

Security Council

The viability of the reintegration
of displaced Palestinians



Forum: Security Council

Issue: The viability of the reintegration of displaced Palestinians

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Introduction

The displacement of Palestinians has spanned seven decades and is one of the most unique and largest refugee situations in the world. It originated in 1948, in the Arab-Israeli War, when Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia (Office of the Historian, US Gov.) invaded the newly formed state of Israel hours after it was established, in rejection of the two state solution that had been created in the United Nations. During the ensuing war, as many as 750,000 Palestinian Arabs were expelled from their homes in the newly created state as a result of many factors. Of the Palestinians who left, one-third went to the West Bank (which was under Jordanian control), one-third went to the Gaza Strip (under Egypt's control), and the remainder to Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. However, the refugees that went into the surrounding Arab countries were not absorbed and reintegrated into society, but instead were settled into refugee camps.

Since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas War in October 2023, the question of the Palestinian people has risen to the forefront of global discussion, a topic of controversy, historical and contemporary.

In terms of Palestinian reintegration, "Palestinians have been remarkably consistent in collectively opposing resettlement as a durable solution to their plight. Both the grass roots and later the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) have repudiated any suggestion of third-country resettlement on the grounds that it would undermine the Palestinians' political and national rights as a people. Host-country integration was similarly spurned." (Forced Migration Review) Therefore, the most viable option for Palestinian reintegration is for those displaced to return to their homes in Gaza, or move into the West Bank. However, certain criteria must be met in order to enable the rebuilding of Gaza and promote more durable peace. In order for Palestinians to be reintegrated into their former homes in Gaza, there must be a demilitarized society, a new administrative authority, Arab peacekeepers, and the removal of Israeli military presence within the borders.

Definition of Key Terms

Reintegration



The process of helping displaced Palestinians resettle and become part of their communities. This could include rebuilding infrastructure, healthcare systems, and many other mechanisms of society.

Refugee

People are forced to flee their own country and seek safety in another country. They are unable to return to their own country because of feared persecution as a result of who they are, what they believe in or say, or because of armed conflict, violence, or serious public disorder. (UNHCR)

Demilitarization

(of an area) having had all military forces removed. (Oxford Languages)

Palestinian refugees

Palestine refugees are defined as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.” (UNRWA)

Note: UNRWA’s policy of including the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of those who were displaced in 1948 and 1967 into the refugee population for demographic and aid purposes is unique among refugee populations, and is not done for any other refugee group. This results in a higher number of classified refugees.

Viability

The feasibility and practicality of reintegrating displaced Palestinians into their former homes or communities.

Terrorist

A person or group who uses unlawful violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims. (Oxford Languages)

Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are the national military of the State of Israel. “It consists of three



service branches: the Israeli Ground Forces, the Israeli Air Force, and the Israeli Navy. It is the sole military wing of the Israeli security apparatus.” (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs) The IDF is currently involved in the Israel-Hamas War.

General Overview

History/Background

*Refer to Major Parties Involved to understand who the major actors are in the General Overview.

Arab-Israeli War of 1948

Continued from the Introduction, “Israel gained some territory formerly granted to Palestinian Arabs under the United Nations resolution in 1947. Egypt and Jordan retained control over the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, respectively. These armistice lines were held until 1967.” (Office of the Historian, US Gov.) Palestinians call the result of the Arab-Israeli War “al-Nakba.” (BBC) The Nakba, which means “catastrophe” in Arabic, had a profound impact on the Palestinian people, who lost their homes, their land, and their way of life. (United Nations)

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA was created in 1949 to supervise the refugees' economic integration into these Arab nations previously mentioned and “to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to registered Palestinian refugees (5.9 million as of 2023) living in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. (UNRWA is distinct from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], with each operating under separate organizational mandates.) “Because that conflict occurred before the establishment of the U.N.’s 1951 Refugee Convention, Palestinian refugees are not typically served by the U.N.’s official refugee agency but by UNRWA, according to a Migration Policy Institute analysis.” (US News and World Report) UNRWA provides food and other essential supplies, health care, education, and other assistance directly to its beneficiaries, in coordination with public services provided by the host authorities.” (Congress Reports Gov.) “Between 1950 and 2018, U.S. taxpayers contributed more than \$6 billion to UNRWA. US President Biden has contributed \$1 billion since just 2021 alone” (UN Watch)

“On January 26, 2024, the Biden Administration temporarily “paused” all U.S. funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), citing allegations that 12 UNRWA employees were involved in the October 7, 2023, attacks led by Hamas against Israel.” (Congress Reports Gov.) Other major UNRWA donors also paused their funding in January. As of August 2024, the UN completed its investigation into the involvement of UNRWA employees in the Oct. 7th attacks. OIOS said that the evidence obtained by OIOS was insufficient to support the staff members’ involvement, but 9 employees’ were fired from the organization. (United Nations News)

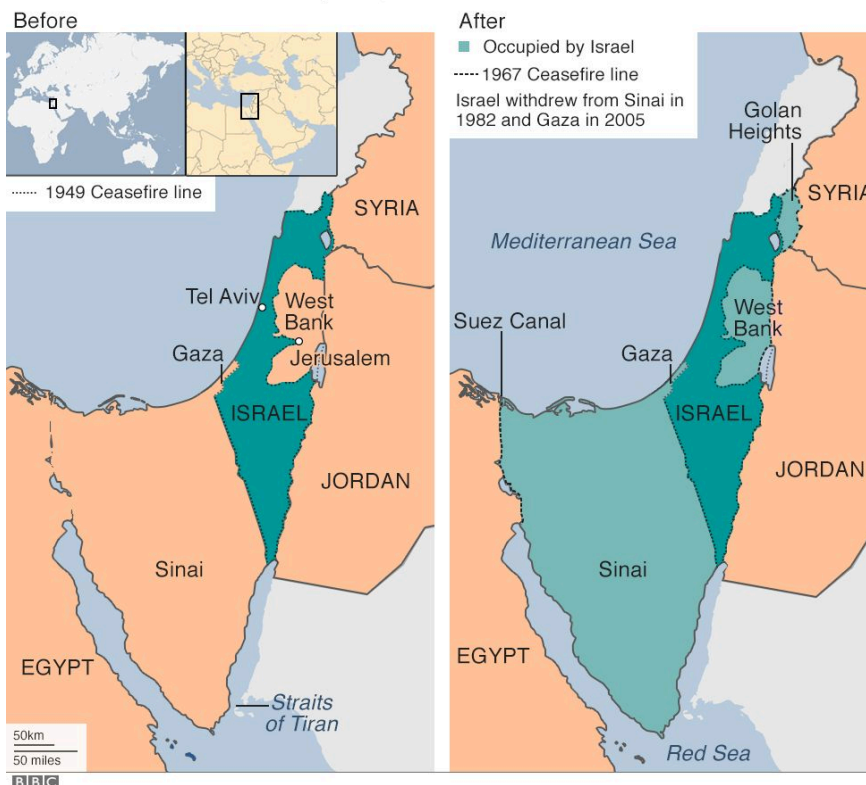


Furthermore, during the IDF's military operations in Gaza since October 8th, they "found a network of tunnels under the Gaza headquarters of the United Nations agency that provides aid to Palestinians, also known as UNRWA. It said that Hamas stored electrical supplies in the tunnels and that the UNRWA headquarters supplied the tunnels with electricity, and [the IDF] had discovered weapons inside the rooms of the UNRWA building, including rifles and explosives." (NPR)

The Six Day War of 1967 and Yom Kippur War of 1973

"The Six-Day War was a brief but bloody conflict fought in June 1967 between Israel and the Arab states of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Following years of diplomatic friction and skirmishes between Israel and its neighbors, Israel Defense Forces launched preemptive air strikes that crippled the air forces of Egypt and its allies. Israel then staged a successful ground offensive and seized the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria." (History.com) The brief conflict resulted in a ceasefire mediated by the United Nations, but it also profoundly changed the Middle East's topography and sparked ongoing geopolitical tension. "As a result of the Six-Day War, around 280,000 to 325,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from the territories won in the Six-Day War by Israel." (Bowker, 2003) This additional event got to be known as "the Naksa." (Orient)

Before and after the Six Day War, 1967



Israel or Israeli territory before and after the Six Day War, in 1967 - it depicts Gaza, the West Bank, Sinai, and Golan Heights as well as the surrounding countries of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. (BBC)



Led by Egypt and Syria, the Arab states later launched a third major conflict with Israel during 1973's Yom Kippur War. By claiming the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the state of Israel also absorbed over one million Palestinian Arabs. Several hundred thousand Palestinians later were forced to flee Israeli rule, worsening a refugee crisis that had begun during the First Arab-Israeli War in 1948 and laying the groundwork for ongoing political turmoil and violence. Since 1967, the lands Israel seized in the Six-Day War have been at the center of efforts to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in 1982 as part of a peace treaty and then withdrew unilaterally from the Gaza Strip in 2005, handing rule over to the Palestinians.

Oslo Accords (1993)

"Oslo Accords, a set of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that established a peace process for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a mutually negotiated two-state solution." (Britannica) With the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA), the agreements gave Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip limited autonomy over their own affairs. The goal of the accords was to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by May 1999. The Oslo Accords specifically stated that PLO, as the representative of the Palestinian people, recognized Israel and its citizens' right to live in peace.

Israel withdraws from Gaza and Hamas takeover (2005-2007)

In 2005, "Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza Strip." (UNRWA) "With the implementation of the plan, IDF installations and forces were removed, and over 9000 Israeli citizens living in 25 settlements were evicted." (Israeli Missions Around the World) Since 2005, there has been no civilian or military Israeli presence in Gaza, until the IDF launched its offensive in 2023. Post Israeli withdrawal, legislative elections were held on January 25, 2006, which resulted in a Hamas victory. Relations were marked by sporadic factional fighting. This became more intense after the two parties repeatedly failed to reach a deal to share government power, escalating in June 2007 and resulting in Hamas' takeover of Gaza. As of August 2007, the Palestinian Territories are split into a Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip and a Fatah-dominated West Bank." (PBS)

October 7th Massacre (2023)

On October 7th 2023, a massacre of Jewish people with the highest death toll since the Holocaust was committed. "Palestinian militant groups, led primarily by Hamas, launched a wide-scale operation named "Operation al-Aqsa Flood" against Israel from the Gaza Strip. This operation was not just a series of attacks but a meticulously planned invasion that plunged the region into chaos. The invasion began with a massive rocket barrage, where thousands of missiles rained down upon Israeli soil, causing significant destruction and loss of life. Armed militants infiltrated Israel, employing various modes of attack, from vehicles to boats and even paragliders. Israeli towns and military installations



near the Gaza border became war zones, with reports of massacres, hostage situations, and intense street battles.” (October 7 Memorial) Over 1,200 Israeli civilians were murdered. 251 civilians, both Israel and foreign nationals, were taken into Gaza as hostages.

Israel-Hamas War (2023-present)

In response to the October 7th Massacre and rocket attacks, Israel called up an approximate 350,000 reservists and launched a counter-offensive against Hamas targets in northern Gaza, first by air, followed by a ground operation. Since October 7, Hamas has fired over 11,000 rockets into Israel’s major civilian centers, including Tel Aviv. Israel declared war against Hamas directly after the massacre. The Israeli government defined its goals as twofold: first, the safe return of all the hostages being held in Gaza; second, to degrade and destroy Hamas in order to restore security along the Israel-Gaza border and ensure Hamas can no longer pose a threat to Israelis.

The reality of Gaza makes the military operation particularly complex, and has led to much suffering and death for Gazan civilians through this war and the intensification of the refugee crisis. Gaza is densely populated, and it is well documented that rockets are launched from schools, and combatants are operating within civilian areas, dressed as civilians too. Israeli officials maintain they have sought to minimize civilian casualties, including calling on civilians to evacuate northern Gaza prior to the operation and other areas through the military campaign, and establishing humanitarian corridors. However, aerial bombing of the Gaza Strip has damaged much civilian infrastructure, with “Researchers at Oregon State University and the City University of New York estimated that as much as 62 percent of all buildings in the Gaza Strip had been damaged or destroyed” (the Guardian). Furthermore, the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry reports an estimated death toll of 35,000. This figure is said to be majority women and children. In May, “Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said 14,000 Hamas fighters” (Reuters) had been killed. In addition to the large number of Gazan civilians who have been killed and wounded, Gaza residents are suffering from a shortage of humanitarian supplies. While Israel reports the regular entry of humanitarian goods for civilians, aid agencies do not consider the scale to be enough to meet the large-scale need.

Refugee Crisis

Today, there are nearly 7 million Palestinian refugees around the world. An endless cycle of violence and failure to reach a hostage deal and ceasefire has created catastrophic humanitarian needs, including the high potential for famine, affecting both Palestinian civilians and the remaining hostages alike. Israeli authorities have also committed repeated abuses and violations against Palestinians in the West Bank, and the Palestinian authority in the West Bank is also responsible for significant human rights violations. (Refugees International) Nearly one-third of the registered Palestine refugees, more than 1.5 million individuals, live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.



(UNRWA) In refugee camps, the conditions are generally poor, “with high population density, cramped living conditions and inadequate basic infrastructure such as roads and sewers”. (UNRWA)

As discussed in the introduction, the refugee issue began after the Arab Israeli War of 1948, when around 750,000 Palestinians left their homes when Israel won the war. There’s also the matter of which countries,would be willing to take in Palestinian refugees. Egypt’s more recent reluctance, for example, is related to former President Mohammed Morsi’s suspected ties to Hamas. When President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi came to power in 2014, there was a “demonization of anything to do with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt” and Palestinians from Gaza are “tied up with that,” El-Sissi himself said in October that he rejected the idea of Palestinians being displaced, NPR reported, and added that the war was in part “an attempt to push the civilian inhabitants to ... migrate to Egypt.” And Jordanian King Abdullah II said directly around the same time, “No refugees in Jordan, no refugees in Egypt,” according to the Associated Press.

Lebanon and Syria also are unlikely to take in more Palestinian refugees, Anne Irfan, (a lecturer and expert in displacement with a focus on Palestinian refugee history and the modern Middle East at University College London in the United Kingdom) says, noting that many of these Arab states have already taken in large numbers of Palestinians over the years and could say they “don’t have the capacity to take in any more.” (US News and World Report)

Major Parties Involved

Israel

The State of Israel is a country that was established in 1948 through the United Nations partition plan, and is the only democratic state in the Middle East. It is bordered by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, and has a population of approximately 9.4 million. The Israeli Prime Minister is Benjamin Netanyahu, a right wing politician who held office from 1996–1999 and 2009–2021, and currently in 2024. He has faced much criticism, both domestically and internationally, for his leadership during the war. Furthermore, he depends on the far right in his governing coalition to maintain his power. It has been invaded three times in its history '48 / '67 / '73. They have occupied the West Bank and Gaza at various points. Israel is currently involved in the Israel-Hamas War, which was instigated on October 7, 2023 when Hamas launched a destructive massacre against Israeli civilians. This war has garnered significant international attention, and has had a high number of casualties. Israel’s offensive, in combination with Hamas, has led to many Gazan civilians being displaced in the territory. For more information, please view the subsections of the General Overview - Israel-Hamas War, and Refugee Crisis.



Hamas

Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiy, or Hamas is a Islamic militant group and designated terrorist by many states, including the US, EU and others. Hamas is primarily funded by Iran, with Yahya Sinwar, a senior Hamas military leader saying that “relations with Iran are excellent, and Iran is the largest supporter of the Izz ad Din al Qassam Brigades [Hamas’s military wing] with money and arms,” Additionally, Hamas's main objective is the elimination of the State of Israel (Hamas [doctrine](#)). The group has controlled Gaza since 2007, and is the other main actor in the Israel-Hamas War, having perpetrated the October 7th Massacre, and vowed to do it many times over. Hamas has been said to steal humanitarian aid from the civilians in need, and not allow for development in the territory.

Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a country that funds numerous Islamic terrorist organizations, including Hamas, the Houthis, Hezbollah, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) as part of its “axis of resistance.”. Iran's support for these groups significantly influences the Israel-Palestine conflict by providing financial, military, and logistical assistance to Palestinian factions opposed to Israel. This support exacerbates tensions and violence, complicates peace efforts, and reinforces the geopolitical struggle between Iran and Israel, as well as Iran's opposition to Western-aligned countries in the region.

Palestinian Authority (PA)

“The Palestinian Authority, officially known as the Palestinian National Authority is the Fatah-controlled government body that exercises partial civil control over the Palestinian enclaves” (New York Times) in the West Bank territory as established in the 1993–1995 Oslo Accords. The PA formerly governed Gaza, until losing the general election after a brief war against Hamas, and being ousted in 2007.

Timeline of Key Events

*With most references from [Council on Foreign Relations](#)

**Please note that for many of these key events, further information can be found in the General Overview.

1947

UN Partition Plan is proposed

- The UN General Assembly passes Resolution 181, calling for the partition of the



UN Partition Plan rejected by Palestinian representation

1948 **Israel declares independence**

Arab countries attack Israel, Arab-Israeli War

- 750,000 Palestinians lose their homes. *See General Overview

1949 **Israel wins the Arab-Israeli War, wins territory.** *See General Overview

UNRWA Established

1967 **Six Day War**

- Israel and Arab neighbors fight the Six-Day War. Israel wins, gets control of Gaza Strip and West Bank. *See General Overview

1973 **Yom Kippur War**

- Egypt and Syria attempt to retake the Israeli-occupied Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights, conflict ends with UN ceasefire. *See General Overview

1979 **Israel Withdraws From the Sinai Peninsula**

1987 **First Intifada**

- Hamas is created

1993 **Oslo Accords**

- Israel and the PLO recognize each other in an exchange of letters. Israel and the PLO agree to the creation of the Palestinian Authority to temporarily administer the Gaza Strip and West Bank. *See General Overview

2000 **Second Intifada**

- Israeli politicians visit the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. Palestinians perceived this visit as an attempt to alter the status quo at the sacred site. The subsequent demonstrations escalated into violence, marking the onset of the second intifada. Thousands die.

The Clinton Parameters

- US President Clinton proposed

2003 **Road Map for Peace**

2005 **Israel unilaterally pulls out of Gaza Strip**

- *See General Overview



- 2007** **Hamas takeover Gaza Strip**
- 2020** **Trump Administration Launches Proposed Peace Plan**
- Israel accepts, Palestinian authorities reject plan
- Abraham Accords**
- Bahrain and the UAE agree to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel, becoming the first Arab countries to do so in over 25 years. In return, Israel suspends plans to annex West Bank territory.
- 2021** **Israel-Hamas Crisis**
- Evictions of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and clashes at al-Aqsa Mosque spark conflict between Israel and Hamas.
- 2023** **October 7th Massacre**
- Hamas launches a rocket and ground operation that kills over 1200 Israeli civilians, and takes 251 civilians hostage in Gaza. Deadliest event for Jews since the Holocaust. *See General Overview
- 2023-2024** **Israel-Hamas War (-present)**
- *See General Overview

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- UN Partition Plan, November 29, 1947 (Resolution 181)
- UN General Assembly Resolution 194, December 11, 1948 (Resolution 194)
- UN Security Council Resolution 242, November 22, 1967 (Resolution 242)
- UN Security Council Resolution 446, March 22, 1979 (Resolution 446)
- UN Security Council Resolution 478, August 20, 1980 (Resolution 478)
- UN Security Council Resolution 728, March 14, 2024 (Resolution 728)

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue



UN Partition Plan (1947): Proposed to partition the mandate of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states with Jerusalem under international administration. It was rejected by Arab states; led to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The plan was never implemented.

Oslo Accords (1993 and 1995): Agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) aimed at establishing a framework for peace and the eventual creation of a Palestinian state. They established the Palestinian Authority and limited self-governance in certain areas but failed to resolve key issues such as settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem. The process ultimately collapsed amid mutual distrust and violence.

Roadmap for Peace (2003): A plan proposed by the Quartet (the US, EU, Russia, and the UN) outlining steps toward a two-state solution. Implementation stalled due to violence and lack of commitment from both sides. Settlements and security concerns remained unresolved.

Abraham Accords (2020): Normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab countries, including the UAE and Bahrain, brokered by the US. It improved Israel's relations with some Arab states but did not address the core issues of the Israel-Palestine conflict, leaving it unresolved.

Possible Solutions

Criteria that must be met for reintegration of displaced Palestinians

*This is not a discussion or debate of how to end the current war, but how to reintegrate Palestinians in a post war context.

Demilitarized Society in Gaza and New Administrative Authority

In order for reintegration and rebuilding of Gaza, a new governing authority must be established in Gaza, one that promotes a demilitarized society. Hamas cannot be allowed to continue to rule over Gaza, as they are not a legitimate ruling body. This is strengthened by how “support for Hamas as a political party has fallen to 34% among Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, a 12-point drop from December 2023, according to a poll released Wednesday by a leading Palestinian research institute.” (NBC) Additionally, Israel will not accept Hamas’ rule of Gaza (Al Jazeera), and therefore, alternatives must be explored. Prior to Hamas’ takeover of Gaza, the governing authority was Fatah, who currently spearheads the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank. Fatah in the PA is internationally recognized, and has a non-member status in the United Nations. While the PA is said to be by some actors an illegitimate government, non democratic and unpopular with the Palestinian



people, it favors negotiation over violence in interactions with the Israeli government. Furthermore, in negotiations in 2020, the Palestinian proposal sought to create a “sovereign Palestinian state, independent and demilitarized,” with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Arab Peacekeepers and Removal of Israeli Military Presence

Once or while a new governing body is/being established in the Gaza Strip, there must be external peacekeepers that supervise the transition of power. The potential peacekeeping force that would come into Gaza must be an alternative to the Israeli forces in the territory, and must be accepted by the Palestinians living there, which means that they must come from Arab countries. In May 2024, the Arab League, “meeting in Manama, Bahrain, called for “international protection and peacekeeping forces of the United Nations in the occupied Palestinian territories,”” with “Bahrain signaling to the US in recent weeks that it was open to deploying troops to Gaza as part of an Arab peacekeeping force.” (Middle East Eye). Israeli military presence must be scaled back to give Arab peacekeepers authority.

When these criteria are met, it can become possible for investment, innovation, and development to be fostered in the region. In order for these aforementioned things to be fostered, there must be cooperation between the new administrative authority, the Israeli government, potential Arab peacekeepers, and surrounding nations. When Gaza can be rebuilt, then the displaced Palestinians can be reintegrated into their former homes or new homes.

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Appendices

- I. Hamas [doctrine](#)
- II. Map of Israel, with the West Bank, Golan Heights and Gaza pictured



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- III. <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2024/05/11/un-halves-its-estimate-of-women-and-children-killed-in-gaza/>
- IV. Who Governs the Palestinians? <https://www.cfr.org/background/who-governs-palestinians>
- V. Resource to view Security Council Resolutions



https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-resolutions/?ctype=Israel%2FPalestine&cbtype=israelpalestine

- VI. Timeline with more detail <https://education.cfr.org/learn/timeline/israeli-palestinian-conflict-timeline>

