

Forum:	Economic and Social Council
Issue:	Deteriorating the living conditions of the people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory
Student Officer:	Nicole Saboya
Position:	Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Nicole Saboya and I will be attending as your Deputy President for the Economic and Social Council for the issue of deteriorating the living conditions of the people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This will not only be my first time as a Student Officer but it will also be my first time participating in a PSMUN conference.

Throughout the conference, I will be there to assist any delegate with any confusion or problem related to the topic, or with any confusion related to the general procedure of the conference. As a Student Officer, there is a lot I can help you with, but there is also a lot I can learn from you. I will take this opportunity as serving as your Deputy President to its full potential and help you with any problems you have throughout the way.

The issue to be dealt with is very complex as it dates back all the way to 1913. Many different events have sparked a lot of tension throughout the years between not only Palestine and Israel but many other countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The United Nations has tried to solve many problems relating to Palestinian and Israeli conflict throughout the years including the current issue at hand. I hope this Study Guide benefits you as you start researching and finding solutions to the problem.

I look forward to meeting all of you and I hope this experience benefits and challenges you for future MUN conferences.

Best regards,
Nicole Saboya

INTRODUCING TOPIC

Geographically, Palestine and Israel are two different sovereign states that own pieces of land in one big area. This is a big factor that has caused and still causes major tensions between Palestine and Israel. Israel currently occupies Palestinian territory, which includes Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. These territories are considered “occupied” by the United Nations as Israel has “effective control” over

them. However, the word “occupied” is used because, according to international law one cannot acquire territory through the means of war. This means that the land does not legally belong to Israel and has a Palestinian governing authority.

Since Israel currently has control over these occupied territories, a lot of humanitarian problems have risen, as well as very significant long term ones, besides attacks toward Israeli armed forces and violence against Palestinians. Many Palestinians in these territories have died due to violence, mostly in the West Bank.

Palestinians in these areas have very little control over their lives, as they are deprived of basic human needs and rights. One of the rights that has been denied for Palestinians is the right to a funeral. The Israeli government continues to hold the bodies of many dead Palestinians and, even if they are legally allowed to organize a funeral, it is usually restricted by a bureaucratic list of conditions imposed by Israeli authority. Other problems include: Palestinians being held in Israeli prisons without undergoing trial; being trip searched; tortured and abused frequently; women in labor often fatefully prevented from getting into hospitals; food and medicine is withheld from entering these territories, etc.

Another problem that has affected Palestine negatively are the major restrictions on border movement. Israel controls the borders of these territories, making it very difficult for necessary goods to enter the area. This, ultimately, takes a toll on the Palestinian economy. Additionally, these border controls make it hard for Palestinians to enter and leave the area, restricting movement to a very large degree.

Statistically, poverty and unemployment has risen dramatically over the years which has driven nearly a quarter of all households into food insecurity; about 1 million people are in need of health and nutrition intervention as healthcare has also decreased dramatically; and 1.8 million people need protection assistance. Additionally, access to clean water and electricity is very unreliable, and access to healthcare services, hospitals, and medicine is very limiting. Humanitarian assistance is needed tremendously, in order to resolve the issues at hand, as the living conditions of the Palestinian people are deteriorating dramatically.

The justification for the occupation of Israel, and a lot of the policies and actions it has taken, is self-defense. Israel has repeatedly stated that all the measures taken and the occupation are necessary to defend themselves from Palestine. This is because Palestine, over the years, has shown aggression and hostility towards Israel through large-scale and small-scale attacks.

KEY TERMS

Occupied Palestinian Territories

The Occupied Palestinian Territories in Palestine are under the control of Israel. They include the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. These are known as occupied territories as, according to the 1907 Hague Regulations, a “territory is considered occupied when it is placed under the authority of the hostile army”. Since one is not legally allowed to acquire territory by war according to international law, these are known as occupied territories, which also means they do not legally belong to Israel.



Zionism

Generally, Zionism is the “national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel” according to the Jewish Virtual Library. Ever since the state of Israel was established, Zionism has come to mean “the movement for the development of the state of Israel and the protection of the Jewish nation in Israel”. In 1975, the UN General Assembly called Zionism a form of racism through an officially adopted resolution. People who agree that Zionism is a form of racism argue that “Zionism is a racist movement that discriminated between people on the basis of religion” while people against Zionism being racist argue that Zionism is not about race but about nationalism.

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)

The PLO was established in 1964 and is considered the embodiment of the Palestinian national movement. It is comprised of multiple organizations including the resistance movement, political parties, and other organizations. In 1974, the Arab Summit stated that the PLO was the “sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people”. The PLO has represented Palestine in the United Nations and in many other fora. It has dealt with many tasks related to the life of the Palestinian people as well as establishing several institutions regarding health, education, and social services.

Intifada

Intifada is an Arabic word deriving from the verb “to shake off” and it is used to describe the major conflict between Israel and Palestine, more specifically, the major uprisings against Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, there have been two intifadas: the first in 1987 and the second in 2000. Although the second was worse than the first, both had disastrous effects and left many injured and dead.

Hamas

Hamas was formed in 1987 as a Palestinian fundamentalist organization. It is supported by a sociopolitical structure in Palestinian territories and is currently the governing authority of the Gaza strip. It consists of a military wing which has conducted many anti-Israel attacks and a social service wing. It has conducted many attacks on Israel such as large scale bombings, rocket attacks, roadside explosives, and small-arms attacks. The United States, the European Union, Canada, Japan, and Israel consider Hamas as a terrorist organization due to its long record of attacks.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In 1917, the British government, after defeating the Ottoman Empire, announced its endorsement of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, through the Balfour Declaration. The Balfour Declaration was a letter written from the British Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur James Balfour to Lord Rothschild. It read:

"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."

During 1933 to 1936, the Nazi's assumed power in Germany. This sparked the start of a refugee crisis as German Jews sought to find safety from prosecution which led to major Jewish immigration to Palestine. Around 154,300 Jews entered Palestine legally and many other illegally, increasing the Jewish population in Palestine from 17% in 1931 to nearly 30% in 1935. Palestine, at the time, was placed under British control after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

As the Jewish population and Zionist movement in Palestine continued to grow, Palestinian nationalism and a desire for self-determination of Arabs appeared. The British Mandate issued permits to thousands of new immigrants. Since the Arab population opposed the increase of Jewish settlement in Palestine, as the Jewish immigrants would not sell or lease land to Palestinians nor hire them, there was opposition by foreign mediators. This resulted in hostile relations between Jewish and Arab populations in Palestine.

Since Palestinian nationalists opposed to the British Mandate, major rebellions broke out. The rebellions included the formation of a new union Palestinian political party, called the Arab Higher Committee. The Arab Higher Committee demanded for a general strike which then increased violence towards British troops and Jewish

settlements as well as sabotage on railroads, roads, pipelines, etc. At the time, Jews were also against the British Mandate and had planned attacks on British troops and police as well.

In 1947, Great Britain requested that the United Nations take up the question of Palestine. The United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into two separate states: one for the Jews and the other for the Palestinian Arabs. The year after, Jewish forces attacked the Palestinian Deir Yassin in order to clear the besieged roads leading to Jerusalem. The month after this attack, Israel declares its independence.

After the independence of Israel, conflict between Israel and Palestine broke out including two Arab-Israeli wars. The first war led to 700,000 Palestinians to become refugees. Since 1948, major conflict including many murders, wars, and invasions broke out between Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The wars include the “Yom Kippur War”, the “Six-Day War”, and the War of Attrition with Egypt. By the end of the Arab-Israeli War, Israel conquered 78% of Palestine and a new map was drawn up in which every city and river received a new Hebrew name. By the end of the Six-Days War, Israel conquered the last 22% of Palestine: The West Bank and Gaza Strip. Since, according to international law, you can not acquire territory by war, these are known as occupied territories, which means they do not belong to Israel. Israel soon evacuates from Gaza but then began moving back into Gaza in order to take control over areas used to fire rockets into Southern Israel.

On September of the year 2000, the second intifada broke out, which was a period of intense Israeli-Palestinian violence. Since the start of the second intifada, suicide bombing attacks against Israel increase significantly which include a total of 164 human bombs exploded. In 2002, Hamas, a Palestinian Fundamentalist Organization, commits a suicide attack killing 30 Israeli civilians. Hamas, during this time period, commits many suicide bombings against Israel.

As a way to fight back against Palestine, Israel started the “Operation Defensive Shield” which led to the occupation of six of the largest cities in the West Bank and their surrounding refugee camps and villages through the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). The IDF arrested any Palestinian who they believed were involved in action against Israel. In general, Israel and Palestine show major violence towards each other during this period. Israel also constructs a West Bank security wall/fence in order to prevent Palestinian suicide bombers and other terrorists from reaching population Israeli territory. This was then condemned by international law.

In 2012, Palestinians launched 60 rockets into Israel from Gaza. Ever since, Palestine has launched many more rockets into Israel, destroying homes and wounding civilians. As a result, Israel launched its military offensive on Gaza which includes the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to start the Operation Pillar of Defense which is aimed at protecting Israeli civilians from rockets fired in Gaza and Hamas' ability to launch attacks. This, however, led to cross-border violence as Palestine fired hundreds of rockets into Israel and Israel military carrying out air strikes and bombarding Gaza. Currently, Israel, the United States and the European Union regard Hamas, the organization in charge of Gaza, as a terrorist organization.

In 2014, Israel launched an assault on the Gaza Strip in order to halt cross-border violence as Palestine launched 150 rockets towards Israeli cities. This attack wounded and killed many citizens in Palestine including members of Hamas. This operation against Hamas was a result of high Israeli-Palestinian tension which included the killing of three Israeli teens in the occupied West Bank which was blamed on Hamas. This operation against Hamas in Gaza is called the "Operation Protective Edge", and it left around 2,000 Palestinians dead.

After seven weeks of fighting, Israel and Hamas agree to a cease-fire. Hamas, although very battered, remains in control of Gaza while Israel and Egypt will control access to blockaded Gaza.

Currently, Israel believes that it no longer occupies the Gaza Strip but the United Nations still considers it an occupying power. As for the West Bank, Israel maintains that it is disputed territory. Israel's continued military occupation in Gaza and the West Bank are extremely oppressive. In these territories, Palestinians have very little control over their lives as thousands of men, women, and children are held in Israeli prisons with many not having a legitimate trial; many are strip searched; torture and abuse towards Palestinians is very frequent; women in labor are prevented from getting into hospitals which, in many cases, causes death; a lot of food and medicine is prevented from entering these territories as Israel controls their borders. Now, there is a major humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

COUNTRIES INVOLVED

Palestine

Palestine is of extreme importance to the issue because it is where the living conditions are being deteriorated. The occupied Palestinian territories, which include the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, are suffering from major humanitarian problems as many Palestinians are unable to have control over their lives and are

treated very unjustly by Israeli authority. The United Nations considers these territories to be “occupied” because Israel has “effective control” over them. Due to Israeli control, lots of humanitarian problems arise: In 2016, more than 100 Palestinians were killed with most shot by Israeli forces through airstrikes and small scale attacks, many of whom were below the age of 18; a report of 81 Palestinian children injured with a vast majority caused by Israeli forces with, in many cases, Israeli forces not letting them see paramedics; numerous attacks; Israelis denying many Palestinians the right to a funeral; restricts the territories borders. In addition, malnutrition rates, poverty, and unemployment has increased in the past years.

However, Hamas, the governing authority of the Gaza Strip, also has some to blame for a lot of problems in the Gaza strip as their authority has not improved the safety or maintenance of Gaza.

Israel

Israel, being the major occupier of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, plays a major role in the issue. Although Israel has handed these areas over to Palestinian authority, the United Nations still considers it occupied because of the control it has over these territories. A lot of the measures Israeli forces have taken are justified by Israel through the protection of Israel and Israeli civilians. Israel has imposed a major blockade on these territories. Israel, however, feels threatened by Hamas, the governing authority of Gaza, as it considers Hamas a terrorist organization along with the United States, the European Union, Canada, and Japan.

Egypt

In 1948, Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip. Israel, however, then encircled Egyptian forces and forced them to withdraw and accept a ceasefire. Now, since Egypt borders part of Palestine, Egypt does close its borders, making border control even more strict in the Gaza Strip. This means that people are not free to leave or enter the Gaza Strip nor allowed to import and export goods freely. Additionally, the United Nations considers the Occupied Territories to be occupied by Israel which are supported by additional restrictions by Egypt in the Gaza Strip.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1939-1945	Jewish immigration into Palestine increases due to the Holocaust taking place during World War 2.
1947	United Nations recommends partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states with international control over Jerusalem.
1948	As British Mandate ends, Israel declares independence.
1948-1949	First Arab-Israeli War: Israel is left with more land than expected; Jordan annexes West Bank and eastern Jerusalem; and Egypt occupies Gaza. This leaves about 750,000 Palestinian refugees.

1950-2000	Many wars, murders, uprisings, an intifada, and violence occurs between Palestine Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Syrian. Additionally, new organizations such as Hamas start to form and the countries try to find ways to come to peace with each other.
2002	Israeli Army starts Operation Defensive Shield on West Bank after multiple suicide bombings directed towards Israel. Israel begins building a barrier around the West Bank in order to, according to Israel, protect themselves from attacks; and, according to Palestine, to grab land. The barrier is very controversial.
2003	“Quartet” of United States, EU, Russia, and United Nations propose solution to solve Israeli-Palestinian conflict which includes an independent Palestinian state, freeze on West Bank Jewish settlements, and an end on attacks on Israel. Israel and Palestine National Authority accept.
2005	Israel withdraws all settlements and military personnel from Gaza while still keeping possession over airspace, coastal waters, and border crossings.
2006	Ariel Sharon incapacitated by a stroke and is put into a coma. As a result, Hamas wins the elections and becomes the governing authority over Gaza. This leads to major clash between Hamas and Israel as Hamas increases violence towards Israel,
2008	Israel launches a month-long full-scale invasion of Gaza to prevent Hamas and other groups from launching rockets.
2012	Gaza-based armed groups creates major clashes with Israel. Israel kills Popular Resistance Committees’ leader Zohair al-Qaisi Israel launches a week-long military campaign against Gaza’s armed groups after months of increased rocket attacks on Israel.
2014	“Mass protests by ultra-Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem against bill ending wholesale exemptions for religious students in military service” In the West Bank, 3 Jewish teenagers are killed. Israel responds by arresting numerous Hamas members
2015	“Israel suspends contact with EU officials in talks with Palestinians over EU decision to label goods from Jewish settlements in the West Bank as coming not from Israel but from settlements.
2016	United States decides to aid Israel with a military package worth 38 billion dollars over the next 10 years. This becomes the largest such deal in United States history.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The United Nations has intervened many times throughout the history of the issue related to Palestine and Israel. These are some of the solutions the United Nations has come up with based on previous resolutions or ideas for new resolutions:

- Halt all Israeli Settlements in the occupied territories.

It is important to realize that the Israeli settlements is a major violation of international law according to the United Nations. The settlements in the territories have no “legal validity”. The halt of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories could eventually end the humanitarian problem happening in these territories as a major part of the deterioration of the living conditions is due to these settlements.

- The creation and funding of humanitarian programs that help Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Palestinians in the occupied territories are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance as poverty, unemployment, healthcare, and protection has decreased dramatically over the past years. Since Palestinians can not help themselves in the issue, humanitarian organizations need to step in. Funding of these organizations has decreased compared to the past year, and it is important to emphasize the significance of these organizations in solving the issue.

- Full opening of border crossing in the occupied territories.

Since the borders of the Occupied Palestinian Territories are controlled by Israel, not much can go in or out. A full opening of the borders will ensure humanitarian access to reach these areas as well as remove movement restrictions placed on the Palestinian people. This will also allow a regular flow of persons and goods in and out of these territories.

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