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The de-escalation of the Arab-Israëli conflict

Security Council



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Introduction

In 2026, the Arab-Israëli conflict is marked by persistent instability that arises from entrenched inequality, seen as the opposing parties believe themselves to be superior, rather than merely transient military confrontations. While the level of active combat fluctuates, the core issues that provoke escalation remain very much alive. Palestinians in Gaza continue to endure a severe blockade, which limits their access to vital goods, electricity, medical supplies, and their freedom of movement. In the West Bank, the relentless growth of settlements, land confiscations, and frequent military incursions have fragmented the territory and reduced the prospects for a viable Palestinian state. These circumstances foster a security environment where de-escalation is tenuous and can be easily reversed.

Violence does not occur in isolation; it is intricately linked to this context. Armed groups such as Hamas function in Gaza amid ongoing humanitarian crises, while Israel responds with extensive military operations that disproportionately affect civilians. In the West Bank, confrontations increasingly involve Israëli security forces and armed Palestinian groups, alongside unarmed civilians who endure raids, arrests, and limitations on their movement. This scenario has resulted in a decline in the legitimacy and efficacy of the Palestinian Authority, further constraining political avenues for alleviating tensions.

The conflict also has implications that extend beyond Israel and the Palestinian territories. Clashes between Hezbollah and Israel along the Lebanese border, Israëli strikes on Iran-aligned targets in Syria, and regional backing for the Palestinian cause illustrate how unresolved Palestinian issues continue to incite broader instability. Although these groups pursue different strategic objectives, their actions are closely intertwined with the developments in Gaza and the West Bank, underscoring that regional de-escalation hinges on addressing the Palestinian dimension of the conflict.

Definition of key terms

Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords represent a collection of normalization agreements brokered by the United States in 2020, which established diplomatic, economic, and security relationships between Israel and various Arab countries. This initiative has significantly altered regional dynamics by promoting a "warm peace" strategy that emphasizes mutual interests and collaboration.

Non-State Armed Actors

Entities like Hamas and Hezbollah who function autonomously from established governments while possessing considerable military and political influence.

Proxy War

A proxy war is a conflict fought between nations that are not directly engaged, frequently involving two allied states to fight in their favour instead. An example of a proxy war was the Vietnam war, often being seen as a proxy war between the USSR and USA.

The Palestinian Issue

The Palestinian issue revolves around the prolonged conflict with Israel concerning land, self-determination, and statehood. This conflict is based on conflicting claims to the same territory, resulting in dispossession, displacement (notably the Nakba of 1948), occupation (in the West Bank and Gaza), settlements, borders, security, and refugee rights. The situation is marked by persistent violence and diplomatic initiatives aimed at finding a resolution.

General Overview

In the year 2026, the Arab-Israëli conflict is characterized by a persistent risk of escalation, shaped by a web of interconnected regional factors rather than a singular, clearly defined battlefield. While Israel and Palestinian armed factions are central figures, the overall landscape is influenced by overlapping fronts that encompass Lebanon, Syria, the Red Sea, and the wider Middle East. These fronts are interlinked through alliances, proxy wars, and mutual strategic interests, resulting in a scenario where violence in one region frequently provokes responses in another.

Non-state armed groups play a crucial role in perpetuating the ongoing instability. Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, and various Iran-aligned militias in Syria and Iraq engage with Israel across different yet interconnected arenas. These organizations frame their actions as a form of resistance, whereas Israel views them as significant security threats. This perception has fostered a cycle of retaliatory strikes and counterstrikes, rendering de-escalation a precarious and transient condition, even in the absence of a full-scale war.

The complexities of regional power dynamics further exacerbate efforts to alleviate tensions. Iran's political, financial, and military support for allied armed groups has expanded the conflict's scope, while Israel has conducted strikes beyond its borders to mitigate perceived threats. Concurrently, Arab nations that have forged ties with Israel through agreements such as the Abraham Accords are striving to navigate diplomatic relations amid the domestic and regional pressures related to the Palestinian issue. These competing interests impede the efficacy of collective regional initiatives.

The current escalation is having profound humanitarian and political repercussions across the region. Civilians are repeatedly exposed to violence, compelled to abandon their residences, and endure economic instability, while humanitarian assistance is frequently restricted due to insecurity and political obstacles. This persistent escalation undermines confidence in diplomatic initiatives and reduces the likelihood of peaceful solutions. Consequently, attaining de-escalation requires more than mere temporary ceasefires; it demands sustained diplomatic engagement, regional dialogues, and approaches that address the intricate, interrelated dimensions of the conflict rather than focusing solely on a singular aspect.

This issue also expands itself to the world stage, as other nations are getting involved. The United States has sent military aid for a long time to Israëli, Iran openly supports Hamas and neutral humanitarian parties are helping the civilians of Gaza.

Major parties involved

Egypt

Egypt plays a crucial role as a mediator in efforts to mitigate violence, particularly in the context of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. It has persistently engaged in negotiations for ceasefires, facilitated discussions regarding prisoner exchanges, and coordinated the delivery of humanitarian aid through the Rafah crossing. Egypt's involvement is driven by concerns over regional stability and the potential for violence to extend into the Sinai Peninsula.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah is a non-state armed organization originating from Lebanon, possessing substantial military capabilities and maintaining a strong alliance with Iran. The confrontations it engages in with Israel along the northern frontier pose a considerable threat of escalation, as even slight instances of gunfire could swiftly develop into a more extensive regional conflict. Hezbollah rationalizes its activities as backing for the Palestinian cause, linking occurrences in Gaza and the West Bank to its military position.

Israël

Israel occupies a prominent military and political role in the ongoing conflict, exerting considerable authority over borders, airspace, and the movement of individuals in Gaza and the West Bank. The nation prioritizes its national security and seeks to dissuade armed factions, despite encountering international condemnation for the expansion of settlements, the persistence of a prolonged occupation, and the humanitarian repercussions of its military operations. The strategies and policies implemented by Israel are pivotal in influencing both the intensification of hostilities and the possibilities for de-escalation.

Iran

Iran occupies a crucial position in the region, offering political, financial, and military support to organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas, thereby extending the conflict's scope beyond merely Israel and the Palestinian territories. While Iran asserts its role as a defender of Palestinian rights, Israel perceives its actions as a strategic threat. This dimension of proxy engagement complicates efforts to alleviate tensions, as it links the conflict to broader regional rivalries.

Palestinian Authority

The Palestinian Authority exercises a degree of self-governance in specific regions of the West Bank and is acknowledged globally as the representative entity of the Palestinian populace. Nevertheless, its authority has been weakened by internal strife, a lack of territorial continuity, and a decline in public trust. The PA promotes diplomatic initiatives and seeks a negotiated settlement, yet struggles to exert control over armed groups or influence the circumstances in Gaza.

Timeline of events

- 1917 November 2nd** The Balfour Declaration is issued by Britain, supporting a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- 1947 November 29th** The United Nations adopts the Partition Plan for Palestine.
- 1948 May 14th** Israel declares independence and the First Arab-Israeli War begins.
- 1917 November 2nd** The Balfour Declaration is issued by Britain, supporting a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- 1967 June 5th** The Six-Day War commences, resulting in Israel's control over the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.
- 1973 October 6th** The Yom Kippur War commences when Arab nations initiate an unexpected assault on Israel.
- 1987 December 8th** The First Intifada commences in Gaza and the West Bank.
- 2000 September 28th** The Second Intifada begins as heightened tensions in Jerusalem come to a boiling point.
- 2005 August 15th** Israel completes its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.
- 2007 June 14th** Hamas takes full control of Gaza.
- 2020 September 15th** Israel and several Arab states sign the Abraham Accords.
- 2023 October 7th** A major escalation begins, and the conflict evolves into a multi-front regional crisis.

Relevant UN treaties and events

A/RES/77/247; Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat: Resolution of the General Assembly extending the mandate of the United Nations entity focused on advocating for Palestinian rights and fostering international involvement regarding the issue of Palestine, 30 December 2022.

A/RES/ES-10/20; Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations: A resolution from the General Assembly urging an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, while reaffirming the duty of all parties to safeguard civilians in accordance with international law, 12 December 2023.

A/RES/ES-10/21; Demand for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza: The General Assembly resolution emphasizes the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire and unrestricted humanitarian access, highlighting widespread international apprehension regarding the escalation of conflict and the suffering of civilians, 21 December 2023.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Oslo Peace Process

The Oslo Accords facilitate mutual acknowledgment between Israel and the PLO, establishing the Palestinian Authority with the objective of progressively advancing towards a two-state solution through incremental negotiations and limited self-governance.

Camp David Summit

The United States organizes high-level discussions aimed at achieving a final-status agreement concerning borders, refugees, and Jerusalem. The summit ultimately fails, underscoring the significant disagreements surrounding fundamental issues.

Arab Peace Initiative

Arab nations collectively propose full diplomatic recognition of Israel in return for its withdrawal from occupied territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state, thereby offering a regional framework for normalization and peace.

Gaza Disengagement Plan

Israel independently withdraws settlers and military personnel from the Gaza Strip, with the intention of diminishing tensions and transferring governance responsibilities to Palestinian authorities.

Abraham Accords

Israel establishes normalized relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and subsequently other nations, with the goal of fostering regional stability, although the agreements largely circumvent a direct resolution of the Palestinian issue.

Possible solutions

Revised Two-State Negotiation Framework (mediated by international parties)

Reinitiate final-status discussions focused on the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state adjacent to Israel, grounded in borders established prior to nineteen sixty-seven, incorporating mutually agreed land exchanges, collaborative or internationally overseen arrangements for Jerusalem, and a negotiated resolution for refugees. This initiative would be assured by significant global stakeholders and bolstered through financial aid and security oversight missions.

Phased Regional Security and De-escalation Agreement

Establish a systematic approach that initiates with a prolonged ceasefire, the exchange of prisoners, and the creation of demilitarized buffer zones. This should be succeeded by limitations on heavy armaments and the introduction of an enhanced United Nations or multinational monitoring contingent in Gaza, southern Lebanon, and adjacent border regions.

International Trusteeship or Transitional Administration for Gaza

Establish a temporary international administration for Gaza, either under the auspices of the United Nations or through a multinational coalition, to manage the processes of reconstruction, the distribution of humanitarian aid, the reform of the security sector, and the organization of unified elections for the Palestinian people.

Coordinated International Counter-Terrorism and Disarmament Campaign

Launch a UN-mandated, regionally backed security framework that treats Hamas, Hezbollah, and other armed militias as transnational terrorist threats rather than isolated local actors. This approach centers on coordinated military pressure, intelligence-sharing, and financial disruption to systematically degrade these groups' command structures, supply chains, and recruitment networks.