



Forum: Security Council

Issue: The Question of Palestine

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Position: Co-chair

It would be my greatest sadness to see Zionists (Jews) do to Palestinian Arabs much of what Nazis did to Jews.

Albert Einstein

INTRODUCTION

According to archeologists, Palestine is one of the most ancient territories to have been inhabited by human beings. Despite this, the area has always been under the control of other bigger or more powerful powers, such as Egyptians, Romans and Arabs among all, but after the Allies' victory in the World War One and the creation of Mandatory Palestine from two different Ottoman provinces, the Palestinian borders were defined by the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

The British administered the region, having promised to give a homeland to the Jews, and fixed the modern boundaries with agreements, such as the Transjordan memorandum (stating that Transjordan was to be excluded from the Jewish settlement), the Paulet-Newcombe Agreement (a sequence of agreements between France and Britain considering the nature and the position of the boundaries between Palestine and Mesopotamia) and by following the dynamics of the Turco-Egyptian boundary agreement.

The Palestinian Region is considered the cradle of the Palestinian people and culture, and this area is usually enclosed in the territories of the Mandatory Palestine. However, ever since its Declaration of Independence in 1988, the State of Palestine consists only of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This sizable difference was even highlighted by the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas during a speech held during a session of the United Nations.



DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Arab League: a regional organization of Arab countries situated in North Africa, Arabia and the Horn of Africa. It currently has twenty-two members, but Syria's membership has been suspended due to the government repression during Syrian Civil War.

Arab Higher Committee: it was the central political organ of the Arab Palestinians during Mandatory Palestine. The Arab League funded a committee with the same name, but it went largely to abeyance during the Arab-Israeli War.

Strip: a relatively long, flat, narrow piece of land.

Borders: the dividing line or frontier between political or geographical regions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE BIRTH OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

In 1947, after a long period of terrorist attacks throughout the country, the British government decided to withdraw from Palestine, as it was impossible for the country itself to act as a third party in the outgoing conflict between Arabs and Jews. After the creation of the UN Special Committee on Palestine in order to prepare a report on the question of Palestine and a period of debate on the topic, it was clear that the different nationalities could not live together in one State. In the aforesaid report, it was suggested to create three independent States, the Arab State, the Jewish State and the City of Jerusalem (the last one to be held by an International Trusteeship System) to replace the vanished British Mandate.

However, when the plan was presented to the committee attached to the Resolution 181 (II), only the Jewish Agency accepted the plan, whereas the Arab League and Arab Higher Committee of Palestine rejected it, stating they wouldn't accept any partition.

Tensions were dividing the country and the following days were scenes of terrible attacks between Jews and Arabs: the Jews initially decided to don't attack the Arabs, but as the civil war broke out they passed from defensive to offensive. Hundreds of thousand Palestinian Arabs were expelled from Palestine.

Eventually, on 14 May 1948 the head of Jewish Agency, David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel and the following days a contingent made of the armies of Egypt, Syria, Transjordan and Iraq entered the Palestine, starting the so-called Arab-Israeli War. Soon other armies from all the Middle-East joined the war with the apparent purpose of preventing the establishment of the Jewish state.

The conflict went on for a year, when a ceasefire was declared and temporary borders were established. A veritable exodus had happened during the war: according to the UN estimation, more than 700.000 Palestinians were expelled or escaped from advancing of Israeli forces during the conflict.

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

The conflict broke out in 1948, after the proclamation of the State of Israel, and it is considered a wide-ranging conflict due to its violence. Despite a long period of relative peace and a general reconciliation of Israel with Egypt and Jordan, Israelis and Palestinians still have not found a final peace agreement, but after the half-century history of the conflict a number of polls submitted to the Israelis and the Palestinians showed how the majority of the two nationalities prefer the two-state solution to the dragging on of the conflict.



However, the war generates a wide range of opinions within the two societies, highlighting the deep divisions between the two nationalities and making the way to peace harder.

The two parties started direct negotiation mediated by the Quartet on the Middle East and with the collaboration of the Arab League and Egypt. Within the Palestinian party, there has been a fracture into two parties, Fatah, the traditionally dominant party, and Hamas, its later challenger and outsider. After quite a long time of division and the final collapse of the governance of the country held by the two-party system, in 2014 a Palestinian Unity Government stated to rule over the country, while a new round of peace negotiations began and was then suspended the same year.

Background

The conflict finds its origins between the 19th and the 20th century, with the interesting growth of nationalist movements among Jews and Arabs. The two nationalities were fighting for hegemony on the Middle East and they collided in Southern Levant first, then during the Israeli-Palestinian war and later on during the Arab-Palestinian conflict.

At first, after World War One, the coexistence of the two national movements seemed to be friendly, but after a faction in the Arab national movement itself, the leader of the said movement, Amin al-Husseini, blamed the Jewish immigration and national movement as the causes of the faction itself. The situation exploded and many strikes and boycotts broke out: the Arabs kept fighting against the British and the Jews, but the eruption of World War Two the situation calmed down.

Lately the Arab leader stated sympathizing for the Nazi regime and he promised to start a Nazi-propaganda in the Arab world. However, when the Allies won the conflict in Europe and the survivors of the Holocaust started to flee over to Palestine, a new crisis between the Jews and the Palestinian Arab leadership broke out: the British tried to calm down the situation fixing immigration quotas, but illegal immigration and Jewish insurgency against the British increased.

First Arab-Palestinian War

After the adoption of Resolution 181 (II) the civil war broke out and the Arab League formed the volunteer-based Arab Liberation Army in order to the Arab party in the war, but soon it was clear that the Arab Forces were collapsing and that the Jews were conquering more and more territories. An Arab refugee wave started and the Arab world helped the refugees, leading, however, to sporadic violence against the Jews, who began to run away from the conflict, creating an opposite refugee wave.

At this point the UN created the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to assist the Palestinian refugees escaping from the conflict.

The Suez Crisis ended up in the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip with the consequent outlawing of the Palestinian Government, lately restored during the Israeli withdraw. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was funded by Yasser Arafat and it immediately gained the support of the Arab League. However, while the Gaza strip was de facto under the military occupation of the Egyptian military.

Six-Day War and the Oslo Accords

The conflict had a positive end for the Israeli party, as it successfully gained the West Bank from Jordan and the Gaza Strip from Egypt. The PLO was unable to control those territories and established its headquarters in Jordan: this collaboration between the two countries led to a civil war, known as the Jordanian-Palestinian War, that saw the defeat of the PLO. The Palestinian militants fled to Southern Lebanon, where they stated an insurgency. While fighting with the Lebanese, the Palestinians went on attacking Israel.

the first Palestinian uprising broke out in 1987 due to the escalating attacks, the perpetrated violence and the occupation. Meanwhile, the Israeli-Palestinian peace progress led to the Oslo Accords of 1993, allowing the return of PLO from Tunisia and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. Instabilities followed soon the agreement taking to the fall of the new-elected government.

An open conflict between Israelis and Palestinians broke out in 2000 and lasted until 2005, when the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip formally ended. Hamas won the majority of the Palestinian parliamentary elections, who accepted a part of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements that were submitted to him under threats of economic sanctions. After some disorders and the Battle of Gaza, Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip and Israel imposed a naval blockade on the Strip itself.

The conflict still goes on in the Strip with sporadic air raids or rocket strikes by the Israelis.

The conflict evolved through the years and many rebellions and conflicts devastated the country, leading to the continuous hemorrhage of territories from the State of Palestine to the State of Israel. You can find a useful document on all the UN declaration and actions on the topic on the question of Palestine at this link (<https://unispal.un.org/pdfs/DPI2499.pdf>). It contains complete sections dedicated to the history of the conflict too.



MAJOR PLAYERS

United States of America

The United States of America do not recognize Palestine as a state, but the two countries' relations go back to the 1970s. Palestine has a delegation in Washington, whereas USA do not have any in Palestinian Authority areas but a Consulate in Jerusalem.

Egypt

The country has become an important strategic partner of Israel ever since 1980 and their relations are usually described as the "cold peace", due to Egypt's skepticism about their effectiveness. The Arab-Israeli conflict contributes to keep the situation cool and anti-Israeli is wide spread in the Egyptian Media.

Iran

Even though relations have always been cold between Iran and Israel, the conflict started around the 1990s, with the fall of the Soviet Union and some other events that contributed to form a bipolar structure of power in the Middle East. More and more incidents are increasing the tension between the countries, also due to the role that media has in the conflict.

Jordan

The diplomatic relations with Israel started officially since the signing of the Israel-Jordan peace treaty. It seems that the normal diplomatic activity has been strained to some vents, regarding the Al-Aqsa mosque (it is not officially proved).

RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

The UN itself has taken part in several diplomatic parts in the question of Palestine, trying to find a new balance in this devastated territory ever since the beginning of the conflict and the withdraw of the English government from Mandatory Palestine.

There is a huge amount of resolutions and debates on the topic, but, among all, I advise you to read S/RES/2334 – this is the most recent one, S/RES/1515 and S/RES/1624. They all give a complete overview on the topic and, in particular the last one focuses on the question of the terrible terrorist attacks that oppress the territory.

You can find more information at the link I already attached to this chair report, <https://unispal.un.org/pdfs/DPI2499.pdf>, that specifies clearly all the UN actions in the region and gives a specific overview on the diplomatic action that has been taken ever since 1947.

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

The aim of this chair report is to give a complete and brief overview on the topic; as I already said, this issue is particularly important because of the effect that it has on the rest of the world, including us.

Now it is your turn, delegate! I suggest you to read and search as much as you can, in order to have a stronger position during the debate. You will find it easier also to understand the dynamics of the debate, as it will be very fast and the other delegates might mention much different information.

I hope that this chair report will help you in your preparation and I wish you a good work.

See you in Ptuj.

USEFUL LINKS

- <http://www.un.org/en/ga/62/plenary/palestine/bkg.shtml>
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/the-relationship-between-israel-and-lebanon-is-deteriorating-again-and-its-civilians-who-will-suffer-a7097191.html>
- <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/israelpalestine/>
- <https://www.un.org/press/en/theme/palestinian-issues>
- <https://www.unrwa.org/>
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/un-security-council-condemns-israeli-settlements-palestinian-territories-us-refuses-use-veto-a7493351.html>
- <http://www.un.org/News/>

You might find interesting the point of view of the Palestinian and Israeli journalists:

- <http://www.aljazeera.com/>
- <http://www.timesofisrael.com/>