

**Forum:** Security Council

**Issue:** Mediating the conflict in West Bank and Gaza

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**Position:** Deputy Chair

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## Introduction

The Gaza Strip and the West Bank have had a history of conflicts dating back over a century. Gaza, the smaller one of the two Palestinian territories, is located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It is also bordered by Egypt to the southwest and Israel to the east and north. The West Bank on the other hand is a landlocked territory that is the larger one of the two Palestinian territories. Over these two Palestinian territories, wars have been fought over the past century. With all of the large history of conflict continuing with the current conflict in the West Bank and Gaza.

On the surface, the issue began on October 7th, 2023 at around 6.30 a.m.(UTC +3). However, there is a much deeper root to the conflict happening in the West Bank and Gaza. A root that has existed for over a century. The attacks ensued after the morning of October 7th, 2023, and the retaliation by the state of Israel followed directly after.

Approximately 1,200 Israeli people were murdered, and the Israeli military claims that over 200 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, were seized as captives in Gaza. According to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry, more than 14,000 Palestinians have been killed as a result of Israeli military air and artillery assaults.

## Definition of Key Terms

Zionism



A global Jewish movement that culminated in the foundation and growth of the state of Israel and continues to support Israel as a Jewish homeland.

### Suez Canal

A man-made canal that runs from north to south across Egypt's Isthmus of Suez. The Suez Canal links the Mediterranean and Red Seas, making it the quickest marine route between Europe and Asia.

### Sinai Peninsula

A peninsula in northeastern Egypt; at the north end of the Red Sea.

### Paramilitary

Noting or pertaining to an organization operating as, in place of, or as a supplement to a regular.

### Intifada

A revolt that began in December 1987 by Palestinian Arabs to protest Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

## Background Information

### 1917-1948

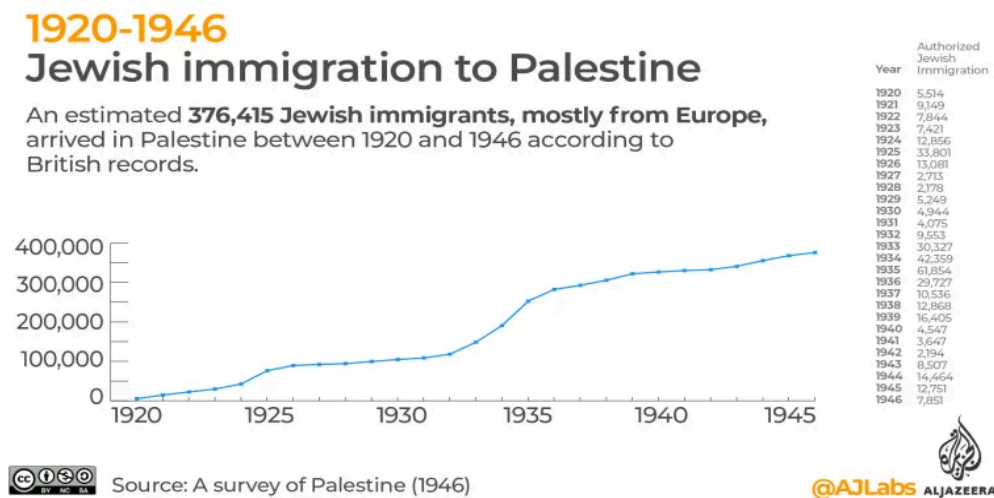
On November 2, 1917, Britain's then-foreign secretary, Arthur Balfour, sent a letter to Lionel Walter Rothschild, a prominent member of the British-Jewish community.

The letter was brief, but its contents had far-reaching consequences for Palestine that are being felt today. It committed the British government to "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" and to support "the achievement of this object". The letter is known as the Balfour Declaration.



A British Mandate was established in 1923 and lasted until 1948. During that time, the British encouraged mass Jewish immigration, with many of the newcomers escaping Nazism in Europe, but they also faced protests and strikes.

While Palestine was still under British mandate administration in 1947, the United Nations General Assembly approved a plan to split it into Arab and Jewish nations, as well as international control over Jerusalem. Jewish leaders agreed to the proposal, giving them 56% of the land. The Arab League rejected the plan. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's founding father, declared the modern state of Israel on May 14, 1948, a day before the scheduled end of British authority, creating a safe haven for Jews fleeing persecution and seeking a national home on a territory to which they claim strong roots extending back to antiquity.

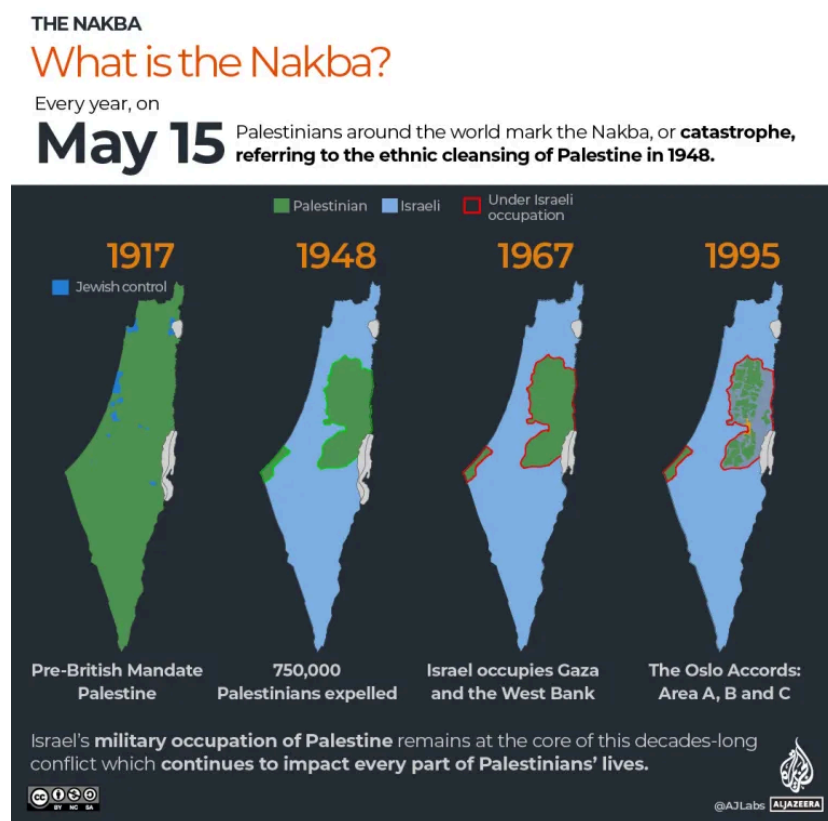


### The 1948 Nakba

Prior to the British Mandate expiring, Zionist paramilitaries began a violent campaign to destroy Palestinian cities and communities. In April 1948, more than 100 Palestinian men, women, and children were slaughtered in the village of Deir Yassin on Jerusalem's outskirts. That established the tone for the rest of the operation, which resulted in the destruction of over 500 Palestinian villages, towns, and cities between 1947 and 1949, known as the Nakba, or "catastrophe" in Arabic. Approximately 15,000 Palestinians were slain, including dozens of massacres. The Zionist movement controlled 78% of historic Palestine. The remaining 22% was



divided between what is today the occupied West Bank and the beleaguered Gaza Strip. An estimated 750,000 Palestinians were forcefully displaced out of their homes. The land was partitioned into three parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (around the Jordan River), and Gaza.



## The Suez Crisis

The Suez Canal is 120 miles long and connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean via the Red Sea, allowing products to be moved more directly between Europe and Asia. Its importance in international trade made it a near-instant source of friction among Egypt's neighbors.

In July 1956, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, which sparked the combined Israeli-British-French invasion of Egypt. The situation of crisis had been developing for an extended period.



Israeli involvement: Israel's participation in the Suez Crisis was to provide a basis for the United Kingdom and France's military engagement. On October 29, 1956, Israel attacked the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula, allowing British and French soldiers to enter as "peacekeepers" to separate the fighting sides. This invasion enabled Israel to control portions of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula.

Following a brief Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the exile of the All-Palestine Government, which was eventually reinstated upon Israeli withdrawal. Egypt abandoned the All-Palestine Government in 1959 and officially incorporated it into the United Arab Republic, which harmed the Palestinian national cause. The Gaza Strip was then placed under the control of the Egyptian military administration, resulting in a de facto military occupation. However, Yasser Arafat founded a new group, the Palestine Liberation group (PLO), in 1964. It quickly gained the backing of most Arab League states and was given a seat in the Arab League.

Following the crisis, Nasser became a prominent hero in the expanding Arab and Egyptian nationalist organizations. While Israel did not win the ability to use the canal, it was allowed permission to ship products across the Straits of Tiran.

Egypt closed the canal again ten years later, in June 1967, following the Six-Day War. For over a decade, the Suez Canal served as the front line between the Israeli and Egyptian troops. Egypt's President Anwar el-Sadat reopened the Suez Canal in 1975 as a peace gesture. In the present, around 300 million tons of commodities are transported through the canal each year.

## The Six-Day War

In the years that followed, tensions in the area escalated, notably between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. After the 1956 Suez Crisis and Israel's invasion of the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria formed mutual defense pacts to prepare for a future deployment of Israeli soldiers. In June 1967, after Egyptian President Abdel Gamal Nasser's maneuvers, Israel launched a preemptive strike against Egyptian and Syrian air forces, sparking the Six-Day War.



For the following two decades, inter-Arab politics focused on undoing the results of the 1948 loss, known as "al-Nakba," and bringing down Israel. Cairo, rather than the two Hashemite rulers, spearheaded the pan-Arab campaign after Nasser rose to power in 1954 and embarked on an aggressive pan-Arab strategy.

In order to transform his militant rhetoric into concrete plans, in January 1964, the Egyptian president convened the first all-Arab summit in Cairo to discuss ways and means to confront the "Israeli threat".

Following its surprising victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel gained control of land four times its previous size. Egypt lost the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip (23,500 square miles), Jordan lost the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and Syria lost the crucial Golan Heights.

### The Yom Kippur War

When the fourth Arab-Israeli conflict began on October 6, 1973, many Israeli troops were absent from their stations to observe Yom Kippur (or Day of Atonement), while Arab armies made great advances with modern Soviet weapons.

Iraqi soldiers immediately entered the conflict, while Jordan lent Syria its assistance. After a few days, Israel was fully mobilized, and the Israel Defense Forces began reversing Arab gains at great cost to soldiers and equipment. A US airlift of munitions bolstered Israel's campaign, although President Richard Nixon postponed the emergency military supplies for a week as an implicit statement of US backing for Egypt. On October 25, the United Nations negotiated an Egyptian-Israeli cease-fire.

Israel's success came at the expense of considerable losses, and Israelis chastised the government for its lack of preparation. Prime Minister Golda Meir resigned in April 1974.

### The First Intifada (1987-1993)



The first Palestinian Intifada broke out in the Gaza Strip in December 1987, when four Palestinians were murdered when an Israeli vehicle collided with two vans transporting Palestinian laborers. Protests quickly erupted throughout the West Bank, with young Palestinians hurling stones at Israeli army tanks and troops. It also resulted in the formation of the Hamas organization, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood that participated in violent resistance to Israeli occupation. The Israeli army's harsh response was summed up by the "Break their Bones" doctrine supported by then-Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin. It featured summary executions, university closures, deportations of activists, and demolition of homes. The Unified National Leadership of the Uprising directed the predominantly youth-led Intifada. A coalition of Palestinian political forces dedicated to ending the Israeli occupation and achieving Palestinian independence.

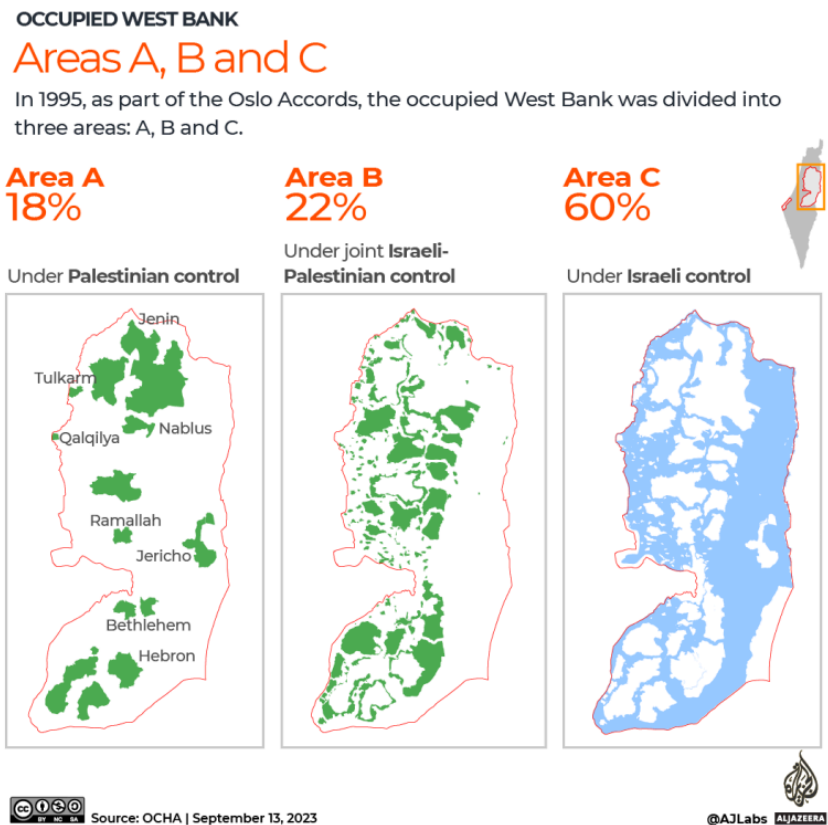
According to B'Tselem, Israeli soldiers murdered 1,070 Palestinians during the Intifada, including 237 minors.

More than 175 thousand Palestinians were detained.

The Intifada also led the international community to seek a resolution to the conflict.

The Intifada concluded in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Accords, which established the Palestinian Authority (PA), an interim government with limited self-rule in parts of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

## The Second Intifada



The second Intifada began on September 28, 2000, when Likud opposition leader Ariel Sharon paid a provocative visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound alongside hundreds of security personnel stationed in and around Jerusalem's Old City.

Over the course of two days, clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli troops killed five Palestinians and wounded 200 more.

The assault prompted a massive armed insurrection. During the Intifada, Israel did tremendous damage to the Palestinian economy and infrastructure.

Israel's reoccupation of the areas governed by the Palestinian authority was followed by the construction of a separative wall and the building of settlements which left the lives of Palestinian communities in ruin.

Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader, died in 2004, and the second Intifada ended a year later. Israeli colonies in the Gaza Strip were destroyed, and Israeli soldiers and 9,000 settlers departed the territory. A year later, Palestinians voted in their first general election. Hamas gained the majority. However, a Fatah-Hamas civil war erupted, lasting many months and killing hundreds of Palestinians. Hamas ejected Fatah from the Gaza Strip, and Fatah, the Palestinian Authority's dominant party, regained control of areas of the West Bank. Israel placed a land, air, and naval blockade on the Gaza Strip in June 2007, accusing Hamas of "terrorism".

### The History of Conflict in the Gaza Strip

Israel has undertaken four protracted military operations against Gaza: in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. Thousands of Palestinians have been slain, including many children, and tens of thousands of homes, schools, and business buildings have been demolished.

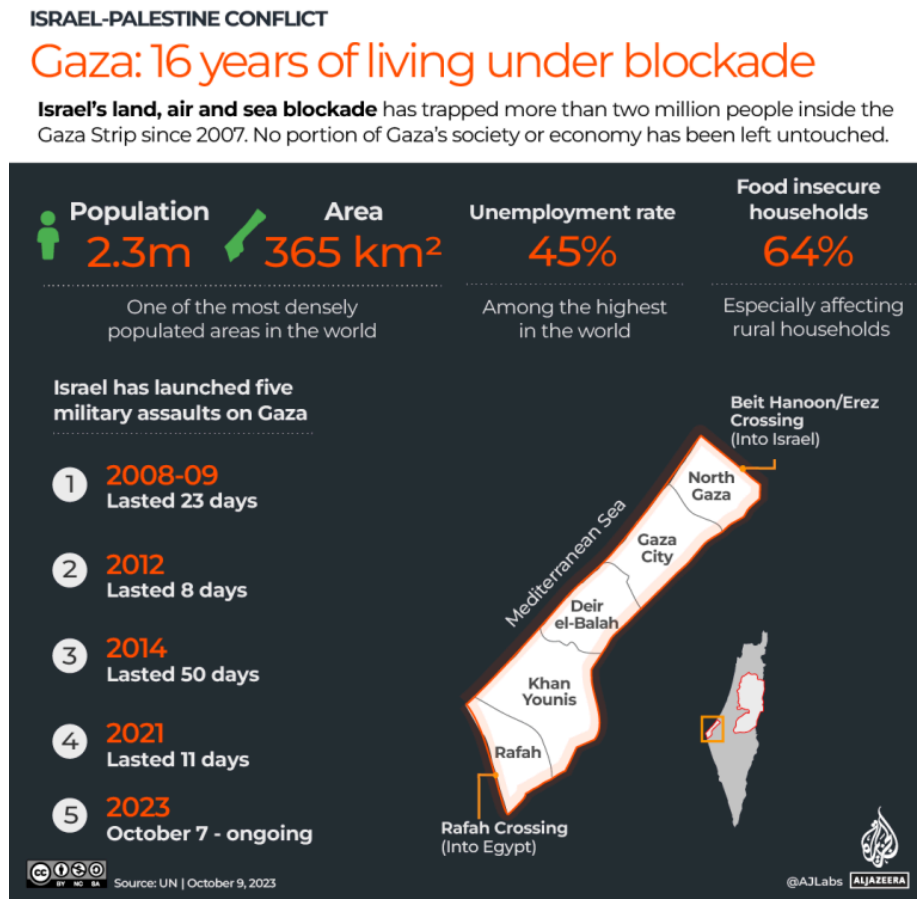
Rebuilding has been nearly difficult since the closure forbids construction supplies, such as steel and cement, from entering Gaza.

The 2008 attack included the deployment of internationally prohibited weapons such as phosphorous gas.





In 2014, Israel killed approximately 2,100 Palestinians in 50 days, including 1,462 civilians and over 500 children. Approximately 11,000 Palestinians were wounded during the Israeli attack, known as Operation Protective Edge, which damaged 20,000 houses and displaced half a million people.



### Hamas-Israel War (2023- )

A battle between Israel and Hamas that has raged since October is the latest chapter in a seven-decade-long struggle between Israelis and Palestinians that has destabilized the region.

On October 7, the Palestinian militant organization conducted a deadly cross-border raid on Israeli territory, prompting Israel to start a ferocious air and ground invasion of the Gaza Strip with the stated objective of annihilating Hamas.



The attack began about 6:30 a.m. with a bombardment of at least 2,200 missiles fired into Israel in only 20 minutes. throughout the first volley, Hamas fired more than half of the rockets launched from Gaza throughout the 11-day confrontation in 2021. The barrage allegedly overpowered the Iron Dome system.

The assault murdered around 1,200 people, including families targeted in their homes on kibbutzim and guests of an outdoor music festival. That figure includes both Israeli citizens and international nationals. A March 2024 United Nations study discovered evidence that some were victims of sexual violence before being executed. It was the bloodiest day for Jews since the Holocaust, which exacerbated the pain.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### Hamas

Hamas, an abbreviation for its full name, Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya, is a Palestinian Sunni Islamist political and military movement that governs sections of the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip. The attack of the militant group on Israel in October has started the deadliest Israeli-Palestinian conflict to this date.

### Palestinian Islamic Jihad

The Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) is a Sunni Islamist terrorist group that aims to build an Islamist Palestinian state dedicated to the destruction of Israel.

### Israel

A Jewish state in the Middle East. They have a history of conflict with Palestinian governments and Palestinian militant groups. Currently at war with Hamas and other militant coalitions or "terrorist" Islamist organizations. Israel's policy regarding the current conflict has gotten more and more malicious.

### Iran



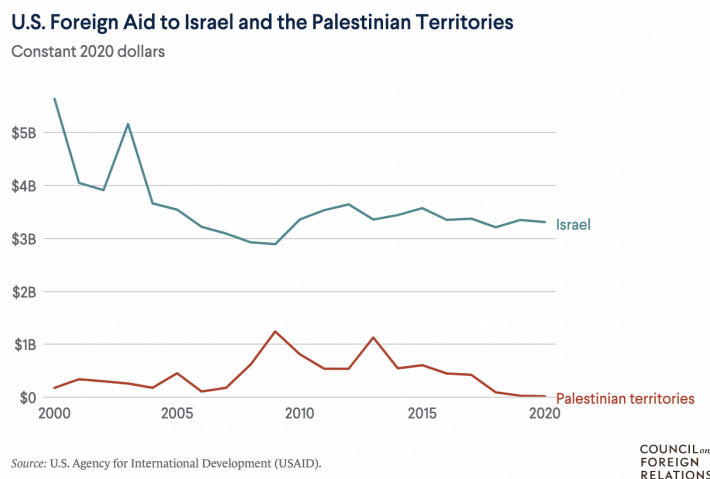
In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran has supported Palestinian factions like Hamas. Israel has backed Iranian rebels such as the People's Mujahedin of Iran, carried out airstrikes against Iranian allies in Syria, and killed Iranian nuclear experts.

## Qatar

Qatari mediators helped Israel and Hamas reach an agreement on where Israeli tanks would be stationed in Gaza during the cease-fire. Similarly, they reached an understanding of how Israeli forces would comply with Hamas' demand to abandon Gaza hospitals, particularly Al Shifa, where they had taken positions, according to the source.

## United States of America

For more than 50 years, the United States has played a significant role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It became involved immediately after World War II, collaborating with the United Kingdom on a 1946 study that advised that one hundred thousand Holocaust survivors transfer to Palestine, which would be neither Jewish nor Arab. In 1948, the United States became the first to recognize Israel as an independent nation.



Despite its strong backing for Israel, the United States has always sought a diplomatic settlement to reconcile the two nations' opposing claims.

The Biden administration has maintained the United States support for a two-state solution but has not taken any steps to begin discussions. Instead, it has encouraged Israeli-Arab rapprochement and restored Palestinian aid.

## Timeline of Events

<b>November 2, 1917</b>	<b>Letter of Arthur Balfour</b>
<b>May 14, 1948</b>	<b>The modern State of Israel is declared</b>
<b>May 15, 1948</b>	<b>al-Nakba</b>
<b>June 1967</b>	<b>Six-day War</b>
<b>October 6, 1973</b>	<b>Yom Kippur War</b>
<b>1987-1993</b>	<b>The first Intifada</b>
<b>1993</b>	<b>The Oslo Accords</b>
<b>2000-2005</b>	<b>The second Intifada</b>
<b>2008-2009</b>	<b>23-day military assault by Israel on the Gaza Strip</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>8-day military assault by Israel on the Gaza Strip</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>50-day military assault by Israel on the Gaza Strip</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>11-day military assault by Israel on the Gaza Strip</b>
<b>October 7, 2023</b>	<b>Hamas attacks Israel with a series of bombings, the beginning of the present Hamas-Israeli war</b>



## Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- November 29, 1947: [UN General Assembly Resolution 181](#): recommending partition of the British Mandate into Jewish and Arab states
- December 11, 1948: [UN General Assembly Resolution 194](#): conditional right of return of refugees
- May 11, 1949: [UN General Assembly Resolution 273](#): admission of Israel to the UN
- March 22, 1975: [UN General Assembly Resolution 3379](#): equating Zionism with racism
- December 16, 1991: [UN General Assembly Resolution 4686](#): annulled Resolution 3379

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

### The UN Partition Plan

A first effort at land division resulted in an Israeli state but no Palestinian state, with Jordan and Egypt ruling over the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively.

### The Oslo Peace Process

In the 1990s, Israeli and Palestinian officials reached a breakthrough agreement in Oslo, Norway, outlining a path for a mutually agreed two-state solution that would be gradually implemented by the end of the decade. Although the process showed initial promise and progress, a mix of unhappiness and distrust caused the process to fail and be delayed. After dissatisfaction and provocation erupted in violence in 2000, the process proved difficult to continue, eventually coming to a standstill after 2008.



## Possible Solutions

- **Negotiation and Diplomacy:** Encouraging diplomatic relations and negotiations that are regulated by an unbiased separate organ of the UN, another organization, or a mediator state is a decent way to approach this issue. The issue regarding this approach to solve this issue is that the tensions in the conflict can be viewed as too high to engage in diplomatic relations. However, it is a peaceful solution that takes time while considering the interests of both sides of the conflict.
- **Two-state solution:** The origins of this approach date back to the UN partition plan that was proposed in 1947. There have been many previous attempts regarding a two-state solution since then. Due to the difficulty that is presented when trying to attempt a two-state solution, a one-state solution has seemed more plausible to member states throughout the years. The two-state solution would be achieved by granting statehood to the Palestinian community, with mutual recognition. The significance of this approach has been highlighted by the UN Secretary General himself.
- **One-state solution:** According to this approach, the way of solving the Israeli-Palestinian issue is by establishing a single, bi-national state between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. With the hope that the state would become a peaceful homeland for both the Jewish and the Palestinian people.
- **Security measures:** Easing the military conflict and tension in the area is also important. This solution can be attempted in many different ways. Having the power of the UN Security Council is also an advantage when it comes to employing security measures as means of solving this conflict.



- Ending the Gaza blockade: The Gaza blockade has caused much harm on the Palestinian community that lives there. Diplomatic relations and easing tensions will most likely move faster when the Gaza blockade ends. This is not a general solution to the conflict but it is more of a supplementary approach to aid in the peace process.
- Sanctions and Incentives: Imposing sanctions on both parties, or rather incentivizing them to move towards a peace process is definitely a necessary approach to solve the conflict.



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