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The Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination

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Introduction

The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is a deeply rooted issue with many faces that has been a key international issue for many decades. Always at the top of the global agenda, the issue was elevated by the war that began when Hamas, the ruling party of the Palestinian territory of Gaza, attacked Israel on 7 October 2023. The raid killed 1,180 people and seized 251 hostages, precipitating a war that killed tens of thousands of Palestinians.



This issue is about the desire of the Palestinian people to have a free and independent state, free from outside influence. The key elements are the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the political and legal assertions of both sides, the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory in the West Bank and its intervention in Gaza, and concerns of people arising from persistent conflict and displacement of people. In 1948, when the State of Israel was created, it led to wars and conflicts that forced many



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Palestinians to become refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and elsewhere.^{1, 2}

The Palestinian right to self-determination is supported by international documents, including the UN Charter and several General Assembly resolutions. These affirm that all people have the right to choose their own government and develop their economy, society, and culture.³. How to balance the competing claims of the parties while upholding international law and human rights has become a primary challenge of the United Nations.

Already over 140 UN Member States recognize the full *national sovereignty* of Palestine. The Member States of the UN passed numerous resolutions affirming the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. However, achieving a lasting solution has proven futile.⁴. The issue is made more complicated by political interests, regional conflicts, and the different opinions of member nations on how peace and stability should be achieved in the region.⁵. For example, while some nations support creating two separate states for Israelis and Palestinians, others are of different views on how peace and stability should be based.

The importance of this issue cannot be overstated. This issue has become very

important because of the lives of millions of Palestinians. The conflict does not affect just their region. It has a big impact on peace and stability across the Middle East and on international relations.⁶. The unresolved status of Palestinian territories undermines the credibility of international law and the UN's ability to mediate conflicts around the world.

The Palestinian issue became more significant because of the revolutionary and anti-colonial legacies fundamental to many UN Member States. For the 120 Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement, the UN's dominant voting bloc, rebellion against colonial rule is part of their history. Palestine is a defining issue in a broader struggle against colonialism, and for self-determination.

The Palestinian issue resonates strongly, particularly with nations that have experienced colonization, seen as part of the anti-imperial struggle. This revolutionary and anti-colonial legacy has influenced the stance of many UN Member states, especially those from the Global South, who see the Palestinian struggle as an extension of their own battles for sovereignty and independence. For them, the Palestinian issue is not just about a single conflict, but also about upholding principles that resonate deeply.⁷

¹ United Nations, 2023. "Un Marks 75 Years since Displacement of 700,000 Palestinians | UN News," United Nations, 15 May 2023.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136662>.

² Elloitt Davis Jr., 2024 "The Plight of Palestinian Refugees | Best Countries | U.S. News," US News, January 5, 2024. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2024-01-05/explainer-the-complicated-plight-of-palestinian-refugees>.

³ United Nations, 2023. "The Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination," United Nations, 22 December 2023. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4032442>.

⁴ United Nations, 2024. "Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination: "United Nations, 12 April 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4046276?v=pdf>.

⁵ Wikipedia, 2024. "Palestinian Self-Determination," Wikipedia, 21 June 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_self-determination.

⁶ John Bluedorn and Taline Koranchelian, 2023. "Middle East Conflict Risks Reshaping the Region's Economies, 2023" IMF, December 2023. <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2023/12/01/middle-east-conflict-risks-reshaping-the-regions-economies>.

⁷ Made by History / Jessica Hanser, 2024. "Choosing the Right Historical Lens on the Israel-Hamas War," Time, February 1, 2024, <https://time.com/6588848/israeli->

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The escalation of violence in Israel and Gaza further elevated the importance of resolving the Palestinian issue. It underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive and just solution that addresses the root cause of the conflict in the context of international law. The international community has been alarmed by the humanitarian crisis in Gaza that resulted in widespread devastation and loss of life, further elevating the Palestinian issue as a priority for global peace and security.⁸

The United Nations plays a crucial role in resolving this issue through its various bodies, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Human Rights Council. These organizations help by encouraging dialogue, guiding negotiations, and offering humanitarian aid. The UN supports various peace initiatives and works with other international organizations to promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict. However, the effectiveness of the UN's role is limited by political divisions and the complex realities.⁹



[palestinian-conflict-historical-approach/](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/25/what-has-the-un-done-on-the-israel-palestine-conflict); Al Jazeera, 2023, "What Has the UN Done and Said on the Israel-Palestine Conflict?" Al Jazeera, 25 October 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/25/what-has-the-un-done-on-the-israel-palestine-conflict>.

⁸ United Nations, 2024. "Gaza Crisis: Back Two-State Solution Urges UN Chief, 'once and for All' | UN News," United Nations, 17 January 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/01/1145607>.

⁹ United Nations, 2023. "The Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination:" United Nations. 22 December 2023. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4032442>; United Nations, "United Nations Charter (Full Text)," United Nations, n.d. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>.

Background

The right to national self-determination finds its root in the broader context of decolonization and the principle of self-determination in the UN Charter. Since the 1970s, the UN consistently affirmed the Palestinians right to self-determination. For example, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in December 2023, reaffirming the rights of the Palestinian people and calling for the implementation of a two-state solution¹⁰. The resolution was supported by the majority of member states, which means a broader international agreement on the issue. In January 2024, the UN Secretary-General affirmed that the two-state solution is the only way to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict¹¹. The Security Council agrees that Israeli occupation of the territories of the Palestinians, since 1967, poses a great barrier to achieving Palestinian self-determination¹².

The Human Rights Council plays its role in the conflict. The Council adopted a resolution that underscores the need for other states to support Palestinian self-determination and to stop Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory. The resolution pointed out the ongoing problems Palestinians are facing, including movement restrictions, settlement expansion, and other human rights violations.¹³

Efforts to achieve Palestinian self-determination are complicated by political divisions among the Palestinians, especially between the Palestinian Authority, which governs the West Bank, and Hamas, which governed Gaza until the war that began in 2023. The divisions bloc a united front in negotiations and harm the overall governance and stability of the Palestinian territories.

Current Issues in Palestinian Self-Determination

A major barrier to Palestinian self-determination is Israeli settlement expansion. Israel withdrew its settlements in Gaza in 2005, but continues to build new ones in the West Bank. Expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem complicates the situation, forcing Palestinians out of their homes and making it very difficult to have a united and sustainable Palestinian state.¹⁴

Another issue is the Israeli occupation. The occupation involves taking over, dividing, and claiming Palestinian land. This weakens the Palestinian control over their territory. Palestinians and their supporters demand that “settler-colonialism” must come to an end. International courts have affirmed the Israeli occupation is unlawful under international

¹⁰ United Nations, 2023. “The Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination.” United Nations, December 22, 2023. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4032442>.

¹¹ United Nations, 2024. “Secretary-General Underscores Two-State Solution Only Way to End Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, One-State Formula Inconceivable, in Day-Long Debate | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases,” United Nations, January 23, 2024. <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15569.doc.htm>.

¹² United Nations, 2023. “Settlement Expansion in Occupied Palestinian Territory Violates International Law, Must Cease, Many Delegates Tell Security Council |

Meetings Coverage and Press Releases,” United Nations, September 27, 2023.

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15424.doc.htm>.

¹³ United Nations, 2024 “Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination.” United Nations, April 12, 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4046276?v=pdf>.

¹⁴ ReliefWeb, 2024 “Israel’s Genocide and Occupation Threaten Palestinian Self-Determination Irreversibly - Occupied Palestinian Territory,” ReliefWeb, April 8, 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/israels-genocide-and-occupation-threaten-palestinian-self-determination-irreversibly>.

law.¹⁵ Could that be a stepping stone to ending the Israeli occupation? Why is the Israeli occupation still ongoing when it has been affirmed as illegal?

Additionally, the Palestinians face human rights violations. Cycles of Palestinian terror attacks on Israelis and Israeli violence—sometimes by its military, sometimes by unofficial militias—make negotiation difficult or impossible. Especially since the wave of suicide bombings in the early 2000s, Palestinians face restrictions on their movement, access to resources, and political rights. This hinders their ability to organize and fight for their rights.¹⁶

Critics argue that the international community's approach makes the Israel-Palestine conflict normal instead of challenging it and taking action to end it. The UN Special Rapporteur, Francesca Albanese, called for a “paradigm shift,” moving away from seeing the situation as a “conflict” between Israelis and Palestinians, seeing it instead as Israel's deliberate effort to take over the land. She called on the international community to formally acknowledge and condemn the settler-colonial nature of the Israeli occupation.¹⁷

Overshadowing any progress toward a two-state solution, toward recognition of Palestinian sovereignty, is the question of whether the Palestinian refugees and their descendants have *the right to return* to the homes of their ancestors, now in Israel. Many Palestinians fled during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and the 1967

Six-Day War. Israel opposes their right to return, fearing the demise of the Jewish state. But it should be acknowledged that resolving this issue is necessary for a peaceful agreement.¹⁸ What should be done?

Leading Actors

Israel: Israel plays a central role as the occupying power in the conflict. And its actions and policies greatly impact the possibility of Palestinians achieving self-determination.¹⁹ Under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition government, Israel refuses to discuss the two-state solution. The government supports creation of new Jewish settlements in the West Bank and relies on military and law enforcement intervention in Palestinian territory to suppress terrorism and violent attacks.

Palestinian Authority and Hamas: The PA and Hamas are the main Palestinian political parties. The PA rules the Palestinian parts of the West Bank. Until the attacks that started the war in 2023, Hamas controlled Gaza. It remains politically dominant there. The two represent Palestinian interests.

But the internal division poses a significant barrier to the peace process.²⁰ The two organizations would like to destroy or at least replace the other. They fought a small war in 2007 in Gaza, which was won by Hamas.

¹⁵ United Nations, 2022. “Israel's Illegal Occupation of Palestinian Territory, Tantamount to ‘Settler-Colonialism’: Un Expert | UN News,” United Nations, October 27, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129942>.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Wikipedia, 2024. “Palestinian Right of Return,” Wikipedia, edited August 6, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_right_of_return.

¹⁹ United Nations, 2022. “Israel's Illegal Occupation of Palestinian Territory, Tantamount to ‘Settler-Colonialism’: Un Expert | UN News,” United Nations, October 27, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129942>.

²⁰ Wikipedia, 2024. “Palestinian Authority,” Wikipedia, edited August 29, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_Authority.

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Resolving this internal conflict requires coordinated efforts to address the complex issues at the heart of the conflict.

United States: Historically the U.S. is the leading ally of Israel and plays an important role in the efforts to resolve the issue.²¹ But the U.S. is divided. Under Democratic Presidents it tends to support a two-state solution and mediates conflict. Under President Trump it fully supported the uncompromising policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and refused to mediate with Palestinian leaders.

European Union: The EU also plays a crucial role in the conflict by providing humanitarian aid, advocating a two-state solution, and offering to mediate.²²

Qatar emerged in 2023 as the leading Arab voice for peace and reconciliation. Negotiations to end the Gaza war happen in Qatar, where some Hamas leaders live. Although it is regarded suspiciously by both sides, Qatar tries to mediate solutions. Egypt and Saudi Arabia also play prominent roles in this process.

United Nations: The UN engages various resolutions and peacekeeping efforts towards resolving the conflict. Through UNRWA (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), it provides most of the humanitarian assistance reaching Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank and throughout the Middle East. The UN Special Rapporteur about Human Rights in the

Palestinian Territory (usually just called the Special Rapporteur) works under a mandate from the General Assembly to end Israeli occupation.²³



The Role of the United Nations

The UN General Assembly (UNGA or GA) consistently and frequently adopts resolutions that reaffirm the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and calls for the support of the international community. Even though the resolutions are not legally binding, they carry some significant political weight and reflect the stance of other nations on the issue.²⁴

The UN Security Council (UNSC) plays a role in the Palestinian right to self-determination issue through resolutions and debates. Its effectiveness is limited by the veto power of its five permanent members, in practice this usually means the veto of the United States.²⁵ Sometimes resolutions can be tailored to avoid an American veto, usually gaining American abstention, allowing them to pass. The Security

²¹ Wikipedia, 2024. "Israel–United States Relations," Wikipedia, edited August 16, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel%E2%80%93United_States_relations.

²² EEAS, 2024 "The EU and the Middle East Peace Process," EEAS, May 5, 2024. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-and-2023-middle-east-peace-process_en.

²³ United Nations, 2022. "Israel's Illegal Occupation of Palestinian Territory, Tantamount to 'Settler-Colonialism':

Un Expert | UN News," United Nations, October 27, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129942>.

²⁴ United Nations, "General Assembly - Question of Palestine," United Nations. n.d. <https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/general-assembly/>.

²⁵ United Nations, 2024. "General Assembly Debates Security Council's Rising Veto Use | UN News," United Nations, April 23, 2024. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/04/1148896>.

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Council passed resolutions like Resolution 2334 (2016), reaffirming that Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal and violate international law.²⁶ But much depends on attitudes in Washington.

The UN Secretary-General, in the efforts to resolve the issue, plays a diplomatic role, advocating for peace and the rights of the Palestinians. The Secretary-General facilitates negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and supports the peace process. Secretary-General statements often underscore the need for a two-state solution and call for an end to Israeli occupation and violence.²⁷ While the Secretary-General is the public face of the UN, there is not much to show for recent efforts.

United Nations Agencies: Several UN agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), UNICEF, and WHO, play crucial roles in the effort to achieve peace. The UNRWA, established in 1949, offers essential humanitarian services such as education, healthcare, and social services to the Palestinian refugees. UNICEF and WHO work to improve the health and well-being of Palestinian children and communities.²⁸



Human Rights Council: The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) conducts investigations into human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories and adopts resolutions to protect human rights. These efforts seek to hold violators accountable and support Palestinian rights.²⁹

What the United Nations cannot do

With all the efforts that the UN is making towards a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian right to self-determination, there are certain actions it cannot take because of its structure, mandate, and the political realities of international diplomacy. These include:

²⁶ United Nations, 2016. "Israel's Settlements Have No Legal Validity, Constitute Flagrant Violation of International Law, Security Council Reaffirms | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," United Nations, December 23, 2016. <https://press.un.org/en/2016/sc12657.doc.htm>.

²⁷ United Nations, 2024. "Secretary-General Underscores Two-State Solution Only Way to End Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, One-State Formula Inconceivable, in Day-Long Debate | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," United Nations, January 23, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15569.doc.htm>.

²⁸ UNRWA, "UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees," UNRWA, n.d. <https://www.unrwa.org/>; UNICEF, "UNICEF's Role in Israel and the State of Palestine," UNICEF, n.d. <https://www.unicef.org/unicef-role-israel-state-of-palestine>; Wikipedia, 2024 "UNRWA," Wikipedia, edited September 3, 2024. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNRWA>.

²⁹ United Nations, "Human Rights Council's Resolutions - Question of Palestine," United Nations. n. d. <https://www.un.org/unispal/human-rights-council-resolutions/>.

The UN cannot enforce implementation of its resolutions. This is because the UN does not have a standing army or enforcement mechanism to compel member states to comply with its resolutions. Even though the Security Council can permit the use of force to maintain international peace and security, the political divisions among its permanent members usually hinder such measures.

The UN cannot force a solution on the parties involved in the dispute. The UN can facilitate dialogue and support negotiations. However, for a lasting solution to the conflict, it requires the consent and cooperation of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Finally, the UN cannot directly intervene in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, unless the parties to the conflict and a majority of the Security Council want it. Because the General Assembly and sometimes the Security Council are dominated by Non-Aligned States sympathetic to Palestine, Israel views the UN as part of the conflict, unfriendly and unsympathetic.

Landmark UN Resolutions

UN General Assembly Resolutions

- **Resolution 181 (1947)** proposed a division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under an international administration. This laid the groundwork for the establishment of Israel.

- **Resolution 194 (1948)** addressed the refugee crisis because of the 1948 Arab-Israel War, affirming the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes or receive payment.
- **Resolution 67/19 (2012)** gave Palestine the privilege to be recognized as a *non-member observer state* in the UN, a step towards international recognition as a sovereign state.³⁰
- **Membership Resolutions:** On 19 December 2023, the UN General Assembly reaffirmed its support for the Palestinian cause and emphasized the need to end the Israeli occupation and achieve a two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders. The resolution calls for recognition and support of Palestine as a full member of the UN.³¹

The General Assembly held an *emergency special session* on 10 May 2024 to overwhelmingly support a resolution to upgrade Palestine's rights at the UN as an observer state. The resolution urges the Security Council to consider Palestine's full membership. It gives Palestine additional rights and privileges in the General Assembly, such as the ability to make statements, submit proposals and participate in UN conferences. However, that does not include voting rights or the ability to run for UN organs.³²

The Assembly also reiterated its support for a two-state solution, urged all member states to recognize Palestine's sovereignty and

³⁰ United Nations, 2024 "Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination." United Nations. April 18, 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4012837?v=pdf>.

³¹ United Nations, 2023. "UN General Assembly 50th Plenary Meeting," United Nations, December 19, 2023, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/412/18/pdf/n2341218.pdf>.

³² United Nations, 2024. "At Emergency Special Session, General Assembly Overwhelmingly Backs Membership of Palestine to United Nations, Urges Security Council Support Bid | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," United Nations, May 10, 2024, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/ga12599.doc.htm>.

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called for an end to the occupation of Palestinian territories. The resolution was adopted with a vote of 143 in favor, 9 against, and 25 abstentions. This is a significant step towards recognizing the statehood and sovereignty of Palestine.³³

UN Security Council Resolutions

- **Resolution 242 (1967):** This demanded that the Israeli armed forces leave the territories taken over during the Six-Day War and recognize that every state has the right to live in peace within safe and recognized boundaries.
- **Resolution 338 (1973):** This called for a ceasefire in the Yom Kippur War and the implementation of Resolution 242. Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) were adopted with 42 to 2, with 3 abstentions.³⁴
- **Resolution 2334 (2016):** The resolution adopted by 14 votes with 1 abstaining reaffirmed that the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, are illegal and violate international law, thereby calling for a stop to all settlement activities.³⁵

- **Resolution 3236 (1974):** The resolution reaffirmed the undeniable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination, national independence, and control of their own land, with a vote of 41 to 3, with 3 abstentions.³⁶

Human Rights Council Resolutions

- **Resolution A/HRC/RES/52/34 (2023):** The resolution reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, adopted with a vote of 41 to 3 and 3.³⁷
- **Resolution A/HRC/RES/55/30(2024):** This resolution on Palestinian right to self-determination, was adopted with a vote of 42 against 2, and abstentions.³⁸
- **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC):** ECOSOC has always spoken to the economic and social rights of the Palestinians, highlighting the need for sustainable development and humanitarian aid in the territories occupied by Israel.³⁹

NGOs and Civil Society: A lot of NGOs and civil society organizations, including Amnesty

³³ Al Jazeera, 2024. "United Nations General Assembly Backs Palestinian Bid for Membership," Al Jazeera, May 10, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/10/un-general-assembly-backs-palestinian-bid-for-membership>.

³⁴ United Nations, 2024. "Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination," United Nations. April 12, 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4046276?v=pdf>.

³⁵ United Nations, 2016. "Israel's Settlements Have No Legal Validity, Constitute Flagrant Violation of International Law, Security Council Reaffirms | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," United Nations. December 23, 2016. <https://press.un.org/en/2016/sc12657.doc.htm>.

³⁶ United Nations, 1974. "Palestine Question/Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: Self-Determination, Independence, Sovereignty, Return - Ga Resolution - Question of Palestine," United Nations. November 22, 1974. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-177305/>.

³⁷ United Nations, 2023. "Right of Palestinian People to Self-Determination – HRC 52nd Session – Resolution (A/HRC/RES/52/34) - Question of Palestine," United Nations. April 18, 2023. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/right-of-palestinian-people-to-self-determination-hrc-52nd-session-resolution-a-hrc-res-52-34/>.

³⁸ United Nations, 2024. "Right of the Palestinian People to Self-Determination - Human Rights Council Resolution (A/HRC/RES/55/30) - Question of Palestine," United Nations, April 5, 2024, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/right-of-the-palestinian-people-to-self-determination-hrc-55apr24/>.

³⁹ United Nations, "The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) - Question of Palestine," United Nations, n.d. <https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/the-united-nations-economic-and-social-council/>.

International, Human Rights Watch, and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, advocate for the rights of the Palestinians. They often highlight human rights violations and call for international action to support Palestinian self-determination.⁴⁰ Their statements highlight the commitment of much of the international community to support Palestinian self-determination.

UN Themes on Palestinian Self-Determination

- **Two-State Solution:** The UN has consistently advocated for a two-state solution as the best way to resolve the issue. This method is rooted in Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 2334, among others.⁴¹
- **Human Rights and Humanitarian Concerns:** The UN has been concerned with the protection of human rights and meeting humanitarian needs in the occupied territories of Palestine. This is shown in the work of UNRWA and OCHA.⁴²
- **International Law and Accountability:** The UN is committed to upholding international law and UN resolutions therefore frequently call for accountability for actions that violate international norms. For example, the expansion of settlements

and the use of force against civilians.⁴³ In all, the UN has put in place a legal framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; however, implementing the resolutions and achieving a lasting peace is a challenge due to the political realities on the ground and political divisions among member states.

- **Full UN Membership:** The UN opens membership to all peace-loving states that accept the obligations of the UN Charter and can carry them out. The process of becoming a member involves a state applying to the UN Secretary-General, including a declaration of acceptance of the UN Charter obligations. The Security Council reviews the application and recommends it for admission with a vote of at least nine affirmative votes from the 15 members. The General Assembly then approves with a two-thirds majority vote.⁴⁴
- **Full Diplomatic Recognition:** This is a formal acknowledgement by one state of another state's existence and sovereignty. This is especially important because it is required for the establishment of diplomatic relations and engaging in international diplomacy. The UN does not grant diplomatic recognition since this is dependent on individual states. However, UN membership often implies a level of

⁴⁰ Amnesty International, 2023. "Human Rights in Palestine (State Of)," Amnesty International, 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/palestine-state-of/report-palestine-state-of/>.

⁴¹ United Nations, 2024. "Guterres: Two-State Solution the Only Path to a Just, Lasting Peace | UN News," United Nations, January 31, 2024. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/01/1146097>.

⁴² UNRWA, "UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees," UNRWA, n.d. <https://www.unrwa.org/>.

⁴³ United Nations, 2022. "Security Council Must Strengthen, Uphold Responsibility to Ensure Accountability When International Law Is Violated, Speakers Stress in All-Day Debate | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," United Nations, June 2, 2022. <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14919.doc.htm>; United Nations, "Uphold International Law," United Nations. n.d. <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/uphold-international-law>.

⁴⁴ United Nations, "About UN Membership," United Nations, n.d. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/about-un-membership>.

recognition by the international community..⁴⁵

- **Recognition of Sovereignty:** This involves the acknowledgement of a state's supreme authority over its territory and the right to govern without external interference. This is important for a state's participation in international law and global governance. Sovereignty recognition is a precondition for full UN membership and diplomatic relations. However, this recognition can be complex and politically sensitive. For example, the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state has been a cause of disagreement for years now. Notwithstanding, over 140 nations recognize Palestine, which reflects a growing international consensus on its right to self-determination and sovereignty..⁴⁶

Major Bloc and Country Positions

China always supported the Palestinian right to self-determination. It often advocates for a peaceful resolution of the conflict through negotiations and dialogue using the UN framework. China continues to engage the Middle East to resolve the issue using its "Four-Point Plan," which calls for a two-state solution adhering to the principle of "land for peace," increasing humanitarian aid to Palestinians and enhancing international efforts to promote the

peace talks. China supports the resolutions of the UN and aligns itself with the Non-Aligned Movement and other developing countries on this issue..⁴⁷

The European Union supports a two-state solution that ensures a secure Israel and sovereign Palestinian state. The EU has condemned the Israeli settlements as illegal under international law and called for a stop to the settlement expansion, which it sees as the barrier to peace. The EU offers financial aid to the Palestinian Authority and supports initiatives that promote Palestinian state-building and development. The policies and actions of the EU are guided by international law and UN resolutions. However, sometimes there is a divergence among the EU members on how to engage the parties resulting in different levels of support for different UN resolutions..⁴⁸

The Non-Aligned Movement is a strong supporter of the Palestinian self-determination. The NAM agrees with the establishment of a Palestinian state and frequently condemns the Israel occupation, settlement activities, and violation of international law. NAM members have been the vocal voices calling for the Palestinian right to self-determination in international gatherings and as well as pushing for resolutions in the General Assembly in favor of the Palestinians. It emphasizes the adherence to international law and the undeniable rights of

⁴⁵ Ibid.; Wikipedia, 2024. "Member States of the United Nations," Wikipedia, edited September 1, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Member_states_of_the_United_Nations.

⁴⁶ Nicole Hassenstab, 2024. "Three Questions on the Recognition of a Palestinian State," American University, May 30, 2024, <https://www.american.edu/sis/news/20240530-three-questions-on-the-recognition-of-a-palestinian-state.cfm>.

⁴⁷ AP and TOI Staff, 2017. "China Pushes Four-Point Israeli-Palestinian Peace Plan | The Times of Israel," The

Times of Israel, August 1, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/china-pushes-four-point-israeli-palestinian-peace-plan/>; Xinhua, 2021. "China Puts Forward Four-Point Proposal Regarding Palestine-Israel Conflict," Xinhua, May 17, 2021. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-05/17/c_139950043.htm.

⁴⁸ EEAS, 2024 "The EU and the Middle East Peace Process," EEAS, May 2, 2024, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-and-middle-east-peace-process_en.



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Palestinians, not excluding the right of return for refugees..⁴⁹

Russia supports the Palestinian self-determination and the creation of a sovereign state. Russia, as a member of the Middle East Quartet, including the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations, has been involved in mediating peace talks between Israel and Palestine. Russia has criticized Israeli settlement expansion and policies that hinder the peace efforts while advocating for direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. In all these, Russia has maintained good relations with both Israel and Palestine..⁵⁰

The United States strongly supports Israeli security and uses its Security Council veto to limit UN activism in the conflict. Even though the United States supports Israel, it has also endorsed a two-state solution..⁵¹ The position of the U.S. differs with different administrations but generally supports Palestinian self-determination in the context of a negotiated peace agreement. The U.S. continues to provide military and economic aid to Israel, and humanitarian aid to Palestinians. President Trump was fully supportive of the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu. President Biden confirmed his support for a two-state solution..⁵²

Other Countries and Blocs

Arab League: The Arab League is a strong supporter of the Palestinian cause, calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. The League has also been instrumental in international forums such as the United Nations in promoting the Palestinian cause and criticizing Israeli policies..⁵³

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC): The OIC is a group of Muslim-majority countries that has been a great supporter of the Palestinian right to self-determination. It often issues statements condemning Israeli policies

⁴⁹ Wikipedia, 2024. "Non-Aligned Movement," Wikipedia, edited August 6, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-Aligned_Movement ; United Nations, 2012. "NAM Condemns Israeli Settlement Activity in Palestinian Lands - Statement - Secco Media Stakeout/UN Video Feed - Question of Palestine," United Nations, December 19, 2012. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-202479/>.

⁵⁰ Wikipedia, 2024 "Palestine–Russia Relations," Wikipedia, edited August 7, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestine%E2%80%93Russia_relations#:~:text=Russia%20continues%20to%20support%20the,brief%20civil%20war%20in%202007; Wikipedia, 2024 "Quartet on the Middle East," Wikipedia, edited

August 4, 2024.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quartet_on_the_Middle_East.

⁵¹ Wikipedia, 2024 "Two-State Solution," Wikipedia, edited September 3, 2024.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-state_solution.

⁵² Kali Robinson, 2023. "What Is U.S. Policy on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?" Council on Foreign Relations, July 12, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-us-policy-israeli-palestinian-conflict>.

⁵³ Ezzedine Said, 2022. "At Arab League Summit, Leaders Vow 'total Support' for Palestinian Cause | The Times of Israel," The Times of Israel, November 2, 2022. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/at-arab-league-summit-leaders-vow-total-support-for-palestinian-cause/>.

and actions in the occupied territories. It has called for international action to ensure Palestinian self-determination. The OIC also supports UN resolutions and other diplomatic efforts that affirm Palestinians' independent state.⁵⁴

African Union (AU): The African Union has consistently supported the Palestinian right to self-determination, drawing on its history of anti-colonial struggle and solidarity with people under occupation. The AU supports a two-state solution with a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel and often aligns with the Non-Aligned Movement in international votes. Many countries in Africa provide diplomatic support for Palestine in the UN and other international forums.⁵⁵

Some Possible Proposals for Action

The UN and the international community have made efforts in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, progress has been disappointing or worse. There is more to be done. To make progress on this issue at ODUMUNC 48 will require great effort. As you prepare to deliberate, write and vote on resolutions, below are some proposals and questions to consider:

Assessing the current UN engagement: This evaluates the extent of the current involvement of the UN in addressing Palestine's right self-determination.

Some questions to guide your deliberations: Is the UN already engaged on the issue? What specific actions are being taken by the UN? How effective have these actions been in supporting the Palestinian self-determination? Are there gaps in the current UN approach that need to be addressed?

Strengthening ongoing UN initiatives: This is to enhance and support the ongoing UN efforts to address the issue, focusing on areas in which the UN has made some progress.

Some questions to guide your deliberations: Which UN bodies (for example: General Assembly, Security Council, UNRWA) are actively involved and what are they doing? How can the international community support and reinforce these efforts?

Exploring new avenues for UN and action: This is to discover new strategies and initiatives that the UN and the international community can undertake to advance the Palestinian right to self-determination.

Some questions to guide your deliberations: What more can the UN and the international community do beyond their current efforts? Are there new diplomatic, legal, or economic measures that could be implemented for the Palestinian right to self-determination? How can the UN better coordinate with regional organizations and civil society to address the issue? Since resolutions are not legally binding,

⁵⁴ Organization of Islamic Cooperation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2022. "OIC Welcomes United Nations Resolutions on the Cause of Palestine," Organization of Islamic Cooperation, December 11, 2022, https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t_id=37837&t_ref=26014&lan=en.

⁵⁵ African Union, 2024. "The African Union Delivered Its Oral Statement before the International Court of Justice for the Palestine Advisory Opinion Proceedings," African Union, February 28, 2024. <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20240228/african-union-delivered-its-oral-statement-international-court-justice>.



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they suffer compliance, can these resolutions be made legally binding? If yes, how?

Promoting greater international cooperation:

This is to foster greater cooperation among UN member states, regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to achieve a comprehensive solution to the issue.

Some questions to guide deliberations: How can the UN encourage or achieve more active participation from member states and regional organizations like the Arab League or EU? What role can NGOs and civil society play in supporting Palestinian self-determination? How can the UN facilitate better coordination among these actors?

Enhancing human rights and legal

protections: To strengthen the legal and human rights frameworks to protect Palestinian rights and hold violators accountable.

Some questions to guide deliberations: How can the UN ensure human rights violations are effectively and appropriately addressed? What legal mechanisms can be strengthened or introduced to protect the rights of Palestinians? What role can international courts play in ensuring justice is served?

Economic sanctions and isolation: That is, the UN should impose comprehensive economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation on Israel until it fully withdraws from the occupied Palestinian territories and recognizes Palestinian statehood. This is to put pressure on Israel to comply with international law and human rights standards.

Some questions to guide deliberations: What should be the scope and intensity of the sanctions and isolation measures? How can they be implemented without harming innocent civilians? What conditions must Israel meet before the sanctions are lifted and how can compliance be monitored and verified? How can humanitarian exemptions be granted to ensure

essential goods and services continue to reach the Palestinian people?

Mandatory Palestinian statehood: That is, the UN Security Council could impose a binding framework that requires Israel and Palestine to reach a final status agreement within a set time limit with severe penalties for non-compliance by any party. This is to force a resolution by bypassing the current political issues and ensuring the realization of Palestinian self-determination.

Some questions to guide deliberation: How should the UN address potential refusal to negotiate within the set time limit? What international law and resolutions support the creation of a Palestinian state? How can these be used to justify a mandatory declaration? How can the security concerns of both Israel and Palestine be addressed within the framework of a mandatory statehood declaration? What mechanisms should be put in place to ensure effective implementation and enforcement of a mandatory statehood declaration?



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