

CRISIS COMMITTEE APPLICATION QUESTIONS 2014

Israel-Hamas-Fatah Joint Crisis Committee

1. What is your past Model UN experience?

I am currently a sophomore, and I have been participating in Model UN since the beginning of my freshman year. I have been on a range of committees including a UN General Assembly and continual crisis committees. Last year, I went to three competitive conferences: SUSMUN, BosMUN, and CMUNC. And I will attend VAMUN this year before PMUNC. I greatly enjoy doing Model UN, and I anticipate I will continue to do Model UN through my senior year of high school and into college. In particular, I enjoy continual crisis committees because of the fast-moving and exciting topics as well as the crises that develop.

2. What do you believe are the three most important issues related to developing a final framework agreement between Israel and Palestine?

The first major issue related to Israel and Palestine conflict that needs to be addressed is religious tension between the two. Israel demands that Palestine recognize Israel as a Jewish State, but Hamas refuses, arguing that that is not right given the millions of Arabs living in Israel. Hamas does not even recognize Israel's right to exist. Additionally, a capital must be determined. Currently, Jerusalem is under complete control of Israel but in developing a final framework agreement, Palestine will likely want it as their capital as well. Given that both sides have a valid claim to the land, the issue surrounding Jerusalem needs to be solved before any headway can be made. The third main issue that must be dealt with is the refugee situation and right of return. After the Arab-Israeli conflicts of 1948 and 1967, millions of Arabs left Israel and are now refugees. There is currently an ongoing debate as to whether these refugees should be able to return to Israel. Israel believes they should not and Palestine believes they should. The Palestinian right of return is perhaps the most important issue that needs to be solved and the most difficult problem to solve.

3. How does the unification of Fatah and Hamas affect negotiations between Israel and Palestine?

The Unification of Fatah and Hamas will add more tension to negotiations, particularly the discussion of Palestinian territory. With Hamas currently in control of the Gaza Strip and Fatah currently in control of the West Bank, tensions between the two groups are

high. Although a unity government was created between the two groups back in April, Israeli intelligence uncovered a plot by Hamas to overthrow Fatah in the West Bank, damaging a possible unification of the two groups. Additionally, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suspended peace talks with PLO President Mahmoud Abbas due to the unity government, as Israel views Hamas as a terrorist organization. If Fatah and Hamas remain together, Israel will be much more reluctant to resume peace talks since Israel would much prefer peace talks with only Fatah.

4. Please discuss some of the potential outcomes of negotiations between Israel and Palestine (i.e. joint government in one state, two separate states, etc.), and the costs/benefits of each scenario.

As a one-state solution is extremely unlikely due to religious tensions, the only possible solution is a two-state system, which can only occur if both Israel and Hamas agreed to negotiate. If a two-state solution were to occur, many issues could be solved. Both countries would be recognized internationally, and Israel could remain a Jewish state. But, in order to form a two-state solution, both sides will have to make significant compromises. Hamas would have to recognize Israel's existence and cease its attacks on Israel. And Israel might have to cease its expansion into the West Bank. Neither side will want to compromise, and if a two-state solution did occur, there would be a couple of possible outcomes. One unlikely outcome would be for both sides to agree to settle their differences. Palestine would form its own country consisting of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel would abandon its territories in the West Bank, Hamas would recognize Israel's existence, and Fatah and Hamas would unify peacefully. A second possible outcome could be the establishment of a Palestinian state, but some small event, such as a Hamas rocket attack, could start more conflict. Unfortunately the most likely outcome of peace talks would be nothing. Fatah and Hamas will likely continue to have tensions and will not stay together, as Hamas has continued its hostility against Fatah and is unwilling to compromise. Israel and Palestine, particularly Hamas and the Gaza Strip, may be unable to overcome their differences, and the conflict would just continue.

5. How can Israel balance its stated desire to be formally recognized by the international community as a "Jewish state" with its constitutional commitment to democracy? How does this impact the negotiations process?

Israel was founded in the hopes that it would serve as a home for Judaism. It wants to be recognized as a Jewish state, but many oppose. Israel has around 1.7 million Arabs living within its borders, and many say that the Israeli government, while attempting to be democratic has discriminated against them. The desire to be a formal Jewish state will only cause more tension and discrimination. Palestine refuses to accept Israel's status as a Jewish state. This issue will have a huge influence on peace talks, and will almost guarantees that a one-state solution will not be reached. The Jewish state issue will lead to both sides favoring a two-state solution.