United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Discussing the Israel and Palestine Conflict

CHAIRS

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1. COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

1.1. WHAT IS THE UNSC?

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six main organs of the United Nations, tasked with maintaining international peace and security. Its primary responsibility is to respond to conflicts that threaten global stability by identifying potential threats to peace or acts of aggression. The UNSC plays a crucial role in conflict resolution, urging diplomatic solutions through peaceful negotiations, treaties, or settlements.

The Council traditionally deals with matters of military security, focusing on conflicts between states, civil wars, and situations involving paramilitary or insurgent groups. Its interventions often aim to prevent wars from escalating or spreading, addressing crises that could destabilize entire regions or lead to global unrest. The UNSC's involvement may range from initiating peace talks to authorizing peacekeeping operations in conflict zones.

In that way, the UNSC is pivotal in shaping international responses to security threats. It handles some of the world's most pressing issues, such as wars, humanitarian crises, and acts of aggression, providing a platform for resolving disputes before they turn into broader conflicts. This makes it a vital institution for maintaining international order and promoting peace.

Traditionally, the UNSC has a total of 15 members, with five permanent members and ten rotative members. However, in this simulation, this model was adapted by increasing the total number of members to 20.

1.2. RESPONSIBILITIES AND POWERS

Furthermore, considering the importance of the matters dealt with within the UNSC, it is seen as a committee with more powers and responsibilities. Dealing with international

military conflicts is extremely intricate, and as a consequence, the Council has the ability to, among other things, investigate any situation threatening international peace, recommend procedures for peaceful resolution of a dispute, call upon other member nations to completely or partially interrupt economic relations, to sever diplomatic relations and enforce its decisions militarily, or by any means necessary.

As a consequence of this, different than other United Nations committees which propose recommendatory resolutions that the member states can decide to abide to or not, the United Nations Security Council has the power to impose its decisions, obligating a state to respect what was decided and, as mentioned previously, enforce this with military power, sanctions, diplomatic changes, etc.

1.3. VETO POWER

Again, different from other UN committees, the UNSC has what are called as the permanent members, or P5, which are: People's Republic of China, French Republic, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America. These members have the power to veto resolutions, meaning, even if resolutions achieve the necessary number of votes to pass, if one or more of these members vote against, the resolution does not pass. For this simulation, vetoes, as described in the rules of procedure, are dependent on a violation of the UN Charter, and follow these steps:

1. The delegate part of the P5 must justify their veto by explaining a violation of a specific UN Charter article to the chair.

2. The chair has the power to approve or not such veto.

3. If the veto is approved, the resolution does not pass.

4. If the veto is not approved and the resolution has achieved the necessary number of votes in favor, it passes, if not, it does not pass.

5. Vetoes can only occur in resolutions and not in amendments.
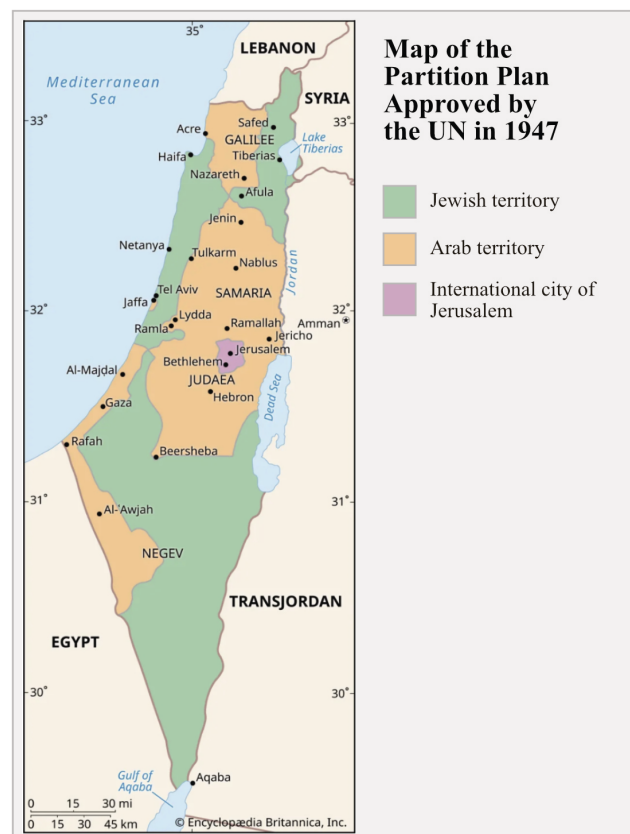
1.4. FREEZING DATE

The freezing date for this committee is September 1st 2024, meaning delegates can not refer to any event that happened after September 1st, including but not limited to the large-scale invasion of Lebanon by Israel in October 2024 and the temporary cease-fire agreement in January 2025.

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Israel-Palestine conflict has its roots in the early 20th century, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in WWI. In 1917, the Balfour Declaration, issued by Britain, promised a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. This area, however, was already home to a significant Arab majority and a smaller Jewish minority. Britain, which was given a mandate over Palestine by the League of Nations in 1922, struggled to manage tensions.

2.1. THE 1947 UN PARTITION PLAN

By 1947, following decades of conflict between Arabs and Jews, Britain decided to withdraw from Palestine and handed the issue over to the newly established United Nations. The UN proposed a partition plan that would divide the territory into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international administration. Jewish leaders accepted the plan, but Palestinian Arabs, along with

Map of the Partition Plan Approved by the UN in 1947

- Jewish territory
- Arab territory
- International city of Jerusalem

neighboring Arab states, rejected it, leading to further violence. In 1948, as Britain officially withdrew, Jewish leaders declared the establishment of the State of Israel, which was immediately met with military intervention by surrounding Arab nations.

2.2. THE 1948 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

The 1948 Arab-Israeli War, also known as the First Arab-Israeli War, ended in a ceasefire in 1949, with Israel controlling much of the territory that had been allocated for a Jewish state under the UN plan, as well as additional areas. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were expelled during the conflict. This led to the long-standing Palestinian refugee crisis. Jordan took control of the West Bank, and Egypt administered Gaza, while Jerusalem was divided between Israeli and Jordanian forces.

Map of the Israel and Palestine Region in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War Aftermath

Land in the lighter shade represents territory within the borders of Israel at the conclusion of the 1948 war.

This land is internationally recognized as belonging to Israel.

2.3. THE 1967 SIX-DAY WAR

Tensions continued in the following decades, particularly after the 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel captured the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula. This expansion intensified the conflict, as Palestinians and neighboring Arab states demanded the return of these territories. While Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt as part of the Camp David Accords in 1979, the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem remain contested to this day.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1. CONTROL OVER TERRITORY

Israel maintains control over the West Bank and considers Jerusalem its capital, though Palestinians view East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. The ongoing Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has been a major point of contention, with over 700,000 Jewish settlers now living in these areas. The settlements are widely considered illegal under international law, though Israel disputes this. Efforts to resolve the conflict have been numerous but largely unsuccessful.

The 1990s saw the most significant attempt with the Oslo Accords, which created a framework for peace and led to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. However, the peace process eventually stalled, and violence erupted again in the form of the Second Intifada in 2000. In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew its settlers and soldiers from Gaza, though it maintained control over Gaza's borders, airspace, and coastline.

Since then, Gaza has been governed by Hamas, a Palestinian militant group, which has led to multiple conflicts between Israel and Hamas over the years. Meanwhile, the West Bank remains under partial control of the Palestinian Authority, but Israel continues to maintain military control over large portions of the territory, including areas where Jewish settlements exist.

3.2. CURRENT CONFLICT

The current situation in the Israel-Palestine conflict remains deeply tense, with ongoing violence and military actions escalating since the Hamas-led attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. Hamas, operating out of the Gaza Strip, launched a large-scale surprise attack on Israeli cities using rockets, drones, and ground forces. In response, Israel initiated a

counteroffensive called "Operation Swords of Iron," which has two stated goals: to destroy Hamas and to free the hostages, including airstrikes on Gaza and preparations for a possible ground invasion

3.3. HAMAS' OBJECTIVES

Hamas states that its actions are a response to the Israeli blockade on Gaza, the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and Israeli actions at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The group demands the lifting of the blockade, the cessation of settlement activity, and broader Palestinian rights, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Their methods, however, often involve violent attacks on Israeli civilians and military targets, making negotiations with them extremely difficult, especially since Israel and other countries classify Hamas as a terrorist organization.

3.4. ISRAEL'S OBJECTIVES

On the other hand, Israel's primary objective is the destruction of Hamas's military capabilities and the re-establishment of security for its citizens. Israel views Hamas as a severe threat to its national security and has vowed to dismantle the group's infrastructure, both militarily and politically. Additionally, Israel seeks to maintain control over key areas such as Jerusalem, which it considers its capital, while Palestinians seek East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. Israel also insists that Palestinian refugees cannot return, fearing it would jeopardize its Jewish identity.

3.5. NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Neighboring countries, including Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, are also drawn into the conflict due to their geographic proximity and political ties to both Israel and the Palestinians. Egypt has attempted to mediate, especially concerning aid to Gaza, but it faces pressure to

limit the movement of refugees. Lebanon, home to Hezbollah, remains a potential flashpoint, with Hezbollah launching attacks on northern Israel. Iran, which supports both Hamas and Hezbollah, poses a risk of further regional escalation.

The situation remains volatile, with the potential for the conflict to expand beyond Israel and Gaza, involving other regional actors. As long as core issues such as security, territorial rights, and the future of Palestinian statehood remain unresolved, the potential for further violence persists.

3.6. POSITION OF MAJOR NATIONS AND GROUPS

3.6.1. United States of America

The USA is Israel's closest ally, it is fully supportive of Israel, providing significant military aid and political support. It backs Israel's right to self-defense and opposes efforts to delegitimize Israel in international forums. The U.S. also advocates for a negotiated two-state solution, though its efforts to mediate between Israel and Palestine have seen limited success in recent years.

3.6.2. Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran is an opponent of Israel, supporting groups like Hamas and Hezbollah that actively resist Israeli influence in the region. Iran views the Israel-Palestine conflict as central to its anti-Israel agenda and seeks the destruction of Israel, providing material support to Palestinian factions in Gaza.

3.6.3. Russian Federation

Russia maintains relations with both Israel and Palestine. It supports the two-state solution and often emphasizes diplomacy to resolve the conflict. While maintaining economic

and military ties with Israel, Russia also backs Palestinian factions, attempting to balance its influence across the region.

3.6.4. Lebanese Republic

Lebanon, home to Hezbollah, is deeply affected by the conflict. Hezbollah, a major political and military force in Lebanon, is backed by Iran and opposes Israel. Lebanon's government generally supports Palestinian rights, although its internal divisions and conflict with Israel complicate its position.

3.6.5. Arab Republic of Egypt

Egypt plays a mediating role, especially concerning Gaza. It has maintained a peace treaty with Israel since 1979 and often facilitates ceasefires between Israel and Palestinian groups. Egypt also advocates for Palestinian statehood and stability in the region.

3.6.6. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, while historically supportive of Palestinian rights, has recently moved towards improving relations with Israel, driven by shared concerns over Iran and regional security. The Kingdom continues to push for a peace process that addresses Palestinian statehood within a broader normalization framework.

3.6.7. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The UK maintains strong diplomatic and military ties with Israel, supporting its right to self-defense. While it backs Israel in many international forums, the UK also advocates for a peaceful resolution through the two-state solution and criticizes actions that hinder peace talks, such as settlement expansion.

3.6.8. French Republic

France seeks a balanced approach, supporting Israel's security while also advocating for Palestinian rights and a two-state solution. As part of the EU, France is involved in peace efforts and has often been critical of Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories.

3.5.9. People's Republic of China

China maintains a neutral position in the Israel-Palestine conflict, advocating for a peaceful resolution based on the two-state solution. China supports Palestinian statehood and has consistently called for negotiations between Israel and Palestine to address key issues like borders, the status of Jerusalem, and security. Although it maintains diplomatic and economic relations with Israel, China also voices support for Palestinian rights in international forums and provides humanitarian assistance to Palestinians. China emphasizes stability in the Middle East, given its interests in the region's energy resources and global trade routes.

4. GUIDING QUESTIONS

Guiding questions are prompts designed to help delegates explore key aspects of the topic and stimulate debate. They serve as starting points for discussion and encourage deeper analysis of the issues at hand. However, delegates are not required to adhere strictly to these questions and are free to develop their own arguments and perspectives:

1. Should Palestine be recognized as a state?

How should the borders be determined, considering historical claims, international law, and current realities on the ground? What implications would official recognition have on peace and stability in the region?

2. To what extent is the reaction by Israel fair?

Is Israel's response proportional to the threats it faces? How should international law on self-defense and civilian protection guide responses to terrorist attacks or military actions?

3. To what extent is international intervention fair and appropriate?

How do the political, military, and economic interests of other countries such as the USA and Iran shape their involvement in the conflict? Should external powers have a say in a regional dispute, and how does their involvement affect prospects for the escalation of the conflict? How should these powers be responsibilized by the consequences of their actions?

4. Is the two-state solution still a viable path to peace?

Given the current political and territorial realities, can a two-state solution address both Israeli security concerns and Palestinian aspirations for statehood? What alternative solutions might exist if the two-state solution proves unworkable?

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