



Security Council (SC)

Topic 1: The Gaza emergency and its implications for regional stability

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1. Definition of key terms

Hamas: A Palestinian fundamentalist and nationalist organization designated as a terrorist group by multiple countries and entities. Founded in 1987, it has since played a significant role in governing the Gaza Strip.

Fatah: Another major Palestinian political organization and the leading faction within the Palestinian Authority.

West Bank: A Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967 and home to numerous Israeli settlements.

Yom Kippur War: An Arab-Israeli conflict frequently referenced in historical contexts, which occurred in 1973.

Blockade: Refers to restrictions imposed by Israel and Egypt on goods and people entering or exiting the Gaza Strip since 2007, following Hamas's takeover of the territory.

al-Aqsa Mosque: A sacred site in Jerusalem that often serves as a flashpoint for tensions.

Zionism: A political, ideological, and nationalist movement that emerged in the late 19th century, aiming to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The movement is rooted in the Jewish historical, religious, and cultural connection to the land of Israel.

2. Introduction

The Gaza emergency is the result of a prolonged conflict between Israel and Palestine, with a particularly dire situation in Gaza. The overwhelming power of Israeli forces has left the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip vulnerable, facing constant threats from airstrikes and military operations. The healthcare system is severely overstretched, with widespread damage to infrastructure, while humanitarian aid is frequently blocked from reaching Gaza due to restrictions imposed by Israel and Egypt. Since October 2023, the death toll has reached devastating levels, with tens of thousands of Palestinians losing their lives. The international community has expressed outrage, yet Israel remains resistant to calls for an immediate ceasefire. In January 2025, a temporary ceasefire agreement, effective from January 15, 2025, was reached, though its future remains uncertain. The Palestinians' future remains precarious, dependent on the political will of Israel, regional actors, and global powers.

3. Timeline of events

1948 Palestine War & First Arab–Israeli War

Tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees fled or were forcibly displaced to the Gaza Strip due to Zionist violence. By the end of the war, Gaza housed 25% of Mandatory Palestine's Arab population, despite comprising only 1% of its land area. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established in 1948 to provide aid.

1956 Suez Crisis

Israeli forces occupied Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula but withdrew under international pressure. Alleged massacres, such as in Khan Yunis, occurred during this period. Egypt retained control of Gaza until 1967, governing it as a militarized territory.

1967 Six-Day War

Israel captured Gaza, displacing 75,000 residents and expelling thousands. A 'five-finger' strategy divided Gaza into zones, facilitating military control and settlement expansion.

1987 First Intifada

Palestinian frustration over prolonged occupation erupted into protests and clashes. Following the 1993 Oslo Accords, much of Gaza came under Palestinian Authority control, though Israel retained oversight of settlements and military zones.

2000 Second Intifada

Triggered by failed peace talks, this period saw intensified violence, including rocket attacks by Gaza-based groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Israel constructed the Gaza–Israel barrier during this time.

2005 Israeli Withdrawal

Israel evacuated settlements in Gaza, leaving the Palestinian Authority in control. However, Hamas's 2006 electoral victory led to economic sanctions and a humanitarian crisis.

2008 Gaza War

A 22-day Israeli offensive against Hamas caused significant casualties and destruction, displacing tens of thousands.

2014 Gaza War

Triggered by the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli teenagers, this seven-week conflict resulted in thousands of deaths, primarily among Gazan Palestinians.

2018–2019 Great March of Return

Protests demanding the right of return and opposing the Gaza blockade resulted in 223 Palestinian deaths. Reports of war crimes followed.

October 7, 2023 Hamas Attack

Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on southern Israel, killing at least 1,300 people and taking 236 hostages. Israel declared war and imposed a “total blockade” on Gaza. By January 2024, an estimated 43,000 Palestinians, including 16,000 children, had died, and extensive internal displacement occurred. Up to 80% of northern Gaza’s buildings were reported damaged or destroyed.

January 15, 2025 Ceasefire Agreement

A temporary ceasefire was reached between Israel and Hamas, effective from January 15, 2025. The agreement has brought a momentary halt to hostilities, though its future remains uncertain as both parties continue to engage in negotiations. International bodies remain closely monitoring the situation, but the humanitarian crisis in Gaza persists, with millions in need of aid and limited access due to ongoing blockades.

4. Background information

The prolonged conflict between Israel and Palestine often receives insufficient attention. Below are two significant events that merit broader awareness.

One notable event occurred between December 27, 2008, and January 18, 2009, when Israel launched a military campaign against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The stated objectives of this operation were to halt Qassam rocket attacks on southern Israel and to degrade Hamas’s military and logistical capabilities. This campaign was striking, as it followed a ceasefire mediated by Egypt only months earlier. The operation began with aerial bombardments targeting military installations, smuggling tunnels, and Hamas’s strategic bases. Civilian structures were also struck, leading to significant casualties. On January 3, 2009, Israel launched a ground offensive, encircling Gaza and cutting off Hamas from essential supplies. Over the 22-day operation, more than 1,200 Palestinians were killed, including many civilians. International organizations, including the United Nations and NGOs, criticized both sides for alleged human rights violations and war crimes. Israel was accused of using prohibited weapons, such as white phosphorus, and targeting civilians. Conversely, Hamas faced condemnation for launching missiles from densely populated areas, thereby putting civilians at risk. Politically, the operation deepened divisions between Hamas and Fatah, further diminishing prospects for Palestinian unity.

Tensions resurfaced dramatically on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, firing over 5,000 rockets and conducting coordinated ground raids along the border. This assault, the most devastating since 1948, caused over 1,200 casualties and saw 250 individuals abducted, including children. Reports of sexual violence also emerged. Hamas framed the attack as a response to Israeli actions at the al-Aqsa Mosque and in West Bank refugee camps. The operation was deliberately timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, as well as the Jewish holidays of Simchat Torah and Sukkot, contributing to Israel’s

unpreparedness. In retaliation, Israel declared war and began extensive bombardments of the Gaza Strip. While the initial attack was carried out by Hamas, the broader Israeli response targeted the entire Gaza region, marking a significant escalation in the conflict with profound humanitarian and geopolitical consequences.

By January 2024, the death toll from Israeli airstrikes and ground operations in Gaza had surpassed 43,000 Palestinians, with the majority being civilians. The humanitarian crisis continued to worsen as basic services collapsed, and widespread displacement affected Gaza's population.

The situation remained dire until January 15, 2025, when a temporary ceasefire was brokered, offering a brief respite from the violence. However, the ceasefire's longevity is uncertain, and tensions remain high. The international community continues to urge both sides to negotiate a lasting peace agreement, but regional instability persists, complicating any potential resolution. The Gaza emergency not only poses significant challenges to Palestinian-Israeli relations but also threatens to destabilize the broader Middle East, with neighbouring countries and global powers closely monitoring the evolving situation.

5. Major countries involved

- **United States of America**

The U.S. remains Israel's closest ally, providing substantial military aid, advanced weaponry, and unwavering diplomatic support. It has consistently voted against UN resolutions critical of Israel, emphasizing Israel's right to self-defence, including military actions in Gaza. During the October 2023 crisis and its aftermath, the U.S. increased its financial and military assistance to Israel, including deploying additional naval forces to the region. While the U.S. supports Israel's security, it has also advocated for humanitarian pauses to allow aid into Gaza, reflecting a complex balancing act in its foreign policy.

- **Canada**

Canada has provided military and economic support to Israel, frequently aligning its policies with Israel's interests on the international stage. Canadian representatives at the UN often vote alongside Israel and its allies. During the Gaza emergency, Canada echoed calls for Israel's right to defend itself while expressing concern over civilian casualties and the need for humanitarian aid to Gaza.

- **Iran**

Iran remains a key ally of Hamas and other Gaza-based factions. It provides military, financial, and diplomatic support to the Palestinian cause. Following the October 2023 attacks, Iran reaffirmed its backing for Hamas, viewing the conflict as part of a broader resistance against Israel. Iran's involvement underscores the regional dimensions of the Gaza emergency, intensifying tensions with Israel and its allies.

- **Lebanon**

Lebanon's role in the Gaza emergency primarily involves the activities of Hezbollah, which has conducted cross-border operations and engaged in skirmishes with Israeli forces along the northern border. While Lebanon's government remains officially neutral, Hezbollah's support for Hamas has heightened regional instability, leading to concerns about the conflict's potential to spill over into a wider war.

The January 2025 ceasefire has reduced immediate tensions, but these nations' involvement continues to shape the conflict's trajectory and its implications for regional stability.

6. UN involvement

United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

A UN agency dedicated to providing relief and promoting the development of Palestinian refugees.

United Nations Independent Commission on the 2018 Gaza Border Protests

Established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2018 to investigate Israel's response to Palestinian protests in the Gaza Strip.

Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO)

UNSCO represents the UN Secretary-General and coordinates political and diplomatic efforts related to the Middle East peace process. It also oversees humanitarian and development initiatives in the occupied Palestinian territories, supporting the Palestinian Authority and people.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334

This resolution condemns actions intended to alter the demographic composition of Palestinian territories occupied by Israel. It highlights violations such as settlement construction, land confiscation, and displacement of civilians, which breach international humanitarian law and Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Additionally, it denounces violence against civilians, terrorism, provocation, and destruction.

7. Official documents and treaties about the issue

The Gaza emergency has been widely discussed, especially over the past year and a half, with the United Nations actively debating and addressing the issue. Several significant actions have been proposed and implemented in pursuit of a resolution. Among the most relevant are **Security Council (SC) Resolution 2735 (2024)** and the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Immediate Actions Appeal**.

- **SC Resolution 2735**

Passed in June 2024 with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russian Federation), this resolution outlines a three-step plan to resolve the conflict. The resolution urged both Israel and Hamas to act promptly:

1. **Phase One:** An immediate ceasefire by both parties, the release of hostages, the withdrawal from occupied areas, and the facilitation of humanitarian aid throughout Gaza.
2. **Phase Two:** A complete end to hostilities and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the focus region.
3. **Phase Three:** A reconstruction plan for the Gaza Strip and the return of deceased individuals to their families.

The resolution also emphasized that the UN would not accept any attempts to limit the scope of the conflict resolution within the Gaza Strip.

- **“Demand for Ceasefire” Resolution (2024)**

After a failed resolution in the SC due to a U.S. veto despite 14 votes in favours, the General Assembly (GA) passed this resolution in December 2024 with overwhelming support: **158 votes in favour, 13 abstentions, and 9 against**. This marked a significant improvement in international consensus, with several nations that previously opposed ceasefire resolutions shifting their stance.

- **“Full Support for UNRWA” Resolution (2024)**

Passed alongside the “Demand for Ceasefire” resolution, this GA resolution garnered similar support: **159 votes in favour, 9 against, and 13 abstentions**. It reaffirmed the UN’s trust in UNRWA’s mandate to protect millions of Palestinian lives and emphasized following recommendations from a former French foreign minister. Since the outbreak of war in October 2023, UNRWA has played a crucial role in providing healthcare and vital aid to refugees in Gaza.

Recent documents include the **January 15, 2025 Ceasefire Agreement**, brokered by Egypt and Qatar, which temporarily halted hostilities and emphasized the need for humanitarian aid and reconstruction in Gaza. These agreements and treaties highlight the ongoing struggle to balance security, sovereignty, and humanitarian concerns in the region, underscoring the urgent need for a sustainable solution.

8. Impact of the issue

The Gaza emergency, from the outbreak of war in October 2023 to the ceasefire on January 15, 2025, has had far-reaching humanitarian, financial, and political consequences for all parties involved. In Gaza, relentless airstrikes and ground operations displaced millions, killed tens of thousands—many of them civilians—and destroyed critical infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and power facilities. The resulting humanitarian crisis has left the majority of Gaza’s population dependent on international aid, with acute shortages of food, water, and medical supplies exacerbating suffering. Israel, meanwhile, has faced significant trauma and insecurity, with over 1,200 lives lost in the initial Hamas attacks, continued rocket fire on civilian areas, and heightened anxiety among its population, particularly in border regions. The financial toll has been substantial for both sides: Israel’s defence spending and disruptions to trade and daily life have strained its economy, while Gaza faces the near-total collapse of its economic system, with reconstruction needs estimated in the billions.

Politically, the conflict has deepened divisions among Palestinians, as tensions between Hamas and Fatah prevent unified governance and further complicate efforts toward peace. For Israel, the war has solidified hard-line policies but also strained its relationships with key allies, including the United States and European nations, as international criticism mounts over civilian casualties and allegations of disproportionate use of force. Regionally, the crisis has heightened tensions with neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Iran, while countries like Egypt and Qatar have taken on significant mediatory roles, facilitating ceasefire agreements and limited humanitarian aid access. On a global scale, the conflict has polarized public opinion, influencing diplomatic alignments and intensifying debates over human rights, international law, and the role of global powers in fostering a resolution. Despite the temporary reprieve provided by the January 15, 2025,

ceasefire, the unresolved root causes and widespread devastation ensure the region remains highly volatile, with the potential for renewed violence threatening both local populations and broader regional stability.

9. Bibliography and useful links

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