

# DISSEMINATION REPORT

*Round table discussion on*

## **HUMANITARIANISM IN THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

*December 8, 2023 | New Delhi, India*



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**We will take this opportunity to thank everyone who had been actively involved in organising the event and publication of this report.**

- **Dr. Farhat Mantoo & Rahul Banerjee for Concept Design.**
- **Rashika Agrawal, Ana Paula Berlin & Lakshi Shandilya for coordinating the event.**
- **Simran Kothari & Prerna Tara for preparing the Report.**
- **Rashika Agrawal for Designing the report.**
- **The entire team at Raisina House & MSF South Asia for their assistance.**
- **Speakers, Amb. Anil Trigunayat, IFS (Retd.); Dr. Farhat Mantoo, Executive Director, MSF South Asia; Dr. Abed Jazer, Political Counselor, Embassy of Palestine in India; Sapna Kedia, Director of Gender, ICRW & Prerna Tara, Research Director, Raisina House for their expert insights.**

**All other colleagues who participated and provided their insights during the discussion.**

# Table of Contents

Introduction	_____	01
Fact Sheet	_____	02
Major Takeaways	_____	03
The Conversation	_____	04
Questions	_____	07
Impact of the Conflict	_____	09
Way Ahead	_____	12
Quotes	_____	13

# Introduction

The recent escalation of violence between Israel and Palestine following the actions of Hamas on October 7 has resulted in a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in the region, which has affected more than two million people with more than 1.8 million people displaced and at least 13,000 people killed, most of them women and children, according to UNRWA.

The casualties being mostly civilians and humanitarian aid staff who are protected under International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The Israeli complete siege coupled with an imposed humanitarian blockade has not just led to a dire scarcity of electricity, water, food, and medicine, exacerbating the suffering of the population, but also the complete destruction and collapse of the healthcare system in Gaza, hampering the delivery of any meaningful humanitarian aid. The international community has repeatedly called for a ceasefire and the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers, as well as the unrestricted entry of humanitarian assistance into Gaza. However, the political and security challenges posed by the conflict have hindered the effective implementation of IHL, humanitarian principles and standards. With a temporary humanitarian pause in place, it is important that all major parties of the conflict come to the negotiation table and discuss a truce to put an end to the catastrophic human suffering.

With these facts in mind, Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), together with Raisina House organised a closed-door roundtable discussion on “Humanitarianism in the Israel-Palestine Conflict: Challenges and Opportunities” on December 8, 2023 in New Delhi India.

The motive of this discussion was to find answers to 3 critical questions:

- What are the main humanitarian principles and standards that guide humanitarian action in Gaza, and how are they being respected (or not) and implemented by the parties to the conflict and the humanitarian actors?
- How can India use its friendship with both Israel and Palestine as well as its influence in the region to mediate, facilitate dialogue among the parties and de-escalate the crisis?
- What are the main humanitarian recommendations and actions that need to be taken by the humanitarian community, the international community and India in particular, to improve the humanitarian situation and protection in Gaza?

# Since the Start of the Conflict:

29,606

Palestinians Killed

1,139

Israelis Killed

12,300

Children

152

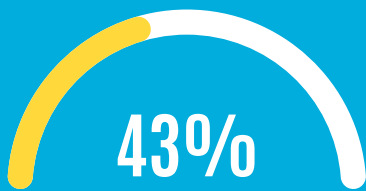
UN Staff Members

70

Journalists

743

Incidents of Targeted Violence Against  
Healthcare Professional in Gaza



Children make 43% of Total Death



70% Homes in Gaza Strip Destroyed

***"Stop the Siege, Allow Us to Treat Patients, Uphold International Humanitarian Laws without Bias"***

# Major Takeaways

- **Dr. Farhat Mantoo, Executive Director, MSF South Asia, sheds light on the dire situation in Gaza. She outlines the continuous violations of not just basic Humanitarian Principles but also several IHL norms enshrined by various International Conventions. She echoes the urgent need for medical assistance, and calls for the invocation of international laws to push for a sustainable ceasefire and not just “Humanitarian Pauses”**
- **Dr. Abed Jazer, Political Counselor from the Embassy of Palestine shares a personal experience and stresses the importance of a political solution and India’s potential role in pushing for a mediated settlement. He underlines the need for a change in the global perspective towards Palestine and emphasises the impact of the conflict on the civilian population, especially children and women.**
- **Ms. Sapna Kedia, Director of Gender at International Centre for Research on Women highlights the often-overlooked gendered impact of conflicts. Issues such as sexual violence, limitations on women’s mobility, and pre-existing vulnerabilities exacerbated during war demand a gender-responsive approach to the Israel Hamas War.**
- **Ms. Prerna Tara, Director of Research at Raisina House analysed the Israel Hamas Conflict and presented a series of recommendations and predictions that will help navigate a post-conflict state in the region.**
- **India’s Strategic Response & Future role: India’s strategic reaction during Palestinian suffering is acknowledged as limited, with a decline in Arab sentiment towards Palestine. India also has a very unique relationship with both Israel & Palestine and this friendship can be appropriately used to bring both parties to a mediated settlement. However, it is important to realise the US influence on Israeli policies vis a vis the influence of Zionist lobbying in the U.S., where policy decisions are perceived as subject to the interests of various groups. It is this lobby which will make it difficult to influence the Israeli government who will not listen to anyone but the US.**
- **International Humanitarian Laws: In the course of the Israel Hamas Conflict, something that has been made clear is that International Humanitarian Laws lack accountability mechanisms. It is only for parties who decide to abide by it and in case a party decides to do otherwise, there is no legal framework to hold the party accountable. The US in Iraq is an example of how ineffective IHL can be. The Israel Hamas conflict is setting a very dangerous precedence before the international community that a country can do anything without repercussions. This is a result of weak & flawed international criminal system. It was also observed that in spite of a temporary Humanitarian pause, it is not a legal basis as there is no Provision for “Pause” in the IHL. IHL also calls for unhindered supply and access to humanitarian resources which has been completely disregarded by Israel.**

# The Conversation



Opening the conversation, Amb. Trigunayat provided a historical context of the Israel Palestine crisis and briefed the gathering on India's relationship with both the parties. He was apt to point out that the Israel Hamas conflict didn't just raise a humanitarian crisis but also a Geo-political one as it will have major impact on the region by destabilising the power balance ratio in the region thus leading to various other conflicts that may arise like an aftershock. He also stressed on the fact of how important it is that the global community put pressure on the US to persuade Israel to cease hostilities as Israel will not respond to any pressure from any other power but the US.

With these opening remarks, he opens the conversation to the Panellists for Initial remarks

Dr. Farhat Mantoo: Executive Director at MSF, South Asia in her address didn't wait to share the dire seriousness of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza where MSF staff has been present providing medical assistance but has been the target of indiscriminate strikes by the Israeli offensive in Gaza. She stressed on the fact that Israel has been constantly violating various conventions of the International Humanitarian Laws by deliberately targeting healthcare infrastructure and staff with over 310 attacks on Medical resources which are supposed to be safe spaces with the most serious being Israeli Snipers targeting a Nurse.



Providing verified numbers from the ground she shares that MSF staff and families have been targets. 2 doctors from the Al-Adha Hospital were killed on October 21, 2023. A convoy was attacked on November 18, 2023 which left 2 members dead. They were helping patients to flee the incoming Israeli onslaught. The impact on the Civilian population has been dire, not just physically but also mentally. She shared that the psychological impact on children as young as 5 years old has been irreversible and never seen before in any conflict in the world.

She shares that the pace of Israeli strikes in South of Gaza which was supposed to be a protected safe space is a repetition of that in Northern Gaza which had already been razed. She highlights the fact that the rate of strikes has left no place safe and emphasised on the fact that it has left the doctors ineffective as 1/3 of patients brought into the only Hospital in Gaza are dead on arrival.

On December 6, the number of dead surpassed the injured, leaving the medical staff ineffective. The MSF medical staff are overworked and exhausted. They have to ration basic medical components such as anaesthesia with instances of amputation without anaesthesia as there are no supplies due to the humanitarian blockade imposed by Israel. Al-Adha remains the only Hospital in the whole of Gaza with the Al-Shifa Hospital being declared a dead zone by the UN.

She expressed the issues arising from a lack of Humanitarian system in Gaza where 85% patients face a 2nd forced displacement imposed upon them by the violent onslaught. It is impossible for patients to evacuate on a short notice especially now with no place to go. She shares that the Israeli offensive forcing a 2nd displacement has every element of a Genocide. Closing her Arguments, Dr. Mantoo's demand was simple, "Allow us to treat Patients".



Dr. Abed Jazer: Political Counsellor at the Palestinian Embassy in New Delhi brought in a Personal experience from the civilian point of view with his family still present in Gaza. At the beginning, he emphasised the fact that he will not speak of what he as a Palestinian believes but will only share his views from the angles of Human Rights, Humanitarian Laws & United Nations.

Starting his career as a journalist in Palestine, and later as a government official at the Palestinian Foreign office, Dr. Jazer shared his experience and observations at various platforms and forums.

He distinctively talked about how Israeli & Western Media is shaping the narrative. He also shared that over the years the Narrative has been transforming from the Arab-Israeli war to the Hamas-Israel War. He also observed how Indian media has been covering the conflict and expressed his displeasure on the biasness & news that are not supported by a lot of on-ground data. He also observed that the media coverage does not show the human suffering and is majorly focused on theatrics of the conflict.

Dr. Jazer, having spent 10 years in India as a Diplomat shared his observations on India's reaction to the conflict and shares how India can play a very important role in mediating the conflict due to the nature of relationship it shares with both Israel & Palestine. He shares that India has always been politically sympathetic towards the Palestinian Cause and this conflict has not changed the same. During his deliberations, he observes that US backing of the conflict is an attempt to alter the Geo-political realities of the region and redesign the Middle East in it's own image.

While closing his initial remarks, Dr. Jazer expressed his concern of the long term implications of this conflict not just on Gaza or the region but upon the world order as well as indiscriminate violation of Humanitarian Laws are creating a seriously negative precedence and will have grave impact on future conflicts.



**Ms. Sapna Kedia: Director of Gender at ICRW, in her deliberations presented a gendered aspect of conflicts. She observes that even in times of Conflict, Women do not have their own individual identity and are clubbed with Children. She states that contrary to popular narratives, wars are not Gender Neutral neither are it's impacts. She observes how conflicts exasperate the underlying biases of the society leading to a heightened violence against women. Even, women issues are sidelined in conflicts which show the inherent masculine bias attached to any conflicts. Dr. Mantoo, adding to her**



**observations shared how the conflict have impacted Young girls and women in Gaza leaving them without access to proper sanitation or even menstrual hygiene products. She also throws light on the ordeal of Gender diverse population in a conflict and says that their sufferings are more than women.**

**Closing her Arguments, Ms. Kedia mentions that it is important that Conflicts are gender responsive in approach and a Gendered analysis is done on conflicts.**



**Ms. Prerna Tara: Director of Research at Raisina House summed up the observations made by her predecessors and provided a prediction and analysed the Geo-political as well as the Humanitarian impacts of the Conflict not just between Israel & Palestine but also in the region for years to come. She very rightly observed that the Israel-Hamas conflict is one of the most protracted and violent episodes of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. She also observed that apart from the long term humanitarian implications, this war has definitely affected the regional and global dynamics and interests, as it has triggered a humanitarian crisis along with a diplomatic challenge.**

**While concluding, Ms Tara also shared her observations and explored a way ahead for a sustainable ceasefire agreement which will bring stability in the region.**

# Questions

1. **What are the main humanitarian principles and standards that guide humanitarian action in Gaza, and how are they being respected (or not) and implemented by the parties to the conflict and the humanitarian actors?**

Something that has been clear during the course of the deliberations is the fact that the actors of the conflict are not respecting Humanitarian Laws & principles that are enshrined upon by various international conventions. The main humanitarian principles and standards that guide humanitarian action in Gaza are:

- **Humanity:** Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable and at risk.
- **Impartiality:** The humanitarian response must be carried out on the basis of need alone, without discrimination based on nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political affiliation.
- **Neutrality:** The humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.
- **Independence:** The humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.
- **During the deliberations,** it has been made clear that these principles and standards are not being respected or implemented by the parties to the conflict with Israel being the most aggressive violator.
- **Collective punishment:** The Israeli blockade of Gaza, which restricts the movement of people and goods, has been condemned by many human rights organisations as a form of collective punishment that violates international law.
- **Unlawful attacks:** Both Israel and Hamas have been accused of conducting unlawful attacks that target or harm civilians and civilian objects, such as hospitals, schools, and homes. These attacks does amount to war crimes under international law.
- **Lack of transparency:** There have been reports of corruption, mismanagement, and politicisation of humanitarian aid in Gaza, which undermine the accountability and effectiveness of the humanitarian response. Transparency International has called for adherence to international aid standards and anti-corruption measures by all humanitarian agencies operating in Gaza.
- **Access constraints:** The humanitarian situation in Gaza is worsened by the limited access of humanitarian workers and supplies to the affected areas, due to the Israeli blockade, the Egyptian closure of the Rafah crossing, and the insecurity and violence on the ground. The Norwegian Refugee Council has urged the international community to keep the Rafah crossing open and to push for the respect of international humanitarian law in the conflict.

**2. What are the main humanitarian principles and standards that guide humanitarian action in Gaza, and how are they being respected (or not) and implemented by the parties to the conflict and the humanitarian actors?**

India holds a very unique position given its friendship with both Israel and Palestine and the global community especially Palestine holds India in a very high regard believing that India can act as a Mediator in this ongoing conflict.

However, during the deliberations what came forward was something different. Many, especially Amb. Anil Trigunayat was of the view that it is only the US who can hold Israel accountable for its actions and enforce a Ceasefire. But, this fact has not stopped India from playing its role as the true voice of the Global South.

The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has been speaking to regional and global leaders trying to create a consensus but is not in a unique position to stop the war. India has not changed its historic position and supports the Palestinian Cause Politically. India has also been providing medical and humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza.

India, through its G20 Presidency had promoted the ideas of a reformed & Inclusive international system and has a very good opportunity to leverage its diplomatic position in the Troika to mobilise world leaders to address the Humanitarian situation in Gaza.

# Long-term Implications

The Israel-Hamas conflict is one of the most protracted and violent episodes of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, which has claimed thousands of lives and displaced millions of people since 1948. The conflict has its roots in the historical, political, religious, and territorial claims of both sides, as well as the role of regional and international actors.

The Israel-Hamas conflict is not only a tragedy for Gaza but also for Israel. It is a tragedy for humanity that affects millions of people around the world. The conflict is a complex and tragic situation that has devastating humanitarian implications for the civilians living in Gaza and Israel. The recent escalation of violence between both the parties, have resulted in a humanitarian crisis in the region, where more than two million Palestinians live under a blockade imposed by Israel. The conflict has also affected the lives of millions of Israelis who live near or within range of Hamas rockets. At the same time, involvement of other actors in the conflict has led to an immense instability in West Asia with the conflict showcasing long-term Geo-political implications in the region.

## Humanitarian Implications

According to Some sources, the conflict has already caused a massive health crisis in Gaza, with high rates of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition, mental health problems, and injuries. The UN states that more than 11,000 people have been killed, most being civilians, and more than 100,000 have been displaced. The lack of electricity, water, food, and medicine has exacerbated the suffering of the population, while the indiscriminate destruction of infrastructure and facilities has hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The situation have worsened with the resumption of hostilities after a negotiated "Humanitarian Pause" which each party claiming was initiated by the other.

At this point The long-term humanitarian implications of the conflict are likely to be severe and lasting:

- The health system in Gaza will need massive reconstruction and rehabilitation, as well as increased funding and support from the international community. The health workers in Gaza will also need protection and assistance to cope with the trauma and stress of living in a war zone.
- The mental health needs of the population will be particularly high, as they have experienced repeated hostilities, violence, displacement, and loss. The children in Gaza will be especially vulnerable to psychological distress, learning difficulties, and developmental delays

- **The conflict has also affected the lives of millions of Israelis who live near or within range of Hamas rockets. They have faced fear, anxiety, disruption to their daily routines, damage to their homes and infrastructure, and increased risk of injury or death from shelling or airstrikes. They have also witnessed scenes of horror and suffering on their television screens or social media feeds. Some Israelis have expressed solidarity with their Palestinian neighbours by donating blood or money to humanitarian organisations.**
- **The conflict has also had global implications for human rights, security, diplomacy, and development. It has raised questions about the legality and morality of Israel's use of force against Hamas militants who have fired rockets into Israel territory. It has also highlighted the need for a political solution that addresses the root causes of the conflict and ensures respect for international humanitarian law by both sides.**
- **It has also challenged the role and responsibility of regional actors such as Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Qatar, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, etc., who have different interests and agendas in relation to Gaza. It has also exposed the gaps and weaknesses in the global humanitarian system that are unable to respond adequately to such emergencies.**

## **Geo-political Implications**

**Now, apart from the long term humanitarian implications, this war has definitely affected the regional and global dynamics and interests, as it has triggered a humanitarian crisis along with a diplomatic challenge. The war has increased the suffering and displacement of the civilian population in Gaza, who have faced shortages of food, water, electricity, and medical supplies. The war has also prompted international efforts to broker a ceasefire and a political solution, involving various actors such as the United Nations, the Arab League, the European Union, Russia, China, Turkey, Egypt, and Qatar.**

**Some long-term Geo-political implications of the conflict are:**

- **The war will have implications for the global economy, as it may affect the oil prices and the trade and investment flows in the region, the recent casualty being India's ambitious India-Middle East-Europe corridor (IMEC).**
- **Next, The war has severely damaged the prospects of a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as both sides have hardened their positions and lost trust in each other. The two-state solution, which was already facing many obstacles, may become even more unrealistic and unpopular. The war has also inflamed the tensions between Israel and other Arab and Muslim countries, especially Iran. The war will also trigger more violence and unrest in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where many Palestinians feel frustrated and marginalised by the Israeli occupation and the lack of political representation.**

- **The war has exposed the fragility and vulnerability of Israel's security and economy, as Hamas was able to launch a massive and coordinated attack on Israeli territory, penetrating its borders and causing widespread casualties and damage. The war has also revealed the limitations and risks of Israel's reliance on its Iron Dome missile defence system, which was overwhelmed by the sheer number of rockets fired by Hamas.**
- **The war has also strained Israel's relations with its allies, especially the United States, which has faced criticism for its unconditional support for Israel's actions. The war may also erode Israel's international legitimacy and reputation, as it has been accused of violating human rights and international law in its attacks on Gaza.**
- **The war has boosted the popularity and influence of Hamas, which has portrayed itself as the defender of the Palestinian cause and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam.**
- **The war has also enhanced Hamas' military capabilities and networks, as it has acquired more weapons and support from Iran and other sources. The war has also weakened the position and credibility of the Palestinian Authority, which has been sidelined and marginalised by the war.**
- **The war may also increase the radicalisation and extremism of some segments of the Palestinian population, who may see violence as the only way to achieve their rights and dignity.**

# Way Ahead

As we've seen, the Israel-Hamas conflict is a complex and long-standing one, with no easy or quick solution. The escalated tensions & violence among the parties as a result of the October 7th attack by Hamas on Israel followed by indiscriminate onslaught of the Palestinian people in Gaza has complicated the situation even more. However, there are some of the possible ways ahead for the Israel-Hamas conflict, but they all require political will, compromise, and cooperation from all sides.

Some ways to resolve the conflict peacefully can be a ceasefire agreement that would end the hostilities and allow humanitarian aid to reach the people in Gaza. The UN General Assembly has adopted an Article 99 resolution calling for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce, but it is not binding and requires the consent of both parties.

Another possible solution is a political dialogue that would address the root causes of the conflict, such as the status of Jerusalem, the rights of Palestinians, and the security of Israel. The US has expressed its support for a two-state solution that would create an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, but it also faces opposition from some Israeli politicians and settlers.

But the most viable way seems to be a mediation role by regional or international actors that would facilitate negotiations and reduce tensions. The UN Security Council has failed to adopt any resolution on the crisis due to vetoes by some permanent members with vested interests, but it could try again with more consensus and pressure. Other countries or organisations, such as Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Turkey, or the European Union, could also play a constructive role in promoting peace and stability. India is in a very unique position to mediate as it has a long standing Friendship with both Israel & Palestine, however it is not certain if Israel will listen to anyone except for the United States.

# Conclusion

"It is only the United States that commands the power & Respect from Israel to Influence it's actions in Gaza"

*- Amb. Anil Trigunayat. Former Indian Ambassador to Libya, Jordan*

"Our Demand is Loud & Clear, Let us Treat The Wounded"

*- Dr. Farhat Mantoo. Executive Director, Medecins Sans Frontieres*

What is happening in Gaza will create a dangerously negative precedence for future conflicts all over the world.

*-Dr. Abed Jazer, Political Counselor, Embassy of Palestine in New Delhi*

"This is the First Tme that a 'Humanitarian Ceasefire' has been enforced in Gaza. There is no concept of a 'Humanitarian Ceasefire' in the IHL"

*-Aashish Yadav. Asst. Director, Centre for Public Interest Law, JGU.*

Conflicts exasperate the underlying Biases of the Society leading to a heightened Violence against Women. Even, women issues are sidelined in conflicts which show the inherent masculine bias attached to any conflicts"

*- Sapna Kedia Director of Gender, ICRW.*

"The Israel-Hamas conflict is not only a tragedy for Gaza but also for Israel. It is a tragedy for humanity that affects millions of people around the world"

*- Prema Tara. Director of Research, Raisina House.*



---

## Contact

Raisina House  
D1-1003, The Express Park View.  
Greater Noida - 201310

[www.raisinahouse.org](http://www.raisinahouse.org)  
[office@raisinahouse.org](mailto:office@raisinahouse.org)  
[@raisinahouse](#)