

Forum: Historical United Nations Security Council

Issue: Third Arab-Israeli War 1967 (Six-Day War)

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Introduction

The Six-Day War, and the longstanding conflict between the Palestinian Islamic Movement and Jewish armed groups of Israel have long been concerning and important to be taken action upon. This conflict, which can be traced back to the United Kingdom's mandate on the area during the time of the Ottoman Empire.

In the past, Israel has been severely repressing the Palestinian population to stay dominant in the region through apartheid and persecution, which was seen as a crime against humanity. [1] The urgency of the crisis in Israel, Syria and Egypt obligates the United Nations to take action and resolve the conflict through peacebuilding efforts as well as to ensure the safety of civilians. The atrocities happening in the war as well as the inhumane conditions civilians are residing in call for international attention. Our responsibility is to ensure a cease-fire and negotiations for long-term peace alongside the resolution of the humanitarian crisis.

Definition of Key Terms

Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip is a territory on the Egypt-Israel border, adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea. It is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with a population of more than two million people. It was occupied by Egypt for 19 years following the 1949 war, and by Israel afterwards. . [2]



Figure 1:
Map of the Gaza Strip, UN OCHA 2023, BBC



Golan Heights

The Golan Heights territory was seized by Israel on the last stretch of the Six-Day War. During the war, most of the Arabic inhabitants had to flee the area. The Israel military gained control over the area and subsequently a settlement in the region began.

The strategic importance of the area arises from the high visibility of Southern Syria and their capital Damascus from the hills, and hence Israel could observe the actions of the Syrian military while the topography provided natural cover [14].

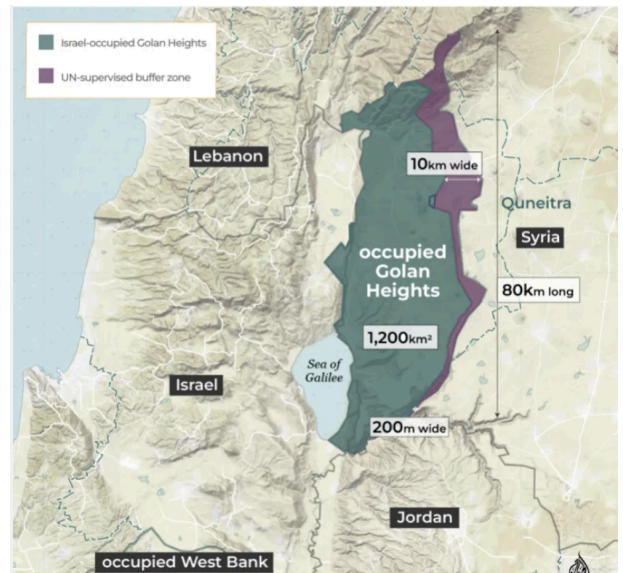


Figure 2: Map of Golan Heights and Surrounding Territories, Al Jazeera United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

West Bank

The West Bank territory was retained by Arab soldiers after Britain's mandate on the territory ended in 1948, and it was a part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan until 1967 when it was occupied by Israel. The borders were decided between Jordan and Israel, however, both of those parties as well as the Palestine Liberation Organisation claimed rights over the territory. [3]

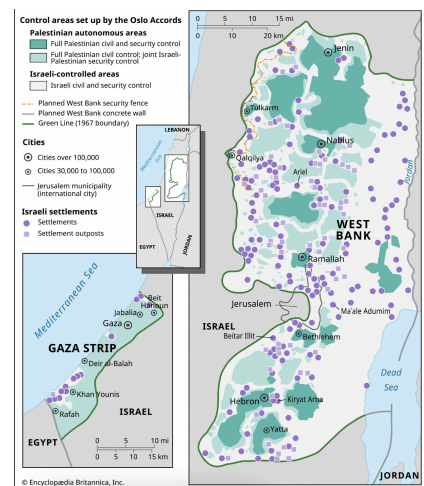


Figure 3: Map of Israeli and Palestinian Settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Encyclopedia Britannica

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)

The PLO was formed in 1964 by a coalition of Palestinian groups under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, in order to establish an Arab state instead of Israel. [4]



The PLO claims to represent the entirety of the world's Palestinians, who lived in the Palestine territory before Israel's formation. [5]

United Arab Republic

The United Arab Republic was a political union between Egypt and Syria that came into force in 1958. Following a defense agreement of three years prior, the union wished to strengthen cooperation against perceivable threats of Israel and the global rise of communism. The pan-Arab nationalist ideologies of the union called for other Arab states to join. The Egyptian dominance in the union led Syria to disengage from the union in 1961. Still, the United Arab Republic is considered the baseline of pan-Arab cooperation and solidarity, being the tangible representation of the rhetoric [16].

Background Information

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has roots leading back to the Jewish migration of the area during the Ottoman Empire. Palestine was under the mandate of Britain due to the decision of the League of Nations, which was thought of as a transition phase, yet failed to address the right to self-determination of Palestinians. [6] With the rise of Zionism, the Jewish nationalist movement that aimed to create a Jewish Palestine state, and the threats posed by pogroms and persecutions, the Jews found refuge in the area now known as Israel and Palestine. The British government had also declared its support for a Jewish national state in Palestine back in 1917.

However, the main starting point of the issue was the United Nations' decision in 1947 to divide the British-governed Palestine into two separate states, one being Jewish and the other Arab. The founding of Israel as a haven for Jews post-holocaust was highly denounced by both Palestine and other Arab countries. Jewish armed groups and Palestine forces were engaged in battles until the 1948 invasion by Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, and Syria, subsequently to the declaration of independence of Israel. In 1967 Israel started a defensive war against the aforementioned countries because of the risk of a future invasion, and the Gaza



Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Golan Heights were taken with the unprecedented battles. [4]

Known as the Six-Day War, the war in 1967 was nothing but predicted. Neighbors of Israel were at a stage of political crisis: Syria had regular military coups, and the king was overthrown in Egypt. The tensions further agressed with the outbreak of the Cold War. The USSR was providing Egypt with warfare, while Israel was getting closer with the United States and receiving support from France and the United Kingdom, probable to acquire nuclear weapons. As Israel expanded it's resources, Egypt was aiming to pan-Arab nationalist movement to take revenge from Israel and re-build Arabic greatness, while coping with a raging war with Yemen. The Jordanian king was fearing a coup or overtaking by Israeli forces.

Full scale air and artillery war between Syria and Israel began on 7 April, 1967. This, paired with the situation in the border of Egypt, triggered mass mobilization in Israel, while the international community, especially the United States, urged them not to be the one shooting first. The Straits of Tiran where of primary concern, as the Secretary General had stated, and the US was promising to create a naval mission to resolve the issue. Still, the agressions were linked to the root cause of the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians. As reiterated by Egypt, the 1948 aggressions against Palestinians were not forgotten, alongside the threats to Syria, which were given as the reason of the Straits of Tiran issue that began the war physically [12].

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Israel

The Israeli view on Palestine roots back to Zionism and the aim of establishing a Jewish state in place of Palestine. The migrated Jews were promised a land to return to and to take back the Temple in Jerusalem. The rise of anti-semitism throughout Europe caused the displaced Jews to migrate to Palestine and revive their nationalism. Zionism was seen as the solution to both anti-Semitism and the creation of a separate Jewish entity and was created as a political view by Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl.



With Palestine under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Zionists were not able to gain political support. However, after World War I, the Zionists persuaded Britain to release the Balfour Declaration, which put forward British support for a "Jewish homeland" in Palestine. Through getting an endorsement from the League of Nations, Palestine was placed under British mandate, however, the British aim of joining the Arab and Zionist forces could not succeed with the great opposition in between.

However, in 1939, after Arabs opposed the declaration of two mutually dependent states, Britain started to restrict Jewish migrations to gain Arabic support against Germany and Italy. After World War II, Britain aimed to stop their mandate entirely on the area and delivered the issue to the UN. In 1948, the Zionist and Palestinian forces clashed over the two-state solution and as Zionists came out of the battles with the upper hand, Israel declared its independence and was recognized by the United States, the Soviet Union, and other significant powers. [7]

Syria

Syria has an extensive history that brought them in the middle of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In 1920, a Syrian congress rejected the Balfour Declaration and chose the king for a united Syria, which included Palestine. However, the Allies' separation of the area deemed that Lebanon and Syria would be under French mandate while Palestine would be held under British mandate. [8]

Syria was one of the first Arab countries to attack Israel after it gained independence in 1948 [10]. In 1958, due to the fragility of Syria, a union was implemented with Egypt to create the United Arab Republic. However, this union failed, and a coup d'état occurred in Syria. The new rule in Syria was not recognized by Egypt. The issue concerning the Jordan River also emerged at this time, with Syria threatening to go to war to obstruct the project that would allow settlement in Israel. The intervention of the United Nations managed to resolve this issue without escalating.



In the 1967 Six-Day War, the biggest hotspot of the war was the Israeli-Syrian border. The disputed territory of Golan Heights as well as River Jordan were of concern. However, Syria was also sheltering Palestinian guerrillas, who were considered terrorists by Israel [12].

Egypt

The relevant history of Egypt's involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict arises from the Suez Crisis. The Suez Canal Company, which was a joint enterprise of UK and France, was going to be nationalized following increased political tension between Egypt and the aforementioned countries. The political presence of the countries in the region were no longer welcomed as traces of European colonialism. UK and France saw physical force as the only option against resolving the issue, and were in extended dialogue with Israel. Hence, a joint plan to invade Egypt and overthrow the president was devised. A UN ceasefire was implemented to broker the issue [13]. However, the Suez Crisis and the responses of respective Arab countries influenced the relationships and actions during the Six-Day War.

The beginning of the Israeli-Egyptian war was triggered by the USSR tipping Egypt off regarding Israel's war plans, argued to be aiming to escalate global tension for a United States already dealing with Vietnam. Egypt expelled the United Nations Peacekeepers, who were present on the land border for the past 11 years, and began its attack on Israel. They went onto close off ports and key trade routes, in order trigger Israel into attacking back. The UN Secretary General, U Thant, despite Egypt's claims of not firing the initial shot, expressed their concern that war was inevitable unless the border blockades were mitigated [12].

Palestine

Palestine was a part of the Ottoman Empire before the start of World War I. Palestinians believed that Britain promised them independence in return for their support of the Allied Forces against the Ottoman Empire. However, according to the 1919 Sykes-Picot Agreement between Russia, France, and Great Britain, the



Palestine territory was going to be under the special protection of the Allies and become internationalized.

After the Balfour Declaration, it was apparent that Palestine was not going to gain independence. With the UN approving the declaration and requesting cooperation between a Jewish Agency and a Palestinian authority, the Zionists and Palestinians realized that sovereignty would be dependent on population after the British rule ended.

As the tension between the two communities increased, the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt occurred due to the Arab desire for independence and fear of a Jewish state. The birth of a national identity was finally achieved thanks to the uprising, yet, the Zionist self-reliance also increased.

After World War II, important powers such as the United States supported the Zionist view in order to have a place for the holocaust survivors. The Arab countries also raised interest in the Palestine issue and declared the Alexandria Protocol, which states that Zionism and the protection of European Jews should not be interconnected and Palestine should not be forced to go through injustices. After PLO and Fatah's formation, Palestinian forces started to train guerillas in order to raid Israel. These organizations fought throughout the civil war as well as the Six-Day War but never achieved a peaceful agreement with Israel. [8]

Jordan

When Israel declared independence in 1948, Jordan was one of the five Arab countries to declare war on Israel. They held control over the West Bank between 1948 and 1967, but their annex was not recognized on an international level. Yet, they become the first nation to recognize their independence [10]. The reason behind this was, as a state, Jordan had always tried to balance conflicting claims of Arab nationalism and coexistence with Israel. During the Suez War, Jordan had sided with Egypt against Israel. However, in 1963, their political discourse with Israel began [15].

In the commencement of the Six-Day War, Jordan was concerned that Israel's primary aim could be occupying the West Bank territory. Jordan was forced to go



into the war, as otherwise, the Palestinian civilians could raise an uprising. With the help of Egypt, Jordan had the chance to delay a possible Israeli invasion of West Bank, at least until a ceasefire was imposed by the UN [12]. However, these perceptions held by the Jordan government were untrue: Israel held no intention to attack Jordan, however, the misunderstanding by Jordan policies brought together the destructive war that erupted. Hence, their siding with Egypt following the United Arab Command was the tipping point of them joining the war [15].

United States

The United States, the primary ally and weapon supplier of Israel, began this relationship when Egypt built its army's capabilities in the Yemen war, pushing Israel to pursue the US's support. Hence, the substantial support began in truth in 1963. As the relationship with Egypt struggled, they were pushed more toward the USSR. The conflict between the Arabs and Israelis hence became a proxy war between communism and imperialism.

During the Suez Crisis, the US had pressured Israel to remove itself from occupied Egyptian territory with the promise of ensuring passage through the Straits of Tiran. However, during the Six-Day War, they were more preoccupied with the Vietnam War, and hence sought diplomatic relations rather than amping the military power of Israel. They were also behind the Red Sea Regatta, an international naval force attempt at reopening the Straits through force, which did not gain support to be followed through [17].

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is one of the most important actors in the Israel-Palestine conflict due to its involvement in the area since it took control after World War I. The British mandate over the area presented many conflicts, especially because the migration of Jews alongside the Balfour Declaration caused the Palestinians to feel betrayed after Britain ensured they would get their right to independence. For this reason, the UK was one of the key factors why the conflict



began in the first place. After the UK mandate ended subsequent to the issue's referral to the UN, a clear two-state solution or peaceful resolution was not achieved, causing the tension to continue after Israel's declaration of independence in 1948. [9]

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1896	Theodor Herzl calls for the "restoration of the Jewish State" and the Zionist movement officially begins.
1916	The Sykes-Picot Agreement is concluded between the Allied Powers to divide Palestine after World War I.
1917	The UK issues the Balfour Declaration that makes the promise of a "national home for the Jewish people in Palestine".
1922	The League of Nations recognizes the Balfour Declaration and gives mandate over Palestine to the UK.
1936-1939	The Arab Revolt occurs as Palestinians riot against Jewish migration and British mandate.
1947	The UK presents the question of Palestine to the United Nations.
1948	The UK mandate comes to an end and Israel declares its independence. The first Arab-Israeli War breaks out with



	the invasion by Egypt, Transjordan (Jordan), Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.
1956	The Suez Crisis shifts power in the Middle East.
1964	Palestine Liberation Organisation is founded.
1967	The Six-Day War occurs with Israel occupying the West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem.

Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- Palestine plan of partition with economic union, 29 November 1947 ([A/RES/181\(II\)](#)): This resolution adopted by United Nations General Assembly is crucial in being the first international document addressing the issue, which was produced after the referral of the issue to the UN by the UK.
- Israel membership in the UN, 11 May 1949 ([A/RES/273 \(III\)](#))
- The Palestine Question, 25 November 1966 ([S/RES/228](#))
- Mideast situation/Withdrawal of Israeli forces, termination of states of belligerency, 22 November 1967 ([S/RES/242](#)): In 1966, Israel raided Samua, a territory in Jordan. The United States supported the condemnation of the Israeli raid by the United Nations Security Council [12].

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

As stated in the background information, international stakeholders, especially the United States' had many attempts of mitigation of the crisis. The United Nations and the Secretary General himself tried to resolve the tension from escalating. Yet, it is important to note some specific initiatives and details. The border between Egypt and Israel were already protected by the United Nations Peacekeepers, however, they were dismissed by the Egyptian government during the planning of attacks [12]. Hence, the incapability of the Peacekeepers and the Secretary General to act to



their full potential and ensure a successful mediation should be of concern, noting their recent attempts in the days prior of this issue commencing in this committee.

More specifically, the United States and the United Kingdom had devised a plan to relieve the tension surrounding Egypt's closing of the Straits of Tiran. Entitled the Red Sea Regatta, operation called for the coalition of maritime states to send a naval force unless Egypt let free access through the straits. However, not much support for the plan could be garnered [13].

Possible Solutions

The first and foremost step to achieve the consideration of a peaceful peninsula is through the termination of the current violence through a ceasefire or permanent truce. Therefore, bilateral or most efficiently multilateral negotiations with international organizations should be resumed while the parties' worries regarding regrouping during ceasefires should be eased through additional agreements. Then, long-term solution including the rights of refugees and displaced people as well as the division of territories and boundaries can be discussed at length in order to reach a mutually beneficial agreement with compromise, which would end the conflict once and for all.

The more urgent, humanitarian side of the issue requires the UN and the Security Council to provide the necessary resources to the citizens impacted by the war. Access to healthcare as well as basic human needs such as shelter, water, and food are at risk. Hence, an agreement to deliver external assistance through one of the borders should be made with Israel and neighboring countries to ensure the flow of humanitarian aid. Additionally, the territories at risk of air raids should be cleared and arrangements for the refugees should be made with international cooperation, which again requires an agreement regarding the border crossings. The refugees should be provided with care as well as financial assistance in their country of residence, which requires long-term planning and UN collaboration to achieve.

Lastly, the atrocities and war crimes should be considered with their long-term impacts once peace is settled in the region. International courts such as



the International Court of Justice or special expert groups could be referred to in order to review the previous human rights violations and their consequences. The currently ongoing human rights violations could also be addressed if a rapid solution and oversight mechanism can be provided by the United Nations to prevent them from happening before a truce is reached.

Overall, the current conflict should be addressed by delegates in two parts: the necessary aid and ceasefire to end the current violence between Jewish armed forces and the Arabs, and the political and legal grounds as well as long-term aid to end the conflict entirely. The delegates are welcome to focus on both short and long term solutions as one cannot exist without the other, and peace cannot be reached without international cooperation and effort. [11]

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