

The Fourth General Assembly

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict with special focus on
the Palestinian right of return



Forum	The Fourth General Assembly
Issue:	The Israeli-Palestinian conflict with special focus on the Palestinian right of return
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Introduction

Throughout the history of humankind, conflict has plagued many. Conflict, stemming from the use of violence to achieve some goal, seems to hurt more than heal, yet time and time again, we humans seem to be drawn to using it as a tool for problem solving. A notable example of this phenomenon is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is an ongoing war that brings into play several complicated factors, such as territorial sovereignty, religious disputes, and proxy war involvement. The complex nature of the conflict, as well as its deep and long history, is what makes it such a challenge to solve; a challenge that we will be trying to solve in this committee. Moreover, we will be focusing on the Palestinian 'Right of Return': a facet of the conflict often ignored. As a result of international law on the topic of forced displacement, an exploration into what this right should and should not entail may provide a unique perspective on solving the issue, whilst addressing an integral aspect of the conflict.

Definition of Key Terms

Mandatory Palestine

Officially known as the 'Mandate for Palestine', it was an area governed by Great Britain between 1920 and 1947 after the First World War, in order to support territories that used to be a part of the Ottoman Empire until they became stable as independent states. Britain's publishing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 encouraged them to promote the migration of Jewish people from



Europe to their “national home” in Palestine, even though the demographic of Jewish people living in Palestine in 1922 was only 11%.

The Nakba

Arabic for “catastrophe”, the Nakba refers to the mass displacement of Palestintians during the First Palestine War in 1948. It may also refer to the deprivation of the Palestinian population of their land, property, and belongings, as well as the overall destruction of their society by Israeli forces. Over 700,000 Palestinians were affected.

Intifada

This is an Arabic word that translates directly to “shaking off”, but it is used in this context to describe an uprising or rebellion. In the history of this conflict, there have been two recognised intifadas, aptly named the first (1987) and the second (2000).

Right of Return

Related to the broader concepts of the universal human right of ‘Freedom of Movement’ (Article 13), the right of return is defined in international law as the freedom of a person or peoples to move back to their country of origin or citizenship. It is often cited by refugees that wish to return to their home country, such as Palestinian refugees displaced in the 1948 Nakba or the Six-Day War in 1967.

Zionism

Initially developed in Europe in the 19th century, Zionism refers to the ethno-cultural movement that sought to establish a home for Jewish people in Palestine. Palestine has an important location in Jewish religion and tradition, making it the ideal location for a “national home”. Now, Zionism can be described as an ideology that seeks to defend the State of Israel and its sovereignty of the territory.



The Two-State Solution

The Two-State Solution was initially proposed in 1937, but was more formally realized in the 1947 UN Partition Plan. It involves the formation of two separate Arab and Israeli states, with an independent Jerusalem; it is widely regarded as the best solution.

General Overview

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Possibly one of the most widely discussed conflicts in the world right now, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has a deep and complex history of disputes over territory and who has the right to call the land between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea home. Palestine houses the city of Jerusalem, which is a holy city for three of the largest religions in the world: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Because of this, Jerusalem and Palestine in general was accustomed to a very diverse population all throughout history, with the largest demographic being Arabs, at 89% in 1922. These religious groups were able to live in peace with one another for centuries, but this changed at the start of the British Mandate period (1920-1947), when Great Britain began to administer Palestine on behalf of the League of Nations "until such time as they are able to stand alone" (Keter).

The mandate called for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people", which the British used as a reason to stimulate Jewish immigration into Palestine. It should be noted that Britain's interest in the creation of a Jewish state was so that it could rally for the Jews in Russia and the United States to keep their governments in the war (WWI) for long enough to win. Moreover, the British had a strategic reason to be interested in the region, due to its access to the Suez Canal, and its placement at the junction of three continents. By the 1930's, the number of Jews moving into Palestine had reached an all time high, with 62,000 immigrants in 1935. This could be traced to the Haavara Agreement of 1933, that facilitated the mass emigration of German Jews out of Nazi Germany and into Palestine.

By 1947, when the population of Jews in Palestine had risen to 31%, the British Mandate period came to an end. On November 29th, the United Nations passed a non-legally binding resolution, known as Resolution 181, that proposed a partition of the region into a separate Arab



state and a separate Jewish state, with Jerusalem gaining special international city status. The proposed split of territory was heavily biased in favor of the Jewish population, which caused outrage amongst the Palestinian Arabs. With decades of political tension prior, the unfairness of Resolution 181 was the spark for the First Palestine War, which lasted until 1949. During the war, Israel declared itself a sovereign state, the UN passed Resolution 194 (establishing the need for the Palestinian Right of Return), and some 700,000 Palestinians were displaced, known as the Nakba.

The post-war borders can be seen below, in which Israel captured a further 26% of Palestinian-designated land.



Territorial divisions of Palestinian land over time.

Following the First Palestine War, Israel maintained occupation in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, which kept tensions high in the following years. The period from 1949-1967 marked a time of relative peace, until June of 1967, which held the Six-Day War. During this war, Israel took forcible control of many contentious territories, namely the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights (previously Syrian), and the Sinai Peninsula (previously Egyptian). The UN's Resolution 242 in November of the same year did little to help alleviate the territorial disputes, and it was not until the 1978 Camp David Accords when these disputes were somewhat settled.

Following the First Intifada of 1987, the peace-making process seemed to be at its peak during the 1990's, marked with historical milestones like the Oslo Accords of 1993, the Israel-Jordan peace treaty of 1994, and the Camp David Summit of 2000. This was, however, until the Second



Intifada in 2000, followed by many bilateral conflicts and attacks, as well as the victory of Hamas in the 2006 elections. These events, alongside a lackluster attempt at building peace from both sides during the 2000's led to the deterioration of the progress made in the decade prior. Tensions in the region once again rose thanks to then US President Donald Trump's one-sided proposals of peace in 2017, as well as terrorist attacks throughout 2021-2022. Most recently, the Hamas attack on Israel in October of 2023 has resurrected the conflict, attracting international attention and cries for a ceasefire. Clearly, the conflict at hand has a deep and troubling history of violence, distrust, and ulterior motives, which continues to afflict pain and sorrow on the lives of millions.

The Palestinian 'Right of Return'

The other aspect of the issue is the Palestinian 'Right of Return'. Mentioned first in 1948 by a UN mediator, the right of return for Palestinians would provide all Palestinian refugees, both first-generation and their descendants (of which there are up to 7 million), have the right to return to their country of origin, and are also entitled to the property they or their ancestors were forced to have left behind. Those in favor of the right argue that it stands in contrast to the existing Jewish 'Law of Return', which grants people of Jewish descent or converts to Judaism the right to relocate to Israel and gain citizenship. Some argue that the lack of a similar right for Palestinians is a flagrant display of hypocrisy on the part of international lawmakers.

A detail often skipped over in the discussion of whether or not the Palestinian diaspora is entitled to a right of return is that of state succession. Defined in international relations as the (forcible) transfer of sovereignty from one state to another in the same territory, many experts argue that Palestinians that were subject to the occupation in and consequent annexation of previously Palestinian areas by Israeli forces are entitled to claim Israeli citizenship. If this claim to citizenship, which can be likened to the same claims made by people when their territory has been colonized, is not valid, then some may declare that the illegal denationalization of Palestinians is grounds enough for them to be granted a right of return. Typically, the debate of whether or not Palestinians are entitled to a right of return is based on who can be blamed for their exodus.

The proponents of the right of return argue that Israeli forces are to blame for the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and thus under human rights law are entitled to such a right. For example, a Palestinian military intelligence report from 1948 claimed that up to



95% of the total exodus could be blamed on Israeli warfare and operations. Other arguments in favor of the right of return call upon existing documents of international human rights, for example Article 13 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or on the Geneva Convention of 1949.

Moreover, proponents reference the (non-binding) UNGA Resolution 3236, adopted in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War of 1973, as it makes a somewhat explicit reference to the Palestinian right of return.

Those who object to the right typically argue that if all Palestinian refugees and their descendants were to re-enter the territory, the idea of a Jewish state would be demolished in its entirety, as Jewish people would be made the minority. Moreover, opponents of the right have shown that there is no legally binding demand or requirement for the repatriation of Palestinian refugees, nor their descendants. Others argue that the exodus of Palestinians in 1948 during the First Palestine War was entirely the fault of Arab armies that told the civilians to evacuate so they could operate effectively; Israel takes no responsibility for this exodus. Lastly, some opponents claim that references to international documents of law, such as the Geneva convention (1949) and the UN Human Rights Declaration (December 1948), are not valid, as the exodus of Palestinians took place predominantly in 1948, therefore making Israel's actions at the time of the exodus legal. As international law does not work retroactively, Palestinians are not entitled to a right of return.

Major Parties Involved

Israel

First envisioned as a state for Jewish people emigrating from Europe during and after the Second World War, in which they faced severe anti-semitism and persecution due to the Nazi regime in Germany, the State of Israel was established formally in 1948 in a region formally occupied by the ethnic group known as Palestinians. As the name suggests, Israel is an integral player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and is majorly supported by the global superpower of the United States of America. Israel is a UN-recognized member state.



The Palestinian Liberation Organisation

The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was first established during the first meeting of the Arab League in 1964, as an entity that could represent the Palestinian people and their desires on a global stage. Initially, it sought to eliminate the State of Israel and to regain total territorial control of the land granted to its people by Britain since 1920, known as Mandatory Palestine. Since the Oslo Accords of 1993, the PLO no longer seeks total control of the territory in question, but does ask for the areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The PLO is the only internationally recognised representative of the Palestinian people, but is not a UN-recognized member state, but rather has been granted observer status since 1974.

Hamas

In response to the death of four Palestinian passengers in car accident in 1987, and the consequential First Intifada, Hamas (an acronym for 'Harakt al-Muqawama al-Islamiya', its real name) was founded by Ahmed Yassin as an Islamist group and movement. Its victory in the 2006 elections allowed it to gain governance of the Gaza Strip and operate separately to its political rival, Fatah. Hamas was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the US in 1997, and is responsible for the recent resurgence in conflict due to its surprise attack on Israel on October 7th, 2023.

Fatah

After its loss to Hamas in the 2006 elections, resulting in a short conflict between the two parties, it was able to maintain control of the West Bank. The leader of Fatah, Mahmoud Abbas, is also the President of the Palestinian Authority.

The United Kingdom

The primary importance of the United Kingdom (UK) was due to its role in highlighting the need for a Jewish state in Palestine during World War One. This was so that the UK could build a sphere of influence over the Middle East, for which it was competing against France and Russia. Currently, the UK hopes to resolve tensions in the region through diplomacy and the creation of a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders.



The United States of America

The United States of America (USA) has, historically, played a complicated role in the Middle East, and its involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is no different. Its position as a Veto member state in the UNSC also adds to its power in decision-making for the conflict. Since its beginning, the USA has been brokering peace treaties and negotiations between Israel and Palestine, such as that of the Camp David Accords of 1978, or the development of the Roadmap for peace in 2003. The United States is in strong support of Israel, seen by how it was the first country to recognize Israel's independence in 1948. The USA has also been accused of having ulterior motives in the region, such as its proxy war with Russia, previously the Soviet Union, or its economic interest in oil reserves in the region.

Egypt

Egypt has been especially involved in the conflict due to its own complicated relations with Israel. Examples of such disputes include the 1954 Lavon Affair and the 1967 Six-Day War, as well as the territorial dispute of the Sinai Peninsula. These tensions and Egypt's involvement seemingly ceased in 1978 with the Camp David Accords that saw a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Currently, Egypt plays a monumental role in the question of Palestinian sovereignty and in the conflict as whole, especially due to it being the only country other than Israel to share a border with Palestine (through Rafah, the southernmost city in Gaza).

Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan

As neighboring nations to the conflict, all of these countries play an integral role in the question of territorial sovereignty and regional peace. All countries mentioned are in strong support of Palestine, and each has an individual history with the State of Israel, such as that of Syria and Israel, with their disputes over the Golan Heights. Iran has been especially involved in the conflict in recent months, slowly increasing its role in the war.



Timeline of Key Events

This timeline was taken in part from the independent U.S. NGO, The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), as well as from Vox.com.

November 2nd, 1917	The Balfour Declaration is published by Britain, and supported by the Allied Powers, calling for a “national home for Jewish people” in Palestine.
1932-1935	Many Jewish people flee Europe and Germany to escape the escalating anti-semitism, arriving at the British-ruled Palestine.
November 29th, 1947	Following the influx of Jewish people after the end of the Second World War, the UN proposes a Partition Plan in Resolution 181, which was rejected by both Israel and Palestine.
1947-1949	The Palestine War notes the first of many official conflicts in the region. The atrocities committed against Palestinians during the war were grouped under the term, ‘The Nakba’, Arabic for ‘the catastrophe’.
May 14th, 1948	Israel declares independence as a sovereign state.
December 11th, 1948	The UN passes Resolution 194, which establishes “the right of return” for Palestinians.
1954	Israel attempts a secret operation, known as The Lavon Affair, against Egypt, which fails and increases tensions in the region.
June 2nd, 1964	The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was founded in Cairo, at the first summit of the Arab League.
June 5th-10th, 1967	‘The Six-Day War’ was fought between Israel and several neighboring Arab states, being Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Israel won the war, gaining control of the Palestinian Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem, as well as the Syrian Golan Heights, and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula.
November 22nd, 1967	The UNSC passes resolution 242, calling on the Arab states to respect Israel’s territorial sovereignty and right to peace, and calls on Israel to not invade



“previously occupied territories”.

October 6th, 1973	The surprise attack on Israel by Egypt and Syria, known as the ‘Yom Kippur War’ came as an attempt to regain control of the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights.
September 1st, 1978	The ‘Camp David Accords’ established a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, in which Israel conceded control of the Sinai Peninsula and Egypt reopened the Suez Canal to Israeli ships in 1979.
1982	The ‘First Lebanon War’ takes place, worsening relations between Israel and Lebanon.
December 1st, 1987	The killing of four Palestinians in a driving accident leads to the ‘First Intifada’ (uprising): a protest against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and of Gaza. This also marks the establishment of the militant group Hamas, which was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the US in 1997.
October 30th, 1991	The Madrid Peace Conference is held for two years, with no major breakthroughs.
September 13th, 1993	The signing of Oslo Accords provisions the creation of a Palestinian Authority to govern the West Bank and Gaza, and Israel agrees to remove their control of the areas. It also aimed to establish a peaceful ‘Two-State Solution’ by 1999, which never came to be.
May 4th, 1994	The Gaza-Jericho Agreement puts the Oslo Accords into motion, in which the structure of the Palestinian Authority is agreed upon.
October 26th, 1994	Israel and Jordan sign a peace treaty. This marks the second peace treaty signed between Israel and an Arab state.
September 28th, 1995	The Oslo II Accord is signed, as an interim agreement on the economic and administrative arrangements of the Palestinian Authority.
July 11th-25th, 2000	The Camp David Summit is held by then US President Bill Clinton as an attempt to continue peace talks and the transfer of territorial sovereignty of the West Bank from Israel to Palestine, to no avail.



September 28th, 2000	<p>The Second Intifada takes place for five years, due to the visit of a right-wing Israeli politician to the holy site of Temple Mount. This uprising, notably more violent than the last, breaks the streak of non-violence in the region.</p>
March 27th, 2002	<p>A terrorist attack on a hotel in Israel leads to the reoccupation of certain parts of the West Bank by Israeli militia, the first of which since the Oslo Accords. Moreover, Israel destroyed virtually all of the Palestinian public administration, including Arafat's head office.</p>
June 23rd, 2002	<p>The building of a protective barrier through parts of the West Bank by Israel severely affects the daily lives of many Palestinians in the region, such as their ability to get to work or school.</p>
April 30th, 2003	<p>'The Quartet', a group comprising the United States, Russia, the UN, and the EU, is established. They release their 'Road Map' for peace in the Middle East, calling for an end to terrorist attacks and of Israeli occupation.</p>
August 15th, 2005	<p>Israel removes its occupants in Gaza in an attempt to stabilize the region and make way for more peace discussions.</p>
January 29th, 2006	<p>The Hamas' defeat of its electoral opposition and consequent takeover of the Palestinian Authority leads the US to stop its funding of said Authority. Hamas takes over the Gaza Strip.</p>
June 25th, 2006	<p>Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit is kidnapped by Hamas operatives. He was taken to Gaza and held there until his release could be negotiated in 2012 for some 1,000 Palestinian prisoners in return.</p>
December 27th, 2008	<p>Israel launches an attack on Gaza in response to the many rocket attacks on Israeli towns, lasting less than a month but killing hundreds of civilians.</p>
2008-2014	<p>This time period marks many small conflicts between Israel and Palestine, including Israel's offensive 'Operation Protective Edge' on Gaza in 2014.</p>
December 6th, 2017	<p>US President Donald Trump officially recognises Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The policy change was met with global criticism and increased tensions between the US and Palestine.</p>



January 28th, 2020	US President Trump announces his administration's plan for peace for Palestine, made with input from Israeli and American diplomats, with complete disregard of Palestinian input. The plan is rejected by Palestine and is criticized by international bodies as being one-sided. Israeli President Netanyahu announces his plan to begin annexation of certain parts of the West Bank, as outlined by Trump in his plan.
September 15th, 2020	The official normalization of relations between Israel, Bahrain, and the UAE lead to Israeli's cessation of annexations of the West Bank. Morocco and Sudan follow suit and normalize relations too.
2021	Minor conflicts and aggressions in East Jerusalem and Gaza lead to rising tensions.
2022	This year marks the deadliest year in the conflict since 2005, due to Israel's counterterrorism operation in the West Bank as a response to Palestinian attacks on Israelis.
October 7th, 2023	Hamas launches a surprise attack on Israel, marking the first major event of violence in years. Mohammed Deif, the military leader of Hamas, stated the reason for the attack as being "because of Israel's long-running blockade of Gaza, its occupation of Palestinian lands, and its alleged crimes against Muslims". In response, Netanyahu announces that Israel is at war with Hamas.
October 17th, 2023	The United States vetoes a UNSC vote for a humanitarian pause in the region, citing Israel's right to self-defense as a reason.
January 2024	Under pressure from the United States, its main ally, Israel begins removing troops from the Gaza Strip. Analysts have found this to be up to 90% of the troops. Netanyahu claims that an attack on Rafah, a city in Southern Gaza, is "essential to eradicating Hamas".
April 1st, 2024	Israel launches airstrikes on an Iranian consular building in Damascus, killing several military officers. In response, Iran sent airstrikes back, involving itself in the war directly.



UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Since 1947, the United Nations General Assembly has drafted hundreds of resolutions, only adopting 131. The United Nations Security Council has drafted 191 resolutions on the topic. Below are some of the most important General Assembly resolutions along with their access codes.

- UN Partition Plan: Resolution 181, November 29th, 1947 (A/RES/181(II))
- Creation of an internal committee to investigate the “Israeli practices affecting Palestinian human rights”: Resolution 2443, December 19th, 1968 (A/RES/2443(XXIII))
- Inviting the PLO to GA discussions: Resolution 3210, October 14th, 1974 (A/RES/3210(XXIX))
- Recognizing the Palestinian ‘Right of Return’: Resolution 3236, November 22nd, 1974 (A/RES/3236(XXIX))
- Calls for embargoes and sanctions on Israel, and grants Palestinians their “inalienable national rights”: Resolution 3414, December 5th, 1975 (A/RES/3414(XXX))
- Palestine is granted observer state status: Resolution 67/19, November 29th, 2012 (A/RES/67/19)
- Criticizing the actions of Hamas on October 7th, 2023: Resolution ES-10/21, October 27th, 2023 (A/RES/ES-10/21)
- Calls for immediate ceasefires and the release of all hostages in the Israel-Hamas war: Resolution ES-10/22, December 12th, 2023 (A/ES-10/22)

Below are some of the most important Security Council resolutions, along with their codes.

- Interpreted as the first major attempt for stabilizing the region, and is often referenced in later resolutions and accords as the ‘Land for Peace’ resolution: Resolution 242, November 22nd, 1967 (S/RES/242(1967))
- Calls for a ceasefire in the Yom Kippur War, as well as immediate implementation of Resolution 242: Resolution 338, October 22nd, 1973



(S/RES/338)

- Calling for a 'Two-State Solution', the first explicit mention of it: Resolution 1397, March 17th, 2002 (S/RES/1397)
- Calls for a cessation of war between Israel and Hamas: Resolution 1860, January 9th, 2009 (S/2009/1860)
- Supporting a deal on hostages and a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war, alongside another call for implementation of the 'Two-State Solution': Resolution 2735, June 10th, 2024 (S/RES/2735(2024))

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

As seen in the two previous sections, there have been many attempts to solve the issue at hand. These attempts have been proposed, debated, accepted, and rejected by many different parties, governments, and international organizations, yet none have been successful in putting a definite end to the issue. Starting in 1947 as what could be considered a preventative measure, the UN proposed a Partition Plan for the region that would create separate Israeli and Palestinian areas, with Jerusalem receiving 'international city status' and thus being governed by a third party. This proposal was rejected by Palestinian representatives due to its extremely unfair distribution of land, specifically fertile land, in favor of the new Jewish settlers.

Following many conflicts since 1947, specifically the Six-Day War in June 1967, the UN Security Council's Resolution 242 came in November 1967 as the second attempt at brokering longstanding peace in the region. The resolution specifically called for the "termination ... of belligerency and respect ... of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area", as well as "their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force" (Resolution 242, Article 1b). Although this resolution did not succeed in solving the issue, due to a lack of actual steps that could be taken to reach peace, it is often quoted in modern peace negotiations and documentation as it laid out the principle nature of what a successful solution to the issue should be: fairness.

The Camp David Accords of 1978 were held in order to resolve the territorial disputes between Israel and Egypt, in order to relieve the region of extra stress. These accords were executed in 1979 through the conceding of the Sinai Peninsula by Israel back to Egypt, as well as the reopening



of the Suez Canal by Egypt for Israeli ships. Similarly, the Oslo Accords and ensuing agreements of 1993-1995 (the Gaza-Jericho Agreement and Oslo Accords II) were also aimed at redistributing territory in order to alleviate tensions between Israel and Palestine. Alongside the agreement on Israel's part to remove their control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, both parties agreed for the formation of a Palestinian Authority to govern these regions. Moreover, both the newly established Palestinian Authority and Israel officially recognised each other as self-governing bodies. The Oslo Accords were a breakthrough in peacebuilding at the time, resulting in three men negotiating the deal to win the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts.

The success of the Oslo Accords was short lived however, once the newly established system was challenged with more difficult questions, such as the exact border of Palestinian state. The pro-Israeli claim as to why the Oslo Accords ultimately failed is that Yasser Arafat, the representative of the PLO at the discussion rejected the best compromise Israel could come up with, and that the lack of response during the Second Intifada was indicative of a lack of respect for the State of Israel. In contrast, pro-Palestinians argue that Arafat would not have been able to accept Israel's offer and survive in the tense socio-political atmosphere of the region at the time. The meek offer made by Israel provided Palestinians with only 22% of the land originally given to them by Britain, and negated their right of return. Moreover, throughout this peacemaking process, in which Israel should have been slowly phasing out its control over the West Bank, up to 150,000 Jewish settlers emigrated to the West Bank, proving to Palestinian authorities that Israel was equally as uncommitted to the process as they were during their disregard of the Second Intifada.

Following the Second Intifada and consequent conflicts initiated by either side, such as the 'Passover Massacre' of 2002 and the consequent 'Operation Defensive Shield', the 'Quartet on the Middle East', composed of the US, Russia, the UN, and the EU, proposed their 'Roadmap for Peace'. The plan differed from others in that it didn't stipulate any exact steps or time frame for its completion, but rather described three phases that, when finished, will have solved the issue. These phases included the satisfying of preconditions for a Palestinian state, the creation of said state with provisional borders, and the determination of exact borders alongside an end to the conflict. Although the roadmap was accepted by the Palestinian Prime Minister, the Israeli ministers struggled with accepting the roadmap as it was, and held 14 reservations that would need to be addressed before they could accept it; amongst these was a waiver of the Palestinian right of return. Due to the disregard these reservations had of the wants and needs of the Palestinian side, it failed in



successfully being implemented in its entirety and thus at solving the issue. Especially after US President Bush left office in 2009, the roadmap became a shell of a solution to the issue.

The last attempt at a solution to the issue was proposed by the US Trump Administration in 2020. The plan proposed by Trump was constructed entirely by American and Israeli diplomats, with no input from Palestinian representatives. For that reason alone, the plan failed to successfully address the issue in a fair manner. A result of this failed plan was Netanyahu's announcement of the Israeli plan to annex parts of the West Bank, to the dismay of many international bodies.

What can be learned from these numerous failed solutions is that bias in the peace-making process simply cannot exist, and that all solutions must be executed with a commitment to fairness. Moreover, all of these mentioned previous attempts at solving the issue neglect the Palestinian right of return. Clearly, acknowledgement of this right and a further debate into its intricacies is necessary for sustainable, long-standing peace to remain in this region in the future.

Possible Solutions

The first and most popular solution that is often proposed, and is widely considered to be the most appropriate given the deep history of the conflict, is the Two-State Solution. Modern interpretations of this solution suggest the creation of an autonomous Palestinian state out of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank territories, although critics still point out the unfair distribution of land with this suggested split. Benefits of this solution are that it would respect both Palestine's wishes for self-determination, as well as satisfying Israel's wish of having a uniquely Jewish state. Conversely, the solution fails to take into account the Jewish settlements in the West Bank that would be reluctant to move, as well as the determination of Israeli leaders to have Jerusalem as their own capital, not to be shared with Palestine. It also fails to consider how the right of return of Palestinians that used to live in now Israeli territory may apply, if at all.

A solution that succeeds in addressing the current Israeli territories present in what would otherwise be dedicated to a unified Palestinian state is that of the One-State Solution. Aptly named, this solution would involve the unification of both Israel and Palestine under one binational state, encompassing the entire territory of the former British Mandatory Palestine. Continued Israeli settlements in the West Bank make the viability of a singular Palestinian state seem continually less



attainable, which the One-State Solution successfully solves. However, the solution is opposed by Israeli politicians as it negates the status of Israel as the world's only Jewish state. Moreover, given the complex history of conflict, violence, and distrust between the two ethnic groups, the idea of a unified state in which both demographics will live side by side seems unfeasible to most. The solution does, however, provide a nice answer to the question of the Palestinian right of return.

A last possible solution to the question of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that of the Three-State Solution. This solution would entail the transfer of authority of the Gaza Strip to Egypt, and the West Bank to be given to Jordan. The remaining territory would stay under Israeli control, except the contentious Jerusalem, which would need its own proper division to remain fair. Opponents of the solution point out the disregard of the Palestinian right of return, as well as a complete neglect of the Palestinian desire for an autonomous state, violating many previous UN resolutions. Moreover, the implementation of millions of Palestinians into either country would prove to be a logistical nightmare, and would place a large amount of stress on both governments. A benefit of the solution is that all Palestinians currently living in occupied territories would be granted citizenship in a culturally safe home. The strong political ties between both Egypt and Jordan with Israel respectively would also mean this solution resolves all potential security threats associated with a singular Palestinian state.

In regards to the Palestinian right of return, only the one-state solution seems to provide a concrete answer to the details of the right. The main issue in resolving the right of return is accountability: Israeli proponents argue that it was Palestinian forces that induced the mass migration during The Nakba, whereas Palestinians argue to the contrary. Only in the latter case would such a right even be applicable, and thus when considering possible solutions to the question of the Palestinian right of return, delegates must also consider who is responsible for the mass migration in 1948, and with what evidence that can be argued: only then can the right be definitively settled.

Finally, it should be noted that no singular solution may be the best way forward when addressing this issue in debate. Delegates are strongly recommended to utilize the strongest aspects of each individual solution, in combination with suggested policies developed by their own countries, in order to synthesize the best answer to the question at hand.



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