



**2019-2020**  
**Model Arab league**  
**BACKGROUND GUIDE**  
**Palestinian Affairs Council**  
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**National  
Council  
on US-  
Arab  
Relations**



*Original draft by Paul Manville, Chair of the Council on Palestinian Affairs at the 2020 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the*

*National Council on US-Arab Relations*

Honorable Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 2019-2020 Model Arab League and the Council on Palestinian Affairs. My name is Paul Manville, and it is an honor to serve as your Chair. I am a recent graduate from Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia, where I earned my degree in History and Foreign Politics. This marks my fifth year participating in the Model Arab League Program, and I'm looking forward to the insightful discussion and passionate debate that I'm sure you will all bring.

The Council on Palestinian Affairs is an integral part of the Arab League, and the topics below address a variety of issues that continue to plague the region. Your responsibility will be to research and develop solutions to these dilemmas while simultaneously representing the interests and positions of your country. As such, it is absolutely integral that you show up having done your due diligence in researching the politics of your country as it relates to each individual topic, though you might also find it beneficial to research the positions of the other member-states. The team that is most prepared will likely end up performing the best as well.

Take full advantage of the opportunities you have. Speak up often during both moderated and un-moderated caucuses and don't be afraid to share your ideas with the room. The more often you stand up and put yourself out there the more chances you will have to influence the flow of debate and maintain some agency over resolutions that end up written.

Finally, it's sometimes important to remind everyone that this is only a simulation. Resolutions will fail, some ideas won't make it into final drafts, and debate and argument might break out between delegates. As long as you are respectful, 'in-character', and enjoying yourself, you are doing everything you are supposed to.

If you have any further questions you can email me at [ManvilleMAL2020@gmail.com](mailto:ManvilleMAL2020@gmail.com). Good luck with your research, and I look forward to meeting you all at the conference!

Best,

Paul V. Manville

## **Topic I: Establishing guidelines for ensuring free and fair elections within Palestine.**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

#### **A. General Background**

The political sphere of Palestine is currently dominated by two parties that are frequently at odds with one-another. The Palestinian Authority - presently run by Mahmoud Abbas and the Fatah Party - is the internationally recognized representation of Palestine and operates out of Ramallah in the West Bank. In Gaza, Hamas was democratically elected but has now taken control and is the *de facto* government. Hamas is branded a terrorist organization by most Western States, including the United States, the European Union, and Israel.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the military branch is branded a terrorist organization by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and is banned in Jordan.

The last election that saw both Hamas and Fatah participate was the same 2006 election that ultimately caused the demise of the unity government. Though numerous reconciliatory agreements between Fatah and Hamas have been signed over the years, none have amounted to any substantial change or meaningful progress, and relations between the two remain strained, and the representation of the Palestinian people remains divided as ever.

While there is no evidence of direct meddling in the elections of Palestine, countries such as the United States, Russia, Iran, and Israel may have a vested interest in ‘influencing’ the election outcome to their favor, and their attempting to do so in the future is not an

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<sup>1</sup> “Foreign Terrorist Organizations.” *U.S. Department of State*, [www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm).

unrealistic eventuality to prepare for. Protection from foreign tampering should be considered a cornerstone in a comprehensive solution.

## **B. History in the Arab World**

In 2006, Hamas defeated Fatah in parliamentary elections. Following complications wherein Fatah refused to recognize Hamas' victory, they forced Fatah out of the Gaza Strip, seizing control and effectively establishing a second government in the region. The governments have remained divided ever since.<sup>2</sup>

This divide was primarily initiated over a failure to agree on a position towards Israel, with Fatah supporting a diplomatic approach while Hamas emphasized a militaristic solution to the conflict.<sup>3</sup> Since Hamas took control in Gaza, Israel has aggressively held firm against the region, notably launching a blockade on the Gaza Strip in 2007, directly in response to Hamas' actions.<sup>4</sup>

Efforts towards reconciliation and the formation of a unity government have been ultimately lackluster. Agreements were signed three separate times between 2011 and 2014, but each time fell through, with a ranking Fatah member commenting on the dissolution of the 2014 unity government that “this one is weak and there is no chance

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<sup>2</sup> “Timeline: Hamas –Fatah Conflict.” Al Jazeera. May 4, 2011. Accessed July 7, 2019. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/05/2011549435141647.html>

<sup>3</sup> Tahhan, Zena. “Hamas and Fatah: How Are the Two Groups Different?” *Palestine | Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 12 Oct. 2017, [www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/10/hamas-fatah-goal-approaches-171012064342008.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/10/hamas-fatah-goal-approaches-171012064342008.html).

<sup>4</sup> “Gaza Blockade.” *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Occupied Palestinian Territory*, United Nations, [www.ochaopt.org/theme/gaza-blockade](http://www.ochaopt.org/theme/gaza-blockade).

that Hamas will allow it to work in Gaza”.<sup>5</sup> The most recent effort, launched in 2017, appeared initially promising, but has recently faced a number of set-backs, beginning with the resignation of Unity government Prime Minister Hamdallah, a move widely seen as an effort to further politically isolate Hamas.<sup>6</sup> Controversy continued over the agenda taken on by the newly-named Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Mohammad Shtayyeh, who is accused of shunning his counterparts in Hamas.<sup>7</sup>

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

This topic tasks you with developing a framework for future elections within the State of Palestine as a whole, while providing safety measures to protect against potential election tampering from enemies near and abroad. You will need to consider the relevant threats to election security, as well as the political ambitions of Fatah and Hamas. Furthermore, there should be discussion and language that encompasses a framework which ensures that the Arab League does not overstep, but rather use the extent of its capacity to aid Palestine’s political system. The sovereignty of Palestine must be protected under resolutions put forward. Keep in mind that these competing priorities will force you to develop comprehensive policies and resolutions that truly attempt to resolve these long-standing issues.

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<sup>5</sup> “Fatah Official: Palestinian Unity Government on Verge of Collapse.” Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 16, 2015. <https://www.jta.org/2015/06/16/israel/fatah-official-palestinian-unity-government-on-verge-of-collapse>.

<sup>6</sup> “Palestinian President Abbas Accepts PM Rami Hamdallah's Resignation.” *Alaraby*, The New Arab, 29 Jan. 2019, [www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2019/1/29/palestinian-president-abbas-accepts-pm-rami-hamdallahs-resignation](http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2019/1/29/palestinian-president-abbas-accepts-pm-rami-hamdallahs-resignation).

<sup>7</sup> Melhem, Ahmad. “New Government Stresses Unity, Yet Ostracizes Hamas.” *Al-Monitor*, 9 Apr. 2019, [www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/04/new-government-palestinian-hamas-division-israel-elections.html](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/04/new-government-palestinian-hamas-division-israel-elections.html).

Palestine has several likely adversaries interested in tipping the balance of any elections hosted by the state. The United States and Russia both have a proven history of involving themselves in foreign elections, and it is not impossible they would find motivation to do so in Palestine. Ensuring free and safe elections will be questioned by both Israeli and US politicians in the region especially if they believe Hamas had any part in “rigging” elections. Lastly, Iran stands as a rival to much of the Arab League, and might capitalize on an opportunity to exert some influence on regional politics. These potential threats and more must be accounted for in order for successful elections in Palestine to take place.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- What caused previous efforts towards a unity government to fail?
- What are the primary threats to election security in Palestine?
- How have other states protected the legitimacy of their elections?
- What election system would be ideal for the situation in Palestine?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- What incentives will bring both Fatah and Hamas to the table?
- What are the ideological differences between Hamas and Fatah that should be addressed?
- What role will the Arab League play in the facilitation of Palestinian elections?
- What protections are in place to prevent election tampering?

## **IV. Additional Resources**

- [Al-Jazeera - Hamas and Fatah: How Are the Two Groups Different?](#).

*An introduction and history of Hamas and Fatah as of 2017, including key disagreements between the two parties.*

- [State of Palestine Mission to the United Nations - Government of the State of Palestine](#)

*Overview of the government of Palestine from the United Nations. Contains information on Palestine's diplomatic relations, as well as the functions of the State of Palestine and the PLO.*

- [Palestinian Mission in Denmark - Palestinian Government](#)

*The Palestinian Mission in Denmark details the political system within Palestine, including a list of relevant political parties and preliminary details on the specifics of the Palestinian constitution.*

- [Constitute Project - 2003 Constitution of the State of Palestine, with Amendments through 2005.](#)

*The 2003 Constitution for the State of Palestine.*

## **Topic II: Addressing the ongoing blockade against the Gaza Strip, with a focus on mitigating civilian suffering.**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

#### **A. General Background**

The Gaza Strip is a 360 square-kilometer area north of the Sinai and south-east of Israel, that together with the West Bank, it makes up what is considered the modern State of Palestine.<sup>8</sup>

Approximately 1.8 million people live in Gaza, compared to 2.5 million in West Bank, the

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<sup>8</sup> "The World Factbook: Gaza Strip." *Central Intelligence Agency*, Central Intelligence Agency, [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print\\_gz.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print_gz.html).

larger of the two Palestinian territories.<sup>9</sup> Since 2007, Hamas governed Gaza has been administered separately from the West Bank, with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority operating in the West Bank.

Due to Hamas having political control in Gaza, Israel has seen fit to enforce a total blockade on the Gaza Strip, preventing humanitarian aid supplies from being delivered to Gaza. This is compounded by Egypt's simultaneous closing of the Rafah Crossing, the only legal point of entry between Egypt and Palestine, and the only entry-point not directly controlled by Israel. Construction supplies are being outright banned from entry, preventing the citizens of Gaza from rebuilding, while Israel is severely limiting the access of medical supplies creating a crisis wherein easily cured/ managed diseases go untreated.

This decade-long blockade has caused damage to every aspect of life in Gaza. The economy has shrunk to approximately ten percent of what it was prior Israel's enforcement of the blockade, life expectancy and overall quality of life has diminished, and access to basic necessities like food and water has become increasingly limited.<sup>10</sup> If Gaza is to recover, steps must be taken to allow for sustainable regrowth and development, something that is currently impossible with the restrictions in place.

## **B. History in the Arab World**

In 2007, Hamas forcibly took control of the Gaza Strip from Fatah, effectively establishing a second government in Gaza. Deemed a terrorist organization by Israel and Egypt, both

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> "The Gaza Blockade Is Strangling Us." *BBC News*, BBC, 18 Dec. 2018, [www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-46599715/the-gaza-blockade-is-strangling-us](http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-46599715/the-gaza-blockade-is-strangling-us).



countries sought to impose a restriction on the movement of the citizens of Gaza out of fear for potential terrorist attacks. Gaza has remained under blockade ever since. Despite removing all settlers from the region, Israel retained absolute control over Gaza's borders, and has enforced a total maritime, aerial and terrestrial blockade, citing concerns that Hamas will use any openings to continually attack Israel.<sup>11</sup> Egypt, for similar reasons, placed equivalent restrictions on the Rafah Crossing, effectively halting all movement into and out of the Gaza Strip. Though the crossing has been temporarily opened periodically since, a 2014 attack in the Sinai Peninsula has resulted in the crossing remaining under strict closure<sup>12</sup>

Previous humanitarian efforts in the region have largely been met with limited success, as Israel maintains a tight grip on border security and heavily restricts what materials can be brought into the country, even by United Nations aid organizations. Only as recently as February 2018, has Israel officially allow international humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza, but only after it approved the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism's operation within the territory.<sup>13</sup>

In 2015, the actual scope of the crisis in Gaza was made clear to the international sphere, as the United Nations published a report suggesting that if present conditions were upheld, Gaza would eventually become unlivable by 2020.<sup>14</sup> According to OXFAM, less than 4% of

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<sup>11</sup> "Israel-Palestinian Conflict: Life in the Gaza Strip." *BBC News*, BBC, 15 May 2018, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20415675](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20415675).

<sup>12</sup> Benari, Elad. "Egypt Closes Rafah Crossing." *Israel National News*, 15 Feb. 2017, [www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/225012](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/225012).

<sup>13</sup> "Israel Approves International Humanitarian Aid to Gaza, Working with Qatar." *i24NEWS*, 9 Feb. 2018, [www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/167267-180209-qatari-official-says-working-closely-with-israel-to-direct-aid-into-gaza](http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/167267-180209-qatari-official-says-working-closely-with-israel-to-direct-aid-into-gaza).

<sup>14</sup> Linshi, Jack. "Gaza Could Become 'Uninhabitable' by 2020, U.N. Report Warns." *Time*, Time, 1 Sept. 2015, [time.com/4019509/gaza-uninhabitable-unctad/](http://time.com/4019509/gaza-uninhabitable-unctad/).

fresh water is drinkable and hospitals are seeing nearly a 15% yearly increase in the number of patients admitted for kidney problems.<sup>15</sup> Even with Israel's aforementioned agreement to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, Israel has yet to approve all of the materials for the construction of necessary water infrastructure, leaving Gaza in a perpetual water crisis.<sup>16</sup>

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

This is a topic that almost requires addressing Israel in some manner, or forming creative solutions to get around the blockade they have imposed without agitating them in any manner that might result in harsher restrictions placed on the Gaza Strip, or lead to further conflict with the Arab League itself. The political situation within Gaza must also be considered; each state will likely have its own opinion on the legitimacy of Hamas, something that needs to be carefully considered when drafting potential resolutions.

The likelihood of "ending" the blockade "full-stop" is slim to none. Seeing as the root causes of these problems are not likely to be solved by this committee, time might be better spent researching viable ways to instead mitigate the end result of the blockade - alleviating the 'symptoms' of the blockade as best as possible. This will include key issues such as the accessibility of water and building materials, the lack of which is stunting the ability for Gaza to sustain itself. Solving that supply shortage should be a chief priority of the council.

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<sup>15</sup>"Failing Gaza: Undrinkable Water, No Access to Toilets and Little Hope on the Horizon." *Failing Gaza: Undrinkable Water, No Access to Toilets and Little Hope on the Horizon* | Oxfam International, OXFAM, [www.oxfam.org/en/occupied-palestinian-territory-and-israel/failing-gaza-undrinkable-water-no-access-toilets](http://www.oxfam.org/en/occupied-palestinian-territory-and-israel/failing-gaza-undrinkable-water-no-access-toilets).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

## II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What resources are most desperately needed in Gaza?
- What group or groups of civilians are most disadvantaged by the blockade?
- What NGOs can assist in this process?
- What does my country provide for Gaza?

## III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How will these resources be provided? In what quantities, and by who?
- Who will be responsible for the distribution of these resources?
- What role, if any, will Israel play in this solution?
- How does this resolution prepare a more self-sufficient Palestine?

## IV. Additional Resources

- [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Gaza Blockade](#)

*Overview of the Gaza Blockade from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.*

- [Timeline: The Humanitarian Impact of the Gaza Blockade](#)

*OXFAM report on the humanitarian crisis the Gaza Blockade has caused. Accurate as of 2018*

- [The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism](#)

*Breakdown on the specifics of what the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism has accomplished and continues to work towards*

- [Partial List of Items Permitted/Prohibited into the Gaza Strip](#)

*List of items prohibited and permitted into Gaza*

### **Topic III: Developing ways to reduce the mortality rate of non-communicable diseases in occupied territories.**

#### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

##### **A. General Background**

It is indisputable that there exists a medical disparity between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. As of 2013, the rate of child mortality was nearly five times higher in Palestine than it was in Israel, and maternity deaths were twice as high.<sup>17</sup> Among these, non-communicable diseases rate among the deadliest in Palestine, accounting for the majority of premature deaths.<sup>18</sup>

The World Health Organization defines non-communicable diseases as chronic diseases that “tend to be of long duration and are the result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behaviors factors”.<sup>19</sup> This categorization most commonly consists of cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and respiratory diseases.<sup>20</sup>

As said by a report by the World Health Organization and supported by the Palestinian Ministry of Health, over half of all deaths in the Palestinian occupied territories are caused by non-communicable diseases, such as cancer or cardiovascular diseases. Because of a lack

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<sup>17</sup> Leach-Kemon, Katie. “Visualizing Health Disparities in War and Peace: Israel vs Palestine.” *Humanosphere*, 22 Aug. 2014, [www.humanosphere.org/science/2014/08/visualizing-disparities-war-peace-israel-v-palestine/](http://www.humanosphere.org/science/2014/08/visualizing-disparities-war-peace-israel-v-palestine/).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> “Non Communicable Diseases.” *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, 1 June 2018, [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

of proper up-to-date healthcare services, diseases such as these are becoming increasingly common in Gaza and the West Bank.

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the number of patients with non-communicable diseases is increasing at a rate of 5% every year.<sup>21</sup> This dilemma is only exacerbated by the lack of proper medical facilities, especially within Gaza. A study on Palestinian mortality rates found that non-communicable diseases accounted for 62% of premature deaths in the occupied territories.<sup>22</sup>

## **B. History in the Arab World**

Even prior to the enforcement of the blockade in 2007, quality of life in the occupied Palestinian territories was noticeably worse when compared to Israel and much of the Arab world as a whole and conditions have only worsened since then. Throughout the blockade, the Israeli government has maintained a strict list of what supplies are not allowed within Gaza. This list heavily restricts essential medical supplies that would help fight the growing disease crisis in Gaza.

Israel has also sought to restrict ‘medical tourism’ – the practice of travelling outside of one’s country to receive medical procedures or medications that are prohibitively expensive or otherwise unavailable in one’s home country.<sup>23</sup> While it was originally possible to apply for and receive special permission to travel into Israel in case it was medically necessary, the

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<sup>21</sup> “Kuwait Patients Helping Fund Society Donates Medicines to Palestine Refugees in Gaza.” *UNRWA*, 21 May 2017, [www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/kuwait-patients-helping-fund-society-donates-medicines-palestine-refugees-0](http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/kuwait-patients-helping-fund-society-donates-medicines-palestine-refugees-0).

<sup>22</sup> Leach-Kemon, Katie. “Visualizing Health Disparities in War and Peace: Israel vs Palestine.” *Humanosphere*, 22 Aug. 2014, [www.humanosphere.org/science/2014/08/visualizing-disparities-war-peace-israel-v-palestine/](http://www.humanosphere.org/science/2014/08/visualizing-disparities-war-peace-israel-v-palestine/).

<sup>23</sup> Meštrović, Tomislav. “What Is Medical Tourism?” *Medical News Net*, 23 Aug. 2018, [www.news-medical.net/health/What-is-Medical-Tourism.aspx](http://www.news-medical.net/health/What-is-Medical-Tourism.aspx).

practice was ended in 2016.<sup>24</sup> Citing multiple attempted terrorist attacks planned by Palestinian's who were seemingly being transported from Gaza into Israel proper, the Israeli government began rescinding much of the travel approvals it had previously granted, inciting protests from groups that required the additional medical attention..<sup>25</sup>

All of the aforementioned issues compound into a true medical crisis in Palestine. Though the ongoing Gaza blockade serves to exacerbate the dilemma in the region by restricting the flow of supplies in, or patients out, the West Bank is by no means unaffected by this. Following a 2014 attack on Tel Aviv, over West Bank 80,000 travel permits were revoked, and Israel began a regime of stricter movement control over the occupied territories.<sup>26</sup>

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

Perhaps the most successful ongoing program that attempts to combat this predicament is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and their 'Family Health Team' approach. Launched in 2003, the UNRWA established groups of trained medical professionals to travel the West Bank in order to treat Palestinians who would most likely been unable to receive treatment otherwise.<sup>27</sup> According to their 2011 report, upwards of 160,000 people may be treated in a given year.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "Israel Bans Travels by Palestinians after Tel Aviv Attack." *The Iran Project*, 9 June 2016, [theiranproject.com/blog/2016/06/09/israel-bans-travels-palestinians-tel-aviv-attack/](http://theiranproject.com/blog/2016/06/09/israel-bans-travels-palestinians-tel-aviv-attack/).

<sup>25</sup> "Gazan Cancer Patients Protest Israel's Travel Ban." *DailySabah*, [www.dailysabah.com](http://www.dailysabah.com), 11 Oct. 2017, [www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2017/10/12/gazan-cancer-patients-protest-israels-travel-ban](http://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2017/10/12/gazan-cancer-patients-protest-israels-travel-ban).

<sup>26</sup> VOA. "Israel Restricts Palestinian Movement After Tel Aviv Attack." *CitizenTV.co.ke*, Citizen TV, 9 June 2016, [citizentv.co.ke/news/israel-restricts-palestinian-movement-after-tel-aviv-attack-129712/](http://citizentv.co.ke/news/israel-restricts-palestinian-movement-after-tel-aviv-attack-129712/).

<sup>27</sup> "Health in the West Bank." *UNRWA*, United Nations, [www.unrwa.org/activity/health-west-bank](http://www.unrwa.org/activity/health-west-bank).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*

Unfortunately, this solution is far from perfect. For one, it treats the overall symptoms of the issue, not the causes. The UNRWA program does not have any sort of mechanism for creating a more self-sustaining medical sector in Palestine. Just as crucial to note is the limited scope of the program – it has no presence in the Gaza Strip. A comprehensive solution put forth by this committee must consider both the short-term and long-term applications and should ideally be applicable to both the West Bank and Gaza, while doing its due diligence in addressing the root causes of this problem, rather than serving only to mitigate the symptoms.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- How does my country deal with similar diseases?
- What are the most common non-communicable diseases, and how can they be prevented?
- Are there any NGOs that might assist in this process?
- What are the root causes of this issue?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- Will treatment be brought to Palestine, or will Palestinian's be transported to treatment facilities more freely?
- How will progress be monitored and quantified?
- How can this resolution include Gaza in its solution?
- What is the long-term implementation goal within Palestine?

#### **IV. Additional Resources**

- [World Health Organization - Non-communicable Diseases](#)

*World Health Organization overview on non-communicable diseases.*

- [UNRWA in Palestine - What We Do](#)

*Summary of the UNRWA health programs active in Palestine*

- [Aetna International - Health Care Quality in the Middle East](#)

*Aetna providing summaries for health care conditions in numerous states in the Middle East*

- [Health Data - Arab Countries Living Longer, but Battling Chronic Disease](#)

*Contains datapoints on key health indicators, including life expectancy among men and women.*

**Topic IV: Examining mental and psychological health concerns among Palestinians in Gaza, West Bank, and in refugee camps in order to develop methods of detection, prevention, and treatment.**

#### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

##### **A. General Background**

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that approximately one-fourth of the global population suffered from some form of mental illness, the majority of which the WHO considers to be treatable to at least some degree.<sup>29</sup> However, due to an

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<sup>29</sup> "Mental Disorders Affect One in Four People." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, 29 July 2013, [www.who.int/whr/2013/media\\_centre/press\\_release/en/](http://www.who.int/whr/2013/media_centre/press_release/en/).



overwhelming stigma against public discussion or admission of mental illnesses in the Middle East and North Africa, most of these will go untreated.<sup>30</sup> Individuals are forced, consciously or not, to struggle with their mental illnesses in private due to a lack of proper available treatment, and a persistent social stigma against open discussion of mental health.

According to the Humanitarian Practice Network, “mental health disorders constitute one of the largest and least acknowledged health problems in the occupied Palestinian territory”.<sup>31</sup> This issue is only compounded by the above-mentioned lack of adequate medical supplies and staffing in the Palestine, as well as the general aversion to candid discussions of mental health among Arab League member-states.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately this leads to a broader rejection of those deemed mentally unwell, wherein there exists no safety net provided by the state or broader society for those suffering from mental illness. Within this topic you will be tasked with addressing those concerns among Palestinians within the occupied territories and refugee camps abroad.

## **B. History in the Arab World**

Conceptions of mental health in the Middle East have a long history, dating back to the Pharaonic period of Egyptian history, during which mental disorders were frequently attributed to “symptoms of the heart or uterine diseases”, rather than directly connecting

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Afana, Abdel Hamid, et al. “Mental Health Needs in Palestine.” *ODI HPN*, Nov. 2004, [odihpn.org/magazine/mental-health-needs-in-palestine/](http://odihpn.org/magazine/mental-health-needs-in-palestine/).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

mental disorders with concepts of mental health.<sup>33</sup> However, the first recorded mental health hospital in Europe was established in Spain in the 1300's, during Moorish rule.<sup>34</sup> This openness towards mental health came with some caveats, as spiritualism still played a strong role in the contemporary perceptions. Patients were not subjected to torture, unlike their Christian-European counterparts largely out of belief that they may be possessed by Djinn.<sup>35</sup>

This connection between mental wellbeing and religion has far from disappeared in modern Muslim societies, and is a large cause of the stigma that continues to exist today, wherein those diagnosed with mental illnesses are feared to be influenced by supernatural forces.<sup>36</sup> This can be quantified through a study done by the Arab Youth Survey in conjunction with the World Health Organization.<sup>37</sup> The survey “explored attitudes among Arab Youth in 15 countries and territories in [the Middle East and North Africa]” found that roughly two-thirds of those polled would never seek professional help if diagnosed with a mental illness, and that over half felt that finding quality mental-health care was difficult.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Okasha, Ahmed. “Mental Health in the Middle East An Egyptian Perspective.” *Clinical Psychology Review*, vol. 19, no. 8, 1999, pp. 917–933., doi:10.1016/s0272-7358(99)00003-3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Afana, Abdel Hamid, et al. “Mental Health Needs in Palestine.” *ODI HPN*, Nov. 2004, [odihpn.org/magazine/mental-health-needs-in-palestine/](http://odihpn.org/magazine/mental-health-needs-in-palestine/).

<sup>37</sup> Bell, Jennifer. “The Hidden Face of Mental Illness in the Middle East.” *Arab News*, 13 May 2019, [www.arabnews.com/node/1496661/middle-east](http://www.arabnews.com/node/1496661/middle-east).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

Palestinian youth are also largely predisposed to a number of mental health issues. As many as 25% of Palestinian youth have attempted suicide, a similar amount are suffering from depression - the highest in the Eastern Mediterranean - and the PTSD rate is as much as four times that of the United States, with one report quoting the number of children in Gaza suffering from PTSD at 70%.<sup>39</sup> The official response on this phenomenon from the Head of Mental Health Services in Palestine is complicated, arguing that what Palestinian youth are suffering from goes beyond PTSD, as “there is no ‘post’ because the trauma is repetitive and ongoing and continuous”.<sup>40</sup>

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

As you can see, this problem extends beyond a ‘simple’ lack of medical professionals or adequate supplies within the occupied territories. Instead, the issue of mental health awareness and treatment is one with roots deep within Arab history and some cultural practices. Addressing this dilemma will mean grappling with the cultural and societal stigmatism that is by-and-large preventing individuals from having an open discussion on the subject, and by extension propagating the continued lack of treatment that many of these mentally unwell individuals desperately need.

Even in cases where the recognition of mental health issues are present, as in the Mental Health Unit of the Palestinian Ministry of Health, there is some disagreement on how applicable these terms might be to the situation many Palestinians are facing today. Reaching consensus on terminology is likely going to be the first hurdle to overcome in

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<sup>39</sup> “Fatah Official: Palestinian Unity Government on Verge of Collapse.” Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Jewish Telegraphic Agency, June 16, 2015. <https://www.jta.org/2015/06/16/israel/fatah-official-palestinian-unity-government-on-verge-of-collapse>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

pursuit of developing proper solutions. Agreeing on an answer to the dilemma will be significantly more difficult if the body cannot agree on what the issues specifically are in regard to mental health care and treatment.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- How can definitions of mental illnesses be adjusted to reflect the realities of Palestine?
- What can be done to mitigate the root causes of mental illness in Palestine?
- How can Palestine reintegrate the large percentage of mentally unwell youth?
- Does my country have a mental health program that might be translatable to Palestine?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- How does this normalize discussing mental wellbeing?
- What are the early detection mechanisms for mental illness?
- How does this address the connection many Muslim societies place on mental health and religiosity?
- How does this make mental health treatments more easily attainable?

## **IV. Additional Resources**

- [Mental Health Stigma in the Muslim Community](#)

*Article by Ayse Ciftci of Purdue University discussing the stigma of discussing mental health among Muslim communities.*

- [Integrating Mental Health within the UNRWA Family Health Team Model](#)

*UNRWA programme discussing the expansion of their “Family Health Team” project to include mental health and psychosocial support within the West Bank.*

- [Mental Health Services in the Arab world](#)

*Article providing data on the mental healthcare services available in the Arab world. Published 2012.*

- [Center on Human Rights Education - The Hidden Problem of Mental Health in Refugee Camps](#)

*Discusses some of the statistics and specifics of mental health issues in various refugee camps.*

## **Topic V: Examining and developing art, sports and music programs for youth development.**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

#### **A. General Background**

Art, music, and sports are essential parts of any established society. According to a study done by the Guggenheim Museum, students participating in art programs in school scored noticeably higher in areas of literacy and creative/critical thinking compared to their peers who were not involved in any equivalent program.<sup>41</sup> Another study found similar benefits when looking at the benefits of music programs, with participating students maintaining attendance rate, more varied vocabulary, and scored higher in math exams.<sup>42</sup> Finally, a study done on the impact of participating in school sports found that student-athletes had reduced risk of teen pregnancy and juvenile arrest, increased problem-solving skills, and were generally more socially competent, in addition to the obvious health benefits.<sup>43</sup>

At least two organizations are actively working in Palestine to spread music, especially to a younger audience. The first, Sounds of Palestine, draws inspiration from the El Sistema programs of Venezuela, focused on using music to spread social change. Fittingly, the Sounds of Palestine “uses music education as a medium to achieve long term social

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<sup>41</sup> Kennedy, Randy. “Guggenheim Study Suggests Arts Education Benefits Literacy Skills.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 27 July 2006, [www.nytimes.com/2006/07/27/books/27gugg.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/27/books/27gugg.html?_r=1).

<sup>42</sup> Bryant, Sharon. “How Children Benefit from Music Education in Schools.” *NAMM Foundation*, 9 June 2014, [www.nammfoundation.org/articles/2014-06-09/how-children-benefit-music-education-schools](http://www.nammfoundation.org/articles/2014-06-09/how-children-benefit-music-education-schools).

<sup>43</sup> Runyan, Robin. “Benefits of School-Based Sports.” *Global Sports Development*, 12 Sept. 2013, [globalsportsdevelopment.org/2013/09/12/benefits-of-school-based-sports/](http://globalsportsdevelopment.org/2013/09/12/benefits-of-school-based-sports/).

change for the children and families involved”, and maintains programs for children in kindergarten through primary school mean to teach them not only how to play an instrument, but the actual social impact music can have.<sup>44</sup> Another organization that works closely with Sounds of Palestine is Musicians Without Borders. Active in a variety of countries, including Ireland, Kosovo, Uganda, Italy and Palestine, Musicians Without Borders champions a similar cause, spreading musical teaching in the name of community engagement and social change.<sup>45</sup> To that end, Musicians Without Borders - in conjunction with Sounds of Palestine - founded Palestine Community Music in 2008, a collection of programs (including Music as Therapy, and workshops for deaf and special needs kids among others) meant to encourage the use of music in children’s day-to-day life and imparting the social and cultural significance music can have.<sup>46</sup>

However, when budgets get cut these programs are among the first to go, due to the high-cost and general perception of being “unnecessary”. Research shows that ‘comprehensive music education’ can cost schools as much as \$200 per student per year, including salary for teachers and the cost of equipment.<sup>47</sup> Sports programs are similarly expensive, with much of the burden placed on the participating student. A report that focused on American schools found that a student would pay as much as \$300 per year to participate

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<sup>44</sup> “Sounds of Palestine » Programs.” Sounds of Palestine. Accessed August 18, 2019. <https://www.soundsofpalestine.org/programs/>.

<sup>45</sup> “War Divides, Music Connects » History.” Musicians Without Borders. Accessed August 18, 2019. <https://www.musicianswithoutborders.org/eng/about-us/about-us/history/>.

<sup>46</sup> “War Divides, Music Connects » Palestine Community Music.” Musicians Without Borders. Accessed August 18, 2019. <https://www.musicianswithoutborders.org/eng/our-work/programs/where-we-work/palestine/>.

<sup>47</sup> “Study First to Detail the Costs of Comprehensive Music Education.” *NAMM.org*, National Association of Music Merchants, 18 Aug. 2012, [www.namm.org/news/press-releases/study-first-detail-costs-comprehensive-music](http://www.namm.org/news/press-releases/study-first-detail-costs-comprehensive-music).

in school sports, largely as a result of limited budget within the district.<sup>48</sup> These costs could be both higher and lower in Palestine depending on the circumstance, but programs devised by the League could prove beneficial in expanding sport access for Palestinian youth.

## **B. History in the Arab World**

Much of the culture in the Middle East is heavily influenced by its Islamic roots, and music is no exception. Though few sects of Islam employ music directly within their religious practices, with the notable exception of Sufiism, Islam still found its way into local folk music.<sup>49</sup> Islamic music developed various *īqā'āt* - rhythmic modes containing beats of varying intensity - and *maqāmāt* (pitches and melodic motifs with a traditional pattern), various schools of thought for how music should be written and played, and rhythmic patterns that can be modified to create new music.<sup>50</sup> The Middle East is also the birthplace of many instruments, including the harp, tambourine, and oboe, all of which are popular in Middle Eastern music.<sup>51</sup> Contemporarily, 'fusion'-style music, which mixes traditional Middle Eastern instrumentation with Western influences has become popular, exemplified by Lydia Canaan, a Lebanese performer hailed as the "First Rock Star of the Middle East".<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Mostafavi, Beata. "Pay-to-Play May Keep Some Kids Out of School Activities." *Extracurricular Activities: Cost of Sports & School Activities*, University of Michigan -Health, 17 Oct. 2016, [healthblog.uofmhealth.org/childrens-health/pay-to-play-may-keep-some-kids-out-of-school-activities](http://healthblog.uofmhealth.org/childrens-health/pay-to-play-may-keep-some-kids-out-of-school-activities).

<sup>49</sup> "Middle Eastern Music." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1 July 2011, [www.britannica.com/art/Middle-Eastern-music](http://www.britannica.com/art/Middle-Eastern-music).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Salman, Ranim. "Meet the First Lebanese Female Rock Star." *The961*, The961, 23 June 2019, [www.the961.com/people/meet-the-first-lebanese-female-rock-star](http://www.the961.com/people/meet-the-first-lebanese-female-rock-star).



One of the artistic customs more unique to Islamic society was the traditional practice of calligraphy. Encapsulated in the expression “purity of writing is purity of soul”, Medieval and Early Modern Muslim societies such as the Ottomans and Abbasids believed that only “a person of spiritual devotion and clear thought could achieve the skill necessary for this supreme art”.<sup>53</sup> Islamic calligraphy can most directly be contrasted with Christian expressions of art such as murals and manuscript illumination. Calligraphy, rather than murals, evolved as a religious expression in Islam – specifically the artistic transcription of the words of the Quran – due to Islam’s iconoclastic nature not allowing for the depictions of living objects.<sup>54</sup> This rejection of more conventional forms of representation has forced art to become more abstract in its depictions.

In the realm of sports, soccer was introduced into the Middle East by imperialist European forces in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century and has since become the most popular sport in the region. Soccer also has a reputation of being politicized in the region, with many soccer clubs being originally founded on some particular ideology. Around the time of the Arab Spring in Egypt for instance, the competing Al-Ahly and Zamalek consisted of and were especially popular with revolutionaries and pro-monarchists respectively.<sup>55</sup>

Protests on soccer fields have a habit of serving as ‘precursors’ to broader social issues in the region, as seen in Jordan, where anti-corruption protests against the royal family first

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<sup>53</sup> “The History of Islamic Calligraphy.” *Asian Education*, education.asianart.org/explore-resources/background-information/history-islamic-calligraphy.

<sup>54</sup> Gale, Thomson. “Iconography: Islamic Iconography.” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Encyclopedia.com, 2005, www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/iconography-islamic-iconography.

<sup>55</sup> Dorsey, James M. “Soccer’s Impact on Middle East Politics.” *Soccer’s Impact on Middle East Politics - The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 16 Oct. 2013, www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/soccers-impact-on-middle-east-politics.

gained media attention on a soccer field.<sup>56</sup> Simply put, soccer is not only a cultural cornerstone, but has very quickly become a political one as well.

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

Establishing these programs for Palestinian youths is a deceptively complicated challenge you are tasked with. As noted above, the cost can be much higher than anticipated, and one must grapple with the logistical problems, such as finding the proper staffing and facilities for these programs. Lastly, the League must also find a way to encourage enrollment in whatever program it chooses to establish. These projects live and die by their benefit to broader society, so enough people need to participate to ensure new programs are strong and sustainable.

In a country where people regularly struggle to find adequate shelter, food, and drinkable water, the council will have to work particularly hard to properly justify such programs that might be seen as “privileges” that Palestine cannot afford to maintain with the current situation regarding the ongoing blockade and occupation. The primary struggle will be convincing the general public and each other why one program or another is immediately necessary.

Additionally, one should consider the programs that are already in operation. Can the League support their expansion, or would it be better served for the committee to create something

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid

independent of those? Determining where these organizations fit into the solutions this committee comes up will be an important step towards a comprehensive resolution.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- Does my country have any comparable programs?
- What are the average costs of upkeep for similar programs?
- What kinds of incentives can the League offer to encourage governments to adopt these programs?
- How politicized are sports in my country? How can such politicization be encouraged or discouraged as necessary?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- Where are the supplies for these programs going to come from?
- How will appropriate staffing for these programs be determined?
- How will it be determined if these programs are successful?
- How will you raise awareness of and encourage enrollment in these programs?

## **IV. Additional Resources**

- [The Rise and Fall and Rise Again of the Politics of Middle Eastern Soccer](#)

*Discusses the political nature of soccer in the Middle East.*

- [Middle East Studies Association - Resources and Opportunities](#)

*Maintains a list of on-going programs and job-listings that might point delegates towards relevant projects already active in the region.*

- [Aga Khan Music Initiative](#)

*A program focused on supporting “talented musicians and music educators working to preserve, transmit, and further develop their musical heritage”.*

- [Middle East Institute - Arts and Culture Center](#)

*Promotes the work of historic and contemporary Middle Eastern artists. Includes a list of videos, publications, interviews on more discussing the topic of Middle Eastern art.*