



STUDY GUIDE

UNGA - SPECPOL

Deliberation on the recent violence in the Israeli-Palestine conflict with special emphasis on violation of ceasefire and the state of Jerusalem.



ABOUT THE LITERARY CIRCLE

Literary Circle is the club in NIT Durgapur, which gives the college an extra dimension of creative expression in the midst of technical unilateralism and gives the students of the college an opportunity to transcend the ordinary and mundane. The Literary Circle conducts various events throughout the year: Verve, Literary cum Youth Festival of the college and the biggest of its kind in Eastern India.

The Literary Circle successfully pulled off the 17th edition of Verve in 2022. Flagship events in the fest, like the Treasure Hunt, have become a matter of college folklore. The club maintains a blog, The Darkest White, as the culmination of myriad pen strokes from the collective literary expression of the college. The club publishes the yearbook, so each student graduating out of college can reminisce about their days in the college, their hostel life and take with them a part of it. Humans of NIT Durgapur, by The Literary Circle, captures the untold stories, legends, and experiences of individuals, showing our readers how ordinary people can be unique, inspirational and relatable. The TEDx is an initiative where influential speakers are invited in order to realise TED's overall mission to research and discover "ideas worth spreading." TEDxNITDurgapur was co-organised by The Literary Circle and was a confluence of ideas and innovation. The club is known to be highly selective in its admission of new members, with only about 10-15 students inducted out of the entire batch of 900 each year. Great believers of the phrase 'quality over quantity', the members selected every year are the best of the best in the field of expression and creativity.

Come, step into the Circle!

ABOUT NITMUN

NITMUN is a forum convened by the members of the Literary Circle for discussion and analysis of global issues. It seeks to bring out motivated delegates from all over the country for a meaningful debate on significant international issues. Currently, in its 10th edition, NITMUN has been extremely successful in providing the perfect experience to each delegate. Over the years, we have entertained more than 2000 delegates totalling all the editions. Delegates arrive from all corners of India for an experience they will never forget.



ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) is the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. This committee focuses on a diverse set of issues relating to peaceful usage of outer space, effects of atomic radiation, political destabilization within or between member nations and discusses the grievances that the nations bring before the committee. In the past, this committee has addressed issues such as working with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and has investigated Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of occupied territories. In general, SPECPOL, like other GA committees, discusses those issues for which the Security Council may carry out enforceable decisions and measures such as economic sanctions.

Israel and Palestine are both located in the east of the Mediterranean sea. While Israel counts with a majority Jewish population, Palestinians are mostly Arab and Muslim. Both are currently involved in a deep-rooted territorial and ideological dispute between two self-determination movements—Zionism and Palestinian nationalism—that claim the same territory. Our primordial goal, as SPECPOL, is to address the territorial dispute in East Jerusalem, The West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, thereafter, it remains pivotal to note the nature of the territorial claims of the parties involved. The complex nature of this issue has led many to believe that peace between the two is inconceivable and unachievable. Nevertheless, the situation as it is today, where Palestine is not a part of Israel and yet not fully independent and where frequent clashes disrupt the peace, is not sustainable in the long term. Recently, in particular, there have been increasing concerns on the part of the international community over the legality of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory. The matter of Israel-Palestine relations has long been addressed by the Security Council, however, this time SPECPOL, which counts upon the participation of a wider range of countries and has traditionally dealt with matters of peacebuilding and international politics, was assigned the privilege of addressing both the conflict at large and the specific question of the current state of Jerusalem.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is one of the world's most enduring conflicts, beginning in the mid-20th century. Various attempts have been made to resolve the conflict as part of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, alongside other efforts to resolve the broader Arab–Israeli conflict. The conflict is rooted in a dispute over land claimed by the Jews as their biblical birthright and by the Palestinians, who seek self-determination. The dispute started in the early 20th century, when Jews were fleeing from Europe, with the rise of anti-Semitism, wanted to reside in what was then an Arab–Muslim majority territory.

After World War II and the terrors of the Holocaust, increased Jewish population moved to an area in the Middle East, known as Palestine at the time. As they viewed the area as a historical homeland, migration continued to escalate rapidly, specifically in regions near Jerusalem. With the increasing populations becoming a pressure to Palestine by the Jewish immigrants, in 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 to call for the formation of two separate Jewish and Arab states in the Palestinian area. Israel then decided to declare itself as an independent state in 1948. They successfully drove back the other countries, enabling it to take land that was originally taken for the Arab Palestinians in the process, which ultimately created a mass refugee crisis in the Palestinian region.

The establishment of Israel would be followed by years of fighting and terrorism, from the 1948 Arab Israeli War to the First and Second Intifadas. The intifadas were two Palestinian uprisings against Israel, the first in the late 1980s and the second is widely seen as the end of the 1990s era negotiating process. As a result of such conflicts, thousands of people have lost their lives, and millions have suffered, with entire populations suddenly becoming refugees.

Unlike in 2014, when the last major fighting between Israel and Hamas occurred, the Israeli troops were wary of launching a ground invasion this time. In a ground attack, Israel could inflict more damage on Hamas, but the risk of losing Israeli soldiers would also be high. This time, the focus of Israel's military campaign, which started on May 10, was on leaving maximum damage to Hamas's militant infrastructure through airstrikes. In the first 10 days of the fighting, Israel carried out more than 1,800 airstrikes on Gaza, according to the UN. But one issue with offensives that are heavily focused on air power is that they need a quicker exit strategy. Airstrikes will leave disproportionate civilian casualties. And disproportionate airstrikes, which was Israel's strategy, will have even greater damage, inviting international pressure.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

While Israel tried to sell the narrative that it's a victim of terror (which has buyers), the fact remains that Israel is the only sovereign power in this conflict, which continues the occupation of Palestinian territories in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, international laws and norms.

So, when civilian casualties mounted in Gaza, even those countries that initially supported Israel's "right to defend itself" started calling for a ceasefire. In the UNSC most countries backed an immediate ceasefire. The Biden administration, which was facing intense pressure from the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, issued a strong statement on Wednesday asking for "a significant de-escalation". Israel was also facing internal pressure as its streets were gripped by riots between Jewish vigilantes and Arab mobs. Protests were spreading in the West Bank and rockets were coming from the Lebanon border. Amid intensifying pressure from many sides, the Israeli Security Cabinet unanimously accepted a "unilateral and mutual" ceasefire with Hamas on Thursday night. The militants immediately confirmed the truce.



KEY TERMS

Jerusalem: The capital of Israel, considered holy to the three major Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Gaza (also referred as the **Gaza Strip**): A self-governing Palestinian territory on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea that borders Egypt and Israel.

West Bank: Landlocked territory bordered by Israel and Jordan that Israel militarily occupied since the 1967 SixDay War.

Al-Aqsa Mosque: The Aqsa Mosque is one of the holiest structures in the Islamic faith. The mosque sits inside a 35-acre site known by Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary, and by Jews as the Temple Mount. The site is part of the Old City of Jerusalem, sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.

Zionism: A colonial movement calling on Jews to establish a national state in historic Palestine by any means.

Administrative Detention: The imprisonment of Palestinians by Israel without charge or trial.

Borders: Israel has never defined its borders.

Bypass Road: Israel's discriminatory road system in the occupied West Bank.

Closure: Arbitrary Israeli blockade of towns and villages in the occupied West Bank.

Collective Punishment: Banned by the Fourth Geneva Convention and routinely used by Israel against the Palestinians.

Ethnic Cleansing: Israel's strategy during the 1948 Palestinian Nakba, which drove 850,000 Palestinian Arabs out of their homes. Today Israel continues to commit ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians.

Green Line: A temporary line that, in 1949, formed the de facto border between Israel and what was left of historic Palestine.

Intifada: The Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation.

KEY TERMS

Occupied Palestinian Territories: The largest and longest lasting occupation of modern time.

Palestinian Authority: The Palestinian body governing parts of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

PLO: Founded in 1964 to create an independent Palestinian State.

The Israeli Wall: Separation barrier in the West Bank that divides Israel and Palestine, considered by Israelis as a security barrier against terrorism while Palestinians call it a wall of racial segregation.

Balfour Declaration: This declaration was a public support for the Zionist movement from the British government and a promise that they would establish a Jewish state in Palestine at the end of World War I.

Partition Plan: At the end of World War II, this plan was developed by the United Nations through Resolution 181. It created two states (one Arab and one Israeli) in Palestine.

Resolutions 242 and 339: A result of the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War respectively, these resolutions required that Israel return land illegally obtained during their conflict with the Arab countries and respect the sovereignty of surrounding states. This effectively cut off Israeli expansion.



TIMELINE

Since May 10, 2021, countless missiles have been streaking back and forth between Gaza and cities across Israel in one of the deadliest episodes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in years.

A dispute that started in a Jerusalem neighbourhood has spiralled into a war that now spans Israel, the Palestinian territories and parts of Lebanon.

Here is how the violence has intensified and expanded:

Mid-April to early May: Sheikh Jarrah district in Jerusalem:

Six Palestinian families face a looming eviction from the houses where they have been living since the 1950s. The case sparks clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces around the neighbourhood. These later intensify as gangs of young Israeli Jews march in the streets of East Jerusalem chanting "Death to Arabs." Violence between Arabs and Jews spreads to other parts of the city and triggers several riots.

May 7: Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem:

Clashes break out at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, one of Islam's most sacred sites — an area also revered by Jews as the Temple Mount. As Muslim worshipers pack the mosque for Friday prayers, Jewish groups approach the area to celebrate the day marking Israel's capture of East Jerusalem in 1967. Clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police ensue that leave hundreds of Palestinians and around 20 police officers injured. In the afternoon, the Palestinian militant Islamist group Hamas, which has controlled the Gaza Strip since 2007 and is classed as a terrorist organisation by both the EU and US, among others, sends an ultimatum, threatening to attack if Israel does not withdraw its armed forces from the mosque compound and Sheikh Jarrah.

As the deadline passes, Hamas' rockets target Jerusalem for the first time in years, with the first shot fired on May 10. Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system intercepts one of the rockets. The others damage properties but leave no casualties. In response, Israel responds with airstrikes on Gaza, killing two children.

May 11 through May 12: Several Israeli cities and Gaza

The exchange of fire continues, intensifies and targets more cities. An Israeli airstrike destroys a Gaza city tower block that was said to host the offices of senior Hamas officials. In other attacks, Israel kills about 10 senior Hamas military figures along with dozens of civilians. In addition to airstrikes, Israeli artillery and tanks fire at the Palestinian enclave from inside Israeli territory.

TIMELINE

In return, Hamas rains rockets down on Israeli cities including Tel Aviv, Ashkelon and Beersheba. In mixed Jewish-Arab towns, riots flare up. Authorities of several cities declare a state of emergency, and police arrest hundreds of Arab and Jewish rioters.

May 13 through May 15: Israel, West Bank, Gaza, Syria and the Lebanese border

As Israel and Hamas continue to trade fire, demonstrations across the West Bank and Jordan turn violent. Palestinian health officials announce that Israeli forces have killed 11 protesters.

On the other side, the Israeli military claims three rockets have hit Israel from Syria. Damascus does not respond to the accusation.

At the border between Lebanon and Israel, Israeli troops shoot dead a 21-year-old Lebanese member of Hezbollah. He and others were protesting in support of Palestinians on the Lebanese side of the border and tried to cross a security fence on the border.

May 17 through May 18: The violence expands to Lebanon

Six rockets are fired from Lebanon toward Israel but fall short into Lebanese territory. Israel responds by firing into southern Lebanon on Monday night.

The violence is now in its second week. It has killed more than 200 people in Gaza and 12 in Israel and left many more injured.



KEY PLAYERS

ISRAEL – Israeli troops routinely exert violence on Palestinian citizens, officially claiming that their actions are justified law enforcement against rioting refugees. The extreme form of this is its hard-line policy against Palestinians approaching the border, in which it openly states that anyone approaching within a certain distance of the border would be shot and killed. The Israeli government is extremely reluctant to engage in any discussions regarding its violence towards Palestinians.

PALESTINE – Palestinian provisional government, whose people are frequently injured and killed amid countless protests against Israel, condemns Israel's "excessive use of force" and calls for the termination of violence.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA – The USA, as a longtime ally of Israel, is very supportive of the Israeli government's actions. Its former ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, defended Israel, asserting that "No country in this chamber would act with more restraint than Israel has" after Israel's use of military force on Palestinians in May 2018, an assault that resulted in 58 Palestinian deaths. On the other hand, the USA is, rather predictably, quite unsympathetic to Palestine and its arguments regarding the situation at hand.

FRANCE – France is critical of Israel's use of force on Palestinians in general. French president Emmanuel Macron emphasised the Palestinian citizens' right to protest peacefully to Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2018.

KUWAIT – Kuwait is disapproving of Israel's continuous violence, and is preparing to initiate international protection for the Palestinian civilians.

GERMANY – Germany, along with France, is deeply concerned about the violence taking place by the Israeli forces on the Palestinian civilians. The German foreign ministry called for an independent inquiry after the aforementioned Israeli violence of May 2018.

HAMAS – Hamas is known among Palestinians in those areas for humanitarian actions such as building schools, hospitals and helping the community in social and religious ways. The military wing of Hamas, Izzedine al Quassam, carries out military and terrorist operations. Hamas was founded in late 1987 at the beginning of the intifada or "uprising," the largely nonviolent Palestinian protest against the Israeli occupation under which many Palestinians were forced to live. In 1988, Hamas published a statement asserting that since Israel wanted the destruction of Islam, working against Israel was a religious duty.

KEY PLAYERS

PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION – The umbrella representative group of Palestinians, the PLO has eight factions and was established in 1964 by the Arab League to press for a Palestinian homeland. Arafat leads the largest group, the moderate Fatah. Long deemed a "terrorist organization" by Israel, the PLO recognized Israel in 1990, and in 1993, the two sides forged a peace agreement.

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY – The ruling body of Palestinians in the occupied territories was created under the 1993 peace agreement signed by Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, which provided for the gradual withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Arafat is president of the Palestinian Authority. Its legislative body, the Palestinian Council, was elected in January in the Palestinians' first elections.

LIKUD PARTY – Israel's governmental body. Likud is the mainstream conservative party in Israel, often accusing the Labor Party of giving up too much to the Palestinians in peace negotiations.

LABOR PARTY – Labor Party is seen as the liberal mainstream party of Israel and has generally taken a softer approach in relations with Palestinians. Former Israeli Prime Ministers Peres and Yitzhak Rabin led this party.



CONCLUSION

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is a complex, controversial saga that has concerned the UN since the organisation's foundation in 1947. It has remained in their agenda until today and remains highly controversial. Questions posed by the conflict concern the development of modern statehood, the necessity of international recognition, the security of state borders as Palestine remains occupied territory. Moreover, the availability of drinking water is limited in many areas and therefore further increases tensions between the local populations. While many have deemed the matter unsolvable, it is clear that the circumstances are not stable in the region and, therefore, something is bound to shake up the status quo eventually. Therefore, it is now in the hands of this committee to propose solutions that are realistic and effective in order to resolve disputes in the region.



QUESTIONS

1. What should be done concerning Israeli settlements? Should settlement activity be frozen to initiate the peace process and what would that signify for Israeli settlers?
2. Which mechanisms for conflict management should be applied to de-escalate tensions in the region? How should the international community deal with Hamas?
3. How should the region be distributed between Palestine and Israel? In what ways could we ensure that all parties involved will comply with the distribution taking into consideration special cases such as the one of Jerusalem and overall ideological discrepancies?
4. Should Palestine be recognized as a full member of the United Nations?
5. What actions must the international community take when diplomatic efforts fail to bring the stakeholders to the negotiation table?
6. The Oslo Accords and the Camp David I & II demonstrated that diplomatic solution may be attainable, but only with negotiations and mediating parties. Egypt has also served numerous times as an intermediary for Palestine and Israel. Is mediation and negotiation still a viable vehicle towards peace?
7. What actions did your country take in the past to improve the situation?
8. Should the international community take any actions towards stakeholders that refrain from complying with international law? What should be done if there are different interpretations?
9. Is there room for innovation within this conflict? Is there a solution other than the “two-state solution”?

QUESTIONS

10. What types of legal mechanisms could be implemented to uphold human rights in occupied Palestinian Territories? How could we ensure the transparency of the aforementioned?

Please keep in mind that these questions are part of a route map and are not exhaustive. We encourage the delegates to display their diplomatic talents and offer realistic solutions to the situation at hand.

REFERENCES

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/the-israel-palestine-conflict-100-years-of-history/article62030290.ece>

<https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14994.doc.htm>

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/explained-israel-hamas-ceasefire/article34614354.ece>

http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7b65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7d/s_pv_7020.pdf

<https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/12/29/507377617/seven-things-to-know-about-israeli-settlements>

<https://israelipalestinian.procon.org/historical-timeline-1900-present/>