
Sophia Model United Nations 2024



UNSC

A letter from the Executive Board.

We are honoured and privileged to invite you to SMUN 2024 and the United Nations Security Council simulation. Welcome to one of the most challenging and complex disputes in contemporary international relations – the Question of Palestine – a dispute that you will now navigate and attempt to resolve. We are delighted to chair this significant committee amidst the ongoing discourse surrounding the conflict and together we promise to make this an enriching experience for all of you.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a deeply entrenched and long-standing struggle, is rooted in historical, religious, and political tensions prevalent in the region. It encompasses numerous challenges, including territorial disputes, the right to self-determination, and national sovereignty. As delegates of the Security Council, you have the challenge of negotiating solutions that foster peace, security, and coexistence. Your insights and proposals could pave the way for renewed dialogue and a hopeful, sustainable future for the region.

We sincerely believe that each of you can provide meaningful analysis and solutions to the issues at hand. In light of this, delegates are encouraged to use this Guide as merely a foundation for further research. Section II provides a brief timeline of significant events in the conflict, highlighting historical incidents with lasting impacts. Subsequently, Section III delves into the key aspects of the ongoing war, while Section IV offers resources for additional reading. Section V includes a list of the Council Members for this Conference.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions. We look forward to meeting you soon!

Signed,

Algin Thomas
Co-Chairperson

Rito Sarkar
Co-Chairperson

Anoushka Anna John
Moderator

Historical Context of the Issue

Spurred by rising antisemitism in 19th and early 20th century Europe, Zionist settlers began migrating to Palestine, laying the groundwork for the present-day conflict. The primary aim was to establish a Jewish state. While Jewish colonization started during this period, the arrival of more ideologically driven Zionist immigrants before World War I drastically changed Ottoman Palestine. Land purchases, forced evictions of Arab tenants, and armed confrontations with Jewish paramilitary groups heightened Palestinian fears of displacement. This fear evolved into a national consciousness opposing the Zionist goal of turning predominantly Arab land into a Jewish homeland. Meanwhile, early Zionists considered ‘transferring’ the Arab population to secure a Jewish majority, further intensifying the conflict.

Note. This section of the Guide offers a simplified timeline of key events in the conflict. Delegates are strongly encouraged to delve deeper into these historically significant events and consider their various dimensions and complexities.

First World War and the British Mandate in Palestine

During the First World War, in an effort to garner support, Weizmann, the then-President of the Zionist Organization, successfully secured the Balfour Declaration. This statement issued by the British government endorsed the establishment of a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. While interpretations of the Declaration vary, Zionist supporters have favoured a maximalist interpretation that allowed for negotiations about the future of the country to occur directly between Britain and the Jewish community, entirely excluding Arab representation.

Following the Ottoman Empire’s defeat in the War, the League of Nations established the Mandate for Palestine, placing Palestine and Transjordan under British administration. This period saw significant Jewish immigration and economic growth, prompting hard-line Palestinian Arab nationalists to emerge, striving for an Arab national home in Palestine. This era was marked by large-scale riots against Jews, including the 1920 Jerusalem and 1921 Jaffa riots. The violence led to the creation of the Jewish paramilitary force Haganah and the evacuation of Jews from Hebron and Gaza.

As the Arab national struggle intensified, it attracted nationalist militants from across the Middle East and led to the formation of various militant groups, including the Black Hand. This set the stage for the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt, the first sustained violent uprising of Palestinian Arabs in over a century.

Following the death of local leader al-Qassam, tensions erupted into an Arab general strike and boycott, which escalated into violence. The British brutally suppressed the revolt with the help of the Jewish Settlement Police, Jewish Supernumerary Police, and Special Night Squads. This repression resulted in at least 14% of the adult male population being killed, wounded, imprisoned, or exiled.

Most Arab groups were defeated, leading to the forced expulsion of much of the Arab leadership. With its leadership in exile and its economy severely weakened, the Palestinian community struggled to confront the increasingly strong Zionist movement, which enjoyed British support. The high cost and risks of the revolt and the subsequent inter-communal conflict prompted a shift in British policies, leading to the appointment of the Peel Commission. The commission recommended partitioning Palestine, but its proposals were largely unsatisfactory to both sides.

Second World War

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the situation in Mandatory Palestine temporarily stabilized, allowing a more moderate Palestinian Arab leadership to emerge. During this period, the Jewish-Arab Palestine Regiment was also established under British command to fight in North Africa. Meanwhile, the more radical faction led by the exiled Palestinian leadership aligned with Nazi Germany, spreading pro-Nazi propaganda throughout the Arab world.

By the end of the War, the crisis surrounding Holocaust survivors in Europe reignited tensions between the Jewish community and the British authorities. The surge in illegal immigration by Jewish refugees and the paramilitary resistance campaign against British rule by Zionist militias effectively undermined the White Paper policies. Such factors ultimately contributed to the British decision to withdraw from Palestine.

UN Partition Plan

On 29 November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 181(II), recommending the partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states, with Jerusalem designated as an international city under UN administration. Palestinian Arabs rejected the partition plan, while Zionists accepted it, intending to later expand Israel's borders. Violence erupted the next day, plunging the region into chaos.

For four months, the Jewish community primarily defended against continuous Arab provocations and attacks, occasionally retaliating. The Arab League supported the Arab resistance by forming the volunteer-based Arab Liberation Army and backing the Palestinian Arab Army of the Holy War. On the Jewish side, the conflict was managed by major militias (the Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi), bolstered by numerous Jewish World War II veterans and foreign volunteers. By early 1948, the Jewish forces had gained significant territory, leading to a large-scale Palestinian Arab refugee crisis.

Note. While the Palestinian Arab population was twice the Jewish population, 56% of the land was allotted to the Jewish State.

Arab-Israeli War and the Subsequent Conflicts

On 14 May 1948, the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel was proclaimed, marking the end of the British Mandate. In response, the Arab League intervened on behalf of Palestinian Arabs, triggering the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The conflict, resulting in approximately 15,000 casualties, concluded in 1949 with cease-fire and armistice agreements. During this period, known as the Nakba, around 750,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled their homes due to various violent means. Israel retained much of the former Mandate territory, while Jordan annexed the West Bank and Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip, proclaiming the All-Palestine Government. The 1949 Armistice borders, known as the Green Line, served as the de facto borders of Israel until the Six-Day War in 1967.

Throughout the 1950s, Jordan and Egypt supported Palestinian Fedayeen militants in cross-border attacks into Israel, which responded with reprisal operations. The 1956 Suez Crisis led to a brief Israeli occupation of Gaza and the exile of the All-Palestine Government, placing Gaza under Egyptian military administration. In 1964, Yasser Arafat established the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), gaining the support of the Arab League.

On 5 June 1967, Israel launched pre-emptive airstrikes targeting Egyptian airfields and other strategic sites, marking the start of the Six-Day War. Simultaneously, Israeli forces initiated a ground offensive into Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. By the time a ceasefire was reached, Israel had captured the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, and the Sinai Peninsula along with the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Within a month, Israel began constructing settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, a direct violation of international law.

Despite condemnation from the international community, Israel maintains control over these territories, perpetuating its ‘illegal occupation’ of Palestinian land.

In 1979, Israel established formal borders with Egypt after becoming the first Arab nation to recognize Israel. This recognition led to a treaty defining Israel’s border with Egypt, and Israel withdrew all its forces and settlers from the Sinai Peninsula. Additionally, in 1994, Jordan became the second Arab country to recognize Israel, formalizing Israel's border with Jordan. Israel's de facto border with Lebanon follows the 1949 Armistice lines, while its border with Syria remains unresolved, constituting Israel's current borders.

First and Second Intifadas

In response to escalating attacks and the ongoing occupation, the first Palestinian uprising began in 1987. Following the Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty's success, the Oslo Accords of 1993 enabled the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by the PLO. However, the peace process encountered strong opposition from radical Islamic factions within Palestinian society, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which promptly launched attacks against Israelis. The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin by an Israeli far-right extremist opposed to the peace initiative dealt a severe blow to the process, prompting the newly elected Israeli government in 1996 to backtrack from it.

After years of unsuccessful negotiations, in 2000, the conflict reignited with the Second Intifada. The violence escalated into open conflict between the Palestinian National Security Forces and the Israel Defense Forces.

In 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Sharon ordered the removal of Israeli settlers and soldiers from Gaza. Despite Israel and its Supreme Court formally declaring an end to the occupation, citing the lack of ‘effective control’ over Gaza, the United Nations and many states and institutions continue to consider Israel the occupying power of the Gaza Strip due to its ‘overall control over’ Gaza's airspace, territorial waters, and movement of people and goods.

Current State of the Conflict

On 7 October 2023, Hamas, in association with several other Palestinian militant groups, carried out armed invasions from the Gaza Strip into the southern parts of Israel's Gaza envelope. This marked the first breach of Israeli territory since the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. In response, Israel promptly initiated Operation Swords of Iron, officially marking the beginning of the 2023 Israel-Hamas war.

Note. This section of the Guide is dedicated to outlining specific aspects of the ongoing conflict for the delegates' acknowledgment and research. While we acknowledge the considerable requirement of existing international law knowledge, for a broader understanding of the ongoing conflict, please refer to §III for Further Readings.

Status of Territorial Disputes & Claims

At the heart of the dispute lies the contentious claims regarding the ownership of West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Unsurprisingly, the legitimacy of Israeli settlements and military presence in these areas is debated against a backdrop of historical narratives, security concerns, and international legal frameworks.

Israeli Perspective

- 1. Security and Strategic Claims:** Israel asserts that maintaining control over parts of the West Bank is essential for national security. Israeli leaders highlight the vulnerability of pre-1967 borders and emphasize the need for strategic depth to defend against potential threats from Palestinian militant groups.
 - 2. Historical and Religious Claims:** Israel's claim to the West Bank, often referred to as Judea and Samaria, is rooted in Jewish historical and religious ties to the land. The declaration of Jerusalem as the 'complete and united' capital of Israel underscores these deep connections, reflecting a view that these areas are integral to the Jewish homeland.
 - 3. Applicability of International Law Norms:** Israel bases its legal position on the principle of *uti possidetis juris*, which holds that the administrative boundaries of former colonies should remain unchanged after independence. Israel argues that since the West Bank and East Jerusalem were not under recognized sovereignty before their capture in 1967, they should be considered disputed rather than occupied territories. Israel further contends that their status should be determined through negotiations, as they were not part of a formal Palestinian state. However, applying *uti possidetis juris* in this context presents notable challenges. This principle typically supports maintaining borders at the moment of decolonization, which intersects with the principle of self-determination.
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The right to self-determination is significant because the Arab population constituted the majority in these regions before substantial Jewish immigration and the establishment of Israel. Therefore, the Palestinian people's right to self-determination challenges Israel's strict interpretation of *uti possidetis juris*.

Palestinian Perspective

- 1. Right to Statehood and Self-Determination:** Palestinians emphasize their right to self-determination, advocating for the establishment of an independent state within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This right is safeguarded by various international legal instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The ICJ, through numerous advisory opinions, has re-affirmed self-determination as a fundamental principle of international law, thereby bolstering Palestinian aspirations for statehood.
- 2. Condemnation of Illegal Occupation:** The Palestinian position, widely supported by other states and institutions, asserts that the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 –including West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza – are illegal occupations. UNSC Resolution 2334 (2016) as well as the Wall Advisory Opinion (2004) from the ICJ explicitly hold that the Israeli settlements contravene international law and undermine prospects for a two-state solution.
- 3. Hindrances to Peace Process:** The expansion of Israeli settlements is widely viewed as a major obstacle to peace negotiations, as it establishes irreversible realities on the ground that complicate the prospects of a viable Palestinian state. States and other international institutions have consistently called for a cessation of settlement activity, considering it a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a significant hindrance to achieving a two-state solution.

Humanitarian Impact of the Ongoing Conflict

As of June, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health, Israel's retaliatory actions have resulted in over 37,000 deaths and over 85,000 injuries. Aerial bombardments by Israel have devastated neighbourhoods, schools, and mosques, with UN satellite imagery indicating that about 30% of Gaza's structures have been destroyed or damaged. Independent analysis, however, suggests a higher figure, between 50% and 61%. In response, Israel's military claims that it has only targeted Hamas centres and tunnels hidden beneath civilian infrastructure, including hospitals.

The UN has warned of an impending famine, affecting 1.1 million people – half the population – facing severe food insecurity. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports ongoing challenges to humanitarian aid delivery, worsening conditions in the region.

Israeli Perspective

Israel argues that its military operations are proportionate and compliant with international humanitarian law, specifically citing Article 51 of the UN Charter as justification for responding to threats it faces. Additionally, Israel asserts that it facilitates the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) manages the transfer of essential goods and services, asserting that the blockade's restrictions are meticulously calibrated to balance security imperatives with humanitarian requirements. According to COGAT, hundreds of thousands of tons of goods are permitted into Gaza annually under strict controls aimed at preventing misuse by militant factions.

Palestinian Perspective

Palestinians and numerous international organizations perceive the blockade and its retaliatory attacks as a type of collective punishment. They argue that its wide-reaching effects on Gaza's civilian population, including limitations on vital goods and services, reinforce this view by imposing significant hardships on the entire populace instead of specifically addressing military threats. The blockade has profoundly damaged Gaza's economy and social structure, contributing to widespread unemployment, poverty, and shortages of medical supplies, clean water, and electricity. Organizations like the UNRWA repeatedly emphasize that Israel's actions exacerbate and sustain a humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Use of AI in Targeting Combatants

According to a recent investigation by +972 Magazine, Israel has reportedly employed AI to guide its operations in Gaza, relying heavily on AI systems to identify targets for military action, with minimal human oversight, particularly in the initial stages of conflict. The investigation details three AI systems: 'Gospel' identifies buildings used by Hamas, 'Lavender' analyses surveillance data to assess the likelihood of individuals being militants, and 'Where's Daddy?' tracks these targets, notifying the military when they are at home.

However, the Israel Defence Forces deny these allegations, stating they do not use AI systems to identify terrorists or predict a person's terrorist affiliation. Instead, they assert that information systems are tools used by analysts in the preliminary target identification process. In this regard, they assert that internal directives require analysts to independently verify that identified targets meet international legal definitions and comply with IDF guidelines.

Involvement of International Courts and Institutions

The following is a brief summary of recent international interventions and statements: On 20 May 2024, the International Criminal Court's Office of the Prosecutor requested arrest warrants for Hamas and Israeli officials, citing allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Israel and the occupied Gaza Strip.

On 24 May 2024, in the ongoing case of *South Africa v. Israel*, the ICJ reaffirmed previous provisional measures, stating that Israel must immediately cease its military offensive and any actions in the Rafah Governorate that could lead to the physical destruction of the Palestinian group in Gaza, in accordance with its obligations under the Genocide Convention. This was influenced by the severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the potential for further deterioration.

On 10 June 2024, the Security Council adopted a resolution endorsing a US-backed ceasefire proposal aimed at halting Israel's eight-month assault on Gaza. However, its implementation remains uncertain as of now.

On 19 June 2024, the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory concluded that both Israeli authorities and Hamas were responsible for war crimes. The report highlighted the grave humanitarian conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories, documenting allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and potential acts of genocide.

On 20 June 2024, UN Special Rapporteurs expressed concerns that the transfer of weapons and ammunition to Israel might constitute serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, potentially implicating states in international crimes, including genocide.

Reading Materials

This section of the Guide provides links to essential sources that delegates must thoroughly research. Nevertheless, you are also encouraged to explore beyond these resources.

United Nations Sources

1. United Nations Security Council, Resolutions on the Question of Palestine [[Link](#)]
2. United Nations General Assembly, Resolutions on the Question of Palestine [[Link](#)]
3. United Nations Human Rights Council, Reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory [[Link](#)]
4. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Reports of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory [[Link](#)]

Articles and News Reports

1. Council on Foreign Relations, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict [[Link](#)]
 2. Al Jazeera, Israel-Palestine Conflict: A Brief History in Maps and Charts [[Link](#)]
 3. BBC, Israel's Borders Explained in Maps [[Link](#)]
 4. Amnesty International, Israel's Occupation: 50 Years of Dispossession [[Link](#)]
 5. Oxfam America, The Humanitarian Impact of the Gaza Blockade [[Link](#)]
 6. CSIS, Hamas' October 7 Attack: The Tactics, Targets, and Strategy of Terrorists [[Link](#)]
 7. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Israeli Security After October 7 [[Link](#)]
 8. 972 Magazine, 'Lavender': The AI Machine Directing Israel's Bombing Spree in Gaza [[Link](#)]
 9. Reuters, Gaza's Catastrophic Food Shortage Means Mass Death is Imminent [[Link](#)]
 10. International Rescue Committee, Crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory [[Link](#)]
 11. BBC, Biden Plans to Send \$1bn Arms Shipment to Israel [[Link](#)]
 12. The Economic Times, Dutch Court Orders Netherlands Govt. to Halt Delivery of Fighter Jet Parts to Israel [[Link](#)]
 13. Foreign Affairs, The Strange Resurrection of the Two-State Solution [[Link](#)]
 14. Articles of War, Symposium on the Israel-Hamas Conflict [[Link](#)]
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International Cases

1. Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (2004)
2. Legal Consequences Arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (Ongoing)
3. Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel) (Ongoing)
4. Alleged Breaches of Certain International Obligations in respect of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Nicaragua v. Germany) (Ongoing)
5. Application of Arrest Warrants in the Situation of the State of Palestine (Office of the Prosecutor, International Criminal Court) (Ongoing)

Members of the Security Council

Given the contentious nature of the Agenda, the Security Council has allowed additional States to participate in the meetings under Article 31 or 32 of the UN Charter, in line with Rule 37 of the Provisional Rules of the UNSC.

However, these States will not have voting rights during the substantive voting phase on the final resolutions.

1. Azerbaijan (V)
2. China (P)
3. Egypt (V)
4. France (P)
5. Germany (V)
6. India (V)
7. Iran (NV)
8. Israel (NV)
9. Japan (V)
10. Palestine (NV)
11. Qatar (NV)
12. Russian Federation (P)
13. Saudi Arabia (NV)
14. Sierra Leone (V)
15. Spain (NV)
16. United Arab Emirates (NV)
17. United Kingdom (P)
18. United States (P)

Note: 'P' refers to Permanent Members of the UNSC, 'V' refers to Voting States, and 'NV' refers to Non-Voting States
