

## THE MIDDLE EASTERN CRISIS AND THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is among the most ongoing and unresolved in the world that has lasted for almost 100 years. The origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lie in a century ago a territorial dispute over the Holy Land, an area of the Middle East that holds significant religious and historical value for Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The European Union, Arab States and United States have historically attempted to promote a diplomatic solution that would balance the opposing claims of the two parties. The present Middle East crisis started on October 7, 2023, when Hamas militants unexpectedly crossed into Israel from Gaza and attacked. In response, Israel has launched airstrikes on Gaza and severed the enclave's access to food, electricity, and water in anticipation of a planned ground assault. Concerns over civilian deaths and Gaza's humanitarian crisis have arisen as a result. There are ongoing diplomatic efforts and the role of international efforts to stop the problem from getting worse. This qualitative study explores the intensity of the crisis and presents the role of major actors involved in the issue. Although cease fire has been in practice between the two adversaries but situation is aggravated by the civilian casualties and regional instability.

Keywords: Middle, Eastern, Crisis, International, Actors

### INTRODUCTION

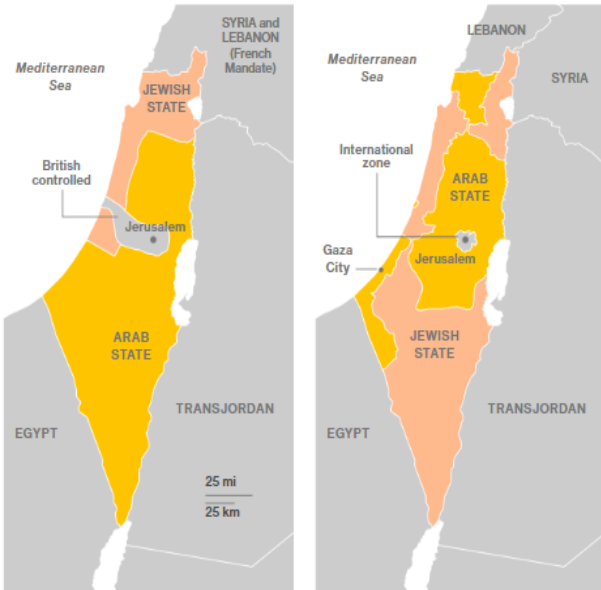
The Palestinian militant group Hamas, which is currently in administrative control of the Gaza Strip and is considered a terrorist organization under UK law, launched a surprise attack on Israeli territory on October 7, 2023. Hamas fighters managed to enter the border in multiple locations by land, sea, and air (using paragliders) in heavy rocket fire. Militants killed civilians and Israeli defense forces personnel in a string of attacks that also targeted hundreds of others attending a nearby music festival and other towns close to the border. According to observers, this is the most significant offensive attack that Israel has faced and the most ambitious operation Hamas has ever carried out from Gaza. In response, Israel formally declared war on Hamas.

The origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be traced back to the late 1800s (Robinson, 2023). The Partition Plan, also known as Resolution 181, was adopted by the UN in 1947 with the intention of dividing the British Mandate of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states (Nations, 1983).

**How Two Peoples Could Have, and Have Split the Holy Land**

**1937 Peel Commission Partition Plan**  
 A British report recommends separate states for Jews and Arabs. Jews accept the plan; Arabs reject it.

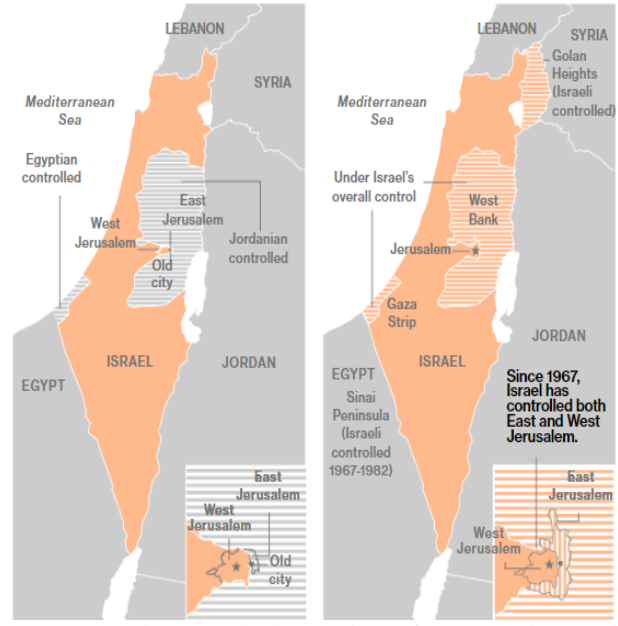
**1947 U.N. Partition Plan**  
 Britain refers the Palestine question to the United Nations. The General Assembly votes for two states in an economic union. Jews say yes. Arabs say no.



Sources: The Routledge Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict; CIA; United Nations

**1948-1967**  
 Israel declares independence when the British mandate to administer Palestine expires in 1948. Six Arab armies attack. War gains establish Israel's frontiers.

**1967-Today**  
 In a 1967 war, Israel captures the West Bank and east Jerusalem from Jordan, the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria.



Sources: The Routledge Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict; CIA; United Nations

The first Arab-Israeli War broke out on May 14, 1948, when the State of Israel was founded (Hitman, & Kertcher, 2023). After Israel triumphed in 1949, the region was partitioned into Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, with around 750,000 Palestinians being forced to flee their homes. The next years saw a continuation of tensions, especially with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Arab states signed mutual defense pacts as a result of increased tensions brought on by Israel's invasion of the Sinai Peninsula and the Suez Crisis in 1956 (Aljazeera, 2008). The Six-Day War began in June 1967 when Israel attacked Syrian and Egyptian soldiers without warning (Britannica, 2023). The Golan Heights, West Bank, East Jerusalem, Sinai Peninsula, and Gaza Strip came under Israeli rule (Malek, 2023).

The Yom Kippur War, often called the October War, took place in 1973 (Fischer, 2023). A surprise two-front offensive against Israel was launched by Egypt and Syria in an attempt to retake lost land (Michman & Mizrahi-Arnaud, 2017). Even though no party made substantial gains, Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat proclaimed Egypt's victory. This prepared the ground for talks over disputed territory (Fischer, 2023). A thirty-year struggle came to an end in 1979 when Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Accords, which followed cease-fires and peace talks (Ishamali & Ibiang, 2023). The problem of Palestinian self-determination and self-governance persisted despite better ties between Israel and its neighbors. The first intifada broke out in 1987 when thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rebelled against Israeli occupation. The Oslo I Accords of 1993 established a framework for the Palestinian Authority and Israel to mutually recognize one other and exercise self-governance (Ishamali & Ibiang, 2023). The Oslo II Accords, which were expanded in 1995, required Israel to completely withdraw from 450 towns and six cities in the West Bank (Rudnitzky, 2023; Mouak &

Токаренко, 2023). But difficulties continued, and in 2000 the second intifada broke out. Palestinian complaints about Israeli rule over the West Bank, a stalled peace process, and Ariel Sharon's visit to the al-Aqsa mosque served as the impetus for the second intifada, which lasted until 2005 (Sarah, 2023). In response, the Israeli government in 2002 approved the building of a barrier wall surrounding the West Bank despite the opposition of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice (Balilty, 2022). This obstacle was a reflection of the continued difficulties and complexity in the region. Palestinian internal tensions grew when Hamas defeated Fatah, the long-standing dominant party, in the 2006 legislative elections held by the Palestinian Authority (Robinson, CFR, 2023). With this win, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood-influenced political and terrorist organization Hamas was able to seize control of the Gaza Strip. Since 1993, the Palestinian Authority has maintained semi-autonomous administration over Gaza, a small coastal area that shares a border with Egypt. Since the late 1990s, Western governments—including those of the United States and the European Union—have refused to acknowledge Hamas' electoral victory and have instead designated the party as a terrorist organization. Conflicts between Hamas and Fatah broke out after Hamas seized power (Aljazeera, 2011). A reconciliation deal was reached after 2006 to 2011 series of catastrophic confrontations and unsuccessful peace talks. In 2014, Hamas and Fatah established a unity government (Danin, 2014).

Conflicts in the Palestinian territories intensified in the summer of 2014, leading to a military battle between the Israeli and Hamas forces (Browning, 2014). After Hamas fired around 3,000 rockets at Israel, Israel started a significant offensive in Gaza. The conflict came to an end in late August 2014 after Egypt mediated a cease-fire. But 2,251 Palestinians and 73 Israelis lost their lives as a result of this war (Gardian, 2014). Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah announced that his people would no longer abide by the territorial boundaries specified in the Oslo Accords after a spike in violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 2015 (Gladstone, 2015). A peaceful demonstration turned violent in March 2018, when some people jumped the perimeter barrier separating Israel and the Gaza Strip and began throwing rocks. As a result, 6,000 Palestinians were

injured and 183 Israelis were killed (CFR, 2023). Soon after, more than a hundred rockets were fired into Israel by Hamas militants, prompting Israeli attacks on more than fifty sites in Gaza in the course of a 24-hour period (Eglash, 2018). Hamas and Fatah were once again at odds as a result of this increased political strain. While Hamas was de facto in charge of the Gaza Strip and Fatah party under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas continued to rule the Palestinian Authority from the West Bank (Alsaafin & Tahhan, 2017).

Significant changes in U.S. policy occurred under the Donald J. Trump administration. These included moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and cutting off funds for the UN Relief and Works Agency, which assists Palestinian refugees (Deyoung & Eglash, 2018). Additionally, the US government was involved in mediating the Abraham Accords, which led to Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates restoring diplomatic ties with Israel (Lazin, 2023). These agreements were the third and fourth times that regional nations had normalized relations with Israel, after Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994. Subsequent agreements were reached with Sudan and Morocco. Hamas rejected the agreements, along with Fatah's Mahmoud Abbas (Aljazeera, 2020).

Protests broke out in early May 2021 following a court decision to expel multiple Palestinian families from residences in East Jerusalem (Alsaafin, 2021). Israeli police physically assaulted protesters. A number of Palestinian militant organizations, including Hamas, then fired hundreds of missiles into Israeli territory (Al-Mughrabi & Ayyub, 2021). In response, Israel launched airstrikes and a bombardment of artillery that caused deaths and structural damage (Al-Mughrabi & Heller, 2021). Both sides declared victory and agreed to a ceasefire after eleven days (BBC, 2021). Over 250 Palestinians lost their lives in the war, at least 13 Israelis lost their lives, almost 2,000 were injured, and 72,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes (Al-Mughrabi et al., 2021). The most extreme right-wing and religious government in Israel, headed by Benjamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu and his Likud party, came to power in late December 2022 (Aljazeera, 2022). The coalition supported people and gave priority to the growth of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

### International Role

#### US:

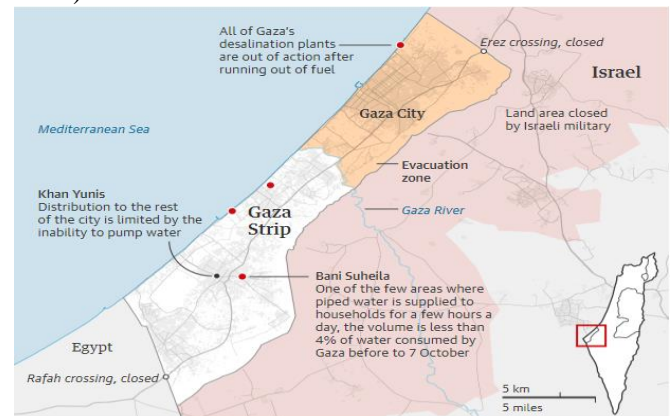
The government of the United States of America backs Israel's lawful military actions, including those in Gaza. It opposes calls for a cease-fire but is in favor of humanitarian breaks that might make it easier to transfer aid or have other benefits, since the start of the crisis. President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, and other administration officials have traveled to Israel and other nations in the region. Secretary Blinken reiterated the United States' position that Israel must defend itself in order to stop such attacks (U.S. Department of State, 2023).

In private, U.S. officials have voiced concerns about the short window of opportunity for operations to eliminate Hamas in Gaza before world outcry over civilian casualties and demands for a cease-fire reaches a breaking point (Hansler, 2023). They have recommended that Israel take into account ways to lessen the number of civilian casualties, like utilizing smaller bombs, enhancing intelligence collection, better targeting, and isolating civilians from militants (Barnes et al., 2023). Israel's goal to destroy Hamas is a big order, and the longer it goes on, the harder it can get, according to Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Charles Q. Brown (Stewart, 2023). Netanyahu, the prime minister, has agreed to four-hour daily stops in Israel's military operations for humanitarian reasons, but he has rejected the notion of a longer stoppage without the release of Israeli hostages (NBC News, 2023).

#### Egypt:

The Rafah border crossing into Gaza is under Egyptian control. As the Gaza conflict intensifies, Egypt may not be able to handle the influx of many migrants into the northern Sinai Peninsula, where there has been a ten-year conflict between the Egyptian military and other terrorist organizations (Hassan, 2023). In addition to a civil conflict occurring in Sudan, Egypt's southern border is marked by an ongoing economic crisis. Similar to certain Palestinians living in refugee camps around the region, the Egyptian government may take into consideration the possibility that the temporary relocation of Palestinians in Egypt could last for a long time or turn into a permanent arrangement (Service, 2023). Egypt plays a major role in the delivery of humanitarian help, with foreign relief shipments intended to arrive by plane at Arish in the

northern Sinai. As of October 17, about 160 trucks headed for the Rafah border crossing from Arish airport with humanitarian aid for the Gaza Strip. The Egyptian government may try to negotiate agreements with Israel, Hamas, and the US on the flow of people and humanitarian aid by using its sovereign control over Rafah as leverage (Magid, 2023).



(The Guardian, 2023)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/18/joe-biden-israel-news-gaza-al-ahli-baptist-hospital-explosion-jordan-summit-cancelled-protests>

#### Houthis in Yemen:

Ansar Allah, another name for the Houthis, is classified as a terrorist group. A US warship in the Red Sea intercepted some of the cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that they had recently launched in Israel. UAVs launched from Yemen toward Israel as part of the strikes persisted, but they were destroyed in Egypt. Additionally, Israel stopped a Houthi ballistic missile in the vicinity of Eilat (Aljezeera, 2023). The Houthis' declarations and strikes show that they are committed to continuing their campaign against Israel and posing a risk to American interests in the Red Sea region (Wintour, 2023). With their anti-Israel and anti-American rhetoric, the Houthis have demonstrated their clear intentions. The group is in possession of sophisticated military equipment, such as ballistic missiles that may reach southern Israel, such as the Quds-2 and Quds-3, which have a range of 1,300–2,000 km. They also have a sizable collection of UAVs with different ranges, including the Sammad-3, Sammad-4, and Waeid (Dostri, 2023). The gang has made it clear that they want to damage Israel, and they have powerful weapons that



are capable of reaching Israeli territory. The attacks could go on in the future, endangering American objectives in the Red Sea region as well as Israel.

**Saudi Arabia:**

Saudi Arabia has released a statement about the Israel-Hamas conflict, calling for reservations, the protection of civilians, and an urgent end to the escalation between the two sides. The state has issued warnings in the past that Israeli policies might lead to conflict (News A. , 2023). At the meeting between Secretary of State Blinken and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abd al Aziz Al Saud on October 15, the kingdom demanded that the siege on Gaza be lifted, that justice, stability, and peace be brought to the region, and that the Palestinian people be granted their legitimate rights (Tribune, 2023). The kingdom opposes the destruction of infrastructure, essential services, and civilian targets. The statement also urges the international community to support the Arab Peace Initiative and U.N. Security Council Resolutions by putting an end to the bloodshed and advancing the peace process (United Nations, 2023). The demand was in a statement released separately by the Saudi Foreign Ministry for an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 boundaries, with East Jerusalem serving as its capital (Khazen, 2023).

**Qatar:**

Qatar, which permits Hamas to operate an office in Doha, has criticized Israel for the ongoing escalation in the Gaza Strip on October 7 (Najjar, 2023). The country has called for all parties to halt the escalation and armed confrontations. Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani stated on October 13 press conference that the Hamas office in Doha is used to communicate and bring peace to the region, not to instigate war (Aljazeera, 2023). The Qatari government rejected attempts to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from the Gaza Strip, called for lifting the blockade, providing full protection to civilians, and affirmed the Palestinian right to statehood with East Jerusalem as its capital under international humanitarian and international law (Qatar Minister of Foreign affairs, 2023).

**UAE:**

The UAE, which restored diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020, showed concern about Israeli citizens being abducted as hostages and criticized the Hamas

attacks as a major escalation. Under international humanitarian law, civilians on both sides must always have complete protection and never be the focus of hostilities (Cornwell, 2023). The UAE Foreign Ministry "emphasized the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities and to ensure that civilians and institutions are not targeted" in the wake of the explosion that occurred on October 17 at the Al Ahly hospital in Gaza (UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

**Jordan:**

Jordan's Foreign Ministry urged a halt to escalation in the Palestinian conflict, while King Abdullah II emphasized the need for a comprehensive resolution based on a two-state solution, ensuring an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital (Arab World, 2023). Jordan also announced its intention on October 10, to dispatch humanitarian relief supplies to Gaza through the Rafah crossing in coordination with Egypt (The Jordan Times, 2023). King Abdullah II emphasized on October 17 about the humanitarian dimension of the situation and emphasized that no refugees should be in Jordan or Egypt (Kourdi, 2023). Jordan offered to host a summit between President Biden, the King, Egyptian President Sisi, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, but cancelled it due to an explosion at the Al Ahly hospital in Gaza October 17 (Borger & Graham-Harrison, 2023).

**Iran:**

Iranian government officials, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, President Ebrahim Raisi, and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, have expressed support for the Hamas attack on Gaza (Toossi, 2023). Khamenei praised the attack but said Iran was not behind it . Raisi stated that Iran supports the legitimate defense of the Palestinian nation (Reuters, 2023). In an October 16 conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin, He also stated that Palestinian groups are free and independent in making decisions, and Iran supports all measures the resistance takes to combat Zionist aggression (Iran Primer, 2023). Many other fronts will likely be opened, if actions to end Israeli operations fail in Gaza stated by Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (Iran Primer, 2023).

**China:**

In order to safeguard civilians and stop the situation from getting worse, China's Foreign Ministry has

urged all parties involved in the ongoing war in Gaza to maintain stability, exercise restraint, and put an end to violence (Rumley & Redlich, 2023). The ministry underlined that the key to ending the conflict is to execute a two-state solution and create an independent State of Palestine. In order to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, protecting civilian safety and providing relief corridors must come first. Since October 7, four PRC nationals have died, six have been injured, and two are missing (The Global Times, 2023). As a result, PRC officials advised their residents to evacuate Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.

**Russia:**

Russia has voiced concern over the violence between Israel and the Palestinians and has called for diplomatic efforts to prevent a military solution and lessen escalation (Aljazeera, 2023). Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, criticized the assaults as manifestations of US policy failures in the Middle East at a meeting with Mohammed Shia al Sudani, the prime minister of Iraq (Reuters, 2023). In conversations with regional officials, including Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Russia has reportedly voiced "serious concern about the likelihood of the conflict escalating into a regional war" (Faulconbridge & Trevelyan, 2023). In an attempt to stabilize the situation, stop more violence, and avert a humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip, Russia has asked for a humanitarian truce in order to send immediate aid to individuals in need. On October 16, the resolution that Russia had also suggested to the U.N. Security Council was not approved (UN News, 2023).

**Turkey:**

The conflict between Israel and Hamas has created difficult circumstances for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. Erdogan first tried to mediate with his Israeli counterpart, Isaac Herzog, but his criticism has grown more vehement due to Turkey's public backing for Hamas, the Israeli military's mobilization, and the commencement of the Israeli aerial offensive in the Gaza Strip (Poyrazlar, 2023). By attempting to act as a mediator, he has made multiple phone calls to Russian President Vladimir Putin, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, and leaders in the region (Barkey, 2023). The relationship between U.S. President Joe Biden and Erdogan has become strained due to Biden's lack of

involvement in the problem. Erdogan has been a longtime supporter of Hamas, granting its officials permission to live and interact with it in Turkey (Marcelo, 2023). The ties between the two countries will probably get stronger as a result of the Turkish public's response to the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Erdogan, however, has cautioned his Iranian counterpart, Ebrahim Raisi, against taking any actions that might heighten tensions because he knows that a significant conflict in the region would be harmful to all parties involved, including Turkey. Erdogan could see more deterioration of relations with Israel and the US given that there appears to be no end in sight to the crisis. Turkey has seen protests that have targeted American sites, and Erdogan's rhetoric against the US has contributed to these incidents (Barkey, 2023).

**UNO:**

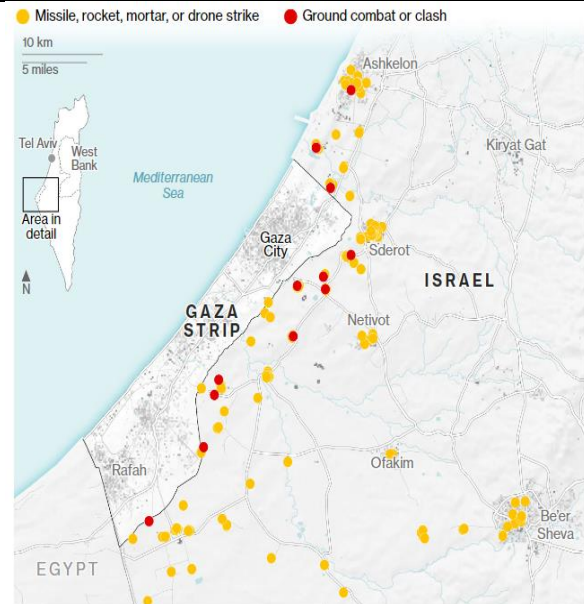
The United Nations for over 20 years has monitoring security and human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, together with the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (United Nations, 2023). On October 16 and 18, respectively, the U.N. Security Council did not succeed in adopting two different draft resolutions. The first draft resolution, put forth by Russia, demanded an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the safe release of all hostages, the unhindered distribution and provision of humanitarian aid, and the safe evacuation of civilians. It also condemned all acts of violence and terrorism directed against civilians. Four members voted against the resolution (the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, and France), five members (China, Mozambique, Gabon, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates) abstained, and six members cast no votes (United Nations, 2023). The second draft resolution, put forth by Brazil, denounced all acts of terrorism and violence directed towards civilians. It also condemned and rejected Hamas' terrorist attacks and kidnapping and abduction of civilians. It also demanded the immediate release of all civilian hostages and urged the uninterrupted supply of goods and services to civilians. Members of the Council abstained (Russia and the United Kingdom), one member voted against the proposal, and twelve members supported it (United Nations, 2023).

Humanitarian groups must be allowed access, people must be protected in both Israel and Gaza, and several U.N. bodies and officials have criticized the

Hamas attacks. For instance, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory of the U.N. Human Rights Council declared that it has been gathering and archiving proof of war crimes perpetrated by all parties, emphasizing that accounts of armed groups from Gaza shooting hundreds of defenseless civilians to death are disgusting and intolerable (Stepansky & Najjar, 2023). U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres acknowledged the genuine grievances of the Palestinian people on October 9 but did not condone acts of terror or the death, maiming, or kidnapping of civilians. Instead, he expressed "utter condemnation of the abhorrent attacks by Hamas and others" (United Nations, 2023). He also emphasized to Israel that rigorous adherence to international humanitarian law is required when conducting military operations (United Nations, 2023). The Secretary-General's spokesperson responded to the IDF's (Israel Defence Force) demand that everyone in northern Gaza, including U.N. personnel, evacuate to southern Gaza by stating that the UN believes that such a movement is not feasible without severe humanitarian consequences (United Nations, 2023).

#### Current Conflict

On October 7, 2023, Israel was the victim of several surprise strikes by the Palestinian Sunni Islamist organization Hamas, which was based in the Gaza Strip and targeted both civilian and military targets in Israel. In the 16 years that Hamas has ruled Gaza, there has never been an attack like this one (Siddiqui, 2023). There is discussion in Israel and elsewhere on the apparent operational and intelligence shortcomings in stopping the attack or lessening its effects. Certain observers propose that Israel might have misinterpreted Hamas's objectives, overlooked indications, or placed undue reliance on technology fixes. Southern Israel faced severe attack of Missile, drone strike, rockets and ground combat by Hamas.



Source: The Institute for the Study of War Note: Conflict events from Oct. 9-25

There are reports that Iran gives tangible support to Hamas, and there may be widespread complicity on the part of U.S. authorities (Reuters, 2023). Israel's cabinet responded by officially declaring war on Hamas, and along with some opposition members, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formed an interim unity government. The Israeli military has sent out hundreds of thousands of soldiers, bombarded Gaza with artillery and aircraft, and surrounded Gaza City with ground forces. Israel has been subjected to random rocket fire by Hamas and other armed groups headquartered in Gaza (Stepansky F. N., 2023). For their own safety and protection, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) declared on October 13 that all people in Gaza City must leave their houses and relocate south (IDF Press Release, 2023). As of November 13, about 1.5 million Gazans were without a place to live. Of them, between 200,000 and 25,000 civilians still reside in northern Gaza, an area that is more susceptible to war and has limited access to life-sustaining goods that enter through southern Gaza (Salem, 2023). The IDF has been implementing regular, limited pauses in combat operations on November 9 in order to allow Gazans from the north to move south.

Observers are debating whether Hamas and Israeli militants are to blame for the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. While some hold



Israel responsible for the deaths and scarcity of life-sustaining supplies, others charge Hamas with endangering civilian neighborhoods and infrastructure by operating in or close to them. The quick release of Palestinians taken captive by Hamas and an immediate humanitarian ceasefire have been called for by U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres on numerous occasions (UN Press, 2023). In order to facilitate monitoring and prevent Hamas from diverting supplies into the region, Egypt is collaborating with Gaza to use the Rafah crossing. The border has been closed numerous times, and hundreds of American citizens and their families have fled Gaza. Officials from the United States and the United Nations have worked to expand the amount of foreign aid that enters Gaza through Egypt (Sullivan, 2023). Concerns about poor sanitation and contaminated water consumption by internally displaced people (IDPs) have been brought up in relation to public health. While water supplies to southern and central Gaza are being piped in by Israel, the northern part of Gaza is still without water (Ahmed, 2023).

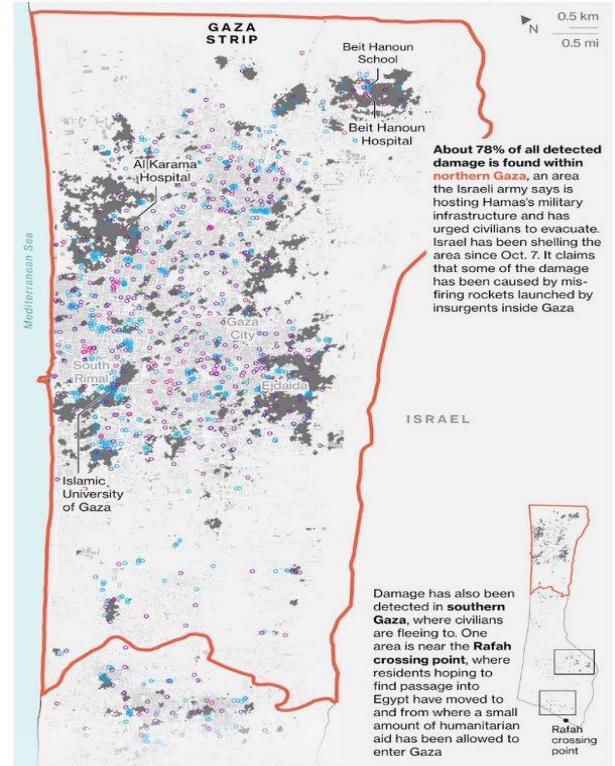
Israel is worried that Hamas would use the fuel for military purposes, so it has blocked fuel imports into Gaza. Some analysts have cited proof that shows a large portion of the fuel now present in Gaza has been stockpiled by Hamas (Rosenberg & Abi-Habib, 2023). Israel started allowing more non-fuel humanitarian aid to pass through Rafah and reach IDP-accommodating areas of southern Gaza in late October (Mahmoudian, 2023). With Israel and Hamas trading allegations regarding the potential endangerment of people, the functioning and safety of hospitals in northern Gaza have drawn attention from across the world. Following calls for immediate international action to stop ongoing strikes on Gaza's hospitals by representatives of the World Health Organization and two other U.N. bodies, President Biden expressed hope that Israel will take less invasive measures with regard to hospitals (ReliefWeb, 2023). As of till November, there had been reported deaths of over 1,200 Israelis and foreigners (including 35 U.S. citizens in Israel) and over 15,000 Palestinians in Gaza (Muro & Adam, 2023).

#### Destruction in Gaza

Key civilian facilities are within or near areas with the most damage

■ Satellite-detected damage, Oct. 7-25 early morning

Buildings: ■ Hospitals ■ Schools, universities, child-care centers ■ Places of worship



Sources: Damage analysis of Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite data by Corey Scher of CUNY Graduate Center and Jamon Van Den Hoek of Oregon State University; building shapes and highlighted facility locations from OpenStreetMap contributors; UNOSAT; UN OCHA  
Note: For highlighted facilities the map shows all buildings, not single compounds. The center point for each building is shown.

(Beyer, 2023)  
<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2023-10-29/how-israel-and-palestinians-troubled-history-set-stage-for-gaza-war#xj4y7vzkg>

About 239 people who were taken hostage in the October 7 attacks may still be in the hands of Hamas and its allies in Gaza, according to Secretary Blinken, who also stated that some of the 10 Americans who have not been found may be among the hostages (U.S. Department of State, 2023). Hamas has stated that it would not release Israeli captives without a cease-fire and fuel shipments into Gaza, and would release all hostages if Israel released all Palestinian prisoners. President Biden believes a deal to release some hostages, possibly connected with a temporary cease-fire and the release of some Palestinian prisoners, is likely to happen in the coming days. On November 22, an agreement was reached between Hamas, Israel, Qatar, and the US government. The "critical leadership and



partnership" of President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi of Egypt and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani of Qatar in mediating a settlement between Hamas and Israel about the release of hostages has been commended by President Biden (Najjar & Stepansky, 2023). Additionally, President Biden expresses gratitude to Netanyahu for his assurance that the agreement will be implemented and more American captives will be sent home. The Israeli military is bombarding the Gaza Strip despite an agreement with Hamas to temporarily halt hostilities in exchange for the release of dozens of hostages. The agreement was approved by Israel, allowing Israel to release 150 Palestinian prisoners in replacement of releasing 50 hostages of Israel during a four-day ceasefire. After that, the war will be fought by the Israeli government, IDF, and security forces in order to free all hostages, destroy Hamas, and guarantee that Gaza will never again threaten Israel's President (Hutchinson, 2023).



(BBC News, 2023)  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67039975>

### Cause of Hamas attacks: Why now?

Saudi Arabia sought guarantees in March 2023 from the US to help improve relations with Israel. These included relaxing restrictions on US arms sales, offering security guarantees, and providing aid in building a civilian nuclear program (Crowley, Nereim, & Kingsley, 2023). This proposal was made shortly before Saudi Arabia and Iran's seven-year diplomatic standoff came to an end due to a deal that China helped to arrange. The possible normalization agreement's specifics are unclear, and it's possible that some US senators would oppose its execution. The implications might raise doubts about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and increase animosity toward Iran in the area. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor was mentioned in a speech given by Israeli Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi in Saudi Arabia in September 2023, and Israeli Tourism Minister Haim Katz addressed a UN conference in Saudi Arabia. Israeli and Saudi officials were in talks to restore diplomatic ties at the period of the attack; Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, declared that the talks were "for the first time real" (Kingsley & Kershner, 2023).

According to Hamas officials, planning for the October 2023 strikes was an attempt to upend the status quo and widely prevailing beliefs in their protracted conflict with Israel (Nakhoul & Bassam, 2023). A number of motivations could have driven the move, such as undermining efforts to normalize relations between the Arab world and Israel, attempting to fortify its position both domestically and regionally, profiting from internal unrest in Israel, and utilizing hostages as a means of obtaining prisoner releases or other concessions.

The October 7 bombings may have been designed to sabotage U.S.-backed initiatives to advance Saudi-Israeli normalization as well as current and prospective future normalization agreements between Israel and Arab nations (Friedman, 2023). In an attempt to get Saudi Arabia to recognize Israel, the US attempted to halt relations with Israel. It's possible that Hamas determined that the readiness of Arab countries to improve ties with Israel prior to the creation of a Palestinian state offered them a chance to position themselves as the only group wholly dedicated to the Palestinian national cause. It's possible that Hamas also wanted to improve its domestic political standing in relation to Mahmoud

Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Hamas leaders may have seen political pressure brought about by alleged Israeli encroachment on Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem and a pattern of confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank in 2022 and 2023 (Indyk, 2023).

In 2023, Israeli political tensions have risen due to disputes over judicial reform. Hamas and its allies may have exploited this time of internal division and distraction by launching attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets, potentially amplifying discord among Israelis. Hamas leaders prioritize the release of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel and may have launched attacks to use hostages for prisoner releases or other Israeli concessions, highlighting their prioritization of these prisoners (Congressional Research Service, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

The attacks carried out by Hamas and Israel's response highlight how crucial the Palestinian issue remains to the security of the Middle East as a whole. This is true despite numerous international attempts to downplay the problem and fail to give the peace process the time and attention it needs. The world is somewhat to blame for ignoring the serious issue that is Israel's ongoing occupation of Palestinian land, as they have been giving lip service to the two-state solution for the past few decades. Everyone can now clearly see the costs and effects of this inaction. Israel's weakness has been shown by Hamas, who has gained ground and raised the possibility of more bloodshed and instability on both sides. From the signing of the Abraham Accords to the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states with Iran, as well as the political advancement to the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, all of the aforementioned pose a threat to the recent climate of de-escalation evident in the Middle East. Although Saudi Arabia has been having extensive talks about the possibility of normalizing relations with Israel, it is now very improbable that these talks will come to fulfillment soon. The majority of European capitals and the United States have firmly declared their support for Israel, reiterating the need for military success and retaliation. While this is acknowledged in light of the dreadful acts of terrorism and war crimes carried out

by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, third parties should now put their efforts first in an effort to stop additional regional conflict. Insisting that all parties abide by international humanitarian law is another way they should be mindful of their humanitarian obligations. The United States and other third parties should concentrate on negotiating humanitarian corridors so that Gazan civilians can escape the violence, securing humanitarian access so that food, fuel, medical supplies, and drinking water can be delivered, and determining who can play what role in the effort to free the hostages. They should consider that Gazans not only rely heavily on humanitarian help, but also that livelihoods depend on development cooperation in areas like water and wastewater management. The European Union and a number of its member states declared that their aid to the Palestinians would be reviewed in response to Hamas's attacks. Furthermore, it is important to remember the straightforward lesson that has been discovered in numerous combat zones that the fighting terrorism with force is not the only way to conquer it. The governments of the United States, Europe, and the Arab world should immediately begin to consider the features of a sustainable postwar stabilization that provides a different approach for Gazans in particular and the Palestine issue in general. Nobody will gain from tit-for-tat reprisal and ongoing escalation. Intense unrest poses a threat not only to the larger Middle East but also to the rest of the world. Comparably, the present administration of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is the most radical and right-wing in the country's history. It demonstrates a complete disdain for the rights of the Palestinian people and a refusal to make concessions in the interest of a just and peaceful settlement.

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