

THE ISRAEL–PALESTINE CONFLICT: HISTORICAL ROOTS, POLITICAL DYNAMICS, AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

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**Abstract**

The Israel–Palestine conflict has lasted for more than 75 years, yet no final or lasting solution has emerged, and it is still ongoing. This conflict clearly reflects historical, geographical, religious, and ethnic dimensions. If we look at it from the beginning, almost 80 percent of conflicts worldwide have occurred due to these same factors. In addition, other aspects such as religious, political, and resource-based conflicts are also continuing.

The main political aspect that has contributed to this conflict is the struggle for self-power and self-determination. This study explores the origins of wars, major events, and the factors responsible for the conflict, with a stronger focus on the current situation. These conflicts will be linked with their historical background. Furthermore, the perspectives of scholars, politicians, and human rights organizations on the Israel–Palestine conflict will be critically analyzed.

**INTRODUCTION**

The Israel–Palestine conflict is one of the longest and most difficult political conflicts in the modern world. Even after more than seventy years of talks, wars, and involvement by the international community, the conflict has not been solved. It continues to affect politics in the Middle East and around the world. This long duration shows that the conflict is deeply rooted in issues of history, land, identity, and power. Unlike short-term conflicts, it is based on long-standing political and ideological differences.

Historically, the conflict began due to competing claims over the same land. These claims were shaped by colonial rule, changing borders, and decisions made by international powers. Over time, the land dispute became closely linked with religious importance and ethnic identity, which increased tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. Jerusalem holds special religious and symbolic value for both sides, making compromise very difficult. These historical and geographical factors have played a major role in continuing mistrust and violence.

From a political point of view, the demand for self-determination and sovereignty lies at the center of the conflict. Both Israelis and Palestinians want political independence, security, and international recognition. However, these goals often conflict because both groups claim the same limited territory. Differences in power, debates over statehood, and governance problems have made peace efforts more complicated. As a result, political interests and security concerns often block peace agreements.

In recent years, the conflict has become more serious due to repeated violence and growing humanitarian problems. Human rights organizations have focused on the suffering of civilians, including displacement, movement restrictions, and violations of international law. At the same time, scholars and political leaders continue to discuss the causes and possible solutions, often reaching different conclusions based on their political and ideological views.

This study explores the Israel–Palestine conflict by connecting its historical background with present-day events. It examines major developments and key factors, with special attention to political issues such as power and self-determination. By analyzing the views of scholars, political leaders, and human rights organizations, the study seeks to explain why the conflict continues and why finding a lasting peace remains so difficult.

**The British Mandate in Palestine (1917–1948)**

The British Mandate in Palestine represented a significant era that shaped the onset of the Israel–Palestine conflict. Following World War I, the Ottoman Empire disintegrated, leading to British control over Palestine. In 1922, the League of Nations formally assigned Britain the responsibility of governing the region. Britain was anticipated to maintain peace, assist the populace in progressing towards self-governance, and safeguard the rights of all communities. Nevertheless, British administration frequently failed to treat all groups equitably, exacerbating tensions among them.

A pivotal event during this timeframe was the Balfour Declaration of 1917. Through this declaration, Britain endorsed the concept of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Although Britain vowed to uphold the rights of the indigenous Arab population, it did not provide a clear framework for how this protection would be implemented. This ambiguity instilled fear and resentment among Palestinian Arabs, who perceived their land and political future as being jeopardized. Throughout the mandate years, a significant influx of Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine, primarily fleeing persecution in Europe. Britain permitted this migration, which rapidly altered the demographic landscape. As the number of Jewish settlements increased, competition for land and resources intensified. Palestinian Arabs felt they were losing their land, employment opportunities, and political influence, leading to protests, strikes, and violent confrontations. Britain faced challenges in managing the escalating conflict between the two communities. Various commissions were established to propose solutions, including the division of land into distinct territories. However, British policies remained ambiguous and frequently shifted. At times, Britain imposed restrictions on Jewish immigration, while at other moments, it endorsed Zionist aspirations. This inconsistent strategy heightened distrust on both sides. By the late 1930s and into the 1940s, violence had become rampant, and British authority diminished. Armed factions from both Jewish and Arab groups launched attacks against British forces. Unable to control the situation, Britain opted to terminate its governance. In 1947, the issue was referred to the United Nations. This resulted in the partition plan and the establishment of Israel in 1948. The decisions made by the British and the conflicting commitments during the mandate period significantly contributed to the profound divisions that persist to this day.

**Case Study: The 1948 Arab–Israeli War**

The 1948 Arab–Israeli War represented a significant turning point in the ongoing Israel–Palestine conflict. It commenced shortly after the conclusion of the British Mandate in Palestine and was a direct result of the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947. This UN plan suggested the division of Palestine into two distinct states, one for the

Jewish population and another for the Arab population, with Jerusalem designated for international governance. While Jewish leaders accepted this proposal, Arab leaders rejected it, contending that it was unjust and disregarded the rights of the Arab majority residing in Palestine. Hostilities erupted even prior to Britain's official withdrawal. Tensions between Jewish and Arab communities escalated as both factions sought to assert control over critical regions.

Following Britain's cessation of rule in May 1948, Jewish leaders proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel. Almost immediately after this declaration, neighboring Arab nations—including Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq—mobilized their military forces into Palestine. This action initiated a comprehensive regional conflict. The war unfolded in multiple phases and was characterized by intense territorial battles. Despite the Arab states possessing larger populations, Israeli forces were more effectively organized and progressively secured more territory than what had been initially allocated to them under the UN plan. By the conclusion of the war in 1949, Israel had significantly enlarged its territory, while the anticipated Arab state failed to materialize. A particularly grave consequence of the war was the displacement of a substantial number of Palestinians. Approximately 700,000 Palestinians were compelled to abandon or flee their homes due to the violence, fear, and forced expulsions.

This occurrence is commemorated by Palestinians as the Nakba, which translates to “catastrophe.” Many of these refugees relocated to neighboring countries and refugee camps, where their descendants continue to reside today. The issue of refugees remains one of the most challenging aspects of the conflict. The war concluded with armistice agreements between Israel and the surrounding Arab states in 1949. These agreements established temporary ceasefire lines, marking a pivotal moment in the history of the region.

#### **Case Study: The 1967 Six-Day War**

The Six-Day War of 1967 is widely regarded by scholars as a decisive turning point in the Israel-Palestine conflict and Middle Eastern politics.

According to Avi Shlaim (2000), although the war lasted only six days, it fundamentally transformed regional power relations and territorial control. The conflict involved Israel and neighboring Arab states—primarily Egypt, Jordan, and Syria—and emerged from prolonged tensions and unresolved hostilities following earlier Arab-Israeli wars. Arab states opposed Israel's existence and viewed its military growth as a threat, while Israel perceived itself as strategically surrounded and insecure (Pappé, 2006). Tensions escalated when Egypt deployed troops in the Sinai Peninsula and closed the Straits of Tiran, actions Israel interpreted as direct security threats (Morris, 2001). On 5 June 1967, Israel launched a preemptive air strike that destroyed much of Egypt's air force, enabling rapid military victories over Arab forces. As noted by Martin van Creveld (1998), Israel's success was largely due to effective planning, intelligence, and speed. The war resulted in Israel's capture of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights, with East Jerusalem gaining particular importance because of its religious and political symbolism (Shlaim, 2000). For Palestinians, the war marked the beginning of prolonged military occupation, leading to displacement, restrictions on movement, and loss of political rights—consequences that continue to shape the conflict today.

Scholar Edward Said (1992) contends that the post-1967 occupation altered the Palestinian issue from merely a refugee crisis to a confrontation against military dominance and territorial control. This occupation has engendered profound political, social, and humanitarian difficulties that remain unaddressed and perpetuate resistance and turmoil. On the international stage, the conflict redefined diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East. In reaction to the hostilities, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 242, which urged for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied lands and acknowledged the right of all nations to coexist peacefully. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Rashid Khalidi (2020), the ambiguous wording and varying interpretations of the resolution hindered the establishment of a definitive political resolution. While the war

bolstered Israel's standing in the region, it simultaneously heightened Palestinian nationalism and set the stage for subsequent uprisings and ongoing resistance.

In summary, scholars concur that the 1967 Six-Day War significantly exacerbated the Israel-Palestine conflict by introducing elements of occupation, contested borders, security issues, and the quest for self-determination that endure to this day. By extending Israeli authority over Palestinian and Arab regions, the war complicated peace initiatives and solidified divisions that continue to influence the conflict's development (Morris, 2001; Shlaim, 2000).

### **Recent Escalations**

In recent years, the Israel-Palestine conflict has experienced numerous escalations characterized by cycles of violence, military confrontations, and deteriorating humanitarian crises. Scholars observe that tensions often escalate around disputed and symbolically significant sites, particularly Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, where clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinian worshippers frequently serve as catalysts for broader conflict (Shlaim, 2014; Pappé, 2017). These confrontations are typically succeeded by rocket attacks from Gaza and retaliatory Israeli airstrikes, resulting in civilian casualties and extensive destruction, particularly in densely populated regions (United Nations, 2021).

Political dynamics have played a crucial role in perpetuating these escalations. The lack of substantial peace negotiations, divisions within Palestinian political leadership, and shifts in Israeli domestic politics have diminished prospects for diplomatic engagement (Morris, 2011). Concurrently, the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the eviction of Palestinian families have exacerbated Palestinian grievances and resistance, while Israeli authorities defend these actions on security grounds (Human Rights Watch, 2022). These conflicting narratives have intensified mistrust and perpetuated a cycle of retaliation.

Humanitarian conditions, especially in the Gaza Strip, have sharply declined during recent

escalations. Prolonged blockades, shortages of electricity, water, and medical supplies, along with recurrent damage to civilian infrastructure, have exerted tremendous pressure on the population (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022). International organizations have consistently cautioned that ongoing violence is exacerbating living conditions and heightening the risk of long-term instability. Despite repeated international appeals for ceasefires and restraint, scholars contend that without addressing the fundamental political issues of occupation, security, and self-determination, a lasting resolution remains elusive.

### **Role of International Actors**

International actors have played an important role in shaping the Israel-Palestine conflict, but their involvement has not produced a lasting peace. From the early stages of the conflict, the United Nations (UN) has attempted to manage tensions through diplomatic resolutions and humanitarian assistance. Scholars note that key UN resolutions, especially Resolution 242, were designed to promote peace by calling for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories and mutual recognition between states. However, the absence of strong enforcement mechanisms has limited the impact of these resolutions (Shlaim, 2000; Smith, 2010). Alongside its political efforts, the UN has provided humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees through agencies such as UNRWA, which delivers essential services including education, healthcare, and emergency relief.

The United States has emerged as the most influential external actor in the conflict. It has consistently acted as a mediator in peace talks while simultaneously maintaining a strong political and military alliance with Israel. According to Said (1992), this close relationship has led many Palestinians to view the United States as a biased actor, weakening its credibility as a neutral mediator. Despite this perception, the US has supported major diplomatic initiatives such as the Camp David Accords and the Oslo Process, highlighting its central role in peace negotiations, even though these efforts have

produced limited long-term success (Quandt, 2005).

The European Union has largely focused on economic assistance and institutional development, particularly in Palestinian territories. It has promoted the idea of a two-state solution and provided substantial financial support to Palestinian governance structures. However, scholars argue that the EU's political influence remains constrained due to internal disagreements among its member states and its reliance on US leadership in the peace process (Smith, 2010).

Regional actors, including Egypt, Jordan, and other Arab states, have also contributed to managing the conflict. Their involvement has been most visible in mediation efforts and ceasefire negotiations, particularly during periods of intense violence in Gaza. These states often act as intermediaries due to their geographic proximity and diplomatic ties with both parties (Barnett, 1998).

Overall, while international actors have contributed through diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and peace initiatives, their effectiveness has been limited by competing political interests, unequal power relations, and inconsistent pressure on the conflicting parties. As many scholars argue, without a coordinated, balanced, and sustained international approach, external involvement is unlikely to result in a durable resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict (Shlaim, 2000; Morris, 2001).

### **Humanitarian Issues and International Law**

The Israel-Palestine conflict has resulted in significant and enduring human rights and humanitarian repercussions, particularly for civilians who frequently find themselves trapped in ongoing cycles of violence. Ordinary individuals, including women, children, and the elderly, bear the brunt of this conflict, over which they possess minimal influence. Civilian casualties are one of the most heartbreaking elements of the conflict, as military actions often occur in heavily populated regions. Researchers highlight that airstrikes, shelling, and ground assaults have led to a high number of civilian fatalities and injuries,

especially in Gaza, where the population density is exceptionally high (Morris, 2001; Shlaim, 2000). The devastation of homes, schools, hospitals, and essential infrastructure has left civilians with very few safe havens during hostilities, heightening the threat to their lives and health (Pappe, 2006).

In addition to immediate fatalities, the harm to civilians encompasses long-term distress resulting from injuries, disabilities, and psychological trauma. Numerous survivors endure lasting physical injuries that hinder their capacity to work and lead normal lives. Research indicates that mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder are prevalent, particularly among children who have faced repeated violence and loss (Barber, 2009). Health care systems in Gaza and certain areas of the West Bank are struggling to manage emergencies due to damaged facilities, a lack of medical supplies, and movement restrictions, which exacerbate humanitarian conditions (Roy, 2016).

The issue of refugees and displacement represents a significant humanitarian challenge in the context of the conflict. The roots of the Palestinian refugee crisis trace back to 1948, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were compelled to flee or were forcibly removed from their residences during the establishment of Israel. This occurrence, referred to as the Nakba, has led to one of the most enduring refugee crises in contemporary history (Khalidi, 1997). Numerous refugees and their descendants still reside in camps throughout the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Although these camps were intended to be temporary, they have evolved into permanent settlements characterized by overcrowding, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, and restricted access to services (Sayigh, 1994).

Displacement has persisted over the years. Following the 1967 war, another significant wave of Palestinians was displaced as a result of Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem (Morris, 2001). Since that time, Palestinians have encountered continuous displacement due to house demolitions, the expansion of settlements, land confiscation, and eviction orders. In East Jerusalem, legal

mechanisms that favor Israeli settlers have led to the expulsion of Palestinian families from their residences, attracting criticism from academics and human rights advocates (Pappe, 2014). In rural areas of the West Bank, communities have been uprooted due to military zones, settler aggression, and infrastructure developments, undermining livelihoods and social cohesion (Shlaim, 2000).

In Gaza, military escalations often lead to displacement. Entire neighborhoods have been obliterated, compelling families to find refuge in schools or temporary shelters that are devoid of sufficient services. The ongoing cycles of destruction and reconstruction have left numerous families in a perpetual state of insecurity and reliant on aid, hindering long-term recovery and development (Roy, 2016).

International law establishes a framework aimed at safeguarding civilians during times of conflict. According to international humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Conventions, conflicting parties are required to differentiate between civilian and military targets and to minimize disproportionate harm to civilians. Additionally, international human rights law ensures fundamental rights such as access to healthcare, education, housing, and freedom of movement. Scholars contend that these legal principles are often breached in the Israel–Palestine conflict, exacerbating the persistent humanitarian crisis (Morris, 2001; Shlaim, 2000).

Human rights organizations have recorded a variety of violations perpetrated by various actors, including civilian deaths, excessive force, arbitrary detentions, restrictions on movement, and collective punishment. The blockade on Gaza has faced significant criticism for drastically limiting access to food, medicine, fuel, and job opportunities, resulting in a prolonged

humanitarian crisis (Roy, 2016). In the West Bank, the expansion of settlements—deemed illegal under international law—along with checkpoints and military incursions, has hindered daily life and access to essential services for Palestinians (Pappe, 2006).

Children’s rights are particularly impacted. Numerous Palestinian children undergo detention, interrogation, and trial in military courts, which experts argue fail to meet international juvenile justice standards (Barber, 2009). Education frequently suffers due to school closures, violence, and damage to infrastructure, especially in Gaza, where repeated assaults have harmed schools and educational facilities (Roy, 2016). These circumstances restrict future prospects and foster feelings of fear and despair among the youth.

Accountability continues to be a significant challenge. Despite the extensive documentation of violations, it has been difficult to hold those responsible accountable. Investigations are frequently delayed or disputed, and victims seldom obtain justice or compensation. Scholars contend that the absence of accountability permits violations to persist and perpetuates cycles of violence (Morris, 2001; Pappe, 2014).

Civilians are still subjected to death, injury, displacement, and the loss of fundamental freedoms, while refugees endure uncertainty and limited prospects. Although international law offers clear protections, its effectiveness has been hampered by weak enforcement and political divisions. Many scholars concur that without accountability, adherence to human rights, and a fair political resolution, the humanitarian crisis will continue, rendering the conflict not merely a political issue but also a significant human tragedy (Shlaim, ; Roy, 2016).



### Current Situation and Ongoing Conflict

The ongoing situation in the Israel–Palestine conflict is extremely unstable and profoundly distressing for individuals on both sides, particularly for civilians. Violence continues to flare up in cycles, frequently instigated by political decisions, military operations, or incidents at sensitive religious and territorial locations. Unlike previous eras where large-scale wars were interspersed with lengthy pauses, the current conflict is characterized by frequent escalations that happen within brief intervals. These episodes may persist for days or weeks, yet their influence on everyday life is unceasing. Civilians are constantly under the threat of sudden assaults, airstrikes, rocket fire, raids, and confrontations, fostering an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty that permeates all facets of life.

In recent years, Gaza has been one of the most severely impacted regions. Intermittent military clashes between Israel and armed Palestinian factions have led to extensive devastation. Airstrikes typically aim at military targets but also inflict damage on residential areas due to Gaza's high population density. Numerous families are displaced from their homes, and vital services such as electricity, clean water, and healthcare face

prolonged disruptions. Even after ceasefires are declared, the pace of reconstruction is sluggish due to material restrictions and persistent political strife. Consequently, many residents in Gaza exist in a state of perpetual emergency, uncertain of when the next wave of violence will strike.

The West Bank and East Jerusalem have experienced ongoing unrest. Frequent occurrences include Israeli military raids, clashes at checkpoints, settler violence, and Palestinian resistance activities. In East Jerusalem, tensions often escalate around religious sites, especially during religious holidays. Protests, arrests, and confrontations can rapidly develop into broader violence. Palestinians residing in these regions endure movement restrictions, home demolitions, and threats of eviction, while Israeli authorities maintain that such actions are essential for security. This scenario has intensified anger and mistrust, rendering coexistence increasingly challenging.

Children and young individuals are among those most impacted by the persistent violence. Many grow up in an environment of conflict, witnessing death, destruction, and fear from a young age. Schools frequently close during periods of escalation, and students find it difficult to

concentrate on their education while coping with trauma. Over time, this atmosphere fosters frustration, hopelessness, and radicalization, heightening the risk that future generations will remain ensnared in the conflict.

In addition to violence, political stalemate is one of the most significant issues hindering peace. There has been no substantial final-status negotiation process for many years. Political leaders on both sides encounter internal challenges that restrict their capacity or willingness to reach compromises. On the Palestinian side, political fragmentation among various factions has undermined national unity. Governance is divided, and elections have been consistently postponed, diminishing public confidence in leadership. Many Palestinians believe that their political system no longer reflects their aspirations or adequately safeguards their rights.

Another significant challenge is the power imbalance between the two parties involved. Israel has control over borders, airspace, and movement in numerous regions, whereas Palestinians do not possess full sovereignty. This disparity impacts negotiations, as one party approaches from a position of strength while the other is in a state of vulnerability. Consequently, agreements are frequently perceived as unjust or unviable. Many Palestinians believe that peace negotiations have not resulted in genuine freedom, dignity, or independence, which has fostered increasing skepticism towards diplomatic resolutions.

Public sentiment also significantly influences the future of the conflict. Over the years, violence has hardened perspectives on both sides. Emotions such as fear, anger, and sorrow shape how individuals perceive the opposing side. Media portrayals, political discourse, and societal narratives often deepen divisions instead of fostering understanding. In such a context, sustaining support for peaceful compromise becomes challenging, particularly when individuals feel insecure or ignored.

Humanitarian conditions are deteriorating as political solutions remain elusive. In Gaza, unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity are prevalent. Young individuals face limited prospects for education or employment, causing

many to feel trapped with no future. In the West Bank, economic development is hindered by movement restrictions and political instability. These challenges breed resentment and contribute to ongoing unrest.

In spite of these difficulties, numerous voices within civil society persist in advocating for peace, justice, and the protection of human rights. Activists, humanitarian workers, educators, and community leaders from both sides operate under challenging circumstances to foster dialogue and safeguard civilians. Nevertheless, their initiatives often contend with the overwhelming forces of political rivalry, military might, and regional instability.

The current state of the Israel-Palestine conflict is characterized by persistent violence, political deadlock, and significant barriers to peace. Daily existence for millions is influenced by insecurity, loss, and uncertainty. Without substantial political reform, accountability, and a renewed dedication to dialogue, the conflict is likely to perpetuate itself. The current situation illustrates that merely managing the conflict is insufficient; it is crucial to tackle its root causes if a fair and enduring peace is to be realized.

### **Conclusion**

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most intricate and enduring disputes in contemporary history. This research indicates that the conflict stems from a mix of historical occurrences, territorial disagreements, political tensions, religious importance, and matters of identity and self-determination.

From the era of the British Mandate to the wars of 1948 and 1967, and from extended military occupation to recurring cycles of violence, each stage has introduced additional layers of complexity. The examination also underscored the grave human rights and humanitarian repercussions of the conflict, especially for civilians, refugees, and displaced individuals. International players have been significant through diplomacy, assistance, and peace efforts, yet their attempts have not succeeded in achieving a lasting resolution.

A primary reason for the ongoing nature of the conflict is the profound mistrust between Israelis and Palestinians. Years of unsuccessful negotiations, broken promises, and persistent violence have led many on both sides to believe that compromise does not result in genuine change. The power disparity is another crucial element, as Israel possesses greater military, political, and economic dominance, while Palestinians do not enjoy full sovereignty. This disparity renders negotiations unequal and often causes Palestinians to perceive peace initiatives as unjust. Political rifts within both Israeli and Palestinian leadership further undermine the peace process, as leaders encounter internal pressures and fear losing support if they make concessions. Moreover, the growth of settlements, security issues, and unresolved matters such as borders, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem continue to hinder progress.

Looking forward, the chances for peace are still uncertain, yet not unattainable. Achieving a lasting resolution necessitates authentic political commitment from both parties, robust and equitable international engagement, and a dedication to upholding human rights and international law. It is crucial to address the everyday challenges encountered by civilians, particularly concerning occupation, freedom of movement, security, and dignity, as these factors are vital for restoring trust. Peace initiatives are more likely to be successful if they not only concentrate on political agreements but also prioritize enhancing the lives of everyday individuals.

In the absence of substantial dialogue, accountability, and fairness, the conflict is expected to continue. Nevertheless, with persistent effort, mutual acknowledgment, and an emphasis on justice and equality, the potential for peace, while challenging, remains viable.

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