

The Deepening Gaza Crisis: Humanitarian Struggles and International Response to Post-October 7, 2023

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ABSTRACT

The crisis between Israel and Palestine has been so long and has brought immense suffering. This paper focuses on the humanitarian crises, and civilians of Gaza from October 7, 2023, till mid-September 2024. Firstly, a brief history of the conflict with key events that led to the attack of October 7, 2023. It also covered the mass attack by Hamas on Israel that claimed the death of more than 1,200 Israelis. In response, Israel launched "Operation Iron Sword," which threw Gaza into a state of war. This paper highlighted the incident in which the collapse of hospitals, infrastructure, and schools and the shortage of food, water, and medical supplies has been covered. This is clearly the violation of human rights, particularly the unjust detention and torture of civilians, mainly women and children. The paper also provokes the comparison of the condition between hostages taken by Hamas and the arrest of civilians in Gaza by Israel. Also, it observed the international response has been in two faces: the majority of countries condemn the actions of Israel while the rest support the actions in multiple ways. Lastly, the paper presents the most possible ways to resolve the conflict between nations, such as two-state and one-state solutions and alternate ideas like joint peace cities. The study emphasizes the urgent need to bring peace and end this ongoing havoc and to focus on how both parties could live coherently because bloodshed, bombings, and massacres had never been a solution.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Israel-Palestine Conflict The Israel-Palestine conflict is more than a territorial dispute; that reflects a profound failure of humanity itself. This issue continued for over a century. The region has gone through wars, different types of displacement, and the over-emotional suffering of civilians in the years leading up to the creation of Israel in 1948. Both Palestinians and Israelis face unimaginable hardship. Some social media resources and news broadcasts, mainly BBC and Al Jazeera, enable us to understand that war is priced in people: deaths, displacements, the shattered futures of children, and loss of livelihoods. These are not just stories but painful realities that underscore the urgent need for solutions that focus human lives over political boundaries.

2.1 Significance of the October 7, 2023 Event The war between Israel and Palestine reached new heights on the 7th of October 2023 when the Hamas attack in which 1200 people were killed while many were kidnapped from the Re'im Music festival. In response to this, Israel launched what they referred to as "Operation Iron Sword," which was their mission to eliminate Hamas in Gaza even though the action brought most of the civil frames and made these areas humanitarian disasters for eternity. The entire affair was live televised through social media platforms and news channels. Within 48 hours, Israel began attacking Gaza, claiming they were targeting the Hamas-controlled areas, but civilians faced the



brunt of the violence, and it became a war zone. This tragic event not only marked a new phase of violence but also highlighted humanitarian crises that demand international attention.[35]

2 Historical Context: Origins of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

The conflict of Israel-Palestine roots can be traced back to the Balfour Declaration in 1917 when Britain promised a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, which was under Ottoman rule at that time. This declaration created tensions between the Jewish immigrants and the Arab communities already living there.[23] After World War I, Britain took control over Palestine, leading to an increase in Jewish immigration to escape persecution in Europe. By 1947, Jews made up 33% of the population, compared to just 6% in 1918. This worried the Arab majority, who were afraid of losing their land and power that leading to the Palestinian revolt from 1936 to 1939 against British rule and the growing of Jewish immigrants. In 1947, the UN suggested making two states, one for the Jews and one for the Arabs, and Jerusalem under international control (UN Resolution 181). A proposal was accepted by Jewish leaders, and 55% of the land was allocated to a future Jewish state and 45% to the Arab state. Arab leaders rejected this proposal, because they found it as unjust. Following the declaration in May 1948, Israel was declared a state, and over 750,000 Palestinians were displaced, this event known as the Nakba in history ("The Catastrophe"). This was the beginning of ongoing conflict and regional instability.[13]

1.2 Key Event Leading Up to October 7, 2023 Several key events have shaped the modern Israel-Palestine conflict. The 1948 Creation of Israel, the 1967 Six-Day War, and the 1987 First Intifada all played critical roles in deepening the divide between Israelis and Palestinians. The expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the eventual rise of Hamas in Gaza caused further tensions. The Abraham Accord 2020 is also a significant highlighted event to normalize relations between Israel and several Arab states, which adds another layer of complexity to the conflict. On October 7, 2023, Hamas's military capabilities came into full display when they launched a surprise attack on Israel, and rising tensions on both sides and Israel took action in the West Bank, which led to violence and devastating impact on Gaza.[3]

3 The October 7, 2023 Attack

1.3 Preparation and Execution On 7 October, Hamas executed this attack in coordination with five other militant groups: Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, Omar Al-Qasim Forces, and Mujahideen Brigades. Some key cities like Sderot, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Ashkelon were hit. These militant groups have been training together since 2020. In this attack, several tactics were used involving land and sea strikes, with militants using paragliders and motorbikes to enter Israel. Initially, the Israeli government thought that around 1,500 militants were involved, but later reports suggested there could be 3,000 militants.[25]

2.3 Media Narratives and Controversy A report by Zeit online said Hamas launched a surprise attack at 6:22 AM, started firing over 3,000 rockets at Israel, and 1,200 Israelis had been killed at the end of the day. More than 200 Israelis were taken hostage in Gaza. The "Al-Aqsa Flood" Operation was announced by Hamas through Telegram at 6:30 a.m. Media outlets began reporting alarming stories, including claims of baby beheadings by Hamas fighters, which later lacked evidence. The reports spread quickly and tried to justify a strong military response from Israel.[27]

Richard Sanders and Al Jazeera's Investigative Unit conducted a thorough review of hours of footage from personal devices and security cameras. Their finding revealed that while Hamas had committed serious abuses, specific claims like the beheading of babies were completely false and lacked evidence.

Certain narratives that were used to justify the actions of the Israeli government become doubted.[19] The aftermath of these revelations created tension between the Israeli government and international media. On April 1, 2024, Israel's parliament passed a law enabling the temporary shutdown of foreign media outlets, including Al Jazeera, which had been critical of the government's narrative. In May 2024, Israeli authorities raided Al Jazeera's East Jerusalem office, seizing equipment. Al Jazeera condemned the attempt to suppress independent reporting on the conflict.[20]

4 Israeli Response and Its Impact

1.4 Military Operations in Gaza Israel responded with "Operation Iron Sword" after the October 7 attack, focusing on Hamas strongholds in Gaza, including Gaza City, Khan Younis, and Rafah. By May 6, 2024, the focus was shifted to Rafah in southern Gaza. What began as a limited operation left the city unrecognizable, more than 70% of the region's homes as well as schools and mosques were either damaged or destroyed. Raising concerns about the humanitarian cost of the operation. (Al Jazeera, 2024).[21]

2.4 Death Toll Overview (as of September 2024) By September 4, 2024, a devastating peak of humanitarian crisis hit Gaza. Over 41,226 Palestinians were killed, including more than 16,500 children, and more than 94,454 injured. More than 70% are women and children, which shows how hard families and the future of Gaza were hit. The UN and Gaza Health Ministry report these numbers. Israel mentions that it's their right to protect their people and country, but humanity is questioning whether killing civilians and children is the right decision to protect themselves.[14]

3.4 Destruction of Infrastructure in Gaza Since the onset of Israel's military response on October 7, 2023, more than 50% of Gaza's buildings have been damaged or destroyed. Approx in one year Israel destroyed 815 Mosques, damaged another 148, and bombed 3 churches. Satellite data estimates that 144,000 to 175,000 structures were affected. Khan Younis lost over 38,000 buildings, nearly half the city's total. Including Al-Farra Tower and Israa University are key places shaped in rubble. The destruction of Gaza's agriculture led to a severe food shortage, and more than half of the population now faces starvation. Farmers like Saeed have seen their crops and livelihoods destroyed.[34]

4.4 Targeting of Hospitals and Healthcare Facilities The violence in the healthcare system makes the conditions worse in Gaza, with more than 1,000 attacks on hospitals and clinics. Because of this, diseases are spreading quickly in Gaza. 577,000 cases of acute watery diarrhea and 995,000 cases of acute respiratory infections and diabetes and heart disease also rise.[28] Some of the heavily damaged or targeted hospitals, like Al-Shifa, Al-Quds, Al-Ahli, Al-Nasr, and Al-Rantisi, have cut down on medical facilities and resources. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 26 out of the 35 hospitals in Gaza can't operate because they were damaged by an Israeli attack or don't have power.[1] Women and girls in Gaza are suffering greatly, with only one public facility for sexual and reproductive health. Many women give birth in unsanitary conditions, which raises the chances of death for both mothers and babies, according to CARE International. These attacks on the healthcare system break international law and highlight the urgent need for help from other countries.[4]

5.4 Demolition of Palestinian Homes Israeli forces began to demolish the Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem. From October 7, to February 2024, 87 homes were demolished. "Fakhri Abu Diab" lost his home on February 14, 2024. He expressed his emotions: "All of my memories were in that house. A picture hanging on our wall shows my mother holding me as a child, but now it's gone." Human Rights Watch has called out these demolitions as a way to force Palestinians out of East Jerusalem. Israeli authorities say we demolish homes, which is illegal. However, the permit system is so strict that it denies Palestinians legal permits.[15]

6.4 Gaza Blockade Intensification Following October 7, 2023, Attack On October 9, 2023, Israel blocked off the Gaza Strip completely after a Hamas attack in which over 1200 Israelis were killed.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant gave the order for the total block of electricity, food, water, and gas to Gaza. The 16-year blockade became even harsher, and the only power plant in Gaza ran out of fuel, everything went dark. Schools, hospitals, homes nothing had power. Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah, a surgeon, said, "We're using our mobile phone's flashlight to operate."^[11] Agnès Callamard of Amnesty International called the Gaza blockade "cruel and inhumane," saying it punishes innocent Palestinians. Aid workers are asking for humanitarian corridors. Gaza's 12-year-old Fatima tells her fears online: "We're scared of the bombs, but now we're also scared of getting sick from bad water or not having enough to eat."^[10] The blockade of Gaza was condemned by various international bodies, including the United Nations. This kind of thing made the situation much more difficult for the 3.2 million people in Gaza and deepened the humanitarian crisis.

5 Human Rights Concerns

1.5 Treatment of Civilians in Gaza Many human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the United Nations have condemned the high civilian deaths and destruction in Gaza. Despite international law protecting hospitals, more than 20 hospitals were damaged or destroyed in the first two months, with 14 directly hit in Northern Gaza (CNN, 2024). Reports indicate that 2000-pound bombs were used by Israel and dropped in populated areas, that lead the serious deaths of civilians and killing of entire families. Residents' places were blocked and collapsed. On September 15, 2024, journalist Hatem Hany posted a video on Instagram showing two unarmed civilians in Rafah being killed by an Israeli missile as they walked along a road.^[8] Water access is another crisis. Residents of Gaza are getting only one to three liters of water a day, far below the daily needed water, and raising the risk of diseases. There are also reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, and Torture.^[5]

2.5 Arrests and Detentions of Palestinians Israeli forces have arrested more than 10,600 Palestinians including more than 700 kids and 350 women from the West Bank and Jerusalem since the "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation was began on October 7, according to groups like the Commission for Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoners Club, 2024. Many people are put in jail without a trial. Even journalists aren't safe, 18 people have died in jail. Hashim Matar, who was detained in November, talked about severe abuse, He says, "We were treated like animals." Ibrahim Yacoub, arrested in Gaza says, "I kept dreading when they were going to hit me next."^[16] Around 3,050 Palestinians are in detention without charge under administration and facing brutal conditions. Human rights groups are worried and mention their concern about the mistreatment of civilians in prisons.^[22]

3.5 Treatment of Women in Israeli Prisons Post-October 7 Reports from various international groups about the treatment of Palestinian women in Israeli prisons have raised serious concerns. They have faced harsh treatment and physical abuses. Ruqaya Amr, a Palestinian woman arrested in Dura, was thrown on a bus while she was handcuffed and blindfolded by Israeli forces. Sixty-five-year-old Suhair al-Barghouthi faced harsh treatment and was denied medication for her chronic illnesses. Partially paralyzed Fatima Shaheen, from gunshot wounds, Israeli forces extremely neglected her medical needs. Such treatment has raised significant concerns and prompted calls for international investigations.^[36]

4.5 Comparing Treatment: Hamas Hostages vs. Palestinians Detained by Israel after October 7, 2023 It's important to start by acknowledging that taking hostages, as Hamas did, is a violation of human rights. While Hamas cited several reasons for their actions—Israeli military actions in Gaza and the West Bank, the treatment of Palestinian prisoners, increasing Jewish migration to the West Bank, and the normalization of relations between Israel and some Arab countries—none of these justify the act of taking hostages.

•**Hamas Hostages:** Hamas took more than 200 Israelis as hostages from Israel on October 7, 2023. According to reports and videos, conditions were difficult, but physical abuse and mistreatment are not true. Their treatment was not always harsh on hostages. Some videos show that hostages were seen

shaking hands with Hamas fighters upon release, like when Yocheved Lifshitz was finally freed from a terrible experience; she paused, turned around, and shook hands with one of the Hamas militants who had held her captive. She said "Shalom," which means peace. Which suggests they didn't always face severe actions.[6]

•**Israeli Detained Palestinians:** After October 7, 2023, Israeli forces detained Palestinians who have faced severe torture. Women and children over, 10,000 Palestinians have been arrested. Detainees like Ruqaya Amr and Suhair al-Barghouthi have told their hardest time. But the list goes up. The detainee, a 37-year-old father of five children, Moazab Abayat, was arrested from the West Bank, accused of links to Hamas, but he was released after nine months without charges. He described to ABC News his time in Ktziot Prison: Abayat faced severe physical abuse, broken ribs, and burns. Guards beat him repeatedly and called him a murderer. His experience was shared on social media, and everyone was shocked.[24]

6 International Response

1.6 Reactions from European Countries European countries have reacted in a mixed way to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Some supported Israel, and some supported Palestine. Israel's actions, particularly the blockade of Gaza, were strongly condemned by Ireland, and they criticized it as a violation of international humanitarian law. Norway and France were also against the actions of Israel and expressed deep concern over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and raised their voices for civilian casualties and an immediate ceasefire.[12]

Meanwhile, some European countries show their support for Israel, with help of increasing arms supplies during the Gaza war. Since October 2023, Berlin has approved the sale of weapons and military equipment to Israel worth about \$275 million. Merkava tanks and warships contain German-made parts. European parts also helped in U.S.-made F-35 fighter jets and used by Israel in Gaza [29]. In 2024, the U.S. approved a \$22 billion arms deal with Israel and sent advanced weapons for defence systems. In March, the transfer of 1,800 MK84 2,000-pound bombs and 500 MK82 500-pound bombs to Israel was authorized by the Biden administration, The Washington Post reported.

The 2,000-pound bombs have been linked to previous mass-casualty events throughout Israel's military campaign in Gaza.[33]

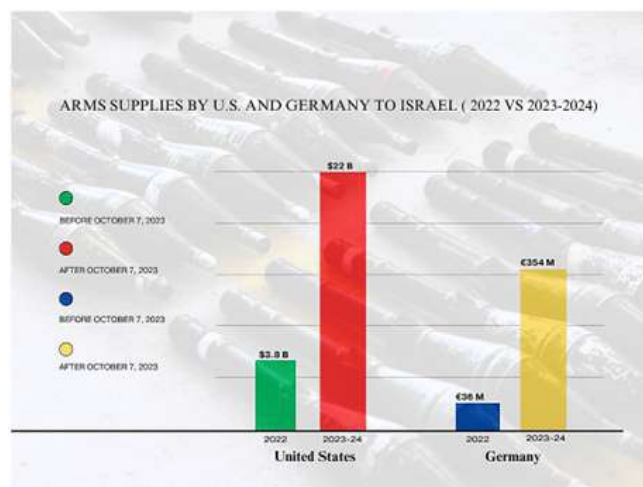


Figure 1: Related to the weapon supply funds

2.6 Middle Eastern Countries' Stance Middle Eastern countries like Kuwait, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, UAE, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and Morocco all are against Israeli military actions in Gaza. They are calling for an end to the blockade of Gaza and an immediate stop to the violence. Many Arab states criticized Western countries for supporting Israel's military and also condemned Israel for war crimes and breaking international law. The people who live in Middle Eastern countries also show support for Gaza by boycotting Israeli products linked to the U.S. like Coca-Cola Starbucks etc. At the same time, Egypt has tried to mediate a ceasefire and make efforts for a diplomatic solution to avoid more escalation.[9]

3.6 International Organizations' Responses International bodies have spoken out about the Gaza war. The United Nations (UN) has called for a ceasefire repeatedly, stressing the need to provide urgent aid and protect civilians. Many meetings have been held by the UN Security Council but they have struggled to agree on strong action. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) asked for open access for aid workers and also warned about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch condemned abuses on both sides, calling for accountability and protecting civilians. The European Union also calls for diplomatic solutions to achieve lasting peace.

7 Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

1.7 Scale of Displacement and Homelessness The scale of displacement in Gaza and the massive humanitarian crisis can be seen since the conflict started in October 2023. According to the New York Times, around 8.1 million people about 80% of Gaza's population have been forced to evacuate their homes. Continuously Israeli airstrikes and ground attacks made places unsafe for people to stay. Many people have taken shelter in medical centers, mosques, schools, and even on the roadside. These shelters became severely overcrowded because they hold four times more people than they should. Some people sleep outside and in unsafe buildings, because they don't have any choice with little clean water and sanitation. As a result, diseases like respiratory infection and diarrhea are spreading rapidly.[32]

2.7 Food and Water Shortages When Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant ordered a total blockade of Gaza and cut down essential supplies like electricity, food, and fuel just after the conflict started. The continuous airstrike has caused hardship in Gaza. In just the first month, many grocery stores and 30 food warehouses were destroyed, making the situation worse. By November, 92% of water usage had dropped. Families eat expired food for survival. Children in southern Gaza only get 5.1 to 2 litres of clean water per day. Despite efforts of help, Israeli forces have blocked most aid supplies, and people were seen to stop the trucks and throw the supplies. Gaza's hospitals are now running at three times their capacity; diseases are spreading because of a lack of clean water. Damage to agriculture, fishing gear, and other resource losses will cause more food shortages in Gaza in the future.[7]

3.7 Collapse of the Healthcare System Gaza's healthcare system is already weakened by the long blockade. As of September 2024, Gaza's healthcare system has reached a critical crisis. Only three hospitals are fully operational out of 36 due to attacks, shortages, and loss of medical staff. The situation became worse as hospitals like Al Nasses, Jenin Hospital, Al-shifa and Indonesian hospitals were destroyed in airstrikes, leaving patients without care like new born, cancer patients, and those needing dialysis. Ambulances were targeted on November 3, 2023, when an Israeli airstrike hit the ambulance of the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS). Despite the risk to life, healthcare professionals worked tirelessly in dire conditions. These acts of Israel have been called "perfect crimes" by UN agencies.[26]

4.7 Impact on Palestinian Children of the Gaza War The Israel attacks and war crimes affected many Palestinian children and gave them deep psychological and physical trauma and nightmares. Many children lost their homes, siblings, parents, 90% of children in Gaza show symptoms of severe trauma, such as anxiety, depression, and nightmares, More than 50,000 children in Gaza require treatment for acute malnutrition[31]. One kid whose name is Abdul Rahman wonders why his father is gone, and

Adnan fears for his mother's safety. Ahmad was injured in an Israeli airstrike and suffered from anxiety and nightmares because of his friend and cousin's deaths.[30]

8 Future Solution for Lasting Peace

1.8 Two-State Solution According to a 1992 census, the population was 78% Muslim, 11% Jewish, and 10% Christian. The British promised a national homeland to the Jews, and that was the aim of a movement called Zionism; it encouraged Jews to move into British Mandate Palestine, and in the 1920s and 30s, more and more did. The growing population of Jews led to tension among Arabs, which caused violence between them. In 1947, the UN partition plan allocated 56% of land to the Jewish state and left 43% for an Arab state. The remaining land, including Jerusalem and all of its holy sites, would be under international control. But now Israeli politicians have openly rejected it because they already occupied more than the allocated land by the UN. After the 1948 war, Israel occupied more than 78% of the land, and now they are negotiating on the remaining 22% of the land as part of the so-called peace process. On the other hand, the Israeli government is helping their civilians in building settlements inside the West Bank, where around 700,000 Israelis are living now. The obstacles in this solution are, the status of East Jerusalem because both parties see it as their capital, the issue of Palestinian refugees, and whether they get the right to return. What to do about all the Israeli settlements, security arrangements, and how the final borders will be drawn. The two-state solution is a widely acceptable peace solution, but there was also opposition to the peace process on both sides.[17]

2.8 One-State Solution The West and the United States have tried to negotiate a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and sought a "two-state solution" for many years. Throughout the decades though all efforts have failed. This solution is becoming less likely because Israel keeps seizing the territories of the West Bank and Gaza also building the Jewish colonies there, with more than 700,000 people already living in these settlements. Many people also begin to wonder whether a two-state solution will ever truly be achievable. For this reason, more Palestinians (particularly those in Gaza and the West Bank) are now looking toward a "one-state solution." The shift is the result of increasing dissatisfaction with the prolonged, unsuccessful negotiation for peace talks also the current situation of separation and unequal treatment based on race is not a fair or lasting solution. Today, many think that true peace can come from one country where both Palestinians and Israelis have equal rights and are treated with respect. The main barriers to a one-state solution might involve land disputes, culture disputes, safety concerns, and political opposition.[18]

3.8 Confederation Model The Confederation Model imagines creating Israel and Palestine as two separate states and working together on common issues like security and economic development while still keeping their independence. It may be challenging to achieve in the current political climate.[2]

4.8 Joint Peace Cities The idea of joint peace cities is to create shared areas where civilians from both countries work together on community projects, to build understanding and cooperation between them. However, due to the current conflict, the idea can face some challenges because both sides' people have lost loved ones. Successful implementation would require strong support from both governments and civil society organizations.

9 Conclusion

The historical fight between Israel and Palestine is continued till now, and it took the worst shape in human crisis after the large-scale attack of Hamas on October 7, 2023, on Israel, in which near about 1,200 Israelis were killed. In this response more than 41,000 people were killed in Gaza, and the majority were children and women. The crisis in Gaza did not stop at the deaths of civilians; but it

was extended in the shape of the destruction of homes, infrastructure, hospitals, schools, and agriculture farms.

Life in Gaza has become challenging for the residents. Many people lost their homes, shelters, and shops. People suffer from a severe lack of food, water, or medical care, especially children who face diseases like diarrhea, anxiety, and malnutrition, and even at a young age, they face the problem of grey hair because of the fear of war. Also, their futures are in danger and there is no path where they should go. International organizations have to look into the matter of difficulties which is faced by children.

The Israeli forces continue to detain Gaza civilians including children, and women, and throw them in jail without formal charges; their lives become dark, and every day they face abuse and mistreatment. To fix this, we need to find ways to make peace last in both regions. People have suggested different ideas for making a permanent solution, like a two-state solution, a one-state solution where everyone lives together, and a confederation model. We could also try new ideas like joint cities where both groups work together with better understanding to other. But as of now, these solutions are difficult to apply because of the damage to civilian lives on both sides.

The most important thing is to prioritize people's lives over the geopolitical dispute. All countries must strictly follow international rules designed to protect civilians and promote lasting peace in both regions. While achieving peace will not be easy, international bodies have to keep trying for peace and long-term stability. It's become essential for the people living there now and for their future generations.

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