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Terminating the escalation chain in the Arab-Israeli conflict

The UN Security Council





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Introduction

Already in June of 2021, following a round of hostilities between Israel and Hamas, the then Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, stated that “*Another escalation (in Gaza) would change the face of the Middle-East*”. The two-week crisis in May of that year had become an additional volume in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a conflict which had seen dozens of operations, uprisings, and wars. However, the most recent escalation, starting on October 7th 2023 - as presumed by Sinwar - has been a game changer in the Middle-East, initiating a devastating chain of escalations, jeopardising the entire region and its civilian populations.

Thereafter, Israel has been fighting a war in seven fronts across the Middle-East (see *appendix 1*). The Israel-Hamas war in the *Gaza strip* ¹ is ongoing; exchanges of fire between Israel and Hezbollah, operating from *Lebanon*, are recurring; anti-Israel attacks on naval vessels in the Red Sea by the *Yemen* based Houthi movement are taking place; tensions between Palestinian and Israeli settlers in the *West-Bank* are proliferating; turmoil between Israel and Shi’a militias in *Iraq* are on the verge of escalating; funds from *Iran* ² continue supporting the aforementioned groups; and Israel has recently deployed military forces into *Syria* following the fall of the Assad regime. Concurrently, civilian losses, particularly of children, have been dramatic. Israeli children have been not only injured, but also kidnapped, tortured and killed. On the other hand, children in Gaza have suffered, and still suffer, from shortages of food, water, electricity and medicine. Many Gazan children have lost their homes and even been injured and killed during fighting in the densely populated Gaza strip. This stretches to the other fronts of the conflict as well. Meanwhile, Israeli children are still held hostage in Gaza by Hamas, and millions of Israeli people, including children, suffer from daily attacks of missiles, rockets and UAVs from multiple fronts.

As this research report will attempt to summarise, there are dozens of stakeholders in this intricate conflict, and hence, it cannot be so easily solved. Nonetheless, with careful measures, the United Nations Security Council can work towards preventing the bloodbath from any further escalations, and ultimately, strive to build a long-lasting peace in the region. A peace, which tomorrow’s children so desperately need. As your president chair in the upcoming HagaMUN conference, I would like to remind you of the complexities of this charged, polarising conflict, and that the escalation chain at hand, regards not only a year of cataclysmic wars, but decades of turmoil. The information below will detail recent affairs in the conflict, but underlying nuances, between Jews and Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians, and even between Sunni and Shi’a muslims, are also relevant to research. I encourage you to use this report as a basis for your exploration of the issue, and look forward to seeing the solutions you will all offer to terminating it at last.

¹ For the purposes of this research report, “Gaza” will refer to the entire Gaza Strip, and not just the city of Gaza located inside it.

² Although Iranians are not ethnically Arab, due to Iran’s involvement in the conflict, its actions are still considered part of the Arab-Israeli conflict for the purposes of this research report.



Definition of key terms

Blue line

Agreed upon line of withdrawal, which forms a de-facto border between Israel, Lebanon and Syria. See *appendix 2* for a visualisation of the Blue line and adjacent demilitarised zones.

ICC & ICJ

International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice, respectively. The ICC prosecutes individuals for crimes such as genocide and aggression, recognised by 125 UN nations. The ICJ settles general disputes between nations, and is recognised by all UN states.

Militia

A military force raised separately from a state's organised army, often from civil populations.

Oslo Accords

A 1993 agreement where Israel first recognised Palestinian legitimacy, and the West-Bank was divided into three areas. See *appendix 3* for the Oslo Accords distribution of the lands.

Red Sea Crisis

Economic crisis derived from Houthi forces attacking cargo ships en route to Israel via the narrow Red Sea as part of the greater Arab-Israeli conflict. Consequently, ships are forced to detour around the entire African continent, holding major negative effects on global trade.

Ring of Fire

Iran-affiliated militias across the Middle-East including Hamas in Gaza, the Houthi Rebel Movement (Houthis) in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Assad regime in Syria (until its fall in December 2024), and Irani militias operating from within Iraq. The Ring of Fire is primarily Shi'a, and is also hostile to other Arab states that are Sunni.

Sunni & Shi'a Islam

The two main factions of Islam, disputing the rightful succession of Muslim leaders after the Prophet Muhammad. Sunni and Shi'a Muslims are generally hostile to one another. Nations like Iran are Shi'a, while others like Saudi Arabia are Sunni.

The Seven Fronts

Refers to 7 areas in which Israel has conducted military operations during the conflict. Alphabetically, these are Gaza, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, the West-Bank and Yemen.

UAV

Acronym for an unmanned aerial vehicle. UAVs are armed drones of varying sizes, operated for the purpose of military activity.

UNSC

Acronym for the United Nations Security Council



General Overview

As mentioned in the introduction, the current Arab-Israeli conflict, and its associated escalation chain, is composed of seven main fronts. In order to terminate this chain, it is imperative to first grasp key events that have happened so far in these various fronts.

The escalation chain starts and ends with Iran, a nation that has often been referred to in the West as the “Head of the Snake”, referring to its leadership of the Ring of Fire. The Iranian regime has for years been making efforts to attack Israel, most prominently with the establishment and maintenance of the Ring of Fire itself. Step by step, it has acted towards the strengthening of Shia’s communities across the Middle-East, and the weakening of Israel and its allies. Iran has been a sponsor of Hamas, the Houthis, the Assad regime in Syria ¹, militias in Iraq, and its strongest proxy, Hezbollah, all allowing Iran to increase its local prominence. Hamas and Hezbollah forced Israel into its longest, most costly war in its history. The Assad regime and militias in Iraq were necessary for the distant Iran to export weapons into Hezbollah. The Houthis have increased Shi’a control over Yemen and their access to the Red Sea has allowed Iran to have influence over global trade, as evident by the Red Sea Crisis. For years Iran would only attack Israel via the Ring of Fire system it has been nurturing, and this period also saw Iran advancing a nuclear programme. During the current war, an escalation was recorded with direct attacks between Iran and Israel.

While Iran has seemed like such a major threat to Israel’s security, its distance from the latter has meant the extent of said threat is dependent on the Ring of Fire parties. Over the course of the current conflict, these have been weakened significantly. For instance, Hezbollah, Iran’s most powerful asset, in less than two months of direct war with Israel, recorded immense losses. Israel led an unparalleled operation of pager explosions ², Hezbollah’s entire senior leadership was assassinated, and the organisation’s military infrastructure was severed. A ceasefire was ultimately signed on this front on November 27th 2024. However, this was not until after an entire year of turmoil. After an Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006, a ceasefire agreement was reached, with UNSC resolution 1701 dictating the demilitarisation of the area between the Blue line and the Litanni river (see *appendix 2*), with the UN interim force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to retain this. This was violated time and time again by Hezbollah, who according to an ex-peacekeeper in Lebanon, was predominantly in control of UNIFIL. Between the start of the escalation chain on October 7th, and the previously mentioned two-month war, Hezbollah was sufficiently established near the Blue line, able to fire missiles and UAVs at Israel. These aerial strikes were justified by Hezbollah as support for Hamas in Gaza. Each missile fired, brought upon a response by Israel, which in turn led to more missiles being fired - a retaliatory escalation chain. In this time, the security threat inflicted upon Israel caused it to evacuate nearly 150,000 citizens from towns and cities near the border, and the evacuated areas suffered extensive damages.

¹ During the Arab-Spring of 2011, rebel forces in Syria threatened revolution, but failed due to interventions by Iran, Hezbollah & Russia. Syria, a Sunni state, has since been collaborating with Iran.

² Hezbollah started to use pagers (small radio devices) for safer communication, but those were jammed by Israel, and exploded all at once, proving a massive strike on Hezbollah.



However, the main catalyst for the escalation chain is still Hamas. On the morning of October 7th 2023, a public holiday in Israel, Hamas launched the master-plan of its military leader Yayha Sinwar, the “Al Aqsa storm”¹. The offensive involved more than 3,000 men, hundreds of whom being citizens of Gaza, not associated with Hamas, invading Israel, mainly by infiltrating the overground barrier between Gaza and Israel (see *appendix 4*), but also via the sea and air. Some committed various atrocities to anyone in their path at an Israeli music festival. Others rampaged Israeli beaches, villages and nearby cities, burning houses, and kidnapping a total of 253 citizens from the two sites, including 30 children - the youngest of whom a 10 months old baby. Israel was inadequately prepared, and aside from the hostages, the attack saw 1,200 dead, 3,300 wounded, and several towns temporarily conquered de-facto by Hamas. In Israel, it is widely considered the harshest blow the nation was ever dealt, and the true extent of the invasion was not revealed until days later. The aforementioned aerial attacks from Hezbollah had commenced the next day.

Hamas is a Palestinian group, and its actions reflect the long history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In short, there used to be an independent Israeli kingdom in the land, conquered by the Romans, who exiled the Jews, renaming the land *Syria-Palestina*. Over two millennia, Arab settlements grew in the area, specifically under Ottoman rule until 1917. Concurrently, the Jewish diaspora grew too, across Europe and the Middle-East. In the 20th century, these Jewish communities began returning to Israel in the hopes of once again establishing a sovereign Jewish state, in a movement dubbed Zionism, derived from one of Jerusalem’s names in Hebrew. This intensified following the terrible events of the Holocaust during WWII. In 1947, the British, who ruled the lands after the Ottomans, expressed a will to leave, and the newly founded UN approved a two-state partition proposal, rejected by the Arabs who were unwilling to give up lands to who they saw as a minority immigrant population. As soon as the British left, Israel declared independence, rejected in the Arab world, who began the first Arab-Israeli war. Israel prevailed. The local Arabs, later known as Palestinians, settled in the Jordan ruled West-Bank, and Egypt ruled Gaza strip. The UN then instituted the UN Relief and Works Agency in Palestine (UNRWA), to support these communities. In 1967, a second Arab-Israeli war took place, concluding with Israel taking control of both lands, beginning its occupation. Attempts at peace in the West-Bank were made with the Oslo Accords, and Israel withdrew from Gaza altogether in 2005, in an effort to foster Palestinian independence. Hamas, an organisation openly hostile to Israel, quickly became the sovereign. Despite fighting wars against Hamas in 2008, 2012, 2014, Israel had allowed cash flow from Iran and Qatar into Gaza, aimed to rebuild the Gaza strip, presuming that it would lead to peace. But, Hamas used that funding to arm itself, construct an underground infrastructure of tunnels, prepare for, and execute the *Al-Aqsa storm* attack.

It was however not prepared for the response campaign Israel then launched from October 27th 2023 onwards. There are two objectives for the campaign - releasing all hostages, and removing Hamas’ ability to launch attacks on Israel from Gaza. This has consisted of an extensive aerial bombing campaign of more than 12,000 strikes in its first 6

¹ Al-Aqsa is a mosque in Jerusalem, the third most holy site to Islam, currently controlled by Israel, a Jewish state. “Al-Aqsa storm” refers to the desire for Muslims to overtake the mosque from Israel.



months, a ground invasion with myriads of military personnel, and Israel seizing control of the surrounding seas. Hamas' underground tunnel-system, where many hostages are held, proves the fighting gruelling for Israeli soldiers. Israeli soldiers have also found missile launching sites below or adjacent to UNRWA schools, hospitals, mosques and other civilian locations. It has been bombing those, bringing much criticism towards it, including protests all around the globe, prosecution for genocide in the ICJ by South Africa, and arrest warrants by the ICC. These also criticise the lengthy duration of the campaign, which many deem unnecessary and genocidal. The campaign has displaced more than 2 million Gazan residents, and casualties have also been exceedingly high. For instance, the UN Human Rights Office has confirmed over 8,000 deaths between November 2023 and April 2024 alone, with almost 70% of whom women and children. Further, local agencies in Gaza have claimed the deaths of over 43,000. Although a brief truce in November 2023 enabled the release of over 100 hostages, the war has not ceased since, and 100 hostages are still there, suffering.

The extensive campaign was condemned by Ring of Fire parties, who initiated attacks on Israel, including Hezbollah, but also the installments in Yemen, Iraq and Syria, three fronts still unresolved as of December 2024. The Houthis for example, expressed solidarity for the Palestinians in Gaza, and as an offensive measure, have been pirating cargo ships on their way to Israel, which is causing the greater Red Sea crisis. Such attacks escalated the war in Gaza into a global matter, with the USA and UK attacking Houthi bases in Yemen, in an attempt to restore peaceful trading in the region, as has done Israel as well. At the time of writing this report, this front is arguably the most active, with consistent nighttime UAV attacks putting Israeli civilians into distraught. Howbeit, these tensions have not yet escalated into an all-out war between Israel and the Houthis, and the situation rather resembles the tensions between Israel and Hezbollah up until Israel's ground invasion of the latter. Similar attacks are also taking place from Shi'a militias in Iraq. Both Yemen and Iraq are much further away geographically, and wars similar to what was seen in Gaza and Lebanon, while still possible, are unlikely. Notably, in a recent letter to the UN, Israel asserted its right to defend itself from attacks originating in Iraq, hinting it will extend its operations on Iraqi soil, and the UNSC should operate to prevent any escalations from taking place.

When the fighting in Lebanon escalated, many Lebanese citizens found themselves migrating into Syria for safety. The proximity of the nations was also important to the Ring of Fire, as Iran was able to transfer arms to Hezbollah through Syria. The front in Syria saw dramatic changes in December 2024, when anti-government rebel forces, supported by Türkiye, led a coup-d'état, effectively overthrowing the Iran-backed Assad regime of Syria. While this weakens Iran's Ring of Fire, it also destabilises the status-quo of the Middle-East. Subsequently, Israel took advantage of said instabilities and deployed military forces to conquer the Syrian side of the Golan Heights mountain range (the border between the nations). Syria is now an unresolved front, and it is unclear how its new anti-Shia government will involve itself in the greater Arab-Israeli conflict.



Major parties involved

Hamas

Hamas, a radical Islamic organisation governing the Gaza strip, and the Ring of Fire installment there, has been in direct war with Israel after it invaded Israel on October 7th 2023. The acts of October 7th, which have been condemned by the UN Secretary General, brought upon the overwhelming Israeli military campaign in Gaza, and constitutes the start of the escalation chain. While said campaign has destroyed the majority of Hamas' facilities, the organisation still holds up to 100 Israeli hostages, whose captivity disallows the preventing of further escalation. Note that despite being a Sunni group, it is allied with the Ring of Fire Shi'a parties under a common anti-Israel ideology.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah, a Shi'ite radical Muslim organization, has semi-de-facto military control of Lebanon. It is the biggest, most powerful non-state party in the Ring of Fire, and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. As elaborated in the *General Overview* above, Hezbollah and Israel are already past a year of military exchanges, and two months of war. Hezbollah is expected, under a ceasefire treaty signed in November 2024, to demilitarise the area between the Blue line and Litani river, effectively withdrawing from the Israeli border. As per the agreement, any aerial attack on Israel by Hezbollah will permit the former to respond as it sees fit, and both parties are greatly responsible for maintaining local peace.

Houthi Rebel Movement (Houthis)

The Houthis constitute Iran's Ring of Fire proxy in Yemen. As a sign of solidarity for Palestinians during the war in Gaza, the Houthis have attacked Israel both directly, with missiles and UAVs, and indirectly, with the Red Sea Crisis. Furthermore, the Houthis have announced they shall continue to do so until the fighting in Gaza is discontinued. The movement has even published footage of its soldiers practising a takeover operation of an Israeli settlement. In turn, escalations have been taking place, with Israel, the USA, and the UK attacking myriads of military bases and infrastructures of the Houthis over the past year. While Hamas, Hezbollah and the Assad regime in Syria recorded great losses, the Houthis are still prominent and their hostility to Israel could be the next escalation of the conflict.

Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran)

Iran is often seen as the leader of the parties opposite to Israel. In the past 30 years, Iran has been sustaining the Ring of Fire, funding, supporting, arming and maintaining the aforementioned parties. Located further away geographically, Iran had historically been conservative to attack Israel only via the Ring of Fire proxies. Nevertheless, in April of 2024, and again in October of that year, Iran attacked Israel directly with aerial strikes, as responses to assassinations conducted by Israel on Irani soil. Its influence over the Ring of Fire parties, and its immediate involvement, position it as a major player in the escalation chain of the Arab-Israeli conflict.



Israel

As implied by the name of the issue, Israel constitutes a central party in the conflict. Israel was attacked by Hamas on October 7th, discussed in the *General Overview* above. Subsequently, Israel has been operating to prevent a repetition of its inadequate preparation, which has come in the forms of pre-emptive pager explosions in Lebanon, deployment of armed forces into a dysfunctional Syria, and the weakening of military infrastructures in all seven fronts. Given that Israel is the central player in the conflict, it holds a mandate to de-escalate it, and potentially resolve it. There will be no peace in the region should Israel not collaborate. Israel is the only non-Muslim state in the Middle-East, and religious factors are also at the center of current affairs ¹.

Palestinian Authorities

The Palestinian Authorities are the sovereign body responsible for all lands allocated for Palestinians in the West-Bank as per the Oslo Accords (see *appendix 3*). In the past, there have been two periods of ‘Intifada’, which translates to “uprising” in Arabic, referring to a Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation. During these periods, hundreds of unorganised terror attacks from within the West-Bank would take place, attacking Israelis in civilian locations. With growing tensions between illegal Israeli settlers, backed by senior ministers in Israel’s current government, and Palestinians in the West-Bank, these attacks are returning - one of the war’s seven fronts. Additionally, as Hamas loses its control over Gaza, the Palestinian Authorities have a chance to extend their reach into the strip as well, forming a de-escalating solution. Anyhow, the Palestinian Authorities are the main voice of Palestinians on the international forum, including organisations such as the United Nations.

United States of America (USA)

The USA has been dubbed “Israel’s greatest ally” due to immense military aid, as well as political support, under both the Trump and Biden administrations. In addition, the USA has participated in the conflict first-hand, attacking Houthi bases in Yemen within the particular scope of the Red Sea crisis. It has also participated in Israel’s defence from Irani and Houthi aerial strikes. To an extent, Israel is militarily dependent on the USA, meaning the latter may intervene in the conflict, and influences all efforts to terminate the escalation chain. This even has precedent ². Moreover, given its status within the UNSC, the USA is able to manifest its support of Israel by exercising its veto power. Alongside Egypt and Qatar, the USA is also a key mediator in the negotiations between Israel and Hamas towards a hostage deal and ceasefire.

¹ One of the reasons Ring of Fire parties, including Hamas, oppose Israel, regards religious disputes, specifically on whether Jews or Muslims will control Jerusalem, a city holy to both religions.

² During the 1991 Gulf War (beyond the scope of this research report), Iraq fired missiles at Israel in an attempt to escalate the conflict, but Israel, under the request of the USA, did not respond.



Timeline of events

2023 October 7th: Hamas launches an attack on Israel, beginning the escalation chain. See *General Overview* for more details of the event.

October 7th: Hezbollah joins the offensive with aerial attacks on Israel, in violation of UNSC resolution 1701 (see *relevant UN treaties and events* below).

October 13th: Hamas calls for international anti-semitic actions as signs of solidarity for the Palestinian people, a catalyst for growing worldwide cases of antisemitism.

October 27th: Israel sets its ongoing ground invasion of Gaza in motion.

November 19th: Houthis attack ships en route to Israel. Escalation in the Red Sea starts, initiating the Red Sea Crisis.

November 24th-30th: Short truce is reached in Gaza, and extended to release a total of 110 hostages in return for 240 Palestinian prisoners. Fires cease as the deal prolongs.

2024 January 23rd: Escalation in Yemen. USA & UK attack Houthi bases as a response to the Red Sea Crisis.

January 26th: Discoveries published about UNRWA involvement on October 7th. The USA, UK, Germany, France, Japan, Italy and a dozen more suspend its funding.

January 26th: ICJ publishes provisional measures in an attempt to de-escalate the fighting, following oral hearings on the case of South Africa vs Israel, in which the former has been prosecuting Israel for a genocide against the Palestinian people.

April 13th: Irani led strike on Israel, with over 300 missiles and UAVs, intercepted by a coalition of Israel, the USA, UK, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and France.

May: Mediators in Egypt and Qatar propose a hostage deal as a de-escalating measure, supported by UNSC resolution 2735. Israel rejects on June 10th.

July 31st: Ismail Haniyeh, political leader of Hamas, is killed by an Israeli airstrike in Iran's capital, Tehran.

September 27th: Israeli assassination of Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, who has led the organisation for over 30 years.



October 1st: Escalation on the Israel-Iran front. Iran strikes about 200 missiles at Israel as a response to Haniyeh's assassination. Israel launches retaliatory strikes across Iranian lands on October 25th.

October 1st: Israeli invasion of Lebanon commences.

October 16th: Military leader of Hamas, Yahwa Sinwar, is killed in Gaza.

November 19th: Israel issues a letter to the UNSC demanding action against Iran-supported Islamic militias in Iraq. Potential escalations of the front. Iraqi Prime Minister reacts by deeming the letter a "pretext for aggression on Iraq".

November 21st: The ICC puts out arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, as well as the head of Hamas' military wing.

November 27th: De-escalation of the war in Lebanon, with a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hezbollah after a year of military exchanges and a two-month long war.

December 8th: Assad regime in Syria falls, Iranian Ring of Fire severed while regional instability grows. Revolution is supported by Türkiye. Assad flees to Russia, whose presence in the Middle-East reduces. Israel takes over the Syrian side of the Golan Heights.



Relevant UN treaties and events

A/RES/2/181; Palestine plan of partition with economic union: Partition plan for the creation of both a Jewish and an Arab state in the land, with Jerusalem as a neutral international zone. *29 November 1947.*

A/RES/3/260; The Genocide Convention: It has often been claimed in the Arab world, and also by nations such as South Africa, that Israel is inflicting a genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The Genocide Convention is the UN document that defines the term, and has been referred to in the South Africa vs Israel trial at the ICJ. *9 December 1948.*

A/RES/4/306; Palestine refugees – Establishing UNRWA: This UN document established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Middle-East (UNRWA) as the organisation responsible for supporting Palestinian refugees in Gaza and the West-Bank following the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. Gaza is the only place in the world where people can be born as refugees, and even newborn babies in Gaza are treated by UNRWA as such. Unlike UNIFIL, UNRWA is not a peacekeeping organisation, and it also has schools and other humanitarian facilities across Gaza and the West-Bank. Note that it has been verified that at least several UNRWA workers participated in the October 7th attacks, and various nations have stopped funding UNRWA after this was published.

S/RES/1701: Adopted by the Security Council following a war in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah, to instate a ceasefire. Notably, this resolution called for the demilitarisation of Southern Lebanon between the Litani river and the border with Israel, and encouraged the strengthening of the Lebanese national forces, instead of Hezbollah. It also reinstated UNIFIL as a vital peacekeeping force in Lebanon to retain this. *11 August 2006.*

Fall of the Assad Regime in Syria: The Assad Regime was a vital participant to Iran's Ring of Fire. It fell due to internal Rebel Forces, the same forces who attempted to overthrow the government back in 2011. Then, the revolution failed due to interventions by Russia, Iran & Hezbollah, all of which were unable to do so now due to the Ukraine war and Arab-Israeli war, respectively. This event widely changes the dynamics in the Middle-East, removes Iran's ability to deliver arms to Hezbollah, and establishes a new Syria, presumably hostile to both the Ring of Fire and Israel. Note that this is not a treaty, but an event. *8 December 2024.*



Previous attempts to solve the issue

First hostage deal, Israel & Hamas

Over 50 days into the conflict, the parties were able to reach a humanitarian pause to the fighting, in a hostage deal. Over 100 hostages, kidnapped on October 7th, primarily women, children and elderly, were released. This armistice, though, was short-lived, and unable to comprehensively resolve the war. As such, the Israeli campaign in Gaza is still ongoing. Aside from Israel & Hamas, the deal involved 3 key mediators, Qatar, Egypt and the USA.

Appeal to the ICJ, South Africa

South Africa, a nation that has an existing relationship with Hamas, and even hosted its representatives mid-conflict, appealed to the ICJ, prosecuting Israel for a genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. Although the handling of this case is still ongoing, the ICJ has published its provisional measures on January 27th 2024, which the Security Council is expected to enforce. The appeal was controversial, with nations like Germany declaring that the claims of genocide are unbased, and the legal process at the ICJ could take years to conclude, potentially too late to terminate the escalation chain on time.

Attempts at ceasefire in Gaza, Egypt & Qatar

Egypt is the only country other than Israel to have a land border with Gaza, and Qatar has been a financial sponsor of Hamas in the past decade. In turn, the two nations have been mediators in all negotiations between Israel and Hamas, alongside the USA. In May of 2024, the nations were close to reaching a second hostage deal, proposed as a three-phase plan, and also endorsed by the UNSC under resolution 2735 on June 10th 2024. This attempt was however unsuccessful, with Israel's rejection.

Arrest warrants, ICC

The ICC published arrest warrants against Benjamin Netanyahu (Israel's Prime Minister), Yoav Gallant (Israel's Minister of Defense until November 2024) and Mohammad Deif (Head of Hamas' military wing) ¹. This was an attempt to enforce the international justice system to put an end to the conflict. However, Israel does not recognise the ICC, and the trials of the three defendants has hence not yet started.

Ceasefire in Lebanon, Israel & Hezbollah

Following months of military exchanges, and a full-scale invasion of Lebanon, the parties were able to sign a ceasefire deal. The solution includes a 60-day period for both Israel and Hezbollah to withdraw and demilitarise the area of fighting, as per the lines of UNSC resolution 1701. It also gives Israel a right to respond heavily against any violation of the agreement, meaning the situation is still fragile. For now, this attempt has mostly de-escalated the Israel-Hezbollah front.

¹ Israel has declared Mohammed Deif dead after attacks in July 2024, but Hamas claims he is still alive, and the arrest warrant against him was therefore issued nonetheless.



Possible solutions

Considering that the issue of terminating the escalation chain of the Arab-Israeli conflict is so widespread, intricate, and diverse, hyperspecific solutions, while welcome, are unlikely to be sufficient in solving it. The three solutions below are general ideas of actions that should be taken, and UNSC delegates in HagaMUN XV are encouraged to work these ideas into tangible solutions that can be presented during debate.

Releasing the hostages to reach ceasefire in Gaza

The escalation chain started with the October 7th attacks from within Gaza, and the response military campaign by Israel. The majority of attacks by the other Ring of Fire parties were declared as gestures of solidarity for the Palestinians in Gaza, under attack by Israel. Thus, the escalations in the various fronts will not terminate without a resolution to the Gaza front. In turn, Israel is unable to reach such a resolution if its hostages are not released, as it has stated time and time again. In the context of the greater Arab-Israeli conflict it is thereby paramount for all hostages to be released, to ensure a permanent ceasefire agreement, and terminate the escalation chain. It is also a humanitarian obligation of the UN to release civilian hostages, kidnapped from their home, tortured, for nearly 500 days.

Tackling the seven fronts separately

Each of the seven fronts involves different players, different histories, and different extents hostilities have reached so far. For instance, de-escalating the war in Gaza would require drastically different measures compared to de-escalating the tensions between Israel and Iran. It is imperative for the UNSC to consider all the major parties involved in the issue when looking towards resolving it, and potentially pass separate clauses for separate fronts.

Finding an overarching diplomatic solution

Seeing as Hamas in Gaza has been militarily reduced to only a fraction of its power, Hezbollah signed a ceasefire agreement, and the Assad regime in Syria has fallen, the Iran-led Ring of Fire is at its weakest point ever. This situation can be seen by the UNSC as an opportunity to reach a diplomatic agreement with Iran that extends to its Ring of Fire proxies around the Middle-East. Such a solution, led for example by the USA, would be the catalyst to terminate the escalation chain at last. But, it will incorporate compensations and negotiations with organisations the USA and Israel themselves have declared to be terrorists. It would also be vulnerable to violations by any of the powers in the Ring of Fire, which have all expressed a goal of eradicating the Israeli regime.



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Appendices

1. Map of the Middle-East

This map of the Middle-East highlights the nations directly fighting in the conflict. Note the relative sizes of the nations, and distances between them.



2. Map of the Blue line

The zone UNSC resolution 1701 called to demilitarise, as did the ceasefire agreement on November 27th 2024. The “Blue line” and Litani river are depicted on this map. The Blue line is a de-facto border between Israel, Lebanon and Syria, but not an official one.



3. Oslo Accords distribution of the West-Bank

The Oslo Accords mentioned in this report divided the West-Bank into three areas, depicted in the map below. 'A' areas are fully controlled by the Palestinian Authorities; 'B' areas have Israeli military control but Palestinian civilian control; 'C' areas are fully controlled by Israel. 60% of West-Bank lands are C areas.



4. Israel-Gaza barrier

The border between Israel and the Gaza Strip is an overground wall, and an underground barrier preventing Hamas tunnels from extending into Israeli territory. Note that the distance between Tel Aviv and Gaza City is only 60km, comparable to the distance between Amsterdam and the Hague.

