



ODUMUNC 2025 Issue Brief Security Council



The Situation in Gaza

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Introduction

The recent escalation violence in Gaza, since 7 October 2023, poses significant challenges for the United Nations (UN) system. The severe humanitarian impact of the crisis including the loss of civilian lives, destruction of homes, schools, and hospitals make the situation extremely catastrophic, urging taking serious actions to facilitate humanitarian response and ceasefire agreement. By promoting human rights, negotiating ceasefires, and providing humanitarian aid, the UN plays a vital role in resolving these crises. The stakes are high as the ongoing conflict threatens regional stability and

the prospects for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the most recent developments before publication of this issue brief, the UN Security Council debated the issue of Gaza in formal session and most Member States agreed on language demanding a ceasefire by all sides. Although the resolution was carefully written to gain the widest possible support, not all member States agreed. It was a single no vote—a veto—by the United States that killed the resolution.¹

The problem is not new. The Security Council was designed to safeguard the interests of the five Permanent Members (the P5). It has never been effective on issues of greatest concern to them, where their veto power enables them to stop UN action. This has been the pattern in the Security Council since Hamas' invaded Israel on 7 October 2023, leaving the Security Council reduced to a talk-shop, a place for countries to express their positions, unable to agree on action. The appointment by President Trump of Elise Stefanik to be the new US Chief Ambassador to the United Nations suggests American policy will be even less compromising on Gaza issues, supporting Israel on all matters.²

It is hard to resist the conclusion that currently, the only possible solutions to end the fighting and preserve peace in Gaza lie outside the Security Council. So long as Member States adhere to long -established policies and

¹ Farnaz Fassihi, et al., 'U.S. vetoes Gaza cease-fire resolution at U.N. Security Council', *New York Times*, 20 November 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/20/world/middleeast/us-veto-gaza-ceasefire.html>

² Nicholas Fandos, 'What to Know About Elise Stefanik, Trump's Pick for U.N. Ambassador', *New York Times*, 11 November 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/11/nyregion/elise-stefanik-trump-un.html>

priorities, there is not much the Security Council can do. Even at ODUMUNC, only extraordinary diplomatic vision and negotiating skill, ideas that appeal to the interests of all five Permanent Members, will allow progress on this extraordinary issue.

Background

The Arab Israeli conflict is primarily a contemporary conflict that dates to the 20th century, when Jewish settlement in Palestine, as it then was known, began to accelerate while under British rule. The dispute's origins go back thousands of years and involve conflicting historical claims to the same area of land. Following the UN mandate in 1948 to divide Palestine into two parts, Israel and Palestine land, the conflict between the Arabs and the Israelis erupted into full scale war. Over the ensuing decades, the Arabs and the Israelis engaged in war several times: in 1956, 1967, and 1973.

Since 1967 the Israelis have occupied more land in the Palestine territories and continued to launch settlement campaigns that are not legal under international law. This expansion created one of the largest and longest refugee crises with some eight-hundred thousand Palestinians internally displaced or becoming refugees in neighboring countries such Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Today their inheritors number almost fifteen million in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, neighboring states, North Africa, the Persian Gulf and around the world.³

In recent history, Gaza has been the site of conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Since Hamas seized control of the Strip in 2007, Gaza has been subject to an embargo. The movement of people and goods has been

severely restricted as a result, worsening the humanitarian and economic conditions of the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip. There have been numerous wars that have caused major civilian casualties and destruction of homes, schools, and Hospitals in Gaza and the West Bank including in 2008–2009, 2012, 2014, 2019, 2021, and most recently 2023-24 further complicating the efforts toward peace.

Current Situation

Following the 7th of October events, the situation in Gaza has drastically deteriorated with several pressing issues that need to be addressed immediately:



Yahya Abou-Ghazala, 'In Gaza, Palestinians have no safe place from Israel's bombs', *CNN*, 12 October 2023

Humanitarian Access: The humanitarian aid delivery to Gaza has been severely impeded by the ongoing conflict. The blockade and ongoing Israeli attacks on civilian targets including hospitals and infrastructures made it exceptionally difficult for humanitarian agencies to get help to people in need. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that because of infrastructure destruction and access constraints, there are severe shortages of food,

³ 'Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Presents the Conditions of the Palestinian Population on the Occasion of the World Population Day',

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 11 July 2024, <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=5791>

medicine, and other essential supplies. According to the Human Right Watch reports the high-ranking Israeli officials have publicly stated that they aim to deny food, water, and fuel to Gazan civilians—statements that are consistent with an Israeli military strategy. Other Israeli officials have openly declared that humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza will only be provided if Hamas is destroyed or its hostages released. Moreover, based on the UNRWA reports the Israeli forces have intentionally been targeting employees and facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

According to the OCHA's latest report on the “Gaza Humanitarian Response Update” in August of this year, several mass casualty situations persist in taxing humanitarian workers' ability to respond to trauma and emergency cases in midst of severe lack of hospital beds. Due to overuse, a lack of alternative power production options, and restricted access to spare parts, hospital generators continue to operate at their breaking point, endangering the lives of seriously ill and injured patients.

Significant health risks continue to increase due to the lack of access to clean water, hygiene kits, and sanitation facilities including a surge in acute respiratory infections (currently exceeding 990,000 cases), diarrheal illnesses (577,000 cases), acute jaundice syndrome (107,000 cases) and skin infections.

Ceasefire: In Gaza, the violence has resulted in significant casualties and extensive destruction. Although there have been continuous efforts to negotiate a ceasefire, it is still difficult to bring the conflict to a durable end. A ceasefire is being mediated by several states and international organizations to stop further loss of life.

Recent estimates of casualties in Gaza put the death toll at over 40,000, including civilians and

combatants with Hamas and other Palestinian organizations, according to the Gazan Health Ministry (Shurafa and Frankel). In addition, 92,401 people have been injured in Israel's offensive, which has forced over 85 percent of the population from their homes.



Carroll, Rory, ‘Dozens killed after Israeli airstrikes on Gaza refugee camp’, *Guardian*, 31 October 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/31/dozens-killed-after-israeli-airstrikes-on-gaza-refugee-camp>

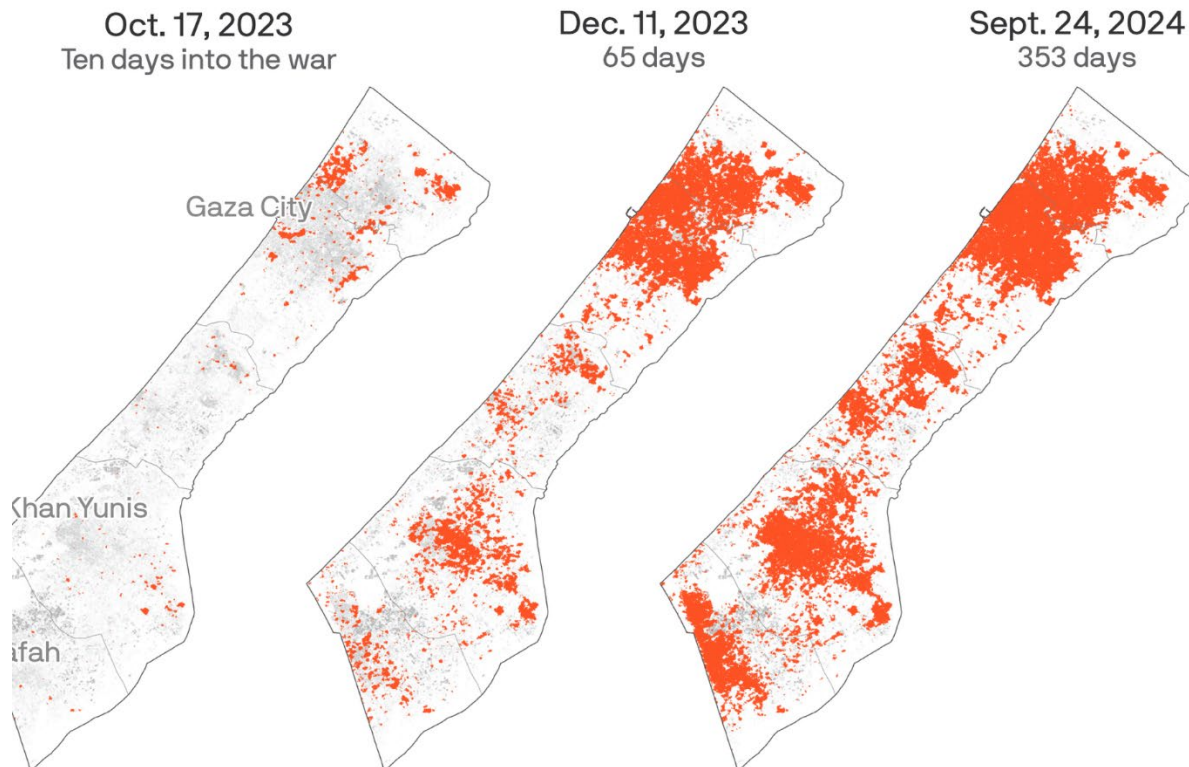
The actual death toll, according to health officials and civil defense workers, is probably thousands higher because many bodies are still buried beneath the debris of buildings that were destroyed by airstrikes. Almost 85% of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have been forced from their homes and have fled the region several times to avoid ground invasions.

Human Rights Violations: On 9 October 2023, Yoav Gallant, Israel’s Minister of Defense, stated, “We are imposing a complete siege on [Gaza]. No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel – everything is closed. We are fighting human animals, and we act accordingly.” (Human Rights Watch). That night, the three Mekorot pipelines supplying water to Gaza were shut off by Israeli authorities. The main source of electricity in the enclave, Gaza, was shut off by Israel on October 7. The Israeli government

continues to largely cut electricity and block entry of fuel and other necessities into Gaza.

Buildings damaged or destroyed in Gaza

Since Oct. 7, 2023



Snyder, Alison, and Erin Davis, 'Mapped: Nearly 60% of Gaza damaged or destroyed in one year of war', *Axios*, 5 October 2024, <https://www.axios.com/2024/10/05/gaza-destruction-map-israel-hamas>

There are increasing concerns about human rights abuses and potential war crimes committed by the Israeli government. According to the Human Rights Watch the "The Israeli government is using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare in the occupied Gaza Strip, which is a war crime". The URW report continues to describe the Israeli forces as purposefully obstructing the supply of fuel, food, and water, as well as obstructing humanitarian aid, and depriving the civilian

population of necessities for survival (Human Rights Watch)

Following the October 7 attacks in Israel, Oxfam and Human Rights Watch have observed or documented that the Israeli authorities have violated international humanitarian law by carrying out indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, imposing collective punishments on the civilian population, depriving the civilian population of necessities for survival, and using civilian starvation as a weapon of war.



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Human Rights Watch recorded multiple strikes at or close to several significant hospitals, including the International Eye Care Center, the Indonesian Hospital, and the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital. Under international humanitarian law, hospitals enjoy protection status from attacks and only lose protection if they are used to carry out "acts harmful to the enemy". Despite the Israel claim that these hospitals were being used by Hamas fighters, the Human Rights Watch found no evidence that would justify depriving the hospitals of their protected status under international humanitarian law (Human Rights Watch).

The use of wide-ranging explosive weapons by Israeli forces in populated areas of Gaza, according to Human Rights Watch and Oxfam, raises concerns about Israel's adherence to the principles of distinction and proportionality in international humanitarian law.

Both the Oxfam and Human Rights Watch have concluded that the Israeli government is using starvation of Palestinian civilians in Gaza as a weapon of war, which is considered a war crime under international law. Israeli authorities are purposefully denying Palestinian civilians in Gaza much-needed aid, including aid from the United States, by limiting humanitarian access. Parties to a conflict are not allowed to purposefully cause "the population to suffer hunger, particularly by depriving it of its sources of food or of supplies," according to international humanitarian law.

Country and bloc positions

Following the October 07th attacks the: the UN Security Council called an emergency meeting to discuss the situation in Gaza, however the members failed to come to a consensus statement. Different countries have different

stands on the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Arab League: While Arab states support humanitarian assistance, an immediate ceasefire, Palestinian independence and the two-state solution, there is considerable difference in specifics. The differing political, religious, and strategic interests in the region are reflected in the differing positions taken by the Arab countries regarding the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Historically, some Arab countries—like Egypt and Jordan—have been crucial in mediating conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and have frequently pushed for a two-state solution and an end to the violence. Egypt has been actively involved in mediating ceasefires, taking advantage of its proximity to Gaza and its diplomatic connections with both Israel and Hamas. In general, these nations denounce Israel's military actions and show support for the Palestinian cause.

On the other hand, Gulf nations such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have adopted a more circumspect stance, particularly considering their recent normalization of relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords. While they have denounced the violence and demanded an end to hostilities, these countries have not fully allied themselves with the Palestinian factions. Their responses are shaped by a precarious balancing act: they must preserve their recently formed diplomatic and economic ties with Israel while also pleasing the predominantly pro-Palestinian public opinion at home and in the region. These nations' positions on the Gaza conflict are further complicated by their shared concern with Israel regarding the alleged threat posed by Iran.

Other Arab nations, like Qatar, have expressed their support for Hamas and the Palestinians more outspokenly. In addition to giving Gaza significant financial support, Qatar has played a significant role as a mediator in previous



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conflicts, frequently mending ties between Hamas and Western nations. Thus, a complex interplay of internal considerations, strategic alliances, and solidarity with the Palestinian cause characterizes the broader Arab response to the conflict. Nonetheless, there is a widespread consensus against the escalation of violence and a call for the protection of Palestinian civilians.

China: Famous for careful diplomacy, China rarely leads on Israel-Palestine issues. Although the People's Republic of China was formally proclaimed in 1949 through a revolution, and it remains sympathetic toward revolutionary movements, China avoids leading on this issue. Instead, it tends to support diplomatic activity of all kinds to reduce tension and guide all sides toward a peaceful solution. China supports the Two-State Solution. In the Security Council it makes diplomatic proposals, but usually votes with the majority outright, or sometimes abstains. It generally avoids voting with the United States, preferring to follow Russia and the Non-Aligned Movement or abstain.⁴

European Union (EU): The 27 member States of EU, including Security Council Permanent Member France, regard the issue of Gaza as the most difficult facing the UN and the international community. EU Members are divided. Several strongly support Palestinian self-rule, the Two-State Solution, and unconditional humanitarian assistance, led by Spain. Other countries like Germany, Italy and Poland tend to support Israel and are skeptical of Hamas leadership, but wish to reduce Palestinian suffering and support the Two-State Solution. Others, especially in Northern Europe, try to avoid political aspects and support humanitarian

assistance, which guarantees it is not used as a cover for weapons transfers.

Iran: the Iranian government has long supported Hamas (Maizland). Iran's position is opposed to that of the U.S. Iran, a longtime ally of Hamas and other Palestinian groups, has denounced Israel's military activities and offered material, financial, and rhetorical support to Hamas. Iran views the conflict as a part of a larger campaign in the Middle East against what it considers to be Western and Israeli imperialism. Iran's involvement inflames tensions with Israel and its allies, which include the United States and certain Arab states, in addition to escalating the conflict, complicating the dynamics in the area

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM): The 137 Member States of the UN's largest voting bloc generally support Palestinian independence and self-rule, under the Two-State Solution. Most NAM Member States, including most countries of Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and much of Latin America, gained their independence through revolutionary movement. This makes them sympathetic to other revolutionary struggles. There are exceptions, such as their indifference to similar situations like Kurdish independence or minority groups in Myanmar, but the independence of Palestine is one thing virtually all NAM member states agree on.

The NAM was the source of the most controversial UN resolution ever, equating Zionism—the founding ideology of Israel—with racism, and other resolutions calling Israel a racist state. While some NAM member states are more restrained in their language, they generally agree on the urgency of an immediate ceasefire

⁴ China, Permanent Mission to the United Nations. 'Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Zhang Jun on the UN Security Council Draft Resolution Regarding the Palestinian-Israeli Situation', 25 October 2023, [http://un.china-](http://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/hyyfy/202310/t20231026_11168489.htm)

[mission.gov.cn/eng/hyyfy/202310/t20231026_11168489.htm](http://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/hyyfy/202310/t20231026_11168489.htm) ; Ghafar, Adel Abdel, et al. 'China's Approach to Palestine and Israel: Towards a Greater Role?' Middle East Council on Global Affairs, 16 July 2024, <https://mecouncil.org/publication/chinas-approach-to-palestine-and-israel-towards-a-greater-role/>

in Gaza, complete support for guaranteeing humanitarian assistance without restrictions, and full Palestinian statehood (which would imply the right to important military equipment and build up a formal Palestinian military).⁵



Vassily Nebenzia, permanent representative of Russia to the United Nations, speaks during a meeting of the UN Security Council, 29 March 2022 (AP Photo/John Minchillo, File)

Russia: Russia has taken a balanced stance toward the ongoing conflict in Gaza, aiming to maintain its influence as a major world power while also attempting to maintain a balance with its Middle Eastern neighbors. Russia has been able to position itself as a potential mediator in the conflict because it has maintained diplomatic relations with both Israel and the Palestinian territories. Moscow has consistently urged both parties to resume talks and called for a ceasefire. Moscow often accused the unwavering violence and instability in the region as a result of Western countries' biased support for Israel. Russia's position is also impacted by its larger

geopolitical interests. Russia seeks to expand its influence in the Middle East by promoting a negotiated settlement and denouncing the excessive use of force, positioning itself as an alternative to the United States in the mediation of regional disputes. Russia's involvement in the conflict also reflects its aim to balance out US influence in the area and its strategic alliance with Iran.

United Kingdom: As a Permanent Member of the Security Council, with a veto, the UK has an important role to play on all issues. The UK tries to be associated closely with the European Union and United States, but that often is not possible on issues related to Gaza. The UK is especially supportive of humanitarian initiatives and a ceasefire, although it is less certain about Palestinian self-rule.⁶

United States of America: The United States' long-standing alliance with Israel forms the basis of its stance on the current conflict in Gaza. Israel's right to self-defense has always been emphasized by the US administration. Significant military assistance, such as the supply of cutting-edge defense systems like the Iron Dome, and resolute diplomatic support in international forums like the UN have been two ways in which this support has shown itself. The United States has also been outspoken in its opposition to attempts to undermine Israel's legitimacy internationally, frequently utilizing its veto power in the UN Security Council to thwart resolutions that it believes unjustly singled out Israel.

⁵ Kasasira, Risdell. 'The Non-Aligned Movement calls Israel's war in Gaza illegal and condemns attacks on Palestinians', *Associated Press*, 10 January 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/uganda-non-aligned-movement-israel-gaza-palestinian-22c852bd408cda0a904431d913728f32>

⁶ 'We voted for this resolution as an expression of our determination to end this war, stop the suffering in

Gaza and secure the immediate release of the hostages: UK Statement at the UN Security Council', Gov.uk, 20 November 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-voted-for-this-resolution-as-an-expression-of-our-determination-to-end-this-war-stop-the-suffering-in-gaza-and-secure-the-immediate-release-of-the>



US Ambassador Alternate Representative Robert A. Wood votes against a draft resolution in the UN Security Council calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, 8 December 2023 (Charly Triballeau/AFP)

The U.S. government has simultaneously worked through diplomatic channels to promote ceasefires and has given humanitarian aid to Palestinians impacted by the violence. Washington, however, has taken care to match these initiatives with Israeli security concerns and has frequently refrained from applying strong public pressure to Israel for an early ceasefire unless a more comprehensive diplomatic plan is in place.

Recent United Nations Resolutions

Since the attacks on 7 October 2023, there have been several United Nations decisions and resolutions concerning Gaza. Here is a summary of the key resolutions:

UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/ES-10/21 (27 October 2023). One of the UN General Assembly's first major responses to the violence that had escalated after the October 7 attacks was this resolution. It emphasized international community concerns regarding the humanitarian situation and the urgent need for a ceasefire.

The resolution demanded an immediate, robust, and durable humanitarian ceasefire that would result in the end of hostilities. It also demanded the immediate delivery of humanitarian aid to those impacted in Gaza, emphasizing the preservation of international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians (United Nations).

UN Security Council Resolution 2704 (7 November 2023). The UN Security Council, which has frequently disagreed on matters pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, took a major step forward with this resolution. The adoption of the resolution demonstrated a wider consensus among nations of the necessity of an immediate ceasefire and the provision of humanitarian aid.

The resolution called for unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza, the protection of civilians, and an instant ceasefire between the conflicting parties. It also asked all sides to abide by international humanitarian law and demanded the release of all hostages (UN Security Council). However, the resolution was not implemented.

Security Council draft resolution S/2024/173. The resolution drafted by Algeria calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, demanding that all parties respect international humanitarian law, protect civilians, and end forced displacement in Gaza. It demands the secure, unfettered delivery of humanitarian aid as well as the unconditional release of hostages. The resolution highlights the unification of Gaza and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority, reaffirms support for a two-state solution, and calls for actions to stop further escalation (United Nations). Notably the resolution was vetoed by the US.

UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2735 (2024). The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2735 (2024) to propose a three-phase ceasefire plan to end the war in Gaza. The

resolution was proposed by the US and approved by 14 votes, with Russia abstaining. In addition to several humanitarian steps including the release of hostages, the repatriation of Palestinian prisoners, and the withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from Gaza, it demands an immediate ceasefire as the first phase. The second phase involves a permanent cessation of hostilities and the release of remaining hostages. The third phase focuses on the reconstruction of the Gaza strip. (United Nations)

Some Possible Proposals for Action

Although the UN is already heavily involved in the efforts to resolve the Palestinian Question, the impact results of this involvement are largely limited. The UN power to carry out or execute resolutions is restricted by the veto power of security council permanent members. The question of how much power the UN has is not a new inquiry. However, the current devastating events in Gaza brings back those concerns.

The inability to reach ceasefire agreement through the UN, the lack of consensus, and the constant block of resolution by UN Security Council permanent members, all are challenges that often put UN credibility on the line. Nevertheless, as an international body the UN still maintains prestige and power. Thus, despite the complexity of the international stand on the issue of Palestine the UN has an obligation to abide by its charter to protect Human Rights and seek international peace. Hence, the UN ought to continue its effort to 'end the war in Gaza and protect Palestinian civilians. The following is a plan of immediate and long-term actions that the UN Security Council should through which the UN could seek end the war in Gaza and establish peace in the region:

Immediate Humanitarian Cease of Fire:

Establish an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to save civilian lives and allow humanitarian relief.

- Call for an urgent UN Security Council session to pass a resolution for a 72-hour humanitarian ceasefire. This is the basic proposal debated several times in the Security Council and consistently vetoed by the United States. Can the other Security Council member states develop incentives and guarantees that will persuade the United States to support such a measure?
- Involve regional and international mediators such as Egypt, Qatar, and the US to broker agreements with both parties.
- Deploy UN-monitored teams to oversee ceasefire compliance and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid. A major problem will be finding countries willing to supply personnel—peacekeepers—to supervise in a situation where mission failure and return to war is a constant risk. Personnel also must come from countries trusted enough by both sides—Israeli and Palestinians, as well as border governments like Egypt and Jordan—to win acceptance by all sides.

Humanitarian Access and Support

- To supply aid to Gaza, establish a large international humanitarian corridor under UN supervision. This might require measures to assure that humanitarian aid does become a route for weapons transfers, a key demand of Israel and the United States.
- Involve Israel and neighboring countries Egypt and Jordan to open all the crossings and allow unlimited access of humanitarian aid. Again, opening border crossings might require measures to assure they do not become a route for

weapons transfers, a key demand of Israel and the United States. Another question is Palestinian access to Israel territory for employment and medical care, something opposed by the Israeli government, deeply unpopular with Israeli public, who fear it will permit new suicide attacks and attacks like 7 October 2023.

- Encourage countries to increase donation efforts, increasing funding for UNRWA and humanitarian aid dedicated to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Hostage Release Mutual Agreement

- Establish a neutral negotiation process under UN auspices, with mediators from governments willing to engage both sides, Hamas and Israel, in hostage exchange agreement. Possible mediators are Norway and Switzerland. Whether further progress is dependent on hostage release would have to be agreed. For Israel, this could be absolutely essential. Hamas may be equally determined to refuse.
- Ensure the safe and immediate return of hostages from both sides. A first step might be permitting the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to determine how many—if any—hostages held by Hamas remain alive. Hamas will want to ensure the releases of its prisoners held in Israeli prisons.

Framework for Long-Term Peace

- Resume peace negotiations that:
- Reaffirm support for a two-state solution, determining whether a Palestinian state would have full sovereignty, including borders

guaranteed by the international peacekeepers or by its own military.

- End Israeli settlements and Gaza and the West Bank. This could require financing new homes and providing financial compensation for the half-million Israelis living there.
- Allows the return of Palestinian refugees. This will require specifying where they are to go, which land, especially the problem of land claimed by Palestinians but since 1948 part of Israel.

Alternatives: If the Security Council cannot agree on the requirements of a multi-step peace formula, there are more modest approaches it can consider.

Send the issue to the UN General Assembly.

When the Security Council is deadlocked, the General Assembly can take up the issue. The guaranteed majority in the General Assembly of Non-Aligned Countries, sympathetic to Palestinian sovereignty and independence, makes the outcome of General Assembly action predictable. A major limitation on the general Assembly is its lack of power. GA resolutions only establish UN goals, they cannot demand action. To be effective, they would require the cooperation of Israel and its supporters, which seems unlikely.

Be ‘heroic’. If agreement in the Security Council is impossible, a majority of Member States may decide they can act in ways that do not require winning a vote. Often, losing a vote is desirable. It allows the sponsors to posture, to look heroic, to signal their support of their friends and allies, and to isolate their opponents. A strongly worded resolution that has no chance of passing might be their preferred alternative.



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