

Role of United Nations for peace with special references to the Israel-Palestine Conflict

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Abstract: This study seeks primarily to discuss and analyze the role of the United Nations in the Israel-Palestine conflict from 1947 to present day in finding a resolution of the issues raised by the Israel-Palestine conflict. These issues are as diverse as might be expected from the history of the conflict. The principle issues are: the establishment of the Zionist State of Israel, which created the problem of Palestinian refugees; the status of the City of Jerusalem and protection of the holy places in Palestine; freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Straits of Tiran; right of self-determination for the Palestinian people who have been pushed around and kicked about with scant respect in the political game; and the authority and role of the United Nations, which this conflict has thrown into bold relief.

Keywords: *United Nations, Israel, Palestine, Conflict, Resolution.*

Of all the troublesome problems in the world, none has engaged the attention of the United Nations more, for a longer time, and with less success than the Israel-Palestine conflict. The Israel-Palestine conflict is practically as old as the United Nations. A major part of the history of the United Nations is thus a history of the Israel-Palestine conflict. And yet no conflict threatens as sure to spark a global nuclear war with all its catastrophic consequences for mankind today as the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The United Nations have had since 1947 been dealing with the Palestine problem, under the cover of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, despite its efforts to resolve the conflict there have been four major wars in the region, and the situation looks as grim and explosive today as ever. Indeed new factors --- political, economic, psychological and human --- have entered the picture, so that we have in West Asia, one of the most complicated of contemporary conflicts.

Origin of the problem:

Following the First World War, Great Britain appointed the occupying power under the League of Nation's Palestine mandate, proceeded to implement policies that contributed to escalating hostilities between the native Arab and immigrant Jewish communities. After World War II, the League of Nations was replaced by the UN, which assumed authority over the League's Mandates. Britain unable to reconcile its conflicting promises to both the Arab and Jewish community, sought to extricate itself from the situation, it had helped to create by requesting that the UN take up the question of Palestine. Thus, in May 1947, the UN General Assembly considered and adopted a resolution establishing the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to investigate and make recommendations.¹

At that time, the UN consisted of 55 members, (no representatives from any Arab nations were included in UNSCOP), however, whose membership comprised Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay and Yugoslavia. Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia requested that Britain's mandate be terminated and Palestine's independence recognized, but this motion was rejected.²

The population of Palestine at the end of 1946 was about 1,846,000 more than two-thirds of whom were Arab and one-third Jewish. While the growth in the Arab population was due to natural increase, the growth of the Jewish population was mainly the result of immigration, which was supported by British policy. Arabs constituted a majority and owned more land than Jews in every district in Palestine, including Jaffa, which included Tel Aviv. According to the UNSCOP report, the Arabs were in possession of about 85 percent of the land, compared to only about 5.8 percent owned by Jews.³

Despite these facts, the majority of UNSCOP recommendation was that Palestine should be partitioned into two states, with the majority Arabs surrender land to the Jews for their state. Under the proposal, 45 percent of the land would be in the Arab state, compared to 55 percent for the Jewish state.⁴ UNSCOP explicitly rejected the right of the Palestine Arabs to self-determination, stating that this principle "was not applied to Palestine, obviously because of the intention to make possible the creation of the Jewish National home there". Arab representatives had proposed a unitary Palestine with a democratic constitution guaranteeing full civil and religious rights for all citizens and an elected legislative assembly that would include Jewish representatives, UNSCOP dismissed this as "an extreme position."

India, Iran and Yugoslavia dissented from UNSCOP's majority recommendation for partition, supporting instead the alternative proposal, which was, they observed, "in every respect the most democratic solution" and most in harmony with the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations". Arab representatives naturally also rejected the proposed partition plan. After receiving UNSCOP's report, the General Assembly established another committee that similarly rejected the majority recommendation as being "contrary to the principles of the [UN] Charter, "pointing out that the UN had no authority to "deprive the majority of the

people of Palestine of their country and transfer it to the exclusive use of a majority in the country." The new committee likewise proposed that the Independence of Palestine instead be recognized.⁵

Nevertheless, on November 29, 1947, by a vote of 33 in favor, 15 against, and 10 abstentions, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, which recommended that the majority UNSCOP plan be implemented. The non-binding resolution was referred to the Security Council --- where it died. It is important to emphasize that, contrary to popular myth; the UN, neither created Israel, nor conferred upon the Zionist leadership any legal authority for its unilateral declaration on May 14, 1948 of the existence of the state of Israel.

Indeed, the US ambassador to the UN, Warren Austin, observed that the only way the UNSCOP plan could be implemented would be through the use of force, and that the Security Council had no such authority to enforce the partition of Palestine. He further noted that the expectations of the termination of the Mandate and withdrawal of the British from Palestine "would result, in the light of information now available, in chaos, heavy fighting and much loss of life in Palestine". On the other hand, Austin agreed, the UN did have authority to take action, including the use of force, to prevent such a violent outcome. The Council "can take action to prevent a threat to international peace and security from inside Palestine", he stated, as well as "to prevent aggression against Palestine from outside". He urged the Council: "The United Nations cannot permit such a result. The loss of life in the Holy Land must be brought to an immediate end. The maintenance of International peace is at stake".

The UN, however, did nothing as the Zionist leadership under David Ben-Gurion implemented a campaign of ethnic cleansing, the expulsion of the Arab population being a prerequisite for the creation of a demographically "Jewish State". As Iain Pappé wrote in his groundbreaking book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, "UN agents and British officials stood by and watched indifferently" as Zionist forces systematically attacked major urban centers of Palestine. Similarly, by the end of April, "US representatives on the ground were by now fully aware of the expulsions that were going on".

By the time, the British Occupation came to an official end on May 14, 1948; a quarter of a million Palestinians had already been expelled from their homes by Jewish military forces. The same day, the Zionist leadership issued its unilateral declaration of the existence of Israel, which falsely cited UN General Assembly Resolution 181 as having granted legal authority for the establishment of their "Jewish State".⁶

The United Nations played role after the partition:

From the start, once Israel was created and on its way to stability, the UN was largely excluded from the politics of the issue. UN peacekeepers were stationed on the Israeli-Egyptian border and the UN Refugee Works Agency (UNRWA) was established to provide for the refugees until such time as they would return home, but there was little involvement of the UN as an institution in political decision-making. That process was largely dominated by the Security Council's powerful permanent members --- and by the time of the Palestine war 1948-49 and 1967 wars, the US, France, Britain and the Soviet Union were in charge.

The UN and the Palestine War of 1948-49:

The Zionists proclaimed the State of Israel on their way on 14 May 1948. The United States extended its de facto recognition to the new state on the same day. The Soviet Union extended its de jure recognition three days later. The forces of five Arab States --- Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Iraq---moved half-heartedly across the borders of Palestine on 15 May. Widespread fighting occurred between Arab and Israeli forces, the most intense fighting being in the Jerusalem area. As the Arab armies were on the point of entering Tel-Aviv, on 22 May, the Security Council adopted a resolution (S/749) calling upon "all governments and authorities without prejudice to the rights, claims or positions of the parties concerned, to abstain from any hostile military action in Palestine, and to that end to issue a cease-fire order to their military and paramilitary forces."⁷

Earlier, Israel has turned to the Security Council for help. The Soviet Union, the United States and UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie had upheld Israel's charge that the Arabs had started an "aggression." Trygve Lie had urged the Security Council and the Member states of the United Nations to take whatever action was necessary, including sanctions against the Arabs.⁸

In their reply, the Arab representatives attacked Israel. At the same time they also defended their own actions, they argued as follows. The partition resolution became a dead letter when the General Assembly dissolved the Palestine Commissions that it had set up earlier to implement the resolution. Britain's surrender of the mandate, therefore, had restored Palestine Commissions to its inhabitants, who had the right to take whatever decision they might think fit for their own future. The Arab League a "regional arrangement under Article 52 of the Charter", had first tried to settle the Palestine problem peacefully.⁹ when it failed in its efforts, it accepted the invitation of the people of Palestine to help them in defending themselves against Zionists "aggression" and to restore order in the country. As a regional organization, it was supremely interested in the maintenance of peace in the region. Moreover the Zionists had "aggressive" and imperialistic intentions in the Arab East and threatened all Arab states. Arab armed intervention in Palestine was, therefore, both necessary and "lawful."¹⁰

After the strong diplomatic and political lobbying and in the face of pressures from the US and other countries and increasing agitation in the Security Council for a stronger cease-fire resolution, the Arabs finally accepted the resolution.

In sum, if one looks at the performance of the UN during this crucial period (1947 to July 1949), one is convinced that the world organization failed to accomplish the role it ought to have played. First, the Arabs remained unconvinced of its competence to pass any resolution. Later, after getting what they had wanted the Zionists developed almost a total hostility. All those affected the prestige of the world body. The responsibility might perhaps have been shared by the Big Powers, but because of inter-bloc rivalry and lack of vision, they exploited the platform for their own petty selfish ends. The consequences were that Arab-Israeli hostility increased. Their differences remained unresolved. The world, which had just managed to survive a bloody war unparalleled in the history of mankind, did not feel encouraged to see how the UN was serving the cause of peace. If the UN gave refuge to a million Jews on the one hand, it deprived two million Palestinians of their rights to self-government and made them refugees almost permanently.

From the Armistice to the Suez War:

The unwillingness on the part of the Arabs as well as the Israelis accept the partition plan, the establishment of Israel, and the Arab-Israeli War created certain basic problems which the UN was not able to solve. The problem of boundaries was the most important of these problems. The frontier between Israel and the Arab states were determined solely on the basis of the positions taken by the forward troops of the opposing armies at the time of the cease-fire. Israel's frontiers with Jordan (329 miles) and with Egypt (164 miles) were particularly vague and confusing. Indeed, they soon proved to be the most turbulent of borders during the post-war era.¹¹

On 11 September 1956 after the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, President Gamal Abdel Nasser released the non-Egyptian employees of the Company from the obligation to remain any longer at their posts. This resulted in the withdrawal of about a hundred pilots. Next day Britain and France moved a resolution in the Security Council calling attention to "the situation which, if allowed to continue, would institute a manifest danger to peace and security."¹²

On 29 October 1956 Israel attacked Egypt, its aim, being the elimination of Fedayeen bases in Egyptian territory. Within a week, Israeli forces had occupied the Gaza Strip and the entire Sinai Peninsula, including Sharm el-Sheikh on the Gulf of Aqaba.

On 30 October the Security Council considered a US draft resolution, which charged Israel with "violating the armistice agreement between Egypt and Israel" and called on Israel immediately to withdraw its armed forces behind the established (1949) armistice line.¹³ Britain and France, however, vetoed the resolution. The Soviet representative thereupon declared: "This has been a black day for the Security Council confronted with an act of aggression, perpetrated against a State Member of the United Nations; the Security Council has shown itself to be incapable of action."¹⁴

In the light of these developments Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the UN, forcefully asked for the support of all members of the UN. He made it clear that unless all members respected all articles of the Charter the Secretary-General could not undertake his responsibility as a servant of the world body. Deadlocked in the Council, the issue went to an emergency session of the General Assembly. For the first time the Assembly met to consider an emergency situation resulting from a deadlocking of the Security Council through use of the veto. The General Assembly deliberated from 1 to 10 November 1956. The Indian representative, Arthur Lall, took the lead in condemning the aggression of Egypt by the armed forces of Britain, France and Israel. He said:

"We demand of the nations concerned that they immediately seek to pursue their interests only through the measures allowed to them by the Charter and sanctioned by all codes of civilized and humane behavior. It is with these feelings and with a deep sense of urgency that we ask this assembly to act immediately and to adopt the draft resolution before it."¹⁵

On 2 November 1956 the Assembly adopted a resolution --- General Assembly Resolution 997 (ES-1) --- by a majority unprecedented in the history of the UN --- 64 to 5.¹⁶ The resolution, which was sponsored by the US. In pursuance of the resolution to the Secretary-General reported that the Governments of France and Britain wanted urgent police action to stop the hostilities which were now threatening the Suez Canal and to prevent the resumption of hostilities as also to pave the way for a definitive settlement of the Arab-Israeli war, which threatened the legitimate interests of so many countries.

On 22 December the Anglo-French forces completed their withdrawal, and United Nations Emergency Forces (UNEF) contingents moved in and took up positions. Since the forces of Israel did not withdraw, the General Assembly passed another resolution, General Assembly Resolution 1123 (XI) of 19 January 1957, requesting the Secretary-General to continue his efforts for securing such withdrawal.¹⁷ By another resolution, General Assembly Resolution 1124 (XI) of 2 February 1957, it deplored Israel's failure to complete withdrawal of its forces and called upon it to do so without any further delay.¹⁸ It adopted yet another resolution General Assembly Resolution 1125 (XI) of the same date, calling upon the Governments of Egypt and Israel scrupulously to observe the provisions of the General Armistice Agreement between them of 24 February 1949 and recognizing that, after full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sharm el-Sheikh and Gaza areas, the maintenance of the armistice agreement required the placing of the UNEF on Egyptian-Israeli armistice demarcation line.¹⁹ On 7 March 1957 the Israeli forces withdrawal from that area.

The Decade of UNEF:

For about a decade (from 1956 to 1967) after Suez War the Arab-Israeli armistice lines remained relatively quiet and the reputation of UN stood very high after the crisis. It had brought an end to the military intervention of two Colonial Powers within a few days and had forced Israel to withdraw all its troops from Egyptian territory. It had created the UNEF, which not only managed the post-

crisis situation, particularly in November 1956, but also stayed on for a decade to ensure stability in the frontier between Egypt and Israel. Whereas the duty of the UNEF was to observe the implementation of the agreements of 1949, task of UNEF was heavier; it had to maintain peace and supervise the boundaries. Its task was rendered especially difficult when Israel refused it permission to station its forces to be stationed on the Israel side of the demarcation lines.²⁰ However, the situation was certainly better than it was prior to 1956, and the presence of UNEF units on the Gulf of Aqaba and at Sharm el-Sheikh on the Straits of Tiran ensured that the Straits would remain open for all ships, including Israeli ships. Although the maintenance of the UNEF cost of tremendous lot of money, the General Assembly voted its continuance year after year. The countries of the Soviet bloc said that the UNEF was illegal and made no contribution to the cost of maintaining it. The Arab states made no comment on the legality or otherwise of the UNEF. They withheld payment all the same, saying that the "aggressors" should bear the cost. No grave incidents took place for the ten years following the Council debate.

However, the Arab-Israeli conflict continued to receive attention from the UN through all of 1956-67. Nature of the cease-fire between Israel on the one hand and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria on the other, was the focal point of the deliberation in the UN.

The United Nations and June War:

In 1966 the US had begun providing Israel with new advanced planes and missiles. Describing the new US's strategy in the Middle East. James Feron wrote in the New York Times (11 June 1966), that the "US has come to the conclusion that it must rely on a local power --- the deterrent of a friendly power --- as a first line to stave off America's direct involvement. Israel feels she fits this definition." The Cold War had come to the Middle East, and the UN was out of the loop.

Over the next month tensions increased between Israel and each of the surrounding Arab states. In April 1967 there were artillery exchanges between Israel and Syria. The US Six Fleet remained on maneuvers off the Syrian coast. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser symbolically asked the UN to move its observers, then inside Egyptian territory to the Israeli border. The UN told him he could not ask for UN troop movement his choice was only to demand complete removal of the UN troops, or to leave them where they were. Under pressure from other Arab governments, and unwilling to back down. Nasser demanded the withdrawal of all UN troops from Egypt. On May 23 Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. The rhetoric escalated, and in early June Israel attacked Egypt, destroying virtually all of Cairo's air force on the ground.

This Six Day War occupied the remaining part of Palestine, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, plus the Syrian Golan Heights and the Egyptian Sinai. Two hundred fifty thousand more Palestinians were forced into exile, and a million more were under Israeli Military occupation. After 1967 US willingness to rely on Israel vastly expanded and relations with the Arabs would be secondary to the emerging US-Israeli alliance.

But a different international consensus took shape in the UN following the June War and Israel's subsequent occupations. Resolution S/242 began with a statement emphasizing "the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security."²¹ While referring to the Palestinians only in the context of refugees rather than reaffirming their national rights, the resolution unequivocally called for "the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict." The resolution was drafted largely by the four powers of the Security Council --- the limited reference to Palestinian rights was a reflection of US influence on the process. And for another two years or so, the same powers operated within the UN to shape the direction --- and the limits --- of Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy.

In sum, this proves that the UN had no solution to offer. It was incapable of being used as an instrument of justice. Indeed the incapacity of the UN increased during this period (June 1967-September 1973). This incapacity threatened to freeze the Arab-Israeli conflict on account of the "State of no war no peace." In the circumstances, the Arabs were left with no alternative but to attack Israel.

The October War of 1973 and after:

The fourth Arab-Israeli war started on 6 October 1973, the Egyptian and Syrian armies simultaneously attacked Israel to get back the territories that they had lost in June 1967. The Security Council met ten times between 8 and 27 October to consider the West Asian situation. On 7 October the US representative, John Scali, requested (S/11010) a meeting in accordance with Article 24 of the UN Charter, which confers primary responsibility for the maintenance of International peace and security on the Security Council. Sir Donald Maitland, the UK representative, said that the Council had two immediate responsibilities, via to issue an urgent call for a cessation of the fighting and to treat the tragic events as a catalyst for accelerating the pace of the diplomatic process and achieve a lasting peace.²²

The debates in the Council remained inconclusive till 20 October. Nothing tangible in the form of a cease-fire resolution was achieved, chiefly because of lack of consensus among members. At the same time, no initiative was taken to persuade either side to cease hostilities. Indeed there prevailed a feeling of frustration in the UN over the world body's inability to influence events. At last on 21 October, the US and the Soviet Union presented a joint resolution containing the basis of a cease-fire. This resolution was adopted as Resolution 338 (1973) by a vote of 14 to nil.²³ (China did not participate in the vote). The resolution called upon the parties concerned to stop the fighting, to cease-fire and terminate all military activity within twelve hours and in the positions these parties occupied at the time of the adoption of the resolution. The Council also called upon them to start implementing Resolution

242 (1967) in all of its parts immediately. It called for negotiations between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices with a view to establishing a just and durable West Asian peace.

Thus, the procedures of a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict following the October War did not originate in the UN. Nor did they result from any initiative that the UN took as an international organization independently, of the will of its members or the effective major powers in it. They were formulated by the two Super Power outside the international organization. The UN was only the organizational framework in which those Powers exercised their role.

The UN during the Oslo Peace Process:

Throughout the late 1980s and into the 90s, Israel-Palestine diplomacy lay squarely at Washington's door. The UN remained excluded, with the exception of a series of condemnations of various specific violations of International law and UN resolutions inherent in Israeli's actions as an occupying power in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. By 1994, after the Oslo Declaration of Principles has been signed, then-Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright wrote in a letter to the General Assembly that the US goal for that year was to make existing UN resolutions on the Israel-Palestine conflict irrelevant, since bilateral negotiations were underway.

In 1996 Israel's "Operation Grapes of Wrath" in Lebanon included the bombing of a United Nations refugee center in Lebanon, killing 106 civilians sheltering there and wounding several UN peacekeepers.²⁴ The release of a UN report, which the US had worked hard to keep secret, proving Israeli knowledge of the center, caused enormous international anger towards Israel in UN circles.

But as the Oslo "peace process" wound on in inconclusive fits and starts, the UN remained sidelined. Other international actors --- notably the European Union and Japan, were encouraged by the US to pay billions of dollars towards the costs of Oslo's infrastructure, but were similarly excluded from political decision-making.

The Camp David Summit & the UN:

By the summer of 2000, Oslo's five-year "interim period" had stretched to seven. No progress was insight on the major issues (a Palestinian state and its borders, Jerusalem, settlers, refugees) and little progress had been made on the "easy" issues that were supposed to be resolved already (release of prisoners, connecting roads, the Gaza air and seaports, water security arrangements etc). It was in that context the President Clinton convened the two sides, again at Camp David, for intensive talks focused directly on the "final status" issues, at that the UN didn't convene talks. Shortly after Camp David's collapse, Ariel Sharon's provocative walk on the Temple Mount and the killing of several Palestinian demonstrators there the next day, the second intifada began.²⁵

But this time, some of the diplomacy began to look just a bit different. There was the hint, though only a hint, that Washington's iron grip on the diplomatic motion in the region had begun to slip. There was a growing sense, in the region and internationally, that the US could no longer maintain its historically absolute control over Middle East negotiations. Other forces --- regional and international --- are suddenly thrust into center-stage. And suddenly UN Secretary General Kofi Anan was not only on the scene, but serving as at least titular centre of negotiations during the weeks leading up to the Sharm el-Sheikh "ceasefire summit."²⁶

The Americans were still in charge, of course. Ambassador Indyk was given a reprieve from his no-access-to-classified-documents-until-you-learn-to-behave scolding. Albright and Clinton both weighed in on a daily, sometimes hourly basis. And more significantly, the participation of other parties, Anan in particular, was harshly constrained by unmistakable US fiat. The UN Chief had already had to "earn" Israel's at least grudging acceptance. It was largely attributed to Annan's role at certifying Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon (despite an unresolved conflict over where to draw the border in the Shaba Farms area), and his behind the scenes efforts to convince the European countries to accept Israel, long an outcast from the UN's regional groups, as a member of the Western European and Others (WEOG) in the General Assembly. Membership in such a group is a prerequisite for Security Council consideration and other UN perks. When it came to Annan's participation as a new mediator, Israel's UN Ambassador Yehuda Lancry acknowledged, "It's a new dynamic. I can't say he has a formal track alongside the US sponsorship. But he is much appreciated."²⁷

It remains uncertain whether the UN Secretary-general's personal role will be broadened to create a new, UN-centered peace effort to replace the long-failed Oslo process. Certainly key limits on Annan's role are already visible; his early efforts focused on persuading the Palestinians to accept the US-Israeli terms for a "cease-fire," including giving up their demand for an UN-based international commission of inquiry. On one occasion Annan even referred to hoping for an end to the escalating violence so that "normalcy will be restored," implying, presumably unintentionally, that Palestinian life under military occupation was somehow "normal" if no shooting was going on.²⁸

UN and the Palestinian state:

The PLO's campaign for full member status for the state of Palestine at the UN and have recognition on the 1967 borders received widespread support though it was criticized by some countries for purportedly avoiding bilateral negotiation.²⁹ Netanyahu expressed criticism of the Palestinians as he felt that they were allegedly trying to bypass direct talks, whereas Abbas argued that the continued construction of Israeli-Jewish settlements was "undermining the realistic potential "for the two-state solution."³⁰ Although denied

full member status by the UN Security Council, in the late 2012 the UN General Assembly over whelming approved the de facto recognition of sovereign Palestine by granting non-member state status.³¹

UN and Palestinian refugees:

The problem of Arab refugees from Palestine has loomed large in the Arab-East since 1948. It has been a constant feature of the Arab-Israeli conflict. To the Arabs and the Palestinians in particular it represents the injustice to which the Palestinians have been subjected by the Western Powers and Israel. The Zionists look upon it as symbolizing the Arab refusal to accept the existence of Israel. It has thus proved to be one of the most difficult problems ever to come up before the United Nations, a problem involving more than a million homeless and landless Palestinian people who feel as though they had been condemned and exiled for over to live in misery and bitterness for no fault of theirs.

Although, the Arab states tried to help the refugees as best they could, the number of the destitute was so enormous that they finally referred the problem to the United Nations. The UN General Assembly established a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to supersede the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR). It also provided for the establishment of an Advisory Commission to assist the Director of the Agency in the execution of its program.

But the situation created two distinct problems --- the problem of emergency relief and the problem of permanently re-establishing the homeless people. A relief program was initiated under the supervision of a UN Director of Disaster Relief and with the assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO) and other Specialized Agencies of the United Nations.

The total number of refugees was now growing by more than 30,000 each year. In its report, the UNRWA clearly admitted that only 10 to 20 per cent of the refugees had been able to make themselves reasonably self-supporting. Between 40 to 50 percent were destitute. The rest were partially self-supporting and needed substantial outside aid.

Meanwhile, the General Assembly adopted many resolutions, which extended the UNRWA's mandate for years. The Commission on Human Rights also adopted resolutions deploring Israel's policy of violating the basic human rights of the inhabitants of the occupied territories and condemning specific Israeli policies and practices in those territories.

Although, the Arab-Israeli conflict from 1948 to present day vastly complicated all these efforts. At the same time it also gave rise to the hope that a new climate of opinion might be a climate created, a climate in which genuine solutions might emerge. However, the objective must be to help the Arab refugees of Palestine to become productive and to enable them to live as fully accepted citizens. Their greatest needs are political identity, economic; security, and social acceptance.

UN and the Current Situation of the Conflict: Israel, the Palestinian territories, and the Palestine-Israel Conflict:

Following several years of unsuccessful negotiations, the conflict re-erupted as the second Intifada on September 2000.³² The violence, escalating into an open conflict between the Palestinian National Security Forces and the Israel Defense Forces, lasted until 2004/2005 and led to approximately 130 fatalities. Israeli Prime Minister Sharon decided to disengage from Gaza.³³ In 2005, Israel removed every soldier and every Jewish settler from Gaza. Israel and its Supreme Court formally declared an end to occupation, saying it "had no effective control over what occurred" in Gaza. In 2006, Hamas took power by winning a plurality of 44% in a Palestinian parliamentary election. Israel responded it would begin economic sanctions unless Hamas agreed to accept prior Israeli-Palestinian agreements, forswear violence, and recognize Israel's right to exist.³⁴ Hamas responded with rocket attacks and an incursion into Israeli territory using underground tunnels to kidnap Gilad Shalit.³⁵ After internal Palestinian political struggle between Fatah and Hamas erupted into of Gaza (2007), Hamas took full control of the area in 2007, Israel imposed a naval blockade on the Gaza Strip, and co-operation with Egypt allowed a ground blockade of the Egyptian border.³⁶

The tensions between Israel and Hamas, who won increasing financial and political support of Iran, escalated until late 2008, when Israel launched operation Cast Lead (the Gaza War). By February 2009, a cease-fire was signed with international mediation between the parties, though small and sporadic eruptions of violence continued.³⁷

The question of whether Gaza remains occupied following Israel's withdrawal remains contentious. Israel insists that its full withdrawal from Gaza means it does not occupy Gaza. The UN has taken no position over whether Gaza remains occupied. Palestinian leaders insist that the Israeli decision, following attacks from Hamas, to impose a weapons blockade of Gaza, Israel's control of Gaza crossing points into Israel, and Israel's control of air above and sea around Gaza constitutes continued Israeli occupation.³⁸

In 2011, a Palestinian Authority attempt to gain the UN membership as a fully sovereign state failed. In Hamas-controlled Gaza, sporadic rocket attacks on Israel and Israeli air raids still take place.³⁹ In November 2012, the representation of Palestine in the UN was upgraded to a non-member observer state, and mission title was changed from "Palestine (represented by PLO)" to state of Palestine).

However, after nearly seven decades of conflict, peace between Israel and the Palestinians remains elusive. The longer the conflict persists, the more intractable it will become. Those Israeli and Palestinians who wish to have it all are dangerously misguided and will ultimately condemn any prospect for peaceful coexistence.

The new international efforts led by the US and the EU to resume the peace negotiations must not lose sight of the popular demand of the majority on both sides to live in peace, because on their own, they will come to terms with one another. The regional turmoil must not forestall the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; on the contrary, it should serve as the catalyst that could end one of the longest conflicts in modern history.

US keep the UN out all those years:

US effort to sideline international law and bypass the UN is not new. To maintain absolute control over the diplomatic process required US's assertion of raw unilateral power, since it meant sabotaging existing international understandings. Since Israel's 1967 occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, those understandings included the nearly unanimous international consensus on how to resolve the crisis: an international conference based on international law and UN resolutions. But since 1967 Israel disagreed, and the US backed Israel's rejection.

The US, while referring to resolution 242 as the ostensible basis of its own "peace process," kept Israel-Palestine diplomacy under its own control. Washington claimed the role of the "honest broker" while proudly asserting its continuity as Israel's major financial, diplomatic and military backer. The actual requirements of International law (like Israel's obligations under the Geneva Conventions as an occupying power to protect civilians and to prohibit settling Israel citizens in occupied territory) and existing UN resolutions were sidelined in favor of US-brokered "even-handed" talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

In the run-up to the 1991 Madrid talks, the US-Israeli Memorandum of understanding stated explicitly that the UN would be allowed no role. In Oslo's 1993 Declaration of Principles, the UN was ignored. By 1994, when the first post-Oslo General Assembly convened, then US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright announced in her annual letter to Assembly members that dissolving the Palestine-related consensus was on top of her agenda. According to her letter, "contentious resolutions that accentuate political differences without promoting solutions should be consolidated (the various UNRWA resolutions), improved (the Golan resolution) or eliminated (the Israeli nuclear armament resolution and the self-determination resolution)." The piece de resistance was the demand that "resolution language referring to 'final status' issues should be dropped, since these issues are now under negotiations by the parties themselves. These include refugees, settlements, territorial sovereignty and the status of Jerusalem." This was, of course, precisely the moment at which those same final status issues were taken off the negotiating table for five, eventually a full seven years. In 1999 when over 100 signatories of the Geneva Conventions met to assess Israeli compliance with the Conventions, the meeting lasted only ten minutes in order according to the Oslo-infatuated PLO delegation, to "avert friction" with Israel's new Labor-led government.⁴⁰ The failed Camp David summit, of course, had ignored the UN altogether.

However, the dawn of the new millennium saw continued conflict fighting Israel and the Palestinians, as well as interference from outside forces, which complicated the conflict to an unprecedented degree. From September 11 2001, World Trade Center attack, to the rise of Hezbollah, to the Arab Spring uprisings in the Middle East, incidents and circumstances in other countries have directly impacted the situation with Israel and Palestinians.⁴¹

But after months of clashes, rising numbers of Palestinian dead, a military occupation and siege tighter than ever, the best hope for a comprehensive and just peace remains a return to UN resolutions, international law, international protection and a new peace process under UN supervision. The Obama administration, particularly its oil industry-linked foreign policy team of Richard Holbrooke, and Gen. Jim Jones has made clear that its Middle East priority have oil and rebuilding ties with the despotic governments of the Arab Gulf.⁴² That bodes badly for Iraq, with a likely effort to escalate the on-going unilateral bombing raids and tighten the already crippling economic sanctions.

But despite such dangerously provocative movements, there could be a moment of hope on the Israel-Palestine front for a new kind of diplomacy. With attention turned towards Iraq, perhaps the Obama administration was less hostile to the possibility of a European, or UN initiative to restarted floundering Israel-Palestine negotiations. Having Secretary-General Ban ki Moon, or even the EU's security coordinator Sebastian Decuyper, Middle East envoy George J. Mitchell, special adviser for Persian Gulf Dennis Ross (who chaired the last-effort before the Israeli elections negotiations) in charge of negotiations instead of unilateralist US Diplomats would certainly raise at least a glimmer of such hope. Only in such a venue is there any possibility that not only the disparity of power, but also the disparity of legitimacy between the two sides, might finally be addressed.

Conclusion:

Since 1947-48 the UN has adopted more than two hundred resolution on the subject of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has taken no action to secure their observance and implementation. Israel has flouted practically all those resolutions with impunity. It is essential to ensure the implementation of those resolutions. If Israel does not comply with those resolutions voluntarily, then coercive action is clearly called for. On several occasions the Security Council has warned Israel that it would take strong action if its directives are not respected and carried out, but it has never carried out any of its threats. Now a time has come when the UN must either uphold the Charter and use coercive means or submit to, or acquiesce in the rule of force. Intervention by the world body is now a political necessity in as much as Israel has not abandoned the gains it has made through military conquests. Without coercion there can be no solution, no restoration of right and justice, no peace in the Arab East. Alternatively the UN should, with the assistance of the International Court of Justice if necessary, reappraise the situation and, regardless of the conditions created by force, lay down a new formula for peace. Such a peace formula should safeguard the rights of the Palestinians and create a Palestinian State.

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