

Hofstra University  
Model United Nations Conference 2022



**Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)**

Iman Elshazly, Chair

Dear Delegates,

My name is Iman Elshazly, and I am Chair of the Special, Political, and Decolonization (SPECOPOL) committee. I am thrilled to be able to oversee and work with you all. This year's conference will be exciting, no doubt, and each creative solution that is made will be one step further into optimistic prospects of ingenuity and perception.

I am beginning my junior year here at Hofstra University, and am a Psychology and Political Science double major. I am also a student of the Legal Education Acceleration Program (LEAP), studying political science and legal philosophy to better my legal threshold. Aside from my studies, I am a Resident Assistant, a Diversity and Inclusion chair of the Residence Hall Association, and chair of Community Service of the Hofstra chapter of Phi Alpha Delta. Outside of Hofstra, I love to take walks, add plants to my ever-growing collection, and watch movies!

I began participating in Model UN while in high school, as I was fascinated by the ability to skillfully examine international problems and suggest solutions with others. During my first Hofstra University Model UN Conference in spring of 2020, I served as a Dais to the Food and Agriculture (FAO) chair and committee. It was such an incredible experience; I yearned to take part in last year's conference as a Co-Chair, for the first time. Although COVID-19 caused the conference to be completely remote, I loved overseeing and guiding delegates to thoughtfully approach topics and discuss possible solutions amongst each other. Model UN at Hofstra has truly made me appreciate just how innovative one can be when they have a true passion for restoration and peace.

I chose the topic of "Decolonization Issues Between Israel and Palestine" because it falls within the mandate of the committee and the current situation in Palestine has revealed worsening conditions for civilians. Issues include the struggle to access basic services, citizenship status, and the removal from homes they have lived in for generations. I wanted to examine how the international community can intervene and prevent further displacement. As the chair of the committee, I will guide delegates through this opportunity to learn, grow, debate, and explore these topics with open minds and thoughtful words.

I am quite excited to hear the differing proposals suggested by everyone concerning the SPECOPOL topics, and I look forward to working with you all!

Sincerely,

Iman Elshazly  
SPECOPOL Chair  
HUMUNC 2022

## **Introduction to the Committee**

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECOPOL) is the Fourth Committee within the United Nations General Assembly. Currently headed by Chair H.E. Ms. Egriselda Aracely González López of El Salvador, SPECOPOL was created in 1993 with the goal of addressing pressing political matters such as self-determination, decolonization, and other international security concerns that the First Committee (DISEC) was not equipped to handle.<sup>1</sup> SPECOPOL also considers other issues including:

a cluster of five decolonization-related agenda items, the effects of atomic radiation, questions relating to information, a comprehensive review of the question of peacekeeping operations as well as a review of special political missions, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Report of the Special Committee on Israeli Practices and International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.<sup>2</sup>

In May 2021, SPECOPOL approved a resolution that endorsed the latest report of the “34-member Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations—including a raft of recommendations related to protection and peacekeeper conduct and safety”.<sup>3</sup> SPECOPOL constantly works to ensure the protection of peace, inalienable rights, and sovereignty of states as well as civilians.

### **Topic 1: Decolonization Issues Between Israel and Palestine**

#### Introduction of the Topic Before the Committee

A recent report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) acknowledged that the situation between Israeli and Palestinian leadership is “unsustainable”, as the absence of a viable peace process draws both sides to make unilateral decisions that aim to protect their individual interests, rather than secure shared peace, and the prosperity that would come with it.<sup>4</sup> The ICG report identifies four issues that, if addressed, would not resolve the peace process, but could at

least address humanitarian and human rights issues in Palestine. Addressing these contentious points can improve the situation on the ground and unwind the tension between the two sides.

### Historical background

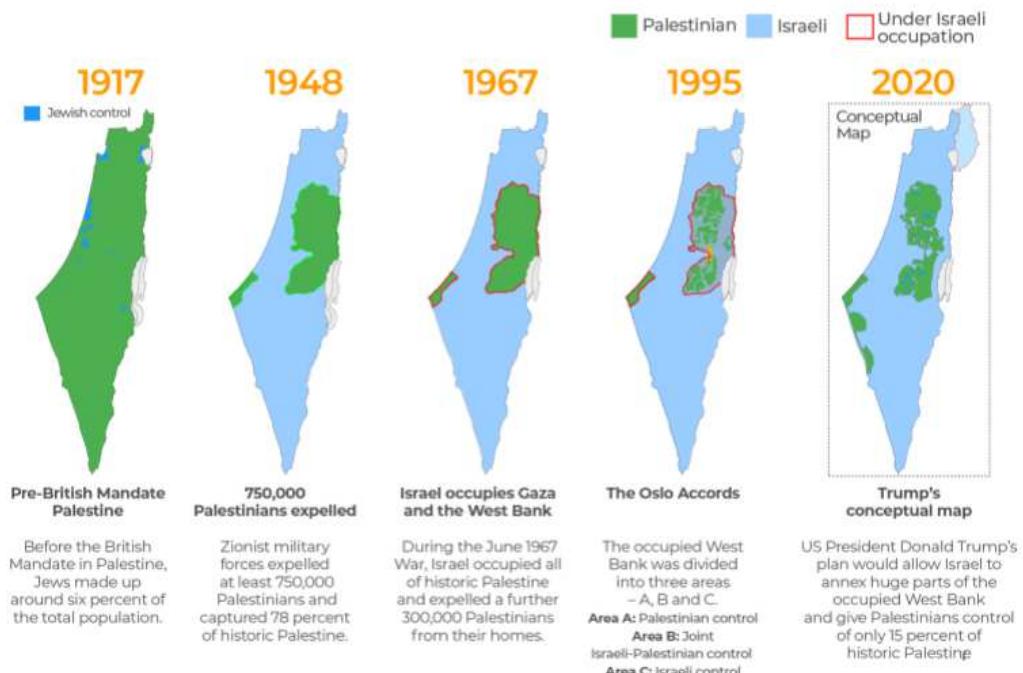
Palestine is a small region of land that has significant historical and religious significance—considered to be the birthplace of Abrahamic faiths such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.<sup>5</sup> Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this territory has been considered to be a part of modern-day Israel.<sup>6</sup> However, control over these regions is complex and ever-evolving, as no international agreement exists on the borders between Palestine and Israel. In fact, while Israel declared statehood in 1948, Palestine has not formally achieved statehood, despite the fact that over 135 United Nations member nations recognize Palestine as an independent state. Israel and other countries—most notably the United States—do not.<sup>7</sup> As such, modern-day Palestine has been formulated as the area that includes the West Bank (an area between Jordan and Israel) and the Gaza Strip (an area bordering Egypt and Israel).<sup>8</sup>

The area that historically comprises Palestine has been ruled by various groups, including Babylonians, Persians, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders, Egyptians, and finally the Ottoman Empire from approximately 1517 to 1917.<sup>9</sup> After the end of World War I, the League of Nations issued a mandate in 1923 to allow the British to legally administer Palestine,<sup>10</sup> providing that a “Jewish national homeland in Palestine was to be established”.<sup>11</sup> The territory remained under British control until the United Nations passed Resolution 181 in 1947, which declared that Palestine be divided into two sections—an independent Arab state and an independent Jewish state.<sup>12</sup> According to the plan, Jerusalem, which both Jews and Palestinian Arabs sought as their capital, would be an “international territory with a special status”.<sup>13</sup> While Jewish leaders agreed to this plan, the Palestinian Arabs, who had been “actively fighting British and Jewish interests in the

region since the 1920s”, argued that sectioning the land was unfair since Palestinians represented a greater share the population in many areas and they deserved more territory.<sup>14</sup>

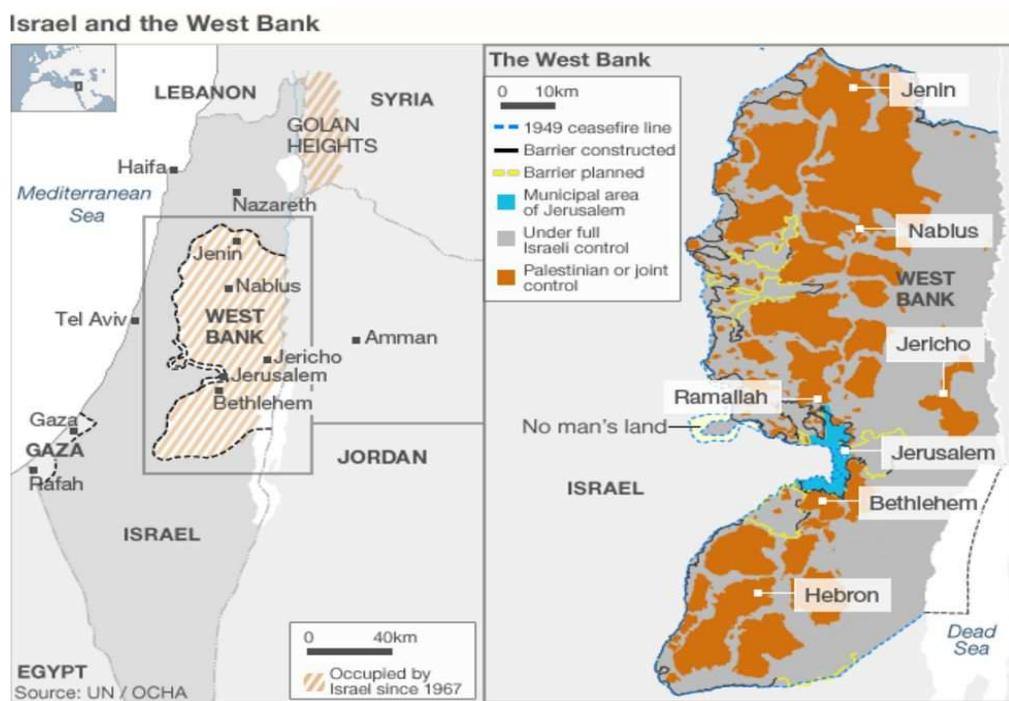
The Arab-Israeli War (1948-49) began after British troops withdrew, and Palestinian and Jewish forces clashed, with civilians often caught in the middle.<sup>15</sup> On May 14, 1948, and in compliance with the 1947 partition plan, Israel declared its independence.<sup>16</sup> Arab forces from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan occupied southern and eastern Palestine and captured East Jerusalem—citing the burgeoning refugee crisis and dangers to Palestinian civilians.<sup>17</sup> Israelis drove back Arab forces, taking over territory up to the former Egypt-Palestine frontier, but not the Gaza Strip.<sup>18</sup> Individualized agreements between Israel and the Arabs facilitated the creation of a “temporary frontier” between Israel and its Arab neighbors.<sup>19</sup> Approximately 750,000 Palestinians were forced to leave their homeland after the destruction of their villages.<sup>20</sup> Israel gained approximately seventy-eight percent of historical Palestine, while the remaining twenty-two percent fell under the administration of Egypt and Jordan (see Figure 1).<sup>21</sup>

*Figure 1: Map of Palestinian and Israeli territories throughout time*<sup>22</sup>



During the 1967 Arab-Israeli War (also called the Six-Day War), attacks from Syria, Jordan, and Egypt were repelled by Israel over the course of six days. Israel gained the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Syrian Golan Heights, and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula.<sup>23</sup> The Six-Day War also led to an additional 300,000 Palestinians being expelled from their homes. The UN-sanctioned truce and ceasefire led to UN Resolution 242, which “called upon Israel to give up the territories in exchange for peace with its neighbors at the end of the 1967 war.”<sup>24</sup>

*Figure 2: West Bank Occupation and Control<sup>25</sup>*



The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was created in 1964 to garner international recognition of the Palestinian State.<sup>26</sup> The PLO is a “broad national front, or an umbrella organization, comprised of numerous organizations of the resistance movement, political parties, popular organizations, and independent personalities and figures from all sectors of life”.<sup>27</sup>

But by 1987, Gaza had become “one of the most densely populated areas on earth” with over 650,000 Palestinians crowded into sixty percent of the territory and the remaining forty percent occupied by Israeli settlers.<sup>28</sup> This contributed to the First Intifada, or “shaking off” in

Arabic, described as a “boiling over of Palestinian anger over ongoing Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.”<sup>29</sup> In 1988—after some 300 Palestinians were killed and 11,000 were wounded in the uprising—PLO leader Yasser Arafat called for peace, recognizing the right of Israel’s existence, and calling for negotiations. After Yitzhak Rabin was made prime minister in 1992 and froze Israeli settlements, the intifada ended.<sup>30</sup>

In an attempt to end the violence, Arafat and Rabin engaged in the Oslo Peace Accords which “created a timetable for a Middle East peace process and a plan for an interim Palestinian government in parts of Gaza and the West Bank.”<sup>31</sup> As a result, Arafat was able to end a twenty-seven-year exile and return to Gaza to lead the newly-created Palestinian Authority (PA).<sup>32</sup> In 1995, Oslo II outlined the process for a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from the West Bank. Despite addressing these major issues, however, these Accords failed in the goal of “bringing Israel and Palestine to agree over a full-fledged peace plan.”<sup>33</sup>

Another significant step toward independence by the Palestinian state was made on November 15, 1988, when the Palestinian National Council (PNC) met in Algiers, Algeria and adopted a Palestinian Declaration of Independence. This declaration proclaimed an “independent State of Palestine in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.”<sup>34</sup>

The Second Intifada began in September 2000 after Ariel Sharon, a right-wing Israeli politician who would later become prime minister, went to the Islamic holy site of al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup> Since this occurred at a time of heightened tensions, the visit was seen as offensive, and initiated another five years of clashes between Palestinians and Israelis.<sup>36</sup>

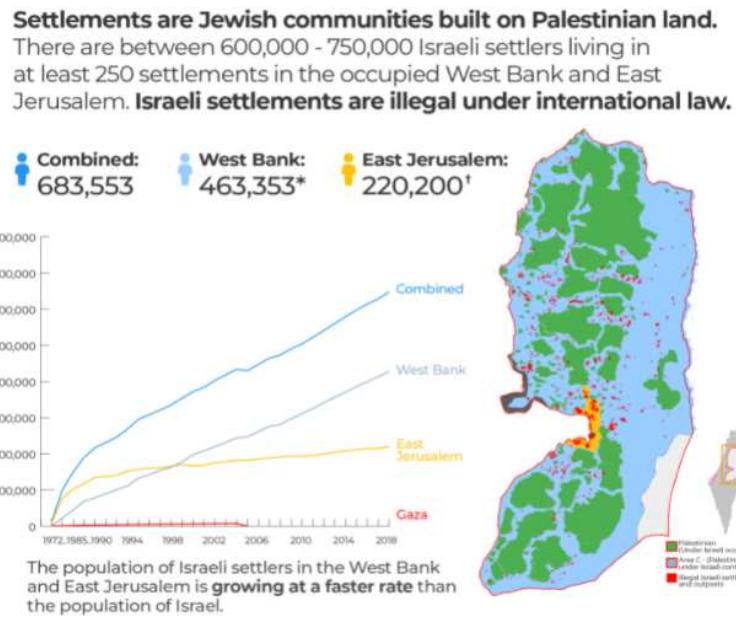
After the Second Intifada ended in 2005, significant changes in Palestinian leadership occurred. Yasir Arafat died in 2004, and the party that he led, Fatah (the political party that oversees the PLO) lost legislative elections to Hamas in 2006. Hamas is a Sunni Islamist militant

group whose use of terrorist attacks inside Israel and promotion of destructive and extremist ideas was opposed by Fatah.<sup>37</sup> Since its origin in 1988, Hamas has been hostile toward Israel; initially it called for Israel's destruction and stood against PLO negotiations with Israel. Its militant wing used suicide bombings against Israeli targets and coordinated violent attacks during the Second Intifada.<sup>38</sup> The win by Hamas also raised alarm in Israel, which fought wars with Hamas in 2008, 2012 and 2014.<sup>39</sup> In April 2014, Hamas and Fatah came to agreement to unify and create a whole national Palestinian government.<sup>40</sup> and after 2017, Hamas accepted borders negotiated with Israel, while still not recognizing it as a state.<sup>41</sup>

On November 29, 2012, Mahmoud Abbas, the President of the Palestinian Authority, called on the UN members to “issue a birth certificate to the reality of the State of Palestine”.<sup>42</sup> A majority of UN member states and two non-member states—138 of 193—voted to grant Palestine non-Member Observer State status. Nine states opposed the resolution (Canada, Czech Republic, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Panama, Palau, United States) and 41 states abstained.<sup>43</sup> Israel’s representative objected to the resolution because it suggested that UN resolutions, rather than negotiations between the two parties, would advance the peace process. Meanwhile, Palestine’s application to join the UN as a full member state failed due to a lack of support from the members of the Security Council.<sup>44</sup>

The lives of approximately 5.1 million Palestinians within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are still under Israeli control to this day.<sup>45</sup> For example, there are over 700 road obstacles across the West Bank, with 140 checkpoints, which restrict movement of Palestinians.<sup>46</sup>

Figure 3: Settlements on Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)<sup>47</sup>



In November 2021, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, warned the Security Council, “I am concerned that if we do not act quickly and decisively, we risk plunging into another deadly escalation of violence.”<sup>48</sup> He reported on “the death of four Palestinians, including two children, and injuries to ninety others—including twelve children—due to action by Israeli Security Forces. One Israeli civilian was killed in the same period, and nine civilians, including one woman and one child, and six members of [the Israeli Security Forces] were injured.”<sup>49</sup>

He also pointed to further threats to negotiations, including settlement expansion, demolitions, and high levels of settler violence. He reported on incidents in the West Bank that included fifty-four attacks against Palestinians by settlers and other Israelis. Additionally, Palestinians carried out forty-one retaliatory attacks.<sup>50</sup> Mr. Wennesland reiterated that, “that all settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace.”<sup>51</sup> Wennesland emphasized the “encouraging” actions of “gradual easing of restrictions on the entry

of goods and people” in the country, but noted that “economic, security, and humanitarian issues remains of serious concern”.<sup>52</sup>

### Forging a long-term truce in Gaza

Using the framework of the ICG report, SPECPOL will aim to debate and discuss the four issues it addressed, and generate proposals to help resolve the individual issues. The first issue identified in the ICG report is to “pursue a long-term truce in Gaza”. Following Fatah’s “decisive loss to Hamas” in 2006 parliamentary elections, President Abbas dissolved the elected Hamas government in favor of an emergency cabinet dominated by Fatah. As a result, “The increasingly violent power struggle between Hamas and Fatah resulted in a split between the West Bank, run by Fatah through the emergency PA government, and the Gaza Strip, controlled by Hamas.”<sup>53</sup>

The election of Hamas, and its status as sole Palestinian entity ruling Gaza has set the stage for many of the humanitarian issues in Gaza since then. “The victory of Hamas, a group that was regarded by many as a terrorist organization, resulted in sanctions and boycotts from Israel, the United States, and the European Union.”<sup>54</sup> It further alienated Israel, since Hamas fired rockets and mortars into Israeli territory once it gained power in Gaza.<sup>55</sup>

Additionally, Hamas militants frequently fly balloons carrying incendiary devices toward Israel, which sometimes causes fires. The group has also carried out incursions into Israeli territory, most famously kidnapping Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in 2006. Five years later, Israel released more than one thousand Palestinian prisoners...to secure Shalit’s release. In 2014, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the movement of kidnapping and murdering three Israeli teens in the West Bank. Indications that a rogue cell committed the abductions highlighted Hamas’s inability to control all those affiliated with it, analysts say.<sup>56</sup>

In turn, “Israel and other members of the international community moved to aid the West Bank, offering shows of economic and diplomatic support for Abbas and Fatah while blockading

the Gaza Strip.”<sup>57</sup> In addition to sanctions against Hamas by the United States and European Union:

Egypt and Israel largely closed their borders with it in 2006–07, restricting the movement of goods and people into and out of the territory...cutting off the territory from most of the world and forcing over one million Gazan Palestinians to rely on international aid. Israel allows Qatar to provide hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance through Hamas. Other foreign aid generally reaches Gaza via the PA and UN agencies.<sup>58</sup>

Egypt further isolated Hamas after 2013, with the rise of President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, working to cut off its network of tunnels for smuggling “food, medicine, and cheap gas for electricity production into the territory, as well as construction materials, cash, and arms”.<sup>59</sup> After 2018, Egypt allowed some goods to enter through one crossing. As of 2021, Hamas reported collecting \$12 million per month in levies on these goods.<sup>60</sup>

The lack of a regular flow of goods and materials into Gaza has not only damaged the ability of Hamas to provide for the Palestinians living there, it has severely curtailed their quality of life.

Over 80% of Gaza’s population is aid-dependent. They are trapped in a cycle of poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity. Gazans have limited access to basic services such as medical care, safe water, electricity, and few educational or economic opportunities. COVID-19 restrictions have further worsened people’s living conditions and eroded their purchasing power.<sup>61</sup>

Conflicts that flare up only exacerbate the humanitarian situation, like the eleven-day war between Israel and Hamas in May 2021. This conflict was “[triggered] by a series of incidents in East Jerusalem, the latest confrontation spread to all parts of the territory of Israel-Palestine and catalyzed the heaviest sustained fighting...in Gaza since 2014.”<sup>62</sup> The reciprocal attacks featured “Israeli airstrikes and artillery barrages on Gaza...[killing] at least 230 people, including 65 children, and wounded 1,620” while “Hamas missiles rained over Israeli towns and cities, sowing fear and killing at least 12 Israeli residents, including two children — a greater civilian

toll within Israel than during the last war, in 2014, which lasted more than seven weeks.”<sup>63</sup> The conflict ended with a cease fire negotiated by Egypt, but it is feared that the root issues remain in place and could spark another conflict at any point.

#### *Guiding Questions*

On this issue, the ICG report recommends that “In Gaza, Israel should forge a long-term truce, lifting the blockade in exchange for a halt to all rocket fire from the territory.”<sup>64</sup> What are the priorities of each side? “Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank say they are suffering because of Israeli actions and restrictions. Israel says it is only acting to protect itself from Palestinian violence.”<sup>65</sup>

1. What steps can be taken to relieve the humanitarian situation in Gaza?
2. What are the conditions that international actors have put in place to lift sanctions on Hamas? What conditions are needed to end the blockade of Gaza?
3. What indicators can be put in place to assure Israel of its security?

#### Halting evictions in East Jerusalem

The second issue is to “call on Israel to halt evictions of East Jerusalem Palestinians”. Jerusalem is an ancient city that houses holy sites and meaning for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.<sup>66</sup> When Israel declared statehood, the United Nations attempted to declare Jerusalem a “separate entity” to preserve its access by all faiths, but Israel consolidated control of the territory around the city after victories in the first Arab-Israeli War and Six Day War—and named Jerusalem as its capital.

Although Israel’s actions were repeatedly condemned by the UN and other bodies, Israel reaffirmed Jerusalem’s standing as its capital by promulgating a

special law in 1980. The status of the city remained a central issue in the dispute between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs, who claim East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.<sup>67</sup>

In summer 2021, the violence peaked once more with the forced expulsion of seven Palestinian families who have lived in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. Israel's High Court was scheduled to rule on the government ordered evictions in May 2021.<sup>68</sup>

Things came to a head in [early May,] the last four days of Ramadan, when Israeli police, responding to chair and bottle throwing, began firing sponge-tipped bullets, stun grenades and tear gas at Palestinians inside al-Aqsa, Islam's third most sacred site. On 7 May, Israeli police clashed with young Palestinians and used force against worshippers at al-Aqsa, injuring dozens and closing the gates leading to the mosque...On 9 May, Israeli forces fired stun grenades and tear gas canisters at stone-throwing youth inside the compound and forced their way into the mosque, injuring scores of worshippers...Another such raid occurred the following day, 10 May, which happened to be Jerusalem Day, when Israel commemorates what it calls the reunification of the city in the 1967 war.<sup>69</sup>

Further tension developed as thousands of Palestinians organized peaceful “protests and prayers at al-Aqsa against a planned march by Israeli ultra-nationalist Jews through the Old City’s Muslim Quarter toward the central plaza that abuts the Holy Esplanade”,<sup>70</sup> which houses sacred sites, known as the Temple Mount to Jews and al-Aqsa Mosque to Muslims. Authorities kept the two groups separated, but the sheer size of opposing groups kept tensions high. The night culminated with “thousands of Israelis gathered at the Western Wall plaza to celebrate Jerusalem Day”<sup>71</sup> when a tree caught fire in the compound. “[Video] of a mass of Jewish Israelis cheering flames at Islam’s third holiest site went viral, exacerbating the rage already felt in the Muslim world about Israel’s raid upon al-Aqsa during Ramadan.”<sup>72</sup>

### *Guiding Questions*

On the issue of evictions from East Jerusalem, the ICG report recommends that:

the formula for stemming unrest...would have a high political cost. Israel would [have to] rescind the orders to evict Palestinian residents and evacuate Jewish settlers from Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah and other densely populated Palestinian neighborhoods. This course would, however, require upending consistent Israeli practices of Palestinian dispossession; their application in East Jerusalem is particularly incendiary given the convergence of nationalist and religious narratives there. Israel is likely to consider taking such steps only if it faces sufficiently stiff consequences in the international arena for not doing so. For now, such consequences are not on the global agenda, even if evictions from particular homes in Sheikh Jarrah are under a microscope.<sup>73</sup>

1. What are intermediate steps that the international community can take that can encourage Israel to halt East Jerusalem evictions as a building block to a wider peace process?
2. What intermediate steps can be proposed to safeguard East Jerusalem's residents and protect their rights?
3. What recommendations can the international community make about the long-term status of East Jerusalem to prevent future flaring of tensions?

#### Encourage Respect for Existing Arrangements at Jerusalem Holy Sites

The third issue is to “encourage respect for existing arrangements at Jerusalem holy sites”. As the recent tension in East Jerusalem indicated, restrictions on access to holy sites can initiate or exacerbate issues between Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

The ICG report suggests that a “framework exists” on this issue, known as the “Status Quo”, which Israel “has subscribed since 1967 and which has largely kept the peace there, albeit increasingly less so of late.”<sup>74</sup> This framework “and subsequent unwritten ‘understandings’ between Israel and Jordan, whose royal family are custodians of Jerusalem’s holiest Islamic sites”<sup>75</sup> puts the Holy Esplanade’s operations under the Islamic Waqf, a foundation funded by the Jordanian government, which “administers daily life on the Temple Mount, which includes the

Al-Aqsa Mosque, Dome of the Rock, archaeological sites, museums and schools.”<sup>76</sup> The ICG report recommends restoring the Status Quo and allowing the Islamic Waqf:

the right to administer the site (with certain restrictions, for instance on archaeological digs) and Israel the power to police it from the outside; it also allows Muslims to pray at the site and non-Muslims to enter as tourists. Returning to this arrangement would help reduce tensions and lessen the chance of altercations between protesters and Israeli police. The latter should be given clear instructions not to enter the Esplanade, much less the al-Aqsa mosque, and refrain from harassing worshippers in East Jerusalem.<sup>77</sup>

In return for maintaining peaceful operations at the Holy Esplanade, the IRC report suggests that the Waqf could play a role in halting violence originating from activities held in the territory it administers.<sup>78</sup>

#### *Guiding Questions*

1. What confidence-building measures can both sides agree to in order to share responsibility for access to the site, and to reduce the conditions which have ignited conflict in the past?
2. What elements of the Status Quo are worth maintaining? Are there key elements of the Status Quo that are missing and could be negotiated between each side?

#### International Community Support for Renewing Palestinian Political Leadership

The fourth issue addressed in the ICG report calls on the international community to “support Palestinians in renewing their political leadership”. The ICG report claims that the disorganization and undemocratic practices of the current Palestinian leadership has hampered its trust with Palestinians. “For Palestinians, the latest events show how desperately they need a leadership that can effectively negotiate and coordinate efforts on their behalf.”<sup>79</sup> However, the report instead points to the lack of elections as an obstacle to fair representation for Palestinians.

Elections, which Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas cancelled in April – due in part to Israeli restrictions on voting in East Jerusalem – should happen, as imperfect as their administration may be under current conditions: political renewal is critical, and people have made clear they want a vote. The broader goal should be internal dialogue and political reconciliation, and a return to representative national institutions embodied in the Palestine Liberation Organization and accountable governance by the Palestinian Authority.”<sup>80</sup>

The lack of elections may also be continuing the situation where Fatah and Hamas are the Palestinians’ only choices to govern, limiting the emergence of newer parties.<sup>81</sup> Because of political splits between Fatah and Hamas, Palestinians have a divided government, with a different government depending on where they live. Instead of this arrangement and “in the interest of effective governance, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories require democratic accountability and a unified government in charge of both the West Bank and Gaza.”<sup>82</sup>

The ICG report indicates that President Abbas fears losing further ground to Hamas in elections, but sees a possible power-sharing agreement, where he controls international aid, as way to serve Gaza and strengthen his political power over all Palestinians.<sup>83</sup> Israel and its international partners seem to also fear further legitimizing Hamas through elections.

The present predicament over Palestinian leadership structures also requires international partners to rethink their positions: why they have seemed indifferent to elections; why they continue to impose unrealistic conditions on Hamas for recognition and, by extension, power sharing; and why they appear willing to keep funding an unrepresentative, undemocratic and rights-violating PA.<sup>84</sup>

#### *Guiding Questions*

1. How should the international community encourage Palestinian leadership to conduct elections on a regular basis?
2. What conditions should Israel and international partners place on Hamas to be recognized in the case that it wins offices through elections?

## **Topic 2: Effectiveness of United Peacekeeping Missions - UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)**

### Introduction to the Topic Before the Committee

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) shares its border with Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania to the east; Central African Republic and South Sudan to the north; Angola and Zambia to the south; and the Republic of the Congo to the west.<sup>85</sup> Violence and instability in the DRC, which hosts an estimated 4.5 million internally displaced persons, originates to a large degree from the conflict and refugee crisis that began with the 1994 Rwandan genocide and continues to affect the region.<sup>86</sup>

The DRC had been an area of conflict and trauma, rooted in post-colonialism after Belgian rule ended in 1960, when the country was named Zaire. Neighboring Rwanda's civil war concerned the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups who engaged in a battle for control between 1990 and 1994.<sup>87</sup> The fighting culminated from April 7, 1994 to July 15, 1994, when extremist Hutu factions within the government carried out a full-blown genocide against Tutsi, Twa, and moderate Hutu in the country.<sup>88</sup> It is estimated that between 500,000 to one million people were killed by the Hutu extremists.<sup>89</sup>

The genocide led to an invasion of the Tutsi opposition, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which were based in neighboring Uganda.<sup>90</sup> The RPF defeated Rwandan government forces, and took control by July 1994, pursuing those responsible for the heinous genocide. This set the stage for the first Congo War (known as Africa's First World War). By 1996, about two million Hutu civilians fled to Zaire to escape consequences of the civil war.<sup>91</sup> Former Hutu regime and military members responsible for the genocide, launched attacks from refugee camps based in DRC in order to regain power in Rwanda.<sup>92</sup> The RPF-led Rwandan government blamed Zaire's leader Mobutu Sese Seko, for providing shelter to the Hutu extremists.<sup>93</sup> Along with their

allies in Uganda, they backed a Congolese revolutionary, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, to replace Mobutu, which he did by 1997. The new regime took over with Kabila as president, and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>94</sup>

The Second Congo War, a conflict with a death toll of an estimated three million people, started soon after.<sup>95</sup> Instability in DRC's eastern provinces forced Kabila to turn on Rwanda and Uganda and provided the Hutu armies with the opportunity to regroup.

This resulted in a Rwandan/Ugandan joint invasion in 1998. Neighboring countries came to Kabila's rescue and temporarily halted the Rwandan and Ugandan troops. The five-year conflict pitted Congolese government forces, supported by Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, against rebels and soldiers backed by Uganda and Rwanda.<sup>96</sup>

Following the war, the UN facilitated implementation of four peace agreements. The Lusaka Agreement led to a brief ceasefire in 1999 and was strengthened after the war in 2003.<sup>97</sup> The Sun City Agreement, signed in April 2002, addressed democratic institutions and elections. The Pretoria Accords, signed in July 2002, initiated a peace deal between Rwanda and the DRC, "requiring dismantling of Hutu militias and the Rwandan withdrawal from the DRC."<sup>98</sup>

Despite these peace accords, armed rebel groups continue to combat the Congolese government and inflict violence against innocent civilians in the eastern region of the country, where the troubled Congolese provinces of North and South Kivu border Rwanda, Ituri and North Kivu share a border with Uganda, and South Kivu shares a border with Burundi.<sup>99</sup> These groups are able to thrive due to "poor governance, weak institutions, and rampant corruption."<sup>100</sup>

North Kivu, in particular, serves as both an "epicenter of war in the DRC" and a model for how armed groups form in other troubled areas.

[North Kivu] has generated a multitude of armed groups, with over two dozen emerging over the past two decades. It was here that the precursors to the Congo wars began with ethnic violence in 1993, and it is here that the most formidable challenges to stability in the country persist today.<sup>101</sup>

The persistence of these armed groups is due to local, regional, and national instability of the DRC, which drives militants to view themselves living in a country where:

neither the rule of law to guarantee property rights nor the force of law to suppress armed rivals [exists]. This weakness reinforces the belief that the only way of protecting property and individual freedoms is through armed force.<sup>102</sup>

The addition of Hutu and Tutsi refugees at various times since independence has sparked conflict with aggrieved indigenous groups. “Most of the fighting today draws directly on this cleavage, hardened by two decades of killings on both sides.”<sup>103</sup> Additionally, local elites support various armed factions that protect their business or political interests.

Another major source of continued conflict in the region is the fight for the natural resources of the DRC. This massive resource wealth has been estimated at \$24 trillion, which offers opportunities for groups to purchase and trade arms to fuel conflicts inside the DRC and surrounding countries.<sup>104</sup> Despite legislation by the United States to prevent the purchase of “conflict minerals” and sanctions to deny militias funding, loopholes in the supply chains of the DRC mineral sale business make it difficult to certify secondhand purchases and therefore deny financial support to these armed groups. Due to the sanctions, global mineral companies avoid work there, further depressing the economy and driving impoverished Congolese to join the armed groups.<sup>105</sup>

The DRC lacks strong governance and requires a solid legal foundation to ensure peace and stability for the whole country.<sup>106</sup> United Nations peacekeeping operations effort to enforce peace in areas of continued conflict utilize the organization’s legitimacy and ability to “deploy and sustain troops and police from around the globe, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to advance multidimensional mandates.”<sup>107</sup> Peacekeeping missions require mutual consent of the

UN and host country, impartiality, and strategies that avoid the use of force, except in self-defense or to protect that mission's mandate.<sup>108</sup> Individual missions may include mandates to:

maintain peace and security, but also to facilitate the political process, protect civilians, assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; support the organization of elections, protect and promote human rights and assist in restoring the rule of law.”<sup>109</sup>

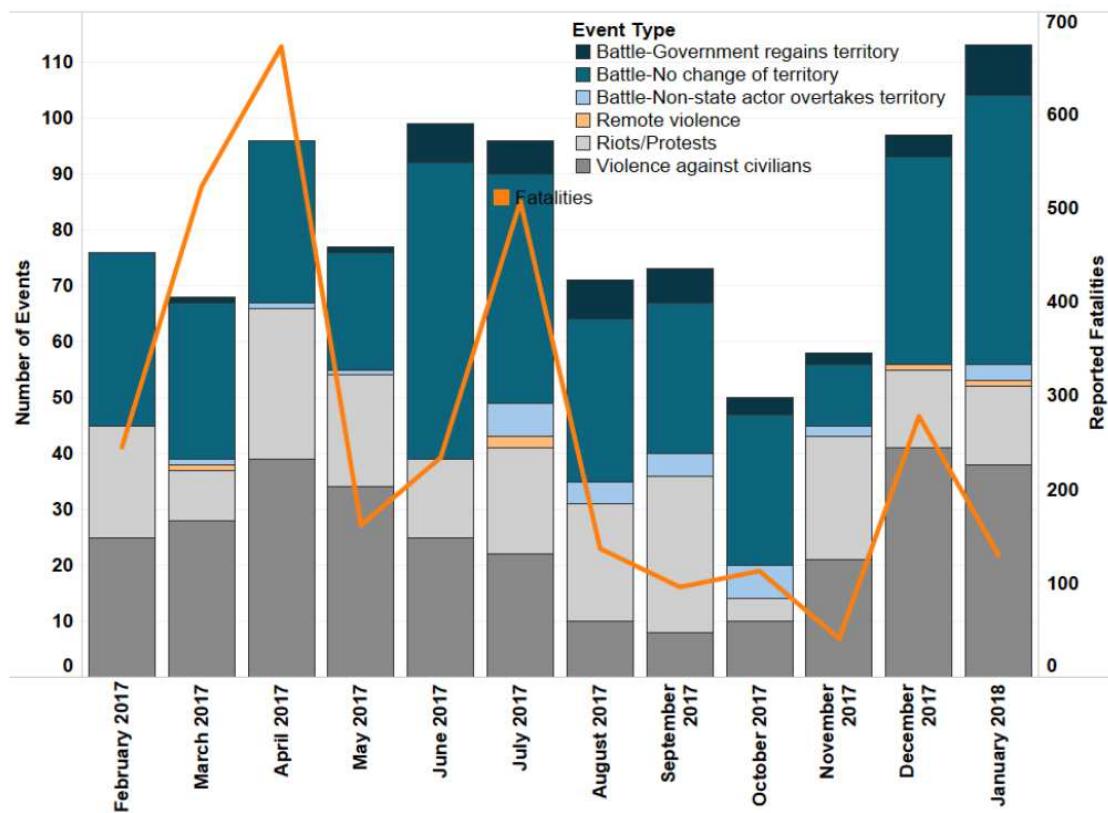
Security Council Resolution 1925 authorized MONUSCO (UN Organization

Stabilization Mission in the DRC) to follow the work of MONUC (UN Organization Mission in the DRC) on July 1, 2010—for “the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence and to support the Government of the DRC in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts.”<sup>110</sup>

Measuring the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions includes “a reality check of their implementation of the mandate delivered by the Security Council against the means and the capabilities that have been given to the mission.”<sup>111</sup> An independent organization, the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) assessed MONUSCO’s work to be impressive when measuring the resources devoted to its mandate and the large geographical area that the mission covers. According to EPON, MONUC/MONUSCO’s ability to prevent a recurrence of major violent conflict by its a peacekeeping presence has created conditions that stimulate the economy and support democratic politics. With these political advancements in place, a new president (Félix Tshisekedi) was elected in DRC via peaceful elections, replacing Joseph Kabil, who inherited the presidency when his father died in 2001. Although it marked the DRC’s first peaceful transition of power, multiple irregularities in the voting have led to questions about whether the opposing candidate won, creating more division and questions of the legitimacy of national government.<sup>112</sup>

While there is support for MONUSCO within the DRC, its mission is far from complete. One concern is whether the DRC remains a threat to international security. If so, is the deployment of a large peacekeeping force necessary, or has the nature of the conflict changed so much that a different kind of mission is needed?<sup>113</sup> Finally, does the DRC support a withdrawal, or is it expected to affect political peace?<sup>114</sup> If the United Nations implemented an exit strategy for MONUSCO, would the country revert to further violence?<sup>115</sup>

*Figure 4: Political Violence in the DRC has increased since 2003.<sup>116</sup>*



Despite significant successes, violence has increased since 2003 (see Figure 4). One example of the armed groups that threaten peace and stability in the DRC and the surrounding region is the March 23 Movement (M23), which is “made up primarily of ethnic Tutsis who were allegedly supported by the Rwandan government. M23 rebelled against the Congolese government for supposedly reneging on a peace deal signed in 2009.”<sup>117</sup> The damaging presence

and relentless violence of M23 led the UN Security Council to authorize MONUSCO “to use an offensive brigade...to support the DRC state army in its fight against M23.”<sup>118</sup> This was the first time the UN called on peacekeeping forces to engage in offensive measures, and while it led to the defeat of M23 in 2013, the group and others continue to re-form or emerge anew.

### Bloc Positions

One way to assess if your country supports the renewal of MONUSCO’s mission is to evaluate which countries support and contribute personnel towards the MONUSCO peacekeeping mission. Currently Pakistan contributes the most troops, while Senegal offers the most police personnel.<sup>119</sup>

Top military contributors to MONUSCO (as of October 2021)	Top police contributors to MONUSCO (as of October 2021)
Pakistan	Senegal
India	Egypt
Bangladesh	Jordan
Indonesia	Bangladesh
South Africa	India
Nepal	Côte d’Ivoire
Morocco	Niger
United Republic of Tanzania	Burkina Faso
Uruguay	Djibouti
Malawi	Tunisia

### Guiding Questions

1. How can the committee enforce better governance and accountability in political leaders within the DRC?
2. How can MONSUCO's mandate be improved to better address security in eastern DRC and the other countries in the region?
3. Has your country contributed to MONUSCO or other peacekeeping missions? If so, does it typically contribute troops, police, or civilian specialists? Does your country only provide funding for peacekeeping missions?

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