

# **THE EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2019**

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## **United Nations Security Council**



## **The West Bank and Gaza Strip Conflict**

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*By Joviana Henza and Mathews Kevin Jn*

## **Welcome letter**

Dear delegates,

First and foremost, we would like to send you our gratitude and welcome you to the TEIMUN Security Council 2019.

Thousands of lives are at stake in regards to the current condition in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Not only the political turmoil in the area, it extends to problems such as humanitarian issues, environmental issues, and terrorist attacks in the area. This topic will bring a broad discussion on how to identify the root problem within the issue and how to solve it. Therefore, we hope that this council can come up with effective and practical solutions to overcome the issue, which involves real actions that are possible to be implemented.

We are as excited as you are to be in the council, we expect that the delegates are not only focusing on the idea to solve the issue but also to have a fun and engaging debate to take home as a memorable experience.

If you have any questions regarding the substantial matters on the topic, do not hesitate to contact us on our email : sc@teimun.org

Yours truly,

Joviana and Mathews  
Security Council Chairs

## **BACKGROUND**

The political turmoil between the Israeli armed forces and the Palestinian protestors in Gaza during the “Great March of Return” from March to May 2018 refocused international and regional attention on the question of Palestine. Although there were various attempts to end the Palestinian struggles over the past two decades, there was no significant international momentum in addressing them.

The Gaza Strip is a small Palestinian territory, about twice the size of the District of Columbia, located along the Mediterranean coast between Egypt and Israel. Palestinians are ethnic Arabs and majority Muslims. It is deeply impoverished, kept in isolation by the Israeli military and ruled by the Islamic Resistance Movement, popularly known as Hamas. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict stems from the inability to determine sovereignty over the Palestinian territories which includes East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The Oslo Accords (1993-1999) between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) attempted to negotiate Palestinian self-governance.<sup>1</sup> The accords deemed that control over civilian and security affairs in part of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were transferred to that government body.<sup>2</sup> Palestinian agitation over what they see as Israel’s enduring occupation of their homeland has inspired uprisings, or *intifadas*, in 1987 and 2001.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the negotiations which attempt to resolve the status of Palestinian territories have historically been deadlocked despite the foreign involvement in regards to the conflict.<sup>4</sup> The initiative to hold peace talks stalled as of 2006 when Hamas, a militant Palestinian party won the Palestinian Legislative Council elections and took over the government. Additionally, Hamas failed in the effort to form a unity government with the traditionally dominant Palestinian party, which is led by Fatah (formally known as the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, a Palestinian nationalist political party and the largest faction of the confederated multi-party Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the second-largest party in the Palestinian Legislative Council). That failure resulted in a violent power struggle among the parties and its supporters. Hamas subsequently assumed military and government control over the Gaza Strip leaving

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<sup>1</sup>“The World Factbook,” Central Intelligence Agency, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/we.html>

<sup>2</sup> “Palestine Territories – Timeline,” BBC News, December 7, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29362505>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The World Factbook

parts of the West Bank under the control of Fatah.<sup>5</sup> In reaction to Hamas seizure of the Gaza Strip, Israel instituted a military blockade which has contributed to the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territories and led to restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement. Protracted Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Hamas violent action have hampered the development of a lasting peace agreement for a two-state solution.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## HISTORY

In 1948, the United Nations declared that the British territory known as Palestine would be divided into two independent countries: Israel and Palestine. Arab leaders rejected the declaration and invaded in order to maintain a unified, independent, Arab Palestine. They lost, and by the time the fighting ended, Israel controlled even more of the land than the U.N. declaration had granted the new country. One of the areas still under Palestinian control was the Gaza Strip. Israel occupied the territory in 1967, after another war with Arab states but withdrew its troops and settlers in 2005. Currently, Israel still maintains extremely tight restriction on trade in and out of Gaza, which has a 40% percent unemployment rate. 38% of Gazans live under the poverty line.<sup>6</sup>

In late 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew all of its settlers and soldiers and dismantled military facilities in the Gaza strip, but continues to control the Gaza Strip's land and maritime borders and airspace. In early 2006, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) won a majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council election. Attempts to form a unity government between Fatah and Hamas failed and violent clashes between their respective supporters ensued, culminating in Hamas' violent seizure of all military and governmental institutions in the Gaza Strip in June 2007. Since HAMAS's takeover, Israel and Egypt have enforced tight restrictions on movement and access of goods and individuals into and out of the territory. Fatah and Hamas have since reached a series of agreements aimed at restoring political unity between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank but have struggled to affect them; a reconciliation agreement signed in October 2017 remains unimplemented.<sup>7</sup>

By June 2008, Hamas and Israel were both ready to reach some sort of accommodation, and a six-month truce was declared, although never formally defined. Their job, the Hamas officials said, was to stop rocket attacks on Israel not only from its own armed groups, but also from others based in Gaza, including Islamic Jihad and the Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades. It took some days, but they were largely successful. Hamas imposed its will and even imprisoned some of those who were firing rockets. But goods exports, while up some 25 to 30 percent and including a mix of more varied items, never began to approach what Hamas thought it was going to get. Israel said it planned to increase the shipments in stages, and noted that the rockets never stopped completely.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2012/11/21/9-questions-about-israel-gaza-you-were-too-embarrassed-to-ask/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.552c13f5538a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2012/11/21/9-questions-about-israel-gaza-you-were-too-embarrassed-to-ask/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.552c13f5538a)

<sup>7</sup> ibid

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, after the truce period had lapsed, there was again a series of consistent airstrikes by the Israeli military in addition to the numerous rockets being fired by rebels. The death toll reached 300 by December 29<sup>th</sup>. A land invasion followed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January and after five days of consistent fighting, the death toll had skyrocketed to 660.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/studentactivity/20090109gazahistory.pdf>

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

In the current situation there are several significant stakeholders:

1. Fatah/ Palestinian Authority (PA) : The role of Fatah in the current event delivers a mixed impact. President Mahmoud Abbas and the Fatah party are seen by the international community as the legitimate government of the Palestinian people. In contrast, the PA implemented severe cuts to electricity in the Gaza Strip in 2017 worsening the humanitarian crisis in that territory. In addition, it also increased media censorship with reports of arbitrary arrests of journalists, activists and opposition politicians continuing to surface in 2017.
2. Hamas : Hamas carried out consistent attacks, with the use of rocket fire, into Israeli population centres causing fear, disruption and occasionally deaths, while inciting armed reactions from Israel.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, political stand-offs with Israel and rival Fatah have resulted in a grave deteriorations of humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip and Hamas authorities arrested scores of protesters in 2017 who were demonstrating against poor living conditions, arbitrary arrests, torture, and unfair trials.
3. Israel : On February 2018, Israel moved to legalize West Bank settlement outposts,<sup>10</sup> which also increased Israeli settlements and the ongoing military occupation in the West Bank diminished progress towards a peaceful two-State solution between Israel and Palestine.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Israel's discriminatory water-sharing agreements prevent thousands of Palestinians from accessing sufficient water supplies.<sup>12</sup>
4. United States : In December 2017, United States' President Trump broke with decades of U.S policy and officially recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, leading to violent demonstrations in the Palestinian territories, and causing Palestinian President Abbas

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<sup>9</sup> "Israel and Palestine: Events of 2017," Human Rights Watch, (Dec 2017). Accessed 6 February 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/israel/palestine>

<sup>10</sup> Osborne, Samuel. "Israel to legalise isolated settlement deep in West Bank after settler murdered, Netanyahu announces." Independent, February 4, 2018. Accessed on May 20<sup>th</sup>. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israel-legalise-settlement-havat-gilad-settler-murdered-palestinian-benjamin-netanyahu-gaza-rabbi-a8194001.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Fisher, Max. "The Two-State Solution: What It Is and Why It Hasn't Happened." The New York Times, December 29, 2016. Accessed on May 20<sup>th</sup>. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/29/world/middleeast/israel-palestinians-two-state-solution.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Corradin, Camilla. "Israel: Water as a tool to dominate Palestinians." Al Jazeera, June 23, 2016. Accessed on May 20<sup>th</sup>. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/06/israel-water-tool-dominate-palestinians-160619062531348.html>

to respond with aversion to any United States' peace agreement.<sup>13</sup> In January 2018, the United States withheld millions of dollars to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) which is responsible for administering aid to Palestinian refugees.<sup>14</sup>

5. United Nations : the UN Secretary-General is of the opinion that illegal settlement expansion must stop, and that Palestine and Israel must make the two-state solution a reality.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, UNGA adopted resolution 11995, asking nations not to establish diplomatic missions in Jerusalem<sup>16</sup> and UN Secretary-General called on all Member States to continue to provide support to UNRWA so that it may fulfil its role and implement its humanitarian mandate to serve Palestinian refugees.<sup>17</sup>
6. Arab League : The assorted impact the Arab league brought to the current conflict involves The Arab Peace Initiative – calling for normalized relations between the Arab region and Israel, Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories, and just settlement of Palestinian refugees – was re-endorsed by the Arab League at the 2017 Arab League Summit.<sup>18</sup> This affect the neighbouring region, as Egypt continues to exert tight control over the Rafah border in the south of the Gaza Strip, controlling the flow of people, goods, and aid between the Egypt and the Gaza Strip.<sup>19</sup>
7. Islamic Republic of Iran: It is known that Iran lends military financial support to Hamas, enabling the rift in Palestinian leadership and promoting armed conflict with Israel.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> "Jerusalem: Palestinian leader Abbas spurns US peace plan," December 22, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east- 42453530>

<sup>14</sup> Colum Lynch, Robbie Gramer, "U.S. Withholds Millions of Dollars in Promised Palestinian Food Aid," Foreign Policy, January 17, 2018, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/17/u-s-withholds-millions-of-dollars-in-promised-palestinian-food-aid-united-nations- relief-and-works-agency-humanitarian-assistance-state-department-middle-east-gaza-strip-west-bank/>

<sup>15</sup> "Concerned about Public Criticism of Palestine Refugee Agency, Secretary-General Calls on Member States to Continue Supporting Its Essential Services." United Nations, June 12, 2017, Accessed on May 24<sup>th</sup>. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sgsm18568.doc.htm>

<sup>16</sup> "General Assembly Overwhelmingly Adopts resolution Asking Nations Not to Locate Diplomatic Missions in Jerusalem." United Nations. December 21, 2017. Accessed February 5, 2018. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/ga11995.doc.htm>

<sup>17</sup> "Concerned about Public Criticism of Palestine Refugee Agency, Secretary-General Calls on Member States to Continue Supporting Its Essential Services."

<sup>18</sup> "Normalization Under Occupation: The Revived Arab Peace Initiative," The Global Observatory. Accessed January 25, 2018. <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/04/israel -palestine-arab-peace-initiative/>

<sup>19</sup> "Freedom in the World 2017 – Gaza Strip." Freedom House. Accessed on May 24<sup>th</sup>. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/gaza-strip>

<sup>20</sup> "New Hamas leader says it is getting aid again from Iran," August 29, 2017, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/29/new-hamas-leader-says-it-is-getting-aid-again-from-iran.html>

8. European Union: As one of the largest donors of foreign aid to Palestine, it provides funds for much needed stabilizing services and programs.<sup>21</sup> It vowed to push against the decision to make Jerusalem the capital of Israel in retaliation to the U.S announcement.<sup>22</sup>
9. Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO): In 2011, the PA through PLO made a bid for full member-state status in the UN. Although this attempt failed, the UN General Assembly voted to make Palestine a “non-member observer state” in 2012. In another step forward, the PLO became a member of the International Criminal Court in 2015.

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<sup>21</sup> “EU vows to push to make Jerusalem capital for Palestinians too” Reuters, (Dec 2017): accessed 6 February 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-israel-eu/eu-vows-push-to-make-jerusalem-capital-for-palestinians-too-idUSKBN1E11GY>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

## ISSUES

### GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY

The PA (Palestinian National Authority) operates under an expired mandate in the West Bank, and Hamas are the *de facto* government authority in the Gaza Strip.<sup>23</sup> In 2016, it marked Mahmoud Abbas' 11<sup>th</sup> year as the president of the PA, and his seventh without an electoral mandate or official legislature.<sup>24</sup> In the same year, the PA postponed all local elections, reasoning that they could not control the voting in the Gaza Strip or East Jerusalem.<sup>25</sup> The postponing of elections has direct effects on the Gaza Strip as they remain without any elected government, leaving Hamas as the *de facto* government authority.<sup>26</sup> Both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have been systematically removing international regulations for NGOs and imposing their own regulations.<sup>27</sup> In addition, press freedom have continued to deteriorate amongst increasing restrictions. In 2016, both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip regularly subjected journalists to arrests, detentions, and interrogations without charge. A third of the journalists detained reported torture and mistreatment while in custody.<sup>28</sup> The PA's unilateral decision to postpone the elections in 2016 has signalled a shift towards a more authoritarian regime as it marks Mahmoud Abbas' 11th year in power, and seventh without an official electoral vote. This move also further exacerbates tensions between the governments of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Without official and open elections, the Gaza Strip received a 0/12 in 2017 for electoral rights, with the West Bank receiving 2/12. As both territories continue to restrict freedom of speech through illegal detainment and abuse of those who publicly criticize the government, individual civil liberties are severely obstructed, and in direct violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Convention against Torture, which was ratified in 2014; signalling a further shift away from international norms and towards authoritarianism.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "Freedom in the World 2017 – West Bank." Freedom House. Accessed January 25, 2018.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/west-bank>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> "Freedom in the World 2017 – Gaza Strip." Freedom House.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> "Freedom of the Press – West Bank and Gaza Strip." Freedom House. Accessed January 25, 2018.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/west-bank-and-gaza-strip>

<sup>29</sup> "Israel and Palestine – Events of 2017." Human Rights Watch. 2017. Accessed February 4, 2018.

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/israel/palestine>

## **ARMED CONFLICT**

In 2014, there were a total of 1,610 deaths that resulted from the armed conflict between Palestine and Israel. Sporadic armed conflict continued in 2017 with 77 deaths as of November 6. The conflict registers as an Intermediate Armed Conflict according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Project.<sup>30</sup>

In 2018, Nickolay Mladenov briefed the 15-member Security Council via videoconference from Jerusalem, recalling that between 11 and 13 November one of the fiercest exchanges of fire since the 2014 Gaza conflict had been triggered by an Israeli Security Defence Forces operation inside the Gaza Strip. A local Hamas commander and six other Palestinians were killed, sparking clashes in the following days. Those strikes included some 450 rockets and mortars launched by Gaza-based militants into Israel, as well as Israeli airstrikes against 160 militant targets. Welcoming the restoration of a precarious calm, he urged all stakeholders to support it as a matter of priority. The situation's fragility underscores the urgent need to change the dynamics on the ground and to address underlying political issues, he stressed, noting that the latest escalation came just as the United Nations and its partners were intensifying efforts to alleviate Gaza's humanitarian and economic crises. "The clock on intra-Palestinian reconciliation is ticking," he added, voicing support for Egypt-led efforts to advance that process. Meanwhile, illegal Israeli settlement expansion continues to eat away at the viability of a contiguous Palestinian State. "If any side fails, every side fails," he warned.<sup>31</sup> There were several statements given by delegates. United States' delegate Nikki Haley stated that while the Special Coordinator's briefing was detailed, it was incomplete; it ignored other serious conflicts in the Middle East, including increased international terrorist activity by Iran. The Special Coordinator's reporting, in her opinion, also missed the provocations (in the form of missile and mortar attacks from Gaza) that caused Israel's military responses. For her, the fact that the Gaza militants target civilians show that it is a terrorist group, with the Islamic Jihad an Iranian proxy group in that context. Only one side attacks indiscriminately and terrorizes to achieve its objects, she stated. While both sides must compromise to achieve the necessary peace, such compromise can only be based on a complete account of the facts on the ground.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> HRW, information of the ceasefire at "Gaza Strip- Background," CIA World Factbook, (January 2018); accessed 28 January 2018, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gz.html>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13589.doc.htm>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13589.doc.htm>

## **DEMOGRAPHIC STRESS**

With constant conflicts and wars in the region, there is a spike in mental health related issues as a result of the stress of meeting daily needs and at the same time avoiding being caught in the cross-fire.<sup>33</sup> The multifaceted psychosocial trauma caused by the IMO CL22 attacks added serious new burdens: loss of killed or wounded family members, neighbours and friends; constant threats to the physical security of self, family and friends; destruction of homes; sleep disturbances; food/electricity/water deprivation; sharply raised fears for future life and livelihoods etc.<sup>34</sup>

In 2005, the Israeli government had decided to remove the Israeli population settled in the Gaza Strip, a process known as “disengagement”. The decision was preceded by a policy of settlement in the region that had been administered by Egypt until Israel occupied the area following the 1967 Six-Day War. The governmental decision to disengage awakened considerable passive and active resistance. Simultaneously with the political struggle, issues related to the mental health of the population targeted for removal were addressed by legal representatives of the settlers’ movement<sup>35</sup>, the press<sup>36</sup>, and health agents.<sup>37</sup> Although population displacements are not a rare phenomenon, the mental health literature on the subject of an impending removal to those being displaced from Gaza is limited.<sup>38</sup> The narrow Gaza Strip, heavily populated by Palestinians, also included 17 settlements characterized as either fully communal, mostly agricultural, or mixed. Most of the settlements were religious, of different degrees of orthodoxy , and a few were secular. They differed as well in their population size, economic level and social composition. After 1987, the cordial relationship that the settlers enjoyed with their Palestinian counterparts slowly degenerated.<sup>39</sup> The disengagement was a complex process, compounded by the fact that the admired national leader whom established the settlements was the one heading the removal, it was met by strong opposition from both settlers and their supporters; continuous efforts were made either to

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<sup>33</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gazans-have-survived-years-of-war-now-depression-is-killing-them/2018/06/18/e0bbfaaa-699c-11e8-a335-c4503d041eaf\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.faf7cdea359f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gazans-have-survived-years-of-war-now-depression-is-killing-them/2018/06/18/e0bbfaaa-699c-11e8-a335-c4503d041eaf_story.html?utm_term=.faf7cdea359f)

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/wbgs/gaza\\_specialized\\_mission\\_extendedrep\\_21may09.pdf](https://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/wbgs/gaza_specialized_mission_extendedrep_21may09.pdf), pg. 12

<sup>35</sup> Moaz Y (2005) Compromise With the Palestinians: The Impact of Psycho- logical Factors. Jerusalem, Israel: Floersheimer Imtitute for Policy Studies . Available at: [www.fips.org.il](http://www.fips.org.il).

<sup>36</sup> Levav I,Bar-TalD (September 1,2004).The to lof the disengagement. Haaretz Daily. B2.

<sup>37</sup> Kaplan Z, Cohen H, Matar MA, Witztum E (2005) A model fortherapeutic interventions inemotional responses. G enforced. Geographical relocation of populations in Israel[Hebrew].Hareftah. 1U:234-236.

<sup>38</sup> HellerT (1982)The effects of involuntary residential relocation: A review. Am J Common Psychol. 10:471-492.

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.ariel.ac.il/images/stories/site/management/rd/social\\_publications/7572.pdf](http://www.ariel.ac.il/images/stories/site/management/rd/social_publications/7572.pdf)

postpone it or to cancel the whole idea. It took place on August, 2005. Gaza settlers appeared to have higher levels of emotional distress than Israel-born young adults, but consistent with other populations groups in transition.<sup>40</sup> Their distress did not reach the relatively higher scores of other female groups nor of levels compatible with those exhibited by psychiatric patients.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Fennig S, Levav I(1991) Demoralization and social supports among Holo- caust survivors.JffervMentDiv. 179:167-172.

<sup>41</sup> Shrout PE,Dohrenwend BP,Levav I A discriminant ing cases of diverse diagnostic types: Prelimlnaly results. J Consult Ctin Psychol. 54:314-319.



## ECONOMIC STATUS

The Palestinian economy is heavily distorted and this makes it difficult for the economy to generate new jobs for the thousands of unemployed Palestinian citizens. This has contributed to the dilapidated living standards of the citizens. The main reasons for this economic regression are restrictions on trade and resources. This, coupled with the blockade in Gaza, which is the main productive base, has caused the economy to shrink at a very rapid rate. The share of manufacturing in the economy has dramatically reduced in the last twenty five years. Meanwhile the agriculture sector is only one third its previous size.<sup>42</sup> The economy of the country is heavily dependent on imports, which is over three times the size of exports, and has a trade deficit close to 40% of GDP, making it one of the highest in the world, while trade is overly concentrated with Israel. Due to this over-reliance on imports, the investment opportunities have constantly decreased, and this has also been driven by the constant insecurity in the region. The only investments taking place are concerned with the consumption market and this also has reduced. Due to all this, the growth in real GDP slowed to 2% on average between 2013 and 2016, and dropped to a mere 0.7% in early 2017, it is also known that the numbers were dropped by 0.8% in the West Bank and 0.4% in Gaza itself.<sup>43</sup> By this projection, it can be seen that Palestinian economy's growth drivers of the 12 year period – consumption supported by fiscal expansion – have run out of steam and are proving unsustainable.<sup>44</sup> In the employment sector as aforementioned, based on the data gathered by World Bank the number of unemployment rate had fluctuated between 20 and 31% over the post Oslo period, it is currently on 29% in both Gaza and West Bank.

Unemployment remains close to 30% on average, with youth unemployment twice as high in Gaza where the humanitarian situation has significantly exacerbated in recent months following the electricity crisis which had a serious implication on the health, water, sanitation sectors, and business activity in the area.<sup>45</sup> In recent months, the PA has cut its payroll and net lending expenditure in Gaza where the poverty levels are the highest. Even with the recent measures implemented and revenue transfers by Israel to offset fiscal leakages, the financing gap in 2017 is projected to be more than USD580 million. It is suggested by the World Bank that a consolidation effort is the solution needed which will focus on reducing low priority

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<sup>42</sup> <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/515891504884716866/pdf/119657-WP-PUBLIC-on-Monday-1-PM-sept-11-AHLC-report-September-8.pdf>, pg. 2

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, pg. 9

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

expenditures and boosting revenues in a fair and sustainable way across both the West Bank and Gaza.

This also affects the private sector to trade which has truncated the structural transformation of the Palestinian economy as the investment rate remain low, the bulk channelled into relatively unproductive activities.<sup>46</sup> In conclusion, the economic development need to be improved which also includes the opposition. Israeli governments need to come up with plans to end the containments of financial and production movements and at a domestic level the PA needs to implement initiatives to reduce the cost of doing business and improve the business climate in the area.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pg. 10

## ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS

The Israeli Defence Forces' (IDF) campaign in the Gaza Strip generated large quantities of solid waste, resulting primarily from the destruction of buildings. This kind of waste – rubble and other building materials – is often contaminated with hazardous substances, in particular asbestos.<sup>47</sup> The most obvious impact from the recent escalation of hostilities is the large quantity of demolition debris that was generated in the Gaza Strip. As a result, 2,692 buildings were impacted; some of these buildings were completely destroyed, while others were partially damaged and rendered unsafe. UNDP estimates that the total quantity of demolition debris produced during this period was close to 600,000 tonnes, In addition, a number of buildings were hit by ammunition that caused fires and partial or total destruction of the structure. Building fires contaminate the building and/or the resulting rubble with polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and, if chlorinated compounds are present, with dioxins and furans, all of which are extremely hazardous.<sup>48</sup> In a conflict situation, hazardous waste can be generated either from the materials stored in a structure that is damaged or by the weapons used to cause the damage. Many different activities use hazardous substances as base materials, or generate hazardous waste. If explosives are used to destroy a building and contaminate the demolition debris, the debris must be treated as hazardous waste. In addition, explosives can cause fires, which can also generate hazardous waste. At the El Swaity juice and food production factory in the Beit Lahia area in the northern Gaza Strip, the cooling warehouse had been hit by a bomb and had burst into flames. The fire was further fuelled by flammable Styrofoam insulation. The contents of the warehouse burned away completely, leaving soot, ash, tar and burnt organic substances in the debris.<sup>49</sup> In the absence of a dedicated facility to handle hazardous waste, however, there is a concern that such waste will be disposed of with non-hazardous waste, thereby contaminating landfills. There is therefore a long- term need to create a system for hazardous waste management in the Gaza Strip.<sup>50</sup>

Another environmental issue covers the deaths of livestock in the area, according to the Palestinian National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza 2009- 2010, over 35,750 cattle, sheep and goats and more than one million birds and chickens were killed during the recent events. These animals could not be consumed for religious and hygiene reasons.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> [https://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP\\_Gaza\\_EA.pdf](https://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP_Gaza_EA.pdf), pg. 2

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pg. 27

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pg. 30

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, pg. 31

<sup>51</sup> El-Fadel, M., M. Massoud. (2000). "Particulate matter in urban areas: A health-based economic assessment". The Science of Total Environment, 257:133-146.

## **HEALTH SITUATION**

The consequences of the continued hostilities are severe for many families. For example, following the 2008 escalation, 1,700 households lost their sole provider from either death or injury, and over 15,000 homes were totally or partially destroyed. 100,000 people fled their homes and neighbourhoods due to the military attacks, half of whom were taken in by UNWRA-organized shelters. The remaining IDPs found refuge with other families, adding to the overcrowding that already characterized many apartments in the Gaza strip. The civilian population suffered further from damage to electricity, water and sewage systems. Damage to 15% of agricultural land, remnants of unexploded ordnance in ruins, destruction of many small industries and damage to essential public service infrastructures further added to the problems.<sup>52</sup> The health services also suffered from direct attacks. 15 of the 27 hospitals in the Gaza Strip were damaged, some extensively. In addition, 43 Primary Care Centres were damaged or destroyed. Twenty-nine ambulances were damaged or destroyed; 16 health staff were killed and 25 injured.<sup>53</sup> Despite the condition, the health service institutions putting in their best effort. Hospitals were quickly reorganized to give room for the arrival of mass casualties, and all staff leave was cancelled. Through an efficient mobilization of the Egyptian Ministry of Health's Rapid Response Team, a good cooperation with the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, a strong action by the ambulance teams of the PRCS and the MoH, and with support from the ICRC a large number of seriously wounded patients were evacuated to Egypt (and some to third countries), thus relieving the workload at the Gaza hospitals.<sup>54</sup> Both the Palestinian National Authority in Ramallah and the de facto local authorities in Gaza quickly organized emergency structures to help manage the situation. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) mobilized the Cluster system, thus creating an organized mechanism for extensive information exchange and practical cooperation among UN agencies, NGOs, and local authorities that were interested in contributing to supporting a particular sector. Thus, the WHO-led Health Cluster, the UNICEF-led WASH Cluster and the WFP-led Logistics Cluster played important roles in helping to coordinate the external aid which poured in. The WHO also contributed by making additional staff available from its Regional Office and the HAC

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<sup>52</sup> [https://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/wbgs/gaza\\_specialized\\_mission\\_extendedrep\\_21may09.pdf](https://www.who.int/hac/crises/international/wbgs/gaza_specialized_mission_extendedrep_21may09.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Gaza Strip, Initial Health Needs Assessment, Prepared by the Health Cluster, Gaza, World Health Organization, 2009:2.

<sup>54</sup> Humanitarian Assistance, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Health Infrastructure on the Gaza Strip: A Post- conflict Preliminary Assessment, Contribution by the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), Cairo, 2009: Chapter III.6.

Cluster in its Headquarter, and already on 16 February the Health Cluster had completed a Gaza Strip Initial Health Needs Assessment for the health sector.<sup>55</sup>

After the 1994 Oslo Accords, a period of development followed whereby the health status of the Palestinian population became typical of a middle-income country, and relatively good by regional standards. However, since June 2006, Gaza has been subject to a very severe blockade by Israel, which has led to a severe deterioration both in social and economic life, which includes the rising of unemployment and poverty. The health effects of this development have resulted in stagnating life expectancy for the 1.5 million people in Gaza. Infant and child mortality has risen, including evidence of childhood stunting, anaemia affecting nearly half the children under 5 years (and in child bearing women), and low birth weight increased from 4% in 2002 to 7.3% in 2006.<sup>56</sup> In addition, there is evidence of profound psychological distress from the many years of conflict and blockade, and that “the siege reached all facets of life, affected the whole society, and suspended people’s life”.<sup>57</sup> Some 1,417 people died, including 313 children and 116 women. These are figures provided by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, collected on fatalities primarily from information about victims from families and obtaining affidavits from witnesses and families. IDF has provided other figures: 1,166 killed, of which 49 women and 89 under the age of 16.<sup>58</sup> Over 5,380 were physically injured, of whom 1,872 were children and 800 women.<sup>59</sup>

*\*Child Stunting: impaired growth and development that children experience from poor nutrition, repeated infection, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation. Children are defined as stunted if their height-for-age is more than two standard deviations below the WHO Child Growth Standards median.*

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<sup>55</sup> Gaza Strip, Initial Health Needs Assessment, Prepared by the Health Cluster, Gaza, World Health Organization, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Director General of Primary Health Care, personal communication by WHO

<sup>57</sup> The effects of the Siege on the quality of life of citizens in Gaza, Psychology Department, Islamic University of Gaza, June 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Yaakov Lappin, IDF releases Cast Lead casualty numbers, Jerusalem Post, 26 March 2009 (<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle>ShowFull&cid=1237727552054>, accessed 2 April 2009).

<sup>59</sup> The Palestinian National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza 2009 - 2010, launched by the Palestinian National Authority at the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 2 March 2009:22.

## **TERRORISM IN THE AREA**

Rocket and mortar shell fire from the Gaza Strip continues as the Palestinian terrorist organizations' preferred form of attack. In 2007, 896 hits were identified in Israeli territory, compared with 946 in 2006, the year with the largest number. The trend continued in 2008. In May 2007 alone Palestinians launched some 300 Kassam rockets from Gaza at Sderot and the western Negev. Hamas openly claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>60</sup> It is difficult to assess the damage caused to the infrastructure in the area, but the death toll reached in Sderot and Western Negev gives a clear picture of the situation. Studies done in recent years show that the continued rocket fire and the large number of shock victims have led to post traumatic stress disorder among many of Sderot's residents (close to 30%). It influences their mental health and seriously damages the quality of their lives.<sup>61</sup>

In March 2011 since Operation Cast Lead (Also known as the Gaza War), there has been a significant reduction in the extent and severity of terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the other Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip. The decrease in terrorism reflects Israel's power, restored by Operation Cast Lead, to deter the terrorist organizations. However, even the current level of rocket and mortar shell fire and the frequent attacks on IDF forces along the border fence disrupt the daily lives of the western Negev residents.<sup>62</sup> Hamas, in order to enforce its strategic policy of restraint on the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, some of which occasionally try to challenge it, uses its security (and sometimes military) enforcement apparatuses. Hamas also coerces other terrorist organizations into accepting its policies through agreements meant to preserve the lull. Its enforcement apparatuses reduce rocket fire, showcases attacks from the Gaza Strip and at the same time try to channel the rogue organizations into accepting the ground rules deemed suitable by Hamas.<sup>63</sup> In the two years since Operation Cast Lead, Hamas (with aid from Iran) has doubled and upgraded its rocket arsenal. It now has thousands of rockets of various ranges, both standard and homemade, including Fajr 5 rockets which can reach the center of Israel. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad has also upgraded its rocket capabilities. Iranian and Syrian support is manifested in supplying Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad with highly advanced weapons, logistical aid in smuggling them into the Gaza Strip, instruction and

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<sup>60</sup> IICC Report, 2008

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup><https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/terrorism/palestinian/pages/missile%20fire%20from%20gaza%20on%20israeli%20civilian%20targets%20aug%202007.aspx>

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

training, transferring funds to the organizations in the Gaza Strip and giving the de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip political and propaganda support. In addition, Iran fosters special relations with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, an Iranian proxy which is not subject to some of the governmental considerations restraining Hamas.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid

### **Questions a Resolution must Answer (QARMA's)**

- 1. How can the Security Council bring the immediate escalation of military tensions between Israel and the various Palestinian organisations to an end?**
- 2. How can the international community reduce the exacerbating humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip ?**
- 3. How can internal factionalism within Palestine, such as between Hamas and Fateh, be reduced?**
- 4. If a cease fire between the various parties is one of the solutions to the current crisis, how can it be ensured that this measure would be effective?**
- 5. What should be the position of regional organisations, such as the Arab League, and non-governmental organisations, in the dispute?**
- 6. How can other issues in relation to the crisis, such as environmental damage, terrorism and mental health problems, be reduced ?**
- 7. What is the Security Council's position on the long-term future of the Palestinian territories such as the possibility of a two state solution?**