

POLICY BRIEF BY Lynda Peters

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CEASEFIRE FOR THE SAKE OF INNOCENT CHILDREN

STOP THE GENOCIDE!



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Introduction: Current Situation



On October 7, 2023, the Palestinian Sunni Islamist group Hamas (A foreign terrorist group) launched surprise attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing more than 1,200 Israelis and foreigners. Hamas and other groups also kidnapped 253 hostages. According to the Gaza health ministry controlled by Hamas, more than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed as of April 15, 2024. Israel declared war on Hamas, conducting aerial bombardment and ground operations in Gaza Zanotti and Sharp (2024) .

The ongoing tensions may have an impact on and be influenced by the Israel-Iran conflict elsewhere. In response, Israel declared war on Hamas and began aerial bombardment and ground operations in Gaza.

According to the Hamas-controlled Gaza health ministry, more than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed by April 15, 2024. Israel publicly seeks the elimination of Hamas' military and governing capabilities, as well as the release of all hostages, but Hamas' tunnels have complicated these efforts. The conflict's impact in Gaza has resulted in a humanitarian crisis, with an estimated 1.7 million Gazans displaced out of a population of around 2.1 million. The United States and other countries began providing additional humanitarian aid to Gaza through airdrops and a proposed maritime corridor. Various nations including the United States, Egypt, and Qatar have attempted to resolve the conflict through negotiations but tensions still prevail currently. For example, President Biden has ordered the US military to build a temporary port just offshore from Gaza to facilitate commercial shipments of assistance, with the goal of beginning humanitarian aid deliveries from the port by Mid May.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A sense of hopelessness is emerging as violence and anguish has now become a reality for many Palestinians in the wake of constant bombings/attacks from Israel. Women and children are dying in large numbers, decimating the already small and marginalized Palestinian populace. This is a very tumultuous period for Palestinians as entrenched beliefs against their sovereignty from Israel continue to result in humanitarian atrocities. The international community's failure to compel both nations to achieve a ceasefire highlights the urgency of the situation and the need for intervention to prevent the start of another global war. We must join hands in imploring the Israelites to cease-fire in Palestine. The Israelites must be held accountable for the mass destruction and chaos they have caused. This brief aims to explore the feasibility of a ceasefire in the current Palestine-Israeli conflict and whether peace is achievable through negotiation. The brief will explore the current situation including the historical background, the immediate challenges facing both nations, and the conflict's impact. The brief will also outline specific recommendations for resolving the conflict, policy recommendations, and the pros and cons of a ceasefire. A sustainable solution that is viable for both parties is key to resolving this crisis.

Background/Historical Context

Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu stated in a speech on 14th June 2009 that "the root of the conflict has been the refusal to accept the Jewish state... the refusal to recognize the right of the Jewish people to have a state of their own in any borders." (Netanyahu, B. as quoted in Ben-Meir, 2022 p. 2)

The current state of Israel was founded in 1948 sparking the initial armed conflict between the two states. In 1947, the United Nations (UN) proposed a plan to resolve the issue of whether the land should be a joint or divided state. The plan was approved a plan to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem internationalized. However, Palestinians and Arab nations rejected the plan and Israel subsequently declared its independence on May 14, 1948. This implementation of a Jewish state and the ensuing conflict caused the plan to fail, with Israel expanding its borders and causing 'al-Nakba' - "the catastrophe." the displacement of over 700,000 Palestinians. (Robson, 2023)



The creation of Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people in 1948 was marked by a war of independence with surrounding Arab states, leaving Israel with divided territory and a Palestinian refugee population. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed in 1964 to create a sovereign state for Palestinians, but began a campaign of terrorism and guerrilla warfare against Israel. This led to the Israeli occupation of the Sinai Peninsula, Syrian Golan Heights, The Gaza Strip, and the West Bank.

In 1967, the 'six-day war' between Israel and its Arab neighbors led to Israel capturing the Gaza Strip and the West Bank from Egypt and Jordan. By the end of this war, Israel possessed 78% of the former Palestine mandate land and about 800,000 Arabs who fled from their homes were not allowed to return. The remaining 22% was divided among the West Bank, then under Jordanian control, and Gaza, then under Egyptian control. Israeli forces had gained full control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Over the next two decades, there were numerous wars, with Israel gaining increasing control over the 22% while continuing to face attacks from the Arabs in the form of guerrilla warfare. (Väyrynen2023)(Lehrs et al.2022)(Sayigh, 2023)

During the Gulf War in 1990, Israel was subject to Iraqi missile attacks that were launched in response to its support of the

United States. Israel was urged by the United States to make peace with the Palestinians and Arab neighbors by attending the October 1991 Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid, beginning a new round of negotiations. Both Israelis and Palestinians have strong claims to the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. (Imseis, 2021)(Biger, 2021).

Humanitarian Crisis

The UN has declared the occupied Palestinian territories a humanitarian crisis due to severe restrictions on Palestinian communities, including personal dignity, freedom of movement, and equality of opportunity. Palestinians face discrimination, mass displacement of Palestinians and destruction of communities and farmland. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian (OCHA) reports that over 60% of Palestinians struggle to access medical care outside the Gaza Strip. (Marie & Bataat, 2022)(Mitwalli et al.2023)(Abu Hamad et al., 2021)



The ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has led to economic hardship and a great deal of fear within Israeli society. Palestinians rely heavily on humanitarian aid, and the current conditions have led to a brain drain and higher fertility rates among the lower class. Mental health issues, environmental damage, and lack of resources for healthcare and education have also contributed to the situation. The conflict has bred animosity and mistrust between Israelis and Palestinians, with innocent civilian populations bearing the brunt of this reality. The current generation of youth on both sides has grown up with resentment, making reconciliation difficult in the long term.

The Way forward



The Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires a final agreement to resolve the conflict. Previous peace talks have been limited due to a lack of a clear final goal, leading to violence and extremist attacks. The failed peace attempt at Camp David Summit in 2000 amplifies the urgency for a final decision. Diplomatic negotiation is crucial for lasting peace, and reducing extremist influence is essential. Although both political leaders have

had several negotiations a concrete decision to ceasefire has not been met. The United Nations has proposed a temporary Palestinian state, while the Geneva Accord outlines a final agreement. However, both sides must agree on a solution that best fits their needs and leads to

sustainable peace. Assistance from foreign governments and peacekeeping forces may be crucial in maintaining a stable ceasefire and moving the conflict into a peace process.

My proposed solution

A proposed two-state solution based on the 1967 borders is highly recommended because each state needs to recognize the other's right to exist by ending all forms of violence. The Palestinians will accept a state in the West Bank and Gaza with its capital in East Jerusalem and security guarantees, while the Israelis will recognize the Palestinian state and grant it security. This policy is derived from the belief that Palestinians are entitled to their own self-determined political existence and freedom, like Israelis. Any variation of the two-state solution will be unjust to one side or the other and only lead to more conflict. Mediation by an unbiased international party should also be involved with this peace building process. Other preliminary confidence-building measures can be taken including the release of prisoners, removal of restrictions in the West Bank and most importantly a ceasefire. Violence should never be an option

Policy Recommendations

- ✚ **The removal of Hamas** would lead to a better future for Gaza and the Palestinian people. This could eventually lead to **the emergence of a new regional order**, with a moderate Palestinian government supported by realistic Arab nations like Saudi Arabia and Egypt taking the lead.
- ✚ **Ensure the safety of all civilians** in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza
- ✚ **Release all political prisoners and hostages**
- ✚ **Acknowledge that the Israeli siege of Gaza is a violation of international norms.** There is more that international organizations like the ICC can do to find and bring charges against anyone who violates international law. Leaders in Israel ought to answer for actions that went against the provisions of the Geneva Convention.

- ✚ **Locate and prosecute Israeli authorities/fighters** who plan, coordinate, and carry out assaults on civilians in Palestine. According to security experts' recommendations based on decades of research on how to dismantle radical right-wing extremist groups, the international community should pursue a law enforcement strategy against Israeli right-wing leaders who are inciting and carrying out ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, as well as Israeli leaders accountable for war crimes in Gaza.
- ✚ **Troop withdrawal** -the end of military occupation in Gaza. In the past troop were withdrawn but because this wasn't negotiated with the Palestinians it was met with distrust and seen as a unilateral move under pressure of the Intifada leads to deeper questions on the real intentions of Israeli adherence to negotiations in a non-Bantustan two state solution. (Nohra, 2022)

Challenges to Policy Implementation

- One of the key issues revolving around the Israel-Palestine conflict has been the peace process and the challenges and negotiations particular to it. Both Palestinian and Israeli societies currently face challenges, especially mistrust and skepticism regarding the sincerity of the other side's aspirations for peace.
- Given the already volatile nature of the middle East, the Israel-Palestine conflict has significant implications for regional stability. (Walsh, 2021) (Qabaha & Hamamra2021).
- Imbalances in power between the two sides have impeded the peace process. The establishment of a Palestinian state will not significantly change the power imbalance, as it is unlikely to have the strength or resources to compete with Israel and will still be reliant on foreign aid and support. This aid and support can be easily withdrawn, and the Palestinian state can be undermined.
- Measures that adversely affect Israeli interests are likely to face resistance from Israel and may be sabotaged. Since Israel is in a position of power over the Palestinians, it is essential to the implementation of any agreement that Israel be convinced of its benefits.
- The Palestinians, in the West Bank, have been increasingly concerned about the potential influence of powerful global and regional actors such as the US, EU, and UN on their conflict. The Israeli government has sought an international coalition against terrorism, while the Palestinians have been concerned that these actors may dictate unfavorable terms. (Leopardi2023) (Abujaber, 2022) (Dabed, 2021)
- It would be difficult to relocate the entire populace.

How can the international Community Help?

International powers like the United States should help construct a multilateral framework involving key regional players, including universal recognition of national rights for both Israelis and Palestinians. This will ensure security and well-being, preventing despair, distrust, and extremism among both states. The international community should also establish safe passage for the elderly, women, children, and civilians as well as establish safety/civilian zones inside Gaza. They can coordinate measures like international monitoring of hospitals, to ensure healthcare is accessible in both states. The international community should allow free passage and ensure that sufficient humanitarian aid is distributed only to civilians, not to Hamas fighters. An international committee to investigate workable political measures to remove Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank can be implemented too. (Anziska, 2020)

While international aid may help to save lives and ease the situation of those who are most vulnerable, access to adequate resources may be limited and unequal with the war restrictions and bombings creating an unpredictable climate of danger, especially for marginalized groups like the elderly, women, and children. International coordination and strategic aid are vital to enable victims to recover. appropriate support from the public sector, private companies, and civil society can create an environment in which civilians can feel safe. (Khan, 2022)

The feasibility of a ceasefire

My main proposed recommendation is a call for a ceasefire. A ceasefire plays an important role in conflict resolution because it provides a brief break from violence and allows for diplomatic interaction. A ceasefire is crucial to prevent further loss of civilian life and can facilitate humanitarian aid, and hostage release. It could also calm tensions and reduce the risk of full-scale fighting. However, a ceasefire is not a peace treaty and its effectiveness is contingent on diligent monitoring, enforcement measures, and a true commitment from all parties to address the underlying issues. While ceasefires can provide immediate relief and open the way for peace discussions, their fragility and potential for exploitation highlight the importance of comprehensive and ongoing efforts toward long-term conflict settlement.

Pros

- ✓ **Provides humanitarian relief.** One of the main benefits of ceasefires is that they give instant assistance to impacted populations. Temporary ceasefires allow humanitarian aid to reach war zones, ensuring that necessary supplies such as food, medication, and shelter may be distributed to people in need.
- ✓ **Diplomatic Opportunities:** Ceasefires provide a favorable climate for diplomatic operations and discussions. The halt in hostilities also allows competing parties to meet at the negotiation table, enabling communication that may lead to a more permanent resolution of the conflict.
- ✓ **Saves lives:** The most evident effect of a ceasefire is the rapid reduction in casualties. Suspending ongoing military operations decreases the current threat to soldiers and civilians, enabling for a relief and possible de-escalation of tensions.
- ✓ **Diplomatic confidence:** Ceasefires can be used as confidence-building measures, helping to foster trust between opposing parties. This trust-building process is critical to the success of future peace negotiations and accords.



Cons

- **Risk of Exploitation:** Ceasefires can be used by either party to reorganize, rearm, or gain strategic advantage. Without effective monitoring and enforcement systems, a temporary suspension of hostilities might be utilized to bolster military positions rather than seek peace.
- **Fragility:** Ceasefires are typically unstable and reversible. The root causes of the dispute may stay unsolved, making it difficult to create long-term peace. A breakdown in communication or a breach of the agreements can swiftly spark animosity.
- **Humanitarian problems:** While ceasefires can bring humanitarian assistance, they also pose problems in terms of effective aid delivery. The dynamic nature of war zones may impede the safe and timely provision of help, endangering relief personnel.
- **Political Manipulation:** Conflicting parties may utilize ceasefires as political instruments. A short stop in hostilities might be used for strategic or political purposes, rather than a genuine desire for peace. This deception can undermine confidence and jeopardize the long-term effectiveness of peace-building initiatives.

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