



2021-2022

Model Arab League

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Council on Palestinian Affairs

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Original draft by Sam Wolfield, Chair of the Council on Palestinian Affairs at the 2022 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations

Honorable Delegates,

I would like to personally welcome you to the 2021-2022 Model Arab League and the Council on Palestinian Affairs. My name is Sam Wolfield and I am excited to be serving as your Chair. I am a senior at Northeastern University, where I am majoring in international affairs with a minor in Russian and international security studies. This will be my third year participating in the model Arab League Program, and I'm looking forward to seeing both new and old faces in-person this year.

The importance of the Council on Palestinian Affairs cannot be understated. Addressing the issues that plague the Palestinian people has historically united the Arab world, and serves as a source of solidarity to this day. It is your job to research and develop solutions to these complex problems while also representing the interests and positions of your assigned country. In order to participate effectively in this conference, it is vital that delegates have thoroughly studied the topics being discussed and the policy of their country. Unlike other councils, the Council on Palestinian Affairs is not limited to one type of topic and includes social, environmental, political, infrastructural, and security oriented topics. The delegates who take a more holistic approach to their research will have an easier time navigating these issues.

Participation will be key to delegates' success during the conference. Delegates are highly encouraged to speak up often during both moderated and unmoderated caucuses. Just as important as speaking, and often overlooked, is listening. The goal of every delegate should not just be to present their own ideas and solutions, but also to understand the ideas and solutions of others. Delegates who are able to create a constructive dialogue and build consensus through cooperation will enjoy the most success during the conference.

Lastly, I would like to remind all delegates that at the end of the day we are all still just students. This is a learning experience for everyone involved and should be treated as such. Delegates should consider this as they participate and know that they are doing everything they are supposed to do as long as they remain respectful, "in-character", and in good spirits.

If you have any further questions you can email me at wolfield.s@northeastern.edu. Good luck with your research, and I will see you all at the conference.

Topic I: Discussing ways the Arab League can assist the Palestinian Authority in holding presidential and legislative elections.

General Background:

It has been 15 years since presidential and legislative elections were last held in Palestine.¹ In January of 2021 the Palestinian Authority called for legislative elections, which were then scheduled for May 22nd. However, on April 29th, President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority (PA) indefinitely postponed elections. President Abbas cited the refusal of the Israeli government to confirm it would allow voting in East Jerusalem as the primary reason for the postponement. Critics of President Abbas cite an ulterior motive, they claim that Abbas is worried about a repeat of the 2006 elections and that he and his party Fatah will lose ground.

The last election held in Palestine was the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council election. This election saw Hamas win a surprise victory against the incumbent Fatah party and gain 74 of 132 seats in the legislature.² Hamas, a militant nationalist group which has been designated a terrorist organization by many western countries, then formed a government despite Fatah's refusal to join.³ Fighting broke out between Fatah and Hamas, interrupted only by the creation of a failed unity government, and culminated in Hamas seizing control of Gaza from the PA.⁴ Today, Hamas still controls Gaza and Abbas, largely by presidential decree as the Palestinian legislative Council was rendered inert, controls the West Bank.

Hamas, who called the postponement of elections “a coup”, are not the only ones calling for elections to continue as scheduled.⁵ Around 93% of eligible voters registered themselves to vote in the West Bank.⁶ According to polling conducted in March 76% of Palestinians demand the holding of elections, and 65% believe elections should continue even if Israel refuses to allow East Jerusalem to participate.⁷ The cancelation of elections sparked a wave of protests which only grew in size after prominent anti-corruption activist Nizar Banat died in PA custody.⁸ Palestinian trust in the PA, which has deteriorated gradually over the years, has in recent times

¹ Kingsley, Patrick. “Palestinian Vote Delayed, Prolonging Split for West Bank and Gaza.” The New York Times, April 29, 2021, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/29/world/middleeast/palestinian-vote-delayed.html>.

² United States Institute of Peace. “Palestinian Politics Timeline: Since the 2006 Election.” Accessed July 9, 2021. <https://www.usip.org/palestinian-politics-timeline-2006-election>.

³ “Hamas: The Palestinian Militant Group That Rules Gaza.” BBC News, July 1, 2021, sec. Middle East. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-13331522>.

⁴ “TIMELINE: Key Events since 2006 Hamas Election Victory.” Reuters, June 20, 2007, sec. World News. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-timeline-idUSL1752364420070620>.

⁵ Krauss, Joseph. “Abbas Delays Palestinian Elections; Hamas Slams ‘Coup.’” AP NEWS, April 29, 2021. <https://apnews.com/article/hamas-middle-east-elections-religion-government-and-politics-e88636bc919f8aab455e01fbbd4b4391>.

⁶ Krauss, Joseph. “Poll: Fatah, Hamas Face Headwinds Ahead of Palestinian Vote.” AP NEWS, March 23, 2021. <https://apnews.com/article/elections-mahmoud-abbas-43b87ac4c4bc04e98cef263c0>.

⁷ “Public Opinion Poll #79.” Palestinian Center for POLICY and SURVEY RESEARCH, March 19, 2021. <http://pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Poll%2079%20English%20press%20release%20March%202021.pdf>.

⁸ Kershner, Isabel, and Adam Rasgon. “Critic’s Death Puts Focus on Palestinian Authority’s Authoritarianism.” The New York Times, July 7, 2021, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/07/world/middleeast/Palestinian-Authority-protesters.html>.

taken a sharp decline. Holding both presidential and legislative elections will be a necessary step in rebuilding the Palestinian people's faith in their government.

History in the Arab World:

One of the primary causes of the Fatah Hamas split is an inability to come to an agreement on a position towards Israel. The absence of a common stance on Israel among the Palestinian people has placed Arab States, who often negotiate on behalf of Palestine, in an awkward situation. In 2002 the Arab League adopted the Arab Peace Initiative, a roadmap for an end to the Arab Israeli conflict, which was then unanimously re-adopted by the League in 2007.⁹ Despite praise from some members of the organization, Hamas has never formally accepted the initiative.¹⁰

The divide between Fatah and Hamas has not only made it more difficult for the Arab League to maintain a unified policy on Israel but has also created a diplomatic quagmire for Arab League member states seeking to work with Palestine. The PA is the Arab League recognized authority of Palestine, and many member states see working with Hamas as a legitimization of their control over Gaza. This is one of the reasons why Egypt has maintained a blockade of Gaza that, despite being lifted intermittently, has been in place since Hamas seized power in 2007.¹¹ However, some Arab League member states and foreign actors have demonstrated strong sympathy or support towards Hamas, which has led to internal divisions within the League.¹²

Several Arab League member states have attempted in the past to help Fatah and Hamas reconcile their differences. Notably both Qatar and Egypt facilitated the Doha and Cairo agreements, respectively. Both agreements, which called for interim unity governments to hold new elections, failed.¹³ While these agreements failed for a multitude of reasons, the failure to hold elections is patently the greatest hinderance to reconciliation. If the Arab League hopes to have a unified stance on Israel and reconcile the internal divisions this conflict has caused, it must first reconcile the rift between Fatah, Hamas, and the broader Palestinian people. Reconciliation has not, cannot, and will not happen without new elections.

Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

This topic tasks delegates with developing a framework to hold both presidential and legislative elections in Palestine. There will be several challenges to holding secure, free, and fair elections that any solution will have to consider. The first of these issues is physically conducting the elections themselves, in a way that allows all Palestinian people to vote. This will likely require

⁹ S. Daniel Abraham Center for Peace. "Arab Peace Initiative." Accessed July 10, 2021.

<http://centerpeace.org/explore/arab-peace-initiative/>.

¹⁰ Mughrabi, Nidal al-. "Hamas Rebuffs Arabs for Softening Israeli-Palestinian Peace Plan." Reuters, May 3, 2013, sec. World News. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-palestinians-arab-hamas-idUKBRE9420M420130503>.

¹¹ "Egypt's Dictator Is Aiding Gaza and Boosting His Image." The Economist, July 1, 2021. <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2021/07/01/egypts-dictator-is-aiding-gaza-and-boosting-his-image>.

¹² O'Connor, Tom. "Qatar, Once Cut off by Arab States, Wiolds Influence and Aid in Blockaded Gaza." Newsweek, May 27, 2021.

<https://www.newsweek.com/qatar-once-cut-off-arab-states-wiolds-influence-aid-blockaded-gaza-1595610>.

¹³ "Fatah-Hamas Reconciliation Agreement (April 2014)," April 23, 2014. https://ecf.org.il/media_items/1193.

that any framework drafted is acceptable to both Fatah and Hamas to ensure Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza can cast a ballot. Such an agreement would also have to address the uncertainty regarding East Jerusalem. Whether Israel will allow campaigning or voting in East Jerusalem remains to be seen, and delegates must decide how to overcome this hurdle.

The second major challenge delegates must consider is the legitimacy and security of elections. According to public opinion polls as of March only 42% of Palestinians expected elections to be free and fair.¹⁴ Ballot stuffing, barring candidates from running, and political intimidation are all major concerns to be addressed. While both Fatah and Hamas certainly have a vested interest in the outcome of these elections, so do many foreign actors. Israel, Iran, Russia, and the United States will all have a strong interest in these elections and the means to manipulate them. Compromised or contested elections would arguably be more damaging to Palestine than if they continued postponing them. Any framework developed will have to address these concerns.

The third challenge will be how to assist Palestine in conducting elections without degrading their sovereignty. It is ultimately the PA who have the final say in all decisions concerning Palestine and elections, and this is reaffirmed by Article VII of the Arab League Charter. While there are many avenues member states can take to assist in running elections, it is crucial to ensure the PA remains in charge of its own affairs. A framework for elections must describe the level of support provided to the PA by Arab League member states.

Questions to Consider in Your Research

1. How have other states under occupation held elections?
2. How have foreign actors previously interfered with elections in the region?
3. What election systems would be the most resilient to fraud and security threats?
4. What restrictions do other states in the region put on candidates and campaigns?

Questions a Resolution Might Answer

1. What can be done to ensure not only those elections are legitimate, but also that they are perceived as legitimate by the Palestinian People?
2. How will a unity government form after elections?
3. How will elections take place if Palestinians in East Jerusalem are not allowed to vote?
4. What should be the degree of involvement of the Arab League in conducting elections?

Additional Resources

- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Palestinian-Authority>
 - History of the Palestinian Authority
- <https://www.dw.com/en/who-is-hamas/a-57537872>
 - Brief explainer about Hamas
- [Palestine constitution](#)
- [CRS report on 2006 elections](#)

¹⁴ “Public Opinion Poll #79.” Palestinian Center for POLICY and SURVEY RESEARCH, March 19, 2021. <http://pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Poll%2079%20English%20press%20release%20March%202021.pdf>.

Topic II: Addressing the housing and homelessness crisis in Gaza that has been exacerbated by the recent Israeli air strikes.

General Background:

The number of displaced persons in Gaza has reached epidemic proportions. Palestine, with a population of 5,227,340 people, is the 12th densest country on earth.¹⁵ Around 2 million of those 5 million people live in the 140 square miles that make up the Gaza Strip, creating a population density similar to the city of Boston, Massachusetts.¹⁶ However, population density is where the similarities to Boston end. In Gaza almost 600,000 refugees live in eight crowded camps, and in Gaza city the population density is close to that of New York City.¹⁷

The 11-day escalation in violence between Israel and Palestine in May of 2021 severely exacerbated the crisis. The airstrikes, which killed over 240 Palestinians, also damaged 16,800 housing units. Of those housing units, 1,800 were rendered unfit for living and 1,000 were completely destroyed.¹⁸ During the bombardment, nearly 80,000 Gazans were forced to flee their homes. Around 9,000 Gazans are still internally displaced as of June 2021.¹⁹ Many of those who were displaced during the strikes, and many of those who remain displaced, took shelter in two schools established by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

History in the Arab World:

The issue of homelessness is not a recent development for the people of Gaza. In a region where almost 70% of the population is registered as refugees, homelessness is a longstanding issue.²⁰ The causes of homelessness in Gaza are numerous, but the destruction of homes by airstrikes and explosives has become one of the primary culprits. Since Hamas took control over Gaza in 2007, there have been four major escalations of violence, and each one ended with countless homes being destroyed. These were the 2008-2009 Gaza War, 2012 Israeli operation in Gaza, 2014 Gaza War, and the 2021 Israel-Palestine crisis.

¹⁵ "Palestine Population 2021 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs)." Accessed July 14, 2021.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/palestine-population>.

¹⁶ Kirby, Jen. "The Fighting in Gaza Is over. The Humanitarian Crisis Isn't." Vox, May 21, 2021.

<https://www.vox.com/2021/5/21/22440537/gaza-fighting-humanitarian-crisis>.

¹⁷ "Israel-Palestinian Conflict: Life in the Gaza Strip." BBC News, May 20, 2021, sec. Middle East.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20415675>.

¹⁸ Al-mughrabi, Nidal, and Jonathan Saul. "Factbox: Palestinians, Israelis Count Cost of 11-Day Fight." Reuters, May 20, 2021, sec. Middle East.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/palestinians-israelis-count-cost-11-day-fight-2021-05-20/>.

¹⁹ Aila, Shrouq, and Anna Therese Day. "With Thousands Left Homeless, Gaza Reconstruction Faces Familiar Obstacle: Israeli Siege." The Intercept (blog), May 27, 2021.

<https://theintercept.com/2021/05/27/gaza-reconstruction-israel-siege/>.

²⁰ ReliefWeb. "Displaced Palestine Refugees Seek Shelter at UNRWA Schools in Gaza - Occupied Palestinian Territory." Accessed July 16, 2021.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/displaced-palestine-refugees-seek-shelter-unrwa-schools-gaza>.

During the 2008-2009 Gaza War a UN report notes that “the Israeli armed forces launched direct attacks against residential houses, destroying them.” It also notes the use of bulldozers, explosive charges, and shelling that were all used to destroy multi and single-story homes.²¹ In 2012 Israeli attacks destroyed or severely damaged an estimated 382 homes. On the 18th of November an air strike, without prior warning, hit a three-story house and killed 12 people.²² Unfortunately, these events paled in comparison to those of the 2014 Gaza war. In Gaza 18,000 housing units were either partially or totally destroyed by Israeli strikes. During the height of the hostilities around 500,000 Gazans, roughly 25% of the population, became internally displaced.²³ This cycle of destruction has turned countless Gazan’s homes into piles of rubble.

After each conflict, the people of Gaza have made efforts to rebuild the homes that were destroyed. However, these rebuilding efforts have historically been hampered by a number of factors. One of the factors that is most prohibitive to rebuilding is a lack of funding. International aid historically flowed through the PA and then was distributed as needed. The split between the PA and Hamas has complicated this flow. Money intended for Gaza is frequently withheld by Abbas as part of a dispute regarding how much authority the PA president still has over Gaza. The withholding of funds by the PA is partially what led to Israel allowing Qatar to send money directly to Hamas starting in 2018. After the 2021 crisis Israel has voiced its desire to either halt the direct funding from Qatar, or to only allow it if certain conditions are met.²⁴ While groups such as the UNRWA would likely be unaffected by any new dispute, the UNRWA is not in a position to rebuild Gaza. Funding is needed in Gaza to repair not just the damage from the 2021 crisis, but also the damage from the previous conflicts.

Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

This topic tasks delegates with developing a framework to address the housing and homelessness crisis in Gaza. To properly address this topic delegates will have to figure out ways to repair existing housing that has been damaged and construct new housing to replace homes that have been completely destroyed. Delegates will also have to find temporary shelter for internally displaced Gazans, many of whom are living in overcrowded refugee camps or on the streets.

²¹ “HUMAN RIGHTS IN PALESTINE AND OTHER OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict*.” UNITED NATIONS, September 25, 2009. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewj3prrlzujxAhVlmeAKHUPWBUUQFnoECAGQAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww2.ohchr.org%2Fenglish%2Fbodies%2Fhrcouncil%2Fdocs%2F12session%2FA-HRC-12-48.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0I3bfirg5v5k1zpSv16fT_.

²² “Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Implementation of Human Rights Council Resolutions S-9/1 and S-12/1.” United Nations, March 6, 2013. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewifyAHmx-jxAhUunuAKHft2BucQFnoECAYQAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ohchr.org%2FDocuments%2FHRBodies%2FHRCouncil%2FRegularSession%2FSession22%2FA.HRC.22.35.Add.1_AV.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1yx_nK_alEkveFFjZ6u9Pu.

²³ “Report of the Detailed Findings of the Independent Commission of Inquiry Established Pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution S-21/1.” United Nations, June 24, 2015. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/ColGaza/A_HRC_CRP_4.docx.

²⁴ Lieber, Felicia Schwartz and Dov. “Gaza Relief Effort Looks to Keep Funds From Hamas.” Wall Street Journal, May 23, 2021, sec. World. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/gaza-relief-effort-looks-to-keep-funds-from-hamas-11621776284>.

The first challenge to reconstructing Gaza will, of course, be financial. During the first 8 months of 2020 financial aid and grants from Arab states to Palestine decreased by 81.6%.²⁵ While much of this decline in funding can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, a portion of the decline is also due to the changing political landscape. Sourcing the funds to rebuild Gaza will be a challenge that the League must overcome if they hope to make meaningful progress.

If and when the above mentioned funding is acquired, the League will have to decide how to distribute and spend the funds. The PA, Hamas, intergovernmental institutions, and NGOs all operate in the region and could potentially utilize the funds. The delegates will not only be tasked with who to give the funding to, but also to determine how they should spend it. How much money should be directed towards immediate solutions versus how much money should be invested into long term solutions is just one of the many determinations the league will have to make.

Questions to Consider in Your Research

1. How have other states recovered after devastating wars?
2. How have foreign actors previously provided aid in the region?
3. What types of aid have proven most effective in similar situations?
4. What restrictions do other states in the region place on humanitarian assistance?

Questions a Resolution Might Answer

1. How will the reconstruction of Gaza be paid for?
2. Where will the necessary materials and skilled workers come from?
3. Who will oversee this construction effort?
4. How can residences be designed to make them more resilient to Israeli attacks?

Additional Resources

- <https://www.unrwa.org/>
 - United Nations relief and works agency for Palestine refugees in the near east
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/22/gaza-rebuilding-faq/>
 - Washington Post article detailing challenges of rebuilding
- <https://grm.report/#/About>
 - The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism
- [Partial](#) list of prohibited items to be imported to Gaza (2010)

²⁵ Melhem, Ahmad. "Saudis, Arab States Drastically Reduce Aid to Palestinians - Al-Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East," October 23, 2020.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/10/palestinian-authority-crisis-arab-financial-aid-decline.html>.

Topic III: Establishing ways to improve Palestinians' access to clean water while also improving sanitation in the region.

General Background:

In Palestine, the fundamental human right of access to clean drinking water is not being upheld. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a daily minimum water consumption of 100 liters per capita, Palestinians on average consume only 73 liters of water a day per capita. In more remote herding communities in the West Bank this number can drop to as low as 20 liters per capita.²⁶ Israel has direct control over 85% of water resources in the West Bank and has a strong say in how the remaining 15% is distributed. This has resulted in some villages receiving water only once every 15 days.²⁷ These water shortages have seriously damaged economic prosperity in the region, especially amongst farmers. It has also led to many in the West Bank purchasing water from mobile tankers, which is far more expensive and often is of a dubious quality. Poor water quality is not limited to just water from tankers, but from much of the water supply in the region. One of the main culprits of water contamination in the West Bank is sewage. In the West Bank 45% of services providers declared their networks perform poorly, 30% admitted to serious leaking issues, and 59% of them admitted to frequent flooding.²⁸

In Gaza, the situation is equally as concerning. The average consumption of water in the region was 88 liters per capita, 22 liters below the WHO recommended minimum.²⁹ This was the consumption rate before the crisis in May 2021. After the Israeli attacks almost a fifth of people in Gaza lack access to clean drinking water.³⁰ Drinking water in Gaza comes mainly from wells, aquifers, and desalination plants. These sources often rely on electricity to operate, and the Israeli attacks damaged the already dilapidated electrical infrastructure in Gaza. The quality of water from these sources is also an issue; in Gaza more than 95% of the water has become unsafe for drinking.³¹ Sewage is a major contaminant of water in Gaza. Despite 78% of households being connected to public sewage networks, treatment plants are overloaded. Over a hundred million liters of partially treated and raw sewage is pumped into the Mediterranean daily, polluting water that could potentially be desalinated for drinking.²⁸

²⁶ "The Occupation of Water," November 29, 2017.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/11/the-occupation-of-water/>.

²⁷ Najib, Mohammed. "Palestine Runs Dry: 'Our Water They Steal and Sell to Us,'" July 15, 2021.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/15/water-war-palestinians-demand-more-water-access-from-israel>.

²⁸ Anayah, Fathi, Issam A. Al-Khatib, and Banan Hejaz. "Assessment of Water and Sanitation Systems at Palestinian Healthcare Facilities: Pre- and Post-COVID-19." *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* 193, no. 1 (January 7, 2021): 41. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10661-020-08791-4>.

²⁹ "Israel-Palestinian Conflict: Life in the Gaza Strip." BBC News, May 20, 2021, sec. Middle East.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20415675>.

³⁰ ReliefWeb. "Almost a Fifth of People in Gaza Do Not Have Access to Clean Water after Bombardment - Oxfam - Occupied Palestinian Territory," May 25, 2021.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/almost-fifth-people-gaza-do-not-have-access-clean-water-after>.

³¹ "A Guide to the Gaza Strip," March 14, 2021.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/14/a-guide-to-the-gaza-strip>.

History in the Arab World:

Years of being forced to drink unsanitary water has led to disastrous public health outcomes for Palestinians, especially those who live in Gaza. According to a report conducted in 2018, over a quarter of all diseases recorded in Gaza were caused by poor water quality or access.³² These diseases, which affect all Palestinians, are affecting children in Gaza at an alarming rate. Sanitation related diseases such as typhoid fever and watery diarrhea have doubled in children since the blockade of Gaza began in 2007.³³ Children in Gaza are also affected by numerous other water contamination related diseases. Doctors in Gaza have seen a rise in gastroenteritis, kidney disease, pediatric cancer, marasmus, and “blue baby syndrome” (an ailment causing bluish lips, face, and skin, and blood the color of chocolate). In 2016 a five-year-old boy died after swallowing sewage-laced seawater and developing a fatal brain disease.³⁴ While not caused by contaminated water, the lack of clean drinking water is exacerbating the Covid-19 pandemic in both Gaza and the West Bank.

The lack of clean drinking water in Gaza and the West Bank has many causes, but the most prominent is the Israeli occupation. In 1967, a month after the end of the Six-Day War, Military Order 92 granted total authority over all water related issues in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the Israeli army. Shortly after this, Military Order 158 and 291 barred Palestinians from construction on any new water installation without obtaining a permit for Israel and annulled any land and water arrangements that existed prior to the occupation of the West Bank respectively. In 1982 water infrastructure in the West Bank was transferred to Mekorot, the Israeli national water company.³⁵ This control over water in the occupied territories was institutionalized under the 1995 Oslo II agreement. Still in effect today, it stipulates that Israel retains total control over water in the occupied territories. It also gives Israel the ability to place restrictions on Palestinian water drilling and water usage. Military Orders 158 and 291 are still in effect today.³⁶ In the West Bank, Palestinians often must buy water from Israel just to meet their basic needs. In Gaza, Israel relinquished any control it had over its water system after the 2005 disengagement. However, the blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt is still a significant barrier to repairing Gaza’s water system.

³² Efron, Shira, Jordan Fischbach, Ilana Blum, Rouslan Karimov, and Melinda Moore. “The Public Health Impacts of Gaza’s Water Crisis.” Rand Corporation, 2018.

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2500/RR2515/RAND_RR2515.pdf.

³³ ReliefWeb. “Gaza’s Children Live and Die on Contaminated Water - Occupied Palestinian Territory,” June 22, 2012. <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/gazas-children-live-and-die-contaminated-water>.

³⁴ Tolan, Sandy. “Gaza’s Drinking Water Spurs Blue Baby Syndrome, Serious Illnesses.” Accessed July 17, 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/10/29/gazas-drinking-water-spurs-blue-baby-syndrome-serious-illnesses>.

³⁵ “TROUBLED WATERS PALESTINIANS DENIED FAIR ACCESS TO WATER.” Amnesty International Publications International Secretariat Peter Benenson House 1 Easton Street London WC1X 0DW United Kingdom: Amnesty International, 2009. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKFwjL96jCrevxAhWhVN8KHfkvDb0QFjADegQIBhAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.amnesty.org%2Fdownload%2FDocuments%2F48000%2Fmde150272009en.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1Rev6rM9HX80EjFihnbWfa>.

³⁶ B’Tselem. “Water Crisis,” November 11, 2017. <https://www.btselem.org/water>.

Israel has been enforcing restrictions on the movement of goods and people into Gaza since the first Intifada began in the 90s.³⁷ After Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007, a full blockade was initiated. The blockade, which also covers the air and sea, severely limits the number of people and the types of goods that are brought in or out of Gaza. Egypt has also largely enforced this blockade at the Rafah border crossing since 2007. Egypt has loosened restrictions in the past, notably after major conflicts or during the brief stint that the PA controlled the crossing in 2018.³⁸ Israel, for the most part, only allows goods that “are vital for the survival of the civilian population” into Gaza. Dual use material, materials that could be used in construction or to make weapons, is tightly controlled.³⁶ It is because of this tight control that there is a dire shortage of construction material in Gaza. Without construction materials repairs to wells, sewers, or other water infrastructure is impossible.

Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

This topic tasks delegates with establishing ways to improve Palestinians’ access to clean water while also improving sanitation in the region. While the issues of access to clean drinking water and sanitation are deeply linked, they also both present their own distinct challenges. Delegates make certain that they adequately address both problems, otherwise the water crisis in Palestine will continue to fester. Delegates must also consider both short term and long-term solutions to this issue. Infrastructure will take time to repair or build, and many Palestinians desperately need water now.

There are many different strategies that could be used to address this topic and it will be up to delegates to decide on the best course of action. Humanitarian aid through direct assistance or Arab League apparatus is one option to solve the short-term water crisis. In the long-term infrastructural assistance may be necessary. Funding will be critical as any resolution designed to rebuild infrastructure will be extremely expensive. Arab League member states, some of which have their own struggles with water resources, will have to determine a fair and equitable funding system. Donation of construction equipment, materials, and expertise will be vital to any infrastructure efforts.

Any infrastructural effort in Gaza will be hampered by the current blockade. Arab League member states will either have to work within the confines of the blockade or find an amicable political resolution to lift certain restrictions. Infrastructure efforts in the West Bank, while not impeded by the blockade, will still potentially be complicated by the occupation. Arab League member states will have to decide how to handle issues that could arise on this front.

³⁷ Poort, David. “History of Israeli Siege,” November 2, 2011.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2011/11/2/history-of-israeli-blockade-on-gaza>.

³⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica. “Gaza Strip - Blockade.” Accessed July 17, 2021.

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Gaza-Strip>.

Questions to Consider in Your Research

1. How have other states in the region managed water crises?
2. How have foreign actors previously provided aid in the region?
3. What has caused the blockade to be lifted in the past?
4. How are my countries diplomatic relations with key players in the region?

Questions a Resolution Might Answer

1. How will infrastructural projects be paid for?
2. How will vital materials be imported into Palestine?
3. Will those who have become ill from contaminated water receive any compensation?
4. What can be done to make water infrastructure more resilient to Israeli attacks and natural degradation?

Additional Resources

- <https://www.unrwa.org/>
- <https://www.btselem.org/water>
 - Explanation of water ownership
- <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/15/water-war-palestinians-demand-more-water-access-from-israel>
 - News article about water shortages
- [Partial](#) list of prohibited items to be imported to Gaza (2010)

Topic IV: Examining the availability of higher education, keeping in mind the discrepancies between men and women, and developing infrastructure in order to raise the accessibility to it.

General Background:

Many Palestinians prioritize higher education and see admission into higher education institutions as a goal for themselves or their children. This can be seen in the 940% rise in enrollment between 1993 and 2011.³⁹ As of 2018 over 221,000 students were enrolled in local higher education institutions. The overall enrollment rate for Palestinians aged 18-24 is over 25%. This number is relatively high compared to international standards, and especially high compared to many of Palestine's neighbors. There are a total of 53 institutions: 14 traditional universities, 19 university colleges, 18 community colleges, and two open universities. They are split between Gaza and the West Bank, with the majority being located in the West Bank.⁴⁰

However, there are still a number of challenges facing current and prospective Palestinian students. The occupation and border restrictions imposed by Israel are one of these challenges. Gender disparities affecting both women and men are another issue in higher education. Lastly, the cost of education and the construction of educational infrastructure present difficulties of their own.

History in the Arab World:

Restrictions on Palestinian's freedom of movement, a violation of their human rights, has been a constant constraint on Palestinian's ability to receive a higher education. Since 2000, Israel has prevented Gazan students from traveling to study at universities in the West Bank. Between 2000 and 2012 only three Gazans were permitted to travel to the West Bank to study; all three also had received scholarships from the United States government.⁴¹ Students in East Jerusalem risk losing their residential status if they travel for their education, and students in the West Bank are consistently hampered by Israeli checkpoints. These restrictions on movement are not just limited to Palestinians traveling to study, but also on those wishing to enter Palestine. A famous example of this is when in 2010 Noam Chomsky, a famous professor from the United States, was denied entry into the West Bank by Israeli authorities, who later claimed that the denial was made in error.⁴²

³⁹ "Development for Empowerment." United Nations, 2014.

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwid7cqX9evxAhVHVc0KHZi3BbsQFjAKegQIBhAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.undp.org%2Fcontent%2Fdam%2Fpapp%2Fdocs%2FPublications%2FUNDP-papp-research-PHDR2015Education.pdf&usg=AOvVaw05Ou52LUO4Yh4N8I4dtTCq>.

⁴⁰ Isaac, Jad, Hatem Jemali, Belal Fallah, Ferdoos Al-Issa, Abeer Istanbuli, Mazen Abu Qamar, and Ala Al Azzeh. "Study of Higher Education and Research in Palestine." Sida, August 2019.

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwid7cqX9evxAhVHVc0KHZi3BbsQFjAQegQIJhAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.arij.org%2Ffiles%2Farijadmin%2F2019%2Funi_2019.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0jU7jNtJrRGYSKXOH_Y-ga.

⁴¹ IMEU. "Israeli Violations of Palestinian Academic Freedom & Access to Education | IMEU." Accessed July 18, 2021. <https://imeu.org/article/israeli-violations-of-palestinian-academic-freedom-access-to-education>.

⁴² News, A. B. C. "Noam Chomsky Denied Entry to Israel." ABC News. Accessed July 18, 2021.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/noam-chomsky-american-left-wing-intellectual-denied-entry/story?id=10664920>.

While women in Palestine clearly have similar access to higher education as men, there are certain factors that limit their fields of study that must be addressed. In 2010, 41% of Palestinians held gainful employment. For men this meant that 67% of them had jobs, but for women this number was only 15%. This is shocking, especially when considering that around that same time women comprised 60% of all college graduates in Palestine.⁴³ Looking at more recent numbers this trend, regrettably, has continued. In 2017, 72% of female graduates were unemployed compared to only 37.8% of male graduates.⁴⁴ One possible explanation for this discrepancy is noted in a report by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). This report states that fields of study are influenced by gender roles, and female students tend to be concentrated in the arts and social sciences. The report also cites the Palestinian Ministry of Education who state, “female participation in vocational education also remains low because of limited suitable programmes and socio-cultural factors.”⁴⁵

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has also created several unique challenges that Palestinians must overcome to ensure access to higher education for all. One of these challenges is the fact that Gaza is frequently mired by violence. A very direct consequence of this can be seen in the 2008 Israeli airstrike that hit the Islamic University in Gaza.⁴⁶ Other indirect consequences are the constant shortages of electricity, water, and other school supplies caused by the conflict. Another issue is how to expand access to higher education institutions to impoverished Palestinian refugees, especially those who live abroad. Palestinian refugees in many Arab countries cannot afford the cost of higher education. They are often charged international fees despite being second or even third generation refugees in their host country.⁴⁷

Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

This topic tasks delegates with examining the availability of higher education, keeping in mind the discrepancies between men and women, and developing infrastructure in order to raise the accessibility to it. This is a multifaceted topic that can be solved a number of different ways. To adequately solve this topic delegates must ensure that more Palestinians have access to higher education, while also ensuring equity.

There are a number of ways delegates can potentially address this topic. The topic itself certainly does not discourage the building of new schools or institutions, and education is one of the most important investments a nation can make. However, delegates should direct the majority of their

⁴³ Raheb, Viola. “Palestinian Women Are Well Educated, but Do Not Find Good Jobs.” D+C, July 15, 2011.

<https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/palestinian-women-are-well-educated-do-not-find-good-jobs>.

⁴⁴ Rasgon, Adam. “Over Half of Palestinian College Graduates Are Unemployed, Report Finds.” Accessed July 18, 2021. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/over-half-of-palestinian-college-graduates-are-unemployed-report-finds/>.

⁴⁵ “SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN AND GIRLS (JULY 2012 - JUNE 2014).” United Nations, February 4, 2015. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewjGiOWnhuZxAhXYHcOKHYXIADQQFjABegQIEBAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Funispal.un.org%2Fpdfs%2FECFSWARPT_040215.pdf&sg=AOvVaw2bBV_z3Xpdv4EPxzI00LFO.

⁴⁶ “Israel Bombs Islamic University in Gaza: Hamas.” Reuters, December 28, 2008, sec. Editor’s Picks.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel-university-sb-idUSTRE4BR2F920081228>.

⁴⁷ Faek, Rasha. “For Many Palestinian Refugees, Higher Education Is Not an Option.” Al-Fanar Media (blog), April 3, 2014. <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2014/04/untold-story-ex-gaza-refugee-students/>.

focus on the issues that prevent students from accessing the institutions that currently exist. Any resolution that prescribes the construction of additional institutions while neglecting existing ones will have improperly addressed the topic.

Outside of Palestine, many Arab League member states also have excellent higher education institutions that could be opened to Palestinian students. However to access Member state's higher education institutions the League must address two major hurdles for Palestinian students. The first being is a financial hurdle, and could be addressed through scholarships or grants. The second hurdle relates to the restriction of movement imposed by Israel. This challenge will be far more difficult to overcome and will require ingenuity on the part of the League.

Questions to Consider in Your Research

1. How have other states in the region managed university admissions?
2. How have foreign actors previously interacted with higher education in the region?
3. Could the increased capacity of online learning help overcome challenges created by the blockade?
4. What education resources does my country possess?

Questions a Resolution Might Answer

1. What can be done to increase the freedom of movement for Palestinians?
2. How can the League assist Palestine to increase employment opportunities for female college graduates?
3. What can be done to address the gender disparity in fields of study at Palestinian institutions?
4. How can Arab states address the educational needs of Palestinian refugees living within their borders?

Additional Resources

- <https://supporthere.org/page/higher-education-palestine>
 - List of higher education institutions
- <https://socialprotection.org/connect/stakeholders/palestine-%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85-mini-stry-education>
 - Ministry of education
- <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/palestinian-women-are-well-educated-do-not-find-good-jobs>
 - Article describing disparities between men and women in Palestine
- <https://fobzu.org/education-in-palestine/>
 - Report on higher education under the occupation