

## Question of Palestine

One of the initial responsibilities of the League of Nations included developing a system for the peaceful transition of colonial rule following World War I (“WWI”). One aspect was the British Mandate over Palestine, a former Ottoman territory in 1922. This mandate included the Balfour Declaration of 1917, supporting the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Arab resistance to European Jewish immigration and demands for independence led to a 1937 revolt.<sup>1</sup> To curb violence, the United Kingdom restricted Jews from buying land in Palestine in all but five percent of the mandate in what became known as the White Paper of 1939.<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations Security Council has addressed the question of Palestine on numerous occasions, regularly insisting on the resumption of negotiations. From 1947-1977, the UNSC abolished the Palestinian Mandate, established two independent states of Israel and Palestine, and supported a just peace between the two, affirming the inalienable rights of Palestinians. On May 15, 1948, the State of Israel was established and admitted to the United Nations.<sup>3</sup> Consistent unrest and conflict in the region impeded a peaceful resolution to the question of Palestine, in addition to an unwillingness to negotiate from both the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. Since 1967, the international community has expressed the need to uphold Security Council Resolution 242 and 338, calling for the withdrawal of Israeli occupation. In 1993, the Israeli military began to withdraw from the Occupied Palestinian Territory<sup>4</sup> In September 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Palestinian Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas, signed a Declaration on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (“Oslo Accord”).<sup>5</sup> By signing the Accord, Israel accepted the Palestinian Liberation Organization (“PLO”) as representative of Palestinians, and the PLO recognized Israel’s right to exist in peace. In 1994, the Palestinian National Authority began to assume of governmental role. Further, in 1995, Israel and Palestine signed the Oslo II, which divided the West Bank into separate areas under Palestinian and Israeli control. The Peace Accords began to crumble after the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. His murder was followed by a series of attacks from Hamas.

The United Nations Security Council has been consistent in supporting Israel and Palestine’s rights to self-determination, the inalienable rights of their peoples, and peaceful negotiations between the two. Throughout the 2000s, the Security Council and General Assembly have passed resolutions regarding the Question of Palestine. In 2002, Israel built a barrier during the second intifada, or uprising, after a series of attacks.<sup>6</sup> In 2004, the International Court of Justice released an advisory opinion, finding the building of the barrier illegal, and stated that Israel should pay reparations.<sup>7</sup> Palestine has attempted to gain status in the international community. Despite, being recognized as a nation by over 130 member states, Palestine has only recently been upgraded from an “observer entity” to a “non-member observer State”

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<sup>1</sup> The Question of Palestine, <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/>

<sup>2</sup> British White Paper of 1939, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/brwh1939.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/brwh1939.asp)

<sup>3</sup> Background: The Question of Palestine <https://unctad.org/topic/palestinian-people/The-question-of-Palestine>

<sup>4</sup> <https://unctad.org/topic/palestinian-people/The-question-of-Palestine>

<sup>5</sup> <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/oslo>

<sup>6</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/politics-middle-east-jerusalem-israel-west-bank-2ce5d9956b729ad6169c880d00068977>

<sup>7</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2004/07/108912>

status.<sup>8</sup> In 2016, Resolution 2334 was adopted, reaffirming prior Security Council resolutions, condemning violence and calling for two democratic states. As recently as December 2021, the United Nations General Assembly has continued to call for a cease to violence in the West Bank, Gaza, and occupied territories.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the resolution has called for humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. Throughout 2021, Israeli military forces have killed approximately 67 Palestinians and wounded over 1000.<sup>10</sup> This body should assess the current situation in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel. This discussion may include referencing previous resolutions drafted by this body, as well as resolutions drafted by other bodies.

**Focus Questions:**

1. What is the role of the UN General Assembly in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
2. What actions have already been taken to address this issue? What has worked and what has not?
3. This issue involves a variety of topics including jurisdiction, right to self determination, humanitarian crises, international criminal law, etc. How can this body address all of these different issues?

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<sup>8</sup>[http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/a\\_res\\_67\\_19.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/a_res_67_19.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>[http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/a\\_res\\_67\\_19.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/a_res_67_19.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/israel/palestine>