

Actors in Israeli-Palestinian conflict

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Introduction

From the dawn of a man, there was always conflict. Conflict concerning land, wealth, religion, ethnicity or view of the world. In the humble history of our kind, there was usually one of these points that stood out. However, right before our eyes lies such a complex problem connecting all these points of heated debates, fights or even wars. Israel and Palestine share a bloody history, that neither side is able to resolve and move on from. Rather, we see a trend, that with every passing decade, each side digs itself deeper and more hostile to the other one. With such complexity, we decided to explore and analyse this intriguing region, to better understand it and be able to view this problem from the point of view of these actors.

Israel

History

The first Jewish community was set in the area of today's Israel circa the 13th century BC. Joshua, the successor of Moses, led them. Israel was divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judea, in the south after the death of King David in 926 BC. Babylon invaded the Jewish state in 586 and took the Jews captive. In the following centuries, the land of today's Israel was controlled by Bizantium and Arabs. The holy land suffered from the Crusades. Ottoman Empire ruled the area from 1517 to 1917.

The modern history of Israel dates back to the 19th century. Zionist philosophy started to surface in antisemitism Europe in the 19th century. Zionism was a minor philosophy in the Jewish community. Balfour Declaration promised Jews a place in Palestine in 1917. Tensions between Arabs and Jews were rising between the two world wars under the mandate of Brits. About 30% of Jews and 70% of Arabs lived in the area before the second world war. The ratio had changed dramatically after the war. The new Jewish population rose significantly. The ratio after the war was circa 2 Jews to 1 Arab.

Tensions were rising between 1945 and 1948, not just between Arabs and Jews but also with Brits remaining control over the area. Ben Gurion declared the independence of Israel on 14th May 1948. Brits, USA and SSSR recognized the establishment of the state. The establishment of the state led to a war known as the First Arab-Israeli War. Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia disrespected the decision of OSN and declared war on Israel. Israel defeated the poorly organized Arabs in the battle for independence. Israel passed the law that enabled every human with a Jewish background to enter the country and become a citizen in 1950. It meant that more Jews entered the country.

The six-day war, also known as the third Arab-Israeli conflict, began on June 5, 1967. Israel secured control over the West Bank, Gaza, Bethlem, Hebron, East Jerusalem, Golan Heights and Sinai. Israel gained a significant amount of territory in the six-day war. UN resolution n. Two hundred forty-two wanted Israel to return the territory. An important partnership with the USA was developed. Israel

approved a law to support the settlement of the new territory after 1967. Israel connected to east Jerusalem in 1980 and declared the City as "the only indivisible capital of Israel". The Yom Kippur War was settled by the USA in 1973. Israel strengthened its position in the region.

Jimmy Carter supported a peace process between Israel and Egypt. As a result, Israel withdrew its citizens from Sinai and moved the Israeli settlements to the West Bank.

Fatah murdered tourists on a bus in 1978. Israel responded by invading south Lebanon. Israel was forced to withdraw its military units. The second invasion after the assassination of the consul in London in 1982. Tension in society was missing and escalated in Intifada.

Peace negotiations began based on the Madrid Peace Conference and the Oslo Accords. Peace negotiations are complicated due to East Jerusalem. After the death of Raabin and before a new election, Israel is under attack from Hezbollah, Hamas and Lebanon and is forced to take the retaliatory attack.

After another war and conflict, Palestine asked the UN for membership. OSN sees Palestine as a non-member observer state of the UN.

Israel's role in the conflict

On October 7, 2023, Israeli civilians were brutally attacked by the armed forces of Hamas. Since then, Israel has been defending its citizens against Arab aggression, mainly represented by Hamas and different terrorist organizations operating in the area.

Conflict From the Israeli point of view

Jews were pursued for centuries without the right to independence. Ever since they claimed this right, they were under attack in an unstable region surrounded by enemies. Currently, the dispute culminated with an attack on civilians. The people of Israel have to go to war once again to fight for their right to exist. The Israeli government decided to destroy Hamas to secure the safety of its citizens in the future. The situation is complicated for the Israeli Army due to the nature of the military strategy of Hamas. Hamas is hiding its soldiers under the cities, using civilians as a human shield. The situation is even more complicated due to support for Hamas from other regional entities.

My opinion

It is very sad to see civilians dying in Palestine. However, I believe that any aggression from any terrorist organization should be responded to by force. We, as Western countries, should support Israel in its war against terrorists and its fight against aggression.

Hamas

History

Hamas, or *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Resistance Movement), was founded in December 1987 during the First Intifada. It emerged as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, a religious and political movement. The reason it was created was mainly down to Muslim Brotherhood preferring negotiations with Israel. Its founders, including Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, wanted to combine resistance to Israeli occupation with Islamic principles. Hamas also aimed to provide an alternative to the secular Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), being more hardline and zealous.

In 1988, Hamas released its charter, which outlined its goals and beliefs. The document declared that all of historic Palestine (pre-1948), including all present-day Israel, belonged to Palestinians. Hamas rejected Israel's existence and called for armed struggle to liberate the land. This document also stated a very controversial stance on dealing with the Israel citizens. Instead of forceful move, it advocated for "killing the jews".

After the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993 between Israel and the PLO, Hamas, similarly to extremists in Israel, opposed the agreements and increased its militant activities. After the massacre in Ibrahimi Mosque by Israeli settler in 1994, Hamas carried out suicide bombings and other attacks targeting both Israeli soldiers and civilians. These actions made Hamas one of the most prominent groups in the Palestinian resistance and landed on lists of multiple countries as a terrorist organisation, including USA in the 1997. Domestically, Israel arrested or assassinated many of its leaders, including Sheikh Yassin in 2004, making any kind of negotiation even harder to achieve.

In 2006, Hamas participated in Palestinian elections for the first time and won a majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council. This unexpected result was mainly attributed to withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip in 2005, which Hamas claimed credit for. This also legitimised use of armed resistance in eyes of the majority of Palestine citizens, as the corrupt president Arafat was unable to deliver on his promises from Oslo Accords through peaceful means. This victory increased tensions with Fatah, the party that had long dominated Palestinian politics. In 2007, after violent clashes, Hamas took full control of the Gaza Strip, forcing Fatah to govern only the West Bank. This created a division in Palestinian governance that still exists today, with Hamas ruling Gaza and Fatah controlling the West Bank.

Since 2007, Hamas has faced significant challenges. Israel and Egypt imposed a blockade on Gaza, severely restricting movement and goods. Hamas has also been involved in multiple armed conflicts with Israel, including major wars in 2008–2009, 2012, 2014 and 2021. Hamas, de facto sole ruling party of Gaza Strip was forced to rely on Iranian help and taxes from smuggling routes from Egypt. This combined with Hamas being focused on mainly arming its military wing and building vast network of underground tunnels for future conflicts let to poverty rate in Gaza rising from 39 percent in 2011 to 59 percent in 2021, with many people being focused to provide food for their families. Jamal A., Robbins M. (2023). The function of public services such as healthcare or educational system was financed mainly by international aid, for example Qatar.

It's role in the conflict

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched an unprecedented and highly coordinated assault on Israel. The attack occurred during Shemini Atzeret, a Jewish holiday, when the majority of Israel Defense Forces (IDF) were on leave.

The Attack Itself

Civilian areas, including kibbutzim and a music festival, were targeted, resulting in over 1,200 deaths, making it the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust. Some Israeli politicians compared this attack to 9/11 or a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour. Robinson K. (2024)

Hostages Taken: Over 240 individuals, including dual nationals from at least two dozen countries, were abducted and brought to Gaza. The pressure on resolving the crisis on Israeli authorities was massive, resulting in several protests during the year of war.

Israeli government with Benjamin Netanyahu at the frontside said, they consider as victory only a total victory over Hamas and its eradication. However, is that possible?

One thing that Hamas managed to do successfully during its reign in Gaza Strip is to integrate itself into all sectors of society. Even though it's true that, according to Arab Barometer's survey used by Jamal A. and Robbins M. (2023) Gaza citizens were untrustful towards Hamas, and they consider them unable to govern Gaza efficiently. Hamas with its financial support from Iran and main goal of fighting Israel, it pushed for active participation of males in its militias.

Airstrikes began in Gaza on October 7, intensifying as Israel declared a full siege of the enclave on October 9, cutting off water, electricity, food, and fuel.

Ground Invasion

By late October, Israel initiated a gradual ground invasion into Gaza. Communications were cut off, complicating rescue efforts for hostages and humanitarian response. The operation faced criticism over civilian casualties and displacement, with over 1.4 million Palestinians internally displaced by the end of October.

Mediation and Ceasefire Efforts

Multiple attempts at ceasefires were mediated by countries such as Qatar, Egypt, and the United States. In November 2023, a temporary pause allowed for a prisoner exchange but did not lead to a lasting peace.

Reaction by international community was practically unilateral with support for Israel. On the other hand, there have been a lot of protests in western states, most notably USA, where protests were noticeable on multiple universities throughout the nation.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) to this day issued arrest warrants for leaders on both sides, including Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Hamas commanders, citing violations of international humanitarian law, which is a big deviation from standpoints of main Western politicians.

My opinion

There is a clear difference between Palestinian citizens and Hamas. Therefore, the continual invasion by Israeli forces, that's resulting in forceful removal of, according to Jamal A. and Robbins M. (2023), around 1/5 of population is really an overstretch in my opinion. In the same article, it's stated that Palestinian citizens in Gaza are in slight majority pro-democracy and pro-peaceful two-states solution. However, it's evident that these people are fed up with the conflict and have grown apathetic towards politics. Which is not surprising as their main concern lies with surviving another day as the government is not looking after them properly. On the other hand, I consider the situation in Israel and Palestine much more complex and it's hard to find a quick solution.

However, one thing is for sure, Hamas as a government parasites on its citizens even though its advocating that all the hardships and the aforementioned October 7th attack was for their own good. But as history taught us many times, violence only breeds more violence. This needs to be realised by Israeli government if they ever want to achieve pacification of Hamas and negotiate with Palestine.

Fatah

Fatah, formal name Palestinian National Liberation Movement is a political party in Palestine. They present themselves by nationalist and social democratic values. They are part of PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) which is the broad coalition in Palestinian parliament. Fatah is the strongest party from the coalition and their current leader Mahmoud Abbas is also a chairman of the group and current president of Palestine.

History

Fatah was founded in the 1959 as a political movement and later in 1965 as a party by Yassir Arafat and Khalil al-Wazir. At first Fatah was part of Palestinian diaspora. Since their foundation they started to practise guerrilla warfare on Israeli soil. In December 1964 it launched military a strike when they blew up an Israeli water-pump installation.

After the Six-Days War they became the strongest Palestinian power and became the leader of PLO. In 1970 Jordan decided to take control over their lands and forced Fatah to move to Syria and South of Lebanon. Jordan army executed one of the leaders of Fatah Abu Ali Iyad which inspired extremist parts of Fatah to form group called Black September (as a reference to events in Syria). In November 1971 they assassinated Jordanian prime minister Wasfi al-Tal as revenge for Abu Ali Iyad.

After the first intifada, the biggest rival of Fatah, Hamas, was founded (highly supported by Iran). PLO declared independence, formed exile government, moved away from terrorism and recognized the existence of the State of Israel. 1993 Israel and the PLO signed a Oslo Accords after which Palestinian autonomous region was formed and PLO was set to govern it. They held elections in 1996 in which Hamas did not participate and Fatah won the majority and Arafat became the first president. In 2004 Arafat died and he set Mahmoud Abbas as his successor, who later in 2005 won the presidency.

In 2006 Fatah lost its popularity to Hamas which won the elections and became the strongest party in Palestinian Legislative Council. Two parties at first formed government together but, because of violence in Gaza, Abbas dissolved the government and declared state of emergency. Hamas remained control over Gaza Strip and Fatah ruling over Wester bank with many attempts of reconciliation, but

with limited success like in 2014 when unity government was formed lead by Rami Hamdallah, who was not member of neither party. But this government was not able to control Gaza, so they just supply it with aid. Unity government ended its rule in 2019 when was clear it cannot manage both parts of the state.

Role in a conflict

Today Fatah is one of the main actors in Israeli-Palestinian relations as they are not radicals as Hamas and are open to negotiations. After Hamas's attack on Israel form October 2023, Hamas lost many of their radical leaders in the war and Israel is "hunting down" all new leaders of Hamas. However, as radicals form Hamas are defeated, reconciliation process is renewed.

On 23 July 2024 Beijing declaration between Hamas, Fatah and others Palestinian factions is signed. According to the Beijing Declaration (2024): "the factions agreed to achieve a comprehensive Palestinian national unity that includes all Palestinian factions under the PLO framework, and to commit to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital".

Relations with Other Authorities

Beyond Hamas, Fatah has complex relationships with other regional and international players. It maintains strong ties with Arab nations. The party also engages with global powers like the United States and the European Union, which recognize the PA as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

My opinion

In this complicated situation, especially in a previous year, when this conflict has many civilian casualties mainly in Gaza it is important for Palestinians to act as one. In Gaza radicals from Hamas and Israeli army caused one of the biggest humanitarian crises in recent years and people of Palestine should solve this problem together and violently. Fatah shown although its corrupt accusations, that they are for solving Israeli-Palestinian conflict peacefully and they are the force that Western Powers and Israeli government would talk. They election success in the past was influenced by radicalism inside Hamas and now when Hamas is the one party to blame for the war Fatah is on its way to become leaders of the Palestinian state although this situation is one of the toughest global problems in the world, so it's hard to find the best solution.

International community

History

The role of the international community in the Israel-Palestine conflict is massive, not only in the current conflict but also in the process of establishing Israel as a sovereign state. Their role towards Palestine is quite different. Their continuous betrayals have left most Palestinians with feelings of resentment towards the Western empires. Before the creation of Mandatory Palestine, the Arab people were hinted at their chance of independence by the British at the expense of supporting them in combating Ottoman forces. This was established in ten letters between July 1915 and March 1916, known as the McMahon–Hussein correspondence (Hourani, 1991). This belief was quickly shattered by the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the Sykes-Picot agreement a year prior. The Sykes-Picot agreement was a secret document between France and Britain in which they planned to partition the Arab lands between their empires, exterminating any idea of Arab independence (Fromkin, 1989).

The British Empire supported establishing a ‘national home for the Jewish people’ through the Balfour Declaration. The declaration specifically stipulated that “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.,” though this belief was not upheld in practice (Schneer, 2011).

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the League of Nations in 1920 established a Mandatory Palestine, which in 1922 was given under British rule. Nevertheless, the Palestinian intelligence still believed that through liberal principles and democratic thought, they could establish a sovereign state. Historically in the Ottoman Empire, Palestinians were already members of the Ottoman parliament with the same privileges as the dominant Turks. Their knowledge of democratic principles and actions has been acknowledged even by British commissions. They believed that following these principles could help create a liberal democracy, like the Western model. The fourteen points of Woodrow Wilson further cemented their vision of sovereignty. The 1919 King-Crane Commission details the effort and desire of the Palestinians for a united independent nation, with democratic principles, in which religious minorities would be free and equal (Great Britain, 1937).

Despite their hopes and aspirations, Palestinians have found themselves marginalised under British rule. Land policies which allowed the transfer of large tracts of land from Arab to Jewish ownership resulted in the displacement of many Palestinian tenant farmers. The lax immigration laws enabled a significant influx of the Jewish populace. The support of the British government for Zionism and the reasons listed prior resulted in the 1936-1939 Arab revolt. It started as the longest general strike of the time but escalated into a violent uprising in which ten per cent of the adult male Palestinian Arab population between 20 and 60 was either killed, wounded, imprisoned, or exiled (Khalidi, 2001). The revolt was unsuccessful and the violent inhumane suppression by the British forces signified the betrayal of their liberal principles once again.

The White Paper of 1939 was a response to this revolt. It rejected the previous Peel Commission’s idea of partition, one Arab and one Jewish. The White Paper called for an independent Palestinian state to be established within 10 years and to be governed jointly by Arabs and Jews and limitation on Jewish immigration for the next 5 years. The general Palestinian reaction was welcoming of this plan, but many critics were sceptical of the British, for their numerous betrayals (Segev, 2000). After World War 2 the goalpost for Palestinian independence was moved once again. The aftermath of the Holocaust introduced the humanitarian politics of Jewish suffrage and strengthened the Zionist movement. The crimes of Europe against the Jewish people have been passed on to Palestinians. They did not participate in the Holocaust, yet they bore the responsibility for the aftermath.

In 1947 the United Nations proposed a partition plan in which the Zionist state claimed 55% of the land, despite only making up a third of the population. The Palestinians would reject any partition of their land but giving them a smaller portion was adding insult to injury. The declaration of the Israeli state in 1948 resulted in the Arab Israeli War in which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced, creating a refugee crisis that persists to this day (Pappé, 2006). The support of the international community extends beyond the creation of Israel. The continuous diplomatic, military, and economic support stands in stark contrast to the disregard for Palestinian demands for sovereignty.

The absence of accountability for allowing Israeli expansion after the 1967 Six-Day War has made their stance clear. Palestinians have been repeatedly betrayed by relying on promises based on international law, by the idea of liberal principles which have consistently failed to apply equally to all parties involved.

Role in the conflict

The current inability of the international community to address the Palestinian struggle is not a deviation, but a continuation of neglect and betrayal. International promises such as Resolution 242 by the United Nations Security Council (1967), which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the recognition of Palestinian rights remain unenforced. On the contrary, Israel's territorial expansion through settlements has continued, even expanding to other neighbouring countries, such as Lebanon. These settlements, illegal under international law, have displaced and harmed thousands of Palestinians, making the dream of a sovereign Palestine increasingly unattainable. This reflects a pattern of international incompetence, strong words are said, resolutions are passed, yet effective steps to address continuous crimes and violations are never taken.

The international community led by the United States, failed to hold Israel accountable for these breaches, isolating and eroding the trust in international legal and humanitarian frameworks. The Palestinian question is viewed as a hindrance rather than a central issue in the Middle East. Peace treaties established with Egypt and Jordan and normalisation pacts with UAE, Morocco and Bahrain have been established despite the Palestinian struggle. These treaties and pacts are celebrated as steps toward regional peace, yet they sideline tens of thousands of innocent lives. The recent investigation by the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court, which investigates the ongoing genocide and war crimes by prominent Israeli politicians continues to affirm Palestinian rights but without enforcement mechanisms, these declarations are symbolic at best (Falk & Tilley, 2017).

Although countries that ratified the Rome Statute are obligated to arrest individuals subject to ICC warrants if they are within their territories, it remains uncertain whether they would act on these obligations in the case of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (Kampeas, 2024).

My opinion

The rhetoric of liberal and democratic principles that once led Palestinians to believe in the possibility of a sovereign, independent state has failed them. The international community, particularly Western nations, continues to apply these principles selectively. Appealing to international law and democratic principles has been met with indifference, their suffering overshadowed by the geopolitical interests of more powerful actors. Until the international community confronts its complicity and applies its principles equally, the cycle of displacement, suffering, oppression, and subsequent resistance of the

Palestinians will not end. The international community must uphold its legal and humanitarian obligations by adhering to the rulings of the International Court of Justice, supporting the work of the International Criminal Court, and ensuring the effective functioning of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Conclusion

We were able to analyse and understand opposing factions in this conflict. We came to unilateral conclusion, that all sides need to come to negotiating table with pure intentions, without trying to dominate the other. This remains the main hurdle in any reasonable progress towards a lasting peaceful solution. We could see that as in the Oslo accords, then also in the negotiations in 2024. We hope that enough blood was shed by both sides to finally realise this, because as per usual, politicians bicker and ordinary citizens suffer.

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