

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: WILL THERE BE AN ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE IN HOLY LAND?

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ABSTRACT: The land of Palestine is also known as 'Holy Land'. It is holy because it is concerned with three great religions of the world i.e. Christianity, Islam and Judaism. It is an area roughly located between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Presently, Jewish state of Israel and state of Palestine together form the ancient land of 'Palestine'. This sacred land after Second World War, particularly after the establishment of Independent State of Israel, has been turned in to a land of chaos, war, miseries and deaths. Thousands of innocent Palestinian Arabs and Jews from Israeli side have lost their lives in this conflict which is mainly concerned with a piece of land where communities i.e. Arabs and Jews, were living in harmony before the forceful mass immigration of Zionists from Europe to the holy land of Palestine. The involvement of Superpowers have further worsened the crisis. They have used the sentiments of both warring sides for their own benefits. The regional powers being militarily weak, failed to protect the legal rights of their coreligionists in Palestine. The younger generation in Israel and State of Palestine are brought up an environment of mutual hatred towards each other. The peace in the region is not possible until their mutual disputes are not resolved. But do they have such a higher level of maturity to solve their mutual disputes? In present paper an attempt have been made to study what are the causes, geopolitical effects and possible solutions to this conflict.

KEYWORDS: Holy Land, Establishment, Communities, Superpowers & Coreligionists.

1 INTRODUCTION

Conflicts with each other among various countries of the world are not a new phenomenon. It is a universal phenomenon that a powerful nation has always tried to subdue its weak neighbor so as to enhance its hegemony over the rival nations. But while enhancing their hegemony, they forgot that the impact of their fight to enhance their influence has to be borne by the common masses who suffer from acts like wars, trade sanctions, bans or restrictions on entry into other country's territory. Asia being the largest continent of the world has a large number of boundary as well as territorial disputes among its constituent countries. From Far East to extreme West and from its north to south there are a number of countries who are indulged in long pending disputes regarding their territories. These territorial disputes have led to a number of wars among these countries. But still after the end of wars, no permanent solutions to these problems till now have been arrived. This has resulted in strained relations among the disputed parties, mutual hatred among the nations, race of arms, human rights violation of prisoners of wars and economic drain of resources for the purchase of arms. It has resulted in mass poverty in these countries. Some important disputes among nations in Asia are Russia-Japan dispute over Kuril Islands, China-Japan dispute over Senkaku Island in East China Sea, China's dispute over South China Sea with ASEAN Countries, Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, India-China border dispute and last but not the least Israel-Palestine Conflict etc. The end of these disputes is not easily visible in near future.

Among these disputes the main discussion in the present paper will be done on 'Israel-Palestine conflict.' This conflict is a living example of how the native inhabitants of a particular area become internally displaced people and cornered to a very

small but fragmented area due to entry of a powerful & technically strong minority community. In other words, we can say that due to this conflict the native Arabs Muslims of Palestine were side cornered to very small fragmented pockets of the country by powerful Jewish state of Israel. Many countries in the world express their sympathy towards people of Palestine but no one has the courage to criticize openly the policies of planned killings of civilians of Palestine by the Israel. They just give 'Lip Service' of sympathy to Palestine but no real action on the ground against aggressor Israel.

2 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

No study and research can be done without fixing its objectives. In the present paper we have following main objectives:

1. To know the main causes behind the Israel-Palestine dispute.
2. To assess the humanitarian situation in Palestine and effects this dispute on both Israel and Palestine.
3. Role of Global Super Powers and Regional Powers & United Nations in this dispute.

3 METHODOLOGY

This paper has used information obtained from various sources including articles form newspapers magazines, internet and numerous books and research papers.

4 AREA OF STUDY

Israel and Palestine states are situated in West Asia. Prior to existence of Independent State of Israel, the entire area was known as 'Palestine', but after the evolution of independent Jewish State after 1948 A.D. war, this area got divided into three parts (1) Jewish State of Israel (2) West Bank(of Jordan River) (3) Gaza Strip. (See the map).



Fig. 1. Political Map of Israel and State of Palestine

GEOGRAPHICAL & HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION PALESTINE REGION CONSISTING ISRAEL & PALESTINE AUTHORITY

Prior to establishment of the British Mandate for Palestine, there was no clear cut definition of the geographical and territorial limits of the area known as 'Palestine'. On the eve of First World War it was described by Encyclopedia of Britannica as a 'nebulous geographical concept under the British Mandate for Palestine' the first geopolitical framework was created that separated the Palestine from larger countries that surround it.

(See the Map of British Mandate for Palestine')



Presently Israel is a dominant independent state here therefore the latitudinal and longitudinal extent of Israel will be considered here. The entire area of Israel has latitudinal here. The entire area of Israel has latitudinal extent from $31^{\circ} 30' N$ to $34^{\circ} 45' N$ at eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea in West Asia. Longitudinal extent of Israel is $34^{\circ} 45' E$. Other areas West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights are captured by Israel Forcefully but presently these controlled areas are together known as 'Palestinian Authority' which has its own democratically elected government. But at international level Palestine has not much international acceptance. This may be due to heavy backing of Jewish State of Israel by United States of America and its western European allies in United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Geographically, West Bank (of Jordan River), Gaza strip and Golan Heights areas are detached, fragmented and separated from each other by the territory of Israel.

Climatically Israel in this region has Mediterranean climate with hot, dry, summers and cool, rainy winters. Heat waves are frequent. The climate conditions are highly variable within the state and modified locally by altitude, latitude and proximity to Mediterranean Sea.

'Jordan River' is the longest and lifeline of Israel and the West Bank settlements of Palestinian Authority. Israel physiographically is divided in to 'Mediterranean Coastal Plains' that extend from Lebanese border in the north to Gaza in South, 'Central Hills' including upper and lower Galilee, Samarian hills in West Bank etc., Jordan Rift valley and 'Negev Desert' which is an extension of Sinai Desert.

In Israel majority of population i.e. 76% is Jews, 16% Muslims, 2% Christians, 2% Druze and 4% are unclassified by choice. On the other hand in Palestinian Authority area of West Bank, Golan Heights and Gaza Strip, Sunni Arab Muslims are in majority followed by Jews and other religious affinities (as per 2013 census).

Historically, the origin of Palestine conflict goes back to First Zionist Congress in Basal in 1897 A.D. when a program for the colonization of Palestine by Zionist settlers was approved to pave the way for establishment of an exclusively Jewish state. "The Zionist scheme was launched with total disregard for the rights of indigenous Palestinians. Its inhabitants were mainly Arabs. The three communities of Palestine i.e. Muslim Arabs, Christians and Palestinian Jews were living in harmony. For Palestinian Jews, Zionism was both European and alien."¹

¹Giladi, G.N., *Discord in Zion*, Scorpion Publishing, London, 1990, P-35.

The Ottoman Empire of that time was well aware of the emerging threat of Zionism. But the real turn in this movement of a separate land for Jews grew strength before, during and after World War II. The massive persecution of Jews under European Nazis regime gave fresh sympathy to Zionist movements claim. With the outbreak of World War II, in order to gain Arab support, Britain under whom the territory of Palestine was in control, published a white paper restricting Zionist immigration and offering independence for Palestine within ten years.

The Arabs accepted the white paper but it was rejected by Zionists. Zionists terror groups mainly Haganah, Irgun and Stern gang unleashed a bloody campaign against British troops and officials and Palestinian civilians. In 1947AD; Britain decided to withdraw from Palestine. "The United Nations, under firm US pressure approved a partition plan under which Palestinian Arabs, comprising 70% population and 92% of land, were allocated 47% land of their country while the Zionists, comprising only 30% of population and only 8 % of land will get 53% of country, including its most fertile regions."²

This injustice of plan widened the rift between Palestinian Arabs and Zionists. In May, 1948, British forces completely withdrew from Palestine and Zionists proclaimed the State of Israel without defining its borders. Arab armies moved to defend the Palestinians and a full scale war between Arabs and Zionists erupted. Arabs were defeated. Finally in 1949AD; ceasefire was agreed. By the time Israel controlled 77% of Palestine, while rest of the area came under Jordan and Egypt's control. About half of Palestinian Arabs (880,000)³, had by 1949, been forced from their homes to become refugees. The exodus of Palestinians and their unexpected defeat are referred to as great catastrophe 'Al-Nakbah'. 'Al Nakbah' is the main event that led to declaration of Jewish state because if Palestinians remained living in the territory, then Jews would be in minority within the state.



(Maps Showing Expansion of Israel since 1946 A.D.)

² Ryan, Sheyla & Muhammad Hallaj, *Palestine is but Jordan*.P-29.

³ *Palestine*, Research Center, PLO prints, Lebanon, P-28.

After the establishment of Jewish state, a continuous struggle for the rights of Independent State of Palestine for those people, who were uprooted from their territory by Israeli Zionists, started. In this direction, first under the leadership of Yasser Arafat in 1964 AD; PLO (Palestine Liberation organization) came into existence. In 1967 AD; Six Day War started up between Arab countries and Israel in which the later emerged victorious and expanded its more territory. Eventually in 1993 signing of 'OSLO Accord' led to the Israel-Palestinian Peace Process. This allowed PLO to relocate from Tunisia and settled in Gaza strip and West Bank. This led to establishment of 'Palestinian National Authority.' In 21st century in 2006 general election Hamas party came in control and again a bitter struggle started between Israel and Palestine Authority.

In 2011, a Palestinian Authority's attempt to gain UN membership as a fully sovereign state failed. In November 2012, the representation of Palestine in UN was upgraded to a non-member observer state, and mission title was changed from 'Palestine (represented by PLO)' to 'State of Palestine.' On July, 2014, due to continuous rocket firing by Hamas militias from Gaza in to Israel's territory has led to a strong Israeli Defense Forces counter attack from ground, air and a sea side blocked has led to more than 1900 civilian deaths in Gaza strip and a severe humanitarian crisis is existing there. This brutal action of Israel has led to widespread criticism of Israel. But Jewish state is not much worried about these criticisms, as they knew that their old ally U.S.A. has a full support to them.

CAUSES OF CONFLICT

The Israel-Palestinian Conflict has been going on for decades and has a number of somewhat complicated causes but the main issues are concerned with land and borders. Both sides believe that they have a God-given right to this territory and both sides have their claims based on the basis of the pact that was made by God with Abraham in Bible's Old Testament. Both sides were once a part of the same group who inhabited what was considered the 'Promised Land.' Who controls Jerusalem; issues of water rights, problems of force and a host of other caused have fueled the conflict particularly in 21st century. Following in brief are some causes:

1. **Origin:** - The country of Israel was not formally created until 1948, so from a technical stand point that would be the earliest beginning, but some scholars believe that the Jewish exile that happened in ancient time when the land was conquered by Romans. Later it was taken over by Arabs, who can still be found there today.

In late 19th century Jews created a Zionist movement in which they would relocate to the land that they felt was given to them by God; based on the accounts of Bible. This occurred with little regard to the already residing Arab Muslim population in that area. These people were against such moves of Zionists. Thus, tensions become serious among local Arab and Jewish immigrants.

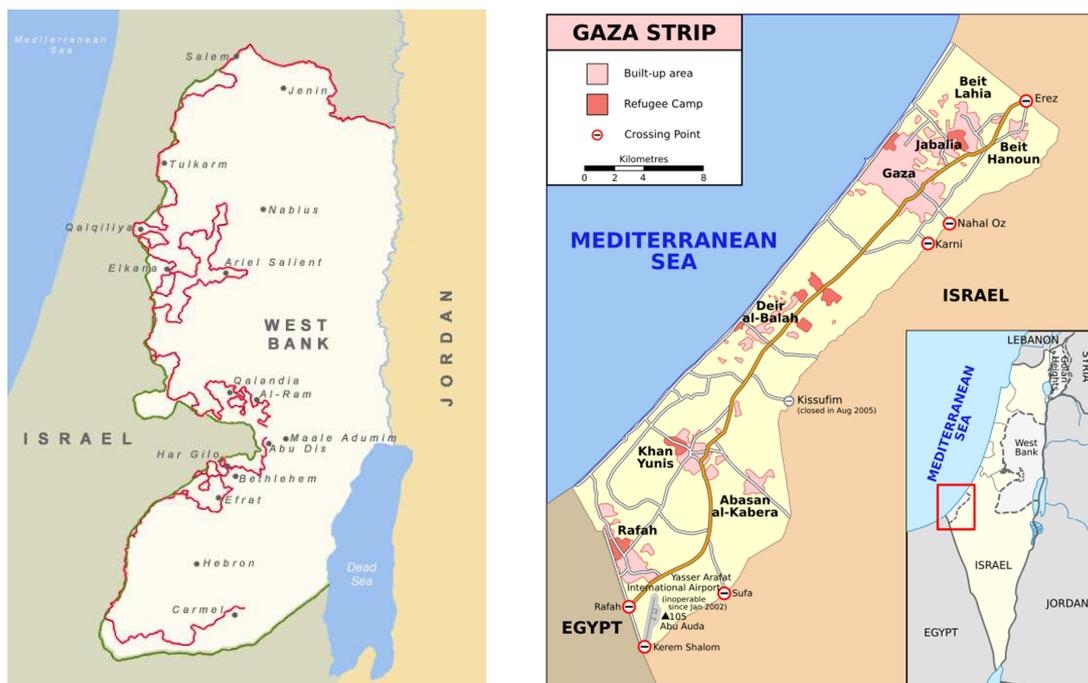
2. **Implications of Holocaust:-** During the Holocaust, more than 6 million Jews were killed by Nazis (in their Auschwitz, Concentration camps and in public shoot outs) in Germany, Poland and other areas of Europe. Many who survived wanted to return to their land that they believe was their biblical birth right. Leaders petitioned Great Britain to allow Jews to migrate to Palestine and finally, in 1948 A.D. formal state of Israel were formed. There was again feelings of local Arab were hurt, they were of the view that why the punishments of sins committed by Europe be borne by them. This was another cause of rift between Arabs and Jews

3. **The Occupation:** - Israel, with U.S. support, has militarily occupied Gaza Strip (along with West Bank and East Jerusalem) since 1967A.D. This belligerent occupation till to date have taken lives of thousands of innocent Palestinian civilians.

Up until 2005 A.D. Israel maintained illegal Jewish colonies in Gaza strip as well. It has since disbanded these colonies and thus, claims that it is no longer occupying the Gaza strip. The illegal occupation of Israel and construction of its settlements in disputed area has led to anger in the mind of Palestinian Arabs against Israel.

4. **Control of Jerusalem:** - One of the most hotly bedded issue is, who or what should have control over 'Jerusalem?' Jerusalem is a religiously significant city for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. It is believed that the city was originally founded by King David, and is also widely believed to be the site of crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Both Israel and Palestine consider Jerusalem to be their capital.

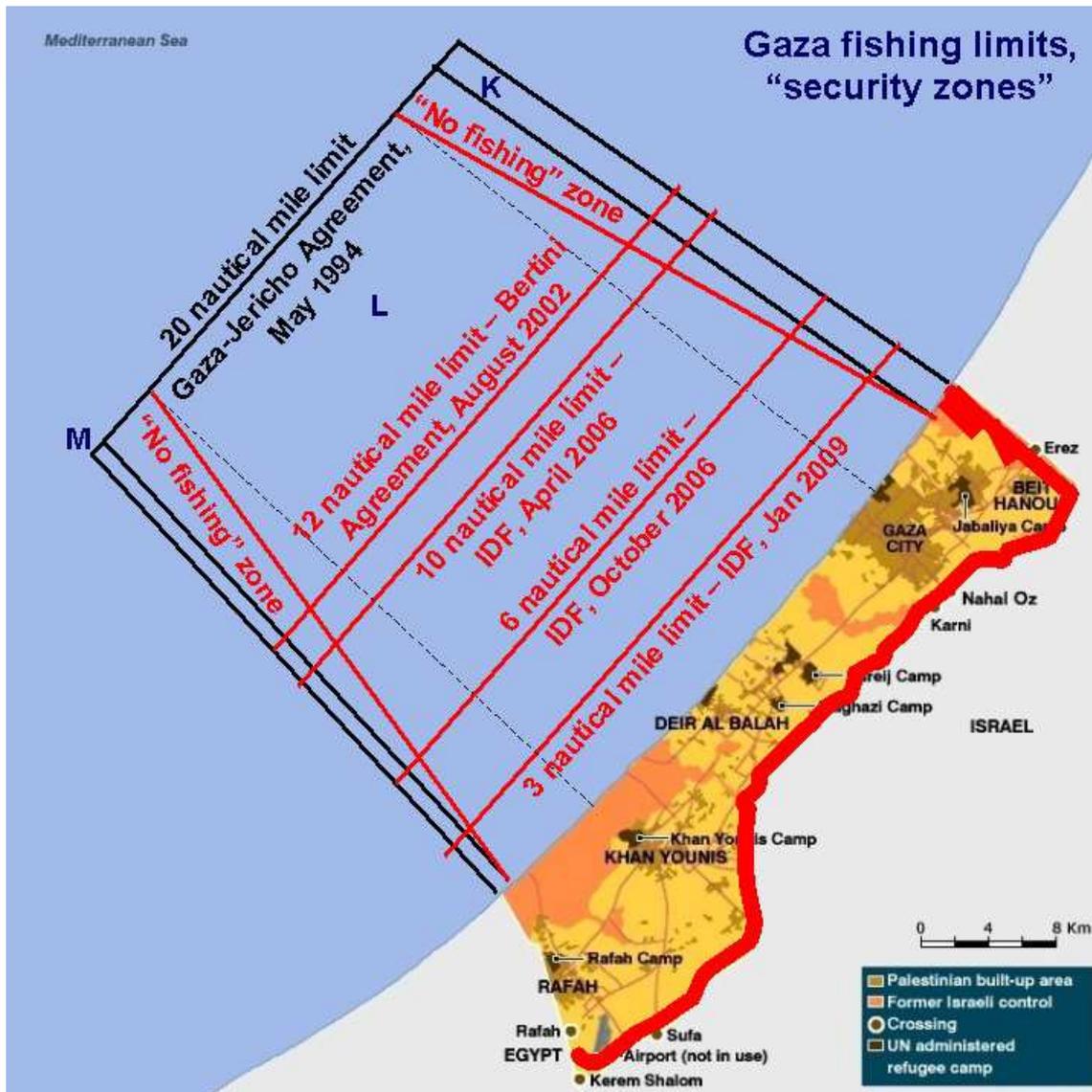
5. **The Siege:** - Israel with U.S. backing, has laid a brutal siege In Gaza strip since 2007 A.D. It has blocked off air, land and water access to the strip. This area is one of the most densely populated areas of the world. Due to its cage-like set up, Gaza has been aptly described as 'World's Largest Open Air Prison.' The siege has destroyed the economy of Gaza. Today almost 80% of Gazans are dependent up on international aid as a result of this blockade. The UN has warned that Gaza will be in hospitable by 2020A.D. if the siege continues. This is a height of cruelty. (See maps showing siege around Gaza Strip and West Bank)



6. **The Water Crisis:** - Control over fresh water is also a pressing issue. The disputed land is situated in a desert area where fresh water is scarce. Well drilling, plumbing and the ability to move this resource from place to place is a matter of intense debate and strife. Israel severely damaged the sewage treatment infrastructure in Gaza during 2009 assault. The blockade means, the resources needed for repairs are unavailable. As a result untreated contaminated water is thrown in Mediterranean Sea every day. About 90% of water supply in Gaza strip is unfit for consumption. This is also a main cause of confrontation between both sides.

7. **Scarcity of Final and Electricity:** - Due to siege, the Gaza strip and other areas i.e. in West Bank, are under chronic power shortage. Israel has severely limited the power supply to the region. There is only one power plant in Gaza which supplies two-third of Gaza's power needs, has been blown over by heavy shelling by Israel Defense Forces on July, 2014. It has plunged many parts of Gaza under darkness and rendered electrically operated medical services useless.

8. **Restriction on Fishing:** - Israel has announced that the access to the sea six nautical miles beyond Gaza shore is prohibited for fishing. This means 85% of fishing waters granted to Palestinians under OSLO Accord is now inaccessible, which in turn is effecting adversely to the Gazans inhabiting near coastal areas.



9. **The Refugee Crisis:** - Out of 1.5 million people living in Gaza, 1.2 million are the registered refugees spread across 8 camps. Since, the newly created State of Israel denied their right of return; they have been trapped in refugee camps for the past 66 years. The condition of refugees in these camps, which cannot be renovated due to siege, is pitiable. Humanitarian crisis in Gaza is higher than the rest of Palestine, unemployment is high, food is scarce and fuel is scant.

10. **Tunnels of Gaza:** - This is one of the main causes behind recent attacks by Israel on Gaza. Due to siege on land, restriction on air movements and blockade on the seaside resulted in creation of these tunnels. Earlier i.e. before first Intifada (December 1987 to 1993), these tunnels were used by Palestinians for their movements in and out of Gaza. But during first Intifada these tunnels were started to be used by Hamas and other terror groups for smuggling of arms and ammunition. The present July, 2014 attacks launched by Israel are also aimed at destroying the entire network of tunnels in Gaza.



These were some important causes which are responsible for the present day situation in Palestine.

ROLE OF SUPERPOWERS IN ISRAEL-PALSTINE CONFLICT

The involvement of superpowers i.e. U.S.A and former U.S.S.R. in Middle East was gradual. As the cold war developed in 1950's and 60's so did the involvement of U.S.A. and the former U.S.S.R. in the Middle East. By 1973, their involvement had become so crucial that both sides in the conflict were being supplied millions of dollars' worth of armaments. Moreover, in the Yom Kippur war of 1973, there was a fear that the superpower might even go to war against each other.

Both U.S.A. and former U.S.S.R helped the warring sides with millions of dollars as well as weapons. But after the disintegration of U.S.S.R.; now U.S.A. is a very strong power in this region and portraying itself as a sole mediator in Israel - Palestine conflict. But the role of U.S.A. is seen as partial in most of cases as due to its very strong Jewish lobby back home in U.S.A, it has to support Israel even if it is taking wrong and oppressive steps against the Palestinians. Jewish lobby in U.S.A. is one of the richest and one of the largest contributors of funds to political parties. So, none of the U.S leaders want to make them angry. Moreover, as per Reuter's news agency on July 2014, U.S government has decided to provide millions of dollars help to Israel to replenish its dangerous arsenal of arms and also to replenish its 'Iron Dome' missile interceptors. This partial attitude has resulted in creation of more problems in the way of peaceful solution of Israel-Palestine conflict. Russia on the other side these days is busy on its western borders with Ukraine, NATO and European Union, over the issue of Ukraine's membership of European Union.

Britain and France are the passive powers as they are supporting the US plans in Middle East.

ROLE OF REGIONAL POWERS

The important regional powers involved on Israel-Palestine Conflict are the members of 'Arab League' mainly Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar, State of Palestine etc. All members of Arab league have disputes with Israel. But after 2000 A.D. a change of positivity towards the solution of Palestine conflict has been noticed in the attitude of these nations particularly Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia whereas Lebanon, Jordan are still anti-Israel. In 2002 A.D. the Arab Peace Proposal initiated by Saudi Arabia was endorsed by Arab league in Beirut. In 2007 A.D. also Arab League endorsed another peace initiative in Riyadh Summit which was also welcomed by the state of Israel who for the first time achieved the official delegation of Arab league.

Other than Arab League, the components of united government of state of Palestine i.e. Hamas and Fatah group are also very important regional players in the solution of this Israel-Palestine Conflict.

GEOPOLITICAL EFFECTS OF ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

Under this heading we will discuss only current i.e. after 2000 A.D. geopolitical effects of this conflict. Some important effects are:

1. **Failure of American Policies:** - The US policy of showing itself as a sole mediator to the solution of this problem has been failed. U.S.A.'s continuous monetary as well as military help to Israel and back home importance of Jewish Lobby in domestic politics has presented a negative image of U.S.A. in the world. It may seriously affect the credibility of U.S.A, as an agent of peace in the world.
2. **Weaknesses of UNO Exposed:** - Recent attacks launched by Israel to destroy the underground tunnels network in Gaza and resultant deaths of more than 1900 people and United Nations` only verbal criticism of Israel and no concrete actions against aggressor Israel is also showing the weakness of UNO in front of superpowers like U.S.A.
3. **Negative Image of Israel:** - Such an unprecedented step taken by Israel as a result of which more than 1900 people of Palestine in Gaza died in which most of the people were common women and children. All these incidents have presented a negative image of Israel to the entire world.
4. **Threat to War against Terrorism:** - Brutal attacks and poor conditions of Palestinian refugees has led to a worldwide anger and hatred for Jewish Israel and U.S and its allies. In the Islamic world of Middle East Asia and also Palestinian supporters in many parts of the world, particularly fundamentalists, may provide both armed as well as monetary support to the terror outfits to launch terror attacks on U.S.A and its citizens as well as Israel and its citizens in any part of the world. This will be a big threat to war against terrorism.

POSSIBLE REMEDIES AND SOLUTIONS

The Israel and Palestine conflict cannot be solved in one day. The problem between these two states has been since after Second World War due to declaration of Israel as an independent state. Both sides need a great level of maturity to find a solution to their problems. Some important possible solutions given by experts are as follows:

1. **Two State Solution:** - Essentially a comprehensive settlement that would create a state of Palestine on the land seized by Israel in 1967 war with Arab state. This could be a better solution for both sides.
2. **One State, Two Peoples:** - Under this suggestion Jews and Arabs would be joined in one state, with all having same citizenship whether Israeli or Palestinian. But considering murderous hatred among the two sides, this solution doesn't seem to be viable.
3. **Regional Solution:** - Israel should talk to Jordan and Egypt on redrawing their border and incorporating the Palestinians of West Bank and Gaza strip into those neighboring countries.
4. **Unilateral Withdrawal:** - Except border areas for security, Israel should unilaterally withdraw its troops from Palestinian territory, remove the siege around Gaza and other areas of Palestine. This may help in easing the tension between Israel and Palestine.
5. Israel, Palestinian government should also imposed a ban on the unnecessary cross boarder rocket fires by Hamas and other terror groups as these fires are always retaliated severely by Israel. Therefore, for the security of common masses, the Palestinian Government should put a stoppage on the activities of these outfits.
6. Both Israel and Palestine State have committed war crimes. Hamas is a powerful group in Gaza Strip, its unreasonable rocket firing on Israeli settlements along the border cannot be justified. On the other hand, attacking UN sponsored refugee camps, mosques, busy markets and small children playing in gardens by mortars and missiles knowingly are grave and unpardonable war crimes by Israeli Defense Forces. Therefore, for ensuring peace, both sides should punish the culprits and in future peaceful solutions should be sought through diplomatic means rather than a war.

5 CONCLUSION

The conflict of Israel-Palestine is a modern phenomenon that began around the turn of 20th century. Although Arabs and Jews have different religions but religious differences are not a cause of conflict. It is essentially a struggle for land, which before 1948 A.D. was known as 'Palestine'. Both sides have fought a number of wars against each other but till to date no solution has come forward rather those who were living in Palestine much before the immigration of Jews from Europe are

now refugees in their own land. Recent 'Operation Protective Edge' taken by Israeli Defense Forces has led to 1900 deaths a majority of which consists of innocent women and children.

Every individual in this world has the right to live a decent, respectable life. Both sides are responsible for this carnage. Had the Hamas in Gaza not pounded hundreds of rockets in the territory of Israel, 'The Operation Protective Edge' then might not be taken by Israeli Defense Forces. Moreover, these precious 1900 lives could have been saved. Therefore, both parties are responsible for this conflict, therefore they should sit together and chalk out plans for future solutions of their conflicts. Though the process of solution is very slow and long but it is not impossible. (Following Table shows the Casualties, suffered by people in Palestine-Israel conflict. In 2014 this conflict has taken the toll of 1900 people of Palestine till the Ceasefire between two sides.)

**Vital Statistics:
Total Casualties, Arab-Israeli Conflict
(1860 - Present)**

Event	Year(s)	Jews/Israelis		Arabs/Palestinians	
		Killed [°]	Wounded [^]	Killed ^{°±}	Wounded [^]
<u>Arab Riots</u>	1920	6	200		
<u>Arab Riots</u>	1921	43			
<u>Arab Riots</u>	1924	133		116	
<u>Arab Riots</u>	1929	135	399	87	91
<u>Arab Riots</u>	1936-1939	415		5,000	15,000
<u>War of Independence</u>	1948	6,373	15,000	10,000	
<u>Sinai Campaign</u>	1956	231	900	3,000	4,500
<u>Six Day War</u>	1967	776	2,586	18,300	
<u>War of Attrition</u>	1968-1970	1,424	2,700	5,000	
<u>Yom Kippur War</u>	1973	2,688		19,000	
<u>First Lebanon War</u>	1982	1,216	2,383	20,825	30,000
<u>First Intifada</u>	1987-1993	200		1,162	
<u>Second Intifada</u>	2000-2005	1,100	8,000	4,907	8,611
<u>Second Lebanon War</u>	2006	164	1,489	1,954	4,400
<u>Operation Cast Lead</u>	2008-2009	14	1,272	1,434	5,000
<u>Operation Pillar of Defense</u>	2012	6	240	158	
<u>Operation Protective Edge</u>	2014	43	134	1,062	
<u>Terrorism/Other</u>	1860-Present	9,927			
TOTAL:		24,894	35,730	91,105	67,602

* - Casualty numbers only placed when a verifiable source was identified.

** - This number reflects total casualties by Palestinians in Israel as well as invading Arab countries Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

[^] - Number of wounded, for both Israel and the Arabs, are estimates.

[°] - Number of killed reflects combination of military and civilians.

[±] - Number of Arab killed are all estimates.

Sources: Wars, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Palestinian Human Rights Monitor, The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group

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