



**Special Political and  
Decolonization Committee  
MICSUN VI 2017  
Background Guide**

Hey friends!

Welcome to one of the most complex issue facing the Middle East currently. There is a lot of information to handle so make sure to get through the background guide and recommended readings to fully understand the context surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict. In this committee, we will be focused on one of two topics which are dissected in detail in the background guide so I won't interest you with all the juicy details just yet.

What is important to keep in mind throughout committee is what I as a chair am looking for:

First, **collaboration**. It is important to keep in mind that Model United Nations is a team game where cooperation enables greater solutions than any one country or mind could conceive on its own. Through your work with others, you will help to generate creative solutions to various problems much like governments use the United Nations to work together.

Second, evidence of **comprehensive research**. In order to understand such a complex issue, you must have sufficient background knowledge that you can fluidly speak on a topic and understand others when they are discussing relevant issues. It will be evident in debate and through your position papers how much research each participant has done, so make sure to do your homework!

Third, willingness to think **outside of the box**. Being a good delegate requires flexibility. While you should maintain your country's position and seek to advance your country's goals, it is important that you navigate towards **diplomatic solutions**. The ability to be flexible, think on your feet, and navigate towards optimal solutions are the cornerstone of a good delegate.

With that in mind, I look forward to seeing everyone in committee and wish you the best of luck!

Sincerely,

Joe Reda

Chair, SPECPOL MICSUN VI

[jreda@miami.edu](mailto:jreda@miami.edu)

## INTRODUCTION

### **History/Structure of the Committee**

The United Nations Fourth Committee is known as the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, or SPECPOL for short. Various topics fall into the purview of this committee, which comprises all members of the United Nations. At its inception, the Fourth Committee primarily focused on the mediation and facilitation of peace with regards to decolonization matters. However, as time progressed and the era of colonization largely closed, the committee became merged with the Special Political Committee, yielding what we know today as SPECPOL. Interestingly enough, one of the committee's primary foci today is the handling of Palestinian refugees (go figure!) as well as peacekeeping, the distribution of public information, and atomic radiation.

## TOPIC A: FOLLOWING UNSC RESOLUTION 2334

### **Statement of the Problem**

Since the Six-Day War, Israel has possessed land that is considered occupied territory by the United Nations. This has led to ceaseless conflict and diplomatic condemnation. Resolving this complex issue will require innovative global solutions that take into context both Israel and Palestine's political climate and will diplomatically engage both parties to rectify past wrongs. The most groundbreaking event in recent memory with regards to the conflict was the US's recent decision to *not* veto UNSC resolution 2334 - it is the first time in recent past the US has abstained from utilizing its veto power in support of Israel. Now, we must consider the ramifications of this decision and how the global community, Israeli and Palestinian allies alike, should react in the context of a changing political sphere.

### **History and Discussion of the Problem**

In order to gain a complete picture regarding the Arab-

Israeli conflict, one must look all the way back to the ancient history of the land. In 135 CE, the Roman Empire conquered the Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judea, expelling Jews from modern-day Israel's capital city of Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. The Romans renamed their new province "*Palestine*." Jumping forward to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Arabs conquered the Roman Palestine and the remaining peoples were assimilated into Arab culture and Muslim religion, with minorities of Christians and Jews living primarily in Jerusalem. While there were brief periods when the Crusaders conquered and expelled Jews and Muslims from Jerusalem, Arab empires were primarily the ruling powers of this area until it became a part of the Ottoman Empire in 1516. The Zionist movement, or the national movement for restoring the land of Israel as the principal Jewish homeland, originated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and encouraged tens of thousands of Jewish people to migrate to Palestine. Following centuries of persecution and anti-Semitism directed at those of Jewish descent, national

independence was the constant driver behind Zionism. The Zionists began to develop a strong following, such so that when the British captured Palestine from the Ottoman Empire in World War I, they were assigned a mandate over Palestine from the League of Nations.

Following the mandate, the immigration and land purchase of Jews into Palestine was met with high resistance by the country's Arab inhabitants. Following attacks on Jewish immigrants, the Zionists developed two self-defense organizations, including the Haganah, which carried out retaliatory attacks in order to protect Jewish settlements. With such conflict permeating the area, it became clear that the two sides would not be able to easily coexist. The British realized that they would not be able to control conflict and gave control of Palestine to the United Nations in order to develop solutions to the issue. The UN proposed a partition plan for Palestine in 1947, which would split up the area into seven parts while also internationalizing Bethlehem and Jerusalem. While the Haganah was outlawed under the British

mandate, it became the primary defense force of the Jewish state after the UN's decision. This plan was accepted by the Jews but rejected by the Palestinians and Arabs. Upon the plan's adoption by the UN General Assembly in November of that year, aggressive conflict escalated between the Arab League and the Zionists.

On May 14, 1948, a day after the declaration of the state of Israel, the conflict between the Haganah and Palestinian Arabs escalated when five Arab armies from neighboring countries planned a simultaneous attack on the new state. These countries include Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Iraq. With an overwhelming advantage of being readily equipped, it was a considered miraculous that the Haganah, which was renamed the Israel Defense Force, was able to halt the offensive and stabilize the front lines only after three weeks. In 1949, the war (known as Israel's War of Independence) ended with every Arab country excluding Iraq signing an armistice agreement.

Following the armistice agreements in 1949, Israel controlled a majority of the area between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea.

Jordan had conquered the West Bank and East Jerusalem while Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip. The city of Jerusalem was now divided, with the Western Wall and the Old City off limits to Jews under the agreements. This created great issues, as these two locations are considered to be paramount to Judaism and to the Jewish people.

### *The Six Day War*

While the two decades following this war were plagued with fighting and conflict, it was not until June of 1967 that it became clear that a peaceful resolution would be nearly impossible. The surrounding Arab states had consistently threatened Israel's destruction, but the conflict finally escalated in May of 1967. During an air battle in April of that year, 6 Syrian fighter jets were taken down by the Israeli air force. This was accompanied by inaccurate information from Soviet intelligence to Syria, which forewarned an Israeli campaign attack on Syria. This heightened tensions between Israel and the surrounding Arab states. In addition, Egyptian president Nasser had recently come under criticism for not defending Syria and Jordan against

Israel and of hiding behind the United Nations Emergency Force (the UN's first peacekeeping force) that was stationed along the Egyptian border. Following Syria's false prediction of an Israeli attack, Nasser decided to act in full force and instructed the UNEF to evacuate the border immediately. Mobilizing Egyptian forces in Sinai, Nasser announced the closing of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, blocking the country off economically at the port city of Elat in southern Israel. Iraq and Jordan quickly came under Egypt's command, placing their respective forces with Egypt under a signed mutual defense pact.

This abrupt mobilization of the Arab countries inspired Israel to respond preemptively, staging an air assault that immediately destroyed more than 90% of Egypt's air force on the ground. This was repeated on the Syrian air force as well. The Egyptian was left vulnerable to attack with no cover from the air, which made it easy for Israel to capture the Gaza Strip and all of the Sinai Peninsula up to the east bank of the Suez Canal. Israeli forces were also able to drive out Jordanian

forces, which began shelling west Jerusalem. Most of the West Bank and East Jerusalem were conquered by the Israelis, including the sacred Western Wall. When the UN Security Council called for a cease-fire after six days of warfare, Egypt accepted. Syria decided to hold out and continued to attack villages in northern Israel. Two days after the ceasefire was called, Israel launched an attack on the Golan Heights and were able to capture it from the Syrian forces after a day of fighting. Syria accepted the UNSC's ceasefire after this loss.

The Arab countries' losses due to the Six-Day War were disastrous. With more than 11,000 casualties for Egypt, 6,000 for Jordan, 1,000 for Syria and only a little over 700 for Israel, the Six-Day War is considered one of Israel's greatest triumphs. However, this war created a series of issues that are still contested to this day, including the current UNSC Resolution 2334. This includes the Palestinian refugee problem along with Israel's refusal to accept the UNSC Resolution 242. As we examine the consequences and conflict that has resulted from this war, it is important that we

keep the history of the problem into mind in order to evaluate both past and present.

#### UN Resolution 242

Following the ceasefire of the Six-Day War, the United Nations convened to create Resolution 242 on November 22 of 1967, which essentially called for the return of the land conquered by Israel to their respective original Arab owners. This resolution was created with the idea that no peaceful solution could be reached while Israel was in control of the lost land. The resolution officially calls for the, "Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict; and the termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

While Egypt and Jordan accepted Resolution 242 and agreed that it was a necessary precondition to negotiations, Israel's acceptance was tentative. While Israel also wanted to

open negotiations, it did not want to accept the resolution unless the questions concerning withdrawal and refugees could be addressed through direct talks between Israel and the Arab states involved. Israel aspired towards a comprehensive peace treaty. However, this was made impossible by the “Three No’s of Khartoum” made at an Arab League session in Sudan in 1967. The “Three No’s” are as follows: no peace, no negotiations, and no recognition of Israel. Syria also rejected the resolution on the basis that it was demanding concessions from Arab countries for Israeli withdrawal.

The resolution also called for a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. Throughout the continuous conflict between Israel and its surrounding Arab neighbors, the displacement of Palestinian refugees has been a large issue that the world still faces today. The Six-Day War was a major contributor to this issue. While we will talk more about this issue in depth later on, it is important to understand that the Arab countries, most specifically the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO),

strongly criticized Resolution 242 for reducing the question of Palestine to a refugee problem.

#### *The Fourth Geneva Convention*

In August of 1949, the United Nations convened to establish the necessary rules of war in Resolution 181 in response to the Nazi’s actions during World War II. The convention set into place standards and expectations for the treatment of hostages, civilians, spies and diplomats in territories under military occupation. It outlaws torture and collective punishment along with the settlement of the occupying powers’ civilians into the newly controlled territory. It applies all of these principles to Israeli-occupied settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel rejects these claims, stating that the territories captured in the Six-Day War were a result of a defensive war against countries that were illegal occupants of Israel until 1948.

In 1999, Resolution 181 was brought up again and it was unanimously decided that the Fourth Geneva Convention does apply to the occupied territories of the Israeli

settlements. Additionally, the signatories of the international community met on December 17, 2014 to discuss the Israeli settlements and their illegality. Israeli officials claim that these criticisms are unfounded, seeing as how the sovereignty of Palestine is muddled.

#### **Current Situation**

##### *Resolution 2334*

On December 23, 2016, the UN Security Council proposed Resolution 2334, which expressed concern involving Israel’s occupation of territory conquered during the Six-Day War. This resolution states that “continuing Israeli settlement activities are dangerously imperiling the viability of the two-State solution based on the 1967 lines.” While numerous subsequent resolutions have been adopted after Resolution 424 condemning Israel’s occupation, Resolution 2334 came under worldwide scrutiny when President Netanyahu of Israel vocalized his furious reaction. It is also the first time that the United States has declined blocking a resolution that openly condemns Israel as acting in a hostile manner. International debate has been sparked, and the loudest voice has been

President Netanyahu, who perceives the resolution as a direct attack to Israel's safety and approval from other countries, especially the US. He has openly stated that any countries who voted against Israel would "pay a diplomatic and economic price."

While Israel has disregarded Resolution 242, the new resolution appears to reflect a shift in international opinion from Israel's perspective. While 242 called on Israeli armed forces to withdraw from occupied territories, it doesn't call for a retreat from "all" territories occupied outside the original Israel boundary, of Green Line. Israel argues that it is the right of every state to live within secure boundaries. Resolution 2334 blatantly states that Israel should not be allowed to occupy any land that was taken during the Six-Day War, not just portions of it.

The resolution also calls to prevent "all violence against citizens, including acts of terror...provocation and destruction." This openly criticizes Israel for violence against Palestinian civilians and the destruction of their homes and personal property. It demands that Israel respect the Fourth Geneva Convention and its

laws concerning the governance of citizens under military occupation. The resolution calls for accountability from Israel, which has been guilty on continuous attacks on Gaza as well as on Palestinian civilians. While Resolution 2334 has not created any permanent structures or international laws, it has created a variety of issues from the Israeli perspective. It confirms the illegality of Israel's settlements. If Israel refuses to accept this call to end all settlement activity, the Palestinians can pursue cases against Israeli leaders in the International Criminal Court.

#### Growing Settlements

While the disputed territory won post-1967 is a contentious area for dispute, Israel's constant growth in these areas has also lead to issue. When Israel and Palestinians first began peace talks in 1993 with the Oslo Accords (which will be covered later), there were only roughly 100,000 Israelis living in these areas. Now, there are around 400,000 living in about 130 different settlements which have been developed in each corner of the West Bank. Critics accuse Israel of intentionally building

these settlements in a way that requires constant Israeli military surveillance, preventing the creation of a viable Palestinian state. As the settlements grow, it becomes harder and harder to remove them. While the term "settlements" implies that these Israelis are living in easily removable places of living, many of the Israelis who have developed there are not in temporary housing.

#### East Jerusalem

East Jerusalem, a territory that Israel has annexed that is not recognized by any other country as belonging to Israel, is an area that Palestinians refer to as their future capital city and a part of the occupied West Bank. While Palestinians made up the original population of East Jerusalem before 1967, now around 200,000 Israelis live there. However, East Jerusalem is the only area that Israel has declared as annexed. Even the West Bank is not recognized by Israel as sovereign Israeli territory. East Jerusalem is host to many religious sites that are paramount to the Jewish religion, especially the Western Wall. The United Nations has continuously been perceived as anti-Zionist

by the Israeli government, especially in October of 2016, when the UNESCO stated that the Temple Mount and the Western Wall should not be associated with Israel because East Jerusalem is still perceived as an occupied territory that does not belong to Israel. While this decision was made with the similar reasoning as Resolution 2334, this claim came across as anti-Semitic to Jews around the world. President Netanyahu has already cut almost \$8 million in funding towards UN institutions, as well as recalled Israel's ambassadors from two of the resolution's four cosponsors (New Zealand and Senegal).

#### *Palestinian Right of Return*

Following the War of Independence and its armistice agreement, there was a mass diaspora of Palestinian refugees who either fled or were expelled from areas under Israeli control. This paralleled the expulsion of Jewish refugees from Arab states at this time. While the Jewish refugees were able to return to Israel, the United States or Europe, there still remains about a million Palestinian refugees remaining in refugee camps to this day.

The problem was further made worse by the Six-Day War's redistribution of territory ownership. This is a result of two main issues; Israel's rejection of the "*right of return*," accompanied by the Arab's countries refusal to permanently house refugees as they do not accept Israel as a state and its consequent decisions. The "*right of return*" implies that since the Palestinian refugees were once inhabitants of the land, they have the authority to return as permanent members of society. However, Israel rejects this because of a fear that an influx of Arab population will create a disruption in the Jewish majority of Israel. Without a majority Jewish, Israel claims it would no longer be able to call itself a Jewish state. Israel claims that it is the Arab countries responsibility to house the refugees. These Arab countries, along with most of the refugees themselves, believe that they have a right to return to Israel because it is their homeland and should not solely belong to the Jewish people.

Arab leaders have regularly referred to Resolution 194 as a reference that supports that Palestinian refugees have a

right to return. This resolution, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 11, 1948, concerned a variety of issues advising how Jerusalem and surrounding areas must be demilitarized and there must be free access to holy places. One of these issues involves how Arab refugees must be handled during conflict. While it does not specifically guarantee an unconditional right of return to Palestinian refugees, it does state that refugees should be allowed to return to their homeland if they are willing to live side by side with their neighbors and that the return takes place as early as possible. The resolution also states that refugees who did not wish to return should be adequately compensated.

While Arab leaders point to Resolution 194 as proof that Palestinian refugees deserve a right to return or compensation, Israel points out that none of the Arab states that attacked Israel during the Six-Day War voted for the resolution when it was initially proposed. Nor is the word "Israel" even mentioned in the resolution, which uses generalized, plural wording that suggests that the burden of compensation and

immigration does not solely rely on one side of the conflict. Israel also points out how the hundreds of thousands of Arab Jews who were under threat of persecution from their respective countries were absorbed by the then-new nation.

## **Past International Actions**

### Oslo Accords

The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government

Arrangements, otherwise known as the Oslo Accord, was first signed on September 13, 1993 between then-Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin and the Palestine Liberation Organization Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas. While Oslo was meant to be an interim agreement, precluding difficult and contentious peace agreements that would eventually follow, these agreements were the closest both sides have been to achieving real peace. Despite Oslo's failures, it is important that we investigate the disparities between both sides' expectations and discover solutions to prevent their repetition.

The expectations of the PLO centered around regaining control of the territories lost during the

Six-Day War, especially the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians entered negotiations with the belief that they could regain at least 90% of the land and bring a halt to Israeli expansion in these settlement areas. These areas would fall under control of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which would eventually lead to and Israeli withdrawal that would put the state back into 1967 borders. The second Oslo expectation was that the peace agreements would center around economic development for Palestinians, who were facing crushing poverty compared to their Israel counterparts. This disparity in economic growth was considered to be humiliating and even outraging to the Palestinians.

With these objectives in mind, we turn to the Israel's expectations. Both sides wished to see the growth of a Palestinian Authority, which from Israel's perspective would create a safety net between them and Palestinian terrorist attacks. The PA would formally disprove of terrorist groups such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, placing Palestinian leadership and Israeli

government interests in alignment against terrorism. A main reason why Israel was also not keen on returning areas such as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip back to the Palestinians was centered around fear of terrorist groups that would use the regained land as closer bases to target Israel. It was Israel's idea that in exchange for land and security, the Palestinians would bring Israel better security. The main downfall of the Oslo Accords, as we will see, was the inability for both sides to feel that their end of the deal was being upheld properly.

The Oslo Accords implementation began smoothly, with Israelis withdrawing from Palestinian territories in the Gaza Strip and in Jericho on the West Bank. However, this confidence-building soon started to shift. The PA became ultimately skeptical of how committed Israel was to allowing Palestinians to fully inhabit control of these areas. Israel split up the West Bank into three areas, only giving the PA control of 50% of the West Bank compared to the 95% that was expected. The PLO was also under the impression that Israel would halt their settlement

expansion, which was not stated in the agreements but presumed from the Palestinian perspective. The free passage route connecting the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that was agreed upon in the Oslo Accords was also never officially realized, even though Israeli military roadblocks between Palestinians cities were set up as a result of “security concerns.” The PLO took this as an added sign that Israel was trying to strangle any possibility of a Palestinian state by preventing territorial contiguity.

On the other hand, the Israeli’s worst fears associated with signing the Oslo Accords were confirmed. The Oslo process gave greater access to aggressive terrorist groups to position themselves in the PA territory, inciting more civilian violence. Israeli observers noticed early on that the number of armed Palestinians and the types of armaments being brought into the territory were exceeding the agreements limitations. The PA was refusing to take steps towards disarming terrorist groups, even permitting these groups to operate offices within their territory and refusing to arrest terrorists

for more than a handful of days. Israel’s previous perception that the armed Palestinians in the PA would provide better protection than the Israeli military force could provide was immediately disproven.

With no safeguards to monitor and prevent violations to the Oslo Accords, it was inevitable that the agreements would not be able to stand against the longstanding sentiments of anger and mistrust between the Palestinians and Israelis. With no mechanisms in place to control both sides, Oslo had no insurance that both sides would act accordingly.

### **Proposed Solutions**

#### *Arab Peace Initiative (API)*

In 2002, the Arab League proposed a 10-sentence initiative aimed at dismantling the Arab-Israeli conflict. In order to normalize relations between both regions, the API called for the complete withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories (including East Jerusalem) taken in the Six-Day War and providing a proper solution to the Palestinian refugee problem along the lines of Resolution 194. East Jerusalem would become

the capital of a new Palestinian state based on 1967 lines. As a result, all the Arab nations would sign peace accords with Israel and finally establish diplomatic relations.

While there are a variety of reasons why the API would be greatly opposed by Israel, it did not help that there was a major terrorist attack, known as the Passover Massacre, that took place just one day before the initiative was published. Then-Israeli President Ariel Sharon rejected the plan largely because it replaced UN Resolution 242 and 338, which both called for the creation of bilateral negotiations. Because the API was not constructed with the help of Israel, Israel did not see itself as a partner in the initiative. While the API solution was revisited in 2007, Israel has largely labeled it as a “non-starter,” unable to create real change.

As of recently, more talk about the Arab Peace Initiative has been revisited with the passing of Resolution 2334. While Palestinian leaders have spoken about how they would be open to peace talks centered around the initiative, President Netanyahu was quoted as of June 13, 2016 claiming that, “If the Arab nations

grasp the fact that they need to revise the Arab League proposal according to the changes Israel demands, then we can talk. But if they bring the proposal from 2002 and define it as 'take it or leave it' – we'll choose to leave it." While Israel respects that the Arabs are making positive steps to achieve peaceful relations, the facets of the proposed plan detailing the evacuation of Israel from the settlements and the return of the Palestinian refugees are too contentious to be agreed upon realistically.

#### *Dismantling and Exchanging Settlements*

In 2005, Israel removed all 8,000 settlers from the Gaza Strip, deciding that the isolate settlements were too difficult to protect in a territory where the percentage of Jewish residents was less than 1% of the population. The removal of these settlers proved to be divisive, with some Israelis having to be removed from their homes by security forces. This episode proved that while Israel has the capacity to remove settlements, it is not done without creating mass friction within the state of Israel itself.

Another general approach to solving the settlements conflict is through the idea of land swaps. This

proposed idea outlines how the largest Jewish settlements near the boundary would become official Israeli territory. In exchange, settlements deep in the West Bank would be disbanded. An equal amount of Israel's current land would become part of a Palestinian state. This plan was proposed by US Secretary of State John Kerry, who stated "...this is necessary to reflect practical realities on the ground, and mutually agreed equivalent swaps that will ensure that the agreement is fair to both sides."

#### **Bloc Positions**

In response to Kerry's speech, spoken on December 28, 2016, both Palestinian and Israeli leaders commented on their opinions regarding his ideas concerning how settlement growth is an impediment to the development of a two-state solution. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said he was open to peace talks once Israel agreed to freeze settlement construction. The chief negotiator of Palestine spoke on behalf of Abbas, claiming that real peace negotiations could be conducted once the cores of the Arab Peace Initiative were adequately carried

out. Israeli President Netanyahu, a firm opponent to the API, perceived Kerry's remarks as a "great disappointment."

Netanyahu went further to say that the conflict was not about settlement construction but about "Israel's very right to exist."

The entire Security Council either voted for or abstained their vote with regards to Resolution 2334. Russia, France, China, the UK and the US all agreed that Israel's actions were a "flagrant violation" of international law. New Zealand and Senegal have also openly disapproved of Israel's actions. The US and the EU have continuously worked together to propose and coordinate solutions to the Israel-Palestine conflict, agreeing that a two-state solution can only be discovered with the prevention of further settlement growth. However, with the new Trump administration, the United States might not longer hold that view in Israeli foreign policy. Upon the passing of Resolution 2334, Trump outwardly spoke about his disapproval of the agreement and his intentions to redirect US support for Israel's

settlement actions once in office. This may create a dilemma for not only the Western countries, but for the US's allies as well. Without US backing, countries who have stood firm against Israel's actions might find that their proposals and resolutions are met with more resistance by Israel. Israel has already acted to cut ties with countries that voted for the resolution, with the Israeli foreign ministry advising their officials to limit visits to those countries.

- adequately prevent further conflict (i.e. Oslo Accords)?
5. How should the Palestinian diaspora be handled?
  6. How should the contested city of East Jerusalem be handled so as not to encourage greater tension between Israel and the UN?

### **Questions a Resolution Must Answer**

1. What are the first steps the SPECPOL committee must take to enforce Resolution 2334 in a way that does not impede on state sovereignty?
2. Should the Arab Peace Initiative be modified? If so, how can it be revised to allow for peaceful negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians?
3. How can we create solutions that do not dismiss Israel in a way that deepens their distrust of the UN?
4. How can solutions be devised to encourage bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians that will

## TOPIC B: FORMATION OF A TWO-STATE SOLUTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

Having been embroiled in conflict for thousands of years, the Israel-Palestine region is more entrenched in their own culturally founded positions than ever. With pressures mounting in the form of superpowers' waning interest in stabilizing the region complemented by seismic political and diplomatic shifts therein, the need for peaceful resolution is paramount. Together, we must analyze the possible avenues of facilitating peace and stability between Israel and Palestine. It is up to us what that solution should look like.

### **History and Discussion of the Problem & Current Situation**

*In what ways are Palestinians underrepresented in the Israeli government?*

Because of the United Nations' assertion that the right to representation is a paramount component and of the development and success of a democratic society, we must take a close look at the power

dynamics between Israelis and Palestinians to divine whether Palestinians have adequate representation to government and access therein. Currently, despite comprising 20.7% of Israel's population, Arab Palestinians only hold 17 Knesset memberships out of a total of 120 – less than 10% of the body. Of those, 8 or 9 have been physically beaten by Israeli forces during protests. However, there has never been a Knesset completely deprived of Palestinian representation. Rather, at least some Palestinians play a role in every branch of the Israeli government.

The origin of this disparity can be found in the base of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the refusal to concede sovereignty and recognition to Israel as the Jewish state resulted in Palestinians refusing Israeli citizenship. In lieu of this concession, Palestinians became permanent residents in the region, thus limiting their political mobility directly and otherwise. Furthermore, representatives “may not participate in the elections if there is in its goals or actions a denial of the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, a denial of

the democratic nature of the state, or incitement to racism.” On one hand, this stipulation serves the obvious value of upholding the state in which law is being discussed and passed. On the other, it allows for the subjective limitation of Palestinian influence – what exactly characterizes a denial of the existence of the State of Israel?

Imbalance of representation reaches beyond the political realm. For example, in state-run schools within Arab communities, students are required to complete a special curriculum that includes Hebrew as a foreign language from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade onward. There is not a similar stipulation for schools in Jewish communities to accommodate Palestinian culture. Conversely, every state-run company in Israel is required to have an Arab Israeli citizen on its board of directors.

Tensions in determining the proper balance, both in terms of sovereignty and cultural presence, result in these distinctions as well as others.

*In what ways is Israel considered a Jewish state? Explore the history and mandates that led to its current world image.*

Israel's concept of Jewish statehood has existed since its inception. In its declaration of independence, it was designated as such. Furthermore, each formation of government under the Knesset has agreed that Israel should remain a Jewish state. In its religious doctrine, Judaism describes the establishment of the state of Israel as a mitzvah, or a Jewish act of goodness. The Jewish statehood is further supported because of the concept of Zionism that underlies its inception. Merriam Webster defines Zionism as "an international movement originally for the establishment of a Jewish national or religious community in Palestine and later for the support of modern Israel." This Zionist effort is encapsulated in the "law of return" that enables every Jew to come to Israel provided they can demonstrate ancestry. Palestinians are unwilling to accept this idea of the Jewish state as they consider acceptance as tantamount to invalidating "right of return."

Conflict exists within Israel itself because, in the present, Israel's status as both a democratic state and a Jewish state seems incommensurable. The reasoning is that to be democratic, Israel must ensure the rights of all citizens and all those deserving to be citizens to vote. However, doing so would invalidate the Jewish majority that currently exists in the country, rendering Jewish statehood impossible. This paradox that Israel wishes to follow the European model of statehood while still maintaining its Jewish identity is central to the aforementioned conflict. The basic tenets of the European system are high quality of life through enfranchisement and beneficial working conditions for all people. The system is partially based in socialism. Israel currently clashes with this system due to the untenable relations in both the West Bank and Gaza, exacerbating the identity crisis.

*Identify current military tensions with Israel and other countries. How can tension be alleviated?*

Israel's foreign policy has highly variable, country-dependent relations both economically and militarily. Although Iran

and Turkey were the first two states in the Middle East to acknowledge the Israeli state, both states and many others now see Israel as an enemy. Israel has a high-tech economy that is partially fueled by its international relations in the Asian "energy triangle." Israel currently has open borders with both Egypt and Jordan. However, Israel's ties with Egypt are highly dependent on the government in power. Specifically, since the Muslim Brotherhood rose to power in the Egyptian government, there has been backlash and a cutting of ties with Israel. This trend emerges economically with many countries in the region wherein countries that once had economic ties with Israel no longer do. The trend is best represented in the 32 UN member states that do not recognize Israel as a country. As one can see, Israel's foreign policy is vast, complex, and highly country-dependent therefore requiring an understanding relative to individual countries.

Why is there military intervention on Israel's part in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank?

Currently, there are complex forces at work determining Israeli occupation of both Gaza and the West Bank. Within Israel, there is the sentiment that Israel should withdraw from the West Bank. This is a super majority opinion, 76% of Israelis support withdrawal. However, President Netanyahu supports that the West Bank was ethnically cleansed of Jews before 1948 which thereby suggests a right to settle for Jews because they were the ones driven from their homeland. The current ruling force in the West Bank is the Fatah government, which is considered the only legitimate claim to Palestinian governance recognized by the United Nations. However, the Hamas regime attempted to oust the Fatah government as the legitimate ruling power, thereby creating a divide over who has the legitimate right to rule. As already stated, the United Nations recognizes only the Fatah government.

**Past International Actions**

The West Bank and the Gaza strip are, perhaps more than any other area, representative of the Palestine Israel conflict. A brief history should shed some light on how these areas came to be disputed. First, in 1948 the Jordanian king validated Israel's claim to Jerusalem, ordained by the Coptic Bishop. Then, in 1967 Israel took over all of Jerusalem and the West Bank as a result of the 6 day war. Initially, Jordan offered all residents of the West Bank Jordanian citizenship. Then, in 1988 Jordan stripped the West Bank residents of citizenship, and they are now considered a displaced people. Gaza was originally controlled by Egypt but is now considered occupied by Israel.

**Proposed Solutions**

Israeli Settlements

From Israel's point of view, annexation is a possible, but not preferable situation. Over 100 settlements in the West Bank are illegal under Israeli law. However, the government still supplies them with basic infrastructure to enable their success. Israel thus has a divided stance on

implementation and existence of settlements.

Geopolitical pressures

The international community must take consideration of all factors, including those that are cultural or geopolitical in nature, and act with haste to mediate a solution amenable to those relevant. Without expedited resolution of the conflict, more lives stand to be lost and instability will certainly continue. Nations looking to solve this issue must consider and balance the views of the Israeli government, the Palestinian Authority, the Hamas government, and other regional entities to ensure that peace is not only achieved, but maintained over the long-term. Suggested solutions include the "land for peace" solution, which proposes concessions from both sides to yield a stable two-state solution, as well as a variety of other one- and two-state solutions. Care must be taken to not overstep sovereignty while pursuing creative, novel solutions.

**Bloc Positions**

Various geopolitical factors play a role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Among other factors, regional and global

scenarios must be taken into account to really consider what is to come in the region. Global power considerations include the notable withdrawal of major powers from the region, such as Russia and the United States, vastly disrupting the power balance. Specifically, as Israel's most notable longstanding ally, the US's foreign policy seems to indicate a coming ebb in support. This trend is further exacerbated and uncertain as a result of the rise of President Trump. The collapse of Egypt with the coupe involving Mubarak further diminishes the significance of US involvement - US statemaking may be a less stable foreign policy intervention than some had hoped.

Furthermore, cultural events in the region have further upended the status quo with regards to Israeli-Palestinian power balance. The Arab Spring resulted in the implosion of various Middle Eastern regime in favor of political uncertainty and public instability. In combination with the weakening of alliances between Turkey and Israel, as well as between Iran and Syria, these trends indicate the possibility for seismic

shifts for Israel and Palestine alike.

These mounting external pressures only exacerbate social tensions in the region, especially for those displaced therein. With more than 330,000 people seeking refuge in Israel, many have to relocate due to hostilities near the Gaza Strip. Unfortunately, many see this displacement as a permanent way of life. Both the Israeli and Palestinian sides demonstrate disregard for international law, as can be seen in the continued offensive measures (e.g. Palestinian rocket-launching from Gaza and Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip).

### **Questions a Resolution Must Answer**

1. What degree of representation should Palestinians have?
2. What form of government will rectify political efficacy of Palestinians?
3. What actions can be taken to balance resource distribution?
4. What peaceful political processes can facilitate diplomacy between Palestine and Israel?
5. How to begin conversations between political factions.

6. What organizations should have a role in achieving peaceful resolution of militaristic actions?

### **Relevant Partners**

Various partners will prove relevant to the response to UNSC resolution 2334, extending beyond the list of relevant national entities. These include NGOs on both sides of the issue. For the Israeli side, consider working with NGOs such as Gush Shalom, Courage to Refuse, and B-Tselem, etc.. On the Palestinian side, consider Mezan, Badil, Addameer, and others. Various other NGOs act with less obviously partisan interests and can be an excellent source of logistical and intellectual support.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Countless factors will continue to influence the progression of Israel-Palestine towards an endpoint, stable or otherwise. While understanding these factors will assist delegates in creating solutions and drafting comprehensive resolutions, the research needed far exceeds the scope of this guide. To fill in some gaps, we suggest reading further into the

cultural undertones (and overtones) that have cemented the positions of Israel and Palestine, as well as looking further into the regional dynamics at play. How have economies and societies shifted in the area? Is the change of tides seeming to favor Israel in these cases, or oppose it? We also suggest further perusing the proposed solutions that have already been given consideration in the real world, as well as their pros and cons. This will empower delegates to make full-minded decisions on the path to peace.

## CLOSING REMARKS

Keeping in mind the **brief** descriptions we have provided, now is the time for you to do your own research. Use the resources in the guide to fully prepare yourselves for committee. Remember, we are looking for out of the box solutions mixed with understanding of your country's stance. I look forward to seeing you there!

## Endnotes/Sources

- Aliboni, R. (2005). Geopolitical Implications of the European Neighbourhood Policy, The. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 10, 1–16.
- DisticorDirect Retail Services - Overcoming Zionism: Creating a Single Democratic State in Israel/Palestine. (n.d.). Retrieved March 20, 2017, from [http://www.magamall.com/Client/Disticor/DisticorDirect\\_LP4W\\_LND\\_WebStation.ns5/255b189eff2529f985256fb1008072a4/48fcd56f68d88f0b8525728f001bd4e!OpenDocument](http://www.magamall.com/Client/Disticor/DisticorDirect_LP4W_LND_WebStation.ns5/255b189eff2529f985256fb1008072a4/48fcd56f68d88f0b8525728f001bd4e!OpenDocument)
- Falah, G.-W. (2005). The geopolitics of “Enclavisation” and the demise of a two-state Solution to the Israeli – Palestinian conflict. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(8), 1341–1372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590500255007>
- Finkelstein, N. G. (2003). *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*. Verso.
- Gelvin, J. L. (2014). *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*. Cambridge University Press.
- Graham, S. (2008). *Cities, War, and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Hamas, Palestine and the Geopolitics of Resistance. (n.d.). Retrieved March 20, 2017, from <http://www.globalresearch.ca/hamas-palestine-and-the-geopolitics-of-resistance/5395333>
- Kamat, A. (2005). [Review of *Review of The Colonial Present*, by D. Gregory]. *The Arab Studies Journal*, 13/14(2/1), 160–163.
- Newman, D. (2002). The geopolitics of peacemaking in Israel–Palestine. *Political Geography*, 21(5), 629–646. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(02\)00010-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(02)00010-0)
- Pappé, I. (1999). *The Israel/Palestine Question*. Psychology Press.
- Swedenburg, T., & Stein, R. L. (2005). *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Duke University Press.
- The Geopolitics of the Palestinians. (n.d.). Retrieved March 20, 2017, from <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/geopolitics-palestinians>
- Yiftachel, O. (1999). “Ethnocracy”: The Politics of Judaizing Israel/Palestine. *Constellations*, 6(3), 364–390. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.00151>
- Yiftachel, O. (2002). Territory as the Kernel of the Nation: Space, Time and Nationalism in Israel/Palestine. *Geopolitics*, 7(2), 215–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/714000930>
- Yiftachel, O. (2006a). *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Yiftachel, O. (2006b). *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine*. University of Pennsylvania Press.