

Security Council

Preventing Civilian Casualties In The Iraseli-Palestinian Conflict



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Introduction

Civilian casualties are an inevitable part of every armed conflict. Despite all the progress humanity makes, it has not left the war as a means of handling differences between people in the past yet. Hopes of gaining economic influence, conquering new territories, aspiring to make political change, and religious or nationalist motives, are just a few root causes of warfare.

Unfortunately, thousands of examples of ongoing hostilities could still be found today, some of them relatively mild, while others outright severe, but a mutual characteristic they have is the fact that innocent people are the ones who pay the high price of such conflicts.

The renewed military actions between Israel and Palestine are one of the many proofs in support of this statement. The region is notorious for its long history of tension between the two nations, however, the most present confrontations are described as the harshest in recent history. The precise number of casualties is still unknown, but data suggests they amount to over 25,000 people, most of whom are civilians. It would be an understatement to say that this is one of the deadliest conflicts today, meaning that an immediate end must be put to it.

The United Nations Security Council bears the moral responsibility to tackle the conflict sensibly and produce a long-lasting solution.



Definition of Key Terms

Civilian casualty

Refers to civilians killed or injured by non-civilians (military personnel, terrorists, policemen, rebel groups) as a result of wartime acts usually serving a political agenda. The term's meaning and connotation could vary depending on the context, so one should be careful when interpreting data regarding civilian casualties. For instance, a civilian casualty could be considered a person who loses their life during a war, without being directly involved in it in any way. A civilian casualty could also be someone who dies due to malnutrition caused by a war, and who would not have done so in the absence of it.

International humanitarian law (IHL)

Also known as “the law of war”, is a set of rules, which has two main objectives – to seek to limit the impact of armed conflicts by protecting civilian people and to conduct the methods of warfare. Under the protection of the IHL are among others hospitals, schools, safe routes for aid delivery, as well as civilians and aid workers. According to the IHL all military operations must be led in such a manner, as to avoid or at least minimise civilian casualties.

Humanitarian crisis

A singular event or series of events which pose a direct threat to the well-being, health and safety of a large group of people. Possible causes for a humanitarian crisis are natural disasters, pandemics, climate change, and armed conflicts. Such crises tend to result in human rights violations, therefore it is of utmost importance that immediate action is taken, to address the situation carefully and promote an adequate and long-lasting solution.

Hamas

Militant Palestinian nationalist and Islamist movement, based on the concept of establishing an independent Islamic Palestinian state. As a means to achieve its goals, Hamas uses violence and terrorism against Israel, because the movement refuses to recognize it as a sovereign state. Shortly after its founding in 1987, Hamas began to act independently and launched violent attacks against Israel, leading to an increase in the tension between the two and resulting in the loss of lives on both sides. Hamas is therefore designated as a terrorist organisation by the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Israel and many others. Nevertheless, Hamas has been the authority in Gaza since 2006, when it won the Palestinian legislative elections, overtaking Fatah.

Fatah



Political and military Palestinian organisation founded in the 1950s and aiming at the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Unlike Hamas, Fatah is open to the two-state solution, as it recognizes Israel's right to exist, and was a prominent party at the Oslo peace process, which prompted the creation of the Palestinian authority. Fatah was in control of both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip until the elections of 2006, when Hamas won a majority in Gaza. This led to a short civil war between the two and in 2007 Fatah was effectively dislodged from the Gaza Strip

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees(UNRWA)

An agency of the United Nations founded in 1950 which provides assistance and aid for Palestinian refugees ever since. It was created to provide protection, financial assistance, health care, housing, and education for the Palestinians displaced during the 1948 war and subsequent conflicts. As of the most recent events, it is Gaza's largest aid supplier. 90% of the funding for all of UNRWA's operations comes from voluntary donations from UN Member States.



Background Information

Ever since the unexpected attack on the 7. October 2023 the situation in the Gaza Strip has been deteriorating. According to the most recent data from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) more than 24,000 Palestinians and over 1,200 Israelis have been reported killed; the injured exceed 67,000 people and the displaced amount to roughly 1.7 million. The humanitarian situation in the region remains a catastrophe - the civilians in Gaza face severe food, clean water and medicine scarcity; shelters and healthcare facilities are insufficient, there is barely any electricity and sanitation. The risk of disease emergence, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported the spread of Hepatitis A, together with the increased violence among civilians are just a couple of the consequences these military actions have brought. Amid these conditions over 20,000 babies have been born in the Gaza Strip since October last year, however, the aid access problems, such as the anaesthetic shortages and the overwhelmed medical workers, have led to the death of many new-borns and mothers.

The United Nations and many further humanitarian agencies are working to provide the region with assistance and protection, alas, the ongoing hostilities and the restricted border-crossing have made this mission difficult to accomplish. Partial relief for Gazan civilians has been provided by the UNRWA, which claims that approximately 1.3 million initially displaced people are now sheltering in 155 UNRWA emergency shelters, more than 227, 907 families outside of shelters have received food and 20, 952 patients have received medical help in UNRWA health centres. Still, the needs of the affected civilians are being hardly met, resulting in the urge of the international community to Israel and Palestine to respect the International Humanitarian Law and end the hostilities or at least protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. In the context of these horrors, it is more crucial than ever to act immediately and find a sustainable solution to the problem, as to avoid the loss of more innocent civilians.



Major parties Involved

Israel

Generally pursues complete control over the Palestinian territories, the Gaza Strip has been under Israeli blockade since 2007 as an answer to the rule of the accused of terrorism Hamas; the state of Israel is hostile against Palestine and firmly supports its demilitarisation, to avoid any possible threat for the sovereignty of Israel. After the unprecedented attack of Hamas in October last year, Israel has declared war on the Gaza Strip, aiming at ending the military and governing capabilities of its ruling organisation. To achieve this goal Israel has been launching bombing and military campaigns in Gaza, which have led to the deaths of thousands. Additionally, Israeli Air Force bombardments have kept the border closed, isolating Gaza from the world, thus, allowing no humanitarian aid to be delivered.

Palestine

Strives to establish a Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank with East Jerusalem as its capital. Originally, Palestine was determined to eliminate Israel, as it did not recognise its right to exist as a state, nevertheless, its views shifted and Palestine was open to accept the two-state solution. Since the 2006 elections the situation in Gaza has changed, as it is now under the rule of Hamas. The movement is not willing to accept any offer that involves Israel as a sovereign country, its main aim is an independent Islamic Palestine, which completely replaces Israel. To achieve its agenda, the organisation has attacked Israelis, civilians and non-civilians, both in Palestinian territories and in Israel. Its most recent attack being the one on 7. October 2023, which sparked an unexpectedly severe conflict between the two nations.

United States of America

Israel's biggest ally worldwide. The United States has supported Israel since the creation of the Jewish state and considers it one of its most valuable and vital partners in the Middle East. USA's aid for Israel is estimated to be more than 260 billion dollars from WWII until today and it goes primarily for military developments. Thanks to the funding of the United States of America Israel has developed one of the most advanced armed forces worldwide. The aid ensures that Israel can defend itself against its enemies in the region, thus hoping it would one day be secure enough to reach an agreement with the Palestinians. After Hamas' attack in October the US has sent extra military support to its ally, helping it fight the organisation. There was no limitation put on the way the provided assistance could be used in Gaza.

Egypt

After the Suez-Canal crisis Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty, which normalised the relationship between the two states. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict Egypt remains relatively neutral. It accepts Israel's right to exist and simultaneously has officially



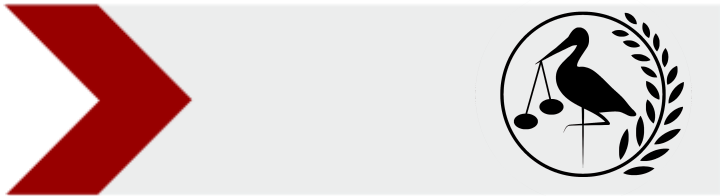
recognized Palestine. Humanitarian aid is delivered to the Gaza Strip through Egypt and the state has also provided assistance in the form of aid for Palestinians. Egypt's border however, remains closed for refugees, as the country fears a potential refugee crisis and/or the passing of extremist individuals from Israel.

Iran

Iran and Israel had a close relationship based on mutual trade before the 1979 Iranian revolution, which brought a new Shia Muslim government. Even today Iran considers the Israelis as usurpers of the Muslim land and describes the Jewish state as a Western colony. In the ongoing hostilities Iran has taken the side of Hamas, blaming Israel for the catastrophe. Despite being widely known that the Iranian government provides Hamas with financial and logistical support, Iran denies being involved in the planning of the attack on the 7. October 2023.

Turkey

Turkey does not deem Hamas to be a terrorist organisation, describing it as a liberal one instead. The country provides Hamas with financial and logistical support, however, it remains completely aware of the fact that a major warfare would not be beneficial to anyone in the region. Therefore, Turkey seeks to play a mediation role in the conflict. A possible deterioration in the already tense relationship between the United States and Turkey due to their stances on the Israeli-Palestinian hostilities is a further reason for the Turkish government to strive for an end to the conflict.



Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
May 14, 1948	On May 14, the state of Israel is established, leading to the Arab-Israeli War. The UN General Assembly recommends the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states with Resolution 181 on November 29.
1950'a	In response to the 1948 war, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) is established on December 8 to assist Palestinian refugees.
1979	After the Suez Canal crisis, Israel and Egypt sign the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty on March 26, normalising diplomatic relations and contributing to regional stability.
2006	In January, Fatah lost control of the Gaza Strip to Hamas following the Palestinian legislative elections.
2007	Hamas takes control of the Gaza Strip, leading to increased tensions with Fatah and impacting the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
October 7, 2023	An unprecedented attack by Hamas sparks renewed military actions between Israel and



Palestine, marking a significant escalation in the long-standing conflict.

End of November 2023 A brief pause in hostilities occurs, providing a temporary respite in the ongoing conflict.

January 21, 2024 The ongoing conflict resulted in over 24,000 reported Palestinian casualties and over 1,200 Israeli casualties. More than 67,000 people are reported injured, and approximately 1.7 million are displaced.



Relevant UN Treaties and Events

Security Council Resolution 2427 on Children and Armed Conflict, 13 June 2018

(S/RES/2427): While this resolution addresses a distinct issue, it underscores the broader need for international efforts to protect civilians, especially children, in conflict zones.

Resolution 181: UN General Assembly's recommendation for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, 29 November 1947.

Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty: Diplomatic normalisation between Egypt and Israel, 26 March 1979.

Resolution 2427: Security Council Resolution on Children and Armed Conflict, 13 June 2018 (S/RES/2427).

Declaration on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa: A/RES/39/29, highlighting economic challenges in Africa, 3 December 1984.



Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

1. Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty (1979):

The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, signed on March 26, 1979, marked a historic breakthrough in diplomatic relations in the Middle East. Facilitated by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, the treaty normalised relations between Egypt and Israel, effectively ending decades of hostility following multiple Arab-Israeli wars. Under the agreement, Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula, which it had occupied during the 1967 Six-Day War, in exchange for Egypt's recognition of Israel's sovereignty and commitment to peace. The treaty established diplomatic missions, opened borders for trade and tourism, and laid the groundwork for subsequent peace negotiations. While the treaty addressed the bilateral conflict between Egypt and Israel, it did not fully resolve the broader Israel-Palestine dispute, leaving the latter unresolved.

2. Three-State Plan (1949-1967):

The three-state plan proposed reverting Gaza to Egyptian control and integrating the West Bank into Jordan, building on historical precedents from 1949 to 1967. This approach aimed to address the challenge of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza while generating momentum for negotiations on core issues like the status of Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. However, the plan faced opposition from various stakeholders and ultimately did not materialise into a lasting solution.

3. Oslo Accords (1993-1995):

The Oslo Accords, signed in Washington, D.C., in 1993 and 1995, represented a significant attempt to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Facilitated by Norwegian diplomats, the accords aimed to establish a framework for interim self-government for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, leading to eventual statehood. The agreements included provisions for Palestinian Authority control over certain areas, Israeli withdrawal from parts of the occupied territories, and the establishment of mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Despite initial optimism, the Oslo process faced numerous challenges, including ongoing violence, settlement expansion, and disputes over final status issues such as borders, Jerusalem, and refugees. The failure to resolve these issues ultimately led to the breakdown of the peace process and a return to violence, notably during the Second Intifada from 2000 to 2005.

4. Camp David Summit (2000):

The Camp David Summit, convened in July 2000 by U.S. President Bill Clinton, aimed to address the final status issues of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat participated in the talks, which focused on contentious issues such as borders, Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements. Despite



intensive negotiations, the summit ended without a final agreement, primarily due to irreconcilable differences over the status of Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. The failure of the summit was followed by the outbreak of the Second Intifada, a period of intensified violence and unrest that further complicated efforts to achieve peace.

5. Road Map for Peace (2003):

The Road Map for Peace, proposed by the diplomatic Quartet (comprising the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia) in 2003, outlined a phased approach to resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict and establishing a viable Palestinian state. The plan called for an end to violence, the dismantlement of Israeli settlements, Palestinian political reform, and the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state with provisional borders. Despite initial support from both parties, implementation of the road map faltered amid ongoing violence, political disputes, and a lack of commitment from key stakeholders. While the road map framework remains relevant, its full implementation has yet to be realised.

6. Annapolis Conference (2007):

The Annapolis Conference, held in Annapolis, Maryland, in November 2007, brought together Israeli and Palestinian leaders, along with representatives from various countries and international organisations, in an effort to revive the stalled peace process. Hosted by U.S. President George W. Bush, the conference aimed to launch negotiations on a final status agreement that would establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel, based on the two-state solution. While the conference generated renewed momentum and commitments from both parties to resume negotiations, progress was limited, and the talks ultimately faltered amid ongoing violence, political instability, and disagreements over key issues such as borders, security, and the status of Jerusalem. Despite these setbacks, the Annapolis Conference highlighted the continued international commitment to a negotiated resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

7. Annapolis Conference Follow-up (2008-2009):

Following the Annapolis Conference in 2007, subsequent efforts were made to advance the peace process through direct negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leaders. These negotiations, facilitated by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, aimed to address the core issues of the conflict and reach a final status agreement based on the two-state solution. Despite some progress, including discussions on borders, security, and refugees, the talks ultimately stalled amid renewed violence, political uncertainty, and disagreements over key issues. Efforts to resume negotiations continued sporadically in the following years but failed to yield a comprehensive agreement.

8. Kerry Peace Initiative (2013-2014):



In 2013, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry launched a renewed effort to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, known as the Kerry Peace Initiative. Building on previous diplomatic efforts, Kerry sought to facilitate direct negotiations between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. The initiative included proposals for confidence-building measures, security arrangements, and parameters for a final status agreement, with the aim of achieving a comprehensive peace settlement. Despite extensive shuttle diplomacy and international support, the talks collapsed in April 2014, citing irreconcilable differences and political challenges on both sides. The failure of the Kerry initiative underscored the deep-seated complexities and obstacles to achieving a lasting peace in the region.

9. Resolution 2712 (2023):

In response to the escalating crisis in Gaza, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2712, calling for urgent humanitarian pauses and corridors to facilitate access for aid agencies and partners. The resolution, passed with overwhelming support, emphasised the immediate release of hostages and the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza. While it represented a step towards addressing the humanitarian crisis, the resolution did not fully address the underlying political and security issues fueling the conflict.



Possible Solutions

The resumption of direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine holds promise as it allows parties to address core issues and fosters a sense of ownership in the resolution process. However, trust deficits and historical grievances may pose challenges. A UN Security Council resolution for a ceasefire could provide a strong international mandate, emphasising a global commitment to peace. Yet, securing unanimous agreement within the Security Council may be challenging due to geopolitical interests.

The deployment of an international monitoring and peacekeeping force offers the benefit of a neutral entity ensuring compliance with a ceasefire, providing security for both parties. However, gaining the consent of Israel and Palestine and potential resistance could impede its effectiveness. Prioritising humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts can address immediate needs and contribute to long-term stability. Nevertheless, ongoing conflict and access restrictions may limit aid delivery and hinder reconstruction.

Engaging regional actors, such as Egypt and Jordan, in diplomatic efforts brings additional perspectives and support, enhancing the chances of finding a resolution. Yet, regional actors may have divergent interests, complicating the balancing act. International diplomacy coupled with economic incentives provides a comprehensive approach, encouraging both parties to engage in meaningful dialogue. However, economic incentives may face resistance from parties reluctant to make concessions.

Fostering public awareness and grassroots initiatives at the community level creates a foundation for lasting peace. While this approach can yield tangible results, it may take time, and immediate conflict resolution remains challenging. A combination of these solutions, tailored to the specific dynamics of the Israel-Palestine conflict, with sustained international collaboration and diplomatic efforts, is crucial for effective implementation.



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