

# INOMUN 2018

## RESEARCH REPORT

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COMMITTEE: International Security Council



UN Security Council

TOPIC: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its repercussions on security in the region : focusing on the Gaza strip and west bank.

In 2007, during the Face 2 Face project, JR and Marco organised the largest illegal photography exhibition ever. For this project, portraits of Israelis and Palestinians were pasted face to face, in monumental formats on both sides of the wall and in several Palestinian and Israeli cities.

The Face2Face project consists of taking portraits of Palestinians and Israelis doing the same job and posting them face to face, in huge formats, in unavoidable places, on both Israeli and Palestinian sides.

***“We want everyone to laugh and to think by seeing the portrait of the other and his own portrait. In a very sensitive context, we have to be clear. We are in favour of a solution in which two countries, Israel and Palestine would live peacefully within safe and internationally recognized borders. All the bilateral peace projects (Clinton/Taba, Ayalon/Nusseibeh, Geneva Agreements) are converging into the same direction.***

*We can be optimistic.”*

## • INTRODUCTION:

If you had to mention the first long term, international, unresolved conflict that came to your mind, what would it be? It would be a safe bet to assume that you would think of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, it is arguably the most significant conflict of this century, dividing the world in two: on the one side we find the Zionists, an overused term that at its core designates individuals who support the idea of a Jewish Homeland in Israel, whilst on the other side we find the Anti-Zionists, who are against this idea. In the middle our most people, wondering, like you and I, how to reconcile these irreconcilable positions. This tremendously important conflict has had repercussions on society as a whole: not only has the political sphere been affected on a global scale, but other fields have suffered the backlash of this crisis, notably the economic sphere. This longstanding conflict has influenced the mindsets of numerous generations, its incredibly complex and shadowy roots being a perfect mould nourishing the critical minds of every individual brave enough to research them.

In short, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a perfect forum for debate. Many people have a polarised opinion on the matter, which is fairly rare for such an intricate crisis. As such, you, delegates of the International Security Council will have to dig deep into the foundations of this plight in order to find solutions to the security problems it is currently causing in the Middle East, more precisely in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank regions. This Research Report is here to help you with your researches, providing you with the basis you need to guide your analysis of the subject. On that note, we hope you will do your best, see you at the conference!

## • HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

First and foremost, you need to know that the first major Jewish waves of migration to the territory known as Palestine dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and was composed mainly of Jewish communities fleeing the Eastern Europeans pogroms. At the same period Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian journalist, defined the concept of political Zionism, a movement whose goal was the creation of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel, known as Palestine. From that point, Jewish communities from all over the world started settling in Palestine, even though it was not officially their territory they believed it was a safe refuge from the oppression they suffered.

**In 1917, during WW1,** Britain issued the Balfour Declaration. This public statement is of critical importance as it is the basis of the whole conflict. In this declaration, Britain's Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour declared that his country supported the creation of a "national home for the Jewish people" in the Land of Israel, all while promising the Arab communities that this would not threaten their sovereignty in any way. This intentionally ambiguous text had no validity in international law but was motivated by realpolitik. The Allies needed all the minorities of the Middle East to overthrow their government in order to destabilise the Triple Entente and win the First World War. As a result of this ambiguous declaration, both communities hoped, indeed expected, to be given the Palestinian territory as theirs.

In 1922, after WWI, Palestine was handed over to Britain by the League of Nations as a “mandate”. Britain had full control over the territory, mandate being a euphemism for a temporary colony. They decided to respect the terms of the Balfour Declaration regarding the Jewish people, even though they made up approximately 10% of the Palestinian population at the time. As far as Arab Palestinians are concerned, Britain did not respect their promises.

Faced with the rise of Nazism and anti-Semitism, an increasing number of Jews started migrating towards Palestine. In 1937, they made up about 33% of the Palestinian population. As such, Britain issued a first proposal, establishing a Jewish state in the Northern part of the territory, the rest of it staying Arab. As for Jerusalem, a city covered by both parties, it would be placed under British control until further notice. The Jews saw it as an opportunity without precedent, but the Arab world rejected it as they saw it as the alarming beginning of a Jewish invasion. However, the Peel plan was and still is considered the master partition plan, on which all those that followed were either based or compared to.

The 29<sup>th</sup> of November, 1947, the UN approved a new partition plan: Jerusalem and Bethlehem were to be considered as international property, open to both communities. Once again, Zionists accepted it but the Arab world was more reticent, as it would reduce their territory. The 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1948 is a major landmark: Ben-Gurion, the leader of the Jewish community in Palestine, proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel. He became Israel’s first Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. He is widely known as Israel’s founding father. The 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1948, right after the proclamation, the Arab states surrounding Israel attacked this new state that they do not acknowledge. In July 1948, Israel counter attacks and annexes most of the Palestinian territory.

In 1949, the first Armistice Agreements were signed by Israel and its neighbouring states: Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. It put an end to the official hostilities of the 1948 Israeli-Arab war, establishing the Green Line, armistice lines between Israeli forces and Jordanian-Iraqi forces. The Gaza strip was given to Egypt, and West Bank was attributed to Jordan.

In 1967, an armed conflict known as the Six-Day War broke out between Israel and its neighbouring countries. Nasser, the Egyptian leader, was massing troops in the Sinai Peninsula on Israel’s border, closing the Straits of Tiran, the narrow sea passage in the Red Sea between the Sinai and Arabian peninsulas. Israel had declared that any closing of the Straits would be considered an act of war. As such, Israel, feeling threatened, launched a large-scale surprise attack on its neighbouring countries. In six days, Israel invaded those countries, meeting little to no resistance. As a result of this conflict, Israel took control of the Golan Heights, the Sinai region, the Palestinian territories as well as a part of Jerusalem.

In order to retrieve those territories, Egypt and Jordan launched a surprise attack on Israel during the most important Jewish celebration: Kippur. This conflict took place in 1973, and is known as the Yom Kippur War. They failed, their weakened armies being no match for Tsahal, one of the most effective and well organized armies in the world. The UN intervened: they managed to obtain a ceasefire and initiated diplomatic proceedings between the belligerent nations.

Between 1979-1982, the Sinai region was gradually given back to Egypt, after long and hard deliberations. Israel eventually let go of the desert, and agreed that it was Egyptian territory.

**In 1982**, Israel invaded the South of Lebanon. Officially, their intent was to put an end to Palestinian terrorist attacks orchestrated by the Palestinian Liberation Organization and coming from Beirut. In Mid-August 1982, France, the USA and Italy intervened: they had 3 main objectives defined in a letter sent to the Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs.

- 1) "Insure the physical safety of the Palestinian fighters leaving Beirut and the dignity of their departure"
- 2) "Insure the physical safety of the other inhabitants of the region"
- 3) "Facilitating the restoration of the Lebanese government sovereignty in said region"

However, the international forces left precipitately, and as such objectives 2) and 3) were not fulfilled.

**In December 1987**, the First Intifada broke out, a clear sign of the Palestinian people's refusal of the Israeli occupation. **The 15<sup>th</sup> of November, 1988**, the national council of the Palestinian Liberation Organization proclaims the creation of a Palestinian state according to the partition plan of 1947, all of this initiated by a man named Yasser Arafat.

**In September 1993**, the Oslo Accords were signed. Those accords are crucial, as they show the first clear signs of reconciliation between the PLO and Israel. Indeed, as a result of those accords, the PLO acknowledges Israel's status of state, and accepts its right to have a peaceful and safe existence. On the other hand, the Israeli government recognizes the PLO as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, turning this terrorist group into a political party. This mutual recognition is followed by the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles that aims at organizing a form of self-government of the Gaza Strip and the region surrounding Jericho. Even though initially the conflict was seemingly coming to an end, the Accords were ultimately a failure. It is fairly hard to say whose fault it is, both parties having held discourses in which they questioned the Accords. As far as the Palestinian people are concerned, Yasser Arafat claimed: "The Jihad will continue and Jerusalem is not for the Palestinian People. It is for all the Muslim Ummah (nation), all the Muslim Ummah. You are responsible for Palestine and for Jerusalem before me."

More recently, in 2001 the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly unaware he was being recorded, said: "They asked me before the election if I'd honour [the Oslo accords]... I said I would, but [that] I'm going to interpret the accords in such a way that would allow me to put an end to this galloping forward to the '67 borders. How did we do it? Nobody said what defined military zones were. Defined military zones are security zones; as far as I'm concerned, the entire Jordan Valley is a defined military zone. Go argue."

**In 2000**, the Second Intifada broke out, definitely proving the last phase of the Oslo Accords to be a failure.

**The 11<sup>th</sup> of November, 2001**, the infamous World Trade Center terrorist attacks perpetrated by Al Qaida were motivated, amongst other reasons, by the USA's support of Israel. **The 25<sup>th</sup> of May, 2006**, Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, announced a referendum regarding the creation of an independent Palestinian state. However, it quickly became irrelevant as on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2007 the terrorist group known as the Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, splitting the Palestinian authority in two instances. Following this takeover, Israel established a blockade around the Gaza strip.

**In March 2009**, Benjamin Netanyahu was elected Prime Minister for a second time. This led to a more strict government, Netanyahu's ideas being very right-winged. **On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2012**, the UN took a consequential decision regarding this conflict: they recognized Palestine as an observing non-member state. This recognition, coming from the first international organization is very meaningful and represents a huge step forward.

**In Autumn 2015**, a new Intifada broke out known as the 'knife Intifada' (as opposed to the stone-throwing intifadas). It resulted in a wave of violence and numerous assassinations, with a terrifyingly high number of deaths notably caused by stabbings, hence its name.

## • TIMELINE OF EVENTS: A LONG PEACE PROCESS

- **1967 :**

UN resolution 242 → calls for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied during the Arab-Israeli war

- **09/1974 :**

56 Member States proposed that « the question of Palestine » should be included into the General assembly's Agenda. The GA later recognised Palestinian Rights in a resolution, « the right to national independence and sovereignty », and the « right to return to their homes and property »

- **1991 :**

Madrid Peace Conference, (right after the First Gulf War), George H.W Bush called a meeting between Israel and the Arab nations. Talks continued in Washington DC, but with few results

- **1993 :**

Oslo Accords, a series of secret meetings between the representatives of Israel and Palestine, in Norway. It led to the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords between Palestinians and Israel, which aimed to discuss the necessary elements for a future Palestinian independent state based on the previous Resolutions 242 and 338 by the Security Council

- **1995 :**

various « transfers of power and responsibilities » in the Gaza Strip and West Bank from Israel to the Palestinian authorities took place.

- **1996 :**

B. Netanyahu (Israeli Prime Minister) declared a tit-for-tat policy, where Israel would not engage into a peace process if Arafat (Palestinian representative) continued suicide attacks.

- **2000 :**

Camp David 2000 Summit, US President Bill Clinton summoned Palestine (Yasser Arafat) and Israel (Ehud Barak). In May 2000, it was reported that Israel had offered Palestinians, 66% of West Bank. The Israeli prime minister reportedly offered the Palestinian leader 95% of West Bank and the entire Gaza Strip if 69 Jewish settlements be ceded to Israel. President Arafat rejected this offer and did not propose a counter-offer. No tenable solution proposed would have satisfied both Israeli and Palestinian demands, even under intense U.S. pressure. Clinton blamed Arafat for the failure of the Camp David Summit.

- **Fall 2000 :**

The Clinton Parameters included a plan on which the Palestinian State was to include 94-96% of the West Bank, and around 80% of the settlers were to become under Israeli sovereignty, and in exchange for that, Israel would concede some territory within the Green Line (1967 borders).

- **January 2001 :**

Continuity of the Clinton Parameters, The Israel Negotiation team presented a new map, it proposed the removal of the temporarily Israeli controlled areas from the West Bank. Palestine agreed as the basis for further negotiations. However the talks ended due to the election of a new Israeli Prime Minister, elected in February 2001: Ariel Sharon

- **March 2002 :**

Beirut Summit, is a meeting between the Arab League, it concluded by presenting a plan to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, it was not successful because Israel was not prepared to enter any negotiations due to the Netanya suicide attack of the day before, by Palestinians.

- **July 2002 :**

the United Nations, the United States, Russia and the European Union outlined the absolute need of a "Road Map for peace", as for example the creation of a Palestinian independent state with an independent government.

- **December 2006 – mid-September 2008 :**

Ehud Olmert (Israeli Prime Minister) and Mahmoud Abbas (President of the Palestinian Authority) met 36 times. Olmert proposal was mainly based on the establishment of a permanent border, which would be based on an Israeli withdrawal from most of the West Bank. Olmert proposed annexing at least 6% of Palestinian territory, in exchange for 5% of Israeli land, with Palestinians receiving alternative land in the Negev, adjacent to the Gaza Strip, as well as territorial link, under Israeli sovereignty, for free passage between Gaza and the West Bank. Both leaders agreed on the necessity of a shared single business ecosystem.

- **June 2009 :**

Israel Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu (in reaction the Barack Obama's Cairo Address) declared his support for a future Palestinian state. However, insisted a lot on the recognition of Israel as the nation-state of Jewish people, the demilitarisation of a future state, and Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel.

- **29 July 2013 (till 2014) :**

Beginning of direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, an attempt by United States Secretary of State John Kerry to restart the peace process. In April 2014, Israel suspended talks due to the new Palestinian Unity Government.

- **25 August 2014 :**

Abbas (Palestinian leader) proposed a new plan to John Kery. It calls for nine months of direct talks between the states followed by a three-year plan for Israel to withdraw to the 1967 lines, leaving East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital. Abbas stated that if Israel rejected the claim he would push for charges against Israel in the International Criminal Court over the 2014 Israel–Gaza conflict.

In December 2014, Jordan submitted the proposal to the UNSC, which failed when voted on later that month. Later that month as previously threatened, Abbas signed the treaty to join the ICC. Israel responded by freezing NIS 500 million in Palestinian tax revenues. In response to the tax freeze, the PLO announced that they may dissolve the PA, leaving Israel fully responsible for both the West Bank and Gaza.

## **KEY TERMS:**

### **Zionism :**

national movement of the Jewish people that support the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Israel (considered as the Holy Land, Canaan, situated in the region of Palestine). It emerged in the late 19th century in Eastern Europe as a response to waves of anti-Semitism and to nationalist movements.

### **Diaspora :**

it comes from a Greek word « diaporà » which means dispersal. Historically it points out the dispersal of the Jewish people after their captivity in Babylon. Nowadays, it is the dispersal of Jews who live out from Palestine.

### **Suicide attacks :**

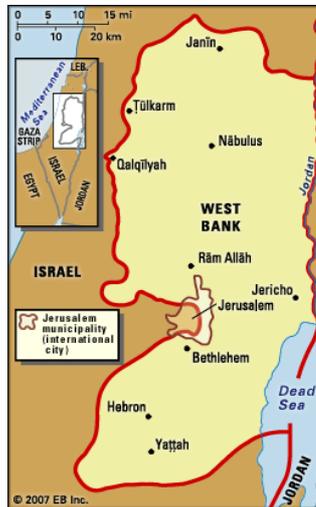
a terrorist attack which someone undertakes knowing that he or she will die in the attack.

### **Intifada :**

a Palestinian uprising, it is an Arabic word meaning « shivering », « shuddering ». It is particularly associated with the Palestinian context, it refers to attempt to « shake off » the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### **Settlements :**

these are civilian communities inhabited by Israeli citizens, often Jews, built on lands within the Palestinian territories (which Israel has occupied since the 1967 Six-Day War). Such territories currently exist on the West Bank or the East part of Jerusalem for example.



### West bank :

The West Bank is a region east of Israel. It is home to 2.6 million Palestinians, and would make up the heart of any Palestinian state. Israel took control of it in 1967 and has allowed Jewish settlers to move in, but Palestinians (and most of the international community) consider it illegally occupied Palestinian land.



### Gaza :

The Gaza Strip, or simply Gaza, is a small self-governing Palestinian territory on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, that borders Egypt on and Israel. Gaza, together with the West Bank, constitutes the Palestinian territories claimed by the Palestinians as the State of Palestine.

## • **STANCES:**

### **France:**

A very ambiguous stance: the first presidents of the 5<sup>th</sup> Republic called for the creation of a Palestinian state, but more recently this position seems to be shifting, even though officially no such shift has been announced.

### **UK:**

The UK is known as “one of the world’s friendliest countries to Israel”. However, in 2014 its lawmakers voted for the creation of the recognition of the state of Palestine, which could indicate the early signs of a shift of position, even though they are still mainly pro-Israel.

### **China:**

China probably has the most ambiguous position of all the countries involved, though it can be explained fairly simply. In order to be economically involved in the Middle East, China needs to take advantage of Israel’s unique geographic location, stable political and social order, as well as advanced technology. However, when it comes to establishing their international image, especially among Arab States, China benefits greatly from supporting Palestine’s independence.

### **Russia:**

Even though historically the Soviet Union had been greatly involved in this conflict, Putin’s Russia has taken a step back, supporting either side as long as they find an interest in doing so.

### **USA:**

USA is one of the fiercest allies and defenders of Israel. They are Israel’s most faithful partner, more so since Donald Trump’s election and his decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, seen as a provocation by many in the Arab world.