



SGSITS MUN 25

DISEC

The Impact of Illicit Arms Transfers on the Israel-Palestine Conflict : Strategies for De-escalation

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Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

It is our distinct honour to welcome you to the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) at the SGSITS Indore Model United Nations 2025. As delegates to one of the UN's most consequential committees, you are entrusted with the task of thoughtfully debating pressing issues of global security and contributing to the formulation of meaningful solutions. Whether your ambition is to propose innovative strategies or address longstanding international concerns, your contributions will be vital to the success of this committee.

This Background Guide is intended to serve as a foundational resource for your preliminary research. We strongly encourage you to expand your understanding by reading a wide variety of sources, including official United Nations reports, reputable news organizations such as Reuters, and, where relevant, documents from government or agency websites specific to the country you represent. Utilizing a broad spectrum of resources will enable you to gain balanced perspectives and construct well-rounded arguments.

We urge all delegates to practice the highest standards of diplomacy and mutual respect throughout the conference. The ethos of Model UN lies in the respectful exchange of ideas, the consideration of differing viewpoints, and the pursuit of consensus-driven outcomes. We especially encourage first-time participants to voice their perspectives and engage actively in discussions, as your insights are invaluable to the collaborative spirit of DISEC.

Should you have any questions or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the Executive Board. We look forward to an enlightening, challenging, and rewarding session with each of you.

Best regards,

Nikunj Vyas — **Chairperson**

Ishaan Joshi — **Vice-Chairperson**

Aditi Avdhani — **Rapporteur**

DISEC, SGSITS Indore Model United Nations 2025

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Committee Overview

- **The Impact of Illicit Arms Transfers on the Israel–Palestine Conflict: Strategies for De-escalation**

The problem of illegal weapons flowing into the Israel-Palestine region makes the conflict much worse and creates major obstacles to peace. These unauthorized arms transfers don't just fuel violence between the two sides, they also involve many international players and expose serious weaknesses in how the world tries to control weapons trafficking.

- **Understanding the Smuggling Networks**

Weapons enter Gaza and the West Bank through several different routes that are hard to monitor and stop. The most famous route has been the extensive tunnel system under the Gaza-Egypt border. These tunnels, sometimes called the "Gaza metro," have been used by Hamas and other armed groups to bring in everything from small handguns to rockets and military equipment. While Egypt has destroyed many tunnels over the years, new ones keep being built, and lighter weapons still get through using hidden crossings and concealed shipments.

In the West Bank, weapons primarily come overland from Jordan through desert routes that are difficult to patrol. Bedouin networks that span across borders help coordinate these smuggling operations, taking advantage of family connections and knowledge of remote desert paths that avoid official checkpoints. These smugglers typically move about 15 handguns and one or two assault rifles per trip, though some cases have involved much larger quantities.

The scale of this problem is significant. Between March 2021 and April 2023, Israeli police detected at least 35 smuggling attempts from Jordan alone, seizing more than 800 weapons. In 2022, Israeli forces seized approximately 570 weapons coming from Jordan, showing how the problem has been getting worse.

- **Who's Involved in Arms Trafficking**

Several different types of players contribute to this illegal weapons trade. Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps provides major support to groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, sending money, training, and weapons through intermediaries in Syria and Lebanon. This isn't just about

ideology – there are also criminal networks that work purely for profit, moving weapons across borders because there's good money in it.

A striking example happened in April 2023 when Jordanian parliamentarian Imad al-Adwan was arrested trying to smuggle over 200 guns into the West Bank through an official border crossing. According to Israeli intelligence, he was motivated primarily by money rather than supporting any particular political cause. This shows how the weapons trade attracts people from all walks of life who see it as a way to make quick profits.

Regional criminal groups also play a major role, often using family ties that cross national borders to coordinate smuggling operations. These networks don't necessarily support any political cause – they're in it for the business opportunity. Many of the weapons come from places like Syria and Iraq, where dealers make business arrangements with Jordanian counterparts who then hire local smugglers to move the guns.

- **Why Current Enforcement Isn't Working Well**

Despite international laws like the Arms Trade Treaty and various UN resolutions that clearly prohibit illegal arms transfers, enforcement remains a major challenge. Several factors make it hard to stop weapons smuggling effectively.

First, there are serious gaps in intelligence sharing between countries. Even when one nation detects smuggling activity, the information doesn't always get shared quickly or effectively with neighboring countries that could help stop the weapons from reaching their destination. Border agencies often lack the advanced scanning equipment and surveillance technology needed to detect well-hidden contraband.

Corruption among local officials creates another major problem. When border guards or customs officers can be bribed to look the other way, even the best laws and equipment become useless. The profits from weapons smuggling can be substantial, creating strong incentives for corruption.

The legal system also faces challenges in prosecuting weapons traffickers. Because these operations are secretive by nature, it's often difficult to gather the kind of evidence needed to secure convictions in court. When traffickers do get caught, they may face relatively light sentences that don't deter others from trying.

- **The Human Cost**

The continuous flow of illegal weapons has devastating consequences for ordinary people on both sides of the conflict. Rockets and other weapons fired from Gaza into Israeli communities force civilians into bomb shelters and sometimes cause casualties and property damage. When Israel responds with military strikes, Palestinian civilians often bear the brunt of the violence, leading to deaths, injuries, and widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure.

This creates a vicious cycle where each attack leads to retaliation, which leads to more attacks. The availability of weapons makes it easier for extremist groups to carry out violent acts, which then justifies more security measures and military responses. Innocent people on both sides suffer the consequences.

In the West Bank, the presence of illegal weapons contributes to clashes between Israeli settlers, Palestinian residents, and security forces. These weapons also empower criminal gangs, making it harder for the Palestinian Authority to maintain law and order and provide basic services to its people.

- **Practical Solutions for Reducing Arms Trafficking**

Stopping illegal weapons flows requires a comprehensive approach that addresses multiple aspects of the problem simultaneously.

Improving Border Security: Countries need better technology to detect hidden weapons, including mobile scanning units that can be deployed to remote border areas and surveillance systems that can monitor vast desert regions where smuggling often occurs. Advanced detection equipment, including underground sensors that can identify tunnel construction, would help border forces stay ahead of smuggling networks.

Strengthening Intelligence Cooperation: Regional countries need to share information more effectively about smuggling networks, suspicious activities, and successful interdiction methods. This requires building trust between intelligence agencies and establishing secure communication channels that protect sensitive information while enabling rapid coordination.

Addressing Corruption: Anti-corruption measures must include better pay and training for border officials, stronger oversight mechanisms, and serious consequences for those who take bribes. Creating reporting systems that allow honest officials to safely report corruption would also help clean up border enforcement.



Legal and Judicial Reforms: Countries need to harmonize their laws regarding weapons trafficking to eliminate legal loopholes that smugglers exploit. This includes ensuring that penalties are severe enough to deter trafficking and that courts have the resources and expertise needed to successfully prosecute complex smuggling cases.

Economic Alternatives: Many people get involved in smuggling because they need money and see few other economic opportunities. Creating legitimate jobs and economic development in border areas could reduce the number of people willing to participate in illegal activities.

Community Engagement: Working with local communities, religious leaders, and civil society organizations to build support for peace and non-violence can help reduce demand for weapons. When communities are committed to peaceful solutions, they're less likely to support or tolerate weapons smuggling.

International Pressure and Support: The international community can use both carrots and sticks to encourage better behavior. This might include offering development aid and technical assistance to countries that improve their border controls, while imposing sanctions on those that allow smuggling to continue.

● **Moving Forward**

Reducing illicit arms transfers in the Israel-Palestine conflict requires sustained commitment from all parties involved. No single solution will work by itself – success requires combining better technology, stronger laws, international cooperation, and efforts to address the underlying economic and political factors that fuel the weapons trade.

The goal isn't just to stop weapons from crossing borders, but to create conditions where people on both sides feel secure enough to pursue peaceful solutions to their differences. When weapons are harder to get, extremist groups have less ability to carry out attacks, which reduces the justification for military responses and creates more space for diplomatic efforts.

This is challenging work that will take time and require patience from all involved. But the alternative – allowing illegal weapons to continue fueling violence – is far worse for everyone in the region. By working together on practical solutions, the international community can help reduce the human suffering caused by this conflict and create better prospects for lasting peace.

AGENDA OF THE COMMITTEE :- “The Impact of Illicit Arms Transfers on the Israel–Palestine Conflict: Strategies for De-escalation.” (Encourages discussion on arms smuggling, international actors, and enforcement.)

The Israel–Palestine conflict has been marked by recurring cycles of violence, where the availability of illicit arms plays a major role in escalating tensions. Smuggled weapons often reach non-state actors, fueling attacks, retaliations, and civilian casualties. These arms transfers are not only a local issue but also part of a wider international problem, as weapons flow through underground markets and porous borders, often with indirect support from external powers and regional actors.

Illicit arms trade undermines peace negotiations by making violence easier to sustain and harder to control. It also strains humanitarian conditions, disrupts security efforts, and complicates international diplomatic initiatives. Addressing this challenge requires a combination of stricter enforcement of international arms regulations, greater cooperation between regional and global stakeholders, and innovative de-escalation strategies to reduce both the demand for and supply of illegal weapons in the conflict zone.

The involvement of international and regional actors further complicates the issue. Some states are accused of turning a blind eye to the flow of arms in order to exert influence in the conflict, while others provide military support under the justification of self-defense or political alliances. Non-state actors, including organized crime groups and extremist organizations, also exploit the instability to profit from smuggling networks. This external involvement transforms a local conflict into a wider security challenge with global implications.

Curbing illicit arms transfers requires stricter border control, intelligence-sharing, and accountability for those enabling the trade. At the same time, addressing the root causes of the conflict—political grievances, insecurity, and economic hardship—is essential to reducing the demand for weapons and moving toward sustainable peace.

Key Terms

- **Illicit Arms Transfers**

The unauthorized movement of weapons, ammunition, and related materials across borders in violation of national laws, international agreements, or UN sanctions. This includes trafficking operations that circumvent official arms control mechanisms and legally required end-user certificates. Illicit transfers can involve completely illegal transactions or the diversion of legally exported weapons to unauthorized recipients through theft, corruption, or re-export without proper authorization.

- **Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)**

Two categories of man-portable weapons as defined by the UN. Small arms are weapons designed for individual use, including handguns, rifles, carbines, submachine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns. Light weapons are portable systems operated by small crews, including heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, anti-tank weapons, rocket-propelled grenades, and mortars under 100mm caliber. These weapons are distinguished from heavy weapons by their portability and the fact they don't require complex logistical support or vehicles for operation.

- **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)**

A multilateral treaty that entered into force in 2014, regulating international trade in conventional weapons to prevent irresponsible arms transfers. The treaty requires states to establish national control systems, prohibits transfers that would violate UN Security Council resolutions or contribute to genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes, and mandates risk assessments to prevent weapons from facilitating serious violations of international humanitarian law. The ATT covers export, import, transit, trans-shipment, and brokering activities.

- **Anti-Satellite (ASAT) Weapons**

Space weapons designed to disable, destroy, or interfere with satellites in orbit for strategic or defensive purposes. Kinetic ASATs physically collide with satellites using missiles or other projectiles, creating dangerous space debris. Non-kinetic ASATs use cyber-attacks, jamming, spoofing, or directed energy weapons like lasers to disrupt satellite functions without physical destruction. Only four countries (United States, Russia, China, and India) have demonstrated operational ASAT capabilities.

- **Non-State Actors**

Organizations, groups, or individuals that operate independently of any government authority but may significantly influence international affairs. In the context of arms trafficking, these include militant groups, terrorist organizations, criminal networks, private military contractors, and armed non-governmental organizations. Non-state actors often serve as both suppliers and recipients in illicit arms networks, sometimes acting as intermediaries between state suppliers and end users.

- **Smuggling Tunnels**

Underground passages constructed to secretly transport goods, including weapons, across monitored or closed borders. The most prominent example has been the extensive tunnel network between Gaza and Egypt, used by Hamas and other groups to import weapons, ammunition, and military equipment while evading border controls. These tunnels can extend for kilometers underground and often include ventilation systems, rail tracks, and storage areas.

- **Border Interdiction**

Law enforcement and military efforts to detect, intercept, and prevent the illegal movement of weapons and other contraband across international borders. This includes customs inspections, surveillance operations, intelligence gathering, and coordination between border agencies. Effective interdiction requires advanced detection technology, trained personnel, and international cooperation to track smuggling networks across multiple jurisdictions.

- **Diversion**

The process by which legally manufactured or transferred weapons are redirected into unauthorized channels. This can occur through theft from military or police stockpiles, corruption among officials responsible for weapons security, re-export without proper authorization, or the failure of end-user controls. The Arms Trade Treaty specifically requires states to assess diversion risks and implement measures to prevent weapons from reaching illicit markets.



- **Intelligence Sharing**

The exchange of information between countries, agencies, or organizations to detect and prevent illicit activities like arms trafficking. This includes sharing data about smuggling routes, criminal networks, suspicious transactions, and interdiction successes. Effective intelligence sharing requires trust between partners, secure communication channels, and agreements on how sensitive information will be protected and used.

- **Space Situational Awareness (SSA)**

The comprehensive understanding of the space environment, including tracking all objects in Earth's orbit, predicting their future positions, and assessing potential collision risks. SSA involves monitoring both operational satellites and space debris to ensure safe space operations. As the number of satellites increases dramatically, effective SSA becomes crucial for preventing accidental collisions and managing space traffic responsibly.

- **End-User Certificate**

Official documentation that identifies the final recipient and intended use of exported weapons. These certificates are required by most arms control agreements and national export control systems to ensure weapons reach only authorized users and are used for legitimate purposes. Fraudulent or inadequate end-user certificates are a common method used to facilitate illicit arms transfers.

- **Arms Embargo**

A restriction or prohibition on arms sales or transfers imposed by international bodies like the UN Security Council, regional organizations, or individual countries. Embargoes are typically imposed on countries or entities involved in conflicts, human rights violations, or threats to international peace and security. Violations of arms embargoes constitute illicit transfers and can result in legal consequences for individuals and states involved.

- **Dual-Use Technology**

Equipment, materials, or technologies that can serve both civilian and military purposes. In the context of arms control, this creates challenges because items with legitimate civilian applications can be diverted for weapons production or military use. Satellite technology, certain chemicals, and manufacturing equipment often fall into this category, requiring careful export controls and monitoring.



- **Space Debris**

Non-functional objects in Earth's orbit, including defunct satellites, spent rocket stages, and fragments created by collisions or ASAT weapon tests. Space debris poses serious risks to operational satellites and spacecraft because even small pieces can cause severe damage due to high orbital velocities. The creation of debris through ASAT tests or collisions could trigger a cascade effect known as Kessler Syndrome, making certain orbital regions unusable.

- **Brokering**

The act of facilitating arms deals between suppliers and buyers, often across multiple jurisdictions. Arms brokers may arrange transactions, provide logistics support, or help circumvent export controls. The Arms Trade Treaty requires states to regulate brokering activities within their jurisdiction to prevent brokers from facilitating illicit transfers or helping weapons reach prohibited destinations.

Historical Background

The question of Palestine was brought before the United Nations shortly after the end of the Second World War.

The origins of the Palestine problem as an international issue, however, lie in events occurring towards the end of the First World War. These events led to a League of Nations decision to place Palestine under the administration of Great Britain as the Mandatory Power under the Mandates System adopted by the League. In principle, the Mandate was meant to be in the nature of a transitory phase until Palestine attained the status of a fully independent nation, a status provisionally recognized in the League's Covenant, but in fact the Mandate's historical evolution did not result in the emergence of Palestine as an independent nation.

The decision on the Mandate did not take into account the wishes of the people of Palestine, despite the Covenant's requirements that "the wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory". This assumed special significance because, almost five years before receiving the mandate from the League of Nations, the British Government had given commitments to the Zionist Organization regarding the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, for which Zionist leaders had pressed a claim of "historical connection" since their ancestors had lived in Palestine two thousand years earlier before dispersing in the "Diaspora".

During the period of the Mandate, the Zionist Organization worked to secure the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The indigenous people of Palestine, whose forefathers had inhabited the land for virtually the two preceding millennia felt this design to be a violation of their natural and inalienable rights. They also viewed it as an infringement of assurances of independence given by the Allied Powers to Arab leaders in return for their support during the

war. The result was mounting resistance to the Mandate by Palestinian Arabs, followed by resort to violence by the Jewish community as the Second World War drew to a close.

After a quarter of a century of the Mandate, Great Britain submitted what had become “the Palestine problem” to the United Nations on the ground that the Mandatory Power was faced with conflicting obligations that had proved irreconcilable. At this point, when the United Nations itself was hardly two years old, violence ravaged Palestine. After investigating various alternatives the United Nations proposed the partitioning of Palestine into two independent States, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish, with Jerusalem internationalized. The partition plan did not bring peace to Palestine, and the prevailing violence spread into a Middle East war halted only by United Nations action. One of the two States envisaged in the partition plan proclaimed its independence as Israel and, in a series of successive wars, its territorial control expanded to occupy all of Palestine. The Palestinian Arab State envisaged in the partition plan never appeared on the world’s map and, over the following 30 years, the Palestinian people have struggled for their lost rights.

The Palestine problem quickly widened into the Middle East dispute between the Arab States and Israel. From 1948 there have been wars and destruction, forcing millions of Palestinians into exile, and engaging the United Nations in a continuing search for a solution to a problem which came to possess the potential of a major source of danger for world peace.

In the course of this search, a large majority of States Members of the United Nations have recognized that the Palestine issue continues to lie at the heart of the Middle East problem, the most serious threat to peace with which the United Nations must contend. Recognition is spreading in world opinion that the Palestinian people must be assured its inherent inalienable right of national self-determination for peace to be restored.

In 1947 the United Nations accepted the responsibility of finding a just solution for the Palestine issue, and still grapples with this task today.

UN Actions and Laws

Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

The Arms Trade Treaty, which entered into force in 2014, represents the most comprehensive international legal framework governing conventional weapons transfers. Under Article 6.3, the treaty explicitly prohibits states from authorizing arms transfers if they know the weapons would be used in genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes. Article 7.1 requires states to assess whether weapons could contribute to violations of international humanitarian law or human rights before approving exports.

Recent civil society groups have called for stricter application of the ATT to the Israel-Palestine context, arguing that continued arms exports to Israel violate these provisions given the International Court of Justice's determination of "plausible genocide" in Gaza. However, enforcement remains challenging as the ATT lacks binding enforcement mechanisms and relies on voluntary state compliance.

UN Security Council Resolutions

The UN Security Council has not imposed a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel or Palestinian territories, unlike embargoes currently in place for nine other countries including Libya, North Korea, and Sudan. While various Security Council resolutions have addressed the Israel-Palestine conflict, they have not included specific arms transfer restrictions. Any attempt to impose such an embargo would likely face a US veto, given America's position as a permanent Security Council member and its strategic alliance with Israel.

UN Human Rights Council Actions

In April 2024, the UN Human Rights Council passed Resolution A/HRC/55/32, which called upon all states to "cease the sale, transfer and diversion of arms, munitions and other military equipment to Israel". The resolution passed with 28 votes in favor, 6 against (including the United States), and 13 abstentions. The resolution cited the ICJ's interim ruling on genocide allegations and demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

The Human Rights Council maintains a unique Agenda Item 7 dedicated exclusively to scrutinizing Israel, making it the only country with its own permanent agenda item. This has contributed to the council passing more resolutions targeting Israel than all other countries combined, leading to criticism about disproportionate focus.

UNODC Anti-Trafficking Framework

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime operates the Global Firearms Programme to assist states in building criminal justice systems capable of addressing illicit arms trafficking. The programme supports implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Firearms Protocol, which requires states to criminalize illicit manufacturing and trafficking of weapons.

UNODC has documented how illicit arms flows fuel regional conflicts and undermine development efforts, noting that cross-border trafficking by land remains the most common method globally. The organization provides technical assistance to strengthen border controls, enhance intelligence sharing, and build prosecution capabilities for firearms-related crimes.

UN Programme of Action on Small Arms

The 2001 UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons provides a framework for national action but lacks legally binding obligations. The programme emphasizes strengthening border controls, improving weapons stockpile management, and enhancing international cooperation to track illicit transfers.

Regional implementation has shown mixed results, with UNDP facilitating the surrender of over 40,000 small arms in West Africa while the Middle East continues to experience significant trafficking challenges. The programme's effectiveness depends heavily on voluntary state participation and adequate funding.

Recent Multilateral Initiatives

In November 2024, 52 countries led by Turkey sent a letter to the UN calling for an arms embargo on Israel, including signatories such as China, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Brazil. The letter urged the Security Council to act on violations of its resolutions, though prospects for Security Council action remain limited due to likely US opposition.

UN experts have repeatedly called for states and companies to end arms transfers to Israel, warning that continued exports may constitute complicity in international law violations. Companies specifically named include major defense contractors like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, BAE Systems, and Rheinmetall.

Enforcement Challenges

Despite extensive legal frameworks, enforcement of arms transfer restrictions remains problematic. The ATT relies on national implementation and voluntary reporting, creating gaps when states prioritize strategic relationships over treaty obligations. UN bodies can issue recommendations and resolutions, but lack mechanisms to compel compliance from non-cooperative states.

The dual-use nature of many technologies complicates enforcement efforts, as items with legitimate civilian applications can be diverted for military purposes. Intelligence sharing between states often remains limited due to security sensitivities, hampering efforts to track sophisticated smuggling networks.

International courts like the ICJ can issue advisory opinions and interim measures, but enforcement ultimately depends on state cooperation and political will rather than binding legal authority.

Recent Incidents

Gaza Strip

During November 2024, Israeli military operations further intensified across the Gaza Strip, particularly targeting northern areas such as Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, and the Jabalia refugee camp. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conducted systematic air, ground, and maritime assaults, resulting in high fatality rates and the near-destruction of community infrastructure.

A series of airstrikes in early November hit residential buildings and schools sheltering displaced persons. For instance, a major strike on November 7 destroyed a family home in Jabalya, killing at least 27 people; the building was sheltering more than 50 displaced individuals at the time. Additional airstrikes targeted Al-Shati refugee camp and schools in Gaza City, killing and wounding dozens, including women and children. In the Beit Lahia area, multiple incidents were

reported in which bombing and shelling killed scores of civilians sheltering in schools and houses.

The IDF also targeted and destroyed significant Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) infrastructure, including headquarters, military facilities, arms caches, and tunnels. Notably, two anti-aircraft missiles were found inside a clinic in Jabalia in late November, underscoring the Israeli claim that militant groups used civilian structures for military purposes.

Civilian infrastructure suffered on a massive scale. Relief sources and hospital directors documented deliberate strikes on shelter centers and hospitals such as Kamal Adwan, which dealt primarily with emergency cases under siege, lacking supplies, electricity, and water. Reports highlight the near-total collapse of health care, with warnings that hospital facilities would turn into “mass graves” without urgent international intervention. Schools, bakeries, water systems, and humanitarian depots across north and central Gaza were also destroyed or rendered inoperable.

The period also saw continuous rocket fire from Gaza towards Israeli communities near the border, but the effectiveness of Hamas and PIJ rocket launches had markedly diminished due to IDF targeting of launch sites and commanders. On November 20 and 22, Israeli airstrikes killed multiple high-ranking militant leaders, including key figures responsible for the October 7, 2023, incursion into Israel.

The West Bank

In the West Bank, Israeli security forces escalated counter-terrorism operations, focusing on Jenin, Qabatiya, Tulkarm, Tubas, and Jerusalem’s Silwan neighborhood. Notable was a two-day IDF operation in Jenin, resulting in the killing of nine Palestinian gunmen via airstrike and ground fire, destruction of bomb-making labs, and the arrest of several suspects.

Airstrikes in populated areas, the destruction of residential buildings, and house-to-house raids were reported throughout November. On November 3, an Israeli airstrike in Aqqaba village (Tubas) killed two Palestinians and injured another, followed by a military incursion into the local hospital. In Silwan, East Jerusalem, Israeli settlement guards killed a 15-year-old Palestinian; in Tulkarm and Tubas, local residents recounted being subjected to prolonged gunfire, bulldozing, and the demolition of infrastructure.

Clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants remained frequent, with exchanges of fire, the use of drones and helicopter support, and significant civilian casualties and arrests. Settler violence also continued, notably in Nablus, where a Palestinian home in Huwwara was set ablaze. The destruction of Palestinian property and the increased number of house demolitions in



East Jerusalem—partially attributed to legal victories by Israeli settler groups—fueled further displacement and tension.

Hostage and Ceasefire Negotiations

The issue of Israeli hostages held in Gaza remained unsolved during November despite international mediation. Hamas steadfastly rejected deals that did not entail an end to the war and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. Negotiators from Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, and the US endeavored to broker a partial or humanitarian truce coupled with a prisoner exchange—none secured traction among the principal parties.

In mid-November, reports confirmed a secret meeting in Turkey between the Shin Bet (Israeli security agency) head Ronen Bar and his Turkish counterpart. Turkey's assistance was sought in prodding Hamas to engage, though its role remained secondary to Egypt's. Both Israel and Hamas accused each other of stalling progress; Hamas insisted that negotiation on hostages would only occur after all hostilities ceased. The group also engaged in psychological warfare, releasing statements about hostages' deaths and deteriorating conditions, which Israeli officials said were aimed at manipulating public sentiment.

International actors, notably the US, Egypt, and Qatar, oscillated between ramping up diplomatic pressure and suspending mediation, depending on the willingness of parties to seriously negotiate. The long-standing demand of unconditional humanitarian access in the context of a ceasefire was reinforced by multiple UN Security Council discussions—but was ultimately blocked by lack of consensus (see further below).

Israeli Political Developments

November 2024 witnessed remarkable domestic and international political shifts for Israel.

ICC Arrest Warrants: On 21 November 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, alleging crimes against humanity and war crimes including the use of starvation as a weapon, intentional targeting of civilians, and deprivation of essential goods to Gaza's population. Israel's government immediately rejected the Court's jurisdiction—a stance mirrored by its closest allies, such as the US—while many European countries faced legal and political pressure concerning compliance with ICC obligations.



Cabinet Approval of Lebanon Ceasefire: In a high-stakes ten-to-one vote, the Israeli Security Cabinet approved a US-brokered ceasefire agreement with Lebanon and Hezbollah, set to take effect on 27 November 2024. The deal, considered a landmark, required Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon within 60 days, contingent on a similar withdrawal north of the Litani River by Hezbollah. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir opposed the plan, reflecting enduring debates about deterrence, civilian security, and the future orientation of Israel's northern border strategy.

Public and Judicial Pressure: Israel's leadership also faced pressures on both the domestic legal front and from the international community, with internal debates on judicial reforms, war objectives (elimination of Hamas, safe return of hostages, security guarantees for border communities), and compliance with Supreme Court rulings regarding protection of Palestinians in the West Bank. The Knesset also passed laws (late October) barring UNRWA operations in Israel or contact between officials and the agency, in line with a broader trend toward limiting UN engagement.

Palestinian Political Developments

Governance and Succession: Within Gaza, Hamas maintained a "shadow governance," enduring as a political and administrative power despite massive physical and leadership losses to the war. Efforts were made to assert tax collection, maintain order, and manage public services. Reports circulated about an imminent leadership transition, potentially replacing Yahya al-Sinwar (killed in October) with Khalil al-Haya at the helm of the political bureau—though no conclusive transfer of power was declared.

Unity Government Prospects: Throughout the month, Egypt spearheaded reconciliation talks between Hamas and Fatah regarding the "day after" scenario for postwar Gaza. Agreements were floated to establish a technocratic administration led by independent Palestinian figures, but the central management structure and terms of Fatah-Hamas power-sharing remained unresolved. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas participated in a series of summits with regional and international leaders, seeking stronger UN action and wider recognition of Palestinian statehood. However, negotiations stalled due to persistent divergence on fundamental issues and ongoing violence.

Support for ICC Proceedings: Palestinian factions welcomed the ICC arrest warrants for Israeli leaders. Official communications, including those from the Palestinian National Authority and various ministries, underscored a strategy to leverage international lawfare as a means of pressuring Israel and advancing the Palestinian national cause.

UNRWA Humanitarian Updates

UNRWA installations themselves became targets, with at least 190 affected by shelling, airstrikes, or gunfire by mid-November. A devastating example occurred on 16 November, when a UNRWA school north of Beach Camp in Gaza City was struck, killing at least 15 and injuring 25. Only seven of 27 UNRWA health centers remained operational due to insecurity and shortages.

The agency reported that food security verged on total collapse: only 388,000 families (1.9 million people) received two rounds of flour, with many dependent solely on irregular food parcels. Community bakeries and kitchens shut down sequentially as flour and fuel stocks dwindled. The launch of severe winter weather worsened conditions, destroying tents and makeshift shelters and introducing new threats of flooding and exposure.

The health sector was overwhelmed, with supplies of most essential medicines nearly exhausted. WHO, UNICEF, and other partners struggled to maintain limited vaccination campaigns, and surgical interventions often took place without anesthesia. More than 247 UNRWA personnel had been killed in Gaza since October 2023—by far the highest humanitarian death toll in a single conflict for the agency.

OCHA Humanitarian Situation Updates

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) tracked compounding crises: dehydration and disease outbreaks soared as water systems collapsed; daily water production dropped to one-fifth of the prewar minimum; fuel for critical infrastructure ran out. Access constraints—imposed by security, infrastructure destruction, and direct denial—meant that of the 319 humanitarian movements coordinated with Israeli authorities in the first half of November, less than half succeeded. In North Gaza, 85% of missions were denied or impeded by military or procedural obstacles.

Reports documented that for much of November, only 65–71 humanitarian aid trucks entered Gaza per day, against the prewar average of 500. Commercial supplies halted, bakeries ceased to function en masse, and flour prices soared (a 25-kg bag reached \$280 in Deir al-Balah). Nearly all agricultural activity was suspended, and winterization and WASH (water, sanitation, hygiene) preparations could not keep pace with demand.

Infant malnutrition and starvation-related deaths—once rare—reportedly increased, with health officials warning of famine's onset by month's end.

Humanitarian Access and Protection Concerns

Ongoing fighting, siege conditions, and Israeli-imposed restrictions—combined with internal lawlessness and organized crime—severely undermined safe humanitarian access. The looting of a 109-truck UN aid convoy on 16 November illustrated the total absence of law and order in parts of Gaza. Aid workers remained under extraordinary risk; by November's close, the cumulative humanitarian worker death toll exceeded 340. Nearly all critical infrastructure, from water wells to education facilities, sustained significant damage or destruction.

Children's wellbeing was particularly compromised: more than 660,000 were out of school, and child protection agencies reported a rise in family separation, child marriage, and exploitative practices associated with displacement and trauma.

United Nations Security Council Actions

November brought high-profile but inconclusive action at the UN Security Council. On 20 November, the US vetoed a draft resolution calling for an immediate, unconditional ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, despite overwhelming (14–1) support. The draft also called for the release of all hostages, rejected starvation as a weapon, and underscored the centrality of UNRWA to Gaza's humanitarian response.

The US justified its veto on the grounds that a ceasefire must be tied to the release of hostages and that any unconditional ceasefire would not be enforceable without such concessions from Hamas. The consequent lack of Security Council action highlighted the impotence of the UN's principal peace and security organ in resolving the active crisis, leaving humanitarian and human rights agencies to operate in a vacuum of enforceable international oversight.

International Criminal Court Proceedings

The single most significant legal-political development was the issuance of ICC arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant on 21 November, charging them with war crimes (notably the use of starvation as a weapon) and crimes against humanity, including murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts for their roles in Gaza military operations from 8 October 2023 to 20 May 2024.

The Pre-Trial Chamber found reasonable grounds that Israeli policymaking intentionally deprived Gaza's civilian population of essential goods and services, leading to the deaths of children and others from malnutrition and dehydration. The decision followed months of mounting referrals from states including South Africa, Bangladesh, Chile, and Mexico, and came amid intensifying international scrutiny of Israel's strategic conduct in the Gaza war. The ICC rejected Israel's jurisdiction challenge, reaffirming that the Court's authority extends over Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem by virtue of Palestine's status as a State Party to the Rome Statute.

International Response to ICC Decision: The US administration “fundamentally rejected” the arrest warrants, with President Biden’s White House issuing statements challenging the ICC’s legitimacy and process; political leaders in Congress threatened sanctions on the Court and its officials. Some European governments faced domestic debate over legal obligations to arrest sitting Israeli leaders if they entered their territory, exposing unresolved tensions between solidarity with Israel and compliance with Rome Statute duties.

Palestinian leaders and civil society welcomed the ICC’s landmark move as validation of long-standing allegations of collective punishment and international law violations against Israel.

Major Media and Civil Society Analysis

Global media outlets—including The New York Times, BBC, Al Jazeera, and The Washington Institute—documented not only the direct violence but also the broader social, psychological, and infrastructural devastation. The scale of displacement in Gaza was repeatedly likened to the Nakba (Catastrophe) of 1948. Reporters cited witness testimony regarding repeated relocations, trauma, and a pervasive sense among Gazan families that permanent return to homes—even if they survive—is far from assured.

NGOs and think tanks also amplified critical perspectives on the “day after” question for governance in postwar Gaza. The collapse of Hamas’s bureaucratic apparatus was noted, but so was the group’s capacity for “shadow governance.” Analysts warned that international delay in establishing a credible alternative authority might enable Hamas to reentrench itself, particularly via control over aid distribution and messaging to the population. Meanwhile, the deepening humanitarian catastrophe was described as “unfit for human survival,” and recommendations centered on the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire and restoration of basic services as preconditions for any political resolution.

NGO and Think Tank Reports, November 2024

The International Crisis Group, International Rescue Committee, and multiple UN technical agencies published critical updates:

- Crisis Group pressed for immediate opening of Gaza’s borders to humanitarian assistance, warning that starvation and preventable death were escalating exponentially.
- The IRC emphasized that aid flows remained at less than 20% of prewar levels and that without a ceasefire, relief efforts would be inadequate and unsustainable.
- WHO warned of escalating child mortality due to malnutrition and dehydration, with the collapse of immunization programs and health services.

- Think tanks such as the Washington Institute analyzed the struggle to dislodge Hamas's influence in civilian spaces, linking humanitarian delivery and long-term governance challenges.

Main International Actors

Several key players influence the flow of illicit weapons into the Israel–Palestine arena. Iran, primarily through its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, provides financial backing, training, and shipments of rockets and small arms to Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad via routes through Syria and Lebanon. Egypt, which shares a narrow border with Gaza, repeatedly destroys smuggling tunnels yet struggles to prevent their rapid reconstruction amid local economic pressures and enduring Bedouin networks. Jordan, tasked with securing long desert frontiers, has made significant arms seizures but still faces challenges from tribal smuggling routes and limited enforcement resources. Israel's Defense Forces lead interdiction efforts along both the Gaza and West Bank borders, using advanced surveillance and collaborating closely with Jordanian and Egyptian counterparts, while also navigating domestic debates over arms procurement and human rights concerns. The United States, as Israel's largest military supplier, provides advanced weapons systems, counter-smuggling training, and intelligence support, though its export licenses have sometimes drawn criticism when weapons are used against civilians. European Union member states apply common export criteria that require assessing the risk of human rights abuses, leading some to tighten or suspend arms sales following escalations in Gaza, and they also fund capacity-building programs to strengthen regional customs and border controls. Non-state armed groups such as Hamas and various West Bank militant factions coordinate with regional sponsors and local criminal networks to smuggle weapons through tunnels, desert trails, and maritime routes, sustaining rocket fire and violent clashes on both sides. Transnational criminal syndicates exploit corruption and familial ties to adapt to crackdowns, shifting to drone deliveries and concealed maritime shipments when land routes become too risky. Finally, international bodies like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the UN Panel of Experts on sanctions monitor arms flows and advise on legal measures, while regional organizations such as the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation issue political condemnations but lack enforcement authority.

Conclusions

The illicit transfer of arms into the Israel–Palestine conflict represents a multifaceted challenge that requires comprehensive international cooperation to address effectively. While existing legal frameworks like the Arms Trade Treaty and various UN mechanisms provide important foundations for regulating weapons flows, their enforcement remains hampered by political divisions, resource constraints, and the sophisticated nature of modern smuggling networks. The humanitarian costs of continued arms proliferation



are evident in the escalating civilian casualties and destruction on both sides, perpetuating cycles of violence that undermine peace efforts. Success in curbing these illicit transfers will require not only enhanced border security and intelligence sharing among regional partners, but also addressing the underlying economic incentives that drive participation in smuggling networks and the political grievances that fuel demand for weapons. Ultimately, sustainable progress depends on the international community's willingness to prioritize the protection of civilian populations over narrow strategic interests, while working toward comprehensive solutions that tackle both the immediate symptoms and root causes of this persistent conflict.

1. Questions a Draft Resolution must answer:

1. What are the primary geographic sources and transit routes for illicit arms flowing into Gaza and the West Bank, and how can they be specifically targeted?
2. What specific types of weapons (e.g., SALW, rocket components, drones) will the resolution prioritize combating, and why?
3. Which state and non-state actors are the key facilitators of these transfers, and what diplomatic or economic pressures can be applied to deter them?
4. What specific technical and financial assistance will be offered to key states like Egypt to enhance their border surveillance and interdiction capabilities?
5. How will the resolution facilitate better intelligence sharing between relevant states and international bodies (e.g., INTERPOL, UNODC) to dismantle smuggling networks?
6. What new mechanisms or task forces (e.g., under the UN) will be established to monitor implementation and coordinate the international response?
7. How will the resolution reinforce existing legal frameworks like the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and ensure accountability for violators?
(Grounds the resolution in international law and proposes consequences.)
8. How can measures against illicit arms be used as a confidence-building measure (CBM) to support a broader ceasefire and de-escalation?
9. How does the resolution address the financial networks that fund the purchase of illicit arms?
10. How will the resolution ensure that enforcement actions do not exacerbate the humanitarian crisis for civilian populations?

Reference Links

1. Arms Trade Treaty (text and status): <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/att/att.html>
2. First Committee (DISEC) overview: <https://www.un.org/en/ga/first/>
3. UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (conventional arms and SALW):
<https://disarmament.unoda.org>
4. Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat: <https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org>
5. UN Office on Drugs and Crime - Firearms Protocol:
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/>
6. UN Human Rights Council press statements:
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases>
7. UN Security Council resolutions on Israel/Palestine:
<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-0>
8. UN Panel of Experts on Palestinian sanctions reports:
<https://www.un.org/press/en>
9. UN News Service articles: <https://news.un.org>
10. UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (for ASAT definitions): <https://www.unoosa.org>
11. UN Small Arms Programme of Action documents:
<https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/SALW/>
12. www.aljazeera.com
13. www.unrwa.org
14. www.timesofisrael.com