



**2022 - 2023**  
**Model Arab League**  
**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**Council on Palestinian Affairs**

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**National  
Council  
on US-  
Arab  
Relations**



**Original draft by Alexander John Paul Lutz, Chair of the Council on Palestinian Affairs at the 2023 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations**

Honorable Delegates,

It is my privilege to welcome you to the 2022-2023 Model Arab League Council on Palestinian Affairs. My name is Alexander John Paul Lutz—though you are more than welcome to call me by any shorter variation of my name that you can come up with—and I will be serving as the Chair of this Council for the National University Model Arab League conference! I am a Senior at Mercer University, where I am majoring in International Affairs, Political Science, and History with a minor in Religion and Public Diplomacy. For the past two years, I have served as the Head Delegate for Mercer University, and this will be my fourth—and likely my final—year participating in the Model Arab League program in some capacity. Though it is, in many ways, sad to see things finally come to an end, I am very excited that I will be able to finish out my time with the program as a Chair for you all this coming year!

I know that reading through a background guide can sometimes be a bit of a slog, but I promise you that it will be worth it. I hope that if you choose to do so, it will help to direct your research and raise interesting questions so that the time we spend together at our conferences will be productive and well informed—but perhaps more importantly, I hope that it will help you to learn something about the world, the region, or even yourself. Though I do not expect you to walk away from this experience somehow transformed or transfigured, I would like to think that all of you will—at the very least—walk away just a bit more knowledgeable, wiser, or insightful.

As you all probably know, Model Arab League asks you to look at the world from a different point of view. But it doesn't just stop there. It also asks you to think critically and present creative solutions to difficult—and sometimes seemingly unsolvable—problems from that different point of view. Though many of our first instincts may be to propose something that'd be right at home in a classroom at one of our colleges or universities, thinking beyond that—and embracing a solution that may, at first, seem strange—is exactly the point! Of course, not everyone will always agree with you—nor should they, if they are authentically representing their assigned countries—but that is okay! At the end of the day, this is just a simulation, after all. You will probably have disagreements, difficulties, and hold-ups, but I genuinely believe that adds to the experience. You should be put in situations where you have to try to understand the points of view that everyone else in the room is representing. Saudi Arabia will not think like Tunisia, nor will Oman think like Syria. Even so, you should always try to work towards a settlement that everyone can walk away happy with. Though no two states in the Arab League are alike, you will find that there's a lot of things that you can agree on—but you'll only find such things if you look for them.

To conclude, I wish you the best of luck in your preparation, and I look forward to seeing everyone this coming year!

If you have any questions or concerns—any at all—please do not hesitate to reach out to me at my email address, which I have listed here: [alexander.johnpaul.lutz@live.mercer.edu](mailto:alexander.johnpaul.lutz@live.mercer.edu).

Sincerely,

Alexander John Paul Lutz

## Topic I: Taking measures to protect and preserve Palestinian cultural heritage sites.

### Section I: Introduction to the Topic

#### A. General Background:

Since 1972, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has “encouraged the identification, protection, and preservation” of “historic buildings and town sites, important archaeological sites, and works of monumental sculpture or painting” considered to be of such “outstanding value to humanity” that their disappearance would constitute a “definite loss and an irreversible impoverishment of that heritage” and impede the “harmonious development [of] present and future civilization” on our planet.<sup>1</sup> From the Great Wall of China to the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu, these sites are “evidence of civilization bequeathed by past generations” and serve as “an irreplaceable source of identity and inspiration” for billions of people all around the world, with just over 75% of the countries recognized by the United Nations—148 out of 195—serving as home to at least one of the 897 “historic buildings and town sites, important archaeological sites, and works of monumental sculpture or painting” that have been designated as World Heritage sites by UNESCO.<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, there are thousands—if not hundreds of thousands—more cultural heritage sites that have not been designated by UNESCO that remain important fixtures of culture in their communities nonetheless.

But the value of cultural heritage sites extends beyond the realm of the mind. While they are rightly held in high regard for their “intrinsic contribution to human wellbeing” and “symbolic and aesthetic” importance, they are also a driving force for “inclusive and sustainable economic growth” because they stimulate economic activity around them—usually by encouraging tourism.<sup>3</sup> This is becoming increasingly valuable as “tourists [now often] demand cultural experiences of various sorts” and seek out genuine engagement with the local community.<sup>4</sup> Cultural heritage sites might also yield significant long-term economic benefits by “attracting investments and ensuring green, locally based, stable and decent jobs, only some of which may be related to tourism” and its affiliated sectors—like hospitality (hotels, bars, and restaurants), creative industries (art, music, and theatrical performance) and retail (souvenirs).<sup>5</sup> UNESCO goes so far as to claim that cultural heritage sites may even “contribute directly to

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<sup>1</sup> “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>.

<sup>2</sup> “World Heritage List,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>; “Socio-Economic Impacts of World Heritage Listing,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/socio-economic-impacts/>.

<sup>3</sup> “World Heritage and Sustainable Development,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabledevelopment/>; “Socio-Economic Impacts of World Heritage Listing,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/socio-economic-impacts/>.

<sup>4</sup> Einar Bowitz and Karin Ibenholt, “Economic Impacts of Cultural Heritage—Research and Perspectives,” *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 1–8.

<sup>5</sup> “World Heritage and Sustainable Development,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabledevelopment/>; “Socio-Economic Impacts of World Heritage Listing,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/socio-economic-impacts/>.

alleviating poverty and inequalities by providing [access to] basic goods and services [like] clean air, water, food and other key resources” if well-maintained.<sup>6</sup>

Certainly then, it would be difficult to “imagine our countries, cities, and landscapes without the familiar remnants of our past, witnesses to continuity through the passing of time [which so often] inspire us” with a profound sense of wonder and joy.<sup>7</sup> But as cultural heritage sites—especially those in the developing world—increasingly come under threat from “armed conflict, natural disasters, pollution, uncontrolled urbanization, and unchecked tourist development,” such a reality might be closer than ever if we do not take decisive action.<sup>8</sup> In Iran, for example, Bam Citadel and its surrounding cultural landscape were struck by an earthquake in December of 2003. As a result, an estimated “26,000 people lost their lives” and some of the oldest and most iconic fixtures of the city—including walls and buildings dating back to the Achaemenid Empire—were destroyed.<sup>9</sup> In response, international efforts from the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and countless other non-governmental relief and reconstruction organizations were mobilized to “salvage the cultural heritage of [the] devastated city” with the guidance of the Iranian government.<sup>10</sup> But the project had to “be [executed] in concurrence with international conventions and charters to ensure that the conditions of authenticity and integrity would continue to be met,” meaning that the “restoration and partial reconstruction of selected elements needed to be based on a critical assessment of the reliability of documentary and field evidence” and that “taking care that the impact on the archaeological and natural setting would not alter the existing balance” of either the property or its surroundings was essential.<sup>11</sup> By 2017, Bam Citadel was fully restored—but at a great cost. It is estimated to have taken almost \$2 billion to finish the project.<sup>12</sup> From this, the world learned that a cultural heritage site, once lost, is very difficult to bring back.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, not all threats to cultural heritage sites come from natural disasters. In many countries—like Yemen, Syria, and Afghanistan—cultural heritage sites have been destroyed during times of conflict and strife. The Old City of Sanaa in Yemen has been under threat since the beginning of the Yemeni Civil War in 2014, as “the bombing of several areas inside the city, a complete lack of attention to building maintenance and restoration, the spread of new

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<sup>6</sup> “World Heritage and Sustainable Development,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabledevelopment/>.

<sup>7</sup> “World Heritage and Sustainable Development,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabledevelopment/>.

<sup>8</sup> “World Heritage in Danger,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/158/>.

<sup>9</sup> “World Heritage in Danger,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/158/>; “Bam and Its Cultural Landscape,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1208/>.

<sup>10</sup> “Rebuilding Bam,” <http://www.parstimes.com/scitech/bam/>; “Bam and Its Cultural Landscape,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1208/>.

<sup>11</sup> “Bam and Its Cultural Landscape,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1208/>; dhwtj. “Arg-é Bam: An Ancient Citadel Destroyed By Nature and Reconstructed By Humanity,” Ancient Origins, <https://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-asia/arg-bam-ancient-citadel-destroyed-nature-and-reconstructed-humanity-007055>.

<sup>12</sup> “Bam Earthquake Damage Estimated at \$1.9 Billion,” <http://www.payvand.com/news/04/feb/1041.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Mohsen Ghafory-Ashtiany and Mahmood Hosseini, “Post-Bam Earthquake: Recovery and Reconstruction,” *Natural Hazards* 44, no. 2 (2007): 229; John Cosgrave, *Responding to Earthquakes 2008: Learning from Earthquake Relief and Recovery Operations* (2008).

construction replacing the ancient architecture, and significant economic hardship” bring both its buildings and people—and therefore its culture—closer to ruin.<sup>14</sup> Mohammed al-Hakimi, an environment journalist, said that “[he] had seen several UNESCO-listed houses among the damaged places” in Sanaa—some of which have now been converted into “commercial centers” or “markets” by local merchants.<sup>15</sup> While there “is a law prohibiting people from constructing new buildings in the city, bribes [have allowed people] to do whatever [they] want” without facing scrutiny from any of the country’s rival political bodies.<sup>16</sup> And although attempts to protect and conserve the cultural heritage of the Old City of Sanaa “have continued when feasible,” the unfortunate reality is that the “security situation in Yemen, in combination with a lack of structured continuous maintenance and organizational support, continues to obstruct effective heritage management and physical conservation work” on the scale seen in places like Bam.

Elsewhere, the “deliberate targeting of culturally significant objects during war” has “become an end” in and of itself.<sup>17</sup> The 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict explicitly prohibits this, but it is a frighteningly common occurrence nonetheless.<sup>18</sup> During the Bosnian War, Bosniak “cultural objects and historical sites were intentionally destroyed as part of the ethnic cleansing campaign” executed by the Bosnian Serb Army.<sup>19</sup> In 2001, the Taliban “demolished a pair of massive statues of the Buddha” in Bamiyan, Afghanistan as part of their “campaign against non-Islamic artifacts” throughout the country.<sup>20</sup> Most recently, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant “looted what treasures could be sold to support their military campaign...[and] destroyed and defaced significant portions of the ancient cities of Nineveh and Hatra” in Iraq.<sup>21</sup> The ancient Syrian city of Palmyra, meanwhile, was nearly razed to the ground, after ISIL demolished the Temple of Baal Shamen and the Temple of Bol in 2015.<sup>22</sup> Nearly every government on the planet condemned them for doing

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<sup>14</sup> “Gallery: Heritage at Risk in Yemen,” UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/galleries/heritage-risk-yemen>; Ahmed Nagi, “Yemen’s Old City of Sanaa: Stripped of Its Identity,” Carnegie Middle East Center, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/09/14/yemen-s-old-city-of-sana-stripped-of-its-identity-pub-82687>.

<sup>15</sup> Ahmed Nagi, “Yemen’s Old City of Sanaa: Stripped of Its Identity,” Carnegie Middle East Center, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/09/14/yemen-s-old-city-of-sana-stripped-of-its-identity-pub-82687>.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmed Nagi, “Yemen’s Old City of Sanaa: Stripped of Its Identity,” Carnegie Middle East Center, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/09/14/yemen-s-old-city-of-sana-stripped-of-its-identity-pub-82687>.

<sup>17</sup> “World Heritage Site - The International Conservation Movement,” Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/World-Heritage-site/The-international-conservation-movement>.

<sup>18</sup> “1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict,” UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/protecting-heritage/convention-and-protocols/1954-convention>.

<sup>19</sup> “Destruction of Cultural Memory in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Human Rights House Foundation, May 24, 2004, <https://humanrightshouse.org/articles/destruction-of-cultural-memory-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>; “World Heritage Site - The International Conservation Movement,” Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/World-Heritage-site/The-international-conservation-movement>.

<sup>20</sup> “The Death of the Buddhas of Bamiyan,” Middle East Institute, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/death-buddhas-bamiyan>; “World Heritage Site - The International Conservation Movement,” Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/World-Heritage-site/The-international-conservation-movement>.

<sup>21</sup> “Here Are the Ancient Sites ISIS Has Damaged and Destroyed,” National Geographic, September 1, 2015, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/150901-isis-destruction-looting-ancient-sites-iraq-syria-archaeology>; “World Heritage Site - The International Conservation Movement,” Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/World-Heritage-site/The-international-conservation-movement>.

<sup>22</sup> “Here Are the Ancient Sites ISIS Has Damaged and Destroyed,” National Geographic, September 1, 2015, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/150901-isis-destruction-looting-ancient-sites-iraq-syria-archaeology>

so—many of them pledging extensive material and technical support to help protect, conserve, and rebuild the lost cultural heritage sites.<sup>23</sup> Yet, it should be acknowledged that not every country receives such displays of support when their cultural heritage sites are threatened—even when the threat is posed by an invasion or occupation. In Myanmar, the military [has] partially or totally razed [about] 300 villages and destroyed numerous historic mosques” over the course of its campaign of persecution against the Rohingya—though it did so with minimal scrutiny until fairly recently.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, many have turned a blind eye to the destruction of cultural heritage sites in Palestine—by Israel and non-state actors like Hamas alike.<sup>25</sup>

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

UNESCO has designated 80 cultural heritage sites in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and only four of them are officially recognized as Palestinian—about 5% of the regional total and less than 1% of the global total.<sup>26</sup> Yet, the massive significance that they hold—for the Palestinian people, of course, but also to Christians, Muslims, and Jews in countries all around the world—necessitates a discussion of their status.

As Adel H. Yahya claims, heritage “has been used to support nationalist, colonialist, and religious claims in different parts of the world, and in [Israel and Palestine] especially, it seems that heritage is practically inseparable from [the affairs of] politics, nationalism, and religion” as they are dictated by governments and peoples.<sup>27</sup> As a result, cultural heritage sites—and their adjacent industries, like tourism and archaeology—have come to play a surprisingly important role in the Israel-Palestine conflict.<sup>28</sup> For both Israelis and Palestinians, they have become a way to “prove” a long-standing presence in the region, which is then used to justify historic claims to land. Unfortunately, this has meant that violations of international law—including “illegal archaeological investigations, the illicit trafficking of artifacts, and the outright destruction of cultural heritage sites” have been quite common.<sup>29</sup> To give one particularly illustrative example,

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[ogv](https://www.britannica.com/topic/World-Heritage-site/The-international-conservation-movement); “World Heritage Site - The International Conservation Movement,” Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/World-Heritage-site/The-international-conservation-movement>.

<sup>23</sup> “The Race to Protect Antiquities in Iraq, Syria,” Antiquities Coalition, March 18, 2015, <https://theantiquitiescoalition.org/the-race-to-protect-antiquities-in-iraq-syria/>.

“How England’s Institute Of Digital Archeology Will Preserve The Art ISIS Wants to Destroy,” <https://www.forbes.com/sites/guymartin/2015/08/31/how-englands-institute-of-digital-archeology-will-preserve-the-art-isis-wants-to-destroy/?sh=d44138440233>; “Threats to Cultural Heritage in Iraq and Syria,” U.S. Department of State, [/2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/09/232028.htm](https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/09/232028.htm).

<sup>24</sup> “Heritage Destruction in Myanmar’s Rakhine State: Legal and Illegal Iconoclasm,” Online Burma/Myanmar Library,

<https://www.burmalibrary.org/en/heritage-destruction-in-myanmars-rakhine-state-legal-and-illegal-iconoclasm>.

<sup>25</sup> “Kashmir & Palestine: The Destruction of Indigenous Cultural Heritage,” Middle East Monitor, September 11, 2020,

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200911-kashmir-palestine-the-destruction-of-indigenous-cultural-heritage/>;

“The Melancholy of the Palestinians: A Heritage Destroyed,” OpenDemocracy,

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/melancholy-of-palestinians-heritage-destroyed/>.

<sup>26</sup> “World Heritage List Statistics,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/stat>.

<sup>27</sup> Ran Boyntner, Lynn Swartz Dodd, and Bradley J. Parker, *Controlling the Past, Owning the Future: The Political Uses of Archaeology in the Middle East*, University of Arizona Press (2010).

<sup>28</sup> Yara Hawari, “Israel’s Archaeological War on Palestinian Cultural Heritage,” The New Arab, March 18, 2022, <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/israels-archaeological-war-palestinian-cultural-heritage>.

<sup>29</sup> Ahmed A. Rjoob, “The Impact of Israeli Occupation on the Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Case of Salvage Excavations,” *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 11, no. 3–4 (November 1, 2009): 214–35.

Palestinian cultural heritage sites were “destroyed by the military operations of the Israeli Defense Forces” during the Second Intifada.<sup>30</sup> The historic centers of Nablus and Hebron were levelled and the separation wall built inside the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) cut off “hundreds of archaeological sites annexed to Israel or to illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank” from Palestinians, causing “unprecedented and irreversible” damage to Palestinian cultural heritage.<sup>31</sup>

Worse yet, the “misuse of archaeological digs and artifacts” found in the OPT has “increasingly become a central theme in the reinforcement of [Israeli national] mythos” which relies strongly on the “identity of the land” being fundamentally Jewish.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the activities of Israeli archaeologists appear to be focused “primarily on identifying and reinforcing connections between the ‘Land of Israel’ [of biblical times] and artifacts” in the West Bank and—to a lesser extent—Gaza.<sup>33</sup> Dr Mahmoud Hawari, Palestinian Archaeologist and former Director of the Palestine Museum, has suggested that in doing so, they have “often destroyed layers of archaeological ruins” to procure evidence of a long-standing presence in the region.<sup>34</sup>

In this way, Israel also uses cultural heritage sites—especially those that produce significant archaeological finds—to “exclude or minimize other cultural heritage claims and historical narratives,” including those of the Palestinian people.<sup>35</sup> This “contradicts the ethics of archaeological practice, which emphasizes [the] preservation of history [and] actively ignores Palestine’s diverse [and] multi-faceted history” to prop up a preferred historical narrative.<sup>36</sup> Of course, “targeting cultural heritage is not an empty gesture. Culture constitutes a visible expression of human identity, [so] depriving a people of their culture is tantamount to emptying them of the very substance that forms the backbone of their right to self-determination, especially in a context of cumulative, interconnected and systemic human rights violations” that have come to define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>37</sup> The fact that Israel has already “found and

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<sup>30</sup> Ahmed A. Rjoob, “The Impact of Israeli Occupation on the Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Case of Salvage Excavations,” *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 11, no. 3–4 (November 1, 2009): 214–35.

<sup>31</sup> Ahmed A. Rjoob, “The Impact of Israeli Occupation on the Conservation of Cultural Heritage Sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Case of Salvage Excavations,” *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* 11, no. 3–4 (November 1, 2009): 214–35.

<sup>32</sup> “Occupation Remains: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Archeology Policies in the West Bank: An International Law Perspective,” Diakonia IHL Resource Centre, 2015, <https://apidiakoniase.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/israeli-archeology-policies-ihl-occupation-report.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> “Occupation Remains: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Archeology Policies in the West Bank: An International Law Perspective,” Diakonia IHL Resource Centre, 2015, <https://apidiakoniase.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/israeli-archeology-policies-ihl-occupation-report.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Yara Hawari, “Israel’s Archaeological War on Palestinian Cultural Heritage,” *The New Arab*, March 18, 2022, <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/israels-archaeological-war-palestinian-cultural-heritage>.

<sup>35</sup> “Occupation Remains: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Archeology Policies in the West Bank: An International Law Perspective,” Diakonia IHL Resource Centre, 2015, <https://apidiakoniase.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/israeli-archeology-policies-ihl-occupation-report.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> Yara Hawari, “Israel’s Archaeological War on Palestinian Cultural Heritage,” *The New Arab*, March 18, 2022, <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/israels-archaeological-war-palestinian-cultural-heritage>.

<sup>37</sup> Yara Hawari, “Israel’s Archaeological War on Palestinian Cultural Heritage,” *The New Arab*, March 18, 2022, <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/israels-archaeological-war-palestinian-cultural-heritage>.

excavated 980 archaeological sites in the West Bank, including 349 in East Jerusalem” and has quite possibly destroyed valuable Palestinian cultural heritage in the process of doing so should be worrying. Should such an agenda be allowed to continue unregulated and uninterrupted, it may very well result in the erasure of the Palestinians from the “history of the land” that they inhabit, effectively denying them “any claims to sovereignty and indigeneity” on the basis of cultural heritage—something which, again, seems to be inseparable from the affairs of “politics, nationalism, and religion” in the region.<sup>38</sup>

Of course, cultural heritage is sometimes about more—or perhaps more aptly, less—than identity. It appears that outside actors are very interested in the financial gain that accompanies the expansion of the tourism industry, the illicit export and transfer of artifacts, and the seizure—and subsequent development—of sites of archaeological importance.<sup>39</sup> To give the reader an idea of the scope of the problem, the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has estimated that “between 1967 and 1992 about 200,000 artifacts were removed from the OPT annually” shrinking only slightly to “approximately 120,000 annually” after the signing of the Oslo Accords.<sup>40</sup> According to Ahmad Rjoob, such removals have been undertaken “officially by the Israeli occupation authorities or persons licensed by it” or “illegally by individual Israeli soldiers or civilians” who were not acting under the auspices of the state.<sup>41</sup> Sometimes, artifacts are also acquired by “Palestinians who [then sell] them to Israeli dealers” to be resold elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, it has been reported that there are currently 15 settlement museums in “Judea and Samaria” that house such “illegally exported” artifacts from the OPT.<sup>43</sup>

In 2017, Hamas nearly destroyed Tal al-Sakan, a 4500-year-old archaeological site, after allocating “shares of [the] land” that it stood on to “loyalists” in an attempt to combat discontent over the ongoing financial crisis.<sup>44</sup> Though “protests by activists, archeologists, and historians in the Gaza Strip” temporarily delayed the bulldozing of the site, Hamas ultimately decided to

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<sup>38</sup> Yara Hawari, “Israel’s Archaeological War on Palestinian Cultural Heritage,” *The New Arab*, March 18, 2022, <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/israels-archaeological-war-palestinian-cultural-heritage>.

<sup>39</sup> “The Tourism Industry of the Settlements,” Amnesty International, January 30, 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/01/chapter-2-tourism-industry-settlements/>.

<sup>40</sup> “Occupation Remains: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Archeology Policies in the West Bank: An International Law Perspective,” Diakonia IHL Resource Centre, 2015, <https://apidiakoniase.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/israeli-archeology-policies-ihl-occupation-report.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> “Occupation Remains: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Archeology Policies in the West Bank: An International Law Perspective,” Diakonia IHL Resource Centre, 2015, <https://apidiakoniase.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/israeli-archeology-policies-ihl-occupation-report.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> “Occupation Remains: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Archeology Policies in the West Bank: An International Law Perspective,” Diakonia IHL Resource Centre, 2015, <https://apidiakoniase.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/israeli-archeology-policies-ihl-occupation-report.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> “Occupation Remains: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Archeology Policies in the West Bank: An International Law Perspective,” Diakonia IHL Resource Centre, 2015, <https://apidiakoniase.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/israeli-archeology-policies-ihl-occupation-report.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> “The Melancholy of the Palestinians: A Heritage Destroyed,” OpenDemocracy, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/melancholy-of-palestinians-heritage-destroyed/>; “Islamic Jihad’s Coffers Run Dry,” Al-Monitor, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/06/palestine-islamic-jihad-financial-crisis-money-iran-hezbollah.html>.



continue.<sup>45</sup> It was only when the Palestinian Authority's Minister of Tourism threatened to "block the national reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah" over the destruction on Palestinian cultural heritage that they halted their development project at Tal al-Sakan.<sup>46</sup> But the stories do not stop there. In 2013, it was reported that "a bronze statue of Apollo" surfaced in the Gaza Strip after Jawdat Abu Grab, a fisherman, came across it while he was out at sea.<sup>47</sup> A few days later, the statue disappeared—seemingly forever. According to Hamas, "the statute [was] taken by [their] police" shortly after Jawdat Abu Grab found it. Yet, a few weeks later, the statue "briefly appeared on eBay with a \$500,000 price tag" before disappearing once again.<sup>48</sup> Hamas would later claim that "it [had] been destroyed" during the 2014 Gaza War. Other cultural heritage sites, like Tal Um Amer, have simply been neglected and left to die at the hands of urban sprawl. The site, which is characterized by "five churches, bath and sanctuary complexes, geometric mosaics, and an expansive crypt" is now used as a dumping site by inhabitants of Al Nuseirat.<sup>49</sup> The land surrounding the site was also completely razed to make way for newer residential and commercial buildings.

Clearly, despite—or perhaps because of—their important role in the political and economic dimensions of the Israel-Palestine conflict, Palestinian cultural heritage sites sit at the brink of disaster. The situation requires that the international community take decisive action as soon as possible. What that looks like, however, is less certain.

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

There is a fair deal of precedent—much of which I have previously alluded to—regarding the treatment of threatened cultural heritage sites. Some of it can even be observed in the histories of Palestine's neighbors. For example, the "primary impetus for the adoption of the World Heritage Convention was the construction of the Aswan High Dam" across the Nile River in Egypt.<sup>50</sup> In 1959, the governments of the United Arab Republic—now Egypt and Syria—and Sudan "turned to UNESCO for help in salvaging the ancient sites and monuments of Egyptian Nubia" which would be "threatened with destruction by the lake [that] would build up" behind the dam.<sup>51</sup> UNESCO responded to this plea with an "appeal to the international community for assistance, and the result was the largest archaeological rescue operation in history" to date.<sup>52</sup> It was because of this project, the "level of international coordination that it entailed, and the

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<sup>45</sup> "The Melancholy of the Palestinians: A Heritage Destroyed," OpenDemocracy, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/melancholy-of-palestinians-heritage-destroyed/>.

<sup>46</sup> "The Melancholy of the Palestinians: A Heritage Destroyed," OpenDemocracy, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/melancholy-of-palestinians-heritage-destroyed/>.

<sup>47</sup> "The Melancholy of the Palestinians: A Heritage Destroyed," OpenDemocracy, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/melancholy-of-palestinians-heritage-destroyed/>.

<sup>48</sup> "Mystery of Lost 2,000-Year-Old Bronze Apollo Statue in Gaza," The Forward, February 10, 2014, <https://forward.com/news/breaking-news/192513/mystery-of-lost-2000-year-old-bronze-apollo-statue/>; "The Melancholy of the Palestinians: A Heritage Destroyed," OpenDemocracy,

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/melancholy-of-palestinians-heritage-destroyed/>.

<sup>49</sup> "Tell Umm Amer," UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5716/>; "The Melancholy of the Palestinians: A Heritage Destroyed," OpenDemocracy,

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/melancholy-of-palestinians-heritage-destroyed/>.

<sup>50</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "World Heritage Site Criteria."

<sup>51</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "World Heritage Site Criteria."

<sup>52</sup> "Victory in Nubia: The Greatest Archaeological Rescue Operation of All Time," UNESCO Digital Library, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000074755>.

obvious benefit to humankind that it yielded” that conservationists were led to conclude that a “permanent mechanism to preserve and protect global cultural heritage” was desperately needed.<sup>53</sup> Yet, as the Palestinian example shows—reaffirmed by ongoing crises surrounding cultural heritage sites in Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, and about 7 other countries with cultural heritage sites on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger—such an organization is not enough to prevent the desecration or destruction of cultural heritage sites.<sup>54</sup>

Some have suggested strengthening existing “instruments for the protection of cultural and natural heritage” like the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations (1956), the Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites (1962), and the Recommendation Concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property Endangered by Public or Private Works (1968).<sup>55</sup> Yet, even though many of the aforementioned guidelines are—at least in part—designed to protect the heritage of occupied peoples, they often have vague definitions and are poorly enforced. Israel, as previously established, has taken advantage of this “to serve its illegal actions of building settlements and roads, and [justify] the destruction of archaeological sites in the OPT” during both wartime and peacetime.<sup>56</sup> It is for this reason that even three major UNESCO World Heritage sites—the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls, Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town, and the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem—are listed and are in critical danger.<sup>57</sup>

Yet, it should not be forgotten that “cultural objects, including those in areas under military occupation, enjoy [the] protection [of] international law” under the Hague Convention.<sup>58</sup> It is only when cultural heritage sites are “turned into a military objective and an attack would be required by imperative military necessity” that any country can or should willingly inflict damage to them.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, it is the responsibility of “occupying powers” to “protect cultural property under their control from theft, pillage or misappropriation” until the end of hostilities and the retreat of the occupying army.<sup>60</sup> With this in mind, even when Israel cites “security concerns” as a pretext to “negate the inviolable rights [of] and [their] obligations towards the protected population residing in [the OPT],” their actions indicate that they are still clearly and

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<sup>53</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “World Heritage Site Criteria.”

<sup>54</sup> “List of World Heritage in Danger,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/>.

<sup>55</sup> “United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Convention Concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage,” UNESCO, November 16, 1972, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Ahmed A. Rjoob, “The Case of Salvage Excavations,” 214–35; “Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict,” ICRC, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/conduct-hostilities/cultural-property/overview-cultural-property.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> “World Heritage List,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>.

<sup>58</sup> “Occupation Remains: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Archeology Policies in the West Bank: An International Law Perspective,” Diakonia IHL Resource Centre, 2015, <https://apidiakoniase.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/israeli-archeology-policies-ihl-occupation-report.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> “Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict,” ICRC, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/conduct-hostilities/cultural-property/overview-cultural-property.htm>.

<sup>60</sup> “Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict,” ICRC, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/war-and-law/conduct-hostilities/cultural-property/overview-cultural-property.htm>.

unambiguously violating international law—even if it is rarely punished for doing so.<sup>61</sup> One might suggest that clearer and more robust policies or enforcement mechanisms—or even new initiatives that operate outside the auspices of UNESCO—be considered as possible solutions to resolve this issue. Undoubtedly, the international community should strive to “encourage Palestinian ownership of archaeological sites [in] the West Bank and East Jerusalem, [to] support the State of Palestine’s initiatives at [an] international level, such as those undertaken within the framework of UNESCO, to enhance the respect for—and enforcement of—international law,” and perhaps most importantly, to “refrain from collaborating with Israeli excavations and the transfer of artifacts [discovered in the West Bank] to Israel or abroad, including to their own state territory, and take all necessary measures to return the artifacts to Palestine” as soon as possible.<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, the needs of specific cultural heritage sites within the borders of Palestine—that is to say, both the West Bank and Gaza Strip—should certainly be considered, as many of them demonstrate an immediate need for material or economic assistance. These cultural heritage sites would also likely benefit from tourism campaigns and promotions in other members of the League of Arab States. Ultimately, the future of Palestine’s cultural heritage sites will likely be determined by the ability of the international community to put pressure on Israel, support Palestine, and organize effective campaigns to do so.

## **Section II: Questions to Consider in Your Research:**

- What aspects of existing international law have been most effective in protecting and conserving cultural heritage sites on an international, regional, and national level?
- Can the League of Arab States feasibly develop or enforce international law—especially in such a way that Israel would have an incentive to abide by it?
- What challenges does the political division between Fatah and Hamas—the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—present for initiatives designed to protect and conserve cultural heritage sites?
- Is it prudent to involve nations outside of—or organizations other than—the League of Arab States in this discussion? Can the Arab League really formulate policy dictating the manner in which its members will approach and relate to external actors like the United States of America or the United Nations?

## **Section III: Questions a Resolution Might Answer:**

- Does the existing body of international law on this subject sufficiently address the current concerns over Palestinian cultural heritage? If not, what might be done to improve it?

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<sup>61</sup> “Occupation Remains: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Archeology Policies in the West Bank: An International Law Perspective,” Diakonia IHL Resource Centre, 2015, <https://apidiakoniase.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/israeli-archeology-policies-ihl-occupation-report.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> “Occupation Remains: A Legal Analysis of the Israeli Archeology Policies in the West Bank: An International Law Perspective,” Diakonia IHL Resource Centre, 2015, <https://apidiakoniase.cdn.triggerfish.cloud/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/israeli-archeology-policies-ihl-occupation-report.pdf>

- What can be done to enhance the respect for—and enforcement of—international law amongst the international community? Does the Arab League have any way to incentivize Israel to abide by it? What about non-state actors like Hamas?
- What can Palestine do—that it is not already doing—to protect and conserve its cultural heritage sites? Does it feasibly have the ability to do so? If not, is there a way in which the League of Arab States might assist them?
- What kind of material or economic assistance can the League of Arab States pledge to the protection and conservation of Palestinian cultural heritage sites? What kind of material or economic would be the most effective?

#### **Section IV: Additional Resources**

- [1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict](#)
- [1956 Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations](#)
- [1962 Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites](#)
- [1968 Recommendation Concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property Endangered by Public or Private Works](#)

## Topic II: Exploring methods to combat environmental degradation and biodiversity loss in Palestine.

### Section I: Introduction to the Topic

#### A. General Background:

According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, biodiversity, or biological diversity, is a term that refers to “the number of genes, species, individual organisms within a given species, and biological communities within a defined geographic area, ranging from the smallest ecosystem to the global biosphere” that encompasses the whole of our planet.<sup>63</sup> Biodiversity loss, likewise, describes the “decline in the number, genetic variability, and variety of species, and the biological communities in a given area” which, once again, can be as small as a garden or as large as the Earth as a whole.<sup>64</sup> This loss in the variety of life can “lead to a breakdown in the functioning of the ecosystem where decline has happened” and change it in such a way that it can no longer survive the way that it did before.<sup>65</sup> Though often instigated by human interference in an ecosystem, an area’s biodiversity does also “increase and decrease” with natural cycles.<sup>66</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica* cites seasonal changes, “such as the onset of spring, [which] creates [new] opportunities for feeding and breeding, increasing biodiversity as the populations of many species rise. In contrast, the onset of winter temporarily decreases an area’s biodiversity, as warm-adapted insects die and migrating animals leave” for warmer climates elsewhere.<sup>67</sup> Usually though, when biodiversity loss is mentioned, it is in reference to the negative impact that humans have had on the environment over the course of the last 200 to 300 years. This biodiversity loss is profoundly unnatural and is incredibly harmful to humans and nature alike, as the “links between all organisms on Earth, binding each one into an interdependent ecosystem, in which all species have their role” cannot be severed—and therefore, the health of the planet hinges on responsible behavior from all members of the community.<sup>68</sup>

When further examined, it becomes clear that “reduced biodiversity [would] mean that millions of people [would] face a future where food supplies are more vulnerable to pests and disease, and where clean water is in irregular or short supply,” something that would effect

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<sup>63</sup> “Biodiversity Loss - Causes, Effects, & Facts,” Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/science/biodiversity-loss>; “What Is Biodiversity and Why is it Under Threat,” World Wildlife Fund, <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/what-is-biodiversity>.

<sup>64</sup> “Biodiversity Loss - Causes, Effects, & Facts,” Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/science/biodiversity-loss>; “UN Report: Nature’s Dangerous Decline Unprecedented; Species Extinction Rates Accelerating,” *United Nations Sustainable Development*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>.

<sup>65</sup> “Biodiversity Loss - Causes, Effects, & Facts,” Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/science/biodiversity-loss>; “UN Report: Nature’s Dangerous Decline Unprecedented; Species Extinction Rates Accelerating,” *United Nations Sustainable Development*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>.

<sup>66</sup> “Biodiversity Loss - Causes, Effects, & Facts,” Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/science/biodiversity-loss>.

<sup>67</sup> “Biodiversity Loss - Causes, Effects, & Facts,” Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/science/biodiversity-loss>.

<sup>68</sup> “How Does Biodiversity Loss Affect Me and Everyone Else,” [https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our\\_focus/biodiversity/biodiversity\\_and\\_you.cfm](https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our_focus/biodiversity/biodiversity_and_you.cfm); Oladimeji Adebayo, “Loss of Biodiversity: The Burgeoning Threat to Human Health,” *Annals of Ibadan Postgraduate Medicine* 17, no. 1 (June 2019): 1–3.

developing countries disproportionately.<sup>69</sup> Entire human “families, communities, nations and future generations” depend on certain other species for survival—the preservation of many species is, as such, a matter of life and death for some people.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, we should be deeply concerned by the fact that the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services reported in 2019 that “an average of around 25 percent of species in assessed animal and plant groups are threatened, suggesting that around 1 million species already face extinction, many within decades, unless action is taken to reduce the intensity of drivers of biodiversity loss. Without such action, there will be a further acceleration in the global rate of species extinction, which is already at least tens to hundreds of times higher than it has averaged over the past 10 million years” of the natural history of our planet.<sup>71</sup> As such, “slowing down biodiversity loss, understood as the reduction or disappearance of the variety of living beings that inhabit the planet, is one of humanity's great challenges” and one of the most pressing to overcome.<sup>72</sup> But, as previously established, biodiversity is more than—or perhaps more aptly, less than—a global issue. It can also be a serious issue at a local, national, or regional level. The situation in Israel and Palestine reflects this fact, as simultaneous crises at the local, national, and regional levels have the potential to spill over into something much worse—perhaps into something that would threaten the future of civilization in the MENA region.

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

In 2020, the United Nations found that “surface and groundwater courses and marine ecosystems [have been] being degraded by the discharge of untreated wastewater and by leaching from solid waste and unregulated industries” in the West Bank and Gaza. Nearly every “environmental indicator related to Palestinian lands suggests unsustainable pressure [is being placed] on their resources” that cannot be maintained for much longer.<sup>73</sup> This is dangerous for everything that lives in Palestine. Jad Isaac and Stephen Gasteyer write that “despite its small size, Palestine is host to over 2,500 species of wild plants with new ones discovered each year...[and] at least 80 species of wild mammals are found in Palestine, [with] its reputation as a geographical and ecological crossroads is reinforced by the fact that 380 different species of birds can be identified there,” beating out much larger countries like the United Kingdom or France.<sup>74</sup> Many of these species are threatened with extinction if Israeli—and also Palestinian—policy continues to ignore the needs of the environment. But of course, as was previously established, humans would be threatened by such a development as well. Should the situation worsen, it could develop into an unmanageable environmental and humanitarian crisis—especially if access to the resources needed to ameliorate such crises remains out of the hands of Palestinians. UN A/RES/70/225 reports that “Israeli policies have disrupted livelihoods and continue to deprive Palestinians of access to their natural resources...[and that] while Israeli

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<sup>69</sup> “How Does Biodiversity Loss Affect Me and Everyone Else,”

[https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our\\_focus/biodiversity/biodiversity\\_and\\_you.cfm](https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our_focus/biodiversity/biodiversity_and_you.cfm).

<sup>70</sup> “How Does Biodiversity Loss Affect Me and Everyone Else,”

[https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our\\_focus/biodiversity/biodiversity\\_and\\_you.cfm](https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our_focus/biodiversity/biodiversity_and_you.cfm).

<sup>71</sup> Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, “Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services,” *Zenodo*, November 25, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3553579>.

<sup>72</sup> “Biodiversity Loss, a Risk for the Environment and for Humanity,” Iberdrola, <https://www.iberdrola.com/sustainability/biodiversity-loss>.

<sup>73</sup> “Environmental Degradation Exacerbated by Israel-Palestine Politics,” Arab News, <https://arab.news/8gr84>.

<sup>74</sup> Jad Isaac and Stephen Gasteyer, “The Issue of Biodiversity in Palestine,” Applied Research Institute Jerusalem.

settlements have high-quality water, only 10 percent [of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip] have access to this vital resource” and enjoy its benefits.<sup>75</sup> Sometimes, policies may even harm biodiversity and human flourishing simultaneously, as when Israel “diverted the waters of the Jordan Valley” for the purposes of agriculture, something which, in turn, led to the uprooting of “over 800,000 olive trees” in the surrounding Palestinian villages.<sup>76</sup> The monoculture crops that Israel now grows there require a fair amount of water—much of it diverted away from Palestinians and Jordanians. As such, organizations like Amnesty International have accused Israel of “hoarding water” at the cost of its neighbors and the biodiversity of the region, which has been stunted by dried or redirected rivers.<sup>77</sup> Hostile constructions like the “separation wall” have also had pronounced effects on biodiversity loss and have hampered sustainability initiatives undertaken by both Israel and Palestine.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, notable non-state actors—like Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad—have been accused of deliberately harming the environment in terror campaigns. The Israeli Defense Forces reported that “balloons with incendiary and improvised explosive devices attached to them” are frequently used by such groups to “cause critical damage” to the environment.<sup>79</sup> During August of 2020, for example, fires that were sparked by these balloons “destroyed thousands of acres of natural forests and farmland in southern Israel” and disrupted conservation efforts.<sup>80</sup> All the while, global and regional problems like “desertification, soil erosion, urbanization, population growth, pollution, and climate change” continue to increase the rate at which environmental degradation and biodiversity loss occurs.<sup>81</sup>

The issue has been further exacerbated by the fact that efforts to combat biodiversity loss in the region are rarely successful and frequently become points of controversy. For example, Israel has claimed that the Jewish National Fund’s initiative to “make the desert bloom” by “planting 250 million of European conifers and eucalyptus trees and creating more than 1000 parks” across the country has improved the ecological health of the region.<sup>82</sup> Yet, critics have argued that this project is motivated more so by colonialism than genuine concern for the

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<sup>75</sup> 70th UN General Assembly, “Permanent Sovereignty of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab Population in the Occupied Syrian Golan over their Natural Resources,” February 23, 2016, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/821599>.

<sup>76</sup> “Biodiversity Loss in Palestine: The Green Colonialism,”

<https://zeroco2.eco/en/2021/05/18/biodiversity-loss-in-palestine/>; Mark Zeitoun and Muna Dajani, “Israel Is Hoarding the Jordan River - It’s Time to Share the Water,” The Conversation, <http://theconversation.com/israel-is-hoarding-the-jordan-river-its-time-to-share-the-water-126906>.

<sup>77</sup> Mark Zeitoun and Muna Dajani, “Israel Is Hoarding the Jordan River - It’s Time to Share the Water,” The Conversation, <http://theconversation.com/israel-is-hoarding-the-jordan-river-its-time-to-share-the-water-126906>; Amnesty International, “The Occupation of Water,” November 29, 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/11/the-occupation-of-water/>.

<sup>78</sup> Tanya Abdallah and Khaled Swaileh, “Effects of the Israeli Segregation Wall on Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainable Development in the West Bank, Palestine,” *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 68, no. 4 (August 1, 2011): 543–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207233.2011.608504>.

<sup>79</sup> “Hamas’ Wave of Environmental Terrorism,” IDF,

<https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/hamas/hamas-wave-of-environmental-terrorism/>.

<sup>80</sup> “Hamas’ Wave of Environmental Terrorism,” IDF,

<https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/hamas/hamas-wave-of-environmental-terrorism/>.

<sup>81</sup> Mazin B. Qumsiyeh and Mohammed A. Abusarhan, “Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation in Palestine,” *Biodiversity, Conservation and Sustainability in Asia*, 2021.

<sup>82</sup> “Biodiversity Loss in Palestine: The Green Colonialism,”

<https://zeroco2.eco/en/2021/05/18/biodiversity-loss-in-palestine/>.

environment, as “these forests were strategically placed atop the ruins of destroyed Palestinian villages, so that the fast-growing pines would erase the history of Palestinian existence and prevent refugees from ever returning to their homes” which have now been transformed into forests.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, “these foreign species, replacing the natural vegetation of olive, carob and pistachio trees, often fail to adapt to the local soil and demand more water,” further harming aquatic ecosystems throughout the country.<sup>84</sup> Other projects in the region, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar’s recent attempts to bolster their ecotourism industries through coastal reclamation, have been similarly critiqued for their unintended environmental consequences. What can be done, then, to resolve concerns over biodiversity and reinstitute a fair and balanced policy on the use of Palestine’s resources by its inhabitants?

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

There is no one easy way to quickly restore the biodiversity of an ecosystem. It is a multi-stepped process that takes a fair amount of time to yield positive results. Nature heals slowly, after all. Even so, there are some obvious places to start. The protection and conservation of remaining biodiverse ecosystems and habitats in Palestine that are currently under threat—like the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, which is, in fact, a World Heritage site—must happen before almost anything else.<sup>85</sup> The restoration—or at least preservation—of these areas is vital to ensuring the long-term survival of the remaining native flora and fauna. Next, the wide-scale reintroduction of native flora and fauna—especially to the fragile and artificially sustained ecosystems of the lakes, rivers, and deserts of Israel and Palestine—is also a necessary precursor to any larger initiatives to restore the natural ecosystems of the region—or to introduce new ones which may benefit it and its peoples. More sustainable farming methods that use less water—and do not rely on redirecting it from its natural course—are another direction that one could go. Of course, they would need to remain cognizant of the fact that many Palestinians still lack access to potable water. Such a plan would likely require international economic and material assistance—as well as both a short-term and long-term solution to Palestine’s water problems, so as to ensure that sustainability does not come at the cost of human life. Sustainable farming could also be used as a way to reinvigorate Palestine’s economy or to feed its people. No matter the solution, working with Israel is, once again, the biggest hurdle to making great strides. Even so, issues as pressing as biodiversity loss and environmental degradation may cooperation between Israel and its neighbors. Issues relating to the environment are rarely confined to national borders, after all. Nevertheless, the renegotiation of resource and land rights is sure to be contentious—especially as Israel’s ownership of water sources and farmlands is less unambiguously a violation of international law. As such, a pressure campaign or similar political strategy coordinated by the League of Arab States would almost certainly be looked down upon by the rest of the international community. Ultimately, there are many opportunities for Palestine, Israel, and other members of the League of Arab States to work towards a better future for the region with this topic, even though contentious questions of resource ownership and land rights looms large over discussion.

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<sup>83</sup> “Biodiversity Loss in Palestine: The Green Colonialism,” <https://zeroco2.eco/en/2021/05/18/biodiversity-loss-in-palestine/>.

<sup>84</sup> “Biodiversity Loss in Palestine: The Green Colonialism,” <https://zeroco2.eco/en/2021/05/18/biodiversity-loss-in-palestine/>.

<sup>85</sup> “Palestine; Land of Olives and Vines; Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir,” UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1492/>.



## **Section II: Questions to Consider in Your Research:**

- What natural conservation efforts have seen success in the MENA region? What natural conservation efforts have not? Has your country pioneered unique sustainable techniques or technology?
- Does your county struggle with biodiversity loss? If so, has it done anything to try to reverse, stop, or slow it?
- To what extent should sustainability come ahead of humanitarian aid? Can they work hand in hand?
- How does biodiversity loss impact political and social affairs?

## **Section III: Questions a Resolution Might Answer:**

- How will Palestine reverse its biodiversity loss? Is it a long-term or short-term process? Or does it combine elements of both? How much of that process relies on the cooperation of external actors like Israel?
- How will Israel's ownership of most of Palestine's water and natural resources play into plans and processes to reverse biodiversity loss in Palestine?
- Can the reversal of biodiversity loss be done in such a way that Palestinians benefit from it on a social, political, or economic level?
- Is Palestine capable of sustaining biodiversity loss reversal processes on its own, or will it receive assistance from other member states of the Arab League? If the latter, will member states expect anything in return?

## **Section IV: Additional Resources**

- [Biodiversity Loss in Palestine: The Green Colonialism](#)
- [State of Palestine Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity](#)
- [State of Palestine Sixth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity](#)
- [Effects of the Israeli Segregation Wall on biodiversity and environmental sustainable development in the West Bank, Palestine](#)

### **Topic III: Devising strategies to improve food security in Palestine, bearing in mind the challenges posed by ongoing international conflicts in major wheat-producing countries.**

#### **Section I: Introduction to the Topic**

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

According to the World Food Program, the “world [currently] faces a global hunger crisis of unprecedented proportions, [as] in just two years, the number of people facing, or at risk of, acute food insecurity increased from 135 million in 53 countries pre-pandemic, to 345 million in 82 countries” today.<sup>86</sup> Fueled by the abnormal frequency of “conflict, climate shocks, and [public health crises like] COVID-19” over the course of the past few years, the global hunger crisis is now “rapidly escalating as the war in Ukraine drives up the costs of food, fuel, and fertilizers” around the world.<sup>87</sup> With neither Russians nor Ukrainians able to effectively harvest or sell agricultural products in wartime—especially given that strict sanctions from the United States and Europe prevents them from doing so—the fact that Russia and Ukraine together “account for about 30 percent of wheat exports” and “19 percent of corn exports” on the global market has worried many in countries who had sustained themselves off of trade with either country before the war.<sup>88</sup> Several countries in the MENA region are almost entirely reliant on exports from Russia and Ukraine. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Lebanon bought “about 81 percent of its national wheat consumption from Ukraine and 15 percent from Russia” before the war, Egypt bought “about 60 percent of its national wheat consumption from Russia and 25 percent from Ukraine” before the war, and Turkey bought “about 66 percent of its national wheat consumption from Russia and 10 percent from Ukraine” before the war.<sup>89</sup> The governments of all three countries now find themselves navigating a precarious situation that could evolve into a political, economic, or humanitarian crisis with even a single misstep. Meanwhile, millions—if not now hundreds of millions—of people are “struggling to put food on the table and are being driven closer to starvation” as the world shows no sign of returning to normal any time soon.<sup>90</sup>

All of this is reversing “years of development gains” and “pushing food prices to [unaffordable] all-time highs,” even in high-income countries.<sup>91</sup> Things are much worse, however, in low-income countries, “where they spend a larger share of their income on food” than the rest of the world.<sup>92</sup> This is even more clearly true when one takes into account the fact

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<sup>86</sup> Heinz Strubenhoff, “The War in Ukraine Triggered a Global Food Shortage,” *Brookings*, June 14, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2022/06/14/the-war-in-ukraine-triggered-a-global-food-shortage/>; “Global Food Crisis,” World Food Programme, <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/global-food-crisis>.

<sup>87</sup> “Global Food Crisis,” World Food Programme, <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/global-food-crisis>.

<sup>88</sup> “Middle East to Suffer from the Grain Shortage Due to the War in Ukraine,” *Business Standard India*, March 7, 2022, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/middle-east-to-suffer-from-the-grain-shortage-due-to-the-war-in-ukraine-122030700098\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/middle-east-to-suffer-from-the-grain-shortage-due-to-the-war-in-ukraine-122030700098_1.html).

<sup>89</sup> “Middle East to Suffer from the Grain Shortage Due to the War in Ukraine,” *Business Standard India*, March 7, 2022, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/middle-east-to-suffer-from-the-grain-shortage-due-to-the-war-in-ukraine-122030700098\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/middle-east-to-suffer-from-the-grain-shortage-due-to-the-war-in-ukraine-122030700098_1.html).

<sup>90</sup> “Global Food Crisis,” World Food Programme, <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/global-food-crisis>.

<sup>91</sup> “Food Security Update,” World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update>.

<sup>92</sup> “Food Security Update,” World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update>.

that staple foods have experienced some of the steepest price hikes. Both “maize and wheat prices are 2% higher” than they were in January 2022 while “rice prices are about 6% higher” than they were in January 2022.<sup>93</sup> The “average maize and wheat price indices are 20% higher” than they were in 2021.<sup>94</sup> Altogether, efforts to improve food security anywhere—on an individual or organizational level—are going to be hampered by the market.

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

The World Food Program reports that “prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, nearly one third of the population of Palestine—that is, 32.7% or 1.6 million people—could not afford nutritious food. Food insecurity is especially high among women—33.7% of families headed by women are food insecure—particularly in the Gaza Strip, where it is around 64%. Severely food insecure Palestinians are suffering a significant consumption gap and lack the means to cover their basic needs including food, housing and clothing.”<sup>95</sup> And with the Russo-Ukrainian War taking place in the “breadbasket of the world,” the conflict is “making food more expensive across the globe, threatening to worsen shortages, hunger, and political instability in developing countries” that don’t have access to a robust agricultural output of their own.<sup>96</sup> Oxfam has reported that things are especially bad in Palestine, as its “wheat storage... could be depleted in as little as three weeks... and most families are now eating less and purchasing food on credit.”<sup>97</sup> The potential impact of the war’s disruption to the Palestinian food supply is even clearer when one recognizes that “about 95% of Palestine’s wheat needs are imported [from abroad] and about one third of that comes from Ukraine. [Worse yet], much of it is shipped [to Palestine] via Israel, which relies on Ukraine for as much as 50% of its grains. But grain is not the only resource affected by this arrangement. Nearly 40% of Palestine’s imported sunflower oil and 14% of its corn oil also comes from Ukraine” and the fact that “the Palestinian Authority does not have its own food-storage facilities, complicates matters [further] and even more directly connects prices to market fluctuations” in the now volatile agricultural industry.<sup>98</sup> Ultimately, Oxfam estimates that “more than 2.1 million Palestinians will require some humanitarian assistance this year” and the majority of them are in the Gaza Strip—somewhere that it is notoriously difficult to get humanitarian aid to.<sup>99</sup> Clearly, something must be done—ideally to address both the short-term and long-term needs of the Palestinian people.

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<sup>93</sup> “Food Security Update,” World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update>.

<sup>94</sup> “Food Security Update,” World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-update>.

<sup>95</sup> “Palestine,” World Food Programme, <https://www.wfp.org/countries/palestine>.

<sup>96</sup> Kelvin Chan and Paul Wiseman, “How the Russia-Ukraine War Triggered a Food Crisis,” Canada’s National Observer, <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2022/06/18/news/how-russia-ukraine-war-triggered-food-crisis>.

<sup>97</sup> Chloe Sorvino, “Palestinians Could Run Out Of Wheat Reserves In Three Weeks In Ripple Effect Of Ukraine War,” Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chloesorvino/2022/04/13/palestinians-could-run-out-of-wheat-reserves-in-three-weeks-in-ripple-effect-of-ukraine-war/>.

<sup>98</sup> Chloe Sorvino, “Palestinians Could Run Out Of Wheat Reserves In Three Weeks In Ripple Effect Of Ukraine War,” Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chloesorvino/2022/04/13/palestinians-could-run-out-of-wheat-reserves-in-three-weeks-in-ripple-effect-of-ukraine-war/>.

<sup>99</sup> Chloe Sorvino, “Palestinians Could Run Out Of Wheat Reserves In Three Weeks In Ripple Effect Of Ukraine War,” Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chloesorvino/2022/04/13/palestinians-could-run-out-of-wheat-reserves-in-three-weeks-in-ripple-effect-of-ukraine-war/>.

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

With many Palestinians already struggling with food insecurity, short-term material assistance must come before any ambitious long-term goals. Beyond that, most anything—within reason, of course—is on the table. Some countries likely will not be able to contribute large amounts of funding or materials, as they themselves struggle with food insecurity as well. Yet, they may have other resources—like technical expertise or manpower—that they can contribute. More ambitious projects, like assisting in the development of sustainable and reliable agricultural infrastructure—perhaps by investing in new machinery, drought-tolerant farming products, or fertilizer—and technical or vocational programs to train farmers on newer equipment and techniques would likely require the assistance of the entire League of Arab States.<sup>100</sup> Perhaps Palestine may even begin exporting a certain good to another country for shipments of food that it cannot produce itself. One might even entertain the prospect of livestock being raised in Palestine if the resources needed to do so can be made available by the generosity of another member state. No matter the solution, proposals that invest in the future of the Palestinian people—not those that seek to cultivate a long-term dependency on foreign assistance from either state or non-state actors—will likely be in the best interests of Palestine and the rest of the League of Arab States. To thrive, Palestine must be able to sustain itself—whether or not that is really a feasible expectation is another conversation entirely, though. And as always, Israel will need to be considered in any possible solution, as the fact that “82.5 percent of Palestinian imports and 55 percent of Palestinian exports come from Israel” make it an actor which cannot be ignored.<sup>101</sup>

### **Section II: Questions to Consider in Your Research:**

- How have other efforts to improve food security in the region fared? If there is still hunger in the MENA region—and indeed there is—why did these efforts fail? What can be done to ensure that this effort is different?
- Can Palestine feasibly sustain a significant agricultural industry? Keep problems of resource shortages in mind. Where is Palestine going to get the water to grow crops? What about the feed to care for livestock?
- Does your country struggle with food insecurity? If so, what contributions can it make to help Palestine?
- Does your country have any economic power that it can leverage to the benefit of Palestine? Would there be a reason to do so?

### **Section III: Questions a Resolution Might Answer:**

- What short-term solutions will you pursue to ameliorate the worst effects of food insecurity—including starvation—in Palestine?
- What long-term solutions will you pursue to develop a sustainable and reliable source of food in the future? Will they rely on Palestinians to tend to crops, livestock, or manage agriculture? If so, how will Palestine acquire the resources necessary to do so?
- Will governments or NGOs be expected to bear the burden of costly relief efforts?
- Will the League of Arab States establish a program to permanently assist Palestine, or will this be a temporary project? Will its start and stop be conditioned on anything?

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<sup>100</sup> “Combating Global Food Insecurity,” USGLC, <https://www.usglc.org/combating-global-food-insecurity/>.

<sup>101</sup> “Food Insecurity in Palestine: A Future for Farmers,” Wilson Center, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/food-insecurity-palestine-future-farmers>.

#### **Section IV: Additional Resources**

- [Combatting the Global Hunger Crisis](#)
- [Food Security Update](#)
- [World Food Program: Palestine](#)
- [Combatting Global Food Insecurity](#)

## Topic IV: Considering ways to protect journalists from violence and unjust imprisonment in Palestine.

### Section I: Introduction to the Topic

#### A. General Background:

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 2166 journalists and media workers have been killed while reporting, covering a military conflict, or because of their status as a journalist or media worker since 1992—and 47 of them were killed in the last year alone.<sup>102</sup> Another 294 journalists are currently imprisoned—many of them unjustly so—by governments around the world.<sup>103</sup> While about 30% of them are in the MENA region, threats to “media freedom and the safety of journalists” are present on every continent on the planet where humans have established civilization—especially as authoritarianism has put democracy on the back foot once again, with 2021 being the fifth consecutive year where the number of countries moving away from democracy exceeds the number of countries moving towards it.<sup>104</sup> To highlight just a few cases, Eman Al Nafjan, the founder of a feminist blog in Saudi Arabia, was sent to prison for her “reporting on elections, human rights activists, and the fight for women to have the right to drive” in Saudi Arabia.<sup>105</sup> Tran Thi Nga, a Vietnamese journalist who was sentenced to “nine years in prison” on charges of “spreading propaganda against the state” for her critical position on topics like government corruption—all after a one-day-trial.<sup>106</sup> Claudia Duque, a Colombian investigative reporter, has endured “kidnapping, illegal surveillance, psychological torture and repeated exiles” as a result of her work.<sup>107</sup> Thus, even though “freedom of the media is essential to enable democratic, free and participative societies” and journalists and media workers help to uphold a standard of “transparency and accountability for [both] public and governmental authorities,” the “scale and number of attacks [that bring into question] their physical safety, as well as... threats of prosecution, arrest, imprisonment, denial of journalistic access, and the failure [on the part of the state] to investigate and prosecute crimes against them” has made it very difficult to do so.<sup>108</sup>

While international organizations like the United Nations have dedicated a great deal of their time and resources to combatting this issue, and a sizeable body of legal guarantees for the

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<sup>102</sup> “Journalists Killed,” Committee to Protect Journalists, <https://cpj.org/>.

<sup>103</sup> “Journalists Imprisoned,” Committee to Protect Journalists, <https://cpj.org/>.

<sup>104</sup> “OHCHR and the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity,” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/safety-of-journalists>; “The Global State of Democracy Report 2021,” IDEA, <https://www.idea.int/gsod/>; “Democratic Backsliding: Different Causes, Divergent Trajectories,” IDEA, <https://www.idea.int/blog/democratic-backsliding-different-causes-divergent-trajectories>; “Democracy Backslides When A Free Press Is Considered an Enemy of the People,” Bush Center, <http://www.bushcenter.org/publications/articles/2022/03/democracy-talks-menchu-democracy-backslides-when-free-press-considered-enemy.html>.

<sup>105</sup> “These Are the 10 Journalists Facing the ‘Most Urgent’ Threats to Press Freedom Around the World,” Time, <https://time.com/5541286/one-free-press-10-most-urgent-journalists/>.

<sup>106</sup> “These Are the 10 Journalists Facing the ‘Most Urgent’ Threats to Press Freedom Around the World,” Time, <https://time.com/5541286/one-free-press-10-most-urgent-journalists/>.

<sup>107</sup> “These Are the 10 Journalists Facing the ‘Most Urgent’ Threats to Press Freedom Around the World,” Time, <https://time.com/5541286/one-free-press-10-most-urgent-journalists/>.

<sup>108</sup> “OHCHR and the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity,” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/safety-of-journalists>.

safety of journalists and media workers are enshrined in international law, treaties, and conventions—including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as well as the Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols—it unfortunately appears to remain unsolved. In fact, it has actually gotten significantly worse since the implementation of UN RES/68/163—a landmark resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly which was supposed to make the world safer for journalists and media workers.<sup>109</sup> While this likely had very little to do with the resolution itself, it is worth noting that subsequent attempts to try again—from UN A/RES/69 to UN A/RES/74/157—seem to have been just as ineffective.<sup>110</sup>

One might ask, is the protection of journalists and media workers from violence and unjust imprisonment impossible? And if not—as is likely the case—then where does the problem lie? Fortunately, it does not seem to be within the laws, treaties, or conventions that define the rights of journalists and the obligations of states to defend them. Under the aforementioned legal guarantees, states are “required to ensure that journalists, media workers and any other individuals [involved in the public dissemination of information] are protected from any acts by private persons or entities that would impair their enjoyment of the freedoms of opinion and expression” and that they “should put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those who are exercising their right to freedom of expression” in the interests of upholding “a safe and enabling environment [which allows] journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference” from any source.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, attacking journalists and media workers has been established as an illegal act under international law—even in conflict areas—as “the protection granted to civilians and civilian objects under international humanitarian law” extends to them, even when they are “used for propaganda purposes” and even acting as an effective organ of the state, as they “cannot be considered as military objectives” so long as they are not combatants or making an “effective contribution” to military action.<sup>112</sup> This rarely—if ever—happens, so most journalists should not be considered fair targets in wartime. Even confusion over whether or not a journalist is a combatant is often unjustified, as journalists in combat zones usually have specific symbols or words on their clothing that establish them as noncombatants. With such robust and well-defined protections in place, it seems like the problem lies with the enforcement of international law—that is, of course, in addition to any number of countries where case-specific phenomena like “public trust in the

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<sup>109</sup> “Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2013,” General Assembly, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N13/449/23/PDF/N1344923.pdf?OpenElement>; “OHCHR and the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity,” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/safety-of-journalists>.

<sup>110</sup> “OHCHR and the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity,” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/safety-of-journalists>.

<sup>111</sup> “The Safety of Journalists,” Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/153/19/PDF/G1315319.pdf?OpenElement>; “The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity,” Report of the Secretary-General, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/497/55/PDF/N1449755.pdf?OpenElement>; “OHCHR and the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity,” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/safety-of-journalists>.

<sup>112</sup> “Protection of Journalists: How Does Law Protect in War,” Online Casebook, <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/protection-journalists>.

credibility of journalism” and the ability of a government to maintain the rule of law and a monopoly on political legitimacy also come into play—Palestine among them.<sup>113</sup>

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

Journalists in the Palestinian Territories (OPT) suffer serious violations of their human rights at the hands of both Israeli and Palestinian entities.<sup>114</sup> The Palestinian Ministry of Information has reported that as many as 45 journalists—including Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh—have been killed by Israeli forces since 2000.<sup>115</sup> Many more have been unjustly imprisoned—usually with the vague and nondescript charge of “incitement against Israel” or without any charges at all. According to Khalid al-Araj of the Palestinian Prisoners’ Society, Israel frequently and easily “arrests journalists under the guise of incitement. They plaster this word on any journalist and say they were working against the security of Israel, but generally, a journalist is held for six months or more without any charges” in administrative detention.<sup>116</sup> Al-Araj has claimed that “if they actually committed a crime, there would be charges” of some sort.<sup>117</sup> Alexandra el-Khazen, of Reporters Without Borders Middle East, reported that Israel’s frequent “use of administrative detention makes it difficult for media watchdogs to defend such cases” as most “only defend journalists persecuted because of their work, or in link with their journalistic activities” or other professional work.<sup>118</sup> As a result, the charge of “incitement against Israel” is often used—with frightening success—to “arbitrarily silence journalists” critical of the state or the occupation.<sup>119</sup>

Israel also occasionally resorts to violence to put an end to protests in the OPT—something that puts journalists in the crossfire. Some believe that Israel does so with the express purpose of targeting journalists, including Mohammed Abed, who said that “[he] was in an open area, [where] the shooters could clearly distinguish protesters from journalists, and [he] was wearing a vest” that clearly said press on it.<sup>120</sup> Even so, he was shot by an Israeli sniper in the knee.<sup>121</sup> Such violent tendencies were displayed again in May of 2022, when the funeral procession of Shireen Abu Akleh was interrupted by Israeli riot police, who “attacked mourners

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<sup>113</sup> “Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2019,” General Assembly, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/428/62/PDF/N1942862.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>114</sup> “Journalists in Palestine Face Huge Risks,” Article 19, <https://www.article19.org/reader/global-expression-report-2018-19/regional-overviews/middle-east-and-northern-afrika-regional-overview/journalists-in-palestine-face-huge-risks/>.

<sup>115</sup> “Shireen Abu Akleh and the Journalists Killed by Israeli Forces,” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/12/infographic-the-journalists-killed-by-israeli-forces-since-2000>.

<sup>116</sup> Sheren Khalel, “Journalism Is a Dangerous Job for Palestinians,” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/8/journalism-is-a-dangerous-job-for-palestinians>.

<sup>117</sup> Sheren Khalel, “Journalism Is a Dangerous Job for Palestinians,” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/8/journalism-is-a-dangerous-job-for-palestinians>.

<sup>118</sup> Sheren Khalel, “Journalism Is a Dangerous Job for Palestinians,” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/8/journalism-is-a-dangerous-job-for-palestinians>.

<sup>119</sup> Sheren Khalel, “Journalism Is a Dangerous Job for Palestinians,” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/8/journalism-is-a-dangerous-job-for-palestinians>.

<sup>120</sup> “Israel Is Regularly Accused of Targeting Journalists,” Le Monde, May 15, 2022, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/05/15/israel-is-regularly-accused-of-targeting-journalists\\_5983560\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/05/15/israel-is-regularly-accused-of-targeting-journalists_5983560_4.html).

<sup>121</sup> “Israel Is Regularly Accused of Targeting Journalists,” Le Monde, May 15, 2022, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/05/15/israel-is-regularly-accused-of-targeting-journalists\\_5983560\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/05/15/israel-is-regularly-accused-of-targeting-journalists_5983560_4.html).



with batons and set off stun grenades, violence that almost caused the pallbearers to drop [her] coffin” and provoked what Esawi Frej, an Arab-Israeli politician, called “a needless flare-up” in Israeli-Palestinian relations.<sup>122</sup> Palestinian journalists who fear violence and unjust imprisonment at the hands of Israel have a very good reason for it.

Of course, it is also necessary to discuss the threats to journalists posed by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza—both of which have carried out “arbitrary arrests for peaceful dissent” in retaliation for “journalism, social media [activism], and public demonstrations” that they have seen as a challenge to their political legitimacy and leadership.<sup>123</sup> As the Fatah-Hamas feud deepens despite continued attempts at reconciliation, the security services of the Palestinian Authority have “targeted supporters” of Hamas and Hamas has “targeted supporters” of Fatah.<sup>124</sup> Both rely primarily on “overly broad laws that criminalize activity such as causing sectarian strife or insulting ‘higher authorities’” just as Israel relies on the charge of “incitement” to enforce its will.<sup>125</sup> Thus, detention is used to “punish critics and deter them and others from further activism” by “taunting, threatening, beating, and forcing detainees into painful stress positions for hours at a time” in what clearly constitutes a violation of human rights, as well as the specific rights of journalists and media workers.<sup>126</sup>

Clearly then, the situation is quite complicated and must be navigated with care. Moreover, the problems caused by both Israeli and Palestinian entities should be addressed when finding a solution to the problem—human rights abuses are human rights abuses and should not be tolerated under any circumstances whatsoever, no matter who the perpetrator may be.

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

As suggested in an earlier section, the laws, treaties, and conventions that define the rights of journalists and the obligations of states to defend them are already quite robust and clear. Modifying them further—especially when they are already poorly enforced, despite widespread tacit agreement on their contents. Here, solutions will likely focus on enforcement mechanisms for existing international law—though delegates should remain conscious of national sovereignty concerns raised by Palestine—and programs that the League of Arab States

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<sup>122</sup> Jonathan Guyer, “The Killing of Palestinian-American Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh Explained,” Vox, May 11, 2022, <https://www.vox.com/2022/5/11/23067365/shireen-abu-akleh-palestinian-journalist-killed-israel>; Patrick Kingsley and Raja Abdulrahim, “Israeli Police Attack Mourners Before Funeral for Palestinian American Journalist,” *The New York Times*, May 13, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/world/middleeast/shireen-abu-akleh-funeral.html>.

<sup>123</sup> “Two Authorities, One Way, Zero Dissent: Arbitrary Arrest and Torture Under the Palestinian Authority and Hamas,” Human Rights Watch, October 23, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/10/23/two-authorities-one-way-zero-dissent/arbitrary-arrest-and-torture-under>.

<sup>124</sup> “Two Authorities, One Way, Zero Dissent: Arbitrary Arrest and Torture Under the Palestinian Authority and Hamas,” Human Rights Watch, October 23, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/10/23/two-authorities-one-way-zero-dissent/arbitrary-arrest-and-torture-under>.

<sup>125</sup> “Two Authorities, One Way, Zero Dissent: Arbitrary Arrest and Torture Under the Palestinian Authority and Hamas,” Human Rights Watch, October 23, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/10/23/two-authorities-one-way-zero-dissent/arbitrary-arrest-and-torture-under>; Sheren Khaleel, “Journalism Is a Dangerous Job for Palestinians,” <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/8/journalism-is-a-dangerous-job-for-palestinians>.

<sup>126</sup> “Two Authorities, One Way, Zero Dissent: Arbitrary Arrest and Torture Under the Palestinian Authority and Hamas,” Human Rights Watch, October 23, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/10/23/two-authorities-one-way-zero-dissent/arbitrary-arrest-and-torture-under>.

can pursue to promote a social and political climate that respects the rights of journalists and encourages states to follow through on their obligations to them. Oversight bodies and reporting committees, as always, are also a good place to start. Moreover, if they are put together well, they will generally steer clear of the sovereignty dispute. Media campaigns and training programs to build “public trust” about the media and state institutions may also be worth looking into. Many of these ideas were put forward in some capacity in the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which suggests that “prevention mechanisms and actions to address some of the root causes of violence against journalists and of impunity [be made a priority]. This implies the need to deal with issues such as corruption, organized crime and an effective framework for the rule of law in order to respond to negative elements. In addition, the existence of laws that curtail freedom of expression (e.g. overly restrictive defamation laws), must be addressed. The media industry also must deal with low wages and improving journalistic skills. To whatever extent possible, the public must be made aware of these challenges in the public and private spheres and the consequences from a failure to act. The protection of journalists should adapt to the local realities affecting journalists. Journalists reporting on corruption and organized crime, for example, are increasingly targeted by organized crime groups and parallel powers. Approaches that are tailored to local needs should be encouraged” as well.<sup>127</sup> One might also look to collaborate with another Council. The United Nations did something very similar when they made a point to “invite the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programs of the United Nations system to consider identifying focal points for the exchange of information about the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, in cooperation with Member States and under the overall coordination of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization” to build a stronger and more comprehensive program. Ultimately, however, the Israeli authorities will be the hardest part of this topic to navigate. With them, it may be best to think about how they were dealt with in other topics—can they be incentivized or coerced into abiding by international law if they do not already do so? If not, what kind of cooperative efforts from the League of Arab States could counterbalance them? To invoke the United Nations once again, what avenues can states pursue to “emphasize the role of international cooperation in support of national efforts to prevent attacks and violence against journalists and in raising the capacities of states in the field of human rights, including in preventing attacks and violence against journalists, including through the provision of technical assistance, upon the request of and in accordance with the priorities set by the states concerned” by the issue?<sup>128</sup> Perhaps the most important consideration of all, however, is that the problems caused by both Israeli and Palestinian entities need be addressed. Failing to do so would mean solving only one half of the problem.

## **Section II: Questions to Consider in Your Research:**

- How should concerns of national sovereignty be addressed here? Can—and should—the members of the League of Arab States seek to change certain domestic policies of other members? Would some of the examples provided in the policy proposals from the United

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<sup>127</sup> UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, United Nations, [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/un-plan-on-safety-journalists\\_en.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/un-plan-on-safety-journalists_en.pdf).

<sup>128</sup> “Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2019,” General Assembly, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/428/62/PDF/N1942862.pdf?OpenElement>.

Nations—like addressing overly restrictive defamation laws—be welcomed by members of the Arab League?

- If your assigned country struggles with freedom of speech and the rights of journalists, how will you want to approach this question? Could pushing for a particularly liberal or conservative treatment of journalists in Palestine set a precedent which could someday be applied to your country? What would the domestic reaction to those kinds of policies be?
- Given that many policies pursued by the United Nations had unsatisfying results, is the League of Arab States capable of doing better in a region which, as the beginning of the first section of this topic points out, struggles with freedom of speech and the rights of journalists?
- How should Israel be approached for this topic? Can they be incentivized into cooperating with the League of Arab States? Might it be necessary to make some concessions in return? If so, how would other members of the Arab League—and the citizens of your country—react?

### **Section III: Questions a Resolution Might Answer:**

- How will international law be enforced in a way that is cognizant of national sovereignty and political realities in both Israel and Palestine?
- Is it better to take an active or reactive approach to defending journalists? In either case, what policies will you pursue to help guarantee their safety?
- How will you address the root causes of violence against journalists, if at all?
- What does respect for freedom of speech and the rights of journalists look like in Palestine after your new policies are implemented? Should it resemble your country, another country, or something entirely different?

### **Section IV: Additional Resources**

- [OHCHR and the Safety of Journalists](#)
- [Protection of Journalists: How Does Law Protect in War?](#)
- [OHCHR and the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#)
- [Journalist Safety and Emergencies](#)