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## SECURITY COUNCIL (SC)

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMITTEE

Under the *UN Charter*, the Security Council has the responsibility of maintaining international peace. It is the most powerful body of the United Nations; while other committees can only make recommendations for action, the Security Council makes decisions that its member bodies must implement. The Security Council meets throughout the year to address the most serious security issues facing the UN and the world.

The Council is made up of 15 nations: five are permanent members and the remaining 10 seats rotate every two years among the nations in the General Assembly. The five permanent members are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Each of these nations has “veto power,” which means that whenever any one of these countries votes “no” on a resolution, that resolution automatically fails. In order for a resolution to pass, it must receive a unanimous vote.

The Security Council may deal with international conflict in many ways. When fighting breaks out, the Council’s first goal is usually to call for a ceasefire—an end to violence. It may also send peacekeeping forces to protect citizens and ensure that any UN decisions are carried out. The Security Council can use more forceful measures to achieve its goals as well, such as issuing economic sanctions, measures that prevent a country from receiving money or trade. In the most serious circumstances, the Security Council can order the use of military force.

### TOPIC: SITUATION IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

#### BACKGROUND

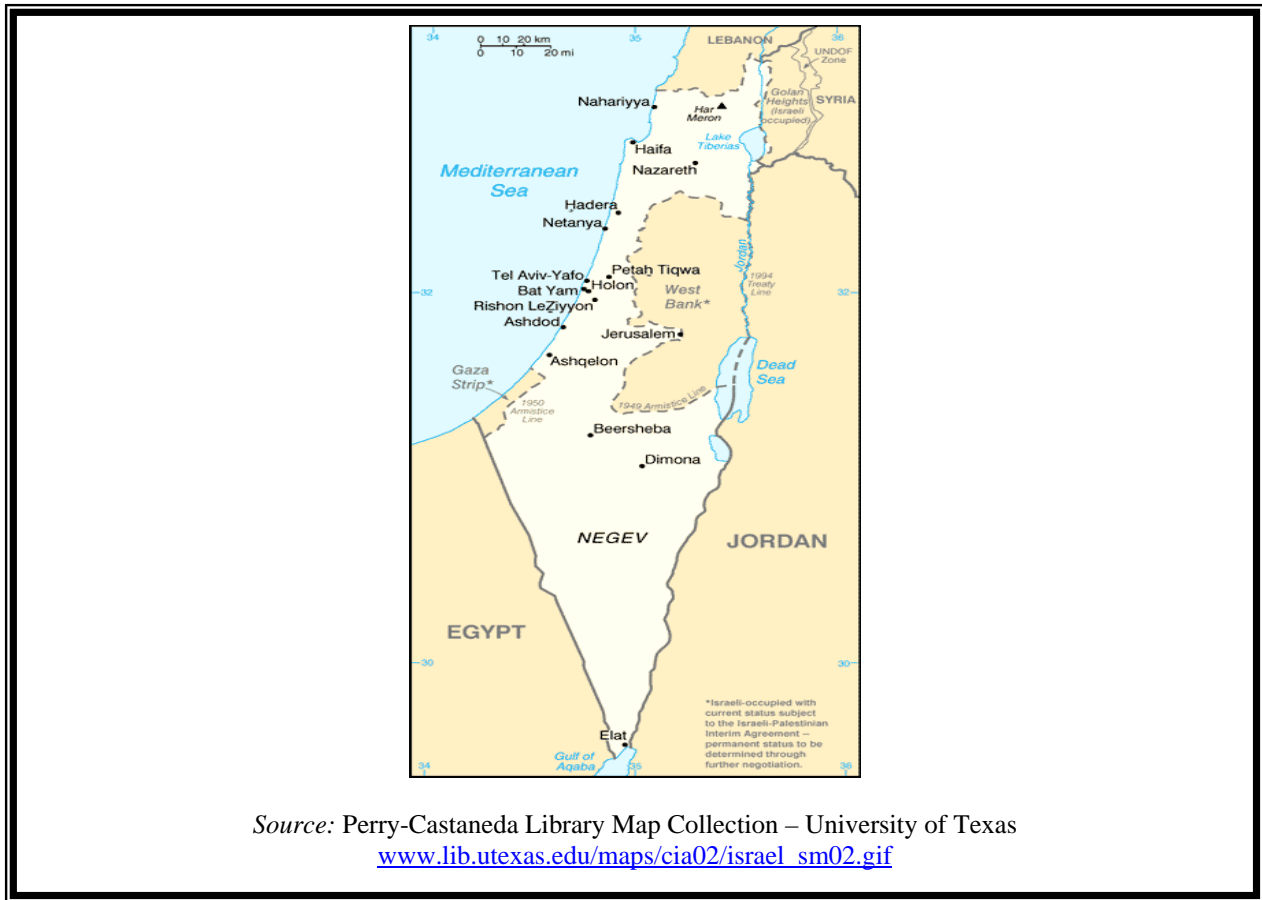
At the end of World War I, British forces occupied the area that is present-day Israel. Pressured by **Zionist** leaders—those who sought an independent Jewish homeland—Britain announced that it would create a state in the Middle Eastern region of Palestine, the historical cradle of both Jewish and Arab civilizations. This state, Israel, would be a national home for the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

Many Jews fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s were not permitted to enter other nations, because many nations harbored **anti-Semitic** sentiment, some passing laws that limited the rights and privileges of Jews, and other nations were already overflowing with refugees. This lack of alternative, coupled with the Zionist movement, prompted a mass



migration of Jews to the new Middle Eastern state. Clashes soon broke out between the immigrating Jews and the Arab population, the Palestinians, who had lived there long before the establishment of the Israeli state and saw the British mandate to make the area Jewish as an invasion. Many Jews believed they were returning to their ancient homeland, as described in the Torah, the Jewish holy book.

In 1947, Britain gave control of most of the region to the United Nations. Later that year, General Assembly **Resolution 181** recommended that Palestine be divided into two separate states, with the city of Jerusalem a religious center for both groups, internationalized and controlled by the UN. The plan, however, was rejected by the Palestinians who did not want to lose their homeland.



By 1948, British forces left the area entirely and Israel declared itself an independent nation—an action that angered neighboring Arab countries. Several of these Arab states staged attacks on Israel, ending with an **armistice** that, among other things, redrew the boundaries of Palestine. Israel received most of the land while Egypt and Jordan also gained key portions. By 1967, Egypt and Jordan appeared to be mobilizing troops for an attack, and Israel launched a pre-emptive strike to defend its land and claim other disputed areas. The war, which lasted only six days, and called the **Six-Day War**, resulted in Israeli occupation of all Palestinian territory.<sup>2</sup> Israel refused to acknowledge the Security Council’s calls for withdrawal.



Palestinians in the area retained small sections of land within the occupied territories. Israelis continued to build new settlements in the regions they claimed as their own, but many nations saw this as an effort to illegally expand Israel’s territory. In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, who led the PLO until his death in 2004. The PLO declared an *intifada*, or uprising, against Israeli occupation several times, to little success. Palestinian suicide bombers attacked Israeli settlements while Israeli troops invaded Palestinian areas in retaliation—both parties are responsible for hundreds of civilian deaths.

*Question of Palestine’s Independence*

The UN has affirmed the Palestinians' right to an independent state and has tried to establish peace in the region, but key points in the conflict remain unsettled. The division of land, ownership of major religious sites, and violence in the region all complicate the peace process.

In 1993, the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or Declaration of Principles, also known as the **Oslo Accords**, was signed by Israel and the Palestinians at the first face-to-face meeting between both sides, where Palestine acknowledged Israel’s right to exist. The Accords created a framework that founded the Palestinian Authority, which was designed to be a five-year transitional body governing during the period in which Israel and Palestine would negotiate final peace treaty terms.<sup>3</sup> The Accord’s signing was witnessed by delegates of the United States and Russia, as well as President Clinton, PLO Chairman Yassar Arafat, and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. When Arafat and Rabin shook hands on the White House lawn, it represented the coming together of two sides that had been in conflict for over half a century.

Although the Accords did not specifically address territorial disputes, the status of refugees and claims to Jerusalem, it did create a process for the Palestinian Authority to transition to fuller autonomy. The Accords brought great promise, but the years following its signing were punctuated by violence and in 2000, the Second *Intifada* further derailed peace efforts. As a response, Israel began building the Israeli West Bank Barrier, built along the 1949 Armistice Line, citing security concerns. Critics said that the barrier was annexing Palestinians from their jobs, families, and schools that lay on the other side of the barrier.

**Palestinian population affected by the barrier's route**

|   | <b>Number of Communities</b> | <b>Number of Residents</b> |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Communities west of the barrier*  | 17                           | 27,520                     |
| Communities east of the barrier that are completely or partially surrounded** | 54                           | 247,800                    |
| East Jerusalem  | 21                           | 222,500                    |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>92</b>                    | <b>497,820</b>             |

\* Residents of these towns and villages will require permits to live in their homes, and they will be able to leave their communities only via a gate in the barrier. The figure does not include three communities that are presently situated west of the barrier but lie east of the barrier according to the currently approved route.

\*\* Residents of these towns and villages will not require permits or have to pass through a gate.

Source: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in Occupied Territories  
[http://www.btselem.org/english/Separation\\_Barrier/Statistics.asp](http://www.btselem.org/english/Separation_Barrier/Statistics.asp)



In 2002, US President George W. Bush introduced a "**road map for peace.**" It was developed by several international parties: the United States, Russia, the European Union and the UN. The plan called for the definition of temporary borders creating an independent Palestinian state before more negotiations could occur at a later date. It also called for Palestinian authorities to control the violent attacks by Palestinian extremists, for Israel to stop dismantling Palestinian homes, and for Israel to evacuate its most recent settlements.<sup>4</sup>

In 2005, after much international negotiation and divisive internal debate, Israel completed the withdrawal of its settlers from the Gaza strip, formerly home to about 9,000 Israelis.<sup>5</sup> However, Israel retained control over Gaza's air space, borders and seashore. It also dismantled four of its settlements in West Bank, a significant move toward the creation of a Palestinian state. The withdrawal occurred with considerable dispute among Israelis, but little violence from either Israel or Palestine.

### *Splintering Effect within Palestine*

In January 2006, however, the Islamic militant party Hamas won a surprising victory over the reigning Fatah (Palestine National Liberation Movement) party in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections.<sup>6</sup> Israel and the US announced that they would not continue negotiations with a government led by a party that calls for the destruction of Israel and funded terrorist attacks on Israel. As a result of the elections, tensions between different political groups in Palestine have become more clearly defined. The Palestinians were no longer represented by a united front, but were divided by allegiances to different Islamic political parties. Tensions between Fatah, which is diametrically opposed to Hamas, rose with the new government.

Iyad Sarraj, a Palestinian psychologist, believes the insistence among the children on identifying strongly with Hamas or Fatah is a symptom of the disintegration of Palestinian society in the past two years. [...] 'There is a preoccupation among the children,' said Sarraj, 'about the issue of who is Hamas and who is Fatah. You go to homes and they ask you this. Even my two-year-old son is very preoccupied with this. He asks me: 'Are you Fatah or Hamas?' I reply: "I'm Palestinian".'

Source: Gaza's factions take their fight to the school playground

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/10/israelandthepalestinians>

### *The 2006 Lebanon War and After Shocks*

Israeli forces entered the Gaza Strip in late June 2006 to secure the release of an Israeli soldier captured by Palestinian militants, so when Hezbollah forces crossed the border from Lebanon into Israel in an attack in broad daylight, Israeli forces quickly retaliated. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, after a further escalation of violence on both sides of the border, Israeli forces retaliated with air strikes against Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon, including Beirut, Lebanon's capital, as well as sending in tanks and Israeli soldiers into Lebanon.<sup>7</sup> Hezbollah, along with several other militant groups in the region, has long supported the creation of a Palestinian state, and resorted to extreme measures to bring their cause to the attention of Israeli civilians the Israeli government,



as well as the whole world. This attack has further polarized popular Israeli sentiment against Palestinian groups, and vice versa.

The war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon only ended after the Security Council unanimously passed *Resolution 1701* in August 6<sup>th</sup>, calling for “a full cessation of hostilities based upon, in particular, the immediate cessation by Hezbollah of all attacks and the immediate cessation by Israel of all offensive military operations.”<sup>8</sup> The resolution acknowledged the provocation of Hezbollah’s attack on July 12<sup>th</sup> on Israeli soil and called for the government of Lebanon to take responsibility for securing its own borders by deploying troops to the south of Lebanon in tandem with the withdrawal of Israeli troops.

In October 2007, Israel cut off power supplies to the Gaza Strip, citing concerns over the safety of Israeli civilians after rocket attacks were launched against Israeli settlements close to the Gaza Strip. The international community responded with condemnation, perceiving Israeli actions as harming civilians and the already fragile Palestinian economy indiscriminately.<sup>9</sup> Israel continued with the power cuts until the end of January 2008, after it bowed to international pressure to restore power. However, Israel has now instituted a policy of reducing and cutting power to the Gaza Strip in response to attacks on Israeli soil.

“Israel views restricting fuel and electricity to Gaza as a way to pressure Palestinian armed groups to stop their rocket and suicide attacks,” said Joe Stork, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “But the cuts are seriously affecting civilians who have nothing to do with these armed groups, and that violates a fundamental principle of the laws of war.”

Source: Human Rights Watch

<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/02/07/isrlpa17994.htm>

The lack of power to hospitals, businesses, and homes destabilizes the Gaza Strip, which borders Egypt. In January 2008, Hamas, which has its power base in the Gaza Strip, blew a hole in the barrier between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, allowing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to flee and roam into nearby Egyptian towns. There are reports that military-grade weapons were smuggled back into the Gaza Strip as well.<sup>10</sup> Egypt resealed the border soon afterwards. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said, "Egyptian authorities reject any outside pressures on their borders and we will not allow any party to dictate the internal policies of Egypt." Chaos in Palestine has a detrimental effect on neighboring countries and their stability.

### *Renewed Conflict in 2008-2009*

On December 27, 2008, Israel launched air attacks on targets in Gaza in response to heavy rocket fire. These air attacks continued for a week before the Israeli army sent tanks and troops into Gaza, beginning a war against Hamas. The war garnered international attention, and the U.N. Security Council passed resolution 1860 calling for “an immediate, durable, and fully-respected ceasefire.”<sup>11</sup>

After twenty-two days of war in which 1,200 Palestinians and 13 Israelis died, both sides agreed to an immediate cease-fire. Israeli troops left Gaza, leaving over 100,000 Palestinians homeless



and without proper food and water. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon toured Gaza after the cease-fire and called the destruction there “shocking and alarming.”<sup>12</sup> On January 21, the Security Council issued a statement that called for humanitarian aid organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to be allowed to operate safely in Gaza.<sup>13</sup> The complete list of aftershocks from this war are yet to be known, but, at the very least, important infrastructure projects such as reconstructing buildings, fixing water and sanitation networks, and restoring electricity are needed.

## PAST INTERNATIONAL ACTION

Since the 1950s, Israel has been the subject to General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. There were several Security Council resolutions either condemning Israel for its attacks or demanding withdrawal from occupied territories. Some of these are: *Resolution 248* (1968), *Resolution 256* (1968), *Resolution 285* (1970), *Resolution 425* (1978), and *Resolution 1860* (2009).

The United States is a strong ally of Israel and generally supports Israel’s actions on the Security Council. Other countries in the Middle East have expressed concern that they have no Security Council permanent member to champion Palestine’s cause, especially since Palestine, a permanent observer at the United Nations since 1974, cannot vote on any resolutions or sign binding agreements.

In November 2007, new talks in Annapolis in the United States brokered by US President George Bush were attended by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and 16 heads of state from the Middle East.<sup>14</sup> Olmert and Abbas released a joint statement, declaring “We express our determination to bring an end to bloodshed, suffering and decades of conflict between our peoples; to usher in a new era of peace, based on freedom, security, justice, dignity, respect and mutual recognition; to propagate a culture of peace and nonviolence; to confront terrorism and incitement, whether committed by Palestinians or Israelis.”<sup>15</sup> However, despite the fanfare surrounding this meeting, both Israeli and Arab commentators criticized the meeting as empty posturing on all sides since none of the divisive issues were addressed.

For over fifty years, the United Nations has sought a peaceful resolution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Every few years, a new peace initiative is started, but is mired by the vicious cycle of violence where Palestinian groups launch attacks onto Israel, and then Israel retaliates with force or economic sanctions, perpetuating the conflict ad infinitum. To bring peace to the Middle East will require earnest participation from all sides, a greater role for other countries in the region who also have a stake in peace and security in Israel and Palestine, in order to create a unified front against all manner of aggression from non-state actors, such as terrorists, as well as retaliation by armed forces, that could derail further peace talks.



### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Does your nation support the creation of an independent Palestinian state? Does your nation provide aid or assistance to either Israel or Palestine?
2. How is the situation between Israel and the Palestinians complicated by terrorism?
3. Has your country been involved in the peace process?
4. What lessons can you glean from your own country's history and involvement in peacekeeping, if any, that may benefit the peace process?

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FORMULATING A RESOLUTION

This resolution will pose a challenge for many delegates to write, as it has been an issue on the Security Council agenda for fifty years, and is complicated by a myriad of factors, including regional ties, the involving of non-state actors, and the involvement of religion to support or negate the other side's arguments. In that time, Israel and Palestine have undergone armed conflict, terrorist involvement, and have tried many times to come to talks with varying degrees of success. Many countries in the area have strong views on this issue, but stability in the Middle East is a worldwide concern. Consider what tools the Security Council has at its disposal to help stabilize the region, such as UN peacekeeping troops and outreach to other UN agencies that are heavily involved in Israel and Palestine. Delegates should consider the following issues:

- How can a lasting peace process be formulated? Who is in the best position to broker a peace agreement?
- What must be done to stabilize the region to provide a foundation for future peacekeeping efforts?
- Religious ideology plays an important role for both Palestine and Israel. How can this space for religion be recognized and supported in terms of peace building?
- Who are the stakeholders who will benefit from stability in the region? How can their needs from a security standpoint be addressed?
- What actions have NGOs, UN agencies and surrounding countries taken that have been successful, and how can they extend this?



## TERMS AND CONCEPTS

**Anti-Semitic**: biased against Jews.

**Armistice**: a truce, or temporary stop to fighting.

**Hamas**: is the largest Palestinian militant Islamist organization. It is branded by Israel, the US and the EU as a terrorist organization while some Palestinians view it as a legitimate force of resistance against the Israeli occupation.

**Fatah**: is a secular nationalist party in the Palestinian Authority. Its leader, Mahmoud Abbas, is the President of the Palestinian Authority and it has been the leading party for decades. Fatah's power is being eroded by internal political struggles and rival political groups such as Hamas.

**Intifada**: an uprising, in this case against the state of Israel by the Palestinians.

**Rogue states**: countries that are seen as threats to the international community because they seek to acquire weapons or power.

**Resolution 181**: a General Assembly resolution that recommended that Palestine be divided into two separate states, one Jewish and the other Palestinian Arab. The city of Jerusalem, a religious center for both groups, was to be internationalized and controlled by the UN. The plan, however, was rejected by the Palestinians who did not want to lose their homeland.

**“Road map”**: a peace plan that calls for the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

**Zionists**: those who seek an independent Jewish homeland

## SOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

UN - Question of Palestine: Overview [www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpalnew/overview.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpalnew/overview.htm)

BBC Profile of Israel and Palestinian Autonomous Areas

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/803257.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/803257.stm)

BBC In-Depth Israel & the Palestinians

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_depth/middle\\_east/2001/israel\\_and\\_the\\_palestinians](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2001/israel_and_the_palestinians)

CNN.com Special Report: Mideast – Land of Conflict [www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/mideast](http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/mideast)



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- <sup>3</sup> “1993 Declaration of Principles,” BCC, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_depth/middle\\_east/israel\\_and\\_the\\_palestinians/key\\_documents/1682727.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/middle_east/israel_and_the_palestinians/key_documents/1682727.stm)
- <sup>4</sup> “A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/20062.htm>
- <sup>5</sup> “Pain of Israel’s Withdrawal From Gaza Strip Is Felt by American Jews, Too,” *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/14/nyregion/14jews.html>
- <sup>6</sup> “ Hamas Sweeps Palestinian Elections, Complicating Peace Efforts in Mideast,” *Washington Post*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/26/AR2006012600372.html>
- <sup>7</sup> “Clashes spread to Lebanon as Hezbollah raids Israel,” *International Herald Tribune*, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/07/13/africa/web.0712mideast.php>
- <sup>8</sup> “Resolution 1701 (2006),” UN Security Council, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8808.doc.htm>
- <sup>9</sup> “Israel’s Gaza fuel cuts alarm UN,” BBC, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7068239.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7068239.stm)
- <sup>10</sup> “Egypt interrogates returning citizens while sending remaining Palestinians back to Gaza,” *International Herald Tribune*, <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/02/11/africa/ME-GEN-Egypt-Palestinians.php>
- <sup>11</sup> “Resolution 1860,” United Nations Security Council, <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/f45643a78fcba719852560f6005987ad/96514396e8389a2c852575390051d574!OpenDocument>
- <sup>12</sup> “Israel Slows Withdrawal as Ban Ki-moon Tours Region,” *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/21/world/middleeast/21mideast.html?scp=14&sq=gaza&st=cse>
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