

THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE WAR AND THE FAILURE OF THE OIC: A DEEP DIVE INTO INEFFECTIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

The Israel-Palestine conflict remains one of the most protracted and divisive issues in modern geopolitics, with decades of violence, displacement, and failed peace initiatives. Despite the region's significant historical, religious, and political importance to the Muslim world, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), established as a collective voice of Muslim nations, has struggled to produce any tangible impact on the resolution of this conflict. This article explores the reasons behind the OIC's ineffectiveness, analyzing factors such as internal divisions, varying national interests among member states, and the organization's limited geopolitical influence. Additionally, it examines how global powers, regional dynamics, and the lack of a unified strategy within the OIC have hindered its ability to mediate or enforce resolutions. The analysis further considers how the OIC's role as a symbolic platform for solidarity has overshadowed its potential as a force for practical diplomacy. Ultimately, the paper underscores the OIC's declining relevance in resolving the Israel-Palestine issue and calls for a re-evaluation of its mandate and approach in addressing modern geopolitical challenges.

Keywords: Israel-Palestine, War, OIC, Ineffectiveness

INTRODUCTION

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most enduring and complex geopolitical issues in the world. It revolves around competing national, historical, and religious claims to land in the Middle East. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent Arab-Israeli wars, the conflict has been marked by violence, occupation, and political gridlock, leading to numerous attempts at resolution but no lasting peace. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict began toward the close of the 1800s. Resolution 181, also referred to as the Partition Plan, was enacted by the UN in 1947 with the goal of dividing the British Mandate of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. With the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, the first Arab-Israeli War began. After Israel won the war in 1949, 750,000

Palestinians were forced to flee their homes, and the region was split into three sections: the Gaza Strip, the West Bank (across the Jordan River), and the State of Israel.¹

A seven-decade struggle between Israelis and Palestinians has destabilized the Middle East, and the most recent one is the war raging between Israel and Hamas since October 2023. Israel responded to the devastating cross-border strike by the Palestinian on October 7 by launching a ferocious air and land offensive on the Gaza Strip, claiming that its objective is to destroy Hamas.² The Hamas attack on Israel has been denounced by the United States, the European Union, and other Western nations. The United States, the most trusted ally of Israel, has provided the Jewish state with over \$260 billion in military and economic

¹ "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." *the Center for Preventive Action*, September 16, 2024.

² "What's the Israel-Palestinian Conflict about and How Did It Start?," Reuters, December 5, 2023.

assistance over the years. It has also pledged more weapons, ammunition, guided bombs, and air defense missiles.³

As documented by OCHA and the Gaza Ministry of Health, at least 41,431 Palestinians were recorded murdered and 95,818 injured between October 7, 2023, and September 22, 2024. The UN estimates that at least 1.9 million people including those who have been moved more than once—are internally displaced in the Gaza Strip.⁴

The Role of the OIC and its Failures

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is an intergovernmental organization that represents 57 Muslims member states. It was established in 1969 in reaction to an arson attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Its goals are to uphold the rights of Muslims around the world, advance Islamic unity, and defend Palestine and its holy sites, especially Al-Quds (Jerusalem). Since its founding, the OIC has consistently denounced Israeli practices, including the occupation of Palestinian territory and the growth of settlements, with a primary focus on the Palestinian cause.⁵ Yet, over five decades later, the OIC has proven largely ineffective in addressing the conflict, a situation that has become especially apparent during the recent escalation.

1. Lack of Unity and Internal Divisions:

The OIC, with its 57 member states, is plagued by internal divisions that prevent it from forming a cohesive and unified stance on the Israel-Palestine issue. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Egypt have divergent foreign policy goals and regional rivalries that overshadow the Palestinian cause. For example, while Iran supports Palestinian militant groups like Hamas, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States have pursued normalization with Israel under the Abraham Accords. This split within the OIC has severely weakened the organization's

ability to collectively pressure Israel or support the Palestinian leadership effectively.

2. Ineffective Diplomacy and Symbolic Support:

The OIC's response to the Israel-Palestine conflict has largely been limited to issuing statements of condemnation and organizing emergency meetings. These diplomatic gestures, however, lack substance and have failed to translate into tangible political or economic action against Israel. While the OIC has called for international intervention, including from the United Nations, it has not been able to organize meaningful diplomatic initiatives or sanctions to influence Israeli policy.

3. Economic Interest:

The UAE-Israel relationship, for example, has rapidly developed, with deals worth billions of dollars in sectors such as finance, infrastructure, and healthcare. Bahrain and Morocco have also signed agreements with Israel, hoping to boost trade and tourism. The economic gains from opening these trade channels have incentivized these countries to de-emphasize the Palestinian issue to some extent in their foreign policies.

As a leader of the Muslim world and a major economic power, Saudi Arabia faces the challenge of balancing its support for Palestine with its geopolitical and economic interests in the region. While Riyadh has not yet formally normalized relations with Israel, the kingdom has opened its airspace to Israeli flights, indicating a softening stance. This is likely motivated by a combination of economic incentives, such as trade opportunities and technology cooperation, and the broader goal of countering Iran's influence in the region, with which Israel shares common interests.

4. Political Dependence:

Many OIC member states rely on Western powers, especially the United States, for economic and military

³ 1. "Israel Gaza War: History of the Conflict Explained," *BBC*, April 5, 2024.

⁴ 1. "UNRWA Situation Report #139 on the Situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem. All Information from 20-23 September 2024, Is Valid as of 23 September 2024 at 22:30 (Local Time) - Occupied Palestinian Territory," ReliefWeb, September 23,

2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/unrwa-situation-report-139-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem-all-information-20-23-september-2024-valid-23-september-2024-2230-local-time>.

⁵ "Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC): Purpose and Governing Bodies," *Jagranjosh*, July 15, 2021.

support. As the U.S. is a staunch ally of Israel, this dependence limits the willingness of some OIC members to take strong action against Israel or fully support Palestinian resistance movements. This compromises the organization's ability to act independently and forcefully on the international stage.

5. Internal Instability in Member States: Many OIC member states, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, face internal challenges such as economic crises, political unrest, or ongoing conflicts (e.g., Syria, Yemen). These internal problems often take precedence over addressing external issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict, further weakening the OIC's ability to act.

Implications of the OIC's Failures

The OIC's failure to meaningfully address the Israel-Palestine conflict has broader implications for both the region and the organization's credibility.

- **Undermining Palestinian Diplomacy:** The OIC's inability to deliver tangible results has weakened the Palestinian leadership's diplomatic efforts. Palestinian leaders, particularly those from the Palestinian Authority, have traditionally relied on the support of Arab and Muslim nations. However, the trend toward normalization with Israel and the lack of concerted action from the OIC leaves Palestinians increasingly isolated.
- **Erosion of OIC's Credibility:** The OIC's perceived failure to uphold its core mission—defending Palestine and protecting Jerusalem—raises questions about its overall effectiveness. As member states pursue divergent foreign policies, the organization risks becoming a symbolic forum rather than a functional diplomatic entity.
- **Emergence of Alternative Frameworks:** The OIC's ineffectiveness has led some countries to seek alternative frameworks for addressing the conflict. The Abraham Accords, for instance, signal a new approach to Israeli-Arab relations, bypassing traditional forums like the OIC. This shift suggests that the OIC's relevance in Middle East diplomacy may be diminishing.

Recommendations for the OIC

1. **Establish a Unified Policy on Israel-Palestine:** The OIC should prioritize forming a cohesive strategy that transcends the differing national interests of its members. This would require building consensus on core issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and the recognition of a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders.
2. **Leverage Economic Power:** Many OIC countries possess significant economic influence, particularly through their control of key resources like oil. The OIC should explore the potential for economic sanctions or collective action that could pressure Israel, while also providing tangible support to the Palestinian economy.
3. **Enhance Diplomatic Engagement:** The OIC needs to step up its diplomatic efforts by actively engaging with both global powers and international organizations. A stronger diplomatic corps, more robust lobbying, and greater cooperation with non-member states sympathetic to the Palestinian cause could improve the OIC's international standing.
4. **Support Palestinian Unity:** One of the barriers to effective Palestinian resistance is internal division. The OIC should play a more active role in facilitating reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, the two major political factions in Palestine, ensuring a united Palestinian front in peace negotiations.
5. **Expand Humanitarian Aid:** In addition to its political objectives, the OIC should focus on providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinians suffering under Israeli occupation. By expanding programs that offer medical aid, food supplies, and infrastructure rebuilding, the OIC can help alleviate the immediate suffering of Palestinian civilians while maintaining its broader goals.
6. **Bridge Internal Divisions:** The OIC must prioritize resolving internal rivalries and sectarian conflicts within its member states. By promoting intra-regional cooperation and understanding, the organization can project greater strength and unity.

on the Israel-Palestine issue and other global matters affecting the Muslim world.

7. **Facilitate Peace Negotiations:** The OIC should not limit itself to taking sides but instead position itself as a mediator. Using its ties with both Palestinian factions and some of Israel's regional allies, the OIC could help facilitate a broader peace negotiation framework that includes regional security arrangements and guarantees.

Conclusion

The Israel-Palestine conflict continues to be a deeply entrenched and volatile issue, with no immediate resolution in sight. While the Organization of Islamic Cooperation was established with the primary goal of supporting the Palestinian cause, its failure to unify its member states, wield effective diplomatic leverage, and adapt to changing geopolitical realities has diminished its role in addressing the conflict. The OIC's limitations not only hinder its ability to influence the Israel-Palestine issue but also raise broader questions about its future relevance in the Muslim world. For the OIC to become a more influential actor in this conflict, it must overcome internal divisions, increase its diplomatic and economic leverage, and present a unified stance on the matter. In doing so, the OIC could enhance its credibility and become a stronger advocate for Palestine on the global stage, while contributing to broader efforts for peace and stability in the region.

