



# **2025-2026**

## **Model Arab League**

### **BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**Council on Palestinian Affairs**

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**Original draft by Zaina Nateel, Chair of the Council of Palestinian Affairs at the 2025-2026 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations**

Honorable Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 Model Arab League Council on Palestinian Affairs! My name is Zaina Nateel, and I am honored to serve as your Chair this year. I'm a junior at the University of Houston, majoring in Political Science, and this is my third year participating in Model Arab League.

This council holds a special place within the Model Arab League as it is entirely devoted to addressing the ongoing struggle for Palestinian freedom, dignity, and self-determination. The Council on Palestinian Affairs centers its work around elevating the voices and needs of the Palestinian people, whose resilience has endured over 75 years of occupation, displacement, and genocide. Our discussions will span across political, social, and humanitarian issues, all deeply connected to the broader Palestinian cause. Engaging meaningfully in these topics means going beyond surface-level understanding and truly examining the root causes and lived experiences behind them.

I know that sometimes, this council might feel intense or overwhelming at first, especially when dealing with complex topics or new perspectives. That discomfort can be a part of the learning experience and an opportunity to grow and challenge yourself. I encourage you to approach your research with curiosity and to enter committee with an open mind and a readiness to collaborate.

If you have any questions or concerns, I'm always available to help, so please don't hesitate to reach out to me. My email is [znateel@cougarnet.uh.edu](mailto:znateel@cougarnet.uh.edu). I can't wait to see all of you in committee and to hear your ideas!

Zaina Nateel  
Chair, Council on Palestinian Affairs

## Topic I: Addressing the systematic imprisonment and conditions of Palestinian hostages held under Israeli custody

### I. Introduction

#### A. General Background

The Israeli imprisonment of the Palestinian people is a central mechanism through which the occupation sustains control. Since 1967, more than one million Palestinians have been detained by Israeli forces. Today, approximately 10,000 remain imprisoned, including over 400 children and 27 women.<sup>1</sup> Among them, over 3,400 are held under administrative detention, a practice that permits indefinite imprisonment without formal charge or trial, often based on secret evidence inaccessible to detainees or their legal counsel.

These arrests extend far beyond individuals engaged in armed activity. Palestinians have been imprisoned for protesting, publishing content on social media, or for alleged political affiliations. Since late 2023, detention conditions have deteriorated further. Reports from UN agencies and human rights organizations document widespread use of torture, including electrocution, sexual violence, physical beatings, exposure to extreme temperatures, and denial of food, medical treatment, and hygiene.<sup>2</sup> At least 53 Palestinians have died in Israeli custody over the past year.

Palestinians are tried in a separate Israeli military court system that operates outside of international legal standards. Trials are conducted in Hebrew, often without adequate translation. Detainees, including minors, are frequently denied timely access to legal counsel and may be interrogated for extended periods without a lawyer present.<sup>3</sup> Hearings are brief, heavily reliant on confessions often obtained under duress, and nearly always end in conviction. The military courts maintain a conviction rate exceeding 99 percent and routinely try children. One prominent case is that of Ahmad Manasra, who was arrested at the age of thirteen, held in solitary confinement, and subjected to prolonged psychological abuse.

This legal framework is not the result of isolated misconduct. It is part of a broader system designed to criminalize Palestinian political life and suppress dissent. The scale, structure, and endurance of these practices reveal a deliberate policy of mass incarceration that functions as a tool of collective punishment.

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<sup>1</sup> Hussein, Mohamed A., and Mohammed Haddad. "Why Has Israel Imprisoned 10,000 Palestinians?" *Al Jazeera*, 17 Apr. 2025, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/17/a-nation-behind-bars-why-has-israel-imprisoned-10000-palestinians](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/17/a-nation-behind-bars-why-has-israel-imprisoned-10000-palestinians).

<sup>2</sup> "Israel's Escalating Use of Torture against Palestinians in Custody a Preventable Crime against Humanity: UN Experts | Ohchr." *United Nations Human Rights*, United Nations, 5 Aug. 2024, [www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/08/israels-escalating-use-torture-against-palestinians-custody-preventable](http://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/08/israels-escalating-use-torture-against-palestinians-custody-preventable)

<sup>3</sup> "Extent of Systematic Torture, Atrocities Endured by Palestinians in Israeli Prisons Is Shocking." *Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor*, HuMedia, 27 Feb. 2025, <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6633/Extent-of-systematic-torture-atrocities-endured-by-Palestinians-in-Israeli-prisons-is-shocking>.

## B. History in the Arab World

Israel's policy of mass incarceration did not emerge in a vacuum. Since 1967, its occupation has relied on a system of military orders, administrative detention, and sweeping criminalization of Palestinian political life. The Israeli legal framework enables indefinite detention without trial, conviction through military courts with near-total conviction rates, and the arrest of minors under laws written by and for the occupying power.<sup>4</sup> These are not isolated policies. They are central to the occupation's ability to control, suppress, and fragment Palestinian resistance.

Arab responses to this policy structure have historically been limited. Statements of condemnation are routine, but sustained intervention is rare. Some governments, such as Egypt and Sudan<sup>5</sup>, have occasionally raised the issue in bilateral or UN settings, but without enforcement or follow-through. The Arab League has passed multiple resolutions supporting hostages, yet no institutional mechanism has been built to track, intervene in, or pressure Israel over this practice.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most high-profile examples of Arab engagement came in the form of Qatar's mediation during the 2023 Hamas-Israel hostage exchange. Qatar brokered a temporary ceasefire that led to the release of both Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners. But while celebrated publicly, the deal exposed critical weaknesses. The exchange was brokered largely through foreign intelligence channels. It was not rooted in international law or based on clear prisoner categories. Instead, Israel retained control over who would be released. And most importantly, it failed to limit future detentions. Israel resumed mass arrests immediately after. The numbers speak for themselves: for every one Palestinian freed, fifteen more were arrested in the weeks that followed.<sup>7</sup>

This is the problem with reactive diplomacy. Without structural follow-up or legal leverage, temporary deals allow Israel to reset the cycle. Arrest, detain, exchange, repeat.

What has worked, though limited, are grassroots and NGO-led legal documentation efforts supported by some Arab civil society actors. Jordanian and Lebanese lawyers have contributed to case tracking. Egyptian medical organizations have offered support to released detainees. Arab media has occasionally released prisoner-centered stories. But without regional political alignment, these efforts remain disconnected from policy.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "The Military Courts ." *The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories*, B'tselem, 11 Nov. 2017, [www.btselem.org/military\\_courts](http://www.btselem.org/military_courts).

<sup>5</sup> "Israeli Practices/Torture of Arab Prisoners - Letter from Sudan - Question of Palestine." *United Nations*, United Nations, 7 May 1977, [www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-187447/](http://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-187447/).

<sup>6</sup> "Arab League Condemns Israeli Denounces Violations against Palestinians, Arabs, inside the Green Line." *Saudi Press Agency*, Saudi Press Agency, 19 Jan. 2017, [www.spa.gov.sa/w316092](http://www.spa.gov.sa/w316092).

<sup>7</sup> Hussein, Mohamed A., and Mohammed Haddad. "Why Has Israel Imprisoned 10,000 Palestinians?" *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 17 Apr. 2025, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/17/a-nation-behind-bars-why-has-israel-imprisoned-10000-palestinians](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/17/a-nation-behind-bars-why-has-israel-imprisoned-10000-palestinians)

<sup>8</sup> "Release the Doctors: Ngos Call for the Release of Unlawfully Detained Health Workers in Gaza and the West Bank." *Human Rights Watch*, 30 June 2025, [www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/30/release-the-doctors-ngos-call-for-the-release-of-unlawfully-detained-health-workers](https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/30/release-the-doctors-ngos-call-for-the-release-of-unlawfully-detained-health-workers)

This is the historical gap. Israel's system is built to endure. The Arab world's response has not been. Until the region treats this as a coordinated political crisis requiring infrastructure, legal strategy, and diplomatic leverage, the pattern will continue unchanged.

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

A solution lies in sustainability, and it lies within addressing the policies and the apartheid that allows Israel to unequivocally break international law. It is important to address root causes. For too long, responses to Israel's imprisonment of Palestinians have centered on symbolic gestures or short-term political concessions, often detached from the broader systems that normalize indefinite detention, administrative incarceration, and psychological or physical abuse. If the underlying legal and structural framework that enables these violations is not confronted, no solution will be enduring.

The historical use of prisoner exchange deals, such as the 2011 Shalit exchange or more recent hostage swaps, has succeeded in securing the release of some detainees, but they are often rearrested.<sup>9</sup> They fail to challenge the legitimacy of the prison system itself. These exchanges reduce prisoners to bargaining chips and allow Israel to maintain the architecture of administrative detention, military courts, and legal opacity. While these events often draw attention to the issue, they risk reinforcing the idea that Palestinians must trade for freedom, rather than possess it inherently as a legal and human right. Moreover, these agreements offer no guarantee of lasting freedom for those released. It is essential any solution has the necessary follow up for it to be effective.

Future solutions must be grounded in a comprehensive understanding of imprisonment as a deliberate mechanism of settler-colonial control, encompassing both legal, humanitarian, and political perspectives. This includes challenging the misuse of administrative detention at international legal forums, generating pressure for compliance with international humanitarian law, and advocating for the reclassification of detainees as political prisoners or prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions. Sustainability also requires mechanisms that function beyond diplomacy, such as a regional legal network dedicated to documenting human rights violations, providing detainees with legal counsel, and assisting families facing economic and psychological fallout.

The Arab world has a central role to play in this. Regional coordination can provide legitimacy and protection that individual actors cannot. This could take the form of an Arab League commission or task force with investigative and advocacy powers, or the integration of prisoner rights into broader campaigns for Palestinian justice and sovereignty. Just as importantly, solutions must center the stories and agency of prisoners themselves, not simply as victims, but as political actors targeted precisely because of their resistance and identity.

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<sup>9</sup> "Palestinians Freed in 2011 Gilad Shalit Prisoner-Swap Back in Custody." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 18 June 2014, [www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/18/palestinians-freed-2011-gilad-shalit-custody](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/18/palestinians-freed-2011-gilad-shalit-custody)

## II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What are the long-term effects of mass incarceration on Palestinian civil society, youth activism, and political participation?
- In what ways have Arab states responded to or failed to address the imprisonment of Palestinians, and what historical or political factors explain their limited engagement?
- What specific Israeli laws, military regulations, or detention practices should be prioritized in addressing the imprisonment of Palestinians?
- Which Arab states have mechanisms or legal tools that could be leveraged to support detainee rights or pressure Israel diplomatically?

## III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What kind of regional framework can be developed to protect Palestinian rights and prevent future campaigns of mass detention?
- What forms of diplomatic pressure could be used to hold Israel accountable for its violations, including conditions on normalization or regional legal action?
- What changes can be made to the structure or administration of Israeli prisons holding Palestinians?
- What strategies can prevent the rearrest of released prisoners, especially in the context of repeated cycles of detention without charge?

## IV. Additional Resources

### [Israeli Military Courts](#)

*B'Tselem is an Israeli-based human rights organization that documents violations committed in the occupied Palestinian territories. While the specific link above directs readers to its reporting on military courts, the broader site includes a wide range of topics including Torture and Abuse, The Supreme Court of the Occupation, and Administrative Detention. B'Tselem provides detailed legal analysis, statistics, and verified reports that can be useful in understanding how Israel implements and justifies its detention policies. This source is especially valuable because it originates from within Israeli society, offering a unique perspective and that can help preempt accusations of bias or one-sidedness. However, it is important to be critical of framing and language, which may reflect liberal Zionist perspectives. Readers are encouraged to focus on the factual reporting and recontextualize narratives through a Palestinian and international legal lens.*

### [Children in Israeli Military Detention: Observations and Recommendations](#)

*UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund, is a United Nations agency dedicated to improving the lives of children worldwide. This is a comprehensive review of how children are treated in Israeli prisons from the moment of arrest through trial and sentencing. It details violations of the Convention on the Rights of a*

*Child and the Convention Against Torture and provides 38 specific recommendations to improve standards of detention.*

### **Annual Violation Reports**

*Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association is a documentation and advocacy organization that monitors and reports on Israel's annual violations against Palestinian prisoners. The link above directs readers to the organization's main page, where detailed reports from 2007 to 2023 are available. These reports document detention practices, conditions of imprisonment (including torture, isolation, and medical neglect), military court procedures, and administrative detention trends.*

### **Israel must end mass incommunicado detention and torture of Palestinians from Gaza**

*Amnesty International is a global human rights organization. In its 2024 findings, the organization documents firsthand Palestinian accounts of torture and other Israeli violations. It details the cases of 27 former detainees, including men, women, and a 14-year-old boy, who were held without legal access or family contact for up to four and a half months. These testimonies reflect systemic abuse under current Israeli detention practices.*

## **Topic II: Advocating for the development of regional and international strategies to ensure accountability and support Palestinian justice**

### **I. Introduction**

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

The denial of justice for Palestinians is not a new development. It is a result of decades of unchecked war crime violations, international paralysis, and the absence of credible accountability. Since 1948, Israel has stolen Palestinian land and forced mass displacement, taken Palestinian hostages, controlled food and water, run an apartheid country, and established security corridors. In addition, in Gaza, it has bombed homes, schools, and undesignated refugee aid sites. All of this violates the Fourth Geneva Convention, designating their actions as war crimes and international violations of war. The problem lies in the fact that when Israel is taken to the International Criminal Court or other means of accountability, even when found guilty, there is no means of holding them accountable.

Palestinian justice and accountability are not abstract demands but urgent calls for the end of impunity, the right to return, reparations for victims, and the recognition of historical and ongoing crimes committed against their people. For many Palestinians, justice means holding perpetrators accountable, restoring stolen land and dignity, and ensuring that future generations live free from occupation, siege, and apartheid.

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

Palestinian justice and accountability, from the perspective of Palestinians, means more than symbolic condemnation. Arab states have historically issued strong statements denouncing Israeli aggression and have passed dozens of resolutions in support of Palestinian rights. Yet despite decades of rhetorical solidarity, the Arab world has struggled to implement concrete mechanisms for justice or accountability. After Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories in 1967, Arab states convened the Khartoum Conference, issuing the famous "Three No's": no peace, no recognition, and no negotiations with Israel.<sup>10</sup> While the statement signaled unity, the years that followed revealed fragmentation in regional approaches. Egypt and Jordan signed peace agreements with Israel, and more recently, the Abraham Accords deepened those divides. Countries like the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan established diplomatic ties with Israel despite ongoing violence in Palestine.<sup>11</sup> While publicly voicing solidarity, many of these states have made deals with Western powers that undermine Palestinian claims and weaken the credibility of their support. At the same time, states like Algeria, Iraq, and Lebanon have remained vocal in rejecting normalization and have called for more decisive legal and political action. However, the internal divide between normalization and resistance has made unified Arab League strategies nearly impossible.

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<sup>10</sup> "4th Arab League Summit in Khartoum - Three No's Resolution (1967)." *ECF*, <https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/141>

<sup>11</sup> Harb, Imad K. "Normalization Survives Despite the Gaza War." *Arab Center Washington DC*, 11 Jan. 2024, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/normalization-survives-despite-the-gaza-war/>

As a result, Palestinians have turned to international bodies like the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, ICC. In 2021, the ICC formally opened an investigation into crimes committed by both Israeli and Palestinian actors since 2014. Yet the Court's work has been obstructed by political pressure, lack of cooperation from powerful states, and prolonged delays. In 2024, the legal landscape shifted when South Africa submitted a genocide case against Israel to the ICJ, the International Court of Justice. The Court found it "plausible" that genocide was occurring in Gaza and ordered provisional measures, including allowing humanitarian access and halting genocidal acts. But without enforcement power, the ICJ's rulings have not stopped the violence.<sup>12</sup>

Palestinians have also looked to the UN, but the United States consistently blocks any serious action through its Security Council veto. This is one of many examples of how powerful international actors have shielded Israel from accountability.<sup>13</sup>

The lack of consistency from Arab Countries, international political protection, and a lack of enforcement from international agencies have prevented Palestinians from gaining reparations for Israel's violent genocidal crimes.

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

True justice must reflect what Palestinians themselves define as accountability. It means addressing war crimes, ensuring reparations, restoring the rights of displaced people, and holding perpetrators accountable through credible legal mechanisms. Both short and long-term strategies are necessary to reinforce Palestinian rights, confront ongoing violations, and build durable systems for justice. Real accountability includes both preventative measures, such as sanctions, investigations, and international scrutiny, and restorative ones, such as legal redress, reparations, and recognition of harm. It must also contend with the structural imbalance Palestinians face when the very systems meant to protect them are routinely obstructed or politicized.

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

- What role has your country played in arms trade, intelligence cooperation, or financial agreements that may contribute to impunity for war crimes in Palestine?
- What specific protections do Palestinians need that are not being addressed by current international mechanisms, and how can your country help provide them?
- What tools does your government possess to support legal accountability for crimes committed in Palestine? Are there underutilized forms of leverage, such as legal jurisdiction, economic ties, or diplomatic influence?
- What are the potential consequences or benefits for your country if it takes a more active role in supporting international legal action against Israel?

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<sup>12</sup> "Israel Not Complying with World Court Order in Genocide Case." *Human Rights Watch*, 26 Feb. 2024, [www.hrw.org/news/2024/02/26/israel-not-complying-world-court-order-genocide-case](https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/02/26/israel-not-complying-world-court-order-genocide-case).

<sup>13</sup> Mishra, Vibhu. "US Vetoes Security Council Resolution Demanding Permanent Ceasefire in Gaza." *United Nations*, United Nations, 4 June 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/06/1164056>

### III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What regional mechanisms can be created or strengthened to enforce international rulings and protect Palestinians from ongoing violations?
- How can Arab states collectively support efforts at the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice to ensure accountability?
- What steps can be taken to prevent normalization policies from undermining Palestinian justice efforts?
- How can Arab states coordinate legal, diplomatic, or economic strategies to pressure Israel into compliance with international law?

### IV. Additional Resources

#### [No Justice, No Peace: A List of Israeli War Crimes Since Oct. 7](#)

*The Institute for Palestine Studies is an independent research center focused on Palestinian rights and international law. This article documents Israeli war crimes since Oct. 7, citing violations of the Geneva Conventions, the Genocide Convention, and customary IHL. It outlines attacks on civilians, starvation tactics, destruction of hospitals and archives, forced displacement, and mutilation of corpses. This source is essential for understanding the specific crimes committed and how they constitute breaches of international law.*

#### [Appeal for accountability of Israel's actions in Gaza- Letter from the State of Palestine](#)

*This official letter from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the UN urgently appeals for international accountability regarding Israel's actions in Gaza. It documents widespread war crimes, including the targeting of civilians, hospitals, and refugee camps, the use of starvation as a weapon, and violations of the Geneva Conventions. The letter underscores the failure of the international community to enforce consequences, highlighting the role of powerful states in shielding Israel. This source is important because it provides an official Palestinian perspective on genocide allegations and calls for concrete legal and political action.*

#### [Lack of Accountability Encourages Israel to Commit More Crimes Against the Palestinian People](#)

*The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights is an independent organization based in Gaza that documents human rights violations. This source details repeated violations of international humanitarian law and highlights the lack of military justification for these attacks, tracing a pattern of impunity across multiple operations since 2009. The report argues that the absence of international accountability enables Israel to continue committing war crimes. This source is important for understanding the legal violations and historical pattern of*

*unpunished aggression.*

### **Israel and the ICJ: Comparing International Court Cases During the Gaza War**

*The Washington Institute for Near East Policy is a U.S.-based think tank that focuses on foreign policy and Middle East affairs. This article outlines the growing role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in addressing Israel's actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It distinguishes between past and present ICJ cases, such as South Africa's genocide case and Nicaragua's complaint against Germany, and emphasizes the symbolic and political weight of ICJ proceedings even when enforcement is unlikely. This resource is valuable for understanding the limitations and potential of international legal mechanisms in pursuing accountability for Israeli violations.*

### **Topic III: Strengthening healthcare and infrastructure access for Palestinians under occupation and blockade with a focus on addressing the different capabilities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip**

#### **I. Introduction**

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

Access to healthcare and basic infrastructure for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank has been severely compromised by the ongoing occupation, blockade, and genocide. The consequences have been devastating and starkly different in each territory.

In Gaza, a 16-year Israeli blockade, compounded by intense bombardment since October 2023, has destroyed critical infrastructure. By January 2025, only 16 of the original 36 hospitals remained partially functioning.<sup>14</sup> Israel continues to block essential medical supplies and fuel from entering Gaza, which are necessary to operate ventilators, oxygen machines, and ambulances. Outbreaks of acute respiratory infections, skin diseases, diarrheal illnesses, and hepatitis A have surged, fueled by the collapse of sanitation systems and the lack of clean water.<sup>15</sup>

In the West Bank, the crisis has escalated through military occupation, systematic attacks on healthcare, and severe mobility restrictions. Since October 2023, over 480 attacks on healthcare infrastructure have been documented in the West Bank, leading to 16 deaths and 95 injuries among health workers.<sup>16</sup> Movement for both patients and providers is heavily restricted. Between October 2023 and May 2024, 44% of West Bank patient applications for treatment outside the territory were denied or left pending. Checkpoints, settler-only roads, curfews, and ongoing sieges have fractured Palestinian communities and obstructed both emergency response and the delivery of essential services.

Both Gaza and the West Bank suffer from deliberate systemic obstruction. Gaza cannot rebuild its health or water infrastructure due to bans on cement, fuel, and essential medical supplies. Even rapid humanitarian responses such as the deployment of ambulances and medical convoys by organizations like the Red Cross and Red Crescent have repeatedly come under fire, with documented instances of Israeli attacks killing medics and destroying marked vehicles.<sup>17</sup> These actions not only paralyze emergency response but also violate international humanitarian protections for medical personnel

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<sup>14</sup> “1000 Attacks on Health Care in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) Devastate Health System, Demand Accountability: PHR.” *PHR*, 2 Aug. 2024, <https://phr.org/news/1000-attacks-on-health-care-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territories-opt-devastate-health-system-demand-accountability-phr/>

<sup>15</sup> “Risk of Disease Spread Soars in Gaza as Health Facilities, Water and Sanitation Systems Disrupted.” *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, 8 Nov. 2023, <https://www.emro.who.int/opt/news/risk-of-disease-spread-soars-in-gaza-as-health-facilities-water-and-sanitation-systems-disrupted>.

<sup>16</sup> “Who Concerned about Escalating Health Crisis in West Bank.” *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, 14 June 2024, [www.who.int/news/item/14-06-2024-who-concerned-about-escalating-health-crisis-in-west-bank](http://www.who.int/news/item/14-06-2024-who-concerned-about-escalating-health-crisis-in-west-bank)

<sup>17</sup> Lukiv, Jaroslav, and David Gritten. “Gaza: Red Cross Outraged over Killing of Medics by Israeli Forces.” *BBC News*, BBC, 31 Mar. 2025, [www.bbc.com/news/articles/crkxm1rg6k1o](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/crkxm1rg6k1o)

and infrastructure. In the West Bank, the permit regime continues to block ambulances, restrict deliveries, and prevent patients from accessing care. Water access is tightly controlled, and even transporting medical staff or supplies between cities is frequently impossible due to military closures and settler violence.<sup>18</sup>

These conditions are not incidental. They reflect a calculated strategy of control, restriction, and denial of basic human needs. Gaza faces total siege and mass displacement, while the West Bank undergoes gradual strangulation through fragmentation and settler expansion. Despite different mechanisms, the result is the same: Palestinians are denied the right to live with dignity, access life-saving care, or build stable, functioning systems for their communities.

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

The Arab world has long positioned itself as a supporter of Palestinian rights, yet the region's efforts to ensure access to healthcare and infrastructure have been uneven, fragmented, and often reactive. While the Arab League has passed numerous resolutions condemning Israeli restrictions and attacks on Palestinian infrastructure, these statements have rarely translated into coordinated action or durable frameworks for intervention.

Following the 2007 blockade of Gaza, several Arab states pledged to support the reconstruction of hospitals, homes, and water systems. These pledges were made repeatedly after each major Israeli assault in 2009, 2014, and again after 2021, but many funds were delayed, redirected, or blocked altogether due to logistical barriers or political disagreements. Gaza's reconstruction has become a cycle of destruction and partial repair, where rebuilding is never completed before the next wave of attacks.<sup>19</sup> Although countries like Qatar and Egypt have provided funding or materials for hospitals and housing, long-term projects remain vulnerable to political shifts, border closures, and Israel's control over all goods entering the Strip. Even Egypt's 53-billion-dollar five-year reconstruction is in a stalemate due to the continuation of bombing and complications with Israel and the United States, underscoring the constant obstacles in any resolution.<sup>20</sup>

In the West Bank, several Arab states have invested in clinics, schools, and rural development. However, occupation policies continue to undermine these efforts, particularly in Area C, where Israel retains complete control. Projects are often demolished or delayed by the Israeli military, and Arab states have not pursued legal or diplomatic responses when this occurs. Instead, they have opted for cautious aid models that avoid confrontation and focus on short-term service delivery.

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<sup>18</sup> "West Bank: Access to Medical Care at Risk as Israeli Incursions Gain in Intensity." *Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières*, 18 Feb. 2025, [www.doctorswithoutborders.ca/west-bank-access-to-medical-care-at-risk-as-israeli-incursions-gain-in-intensity/](https://www.doctorswithoutborders.ca/west-bank-access-to-medical-care-at-risk-as-israeli-incursions-gain-in-intensity/).

<sup>19</sup> Barakat, Sultan, and Firas Masri. "Still in Ruins: Reviving the Stalled Reconstruction of Gaza." *Brookings*, 22 Aug. 2017, [www.brookings.edu/articles/reviving-the-stalled-reconstruction-of-gaza/](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/reviving-the-stalled-reconstruction-of-gaza/).

<sup>20</sup> Staff, Al Jazeera. "What Is Egypt's Plan for the Reconstruction of Gaza?" *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 4 Mar. 2025, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/4/what-is-egypts-plan-for-the-reconstruction-of-gaza](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/4/what-is-egypts-plan-for-the-reconstruction-of-gaza).

The differences in how Arab states engage with Gaza versus the West Bank reflect deeper regional divides. Some states have moved toward normalization with Israel in recent years, shifting their priorities away from direct support for Palestinian infrastructure. Others maintain a strong public rhetoric of solidarity while offering minimal material aid. The result is an inconsistent approach that leaves Palestinians without reliable regional backing, especially in the most urgent and vulnerable sectors of healthcare and infrastructure. This lack of reliability from the Arab world leaves Palestinians dependent on civil society efforts attempting to fill this gap, particularly through fundraising campaigns, humanitarian missions, and medical delegations. However, these are often episodic and lack the institutional weight of state-backed programs. In the absence of unified Arab action, Palestinians remain dependent on a mix of international agencies, overburdened NGOs, and unpredictable funding cycles.

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

Finding an effective solution must address both the immediate emergency and the underlying structural crisis that has produced it.

Early recovery efforts must be prioritized. Palestinians who are currently suffering from burns, amputations, starvation, untreated chronic illnesses, and trauma need immediate support. Short-term efforts must prioritize providing urgent medical care, ensuring access to safe zones for treatment, and protecting healthcare workers from Israeli attacks. Aid delivery cannot continue to depend solely on overburdened NGOs and the Red Cross.

At the same time, long-term planning must focus on rebuilding healthcare and water infrastructure in a way that prevents its repeated destruction. That means securing the materials needed for reconstruction, but more importantly, building systems and agreements that shield these structures from bombardment. Rebuilding cannot be possible while Israel continues to target hospitals and block critical supplies.

Ultimately, any solution must challenge the systems of control that created the crisis; otherwise, the cycle of destruction and repair will continue. A functional health system cannot rely on foreign aid indefinitely. There must be follow-up and a path to sovereignty.

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

- What forms of political pressure or Western influence limit the Arab League's ability to pursue sustainable healthcare and infrastructure solutions in Palestine?
- What role can Arab states play in creating alternatives to Israeli-controlled permit systems, fuel restrictions, and border closures?
- What mechanisms can the Arab League establish to ensure that reconstruction efforts in Palestine are protected from future destruction and political interference?
- How can the Arab League leverage its collective political and economic power to enforce accountability for the destruction of Palestinian healthcare and infrastructure?

### III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- How can the Arab League operationalize a coordinated reconstruction mechanism that bypasses restrictions imposed by occupation while upholding Palestinian sovereignty?
- What concrete measures will ensure protection for medical infrastructure and personnel under international law, and how will accountability for violations be enforced?
- In what ways will the resolution secure long-term funding and resource independence for Palestinian healthcare systems beyond emergency relief cycles?
- How will the resolution establish a credible monitoring body to track reconstruction progress, guarantee equitable distribution of aid, and respond to renewed destruction?

### IV. Additional Resources

#### [Reviving and rebuilding the health system in Gaza](#)

*WHO is the World Health Organization, a UN agency focused on global public health. This article details the collapse of Gaza's health system, its impact on chronic care and mental health, and what is required to rebuild it, including sustained aid, restored infrastructure, local leadership, and long-term investment in resilience. It can offer expanded insight into the infrastructure, workforce, and political conditions needed for recovery.*

#### [Constant settler and military violence in the West Bank](#)

*Doctors Without Borders is an international medical humanitarian organization that provides emergency care in conflict zones. This article was written in 2025 and details the mental and physical health toll of daily settler and military violence in the West Bank, especially in Masafer Yatta, and how MSF is responding through mobile clinics and psychological support.*

#### [West Bank and Gaza Health System Efficiency and Resiliency Project](#)

*The World Bank is an international financial institution that funds development projects and provides policy advice. This is a 2022 report detailing a health system project aimed at improving efficiency, quality, and resilience of care in the West Bank and Gaza, with a focus on infrastructure, non-communicable diseases, and emergency preparedness.*

#### [Health Crisis in Gaza: The Urgent Need for International Action](#)

*The National Library of Medicine is a U.S. government institution that archives global health research but is not responsible for the content of this article. This paper is a study that details Gaza's ongoing health crisis, highlighting rising mental health disorders among children, unsafe water, collapsing healthcare*

*access, and the urgent need for international academic and UN intervention to stabilize conditions and prevent further deterioration.*

## **Topic IV: Fostering an Arab-led mediation between Palestinian political factions to build a unified negotiating position**

### **I. Introduction**

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

Palestinian political fragmentation remains one of the most significant internal barriers to meaningful diplomacy and the pursuit of self-determination. Since 2007, the divide between Fatah and Hamas has resulted in the de facto political bifurcation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, undermining efforts toward national unity, democratic governance, and coherent international representation.<sup>21</sup> While both factions claim to work toward the creation of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, their strategies, ideologies, and power bases remain sharply divided. This split has not only undermined Palestinian self-determination but has also fractured the legitimacy and effectiveness of Palestinian diplomacy on the international stage. The roots of the division go back to the 2006 legislative elections, in which Hamas won a decisive victory over Fatah. Tensions escalated rapidly, and in 2007, violent clashes between the two factions led to Hamas assuming control of the Gaza Strip, while Fatah retained power through the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Since then, the two groups have ruled separately, each consolidating its own institutions, security forces, and political structures.

Ideologically, Hamas defines itself as an Islamic resistance movement with a focus on armed struggle, while Fatah has embraced secularism and diplomacy. Fatah recognizes Israel and has committed to negotiation through international frameworks, while Hamas does not formally recognize Israel but has expressed conditional openness to a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders. These differences have shaped their policies and their engagement with regional and international actors.

The impact of the division has been deeply felt across Palestinian society. According to Fatah's Faisal Abu Shahla, the 2007 split was considered by many Palestinians as a second Nakba, a catastrophe that further fragmented the national cause.<sup>22</sup> In Gaza, Fatah members were jailed and expelled, while in the West Bank, Hamas members continued to face arrests, surveillance, and restrictions on political activity. The split has weakened electoral legitimacy, deepened mistrust, and led to competing claims of governance. Internationally, the absence of a unified Palestinian position has hindered legal efforts, diplomatic negotiations, and engagement with institutions such as the United Nations. The ideological divide and differing approaches to engaging with Israel have divided Palestine, weakening its ability to present a unified front in negotiations.

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

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<sup>21</sup> Tahhan, Zena Al. "Hamas vs Fatah: Same Goal, Different Approaches." *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 12 Oct. 2017, [www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/10/12/hamas-and-fatah-how-are-the-two-groups-different](http://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/10/12/hamas-and-fatah-how-are-the-two-groups-different).

<sup>22</sup> "Palestinian Split: Views from Hamas and Fatah, Six Years On." *BBC News*, BBC, 17 June 2013, [www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22902880](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22902880).

Multiple reconciliation agreements have been brokered over the years by Arab states, each with distinct motivations and strategies. The 2007 Mecca Agreement, hosted by Saudi Arabia, aimed to end infighting and create a unity government. It collapsed within months as internal mistrust persisted. The Cairo agreements, spanning from 2009 to 2017, focused on political integration and election planning but were similarly undercut by disagreements over control of security forces, reconstruction efforts, and international recognition. In 2012, the Doha Declaration, mediated by Qatar, attempted to unify the factions under a transitional government, but implementation again stalled. Most recently, the 2022 Algiers Declaration and 2024 Beijing Declaration<sup>23</sup> renewed hope for unity but have yet to produce meaningful institutional change.<sup>24</sup>

Arab states have long positioned themselves as mediators in the Palestinian reconciliation process. Their efforts have been inconsistent and often shaped by broader regional rivalries. Egypt and Saudi Arabia have historically supported Fatah-aligned actors, while Qatar and Turkey have maintained closer ties to Hamas. These dynamics have at times intensified the divisions they aimed to resolve. Mediation has often focused on securing short-term ceasefires or temporary power-sharing agreements instead of building a credible long-term political framework. Over a dozen reconciliation efforts since 2007 have failed to yield lasting results. This has left both Arab states and the Palestinian public increasingly skeptical about the seriousness of the process.

External political pressure has also undermined these efforts. Israel, the United States, and European donors have consistently set preconditions on Palestinian unity, such as the exclusion or disarmament of Hamas, which has made any reconciliation fragile and conditional. International actors have frequently prioritized security coordination and aid disbursement over political restructuring, reinforcing the status quo rather than challenging it. Instead of insulating the process from such influence, most mediation efforts have become entangled in it, limiting their effectiveness and eroding trust.

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

Despite these repeated failures, the history of reconciliation attempts reveals clear patterns. Agreements tend to be rushed, lack implementation mechanisms, and fail to address core ideological and institutional divides. What is missing is not the desire for unity but the political infrastructure, neutral mediation, and sustained pressure to make it viable. Without these elements, reconciliation remains symbolic rather than structural, an elusive aspiration rather than an achievable goal.

A viable solution must prioritize the creation of a sustainable mechanism through which Palestinian leadership, despite internal differences, can coordinate external negotiations.

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<sup>23</sup> Aboudouh, Ahmed. *The Fatah–Hamas Agreement Increases Chinese Influence in Palestinian Affairs. but the Road to Unity Is Rocky*, Chatham House, 24 July 2024, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/07/fatah-hamas-agreement-increases-chinese-influence-palestinian-affairs-road-unity-rocky>

<sup>24</sup> Jahshan, Khalil E. “The Persistent Illusion of Palestinian Reconciliation.” *Arab Center Washington DC*, 14 Aug. 2023, [arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-persistent-illusion-of-palestinian-reconciliation/](http://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-persistent-illusion-of-palestinian-reconciliation/).

This structure does not require full political integration but must enable precise, consistent representation across diplomatic, legal, and reconstruction platforms. It must be capable of formulating shared positions, maintaining internal legitimacy, and functioning independently of shifting leadership or factional agendas.

Support from the Arab League or a regionally trusted body will be essential in establishing and maintaining this process. Mediation must be ongoing, not limited to moments of immediate political escalation. It should be grounded in equal participation, political balance, and regional protection, while remaining insulated from external or Western interference. The solution must also address how representation is determined, ensuring that Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and the diaspora are reflected in any negotiating platform.

Mechanisms for decision-making, dispute resolution, and enforcement are necessary to ensure continuity. Without these elements, past efforts have quickly unraveled. In addition, any negotiating framework must be linked to tangible goals, including international legal action, coordinated diplomacy, and reconstruction planning.

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

- How have internal governance structures and external pressures shaped the relationship between Palestinian factions?
- What factors have prevented sustained trust or cooperation between political leadership in Gaza and the West Bank?
- In what ways have Arab mediation efforts reflected broader regional interests rather than Palestinian priorities?
- How does the absence of a unified leadership affect Palestine's ability to engage diplomatically or legally on the international stage?

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

- What role should the Arab League play in establishing a permanent and trusted mediation framework?
- How can a resolution ensure that mediation efforts are led by Palestinians but supported by the region?
- What mechanisms can guarantee all factions have equal and fair representation in future negotiations?
- How can political unity help advance shared priorities, such as national elections, rebuilding Gaza, or pursuing legal accountability?

## **IV. Additional Resources**

### **[Political Reconstruction: For Gaza and Collective Survival](#)**

*Al-Shabaka is an independent Palestinian think tank that publishes research and commentary from a vast network of scholars and policy experts. This analysis explains how Israel has used territorial fragmentation, suppression of unified leadership like the PLO, and division of administrative authority to weaken Palestinian unity. It describes how Israeli policies created conditions where*

*meaningful joint governance became nearly impossible. This is a valuable resource for understanding the structural barriers that have prevented reconciliation.*

### **Predictable in Their Failure: An Analysis of Mediation Efforts to End the Palestinian Split**

*International Peacekeeping is a peer-reviewed academic journal focused on mediation and conflict resolution. This analysis gives in-depth detail about the mediation efforts and the history of the two factions. It also explains why Hamas and Fatah have a deep divide, how each group is perceived, and why reconciliation has continued to fail.*

### **To negotiate with Israel, Palestine needs political unity**

*International Crisis Group is an independent organization that provides in-depth analysis of global conflicts and wars. This article is essential because it recenters the narrative of political unity and reconciliation around negotiation. It's important to understand why Hamas and Fatah cannot effectively negotiate while fragmented and how the leadership plays a role in furthering the divide.*

### **The Challenge of Hamas to Fatah**

*The Washington Institute is a policy-focused think tank that publishes research, specifically focusing on Middle East politics. This article outlines the core demands and ideological differences between Hamas and Fatah in negotiations, showing how Hamas's strategy of resistance contrasts with Fatah's focus on diplomacy and international recognition. This is a vital resource to help understand the differences and similarities in each group's strategies and how those shape their negotiating positions.*