

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE GAZA-ISRAELI CONFLICT 1948 – 2023

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OCTOBER, 2025

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**BEING A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT
OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF BACHELOR OF ARTS
(B.A) HONOURS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AND DIPLOMACY,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

OCTOBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the project work was carried out by **Mirabel Osaogie OMOFONMWAN** in the Department of History and International Studies and Diplomacy, University of Benin, Benin City.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my beloved family, especially my Dad and Mum and also to my siblings, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been my greatest strength.

Above all, I thank God for the wisdom, perseverance, and inspiration that have carried me through this journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All gratitude to God Almighty, the one who has made it possible for me to complete this programme and this project work. May his name be praised forever. My unreserved gratitude goes to my amiable and intelligent supervisor, Miss Omoruyi for her patience, guidance and well-articulated instructions during the course of this project for accuracy and splendid completion. Thank you Ma. for your painstaking and efficient manner with which you scrutinized every stage of this project, may God reward you bountifully Ma.

To the lecturers in the Department of International Studies and Diplomacy, I say a very big thank you for their intelligent and scholarly academic excellence through which knowledge, values and morals were impacted in me. God replenish you all in Jesus name, Amen.

Special thanks to my ever caring and supporting parents Mr. and Mrs. OMOFONMWAN, for their immense support, prayer and advice all through my study. You both have been a pillar of support for me. I love you.

To my friend Billy Olaitan, I say a very big thank you for being my partner in progress I appreciate you for your support morally, emotionally, financially, spiritually, academically and psychologically, thank you all.

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CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE GAZA- ISREALI CONFLICT 1948- 2023

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The conflict between Gaza and Israel stems from the larger Arab-Israeli dispute. Following the United Nations' 1947 proposal to divide the territory into separate Jewish and Arab states, Israel proclaimed its independence on May 14, 1948. This declaration triggered the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, during which Egypt assumed control of the Gaza Strip. When the war concluded in 1949 with the signing of the Armistice Agreements, Gaza remained under Egyptian administration.¹

During Egypt's administration of Gaza, the area became a refuge for a significant number of displaced Palestinians. As Palestinian nationalism intensified, militant groups such as the Fedayeen began carrying out cross-border raids into Israeli territory, which led to Israeli military responses. On May 28, 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded at the first Arab League Summit held in Cairo. The organization was established to serve as the recognized representative of the Palestinian people, aiming to achieve self-determination and ultimately liberate Palestine from Israeli authority.²

In 1967, escalating tensions between Israel and its neighboring Arab states sparked the Six-Day War. Israel quickly overcame the forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, gaining control of several territories, including Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. The occupation of Gaza brought an increased Israeli military presence and the establishment of settlements, intensifying Palestinian anger. As Israeli settlements expanded within Gaza, Palestinian opposition mounted, resulting in frequent confrontations. This growing

unrest culminated in the First Intifada in 1987, characterized by widespread protests and violent clashes with Israeli troops.³

The First Intifada led to the emergence of Hamas, an Islamist organization that originated as a branch of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. It was founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, and other Palestinian figures. Hamas was created with the aim of opposing Israeli occupation and establishing an Islamic state across historic Palestine.⁴ The organization comprises both a political division and a military arm known as the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades. Due to its involvement in attacks targeting civilians, Hamas is classified as a terrorist organization by countries such as the United States, the European Union, Canada, and Israel. Despite this, Hamas also plays a political role, having governed the Gaza Strip since its victory in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections.⁵

Israel drew international condemnation for its handling of the uprising, which underscored that military action alone could not address Palestinian aspirations for statehood. The First Intifada highlighted the urgency of pursuing a political solution rather than relying on continued violence. At the time, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, was politically and financially weakened—partly due to its support for Saddam Hussein during the 1991 Gulf War, which strained relations with key Arab nations. The collapse of the Soviet Union further diminished the PLO's access to funding and military support. Faced with declining influence and limited options, the PLO became more open to negotiating a political settlement.⁶ Through talks with Israel, the PLO aimed to gain international recognition and establish a governing authority in the occupied territories. On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin pursued negotiations to reduce violence and protect Israeli citizens. The ongoing Palestinian resistance made the prospect of indefinite occupation increasingly

untenable, and Israel also sought to curb the rising influence of militant groups like Hamas, which opposed any peace process.

In an effort to reduce resistance and promote lasting peace, the United States—particularly under President Bill Clinton—along with other international actors, encouraged Israel and the PLO to engage in negotiations. Unlike earlier efforts that were public and heavily shaped by international politics, a new round of secret discussions began in Norway. Facilitated by the Norwegian government, these confidential talks laid the groundwork for the Oslo I Accord. Signed in 1993 in Washington, D.C., the accord marked a significant step toward a formal peace process. It resulted in the transfer of administrative control of Gaza and parts of the West Bank to the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA), led by Yasser Arafat. Despite these developments, Israeli settlements remained in the territories, and Hamas rejected the peace agreement, continuing to oppose the negotiated process.⁷

After the breakdown of the 2000 Camp David Summit, the Second Intifada erupted, resulting in a period of intense violence between Israelis and Palestinians. In 2005, Israel carried out a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, removing all settlers and military personnel. Despite this, Israel continued to control Gaza's airspace, borders, and coastal waters. The Palestinian Authority (PA) initially assumed governance, but tensions soon escalated between Fatah, which dominated the West Bank, and Hamas, which was gaining influence in Gaza. The situation deteriorated further after Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, leading to a power struggle with the PA. In 2007, following violent confrontations, Hamas seized full control of Gaza and expelled Fatah forces. In response, Israel and Egypt imposed a blockade on the territory, citing security concerns.⁸

Hamas and Israel engaged in major conflicts in 2008–09, 2012, 2014, and 2021, with periods of sporadic violence in between. Egypt, Qatar, and the United Nations frequently mediated ceasefires, though these agreements were typically short-lived. Recurrent confrontations at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem—particularly during the holy month of Ramadan—often sparked escalations between the two sides. Hamas, along with Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), received military and financial assistance from Iran, including weapons and training. Iran-backed Hezbollah also increased coordination with Hamas and maintained its own confrontations with Israel along the northern border. In addition, countries like Qatar and Turkey provided political and financial support to Hamas. However, the Abraham Accords of 2020 marked a shift in regional dynamics, as Israel normalized relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan—an action Hamas viewed as a betrayal of the Palestinian struggle. By 2023, the United States was working to mediate a normalization deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia, a development Hamas and Iran actively opposed.⁹

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a major assault on Israel from the Gaza Strip, combining heavy rocket fire with coordinated ground incursions. The attack caused significant civilian and military casualties in Israel and included the abduction of hostages. In retaliation, Israel declared a state of war against Hamas and began sustained military operations in Gaza. The ensuing conflict has led to substantial loss of life on both sides and has severely deepened the humanitarian crisis within the Gaza Strip.

Aims of the Study

This study examines Historical Survey of the Gaza- Israeli Conflict within the period of 1948- 2023. While the specific Objectives are;

1. Present a brief history history of the Arab- Israeli Conflict

2. Delve into the causes and nature of the Nakba
3. Examine the first and second Intifadas
4. Examine the causes of the Hamas- Israeli War

Scope of the Study

The study covers the history of the Gaza- Israeli Conflict within the period of 1948- 2023. The study encompasses a broad range of political, military, social, and humanitarian dimensions. This period witnessed the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent Arab-Israeli wars, such as the 1948 War, Six-Day War (1967), Yom Kippur War (1973), Intifadas and the Gaza War.

Methodology

The research methodology is on the historical method base on time and space. The study will rely mainly on secondary documents and materials, while also conducting interview around Benin;

Primary Source— The Primary sources are interviews.

Secondary Sources— While the secondary sources are articles in journals, Publications and online sources.

Literature Review

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has drawn extensive scholarly attention across political science, history, international relations, and Middle Eastern studies. This literature review traces the evolution of the conflict from 1948 through 2023, highlighting the key phases, actors, and debates within academic and policy-oriented research.

David Lacey's analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in *The Role of Humiliation in the Palestinian/Israeli Conflict in Gaza* provides a social psychological framework that

complements traditional international relations approaches. He suggests that the conflict's persistent nature can be better understood through the lens of collective emotions such as humiliation and resentment, which deeply shape both Israeli and Palestinian identities. Lacey highlights how the ongoing crisis in Gaza fuels emotional responses that contribute to recruitment into resistance groups. By linking humiliation and resentment to forced changes in social status, Lacey opens the door for social psychologists to explore conflict potential through group status dynamics and hierarchy analysis.¹⁰

Similarly, Ahron Bregman's *Israel's Wars: A History Since 1947* offers a comprehensive historical overview of the Arab-Israeli conflict. While acknowledging that tensions existed before 1947, Bregman focuses on the conflicts that have followed Israel's declaration of independence—an event seen by many Arabs as the loss of Palestinian land. The fourth edition of his book brings the narrative up to date with recent events, including the Gaza conflicts between 2007 and 2014. It also uncovers previously undisclosed information, such as Soviet involvement in escalating the 1967 Six-Day War, the Israeli attack on the USS *Liberty*, and the targeting of Palestinian leaders by Israeli forces. With detailed maps, photographs, and fresh commentary, Bregman's work serves as a vital resource for anyone studying the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict over the past seventy years.¹¹

Karen Tenenbaum and Ehud Eiran, in their study *Israeli Settlement Activity in the West Bank and Gaza: A Brief History*, explore the origins and development of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The drive to claim and settle the West Bank—often referred to as Judea and Samaria—emerged after Israel's unexpected victory over Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War. Prior to this conflict, there was little domestic political pressure within Israel to expand its borders. Although the right-wing Herut party (the predecessor of Likud)

historically supported the idea of a Jewish state spanning “both banks” of the Jordan River, by the mid-1960s, this was a minority viewpoint. The outcome of the Six-Day War, however, brought a dramatic shift in public sentiment. Israel suddenly controlled a significantly larger territory, prompting various political and religious groups to mobilize the ideological, political, and financial means to populate these areas. Shortly after the war, Israel annexed East Jerusalem, with broad consensus supporting its status as an undivided capital. Efforts were made to encourage Jewish settlement in these new Jerusalem neighborhoods. However, Tenenbaum and Eiran focus primarily on settlement activities in the West Bank and Gaza, distinct from developments within Jerusalem itself. Their analysis divides the settlement history into two main periods: 1967 to 1977, when the Labor party governed, and the post-1977 era, marked by Likud’s rise to power.¹²

In a related study, Salah H. Al-Houdalieh, Loay Abu Alsaud, and Ayman Warasneh examine the effects of the ongoing Gaza conflict on cultural heritage in *Heritage and Conflict in Gaza*. During the first 170 days of the 2023–2024 war, numerous cultural sites in Gaza suffered partial or total destruction. Local and international organizations have attempted to assess the damage using eyewitness reports, direct observations, and satellite imagery. However, continuous Israeli air, land, and sea bombardments across Gaza have hindered a comprehensive evaluation of the cultural losses. Existing data reveals that many significant archaeological sites, historic cities, religious buildings—including churches, mosques, and shrines—museums, traditional markets, libraries, manuscript collections, cemeteries, cultural and administrative centers, as well as educational institutions, have been severely impacted. The study highlights not only the risks armed conflict poses to cultural heritage but also the profound consequences such damage has on the collective national identity.¹³

Anthony H. Cordesman, in his work *The Gaza War*, debates whether the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza should be classified as a full-scale war or viewed as another violent episode in the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian struggle. Notably, it represents the first significant armed confrontation specifically between Israel and Hamas, distinguishing it from earlier conflicts involving the PLO and Fatah. Cordesman's analysis also explores how Israeli military capabilities have evolved since the 2006 conflict with Hezbollah, highlighting the dynamics of asymmetric warfare between a state and a non-state actor. Drawing on briefings in Israel during and immediately after the conflict—facilitated by Project Interchange—and daily reports from the Israeli Defense Spokesman, the study examines changes in Israeli tactics and capabilities and extracts broader lessons relevant to asymmetric conflicts.¹⁴

In a different approach, Gregory Harms' *The Palestine Israel Conflict* focuses on providing foundational context for understanding the dispute. Harms emphasizes the importance of clarifying what is meant by terms like "Middle East," "Arabs," and "Jews," especially since these labels are often taken for granted. He points out that the term "Middle East" itself is relative—originating from a Western European perspective—and can be confusing depending on one's geographical viewpoint. For example, from the perspective of someone living in India or Mexico, the designation "Middle East" might seem inaccurate or irrelevant. This framing invites readers to reconsider assumptions about the conflict's location and the identities involved.¹⁵

Jeremy Pressman, in *A Brief History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, provides an overview of the conflict's origins, tracing back to the early Jewish migrations and settlement in Palestine. The modern tensions between Jews and Arabs, which set the stage for the Arab-Israeli conflict, began around 1881. At that time, Palestine was home to approximately 565,000 Arabs—mostly Muslims with a Christian minority—and about 24,000 Jews. During this period,

a small number of Zionist Jews from outside the region sought to immigrate to Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire. Zionism, a form of Jewish nationalism, advocated for the return of Jews to their ancestral homeland and the re-establishment of a Jewish state—since the last Jewish sovereignty in the area had ended in 63 BCE. This movement emerged in response to widespread European anti-Semitism and stood apart from other popular 19th-century Jewish responses such as assimilation into Western European societies or emigration to the United States. The area referred to as the Holy Land roughly corresponds to what are now Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Following World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Britain took control of this territory under a League of Nations mandate, known as Mandatory Palestine, which included the land east of the Jordan River that later became Jordan..¹⁶

In a related study, Steve Mock and Amer Obeidi, alongside John Zeleznikow in *A Brief Outline of the Israel–Palestinian Conflict*, explore the causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict beginning with the establishment of Israel in 1948. This includes the Palestinian experience of al-Nakba, or “the catastrophe,” and traces the ongoing conflict up to recent times. Due to the conflict’s long, complex, and deeply contested history—marked by multiple perspectives and significant moral and political ramifications—no single narrative is likely to satisfy all parties involved. Their analysis starts from the biblical figure Abraham, recognized as a patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and moves through the rise of Zionism and Arab nationalism. This leads to Israel’s declaration of independence on May 14, 1948, a date celebrated by Israelis as Yom Ha’atzmaut and mourned by Palestinians as al-Nakba. Although the discussion covers recent developments, such as the 2011 Arab Spring protests, the authors acknowledge that the situation remains fluid, with significant events likely continuing to unfold..¹⁷

Thomas Zeitzoff's study, *Using Social Media to Measure Conflict Dynamics: An Application to the 2008–2009 Gaza Conflict*, analyzes the Gaza conflict by utilizing data extracted from various social media platforms. One major challenge in conflict research has been the lack of fine-grained temporal data, which limits the understanding of short-term military dynamics. To address this, Zeitzoff develops a novel dataset containing hourly dyadic conflict intensity scores derived from Twitter and other social media during the 2008–2009 Gaza conflict. By applying a vector autoregression (VAR) model, the study examines how Israel and Hamas adjusted their military responses immediately after two pivotal moments: the deployment of Israeli ground forces and the UN Security Council's vote on the conflict. The findings indicate that both parties roughly doubled their responses following the ground invasion, but after the Security Council vote, Israel's response decreased by about half while Hamas's slightly intensified. Furthermore, the research offers a methodological framework for scholars to use social media data in analyzing the micro-level dynamics of armed conflicts.¹⁸

Miriam Billig, in *The Jewish Settlements in Judea and Samaria (1967–2008): Historical Overview*, explores the origins and expansion of settlements in Judea and Samaria—territories Israel captured from Jordan during the 1967 Six-Day War. The study investigates the motivations and development of these settlements from temporal, spatial, and societal perspectives. It distinguishes between government-sanctioned settlements and those established by private groups or individuals, sometimes in defiance of official construction freezes. The work also assesses the relative influence of ideological versus practical factors in the colonization process. Quantitative demographic data is incorporated to illustrate the various community structures and social compositions that define the settlement landscape.¹⁹

Yara Nassar's work, *Israel's War on Gaza*, analyzes data from the Arab Opinion Index collected between December 12, 2023, and January 5, 2024. The survey focuses on public sentiment in neighboring Arab countries—Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon—and reveals a strong emotional impact from the Gaza war on the Arab population. It highlights widespread solidarity with Palestinians and significant dissatisfaction with Western support for Israel, particularly targeting the United States. Following Hamas's surprise attack on October 7, 2023, initial public enthusiasm in the Arab world shifted to despair and anger as Israel launched a declared war and ground invasion, causing extensive destruction and numerous civilian casualties. The Arab public responded with economic boycotts, increased social media activism, and street protests, reflecting both solidarity with Palestinians and frustration at the conduct of the war by Israel as well as perceived inaction by Arab governments.²⁰

In as much as these contributions and views have their own merits towards understanding the historical survey of the Hamas- Israeli conflict. It must also be agree that they have not been able to give a total study of the subject matter. All the books, and articles reviewed have been able to cover only some parts of my research. This research seeks to fill that vacuum that has been created for a long while by various scholars.

CHAPTERIZATION

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The first chapter serves as a preamble to the entire work. It introduces the work and tries to give an insight of the entire body work, with its aim and objectives, the methodology used in carrying out this research, the scope of the research and various literature reviewed in relation to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF THE ARAB- ISRAELI CONFLICT AND THE NAKBA

This chapter examines the history of the Arab- Israeli conflict and the Nakba. It focuses on the nature and causes of the conflict.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTIFADAS: POPULAR RESISTANCE AND POLITICAL AWAKENING OF PALESTINIANS

This chapter examines the first and second Intifadas and the growth of popular resistance groups in the Gaza strip.

CHAPTER FOUR

HAMAS AND ISRAELI WAR: NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter focuses on the causes, nature of the Hamas and Israeli war and its implications.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This is the concluding chapter which gives a general summary of the entire research.

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CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF ARAB- ISRAELI CONFLICT AND THE AL- NAKBA

Introduction

The Arab-Israeli conflict has persisted for nearly a century, marked by deep-rooted political tensions and repeated outbreaks of violence. Central to this struggle is the founding of the modern State of Israel as a Jewish homeland and its complex interactions with neighboring Arab countries. The conflict has seen three major wars, numerous smaller clashes, cycles of terrorist attacks and retaliations, and the contentious occupation of disputed territories.¹ Alongside these hostilities, various peace efforts and agreements have been pursued, including treaties that have led to normalized diplomatic relations between Israel and two of its neighboring states. Since the adoption of United Nations Resolution 181, which provided the legal framework for Israel's declaration of independence on May 14, 1948, the international community has remained deeply engaged in attempts to address and resolve the conflict.²

Because the contested region is regarded as sacred by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, the conflict has drawn significant global attention. Its geopolitical significance is heightened by its proximity to some of the world's largest oil-exporting nations, increasing the urgency for a peaceful resolution. Despite considerable efforts toward peace, progress has been limited. Thousands of Palestinians remain refugees, and over three million people living in the West Bank and Gaza lack citizenship in an independent state, enduring widespread poverty.³ The ongoing conflict has also strained relations between the Muslim world—largely advocating for Palestinian rights—and the West, particularly the United States, which is often seen as favoring Israel. This divide has intensified discussions about a “clash of civilizations.” Securing a lasting and fair peace continues to be a critical objective for international diplomacy.⁴

Though the conflict covers a relatively small territory and involves fewer casualties compared to other global disputes, it has consistently attracted significant international media and diplomatic attention over several decades. Various countries, organizations, and individuals around the world are engaged with or closely monitor the conflict due to cultural and religious ties—such as connections to Islam, Arab culture, Christianity, Judaism, or Jewish heritage—as well as ideological, human rights, and strategic concerns. Israel’s democratic system and free press provide broad media access, which further intensifies the coverage.⁵

Some analysts interpret the Arab-Israeli conflict as part of, or a precursor to, a larger “clash of civilizations” between the Western world and the Arab or Muslim world. Others challenge this view, suggesting that the religious dimension is a more recent factor in the conflict. The longstanding hostilities have triggered attacks against perceived supporters of each side in various countries globally. In addition to interstate wars between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the conflict has involved Palestinian refugee terrorism, Israeli retaliations, popular uprisings following the 1967 occupation, and multiple peace initiatives, all contributing to the complexity and longevity of the dispute.⁶

Origins of the Arab- Israeli Conflict

The war, in the formal sense of an interstate armed conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors, began in November 1948 and ended with a series of armistices in 1949. However, the roots of the conflict stretch back much further, to around 1882. Some trace the origins even further, citing ancient animosities between Jews and Muslims, but from 1882 onward, a significant wave of Jewish migration to Palestine—then part of the Ottoman Empire’s Greater Syria province—began. These settlers, fleeing persecution in Europe, were mostly secular Jews, many with socialist leanings, who envisioned establishing a Jewish colony or state in their

ancestral homeland. They purchased land primarily from Arab absentee landlords, much of which was previously swamp or desert. With determination, ingenuity, and financial support from affluent European Jews, these settlers transformed the land into productive farms. Despite the legality of this migration at the time, it was met with strong Arab opposition.⁶

Britain was an early and influential supporter of Jewish settlement. In 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration, officially endorsing the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Since 1897, the World Zionist Organization had advocated that only through a Jewish state could Jews achieve true freedom from persecution. While Palestine was not initially the sole focus for this goal, by 1917 it had become the primary candidate. Even before World War I ended, Britain had laid claim to administering Palestine, as agreements were made with France to divide the Ottoman Empire's territories among the anticipated victors (with Libya going to Italy).⁷

The 1919 Paris Peace Conference ratified this territorial division under the League of Nations mandates. Although the Arab delegation opposed the arrangements, the conference also endorsed the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, provided that the rights of the existing communities—primarily Arab Christians and Muslims—were preserved. This sparked immediate Arab resistance, including conferences, delegations to London, and widespread unrest. Anti-Jewish riots erupted, marking the early stages of open conflict. The violence in 1920 resulted in over 200 casualties. Despite persistent Arab objections, the British Mandate for Palestine was formally established in 1922.⁸

The British Mandate of Palestine

Most Arabs immediately adopted a policy of non-cooperation with the British authorities. As a result, the Legislative Council that was supposed to be established under the

Mandate was never formed. Between 1929 and 1936, anti-Jewish riots erupted once again. In 1936, the Arab population demanded an end to Jewish immigration, leading to severe restrictions on migration. Faced with increasing difficulties in managing the Mandate, the British government established the Peel Commission to provide recommendations. The commission proposed partitioning the territory into two separate states—one Jewish, one Arab.⁹

During World War II, the Mufti of Jerusalem, whom the British had recognized as the leader of Palestinian Muslims since 1922 despite his involvement in the 1920 riots, openly supported Adolf Hitler. He believed that a German victory would resolve the “Jewish question.” Meanwhile, Jewish resistance to British rule escalated, with several militant groups carrying out attacks in response to the continued delays and restrictions under the Mandate. By the end of the war, thousands of Jewish refugees were stranded in Europe, and many attempted to breach the British blockade, which still severely limited Jewish immigration to Palestine. Realizing the Mandate was no longer sustainable, Britain announced its intention to withdraw completely on May 15, 1948, transferring responsibility to the newly formed United Nations.¹⁰

The UN set up a commission to advise on the situation, which, building on the Peel Commission’s work, recommended the “two-state solution.” This plan also proposed placing Jerusalem under direct UN control. The recommendation formed the basis of UN Resolution 181, passed on November 29, 1947, despite strong opposition from all Muslim states. Ten countries abstained, including Britain, while 33 voted in favor, including the United States. The partition plan allocated approximately 55 percent of the land to the Jewish state, which housed about 60 percent of the population in the designated area. However, no international mechanism was established to oversee the implementation of the plan.¹¹

Due to Arab states' opposition, no steps were taken to establish or support an Arab-majority state. Violence escalated, with rioting between November 1947 and May 1948 resulting in at least 750 deaths. Amidst this international deadlock, Jewish leaders declared the establishment of the modern State of Israel on May 14, 1948, on the eve of Britain's withdrawal. The United States became the first country to officially recognize Israel.¹²

The War of 1948-1949: Al-Nakba

The Arab nations objected to the partition, arguing that according to democratic principles, the governance and future of the entire territory should be determined by all its inhabitants. Declaring that with the British departure no legal authority existed in Palestine, they announced their intention to intervene. On November 29, 1947, the armies of Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt invaded the territory. This conflict is known in Israel as the War of Independence and by Arabs as al-Nakba, meaning the Catastrophe.¹³

By the end of the fighting, Israel had expanded its territory to cover approximately 80 percent of the former British Mandate of Palestine. Jordan, which had itself been created from part of the original Ottoman province by Britain in 1921—fulfilling promises made to Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca during World War I—took control of parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Egypt gained control over the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip.¹⁴

Hostilities ceased in 1949 through the mediation of UN envoy Ralph Bunche, following a series of separate armistice agreements: with Egypt on February 23, Lebanon on March 23, Jordan on April 23, and Syria on July 20. Iraqi troops withdrew in March under the terms of the armistice with Jordan. Although these armistices ended active fighting, they did not legally end the war. Later peace treaties normalized relations between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and between Israel and Jordan in 1994, but Israel remains officially at war with Syria, Lebanon,

and Iraq. During the 1948-1949 war, between 750,000 and 900,000 Palestinian Arabs became refugees, displaced to Lebanon or territories controlled by Jordan and Egypt..¹⁵

The Suez crisis of 1956

In 1955, the focus of Arab–Israeli animosity shifted from the Jordanian front to Egypt, influenced heavily by Cold War rivalries between the Soviet Union and the West. The United States aimed to position Egypt as a key ally in a Middle Eastern alliance to contain Soviet influence and global communism. However, Egypt’s leader, Colonel Gamal Abd al-Nasser—who came to power through a coup in July 1952—adopted a doctrine of neutrality, refusing to align with either Cold War bloc. The situation was further complicated in February 1955 when Britain signed the Baghdad Pact, a security alliance with Iraq’s Nuri al-Said, igniting deep inter-Arab rivalries and regional tensions.¹⁶

In the same month, Nasser faced a military crisis with Israel linked to a prior agreement he had made with Britain in 1954 for British forces to withdraw from the Suez Canal Zone by June 1956. In response, Israeli officials, without Prime Minister Moshe Sharett’s knowledge, activated a spy ring in Egypt. Their objective was to sabotage installations frequented by Westerners, thereby provoking Britain to maintain its military presence to protect its citizens, effectively blocking Egyptian troop movements into Sinai.¹⁷

When the spy ring was exposed, two Israeli agents were executed and others imprisoned. This episode gave the Israeli public the impression of Egyptian hostility and racism, especially as Sharett could not publicly acknowledge Israel’s involvement. The perceived failure to counter Egypt led to a political shift in Israel: David Ben-Gurion returned as Minister of Defense in January 1955, wielding real authority despite nominal subordination to Sharett.¹⁸

In February 1955, Israel launched a large-scale raid into Gaza, inflicting significant Egyptian casualties. This operation was intended primarily to reassure Israeli citizens of their government's military strength after the spy scandal and in the context of Cold War tensions. Alarmed by Egypt's military weakness, Nasser signed an arms agreement with the Soviet Union in September 1955, prompting Israel to strengthen its military ties with France.¹⁹ Tensions escalated in July 1956 when the United States and Britain declined to fund the construction of the Aswan Dam. In retaliation, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal later that month.

This nationalization triggered a covert alliance between Britain, France, and Israel. Each had distinct motivations: Israel sought to break the Egyptian blockade of shipping through the Straits of Tiran to the Gulf of Aqaba and aimed to overthrow Nasser; France, humiliated by its recent loss of Vietnam and embroiled in the Algerian war for independence, viewed Nasser as a supporter of the Algerian revolt and sought his removal to secure its colonial interests; Britain saw the nationalization as a direct challenge to its former imperial dominance and a threat to international order.²⁰

The 1967 war

In May 1967, Israel issued threats of possible retaliatory strikes against Syria, which prompted the Soviet Union to wrongly inform Egyptian President Nasser that Israeli troops were massing on the Syrian border. Seeking to strengthen his reputation as a staunch opponent of Israel, Nasser deployed Egyptian forces into the Sinai Peninsula on May 14, 1967.²¹ These troops removed the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) stationed there, including from Sharm el-Sheikh, which overlooks the strategic Straits of Tiran. In response to provocations from Jordan and Syria, Egypt reinstated its blockade of the Straits, cutting off Israeli maritime

access. This action recreated the tense situation that existed before the 1956 Suez Crisis.²² Nasser's move was largely driven by a desire to assert Egypt's nationalist position, especially in competition with Syria, and this action provided Israel with the justification for war it had asserted in 1957. Following this, Jordan sided with Egypt and Syria, despite its historical rivalry with Syria.

On June 5, 1967, Israel launched a preemptive attack on Egypt, despite receiving information from the United States that an Egyptian envoy was expected in Washington two days later to negotiate a peaceful settlement. With Jordan and Syria joining the conflict, Israel quickly captured and occupied the West Bank, Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, and Sinai Peninsula. Israel then annexed East Jerusalem, which holds significant religious importance for Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, declaring the city its eternal capital. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza came under Israeli military administration.²³

The 1973 war and its consequences

In 1973, Egypt and Syria resolved to launch an attack on Israeli forces in the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights if diplomatic efforts failed to produce progress. Tensions escalated when Israel decided to annex a significant portion of the Sinai, defying UN Resolution 242. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan advocated this move as a condition to remain within the Labour Party ahead of the November elections.²⁴

On October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria initiated a surprise attack on Israel. Israeli troops initially retreated in the Golan Heights but eventually halted the Syrian advance. Meanwhile, Egyptian forces crossed the Suez Canal and overwhelmed Israeli defenses, pushing deep into the Sinai Peninsula before Israeli counterattacks pushed them back and even crossed the Canal to

occupy its west bank. Although Israel technically emerged victorious, Egyptian troops maintained strongholds in the Sinai, leading to prolonged clashes as Israel sought to expel them and restore the previous situation.²⁵

While the 1967 war had dramatically changed the political and military landscape of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the 1973 war established a new territorial status quo that set the stage for negotiation. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger intervened to broker a ceasefire between Egypt and Israel, resulting in Egyptian forces remaining in the Sinai. This created a scenario that necessitated further diplomatic talks. Kissinger believed that limited agreements involving partial Israeli withdrawals from occupied territories could foster trust and pave the way for comprehensive peace treaties.

Following Security Council Resolution 338, passed on October 22, 1973, Kissinger negotiated agreements in 1974 for Israeli withdrawals from the Sinai and Golan Heights with Egypt and Syria. Egyptian President Sadat, eager to regain the Sinai, accepted a second limited agreement with Israel in September 1975. Although this separate arrangement troubled other Arab leaders, it was welcomed by many Israeli politicians, including Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who had taken office in 1974.²⁶

Rabin and most Israeli leaders prioritized retaining the Golan Heights and West Bank despite Resolution 242. They viewed a separate peace with Egypt as a way to remove Egypt from the military equation, allowing Israel to focus on Syria and Jordan to maintain control of these territories. Kissinger reassured Rabin that the U.S. would not pressure Israel into negotiations with Jordan over the West Bank. These U.S.-backed peace efforts in 1974–75, combined with Israel's reluctance to negotiate over the West Bank, had significant consequences for Palestinians and the Palestine Liberation Organization within the broader conflict.²⁷

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CHAPTER THREE

THE INTIFADAS: POPULAR RESISTANCE AND POLITICAL AWAKENING OF PALESTINIANS

Introduction

The term *Intifada*, which means “shaking off” in Arabic, refers to the most notable waves of Palestinian popular resistance against Israeli occupation. There have been two major Intifadas in recent Palestinian history: the First Intifada (1987–1993) and the Second Intifada (2000–2005). Each of these uprisings marked pivotal moments in shaping Palestinian national identity, society, and political activism. The First Intifada began in December 1987 in Gaza’s Jabalia refugee camp after an incident in which four Palestinians were killed in a traffic accident involving an Israeli military vehicle. This event triggered an outburst of years of mounting frustration under Israeli occupation following the 1967 Six-Day War.¹

This initial uprising was largely nonviolent, featuring civil disobedience, widespread protests, boycotts, strikes, and youth throwing stones. It was a grassroots, decentralized movement led by local groups, notably the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising, which included representatives from various Palestinian factions. The First Intifada heightened Palestinian nationalism and identity, leading to greater international awareness of their cause and establishing the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as a recognized representative body.² In 1988, the PLO declared a Palestinian state and moved toward endorsing a two-state solution. The uprising eventually culminated in the 1993 Oslo Accords, in which the PLO formally recognized Israel, and Israel granted limited self-rule to Palestinians through the Palestinian

Authority. Nonetheless, many Palestinians felt that these results fell short of achieving full independence. The Second Intifada was triggered by Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a site of profound significance in East Jerusalem.³

The visit sparked widespread protests and violent clashes. Unlike the largely nonviolent First Intifada, the Second Intifada was marked by much more intense violence, including suicide bombings, shootings, and extensive Israeli military operations. Armed groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades became prominent actors during this period. The increase in armed resistance prompted harsh Israeli responses, including curfews, checkpoints, closures, and targeted killings. Palestinian daily life worsened significantly, and political and social divisions within Palestinian society deepened. This period further strained relations between the Palestinian Authority, led by Fatah, and Hamas, eventually leading to Hamas's electoral victory in 2006 and its takeover of Gaza in 2007, dividing the Palestinian territories both politically and geographically.⁴

Overall, the Intifadas illustrate the changing dynamics of Palestinian resistance. The First Intifada represented a largely unified, grassroots, and mostly peaceful movement for national awakening. In contrast, the Second Intifada reflected growing disillusionment with the peace process and an increase in militancy. Despite these uprisings having officially ended, ongoing protests and movements—such as the Great March of Return in Gaza during 2018–2019 and various demonstrations in the West Bank—demonstrate that the Palestinian struggle for self-determination continues.

The First Intifada, 1987-1993

The First Intifada, also known as the “war of the stone,” began on December 9, 1987, in the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza. It was a widespread grassroots uprising involving people from all segments of Palestinian society—women, teenagers, children, students, workers, teachers, intellectuals, and many others—rising together to challenge the status quo. A PLO activist described the First Intifada in a 2004 interview with From Occupied Palestine. org as “mass participation—it was like a civil rebellion.”⁵ Although neither the Israeli side nor the Palestinians initially expected the uprising, the PLO (which was then headquartered in Tunis) later claimed to have orchestrated it. What made this uprising unique was its extensive geographic reach, covering all the Occupied Territories, its duration of roughly four years, and the forms of resistance involved—mass rallies, general strikes, unarmed protests, local self-administration, and acts of civil disobedience, as noted by the European Institute for Research on Mediterranean and Euro-Arab Cooperation.⁶

The immediate trigger for the uprising was a tragic car accident: an Israeli truck collided with a Palestinian vehicle carrying workers home, killing four Palestinians. This incident ignited widespread riots initially in Gaza that soon spread to the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Beyond this event, deeper frustrations fueled the uprising, including ongoing violations of basic rights, house demolitions, and imprisonment without trial, torture, mass detentions, and deportations. NPR reporter Mike Shuster described the Palestinian condition at the time, emphasizing their statelessness and daily humiliations such as identity checks, body searches, verbal abuse by Israeli soldiers, and witnessing the expansion of Jewish settlements on what Palestinians considered their land.⁷

The uprising also brought international attention to the situation in the region. Four major PLO factions—Fatah, the PFLP, the DFLP, and the PPP—formed the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) to coordinate activities. Meanwhile, Hamas and Islamic Jihad challenged the PLO's leadership role in the uprising. Importantly, no single faction or organization fully controlled the movement, which was mainly guided by local councils of ordinary people unaffiliated with any specific group. The uprising was predominantly nonviolent at first, consisting mainly of stone-throwing, setting up barricades, and burning tires.⁸ Later, Molotov cocktails and hand grenades were also used, while the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) were equipped with advanced weaponry and training.⁹ Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared that Israel would respond with an “Iron Fist” or “breaking of bones” policy, which entailed harsh measures such as beatings, the use of live ammunition, and rubber bullets.¹⁰

First, it seems that the Israelis did not anticipate the scale of the challenge posed by the uprising, which succeeded in bringing the Palestinian issue to the attention of the international community. The global public was shocked by reports detailing the harsh methods used to suppress the uprising, as well as the difficult living conditions of refugees and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. In response, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 605 on December 22, 1987, which condemned Israel for human rights violations. The resolution also called on the Secretary-General to submit recommendations aimed at ensuring the protection and safety of Palestinian civilians.¹¹

Second, Israel appeared to pursue a dual strategy during the Intifada: forcefully trying to quell the uprising while simultaneously sending a clear message that any attempts to challenge the Israeli occupation would be met with severe consequences, in order to deter future resistance. The international community sought ways to halt the violence, and the Palestine

Liberation Organization (PLO) gained recognition as the representative of the Palestinian people. However, Israel refused to recognize the PLO as a legitimate representative and continued to label it a terrorist organization.¹² In November 1988, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) held a session in Algeria where it declared the independence of the Arab State of Palestine within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The PNC also formally recognized the state of Israel and renounced terrorism. Despite this, Israel did not accept the PLO as a legitimate party for negotiations, and its close ally, the United States, as noted by Beinín and Hajjar, “did little to encourage Israel to soften its rigid stance.” The U.S. notably denied Yasser Arafat a visa to attend a United Nations General Assembly session relocated to Geneva in December 1988, where Palestine’s status was discussed. During that session, Arafat reiterated recognition of Israel and rejection of terrorism. He was again refused a U.S. visa in 1990, when the Security Council convened to address events on May 20 in Herzliya, Israel, where eight Palestinian workers were shot and killed by Israeli gunfire.¹³

The Second Intifada 2002- 2006

The Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, began on September 28, 2000, following a visit by Likud leader Ariel Sharon to Jerusalem’s Haram al-Sharif (also called the Noble Sanctuary or Temple Mount). This uprising took its name from the Al-Aqsa Mosque, a significant Muslim holy site.¹⁴ Sharon’s visit, which was heavily guarded by Israeli police and soldiers, was intended to demonstrate that access to the Temple Mount and freedom of worship were guaranteed to all. However, the area was sealed off before, during, and after his visit. Unlike the largely unarmed First Intifada, the Second Intifada was militarized from its outset. Israel was prepared for such unrest, having anticipated possible escalation following the 1996 tunnel incident.¹⁵

In the early days of the uprising, large-scale protests and clashes with Israeli forces were common, often escalating after specific Israeli actions. There were no significant attempts to contain the spread of violence throughout the Palestinian territories. Israel responded with air strikes targeting the Palestinian Authority. Within the first six days, Israeli military and police actions resulted in the deaths of 61 Palestinians and injuries to over 2,600. One notable and tragic incident was the shooting of 12-year-old Muhammad al-Durra and his father on September 30, which became a symbol of the violence. The conflict saw ongoing reciprocal attacks, including Israeli airstrikes on Gaza, suicide bombings in Tel Aviv by groups such as Islamic Jihad and Hamas, and targeted assassinations like that of PFLP leader Abu Ali Mustafa. In retaliation, Israel's tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi was assassinated by the PFLP.¹⁶

The year 2002 was particularly deadly, with violent exchanges resulting in approximately 45 Palestinian and 28 Israeli deaths between March 8 and 27. Multiple attempts were made to halt the violence and return to peace talks. The United States proposed several bridging proposals, culminating in negotiations in Taba from January 21-27, 2001. Although some progress was reported—especially on issues unresolved at Camp David—the talks ultimately failed to stop the ongoing conflict.¹⁷

The causes of the Second Intifada are debated and complex. The seven years of the Oslo Peace Process had failed to resolve core issues, and Israel's continued military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, unresolved refugee rights, ongoing expansion of Jewish settlements, and the construction of bypass roads that damaged Palestinian agricultural land contributed to mounting tensions.¹⁸ While Ariel Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque is widely seen as the immediate trigger, Palestinians view the uprising as a response to frustration over the failure of the Oslo Accords and Camp David Summit in 2000, along with expanding settlements and a lack

of hope for peace. Conversely, Israel sees the Intifada as a planned Palestinian strategy to achieve goals unattained through negotiation, using violence and terror as tactics.¹⁹

At the Camp David Summit, a proposal was offered to the Palestinians that, if accepted, would have effectively ended their claims to statehood. Gregory described the Intifada as a pivotal moment in Israeli-Palestinian relations, emphasizing that this uprising differed from previous ones in many ways. He cautioned that those in power should recognize that the movement's outcome was unpredictable.²⁰ In his article *"Palestinians under Siege,"* Gregory warned:

"What must be clear to every ruler, including Clinton and Barak, is that the period of stability guaranteed by the tripartite dominance of Israel, the United States, and local Arab regimes is now threatened by popular forces of uncertain magnitude, unknown direction, and unclear vision. Whatever shape they eventually take, theirs will be an unofficial culture of the dispossessed, the silenced, and the scorned."²¹

Tensions escalated further when Likud leader Ariel Sharon assumed power following the February 2001 elections. The leadership of the Second Intifada included Tanzim—a Fatah offshoot led by Marwan Barghuti—alongside Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. Additionally, a broad political coalition known as the National and Islamic Forces (NIF) was established to coordinate the uprising. Nevertheless, Fatah played the most influential role during the Intifada.²²

Many scholars link the outbreak of the Second Intifada to the failure of the Oslo peace process and the collapse of the Camp David Summit in 2000. Beyond the factors already discussed, one underlying cause of Oslo's failure was the power imbalance at the negotiation table.²³

A key feature of hegemonic peace is that it tends to destabilize both the dominant power and the weaker party. However, the Israel-Palestine conflict does not fully fit this pattern since the Palestinians were not completely dominated by Israel, despite the latter's significant power advantage. Historical precedents like the Treaty of Versailles after World War I—where Germany was not entirely subdued—show that such peace agreements can sow the seeds of future conflict. Similarly, the Israel-Lebanon peace treaty of the early 1980s illustrates this instability. Thus, the Oslo process fits the model of hegemonic peace, which is inherently fragile. The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 exemplified the destabilizing effects of such peace efforts.²⁴

Power imbalances have persisted throughout, amplified by substantial U.S. financial and diplomatic support for Israel. The Oslo Accords highlight this disparity: Palestinians made considerable concessions over seven years of negotiations. The Camp David proposals put the viability of a future Palestinian state in question, as accepting Ehud Barak's offer would have compromised essential Palestinian demands.²⁵ A "just peace" requires addressing critical Palestinian concerns—resolving refugee issues, ending human rights violations, and halting Israeli settlement expansion in the Occupied Territories. However, Israel retained control over implementation; for example, refugees could not return without Israeli approval, and settlements could not be dismantled without Israel's consent, even if the agreements stipulated otherwise.²⁶

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE GAZA- ISRAELI CONFLICT: NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

On October 7, 2023, Hamas carried out a highly coordinated and unexpected assault on Israel during *Shemini Atzeret*, a Jewish holiday marking the conclusion of the Sukkot festival. With many Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) troops off duty and military attention focused on the northern border, the southern region near Gaza was less defended. The attack began around 6:30 a.m. with an intense launch of more than 2,200 rockets over just 20 minutes—exceeding half the number used in the entire 11-day conflict in 2021.¹

This massive rocket barrage reportedly strained the Iron Dome missile defense system, though Israeli authorities did not disclose how many rockets bypassed its protections. At the same time, around 1,500 fighters from Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) breached the border at numerous points. Using bulldozers and explosives, they broke through barriers reinforced with advanced surveillance technology, fencing, and concrete structures. They also disrupted communication lines at Israeli military posts, enabling them to overrun those positions and move into nearby civilian areas undetected. Additional infiltrations occurred via the sea near Zikim using motorboats, while other attackers arrived using motorized paragliders.

Roughly 1,200 individuals were killed in the attack, including entire families in their homes and participants at a music festival. Most of the victims were Israeli civilians, though several foreign nationals were also among the dead.³ A United Nations report released in March 2024 indicated that some of the victims were subjected to sexual violence before being killed. The scale of the tragedy made it the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.

More than 240 people were taken hostage and transported to Gaza. Hostages were abducted from residential areas and the music festival. Many held dual citizenship, with passports from approximately two dozen nations—drawing multiple countries into the push for their release.⁴

The following day, Israel formally declared a state of war—the first time it had done so since the Yom Kippur War in 1973. The conflict began with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launching air strikes across the Gaza Strip, followed by a ground invasion involving troops and armored units several weeks later. By the time a ceasefire was brokered in January 2025, official figures indicated that over 46,000 Palestinians—approximately 2 percent of Gaza’s population—had been killed, and around two-thirds of the territory’s infrastructure had been either damaged or destroyed. On the Israeli side, roughly 1,600 people had died, including those killed during the October 7 attack. While the ceasefire brought a temporary halt to the violence for over a month, its enforcement proved unstable, and by mid-March, hostilities had resumed.⁵

The Hamas Israel war: Nature and Dynamics

In early October 2023, Hamas launched a surprise assault on southern Israel, firing rockets and crossing the border from Gaza to attack Israeli cities and towns. The attack resulted in the deaths of over 1,300 Israelis, injuries to approximately 3,300 more, and the abduction of hundreds of individuals. In response, Israel’s cabinet officially declared war on Hamas a day later. The defense minister ordered a “complete siege” of Gaza, marking the most significant escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in decades.⁶

Ahead of a planned ground invasion, which began on October 27, Israel instructed over one million residents of northern Gaza to evacuate while continuing aerial bombardments. From November 24 to 30, 2023, a temporary ceasefire allowed for the exchange of hostages and

prisoners, along with increased humanitarian aid to Gaza. However, the truce collapsed amid accusations of violations by both Hamas and Israeli forces.⁷

In January 2024, under international pressure—particularly from the United States—and growing concerns about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, Israel indicated a move toward less intense military operations. The IDF also began repositioning for a new phase in southern Gaza, especially targeting Rafah.

Israel's planned operation in Rafah sparked criticism from the Biden administration. In May 2024, reports emerged that the U.S. had delayed a shipment of bombs to Israel, citing concerns about the potential for mass civilian casualties in the densely populated area. Shortly after, President Biden announced that he had warned Prime Minister Netanyahu that certain offensive weapons, including artillery and 2,000-pound bombs, would be withheld if Israel launched a major assault on Rafah. Ultimately, the administration did not enforce the restriction, judging Israel's actions in Rafah to be more precise than previous campaigns.⁸

In the autumn of 2024, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) renewed their military campaign in northern Gaza, focusing specifically on the Jabalia refugee camp, even as operations continued in the south and central parts of the Strip. This offensive was justified by Israeli officials as necessary to eliminate Hamas fighters who were reportedly reestablishing their presence in areas previously targeted.⁹ The intensity of the operations in Jabalia raised fears among observers that Israel could be preparing to implement the controversial "Generals' Plan," which calls for a total blockade of the region, including restrictions on humanitarian aid, as a strategy to force Hamas combatants to surrender. Between October 6 and December 31, 2024, the United Nations made 165 attempts to deliver aid to the besieged area, but 149 were denied by Israeli authorities, and the remaining 16 were obstructed in various ways. The humanitarian

crisis has extended well beyond Jabalia. Since Israel's military operations began in 2023, there have been numerous reports documenting strikes on journalists, educational facilities, and areas that Israel had designated as safe humanitarian zones.

Israeli attacks on healthcare infrastructure, including hospitals and vital services, have contributed to a resurgence of diseases such as polio across Gaza. The risks to aid workers have also grown, with tragic consequences. In April 2024, seven World Central Kitchen staff were killed in an Israeli airstrike, and in August, personnel from the World Food Programme were shot.¹⁰ These incidents have severely undermined the ability of humanitarian agencies to operate safely, prompting many to reduce or suspend their activities. Further complicating aid efforts is Israel's restriction on so-called "dual-use" items—goods that could have both civilian and military applications. This has led to the rejection of essential humanitarian supplies, including chlorine tablets meant for water purification.¹¹

As of January 2025, an estimated 1.9 million people—roughly 90 percent of Gaza's population—had been displaced and are now experiencing acute or catastrophic levels of food insecurity. The healthcare system has entirely collapsed, with no functional hospitals remaining.

The death toll in Gaza has exceeded 46,000, with Israeli sources claiming that 17,000 of those were Hamas fighters. Israeli officials have argued that the group's strategy of embedding combatants in civilian areas complicates efforts to avoid civilian casualties. They have also pointed to military successes, such as the June 2024 rescue of four hostages in central Gaza and the killing of key Hamas leaders, including Yahya Sinwar, military commander Mohammed Deif, and his deputy Marwan Issa. However, U.S. intelligence has expressed skepticism that these outcomes will have a lasting impact, stating that Hamas appears to have

replenished its ranks nearly as quickly as fighters have been lost—largely due to the war’s radicalizing effect on the Gazan population.¹²

Implications of the Hamas- Israeli conflict

The socio-economic and political consequences of the Hamas-Israel conflict—particularly the escalation that began on October 7, 2023—have been severe and far-reaching, impacting not only Israel and the Palestinian territories but also the broader Middle East and international relations. The war has triggered an overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe, with tens of thousands of Palestinians reported dead or injured and hundreds of thousands forced to flee their homes. Essential infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, and residential buildings has been reduced to rubble. The United Nations has described Gaza’s condition as a “total humanitarian collapse.” Widespread destruction has also affected roads, electricity, water systems, and communication lines, effectively crippling Gaza’s economy and worsening the already dire humanitarian conditions.¹³

In commentary, Osarewese emphasized that the most immediate and devastating effect of the war is the humanitarian crisis affecting both Gaza and parts of Israel. Thousands of lives have been lost, including a significant number of civilians, and mass displacement has become the norm. Beyond the humanitarian toll, the conflict is shifting geopolitical dynamics in the region. Iran’s role, changing relationships among Arab states, and mounting pressure on diplomatic normalization initiatives such as the Abraham Accords are reshaping the political landscape.¹⁴

On the Israeli side, more than 1,200 individuals were killed in the initial Hamas assault on October 7. The psychological impact of ongoing rocket attacks and infiltration threats has left deep scars on Israeli society. Over 200,000 Israelis were temporarily relocated from

southern and northern regions due to security threats posed by rocket fire from both Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Israel's prolonged military engagement in Gaza has also come at a high financial cost, amounting to billions of dollars—putting strain on the national budget and potentially affecting the provision of public services. Meanwhile, Gaza's already fragile economy has deteriorated further. Before the war, unemployment rates in the region exceeded 40 percent. The ongoing conflict has brought nearly all economic activity to a halt. Israeli-imposed blockades and tight controls on humanitarian aid have resulted in severe shortages of basic necessities; including food, clean water, fuel, and medical supplies.

Impact of the war Israeli Economy

The Israel-Hamas war started on October 7, 2023, following the invasion of Palestinian militants into Southern Israel. The attack ignited a multi-front war which has become one of the longest and most costly wars in Israeli history. By many indicators, the initial shock of the Hamas attack had a sudden impact on local and international markets. Israeli consumers were hit with a crisis of confidence and consumer spending dipped in the short term. However, as the war drags on, increased public expenditure is straining national accounts. The question remains: how will the government balance its budget? And will their consolidation efforts satisfy international creditors? In the absence of this, the country is likely to face further financial hardships that may impact its economy in the long term.¹⁵

Furthermore, following the outbreak of war, public sector spending increased by over 25 percent in comparison to the pre-war period. As people were displaced and moved away from regions affected by the war, the government stepped in to compensate their losses and fund their stay in temporary accommodation. Most significantly, the army's budget grew almost two-fold, and greater military spending is expected to persist for the foreseeable future.¹⁶

In an interview, Ikponwonsa pointed out that the economic fallout from the conflict is both regional and global in scale. He noted that oil prices have experienced instability due to concerns about a broader regional conflict, particularly if Iran becomes more directly involved. Additionally, the war has disrupted key trade routes and hindered economic activities in the impacted areas. While Israel has seen a sharp rise in defense expenditures, the Gaza Strip has suffered near-total economic collapse.¹⁷

In the immediate aftermath of the October 7 attacks, Israel experienced a significant slowdown in economic and commercial operations. Nearly one million Israeli workers, along with an estimated 150,000 Palestinian laborers employed in Israel, were unable to work for several weeks. Notably, around 7 percent of Israel's vital high-tech workforce was called into military service, including many individuals in critical research and development roles. This disruption is likely to impact the short-term performance of many technology companies.¹⁸ However, as the country adapted to a wartime footing, some of the initial shocks to the economy began to stabilize. Most Israeli workers returned to their jobs, consumer activity increased, and overall business operations in many areas of the country showed signs of recovery.¹⁹

International impactions of the conflict

Western nations, particularly the United States, have faced global backlash for their support of Israel during the conflict. United Nations resolutions criticizing Israeli military actions have exposed deep international divisions. Massive demonstrations supporting both the Palestinian and Israeli sides have erupted worldwide, increasing political pressure on governments in the West and intensifying domestic polarization.

Iran-aligned groups such as Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Iraqi militias have expanded their regional operations amid the war. Iran has seized the opportunity to bolster its "axis of

resistance" and challenge pro-Western states in the region. Although some Arab governments like the UAE and Egypt maintain diplomatic ties with Israel, public sentiment in much of the Arab world overwhelmingly supports Palestinians. This disconnect between leadership and popular opinion risks destabilizing regimes and empowering populist or Islamist factions. At the same time, Turkey, led by President Erdoğan, has become one of the strongest regional critics of Israel, realigning its position to resonate more with pro-Palestinian sentiment and to assert greater influence in the region. The conflict's scope has expanded further, with growing tensions involving Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping routes, and increased activity from Iraqi militias.²⁰

Both Hamas and Israel are currently under investigation for potential war crimes. The International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are facing demands to take firm action. The broader international system—including the United Nations—has come under criticism for failing to end the conflict or adequately protect civilians. UN agencies like UNRWA have seen funding cuts and intense scrutiny, especially after Israel accused some of its staff of links to Hamas.²¹

Globally, the conflict has led to a rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents, particularly in countries such as the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Western governments have also faced criticism from countries in the Global South, which accuse them of applying double standards—condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine while supporting Israel despite the large number of civilian casualties in Gaza.

Within Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has faced mounting criticism for intelligence failures that allowed the October 7 attack to occur. His political future is increasingly uncertain, as protests and public dissatisfaction grow. The war has deepened

internal divisions between right- and left-leaning factions, especially regarding policies on Gaza and settlements in the West Bank. Meanwhile, Palestinian opinion is divided: while some view Hamas as a resistance force, others blame it for triggering a catastrophic conflict. Dissatisfaction with Hamas has risen in Gaza, while the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank has been further marginalized and politically weakened.²²

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CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

The conflict between Gaza and Israel from 1948 to 2023 represents one of the longest-running and most complex struggles in contemporary history. It traces its roots to the establishment of Israel and the subsequent displacement of large numbers of Palestinians. Since then, the Gaza Strip has emerged as a central arena for territorial, national, and ideological disputes.¹ Pivotal events—such as Israel's occupation of Gaza in 1967, the emergence of Hamas, multiple armed confrontations, and the longstanding blockade—have fueled ongoing violence, derailed peace efforts, and created severe humanitarian challenges, especially for residents of Gaza.² Despite numerous ceasefires and negotiation efforts, the absence of a durable political solution and mutual distrust between the parties has ensured that tensions remain high.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas carried out an unprecedented assault on southern Israel, killing approximately 1,200 individuals—most of them civilians—and capturing more than 200 hostages. Israel responded with a large-scale military operation targeting Hamas in Gaza, which included extensive airstrikes, a ground offensive, and a blockade.³ This escalation has resulted in devastating consequences for civilians and has significantly altered the regional and global landscape. The humanitarian toll in Gaza has been overwhelming, with tens of thousands of deaths, entire communities flattened, and basic services like food, water, and healthcare rendered nearly inaccessible.⁴ For Israel, although it has inflicted considerable damage on Hamas, the campaign has come at a high price—both in human terms and in terms of international reputation. The persistence of Hamas despite Israel's military campaign underscores the limitations of relying solely on force to resolve a deeply political conflict.⁵

On the political front, the war has deepened divisions. In Israel, public confidence in the leadership of both the government and the military has been severely shaken. Within Palestinian territories, the war has laid bare the disunity of Palestinian governance, with the Palestinian Authority appearing increasingly powerless and disconnected from the situation in Gaza. This leadership vacuum risks enabling further radicalization and unrest.⁶

Globally, the war has sparked intense debate and activism. Demonstrations across university campuses in the United States and in major cities across Europe and the Middle East have highlighted a generational and ideological shift in public perception of the conflict. Criticism of Israeli policy has grown louder, with increasing support for Palestinian self-determination. Western nations, particularly the United States, are under mounting pressure to reevaluate their stance—striving to balance unwavering support for Israel’s security with growing demands for accountability over civilian suffering.⁷

The conflict has drawn in additional regional players, especially Iran and its allied militias, raising concerns about the possibility of a wider war across the Middle East. Direct clashes between Israel and Iran have already taken place, contributing to an unstable and unpredictable environment. At the same time, Arab states that had established diplomatic ties with Israel through the Abraham Accords are facing growing internal opposition, putting these agreements under considerable strain. Ultimately, the conflict reveals that lasting security or peace cannot be achieved through military force alone. The cycle of violence will persist unless the underlying issues—such as the occupation of Palestinian lands, the Gaza blockade, mutual non-recognition, and the absence of a credible political framework—are resolved.⁸

In summary, the Hamas-Israel war has significantly heightened geopolitical tensions throughout the region. The longer hostilities in Gaza continue, the greater the risk that the conflict will spill over beyond Israeli and Palestinian borders. Ongoing Israeli military actions increase the likelihood of deeper involvement by regional actors, threatening the overall stability of the Middle East. The war has also stalled progress on normalization efforts between Israel and Arab countries and raised the possibility of proxy conflicts escalating into wider violence.⁹ Furthermore, the tense atmosphere has emboldened terrorist organizations and piracy operations across the region. At the same time, China and Russia are expanding their diplomatic influence by supporting Palestinian statehood and capitalizing on growing Arab dissatisfaction with Western powers, including the United States. When considered alongside the Ukraine conflict and Indo-Pacific tensions, the instability in West Asia contributes to a precarious global security landscape.¹⁰

This crisis highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive and equitable resolution that addresses fundamental issues including sovereignty, security, human rights, and the quest for statehood. Without confronting these root causes, the Gaza-Israel conflict will likely endure, prolonging hardship for all parties involved.¹¹

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1.	Charles Osarewese	Lecturer	Benin	14th, May, 2025
2.	Frank Ikponwonsa	Lecturer	Benin	14th, May, 2025

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