



The Hague International Model United Nations

Forum: ECOSOC

Issue: The Humanitarian Situation and Assistance for Palestinian Citizens

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Introduction

The general situation in Palestine (PA) has been characterized by continuous challenges: displacement, military occupation and lack of rights. Palestinians have suffered from forced displacement since 1948, with thousands being rendered homeless as a result of the continuous conflict. The West Bank and Gaza have become flashpoints of tension with Israel, and Hamas' control of Gaza has further complicated efforts towards a resolution of the crisis. These divisions have contributed to economic and social challenges, leaving Palestinian society fragmented and struggling with instability.

In August 2023, the Israel-Palestine violence flared up as Hamas, a Palestinian militant group which has run Gaza since 2007, orchestrated a string of attacks in an attempt to reclaim land taken by Israel decades ago, before October 7th, whilst the situation in Gaza was dire, the land was mostly peaceful. The attacks damaged settlements and infrastructure in Southern Israel, as the area became an area of interest for analysts.

On October 7, 2023, a coordinated and heavy attack was led by Hamas in Gaza, a Palestinian military group with five armed Palestinian groups joining Hamas to attack Israel, having originally carried out drills in Gaza; there was great destruction with resultant loss of life even within civilian facilities such as hospitals and refugee camps. This attack heightened the humanitarian crisis in Gaza since it was already in dismal shape with starvation and lack of access to clean water widespread. The violence further emanating from the divided leadership among the Palestinians has affected their population, leading to a perpetual cycle of suffering.

Background Information

The history of modern day Israel and Palestine is long and complicated with incredible nuances and must be examined with great care. Starting with the partition of what was then simply known as British Palestine on the 15th of May with the support of the UN general assembly. It is important to know however whilst the proposition gave Israel 56% percent of British Palestine, Jewish leaders accepted the proposal whilst the Arab league rejected and refused to accept it. Another valuable piece of information however is that Israel's founder and first prime minister David Ben Gurion announced the creation of Israel one day prior to the actual independence of the region, further stirring up tensions among the Arab communities there. Soon thereafter in the late 1940's violence exploded in the region displacing over 700'000 Palestinians, the region has been unstable ever since.

Definition of key terms

October 7th

October 7th, 2023-also known as the Assault of October 7th: The general term for a large-scale military operation against Israel by Hamas, a Palestinian terrorist organization. On this day, Hamas carried out coordinated attacks, which included missile launches and infiltrations into the towns of Israel, killing numerous people and destroying many areas. This was a major intensification of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, at the time when Israel acted in return, striking with airstrikes and military operations in Gaza. The attack caused huge human loss and infrastructural damage, adding to the humanitarian crisis that has been going on in this region.

Palestine

State of Palestine: Geographically located in the Middle East, the land is traditionally the homeland of Palestinian Arabs. Now it is also used popularly to define the lands that include the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and even parts of East Jerusalem, a piece of land mostly occupied, partially controlled by Israel, to refer to Palestinian people and their long urge for an independent homeland. The status of Palestine as a state remains contentious, and continuous conflicts and disputes over lands, sovereignty, and rights between the Palestinians and Israelis are in constant contention. Many countries in the world and international organizations consider it to be a state such as China, India, France and Spain; however, its full recognition as an independent state, with countries such as the US refusing to recognize it, is in constant debate in global diplomacy.

Military Occupation

Military occupation is a condition where there is a control and administration of a territory by a foreign military power without the consent of the occupied population. In the case of Palestine, Israel has maintained military occupation over the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza since 1967. This occupation has resulted in widespread restrictions on the movement, rights, and daily lives of Palestinian civilians. The Palestinians are being subjected to curfews, land expropriation, violence by settlers, and limitation of access to basic resources such as water, health, and education. Military occupation, under international law-the Fourth Geneva Convention, is prohibited from making permanent changes in the status of the occupied territory or its population.

Settlements

These are civilian communities built by Israel on land that it occupies in a military capacity, especially in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. By international law, such settlements are illegal; they constitute a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention's prohibition against an occupying power transferring its civilian population into the occupied territory. Despite this fact, the expansion of Israeli settlements has been ongoing for decades, displacing Palestinian families, restricting their access to land, and fragmenting the Palestinian territories. This often results in settlers being subsidized and protected by the government, exacerbating tensions to frequent clashes with Palestinian residents often ending in violence with it not being uncommon for children to get caught in the crossfire.

Blockade of the Gaza Strip

That the restrictions imposed by Israel on anything going in and out, on the people and goods, going from and into the region are very severe. Since its institution in 2007, when Hamas took power in Gaza, the blockade has caused immense humanitarian anguish to the people. In essence, this means sharply curtailed movements of foodstuffs, medicines, construction materials, and fuel. This situation aggravates the poverty and unemployment levels as well as the shortages in basic services. The hospitals in the Gaza Strip are highly strained and offer little in the way of care due to acute shortages of equipment and medicines. The blockade has been referred to as a form of collective punishment, having an out-of-proportion impact on the civilian population without distinction.

Checkpoints

There are Israeli military checkpoints positioned everywhere in the West Bank. These checkpoints monitor the movement of Palestinians between cities and villages. They were part of an extensive security infrastructure devised to control and limit Palestinian mobility; very often, These have caused delays at checkpoints for very long periods of time and greatly disturbed daily routines. During these checkpoint detentions, Palestinians are generally subjected to searches, detention, or even arrest. Thus, they make traveling for work or school, or for medical purposes, very distressing. This means that families have become separated as Palestinian civilians have to in some cases go through multiple military checkpoints just to get to school or work.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Israel, as the occupying power in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, is central in the treatment of Palestinian civilians. Israeli policies, such as military occupation, settlement expansion, and the blockade of Gaza, directly impact Palestinians' daily lives and rights.

United States: The U.S. is one of the key allies of Israel, and through the years, it has been supporting Israel in every possible way on every issue that has come up before them, whether it

be at the diplomatic or military level. Given humanitarian aid to the Palestinians, supported peace processes such as the Oslo Accords, and a two-state solution. On several occasions, it has exercised its veto in the UN Security Council against the passing of any resolution which came against Israel, a historic ally.

Egypt borders the Gaza Strip to the south and has long played an important role mediating between Israel and Hamas, including several cease-fire agreements. It plays a key part in granting humanitarian access as well as controlling the borders into Gaza.

Jordan: Jordan has a very big population of Palestinian refugees. It is attached to the matter of advocating for the rights of the Palestinians. It has taken part in the peace negotiations and supported the solution involving two states. Jordan also helps Palestinian refugees, especially those living in camps.

Saudi Arabia: For decades, Saudi Arabia has championed the political and economic rights of Palestinians, however is not as opinionated as other Arab states

Palestinians in addition to offering financial help to the Palestinian Authority as well as to humanitarian entities. On several occasions, the Kingdom participated in regional peace efforts; the most substantial example being the Arab Peace Initiative.

Iran - This country provided financial and military support for various groups active in Palestine like Hamas and Islamic Jihad; Teheran strongly protests against Israel's policy on self-government in Palestine. Iran also funds Hezbollah and other anti Israel terrorist organizations

European Union: The EU is collectively in favor of Palestinian statehood and has provided a great deal of humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians. The EU calls for a negotiated two-state solution and has criticized Israeli settlement expansion as well as the blockade on Gaza.

Turkey: Turkey has been quite vocal regarding the rights of the Palestinians and has also provided humanitarian aid to Gaza. The Turkish government is opposed to Israeli policies and has called for an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Russia: Russia has supported Palestinian self-determination and called for a two-state solution. Russia has also been involved in diplomatic efforts, including backing UN resolutions that support Palestinian rights. However Russia always makes an effort to counteract the US and Nato and one of its primary objectives is to limit their influence in the region

Key UN Organizations Involved:

United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA): UNRWA is the lead UN agency responsible for the provision of humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. It provides education, health care, social services, and emergency assistance to Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: OCHA coordinates international humanitarian efforts in Palestine, giving priority to the relief activities, advancement of civilians' rights, and documentation of human rights abuses. Besides, it also works towards allowing access to people in need, especially in Gaza and the West Bank.

Past UN involvement

On the 27th of October 2023 the UN General Assembly adopted a [resolution](#) calling for the Immediate, Sustained Humanitarian Truce Leading to Cessation of Hostilities between Israel, Hamas by a vote of 120-14 with 45 abstaining and 14 not voting.

Timeline

1947-1948: The United Nations creates a Partition Plan for the division of Palestine into a

Jewish and a Muslim state. The declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 was the cause of the Arab-Israeli War and led to the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians, known as the Nakba which is defined by many as an act of Ethnic cleansing

1967: In the course of the Six-Day War, Israel seized the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem,

1993: The Oslo Accords were signed, instituting partial self-government for Palestinians and laying the groundwork for further peace negotiations.

2006: After the Palestinian legislative elections, Hamas came into power, creating a political split, with Hamas in control of Gaza and the Palestinian Authority managing parts of the West Bank.

2008-2009, 2012, 2014: There were several high levels of violence between Israel and Hamas, with hundreds of civilians killed, especially in Gaza.

Post-October 7, 2023

October 7th, 2023: Hamas launched a major attack against Israel, which included rocket fire, incursions, and abductions of civilians. Hundreds died on both sides as Israel labeled the attack a terrorist massacre. The escalation marked a significant shift in the conflict.

October 7th-10th, 2023: In response, Israel had begun airstrikes in Gaza, hitting Hamas infrastructure and militant sites that brought massive destruction to Gaza, causing civilian deaths.

October 9th, 2023: With war declared, Israel ratcheted up its military action as the international community called increasingly urgently for restraint and humanitarian intervention.

October 13th, 2023: The UN and humanitarian agencies issued warnings of an out-of-control humanitarian crisis within Gaza amidst extreme shortages of food, water, and medical supplies.

Mid-October 2023: An emergency session by the UN General Assembly called for a cease-fire and improved access to aid. Nevertheless, this resolution to censure attacks by Hamas has been vetoed by many member states.

October 18th, 2023: Israel launched a ground invasion into northern Gaza, trying to dismantle Hamas leadership and infrastructure and further increasing the civilian toll.

October 21th, 2023: More than 7,000 Palestinians were reported to have been killed, with thousands more displaced. Over 1,000 Israelis had died as a result of Hamas's attacks.

November-December 2023: The conflict spilled over into the West Bank and East Jerusalem

October 1th, 2024: Israel declares war with Hezbollah and launches a ground invasion of southern Lebanon nearly one year after the original Hamas attacks on October 7th

October 16th, 2024: Yahya Al Sinwar, the leader of Hamas, is killed by Israeli Forces

November 27th, 2024: Israel and Hezbollah reach a ceasefire agreement, which continues to stand at time of writing (08. December)

Possible Solutions

1. Two-State Solution

The two-state solution is widely regarded by the international community as the most feasible framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It looks to be a peaceful independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. It would be based on the pre-1967 borders: the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. The latter being the capital of Palestine. This solution has

been adopted by a raft of countries and organizations, but a number of serious obstacles lie in the way.

One such problem is the proliferation of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which has never been checked, rendering the task of building a contiguous Palestinian state very hard. These settlements, considered illegal under international law, though Israel disputes this, facially divide the land of the Palestinians and greatly complicate the territorial negotiations that would be at the center of any two-state settlement.

Security concerns are another significant issue for Israel. Given the history of violent conflicts, particularly with groups such as Hamas, Israel insists on stringent security guarantees to ensure the safety of its citizens. The issue of recognizing Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state remains contentious, especially among certain Palestinian factions and regional actors.

2. Economic Development and Humanitarian Assistance

Any long-term stability in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires the strengthening of institutions and fostering economic development on the Palestinian side. An improved economy for the Palestinians in Gaza and West Bank would decrease the burden of dependency on international assistance and improve their livelihood and lay a sound basis for peace.

The Gaza Strip, in particular, suffers from severe economic challenges because of the Israeli blockade, internal political strife, and repeated cycles of conflict. The destruction of infrastructure, including homes, schools, and hospitals, in periods of violence has left Gaza in dire need of reconstruction. Any peace process would necessitate an effort to rebuild Gazan infrastructure, along with efforts to upgrade basic services such as electricity, water, and healthcare.

What is required in the West Bank is investment in sectors such as agriculture, technology, and education, which can help ensure more sustainable economic growth and a decrease in Palestinian dependence on aid. Building a robust private sector, while addressing issues related to job creation and diversification of the economy, would afford Palestinian communities more independence. Equally, efforts should be directed at improving governance structures for the Palestinians so that any form of assistance will be well utilized and that Palestinians build institutional capacity to manage and invest in their own development.

Humanitarian assistance should also persist, especially to Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons. Efforts should be made to ensure that refugees have access to decent housing, health, and education facilities for an improved quality of life. Besides, international aid agencies should focus on short-term relief while building long-term sustainable solutions with the host governments.

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