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## Palestine (76 years of Struggle for Freedom)



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## Introduction:

The Israel-Palestine conflict stands as one of the world's most enduring and deep-seated disputes. Periodically, the situation escalates into violent confrontations, resulting in loss of life and widespread destruction, often concentrated on the Palestinian side, particularly in the Gaza Strip.



On October 7, 2023, Hamas initiated a significant attack by launching over 5,000 rockets from Gaza into Israel. This offensive led to the death of around 1,400 Israelis, with some individuals being taken hostage within the Gaza Strip. On October 8, 2023, Israel initiated a war against Hamas. The IDF carried out extensive bombardments in residential areas of Gaza, resulting in significant destruction and a notable increase in civilian casualties. According to the Gaza Ministry of Housing and Works, Israeli forces have demolished around 200,000 housing units, either entirely or partially. This destruction corresponds to more than a quarter of the populated areas in Gaza.

As of October 26, 2023, the Palestinian death toll continues to climb, with over 6,546 Palestinians killed during two weeks of Israeli airstrikes, including 2,704 children, and more than 17,439 are injured according to Gaza's health ministry. Additionally, more than 1 million Palestinians have been displaced within Gaza. Israel's decision to cut off



food, water, electricity, and fuel supplies to Gaza has triggered a severe humanitarian crisis in the region. Israel has also called upon residents in Northern Gaza to evacuate. The Israel Defence Forces are continuously conducting bombings in civilian areas, including schools, rescue and relief offices, and even hospitals, leading to a surge in casualties in the Gaza Strip. In contrast, Hamas employs smaller rockets, many of which are intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome Defence system when fired towards Israel.

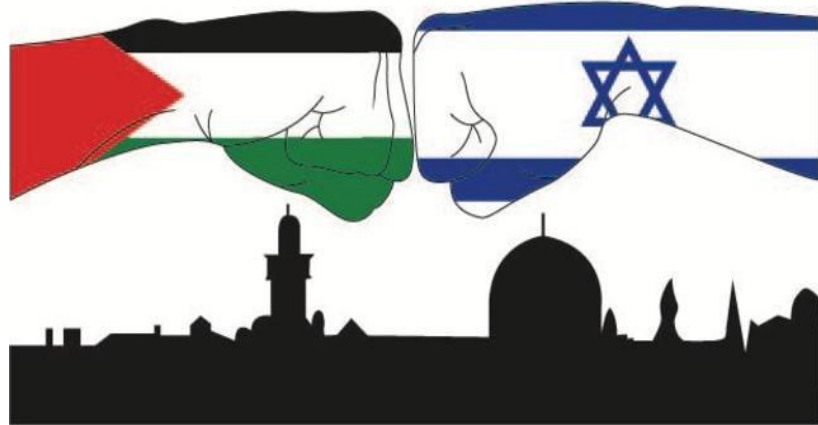
To grasp the ongoing and tragic conflict between Israel and Palestine in the present day, it's crucial to delve into the historical and religious background of the region, considering the ancient history that holds significance for the key stakeholders in this conflict. While the current conflict has its roots in the 20th century, understanding the historical context is essential to appreciate the religious and historical importance of the area, particularly to those involved in the ongoing struggle. This article aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of the historical underpinnings of the ongoing conflicts and their far-reaching consequences, while also shedding light on the Palestinian quest for freedom and the significance of Al-Aqsa-Mosque.

### **History of Palestine and Israel:**

In the 19th century, mirroring a trend that had emerged in Europe earlier, individuals across the globe began to recognize themselves as distinct nations and started advocating for their national rights, with a primary focus on the right to self-governance within their own state (self-determination and sovereignty). Both Jews and Palestinians began developing a sense of national identity and mobilized to pursue their respective national aspirations.

Given that the Jewish population was dispersed worldwide (in a diaspora), the Jewish national movement, known as Zionism, aimed to pinpoint a location where Jews could unite through immigration and settlement. Palestine appeared to be the logical and most suitable choice because of

its historical significance as the birthplace of Judaism. The Zionist movement commenced in 1882 with the initial wave of Jewish immigrants



from Europe to Palestine. At that time, the land of Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. This area did not constitute a single political unit, however. The northern districts of Acre and Nablus were part of the province of Beirut. The district of Jerusalem was under the direct authority of the Ottoman capital of Istanbul because of the international significance of the cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem as religious centers for Muslims, Christians and Jews. In the 19th century, the population in the region of Israel/Palestine was almost 87% Muslim, 10% Christian and 3% Jewish. From all accounts, the communities lived in peace with each other. In the city of Jerusalem, the population of the three communities was roughly equal.

As the early 20th century unfolded, the Ottoman Empire was in decline, while European powers were gaining influence in the Eastern Mediterranean region, including Palestine. During World War I, which took place from 1914 to 1918, Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, engaged in confidential correspondence with



Husayn ibn ‘Ali, the leader of the Hashemite family and Ottoman governor of Mecca and Medina. McMahon persuaded Husayn to lead an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire, which had aligned itself with Germany, a British and French adversary in the war. In return for Arab support, McMahon promised British backing for the establishment of an independent Arab state, to be governed by the Hashemites, in the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire, which included Palestine. The Arab revolt, led by Husayn's son Faysal and the renowned figure T. E. Lawrence, known as "Lawrence of Arabia," successfully defeated the Ottomans, leading to British control over a significant portion of this region during World War I.

In 1917, British Foreign Minister Lord Arthur Balfour issued a declaration known as the **Balfour Declaration**, in which the British government expressed its support for creating "a Jewish national home in Palestine." In 1921, the British partitioned the area, with the land east of the Jordan River becoming the Emirate of Transjordan, under the rule of Faysal's brother ‘Abdallah, and the land west of the Jordan River becoming the Palestine Mandate. This marked the first instance in modern history when Palestine was considered a unified political entity.

In 1928, tensions between Muslims and Jews in Jerusalem came to the forefront, as they clashed over their respective religious rights at the Western Wall, the last standing relic of the Second Jewish Temple and a holy site in the Jewish tradition. Above the Wall lies the expansive Temple Mount, the site of the two ancient Israelite temples, which is also sacred to Muslims, referred to as the Noble Sanctuary. This area now houses the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, believed to be the location from which the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon him) ascended to heaven on a winged horse, Al-



Buraq, which was tethered to the Western Wall, known as the horse's name in Muslim tradition.

The rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany in 1933 prompted a significant surge in European Jewish immigration to Palestine, resulting in increased land acquisitions and Jewish settlements. Palestinian resistance against British rule and Zionist colonization reached its peak during the Arab revolt of 1936-1939, which the British quelled with the assistance of Zionist paramilitary groups and the cooperation of neighbouring Arab states. After suppressing the Arab revolt, the British re-evaluated their governance policies to maintain order in an increasingly tense environment. They issued the 1939 White Paper, a government policy statement that restricted future Jewish immigration and land purchases while promising independence within ten years, a scenario that would have led to a predominantly Arab Palestinian state. This White Paper was viewed by Zionists as a betrayal of the Balfour Declaration, particularly given the dire situation of Jews in Europe, facing extermination. The 1939 White Paper marked the dissolution of the British-Zionist alliance. Concurrently, the defeat of the Arab revolt and the exile of Palestinian political leadership left the Palestinians in a politically disorganized state during a crucial decade when the future of Palestine was determined.

### **Role of United Nations:**

In the aftermath of World War II, tensions between Arabs and Jews regarding the future of Palestine escalated, leading to confrontations between Zionist militias and the British military. The British government decided to relinquish its mandate over Palestine and turned to the newly established United Nations to determine the country's fate. However, the British government hoped that the UN would fail to find a practical



solution and return the governance of Palestine to them under a UN trusteeship. A UN-appointed committee composed of representatives from various nations was dispatched to Palestine to investigate the situation. While members of this committee had varying opinions on the form of a political resolution, the majority concurred that partitioning the country would be the way to address the needs and demands of both Jews and Palestinian Arabs. By the end of 1946, the population within the borders of Mandate Palestine included 1,269,000 Arabs and 608,000 Jews. Through purchases, Jews had acquired approximately 7 percent of the total land area in Palestine, equivalent to about 20 percent of the Arab land.

The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was a United Nations proposal that recommended dividing Mandatory Palestine at the conclusion of British rule. On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted this plan as **Resolution 181 (II)**. The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, recommended dividing Mandatory Palestine into independent Arab and Jewish states with a special international status for Jerusalem. It aimed to address the conflicting claims of Palestinian nationalism and Jewish nationalism (Zionism). The plan was accepted by Jewish organizations but rejected by the Palestinian Arab leadership and Arab states. Critics argued that the plan favored the Zionist movement, as it allocated 56% of the land to the Jewish state despite the larger Palestinian Arab population. This led to a civil war in Palestine, and the plan was never implemented.

After the 1967 war, UN Security Council Resolution 242 called for Israel's withdrawal from the territories it had occupied during the conflict. The grammatical nuance in the French version of Resolution 242 uses "the territories," while the English version simply

mentions "territories." (Both English and French are official languages of the UN.) Israel and the United States rely on the English version to argue that Israeli withdrawal from some, though not necessarily all, of the territory occupied in the 1967 war fulfills the resolution's requirements.

For years, Palestinians rejected Resolution 242 because it didn't recognize their right to national self-determination or the right of return to their homeland. It called for a "just settlement" of the



refugee issue without specifying details, and it implied unilateral recognition of Israel without acknowledging Palestinian national rights.

### **Formation of Israel state and Division of Palestine:**

On May 15, 1948, the British withdrew from Palestine, and Zionist leaders declared the establishment of the State of Israel with David Ben Gurion as the Prime Minister. In response, neighboring Arab countries, including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, launched an invasion of Israel, claiming their aim was to "save" Palestine from the Zionists. The war between Israel and the Arab states concluded in 1949 with the signing of armistice agreements. The region previously known as Palestine was now divided into three distinct parts, each under a different political administration. The demarcation lines between them were based on the 1949 armistice agreements, often referred to as





the "Green Line." The State of Israel encompassed more than 77 percent of the territory, while Jordan occupied East Jerusalem and the central hill region of Palestine, which became known as the West Bank. Egypt assumed control over the coastal plain surrounding the city of Gaza, forming the Gaza Strip. Unfortunately, the Palestinian Arab state envisioned in the UN partition plan was never realized. More than 700,000 Palestinians were displaced from the area and became refugees in neighbouring Arab nations. This conflict is remembered by Palestinians as the **Nakba**, which translates to "catastrophe," signifying their loss of homeland and statelessness.

Today, approximately 5.6 million Palestinians reside within the region, which is partitioned between the State of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. The West Bank and Gaza came under Israeli control in 1967. Among this population, more than 1.4 million Palestinians are citizens of Israel, living within the borders established by the 1949 armistice and constituting roughly 20 percent of the country's total population. Approximately 2.6 million Palestinians inhabit the West Bank, which includes 200,000 in East Jerusalem, and about 1.6 million reside in the Gaza Strip. The remaining segment of the Palestinian population, an estimated 5.6 million, is part of the Palestinian diaspora, living outside the borders of the nation they consider their homeland.

### **The June 1967 War:**

After 1949, even though an armistice had been established between Israel and the Arab states, the conflict persisted, and the region remained on the brink of another war. In 1956, Israel, in collaboration with Britain and France, launched an attack on Egypt, ostensibly to counteract the Egyptian government's nationalization of the Suez Canal (which was previously under French and British control) and to quell Palestinian



commando attacks on Israel originating from the Gaza Strip. Israeli forces successfully seized control of Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula, but they were compelled to withdraw to the armistice lines due to international pressure, primarily led by the US and the Soviet Union. During the spring of 1967, tensions between Israel and Syria had been escalating for approximately a year. In response to a request for assistance from Syria, Egyptian troops entered the Sinai Peninsula, which shares a border with Israel, in May 1967. Shortly thereafter, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser requested the redeployment of the UN observer forces positioned between Israel and Egypt. Subsequently, the Egyptians took control of Sharm al-Sheikh, located at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, and declared a blockade of the Israeli port of Eilat on the Gulf of 'Aqaba. They argued that access to Eilat passed through Egyptian territorial waters. These actions deeply unsettled and alarmed the Israeli population, as they believed their very existence was under threat. Amidst the ongoing military and diplomatic crisis, on June 5, 1967, Israel launched a pre-emptive attack against Egypt and Syria. In a matter of hours, they incapacitated the air forces of these nations on the ground. Subsequently, Jordan also entered the conflict, resulting in an Israeli counterattack. In the end, Israel achieved a resounding victory, capturing the West Bank from Jordan, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, and the Golan Heights from Syria.

The 1967 war, which lasted a mere six days, firmly established Israel as the dominant military power in the region. The rapid and decisive nature of Israel's victory undermined the credibility of the Arab governments. In contrast, the Palestinian national movement gained significant prominence after 1967 through the emergence of



political and military groups that constituted the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

### **Palestine Liberation Organization and Emergence of Hamas:**

The PLO, or Palestine Liberation Organization, was established by the Arab League in 1964 to support the Palestinian cause. It comprises various political groups with differing ideological stances. Yasser Arafat served as the PLO chairman from 1968 until his death in 2004 and was also the leader of Fatah, the largest PLO faction. Despite internal factional differences, the PLO was widely recognized as the representative of Palestinians until its influence waned following the 1993 Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994. In the late 1980s, Hamas, an Islamist group separate from the PLO, emerged, further diminishing the PLO's authority, especially in the 2000s.

Until 1993, Israel did not recognize Palestinian national rights or consider Palestinians as an independent party to the conflict. Israel refused to negotiate with the PLO, regarding it as a terrorist organization, and insisted on engaging only with Jordan or other Arab states. Israel also opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state, advocating for the incorporation of Palestinians into existing Arab states. This stance changed when Israeli representatives entered into secret negotiations with the PLO, resulting in the 1993 Oslo Accord's Declaration of Principles.

### **The October 1973 War:**

The year 1973 marked a significant turning point in modern Egyptian and Middle Eastern history. The longstanding Arab-Israeli conflict, which had been festering for



years, erupted into a full-scale war in October of that year, commonly referred to as the Yom Kippur War or the October War. In this conflict, Egypt's armed forces launched a bold and strategic offensive against Israel. Egypt's eventual triumph in this war not only reshaped the political landscape of the region but also had profound consequences for the pursuit of peace and justice.

For Egypt, the recovery of the Sinai Peninsula, which had been under Israeli occupation since the Six-Day War of 1967, was a long-standing goal. President Anwar Sadat, who assumed power in 1970, was determined to regain this territory and restore Egyptian national pride. The opportunity to do so arose on October 6, 1973, when Egypt launched a surprise attack on Israel, intentionally coinciding with the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. Egypt's victory in the Yom Kippur War proved to be a pivotal moment in its history, as it not only led to the reclamation of territory but also renewed Egyptian confidence and pride.

In September 1978, President Jimmy Carter invited Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland. During these negotiations, they reached two key agreements: one provided a framework for peace between Egypt and Israel, leading to the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979. The second agreement proposed granting autonomy to the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for a five-year interim period, with the final status of these territories to be determined through negotiations.

However, only the Egyptian-Israeli aspect of the Camp David accords was put into action. The Palestinians and other Arab states rejected the autonomy concept because it did not guarantee a complete Israeli withdrawal from the territories captured in 1967 or

the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Furthermore, Israel's continued appropriation of Palestinian lands and construction of new settlements, contrary to the commitments Begin made at Camp David, hampered the negotiations.

### **First and Second Intifada:**

The term "intifada," meaning "uprising" in Arabic, refers to two significant Palestinian uprisings against Israel. The first occurred in the late 1980s, while the second took place in the early 2000s.

**The First Palestinian Intifada** began in Gaza in December 1987, triggered by an incident in which four Palestinians were killed when an Israeli truck collided with two

vans carrying Palestinian workers. Subsequent clashes quickly spread throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Primarily led by young Palestinians, the



Intifada was coordinated by the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising, a coalition of Palestinian political factions united in their goal to end the Israeli occupation and establish Palestinian independence. Israel responded with a heavy hand, including measures such as closing universities, deporting activists, and demolishing homes.

During the First Intifada, Israeli forces killed over 1,000 Palestinians, injured more than 130,000, and imprisoned tens of thousands, many of whom were subjected to routine torture. The clashes resulted in the deaths of fifty Israelis. The United Nations criticized



Israel for its use of lethal force, and the U.S. government, under President Reagan, condemned Israel's "harsh security measures and excessive use of live ammunition.". Additionally, the Intifada prompted the international community to seek a solution to the conflict, leading to the Oslo Accords in 1993, with Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin agreeing to a five-year peace process involving mutual recognition and a phased plan to address final status issues.

**The Second Intifada**, also known as the "Al-Aqsa" Intifada, commenced on September 28, 2000, when Ariel Sharon, the leader of the Likud opposition, made a provocative visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, accompanied by thousands of security forces deployed in and around the Old City. Clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces during the first two days resulted in the deaths of five Palestinians and the injury of around 200, including many children and women. This incident sparked a widespread armed uprising in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Second Intifada was much more violent than the first. In the initial three weeks of the uprising, Israeli forces fired one million live bullets at unarmed Palestinian demonstrators. This was a deliberate escalation in the use of force designed to prevent a prolonged civil uprising like the first Intifada, which had garnered international sympathy for the Palestinians. Israel characterized the expanding protests as acts of aggression, and the use of force expanded to include tanks, gunship helicopters, and even F-16 fighter planes. The Israeli army attacked Palestinian Authority installations in Ramallah, Gaza, and elsewhere. Civilian neighborhoods were subjected to shelling and aerial bombardment. During the Al-Aqsa Intifada, Israel caused unprecedented damage to the Palestinian economy and infrastructure, reoccupied areas under

Palestinian Authority control, and initiated the construction of its separation barrier. By the end of 2008, the Palestinian death toll had reached nearly 5,000, with over 50,000 injured.

### **Significance of Jerusalem:**

The United Nations' 1947 partition plan proposed that Jerusalem should become an international zone. In the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, Israel gained control of the western part of Jerusalem, while Jordan took the eastern part, which included the old walled city housing significant Jewish, Muslim, and Christian religious sites.

In Islam, Jerusalem is regarded as the third-holiest city after Mecca and Medina. It is believed that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon him) was miraculously transported to Jerusalem during his Night Journey (Isra and



Mi'raj). The Qur'an narrates how the prophet (Peace be Upon him) was taken on the miraculous steed Buraq from the Great Mosque in Mecca to Al-Aqsa, the "farthest place of prayer," where he prayed before ascending to heaven in a single night in the year 621. The spiritual significance of Jerusalem in Islam is also underscored by its role as the first Qibla, the direction of prayer. Islamic tradition maintains that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon him) led prayers facing Jerusalem until approximately the 16th or 17th month after his migration from Mecca to Medina when he received



guidance from Allah to change the direction of prayer toward the Kaaba in Mecca. Furthermore, Jerusalem's sacredness to Muslims is linked to its association with Prophets such as Abraham (A.S), David (A.S), Solomon (A.S), and Jesus (A.S), with their stories mentioned in the Qur'an.

Between 587 B.C. and A.D. 70, the Jewish people constructed two temples in Jerusalem, both of which were subsequently destroyed and held significant importance in their religious and communal life. Even after nearly 2000 years, Jerusalem and the Temple remain pivotal in traditional Jewish theology and prayer. Across the globe, Jews offer their prayers while facing Jerusalem, and according to Jewish rabbinical teachings, it is believed that the temple will be reconstructed when the Messiah arrives. Presently, one of the ancient retaining walls of the Temple, known as the Western Wall, serves as a primary place of worship for Jews.

For Christians, Jerusalem holds deep significance as the location where according to Christians Jesus preached, was crucified, and experienced resurrection. Many Christians also view the city as central to the anticipated Second Coming of Jesus, making Jerusalem a significant pilgrimage destination for Christians from various parts of the world.

Presently, the Temple Mount is characterized by three significant structures from the early Umayyad period: The Dome of the Rock (691 CE), the Dome of the Chain (691-692 CE), and the Al-Aqsa Mosque (705-715 CE).





## **2006: The Rise of Hamas:**

Under the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian territories of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem were intended to have a governance structure that included the Palestinian Authority's legislative branch. This legislative body had authority over civil matters, internal security, and public order. From its establishment until 2006, the Palestinian Authority was predominantly led by the secular Fatah party. Fatah recognizes Israel as an Independent state and pursued negotiations after renouncing armed resistance in the 1990s. In January 2005, following the passing of Yasser Arafat, Mahmoud Abbas was elected as the President of the Palestinian Authority with the support of the Fatah party. In the January 2006 elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council, Hamas won the majority, securing 77 out of 122 seats. However, its victory in the popular vote was relatively narrow, with 44.45 percent compared to Fatah's 41.43 percent. Due to Hamas's history of armed conflict with Israel and its goal of eliminating the Israeli state, the international community declined to recognize the Hamas-led government. Moreover, the United States subsequently organized efforts against Hamas, including providing \$86 million in military assistance to Israel.

## **2008-2014: Wars in Gaza**

On September 19, 2007, Israel declared Gaza as a "hostile territory" and imposed a stricter blockade on the Gaza Strip. Israel's military actions in Gaza in 2008-2009 and 2012 boosted Hamas's standing and gained it support among Palestinians and on the international stage.



Despite having agreed to a ceasefire with Hamas just a few months earlier, Israeli soldiers conducted a raid into Gaza in November 2008 with the intention of targeting Hamas fighters. This escalation heightened tensions, eventually leading to Israel's launch of Operation Cast Lead, a multi-week assault on Gaza that involved both aerial bombings and a ground invasion. The exact casualty figures are a matter of dispute, but the operation resulted in the deaths of at least 1,000 Palestinians and 12 Israelis. It also caused severe damage to housing, businesses, and electrical infrastructure in Gaza. Subsequently, United Nations officials concluded that the Israeli military had committed war crimes and crimes against humanity during the operation, which included the use of white phosphorus in populated areas and deliberate targeting of civilians.

Violence erupted once again in 2012 when Israel carried out eight days of airstrikes, resulting in the deaths of almost 180 people, predominantly civilians, including children and women. Although a ceasefire was brokered with the assistance of Egypt, it proved to be short-lived. In 2014, Israel conducted a series of airstrikes, ground operations, and naval blockades in Gaza, with its stated target being Hamas and its infrastructure. However, thousands of innocent Palestinians lost their lives during the seven-week conflict. The conflict in 2014 claimed the lives of at least 2,200 people, the vast majority of whom were Gaza civilians.

### **2021: A major escalation in East Jerusalem and Gaza**

In October 2020, an Israeli court issued a ruling that called for the eviction of several Palestinian families residing in Sheikh Jarrah, a neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, and their land to be transferred to Jewish families by May 2021. In response, in February



2021, some Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah appealed this court decision, leading to protests during the appeal hearings. This legal battle over property ownership and the forced displacement of Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem continued.

In May, amid discriminatory efforts to displace Palestinians from their homes in occupied East Jerusalem, an 11-day conflict ensued between the Israeli government and Palestinian protesters in Gaza. Israeli forces targeted 1,500 locations in Gaza with both ground and air weapons, resulting in the deaths of at least 120 Palestinian civilians, according to UN reports. Human Rights Watch documented serious violations of the laws of war and potential war crimes by the Israel Defence Forces during the hostilities, including strikes that killed numerous civilians and the destruction of four high-rise buildings in Gaza, which housed homes and businesses, without apparent military targets nearby.

In the hostilities that occurred in May 2021, a tragic toll was recorded with 260 Palestinians losing their lives, among them 66 children. Additionally, 2,200 individuals sustained injuries, with some potentially facing long-term disabilities requiring rehabilitation, as reported by OCHA (the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). Gaza authorities reported that 2,400 housing units were rendered uninhabitable, and more than 50,000 units were damaged. As of October 14, 2021, approximately 8,250 people remained internally displaced, according to OCHA. The conflict also resulted in significant harm to infrastructure, including 331 educational facilities, 10 hospitals, and 23 primary health clinics.

The World Bank estimated that the total physical damage in Palestine amounted to around \$380 million, with economic losses reaching approximately \$190 million. These figures reflect the extensive destruction and economic impact of the hostilities.

### **Israel War crimes in Palestine:**

The Israeli government has established a dual-tiered legal and political system that grants comprehensive rights to Jewish Israeli settlers while imposing military rule and control on Palestinians, depriving them of basic protections and rights under international law. In

addition, the Israeli government has been involved in a recurring pattern of inhumane actions, extrajudicial killings, torture, the



denial of fundamental human rights, arbitrary detentions, and collective punishment.

In June 2022, the UN Human Rights Council-mandated Commission of Inquiry (CoI) on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem, and Israel concluded that the continued occupation and discrimination against Palestinians are key factors contributing to recurring instability and the prolonged conflict in the region. Similar conclusions were reached by the CoI in September 2022, reporting that Israeli government policies and actions have effectively led to the permanent occupation and de facto annexation of Palestinian territory, potentially amounting to crimes under international law, including war crimes. Both the CoI and the Special Rapporteur have



noted that this ongoing coercive environment has prevented Palestinians from realizing their right to self-determination and other fundamental human rights.

In December 2022, the UN General Assembly requested the International Court of Justice to provide an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's ongoing occupation. Palestinians are frequently subjected to violence by Israeli settlers, including physical attacks, live ammunition shootings, field and livestock arson, property theft, and vandalism. Israeli security forces also carry out extensive attacks against Palestinians, particularly in occupied territories, often leading to deadly escalations, including periodic aerial bombardments of the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, Israel's air, sea, and land blockade of Gaza, in place since 2007, has caused collective punishment for 2 million Palestinians, resulting in a humanitarian crisis.

Since the beginning of 2023, over 170 Palestinians have lost their lives in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For the third consecutive year, Israeli forces carried out violent raids on April 5-6, 2023, at the Haram Al-Sharif compound and Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan, resulting in injuries to dozens of Muslim worshippers due to stun grenades, tear gas, sponge-tipped bullets, and indiscriminate beatings. This daily violence occurs alongside ongoing violations of international law by Israeli authorities, including the rapid and illegal expansion of settlements. According to OCHA, in 2023, Israeli government authorities have demolished or seized 530 Palestinian-owned structures, resulting in the forced displacement of over 940 Palestinians.



## **7-October, Hamas-Israel conflict:**

In response to a series of events, including the perceived desecration of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, ongoing Israeli settlements, settler violence, and restrictions on movement between Israel and Gaza, Hamas launched an attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. This offensive, codenamed "Al-Aqsa Flood," involved a coordinated surprise assault by air, land, and sea.

Israel with retaliatory strikes and officially declared war on Hamas a day on October 8, 2023. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) conducted airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, resulting in the deaths of over 6,000 Palestinians, a significant number of whom were civilians, including children and women. According to the United Nations, approximately 1 million Palestinians, nearly half of Gaza's population, were internally displaced. On October 9, the IDF carried out strikes on 500 targets in the Gaza Strip overnight, including the densely populated Jabalia refugee camp, resulting in numerous casualties, including children. Moreover, Israeli aircraft bombed the Hajj Tower in the Gaza Strip, a building that housed residences and offices for journalists, leading to the deaths of three journalists and injuries to dozens.

Defence Minister Gallant announced a "total" blockade of the Gaza Strip, which involved cutting off electricity and blocking the entry of food and fuel. This order was strongly criticized by Human Rights Watch, which called on the International Criminal Court to take note of the call as a potential war crime. On October 17, 2023, IDF targeted missile in the parking lot of the Al-Ahli Arabi Baptist Hospital in Gaza City, resulted in the deaths of at least 500 civilians in the hospital. An Israeli strike also hit a UNWRA school in the Al-Maghazi refugee camp, causing six fatalities and injuring 12.



Following evacuation warnings aimed at preventing civilian casualties, the IDF launched airstrikes in the al-Daraj and al-Furqan neighbourhoods in Gaza, as well as the Port of Gaza. They also targeted the al-Karama and Rimal neighborhoods of Gaza City, where government ministries, universities, media organizations, and aid agencies were located. An Israeli airstrike resulted in the deaths of four IFRC paramedics inside an ambulance. The Gaza Strip's sole power plant ran out of fuel, and all supplies of gas and other types of fuel were cut off due to the blockade by Israel. Israel used white phosphorus artillery projectiles to strike the Gaza City port.

Numerous international organizations and experts strongly condemned the evacuation orders issued by Israel. Doctors Without Borders, OHCHR, and other organizations labelled the orders as outrageous and a violation of international humanitarian law. The World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the International Rescue Committee echoed these concerns, emphasizing the difficulties in moving critical care patients and depleting medical supplies. Gaza's health ministry reported over 700 Palestinians killed overnight, and the health system in Gaza was described as being in "total collapse." In remarks to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed deep concern about "clear violations of international humanitarian law" in Gaza. He also emphasized that the attacks by Hamas did not occur in isolation but were part of a context of prolonged occupation.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres visited the Rafah crossing and called on Israel to provide a "lifeline" of aid to Gaza. He described the situation of aid trucks being delayed or obstructed as heartbreaking. On October 21, a convoy of 20 aid trucks entered Gaza from Egypt through the Rafah crossing, carrying medicine, medical

equipment, and some food. However, the crossing was promptly closed again after the convoy passed through. The UN secretary-general stressed the need for much more aid to be delivered to the people in Gaza.

### **Pakistan and Palestine Relations:**

The relationship between Pakistan and Palestine is characterized by a strong bond of mutual support, cooperation, and unwavering solidarity. Palestine has consistently expressed its backing for Pakistan's stance on the Kashmir issue, while Pakistan has steadfastly supported the establishment of an independent Palestinian State and maintains a pro-Palestinian position by not recognizing the State of Israel. Since establishing diplomatic ties in 1988, both nations have collaborated in various international forums to support each other's causes.



On November 29, 2012, Pakistan supported the UN General Assembly Resolution 67/19, for non-member observer state status to Palestine within the United Nations. Pakistan also has consistently endorsed Palestine's pursuit of statehood and full United Nations membership. It has also provided economic and humanitarian aid, including support for Palestinian refugees, assistance for the Palestinian economy, and contributions to the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip following conflicts.

Cultural and political ties between Pakistan and Palestine are robust, with many Pakistanis sympathizing with the Palestinian struggle, and a notable Palestinian





community residing in Pakistan. High-level meetings and visits between leaders of both nations have fostered a strong bilateral relationship. For instance, the second Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, officially visited Pakistan three times in 2005, 2013 and 2017 allowing for discussions on regional and global issues, the Middle East situation, and bilateral interests. During these interactions, Pakistan's Presidents and Prime Ministers reiterated their unwavering support for the just cause of the Palestinian people.

Notably, the Palestinian Authority established an embassy in Islamabad in 2017, and Pakistan has General Consulate in Palestine. Cultural exchanges, encompassing art, literature, and film, have further deepened mutual understanding and strengthened ties between the two nations. Pakistan annually provides scholarships to 100 Palestinian students, with approximately 50,000 Palestinians having graduated from Pakistani universities. Additionally, Palestinian doctors who received their education in Pakistani universities now practice in both Palestine and Pakistan.

In the context of the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel, Pakistan's President, Arif Alvi, visited the Palestine Embassy in Islamabad. During his visit, President Alvi met with Palestinian Ambassador Ahmed Jawad Rabei and conveyed Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian people on behalf of both the government and the citizens of Pakistan. He called for the United Nations to address the atrocities in Palestine and pass a resolution in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to end Israeli actions. President Alvi strongly condemned the brutalities in Gaza, criticized the perceived disproportionate Israeli response, and voiced concern over the long-standing



apartheid situation. He particularly denounced the bombing of a Gaza hospital, resulting in casualties of more than 500 innocent lives.

Furthermore, Pakistan promptly dispatched a chartered plane carrying 100 tons of essential medical supplies, tents, and blankets to Egypt. These supplies will be transported from Egypt to Gaza, with this humanitarian effort announced during a weekly news briefing by the Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, in Islamabad.

In light of the dire humanitarian situation and the impact on millions of lives, Pakistan is actively and urgently working toward a resolution of the Palestine conflict.

### **Interview of Nader Al-Turk, (Head of mission Palestine to Pakistan) with Zaildar**

#### **Ahsan Shah:**

On Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023, Nader K. Al-Turk, Counsellor/Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Media and Civil Society was invited to a podcast interview at the program ‘Dialogue with Experts’ hosted by Advocate Zaildar Ahsan Shah at Radio Pakistan.

During the interview, a series of tragic events that occurred in Palestine this month were discussed. Gaza is completely under siege, and the Palestinian people are enduring brutality and injustice, with their lives shattered by violence.

Mr. Nader K. Al-Turk pointed out that in response to these events, Israel declared a state of emergency and the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) declared war against Palestine. The Israeli government imposed a "total blockade" on Gaza, which included a ban on water and food as part of their retaliatory measures. Israel also announced the amassing of 100,000 troops on the southern border and intensified bombings in Gaza, hitting



refugee camps, mosques, residential buildings, and educational institutions. Israeli air attacks disrupted the Rafah crossing, which connects the Gaza Strip to Egypt, and Israel prevented its reopening. Disturbingly, Israeli forces were using white phosphorous, a lethal chemical capable of causing severe harm to human skin and tissue. Furthermore, Palestinian Red Crescent headquarters and UN buildings were hit, resulting in the loss of many UN workers' lives. Gaza is now without power, and its power station has run out of fuel, affecting essential services, particularly in hospitals. Food and water supplies blocked, and electricity is cut-off. Gaza is effectively under total siege as Israel controls its territorial waters and airspace.

These events are described as a genocide of the Palestinian people, involving the killing of innocent men, women, and children. It is emphasized that the international community needs to step up and take action. Hospitals have collapsed, running out of essential supplies like oxygen, fuel, and medicine, leading to a humanitarian disaster that has struck fear into the hearts of many.

The discussion also touched upon the critical role that the Muslim Ummah needs to play in supporting Palestinians collectively. It is stressed that all Muslim states must unite and raise a collective voice for Palestine, offering their support during this catastrophic situation.

The role of Pakistan in supporting Palestinians is highlighted, with Pakistan consistently recognizing the rights and sovereignty of Palestine. Pakistan has supported Palestine at international forums and is called upon to continue its efforts.



Mr. Zaidar Ahsan Shah asked about the role of the United States in the Israel-Palestine conflict and whether the US can act as a game changer in this situation. Mr. Nader stated that while the US President mentioned an agreement with Egypt for humanitarian aid to Gaza, the US is supporting Israel with military troops and equipment. The US does not officially recognize the state of Palestine or the Palestine Liberation Organization. The US has resisted ceasefire calls and rejected UN resolutions on the Palestinian issue due to various interests and strong political and economic ties with Israel.

The interview also raised concerns about double standards, misinformation, and fabrications by Western countries, media channels, and Israel to shape public opinion.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Nader K. Al-Turk appealed for global support, especially from the Muslim Ummah, to help the Palestinian cause. He emphasized the need for the international community to raise its voice strongly and wisely against the tricks and challenges Palestinians are facing. He also called for an end to the crimes against Palestine and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. The rights of Palestinian refugees, as per the 1947 UN resolution, should be upheld.

It is stressed that the fight is not against Jews but against the idea of Zionism. Respect for all religions and the protection of holy places like Al-Aqsa Masjid are vital. The international community is urged not to remain silent and to prioritize humanitarian values and peace efforts to save Palestinian lives.

In closing, Mr. Zaidar Ahsan Shah praised Mr. Nader K. Al-Turk's efforts to raise awareness and support for the Palestinian cause. He acknowledged the bravery and



strength of the Palestinian people, emphasizing that they are fighting for their rights and independence. He expressed solidarity and hope that one day, the Muslim Ummah will offer pray together at Al-Aqsa Mosque, and he pledged ongoing support for the liberation of Palestine.

### **Government of Pakistan Stance on Palestine:**

On 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Government of Pakistan) in its weekly briefing stated that Pakistan expresses deep concern over the situation in occupied Palestine, emphasizing unwavering support for the Palestinian people in Gaza facing a harsh collective punishment from Israeli forces. The loss of over 6,500 civilians, including 2,700 children, in Gaza due to indiscriminate bombardment is mourned. Acknowledging the commendable efforts of doctors, paramedics, first responders, and UNRWA and other UN organization workers, who bravely serve despite challenging conditions, Pakistan urges Israel's supporters to intervene and end the atrocities. The call is for lifting the Gaza siege and providing essential humanitarian aid such as water, fuel, food, and medicines. Pakistan urges the international community to prevent the escalation of violence in the Middle East and stresses the need for a two-state solution. This solution entails the creation of a secure, viable, contiguous, and sovereign state of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, based on pre-1967 borders, to establish lasting peace in the region.

**Foreign Minister of Pakistan Jalil Abbas Jilani** has reiterated Pakistan's steadfast support for the Palestinian people, expressing condolences to those affected by Israel's aggression. He also announced the dispatch of a second shipment containing relief goods and medical supplies to Gaza.



## **Conclusion:**

For more than five decades, Israel has maintained control over the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and it has been accused of governing these areas through oppressive measures, institutionalized discrimination, and systematic violations of the rights of the Palestinian population, according to Human Rights Watch. This occupation has seen at least five significant violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, Unlawful killings of Palestinians, forced displacement of Palestinian communities, abusive detention practices, The closure of the Gaza Strip and other unjustified restrictions on the movement of Palestinians. The establishment of settlements, accompanied by discriminatory policies that disadvantage Palestinians.

In the most recent conflicts since October 7, 2023, Israeli forces have been involved in the deaths of over 6,000 Palestinian civilians. Many of these incidents are considered violations of international humanitarian law because they failed to take reasonable precautions to protect civilians. Some actions may even amount to war crimes, such as the targeting of apparent civilian structures. As reported by the Gaza Ministry of House and Works, Israeli forces have destroyed approximately 200,000 housing units since October 7, constituting over 25% of populated areas in Gaza. The actions of the occupying forces are described as exceptionally heinous, resulting in the erasure of entire families from civil registries, the destruction of neighbourhoods and residential communities, and the devastation of essential facilities including hospitals, places of worship, bakeries, water filling stations, markets, schools, and educational institutions. Numerous international organizations, including Human Rights Watch, OHCHR, WHO, UNICEF, and the UN, have strongly condemned these actions and called on



Israel to lift the blockade on aid, food, and medical supplies. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has expressed deep concern over clear violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza, emphasizing that these attacks by Hamas are not isolated incidents but occur within the context of a prolonged occupation.

The Palestinian representatives and people are seeking support from the international community, particularly Muslim nations, to intervene and put an end to Israel's actions against humanity. They are urging human rights organizations to help terminate the illegal occupation and support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. The international community is also urged to uphold the 1947 resolution calling for the establishment of two states for Jewish and Arab populations, and to address the numerous resolutions on Palestine at the United Nations and Security Council. The repeated vetoing of these resolutions by the US and a few other nations, along with the silence of the international community, is a source of concern for Palestinians. They are calling on the international community, the Muslim world, and global media to expose Israel's alleged war crimes and put an end to the suffering of innocent civilians in Gaza.