



PacificMUN 2017

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

Backgrounder Guide

Topic A: The Arab-Israeli Conflict



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Dare to Speak | February 24-26 2017

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Ali Mohaidly and it's my utmost pleasure to serve as director of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation along with my chair Carol Wang. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, formally known as the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, will be known as the OIC for the purpose of the backgrounder. The OIC is new to PacificMUN and we're expecting a great outcome for all delegates. The OIC was established in a historical summit which took place in Rabat, Morocco, 12th Rajab 1389 Hijra > Islamic date (25 September 1969) as a result of criminal arson to the Aqsa Mosque (Dome of the Rock) in Occupied Palestine. This is the second largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations. The OIC overlooks and encompasses the 1.5 billion Muslims spread across the universe. Representing the Muslim world, its sole purpose is to keep maintaining the unification of the Muslim world (i.e. the Ummah it follows that through building international peace and safeguarding the interests of Muslims).

Sincerely,
Ali Mohaidly
Director of OIC | PacificMUN 2017



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Committee Overview

The OIC consists of 57 member states with each respective state acting to represent their country in the OIC. In 2008, the present charter was adopted by the eleventh Islamic session, which laid down the principles and objectives of the organization. As a result, this charter unifies the OIC under one umbrella of “Strengthening Solidarity”. Each member state must abide by the OIC. The OIC consists of many different organs, each with the purpose of strengthening relations between its member states. The “Standing Committee,” which is one of the organs, consists of the following; The Al Quds Committee, The Standing Committee of Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), The Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC), and lastly The Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological cooperation (COMSTECH).

Delegates should be aware of “The Standing Committee,” which is significant for the OIC as it strengthens the links between its member states, and in-order to advance issues of critical importance to the organization. The OIC’s 57 members are spread throughout four continents. In order to protect the interests of Muslims and to re-solve any rivalry between member states, the OIC’s relation with the United Nations and other bodies/organizations is consultative and cooperative. To stress more on the prime purpose of the OIC, it has adopted principles for which its members must abide by which are as follows:

- All member States shall commit themselves to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter
- Member states are sovereign, independent, and equal in rights and obligations
- All Member States settle their disputes through peaceful means and refrain from the use or threat of use of force in their relations
- All member states should undertake to respect national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of other member states and shall refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of other
- Member states shall uphold and promote, at the national and international levels, good governance, democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law

Quick brief points from the Charter of the OIC which are significant include:

- To enhance and consolidate the bonds of fraternity and solidarity among the member states
- Ensure active participation of the member states in the global political, economic, and social decision-making processes to secure their common interests
- Protect and defend the true image of Islam, to combat defamation of Islam, and encourage dialogue among various civilizations and religious

The goal for the OIC is to keep a strong bond among its fellow member states despite the Sunni and Shia split. It should opt to combat any sectarian tension between Muslims, Islamic Defamation, and most importantly to ensure the safeguard of the 1.5 billion Muslim which are faced with discrimination and various threats. I’m expecting delegates to keep in mind the charter and principles of the OIC, but moreover, delegates shouldn’t isolate themselves from the outside world and should keep on maintaining relations and encouraging dialogue¹.

“There is no compulsion in religion” (Baqarah: 256)

¹ <http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv3/>



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Topic Introduction

*"We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians."
–Nelson Mandela*

The Arab-Israeli Conflict, also known as the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, is a 67 year old conflict which is one of the most sophisticated situations in modern times, taking the lives of many from both sides. It erupted as the British in the 1930s began bringing Jewish immigrants to Palestine without the consent of Palestinians. The more it increased, the more resentment within the Palestinian population was caused because they were treated unfairly and were losing sovereignty over their homeland. As a result, the Palestinians started resisting against the mass Jewish immigration, and the British presence. That said, it was not until 1948 that the Jews were almost a majority of the population, at which point then they claimed sovereignty over their ancient homeland, declaring independence and proclaiming the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel. To this day the Palestinians are still fighting for their right to regain their homeland. This has caused the Muslim community to offer assistance to the Palestinians in the form of refugee asylum. Jordan holds 2,117,361 refugees, Syria holds 526,744, and Lebanon holds 449,957². What worries the OIC most is restrictions and violations against the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, where it stands as the third holiest site in Islam, being sacred to Muslims everywhere. The great prophet Mohammad (SAW) during his journey from Mecca to Jerusalem descended to heaven from the Al-Aqsa mosque. As quoted in the holy Koran, *"Glory to Allah who did take His Servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (in Makkah) to the Al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem) whose precincts we did bless"* (al-Isra 17: 1)

Both sides need to end this conflict immediately and peace negotiations should resume, which is a long process, but there isn't any viable solution rather than that. Arabs and Jews can and must be able to live in coexistence and peace. In-order for peace negotiations to happen smoothly, Israel should first end its occupation of the West Bank. Currently, Palestinians are arguing for a halt on the illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank, the number of which has dramatically increased, often forcing Palestinians to leave their homes. Aside from this, Israel currently occupies the Syrian Golan Heights, where about 17000 Jewish settlers are trying to inhabit³. The UN has condemned Israel for its actions towards settlements in the West Bank, but Israel refuses to comply. Another issue is Jerusalem, which Israel currently occupies, which is home to the holiest site of Islam. Restrictions and attacks on the Al-Aqsa mosque have happened, which is reason for bitter dispute, as it must be protected, and Muslims must be able to access it. Under international law, Israel is causing violations by occupying Jerusalem. These are obstacles towards peace negotiations and it's the reason why most of the peace talk weren't successful. However, a solution must be reached for the betterment of all parties involved.

² <http://www.npr.org/2011/05/24/136495202/background-israels-pre-1967-boundaries>

³ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alon-benmeir/why-have-past-israeli-pal_b_8590960.html



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Timeline

May 16, 1916	Sykes-Picot Agreement marks out the new borders of the Middle East, which has been under Ottoman Rule since the 16 th Century. Britain would be given control over Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine, where as France would control Syria and Lebanon.
November 2, 1917	Balfour Declaration of 1917 is created, by which the British Government proposed and supported the idea of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
1920 - 1922	League of Nations divides the former Ottoman territories into mandates where France was given the mandate for Syria and Lebanon and Britain was given the mandate for Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan, but the British carve Palestine into two political entities.
1933 - 1936	Mass Jewish immigration starts descending into Palestine after the Nazi's rose to power in Germany. The Jewish population in Palestine rose from 17% in 1931 to 33% in 1936, also with over tens of thousands Jews entering Palestine illegally.
1936 - 1939	The Palestinian rebellion against foreign colonization and foreign rule started, later as tensions deteriorated, clashes broke out between Arabs & Jews which then resulted in a major revolt. The Arab higher committee was formed headed by the grand mufti of Jerusalem: Al Hajj Amin el-Husseini.
November 1947	The UN General Assembly partitions Palestine into separate Jewish and Palestinians states. One for the Jews which would consist of Tel-Aviv and Haifa, and the other for the Palestinian Arabs which would consist primarily of the West Bank of Jordan, the Gaza district, and other cities. The holy city of Jerusalem would be shared by both Muslims and Jews, later becoming an international enclave under U.N trusteeship. This partition was accepted by the Zionists of Israel, but was rejected by the Palestinian Arabs.
May 14, 1948	Israel declares its independence as it proclaims the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine. In its declaration they claimed equal rights to Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel.



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Timeline

May 15, 1948	The first Arab-Israeli war broke out when five Arab nations invaded the newly created state of Israel. The Arabs launched multiple attacks across Israel, but Israelis were able to resist and gained the offensive advantage, retaliating by launching attacks in Syria, Egypt and Jordan. At the end of the war, Israel has not only managed to retain its land assigned to them by the UN, but also seize part of the land designated for the Palestinian state as well. The other designated Palestinian areas were near Jordan and Egypt. Jordan annexed the West Bank and Egypt took control of the Gaza district.
July 1956	The Suez Crisis/the second Arab-Israeli war begins, tensions kept going on with Israel, so Egypt closed the Suez Canal and the straits of Tiran to Israel. General Abdul Nasser of Egypt then nationalizes the Suez Canal, which angered the French, the British, and the Israelis. Under a secret plan, France, Britain, and Israel plan to attack Egypt which started first by the Israelis attacking Egyptian military positions. From there, they captured the whole Gaza strip and the Sinai peninsula. Both France and Britain joined the war with Israel.
June 1967	Six Day War commences. June 5-10. This was the third Arab-Israeli war. As a result of Israel's victory, it captured Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights, Gaza, West bank and the holy city of Jerusalem.
1993 - 2000	Multiple peace negotiations and accords were taken place between the Palestinians led by Yasser Arafat and Israel. The US, Jordan, and Egypt acted as mediators towards the peace process. This lead to dialogue between both sides which leads to major accords known as the Oslo Accords I & II.



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Historical Analysis

Many of the events that triggered this conflict are mentioned in the Timeline, but it's important that I further elaborate on them as they are significant. Firstly, the Sykes-Picot agreement was the ignition to the conflict. After the Ottomans were defeated the British and French, they decided to carve up the borders and expand their colonies into the Middle East. They promised the Arab countries that at the cost of fighting the Ottomans, they would be rewarded with independence. But French and British had a desire for the oil in that region, and they couldn't let go of that. After this, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 was enacted, where the British met with the Jews secretly and supported an idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Despite the Sykes-Picot agreement, the British didn't notify this to the Arabs. It was said that the British and French planned for this to happen, and as a result in 1920 the League of Nations divided the former Ottoman territories in the Middle East into British and French mandates. As this came into action, the mass Jewish immigration began in 1933 and onwards. Palestinians promptly started to resist against the Jewish immigration.



A Palestinian child throws a rock at an Israeli tank



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Current Situation

Currently, there haven't been any major developments towards solving this conflict, as there are many aspects to be covered before both sides come to the negotiating tables. Chances are if these aspects are dealt with, there could be the likelihood that negotiations will succeed. The OIC has set up a department which overlooks the Palestinian cause and especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In 2011, Mahmoud Abbas (President of the Palestinian Authority) asked for full UN membership for a Palestinian state, which would narrow the path for the recognition of Palestine. The US vetoed this from passing in the UN Security Council though, and Israel condemned this request for UN membership claiming that peace negotiations would deteriorate. Shortly after, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called for peace talks to resume between both sides.

Later in 2011, Palestine became the 195th full member of UNESCO and their flag was raised in the UNESCO headquarters. In contrast, in November 2012, in an overwhelming vote the UN General Assembly voted to accept Palestine as a non-member observer state. This led to Israeli and Palestinian peace talks in Washington, DC, which subsequently led to some success where Israel agreed to release 104 Palestinian prisoners. In addition to this, the leader of Hamas, the popular Islamist resistance movement in Gaza, and Fatah, the main political party from the West Bank, formed a unity government that finally put an end to a seven year split between both sides. This is significant as it's important that the Palestinians stay united in defending their right for sovereignty.

Delegates should have a clear understanding of the aspects that need to be met in order to finally resolve this conflict, such as looking at the past peace negotiations and see why it crumbled. Some of the terms that Palestinians had for Israel include the following:

- Firstly, Israel should stop constructing settlements in the West Bank, which the UN in the past has condemned.
- Second, Israel should withdraw and end its occupation of the West Bank, in which security should be handed to Palestinian Authority. It's feasible as in a 2005 agreement, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip.
- Thirdly, before coming to the negotiation tables, both sides need to agree on what solution they opted for. Either a two state solution, or to go back to the Pre-1967 UN borders, or a one state solution.
- Lastly, there needs to be full recognition by the international community of Palestine. Luckily, the Vatican recognized the State of Palestine in 2015.

A Map of the Israel-Palestine area and surroundings





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United Nations Involvement

The UN has stayed neutral on this conflict; it doesn't favour any side, but it encourages both sides to resume and maintain peace talks. In 1947, the UN established the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCP) which gave recommendations for Palestine to be presented at the next session of the General Assembly. Unfortunately, this led to criticism due to its lack of involvement with Arab nations in the committee. There have been multiple UN resolutions passed, including major ones in 1947 with the UN partition of Palestine into Separate Jewish and Palestinian states, and Resolution 242, which was adopted in the aftermath of the Six Day War. This called on Israel to relinquish the territories acquired during its war with Syria and Egypt. This resolution was one of the most significant resolutions to ever be passed because it led to future agreements between both sides. The UN has also played a role in dealing with the influx of Palestinian refugees, which totals around 5 million. For this reason, the United Nations Relief and Work agency (UNRWA) was set up to assist the refugees who were mostly situated in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. In 2012, the UN voted to accept Palestine as a non-member observer state. This upgraded Palestine's status without prejudice to the acquired rights.



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Possible Solutions

This is a very critical section which outlines a few of the solutions to the conflict, and delegates should have a clear idea on each potential solution and its implications. Making a way for a viable Palestinian state is not impossible and without doubt Palestinians deserve self-determination. I recommend delegates to come up with the most effective solution which would benefit both sides, and which would hopefully end the conflict. Below are some of the possible solutions to ending the conflict and to peace negotiations.

Two State Solution

This is by far the most supported solution by major international players such as the US, UN, EU. Most members of the Arab League are open to it, and most importantly it's the stated policy of the current Israeli government, as well as being recognized by the current Palestinian leadership. The holy city of Jerusalem will be partitioned as it was in 1967, and it will serve as a shared capital between Israel and Palestine, which the OIC would favour. Also the borders will be based on the 1967 line which will divide Palestine into the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza strip. The benefit of this is that it is internationally-recognized, and it's undisputed that this is the best security arrangement for both sides. A corridor would also be built to connect Gaza and the West Bank to allow safe and free passage⁴.

This solution could lead to some issues though, first, both sides need to halt the spread of hatred and racism between one and another that has been rooted in people for decades, this hatred can be prevented with increased educational institutions. Secondly, both sides could face backlash, especially from hardliners such as Hamas and the Zionist movements in Israel. Lastly the Jewish settlers would have to leave the West Bank, leading to great tensions⁵.

One State Solution

This is a proposal for a solution to the conflict. In-contrast to the two state solution this is less supported by the US, EU, and Palestine because it would lead to a bi-national state, but it is favoured by Israeli Arabs and by Zionists of Israel. The pros of the one state solution in the eyes of the OIC is that Palestinians would become a majority without considering the Palestinian Diaspora. The drawbacks of the one state solution is the Palestinians desire their own sovereignty and an independent state, which is motive behind this 67 year old conflict. Secondly, it would ignite political tensions as Israeli and Palestinian political parties form, they would have to bridge the gap between these peoples to form coalitions, which could cause great political unrest with members of one party greatly disagreeing with each other⁶.

⁴ <http://fathomjournal.org/the-two-state-solution-the-way-forward/>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/nov/02/israel-palestine-two-state-solution>

⁶ <http://israelipalestinian.procon.org/view.answers.php?questionID=000565>



OIC

The OIC denounces and condemns the brutal actions of the Israeli occupation towards the Palestinians. Having stated above one of the standing committees within the OIC is the Al-Quds committee, which was created to extend assistance to the Palestinian population and the holy institutions in Jerusalem. However, the OIC favours a peaceful solution for both sides because this conflict cannot continue. It has caused the death of many innocent civilian on both sides, and has displaced up to 750,000 Palestinians, many of whom would be eager to return back to their homeland, which the OIC members should assist with. The great prophet Mohammad (SAW) once said *"Whoever kills a person [unjustly]...it is as though he has killed all mankind. And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved all mankind."* (Qur'an, 5:32)

United States

The USA has been a strong supporter of Israel, and has viewed it has its strongest ally in the oil rich Middle East. As a matter of fact, Israel receives the most support from the US. The US provides Israel with approximately \$10.2 million in military aid each day! The US is the largest contributor of aid to Israel of any other foreign country. For the past decade, the US has been slowly decreasing economic aid to Israel and gradually replacing it with increased military aid. In 2007, the Bush administration and the Israeli government agreed to a 10-year, \$30 billion military aid package. In the 2008-2009 Gaza War, Israel used white phosphorus munitions, a chemical weapon that is prohibited under a UN convention which the US didn't sign. The US government supplied Israel with white phosphorus munitions. US military support to Israel won't solve the conflict at all, it only deteriorates the peace process. For over 60 years the US has provided Israel with aid, yet the conflict remains unsolved. Instead the US should decrease the aid to Israel and work towards pushing both sides to the negotiation table.

Lebanon

Like many of the Arab nations, Lebanon denounces the existence of Israel and supports the Palestinian cause. Lebanon has had a war with Israel recently in 2006 over the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers which were spotted on Lebanese territory. Lebanon was the base of the PLO as after fighting against Israel, they were expelled from Jordan, and they moved mostly in south Lebanon. During the Lebanese Civil War, Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 to annihilate the PLO. After bitter fighting, Israel drove the PLO out of Beirut, but later the siege ended through a negotiation with the US in which the PLO would evacuate from West Beirut and relocate its headquarters in Tunisia. Lebanon currently holds 450,000 Palestinian refugees; Israel only withdrew from Lebanon in 2000 ending its 28 year occupation. Lebanon doesn't hold any diplomatic relations with Israel, but Lebanon supports a peaceful solution for both sides.



Jordan

Jordan has played a major role in the Israel-Palestine conflict, being home to the largest Palestinian population in the Arab world, which totals around 2 million. After the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948, Jordan annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem. However, Jordan favours and believes more in a peaceful solution for both sides, and it has acted as a non-threatening mediator between both Israel and Palestine in the past. It has had a strong commitment to the two state solutions. In Oct, 26 1994 Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty which eased their tensions.

Egypt

Though Egypt has had rough relations with Israel in the past, after the death of Jamal Abdul Nasser (may Allah grant him mercy), the relations gradually got better to a point where the two nations signed a peace treaty called the Camp David Accords. It was the first Arab country to recognize the existence of Israel and to open diplomatic relations. Egypt has always acted as a mediator between Israel and Palestine whenever peace negotiations would occur as well as whenever conflict bubbled up between Hamas and Israel. In the past, Egypt would always broker for ceasefire. Egypt supports the "Two State Solution" as a solution to the conflict. In terms of Palestinian refugees, Egypt doesn't allow any refugee camps on its soil, however there are Palestinian refugees living in Egypt.



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Discussion Questions/Further Reading

1. What are the short and long term implications to the conflict?
2. If the peace negotiations resume how it could succeed this time?
3. What's the guarantee that the two state solutions will be the most effective solution?
4. If the two state solution is implemented what would be the structure of the new Palestinian government?
5. How can the OIC prevent any future attacks against the Al-Aqsa mosque?
6. Who should be held accountable for cause of deaths of the civilians caught in between the conflict?

Information on the "Palestine and Al-Quds affair" department in the OIC

http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv3/dept/?d_id=17&d_ref=3&lan=en

Timeline of events starting from the events leading to the Jewish migration to Palestine

<http://israelipalestinian.procon.org/view.timeline.php?timelineID=000031>

Justification for the two-state solution

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/9703026/The-Israel-Palestine-problem-has-a-simple-solution.html>

The significance of the Al-Aqsa Mosque

<http://www.iqrasense.com/islamic-world/significance-of-masjid-al-aqsa-in-jerusalem-haram-al-shareef.html>

Information about Jewish settlements

<http://www.bloomberg.com/quicktake/israeli-settlements>



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