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Fall 11-16-2023

Israel-Palestine Conflict

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By: Gabriel Mott**Israel-Palestine Conflict****Introduction**

On October 7, 2023, *Hamas* launched a powerful surprise attack on the state of Israel, killing more than one thousand people.¹ While this may represent a spike in violence, it is not the beginning. Tensions have existed on the West Bank since the onset of World War I, while a series of negotiations, third party interventions, and frequent violence has exacerbated the problem in the following decades. With this in mind, this Critical Question identifies key actors in the conflict, the history and progression of the conflict, and reasonable predictions for the future of the conflict in the Middle East.

Who are Israel, Palestine, and Hamas?

The territory currently recognized as the state of Israel has been occupied by both Jewish and Arab populations for much of recorded history. Today, Mizrahi Jews—those with Middle Eastern or North African descent—compose around 50% of the total Israeli population.² Including those of diaspora origins, Jewish people make up 74% of the total Israeli population.³ Palestine, in the modern sense, is the product of the British Mandate of Ottoman Territories after World War I.⁴ After WWII, the United Nations partitioned the old British Mandate into two states, which became the contemporary conceptions of Israel and Palestine.⁵ HAMAS—The Islamic Resistance Movement—was formed in 1987 as an offshoot of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁶ As a political group, Hamas has won some elections in Palestinian territory.⁷ They are internationally recognized as a terrorist organization.⁸

How did the conflict begin?

Since the partitioning of the British Mandate into regions which would become Israel and Palestine, a series of disputed borders have progressively expanded the size of Israel's territory.⁹ Also under dispute is the rightful possession of Jerusalem, which both Israel and Palestine claim as their capital; while most nations recognize Israel's general territorial claims as legitimate, the United States was the first to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital under the

¹ <https://abcnews.go.com/International/timeline-surprise-rocket-attack-hamas-israel/story?id=103816006>

² <https://people.socsci.tau.ac.il/mu/noah/files/2018/07/Ethnic-origin-and-identity-in-Israel-JEMS-2018.pdf>

³ <https://www.jpost.com/judaism/article-718145>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-hamas>

⁷ <https://apnews.com/article/hamas-gaza-palestinian-authority-israel-war-ed7018dbaae09b81513daf3bda38109a>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-54116567>

administration of Donald Trump.¹⁰ Containing the Al-Aqsa mosque, the Western Wall, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem is a holy site to Christians, Jewish people (who primarily occupy Israel), and Muslims (who primarily occupy Palestinian territories).¹¹

These tensions have escalated into violence through the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. A series of back-and-forth attacks have hindered peacemaking processes. Palestine has generally faced larger casualties than Israel; since 2008 (excluding this month's developments), there have been 308 Israeli fatalities and 6,407 Palestinian fatalities.¹² This may be due in part to the military aid Israel receives from other nations, including \$260 Billion from the United States since World War II--the most of any nation.¹³ This aid has helped Israel to develop the Iron Dome, a defensive anti-missile intervention system which has played a significant role in the conflict during the 2010s, but was subverted by the most recent Hamas attack.¹⁴

What will happen now?

Following the trend of the past years, it is probable that violence between Israel and Hamas will continue to escalate; for example, the Al Ahli Arab Hospital was recently bombed, with both sides blaming the other for the estimated 1000-3000 wounded or dead.¹⁵ The hospital is located in the North of the Gaza Strip, a Palestine-controlled territory on the West Bank of the Middle East, for which Israel has issued warnings to evacuate.¹⁶ The strike may also be the accidental product of an "errant rocket" not meant to target the building.¹⁷ This destruction of infrastructure is characteristic of violent conflict, and precedent indicates it may play a key role in the duration and resolution of the conflict.¹⁸

Another potential future outcome is military intervention by the United States or others. As mentioned above, the United States provides more financial assistance to Israel than any other country. The U.S. has brought two aircraft carriers into the waters by Israel, while administration officials such as National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby has given indecisive statements to the public as to whether or not the country will intervene.¹⁹ United Nations Peacekeepers are another intervention force which attempts to mitigate conflict

¹⁰ Eran, Oded. *The Recognition of Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel*. Institute for National Security Studies, 2017. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17023>. Accessed 18 Oct. 2023.

¹¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/12/06/questions-about-jerusalem-you-were-afraid-to-ask/>

¹² <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>

¹³ <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2023-10-10/how-much-aid-does-the-u-s-give-to-israel>

¹⁴ <https://www.npr.org/2023/10/12/1205255594/israel-gaza-hamas-war-iron-dome-defense-palestinians>

¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/gaza-hospital-blast-what-we-know-about-explosion-2023-10-18/>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Mashatt, Merriam, et al. *Conflict-Sensitive Approach to Infrastructure Development*. US Institute of Peace, 2008. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12207>. Accessed 18 Oct. 2023.

¹⁹ <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/14/middleeast/us-aircraft-carrier-eisenhower-israel-gaza-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>

while providing humanitarian aid and remaining strictly non-aligned. While no peacekeepers have entered the Israeli region yet, there are over ten thousand around Israel's border areas.²⁰

Conclusion

Starting over territorial disputes from the conclusion of World War I, the conflict between Israel and Palestine has grown over the past century. Most recently, Hamas, a terrorist organization with political power within Palestine, has launched an attack on Israel, with Israel mounting a counteroffensive with a high likelihood for some form of foreign aid or intervention. ICAPP encourages, as with all critical questions, civil discourse among our audience on the topic. We encourage you to consider multiple perspectives and come to your own conclusions about the best resolution to the conflict. If you want to know more, read the news from trustworthy sources. If you can, try to find claims being verified by multiple independent outlets, and relate what you find to your knowledge of the conflict's history and context.

²⁰<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142442#:~:text=10%2C000%20UN%20peacekeepers%20at%20work,in%20the%20vicinity%20this%20week.>