French forces, President Nasser reached out to the Soviet Union. He received a reply from Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Prime Minister, who stated that while the Soviet Union was not willing to physically intervene as it could risk a 'third world war', it was prepared to call for a halt to hostilities towards Egypt, with Moscow sending a strongly worded message to London for the same. Furthermore, Soviet planes were detected to have crossed into Turkish airspace heading for an unknown destination. The Soviet Union also requested Turkey for permission for a cruiser and three destroyers to pass through the Dardanelles. The British and French, fearing Russian military intervention, reached out to the US for reassurance and support, with the US agreeing to respect 'its obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty arrangements'. This meant while the US would support these countries in the event of a nuclear attack, it would not deploy its forces in the event that the European forces in Egypt and the Mediterranean were attacked by the Soviet Union. At this time, the United Kingdom was also in the thick of an economic and financial crisis caused by the rapidly falling value of the Pound Sterling and the stoppage on Britain's oil supplies. Under pressure from the US, the Soviet Union and their own rapidly destabilising economy, Britain, along with France and Israel accepted the UN-brokered ceasefire and agreed to withdraw their troops from Egypt under the supervision of a UN peacekeeping force. The UN Force was deployed on 7th November, 1956, under UN Resolution 1001, with British and French forces withdrawing by 22nd December 1956. Israel, however continued to occupy the Sinai and parts of the Gaza Strip and control the Suez Canal and only under US pressure did it withdraw its forces and relinquish control of the Canal to Egypt, which was finally opened in April 1957.

2. **The Six Day War** - The 1967 Arab-Israeli War, also known as The Six-Day War, was fought from 5 June 1967 to 10 June 1967 and witnessed Israel convincingly defeat three Arab armies, annex territories which resulted in the expansion of the State of Israel to four times its original size, and establish itself as the preeminent military power in the region. This war has come to be viewed by many as an accidental conflict, one which neither Israel nor the Arab states desired and yet were unable to prevent. Mutual miscalculations and misunderstandings on the parts of both Egypt and Israel were responsible for setting the two countries on the path to an inevitable conflict. On 13th

May, 1967, Soviet officials delivered a warning to the Egyptian and Syrian governments informing them about a mass buildup of Israeli troops along the Syrian border. While this report was false, Egyptian President Nasser deployed a large number of Egyptian troops into the Sinai and demanded that the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), which had been deployed in both the Sinai and Gaza Strip in 1957, withdraw from Israel's border. On 22nd May, 1967, after the UNEF had withdrawn, President Nasser announced that he would now close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. The following day, Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and his cabinet ordered a full mobilisation of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). However, the US cautioned Israel against being the aggressor, while exploring other options to get the blockade lifted, potentially with the help of a multinational naval force via Operation 'Red Sea Regatta'. Thus, Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban decided to proceed forward at America's pace, for in 1956, when it had attacked Egypt as part of a covert agreement, the US had labelled it as an aggressor and forced it to withdraw from the territories it conquered. However, this move irritated the Israeli generals, for the Israeli military, being in position and ready to attack, was acting in a 'slightly complacent' manner, while Egypt was uniting the entire Arab world against them, with Jordan also becoming a part of the Egyptian coalition, for its ruler, King Hussein, believed that the only way to preserve his regime and win the support of his Palestinian subjects was to reconcile and ally with President Nasser. With international attempts to diffuse the crisis having failed and President Nasser's brinkmanship having put Egypt on the edge of war, the only option that remained with the US and its allies was Operation 'Red Sea Regatta'. However, opposition to this plan from the political and military heads of these nations meant that it had to be discarded. In early June, following covert meetings between US Defence Secretary Robert McNamara and Mossad head Meir Amit, the former gave a green light to Israel to go to war with Egypt, Syria and its allies. Thus, on 5th June, 1967, the Israeli Air Force carried out Operation Focus, a well rehearsed and strategically planned aerial pre-emptive strike, which aimed to destroy the Arab air forces stationed on the ground, starting with Egypt. The attack had been a success, having caught the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian military completely off guard and Israel established control of the skies by the end of the day. Soon, fighting erupted in Jerusalem, between the Jordanian and Israeli militaries, while further south, Israeli ground forces pushed into the Sinai Desert, breaching the Egyptian defensive positions. 6th June, 1967 witnessed further fighting between Jordanian and Israeli forces in Jerusalem and by 7th June, 1967, the third day of the war, Israel had captured the Old City of Jerusalem and its holy sites of the Western Wall and Dome of the Rock. By 8th June, 1967, Israeli forces reached the Suez Canal, capturing the entirety of the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and took over the West Bank from Jordan, which led to approximately 300,000 refugees fleeing to Jordan. Once the Israeli military had reached the Suez Canal and the decimation of Egypt's

army could no longer be covered up, President Nasser backtracked on his earlier claim of rejecting any ceasefire and along with Jordan, accepted the Israeli proposal for the same. The last two days of the war saw Israel capture most of the Golan Heights from Syria, before it ceased military operations following a cease fire as called for by an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council. Thus, in these six days, Israel had routed the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armies and captured a large tracts of land and territory from these three Arab states. This victory, though spectacular and widely celebrated in Israel, saw a mixed response from its people. While the religious Jews saw this as a victory given to them by God, having gained control of the Holy Land and sites sacred to the Jewish religion, many individuals, including Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion warned against continued occupation of the Arab territories, as it could potentially lead to the distortion and destruction of the Jewish state and that except Jerusalem, all other captured land must be returned to the Arabs.

3. **The Yom Kippur War** - On 6th October, 1973, at 2:00 PM on the Jewish religious holiday of Yom Kippur, Syrian and Egyptian forces stormed across Israel's borders in a two front offensive, from the Sinai Desert in the south and the Golan Heights in the north. Both Egypt and Syria had lost considerable territory to Israel in the aftermath of the Six Day War and since had been pondering and deliberating upon various courses of actions to adopt in order to regain their lost land. Egypt, recognising that it would take time before it would be in a position to mount a military campaign for the reconquest of its lost territories and once having adequately recovered and redeveloped its military capabilities with the help of Russian investment, decided to resort to a long drawn and inconclusive conflict with Israel, known as the 'War of Attrition', in March 1969. This conflict, which lasted from March 1969 to August 1970, was marked by heavy cross border fighting between Israel and Egypt, with Syrian, Iraqi, Jordanian and Palestinian elements like the Fatah also becoming involved. Egypt, initially only deploying Russian arms and aircraft, soon managed to pressure the Soviet Union to militarily intervene and fly combat patrols over parts of Egypt. However, fearing a direct confrontation between Israel and the Soviet Union, the Nixon Administration intervened and Secretary of State William Rogers drew up a complex cease fire plan, known as 'Rogers II', which was accepted by Israel and Egypt, who stopped fighting on 7th August, 1970. Thus, faced with the failure of the 'war of attrition' and a diplomatic and military stalemate, Egypt soon began exploring military options. While being acutely aware of the air and armour advantage that Israel possessed, the Egyptian planners were also able to realise several critical disadvantages that Israel had, notably having the bulk of its military strength in the form of reserves. Thus, a plan was drawn up which aimed to exploit

these 'chinks' in Israel's defence fortifications. However, despite having sufficient intelligence about Egyptian and Syrian military activity, being well aware of the troop buildup by these two countries along their borders, receiving multiple reports and inputs on Egyptian and Syrian activity, all of which clearly hinted towards an imminent attack, the Israeli Defence and Intelligence Staff did not believe that these two neighbours would attack, else there would have been further indications and incontrovertible intelligence reports. Yet, as a precautionary measure, on 5th October, 1973, the Israeli Defence Minister and General Staff did order an early morning 'C Alert' for the army, the highest alert short of calling up the reserves, along with a full alert for the air force, including the reserves. As a result, when on the Saturday morning of 6th October, 1973, the Israeli Intelligence Chief received the incontrovertible report that Egypt and Syria were going to start a war that evening around 6:00 PM, he realised that this was not sufficient to permit an orderly mobilisation of the reserves. Thus, when the Egyptians and Syrians did launch an attack, it caught Israel's defence apparatus entirely by surprise, overwhelming its defensive positions and causing the tide of the war to shift in favour of the Arab states. The first stage of the war witnessed the initial Egyptian and Syrian onslaughts, wherein around 150 Egyptian planes erupted into Sinai, targeting Israeli defensive fortifications, aerial batteries and infrastructure, followed by an intense artillery barrage and infantry attack on Israeli positions. With the bulk of Israeli armour not being deployed in its prepared positions and the Israeli air force occupied in repelling the Egyptian aerial attack and helicopters carrying commandos behind Israeli lines, the Egyptian soldiers were able to bypass and exploit the defence systems and successfully cross the Suez Canal and capture the Bar Lev Line, a fortified sand wall on the east bank of the Canal. At the same time, the Syrian military had attacked the Golan Heights with a series of low level air strikes, followed by an artillery barrage and finally an infantry and motorised assault on the entire front. Syrian armour was able to breach the Israeli defences of the entire Southern Sector and advance through the Southern Golan Heights to a point almost halfway to the Jordan River. Thus, in order to prevent a total collapse of Israel's defences in the North and give some time to Israeli units to mobilise and engage with the invaders, the Israeli Air Force was diverted from the South, where it was engaged against the Egyptian missiles and ordered to strike the Syrian tanks and armoured elements. While this intervention proved costly, as some 30 planes were lost that day, it checked the Syrian assault and eased the pressure on the Israeli Northern Command. While the Syrian forces were able to breach and advance through the Israeli defences, with forward units even reaching El Al, some 7 miles from the Sea of Galilee, by the evening of 7th October, 1973, the Syrian advance had largely been checked. The second stage of the war was marked by major counterattacks by the first concentration of Israeli reserves, on the Egyptian and Syrian bridgeheads, from 8th to 10th October, 1973, which yielded success in the north, but were a

complete failure in the south. The Israeli Southern Command, along with Chief of Staff General Elazar, drew up a plan for a counteroffensive against the Egyptian forces, wherein two divisions would attack the flanks of the Egyptian armies. If the first division's attack from the Kantara area succeeded, then the second division would attack from the area of the Great Bitter Lakes, but if the first attack failed, then the second division, which was held in reserve in the Tassa area, would reinforce it. If both attacks were successful, then two further divisions would follow to sweep the region and eliminate any remaining threats. However, when the time for action came, the plans went completely awry. As the initial attack was going successful and the Israeli forces attempted to broaden their front and seize three Egyptian bridges, the advancing Israeli brigades discovered they were much further inland than planned and came upon their target frontally, where the Egyptians expected them, rather than from the flank. The Israelis suffered massive losses and by the time the general command realised what had occurred, the second division was heading south, only to be recalled back too late, making no contribution to the battle. The counteroffensive against the Syrians was much more successful. The Israeli forces, with heavy air support, were slowly able to close onto the Syrian forces, until a massive Syrian attack on its flank near Kuneitra against the embattled 7th Brigade appeared to almost reverse the tide. However, a small Israeli unit managed to penetrate the flank of the attacking Syrian forces, causing the tanks to retreat and the Syrian forces to fall back, until they were driven out of the pre-war Golan Heights border. The third phase of the war saw both the US, Europe and Soviet Union undertake massive resupply missions to replenish the rapidly depleting arms and ammunition of Israeli and the Arab forces respectively. Following this, the Israeli Northern Command launched a series of airstrikes on Syrian forces, before carrying out a ground based infantry and armoured assault, which pushed through the Syrian positions, before stopping its advance to strengthen and consolidate its current positions and protect the exposed Israeli flank in the south, which was being targeted by an Iraqi armoured brigade. While the Israeli forces could gain new ground and defeat more enemy units, they strengthened the existing defensive line, which was within 20 miles of Damascus. In the south, General Ismail, commander of the Egyptian forces, began preparing a major offensive against the Israeli Southern Command in an attempt to relieve the Syrian forces in the north. On 13th October, 1973, the Egyptian air force began bombing and carrying out reconnaissance runs in the Sinai region, in preparation for the attack. However, at the same time, the Israeli forces had decided to abandon their offensive in the north, having nearly captured the Syrian capital, Damascus and instead began to draw up plans for a counteroffensive against the Egyptians. The Egyptians launched their offensive on 14th October, 1973, carrying out an artillery barrage on the Israeli positions, followed by an advance of the infantry and armour and low level runs on Israeli positions by Egyptians MIG's and Libyan Mirages.

However, the superiority of the Israeli armour quickly influenced the course of the battle, first halting the initial advance and then, supported by the air force, picking off Egyptian targets removed from the support of the missile network. The final phase of the Yom Kippur War saw a large scale Israeli counteroffensive, which had been under planning, unfold, thus finally leading to the end of the war. The plan, set to start at 7 PM on 15th October, 1973, was for two Israeli divisions to hold the Egyptian army on the East Bank, while two other divisions would cross over at Deversoir, just north of the Great Bitter Lake, which would help shield the flank of the crossing forces. The first of these divisions would then secure a corridor two and a half miles wide by capturing an important access road, while a paratroop brigade with armour support under Colonel Danny Matt would then cross and secure a bridgehead on the west bank. Once both the bridgeheads were put in place on the Suez Canal, then the second Israeli division would advance on the west bank southward toward the Gulf Of Suez in the rear of the Egyptian Third Army, before advancing westward to Cairo. By 16th October 1973, Colonel Matt's brigade and around 30 tanks had transferred to the west bank of the Canal without any opposition. However, the Egyptian forces to the east of the canal had halted the Israeli advance, but undeterred, the Israeli commander ordered Colonel Matt to leave a part of his force at the bridgehead while the rest would advance to the rear of the Egyptian forces to raid and destroy and create confusion, chaos and disorient the enemy. After intense fighting and fierce opposition from the Egyptian forces in the area, the Israelis were finally able to get the bridgeheads installed and advance towards Cairo. Finally, following long drawn fighting between the Israeli armoured divisions and the Egyptians Third Army, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 340 on 25th October, 1973 which called for a ceasefire and withdrawal of all forces to their 22nd October positions, with UN observers and peacekeepers to monitor the ceasefire. This was accepted by Israel, thus marking the end of the Yom Kippur War.

4. **The First Lebanon War** - Since its independence from France in 1943, Lebanon adopted a system of political division of power that ran along clearly defined sectarian lines. This form of administration, coupled with growing political, economic and social tensions and inequality in and among different sectarian groups boiled over into a civil war that began in 1975, wherein different sectarian militias came up and began fighting each other. One of the groups which became involved in this conflict was the Palestinian Liberation Organisation or PLO, a group at the forefront of the struggle for a separate Palestinian state. The PLO, established by the Arab League in 1964 and meant

to control Palestinian nationalism while championing for their cause, was initially a puppet group of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, to contain and limit Palestinian radicalism and guerilla activities. The intended purpose was to allow the Arab states to develop militarily and unite among themselves to better negotiate with Israel, but some Palestinians refused to wait for this and began establishing their own unions and groups. One such group was Fatah, led by Yasser Arafat, which abstained from joining the PLO and instead began carrying out guerilla raids into Israel from neighbouring Arab countries. The popularity among Palestinians that accompanied such activities meant that soon the PLO also began to engage in such acts and younger, more radical and militant minded Palestinians began to occupy its leadership. Following the defeat and regional embarrassment of Egypt, Syria and Jordan after the Six Day War in 1967, the PLO gained further regional support for its efforts to 'liberate' Palestine. Comprised of different political/armed groups with varying ideological orientations and headed by Yasser Arafat, its Chairman since 1968 and leader of Fatah, its largest group, the PLO had its original base of operations in Jordan, but following a series of military offensives against it between 1970 and 1971 led by King Hussein, Jordan's ruler, meant it was forced to relocate to Lebanon. This was also because the negative international attention and fear of Israeli reprisal meant that Egypt and Syria had clamped down on PLO guerilla activities being carried out on their soil. From the 1970's, the PLO (apart from the Palestinian Liberation Army), began using guerilla strategies not to wage offensives in Israel, but to defend positions and infrastructure on ground and also began acquiring heavy armaments for the same. Between 1973 and 1975, the PLO, led by Arafat's Fatah movement began seeking a 'Two State Solution' or an independent Palestinian state in West Bank and Gaza and believed that the entirety of the PLO infrastructure in Lebanon could be 'more or less' transplanted to the new Palestinian state to act as its basis of administration. However, the Geneva Conference, meant to achieve this, eventually failed to reconvene after 1973 and subsequent negotiations were influenced by the vested interests of Egypt and other nations, thus rendering the return of the exiled Palestinian community to historic Palestine with their institutions intact only a remote possibility. Meanwhile, following the start of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, Israel launched a series of direct interventions inside the Lebanese body politic to erode the PLO's strength. This included providing direct help to the Lebanese Phalangist militias (Maronite Christian groups opposed to the Muslim coalition) and augmenting the policy of indiscriminate Israeli bombardment in Southern Lebanon, where the PLO camps were located, with a new 'good fence' policy to win over the local Lebanese population in this region against the PLO. Furthermore, following a seaborne Palestinian attack which killed 34 Israelis on the Tel Aviv-Haifa coastal highway, Israeli forces invaded South Lebanon in March 1978, coming up to the Litani River. Armed PLO elements in the region were the ostensible targets of the operation, with about a 100

Palestinian guerillas being killed, along with over 2,000 Lebanese and Palestinian civilian deaths. It was only following UNSC Resolution 425, which called for a complete withdrawal, did Israel pull back from the area, only to hand over a band of Lebanese territory about 10 kilometres deep along the Lebanese Israeli border to its collaborators in the region. The main move, however, came on the morning of 6th June, 1982, when 40,000 Israeli troops, along with hundreds of tanks and armoured personnel carriers, rolled into Southern Lebanon as part of Operation 'Peace for Galilee', aimed to militarily and politically debilitate the PLO and install a favourable Christian backed government in Lebanon, which would sign a peace treaty with Israel, thus marking the start of the First Lebanon War. In the first phase of the war, the Israeli military launched a three pronged assault. One armoured group moved towards the Bekaa Valley in the east, where Syrian troops and anti-aircraft missiles in Lebanon were concentrated, while the middle force moved through the area patrolled by the UN peacekeeping force, UNIFIL (deployed in 1978 to restore peace and security in the region and oversee Israeli withdrawal following the 1978 South Lebanon conflict), to Beaufort Castle. The third force, which was also the largest, moved along the coastal road to Tyre, which was located 13 miles north of the Israeli Lebanon border. The first prong, however, was largely a feint, meant to draw the Syrians into inaction for two days before striking them hard with a lightning attack from the coast. Meanwhile, in the central and eastern sectors, the PLO and Lebanese forces adopted classic guerilla tactics of 'retreat and harass', standing their ground and fighting against the overwhelming odds along the coast. However, within four days of very heavy fighting, the IDF had seized the entire southern quarter of Lebanon. From 9th to 11th June, 1982, the joint forces of the PLO and Lebanese put up a major defence of Beirut, virtually halting the Israeli advance. However, with Syria having withdrawn from the war due to the Israeli threat on Damascus and being equipped with superior firepower, it was not long before Israeli forces cut off Beirut entirely by land and Israeli warships and warplanes controlled the coast and skies. Thus began the Siege of Beirut, from 13th June 1982. During the Siege of Beirut, the IDF imposed a total naval and land blockade, while continuing to engage with PLO and Lebanese elements, striking the city via sea, air and artillery barrages. Meanwhile, PLO leader Yasser Arafat began to reach out diplomatically to the US, France, the Soviet Union and Arab nations to engage in negotiations, in an attempt to reach an agreement to prolong or end the Israeli assault on the city. However, despite the Soviet Union promising to pressurise Israel to withdraw, a lack of cooperation and action on part of the Arab states meant that Palestinian initiatives towards its allies were falling apart. Around the same time, in July 1982, the PLO took its decision to withdraw from Beirut, seeking to do so on certain conditions which in turn could be used to leverage against the United States. However, this attempt was also unsuccessful, thus forcing the PLO to withdraw unconditionally from Beirut to Tunisia, with the same

being completed by 31st August, 1982. Having driven out Palestinian elements from Lebanon, Israel now sought to install a favourable regime, but internal violence and opposition to the same meant the IDF was forced to occupy West Beirut, but following the Sabra and Shatila Massacres, wherein Lebanese Phalanges militia killed residents of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps and increased international pressure, Israeli forces withdrew from Beirut by 29th September, 1982, marking the end of the war. They however, continued their presence in Lebanon, slowly withdrawing from the entire country in 1985, except a special security zone extending 8 miles into South Lebanon, to protect towns in villages in northern Israel from attacks. It was only on 24th May, 2000, that Israel pulled all its troops out of South Lebanon, ending its 22 year long military presence in the country.

5. **The Second Lebanon War** - Following the First Lebanon War, Israel continued to have a military footprint in Lebanon for 18 more years via its special security zone in South Lebanon. During this period, a militia known as Hezbollah, which had come up during the Lebanese Civil War, having been influenced by Iran and rooted in the Shi'ite communities of Southern Lebanon and Southern Beirut and which also enjoyed Syrian support in the form of money, arms and training, rose in prominence. It also joined the ranks of the PLO and Amal (a Shia linked militia group in Lebanon) as one of Israel's main enemies. It was however, better equipped and organised as compared to its predecessors, receiving support from not only Syria, but also Iran. Led by Hassan Nasrallah since 1992 (after its previous leader and cofounder, Abbas Al-Musawi was assassinated by Israel), the group established its base of operations in Lebanon and has since continued to operate out of the country. Following the departure of Israeli forces in 2000, Hezbollah declared that it would continue its 'resistance' and do so in three main ways. First, it sought to release several thousand Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Second, it sought to 'liberate' Shaba Farm, a small piece of territory located near the Israeli occupied Golan Heights, which it claimed belonged to Lebanon. Third, while existing as a political party and paramilitary organisation, it also sought to 'resist' Israel, to justify itself to its supporters and the Arab world. Soon, the group began engaging in periodic conflict with Israel, launching raids and aerial strikes across the Lebanese Israeli border. It was one such raid, on 12th July, 2006, when Hezbollah fighters infiltrated the Israeli border, killing 8 Israeli soldiers and taking 2 hostage, that eventually culminated into a full blown war. A few hours after this incident, which had been labelled an 'act of war' by Israel, the IDF launched a heavy aerial assault on Lebanon, focusing on Hezbollah targets and its residential areas. This was part of Israel's military offensive to obtain the release of the two kidnapped soldiers, 'remodel' the security situation along the Israeli Lebanese border, to

prevent Hezbollah from reaching Israeli territory, to weaken the Hezbollah organisation and get the Lebanese government to exercise sovereignty over its territory and activities taking place in it. In response to the Israeli air strikes, Hezbollah launched a barrage of missiles and Katyusha rockets targeting Israel's northern towns, in what was possibly the largest attack on Israel's civilian population since the 1948 Arab Israeli War. On 13th July 2006, Israel imposed a total land, sea and air blockade of Lebanon and began a massive aerial, naval and artillery bombardment campaign on the country, which continued till 23rd July, 2006. The aim of this was to degrade Hezbollah's military capacity by targeting its infrastructure, forces and arms and ammunition depots, while also pressurising the Lebanese population to turn against the group. Following this initial phase of the war, Israeli forces initiated ground raids, aimed at pushing away Hezbollah elements from the border and taking over control of the Katyusha launch sites. When the IDF ground offensive got underway in Lebanon, the large number of forces and armour (around 500 to 600 tanks were deployed along with supporting troops) deployed meant that element of surprise could and was not utilised. To add to that, the IDF did not attempt deploying flanking tactics and cooperation among the various military units was very poor or even at times non-existent. This meant that the initial campaign was very heavy handed and slow. The mountainous and rocky terrain of Lebanon, which was unsuitable for Israeli armour, meant that the IDF also experienced many difficulties and shortcomings in its ground offensive. Furthermore, the Hezbollah guerillas fought back very well, standing their ground and using Russian anti-tank Kornet missiles to destroy and disable the advancing Israeli Merkava tanks. Following a month of fighting, the war finally ended on 14th August, 2006 after a ceasefire was brokered as a result of UNSC Resolution 1701, which also called for the deployment of UN peacekeepers and the Lebanese military to South Lebanon, along with the withdrawal of the IDF and Hezbollah and the disarmament of Hezbollah. In the end, about 120 IDF soldiers and 40 Israeli civilians were killed while around 2,000 Lebanese civilians and Hezbollah fighters became casualties. Lebanon's infrastructure was also left in ruins as a result of the indiscriminate bombardment, which led to 30,000 dwellings being damaged or destroyed and dozens of bridges, underpasses and gas stations being demolished.

Hamas: An introduction

Hamas or the Islamic Resistance Movement, is a Palestinian Sunni Islamist political and military organization, currently headed by Ismail Haniyeh. The group emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood and immediately chose armed resistance as the path to establish a Palestinian state in modern Israel. After winning the 2006 legislative council election very unexpectedly, Hamas became engaged in a series of wars and conflicts with Israel extending to the current conflict.

Origin and History

The origin of Hamas is deeply ingrained in the historical and political context of the Palestinian nationalist movement. Hamas emerged as an outgrowth of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is a transnational Islamist organization aimed primarily at promoting Islamic principles and values in society and politics. The involvement of Islamist organizations in Palestinian nationalism and politics began in the early 1980s. A very pivotal figure in this early transition to involvement was Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Yassin founded the social-religious charity Mujama al-Islamiya in 1973, which operated as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Yassin was arrested in 1984, relating to the discovery that his group was collecting arms, he did not halt the organization's activities. He was released in May 1985 as part of a prisoner exchange, and he continued to expand the reach of his charity in Gaza. At this time, Yassin also played a role in the establishment of several other entities, such as al-Majd and al-Mujahidun al-Filastiniun, each with specific tasks related to internal security and resistance efforts. The charity was largely ignored due to its significantly less violent and volatile nature as compared to other organizations at the time such as Fatah or PLO.

The concept of Hamas began to take shape in December 1987, following an incident that fueled the First Intifada, in which an Israeli army truck crashed into a car at a Gaza checkpoint. Yassin issued a leaflet on December 14 that called for resistance, though the name Hamas' was not used till after the beginning of the First Intifada. Creating Hamas as a distinct entity from the Muslim Brotherhood was practical, as the latter refused violence against Israel. By keeping militant activities separate, the Islamists aimed to maintain support for their social work. Hamas was formally established in January 1988 and was formally recognised by the Jordanian Branch of the Muslim Brotherhood a month later.

The First Intifada gained huge support for the newly established Hamas. While Hamas was initially focussed on social and charitable activities, it conducted its first combat operation in 1989 wherein it abducted and killed two Israeli soldiers. The Temple Mount killings incident led to an increase in the intensity and amount of abductions being carried out by Hamas. Facing a harsh Israeli crackdown, Hamas reorganized, intensifying its campaign with a declaration that every Israeli soldier was a target and called for Jihad against Zionists

everywhere. The group's military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, played a key role, employing suicide bombings and escalating violence during this period. The Palestinian National Authority established as a result of the Oslo I accord while backed by Israel and Yasser Arafat, the leader of PLO, was strongly condemned and opposed by Hamas.

Following the 1994 Cave of the Patriarchs massacre, Hamas shifted to suicide bombings against civilians. The group temporarily ceased operations in 1995 but resumed after the assassination of Yasser Arafat. In 1997, Israel attempted to assassinate Hamas leader Khaled Mashal, leading to tensions. Hamas faced opposition and varied public support for suicide bombings. Its leaders faced arrests, with some moving to Syria and later Qatar. In the aftermath of Yasser Arafat's death in 2004, Hamas initially boycotted the 1996 and 2005 Palestinian elections but decided to participate in the 2006 legislative election. Despite concerns from the US, Israel, and the UK, Hamas won a majority with 74-76 seats out of 132 in the Palestinian Legislative Council. The elections were deemed competitive and genuinely democratic by international observers. Hamas, emphasizing political means over violence, pledged to refrain from attacks on Israel if Israeli offensives ceased. Their election manifesto dropped the Islamic agenda, endorsing the two-state solution implicitly.

After winning, Hamas leader Khaled Mashal sent a letter to US President George W. Bush expressing willingness to accept a state based on the 1967 borders with a truce for many years, but the Bush administration did not respond. Despite international observations of the election's fairness, the Quartet on the Middle East (US, Russia, and the UK) conditioned aid on Hamas renouncing violence, recognizing Israel, and accepting previous agreements. As Hamas refused, a freeze on international aid was imposed.

In response, the EU froze financial assistance to the Hamas-led government, violating its own principles on free elections. After failed coalition attempts with Fatah, Hamas assumed sole administration of Gaza in March 2006, introducing radical changes. There were several reasons for the Palestinian people to be dissatisfied with the Fatah government. Firstly, Fatah suffered from corruption at the helm of the PLO. Secondly, the PLO's focus was too much in the West Bank although many Palestinians were refugees or lived in Gaza. Thirdly, the PLO's devotion to the two-state model was difficult to accept by many Palestinians. Finally, violence between Israelis and Palestinians and elusive political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict pushed Palestinians to opt for change.

Against the background of rising Islamist nationalism, Hamas and Fatah, the two main Palestinian political parties were polar opposites in terms of their policy towards Israel, which led to a rise in tensions between the two. Hamas is Islamist and emphasizes armed struggle against Israel and does not support a two-state solution. Historically engaged in armed struggle but shifted towards diplomatic solutions, supporting negotiations for a two-state solution. Has a charter that includes anti-Israel rhetoric and rejectionist stances. Fatah's official stance has evolved, and its leadership has made statements endorsing coexistence with Israel. After Hamas unexpectedly won the 2006 legislative election and shocked both Israel and the US, tensions between Fatah and Hamas grew. Factional conflict resulted from the inability to establish a power-sharing agreement, and in June 2007, Hamas

took control of Gaza. One major problem was border crossing control, specifically at the Rafah international crossing. The international observers declared the election to be free and fair.

The victory of Hamas, according to US President George W. Bush, represents a rejection of the "status quo" and a rejection of the "old guard" who had failed to deliver honest governance and services. Their opposing philosophies are one of the main causes of conflict between Fatah and Hamas. While Hamas identifies as an Islamist group and supports the creation of an Islamic state in historic Palestine, Fatah has historically supported a secular nationalist goal. Rivalry and the struggle for influence have been fuelled by these ideological differences. Fatah, unwilling to cede power, rejected the election results, and this disagreement escalated into violent clashes between the two factions. The conflict resulted in a de facto geographical division of Palestinian territories, with Fatah maintaining control in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Efforts to reconcile and form a unified Palestinian government have faced numerous obstacles, including disputes over governance, security, and the recognition of Israel. The international world has tried a number of ways to mediate and promote peace between Hamas and Fatah. Nonetheless, these endeavors have frequently faced obstacles, and the internal division persists in impeding the formation of a cohesive Palestinian leadership. A united front for Palestinian ambitions is still largely impeded by the Hamas-Fatah war, whose settlement is essential to the region's chances of experiencing a comprehensive and long-lasting peace.

These differences led to the Battle of Gaza (2007) which was an armed struggle between Fatah and Hamas, which resulted in the collapse of the unity government and the de facto split of the Palestinian territories into the Gaza Strip, under Hamas rule, and the West Bank, under the control of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Fighters from Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip, and Fatah officials were either executed, captured, or driven out.

According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, the violence resulted in at least 161 fatalities and over 700 injuries. The international community, including Israel and the West, imposed sanctions on Hamas-controlled Gaza, citing security concerns and refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the Hamas government. This led to economic hardships and a blockade on the Gaza Strip, impacting the living conditions of its residents. Hamas and Israel engaged in several armed conflicts, including the Gaza War in 2008-2009, 2012, and 2014. These conflicts resulted in significant casualties and damage in the Gaza Strip. Hamas's use of rocket attacks and tunnels into Israel and Israel's military responses contributed to a cycle of violence. Ismail Haniyeh became the prominent figure in Hamas leadership, serving as the Prime Minister in the Gaza. Khaled Meshaal continued to lead the political bureau of Hamas until 2017 when he was succeeded by Ismail Haniyeh.

October 7 attacks:

The October 7 attacks marked a turning point in the decades long Israel-Palestine conflict. On the morning of Saturday, October 7th, the day of Shemini Atzeret, a Jewish holiday, the Iranian sponsored Hamas led a very well planned and stunning coordinated attack. Many IDF soldiers were on leave, and the IDF's attention had been focused on Israel's northern border

rather than on the Gaza Strip in the south. Palestinian armed groups named this attack ‘Operation Al-Aqsa Flood’.

At around 6:30 am Hamas announced the commencement of operation Al-Aqsa Flood. Hamas commenced their assault on Israel with a deadly bombardment of missiles at around 6:30 a.m., firing around 2,200 rockets into Israel in only 20 minutes. This opening salvo was notable for its violence, with Hamas firing more than half of the total number of rockets launched from Gaza during the whole 2021 conflict. The bombardment apparently overcame Israel's highly sophisticated anti-missile defence system, though the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) did not specify how many missiles entered the system.

At various sites along the border, about 1,500 terrorists from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Hamas simultaneously entered Israel. They broke through the strongly guarded border, which was outfitted with concrete barricades, fences, and sophisticated equipment, using explosives and bulldozers. The terrorists took down the communication systems for multiple Israeli military outposts in the area, giving them the opportunity to strike these targets and sneak into residential areas. Moreover, terrorists used motorboats to cross the maritime boundary close to Zikim, a seaside town, while some used motorised paragliders to enter Israel.

The assault resulted in a significant loss of life, with approximately 1,200 people killed. Targets included families in their homes in kibbutzim (Israeli collective communities) and attendees of an outdoor music festival. The majority of casualties were Israeli civilians, but foreign nationals were also among the victims.

Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

The current conflict in Gaza has led to a humanitarian crisis in the region owing to collapse of healthcare systems and famine. After the war began, Israel tightened its blockades on Gaza reducing the amount of fuel, food and other supplies entering the area, this led to an acute food shortage. According to the Hamas run Gaza Health Ministry, approximately 38,000 people have been killed during the course of the war. It is estimated that approximately 63 women, including 37 mothers are being killed daily. Of the number of Palestinians killed in Gaza, 14,500 are children and 9,500 are mothers.

The healthcare system in Gaza is on the brink of collapse. In addition to having a severe scarcity of medical supplies, equipment, and staff, hospitals are overflowing with casualties. The issue is made worse by the blockade, which limits the admission of medical supplies and aid.

Numerous individuals lack access to basic services and shelter as a result of extensive damage to infrastructure, which includes homes, schools, and hospitals. Critical infrastructure has been devastated by frequent airstrikes and ground actions, making recovery and reconstruction efforts extremely difficult.

Gaza's human rights situation is dire. The figures are astonishing. The Gaza Ministry of Health reports that there have been about 25,000 fatalities and over 65,000 injuries. Since many thousands are still under the debris, the numbers will probably increase. Out of the 2.3 million people living in Gaza, 1.9 million are displaced. There is no safe place in Gaza. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) continue to bombard both the north and Khan Younis in the south. A severe shortage of food, water, medications, tents, and other essentials is also present.

The current shelters are extremely confined and have terrible hygienic conditions. Sewage flows from every corner in Khan Younis and Rafah. There is a ticking time bomb here that could result in an epidemic.

Economic Implications

Since the beginning of the conflict in October 2023, hostilities in the Gaza Strip have resulted in massive loss of life. The effects of the conflict on the Palestinian economy have been consequential as the loss of life, as well as the speed and extent of damages to fixed assets and reduction in production flows across the Palestinian territories are unparalleled.

The observed level of fixed assets damage and destruction is catastrophic. Since the start of the conflict, the Palestinian economy experienced one of largest shocks recorded in recent economic history. In Gaza, GDP plummeted by more than 80 percent in Q4-2023—from approximately US\$670m in Q3 to roughly US\$90m in Q4. Almost all economic activity in Gaza has ground to a halt, with little indication of substantial improvement at the time of publication. According to initial estimates from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the GDP in Gaza saw a decline of over 80 percent in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2023 and a drop of 24 percent for the whole year (2023). The economic decline in the Palestinian territories already exceeds the impact of the conflicts in 2008, 2012, 2014, or 2021, and over the past two decades.

Gaza's long-term economic trajectory is anticipated to face vast challenges not only from the destruction of fixed assets, but also from the effects of the conflict on the people of Gaza, including on their mental health. Prior to this conflict, a recent study by the World Bank found that 58 percent of the Palestinian adult population exhibit symptoms consistent with depression having direct implications on labour productivity. The share of population exhibiting depression symptoms was 50 percent in the West Bank and soared to 71 percent in Gaza. The trauma associated with displacement and destruction during the ongoing conflict has led to a further deterioration of mental health. Moreover, labour participation is also predicted to suffer, as physical displacement, security concerns, and disrupted infrastructure will limit employment opportunities at least over the medium term.

Poverty was prevalent in Gaza long before the conflict, with social assistance playing a crucial role in mitigating its impacts. The 2017 household survey²⁷ indicated that 79 percent of residents in Gaza were recipients of governmental or non-governmental aid. For those living below the poverty line, almost half of total income came from assistance. More recent estimates (2022) suggest that more than half of Gazan households continue to report aid as their primary source of income,²⁸ including for food assistance. On the eve of the conflict, 8 out of 10 individuals received some form of aid. Non-monetary welfare (multidimensional poverty) conditions in Gaza have also deteriorated rapidly, while the need for assistance has correspondingly increased, along with displacement. The hostilities have also led to a substantial increase in multidimensional poverty, stemming from disruptions to children's access to education and challenges in obtaining essential health and other basic services

Segments of the population that are already vulnerable, including women and marginalized groups, will bear a disproportionate burden, as these groups face increased challenges in accessing education, healthcare, and economic opportunities already under normal circumstances. Overall, the outlook hinges largely on the conflict's intensity and the level of restrictions.

	Actual			Pre-conflict projections			Current baseline projections*		
	2020	2021	2022	2023e	2024f	2025f	2023e	2024f	2025f
Key fiscal indicators, percent of GDP, unless indicated otherwise									
Overall balance	-7.5	-5.8	-1.4	-0.5	-0.8	-0.6	-3.0	-2.9	-2.7
Primary balance	-7.1	-5.1	-0.7	0.1	-0.1	0.1	-2.2	-2.2	-2.0
Total revenues and grants	25.7	25.0	27.3	24.6	25.9	26	25.5	27.9	27.7

Source: MoF for actual data, and World Bank staff for projections.